Symeon Stylites the Younger and his Cult in Context:

Hagiography and Society in Sixth- to Seventh-Century Byzantium

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between hagiography and history, with a particular focus on the cult of the little-studied sixth-century Antiochene holy man Symeon Stylites the Younger. It argues that any hagiographic text can only be understood through an appreciation of both its particular historical context and of developments in the genre over time. The first chapter thus addresses the economy, society and culture of the Antiochene area, arguing, against some recent archaeological interpretations, that sixth-century natural and military disasters did have a significant impact on the region. The second chapter turns to the first text associated with Symeon's cult, the sermon collection attributed to the stylite, which reveals how a holy man could construct his own spiritual authority through powerful rhetoric. Starkly polarised in his thought, Symeon eschews the compromises adopted by many clerical preachers, focusing on the opposition of demon and monk, rich and poor, and heaven and hell. The third chapter addresses the *Life of Symeon*, arguing that it can be read as an extended apology for Symeon's failure to protect the Antiochene from the disasters of the sixth century. The fourth chapter looks at the *Life of Martha*, Symeon's mother, which contains an original and inclusive vision of holiness, focusing not on asceticism or celibacy but on the redemptive powers of liturgy and the sacraments. The fifth chapter takes a step back, arguing that both Lives reflect broader developments in hagiography in the late sixth and seventh centuries: Symeon's hagiographer's struggle to justify disasters are echoed in other near-contemporary saints' Lives, while Martha's *Life* resembles in many respects the posthumous miracle collections which flourished in this period and were, in their relatively narrow focus, very suitable for a time of crisis.

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Introduction: Approaching Late Antique Hagiography

This is a thesis about the relationship between saints and society; between hagiography and history. The study of late antique hagiography has come on in leaps and bounds over the last few decades;[1] hagiography is finally being recognised—although some sceptics remain—as a valuable, if complex, body of source material and as an important literary phenomenon[2] in its own right.[3] Nonetheless, much scope remains for further work. There has been a considerable imbalance in the attention paid to different texts. Understandably, the *Life of Antony*, normally regarded as the foundational text in the genre of Christian biography,[4] has been the subject of extensive research: studies have not only examined its dating and authorship[5] but have also provided sophisticated analyses of its literary form and of the author's motivations and concerns in devising his picture of Antony.[6] Perhaps surprisingly, however, even other demonstrably early texts have excited far less scholarly interest. In some respects, Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Gregory the Wonderworker*, which betrays a less ambivalent attitude towards miracles than the *Life of Antony*, is closer in its concerns to later Christian biographies, yet it has been the subject of far fewer studies.[7] Even the *Lives* of Pachomius, who, like Antony, is considered a key figure in the history of

[1] For a useful survey of developments in studies of Byzantine hagiography, see Efthymiadis 2006a.
[2] I use the unspecific 'phenomenon' instead of 'genre', since whether hagiography constitutes a genre has been contested: some scholars prefer to see it as a 'discourse', or simply as a subject matter that crosses multiple genres. See e.g. Van Uytfanghe 1993, esp.146-9; Rapp 1999, 63-5; Déroche 2004, 367-70; Burrus 2006, 153-5; Hinterberger 2014a, 25-8.
[3] For a recent statement of hagiography's literary worth, see the articles collected in Efthymiadis 2014a.
[4] Although it has been suggested that Eusebius's earlier *Life of Constantine* could be viewed as 'a prototypical saint's life' (A.M. Cameron 1997, 174) or 'the founding work of Christian biography in late antiquity' (M.S. Williams 2008, 18). The *Life of Antony* is normally given precedence, as both these authors acknowledge, because of its great influence on subsequent hagiographies.
[5] The weight of evidence (and of scholarly opinion) seems to support the traditional view that Athanasius wrote the *Life:* see e.g. Barnard 1974, 169-70; Bartelink 1994, 27-42; sceptics include Rousseau 2000, 100-4, and Barnes, in e.g. Barnes 2010, 163-70 (although Barnes accepts that Athanasius had some role in distributing the *Life*).
[6] See M.A. Williams 1982b; Brennan 1985; Brakke 1995, 201-265; Alexandre 1996; M.S. Williams 2008, 103-114; Hägg 2011.
[7] The main studies include Van Dam 1982; Mitchell 1999; and, on the topic of the 'Creed' which Gregory of Nyssa attributes to the Wonderworker, Abramowski 1976.

monasticism, have received uneven coverage:[8] most studies have either treated the textual problems associated with the different versions of the *Lives* or have used the *Lives* to discuss Pachomian spirituality and coenobitic monasticism;[9] relatively few have analysed the literary features of the texts and the biases and motivations of their authors.[10] After the fourth century, the picture is even sparser. Even though hagiography arguably reached its peak in the sixth and early seventh centuries, the majority of saints' Lives from this period, with the exception of a small number deemed to be of outstanding historical interest, have received at most one or two in-depth studies (although some of these are of exceptional quality).[11] This in fact echoes an imbalance in studies of monasticism: although there are many analyses of its origins in the fourth century and earlier, monasticism between the Council of Chalcedon and the Arab Conquests has been largely neglected.[12]

As well as these gaps in coverage, there is also a certain methodological tension that often, inevitably, affects studies of hagiography and saints' cults. The problem, of course, is that hagiography is *not* history, in the sense of quasi-objective modern historiography.[13] It is very difficult to untangle the complex relationship between holy men, their cults, and their hagiographers. Since Peter Brown's ground-breaking article of 1971 brought holy men to the forefront of late antique historians' attention, it has become very apparent that saints' Lives cannot be read as straightforward, accurate reports of the lives of holy men or women:[14] hagiographers selected and shaped their material to fulfil a wide range of

[8] Admittedly, the dating of the various Lives of the saint is not certain: it seems likely that they derive from fourth-century material, but contain various later accretions: see e.g. Goehring 1982.
[9] See esp. Rousseau 1999a.
[10] With some exceptions, including in particular the articles on Pachomius collected in Goehring 1999.
[11] There have been, for example, excellent studies of the works of Cyril of Scythopolis (Flusin 1983) and Leontius of Neapolis (Déroche 1995).
[12] An important exception is Hatlie 2007. There have also been several studies of Palestinian monasticism in this later period, largely based on the works of Cyril of Scythopolis: see e.g. Patrich 1995 and Binns 1996.
[13] Lifschitz 1994 argues that the distinction between hagiography and historiography is an artificial one created in the nineteenth century and inapplicable to earlier centuries.
[14] Brown himself has sometimes been accused of doing exactly this: see e.g. Treadgold 1994.

purposes, from the panegyrical to the personal and political.[15] Some holy men may have been entirely fictitious (although their Lives could still, of course, convey spiritual truths);[16] many probably existed, but this does not mean that the majority of material found in their *vitae* is historically accurate.

Even if an historian abandons the ambition to assess the historicity of the Life of a holy man, and decides to focus instead on his cult and posthumous representations, the relationship between hagiography and cult remains complicated. Hagiography (whether in the form of a saint's Life or a collection of miracles), *creates* a particular vision of a saint and his or her cult. This vision does not necessarily reflect a generally accepted interpretation of the saint, who could mean very different things to different people. Nor does it always represent the 'official' ideology of a cult, insofar as such an ideology ever existed. This is perhaps most strikingly demonstrated by the fifth-century *Miracles of Thekla:* the work seems to have been written by a maverick ex-member of the clergy at her shrine at Seleucia in Isauria, who had twice been excommunicated by local bishops.[17] But a whole host of examples could be adduced to show that hagiography often represents the interests of a particular individual, or group, rather than all of a cult's devotees. The several Lives of the fifth-century stylite Symeon the Elder differ, sometimes significantly, in their accounts of his life and in particular his death; these differences seem to reflect the diverse interests of rival groups associated with his cult.[18] The two surviving miracle collections relating to the cult of Cyrus

[15] See e.g. the articles gathered in Howard-Johnston and Hayward 1999, especially those by A.M. Cameron, Rousseau, Rapp and Magdalino.
[16] On the relationship between reality, truth as understood by the Byzantines, and fiction, see Kaldellis 2014a, esp.116-8.
[17] On the text's author see Dagron 1978, 13-6. On the *Miracles* as a whole see also Johnson 2006. On Thekla's cult see Davis 2001.
[18] No consensus has, however, been reached on which precise groups the different texts were associated with. Bernard Flusin argued that the Syriac *Life* was written by the saint's monastic disciples at Telneshin, whereas the Greek *Life* by 'Antonius' was probably associated with a relic cult of the saint at Antioch (Flusin 1993). Dina Boero has recently argued that the Syriac *Life* originated not among Symeon's disciples at Telneshin, but at a church there, and represents clerical interests (Boero 2015).

and John at Menuthis, one written by the educated monk and future patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius, and the other by an anonymous, possibly non-clerical, devotee of the martyrs' shrine, present drastically different visions of proper cultic practice, of the requirements for suppliants, and of salvation.[19]

Several saints' Lives produced in monastic communities seem to have been written in the context of internal controversy, often relating to events following the death of the holy man. The Bohairic *Life of Pachomius,* for example, seems to have been intended in part to defend Theodore, a monk in Pachomius's monastery at Phbow who later became leader of the Pachomian confederation in very controversial circumstances.[20] The whole account of Pachomius's life is bound up with that of Theodore's, and appears highly partisan: it is difficult to believe that this emphasis would have been accepted by all members of the Pachomian confederation. Hagiographic texts thus embody a range of more or less particular interests, which do not necessarily represent those of most devotees of the cult of the saint in question. This point should not perhaps be pushed too far: even if rival factions might have interpreted particular aspects of a saint's career very differently, it is likely that they would all have shared some common 'memories' of his or her achievements, which are reflected in hagiography. Nonetheless, it is clearly of critical importance to establish, as far as possible, when, why, and by whom, any given hagiography was written.

How, then, is the historian to tackle the problem of disentangling the saint as historical figure, from his posthumous cult, and from the version of him represented in a hagiographic text? One option is to avoid the pitfalls of hagiography by focusing on other sources relating to holy men, including letters and sermons. Powerful studies have been produced on, for

[19] The anonymous collection is edited and discussed by Déroche 2012; see also, on Sophronius's collection, Booth 2014, 44-89.
[20] For a discussion of Theodore's relationship with Pachomius (although one which perhaps underestimates the unreliability of the literary sources), see Rousseau 1999a, 178-91.

example, the letter collection of the sixth-century Palestinian holy men Barsanuphius and John,[21] and the various writings of the famous fifth-century Egyptian hegumen Shenoute of Atripe.[22] A contrasting approach to the problem of historicity is, in a sense, to discount it: to focus only on the reality of the hagiographic text, rather than trying to relate it to any real historical events or persons. This can be a very fruitful approach, and is often necessary, especially when dealing with Lives of saints which are almost certainly entirely fictitious.[23] To my mind, however, it is not entirely satisfactory when examining saints' Lives that do demonstrably bear some relationship to real historical events and persons, particularly if they were written for audiences who would have had some knowledge of the historical saint. This is because, even if a historian is interested in the hagiographer and his construction of the holy man rather than in the holy man himself, it is only possible to analyse fully the work of the former through an awareness of how far he is constrained by real events and how and why he may have distorted his account of the saint's life. While the recent emphasis on the 'literary' qualities of hagiography is to be welcomed, hagiography is a form of literature which, perhaps more than most, cannot be dissociated from society and events, particularly given how often it is polemically or apologetically motivated.

The problem then remains, of course, of how to establish the relationship between hagiography and historical events. When other sources are available for comparison, the task becomes easier, but often this is not the case. Unfortunately, it is not possible to accept a hagiographic narrative on the grounds that it seems plausible: the divergent accounts of the death of Symeon Stylites the Elder all seem, independently, reasonably coherent and

[21] Hevelone-Harper 2005, and, looking at various letter collections, Rapp 1999, 63-81.
[22] E.g. Schroeder 2007; López 2013. Unlike Barsanuphius and John, Shenoute has been immortalised in hagiography, but both Schroeder and López prioritise his own writings. For further examples of studies based on holy men's own prose, see below pp.73-4.
[23] This is the approach adopted by, for example, Derek Krueger, in his study of Leontius of Neapolis's *Life of Symeon the Holy Fool* (Krueger 1996, 6).

realistic, but they clearly cannot all be true.[24] Nonetheless, there are elements in hagiography which I believe can be taken, with reasonable confidence, to relate in some sense to actual events. In particular, it seems likely that pressure points—that is to say moments of significant tension or opposition to the saint or his cult, which go beyond mere hagiographic stereotype—must in most cases reflect real instances of trouble, even if they are often recounted in highly misleading terms. It is not uncommon for hagiography to contain elements of apologetic, which would be unnecessary were they not a response to actual controversy and a reflection of genuine concerns about maintaining a saint's reputation. It may therefore be possible, with care, to isolate moments in texts in which hagiography and history draw particularly close. This is certainly not to suggest a return to the approach of extracting 'historical nuggets' from hagiography. Rather, it is to emphasise that a hagiographer's literary strategies (from the structuring of the text to the use of biblical typologies) are often a response to historical *realia* and that the one cannot be understood without the other.[25]

There are other ways, too, of writing history from hagiography. One productive approach is to look at hagiography comparatively and systematically, and to trace developments in the genre over time. If a development can be noted across numerous texts of a similar chronological period, this must relate to some ideological or societal change. The modern study of hagiography and holy men has, however, too often adopted a synchronic approach: one flaw, for example, in Brown's indisputably brilliant work is that he tends to speak interchangeably of holy men from the fourth to sixth/seventh centuries, without questioning whether their roles remained the same despite undeniable changes in the societies in which

[24] Cf. Magdalino 1999, 83-4. On the different versions of the Lives of Symeon, see above p.11 n18, with Harvey 1998.
[25] As is evidently the case in, for example, the sixth-century *Life of Eutychius* by Eustratius Presbyter, powerfully analysed in A.M. Cameron 1988 and 1990.

they lived.[26] It is, rather, necessary to adopt a diachronic approach, since evolving opportunities and pressures within a changing society had a determinative impact both on holy men's careers and on how they were presented by their biographers; hagiography was never a static literary form.

There have been few surveys of hagiography across late antiquity, although it is difficult to know whether this is a cause or an effect of this dominant synchronic perspective.[27] Recently, however, several important studies have emphasised the importance of situating hagiography in its precise context, and shown that developments in hagiography relate to wider social, political and ideological trends. Thus Phil Booth analyses the developing role of the sacraments in late antique hagiography, arguing that this was linked both to the growing dissociation of the anti-Chalcedonians from the imperial church and, at least in some circles, to the political and military crises of the seventh century.[28] Matthew Dal Santo has shown that hagiographic sources produced in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, in both east and west, were characterised by signs of dissent and scepticism, particularly about the possibility of posthumous intercession by saints; he suggests that this was related to criticisms of the Byzantine emperors, and more generally to the political and economic tensions of the period.[29] There is still, however, much work to be done in assessing processes of change in late antique hagiography.

Dal Santo's book also reflects another important development in studies of holy men: the realisation that many Byzantines did not accept the claims made about some (or all) saints'

[26] Holy men discussed in his original article of 1971 include Antony (4th C), Symeon Stylites the Elder, Daniel the Stylite, Hypatius (all 5th C), Sabas (6th C) and Theodore of Sykeon (6th-7th Cs). He does acknowledge that the characteristic 'holy man' emerged at different times in different regions.
[27] One exception is Barnes 2010, but in general he analyses his selection of texts sequentially, rather than comparatively.
[28] Booth 2014 passim (esp. chapter 1).
[29] Dal Santo 2012.

miracle-working powers and spiritual authority, on a wide range of grounds.[30] The ubiquity of references to scepticism about saints, which had earlier been highlighted in an important article by Gilbert Dagron,[31] has also been emphasised recently by Antony Kaldellis.[32] From a different direction, Mischa Meier, in his monumental work on responses to disasters in the reign of Justinian, has argued that crises in this period caused severe damage to holy men's reputations (although he does not analyse many hagiographic texts in depth).[33] The insights of all these scholars have profoundly changed the way we understand Byzantine hagiography and holy men. There remains considerable scope, however, to build on this work. There is, for instance, a need for more detailed studies of individual holy men, to assess how the particular context of their careers shaped their opportunities and the challenges they faced, and for literary-historical analyses of hagiographies, to show how their authors attempted to deal with scepticism. And much analysis remains to be done of the development of hagiography across late antiquity, to show how particular trends created both possibilities and pitfalls for saints and their devotees.

These questions are at the heart of this thesis. Its primary focus is the cult of the holy man Symeon Stylites the Younger, who lived in the sixth century on the so-called 'Wonderful Mountain' near Antioch-on-the-Orontes [see Figure 1]. According to his hagiographer, Symeon was a witness to many of the most dramatic events of the sixth century (including earthquakes, Persian invasions, recurrent outbreaks of plague, and imperial anti-pagan persecutions), and formed close relationships with leading figures in Antioch and the wider empire, including the patriarch of Constantinople John Scholasticus and the emperor Justin

[30] See also the various essays collected in Sarris, Dal Santo and Booth 2011.
[31] Dagron 1992.
[32] Kaldellis 2014b. Other scholars to allude to signs of doubt surrounding saints and their miracles include Marie-France Auzépy (Auzépy 1995) and Peter Brown (Brown 1995, esp.72-3), although, as Booth notes, the latter implies that ultimately holy men managed to conquer scepticism and achieve harmony (Booth 2011, 128 n.48).
[33] Meier 2003, esp. 354-5, 415-21, 426, 543-5, 555.

II himself. Yet, despite the considerable historical interest of his life, the abundant extant evidence relating to the saint and his cult has been little studied. This evidence includes a letter[34] and thirty sermons[35] attributed to Symeon; his lengthy saint's *Life*, which appears to have been written by a member of his monastery shortly after his death;[36] a further hagiographic *Life* of his mother, Martha;[37] the physical remains of his monastery[38] [Figures 2-4] and cult objects associated with it;[39] and several other references to Symeon in contemporary and near-contemporary sources, including the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius Scholasticus,[40] the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus,[41] and the Georgian *Life of Abibo* (in a reflection of the strong connections established between Symeon's cult and Iberia).[42] In addition, there is a significant body of later Byzantine and eastern Christian material associated with the saint and his monastery.[43] Many of these sources have been almost totally neglected in modern scholarship; most notably, the sermon collection and the *Life of Martha* have never been translated into a modern language. The range and diversity of these materials provide a rare opportunity to trace the evolution of a cult across late antiquity and beyond.

I am interested, first, in examining how Symeon's cult developed both during his lifetime and in the years after his death. As argued above, any holy man's career, and cult, can only be understood in its precise social, economic, political and religious context: the first chapter

[34] Symeon Stylites the Younger, 'Letter to Justin II.'
[35] See below chapter 2.
[36] See below chapter 3.
[37] See below chapter 4.
[38] See Lafontaine-Dosogne 1967, 67-135; Djobadze 1986, 57-115, 204-5.
[39] See esp. Lafontaine-Dosogne 1967, 140-58, 169-96; Vikan 1984, 67-74; Volbach 1996.
[40] Evagrius Scholasticus, 5.21 (p.217), 6.23 (pp.238-40).
[41] John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, 96 (cols.2953-6), 117-8 (cols.2981-4).
[42] *Life of Abibo*, 2 (pp.77-8). For the probable seventh-century date of the *Life*, see Martin-Hisard 1985-6, I, pp.164-5. On links between Symeon's cult and Iberia, see Van den Ven 1962, 53*-71*, 160*-62*, 216*-221*, and Martin-Hisard 2006-7, 128-29, 159-61. Iberians play a prominent role in the later part of the *Life of Martha* (54-70, pp.298-312). Peeters 1950, 161-2, argued that Martha's *Life* was actually written in Georgian rather than Greek (several manuscripts of a Georgian version of the text survive), but this is highly implausible, as shown by Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 68*-77*; II, 250*-51*.
[43] See for an introduction to this material Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 214*-221*.

of the thesis therefore introduces Antioch and northern Syria in the sixth century. After this, the main body of the thesis analyses three key texts associated with the cult. Chapter 2 discusses the sermon collection attributed to Symeon, which sheds light on how a holy man could construct his own spiritual authority. Whereas Symeon's hagiographer presents his healing miracles as the basis of his popularity, the sermons reveal the power of the stylite's own rhetoric: starkly polarised in his thought, he eschews the compromises adopted by many clerical preachers, focusing on the opposition of demon and monk, rich and poor, and heaven and hell. Chapter 3 examines the *Life of Symeon the Younger*, which shows how the recently-deceased leader was memorialised by his disciples to perpetuate his cult posthumously and, particularly interestingly, how they dealt with controversial aspects of his career. It argues that at one level the *Life* can be read as an extended *apologia* for Symeon's failure to protect Antioch and its environs from the natural and military disasters of the sixth century. Chapter 4 addresses the *Life of Martha*, in which a new saint, the stylite's mother, is created for the cult, revealing the latter's continued need for development in the seventh century; I argue that the promotion of Martha's cult was intimately bound up with the desire to encourage liturgical participation at the shrine. Thus her *Life* contains an original and inclusive vision of holiness, which eschews most traditional emphases of the Lives of female saints, such as celibacy and asceticism, focusing instead on the redemptive powers of liturgy and the sacraments.

Chapter 5 takes a step back and situates the Lives of Symeon and Martha in the context of broader hagiographical trends in the sixth and seventh centuries. Symeon's hagiographer's struggles to justify disasters are echoed in other near-contemporary saints' Lives, including those of Nicholas of Sion, George of Choziba and Theodore of Sykeon. I argue that holy men had by this period become particularly prone to accusations of failure in times of crisis because of ideological developments across late antiquity: in particular, growing claims

about the thaumaturgic powers of saints and the increasing association between holy men and the empire. The *Life of Martha* reflects a different, but possibly complementary, development in hagiography: the emergence of posthumous miracle collections which, with the important exception of the *Miracles of St Demetrius*, do not describe extravagant miracles performed for the benefit of large groups of people but instead include only small-scale miracles (almost always healing miracles) which help only one or two people. In these collections, the onus for performing the miracle tends to be shifted away from the saint and onto the supplicant; a miracle will only take place, usually, if the supplicant fulfils various preconditions, be they practical or spiritual. This narrower focus, as well as this change of emphasis, was certainly suitable for a time when the more ambitious claims of many living holy men's hagiographers had been called into question by plague, earthquakes, and conquest. The thesis ends with a brief conclusion which analyses the implications of my findings for scholarly understandings of the social position of the holy man, of Christian attitudes to theodicy, and of the state of the Byzantine empire in the sixth and seventh centuries.

My thesis thus takes hagiography seriously as a genre that is both literary and deeply historically embedded. It is committed to exploring new ways of writing history from hagiography. It presents the first detailed study of the unusually extensive evidence relating to an important late antique holy man, Symeon the Younger. It examines not only the *Life of Symeon,* a text which has received limited scholarly attention, but also the stylite's sermon collection and the *Life of Martha,* both of which have been almost totally neglected. It provides the first attempt to analyse these texts together to trace the development of the cult from the holy man's lifetime into the seventh century as it was renegotiated and reinterpreted by his disciples after his death in 592. It argues that this process reflected wider changes in approaches to the holiness in the late sixth and seventh centuries, as a result both of long-

term religious developments and of the particular circumstances of this momentous period in eastern Roman history. It thus seeks to contribute to a diachronic understanding of the holy in late antiquity: to show how holiness evolved with the society that conceived it.

The Context of Cult: Northern Syria in the Sixth Century

Northern Syria contained some of the greatest cities of the Roman empire. Most notably, Antioch, situated on the Orontes River less than 20 kilometres from the Mediterranean, played a prominent role in the political, cultural, and economic life of the region. Late antique Antioch has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention. Most studies, however, have focused on the fourth century, as this period is richly attested through the voluminous works of two of the most famous late antique Antiochenes: the pagan orator Libanius and the Christian bishop John Chrysostom. Various recent works have drawn upon these sources to explore, in particular, Antiochene religious culture and identities.[1] In contrast, later periods of Antiochene history have been relatively neglected, largely due to the perception that there is a lack of evidence relating to them.[2] Yet sixth-century Antioch, at least, is hardly bereft of interesting source material. The renowned Miaphysite leader Severus, patriarch of Antioch from 512 to 518, does not fall short of Libanius and Chrysostom in terms of his historical significance—or in his literary prolificacy. Admittedly, Severus was only based in Antioch for a brief period, and many of his extant works are not focused on the city, but several of his letters, as well as his extensive Cathedral Homilies, do deal with Antioch, and remain, despite a few important studies,[3] underexploited by historians. Two key sixth-century historiographical sources were also produced in Antioch, and have a strongly local focus: the *Chronicle* of John Malalas,[4] and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius Scholasticus.[5] Major events in Antioch were also recorded by historians across the empire, including Procopius, Zachariah of Mytilene and

[1] See e.g. Maxwell 2006, Soler 2006, Sandwell 2007, Cribiore 2007, and Shephardson 2014.
[2] See e.g. Shephardson 2014, 252; Liebeschuetz 1972, 259.
[3] Esp. Alpi 2009; see also Allen 1996, Allen and Hayward 2004.
[4] On which see esp. the articles collected in Croke, Jeffreys and Scott 1990. See also Liebeschuetz 2004.
[5] See above all Allen 1981 and Whitby 2000, with Caires 1982 and Whitby 1998.

John of Ephesus. Other insights into Antiochene society in this period come from a diverse range of sources associated with the city, from the homilies and letters of its other patriarchs[6] to the *Life of Symeon the Younger* itself. There are undoubtedly gaps in the extant source material: as discussed below, archaeological evidence is particularly lacking. The written sources illuminate some events and themes, such as the activities of the city's bishops, much more clearly than others. The countryside surrounding Antioch—including the area where Symeon the Younger's monastery was situated—is far less well served by the evidence than the city itself. Nonetheless, enough survives to enable a discussion of many key aspects of the region's history. This chapter will consider three key, contested themes in the sixth-century history of the city and its environs: first, natural and military disasters and their significance; second, social and economic tensions; and third, religious and cultural relations. All these themes will be contextualised, as far as possible, in terms of broader debates about the sixth-century eastern empire. Yet the focus throughout will be on a detailed analysis of the evidence from northern Syria itself, as it is unsafe to generalise from material from other regions and to assume that patterns were consistent across the Byzantine east.[7]

Disasters in Antioch: A City in Decline?

The traditional narrative of Antioch's fate in the sixth century is one of decline. Literary sources relate that the city was smitten by a procession of devastating disasters including fire in 525, earthquakes in 526 and 528, a sack by the Persians in 540, the plague from 542 (with repeated recurrences later in the century), and further earthquakes in the 550s, 577 and 588. Much modern scholarship, heavily reliant on these texts, has continued this picture of

[6] For full references to the surviving works/fragments of the sixth-century Antiochene patriarchs, see *CPG*, III, 6902-16 (pp.306-9) for Ephraim, 6944-69 (pp.313-9) for Anastasius, and 7384-94, pp.383-5 (for Gregory).

[7] For the need to recognise that even nearby settlements could experience very different patterns of economic development, see e.g. Horden and Purcell 2000, 53; Liebeschuetz 2001a, 5; Stathakopoulos 2007, 117; and for a slightly later period, Haldon 2012, 121.

crisis: thus Downey wrote that the Persian sack in 540 'brought the real greatness of Antioch to a close.'[8] Even historians who have argued that near eastern cities remained prosperous throughout the sixth century have often viewed Antioch as an exception.[9] Recently, however, attempts have been made to revise the common picture of sixth-century Antioch, on the grounds that archaeology suggests that the city remained prosperous well into the seventh century.[10] This chapter will address the question of decline directly, first looking at the picture of crisis painted in the literary sources, before comparing this to the impression gained from the archaeological evidence from the city and the nearby countryside. It will assess whether this—limited and contested—archaeological material does pose a serious challenge to the claims made by contemporary authors about the effects of disasters.

The Literary Evidence

Symeon the Younger's birth, in 521/2, coincided, approximately, with the beginning of Antioch's age of insecurity. Although the previous decade had seen political and ecclesiastical instability, with a rapid turnover of patriarchs of different Christological opinions, it was only in the 520s that serious disaster struck.[11] In 525, during the patriarchate of the Palestinian Chalcedonian Euphrasius, a severe fire broke out in the city, outbreaks of which seem to have recurred for months.[12] The fire is presented in the sources as damaging in itself but also as God's warning of the worse crises that were to come: thus John Malalas (whose account of the fire underlies most later descriptions) reports 'this conflagration

[8] Downey 1961, 527. For his narrative of the sixth century disasters, see ibid., 503-574.
[9] Foss 1997, 259; Wickham 2005, 623; Walmsley 2007a, 37; Walmsley 2007b, 334-5.
[10] See esp. Magness 2003, 206-9. Cf. also Mayer and Allen 2012, 11-3.
[11] The following narrative focuses only on the events which make most impression in the sources; for a more detailed account, see Downey as cited in p.15 n8.
[12] See Pseudo-Dionysius (II, p.20); Theophanes, AM 6018 (p.172); Malalas 17.14 (p.344). The extant Greek manuscript of Malalas does not provide a clear date for the fire, but two witnesses probably drawing on the lost original of Malalas do: Pseudo-Dionysius dates it to the year 837 (i.e. 525/6) and Theophanes to AM 6018, October of the 4th indiction (i.e. 525), a date which is generally accepted: see Downey 1961, 520 n.75, though note that 'the earthquake **preceded** the fire' seems to be a mistake (the earthquake followed the fire). These texts describe a distinct fire whereas Evagrius Scholasticus states that 'frequent and terrible conflagrations occurred at Antioch, as if leading in the most frightful tremors that took place there and providing a prelude to the sufferings': Evagrius Scholasticus 4.5 (p.155, trans. p.203).

foretold God's coming displeasure.…many houses were burned and many lives lost and no one could discover the source of the fire.'[13] 'God's displeasure' manifested itself in full in the next year, 526, in the form of a devastating earthquake.[14] Malalas again provides a vivid description of the destruction caused by the quake:

> The surface of the earth boiled *and blazed, setting fire to everything,* and foundations of buildings were struck by thunderbolts thrown up by the earthquakes and were burned to ashes by fire, so that even those who fled were met by flames, *like those who remained in their houses*….As a result *Christ-loving* Antioch became desolate…for nothing remained apart from some buildings beside the mountain. No holy chapel nor monastery nor any other holy place remained which had not been torn apart.[15]

The chronicler continues to describe the human effects of the disasters, stating that the victims included many visitors who had come to the city for the feast of the Ascension, as well as the patriarch, Euphrasius. Although he notes that God miraculously saved from death some of those who had been buried in the earthquake, including pregnant women and young children, he claims that the death toll was extremely high: 250 000 victims.[16]

As Malalas continues to report, the emperors dedicated considerable resources to the reconstruction of Antioch after this crisis. But disaster soon struck again, in 528, when the city was hit by another severe earthquake.[17] Although the death toll was apparently much lower than in 526 (only 5000 lives), the physical damage to the city was considerable: 'the buildings that had been reconstructed after the former shocks collapsed, as did the walls and some of the churches.'[18] This second earthquake—presumably because it followed so soon on the heels of the stronger disaster, and impeded the repair efforts—also appears to have

[13] Malalas 17.14 (p.344, trans. p.236).
[14] On the earthquake, see Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle*, sa.525-6 (p.41); Malalas 17.16 (pp.346-50); Evagrius Scholasticus 4.5 (pp.155-6); Pseudo-Dionysius (II, pp.47-52); Pseudo-Zachariah (II, p.76); Theophanes, AM 6018-9 (pp.172-3).
[15] Malalas 17.16 (pp.346-7, trans. pp.238-9) [italics indicate the parts of the text attested only indirectly].
[16] According to the *Life of Symeon*, 7 (p.8), these victims included the saint's father, John.
[17] On this earthquake, see Malalas 18.27 (pp.269-70), Evagrius Scholasticus 4.6 (p.156); Pseudo-Dionysius (II, pp.72-4); Theophanes AM 6021 (pp.177-8).
[18] Malalas 18.27 (pp.369-70, trans. pp.256-7).

had a significant ideological and emotional impact,[19] as it prompted the emperor to rename the city Theoupolis, city of God, presumably as an appeal to God to restore his favour to the city.[20] Numismatic as well as literary evidence attests that the city's new name was used widely, if not exclusively.[21]

These disasters are mentioned not only by Antiochene authors, but by writers from across the empire, which seems to suggest their unusual severity and exceptional ideological impact. Procopius refers to an 'exceedingly violent earthquake' in the city during the reign of Justin I.[22] Marcellinus *comes* includes the earthquake of 526 in his Latin chronicle of the period, even though his predominant focus is on Constantinople and the Balkans.[23] So too Theodore of Petra, in his *Life of Theodosius,* describes his hero, a prominent Palestinian holy man, foreseeing God's anger coming to the east; he continues to recount that 'after six or seven days, the news was brought that the great metropolis of the Antiochenes, as a result of a dreadful earthquake, had been flattened on the very day when the great Theodosius had predicted the fall, as the prophet Jeremiah had seen in advance the capture of Jerusalem.'[24] And the bureaucrat John Lydus, based in Constantinople, emphasises the deleterious effects of the disasters in Antioch on the resources of the praetorian prefecture:

> 'There was need of money, and without it none of the imperative tasks could be done.' In order, however, that nothing of whatever was necessary for overturning the prosperity might be neglected, tremors, springing and splitting the earth from its

[19] See Meier 2003, 345-357, arguing that conventional coping strategies in times of natural disaster withstood the 526 earthquake, but were severely challenged in 528.
[20] Malalas 18.29 (p.371); Evagrius Scholasticus 4.6 (p.156). One manuscript of Malalas claims that the decision to change the city's name was made at the order 'of holy Symeon the miracle-worker' i.e. Symeon the Younger. But the original manuscript seems to have read only 'Symeon': 'holy' and 'miracle-worker' were added later, and the link to Symeon the Younger seems unlikely, given that it is not attested elsewhere, and that Symeon was still a young child in the 520s. See Bury 1897, 229.
[21] On the coins see e.g. Metcalf 2000, 110-1; Salamon 1993, 15-20. Salamon argues that some coins seem to refer to the city as 'Christoupolis' and possibly 'Kurioupolis' and 'Huioupolis', and connects this to the 'neo-Chalcedonian' theological programme of the patriarch Ephraim.
[22] Procopius, *Wars,* II.xiv.6 (I, p.214, trans I, p.383).
[23] Marcellinus (p.41) (on his focus on the west see Croke 1995, xx-xxi)
[24] μετὰ γὰρ ἕξ ἢ ἑπτὰ τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἡμέρας καταμηνύεται ὡς ἡ μεγάλη τῶν Ἀντιοχέων μητρόπολις διά τινος φοβερωτάτου σεισμοῦ κατ᾽ἐκείνην ἐμπεπτώκει τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐν ᾗ τὴν ἔμπτωσιν ταύτης ὁ μέγας οὗτος προεφήτευσε Θεοδόσιος, ὥσπερ ὁ προφήτης Ἱερεμίας τὴν τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἅλωσιν: Theodore of Petra, *Life of Theodosius* (p.87).

> roots, crushed Seleucus' Antioch, having buried the city by the mountain situated above it, so that no distinction between mountain and city was left to the site, but the whole thing was glen and rocks, which erstwhile used to shade the Orontes as it flowed past the city. The prefecture, therefore, had to rain down over it an immense amount of gold meanwhile for the removal of the mounds which had been heaped up as a result of the collapse and had swollen up to a high rough terrain, for it was not safe to neglect the capital of the Syrians after it had been cast to the ground.[25]

This was not the end of the troubles which Antioch caused to the public finances. Lydus moves on directly to recount the next major disaster to strike the city, the Persian sack of 540:

> As the city, however, was recovering, just as if from nether gloom, with much toil, abundance of funds, and collaboration of trades, after Justin had reached his end, Chosroes the evil genius with a vast army invaded the Syrias through Arabia, and, when he had captured by war the recently collapsed city because it had appeared to him easily subdued as it was unfortified, he burned it down, after working incalculable massacre, and indiscriminately looted the statues with which the city was embellished, including marble tablets, carved stones, and paintings, and drove away all Syria to the Persians. There was no farmer nor contributor any longer for the public treasury, and yet, whereas revenue was not being brought in to the empire, the prefect was obliged to support the civil servant and to furnish the government with all its customary expenses at a time not only when he was being deprived of the taxes from the Syrians, which even alone used to turn the scale for the authorities, but, besides, was also being hard pressed to supply added outlays too great to be counted both for the captured cities and for the contributors, if perhaps any chanced to have escaped the Persians' bondage and to be wandering about in the deserted ruins of sites that used to be admired long ago.[26]

Lydus may, perhaps, have exaggerated the financial effects of these disasters in Antioch as part of his broader lament for the decline of the praetorian prefecture.[27] Nonetheless, it is clear that Khusro's sack of the city in 540 was widely perceived as a major catastrophe.[28] The best-known account of the disaster is provided by Procopius in his *History of the Wars.* He narrates the events leading up to and during the sack in some detail, culminating with his famous reflection:

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[25] Lydus, *De Magistratibus,* 3.54 (ed. and trans. pp.216-7).
[26] ibid.
[27] On Lydus see Maas 1992.
[28] For other accounts of the sack see Marcellinus (p.48); Malalas 18.87 (p.405); Pseudo-Dionysius (II, p.69); Evagrius Scholasticus 4.25 (p.172) (account based on Procopius); Pseudo-Zachariah (II, p.190) (unfortunately his full account of the invasion is lost); *Life of Symeon,* 57-64 (pp.50-6). On the event's ideological significance, see esp. Meier 2003, 313-8.

> But I become dizzy as I write of such a great calamity and transmit it to future times, and I am unable to understand why indeed it should be the will of God to exalt on high the fortunes of a man or of a place, and then to cast them down and destroy them for no cause which appears to us. For it is wrong to say that with Him all things are not always done with reason, though he then endured to see Antioch brought down to the ground at the hands of a most unholy man, a city whose beauty and grandeur in every respect could not even so be utterly concealed.[29]

Other authors, in contrast, were quick to identify the cause of the disaster. Thus the Miaphysite chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah of Mytilene presented the city's sack as God's punishment for Ephraim and other Chalcedonian bishops' rejection of Severus of Antioch and acceptance of the council of 451,[30] while, as we shall see, Symeon the Younger's hagiographer blamed it on paganism among the Antiochene population.[31] This highlights one reason why disasters could prove ideologically destabilising: severe calamities demanded an explanation, opening the way for rival political, religious and other groups to interpret the crises to suit their particular purposes, and, perhaps, to subvert dominant ideologies.[32]

The year after the Persian army had plundered Antioch, plague broke out in the eastern empire. In the next year, 542, it reached the much-afflicted Syrian city.[33] The so-called 'Justinianic plague' was described by numerous contemporaries, including Procopius and John of Ephesus,[34] but the author to give most information about its appearance in Antioch is the local church historian, Evagrius Scholasticus.[35] Evagrius—who moves straight from his account of the Persian invasion to describing the plague, emphasising their chronological proximity—draws his readers' attention to a particularly damaging feature of the plague: its repeated recurrences throughout the later sixth century. In contrast to the largely

[29] Procopius, *Wars*, II.x.4-5 (I, pp.193-4, trans. I, pp.343-5).
[30] Pseudo-Zachariah (II, p.190).
[31] See below pp.210-11.
[32] On the ideological ramifications of disasters in this period see esp. Meier 2003, passim: he focuses particularly on the growth of *Kaiserkritik* but addresses many aspects of the broader topic.
[33] On the sixth-century plague, see esp. the essays collected in Little 2007b.
[34] Procopius, *Wars*, 2.22 (I, pp.249-56); John of Ephesus, as preserved in Pseudo-Dionysius (pp.79-109).
[35] Evagrius Scholasticus, 4.29 (pp.177-9). See also Allen 1981, 193-4.

depersonalised narrative of the earlier Antiochene chronicler Malalas, Evagrius explicitly states that he has 'decided to interweave my own affairs also into the narrative.'[36] Thus he not only gives a general account of the development of the plague, but also describes how subsequent outbreaks had affected his own life, from his childhood to the present day:

> At the outset of this great misfortune I was affected by what are called buboes while I was still attending the elementary teacher, but in the various subsequent visitations of this great misfortune I lost many of my offspring and my wife and other relatives, and numerous servants and estate dwellers, as if the indictional cycles divided out the misfortunes for me. Thus as I write this, while in the 58th year of my life, not more than two years previously while for the fourth time now the misfortune struck Antioch, when the fourth cycle from its outset had elapsed, I lost a daughter and the son she had produced, quite apart from the earlier losses.[37]

His moving account is suggestive of the difficulties of recovering from a calamity which kept recurring. Although there is no reason to think that Antioch was affected by the plague more severely than other major urban centres, it does seem possible that its effects were felt particularly keenly in the context of the previous disasters to strike the city.

Antioch's difficulties persisted in the later sixth century. As well as the repeated outbreaks of plague, earthquakes and invasions continued to pose a threat. The 550s saw several serious earthquakes in Constantinople and in the east: Antioch was affected, although it does not seem to have been among the worst-hit cities.[38] In 573 a Persian army under the command of the general Adarmaanes approached, but did not take Antioch; John of Epiphania reports, however, that the attackers 'destroyed' the city's suburbs.[39] In 577, according to Evagrius, an earthquake caused significant damage in Antioch and total

[36] Evagrius Scholasticus, 4.29 (p.178, trans. p.231).
[37] ibid.
[38] Malalas 18.112 (pp.413-4), 18.118 (p.416), 18.124 (p.419). Some of these earthquakes seem to be mentioned in the *Life of Symeon*, 78 (pp.66-8), 104-7 (pp.81-8): see below pp.188-90.
[39] John of Epiphania (p.275); he is followed by Theophylact Simocatta, III.10.8 (p.131); see also Theophanes, AM 6066 (p.247). Evagrius's account of this incident reports that the Persian army was repulsed unexpectedly from the city; he does not refer specifically to damage to the Antiochene suburbs but does describe the army's general pillaging of the region: Evagrius Scholasticus, 5.9 (p.206).

devastation in its suburb of Daphne.[40] In 588, a still more severe earthquake hit the city, apparently during the historian's wedding festivities:

> In the 637th year of the Era of Theopolis, in the 61st year after the previous earthquakes, when I was celebrating marriage with a young maiden on the last day of the month of Hyperberetaeus, when the city was conducting a festival and holding a public celebration of the procession and bridal ceremonies, at about the third hour of the evening, a convulsion and quake struck and levelled the entire city. Most buildings fell down when their very foundations were churned up...and an unquantifiable multitude was caught: as certain people conjectured, inferring from the bread supply, this affliction consumed about 60 000.[41]

Evagrius's claim that it had been 61 years since the last earthquake in Antioch must be a reference to the disasters of the 520s, implying that the 588 earthquake was much the most serious quake to hit the city since then. The historian notes that God's mercy was manifested in the crisis, since the patriarch Gregory was saved miraculously from death, and since there were no serious fires. Nonetheless, his description suggests that the earthquake dealt another severe blow to the city.

Evagrius's *History* ends in 592, the year of the deaths of both Symeon the Younger and Gregory of Antioch. No later historical work from Antioch survives to provide a detailed picture of subsequent events in the city. In the seventh century, of course, like the rest of the Byzantine east, Antioch experienced conquest by both Persian and Islamic armies. But it was the natural and military disasters of the sixth century that distinguished its fate in the eyes of contemporaries—as well as in those of many modern scholars. The literary sources undoubtedly suggest that these disasters were of great significance in many areas: not only did they cause many deaths and considerable physical damage, but they also had financial repercussions, even at an imperial level, as well as provoking strong emotional responses.

[40] Evagrius Scholasticus, 5.17 (p.212).
[41] ibid. 6.8 (pp.227-8, trans. pp.298-300; quotation at p.227, trans. pp.298-9).

The Archaeological Evidence

The question remains: do these literary descriptions provide a realistic picture of the impact of the disasters? It has been suggested that 'catastrophes' in fact had only limited effects, at least in economic terms.[42] When literary sources imply decline, archaeological evidence may suggest continuity or even prosperity. The economic situation of the sixth-century eastern Roman empire has provoked considerable scholarly debate, and even now few definite conclusions have been reached. The debate has centred largely on the question of whether the economy remained, in general, prosperous into at least the first decades of the seventh century, or whether it entered a period of 'decline' from the mid-sixth century onwards.[43] It has become increasingly clear that it is dangerous to generalise about the Byzantine economy as a whole: the empire was very diverse, and even nearby settlements could experience divergent patterns of development.[44] It is thus necessary for the present purpose to focus closely on the particular area of interest, northern Syria, and to look first at its cities, above all Antioch, and then at the countryside. The clear divide sometimes drawn between town and countryside has been problematized in recent scholarship.[45] It is certainly true that the distinction between city and village in sixth-century Syria is not always simple: some settlements, while lacking the official status of *polis*, had many of the characteristics of cities, such as Androna (modern al-Andarin), described as a *kome* yet large in size and possessing walls and public buildings.[46] In addition, the economies of city and countryside seem to have been closely linked, so it would be counterproductive to treat them entirely in isolation.[47] Nonetheless, by considering cities and countryside separately it is

[42] Horden and Purcell 2000, 305-8; Wickham 2005, 13.
[43] For the former position see e.g. Whittow 1990; Magness 2003. For the latter, see e.g. Kennedy 1985a; Liebeschuetz 2001a, esp. 410.
[44] See above p.22 n7.
[45] See in particular Horden and Purcell 2000, 90-100. Cf. also on the terminology Saradi 2006, 96-100.
[46] M. Mango 2002a, 307.
[47] Foss 1995, 221; Liebeschuetz 2001a, 7-8, 295.

possible to focus more closely on the distinctive features of each. The source material relating to each is different, but, as we shall see, in both cases problematic.

The cities of northern Syria, and in particular Antioch, are paid much more attention in the literary sources than is the local countryside. In contrast, archaeological evidence for the cities is generally in short supply, which makes it particularly difficult to assess whether the traditional picture of decline derived from the literary sources is accurate. It is certainly true that some of the arguments that Antioch was in sharp decline in the sixth century have relied upon problematic or unconvincing evidence. The Byzantine authors were not concerned with providing a picture of the long term impact of disasters on the economy. Kennedy has attempted to use the (much later) Arabic sources for the Islamic conquests of the near east to show sixth-century crisis: he claims that the Syrian cities fell to the invaders because they did not attempt to repel them, as a result of their earlier decline.[48] Yet it has been shown repeatedly that the Arabic sources for the Islamic conquests are far from reliable, and the claim that the cities did not attempt to withstand the invaders seems likely to reflect propaganda rather than reality. Kennedy also uses archaeological evidence to support his point, but the archaeology from Antioch is extremely difficult to interpret. The material is limited, since most of the ancient city either lies under modern Antakya or is buried under silt deposits.[49] Some excavation has occurred, in areas including the 'island' between two branches of the river Orontes where the hippodrome and stadium were located, and the main street of the ancient city.[50] The excavators do not, however, provide enough precise evidence about coin and pottery finds to make many of the provisional datings in their reports secure.[51] It sometimes appears that signs of destruction are associated with particular

[48] Kennedy 1985a, 147 ff.
[49] Sandwell and Huskinson 2004, 2. See, however, Casana's comments in the same volume: he notes that many sections of the ancient city are under fields, not silt, and could potentially be excavated (Casana 2004, 117).
[50] The excavation reports are published by Princeton: Elderkin et al. 1934-72.
[51] Ward-Perkins 1996, 150; Magness 2003, 206.

historical events on the basis of what one might expect from the literary sources, rather than from any solid evidence.[52] The excavators also assume that all the parts of the former city apparently left outside Justinian's new city walls (including the Orontes 'island', see Figure 5) were abandoned in the sixth century,[53] yet it is not certain that these areas were no longer inhabited just because they were now outside the walls. Procopius asserts, and archaeological evidence seems to confirm, that rebuilding work was carried out after the disasters of Justinian's reign: the city did not become derelict, at least initially.[54] We must, therefore, be careful before suggesting that the archaeology clearly supports a picture of sixth-century decline.

Nonetheless, Magness's argument that Antioch continued to prosper throughout the sixth century is not entirely convincing. Although she acknowledges that fewer late-sixth century coins were found in the excavations than early-sixth century coins, she claims that the existence of reasonable numbers of late-sixth century coins refutes Kennedy's argument that Antioch saw a severe economic downturn before Islam.[55] Yet the reduction in the frequencies of coins found across the sixth century (Figures 6 and 7) may suggest economic decline.[56] The figures are perhaps surprising, as it is difficult to explain the extremely high peak in Justin I's coins, especially as none of the coins were found in hoards (which could have resulted in skewed frequencies).[57] Nonetheless, there is a clear decrease by the end of the century in comparison with its start, and a steady decline from the reign of Justin II onwards, especially evident in Figure 7, adjusted for reign length. Most of the coins found

[52] See e.g. Stilwell in Elderkin et al. 1934-72, III, 9.
[53] Fisher in Elderkin et al. 1934-72, I, 6, 19, 23 n.5.
[54] Procopius, *On Buildings*, 2.10.2-25 (pp.76-80); Foss 1997, 193.
[55] Magness 2003, 209.
[56] Based on the data of Elderkin et al. 1934-72, IV.2, 182. My graphs are only approximate, as they do not include the 14 joint coins of Justin and Justinian, nor the numerous coins which could not be securely identified.
[57] ibid. vii.

at Antioch were bronze,[58] and it has been suggested that stray finds of bronze/copper coins are a significant indicator of economic vitality;[59] the decline in such finds may therefore be significant. The data are not conclusive, but suggest the possibility of a downturn in the later sixth century, and certainly should not be used as evidence of continued prosperity. Moreover, there is some evidence for the abandonment of some buildings in the course of the sixth century.[60] For example, a rectangular building (of unknown function) in the suburbs of Daphne appears to have been occupied from the third to the sixth century (and again, as a church, from the tenth century onwards), judging by the coins found on the site. Part of the walls of the building had been burnt, as had a coin from the reign of Maurice, dated to 583.[61] It thus seems possible that it saw violent damage in the late sixth century, resulting in its abandonment—though one example proves little, since the fire could have been unrelated to the wider events affecting Antioch. A recent survey on a road to the north of modern Antakya found a series of houses from the fifth or sixth century which may have been destroyed in a (perhaps earthquake-triggered) landslide, as they contain numerous skeletons under the destroyed roof. The area was never rebuilt, which may reflect sixth-century decline.[62] Even if the buildings left outside Justinian's new walls were not entirely abandoned, the decision to exclude large areas of the old city from the walls suggests that Antioch did not have the resources to defend all its residents. There is also no active evidence of building, including church building,[63] after the death of Justinian in 565, though an argument *ex silentio* seems particularly risky given the limited amount of excavation which has taken place. It has been suggested that Antioch's major port, the nearby Seleucia

[58] ibid.
[59] Whittow 2001, 139.
[60] For a general overview, see Foss 1997, 193-4, although not all the dates he cites are definite.
[61] Downey in Elderkin et al. 1934-72, I, 107-8.
[62] Casana 2004, 120.
[63] As noted in the detailed study of the archaeological and literary evidence for churches in Antioch by Mayer and Allen 2012, 163.

in Pieria, was largely abandoned in the sixth century (although this argument too is based primarily on the absence of evidence), which, if true, would be a striking indication of economic change and retraction in the area.[64] Overall, although evidence is far from abundant, it does seem to suggest a reduction in prosperity in the second half of the sixth century. At the least, there is no proof that the city was flourishing at the time of the Islamic conquests.

How did Antioch compare to other Syrian cities? The closest city for which reasonable evidence survives is Apamea, although here too the picture is complex. The literary sources suggest that the Persian sack of 573 was the key event in sixth-century Apamean history.[65] Unfortunately, the difficulty of dating archaeological evidence again hinders an assessment of the impact of the Persian victory. Foss has analysed the development of a series of houses in Apamea clearly occupied by wealthy nobles. One of the houses, the 'Console House', seems to have remained in use into the seventh century. The fates of the other houses, however, are less clear. The 'House of the Bilobe Columns' ceased to be occupied and the 'Deer House' and the 'Trilobe Columns House' saw fire damage at some point after the early sixth century. Foss suggests a connection to the Persian attack of 573, which is plausible, but not provable.[66] If Apamea was in difficulty in the later sixth century, it seems to have shared this only with Antioch. Further south—whether only by tens of kilometres, as at Hama/Epiphania, or at the far southern extent of Syria, in Bostra—there is active evidence of building and prosperity in the second half of the sixth century.[67] These comparisons cannot, however, shed light on the situation in Antioch, since invasion and natural disaster affected them largely separately. To discover more about the fate of Antioch,

[64] Kennedy 1985a, 154-5.
[65] See John of Epiphania (p.275); Evagrius Scholasticus, 5.10 (pp.206-7); John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.6 (pp.292-3).
[66] Foss 1997, 222-3.
[67] ibid. 230-45.

it is necessary to turn to another environment whose fate was closely bound up with that of its leading city: the north Syrian countryside.

The countryside of northern Syria is extensive and diverse; it is also unevenly furnished with archaeological evidence. Many of the most productive agricultural areas, such as the Orontes valley in the immediate vicinity of Antioch, have produced little for the archaeologist, as fertile lands are inevitably most likely to see present day occupation. It is the 'marginal' areas—mountains, deserts—where the best evidence has survived for the study of the late Roman rural economy.[68] In particular, attention has largely focused on the impressively well preserved ruins of the villages of the Limestone Massif, three ranges of mountains to the east of Antioch. There were around 700 villages on the Massif, of varying sizes, typically composed of similar limestone, two-storey, decorated houses.[69] Although only three houses in one village, Dehes, have been excavated to date,[70] surveys have been carried out in many of the other villages. As a result, we have far more evidence for the Limestone Massif than for any other large rural area in Syria, and it will consequently form the basis of the subsequent discussion of the countryside. It is important to remember, however, that the Massif may not be representative of the whole region, and should consequently be compared with other settlements for which there is some, if limited, data.

Georges Tchalenko, in his three-volume work of the 1950s, made the first systematic attempt to understand the economy and society of the Massif.[71] He presented a picture of a prosperous peasantry sustained by an olive monoculture: trade in olive oil was the basis of their existence. No excavations had been carried out on the Massif when Tchalenko was writing, and the subsequent excavations at Dehes showed that the idea of an olive

[68] Sarris 2006, 117.
[69] Wickham 2005, 443.
[70] Sodini et al. 1980.
[71] Tchalenko 1953-8.

monoculture was not tenable. In fact, the villagers appear to have engaged in a variety of economic activities, including animal husbandry: troughs and various animal bones were found throughout the villages.[72] Given, however, the large number of oil presses in the area (Decker estimates, based on Tate's figure of 249 presses from 45 surveyed villages, that the whole massif would have contained at least 3850),[73] it remains a probability that the villages traded their surplus oil, ensuring that their economy was to some extent reliant on the wider market.[74]

Throughout much of their history this economic arrangement seems to have worked very well for the villages of the Massif: one of their most striking features is their inhabitants' apparent prosperity. Not only are the houses well-built and sometimes spacious, but many of them also have carved adornments including elaborate column capitals. Decker argues that even the smaller houses on the Massif would have been worth at least 200 solidi, given that the church at Khirbet Hassan, similar in many respects to the middling sized houses of the Massif, cost 580 solidi.[75] This evidence of significant prosperity has led to much debate on the status of the residents of the villages.[76] The question of relevance here, however, is how long this prosperity continued. As in the case of Antioch, much debate on the Limestone Massif has focused on whether the villages remained prosperous until at least the seventh-century Persian conquests, or whether their economy began to falter in the sixth century. Many arguments have rested on the dating of the village buildings. Georges Tate, who has done the most extensive work on the dating of the houses, argued that new construction almost came to a halt in the sixth century. He used the buildings dated by epigraphy to work out which building techniques and decorative styles were in use at

[72] Sodini et al. 1980, 292-4.
[73] Decker 2009, 172.
[74] Wickham 2005, 445-6.
[75] Decker 2009, 42.
[76] See below pp.48-9.

different times, then dated the (far more numerous) buildings not dated by epigraphy by matching their construction techniques and styles to this scheme. Based on this system, he argued that house-building peaked in the late fifth century, beginning to decline from c.480; that by 550 it had already sunk to the level of the early fourth century; and after 550 it had all but stopped. Although inscriptions show that building work continued in the second half of the sixth century, the considerable majority refer either to churches or to extensions to houses, not to new houses, suggesting that settlement growth had come to a halt by this period.[77] No inscriptions were found from the seventh century.[78] Pottery and numismatic finds in the excavations at Dehes had revealed, however, that settlement continued in the Massif until the ninth or tenth centuries; thus Tate sees demographic 'stagnation' rather than 'decline' in the late sixth century.[79] Tate's dating system is not completely exact, being based on the approximate date ranges of different styles, but the reduction of epigraphic evidence in the later sixth century and its complete absence in the seventh seems significant, implying a change from the previous pattern of rapid expansion.

Magness, however, has questioned Tate's (and Kennedy's) picture of stagnation in the Massif. Her arguments, which have recently been accepted by Gideon Avni,[80] are based on the excavation of three houses at Dehes; she states that the excavators' preconceived notions about decline in the sixth century caused them to misattribute the growth period at Dehes to earlier centuries when in reality it was the late sixth and seventh centuries that saw the most expansion in the settlement. She claims that all three buildings excavated at Dehes were in fact built in the late sixth or seventh century.[81] Her arguments are largely based on the pottery evidence; whereas previous interpreters had viewed the accumulation of seventh-

[77] There are only three exceptions, two of which are from Deir Semaan, considered exceptional by Tate due to its status as the pilgrimage base for the site of Symeon the Elder's monastery at Qalaat Semaan.
[78] Tate 1992, 85-179.
[79] ibid. 184.
[80] Avni 2014, 295-6.
[81] Magness 2003, 196-206.

century and later pottery on the ground floor of the houses as a sign of decline, as the village's inhabitants had ceased to take good care of their property, she suggests that in fact it shows that the houses were not inhabited, or constructed, before the sixth/seventh centuries. She dismisses the absence of epigraphy after 610 as 'meaningless', on the grounds that Dehes was clearly inhabited for several centuries more.[82] Her arguments are, however, problematic. First, it is dangerous to base conclusions about the development of the whole region on the basis of the excavation of only three houses. Second, she seems too quick to dismiss the epigraphic evidence from the surveys of the Massif. While it may not provide much evidence about population, it is suggestive of building patterns. The numerous inscriptions from the fifth century in particular show clearly that building cannot in the Massif as a whole have started only in the late sixth or seventh centuries. In addition, the decline in inscriptions from the mid-sixth century does imply a fall in house building. While it is true that a reduction in inscriptions may sometimes reflect a loss of the 'epigraphic habit' rather than a fall in building,[83] this does not seem to be the case here, given that inscriptions continued to be produced for new churches and for extensions to houses.[84] There therefore does appear to be some form of economic contraction—or at least stagnation—in the Limestone Massif in the late sixth century. It is difficult to identify the precise causes of this. Trombley has argued that economic change in the Massif can clearly be linked to the Persian invasions of the province rather than to the plague on the basis that there is a lull in inscriptions starting not in 542 (the year of the plague outbreak) but in 539 (a year before the Persian sack of Antioch).[85] Yet the corpus of inscriptions is not large enough to show that the absence of surviving inscriptions from the two years between invasion and plague is significant. It is possible that any combination of the troubles facing

[82] ibid. 206.
[83] The concept of the epigraphic habit was developed in Macmullen 1982.
[84] Kennedy 2007, 90.
[85] Trombley 1997, 176 n.85.

sixth century Syria—plague, war and earthquake—could have affected the Massif directly; or that the disasters had an indirect impact, in that crisis in Antioch had a knock-on effect on the economy of the Massif as their main trading link was weakened.[86]

We should not, however, overstate the case for economic decline in the Limestone Massif in the second half of the sixth century. It certainly does not appear to have become totally impoverished, as suggested not only by the continuation of church building (four churches are dated epigraphically to the period from 550 to 610, and, Tate suggests, nine more by decorative style)[87] but by the impressive silver treasure from the apparently average village of Kaper Koraon. Fifty-five silver objects dedicated to the church at Kaper Koraon have been found, most of which date from the period 540 to 640. Although they weighed considerably less than similar objects found elsewhere, and therefore must have been less expensive, they still suggest a striking degree of rural wealth.[88] It is not, however, entirely certain what conclusions should be drawn from wealth devoted to churches, either in the form of building or of expensive gifts. First, it is not clear what proportion of the population contributed to such endowments, and thus how far wealth was diffused in the society.[89] Second, it seems possible that gifts to the Church would continue, or even increase, in times of difficulty, as a need was felt to propitiate God[90]—hence the decision in the sixth century to give Antioch the new name of Theoupolis.

Again, therefore, the picture that emerges of the economy of the Limestone Massif in this period is complex. It appears that the prosperous villages encountered some form of economic difficulty from the middle of the sixth century, resulting in a reduction in new building although not in severe impoverishment or depopulation. This lapse may well be

[86] Foss 1997, 204.
[87] Tate 1992, 336-7.
[88] M. Mango 1986, 12-3; Boyd and Mango 1992, xxv.
[89] Cf. Naccache 1991, I, 300.
[90] Cf. Kennedy 1994, 267-8.

related to a decline in Antioch's fortunes in the same period. The argument that Antioch and the Limestone Massif entered a closely connected period of decline in the late sixth century would clearly be strengthened if corroborative examples could be found from other rural areas close to Antioch. Unfortunately, no other nearby area has seen nearly as much study, or has as much easily accessible evidence, as the Massif. The University of Chicago survey of the Amuq valley, the land immediately around Antioch, has revealed intriguing but as yet inconclusive finds. It has shown that, unsurprisingly, the valley around Antioch was densely settled in the Late Roman period, and seems to have been prosperous: mosaic tesserae and imported pottery were found at many of the sites.[91] It has also established that many of these sites ceased to be occupied by the tenth century at the latest, but uncertainties around pottery dating make it impossible to tell whether this process happened before, during, or well after the Islamic conquests.[92] It consequently cannot develop our picture of the Syrian economy in the sixth century.

More evidence comes from sites further afield, in central and southern Syria. This is not the place to explore many such examples in depth, since, given local variations, they cannot contribute much to our understanding of the region around Antioch. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that the Antiochene seems to have been unusual in experiencing economic slowing in this period; in many regions the countryside continued to thrive. A particularly clear example of prosperity in the second half of the sixth century, although admittedly from the earlier part of this period, is the *kome* of Androna to the south-east of the Limestone Massif, which has benefited from recent and thorough excavation. A *kastron* was built there in 558-9 by a local man called Thomas, who also built, shortly afterwards, a public bath. Both appear to have been expensive and ornate: the bath contained mosaic

[91] Casana 2004, 115.
[92] Casana and Wilkinson 2005, 44-5.

tesserae, fragments of marble and alabaster, and wall frescoes.[93] Limescale residue on the bath suggests that it was used for some decades at least.[94] Fragments of red and green porphyry and mosaic tesserae were also found at the *kastron.*[95] Admittedly, it is difficult to be certain that a few examples of expensive building reflect generalised wealth in the community, rather than a few (or even a single) wealthy resident. Nonetheless, the difference between the declining rate of inscriptions in the Antiochene and its continuity in other areas of Syria seems significant: in the countryside around Hama/Epiphania, for example, south of the Limestone Massif, 25 of the 50 extant dated inscriptions come from the period 565-605.[96] The apparently unprosperous condition of the Massif in this period thus seems to have been exceptional, and may well have been related to its close connection with the trouble-beset city of Antioch.

Overall, then, due to the complexities of the archaeological evidence, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the economy of northern Syria in the sixth century. Nonetheless, what evidence does survive seems to suggest that both Antioch and its rural neighbourhood experienced economic difficulties in the later sixth century, although, at least in the case of the countryside, the extent of this should not be exaggerated. At the least, we can say that there is not the clear evidence of continued prosperity that we find in some other cities and in the rural areas of southern Syria. It is thus not possible to use archaeology to refute the picture of troubles given by the textual sources; in fact, it seems to provide some support to the view that Antioch's position in the sixth century was unusually difficult. This of course does not mean that we should accept everything in the literary sources at face value, but it does suggest that they should not be dismissed out of hand.

[93] Mango et al. n.d., 9-10.
[94] M. Mango 2008, 74.
[95] Strube 2008, 58.
[96] Foss 1997, 233.

Sometimes scepticism about the literary testimonies has been taken too far. It does not, seem for example, that sixth-century authors merely derived their material about the plague from classical predecessors: thus, as Sarris has argued, Evagrius Scholasticus notes that while the Justinianic plague resembled that described by Thucydides in some respects, it also had significant differences.[97] Not all the literary sources describing immense damage inflicted by natural disasters had good reason to overstate the extent of the crisis. As we will see in later chapters, the earthquakes and plague afflicting Antioch in the sixth century posed a severe challenge to the reputation of Symeon the Younger: it is difficult to believe that his hagiographer would have exaggerated their severity. We should also distinguish between the strictly economic impact of disasters, and their psychological and emotional effects, which could be much more significant. The perception of many contemporaries that Antioch was in crisis is shown, perhaps best of all, by its renaming to Theoupolis, in an apparent cry for help to a God who seemed to have forsaken the city. The ideological as well as physical ramifications of disasters provide an essential context as we turn to an examination of social and cultural conflicts in the region.

Society and Culture

Social, cultural and religious conflict in the sixth-century eastern empire has been the subject of considerable research.[98] Less work has been done, however, on the specific area of the Antiochene and northern Syria. This is largely due to the problems inherent in the source material from the region: this provides considerable, if often complex, evidence about some topics, such as the activities of the bishops, but far less about others. It is often difficult to assess whether the relative insignificance of some themes in the written sources—for example, lay elites, or late sixth-century Miaphysitism—reflects historical reality or the

[97] Sarris 2002, 172; Evagrius 4.29 (p.177).
[98] Key works include Banaji 2001, Sarris 2006, Bell 2013.

preoccupations of the authors. There is, of course, nothing to compare to the papyrological evidence from Egypt which provides such a rich resource for socio-economic historians. It is thus not always possible to confirm whether broader theses that have been proposed about the empire as a whole apply to the Antiochene. In the second half of this chapter I will attempt, nonetheless, to explore three key potential areas of conflict within northern Syrian society: tensions between different socio-economic classes; cultural conflict between Christians; and religious friction between rival Christian and non-Christian groupings. When possible, I will relate the material from Antioch to broader debates about sixth-century society, but my focus will remain throughout on the local evidence and its limitations and possibilities.

Socio-Economic Relations

The sixth century has been presented by some historians as a time of growing socio-economic inequality, and, sometimes, of concomitant increases in social tension. Jairus Banaji has argued that late antiquity saw drastic change in patterns of power, status and wealth in the countryside, as the traditional local landholding elites, associated with the town councils, were replaced by a new class of aristocrats whose authority derived predominantly from their offices in the imperial administration, but who came to 'dominate' provincial landholding. He claims that all levels of society had become increasingly stratified by the sixth century: among the upper classes, there were greater gradations than before, with a small group of aristocrats possessing far more power and wealth than even the rest of the landholding elite, while, among the peasantry, increasing divisions had emerged between a relatively small number of prosperous families with some social status and the majority, whose lives remained unstable despite general increases in rural wealth. He emphasises, however, that different areas—even nearby areas—could have very different patterns of

social organisation, and that his arguments, which are predominantly derived from Egyptian papyrological evidence, might not apply across the eastern empire.[99]

Building, in some respects, on Banaji, Peter Sarris has also depicted the sixth century, and especially the later sixth century, as a time of heightened social conflict. He argues that across late antiquity, nobles had amassed increasingly large estates, taking over the lands of previously independent farmers through persuasion or coercion. This—and in particular, its impact on tax revenues, as the powerful aristocrats were better able to avoid paying their taxes—caused tension between aristocratic and imperial interests, which prompted Justinian to attempt to crack down on elite abuses. But Justinian failed in these efforts, and in the later sixth century the landholding elites further enforced their power in the countryside, effectively preventing the emperor from having any direct association with the rural population. This proved socially destabilising on at least two levels: first, the lower classes increasingly associated the emperor with the powerful and often oppressive landholders, which may have loosened their loyalty to the government, and possibly facilitated the invasions of the seventh century. Second, after the peasantry had enjoyed a brief improvement in living standards after the plague of 542, as their labour became more valuable, the reassertion of aristocratic dominance in the second half of the century caused increased social resentment and sometimes even open class conflict.[100] The core of his book is focused on Egypt (in particular on the estates of the Apions), and his use of papyri has been criticised by papyrologists, who suggest that he misreads some texts and pushes his arguments beyond what the evidence will allow.[101] But he also applies his arguments to the

[99] Banaji 2001.
[100] Sarris 2006, passim but esp. 228-34.
[101] See in particular Mazza 2008 (her own analysis of the Apion material is found in Mazza 2001); and Hickey 2012, e.g. 28, 41n15, 62-4, 98n25, 110n87, 127, 131n178, 149-51, 157-9.

eastern empire as a whole, on the basis of references in other kinds of sources; I will consider below whether his use of evidence from Antioch is convincing.

While Banaji and Sarris's analyses are predominantly socio-economic in focus, Peter Bell has recently examined a range of potential conflicts, including economic, religious and more broadly ideological tensions, and imperial responses to them.[102] In the third chapter of his monograph, which focuses more strictly on the socio-economic themes discussed by Banaji and Sarris, he argues that, in the sixth century, relations between the rich and the poor were in general intensely exploitative: 'unless everything we read in the literary sources is seriously distorted, we have no compelling reason to dissent from the conclusion of A.H.M. Jones, a historian not given to sensationalism, that, "taken as a whole, the peasantry were an oppressed and hapless class".'[103] Emperors and nobles extracted as much revenue from the peasantry as possible—and their demands may have increased in the sixth century due to the varied financial pressures on Justinian's government, from natural disasters to the costs of war and building work. Although various factors combined to prevent any large-scale movements of class conflict, some peasant communities did practise varying strategies of resistance to oppressive magnates, and submerged social tensions were sometimes brought to the fore in times of crisis. Whereas Banaji's and Sarris's books rely heavily, although not exclusively, on Egyptian papyrological evidence, Bell's geographical focus is broader, as his arguments are based predominantly on legal and hagiographical material. All three scholars, however, acknowledge that there was considerable variation in social relations between different regions. Do their theses apply to the sixth-century Antiochene?

The historian attempting to answer this question is immediately forced to confront difficulties in the source material. Relatively little information survives from the sixth

[102] Bell 2013.
[103] ibid. 51-118, at 82-3.

century about lay society in the Antiochene countryside, or even in the city itself. The homilies of Severus of Antioch might seem the most promising source for Antiochene social relations, as they certainly refer frequently to the rich and poor,[104] but as Peter Brown has shown, Christian orators tended to use rhetoric about wealth and poverty in highly ideologically charged ways, often separating society into two binary groups without acknowledging different degrees and gradations in wealth and status.[105] Even the secular social elites are largely invisible in the extant sources. The *comites Orientis* are sometimes mentioned by the chroniclers and historiographers, but in general far more is reported about the city's bishops. In part this must reflect the well-known phenomenon of the 'flight of the curiales' and related growth in status of the bishops.[106] Yet scattered references do make it clear that Antioch did still contain some wealthy elites who played a prominent role in city life. The *comes Orientis* was undoubtedly influential: Asterius in the later sixth century apparently succeeded, if we can trust the report of Evagrius Scholasticus, in activating the city's population against their patriarch, Gregory.[107] Earlier in the century, Severus, during his patriarchate in Antioch, wrote several letters arguing that disobedient clerics and monks should not be allowed to avoid the judgements of ecclesiastical courts by turning to civil courts: one was addressed to Hypatius the στρατηλάτης, whom the letter reveals to have been based in Antioch, and who, Severus implies, could have had the power to overturn the judgement of the Church.[108]

Except in the case of major imperial appointments, however, mentions of individual named notables are rare. More common are generic references to the city's notables, which suggest that it did contain a recognised elite, even in the later sixth century. Thus Severus in another

[104] See Alpi 2009, 173-8.
[105] See below p.128.
[106] On this see esp. Liebeschuetz 2001a, esp. chapters 3-4, 104-68; see also Liebeschuetz 1972, 260-3.
[107] See below pp.62-3.
[108] Severus, *Letters*, 1.40 (I.I, pp.126-9).

letter about jurisdiction refers to the 'glorious nobles/chiefs'[109] of Antioch; Evagrius states that 'the entire upper tier of the city'[110] supported Asterius against Gregory in the conflict mentioned above, and that 'very many of the notables'[111] fell victim to the earthquake of 588; Symeon the Younger's hagiographer refers to 'most of the leading men of the city'.[112] The latter does in fact also mention a few named notables, including Anastasius, a *scholastikos* and the friend of two *illustres,* Asterius and Thomas Veredaronas.[113] Evagrius Scholasticus himself should be considered a member of the elite, given that he refers to public celebrations in the city for his marriage festivities,[114] and to his servants and 'estate-dwellers [χωρίτας]',[115] as well as to honours bestowed upon him by the emperors Tiberius and Maurice.[116] Unfortunately, there is little precisely dateable archaeological evidence to flesh out this rather meagre picture derived from the literary sources. While lavish elite houses, featuring famous mosaics, have been discovered in Antioch and its suburb of Daphne, most of these are dated to the fifth century or earlier and it is difficult to establish how long they remained in use.[117] Thus, while it seems that there was an identifiable elite within the city, there are considerable limitations on how far we can understand their composition, numbers, and lifestyles.

The situation is still more difficult with respect to the countryside, for which literary evidence is extremely slight. Occasional references do suggest that elites owned estates around Antioch: thus for instance, as mentioned above, Evagrius refers to losing many of

[109] ܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܪܝܬܐ: ibid. 1.43 (I.I, p.136).
[110] τὸ πᾶν τῆς πόλεως κεφάλαιον: Evagrius Scholasticus, 6.7 (p.226, trans. p.296).
[111] ἀξιολόγων πλεῖστοι: ibid. 6.8 (p.288, trans. p.300).
[112] τοὺς πλείους τῶν πρώτων τῆς πόλεως: *Life of Symeon*, 161 (p.144).
[113] See below p.212.
[114] Evagrius Scholasticus, 6.8 (p.227)
[115] ibid. 4.29 (p.178, trans. p.231).
[116] ibid. 4.24 (p.240). Cf. Allen 1981, 2-3.
[117] Although the excavation reports from the houses at Antioch are problematic and the dwellings have yet to be thoroughly studied: see Dobbins 2000, 51-2. The most convincing work on the dating of the mosaics in Antioch is that of Campbell 1988.

his 'servants and estate-dwellers' in an earthquake,[118] apparently implying that he possessed agricultural workers, although the term 'χωρίτας' is perhaps ambiguous. The sermons of both Severus and Symeon the Younger make several references to oppressive landlords and oppressed agricultural workers, but in generic terms which may reflect rhetorical convention as much as social reality.[119] Given the shortage of literary evidence, archaeology must come to the fore, and again it is the Limestone Massif that provides the most material. As mentioned above, most of the houses in the Massif appear to have been well-built, expensive structures. This notable evidence of prosperity has led to much debate on the status of the residents of the villages: were they subordinate to (probably city-based) landowners, or independent? Tate argued that there was no evidence for large estate owners in the villages, and that the residents appear to have been independently wealthy peasants.[120] This view that most of the Massif's residents were independent farmers has been widely accepted: Wickham, for example, although conceding that city-based landowners would be unlikely to show up in the archaeological record, has argued that it is very improbable that landowners would provide such elaborate housing for their tenants, and that tenants would struggle to pay for the houses themselves in addition to rent and tax.[121]

There are, however, sceptics. Purcell and Horden have argued that an 'independent producer is an inherently unlikely specimen in the Mediterranean world' and that the villages of the Massif belonged to wealthy landowners based in Antioch, whose subordinate peasants had 'little or no autonomy.'[122] They do not, however, explain why these dominant landowners would have expended significant sums of money on providing ornamented houses for their tenants. Sarris, while accepting that some of the Massif was inhabited by independent

[118] οἰκέτας τε καὶ χωρίτας: as cited above p.47 n.115.
[119] E.g. *Sermons* 6.4 (pp.19-20), 16.6 (pp.79-80); on this theme in Severus's homilies, see Alpi 2009, 175.
[120] Tate 1992, 349.
[121] Wickham 2005, 447.
[122] Horden and Purcell 2000, 274-5.

farmers—it being in any case relatively unproductive land, and therefore less appealing to large landowners—claims that there is also probable evidence for estate owners, adducing Tchalenko's argument that villages whose Arabic names start with beit/ba were in origin *epoikia,* Byzantine estates. This etymological evidence is unconvincing,[123] but Sarris also notes that we should not exaggerate the richness of the village houses, pointing out that the ground floors appear to have been dedicated to livestock.[124] Similarly, Bell makes the important point that some of the villages in the Massif may have been less prosperous than the more celebrated examples.[125] It appears possible that the Limestone Massif saw a combination of estate villages and autonomous farms; perhaps, as Sarris seems to suggest, more fertile areas closer to Antioch would have seen more heavy involvement by the city's wealthy upper strata. Certainly, the notables of the city referred to in the sources discussed above must have possessed land somewhere in the region, although this was not necessarily in the Massif. There is some, although limited, epigraphic evidence for the existence of noble landholdings to the southwest of Antioch: a sixth-century inscription from Kara Douran, in the region of Mount Cassius, seems to refer to the property of either the ex-consul Patricius, or the ex-consul (and future emperor) Justinian—its interpretation is uncertain.[126] Overall, it remains unclear how far the countryside was dominated by powerful nobles.

[123] Sarris cites two authors on the topic. But the first, Sodini, states that village names are unreliable as sources for their subsequent development as their status may have changed without any concomitant change in name (Sodini 2003, 47), while the second, Feissel, explicitly notes that it is impossible to infer from the existence of a 'b' in an Arabic place name that it was originally an *epoikion* (Feissel 1991, 296). Sarris also attempts to use etymology to show that the region around Symeon the Younger's monastery saw many noble-owned villages, on the basis that the *Lives* of Symeon and Martha refer to several settlements with names with the formula 'chorion of *name*'. He again cites Feissel in support of this argument, but Feissel's discussion focuses only on the *origin* of the place names, and does not draw any inferences about their social status in the sixth and seventh centuries (Feissel 1991, 297 ff.).
[124] Sarris 2006, 117-24.
[125] Bell 2013, 58.
[126] Mouterde interpreted the inscription to read 'tomb belonging to the very illustrious and very glorious ex-consul Patrikios, in the time of lord Justinian' (*IGLS* 1232); Feissel as 'place belonging to the very glorious and very excellent ex-consul and patrician, (our) lord Justinian' (Feissel 1992, 404-7). See also *SEG* 42:1363. Strangely, Trombley (and subsequently Sarris) seems to have combined these readings: he refers to

Given the limitations of the evidence relating to Antiochene lay society, it is difficult to make any firm statements about social relations in the period. Nonetheless, both Sarris and Bell have argued, largely on the basis of two references in the sources, that Antioch did conform to their picture of rising societal tensions.[127] The first of these is found in Evagrius Scholasticus's account of the Persian retreat from Antioch in 573.[128] Evagrius claims that their defeat was entirely unexpected, since most of the population had abandoned the city, including the patriarch (Gregory), who had fled with the church treasures 'both because much of the wall had collapsed**,** *and because the populace had rebelled in its desire to begin a revolution, as is accustomed to happen and particularly at such moments* [emphasis mine].'[129] The second passage comes from the ninth-century chronicle of Theophanes, and refers to events of 608/9: the chronicler reports that Jewish rioters in the city 'killed many men of property and burnt them.'[130] These passages do suggest some tensions in the city. Yet the first does not explicitly relate the disturbance to any particular social discord, beyond a dissatisfaction with the city's leadership, while the latter postdates the events it describes by more than two centuries, and gives the conflict a religious as well as social dimension. Together, they may hint at the existence of social conflict within Antiochene society, but are not sufficient to prove that such conflict had *increased* in the sixth century. Rather, they may suggest that in sixth-century Antioch, as throughout most of the ancient world,[131] socio-economic inequalities and oppressive behaviour by elites created the possibility for social tensions. Even if discord between the powerful and poor in society was usually submerged, it could be activated in certain contexts—and in particular in times of crisis. Antioch's

the inscription as commemorating a place which was owned first by Patricius and subsequently by Justinian (Trombley 2004b, 76; Sarris 2006, 124).
[127] Sarris 2006, 232; Bell 2013, 114-5.
[128] On which see above p.28 n.39.
[129] Evagrius Scholasticus 5.9 (p.206, trans. p.268).
[130] Theophanes, AM. 6101 (p.296, trans. p.425).
[131] See de Ste. Croix 1981, passim.

repeated experiences of disasters and concomitant decline may have encouraged the development of these tensions, tensions, which, as we will see, could be exploited by individuals such as holy men for their own benefit.

Cultural and Religious Tensions

Social and economic tensions had an intimate, but by no means straightforward, relationship with cultural and ideological conflict. Peter Bell has provided a powerful analysis of ideological friction in the sixth-century empire. Of particular interest here are his arguments about the relationship of classical *paideia*, Christian ideology, and paganism.[132] He traces the complex position of classical *paideia* (and other manifestations of classical culture such as art) within the growingly dominant Christian ideology of the empire, showing that while the two could be combined harmoniously, they could also come into conflict. Opinions varied about what was acceptable within Christianity. Particularly importantly, his analysis implies that the same or very similar 'classicising' phenomena could, in different contexts and when embraced by different people, be regarded either as entirely legitimate and perfectly compatible with Christianity or as unacceptable relicts and symptoms of paganism. Equally, classicising cultural forms could be used by sincere Christians who viewed them as an unproblematic part of their cultural heritage—but they could also be deployed by religious dissidents who were often unable to reveal their pagan views openly but could express their ideological alienation by drawing upon traditions associated with pre-Christian culture. Indeed, in Bell's view it is essential to recognise that genuine pagan views were still relatively widespread in the sixth century. For him, the manifold references to pagans in the literary sources, and in particular the many accounts of anti-pagan purges, only make sense in a world in which the existence of pagans was taken for granted—even if many of the accusations of paganism were fabricated, or at least exaggerated, for political reasons. For

[132] Bell 2013, esp. c.5.

these cultural and religious tensions often had a social dynamic, since traditional elites were often associated with classical *paideia,* and thus social or political conflict between nobles and the emperor or nobles and the Church could be expressed in terms of cultural or even religious conflict—as the traditional lifestyle and education of many notables rendered them vulnerable to accusations of paganism.

These themes are of great importance to an understanding of sixth-century Antiochene culture. Throughout the century we can trace divergent, and sometimes conflicting, attitudes within the city towards the classical inheritance and its contemporary manifestations. It is important to note that there is no simple correlation between these attitudes and particular socio-economic or political groupings: we find differing views even among members of elites with similar educational experiences. Not all manifestations of 'pagan' or 'secular' culture were confined to the elites. This is not to say, however, that these tensions never had any social or political aspects. Throughout much of the period these disagreements did not erupt into open conflict. But in the later sixth century, Antioch did see explosive religious-cultural controversy, in the form of several 'pagan' scandals, in one of which the then-patriarch, Gregory, was implicated. By examining the broader evidence for cultural tensions within the city first, before considering the pagan scandals in more detail, it may be possible to reach a better understanding of the intersection of ideological, socio-economic, and political factors within sixth-century conflict.

Public spectacles, civic identities, and Christian ideology

The surviving sources from sixth-century Antioch reveal the existence of an ongoing cultural clash between rigorist Christians who expected their co-believers to follow very strict moral codes and others who believed that Christianity was compatible with traditional aspects of culture and entertainment. This is shown particularly clearly by debates relating to one aspect of civic life with long-established pre-Christian roots: athletic and theatrical

performances in the theatres and hippodromes. The population of Antioch had something of a reputation for its love for these spectacles,[133] and they seem to have retained an important role in the city's life across the sixth century. John Malalas records developments related to the theatres, games and circus races in Antioch from the age of Augustus onwards.[134] As he recounts, in the sixth century emperors repeatedly banned theatrical performances, often in response to riots by the factions, but these bans usually proved temporary;[135] although the performances had the potential to excite unrest, they were too popular to be suppressed entirely. Chariot races also continued throughout the century. If we can believe the hostile report of John of Ephesus, Gregory, the patriarch from 570-92,[136] even received money from the emperor to build a new hippodrome for the Antiochenes in an attempt to bolster his popularity after being accused of paganism: 'and, contriving to appease and mollify the people of his city, he asked the king to command him to build a hippodrome for them. And he also bestowed this on him, giving him also the expenses for the building of the church of Satan, in which he was going to perform his whole will and pleasure, so that he, as was said, even brought mimes with him down from the capital, so that for some, this was [a source of] laughter and mockery and derision, but for others, [of] sorrow and distress…'[137]

John's scathing account provides an important reminder that theatrical and sporting performances could prove highly controversial. While the emperors' decisions to ban

[133] See e.g. Procopius, *Wars*, 1.17.37 (I, p.88); *Life of Thekla*, 15 (p.228); with Saradi 2006, 296.
[134] E.g. Malalas 9.21 (p.171), 10.27 (pp.188-9), 12.3-10 (pp.215-8), 12.26 (pp.228-9), 12.44, 46 (pp.238-40), (all examples from before the 6th C—on the 6th C see below). On Malalas's interest in the hippodrome and circus factions cf. A.D.E. Cameron 1976, 138-9.
[135] Malalas 17.12-3 (pp.343-4), 18.41 (p.376), 18.62 (pp.390-1), 18.67 (p.393).
[136] For the dates of the sixth-century Antiochene patriarchs, I use Whitby 2000, 320. The precise start/end dates of their patriarchates are unimportant to my argument.
[137] ܘܥܒܕ ܗܘ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܗ ܠܥܡܐ ܕܐܢܛܝܘܟܝܐ ܘܒܥܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ ܕܢܦܩܕ ܠܗ ܕܢܒܢܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܗܝܦܘܕܪܘܡ ܘܐܦ ܗܘ ܝܗܒ ܠܗ ܗܢܐ ܕܢܒܢܐ ܠܗ ܐܦ ܠܗ ܐܓܪ̈ܐ ܕܒܢܝܢܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܣܛܢ̈ܐ ܕܗܘ ܥܬܝܕ ܕܢܥܒܕ ܟܠ ܨܒܝܢܘܬܗ ܘܗܢܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܦ ܡܣܟ̈ܢ̈ܐ ܥܡܗ ܡܢ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܠܬܚܬ ܕܠܥܠ̈ܡ ܗܢܐ ܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܠܐ ܠܚܕ̈ܐ ܕܗܘ ܫܚܘܩ ܘܣܚܩ̈ܐ ܘܠܐ ܠܚܕ̈ܐ ܕܗܘ ܒܟ̈ܝ ܘܐܒ̈ܠ̈ܐ...: John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.17 (p.268).

spectacles seem to have been based on fear of disruption, other Christians objected to the performances on moral grounds.[138] This is displayed particularly clearly in the Cathedral Homilies of Severus, who repeatedly fulminates against all kinds of spectacles,[139] on various grounds, from the indecent dress and behaviour of both the actors and the audience,[140] to the aggressive behaviour of the spectators,[141] and the cruel mistreatment of the animals involved.[142] He goes so far as to suggest that the theatrical and sporting performances are inherently pagan, and incompatible with Christianity. Thus he claims that each kind of spectacle is consecrated to a particular pagan deity: horse racing to Neptune, wrestling to Mercury, wrestling with animals to Artemis, theatrical performances to Bacchus.[143] He protests that the common cry of spectators at the horse races, 'Fortune of the city, grant victory!' was effectively denying God's providence by attributing the outcome of the race to a demon, Fortune (this is of course a reference to the classical protective deity of the city, Tyche).[144] He associates processions at Daphne (for Severus, a notable centre of pleasure and luxury) with the veneration of Jupiter.[145]

If Hollman is right to date a curse tablet found in the hippodrome at Antioch to the late fifth or early sixth century, Severus's arguments might seem to be justified: the tablet calls upon various Olympian deities to curse the horses of the Blue faction.[146] Yet it is clear that the vast majority of those attending the spectacles in Antioch and Daphne at this time would have self-identified as Christians. Severus himself acknowledged that many people would

[138] This was certainly not a new source of controversy in this period: John Chrysostom is only one example of an earlier bishop vehemently hostile to the theatre (see e.g. Leyerle 2001, esp. chapter 3).
[139] For Severus on spectacles see Graffin 1978; Saradi 2006, 296; Alpi 2009, 178-83.
[140] See e.g. Homily 95 (p.94); Homily 54 (p.55).
[141] See e.g. Homily 26 (pp.548, 550-2); Homily 54 (p.52).
[142] E.g. Homily 26 (p.548).
[143] Homily 54 (p.48).
[144] ܥܠ ܕܝܘܢܣ ܘܥܠ ܟܠ ܕܡ: Homily 26 (pp.544-6, quote at p.544).
[145] Homily 95 (pp.93-4).
[146] Hollman 2003, 67-82 [for the dating see 68-9]. For discussion of magic at the circus races, see Graf 2015, 278-9; he suggests that even Christians used this kind of spell at hippodromes.

not accept that there was any association between the performances and paganism, and that he would therefore have to persuade them of their wickedness on other grounds.[147] This was not, therefore, a clash between Christianity and paganism, but between different approaches to Christianity. To an extent, Severus's hostility towards the theatre and hippodrome may have been encouraged by the fear of losing members of his audience to their spectacles; it was thus in part a question of rivalry at a practical level.[148] Yet in other areas of society and culture it is equally possible to discern a deeper conflict between Christian attitudes towards 'secular' or 'pagan' material, which ranged on a spectrum from the complete condemnation of any aspects of identity or practice which were not explicitly Christian, particularly if they had pre-Christian roots, to the total acceptance of traditional culture as entirely compatible with Christian piety.

This is visible, for example, in expressions of civic pride and identity. Pride in one's city was an important phenomenon in classical culture, and usually involved an emphasis on the city's past, including myths related to its foundation, which had often taken place in the pre-Christian era. Some Christians, however, eschewed any pagan or pre-Christian elements in civic identities, instead stressing only their cities' roles in Christian history.[149] Severus, again, represents this rigorist Christian viewpoint. In his Cathedral Homilies he frequently exalts Antioch's special status, but bases this on exclusively Christian grounds. Thus he repeatedly cites the statement in Acts 11:26 that it was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.[150] He also claims that various martyrs had a particular fondness for Antioch, often because they had lived there, or been martyred there, or because the city possessed a relic of them.[151] Similarly, on a visit to the port of Seleucia he declares that the

[147] Homily 26 (pp.546-50).
[148] See e.g. Leyerle 2001, 13-19; Webb 2008, 201-2.
[149] On varied conceptions of civic pride in the sixth century, see Saradi 2006, 49-101.
[150] E.g. Homily 1.10 (Coptic version) (p.258); Homily 26 (p.542); Homily 28 (p.576); Homily 80 (p.324); cf. also Homily 125 (p.246).
[151] E.g. Homily 51 (p.376); Homily 35 (p.448); Homily 97 (p.137); Homily 75 (pp.130-1).

port was 'truly blessed and holy',[152] and deserved imperial support for its regeneration, because Scripture reports that it was from Seleucia that Paul and Barnaby had set sail to Cyprus.[153] He makes no mention of any secular, let alone pagan, part of Antioch's history.

Other Christian authors took a very different approach. John Malalas, a contemporary of Severus, recounts Antioch's pre-Christian past at length, from its foundation by Seleucus Nicator.[154] The chronicler does not hesitate from recording explicitly pagan aspects of these myths (which he reports as factual history): even the story of its foundation revolves around a pagan augury.[155] He implies that the Antiochene people associated landmarks in their region with pre-Christian myths, reporting, for example, that Seleucus Nicator had 'found that giants had lived in the land; for two miles from the city of Antioch is a place with human bodies turned to stone because of God's anger, which are called giants to the present day; equally, a giant known as Pagras, who lived in the land, was burnt by a thunderbolt. So it is plain that the people of Antioch in Syria live in the land of the giants.'[156] Malalas does not reject the image of Antioch presented by Severus; in fact, he too reports that Antioch was where Christians were first called Christians,[157] and highlights its association with various martyrs.[158] Yet for him this Christian history does not replace the pagan past, nor is the latter shameful or best forgotten; rather the two complement each other as sources of pride and identity for the city.

Again therefore we find a tension between opposed Christian viewpoints, one rigorous and exclusionary, the other relatively inclusive (there were, of course, a range of possible

[152] ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܡܒܪܟܬܐ ܘܩܕܝܫܬܐ ...ܐܢܛܝܘܟܝܐ: Homily 28 (p.576).
[153] Homily 28 (pp.574-6); Cf. Acts 13.4.
[154] I cannot agree with Liebeschuetz (2004, 153) that Malalas was largely uninterested in city pride; Antioch is at the heart of his chronicle.
[155] Malalas 8.12 (pp.151-2).
[156] ibid. 8.15 (p.153, trans. pp.106-7).
[157] ibid. 10.24 (p.187).
[158] ibid. e.g. 11.10 (pp.208-9), 12.35 (pp.233-4).

degrees of strictness: we must imagine a spectrum of opinions, rather than two strictly opposed positions). It is important to recognise that this was a complex ideological conflict, and did not represent a divide as simple as, for example, the Church versus the laity. Not all clerics were as strict as Severus. As we have seen, patriarch Gregory apparently arranged for the construction of a hippodrome in Antioch. In one of his letters Severus reproached the clergy of Apamea for quoting 'the rhetor of Greece' in their letter to him, stating that they should have cited only the Bible.[159]

Nor does the tension have a straightforward socio-economic dimension. As mentioned above, Bell and others have drawn a connection between continued adherence to classical culture and social elites. Indeed, it has been suggested that by this period the lower classes would not even have understood references to classical mythology.[160] It may well be true that intellectuals and elites were more likely to be interested in myth and classical history. Although the mythological mosaics that survive from Antioch seem to date from earlier centuries, mosaics with classical and quasi-pagan themes were still being produced for elite residences in the sixth century in other parts of the eastern empire.[161] Education in classical authors remained common for elites, and while Severus (who had himself trained as a lawyer) may have later shunned these aspects of his upbringing, he was probably in a minority.[162] Nonetheless, the controversy surrounding theatrical and sporting spectacles suggests that the problem was more complex: the spectacles must have been attended by Antiochenes from across the social spectrum, and, given that the popular mime and pantomime performances were still dominated by classical mythological themes, must have given many lower-class citizens some familiarity with aspects of pre-Christian

[159] Severus of Antioch, *Letters*, 1.30 (I.I, pp.103-4, trans. II.2, pp.92-3). See on this and Severus's intolerance of classical learning Alpi 2009, 245-6.
[160] See e.g. A.D.E. Cameron 2007, 39.
[161] See Bowersock 2006, 31-63.
[162] On Severus's education, see Alpi 2009, 40-1.

mythology.[163] This was therefore an ideological conflict that did not correlate straightforwardly to any particular social divide, either between clergy and laity, or between rich and poor. Nonetheless, as will be argued later, these tensions could undoubtedly be exploited in the context of social polemic.[164]

Pagan scandals

But did 'paganism' only survive in the eyes of rigorist Christians, in the form of cultural practices largely stripped of their original cultic significance, or did paganism as a religion really persist into the sixth century? Contemporary Christian sources from across the empire certainly refer frequently to the existence of pagans: a well-known example is John of Ephesus's account of his conversion missions, apparently sponsored by Justinian, to pagans in Asia Minor.[165] Modern scholars have been divided on how literally to interpret these accounts: some prefer (while not completely denying the survival of any paganism) to see the vast majority of references to paganism as either rhetorical, fear-mongering, or politically inspired,[166] while others, although acknowledging that the label could be used for rhetorical purposes, insist that it would only be powerful in a society in which pagans still existed, and that there is no good reason to think paganism had been extinguished by this date.[167] Peter Bell notes, suggestively, that sixth century authors sometimes refer to pagans in passing, rather than placing them at the centre of their narratives, in ways which suggest that 'their existence is taken completely for granted.'[168] It is unlikely that we will ever be able to prove how common paganism really was at this time, but there is no reason to dismiss

[163] See esp. Leyerle 2001, 20-31.
[164] As we see with Symeon the Younger and his hagiographer; see below pp.210-18.
[165] On the missions in Asia Minor from 541-2, see John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 40, 43, 47, 51 (II, pp.650, 658-60, 681; III, p.163); Pseudo-Dionysius (II, pp.77-8).
[166] See for example Allen 1981, 231-2; Déroche 1996, 76-8.
[167] This is broadly the line adopted by Whitby 1991 and Bell 2013, esp. 235-46. Trombley, taking the literary sources much more literally, insists still more emphatically on widespread pagan survivals (Trombley 1985b).
[168] Bell 2013, 240.

out of hand the idea that some 'real' pagans might have lived in parts of the empire in the sixth century.

Nonetheless, it is clear that references to 'pagans' could be used to fulfil a range of polemical and political purposes which were not necessarily related to the realities of pagan survivals. It was the emperors who seem to have provided much of the impetus behind this development. Pagans had been scapegoated for large-scale disasters by the emperors since at least the reign of Theodosius II (408-50).[169] In the sixth century, and in particular during Justinian's reign, there were recurrent imperially-backed purges of 'pagans' in Constantinople and other major cities, often following on the heels of natural disasters.[170] It is difficult to interpret the driving aim behind these purges: they could be seen as purely cynical and politically motivated, given that the 'pagans' targeted were almost invariably members of powerful elites or dissident intellectual circles who could pose a threat to the stability of the regime. On the other hand, the emperor's religious convictions may have been crucial: Justinian may well have believed that it was necessary to remove pagans as well as other 'sinners', such as homosexuals, in order to create orthodox ideological conformity and thereby to appease God. It is perhaps best, with Peter Bell, to view the purges as both politically and religiously motivated.[171] The empire's secular elites were, as mentioned above, particularly vulnerable to accusations of paganism because, even if practising Christians, many retained aspects of elite pre-Christian culture and lifestyle, which could be condemned by rigorous Christians from different social circles as inherently pagan.[172]

[169] Stathakopoulos 2004, 76; Millar 2006, 120-22.
[170] On the purges see e.g. Maas 1992, 69-78.
[171] Bell 2013, esp. 306-7.
[172] See above pp.51-2.

Antioch itself saw two major anti-pagan purges in the sixth century. The first of these, which may have taken place in the mid 550s, is described only in the *Life of Symeon the Younger.*[173] The hagiographer recounts that the *archôn* Amantius was sent to the city, whereupon he 'found most of the leading men of the city and many of its inhabitants possessed by Hellenism and Manichaeism and astrology and automatism and other ill-omened heresies';[174] he is said to have punished the culprits severely. This incident is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3,[175] but several points should be noted now. The purge seems to have been imperially sponsored, as the hagiographer describes Amantius being sent from the palace; Amantius is also known as a Justinianic agent from the chronicle of John Malalas, in which he is said to have been sent to suppress the Samaritan revolt in Palestine in 555.[176] The purge had a political aspect as well as a religious, as the hagiographer refers to Amantius condemning to execution a *δημότης* who had been involved in popular/factional disorders. Finally, there may have been a socio-economic dimension to the incident, since the dissidents exposed by Amantius apparently included 'most of the leading men of the city'. This event, then, seems to fit into the broader pattern of Justinianic purges of 'pagans', including in particular members of elites, who may have posed a political threat to the city or emperor's security.

The second, more famous, incident, is in some respects more obscure, even though it is discussed at some length by two independent sources. It revolved (at least in terms of its significance in Antioch) around Gregory, patriarch of the city from 570 to 592. The former monk had experienced a turbulent start to his patriarchate: not only had his predecessor,

[173] It has been suggested that Amantius's activities in Antioch could have followed on from his suppression of the Samaritan revolt in Palestine in 555/6: see *PLRE* 3a, 'Amantius 2', pp.52-4.
[174] ηὗρε τοὺς πλείους τῶν πρώτων τῆς πόλεως καὶ πολλοῦς τῶν κατοικούντων αὐτὴν ἑλληνισμῷ καὶ μανιχαϊσμῷ και ἀστρολογίαις καὶ αὐτοματισμῷ καὶ ἄλλαις δυσωνύμοις αἱρέσεσι κατεχομένους: *Life of Symeon,* 161 (p.144).
[175] See below pp.213-6.
[176] Malalas, 18.119 (pp.417-8).

Anastasius, been deposed by Justin II on rather dubious grounds,[177] but in 573 Gregory had fled from Antioch in face of the threat of Persian invasion.[178] It is not clear whether this contributed to his unpopularity, but certainly by 579 he had provoked considerable opposition in his see. The conflict which broke out in this year is described by both Evagrius Scholasticus and John of Ephesus, who held diametrically opposed attitudes to Gregory: Evagrius worked for the patriarch, and was his close supporter, whereas John was very hostile to him on doctrinal grounds. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the two provide a very different account of events.[179] What is clear from both is that a major scandal exploded in the east when several prominent officials were supposedly discovered to be practicing paganism and even engaging in human sacrifices; Gregory was one of the figures accused. Even Evagrius acknowledges the hostility towards Gregory in Antioch: 'Gregory came into great danger, since great attacks were made upon him by the people;'[180] John of Ephesus reports that 'the whole city was shaken and stirred up, and there were diverse shouts, and the church was closed, and Gregory did not dare to come out from the bishop's residence, and the liturgy was not allowed to take place, nor the consecration of the chrism, as is customary on the Thursday of Passion Week.'[181]

Perhaps surprisingly, no investigations seem to have been made into the patriarch at this point, an omission which John scathingly attributes to the establishment's desire to avoid a scandal. John does report, however, that 'some time later',[182] Gregory went to

[177] See Evagrius Scholasticus 5.5 (p.201); Theophanes, AM 6062 (p.243). For discussion, see Allen 1981, 214-7; Whitby 2000, 261, n.17.
[178] Evagrius Scholasticus 5.9 (p.206).
[179] For discussions of them see Rochow 1976, esp. 123-30; Allen 1981, 230-2, 250; Whitby 1991, 123-5; Liebeschuetz 2001a, 263-9; Lee 2007, 103-6. John's account is found in his *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.27-34, 5.17 (pp.154-67, 267-8); Evagrius's in Evagrius Scholasticus 5.18 (pp.212-4), 6.7 (pp.225-6).
[180] Evagrius Scholasticus 5.18 (p.213, trans. p.278).
[181] ܗܘ ܕܒ ܒܝܫܐ ܕܐܢܛܝܟ̈ܝܐ ܡܛܠ ܕܐܬ̈ܐ ܒܗ ܥܠ ܟܠ ܥܡܐ ܘܩܛܠ ܘܩܛܠ ܘܗܘ ܒܟܢܝܫܬܐ ܕܐܬ̈ܬܣܪ ܘܠܐ ܒܥܐ ܡܢ ܒܝܬ ܐܦܣܩܘܦܐ ܕܢܦܩ ܘܠܐ ܐܫܬܡܥ ܩܘܕܫܐ ܘܠܐ ܡܘܫܚܐ ܒܝܘܡ ܚܡܝܫܝ ܕܨܘܡܐ ܪܒܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܓܢܝܢ ܒܟܠ ܫܢܬܐ: John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.29 (p.157).
[182] ܒܬܪ ܙܒܢ: ibid.5.17 (p.267).

Constantinople with many gifts for the senate and clergy; these apparently won him sufficient good will for the case against him to be dropped. It was at this point that, as mentioned above, Gregory supposedly arranged to build a hippodrome in Antioch to appease its population. Evagrius's account of this second phase of the trouble is quite different: he reports that Gregory had quarrelled with the count of the east, Asterius, who successfully roused the elites, the people, the tradesmen and the factions of Antioch against the patriarch.[183] Asterius was removed from his role as count of the east, but this failed to quell the disturbance, and various accusations were made against Gregory by the citizens, including a banker who claimed that the patriarch had slept with his married sister. Gregory was forced to go to Constantinople to defend himself, with Evagrius acting as his legal aide; after a detailed investigation, Gregory was cleared and his accusers punished.

It is difficult to know how to reconcile these two accounts, and unlikely that it will ever be possible to establish the precise sequence of events. Nonetheless, the episode has suggestive implications. In particular, the accusations against Gregory raise the question of what was really at stake in anti-pagan violence. Even if it is possible that some of those targeted were practising pagans, it seems highly unlikely that this was true of the patriarch himself. Some of those who resisted Gregory in Antioch may genuinely have believed that he was guilty of the charge. Other motives for involvement, however, seem to have been personal and political. Gregory certainly had his enemies in Antioch, as becomes clear in Evagrius's description of the later outbreak of opposition to the patriarch. As mentioned above, Evagrius reports that a conflict had taken place between the *comes Orientis*, Asterius, and Gregory, and that 'the entire upper tier of the city' sided with the count against the patriarch, as well as the 'popular element', the tradespeople, and the circus factions. A banker accused Gregory of having inappropriate relations with his sister, while 'other similar people'

[183] Evagrius Scholasticus, 6.7 (pp.225-6).

proffered ‘indictments about how the prosperity of the city had often been abused by him.’ Unfortunately, it is difficult to know what had caused Gregory’s quarrel with Asterius, as well as his apparent unpopularity in the city, although there seems to be some suggestion of financial mismanagement. It is thus highly tempting to suggest that in this case accusations of paganism were used for political reasons, although the evidence is rather unclear, since, as we have seen, Evagrius seems to imply that these accusations against Gregory were separate from the earlier charge of paganism, whereas John of Ephesus presents the two conflicts as closely linked. At the very least, it may be suggested that Gregory’s unpopularity in certain circles must have rendered him vulnerable to charges of heterodoxy. This incident is particularly important given the relative silence of the literary sources on the activities of secular elites in Antioch compared to those of the patriarchs. If Asterius, with the support of local elites, was able to rouse most of the city against Gregory, powerful laymen could still pose a severe threat to the authority of the Church—although ultimately the threat did not prove fatal, since Asterius was removed from his position and Gregory was cleared of all charges. Certainly, the patriarch did not possess unquestioned authority within his city, whose political situation seems to have been highly volatile.

Taken together, these various incidents confirm that anti pagan-purges were often not strictly religious in their origin; rather, they involved a heavy element of political conflict and score settling, whether between emperors and elites or between local rivals for authority. This is not to deny that genuine anti-pagan fervour often played a vital role in the development of these movements, particularly, perhaps, in terms of gathering momentum and mass support. Indeed, accusations of paganism could only be powerful among a population which believed, in general, both that paganism existed and that it was an unforgivable sin that posed a threat to society, a view which was undoubtedly encouraged, in some situations, by imperial and clerical elites. In the ideological climate of the sixth

century, a charge of paganism was perhaps the most powerful way of destroying someone's reputation and status: few may have had the resources to resist such an allegation. This may be why the sources contain relatively little information about strictly political or social conflict in Antioch in this period: in a society with an overwhelmingly religious political discourse, secular tensions may well often have manifested themselves in 'religious' conflict. The events of the later sixth century clearly point to instability within Antiochene society: the patriarch, who by this point played a vital role in the city's secular as well as religious governance, seems to have relied on imperial support to retain his position in the face of widespread local opposition. It is tempting, if impossible to prove, that the city's repeated experience of disaster had contributed to this political volatility. Certainly, disasters are likely to have encouraged anti-pagan activity: as will be argued in Chapter 3, it was not only emperors who scapegoated 'pagans' for causing crisis.[184] Controversy over supposed paganism was thus closely linked to wider developments in the history of the city.

Christological controversy

One explanation that has been offered for the accusations against Gregory has yet to be considered: that the charges against him were invented or at least encouraged by his Christological opponents, the Miaphysites.[185] In order to assess the plausibility of this theory, it is necessary to consider in some detail the position of Miaphysites within Antioch in the sixth century. This is challenging, however, since, below the level of the bishops, evidence about religion in the city is again uneven. Antioch has sometimes been presented as a Chalcedonian haven in the midst of a Miaphysite countryside,[186] and sometimes (perhaps more commonly) as a Miaphysite stronghold.[187] The evidence presents two

[184] See below pp.210-18.
[185] As suggested by Liebeschuetz 2001a, 262-9.
[186] See e.g. Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 170*n6.
[187] See Frend 1972, 140, 166-7; Mayer 2009, 362.

particular difficulties. First, it is often difficult to isolate evidence about the Antiochene area in particular from sources dealing with the east more generally; even the letters of Severus range in scope across the diocese of Oriens and beyond. Secondly, sources dealing with this topic are often highly ideologically charged. It is not safe to state that Antioch was thoroughly Miaphysite at the time of Severus's accession in 512 purely on the basis that the anonymous *Life of Severus* claims that the whole city welcomed the new patriarch with joy and spontaneously anathematised Chalcedon.[188] Nonetheless, enough material survives from the earlier decades of the century to draw some conclusions about what seems to have been a Christologically divided city. In the second half of the century evidence becomes sparser, since our major sources, including Evagrius Scholasticus's *History*, say little about contemporary Christological disputes; it is difficult to determine whether this omission is conscious and politic, intended to smooth over controversy,[189] or whether it reflects the genuine unimportance of Christological divides in Antiochene society.[190]

In the early parts of the sixth century, Antioch was thoroughly divided on the question of Christology, perhaps more so than any other patriarchal see.[191] Events surrounding the deposition of the Chalcedonian patriarch Flavian in 512 provide evidence of an active Chalcedonian element in the population: Evagrius Scholasticus reports that when the anti-Chalcedonian bishop Philoxenus of Mabbugh persuaded the monks of First Syria (i.e. northern Syria, normally regarded as predominantly pro-Miaphysite in contrast to the Chalcedonian Second Syria)[192] to pressurise Flavian into anathematising Chalcedon, 'the

[188] *Life of Severus of Antioch* (pp.241-2). It should be noted that the hagiographer's main source for this passage, Zachariah Scholasticus's 'Life' of Severus, contains no reference to spontaneous popular anathematisations of Chalcedon. Allen has claimed on the basis of the former passage that Antioch was 'pro-monophysite' (Allen 1981, 152).
[189] As argued by Allen 1981, 42-4.
[190] As suggested by Whitby 2000, xl-xlvii, though he does also suggest that Evagrius's silence suited Chalcedonian efforts to cooperate with Miaphysites.
[191] For Christological developments in the first decades of the sixth century, see Honigmann 1951, esp.7-25.
[192] See e.g. Menze 2008, 45; Alpi 2009, 103-6, with plate III (309). In both provinces, however, there were exceptions to this general trend.

populace of the city rose up and effected a great slaughter of the monks.'[193] Pseudo-Zachariah also reports, if in even vaguer terms, that the anti-Chalcedonian monks who went to Antioch to oppose Flavian met with violent resistance: 'some of them were beaten and some of them were killed; nevertheless Flavian was driven from his see.'[194] As Alpi has observed, there is no comparable evidence of violent unrest when Flavian's Miaphysite replacement Severus was forced to flee his see later in the same decade.[195] In general, Miaphysite sources describing Antioch during Severus's patriarchate tend to present the city as 'orthodox'.[196] Yet various references in Severus's own homilies imply that he was fully aware of the existence of Chalcedonians within Antioch. The caption to Homily 64 claims that it was pronounced in a church where 'Nestorians' (i.e. Chalcedonians) tended to congregate secretively.[197] In Homily 29 he states that it is necessary to anathematise heretics in order to prevent God from wreaking devastation on whole communities; this is why 'we' anathematise those who divide Christ into two natures. He then turns to talking about a particular 'wicked'[198] man, apparently well known to his audience, who had lived among them spreading heresy and causing violent disturbances, without Severus knowing; finally, however, he had been exposed and punished, along with his family and accomplices.[199] In both one of his homilies and one of his hymns he attacks claims by the Dyophysites that a drought in the region had been caused by the anathematisation of Chalcedon.[200] In this homily, he refers to 'the raging wasps of the Nestorian heresy, which buzz with unpleasant and polluted sounds, circulate between the houses and creep into the inner rooms, and, through one or two insane women somewhere, apply their leprosy, although the whole city

[193] Evagrius Scholasticus, 3.32 (p.131, trans. p.174).
[194] Pseudo-Zachariah (II, p.51, trans. p.268).
[195] Alpi 2009, 286-7.
[196] So see the account by Severus's hagiographer of his accession, as cited above p.65 n188. So too Severus in his own homilies generally seems to assume the orthodoxy of his audience.
[197] Homily 64 (p.313). Cf. Mayer and Allen 2012, pp.55-6, 204.
[198] ܪܥܝܫܐ: Homily 29 (p.592).
[199] Homily 29 (pp.588-606).
[200] Homily 19 (esp.p.26); Hymn 253 (II, pp.701-2).

is healthy and closes its ears to their words through the grace of God.'[201] The patriarch is here clearly trying to mock and downplay the significance of Chalcedonianism and its adherents, associating it with the credulous and weaker female sex, but the care he takes to refute the argument about the drought suggests that he felt Dyophysitism to be a greater threat than he was prepared to admit. Even at the height of anti-Chalcedonian power in Antioch, therefore, Chalcedonianism was never eradicated.

Equally, Miaphysitism seems to have remained active in the city and its environs even after Severus's deposition. While in exile both Severus and Philoxenus of Mabbugh claimed that much of the Antiochene population had remained loyal to 'orthodoxy': thus Philoxenus said that he had heard that the 'God-loving Christian people of Antioch' were openly proclaiming their willingness to be martyred for the faith.[202] While these claims doubtless contain some exaggeration, it seems unlikely that either bishop would have praised Antioch if it had wholeheartedly embraced Chalcedonianism. The chronicle of John Malalas reports that when, in the early 530s, a rescript was promulgated ordering that obdurate anti-Chalcedonians should be exiled, 'a riot broke out in Antioch, and the mob burst into the bishop's residence, throwing stones and chanting insults.'[203] Many monasteries in the Antiochene area endorsed Miaphysitism even in the face of persecution. Pseudo-Zachariah records a list of monasteries and abbots who were expelled in the persecutions of the 520s:[204] it included the abbot of the monastery of the Syrians in Antioch, and the monastery of Thomas of Seleucia.[205] This last is particularly interesting as it shows that there were

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201 ܕܒܘܐ ܒܢ̈ܫܐ ܕܗܪܣܝܣ ܢܣܛܘܪܝܢܘܬܐ ܀ ܗܘ̇ ܕܡܬܚܒܪܢ ܒܢ̈ܫܐ ܩܠ̈ܝܠܬܐ ܠܗ ܡܬܢܟܝܐ ܘܡܬܡܣܟܢܐ ܀ ܘܡܬܒܪܢܢ ܒܝܫ ܬܘܒ ܢ̈ܫܐ ܘܡܫܠܡܝܢ ܠܡܘܬܐ ܠܓܒܪ̈ܐ ܀ ܘܡܣܒܪܐ ܒܗܘܢ ܐܝܬܘܗܝ ܐܘ ܗܘ̇ ܐܝܬܝܗ ܕܫܢܝܢ ܒܡܘܬܢܐ ܠܒܢ̈ܝܢܫܐ ܥܒܕܝܢ ܀ ܒܪ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܥܕܬܐ ܚܠܝܡܐ ܀ ܘܡܣܟܪܐ ܐܕܢ̈ܝܗ ܡܢ ܡ̈ܠܝܗܘܢ ܒܝܕ ܛܝܒܘܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ.: Homily 19 (p.26).

202 ܥܡܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܪܚܡܐ ܟܪܣܛܝܢܐ ܕܐܢܛܝܘܟܝܐ: Philoxenus (I, p.80). See also Severus, *Letters* e.g. 1.54 (I.I, pp.180-1); 4.8 (I.II, p.302); 5.8 (I.II, pp.361-5).

203 Malalas 18.64 (p.391, trans. p.273)

204 On these persecutions and the relevant sources see esp. Menze 2008, 109-34, who emphasises that the expulsions seem often to have been limited in scope (e.g. targeting abbots rather than entire monasteries).

205 Pseudo-Zachariah (II, pp.80-1).

Miaphysites in the coastal regions west of Antioch (close to Symeon the Younger's monastery), not only to the east in the Limestone Massif. Antioch therefore seems to have been a divided city in the early sixth century: it cannot be seen in simple terms as either a Chalcedonian or a Miaphysite stronghold. On both sides of the divide, accusations of violence were made: thus, after Severus's deposition, monks from Second Syria claimed that he had been involved in various attacks on Chalcedonian monks, including on a group travelling near Symeon the Elder's monastery in the Limestone Massif,[206] while several anti-Chalcedonian authors denounced Ephraim, patriarch from 527 to 545, as a cruel and violent oppressor.[207] Even if the violence may have been exaggerated on both sides, such claims must suggest that the conflict involved considerable embitterment and hostility, at least among the region's monastic communities.[208]

It is much harder to trace the fate of Miaphysitism in Antioch later in the century. We have no sources comparable to the homilies and letters of Severus and Philoxenus for guidance. Later sixth-century anti-Chalcedonian authors display limited interest in Antioch. Thus in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* John includes only a very few tales about Antiochene holy persons, none of whom are distinguished by their struggles for the faith.[209] This does not necessarily mean, however, that there were no Miaphysites in Antioch, since John's focus throughout the work is on monks of his acquaintance, and in particular monks from his region of origin in Mesopotamia.[210] On the Chalcedonian side, even Antiochene authors tell us little. Evagrius Scholasticus, for example, despite his professed focus on ecclesiastical history, barely refers to Christological disputes in Antioch during his lifetime. Michael

[206] *ACO*, 1st Series, III (1940), pp.106-9. See Menze pp.46-7.
[207] Pseudo-Zachariah (II, pp.174-6); Pseudo-Dionysius (probably John of Ephesus) (pp.38-44, p.53). He appears in the Miaphysite *Life of John of Tella*, which describes him disputing with John and imprisoning him in Antioch: Elias, *Life of John of Tella* (p.65 ff); cf. Menze 2008, 231-3.
[208] Cf. Menze 2008, 47.
[209] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 46 and 52 (II, pp.671-6, III, pp.164-9).
[210] On the personal focus of John's work, see Harvey 1990a, 31-3; Van Ginkel 1995, 41.

Whitby has argued that the explanation for this silence may have been that in fact there were not very many Miaphysites in Antioch at this time, and so they posed no threat to the Chalcedonian authors.[211] He suggests that the repressions of patriarchs such as Ephraim must have had some effect, and that in any case Miaphysitism had always been more popular in the monasteries to Antioch's east than in the city itself. There certainly may have been a lack of anti-Chalcedonian clerical leadership in Antioch by this point: although the Miaphysites had appointed replacement patriarchs of Antioch after Severus's death in 538, if with some gaps between appointments, they probably spent little time in their patriarchal see.[212] Even if Miaphysitism did continue among the Antiochene laity, this would not necessarily have led to clashes with the Chalcedonians; there is some evidence that Miaphysites and Chalcedonians could have friendly social relations, and sometimes even worship together.[213]

On the other hand, Pauline Allen sees the silence of Evagrius on this topic as deliberate, calculated, and even polemical. By her argument, he had no desire to stir up pre-existing tensions, so avoided discussing the conflict, but, by essentially ignoring the existence of the Miaphysites, implied that only the Chalcedonians constituted the true Church.[214] Occasional references do suggest that Evagrius, and other Antiochene Chalcedonians of his day, were acutely aware of ongoing conflict. In Evagrius's discussion of Severus's patriarchate, he refers to his enthronement missives, stating, 'these indeed have been preserved down to our time, and from there many disputes have arisen for the church, and the most faithful populace has been divided.'[215] Admittedly, this remark is not necessarily specific to Antioch itself, but it shows that Evagrius was well aware of continued conflict. Evagrius's employer,

[211] Whitby as cited above p.65 n190.
[212] Cf. Mayer and Allen 2012, 205.
[213] Cf. Whitby 2000, xlv-xlvii, and see below pp.166-7.
[214] Allen 1981, esp.49.
[215] Evagrius Scholasticus, 4.4 (p.154, trans. p.202).

Gregory, made calls for Christian unity and an end to the obsession with difficult points of doctrine. Thus in a sermon on the baptism of Christ he presented the unquestioning worship of the heavenly powers as a model for his congregation: 'the cherubim and seraphim….sing hymns; they do not make excessive inquiries into the one whom they venerate.'[216] Later in the same sermon, Gregory appeals directly to his audience, 'Why do we fight each other pointlessly? Why do we battle each other, we who have been commanded to love even those who hate us?...why do we fulfil the desire of our common enemy?'; he continues to explain that it is the Devil who has stirred up the conflicts within the Church.[217] Evagrius too claimed that Christological conflict was caused by the Devil.[218] Such arguments must have been intended at least in part to win over a divided audience; Gregory's homily would surely not be necessary in a fully Chalcedonian city. Evagrius's downplaying of contemporary conflict thus seems likely to reflect a conciliatory attitude among some prominent Chalcedonians of the day, rather than the unimportance of Miaphysitism in Antioch. This does not preclude the possibility that Miaphysitism was declining in the city in this period, nor that relationships between Miaphysites and Chalcedonians were often less tense than has sometimes been thought. Indeed, a more conciliatory approach by the clergy might encourage positive social interactions. But it does seem unlikely that Miaphysitism could have been completely eradicated from the city within half a century, although its influence may have been greatly reduced.

Conclusion

In some respects, the sixth-century Antiochene seems to reflect broader developments in the eastern Roman empire. Thus, despite gaps and interpretative difficulties in the evidence, we

[216] Τὰ Χερουβὶμ καὶ τὰ Σεραφὶμ...ὑμνοῦσιν, οὐ πολυπραγμονοῦσιν, ὅν σέβουσιν: Gregory of Antioch, 'On the Baptism of Christ' (col 1873).
[217] Τί μαχόμεθα πρὸς ἀλλήλους εἰκῇ; Τί πολεμοῦμεν ἀλλήλους οἱ προστεταγμένοι καὶ τοὺς μισοῦντας φιλεῖν;…τί πληροῦμεν τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τοῦ κοινοῦ δυσμενοῦς;' ibid. (cols. 1880-1).
[218] See especially Evagrius Scholasticus, 2.5 (pp.52-3), where Evagrius also claims that Christological conflict was caused by the Devil, with Whitby 2000, xxxvii-xlvii, and Ginter 2001.

can see signs of conflict between emperor and local elites, between secular and religious leaders, and between the rich and the lower classes—although it is not clear that Sarris's argument that such social tensions were rising can be sustained. We can also see fundamental tensions within Christian approaches to identity and behaviour, which suggest that religion was not a straightforwardly integrating or unifying force in society. Conflicts over 'paganism' reveal both the intensity that perceived religious dissidence could generate, and how suppressed social and political tensions could find outlets in specific forms of violence. Yet Antioch's position was exceptional, largely because of the series of devastating disasters that hit the city across the sixth century. The literary sources paint a consistent picture of the physical and emotional damage caused by the crises. Although it is much harder to trace the effects of disasters in the limited archaeological record from the area, recent efforts to show that the local economy continued to thrive into the seventh century have proved unconvincing, while there is some evidence to corroborate the image of decline in the written sources. Certainly, there is no reason to question the severe ideological and emotional effects of the disasters, which are likely to have contributed to political, social and religious instability within the city. Although social and cultural tensions undoubtedly reflect both long term developments in the region, and wider trends in the society of the empire, they may well have been intensified and exacerbated in this context of crisis.

All of this provides the crucial background to the life and cult of Symeon Stylites the Younger. His whole life was, according to his hagiographer, interwoven with the disasters to hit the city: his father was killed in the earthquake of 526 while, as we shall see, a significant part of his career seems to have revolved around handling the subsequent earthquakes, invasion and plague which hit the city. Disasters posed a significant challenge to the saint's claims to be able to protect his suppliants. Any holy man's career was

inextricably linked to his local society: he had to understand, and perhaps manipulate, social and cultural realities in order to carve out a space for himself as a source of authority. Thus, as we will see in the next two chapters, Symeon the Younger seems to have played on tensions between the wealthier and poorer classes, as well as on culturally sensitive areas such as paganism, as part of his efforts to assert his own role as moral arbiter and religious figurehead. This is manifested not only in the hagiographic material associated with his shrine, but also in a text which may well date from his lifetime, and which forms the subject of the following chapter: the sermon collection attributed to the stylite.

The Sermons of Symeon Stylites the Younger

Although holy men have been the subject of considerable historical interest since Peter Brown's famous article of 1971, they can usually only be approached, at best, at second-hand, through the prism of hagiography.[1] As discussed above, it has been well established that hagiographers selected and adapted their material for a variety of purposes, from cult-promotion to apologetic and polemic;[2] to take but one example, Claudia Rapp has argued that many hagiographers focused on their saints' miracle-working rather than their other important functions, which were less useful posthumously, in order to encourage pilgrimages to their saints' shrines.[3] As a result, studies which rely on this material must necessarily be studies more of hagiographers and hagiographic ideals than of holy men themselves.[4] For most holy men, we can never get beyond this hagiographic picture. Yet in a few precious instances, we also possess some of the saint's own writings, which enable us to gain a much fuller image of the holy man—and in some cases, an image that is strikingly different from that preserved in hagiography. Thus, for example, Samuel Rubenson has argued that the letters attributed to Antony, perhaps the most famous of all holy men, show that the saint was far more philosophically and theologically sophisticated than Athanasius's *Life of Antony* and the *Apophthegmata Patrum* acknowledge.[5] The much more extensive (although, unfortunately, relatively inaccessible)[6] extant corpus of the fifth-century abbot Shenoute provides far more information about his life and character than does his largely formulaic biography, which claims to have been written by his disciple Besa, but in fact

[1] López 2013, 14.
[2] See above pp.10-12.
[3] Rapp 1999, 65.
[4] Such studies are, of course, important and interesting in their own right.
[5] Rubenson 1990, passim.
[6] Shenoute's works have yet to be edited in full, let alone translated, but editions are in progress on the back of Stephen Emmel's vital study of his corpus (Emmel 2004).

probably dates from considerably later.[7] Stephen Emmel has, for instance, managed to reconstruct, from parts of Shenoute's Canons, the controversial series of events which led to Shenoute becoming head of the White Monastery,[8] events which are not even mentioned in 'Besa's' *Life*. Heike Behlmer and David Brakke have both highlighted a tension between Shenoute's sermons, in which he refuses to use his miraculous powers to resolve everyday difficulties amongst his congregation, and his *Life,* in which he frequently performs such activities.[9] It is clear, therefore, that the writings of holy men can provide new and sometimes radically different insights into holy men from those gleaned from their hagiographies.

In view of this, it is perhaps surprising that the writings attributed to Symeon Stylites the Younger have received very little scholarly attention. These consist of a letter apparently written to the emperor Justin II on the subject of a Samaritan revolt, preserved in the acts of the Second Council of Nicaea, and, most significantly, a collection of thirty sermons.[10] Admittedly, this collection presents various difficulties to the historian, which will be discussed below, but it at least possesses the potential to yield substantial insights into the thought and teaching of this important holy man. This chapter will, after a brief discussion of scholarship on the early Christian sermon, address the complicated evidence relating to the dating and authorship of the collection attributed to Symeon. It will then outline the themes, form and style of the collection, arguing that although the author displays no rhetorical brilliance, he does construct his relationship with his audience in fairly sophisticated ways. It will analyse three dominant themes within the collection—monks and their relationship with demons, eschatology, and wealth—to suggest that the speaker

[7] Lubomierski 2008 (although López has suggested that the work may ultimately derive from an encomium of Shenoute delivered by Besa soon after the saint's death: López 2013, 135-6).
[8] Emmel 2004, II, 558-64. For a detailed analysis of this episode, see Schroeder 2007, 24-53.
[9] Behlmer 1998, 341-359 (Behlmer also discusses more generally the greater focus on miracles in 'Besa's' *Life* than in Shenoute's own writings); Brakke 2007.
[10] For details of the editions, see the bibliography.

presents himself as an experienced combatant with demons, and as a visionary prophet bringing an ominous message to the world. Different themes within the collection may have been intended for different audiences: some address monks, while others seem to target parts of society beyond the monastery. But throughout, the preacher insists upon uncompromising moral standards and on the stark divide between heaven and hell. His sometimes aggressive language and harsh message suggest that he may have played a less peaceful role within society than that which has often been associated with the holy man.

The Early Christian Homily

Part of the explanation for the relative historiographical neglect of Symeon's sermons may lie in the generally underdeveloped and uneven state of scholarship on the early Christian sermon. Although it has been recognised that preaching played a crucial role in the rise of Christianity,[11] and that sermons, particularly in view of their apparent popularity, should be fertile ground for research,[12] comprehensive studies of sermons and preaching remain limited. This is largely due to the myriad practical difficulties involved in treating the large extant body of early Christian homilies.[13] These difficulties include the sheer extent of the surviving material; some of the most renowned preachers have hundreds of sermons attributed to them in the manuscripts, making it difficult for scholars to treat their works in full. A particular problem is that it is often hard to establish the extent of an individual's authentic corpus, as many sermons appear to be falsely ascribed to famous early preachers such as John Chrysostom and the Cappadocian Fathers. As a result of these challenges, we still lack critical editions of many important homiletic collections.

[11] A.M. Cameron 1991a, 79; cf. also Hartney 2004, 5, 50, and passim; Brown 2012, 72.
[12] Cunningham 1986, 29; Allen 1997, 4.
[13] See e.g. Allen and Mayer 1993, 260 ff.; Allen 1997, 5-8; Cunningham and Allen 1998, 1-20; Olivar 1998. These articles underlie most of the following discussion on problems in studying early Christian homilies.

It is also unclear how, why, and when, many of these sermons were preserved, and to what extent they were edited between their delivery and their transmission in their current forms. No one-size-fits-all answer will serve: some sermons seem to have been recorded more or less verbatim by stenographers, others to have been extensively rewritten, either by the author himself, or by later editors.[14] It is not even certain whether all works written in the form of 'sermons' were delivered orally or whether some were only ever intended for private reading. This brings the very definition of the sermon into question; but if we wish to restrict the label to apply only to those sermons which were delivered to an audience, the problem then arises of how we determine which texts were so delivered.[15] While in some cases the presence of references to specific behaviour by the audience,[16] to particular contexts for delivery, and to the act of preaching itself strongly suggest that the sermon was delivered orally, the absence of such comments cannot always be taken to prove the opposite. This problem becomes particularly acute if we take into account not only the sermons attributed to ecclesiastical leaders who almost certainly did preach to their congregations, but also the various collections of discourses on monastic and ascetic themes attributed to authors such as Isaiah of Scetis and Dorotheus of Gaza. Some periods present especial difficulties: as suggested by Pauline Allen, one reason that sixth-century material has been particularly neglected may be that some of its most notable collections survive only in translation (most famously, the Cathedral Homilies of Severus of Antioch);[17] fewer scholars are comfortable working with Syriac and Coptic material than with Greek, while the translation process makes it even harder to assess the style of the sermon as originally delivered. All these and

[14] See e.g. Rousseau 1998, 395. For evidence of the different transmission methods within the corpus of John Chrysostom, see Goodall 1979, 62-78, with Mayer and Allen 2000, 30-1. Mary Cunningham has discussed issues of transmission relating to Byzantine homilies in various studies, including Cunningham 1986, 1996, and 2011.
[15] Cunningham and Allen 1998, 1-2.
[16] On this theme see esp. Olivar 1991, 786-811.
[17] Allen 1998, 202-6.

other difficulties have impeded the progress of scholarship on the early Christian sermon, and, in particular, have practically precluded comprehensive overviews of the evidence.[18]

The lack of such overviews makes it much harder to situate the corpus of an individual author in its wider context. As I will argue, in order to understand the sermons of Symeon the Younger, we need an appreciation of both the ecclesiastical traditions of preaching, as exemplified by figures such as John Chrysostom and Severus of Antioch, and of the monastic tradition of ascetic discourses, as typified by authors including Evagrius Ponticus and Isaiah of Scetis. Although little of what Symeon says is in itself original, the combination of themes and approaches from these two traditions is unusual and striking. But before analysing the contents of Symeon's homilies, it is necessary first to examine in some detail the evidence relating to the authorship and transmission of his corpus.

Authorship

Did Symeon the Younger write the sermons attributed to him in the manuscript tradition? The question must be answered in several stages. It is worth stressing, first, that there is nothing inherently implausible in the idea of a holy man delivering sermons which were subsequently recorded. Early Christian hagiography makes it clear that holy men were expected to preach, mostly to their monastic disciples, but sometimes, too, to lay and clerical visitors.[19] Innumerable saints' Lives, not only of bishops,[20] but also of monks,[21] depict their

[18] An important exception is Olivar 1991, a detailed survey of diverse aspects of early Christian preaching in east and west. Also of great importance is Ehrhard's study of the evidence for the tradition and transmission of early Christian hagiography and homilies (Ehrhard 1936-52).
[19] Escolan stresses the importance of preaching for monks, and especially for stylites: Escolan 1999, 242-65.
[20] See e.g. *Life of Rabbula* (pp.173 (line 7)-181 (line 11); John Rufus, *Life of Peter the Iberian,* 105 (p.158), 155-8 (pp.228-34), 163 (p.238), 179 (pp.258-62); *Life of Severus of Antioch* (pp.242-6); and Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver,* 20-1 (pp.368-72), 42-3 (pp.393-7).
[21] See e.g. Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 16-43 (pp.176-252), 55 (pp.280-6), 91 (pp.366-70); Bohairic *Life of Pachomius* e.g. 46 (pp.48-9), 69 (p.72), 86 (pp.95-6), 105 (pp.135-8); Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatius,* Prologue 8-18 (pp.70-2), cc.13, (pp.120-2), 24-5 (pp.146-80), 27 (pp.182-4), 48 (pp.274-84); *Life of Alexander Akoimetos,* 39 (pp.688-9), 44 (pp.692-3), 52 (p.700); Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius,* 9 (pp.16-18), 29 (pp.45-7), 39 (pp.57-8); Theodore of Petra, *Life of Theodosius* (pp.49 line 22-p.53 line12); and Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba*, 13 (pp.111-4), 18 (pp.116-8), 39 (pp.137-141).

heroes as preachers and teachers. Some hagiographers even include the texts of long discourses supposedly delivered by their saints;[22] Athanasius seems to have set the trend here, as he embedded within the *Life of Antony* a lengthy speech about demons and monks.[23] In addition, several hagiographers claim that their heroes' teachings were committed to writing in their lifetimes, sometimes by their disciples, sometimes by the holy men themselves.[24] Although it is possible that some hagiographers invented such claims in an attempt to prove that their Lives were based on good sources, the Canons of Shenoute seem to confirm that some holy men sought to preserve and even institutionalise their own teachings: Stephen Emmel has noted that the postscript to Shenoute's first Canon—a postscript apparently written by the holy man himself—demands that the leader of the Shenoutian monasteries should 'rely on it [i.e. the Canon] and not forget it or neglect to read its words four times a year, as is appointed for us.'[25] In view of this, it is perhaps surprising that we do not possess more collections of sermons by holy men (although it is possible, if rarely provable, that some saints' Lives preserve authentic discourses delivered by their heroes).

The *Life of Symeon the Younger* is one of the late antique saint's lives to place the most emphasis on its subject's preaching.[26] It reports that Symeon began to preach, with divine inspiration, as a child: after the youth delivered a long sermon to the monks of his monastery, the abbot John remarked "It was not he [i.e. Symeon] himself who said these things, but the perfecting and all-holy Spirit from the father; for it is written: 'you have prepared praise

[22] See e.g. Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatius,* 24 (pp.146-78); Bohairic *Life of Pachomius,* e.g. 105 (pp.135-8); George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 164 (pp.150-2); Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba,* 13 (pp.111-4), 18 (pp.116-8), 39 (pp.137-41).
[23] Athanasius, *Life of Antony,* 16-43 (pp.176-252).
[24] See e.g. the First Greek *Life of Pachomius,* 99 (pp.66-7); Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatius,* 27 (p.184).
[25] Emmel 2004, II, 562-3.
[26] See Van den Ven 1957, 7-8.

from the mouth of babes and sucklings'.[27] The hagiographer claims, soon afterwards, that the brethren asked Symeon to speak to them about salvation, prompting a long discourse on proper monastic behaviour.[28] While still a child, Symeon prayed to God to send grace upon him as he had upon his apostles and disciples, 'so that I may utter words of eternal life for the forgiveness of sins;'[29] the purpose of preaching is thus defined as the salvation of the audience. God, we are told, responded instantly:

> While he was uttering this prayer, the holy spirit of God came down like a lamp upon his heart, as he had asked, and filled him with wisdom and understanding; and he was judged worthy of such grace that no-one could resist (as it is written) the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke. He wrote discourses about monks, the penitence of the laity, the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the future judgement, and hope, explaining clearly things which are unknown to most people.[30]

This seems to imply that Symeon not only preached directly to the brothers, but also wrote down [συνέτασσε] his discourses. The topics of the discourses as listed show some parallels to those included in the extant sermon collection, which has led Van den Ven to suggest that this passage may in fact be referring to this collection.[31] Although the hagiographer does not, perhaps, stress Symeon's preaching to the same extent in his adulthood, he does continue to recount various shorter ethical speeches delivered by the saint throughout his lifetime;[32] he describes Symeon expounding the book of Job to the brethren;[33] and, incidentally, provides the text of several *troparia* the saint supposedly wrote in response to a series of earthquakes.[34] Symeon's hagiographer thus presents Symeon as a potent

[27] Οὐκ αὐτὸς λαλεῖ ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ τὸ πατρικὸν καὶ τελειωτικὸν πανάγιον πνεῦμα· γέγραπται γάρ· 'Ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηρτίσω αἶνον': *Life of Symeon*, 24 (p.21).
[28] ibid. 25 (pp.23-9).
[29] ἵνα λαλήσω ῥήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν: ibid. 35 (p.32).
[30] Ταῦτα αὐτοῦ προσευχομένου, κατῆλθεν ἐξαίφνης ὥσπερ λαμπὰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ, καθάπερ ἠτήσατο, καὶ ἐνέπλησεν αὐτὸν σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως· τοσαύτης δὲ ἠξιώθη χάριτος, ὥστε μηδένα δύνασθαι ἀντιστῆναι, κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον, τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι ᾧ ἐλάλει. Συνέτασσε δὲ λόγους περὶ μοναχῶν καὶ περὶ μετανοίας λαϊκῶν καὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης κρίσεως καὶ ἐλπίδος, σαφῶς ἑρμηνεύων τὰ λανθάνοντα τοὺς πολλούς: ibid. 35 (p.32).
[31] Van den Ven 1957, 24.
[32] See e.g. *Life of Symeon*, 52 (pp.47-8), 113 (pp.92-3), 166 (p.148), 171 (pp.152-3).
[33] ibid. 124 (pp.106-7).
[34] ibid. 105-7 (pp.84-7).

preacher, claiming that he taught through both speech and the written word. Archaeology may provide some support for this vision of Symeon as preacher: there are two-layered benches cut into the walls at the sides of the open space surrounding Symeon's column, which could have provided seating for the audience of his discourses (although they could also perhaps have seated pilgrims who merely wanted to look at the saint).[35] Given the evidence from Symeon's *Life*, and from late antique hagiography more generally, that holy men could compose discourses, we should not be suspicious, *a priori*, of the idea that a collection of the stylite's sermons might have survived, particularly since there does seem to have been a collection made of his letters.[36]

This does not, of course, prove that the collection which does survive under the saint's name is authentic. Hippolyte Delehaye, in his magisterial study of stylites, expressed serious doubts about its attribution to Symeon, noting that 'dans ce genre de littérature rien n'est plus frequent que les compilations faites de lambeaux de toute provenance, et placées sous le patronage de quelque nom illustre', and claiming both that the sermons themselves contain no indication that they were delivered by the stylite, and that the large number of monks called Symeon who wrote on spiritual themes could have caused confusion.[37] Delehaye was writing several decades before the publication by Paul Van den Ven in 1957 of the first four sermons in the collection. In the introduction to his edition, Van den Ven proposed that the surviving sermons were based upon lost originals delivered by Symeon himself, but that they had been rewritten in a more verbose style by a later editor.[38] To my knowledge, all but one of the (far from numerous) scholars who have subsequently dealt

[35] Lafontaigne-Dosogne 1967, 94-5; Djobadze 1986, 60.
[36] This is implied by the fact that the letter of the stylite quoted at the Second Council of Nicaea is described as his 'fifth' letter: Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 179*.
[37] Delehaye 1923, lxxiv-lxxv.
[38] Van den Ven 1957, 16-33.

with Symeon's sermons have accepted Van den Ven's opinion of the origin of the text.[39] Although in the following discussion I will challenge some aspects of his arguments, I remain indebted to his presentation and analysis of the relevant material. I will look first at the manuscript tradition and external evidence for the authorship of the sermons, before moving on to consider evidence within the sermons themselves, and, crucially, the parallels identified by Van den Ven between the sermons and the *Life of Symeon the Younger*.

The sermons survive in a small number of manuscripts, the earliest of which are from the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[40] The only manuscript to preserve the collection in its entirety, Mount Athos Lavra gr.BE 71, dates from the twelfth century, and contains, in addition to the sermons, the *Life of Symeon the Younger*, the *Life of Martha*, and several liturgical texts devoted to the stylite and his mother. This manuscript serves as the basis for Van den Ven's edition of sermons 1-4. It was unknown to Angelo Mai, whose edition of sermons 5-30 is based primarily upon Vaticanus gr.2021. Vaticanus gr.2021 originally contained the full text of the sermons, but the first section, containing sermons 1-4, has been lost.[41] The manuscript was finished, according to its copyist Bartholomew the monk, in 1105. Mai also used another, incomplete, eleventh/twelfth-century manuscript from the Vatican, Vaticanus gr.2089, the second fragment of which contains nine of Symeon's sermons, as well as extracts from other religious works. The final relevant manuscript, Codex B.a.VII from the abbey of Grottaferrata, dates from the eleventh century and consists only of Symeon's eleventh and twelfth sermons. The texts of the sermons given in these four manuscripts are extremely similar; all also use the same captions for the sermons

[39] Thus Hester 1990, 332-3; Allen 1998, 204-5; see also *CPG* III, 7367 (p.378). The exception is Olivar who, in his brief notice on the collection, argues, recalling Delehaye, that the peculiarities of the text suggest that it was a later compilation rather than an authentic record of Symeon's preaching. He does not support his arguments with any analysis of the text itself (Olivar 1991, 179-80).
[40] My description of the manuscripts is based on that of Van den Ven 1957, 8-12.
[41] Mai did, however, provide a text of sermon 4, derived from an edition by the Danish scholar Clausen on the basis of a lost manuscript.

(captions which identify 'Symeon the stylite of the monastery of the Wonderful Mountain' as the author of the texts, and which all specify the age at which the sermon was delivered, within a range of ten to twenty-four years old). The Athos manuscript, and the two Vatican manuscripts, ascribe the same numbers to the sermons, which is particularly noteworthy in the case of Vaticanus gr.2089 as it contains only sermons 11, 14, 16, 22, 25, 26, 28 and 29. Notes in the margins of the Athos manuscript instruct that sermons 1, 5, 8, and 22 were to be read on specific feast days; Vaticanus gr.2089 contains the same instruction that sermon 22 should be read on the first Saturday of Lent[42] (as mentioned, this manuscript does not include sermons 1, 5, or 8, so could not repeat the instructions in those cases). The uniformity of the manuscripts strongly suggests that there was already a collection of these thirty sermons in circulation, attributed to Symeon the Younger, with the numbering and captions that have survived, and, possibly, with some link to liturgical readings. The surviving text is in many places very obscure, and this obscurity may well be partly due to textual corruption in the source of all our manuscripts.

When was this collection made? It is impossible to be sure, but we do possess a crucial piece of evidence proving that at least one of Symeon's sermons was already circulating, apparently under his name, long before the copying of the medieval manuscripts. John of Damascus, in his third discourse on images, dating from the early eighth century,[43] quotes several lines of the eighth sermon in our collection, under the heading 'from the great Symeon of the Wonderful Mountain about icons.'[44] As John does not refer to the number of the sermon, nor use its title, this cannot in itself be used to prove that the full collection as we have described it already existed in the eighth century. Yet Van den Ven has argued

[42] Van den Ven 1957, 13 n.48.
[43] Paul Speck has cast doubts on the dating of this text, as with many other iconophile texts, arguing that it in fact was written in the ninth century. On Speck's arguments, which have failed to win widespread acceptance, see below pp.147 n19, 151-55.
[44] John of Damascus, On Images, 3.126 (p.194). Cf. Van den Ven 1957, 23. The wording of the excerpt in John of Damascus is extremely similar, but not identical, to that printed by Mai.

persuasively that the whole collection is stylistically and thematically homogeneous, implying that it was all the work of the same author.[45] This does, then, suggest that the collection must have been written, at the latest, in the early decades of the eighth century, and that it was already attributed at this point to Symeon of the Wonderful Mountain (i.e. Symeon the Younger), although it is possible that the captions and liturgical links were a later development. Unfortunately, external evidence can take us no further; John of Damascus is the earliest known author to refer to the sermons.

Internal evidence from the collection itself may provide more clues. We must, however, be on our guard here, to avoid reading too much into the text; some pieces of evidence that have been adduced by previous scholars to support Symeon's authorship do not seem to me compelling. Van den Ven, for example, argues that the author must have lived near Antioch, since the sixth sermon was directed at an Antiochene landowner.[46] This reference to Antioch, however, only appears in the caption to the sermon;[47] in the body of the text, while there are many attacks on wealth, and a rich person is addressed directly, there is no link with a particular city. Given that, as mentioned, the captions all identify 'Symeon the stylite of the monastery of the Wonderful Mountain' as the author of the sermons, the reference to Antioch here seems of little value in identifying the collection's authenticity; if we agree that the captions are authentic, Symeon's authorship must be accepted anyway. Although Van den Ven notes that the captions do not always fit the contents of the sermons very accurately,[48] and suggests that they were added by the editor of the text,[49] he nonetheless regards them as preserving some genuine information, such as the young age at which Symeon delivered the sermons.[50] This is not, however, entirely compelling: while it is true

[45] Van den Ven 1957, 19-20.
[46] Van den Ven 1957, 22.
[47] Where it is described as a speech 'πρὸς τινὰ κτήτορα Ἀντιοχείας'.
[48] Van den Ven 1957, 12.
[49] ibid. 32.
[50] ibid. 29.

that at some points the speaker of the sermon seems to imply he is a young man, at other points he presents himself as elderly: 'When I repent, pleasures pass me by, and having old age in mind, the tomb of death drags me, naked of the commands and unready, to the judgement… I was revealed a flourishing tree, and having been corrupted by old age, I am cut down for burning. I am whitened grain, and I am harvested by angels with scythes.'[51] While this passage is doubtless largely rhetorical, it is difficult to imagine it being delivered, as the caption claims, by a thirteen-year old! It is thus far from clear that the captions are genuine, and they cannot be used as strong evidence to associate the text with Symeon.

Other scraps of evidence adduced by Van den Ven are more suggestive.[52] In the first sermon, unknown to Mai (and by extension Delehaye) the speaker's name is identified as Symeon ['I, your slave, Symeon'].[53] Van den Ven has argued that the allusion to the speaker's 'station [στάσεώς μου]' in the same sermon is a reference to his 'station' as a stylite on his column. In the first sermon the speaker also claims to have been young when he first became an ascetic: 'And having stretched my hands towards you, my saviour, I will leap with joy and with the corps of the bodiless ones and all the prophets and apostles of the ages, the martyrs, the confessors *and those of the same age as me when I began my asceticism, the children killed by Herod* [emphasis mine]'[54] which would fit the claim in the *Life of Symeon* that Symeon first joined his monastery aged six**,** and ascended his first column at the age of six or seven**.**[55] On their own, these pieces of evidence are not decisive; while the picture of

[51] καὶ ὅταν μετανοῶ, τὰ τερπνὰ με διαβαίνει, καὶ τὸ γῆρας ἔχοντός μου κατὰ νοῦν, ἡ ταφή με τοῦ θανάτου γυμνὸν τῶν ἐντολῶν καὶ ἀνέτοιμον ἕλκει πρὸς τὴν κρίσιν....φυτὸν ἀνεδείχθην εὐθαλὲς, καὶ ἐκ τῆς παλαίοτητος διαφθαρεὶς ἐκκόπτομαι πρὸς κατάκαυσιν. σῖτος εἰμὶ λευκανθεὶς, καὶ ὑπο τῶν δρεπανιστῶν ἀγγέλων θερίζομαι. Sermon 10.2 (p.46).
[52] Van den Ven 1957, 21-2.
[53] ἐγὼ ὁ δοῦλός σου Συμεών: Sermon 1 (p.35).
[54] καὶ τὰς χεῖράς μου πρὸς σὲ τανύσας, τὸν σωτῆρά μου, συσκιρτήσω τῇ εὐφροσύνῃ καὶ πολιτείᾳ τῶν ἀσωμάτων καὶ πάντων τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος προφητῶν καὶ ἀποστόλων, μαρτύρων, ὁμολογητῶν καὶ *τῶν ἀφ' οὗ ἠρξάμην τὴς ἀσκήσεως συνηλίκων μου τῶν ὑπὸ Ἡρῴδου ἀναιρεθέντων παιδίων:* ibid.
[55] *Life of Symeon,*10-12 (pp.10-12); 15 (pp.13-4), 258 (p.223); cf. Van den Ven's discussion of the chronology of his life: Van den Ven 162-70, I, 124*-130*.

the speaker that emerges—of an ascetic, from a young age, with a 'station', called Symeon—certainly would fit Symeon the Younger well, Delehaye's suggestion that the sermons could have been the work of another Symeon who was later confused with the more famous stylite remains possible.

Yet there is a final, crucial, piece of evidence that seems to prove that the 'Symeon' of the first sermon is to be identified with Symeon Stylites the Younger. Van den Ven has shown the existence of indisputable connections between several passages in the sermon collection and some episodes in the *Life of Symeon the Younger*.[56] In two cases, we find accounts of the same vision in the sermons and in the *Life,* but in the sermon collection they are recounted in the first person, as if seen by the speaker himself, while in the *Life,* they are reported in the third person, as visions which Symeon saw as a child. In one of these visions, recounted in the ninth sermon and in the eighteenth chapter of the *Life*, Symeon is said to have seen the devil with his hordes of demons. Both versions refer to much the same details—musical instruments, the devil's diadem, gold and precious stones, Sin the devil's daughter, and the sign of the cross scattering the demons—even if in a somewhat different order. There are also clear verbal links between the two: in sermon 9, for example, the speaker reports 'and I have seen the spirit of avarice, a plague and sordidly greedy of gain, gaping to swallow up the world';[57] while the *Life* recounts 'there he saw the spirit of wickedness and forgetfulness and laziness and the spirit of avarice gaping to swallow up the world.'[58]

In the second example, both texts seem to be referring to the same event—an occasion on which Symeon was tempted by lust in a dream, but was saved after swearing never to

[56] Van den Ven 1957, 24 ff.
[57] καὶ τὸ τὴς φιλαργυρίας εἶδον πνεῦμα λοιμὸν καὶ αἰσχροκερδῆ κεχῃνότα τοῦ καταπιεῖν τὸν κόσμον: Sermon 9.5 (p.41).
[58] ἐκεῖ εἶδε πνεῦμα πονηρίας καὶ λήθης καὶ ῥᾳθυμίας καὶ πνεῦμα φιλαργυρίας χαίνον τοῦ καταπιεῖν τὸν κόσμον: *Life of Symeon,* 18 (pp.15-6).

succumb and after taking the Eucharist—but, interestingly, it is recounted in almost entirely different terms. In the *Life,* the narrative is fairly straightforward: the hagiographer reports that Satan tried to tempt Symeon with titillating dreams, but that Symeon resisted him through the power of God; he woke up and lamented, praying to God for mercy; he then saw a 'holy minister, a priest from the altars above',[59] carrying a cup of the Eucharist; the place was filled with a sweet smell; and the heavenly minister made Symeon swear that he would never succumb to lust. The account in the ninth sermon is less clear: the speaker reports that he fell asleep, saw visions of pleasure, resisted them, understanding that they were the work of the devil; that he was bound by an oath on the body of Christ that he would not succumb to lust, and that this dispelled the vision. He then reports: 'I made promises to Christ of virtues and of prayers, receiving with a sweet smell, in the partaking of life, his body and blood, to which I swore my oath, through a wise man. And in him I recovered from the vision of the spectacle.'[60] The two accounts are clearly closely linked: features that appear in both include temptation in a dream, an oath not to succumb to lust, the taking of the Eucharist, a sweet smell, and the involvement of a virtuous man. But the sermon is more concise, and much less clear, than the *Life*: most notably, whereas the *Life* reports that a heavenly priest appeared and brought the Eucharist, the sermon only states that the speaker took the Eucharist 'through a wise man'.[61] Unfortunately, this cannot obviously be used to prove the direction of the relationship between the texts; while it is possible that the author of the sermons presupposed a knowledge of the account in the *Life,* and therefore felt able to write allusively, it is equally possible (perhaps even more likely) that the hagiographer,

[59] ἅγιον λειτουργὸν ἐκ τῶν ἄνωθεν θυσιαστηρίων πρεσβύτερον: ibid. 35 (p.34).
[60] καὶ τῷ Χριστῷ συνταγὰς ἀρετῶν καὶ εὐχῶν ἐποιούμην, δεχόμενος μετ' ὀσμῆς εὐωδῖας ἐν μεταλήψει ζωῆς τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ, εἰς ὅ ἐπιστωσάμην τὸν ὅρκον, δι' ἀνδρὸς συνετοῦ. καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν ἀνάνηψιν ἔσχον ἐκ τῆς ὁράσεως τοῦ θεάματος: Sermon 9.2 (p.39).
[61] A subsequent passage in the same sermon may also refer to this incident, in equally oblique terms: it speaks of the demons of fornication and wickedness screaming at Symeon but being dismissed by a saint from heaven: Sermon 9.7 (pp.42-3).

if he was drawing on the text of the sermon, would have felt the need to develop and clarify its words.

The third example of a relationship between the sermon collection and the *Life* is of a different nature. Rather than a vision recounted in the first person in the sermons, and in the third person in the *Life,* we find the same sermon (in variant versions) delivered directly in both. In chapter 24 of the *Life*, the hagiographer reports that the saint, as a boy, delivered a speech, and proceeds to give a text which is clearly connected to the third sermon in the collection. I provide a translation of both sermons in parallel below, in order to show both the close relationship between them, and the different styles of each.[62] I translate the version given in the *Life* in full; for reasons of space, I have omitted (but marked) a passage from the third sermon of the collection which is not paralleled in the *Life.* Parts of the sermon which are impossible to translate into comprehensible English are italicised. I also give a translation of select passages from the Fourth Book of Maccabees, which seems to have inspired the sermon.[63]

Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger, c.24.	Sermon 3	4 Maccabees[64]
Pious reason is the master of the emotions and it is co-bound to the body, and as a machine holds together the breaths which are drawn and is held together by them, thus also the body and the emotions moved in the body appear ruled by pious reason.	Pious reason is the master of the emotions; for it is bound to the body, and as a machine holds together the [breaths] which are drawn, so it is held together by the examination and condemnation of reasonings *that are poured out,* so that the body and the emotions moved in the body appear [ruled] by dominant reason.	1.1: The subject that I am about to discuss is most philosophical, that is, whether pious reason is sovereign over the emotions. 1.7: I could prove to you from many and various examples that reason is the master of the emotions.

[62] I have chosen to provide translations rather than the original Greek since Van den Ven 1957, 41-6, has already presented the two passages in Greek, without translation, in parallel.
[63] Van den Ven notes the connection to 4 Maccabees in a footnote (Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 20), but does not explore it in detail. I give the passages here as I believe that they may help to identify the relationship between the different versions of Symeon's sermon.
[64] My translations here are based closely on that of the NRSV: I have made only minor changes to highlight points of comparison with the Symeon texts.

For God, having created man in the beginning, established in him a mind as a commander [and] charioteer, as a judge of the whole body and an examiner of the good and bad thoughts that happen in us.	For God, having created man in the beginning, put in his heart a mind as a commander, like horses and charioteers of our whole body, creating the chariot with four wheels through dryness and wetness and hot and cold, from which things we run up to the separation of the soul and the body, of the joints and the marrows, distinguishing by our governing mind the onset of good things and of worthless things, and examining them in us, both the good things and the bad things, and controlling our thoughts like some rein on a horse we roll towards the tracks of the desires in us… [the speaker develops the metaphor of the charioteer and chariot for several further lines].	2.21-2 Now when God fashioned man, he planted his emotions and inclinations, but at the same time he enthroned the mind among the senses as a sacred commander over them all.
And so no-one is [so] mindless that he is ignorant of what is profitable, but we also recognise that those who have done bad things will not escape the coming judgement. For if the desires of pleasures overcome us and we are besieged by them and we do not rather bravely fight against their attacks, we are found transgressors of our promises and are condemned justly.	For no-one is mindless of discernment for what is profitable, just as we know of what is bad that when we do them [the doers] are brought to judgement. And so desire is defeated and has been overcome by reasonings. For whenever we desire the smoothness of pleasure, let us not fall into the destruction of transgression, if our reason doesn't wish it.	
	Just as it is possible to compare a tree with offshoots [παραφυάδας], whose branches when it is neglected are lowered, thus also reason, by not rousing *the soft rests of the body towards the trunk* dries out	**Just as pleasure and pain are two plants growing from the body and the soul, so there are many offshoots [παραφυάδες] of these plants, each of which the master cultivator, reason, weeds**

	the offshoots [παραφυάδας] of desires, that is yearnings.	**and prunes and ties up and waters and thoroughly irrigates, and so tames the jungle of habits and emotions.**
For none of us is able not to desire, since this attaches to us naturally. But not yielding to pleasure, since pious reason prevails, as well as fear of judgement, is of our own choosing. Likewise we can put a stop to anger through the same reason. Let us rein in gluttony and the cravings begotten from this through prayer and laborious fasting. Let us not only turn away greediness as prohibited, but let us also hate it. The divine law too testifying in advance says this: "You will not desire the wife of your neighbour, nor his field, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor any of his possessions" [Deuteronomy 5:21], teaching us through these things not to be conquered by desire for woman, nor by vainglory or pretension, nor to be controlled by anger, nor to be defeated by gluttony or avarice or other bad desires.	For none of us is able not to desire, having been born so by nature. But not yielding to pleasure, since pious reasoning prevails, we can [achieve] easily on account of fear of judgement. And none of us can be completely delivered from evil dispositions and anger. But through the good victory of reason we can assist our anger to resistance and changing. None of us again can prevent gluttony and the cravings from it; but we can bridle gluttonous indulgence and the desires from it. The God-given law too testifying reminds us of this, saying, "You will not desire the wife of your neighbour, nor his field, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor any of his possessions", [Deuteronomy 5:21] through which things he revealed that we should not be conquered by desire for woman, if one of us desires it, nor to be flattered by vainglory from much pretension, nor to be controlled by anger, nor to be possessed by gluttony and avarice. Just as desire is one, many are the many-branched thoughts of its protuberances, as for instance we desire to be gluttonous, to fornicate, to love money, to be vain, and we apply to the body the same muddiness of pleasure towards each passion of desires.	3.2-4: None of us can eradicate that kind of desire, but reason can provide a way for us not to be enslaved by desire. None of us can eradicate anger from the mind, but reason can help us to deal with anger. None of us can eradicate malice, but reason can fight at our side so that we are not overcome by malice. For reason does not uproot the emotions but is their antagonist. 2.5 Thus the law says, "You will not desire the wife of your neighbour, nor any of his possessions."

But also the Lord because of this showed two paths, the former, narrow one leading to life those who walk on it and are zealous to behave well in this life, but the other, broad one, leading to destruction those who scorn the virtues [cf. Matt 7:13]. Thus he proclaims: 'What I say to you in the darkness, tell in the light." [Matt 10:27] Now, thinking on and doing bad things bears the likeness of the darkness, [a likeness] condemning those who have sinned; but choosing, through good behaviour, that which is good and just, leads to the eternal light to come. And so let us master pleasures with pious reason, and let us turn away every bad and sin-loving desire, emulating the lives and toils of the saints and the glory which is prepared for them and the difficult-to-describe command on account of which we should stay awake and always pray, being freed, as brothers, by the freedom of Christ our God [cf. Galatians 5:1], who will guard all of us for the glory of his majesty, Amen.'	But because of this the Lord shows two paths to reason mastering the passions, both a narrow and a broad, the former leading towards life on account of behaving well in this life, but the other leads those who neglect the virtues towards destruction. [cf. Matt 7:13] Thus he proclaims: 'What I say to you in darkness, tell in the light." [Matt 10:27] For thinking on bad things bears the likeness of the darkness which condemns those who have sinned; but choosing, through doing good, that which is good and just, is a witness of your virtue and life towards the deathless light to come. And so whenever we feel delight in this age and the world within it, strengthening pious reason let us turn away every impassioned and sin-loving desire, emulating the toils of the saints for the sake of the prepared glory and indescribable command, on account of which we should stay awake in petitions and in fastings and be enslaved in righteousness [cf. Romans 6:18] to the lifestyle of maximum virtue, being freed by the freedom of Christ our God [cf. Galatians 5:1], who will guard all of us for the glory of his majesty, with whom and to the father with the Holy Spirit glory is now and for ever and for all eternity, <Amen>."	

Some general observations can be made. The sermons given in the *Life* and the sermon collection clearly have a far closer relationship to each other than they do to 4 Maccabees; there can be no suggestion that they were drawn independently from the biblical text. I will return to the relationship between the sermons and 4 Maccabees below. Generally, the version of the sermon in the sermons collection is longer and more elaborate than that in the *Life* (in particular, it contains more developed similes). Neither text is decisively 'better' than the other: on the one hand, various parts of the sermon in the collection verge on the incomprehensible (as marked by italics), but on the other, at several points this version makes better sense than the text of the *Life.* Thus, for example, the exhortation in the last part of the sermon that we should 'turn away every….desire, emulating the toils of the saints for the sake of the prepared glory', seems more coherent than the comparable passage in the *Life:* 'let us turn away every….desire, emulating the lives and toils of the saints and the glory which is prepared for them'. It seems more comprehensible to urge the audience to emulate the toils 'for the sake of' the glory, rather than, like the *Life,* to urge them to emulate the glory itself. In any case, little can be achieved by efforts to show which text makes better sense: even if one were clearly more logical than the other, this would not prove the direction of the relationship between them. The more logical text could be the original, from which the later version has been corrupted, but it could, equally plausibly, represent a later effort to make sense of a confused and difficult original.

The question remains, therefore, of what relationship the *Life* and the sermon collection bear to each other. Van den Ven argued that neither text could be directly dependent upon the other, because if it were, the author would have utilised more of the material available to him (it is notable that the three above examples appear to be the only instances of the texts' interdependence, despite both works being fairly lengthy).[65] He suggested, in consequence,

[65] Van den Ven 1957, 30-32.

that both texts drew on an earlier, no longer extant, record of Symeon's sermons preserved at his monastery. In his view, given the verbal parallels between some of the passages just cited, both the relevant passages of the *Life* and the extant sermon collection must be closely based on this original collection (which I shall refer to as Ur-Sermons). He thinks, however, that Symeon's hagiographer was more faithful to Ur-Sermons than was the redactor of the extant sermon collection. His argument is based on stylistic grounds: he contrasts 'la simplicité spontanée, la clarté et la logique de l'exposé' of the passages in the *Life* with 'le maniérisme lourd, l'absence de cohésion et d'équilibre, la verbosité, la recherche souvent peu heureuse de l'effet, l'abus des comparaisons, la médiocrité pour tout dire, qui déparent l'autre texte [i.e. the sermon collection].'[66] The stylite, in his opinion, could not possibly have preached in such bad style; it must have been the work of a subsequent editor, who rewrote the whole collection.

Van den Ven's arguments here are, however, problematic. First, it is not clear that his argument that neither text can be dependent on the other holds water. While it is true that it is surprising that the parallels are so few in number, this problem is not resolved by proposing the existence of the Ur-Sermons collection, as the same question remains: why did the two authors, although using the same source material (which Van den Ven implies would have been of roughly the same length as the extant collection), only excerpt such a small number of comparable passages? While the existence of Ur-Sermons cannot be ruled out, it does not help to resolve this difficulty, and therefore is not a necessary hypothesis. Furthermore, his argument that the version of the sermons preserved in the *Life* is closer to the original than that in the sermons collection is based on little more than his preference for the style of the former. We cannot assume that Symeon (or whoever wrote the original version of the sermons) would have had a simple style, particularly if, as is possible, the

[66] ibid. 31.

sermons were originally composed in written form, rather than delivered extempore (or if they were rewritten after delivery). There is thus no positive evidence that the shorter version of the sermon in the *Life* is primary, and that in the sermon collection secondary.

Indeed, one piece of evidence suggests that in fact the longer version of the sermon is original. To analyse this, we must return to the above table comparing the two versions of the sermon on 'pious reason' to selected passages from 4 Maccabees. Although Van den Ven noted that the sermon was connected to Maccabees, he did not explore the parallels in any detail. As the table shows, in most instances of parallels between Maccabees and the Symeon sermon, the parallels are found in both versions of the sermon. Yet in one case, highlighted in bold in the table, we find an apparent parallel between the biblical text and the text in the sermon collection which has no parallel in the version of the sermon in the *Life*. Unfortunately, one phrase in the middle of the excerpt from the sermon is impossible to translate (as marked in italics). The general sense is, however, clear: the sermon-writer uses imagery of a tree with many offshoots, and later suggests that these offshoots are desires, and that reason can, through careful cultivation, dry them out; reason is thus presented as mastering the desires, in a horticultural image. This is very similar to the sense of the imagery in 4 Maccabees 1.28, although there are differences in details (the Maccabees text, which is much clearer, describes two plants, pleasure and pain, with many offshoots, which reason 'the master cultivator' weeds, prunes, and irrigates, thereby taming the emotions). In common with the other parallels between Maccabees and this sermon (also shown in the table), the similarities are largely at the level of concept rather than language, but both texts do use the unusual word 'παραφυάδες' [offshoots]. Given that the original sermon was clearly inspired by 4 Maccabees, and contains several such thematic parallels with the text, it seems highly likely that this horticultural image was contained in the original version of the sermon. It does not appear at all in the shorter version of the sermon in the

Life, and this absence suggests that this text is a condensed form of the original; the hagiographer omitted the imagery of the plant/tree, perhaps reflecting his preference for a simpler style. The alternative interpretation, that the author of the sermon collection, when writing up the shorter version of the sermon in the *Life*, decided to add his own additional allusion to (but not direct citation from) 4 Maccabees, is much less likely. One example is not conclusive, but it does provide strong support to the view that the longer version of the sermons, as preserved in the sermon collection, represents an earlier version of the text.

It seems, then, that the version of the sermons as preserved in the collection is probably prior to that in the *Life* (although it may, like many ancient works, have undergone revisions in the processes of transmission and reuse). Given that the *Life* is itself likely to be an early text, compiled or written at Symeon's monastery reasonably soon after his death,[67] this implies at the very least that the sermon collection had an early date and a strong connection with the same monastery; surely the author of the *Life* would not have accepted a collection written elsewhere as the authentic words of the saint. It cannot be proven that Symeon himself was the author, rather than an early disciple of his, but it should be regarded as a strong possibility. At the very least, the collection was closely associated with his cult and monastery, and is as such eminently worthy of further stylistic and thematic examination.

Genre

Symeon's sermons are difficult to classify in terms of genre. They do not fit into some of the most prominent categories of the sermons of ecclesiastical preachers, being neither exegetical, festal, nor panegyrical.[68] They contain next to nothing to tie them to any particular event or occasion for preaching. In the main, they deal with moral themes,

[67] See below pp.147-56.

[68] Cunningham and Allen note rightly that we should not be too concerned with classifying sermons into particular genres; many fall between several (Cunningham and Allen 1998, 19. Cf. also Mayer and Allen 2000, 29). Symeon's sermons sometimes have exegetical and panegyrical elements, but these are limited in scope and are never the main focus of any single discourse.

exhorting the audience to reform their behaviour in view of the coming Judgement. To show the range of topics covered, I give below a table showing the contents of the sermons, including both their titles in the manuscripts and my own brief summary of their key themes (the latter is important since the titles, as suggested above, may be later additions, and do not always reflect the contents of the sermon accurately).[69]

	Title (age delivered)[70]	**Main themes**
1	About the great benefactions of God (10)	The great goods prepared for the saints in heaven; Symeon's plea to Christ to count him among them
2	About self-control and faith and deeds (10)	Moral/spiritual themes: faith and works; faith, hope and love
3	About emotions and thoughts (11)	Pious reason as master of the emotions
4	About asceticism through the visions of which he was judged worthy, about the things which God revealed to him so as to know, in the purity of his heart, everything (11)	The dangers demons pose to monks; monastic values
5	On the struggle of the prophets and apostles and martyrs (11)	The endurance of the prophets and martyrs
6	To a landowner of Antioch (12)	The lure of worldly pleasures and wealth; the eternal punishment for those who succumb to them
7	About repentance and compunction (12)	The power of repentance; Christ as doctor; the weight of sin
8	About those who are proud and sin fearlessly (12)	Danger of wealth and pride; need for renunciation; the errors of pagans and sins of pagan 'gods'; defence of icons
9	A teaching to monks about the specific deceptive appearance of the demons (13)	Demonic attacks on monks; speaker's visions of and encounters with demons
10	About the uncertainty of human life (13)	The transience of the earth; a painful death and eternal punishment for sinners; rewards for the virtuous
11	About the bad death of the sinner and restful passing-away of the just (14)	Painful death of sinners and eternal punishment; rewards for the virtuous; call for repentance; futility of wealth and reputation.

[69] Van den Ven provides a list of the Greek captions, with some minor variations from those printed by Mai, with a brief summary of their contents (Van den Ven 1957, 13-6). I translate Van den Ven's text.
[70] I have provided only short forms of the titles since most begin with the same formula: 'Homily of the holy abba Symeon the stylite of the monastery on the Wonderful Mountain, which God caused him to speak, like Daniel, through the holy spirit, about…'

12	About the second coming of the Word God and the just retribution (14)	Last Judgement; punishment of the rich; reward of saints.
13	About those who have fallen through pride away from the commands of God (14)	Punishment of the proud and greedy; importance of humility; inevitability of judgement
14	About the temporary and fanciful conceit of the rich and their condemnation at the tribunal of Christ (14)	Punishment of rich and rulers; exaltation of the poor; wicked behaviour of the rich
15	About those who deify the yoke of marriage (14)	Marriage/sex do not create children—God does; marriage is good, but virginity better.
16	About those who are proud and sin fearlessly (15)	Sins of the rich; their future punishment; problems with their almsgiving; all men are brothers; harmonious vision of ideal social hierarchy
17	About the theatre of the saints in piety, from the example of worldly pleasures (15)	Comparison between actors/theatre and the pious; need for asceticism; coming judgement
18	About the army of the pious who through their better struggle please [God] (15)	Comparison between soldiers in service of mortal king and the ascetics fighting for God. Ascetic virtues. Punishment in store for rich and worldly.
19	About compunction and about virginity and divine love and error and the transience of life (16)	Transience of the world; virginity; eternal punishment for sinners
20	A teaching about divine grace, the governor of man (16)	Fragility of world; eternity of punishment; need for asceticism; divine providence; wickedness of oppressors
21	About the prepared Gehenna and about the good things which God has promised to the saints (16)	Eternal punishment for sinners; the virtue of the saints; the failings of many lazy monks; the different demons and their ways of attacking monks
22	About the soul at the exit from the body and the spirits which meet it, the powers of evil, and the praises of God and the saints, and about those who are found in sins, through the visions of which he was judged worthy (17)	Pain of death; revelations about the soul's journey after leaving the body; moral failings of present generation; the joy for virtuous souls in heaven.
23	About the active way of life of the monk (17)	Goals and dangers of monasticism; need for humility; eternal judgement
24	Exhortation towards a virgin (18)	Glory of virginity; true virginity requires all virtues
25	About the virtues and firmness of monks (21)	Monks equally/more virtuous than martyrs. Demonic attacks on monks and their failure in face of monks' virtues.

26	About…the divine visions and revelations of which he was deemed worthy (23)	Futility of temporal world; eternal joy of heaven; need for continual search for God; weakness of Devil due to Christ's sacrifice; virtues and purity; the virtues of prophets, apostles, martyrs, and ascetics.
27	Exhortation towards those who rave in despair and think that life will be ended with the flesh (23)	Transience of world; salvation of just and destruction of sinners; sinfulness of the monks of the current time.
28	Ascetic [homily] (24)	Rewards of former holy fathers; sinfulness in store for current monks unless they repent; danger of ignoring the signs of God's anger
29	Exhortation towards those who say that they are martyrs but cannot tolerate a slight observation (24)	Current monks failing to live up to standards of former saints. Monastic virtues. Christ's incarnation and our salvation.
30	About the visions of which he was deemed worthy (24)	Christ calling the saints to become heirs; the end times; speaker's own knowledge of paradise; God a creator; saints in heaven; our current sinfulness.

As the table suggests, a few of the sermons deal with particular virtues (such as sermon 24, on virginity), or particular vices (sermon 6 is one of several focused largely on love of wealth), but many lack a specific focus, either touching on a wide range of virtues and vices or simply exhorting the audience to reform in generalised terms. Recurrent themes, which will be explored in more detail below, include asceticism, demonic attacks on monks, the wickedness of wealth, and eschatology. There is next to no formal theological or doctrinal content, and certainly no explicit reference to the Christological debates of the age.[71]

The sermons' structure is often loose, and the author's chain of thought difficult to follow. Sermon 2, for example, begins with an obscure sentence about solitary self-control, double virtue, and the triple crown; briefly refers to the image of pious reason as charioteer of the body developed at length in sermon 3;[72] then discusses, at greater length, the need for both faith and deeds; it continues, with a rather clumsy transition, to argue that God is invisible

[71] On this theme in relation to Symeon's cult, see below pp.162-72.
[72] See above pp.87-90.

to human eyes; and then moves on to discuss the 'triple virtue' of faith, hope and love (perhaps echoing the single/double/triple language of the opening section, but in different terms); then briefly returns to the theme of faith and deeds before concluding. Some sermons are structured more clearly: sermon 5 begins with praise for the patient struggle of the prophets and martyrs; it then lists various persecuted figures from the Old and New Testaments and their afflictions; it discusses their courage in the face of hardship and persecution in more general terms, before ending by exhorting its audience to imitate their virtues. Several sermons have more distinctive structures: a few, for example, are based around extended similes (including sermons 17 and 18, which use similes of the theatre and of the army respectively, although in both cases the simile is abandoned in the final few paragraphs of the sermon).

In many respects, Symeon's sermons are most reminiscent of the 'ethical' discourses of various ascetic authors.[73] There are many structural, stylistic and thematic parallels between his works and those of famous monastic authors such as Evagrius of Pontus, Isaiah of Scetis, and Dorotheus of Gaza, including his interest in demonic attacks on monks[74] and more generally, the lack of a specific festal or exegetical focus for the works. Yet there are important differences between Symeon's work and most of these ascetic collections. First, Symeon's collection is unusually homogeneous, in that all of it is written in homiletic form. To my knowledge, homogeneous, purely homiletic collections by ascetic authors are rare. The so-called 'Discourses' of Isaiah of Scetis, for example, contain many texts in homily form, but also various other genres, including lists of precise instructions,[75] records of 'sayings' by the holy man in the style of the Apopthegmata Patrum; lamentations; and

[73] Cf. Cunningham and Allen 1998, 7; Allen 1998, 208.
[74] See below pp.112-7.
[75] There is, admittedly, no clear distinction between the homily and the instructions/monastic rule genre; some works contain elements of both.

letters.[76] Evagrius's ethical corpus includes lists of proverbs/maxims, letters, and instructions, as well as many sermon-style discourses.[77] Given the difficulties of distinguishing between these genres, and of knowing how these authors' corpora were transmitted, this point should not perhaps be pressed too far. Yet another, more important, difference between Symeon's sermons and these ascetic collections remains. The most characteristic ascetic collections appear to be targeted exclusively at monks, and therefore deal only with topics of direct relevance to them. Some of Symeon's sermons do likewise presuppose a monastic audience,[78] as is made clear in sermon 28: 'O monks, let us lament being called monks. We did not remain monks, having consorted with the deeds of the demons.'[79] Yet other passages imply that the audience for at least some of the sermons included lay people.[80] In particular, the many sections containing detailed attacks on the rich and their luxurious lifestyles are far more reminiscent of the preaching of John Chrysostom to his Antiochene and Constantinopolitan congregations than of the ascetic discourses mentioned above.[81] When monastic authors discuss the dangers of wealth, it tends to be with reference to monastic concerns: they urge monks, for example, not to insist on a high price for their handiwork; [82] not to accumulate wealth for almsgiving[83]; and not to worry about

[76] Although, again, some of the 'letters' in the collection contain homiletic elements; distinguishing between genres is very problematic. For general discussion of the Discourses of Isaiah of Scetis (which are still in need of a detailed scholarly study) see the introductions to the French translation (the Monks of Solesmes 1970, 3-41) and to the English translation (Chryssavgis and Penkett 2002, 13-37). There is as yet no critical edition of Isaiah's works, and both translators base their texts on unpublished manuscripts; I therefore cite the English translation directly.

[77] Evagrius's works have received uneven scholarly treatment: some still lack good critical editions, while others have been much better served. Sinkewicz discusses all the works in his English translation thereof (Sinkewicz 2003). In what follows I use, for convenience, the English titles to the works provided by Sinkewicz.

[78] See below pp.109-17.

[79] 'ὦ μοναχοὶ, κλαύσωμεν μοναχοὶ καλούμενοι· μοναχοὶ οὐκ ἐμείναμεν συμπολιτευσάμενοι τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν δαιμόνων': Sermon 28.2 (p.142).

[80] See Van den Ven 1957, 18 (although he relies perhaps too much on the captions to the sermons – for the dangers of this see above pp.83-4).

[81] On these passages, see below pp.126-42.

[82] E.g. Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses,* 4 (trans. pp.58-9).

[83] E.g. Evagrius of Pontus, *Foundations,* 4 (col 1256). Compare also Evagrius, *On Thoughts*, 21 (p.226).

saving money to look after themselves when they are sick, or too old to work.[84] Symeon's evocation, and condemnation, of the luxurious lives of wealthy lay people is of a very different nature: in sermon 14, for example, addressing a (presumably hypothetical) rich man, he reproaches him:

> For in luxury of foods you nourish your flesh into food for the unsleeping worm; and saluting the one above you in wealth, on account of a perishable fantasy, you set at naught the pauper, who is justified in the Lord; and you besmirch your bed in sleeping with alien women; and in sleeping with transgressive men, you look at yourself as if you possessed a deathless head, dressed in soft garments; and elevating your desires in dances of women, and in fantasy of attendants on both sides, sittings of horses, in overlooking of the poor; and with blasphemous words, and purchasing of beauty, besides the other things which you do which it is shameful even to speak of.[85]

I will discuss his treatment of wealth in more detail below, but it will suffice for now to note, first, that it distinguishes his work from that of many of his ascetic predecessors, and, second, that it suggests that his audience included laymen as well as monks. This in turn may imply that the sermons were delivered orally, rather than being intended solely as reading material for the monks of his monastery, although it seems likely that they also served the latter function.[86]

Style

The style of the sermon collection has met with heavy criticism. As mentioned above, Van den Ven argued that their style was so poor that they could not have been written by Symeon himself. Allen has agreed with this verdict, referring to the collection's 'torturous and

[84] E.g. Evagrius of Pontus, *Praktikos*, 9 (II, p.512); compare also Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses*, 17 (trans. p.131).

[85] ἐν γὰρ σπατάλῃ βρωμάτων ἐκτρέφεις σου τὰς σάρκας εἰς βρῶμα τοῦ ἀκοιμέτου σκώληκος· καὶ ἀσπαζόμενος τὸν ὑπὲρ σὲ ἐν χρυσίῳ, ἕνεκεν φαντασίας φθαρτῆς, ἐξουθενεῖς πένητα δεδικαιωμένον παρὰ τῷ θεῷ· μιαίνεις δὲ τὴν στρωμνήν ἐν κοίταις γυναικῶν ἀλλοτρίων· καὶ συγ[κα]θευδήσει ἀνδρῶν παρανόμων, ἀφορᾷς εἰς ἑαυτὸν ὡς ἀθάνατον κεφαλὴν κεκτημένος, ἐν μαλακοῖς ἱματίοις ἠμφιεσμένος· καὶ μετεωρίζων ἐπιθυμίας σου ἐν ὀρχέμασι θηλύων, καὶ φαντασίᾳ ῥαβδούχων ἑκατέρωθεν, καθίσμασι ἵππων, παροράσει πτωχῶν· καὶ βλασφήμοις λόγοις, καὶ ἐξαγορασμοῖς κάλλους, παρεκτὸς τῶν λοιπῶν ὧν διαπράττεις ἅτινα αἰσχρόν ἐστι καὶ τὸ λέγειν: Sermon 14.2 (p.64).

[86] In general, as with many early Christian sermon collections, there is little evidence to show whether the works were actually preached; for the difficulties of distinguishing between preached homilies and 'desk homilies' see above p.76.

obscure style.'[87] Because of this, and because of their belief that Symeon's collection was heavily redacted by an anonymous editor, neither has analysed the work's style in detail. [88] The validity of their criticisms can, at one level, hardly be denied; the sermons' phraseology is over-elaborate and difficult at best, and sometimes entirely incomprehensible, even if some of these obscurities are products of textual corruption. Yet it is clear that their author used a variety of rhetorical techniques in his writing, including many of those identified by Cunningham as common aids to an audience's comprehension of preaching.[89] The following analysis will, therefore, attempt to understand the sermons' style in terms of Symeon's rhetorical strategies, setting to one side its lack of appeal to modern ears.

Symeon uses a range of techniques to attract his audience's attention. Several of his sermons have vivid or dramatic openings surely intended to pique the audience's interest, such as, 'the beauty of life is an uncertain loveliness, and the decoration of houses is a passing shadow';[90] 'the blood of the martyr is not more venerable than the way of life of the monk';[91] 'I think that the earthly world should be considered a ship carried round by waves of the sea and whirled hither and thither.'[92] Throughout the collection, his use of imagery is varied and extensive, if rarely original, and again serves to add interest to his words. Some of the images appear deliberately shocking, or paradoxical, a technique which Averil Cameron has identified as characteristic of early Christian literature:[93] thus, for example, in sermon 17 he compares both himself and his audience, and, subsequently, God, to a prostitute adorning

[87] Allen 1998, 205.
[88] As discussed above, I do not deny the possibility that the sermons were edited during transmission, but I do not, like Van den Ven, regard this as a certainty.
[89] Cunningham 1995, 72 ff; Cunningham 1997, 25 ff. Hartney makes a similar argument with particular reference to the sermons of John Chrysostom: Hartney 2004, 47.
[90] τὸ κάλλος τοῦ βίου, ὡραιότης ἄδηλος· καὶ ὁ τῶν οἰκιῶν κόσμος, σκιὰ παρατρέχουσα: Sermon 10.1 (p.45).
[91] μαρτυρίου αἷμα οὐ τιμιώτερον τῆς τοῦ μοναχοῦ πολιτείας: Sermon 25.1 (p.125).
[92] σκάφος οἶμαι νοεῖσθαι τὸν περίγειον κόσμον περιφερόμενον ὑπὸ κυμάτων θαλάσσης καὶ τῇδε κἀκεῖσε δονούμενον: Sermon 20.1 (p.98).
[93] A.M. Cameron 1991a, 155-88.

herself for her clients.[94] Sometimes he presents a rapid series of diverse metaphors and similes, as in the opening of sermon 27: 'brothers, this world is a cloud of iniquity, dissolving frost, a passing dream, a wiped out sketch, a turning point of the horse race, a leaning shadow, a wind of words, the succession of mortals' glory, the invisible corruptor of inhabitants, the cauldron or abyss, like a cauldron from eternity world boiling up fire of the impious. For it appears like a pestle, to dissolve everybody in the earthly mist, and a passing dew.'[95] The quick-fire sequence of images is varied and engaging. The most extended series of images comes in the middle of sermon 4, which consists of a long string of statements of bipartite structure, one half of which introduces an image, and the other half a supposedly comparable phenomenon from the life of the monk. Thus for example, 'a sheep which casts aside its wool is useless to its owner, and a monk shorn without the psalmody does not build for God.'[96] This passage contains an extremely varied range of images, including a temple, a tomb, a treasury, an altar, a good worker, a clever merchant, a trumpet, charcoal, wax and fire, thorns, a fisherman, a garden, a ship, birds, wine, olive oil, a lion, a goat, a star, a reed in the wind, a stream, a house, a missile, a sword, a shepherd, wood, a fox in the vineyard, a sparrow, a partridge, a dog, a pigeon, a metal-worker, a pot, deer, senators, a weaver, a gem-engraver, moths and a cloak, the moon, torches, a blood-stained cloak, a falcon, childbirth, mourning, beauty, an angry man, a lascivious youth, various body parts, a wolf, a river, and a vine. None of the metaphors are developed in detail; the power of the passage comes from the diversity and sometimes unexpectedness of the parallels.

[94] Sermon 17.2-3 (pp.82-3).
[95] ἀδελφοὶ, ὁ κόσμος οὗτος, νέφος ἀνομίας τυγχάνει, πάχνη λυομένη, ἐνύπνιον διαβαῖνον, σκιογραφία λειουμένη, ῥοπη ἱπποδρομίου, σκιὰ κεκλεκυῖα, ἄνεμος λόγων, διαδοχὴ δόξης ἀνθρώπων, ἄδηλος οἰκητόρων φθορεὺς, λέβης ἢ ἄβυσσος ὡς χαλκεῖον ἐξ αἰῶνος ἀναβράζων πῦρ ἀσεβῶν· ὅτι ὡς τριβεὺς πέφηνε τοὺς ἅπαντας τῇ γηΐνῳ διαλύειν ὁμιχλῃ, καὶ δρόσος παροδεύουσα: Sermon 27.1 (p.137).
[96] Πρόβατον ἀπόρριπτον τὰ ἔρια ἀνωφελὲς τῷ κεκτημένῳ, καὶ μοναχὸς κειράμενος ἄνευ ψαλμῳδίας οὐκ οἰκοδομεῖ εἰς Θεόν: Sermon 4 (p.51).

In contrast, in other sermons Symeon uses long, developed similes. Sermon 18, for example, contains a lengthy elaboration upon the common comparison between the Christian and the soldier.[97] He starts the sermon by recounting the imagined words of a commander to his soldiers (thereby using another technique intended to add vividness: direct speech), and by emphasising the soldiers' willingness to die for honour and gifts. He then launches into a series of comparisons emphasising that 'we' (himself and his audience) should be more committed to strive for Christ than the soldiers for their king: since the soldiers are prepared to die for a mortal king, we should mortify our bodies for the immortal king; as soldiers are aggressive to their enemies, but calm to their companions, so we should attack the demons but be kind to our fellow Christians; whereas soldiers wear 'covetous' outfits (cloaks, fur, necklaces), we wear 'pious' clothes (animal skins, hair tunics, dog-collars); just as soldiers gain promotions through their efforts, we may through virtue become rulers of the angels; whereas soldiers' weapons are physical and destructive, ours are spiritual and life-giving—dedication, the spirit of blessedness, faith and action, prayer, the Cross, and Paul like a general urging us to fight—; whereas a mortal king cannot save his soldier if he is killed, Christ can save us if we are endangered by demons; soldiers have rotten camps, but we have eternal tents; soldiers eat meat preserved in vinegar, but our food is soberness and the Eucharist. This is clearly not a simple simile, as it relies as much on the differences between the two points of comparison (for example, the mortal v. immortal king; luxurious outfits v. ascetic trappings; physical v. spiritual weapons) as on their similarities. Its purpose is didactic and exhortatory, and it conveys a similar message to many of Symeon's other sermons; by using this extended image he can present the material in a different and perhaps more engaging fashion. While, therefore, most of the images used in the sermon collection are in themselves conventional, the variety of ways in which they are deployed is

[97] An image ultimately derived from the New Testament, esp. Ephesians 6:13-18.

noteworthy: the author appears to possess a modicum of sophistication in his rhetorical technique.

Imagery is not the only means he uses to emphasise and dramatise his message. In several sermons he repeats key phrases, a technique intended to reinforce a point and, perhaps, to aid audience comprehension.[98] Rhetorical questions abound. Some are neutral, intended merely to advance the speaker's argument in an engaging manner, such as, 'and so what? After old age does God abandon man? May it not be!'[99] and 'do you want to understand the unquenchable fire, what it is like for the second death?'[100] Others, however, have an accusatory tone, as illustrated by the beginning of sermon 19: 'why do you desire corruptible and temporal things in this unprofitable life, gathering bitterness through vanishing pleasure?'[101] Many of these reproachful questions occur in the context of Symeon's addresses to, and dialogues with, probably hypothetical individuals. The apostrophe is indeed one of his most characteristic rhetorical strategies, occurring in sermons 2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21 and 29. His apostrophes come in a variety of forms and lengths; sometimes Symeon abruptly breaks off from his previous discourse to address an individual; sometimes he describes a person's thoughts in the third person before beginning to address them in the second person; and on other occasions he uses procatalepsis, imagining a question or an objection which a member of the audience might raise, and proceeding to answer or refute it. Many of these apostrophes are targeted at a wealthy person, who is often addressed in the vocative as 'money-lover' [φιλάργυρε] or 'rich man' [πλούσιε];[102] some are simply directed to 'man' [ἄνθρωπε] or use the second person singular form of the verb

[98] Cf. Cunningham, as cited above p.101 n89. For anaphora in Symeon's sermons see e.g. Sermon 10.3 with its series of laments beginning with the word 'alas [οὐαὶ]' (p.47).
[99] Τὶ οὖν; μετὰ τὸ γήρας ἐγκαταλείπει ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον; μὴ γένοιτο: Sermon 8.2 (p.28).
[100] Θέλεις δὲ τὸ πῦρ ἄσβεστον, ὁποῖόν ἐστι πρὸς δευτέραν τελευτὴν θεωρῆσαι; Sermon 21.2 (p.104).
[101] Τί τὰ φθαρτὰ καὶ πρόσκαιρα ἐν τῷ ἀνωφελεῖ τούτῳ βίῳ ἐπιθυμεῖτε, διὰ τῆς ἀφανοῦς ἡδονῆς πικρασμὸν συνάγοντες; Sermon 19.1 (p.93).
[102] For discussion of many of these passages, see below pp.126-42.

without an accompanying vocative. An apostrophe in sermon 21, uniquely, is addressed to a monk wishing to be saved.[103]

As Karl-Heinz Uthemann has argued, such apostrophes can serve an important role in homiletic rhetoric, because they enable the speaker to render his sermon more conversational, giving the audience a sense of involvement in a dialogue, even though in fact the preacher is delivering a monologue.[104] It is notable that Symeon rarely uses the second-person plural to address his audience; he favours either the second-person singular, in these apostrophes, or the first person plural (either in the indicative, for example, 'we have given our way of life to darkness',[105] or in the hortatory subjunctive, as in 'let us grieve, most desired ones, and let us mourn bitterly.'[106]) The second person, singular or plural, implicitly distances the speaker from those whom he is addressing, and thus is particularly appropriate for delivering stern reproaches and commands. In contrast, the first person plural is, even when used to highlight the same failings, less harsh, since the orator includes himself in the community who needs to reform. His frequent use of the first person plural thus enables Symeon to stress the need for moral reform without alienating his audience by opposing himself, as virtuous, and them, as sinners. The use of the second-person singular in the apostrophe may at one level perform a similar function: it enables the speaker to use aggressive invective, highlighting the punishments in store for unrepentant sinners, without estranging his entire audience, because this polemic is targeted at an individual (usually, as mentioned, a rich individual with whom the majority of the audience would not have identified).

[103] Sermon 21.9 (pp.110-1).
[104] Uthemann 1998, 143 ff.
[105] τῷ σκότει δεδώκαμεν τὴν διατριβὴν ἡμῶν: Sermon 28.1 (p.141).
[106] κλαύσωμεν ὦ ποθητοὶ καὶ πενθήσωμεν πικρῶς: Sermon 28.3 (p.142).

Indeed, Symeon rhetorically breaks down the barriers between himself, as authoritative preacher, and his audience by stressing his own sinfulness and humility. His humility is expressed, implicitly, throughout the collection. As mentioned, he frequently uses the first personal plural to include himself in the community which he is addressing, even when he is highlighting that community's sinfulness. Thus in sermon 28, apparently addressed to monks, he laments 'our' wicked deeds and fall from virtue: 'having been called chaste, we have become fornicators; polluting divine freedom by our deeds, we have strengthened hate and falseness. And because of this no truth shines in us. O monks, let us lament being called monks. We did not remain monks, having consorted with the deeds of the demons. Christ called us hypocrites…our lamps are quenched, our talent is hidden, the heavenly master comes from above…how will we defend ourselves, or what will we say to him?... there is no defence in us. For being shaped in piety, we have renounced this…alas, that every day we behave disgracefully in the cities.'[107] He includes himself in actions which he could not have committed, such as disgraceful behaviour in the cities. These passages serve both to emphasise the speaker's sense of communal identification with his monks and to show his humility, since he confesses his shared sinfulness.

Symeon, however, moves beyond these communal professions of guilt. In several passages in the sermons, he uses the first person singular, addressing his own moral state, often in negative terms. Thus in sermon 10 he moves from a discussion, in the third person, of the transience of life, to a more personal passage:

> I know myself to be dried hay…For just as in season hay, although existing today, tomorrow is thrown into an oven, thus also death drags everyone with piteous tears to their necessary end; and the delaying of repentance has deceived me for a time;

[107] ἀγνοὶ ἐπικληθέντες, πόρνοι καθεστήκαμεν, πράξεσι βεβηλοῦντες τὴν θείαν ἐλευθερίαν, μῖσος καὶ ψεῦδος ἐνισχύσαμεν· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ἡμῖν οὐδὲν λάμπει ἀληθείας· ὦ μοναχοὶ, κλαύσωμεν μοναχοὶ καλούμενοι· μοναχοὶ οὐκ ἐμείναμεν συμπολιτευσάμενοι τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν δαιμόνων· ἡμᾶς ὁ Χριστὸς ἔλεγεν ὑποκριτὰς...αἱ λαμπάδες ἡμῶν ἐσβέσθησαν, τὸ τάλαντον κέκρυπται, ὁ οὐράνιος δεσπότης ἄνωθεν...ἔρχεται· τί ἀπολογησόμεθα, ἢ τί ἐροῦμεν αὐτῷ;….ἀπολογία ἐν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία· μορφούμενοι γὰρ ἐν θεοσεβείᾳ, ταύτην ἀπηρνησάμεθα...Οἴμοι, ὅτι καθ'ἑκάστην ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἀσχημονοῦμεν': Sermon 28.2-3 (pp.142-3).

> when I think on my sin, I fear to die. And when I repent, pleasures pass me by, and with me having old age in mind, the tomb of death drags me naked of commands and unready to the judgement. I was fashioned as a brick, and after a time I am dissolved, and I go away to the earth from which I was taken. I was revealed a flourishing tree, and having been corrupted by old age, I am cut down for burning. I am whitened grain, and I am harvested by angels with scythes. O my soul, be afraid of the fire-bearing servants, who are coming to you at your necessary end; and acquire friends immune to flattery through renunciation, before the twelfth hour. Oh my soul, respect repentance in life, lest afterwards you fall to the enemy.[108]

This passage clearly continues the sermon's earlier theme of the ephemerality of life. But by moving to the first person, Symeon transforms the tone of his discourse. The use of the first person creates an intimate effect; it gives the impression (whether true or not) that the speaker is baring his innermost thoughts to his audience. He dwells not only on his own impermanence but also on his own sense of his sin ('when I think on my sin, I fear to die'; 'the tomb of death drags me naked of commands and unready…'), again suggesting his personal humility and self-abasement.

What does this humility achieve? First, humility, as manifested in particular by an awareness of one's own sins, was considered one of the key Christian and monastic virtues.[109] As a result, Symeon's emphasis on his sinfulness, far from undermining his authority as a moral teacher, in fact serves to increase it; paradoxically, for a monk to speak about his sins demonstrated that he was a paradigm of virtue and spiritually advanced.[110] Secondly, Symeon's first-person passages have a strongly didactic purpose. By presenting himself as sinful—even though, to much of his audience, he must have appeared as a holy man of

[108] ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οἶδα ἐμαυτὸν χόρτον ξηραινόμενον.... ὅν τρόπον γὰρ κατὰ καιρὸν ὁ χόρτος, σήμερον ὢν, αὔριον εἰς κλίβανον βάλλεται, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θάνατος ἐλεεινοῖς δάκρυσι πρὸς τὴν ἀνάγκην πάντας ἐφέλκεται· καὶ ἡ ἀναβολὴ τῆς μετανοίας πρὸς καιρὸν ἀπατᾷ με· ὅταν ἐννοῶ μου τὸ πταῖσμα, δειλιῶ τὸ θανεῖν· καὶ ὅταν μετανοῶ, τὰ τερπνὰ με διαβαίνει, καὶ τὸ γῆρας ἔχοντός μου κατὰ νοῦν, ἡ ταφή με τοῦ θανάτου γυμνὸν τῶν ἐντολῶν καὶ ἀνέτοιμον ἕλκει πρὸς τὴν κρίσιν· πλίνθος ἐπλάσθην, καὶ μετὰ χρόνον λύομαι, καὶ εἰς γῆν ἐξ ἧς ἐλήφθην, ἀπέρχομαι· φυτὸν ἀνεδείχθην εὐθαλὲς, καὶ ἐκ τῆς παλαίοτητος διαφθαρεὶς ἐκκόπτομαι πρὸς κατάκαυσιν. σῖτος εἰμὶ λευκανθεὶς, καὶ ὑπο τῶν δρεπανιστῶν ἀγγέλων θερίζομαι· δειλίασον ὦ ψυχή μου τοὺς πυρφόρους λειτουργοὺς, τοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀνάγκῃ ἐρχομένος ἐπὶ σέ· καὶ τοὺς ἀκολακεύτους κτῆσαι φίλους διὰ τῆς ἀποταγῆς, πρὸ τῆς δωδεκάτης ὥρας· αἰδέσθητι ὦ ψυχή μου ἐν ζωῇ μετανοεῖν, ἵνα μὴ μετέπειτα ὑποπέσῃς τῷ ἐχθρῷ: Sermon 10.2 (p.46).

[109] See e.g. Burton-Christie 1993, 236-58.

[110] Cf. Schroeder 2007, 52, who refers to 'the common ascetic practice of status negotiation through the rhetoric of humility.'

exemplary piety—and in need of God's mercy (many of the sermons end with Symeon's personal appeals to God to save him, or with instructions to his own soul to repent),[111] he implicitly invites his listeners to compare themselves to him, to acknowledge their own sins, and, like him, to ask God for forgiveness. By referring to his own sinfulness in very generalised terms, he provides an opportunity for every member of his audience to reflect on his (or her?)[112] own particular faults. His self-criticisms therefore act as another indirect, non-aggressive way of highlighting the misdeeds of his audience.[113]

Symeon's presentation of himself as a humble sinner thus serves multiple ends: it renders his preaching more intense and intimate; it subtly serves to enhance his own position of moral authority; and it provides a non-aggressive method of encouraging his audience to repent. Even if Symeon's sermons are far from rhetorically brilliant, they are thus nonetheless quite didactically sophisticated. The speaker conveys his moral messages in ways that extend far beyond direct instruction, while his emphasis on humility serves both to break down the barrier between preacher and audience, and, at the same time, to increase his spiritual authority. Humility is only one aspect of Symeon's self-presentation. He also, perhaps paradoxically, presents himself as the recipient of divine visions and as an experienced combatant against the demons.[114] In order to understand this, however, we must turn to an analysis of one of the key themes of the collection: the spiritual life of the monk, and his constant war with the forces of evil.

[111] Sermons 15.8 (p.73), 19.6 (p.98), 20.6 (p.102), 24.3 (p.124), 27.4 (p.140), 28.4 (pp.143-4) and 29.6 (p.148).
[112] There is nothing in the sermons to suggest that Symeon had a female audience in mind, but if his audience did include pilgrims to his shrine, some women would presumably have been present; his *Life* depicts him receiving many female supplicants in person: see e.g. *Life of Symeon,* 48 (p.45), 101 (pp.78-9), 118-9 (pp.96-9), 138-40 (pp.129-30), 154 (p.137), 181 (pp.160-1), 200 (pp.175-6), 213 (p.182), 243 (pp.217-8), 252 (p.220). This contrasts with Symeon Stylites the Elder, whose enclosure women were forbidden from entering (Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *History of the Monks of Syria,* 26.21 (II, pp.202-4); Antonius, *Life of Symeon,* 14, 23, 25 (pp.36-8, 56-8, 58-60); Evagrius Scholasticus, 1.14 (p.24).
[113] A rhetorical strategy described by Leontius of Neapolis in his *Life of John the Almsgiver,* 42 (pp.393-4).
[114] See Brakke 2006, 238, on the 'paradoxical circle of humility and achievement' in ascetic writings.

Demons and Monks: Symeon as Hegumen

As mentioned above, warnings and advice to monks are one of the most dominant themes in Symeon's sermons. This is far from surprising; as the hegumen of his monastery, the provision of spiritual guidance to his monks must have been one of his key duties.[115] It is not always possible to distinguish which sermons in Symeon's collection were intended in particular for monks—many address general subjects applicable to both monks and laity, and may indeed have had mixed audiences—but some are explicitly addressed to monks or deal with themes of especial relevance to them, such as virginity, asceticism, and demonic attacks.[116] The advice and exhortations which the preacher gives to his monastic audience are often quite generalised, and rarely original: earlier, famous, ascetic authors such as Evagrius of Pontus and Isaiah of Scetis had treated similar monastic topics, sometimes in more sophisticated ways. But Symeon's sermons derive power from his claims to have not only theoretical, but personal and experiential, knowledge of the subjects he discusses: he presents himself as an experienced and effective combatant with the demons. The sermons thus suggest that Symeon's authority over his monks derived not merely from his moral guidance but from his personal status as a powerful and charismatic ascetic.

Before looking at the sermons' teaching for monks in detail, it is worth briefly considering what the collection does *not* include. It is notable that the advice given is almost all at a spiritual level; we do not encounter the kinds of instructions about everyday monastic life that are common in the 'monastic rules' found both in early ascetic literature and in some saints' Lives, including, in fact, the *Life of Symeon the Younger*. Chapter 27 of Symeon's *Life* contains a long sermon apparently delivered by the stylite in his youth, which gives

[115] See below pp.178-80.
[116] Sermons explicitly referring to monks include 4 (pp.47-55), 9 (pp.37-45), 21 (pp.103-11), 23 (pp.118-21), 25 (pp.125-7), 28 (pp.140-4), although many others contain themes which seem of particular relevance to monks.

some fairly specific instructions on proper monastic behaviour. It repeats the phrase 'the boast of the monk [is],'[117] listing many standard attributes of Syrian monasticism,[118] such as ceaseless psalming and prayer, and weeping and striking the breast. It is clearly concerned with a coenobitic existence, providing advice, for instance, on behaviour at communal meals: listeners are told not to say 'give me something to drink'[119] when thirsty, but to signal to the server with their finger, and not to spit out phlegm at the table 'to scandalise the brothers'[120] but to leave and do it discreetly before returning. They are not extreme ascetic rules, but more moderate ones suitable for a community.[121]

In some respects they are very similar to other monastic instructions attributed to earlier ascetics: Isaiah of Scetis also, for instance, orders monks sitting with their brethren not to spit in their presence but to go outside.[122] But the instructions attributed to Symeon seem to reflect their Syrian context: unlike Isaiah's text they do not contain, for example, references to manual labour, which was deemed spiritually vital in many Egyptian monasteries.[123] Did these instructions really derive from the stylite? That is possible, given that, as discussed above, the author of the *Life* does seem to have drawn on earlier records of his sermons; these instructions could therefore be derived from a now-lost source. Whether authentic or not, it is unsurprising that they are not included in the sermon collection, which, as observed above, rarely addresses direct commands to its audience, and only occasionally deals with practical issues of day-to-day life. Its focus, rather, is on the spiritual battles underlying the

[117] καύχημα μοναχοῦ: *Life of Symeon*, 27 (pp.23-5).
[118] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 212*.
[119] Δός μοι πιεῖν: *Life of Symeon*, 27 (p.27).
[120] σκανδαλίσαι τοὺς ἀδελφούς: ibid. 27 (p.27).
[121] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 166*.
[122] Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses*, 3 (trans. p.48).
[123] This is not to say that Symeon's monks did not work with their hands (they did perform at least some agricultural tasks: see below, p.187), but rather that manual labour did not usually possess the same ideological significance in Syria as it had come, in general, to possess in Egypt. For a nuanced discussion of the role of manual labour versus alternative forms of asceticism, see Caner 2002, esp.19-49.

monastic existence. It is now time to examine the collection's spiritual teaching for monks in more depth.

Several of the sermons exalt characteristically monastic virtues, including virginity and asceticism. In sermon 15, about those who 'deify' marriage, Symeon insists that it is not marriage or sex that engender children, but God, and asserts that while marriage is good, virginity is better.[124] In sermon 24, on virginity, he claims that the virgin will be a lord in heaven: 'and if a sinning man [has] become lord of all visible things, by how much more will the one who has perfected his controlled way of life in virginity [?], wearing a crown, lead a procession, and be lord in God's ineffable treasuries of incorruptible things?'[125] He proceeds to state that chastity does not constitute true virginity unless it is adorned with other virtues: fasting, restraint from elaborate foods; mildness; walking in peace; prayer and psalmody, piety and sobriety. This reflects his general tendency to blur the lines between different virtues (and indeed different sins); this might be interpreted as indicating a lack of clarity of thought, but is perhaps better understood as reflecting an integrated, holistic approach to morality; no individual virtue can be perfect in isolation.

Asceticism was, for the preacher, another crucial virtue. While the instructions in the *Life*, as mentioned above, might suggest that Symeon preached a moderate message to his monks, not expecting them to emulate his own severe asceticism, several passages in the sermons suggest that he did promote a certain degree of rigour.[126] He repeatedly stresses the importance of adhering to the 'utmost asceticism',[127] on one occasion stating that the monk must always think of new ways to afflict himself: 'the life of the monk is thus; and with

[124] Sermon 15, esp. 15.7 (pp.72-3).
[125] καὶ εἰ ἁμαρτάνων ἄνθρωπος τῶν ὁρωμένων πάντων κύριος κατέστη, πόσῳ κρεῖττον τὸ [? ὁ] κατὰ παρθενίαν ἐγκρατεῖ [? ἐγκρατῆ] βίον τελέσας, στεφανηφορῶν πομπεύσει, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀρρήτοις τοῦ θεοῦ ταμιείοις τῶν ἀφθάρτων δεσπόσει;': Sermon 24.1 (p.122).
[126] For his encouragement of asceticism see e.g. 7.5 (p.27); 17.1 (p.82); 18.2 (p.88).
[127] ἀκροτάτῃ ἀσκήσει: Sermon 17.1 (p.82), 18.2 (p.88).

these virtues to think up other afflictions for his body, like the martyrs, according to [his] ability. For just as the sea, receiving all the rivers, is never full, until the heaven and earth grow old, thus the monk ought to be insatiable always to impose contests on himself until the exit from the body.'[128] Admittedly, this exhortation includes the concessive clause, 'according to his ability', but it nonetheless suggests that constant asceticism was a requirement for all monks. Elsewhere he repeats this association between monks and martyrs, implying that the former had to match the physical struggles of the latter.[129] Nowhere in the sermons do we find the kinds of warnings against the dangers associated with extreme asceticism that are relatively common in monastic literature.[130] Although he was addressing coenobitic monks,[131] he nonetheless sometimes speaks as though solitary ascetics were the ideal type of the monk: 'the purity of the monk is a holy temple of God. For some in sheepskins and goat-skins, but others in mountains and caves, and caverns of stones, being needy, being afflicted, being mortified, and fulfilling the course of asceticism, and putting on the power of incorruptibility like the holy angels.'[132] His sermons thus present an austere picture of the ideal monk and his lifestyle.

The dominant theme of Symeon's preaching for monks is, however, the need to be aware of the attacks of the demons, and how to resist them. He describes the various ways in which

[128] Οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ μοναχοῦ· καὶ τὸ μετὰ τούτων τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐπινοεῖν ἑαυτοῦ τῷ σώματι θλίψεις ἑτέρας μαρτυρικῶς κατὰ δύναμιν· καθάπερ γὰρ ἡ θάλαττα τοὺς ἅπαντας ποταμοὺς δεχομένη, οὐδαμῶς ἐμπίπλαται, ἕως ἂν οὐρανὸς καὶ γῆ παλαιωθῇ, οὕτως ὀφείλει τῷ μοναχῷ εἶναι ἀκόρεστον τὸ διὰ παντὸς ἀγῶνας αὐτῷ ἐπιφέρειν ἕως τῆς ἐξόδου τοῦ σώματος': Sermon 25.3 (pp.126-7).
[129] See e.g. Sermons 26.8 (pp.134-5), 29.1-5 (pp.144-8).
[130] For examples in homiletic literature, see e.g. Evagrius Ponticus, 'To Eulogius', 29-31 (pp.330-2); Evagrius Ponticus, 'On Thoughts', 35 (ed. pp. 272-6); Dorotheus of Gaza, 'Instructions', II, 32 (p.194), XIV, 153 (p.430); Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses*, 4 (trans. pp.57-8).
[131] If we accept Symeon's authorship, he must have preached to his monks. As argued above, even if the sermons were not written by the saint, they are still likely to have been produced at his monastery. Irrespective of this, various passages in the sermons, such as those quoted below discussing the dangers of rivalry among monastic brethren and of leaving the monastery, suggest a coenobitic audience.
[132] Καθαρότης γὰρ μοναχοῦ, ναὸς θεοῦ ἅγιος ὑπάρχει· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐν μηλωταῖς καὶ αἰγίοις δέρμασιν· ἕτεροι δὲ ἐν ὄρεσι καὶ σπηλαίοις, καὶ τοῖς τῶν πετρῶν φωλεοῖς, ὑστερούμενοι, θλιβόμενοι, κακοχούμενοι, τὸν τῆς ἀσκήσεως τόνον ἐκπληροῦντες, καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τὴς ἀφθαρσίας κατὰ τοὺς ἁγίους ἀγγέλους ἐνδυόμενοι': Sermon 25.1 (p.125).

the demons attack by day and by night, and the consequent need for the monk to be constantly vigilant.[133] His emphasis varies: in sermon 9, discussed below, he speaks about the frightening and strange appearances of the different demons; in sermon 21, in contrast, he focuses on their association with various potential sins. This latter sermon contains his most developed discussion of the effects of the suggestions of different demons (avarice, pride, jealousy, fornication, and *acedia*) on monks, showing an awareness of the potential dangers of communal monastic living, reminiscent of that found in the works of Evagrius and Isaiah.[134] In this sermon he adopts a monastic interpretation of avarice, unlike elsewhere in the work, stating that the demon of avarice tempts the monk by making him think about the sufferings of the poor and needy, and thereby making him seek the company of the rich. He is opposed to economic activities**,** claiming that demons also throw the monk 'into unprofitable complications and earthly concerns, into needless questionings which are deceptive and unsuitable for monks, diverting him through supposedly good arguments for acquisition, either towards buildings, or vine-working and care for herds.'[135]

This is in many respects his most pastoral sermon, as he appears keen to discourage conflict and dissension among his brethren. He notes the danger of rivalry between monks, stating that demons cause the monk to despair because he cannot equal his neighbour in virtue; to envy 'the one who is capable in the struggle concerning piety towards God';[136] and to rejoice when one of his companions is destroyed by sin. He is particularly concerned to warn monks not to abandon their monasteries to found new ones: he reports that the demons suggest to a monk who has made progress in virtue that he should leave and found his own monastery,

[133] See e.g. Sermons 4 (pp.47-50) and 9.1-5 (pp.37-41).
[134] See e.g. Isaiah of Scetis, *Discourses*, 5 (trans. pp.69-76); Evagrius Ponticus, 'to Eulogius', 5 (p.313), 17 (pp.321-2), 24 (pp.326-7), 26 (pp.328-9), 31 (p.332).
[135] Συμπλοκὰς ἀνοφελεῖς καὶ φροντίδας γηΐνας, εἰς περιεργείας τὲ ἀπατηλὰς καὶ μὴ πρεπούσας μοναχοῖς, ὡς ἐν χρηστολογίαις δῆθεν περιποιήσεως ἀπάγοντες, ἢ πρὸς οἰκοδομὰς, ἢ ἀμπελουργία[ι]ς καὶ κτηνῶν εὐνοίας: Sermon 21.6 (pp.107-8).
[136] τὸν ἰσχύοντα ἐν πάλῃ περὶ τὴν εἰς θεὸν εὐσέβειαν: Sermon 21.5 (p.107).

so that he can lead his own brethren and nurture the poor; then, having persuaded him to do this, when the practical concerns of founding his monastery have caused his behaviour to decline from virtue, they make him regret leaving his monastery; he then tries to return to his old monastery but they incite the brotherhood against him so that they refuse to readmit him; finally, he is completely alienated and returns to the world. This sequence of events, described in unusual detail, conveys a particularly severe warning to the audience that there may well be no return for anyone who abandons his monastery from pride and ambition; it is perhaps unsurprising that this should be regarded by the hegumen as an unforgivable sin. As we will see in the next chapter, Symeon appears to have struggled at times to retain the loyalty of his monastic disciples;[137] his exhortations to the monks to resist the subversive suggestions of the demons may therefore have been of more than theoretical importance.

He emphasises two key features of demonic attacks, irrespective of what particular sin they are trying to incite. First, he stresses the demons' craftiness, repeatedly warning that monks should never become complacent, since demons often cunningly allow them to make unimpeded progress for a while before beginning or resuming their attacks. Thus he describes how demons allow novices to begin their monastic careers with such success that they are on the point of being inscribed in the Book of Life—whereupon the demons strike: 'and when [a monk] begins, they allow him for a while to possess subordination, love, gentleness of temper, struggling; and to be sympathetic, free, blameless, strong, obedient to commands, quiet in voice and well-disposed, and not making oaths, not being undisciplined in distasteful words; and they allow him to store up all these achievements in heaven. And henceforth seeing God waking to help him, to inscribe his name in the book of life, then suddenly, poured upon him like violent water, they work to destroy his toil through

[137] See below pp.180-90.

desires.'[138] Secondly, however, he emphasises in several passages that it is possible for a steadfast monk to defeat demonic attacks, as the demons are fundamentally weak.[139] Thus at the beginning of sermon 9 he states that while demons terrify the soul of the monk, they do not have the power to implement their threats. Just as someone might plan in the agora to rob an inexperienced pauper, but would run away if someone brave and confident appeared, so too demonic apparitions may frighten someone inexperienced into abandoning piety, but are easily chased away by a wise monk using the sign of the cross.[140] His message is therefore simultaneously uncompromising (there is little excuse for a monk to succumb to the demons) and encouraging (anyone can resist if he is strong and follows my guidance).

Symeon does not present his teaching about demons as purely theoretical; rather, he claims that he himself had received visions about demons, and indeed had fought (and defeated) them. This is a particularly prominent theme in sermon 9, on demonic attacks. After the opening of the sermon which, as just discussed, states that demons can only overcome weak monks, the preacher asserts that he has personal knowledge of this topic: 'For I, having put it appropriately to the test, have achieved theory/vision.'[141] His claim to have personal experience is highlighted by the use of the emphatic pronoun ἐγώ. Throughout the sermon, even when he is talking about demonic attacks in the abstract, he repeatedly uses first person verbs to stress his own familiarity with the topic: 'I know and believe that the demons are transformed into every form….I know and believe that when a monk is in self-control, the

[138] Καὶ ὅτ'ἂν ἄρχηται, ἐῶσιν αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ τέως ἔχειν ὑποταγὴν, ἀγάπην, πραῦπάθειαν, ἀγῶνα· εἶτα τε συμπαθῆ, ἐλεύθερον, ἄμεμπτον, καρτερικὸν, ὑπήκοον περὶ τὰ κελευόμενα, τῇ φωνῇ ἥσυχον καὶ εὐδιάθετον, καὶ μὴ ὀμνύοντα ἔν τινι, μὴ δὲ ἀτακτοῦντα λόγοις ἀηδέσι· καὶ πάντα τὰ κατορθώματα συγχωροῦσιν αὐτῷ θησαυρίζειν ἐν οὐρανοῖς· καὶ λοιπὸν βλέποντες τὸν θεὸν διεγειρόμενον πρὸς βοήθειαν αὐτοῦ, τοῦ ἐγγράψαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς, τότε ἐξάπεινα ὡς βίαιον ὕδωρ περιχυθέντες αὐτῷ, κάμνουσι τὸν κόπον αὐτῷ ἀπωλέσαι διὰ τῶν ὀρέξεων: Sermon 21.7 (p.108).

[139] The weakness of the demons is a major theme in the discourse attributed to Antony by Athanasius, as cited above p.78 n23.

[140] Sermon 9.1 (p.37). See also 10.1 (pp.45-6) and 25.1-2 (pp.125-6).

[141] Δέοντως γὰρ δοκιμάσας ἐγὼ κατέλαβον τὴν θεωρίαν: Sermon 9.1. (p.37).

phalanx of demons is at hand…'[142] The verbs οἶδα and πέπεισμαι are positioned emphatically at the start of the sentence. In addition, in the course of the sermon he refers to numerous occasions in which he has seen different demons, claiming to recognise their various forms. He reports, for example,

> I know, moreover, and I have seen, demons transformed into divine light, in order through pride to darken the monk. And I have often seen species of demons transformed into winged beings. And I have seen the spirit of avarice, a plague and sordidly greedy of gain, gaping to swallow up the world. And behold, it was poor in its own hypostasis, but destructive and full of burning coal. Again I saw the spirit of folly, wandering, small-brained, jingling, laughing proudly; and its clothing was like a mat, and its height was double, its length of a four-cubit man; and I saw it plaguing self-controlled people, and stimulating them to fornication. I again saw demons urging [monks] to look at a young woman, and promising all the wealth of the world.[143]

He dramatizes his visionary experiences by claiming they surpass both speech and the ability of his audience to hear: 'And I observed their city, but a narration of the vision is not [possible]';[144] 'I saw these things, and I recognised everything. And more things than these the Lord did not hide from me. But I have written a part [of them], passing over many things in silence, on account of the weakness of those who do not have the capacity to hear.'[145] He claims not only that he saw the demons, but that he was able to resist them; he reports, for instance, that demons in the forms of dragons, serpents and piglets wrestled with him, and tried to cut his loin-cloth, but that by making the sign of the cross and thinking on God's wisdom, he repelled them.[146]

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[142] Οἶδα γὰρ καὶ πέπεισμαι πρὸς ἕκαστον εἶδος μεταμορφοῦσθαι τοὺς δαίμονας... οἶδα καὶ πέπεισμαι ἐν ἐγκρατείαις ὄντος μοναχοῦ ἐπιστάσαν φάλαγγα δαιμόνων: Sermon 9.4-5 (pp.40-1).
[143] Οἶδα δὲ πάλιν ἐγὼ, καὶ ὠψόμην μεταμορφουμένους δαίμονας εἰς θεῖον φῶς, ὅπως διὰ τῆς ἐπάρσεως σκοτίσωσι τὸν μοναχόν. Καὶ εἰς πετεινὰ δὲ μεταμορφουμένας φύσεις δαιμόνων πολλάκις ἐθεωρησα· καὶ τὸ τῆς φιλαργυρίας εἶδον πνεῦμα λοιμὸν καὶ αἰσχροκερδῆ κεχηνότα τοῦ καταπιεῖν τὸν κόσμον· καὶ ἰδοὺ αὐτὸ ἦν πενόμενον κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν, ὀλέθριόν τε καὶ ἀνθράκων ἐμπεπλησμένον· ὠψόμην πάλιν πνεῦμα μωρίας, πλάνον, μικροκέφαλον, καὶ κατακώδωνον, ὑψηλά γελῶντα· καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐσθὴς αὐτοῦ ψιαθώδης, καὶ τὸ ὕψος αὐτοῦ διπλοῦν, τὸ μῆκος αὐτοῦ τετραπηχέου ἀνδρός· καὶ αὐτὸ λοιμαῖνον τοὺς ἐγκρατεῖς, καὶ παροξύνον εἰς πορνείαν· εἶδον πάλιν δαίμονας προτρεπομένους εἰς θέαμα νύμφης, καὶ τὸν ἅπαντα πλοῦτον τοῦ κόσμοῦ ἐπαγγελλομένους: Sermon 9.5 (p.41).
[144] Καὶ πόλιν δὲ αὐτῶν κατεῖδον· ἀλλ'οὐκ ἔστιν εξήγησις τῆς ὁράσεως: Sermon 9.6 (p.41).
[145] Ταῦτα εἶδον ἐγὼ, καὶ ἐπέγνων τὰ πάντα· καὶ πλείονα δὲ τούτων οὐκ ἔκρυψε κύριος ἀπ'ἐμού· ἀλλὰ μέρος τί συνέταξα, τὰ πολλὰ σιωπήσας, διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῶν ἀκούειν μὴ χωρούντων: Sermon 9.8 (p.43).
[146] Sermon 9.6 (pp.41-2).

At one level, these claims about his personal experiences with demons serve simply to substantiate his general arguments about demonic attacks; he can back up his theoretical observations through personal anecdotes. Their importance is greater than this, however, as they also place Symeon firmly in the tradition of the great monastic heroes of the past. Since the life of Antony the Great, at least, 'discernment of spirits' had been regarded as one of the key traits of the advanced ascetic; monastic leaders were expected to understand the different demons and how to combat them, both to help other monks and to gain personal control over the forces of evil.[147] David Brakke has argued persuasively that monastic identity was conceived in large part in terms of opposition to the demons.[148] Symeon's claims to have seen, and defeated, the demons, thus confer spiritual authority upon him and his preaching. The *Life of Symeon the Younger* contains more descriptions of its hero's visions than perhaps any other late antique saint's Life.[149] At least two of these descriptions seem to derive from the sermon collection;[150] it is thus possible that more of the *Life's* accounts of visions could derive from earlier records of the saint's words, now lost. But whether or not this is the case, the sermon collection that does survive suggests that visions were indeed an important component of Symeon's identity, and in the construction of his spiritual authority. What is more, demons were not the only subject about which he claimed to have seen revelations. When we turn to another key theme of the collection, eschatology, we will see that Symeon also professed to have received divine knowledge about the fate of the soul after death, the final judgement, and the end of the world.

[147] On the role of demons in the *Life of Antony* see Schneelmelcher 1980, 281-92.
[148] Brakke 2006.
[149] The ubiquity of visions in the *Life* is noted by Millar 2014, 285, 292.
[150] See above pp.85-7.

Heaven and Hell: Symeon as Prophet

Throughout the sermon collection, Symeon is preoccupied with the vivid reality of heaven and hell.[151] He repeatedly reminds his audience that the present world and its pleasures are temporary and will, like the human body itself, be dissolved.[152] Every soul will have to face judgement (he seems to discuss both the judgement of the soul after a human's death, and the final judgement of all at the end of the world, without clarifying the relationship between the two).[153] He describes the joys of heaven,[154] and the horrors of hell,[155] in striking terms, again claiming personal knowledge, through revelation, of the afterlife. His vision is entirely black and white: no degrees or levels of heaven or hell are envisioned. Interest in eschatology and the final judgement is, of course, ubiquitous in early Christian thought, but Symeon's sermons may fit into a context of rising speculation about the end of the world during the sixth century. The holy man does not make any great innovations in eschatological theology. What is striking about Symeon's sermons is simply how far they are pervaded by eschatology. His message is straightforward, vivid, and insistent: judgement is inescapable; if you are in a state of sin at death, there is no way to escape unspeakable horrors; but if you are virtuous, you will find unimaginable joys. Yet while he urges everyone to focus on the afterlife, his warnings are particularly directed at the rich; he repeatedly presents the last judgement as a time when worldly hierarchies will be overthrown.

[151] See Hester 1990.
[152] See e.g. Sermons 10.1 (p.45), 19.1-2, 5-6 (pp.93-5, 96-8), 20.1 (p.98), 26.1 (p.137), 27.1 (p.140).
[153] See e.g. Sermons 6.2-3 (pp.17-8), 8.2, 7 (pp.28-9, 32-3), 10.2-4 (pp.46-9), 11.3-4 (pp.51-3), 12.1-3 (pp.53-7), 13.4-5 (pp.59-63), 14.1 (pp.63-4), 15.7 (pp.72-3), 16.1-5 (pp.73-9), 17.6 (pp.86-7), 18.6-7 (pp.91-2), 19.1-2, 5-6 (pp.93-5, 96-8), 20.1-6 (pp.98-102), 21.1-2 (pp.103-4), 22.1-9 (pp.111-8), 23.1-3 (pp.118-21), 26.2, 6 (pp.129, 132-3), 27.1, 3-4 (pp.137-40), 28.1-4 (pp.140-4), 29.3, 5 (pp.145-8).
[154] Brief references to the joys of heaven abound, but for longer expositions see e.g. Sermons 1 (pp.33-5), 9.8 (pp.43-4), 11.2 (pp.50-1), 22.6-7 (pp.115-6), 26.1, 5-6, 9-10 (pp.127-9, 132-3, 135-7), 30.1-5 (pp.48-52).
[155] Similarly, brief references to the tortures awaiting the sinner are ubiquitous. For fuller expositions, see e.g. Sermons 6.3 (pp.17-18), 8.2 (pp.28-9), 11.1 (pp.49-50), 21.1-2 (pp.103-4).

Symeon claims to have received divinely-inspired knowledge of the afterlife and of the fate of the soul after death. In sermon 30, he suggests that God has revealed the joys of paradise to him: 'I [ἐγὼ] knowing the goodness of the son, which is the same goodness as the father's, have taken freedom of speech to say that [in paradise] there are many cities, and there are many lands, there are many lights, and there are many glories, there is much joy.'[156] Later in the same sermon, he provides a vivid description of God's elect in heaven:

> Behold his saints, exalting in glory, wearing bright, eye-catching clothing, girdles and sandals of living stones, necklaces and things brighter than lightning, garments surpassing the day [in brightness], marked in the name and character of the son of God. Wherefore the seraphim worship, and the archangels tremble, the angels fall forward, the light is greatly multiplied, the fire blazes high, the plants give way, the deathless horses leap, and the chariots spring gracefully, the clouds bear those climbing on them on high. And while all this will be thus, others of the saints will grow wings like eagles, and some will fly like doves; and everything will flourish in joy and happiness.[157]

The speaker's use of the present tense for most of the passage conveys an almost ecstatic impression, as if he could see the vision before his eyes while speaking, and was trying to recreate it for his audience. It is important that Symeon does provide vivid evocations of the joys of heaven, and not only of the horrors of hell: he seems to hope to persuade his audience to reform not only through fear, but also through the promise that their sacrifices and sufferings will be worthwhile in the end.

Nonetheless, in other passages his emphasis is much more threatening. In sermon 22, he reports an extremely ominous revelation, as if it had been reported to him by another

[156] ἐγὼ δὲ εἰδὼς τὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ υἱοῦ, τῆς αὐτῆς ἀγαθότητος οὖσαν τοῦ πατρὸς, λαβὼν τὴν παρρησίαν εἰπεῖν, ὅτι πολλαὶ πόλεις εἰσὶ, καὶ χῶραι πολλαί εἰσι, φῶτα πολλὰ εἰσι, καὶ δόξαι πολλαί εἰσι, χαρὰ πολλή ἐστι: Sermon 30.2 (p.150).

[157] ὁρᾶτε τοὺς ἁγίους αὐτου καυχωμένους ἐν δόξῃ, λαμπρὸν καὶ ὁλόφθαλμον ἔχοντας ἔνδυμα, ζώνας καὶ ὑποδήματα διὰ λίθων ζώντων, μανιάκια καὶ τὰ αὐγάζοντα ὑπὲρ ἀστραπὴν, στολὰς ὑπερνικώσας τὴν ἡμέραν, ἐν ὀνόματι καὶ χαρακτῆρι κατεστιγμένας τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ· διὸ καὶ τὰ σεραφεὶμ προσκυνοῦσιν, καὶ ἀρχάγγελοι τρέμουσιν, οἱ ἄγγελοι προσπίπτουσιν, τὸ φῶς ὑπερπληθύνεται, τὸ πῦρ ὑπερεκπυροῦται, τὰ φυτὰ ὑποκλίνουσιν, οἱ ἀθάνατοι ἵπποι σκιρτῶσι, καὶ τὰ ὀχήματα ἐν εὐπρεπείᾳ ἄλλονται, αἱ νεφέλαι μεταιώρως φέρουσι τοὺς ἐπιβαίνοντας· τούτων δὲ οὕτως ἐσομένων, ἄλλοι τῶν ἁγίων πτεροφυήσουσιν ὡς ἀετοὶ, καὶ τινες ὡς περιστεραὶ πετασθήσονται· τὰ δὲ πάντα εὐφροσύνην καὶ χαρὰν ἐξανθήσουσι: Sermon 30.6 (p.153). Cf. on this passage Hester 1990, 340-1.

visionary: 'Behold, I speak mysteries to you: for I know a man in this generation who has been informed that now few are to be found who give over their souls into the hands of the angels'; rather, 'it is the demons who receive them.'[158] The subsequent few lines are perhaps corrupt, and certainly difficult to translate, but one relatively clear passage seems to imply that this anonymous man was himself capable of saving souls from the demons: 'and when he had rebuked them [the demons] by the power of the Holy Spirit, holding out his hand to the soul constrained in compulsion, immediately these [the demons], terrified, let it go and fled. And the soul returned to the settled condition of its body.'[159] The speaker then proceeds to say that this man contemplated and bewailed the demonic treatment of souls who had sinned, whereupon, 'having shouted like Moses in his heart towards God, he asked to understand something about this saying; and it was revealed to him through the holy spirit, that from ten thousand scarcely one soul would be found in the present times, advancing in the hands of the holy angels;'[160] this is then followed by a narrative of the fate of the soul after death, which describes the different demons examining the soul to see if they can find anything of their own sin in it, in a variant of a common account which appears in the works of many late antique authors (interestingly, several versions survive attributed to Symeon Stylites).[161]

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[158] ἰδοὺ δὴ μυστήρια ὑμῖν λέγω· οἶδα ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπον ἐν τῇ γεννεᾷ ταύτῃ πεπληροφορημένον, ὅτι νῦν ὀλίγοι εὑρισκονται οἱ εἰς χεῖρας ἀγγέλων παραδιδόντες τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν….δαίμονες εἰσὶν οἱ παραλαμβάνοντες αὐτάς: Sermon 22.2 (p.112).

[159] Καὶ ἐμβριμησταμένος αὐτοῖς ἐν δυνάμει τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου, ἐκτείναντός τε τὴν χεῖρα ἐπὶ τὴν βιαζομένην ἐν ἀνάγκῃ ψυχὴν, εὐθέως ἐκεῖνοι τρομάξαντες, ἔασαν αὐτὴν καὶ ἔφυγον· κἀκείνη ἐπιστρέψασα εἰς τὴν αὐτῆς τοῦ σώματος κατάστασιν ἐγένετο': ibid.

[160] Βοήσας ὡς Μωϋσῆς τῇ καρδίᾳ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν, ἐπηρώτα μαθεῖν τί περὶ τοῦ ῥήματος τούτου· καὶ ἐχρηματίσθη αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου, ἀπὸ μυρίων μίαν μόλις εὑρίσκεσθαι ψυχὴν ἐν τοῖς ἐνεστῶσι χρόνοις, ἐν χερσὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων προερχομένην: ibid.

[161] On the development of these accounts of demons interrogating souls after death (which often use the image of aerial 'tollgates') from early Christianity through the Byzantine period see e.g. Rivière 1924; Every 1976; Constas 2001, 105-9. None of these studies, however, discuss any of the three versions of the story attributed to Symeon Stylites. One is, of course, the account in Sermon 22. Another is found in Leontius of Neapolis's *Life of John the Almsgiver*, 43 (pp.395-6) which refers to a revelation spoken by 'the holy Symeon the Stylite' about the different demons which examine the soul after its death. Leontius does not specify which Symeon Stylites he means, which might suggest he was referring to Symeon the Elder. The third similar account, again in the form of a sermon, is translated in Latin in the *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum* (vol 7, 1677), but unfortunately its origin is not described. Again, however, it describes the

Although this revelation, and anti-demonic power, are not attributed to the speaker, but to an anonymous acquaintance, it is highly likely that his audience would have understood this as a modest way of referring to Symeon himself. It seems to have been widely believed that Paul's claim in 2 Corinthians 12.1-5 to have known a man who had been taken up to heaven and seen revelations was a reference to Paul himself, and that some ascetics, imitating the apostle, reported their visions in the third person; thus we read in the *Life of Alexander Akoimetos,* "and this [vision] he confessed to us as if it had happened to another person. Just as the blessed Apostle Paul described his own vision as if it had belonged to someone else, so too did Alexander, the Apostle's disciple.'[162] It is therefore likely that Symeon is implicitly suggesting that he himself had 'shouted like Moses' and received the ominous revelation that barely one in ten thousand men of the present generation would be saved. He thus presents himself as a prophet (as signalled by the comparison to Moses) bringing God's warning to the world. His repeated, vivid descriptions of the Last Judgement and of the afterlife throughout the collection consolidate the impression that he spoke in the manner of an Old Testament prophet, as a mediator and messenger from God to humanity, bringing a message full of both threats and promises.

His vision of the afterlife is characterised by its stark polarisation**.** There was no agreed eschatological theology in the early church; instead authors manifested a diverse range of understandings of the afterlife.[163] Some developed complicated images of the world to come, in which heaven, in particular, had various sections or grades for people who had attained differing levels of virtue. This is even implied in some material associated with

angels and demons examining the soul (although it does not, unlike the first two, name the different demons associate with particular sins). It is attributed in the Latin translation to 'Simeonis Admirandi', which seems more likely to refer to Symeon the Younger than Elder, since the Younger was normally known as Symeon 'of the Wonderful Mountain', or sometimes as 'Symeon the Wonder-worker' [*thaumatourgos*]. None of these three accounts attributed to Symeon appear to be directly related to each other, however; all have more in common with various of the many other versions of the account.

[162] *Life of Alexander Akoimetos* (p.680, trans. p.266).

[163] Cf. Constas 2001, 91-4 and *passim*; Shoemaker 2003, 179-203.

Symeon's own shrine. Thus in the *Life of Martha,* Martha is shown in a vision a fine mansion in heaven for herself, then an even more splendid mansion for Symeon, as well as eastern suburbs where the 'pious in almsgiving and god-fearing men and women'[164] lived.[165] The hierarchies of heaven are expressed still more clearly in other sources: the Bohairic *Life of Pachomius,* for example, contains an elaborate account of the different degrees of honour accorded to deceased monks of different degrees of virtue (although all good enough to have been saved).[166] There are no such variations in the vision of the afterlife expressed in Symeon's sermons. Only two options are available: the full glory of heaven, involving lordship over the angels, fellowship with the saints and martyrs, and close proximity to God; or, in contrast, eternal fire and torment. It is important to note that Symeon's message is not entirely negative: while he does dwell on the sufferings of the wicked, he is equally committed to describing the glories of heaven. The divide between the two is, however, absolute:

> See with me the Lord saying in the gospels that he will separate the just on his right, from the sinners on his left, like the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats [cf. Matthew 25:32-3]. And then he will say to the just, 'come, you blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' And to the sinners he will say, 'depart from me, accursed ones, into the outer darkness, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.' [cf. Matthew 25:41] And there will be wailing [and gnashing] of teeth.'[167]

Again, this polarised vision is not original; as this passage shows, Symeon could draw upon the Gospels to support his position. But whereas some Christian thinkers had elaborated upon this sparse picture of the afterlife—largely in order to accommodate different degrees

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[164] τῶν ἐν ἐλεημοσύναις εὐσεβῶν καὶ φοβουμένων τὸν Θεὸν ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν: *Life of Martha,* 18 (p.266).
[165] ibid. 17-18 (pp.265-7).
[166] Bohairic *Life of Pachomius,* 82 (pp.87-91).
[167] ὅρα μοι ἐν εὐαγγελίοις τὸν κύριον λέγοντα, ὅτι τοὺς δικαίους ἀφοριεῖ ἐκ δεξιῶν, τοὺς δὲ ἁμαρτωλοὺς ἐξ εὐωνύμων, ὥσπερ ἀφορίζει ὁ ποιμὴν τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων· καὶ τότε ἐρεῖ τοῖς δικαίοις· δεῦτε οἱ εὐλογημένοι τοῦ πατρός μου, κληρονομήσατε τὴν ἡτοιμασμένην ὑμῖν βασιλείαν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου· καὶ τοῖς ἁμαρτωλοῖς, πορεύεσθε οἱ κατηραμένοι εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον, τὸ ἡτοιμασμένον τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων: Sermon 17.6 (p.86).

of piety into heaven—Symeon retains the stark duality of Matthew, offering his audience only two, diametrically opposed options: heaven and hell.

While many of Symeon's evocations of the afterlife refer to judgement at an unspecified future time, some go further, suggesting that the final *eschaton* was about to take place. Thus sermon 12 begins with an evocative description of Christ's Second Coming, appearing to imply that it was imminent:

> Approaching to the blessed glory of the manifestation [ἐπιφανείας] of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ, sons of light, think on this wisely: and remove yourself from earthly matters and strive to acquire the one who comes on the clouds of heaven with great power. For behold, the glory of the Lord will appear, and all flesh will see the salvation of our God, when the powers of the heavens shake, and the earth turns around, the angels shudder, and the just exult in the everlasting brightness.[168]

Although 'ἐπιφάνεια' had various different senses in early Christian writings, one of these was Christ's Second Coming, and the description that follows makes it clear that Symeon is warning his audience to prepare for the *eschaton*. Elsewhere in the collection, sermon 28 suggests that the signs of the end of the world described in the Gospels (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) have already taken place. His description of the signs does not exactly match that found in the Gospels, but is very similar in tone, and the subsequent reference, in the present tense, to the descent of the Lord, makes its eschatological significance clear: 'Our eyes have seen the sun darkened, and earthquakes in cities and countryside, and burnings and fallings, and signs that happened, uprisings of peoples, and sheddings of blood, and gulfs threatening swallowings, encampings of locusts, uprisings of bloody wild beasts, seizings of men and children…. Our lamps are quenched, our talent is hidden, the heavenly master comes from above, rising powerfully, for Judgement.'[169] The preacher combines

[168] τῇ μακαρίᾳ δόξῃ τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστού προσελθόντες υἱοὶ φωτὸς, νοήσατε ταύτην συνετῶς· καὶ τῶν περιγείων πραγμάτων ἀπαλλαγέντες, τὸν παραγινόμενον επὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανου μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς, ἀγωνίσασθε κτήσασθαι· ἰδοὺ γὰρ ἡ δόξα κυρίου ὀφθήσεται, καὶ ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν· ὅτ'ἂν αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλεύονται, καὶ ἡ γῆ περιφέρεται, ἄγγελοι φρίττουσι, καὶ δίκαιοι ἀγάλλονται ἐπὶ τῇ ἀειδίῳ λαμπρότητι: Sermon 12.1 (p.53).
[169] Εἶδον οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν ἥλιον σκοτισθέντα, καὶ σεισμοὺς κατὰ πόλεις καὶ χώρας, καὶ ἐμπρήσεις καὶ πτώσεις, καὶ σημεῖα γεγονότα, ἐθνων ἐπαναστάσεις, καὶ αἱμάτων ἐκχύσεις, καὶ χάσματα ἀπειλοῦντα

references to various eschatological parables ('our lamps are quenched' is an echo of the Parable of the Ten Virgins, 'our talent is hidden' of that of the Talents) to emphasise the unpreparedness of his audience and himself to face the coming *eschaton.*

These passages suggesting that the Second Coming was imminent seem to reflect wider eschatological trends during Justinian's reign, perhaps encouraged by the natural and military disasters of the period.[170] Thus for example Romanus the Melodist, in a hymn on the Ten Virgins, states explicitly that the end of the world is at hand, 'the final day is near….the bridegroom is coming; let us not remain outside, crying, "open!"',[171] adducing as evidence the disasters which the current generation has witnessed:

> How long, my soul, are you going to sleep this vain sleep, rest and snore? Wake up now, at what we see [happening]: grievous threats and constant earthquakes have disturbed the earth and those in it…the trumpets of the signs sound in the world, to predict to those expecting Christ that he will come…. We see these things now, [my] soul. They are not at the doors; they are the doors; they are ready and present. Nothing is missing, as Christ said, but as he foretold, everything will happen, both famines and plagues, and constant earthquakes, and race has been roused against race; the things inside are frightening, and those outside are full of war; there is nowhere to be saved, but danger is everywhere.[172]

Romanus, like Symeon in the passage quoted above, combines references to the parable of the Ten Virgins with descriptions of the current omens of the end time, in the form of disasters.[173] Aspects of Symeon's eschatology may thus reflect wider ideological

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καταπόσεις, ἀκρίδων στρατοπεδεύσεις, καὶ θηρίων αἱμοβόρων ἐπαναστάσεις, ἀνθρώπων καὶ παιδίων ἁρπάγματα…αἱ λαμπάδες ἡμῶν ἐσβέσθησαν, τὸ τάλαντον κέκρυπται, ὁ οὐράνιος δεσπότης ἄνωθεν δυνατῶς εἰς κρίσιν ἀνιστάμενος ἔρχεται: Sermon 28.3 (pp.142-3).

[170] Magdalino 1993, esp.5-7; Meier 2003, esp. chapters 1-2. Averil Cameron has recently expressed doubts about a general rise in eschatology in this period (and about links between natural disasters and apocalypticism), and called for detailed studies of the content and contexts of particular 'eschatological' texts: A.M. Cameron 2016, esp. 17-22.

[171] ἡ ἐσχατη ἐγγὺς/... ὁ νυμφίος ἔρχεται·/ μὴ ἀπομείνωμεν ἔξω/ βοῶντες· 'ἄνοιξον': Romanus the Melodist, *Kontakion* 48.1-2 (p.410).

[172] ὕπνωσας ὕπνον, ψυχή μου, κενόν·/κεῖσαι καὶ ῥέγχεις ἕως πότε;/ γρηγόρησον κἄν νῦν, πρὸς ὃ βλέπομεν./ἀπειλαὶ ἐπαχθεῖς/καὶ σεισμοὶ συνεχεῖς/συνετάραξαν γῆν μετὰ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ'/...ἠχοῦσι κατὰ κόσμον/ τῶν σημείων αἱ σάλπιγγες/προμηνύουσαι Χριστὸν τοῖς προσδοκῶσιν,/ ὅτι ἐλεύσεται.../// ταῦτα καὶ νῦν θεωροῦμεν, ψυχὴ·/θύραι εἰσίν, οὐκ ἐπὶ θύραις·/ἐπέστη γὰρ καὶ πάρεστιν ἕτοιμα./οὐκ ἐλλείπει οὐδέν/ὥσπερ εἶπε Χριστός,/ἀλλ'ὡς προεῖπε, πάντα γενήσεται·/ καὶ λιμοὶ καὶ λοιμοὶ/καὶ σεισμοὶ συνεχεῖς, /καὶ ἔθνος ἐπὶ ἔθνος ἐγήγερται· τὰ ἔσω φοβερά, τὰ ἔξω δὲ/μάχης πεπλήρωνται./οὐκ ἔστι ποῦ σωθῆναι·/πανταχοῦ γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος: ibid. *Kontakion* 48.3-4 (pp.411-2). Cf. Magdalino 1993, 6.

[173] On eschatology in Romanus, see also Meier 2003, 77-84.

developments, at least among some groups within the empire, prompted by some of the traumatic events of the mid sixth century, including defeats to the Persians, severe outbreaks of plague, and earthquakes in both capital and provinces. The ideological effects of these disasters will be discussed in greater depth in subsequent chapters; indeed, we will see that they seem to have posed considerable challenges to the reputations of Symeon and other holy men. Symeon's sermons, with their lack of specificity and contextual references, provide no insights into the effects of the disasters on the saint's career. But they do show that the holy man provided repeated, stark warnings that his generation must prepare for judgement, warnings which must have seemed all the more powerful in the context of rising concerns about the end of the world.

Yet although the preacher urges everyone to remember the inevitability of death and judgement, his words have one particular target: the rich and powerful. He frequently claims that the rich justify their immorality by ignoring, or denying, the soul's continued existence after death.[174] In one passage, he imagines a rich man claiming that no-one has ever returned from Hades, thus implicitly denying Christ's resurrection.[175] His message, in contrast, is that all will be called to judgement, irrespective of their rank. He frequently stresses that neither wealth, nor family connections, will help a soul when it is being judged: God is entirely impartial and will judge based on the soul's moral state alone.[176] He claims that all humans will be equal at the judgement, irrespective of their worldly rank; but in fact he tends to depict only the rich and powerful as facing punishment. He thus implies not merely a levelling of worldly hierarchies, but their complete reversal:

> For there is no respecting-of-persons with the king of the ages, Christ, nor [is it possible] to give a golden ransom for a soul; neither the boldness of parasites, nor household

[174] The fate of the soul after death was a topic of much debate in the sixth century, a debate which was closely linked to conflict about the cult of saints (Dal Santo 2012). It does not seem impossible that Symeon's repeated references to this theme reflect this wider debate.
[175] Sermon 6.4 (p.20).
[176] See e.g. Sermon 11.1, 4 (pp.49-50, 52-3), 14.1 (pp.63-4), 18.6 (pp.91-2), 19.6 (pp.97-8).

> helpers, nor friends, can deliver the soul; for these rather lament on their own because the opportunity for repentance has passed. [For there are] no gifts blinding eyes towards forgiveness, nor cajolery of parents, nor sympathy of relatives; nor will a ruler be above a poor person, nor a king above a pauper; but the rich man and the pauper will come to the same [tribunal]. Then proud kings, present naked and bowing their necks, are sent into the eternal death and bitter punishments; there the ruler, condemned, is flung to unquenchable fire and an underwater place, in a deathless worm; because he justified the impious on account of gifts, and hid judgements from the poor, for doing injustice to their widows and orphans, and for living in luxury in the sweetness of foods; there the just poor man is exalted by Christ in glory, in order to sit with the rulers of the people in eternal life, being glorified by angels.[177]

Although this and comparable passages are clearly threatening towards the rich, they do have a more positive inverse: he reminds the less wealthy, who must have constituted the majority of his audience, that the injustices of this life are temporary, that their oppressors will be punished and the innocent poor exalted. These are not original arguments, but Symeon's emphasis on the punishment of the rich is notable, particularly given his position as a monastic, not ecclesiastical, author. Indeed, his criticisms of the rich extend far beyond these passages describing posthumous judgement: wealth and its corrupting influence is a dominant theme of the collection. By examining this in more detail, we will see that Symeon appears like a prophet not only by claiming to reveal God's mysteries to his audience, but also by bringing a powerful message of social criticism.

Rich and Poor

Symeon's strong concern to denounce worldly wealth distances him from most of the famous monastic authors of late antiquity. Monastic writers tended to refer to the secular rich only to warn monks to avoid them: thus Isaiah of Scetis instructs, 'Do not seek to make

[177] Οὐ γὰρ ἐστι παρὰ τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων Χριστῷ προσωποληψία ἀνδρὸς, οὔτε χρυσίον ἀντάλλαγμα τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ δοῦναι· οὐ παρασίτων θράσος, καὶ οἰκείων βοήθειαι, οὐ φίλοι δυνάμενοι ἐξελέσθαι ψυχήν· οὕτοι γὰρ μᾶλλον καθ'ἑαυτοὺς κόπτονται διὰ τὸν παρελθόντα τῆς μετανοίας καιρόν· οὐ δῶρα ἐκτυφλοῦντα ὀφθαλμοὺς πρὸς συγχώρησιν· οὐδὲ γονέων περιδρομὴ, ἢ συγγενῶν συμπάθεια· οὐκ ἔσται ἄρχων ὑπὲρ πένητα, οὐδὲ βασιλεὺς ὑπὲρ πτωχόν· ἀλλ'ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πλούσιος καὶ πένης παραστήσονται· τότε βασιλεῖς ἀλαζόνες, γυμνοὶ καὶ τετραχηλισμένοι παριστάμενοι, ἐκπέμπονται εἰς αἰώνιον θάνατον καὶ τιμωρίας πικρὰς· ἐκεῖ ἄρχων κατακριθεὶς ἐκρίπτεται εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον καὶ εἰς τόπον ὑποβρύχιον, ἐν ἀθανάτῳ σκώληκι· διὰ τὸ δικαιοῦν τὸν ἀσεβῆ ἕνεκεν δώρων, καὶ ἀποκρύπτειν κρίματα πενήτων, εἰς τὸ ἀδικεῖν αὐτῶν χήρας καὶ ὀρφανοὺς, καὶ σπαταλᾷν ἐν ἡδύτητι βρωμάτων· ἐκεῖ πένης δίκαιος ἀψοῦται [? ὑψοῦται] ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ ἐν δόξῃ, τοῦ καθίσαι μετὰ ἀρχόντων λαοῦ ἐν ζωῇ ἀτελευτήτῳ ὑπὸ ἀγγέλων δοξαζόμενος: Sermon 14.1 (pp.63-4).

friends with those who are glorified in this world, lest the glory of God becomes dimmed inside you',[178] while Evagrius of Pontus warns that a monk afflicted by avarice, 'associates himself with wealthy women and indicates to them who should be treated well.'[179] As mentioned above, they are preoccupied with particularly monastic concerns, such as the desire to gain money to perform almsgiving, anxieties about supporting oneself when too old or sick to perform manual labour and, sometimes, monks' retention of excessive wealth after joining a monastery.[180] They do not launch into lengthy, vitriolic attacks on the rich, even if they occasionally include brief criticisms of them. Isaiah of Scetis adopts a spiritual definition of poverty which implicitly excludes the non-monastic poor, implying a lack of interest in societal economic divides: 'the poor are not those who have renounced and given away this visible world alone, but those who have given up all evil and who hunger always for the remembrance of God.'[181] There were some important figures who broke this trend—including above all Shenoute of Atripe, discussed below—but it generally holds true of the most popular ascetic authors of the late antique east.

Attacks on the rich were, rather, a characteristic of ecclesiastical preaching. Wealth and its abuses constituted a major theme of the sermons of the most famous early Christian preachers, including, in the east, John Chrysostom[182] and the Cappadocian Fathers,[183] and, in the west, Ambrose and Augustine.[184] The work of Peter Brown and others on early Christian rhetoric on wealth and poverty has revealed the complexity of its strategies and

[178] Isaiah of Scetis, *Discourses,* 6 (trans. p.78).
[179] Evagrius Ponticus, 'On Thoughts', 21 (p.226, trans.p.67). On Evagrius's portrayal of monastic avarice, see Brakke 2008.
[180] See e.g. Evagrius Ponticus, 'Eight Thoughts', (col 1152), trans. p.78: 'a monk with many possessions is like a heavily laden boat that easily sinks in a sea storm.' [NB: This text survives in various versions under various names: see Sinkewicz 2003, 67.] Not all early Christian monks renounced all their wealth; see e.g. Laniado 2009, Caner 2008, 222-4.
[181] Isaiah of Scetis, *Discourses,* 17 (trans. pp.133-4).
[182] See e.g. Leyerle 1994; Hartney 2004, 133 ff.; Mayer 2006; Brändle 2008; Sitzler 2009.
[183] See esp. the works of Holman, including 2001 and 2006.
[184] For attitudes to wealth and poverty in the West, see esp. Brown 2012.

ambitions. Brown has argued, for instance, that far from accurately reflecting social realities, early Christian rhetoric usually focused on social extremes, contrasting the extremely wealthy and the extremely poor while ignoring the majority of the population who fell in the middle.[185] He has also shown how a purely economic understanding of the poor was increasingly supplemented, and sometimes replaced, by one which conceptualised the pauper as someone who was owed justice by the powerful, in terms ultimately derived from the Hebrew Bible.[186] This discourse on wealth and poverty was inherently political and contributed to the growth of bishops' power: as Brown argued with reference to Ambrose of Milan, sermons on these themes served to 'open up for Ambrose and for similar Christian bishops a space for intervention in society';[187] they enabled bishops to appear as 'modern avatars of the prophets of ancient Israel.'[188]

Many of these complexities are reflected in Symeon's preaching. He provides elaborate descriptions of the luxurious lifestyles of the rich, denouncing, in particular, their oppressive treatment of the poor. For Symeon, unlike for many early Christian preachers, there seems to be no possibility of legitimate wealth or of living piously while retaining riches; his message is unusually harsh and uncompromising. Indeed, he goes so far as to associate the wealthy with one of the groups most despised by early Christian authors: pagans. He seems less interested than some preachers in promoting almsgiving; his aggressive rhetoric thus seems to have a symbolic rather than strictly practical function. He creates a role for himself as defender of the poor and oppressed, a role which had the potential to be both powerful and deeply controversial.

[185] Brown 2002, 6-16, 45-9; Brown 2012, 76-8; cf. also López 2013, 14-5.
[186] Brown 2002, 68-73; Brown 2012, 79-81. cf also Holman 2009.
[187] Brown 2012, 143-4.
[188] ibid. 80.

Symeon gives detailed descriptions of the extravagant lives of the rich. He often imagines their thought processes, sometimes even portraying them temporarily renouncing their lifestyles before relapsing into sin. In sermon 8, for example, he imagines a rich man, having eaten too much, acknowledging the vanity of life, renouncing greediness, marriage, possessions and injustice, and recognising that earthly goods will lead to eternal torment. He then reports, however, that such repentance is not sincere, and that the rich man soon changes his mind:

> And the rich man, raising himself through some window, and viewing the pleasures of the world and their glory…. piercing himself on the thorns of earthly things, begins to say, 'What is better than this glory? Or what is more than the love of parents? Or what is more enjoyable than the present good things?....Therefore let us be warmed by expensive wine and perfumes, with all the other foodstuffs; for our life is short and grievous, and the body will turn into ash, and the spirit will be dissolved like empty air; and so because of this we will choose before the time of the tomb to live in such houses, and before the time of ash, to dress our body in the diverse patterns of gold-threaded and silk garments; and before the last silence to be merry in speech and laughter and joys and much-twisting leapings. Of all things what is sweeter than a wife? With her the sweet repose of life, illuminating, shines forth; for entering into my house I will sleep beside her; for living with her possesses not bitterness, but happiness and joy.'[189]

Here, as in other comparable passages,[190] he presents a vivid picture of the rich man, referring to luxuries which engage all five senses (the sight of fine clothes; the taste of wine and food; the scent of perfume; the sounds of laughter and conversation; the touch of his wife), and imagining, however inaccurately, his innermost thoughts. It is notable that in this passage Symeon does not depict the rich man as doing anything unusually scandalous, at least in terms of his sexual morality; he is not presented as consorting with prostitutes or

[189] Ὁ δὲ πλούσιος διά τινος θυρίδος ἑαυτὸν ἐωρίζων, καὶ θεωρῶν τὰς ἀπολαύσεις τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν…ταῖς ἀκάνθαις τῶν γηΐνων ἑαυτὸν περιπείρων, ἄρχεται λέγειν· τί βέλτιον τῆς δόξης ταύτης; τί πλέον τῆς τῶν γονέων στοργῆς; ἢ ἀπολαυστικώτερον τῶν παρόντων ἀγαθῶν;… ὅθεν οἴνου πολυτελοῦς καὶ μύρων σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ἐδωδίμοις θαλφθῶμεν· ὅτι ὀλίγος καὶ λυπηρός ἐστιν ὁ βίος ἡμων, καὶ τὸ σῶμα τέφρα ἀποβήσεται, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα διαλυθῆσεται ὥς χαυνὸς ἀήρ· διὰ τοῦτο οὖν αἱρησόμεθα πρὸ καιροῦ τῆς ταφῆς ἐνοικῆσαι εἰς τὰς τοιαύτας βάρεις· καὶ πρὸ καιροῦ τῆς τέφρας, ἐν ποικίλαις τῶν διαχρύσων καὶ σηρικῶν χιτῶνων ἀμφιάζειν τὸ σῶμα· πρὸς δὲ τῆς ἐσχάτης σιγῆς, εὐφραίνεσθαι ῥήματι καὶ γέλωτι καὶ χαρμοναῖς καὶ πολυστρόφοις σκιρτήμασι· τί δὲ πάντων τῆς ὁμοζύγου ἡδύτερον; μεθ'ἧς ἡ γλυκερὰ τοῦ βίου ἀνάπαυσις ἐπιφώσκουσα καταυγάζει· εἰσελθὼν γὰρ εἰς τὸν οἶκον μου προσαναπαύσομαι αὐτῇ· οὐ γὰρ ἔχει πικρίαν ἡ συναναστροφὴ αὐτῆς, ἀλλ'εὐφροσύνην καὶ χαράν': Sermon 8.6 (pp.31-2).

[190] See e.g. Sermons 6.1-4 (pp.17-20), 14.2-3 (pp.64-6), 16.1-4 (pp.73-7).

committing adultery, but simply as desiring to sleep with his wife. This suggests that Symeon adopts a particularly hard-line approach to the wealthy; even the wish to continue living with his wife is presented as a sign of the rich man's swift relapse into sin.[191]

He is particularly concerned to denounce rich people's unjust treatment of the less powerful in society (indeed, he seems more interested in those experiencing various kinds of oppression than in the simply economic poor).[192] Thus in sermon 6 he imagines a rich man saying 'I will acquire castles, I will buy fields, and I will master people, through slaves and slave girls; I will seize the land of this man in my farm [?], for it is very productive, and it will accrue gold by fertility for me, and I will impose a heavy collar on my labourers, and I will give joy to my soul….for this is my part, and this is my lot. I will oppress the pauper, I will not spare widows, nor will I respect the grey hair of the old man; and my strength will be the law of righteousness, for weakness is exposed as useless.'[193] Despite the reference to the pauper, the rich man's words are focused much more on injustice and oppression ('master people', 'seize the land', 'inflict a heavy collar', 'oppress'), and on the conflict between strength and weakness, than on the gap between wealth and poverty.

Indeed, for Symeon, wealth is essentially synonymous with injustice; there seems no possibility of legitimate wealth. In sermon 16 he claims that the rich gain their money through accepting bribes to make false judgements; through plundering orphans and widows; through treacherous murders; through lending money and demanding interest unjustly; and through forgeries.[194] Many ecclesiastical preachers, despite including

[191] Elsewhere, too, he preaches an entire sermon against those who elevate marriage to the status of a god, although he does, briefly, acknowledge its legitimacy: Sermon 15 (pp.66-73).
[192] See, on this theme in the works of ecclesiastical preachers, Brown, cited above p.128 n186.
[193] Κτῆσομαι βάρεις, ὠνήσομαι ἀγροὺς, καὶ κρατήσω λαῶν, διὰ δούλων καὶ παιδίσκων· ἁρπάξω τοῦδε τὴν γῆν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ· ὅτι καλλίκαρπος αὕτη, ἐν εὐφορίαις χρυσὸν προσοδεύσει μοι, καὶ προσθήσω ἐπιθῆναι κλοιὸν βαρὺν ἐπὶ τοὺς γηπόνους μου· καὶ δώσω εὐφροσύνην τῇ ψυχῇ μου...ὅτι αὕτη μοι μερὶς, καὶ οὗτος μου κλῆρος· καταδυναστεύσω πένητα, οὐ φείσομαι χήρας, οὐδὲ πρεσβύτου ἐντραπήσομαι πολιάν· καὶ ἔσται μου ἡ ισχὺς νόμος τῆς δικαιοσύνης· τὸ γὰρ ἀσθενὲς ἄχηστον ἐλέγχεται: Sermon 6.4 (p.20).
[194] Sermon 16.1 (pp.73-4). Compare also Sermon 6.1-2 (pp.17-8); 8.3 (pp.29-30); 12.1-2 (pp.53-5), 16.4 (p.77).

vituperative attacks upon the impious rich, acknowledged the possibility that a rich man could be pious if he lived moderately and gave alms generously: thus even John Chrysostom could write, 'wealth will be good for its possessor if he does not spend it only on luxury, or on strong drink and harmful pleasures; if he enjoys luxury in moderation and distributes the rest to the stomachs of the poor, then wealth is a good thing.'[195] Operating in a society in which the total abolition of wealth was neither possible nor desirable, churchmen tended to soften their messages to accommodate the pious Christian rich. Thus John Chrysostom also interpreted Jesus's words in the Gospels as proof that renunciation of riches was not necessary: 'he did the same thing for poverty; he did not make it mandatory. He did not simply say: "Sell all that you have," but "*If you want to be perfect, go, sell your belongings.*"'[Matthew 19:21].[196] Severus of Antioch, although often exhorting his audience to be generous to the poor, nonetheless at times adopts a strictly spiritual interpretation of scriptural references to the wickedness of wealth and the virtue of poverty, with the result that material wealth is not presented as a barrier to salvation: he says that it is not forbidden to become rich, but only to be enslaved by love of riches, and that it is not all the wealthy who are damned, but those who devote all their thoughts to worldly possessions.[197] There is little sign of such accommodation in Symeon's sermons. He quotes the stricter parts of Jesus's message, 'it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven' [Matthew 19:24][198] and 'those with wealth will have difficulty entering the kingdom of heaven' [Matthew 19:23],[199] with no suggestion that 'wealth' in this context should be understood metaphorically. Indeed, he

[195] John Chrysostom, 'Against Those Who Go to the Circus Games', 5 (col.1052, trans. p.137).
[196] John Chrysostom, 'On Fasting', 3 (col.318, trans. p.77).
[197] Homily 113 (p.274). This spiritual/metaphorical interpretation of biblical references to wealth and poverty had, of course, a long history in early Christianity: see e.g. de Ste. Croix 1981, esp.434-5.
[198] Sermon 6.5 (pp.20-1).
[199] Sermon 8.2 (p.29).

comes close to suggesting that total renunciation and separation from the world provides the only opportunity for the rich to be saved:

> Thus it is necessary also for the one approaching God for the heavenly inheritance, to distribute well the things gathered together evilly from the injustice of Mammon to the poor….and likewise with daily tears to separate like a stranger and a sojourner from the world, in the hope of coming to Christ…On account of this the Lord himself said: 'The one who does not leave his father or mother, or brothers, or sisters, or fields, or houses, and take up his cross and follow behind me, is not worthy of me.'[200]

Here Symeon combines two different gospel passages to emphasise the need for total dedication to Christ. He blends Matthew 19:29, 'everyone who has forsaken houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit everlasting life,'[201] and Matthew 10:38, 'whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me', to demand the complete rejection of family ties. This is quite different from the process whereby ecclesiastical preachers tried to emphasise more moderate aspects of Christ's message. Symeon thus offers no route for a rich man to retain his wealth and status and still achieve salvation. His uncompromising language, and the stark division he draws between wealth and poverty, recalls his equally black-and-white vision of the afterlife. The contrast he draws between monk and demon, between pauper and rich man, thus seems to symbolise the ultimate and eternal divide between heaven and hell.

When he explicitly discusses the social order he approaches, but falls short of, true radicalism. Like many other Christian preachers, he stresses the essential equality of mankind,[202] reminding the rich that they are the brothers of the poor and lowly: 'How, taking

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[200] Οὕτω δεῖ καὶ τὸν προσερχόμενον τῷ θεῷ πρὸς τὴν κληρονομίαν τὴν οὐράνιον τὰ κακῶς ἐκ τῆς ἀδικίας τοῦ μαμωνᾶ συναχθέντα, καλῶς διοικῆσαι τοῖς πένησιν…καὶ ὁμοίως δάκρυσι καθημερινοῖς ὡς ξένον καὶ παρεπίδημον διΐστασθαι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐν τῇ ἐλπίδι τοῦ καταλαβεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν....διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο δὲ αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἔλεγε· ὁ μὴ καταλιπὼν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα, ἢ ἀδελφοὺς, ἢ ἀδελφὰς, ἢ ἀγροὺς, ἢ οἰκίας, καὶ λαβὼν τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθῶν ὀπίσω μου, οὐκ ἔστι μου ἄξιος: Sermon 8.3 (p.29).

[201] See also Mark 10:29.

[202] For the view expressed by some—but not all—early Christian preachers that all men were equal and/or brothers, see Holman 2009, 98-105; Brown, 2012, 79 ff.

up the sin of pride, do you say to your brother, "Don't go ahead of me, nor do I serve you, since I am better than you"?'[203] All humans are in fact fellow slaves – of God.[204] The rich and the poor were formed from the same material; conceived in a similar womb; and were born and will die in the same way.[205] Symeon goes further than some preachers, however, in explicitly calling into question the basis of slavery:[206] 'Surely [God] did not create one Adam a slave, and another a freeman? And even if it had been thus, you as descended from the free, should have observed justice, so as not to mistreat those begotten from the enslaved Adam, homebred [slaves] and labourers, sold and given and bought. But you have not acted thus…'[207] Ultimately, however, he does not call for the overthrow of the social order, instead idealising *eutaxia*[208] and mutually beneficial and respectful relationships between those of greater and lesser status: he argues that God appointed the ruler like a choice vessel to judge justly and wisely, and the labourer as a vessel for service, 'so that we may each take care of what is just for each other';[209] the king takes care for his people, and his people serve him; the owner supports his slaves, and the slaves are well-disposed to their lord; 'so that everyone taking care of each other, will give what is due duly to each other, and will not be destroyed by each other as from oppression, for we are all mortals from Adam, one flesh, and one blood in Christ our Life….and as we have been taught, let this be thought among us; for there is no slave nor freeman; for we are all one in Jesus Christ our Lord.'[210]

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[203] Πῶς τὸ τῆς ὑψηλοφροσύνης πτῶμα ἀναλαβὼν λέγεις τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου οὔτε προηγήσει μου, οὔτε διακονῶ σοι, μείζων σου ὤν: Sermon 13.2 (p.58).
[204] Thus he repeatedly refers to the pauper as the 'fellow slave' and/or 'brother' of the rich man: see e.g. Sermons 12.2 (p.55); 12.3 (p.55); 13.5 (p.61); 14.2 (p.64); 16.6 (p.79).
[205] Sermon 12.2 (pp.54-5).
[206] Even preachers who were particularly vehement in attacking the rich and defending the poor often glossed over slavery: Kelly 1995, 99-100; Brown 2002, 61-3.
[207] μὴ ἕτερον ἄρα Ἀδὰμ ἔκτισε δοῦλον, καὶ ἕτερον ἐλεύθερον; καὶ εἰ οὕτως εἶχεν, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ ἐλευθέρου ὑπάρχοντά σε, φυλάττειν σε ἔδει τὰ δίκαια, τοῦ μὴ ἀδικεῖν τοὺς ἐκ τοῦ δουλωθέντος Ἀδὰμ γεγγενημένους οἰκογενεῖς καὶ γεηπόνους, πρατάς τε καὶ μεταδότας καὶ ὠνουμένους· ἀλλ'οὐχ οὕτως διεπράξω: Sermon 16.6 (p.79).
[208] For the concept of 'eutaxia', defined as 'good social order', see Caner 2009, 55.
[209] ἵνα ἕκαστος τὰ ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων δίκαια μεριμνῶμεν: Sermon 16.6 (p.80).
[210] ὅπως πάντες τὰ ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων μεριμνῶντες, ἀλλὴλοις τὰ ὅσια ὅσίως ἀποδώσωμεν, καὶ μὴ ὡς ἀπὸ καταδυναστείας ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθείημεν· οἱ γὰρ πάντες ἑνὸς Ἀδὰμ ὄντες θνητοὶ, μία σὰρξ, καὶ ἕν αἷμα

There is therefore some inconsistency in his position; this passage implies his support for the social order, at least in theory, yet, as discussed, elsewhere he appears to deny the possibility of just wealth, and of the salvation of the rich. Although he does not seem to be preaching revolution, he remains profoundly sceptical of the behaviour and status of the wealthy.

Indeed, he goes so far as to associate the rich with the one of the groups most abhorrent to late antique Christian authors: pagans. The association between avarice/wealth and idolatry/paganism is not unique to Symeon: we find passing comparisons between the two in the works of both ascetic authors such as Evagrius of Pontus[211] and ecclesiastical authors like John Chrysostom.[212] Symeon, however, develops this point in much more depth, and suggests not only that the rich are like pagans, but that they actually are pagans. Sermon 8 begins with one of Symeon's characteristic attacks on wealth; he discusses the inevitable punishment of the avaricious at the Last Judgement; the need for renunciation; Christ's renewal of the world 'through poverty….so that those depriving themselves of earthly things will be glorified with him,'[213] and the temporary repentance of the rich man followed by his swift relapse into sin. He reports that when the rich man becomes hungry, he abandons his pious intentions, 'and perhaps even turns to idol-worship.'[214] He does not develop this theme at this point, instead returning to address the rich man and warning him that the goods promised to the saints in heaven far surpass the transitory pleasures of the world.

He then, however, breaks into an attack on pagans. There is a loose connection to the preceding theme—Symeon notes that pagans are lured by demonic counsellors to enjoy the

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ἐσμὲν ἐν Χριστῷ τῇ ζωῇ ἡμῶν...καὶ ὡς ἐδιδάχθημεν τοῦτο φρονείσθω ἐν ἡμῖν· ὅτι οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος· πάντες γὰρ ἡμεῖς εἷς ἐσμὲν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν: ibid.

[211] Evagrius Ponticus, 'Eight Thoughts' (col 1153).

[212] John Chrysostom, Seventh Homily on Colossians, 5 (cols. 349-50).

[213] Διὰ πενίας...ἵνα οἱ συστέλλοντες ἑαυτοὺς τῶν γηΐνων, σὺν αὐτῷ δοξασθῶσιν: Sermon 8.3 (p.30).

[214] Τάχα δὲ καὶ εἰς εἰδωλομανίαν μετεστράφη: Sermon 8.7 (p.32).

present life, in drunkenness, food, and marriage—before the passage develops into a polemic against the Greek gods and mythological figures. The grammar of the passage (at least in Mai's edition) temporarily breaks down, making his line of thought difficult to trace, but he attacks Herakles, 'Anteon', Skamander, Medea, Cronos, Semiramis, Zeus ['Dios, who is also Pezecus, whom they name Zeus'], Hermes, Hephaestos 'whom they call Pluto', Ares and Aphrodite, for a variety of immoral behaviours, including wrestling, adultery, incest, magical practices, fornication, avarice, blasphemy and lust. He proceeds to claim that all these 'gods' were in fact mortal men, who took the names of the stars on themselves, who were conceived by intercourse, oppressed their fellow men, and met bitter deaths. Interestingly, his account of the gods seems to derive from the chronicle of John Malalas: he reproduces, in rather garbled form, various details of the Antiochene chronicler's account,[215] as well as his euhemerizing approach.[216] Yet while Malalas discusses the gods fairly neutrally, sometimes even praising their virtues (for example, he calls Hera 'good, just and universally benevolent'),[217] Symeon is entirely hostile, repeatedly referring to their corruption and deceitfulness. He condemns the pagans who worship them as gods as 'stupid' [ἀνόητοι] and denounces their creation and worship of idols. It is at this point that he returns to the earlier theme of the 'Christian' rich man, explaining why his discussion of paganism is relevant:

[215] Especially Malalas, 1.8-2.2 (pp.9-18; trans. pp.6-11). For example, compare Malalas 1.14-15 (pp.14-6) with Sermon 8.7 (p.33), lines 15-18 ['Ερμῆς ὁ δολερὸς...ὡς πλοῦτον δωρούμενος']. Compare also ibid. lines 11-15 [Διὸς...ἀβασίλευτον ὅν τότε], to Malalas 1.9-10 (pp.10-12), 1.13 (pp.13-4). Further points of comparison between the two accounts abound, though it should be noted that some of the people mentioned by Symeon (e.g. Anteon, Skamander) do not appear in Malalas's account. There is nothing inherently implausible in the idea that Symeon might have known Malalas's work, at first or second hand: it was used by several contemporary historians, including his acquaintance Evagrius Scholasticus: see Jeffreys 1990a.
[216] On the relevant passage in Malalas, see Jeffreys 1996, esp.66-70. She shows that Malalas himself was using an earlier source, which was either the *Excerpta Barbari* or a very similar text. Symeon's version, however, seems to derive from that in Malalas, rather than his source, as it repeats various changes Malalas has made to the original: for example, like Malalas, Symeon describes Semiramis as Kronos's wife, not Picus's.
[217] Malalas, *Chronicle*, 1.8 (p.10, trans. p.6). On Malalas's attitude towards the pagan past, see also Liebeschuetz 2004, 151-2.

> Do you see these things, rich man, for it is towards you that my words look keenly, [my words] about the desires of this life which you have; for in this way a dead expectation lies in wait for the pagans; for they are greedy with respect to the pleasures of the world, pressing themselves in them, for the idols to rejoice with them, and to take part in injustices and luxuries and fornications and defiled sacrifices and libations for the rite of the demons; setting up a table for the spirit, that is the demon, and a mixture of wine for drunkenness, in revels and drunkennesses and whorish songs and varied dances, where the whole sacrificial smoke of the idols lives; with respect to these illegal and harmful pleasures, rejoicing in unjust thoughts. For even if you are called a Christian, being corrupted in these things you are distanced from God, 'for into a malicious soul wisdom will not enter' [Wisdom 1:4].[218]

By the end of this passage, the distinction between pagan and rich man has entirely disappeared. Symeon describes the dissolute behaviour of the pagans, including sacrifices as well as drunkenness, fornication, worldliness, and oppression, but at the end implies that the rich man himself engages in all these activities: 'being corrupted *in these things* you are distanced from God [emphasis mine].' He explicitly states that even if the wicked man calls himself a Christian, he is entirely removed from God; he is thus, in essence, also a pagan. The relationship between pagan and rich man thus does not lie solely in their comparable idolisation of material objects; rather, the entire lifestyle of the rich man and all its associated luxuries are condemned as essentially pagan, and even tainted with the association of pagan sacrificial rituals. Indeed, although nowhere else in the sermon collection does he develop the connection between pagan and rich man at such length, he repeatedly refers to the rich man eating and drinking excessively 'as if on a day of sacrifice.'[219] Admittedly, this phrase is from the New Testament (James 5:5), so might be regarded as a commonplace. Yet Symeon always links it to a rich man drinking expensive wine or indulgent foods, an

[218] ὁρᾷς ταῦτα ὦ πλούσιε, εἰς σὲ γὰρ ἀφορῶσιν ὀξέως οἱ λόγοι μου, περὶ ὧν ἔχεις ἐπιθυμιῶν τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου· οὕτως γὰρ ἀπόκειται τοῖς ἔλλησι νεκρὰ προσδοκία· πλεονεκτοῦσι γὰρ πρὸς τὰς ἡδονὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος, ἑαυτοὺς ἐν αὐταῖς ἐπείγοντες, πρὸς καὶ τὰ εἴδωλα συγχαίρειν αὐτοῖς, καὶ συναιρεῖσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἀδικίαις καὶ τρυφαῖς καὶ πορνείαις καὶ μιαραῖς πρὸς τελετὴν τῶν δαιμόνων θυσίαις καὶ σπονδαῖς· παρατιθοῦντες τράπεζαν τῇ ψυχῇ, τούτεστι τῷ δαίμονι, καὶ οἴνου κέρασμα πρὸς μέθην, ἐν κώμοις καὶ μέθαις καὶ ᾄσμασι πορνικοῖς καὶ πολυστρόφοις χορείαις, ἔνθα ἡ πᾶσα κνίσσα τῶν εἰδώλων αὐλίζεται· πρὸς τὰς ἀνόμους ταύτας καὶ βλαβερὰς ἡδονὰς, συγχαίροντες τοῖς σκολιοῖς διαλογισμοῖς· εἰ γὰρ καὶ χριστιανὸς εἶ λεγόμενος, ἐν τοῦτοις ὡς διεφθαρμένος κεχώρισαι ἀπὸ θεοῦ, ὅτε εἰς κακότεχνον ψυχὴν οὐκ εἰσελεύσεται σοφία: Sermon 8.10 (p.35).

[219] ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ σφαγὴς: Sermons 11.3 (p.52), 12.2 (pp.54-5), 14.3 (p.65), 16.1 (p.74).

association not made explicit in James.[220] These references may therefore also echo the association Symeon draws in sermon 8 between the lifestyle of the rich and the lives of the pagans and, in particular, their sacrificial practices.

Symeon emphasises the oppressive and unjust behaviour of the pagans, in a manner very reminiscent of his attacks on the rich. The last section of sermon 8 contains a description of the effects of pagan belief: 'the gods of the gentiles/pagans are demons, and products of the hands of men. On account of this those who believe in them brought one another to destruction; for they poured out blood in murders, on account of theft and trickery, corruption and disbelief, disturbance and perjury, disordered uproars, forgetting of favours, pollution of souls, falsified lineages [?], and disorders of marriages, adulteries and licentiousnesses; for the worship of nameless idols in wealth, is the cause, beginning and end of every evil of the world. For either they go mad from enjoyment, or they prophesy falsehoods, or they live unjustly, or they commit perjury speedily; for believing in soulless idols, swearing wickedly, they do not expect to be harmed; but from both sides justice will pursue/punish them….'[221] The beginning of this passage might seem to be talking about pagans in the past, as it uses verbs in the aorist and imperfect. The scope of the discussion then expands, however, with the general proposition that idol worship in wealth is the 'cause, beginning and end of every evil in the world.' From then on, Symeon switches to using the present tense, implying that he is referring to present day idolaters. The accusations

[220] The full text of James 5.5 reads: 'You have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton. You have nourished your hearts, as on a day of sacrifice.' There is thus a connection to luxurious living, but no specific reference to over-eating and consumption of expensive wine as we find in Symeon.

[221] Οἱ δὲ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια, καὶ ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων· διὰ τοῦτο καὶ οἱ πιστεύσαντες αὐτοῖς, ἕτερος τὸν ἕτερον εἰς ἀναίρεσιν ἦνεγκαν· ἐξέχεον γὰρ αἵματα ἐν φόνοις, διὰ κλοπὴν καὶ δόλον, φθοράν τε καὶ ἀπιστίαν, ταραχὴν καὶ ἐπιορκίαν, θορύβους ἀτάκτους, χαρίτων ἀμνηστίας, ψυχῶν μιασμὸν, γεννήσεως ἐναλλαγὰς, καὶ γάμων ἀταξίας, μοιχείας τὲ καὶ ἀσελγείας· ἡ γὰρ τῶν ἀνωνύμων εἰδώλων θρησκεία ἐν τῷ πλούτῳ, τοῦ αἰῶνος παντὸς κακοῦ αἰτία, ἀρχή τε καὶ πέρας ἐστίν· ἢ γὰρ εὐφραινόμενοι μεμήνασιν, ἢ προφητεύουσι ψευδῆ, ἢ ζῶσιν ἀδίκως, ἢ ἐπιορκοῦσι ταχέως· ἀψύχοις γὰρ εἰδώλοις πεποιθότες, κακῶς ὀμόσαντες, ἀδικηθῆναι οὐ προσδέχονται· ἀμφοτέροθεν δὲ αὐτοῖς μετελεύσεται τὰ δίκαια: Sermon 8.11 (p.36).

he makes against the pagans—murder, theft, corruption, perjury, adultery—are exactly the kinds of criticisms which, as we have seen, he elsewhere makes of the rich. The link between the pagans and wealth is made explicit through the reference to 'idol worship in wealth', which is presented as responsible for all evil. The boundaries between the rich and the pagans are again elided; both deny God in deeds as much as in words, living luxuriously and oppressing the weak. Symeon thus presents the rich not just as Christians who have lapsed through sin, but as outside the Christian community itself.

What motivated Symeon's attacks on the rich? Many clergymen who preached on wealth had a practical and pastoral aim: to encourage their audience to donate more generously to charity. It is far from clear, however, that this is the primary aim of Symeon's preaching. If we again compare his sermons to those of John Chrysostom, we see a striking difference. Chrysostom frequently exalts almsgiving as a key virtue, calling it 'the queen of the virtues, who quickly raises human beings to the heavenly vaults', [222] and claiming that it can counterbalance any other flaws: 'regardless of how many other sins you have, your almsgiving counterbalances all of them.'[223] He urges not only the extremely wealthy, but also those of moderate and lesser means to make charitable donations,[224] which suggests that his preaching has practical motivations.

Symeon displays far less interest in the subject of almsgiving. He does not focus on the sufferings of the economic poor; he also rarely discusses the redemptive power of almsgiving at any length. One passage in sermon 16 does suggest that charity can help redeem the rich person. Yet even here, Symeon's focus is on stressing that almsgiving is *not* effective if it is undertaken for the sake of vainglory or from wealth which has been obtained

[222] John Chrysostom, **'**On Almsgiving and the Ten Virgins', 1 (col. 293, trans. p.30).
[223] ibid. (trans. p.31).
[224] See e.g. John Chrysostom 'On Almsgiving', 3 (cols 265-6).

unjustly (and, as we have seen, he tends to imply that all wealth is gained unjustly).[225] Again, he seems to imply that the rich man needs to renounce all his possessions in order to be saved: 'and so what do you think about these things, avaricious man, who wants to perform almsgiving from theft? And so if you give alms, give your own possessions to the poor, to one a garment, to another food, also free the ones treated unjustly, have mercy on widows, treat orphans well, tear up the unjust contract, from now on lending all your gold table service to God….'[226] The sermon collection contains a few other references to the salvific power of almsgiving,[227] but it is far from a major theme. It thus does not seem that the primary motivation behind Symeon's attacks on the rich was the desire to stimulate charitable giving.

His strident rhetoric may, therefore, serve a symbolic rather than strictly practical function. As Peter Brown argued was the case for bishops,[228] his attacks on the rich may have served to create for himself a moral and political role as defender of the poor, speaking with the voice of an Old Testament prophet. By defining the poor not simply as the economically destitute, but as all those who are oppressed in any way (including farmers, slaves, debtors, and those treated unjustly in court) he expands the community for whom he claims to act as advocate; even members of his audience of moderate means could well have identified with the oppressed and wronged. Perhaps counter-intuitively, therefore, his message could be seen as targeted less at the rich themselves than at the 'poor', even though it is the former whom he addresses so frequently. Brown has argued that the rhetoric of bishops like

[225] Sermon 16.4-5 (pp.77-9). For this theme in the writings of other early Christian preachers, see Holman 2009, 106 ff.
[226] Τί οὖν δοκεί σοι πρὸς ταῦτα φιλάργυρε, ὁ μᾶλλον ἐξ ἁρπαγῆς βουλόμενος ἐλεεῖν; εἰ οὖν ἐλεεῖς, τὰ ὑπάρχοντά σου διάδως [? διάδος] τοῖς πένησιν, ᾧ μὲν ἐσθῆτα, ᾧ δὲ τροφὴν, καὶ ἀδικουμένους ῥῦσαι, χήρας οἰκτείρησον, καὶ ὀρφανοὺς εὖ ποίησον, ἄδικον συγγραφὴν διάσπα, τὸν πάντα σου κόσμον τοῦ χρυσίου δανείζων ἀπενθεῦθεν [? ἀπεντεῦθεν] θεῷ: Sermon 16.5 (p.78).
[227] See e.g. Sermon 18.7 (pp.92-3); 20.4 (p.100).
[228] See above p.128. Brown notes that the same was true for holy men but does not discuss this in detail.

Ambrose was populist and ran the risk of alienating some secular parts of the elite;[229] nonetheless, most bishops needed to keep the civic elite on side, and showed them ways to accommodate their wealth within the pious Christian community. Symeon, however, displays little interest in offering practical solutions to the wealthy as to how to live; his limited advice tends to involve total renunciation and the assumption of asceticism. Rather than trying to bring the Christian community together, he appears to be asserting sharp boundaries between the oppressive rich—who are also denigrated as pagans—and the oppressed poor, which could potentially include large swathes of society. As discussed in Chapter 1, the sixth century seems to have seen continued tensions between different social classes, and there is some, if limited, evidence from Antioch to support this picture.[230] This must have created opportunities for a holy man to play on this friction to win support and popularity.

Of course, the image of the holy man as defender of the poor against the depredations of the rich is not unusual. Many saints' Lives, and in particular fifth-century saints' Lives, contain stories depicting their holy men reforming, or punishing, rich laypeople who acted oppressively.[231] In most of these cases, however, the stories are counterbalanced by others in which pious rich people who are devoted to the saint and his cult are treated by him with respect.[232] Symeon the Younger's *Life* stands out, since, as we will see, it contains no episodes which portray the local nobility positively.[233] Furthermore, since these other holy men are known only through their saints' Lives, we cannot be certain how far the anti-noble

[229] Brown 2012, esp.138-43.
[230] See above pp.43-51.
[231] Thus see Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatius,* 21 (pp.134-40), 44.8-19 (pp.262-4); Syriac *Life of Symeon Stylites the Elder* (pp.581-3, 585-8); *Life of Alexander Akoimetos,* 34 (pp.684-5), 39 (pp.688-9); *Life of Marcellus Akoimetos,* 32 (pp.314-6).
[232] The *Life of Alexander Akoimetos* stands out as another *Life* which contains few positive stories about the rich, though it should be noted that it is much shorter and less detailed than the other Lives just cited.
[233] It does present a few Constantinopolitan notables in neutral or positive terms, which may suggest that it was the particular political circumstances in Antioch which engendered Symeon/his hagiographer's hostility towards the city's elites: see below, pp.210-8.

stories in these texts reflect the saints' lived experiences as well as hagiographic topoi. There is, however, one important example of a holy man who used similarly aggressive rhetoric against the rich and whose own sermons survive: Shenoute of Atripe.

Ariel López has argued persuasively that Shenoute used his claims to represent the poor to boost his own position as a local patron and to attack his rivals and enemies, in particular the nobleman Gesius, probably the subject of Shenoute's famous sermon 'Not because a fox barks'.[234] Shenoute attacked Gesius's (supposed) crypto-paganism, drawing a connection between rich, pagan, and oppressor similar to that found in Symeon's sermons. Shenoute was clearly a highly controversial figure in his time and afterwards, and his sermons are full of precise references to particular incidents and individuals. They are in this sense very different from Symeon's sermons, which are entirely shorn of specific details. Peter Brown has, however, pointed out that even a non-specific attack on a generic rich man could be interpreted, in the context of live preaching, as an attack on a known individual;[235] Symeon's sermons could thus have proved highly contentious.

Unfortunately, the sermon collection provides few clues as to whether his preaching reflected genuine tensions with the local noble community, as in the case of Shenoute. There are only the faintest hints in the sermons themselves of any reference to rich men opposing Symeon and his monks: in sermon 16, when describing the indecent behaviour of the rich, he accuses them of making fun of the pious, 'mocking the just on account of [their] chastity; for what is just and blessed has become for you a laughing stock and mockery.'[236] This appears to be a complaint about the rich mocking monks, but is so non-specific that it cannot be associated with any confidence with genuine historical conflict. In order to understand

[234] López 2013, *passim*. See also Frankfurter 1998, 77-82; Schroeder 2007, 132-7.
[235] Brown 2012, 142.
[236] ἐμπαίζοντες δικαίους διὰ τὴν σωφροσύνην· καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ὅσιον ἐγενήθη ὑμῖν εἰς γέλωτα καὶ εἰς ἐμπαιγμόν: Sermon 16.3 (p.76).

the context for Symeon's preaching better, it is necessary to turn to other sources, and in particular to the *Life of Symeon the Younger*. Importantly, the *Life,* as we will see in the next chapter, appears very hostile towards Antioch's wealthy classes, and indeed draws a very similar connection between them and paganism to that found in the sermon collection. By examining this theme in terms both of the challenges Symeon seems to have faced in his career, and in the broader context of Antiochene society in the sixth century, we may come to a better understanding of the holy man's role in northern Syrian society. But the aggressive anti-wealth rhetoric of the sermons already warns us that he may have been far from a peaceful and generally-accepted figure.

Conclusion

Symeon's sermons combine aspects of genres often regarded as distinct: the ascetic discourses of monks such as Evagrius Ponticus and Isaiah of Scetis, and the sermons of ecclesiastical preachers such as John Chrysostom and the Cappadocians. Symeon himself therefore appears as a liminal figure, bridging the gap between the internal world of the ascetic and his monastery and the extroverted and socially-engaged domain of the Church and its preachers. The impression of Symeon gained from the sermons in many respects complements that found in his *Life*: both *Life* and sermons present Symeon as the recipient of divine visions; both depict him as a wise teacher of his monastic disciples; and both are intensely hostile to the wealthy and to pagans, often blurring the boundaries between the two. Nonetheless, the sermons reveal new sides to Symeon, which are suggestive of how the holy man constructed his own authority. Whereas Symeon's hagiographer presents his healing miracles as the basis of his popularity, the sermons reveal the power of Symeon's own rhetoric, which is only hinted at in the *Life.*[237] He presents himself, implicitly, as a

[237] As discussed above, the Life does present Symeon as a preacher and provides the text of several sermons attributed to him. Only one of these, however, contains the eschatological focus which, as we have seen, predominates in the sermon collection itself: *Life of Symeon*, 171 (pp.152-4).

prophetic mediator between heaven and earth, bringing an uncompromising message. He eschews the accommodations made by some clerical preachers, focusing on the polarised opposition of demon and monk, rich and poor, and heaven and hell. His preaching was thus in many respects aggressive and confrontational, focusing not on what united the wider Christian community, but what divided it. He thus appears, like Shenoute of Atripe, as a figure who had the potential to create conflict as much to assuage it. Unfortunately, the lack of specific references within the sermons to their delivery and reception makes it impossible to gauge from the collection itself what effect Symeon's preaching had on his audience. When, however, we turn to the next major text associated with Symeon's shrine, the *Life of Symeon the Younger*, we do find evidence that Symeon, like Shenoute, was a controversial figure who struggled to win the favour of his wider community.

The Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger

The *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger,* the saint's vast hagiographic biography, must lie at the heart of any study of Symeon's cult. It is in many respects a remarkable text, and much the best known of the works originating at the 'Wonderful Mountain', although still arguably understudied in comparison with other comparable saints' Lives. There have been a small number of excellent studies looking at the *Life* as a whole;[1] it has also been examined from various specific angles, including the intersection between the stylite's lifestyle and the liturgy,[2] the presentation and significance of wounds in stylites' biographies,[3] and 'holy anorexia.'[4] Certain basic problems about the text's dating, compositional process, and authorship remain, however, unresolved. In addition, broader questions about the significance and interpretation of the *Life* deserve further attention. The text has a distinctive perspective, in geographical, political, and religious terms; it may not, however, be as fiercely pro-Chalcedonian as has sometimes been claimed. Symeon's hagiographer seems preoccupied not with doctrine, but with various local challenges to the saint's authority from both within and outside his monastery. He describes serious opposition to the stylite among his own disciples, but in problematic terms which again raise concerns about the methodological challenges of handling hagiography. He also indicates that Symeon aroused hostility among some sections of secular Antiochene society. As argued in the previous chapter, the sermon collection attributed to Symeon suggests that the saint used aggressive and potentially divisive rhetoric, but provides no means of assessing its social relevance.

[1] Déroche 1996 (and see also Déroche 2004); Millar 2014. Van den Ven's introduction to his edition of the Life also remains essential.
[2] Harvey 1998, esp.534-9.
[3] Cremonesi 2011; Cremonesi 2008 discusses references to sacrificial meat, and to paganism more generally, in the *Life*.
[4] Chevallier-Caseau 2003; her attempts, essentially, to psychoanalyse Symeon, do not seem to me convincing, as they rely on an overly literal interpretation of the *Life* and a downplaying of the specifically Christian significance of Symeon's ascesis.

The *Life* seems to place this rhetoric into context. In particular, it implies that Symeon and his supporters were forced to use various, sometimes conflicting, tactics to defend the saint from accusations of failure in the aftermath of the disasters that struck Antioch in his lifetime. These disasters raised questions about the role of the holy man and about theodicy itself.

Before these themes can be analysed in detail, it is necessary to provide a brief description of the contents and structure of the *Life.* As Fergus Millar has noted, it is the longest saint's Life that has survived from before the Arab conquests,[5] with over 250 chapters. In its broad outlines, it shares the common structure of many saints' Lives: it begins with the marriage of Symeon's parents, his conception and birth, and continues to describe, first, his childhood, then, intermittently, key events in his life and in Antioch, before ending with his death. Between these descriptions of events comes a vast array of miracle stories, which are so numerous that it has been claimed that the text should be viewed as a miracle collection rather than as a true saint's Life.[6] This view is not entirely persuasive; given one basic distinction between a saint's Life and a miracle collection—that the former deals with a living saint and the latter with the miracles of a (usually long-) dead saint—it seems preferable to continue to describe Symeon's hagiography as a saint's Life, but to note that the same tendencies that contributed to the proliferation of miracle collections in the late sixth and early seventh centuries also affected contemporary saints' Lives, so that the boundary between the two genres is permeable.[7] Nonetheless, the volume of miracle stories in the text is exceptional and worthy of note.

[5] Millar 2014, 286.
[6] Déroche 1996, 70; Dal Santo 2012, 196-7; Efthymiadis 2014b, 117-8.
[7] On the relationship between the two genres, see below, pp.268-77.

Although, as the previous description implies, the basic framework of the *Life* is chronological, beginning with Symeon's conception and ending with his death, it is not fully chronologically structured. While most of the dateable events in the *Life* are in broadly the correct temporal order, some are out of place, and the miracle stories are sometimes grouped in thematic 'clusters' rather than by any possible chronology.[8] The text has various other oddities: one sequence of miracles appears twice in the text in slightly different forms,[9] while the monk Angoulas, a major opponent of Symeon's, first appears in chapter 123, but is presented again as if for the first time in chapter 168.[10] The preface to the *Life* implies that it was intended as reading material (it speaks of benefiting 'its readers'),[11] whereas the conclusion suggests that it was an oration in memory of the saint (it urges the audience to glorify God, remembering Symeon and 'becoming listeners to this divine and beneficial reading'),[12] which seems inconsistent—although it is certainly possible that the text could have fulfilled both functions.[13] Another distinctive feature is the shift in narrative voice from chapter 71 onwards: while all the previous chapters have been recounted entirely in the third person, from 71 the narrator frequently, though far from consistently, speaks of 'us' and 'we', apparently in reference to the monks of Symeon's monastery.[14] All of these

[8] See Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 124*-9*; Millar 2014, 285-6; Déroche 1996, 68-71 (Déroche 2004, 373, gives a somewhat more positive view of the *Life*'s chronology).
[9] The miracles in chapters 80-84 (pp.68-9) and 86-89 (p.70) are repeated, sometimes with more details (such as the names of the suppliants), in chapters 241-48 (pp.216-9): see Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 130* n.1; II, p.86 n.3, p.241 n.3; Chitty 1964, 181. Déroche has attempted to identify other examples of repetition of chapters or sequences of chapters but these are less convincing (Déroche 1996, 68-9).
[10] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 130* n.1; Chitty 1964, 180. On Angoulas and his role in the *Life* see Déroche 1996, 74-5, and below pp.183-5.
[11] τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων: Life of Symeon, Preface (p.2).
[12] τῆς θείας ταύτης καὶ ἐπωφελοῦς ἀναγνώσεως ἀκροαταὶ γινόμενοι: ibid. 259 (p.224).
[13] There has been considerable discussion of how hagiographic texts were used (see for a recent survey Efthymiadis and Kalogeras 2014): it seems to me most likely that Lives originating in monasteries were often intended both as reading material for the monks and as sources for services in memory of the saint. Sometimes funerary orations may have been built up into longer works more suitable for reading; certainly, the entire *Life of Symeon* could not have been read out on one occasion (cf. Festugière 1970, II, 169-70—who suggests that the references to a listening audience are purely rhetorical).
[14] See Delehaye 1923, lxiii-lxiv; Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 102*-3*; Déroche 1996, 71-2; Millar 2014, 283.

features must be borne in mind as we move on to consider the dating and authorship of the text.

The external evidence for the dating of the *Life of Symeon* is limited, but important. Van den Ven in his introduction to his edition of the text describes its nine extant manuscripts, the earliest of which date from the late ninth century.[15] The *Life* is certainly earlier, however, as it had already been translated into Syriac in the early ninth century (828-9).[16] Other derivative forms of the *Life* survive—a Georgian translation, and several Greek metaphrastic and abbreviated versions of the text—but are of little help in establishing its original dating.[17] An Arabic version of the *Life* is also attested, but no longer appears to be extant.[18] Much more relevant are two eighth-century citations of the Life: it is quoted in the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787) and in the third discourse of John of Damascus on images**,** probably dating from the first half of the eighth century.[19] This evidence thus situates the composition of the *Life* within, at the latest, 150 years of the saint's death. The only other piece of external evidence that might seem to suggest a significantly earlier date for the *Life* is the statement by John of Damascus that it was written by Arcadius, archbishop of Cyprus. Arcadius was bishop of Cyprus in the first half of the seventh century, and played an important role in the controversy over Monenergism; he also seems to have

[15] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 12*-30*.
[16] The only manuscript of this Syriac version of the *Life* dates from the tenth century, but it refers to the translation being made in the year 1130 of the Greeks, i.e. 828-9 AD. Unfortunately, the Syriac translation of the Life is unpublished and I have not been able to consult the manuscript (which is among the Sinai 'New Finds'). It is described (although mistakenly identified as a translation of Theodoret of Cyrrhus's work on Symeon the Elder), and the opening and closing lines of the manuscript published, in Philothée du Sinaï 2008, 320-22, 593. See the corrections and notes of Géhin 2009, 75-6, 86.
[17] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 34*-67*.
[18] Nasrallah 1972b.
[19] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, pp.32*-3*. See also Van den Ven 1955-7. The early eighth-century dating for John's third discourse on images has been challenged—most notably by Paul Speck—but remains dominant; see e.g. Louth 2002, 208, where a date in the 740s is suggested.

commissioned Leontius of Neapolis to write Lives of the Cypriot saints Spyridon and John the Almsgiver.[20]

The attribution of the text to Arcadius has, however, met with scepticism, in part because it is found in no other reference to, or manuscript of, the *Life* (no other witness names the text's author). Hippolyte Delehaye and, following him, Van den Ven, both found the attribution highly implausible on primarily chronological grounds: both believe the claim of the author of the *Life* that he was an eyewitness to Symeon's prediction of the death of Ephraim of Antioch in 545.[21] In their view, even if Arcadius had been a young monk in Symeon's monastery in 545, this would still mean that he had had an active monastic/ecclesiastical career of approximately 90 years, and must have died aged well over 100, which, if not impossible, is highly improbable. This argument is not entirely conclusive: even if we accept that the author of chapter 71 had genuinely witnessed the events of 545,[22] it is possible that the final 'author' of the *Life* as a whole was drawing on earlier written sources (a possibility that will be discussed shortly), and therefore could himself have joined the monastery later: Arcadius could thus have acted as the final redactor of the *Life* even if he only joined the monastery in the late sixth century. Nonetheless, his authorship of the *Life* is unlikely, given the unreliability of its sole attester: John of Damascus also, for example, attributes John Moschus's *Spiritual Meadow* to the latter's friend Sophronius of Jerusalem.[23] The case that Arcadius wrote the *Life* certainly is not strong enough to allow a secure dating of the text to the sixth or seventh centuries; external evidence can therefore take us no further than a *terminus ante quem* of c.750.

[20] On Arcadius's commissioning of Leontius, see Festugière and Rydén (1974), 2-3.
[21] *Life of Symeon*, 71 (pp.60-2). See Delehaye 1923, lxiii-lxiv; Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 101*-2*.
[22] Of course, not all claims by hagiographers to have witnessed their saint's miracles can be trusted, as Delehaye himself acknowledges; he does, however, regard Symeon's hagiographer's claim as plausible.
[23] John of Damascus, 'On Images', I.64 (p.165), III.13 (p.124).

The internal evidence of the *Life* has, therefore, formed the basis for most arguments about the text's dating. As mentioned above, several passages of the *Life* imply that their author was present at many of the events in Symeon's monastery from 545 onwards, which, if true, would mean that the text must have been written within a few decades of the saint's death. While these claims are not necessarily reliable (and become less relevant in any case if the final author's use of written sources is accepted as a possibility), it does seem very plausible that the text was written fairly soon after Symeon's death, by a monk of his monastery. The author is very interested in the monastery and its internal workings, and, in particular, in an outbreak of trouble which happened in the monastery shortly after Symeon's death. The hagiographer reports that Symeon, towards the end of his life, predicted that Angoulas (the supposedly insubordinate monk mentioned above) would, after the saint's death, become 'a traitor and a Judas to this place'; that 'his blasphemies' would be talked about 'almost everywhere'; and that he would be the 'cause of scandal' to many souls.[24] The hagiographer then notes, crucially, '**this indeed did happen not long after [Symeon's] death**.' No details are provided of what form this 'scandal' took, but it must provide an important context for the writing of the *Life;* it is difficult to see why the author would be so interested in Angoulas were he not a monk of the monastery who had some experience of the conflict after Symeon's death.

It is unlikely that we can determine the date of the text with any more precision than this. Vincent Déroche has argued that the *Life* can be dated to the reign of Phokas (602-10) because of a strange gap at the end of the text: it describes no events that can be dated between the accession of Tiberius in 578 and Symeon's death in 592. In particular, Déroche suggests that the author's failure to refer to Phokas's deposed and murdered predecessor

[24] 'προδότης καὶ Ἰούδας τοῦ τόπου τούτου'; 'σχεδὸν ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ' 'αἱ βλασφημίαι αὐτοῦ' 'αἰτία σκανδάλου': *Life of Symeon,* 240 (p.216).

Maurice, and his close associate Gregory, patriarch of Antioch (even though a contemporary author, Evagrius Scholasticus, presents Symeon as having friendly relations with both figures, and even though the *Life* does describe the saint's interactions with earlier patriarchs and emperors), arises from the virtual *damnatio memoriae* Maurice was subjected to by his usurper.[25] This argument is tempting, but not conclusive,[26] particularly given that the author is equally silent on the reign of Tiberius. It could also be noted that both Gregory and Maurice were very unpopular in some circles during their lifetimes,[27] so that even if the author did deliberately refuse to mention them, this does not necessarily presuppose a date after 602.[28] Again, we can say little more than that the author was almost certainly a monk of the saint's monastery, writing within a few decades of his death.

Should we, however, be speaking of the text's 'author' at all? While Delehaye and Van den Ven conceived of the text as having a single author who used only limited written sources (perhaps including his own notes taken contemporaneously with the events described),[29] Déroche has challenged this view, arguing, on the basis of the text's repetitions and other inconsistencies discussed above, that the final author acted as a compiler, who drew on various pre-existing sources, but failed to synthesise them convincingly.[30] As argued above, the author does seem to have used at least one written source, namely, a record of Symeon's sermons.[31] Beyond this, it is difficult to identify any particular sources used, but it is certainly not unlikely that, for example, he could have incorporated earlier records of miraculous cures into the later *Life*. There is no reason, however, to think that this

[25] Déroche 1996, 73-4
[26] Millar 2014, 283.
[27] On Maurice, see e.g. Whitby 1988, 18-9, 24-5; on Gregory, see Lee 2007, 99-106.
[28] Whitby 1998, 331, suggests that Symeon's hagiographer does not mention Gregory because 'the Life was composed under the restored Patriarch Anastasius, when there may have been no incentive to invent a close friendship'—but provides no evidence for this dating of the Life.
[29] Delehaye 1923, lxii-iii*;* Van den Ven 1962-70, I, pp.103*-4*.
[30] Déroche 1996, 66-73. Millar is sceptical of this argument: Millar 2014, 283-4.
[31] See above pp.85-94.

compositional process took place later than the late sixth or early seventh century; nor, as we have seen, does Déroche argue this.

A much more radical argument about the editing of the *Life* has, however, been made by Paul Speck, as part of his wide-ranging thesis about all pre-iconoclastic sources that refer to the veneration of icons. Speck's general argument, that the cult of images emerged at earliest in the late seventh century, and that any references to icons in earlier texts must be interpolations, has been strongly and persuasively challenged.[32] I will focus here only on his theories about the *Life of Symeon.*[33] He argues that the *Life* was systematically edited in various stages (and that the resultant *strata* of the text can be identified and analysed),[34] and that insertions were made into the work as late, at least, as the ninth century.[35] His argument has been followed, somewhat more cautiously, by Leslie Brubaker, although rather than making claims about the composition of the entire text, she focuses on the two chapters, 119 and 158, which contain stories of miracle-working icons, suggesting that one and quite possibly both are late interpolations.[36] Yet neither the broad case, that the *Life of Symeon* was comprehensively edited in various stages, nor the specific case, that chapters 119 and 158 are late interpolations, is compelling. Speck adduces a host of examples to support his theory about the editing of the *Life* (in particular, he seeks to show that every reference to the saint's miracle-working dust is a later addition), which cannot all be analysed in detail here. In general, however, his arguments rest on some problematic assumptions and methodological approaches.

First, he frequently claims that he can discern what the original core of a particular story must have been, and thus how it has been edited, on very insecure grounds. Chapter 130

[32] See e.g. Dal Santo 2011c.
[33] Expressed in Speck 1991 at 165-210.
[34] ibid. 165-6 and *passim*.
[35] ibid. esp.189-91.
[36] Brubaker 1998, 1244-8. See also Brubaker and Haldon 2011, 57-8.

recounts that an Iberian priest visited Symeon, took some of his hairs as a *eulogia*, returned to Iberia, built a shrine near his village, made a cross and shut the hairs inside it; the relic then cured many visitors, whereupon the Devil incited some local priests to denounce the first priest to their bishop as a magician; the bishop then barred him from the liturgy and confiscated his possessions until, struck down by a sudden illness, he repented, went to the priest, was cured and restored him to his former position. Speck claims that the beginning of this story was re-written by a later editor to play down tensions between Symeon's ascetic authority and the church's ecclesial power: he states that originally the priest must have taken Symeon's hairs to a church and tried to have them worshipped there, but was rejected and cast out, and it was only then that he built a separate shrine; the later editor also, in his view, invented the detail about the priest putting the hairs inside a cross, to play down the novelty of revering hair.[37] This is clearly pure speculation. Speck also dismisses two stories as later additions to the text on the ground that they are too silly to be original;[38] he also repeatedly claims that awkward turns of phrase or slight inconsistencies are signs of later emendation, apparently without considering the possibility that the original author might well not have been in full control of his material. He has strong views about the forms that miracle stories ought to take: so, for example, if one account contains several miracles of different types, even if they happen to the same suppliants, this is supposedly a sign of later editing.[39] He does not justify these claims and, in short, there is little reason to accept his view that the text has undergone reworkings in many stages.

Even his and Brubaker's arguments that the two chapters dealing with miracle-working icons are late interpolations are not entirely convincing. Chapter 118 recounts the story of a woman whom Symeon healed of demon possession and infertility; in gratitude, the woman

[37] Speck 1991, 167-9.
[38] ibid. 175, 181.
[39] See e.g. ibid. 177.

set up a picture of the saint in her house, which then performed many miracles, including healing a haemorrhaging woman.[40] Speck claims that the original story must have been the initial healing of the woman, and that the icon and healing miracles were probably added in at least two subsequent stages.[41] Again, however, this argument rests on the unsupported view that miracle stories should only contain one miracle, whereas in fact multi-miracle stories are relatively common both in the *Life* and in other hagiographies.[42] Speck claims that the addition of the icon story to this chapter probably dates from, at earliest, the late eighth or early ninth century, on the grounds that it uses the term 'ὁμοίωσις' in a sense that only develops at this late date: the haemorrhaging woman, when going to the icon to be healed, said to herself, 'If I only look upon his likeness/depiction [ὁμοίωσιν] I will be cured.'[43] In Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon,* however, two citations are given for ὁμοίωσις in the sense of 'likeness, portrait': one from the early eighth century, but the other from a source dated by Schwartz to before Heraclius's Persian conquests, the anonymous *Narratio de rebus Persicis*.[44] Brubaker follows Speck's arguments and adds the point that although this passage is quoted in the 787 Nicene Acts, it was not by the earlier John of Damascus; her implication is that it did not exist in early eighth-century versions of the *Life.*[45] This is at best suggestive, but not conclusive, since we cannot be sure that John would have excerpted every single icon story known to him. Brubaker could, perhaps, have supported her argument by noting that the story which John of Damascus does quote from the *Life,* although called chapter 158 in the Acts of the Council of Nicaea and in the *Life's* manuscripts, is referred to as miracle 132 by John.[46] This might seem to suggest that John

[40] *Life of Symeon,* 118 (pp.96-8).
[41] Speck 1991, 188-9.
[42] For other examples in the *Life of Symeon,* see e.g. 43 (pp.41-2), 101 (pp.78-9), 137 (pp.128-9), 195 (pp.172-3), 213 (p.182), 230 (pp.203-4), 231 (pp.204-8).
[43] *Life of Symeon,* 118 (p.96).
[44] Lampe, p.956; Schwartz in Pauly-Wissowa, Ia (1894), col 2791.
[45] Brubaker 1998, 1246-7.
[46] Van den Ven, 1962-70, I, 32*.

possessed a shorter version of the *Life* than that which has been transmitted to us; yet it is also possible that the numbering of the *Life's* chapters had not yet been standardised. Overall, while it cannot be ruled out that Chapter 118 was a later addition to the life, this does not seem to be a certainty.

The case of chapter 158 is equally problematic. The story recounts that an artisan of Antioch, after being cured by the saint, set up an icon in thanks outside his workshop. Some 'unbelievers', however, grew angry at the icon and wanted to take it down; they asked a soldier to climb the ladder to the icon and destroy it, but when he got on the ladder he was thrown down by a miraculous power; this happened a further two times. Speck argues that this account is based upon a popular iconophile tale of the ninth century, reported in, among other texts, the *Chronicle* of Theophanes the Confessor and the *Life of Stephen the Younger*.[47] In this well-known story, Leo III arranged for the icon of Christ over the Chalke gate in Constantinople to be removed, but when his agent (or agents—the details vary in different accounts) went to remove it, some pious members of the city's population attacked and killed him. In the *Life of Stephen the Younger*, it is specified that the people, in this case women, pushed the emperor's guard off a ladder before killing him. Yet while there are clearly some parallels between the account in the *Life of Symeon* and those from the eighth century (in both cases the icon is in a public place, and its attackers are pushed off ladders) there are also significant differences: in the *Life of Symeon*, the focus is on the miraculous powers of the icon, and the refutation of unbelieving critics of the saint, whereas in the iconophile accounts, no miracle takes place; rather the focus is on the bravery of those who attacked the iconoclast guards and on the wickedness of Leo II. Even if the two stories are linked, the *Life of Symeon* chapter does not have to be secondary to the Chalke stories; indeed, Brubaker herself notes that the story in the *Life of Symeon* appears to predate the

[47] Theophanes, AM 6218 (ed. p.405); Stephen the Deacon, *Life of Stephen the Younger*, 10 (pp.100-1).

stories about the Chalke gate, since it was reported by John of Damascus in the early eighth century, whereas the Chalke stories emerged c.800.[48] There is thus no evidence that chapter 158 is a late interpolation into the *Life.*

In general, then, although the possibility cannot be ruled out that the *Life* had an unstable textual history, this has certainly not been proven. There is no evidence that it was systematically edited and interpolated as suggested by Speck. The most plausible hypothesis remains that the text was composed, much as it survives today, in the late sixth or early seventh centuries, by a monk from Symeon's monastery, drawing on at least one and quite possibly several written sources (which may explain the presence of duplications in the work). With this in mind, it is time to analyse the contents of the *Life*, to investigate both the hagiographer's strategies and priorities in writing and, as far as possible, the position of the holy man himself. It has often been argued that doctrinal conflict was a key driving force behind the creation of Symeon the Younger's *Life,* and indeed his cult more generally. Yet it is far from clear that Symeon's hagiographer was preoccupied with doctrinal polemic. Rather, his primary motivation may have been very different: to provide an extended counterargument to criticisms made of the saint's powers in the context of the disasters that affected Antioch in the sixth century.

The Hagiographer's Worldview

In order to contextualise the hagiographer's presentation of Symeon's career, it is necessary to examine, briefly, his broader perspectives on the world, in terms of places, politics, and religion. The topography of the *Life* has recently been analysed by Fergus Millar.[49] He shows that the reach of Symeon's cult, at least according to his hagiographer, was concentrated in particular regions: he received visitors from the coast of Syria and the

[48] Brubaker 1998, 1245-6.
[49] Millar 2014, 284, 287-9.

Orontes valley, from coastal Asia Minor and Cappadocia, and from the Caucasus, and had some links with Constantinople. In contrast, very little is said about other Syrian cities or regions further south such as Palestine. By far the most important sources of support for the saint were the villages near his monastery, and Antioch and its environs. Indeed, Antioch plays such a prominent role in the *Life* (not only does Symeon receive innumerable visitors from the city, but several of his miracles take place in Antioch, and various areas of it are described in some detail)[50] that the stylite has been used as an example of the urbanisation of 'popular' holy men,[51] even though he never set foot in Antioch after leaving it as a young child.[52] As we will see, events in Antioch, and in particular the natural and military disasters suffered by the city, play a crucial role in the text;[53] in contrast, important events elsewhere in the empire are rarely mentioned.[54] The hagiographer thus has a strong local focus, despite claiming an international range for Symeon's cult.

The political position of the *Life* is complex, and in some respects perhaps surprising. The most important 'political' figures in the text are the patriarchs of Antioch and Constantinople, and the emperors. Symeon lived at a time of great controversy in both patriarchates: in Constantinople patriarch Eutychius was deposed in 565, to be replaced by John Scholasticus, before being reinstated upon the latter's death in 577;[55] in Antioch, Anastasius was deposed in 570, replaced by Gregory, and reinstated again after his replacement's death in 592.[56] Rivalry between the two Constantinopolitan patriarchs

[50] For his miracles in Antioch see e.g. *Life of Symeon,* 126 (p.112-3), 158 (pp.139-41), 163 (p.145), 224 (pp.194-6).
[51] Thus Saradi 1995, 88; cf. also Saradi 2006, 108-9.
[52] He does however see the city in many visions (and sometimes sees himself in the city): see e.g. *Life of Symeon,* 57 (pp.150-2), 104 (pp.81-4), 127 (pp.113-4), 160 (pp.141-3), 162 (p.144), 204 (pp.177-8).
[53] See below pp.194-210.
[54] The main exceptions are an earthquake in 557 in Constantinople and neighbouring cities (*Life of Symeon,* 106 [pp.86-7]) and Justin II's descent into madness (ibid. 208-11 [pp.179-81]).
[55] On the conflict over the patriarchate in Constantinople, see Van den Ven 1965; A.M. Cameron 1988, 233-241.
[56] On these events, see Allen 1981, 214-7. The relationship between Anastasius and Gregory seems to have been much less acrimonious than that of John and Eutychius (cf. ibid. 30).

Eutychius and John seems to have been bitter, and debates continued about the legitimacy of John's patriarchate even after his death and Eutychius's reinstatement.[57] The *Life of Symeon* presents John as an associate of the stylite's: Symeon predicted to John that he would be made patriarch when he sought the saint's advice about whether to accept ordination to the priesthood, and also told John that Justin would succeed Justinian, a prediction which John repeated to Justin, thereby cementing his friendship with the future emperor.

Nonetheless, Symeon's hagiographer does not seem keen to take sides in the sometimes bitter quarrels surrounding the legitimacy of the two patriarchs. Even though Eutychius seems to have been a controversial figure,[58] Symeon's hagiographer's sole reference to him, in the context of his deposition, is far from hostile: he states that 'when some reason had been devised, the most holy patriarch Eutychius was thrown off the apostolic throne of the ruling city.'[59] This is hardly a strongly partisan line to take, given that it was only this 'pretext' which enabled John Scholasticus to be appointed (although the hagiographer does emphasise that the choice of John was divinely inspired). It also seems that tension may have existed between John Scholasticus and Anastasius of Antioch,[60] yet the *Life* is very favourable to Anastasius.[61] On the whole then, while the hagiographer presents a favourable picture of John Scholasticus, he steers clear of controversy. As discussed above, he is entirely silent on the divisive patriarchate of Gregory, although it is unclear whether this was because of Gregory's unpopularity or for unrelated reasons. Nevertheless, this silence

[57] A.M. Cameron 1988, 233-41.
[58] A.M. Cameron 1988.
[59] προφάσεώς τινος κινηθείσης, ἐξεβλήθη τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ θρόνου τῆς βασιλευούσης πόλεως Εὐτύχιος ὁ ἁγιώτατος πατριάρχης: *Life of Symeon,* 205 (p.178).
[60] Theophanes claims that one reason for Anastasius's deposition was that he had objected to John's choice of bishop for Alexandria: Theophanes, AM 6062 (p.243); see Allen 1981, 214-7.
[61] *Life of Symeon,* 204 (pp.177-8).

certainly helps his apparent goal of avoiding taking any strong position on the conflicts in church politics of the later sixth century.

There is, however, one striking exception to this general tendency towards neutrality: the *Life* presents a very negative portrait of Domninus, patriarch of Antioch from 545-59.[62] The hagiographer claims that Symeon had a vision foretelling that his predecessor Ephraim (who is greatly praised by the hagiographer) was going to die and that this would be damaging for Antioch; he also heard a voice saying 'He who is going to come, who knows where he is from?'.[63] After Ephraim's death, the meaning of this vision became clear: Domninus, who was hegumen of a poor-house in Thrace, went to Justinian to discuss some business related to the poor-house; Justinian, upon seeing him, declared that he was the new patriarch of Antioch, 'without giving any explanation about him'.[64] Domninus was then sent to Antioch as patriarch, where his first move was to attempt to expel the paupers who congregated by the city gate; these sought Symeon's help against the bishop's repression, whereupon the stylite declared that God had heard their prayer and would cause Domninus to fall ill, 'so that he will learn by trial to be sympathetic, that which he was not taught through nature.'[65] Soon, unsurprisingly, the bishop fell so ill that he could no longer walk, and had to be carried everywhere; because of this he was widely scorned.

The account could hardly be more negative, particularly given that, unlike in many stories of punishment miracles, there appears to be no moment of repentance and cure for the bishop. The *Life*'s later report of Domninus's death is equally unflattering.[66] Unfortunately, it is difficult to know why Symeon's hagiographer had such a hostile attitude towards Domninus. Domninus is in fact a rather enigmatic figure: in contrast to his predecessor

[62] ibid. 71-2 (pp.60-3).
[63] Ὁ ἐρχόμενος τίς οἶδε πόθεν ἐστίν; ibid. 71 (p.61).
[64] μηδεμιᾶς ἐμφάσεως προλαληθείσης περὶ αὐτοῦ: ibid. 72 (p.62).
[65] ἵνα γνῷ διὰ τῆς πείρας συμπάσχειν, ὅπερ διὰ τῆς φύσεως οὐκ ἐδιδάχθη: ibid. 72 (pp.62-3).
[66] ibid. 204 (pp.177-8).

Ephraim, and his successors Anastasius and Gregory, he has left little impression, positive or negative, on contemporary sources (of any Christological persuasion),[67] even though he was a participant in important events such as the Second Council of Constantinople of 553.[68] The only other negative comment on him is found in the medieval chronicle of Michael the Syrian, in which he is criticised for greediness.[69] It is, therefore, very difficult to contextualise the hagiographer's antagonism towards Domninus: did he arouse widespread hostility in Antioch, despite the silence of other contemporary sources, or was there was a particular grievance between the patriarch and Symeon's monastery? Nonetheless, the substance of the criticisms levelled in the *Life* may be significant: Domninus is attacked, above all, for oppressing the poor. As argued elsewhere,[70] both Symeon's sermons and his hagiography display a consistent hostility to Antioch's wealthy classes: it seems that Symeon may have built his reputation, in part, by presenting himself as an opponent of the rich. If Domninus did, as Michael the Syrian claims, have a reputation for greediness, he could well have become a target for the saint. In any case, the hagiographer's treatment of Domninus is a striking exception to his generally positive portrayal of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

His treatment of the emperors of the period is also distinctive. As discussed above, the *Life* is entirely silent on the reigns of Tiberius and Maurice (apart from mentioning the former's accession): thus the only two emperors to play a role in the work are Justinian and Justin II. Justinian, despite having been in power for the majority of the period covered by the *Life*, only appears occasionally, and never as the central figure of a story. The hagiographer's

[67] John of Ephesus, when listing the sixth-century patriarchs of Antioch, describes Domninus as ܪܘܡܝܐ (which can mean Latin, Greek, or soldier), but unfortunately the latter part of this sentence is lost, making his opinion of the bishop unclear: John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.41 (p.50).
[68] Eustratius Presbyter, *Life of Eutychius* (p.29 line 811); Acts of the Second Council of Constantinople, *ACO* 1st series, 4.1 (1971), pp.3, 7, 18, 24, 220-1.
[69] Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* (IV, pp.322-3); see Van den Ven 1962-70, II, 79 n.1.
[70] See above pp.126-42, and below pp.210-18.

attitude to him appears cool, at best: as we have just seen, he reports that Justinian chose Domninus as patriarch of Antioch without giving any reason for this mistaken decision. The two other references in the text to decisions by Justinian are less negative, but in neither case is the emperor himself given much credit. In one, the Spirit of God prompts Justinian to appoint John Scholasticus to replace Eutychius; the point of the story is clearly that John had God's support—Justinian's role is of little importance.[71] In the other, Symeon predicts that the 'frightening leader'[72] Amantius would come to Antioch to persecute the city's pagans after he has a vision of Amantius in 'the palace of the emperor' in Constantinople.[73] Yet the emperor in question (almost certainly Justinian) is not named, and Amantius is described as a man 'to whom power surpassing that of all his predecessors had been given *through the Holy Spirit* over the east [emphasis mine].'[74] The initiative to send Amantius to Antioch is thus attributed to God, in response to Symeon's prayer; no credit is given to Justinian. Thus, while the hagiographer does not explicitly criticise Justinian, his attitude towards him appears distant. He certainly makes no reference to the support apparently given by the emperor to Antioch to help it recover from earthquakes and Persian sack.[75]

It is tempting to suggest that this coolness to Justinian may reflect a wider disengagement by many inhabitants of the eastern provinces from the imperial centre, in response to the government's failure to defend the east from Persian invasions.[76] This argument is somewhat weakened, however, by the fact that Symeon's hagiographer pays rather more attention to Justinian's successor, Justin II. The stories about Justin are clustered together in the later part of the *Life,*[77] and move swiftly from Justin's accession, as predicted by

[71] *Life of Symeon,* 205 (p.178)
[72] Φοβερὸς ἄρχων: ibid. 160 (p.143).
[73] ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ τοῦ βασιλέως: ibid. 160 (p.142)
[74] ᾧ ἐδίδοτο ἐξουσία διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ἀρχῆς τῆς Ἑῴας μεγάλη καὶ δυνατὴ ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ ἄρξαντας: ibid.
[75] See above p.32 n54.
[76] As discussed by Meier 2003, e.g. 313 ff.
[77] *Life of Symeon,* 203 (p.177), 206-11 (pp.178-81).

Symeon, to his madness and death. Initially the relationship between saint and emperor is very positive: Symeon is said to have been Justin's intimate confidant, and to have healed his sick daughter. After this, however, everything went wrong: Justin fell ill and Sophia, his wife, was persuaded to entrust his health to a Jewish doctor, the 'sorcerer' Timothy. Symeon protested against this repeatedly but was ignored, until Justin was struck down with madness by a divine power which proclaimed to him, 'May you become a fable for all men, because you have not put your hopes in divine assistance, but have abandoned yourself to the vanity of demons.'[78] Whereas other authors attributed Justin's well-documented madness to a range of causes, including the loss of Dara to the Persians,[79] and the emperor's profligate lifestyle and persecution of the Miaphysites,[80] Symeon's hagiographer blamed his refusal to obey the saint's commands, thereby refuting any potential accusation that Symeon's powers of protection had failed the emperor.

Overall, then, the hagiographer displays a rather unusual attitude to ecclesiastical and imperial politics. In terms of the Church, he seems to avoid taking sides in the well-publicised patriarchal conflicts of the sixth century, but presents a vehement and unparalleled attack on the apparently oppressive Domninus. He seems rather less favourable to emperors, in general, than to patriarchs, but was perhaps forced to explain why Symeon's relationship with Justin II did not prevent the latter from going mad. His focus throughout is on Antioch and its surroundings, and his attitude to all events is dependent upon the interests of Symeon's reputation and cult. With this in mind, it is now time to turn to a potentially contentious question: the Christological attitudes of Symeon's hagiographer and of the saint himself.

[78] Ἕσο τέως ὧδε διήγημα πάντων ἀνθρώπων, ἀνθ' ὧν οὐκ ἤλπισας ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ βοήθειαν, ἀλλ' ἐξέδωκας ἑαυτὸν τῇ τῶν δαιμόνων πλάνῃ: ibid. 210 (p.180).
[79] Evagrius Scholasticus, 5.11 (p.207).
[80] John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History,* 3.2 (pp.121-3).

Christology and the Life of Symeon the Younger

Sixth-century Antioch and its environs were religiously diverse, and often fraught with tensions. In particular, northern Syria was one of the regions of the empire which saw the least consensus over the Christological conflicts that divided eastern Christianity in the period. As we have seen, it is difficult to ascertain what doctrinal position the majority of Antiochenes espoused, and Miaphysitism may have been declining in the region by the later sixth century.[81] Nonetheless, it is highly probable that the sphere of Symeon the Younger's influence included territories inhabited by both Chalcedonians and Miaphysites, and tensions between the two might be expected to form an important backdrop to the saint's career. In view of this, one of the most surprising features of Symeon's *Life* is its treatment, or rather total neglect, of Christology: the author makes no direct reference to Chalcedonianism or Miaphysitism. The only possible allusions to the controversies are implicit: Symeon is urged to accept ordination because of the need for orthodox priests to perform communion in a time of heresies,[82] while elsewhere the hagiographer claims that the stylite had caused many heretics to convert to God.[83] We only presume that Symeon himself was Chalcedonian because of his apparently friendly relations with known Chalcedonians such as Evagrius Scholasticus, the Antiochene patriarchs Ephraim and Gregory, and the emperor Justin II.[84]

Nonetheless, many historians who have considered the problem of the *Life's* Christology have presumed that it was vigorously Chalcedonian, focusing on another striking feature of the work: the absence of any explicit reference to Symeon's forebear, Symeon the Elder.[85]

[81] See above pp.64-70.
[82] *Life of Symeon,* 132 (p.132); Déroche 1996, 76.
[83] *Life of Symeon,* 125 (p.112).
[84] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 168*.
[85] But on possible echoes of the *Lives* of Symeon the Elder in the text, see Van den Ven 1962-70, I, pp.132*-4*, 171*-77*. Van den Ven argues, persuasively, that the number of direct borrowings that can be traced between the texts is very limited, pointing out that some similarities between the works might result from

Thus, it has been argued, the Younger's *Life* and cult were a vehemently Chalcedonian counter to the nearby shrine of the Elder at Qalaat Semaan, which was now controlled by Miaphysites.[86] So, for example, Susan Ashbrook Harvey has claimed that the *Life* has an 'aggressively Chalcedonian stance',[87] Robin Lane Fox that it was 'essentially the 'orthodox' retort to the Monophysites' annexation of Simeon the Elder,'[88] and Michael Whitby that Symeon was 'a saint who was promoted….by the Chalcedonian Christians of Antioch in a deliberate attempt to rival the continuing popularity of Symeon the Elder's monastery at Qalaat Semaan.'[89] Such arguments imply that the Christological conflicts were the main driving force behind the *Life*—and indeed, in the last case, behind the saint's career itself—and that one of its chief ambitions was to focalise Chalcedonian sentiment against their doctrinal rivals.

This is not, however, a convincing reading of the *Life.* Arguments that the text was vehemently Chalcedonian fail to explain why the author never mentions the Miaphysites explicitly and does not attack them or their doctrines. It was hardly rare for sixth- and seventh-century hagiography to be openly doctrinally polemical. On the Chalcedonian side, Cyril of Scythopolis and John Moschus stand out as authors who were particularly condemnatory of the Miaphysites; the latter refers, for example, to 'the godless heresies which used to flourish and flourish still, and most of all….the heresy of Severus Acephalos and of the pernicious sect of the rest of them.'[90] On the anti-Chalcedonian side, John Rufus

their shared reliance on a pre-existing repertoire of hagiographic stories, rather than on direct interdependence.

[86] Peeters 1950, 134-6; Van den Ven, 1962-70, I, 97* and, more cautiously, 171*-177*; Van den Ven 1965, 351; Lafontaine-Dosogne 1967, 195; Whitby 1987, 315; Hester 1990, 329; Lane Fox 1997, 209; Harvey 1998, 535 fn. 47; Sodini 2010, 319-21. Cf. also (although expressed rather less strongly), A.M. Cameron 2014, 8; Binggeli 2009, 437.

[87] Harvey 1998, 535 fn. 47.

[88] Lane Fox 1997, 209.

[89] Whitby 1987, 315. Whitby does, however, note in the introduction to his translation of Evagrius's *Ecclesiastical History* that Symeon 'is not presented by his biographer as having to pay attention to a Monophysite 'problem' at his station close to Antioch.' (Whitby 2000, xlv).

[90] John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow* (col.3105, trans. p.191).

and John of Ephesus included stinging attacks on Chalcedonians and their doctrines in their hagiographies: John of Ephesus, for example, not only attacks individual Chalcedonians as oppressive persecutors[91] but also shows his heroes presenting Chalcedonian doctrine in polemical terms: 'instead of the Holy Trinity…these men [Chalcedonians] were secretly introducing a quaternity.'[92] The *Life of Symeon* contains nothing comparable to these criticisms. The only Christological heretic who appears in the text is an Arian Goth, and Symeon's teachings to him, as Fergus Millar has noted,[93] seem intended to combat not Miaphysitism but, in complete contrast, Nestorianism*:* Symeon taught that 'the enemies of the son of God are the Jews and those who, like them, deny and don't confess that Christ is the son of God'[94] and those who deny that Mary is the Theotokos.[95] This could, perhaps, be viewed as Chalcedonian apologetic, intended to emphasise that Chalcedonians had nothing in common with Nestorians, but it certainly cannot be seen as an aggressively pro-Chalcedonian attack on Miaphysitism. On that topic, the hagiographer is entirely silent: he seems purposefully to avoid the kind of anti-Miaphysite polemic espoused by some of his contemporaries.

It is more plausible that the *Life*'s failure to mention the Miaphysites is less an attempt to oppose them than to conciliate them. This is argued, with differing emphases, by Déroche and Cremonesi: Cremonesi contends that the hagiographer consciously downplayed divisions between Christians in an effort to unite them against a pagan enemy,[96] while Déroche suggests that the hagiographer was in accord with the conciliatory efforts of local

[91] He is particularly hostile to Ephraim of Antioch, describing him as 'Ephraim the persecutor' and 'the impious Ephraim': John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 35 (II, p.621).
[92] ibid. 5 (I, p.99)
[93] Millar 2014, 289-91.
[94] οἱ ἐχθροὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοί εἰσι καὶ οἱ κατ' αὐτοὺς ἀρνούμενοι καὶ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες τὸν Χριστὸν υἱὸν εἶναι τοῦ Θεοῦ: *Life of Symeon*, 226 (p.197).
[95] ibid. 226 (p.198).
[96] Cremonesi 2008, 263.

orthodox dignitaries such as the patriarchs Anastasius and Gregory.[97] It does seem that many 'neo-Chalcedonian' authorities were trying to heal the divisions between Chalcedonians and Miaphysites in Antioch in this period.[98] Various attempts were made by the emperors to reconcile the parties: thus Justinian patronised churches in the city which may have been intended to appeal to those of all Christological views.[99] Late sixth-century patriarchs made calls for Christian unity and an end to conflict over difficult points of doctrine. Thus, as discussed above, Gregory urged his congregation to emulate the unquestioning worship of the cherubim and seraphim, and to abandon their internecine conflicts provoked by the Devil.[100] Similar arguments are found in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Gregory's close associate, and Symeon's friend, Evagrius Scholasticus, who, like the stylite's hagiographer, speaks very little of Christological conflict in his own times.[101] The silence of the *Life* on the subject of Christological controversy thus fits well into a broader context of efforts within Antioch to minimise the conflict between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians.

This may not suffice, however, to explain the problem. The hagiographer may have had a more particular reason for not referring to the Miaphysites, related to his general concern to encourage as many visitors as possible to Symeon's shrine: he did not wish to alienate potential clients of the saint's cult. Recent scholarship has shown that saints' shrines often attracted Christians of different Christological opinions: Phil Booth, for example, has shown this to be the case of many cults, including that of Cosmas and Damian, and Elizabeth Key Fowden of the shrine of St Sergius at Resafa.[102] Even Severus of Antioch, the renowned Miaphysite resistance leader, stated that anti-Chalcedonians could pray in martyr shrines

[97] Déroche 1996, p.76.
[98] See Allen 1981, 21-44; Whitby 2000, xxxvii-xlvii.
[99] Mayer 2009, 362-66.
[100] See above pp.69-70.
[101] See especially Evagrius Scholasticus, 2.5 (pp.52-3), where Evagrius also claims that Christological conflict was caused by the Devil, with Whitby 2000, xxxvii-xlvii, and Ginter 2001.
[102] Booth 2011, 117-28; Booth 2014, 54; Fowden 1999, 156-7. Cf. also Perrone 1998, 71-92; Caseau-Chevallier 2009, 380-1.

run by Chalcedonians, although preferably when there were no Chalcedonians worshipping there: 'where the bones of holy martyrs have previously been laid, it is right to pray without hesitation, especially when the place is in silence, and the heretics are not unlawfully conducting services or singing inside.' He supports this view with the observation that Peter the Iberian had himself prayed in several martyr chapels (presumably run by Chalcedonians).[103] The Holy Places in Jerusalem were visited by anti-Chalcedonians even when under Chalcedonian control, although some Miaphysites did begin to criticise this practice.[104] Admittedly, there might seem to be a difference between shrines relating to Christ and the early martyrs—who had died long before Christological differences had crystallised and were thus of unquestionable orthodoxy—and those of living or recently deceased saints like Symeon, whose own opinions could have divided his potential clients. But by veiling Symeon's own views, his hagiographer could aspire to make him as neutral a saint as the early martyrs, in order to achieve the confessional plurality of their shrines.

It was not, in any case, only the shrines of long-deceased martyrs which attracted Miaphysites to worship with Chalcedonians: even ordinary church services sometimes attracted a mixed clientele.[105] This should not, perhaps, be as surprising as it may initially appear. There is considerable evidence that Chalcedonians and Miaphysites were not in practise as hostile to each other as the more polemical writings of some members on both sides might suggest.[106] The pronouncements of the early sixth-century anti-Chalcedonian

[103] Severus, Letters, 4.9 (I.II, p.305; trans. II.II, p.271).
[104] See Horn 2006, 321-330; cf. also Kofsky 1997, 216-9.
[105] See John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints,* 5 (I, p.102). John is, however, careful to emphasise that the Miaphysites who came to hear the service and preaching in the Chalcedonian church did not take communion there. This practice was not uncontroversial: Severus of Antioch replied to a letter asking if the habit of some anti-Chalcedonians of going to hear prayers in Chalcedonian churches, and sometimes even of watching (but not participating in) the Eucharist, was commendable, with a resounding negative (although he made an exception if the anti-Chalcedonian in question happened to be a great man of state and was obliged to attend the church with the emperor): Severus, *Letters,* 4.10 (I.II, 306-9).
[106] For an analysis of the complex relations between Miaphysites and Chalcedonians in the seventh and eighth centuries, see Tannous 2013, esp.83-91.

bishop John of Tella are revealing: he urges the 'orthodox' to avoid various forms of interaction with the 'heretics', including, for example, receiving alms from them. His rejection of these practices suggests that they were common at the time. Even he, however, concedes that it is acceptable for members of the different sects to greet each other warmly, and that Chalcedonian burial rites are preferable to no burial rites.[107] The early sixth-century *Life of Peter the Iberian,* although in general stridently anti-Chalcedonian, describes its hero, the Miaphysite bishop Peter, as being friends with the Chalcedonian bishop of Orthosias, who even provided shelter for him after he was driven out of another town by a more hostile Chalcedonian prelate.[108] If bishops from rival parties could be friends, this must have been widespread among the general population. This evidence of a degree of respect and interaction between Chalcedonians and anti-Chalcedonians confirms the impression that many were willing to worship together.

It thus seems quite possible that Symeon's shrine had and may even have welcomed a multi-confessional clientele: indeed, there are suggestions in the *Life* that not all the beneficiaries of Symeon's miracles were orthodox. He cures a man from Persia (very few Persian Christians were Chalcedonian—and of course many Persians were not Christian at all),[109] two pagans,[110] and, significantly, receives a visit from eight Armenians.[111] Most Armenians seem not to have accepted Chalcedon;[112] and even if these pilgrims were not anti-Chalcedonians, the fact that the hagiographer makes no reference to their doctrinal position suggests that this was not a key consideration for Symeon's shrine. Notably, none of these suppliants are said to have been converted by Symeon; the holy man even tells the pagans

[107] John of Tella, Canons, esp.24-9 (pp.78-84).
[108] John Rufus, *Life of Peter the Iberian,* 141 (pp.208-10).
[109] *Life of Symeon,* 73 (p.63).
[110] ibid. 184 (p.163).
[111] ibid. 237 (p.213).
[112] The ecclesiastical situation in Armenia was, admittedly, complicated: for an introduction see e.g. Thompson 2000, 669-75; Greenwood 2012, 119-26.

that God 'favours a reasonable and right purpose from *both believers and unbelievers*' [emphasis mine].[113] Admittedly, the hagiographer does on other occasions describe suppliants converting from paganism before or after being cured,[114] but, since conversion is not presented as a necessary pre-condition for all the stylite's cures, the hagiographer seems to have been less concerned to promote orthodoxy than to show that Symeon's gifts extended to all peoples. This relatively tolerant attitude towards pagan suppliants does, it is true, seem to stand in sharp contradiction to the vehement hostility towards paganism evidenced elsewhere in the *Life*. This may be a sign that—as argued below—this anti-pagan hostility serves a particular polemical function within the text, irrespective of the actual position of 'pagans' at the cult.[115] Certainly, there is no evidence that the cult adopted an exclusionary policy towards Christians of different doctrinal beliefs. Symeon himself may well have abstained from making doctrinal pronouncements: none of the sermons attributed to him refer to Christological divisions, while the themes identified in Chapter 2 as the keystones of his preaching, including asceticism and the renunciation of wealth, crossed doctrinal boundaries.

Why, then, if the *Life* is not actively opposed to the anti-Chalcedonians, does it never mention Symeon the Elder? The explanation that he was ignored because his shrine was under anti-Chalcedonian control is not entirely convincing. First, it should be noted that it is not certain that Qalaat Semaan was in fact run by anti-Chalcedonians at the time Symeon the Younger's hagiographer was writing.[116] Yet even if the shrine was now in the hands of the Miaphysites, this did not mean that the saint himself could no longer be venerated by

[113] προαίρεσιν εὐγνώμονα καὶ ὀρθὴν ἀποδέχεται ἐπί *τε πιστῶν καὶ ἀπίστων: Life of Symeon,* 184 (p.163).
[114] ibid. 141, 143 (pp.130-1).
[115] See below pp.210-18.
[116] See Whitby 2000, xlii-iii—he argues that it is possible that Qalaat Semaan was only taken over by the Miaphysites at the time of the Arab conquest of the region. Joseph Nasrallah has argued that while the monasteries of Teleda and Telneshin—both closely associated with Symeon the Elder—had become Miaphysite early in the sixth century, there is no evidence that Qalaat Semaan itself was no longer Chalcedonian: Nasrallah 1971, esp.358-64.

Chalcedonians. Joseph Nasrallah has collected considerable evidence showing that the elder stylite continued to be venerated throughout the medieval period by the Byzantine and Melkite Chalcedonian churches.[117] He was certainly revered in the first half of the sixth century even by strongly pro-Chalcedonian hagiographers: Cyril of Scythopolis and Theodore of Petra both refer to the stylite in laudatory terms in their Lives of, respectively, Euthymius and Theodosius.[118] Still more suggestively, Symeon the Younger's friend, Evagrius Scholasticus, talks about Symeon the Elder extensively in his *Ecclesiastical History*, with no suggestion that his reputation had come into question.[119] Indeed, Evagrius had actually visited the stylite's shrine at Qalaat Semaan. He describes its location, buildings, restrictions placed on female visitors, and the miracles which took place there: he himself saw a bright star several times running around the column during the commemorations in honour of Symeon; while others reported—and Evagrius notes that he saw no reason to disbelieve them—that the saint's disembodied head had been seen flying around the shrine.[120] Ephraim of Antioch, the Chalcedonian patriarch greatly praised by the Younger's hagiographer, also cited Symeon the Elder as an example of Chalcedonian piety in his efforts to persuade anti-Chalcedonians to rejoin the imperial Church.[121] Symeon the Elder thus does not seem to have fallen into disfavour among Chalcedonians in this period, and it is therefore highly unlikely that the Younger's hagiographer fails to refer to him for reasons related to Christology. In fact, if the Elder was disapproved of by any Christological party, it was the Miaphysites: Severus of Antioch was forced to defend himself against anti-

[117] Nasrallah 1971, 347-58.
[118] Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius* (pp.47-8)*;* Theodore of Petra, *Life of Theodosius* (pp.9-12).
[119] Evagrius Scholasticus, 1.13-4 (pp.20-5).
[120] ibid. 1.14 (pp.23-5).
[121] See Photius, *Bibliotheca* (IV, pp.123, 142, 174). Ephraim refers to writings by Symeon defending Chalcedon; Evagrius Scholasticus also quotes a letter apparently written by the stylite in defence of the synod (2.10 [pp.61-2]).

Chalcedonian opponents who criticised him for having pronounced a discourse in praise of the stylite.[122]

It seems more probable that Symeon the Younger's hagiographer does not mention the elder Symeon for the same reason that he does not refer to any other holy ascetics:[123] he did not wish to encourage rival cults, irrespective of doctrinal persuasion. The Elder's shrine was a particular threat because it was so close (see Figure 1). The hagiographer is equally silent about other potential sources of thaumaturgic power in the Antiochene area, such as the relics of the monk Thomas, whose body had, according to Evagrius Scholasticus, been translated to Antioch during the prelacy of Ephraim, where it successfully ended an outbreak of the plague.[124] It may be significant that while John Moschus reports stories about Symeon which show him interacting with other holy monks, such tales are absent from the *Life.* In particular, it is hardly surprising that the *Life* does not report Moschus's story in which Symeon tells a visiting monk that he should have sought help at his own monastery instead: 'I am surprised at what toil you have endured, what a journey undertaken, to come to me, a mere sinful man, when you have such great fathers in your own lavra. Go, prostrate yourself before Abba Andrew, asking him to pray for you, and he will heal you at once.'[125] The author of the *Life*, eager to encourage as many visitors to Symeon as possible, implies that he should be visited by pilgrims from all regions: he tells us that Symeon assisted suppliants from places as far afield as Cappadocia,[126] Laodicea,[127] Iberia,[128] Isauria,[129] 'the land of the

[122] Severus of Antioch, Letters, 5.II (I.II, pp.376-80).
[123] With the exception of Symeon's spiritual father, John (who is not, however, described as a prophet or miracle worker), and one other, not at all successful, recluse: for the (limited) asceticism of the former, see esp. *Life of Symeon,* 11 (p.11), 17 (p.14); for the latter, ibid. 169 (pp.151-2).
[124] Evagrius Scholasticus, 4.35 (p.185). The myth of Thomas was certainly known at Symeon's monastery as it is referred to in the *Life of Martha,* 24 (p.271). Peeters tried to draw a connection between Martha and a popular story about Thomas's burial (Peeters 1927), but Van den Ven has shown this to be highly implausible (Van den Ven 1962-70, 78*-84*).
[125] John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow,* 117 (col. 2981; trans. pp.96-7).
[126] *Life of Symeon,* 43 (p.41), 168 (p.150), 191 (p.169).
[127] ibid. 150 (p.135), 169 (p.151).
[128] ibid. 103 (pp.80-1), 253 (p.220).
[129] ibid. 227 (p.198), 228 (p.200), 192 (p.170).

Ishamelites,'[130] and, as we have seen, Persia and Armenia. Admittedly, on one occasion when an Isaurian visitor asks the saint if his request will be ignored despite his journey across the sea, Symeon replied 'and who asked you, man, to cross the sea?'.[131] Symeon does ultimately, however, do as he requests, and there is no suggestion that there was any other holy man who could have solved the Isaurian's problem. We know from John Moschus, Evagrius Scholasticus, John of Ephesus and many others that there was no shortage of sixth-century holy men: Evagrius states 'at that moment of time there were divinely inspired men and workers of great signs in many parts of the earth.'[132]

Indeed, there is considerable reason to think not only that there were many holy men at this time, but also that there was widespread contact between them, and that closely linked networks of spirituality were the norm.[133] Many saints' Lives do describe various holy men other than their heroes, and often present their saints as having contact with them. This is particularly true of anti-Chalcedonian hagiography, perhaps because the authors are often less concerned with promoting a particular cult than with showing the legitimacy of the Miaphysite cause, an aim which could only be strengthened by suggesting that their anti-Chalcedonian heroes were friends of other unquestionably holy ascetics. Thus the *Life of Peter the Iberian* contains numerous descriptions of various holy friends of Peter's, including Melania the Younger[134] and her close associate (and biographer) Gerontius,[135] and the renowned ascetic Isaiah of Scetis;[136] so too the *Life of Severus of Antioch* talks extensively about Peter the Iberian, and other distinguished members of his monastery in Palestine (which Severus himself joined), including its superiors John the Canopite, John of

[130] ibid. 201 (p.176).
[131] καὶ τίς ὑμᾶς ἐκάλεσεν, ἄνθρωπε, διαπερᾶσαι τὴν θάλασσαν; ibid. 192 (p.170).
[132] Evagrius Scholasticus, 4.33 (p.182; trans. p.237).
[133] On spiritual networks—though focusing on links *within* monastic communities—see Hevelone-Harper 2005, 6.
[134] John Rufus, *Life of Peter the Iberian*, 39-41 (pp.52-8), 44 (p.60).
[135] ibid. 44-8 (pp.60-4).
[136] ibid. 138-9 (pp.200-4), 167-9 (pp.242-6).

Antioch, and Theodore of Ascalon, and one of its priests, Elisha.[137] But the theme is also present in Chalcedonian hagiography: Cyril of Scythopolis's Lives of Euthymius and Sabas contain, for example, many references to the holy friends of his heroes and to the distinguished religious careers of their associates and disciples.[138] John Moschus's stories about Symeon the Younger, just discussed, seem to confirm this picture of an integrated and often international network of holy people, in which the stylite played his part. The author of the *Life of Symeon*, however, ignored these ties, keen to present Symeon as a unique source of holiness, in order to encourage visitors, of all doctrines and nationalities, to visit one shrine alone. In this context, it is less surprising than has been thought that he makes no direct reference to Symeon the Elder.

The *Life of Symeon the Younger* cannot be seen as a polemical intervention into contemporary Christological conflicts. Its author is concerned with promoting not a doctrine, but a cult, and it is this overriding aim which shapes his selection and presentation of events. He avoids referring to currently contested doctrinal issues, instead attacking only heresies such as Arianism and Manicheism which were totally unacceptable to the vast majority of Christians in the eastern Roman empire. He also avoids referring to any holy men of the past or present who might threaten the supremacy of Symeon the Younger's reputation and cult; he presents him as a figure of unique holiness and thaumaturgic power, rather than acknowledging, perhaps more realistically, that he was only one of a fairly large and interconnected network of influential holy people. This does not mean, however, that the *Life* is a text untouched by controversy. In fact, it is a highly polemical work, intended to rebut a range of critics and opponents of the saint and, in particular, to defend his

[137] *Life of Severus of Antioch* (pp.219-23, 224-7).
[138] See e.g. Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius* (pp.11-2, 14-5, 16, 25-7, 35, 50-1, 55-6, 68); see also Flusin 1983, 152-4.

reputation in the face of his failure to prevent the exceptional series of crises that afflicted Antioch and its surroundings during his lifetime.

Symeon, Opposition, and a City in Crisis

Recent scholarship has shown, convincingly, that Byzantine society did not accept the claims of holy men and their hagiographers uncritically; rather, saints had to tackle widespread scepticism even among 'orthodox' Christian believers.[139] Symeon the Younger was no exception; in fact, his *Life* suggests that the stylite had to face an exceptionally wide range of opponents, including monks within his own monastery, local farmers, clerics, and various other sceptics often denigrated as 'pagans'.[140] Many of these problems were shared by other late antique holy men, but Symeon faced even more suspicion and disbelief than most, because of the plight of sixth-century Antioch, which, as discussed in Chapter 1, was afflicted by invasion, numerous earthquakes, and plague. His hagiographer was forced to go to considerable lengths in his efforts to justify Symeon's failure to fulfil his duties as defender of the Christian people. Thus he attempts, not entirely successfully, to deal with difficult problems surrounding theodicy and Symeon's conflicting loyalties to God and to his suppliants by presenting the saint as fulfilling various, sometimes contradictory, roles drawn from the Old Testament, including those of Abraham and Job. As well as this defensive tack, he also uses more aggressive measures to combat criticisms of the saint, blaming the disasters on wicked members of the local community, stirring up social tensions, and going so far as to support the controversial Justinianic persecutions. The *Life* can thus be viewed as a multifaceted, and sometimes contradictory, *apologia* for Symeon's all too human limitations. By setting the text in the broader context of responses to disasters in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, it may be possible to come to a better

[139] See in particular Dal Santo 2011a and 2012, esp.149-236; Sarris 2011c; Kaldellis 2014b. The extent of Christian scepticism about miracles was earlier highlighted by Dagron 1992.
[140] Cf. Van den Ven, 1962-70, I, 163*-4*. On the significance of 'paganism' in the *Life*, see below pp.210-8.

understanding of social and religious developments in this period. First, however, it is necessary to analyse in some detail the different kinds of opposition faced by Symeon, and the various ways in which his hagiographer handles them.

Before this analysis can be made, a key methodological problem must be addressed. As discussed in the introduction, the fundamental challenge of studying saints' cults through hagiography is that of distinguishing between the saint's own views and actions and those of the hagiographer. It is by now incontestable that hagiographic texts cannot in any sense be read as straightforward, factually accurate reports of the lives of holy men. As argued above, this is one reason why the rare surviving examples of holy men's own writings are so valuable.[141] Does this mean, then, that we cannot learn anything about Symeon the Younger himself from his *Life*? Not necessarily. Although his hagiographer undoubtedly selects and shapes his account in various distorting ways, he must nonetheless in some instances have been responding to real situations. In particular, it seems probable that moments of extreme tension in the *Life*, which go far beyond literary trope, must reflect real challenges, even if they are described in potentially deceptive ways. As will be argued, many of these accounts display a decidedly apologetic tone, which seems impossible to explain except as a response to genuine controversy and real concerns about maintaining Symeon's reputation. Again, this is not to say that all accounts of opposition faced by Symeon in the *Life* should be taken at face value; indeed at several points in the following discussion the accuracy of the hagiographer's presentation of events will be explicitly analysed. But it is to suggest that the sense of crisis in the *Life* cannot be dismissed, and must relate to real challenges faced by the saint.

[141] See above pp.73-4.

What is more difficult is to ascertain how far the hagiographer's *response* to these crises mirrors that of Symeon himself. Some aspects of his response, as discussed below, do find striking parallels in Symeon's own sermons, which suggests that he may have been continuing the saint's own policies. Other aspects find no extant parallels, and must therefore be attributed to the hagiographer rather than to the saint (although the possibility that they were derived from Symeon's own words and thoughts cannot be excluded). The relationship between the two is thus highly complex, and must be constantly questioned as we proceed to an analysis of the *Life's* presentation of hostility towards the saint.

Symeon and his Monastery

Symeon's hagiographer claims that his saint had to face considerable opposition from those who should have been most loyal to him: his own monastic disciples. Before examining this conflict in detail, we must consider the fundamental dependence of a stylite on his monks, to show how serious internal challenges to his authority could be. It is a striking feature of Peter Brown's justly famous article of 1971 that his holy men interact directly with the local lay community: in the entire article, he refers to no monks apart from the holy men themselves, except when he contrasts monasticism with asceticism, implying that the two were in opposition.[142] Symeon the Younger's career shows, however, that they could be inextricably linked. An examination of Symeon's relations with his monastery reveals a close connection between stylites and coenobitic monasticism, highlights that stylites could never achieve separation from the world, because their duties and needs tied them to their monastic followers, and shows that their position was entirely dependent on a mutually beneficial relationship with their disciples.[143]

[142] Brown 1971, 82, 100.
[143] Cf. Peña, Castellana and Fernandez 1975, 76-7.

Symeon's career was embedded in coenobitic monasticism. He entered the monastery of the stylite John as a boy and never left.[144] He appears to have inherited its leadership, although this is not stated explicitly in the text, as he later makes important decisions including arranging for the brotherhood to move to a new site on the Wonderful Mountain, and subsequently to build a splendid new monastery there.[145] It is significant that Symeon stayed in one community for his whole life: his famous predecessors, Symeon the Elder and Daniel, had both, by choice or by expulsion, departed from the monasteries they first joined to undergo a period of solitary struggle before returning to the public view and attracting new disciples.[146] This suggests that the account of the Younger's early career is not entirely formulaic, although the early part of his *Life* has been viewed as less reliable than later sections.[147] It also demonstrates that Whitby is right to stress the diversity of holy men's careers,[148] as they could be more or less closely linked to particular monastic communities in their lifetime. This is significant in relation to broader historiographical debates about the development of monasticism. There has been a tendency to perceive a shift over time from more individualistic ascetic practices towards coenobitic monasticism: even Rosemary Morris, who rightly stresses that we cannot trace a simple progression from lavriote to coenobitic monasticism,[149] still suggests that it was not until the middle Byzantine period that stylites began to abandon their 'traditional withdrawn existence' for 'active involvement in the day-to-day affairs of a neighbouring monastery.' She points to Paul of Latros, who died in the mid-tenth century, as an example, noting that his *stylos* was within his monastery.[150] Yet Symeon's *Life* reveals that this kind of monastically integrated

[144] *Life of Symeon,* 11 (p.11).
[145] ibid. 65-67 (pp.56-58).
[146] For Symeon the Elder, see Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *History of the Monks of Syria,* 26.5-12 (II, pp.166-90); Antonius, *Life of Symeon,* 6-12 (pp.24-36); for Daniel, *Life of Daniel,* 9 (pp.9-10), and 21-6 (pp.21-7).
[147] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, p.105*.
[148] Whitby 1987, esp. 316.
[149] Morris 1995, 33.
[150] ibid. 61.

lifestyle already existed in the sixth century. We do not know where John and Symeon's columns were in the lower monastery, but Symeon's column was in the centre of the new monastery, as its remains show. [Figures 2, 4].

He also took a direct role in the monastery's management.[151] The *Life* frequently shows him, for instance, refusing to let the monks accept gifts from visitors to the shrine. On one occasion his disciples decided to take some gifts in secret because their donors were distraught that Symeon had declined them; Symeon found out, and rebuked them severely.[152] Similarly, one of his monks, Julian, planned to take gold from cured patients until Symeon reprimanded him.[153] He forbad the brothers from thinking profane thoughts, and reproached them when they disobeyed.[154] The holy man also provided grain and water for his monks when they were concerned about shortages,[155] and prevented them from enclosing the cistern to keep out visitors.[156] He protected the gardens of the lower monastery from a bear and other wild animals.[157] He discovered that one of the brothers was embezzling money intended to buy salt for the monastery, and exposed him to the other monks.[158] Whatever one makes of the miraculous content of all these episodes, they suggest that he was perceived to have a serious responsibility for the everyday management of the monastery. Thus it seems that his position was closely tied to that of his community; his most basic role was that of hegumen.

His position as a stylite made him particularly dependent on his monks. As most stylites would not leave their pillars, they relied on their disciples' cooperation for practicalities,

[151] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 165*-167*.
[152] *Life of Symeon*, 56 (pp.49-50).
[153] ibid. 93 (p.73).
[154] ibid. 174 (p.155).
[155] ibid. 122-123 (pp.100-106), 97-98 (pp.75-76).
[156] ibid. 100 (pp.77-78).
[157] ibid. 176 (pp.155-156).
[158] ibid. 175 (p.155).

including, in Symeon's case, the reception of the monastery's numerous, often sick, visitors. Such great crowds came to be healed that the saint was forced to bless sticks to give to his disciples to help perform cures. Symeon (or perhaps his hagiographer) was, however, keen to emphasise that this did not mean that the disciples could rival the holy man's power or perform miracles without him. The *Life* states that the sticks needed to be touched and blessed by the saint after every three healings, or they would stop working; this was God's plan to prevent 'the brothers from being seized by a thought of arrogance.'[159] This suggests that it was potentially threatening to the saint's authority to let others perform miracles on his behalf, although, due to his immobility, this could not be avoided. Equally, he required others to perform errands for him: he sent one brother, Anastasius, to convey a message to a lion which had been frightening the community;[160] two others to rescue a monk who had collapsed from thirst;[161] and another to buy salt.[162] Archaeological evidence confirms that stylites required at least a few disciples to attend them, belying the notion that they could ever achieve complete isolation from the world. Various sites for which little or no literary evidence survives have been excavated around Antioch which appear to have been the sites of stylites; while most of them do not seem to have received many outside visitors (as they lack the necessary amenities like guesthouses and baptisteries) they do have small facilities for the stylite's assistants.[163]

Of course, this was not a one-sided relationship: while Symeon was dependent on his monks for these practicalities, he supplied them with the benefits of his spiritual powers, in the form of both miracles and teaching, which may also have played an important economic role in drawing visitors and potential donors to the shrine.[164] The *Life* focuses strongly on

[159] τὸ…κατασχεθῆναι τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἐπάρσεως λογισμῷ: ibid. 50 (p.46).
[160] ibid. 68 (pp.58-59).
[161] ibid. 170 (p.152).
[162] ibid. 175 (p.155).
[163] Peña, Castellana and Fernandez 1975, 76-7; Callot and Gatier 2004, 584.
[164] For discussion of the funding model of the cult, see below pp.186-9.

the former of these,[165] but, as mentioned above, many authors of *vitae* seem to have emphasised miracle-working over the other important duties of holy men, in order to promote pilgrimage to their shrines.[166] In fact, a comparison of the *Life*, his sermons, and other contemporary references suggests that Symeon's essential role was that of 'teacher', as Rousseau argues was the general case for holy men.[167] Significantly, the three stories concerning Symeon in John Moschus's *Spiritual Meadow* focus less on his miraculous powers than on his advice to nearby monks. One is entirely non-miraculous: Symeon advises Abba Julian how to react to his quarrel with Macarius, archbishop of Jerusalem, instructing him 'do not withdraw from the monastery, nor should you distance yourself from the holy church.'[168] The other two stories do contain miracles, but unlike Symeon's biographer, who often describes the processes of miracles in vivid detail,[169] Moschus mentions them only in passing, almost as incidental to the main matter of interest, Symeon's advice. On one occasion, Symeon tells a visiting monk who asks him to expel a demon to return to his own *lavra* and seek help there; the brother is eventually cured by the prayer of Abba Andrew, who attributes the cure to Symeon.[170] Another time, Symeon perceives through divine knowledge that a visitor to his shrine is a monk who has abandoned his monastery; the focus of the tale, however, is on his reassurances to the monk that he will be welcomed back if he returns, as he should, to his community: 'Believe me, child, you do not have to feel disgrace for this. The fathers will receive you with smiling faces and gladness at your return.'[171] Symeon's sermon collection, and the references to preaching in his *Life*, confirm that moral advice was the ultimate basis of his influence. Much of his preaching seems to be targeted

[165] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 181*.
[166] Rapp 1999, 65: See above p.73.
[167] Rousseau 1999b.
[168] John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, 96 (cols. 2953-6, trans. p.77).
[169] For example, *Life of Symeon*, 138 (p.129), 231 (pp.204-8), 249 (p.219).
[170] John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, 117 (col. 2981).
[171] ibid.118 (col. 2981, trans. pp.97-8).

in particular at his monks, extolling the monastic life but also warning against the dangers of disruptive behaviour and yielding to demonic temptations.[172] His starkly dualistic rhetoric, and claims to have had personal experience of battles with demons, confirmed his authority as visionary preacher and spiritual guide.

In theory, therefore, the stylite and his monks enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship: the monks attended to the saint's practical needs and he to their spiritual ones.[173] Stylites and coenobitism thus went hand in hand: indeed, Ignace Peña may not have been going too far in stating that 'une des caractéristiques du mouvement stylite est d'avoir été le promoteur de la vie monastique organisée.'[174] Yet Symeon did not gain easy or uncontested authority within his monastery. He faced considerable opposition throughout his career, not only from external sceptics, who will be discussed shortly, but from the very men closest to him. This opposition developed over time: in Symeon's youth, it mostly manifested itself as jealousy of his lifestyle; later, when he ran the monastery, it related to his management and to factional divisions within the brotherhood.

Symeon's behaviour, according to the *Life,* caused troubles within the monastery from his arrival. As a youth, when the elder John was still the superior, Symeon was reprimanded for disturbing the other monks through the extremity of his ascetic practice: John instructed him to stop chanting psalms throughout the night, since he was stopping the brothers from getting any sleep.[175] John also twice rebuked him for making inappropriate inquiries, once for asking why the devil plotted so zealously against the saints,[176] and the second time for enquiring who was worthy to receive the spirit of God as the apostles had.[177] Such

[172] See above pp.109-17.
[173] Peña, Castellana and Fernandez 1975, 76-7; Binggeli 2009, 429-31.
[174] Peña, Castellana and Fernandez 1975, 76.
[175] *Life of Symeon,* 17 (p.14).
[176] ibid. 22 (p.18).
[177] ibid. 32 (pp.31-2).

complaints suggest that his individualistic, independent manner was not deemed appropriate in a coenobitic setting. Indeed, the *Life* reports that his ascetic lifestyle provoked real hatred among the monks: one, 'who, having seen the way of life of the child, was struck by a devilish envy,' attempted to murder the young Symeon.[178] On another occasion, the monks refused John's command to help Symeon during a storm, saying to each other that he would die, 'and they also said the following things, moved by wickedness: "Where is his holiness and the mania of his asceticism now?"'[179]

We should not, however, necessarily trust these reports: they may be drawn from hagiographic convention and in particular from the example of Symeon Stylites the Elder.[180] Symeon's outstanding asceticism, according to his hagiographers, had caused serious tensions in his first monastery, although all three provide rather different details. Theodoret reports that the superiors of the monastery ordered him to leave as they were unable to tolerate his extreme asceticism; in the Syriac *Life*, in contrast, it is the ordinary monks who are jealous of the saint's prowess and the abbot is much more sympathetic, although eventually forced to expel him; in Antonius's *Life* it is the regular monks who first turn against Symeon, but the abbot joins them when he is alerted to the extremity of his behaviour.[181] The basic point, however, that Symeon's extreme ascesis provoked jealousy and hostility in his monastery, resulting in his expulsion, is the same in all three. These accounts of jealousy about Symeon the Elder's exceptional prowess may well have inspired the Younger's hagiographer; certainly, his report that Symeon was rebuked by John for wrapping himself harshly in rope is highly reminiscent of an episode recounted in all three

[178] ὅς ἑωρακὼς τὴν τοῦ παιδίου διαγωγὴν φθόνῳ βάλλεται διαβολικῷ*:* ibid. 14 (pp.12-13).
[179] ἔλεγον δὲ καὶ ταῦτα ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ κινούμενοι· "Ποῦ ἐστιν ἡ ἁγιωσύνη αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀσκήσεως ἡ μανία: ibid. 23 (p.19).
[180] Harvey 1998, 535-6, fn.47.
[181] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *History of the Monks of Syria,* 26.5 (II, pp.166-70); Syriac *Life of Symeon* (pp.520-5); Antonius, *Life of Symeon,* 6-8 (pp.24-30).

Lives of the Elder (although again with some variations).[182] The details of early opposition to Symeon are not, therefore, necessarily entirely reliable. Nonetheless, we should not be too ready to disregard the entire theme as merely trope. Tropes often reflect reality,[183] and it is certainly does not inherently implausible that Symeon's harsh way of life could have prompted envy or hostility; it may well have been genuinely uncomfortable for a rigorous ascetic to be incorporated into a monastery.[184]

This impression becomes still stronger when we look at reports of conflict once Symeon had become hegumen, conflicts which the hagiographer associates with his management of the monastery. As we have seen, he depicts the monks repeatedly challenging Symeon's refusal to accept gifts from visitors; they also often appear concerned about provisioning the monastery. An incident concerning the supply of water for all the visitors and builders at the new shrine is both typical and revealing: we are told that 'the disciples of the saint were anxious about where to bring water from for the need of such a service.'[185] The problem of the provision of water was Symeon's responsibility not only because he was hegumen, but because it was the result of his decision to move up the mountain: 'for the source of the waters was at the foot of the mountain at a considerable distance.'[186] This illustrates one way in which the pursuit of Symeon's ascetic struggle could have inconvenienced the monastery as a whole; it is not, therefore, implausible that his administration could have provoked unease.

[182] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *History of the Monks of Syria,* 26.5 (pp.166-70); Syriac Life of Symeon (p.522); Antonius, *Life of Symeon,* 5 (p.24) 8 (pp.28-30); *Life of Symeon,* 26 (pp.23-23); Van den Ven 162-70, I, 171*.
[183] Morris 1995, 77.
[184] Whitby 1987, 313.
[185] οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ τοῦ ἁγίου ἐμερίμνουν πόθεν ὕδωρ κομίσαι πρὸς τὴν χρείαν τῆς τοιαύτης ὑπουργίας: *Life of Symeon,* 97 (p.75).
[186] ἦν γὰρ ἡ πηγὴ τῶν ὑδάτων παρὰ τὰς ῥίζας τοῦ ὄρους ἐκ πολλῶν διαστημάτων: ibid. 97 (p.75).

Certainly, concerns about provisioning the monastery are presented as having been important to the biggest internal challenger of Symeon's authority, who has already been mentioned several times: the monk Angoulas.[187] Angoulas appears at various points in the text as a sceptic and opponent of Symeon's: on one occasion he doubts the efficacy of one of Symeon's cures.[188] The most extended description of Angoulas's troublesome behaviour, however, involves another dispute about monastic funding. The *Life* reports that Satan inspired Angoulas,

> And he stirred up the brotherhood against the holy slave of God. And the brothers rose against him on account of his great charity, saying, 'Who can subsist thus? And where is this the practice for those requiring healing? Neither in the holy city, nor in the monasteries, nor in the houses of God [churches].'[189]

They stated that in all these other places suppliants brought their own food and left a gift. After Symeon rebuked them, saying that as monks they had to be charitable and support the crowds, 'Angoulas spoke rougher words to the saint, saying that he would not do any such thing.'[190] This passage is highly significant: it presents the entire brotherhood in opposition to Symeon because of his atypical and impractical management of monastic affairs, led by a figure who was prepared to deny his authority. This suggests that the role of stylite was not so authoritative or popular that he could easily command respect, and that individual asceticism was indeed difficult to fit into a coenobium.

Can we, however, trust the hagiographer's report of these disturbances? Déroche has argued that the author is highly partial and invents Symeon's ire against Angoulas because of factional divisions which erupted in the monastery after Symeon's death.[191] He focuses particularly on the passage in the *Life* in which Symeon predicts that Angoulas 'will be a

[187] See above pp.146, 149. See also Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 164-5.
[188] *Life of Symeon*, 168 (pp.150-151).
[189] καὶ ἐκταράττει τὴν ἀδελφότητα κατὰ τοῦ ἁγίου δούλου τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καὶ ἐπανίστανται οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῷ ἐπὶ τῇ πολλῇ ἐλεημοσύνῃ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες · 'Τίς ὑποστήσεται οὕτως; Ποῦ δὲ ταῦτα γίνεται εἰς τοὺς δεομένους ἰάσεως; οὐδὲ ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ πόλει, οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς μοναστηρίοις, οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς κυριακοῖς οἴκοις': ibid. 123 (p.103).
[190] Ἀγγουλὰς ἔλεγε τῷ ἁγίῳ τραχυτέρους λόγους, φάσκων μὴ ποιεῖν τι τοιοῦτον: ibid. 123 (pp.103-104).
[191] Déroche 1996, 75.

traitor and a Judas to this place. And such things will happen here through him, that his blasphemies will be spoken of in nearly every place. Alas for his soul; for how many souls it is a cause of scandal!';[192] the hagiographer continues to say that this indeed came true shortly after Symeon's death.[193] Déroche is certainly right to be wary of this prophecy and to suggest that a *Life* written by one of Angoulas's followers would have been very different. Nonetheless, his argument that it is not possible that Angoulas had quarrelled with Symeon during the holy man's life is not entirely compelling. He claims that had the monk been so disobedient to his superior, he would either have been expelled or rebuked before all the other brothers, but that this did not take place.[194] But expulsion was not a common form of punishment in all monastic communities: it seems, for example, to have been rare in the Pachomian federation.[195] A hegumen might be reluctant to expel a disobedient brother either on religious grounds (forgiveness is an important monastic virtue)[196] or on more practical ones: as we have seen, Symeon was dependent upon the support of his disciples and therefore could not necessarily autocratically expel a dissenting monk, particularly if he had numerous sympathisers among the brotherhood.

In addition, Déroche appears to be mistaken to say that Symeon could not have rebuked Angoulas publicly because the *Life* would have said so. It is true that the saint's prophecy about future strife was made to only two other brothers; yet during the debate about accepting gifts, Angoulas was indeed reprimanded before the community:

> Having made the sign of the cross, [Symeon] said to Angoulas, 'He who speaks through you is clearly a devil; alas for your soul, because you have become his

[192] γενήσεται προδότης καὶ Ἰούδας τοῦ τόπου τούτου · καὶ τοιαῦτα γενήσονται ἐνταῦθα δι'αὐτοῦ, ἵνα σχεδὸν ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ λαληθῶσιν αἱ βλασφημίαι αὐτοῦ. Οὐαὶ δὲ τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτοῦ· πόσων ψυχῶν γίνεται αἰτία σκανδάλου: *Life of Symeon,* 240 (p.216).
[193] ibid. 240 (p.216).
[194] Déroche 1996, 75.
[195] Rousseau 1999a, 96-8. Pachomius is depicted refusing to expel disobedient brothers in his Bohairic *Life,* 102 (pp.128-9). By comparison, Shenoute seems to have used expulsion much more readily in his monastic federation (although this may have met with opposition): Schroeder 2007, 75-82.
[196] See e.g. Burton-Christie 1993, 275-6.

> organ.' He then said to the other brothers, 'Look, like the Lord I say to you: "Feed the crowds," when you have repented."'[197]

On another occasion, moreover, the Devil tells Symeon in a vision that he will begin his attack on the monastery 'through Angoulas, who always obeys me'; Symeon reports this to the brothers, only for Angoulas to retort rudely.[198] The argument that the hagiographer *must* have invented Symeon's conflict with Angoulas is not, therefore, compelling, although this remains a possibility.

What is probable is that, whether or not the hagiographer exaggerates Angoulas's involvement in the troubles, Symeon did face serious opposition among his monks. The debate about the receiving of gifts is not the only allusion in the *Life* to widespread hostility to the saint. In subsequent chapters, the hagiographer makes other, rather cryptic, references to resistance to Symeon among the brotherhood. In one crucial but complicated passage, which will be discussed in more detail below,[199] the Devil successfully requests permission from God to test Symeon, declaring, 'I will enter into his disciples and turn them savage, into a species of men-demons.'[200] He later addresses the saint himself, threatening, 'even if I cannot do anything against you yourself…I will nonetheless excite such tribulations on the part of men that you will not able to support them, *and after having agitated the brotherhood around you, I will make them raise their necks, to torment your soul*' [emphasis mine].[201] This is far from typical hagiographic cliché, and does suggest that there was a serious movement of opposition to the saint from within the monastery.

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[197] ποιήσας τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σφραγῖδα εἶπε πρὸς τὸν Ἀγγουλάν · 'Ὁ μὲν λαλῶν διὰ σοῦ δαίμων εὔδηλός ἐστιν · ὀυαὶ δὲ τῇ ψυχῇ σου, ὅτι γέγονας αὐτῳ ὄργανον.' Εἶτα λέγει τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀδελφοῖς · 'Ἰδοὺ ὡς ὁ Κύριος ὑμῖν λέγω · "Δότε φαγεῖν τοῖς ὄχλοις", ἐπεὶ μεταμεληθήσεσθε: *Life of Symeon,* 123 (p.104).
[198] 'ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑπακούοντός μου ἀεὶ Ἀγγουλᾶ': ibid. 128 (p.116).
[199] See below pp.203-10.
[200] εἰσελεύσομαι εἰς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκθηριώσω αὐτοὺς ἐν γένει δαιμόνων καὶ ἀνθρώπων: *Life of Symeon,* 124 (p.110).
[201] εἰ γὰρ μηδὲν ἰσχύσω κατὰ σοῦ… ἀλλὰ ἀναστήσω σοι τοσαύτας θλίψεις ἐκ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἃς οὐ μὴ δυνηθῇς βαστάσαι, καὶ τὴν περὶ σὲ δὲ ταράξας ἀδελφότητα ποιήσω τραχηλιάσαι, ὥστε στενοχωρηθῆναί σου τὴν ψυχήν: ibid. 125 (p.110).

Funding the Monastery

Did this conflict really relate to the question of whether the monks should accept gifts from suppliants and pilgrims? This is difficult to answer, and raises wider questions about the economic foundation of the monastery. There have been few comprehensive studies of the economic bases of early Syrian monasteries,[202] although more has been done for Egypt and Palestine.[203] Hagiography is notoriously problematic as a source for economic history, both because hagiographers were uninterested in a realistic appraisal of the subject, and because money and wealth were highly ideologically charged topics. We thus cannot necessarily take at face value Symeon's hagiographer's depiction of the financial workings of the monastery. The hagiographer presents Symeon as being vehemently opposed to money and economic transactions, as shown not only by his repeated insistence that pilgrims should not bring gifts to thank him,[204] but also by his unusual reply to a stone-cutter who asked for his help in regaining his stolen salary: 'the Son of God didn't send me to settle questions about money, but to heal those who are ill.'[205] In this last instance, he does then help the man to find his money—but it is interesting to note that miracles relating to lost money, although popular in much late antique hagiography, are very rare in the *Life*.[206] Strikingly, the same hostility to money is reflected in the *Life of Martha*: Symeon states that he was initially reluctant to engage in any building projects, only becoming reconciled to the idea once God had promised that no money would have to be involved.[207] Both the *Life of Symeon* and the *Life of Martha* claim that the substantial construction works carried out on the 'Wonderful

[202] There is some discussion in e.g. Vööbus 1960, 159-6; Escolan 1999, 183-225.
[203] On Egypt see e.g. Wipszycka 2009, 471-565. On Palestine see e.g. Hirschfield 1992.
[204] See above p.177.
[205] οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλέ με ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ δίκας χρημάτων ἐλέγξαι, ἀλλ' ἰάσασθαι τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας: *Life of Symeon,* 180 (p.160).
[206] The only examples occur in ibid. 180-1 (pp.159-61). In 179 (pp.158-9) a woman asks Symeon to help avenge a theft, but he discerns miraculously that she was lying about the crime.
[207] *Life of Martha*, 64 (pp.306-7).

Mountain' were the product of voluntary work by pilgrims (many of them from Isauria)[208] who had been cured and wanted to thank the saint.[209]

But is this picture of a radically money-spurning hegumen, who refused to accept gifts (apart from labour hours and construction materials for building) plausible? If a monastery was not to accept gifts, it could only provide for itself and its guests through its monks' own labour. Symeon's monastery does—like other monasteries associated with stylites[210]—seem to have engaged in agriculture. The *Life* contains several references to cultivated gardens and fields attached to the lower monastery.[211] The reference to conflict with leaders of nearby villages 'because of the νομὰς [pasturings?] of the Wonderful Mountain' may also reflect agricultural activity.[212] The monks appear to have performed at least some of the farm labour themselves,[213] which challenges Escolan's contention that Syrian monks very rarely worked, subsisting almost entirely from alms (although he is correct to note that Syrian saints' lives do not emphasise the value of work to the same extent as many Egyptian hagiographers).[214] The monks thus provided for some of their own needs, and it is not impossible to believe that before Symeon's rise to prominence, their monastery, under John, could have been largely self-sufficient, if their buildings (which do not survive) were modest and self-built.[215]

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[208] On the Isaurian builders, see C. Mango 1966.
[209] *Life of Symeon*, 96 (pp.74-5), 110-11 (pp.89-90), 172-3 (pp.154-5), 192 (pp.170-1), 228 (pp.200-1); *Life of Martha*, 47 (pp.288-9), 49 (pp.290-1). These claims have been accepted by various archaeologists working on Symeon's cult site (Lafontaine-Dosogne 1967, 84-5; Djobadze 1986, 58; cf. also Schachner 2010, 361), but, to my knowledge, this is based purely on the hagiographic sources.
[210] Schachner 2010, 363-5.
[211] i.e. the monastery of Symeon's predecessor John, in which he too had lived before moving up to the Wonderful Mountain, whereupon he appointed an older monk as guardian of the lower monastery (*Life of Symeon*, 66 (p.57). For its fields and gardens, see ibid. 176 (p.155), 182 (p.161), 178 (p.157).
[212] ibid. 125 (p.112).
[213] ibid. 174 (p.155) refers to the brothers 'doing work in the lower convent [ποιούντων αὐτῶν ἔργον ἐν τῇ κατωτέρᾳ μονῇ]'.
[214] Escolan 1999, 183-201.
[215] In his useful survey article, Brenk notes (though perhaps does not sufficiently emphasise, given that he draws on evidence from the Latin west as well as many different regions of the east) the variety in possible economic models for monasteries, suggesting that some smaller monasteries could perhaps have subsisted largely from agriculture: Brenk 2004. Some modest and apparently largely self-sufficient monasteries on the

Yet comparative evidence would suggest that, at least by the time of the move to the 'Wonderful Mountain' and the building of a relatively lavish new monastic complex (Djobadze notes the 'high quality' of some of its mosaic decoration and the use of 'imported' coloured marbles),[216] Symeon's monastery must have relied upon gifts as well as agricultural income. There is near complete consensus among archaeologists, papyrologists, and literary historians that gifts and patronage were essential to monastic economies, especially in the case of large, luxuriously decorated establishments which provided considerable amount of charitable support to the poor and to pilgrims.[217] Different monasteries relied on different sources of patronage. Emperors, of course, were important patrons of some monasteries, as is often attested in hagiography.[218] But emperors did not patronise all monasteries equally,[219] and it seems unlikely that Symeon the Younger benefited seriously from this source. The majority of his building work seems to have been completed by 551,[220] during the reign of Justinian, and it seems improbable that this emperor contributed to the constructions given his decidedly cool portrayal by the hagiographer.[221] Donations by subsequent emperors cannot be ruled out (and one intriguing reference in the *Life* to Symeon sending three monks to Constantinople 'for several soul-benefiting needs' might suggest an attempt to find imperial or senatorial patronage),[222] but there is no positive evidence for them. Wealthy nobles were a key source of patronage for monasteries

Sinai peninsula are described by Dahari 2000, esp.157-8, 163, 167—although even here it seems possible that he has underestimated the significance of gifts to the monks.

[216] Djobadze 1986, 77, 80, 96.

[217] See e.g. the conclusion to Brenk 2004, 472.

[218] See e.g. *Life of Daniel*, 38 (p.35), 44 (pp.41-2), 54 (p.53), 57-8 (pp.55-7), 92 (p.86-7); Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas* (pp.143, 175-9); George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 54 (pp.46-7), 82 (pp.69-79).

[219] On Justinian's variable patronage, see Hatlie 2007, 46 ff.

[220] If, at least, we can trust the chronology of the *Life*, which states that Symeon moved to the top of the 'Wonderful Mountain' aged twenty and lived there on a rock for ten years as the new monastery was built before moving onto his final column: as he seems to have been born in 521, this would suggest the monastery was largely finished in 551. See *Life of Symeon*, 112-3 (pp.90-3), 258 (p.223), with Van den Ven 1962-70, I, pp.124*-130*.

[221] See above pp.159-60.

[222] Διά τινας ψυχωφελεῖς χρείας: *Life of Symeon*, 232 (p.208).

throughout the empire, and their generous donations are, again, often commemorated by hagiographers.[223] Yet, as will be argued below, the *Life of Symeon* betrays such an unusually hostile attitude to the local nobility, an attitude which may derive from the saint's own views, that it is difficult to envision strong ties connecting the monastery to members of the Antiochene secular elites. Unlike most saints' Lives of the period, it contains no stories praising nobles who gave gifts to the saint, and it is very difficult to read it as a patronage-seeking document. Even if we cannot assume that the *Life* does reflect the real situation in Symeon's lifetime, it seems that by the time the hagiographer was writing, seeking noble patronage was not a priority.

Who is left? The patronage of monasteries by leading churchmen was not unknown, if perhaps less common than lay patronage—some bishops even founded monasteries[224]—and given Symeon's apparently good relations with several prominent bishops,[225] this could have been a source of revenue, although again there is no evidence for it in the sources. Yet it seems unlikely that this can explain the building works on the 'Wonderful Mountain', since Domninus, so vehemently excoriated by Symeon's hagiographer, was patriarch of Antioch when the majority of these took place. The only remaining source of donations would seem to be the regular stream of pilgrims and suppliants who visited Symeon's shrine. If these suppliants are envisaged as being primarily of low or medium income, a considerable number of visitors would be required to pay for, for example, the building projects on the mountain. But Symeon's *Life* does claim that the saint did receive a vast quantity of visitors, and the archaeological evidence of the pilgrim tokens from the shrine

[223] See e.g. Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatius*, 12.12-3 (pp.118-20), 15.9 (p.126), 51.7 (p.290); *Life of Daniel*, 29-30 (pp.29-30), 36 (p.34), 94 (p.88); George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 120 (pp.96-7).
[224] See e.g. Vööbus 1960, 161.
[225] *Life of Symeon*, 25 (pp.21-2), 34 (p.33), 71 (pp.60-2), 134 (pp.126-7), 202 (pp.176-7), 204 (pp.177-8), 206 (p.178).

may support this.[226] It is, perhaps, not impossible to envision a monastery that subsisted primarily from large numbers of relatively small gifts by ordinary suppliants.

This does, however, call into question the hagiographer's claims about Symeon's refusal to accept gifts. Two interpretative possibilities seem possible. The first would be to accept much of what the hagiographer does say, including his claims that the building of the monastery was made possible by the donation of materials and manpower by healed suppliants. If Symeon really did refuse to accept more gifts than this, it might well have provoked hostility among his monks, who could have seen that this was an unrealistic economic strategy. Yet it ultimately seems more plausible that this conflict over the acceptance of gifts was largely staged by the hagiographer. It is relatively common in hagiography for saints to be presented as free sources of spiritual help (although rare for this to be insisted on so vehemently as in the *Life of Symeon*), but, as Déroche suggests, this is often little more than a rhetorical platitude.[227] In this case, therefore, it would seem that the hagiographer is treating a real conflict between Symeon and his monks, but veiling its causes, by attributing it to a factor which show the saint in an unambiguously positive light: his superabundant charity. The true circumstances which involved the monks becoming 'men-demons' may therefore be lost to us. Symeon's career thus shows both that a stylite could be fully integrated into a coenobitic monastery, and that this was liable to cause serious difficulties and tensions.

External Opposition

The tensions within his monastery were far from the only conflict in Symeon's career. He seems to have experienced hostility from a diverse range of groups outside his monastery,

[226] On pilgrim tokens see above p.17 n39.
[227] Déroche 2006.

on varying grounds. Like many other holy men and churchmen,[228] he provoked economic resentment as the new monastery encroached on locals' pastures. Thus the *Life* tells us that 'the devil began to animate the leaders of the nearby towns because of the pasturing [?] of the Wonderful Mountain on which the monastery of the blessed man was situated'.[229] This economic conflict with the local farmers is not, however, a main theme of the *Life.* More common are instances of tension between Symeon and various members of the local clergy.[230] Thomas, a priest from the village of Paradeisos, was 'moved by a diabolic jealousy' and anathematised Symeon;[231] similarly, an unnamed priest from the village of Kassa became very envious when he heard about Symeon's miracles, criticised him, and finally, under the influence of a devil, anathematised the saint.[232] Both, unsurprisingly, were immediately afflicted by divine punishments, as were the deacon Epiphanius, from a village called Euthalion near Antioch, and John, a deacon of the Holy Church of God in Antioch, both of whom spoke abusively about the saint, the latter to the point of writing to him 'a letter full of many insults and blasphemous words.'[233] Two other stories may be suggestive of similar tensions. In one, a Georgian priest who starts, in his own country, a miracle-working shrine with a lock of Symeon's hair, excites the envy of his local priests because 'crowds were going to that place and giving offerings'; the priests denounce him to their bishop as a magician; the bishop then imposes sanctions on him until he himself falls ill and

[228] Brown 1995, 62-4; Sarris 2011c.
[229] ἤρξατο ὁ διάβολος... τοὺς ἡγουμένους τῶν κύκλῳ πόλεων κινεῖν διὰ τὰς νομὰς τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ Θαυμαστοῦ ἐν ᾧ ἡ μονὴ ἵδρυται τοῦ μακαρίου: *Life of Symeon,* 125 (p.112).
[230] Cf. Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 164*.
[231] φθόνῳ διαβολικῷ φερόμενος: *Life of Symeon,* 116 (p.95).
[232] ibid. 239 (p.214-5).
[233] ἐπιστολὴν...πολλῶν ὕβρεων πεπληρωμένην καὶ βλασφήμων λόγων: ibid. 225 (p.196). For Epiphanius, see ibid. 195 (pp.172-3); for John, 225 (pp.196-7).

repents.[234] Finally, in a rather different story, Symeon exposes John, a priest and *oikonomos* from the Church of Apamea, who has come to visit him, as a wicked idolater.[235]

It is difficult to know what to make of these stories. Apart from the last mentioned case (in which the priest is not in fact openly hostile to Symeon), the accounts seem to be suggestive of the well-documented resentment felt by some non-monastic clergyman towards holy men, on the grounds that the latters' charismatic authority was drawing away influence, power, and wealth from them.[236] The account set in Iberia certainly explicitly states that it was economic considerations (as well as the work of the Devil) that provoked the envy of the Georgian priests; the stories about the local priests from near Symeon's monastery are less direct, but the repeated references to jealousy may suggest that similar factors were at play. This is certainly the reading of Philippe Escolan, who posits a seriously hostile relationship between Symeon and the clergy, although his argument rests in part on an apparent misinterpretation of chapter 224 of the *Life*.[237] It does seem very likely that rivalry could have existed between Symeon and other local priests. This is not to say that the stylite lived in tension with the entire Church; in fact, the text provides considerable evidence of integration between the two. Not only does the hagiographer emphasise Symeon's close relationship with several bishops of Antioch, Seleucia and Constantinople,[238] but, as Susan Ashbrook Harvey has shown brilliantly, his focus on liturgy serves to show Symeon's integration into the Church: 'ultimately, liturgy transfigured the ascetic body of the stylite

[234] ὡς τῶν ὄχλων ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ἐκείνῳ συνερχομένων καὶ τὰς καρποφορίας προσφερόντων: ibid. 130 (pp.122-3).
[235] ibid. 223 (pp.193-4).
[236] See e.g. Escolan 1999; Caner 2002; Rapp 2005, 103-5.
[237] Escolan 1999, 307-9. He claims that Anastasius, an Antiochene scholasticus who was extremely rude about Symeon, was treated less harshly by the saint than the aforementioned clergy who criticised him. In fact, Anastasius dropped dead in a public portico in Antioch after receiving an angry message from the saint (*Life of Symeon*, 224 [pp.194-6]); this was actually more severe than the punishments suffered by any of the clerics (one of the guilty clergymen, Thomas, did die, but only after repenting and being forgiven by Symeon: ibid. 116 [p.95]).
[238] See esp. ibid. 25 (pp.21-2), 34 (p.33), 71 (pp.60-2), 134 (pp.126-7), 204 (pp.177-8), 202-3 (pp.176-7), 205 (p.178).

into the ecclesial body of the church.'[239] The picture given by the *Life* is thus complex; on the one hand, it seems to reflect the growing closeness of the monastic and ecclesiastical worlds by the sixth century, as monasteries came increasingly under episcopal control while, at the same time, the Church was ever more influenced by ascetic and monastic ideals;[240] on the other, it suggests that this process had not caused rivalries to disappear, at least at a local level. Indeed, if the stylite did enjoy a strong relationship with Antiochene bishops, this could have heightened tensions between him and lower-level clerics, as the latter saw Symeon's popularity threatening their standing not only among the wider population but also with their own ecclesiastical superiors.

Most of the criticisms levelled at Symeon in the *Life* do not relate to any identifiable rivalries, but rather seem to reflect a widespread religious scepticism, largely among Christians, about his claims to holiness. In particular, his ability to perform miracles is frequently doubted: one man from Daphne was reluctant to take his daughter to Symeon to be cured, as he was 'held by a profound incredulity';[241] a bald man, Babylas, initially refused to use a eulogy given to him by Symeon to grow his hair, 'not believing this to be possible';[242] and the 'masters' of a priest who had experienced many of Symeon's miracles mocked them.[243] Other opponents accepted that miracles took place but denied that they were divine: a Cilician brick-maker asked a potential suppliant of the saint, 'Why do you wander, going away to a man [who is] an imposter and counterfeits doing such things through sorceries?'[244] Antony Kaldellis has argued persuasively that these kinds of doubts

[239] Harvey 1998, 538.
[240] On the increasing institutionalisation of monasticism (a process in which the Council of Chalcedon represented a watershed), see e.g. Dagron 1970, 276, and Caner 2002, esp.235-47. The process of monastic institutionalisation continued in the sixth century: see e.g. on Justinian's actions Hatlie 2007, esp.45-57. On the uptake of ascetic ideals in ecclesiastical and episcopal circles, see esp. Sterk 2004, passim.
[241] ἀπιστίᾳ πολλῇ κατεχόμενος: *Life of Symeon*, 193 (p.171).
[242] μὴ πιστεύσας...εἶναι τοῦτο δυνατὸν: ibid. 194 (p.172).
[243] ibid. 231 (p.208).
[244] τί πλανᾶσθε πρὸς ἄνδρα ἀπερχόμενοι ἐπιθέτην καὶ διὰ φαρμακίας τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιεῖν…ἐπιτηδεύοντα: ibid. 234 (p.211).

and queries, which are fairly common in hagiography, do not simply represent generic clichés; rather, they must be a response to real scepticism among the broader Christian society (even if the particular incidents are not literally true).[245] Indeed, it is demonstrably true that ordinary Christian believers sometimes struggled to accept holy men's claims to miracle-working powers, often in the face of their failures to perform.[246]

Yet Symeon faced far greater doubts and hostility than many holy men, because of the devastations suffered by northern Syria in the sixth century. The significance of the disasters to Symeon's reputation is shown by the careful attention paid to them in the *Life:* even if the proportion of the text dealing with them directly is relatively small, the accounts do constitute some of the text's most elaborate chapters.[247] The hagiographer combines precise detail about the scope and effects of the disasters with highly emotive and religiously charged language reminiscent of apocalyptic literature. This combination is illustrated, for example, by chapters 104-7 of the *Life*, which probably deal with the severe series of earthquakes of late 557.[248] The hagiographer narrates in detail Symeon's predictions of the disaster and his efforts to negotiate with God to mitigate its results, his composition of three *troparia* for his monks and visitors to chant, his mother's fear, and the series of earthquakes itself. The account has apocalyptic and eschatological overtones throughout.[249] Thus the narrative of events is frequently interrupted by Symeon's visions: he sees, for example, the heavens open (with a phrase recalling the book of Revelation),[250] the heavenly powers in

[245] Kaldellis 2014b, esp. 462. For further bibliography on Christian scepticism see above p.173 n139.
[246] This is evident not only from hagiography, but also from genres such as letters which could target scepticism still more directly: see e.g. below pp.282-4 on the letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza.
[247] See esp. *Life of Symeon*, 78 (pp.66-8), 104-7 (pp.81-8) (on earthquakes); 57-64 (pp.50-56) (on the Persian invasion of 540); 69-70 (pp.59-60), 124-9 (pp.106-22) (on the plague).
[248] The hagiographer describes one of the earthquakes as devastating Rhegium, near Constantinople; an earthquake damaging Rhegium is attested by Agathias in 557: Agathias, *Histories*, 5.3.9 (p.167). See Pétridès 1902, 272-3.
[249] See Van den Ven 1962-70, II, 104 n.3.
[250] *Life of Symeon*, 104 (p.82): εἶδε τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἀνεῳγότας; Revelation 19:11: εἶδον τὸν οὐρανὸν ἠνεῳγμένον.

two ranks with bowed heads, and above them a throne, raised in the air with no supports, and Christ sitting on it, full of anger.[251] Later, he sees an aerial boat containing 'angels of wrath,'[252] which is steered by the Holy Spirit against the coast. He predicts to his brethren that if they cannot appease God's anger, 'stone will not remain on stone', recalling Jesus's words as reported in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark about the destruction of the Temple, which lead into his discourse about the end times.[253] Yet despite these apocalyptic overtones, the hagiographer takes care to describe the extent of the earthquake with some precision. Thus he narrates, of the first quake:

> The next day, about the tenth hour of the day, all the earth was shaken by a great trembling, such that the numerous past generations could not remember one like it, and cities and villages of the coast fell down according to the vision which had been seen by him [Symeon]…. but in the region of the North, from Laodicea to Antioch, everything remained upright; only certain wall-towers and walls of churches were broken, but there was no collapse, according to the word of the saint, and the regions from Tyre to Jerusalem, as well as the southern side, were preserved equally, according to that which had appeared to Symeon in the course of his vision.[254]

Subsequently, Symeon foresees that another quake will strike parts of Constantinople and its surroundings; the hagiographer is equally precise about the results of this, recounting that it caused much destruction in Constantinople, Nicomedia, Rhegium, parts of Nicaea and other towns in Illyria.[255] It is important to bear this element of precision in mind, because it suggests that the hagiographer is not exaggerating the scale of the crises he recounts for any special purpose (for example, for didactic reasons, to stress the need for the people to

[251] *Life of Symeon*, 104 (pp.82-3).
[252] ἄγγελοι ὀργῆς: ibid. 104 (p.83).
[253] οὐ καταλειφθήσεται λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον: ibid. 104 (p.82); compare Matthew 24:2/Mark 13:2: 'οὐ μὴ ἀφεθῇ ὧδε λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον ὃς οὐ καταλυθήσεται'.
[254] Τῇ δὲ ἑξῆς περὶ ὥραν δεκάτην τῆς ἡμέρας ἐσείσθη πᾶσα ἡ γῆ σεισμῷ μεγάλῳ, οἷον οὐδὲ αἱ παρελθοῦσαι πολλαὶ γενεαὶ ἀπεμνημόνευον γενέσθαι, καὶ ἔπεσαν πόλεις καὶ χῶραι τῆς παράλου κατὰ τὴν ὀφθεῖσαν αὐτῷ θεωρίαν…. Ἀπὸ μέντοι Λαοδικείας κατὰ Ἀντιόχειαν ἐπὶ τὸ βόρειον κλίτος ἔστησαν πάντα, μόνον πύργων τινῶν τοῦ τείχους καὶ τοίχων τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν διαρραγέντων· πτῶσις δὲ οὐ γέγονε κατὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ ἁγίου, καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ Τύρου δὲ ἐπὶ τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ τὸ μεσημβρινὸν κλίτος διεφυλάχθη ὡσαύτως κατὰ τὸ εἶδος τῆς θεωρίας αὐτοῦ: *Life of Symeon*, 105 (p.85).
[255] ibid. 106 (pp.85-7). The reference to 'Illyria' here is, however, difficult to explain: the province of Illyria/Illyricum was in the western Balkans, whereas the particular towns cited are all to the east of Constantinople.

repent). Rather, as the previously quoted passages make clear, far from overplaying the effects of the earthquake, Symeon's hagiographer stresses their limitations, in order to show that Symeon's prayers had some moderating influence. The true scale of the disasters posed, in fact, a severe problem for both hagiographer and saint, as it called into question the efficacy of Symeon's intercessory powers.

Theodicy and the Problem of Intercession

The *Life* reveals that the catastrophes afflicting Antioch and its surroundings led to challenges to Christian belief and in particular to Christian theodicy.[256] Thus, for instance, it tells us that Evagrius Scholasticus entertained blasphemous thoughts when the plague killed his own children but spared those of a pagan neighbour, a story confirmed by Evagrius himself.[257] More generally, the *Life* reports that there were 'certain impious men of the city of Antioch'[258] who denied mortal sin, the Last Judgement and the final resurrection, and some of whom, significantly, 'judged that the movement of the stars was responsible for the earthquakes which were happening.'[259] Here, deviant explanations of the earthquakes are linked to doubts concerning Symeon's miracles: these impious men, hearing about the saint's miracles, challenged him in debate.[260] Another episode conveys the impression still more strongly that the saint's hagiographer felt divergent explanations of the earthquakes to be a direct threat to Symeon's authority: Symeon foresees an earthquake and prays for pardon from the Saviour, but the earthquake strikes nonetheless, whereupon 'some of those who are pagans and wander in the errors of astrology said that the town would certainly be

[256] On the ideological effects of the disasters in Antioch, see Meier 2003, esp. 313-9 (on the Persian sack) and 345-57 (on the fire and earthquakes of 526-8). On the effects of the sixth-century disasters across the empire on faith in holy men, see ibid. esp.354-5, 415-21, 543-5, 554-6; Dal Santo 2011a, esp.133, and Dal Santo 2012, 323-4. On responses to earthquakes, see Dagron 1981, 87-103.
[257] *Life of Symeon*, 233 (pp.210-11); Evagrius Scholasticus, 6.23 (p.239).
[258] τινες ἀσεβεῖς ἄνδρες τῆς πόλεως Ἀντιοχείας: *Life of Symeon*, 157 (p.138).
[259] τὴν τῶν ἄστρων κίνησιν αἰτίαν ἐδόξαζον γίνεσθαι τῶν συμβαινόντων σεισμῶν: ibid. 157 (p.138).
[260] ibid. 157 (pp.138-139).

destroyed.'[261] The stylite, however, proved them wrong: praying again, he managed to stop the earthquake and proclaimed, 'It is ended, the needless error of the calculators who claim boldly to know the will of God by guessing at events.'[262] The hagiographer thus portrays the saint as claiming the end of the earthquake as proof of his interpretation of events—and of his intercessory powers—against rivals who implicitly or explicitly denied his authority and relevance.

The threat posed by such disasters to Symeon's authority is further shown by the confused, and sometimes unorthodox, ways in which the hagiographer attempts to justify the saint's failure to prevent the devastation. In particular, the *Life*'s presentation of Symeon's conversations with God is highly revealing: in times of crisis, the two frequently come into conflict. Déroche has noted examples from various hagiographies of the author presenting his saint as being unwilling to follow God's will: for instance, (the deceased) Demetrius of Thessalonike refused to leave his city to plague, although ordered to do so by angels; Symeon the Younger rebuked the heavenly saints for failing to answer his prayer to resurrect his disciple Conon. Déroche is surely right to see behind this the problem of reconciling the saint's role as obedient performer of divine commands with his equally important role as intercessor for his suppliants; yet his argument is less convincing in trying to associate this dilemma with a specific form of hagiography, miracle-collections, on the grounds that their compilers struggled to unify accounts from different sources.[263] It seems more probable that the real difficulty was a more basic one, applicable to any hagiographer: how to reconcile high expectations of a holy man with a sometimes disappointing reality. Thus, instances of tension between Symeon and God proliferate in the context of the earthquakes and plagues

[261] ἔλεγόν τινες τῶν ἑλληνιζόντων καὶ ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀστρολογίας πλάνῃ ματαιοπονούντων ὅτι πάντως ἀπόλλυται ἡ πόλις: ibid. 78 (p.67).
[262] πέπαυται γὰρ ἡ τῶν ψηφιστῶν περίεργος πλάνη στοχασμῷ τῶν συμβαινόντων βουλὴν Θεοῦ γινώσκειν ἀπαυθαδιαζομένων: ibid.
[263] Déroche 2000, 145-55.

affecting Antioch (a feature not discussed by Déroche), suggesting that the hagiographer is attempting, with limited success, to explain Symeon's inability to prevent the disasters. Normally, Symeon is presented as a direct channel and 'vessel' of God's will: the elder John states that 'he is a great and valued vessel of the choice of God',[264] and John the Baptist tells Martha that she must guard him carefully 'as a holy vessel',[265] a phrase which recurs when the brothers carry him to his new pillar.[266]

In times of crisis, however, the link between Symeon and God is much less direct. On one occasion, God ignores Symeon's prayer: Symeon asked God if he would spare Antioch from a Persian attack, 'and there was no explanation from the Lord, because the anger of his soul was full.'[267] At other times, God or his messengers question Symeon's attempts to intercede: once when Symeon prays for relief from plague, God replies that the people's sins are manifold, and asks why Symeon is upset, since he loves them no more than God himself does.[268] On another occasion, Symeon is distraught at the destruction he has foreseen, and a troop of angels ask him, 'Why do you concern yourself thus? Who will say these things to the Antiochenes? They say hostile things about you and you struggle on their behalf?'[269] The hagiographer thus attempts to move responsibility for the disasters from Symeon to divine will and the Antiochenes' sins, by showing that he has made great efforts to intercede and change God's mind. Yet this is no simple solution to his difficulty, as it fails to deal with the problem of why good people fall victim to disasters. The hagiographer thus has to face a doubly challenging situation: not only does he have to prove that Symeon's loyalty to his suppliants is unwavering, and effective, but he also has to handle the thorny question

[264] 'μέγα καὶ τίμιον σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστιν': *Life of Symeon*, 36 (p.36).
[265] ὡς σκεῦος ἅγιον: ibid. 3 (p.5).
[266] ibid. 113 (p.93).
[267] καὶ οὐκ ἦν δήλωσις παρὰ Κυρίου, ὁτι ἡ ὀργη τοῦ θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ πλήρης: ibid. 57 (p.51).
[268] ibid. 69 (pp.59-60).
[269] τί ὅτι μέλει σοι οὕτως; Τίς ἐρεῖ ταῦτα τοῖς Ἀντιοχεῦσιν; Αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν ἐναντία περὶ σοῦ καὶ σὺ ἀγωνιζῃ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν; ibid. 104 (p.82).

of theodicy. In short: he cannot show Symeon accepting God's apparently indiscriminate punishment of the Antiochenes (as this would be to betray his dependants), but equally he cannot, while remaining in orthodoxy, suggest that God was acting wrongly. In his efforts to handle these competing pressures, the hagiographer tries to portray Symeon as following in the footsteps of old Testament figures of unquestionable orthodoxy: Abraham and Job. But the extremity of the situation in Antioch forces him to make subtle changes to his models, which have profound consequences for the question of theodicy and the role of the holy man.

When describing the devastating earthquakes of 557, the hagiographer draws on the Old Testament story of Abraham interceding for Sodom. In the biblical passage (Genesis 18:16-33) God decides that he will not conceal his plans from Abraham, and tells the patriarch that he will destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if what he has heard about their sinfulness is true. Abraham, however, questions him, asking if he will really destroy Sodom if he discovers that there are even fifty righteous people there, and suggesting that this would be immoral: 'Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked!...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?'[270] God promises that if he finds fifty good people he will not destroy the city; Abraham then haggles, lowering the number of the just required to save Sodom first to forty five, then to forty, then thirty, then twenty, and finally to ten; God agrees that he will not destroy the city in any of these situations. In the event, God does destroy the city, after saving the righteous Lot and his daughters. Even this biblical narrative in its original form posed challenges to early Christian commentators: either Abraham was right to intervene, and God was in danger of acting unjustly (which would, of course, be very problematic theologically), or the patriarch's protestation was unnecessary, which would somewhat undermine Abraham's

[270] Genesis 18:25.

own authority. John Chrysostom, in his forty-second homily on Genesis, opts for the latter option, without entirely solving the problem:

> So when the angels went off to Sodom, as I remarked before, the patriarch stood before the Lord. 'Abraham approached him,' the text goes on, 'and said, "Surely you won't destroy the good along with the impious, so that the good will be as the impious?"' O, what bold speech on the just man's part – or, rather, his great compassion of spirit, stupefied as he was by the intoxication of sympathy and not knowing what he was saying. To show that he made this plea in great fear and trembling, Sacred Scripture says, 'Abraham approached him and said, "Surely you won't destroy the good along with the impious?"' What are you doing, blessed patriarch? Does the Lord require entreaty from you not to do this? No, let us not think that. You see, he doesn't say it to the Lord as if he were about to do it; instead, since he wasn't bold enough to speak directly on his nephew's [i.e. Lot's] behalf, he made a general entreaty for everyone out of a desire to save his life along with theirs and rescue them along with him.[271]

Chrysostom explains away Abraham's words (which he clearly found somewhat problematic), telling his audience that he was 'stupefied by the intoxication of sympathy and didn't know what he was saying': he was so worried about his nephew Lot that he made a quite unnecessary plea to God. The preacher makes it clear that God would never have destroyed the just with the impious: 'Does the Lord require entreaty from you not to do this?'. His interpretation of the passage is, therefore, dependent on the fact that God did not destroy anyone just in his punishment; he saved the virtuous Lot, and only condemned the other, sinful, men of Sodom. He thus manages to avoid any suggestion that God could act unjustly, even if at the price of suggesting that Abraham was not entirely in control of himself.

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[271] Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄγγελοι, καθάπερ ἔφθην εἰπὼν, ἀπῆλθον εἰς τὰ Σόδομα· ὁ δὲ πατριάρχης εἰστήκει ἐναντίον Κυρίου. Καὶ ἐγγίσας, φησὶν, Ἀβραὰμ εἶπε· Μὴ συναπολέσῃς δίκαιον μετὰ ἀσεβοῦς, καὶ ἔσται ὁ δίκαιος ὡς ὁ ἀσεβὴς; Ὢ τῆς τοῦ δικαίου παῤῥησίας, μᾶλλον δὲ, ὦ ψυχῆς συμπάθεια· ὅπως τῇ τῆς συμπαθείας μέθῃ καρωθεὶς οὐδὲ ὅ λέγει συνίησι. Καὶ δεικνύουσα ἡ Θεία Γραφὴ, ὅτι μετὰ φόβου πολλοῦ καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἱκεσίαν ποιεῖται, φησίν· Ἐγγίσας Ἀβραὰμ εἶπε· Μὴ συναπολέσῃς δίκαιον μετὰ ἀσεβοῦς; Τί ποιεῖς, ὦ μακάριε πατριάρχα; Τῆς παρὰ σοῦ δεῖται παρακλήσεως ὁ Δεσπότης, ὥστε μὴ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι; Ἀλλὰ μὴ τοῦτο νοήσωμεν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ὡς τοῦ Δεσπότου τοῦτο μέλλοντος λέγει, ἀλλ'ἐπειδὴ ἐξ εὐθείας διὰ τὸν ἀδελφιδοῦν εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἐθάῤῥει, κοινὴν ὑπὲρ ἁπάντων ποιεῖται τὴν ἱκεσίαν, βουλόμενος μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τοῦτον διασῶσαι, καὶ μετὰ τούτου καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἐξαρπάσαι: John Chrysostom, *42nd Homily on Genesis,* 4 (col.390, trans. pp.426-7 [with minor revisions by me]).

What we find in the *Life of Symeon* is more startling. At the beginning of his account of the earthquake of 557, the hagiographer tells us that God 'looked upon the earth and saw that it was entirely destroyed….and he didn't hide anything from his servant'; this last phrase recalls God's decision in Genesis 18.17 not to conceal his intentions from Abraham.[272] Symeon then receives various warnings of the destruction that was going to take place before having a vision of Christ seated on an aerial throne. Symeon finds himself in front of the throne, and says to Christ:

> Listen to me Lord, the God of me your servant, and have pity and don't act in accordance with the word of your anger, but through your love for mankind be reconciled with them. On the first Friday when you ordered that Antioch should be overthrown, were there not thirty just men in her, and didn't you destroy them with the impious? But now don't act in accordance with this word; you who judge the whole earth, don't destroy the just with the impious.[273]

This passage is clearly based upon the Genesis passage just discussed and indeed has strong verbal parallels with it.[274] Yet whereas Abraham's speech is entirely directed towards the future, urging God not to destroy the just with the impious—and John Chrysostom is therefore able to defend God by stating that, of course, he would never act in this unjust way—Symeon, according to his hagiographer, told Christ that he had *already* destroyed the just with the impious, on a previous occasion when Antioch had been overthrown;[275] he simply asks him not to repeat this distressing action. The hagiographer thus comes very close to making Symeon reproach God for having behaved immorally in the past, a reproach charged with potentially subversive implications. This is not to suggest that the

[272] Κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἐκεῖνον ἐπέβλεψε ὁ Κύριος καὶ εἶδε πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν κατεφθαρμένην…καὶ οὐκ ἀπέκρυψεν οὐδὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ δούλου αὐτοῦ: *Life of Symeon,* 104 (p.81); compare Gen. 18:17: ὁ δὲ Κύριος εἶπεν· οὐ μὴ κρύψω ἐγὼ ἀπὸ Ἀβραὰμ τοῦ παιδός μου, ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ. Cf. also *Life of Symeon,* 57 (p.51, lines 22-3).

[273] Ἄκουσόν μου, Κύριε ὁ Θεός μου τοῦ δούλου σου, καὶ σπλαγχνίσθητι καὶ μὴ ποιήσῃς κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς ὀργῆς σου, ἀλλὰ τῇ σῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ διαλλάγηθι. Ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ παρασκευῇ ὅτε ἐκέλευσας στραφῆναι Ἀντιόχειαν, οὐκ ἦσαν ἐν αὐτῇ τριάκοντα δίκαιοι καὶ ἀπώλεσας αὐτοὺς μετὰ τῶν ἀσεβῶν ; ἀλλὰ νῦν μὴ ποιήσῃς κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο· ὁ κρίνων πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, μὴ ἀπολέσῃς δίκαιον μετὰ ἀσεβοῦς: ibid. 104 (p.83).

[274] E.g. compare the *Life's* 'μὴ ἀπολέσῃς δίκαιον μετὰ ἀσεβοῦς' to Genesis 18.23, 'Μὴ συναπολέσῃς δίκαιον μετὰ ἀσεβοῦς'.

[275] It is not clear to which of the previous catastrophes recounted in the *Life* this refers.

hagiographer was consciously trying to imply that God had acted unjustly; this is most unlikely. Rather, the extremities of the situation on the ground in Antioch, and the almost impossible task of having to balance Symeon's duty to the Antiochenes with his loyalty to God, forced him into this awkward and in some ways destabilising parallel with Abraham.

Yet earthquakes in nearby cities were not the biggest challenge faced by Symeon. While the *Life* certainly does suggest that he was deemed to have a responsibility to protect neighbouring areas, the centre of his authority and therefore of his protective sphere was, of course, his own monastery. A passage in the *Life of Martha* shows clearly that Symeon's powers were supposed to keep his monks safe, unless they acted sinfully: one of the monks fell ill after extinguishing the lamp on Martha's tomb, 'and so since the grace given to the holy man did not allow anything bad to befall one of them unless a command had been transgressed, the brothers reasonably asked what he had done wrong.'[276] His powers were thus particularly vulnerable to scepticism and criticism if his monastery was afflicted by disaster. This seems to have happened, during his lifetime, in the form of an outbreak of the plague. Antony Kaldellis has shown that sixth-century writers, in the absence of a shared, coherent, and emotionally satisfying theological explanation for disasters, often wrote about outbreaks of plague in confused and contradictory ways.[277] He does not consider Symeon the Younger's *Life*, except in relation to Evagrius's response to his children's death, mentioned above,[278] yet the text certainly confirms his thesis. The hagiographer, striving to justify how Symeon's own disciples could fall victim to the plague, develops an elaborate account modelled on the book of Job, according to which the outbreak of the plague is part of Satan's plan, with God's permission, to test Symeon. Yet even though this approach

[276] Ἐπειδὴ οὖν ἡ δεδωρημένη τῷ ἁγίῳ χάρις ἐκτὸς παραβάσεως ἐντολῆς αὐτοῦ οὐδὲν συνεχώρει κακὸν ἐπελθεῖν τινι αὐτῶν, εἰκότως ἠρώτα ὁ ἀδελφὸς τί ἔτυχεν ἡμαρτηκώς: *Life of Martha*, 43 (p.285).
[277] Kaldellis 2007, 1-19. For the more general difficulties faced by early Christian theologians in responding coherently to disasters, see Young 1973, 113-6.
[278] Kaldellis 2007, 12-13; for Evagrius, see above p.196 n257.

might seem to have the potential to deal with the problem in a sophisticated and satisfying manner, again we see that the hagiographer's concerns to defend the saint at all costs lead him to make alterations to his biblical model and into inconsistencies.

Job was an icon and role model for many early Christian monks, viewed as the perfect example of how to endure suffering with patience.[279] Job is thus frequently cited in hagiography, particularly in reference to ailments endured by holy men: to take but a few examples, Theodore of Sykeon 'was thought to be a new Job because of his great suffering';[280] John the Almsgiver was described as a new Job after his wealth was lost at sea (but later replaced twofold);[281] Symeon Stylites the Elder is repeatedly compared to Job, as, for example, when Satan apparently received permission from God to smite the stylite with a worm-filled infection in his foot.[282] Yet these comparisons are, by and large, brief and relatively straightforward: they are used to show how the saints in question endured personal misfortunes. The account in the *Life of Symeon the Younger* is much longer, more complex, and more morally problematic, as the saint experiences illness not in his own body, but in those of his dependent disciples. In order to demonstrate the complexities and problems of the hagiographer's narration, it is necessary to summarise the relevant section of the *Life.*[283]

It begins immediately after the account of the brothers' uprising against Symeon led by Angoulas, discussed above. Symeon summons his monks and tells them to endure the tests they have to face; he then reads and explains the Book of Job to them. He reports that Satan has acquired a power against them and against young children, but that he himself has gained the power to resist him, and he narrates a vision he had seen of the Devil outside the gates

[279] See Caseau-Chevallier 2005, 93-5; Brakke 2006, 45-7.
[280] νέος Ιὼβ ἐνομίζετο εἶναι διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ἀλγηδόνα: George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 20 (p.17).
[281] Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver*, 28-9 (pp.380-1).
[282] This comparison is made in both the Syriac *Life of Symeon* (p.577) and in Antonius, *Life of Symeon*, 7 (p.26).
[283] *Life of Symeon,* 124-9 (pp.106-22).

of heaven. The hagiographer then recounts a conversation between the Devil and God: the Devil is ordered by God to attack children and good men, whereupon he retorts that he will start with Symeon. God refuses, saying that he protects Symeon; the Devil is angered, saying that it is easy for Symeon to be pious since God has always favoured him. He then asks him to let him excite disobedient men against Symeon and to turn his disciples into men-demons.[284] God gives him permission, 'so that his servant would appear the more approved through such a trial.'[285] The Holy Spirit reassures Symeon that God had not given Satan power against the stylite himself, but that he 'had only given permission to this, that he should struggle with him through the testing of his brothers.'[286] After this, we are told, Satan swoops down to Symeon's column and threatens him, telling him that he will make the people and his disciples cause him intolerable troubles. Symeon drives Satan away. While leaving, the Devil touches Symeon's beard and all the hairs fall out, but the saint prays to God, who makes the beard reappear.

At this point, the narrative becomes confused.[287] The hagiographer refers, very briefly, to disturbances caused by the Devil, recounting that he stirred up trouble among the brothers, hardened the hearts of the people who came to the monastery, and made the leaders of neighbouring towns angry with the saint, but that all this was to no avail, because pagans and barbarians and heretics all converted to God, and 'moreover, the people who had been hardened a little returned to their former certainty. Henceforth also the spirits of the brothers were calmed after the disorder which had happened among them, and the heads of the neighbouring villages, abandoning their inappropriate revolt, entered into a profound and

[284] See above p.185.
[285] πρὸς τὸ δοκιμώτερον διὰ τοῦ τοιούτου πειρασμοῦ φανῆναι τὸν αὐτοῦ θεράποντα: *Life of Symeon*, 124 (p.110).
[286] τοῦτο δὲ μόνον συνεχώρησεν, ὥστε παλαῖσαι αὐτὸν μετ' αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ πειρασμοῦ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ: ibid. 124 (p.110).
[287] Cf. Van den Ven 1962-70, II, 136 n.126.

loving peace with the saint as before.'[288] This would seem to be the fulfilment of Satan's pact with God, yet, at this point, after peace has apparently been restored, the hagiographer narrates, 'after this came the time of testings which the devil had sought and received from the Lord, to smite first the children and the best of men and to struggle with the slave of God in his brethren.'[289] The Devil spreads his wings over the north-eastern part of Antioch and causes great lamentation there among children and many men (this appears to be a euphemistic way of referring to the plague, given that later passages make it clear the discussion refers to an illness).[290] Suppliants from Antioch, and Symeon's mother Martha, beg him to protect Antioch; at dawn on Sunday Symeon prays to God and sees himself in a vision over the affected part of the city, 'and although he prayed for this place, he didn't obtain the power to pray for the entire city';[291] the hagiographer thus has to acknowlege limitations on the saint's capacities. The Devil then moved to the southern part of the city and caused further great grieving there. On the next Saturday (the intervening week is passed over swiftly) Martha again urges Symeon to pray for the bane/plague (πληγὴν) to be removed. On Sunday Symeon sees himself in the south-west of Antioch, from where the Devil is trying to attack the whole town. Symeon prevents him from doing this but the Devil retorts that he will target his monks instead. Soon the devil attempts to attack the monastery; Symeon resists, and the devil is ordered by God to leave, for the moment, and strike a different region.

[288] οἱ πρὸς μικρὸν σκληρυνθέντες λαοὶ πρὸς τὴν προτέραν αὖθις πληροφορίαν ἐπανήρχοντο. Ἐγαληνίουν δὲ λοιπὸν καὶ οἱ τῶν ἀδελφῶν λογισμοὶ ἐκ τῆς προγενομένης αὐτοῖς ταραχῆς, καὶ οἱ ἡγούμενοι δὲ τῶν κύκλῳ πόλεων παυσάμενοι τῆς ἀκαίρου κινήσεως εἰρήνην πολλὴν καὶ ἀγάπην εἶχον πρὸς τὸν ἅγιον καθὰ καὶ πρότερον: *Life of Symeon,* 125 (p.112).
[289] Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἤγγικεν ὁ καιρὸς τῶν πειρασμῶν οὓς ἐξῃτήσατο ὁ διάβολος παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ ἔλαβεν, ὥστε πατάξαι πρῶτον τὰ παιδία καὶ τοὺς καλοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ παλαῖσαι ἐν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μετὰ τοῦ δούλου τοῦ Θεοῦ: ibid. 126 (p.112).
[290] On the hagiographer's 'metaphorical' terminology for the plague, see Stathakopoulos 2004, 308.
[291] ἐπιτελέσας τὴν εὐχὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου οὐκ ἔλαβεν ἐξουσίαν δεηθῆναι ὑπὲρ πάσης τῆς πόλεως: *Life of Symeon,* 126 (p.113).

On Sunday, however, Symeon calls the brothers together and tells them that the trials are imminent, urging them to resist evil. The Devil tells Symeon that he will begin the plague 'through the one who always obeys me, Angoulas';[292] Symeon reports this to the brothers; Angoulas retorts rudely and immediately falls severely ill. After this, we are told, 'in the same way, almost simultaneously, the exterminator attacked all the brothers, and all were struck with the same mortal malady; some of the more negligent of them even died.'[293] Then one of the monks, Conon, 'whom the saint loved greatly as he was very zealous',[294] dies of the same illness; Symeon, distraught at this, calls upon God and the heavenly powers to resurrect him. When he is initially unsuccessful in his requests, he appears to grow angry with his heavenly intercessors (including Mary, John the Baptist, and the angels and archangels), asking if they have forgotten their love for him and saying that if Conon is not resurrected all his efforts have been in vain. The brothers present, and Martha, become terrified, seeing that 'the heaven was scowling.'[295] Symeon prays again, and finally the Lord appears to him (in a vision laden with apocalyptic overtones); he inquires into the situation and resurrects Conon.[296] The account ends with a statement that these troubles happened to the brothers because of their failure to obey Symeon properly, despite his efforts to encourage the weaker monks to act better.

The general tenor of the account is somewhat incoherent and contradictory, both on a structural and narratological level and on an interpretative one. In terms of the shape of the narrative, it is far from clear what the relationship is supposed to be between the two different sets of Satanic attacks which are described: the first being when Satan makes the monks, visitors, and neighbours of the saint hostile to him (which the hagiographer refers

[292] ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑπακούοντός μου ἀεὶ Ἀγγουλὰ: ibid. 128 (p.116).
[293] Ὡσαύτως δὲ ἐν μιᾷ σχεδὸν ὥρᾳ κατὰ πάντων τῶν ἀδελφῶν ὥρμησεν ὁ ὀλοθρεύων, καὶ πάντες τῷ ὁμοίῳ κατεσχέθησαν πάθει θανατηφόρῳ· ἐξ ὧν τινες τῶν ἀμελεστέρων καὶ ἐτελεύτησαν: ibid.
[294] ὃν πάνυ ἠγάπα ὁ ἅγιος ὡς πάνυ σπουδαῖον: ibid. 129 (p.116).
[295] τὸν οὐρανὸν στυγνάζοντα: ibid. 129 (p.118)
[296] On this important episode, see Déroche 2000, 153-4; Meier 2003, 416-7, and below p.263.

to very briefly, providing no explanation or detail of this hostility), and the second, recounted in much more detail, when he smites both Antioch and the monastery with plague. As narrated, the two episodes seem to follow on from each other chronologically, with little to no link between them. But the introductory part of this section, when Satan negotiates with God to gain power against Symeon, does not speak of him making two separate attacks on the saint, but of one. This introductory section undoubtedly refers to the plague, as it speaks of Satan being sent against children, who are later named as among the primary victims of the plague in Antioch.[297] Yet it also speaks of the Devil turning Symeon's monks into men-demons, which must be a reference to the outbreak of widespread hostility to the saint.[298] Two interpretations are possible. Either the hagiographer is conflating two separate episodes of trouble faced by Symeon, and tries to deal with them both through the typology of Job, or in fact the scepticism targeted at the saint and the outbreak of the plague are linked. By this latter reading, the brief reference at the end of chapter 125 to the outbreak of hostility to the saint and its swift conclusion might in fact anticipate and summarise the subsequent more extensive narrative about the spread of the illness itself; the outbreak of plague could have caused this widespread scepticism and criticism.

Still more fundamentally, the narrative also seems to be confused at an interpretative level. On the one hand, the hagiographer uses the typology of Job to explain the events. This is signalled quite explicitly, since Symeon reads the book of Job to his monks to prepare them for the crisis. When he recounts his vision of Satan to the monks, he states that it was 'just as the things read to you in the book of Job signified.'[299] The conversation described between Satan and God, in which the former gains the power to test Symeon through other men, is closely modelled on the opening passages of the book of Job, in which God gives

[297] ibid. 124, lines 59, 78-9 (pp.108-9); 126, lines 3, 9-10 (pp.112-3).
[298] ibid. 124 lines 106-7 (p.110).
[299] ὥσπερ τὰ ἐν τῷ Ἰὼβ προαναγνωσθέντα ὑμῖν ἐσήμανεν: ibid. 124 (p.108).

Satan the permission to test Job to prove that he is a truly pious servant of God, but denies him, initially, power to afflict Job himself.[300] The hagiographer somewhat adapts the story of Job, since in the Bible, when Satan's attacks on Job's animals, servants and children fail, he does then gain permission from God to afflict Job directly with sickness, although not with death.[301] This second stage of trials does not happen to Symeon; the hagiographer's focus is firmly on the sufferings of the brethren and the Antiochenes. At one level, this use of the story of Job is a very effective way of justifying the outbreak of plague at Symeon's monastery, as it suggests that far from being the fault of the saint or his monks, it is in fact a product of Symeon's great virtue: the Devil yearns to prove that the apparently perfect man can be shaken from piety by distress. The hostility of the brothers is presented as a product, not a cause, of the Devil's attacks: 'I will enter them and turn them into a species of men-demons.'[302] This explanatory schema could even explain why good monks, such as Conon, described above, could fall victim to the plague, since the illness was a byproduct of Satan's hostility to Symeon rather than the result of sinfulness.

Yet at the same time there is a decidedly different interpretative current running through the hagiographer's narrative: one that presents the troubles as the punishment for the monks' disobedience to the saint, and suggests that the plague served to reform and improve the monastery, in part by removing the most wicked of its monks. The news that Satan was about to strike the monastery is said to have induced a change of heart among the monks: 'and behold the monastery, weeping and repenting, was whitened and renewed.'[303] The idea of the regeneration of the sinful monastery emerges still more clearly through the hagiographer's use of a horticultural image: the saint, he reports, gathered the brethren

[300] Job 1.6-12.
[301] Job 2:1-6.
[302] See above p.185 n200.
[303] ἰδοὺ ἡ μονὴ κλαίουσα καὶ μετανοοῦσα καὶ ἐλευκαίνετο καὶ ἐνέαζεν: *Life of Symeon*, 107 (p.114).

before him 'like a very extended vine, waving with long branches in fruits of justice. And since the time had come to prune the vine, so that it would bear more fruits and so that they would become truly his disciples', he told them that the tests were imminent.[304] This image implies the monastery was being purged, violently, of damaging and disruptive elements. The pre-existence of sinfulness among the brethren is referred to explicitly when the plague actually strikes the monastery: not only does Satan first attack the wicked Angoulas but, as mentioned above, the hagiographer claims that some of the 'more negligent' brothers died from the illness. This is evidently a return to the concept of disease as punishment for sin, even though the hagiographer immediately goes on to describe the impressively zealous monk Conon falling ill with the same sickness. The clearest expression of this interpretative scheme comes in the final lines of the account: 'All this happened to the brothers because of their negligence and the contempt which they displayed for the commands of the just [Symeon], who exhorted those who were falling short not to be indifferent any longer, but rather to obey his words enthusiastically.'[305]

This explanatory approach is incompatible with the Job typology outlined above: in the one, the plague is the product of Satan's God-sanctioned testing of the virtuous Symeon and his monks; in the other, in contrast, it is created by the same monks' sinfulness. The hagiographer thus responds inconsistently and rather incoherently to what was, perhaps, the biggest challenge of Symeon's career. Constrained by events, he has to admit limitations on the saint's capacities—thus he notes that Symeon did not obtain the power to protect the entirety of Antioch from the plague—but tries to deploy various competing explanatory arguments to show, first and foremost, that the stylite himself could not be blamed for what

[304] αὐτοὺς ἔστησεν ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ ὡς ἄμπελον ἐκτεταμένην σφόδρα καὶ κομῶσαν τοῖς κλάδοις ἐν καρποῖς δικαιοσύνης. Καὶ ἐπειδὴ παρέστη ὁ καιρὸς τῆς καθαιρέσεως τῆς ἀμπέλου, ἵνα καρπὸν πλείονα ἐνέγκῃ καὶ ἀληθῶς γένωνται αὐτοῦ μαθηταί: ibid. 127 (p.115).
[305] Ταῦτα δὲ πάντα συνέβαινε τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς διὰ τὴν ὀλιγωρίαν αὐτῶν καὶ καταφρόνησιν ἣν ἐπεδείκνυντο περὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ δικαίου ὑποστηρίζοντος τοὺς ὑπολειφθέντας μηκέτι ἀμελεῖν, ἀλλὰ προθύμως ὑπακούειν τῶν λεγομένων ὑπ'αὐτοῦ: ibid. 129 (p.122).

had taken place. Indeed, the only common strand between his two interpretative systems is that, in both, the guilt is placed firmly elsewhere: in the Job-typology, on Satan and his envy of Symeon, and in the punishment-for-sins model, on the disobedience of the monks. For the hagiographer, needing to counteract the scepticism faced by the holy man in the light of these disasters, the pressure to absolve him of all blame was a much higher priority than forming an internally consistent interpretation of what had taken place.

Scapegoats: The Pagan Rich

Symeon's hagiographer thus uses a variety of biblical typologies and interpretative strategies in his attempts to explain why Antioch and its neighbouring regions faced disaster despite the supplications of the saint. But these defensive and exculpatory measures were not the only tactic employed by the hagiographer in the face of growing scepticism induced by crisis. He also seems—quite possibly following in the footsteps of the saint himself—to have adopted a more aggressive approach, employing strong, potentially divisive rhetoric to separate and condemn the impious in society whose behaviour had supposedly provoked most of the disasters. In particular, the frequent references to paganism (sometimes paired with other forms of heterodoxy such as astrology and Manicheism) in the *Life* are highly significant. Pagans appear in varying contexts, most commonly as suppliants at Symeon's shrine;[306] as secret pagans whom Symeon exposes;[307] and, as we have seen, as those who advanced alternative, non-Christian, explanations for the disasters.[308] Once paganism is explicitly blamed for crisis: thus when Symeon discovers that God is planning to let the Persians sack Antioch, and prays to ask him to change his mind, God retorts, 'Look, the shouting of its inhabitants has risen to me and the time is at hand of its retribution on account of the lawless acts which they do, setting up a table and libations and sacrifices to the

[306] ibid. 141 (pp.130-1), 143 (p.131), 188 (pp.166-7).
[307] ibid. 221 (pp.190-2), 223 (pp.193-4).
[308] ibid. 78 (pp.66-8), 157 (pp.138-9).

demons, using as a pretext the Fortune [Tyche] of the city and inciting me by these things. Because of this I will give them over to a witless race.'[309] The hagiographer here makes supposed idolaters in Antioch the scapegoats for the Persian invasion; their pagan activities, although apparently intended to protect the city, have irremediably angered God.

What, however, should we make of these references to paganism? Déroche argues that they do not show that paganism had survived well into the sixth century; instead 'pagan' in the *Life* means only a Christian who was superstitious, or sceptical about Symeon.[310] He may go too far in rejecting the idea of sixth-century Byzantine paganism: as discussed in Chapter 1, pagans are certainly referred to in a wide range of sources from this period,[311] and sometimes, as Peter Bell notes, in ways which suggest that 'their existence is taken completely for granted.'[312] Thus, while it is unlikely that we will ever be able to prove how common paganism really was at this time, there is no reason to dismiss out of hand the idea that Symeon and his hagiographer might have encountered 'real' pagans in and around sixth-century Antioch. Nonetheless, as has been seen, it is clear that references to 'pagans' could be used to fulfil a range of polemical and political purposes which were not necessarily related to the realities of pagan survivals. In particular, imperially-sponsored purges of 'pagans' seem to have targeted dissident or potentially dissident members of traditional elites, who had a strong cultural connection to the classical past and were thus vulnerable to such charges.

[309] 'Ἰδοὺ ἡ κραυγὴ τῶν κατοικούντων ἐν αὐτῇ ἀνέβη ἐνώπιόν μου καὶ καιρὸς ἀνταποδόσεως αὐτῆς ἐπέστη διὰ τὰς ἀνομίας ἃς πράττουσιν, τιθέντες τράπεζαν καὶ σπονδὰς καὶ θυσίαν τοῖς δαιμονίοις, προφάσει τύχης τῆς πόλεως καὶ παραζηλοῦντές με ἐπὶ τούτοις· διὰ τοῦτο παραδώσω αὐτοὺς ἔθνει ἀσυνέτῳ: ibid. 57 (p.50). The hagiographer invokes another biblical model here, recalling the words of God reported by Moses in his song: Deuteronomy 32:21.

[310] Déroche 1996, 76-8. His argument is reacting against Van den Ven's literal understanding of the references to pagans in the *Life*: see Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 163*.

[311] See above p.58.

[312] Bell 2013, 240.

Accusations of 'paganism' thus often had implications that were not only religious, but social and political. It is particularly important to bear in mind this social dimension of allegations of paganism when examining the *Life of Symeon,* for here too we find an association drawn between pagans and the wealthy. The *Life* is, in general, unusually hostile to the Antiochene upper classes. As noted above, it was not uncommon for hagiographers, particularly those writing in the fifth century, to include stories which portray their heroes as defenders of the poor from the cruel behaviour of the rich.[313] Most of these stories, however, are offset by others in which virtuous nobles who show their devotion to the holy man (often by giving him gifts and patronage) are treated by him with respect and often benefit from his miraculous powers.[314] Their purpose thus appears didactic: to encourage the wealthy to emulate the examples of the virtuous nobles, in order to receive the same rewards. Symeon's *Life* stands out, as it contains almost no episodes which depict the local secular elites in a positive light (although there are a small number of neutral/positive references to nobles in Constantinople).[315] Several stories describe scepticism about Symeon and his powers on the part of notables from Antioch and its surroundings, including an unnamed *magistrianos*,[316] the 'masters [*despotai*]' of a priest from the village of Basileia,[317] and Anastasius, a *scholastikos* and friend of two *illustres*, Asterius and Thomas Veredaronas.[318] Anastasius's association with secular elite culture is signified by the fact that Symeon's messenger finds him when he has just bathed and is sitting 'in one of the most renowned parts of the city by the winter bath';[319] he also subsequently dies by 'the

[313] See above p.140 n231.
[314] One exception is the fifth/early sixth-century *Life of Alexander Akoimetos* (cf. above p.140 n232).
[315] *Life of Symeon,* 151 (pp.135-6), 232 (pp.208-10).
[316] ibid. 144 (pp. 131-2).
[317] ibid. 231 (p.208).
[318] ibid. 224 (pp.194-6). Two *scholastikoi* (lawyers) do appear in the work who are presented positively—John and Evagrius. Both, however, were closely associated with the Church: John subsequently became Patriarch of Constantinople, while Evagrius worked for the patriarch Gregory. For Symeon's hagiographer, their allegiance to the church seems to exempt them from his general hostility to the local elites.
[319] ἔν τινι τῶν ἐπισήμων τόπων τῆς πόλεως ἐν τῇ λεγομένῃ Διφώτῳ πλησίον τοῦ χειμερινοῦ δημοσίου: ibid. 224 (p.195).

public colonnade'.[320] Babylas, a man from a village near Antioch, whom Symeon cures of baldness, is interrogated about his cure by 'many of the most important men of the city and those who, along with them, had formerly been mocking him with scorn.'[321]

Most strikingly, the *Life* suggests that many of the notables of Antioch were secret pagans. Symeon exposes the devil-worship of an individual noble: we are told that 'one of the notables of the aforementioned city of Antioch'[322] came to take communion during a celebration at the monastery but was rebuffed by Symeon, who eventually turned to him and exposed his hidden wickedness, accusing him of constantly blaspheming Christ and threatening him that a demon would hang him in the air until he confessed his sins. The notable, in terror, 'started recounting his lawless actions, his blasphemies towards God, the numerous sacrifices which he offered in secret to the demons, and other abominable things which we have believed it best to pass over in silence, to spare the ears of simple people.'[323] This crypto-pagan does not appear as an isolated example but as characteristic of a wider trend among the Antiochene nobility. This is made clear during the most explicitly political part of the *Life,* that conveying Symeon's support for the imperial agent Amantius. After 'some of the unbelievers', who wanted to insult Symeon 'because he had often shamed the wicked belief and error of those practising paganism among them,' tried to destroy an icon of him,[324] the saint asked God to send a man to expose the impious. Importantly, in this imprecation he links the idolatry of the sceptics to their wealth, calling them, 'they who have

[320] τὸν δημόσιον ἔμβολον: ibid. 224 (p.196).
[321] πολλοὶ τῶν πρώτων τῆς πόλεως καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτοῖς τὸ πρότερον ἐν ἐξουδενώσει διαγελῶντες αὐτόν: ibid. 197 (p.175).
[322] Ἀνήρ τις τῶν ἐπισήμων τῆς εἰρημένης Ἀντιοχέων πόλεως: ibid. 221 (p.190).
[323] Καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀφηγεῖτο τὰς ἀνόμους αὐτοῦ πράξεις καὶ τὰς εἰς Θεὸν βλασφημίας καὶ πολλὰς θυσίας ἃς κρυπτῶς ἐπετέλει τοῖς δαίμοσιν, καὶ ἕτερά τινα μυσαρά, ἅπερ σιωπῇ παραδραμεῖν καλὸν εἶναι νενομίκαμεν, φειδόμενοι τῆς τῶν ἁπλουστέρων ἀκοῆς: ibid. 221 (p.191).
[324] 'τινες τῶν ἀπίστων', 'ὡς πολλάκις ἐλέγξαντα τὴν κακοπιστίαν καὶ πλάνην τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἑλληνιζόντων': ibid. 158 (p.140).

not put their faith in you, but in the abundance of their riches, from whence their reason was destroyed in the practices of idolatry, because they considered gold like their God.'[325]

Symeon then related a vision to his monks: 'a fearful leader will come and refute the impieties and trivialities of the atheists.'[326] Within a few month this leader, Amantius, came to Antioch, employing such harsh tactics that 'even those with a blameless way of life feared his presence.'[327] Amantius, upon investigating Antioch, '*found most of the leading men of the city* and many of its inhabitants possessed by Hellenism and Manichaeism and astrology and automatism and other ill-omened heresies' [emphasis mine].[328] The *Life* continues to describe the diverse punishments, including, significantly, heavy fines, which Amantius inflicted on the heretics: 'their wealth was used up in numerous fines.'[329] The account is laced with strong religious symbolism: Symeon saw Amantius in a vision with the river Jordan following him, the paradise of God all around, and a wild beast paraded in procession, representing the discovery of the truth and the punishment and mockery of the idolaters;[330] he later saw, in a vision of the tribunal, stars emerging from the darkness of night.[331] The hagiographer thus portrays Amantius as an instrument of God's will, and the fulfilment of Symeon's prayer for the chastisement of the heretics.

Amantius, however, may have been a controversial figure, and was certainly associated with controversial policies. The chronicle of John Malalas contains the only other known contemporary reference to him, describing him, as governor of the east, punishing those

[325] μὴ ἠλπικότες ἐπὶ σοί, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῷ πλήθει τοῦ πλούτου αὐτῶν, ὅθεν καὶ διεφθάρη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν ἐν ἐπιτηδεύμασιν εἰδωλολατρείας, τὸν χρυσὸν θεὸν αὐτῶν ὑπάρχειν ἡγουμένων: ibid. 160 (p.142).
[326] φοβερὸς ἄρχων ἐλεύσεται καὶ τὰς ἀσεβείας καὶ φαυλοπραγίας τῶν ἀθέων διελέγξει: ibid. 160 (pp.141-143).
[327] καὶ τοὺς ἐν ἀμέμπτῳ πολιτείᾳ δεδιέναι τὴν παρουσίαν αὐτοῦ: ibid. 161 (p.143).
[328] ηὗρε τοὺς πλείους τῶν πρώτων τῆς πόλεως καὶ πολλοῦς τῶν κατοικούντων αὐτὴν ἑλληνισμῷ καὶ μανιχαϊσμῷ καὶ ἀστρολογίαις καὶ αὐτοματισμῷ καὶ ἄλλαις δυσωνύμοις αἱρέσεσι κατεχομένους: ibid. 161 (p.144).
[329] ὁ πλοῦτος αὐτῶν ἐν πολλαῖς ζημίαις κατηναλώθη: ibid.
[330] ibid. 160 (pp.142-143).
[331] ibid. 164 (pp.145-146).

involved in the Samaritan revolt of 555/6: 'he hanged some, beheaded others or cut off their right hands, and confiscated others' property. There was great fear in the city of Caesarea and the eastern regions.'[332] It is possible that his purge in Antioch, attested only in the *Life of Symeon,* may have followed on from his actions in Palestine.[333] As discussed above,[334] although Symeon's hagiographer claims that the sole target of the purge was heterodoxy, the reality may well have been more complex: the *Life* also refers to Symeon saving from execution a *δημότης* imprisoned by Amantius who had caused 'many disturbances during popular/factional [δημοτικαῖς] disorders'.[335] Whether this refers simply to popular unrest, or more specifically to conflict between the circus factions, it certainly suggests that the targets of the purge may have been guilty of social and political as much as religious crimes. In any case, the descriptions of Amantius's confiscations of property in Malalas, and of his imposition of fines in the *Life of Symeon,* recall hostile accounts of Justinian's purges by authors including Procopius and Evagrius Scholasticus, who claimed that the accusations of heterodoxy and misdemeanours were invented to enable the emperor to accumulate as much wealth as possible; thus for instance the latter wrote 'many, indeed innumerable, men of substantial property [Justinian] deprived of all their possessions, painting on excuses without excuse.'[336] All this suggests that persecutions like that described in Symeon's *Life* were highly controversial, and that by supporting one of their leaders, Amantius, Symeon's hagiographer was aligning himself with a particular political faction. Yet, as we have seen, he does not always favour Justinian, and indeed downplays his role in the appointment of Amantius.[337] He does not seem, therefore, to be straightforwardly promoting imperial

[332] John Malalas, 18.119 (p.417, trans. pp.294-5).
[333] See *PLRE* 3a, 'Amantius 2', pp.52-4.
[334] See above p.60.
[335] 'στάσεις…πολλὰς ἐν ταῖς δημοτικαῖς ταραχαῖς': *Life of Symeon,* 164 (p.146).
[336] Evagrius Scholasticus, 4.30 (p.179). For this theme in Procopius see e.g. *Secret History*, 6.20 (p.41), 8.9 (p.51), 8.31 (p.55), 11 (pp.70-77), 12.1-13 (pp.77-9), 13.2 (p.84), 13.4-8 (p.85), 13.22 (p.87), 19.1-12 (pp.120-2). On the possible social/political context for these complaints, see esp. Sarris 2006, esp. 200-27.
[337] See above pp.159-60.

propaganda; instead, he thought that supporting Amantius's persecutions lay in Symeon's best interests. Just as Justinian may have launched persecutions to deflect the idea that earthquakes and defeat in war were a punishment for a wicked emperor,[338] so too Symeon is shown supporting his efforts, as well as launching his own, smaller scale, persecutions by punishing sceptics,[339] to deflect attention from his own impotence to the impieties of others.

There is a strong social dynamic to this scapegoating in the *Life of Symeon.* As the above summary shows, the hagiographer emphasised that the wealthy elites of Antioch were disproportionately represented among the pagans detected by Amantius; he even claimed that it was the worship of gold that led to their idolatry. This may, in part, reflect reality; as noted above, purges elsewhere in the empire seem to have targeted the rich. Yet, given the other indications already discussed of the hagiographer's hostility towards the upper echelons of local society, it is almost certain that he consciously emphasised the guilt of the rich. Crucially, this does not seem to be an innovation by the hagiographer, but rather to reflect the saint's own rhetoric, since, as we have seen, Symeon himself in his sermons evinces considerable hostility towards the wealthy and draws a very similar connection to that found in the *Life* between riches and paganism.[340] Why, then, do Symeon and his hagiographer target the rich in this way? It is quite possible that, as mentioned above, the lifestyles of the Antiochene notables made them vulnerable to such attacks: continuities from pre-Christian culture in art, education, and lifestyle could easily be perceived and condemned as 'pagan'.[341] Some of Symeon's comments in his sermons certainly suggest that this was the case, as when he addresses a hypothetical rich man, telling him that his

[338] For the idea that Justinian's wickedness caused Rome's disasters, see Procopius, *Secret History,* 18.36-45 (pp.118-9). The troubles caused to Justinian's authority by disasters, and his attempts to rebut these, are a major theme throughout Meier 2003.
[339] *Life of Symeon,* 224-5 (pp.194-197).
[340] See above pp.126-42.
[341] See above p.52.

luxurious lifestyle made him like a pagan 'even if you are called a Christian.'[342] This is a strong statement, effectively narrowing the boundaries of Christianity to include only those who met the saint's very high standards. Such comments support Robin Lane Fox's argument that the holy man tended to function less as a 'mediator' than a 'commander', insisting on strict rules;[343] in Symeon's case his rhetoric became even more stark due to the serious problems facing him.

Chiara Cremonesi has argued that the hagiographer's claims that in his youth Symeon refused to drink from his mother's left breast, or even her right when she had been eating sacrifical meat, was part of a broader rhetoric of separation, asserting an unbreachable divide between pagan and Christian in order to unite Christians together in a time of difficulty.[344] Her argument about the imagery of the rejected breast is powerful, but it seems likely that the rhetoric was intended not to unite all Christians, but to condemn and ostracise Symeon's critics, and thereby defend the saint himself. In the face of adversity, the stylite adopted an aggressive and divisive strategy that attempted to impose strict binary definitions on an Antiochene society which was in practice more culturally, religiously, and socially fluid. The saint and his defenders may also have exploited pre-existing social friction. As discussed in Chapter 1, Antioch in this period shared with many other cities in the ancient world the potential for conflict between its wealthy and poorer classes, conflict which was sometimes submerged but often came to the fore in times of crisis.[345] By playing on such tensions by trying to isolate and condemn Antioch's wealthy elite as unbelievers who were responsible at least in part for the disasters which were afflicting the city, the stylite's supporters could hope to unite the rest of society behind the saint, to shore up his support,

[342] εἰ γὰρ καὶ χριστιανὸς εἶ λεγόμενος: Sermon 8.10 (p.35).
[343] Lane Fox 1997, 213.
[344] Cremonesi 2008, 255-264.
[345] See above pp.43-51.

and to deflect attention from the failings of his own intercessory powers. They used a harsh, black and white rhetoric, to scapegoat certain 'heterodox' elements in society for disasters that affected almost everybody. In a sense, they seem to have been playing out in microcosm in Antioch what Justinian was enacting throughout the empire, without necessarily being conscious or approving of the wider imperial programme. Far from acting to unify society, therefore, the saint appears as a divisive and politicised figure, fighting for his reputation in a climate of uncertainty.

Conclusion

The *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger* shows the importance of situating hagiography in a precise historical context. It is a complex text, containing unexpected silences and unusual interpretations, which can only be understood against the background of sixth-century Antiochene history and society. In particular, the invasion, earthquakes, and outbreaks of plague experienced by the city and its neighbourhood necessitated a response from the saint's supporters. The disasters damaged Symeon's claims to be able to mediate between man and God, provoked increased scepticism and hostility towards the saint, and thereby drove his hagiographer, perhaps following in the stylite's own footsteps, into aggressive and potentially divisive rhetoric and politics. The author of the *Life*, torn between presenting Symeon as direct vessel of God's will, and as bold and powerful defender of his suppliants, is forced into conflicting and sometimes uncomfortable explanations of events. One more feature of the text, which has been noted but thus far not discussed, may also serve an apologetic purpose: its unusual length and the vast quantity of miracle stories related. Miracle stories could serve an apologetic function: thus Robert Doran has argued that the non-chronological version of the Syriac *Life of Symeon Stylites the Elder* preserved in a manuscript at the Vatican was structured, purposefully, so that the vast majority of the miracles are related before the hagiographer deals directly with the controversial question

of Symeon's ascent onto a column.[346] This structure, Doran suggests, is intended to ensure that the reader has accepted Symeon's holiness before he is confronted with his novel form of asceticism: 'the very order of the account is thus perhaps also an apology for stylitism.'[347] The *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger* is not structured in this way, but its accumulation of miracle stories may serve a similar function. By embedding his accounts of the most controversial events of the stylite's career within extremely lengthy records of his miracles, the hagiographer almost overwhelms the reader with proofs of his saint's sanctity: the stories of his failures, however dramatic, are vastly outnumbered. The *Life of Symeon the Younger* contains perhaps more miracles than any other late antique saint's life; this may be because its hero had to contend with more challenges than almost any other major saint. Unfortunately, we do not have the sources to assess the efficacy of the hagiographer's approach to dealing with these challenges. There is, however, an important text, probably dating from fairly shortly after the *Life of Symeon,* which does give some insight into how the saint's cult continued to evolve: the *Life of Martha.*

[346] Doran 1984.
[347] ibid. 47.

The Life of Martha: Liturgy and Paradigmatic Piety

At some point after the death of Symeon the Younger, a new saint was created for his shrine, although one whose connection to the stylite could hardly have been stronger: his mother, Martha.[1] The record of her veneration is preserved in her hagiographic *Life*, which has been almost totally neglected in modern scholarship. This work, edited but not translated by Van den Ven towards the end of his edition and translation of the *Life of Symeon*, was seemingly also written by one of the monks of Symeon's monastery.[2] Van den Ven expressed a negative (and doubtless accurate) view of the work's historical reliability, commenting, 's'il existe des faits réels au fond de ce roman historique, de caractère très artificiel, il est impossible de les découvrir.'[3] Nonetheless, as evidence for the development of a cult, as a literary composition containing a distinctive vision of piety, and as the Life of a holy woman who was neither a martyr nor a nun, the text possesses considerable historical interest.

Unfortunately, there is no secure evidence to provide a precise dating for the *Life*. Van den Ven has shown that, although it contains some strange inconsistencies in chronology when compared to the *Life of Symeon*,[4] its author undoubtedly knew of the latter work (probably, as suggested above, dating from the late sixth or early seventh century). The earliest manuscript containing the whole *Life of Martha* dates from the tenth/eleventh century, but there is a late ninth-century manuscript containing a part of the text,[5] leaving a window of approximately two and a half centuries in which the work could have been produced. Van den Ven has argued that it most probably dates from the seventh century, and is not much

[1] A version of this chapter has been published in the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*: Parker 2016.
[2] Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 78*.
[3] ibid. 92*.
[4] ibid. 89*-90*.
[5] ibid. 67*-78*. The *Life of Martha* has survived in four manuscripts, all of which transmit almost identical versions of the text. All four also contain the *Life of Symeon* (which also survives in several manuscripts that do not contain Martha's *Life*). For detailed description of the manuscripts, see ibid. 12*-19*.

later than the *Life* of the stylite himself, since its style and language are very similar to that of the longer *Life*, as is its picture of the community on the 'Wonderful Mountain'*;* he notes too that its author understands the meaning of obscure phrases such as 'καμασίνη μηλωτή' (the covering which sheltered Symeon on his column) which were misunderstood by later adapters of Symeon's *Life*.[6] There are no obvious anachronisms suggestive of a later date; for example, there is a reference in the *Life* to a visitor taking from Symeon's monastery 'the tokens of his image formed from the earth'[7]—archaeological evidence suggests that the shrine on the 'Wonderful Mountain' produced such clay tokens in the sixth and seventh centuries, but lead tokens in the Middle Byzantine period.[8] The *Life* also refers to opponents of Symeon in his lifetime and appears keen to avert criticism of his decision to build an oratory for himself and Martha, which seems most likely to have been a contentious issue relatively close to his life.[9] It thus appears probable that the *Life* dates from the seventh century; certainly, as we will see, many of its themes resonate with other works of that period.

The *Life of Martha* is very unusual both in subject matter and in structure. Although several late antique saints' Lives feature the holy men's mothers as pious auxiliary characters,[10] the *Life of Martha* is, to my knowledge, unique in taking as its central figure the mother of a famous holy man. A comparison of Martha's roles in the *Life of Symeon* and in her own biography demonstrates the difference between these approaches. In the former, the stylite's mother features as an important, yet occasional, character.[11] She is most active at the start of the *Life*, which describes her (reluctant) marriage to Symeon's father John, her success

[6] ibid. 78*.
[7] Τὰς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἐκτετυπωμένας ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνος αὐτοῦ σφραγῖδας: *Life of Martha,* 54 (p.298).
[8] Lafontaine-Dosogne 1967, 146-7; Vikan 1984, 73-4.
[9] See below pp.225-6.
[10] See, for example, Antonius, *Life of Symeon,* 14 (pp.36-8); *Life of Alypius,* 2-3 (pp.148-9), 6 (pp.151-2), 15-6 (pp.159-61), 19 (pp.162-3). For an argument that Alypius's hagiographer drew upon the story of Martha and Symeon, see Lane Fox, 1997, 184-5.
[11] See Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 87*.

in converting John to a more pious way of life, her vision of John the Baptist proclaiming her imminent conception of a holy son, and her nurturing of Symeon until, at the age of six, he was led by a white-robed man to the monastic community in which he spent the rest of his life.[12] After this, her appearances in the *Life* are far less frequent, but nonetheless hint at her importance: both John, the head of the monastery joined by Symeon, and Ephraim, patriarch of Antioch, supposedly mentioned Martha on their deathbeds,[13] while she is involved in some of the most dramatic episodes in the saint's adult life, including his response to a devastating earthquake,[14] the procession celebrating his elevation to the column in the centre of the new church complex on the 'Wonderful Mountain,'[15] and his resurrection of his disciple Conon after his death from the plague.[16] In these episodes, however, she plays only a supporting role, and her own life is paid little attention; we only learn of her death by chance, as a service held in her memory is the setting for one of Symeon's miracles.[17] Although she sometimes intercedes with Symeon,[18] she never intercedes directly with God, and there is no suggestion that she can perform miracles.

The picture is very different in the *Life of Martha*. Here, Martha is presented as a miracle-worker and intercessor with God in her own right, particularly after her death. Indeed, the *Life of Martha* is something of a misnomer, since the saint's death and posthumous activities are accorded considerably more attention than is her life.[19] The structure of the work is unusual and worth outlining briefly. The first ten chapters consist of an overview of Martha's pious *politeia*, with very little specific information about her life. Then, over 20

[12] Martha is most active in *Life of Symeon* 1-8 (pp.2-9); Symeon is led away in ibid. 10 (pp.10-11); for his age see ibid. 12 (p.11).
[13] ibid. 26 (p.35), 71 (p.61).
[14] ibid. 105-7 (pp.85-8).
[15] ibid. 113 (p.93).
[16] ibid. 129 (p.118).
[17] ibid. 221 (p.190).
[18] See e.g. ibid. 101 (p.79), 127 (p.127).
[19] See Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 71*.

chapters (11-33) are devoted to an extended account of her death, from a series of premonitory visions until her initial burial in Daphne and subsequent reburial on the 'Wonderful Mountain.' The next ten chapters (34-44) recount her posthumous healing miracles, and are followed by six chapters (45-51) relating to the building of a new oratory, and the translation of Martha's body to this shrine. The final lengthy section (52-70), perhaps the most isolated part of the *Life*, consists of a series of visions, miracles, and letter exchanges relating to Symeon's acquisition of a relic of the True Cross from Jerusalem for his monastery; Martha is noticeably less present in this part of the text. The *Life* finishes with the report of two more healing miracles and a conventional conclusion, stressing her continued performance of miracles and intercession with Christ (71-73). The work does not have the clear narrative arch of a typical holy biography, and it seems possible that it was not originally conceived as a whole; in particular, the awkwardly phrased transition into the section describing Symeon's acquisition of a relic of the True Cross, as well as the different tone of this section from the rest of the *Life*, suggests that it may have been added after the original account of Martha's life and miracles.[20] On the other hand, as we will see, certain themes do run throughout the entire work.

In order to understand better the structure and contents of the *Life*, we need to consider its hagiographer's aims and ideals. At their most basic level, most saints' Lives were concerned with cult promotion, and the *Life of Martha* is no different. Yet, given that this ambition underlay most hagiography, it cannot explain the distinctive features of Martha's *Life.* The unusual structure of the work—in particular, the combination of a short, generic biographical section with an extended death scene and a selection of posthumous miracles—and the choice of a non-monastic protagonist require further examination. A comparison with other Lives of holy women only serves to highlight the originality of Martha's

[20] *Life of Martha,* 51 (pp.295-6).

portrayal. Gender does not seem to provide the key to interpreting the *Life*; rather, the fundamental theme connecting all parts of the text is liturgy and the sacraments. Although the work shares some similarities with the *Life of Symeon the Younger,* its author displays a very different set of priorities and interests, which may reflect a wider shift in ways of responding to the challenges facing saints' cults in the seventh century.

Cult Promotion and Apologetic

Martha's hagiographer shares the common goal of most hagiographers: cult promotion. The decision to promote Martha as a miracle-working saint in her own right seems to have been made consciously at some time after the death of her son: there is no suggestion in the *Life of Symeon* that his mother was herself worthy of reverence. While later medieval pilgrim-tokens from Symeon's shrine depict Martha (and the saint's most famous disciple, Conon) as well as Symeon, the earliest tokens feature Symeon alone.[21] The *Life of Symeon* does, however, show that Symeon did perform memorial services for his mother at the shrine: he unveils the impiety of a notable Antiochene who visited the monastery 'while the holy service was being performed in memory of his holy and blessed mother Martha'.[22] It is tempting to suggest that the *Life of Martha* represents at one level an attempt to justify the continued performance of these services, as well as to promote them to a wider audience; as we will see below, the memorial services for her death play a crucial role in the text, particularly as a setting for her miracles. By showing Martha to be a powerful holy woman in her own right, and by associating her miracles with the rituals of her shrine, the *Life*

[21] Lafontaine-Dosogne 1967, 143-58, 68-81. There are signs, however, that Martha was sometimes represented before the medieval period, since a mould for pilgrim tokens which may date to the seventh or eighth century has been found which does depict Martha and Conon (Lafontaine-Dosogne 1967, 148).
[22] ἐπιτελουμένης τῆς ἁγίας συνάξεως ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ τῆς ἁγίας αὐτοῦ μητρὸς καὶ μακαρίας Μάρθας: *Life of Symeon,* 221 (p.190).

encourages participation in her cult by offering the possibility of wonderworking: twice in the text the author explicitly states that miracles are still occurring at her tomb.[23]

Yet her hagiographer may also have had a more defensive, apologetic, goal. There are various hints in the *Life* that Martha's cult was a sensitive topic—possibly, though this is never stated explicitly, due to accusations that Symeon's encouragement of her cult was self-promoting—and the performance of services in her honour might need justification for this reason. In one episode, we are told that Symeon refrained from ordering his disciples to attend to the lamp on Martha's coffin, out of fear that it would be thought that she was only revered because of his commands:

> For when the saint saw the brothers despising and not lighting the candle on her honourable coffin, he did not command them to do this. This [he did], on the one hand, so that it would not be thought by unbelieving people and those having weaker power of reasoning that he himself was requiring and demanding the rites performed for her honour. But this [he did] also as a way of educating his brothers and wishing them to be taught through experience to offer the honours due to the saints willingly and not under compulsion.[24]

This seems to imply that Symeon (or the hagiographer) was concerned that some people might think that he was forcing the promotion of her cult, perhaps for self-aggrandising reasons. Similar fears are recounted in relation to Symeon's building of a new oratory for Martha's body. The *Life* claims that even after Martha had appeared to Symeon and the other brothers demanding the construction of a new oratory,

> The saint, despite having such an intention on the basis of revelation, held himself back cautiously at that time, and was not willing to embark on such a work**,** *both so that certain of the more simple and unbelieving should not be put to the test, inventing vain thoughts in themselves and speaking impiety against the just man,*

[23] *Life of Martha,* 51 (p.295), 73 (p.314).

[24] ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἑώρα τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὁ ἅγιος καταφρονοῦντας καὶ μὴ ἅπτοντας τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς τιμίας αὐτῆς λάρνακος κανδήλαν, οὐκ ἐπέθετο αὐτοῖς τοῦτο ποιεῖν · τοῦτο μέν, ὡς ἂν μὴ νομισθείη ὑπὸ τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ ἀσθενεστέρους ἐχόντων λογισμοὺς αὐτὸς ἐπιτηδεύειν καὶ ἀπαιτεῖν τὰ πρὸς τιμὴν αὐτῆς · τοῦτο δὲ, καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς παιδεύων καὶ διὰ τῆς πείρας διδαχθῆναι βουλόμενος ἑκουσίως καὶ οὐκ ἀναγκαστῶς προσαγαγεῖν τὰς ὀφειλομένας τιμὰς τοῖς ἁγιοις: ibid. 39 (p.282).

> and also planning to prepare one house for himself and her, so that they would remain undivided in it, which in fact happened after some time. [emphasis mine]. [25]

This reference to potential critics (denigrated as 'simple and unbelieving') of the saint's decision to build the shrine seems to reflect, again, fears that Symeon would be accused of self-aggrandisement by promoting his mother's cult. The whole extended sequence of visions and signs preceding the construction of the shrine should therefore be seen as an attempt to justify the decision to build the shrine, whether or not this in fact took place in the precise context described in the work.

Yet while the *Life* contains this specific apologetic related to Martha's veneration, it does not continue most of the apologetic and polemical lines of the *Life of Symeon*, discussed above. It is true that Martha's hagiographer does present a further attack on Angoulas, the bête-noire of the author of the earlier text: he claims that Angoulas attempted to impede the proper building of Martha's oratory, by persuading one of the builders to begin construction according to his own plans, rather than to those revealed by the deceased Martha to Symeon.[26] Unfortunately, it is difficult to be sure whether the author of the *Life of Martha* has additional information about Angoulas, or was one of his monastic opponents (which would suggest an early date for the *Life*), or whether he had just heard the name in the *Life of Symeon* or from oral traditions at the monastery and thus mentioned this well-known opponent of the saint to lend his account veracity, and to show that efforts to thwart the building of the oratory were in vain.

Apart from this negative depiction of Angoulas, Martha's hagiographer seems to steer clear of most of the polemic and apologetic embedded in the *Life of Symeon.* He makes only an

[25] ὁ ἅγιος καίτοι πρόθεσιν ἐξ ἀποκαλύψεως ἔχων τοιαύτην ἐπεῖχεν ἑαυτὸν οἰκονομικῶς τὸ τηνικαῦτα καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησεν ἀπάρξασθαι τοῦ τοιούτου ἔργου, *τοῦτο μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ πειρασθῆναί τινας τῶν ἁπλουστέρων καὶ ἀπίστων ματαίους ἀναπλάττοντας ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λογισμοὺς καὶ καταλαλοῦντας κατὰ τοῦ δικαίου ἀνομίαν,* τοῦτο δὲ καὶ βουλευόμενος ἕνα οἶκον ἐπιτηδεῦσαι ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ αὐτῇ, ὥστε αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἀχωρίστους ἀλλήλων εἶναι, ὅπερ καὶ γέγονε μετὰ τινας χρόνους: ibid. 46 (p.288).
[26] ibid. 50 (pp.293-5).

allusive reference to the scepticism and criticism of the saint which is such a dominant theme in the earlier text: Martha, in her final speech to her son before her death, urges him, 'Don't let abuse grieve you, child, I implore. Don't be vexed at the disbelief of some people, but pray for everyone to the son of God, he who on account of his immeasurable philanthropy attained to such humility that he said about those who crucified him, "Forgive them, father, for they knew not what they were doing."'[27] This might seem too generic to relate to particular criticism, but a subsequent exhortation does seem to link it to the saint's opponents in Antioch: 'Always remember in your requests to God the whole world; and also pray for your city in which you were born and its inhabitants….provide pardon to the wicked hearted, because of those who are Christ-lovers in it [i.e., presumably, Antioch].'[28] The hagiographer thus alludes to opposition to the saint in Antioch, in a fairly conciliatory fashion, but does not make it a dominant theme of the work.

Similarly, the disasters that preoccupy the earlier hagiographer play a comparatively limited role in Martha's *Life.* An outbreak of the plague does occupy several chapters of the text: before Martha's death, she foresees some of the inhabitants of Daphne seeking Symeon's help against the plague,[29] while after her death, both she and Symeon are said to have cured many inhabitants of local villages.[30] The severity of the plague is again stressed: 'for there was great mortality of men in that time.'[31] Yet no elaborate theological justifications for this outbreak are developed comparable to those in the *Life of Symeon.* Still more strikingly, neither the Persian invasion of Antioch nor the severe earthquakes in northern Syria, which

[27] Μή σε λυπείτωσαν, τέκνον, λοιδορίαι, παρακαλῶ· μηδὲ ἀγανάκτει ἐπὶ ἀπιστίᾳ τινῶν, ἀλλὰ πάντων ὑπερεύχου τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸν διὰ τὴν ἄμετρον αὐτοῦ φιλανθρωπίαν εἰς τοιαύτην ἐλάσαντα ταπείνωσιν καὶ λέγοντα περὶ τῶν σταυρωσάντων αὐτόν· "Πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἴδασι τί ποιοῦσιν: ibid. 21 (p.268).
[28] Μνείαν ἀεὶ ποιοῦ ἐν ταῖς πρὸς Θεόν σου δεήσεσι τοῦ κόσμου παντός· ὑπερεύχου δὲ καὶ τῆς πόλεώς σου ἐν ᾗ ἐγεννήθης καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ…τοὺς σκληροκαρδίους συγγνώμην πάρεχε διὰ τοὺς ὄντας ἐπ' αὐτῇ φιλοχρίστους: ibid. 22 (p.269).
[29] ibid. 16 (p.265).
[30] ibid. 34-5 (pp.279-80), 37 (p.281).
[31] ἦν γὰρ τῷ χρόνῳ ἐκείνῳ θνήσις ἀνθρώπων μεγάλη: ibid. 34 (p.279).

occupy such a prominent place in the *Life of Symeon,* are mentioned at all by Martha's hagiographer. What is more, the work contains none of the references to paganism or other forms of heterodoxy that are so prevalent in the *Life* of the stylite. Martha's hagiographer thus adopts a very different approach towards the challenges of Symeon's career from that of the stylite's own biography: eschewing polemic, he refers to some of the tensions allusively, and veils others in complete silence. This does not mean, however, that his work was unaffected by these problems: as will be argued, the form and focus of the *Life* may reflect broader developments in hagiography in the seventh century, which were caused in part by the crisis facing traditional holy men in this period.

Before this argument can be made, however, the unusual structure and subject of the *Life of Martha,* and its author's aims, must be explored in more depth. As we have seen, its author seems to have had particular apologetic goals relating to the promotion of Martha's cult: he was concerned to refute the idea that Symeon himself was driving her veneration. Yet this concern, and broader issues relating to cult promotion, cannot explain the peculiar features of the *Life;* traditional saints' Lives, after all, shared similar propagandistic aims. We must, instead, examine the unusual features of Martha's persona and her hagiography, beginning with what is perhaps an obvious point: her gender.

Holy Women

One possible explanation for the distinctiveness of the *Life of Martha* might lie in its hero's gender: do holy women perform different roles, and inspire different narratives, from holy men?[32] Yet when we compare the depiction of Martha in her *Life* to early hagiographic portrayals of holy women, we find that our text has no obvious precedents. Three dominant 'models' of female holiness have been identified within late antique hagiography, none of

[32] As argued by Constantinou 2004, 411-23, and Constantinou 2005.

which are applicable to Martha: the 'harlot-saint', the 'patrician philanthropist', and 'the cloistered nun.'[33] This concept of three 'models' for female holiness may be too schematic, failing to appreciate the diversity of late antique hagiography.[34] Nonetheless, there are characteristics of many biographies of holy women which are noticeably absent from Martha's *Life*, including, most strikingly, an emphasis on the body, celibacy and asceticism.[35] Apart from a solitary comment that Martha often fasted, especially on Wednesdays and Fridays,[36] the author of Martha's *Life* makes no reference to Martha mortifying her body or shunning fine clothes and jewellery, despite these being dominant themes in much hagiography relating to women;[37] nor does he attempt to excuse her for not maintaining her virginity by stressing either her reluctance to marry or her later adoption of a celibate lifestyle.[38] It has been argued that the Lives of women provided more powerfully than the biographies of holy men the hope of redemption for all humankind, since if a woman, a descendant of Eve, could overcome her inherently sinful body and become holy then so could anyone.[39] The *Life of Martha*, however, does not fit into this pattern, given its lack of interest in its subject's body and sexuality. It is also, unusually, uninterested in Martha's family life: while her son Symeon features frequently, there is no mention of any of her other blood relations and only one passing reference to her husband John (who died

[33] Coon 1997, xxii; compare also Talbot 1998, 2.
[34] Constantinou has identified a wider range of 'roles' performed by female saints in hagiography; she focuses on six which she regards as particularly common, 'the martyr, the penitent, the cross-dresser, the nun, the abbess and the pious wife,' but states that several others existed, including 'the virgin', 'the defender of images', and the 'mother of a saint' (Constantinou 2005, 17-18). Yet given that, as she acknowledges, there are only one or two examples of these last three categories—the *Life of Martha* is the only example she finds of the 'mother of a saint'—I would question whether the term 'role,' in this schematic sense, is useful here.
[35] For the prominent role of the body and associated themes in female hagiography, see above all Constantinou 2005*:* she argues that 'holy women achieve sanctity almost exclusively through their bodies' (16) (although I cannot agree that this applies to the mothers of saints; Martha's hagiographer is uninterested in the bodily implications of motherhood, as in other aspects of Martha's body).
[36] *Life of Martha,* 2 (p.254).
[37] See Coon 1997, 31-41.
[38] The *Life of Symeon* takes a more conventional approach, claiming that Martha was very reluctant to marry but eventually yielded to marriage because of the need to obey her parents' wishes and because of divine instruction: *Life of Symeon,* 1 (p.3).
[39] Harvey 1990, 45-6; Coon 1997, xvii, 77, 94.

in Symeon's youth, according to the *Life of Symeon*);[40] shortly before her death she urges Symeon, 'bring relief also to John, your father in the flesh.'[41]

This is not to suggest, however, that the *Life of Martha* has nothing in common with other Lives of holy women. Martha's hagiographer draws on certain biblical models of women which were popular in late antique hagiography, in particular the humble, serving and ministering woman exemplified by Martha, sister of Lazarus, in the Gospel of Luke.[42] Ministration is a prominent theme in Martha's Life: she is depicted, for example, providing garments for the children of the poor at baptism, helping the sick and supplying food and clothing for the poor, provisioning the funerals of dying strangers, tending to demoniacs, and taking care of the pilgrims and brothers at her son's monastery.[43] Sometimes her ministrations are described in explicitly biblical terms: thus it is reported that 'she admired the priests, honouring them in many ways according to what is written. For, like Martha before the Lord, she was busied with much service of care to them and offering olive oil with Mary she poured it on their feet, continuously doing this and in everything refreshing them.'[44] She is also stated to have obeyed Christ's injunction to be humble, like 'Mary Magdalen and Salome, Susanna and Joanna, and the other Mary and the remaining female disciples.'[45] Her humility is stressed throughout: in the prologue to the work, we are told that Martha had gained three pearls (faith, hope and love), 'which, wishing to reveal them to God alone, she took trouble to conceal from men, shunning vainglorious thoughts, so that

[40] *Life of Symeon*, 7 (p.8).
[41] Ἀνάπαυε δὲ καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν σαρκικὸν πατέρα σου: *Life of Martha*, 22 (p.269).
[42] See Coon 1997, 41-4. For depictions of the biblical Martha in the early Church more generally, see Ernst 2009.
[43] *Life of Martha*, 4-5 (pp.256-7), 7-8 (pp.258-9).
[44] Τοὺς δὲ ἱερεῖς ἐθαύμαζεν, κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον τιμῶσα τούτους πολυτρόπως· καὶ γάρ, ὡς Μάρθα ἐπὶ τοῦ Κυρίου, περὶ πολλὴν διακονίαν τῆς εἰς ἐκείνους θεραπείας περιεσπᾶτο καὶ ἔλαιον μετὰ Μαρίας προσφέρουσα ἐξέχεεν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτῶν, συνεχῶς τοῦτο ποιοῦσα καὶ διὰ πάντων αὐτοὺς ἀναψύχουσα: ibid. 7 (p.258).
[45] Ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία καὶ Σαλώμη, Σουσάννα τε καὶ Ἰωάννα καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ μαθήτριαι: ibid. 10 (pp.260-1).

no-one knew any of the deeds of her industry and philosophy.'[46] Her *Life* thus utilizes elements of the conventional portrayal of female holiness without itself being entirely conventional, strongly emphasizing Martha's devoted care for the religious and for the poor at the expense of discussing her asceticism and chastity. This stress on her ministration, and in particular her ministration to the priests and monks of Symeon's monastery, is at the heart of the text, as we shall see.

The most famous holy woman—and indeed holy mother—was, of course, the Virgin Mary. In the *Life of Symeon,* Martha is on occasion assimilated to Mary: John the Baptist proclaims to her in a vision before Symeon's conception, 'you will bear a son and you will call his name Symeon,'[47] clearly recalling Gabriel's pronouncement to Mary in Luke 1.31, 'you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will call his name Jesus.' The *Life* also claims that she gave birth to Symeon 'without any pains at all being inflicted upon her';[48] a painless birth was again associated with Mary's delivery of Christ.[49] Yet it is probable that Martha is only linked to Mary in this scene in order to highlight Symeon's identification with Christ, one of the main themes of the work as of much hagiography.[50] In other places she is depicted as less virtuous in order to highlight her son's piety;[51] her presentation in Symeon's *Life* is therefore chameleonic, changing in order to fit the hagiographer's immediate needs.

The situation is still more complex in the *Life of Martha.* Martha seems to have a connection to the Virgin: one of Symeon's monks, before her death, had a vision of her standing before

[46] Ἂς Θεῷ μόνῳ φανεροῦσθαι βουλομένη ἔσπευδε λανθάνειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, φεύγουσα τὸν κενόδοξον λογισμόν, ὥστε μηδένα γινώσκειν τί τῶν τῆς φιλοπονίας καὶ φιλοσοφίας αὐτῆς ἔργων: ibid. 1 (p.254).
[47] Συλλήψῃ υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Συμεών: *Life of Symeon,* 3 (p.5).
[48] Οὐ πάνυ τῶν ἀλγηδόνων αὐτῇ ἐπιτιθεμένων: ibid. 3 (p.6).
[49] Van den Ven 1962-70, II, 9n5.
[50] For the holy man as image of Christ, see e.g. Drijvers 1981, 27-8.
[51] See e.g. *Life of Symeon,* 6 (p.7), in which Symeon refuses his mother's milk when she had partaken of *κρεῶν θύτου,* and 4 (pp.6-7), in which she ignored John the Baptist's injunction not to give Symeon her left breast to feed from and it consequently shrivelled up.

Mary,[52] while she herself had a vision of heaven in which Mary was her guide.[53] Yet she is not only associated with Mary; she also has a close relationship with John the Baptist,[54] and on occasion seems to be envisioned in Christomimetic terms; in his vision, mentioned above, of Martha before Mary the monk reported that 'the great mistress [Martha] held out her hands in the form of a cross, and she became wholly metamorphosed like a cross from gold and silver and flashed rays of light like the sun, and only her face was recognizable above the cross,'[55] a transformation which recalls both Christ's Transfiguration and his crucifixion. There is thus no simple connection drawn between Martha and Mary as holy mothers of even more holy sons; Martha is linked to a variety of important biblical figures, both female and male.

This last point, that Martha was associated with men and women, is significant, as it is notable that there is no sign that she was promoted as a saint particularly for women.[56] None of the specified beneficiaries of her miracles in the text are female:[57] they are either monks of Symeon's monastery,[58] local villagers,[59] or foreign visitors,[60] all male.[61] It is also noteworthy that, in contrast to some saints' Lives and miracle collections which focus on

[52] *Life of Martha,* 12 (pp.262-3).
[53] ibid. 17-18 (pp.265-7).
[54] ibid. 2 (p.254), 8 (p.259), 26 (p.272). This connection between Martha and the Baptist is also made in the *Life of Symeon,* 1-3 (pp.3-6).
[55] Ἐξέτεινε τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῆς ἡ κυρία ἡ μεγάλη ἐν σχήματι σταυροῦ, καὶ ἐγένετο ὅλη ὡσεὶ σταυρὸς ἐκ χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργυροῦ μεταμορφουμένη καὶ ἀπαστράπτουσα ἀκτῖνας φωτὸς ὡς ὁ ἥλιος· μόνον δὲ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς ὑπεράνω τοῦ σταυροῦ ἐγνωρίζετο: *Life of Martha,* 12 (pp.262-3).
[56] Claudia Rapp has argued that hagiography relating to female saints was read by both genders: Rapp 1996, 321-5 and passim.
[57] Although some of her miracles are performed for groups which may include women, including the villagers of Charandamas (*Life of Martha,* 35 [p.279]) and Gandigorōn (ibid. 37 [p.281]).
[58] E.g. ibid. 39 (pp.282-3), 43 (pp.285-6), 44 (pp.286-7).
[59] E.g. Sergius son of Antoninus the procurator, from the village of Charandamas (ibid.35 [pp.279-80]), John Lector, from the village of Gandigorōn (ibid. 38 [pp.281-2]).
[60] E.g. a man from Lycaonia (ibid. 41 [pp.283-4]), a soldier from Hierapolis (42 pp.284-5]), Neon, an (almost certainly Isaurian) builder working at the monastery (50 [p.293]), and two brothers from Phrygia, Proairesius and Hilarion (71-2 [pp.312-14]).
[61] The *Life of Symeon* depicts the saint receiving many female suppliants; the cult was already, therefore, presented as gender inclusive (see above p.108 n112).

aristocratic and high-status suppliants,[62] almost all the specified beneficiaries of Martha's miracles appear to come from relatively humble social backgrounds.[63] Her biographer thus presents Martha as approachable and accessible to 'ordinary' suppliants such as local villagers; he is far less exclusive and elitist than many hagiographers. This is very significant because arguably the most distinctive feature of the text is that it presents an inclusive, achievable vision of piety, based not on dramatic material renunciations or on bodily mortification, but on participation in the liturgy and in the sacraments and on devotion to Martha's shrine.

Liturgy and Ritual Practice

Liturgy and ritual suffuse the *Life of Martha,* linking the different, and sometimes apparently disparate, sections of the work. In the first part of the text, as mentioned above, she is not depicted as an ascetic; rather her life is marked by pious attendance to priests and monks, and by devoted participation in various liturgical rituals: 'she took care of the proffering of many lights and incense,'[64] while

> in all her days she did not miss the lamplight and dawn services, being especially eager for the night watches which happened in memory of the holy martyrs. For being the first at church and in no way being hindered by any care she partook of our salvific life, the body and blood of the son of God…in all the holy and divine liturgy she gave incense to the priests, asking them to join with her in her requests to God.[65]

A monk urged her to sit down in church, but she rebuked him respectfully, saying that sitting during the liturgy was contemptuous of God.[66] As seen above, she is said to have anointed

[62] Examples include the *Miracles of Thekla* and the *Miracles of St Demetrius*; on the aristocratic focus of the former see Johnson 2006, 155-6, 170.
[63] The sole exception is one Sergius, described as the son of the procurator Antoninus: *Life of Martha,* 35 (p.279).
[64] Ἐπεμελεῖτο φώτων πολλῶν καὶ θυμιαμάτων προσαγωγῆς: ibid. 2 (p.254).
[65] Ἐν ὅλοις δὲ τοῖς χρόνοις αὐτῆς λυχνικῶν καὶ ἑωθινῶν οὐκ ἀπελιμπάνετο, σπεύδουσα μάλιστα εἰς τὰς νυκτερινὰς διαγρηγορήσεις τὰς γινομένας ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων μνήμαις. Συναγομένη δὲ πρώτη ἐν τῷ κυριακῷ καὶ μηδαμῶς ὑπό τινος φροντίδος κωλυομένη μετελάμβανε τὴν σωτήριον ζωὴν ἡμῶν, τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ.... ἐν ὅλῃ δὲ τῇ ἁγίᾳ καὶ θείᾳ λειτουργίᾳ ἐπεδίδου τὸ θυμίαμα τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν, αἰτοῦσα καὶ αὐτοὺς συνεργῆσαι αὐτῇ ἐν ταῖς πρὸς Θεὸν δεήσεσιν αὐτῆς: ibid. 3 (p.255).
[66] ibid. 4 (pp.255-6).

and refreshed the priests. Even her charity seems to have taken place in a sacramental context: she provided cloths for farmers who were baptizing their children (and was at her request buried wrapped in some of these cloths),[67] as well as taking care of the dead.[68] Martha's *Life* is far from the first hagiographic work to emphasize its subject's participation in church rituals. As we have seen, however, its author neglects other tropes of female piety such as asceticism and dutiful wifehood, with the effect that liturgical participation is presented as the key element in Martha's holiness.

Liturgy is still more important in the next section of the *Life*, Martha's death. She prepares for death by participating in the sacraments and the liturgy: she takes the Eucharist in Symeon's monastery,[69] and goes to the church of John the Baptist to pray, 'since a service was being conducted.'[70] She tells Symeon in one of her last addresses to him that 'in every liturgy and before every altar with incessant incense I have offered tears to God for your survival, and journeying frequently to every holy house I have zealously asked the holy martyrs of Christ our God to shield and help you. I have honoured every holy man, carrying off prayers for you [?].'[71] This is especially noteworthy, as it suggests that not only Martha herself but also Symeon was in need of ritual supplications before God, and the intercession of martyrs and holy men. The mention of these last, in particular, is striking, since in the *Life of Symeon* there is no reference to holy men, living or dead, other than the stylite himself (perhaps to avoid cult competition); here, however, the desire to emphasize Symeon's

[67] ibid. 4 (p.256), 28 (p.274).
[68] ibid. 5 (pp.256-7).
[69] ibid. 19 (p.267).
[70] Τηνικαῦτα συνάξεως ἐπιτελουμένης: ibid. 26 (p.272).
[71] Ἐν πάσῃ λειτουργίᾳ καὶ ἀπέναντι παντὸς θυσιαστηρίου μετὰ θυμιάματος ἀκαταπαύστου ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπομονῆς σου δάκρυα προσέφερον τῷ Θεῷ καὶ εἰς πάντα οἶκον ἅγιον πορευομένη συχνῶς, ἐκτενῶς ἐδεόμην τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν ὑπερασπίσαι σου καὶ ἀντιλάβεσθαι. Πάντα ὅσιον ἄνδρα ἐτίμησα, συλήσασα σοι προσευχάς: ibid. 20 (p.268).

surpassing holiness seems to be subordinated to the need to stress the importance of liturgical participation and of reverence of martyrs and monks.

To some extent, an emphasis on liturgical preparations for death is conventional, and must reflect actual practice as well as the hagiographer's interest.[72] Yet Martha's hagiographer goes further than most earlier hagiography, in stating explicitly that it was Martha's devotion to church, and participation in rituals and sacraments, that achieved her salvation. While it is true that her palace in heaven, seen by her in a vision before her death, was supposedly built by Symeon, the Virgin Mary says to her, 'look, this honour has been given to you, and stay here, in exchange for the fact that you feared the Lord and *honoured the church of God'*[73] [emphasis mine]. Furthermore, Martha herself emphasises before her death that salvation is achieved through the Eucharist, saying in a prayer to God, 'I have had confidence, trusting to be saved by the salvific participation of your life-giving body and blood, given to us by you for the forgiveness of slips, that you will remove my transgressions and purify my sins.'[74]

After her death, too, the importance of appropriate funerary rites for salvation is stressed: after John Lector, a local villager, has a vision of a chariot of cherubim over Martha's tomb, Symeon tells him, 'glorify the Lord, child. For you have found grace to see as you went the holy beasts of the cherubim carried on the chariot, [the cherubim who] arrived in response

[72] Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina* is a particularly noteworthy example of an earlier hagiographic text which emphasizes its heroine's liturgical life and provides an extended, liturgically-focused account of her death. On the liturgical implications of Macrina's *Life* see Krueger 2000, 484-510. Macrina is, of course, a very different figure from Martha: Gregory presents her as an aristocratic, philosophical, beautiful, and (moderately) ascetic virgin with strong family ties. The liturgical focus of Gregory's text is also very different from that of Martha's *Life*, as it lacks the strong cultic dimension of the latter: whereas Gregory's focus is on prayer and thanksgiving, Martha's hagiographer also, as we will see, emphasizes the importance of the rituals associated with saints' shrines.

[73] Ἰδοὺ δεδώρηταί σοι ἡ τιμὴ αὕτη, καὶ κατάμενε ἐνθάδε, ἀνθ' ὧν ἐφοβήθης τὸν Κύριον καὶ *ἐτίμησας τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ*: *Life of Martha,* 17 (p.266).

[74] Τετόλμηκα τῇ σωτηρίῳ μεταλήψει τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ σου σώματος καὶ αἵματος πιστεύουσα σωθῆναι τῇ δεδωρημένῃ ἡμῖν παρὰ σοῦ εἰς συγχώρησιν παραπτωμάτων, ὅπως ἀφέλῃς τὰς ἀνομίας μου καὶ τὰς ἁμαρτίας μου καθαρίσῃς: ibid. 23 (p.270).

to the prayer of the hymnody and sanctified her dormition in the relic of death [?], because even I and she, captured in sins, needed release by him, although standing in the halls of the house of God.'[75] Symeon's claim that not only Martha, but he himself, needs a heavenly visitation in response to the hymnody to assure salvation, is particularly striking. Although liturgy is undoubtedly a key motif of the *Life of Symeon the Younger*—the text is suffused with mentions of incense, with elaborate descriptions of liturgical processions, and with references to the Eucharist—there is less sense that participation in ecclesiastical rites was the key requirement for salvation.[76] Rather, the focus on liturgy in the text has been interpreted as an attempt to emphasize the stylite's 'integration' within ecclesial worship.[77] The *Life of Martha* thus accords an even more important role to liturgy and the sacraments; the hagiographer uses her brief life and her lengthy death scene to present an inclusive vision of salvation, focusing on dedication to ecclesial rituals, participation in the Eucharist, and proper funeral rites.

In part, this reflects a growing tendency in seventh-century hagiography to emphasize the importance of participation in the sacraments and church rituals.[78] Leontius of Neapolis, in the *Life of John the Almsgiver*, recounts the story of a clergyman who never went to church and was jealous of his neighbour's—another priest's—prosperity, until discovering that the remedy was regular church attendance.[79] Leontius is still more explicit in his *Life of Symeon*

[75] Δόξαζε, τέκνον, τὸν Κύριον· χάριν γὰρ ηὗρες θεάσασθαι καθὼς ἐχώρεις τὰ ἁγιαστικὰ ζῶα τοῦ ἐπιβεβηκότος ἐπὶ ἅρματος χερουβὶμ παραγενομένου ἐν τῇ ἐπικλήσει τῆς ὑμνῳδίας καὶ ἁγιάσαντος ἐν τῷ λειψάνῳ τοῦ θανάτου τὴν κοίμησιν, καθότι κἀγὼ καὶ αὐτὴ ἐν ἁμαρτίαις συλληφθέντες ἐχρήζομεν τῆς παρ'αὐτοῦ ἀφέσεως, ἐν αὐλαῖς οἴκου Κυρίου ἱστάμενοι: ibid. 33 (pp.278-9).

[76] In one incident in the stylite's youth the Eucharist is presented in soteriological terms: he is given it in a dream by a priest to save him after Satan has been afflicting him with sexual dreams (*Life of Symeon,* 35 [p.34]). Yet usually, even where the Eucharist features, it is not explicitly connected with salvation, even in the section in which Symeon is made a priest (132-35 [pp.124-7]). In Symeon's lectures on the behaviour necessary for salvation (e.g. 24 [pp.20-1], 113 [p.92], 171 [pp.152-3] he makes no mention of the sacraments, nor do they feature in the various accounts of the deaths of pious men (e.g. 36 [pp.34-6], 109 [pp.88-9], 257 [p.223].

[77] Harvey 1998; Booth 2014, 34-37.

[78] For the growing importance of liturgy and the sacraments in hagiography across late antiquity and in particular in the seventh century, see Déroche 2002, 180; Booth 2014, 7-43 and *passim.*

[79] Leontius of Neapolis, *Life of John the Almsgiver*, 51 (pp.401-2).

the Holy Fool, making his hero include failure to take communion among a list of heinous crimes: 'While the saint was there (in Emesa), he cried out against many because of the Holy Spirit, and reproached thieves and fornicators. Some he faulted, crying out that they had not taken communion often, and others he reproached for perjury, so that through his inventiveness he nearly put an end to sinning in the whole city [emphasis mine].'[80] George, the author of the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon***,** attributes to his holy man a long speech emphasizing the importance of attending church and participating in the liturgy, after his servants have failed to wake him for the night service out of concern for his health:

> For if, in the presence of a mortal king, not only the healthy, but even the mutilated and the sick hasten to praise him, how much more ought we run together zealously, by night and day, at all times, to praise and laud the heavenly and immortal king of glory, Christ our God, not only those of us who are in good bodily health, but also those who are ill should display enthusiasm, so that he may both destroy our illnesses, if he knows that this would benefit us, and purify our souls from wicked deeds and considerations, and, like a debtor, pay to us the wages for our praises, wages which are not earthly but celestial? And just as one of the poorer people, if he is suddenly brought into the imperial halls and becomes a familiar and unhindered companion to the emperor, desires to have more and longer association with him, how much more ought we to render closer our dialogue of prayer and praise with the heavenly emperor, and to linger desirously in church, and not to hasten to fling off quickly the office of prayer, as if it were a very heavy burden and not something which brings a wage**,** and not to hasten, at devilish prompting, to depart from church as if from a prison, which is a great abomination? For we should always have this in mind, that, when we enter into the house of the Lord, we climb to heaven itself and we find the heavenly emperor seated on his throne of glory, surrounded by cherubim and seraphim….and that, although all those attend him with fear, we are allowed to speak to him confidently through ourselves and not through an interpreter, and to praise him and to ask for what we want; but when we leave from there [i.e. church] …we descend to the earthly and material world, bound by our wicked thoughts and preoccupations.[81]

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[80] idem, *Life of Symeon the Holy Fool* (p.96, trans. p.165).

[81] Εἰ γὰρ ἐπὶ φθαρτοῦ βασιλέως οὐ μόνον οἱ ὑγιαίνοντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ἠκρωτηριασμένοι καὶ οἱ ἐν ἀσθενείαις εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐπείγονται εὐφημίαν, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς εἰς τὴν τοῦ ἐπουρανίου καὶ ἀθανάτου βασιλέως τῆς δόξης Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν εὐφημίαν καὶ δοξολογίαν ὀφείλομεν σπουδαίως συντρέχειν νυκτός τε καὶ ἡμέρας κατὰ πᾶσαν ὥραν οὐ μόνον οἱ τῷ σώματι ἐρρωμένοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ νοσοῦντες τὸ εὐπρόθυμον συνεισφέρειν, ἵνα καὶ τὰς νόσους ἡμῶν, ἐὰν γνῷ συμφέρειν ἡμῖν, ἀπελάσῃ καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καθάρῃ τῶν πονηρῶν πράξεων τε καὶ ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ τοὺς μισθοὺς τῶν εὐφημιῶν οὐ γηΐνους, ἀλλ' οὐρανίους ἡμῖν ὡς χρεώστης ἀποδώσῃ· καὶ ὥσπερ τις τῶν μετριωτέρων, ἐὰν ἐν βασιλικαῖς αὐλαῖς ἄφνω εἰσαχθεὶς γνώριμος τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ συνόμιλος ἀκωλύτως γένηται, πλείονα καὶ μακροτέραν τὴν μετ' αὐτοῦ συντυχίαν γίνεσθαι ἐπιποθεῖ…πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν πλείονα τὴν πρὸς τὸν ἐπουράνιον βασιλέα ἡμῶν διάλεξιν τῆς εὐχῆς καὶ δοξολογίας ποιεῖσθαι καὶ ἐγχρονίζειν ποθεινῶς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ μὴ σπεύδειν ὥς τι βαρύτατον φορτίον καὶ οὐχ ὡς μισθοφόρον τὸν τῆς εὐχῆς κανόνα τάχιον ἀπορρῖψαι καὶ ἐπείγεσθαι ἐκ διαβολικῆς

George's attention is focused very much on the practical (even if often delayed) benefits of church attendance: if we praise God, we are owed a heavenly reward; if we speak to him in church, we can ask for whatever we want. We may even be healed of our diseases, if he judges that this is in our best interests. It is thus, in a sense, a pragmatic rather than spiritual message, and might be thought to be aimed at a wide, not exclusively monastic audience. The act of attending church is made a key constitutive element of salvation.

Martha's hagiographer is thus far from unique in his interest in ecclesial rituals and in the sacraments; in general, seventh-century hagiography was increasingly oriented towards the liturgical. He does, however, go further than most of his contemporaries, in choosing as his hero a figure who bears no resemblance to the traditional ascetic, monastic subjects of hagiography. Whereas in the Lives of Theodore of Sykeon, John the Almsgiver and Symeon the Holy Fool, as in other contemporary examples, the new emphasis on liturgy is balanced by a more conventional interest in asceticism, in the *Life of Martha* liturgy predominates. This is not to suggest that Martha's hagiographer completely rejected the traditional model of the holy man: indeed, in the *Life* we find occasional references to Symeon's performance of large-scale miracles.[82] Yet his choice not to focus on Symeon but on a holy figure presented in very different terms suggests that, even more than many of his contemporaries, he was interested in exploring a different view of piety, and of salvation; salvation is clearly attainable for even an ordinary Christian layperson, as long as he or she is devoted to the rituals of both church and saint's cult.

ἐνεργείας ὡς ἐκ φρουρᾶς τινος ἐξιέναι τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ὅπερ ἐστὶν μεγάλη παρανομία. Ἐν νῷ γὰρ ὀφείλομεν ἔχειν τοῦτο, ὅτι ἐν τῷ εἰσέρχεσθαι ἡμᾶς εἰς τὸν κυριακὸν οἶκον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν αὐτὸν ἀνερχόμεθα καὶ τὸν οὐράνιον βασιλέα εὑρίσκομεν καθήμενον ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου τῆς δόξης, κυκλούμενον ὑπὸ τῶν χερουβὶμ καὶ σεραφίμ… καὶ ὅτι πάντων ἐκείνων μετὰ φόβου παρεστώτων ἡμεῖς συγχωρούμεθα αὐτῷ τεθαρρηκότες δι' ἑαυτῶν καὶ οὐ δι' ἑρμηνέως διαλέγεσθαι καὶ εὐφημεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ αἰτεῖν ἅπερ ἂν θέλωμεν· ὅταν δὲ πάλιν ἐξερχώμεθα ἐκεῖθεν, λογίζεσθαι ἡμᾶς χρὴ ὅτι…εἰς τὸν ἐπίγειον καὶ ὑλώδη κόσμον καταβαίνομεν δεσμούμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν πονηρῶν λογισμῶν καὶ φροντίδων: George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 164 (I, pp.150-1).

[82] *Life of Martha,* 9 (p.260), 16 (p.265), 34 (p.279).

How comprehensive, however, is the vision of Martha's hagiographer? Is he genuinely concerned to encourage devotion to ecclesial and cultic rituals in general, or is his intention solely to promote participation in the cults of Symeon and his mother on the 'Wonderful Mountain'? The answer, arguably, is twofold. In the first part of the *Life,* that dealing with Martha's lifestyle and her death, it does seem that the author presents a general model for salvation. His descriptions of Martha's devotion to services in honour of the martyrs, of her care for priests, and of her visits to 'every holy house' and 'every holy man,' as well as his emphasis on the salvific powers of the Eucharist and of the funeral hymnody, do not appear to be tied to a particular cult (although her devotion to Symeon is repeatedly stressed).[83] After the narrative of her death, however, the hagiographer's focus changes; he is still preoccupied with liturgy and ritual, but now almost exclusively gives centre stage to the ceremonies at Martha's shrine. In other words, his ambitions appear to shift from providing a general paradigm for the ideal worshipper to reinforcing the importance of participation in the cultic community on the 'Wonderful Mountain.'

This new focus emerges very shortly after Martha's death, in the descriptions of her funeral rites. The hagiographer recounts, in some detail, the series of liturgical acts performed in her honour: her initial burial in Daphne and the transfer of her body from Daphne to Symeon's monastery are accompanied by psalms, hymns, and incense;[84] when she is brought to the monastery an all-night vigil is performed before her tomb is dug, and in the morning a crowd of clergy and laymen gather, who bury her and perform the Eucharist and funeral ceremony.[85] After the Eucharist, villagers from Gandigorōn come to the monastery, and perform another all-night vigil, 'so that they also might gather the fruits of the prayers

[83] See e.g. ibid. 2 (p.254), 3 (p.255), 6 (p.258), 8-9 (pp.259-60).
[84] ibid. 28 (p.274), 30 (p.275).
[85] ibid. 32 (p.277).

of the blessed woman,'[86] implying that participation in her liturgical remembrance was necessary in order to benefit from her intercession. The hagiographer's desire to encourage dedication to and participation in the rites at her shrine becomes still clearer in the next section of the *Life,* that dealing with Martha's posthumous miracles. Many of the miracles take place in a liturgical or ritual context: for example, a man from Lycaonia who had been afflicted by demons for thirty years, so that he could not hear the divine liturgy, was healed during the nocturnal odes, having being dragged by an invisible power to Martha's tomb.[87] Sergius son of Antoninus, from the village of Charandamas, was cured of a severe fever at the rites for the thirtieth day after Martha's funeral.[88] The lamps from her all-night vigils also had healing properties: John Lector, 'having found a good moment and unbeknownst to everyone, lifted the wicks of the lamps being burnt for the night vigil';[89] he took them to his village where he used them to heal the sick and drive out demons. By connecting Martha's performance of miracles with the liturgical ceremonies at her shrine, the hagiographer seems to be encouraging attendance at these services.

He is also, more specifically, encouraging proper ritual practice, in particular by cautionary tales involving those who neglected their duties. Sergius son of Antoninus, mentioned above, fell prey to a severe fever because 'he refused to go near to any corpse, thinking this an abomination. Doing the same thing to the relic of the blessed woman he did not draw near, nor did he put his shoulder underneath it.'[90] The connection between his refusal to honour Martha's corpse and the disease is stressed in his later confession, 'I neglected to handle the honourable relic of the mother of saint Symeon and because of this these terrible

[86] Ὅπως καὶ αὐτοὶ τοὺς καρποὺς τῶν εὐχῶν τῆς ὁσίας τρυγήσωσιν: ibid. 33 (p.278).
[87] ibid. 41 (pp.283-4).
[88] ibid. 35-36 (pp.279-81).
[89] Εὑρηκὼς καιρὸν καὶ λαθὼν πάντας ἐπῆρε τῶν εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγρυπνίαν καιομένων κανδηλῶν τὰ ἐνλύχνια: ibid. 37 (p.281).
[90] Παρῃτεῖτο παντὶ νεκρῷ πλησιάσαι, βδελυκτὸν τοῦτο λογιζόμενος. Τοῦτο δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ λειψάνου τῆς ὁσίας πεποιηκὼς οὐ προσήγγισεν, οὐδὲ τον ὦμον ὑπέθηκεν: ibid. 35 (p.280).

judgements have befallen me.'[91] One of Symeon's monks fell severely ill because 'after drawing near to the honoured coffin of the blessed woman to light the lamp, having been seized by an impulse of contempt and disbelief he rather quenched it and with grumbling withdrew, not recognizing that the mistake was in himself.'[92] In a third example, Symeon is said to have refrained from rebuking his monks for neglecting the lamp on Martha's coffin, both out of fear that he would seem to be insisting on her adoration,[93] and, importantly, 'as a way of teaching his brothers and wishing them to be taught through experience to offer willingly and not with compulsion the honours due to the saints.'[94] The outcome was much the same as in the other cases of negligence: one of the remiss brothers, the monastery's manager, fell extremely ill. When he was on the brink of death, Martha appeared to him with a reproach: 'What were you thinking when you did not light my lamp? Don't you know that I am a sharer in the heavenly light and I do not need any of such things, unless for the sake of your salvation?'[95] This makes clear that ritual care for the saint was not intended to glorify the saint—who was already dwelling in glory—but to benefit the soul of the worshipper. The manager was cured after Martha brought the Eucharistic bread forward to his stomach, and thenceforth was diligent in lighting her lamp. These miracles where disease is caused by failure to carry out the appropriate rituals are clearly intended to emphasize the importance of attending to the saint's tomb, and the danger to both body and soul of failing to do so.

[91] Ἀπεστράφην βαστάσαι τὸ τίμιον λείψανον τῆς μητρὸς τοῦ ἁγίου Συμεὼν καὶ διὰ τοῦτό μοι τὰ δεινὰ ταῦτα ἐπέστησαν κριτήρια: ibid.
[92] Προσεγγίσας...τῇ τιμίᾳ σορῷ τῆς ὁσίας ἐπὶ τὸ ἅψαι τὴν κανδήλαν, περιφρονήσεως καὶ ἀπιστίας λογισμῷ κατασχεθεὶς ἔσβεσεν μᾶλλον καὶ μετὰ γογγυσμοῦ ἀνεχώρει, μὴ διακρίνας ἐν ἑαυτῷ πταῖσμα εἶναι τοῦτο: ibid. 43 (p.285).
[93] See above pp.225-6.
[94] Καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς παιδεύων καὶ διὰ τῆς πείρας διδαχθῆναι βουλόμενος ἑκουσίως καὶ οὐκ ἀναγκαστῶς προσαγαγεῖν τὰς ὀφειλομένας τιμὰς τοῖς ἁγίοις: ibid. 39 (p.282).
[95] Τί διαλογιζόμενοι οὐχ ἥψατέ μου κανδήλαν ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι τοῦ ἐπουρανίου φωτός εἰμι κοινωνὸς ἐγὼ καὶ οὐ προσδέομαί τινος τῶν τοιούτων, εἰ μὴ διὰ τὴν ὑμῶν σωτηρίαν; ibid. 39 (p.283).

Indeed, it is arguable that one of the primary functions of the work is to teach the audience how to be a good worshipper. The composite (and unusual) nature of the work, consisting of a short Life followed by an extended account of miracles, facilitates this. Whereas a traditional holy Life, with its emphasis on worldly renunciation and on asceticism, does not provide a realistic role model for most worshippers,[96] the *Life of Martha* is particularly effective as a didactic work: it combines a paradigmatic life, stripped of extraneous biographical detail, whose protagonist is essentially depicted as an ideal devotee of shrines and holy men, with miracles, which by their structure are very much focused on what a suppliant should do in order to gain divine assistance. This is not to deny earlier saints' Lives any didactic role: clearly, they were often intended at least in part to be instructive, and they too contained warnings against those who did not put their faith in the holy men. Some saints' Lives, including the *Life of Symeon the Younger,* contain numerous accounts of miracles performed by the holy men, which could themselves contain guidance for potential suppliants at the shrine. Yet saints' Lives are oriented on the whole towards the perspective of the saint, whereas in the independent miracle collections of deceased saints the suppliant takes the primary role; we perceive the saint through their eyes. The focus is thus on the experience of the suppliant, making them a particularly effective didactic medium for teaching proper cultic practice.

This is evident from a wide range of miracle collections, not only the *Life of Martha.* Even pre-Christian miracle collections are clearly in part didactic: the *stelai* from the cult of Asclepius at Epidaurus, bearing records of miraculous *iamata*, probably from the late fourth century B.C.E., contain clear warnings encouraging belief in the god and payment of the

[96] Peter Brown has argued (focusing on Western Europe but implicitly extending his arguments across the Christian world) that the 'notion of imitable sanctity is a theme as vivid and colourful, but as superficial, as a growth of lichen across an ancient rock,' and that, in general, saints were sacred by virtue of their inimitability: Brown 2000, 22 and passim.

ritual dues.[97] One account records, for example, that Hermon of Thasus was cured of blindness, but, because he failed to offer gifts of thanksgiving, Asclepius brought back his blindness; he had to return to the shrine to be cured.[98] Christian miracle collections, which saw a particular boom in the last half of the sixth century and in the seventh century, are equally didactic.[99] The authors (or compilers) of these collections conveyed their messages in a variety of ways, including through cautionary tales, exemplary models, and direct exhortations to the audience. All three of these techniques are exemplified in the compilation of miracle collections attached to the cult of the doctor-martyrs Cosmas and Damian.[100] In one cautionary account, a man suffering from a severe lung condition came to the saints' shrine to seek a cure. Initially, however, his disease continued, and 'he was, according to his nature, angry and feather-brained and rash, and was proffering unsuitable blasphemies through his mouth.' Cosmas and Damian appeared to another man in the night, instructing him to tell the angry man that he would only be cured if he stopped blaspheming, and stopped eating bird-flesh in their shrine during Lent. When this message was conveyed to him, the man desisted from his undesirable behaviour, and was subsequently cured.[101] The story seems to warn its audience that aggressive and impious behaviour was a barrier to healing, and that total obedience to the saints was required.

The next account in the collection provides, in contrast, a paradigm for the correct way to approach the martyrs. A woman who was both deaf and dumb came to the shrine, asking

[97] Dillon 1994, 239-60. Festugière has highlighted parallels between some of the miracles in the *Life of Symeon the Younger* and the miracles ascribed to Asclepius at Epidaurus (Festugière 1973, 70-73).
[98] *IG* IV.1^2. 122, XXII.
[99] See Maraval 1981.
[100] Deubner 1907. The first three 'series' of miracles can be dated to the sixth/early seventh century as references to several are found in the *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, written by Sophronius of Jerusalem (d.638): Festugière 1971, 88-89; Booth 2011, 116-17. As well as the Chalcedonian collections edited by Deubner, a Miaphysite collection also survives, ed. Rupprecht 1935.
[101] Τούτου...κατὰ φύσιν ὀργίλου καὶ κεφφοῦ καὶ προπετοῦς ὑπάρχοντος καὶ ἀπρεπεῖς διὰ τῆς γλώσσης βλασφημίας προφέροντος: *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian*, 6 (pp.110-1, quote at p.110).

Cosmas and Damian, 'with tears and with faith,'[102] if she could die, as her disability was making life unbearable. 'Since she had lamented because of all these things and had remained in this supplication with faith towards the saints,' God's help came to her through the saints' mediation: but instead of granting her request to die, he healed her completely.[103] Her humility, faith and patience were thus rewarded through the conferring of a boon greater than her original demand. In both these examples the stories' morals have been only implicit, if clear. Sometimes, however, the didactic messages of the accounts are openly expounded. In the third collection of Cosmas and Damian's miracles, for example, the hagiographer reports that one of the beneficiaries of the saints' miracles had helped him greatly by recounting his story, 'for he taught that it is necessary to approach God with faith, because faith is the mediator of the blessings that come from God to us.'[104] Hagiographers thus had various ways, some more subtle than others, of instructing their audiences in their particular messages, which ranged from the cult-promoting, to the moralistic, to the doctrinal. The *Miracles of Artemius,* which was probably written in late seventh-century Constantinople, is perhaps most similar to the *Life of Martha*, in that its hagiographer was also particularly interested in ritual and liturgy; night-vigils held in memory of the saint are the setting for many miracles in both texts.[105] The unusual feature of the *Life of Martha* is the combination, within a single work, of these instructive miracle stories with the short life of the saint herself: the text's audience is therefore presented first with the exemplary paradigm of life of the perfect worshipper, and subsequently with miracle stories which warn against the dangerous consequences of improper ritual practice. The work also differs notably from most late-sixth and seventh-century miracle collections, in that it relates to a recently

[102] Μετὰ δακρύων καὶ πίστεως: ibid. 7 (p.111).
[103] Διὰ πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ὀλοφυρομένης καὶ τῇ τοιαύτῃ ἱκετηρίᾳ μετὰ πίστεως πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους ἐπιμενούσης: ibid. 7 (p.112).
[104] Ἐδίδασκεν γὰρ ὡς δεῖ μετὰ πίστεως θεῷ προσιέναι, ὅτι ἡ πίστις τῶν ἐκ θεοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς διαβαινόντων ἀγαθῶν μεσίτης ἐστίν: ibid. 24 (p.162).
[105] For discussion of the *Miracles of Artemius* see Booth 2014, 82-4.

deceased saint, whereas the majority concern long-established cults of early Christian martyrs (including Cosmas and Damian, Cyrus and John, Artemius, and Demetrius). This highlights, again, Martha's exceptional relatability: she was a near-contemporary figure who had died an ordinary death, rather than a famous, martyred, hero from an era of Christian history which had gained legendary status.

The liturgical and ritual themes of the *Life* come to a crescendo in its final sections, as the hagiographer completes his portrayal of the sacred origins of the ceremonies at Martha's shrine. The penultimate major section of the *Life*, that dealing with the construction of an oratory for Martha and Symeon's bodies, is suffused with images of incense, prayer and processions. The series of visions witnessed by the brothers of the monastery encouraging the construction of the shrine were highly liturgical: Symeon had a vision of the shrine being built, and the tomb being moved, 'and young children circling around the coffin and singing very beautiful and pleasing things to God and pouring out the alleluia to one another';[106] one of the brothers saw Martha outlining the shape of the oratory, and her tomb surrounded by candelabras and shining lights and people singing psalms and alleluias;[107] while Symeon again, in a passage which is lengthy but worth quoting, saw Martha performing a divine doxology which affected his own liturgical practice:

> He saw the blessed woman…with much sweetness sending a melodious and pleasant angelic speech on high and saying three times, 'Glory to you, God, glory to you, alleluia', and the whole *mandra* sounded together as if giving voice, and her body in the tomb was shaken by the doxology. And held by fear and joy at such grace of God which he had given to his slave woman, he remembered divine scripture saying, 'the humbled bones will rejoice.' Then he remained guarding in his heart that song of the doxology towards God, and from joy of soul he rejoiced in the holy spirit and also himself sang the heavenly doxology. When the time for the nightly hymns summoned, the brothers were gathered to him according to custom, and having learnt from him they sang along as well that God-given hymn until the Sabbath dawned.

[106] Παῖδάς τε ὡραίους περικυκλοῦντας τὴν σορὸν καὶ καλὰ λίαν καὶ τερπνὰ ὑμνοῦντας τὸν Θεὸν καὶ ὑπηχοῦντας ἀλλήλοις τὸ ἀλληλούϊα: *Life of Martha*, 45 (p.287).
[107] ibid. 46-7 (pp.288-9).

> And henceforth in the lamplight service of the Sabbath and holy Sunday and every evening he commanded this to happen, with one brother saying before the tomb three times such a hymn and everyone psalming back three times.[108]

Here Symeon's visionary experience directly affected the liturgy as practised at the monastery; the chant he heard in his vision was apparently incorporated into the lamplight services. The hagiographer thus presents the origins of the current rituals at the shrine as supernatural, thereby sacralising both the rites themselves and, by implication, their participants. Even the planning of the shrine was sanctified by ritual; Symeon, on Sunday, ordered the plan for oratory to be drawn, 'throwing incense.'[109] When Martha's body was transferred to the completed shrine, priests and faithful laymen gathered, with further psalming and hymning, and miracles were performed.[110] Every stage of the construction of the oratory, from preliminary inspiration, to practical planning, and its culmination in the translation of Martha's body, was thus marked and sanctified by liturgical rituals.

The final section of the *Life*, the account of Symeon's acquisition of a relic of the True Cross, seems to stand apart from the rest of the *Life* and may, as suggested above, have been absent from the work as originally conceived and written. Martha is noticeably less active here: of the eighteen 'chapters' (52-70), she is mentioned in only seven, usually briefly, and never speaks. The only miracles are performed through Symeon, not Martha. The lengthy exchange of elaborate letters between Symeon and the *staurophylax* Thomas has no parallels in other parts of the work. Nonetheless, this section is thematically linked to the rest of the

[108] Εἶδε τὴν μακαρίαν…μετὰ ἡδύτητος πολλῆς εὐμελῆ καὶ τερπνὴν ἀγγελικὴν εἰς ὕψος ἀναπέμπουσαν φωνὴν καὶ λέγουσαν ἐκ τρίτου· 'Δόξα σοι, ὁ Θεός, δόξα σοι, ἀλληλούϊα', καὶ συνήχει ἡ μάνδρα ὅλη ὥσπερ φωνὴν διδοῦσα, καὶ τὸ λείψανον αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ θέσει ἐδονεῖτο τῇ δοξολογίᾳ. Καὶ τρόμῳ καὶ χαρᾷ συσχέθεις ἐπὶ τῇ τοσαύτῃ χάριτι τοῦ Θεοῦ ᾗ δέδωκε τῇ δούλῃ αὐτοῦ, ὑπόμνησιν ἔλαβε τῆς θείας γραφῆς λεγούσης· 'Ἀγαλλιάσονται ὀστέα τεταπεινωμένα'. Τότε ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἔμεινεν διαφυλάττων τὸ μέλος ἐκεῖνο τῆς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν δοξολογίας, καὶ ἐκ τῆς χαρᾶς τῆς ψυχῆς ἠγαλλιάσατο ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι καὶ συνυπήχει καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν οὐράνιον δοξολογίαν. Τοῦ δὲ καιροῦ καλοῦντος διὰ τὰς νυκτερινὰς ὑμνῳδίας, συνήχθησαν κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἀδελφοί, καὶ μαθόντες παρ' αὐτοῦ συνυπήχουν καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν θεόσδοτον ἐκείνην ὑμνῳδίαν ἕως πρωὶ ἐπιφωσκοῦντος σαββάτου. Λοιπὸν οὖν καὶ ἐν τῷ λυχνικῷ τοῦ τε σαββάτου καὶ τῆς ἁγίας κυριακῆς καὶ κατὰ πᾶσαν δὲ ἑσπέραν τοῦτο ἐπέτρεψε γίνεσθαι, ἑνὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἔμπροσθεν τῆς σοροῦ τρίτον λέγοντος τὸν τοιοῦτον ὕμνον καὶ πάντων τρίτον ὑποψαλλόντων: ibid. 48 (pp.289-90).
[109] Βαλὼν θυμίαμα: ibid. 49 (p.290).
[110] ibid. 51 (p.295).

Life through, again, the liturgy.[111] Symeon asks God for a piece of the cross, 'for the memorial of your slave whom you took, in return for the fact that you made known to her faithful soul how to handle in her hands your life-giving cross, when I ascended from power to power to this elevation, and she went ahead in a flood of tears saying the song, "Save us, son of God, who was crucified for us, alleluia."'[112] Martha is thus associated with the cross through past ritual; she carried a cross in the procession in which Symeon moved to his column in the new monastery.[113] Furthermore, it becomes clear that the relic of the True Cross, once attained by Symeon, will be connected to Martha through liturgy: he tells the priest Paul, envoy of the *staurophylax*, that he wants the relic 'for venerating on the day in which his [God's] philanthropy consented to sanctify my mother's dormition.'[114] The *Life* claims that the relic of the cross was brought to Symeon's monastery on the one-year anniversary of his ascent to the column—although other chronological indicators suggest that this was in fact impossible[115]—highlighting the author's desire to associate the arrival of the cross with important ceremonies at the monastery. The section concludes with a detailed description of the memorial service held on the first anniversary of Martha's death:

> When the time of twelve months had been fulfilled, the first memorial of the dormition of the blessed Martha took place, and although the brothers had said nothing to anyone**,** a great crowd of men and women by the grace of God came together with candles and lamps to conduct her memorial service. And having made an all-night vigil, just before dawn, when the life-giving cross had been put forward, all those who had come together worshipped it with hymns, crying, 'we revere your cross, master, and we glorify your holy resurrection.' After the proskynesis, when the priest Antonius had taken the cross, while the deacons were escorting him in procession with fans and censers and psalming, 'save us, son of God, who was crucified for us, alleluia,' he put it down in the treasury. And after a series of readings they

[111] See Van den Ven 1962-70, I, 88*-9*.
[112] Εἰς ἀνάμνησιν ἧς προσελάβου δούλης σου, ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγνώρισας τῇ πιστῇ αὐτῆς ψυχῇ βαστάσαι ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ τὸν ζωοποιόν σου σταυρὸν, μεταίροντός μου ἐκ δυνάμεως εἰς δύναμιν ἐπὶ ταύτην τὴν ἀνάβασιν, προπορευομένης αὐτῆς ἐν πλήθει δακρύων καὶ τόδε τὸ ᾆσμα λεγούσης· 'Σῶσον ἡμᾶς, υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι' ἡμᾶς, ἀλληλούϊα': *Life of Martha*, 52 (p.297).
[113] *Life of Symeon*, 113 (p.93).
[114] Ἐπὶ τὸ προσκυνεῖσθαι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐν ᾗ ηὐδόκησεν ἡ αὐτοῦ φιλάνθρωπία τῆς ἐμῆς μητρὸς ἁγιάσαι τὴν κοίμησιν: *Life of Martha*, 60 (p.304).
[115] Van den Ven 1962-70, II, 309n2.

> performed a perfect service, with the slave of God performing the divine mystery.[116]

This scene firmly places the relic of the True Cross within the ritual context of the whole *Life*; again we see candles, lamps, an all-night vigil, psalming and the Eucharist, all in honour of Martha's memory. The hagiographer, by emphasizing the unparalleled value of the Cross—he describes Symeon requesting 'something more precious than every relic of the saints, than every treasure, a visible and venerable part of the unblemished lordly and salvific wood'[117]—implies that its acquisition conferred still greater status and power on the memorial ceremonies on the 'Wonderful Mountain.'

Conclusion

As we have seen, the liturgical rhythms of the shrine, and in particular the memorial services for Martha's death, provide the main unifying theme across the *Life of Martha*. At one level, this has a pragmatic function: to encourage participation in these memorial services and thereby to promote the cult of the shrine on the 'Wonderful Mountain.' The text also, however, more generally seems to instruct its audience in how to live a good, liturgical and sacramental life as a devotee of the saints, more comprehensively than would be possible in a traditional Life of an ascetic holy man; Martha is a direct model for her own worshippers in a way which her son Symeon could not be. This is not to say that the *Life of Martha* rejects the old model of the holy man—Symeon still appears to possess the same powers in the work, although they are the focus of less attention—but it does seem to be exploring

[116] Πληρωθέντος δὲ τοῦ δωδεκαμηνιαίου χρόνου, ἐνέστη ἡ πρώτη μνεία τῆς κοιμήσεως τῆς μακαρίας Μάρθας, καὶ μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἰρηκότων τῶν ἀδελφῶν, συνῆλθον τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ χάριτι ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν πλήθη πολλὰ μετὰ κηρῶν τε καὶ λαμπάδων, ὥστε τὴν σύναξιν τῆς μνείας αὐτῆς ἐπιτελέσαι· καὶ πάννυχον ἀγρυπνίαν ποιήσαντες, ὄρθρου λοιπὸν βαθέως, προτεθέντος τοῦ ζωοποιοῦ σταυροῦ προσεκύνησαν πάντες οἱ συνελθόντες μεθ' ὕμνων βοῶντες 'Τὸν σταυρόν σου προσκυνοῦμεν, δέσποτα, καὶ τὴν ἁγίαν σου ἀνάστασιν δοξάζομεν.' Μετὰ δὲ τὴν προσκύνησιν λαβὼν ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἀντώνιος τὸν σταυρόν, διακόνων ὀψικευόντων μετὰ ῥιπιδίων καὶ θυμιατηρίων καὶ ψαλλόντων· 'Σῶσον ἡμᾶς, υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι' ἡμᾶς, ἀλληλούϊα,' ἀπέθετο αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ κειμηλιαρχίῳ. Καὶ γενομένης ἀκολουθίας τῶν ἀναγνωσμάτων ἐπετέλεσαν τελείαν σύναξιν, τοῦ δούλου τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν θείαν μυσταγωγίαν ἱερουργήσαντος: *Life of Martha*, 70 (pp.311-2).

[117] Τινα παντὸς λειψάνου ἁγίων, παντὸς δὲ θησαυροῦ τιμιωτέραν, ἐμφανῆ καὶ σεβασμίαν μερίδα τοῦ ἀχράντου δεσποτικοῦ καὶ σωτηρίου ξύλου: ibid. 60 (p.304).

newer, and in some ways more practical, models for holiness. The text is in many respects less ambitious in scope than Symeon's Life: no emperors or great nobles appear as devotees of the saint; there are few mass miracles; and the miracles are almost exclusively healing miracles. This might be because its subject is a woman, and in some respects only an adjunct to her more powerful son. It is more likely, however, given the period in which it seems to have been produced, that its character in fact reflects wider developments in attitudes to the holy; in the late sixth and seventh century many miracle collections of male saints were produced which showed similar tendencies towards less ambitious, predominantly medical, miracles, and in which the Lives of holy figures were diversifying, as traditional, extravagantly ascetic, monastic miracle workers lost their dominant hold over hagiographers' imaginations. It is these wider developments in hagiography, and their implications for our understanding of the Lives of Symeon and Martha, that form the subject of the final chapter of this thesis.

Hagiography and the Crises of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries

The natural and military disasters of the sixth century, and the military crises of the seventh, sent shockwaves across East Roman society. These crises left their mark on a wide range of sources from many genres.[1] To take but a few examples from the sixth century, the hymns of Romanus the Melodist,[2] the novels of Justinian,[3] and the letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza[4] all contain efforts to explain and justify why God chose to inflict disasters on his empire. From the seventh century, the Questions and Answers of Anastasius of Sinai perhaps best show the spiritual difficulties faced by Christians in coping with the defeats to Islam.[5] These and other sources reveal that disasters provoked questions about causation, divine providence, and the special status of the empire, which Christian authors from diverse backgrounds sometimes struggled to answer. Hagiographers, however, faced particular challenges, since they had not only to tackle the question of theodicy but also to show how their saints were positioned between the will of God and the will of their suppliants. This was a conceptual problem at the best of times, but gained much greater urgency and emotional importance in the context of crisis. This chapter, therefore, will focus on hagiography, looking first at sixth- and seventh-century Lives of holy men, in particular those of Nicholas of Sion, Theodore of Sykeon, and George of Choziba. It will then examine long-term religious developments which had rendered holy men of this period particularly

[1] On responses to the plague, see esp. Kaldellis 2007; on those to earthquakes, Dagron 1981; on reactions to sixth-century disasters more generally, Meier 2003 and Dal Santo 2012. On reactions to seventh-century crisis, see esp. Booth 2014.
[2] Romanus the Melodist, Kontakion 54 (pp.462-71). In the first part of the kontakion, Romanus argues, drawing on examples from both Old and New Testaments, that God has often appeared to act cruelly and angrily to bring about a good result.
[3] See esp. Justinian, Novels 77 and 141 (pp.381-3, 703-4).
[4] esp. Barsanuphius and John, Letter 569 (III, pp.730-4).
[5] The Questions are suffused with discussion of theodicy and causation; some deal explicitly with the Arab conquests, as, for example, Question 101: 'Is it true of all the evil things done by the Arabs against the lands and nations of the Christians, that they have done them against us completely at God's command and with his approval?': Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions and Answers*, 101 (p.161, trans. p.230). On Anastasius. see esp. Haldon 1992.

vulnerable to accusations of failure in the face of disaster. Finally, it will consider the miracle collections of long-dead saints which became popular in this period, suggesting that certain features of this genre as it developed made it particularly suitable for a time of crisis. It will argue that the tensions evinced in the *Life of Symeon,* and the reorientation of priorities visible in the *Life of Martha,* are not anomalous and unexpected, but rather reflect broader ideological developments in the period and across the whole of late antiquity.

Saints' Lives and Disasters: Three Case Studies

The disasters of the sixth century are reflected in various saints' Lives from the period. Thus, for example, Eutychius of Constantinople is said to have led a procession which successfully quelled an outbreak of the plague in Constantinople; he also predicts that disasters would later strike the capital 'because of our sins and immoral habits', asking that if the punishment could not be averted, he himself should be allowed to die before it took place.[6] The earthquakes in Antioch had sufficient impact to be referred to even in Lives set in other regions: thus the Palestinian monk Theodosius is said by his biographer Theodore of Petra to have predicted one of the terrible quakes of the early sixth century.[7] Most hagiographers of this period, however, do not deal with the disasters in such great depth, and with such conflicted and competing measures, as the author of the *Life of Symeon*; it seems likely that this reflects the unique sufferings of Antioch in the sixth century.[8] Yet one other, little-studied, sixth-century Life does seem to betray some of the anxieties and tensions of the stylite's biography: the *Life of Nicholas of Sion,* a Lycian saint who became bishop of Pinara.

[6] διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἡμῶν τὰ μὴ ἀγαθά: Eustratius Presbyter, *Life of Eutychius*, lines 2510-11 (p.80).
[7] See above p.25 n24.
[8] As discussed in Chapter 1.

This text, which was perhaps composed soon after the death of the saint in 564,[9] has a complicated transmission history and has not been fully critically edited.[10] Like the *Life of Symeon,* it shows some signs of being a compilation,[11] and contains a considerable amount of polemical material, in this case directed against the saint's brother Artemas.[12] Most interestingly, again like the *Life of Symeon,* it contains an elaborate and complex account of an outbreak of the plague in Lycia. The account follows several stories evincing hostility to Artemas.[13] The narrative voice abruptly shifts from the third to the first person; apparently Nicholas himself is relating the story.[14] The holy man recounts that he once had a vision of an angel coming to him on horseback and saying, 'Come here, O minister of Christ, behold what is going to happen to the whole world, for the time of harvest is at hand, by the command of the Lord God; and He sent me to you, to give you tools for the harvest.'[15] Nicholas was terrified and questioned the angel, who repeated that he was going to give him a sickle to seal up the harvest for God. At this point,

> I drew near to the angel, to see the tools, and I saw, as it were, three sickles, five cubits in width, and fifteen cubits in length and I touched the three sickles. And I

[9] The date of his death differs in the surviving manuscripts of the *Life,* but Anrich has argued persuasively that December 6, 564 is the most likely option: Anrich 1913-7, II, 214-6. The date of the text's composition is less certain: Anrich argued that it must have written been shortly after Nicholas's death, since the author seems to have been an acquaintance of the saint and recounts many details about his life: ibid. II, 217-220. His contentions seem to have been accepted by the text's partial re-editors and English translators (Ševčenko and Ševčenko 1984, 11). The argument is not certain—as noted elsewhere, hagiographers often claimed to be disciples of their saints and the provision of detail does not guarantee authenticity—but an early date for the text remains plausible, given, for instance, its hostility to the saint's brother, which would be difficult to explain in a later Life.

[10] The transmission of the text was complicated by the fact that Nicholas of Sion was, from a fairly early date, confused with the famous early Christian bishop Nicholas of Myra: on this, and other problems in the textual tradition, see Anrich, 1913-17, II, 210-4. I have used the version of the text published by the Ševčenkos, which, as they discuss (Ševčenko and Ševčenko 1984, 17), is largely that of Anrich, 1913-7, I, 3-65, but with various corrections and emendations.

[11] In fact the case for this with reference to the *Life of Nicholas* seems stronger than that for the *Life of Symeon:* not only are there various incidents related multiple times in different versions, and abrupt changes of narrative voice, but also on several occasions the narrative breaks off mid-account and jumps to an apparently unconnected episode.

[12] *Life of Nicholas of Sion,* 39 (pp.66-8), 44-8 (pp.74-80).

[13] ibid. 44-6 (pp.74-6).

[14] It is tempting to suggest that the author is here integrating into his text part of a sermon or writing by Nicholas himself (in a similar fashion to that in which, I have suggested, the author of the *Life of Symeon* used the stylite's sermons). Anrich was sceptical about this, preferring to see the use of the first person as a result of the author's fondness for vivid prose (Anrich 1913-7, II, 217-8).

[15] *Life of Nicholas of Sion,* 47 (ed. and trans. pp.78-9).

> said to my brother: 'Come here, brother, let us give him three "blessings" [*eulogiai*].' And he said to me: 'Why do you want us to give him blessings?' And he grumbled. And the servant of God said to him: 'You do not want us to give him three blessings? Truly, he will take two doves as well, and so be on his way.'[16]

After this brief return to the third-person narrative voice, the first-person narration resumes again: Nicholas reports that he woke up, urged his brother to sing psalms with him, and told him about his vision, stating, 'I saw that the world was about to end, and that the Lord required this to be sealed up through my hand.'[17] Several days later he saw a frightening vision of the altar tilting to the side, and water pouring through the ceiling into the church. A week afterwards, the archangel Michael came to explain his visions, telling him that the angel he saw, 'was sent to reveal to you what is about to come to the world, and how the souls of men will be given over to the holy men, and how the holy men will offer them to God. And it was given to you to pray for these souls that will be given over from Lycia.'[18] He then clarifies further: 'the mortality [plague] has arrived like a harvest. For the harvest is the mortality coming to the race of men before the end of the world.'[19] The narrative then returns to the third person, becoming less apocalyptic and more matter-of-fact. The author reports that the plague (still called 'the mortality', although a subsequent reference to the 'bubonic' disease makes its nature clear) started within forty days, in the city of Myra, and that the farmers were so afraid of the disease that they refused to go to the city, resulting in famine. A rumour broke out in Myra that Nicholas had forbidden the farmers from going to the city, so that the governors and archbishop of Myra sent clergymen to Nicholas to arrest him. Some local villagers urged Nicholas not to go to the city, 'for there is much wrath in the city because of you.'[20] At this point, without explaining how Nicholas avoided arrest, how the plague developed and ended, or how the visions recounted by Nicolas were

[16] ibid.
[17] ibid. 48 (ed. and trans. pp.78-81).
[18] ibid. 50 (ed. and trans. pp.82-3).
[19] ibid. 51 (ed. and trans. pp.82-3).
[20] ibid. 53 (ed. and trans. pp.84-5).

fulfilled, the narrative abruptly shifts to describing Nicholas travelling around to local shrines and performing sacrifices and processions; the plague plays no further role in the text.

Here again we find a hagiographer struggling to deal with a major disaster that posed a severe threat to his saint's reputation. The importance of the plague is indicated by the eschatological tone of the visions announcing it; the saint and the archangel Michael both refer to it as heralding the end of the world.[21] The description of events in Myra, and the attempts to arrest Nicholas, show how greatly the disaster threatened the saint, prompting not only scepticism about his thaumaturgic powers, but also criticism of his social influence. Nicholas himself seems to have been scapegoated by certain authorities within the city. Like Symeon's hagiographer, Nicholas's adopts several strategies to try to combat this hostility. First, in a manner recalling the scapegoating of Angoulas in the *Life of Symeon*,[22] he seems to shift blame for part of the disaster onto the saint's brother, Artemas. Here the saint's vision, in which Artemas refused to give the scythe-bearing angel three *eulogiai*, and Nicholas says that as a result the angel will take two doves, is crucial. The fragmented nature of the narrative (probably the result of a clumsy process of compilation)[23] means that the significance of this vision is never explained, and its realisation never described. It seems almost certain, however, that in its original form the 'two doves' must have symbolised two special victims of the plague—quite possibly, although this must remain speculative, two monks from Nicholas's monastery. As the *Life of Symeon* revealed, holy men faced especial challenges when they failed to protect their own disciples, and this could explain why the hagiographer named a scapegoat for these deaths in particular.

[21] ibid. 48 line 6 (pp.78), 51 line 9 (pp.82).
[22] Cf. Efthymiadis et al. 2011, 70 n91.
[23] See above p.252 n11.

Yet the hagiographer also adopts a more general framework to explain the outbreak of the plague, and the role of the holy man within it; angels repeatedly tell Nicholas that it is the time of the harvest and that the holy men must harvest the souls with scythes, 'seal' the harvest, and deliver the souls to God. The image of the eschatological harvest derives from the New Testament, where it occurs in both the Gospel of Matthew (13:36-43) and the Book of Revelation (14:14-20). In the Gospel text, the reaping is performed by the angels; in Revelation, by both angels and Christ himself. Nicholas's hagiographer attempts to give holy men a role in this eschatological drama, by making an angel distribute scythes to the saints (the claim that Nicholas had the responsibility for the souls from Lycia implies that other holy men in other areas were performing the same task).

This model gives a completely different role to the holy man from that found in the *Life of Symeon.* There, when there was a tension between God's will and the safety of the people, the saint was presented firmly as representing the latter; he repeatedly urged God to change his mind and never accepted the infliction of disasters without protesting. When an earthquake is about to hit Syria, Symeon sees angels in a boat about to hurl themselves against the coast; they, the 'angels of wrath', are the executors of God's judgement, while he is an unwilling bystander.[24] In the *Life of Nicholas,* in contrast, although the saint is very afraid and upset by what he has seen, he makes no attempt to change God's mind, and by receiving a scythe, he himself takes the place of the angel and becomes the executor of God's command. Thus even though Nicholas's hagiographer uses some of the same techniques as Symeon's, including the displacement of blame onto a disliked scapegoat, he displays a markedly different theological interpretation both of events and of the holy man's position between God and earth. The text does, however, exhibit many of the same tensions

[24] ἄγγελοι ὀργῆς: *Life of Symeon,* 104 (p.83).

as the *Life of Symeon,* and shows how far a holy man's reputation could be put at stake by disasters afflicting his neighbourhood.

These signs of tension and crisis become still clearer in hagiography written in the second quarter of the seventh century, after the Persian invasions of the empire. Theodore of Sykeon died in 613,[25] and his *Life* seems to have been written by his disciple George in the mid seventh century, between c.640 and 680.[26] Theodore therefore died when Khusro II's Persian armies were already making major inroads into Roman territory, although before the conquests of Jerusalem and Egypt, whereas the *Life* was written after much of the Empire had already fallen to the Arab invaders. The later parts of the *Life* are suffused with ominous warnings about the coming crises. Thus George recounts that once when Theodore was making the eucharistic oblation, steam rose from the bread even though it was stale; the patrician Photius asked the saint what this signified, whereupon Theodore explained that 'the grace which the saints receive is withdrawing and returning from us into the heavens, because of our unworthiness and our sins, so that our state will by tested by many tribulations and dangers.'[27] This seems in itself to be an *apologia* for the failure of saintly intercessors, living or dead, to prevent the coming military disasters; the grace of the saints was being drawn back to God because of the empire's great sinfulness. During processions in the nearby towns and villages, the crosses carried by the participants started to leap around of their own accord; Theodore predicted that this too signified great dangers approaching

[25] At least according to his hagiographer: *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 170 (I, p.161).
[26] Terminus post quem of October 640: George says that Theodore's prediction that Heraclius would reign for 30 years came true, implying he was writing at earliest in the 30th year of Heraclius's reign, 640-1 (*Life of Theodore,* 166 [I, p.154]). Terminus ante quem of 680: even if one does not accept George's claim that he was a disciple of Theodore, he was almost certainly writing before the Third Council of Constantinople in 680-1, which condemned patriarch Sergius of Constantinople as a heretic; George is extremely favourable to the patriarch (see esp. ibid. 136 [I, pp.108-9]). A date around or shortly after Heraclius's death in 641 seems most plausible.
[27] ἡ γὰρ χάρις τῶν ἁγίων συστέλλεται καὶ ἀνέρχεται ἀφ' ἡμῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς διὰ τὴν ἀναξιότητα καὶ τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πρὸς τὸ πειραθῆναι τὴν πολιτείαν ἡμῶν πολλῶν θλίψεων καὶ κινδύνων: *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 127 (I, pp.102-3).

the world.[28] On a subsequent visit to Constantinople, the patriarch, Thomas, anxiously asked the saint if the stories about the jumping crosses were true, and, if so, what they foretold. Theodore was reluctant to reply but, when pressed, provided the interpretation:

> The shaking of the crosses portends many painful and dangerous things for us – it means woe and apostasy in our faith, and the inroads of many barbarous peoples, and the shedding of much blood, and destruction and captivity throughout the whole world, the desolation of the holy churches, the cessation of the divine service of praise, the fall and instability of the Empire and perplexity and critical times for the State; and further it foreshadows that the coming of the Adversary is at hand.[29]

This eschatological prophecy (which echoes other eschatological predictions from Heraclius's reign)[30] almost certainly refers not only to the Persian invasions, but also to the subsequent Islamic conquests that must have been in the forefront of the hagiographer's mind. The rest of the *Life* continues this ominous tone: patriarch Thomas asks Theodore to pray for him to die before the catastrophes occur, and is replaced by Sergius, who protests his unworthiness for the role. Theodore tells Sergius that it is precisely because he is so young that God has chosen him as patriarch, so that he will be able to endure the terrible trials to come.[31] After his return to his monastery in Galatia, Theodore reassures the general Priscus that the rumours he had heard that Caesarea in Cappadocia was being starved in a siege by the Persians were false, but then warns that if the Romans failed to repent and appease God's wrath, the Persians would return with a great army and destroy all the land up to the sea. He then states that he trusts in God that while he is alive, God will not let the barbarians attack his homeland; George comments that this indeed turned out to be the

[28] ibid. 127 (I, p.103).
[29] ὁ τῶν σταυρίων σεισμὸς πολλὰ σημαίνει ἡμῖν ὀδυνηρὰ καὶ ἐπικίνδυνα· καὶ γὰρ ταλαντισμὸν [? ταλανισμὸν] τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν καὶ ἀποστασίαν σημαίνει, καὶ βαρβαρικῶν πολλῶν ἐθνῶν ἐφόδους, καὶ ἔκχυσιν αἱμάτων πολλῶν, καὶ φθορὰν καὶ αἰχμαλωσίαν κοσμικὴν καὶ ἐρήμωσιν τῶν ἁγίων ἐκκλησιῶν, καὶ κατάπαυσιν τῆς θείας δοξολογίας, καὶ τῆς βασιλείας πτῶσιν καὶ ἀκαταστασίαν, καὶ πολλὴν τῆς πολιτείας ἀπορίαν καὶ περίστασιν· λοιπὸν δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἀντικειμένου τὴν ἐπιδημίαν ἐγγίζειν προδηλοῦσι: ibid. 134 (I, p.106, trans. pp.176-7).
[30] On eschatology under Heraclius (especially in connection with the Persian war), see e.g. Reinink 2002; Stoyanov 2011, 55-71.
[31] George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 136 (I, pp.108-9).

case.[32] This, then, provides a useful defensive argument for the hagiographer: it was only after the saint's death that the worst incursions of the Persians took place, and therefore he could claim that his saintliness had held back the disasters for a while.

Nonetheless, the hagiographer does resort at times to more directly exculpatory tactics. Thus he recounts a story in which Heraclius visited the saint on his way to prepare a campaign against the Persians. Theodore embraced the emperor, prayed that God would protect him, gave him gifts of bread, apples and wine, and offered to serve him dinner. Yet Heraclius, in a hurry, rejected the offer of dinner and asked him to keep the gifts for him to collect on his return. After the emperor left, Theodore was distressed that he had not taken the gifts, and told his monks, 'If he had taken them, this would have been a proof of his victory and he would have returned in joy. The fact that he has left them is a sign of our defeat, and if it had not been the case that he had come and received the prayer of the saints, in truth this disaster would have reached to him and to all of us.'[33] The hagiographer tries simultaneously to exculpate Theodore of guilt for Heraclius's military defeat, by laying the responsibility on his failure to take the gifts, and to suggest that the saint's prayers had had some positive impact: if Heraclius had not visited him at all, he and the entire empire would have been lost.[34]

George of Sykeon's task in writing was made somewhat easier by the fact that military disaster had not reached as far as Theodore's home province by the time of his death. As the *Life of Symeon* shows, disasters which took place near the saint's own person posed particular challenges to his authority. Seventh-century hagiographers writing about holy men who lived through the worst of the Persian invasions thus faced an extremely difficult

[32] ibid. 153 (I, pp.123-4).
[33] ἐὰν ἔλαβεν αὐτάς, τεκμήριον ἦν τῆς νίκης αὐτοῦ καὶ μετὰ χαρᾶς ὑπέστρεφεν· τὸ δὲ καταλιπεῖν αὐτὸν ταύτας σημεῖόν ἐστι τῆς ἥττας ἡμῶν, καὶ εἰ μὴ ὅτι ἀνῆλθεν καὶ ἔλαβεν τὴν εὐχὴν τῶν ἁγίων, ἐπεὶ καὶ μέχρις αὐτοῦ εἶχεν φθάσαι καὶ εἰς πάντας ἡμᾶς τὸ τοιοῦτον πένθος: ibid. 166 (I, p.154).
[34] On this passage see Dal Santo 2012, 214-6.

task. There are not in fact many full-length saints' Lives set in the eastern empire in this period, perhaps for this very reason. But the extraordinary lengths to which hagiographers could go in tackling these disasters are brought out with exceptional clarity in a short saint's Life written after the early 630s:[35] the *Life of George of Choziba.*

George, from the monastery of Choziba, near Jericho, lived through the Persian invasion of Palestine, which included perhaps the most emotionally devastating event of the entire war: the fall of Jerusalem in 614.[36] The hagiographer blamed these disasters firmly on the sins of the people, and, in particular, on their recourse to sorcerers, implying that this constituted idolatry. Thus, when a wrestler, Epiphanius, who had been afflicted by a demon after consulting a sorcerer, came to Choziba to seek George's help, George launched into a passionate discourse to the brothers:

> Look, dear friends, at what Christians do! Woe to this world because of its scandalous acts… Although supposedly called Christians, we submit to the yoke of the enemy of Christ: some become sorcerers, while others seek out help from them! What fellowship does light have with darkness, what agreement does the temple of God have with an idol, or what agreement is there between Christ and Belial?....How, therefore, can God not be angry at our people? How can he not turn his face away from the evil generation that does these things? Who will persuade him not to bring cataclysm on the earth or once again rain down fire and brimstone, burning up the earth like Sodom and Gomorrha?[37]

[35] The *Life of George of Choziba* has been dated to 631 by Binns on the grounds that it refers to the patriarch of Jerusalem as Modestus, who, according to him, served in this position only briefly in 631: Binns 1996, 54. Vivian, in his English translation of the *Life*, seems to accept this argument, as he dates it to 631, without explanation (Vivian 1996, 53). This dating is problematic, however, as the text merely refers to an event taking place 'in the time of our blessed father Modestus, patriarch of the holy city of Christ our God' (ἐπὶ τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Μοδέστου, πατριάρχου τῆς ἁγίας Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν πόλεως) (Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba* [p.115]), which does not seem to guarantee that Modestus was still patriarch at the time that the hagiographer was writing. Modestus's patriarchate (the dates of which are, in any case, uncertain), thus serves only as a terminus post quem for the composition of the *Life;* its real date remains unknown.

[36] On the ideological impact of the fall of Jerusalem, see Flusin 1992, II, esp.129-49; Booth 2014, 94-100.

[37] Βλέπετε, ἀγαπητοί, τί ποιοῦσιν οἱ χριστιανοί. Οὐαὶ τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ ἀπὸ τῶν σκανδάλων…Χριστιανοὶ δῆθεν λεγόμενοι, καὶ τῷ ἐχθρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑποκύπτομεν, οἱ μὲν γινόμενοι μάγοι, οἱ δὲ παρ' αὐτῶν βοήθειαν ἐπιζητοῦντες. Τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος, τίς δὲ συγκατάθεσις ναῷ Θεοῦ μετὰ εἰδώλου, ἢ τίς συμφωρία Χριστοῦ πρὸς Βελίαρ;….Πῶς οὖν μὴ ὀργιασθῇ ὁ Θεὸς ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἡμῶν; Πῶς μὴ ἀποστρέψῃ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς πονηρᾶς γενεᾶς τῆς ποιούσης ταῦτα; Τίς δὲ καὶ δυσωπήσει αὐτὸν μὴ ἐπαγαγεῖν κατακλυσμὸν ἔτι τῷ κόσμῳ, ἢ πάλιν ὑετὸν πυρὸς καὶ θείου, καταφλέγων τὴν γὴν ὡς Σόδομα καὶ Γόμορρα: Antony of Choziba, *Life of George of Choziba*, 18 (pp.116-7, trans. pp.84-5 with small changes by me).

This, by itself, recalls Symeon's hagiographer's blaming of the idolatry of the Antiochenes for the Persian sack of 540. But George's hagiographer (apparently his disciple Antony) continues to adopt a very different approach from that found in Symeon's *Life*. We have already seen that hagiographers could take varying lines when handling the difficult question of the saint's response to God's decision to punish humanity. Thus Symeon repeatedly protested against God's decisions, urging him to change his mind, whereas Nicholas of Sion reluctantly acquiesced with God's plans and even became an agent of his wrath. George of Choziba, according to Antony, went still further: he actively urged God to punish his people. Thus, we are told, when the Persians had conquered land up to Damascus, George was praying to God to be merciful, but heard a voice telling him to go down to Jericho to see the actions of men. When he arrived, he saw over the city a crowd of Indians fighting with each other, and told the brothers he was with to flee. At this point,

> The old man returned to his cell, and he bewailed and mourned the people's confusion, or rather their ignorance and impiety. He then went outside and sat on the rock...and called upon God and implored him, saying, 'Lord God of mercies and Lord of pity, you who wish everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth, take up your staff and smite this people, for they walk in ignorance.' And suddenly he saw a fiery staff stretching in the sky from the Holy City to Bostra. And the holy man knew that the people would be severely disciplined. And he bewailed and mourned everything.[38]

The saint is thus actually presented, it would seem, as calling for the Persian attacks to worsen. In this moment of crisis, George abandons the traditional role of the holy man, that of intercessor for a people, however sinful, instead demanding that they should be chastised. No story can better show how severely challenged holy men and hagiographers were by the disasters of the early seventh century.

This is not to argue that the crises of the sixth and seventh centuries *created* scepticism towards and criticism of holy men. Far from it: there had always been a conceptual problem

[38] ibid. 30 (p.129, trans. p.92). On this passage cf. Booth 2014, 100.

surrounding the idea of saint as mediator between God and man.[39] So too there had always been sceptics about some forms of miracle-working, ranging from theologically-minded clerics who were averse to anything that might bear the taint of paganism to ordinary lay Christians who observed that the saints sometimes made very human mistakes.[40] The holy man had never been accepted unquestioningly by Byzantine society. But it is to argue that widespread societal crisis crystallised these concerns, gave fodder to the saints' critics, and ensured that the debate had far greater emotional and ideological significance.

Context for Crisis: Heightened Expectations of Holy Men

Holy men had in fact by this period become particularly vulnerable to accusations of failure in times of disaster because of ideological developments across late antiquity. Two related developments were key: first, rising expectations of the miracle-working powers of saints, and second, the growing association between holy men and the empire. In the earliest saints' Lives, from the fourth century, hagiographers are often quite cautious about miracles, and avoid overstating the capabilities of their saints. Admittedly, not all hagiographers are equally restrained: Gregory of Nyssa in his *Life of Gregory Thaumatourgos* places rather more emphasis on the miraculous than some of his contemporaries, although his claims are still less extravagant than those found in many later saints' Lives.[41] But in the foundational texts of Christian monastic hagiography, we find explicit acknowledgements of limitations on holy men's thaumaturgic powers. Thus Athanasius in his *Life of Antony* states that the holy man did not expect to have his every request granted by God, and that he did not become angry if he failed to perform a miracle: '[Antony] would suffer with those who suffered, and pray for them, and often the Lord hearkened to him concerning many of them.

[39] Cf. above pp.197-202, and Dal Santo 2012, 181.
[40] See above p.73 n139.
[41] It should be noted that the epithet 'Thaumatourgos', Wonder-worker, was not used by Gregory of Nyssa himself for his subject; it does not seem to have been employed until the fifth century: see Slusser 1998, 1 (with n1). Rowan Greer has discerned some signs of tension in Gregory of Nyssa's own attitude to miracles: Greer 1989, 108-111.

He was neither boastful when he was heard, nor did he grumble when he was not heard, but always gave thanks to the Lord.'[42] Athanasius's generally ambivalent attitude towards miracles in the text[43] may in part reflect his role as bishop: as a representative of ecclesiastical authority he may have been suspicious of the charismatic powers ascribed to holy men.[44] Yet similarly limited expectations are found in the Bohairic *Life of Pachomius,*[45] a work usually thought to be of monastic rather than clerical origin: the hagiographer reports, probably inspired by the *Life of Antony,* 'the Lord did many other healings through [Pachomius]. But if he prayed over someone for his healing and was not granted his request by the Lord, he was not afflicted at not being heard. On the contrary his prayer was always, "Lord, may your will be done."'[46] As long as expectations of miracle working were kept this low, and God's overriding will was always emphasised, holy men were much less vulnerable to criticism in times of disaster.

Yet these caveats about the limitations of saints' abilities soon disappear from most hagiography, and expectations of the scope and efficacy of their miracles become increasingly great. By the sixth and seventh centuries, we even find holy men becoming angry when God refuses to accept their prayers, in sharp contrast to the equanimity in the face of failure praised by Antony and Pachomius's hagiographers. This contrast can perhaps best be illustrated by a comparison to reactions to outbreaks of disease within saints' monasteries. An epidemic hit Pachomius's monastic confederation towards the end of the saint's lifetime. Many senior monks, including the abbots of some of the monasteries, died, yet Pachomius neither healed any of the monks nor seemed to be expected to. He displayed

[42] Athanasius, *Life of Antony,* 56 (p.286, trans. p.179).
[43] Also suggested by e.g. ibid. 31-38 (pp.220-38).
[44] See esp. M.A. Williams 1982b, esp.33-40.
[45] The dating of the various versions of the Life of Pachomius is very difficult to establish: all probably contain fourth-century material, but with later accretions: see above p.10 n8.
[46] Bohairic *Life of Pachomius,* 45 (p.48, trans. pp.68-9).

his holiness simply by refusing any special treatment when he too fell ill.[47] The epidemic is described in sorrowful, but matter-of-fact terms, and is apparently a natural phenomenon. This could hardly contrast more strongly with Symeon the Younger's presentation of plague within his monastery, as discussed above;[48] in this late sixth/seventh century source, the plague is presented as a manifestation of the Devil's supernatural campaign against the saint. The account of Symeon's resurrection of his beloved disciple Conon shows how far the expectations of and about holy men had changed. When Conon dies of the plague, Symeon prays to God for his life to be restored. His initial prayers seem to have no effect, at which point, far from displaying the composed resignation idealised by Antony and Pachomius's hagiographers, he appears to grow angry and rebuke the heavens. He addresses the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and all the heavenly powers, saints and martyrs, asking, 'Have you ceased to pray for me, have you forgotten my love? Where now is your sanctification? Where is your remembrance of me in your phalanxes?',[49] and insisting, 'If he does not live [again], I have toiled in vain; if he isn't resurrected, I have not pleased the Lord nor obtained [the right] to participate in the celestial treasure of his greatness.'[50] The other monks are terrified, 'because it could be seen, after these words, that the Heaven itself was almost hostile.'[51] Ultimately, Symeon's impassioned pleas are successful, and Conon is resurrected. The contrast between this account and that found in the *Life of Pachomius* reflects a great increase in the claims of hagiographers about their saints' powers: failure was no longer to be tolerated.

[47] This part of the *Life* is missing from the surviving Bohairic version of the text, but the gap can be filled by recourse to one of the surviving Sahidic versions (S^7): Sahidic *Lives of Pachomius* (pp.91-2). (See Veilleux's discussion of the corpus: Veilleux 1980, 1-18).
[48] See pp.195-203.
[49] 'ἐσιγήσατε δεόμενοι ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, ἐπελάθεσθέ μου τῆς ἀγάπης; Ποῦ νῦν ὁ ἁγιασμὸς ὑμῶν; Ποῦ νῦν ἡ μνήμη μου ἐν τοῖς συντάγμασιν ὑμῶν;' *Life of Symeon*, 129 (p.118).
[50] εἰ οὐ ζήσεται, εἰς μάτην ἐκοπίασα· εἰ οὐκ ἀναστήσεται, οὐκ εὐηρέστησα τῷ Κυρίῳ οὐδὲ κοινωνίαν εὗρον εἰς τὸν ἐν οὐρανοῖς θησαυρὸν τῆς μεγαλωσύνης': ibid.
[51] 'ἦν γὰρ ἰδεῖν ἐκ τῶν λεγομένων αὐτὸν σχεδὸν τὸν οὐρανὸν στυγνάζοντα': ibid.

Later hagiographers also present their saints attempting and achieving more ambitious miracles than we find in the fourth century. Fourth-century holy men normally performed miracles for individuals or small local groups who, or whose representatives, came to visit the saint in person. Many later saints, however, are described performing miracles for whole cities, or for people in distant lands: thus the fifth-century Syriac *Life of Symeon Stylites the Elder* states 'for what mouth could tell or recount about the miracles and glorious deeds which our Lord performed through him, not only nearby, but also far away, and at sea, and among the pagans, and among the Magians, worshippers of fire and water?'[52] The sixth-century *Life of Severus* seems to depict its hero as guardian of the city of Antioch and its people against all disasters: 'in times of drought, dearth of rain, rapacious pestilences, and the irruption of demonic attacks, like Moses he would stand against the wrath of God, appeasing Him by [his] intercessions for all the people.'[53] These highly ambitious claims about what holy men could achieve, together with the refusal to accept they might fail in their requests, undoubtedly had the potential to increase the influence and status of saints' cults, and to attract more worshippers. But they also bore a potential downside: if the saints were always expected to achieve their requests, and defend large populations, they were much more vulnerable when they had clearly failed to do so.

In particular, military disasters for the empire became a threat to Byzantine holy men because of an increasing association, from the late fifth century onwards, between holy men and the security of the state. Fourth-century hagiographies generally display a reserved, or openly hostile, attitude towards the Roman emperors—perhaps unsurprisingly, given that the emperors in this period were either 'heretics' or pagans—and display no interest in the

[52] ܒܬܪ ܚܝܬ ܡܢ ܡܐ ܕܢܫܬܥ ܠܗ ܐܚܝܢ ܒܟ ܠܟܐܦ ܡܝܬܝܢ ܒܚܝܠ ܬܘܒ ܕܒܝܬ ܩܕܝܫ ܕܡܪܢ ܥܒܕ ܠܗ ܒܗ ܘܒܟܠ ܐܬܪ ܘܒܝܡ ܘܒܝܡ ܒܚܪ ܘܒܝܡ ܒܢܘܪ ܘܒܝܡ ܒܒܢܝ ܡܓܘܫܐ ܘܒܝܡ ܒܒܢܝ ܐܒܪ ܡܓܘܫܐ ܘܒܝܡ ܒܒܢܝ ܐܒܪ ܡܓܘܫܐ : Syriac *Life of Symeon* (pp.594-5).

[53] *Life of Severus* (p.245, trans. p.127).

military successes or failures of the empire.[54] From the fifth century onwards, with the advent of 'orthodox' emperors, hagiographers engage more closely and favourably with imperial authorities, although they still play a limited role in comparison with later saints' Lives.[55] The Syriac *Life of Symeon Stylites the Elder* does, however, contain perhaps the first reference in a saint's Life to what becomes a crucial concept, the idea that the sanctity of holy men could protect the empire: thus it reports that Leo I tried to acquire the body of the saint for Constantinople, 'in order to honour it there with him as his endeavours deserved, *and in order for their kingdom to be protected by his prayers* [emphasis mine].'[56] Yet it is only with the *Life of Daniel the Stylite,* probably dating from the last decade of the fifth century, that the emperors become an important focus of interest in a holy *vita*.[57] It would be excessive to list all the forms of association between saint, emperor, and empire in the *Life,* but again the link between the power of the saint and the prosperity of the empire should be noted: Daniel reassures Leo that God has promised to preserve Alexandria and the emperor against Vandal attacks.[58]

In the sixth century, this connection between saint and state was thoroughly cemented, at least in the Chalcedonian tradition,[59] to the extent that Helen Saradi has spoken of the appearance of the 'national saint.'[60] Certain tropes emerge: Eutychius of Constantinople, Symeon the Younger and Theodore of Sykeon all predicted the accessions of one or more

[54] E.g. Athanasius, *Life of Antony,* 81 (pp.340-4); see Brakke 1995, 247; Bohairic *Life of Pachomius,* 101 (pp.125-8), 185 (pp.164-8); Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* (pp.44-5).
[55] See e.g. Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatius,* 37 (pp.227-9).
[56] .ܒܝܫ ܟܬܒ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܠܗ ܒܗ ܢܗܘܐ ܒܛܝܒ ܘܒܬܩܝܡ ܡܠܟܘܬܗ ܒܨܠܘܬܗ: Syriac *Life of Symeon* (p.643).
[57] On the extraordinary relationship of the saint and the emperor in the *Life of Daniel* see Miller, 1970; Lane-Fox 1997, 178-9, 205, and esp. Trampedach 2013, 189-207.
[58] *Life of Daniel,* 56 (p.55); on the historical context see Lane Fox 1997, 190-1.
[59] The picture is, unsurprisingly, more complex in Miaphysite hagiography, where holy men are sometimes depicted criticising emperors' religious policy, as in John of Ephesus's *Lives* of Z'ura and Mare the Solitary (*Lives of the Eastern Saints,* 2 [I, pp.18-35], 36 [II, pp.624-41]—though it should be noted that John's attitude towards Justinian is far from uniformly hostile, and he often tries to show that his holy men did achieve influence over him. For a study of John's treatment of emperors (although focusing particularly on his *Ecclesiastical History*), see Van Ginkel 1994.
[60] Saradi 1995, 102.

emperors.[61] Symeon the Younger healed Justin II's daughter of demon possession;[62] Theodore of Sykeon cured Maurice's child of 'an incurable disease'.[63] Above all, crucially, the association between saint and the security of the state grew ever stronger. Thus in Cyril of Scythopolis's influential *Life of Sabas* Justinian is said to have offered patronage to his monasteries in the desert, 'so that they may pray for the state entrusted to our care';[64] Sabas also tells Justinian that if the emperor fulfils the saint's requests he will regain Africa, Rome, and the rest of the lost provinces.[65] Theodosius, in his Life by Theodore of Petra, gives the Magister Militum per Orientem his hairskin vest as a phylactery on his way to campaign against the Persians; the general achieves a victory 'so brilliant and so useful to the universality of the whole Roman state'.[66] Theodore of Sykeon is particularly closely implicated with the military fate of the empire. The episode in which Heraclius seeks his prayers when on his way to fight the Persians has already been mentioned, but Theodore also heals the important patrician Niketas of a sickness rumoured to have been caused by poison, telling him, 'Get up, my son, it is the hour of toil, our government/state has need of you.'[67] He even prays for various important members of the subsequently reviled regime of Phokas, although his hagiographer makes him warn both 'the savage consul'[68] Bonosus and Phokas himself that their wicked deeds are likely to prevent God from favouring them with success.[69]

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[61] Eutychius predicts the accessions of Justin II, Tiberius, and Maurice (*Life of Eutychius,* lines 1842-1945 [pp.60-63]; Symeon that of Justin II (*Life of Symeon,* 202-3, [pp.176-7]) (Evagrius Scholasticus also claims that Symeon had foretold the accession of Maurice: V.21 [p.217]); Theodore that of Maurice (George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 54 [I, pp.46-7]).
[62] *Life of Symeon,* 207 (pp.178-9).
[63] πάθει ἀνιάτῳ: George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 97 (I, p.79, trans p.153).
[64] Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas* (p.175, trans. p.184).
[65] ibid. (p.175, trans. p.185).
[66] Τῆς οὕτω λαμπρᾶς καὶ κοινωφελοῦς τοῦ παντὸς Ῥωμαίων πολιτεύματος: Theodore of Petra, *Life of Theodosius* (pp.83-5, quote at p.85).
[67] ἀνάστηθι, τέκνον, ὅτι καιρὸς καμάτου ἐστὶν καὶ χρήζει σου τὸ πολίτευμα ἡμῶν: George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon,* 154 (I, p.125)
[68] ἀνήμερος ὕπατος: ibid. 142 (I, p.111).
[69] He saved Phokas's nephew, Domnitziolus, from a Persian ambush, and prayed and predicted successfully that his wife would bear three children: ibid. 120 and 140 (I, pp.96-7, 110-1); he healed Phokas himself of an

In the early seventh century we even see the development of hagiography as imperial, patriotic, propaganda, as seen in the rewritings of the Lives of Golindouch and Anastasius the Persian by, respectively, Eustratius Presbyter and George of Pisidia.[70] This last development reflects an important fact: the association between holy men and empire does not seem to have been drawn only by hagiographers seeking to boost the prestige of their saints, and to win patronage, but was also encouraged by the imperial government itself, especially from the late sixth century onwards, to strengthen and legitimise its authority.[71] This identification of holy men and empire worked in the favour of both in times of peace and prosperity. Yet, inevitably, it meant that if the defences of the empire failed—as they did, spectacularly, in the seventh century—the protective powers of the saints became extremely vulnerable to criticism. Eustratius Presbyter's *Life of Golindouch,* written in the last months of Maurice's reign,[72] reveals particularly clearly how quickly a hagiographer's claims about his saint's powers could be disproven: Eustratius describes Golindouch praying on her deathbed for Maurice's success and prosperity, yet, within a year, Maurice had been overthrown by Phokas and the empire was facing disaster.[73] Again, therefore, it is clear that long term ideological developments underlay the crisis in sanctity reflected in hagiography of this period. As hagiographers attributed more ambitious roles to their saints, depicting them as the mainstays of the empire and the defenders of the Christian people, they also faced a greater risk of embarrassment if their saints had clearly failed to fulfil their goals. It was in the late sixth and seventh centuries that expectations of holy men's miracle-

illness, although was more equivocal when asked to pray for his regime (133 [I, pp.105-6]); he prayed for, but also rebuked, Bonosus (142 [I, pp.111-3]).

[70] On the strongly pro-imperial line of Eustratius's version of the *Life of Golindouch,* see Dal Santo 2011b. George of Pisidia's reworking of the *Life of Anastasius* has yet to receive a detailed study, but does seem to reflect Heraclian propaganda: it contains—unlike its Palestinian source—aggressive attacks on Khusro II (see e.g. 5 [p.209], 35 [p.245]), a military-religious ethos (see e.g. 18 [pp.225-7], and a possible effort to associate the saint with the emperor through imagery (ibid. 45 [p.255], 47 [p.257]).

[71] See esp. A.M. Cameron 1979 and Dal Santo 2012, 321-4.

[72] The *Life* must have been written after January 12 602, the death of Bishop Domitian of Melitene, but before the revolt of Phokas late in the same year (Peeters 1944, 81, 91).

[73] *Life of Golindouch,* 24 (pp.171-2).

working reached their peak—and in the same period that holy men were most closely identified with the empire and its success. As a result, the disasters of the period—the sixth-century plague, severe earthquakes in some locations, and above all the destructive wars with the Persians and the Arabs which resulted in serious losses to the empire—posed an exceptionally strong challenge to holy men's claims to authority to which some hagiographers, at least, clearly felt obliged to respond.

Miracle Collections

Was this sense of crisis confined to the biographies of living holy men? At the same time that some saints' Lives evince the kinds of tension just described, another hagiographic genre was flourishing: the miracle collections of long-dead martyrs. Only one such collection survives in Greek from before this period: the miracles of the cult of Thekla at Seleucia in Isauria, written in the fifth century by a maverick ex-member of the clergy of her shrine, who had twice been excommunicated by local bishops.[74] But numerous miracle collections have survived from the late sixth and seventh centuries, including, from Constantinople, the several miracle collections of Cosmas and Damian, the Miracles of Artemius, and the Miracles of Therapon; from Menouthis in Egypt, Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Miracles of Cyrus and John,* and from Thessaloniki, the two series of the Miracles of St Demetrius.[75] The relationship between this genre of hagiography, and the saint's Life, is complex, but despite important differences the two undoubtedly share certain key concerns and conceptions.[76] Some texts cross the boundaries between the genres, including, as argued above, the *Life of Martha.* We thus might expect to find in the miracle

[74] See above p.11 n17.
[75] On the emergence of miracle collections in this period, see e.g. A.M. Cameron 1991a, 211-2.
[76] Both, of course, are generally concerned with cult promotion, but they also seem to respond to similar ideological currents and even, sometimes, particular debates: see Dal Santo 2012, 149-236 (though he notes, rightly, that we must be cautious when drawing links between texts with very different backgrounds).

collections attempts to counter tension and scepticism provoked by natural and military disasters, similar to those found in the saints' Lives mentioned above. But is this the case?

The miracle collections of this period do display certain signs of tension, and seem keen to rebut potential critics of the miracle-working powers of their saints. This phenomenon has in fact been studied more thoroughly than responses to crises in holy *vitae,* by, in particular, Vincent Déroche and Matthew Dal Santo. Dal Santo focuses on the evidence in the texts of widespread scepticism about the possibility of posthumous intercession,[77] while Déroche shows that many of the hagiographers struggled to reconcile the saint's duty to his suppliants with that towards God, and often as a result show the martyr resisting God's command and messengers.[78] Both suggest that these tensions are similar to those displayed in the *Life of Symeon;* indeed, both count the *Life* as one of these miracle collections (a view which I have challenged above).[79] Neither, however, gives a central place to the disasters of the period when discussing these tensions. Déroche argues that they were caused by the particular process of compilation of miracle collections.[80] Dal Santo does at various points suggest that the manifold difficulties facing the empire in the period may have encouraged the debates he describes, but this is not the focus of his attention, and he does not always explore the theme when discussing individual texts, even the *Life of Symeon.*[81] While in the *Life of Symeon* this connection between disasters and scepticism and tension is clear, it is much harder to assess how far it is relevant in the case of the miracle collections.

It is a notable feature of the sixth- and seventh-century miracle collections (with one important exception, to be discussed shortly) that they are far more limited in scope than many contemporary saints' Lives. Thus—and this is where their similarities to the *Life of*

[77] Dal Santo 2012, chapter 3.
[78] Déroche, 2000, 145-54.
[79] See above p.145.
[80] A view which I have argued against above p.197.
[81] For references to disasters, see Dal Santo 2012, 214, 216, 324-5.

Martha are most striking—they generally contain nothing about major events in the empire, or even in the city where they are set; rather their focus is entirely on their cult site and on the private lives of their suppliants. They also focus almost exclusively on healing miracles, including only the occasional other form of small-scale miracle: thus, for example, the miracles of Cosmas and Damian are overwhelmingly dominated by healing miracles, but contain one reference to a miracle of conversion with no healing attached, and another to the saints' miraculous procuring of a job for one of their suppliants.[82] So too 44 of the 45 miracles of Artemius deal with healing miracles (almost all of which relate to ailments of the male genitalia); just one recounts the saint's success in helping one of his devotees regain his stolen goods.[83] Finally, their miracles almost always benefit only one (or sometimes two or three) suppliants; mass miracles for whole villages or cities are unknown. The saints are not presented as general protectors of whole regions, but as patrons of individuals who have turned to the saints and fulfilled the required conditions for healing (conditions which vary, sometimes relating to orthodox belief, sometimes simply to belief in the saints, and other times to particular ritual activities). All this means that disasters such as earthquakes and invasions are irrelevant to the preoccupations of these hagiographers; plague sometimes enters the accounts, but even then the hagiographers describe their saints healing particular victims of the disease rather than, like Symeon the Younger, attempting to avert the sickness from a whole area.[84] The genre of the miracle collection thus seems well-suited to a time of crisis; the narrower horizons of these cults when compared to those of some holy men meant

[82] *Miracles of Cosmas and Damian,* 10 (pp.117-21), 18 (pp.144-9). In miracle 25 the saints also prove that a man's wife has not been unfaithful to him, but this story still contains a healing (pp.164-6).
[83] *Miracles of Artemius,* 18 (pp.114-20).
[84] See e.g. ibid. 34 (pp.176-82). The late seventh or early eighth-century *Miracles of Therapon* might seem to be an exception to this rule, since the work contains, near its beginning, an account of the saint's relics being transferred from Cyprus to Constantinople to escape the second Arab attack on the island (Miracles 6-11 [pp.123-6]; during this section the hagiographer does urge Therapon to protect the Christians from the barbarians (Miracles 10 [p.125]). Yet once the author begins to recount the saint's miracles, again he focuses exclusively on healing miracles of small numbers of people, seemingly unrelated to the context of invasion (Miracles 12-24 [pp.126-32]).

that their hagiographers did not have to deal with many of the challenges faced by the latter. It is particularly well-suited because miracle collections, in comparison with saints' Lives, tend to place far more responsibility for the successful performance of a miracle on the individual suppliant than on the holy man or martyr; if a miracle does not take place it is the former who is to blame.[85]

The question remains of whether these characteristics of miracle collections are entirely coincidental, and unrelated to the crises, or whether these hagiographers were responding, consciously or unconsciously, to the pressures of the time by narrowing their claims about their saints' powers. It might be suggested that these limited horizons were somehow inherent to the genre of the miracle collection, or might indeed reflect the realities of the incubation cults that produced them. Certainly collections like those of Cosmas and Damian and Cyrus and John do resemble in these respects the miracles recorded at the pagan cult of Asclepius.[86] Three texts, however, suggest that this is not a complete explanation for the phenomenon. The first is the *Miracles of Thekla*, which reveals that it was possible for a Christian miracle collection derived from the cult of an early martyr to be extremely ambitious in scope. Its fifth-century author certainly does not limit himself to recounting healing miracles or miracles benefitting individuals, instead presenting Thekla as the patron of the whole city, and even perhaps the empire, and as performer of a diverse range of

[85] Not only is the focus in miracle collections always on the individual suppliant—we perceive the saint through their eyes—but stress is usually laid on the need for the suppliant to approach the saint properly and to fulfil certain preconditions for healing; indeed, in some collections the healing is even presented as a reward, repayment, or as the 'fruit', of the suppliants' proper behaviour, as in Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Miracles of Cyrus and John,* 1.12 (p.246, 'μισθὸν εὑπρεπῆ'), 2.3 (p.247, 'καρπὸν'), 15.5 (pp.273-4, 'ἀντάλλαγμα'), 19.3 (pp.279-80, 'τιμὴ'), 39.9 (p.338, 'μισθὸν'), 46.2 (p.351, 'μισθὸν'). The dramatic tension in the miracle collection thus revolves around whether the suppliant can persuade the saint to help him or her, whereas in a saint's Life, the crux of a healing story is the moment when the saint petitions God to help the suppliant. This is not an absolute difference, but one of emphasis (since, for example, in some saints' Lives suppliants are not healed because of their sins), but it is nonetheless significant.

[86] The relationship between Christian and pagan healing accounts, and cultic rites, has been discussed extensively: for some recent treatments, from various angles, see Csepregi 2002; Stewart 2004; Csepregi 2012; Graf 2014. Festugière 1973 has also discussed parallels between Asclepian miracles and some of the miracles recounted in the *Life of Symeon the Younger*.

miracles: 'the great martyr…often halted famine, put an end to plague, quenched drought, terminated war, handed over enemies, saved cities, protected houses, and gave out bountifully, to the collective and to each individual, the very things which each asked for.'[87] In the fifth century it was, apparently, possible to conceive of a long-deceased martyr fulfilling the role of a living holy man.

The second relevant text is the *Life of Martha.* The *Life* gives no indication that incubation was common at her cult, and she was certainly not a long-dead martyr: nonetheless, the author displays a similar focus on local, small-scale healing miracles to that of the authors of more characteristic miracle collections. This suggests that there was more than simply generic or literary convention behind this hagiographic development; it seems rather to have reflected wider ideological changes. The final, and most important, text is, however, a seventh-century miracle collection of a long deceased martyr (that is to say, a text sharing the key characteristics of collections like those of Cyrus and John and Artemius): the *Miracles of St Demetrius.*

The *Miracles of St Demetrius* is in many respects an extraordinary text. It is in fact a composite work, containing two series of miracles, the first apparently written by archbishop John of Thessaloniki, perhaps in the early years of Heraclius's reign,[88] the second by an anonymous continuator at least some decades later.[89] Neither collection is remotely limited

[87] *Miracles of Thekla,* 4 (ed. p.296; trans. pp.19-21).
[88] This is the dating proposed by Lemerle 1979-81, II, 40-44, 80, although he suggests that John may have drawn upon earlier records. Lemerle notes in particular that John refers to the reign of Phokas as 'the reign after that of Maurice, he of τῆς εὐσεβοῦς λήξεως βασιλείας' (Miracles of Demetrius, 82 [I, p.112]), suggesting that this formula would make most sense under Heraclius. This seems suggestive but not definitive; nonetheless, a date during Heraclius's reign is likely, given that the miracles recounted seem to take place in the reigns of Maurice and Phokas, while the author of the later collection notes in his preface that John had failed to record the miracles that took place during his own episcopate (ibid. 176 [I, pp.168-9]), implying that it succeeded the events recounted.
[89] The anonymous author of the second collection states that, when recounting the events of John's episcopate, he was following in the footsteps of Zorobabel in writing about the captivity and return of the Jews seventy years after it took place, and Philon and Josephus in writing about events under Titus and Vespasian (ibid. 177 [I, p.169]). Lemerle takes this to mean that he was writing c.70 years after John's

to healing miracles: in fact both are particularly preoccupied with the various sieges Thessaloniki experienced in this period at the hands of the Slavs and Avars. Demetrius is presented as the saviour of the city from plague, famine, earthquake, and these attacks. In this case, therefore, we find a miracle collection which is very clearly affected by the disasters of the sixth and seventh centuries. Throughout the collection, as Déroche and Dal Santo have observed, there are signs of tension surrounding the thaumaturgic powers of the saint, his role as mediator between God and man, and indeed about divine providence and theodicy itself—all themes which were crucial in texts such as the *Life of Symeon the Younger*.[90] The first of these themes (doubts about the saint's capabilities) comes to the fore, for example, when John describes Demetrius's healing miracles during an outbreak of the plague in the city. The hagiographer produces arguments to try to refute both sceptics who thought that the healings simply took place by chance, and critics who accused the saint of 'impotence, hard-heartedness, or partiality.'[91] This trio of potential accusations is very important, as it shows that the hagiographer was caught in a delicate position: it was difficult to avoid either acknowledging that Demetrius did not have the power to heal everyone, or that he was choosing which of his suppliants were worthy of assistance. In this case, John tried to deal with the problem by stating that Demetrius was confined by the decisions of divine providence; he thus deflects the problem from Demetrius to God, without exploring the implications of this for the martyr's role as intercessor.

Elsewhere in the collection, however, John presents Demetrius as displaying a very different attitude to the divine will: rather than accepting God's apparent decision to condemn the city, he resists it. Thus in one account an *illustris* has a vision in which two men dressed like

episcopate; this may be taking the reference too literally, but it certainly suggests a period of some decades between the texts: Lemerle 1979-81, II, 83-4.

[90] On the miracles of Demetrius, see Déroche 2000, 145, 151-3; Dal Santo 2012, 183-95.

[91] ἀδυναμίας ἢ ἀσπλαγχνίας ἢ προσωποληψίας: *Miracles of St Demetrius*, 40 (I, p.79).

imperial guards (almost certainly angels) went to Demetrius and told him to leave Thessaloniki because 'the master' (i.e. God) had declared that it was going to be given over to the enemies. Demetrius refused, saying that either the city would be saved, or he would die with its inhabitants. The angels tried to argue with him but could not change his mind.[92] The hagiographer thus, like Symeon the Younger's, firmly asserts Demetrius's ultimate loyalty to his dependent people, even to the extent of opposing God's expressed will.[93]

This choice, of course, implicitly raises the question of whether the saint in fact loved the Thessalonikans more than God did. John does not address this question directly, but throughout the collection he does repeatedly stress not only that Demetrius always helped the citizens, but also that God himself was protecting them and coming to their aid (rather in contradiction to the claim that God had ordered Demetrius to leave the city). Thus, for example, in miracle 14, describing a major siege of the city by the Avars, John recounts several miracles without stressing Demetrius's intercessory role; his focus is instead on proving that it was God who had saved the town. He provides various arguments to show that it must have been divine providence, rather than the Thessalonikans' bravery or the incompetence of the attackers, that had saved the city: he emphasises, for example, that although the citizens had been almost dead with fear during the first two days of the siege, on the third day they suddenly became very courageous, to the point of mocking their enemies. 'Who would doubt,' he asks rhetorically, 'that this was the effect of divine action… who can raise the dead, apart from God….who, if not God, could inspire their courage?'[94]

[92] ibid. 166-75 (I, pp.161-5).
[93] Déroche 2000, 145.
[94] ἆρα τίς ἀμφιβάλλοι μὴ θεϊκῆς ἐνεργείας εἶναι κατόρθωμα...τίς γὰρ νεκροὺς ἐγείρει; οὐχὶ μόνος θεός;….τοὺς οὖν τοιούτους μεταβαλεῖν εἰς ἀνδρείαν, τίνος, εἰ μὴ θεοῦ; *Miracles of St Demetrius,* 143-4 (I, p.151).

Some of the Thessalonikans seem to have doubted precisely this. John's emphasis on the theme appears to have been a reaction to sceptics who thought either that the events were attributable to human causes, or that God had abandoned the city. Thus in the same chapter, he repeatedly anticipates and attempts to refute doubts that could be raised about God's involvement in Thessaloniki's rescue, commenting, for example, after attributing a sudden upturn in the city's fortunes to God's decision to heed the citizens' prayers, 'But perhaps you will say, "What is this clear from? Who saw God? Or who heard him promising salvation, that he would assure that the city would be watered with goodness?"'[95] He subsequently claims that many people desire further proof that God had saved the city: 'but since the mind of many desires that a narration should be supplied of other things that happened which establish that only the hand of God, through the intercession of the victorious one [Demetrius] saved the city at that time, we will not fail to fulfil your desire, on the sole condition that you eagerly promise to listen to me piously and faithfully.'[96] The last clause of this passage seems to acknowledge that his proofs will only be effective for those who already have faith! John even refers to objectors who might claim that by attributing the salvation of the city to God's providence, he was putting the Thessalonikans to shame, by denying their own bravery.[97] And while the disasters seem to have encouraged some to deny God's determinative role in affairs, they may have led others to claim that God had turned against the city: John also condemns the view held by some citizens, 'with the devil causing this wicked suspicion', that God actually wanted Thessaloniki to be taken by the enemy.[98] This is in fact what John himself had seemed to imply when he described

[95] ἀλλ'ἴσως ἐρεῖς· πόθεν δῆλον; τίς εἶδε θεόν; ἢ τῖς ἤκουσεν αὐτοῦ τὴν σωτηρίαν ὑποσχομένου, ὅτι διαβεβαιοῦσαι τὴν πόλιν ὑετισθῆναι τῇ ἀγαθότητι; ibid. 142 (I, p.150).
[96] ἀλλ'ἐπεὶ τῶν πολλῶν ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν γεγενημένων προτεθῆναι διήγησιν βούλεται, τῶν συστησόντων ὡς χεὶρ μόνη θεοῦ ταῖς τοῦ ἀθλοφόρου πρεσβείαις τηνικαῦτα τὴν πόλιν ἐξέσωσεν, οὐκ ἀποροῦμεν ὑμῶν τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν πληρῶσαι, μόνον αὐτοὶ θεοφιλὴ καὶ πιστὴν ἀκοὴν ἡμίν ὑποσχείν προθυμήθητε: ibid. 145 (I, p.151).
[97] ibid. 164 (I, p.158).
[98] τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ὑποβαλόντος ἐννοίας πονηράς: ibid. 149 (p.153).

the angels telling Demetrius to leave the city as God had decided it should be handed over to the enemies; he thus responds rather inconsistently to the pressures of justifying the roles of, and of refuting scepticism about, both Demetrius and God.

These allusions to potential sceptics, many of whom seem to have doubted that divine providence was responsible for the events in the city, recall Symeon the Younger's hagiographer's claims that when an earthquake occurred, pagans and astrologists would deny that it was the product of God's will.[99] But John does not here accuse these sceptics of any recognised form of heterodoxy; there is nothing to imply that they are anything more than Christians who have come, perhaps as a result of the disasters afflicting their city, to doubt the direct and benevolent intervention of God in everyday affairs. John's emphatic insistence on God's determinative role in all events thus seems to have been intended to refute doubts about his providence among the city's Christian population. The *Miracles of St Demetrius* appears to have been an (occasionally inconsistent) *apologia* not only for the saint's role in defending the city, but for God's goodwill and providence itself.

The *Miracles of Demetrius* thus shows both that the hagiographer of a martyr cult did not need to be restricted in his scope and that, if he did extend his claims about his martyr's power, in a time of real crisis this raised the same kinds of challenges and dilemmas faced by the authors of saint's Lives. Is it therefore possible that the more modest, or at least more narrowly focused, claims about the thaumaturgic powers of their saints made by the authors of most miracle collections, were in part the result of a desire, conscious or unconscious, to avoid facing these great challenges? In a world which must have seemed increasingly out of control, saints could no longer be said with any credibility to be regulating the cosmos; but they could still, perhaps, help individual suppliants regain control of their lives and

[99] See above p.196.

bodies. At the very least, even if this argument is not accepted for the traditional martyr cults, it is surely not coincidental that the author of the *Life of Martha,* who was not writing about the long-established incubation cult of a famous martyr, but about a recently deceased, relatively minor figure, adopted a similarly narrow focus, concentrating on healing miracles benefiting small numbers of local monks and villagers, in a sharp break from the approach used by the author of the *Life of Symeon.*

Conclusion

The disasters of the sixth and seventh centuries brought to the fore conceptual and theological problems which were inherent within late antique Christianity, but usually submerged. In particular, they raised questions about the role of the intercessor between God and man, and about theodicy itself. When there seemed to be an inescapable conflict of interest between God's will and the desires and safety of the Christian population—as when disasters threatened to punish large groups, irrespective of the piety of individual victims—the hagiographer was forced to choose, if not consciously, whether to present his saint as displaying ultimate loyalty to God, or to his suppliants. Both options were problematic: if the saint accepted God's will, he had arguably failed in his duties to his devotees; if he resisted, then he ran the risk of accusing God of acting unjustly. The very idea of an intercessor trying to change God's mind, although fundamental to late antique Christianity, was theologically challenging, as implied by part of Barsanuphius of Gaza's response to a question about the plague: 'There are indeed many people who entreat God's loving kindness to remove his wrath from the world; and, of course, none is more kind and loving than God, who desires to have mercy and opposes the multitude of sins that occur in the world.'[100] Although this was undoubtedly not his intention, Barsanuphius's words raise

[100] Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, Letter 569 (II.II, p.732, trans. II, p.146).

the question of why an intercessor should be needed to deal with an all-loving, all-good God.

As we have seen, hagiographers adopted very different approaches to these challenges: Symeon the Younger was shown resisting God's will, Nicholas of Sion as reluctantly enforcing it, and George of Choziba as actively calling for divine punishment for the people's sins. The contrast between these approaches demonstrates that there was no pre-existing, agreed model of reacting to such pressures, perhaps because there was no perfect, unproblematic, response. The hagiographers are unlikely to have conceived of the problem in the terms in which it has been described here, nor, perhaps, to have realised that their solutions were sometimes theologically awkward. Yet, as we have seen, they did struggle, not always with success, to show that their holy men were neither impotent nor heartless; that they were both vessels of God's will and effective mediators on behalf of their suppliants. These apologetic arguments must have been a response to real criticisms or doubts raised about the saints within contemporary society.

At a conceptual level, the problem of intercession was equally relevant to the authors of miracle collections of long dead saints. Yet, because the authors of most such collections from this period restricted themselves to recounting healing miracles for individual suppliants, rather than treating earthquakes or invasions threatening entire populations, the difficulties were less sharply exposed, and their saints' powers less seriously challenged. Natural and military disasters were ignored, rather than justified. As has been argued, this was not simply a question of genre, since the *Life of Martha* shares in this respect the characteristics of many miracle collections, whereas the *Miracles of St Demetrius* is much more similar to contemporary saints' Lives. It could thus be argued that the Lives of Symeon and Martha embody two very different ways of responding to the crisis in holiness of the late sixth and seventh centuries. The author of the former adopted a clearly apologetic but

also polemical tone, blaming the disasters in large part on Antioch's wealthy 'pagans' as well as experimenting with various, sometimes contradictory, Old Testament explanations for events. The author of the latter, in contrast, refocused the goals of the cult, apparently abandoning ambitious claims that his saint could defend entire regions or cities, and instead focusing on the healings of particular individuals who devoted themselves to Martha's cult and in particular to the liturgical rituals at her shrine. Symeon's hagiographer may well have been writing before the Arab conquest of Syria; if Martha's hagiographer was writing after, it is perhaps unsurprising that the scope of the work was drastically reduced. In a climate of political and social uncertainty, during or after crises which raised serious questions not only about saints but about God's providence itself, a reorientation of priorities was, in fact, only to be expected.

Conclusion

The abundant surviving evidence relating to the cult of Symeon the Younger sheds light not only on the life of the stylite himself but also on wider developments in holiness in the sixth and seventh centuries. As we have seen, Symeon lived through a critical period in the history of the Antiochene region. Although the source material does not allow a full reconstruction of the social and economic situation in the area, it does suggest that the city and its environs were experiencing considerable hardships and tensions, tensions which were often expressed in religious terms but may well have reflected other social and political concerns. In this environment, Symeon appears to have carved out a role for himself as a figure of religious authority, in the face of considerable opposition. The sermon collection attributed to him suggests that this authority rested in large part on his claims to be the recipient of divine visions. He used this prophetic voice to make bold social statements, capitalising on divisions between the rich and the poor, and on fears of paganism, to draw stark lines between the wicked and the pious in Antiochene society. His focus on the end of the world, echoing wider eschatological trends in contemporary thought, lent his message greater urgency. Although the sermons themselves give no sign of the responses they evoked in their audience, their often harsh and aggressive language suggests that their speaker was a polemical figure who could have proved highly controversial.

The *Life of Symeon the Younger* confirms that the saint's position was hotly contested, both from within his monastery and by various sections of society at large. The hagiographer often veils the details of this opposition, but reveals enough to show that it was crystallised and exacerbated in the context of external crisis. The *Life* is highly apologetic and polemical, and again seems to exploit social tensions in the city of Antioch. In the *Life*, Symeon's mother, Martha, plays only a small role, but in the years after the stylite's death she came

to be revered as a miracle-working saint in her own right. Her *Life* is very different in structure, tone and content from that of the stylite; in terms of the controversies of Symeon's career, it adopts a more irenic approach, eschewing the polemic which is so predominant in the earlier text, and instead showing Martha urging Symeon to forgive his sceptics. The hagiographer makes no extravagant claims about Martha's miracle-working powers; unlike Symeon, she is not expected to defend Antioch from earthquake or invasion, but only to heal individual suppliants who have turned to her shrine and performed the required rites. These *Lives* seem to exemplify two divergent ways of reacting to the crisis in holiness engendered by natural and military disasters in this period: the one adopts a direct, confrontational approach, using socially-charged polemic to exculpate the saint for his failure to prevent disaster, while the other reveals a reorientation of expectations and priorities, as well as a reinterpretation of the process of the miracle that places the responsibility for its success onto the suppliant. Parallels to both these approaches can be found in other contemporary saints' Lives and miracle collections.

All this material has broader implications for our understandings of late antique holy men and hagiography. First, it highlights the difficulties for a holy man in establishing his position, particularly in a period when the performance of miracles was considered to be an integral part of sanctity. In Symeon's case, these difficulties were increased by the severe disasters that afflicted Antioch during his lifetime. Crises undoubtedly laid bare the occasional powerlessness of holy men and other intercessors, as indicated by a story in the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus:

> Scythopolis was the second city of Palestine. There I met Abba Anastasios who told us about Abba George the recluse: One night I got up…and I heard an elder weeping. I went and entreated him, saying, 'Abba, what is the matter, sir, that you weep so?' He answered me not a word. So I asked him again, 'Tell me the cause <of your grief>.' Sighing from the depths of his heart, he said to me, 'How should I not weep, seeing that our Lord is not willing to be placated on our account? I thought I stood before one who sat on a high throne, my child. Around him were several tens of

> thousands who besought and entreated him concerning a certain matter, but he would not be persuaded. Then a woman clothed in purple raiment came and fell down before him, saying, "Please, for my sake, grant this request," but he remained equally unmoved. That is why I weep and groan, for I am afraid of what is going to happen to me.' He said this to me at first light on the Thursday. The next day, Friday, about the ninth hour, there was a severe earthquake which overthrew the cities of the Phoenician coast.[1]

Abba George's account suggests that not only holy men, but even the Virgin Mary herself (surely the woman dressed in purple), could not always dissuade God from inflicting disasters on the earth. No story could more clearly display the failure of intercession in the face of God's implacable wrath.

But the position of the saint was not only difficult in times of exceptional crisis. Symeon's *Life* also reveals the more basic problem, applicable to almost any holy man, of managing potentially high expectations. For someone who claimed to have miraculous powers—or whose supporters claimed had miraculous powers—sanctity could be a burden as much as an opportunity. Claims to have a special relationship with God needed to be constantly reaffirmed, and could easily be challenged by failure. The everyday difficulties of maintaining a reputation for holiness are illustrated particularly clearly in the letters of the sixth-century Palestinian holy men Barsanuphius and John. The two monks had to reply to various correspondents seeking explanations as to why the holy men's prophecies and prayers seemed to have failed. John, for instance, was asked, 'I sometimes happen to ask the fathers about the crops in my field, whether they will be good; or I may even have an enemy, and so I happen to ask about him, whether he is able to harm me. And the fathers respond that my crops will be good and that my enemy will not harm me. Then, however, my crops fail and my enemy is about to harm me; so what should I believe? And if I find that my thought becomes slackened in its faith because it thinks things have gone differently

[1] John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, 50 (col 2905, trans. p.41).

than expected, how can I revoke it and establish it again?'[2] He also had to explain why his prayers to save the life of the abbot of their monastery, Seridos, had not been successful,[3] and why the saints' requests to God are not always granted.[4]

One particularly noteworthy exchange[5] started with a question from a layman, who asked John whether his slave, who had recently been bitten by a dog, was going to die. John's response seemed clear: 'there is nothing wrong with him. Do not be afraid. Rather, try to think of what is written: "Not a sparrow falls into a trap apart from your Father who is in heaven."'[6] The layman, we are told, assumed on the basis of this response that his slave would survive, but, in fact, he died two days later. In confusion, the layman asked John whether the slave was really dead. John confirmed that he had died, which prompted the man to ask why he had said that there was nothing wrong with him. The holy man replied that he had meant that there was nothing wrong with death from God, and added that his biblical citation had been intended to suggest that the slave would die. The layman's response, according to the surviving account, was brief: 'then, why was your answer so unclear?'[7] John replied that this should not have surprised him, 'for one should not always speak clearly about such things, since they are harmful and of no benefit to the person speaking';[8] he claimed that this was how Christ taught his disciples to speak. The end of his response seems to imply the condemnation of anyone who did not accept his words, suggesting that the saints benefit from the criticism of their impious sceptics: 'now for those who are faithful, these things are for their understanding and benefit; however, for those

[2] Barsanuphius and John, *Letters*, 383 (II.I, p.424, trans. II, p.23).
[3] ibid. 599 (II.II pp.798-800).
[4] ibid. 778, a-d (III, pp.224-32).
[5] ibid. 779-82 (III, pp.232-6).
[6] ibid. 779 (ed. III, p.232, trans II, p.285).
[7] ibid. (III, p.234, trans II. p.286)
[8] ibid.

who are not faithful, they are for our benefit through their scorn.'[9] If the layman replied to this, his response is not recorded.

At the very least, this exchange of letters proves that the expectations of a holy man and his suppliant did not always correspond neatly. John had failed to provide the straightforward guidance that the layman sought. Even if it cannot be proved, it is tempting to suggest that John was forced to reinterpret his initial response after events had turned out differently from how he had expected; certainly, he seems to have used ambiguity deliberately to avoid a difficult situation. We cannot know, unfortunately, whether the layperson accepted John's justification, or if the holy man lost a devotee through this disappointment. But the exchange certainly reveals some of the possible pitfalls in store for those who professed to possess, or were believed to possess, any kind of miraculous powers. An episode recounted in the Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople (680/1) brings out still more clearly the potential embarrassment caused by the failure to perform miracles. During the fifteenth session of the synod, a monk, Polychronius, declared that he would resurrect a corpse to prove the validity of his Monothelite beliefs. The synod produced a corpse and decided that the demonstration should take place outside, so that it could be witnessed by the crowds. Polychronius, we are told, tried for many hours to awaken the corpse, with no success; the crowd, and the synod, then anathematised him as a heretic.[10] This episode is, of course, recounted in an anti-monothelite source, and the dispute revolved around Christology, rather than the perhaps simpler question of whether Polychronius was a holy man. But it nonetheless provides a striking example of the dangers of claiming the ability to perform miracles, either through one's own powers or through Christ.

[9] ibid. (III, p.236, trans II. p.286).
[10] Acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, *ACO* 2nd series, 2.2 (1992), Session 15, pp.674-82.

The status of the holy man was thus more precarious than it might appear in some hagiography. Even apart from the opposition which they often faced from various groups, from members of the clergy to farmers, their position as miracle-workers was inherently delicate. This may go some way towards explaining why many holy men appear to have played divisive and confrontational roles within society, insisting on strict standards of morality and often heightening pressure on traditional victims of Christian intolerance such as Jews, pagans, and 'heretics'.[11] Such actions could serve to deflect attention from their own weaknesses, to denigrate their critics (whom they could associate with these religious 'deviants'), and to increase their own authority, as they presented themselves as the champions of strict ethical standards, who often took a harsher line against religious or moral dissidents than did members of the establishment. The precise implications of this behaviour were very different in different local contexts; in some situations, for instance, holy men's intolerant words and actions seem to have had the support of local bishops,[12] while in other areas they furthered conflict between the two.[13] As we have seen, verbal or physical attacks could have a strong social dimension: thus both Symeon the Younger and Shenoute of Atripe used accusations of paganism to condemn the wealthy, perhaps in an attempt to shore up popular support against their opponents. Holy men's persecuting efforts did not always, however, meet with popular enthusiasm: John of Ephesus records that when one Miaphysite holy man, Sergius, burnt a synagogue, the local church members allied with the Jewish population to protest against his behaviour.[14] This highlights again that holy men's actions were not always accepted unquestioningly; indeed, it seems highly unlikely

[11] See Gaddis 2005, chapters 5-8.
[12] E.g. Syriac *Life of Symeon* (pp.636-8), which reports that local bishops sought the stylite's help in protesting against a new imperial policy of toleration towards the Jews. The hagiographer could of course be exaggerating the bishops' reliance on the stylite for panegyrical purposes.
[13] See e.g. Kallinikos, *Life of Hypatius*, 32.12-16 (pp.212-4); 33.4-11 (pp.216-8), in which Hypatius's opposition to Nestorius and to an attempt to reintroduce the Olympic Games were apparently resisted by bishop Eulalius of Chalcedon. These and comparable reports may well, of course, serve a polemical function rather than accurately reflecting reality.
[14] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 5 (I, pp.90-3).

that Sergius was viewed as a holy man at all by the local Christian community (let alone, of course, by the Jews whom he targeted). His efforts to stir up intolerance in what appears, from John's admittedly limited and highly partial account, to have been a relatively peaceful mixed community, thus serve as a powerful reminder both of the highly divisive behaviour of some holy men, and of the difficulties which they often faced in establishing their positions as sources of authority. This is not to suggest that all holy men always acted intolerantly, and certainly not to deny the validity, in some contexts, of Peter Brown's brilliant work on holy men as arbiters and mediators. But it is to emphasise both that their positions could be based, at least in part, on aggressive and divisive behaviour, and that few gained such authority within their local communities that they could act as unquestioned mediators in all situations.

The fragility of the position of the holy man points towards wider unresolved tensions at the heart of Christianity itself. In particular, the natural and military disasters which proved so challenging to holy men also raised serious questions about theodicy. The standard Christian explanation as to why God inflicted disasters on his people—that it was a punishment for their sins—did not prove emotionally satisfying in all situations, particularly when it was demonstrably clear that these punishments did not distinguish between the good and the impious. Thus, as we have seen, Evagrius Scholasticus admitted to having heretical thoughts after the plague killed his children but spared those of a pagan neighbour.[15] So too Symeon the Younger himself is said to have accused God of killing the just with the impious in Antioch.[16] These examples are perhaps particularly striking because both are reported by unquestionably devout and orthodox Christians with close links to the Church. But other contemporaries, too, noticed flaws in this interpretation of catastrophe. The historian and

[15] See above p.196 n257.
[16] See above pp.201-2.

lawyer Agathias, in his account of an earthquake in Constantinople in 557, records that only one noble, Anatolius, was killed. He reports that the common people claimed that this had been a fair punishment for his oppressive and wicked behaviour. Yet Agathias himself was not convinced by this argument:

> 'Personally I should be extremely hesitant to advance any sort of explanation for such occurrences. Undoubtedly the earthquake would have been a very real boon if it had been able to distinguish the wicked from the good, causing the former to perish miserably and graciously sparing the latter. But even granted that Anatolius really was a wicked man there were countless others in the city no better or even worse than he was. Yet he was suddenly struck down whilst the others have remained unscathed. It is, therefore, no plain or easy matter, I think, to ascertain why of all men Anatolius was the only one to lose his life.'[17]

The author goes on to discuss this theme in Platonist, rather than biblical terms, but his words show clearly that it was easy to find fault, on various grounds, with the view that disasters were punishments for the wicked. This was a theological problem with no easy solution, and one which gained far greater emotional resonance in times of crisis. Holy men were particularly vulnerable to criticism in the aftermath of disasters because of their uneasy and in many ways conceptually incoherent position as mediators between God and man, but the ideological challenge posed to Christians by catastrophe ran deeper than this.

It is generally agreed that the eastern Roman empire saw widespread ideological developments in the sixth and seventh centuries, of which the processes described in this thesis constitute only a small part. There is less consensus, however, on what role disasters played in causing these developments and, in particular, *when* the major changes in ideology took place and thus which disasters could have contributed to them. Mischa Meier has argued that the reign of Justinian already saw significant ideological developments, largely as a result of the natural and military crises of his rule, developments which included a crisis of confidence in holy men and the concomitant emergence of supplementary, and perhaps

[17] Agathias, *Histories*, 5.4.3-4 (pp.168-9, trans. p.139).

rival, sources of divine intercession such as the cult of Mary, mother of God, and icons. He is concerned to refute the idea that it was only in the later, post-Justinianic, decades of the sixth century that widespread ideological change took place.[18] It is this later period on which Matthew Dal Santo focuses on his powerful study of scepticism towards saints' cults: he argues that criticism of saints flourished from the last quarter of the sixth century onwards as a result both of the military, financial and political tensions which developed after Justinian's death and of the emperors' increasing attempts to turn to the saints for legitimisation.[19] Others have focused on the military disasters of the seventh century as the major catalyst behind ideological crisis and reorientation.[20] All of this relates to still wider debates about the state of the eastern empire in this period: those who view its economy and society as having continued to flourish until at least the seventh-century Persian conquests are less likely to accept that there was any kind of ideological crisis in the sixth century.

Two points seem of particular relevance here, especially with respect to the question of hagiography and a possible crisis of confidence in holy men. The first is that crisis could strike different areas at different times; even regions in close geographical proximity could experience very different fates.[21] Thus, as argued in the first chapter of this thesis, Antioch and the countryside around it may well have experienced economic slowdown at a time when other regions of the empire, and indeed of Syria itself, remained prosperous. Consequently signs of tension and crisis could appear in sources from the Antiochene, like the *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger*, before ideological crisis became widespread across the empire in the seventh century.

[18] Meier 2003, passim, esp. 642-3.
[19] Dal Santo 2012, esp. pp.321-35.
[20] See e.g. Auzépy 1995, Haldon 1997, esp. chapters 9 and 11.
[21] On the diverse developments of even nearby settlements, see e.g. Horden and Purcell 2000, 53.

Yet the second point is perhaps more important: ideological crisis does not necessarily correlate directly to social and economic deprivation. As argued above, even if we can recognise that the long term economic impact of plague, earthquakes, and invasions, was not totally devastating, we should not neglect the testimony of the written sources as to their psychological effects on some contemporaries.[22] Natural disasters could have historical impact upon ideologies and mentalities which was far greater than their economic effect, as shown by the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. We should not discount the evidence from the *Life of Nicholas of Sion* that the plague caused severe hostility towards the holy man, purely because archaeological evidence suggests that Asia Minor remained generally prosperous throughout the late sixth century.[23] Holy men were less responsible for the economic situation of their region than for their suppliants' lives and health, and the plagues and earthquakes of the sixth century undoubtedly posed them significant challenges, to the extent that their hagiographers were forced to exculpate them in often confused and conflicting ways.

The polemical and apologetic nature of many saints' Lives points, I believe, towards one way of approaching the formidable challenge of writing history from hagiography. It is unsurprising that some historians try to avoid the extensive use of hagiographical material; it certainly poses considerable difficulties, and cannot answer all questions. Not all hagiographies are equally historically useful. Yet many hagiographic texts are undoubtedly anchored in some kind of social reality, even if this is not easy to uncover. The kinds of defensive tactics employed by Symeon the Younger's hagiographer, among others, do not make sense in a vacuum; rather, they must be a response to real concerns and criticisms among wider society. It is thus possible to use hagiography for historical purposes by

[22] See above p.42.
[23] For a positive assessment of the economy of Asia Minor in this period (although one acknowledging that the plague may have caused a temporary 'urban recession'), see Whittow 2001.

reading it ‘against the grain’, that is to say, by, rather than surrendering to the narrative flow of the text, seeking to understand the pressures which have caused the narrative to be structured as it is. Such a method of approaching hagiography opens a valuable window onto often-obscured religious and social trends, and in some respects provides a more vivid picture than more historiographically valued sources of contemporary debates and concerns, concerns which reached to the very heart of Christianity.

Figures

Figure 1: Map showing Antioch, the 'Wonderful Mountain' (Mont Admirable) and Qalaat Semaan, from Lafontaigne-Dosogne 1967, Plate 1. Permission to reproduce this map has been granted by Peeters.

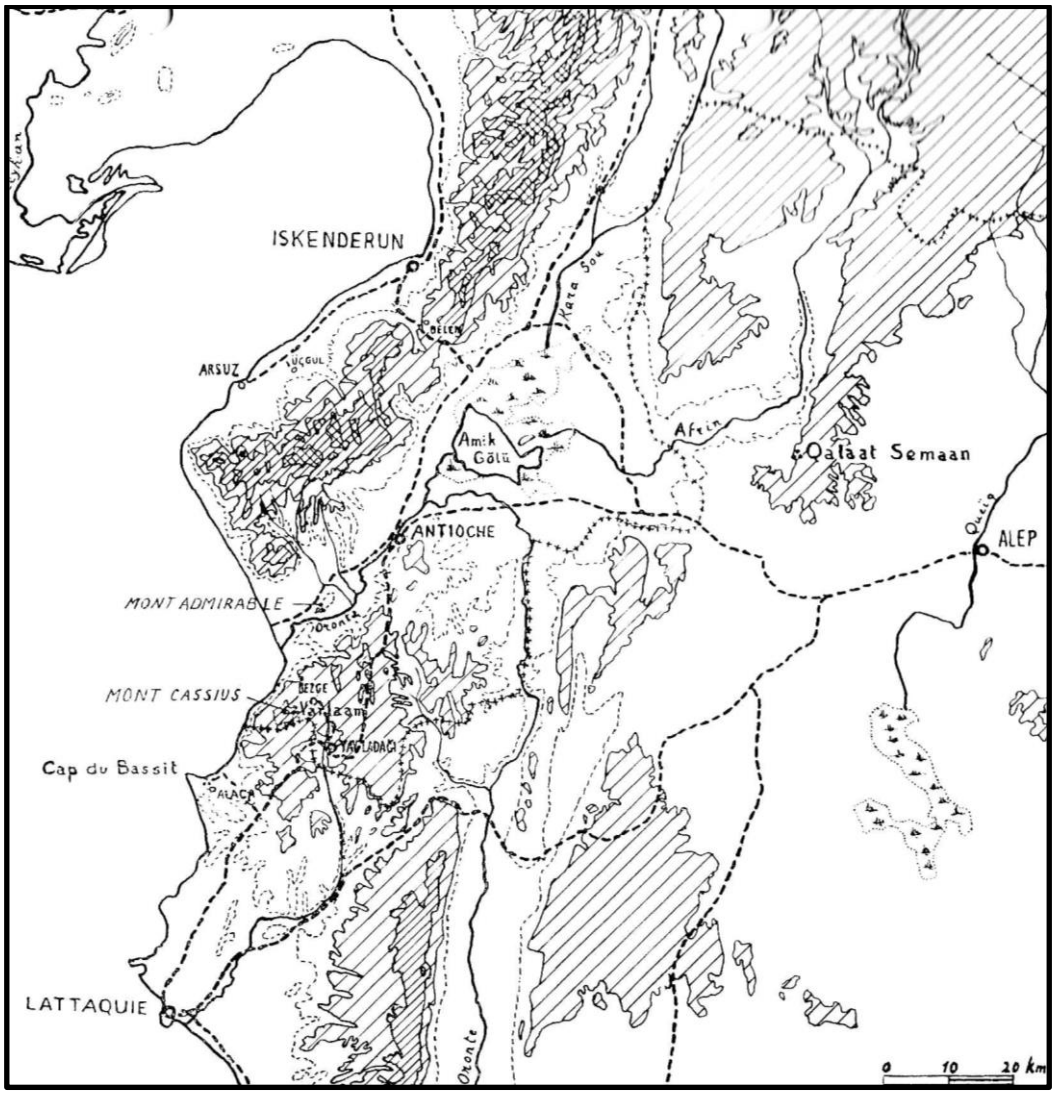


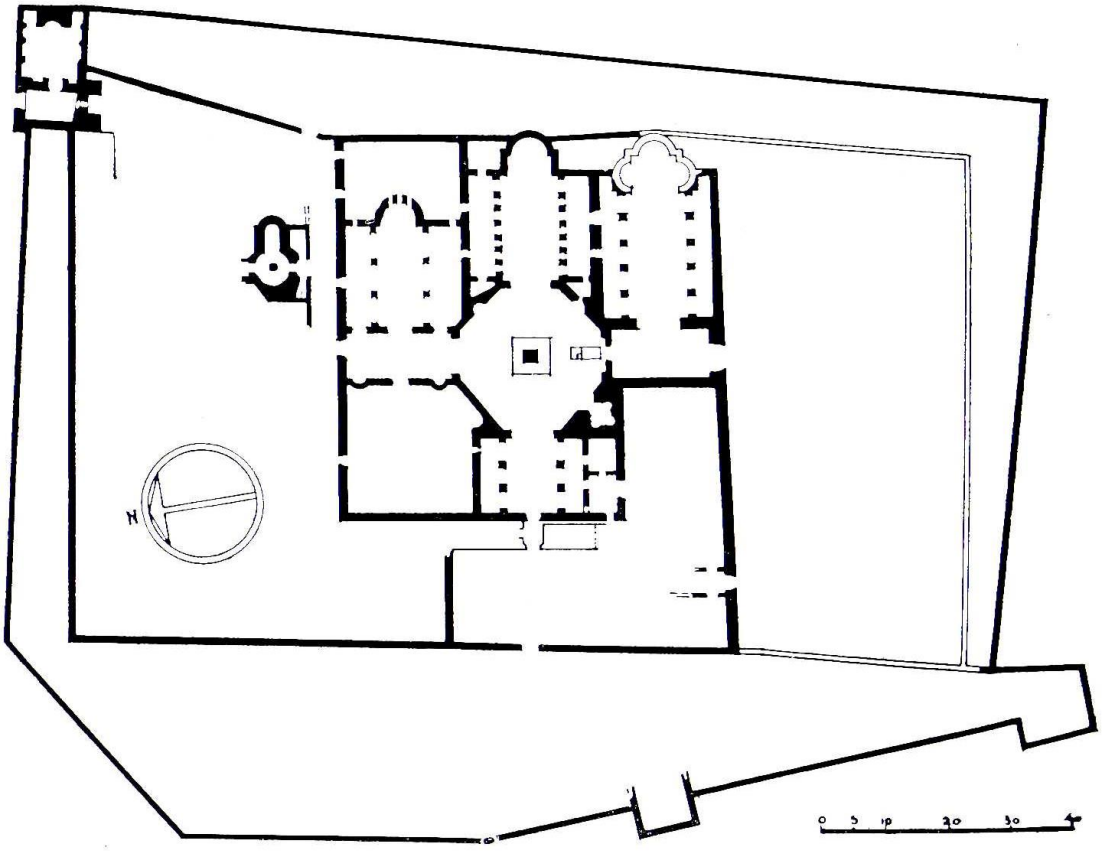
Figure 2: The remains of Symeon's column on the 'Wonderful Mountain' (my photograph).



Figure 3: The remains of the baptistery on the 'Wonderful Mountain' (my photograph).



Figure 4: Plan of Symeon's monastery on the 'Wonderful Mountain', with his column in the centre, from Van den Ven 1962-70, Plate 1. Permission to reproduce this plan has been granted by the Société des Bollandistes.



a. Plan du monastère et des églises de Saint-Syméon, d'après le p. mécérian

Figure 5: Antioch, from Foss 1997, Figure A.

The map originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The map was from C. Foss, 'Syria in Transition, A.D. 550-750: an Archaeological Approach', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51, pp.189-269, Figure A.

Figure 6: Coin finds from Antioch, by reign

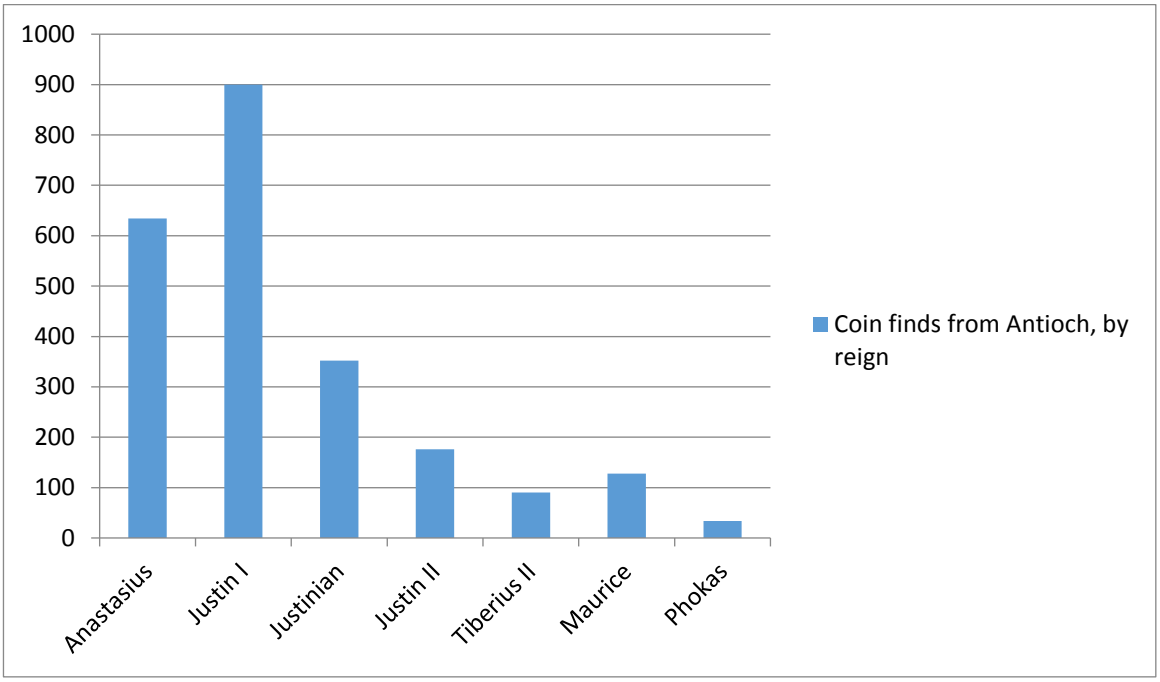
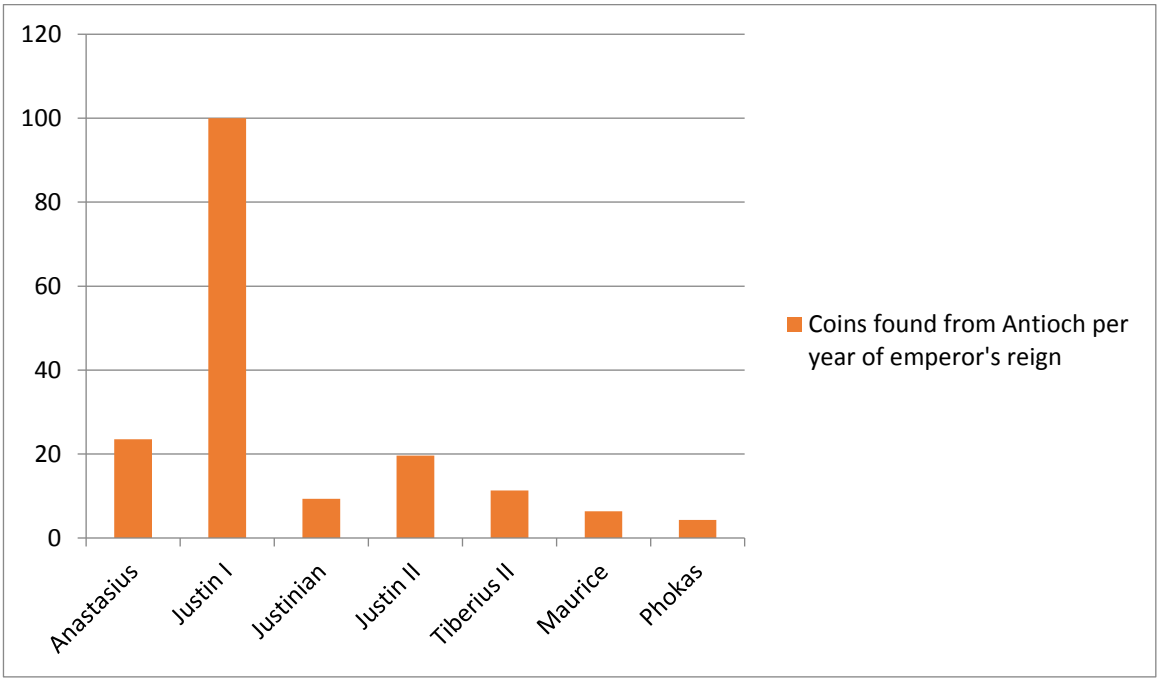


Figure 7: Coin finds from Antioch per year of emperor's reign



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