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From Pagan to Christian: an archaeological study of the transformation of Corinth in Late Antiquity

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An Archaeological Study of the Transformation of Corinth

in Late Antiquity

Eli Weaverdyck

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Sometime between the death of Jesus and the present day, something drastic happened: the Western world as a whole abandoned traditional, polytheistic religion and embraced monotheism, first in the form of Christianity and then in the form of Islam. The state religion of the Roman Empire went from polytheism to Christianity, leading to the rapid growth and institutionalization of what was, originally, a radical cult on the fringe of Judaism. This religious transformation is the most enduring legacy of the Roman Empire. In America, the CIA World Factbook identifies 76% of the population as either Protestant or Roman Catholic.[1]

Christianity emerged within the Roman Empire but remained a minority religion until it was adopted by Constantine in 312. Even then, with Imperial patronage and persecution of non-Christians, it took hundreds of years for Christianity to become the dominant religion throughout the empire. When Constantine converted, most people in the Empire were not Christian. Most people in the Empire would not even have thought to identify themselves on the basis of religious belief. Paganism was so entrenched that it was a part of life, as natural as waking, working, bathing and eating. The shift to a dominant monotheistic religion was a major undertaking that took generations, and progressed differently in different places.

The Roman Empire was a very diverse place. It was made up of thousands of cities and towns across the Mediterranean on three different continents. Mass communication as it is known today was unimagined, and so universal conformity on the

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[1] CIA World Factbook (2007).

scale that we see it in the modern world was neither conceived of nor attempted. In general, Rome was content to let local authorities run their towns and provinces as they saw fit, so long as they paid taxes, honored the emperor, and kept the peace.

Consequently, the process of Christianization varied from place to place. In some cities, Christian communities grew up quickly and dominated civic life from an early date. In other places, paganism remained the default religion of the town for much longer. Some cities, such as Gaza, showed both phenomena, with part of the town being converted quickly and the other part remaining pagan. The port of Gaza, Maiuma, was predominantly Christian even before the conversion of Constantine, so he gave it independence from the predominantly pagan main city, which was only Christianized later in the fifth century.[2]

Despite the differences in process and rate, most towns in the Empire went from being predominantly pagan to predominantly Christian. There was some period of time when the balance tipped from paganism to Christianity, and Christianity went from being a minority upstart with powerful patrons to being the dominant religion of the region. This tipping point was the point of no return, when any hopes that Christianity might fade away and the traditional cults might regain preeminence were lost. Aspects of paganism were preserved within Christianity, and traditional cults survived long after this, but only as a minority religion, often practiced in secret, and doomed to eventual extinction.

Because of this local variation, to study the process of Christianization in detail, one must limit oneself to a specific city and region, in this case, Corinth and the Corinthia region. In some cities, the literary record preserves a detailed account of the conversion to Christianity. In most cities, including Corinth, this is a luxury that modern scholars do

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[2] Trombley (1993) 188.

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not have. Here we must rely on archaeology to tell the story of Christianization. In this investigation, I examine archaeological evidence from Corinth and, to a lesser extent, from the Isthmian Sanctuary and Kenchreai.

I focus on evidence from an urban context for two reasons: first, rural evidence for Christianization is largely absent; second, the nature of the methods for rural conversion dictates this focus. Frank R. Trombley, in "Paganism in the Greek World at the End of Antiquity: The Case of Rural Anatolia and Greece," writes:

> There is no sound evidence for the establishment of monasteries on mainland Greece before the ninth century…. It is unlikely that the rustics were largely converted without the steady catechetical work so abundantly attested for western Asia Minor.[3]

Trombley argues that the countryside was converted through the evangelizing efforts of monks and that, without monasteries, there must have been little conversion of rural Greece. There was another mechanism, however, for the spread of rural Christianity. Inhabitants of the countryside could be converted through the conversion of a patron. When an aristocrat accepted Christianity, he would often mandate conversion for the rest of his household as well, including not only the nuclear family, but all the clients and slaves dependent on him as well.[4] A landed magnate living in Corinth might convert and force all the slaves and free people who worked his land in the countryside to abandon paganism. Thus, in the absence of monasteries, the only way for the Corinthian countryside to be converted was for elites in the urban center to convert.

Previous scholars have studied the Christianization of Corinth, most notably Richard Rothaus in his book *Corinth, the First City of Greece: an urban history of late antique cult and religion* (2000), and various authors in *Urban Religion in Roman*

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[3] Trombley (1985) 345-346.
[4] Chapter 5.

Corinth: interdisciplinary approaches (2005), edited by Daniel N. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen. I hope to contribute somewhat different interpretations of the evidence from those suggested by previous scholars, as well as a contextualization of Christian Corinth within the larger Eastern Mediterranean.

I begin with a brief examination of the categories of "pagan" and "Christian," emphasizing that the category of "pagan" was defined by Christians as a non-group, that is, people who were not part of the groups "Christian," or "Jew." I also review basic aspects of non-Christian religions, such as the principle of *do ut des,* religious tolerance and syncretism. The persistence of certain pagan concepts and practices in Christianity blurs the line between Christian and pagan. I then summarize the climate of the third and fourth centuries and the adaptations of Christianity that allowed it to flourish, specifically the writers who portrayed Christianity as the preserve of Roman civilization in the face of barbarism.

In the third chapter, I examine the benefits and limitations of the literary record and briefly review major scholarship in the field of late antiquity and religious transformation. I then move on to an investigation of Imperial legislation concerning paganism from Theodosius I through Justinian. Included in this chapter is an overview of the nature of Roman law as reactive and geographically specific, the effects of the codices of Theodosius II and Justinian, and the limitations on the enforcement of Roman law. Some edicts provide a glimpse of the religious situation in the empire as seen from Constantinople, and one can identify the change in ambition from Theodosius, who wanted to contain paganism, to Justinian, who passed a law to completely eliminate it.

In light of the heterogeneity of the Roman Empire, I dedicate the fifth chapter to a series of four case studies drawn from Frank R. Trombley's major work *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529*. I summarize the process of Christianization in Gaza, Alexandria, Aphrodisias, and Athens, and identify some general trends that are apparent in these cities, namely, Christianity's adaptability and willingness to fulfill the needs of the pagans and not to force them to abandon their cultural paradigms. I argue that it is Christianity's willingness to approach paganism on its own terms and its respect for non-Christian traditions that allowed it to become the dominant religion in the Roman Empire.

After my investigation into the Roman Empire at large, I focus on Corinth, beginning with an overview of Corinthian history. Through Paul's letters to the Corinthians, mentions in Eusebius, and the story of a bishop's election, I conclude that Corinth had an old and well-established Christian community, even before the Christianization of most civic residents. I then examine Libanius' oration to Julian in defense of Aristophanes, a Corinthian pagan, to evaluate the strength of paganism, especially in the aristocracy, in the fourth century. Finally, I review the earthquakes and sack of Corinth that made for a catastrophic end to the fourth century and the attendant shift in the archaeological record. No identifiably Christian remains predate the fifth century, and no identifiably pagan remains postdate the early sixth century. The fifth century was the period of transition in Corinth.

My examination of Corinthian archaeology is broken into three sections: monumental architecture, sculpture, and cemeteries. In the section on monumental architecture, I examine the destruction of several temples, the use of the Fountain of the

Lamps, the *Orgia* column, civic architecture and the eventual construction of Christian basilicas. The Asklepieion and the existence of the *Orgia* column show the persistence of paganism into the fifth century. The Fountain of the Lamps bears striking witness to the confusion of the categories of pagan and Christian. I then conclude that the archaeology reinforces the case for general destruction in the late fourth century and that this destruction led to a halt in the cycle of euergetism. The Imperially financed Lechaion basilica restarted the cycle in the late fifth and early sixth century, but by now the architecture donated by wealthy Corinthians was Christian. Further, the placement of the basilicas advertised the Christian nature of the town to those approaching it. The monumental architecture in Corinth frames the question of Christianization. In the fourth century, all the architecture was pagan; in the sixth century, it was all Christian. Thus, the tipping point between paganism and Christianity occurred sometime in the fifth century.

My examination of sculpture, therefore, focuses on the fifth century. I first review iconoclasm and the belief in sculptural animation, either by gods or by demons. I then identify two pagan heads that were sculpted in the first and second halves of the fifth century, lending further support to the survival of public paganism in the fifth century. Next, I examine several cases of Christian defacement and the ideologically motivated deposition of pagan statues. Corinthian sculpture, therefore, illustrates both the survival of paganism and a violent Christian reaction to it.

I conclude my investigation of Corinthian archaeology with the cemeteries because of whom they represent. Monumental architecture represents the religious leanings of the ruling class; sculpture shows the religious views of those wealthy enough

to afford it as well as the views of a few people who felt strongly enough to destroy it; cemeteries provide evidence for the religious thought of a great many people across the socioeconomic spectrum over a long period of time. The Late Roman cemeteries in Corinth are mostly interesting in relation to the nearby architecture. The cemetery near the Asklepieion shows, I argue, that Christians respected the religious taboos of their pagan neighbors who continued to worship at the ruined temple. The Christians who were buried on Acrocorinth, near the ruined sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, may not have viewed the area as sacred, but the influence of the pagan goddesses persisted, making the place especially attractive for the burial of women and children. The placement of the Kraneion basilica in the midst of an ancient cemetery and the continued burial of Christians around the basilica indicate the value that the Christian aristocracy placed on its pagan heritage. I conclude with an examination of two individual burials, that of the Bishop Eustathios in the Kodratos basilica and that of an anonymous Christian in the podium of the destroyed shrine of Palaimon. The grave of Eustathios is fitted with a libation pipe, demonstrating the adoption of pagan cult practice by the clergy. Palaimon was worshipped with funerary rites, so a burial in the Palaimonion suggests that the memory of the hero and his cultic associations survived after the destruction of his shrine.

Corinth was Christianized in the fifth century following a period of widespread destruction. One can easily imagine, after the sack of the city by Alaric in 395/6, which followed a series of earthquakes, Corinthians wondering what they had done wrong. Through the fourth century, they had honored the gods faithfully, despite the prohibitions from Constantinople, and still their city was ruined. Perhaps now the Christian

community did not seem so foolish in their worship of one god. Immediately after the end of the fourth century, Christians become visible in the archaeological record through the desecration of statues and, later, the existence of distinctly Christian burials. Even so, it took time for the city to fall firmly into the hands of the Christians. The only way that most Corinthian citizens would agree to accept baptism was if the Church did not force them to give up those aspects of traditional society that they valued the most. The aristocrats had to be able to compete for honor by building great structures, and they had to be able to be buried near their ancestors. The Church could not force the people to forget the places of power and their associations, and it could not take away the libations that they poured for the dead, nor could it forbid the dedication of lamps in caves. The Corinthian Church understood the power of compromise and did it well. It accommodated the new converts and did not seek to destroy paganism violently. Some Christians did smash, deface, or bury statues, but these would have been relatively isolated events. Far more important is the fact that the Christians who buried their dead near the Asklepieion avoided polluting the sanctuary by trying to stay outside of the temenos and keeping their graves inconspicuous to those worshipping at the temple. Corinth became a Christian city peacefully in the wake of a natural disaster.

Such a peaceful conversion contradicts the literary record, which abounds with hagiographies narrating the lives of bishops who destroyed temples, uprooted altars, and terrorized pagans into conversion. The Emperors tried to force their religion on pagans by threatening them with exile, financial ruin, and even death. Such methods contributed to the spread of Christianity, but literary scholars have long recognized Christianity's adaptability as being vital to its success. Many have posited that the zealous,

uncompromising bishop of the hagiographies was the exception rather than the rule. Corinth provides archaeological confirmation of a model of peaceful accommodation for urban conversion.

Chapter 2.

Pagan and Christian

Any examination of the process by which a place went from being generally pagan to generally Christian must include a discussion of what it meant to be pagan and Christian in the first place. The issue is not so simple as it might first appear to the modern person. The discussion is laden with questions of identification, both of the self and of the other, and the acceptance or rejection of such identification. The line between Christian and pagan is not clear and, depending on the definition used, there can be overlap between the two categories. For the convenience of the reader, throughout this paper I will use the term "pagan" to indicate a traditional polytheist, or someone who worshipped multiple gods. While the term was originally used pejoratively, those whose feelings might have been hurt by the implication that they were rustic or excluded in some way have long since died.

In the first century C.E., Philo, a Jew, coined the term "polytheism" to describe the belief in multiple gods.[5] Before this, no one had grouped polytheists together based on their belief system. Later, Christians would use other words to denote non-Christians and non-Jews: "pagan" in the West and "Hellene," or "gentile" in the East.

"Pagan" originally meant a non-participant, or one excluded from a professional or distinguished group. It was used to describe civilians as opposed to soldiers and private individuals as opposed to public officials. It could also mean a peasant, or rustic, and was not imbued with any religious meaning until the Latin speaking Christians adopted it in the fourth century to describe those who were excluded from the Church,

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[5] Rousselle (1999) 625.

God's love, salvation, heaven, and the Christian community.[6] The term "pagan" bore the negative connotations of common, unsophisticated, and inferior in its religious sense in the West, but also in the secular sense in which it was used in the East.

"Hellene" literally means "Greek," but was adopted by Neoplatonist philosophers who described themselves as "Hellenists." Beginning in the fourth century, Greek-speaking Christians used the term in the same way that their Latin-speaking coreligionists used "pagan." This can lead to some confusion when reading Christian authors. When they label someone a "Hellene," they usually mean non-Christian, but can also mean Neoplatonic philosopher, someone trained in the classical curriculum of rhetoric and philosophy, or simply someone from Greece.[7]

All these terms "polytheist," "pagan," and "Hellene" were used by one group to describe others. Philosophers called themselves "Hellenes," but they were referring to an elite group of highly educated individuals, not non-Christians. The terms, as used by Christians and by scholars today, do not refer to what someone was, but to what someone was not. Non-Jews and non-Christians were never a group until Christianity became powerful enough to define the religious discourse in the empire.

Before this, people were rarely defined on the basis of religious conviction. Indeed, the idea of belief and faith, so central to modern religion, was peripheral to most cult practices in the ancient world. Aline Rousselle writes:

> It was never necessary within pagan practice itself to make beliefs (faith) explicit, except within mystery cults, where the elaboration of myths and rites was an essential component of the ritual. But there was no universal, normative pronouncement of faith.[8]

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[6] Brown (1999) 625.
[7] Bowersock (1990) 9-13.
[8] Rousselle (1999) 626.

Religious conviction was simply not as important to the ancients as it is to modern people. Instead, the ancients valued the continuation of cult in the manner of the ancestors. Porphyry, a Neoplatonic philosopher, wrote, "Such is the chief fruit of piety, to honor the divinity according to one's ancestral custom."[9] Adherence to the old way of things was the most important part of cult practice, not the conviction of the participant. One could say that orthopraxy trumped orthodoxy.[10]

The public sacrifice was the most important ritual in ancient public paganism. The sacrifice was the climax of most civic ceremonies in antiquity and, along with the banquet that followed it, was an important tool for promoting solidarity within a city.[11] Sacrifice was also seen as the most effective way to communicate with the divine. Most pagan worship involved some sort of sacrifice, whether of an animal or of something less grand like a cake. The efficacy of sacrifice was never seriously questioned and in the fourth century it gained new emphasis.[12] The earliest anti-pagan law, issued by Constantine in 321, was a ban on sacrifice (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.1). The ban would often be reiterated by subsequent emperors, including every emperor who reigned in the fifth century.[13] Sacrifice was the most visible and the most important part of paganism.

Most people believed in the existence of the gods, but honored them not out of devotion, but with the expectation of receiving a blessing in return. The principle is known as *do ut des*, "I give so that you might give." While the true Christian was supposed to love god, for the pagan, the gods' ability to help was more important.[14] This

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[9] Porphyry *Ad. Marcella* 18 in MacMullen (1981) 3.
[10] Assmann (2004) 28.
[11] Harl (1990) 8 and Trombley (1993) i 3.
[12] Harl (1990) 11.
[13] Harl (1990) 7.
[14] MacMullen (1981) 52-53.

principle functioned on a personal as well as a civic level. A farmer would worship a god to ensure fertility, a general would give a sacrifice for victory, a city would celebrate a festival to ensure either a specific blessing, like good harvest, or general felicity, and the Roman state performed many sacrifices and rites to ensure peace, prosperity, and security for the empire. The good will of the gods was required to maintain society at every level. If one failed to honor the gods in the customary ways, one risked personal calamity. If the state failed to honor the gods, society was in serious danger.[15]

Personal devotion to a single god was possible, and some people, like Aelius Aristides in the second century, did feel that they had a personal relationship with one god or another, but this was not required, nor even expected, of the majority of worshippers. Further, those particularly devoted to a single god were not expected to abandon the worship of other gods. A person dedicated to Asklepios still sacrificed to Zeus.

Hellenism, or Neoplatonic philosophy, was the closest that polytheists would come to a confessional religion in the mold of Christianity. They believed that, through logical thought and dialectic in the style of Plato, they were able to understand the divine source of the universe, the One God.[16] They believed in all the gods of the world, but believed their source to be a single, great divine force. The Neoplatonists had a complex theology regarding the soul and the relationship between God and the universe.[17] Hellenism was a religion/philosophy for the wealthy and educated elite. Hellenes patronized the more common pagan shrines and cults and were inclusive of all deities, but they explored questions of theology and metaphysics similar to the ones that

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[15] Trombley (1993) i 6-8 analyzes Libanius *Or.* 30.
[16] Brown (1971) 73-74.
[17] Brown (1971) 74.

Christian theologians were writing about. It is this version of paganism that Julian converted to and sponsored during his brief reign from 361-363.[18]

The idea of belief and religion as exclusive was foreign and even dangerous to pagans. MacMullen summarizes this sentiment nicely when he describes "a widespread feeling that to slight the gods, plural, was wrong…monotheists rate as atheists: to have one's own god counted for nothing if one denied everybody else's."[19] This reluctance to slight divinity in any form led to a great profusion of various cults in the Roman Empire. In addition to the twelve Olympian gods, each city had its own local gods that were tied to that place. Further, other gods grew popular throughout the empire, such as Isis, Mithras, Cybele, Asklepios, Serapis, and others. Finally, local gods were often conflated with an Olympian god with similar powers and were known by composite names, such as Zeus-Ammon in Egypt. Such diversity carried with it a universal tolerance among the polytheists. They may have disagreed about which god was supreme, but it would never have occurred to a polytheist to deny the existence of one god while affirming the truth of another.

The practice of equating one god with another is one of the oldest forms of religious syncretism. Jan Assmann, in "Monotheism and Polytheism," states:

> The great achievement of polytheism is the articulation of a common semantic universe. It is this semantic dimension that makes the names translatable—that is, makes it possible for gods from different cultures or parts of a culture to be equated with one another.[20]

Names and forms of gods were immaterial. The differences were local inventions, used to describe common, international gods. Eventually, this led to the idea that the

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[18] Fowden (1999) 85-87.
[19] MacMullen (1981) 2.
[20] Assmann (2004) 24.

international gods were aspects of one Supreme God.[21]   This notion is distinct from Judaic, Christian, and Muslim monotheism in that it does not deny the existence or repudiate the worship of the gods in their many various forms.[22]   This belief in a Supreme Being was probably prevalent only among the educated classes.   Most pagans probably did not worry about the theological consequences of syncretism and were more concerned with the direct impact of the supernatural world on the mundane than on the precise nature of the divine.

Such tolerance leads to a problem of categorization. If one defines Christians as those who worship Christ and pagans as those who worship many gods, the result is not two distinct groups.   Since religious exclusivity was not the dominant paradigm throughout most of ancient history, there were people who worshipped Christ along with Zeus, Apollo, Isis, Mithras, and all the other gods.[23]

The methods of worship are also problematic. Because of the importance of rite, many refused to abandon ancient rituals when they converted to Christianity. Understanding the conception of a single deity with multiple names, recent converts would have had little trouble invoking the divine in new terms. It was harder for them to give up the ritual practices that were so ingrained in their psychology as an inherent aspect of life. Christian missionaries found it easier to adopt these practices in Christian form than to eradicate them. Christian writers would often identify a Judaic or Christian origin for non-Christian ritual, thus simultaneously sanctioning the practice and demonstrating the supposed originality of the new religion.   If Christianity was the

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[21] Assmann (2004) 27.
[22] Assmann (2004) 28.
[23] *1 Corinthians* 8:10 is exhortation from the apostle Paul to the Corinthian Christians not to participate in pagan sacrificial banquets.

original, pure religion, by adopting it, people were not converting to a new religion, but reverting to an old religion.[24] In this way, certain pagan festivals, deities, and practices were incorporated into Christianity.

In many instances, a specific narrative of conversion can be identified, such as the Christianization of the Ankh, which occurred with the destruction of the Serapeum.[25] Other practices, such as the dedication of lamps, were so fundamental to the idea of worship that they were ubiquitous in both paganism and Christianity.[26] Indeed, some Christians were alarmed at large numbers of votive lights in churches because the phenomenon was so similar to pagan rituals. In the fourth century, a certain Vigilantius says to Jerome, "We see something close to a pagan rite brought into the church in the guise of religion: in full daylight, a mountain of candles lit…" Jerome responds, "[B]ecause we once worshipped idols, are we now not to worship God?—lest we appear to venerate him with the same honors accorded to idols?"[27] Christians and non-Christians both dedicated candles and lamps to the divine and the practice was seen as intrinsic to worship, be it pagan or Christian. Thus, cult practice does not always enforce the dichotomy of Christian versus pagan. Indeed, this dichotomy, an invention of Christianity that stemmed from its origin as a radical, apocalyptic Jewish cult, had to be imposed on the rest of the empire. There must have been a considerable period of time when people were not convinced that it was valid. Since polytheists did not emphasize personal faith, the fact that Christians worshipped in the same way that they did, by

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[24] Trombley (1993) i 148.
[25] Trombley (1993) i 141-142.
[26] Rothaus (2000) 4-6.
[27] *Contra Vigilantium* 4 in MacMullen (1997) 116.

dedicating lamps, would have been more important than the fact that Christians were worshipping a different god.

To the modern viewer, used to heartfelt confessions of faith, this theological paradigm may seem shallow, but polytheism met the religious needs of millions of people for thousands of years. Those religious needs were varied and they can be fruitfully studied by examining the inscriptions left in sanctuaries either in thanks or in supplication for divine intervention, the epithets attached to gods, and the presence and frequency of sanctuaries dedicated to gods with specific powers. Ramsay MacMullen, in his book *Paganism in the Roman Empire,* includes a chapter that does just this. Through the proliferation of Asklepieia, the healing epithets attached to various gods, and the number of inscriptions either requesting or grateful for a cure, he concludes, "The chief business of religion, it might then be said, was to make the sick well."[28] Drawing on other dedicatory inscriptions, MacMullen also lists beauty, fertility, wealth, freedom from slavery, relief from tax payments, and protection from natural disasters and other dangers such as drowning and brigands as common requests. The gods, then, served a rather utilitarian function. By limiting himself to inscriptions found in sanctuaries, MacMullen ignores domestic cult, which is much harder to identify, but probably served similar needs. Less mundane requirements that we often associate with religion, such as a supportive community, were met in other ways.

Christianity began to flourish in the early centuries of our era when these other needs stopped being met by secular life. The peace and prosperity of the empire led to a kind of globalization that had not occurred before. Many towns still prided themselves on their local heritage and unique customs and history, but many people, especially

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[28] MacMullen (1981) 49.

merchants, were now free to travel more than they ever had before. One could pass from Rome to Syria and speak Greek the entire way. Freedmen were more numerous and successful, and a lower middle class grew and prospered.[29] This widening of horizons led to the weakening of old social orders and ties to individual cities. As Peter Brown puts it, "Imperceptibly, the Roman empire dissolved in the lower classes that sense of tradition and local loyalties on which its upper class depended."[30] Traditional communities were breaking down, which made Christianity's message of radical community appealing to many. Christianity drew distinct boundaries between who was in and who was out. It provided a community for those who no longer felt that they had a place in the old social institutions, especially the lower middle classes.[31]

In the chaos of the third century, this became even more valuable and pronounced. Intermittent persecution only heightened the sense of exclusivity and, amidst the turmoil, many people felt afraid and needed something larger than themselves to which to cling. Many cults offering salvation in the next world emerged, such as Mithraism, but Christianity was able to out compete with them for several reasons. First, was the radical community already discussed. Second, the Christian God was, unlike the pagan gods, capable of giving and receiving love. The image of God as a loving father must have appealed to many.

The other asset of Christianity was its belief in demons. In a time of great fear, it must have been easy to view the world as full of malevolent forces, working to afflict humans with all sorts of bad fortune. Christianity viewed the spiritual world as a great cosmic struggle between good and evil. Christian holy men, through their alliance with

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[29] Brown (1971) 60-62.
[30] Brown (1971) 60.
[31] Brown (1971) 62.

the source of good, God and Christ, were able to control and defeat the allies of evil, the demons.[32] Possession by these demons, which was thought to be the cause of mental illness, was frightening and required an exorcist. While there were very few pagan exorcists, many churches maintained an official exorcist who was advanced in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. These exorcists were thought to be quite powerful and their effectiveness was a point that many Christian authors stressed.[33]

While certain aspects of Christianity were thus attractive to the lower classes that felt adrift in society, some church fathers began to outline a Christian doctrine that did not require the rejection of the benefits of this society.[34] Beginning with Origen in the first half of the third century and culminating in Eusebius in the first half of the fourth century, this line of theology celebrated the Roman Empire and Hellenistic Culture. It argued that Christianity was the natural religion and that Christ had planted the seeds of Christianity in every one and had tended them since the beginning of creation. Christ had thus tended the best in Greek culture and philosophy. These men saw the birth of Jesus as deliberately timed to coincide with the beginning of the *Pax Romana* ushered in by Augustus. In a remarkable reversal, Christians could no longer turn their backs on Roman society because Christ had brought that society into being. In fact, Christianity was the perfection of Greek philosophy and the culmination of history. On sarcophagi, Christ wears the robes of a Greek schoolmaster and is surrounded by refined disciples, eager to hear his lecture.

In this view, Christianity was the sole preserve of a civilization beset on all sides by barbarians. In the late third and early fourth century, emperors were almost

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[32] Brown (1971) 53-56.
[33] MacMullen (1981) 50.
[34] Brown (1971) 82-85.

exclusively military men and the military itself was manned by soldiers from the very frontiers on which it was stationed. Their rough appearances and uncivilized manners must have seemed, to the refined urbanite steeped in the *paideia*, as great a threat to civilization as the invading barbarians. Christianity, it was claimed, could keep the increasing barbarism of society at bay. While a sense of community and exorcisms helped Christianity spread in the early centuries, it was this transformation in message that allowed Christianity to spread among the upper classes, that allowed an emperor to become a Christian while still fulfilling the traditional roles of the emperor, and that led to its eventual preeminence as the dominant religion in the empire.

The preceding narrative of the development and different appeals of Christianity paints the new religion with broad strokes that belie the great diversity of thought within it. Many different versions of Christianity existed in the early centuries of the Common Era, often with wildly different ideas about a variety of issues. The most contentious was the exact nature of Christ, whether he was of the same, similar, or completely different nature of God. Some who considered themselves Christians believed things that many modern Christians would see as sacrilegious, and many groups of people who worshipped Christ did not consider any of the other groups of people who worshipped Christ to be true Christians. The situation was one of intense debate and often hostility. When Constantine converted, he attempted to settle some of the disputes with the Council of Nicaea. This gave rise to an orthodox version of Christianity, but did not eliminate the other versions. Emperors found it necessary to legislate against heretical interpretations of Christianity for quite some time.

Because of such diversity of belief within Christianity and the tolerance of paganism, the question of who was a pagan and who was a Christian is a difficult one. "Paganism" was never a group until the Christians defined it as one, and many pagans probably did not think of themselves in those terms. Christians are somewhat easier to identify because they, theoretically, identified themselves as a group. However, not all who worshipped Christ ceased to worship other deities, despite the pleas of the clergy, and so could be considered both Christian and pagan. Further, there were some cult practices, such as the dedication of lamps and candles, that Christians shared with their non-Christian neighbors who saw the practical ritual as more important than the faith behind it, thus further blurring the line.

When the identification of pagan and Christian is so difficult on theoretical terms, such an identification based on archaeological evidence becomes even more difficult. Even though we know that Christian communities existed since the first century CE, they are invisible in the archaeological record. Early Christians either saw no need or were not able to manufacture lamps with Christian symbols so we cannot speak to their activities. We must rely on overt signals of religion, such as a cross, a chi-rho symbol, or an invocation of Christ or the Christian god to identify Christianity. In Late Antiquity, paganism was the status quo that Christianity was changing. Christianity was trying to establish itself as the universal religion of a pagan empire. Thus, when the religious nature of an activity is in question, the burden of proof should be on Christianity. One should assume non-Christian activity unless one finds evidence to the contrary. In places that are known to have been thoroughly Christian in Late Antiquity, the situation would

be reversed. Until a locale is known to have been thoroughly Christianized, however, the burden of proof must remain on Christianity.

Chapter 3.

Previous Scholarship

The history of the Late Antiquity, like most history, has been studied primarily from the literary sources. We are fortunate to have at our disposal a wealthy corpus of literature dating from this time, but it is important to recognize the limitations of these sources. While the works of some pagan historians survive, the majority of literature from the later Roman Empire was written by orthodox Christians. This is because the monks who copied texts in the Middle Ages did not see fit to promulgate what they saw as offensive literature, including that written by pagans. Further, ancient authors were invariably aristocratic and so tended to focus on the elite few. This is true even in Late Antiquity despite Christianity's theoretical focus on the poor. The spotlight was still firmly on the elite.

These limitations of the sources are well known, however, and not fatal to the careful scholar, of which there have been many. J. B. Bury published *A History of the Later Roman Empire From Arcadius to Irene (395 A.D. to 800 A.D.)* in 1889 and a similar *History of the Later Roman Empire From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian (A.D. 395 to A.D. 565)* in 1923. Although he reflects the biases of his time, he remains an important source for the general history of Late Antiquity. Bury's books were eclipsed by A.H.M. Jones, who published *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey* in 1964. In 1971, Peter Brown published, among others, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* which explores cultural changes during this time for a wide audience. Averil Cameron provides a brief introduction to this period in her book *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity AD 395-600,*

published in 1993. In 1999, *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* came out, edited by G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar. The first portion of this book is a collection of essays by a variety of authors on areas that early scholars would not have explicitly addressed, e.g. "Remaking the Past" by Averil Cameron, and "Sacred Landscapes" by Beatrice Caseau. The second portion, slightly more than half of this great work, is given over to an alphabetical guide to major subjects in Late Antiquity. The different subjects under consideration in *Late Antiquity* are indicative of larger scholarly trends away from administrative, military, and elite histories to social and cultural histories.

In addition to these surveys, myriad books exist with more specific focuses. Most important for this investigation are *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, edited by Sarah Iles Johnston and Frank R. Trombley's work *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529*, published in 1993. The first two chapters of this book are "The Legal Status of Sacrifice to 529," and "Christianization," but the majority of the book is given over to nine regional case studies of Christianization. These are drawn primarily from the literary record, but Trombley occasionally utilizes archaeology and epigraphy as well.

Trombley's focus on regional case studies addresses a problem not with the literary record itself, but with scholars' interpretation of it. The Roman Empire was never a homogenous institution. Rather, it was made up of many cities and regions, each with their own unique culture and history that led to basic differences, which were respected by the Imperial administration. Except for paying taxes, contributing to the military, and honoring the emperors, Rome had never asked all the cities in her domain to

conform to any centralized standards of behavior until Constantine became a Christian. Even then, Constantine outlawed sacrifice, but not paganism. Cities were left, for the most part, to their own devices. The result was a great diversity between cities in most aspects of life. Thus, what was true in Alexandria was not necessarily true in Aphrodisias, and what was true in Athens was not necessarily true in Corinth. Further, all these diverse regions were constantly changing, and thus the empire was constantly changing. Unfortunately, scholars in the past have generalized from the local to the global, applying what was written in one place in one time to the entire empire and an era.

Chapter 4.

Anti-pagan Legislation

Despite this diversity, Rome did have an Imperial administration that, especially after Constantine, sought to influence the entire empire at once. Thus, a chronological overview of the process of Christianization throughout the Eastern Mediterranean should include the laws. [35] Roman law was practical, reacting to the current situation and, usually reflecting broad realities. Twice in Late Antiquity, these laws were compiled into codes. The first was the *Codex Theodosianus*, completed in 438 at the order of Theodosius II (408-450). In the sixteenth and final chapter are the laws that address religion. The second was the *Corpus Juris Civilis* issued under Justinian (527-565). Both are concerned with the eradication of paganism, proof that it survived even under Justinian. A close reading of the laws of Theodosius, Justinian, and the other later Roman emperors can provide a glimpse of the changing state of paganism over time.

Before such a reading is attempted, however, it is important to recognize the gap between legislation and reality. The need for the repetition of proscriptions against paganism by various emperors is proof that such a gap existed and the cause is not hard to find: the ancient Roman Empire had no institution dedicated to law enforcement. It was left to local officials or private individuals to prosecute cases. Administrative officials, such as magistrates or governors, sat in judgment of the cases, local officials who were often pagan themselves. The problem of enforcement is revealed in the laws

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[35] For an overview of the law in late antiquity see Jones (1964) 470-479.

themselves, which prescribe stiff penalties for officials who fail to execute the emperors' edicts. Despite such threats, the law was only sporadically enforced. [36]

Prior to 391, the Roman Emperors were generally tolerant of paganism. Constantine outlawed public sacrifice in 321 but permitted every other expression of pagan religion. With the exception of Julian the Apostate (361-363), every emperor after Constantine was Christian and they patronized Christianity, but they did not make it the official religion of the state until Theodosius I (379-395).

Theodosius I, called the Great, was the first to make Christianity the official religion of the Roman state, but it was not until 392, thirteen years into his reign, that Theodosius outlawed all public forms of pagan worship:

> No person of any class or order whatsoever…shall sacrifice an innocent victim to senseless images in any place at all or any city. He shall not in secret wickedness kindle lights with fire to a household deity, with a wine libation to his genius, with incense to his *penates*, lay incense, or hang garlands.[37]

In a drastic change from previous policies of tolerance, Theodosius not only banned sacrifice, but also banned all forms of worship in the temples and in the home.[38] Of course, this was a largely symbolic gesture, as enforcement would have been impossible without a truly massive operation to invade the privacy of every home in the Eastern Empire. Nevertheless, it was a watershed moment when all forms of pagan practice, public and private, became illegal.

Even after Theodosius I, not all emperors were zealous oppressors. In 402, when the bishop Porphyrius asked for permission to destroy the temples in Gaza, Arcadius expressed misgivings about offending the pagans for fear of losing tax revenue from that

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[36] Jones (1964) viii.
[37] *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.12 in Trombley (1993) i 13.
[38] King (1960) 71-76.

city.[39] The emperor was more interested in maintaining a steady income than in changing the beliefs of his subjects. When it was to their advantage, even emperors would fail to enforce the law.

In addition to the *Codex*, Theodosius II published the *Novellae*, additional laws of his own. *Novella* 3 concerns religion and its introduction sums up the major thrust very well:

> Among the other anxieties that Our love for the State has imposed upon Us for Our ever watchful consideration, We perceive that an especial responsibility of Our Imperial Majesty is the pursuit of the true religion. If We shall be able to hold fast to the worship of this true religion, We shall open the way to prosperity in human undertakings. (*Nov.* 3)

The tone is striking. Theodosius II feels responsible for the belief of his subjects and is concerned that so many of them are not followers of the "true religion." This stems from, as is clear from the second sentence, the pagan theological paradigm of *do ut des,* described above.[40] Theodosius wanted his empire to be an orthodox Christian one not because of his altruistic love for God, although his piety must have played a part, but so that God would bless the empire and make it prosperous. This was the rationale behind the Roman state's sacrifices. Even though he was a devout Christian, Theodosius had pagan tendencies.

The next codification of Roman law was the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, a truly massive compilation of Roman law including the *Codex Justinianus* issued under Justinian (527-565) in 529. He had a passion for early Imperial Rome and sought to re-conquer the Western Empire to restore the Roman Empire to its former glory. He was also a devout Christian and thought that his military success was dependent on the favor of god. Thus,

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[39] Chapter 5.
[40] Chapter 2.

he worked tirelessly to regulate the church and eliminate unorthodoxy in the empire.[41]

He passed several laws to this effect and of special interest is one edict, *Cod. Just.* 1.11.10:

> It is necessary for as many persons as have not been deemed worthy of baptism to make themselves manifest…and proceed to the most holy churches with their wives and children and entire household and be taught the true Christian faith…. We enact this so that children who are at an early age will at once and without delay partake of saving baptism in such a manner that, after they have advanced in maturity sufficiently to sit in the most holy churches and be taught the sacred scriptures and canons and thus partake of genuine conversion, they shall receive reverend baptism only after shaking ancient error from themselves. For they ought to receive this way of life firmly and keep the true faith of the orthodox and not convert again back into ancient error.[42]

The scope and audacity of this law were unprecedented. It ordered every single person in the empire to be baptized. It is an all-encompassing sweep of everyone not already baptized mandating that they convert. The last section of the law, concerning children, is most telling. Justinian was under no illusions that such forced conversion would lead to true, heartfelt love of Christ in pagans. His goal was to expose the children, while they were still impressionable, to Christian teaching and thus convince them of the truth of Christianity, achieving homogeneity of belief after the current generation had passed away. The children were the key to Justinian's ideal of a universally Christian empire.

Paganism survived the radical attacks by Justinian, but only in a small, oppressed, hidden minority.[43] Never again would it contend with Christianity as the religion of the Romans. The balance of power in the empire had tipped forever.

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[41] Jones (1964) 270 and 285-287.
[42] *Cod. Just.* 1.11.10 in Trombley (1993) i 88-89.
[43] See especially Trombley, (1985) 327-352.

Chapter 5.

Local Histories

Imperial legislation was not immediately effective in eradicating paganism, but paganism did, eventually, give way to Christianity as the majority religion of the Roman Empire. The combination of the proselytism mandated in the New Testament, the organization of the Christian church that facilitated such proselytism, and the Imperial policies, especially Justinian's, making conversion advantageous was the driving force behind the Christianization of the empire. However, to understand the process of the conversion of the empire from primarily pagan to primarily Christian, it is necessary to understand the conversion of specific locales. As has been noted, the empire was a diverse place, made up of individual cities that each had a unique history. Luckily, literary sources illuminate certain aspects of the conversion of some cities and Trombley has analyzed this material admirably. Especially helpful are his examinations of Gaza, Alexandria, Aphrodisias, and Athens.

A comparison of these regions yields one major generalization: Christianity gained converts when it addressed the same issues that paganism did and when it allowed recent converts to retain traditions from pagan society. Pagans converted to Christianity when they saw it as more powerful and better able to serve their needs. Elite pagans converted to Christianity when it advanced their social standing or when it was presented to them in Neoplatonic language. The poor converted when the Christian clergy were more effective than pagan priests in securing divine aid, when the pagan gods were powerless in the face of Christian assaults, and when Christians terrified them into

conversion. For rich and poor alike, Christianity had to adapt to Roman society and culture in order to be successful.

Gaza

The story of the Christianization of Gaza is told by Mark the Deacon in his *Life of Porphyrius.*[44] Porphyrius was the Bishop of Gaza from 395-420 and, as a militantly anti-pagan evangelist, he destroyed the pagan temples of Gaza in 402. When Porphyrius arrived in 395, Gaza had only a very small Christian community; when he died in 420, it had grown significantly.[45]

One of the first things that Porphyrius did when he arrived in Gaza was to miraculously end a drought that the pagan priests had been unable to affect.[46] This miracle led to the conversion of over one hundred pagans, according to Mark the deacon. Gazans expected the pagan priests to ensure the rainfall. Porphyrius won converts when he did the priests' job better than they did.

Soon after, another miracle occurred in Gaza. An aristocratic woman, Aelia, was in the pangs of a difficult childbirth. After calling upon pagan deities in vain, the family invoked Christ. Following a successful delivery, the entire household converted. This was a major event. The head of an aristocratic household could mandate the religion of everyone under his control, including all of his slaves and clients. The conversion of Aelia's household added 64 members to the Christian church. Just as with the drought, Christianity was taking on the same function that paganism had. In 395/6, the pagans sacrificed and prayed for rain, and Aelia's household had done the same for a safe

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[44] Trombley (1993) i 187-245.
[45] Trombley (1993) i 227-228.
[46] *V. Porphyrii* Cap. 20, recounted in Trombley i (1993) 194.

delivery, to no avail. People converted to the Christian god because he fulfilled the duties of the pagan gods better than they did.

Paganism remained strong at Gaza, however, and not even the destruction of the temples accomplished its eradication. In 402, Porphyrius led a procession of Christians to the temple of Aphrodite and miraculously destroyed the cult image inside. As a result of the apparent power of the Christian bishop, over forty pagans joined the church. A few days later, with the help of Imperial troops, Porphyrius and a Christian mob destroyed all the temples in Gaza and stole the treasure contained therein. As much as he could, Porphyrius ensured that this booty went to the church, but could not prevent some individuals from keeping it for themselves. This detail is informative. It would be surprising to find a large mob of Christians zealous enough to destroy so many ancient temples for purely ideological reasons. The lucrative rewards of temple destruction, however, make this story entirely believable.

The last temple to be destroyed was that of the most important god in Gaza, Zeus-Marnas. After much debate, the Christians decided to build a church on the site of the Marneion and to use the stones from the temple to pave the square in front of the church:

> …the bishop ordered the remaining debris of the marble work of the Marneion, which the pagans said was sacred and lay in a place not to be trodden, particularly for women, to be used as paving stones in the main street outside the temple, so that they would be trodden upon not only by men, but also by women, and dogs and swine and beasts. This grieved the idolaters more than the burning of the temple wherefore the greater number of them, mainly the women, do not walk on the marbles up to the present day.[47]

Porphyrius insulted the pagan temple, but he did not stamp out paganism with his destructive campaign. The pagan Gazans still revered the stones of the destroyed

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[47] *V. Porphyrii* Cap. 76 in Trombley (1993) i 203.

Marneion, even though the temple had been destroyed and the stones polluted. The pagans in Gaza were steadfast in their faith despite the attacks made upon it by Porphyrius.

After the Marneion was destroyed, the empress, Eudoxia donated the funds for the church that replaced it. This patronage should not be taken for granted. In order to obtain the soldiers needed for the temple destruction, Porphyrius and Mark sailed to Constantinople where their request was put to the emperor Arcadius. Mark reports:

> The emperor said: "I know that the city is given to idolatry, but is right-minded with respect to taxation, paying a large amount of public revenue. If we attack them suddenly with fear, they will flee and we shall lose considerable revenue…. For when we trouble them, we fall short in all things, and they know the truth of this."[48]

Arcadius was not eager to oppress the pagans in Gaza because he feared, rightly as it turned out, a loss of revenue. Prior to the destruction of the temples, the Gazan aristocrats fled the city. The emperor preferred a pagan town that paid taxes to a Christian town that paid less in taxes. Further, the pagans knew this. It was the status quo that the emperor would leave a town alone if it was in the Empire's best interest to do so, be it pagan or Christian.

After the destruction of the temples, the mob went through the city destroying statues, throwing them into the sewer, and burning pagan books. It is possible that the deposition of the statues in the sewer, being subterranean, was seen as a way to send the demons in the statues back to hell. It is also possible that the sewer was a polluted place and that putting the statues in them was an insult added to injury. This mob violence was sufficiently frightening to drive many pagans to the church.

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[48] *V. Porphyrii,* Cap. 41 in Trombley (1993) i 237.

Gazans were probably not convinced of the superiority of the Christian god, but they were convinced of the power of the Christians. They not only destroyed temples, statues and books, but they took the precious materials from the temples as well and co-opted them for the church. To see a church sparkling with gold that used to adorn a temple, which now lay in ruins, would have been a powerful illustration of the supremacy of the new religion.

The zeal of Porphyrius was extraordinary. Most bishops were not nearly as combative or energetic in their proselytism. Gaza is, therefore, an extraordinary case and one should not expect to find similar circumstances in very many other cities. Porphyrius was a man bent on the expansion of the Christian church and who was very effective. He employed a mixture of coercion, and miraculous spectacle. With Imperial muscle behind him, he closed and destroyed the temples and led the Christian riots and iconoclasm. He also worked miracles, such as the end of the drought, the destruction of the statue of Aphrodite, and the successful birth of Aelia's child. Porphyrius was successful when he took over the responsibilities of the pagan priest and proved that acceptance of Christianity was advantageous because of the greater power of the Christian God and the church.

Alexandria

The destruction of the Serapeum in Alexandria in 391 was thought by some Christian scholars at the time to be the end of paganism in the Mediterranean.[49] The Serapeum was famous throughout the empire, for Serapis was responsible for the annual

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[49] Trombley (1993) i 129-145.

flooding of the Nile, which deposited rich silt on the Egyptian fields, making it the breadbasket of the Mediterranean. When Serapis failed to defend his temple, the faith of many was shaken. When the Nile flooded the next year and the Christian patriarch took over the Nilometer, many were convinced that the Christian god was more powerful than Serapis.

Alexandria was one of the most important cities in the empire partly because it contained a university that was one of the most prestigious intellectual centers in antiquity. This university remained a stronghold of pagan Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity. With the growth of Christianity, the school at Alexandria also became a Christian theological center for various sects and the Christian community in the town became quite powerful in the fourth and fifth centuries.

In 391, there was a riot during which pagans tortured and killed several Christians. In response, the emperor Theodosius I tried to end the conflict by decreeing that the Christians had become martyrs and, because of this honor, the pagans who had killed them were not to be punished. The emperor who permanently married Christianity to the Roman state forgave pagans for killing Christians in the interest of harmony. Nevertheless, as retribution for the pagan riot, the Christians rose up against the Serapeum and destroyed the cult statue of Serapis along with all the other statues inside the temple.

The effect of the destruction of the Serapeum, while exaggerated by Christian propagandists, cannot be denied entirely. The desecration of the temple and the failure to perform the sacrifices should have caused Serapis to prevent the Nile from flooding. When it did, many must have been convinced that they were wrong to worship Serapis.

Indeed, the Christian God obtained the Serapic title "Lord of the Waters" and Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, was given the most important Nilometer in Egypt. From then on he and his successors, not the priests of Serapis, announced the day the Nile began to rise.[50] Like Porphyrius, Theophilus was a zealous converter who led a Christian mob in the destruction of a temple of a great god and gained many converts by doing so. He also was able to appropriate the purview of the pagan gods. Proselytizers were successful in converting pagans when they showed that Christianity met their needs better than paganism.

Zachariah of Mytilene, writing in the middle of the fifth century, makes it clear that paganism did not die in Alexandria with the demise of the Serapeum.[51] Zachariah was a zealous Christian and a student at the university in Alexandria, which he describes as a place where Christians and pagans mingle, usually amicably, and where students experiment with religion. In his work on the bishop Severus, Zachariah also gives a brief biography of a friend named Paralios, who went to a temple to test the powers of Isis. He spent the night and had a dream in which Isis appeared to him. When he discussed it with other students, none doubted the reality of his dream, but some argued that it was not a god but a *daimon*. After an unsuccessful test of the powers of Isis, Paralios converted to Christianity.

Paralios converted only after a long period of consideration and experimentation with both religions. He conversed with both Christian and pagan intellectuals and employed a rational experiment to settle the issue of his religion. Paralios' conversion was almost scientific. After hearing many arguments as to the relative efficacy of

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[50] Trombley (1993) i 144.
[51] Trombley (1993) ii 1-20.

different religions, he tested the matter for himself and decided on Christianity. Paralios, like the unnamed converts in Gaza and those who chose Christianity after the destruction of the Serapeum, based his decision not on a newfound love of Jesus, but on the promise that Christianity would be a more powerful ally than paganism. He converted to Christianity but still thought like a pagan.

Most of the time, pagans and Christians coexisted peacefully in the school at Alexandria. Even the zealous Christians had pagan friends. Zachariah recalls the funeral of another Christian who "had gained the admiration even of the Hellenes in spite of the zealotry he showed against them because of his great kindness and love of neighbor."[52] Pagan and Christian professors worked side-by-side instructing students whose religious convictions were far from settled. They each worked to convince students, but did so professionally and with mutual respect.

Alexandria was a unique place at the end of the fifth century in that it was a stronghold of both paganism and Christianity. The school was a place where wealthy students exchanged ideas, both religious and secular, in an environment that was, with some exceptions, professional and congenial. Paganism was alive and well in Alexandria a century after the patriarch Theophilus destroyed the great temple of Serapis.

Aphrodisias

Aphrodisias was the provincial capital of Caria in Asia Minor and was Christianized in the late fifth century but public paganism survived in inscriptions into the sixth.[53] The conversion of the upper class was probably hastened by the pagan

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[52] *V. Severi* 45f. in Trombley (1993) ii, 19.
[53] Trombley ii (1993) 52-73 and Roueche (1989).

suppression that followed the failed revolt of Illus from 484-488, to which some Aphrodisian pagans were devoted.[54]

Illus was a general whose rebellion was associated with paganism only through the involvement of a prominent pagan philosopher. Illus was not a pagan himself and no evidence exists to suggest that, outside of Aphrodisias, any pagans thought the rebellion would bring greater religious freedom. Nevertheless, in the immediate aftermath, Zeno persecuted the pagan establishment in several cities, including Alexandria. After the brief suppression, the emperor lapsed back into the tolerant status quo.[55]

The epigraphic evidence from Aphrodisias chronicles the changing religious climate among the aristocracy from the fifth through the sixth century.[56] The inscriptions show that in the first half of the fifth century, the Aphrodisian aristocracy was firmly pagan, that Christianity began to spread among the elites in the second half of the fifth century, and that it had become fairly well established by the late fifth and early sixth centuries.

In the first half of the fifth century, a statue was re-erected to Tatian, the pagan Praetorian Prefect of Oriens from 388-392.[57] His successor erased his name from several inscriptions and took down his statue, but, some time in the first half of the fifth century, his great-grandson, while governor of Caria, re-erected the statue with the approval of the pagan landed magnates.[58]

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[54] Trombley (1993) ii 21-22.
[55] For the Revolt of Illus see Bury (1923) i 395-398, Bury (1889) i 256-258, Kaegi, (1968) 91-95, and Jones (1964) 228-229 and, for the pagan reaction to it, 943.
[56] Roueche, (1989)
[57] Roueche no. 37.
[58] Trombley (1993) ii 53-54

Crosses start appearing regularly in Aphrodisian inscriptions in the mid- to late-fifth century. One of the earliest appears on an inscription over a gate, dating to ca. 450, commemorating the repair of the wall by one Flavius Ampelius.[59] This same man, a local Aphrodisian and one of the earliest Christian elites in the city, also repaired other structures including a nympheum.[60] The inscription from the nympheum is almost entirely complete. It bears a small cross above the text, which was composed by a rhetor named Pythiodorus and thanks Flavius Ampelius, in the voice of the Nymphs, for his generosity. This is a pagan inscription thanking a Christian man for repairing a fountain. Flavius Ampelius was probably responsible for the cross above the text, but did not seek to change the inscription. This man was a Christian, but he apparently got along well with his pagan neighbors and fulfilled his traditional duties as an aristocrat.

Another inscription from the late fifth- or early sixth-century also illustrates the interaction between Christians and pagans.[61] The inscription honors Flavius Palmatus, governor of Caria and was dedicated by an individual named Flavius Atheneus. It begins with the traditional formula, "to Good Fortune," but in between the words are crosses. This phrase, referring to the deity Tyche, is one of several archaizing features in the inscription. Flavius Atheneus, evidently a devout Christian, wanted to use the old formula, but feared impiety, and so added the crosses. This Christian still valued, with some hesitation, his pagan heritage.

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[59] Roueche no. 42. This inscription was modified in the seventh century; the word "Aphrodisians" was replaced with "Stauropolitans," a name for the city preferred by Christians who wanted to avoid the name of the goddess. This emendation is concurrent with several other Christian inscriptions in the city wall that suggest they were intended to help protect the city from invaders. Roueche (1989) 150-151.

[60] Roueche no. 38.

[61] Roueche no. 62.

It was at this time that Christians were becoming more prominent in the Aphrodisian aristocracy. Two inscriptions set up by the council in the late fifth and early sixth centuries have crosses.[62] Several other inscriptions from the same period show Christians donating public works or vast sums of money and achieving civic office and recognition.[63] One of these men was named John, but the rest all had old Hellenic names, suggesting that they were Christian members of old aristocratic families rather than newly wealthy Christians.[64] Despite their religious conversion, they continued to fulfill the duties of the aristocracy through building projects and government.

At the same time that Christian symbols were becoming ubiquitous, pagans began advertising their religion more overtly. For example, Asklepiodotos was a prominent pagan who died sometime after 490 and who received a posthumous honorary inscription and a funerary stele. The funerary stele says, "He did not die, nor did he see the stream of Acheron, but in Olympus Asklepiodotos is among the stars—he who also built many splendid things for his motherland…"[65] A clearer statement of pagan faith is hard to imagine. This man was a well-known pagan, but it apparently had little effect on his reputation.

An inscription dating from around the same time honors a man named Pytheas and includes the phrase "city of the Paphian goddess [Aphrodite]."[66] The inscription is on a statue base, but is too fragmentary to determine the donor. This blatantly pagan inscription was found in the theater and so would have stood in a very public setting. The

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[62] Roueche nos. 65 and 73
[63] Roueche nos.66-70 and 74
[64] Trombley (1993) ii 65
[65] Roueche no. 54.
[66] Roueche no. 56.

inscriptions honoring Pytheas and Asklepiodotos show that there were still influential pagans in Aphrodisias in the late fifth century, even as the Christians gained power.

The overt use of pagan imagery hints at tension between Christians and pagans, which appears in an inscription erected by the city to honor a governor in the late fifth or early sixth century.[67] The first line of the text originally began with a cross, but someone gouged it out of the stone completely, leaving behind only a deep cavity. The cross was not hastily chipped at or defaced, but completely removed. Someone must have felt very strongly about it to have taken the time to erase it so completely. Even though the new Christian elites were continuing the traditions of their pagan ancestors, not everyone was happy about the spread of the new religion.

By the early sixth century, the Christians had taken the reins of power from the pagans, but did not eradicate them until later, as is proven by an epitaph, dating from the reign of Justinian, which refers to the "blessed gods."[68] Paganism survived, but the Christians had taken control of the city.

Athens

Epigraphic evidence also illuminates religious transformation in Athens. [69] Athens retained a pagan character for most of the fifth century because of Plato's academy. This school was more thoroughly pagan than the one in Alexandria, and Athenian elite paganism is thoroughly detailed in literature because of the school. [70]

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[67] Roueche no. 65.
[68] Roueche no. 157.
[69] Trombley (1993) i 283-332.
[70] Trombley (1993) i 307-324.

Athens did have a small Christian community, attested in Christian literature. [71] There are also a few Christian epitaphs from the fourth century with language that indicates that Christianity was rare and remarkable.[72] When Christianity began to gain ground among the aristocracy, it did so by accepting Neoplatonism.

Athens was a Neoplatonic town. The philosophy was widely popular among the aristocrats and when they began converting to Christianity, they brought it with them to the new faith. Several inscriptions attest to this, but one inscription from the fourth or fifth century illustrates the phenomenon particularly well:

> Photius, son of Photius…was born of Demostrate, the daughter of Zoilos. The earth hides a body here, but the soul was carried up into the ether and abides with those [who came] before it. A (cross) Ω[73]

The idea of the soul ascending into the ether was fundamental tenet of Neoplatonism and is almost never found on Christian inscriptions outside of Athens. Photius was a Christian well versed in Neoplatonic philosophy and did not feel that the two were mutually exclusive. A knowledge of Neoplatonism need not indicate aristocracy, but the name of his mother, Demostrate, marks Photius as part of one of the old aristocratic families of Athens.

Syncretism was necessary for the conversion of the aristocratic Athenians who were proud of their pagan heritage. The memory of classical Athens survived and the Neoplatonic academy was an important conduit for that history. The only way that Christianity could penetrate the upper classes was if it did not compromise their civic pride. Either Christian evangelists recognized this and used Neoplatonic language to sell Christianity or recent converts refused to abandon some of their pagan traditions. It is

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[71] Trombley (1993) i 284 and Acts 17:16-34.
[72] Bayet nos. 75, 92 in Trombley (1993) i 284, 285.
[73] Bayet no. 38 in Trombley (1993) i 286. For others see especially no. Bayet 98 in same.

possible that both occurred. Regardless, Athenian Christianity expanded by being accommodating to pagan traditionalism. While the influence of Neoplatonism on Christian writers is well known,[74] Athens is unusual in that it offers archaeological evidence for individuals who not only adopted the Neoplatonic style of argument, but incorporated Neoplatonic theology into their conception of Christianity.

Conclusion

Athenians refused to give up philosophy when they converted to Christianity. Aphrodisians clung to their traditional roles as builders and city benefactors. In Alexandria, students had to determine which god was more potent before they chose a religion. To follow a religion out of affection for a deity made no sense. A century earlier, in the same city, Theophilus had proved that the Christian God could cause the flooding of the Nile. When people realized that they did not have to give up the prosperity that that annual event brought, they were much more willing to accept Christianity. Similarly, in Gaza, Porphyrius brought rain when the pagan priests could not, Christ brought about the successful birth of a child when the pagan gods could not, and the bishop proved that he and his God were more powerful than they and their gods when he destroyed their temples, smashed their idols, took their treasure for his churches, and the gods did nothing. Christianity spread when it adapted to society, both by fulfilling needs better than paganism could and by allowing people to keep their old ways.

Christianity went from being a radical Jewish sect to the majority religion of the Roman Empire. Along the way, in the second and third centuries, it attracted followers

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[74] Brown (1971) 77-94.

by offering a radical sense of community. These Christians took on a new identity within the community, ideally to the exclusion of previous identities: "He resisted them with such determination that he would not even tell them his own name, his race, or the city he was from, whether he was a slave or a freedman. To all their questions he answered in Latin: 'I am a Christian!'"[75] Such an extreme rejection of traditional social categories helped make Christianity a successful minority religion, but such a religion could never have been profitably adopted by the empire at large.

In 1971, Peter Brown wrote of the "conversion of Christianity," by which he meant the transformation of Christianity from a religion that rebelled against the Roman Empire, society and culture to one that embraced and championed classical civilization.[76] This transformation was brought about in the third and fourth centuries by church fathers who, educated in the *paideia*, appreciated Hellenic culture. At this same time, Christ appears on sarcophagi as a philosopher, surrounded by refined, Greek disciples. The Christian intelligentsia was so steeped in Hellenism that when Julian tried to bar them from teaching the classics, they responded furiously. "…like a thief of someone else's goods, he has stripped us of our speech."[77] These philhellenes sought to graft Christianity onto the culture they loved by arguing that Christ, nurturing humanity, was responsible for Hellenism and the Roman Empire. This mutation of Christianity from a radical rejection of society to the safeguard of civilization allowed Constantine to convert and still fulfill the duties of the Roman Emperor. It also made Christianity viable as the dominant religion in Roman society. Before Rome could become Christian, Christianity had to become Roman.

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[75] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V, 1, 20 in Brown (1978) 56.
[76] Brown (1971) 82-94.
[77] Gregory Nazianzus *Orations* 4 5.79—80 in Bowersock (1990) 11-12.

Chapter 6.

Corinthian History

The religious changes that came about in Late Antiquity did not happen in isolation; they were part of larger transitions. The process of conversion from pagan to Christian was linked to Corinth's earlier history and to other changes that were occurring at the time. As such, a brief overview of the broader history of Corinth is in order.

In 146 BCE, the Roman general Mummius, on his campaign through Greece, razed the ancient city of Corinth to the ground. The city lay mostly abandoned until 44 BCE when Julius Caesar refounded Corinth as a Roman colony and the capital of the province Achaea, which was originally part of the Diocese of the Moesias. Constantine divided the Moesias into Dacia and Macedonia, with Achaia in the latter. Corinth was part of the prefecture of Illyricum until Justinian separated Achaia from that prefecture.[78] The province covered the Peloponnesian peninsula as well as part of the Greek mainland including Attica.

The Church instituted a hierarchy mirroring that of the civil government. A bishop was responsible for the spiritual life of a city and a metropolitan for a province. Thus, Corinth was home of the metropolitan of Achaia, who governed the bishops of all the cities in the province. In the early fifth century, the election of the Corinthian metropolitan had wider political ramifications, which caused it to be recorded. [79] The details of this story need not concern us here, save the fact that he was elected by the Corinthian laity and clergy. The Christians of the provincial capital apparently exercised more power in the selection of the metropolitan than did any other Christians in the

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[78] Limberis (2005) 444-445.
[79] Limberis (2005) 447-449.

province. This suggests a rather sizeable and vibrant Christian community in the early fifth century.

This is unsurprising because Corinth was home to one of the earliest Christian communities in the world. The apostle Paul wrote two famous epistles to the Corinthian Christians in the middle of the first century C.E. and, in later centuries, various traditions about Corinthian saints arose.[80] Identifiably Christian remains do not appear in Corinth until the fifth century. Rothaus sees the lack of religious distinction as a sign of thorough integration of pagan and Christian until the fifth century, but this is speculative. An equally plausible speculation is that Christians distinguished themselves in ways that do not survive. Alternatively, perhaps Christians felt that putting the cross on mundane objects was unnecessary or even disrespectful to Christ and so Christian symbols were used only for sacred artifacts that we have yet to recover. Whatever the reason for the silence of the material record, Corinth had a well-established Christian community even before the fifth century.

Corinth's pagan community was also strong in late antiquity, especially in the fourth century. Libanius' 14th oration to the emperor Julian shows powerful, public Corinthian pagans under Julian's Christian predecessors. Libanius writes to request that Julian bestow some honor on one Aristophanes, a pagan who has fallen on hard times, both legally and financially. Libanius highlights the religious leanings of Aristophanes and his father, Menander. Although writing to Julian, most of the events that Libanius narrates occur before the reign of the Apostate.

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[80] For Corinth's saints see Limberis (2005) 449-456.

The picture that Libanius paints of Corinth in the fourth century is of a city with many pagan cults and a pagan ruling class that has connections to the Imperial court. When describing the piety of Aristophanes' father, Libanius writes:

> His father was Menander, a leading citizen of Corinth, and a friend of Hecate and Poseidon, who sailed to Aegina to take part in her ritual and rode to the Isthmus to take part in his mysteries…. He performed every kind of expenditure associated with piety toward the gods. Demeter and her daughter and Serapis and Poseidon and Iacchus of Lerna all know this well, as do many other deities besides, towards whom he zealously fulfilled all his obligations.[81]

In the fourth century, Corinthian pagans were still able to donate money to the cults of the gods. Menander participated in and patronized pagan cults publicly and with apparent impunity. The cults at Corinth must have survived comfortably in the fourth century. Aristophanes himself was a devout pagan as well. Libanius writes that, while he was in exile, "He came into the remains of the temples bringing no incense, no sacrificial victim, no fire, no libation, for it was not permitted."[82] Libanius here emphasizes not only Aristophanes' piety, but his regard for the law as well, even when it causes great pain. In fact, to judge from the example of his father, Aristophanes would probably have had little trouble making a small offering, but, as part of his misfortunes involved the accusation that he had illegally taken bribes and hired a soothsayer, Libanius probably wants to portray Aristophanes as innocent in every respect. Aristophanes' piety and moral character are emphasized later as well in implicit contrast to other less faithful pagans:

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[81] Libanius *Or.* 14.5-7. Translation from Norman (1969) 105-107. All translations of Libanius *Or.* 14 are from Norman (1969) unless otherwise stated.
[82] Libanius *Or.* 14.41. Translation my own. Norman translates "*pur*" as "burnt-offering," but, due to the number of votive lamps found both in the Korinthia and throughout the ancient world and to the preceding reference to the "sacrificial victim", a literal translation of "fire" is preferable.

> Yet not for office or wealth or security or ambition did he barter all that is best of the heritage of Greece. Even in the actual trials, whenever he had to take the oath, he swore by our gods and stayed at his post more steadfastly than any Spartan, not won over by hopes of safety, but regarding his piety as a noble memorial. (*Or.* 14.66)

This passage is most interesting in that it gives a list of motives for pagan conversions to Christianity. Libanius implies that, when in danger, an expedient conversion was the norm, and Aristophanes' refusal makes him noteworthy. No doubt, such conversions of convenience contributed greatly to the Christian church at this time.

Libanius' oration reveals something of the standing of Corinth within the empire during the fourth century as well. He says, "His [Aristophanes'] city name inspires even more respect for he is from Corinth" (*Or.* 14.28), and then reminds Julian of a letter he had written to Corinth. Libanius quotes from Julian's letter, "I [Julian] have an hereditary friendship with you…for my father lived among you and departed from among you like Odysseus from the Phaeacians, after resting from his long wanderings" (*Or.* 14.30). Julian's father was the half-brother of Constantine, so, during the fourth century, Corinth was at least wealthy enough to house a member of the royal family.

Finally, some Corinthian aristocrats were well known and had connections to the Imperial court. Libanius names Aristophanes' two maternal uncles as, "The philosophers Hierius and Diogenes" (*Or.* 14.7) without any further explanation, expecting the emperor to know these two men. Later, at 14.32, he says that they would have been part of Julian's entourage. He then lists five members of Julian's court who will speak for Aristophanes in addition to himself (14.34-38). Aristophanes had connections to many powerful people. Corinth was not an isolated backwater. Its ruling class was well connected in Imperial circles, and it even played host to royalty.

This thriving, pagan city suffered a series of earthquakes in the late fourth century. Literary sources mention two massive earthquakes in the eastern Mediterranean in 365 and 375, though these may refer to only one event, as well as a third earthquake in 400. Widespread destruction at this time is reflected in the archaeological record, so scholars have, for some time, assigned destruction events to these dates. Caution should exercised in dating archaeological events with literature, however. The literary record is incomplete, and many sources do not record all contemporary earthquakes.[83] The Aegean is a very active seismic zone, so it would be natural for writers to neglect to comment on every single earthquake that occurred. Further, the sources never mention Corinth specifically, so the effects of these earthquakes are conjectural. It is certain that the end of the fourth century saw widespread destruction in Corinth, and it is very likely that a good deal of it was the result of earthquakes, but to date destruction events specifically to 365, 375, or 400 is unwise.

In 396, Alaric, leading a band of Visigoths, sacked Corinth on his way south into the Peloponnese.[84] This is another date to which archaeologists date destruction events. As it is often as difficult to determine the method of destruction, whether by human hands or by earthquake, as it is to determine the exact date of destruction, it is safer to say only that widespread destruction occurred in the second half of the fourth century.

This period of catastrophe coincides with a shift seen in the archaeological record. Before the fifth century, Christianity was invisible in the archaeological record. During the fifth century, recognizably Christian remains, such as lamps with crosses, Christian

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[83] Rife (2008) 99-100.
[84] Gregory (1993) 141, Rife (2008) 97.

epitaphs, Christian style burials, and basilicas, gradually appeared. By the sixth century, paganism disappeared from the archaeological record.[85]

The study of Corinth in Late Antiquity is made more difficult by early excavators. To investigate the city of Corinth as a whole, one should examine the forum first, which abounds in temples, honorary monuments, stoas, basilicas, and other grand architectural works. Unfortunately, these were the subjects of the first excavations in Corinth when archaeologists moved quickly and often carelessly through the strata in order to expose the ruins of a once great civilization. Even when they were not unwittingly destroying evidence, the records they kept were not at all thorough and the data that they saw fit for publication sheds little light on the later history of the architecture. It is impossible to estimate the amount of information about Late Antique Corinth that was lost during the early excavations of the forum.

Nevertheless, an archaeological study of Corinth that investigates the transformation of the city from pagan to Christian is possible. I begin with an examination of monumental architecture outside the forum, followed by a study of Corinthian sculpture, and, finally, an investigation of the cemeteries in and around Corinth. Monumental architecture, with the exception of the Fountain of the Lamps, reflects the actions of a few, elite Corinthians; sculpture reflects the actions of similar elites, but also of a few people who reacted to the statues; cemeteries reflect the actions and ideologies of many different people from the entire socioeconomic spectrum. I consider these three types of evidence in conjunction in order to gain a more holistic view of Corinth in Late Antiquity. I conclude that the conversion of Corinth was generally,

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[85] It is possible that lamps from the Fountain of the Lamps bearing pagan symbols and dating to the sixth century exist, but a complete catalog of remains from the Fountain of the Lamps has never been published.

though not always, peaceful and required the same continuation of and respect for pagan

traditions and institutions that have been shown in other eastern cities.

Chapter 7.

Corinthian Monumental Architecture

An examination of Corinthian monumental architecture in Late Antiquity yields a trend that will frame the discussion of the Christianization of Corinth. Monumental architecture was built in Antiquity with funds donated by aristocrats. In order to maintain elite status, aristocrats donated buildings and other public services. In return, they received prestige and honors of various kinds in a process known as euergetism. Competition among the wealthy to build bigger and better structures was an inherent part of euergetism. The close association of monumental architecture with the aristocratic class means it was a good reflection of the ideals and tastes of the upper echelons of society. Corinth in the fourth century was a pagan town. No archaeological evidence exists from this time that is identifiably Christian, neither artifactual nor architectural. The Corinthian temples, as well as many civic structures, survived and flourished into the late fourth century when a series of earthquakes and an invasion left the city in ruins. The construction of monumental architecture ceased until the second half of the fifth century, when work began on the Lechaion Basilica. This basilica was one of the largest in Greece at the time and was almost certainly an Imperial donation. Soon after, in the sixth century, three other major basilicas sprang up in the Corinthia, probably funded by local aristocrats. In the fourth century, wealthy Corinthians built pagan buildings; in the sixth century, they built Christian buildings. This means that sometime in the fifth century the Corinthian aristocracy converted from paganism to Christianity.

The impact of early excavations on the archaeological record has already been discussed. Some structures, luckily, remained untouched until archaeological

methodology had advanced. In the nearby Isthmian Sanctuary, a temple dedicated to Poseidon lay unexcavated until 1952 and was published in 1971. Excavations at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth began in 1961 and ended in 1975, but the results were not published until the mid-nineties. This long delay allowed the researchers to thoroughly analyze the finds and thus to present concrete analysis of the site. The Asklepieion and Lerna at the northern edge of the city were excavated from 1929-1934, but after World War II, the finds were reexamined and some further excavation was conducted. The site was published in 1951. Despite the early date, the publication is quite thorough and the nature of the evidence led scholars to focus on the destruction and later history of the site more closely than they might otherwise have done. Excavations in the Gymnasium area lasted from 1965-1970 and turned up a great amount of evidence about the later history of Corinth, including the Fountain of the Lamps. The results of this excavation were published in a series of extensive preliminary reports from 1967-1972. Finally, a column was found reused in a Christian Basilica in Kenchreai that bears an interesting inscription. The treatment of these structures attests to the survival of pagan ideas and worship into the fifth century, even after their destruction.

The Temple of Poseidon

The temple of Poseidon was part of a larger sanctuary at the isthmus that served the religious functions of the Isthmian games. These games, similar to the Olympic Games, were not merely contests of skill, but important religious institutions. The Games ceased sometime in the third century, but the Sanctuary remained an important religious

site into the fourth century.[86] Libanius points to Menander's visit to the sanctuary as evidence for his pagan piety (*Or.* 14.5).

After Alaric sacked Corinth, the Corinthians began to fortify the Isthmus. Part of this program was the Hexamilion, a wall across the Isthmus built from 410 to 420 with stones pillaged from various places including the temple of Poseidon.[87] The temple was no longer in use and was an expedient source of building material. In the sixth century, the Hexamilion was rebuilt with spolia that probably also came from the temple of Poseidon.[88] The Sanctuary served as a quarry for quite some time. The excavators of the temple comment on the thoroughness of its destruction,[89] but this is the result of a long history of robbing. During the fifth century, remains of the temple, including fragments of the cult statue group, would have been clearly visible on the surface.

The ruins of the temple must have provoked some sort of response in passersby, if only as a reminder of the mutability of things once thought stable. It is possible that some people continued to respect the site for a time at least. In Gaza, it will be recalled, residents respected the stones of the Marneion even when they had been used as pavement before a church. Unlike the Marneion, the temple of Poseidon was not intentionally destroyed and there was no attempt to erase it from history. It is hard to believe that no one remembered the old rites to Poseidon that had once been such an important part of life at the Isthmus.

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[86] Rife (2008) 92-96.
[87] Gregory (1993) 139, 142.
[88] Gregory (1993) 81.
[89] Broneer (1971) v.

The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore

The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore was also destroyed at the end of the fourth century. Situated on the slopes of Acrocorinth, this complex continued to thrive through the fourth century, as the archaeological record makes clear.[90] It was finally destroyed in the last decades of the fourth century. Earthquakes probably did most of the initial damage, but it cannot be doubted that human agency was also involved. A well in the sanctuary contains debris from the destruction that must have been thrown down at some point. Included in this debris are three sculpted heads that were purposely defaced. The sanctuary was robbed extensively for future building projects, but much of the debris lay where it fell until uncovered by archaeologists. Like the temple of Poseidon, there was no effort to conceal its existence. Bookidis and Stroud speculate that "hostility from the Christian community may have helped to hasten the end of the Sanctuary."[91] While it cannot be ruled out, there is no evidence for human destruction of the structures, only human activity after the initial catastrophe. The sanctuary was probably destroyed by an earthquake and was never rebuilt.

The Asklepieion

Like the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore and the Temple of Poseidon, the temple of Asklepios was destroyed late in the fourth century. Excavators encountered a layer of debris, consisting of marble chips and fragments of poros limestone as well as burnt material 0.7 meters thick.[92] The chips and fragments indicate that people reshaped the blocks from the ruined temple on site and then, perhaps, sold them. Lime kilns were also

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[90] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 437.
[91] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 438.
[92] Roebuck (1951) 160-161.

discovered on the temple. Lime was made by burning marble and was an essential ingredient in concrete. Doubtless, these kilns devoured material from the temple and it is probable that much of the burnt material does not represent a conflagration in the temple but spent fuel from the kilns.

The Asklepieion offers proof that Corinthians continued to worship at ruined temples. Rothaus identifies several late fourth/early fifth century lamps found on the foundations of the temple as votive offerings.[93] The fact that the lamps were mostly intact and that the site was never a dumping ground supports his conclusion. Firmer evidence for continued worship comes from Rothaus' identification of a votive pit near the temple.[94] Between 0.5 and 1.0 meter deep, the pit contained animal bones, burned stones, and intact lamps dating from the early fifth to mid sixth centuries. The lamps and burned stones could have resulted from a secular feast, but the only explanation for the burial of intact lamps is religious rite. The votive lamps in conjunction with the animal bones and burned stones suggest that they were the refuse of sacrifice. Whatever the nature of the rite, religious veneration of the site continued into the mid sixth century, long after the temple had collapsed, the blocks were robbed, reformed and sold, and the statuary was melted to make lime. The temple itself was completely demolished, but the site was still seen as sacred to Asklepios and people continued to worship the god there.

Worship at a ruined site is not incredible. The Gazans continued to revere the stones of the Marneion even after their reuse as pavement. Pausanias, writing in the second century describes the great temple at Nemea. "…the roof has collapsed and the

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[93] Rothaus (2000) 48.
[94] Rothaus (2000) 49-50.

cult statue no longer remains…. The Argives burn offerings to Zeus even at Nemea…"[95]

Sacrifices continued despite the decrepitude of the temple. The temple of Zeus at Nemea was, unlike the Asklepieion, still standing, but it had no roof and the cult statue did not survive. These were, evidently, not required for sacrifice. This is consistent with greater paradigms in ancient paganism. In antiquity, temples were built in sacred spaces, but, especially outside of towns, the spaces were often sacred to a god or goddess before the temple was built there. This sacred precinct was usually demarcated with a wall and people purified themselves before entering the precinct. The temple was the largest feature inside the sacred precinct, but it was the area of land that was primarily sacred to the deity, not the temple. Many sacred precincts, especially in rural areas, did not even contain a temple, but only an altar. [96] One should not be surprised, therefore, to find pagan worship continuing in the precinct of the Asklepieion despite the absence of a temple.

The Fountain of the Lamps

Votive lamps, such as those on the podium of the Asklepieion and in the votive pit, were also found in Christian graves[97] and, most strikingly, in the nearby Fountain of the Lamps. Lamps as votive objects occur throughout antiquity and are mentioned by Libanius. In his 30th Oration, addressed to the emperor Theodosius I and written between 381 and 391,[98] Libanius thanks the emperor. "You then have neither ordered the closure of temples nor banned entrance to them. From the temples and altars you have banished

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[95] *Pausanias* 2.15.2-3 in Rothaus (2000) 47.
[96] For pollution and purification see Attridge (2004) 71-76. For sacred space and the temple structure see Caseau (1999) 25, Graf (2004) 269, and Kinney (1999) 717.
[97] Wiseman (1972) 8.
[98] Norman (1977) 94-95.

neither fire nor incense nor the offerings of other perfumes."[99] As Rothaus points out, since Theodosius had banned sacrifice at this point in *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.7, and incense is mentioned separately, the fire must have been that of lamps or candles.[100]

At the end of the fourth century, a bath complex situated on a bluff near the Asklepieion, collapsed, creating an artificial, subterranean cave, which served as a cult place until the further collapse of the cliff in the mid-sixth century.[101] Excavators working in the area from 1965-1970 were ignorant of its existence until 1967. Since its discovery, the Fountain has yielded over 4,000 lamps, almost half intact, dating from the mid fifth to late sixth century,[102] with the majority dating to the late fifth and early sixth centuries.[103]

The number of lamps and their condition led the excavators to conclude that it was the site of cult practice.[104] Wiseman points out in his discussion of the cult that, "Water sources that fell into disuse often became places of magic in antiquity…. Caves, furthermore, were the natural haunt of Pan, nymphs and other deities."[105] The Fountain of the Lamps was a natural site for a cult and, to judge by the number of votive offerings that have survived, it was the most popular cult site in the Corinthia for some time.

The nature of the votives at this popular cult site provides dramatic evidence for the simultaneous worship of Christians and pagans. The decoration of the lamps spans almost the entire range of Late Roman Corinthian lamp types, about 300 different

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[99] Libanius *Or.* 30.8. Translation from Norman (1977) 107.
[100] Rothaus (2000) 49.
[101] Wiseman (1972) 24.
[102] Garnett (1975) 186.
[103] Jordan (1994) 223.
[104] Wiseman (1972) 27.
[105] Wiseman (1972) 26-27.

designs.[106] Interestingly, both cross designs and Eros figures appear. For these designs

not to indicate the religious views of their donors, the cross would have had to be

divorced from its association with death, an association that would have made the

offering impure to pagans, and Eros figures would have had to be dissociated with the

pagan deity. While both of these are possible, a more logical explanation is that both

Christians and pagans were using the Fountain of the Lamps simultaneously.

This synchronous use is proven by the graffiti on the lamps and by the lead tablets

found in the Fountain. Four lamps had graffiti scratched on their surfaces.[107] The most

telling graffito was on Jordan 1. "+ Angels who dwell upon these waters." The cross

clearly identifies the worshipper as Christian. Four rolled, lead, curse tablets were found

in the Fountain of the Lamps.[108] Such tablets deposited in a chthonic setting were

common forms of communication with the divine or supernatural. Although the tablets

have not yet been published, Rothaus, citing personal communication with David Jordan,

states that one invokes the nymphs.[109] As noted by Wiseman, a subterranean water

source is a natural setting for a pagan cult of the nymphs. The Fountain of the Lamps

was a dwelling place for both Christian angels and pagan nymphs in the late fifth and

early sixth centuries.

Such sites of multi-faith devotion were not unheard of in the Late Roman Empire.

Rothaus specifically mentions the site of Mamre in Palestine, where a great oak tree was

sacred to pagans, Christians, and Jews.[110] Sozomen, writing in the fifth century,

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[106] Garnett (1975) 184.
[107] L-69-103, Wiseman 1972, no. 21; L-4607, Wiseman 1972, no. 22; L-69-104, Wiseman 1972, no. 23;
and L-69-105, Wiseman 1972, no. 24. The graffiti were retranslated and republished in Jordan (1994) as
Jordan 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively.
[108] Wiseman (1972) 33.
[109] Rothaus (2000) 129.
[110] Rothaus(2000) 132.

describes the cults at the site in vivid detail, while claiming to describe events in the time of Constantine. Sozomen was probably describing events that he witnessed and placed them in the past to advance the myth that paganism was extinct in the fifth century.[111] Sozomen writes:

> The festival was celebrated by all, by the Jews because they honor Abraham the patriarch, by the Hellenes because it is the dwelling place of angels, and by the Christians because at one time Christ manifested himself there to a holy man…. During the time of the celebration, no one draws water from that place. For according to Hellenic custom some deposited burning lamps, and some offered wine or threw in round offering cakes, and other coins or myrrh or incense. And because of this, as is likely, the water became unfit by the action of the material thrown in.[112]

Sozomen not only describes people of three different faiths worshipping together, but also specifically states that they deposited lamps in the water. He also does not specify who offered the lamps, saying only that they did it according to the Hellenic custom. As we can see in the Fountain of the Lamps, it is entirely possible that the Christians offered lamps according to that same custom. It is also interesting that, unlike in Corinth, it was the pagans who were worshipping the angels dwelling at the sacred site. Angels were not a specifically Judeo-Christian concept, but, for pagans, they were supernatural beings unbound to any higher deity. Inscriptional evidence for pagan cults of angels has been found in Asia Minor, but, as Sozomen proves, these cults existed elsewhere as well.[113]

The second parallel comes from Asia Minor. Trombley summarizes a text called *The Miracle of the Archistrategos Michael* from the eighth century that repeats a story

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[111] Rothaus (2000) 132.

[112] Sozomen 2.4.3-6 in Rothaus (2000) 132.

[113] Sheppard (1980/1981) suggests that the term *angelos* was borrowed from Judaism without an understanding of its theological meaning.

from the fifth century.[114] The text is about a pagan who frequents a sacred spring to pray for the cure of his mute daughter, having been guided there by an angel whom the man identifies as Michael after his conversion to Christianity. After his daughter is cured, the man gratefully converts his entire household and builds a chapel above the spring. Pagans and Christians both worshipped at the spring for nearly a century, until a monk took up residence at the site. It is likely, as Trombley argues, that the spring had an earlier, chthonic healing deity associated with it that remained even after the Christians began using the spring as well.[115] The Fountain of the Lamps was also a water source associated with angels and, due to its proximity to the old Asklepieion, may have had healing powers as well.

During the fifth and part of the sixth century, Christians and pagans shared this popular cult site. Side by side they offered lamps to the divine. With such amicability, the line between Christian and pagan begins to blur. For pagans, the very idea of religious differentiation was foreign. Some devoted themselves primarily to a single god, but they still believed in all the other gods as well. Worshipping one deity did not necessitate the abandonment of another deity. It is entirely possible that some Corinthians offered a lamp to the Christian God on one day and to Pan, the nymphs, or some other pagan god on the next. The strict separation of paganism and Christianity was most important to zealous Christians who felt it their responsibility to oppose what they saw as the unholy religion of pagans. The intermingling of pagan and Christian at the Fountain of the Lamps suggests that such zealotry was largely absent from Corinth in the fifth and sixth centuries.

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[114] Trombley i (1993) 153-154.
[115] Trombley (1993) i 153.

The Orgia Column

Worship at the Asklepieion and the Fountain of the Lamps were not isolated survivals of paganism in the Corinthia region, as is demonstrated by the "Orgia" column.

fig. 1

This decorative marble column was discovered in the Christian Basilica at the base of the south mole in Kenchreai, but it was doubtless robbed from somewhere else nearby. Inscribed on the column is the single word "Orgia," a rare epithet of Isis,[116] suggesting that the column was a votive offering to the goddess. The worship of this Egyptian goddess in Kenchreai is common knowledge. Pausanias identifies a temple to Isis at the harbor (2.2.3) and, in book 11 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, the main character has a vision of the goddess on the beach at Kenchreai and becomes a priest, joining an established cult in the town. Being familiar with Apuleius, many scholars have assumed that the column dated to the second century. However, after completing an extensive paleographic study of the published Corinthian inscriptions, I have been able to date the

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[116] Witt (1971) 305.

column to the fifth century or later. The alpha on the column appears for the first time in Corinthian inscriptions in the Christian cemetery around the Asklepieion, which was in use from the fifth through the seventh centuries.[117] This column was erected after the end of the fourth century. Such a public dedication to a pagan deity suggests that paganism in Corinth survived among those with the means to dedicate a column and that they could express their religious views without fear of reprisal.

Civic Architecture

Architecture everywhere in the Corinthia sustained damage in the second half of the fourth century. Excavations around the theater undertaken from 1982-1989 show that the stage building of the theater collapsed at this time.[118] Excavations in the Gymnasium area reveal a similar picture. James Wiseman summarized:

> Everywhere in this area the excavations revealed a quantity of evidence for: a) catastrophic devastation in the late 4th century; b) wholesale plundering of building material in the late 4th to 5th centuries; c) habitation, burials and rubbish dumps of the 5th to 6th centuries.[119]

This description could be applied, with only minor emendation, to most of the excavated areas of Corinth. The city was ruined and the buildings were plundered for their stone. Habitation continued, but the areas that used to be the heart of town became cemeteries and trash dumps.

The central staircase in the forum is a significant exception to this rule. The Corinthian forum lies at two levels, which were separated, originally, by a row of shops. Staircases at either end of this row facilitated traffic between the two halves of the forum. In the later part of the fourth century, the central shops, like so much else, were

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[117] See, for example, Kent nos. 540 and 542.
[118] Williams and Zervos (1987) 31.
[119] Wiseman (1972) 4.

destroyed. Unlike so much else, they were not simply abandoned to robbers. A large central staircase was built over the shops soon after their destruction, probably before the sack of Corinth by Alaric. This staircase spanned the entire length of the forum and was a major architectural undertaking. As far as we know, it was one of the last public monumental architectural projects undertaken in the Corinthia until the construction of the Lechaion Basilica in the second half of the fifth century.

The disasters of the fourth century discouraged new civic or religious architecture. After the sack of Alaric, the Corinthians expected to be attacked again, and so channeled resources toward defensive structures, leaving little for temples, baths, stoas, or any other public structure. Even if the resources had been available, Corinthians thought that anything they built was likely to be destroyed soon by earthquakes, invading barbarians or both. Economic depression may also have played a role, but the continued dedication of statues, discussed below, would suggest otherwise. Unlike Aphrodisias, which saw construction throughout the fifth century, euergetism ended at Corinth after the fourth century.[120]

The Basilicas

The Lechaion Basilica, on the western coast of the Isthmus, restarted the cycle of euergetism. At 180 meters long, it was one of the largest Christian Basilicas in the world when it was constructed.[121] Its rich opus sectile floors and the marble revetment on the walls, as well as the uniform columns, capitals and screens, all of Proconnesian marble, mark it as an Imperial donation.[122] Although church mosaics draw tourists today, in

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[120] Chapter 5.
[121] Sanders (2005) 437.
[122] Sanders (2005) 439.

antiquity the wealth of a church was judged primarily by its use of marble. In the third century, Diocletian fixed prices and wages on various goods and services throughout the empire. A mosaicist was paid only slightly more than a carpenter or mason and the glass tesserae that they used were significantly cheaper than marble.[123] The Lechaion Basilica's marble, in conjunction with its size, made it an extravagantly opulent and impressive structure.

The basilica was constructed in the second half of the fifth century. A coin of Marcian (450-457) in the foundation trenches provides a *terminus ante que non*, and various later emperors' coins indicate that construction and remodeling continued for quite some time. Sanders argues that it cannot have been built before the 525 earthquake because it shows no damage,[124] but this is largely an argument from silence and as such is unconvincing. There are any number of reasons why a structure might survive an earthquake intact and, if it was damaged, there are many reasons why the effects might not have been preserved in the archaeological record. A date in the second half of the fifth century is much more plausible than a sixth century date.

Three other basilicas have been excavated in the Corinthia, the Kraneion basilica, the Skoutela basilica, and the Kodratos basilica, all constructed in the early 6th century and all roughly half the size of the Lechaion basilica.[125] While dwarfed by their mammoth predecessor, these basilicas were all large structures in their own right. The Kraneion basilica was also richly appointed with marble revetment on the walls, a marble and slate floor, and a sumptuous mortuary chapel. These basilicas would have been ostentatious testaments to the power and wealth of Christianity, especially in comparison

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[123] Bowden (2001) 62.
[124] Sanders (2005) 439-440.
[125] Pallas (1990) 777-785.

to the dilapidated pagan temples. There is no evidence for a direct transferal of wealth from the temples to the churches as at Gaza, but the contrast between these ornate structures and the ruined temples would have been stark nonetheless.[126]

The process by which these churches came to be built illuminates the religious leanings of the Corinthian aristocracy. While the Lechaion Basilica was almost certainly an Imperial donation, the other three basilicas were almost certainly donated by local Corinthian aristocrats. A. H. M. Jones wrote:

> …apart from a government grant, instituted by Constantine and, after its abolition by Julian, renewed by later emperors on a much more modest scale—one-third of the original amount—the churches derived their income from two main sources: the offerings of the faithful, and the rents of lands and house property given or bequeathed by benefactors or more rarely purchased.[127]

Having built a basilica as grand as the one at Lechaion, the emperor is unlikely to have donated great funds for the other basilicas in the region. It is equally unlikely that the wealth of the basilicas was the result of monetary donations from the congregation. Wealthy Corinthians, therefore, must have donated the land to support the churches and the funds for their construction. These donations were probably inspired by the construction of the Lechaion basilica. William Bowden, writing about Epirus Vetus, proposed a model for ecclesiastical donation that can be fruitfully applied to Corinth:

> Church building offered a potent blend of status in this world and salvation in the next. New churches generated prestige for both the community and the ecclesiastical establishment. The construction of new churches encouraged donations from within the community and perhaps from outside. Often the larger donations and bequests were specifically for the foundation of new churches, while local bishops and prelates also built churches to enhance their own prestige and encourage donations, aside from motives of genuine piety.[128]

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[126] Chapter 5.
[127] Jones (1960) 334-335.
[128] Bowden (2001) 64-65.

No doubt, the Lechaion basilica made Corinth even more famous as a Christian center and empowered the local clergy. The phenomenon of increased basilica construction in the late fifth and early sixth century is not unique to Corinth, suggesting that other, larger trends were also at work.[129] Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that the construction of the Lechaion basilica would have helped to spur other Christian constructions if only because it showed that the emperor was confident that Corinth was safe from the destructive forces that had plagued it in the past. This inspired local magnates to resume building as well and, several generations after Alaric sacked Corinth, the cycle of euergetism was revived in Corinth. The obvious difference is that, while aristocrats in the fourth century built civil structures or donated to temples, in the sixth century they built churches. Like their Aphrodisian counterparts, the Corinthian elites continued to fulfill their roles as builders, but now the aristocracy of Corinth was Christian.

Further, the churches were situated to communicate Christian victory to visitors to the city (fig. 2). Corinth was a commercial city situated at the intersection of two trade routes, so visitors were a constant feature. The Lechaion basilica would have been the largest thing on the horizon for anyone approaching Corinth by sea from the west. Lechaion is due north of Corinth, so travelers who landed at Lechaion traveled south to the city and were met with the Kodratos basilica. Corinth's eastern port, Kenchreai, had a basilica situated directly on the harbor which incoming sailors could not have missed. Anyone traveling by road to Corinth from Kenchreai, or vice-versa, would have been confronted by the Kraneion basilica at the Cenchrean gate. Approaching the city from the northwest, one would have seen the Skoutela basilica. Acrocorinth lies directly south

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[129] Bowden (2001) 66, Caseau (1999) 39.

of the city, precluding an approach from that direction. However one approached Corinth, the landscape would have been dominated by a Christian basilica. In the early sixth century, Christianity conquered the Corinthian landscape. The new religion had made great strides since the fourth century when Corinth was solidly pagan.

After the massive destruction that plagued the city in the fourth century, the Corinthians must have wondered why so many bad things had happened to them. They had been faithful in their reverence of the gods, even though the emperor had not and had passed laws trying to impel the Corinthians to abandon their religion. After the earthquakes and the barbarian sack, many Corinthians must have felt betrayed by the old gods. Their rituals and sacrifices had not averted disaster and there was a group of people who were eager to tell them why. Corinth had one of the oldest Christian communities in the world, dating back to the time of Paul in the first century CE and in the fifth century, there must have been pagans who viewed them with new found respect. By the early sixth century, the wealthy Corinthians had abandoned paganism and joined the Christian church, probably bringing their households along with them. When they felt safe enough to invest in building projects they competed for prestige as they had in the past, but instead of temples they built churches.

Chapter 8.

Corinthian Sculpture

Statues are some of the most picturesque and durable artifacts of the past and so are often featured prominently in museums and books. Scholars study them to learn about societal as well as artistic trends and it is easy to forget that relatively few people were responsible for them. They were usually commissioned by an individual or small group, erected, viewed by the public and, sometimes, removed. Most of the public reaction to sculpture does not appear in the archaeological record. Sculpture is directly informative about the attitudes of the people who commissioned it, sometimes the sculptors who made it, and occasionally, the vandals who reacted to it. The information about these people can be extrapolated to society as a whole, but only with caution. Therefore, this chapter will focus primarily on the people who commissioned statues in Late Antiquity and the people who reacted to that and older sculpture.

Both Christians and pagans believed that spirits could inhabit sculpture, especially cult statues. While pagans worshipped these spirits as gods, Christians feared them as demons and sought to expel them by defacing or destroying the statues. Part of the anti-pagan campaign by Christians was the demotion of the pagan gods to the status of demon. This accounted for past miracles worked by the gods while denying their right to worship.[130] Just as pagans believed cult statues to be inhabited by the gods they represented, Christians believed the inhabitants to be the demon masquerading as a god. This iconoclasm was not systematic; indeed, it was common for the educated, Christian

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[130] Goehring (2004) 415.

elites to keep pagan sculpture in art collections.[131] The fate of sculptures was dependent

more on the attitudes of individuals than on the nature of the statues themselves.

Iconoclasm did occur, however, as is attested both in the archaeological and literary

record.

Mark the Deacon, recounting the conversion of Gaza in his *Life of Porphyrius,*

tells the story of the destruction of the cult statue of Aphrodite:

> …as we reached the place in which the said idol of Aphrodite was (for the
> Christians were carrying the worthy cross of Christ, that is the sign of the
> cross), the pagan god dwelling in the statue, upon seeing the sign and
> being unable to bear looking upon it, departed from the statue in great
> disorder and cast it down and broke it into pieces.[132]

It is important that the Christians believed that the pagan gods existed. Most Christians

did not believe that the pagans were worshipping inanimate images, but that the statues

really were inhabited by a supernatural force.[133] Pagans worshipped these beings, and

Christians sought to eradicate them, either through desecration or the complete

destruction of the statues, with the cross being the most potent tool for exorcism.

The ideologically driven destruction of statues is evident in the archaeological

record as well. At Palmyra, there was a temple of Allat-Athena that was destroyed in the

late fourth century as part of a Christian campaign against temples in the East.[134] The

excavators found the statue and were able to reconstruct the destruction. Trombley

summarizes their findings:

> The statue was first decapitated with a blow behind the head. The face
> was then smashed into several pieces so dexterously that no fragments

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[131] Sodini (1999) 686.
[132] *V. Porphyrii* Cap. 61 in Trombley (1993) i 210.
[133] Trombley (1993) i 45, Rothaus (2000) 105-112.
[134] Trombley (1993) i 145-147 summarizes Gassowska, B. "Maternus Cynegius, Praefectus Praetorio
Orientis and the Destruction of the Allat Temple in Palmyra" *Archeologia* 33 (1982) 121f.

survive of the nose upper lip, and chink between the eyes of Allat-Athena.[135]

The vandals treated the statue as if it were a living person, first killing it by removing its head, and then obliterating its personality by destroying its face. Desecration could also be affected by inscribing a cross on the statue or by destroying its face alone.

Christians would also, sometimes, disempower demons by burying or depositing their statues in wells or rivers. Rothaus cites the work of Ralph Merrifield, who identified a number of cult objects deposited "in a manner that would return the possessing demons to the underworld."[136] The deposition of objects under the ground was a common way for pagans to communicate with chthonic beings, dating back at least as far as *Odyssey* 11, when Odysseus pours drink offerings for the dead into a pit. Votive pits are common archaeological finds and curse tablets were often placed in graves in order to summon the power of the underworld. The practice of subterranean deposition as a mode of access to the underworld was well established in Late Antiquity and so it was a short, logical step for Christians to send demons back to hell by burying statues or throwing them down wells.

Subterranean deposition could also have other meanings with different degrees of ideology. Trash was also buried, so sculpture in a trash heap might just be viewed as refuse, no more important than a broken plate. A trash heap was also a particularly disrespectful place to put anything. Someone might bury a statue with trash in order to dramatically reject it, without any reference to the underworld. Similarly, the difference between a drain and a sewer is slight, so deposit in a drain could indicate something

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[135] Trombley (1993) i 146
[136] Rothaus (2000) 116 referring to Merrifield R. *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (London, 1987) 97-110.

similar, as is attested in Gaza.[137] Thus there are three categories of deposit: ritual deposit, with the aim of sending demons to hell; ignominious deposit, with the aim of blatant disrespect for the statue; and incidental deposit, with the aim of getting rid of something that is no longer useful without ideological consideration. It is difficult, and often impossible, to distinguish between these three different categories in the archaeological record, and the line between a ritual and an ignominious deposit may be artificial. In Corinth, there are no deposits that fit exclusively into one category or another. Nevertheless, the two different ideological motivations are important when examining the Corinthian sculpture.

Similarly, one must exercise caution when describing a damaged statue as defaced. Statues that fall forward will necessarily sustain damage to the face and nose particularly. Without the clear marks of a chisel, which rarely appear, it is difficult to say whether a statue was injured intentionally or accidentally, though the nature of the damage often provides clues. If the damage is extensive and of the sort could not have been caused by a fall, it is likely to be the product of defacement.

The Corinthian sculpture was first published by Franklin P. Johnson in 1931[138] and a comprehensive update of this work has not been attempted. Johnson, working from an art historical perspective, described and dated the sculptures stylistically with little regard for their archaeological context. In 1973, Catherine De Grazia finished her dissertation on the Corinthian portrait sculpture. She also analyzed and dated the sculpture stylistically, though she did include general find contexts, and her dates have not been challenged. The brevity with which she identified provenience was

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[137] Chapter 5.
[138] Johnson (1931).

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unavoidable, because most of the statuary was found in the early excavations when detailed records were not kept. In his chapter entitled "Images and Power," Rothaus assembles the sculptural evidence for the conversion of Corinth and argues that much of it was ritually deposited and defaced, indicating a virulent conflict between paganism and Christianity. Unfortunately, Rothaus has a tendency to caution readers against the urge to draw unwarranted conclusions, similar to those issued above, and then to fall victim to those urges. Thus, I will restrict myself to only the clear instances of desecration and ritual or ignominious deposit.

Only a handful of statues from Corinth yield evidence from Late Antiquity, but those which do indicate two phenomena: the survival of public paganism into the fifth century and a violent Christian reaction to that paganism. The clearest evidence for the former comes in the form of a bearded portrait head, found in 1908 in a drain in the Peribolos of Apollo near Peirene, with the headdress of a pagan priest.[139] Johnson dates this head to the end of the fourth century, comparing it with a portrait of Julian. De Grazia argues convincingly, based on the sculpting techniques, that both the Corinthian head and the alleged portrait of Julian actually date to the first half of the fifth century. De Grazia also points out that it was repaired at some point in antiquity. Not only was the portrait of a pagan priest carved in the fifth century, but someone respected it enough to repair it later. De Grazia suggests that the subject of the portrait may have chosen to be represented as a pagan priest because it was an old-fashioned and thus respectable style.[140] This argument would make sense only in a time when paganism and its priests

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[139] S 920, Johnson no. 321, De Grazia no. 53. For provenience see Rothaus (2000) 121.
[140] De Grazia no. 38.

had completely vanished, which is not the case in fifth century Corinth.[141] A far simpler explanation is that the subject of this portrait chose to be represented as a pagan priest because he was a pagan priest.

Another head found with the priest's head provides evidence for the survival of paganism well into the fifth century.[142] This head of a bearded man, dated stylistically to the second half of the fifth century, is remarkable because someone inscribed a cross in its forehead. This represents, of course, a violent Christian reaction to paganism, but, to modern eyes, at least, there is nothing explicitly pagan about this sculpture. This cannot have fallen victim to a general Christianization of all sculpture in Corinth because only two other statues, out of the thousands found, have crosses inscribed in them. This is a rare practice. Someone recognized something inherently pagan about this particular statue and defaced it. That means that someone carved an inherently pagan statue in the second half of the fifth century. The tradition of monumental pagan sculpture, as represented by the priest's head and the head of this bearded man, survived into the later fifth century.

These two statues were both found in the center of town. Statues, being heavy, were not often moved far from their original setting, so these two statues probably adorned the forum. Thus, their desecration and deposit would certainly have been noticed. This was a public act, similar to the destruction of sculpture at Gaza.[143] Further, the statues were found in a drain, which is unusual. Drains were usually covered and it took effort to access them. If they had simply been discarded, the fountain of Peirene,

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[141] See the previous chapter for pagan worship at the Asklepieion, the Fountain of the Lamps, and the dedication of a column to Isis.
[142] S 919, Johnson no. 178, De Grazia no. 58.
[143] Chapter 5.

out of use by this point, would have been the most convenient place to put them. We have no information about the fill in which they were found, so any conclusions must remain tentative, but it is likely that these two statues represent a ritual deposit. Of course, drains could also be sewers, so this may also have been an ignominious deposit.

Aside from the bearded man there are two other sculptures that bear an inscribed cross. One is a decapitated herm and the other is a fragment of a statue of a man in a toga.[144] The herm would have been a rather obvious target for Christian iconoclasts, but the reasons why they felt threatened by the latter statue is a mystery. Perhaps it represented a philosopher, or a recognizable individual with well known pagan sympathies. Unfortunately the provenience of this statue is unknown so all that can be said is that at some point, someone felt the need to Christianize this statue.

It is often difficult to tell if a statue was intentionally defaced or accidentally damaged and, even if it was intentionally defaced, it is hard to say when or by whom. Statue desecration occurred before the rise of Christianity. However, in Corinth, when the damage can be attributed to the transitional era of the fifth and early sixth century, Christian agency can be safely assumed. Clear examples of defacement do, occasionally, arise. The excavations east of the theater conducted by Charles K. Williams, II have uncovered two such examples: an Osiris Hydreia (fig. 3) jar and a lower torso of Aphrodite (fig. 4).[145]

The Osiris Hydreia Jar is a large, anthropomorphic, ritual container supposed to contain the water of the Nile, which was the blood of Osiris. The jar originally had a head, but it was decapitated. The jar was also cut in half and the miniature figures that

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[144] S 202 and S 3361, De Grazia no. 75
[145] Williams and Zervos (1985) 79-80 for the Osiris Hydreia jar and Williams (2005) 243 for the torso of Aphrodite.

decorated the body were so badly mutilated by a chisel as to be scarcely recognizable. The jar is battered all around and the figures are clearly shorn off. Such complete and precise damage could not have been accidental. The jar was found in the fourth to early fifth century backfill of a trench left by the robbing of a wall. The stones from the wall were probably taken to build fortifications against barbarian attacks at the end of the fourth century and the jar deposited not long after. This need not have been a ritual deposit. It is possible that, after the jar had been defaced, it was no longer threatening, but it is more probable that an object so closely tied to pagan cult was buried intentionally. The trench was not a trash dump, so the deposition was probably ritualistic.

The torso of Aphrodite found in East Theater Street is, unfortunately, only published perfunctorily.[146] Only the area from the waist to the mid thigh remains. At some point, the fragment was sawn in half vertically and then violently defaced with a chisel. The vandals hacked a vertical swath, following the first cut from the naval, through the pubis, and between the legs, forming a pattern of damage that would have been impossible to replicate unintentionally. This statue was not damaged in an earthquake. It was reused as building material in the foundation of a wall sometime before the middle or second half of the fifth century, suggesting an incidental deposit. Williams suggests that the Aphrodite statue stood in a room of a nearby building. This was not a temple, but the statue would have been visible. The desecration of the statue of Aphrodite, like that of the bearded man and the pagan priest, would also have been

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[146] Williams (2005) 243. Apparently, Williams and Zervos did not find this statue important enough to publish in any of their excavation reports. Consequently, we are forced to rely on William's brief and confusing account in this chapter for context. He does not include a date for the building of the wall the foundation of which this statue forms a part, but, as he reports that the street went out of use "in the middle or second half of the fifth century," we can assume that the wall was built sometime before then.

noticed. The damage done to the Aphrodite torso and to the Osiris Hydreia jar is so extensive and thorough that it must have been deliberate. Both are evidence of antagonism, almost certainly Christian, toward pagan gods in the fifth century.

Three female heads found in a well on Acrocorinth were also defaced (fig. 5).[147] The well stands in the middle of the Sanctuary to Demeter and Kore, which was destroyed at the end of the fourth century. The largest head, slightly over life size, is from the cult statue of Demeter and the two smaller, life size heads may have represented attendants.

Each of the life size heads is damaged from the nose down. On one, the tip of the nose, lips, and chin are all damaged. On the other, the entire lower portion of the face, from the bridge of the nose down, is missing. In 1965, Stroud said it was "broken away, apparently by a sharp, clean blow."[148] This damage done to both of these heads could have been accidental, but it does not seem likely, based on the nature of the damage. When a statue falls forward, there are only a few ways that it can hit the ground. If the statue is on the ground, the face will be roughly parallel to the ground when it makes contact. If the statue is in a niche or on a base above ground level, the top of the head or forehead of the statue will hit the ground first. As there is no damage to the hair or forehead of either head, this scenario is impossible. If the face was parallel to the ground when it struck, the nose would have hit first and would have been destroyed, as it is in these two statues. However, as the statues are roughly life size, it seems impossible that this impact would have been strong enough to remove much of the rest of the face as well. Further, on the second statue, the face is missing from the bridge of the nose down,

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[147] S 2666 De Grazia no. 26, S 2667 De Grazia no. 27, and S 2668. The heads were first published in Stroud (1965) 21-22 and again in Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 332-336.
[148] Stroud (1965) 21.

forming a rough plane from the bridge of the nose down to the place where the neck meets the underside of the jaw. In order to form this plane, the impact must have come from the bridge of the nose. It is impossible, whether the head was attached to the rest of the statue or not, that the bridge of the nose struck the ground first. It seems highly unlikely that this head could have been damaged accidentally.

The over life-sized head of the cult statue originally had gilded hair, but the gold was all scraped off, except a little over the right ear. The eyes probably contained semiprecious stones and these were gouged out. This damage could have been the result of plundering, especially since we know that the Goths sacked Corinth at the time the Sanctuary was destroyed. Other damage, however, was probably driven by ideology. The nose is completely removed, indeed, the entire front of the face, from the chin to the forehead is damaged extensively, and there are several chips missing from the right cheek. In 1972, Bookidis and Fisher, describing the end of the sanctuary, wrote, "That the destruction was violent and willful is shown by the defacement of the one surviving cult head."[149] However, in 1997, Bookidis and Stroud, describing the three heads, wrote, "In each case the front of the face is badly enough broken to suggest that the statues fell forward onto a hard surface, perhaps at the time when the heads were broken off."[150] In the 1997 report, the excavators suggest that the sanctuary was destroyed by an earthquake, but they continue to describe other agents as well:

> Sanctuary buildings, however, did not merely collapse in an earthquake and lie abandoned. Human agents of destruction were at work, as is clear from the three marble heads in the well and other badly broken objects scattered over the site. Not to be ruled out as having a possible impact on

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[149] Bookidis and Fisher (1972) 284.
[150] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 334.

the destruction and looting of the shrine are the invading Visigoths who swarmed into Corinth under the leadership of Alaric in A.D. 395.[151]

The cult head was obviously robbed of its gilding and its semiprecious stones by human hands, but greed was only one of the motivations behind the defacing of this statue. The extensive damage to the front of the statue was probably intentional and anti-pagan. The two statues that accompany it bore no materials worth stealing. Their defacement could only have been ideologically driven. The three heads were defaced by iconoclasts and thrown into a well at the end of the fourth century.

If we accept that the heads were intentionally defaced, it is logical to assume that they were thrown into the well for similar ideological reasons. In this case we are fortunate to have a thorough report of the fill in which the heads were found which consists mostly of debris from the ruined sanctuary.[152] The well was a trash dump, suggesting that these statues were thrown into it to heighten the ignominy of the desecration. The three heads were defaced, almost certainly by Christian zealots, were probably deposited in the well as an insult, and, at the very least, represent the end of the public worship of Demeter and Kore at this site. These heads may represent the earliest archaeological attestation of Christian activity in Corinth.

A head of a bearded Dionysus and of a female are known to have been found in the great drain of the Peribolos of Apollo.[153] Unfortunately, we do not know exactly where in the drain they were found or where they were in relation to each other. Both heads are damaged, but neither has been obviously defaced. Due to the difficulty of placing the statues in the drain discussed above, these heads were also, probably,

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[151] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 439.
[152] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 333.
[153] S 987, Johnson no. 27 and S 986, Johnson no.164, De Grazia no. 53.

deposited in a ritualistic or ignominious manner. De Grazia dates the female head to the first quarter of the sixth century.[154] This date would put the deposit of the statue a century or more after the destruction of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth and the deposit of the Osiris Hydreia jar in the trench on East Theater Street at the end of the fourth century.

The chronology of deposition of these statues precludes the possibility of a single Christian zealot. Similarly, the lower torso of Aphrodite was built into a wall sometime before the middle or second half of the fifth century, while the head of the bearded man was not even carved until the second half of the fifth century. The defacement of the Aphrodite statue was probably not carried out by the same person who defaced the bearded man. The tension between pagan and Christian may not have been widespread as it was in Aphrodisias where competing factions advertised their religion prominently and someone went so far as to chisel a cross off a dedication, but it existed for some time.[155]

The fact that this discussion of Corinthian sculpture has focused almost exclusively on heads is important. As was seen in the treatment of the cult statue of Allat-Athena at Palmyra, the head of the statue was the most important, individualistic part.[156] Just as with people, the face of the statue conveys its individuality and personality and is the source of its power. Decapitation was the best way to "kill" a statue. In most of these deposits, the only part of the sculpture found was the head, so it is not unreasonable to think, knowing how important the head of a statue was, that they were not buried accidentally.

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[154] De Grazia no. 238.
[155] Chapter 5.
[156] Trombely (1993) i 145-147.

The exceptions to this trend are not seriously problematic. The head of the Hydreia jar does not survive, but it was decapitated like the other statues. It was not the head, but the pubis of Aphrodite that was the target of iconoclasm, which is logical considering her domain. A fragment of a torso was found in the well on Acrocorinth along with several small fragments of sculpted marble, but this is not surprising in what is, admittedly, a garbage dump. The most important parts of the figural statues, in most cases the heads, in the case of Aphrodite, the pubis, were either defaced, buried, or both.

A study of the Corinthian sculpture reveals both the demise and survival of paganism in the late fourth and fifth centuries. At the end of the fourth century, the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore collapsed. The head of the cult statue was robbed of its gilded hair and its precious stone eyes, the heads of her attendants were defaced and all three were thrown down a well. Not long after, the mutilated remains of the Osiris Hydreia jar were buried. Several years later, in the first half of the fifth century, someone carved a life size portrait of a pagan priest. Even later, in the second half of the century, someone carved a portrait that was deemed pagan enough to warrant the inscription of a cross on its forehead. The sculpture shows that paganism did not end in Corinth suddenly. A sanctuary was abandoned and statues were defiled, but public paganism remained. The fact that the Corinthians still erected pagan statues means that they were not afraid of Christian violence. Even though the statues might be attacked, the pagans themselves were probably safe.

The sculpture also shows that there were those who violently opposed paganism. When the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore was destroyed, someone defiled the cult statue and her attendant statues and threw the heads down a well. At some point, probably

around the same time, a statue of Aphrodite and an Osiris Hydreia jar were both intentionally defaced. Later, after the mid fifth century, someone carved a cross on the head of what he or she saw as a pagan statue and put it, along with the sculpted head of a pagan priest, under ground in a drain. Finally, sometime after the first quarter of the sixth century, someone put the head of a woman and a head of a god in a different drain nearby. For over a century in Corinth there was at least one Christian, probably more, who was so violently opposed to paganism that he, she, or they took the time to destroy pagan sculpture and try to send the demons inside back to hell.

Chapter 9.

Corinthian Cemeteries

Even more than their treatment of sculpture or their construction of architecture, the Corinthians' treatment and placement of their dead reveals their religious inclinations and their opinions about their past. The study of monumental architecture indicates that, after a disastrous late fourth century, Corinthians ceased building large, public structures until the late fifth-early sixth century after the construction by the emperor of the mammoth Lechaion Basilica. When the Corinthians did start investing in construction again, they built churches. By studying the sculpture, one finds that, during the intervening years, public paganism persisted, and that some Christians felt such animus toward the old religion that they violently attacked the pagan sculptures and deposited them ritually or ignominiously in the ground. Both of these sets of evidence reveal a great deal about a few people at a very specific time. Monumental architecture and sculpture were both built with the will of the aristocracy, and the destruction of the sculpture, by its very nature, is an isolated event. In Corinth, it happened more than once and at different times in the fifth century, but the small number of defaced sculptures suggests that only a few people had a hand in their destruction.

The Corinthian cemeteries, in contrast, represent the actions and interests of a large number of people across a fairly large extent of time. The Late Roman cemeteries in Corinth, in use for centuries, contain burials across the socioeconomic spectrum. Funerary practices generally reflect a belief about the afterlife and thus, religious

conviction.[157]   Unfortunately, most of the graves in Corinth do not preserve many grave

goods that would indicate religious inclination or a precise date of interment. Rather,

most of the cemeteries are interesting in their relation to the monumental architecture that

they surround or abut. Three major Late Roman cemeteries are useful in this regard, the

cemetery around the Asklepieion and Lerna[158], the cemetery on Acrocorinth near the

sanctuary of Demeter and Kore[159], and the cemetery near the Cenchrean gate surrounding

the Kraneion Basilica[160]. Two individual graves are worth examining as well for their

use of pagan elements in a Christian burial, that of the bishop Eustathios in the Kodratos

basilica[161], and the anonymous grave in the podium of the Palaimonion in Isthmia.[162]

These Christian cemeteries and graves contradict the rejection of paganism evinced in the

defacement of statues examined above, showing respect and appreciation for the pagan

past.

The Asklepieion and Lerna cemetery

The area around the Asklepieion and Lerna served as a cemetery from the fifth

through the seventh centuries (fig. 6).[163] Hundreds of burials have been found, most of

them humble, tile graves dug into the earth with the body covered by tiles propped

against each other to form a sort of tent over the deceased. When the soil was not deep

enough for a tile grave, the Corinthians cut a square shaft into the rock and then an area

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[157] Renfrew and Bahn (1991) 412.
[158] de Waele (1933) 436-437, de Waele (1935) 352-359, Roebuck (1951) 161-167, Wiseman (1967a) 31-36, Wiseman (1967b) 417-420, Wiseman (1969) 79-87, Wiseman (1972) 8-9, Sanders (2005) 430-437, Rothaus (2000) 50-55.
[159] Bookidis and Stroud (1997).
[160] Carpenter (1929) and Shelley (1943).
[161] Rife (2008).
[162] Rife (2008).
[163] Sanders (2005) 430.

large enough to contain the body was carved out at a right angle to the shaft forming an L shape when viewed in elevation.[164] All the graves were oriented east-west with the feet toward the east and the hands were crossed over the abdomen.[165] Over sixty epitaphs have been recovered that clearly identify the cemetery as Christian. Unfortunately, only a few epitaphs were found with the graves to which they were originally attached. Most were found loose in the fill that had accumulated over the ages. Since none of the grave markers can be dated precisely to the fifth century, they will not be considered here.

The majority of the graves lie to the west of (behind) the temple of Asklepios, but some spill around and onto the ridge to the north of the temple. These burials roughly follow the boundary of the sacred precinct. The early excavators, Ferdinand de Waele and Carl Roebuck, thought that the Christians avoided burial in the temple because they considered it impure, or haunted by pagan demons.[166] Rothaus argues that the temple was still in use in the fifth century, and that the graves were an affront to the pagan worshippers. Death was a severe pollution to pagans, so much so that Julian the Apostate forbade diurnal funerary processions because the sight of one would render a pagan impure and, therefore, unable to commune with the gods (*Ep.* 56).[167] He argues that the presence of the dead would have made proper pagan worship impossible and that therefore, the cemetery represents a Christian offensive against paganism. Sanders disagrees with Rothaus, favoring the argument of de Waele and Roebuck.[168]

Neither de Waele's argument nor Rothaus' argument is sustainable. Corinthian Christians buried their dead on Acrocorinth over the sanctuary of Demeter and Corinth,

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[164] Roebuck (1951) 162.
[165] Sanders (2005) 430.
[166] De Waele (1933) 436, Roebuck (1951) 161.
[167] Rothaus (2000) 53.
[168] Sanders (2005) 430.

indicating that they had no fear of demons and did not consider pagan sanctuaries unsuitable for burial. If the Christians had wanted to deter pagan worship, they could have done so much more effectively by burying their dead either inside or in front of the temple where the rituals occurred. Instead, they confined themselves to the area behind the temple and to the north ridge, outside the sacred precinct. The graves do encroach slightly, but since the Asklepieion was destroyed at this time, an exact border to the precinct would have been impossible to identify. The burials follow the border so closely that it is certain they did not intend to encroach on the sacred space. Further, the burials on the north ridge are rock cut burial, the shafts of which were covered with a slab of limestone with the grave marker laid flat on this slab, flush with the ground level.[169] These graves would have been largely invisible from where the pagans were worshiping.

Far from offending the pagan worshippers, the Christians respected them by keeping their burials outside the sacred precinct and by keeping their graves hidden from sight. The cemetery at the Asklepieion shows Christians respecting their pagan neighbors' rituals and laws of purity.

The Cemetery on Acrocorinth

Acrocorinth had been a burial site since the Hellenistic times[170] and soon after the destruction of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at the end of the fourth century, Corinthians began to bury their dead over it. Twenty-nine graves were excavated with the sanctuary, almost all tile graves like the ones near the Asklepieion and Lerna. Twenty-six graves were oriented east-west with their feet to the east and, of the fifteen

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[169] Roebuck (1951) 162. Roebuck states that some epitaphs had mortar on the back, but goes on to say, without presenting any evidence, that most grave markers would have been set upright with a cross.
[170] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 389.

that preserved the placement of the hands, twelve had hands crossed over their pelvis, stomach, or chest.[171] This orientation, facing west with hands crossed over the abdomen, was also the most common in the Asklepieion and Lerna cemetery. No epitaphs and very few grave goods were recovered, none with overt religious symbols, leading Bookidis and Stroud to be very cautious in their naming of the graves. They identify them only as "Late Roman" and refuse to comment on the religious allegiance of the deceased.[172] The excavators should be commended on their discretion, but the similarities between these burials and the ones in the clearly Christian cemetery around the Asklepieion and Lerna allow us to surmise that the dead were Christians.

The dating of these graves is difficult. The paucity of grave goods makes a precise chronology impossible to determine. Bookidis and Stroud consider the parallel between these burials and the ones around the Asklepieion and Lerna strong enough to date the cemetery, and so it should be dated to the fifth through seventh centuries.

The most striking aspect of the cemetery near the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore is the demographic distribution of the dead. Of the twenty-nine graves found, fourteen contained female skeletons, twelve the skeletons of children, and only two contained male skeletons. Demeter and Kore were agricultural deities and symbolic of the relationship between a mother and her children. This distribution of sex and age suggest that the space devoted to Demeter and Kore persisted, in the minds of the Corinthians, to be of special importance to women and children.[173] Even though the temples were destroyed and the cult statues defaced, the attributes of the goddesses remained attached to the space. The site remained popular for women and children, indicating that the

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[171] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 382-388.
[172] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 389.
[173] Bookidis and Stroud (1997) 391.

Christians did not fear or revile the former sanctuary, but continued to consider it, if not sacred, at least powerful and beneficent. There is no evidence of continued worship at the sanctuary, but, as at the Asklepieion, the Corinthian Christians continued to recognize and respect the holy site.

The Cemetery near the Cenchrean Gate

The American School at Athens began excavating near the Cenchrean gate in 1928, where they found an ancient cemetery and a Christian basilica that would later be called the Kraneion Basilica. The cemetery dates back to pre-Roman Corinth[174] and is mentioned by Pausanias, writing in the second century CE. The continued use of the cemetery in Roman times is uncertain, but Pausanias, by failing to state otherwise, would seem to imply that it was.

The Kraneion basilica was built in the early sixth century CE with funds from the Corinthian aristocracy and contains an unusual number of burials as well as an opulent mortuary chapel.[175] There are even more late burials surrounding the structure, proving that this church was built as a cemetery church. In 1943, as part of his publication of the basilica, Joseph Shelley wrote:

> From the time of its erection, tomb chambers surrounded the walls, while later burials were made within the structure itself. In fact, it would appear that the building was erected not only to honor some early saint or martyr, but also to provide a sacred precinct for the burial of wealthy or pious Corinthians.[176]

The richness of the late tombs, both within and outside the basilica, bears out Shelley's identification of the area as a wealthy cemetery. Aristocratic Corinthians selected this

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[174] Carpenter (1929) 345.
[175] Pallas (1990) 783.
[176] Shelley (1943) 166.

old, venerable cemetery as the site of a new, wealthy basilica that would sacralize the surrounding area for burial and would serve as a burial chapel itself. The number of burials and the mortuary chapel show that the builders of the basilica chose this site for its proximity to the old cemetery as much as for its command of the road into Corinth. In this basilica, the Christian aristocracy found a compromise between the desire to be buried in a Christian setting and the desire to be buried in a traditional setting. Just like the Athenian Christians who inscribed Neoplatonic theology on their tombstones, they converted to Christianity, but did not abandon their heritage. The Corinthian aristocrats, just like their less wealthy neighbors buried on Acrocorinth, valued their pagan past and emulated their pagan ancestors.

The Tomb of the Bishop Eustathios

In the nave of the Kodratos basilica is a tomb with an epitaph identifying it as that of a bishop named Eustathios. A pipe runs diagonally from a hole in the pavement down to the burial chamber below. This pipe carried liquid libations poured by mourners in the basilica down to the body of the bishop.[177] Libation holes and pipes are ubiquitous in earlier graves throughout the Empire, and the practice of pouring a libation for the dead was an ancient one, dating back to the Bronze Age. The presence of such an obviously pagan feature in the tomb of a bishop indicates a remarkable degree of syncretism. Not only did Corinthian converts refuse to abandon old traditions, but these pagan traditions were adopted by the clergy. A similar adoption of pagan tradition, though not involving

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[177] Pallas (1990) 778, Rife (2008) 178.

a bishop, has been seen at Aphrodisias, where a Christian man used a traditional invocation of Tyche to begin a dedicatory inscription.[178]

The Kodratos basilica that housed this tomb was a major church in the Corinthia. This was not a tomb tucked away in a church that no one ever visited. The tomb would have been seen by many people on a regular basis. Syncretism in Corinth was not something begrudgingly tolerated by conservative clergy for the sake of increased conversion. Eustathios, a high-ranking church official in a prominent basilica, wanted people to pour libations for him after death. He valued and intentionally maintained a pagan ritual.

The date of the tomb is uncertain, but bishop's grave with a libation hole is remarkable whatever the date. Even if Eustathios lived long after the sixth century, his acceptance of this pagan feature proves that it was not eliminated with the conversion of Corinth that took place in the fifth century. The conversion of Corinth allowed for the continuation of important pagan practices in the mortuary sphere.

The Tomb in the Palaimonion

One other extraordinary burial represents the religious transformations occurring in Late Antique Corinth. [179] The Isthmian Sanctuary contained, in addition to the temple of Poseidon discussed above, an ancient shrine to the hero Palaimon. This shrine collapsed, along with the rest of the sanctuary, at the end of the fourth century, but the concrete podium remained. In the center of the podium was an arched opening leading to

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[178] Chapter 5.
[179] For a complete discussion of the grave in the Palaimonion see Rife (2008) 149-154.

a tunnel that connected the Palaimonion with an older, underground "sacred chamber" where Palaimon, according to one tradition, was buried.[180]

Sometime between the early fifth- and mid sixth-centuries, mourners cut a grave into the concrete podium right next to the tunnel. In this grave, they buried a woman wearing an earring and a necklace in a wooden coffin with plaster lining and sealed the entrance with stone slabs and mortar. The tomb was conspicuous in its placement beside the tunnel, which was an important part of the visual program of the original shrine. The mourners could have easily buried her in the tunnel, but by digging a new grave, they made the tomb highly visible. The labor that went into her burial and the jewelry she wore mark the woman as important. She was not buried with any Christian iconography, but no pagan would have chosen to be buried in a shrine because of the pollution that it would entail. She did not believe, therefore, in the sanctity of Palaimon or his shrine and she was probably a Christian.

Joseph Rife, in his forthcoming book, details two different interpretations of the peculiar placement of this grave. He suggests that mourners either intended to appropriate a large piece of architecture as a grave marker in order to aggrandize the status of the deceased, or that the burial was an attempt to denigrate the cult of Palaimon. Regardless of the intention of the mourners, the burial in the Palaimonion would have reminded passersby of the rituals formerly practiced at the site, which were funerary in nature.[181] The Palaimonion was treated as the hero's tomb and the sacrifices made in front of it were the same made to the dead. The woman buried in the concrete podium was thus, in some sense, taking the place of Palaimon.

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[180] Rife (2008) 153.
[181] Rife (2008) 152.

This could have been a hostile, strategic maneuver by the Christian community, but there is no evidence for it. Neither Christian iconography nor triumphant Christian inscriptions survive to show that the burial was part of an anti-pagan campaign. Indeed, if the grave was an intentional pollution of a pagan shrine, it would be unique in Corinthian funerary archaeology.

The choice of the Palaimonion, with its preexisting funerary associations, also makes Christian hostility seem unlikely. Palaimon was honored with funerary rituals. A visible burial in the podium of what once was the shrine of Palaimon would have reminded viewers of the old hero-cult. The woman who chose to be buried here would have known this and counted on her association with the hero to increase her prestige. This would suggest that the cult of Palaimon was not scorned, but remembered respectfully. The woman chose to be buried in the Palaimonion because it was a visible piece of architecture that was already associated with death and mortuary rituals, not to strike a blow against paganism. When the woman was interred, the memory of Palaimon survived, even if the site were no longer seen as sacred. Just like the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth, the holy site lost its sanctity but maintained its cultic associations.

The Christian burials in the Corinthia reflect a population that did not abandon its heritage when it converted to Christianity. The burials near the Asklepieion tried to avoid polluting the holy site, both by staying out of the sacred precinct and by not advertising their presence to the pagan worshippers below. The Christians accommodated the pagans. The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, destroyed at the end of the fourth century, was still seen as a place that was beneficial to women and children.

The cult statue of Demeter, along with two other heads, was defaced and thrown down a well, but most Christians did not revile the sanctuary and buried people there who would have been protected by the goddesses. The Kraneion basilica was built near the Cenchrean gate so that Corinthians would not have to abandon their ancestral cemetery in order to be buried near a church. The pagan custom of pouring a libation for the dead was so accepted that it was publicly practiced for a bishop who had made provision for it. Finally, a woman at the Isthmus chose to be buried in a pagan shrine because it was still associated with mortuary rituals. Most Corinthians did not become Christian zealots like the ones who destroyed the statuary discussed above. They remembered their pagan past when they converted to Christianity, and refused to abandon it.

Chapter 10.

Conclusion

Christianity gained converts when it was presented in a form that would be recognizable to pagans. The conversion tactics used by the Christians in Alexandria relied on presenting Christianity in the style of Hellenic philosophy. If the conversion stories for individuals in Athens survived they would, no doubt, be similar. In Aphrodisias, the conversion of the aristocracy, hastened by the failure of the Illus rebellion, accompanied a continuation of that class's traditional function. After the destruction of the Serapeum, the Christian God took the place of Serapis. He took on the old god's responsibility for the flooding of the Nile and his priest, the patriarch, took on the responsibility of announcing when the Nile began to rise. Christianity adopted the roles of the pagan gods in order to convert the Alexandrian populace, just as happened in Gaza when Porphyrius ended the drought. In every region, across the socioeconomic spectrum, the people had certain needs that they filled with religion. The Gazans needed good weather and safe delivery of children; the Egyptians needed the Nile to flood; the Alexandrian students needed a rationally proven deity; the Aphrodisians needed political security and prestige; the Athenians needed philosophy and civic pride. Christianity was successful when it fulfilled those needs better than paganism or incorporated the old, pagan solutions. The same is true in Corinth.

The period of destruction at the end of the fourth century ushered in a new era in Corinthian history. Those years of catastrophe shook the faith of many pagans and allowed Christianity to grow in the city, eventually replacing paganism as the dominant religion. The destruction at the end of the fourth century was not confined to Corinth.

The same earthquakes that damaged Corinth affected many other cities throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.[182] Similarly, Alaric rampaged through Greece between 395 and 397, sacking many cities.[183] Each city probably reacted slightly differently, but at Corinth, the change in the archaeological record is striking. Whereas no identifiably Christian activity has been identified in the archaeological record prior to this destruction, soon after the end of the fourth century, Christians defaced the Osiris Hydreia jar and the statues from the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. Not long after, identifiably Christian cemeteries appeared near the Asklepieion and Lerna and on Acrocorinth over the Sanctuary. By the end of the fifth century, when Corinth, along with the rest of the empire, experienced a surge of building activity, all of the construction was Christian.

The fifth century was, therefore, the period of Corinthian transition from paganism to Christianity. It is fitting to speak of the entire century as transformative because, even as Christianity gained prominence, public displays of paganism survived throughout the fifth century. Someone made a very public dedication of a column to Isis; someone carved the portrait of a pagan priest in full temple regalia; at least one person continued to worship at the ruined temple of Asklepios.

Such open displays of piety would indicate a tolerant society in which pagans were free to hold whatever religious beliefs they chose. This view is largely borne out by the evidence of Christian attitudes toward their pagan past. Christian women and children chose to be buried near the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore because of the beneficial pagan associations. A Christian woman chose to be buried in the defunct shrine of Palaimon in order to take advantage of positive memories of old funerary rituals

[182] Rife (2008) 98-99
[183] Mathison (1999) 283.

that were performed there. In the early sixth century, the Corinthian aristocracy, now Christian, resumed the old tradition of euergetism in the form of basilica construction. One of these basilicas they placed in an ancient cemetery so that they might have a Christian burial near their pagan ancestors. In another basilica, a bishop had a libation tube installed in his tomb, showing that even members of the clergy valued their pagan heritage. The Corinthian converts also respected their living pagan neighbors. The Christians tried to keep their dead outside the sanctuary of Asklepios, even though the boundary was no longer clear, in order to avoid polluting the sacred space. Their graves were low to the ground, so those worshipping at the temple could easily avoid seeing evidence of death and thus maintain their purity. They even worshipped side by side in the Fountain of the Lamps. Indeed, in this subterranean sanctuary, the boundary between Christian and pagan begins to dissolve, revealing simply Corinthians dedicating lamps to the divine.

This rosy picture of religious harmony is, unfortunately, marred by a few instances of sectarian violence. Soon after the sack of Corinth, some Christian defaced the cult statue of Demeter in her sanctuary on Acrocorinth, as well the statues of her two attendants, and threw the heads of all three down a well with trash from the sanctuary. Soon after, someone desecrated a sacred Osiris Hydreia jar and buried it in a trench. Antipathy to pagan statuary continued through the fifth century, with several other statues defaced or ritually and ignominiously discarded. There is no evidence as of yet that this violence spread from statues to people. We should probably assume, in light of the evidence for tolerance cited above, that these were isolated events and that, in general, relations between Christians and pagans were congenial.

Paganism, nevertheless, does eventually disappear from the archaeological evidence. Christianity succeeded, as it did so many other places, in becoming the official and accepted religion of Corinth, but it was a Christianity that valued and perpetuated many aspects of pagan society. Corinthians were willing to abandon their old gods, especially after the gods had abandoned them and let so much disaster befall the city, but they were not willing to abandon their history, their society, and their identity. Corinth had an old Christian community, but even here, in order for Corinth to become Christian, Christianity had to become Corinthian.

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