

**The Religious World of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus**

**‘A thesis submitted to the  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David  
in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy’**

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**For Michael – and in memory of my father Kenneth who started it all**

## **Abstract for PhD Thesis in Classics**

### **The Religious World of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus**

This thesis explores the last decades of legal paganism in the Roman Empire of the second half of the fourth century CE through the eyes of Symmachus, orator, senator and one of the most prominent of the pagans of this period living in Rome. It is a religious biography of Symmachus himself, but it also considers him as a representative of the group of aristocratic pagans who still adhered to the traditional cults of Rome at a time when the influence of Christianity was becoming ever stronger, the court was firmly Christian and the aristocracy was converting in increasingly greater numbers. Symmachus, though long known as a representative of this group, has only very recently been investigated thoroughly. Traditionally he was regarded as a follower of the ancient cults only for show rather than because of genuine religious beliefs. I challenge this view and attempt in the thesis to establish what were his religious feelings.

Symmachus has left us a tremendous primary resource of over nine hundred of his personal and official letters, most of which have never been translated into English. These letters are the core material for my work. I have translated into English some of his letters for the first time. The thesis is organised in the main thematically, looking at Symmachus' religious language, pagan religious ritual, the changing religious topography of Rome itself – and the clash with the Christian establishment specifically with Bishop Ambrose of Milan over the Altar of Victory Affair. The last chapter, although still thematic, looks at Late Antique Paganism through a series of personal events in Symmachus' life; but is also chronological in the sense that it covers the last seventeen years of it. There are six appendixes, tables and illustrations.

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## Abbreviations

BMCR	Bryn Mawr Classical Review
C Th	Codex Theodosianus
CIL	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CCEL	Christian Classics Ethereal Library
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Scriptorum Latinorum
JDAI	Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Berlin: De Gruyter
JRA	Journal of Roman Archaeology
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
LTUR	Lexicon Topigraphicum Urbis Romae
NS	Not Seen
OCD	Oxford Classical Dictionary
OLD	Oxford Latin Dictionary
PLRE	Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire



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## Chapter 1

### The Religious World of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus

#### Reasons for this thesis

In November 396, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, senator, orator and one of the last pagans of Rome, spent the month at one of his villas in the vicinity of Capua. He had been suffering from ill-health and was recuperating. He wrote to his friend Helpidius that he was enjoying the repose of the countryside, reading books and contemplating the winter work on his vines.<sup>1</sup> This is a pleasant, even idyllic picture reminiscent of Pliny or of Horace which emphasises the agreeable life of *amicitia* and *otium* led by the Roman aristocrat of Late Antiquity, very similar to those led by his aristocratic predecessors of the Late Republic and the Empire. If this were all there was to tell about Symmachus, he would probably nowadays remain unknown. Knowledge of him, however, continued through the survival of his vast political and private correspondence and by his inclusion amongst the last aristocrats of Rome to worship the old gods and the cults of the *sacra publica*. He is best remembered for his conflict with Ambrose, Bishop of Milan over the Altar of Victory Affair in 384.

In summer 2006 I was researching the cult of Mithraism as part of my Master's in Classical Studies with the Open University, when an article by James O'Donnell entitled 'The Demise of Paganism' brought into focus Symmachus and the group known collectively as the last pagans of Rome. Study of this group and in particular Symmachus seemed to have been given less in depth attention than other aspects of the period of Late Antiquity. After careful research I chose to offer this as a doctoral topic to the University of Wales, Lampeter on completion of my Master's in December 2008.

As the topic proved to warrant a more detailed analysis I attained an upgrade from M.Phil. to Ph.D. in March 2011 by which time the thesis title had become fixed as the 'Religious World of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus'. The aim of this thesis then is to study Symmachus and his circle of fellow aristocratic pagans, particularly his intimates Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, for the purpose of establishing their real religious world,

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<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 5.78.

that is the changing religious world of the late fourth century in Rome itself where all three of these individuals were based; and to explore what it felt like to be a pagan in a society that was rapidly converting to Christianity. This was a period which saw in Symmachus' own lifetime the increasing domination and ultimate triumph of Christianity.

It is important not just to study Late Antique Roman religion from the point of view of Christianity but also from the point of view of those who were still pagan and desired to remain so. I am interested in the interaction between all three participants in religious terms but especially in the religion of Symmachus himself. I want to discover also, if possible, why Symmachus and his group remained pagan when many of the aristocracy were converting. It is valuable to study Symmachus himself, not just as an individual, but as a representative of an aristocrat living in Rome in the last decades of the fourth century. I also argue in the course of the thesis that Symmachus was not just a dyed in the wool traditionalist but someone who genuinely believed in established religion, while moving with the times. In many ways Symmachus has suffered badly at the hands of modern scholars, particularly Anglo-American ones, who considered his written corpus dull and uninformative and his religion merely a surface devotion to the traditional *sacra publica* of Rome - largely here following the lead of his first translator, the great late nineteenth century German scholar Otto Seeck.

### **Survival and modern publication of Symmachus' work**

Fortunately this approach has now largely been overtaken by a new generation of scholars who have produced very important work on Symmachus such as Matthews, Salzman, Sogno, Cameron and others. Sogno's 2008 work has been particularly influential as she has written an excellent biography of Symmachus' political career. It is the aim of this thesis to emulate her as far as possible by producing a biographical account of the **religious** career, life and thought of Symmachus. The traditional approach to Symmachus' writings however has meant that most of them even now have not been translated into English. There is an English edition of the *Relationes* or the official dispatches written while he was Urban Prefect of Rome in 384 published by Barrow in 1973; however only the first book of the surviving ten books, or ninety one of nine hundred of his letters, has been translated into English, by Salzman and Roberts in 2011. There is a Latin-Italian translation with commentary of most of the other

books of letters by several different authors - and Jean Callu has published a Latin - French translation with commentary in five volumes, originally with Budé, now reprinted by Belles-Lettres, of all the *Epistulae*, Volumes 1-4, and in Volume 5 the eight surviving *Orationes* and also the *Relationes*. There is also a Latin - German edition of the *Orationes* published by Pabst in 1989. In writing this work I have used the Callu Latin - French edition with some reference to the various commentators of the Latin - Italian books of letters, in particular the commentary and translation of Book 2 by Cecconi. Liebeschuetz's discussion and translation of *Relatio* 3 and Ambrose's related letters are also a valuable resource.<sup>2</sup> Most of the translations of Symmachus' letters are therefore my own; where I have used those of others, this is indicated in the footnotes.

Unfortunately for us, only eight of his speeches have survived, mainly incomplete. These were found bound in a volume of the Proceedings of the Council of Chalcedon of 451, by Cardinal Mai in 1815 - and subsequently published. It is ironic that one of the last pagans should have some of his work survive because of a Christian council. The private letters survived because they were held up as models of how an aristocratic letter should be constructed by the Byzantines; this is paradoxical to modern eyes that see these as dull, over-rhetorical and uninformative. The first modern edition of the private letters was published in France in 1580,<sup>3</sup> and the first of the official despatches, the *Relationes* in Basle in 1549.<sup>4</sup> Otto Seeck published his magisterial *Opera Q. Aurelii Symmachi quae supersunt* in Germany in 1883 and all editions/translations of Symmachus' works since then are based on this edition.

Book 1 of the letters was selected and prepared for publication by Symmachus himself, even though it is likely that it was published post mortem; and it is almost certain that he at least did the initial selection of letters for some of the other books. It is generally agreed now that Memmius the son of Symmachus published and to some degree edited volumes 2 to 7, with the help of his brother-in-law, Nicomachus Flavianus junior. This scheme of things has been developed and argued by Salzman.<sup>5</sup> The nine hundred letters are arranged in ten books like those of Pliny and Ambrose. It could be argued that Symmachus' arrangement was inspired by that of Pliny. Some letters were certainly omitted, particularly anything to do with the

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<sup>2</sup> Liebeschuetz, 2005, 61-94.

<sup>3</sup> Barrow, 1973: 21.

<sup>4</sup> Barrow, 1973: 21.

<sup>5</sup> Salzman, 2011: xiv.



Frigidus rebellion in which both Flaviani were implicated, but many letters with pagan content were included. The most important of these are contained in Books 1 and 2 but by the time these volumes were published, the personages to whom they were sent, Praetextatus, Flavianus senior, Symmachus' brother Titianus and Symmachus himself were safely dead. Cameron states that from May 395 Flavianus junior was no longer a 'non-person'<sup>6</sup> – and that this probably allowed greater freedom for publishing the senior Flavianus' work. This is further discussed in Chapter 8.

There is evidence of a pattern in the publishing in that Books 2 and 6 contain the letters dedicated to the Nicomachi Flaviani, father and son, and Books 1 and 4 open with letters dedicated to Symmachus' father and his son respectively. The rest of Book 1 contains many of the most important of Symmachus' correspondents. The letters to Stilicho are placed right in the middle of the sequence, at the beginning of Book 4.<sup>7</sup> Memmius carried on the pattern established in Book 1 of putting groups of letters sent to the same correspondent together in books 3, 4, 5 and 7. Book 10 only has two letters, both to very important people, one being the Emperor Gratian, the other Count Theodosius, father of the Emperor Theodosius. This pattern is not seen in Books 8 and 9, where the name of the correspondent is often lacking, and even if it is given, letters to the same person are not placed together but scattered through the correspondence, allowing for a reasonable conclusion that these letters were published later by somebody who paid no attention to the earlier arrangement of things and was not bothered by what was included. For example Book 9 includes the two letters 9.147 and 148 in which Symmachus demands the traditional death penalty for a Vestal who is unchaste. This is discussed in Chapter 5. It is unlikely that Symmachus himself, or his immediate heirs would have wanted these particular letters published after the demise of paganism after 394, but presumably by the time these books were produced this was no longer an issue.

## **Methodology**

After a period of exploration about the best way of developing the thesis topic, it has evolved into a study where Symmachus' religious world is examined in a variety of ways and

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<sup>6</sup> Cameron, 2015: 98.

<sup>7</sup> Cameron, 2015: 95.

analysed using a wide set of approaches which, it is hoped, will reveal the nature of his religious world and religious beliefs. The methodology includes:

1. Reading and engaging with modern scholarship on Symmachus and the religion and politics of his time.
2. An in-depth analysis of Symmachus' extant letters and speeches.
3. Reading other late fourth-century primary sources.

As already stated, my aim is to produce a religious biography of Symmachus to emulate Sogno's political biography; and also to situate Symmachus as far as possible within his own time, culture and religious background by examining his religious world from a variety of angles. To achieve this, my research has used a range of academic methodologies involving the application of theoretical models from other disciplines, for example from community work, which is used in Chapter 6, prosopography, and the integration of a variety of sources such as literary, archaeological, topographical and epigraphical. Chapter 4 uses a topographical and archaeological approach; Chapter 5 also uses archaeology and epigraphy. Literary evidence is used throughout the thesis and literary criticism also plays its part, both in analysis of various letters and in Chapter 8 where various relevant poetic works are discussed. A statistical approach has also been employed where relevant and in places where statistics would help to elucidate the argument. Examples of this can be found in Chapters 3 and 7 – and to some degree in Chapter 5. Another important theme of this thesis is to try to discover if Symmachus had deeper religious feelings than he has been traditionally allowed by modern scholars who have been unwilling to give him credit for anything other than the shallowest of belief systems.<sup>8</sup> This is considered in the various chapters.

Chapter 1 is the Introduction and Chapter 2 the Literature Review; an analytical structure follows in the subsequent chapters which are thematic rather than predominantly chronological, the material being divided into seven chapters. The thesis is organised in two main sections. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are thematic in content. In Chapter 3, I examine Symmachus' religious language and in Chapter 4, the changing religious topography of the part of Rome where he lived, the Caelian Hill, is considered by examining what temples

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<sup>8</sup> As O'Donnell: 1979.

existed in his time and if they were closed or still open; and the growth and development of churches. I also argue in Chapter 3 that Symmachus' religious language reveals much about his religious focus. In Chapter 4 I argue that investigating his religious letters tells us a great deal about traditional Roman pagan cult. A very important focus of the thesis is situating Symmachus and the other players in this drama within their various landscapes – physical, political and religious – and great attention is devoted to this theme in this part of the thesis. It shows, for example, that situating Symmachus within his domestic physical location demonstrates how the sacred topography was changing in Rome and how it impacted on a committed pagan like Symmachus. Chapter 5 is dedicated to examining the religious ritual that Symmachus and his pagan confreres used in carrying out the rites of the *sacra publica* and of Vesta, to whose priestly college they all belonged. This chapter shows how scrupulous Symmachus was in his dealings with the Vestals and in the execution of his priestly duties. Chapter 6 examines by a detailed look at Symmachus' private letters how his devotion to the aristocratic cult of *amicitia* or professional political 'friendship' Roman style could almost be seen as Symmachus' second religion. I argue here that Symmachus' conviction of his religious rightness allows him to write to Christians about pagan rites and to recommend a Christian bishop for a North African town. This chapter stands slightly apart from the main body of my work but is an essential link between the first thematic part and Chapters 7 and 8 which are more chronological in approach as here I consider the events of the life of Symmachus from the time he became urban prefect of Rome in July of 384 until his death in very late March or very early April 402.

In Chapter 7, I examine the event for which Symmachus is best known, the Altar of Victory dispute when Symmachus as urban Prefect of Rome in 384 tried to get the Altar of Victory of Augustus restored to the Senate House and the state funding returned to the Vestal Virgins. This is the matter in which Ambrose of Milan was closely involved and this chapter therefore is the one where Christianity – and Symmachus' interaction with it – is most important. Here I argue that the passion Symmachus displays in *Relatio* 3 shows a man prepared to defend his religious beliefs and who has deep religious convictions. Chapter 8 considers the last seventeen years of Symmachus' life during which period pagan worship was banned and the temples shut, and the traces of paganism that still existed in a series of events and positions pertaining to his lifestyle and political career. These are Symmachus' tenure of the consulship of the West in 391, the events leading up to the battle of Frigidus in 394 in the aftermath of

which Virius Nicomachus Flavianus committed suicide, the marriage of Symmachus' only son in 401, and Symmachus' own death and the rites associated with it in the early spring of 402. Finally in Chapter 9, called 'Symmachus' Religious Epitaph', an attempt is made to articulate some conclusions both about the nature of Symmachus' religious world and his private religious beliefs.

One aspect of pagan and philosophical belief systems that was very important during the lifetime of Symmachus was Neoplatonic thought, first promulgated by Plotinus and his acolyte Porphyry during the third century but which continued, via other philosophers such as Iamblichus and Proclus, to have great influence on pagans and Christians alike during the fourth and into the fifth and even sixth centuries. There is not a separate section on Neoplatonism as such in this work as it does not appear to have been a major inspiration for Symmachus or his polytheistic contemporaries; but where there is evidence of its influence it is dealt with in the appropriate chapters.

There are six Appendices which complement the chapters. Appendix 1 is a timeline which places the events of Symmachus' life in the context of the major events of the period. It starts with the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 and finishes with the writing of *De Civitate Dei* from 413. Appendix 2 contains a series of mini-biographies of some of Symmachus' most important correspondents, which is organised by the book of the correspondence in which they (primarily) appear. The purpose of this appendix, much of whose information is derived from the *Prosography of the Later Roman Empire Volume 1*, is to enhance our knowledge of at least some of the persona with whom Symmachus corresponded although it is selective. However family members and correspondents who appear frequently in the chapters of the thesis are not included as their biographical details are detailed adequately elsewhere in the text. Appendix 3 contains the details of the last pagan priests of Rome from 374 to 408. This information, derived from Jorg Rüpke's *Fasti*, was originally in Chapter 5. However it was felt that it was more appropriate and would make the text flow more smoothly if just the total number of priests for a particular year was listed in the chapter and the more detailed information of the names of these priests, their religious colleges and the deities that they served put in the appendix. Appendix 4 is a chronological list of the anti-pagan legislation contained in the Theodosian code from 320 to 407/8. The purpose of this is to elaborate on some of the entries in the Timeline and to develop information given at

particular points in the text. It gives a list of the most important anti-pagan measures of the state during the period of Symmachus' life time and beyond. They are listed in numerical and chronological order which allows one to see just how comprehensive was the anti-pagan legislation of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Appendix 5 lists the letters with religious content in number order, giving also their approximate date, recipient and content. The purpose of this appendix is to provide an easy reference tool for the content and subject matter of Symmachus' religious correspondence. Finally Appendix 6 lists all the Symmachus letters which are quoted or referred to in the text of the thesis. The letters are organised by the chapter in which they are referred to or quoted from, then the number of the book of letters in which the reference is contained, the number of letter within book in ascending order and finally which page mentioned on in text.

### **Short Biography of Symmachus**

Symmachus' life is recorded in various inscriptions and literary works and these will be discussed at relevant points in the thesis. His family tree is depicted in Figure 1 on the next page. This comes from *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, Vol 1*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Jones, Martindale and Morris, 1971: 1146.

## 27 Stemma of the Symmachi

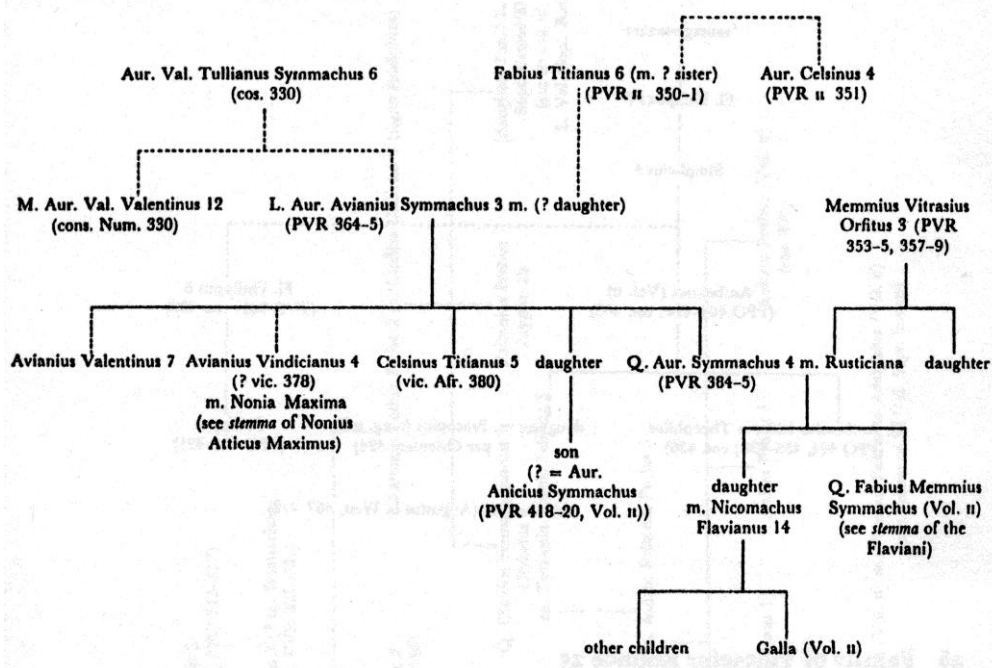


Fig.1: The Symmachi family tree

His *cursus honorum* is to be found on a statue base dug up in 1617, *CIL* 6.1699, on the site of his old home on the Caelian Hill. A photo of this is shown in Figure 2 with the text of the *cursus honorum* following. Symmachus first comes to light in his own writings in a letter dated to Flavianus senior in 365<sup>10</sup> though the main sequence of the letters starts in the 370s and continues until his death in 402. Appendix 2 lists the books of letters in order, giving some idea of the main recipient(s) of each book with short biographies of his principal correspondents.

<sup>10</sup> *Ep.*2.27



Fig. 2: The statue base with Symmachus' *cursus honorum*

Symmachus' *cursus honorum* is below with the translation in note 11:<sup>11</sup>

EUSEBII  
 Q AUR SYMMACHO V C  
 QUAEST PRAET PONTIFICI  
 MAIORI CORRECTORI  
 LUCANIAE ET BRITTIORUM  
 COMITI ORDINIS TERTII  
 PROCONS AFRICAE PRAEF  
 URB COS ORDINARIO  
 ORATORI DISERTISSIMO  
 Q FAB MEMM SYMMACHUS  
 VIR CLARISSIMUS  
 V C PATRI OPTIMO<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *CIL*.6.1699

<sup>12</sup> Eusebii: Quintus Aurelius Symmachus *uir clarissimus*, Quaestor, Praetor, Pontifex Maior, Corrector of Lucania and Brutii, Count of the Third Order, Proconsul of Africa, Urban Prefect, Ordinary Consul, Superb Orator, Quintus Fabius Memmius Symmachus, *uir clarissimus*, To the best of fathers.

Symmachus was born c340 and came from a senatorial family, his father being Lucius Aurelius Avianus Symmachus who died in 377 as *consul designatus*. Symmachus was trained in rhetoric as a youth by a Gallic rhetor, was quaestor and praetor as a very young man and became Corrector of Lucania and Bruttii in 365. About the same time he was appointed to membership of the pontifical college of Vesta which remained his only priesthood, one which he probably owed to family connections and which he held for the rest of his life. He first came to prominence, however, in 367-8 when he was sent to the court of Valentinian I at Trier as part of a senatorial embassy sent from Rome to help celebrate Valentinian's first five years of rule, his *quinquennalia*, carrying with them the *aurum oblativum*, a 'voluntary' tax collected by the senate. Symmachus delivered three of his surviving speeches while at court, *Orationes* 1-3. His rhetorical skills became so admired that he became universally acknowledged as the greatest orator of his time.<sup>13</sup>

Symmachus married in 370<sup>14</sup> Rusticana, the daughter of Orfitus, senator and office holder. They had two children, a daughter whose name we do not know, who became the second wife of Nicomachus Flavianus junior to whom, with her husband, the letters of Book 6 of the correspondence are addressed, and one son. Symmachus' son Memmius to whom he was devoted was born probably in 383 and therefore was under twenty when his father died in 402. Symmachus' last ten years of life (during which most of the surviving letters were written) were devoted to his own consulship in 391, Memmius' quaestorian celebrations and games in 393 and Memmius' marriage and praetorian celebrations and games in 401. Symmachus himself, after a period of political isolation and aristocratic *otium* following his brief period as Urban Prefect of Rome in 384, spent the last years of his life, when he was not writing letters to his numerous and still important correspondents, much in demand as a diplomat being employed in many senatorial embassies to the court at Milan. His friendship with Stilicho, the *magister militum* and power behind the throne of the Western court undoubtedly helped with this as did his position as *princeps senatus* of the Senate during the same period. During all this time he remained resolutely pagan in spite of the anti-pagan legislation of Theodosius and his successors and the closing of the temples in 394. This thesis is therefore an investigation of this paganism. I have used the word pagan or paganism to describe Symmachus and his contemporaries' religion in this work deliberately as I think it

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<sup>13</sup> Sogno, 2008: 2.

<sup>14</sup> Callu, Tome 1, 2003: 11.



is the best modern term available although polytheist and polytheism are also used. It seems to me that the word ‘pagan’ best describes the range of non-Christian or Jewish cults practised in the late Roman Empire and is a term both readily understood and commonly used in this way by modern scholars. In this I follow Cameron’s example.<sup>15</sup>

There are three possible extant likenesses of Symmachus in existence, all of which are shown here. The first of these is sculptural and is in the Museo Centrale Montemartini in Rome; this has been tentatively ascribed to Symmachus by the curators there because of the date of the clothing and the fact that the figure has his hand raised, holding the *mappa* or starting cloth, signifying that this person was a magistrate, officiating at the games as Symmachus did. This figure, and also that of a youth thought possibly to be a likeness of Symmachus’ son Memmius, was discovered in pieces in a late curtain wall near Termini Station. Originally they stood in niches in a nymphaeum in the so-called Temple of Minerva Medica in the *Horti Liciniani* on the Esquiline.<sup>16</sup> Their location on the Esquiline rather than the Caelian perhaps negates the likelihood that these statues are indeed Symmachus and his son; and indeed the so-called statue of Symmachus seems to be of a generic magistrate who could be anyone.



Fig. 3: Head (from a full figure) of a late fourth century magistrate in the Museo Centrale Montemartini, Rome

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<sup>15</sup> Cameron, 2011: 25 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Bertolotti, Cima and Talamo: 2007: 96.

The second is also sculptural but is purely a head, unlike a whole figure of the first example. This personage also looks entirely different from the first. It was sold by the Engs-Dimitri Gallery in California in 2009 and now is in private hands in the USA.<sup>17</sup> I have not been able to discover further evidence about this sculpture or why it is believed to be Symmachus.



Fig. 4: Another supposed likeness of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus



Fig. 5: The supposed face of Symmachus in the Apotheosis panel held by the British Museum

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<sup>17</sup> Listed in the online blog of Erin Ferruci, Celebrity Lifestyle Designer on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

The third, carved in ivory, the so-called Apotheosis Panel kept in the British Museum and now ascribed to the Symmachi family, is discussed in Chapter 8, page 285-7. Whether any of them is a true likeness of Symmachus himself is purely a matter for conjecture. Spera also mentions a fragment of glass plate inscribed with the effigy of Symmachus himself and his son Memmius which was also found buried in the *Basilica Hilariana*.<sup>18</sup> This is dealt with in Chapter 4 and is illustrated in Figure 9, page 80. I have not included its picture here because, unlike the others, the image does not appear to be that of a real person.

## Conclusion

I would conclude this initial chapter by stating that it is important to study Symmachus and his religious world for three main reasons.

1. Symmachus was one of the last generations of pagans,<sup>19</sup> and is an excellent example of one who followed the traditional cults of Rome. However his religious world was in a state of flux and was rapidly changing permanently into a Christian world.
2. He is important also because he stood for an interpretation of Roman virtues which he believed represented a continuous tradition from early Roman history. He also supported the old cults of the *sacra publica* that had made Rome great but which were now being superseded and ostracised.
3. He stood for the traditional concepts of moderation and relative religious freedom that had always been part of the package of the *pax Romana* that the Romans imposed throughout their empire.

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<sup>18</sup> Spera, 2013, 124 and 134: n 18.

<sup>19</sup> Watts: 2015.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The purpose of this Literature Review is to place scholarship associated with Symmachus within a larger framework of Late Antique and late pagan studies and then analyse the historical and current developments in Symmachean scholarship. The theme of my thesis is Symmachus and how he can be situated within and related to Late Antique paganism; and this is reflected in the variety of books and articles in a wide range of topics, all in some way concerned with Symmachus' religious world and Late Antique life, which I discuss and assess. Finally I locate my thesis within these various parameters and discuss what lines future research in this field might take.

#### 2.1 Late Antiquity

Before considering the importance of the current development in the corpus of books and articles about Symmachus and his religious world – and his rediscovery and re-evaluation by modern scholars – it is necessary to place him first within the larger context of the burgeoning development of interest of all aspects of the period now called Late Antiquity. Late Antiquity is a periodization used by historians to describe the time of transition from Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages in mainland Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. It is usually thought to cover the period from the Tetrarchy, or rule by four emperors, of Diocletian (284) to the advent of Islam in the early seventh century and beyond. The development of this concept can be accredited to the historian Peter Brown in his seminal book, *The World of Late Antiquity*, (1971) which for the first time challenged Gibbon's 'decline and fall' scenario and revealed the late Roman world to be an entity in its own right, not something called 'early medieval'. During this period the Roman Empire underwent considerable social, cultural, religious and organisational change, in part because of massive immigration by Germanic tribes, which led to the splitting of the Empire into two halves, the breakup of the Western Empire and the survival of the Eastern; the resultant cultural fusion of Graeco-Roman, Germanic and Christian traditions formed the foundations of the subsequent culture of Europe. The following books have therefore all been of value in different ways by expanding my knowledge of the period called Late Antiquity and allowing me to centre Symmachus more fully within it.

## 2.2 Works on the Late Antique Period and Lifestyle

A H M Jones produced his immensely important work, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602, Volumes 1 and 2* in 1964. This is still unrivalled in its scope, providing a political and narrative background to the whole period and the most important individuals of the era. Interpretation of its detailed information is developed in more modern works such as Christopher Kelly's, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (2006) which gives a concise and lucid account of the growth and functions of the Late Antique administration reflecting current scholarship. In France, about the same time, another great scholar of the political world of Late Antiquity had emerged in the person of André Chastagnol, two of whose books, the *La Préfecture Urbaine à Bas-Empire* (1960) and *Les Fastes de la Préfecture de Rome au Bas-Empire* (1962) are both still essential works for the understanding of the political scene of the late fourth century. These are of particular value in understanding the role of urban prefect and the men who held this role.

Bertrand Lançon's *Rome in Late Antiquity* (2001) gives a very good account of how Rome itself and its society functioned during a period of great change and charts its development from a pagan into a Christian city. It complements John Curran's work, *Pagan City and Christian Capital* (2000) which is very good in dispelling old certainties about the fourth-century changes in Rome itself and giving fresh insights into the political and religious world he analyses. Michele Salzman has produced many articles and books connected with Late Antique paganism including *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy* (2002) covering social and religious change in the Western Roman Empire and in particular analysing the conversion of the pagan Western Roman aristocracy to Christianity, especially those based in the City of Rome itself.

One of the most important background books to the whole Late Antique Period and the 'triumph' of Christianity, is *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*, (1998) published by Jas Elsner. This lavishly illustrated work shows by means of art and architecture how between AD 100 and 300 some of the most significant and innovative developments in Western culture are to be found. It covers subjects such as power, death, society and religion and discusses these topics by looking at the visual arts, paintings, statues, and buildings. Sabine MacCormack's *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (1981) is another very valuable book

which discusses the ceremony associated with the courts of Late Antiquity, the speeches made to emperors and the ritual associated with them at various stages of their lives and deaths. It describes in words the ceremonies of which Elsner produces visual examples.

There are also books which give essential information about different aspects of Late Antique Roman life. One which provides a very good background to Late Antique Roman political and legal life is Jill Harries' biography, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome, AD 407-485*, (1994), which contains very important information on Sidonius' aristocratic youth, various visits to Rome and what it was like in the fifth century – and fifth-century consuls and consular rituals which give much needed background to some of the consular rituals associated with Symmachus. Cameron's book, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (2011), is not just important for its analysis of Late Antique Rome and Roman paganism but also covers important political events of the period, such as the battle of Frigidus in 394. This is also dealt with by Charles Hedrick in his book, *History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (2000), which deals with Virius Nicomachus Flavianus' consulship, participation in the battle of Frigidus, death and subsequent *damnatio memoriae*. Cameron in *The Last Pagans of Rome* does not agree with many of Hedrick's conclusions, but Hedrick's book addresses the paucity of works about Flavianus, Symmachus' companion and fellow pagan, although it is not a biography.

Books and articles about Late Antique marriage are relevant to my thesis because of the marriage of Symmachus' son; the marriage ceremony was one area where pagan rites were still observed at the end of the fourth century, even though the Church was beginning to turn its attention to the Christianisation of wedding ritual by this period. The best book on this topic is undoubtedly Karen Hersch's *The Roman Wedding: Ritual Meaning in Antiquity* (2010), which deals with marriage ceremonial in great detail. Death and its rituals are part of life in any society and are relevant here when considering Symmachus' death, the rites associated with that, his funeral and remembrance – all of which would have been pagan. Long before the end of the fourth century, inhumation rather than cremation had become the norm in Rome, and aristocrats would have been interred in splendid sarcophagi. Stine Birk's *Depicting the Dead*, (2013) is a fascinating volume on Roman sarcophagi in the third and fourth centuries, constructed in part as a catalogue with many illustrations. It gives a clear history of the art form and changes in style, use and ceremonial of these artefacts which took

place over the period analysed. However another volume on sarcophagi that gives a different perspective is Jas Elsner's and Janet Huskinson's *Life, Death and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi* (2011). This is a series of essays looking at different kinds of sarcophagi and their design, art, inscriptions and history. The article by Elsner, entitled, 'Image and Rhetoric in Early Christian Sarcophagi: Reflections on Jesus' Trial', is particularly relevant and demonstrates how the skills of the sarcophagus makers with pagan themes were translated into producing sarcophagi covered with Christian ones for the Christianised Roman aristocracy of the late fourth century.

### 2.3 Symmachus and his Works

Having discussed a group of books which between them have developed my knowledge of the world of Late Antiquity, the next two sections consider works about or by Symmachus. Surprisingly little has been written about Symmachus himself, more evidence of the fact that until recently his importance was not appreciated – and Seeck's negative opinion of him was the one that prevailed. Such is the 1942 doctoral dissertation of John McGeachy, *Quintus Aurelius Symmachus and the Senatorial Aristocracy of the West* in which Symmachus is seen as having value only in his membership of the Senate. This work is well written but incorrect in its assertions about its principal subject. The fact that nothing substantial was written on Symmachus after this until the Seventies is significant, although in that decade many scholars were still critical of Symmachus; among these was Richard Klein in his 1971 tome, *Symmachus: Eine Tragische Gestalt des Ausgehenden Heidentums*. Klein placed Symmachus' version of paganism as being fairly conventional, poles apart from Praetextatus' solar monotheism which Macrobius describes and Flavianus' revival of the Mystery cults.<sup>1</sup>

The tide began to turn with Matthews in his 1974 chapter on Symmachus in Binns' *Latin Literature of the Fourth Century*, which is an excellent introduction to Symmachus and his corpus of works, followed a year later by *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 364-425*, in which work Symmachus is given a major role. Matthews presents a new, far more positive image of the author and orator in a thorough analysis of the ways that the Late Antique court and the aristocracy interacted, demonstrating the value of both Symmachus' personal and public correspondence and his surviving speeches to new generations of

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<sup>1</sup> Tomlin, on Klein: 1975, 202-204.

scholars and putting him right at the centre of his world. The whole period of Symmachus' adult life is covered and in analysing the rapidly changing political, religious and cultural scene of the period, the work is excellent. It also deals with the Late Antique court with which Symmachus was closely involved and its various personalities in depth, such as Ausonius, Ambrose, Stilicho and Theodosius.

Other academics continued this process including Gerd Haverling in her exhaustive 1988 doctoral thesis on Symmachus' Latin and syntax, *Studies on Symmachus' Language and Style*, which is not only a very useful addition to scholarship on Symmachus himself but an excellent analytical tool for anyone interested in the development of written Latin in Late Antiquity. Then in 2008 Cristiana Sogno published her short but very good political biography of Symmachus in three chapters, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*. Chapter 1 is based on his speeches, Chapter 2 on his political letters, the *Relationes*, and finally Chapter 3 on his private correspondence. Her grasp and interpretation of Symmachus' political career is superb – and her notes very informative. This work has been an excellent example for me and it is my wish to produce in this thesis a religious biography of Symmachus which complements her political one. Symmachus is now recognised by most recent scholars as being an important figure in the world of late fourth-century Rome political and religious life as Alan Cameron's 2011's work further establishes. This opus is analysed in more detail later in this chapter.

The various editions of Symmachus' works that have been used in the construction of this thesis are detailed in Chapter 1. The Latin introduction to Seeck's 1883 edition is very full and very useful, although it is largely responsible for establishing the stereotype of Symmachus being a dull individual both in his writings and his life. In 1973 Callu began the translation into French of all Symmachus' private and public letters and his surviving speeches. This magnum opus contains five volumes and took him until 2009 to complete. The notes of Callu's edition, although confusingly organised, contain good information at times; but they are there to explain the translation rather than offer a systematic commentary, and therefore do not necessarily address the most interesting issues from my perspective. Callu's introduction in Volume 1 which covers Books 1 and 2 of the letters, written originally in 1973, is valuable as an introduction to Symmachus himself with a short biography, an interpretation of his personality and place in society, a discussion of his works and their



survival. Callu's approach to Symmachus is sympathetic and positive and so fits in with that of Matthews. Callu's works are complemented by Barrow's 1973 English translation of the *Relationes* which has a general introduction discussing the role of the urban prefect in Late Antique Rome, Symmachus' time in the role and the importance of the *Relationes*, Imperial dispatches, to our understanding of how the administration of late fourth century Rome worked. It also has a note on each *Relatio*. The Latin-Italian edition of the letters is published in a series of nine volumes with a variety of authors. Although giving a translation of each letter in Italian, each volume has a far fuller commentary than Callu. Of particular benefit has been Cecconi's commentary on Book 2 (2002), *Commento Storico Al Libro II Dell'Epistolario Di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, which contains Symmachus' correspondence with his lifelong friend and fellow pagan, Virius Nicomachus Flavianus; and Roda's on Book 9 (1981). The 2011 translation into English by Salzman and Robert of the one hundred and seven letters in Book 1 has at last begun to rectify the lack of an English translation of any of the letters except the *Relationes*. This volume contains clear translations and an introduction to and notes to each letter which makes their interpretation much easier to readers of English. It is to be hoped that there will be English publications of further volumes of the letters.

## 2.4 Symmachus' Religious World

The books discussed in this section are all connected either with Late Antique paganism in one way or another, or Christianity. Symmachus is best known as being one of the last pagans of Rome and the opponent of Ambrose of Milan in the Altar of Victory affair. The fields of paganism and Christianity in the Late Antique period are one of the most vigorous in modern classical scholarship and one of the most important to be commented on here. Academic writing on the demise of paganism and the growth of Christianity in the late fourth century was dominated for many years by the supposed conflict between 'the last pagans of Rome' and Christians as advocated by Bloch in his very influential 1945 article 'A New Document of the Last Pagan Revival in the West, 393-394 AD', which discusses the supposed revival of paganism under Eugenius and Virius Nicomachus Flavianus between 393 and 394 which ended with the defeat of Eugenius at the battle of Frigidus in September 394. According to Bloch there were two styles of paganism at the time, the Oriental style favoured by Flavianus and Praetextatus and the traditional *sacra publica* favoured by Symmachus. For many years scholars accepted this model but it has been successfully challenged by a whole group of modern academics who have proved that not only is there no

evidence for a permanent conflict between the ‘last pagans’ and Christians on religious grounds, but that Christian scholars of the period were also interested in ancient Roman writers and also contributed to ensure their preservation for posterity.

Alan Cameron is foremost among this group and his magisterial volume, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (2011) proves this beyond any doubt. To quote O’Donnell’s review:

Cameron shows conclusively that there was no organised pagan resistance and the bulk of the evidence supporting the old view consists of Christian imagination and projection from that period, compounded by a modern willingness to be persuaded that there really were anti-Christian holdouts as Christianity ‘triumphed’.<sup>2</sup>

A riposte to his book called *The Strange Death of Pagan Rome* was published in 2013 by a group of eminent Italians who also write on various aspects of Late Antiquity and who have dissected various aspects of Cameron’s work. Basically they agree with most of what Cameron says, but they do highlight certain limitations or areas possibly open to other interpretations. James O’Donnell in a BMCR review states: ‘for where Cameron has bathed the landscape in nearly blinding halogen light, there are things to be seen that were hard to see before as in Lellia Cracco Ruggini’s treatment of the chapters on the *subscriptions* in classical and not so classical Latin texts copied in elite circles in this period’.<sup>3</sup>

Rupke’s *Religion of the Romans* (2007) is a very good resource for information on traditional Roman cult combining as it does narrative and thematic approaches within a strongly sociological framework. This volume is especially good on the role of priests and priestly colleges in Late Antiquity. Another work edited by Rupke which is also extremely valuable is his *Companion to Roman Religion*, also 2007. This covers the whole period of Roman religion up to that of Late Antiquity but is particularly good on the Republic and earlier Empire. Strousma’s 2009, *The End of Sacrifice* is a dense but very authoritative volume which combines religious and philosophical thought on its subject and is particularly interesting in linking the contribution of Jewish cult practice and belief to this subject and then bringing in the Christian perspective. In *Power of Religion in Late Antiquity* (2009), edited by Cain and Lenski, articles look at a variety of topics encompassing Christianity and

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<sup>2</sup> O’Donnell, BMCR Review, 2014.09.53.

<sup>3</sup> O’Donnell, BMCR Review, 2014.09.53

its texts, the lingering on of types of paganism and philosophical tradition. The article by Lizzi Testa on 'Augures et Pontifices' is particularly interesting in its arguments for the continuation of the priestly colleges into the fifth century in which she takes a different stance from Cameron.

*Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* edited by Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede appeared in 1999. This is a collection of essays about the whole concept of pagan as opposed to Christian monotheism from a variety of angles. These theories, of which Neoplatonism was the most important but certainly not the only one, were very influential in Late Antiquity and would have been known by Symmachus and his contemporaries. A recent (2015) publication of twenty one of Athanassiadi's articles in *Mutations of Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, highlights various aspects of Late Antique Neoplatonism, monotheism and pagan practices and advances her earlier work. Another book which complements Frede and Athanassiadi but which focuses on the eclectic religious beliefs of the Emperor Julian is *Julian's Gods: religion and philosophy in the thought and action of Julian the Apostate*, published in 1995 by Rowland Smith. This very in-depth study was enlightening about Julian's religious and philosophical beliefs. James O'Donnell has published excellent biographies of Augustine and Cassiodorus and in 1979 published a very influential article entitled, 'The Demise of Paganism'. In this O'Donnell dismisses Symmachus as insignificant. His recent (2015) *Pagans: The End of Traditional Religion and the Rise of Christianity* is a very lively volume intended mainly for a general audience. This gives an up-to-date account of the whole Pagan-Christian story of the late fourth and early fifth centuries in which his opinion of Symmachus is much more positive.

If we turn now to the growth and domination of Christianity in this period, Dennis Trout has written a very good biography, *Paulinus of Nola* (1999) which opened up the world of Late Antique aristocratic conversion, not just to Christianity but also to asceticism. It is particularly useful in describing Paulinus' relationship with Ausonius, poet and statesman, one of Symmachus' close friends and political contacts. There is also a very interesting article by Trout on Augustine, 'Augustine at Cassiciacum: *Otium honestum* and the Social Dimensions of Conversion', which analyses Augustine's behaviour after his conversion by Ambrose in Milan. Like his biography of Paulinus of Nola this article demonstrates how

strong the class ties of *amicitia* and *otium* were in the lives of even the most ardent upper-class Christians of the late fourth century.

Turning to the figure of Ambrose of Milan as a politician rather than as a religious leader, McLynn's *Ambrose of Milan* (1994), where he places Ambrose within his political as well as his religious context, is excellent. Ambrose, his world and his relationship with emperors are analysed in depth and to quote McLynn ... 'the bishop belongs ultimately within the rough and tumble of political life, not above it'. Henry Chadwick has written two works which have also been very influential, *The Early Church* (1993), a lucid account of early Christianity. There are many biographies of Augustine of Hippo but Chadwick's, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life*, published after his death in 2009 is excellent: as Diarmaid MacCulloch says, 'A gem of a biography'. *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Constantine to c 600* (2010) edited by Augustine Casiday and Frederick Norris is a collection of essays about aspects of early Christianity after it became established as the state religion, which is especially good in helping the reader to understand the background to Christianity, its structures and disputes of the fourth century. The final book I would like to comment on here is Gerard O'Daly's *Augustine's City of God* (2008). This is a superb commentary and explanation of Augustine's most important work, which is one of the most important cultural as well as religious works of this whole period.

## **2.5 Ancient Letters, Letter Writing and Literary Arts**

Another very important aspect of Late Antique aristocratic *otium* was letter writing and Symmachus was a letter writer par excellence. The books following therefore all enhance knowledge about Late Antique aristocratic correspondence and associated literary and oratorical subjects. Letter writing is a field which is of great interest to modern scholars whose recent work has redefined old ideas and created new paradigms concerning the art of writing letters in this period. *Ancient Letters*, edited by Ruth Morello and A.D. Morrison appeared in 2007. This is a very useful volume with a series of articles on different well known ancient letter writers including Pliny, Seneca, Horace, Fronto and a very interesting chapter on Late Antique letter writers, comparing the correspondence of Paulinus and Ausonius, and comparing and contrasting it with that of Jerome and Augustine. One sees from this that the style of letter writing of pagan and Christian at this period was very similar.

Morello and Roy Gibson's 2012 *Reading the Letters of Pliny the Younger*, is the first general introduction to Pliny's letters as a piece of literature published in any language and offers close readings interspersed with broader context and adopts an innovative approach to reading the letters as an artistically created collection.

Another very useful recent book is Hall's *Politeness and Politics in Cicero's Letters* (2009). His analysis of the kinds of letters which Cicero wrote is directly relevant to some of Symmachus' own correspondence dealing with political issues and politicians. Hall's discussion of how Cicero interpreted and used 'politeness' is very well done and again is of great value when considering the extreme politeness for which Symmachus was famous - and which he demonstrates in letter after letter, judging to a nicety how to approach his correspondents. This is an aspect of Symmachus' correspondence which scholars have touched on but which has not been systematically studied. Peter White's 2010 book, *Cicero in Letters; Epistolary Relations in the Late Republic* is good at providing a means of understanding the Ciceronian epistolary corpus and its relationship to the shifting political alliances of the period. Stowers *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (1986) is also useful. This, while not having the same literary approach of some of the other works mentioned, is very good especially on the analysis of the different kinds of letter which were common in Antiquity.

Another literary art in Late Antiquity was the field of panegyric, a subject of great importance. I have included it in this section because oratorical techniques were used in the creation of many letters. Symmachus was a very famous orator, regarded by his contemporaries as the Cicero of his day, someone who eulogised emperors, as his *Orationes* 1-3 attest. From the time of Constantine, imperial eulogies had become one of the main ways in which political power could be exercised by the aristocracy. The ability to deliver these speeches well was very much part of public life for an aristocrat like Symmachus. There is currently great interest in the whole study of Late Antique oratory, panegyric and the teaching of rhetoric and many academic tomes are devoted to this subject. One book which is essential reading is the 1994 *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* by C E V Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers. This work gives the Latin and a translation and commentary of twelve surviving imperial speeches from Late Antiquity. The collection includes speeches addressed to the emperors Trajan, Maximian, Constantine, Julian, and

Theodosius, and traces three centuries of oratorical praise-giving in the Roman world. A more recent addition to the corpus is the series of essays edited by Roger Rees and published in 2012, *Latin Panegyric*. These influential readings consider textual, rhetorical, literary, political, and religious matters, and together represent the evolving landscape of academic attitudes towards praise discourse, with its strengths and problems, and towards some of the best-known Roman emperors, written by some of the best scholars on the subject including Sabine MacCormack, Barbara Saylor Rodgers and C E V Nixon. With a full introduction by the editor, and with four essays translated into English for the first time, this valuable volume plots the narratives of Roman praise. Schools of rhetoric, like the ones in Rome and Bordeaux which Ausonius lauded in verse, and that of Libanius in Antioch, taught the processes of rhetoric.

Raffaella Cribore's 2007 *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* is very good in helping the modern reader to understand how future rhetoricians were trained. Also of great importance to the Late Antique aristocrat was the possession of a good library, essential if one were a poet and author like Ausonius or composed literary letters like Symmachus and his contemporaries. A recent book, George Houston's, *Inside Roman Libraries*, (2014) discusses a dozen different book collections of the Roman period to discover how the libraries came into existence, how the collections evolved, where they were housed and who selected the books. This is a most interesting volume, very valuable in helping the reader to discover more about how ancient libraries worked, which were so important to aristocratic *otium*. Another essential component of Late Antique literary life was the construction of poetry and Michael Robert's *The Jewelled Style: Poetry and Politics in Late Antiquity* (1989) is an excellent account of the literary tradition of the period – and its texts and poets.

## **2.6 The Topography and Archaeology of Rome**

A fundamental aspect of my approach to Symmachus' religious world is my analysis of the places in his locality and life associated with religion, the changing religious topography of Rome and the reuse of sacred space within the city. This is an angle which other scholars have not really touched upon in relation to Symmachus, but it one which I consider to be very important in our understanding of him and his religion. Symmachus' world, political and religious, was based mainly in Rome itself and so the utilisation of archaeological and

topographical material about Rome and its environs in the late fourth century helps to develop a better understanding of Rome and its monuments at this period. A lot of new work has been produced in this field recently as scholars have become interested in the changing nature of the Roman landscape because of the changing nature of its religious practices. One book which is valuable here is the 2009 series of essays exploring archaeological themes connected with Late Antique paganism, *The Archaeology of Late Antique Paganism*, edited by Lavan and Mulryan. These essays cover both Rome itself and the Roman provinces analysing such themes as 'The End of the Temples: Towards a new narrative'. This work helps to develop understanding of both Late Antique Pagan Archaeology and the nature of religious structures.

The fundamental general topographical reference book to Ancient Rome is the Steinby series of five volumes, 1994, entitled *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* which are organised alphabetically under site or building name. So entries such as *templum*, *domus* et alia are grouped together. This work is essential if one is seeking information about the buildings, structures and streets of Ancient Rome. Other books which are especial use are Amanda Claridge's 2010 *Rome: An Archaeological Guide* and Filippo Coarelli's 2007 and 2014, *Rome and Environs: An Archaeological Guide* (translated from the Italian). These works complement each other and between them cover the archaeology of Ancient Rome comprehensively. If one is looking at Christian structures and churches Matilda Webb's excellent 2001, *The Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome*, describes the churches and their archaeological history of Rome, divided by geographical area. L Richardson Jr's *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* 1991 is a very thorough topographical dictionary of Rome in one volume; and Richard Krautheimer's *Rome, Profile of a City, 312-1308* (2000) is the classic work on the changes that Christianity brought to the religious topography of Rome and an essential text. Michael Mulryan's much more recent 2008 thesis, *The Religious Topography of Late Antique Rome (AD 313-440): A Case for a Strategy*, supplements Krautheimer's work on the changes in the landscape that were caused by the growth of the number of churches in the period to 440. An excellent volume, a series of essays taking a variety of approaches which together illuminate our understanding of Old St Peter's, published in 2013, is *Old Saint Peter's Rome* edited by Rosamond McKitterick et al. Mention here must also be made of Carlos Machado who has published many useful articles on various aspects of the aristocracy and topography of Late Antique Rome, and how

they interacted. One example of this is his 2006 article contained in another of the Brill annual volumes of Late Antique Roman archaeology, which is entitled, *Building the Past: Monuments and Memory in the Forum Romanum*.

Professor Carlo Pavolini's works on his excavation of the Caelian Hill, including the area within the Ospedale Militare where Symmachus' domus and the *Basilica Hilariana* were located, are valuable because of their importance in understanding the archaeology of this part of Rome. Pavolini's most useful work is a supplement to the *Lexicon Topigraphicum Urbis Romae* – published in 2006, *Archeologia e topografia della Regione II (Celio)*. This is an assessment of the work that has been done in excavating the Caelian Hill since the seminal work on its archaeology produced by Colini in 1944; the later excavation has been done mainly by a team working under Pavolini. Pavolini also has a very good article about the consequences of the sack of Rome upon the Caelian Hill in a volume produced in 2013, *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD: The Event, its Content and its Impact*. This work also has relevant articles concerning the sack by well-known scholars writing in the field of Late Antiquity, including Machado and Salzman. Finally in this section there is another book which can be thoroughly recommended – the catalogue of an exhibition held in 2000 in Rome called *Aurea Roma: Dalla Città Pagana Alla Città Cristiana*. This volume is expensively produced and extensively illustrated in colour with a series of very useful articles on all aspects of the subject of the exhibition which covered the period when pagan Rome became Christian. It includes articles about the temples and archaeological excavations in Rome. At the back of this very large volume is a catalogue of artefacts and surviving inscriptions. This is an excellent resource to supplement other archaeological, topographical and religious books mentioned.

## **2.7 My Contribution to Symmachean Studies**

In this section I will try to outline where I think my work belongs in the Symmachean corpus and how I think it enhances and augments it. I have stated that I greatly admire Sogno's political biography of Symmachus and one of my main aims in writing this thesis is to produce a religious biography of him, complementing Sogno's political one, which will illuminate our knowledge of Symmachus the individual and how his religious world was constructed. Symmachus' religious world is an area which I felt had been greatly neglected



when I started researching over seven years ago and I also felt that there was far too little on Symmachus himself. Cameron's *The Last Pagans of Rome* appeared in 2011 and this has certainly gone a long way to develop our knowledge both of the last pagans and their world, including Symmachus. Cameron paints the big picture while my approach is a more intimate one and is obviously focused on Symmachus himself, for example when I examine religion within the Caelian *domus* and on the wider Caelian hill. I do not think that I have duplicated what Cameron has produced, though at times we use the same material. I have looked at this material from a different viewpoint, always focused on Symmachus, rather than Symmachus being one of a group of the 'last pagans'.

I have been influenced also by other biographies about important Late Antique figures such as that by McLynn's 1994, *Ambrose of Milan*, Kahlos' 2002, *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus: A Senatorial Life In Between*, and Trout's 1999, *Paulinus of Nola*. I hope then that this thesis can take its place, not just as a religious biography, but in a wider biographical tradition of Late Antique notables. Another field to which I have contributed is that of Late Antique letter writing. There are many collections of fourth and fifth century letters and while Symmachus' are admittedly not on the whole as interesting as some others, they do have value both in understanding Symmachus himself and his wider world; he after all was one of the senatorial elite and corresponded with many of the most important men of the Empire. I have used Symmachus' letters consistently through this work and have translated all the ones considered, although occasionally I have also used other translations. I have analysed in some depth Symmachus' writing and literary style as applied to his letters and feel that my approach to, and utilisation of, his letters will enlighten others about this massive letter collection and make it seem a more valuable primary source. The final field where I think this work contributes to Symmachean scholarship is its social history approach. This is particularly important in Chapters 4 and 5 which relate to Symmachus, his own religious life and the wider religious life of his neighbourhoods; and especially in Chapter 8 where I consider Symmachus against the background of various aspects of his social and political life, for example his consulship, the marriage of his son and his death and burial. This approach is important both in seeing Symmachus the individual, in his social and religious world, and also in the wider world of Late Antique Rome with political and religious shifts and alliances.

## 2.8 Future Scholarship on Symmachus

I want to conclude this Literature Review by considering where future scholarship on Symmachus might best be targeted. These are only some possibilities but they are the ones which I feel are the most important.

1. It is essential that all the letters of Symmachus are published in an English translation, with a full commentary. This would open up the collection to a much wider English audience than at present and would hopefully allow not just a specialist community, but a much more general one also, to appreciate Symmachus' many good qualities. Salzman and Roberts' 2011 publication of Book 1 of the letters is admirable but it needs to be complemented by the publication of the remainder of the letters. Book 1, though it contains many of Symmachus' most important correspondents, only goes up to 384. Symmachus lived until 402 and corresponded with many of the great men of his day including Stilicho, *magister militum*, the governor of the Emperor Honorius and effective ruler of the Western Empire from the death of Theodosius in 395 until his own execution in 408.
2. Another political biography placing Symmachus more directly against the main events of his lifetime. This would extend the work of Cristiana Sogno and bring up to date that of John Matthews whose excellent *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 375* was published in 1975.
3. Further study of Symmachus' oratorical prowess and career against the background of modern scholarship on the *Panegyrici Latini* and Late Antique oratory and laudatory praise.
4. Further study of the topographical angle which might result in a book to be entitled 'Symmachus' Rome'. This would describe Rome in terms of its buildings both religious and political, that Symmachus would have seen in the late fourth century.

## Chapter 3

### Symmachus' Religious Language

Having put Symmachus in his historical and scholarly context in Chapters 1 and 2, in this chapter my intention is to explore the religious affiliations of Symmachus through his correspondence and analyse his religious language. Symmachus uses a vast array of religious expressions in his letters and I intend to examine these expressions and analyse them and by so doing identify what expressions he uses, how often they occur, and to attempt to establish whether or not they are genuine religious expressions, or just figures of speech. To understand them better I also look at their origin and function which can give us some idea of Symmachus' interest and use of antique Latin religion and Latin language.

While other scholars have done some work on Symmachus' religious terminology, such as Matthews, Cameron and O'Donnell, this approach covers and analyses for the first time a broad spectrum of terms covering all ten books of letters. Cameron's 2011 book covers this ground from a different perspective in that he is interested in whether these terms – particularly what I term religious invocations – are targeted according to the recipient of Symmachus' letter and if they are pagan or Christian. My work, on the other hand, is concerned with what the terms might tell us about Symmachus' religious affiliations. One thing that immediately becomes obvious was that Symmachus was comfortable with using religious language in a variety of ways, both religious and not religious. In this chapter I shall also analyse how the *tria genera theologiae* model of polytheistic religion, which had been known to the ancient world since the time of Plato, can be applied to Symmachus' religious beliefs and practices; and I argue that there are features in Symmachus' use of religious language which reveal a lot about his religious focus and give insights into his beliefs.

#### 3.1 Methodology

The first section which follows describes the methodology used to define and analyse Symmachus' religious language. The purpose is to try to establish what religious terms Symmachus has employed and by analysing these in depth and by using as wide a range as possible of terms that might be called 'religious', to see if in fact they demonstrate religious belief. His nine hundred letters contain many usages of words that might be construed as

having a sacred content and this is one way of beginning to understand his personal religious world. It must be stated however before proceeding that the word ‘religious’ is a relative one which does not necessarily correspond to any single heading which either Symmachus or a fourth-century Christian might use. I use an open-minded approach to try to understand his use of the words which I have defined as ‘religious’. My aim here is to show, as I try to do in the other chapters of this thesis, the pervasiveness of religion in Symmachus’ life which demonstrates, in my opinion, a much more prominent commitment than has previously been thought.

I first drew up a list of Latin words found in the letters and which could be defined as having some degree of religious meaning. The list was put together by pulling out appropriate idioms from the correspondence which could be considered to be ‘religious’, by a brainstorming session to identify suitable other terms which identified relevant Latin key words and finally by reference to works on Roman religion which included those authored by Rüpke, Beard et al. and Turcan. The final list compiled was then tested both for the way in which the term was used and the number of times utilised. I used a concordance of the works of Symmachus to do this<sup>1</sup> – and all the terms included are found in at least one letter. This study is based on the use of the selected terms in the letters. A group of the total list of words was chosen to discuss in more detail because they were the most interesting or unusual. They are listed in four sections below and Sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5 are listed alphabetically. Section 3.4, religious words used in a religious way, is listed thematically as this was the most effective way of organising and discussing the idioms considered in this part. Each term selected from the first list was then checked in the concordance for the number of times it was used in the *Epistulae* and a note made of its context. The conclusions and analysis of Symmachus’ religious language contained in the rest of the chapter are derived from the information thus gathered. It will be seen that the list contains words which were the names of deities and the names of mythical personages, words like *Roma* which could be said in certain instances to be personifications, words which in one way or another were associated with cult and a whole variety of other expressions to which some kind of religious meaning could be assigned. In most cases cognates and associated words are placed together.

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<sup>1</sup> Lomanto, 1983.

Section 3.2 contains the names of all the gods, goddesses, mythical characters and terms such as *Roma* or *Fortuna* which are used as personifications. These, though they have a religious connotation, are not in the main used in a religious way or in order to make statements with religious content. They are used mainly in a poetic or mythological way. This group has been placed first because it is the least significant of the four groups. Section 3.3 can be seen almost as a control as it considers some of the most important expressions which can be defined as 'religious' but which Symmachus does not use in a religious way. It is within 3.4 and 3.5 however that the real evidence for religious belief can be discovered. Section 3.4 comprises most of the rest of the religious terms which are used in a religious way. The final group, 3.5 contains most of the expressions which use *Deus*, *Dii* and their cognates, the expressions containing *Mehercule*, and also some others of the same type, for example, some using *fortuna*.

I intend to explore these expressions in some depth because I believe that with these one can trace some deeper religious belief on Symmachus' part, if only because of the frequency with which he uses such expressions. They were of course also used as common conventions of speech. Some words, for example the names of gods or goddesses will only appear in one section even if they are used in different ways, while other words might appear in two or even more sections. This will be made clear as I assess and analyse them. In the course of the chapter certain phrases or sentences may emerge several times because they contain several of the terms I am analysing. The intention is for the four sections to be dealt with so that one flows into the next; the conclusion will therefore refer to all four parts so that they can be fully compared and contrasted.

### 3.2 Gods, goddesses, mythic personages and personifications

*Achilles, Alcides, Amathus, Apollo, Castor, Deum Matris, Diana, Dione, Fama, Fata, Fortuna, Geryon, Hercules, Iuppiter, Iuno, Lyaeus, Mercurialis, Minerva, Natura, Nestor, Polluces Gemini, Prometheus, Roma, Sacri Vestalis, Thetis, Volcanus*

**Table 1: This shows number of times that various deities and personas are mentioned**

Fortuna	94
Roma	47
Natura	32
Iuppiter, Minerva, Hercules	4
Achilles, Castor, Fata	3
Apollo, Amathus, Aurora, Circe, Deum Mater, Diana, Dione, Fama, Geryon, Iuno, Lyaeus, Nestor, Polluces Gemini, Mercurialis Prometheus, Sacri Vestalis, Thetis, Volcanus	1

The chart above shows the exact distribution of how often each of these personages is mentioned. The terms include the names of greater and lesser divinities, mythic figures and certain words which I have included because they can be used as a personification. The terms are given as they are found in the text and in the concordance with the exceptions of *Amathus* (*Amathusium*), *Deum Mater* (*Deum Matris*), *Iuppiter* (*Iove, Iovem*), *Iuno* (*Iunonis*) and *Sacer Vestalis* (*Sacri Vestalis*) whose nominative form is given in the chart. The names discussed here belong to myth, the first part of Varro's *tria genera theologiae* which I discuss fully in the conclusion of this chapter. From this it can be seen that *Fortuna*, included as a personification, is mentioned the most often by a wide margin. There are of course several reasons for this; some uses, for example, belong to Section 3.5 on religious invocations where *fortuna* is invoked to achieve a specific end, for example better health, and these will be dealt with fully in that section. However, I have identified at least twelve uses of *Fortuna* where it could be said that this term is used as a personification and where usually, though not consistently, *Fortuna* is given a capital F in the Callu edition. These usages are very varied and can be either poetic, as in the first example, or more mundane as in the second. The first example below is from letter 9.72 and the second is from letter 9.122.

- 1 *quod Achilli fortissimo aevi sui Homerum praeconem Fortuna tribuisset  
because fortune had given to Achilles, the strongest man of his age, Homer  
to be herald.*
  
- 2 *admodum gratulatus sum quod illi aequum iudicem Fortuna praestitit Certainly I  
have given thanks that fortune has given him an equitable judge*

*Roma* is found forty seven times. The only usage, however, which can be termed a personification is in *Relatio* 3 which is dealt with in Chapter 7. The same goes for *Romulus* and *Romuleus*. All these terms therefore belong to the non-religious, grouping and in every case *Roma* in the letters of Symmachus is defined as the city or the place. *Natura* occurs thirty two times and all the references are used in a non-religious way apart from two which could be described as personifications, one of which I give here.<sup>2</sup> It is worth commenting that Symmachus did not use a capital letter for *Natura* or *Fortuna* so he did not have to make a clear distinction as to whether he was referring to them in a religious way or not or as a personification.

*Multa in te virtutum natura conguessit*

*Nature has accumulated many virtues in you*

We now come to the group of names which are used either three or four times. Most of these names are used in a poetic way, some refer to practical cult and a very few seem to envisage the deity as an actual divine power. *Minerva* is one of the most interesting of this group where three out of the four mentions have some claim to a religious connotation. Two of these particularly stand out though they are very different. One is contained in a letter to Eutropius, historian and pagan, Ep.3.47 when Symmachus says:

*Sed haec stilo exequenda ante alios cui pollet Minerva concedimus*

*But we leave this work to be pursued by your pen to which Minerva promises (benefit) before any others*

This then is a poetic or mythic use of the goddess's name which is apparently an allusion to the last lines of the *Breviarum Historiae Romanae* of Eutropius,<sup>3</sup> further influenced by Virgil and Statius.<sup>4</sup> It is an interesting reference due to Eutropius' paganism. The second occurrence is Symmachus' friend Helpidius, referred to already, to whom some of his last letters were addressed. This allusion is a more specifically religious one:<sup>5</sup>

*Nempe Mineruae tibi sollemne de scholis notum est*

*To be sure, since school you have known the solemn rites of Minerva*

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<sup>2</sup>Ep.3.74.

<sup>3</sup>Callu, Tome 2, 2003: 53.

<sup>4</sup>Virg.*Aen.*9.7; Stat.*Theb.* 4.196-7.

<sup>5</sup>Ep.5.85.3

The implication here is that Helpidius, even if he is now a Christian, originally was pagan. He is somebody with whom Symmachus can share a memory of cult and knows that he will both understand and appreciate it. The feast of Minerva was on 19<sup>th</sup> March and was celebrated particularly by artisans among which schoolmasters were numbered.<sup>6</sup> This presumably refers to Minerva's dual functions as being both goddess of wisdom and of crafts. The one reference to Mercury is also in this letter, *artis Mercurialis* or *of the art of Mercury*.

Of the four uses of *Iuppiter*, always shown in the Symmachus corpus in its ablative use as *Ioue* or accusative as *Iouem*, two are significant here. Of these references the most interesting is in a very important letter to Praetextatus which Callu dates to towards 378, letter 1.49, which will be dealt with fully in Chapter 5, page 141-44. In this missive Symmachus is talking about an actual sacrifice.

*Nam et Iovem vix propitiavit octava mactatio*

*For the eighth sacrifice scarcely propitiated Jupiter.*

This letter of Symmachus seems to indicate that he still believed in the efficacy of sacrifice and in the efficacy of Jupiter. The style of the expression demonstrates to me some depth of belief in this process on Symmachus' part, so this use of *Jupiter (Iouem)* would seem to envisage the deity as a divine power.

*Hercules* is referred to four times, apart from being a personal name. One is a poetic reference to one of the labours of Hercules where *Hercules* is called by a synonym – *Alcides*. One however is of particular interest as it pertains to the marriage of a friend of Attalus,<sup>7</sup> one of Symmachus' friends, in the town of Tibur, under the auspices of *Iuno* as *pronuba* or matron of honour<sup>8</sup> and *Hercules*, who had an oracular, long-established cult at Tibur, modern Tivoli, as Hercules Victor.<sup>9</sup> The friend evidently had previously carried the torches in front of the bride at Attalus' wedding.<sup>10</sup> This usage of *Iunoni et Herculi* can be seen as an example of

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<sup>6</sup>Callu, Tome 2, 2003: 218.

<sup>7</sup>*Ep.7.19*

<sup>8</sup>Adkins and Adkins, 2000: 116.

<sup>9</sup>OCD, 1999: 1524.

<sup>10</sup>Callu, Tome III, 2003: 175, p 56 n 2; torches were normal components of an aristocratic wedding which is dealt with in Chapter 8, page 267.



the practical operation of cult in the context of a wedding and I refer again to this letter in Chapter 8. The passage quoted goes as follows:

*Sino ut amici tui nuptiale festum curae uacuis exerceas et urbem Tiburtem quae  
nuper faces praetulit communem Iunoni et Herculi facias*

*I allow that free from care you may celebrate the marriage festivities of your friend  
and make the city of Tibur, who recently carried the wedding torches for you, common to  
Juno and Hercules*

We can now look at the final group of the names of divinities used by Symmachus in his letters. These names in this group are only used once each and are mainly, if not exclusively, used in a poetic way. *Iuno* which we have already looked at is an exception to this. Like many of his contemporaries Symmachus wrote poetry on occasion. Exchanging literary efforts between friends was, after all, one of the commonest aspects of *amicitia*. There is evidence in his correspondence to his father which comprises the first part of Book 1, of some of these attempts in which much play is made of mythic and divine allusion. The following example demonstrates this:<sup>11</sup>

*Ubi corniger Lyaeus  
Operit superna Gauri  
Volcanus aestuosis  
Medium coquit cauernis  
Tenet ima pisce multo  
Thetis et Baiae sorores.  
Calet unda, friget aethra.  
Simul innatat choreis, Amathusium renidens  
Salis arbitra et uaporis  
Flos siderum, Dione*

*Where the horned Lyaeus  
Covers Gaurus' heights  
At the halfway point Vulcan is blazing  
Burning in his caverns  
And the sisters Thetis and Baiae  
Hold the depth with many fish  
The waves are hot, the heavens cold  
Together with her company swims  
Beaming down on Venus of Amathus  
Mistress of spa and balmy sky  
Flower of the stars, Dione<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> *Ep.* 1.8.

<sup>12</sup> Salzman/ Roberts, (trans).

Here we have examples of several deities and lesser divinities. The horned *Lyaeus* is Bacchus, *Vulcan*, god of fire and celestial blacksmith and *Venus*, here called *Amathus* after a town sacred to her in Cyprus,<sup>13</sup> all put in an appearance, as does *Dione*, Aphrodite's mother in one myth. Poetry is one of the most common ways in which the traditional gods were celebrated but does not necessarily indicate any religious belief any more than mythical topics in mosaics did. It can be compared to the Late Antique epithalamia, most of them Christian, where mythological references were expected<sup>14</sup>; and also to the literary efforts of many of our own traditional poets, influenced as they were by their classical education.

There is one final letter in which a god – here *Apollo* – is referred to in a poetic way which also demonstrates Symmachus' literary learning. It is another letter to Praetextatus, written before 384, which has to do with hunting and with literary metaphors for hunting through literature:<sup>15</sup>

*Nisi forte in siluis Apollinem continaris ut ille pastor Hesiodus, quem poetica lauru  
Camenalis familia coronauit*

*Lest in the hope that you might meet in the woods Apollo, as did that shepherd Hesiod  
whom the Muses crowned with poetic laurel*

This is a very nice turn of phrase where Symmachus is glossing verses of Virgil.<sup>16</sup>

The use of *Deum Mater*, the Mother of the Gods, *Cybele*, in a letter to Flavianus<sup>17</sup> when he asks if Flavianus is returning to Rome for the annual festival held on the vernal equinox, or 25<sup>th</sup> March, is also very intriguing. This is the only example in the letters of any reference to any mystery religion though it is far from clear that Symmachus himself was involved in this. It is a mundane reference which shows us Flavianus' religious associations rather those that of Symmachus. However the intention is to examine this in more depth and Symmachus' possible involvement in the cult in Chapters 4 and 5. Finally there is the usage of *Sacri*

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<sup>13</sup> Salzman, 2011: 28, n 5.

<sup>14</sup> For example Claudian *Fescennina/Epithalamium de Nuptiis Honorii Augusti*

<sup>15</sup> *Ep.* 1.53.2.

<sup>16</sup> Virg. *Eclog.* 6, 69-70; Callu, Tome 1, 2003:226, 115, n 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ep.* 2.34.1.

*Vestalis* in another important letter to Flavianus senior,<sup>18</sup> after the death of Praetextatus in December 384:

*Praetextato nostro monumentum statuae dicare destinant uirgines sacri Vestalis anstites*

*The Virgins of the cult of Vesta determine to dedicate a commemorative statue to our Praetextatus*

This is a very useful reference which demonstrates a practical application of cult rather than saying anything about belief, because Symmachus, as we know from his *cursus honorum* was in fact a priest of Vesta. However it is one of a group of several letters which all refer to different aspects of his priesthood and the cult and these too will be dealt with in depth and as a group in Chapter 5. The first section therefore has examined a series of names of divinities and associated mythical beings and established the variety of ways in which they are used. What they tell us about Symmachus' religious affiliations will be analysed in the conclusion. The second section looks at religious words, not proper names, which are used in a non-religious way.

### **3.3 Religious words used in a non-religious way**

**Aedes, Auspicare, Auspicium, Celebrare, Celebritas, Cineres, Consecrare, Coronare, Deuotio, Deuotus, Dialis, Diuinus, Fanum, Ferae, Ferialis, Flamma, Fortunatus, Genius, Impius, Infortunium, Lar, Mortales, Mystagogus, Olympius, Pietas, Profanus, Religio, Religiosus, Sacramentum, Sacarium, Sanctita, Sanctus, Sodalitas, Sol, Superstitio, Taeda, Uotius, Uotum**

These are all words which can in some contexts be construed as religious, but their usage in Symmachus' letters in the vast majority of cases is not religious. I am only commenting on a selection of these words in the following section. The majority of terms in this section turned out not to have a religious significance contrary to my original assumption.

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<sup>18</sup>*Ep.*2.36.2.

*Aedes* – its original meaning was a small temple, probably a simple building which was undivided,<sup>19</sup> while the word *templum*, not used in the letters, referred to something much more splendid. However all its uses, apart from one, in the letters is in its other meaning of a house, for example when Symmachus writes to Flavianus senior about building a new house near Naples.<sup>20</sup> The exception however is illuminating as an example of a description of a historical temple. This occurs in a letter to Ausonius when he says:<sup>21</sup>

*Aedes Honori atque Virtuti gemella facie iunctim locarunt conmenti*

*when they situated the temples to Honour and Virtue together with a twin facade,*

The *aedes* to *Honos* and *Virtus* was beside the Porta Capena gate and is discussed in Chapter 4, page 102.

*Lar* and *lares* constitute an example of metonymy, where the original meaning of the word, the household gods, has become used in a broader way, here meaning house. All the entries in the Symmachean letters are of this kind and this is discussed further in Chapter 4, page 74. The cult of the household gods is also discussed in Chapter 4, pages 82-83. In the letter to his friend Attalus, who is in Tivoli celebrating a friend's wedding and which I have quoted in Section 3.2, Symmachus invites him to visit him in Rome in his house on the Caelian Hill – *in Caelium larem* - after the drinking and wedding celebrations are finished.<sup>22</sup>

*Mystagogus* is another word whose meaning has been transferred to something else. It originally meant a priest who initiated supplicants in holy mysteries; and the Latin word is derived from the Greek *mystagogos*,<sup>23</sup> where the mystery connotation is much stronger. It is only used very occasionally in Latin by Cicero, Varro, Fulgentius but most of all by Symmachus. In the Latin it has a transferred meaning of one who shows someone the sights.<sup>24</sup> It seems to have had originally some attachment to the Eleusinian mysteries, being a person assigned to an initiate who would lead them through the rituals; although *mystagogoi*

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<sup>19</sup> OLD, 2005: 61.

<sup>20</sup> Ep.2.60.1.

<sup>21</sup> Ep.1.20.1; Salzman/Roberts (trans).

<sup>22</sup> Ep.7.19.

<sup>23</sup> OLD, 2005: 1153.

<sup>24</sup> OLD, 2005: 1153.

are only mentioned in connection with Eleusis from the first century BCE onwards.<sup>25</sup> Symmachus however uses *mystagogus* in the sense of an initiator as in the following example, which also shows Symmachus' poetic tendencies:<sup>26</sup>

*In domus tuae sacrarium tamquam mystagogus induco*

*Just as an initiator I introduce (him) to the sanctuary of your house*

This sentence also has a nice mellifluous use of the word *sacrarium* which here means, 'sanctuary', and the use of the terms together seems to play with the idea of the house as a sacred place in some way.

There are among the group of terms in Section 3.2 some surprising words which are not used in a religious way. *Religio* and its associated adjective *religiosus* are two of these. *Religio*, which was traditionally in Roman religion applied to the cults of the *sacra publica*, later was taken by Christians to mean only the true path of Christianity as opposed to *superstitio*, originally rites foreign to Rome which now meant paganism. But Symmachus uses both terms to mean devotion or scrupulousness in a general sense in the vast majority of the ninety or so occurrences in the letters as in *Ep.* 4.72 where Symmachus states

*cedo praestandissimae religioni*

*I incline to a superior scrupulousness*

This term must, however, be regarded as one of the most important words in Symmachus' religious vocabulary because the traditional qualities of *religio*, scrupulousness and devotion, are those very essential and long-established Roman virtues to which Symmachus in his practice and interpretation of Roman cult would have subscribed.<sup>27</sup> The few instances of *religio* and *religiosus* being utilised in a religious way – *religiosus* has forty non-religious usages to one religious - are dealt with in Section 3.4, page 51.

There are other words used by Symmachus in a non-sacred way, which to us have special religious meaning and which have all been very important in traditional Christian rites, although they can also be used in a lay or normal conversational way. Among these are

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<sup>25</sup> Bowden, 2010: 32.

<sup>26</sup> *Ep.* 9.9.

<sup>27</sup> Callu, Tome 1, 2003: 218, 81, n 6.

*diuinus, sacramentum, sacrarium, sanctitas, uotiuus* and *uotum*. These are used in the letters in what we would consider a non-religious sense, and are constantly repeated. I will just give one example of these, *sanctus*, which Symmachus uses in the sense of venerable or worthy of esteem. Symmachus uses it in this way in letter 6.49.1 written to his daughter and son-in-law in 397:

*et tamen, sanctum atque honorabilem uirum parentem uestrum Seuerum nolui abitere*  
*and however I have not wished to let go of your parent Severus, this venerable and*  
*honourable man*

*Pietas* is normally used in a non-religious way, meaning dutifulness. However there are one or two instances of this term where a spiritual dimension can be observed as in the following extract from letter 8.40:

*ea maesta profectioe uisus es satisfecisse pietati*  
*you have been seen to have satisfied dutifulness by this departure into grief*

*Auspicium* too is used mainly in a non-religious way as in *auspiciis litterarum* or ‘by the good augury of letters’. However in a letter to Flavianus senior in 383 concerning the departure of Flavianus junior on a trip to Asia, Symmachus states:<sup>28</sup>

*et breui iter in Asiam secundis auspiciis ordietur*  
*and shortly he will begin his journey to Asia under good auspices*

It is possible that this might refer to the actual taking of the auspices or just be a figure of speech.

*Fortuna* is a personification already dealt with in Section 3.2 but its related opposite *infortunium*, misfortune (mentioned seven times) is not used in a religious sense although in one letter someone is described as being ‘strangled with the knot of misfortune’, which is a colourful turn of phrase.<sup>29</sup> Finally *diuinus* is used many times in a non-religious way to denote the emperor or emperors as in letter 5.95 to Helpidius in 402 when Symmachus has successfully completed a mission to the Imperial Court at Milan – *ad exorandam diuini principis* or *to entreat our divine prince* – although one could argue that someone like

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<sup>28</sup> *Ep.* 2.24.

<sup>29</sup> *Ep.* 4.22.

Symmachus might well regard the emperors as divine. In reality, however, he shows no sign of this belief. Its religious use is mainly in religious invocations used by Symmachus which is the subject of Section 3.5 although there are some other usages, religious words used in a religious sense which are dealt in Section 3.4.

In this section a range of terms which we might consider 'religious' but which are not generally used as such in Symmachus has been examined. In Section 3.4 a range of words, which are not the names of divinities but do have religious applications, and which are exercised as such by Symmachus in the course of his writing will be examined.

### **3.4 Religious words used in a religious way**

Here follows an analysis of a series of terms which Symmachus uses in a religious way and which reveal both his intense interest in cult matters and more of his beliefs. These terms are organised into three groups listed below, and then alphabetically within the groups.

A Offices and Institutions

B Rituals and Cult Practices

C Divine Figures and Places

#### **A Offices and Institutions**

##### **Antistes**

This term is used in the sense of a 'presiding priestess' in a very important letter about a Vestal, formerly in charge of the Alban rites, who is guilty of incest. The letter dates from before 382 and is to unnamed correspondent(s) who in fact were the Urban Prefect and the governor of a neighbouring province. This letter, 9.147, and 9.148 which deals with the same subject are dealt with in depth in Chapter 5, page 132 and on pages 137-8.

*More institutoque maiorum incestum Primigeniae dudum apud Albam Vestalis anstitis colegii nostri disquisitio deprehendit*

*The investigation by our college has taken place into the lack of chastity of Primigenia,*

*formerly Chief Vestal at Alba, by custom and ancestral tradition.*

There is also another use of *anstites* in a letter to his son in law, Nicomachus Flavianus junior, in 397 – 6.29, which refers to a legal dispute in which the ‘priests’ intervened and there was a clash between what Symmachus calls ‘justice and innocence’ on the one hand and ‘religion’ on the other.<sup>30</sup> Matthews feels that the priests here were Christian but states that the allusion is so obscure that regrettably no more can be made of it.<sup>31</sup>

## **Augur**

There is only one entry for *augur* but it is a very important one in a letter to Siburius dated before 380.<sup>32</sup>

*Si tibi vetustatis tantus est amor pari studio in uerba prisca redeamus quibus Salii canunt et augures auem consulunt et decemuires tabulas condiderunt*

*If your love for antiquity is so great then let us return to the old formulas with equal zeal, where the Salii sing and the augurs consult a flight of birds and the decemvirs composed the tablets*

In this letter Symmachus displays his knowledge of augury and the place it had in traditional Roman cult. Lizzi Testa makes the crucial point that though Symmachus may be jesting at Siburius’ archaism he uses the present tense for the activities of the Salii (see this chapter, page 45 under *Salii*) and the consulting of *signa ex auibus* from fixed points in the heavens. This was traditionally a very difficult way of reading the auspices which, even by the time of the late Republic, had fallen into disuse. However this may be an indication that it was still used at least sometimes in the late fourth century as a method of augury,<sup>33</sup> although it is possibly a distinction between a one-off and a regular occurrence. The *decemvirs*, on the other hand, who composed the Twelve Tables, are referred to in the past tense showing that they belonged back in the ancient history of Rome.

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<sup>30</sup>Matthews, 1974: 87.

<sup>31</sup>Matthews, 1974: 87.

<sup>32</sup>*Ep.* 3.44.

<sup>33</sup>Lizzi Testa, 2009: 272.



## Canephorae.

This term is included in this section because like *mystagogus* it is a term derived from Greek religion; although its use in letter 1.29 is essentially factual as it refers to a well known statue.<sup>34</sup> It means an office-bearer and is always used in a religious context meaning ‘sacred basket carriers’ which Lewis and Short state were ‘Athenian maidens who in the festivals of Juno, Diana, Minerva, Ceres and Bacchus bore different sacred utensils in wicker baskets’.<sup>35</sup> The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* defines it as ‘a statue of a sacred basket carrier’.<sup>36</sup> The term is not much used in Latin literature though Cicero uses it in *In Verrem*, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and Pliny in *De Natura*, 36.25.<sup>37</sup> The sentence it is contained in shows very well Symmachus’ knowledge of Greek culture.

*Nam et Phidiae Olympium Iouem et Myronis buculam et Polycliti canephoras rudis eius artis hominum pars magna mirata sunt.*

*A great majority of humankind is ignorant of the art of sculpture yet has admired the Olympian Jove of Phidias, the heifer of Myro, and the Canephorae of Polyclitus.*

These great works of art were widely known through Roman copies and are exhaustively discussed.<sup>38</sup>

## Collegium

Four of the six instances of *collegium* refer to Symmachus’ priestly role in the cult of Vesta. So there are references to the college in the two letters concerning the unchaste Vestal, there is one to Praetextatus about a year before the latter’s death concerning the many decisions the college must take and a reference in a letter to his brother Celsinus about one Rufus who is the treasurer of the priests and who is attending Celsinus with the college’s instructions. These are all functional religious references concerned with Symmachus’ role in an important state cult and which is considered in much greater depth in Chapter 5.

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<sup>34</sup> Salzman/Roberts, 2011: 68.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis and Short, 1879: 278.

<sup>36</sup> *OLD*, 2005: 265.

<sup>37</sup> *OLD*, 2005: 265.

<sup>38</sup> Salzman/Roberts, 2011: 69.

## Episcopus

The next religious term is probably the most surprising one of all. Symmachus is the last person who one would expect to recommend a bishop, and he says as much to his brother in a letter not long before the latter's death:<sup>39</sup>

*Commendari a me episcopum forte mireris*

*You will wonder perhaps that a bishop is recommended by me*

This indeed is a surprising turn of events but seems to have occurred because Clemens, the gentleman concerned, recommended himself to Symmachus because of the rightness of his cause – problems concerned with the rebellion of Firmus in Mauretania – and certainly not because of his religious affiliations. Symmachus, of course, had been proconsul in Africa, that is not Mauretania, in 373 and had estates there. This is an example of pure patronage based on *amicitia*. This letter is dealt with in full in Chapter 6, page 187.

## Pontifex, Pontificalis, Pontificium

These three terms are all associated with priesthood. *Pontificalis* occurs three times, all in a religious context relating to the priestly college with which Symmachus was associated. For example in letter 1.51 to Praetextatus, Symmachus reveals that each priest in the *collegium Vestae* served for a month at a time. This letter is also discussed in Chapter 5, pages 140-1:

*Ad hoc sacri pontificalis administratio curam de me et officium stati mensis exigit*

*In addition, the priestly administration of the sacred requires my attention and makes me responsible for my sacred month.*<sup>40</sup>

This also possibly reveals his *religio* or scrupulousness of attention to the duties of public sacred ritual. *Pontifex* and *pontificium*, which between them have five entries, are all used in a sacred sense and refer to the office of *pontifex*. One example of these will suffice; in 1.47.2 Symmachus declares to Praetextatus, also a priest of Vesta:

*Nisi mauis auctoritatem pontificis experiri*

*Unless you prefer to test the pontifical authority*

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<sup>39</sup> *Ep.* 1.64.1.

<sup>40</sup> Salzman, 2011: 109, 110, n 5.

## Sacerdos, sacerdotium

*Sacerdos* has four entries as has *sacerdotium*. As would be expected most of these usages are religious as in 1.46.2 when Symmachus writes to Praetextatus in 381:

*Convenit inter publicos sacerdotes ut in custodiam ciuium publico obsequio traderemus curam deorum.*

*It has been decided among the public priests that we would hand the care of our god into the guardianship of our citizens for a public homage*

Salzman states that this letter is frustrating because ‘Symmachus does not specify what happened that prompted the public priests to hand over ‘care of the gods to the guardianship of our citizens for a public homage’.<sup>41</sup>

## Salii

The *Salii* – meaning ‘leapers’ or ‘jumpers’ (see page 42) was a college of twelve priests of *Mars Gradivus* who traditionally had made solemn processions through Rome on the Kalends of March.<sup>42</sup> Some of the *curiae* or lodges of the *Salii* which had fallen into disrepair were fixed by the pontifices in the mid-fourth century, which is an indication that these processions continued to take place after this date – at least according to Rüpke.<sup>43</sup>

## Sodales

The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* defines *sodalis* as, among other things, ‘A (fellow) member of a fraternity meeting for religious or social purposes’.<sup>44</sup> *Sodales* is used once in a reference to hunting in a letter to one Maximus in 395 where it does have the meaning of a religious fraternity:<sup>45</sup>

*Quare inter sodales Apollinis ac Dianae sectator utriusque numerabere*

*Therefore also among the adherents of Apollo and Diana you will be counted as attached to both*

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<sup>41</sup> Salzman/Roberts, 2011: 99.

<sup>42</sup> Cassells, 1966: 531.

<sup>43</sup> Rüpke, 2007: 179.

<sup>44</sup> *OLD*, 2005: 1780.

<sup>45</sup> *Ep.* 9.28.

## Vestales, Virgo

*Vestalis* and *Vestalis Sacri* refers to the Vestals and several of the references are within letters already discussed. One that is not is a letter to Flavianus senior, 2.59.1, before 395 in which he announces that he (Symmachus) is returning to Rome because it is the forthcoming feast of Vesta, the ninth of June. Obviously in view of his priesthood this was an important day in the calendar for Symmachus. This letter is further analysed in Chapter 5, pages 129-30. And finally in this group *Virgo* and *Virgines* also mean the Vestals, and the references here cover the letters involved with that cult which are dealt with fully in Chapter 5. The word *Virgo* had been appropriated by Christians by this date to refer to the Virgin Mary, so using it here on its own to mean a Vestal might give it extra significance.

## B Rituals and Cult Practices

### Ara

There are two references to *ara* or its cognates in the *Relationes*, one of them being of course the famous reference to the *aram victoriae* in *Relatio 3* which is the subject of Chapter 7. Within the letters themselves there is only one instance of *ara*, in a letter to Praetextatus dealing with the normal business of the priestly college. This is a famous sentence which reads:<sup>46</sup>

*Fuerit haec olim simplex diuinae rei delegatio: nunc aris deesse Romanos genus est ambiendi*

*Once this sort of delegation of religious things was simple: now to desert the altars is for Romans a kind of careerism*<sup>47</sup>

This letter was written in 383 and in this statement in a letter written to his friend and fellow priestly college member Symmachus can freely express his frustration. This was the period when the senatorial order was converting in ever greater numbers to Christianity and undoubtedly Symmachus was aware of this. There is probably too an element of cynicism here and acceptance of the fact that some conversions at least were done for political rather than religious reasons. This letter is discussed in depth in Chapter 5, pages 138-9 because of

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<sup>46</sup> *Ep.* 1.51.

<sup>47</sup> *Ep.* 1.51; Salzman/ Roberts, (trans).

the light it sheds upon the state of the pontifical college at this period and also aristocratic conversion to Christianity. *Arae* here stands symbolically for pagan religion.

### **Auspex, Auspicatus**

There is only one occurrence of *auspicatus* and seven of *auspex*; but there is one nice religious usage in a letter from 396-7 to an unknown recipient when Symmachus informs his correspondent that the gods are giving him (Symmachus) signs that as he is in full possession of his health, he will be able to attend the wedding festivities of his friend's family.<sup>48</sup> Symmachus may just be invoking the gods here without meaning it literally; on the other hand this usage may reveal an inner depth to his belief.

*Dabunt dii auspices facultatem ut nuptialibus familiae uestrae uotis compos sanitatis intersim*

*The gods on my side will give me the ability to participate in the wedding celebrations of your family (now) my health is restored*

### **Caerimonia**

*Caerimonia* has two occurrences, both of which are religious. In 2.53.1 which is a letter to Flavianus senior before 390 Symmachus writes:

*Notae nobis caerimoniae deorum et festa diuinatis imperata*

*We know about the ceremonies of the gods and the commanded festivals of the Divinity*

This reference is apparently to the celebration of the feast of Ceres which took place on 4<sup>th</sup> October of each year.<sup>49</sup> It is not therefore surprising that Symmachus would have made such a reference to his friend and fellow pagan. The other reference occurs in 9.147, discussed fully in Chapter 5 pages 135-6, about the breaking of her vow of chastity by the Vestal Primigenia.

*Restat ut in eos qui caerimonias publicas abominando scelere polluerunt legum seueritas exeratur*

*It only remains to deploy the severity of the law against those who have sullied the rites of the city by an abominable crime*

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<sup>48</sup> *Ep.* 9.128..

<sup>49</sup> Callu, Tome 1, 2003: 190, n 1.

Symmachus very clearly here demonstrates his dedication to traditional cult values because it affects the sanctity of Rome if it is broken, the gods will be displeased and Rome will suffer.

## **Carmen**

Most of the references to *carmen* are non-religious, where it means a ‘song’. However there are two exceptions, one in a phrase which will be dealt with under the *Delphi* entry, the other in a letter to Patruinus,<sup>50</sup> where though the term is utilised in a poetic way it does indicate cult knowledge:

*Nostrum est pastorales inflare calamos, tuum sacris tibiis carmen incinere*

*It belongs to us to blow into the shepherds’ pipes; to you to sing songs on the sacred flute*

Music was a very important element of pagan ceremonies, being used in processions among other things.<sup>51</sup>

## **Corniger and Cornua**

*Corniger* is of course poetic. It is associated with Bacchus and occurs in the poem in letter 1.8, examined in Section 3.2. The one use of *cornua* in 5.68 is important; and this letter is more fully discussed in Chapter 6 when Symmachus refers to the antlers of the deer being given to the deities of the wood in consecration as a ritual of hunting. This cult reference is intriguing as it must refer back to a very early tradition of Roman religion. Symmachus had been a hunter so it apparently refers to something that he had actually done, or seen done – even though its application in the letter is a literary one.

## **Dapalis**

Letter 1.23.2 refers to the *cenae dapales*, sacred meals or feasts which again were associated with the Salii, see page 45 as well as with other priestly groups and sacrifices. *Dapales* is a word which has early usages in traditional Roman religious function, being used by Cato.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ep.* 7.60.2.

<sup>51</sup> Rupke, 2007: 94.

## Festa

There are twelve entries for *fésta*, some at least of which relate to religious festivals. One of these is the Festival of Vesta that Symmachus returns to Rome for in the letter mentioned above to Flavianus. To Protadius in 4.18.2 Symmachus speaks of *uenatica fésta*, a reference to the feast of Diana which was on the Ides of August. These festivities involved processions with hunting dogs which of course were dedicated to Diana. The allusions here seem to belong to the cult of Diana of Aricia on Lake Nemi. Originally a rite belonging to Latium involving a sacred king of the wildwood, the *rex nemorensis*, it had long before been assimilated into the Roman cult of Diana.<sup>53</sup> Callu states that at this festival, the *Ambarualia*, at Aricia, dogs were crowned.<sup>54</sup> There is a description of these ceremonies in the *Cynegetica* of Grattus, (late first century BCE to first century CE), lines 483-96<sup>55</sup>.

## Hostia, Mactatio, Propitiare

*Hostia* meaning a ‘sacrificial animal’ occurs in the letter to Praetextatus, 1.49, covered in Chapter 5. *Hostia*’s original use became transferred into Christianity where the ‘host’ or sacrificial bread is the symbolic sign of the sacrificial body of Christ. The *mactatio* or a ‘sacrificial slaying’ did not go according to plan as Symmachus states in this letter. The sacrifice was hardly successful on this occasion, so the word *litatio* meaning a successful sacrifice and which Symmachus does not use in the letters would certainly not have been appropriate as the gods were barely propitiated here; the only use of *propitiare* is also in this sentence.

## Omen

This term is also used only once, in *Ep.*9.68 written to an unknown correspondent in 380 when it is used in the sense of ‘auspices’.

*Non negligentiae sed maestitudini meae et bono omine*

*Not because of negligence but for my sadness and under good auspices*

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<sup>52</sup>Cato, *Agr.* 132.1; Haverling, 1988: 83.

<sup>53</sup>Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.

<sup>54</sup>Callu, Tome 2, 2003: 237, 98, n 4.

<sup>55</sup>Grattus, *Cyneg.* ll. 483-96; C Green, 2007: 51.

## Oraculum

The sentence below contains the most important of the four examples of *oraculum*.<sup>56</sup>

*Non uides oracula olim locuta desisse, nec ulla in antro Cumano litteris legi, nec Dodona loqui frondibus nec de spiraculis Delphicis ullum carmen audiri*

*Do you not see that the oracles which once spoke have ceased, neither can anything be read from the books in Cumae's cave, nor does Dodona utter any more from its leaves, nor is any song heard from Delphi's breath*

Three of the great oracles of the Graeco-Roman world were Delphi, Dodona and the Sybil of Cumae.

## Precor

This is used by Symmachus in phrases like *deos precor*, as in *Ep.* 7.68 written in 396, where he says to Alypius:

*et deos precor ut tua secunda proficiant*

*and I pray to the gods that your affairs may progress favourably*

These phrases have been dealt with here because they are structured in sentences and therefore do not really fall into the category of religious invocations dealt with in Section 3.5 where I examine all the invocations involving *deus* and its cognates. This is extremely interesting because here we appear to have the only instance of Symmachus actually praying or stating that he is praying to the gods, although it is possible that it is just a figure of speech. Additionally it would appear that Symmachus is using a phrase here which is not replicated in other writers of this time although used earlier by writers such as Pliny and Livy.

## Religio, Religiosus

There are among the group of terms some surprising words which are not used primarily in a religious way as discussed on page 40. *Religio* and its associated adjective, *religiosus* are two of these though because there are some religious usages I have included them in this section. *Religio*, which was later taken by Christianity to mean the true path as opposed to *superstitio*

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<sup>56</sup> *Ep.* 4.33.2.



which came to be applied to paganism here means ‘devotion’ or ‘scrupulousness’ in the vast majority of the ninety or so occurrences. It must, however, be regarded as one of Symmachus’ *mâitre mots de la langue*;<sup>57</sup> because the traditional qualities of *religio*, scrupulousness, devotion are those very essential and traditional

Roman virtues, to which Symmachus in his practice and interpretation of Roman cult would have subscribed. There are only three mentions of *religio* that could be said to have a religious component in a modern sense and these are largely poetic. One of these is in letter 1.20.1 to Ausonius where Symmachus states:<sup>58</sup>

*etiam Camenarum religio sacro fontis aduertitur*

*But, in fact, the cult of the Camenae with its sacred spring is found nearby*

Callu states that the goddesses of the springs of the Porta Capena were originally associated with the goddess Egeria but later became assimilated to the Muses.<sup>59</sup> These springs were in Symmachus’ own locality and are considered more closely in Chapter 4. Another religious use of *religio* is in letter 2.36.3, written to Flavianus senior before 385, we have a factually religious application of *religio* where it refers to the originators of the official Roman state cult,

*quod Numa auctor, Metellus conservator religionum*

*that Numa the author, Metellus the conservator of cults*

The only religious use of *religiosus* – where another meaning, ‘holy’<sup>60</sup> could be applicable – is in a letter, 1.71, to his brother Celsinus Titianus, a fellow pagan in 380, shortly before his brother’s death. Here Symmachus is knowledgeable about a localised cult in Lavinium in Latium where traditionally there were cults dedicated to Vesta, the Dioscuri, Ceres, the Penates and Aeneas. In using the phrase *religiosa ciuitas* Symmachus here is echoing a longstanding Roman reverence for a city founded by Aeneas;<sup>61</sup> and may be just dwelling on Lavinium’ glorious sacred past which could have had particular relevance for him because of its association with Vesta. It is still possible, however, that like the sacrifice in Spoleto

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<sup>57</sup> Callu, Tome1, 2003: 218, 81, n 6.

<sup>58</sup> Salzman/Roberts (trans).

<sup>59</sup> Callu, Tome, 1, 2003: 219, 84, n 5.

<sup>60</sup> Lewis and Short, 1991:1557.

<sup>61</sup> Salzman/Roberts, 2011: 141, n 4.

mentioned in letter 1.49 which is dealt with in Chapter 5, pages 143 ff, cult practice still continued.

Linked with these, hence its inclusion, is the one mention of *superstitio* which Symmachus uses in a sense where it means ‘tradition’:<sup>62</sup>

*Hunc scribendi morem superstitio uetusta constituit*

*An ancient tradition decides this custom of writing*

*Superstitio* probably originally meant ‘a state of religious exaltation’.<sup>63</sup> Here its usage is almost interchangeable with *religio* in its sense of ‘scrupulousness’ although Cicero used in a disparaging way.<sup>64</sup> With Christianity, however, the meaning of the words becomes much more polarised and from the beginning of the fourth century, as Salzman says, Christian writers ‘draw the line between the false beliefs of pagans and the true, correct beliefs of Christians. Lactantius states the concept succinctly: *religio ueri dei cultus est, superstitio falsi.*’<sup>65</sup>

### **Sacer, Sacrare, Sacrificium**

*Sacer* is listed many times but only a few of these usages are religious as in 2.34.1 when Symmachus writes to Flavianus *quod sacra Deum Matris adpeterent – because the rites of the Mother of the Gods approach*. This entry is also significant because *sacra* is used as a noun. The vast majority of these usages of *sacer*, however, have the meaning of ‘imperial’ or ‘of the court’ as when in a letter to Hadrianus in 401 Symmachus refers to Iulius the *agens in rebus* who has brought him ‘sacred letters’ containing a beautiful gift of leopards<sup>66</sup> whose destination was for Memmius’ praetorian games the same year. The one entry for *sacrare* is in *Ep.5.68*, where it means ‘consecrate’ – *honorum numinum ... sacrare*. Similarly *sacrificium*

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<sup>62</sup> *Ep.* 3.3.

<sup>63</sup> *OLD*, 2005: 1878.

<sup>64</sup> *Cic. Clu.* 194; *OLD*, 2005: 1878.

<sup>65</sup> *Lactant. Div. Inst.* 4.28; Salzman, 1987: 175.

<sup>66</sup> *Ep.* 7.59:

appears only once, as *sacrificiis* although this is in a religious context – in the letter about the unsuccessful sacrifice at Spoleto.<sup>67</sup>

## C Divine Figures and Places

### Deus, Divinus

*Deus* and its cognates are used no less than sixty-five times. Many of these usages belong to this section, but forty eight belong to Section 3.5 where they are discussed more fully. One example of a religious use of *deus* that is not an exclamation is one from a letter to Stilicho in 401,<sup>68</sup> on the occasion of Symmachus' beloved son Memmius' marriage to a niece of Memmius' brother- in- law Nicomachus Flavianus junior:

*Effectum nuptialibus uotis deus praestitit*

*The god has granted execution to these marriage vows*

It is not clear who the god is but this topic will be further discussed in 3.5. One important thing to mention though is that Symmachus does not usually call on any particular god; it is, normally 'the/a god' or 'gods'. This was entirely normal and Cicero used *deus* in a similar way, for example, in *De Legibus* 1.8.26. Although most of the thirty five uses of *diuinus* mean 'imperial' and thus belong to Section 3.3 there are two which belong in this section and three in 3.5. One example of where it is used in a religious, but non-exclamatory way is in a letter dated 396 to Flavianus junior,<sup>69</sup> in which Symmachus states:

*Nunc uotis opus est ut diuina opulatio inuehat commeatus*

*Now, there is a need for vows so that divine aid expedites the convoy*

Again just who is the divinity being appealed to is not clear.

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<sup>67</sup>*Ep.* 1.49.

<sup>68</sup>*Ep.* 4.14.

<sup>69</sup>*Ep.* 6.14.3.

## Delphi, Dodona

The place names *Delphi* and *Dodona* – famous for their oracular properties - occur in a very important sentence in a letter to Protadius in 395.<sup>70</sup> *Oraculum* has been already mentioned in this context on page 51. There is a famous allusion here to the Emperor Julian sending to various oracles from which he does not get the desired response. Claudian refers to it in his panegyric on Honorius' fourth consulship and it is likely that Prudentius, too, knew of this letter.<sup>71</sup> This piece is a very good example of the poetry that Symmachus can demonstrate when he is actually writing prose, even if it is derivative. His prose poetry appears to be much better than his attempts in verse.

## Numen

Three of the five entries for *numen* have sacred connotations, being used in the sense of 'deity'. The most interesting of these entries occurs in a letter to Gregorius in 396 when Symmachus declares:<sup>72</sup>

*Quare ut in honore numinum solet fieri, litationi addo donarium*

*Therefore as is accustomed to happen in honour of the deities, I complete my act of propitiation with an offering*

This is intriguing and is unfortunately not clarified further. It would be very interesting to find out just who these deities were, what the offering consisted of and where this transaction took place in the world of 396 when the temples were officially closed or if it is just figurative, a fancy way of talking about sending a letter. Callu states that there appears to be some link with a quotation from the *Aeneid* here:<sup>73</sup>

*ne qua inter sanctos ignis in honore deorum hostilis facies occurrat et omina turbet.*

*that in the worship of the gods no hostile face may intrude amid the holy fires and mar the omens.*

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<sup>70</sup> *Ep.* 4.33.2.

<sup>71</sup> *Prud. Apotheosis*, ll. 435-443; Callu, 2003, Tome 2: 239, 116, n 2.

<sup>72</sup> *Ep.* 8.26:

<sup>73</sup> *Virg. Aen.* 3.406-7; Callu, Tome 3, 2003: 126, n, 2.

He goes on to state that Macrobius in the *Saturnalia*, 3.5.4, in the fictive persona of Symmachus, glosses Virgil with:<sup>74</sup>

*'Litare' quod significat sacrificio facto placasse numen*

*To propitiate which indicates that he placated a god by making the sacrifice*

This phrase is similar to the one Symmachus uses in the letter, and the conclusion must be therefore that Macrobius knew of this letter – and was trying to make **his** Symmachus say something similar, about the same subject, as the real Symmachus did.

Section 3.4 has dealt with a series of entries which do illuminate and reveal Symmachus' religious background and context to a much greater extent than what has gone before. It has therefore been easier to extract something of the real Symmachus in relation to his activities in connection with rite and ritual, not just the literary appreciation of the traditional pantheon of gods which Section 3.1 revealed. There are glimpses of his practical and functional approach to religion and also to his devotion and scrupulousness in carrying out his cult duties relating to the *Sacra Publica*. In the final part, before an assessment of what this galaxy of religious and ritual expressions can tell us about Symmachus' beliefs in the conclusion, it will be necessary to consider a range of religious invocations which Symmachus uses again and again to see what these might reveal about his religious beliefs.

### **3.5 Religious Invocations**

#### **Deus, Divinitas, Divinus, Fors Fuat, Fortuna, Hercule**

The method used to define a word as a religious invocation was a careful analysis of how Symmachus used religious words and phrases in the letters, with reference also to Lomanto's Concordance on Symmachus. This process identified and selected the words contained in Table 2; and revealed the number of times these terms were utilised in a way that could be called 'a religious exclamation' or a religious invocation'. The way in which Symmachus' uses these religious invocations is explored in the section directly after Table 2.

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<sup>74</sup> Mac.Sat.III.5.4. R. Kaster (trans); Callu, Tome 3, 2003: 126, n 2.

So Table 2 shows the number of times these religious terms are used in a fashion which might be described as a religious invocation. Symmachus uses these particular words to call on divine aid in a variety of circumstances. The intention therefore of this enquiry is to see if these appeals to gods and to fate do have any genuine religious depth or are expressions used to show surprise and emphasis: the difference between them being for example an expression such as ‘Oh God our help in ages past’ and ‘Oh my God’.

**Table 2: The number of times gods and deities are mentioned as religious invocations**

Deus	50
Fortuna	8
Diuinitas	6
Diuius	3
Fors Fuat	2
Mehercule	1

It can be seen from the chart that it lists the six religious terms utilised in order of the number of times used. It is quite obvious that *deus* has the most entries; in fact out of the total number of entries for *deus* and its cognates, sixty five, no less than fifty are appropriate for 3.5. The next two are *Diuinitas* and *Fortuna*, six out of the seven instances of *Diuinitas* are included in this section and eight out of the total of ninety four versions of *Fortuna*. *Diuius* which is next, on the other hand, only has three entries out of a total of thirty five which come under 3.5. The next term, *fors fuat*, is a particularly interesting one and out of the seven instances listed in the concordance, two are appropriate to use in 3.5 because these are the instances where the phrase is used in the sense of a religious invocation. Then comes the term with the least number of entries – *mehercule* – being only one out of the total number of four. Originally, *ops* was included as a separate entry; however two of the relevant usages of these are placed in the *deus* section and one with *diuinitas* because *ops* by itself has no religious significance. This means that there are a total of fifty entries for *deus* and eight for *diuinitas*. Each one of these terms will be discussed in turn but leaving *deus* because of its sheer supremacy of numbers to the last. In terms of similarity, it appears that *diuinitas* belongs

with *deus* in the way that it is used, so these terms will be analysed together although I also discuss *diuinus* with them.

*Fors fuat* is undoubtedly the most unusual one of this group and, to me at least, surprising. In early Latin and as used by Plautus it meant ‘perhaps’ but Haverling makes the point that this usage had changed over the centuries between Plautus and Symmachus and analyses the various usages in the letters. She also emphasises that Symmachus uses *fors fuat* and *fors fuat an*, interchangeably<sup>75</sup>. Lewis and Short define the phrase among other ways as meaning ‘so be it!’ – *fors* means ‘chance’. Letter 1.20.3 is one of the examples of where the phrase is not used as a religious exclamation.<sup>76</sup>

*Fors fuat an optineamus apud te ueterem gratiam;*

*It may be that I will regain my former favour with you.*

In two cases, however, Haverling’s interpretation places the way this expression is used as a religious exclamation and so into the group of religious phrases under consideration. In letter 2.3 Symmachus is writing to Flavianus senior about the journey he is undertaking to Campania and which has run into problems:

*fors fuat, an possit biduo tenus eiusdem nos praedii annona retinere*

*may the gods see to it that there will be enough to eat from the farm for at least two days*

The other instance occurs in 1.3.5 in a letter to his father when Symmachus states:<sup>77</sup>

*Fors fuat huiusce promissi*

*May Fortune allow me to acquit this promise*

I have followed Haverling’s translations here, in which she agrees with Callu, although in other uses of *fors fuat* she differs from Callu. It is interesting to compare these usages with the meaning of the English ‘perhaps’ which in the Oxford Dictionary Online is defined as meaning ‘through chance’. It is a term dating from the mid fifteenth century, the ‘hap’ part being originally an Old Norse word which also occurs in ‘happen’. This correlates completely

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<sup>75</sup>Haverling, 1988: 119.

<sup>76</sup>Salzman/Roberts (trans).

<sup>77</sup>Haverling, 1988: 119.

with the meaning of *fors fuat* in these two instances where ‘chance’ can almost be equated to the ‘gods’ or the ‘supernatural’

*Fortuna* is used eight times in expressions that might be called an ‘invocation’, rather than being used as a personification which is discussed earlier in this chapter on page 33. Two examples are cited here.

- One occurs in letter 7.74, which is another missive to the ‘brothers’ mentioned above, dated 396. Symmachus has been ill and absent from Rome but hopes to return around the Ides of October. Thus:

*si dicto fortuna adsit*

*if Fortune grants what I have said.*

- In 396 he is on his way to Capua and writes to assorted friends in letter 8.61 complaining about the length of the journey and the duties he has en route. Thus:

*si optatis fortuna consenserit*

*if Fortune assents to my wishes*

These examples of *fortuna* all are varied and use the term in a way which also has elements of personification. They also have quite a lot in common with the *fors fuat* phrases and again display the very varied topics in which Symmachus uses these ‘religious’ invocations.

*Mehercule* is used only once in an exclamatory sense and that is in the phrase *diis me hercule ut praefatus sum* in letter 2.6 which more correctly places it in the *deus* group. It has been dealt with separately because it was in fact such a normal mild Roman swear word; and this is the only occasion of its use in the letters. So it could mean *by the gods and Hercules as I have already said*. If Symmachus had had a particular devotion to Hercules, he would presumably have used this expression in the letters a lot more; but he does not do so, and there is no evidence of him being more attached to Hercules than to any other specific divinity.



*Diuius*, *diuinitas* and *deus* all belong to the same family. I will however consider *diuius* first. *Diuius* is used three times out of a total of thirty five as a religious invocation. In letter 2.49 to Flavianus senior, Symmachus' health has been an issue but with *diuina ope* or *divine help*, it begins to improve. Health again is Symmachus' reason for entreating divine help as can be seen in letter 7.80, dated to 397, when he writes to his *fratribus* who are not his real brothers – *quae iam diuina ope...* or *that now by divine help*. This is an example of the fake intimacy of *amicitia* that Symmachus liked to practise which can be seen in Chapter 6. The third instance is in a letter, 9.73 to an unknown recipient before 402 when he states that:

*Praestabit diuius fauor ut sicuti de absentia tua optata cognouimus, ita tuo reditu gaudeamus*

*Divine favour will allow us to rejoice at your return just as we learnt of your absence*

The context here seems to be Symmachus' rejoicing at his correspondent's return. Symmachus is evidently not afraid to evoke the divine in a variety of situations.

This then brings us naturally to the usages of *diuinitas*, which I consider together with *deus* because of their likeness to each other. Their similarity of use lies in the fact that Symmachus uses both terms in an abstract sense. We are not told who the god, gods or divinity or divinities might be. However late antique paganism was, through the dual influence of Neoplatonism and sun worship - the product of the conflation of Sol Invictus with Apollo and Mithras - becoming more and more monotheistic anyway and these trends must have influenced Symmachus. This will be further explored in Chapter 7, pages 227 ff; but there might be evidence within the letters where *deus/dii/diuinitas* are used in this particularly emphatic way of Symmachus being gradually influenced, as he got older, more to a type of monotheism, rather than still believing in many gods.

One way of showing this – which is something that no other scholar to my knowledge has attempted – would be if there was chronological evidence for Symmachus in his later years only using *deus* rather than *dii* in his use of 'religious' invocations or *diuinitas* rather than *diuinitates*. As there are only seven usages of *diuinitas* in total, I will examine the usages of *deus* to see if I can establish this fact. The total number of times that *deus* and *dii* are used in an exclamatory context in the letters is as follows:

Deus 25

Dii 20

It can be seen quite clearly from this that the usages of *dii*, that is gods in the plural, is only slightly less than that of *deus*, god, in the singular when used in an exclamatory way. So from this evidence, one could conclude that Symmachus' paganism was still rooted in many gods. What though does the chronological evidence display? Does this show Symmachus becoming more monotheistic as the years advanced, if we assume that these invocations have a genuine religious basis and are not just conversational? This could be demonstrated by calculating, from the relevant letters, how many times after 386 until his death in 402 Symmachus uses *deus* rather than *dii* in an exclamatory way.

Table 3, shows this; the first part has the *deus* exclamations and the three columns give number of letter, recipient and finally date of letter in chronological order from 386 until 402. The second part of the chart gives the *dii* exclamations arranged in the same three columns. The religious affiliation of the correspondents was not a consideration here though in some cases it is indicated by Callu or is mentioned in *PLRE I*. One who was Christian is Florentinus. What was being investigated was how often Symmachus used *deus* rather than *dii* (and the cognates of each term) in the letters between 386 and 402. The emphasis was therefore on the actions of Symmachus in this regard, rather than that of the recipient(s) of the letters involved. Some of the correspondents listed in Table 3 are the authors of the letters which use the phrases detailed in Table 4 - although the phrases quoted from *Ep.* 1.9, 1.57, 2.3 and 2.6 listed in Table 4 are not letters quoted from in Table 3.

**Table 3: Comparison between usages of *deus* and *dii* between 386 and 402.**

<b>Letter <i>deus</i></b>	<b>Correspondent</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Ep.</i> 4.69	Eusignius	386-7
<i>Ep.</i> 8.58	Marcianus	396
<i>Ep.</i> 8.47	Valerius	396
<i>Ep.</i> 6.19	Nichomachus Flavianus jr	397
<i>Ep.</i> 6.65	Nichomachus Flavianus jr	397
<i>Ep.</i> 9.151	Honorius	398-401
<i>Ep.</i> 9.22	Aurelianus	399
<i>Ep.</i> 9.137	Unknown	399-400
<i>Ep.</i> 6.68	Nichomachus Flavianus jr	Before 402
<i>Ep.</i> 9.106	Unknown	400-1
<i>Ep.</i> 7.14	Memmius Symmachus	402
<i>Ep.</i> 5.95	Helpidius	402
<b>Letter <i>dii</i></b>	<b>Correspondent</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Ep.</i> 2.52	Nichomachus Flavianus snr	388
<i>Ep.</i> 2.50	Nichomachus Flavianus snr	Before 390
<i>Ep.</i> 2.59	Nichomachus Flavianus snr	393
<i>Ep.</i> 2.11	Nichomachus Flavianus snr	Not later than 393
<i>Ep.</i> 9.125	Unknown	396
<i>Ep.</i> 8.27	Censorinus	396
<i>Ep.</i> 8.2	Almachius	End 396
<i>Ep.</i> 9.128	Unknown	396-7
<i>Ep.</i> 9.83	Unknown	397
<i>Ep.</i> 4.54	Florentinus	397
<i>Ep.</i> 5.17	Magnillus	Before 402
<i>Ep.</i> 9.39	Unknown	Before 402

Table 4 demonstrates some of the exclamatory expressions used in the two groups. They are arranged like Table 3 with the expressions used with *deus* first, followed by the *dii* expressions. They are also arranged in three columns with the letter number given first, then the Latin and finally the English. There is a great variety of idiom used, both with *deus* and *dii* and its cognates.

**Table 4: Some of the types of religious invocations**

<b>Letter <i>deus</i></b>	<b>Latin</b>	<b>English</b>
<i>Ep.6.19</i>	<i>praefata dei uenia</i>	<i>by the aforesaid grace of (the) god</i>
<i>Ep.8.58</i>	<i>cum bona dei uenia</i>	<i>with the good grace of (the)god</i>
<i>Ep.8.47</i>	<i>deo auctore</i>	<i>by the authority of (the) god</i>
<i>Ep.9.137</i>	<i>deo auspice</i>	<i>under (the)god's auspices</i>
<i>Ep.6.65</i>	<i>deo iuuante</i>	<i>god willing</i>
<b>Letter <i>dii</i></b>	<b>Latin</b>	<b>English</b>
<i>Ep. 1.9</i>	<i>dii modo auctores sint</i>	<i>may the gods only be the authors</i>
<i>Ep.1.57</i>	<i>dii modo optata fortunent</i>	<i>may the gods only make our hopes prosper</i>
<i>Ep.2.11</i>	<i>dii uertant bene</i>	<i>may the gods turn around things for good</i>
<i>Ep.5.17</i>	<i>si dii uotum iuuerint</i>	<i>if the gods helped my vow</i>
<i>Ep.2.3</i>	<i>diis auspibus</i>	<i>under the auspices of the gods</i>
<i>Ep.2.6</i>	<i>sed diis opus es</i>	<i>but the help of the gods is necessary</i>

The chronological evidence for when *deus* rather than *dii* is being used in these expressions is informative in a negative way not suggesting any great change over time; and it certainly does not show Symmachus abandoning polytheism for monotheism for Symmachus is still using *dii* and its cognates until at least 397, as Table 3 demonstrates. There are twelve instances of *dii* to twelve of *deus* in the same period, so Symmachus is using *dii* in religious invocations equally as much as *deus* in the later stages of his life. If one subtracts these figures from the total number of uses of religious exclamations in the letters from 365 to 402 given on page 57, this shows that there are eight usages of *dii* in this sense in the letters before 386 and thirteen usages of *deus*.

It would appear from these statistics (derived from the surviving letters) that Symmachus used *deus* slightly more frequently than *dii*. It is also relevant however that there are many different kinds of expression used in the use of singular and plural. The use of *deus* or *dii* could as much depend upon the sense of the sentence rather than on the possible evolution or change in Symmachus' religious tendency, as the examples quoted from Cicero on page 65 show. Also the use of *dii* to a variety of correspondents, who included some Christians such as Florentinus, could indicate that Symmachus was unconcerned about using this pagan phrase in correspondence with non-Christians.

These expressions, both singular and plural give a real flavour of the variety of Symmachus' 'religious' exclamations and expressions and their frequency does lead me to conclude that they demonstrate a genuine level of belief in a polytheistic pantheon, which he calls upon when he needs help in various ways. This opinion is supported by Haverling.<sup>78</sup> For example Symmachus uses these expressions when divine intervention is a real possibility and need which I believe, demonstrates an underlying assumption that these supplications to the gods will get him results as the following quotations using *ops* demonstrate. In 2.47 Symmachus is giving thanks for a successful journey:

*Ope deum secunda nauigatione et facili itinere ad destinata peruenimus*

*By the grace of the gods, after a favourable navigation and easy journey we arrived at our destination.*

Another example is shown in 8.13, written to Apollodorus in 400, where Symmachus again invokes a deity when he returns to one of his favourite themes – his health:

*Mea cum filio sanitas ope diuinitatis, in solido est*

*My health and that of my son is sound by the grace of the god*

These expressions may only be superstition as O'Donnell concludes,<sup>79</sup> but they may show that they are more: I think they give us evidence of Symmachus' belief in the help of the divine, though this understanding has to be inferred to some extent. However the investigations add context to the making of this claim. The chronological and statistical evidence does not indicate Symmachus becoming more monotheistic in the later stages of his life; because he certainly continued to use variants of *dii* (not the more common *di*) to the end of his life, even if he was also using *deus* in similar numbers. The god upon whom Symmachus calls is unnamed and is probably an overall divine power of which the individual gods were just manifestations. The subject of late fourth century pagan monotheism will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

Before finishing 3.5, it is necessary to consider briefly the usages of *deus* and *dii* by earlier and contemporaneous writers to see if there are any differences between Symmachus and others in their usage of these terms. In an examination of the third book of Cicero's *Ad*

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<sup>78</sup>Haverling by email, 20.9.10.

<sup>79</sup>O'Donnell, 1979:13 (my reckoning of page number from online version of article cited where the pages are unnumbered).

*Familiares* letters written at the end of his life – 46-43 BCE – there is evidence that Cicero does use these religious exclamations in a similar way to Symmachus, though possibly slightly less frequently. In this volume there are two instances of *Fortuna*,<sup>80</sup> an instance of *mehercule*<sup>81</sup> and two uses of *di*.<sup>82</sup> The first of these is an expression using *diis* that Symmachus does not use:

*Diis approbantibus or with the favour of the gods.*

In the second example of this type Cicero writes:

*Di isti Segulio male faciant or may the gods bring evil to that Segulius*

It can be seen from these examples of Cicero that there is not actually very much difference in the way that he uses religious invocations and that of Symmachus four hundred years later, although he seems to have done it much less. In the sample of Cicero examined expressions using *deus* did not occur, but he does use this expression elsewhere, for example in *De Legibus* 1.8.26 as I have already mentioned on page 54.

Another example of a pagan writer contemporaneous with Symmachus using religious exclamations is this example from Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>83</sup> Ammianus states:

*ni favore propitii numinis praesens Messala, provinciae rector eam iudicali carpento impositam*

*but by the favour of the propitious godhead, Messala, the governor of the province was at hand and placed her in the state carriage*

This is another very interesting example of the use of religious exclamations, although a different one from those used by Symmachus, particularly in view of the date, its similarity to Symmachus' usage and the fact that Ammianus was a pagan.

However is there a significant difference in the way the great Christian writers of Symmachus' own time used these expressions; in other words does the influence of Christianity change the traditional way in which *deus* is used? Haverling<sup>84</sup> states that the

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<sup>80</sup> Cic. *Ad. Fam. Ep.* 362; 372.

<sup>81</sup> Cic. *Ad. Fam. Ep.* 362.

<sup>82</sup> Cic. *Ad. Fam. Ep.* 423; 411.

<sup>83</sup> Amm. Mar. 29.6.7.

<sup>84</sup> Gerd Haverling by Email, 20/9/10.

Church fathers continued to use many of the same conventional exclamations as Symmachus, though obviously here applied to the Christian god rather than a pagan deity, such as *deo uolente* and *deo iuuante*, which latter phrase can be found, for example, several times in various letters of Augustine as in:<sup>85</sup>

*et per nostrum ministerium..... deo... iuvante or and through our ministry... by God's ... help*

This is evidence then that the same kind of religious exclamations were being used by Symmachus' Christian contemporaries in much the same way as Symmachus did – although applied to the new, not an old, god. This is one area where religious exclamations and expressions from one faith were transferred to the new one without any particular controversy; and perhaps were more likely to be considered a true expression of faith when uttered by Christian authors.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In this survey of Symmachus' 'religious words', a whole variety of terms within the four categories have been presented and analysed. Inevitably this approach can, in some ways, almost verge upon the lexicographical so in this final section I will summarise the evidence for how Symmachus uses religious terms and then try to come to some conclusions about what this can show us about his beliefs. If one examines Symmachus' writings from the position of micro-information rather than macro-information, there are quite a lot of interesting facts to be discovered – and this applies whether dealing with religion or some other topic. This is the approach that I adopted in this study. O'Donnell argues that Symmachus was preoccupied with his family and a lifestyle of *amicitia* and *otium*. However it appears that his views on religion were an integral part of this.<sup>86</sup> Symmachus' obsession with *amicitia* in all its aspects will be dealt with in Chapter 6. In religious terms, however, one thing that can definitely be concluded about him is his interest in a variety of traditional cults, the evidence for which is clearly shown in his letters. This chapter has argued that there are features in Symmachus' use of religious language which reveal a lot about his religious focus and give insights into his beliefs.

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<sup>85</sup> Aug. *Ep.* 34.

<sup>86</sup> O'Donnell, 1979:13 (my reckoning of page number from online version of article cited where the pages are unnumbered).

Rüpke defines three types of *theologia* applying to polytheistic religion that the classical world had been familiar with from the time of Plato.<sup>87</sup> This is the first time that Symmachus' religious beliefs and practices have been analysed using the *tria genera theologiae* exemplar as a comparison. This model seems to have been developed round about the end of the second century BCE and come into the Roman world via Varro who first articulated the concept of the *tria genera theologiae* for a Roman audience. Varro's definition of the three types of theology has survived only by being quoted by a Christian author in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* 6.5

*Tria genera theologiae ... esse, id est rationis, quae de diis explicatur, eorumque unum mythicon appellari, alterum physicon, tertium civile ... Mythicon appellant, quo maxime utuntur poetae; physicon, quo philosophi; civile, quo populi*

*There are three types of theology that is of reasoning about the gods. One of them is called mythical, the second physical, the third civic. They call mythical the kind that is especially used by the poets; physical that is used by philosophers; civic that is used by the peoples.*

Having given Varro's overall statement regarding the three different types of theology, Augustine then goes on to give Varro's detailed definition of each one:<sup>88</sup>

*The first type [myth] includes a great deal of fiction which is in conflict with the dignity and nature of the immortals. It is in this category that we find one god born from the head, another from the thigh, a third from drops of blood; we find stories about thefts and adulteries committed by gods, and gods enslaved to human beings. In fact we find attributed to gods not only the accidents that happen to humanity in general, but even those which can befall the most contemptible of mankind.*

*The second type [physical] which I have pointed out, is one on which the philosophers have left a number of works in which they discuss who the gods are, where they are, of what kind and of what character they are; whether they came into being at a certain time, or have always existed; whether they derive their being from fire (the belief of Heraclitus) or from numbers (as Pythagoras thought) or from atoms (as Epicurus alleges). And there are other like questions all of which men's ears can more readily tolerate within the walls of a lecture room than in the market place outside.*

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<sup>87</sup>Rüpke, 2009:119.

<sup>88</sup>Aug. *De. Civ. Dei.* 6.5



*The third variety [civil] is that which the citizens in the towns and especially the priests ought to know and put into practice. It contains information about the gods which should be worshipped officially and the rites and sacrifices which should be offered to each of them.*<sup>89</sup>

This differentiation of theology is not a unified doctrine but one with three different strands and facets.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore these are not really doctrines at all centred on a religious context,<sup>91</sup> but aspects of religious belief and practice, standing within a much looser framework. The three different theologies identified are mythic, philosophical and what Rüpke calls *theologia civilis*: ‘this category includes everything that a political community claims to be necessary for the gods to receive proper worship, expressed at Rome by the notion of maintaining the *pax deorum*.’<sup>92</sup> This last category is obviously the *sacra publica* which included all relating to public cult and practice, for example the colleges of priests and their particular functions. So where, using these definitions as a model, is Symmachus placed in terms of his religious practice and belief system?

If one examines the first category which is ‘myth’ one can relate nearly all the terms used in Section 3.2 to this. This collection of references to the various gods, goddesses and deities which made up the main pantheon can properly be called ‘mythic’. To a late fourth-century educated person like Symmachus it is probably unlikely that there was any genuine belief in these beings or the legends surrounding them. Certainly his main treatment of them is poetic or literary. Though there are within the letters some examples of Symmachus’ rather derivative poetry to his father which demonstrates mythic content, these could certainly not be seen as types of the kind of hymns which might have been used at a specific festival, for example Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare*, though this is a rather specific kind of example. Perhaps a better example can be found in the wedding poems of Catullus, for example, 61,

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<sup>89</sup> Aug. *De Civ. Dei*. 6.5

<sup>90</sup>Rüpke, 2009:119.

<sup>91</sup>Rüpke, 2009:119.

<sup>92</sup>Rüpke, 2009: 130.

*Epithalamion: for Vinia and Manlius, 62, Wedding Song and 64, Of the Argonauts and an Epithalamium for Peleus and Thetis.*<sup>93</sup>

How then about philosophy? Based on the content of his writings, philosophy rarely stands in the foreground of his theorising, and it does not therefore figure as an important element in his religious formation or background. Philosophy traditionally had played very little part in historical Roman cult which was firmly rooted in an agricultural pattern and yearly cycle. The rituals described in Cato's *De Agri Cultura* are evidence of this. Roman exposure to philosophical debates came first with contact with the Greek cities of *Magna Graecia* in the south of Italy and then later with the Roman takeover of the whole Greek world. In this environment Greek philosophical ideals and theories became much more attractive and necessary to religious cult or 'what philosophy offered was a means of generalising or universalising rules and values, including Roman ones, a task quite beyond the various traditional narratives which only made sense in the context of the history of the city'.<sup>94</sup> This can be seen in the writings of Cicero with *De Natura Deorum* and other similar works. Cicero however had philosophical tendencies but Symmachus did not.

That does not mean to say that he was not capable of religious or philosophical theorising, just that this does not seem to have been important to him. His letters do not show concern with the nature of the gods, probably because he was much too interested in life here on earth. His letters on the whole, though showing a perfectly normal range of emotions, do not dwell on or concern themselves with philosophical speculation. There does not either seem to be in Symmachus any preoccupation or concern about salvation after death which would be a link with Christian belief, but was also characteristic of the mystery religions.<sup>95</sup> He is very concerned about his health but in a way that is normal in one whose health is not perfectly sound. It is however interesting that if the attribution of the so called *Apotheosis of Symmachus* is correct, see Figure 57, page 284, it would appear that the **heirs** of Symmachus did have a belief in the afterlife for in this elegant diptych Symmachus is shown being carried up to heaven – although it could be allegorical. So did Symmachus himself have such a belief? Unfortunately his writings do not tell us.

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<sup>93</sup> Cat. *Poems*.

<sup>94</sup>Rüpke, 2009: 125.

<sup>95</sup> For example, Bowden, 2010: 47.

It is with the third category included in the *tria genera theologiae* or *theologia civilis* that the most important key to Symmachus' religion is found and here I would agree with the other scholars who have explored this aspect of Symmachus. Part of the public life of an aristocrat was his participation in the rites of the cults of the *sacra publica*. It was with these rites and by this participation that the safety of Rome and her success were preserved; and the serving in priestly colleges as Symmachus did in the college of priests associated with Vesta, was just one aspect of this as can be seen for example in *Ep.* 1.46 and 1.68.<sup>96</sup> This was the traditional and antiquarian world of the Roman *sacra publica* that Symmachus was most comfortable with and interested in. The protection and survival of Rome was of supreme importance to Symmachus as is shown in the letters again and again. It is also the most important aspect of the thrust of *Relatio* 3 which will be dealt with in Chapter 7. There is, however, only one case is a particular god invoked and that is in 1.49 when he writes to Praetextatus about the prodigy at Spoleto which the local authorities tried to appease by public sacrifice and where Jupiter was hardly mollified, even by the eighth sacrifice; this episode is dealt with in detail in Chapter 5. This demonstrates Symmachus' practical approach to everyday ritual but also I suspect an identification of Jupiter as being Symmachus' model for the Supreme Being or god.

Symmachus took his priestly duties seriously and there is evidence within the letters of his knowledge of traditional cult and what was due to it. He knows about the duties of the augurs (*Ep.* 3.44), the Salian priests (*Ep.* 3.44), how to worship the gods of the greenwood (*Ep.* 5.68) and the localised cults like Diana of Aricia (*Ep.* 4.18). He is comfortable in this cultural world, the traditional religious world of Rome that he wishes to preserve and keep and he will do all he can to maintain the expected and required standards. To these ends he will use the means available to him to try and preserve the old ways; as a great aristocrat, comfortable as the friend of the great and even of emperors, he is therefore hopefully able to exert influence, a great orator and an erudite and literary writer. He would probably not have been in sympathy with Julian's religious extremism but this will be touched on later in Chapter 5, page 150. The religious terms included in Section 3.4 however do not in themselves tell us a lot about Symmachus' beliefs – at times they are very similar to those that a Christian might use describing the same events except that Symmachus was a participant not an onlooker. I

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<sup>96</sup> 1.46 – a letter about the ordinary business of the College of *pontifices*; 1.68 – Symmachus recommends the treasurer of the college to his brother in his capacity of proconsul of Africa where the treasurer was going on official college business.

think that this reflects the fact both that religion is not a main thrust of the contents of the letters; it is something which intervenes from time to time in a variety of different ways depending on whom he is corresponding with. But I also feel that it shows again that Symmachus is not preoccupied by theology or philosophy – though there were obviously times when religion was extremely important to him.

Section 3.4 deals with the practical aspects of cult and religion which is the main key to Symmachus' approach to the outer facets of his religion. It is, however, 3.5 with its exploration of Symmachus' religious invocations where some indications of his inner religious mindset is found. This section does not show Symmachus as a philosopher with intellectual musings on the nature of godhead, but it does try to demonstrate that his need to call upon undefined gods or god to help him and his contacts in a variety of situations is more than purely an automatic, irreligious or superstitious act. The very frequency of these expressions seems to me to belie that. It is a practical showing of Symmachus' links with otherworldly beings whoever these may be. It may too show that Symmachus was not uninfluenced by the movements in late polytheism towards some kind of monotheism whether this was sun worship or the supreme being of the Neo-Platonists. The statistical evidence for this, however, is inconclusive and like so much of Symmachus it is undefined and insubstantial. The trails of words that he is so adept in using demonstrate his scholarship; but this also shows that faith, his own or others, was not of supreme interest to him, except occasionally. That he did have some innate religion however appears undeniable and subsequent chapters will explore this, first by examining Symmachus' religious landscape and then by dissecting a series of letters which have the most to say about his religious ritual and the religious practices of everyday life. In the process of doing this, I will explore further the cult of Vesta which is the one he was most associated.

## Chapter 4

### Symmachus' Religious Landscape

In Chapter 3 I explored Symmachus' religious language. In this chapter I extend my exploration of 'The Religious World of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus' by looking at the religious topography of Symmachus' own neighbourhood on the Caelian Hill and the Forum Romanum, and will try to determine how the religious nature of the Caelian Hill was changing in Symmachus' time. A related aim of this chapter is to situate Symmachus physically in his religious world in the sense of his own locality, which in part can be done by a judicious use of ancient and modern maps and photographs. In this chapter I also argue that Symmachus lived in an environment which was changing rapidly and which he could not and did not try to ignore; and that situating him within his domestic physical location shows both how the religious topography was changing in Rome and how this impacted on a committed pagan.

I start the process of examining local religious change by considering Symmachus' own house and the expression of religion that could be found there. I will then investigate his religious neighbourhood to see which local temples were still operating, how the progressive banning of ritual affected this and when these temples were closed. I also discuss what the impact of Christianity was – especially how the local topography was changing with the building of churches – and then trace the journey that Symmachus would have made from his house to the Forum Romanum and the Temple of Vesta and what buildings with religious significance he would have encountered on his way. This procedure provides one way of investigating Symmachus' response to the de-paganisation of the Caelian Hill. I will end the chapter by a consideration and comparison of the historical religious topography of Symmachus' neighbourhood in his time with that of an idealised religious environment potentially created in his works. In other words, is there evidence of a hearkening back to a glorified pagan yesteryear of the time of Cicero or the early Empire on the part of Symmachus? Whether that is the case or not, his religious letters contain much information about traditional Roman pagan cult and its rituals which demonstrate Symmachus' overarching interest in ancient religious rites.

#### 4.1 The Caelian Hill and the Domus Symmachorum

The Caelian Hill is the south-easternmost of the seven hills of Rome, a long narrow ‘A’ shape, running from its juncture with the plateau of the Esquiline at Porta Maggiore in a gentle curve south and west and ending in lobes at the church of SS Quattro Coronati, built in the early fourth century, the Temple of Divus Claudius, started early in the reign of Nero, and behind S Gregorio Magno, which dates from the late sixth century. It is about two kilometres long and no more than half a kilometre wide at its greatest extent. At its western end, where it is low, there was the Vallis Camenarum and one passed through the Porta Capena there onto the Via Appia.<sup>1</sup> In the Augustan re-making of the districts of Rome, the Caelian was divided among three of the new *Regiones*, the western and southern slopes became *Regio I*, the main body of the hill *Regio II*, called *Caelimontium*, where Symmachus’ main town *domus* was;

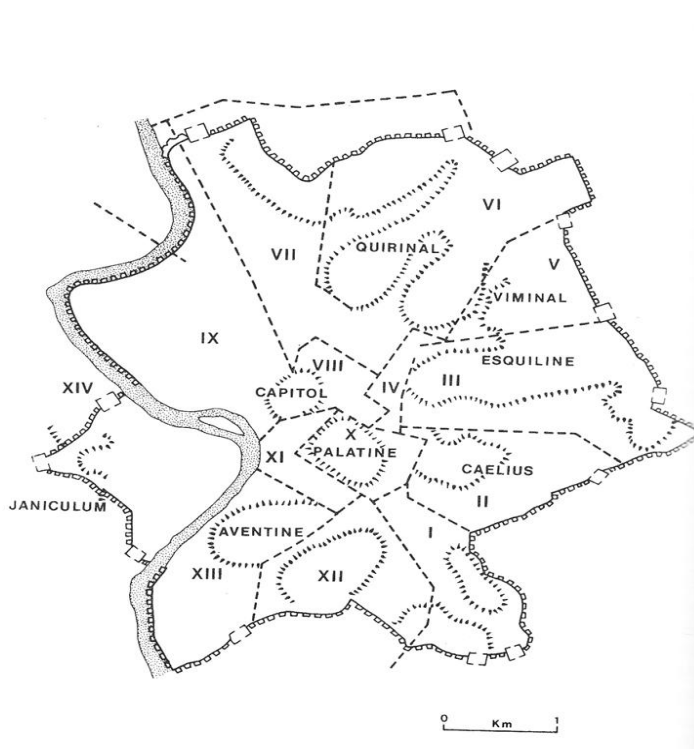


Fig 6: The Regionary Areas of Rome

*Regio III* contained most of the old Suburra.<sup>2</sup> Figure 6 shows the hills of Central Rome including the Caelian and also the *Regiones*. The Caelian was always densely populated in Republican times but there was no major temple there. However this whole area was

<sup>1</sup> Richardson, 1992: 61, 63.

<sup>2</sup> Richardson, 1992: 63.

important to the Julio-Claudians as a new area of public building, imperial representation and propaganda, making a contrast to the Esquiline and the urbanistic plans for Nero's *Domus Aurea* – one reason that the temple of Divus Claudius was placed here. The *Aqua Claudia* also crossed the area, just to the south of the Temple of the Divine Claudius as can also be seen in Figure 27. Another feature of the area was the presence of numerous barracks such as the *Castra Peregrina* whose remains were discovered in 1905 south of San Stefano Rotondo. This camp housed detachments of soldiers from provincial armies employed in Rome for specific functions such as police duty, courier service or provisioning of the court.<sup>3</sup>

While the slope of the hill which faced the Esquiline and Colosseum was occupied by *insulae* several stories high, the summit was occupied by luxurious aristocratic residences during the imperial Period. One of these houses belonged to Domitia Lucilla Minor the mother of Marcus Aurelius who was born here. Commodus in turn lived at various times on the Caelian and was assassinated there. This pattern of the top of the Caelian hill being covered in *domus* continued during the fourth century and, at least for a while, after Symmachus' time.<sup>4</sup> In the fourth-century *Regionary Catalogues*, there are a total of 127 *domus* listed in *Regio II*<sup>5</sup> of which Symmachus' would have been one of the greatest, and 3600 *insulae* where the mass of the population lived.<sup>6</sup> These *insulae* were badly built and frequently fell down causing much distress, as Symmachus attests.<sup>7</sup> These habitation statistics can be compared, for example, with those for *Regio XIII*, the Aventine where Praetextatus lived, which at the same time lists 2847 *insulae* and 130 *domus*, not at all dissimilar.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 216.

<sup>4</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 216.

<sup>5</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 2008: 295.

<sup>6</sup> [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Italy/Lazio/Roma/Rome/\\_Texts/Regionaries/text\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Italy/Lazio/Roma/Rome/_Texts/Regionaries/text*.html) – 28/06/11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ep.* 6.37.

<sup>8</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, 2008: 295.

Pavolini, who excavated the area, states that the sack of Rome in 410 had a great effect on the Caelian.<sup>9</sup> Some mansions like that of the Valerii were largely destroyed; others looted and devastated. In an area which had a large presence of these *domus* and their consumption of luxury goods, this must have affected the local economy. This in turn led in time to the abandonment of middle and lower class houses and then a substantial depopulation of the area which was confirmed by the archaeological excavations of the Caelian from 1984-1989 which took place in three sections: in the area of two eighteenth-century buildings demolished in Piazza Celimontana, the Ospedale Militare and to a more limited extent on the site of San Stefano Rotondo.<sup>10</sup> The homogeneity of the information revealed by this research was remarkable. During the fifth century it appears that many of the existing classical structures were destroyed or ceased to be used their its original purpose; these buildings may have still functioned but in a lesser fashion as in the case of the buildings found within the modern Ospedale Militare.

Carignani states, says Pavolini, that the sewerage system of Symmachus' house progressively ceased to function around the middle of the fifth century. After this, earth built up gradually in the rooms, a process which continued until the complete interior was filled.<sup>11</sup> The sixth century largely marked the decline of urbanisation anywhere in Rome, a process which many regard as due to the devastating effect of the Gothic Wars which affected the conditions of the whole of the city.<sup>12</sup> The area of the Caelian was probably not very extensively inhabited again for a thousand years, till in the seventeenth century the nobility of Rome once again began to build villas there. The next map, Figure 7 shows part of the modern street plan with the Roman streets superimposed upon it.

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<sup>9</sup> Pavolini, 1993: 1. (my page numbering as article online with unnumbered pages).

<sup>10</sup> Pavolini, 1993: 1.

<sup>11</sup> Carignani cited by Pavolini, 2013: 174.

<sup>12</sup> Pavolini, 1993: 2. (my page numbering as article online with unnumbered pages)



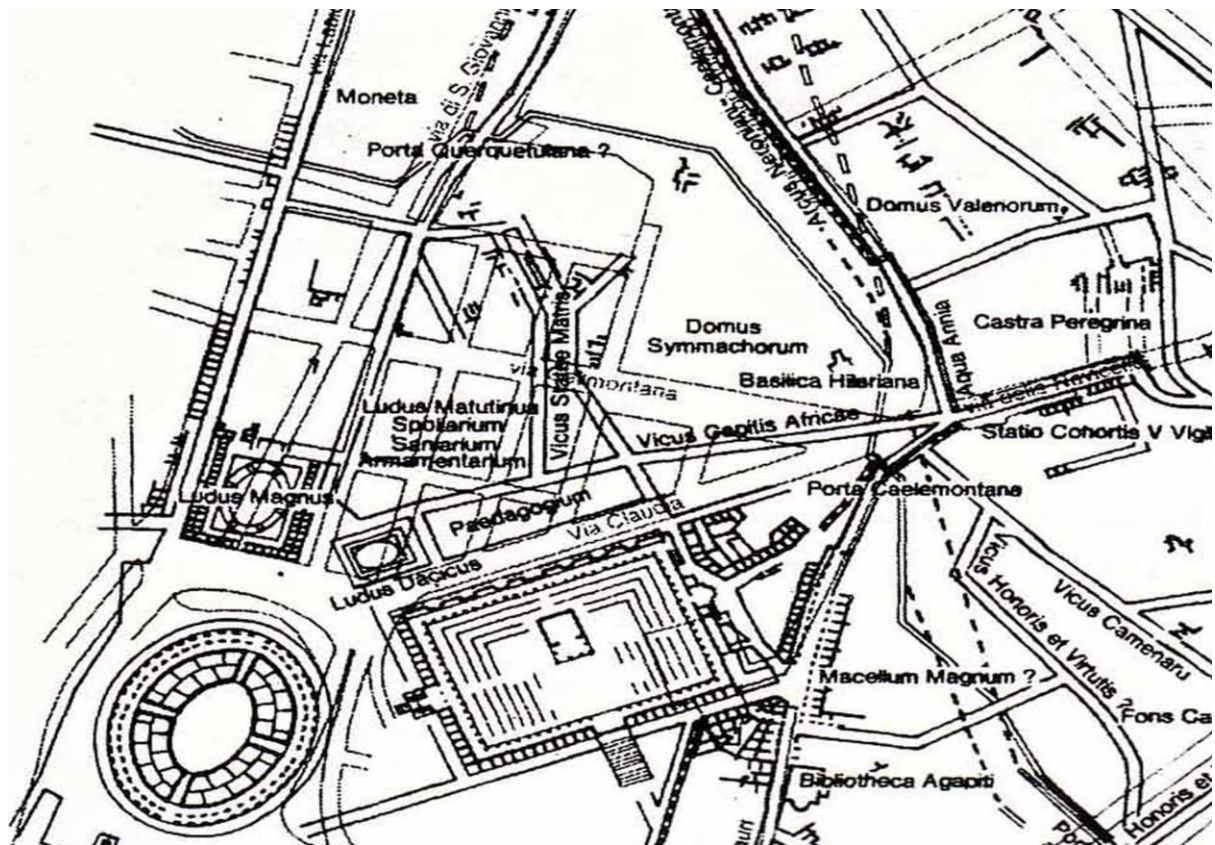


Fig 7: A detail of the modern Caelian Hill with the Roman street pattern superimposed

If one looks at this plan the Colosseum is clearly seen down in the bottom left corner with the great temple of Divus Claudius immediately to the right. Moneta, shown at the top left, is approximately north. The modern Via Labicana runs up vertically at the extreme left of the plan. Above the Colosseum, running from left to right is the *Vicus Capitis Africae* roughly half-way between the modern Via Celimontana and the Via Claudia, both also shown on the plan, where they meet in the Piazza Celimontana. This is a different street altogether from the modern Capo D’Africa which is above Via Annia. The *Domus Symmachorum*, the site of the main town house of Symmachus can be seen clearly above the Via Celimontana, in the middle of the map on the slope of the Caelian where it inclines down to the Via Annia. Next to it is the *Basilica Hilariana*, a temple to Cybele. Across the road from the *Basilica Hilariana* is the *Porta Caelimontana* entered via the Arch of Dolabella which leads into the modern Clivo Scauro, the Roman *Clivus Scauri* winding below the Colosseum. Along this road can be found SS Giovanni e Paolo, the few remains of the Temple of Divus Claudius, and eventually S Gregorio Magno, which was originally the town *domus* of Pope Gregory the

Great.<sup>13</sup> In close proximity is S Clemente and its *mithraeum* which is an example of a near-by site that changes dramatically in the relevant period.

The principal family residence of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus and his family is repeatedly referred to by Symmachus himself in various letters, for example 3.88, 7.18 and 7.19, the latter two written to his old friend Attalus who is in Tivoli celebrating a friend's wedding when Symmachus invites him to visit him at his Caelian house – *in Caelium larem* – once the wedding festivities are finished.<sup>14</sup> This would have been on Attalus' way home because he too lived on the Caelian and so was a neighbour.<sup>15</sup> The word *lar* applied to a residence usually indicated that this was the person's chief house.<sup>16</sup> According to the jurist Alfenus Varus, the most important house where its owner had more than one was that in which this owner established his household deities,<sup>17</sup> the *lares familiares*, *dii penates* and the *genius*. In Symmachus' case the Caelian mansion was such a house. We know that Symmachus owned various properties in Rome<sup>18</sup> and we assume the one on the Caelian was the main one because he calls it his *lar*. In his correspondence can be found allusions and references to construction activities of various kinds, such as the renovation and restoration of floors and frescoes of his house.<sup>19</sup> We do not however know if this is the house that Symmachus grew up in.

Salzman speculates that Symmachus might have been raised in the Caelian *domus* and that his father moved *trans tiberim* when his son married to a house which was destroyed in a riot in 374.<sup>20</sup> Hillner, however, thinks that the *domus* on the Caelian hill may have been acquired by Symmachus on his marriage in 370, from his wife's family.<sup>21</sup> She has ascertained in her cross referencing of the topographical and prosopographical evidence for every known senatorial property in Rome from the fourth to sixth centuries CE that in late antique Rome urban residences could be transmitted to older sons, younger sons and daughters.

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<sup>13</sup> Claridge, 2010:351.

<sup>14</sup> *Ep.* 7.19

<sup>15</sup> Hillner, 2003: 133, n 22.

<sup>16</sup> Salzman, 2011: 34, n2, n6.

<sup>17</sup> *Digest* 50.16.203 (Alfenus Varus); Hillner, 2003:135, n32.

<sup>18</sup> Hillner, 2003:135; Salzman, 2011: 34, n2, n6.

<sup>19</sup> Carignani, 2001:149.

<sup>20</sup> *Amm. Mar.* 27.3.4; Hillner, 2003:136; Salzman, 2011:34, n 6.

<sup>21</sup> Hillner, 2003:134.

In 1617 the site of Symmachus' Caelian house was occupied by the gardens of Sertorius Theophilus when, during the construction of a villa, the Villa Cavalli, the bases of two statues to Symmachus himself and to Virius Nichomachus Flavianus were discovered.<sup>22</sup> The statue base with Symmachus' *cursus honorum* was shown in Chapter 1 on page 8; the statue base of Virius Nicomachus Flavianus is shown on below as Figure 8.



Fig. 8: The statue base inscribed with the *cursus honorum* of Virius Nicomachus Flavianus

It is worded and arranged on exactly the same lines as that of Symmachus himself shown in Chapter 1 and the translation is seen in footnote 23:<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *CIL*.6.1782.

<sup>23</sup> *CIL*.6.1782; To Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, *uir clarissimus*, Pontifex Maior, Proconsul of Sicily, Vicar of Africa, Quaestor in the Palace, Praetorian Prefect Twice, Ordinary Consul, Very Distinguished Historian, Quintus Fabius Memmius Symmachus, *uir clarissimus*, To the Best Grandfather-in-law

VIRIO NICOMACHO FLAVIANO V C  
QUAEST. PRAET. PONTIF. MAIORI  
CONSULARI SICILIAE  
VICARIO AFRICAE  
QUAESTORI INTER PALATIUM  
PRAEF. PRAET. ITERUM COS. ORD.  
HISTORICO DISERTISSIMO  
Q. FAB. MEMMIUS SYMMACHUS V C  
PROSOCERO OPTIMO

While there is no record of where these statues were found, Pavolini agrees that they would almost certainly have been in the atrium of his *domus* – Room B, Figure 11 on page 78.<sup>24</sup> These were presumably erected by Memmius soon after his father's death in 402 and are discussed further in Chapter 8, page 284. The area later passed to the Casali family who in the early eighteenth century built a villa. This in turn was destroyed in the eighteen eighties when the Ospedale Militare was built on the site. The somewhat haphazard nature of the excavations carried out at the time did not conclusively prove that this was the location of Symmachus' house, although the discovery of structures, pavements and fine furnishings hinted at the presence of many rich Late Antique houses.

However, when the hospital was modernized in the nineteen eighties, a proper archaeological exploration and excavation was carried out. In the basement of the *Domus Gaudentii* beside the *Domus Symmachorum* a brick with *SYM* on it was found;<sup>25</sup> and in a layer of abandonment in the *Basilica Hilariana* beside the *Domus Symmachorum* was found a glass vase inscribed with the same initials in a fragment of gold leaf.<sup>26</sup> Spera also mentions a fragment of glass plate, inscribed with the effigy of Symmachus himself and his son Memmius which was also found buried in the *Basilica Hilariana* (Figure 9) which is illustrated on the next page.<sup>27</sup> This has not been discussed with the other supposed likenesses of Symmachus in Chapter 1 because the adult figure is shown from the back.

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<sup>24</sup> Pavolini in conversation, 4/9/13

<sup>25</sup> Pavolini, 1993: 4, n18. (my page numbering as article online and pages unnumbered).

<sup>26</sup> Pavolini, 1993: 4, n16. (my page numbering as article online and pages unnumbered).

<sup>27</sup> Spera, 2013, 124 and 134: n 18.

These items, coupled with the statue bases found in 1617 and the literary evidence that Symmachus lived on the Caelian, provide fairly conclusive proof that this area was the location of Symmachus' *lar*, the *Domus Symmachorum*. Figure 10 shows the interior layout of Symmachus' house.



Fig.9: Inscribed fragment of glass plate with the effigies of the Symmachi

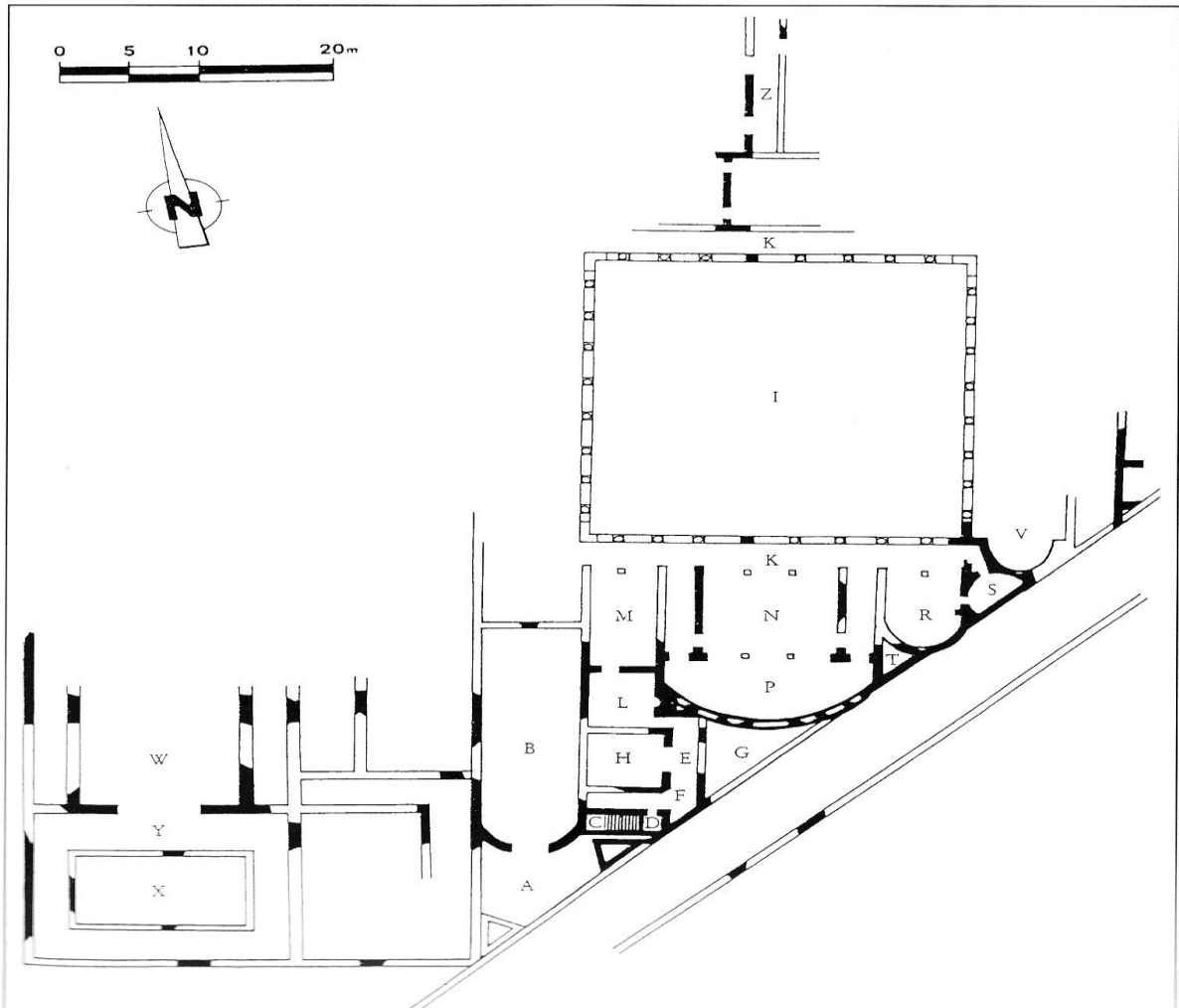


Fig 10: Interior of the *Domus Symmachorum*.

The *Domus Symmachorum* was located in a large triangular block, 220x150x150 metres. This was a large residential complex spread over an area between 6300 to 8000 square metres, divided into open areas, reception rooms, halls and service areas plus the upper floors which housed the bedrooms. There were also 2000 square metres of commercial spaces and craft workshops of autonomous function but in one way or another dependent on the owners of the house.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Carignani, 2001: 149.

The complex dates back to the Antonine period, attested by a lead fistula with a consular stamp of 177 CE.<sup>29</sup> This town *domus* of Symmachus was a very spectacular house, which was remodelled during the fourth century to make it even more luxurious.

If visiting the house one might be admitted into the ‘study’ where Symmachus wrote or dictated his letters to his innumerable correspondents. This was possibly the *tablinum* in the conventional layout of a Roman house. We do not know from the letters and it is not clear from Figure 10 which room could be called the *tablinum* but it could have been (L) or (H). Whichever room was used would need to have some degree of comparison with the pleasant room that Pliny used for this purpose in his villa at Laurentum.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4.2 Religion within the Domus Symmachorum itself

Within this magnificent mansion we must assume that the worship of the *lares et penates* would have constituted an aspect of traditional Roman worship that would have been observed by Symmachus with his family and household on a daily or at least a regular basis until it was officially banned by Theodosius at Constantinople on 8<sup>th</sup> November 392.

The edict states:<sup>31</sup>

*uel secretiore piaculo larem igne, mero genium, penates odore ueneratus accendat lumina, inponat tura, sarta suspendat.*

*[He shall not], by more secret wickedness, venerate his lar with fire, his genius with wine, his penates with fragrant odours; he shall not burn lights to them, place incense before them or suspend wreaths for them.*

It was probably therefore very desirable to the Christian emperors to banish these domestic cults if only to reinforce the fact that the new religion dominated everywhere, even in the home. How strictly this ban was obeyed is debatable and one cannot imagine that Symmachus in the ten years of life that remained to him would have paid much attention to it. The domestic household cults were so integral to family identity that they continued albeit

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<sup>29</sup> Carignani, 2001:150.

<sup>30</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 2.17.

<sup>31</sup> C. Th. 16.10.12.

surreptitiously. The *lararium* in a great *domus* such as Symmachus' would have been found in the *atrium* where the ancestral or family statues would also have been kept and would have provided the establishment with a richly ornamented entrance hall suitable to the status and richness of a family such as the Symmachi. This is possibly (B) on Fig.10. We can envisage Symmachus, therefore, as a *pater familias*, taking the rites and physically place him where these rites would have taken place within the house.

Apart from worshipping the Lares, there is evidence of domestic activity related to pagan religion in a letter to Symmachus' friend Helpidius, *Ep.*5.85 in 395, mentioning the festival of Minerva which was celebrated traditionally for five days, starting with 19<sup>th</sup> March. This was a festival essentially for artisans, among which were numbered school teachers who might receive a present from their pupils.<sup>32</sup> Symmachus desires Helpidius' presence to help celebrate the festival days as the latter, presumably a pagan in his youth, had celebrated the solemnities of Minerva since he and Symmachus were children. Apparently it was the custom to prepare a feast of simple vegetables as the frugal goddess was shocked by regal fare.<sup>33</sup> The present tense used in the quotation is very interesting:

*Ad eum diem tibi conuictum paramus agrestibus holusculis partum*  
*For this day we prepare for you a meal made from poor vegetables grown in the fields*

as is the late date for it – 395 – which could indicate that even after the closing of the temples this festival was still being kept, albeit in private.

This is a meal between old friends, one still a pagan, the other probably with pagan sympathies, who as boys had enjoyed the festivities of Minerva together and who now still enjoyed each other's company and a shared meal which commemorated both the goddess and times past. Meals had always been an important part of pagan worship. Where in the house might this feast have taken place? It would probably have been in the *triclinium*, N (see Figure 10). This was a large room just off the courtyard (I on Figure 10), its marble floor complete with a rich mosaic possibly formed from expensive red, green and yellow *opus sectile* if Carignani is correct.<sup>34</sup> This floor was refashioned during the fourth century. A

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<sup>32</sup> Callu, Tome 2, 2003:218, n1.

<sup>33</sup> Callu, Tome 2, 2003:218, n1.

<sup>34</sup> Carignani, 2001: 150.



hypothetical plan of what this room might have looked like can be seen in Figure 11. Again it is possible to place Symmachus physically within his house, worshipping his gods. Figure 12 shows an example of *opus sectile* in the museum attached to the Villa of the Quintili on the Appian Way.

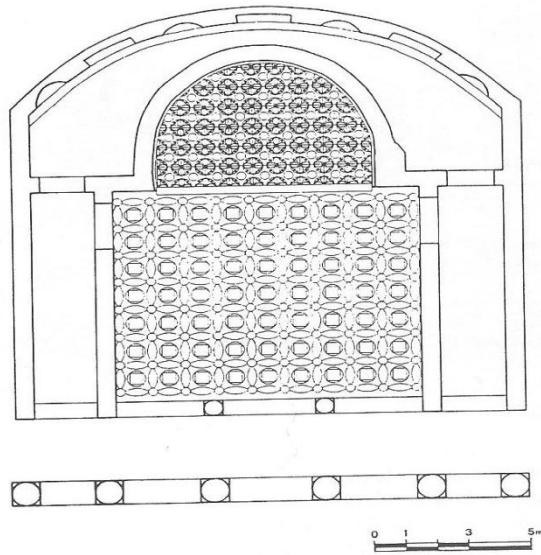


Fig. 11: The *triclinium* of Symmachus' mansion.



Fig. 12: *Opus sectile* tiles from the Villa of the Quintili

A third aspect of religion found in the house itself is a literary one, contained within the letters Symmachus wrote to his numerous correspondents. It is religion within the house because this is where Symmachus wrote his letters. Religious themes are scattered throughout these missives, although it is unusual to find a letter just devoted to a religious topic. For example, there are many epistles which mention the traditional deities of the Roman pantheon and their festivals such as Vesta, Minerva which I touch on above, Diana of Aricia and Cybele. A list of the religious letters can be found in Appendix 5.

### **4.3 The Changing Religious Topography of the Caelian Hill**

The pagan topographical landscape of the Caelian Hill was an old and very well established one. However Symmachus lived at a period when all that was beginning to change slowly but irretrievably into the Christian landscape which came to dominate Rome. I propose in this part of Chapter 4 to trace the changing nature of the religious topography of Symmachus' own neighbourhood, if this is possible, looking at old established temples to see what they were (or had been) and if they were still functioning in terms of cult during the last years of the fourth century. I also intend to trace the development of the churches in the area to see which were being built in Symmachus' time, if their location was by design or was more unplanned and how this affected the religious topography of the Caelian Hill. I intend to do this by using a series of maps which show the location of the old temples, the new churches and how they fitted into the ancient street layout. Figure 13 has the churches and major monuments of the Caelian Hill clearly marked. The numbers indicate edifices which are

important to the thesis; some of these are already included on the map, but others are not.

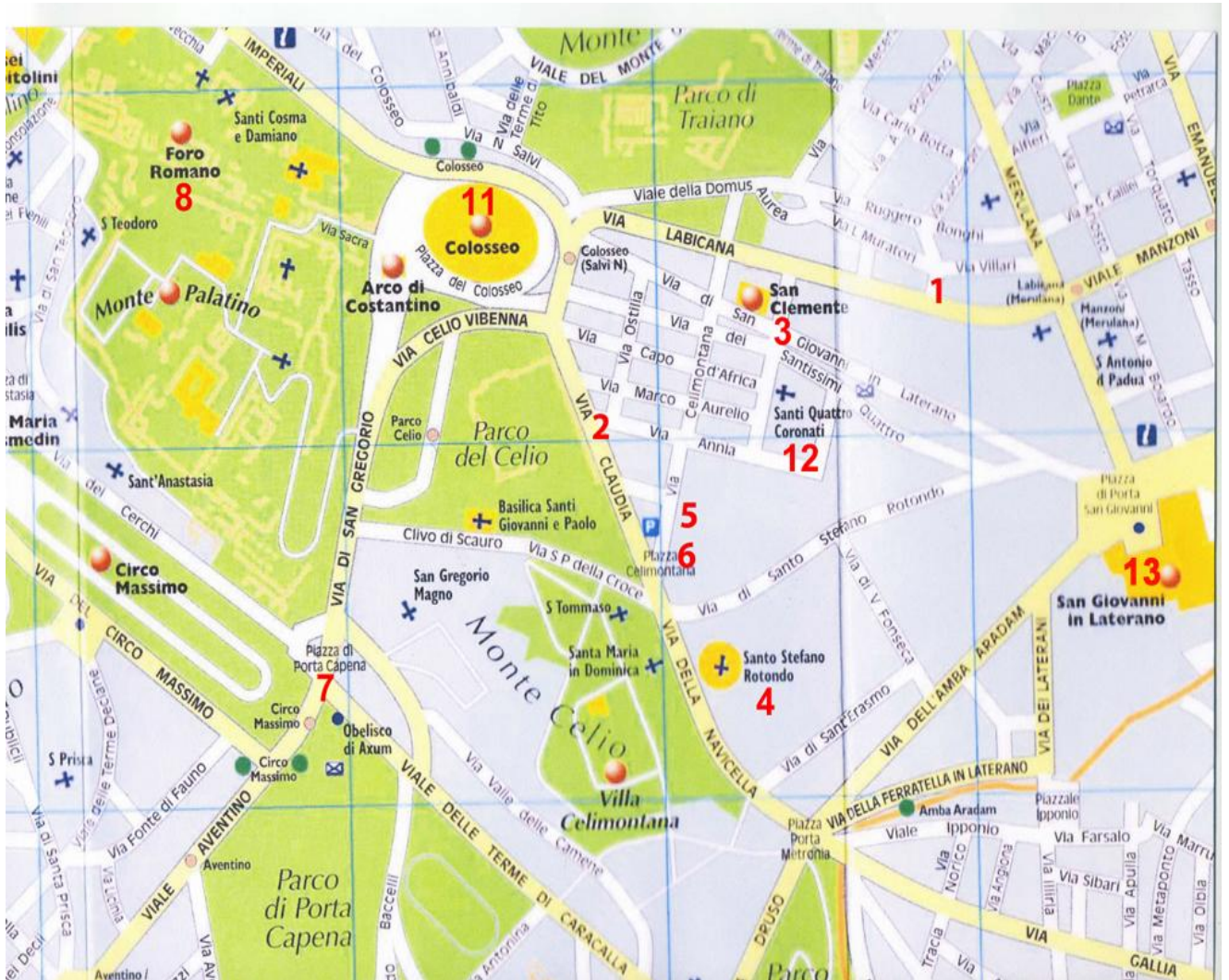


Fig.13: The Modern Caelian and beyond with Pagan temples, monuments and churches marked

Key: 1= Temple of Isis and Serapis; 2= Temple of the Divine Claudius; 3= *mithraeum* at San Clemente; 4= *mithraeum* at Santo Stefano Rotondo; 5= Domus Symmachorum; 6= Basilica Hilariana under Ospedale Militare; 7= Temple of Honos et Virtus; 8= Temple of Vesta; 9=San Giovanni in Laterano; 10=Basilica Santi Giovanni e Paolo; 11=Colosseum; 12= Santi Quattro Coronati; 13=San Giovanni in Laterano.

### ***Mithraea* on the Caelian Hill**

There were at least two *mithraea* associated with the Caelian Hill, one below the modern church of San Clemente (number 3, Figure 13) and the other below Santo Stefano Rotondo,

(number 4, Figure 13) in the Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo, very near where Symmachus' *domus* would have been.<sup>35</sup> Although there is no evidence that Symmachus was a follower of Mithras, it was an extremely important cult in Late Antiquity and was obviously an important aspect of pagan worship in the locality although this would have disappeared or been disappearing by the last quarter of the fourth century. Pavolini's evidence however, detailed in the next section, indicates that the *Castra Peregrina mithraeum* (now below San Stefano Rotondo) may well have been open right up till the sack of Rome.<sup>36</sup>

### **The *mithraeum* below Santo Stefano Rotondo**

This *mithraeum* had nothing to do with the later church. It was originally part of the *Castra Peregrina*, the camp on the Caelian Hill for soldiers detached from the provincial armies for special service in Rome. In 1904-9 the camp was found in digging for the foundations of the convent and hospital of the Little Company of Mary and was partially excavated. The excavators recovered many inscriptions including dedications to the *Genius Castrorum* and *Iuppiter Redux*. One of the several stone ships found there was the original ornament of the nearby fountain of Via Navicella. There was also probably a set of baths.<sup>37</sup> The camp was founded by Augustus and almost completely rebuilt in the second century. It was still in use in the later fourth century as Ammianus Marcellinus attests.<sup>38</sup> Figure 14, a section of Figure 7, shows the camp at the far right top of the picture beside the Basilica Hilariana. This camp therefore would have been well known to Symmachus and was very near to his house.

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<sup>35</sup> Claridge, 2010: 347.

<sup>36</sup> Pavolini, 2013: 167.

<sup>37</sup> Richardson, 1992: 78.

<sup>38</sup> Amm. Mar. 16.12.66

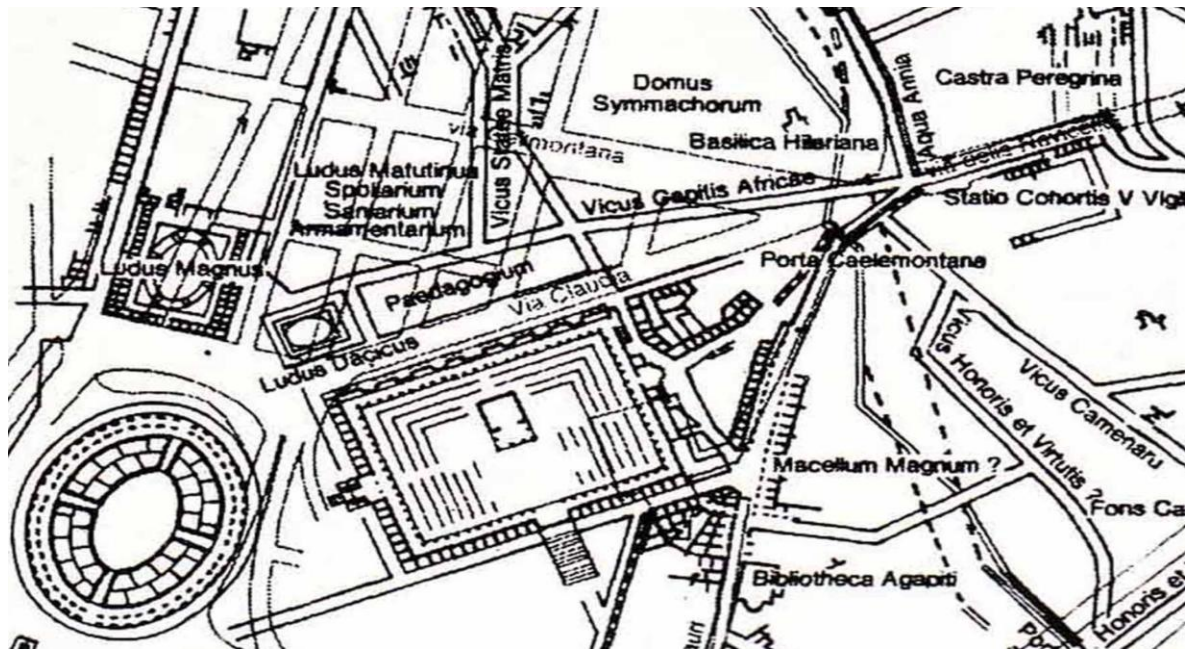


Fig. 14: Detail of the Caelian Hill and the Castra Peregrina

The wonderful round church of Santo Stefano Rotondo in Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo is much later than Symmachus' time being consecrated during the papacy of Pope Simplicius 468-83 and was built on part of the land previously occupied by the *Castra Peregrina*. It was built possibly to commemorate the proto-martyr St Stephen and perhaps originally held a relic of the saint.<sup>39</sup> For a long time it was assumed that the church had taken over the site of an earlier, non-Christian building but modern excavation has disproved that theory. Between 1973-5 excavation under the floor of the ambulatory on the west side – under part of the *Castra Peregrina* - discovered a virtually intact *mithraeum* which was built about 180. Figure 16 shows this, under M.

<sup>39</sup> Claridge, 2010: 345.



Fig. 15: An external view of San Stefano Rotondo

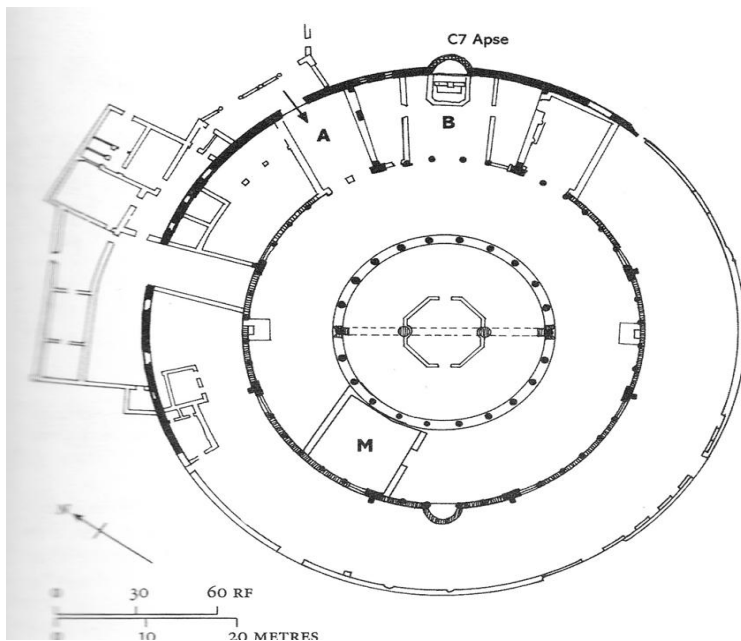


Fig. 16: A plan of the interior of S Stefano Rotondo with the ambulatory under which is the *mithraeum* marked by M

The *mithraeum* was extended about a century later and occupied an adjoining room. This therefore was a *mithraeum* functioning during Symmachus' lifetime. However towards the end of the fourth century Claridge states that the *mithraeum* was violently suppressed and sealed up with all its marble and terracotta altars, statuettes and reliefs which preserve

extensive traces of painting and gilding. A head of Isis was also found in the vicinity.<sup>40</sup> Some of these can be seen in the Museo Nazionale Romano, Terme.<sup>41</sup> Pavolini thinks that the *mithraeum* and the camp may have lasted until the sack of Rome when the Goths, Arian Christians, having stormed the barracks would have ransacked the *mithraeum*, rather than the *mithraeum* having seen an earlier cessation of use; both the camp and *mithraeum* would therefore have been simultaneously abandoned.<sup>42</sup> If, however, it was ransacked during the fall of Rome, why when it was excavated were all the *mithraeum*'s appurtenances found more or less intact? Perhaps the Goths for reasons unknown left most of its contents in situ. It would be interesting to know if in fact it was violently suppressed, due to the sack or religious intolerance which certainly happened to some *mithraea* at this period – or whether it just faded away which is quite probable, as if the barracks were gradually abandoned, the personnel who had once been the adherents of Mithras in this site would no longer be there. By the end of the fourth century anyway it is probable that many of these personages would have been gradually converting to Christianity.

### **The *mithraeum* of S Clemente, the church itself and the other churches at the east end of the Caelian hill**

S Clemente is an impressive structure. It stands at the foot of the northern slope of the Caelian Hill, not far from the Colosseum. The present church dates from 1108 with a wonderful mosaic in the apse but the marble panels forming the choir enclosure come from its large fifth-century predecessor, a three-sided apsidal basilica, which was added to and changed over the subsequent centuries and which has been excavated beneath the nave. It started off life, however, as a large Roman house dating back to 90-6 CE when it formed part of the redevelopment of the Colosseum valley after the abolition of Nero's Golden House.<sup>43</sup> Below the fifth century church lie two Roman buildings dating from the first century CE separated by a narrow alleyway.<sup>44</sup> These consist of the basement of a courtyard-style house with a *mithraeum* installed in it in the late second century;<sup>45</sup> the other is a large structure which seems to have been a *horrea* or warehouse.<sup>46</sup> These were built in the first century over

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<sup>40</sup> Pavolini, 2013: 167.

<sup>41</sup> Claridge, 2010: 347.

<sup>42</sup> Pavolini, 2013: 167.

<sup>43</sup> Claridge, 2010: 321.

<sup>44</sup> Claridge, 2010: 321.

<sup>45</sup> Claridge, 2010: 322.

<sup>46</sup> Coulston in conversation 7/10/15.

earlier structures destroyed in the great fire of 64. The central room of the house was turned into the *mithraeum*. It would appear that the *horrea* later became a wealthy private house within which some years later a large hall was built over the inner courtyard and ground floor rooms. Scholars now believe that it was within this house that the church of St Clement, the fourth Pope of Rome who was martyred in 100, was founded in the fourth century by a Christian of the same name.<sup>47</sup> So in this complex there would have been at the same time both a church and a *mithraeum*, and this is a church which was operational during Symmachus' lifetime and in his neighbourhood. The hall was converted into a church of basilica plan during the pontificate of Pope Siricius (384-399) which is recorded in an inscription of dedication to the left of the entrance.<sup>48</sup> This conversion was achieved by the addition of an apse, a narthex and an atrium, by bricking up openings in its sides and by creating a nave and two aisles through the addition of two arcaded colonnades in the main part of the hall.<sup>49</sup> The church was first mentioned in 392 and two papal councils were held there in the fifth century.<sup>50</sup>

The inner courtyard of the *insula* that became a *mithraeum* had decoration that was perfectly suited to simulating the cave of Mithras when it was converted to religious use c 200. The original doors were closed and the vault decorated with stars, a reference to the Mithraic cosmology.<sup>51</sup> Broad masonry dining couches were built on either side where the male initiates would share a communal meal as part of the cult. The door at the west end became a niche where a shaft of sunlight would be directed to strike the cult image in front of which stood an altar, erected (*posuit*) by one Gaius Arrius Claudianus<sup>52</sup> who had reached the top grade of the cult – *pater*. The altar displayed in Figure 17 is a replica. It has Mithras killing the sacred bull on one side and the torchbearers, Cautes and Cautopates and a large snake, symbol of regeneration, on the other:<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Claridge, 2010: 323.

<sup>48</sup> Webb, 2001: 87.

<sup>49</sup> Webb, 2001: 87.

<sup>50</sup> Webb, 2001: 87.

<sup>51</sup> Coarelli, 2014, 175

<sup>52</sup> Claridge, 2010: 320.

<sup>53</sup> Claridge, 2010: 320.





Fig. 17: Altar in San Clemente Mithraeum

The *mithraeum* was blocked up by the end of the fourth century though the basement it was situated in was still being used long afterwards – maybe up to the tenth century.<sup>54</sup> Coarelli states that signs of vandalism can be associated with its closure and abandonment.<sup>55</sup> Possibly this destruction was caused by Christians associated with the church next door but the abandonment of the *mithraeum* may well have been due as well to lack of devotees and the closure of the temples. The perceived end of the S Clemente establishment can be compared with what happened to the *mithraeum* under S Prisca on the Aventine. Coarelli and Vermaseren both take the viewpoint that this *mithraeum* was destroyed violently c 400 CE by Christians just before construction of the church.<sup>56</sup> Jerome in a letter of 403 mentions the destruction of a *mithraeum* which may be the same one and also derides the Mithraic grades which are shown so vividly in the Santa Prisca frescoes.<sup>57</sup> However Jonas Bjornebye<sup>58</sup> does not agree with this. He feels that about sixteen of the many *mithraea* in Rome may still have been functioning at the end of the fourth century, in spite of the closure of the temples in 394,

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<sup>54</sup> Claridge, 2010: 323.

<sup>55</sup> Coarelli, 2007: 175.

<sup>56</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 341; Vermaseren, 1965: 241. ‘The Aventine Mithraeum was destroyed in a very thorough manner and ... the Christians first attacked the representation which had the most striking similarity to their own cult practices, i.e the picture of the sacred repast of Sol and Mithras.’; LTUR, 1996, v 3, 269, ‘L’edificio fu distrutto verso il 400 di C, poco prima della costruzione della chiesa’.

<sup>57</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 107.

<sup>58</sup> Bjornebye, J. ‘Re-Interpreting the Cult of Mithras’, *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome*, Rome, Italy (20<sup>th</sup> September), 2012; Bjornebye in Salzman, Sághy and Lizzi Testa, 2015: 209.

including that of Santa Prisca; and the end of this *mithraeum* could have been a peaceful one where, with a dwindling or no congregation, the room was just blocked up.



Fig. 18: Painted depiction of Mithras from the *mithraeum* of Santa Prisca in the Capitoline Museums<sup>59</sup>

If this re-interpretation of the evidence is accepted, then the conclusions of Vermaseren and Coarelli regarding the end of the Santa Prisca *mithraeum* must be seen as erroneous. This re-evaluation could also be a possibility as an explanation for a slightly later ending of the two *mithraea* on the Caelian, and is certainly a viewpoint agreed with by Martin in his comments on San Clemente.<sup>60</sup>

‘Rather than intense rivalry resulting in destruction the rapidly expanding Christian church in fourth century Rome seems simply to have capitalized upon the misfortunes of their pagan neighbors in order to maximise their real estate holdings’

### **The Churches of the Caelian Hill**

Figure 19 shows the Christian churches on the Caelian Hill though not all of these existed in Symmachus’ lifetime. His house would have been located just north of S Stefano Rotondo. Going east from S Stefano Rotondo is the Lateran Cathedral, built by Constantine in the early years of the fourth century on imperial land and the seat of the Bishop of Rome. Although the

<sup>59</sup> However attested by Dr Jon Coulston to be actually from the *mithraeum* of Santo Stefano Rotondo in conversation on 8/10/15

<sup>60</sup> Martin, 1989: 6.

Lateran was at some distance from Symmachus' *domus*, and very much on the edge of the Caelian, nevertheless it shows that the wider area was beginning to have a major Christian presence very early on.

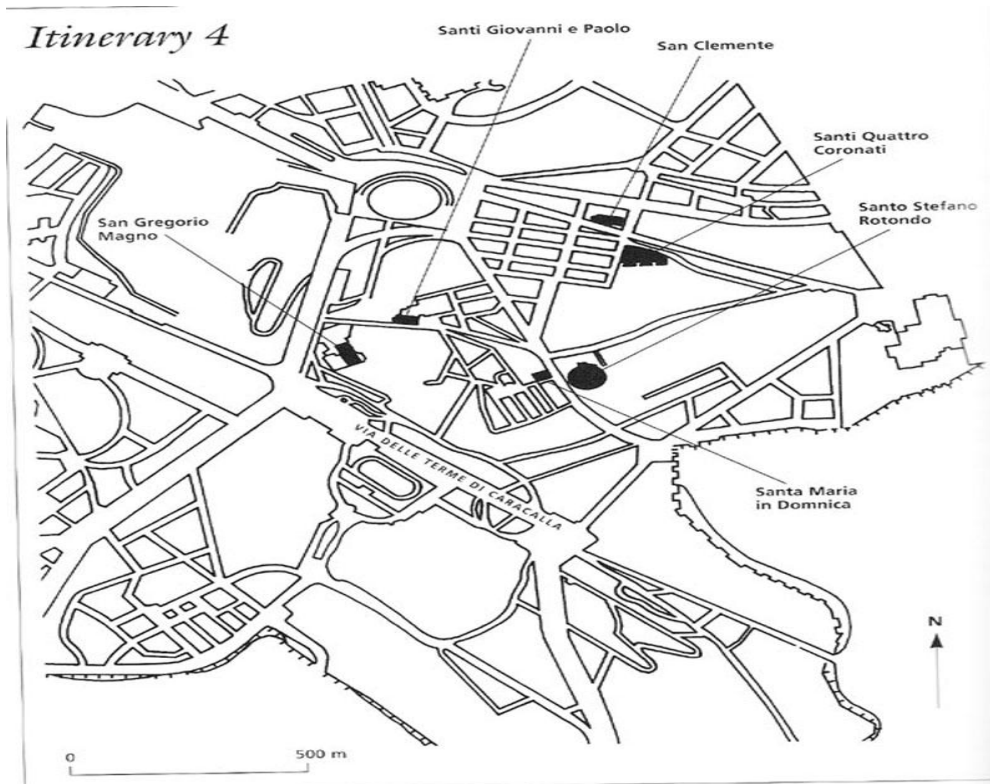


Fig. 19: The Christianisation of the Caelian Hill

The Arch-basilica of S Giovanni in Laterano is the cathedral church of the Diocese of Rome and the official ecclesiastical seat of the Bishop of Rome who is the serving Pope. It can be seen on Figure 13 in the middle, extreme right, number 13 although not on Figure 19 which shows the churches to the west of the Lateran. This extremely important cathedral was the first of the Constantinian churches and its building commenced very early in his reign – perhaps as early as 313<sup>61</sup> – on what was already imperial land as part of his official policy of developing big basilicas carefully placed away from the then pagan centre of Rome. The barracks which previously had held the Praetorian troops were demolished and the regiments who had fought for Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge were disbanded. On the site of these barracks was erected Constantine's new cathedral.

<sup>61</sup> Krautheimer, 2000: 21.

The Lateran has remains surviving of the foundations and walls of the original cathedral which was added to and changed throughout the Middle Ages. It was markedly remodelled by Borromini in the seventeenth century and again in the nineteenth.<sup>62</sup> The original building was a basilica consisting of a large, long hall with a timber roof. The nave had double aisles on both sides and ended in an apse. The nave and aisles were supported by columns, those in the aisles being arcaded and covered in green-speckled marble. The apse vault of Constantine's church glittered with gold and there were seven silver tables - one of which was the altar and the others to hold offerings.<sup>63</sup> In addition in the apse a screen or canopy sheathed in silver carried or contained statues of Christ, the Apostles and angels.<sup>64</sup> Behind the church, although remodelled inside, remains Constantine's Baptistery dating to 315. This great edifice was truly magnificent. It irrevocably pointed the way to how religious space within the city was henceforth to be defined.

### **SS Quattro Coronati**

Not far from S Clemente in Via dei Santi Quattro is SS Quattro Coronati church. This is slightly north of Symmachus' *domus*. The church is situated at the top of a steep escarpment in a naturally defensive position on the northern side of the Caelian Hill and though peaceful has a fortress-like appearance.<sup>65</sup> The Quattro Coronati refers to four unknown martyrs. The Roman structures on the site include remains of what may have been an early church, found below the north corner of the apse of the present church. In this location were found capitals and inscriptions referring to Pope Damasus (366-384). In the fourth century a hall was built to the east of this, with a single nave and a large apse and Webb suggests<sup>66</sup> that this was an early church built by Pope Melchiades or Miltiades (311-14). If this is true, then church building on the traditional pagan topography of the Caelian started right at the beginning of the reign of Constantine, even before the construction of the Lateran.

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<sup>62</sup> Krautheimer, 2000: 21.

<sup>63</sup> Krautheimer, 2000: 22.

<sup>64</sup> Krautheimer, 2000: 22.

<sup>65</sup> Webb, 2001: 93.

<sup>66</sup> Webb, 2001: 93.

## Clivo Scauro

The Clivo Scauro which follows on from the Via di San Paolo della Croce is the location of an early church, SS Giovanni e Paolo. It is approached from the modern Piazza Celimontana by the Arch of Dolabella at the ancient Porta Celimontana. Figure 20 shows the Arch of Dolabella. While the name 'Clivo Scauro' is medieval, the road is ancient and the Italian version reflects the Latin - *Clivus Scauri*.



Fig. 20: The Ancient Arch of Dolabella

The owners of the great *domus* on the top of the Caelian may well have largely stayed pagan for most of our period, with the exception of the Valerii family whose house was on the other side of the road from the *Domus Gaudentii*, which can be seen on Figure 7 and to which I will return later in the chapter. Further excavation of other aristocratic *domus* in this locality may however change this picture. However the Clivo Scauro part of the Caelian is strongly linked to Christianity from at least the mid-fourth century although the development of Christianity and Christian churches on the Caelian Hill does not really appear to have followed a carefully planned, coherent, strategy apart from the Lateran complex. Other churches seem to have developed more on an ad hoc basis. But once the Clivo Scauro began to develop some Christian elements, other began to follow.

The remains below SS Giovanni e Paolo were first excavated in 1887. These structures are now called the *Case Romane*, have been fully excavated and are open to the public. Originally there was a narrow alleyway running between the backs of three or four properties. These consisted of a wealthy *domus* dating from the 120s CE which was terraced down a steep slope to the north and aligned with the street in front of the temple of Divus Claudius.

There was also a fairly smart apartment block building, fronting onto the street on the south side of the church, where its facade, flanked by parts of two others, survives to a height of three storeys.<sup>67</sup> The principal apartments of this block were on the first floor. In the later third to early fourth century, the housing block was converted into a single house, taking over the alleyway at the back and largely redecorated. In the later fourth century the back staircase was converted into a martyrs' tomb (before the construction of the church): three bodies were buried under it at the east end, a door to the back stair was narrowed and heightened, the stairs were finished in marble and a *confessio* was made on the landing.<sup>68</sup> On the right hand wall of this *confessio* a painting showed the martyrdom of three kneeling figures, two men and a woman, blindfolded with their hands bound around their backs.<sup>69</sup> In the centre, on the bottom is the orant figure illustrated in Figure 21, at whose feet kneel figures identified as Pammachius and his wife. The opening above has been interpreted as a confessional window, or a space intended to have a cabinet holding reliquaries.<sup>70</sup>

It appears that, at the end of the fourth century, the house belonged to the family of Pammachius, a senator and friend of St Jerome who after his wife's death became a monk. Brenk<sup>71</sup> has a theory that Pammachius' house was destroyed by fire in the sack of Rome and the church was then built on top. Pavolini however doubts this as there were no trace of fire found on the site, which Brenk himself admits.<sup>72</sup> Certainly Pammachius left money in his will to build a church, c410, which rose within and above the earlier buildings, most of which were filled in except for the landing in front of the *confessio* area with its Christian paintings. One could gain access until the twelfth century when a small staircase by which people entered was blocked up in the southern wall of the church.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Claridge, 2010: 353.

<sup>68</sup> Claridge, 2010: 353.

<sup>69</sup> Claridge, 2010: 354.

<sup>70</sup> *The Roman Houses beneath the Church of Sts. John and Paul*, No date.

<sup>71</sup> Brenk, 2002: 1013-4; Pavolini, 2013: 167, n 26.

<sup>72</sup> Pavolini, 2013: 167, n 26.

<sup>73</sup> Webb, 2001: 101.

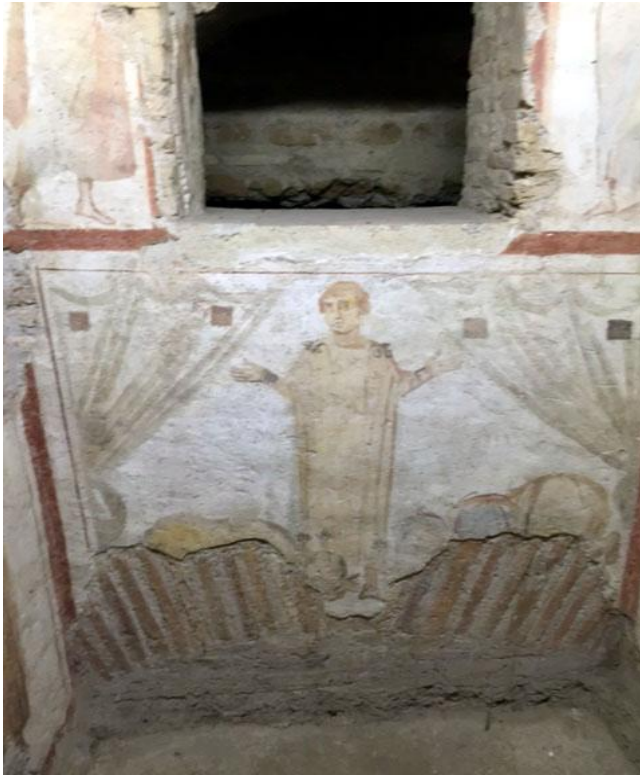


Fig. 21: The *confessio* in the Case Romane: praying figure with figures supposed to be Pammachius and his wife kneeling on either side of celebrant

This location is another instance of where a house church develops in the course of time into a church proper, like S Clemente. Unlike that church, however, there was never any pagan institution on the site. It is rather a case where an aristocratic residence was re-developed for religious use, a pattern that became more common in Rome as the fourth century gave way to the fifth. It is also a pattern that is replicated if one travels down the Clivo Scauro to the church of S Gregorio Magno which originated as the family home of Gregory the Great in the late sixth century. Born in about 540 Gregory grew up on his family estate on the Caelian Hill, the mansion of which he later turned into a monastery dedicated to St Andrew though virtually nothing of this complex has survived. It has all been remodelled many times since.<sup>74</sup> So the evidence of the lower Caelian would appear to indicate a steady development of Christian institutions, whatever was happening at the top of the hill nearer to where Symmachus had his residence.

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<sup>74</sup> Webb, 2001: 105.

## The Temple of Divus Claudius

If one comes west again down back onto the main axis of the Caelian Hill and back into the traditional pagan religious world that Symmachus knew, one would have been confronted in the Classical period with Temple to Divus Claudius. It is marked as number 2 on Figure 13. Its east side would have been on the left of the modern Via Claudia which can be seen in Figure 22. Via Claudia of course did not exist in Roman times, the main 'road' being the *uicus capitis Africae*. The temple was a massive structure. It was immediately south of the Colosseum although its construction started before that of the Flavian Amphitheatre. Snaking below the temple was the great and substantial Aqua Claudia, some parts of which still remain and which can be seen clearly running through the middle of Figure 23 from right to left.

In 54 CE Agrippina the Younger, widow and probable murderer of Claudius and mother of his successor, Nero, started building this temple in a gesture that at best could be seen as cynical. It might be assumed to be an insult to the memory of Claudius not to build his temple on the Capitoline or Palatine; however the denuclearization of the city centre was indeed a progressive phenomenon started by Augustus and continued by his successors and objectively seen the Caelian was quite near to the Palatine and the Republican Forum.<sup>75</sup> After Nero had Agrippina murdered in 59, work on the structure stopped till after his death in 68 and it was finished and dedicated under Vespasian in the early 70s.<sup>76</sup> Suetonius states; 'He made new works ... the temple of the Divine Claudius on the Caelian Hill, begun indeed by Agrippina but by Nero almost utterly destroyed.'<sup>77</sup> This destruction was probably due, in part at least, to the construction of the distributing station of the Aqua Claudia, which Nero extended to the Caelian.<sup>78</sup> The platform of the temple is identified by the fact that Frontinus<sup>79</sup> states that Nero extended the arches of the Aqua Claudia as far as this temple. This platform was enormous measuring 175x205 metres and was built out from the crest of the hill to support the temple at a level equivalent with the top of the Palatine Hill and is still a major

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<sup>75</sup> Morcillo by email, 1/03/12

<sup>76</sup> Claridge, 2010: 349; LTUR VI, 1993: 277.

<sup>77</sup> Suet. *Vesp.*9.

<sup>78</sup> Platner, 1926 : 120.

<sup>79</sup> Frontinus, *Aq.* 2.76



feature of the landscape - although it is hidden in the private gardens of the monastery of the Passionist fathers who are attached to SS Giovanni e Paolo in the Clivo Scauro.<sup>80</sup>

Its eastern side became temporarily under Nero a gigantic nymphaeum and Figure 22 still shows the base of this part of the structure. No trace of the temple itself has yet been found but we know from the fragments remaining of the Marble Plan that it had six columns across the front and it faced west towards the Palatine and was set slightly to the rear on the shorter axis of the platform in a precinct which the Plan shows filled with narrow parallel strips which possibly represented trellised gardens.<sup>81</sup>



Fig. 22: Eastern buttress wall of the temple terrace in Via Claudia.

On the Palatine side on the west a wide set of steps led up from the valley on an axis with the temple and the supports to the structure were given a travertine facade in a rusticated style which would have appealed to Claudius' antiquarian tastes.<sup>82</sup> Some of this arcading can still be seen in the structure of SS Giovanni e Paolo off the Clivo Scauro. The last mention of the edifice is in the fourth century although in 1217 a bull of Pope Honorius III mentions 'formae et alia aedificia positae intra clausuram Clodei'.<sup>83</sup> It is not known when or how the temple was destroyed although the general decay and ultimate abandonment of the Caelian in the fifth and sixth centuries must have affected its fate. It was however a very substantial monument almost opposite Symmachus' house and which may have acted as a poignant

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<sup>80</sup> Claridge, 2010: 349.

<sup>81</sup> Claridge, 2010: 349.

<sup>82</sup> Claridge, 2010: 349.

<sup>83</sup> Platner, 1926: 121.

reminder of a more glorious pagan past to Symmachus as he was driven or carried past it; for it belonged to a time when the Imperial cult was an integral part of the *sacra publica* which was such an important part of his religious *raison d'être*.

It is probable that religious activity within its walls would have ceased by the end of the reign of Constantine, although it is known that Constantine did permit the continuation of at least some aspects of the Imperial cult provided there was no sacrifice. To uproot customs of games, festivals and temples might have decreased the loyalty of his subjects and in the early stages of the Christianisation of his Empire Constantine, to some degree at least, played a softly, softly policy. For example he granted permission to the people of Hispellum in Umbria to erect a temple honouring his Flavian ancestors and to hold gladiatorial games.<sup>84</sup> One of his last edicts freed priests of the Imperial cult, past and present, from heavy public burdens.<sup>85</sup> This policy of toleration was not, however, carried on by his successors.



Fig. 23: Vroma view of the Colosseum with the Temple of Divus Claudius below it.

### **The Porta Capena**

If Symmachus had followed the Clivo Scauro down to its end and then turned left, he would have come to the Porta Capena and its temples and its access to the Via Appia – see Figure

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<sup>84</sup> Stevenson, 2009: 247.

<sup>85</sup> C. Th. 12.5.2.

13, number 7. Regrettably there is now little left of the structure of the Porta Capena. This area traditionally had been the site of many temples though presumably by the late fourth century many of them were falling into decay. Colonnades must have lined the first part of the road and numerous aristocratic tombs were interspersed with places of cult. The temple to *Honos et Virtus*, according to Livy, was *ad portam Capenam*, that is near the Porta Capena but not outside it because that would be *extra portam* Richardson asserts.<sup>86</sup> Coarelli, however, states that it was immediately **beyond** the Porta Capena on the left hand side of the street with the Temple of Mars not far from it but a bit further along the road.<sup>87</sup> A sanctuary built to *Honos* was erected in 234 BCE by Q. Fabius Maximus, while the one to *Virtus* joined it in 208 in spite of the opposition of the Senate, due to the generosity of M. Claudius Marcellus the conqueror of Syracuse who richly endowed the temple with treasure from that city. His son dedicated it in 205.<sup>88</sup> It was restored by Vespasian and decorated by two Roman artists, Cornelius Pinus and Attius Priscus and is last mentioned in the fourth century (*Not.Reg.1*).<sup>89</sup> Symmachus mentions this temple in a letter to Ausonius,<sup>90</sup> in 378. He states:

*Bene ac sapienter maiores nostri, ut sunt alia aetatis illius, aedes Honori atque Virtuti gemella facie iunctim locarunt conmenti, quod in te uidimus, ibi esse praemia honoris, ubi sunt merita uirtutis. Sed enim propter etiam Camenarum religio sacro fontis aduertitur quia iter ad capessendos magistratus saepe litteris promouetur*

*Our ancestors acted well and wisely in this, as in other affairs of that time, when they situated the temples to Honour and Virtue together with a twin facade, recognising, as we see in you, that wherever the merits of virtue are found, there are the rewards of honour. But, in fact, the cult of the Camenae with its sacred spring is also found nearby, since often the path to obtaining office is advanced through literature.*

This is a fairly typical example of Symmachus' flowery and elaborate literary style with information almost obscured by his verbiage, but the reference is interesting because of the nearness to his home of this temple. It is possible that it was still functioning during his lifetime although this cannot be proved as there is no definite date for cessation of temple activities.

Symmachus' reference to 'devotion to the Camenae with its sacred spring' takes the journey out of the Porta Capena a little further. The woods beyond San Gregorio Magno hid a valley

<sup>86</sup> Livy, 26.32.4; Richardson, 1978: 244.

<sup>87</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 214.

<sup>88</sup> Richardson, 1978: 244.

<sup>89</sup> Platner, 1926: 259.

<sup>90</sup> *Ep.* 1.20, M. Salzman/M. Roberts (trans.).

between it and the spur on which the Villa Celimontana<sup>91</sup> in the Celimontana Park is built, where the sanctuary, fountain, and grove of the Camenae or Muses were to be found. The spring must have emanated from the slopes of the Caelian, probably where Lanciani noted the existence of a *fons mirabilis immo saluberrimus* which is just north-east of the church of S Gregorio Magno and then runs down to join the stream that flowed down the valley of the Via dei Troifi from the basin of the Colosseum and fed into the stream of the Circus Maximus.<sup>92</sup> The temple of *Honos et Virtus* would have stood between the spring and the Porta Capena.<sup>93</sup> The sanctuary, grove and fountain of the Camenae were situated in the little valley to the left of Porta Capena, at the foot of the Caelian where King Numa was supposed to have met with the nymph Egeria.<sup>94</sup> The Vestal Virgins in antiquity had had to fetch water daily from this spring<sup>95</sup> because it was prescribed by Numa. During the Empire the natural basin into which the spring flowed was reconstructed in marble and patronised by Jewish merchants.<sup>96</sup> Claridge states that the place was still venerated within religious cult in the late fourth century.<sup>97</sup> This therefore – like the Temple of *Honos et Virtus* – was a sacred place on the edge of the Caelian hill which Symmachus must have known well and which was part of his local religious topography. It is also interesting because of its association with the Vestals with whom Symmachus was closely involved.

### **Basilica Hilariana**

This assessment of the religious layout of the Caelian, both pagan and Christian, that Symmachus knew comes back now topographically to opposite his own house with the *Basilica Hilariana*, or temple to Cybele that can be seen in Figure 13, number 6, located just to the east of the *Domus Symmachorum*. There were of course several temples to Cybele in Rome, particularly the main one located on the Palatine Hill and the Phrygianum located in the vicinity of St Peter's on Mons Vaticanus. The *Basilica Hilariana* is an odd building which was founded towards the end of the second century CE and which was discovered on the Caelian in the grounds of the Ospedale Militare in the angle between Piazza Celimontana

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<sup>91</sup> Claridge, 2010: 355.

<sup>92</sup> Richardson, 1978: 244.

<sup>93</sup> Richardson, 1978: 244.

<sup>94</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 214.

<sup>95</sup> Claridge, 2010: 356.

<sup>96</sup> Juvenal, 3.10 ff; Coarelli, 2007: 214.

<sup>97</sup> Claridge, 2010: 356.

and Via di S Stefano Rotondo.<sup>98</sup> It faces the modern Via Celimontana on one side and Via di San Stefano Rotondo on another. The vestibule of this building with an inscription on the mosaic floor was found in 1889 when the Hospital was being built. Further excavations were done between 1987-9 and then again in 1997 when the Hospital was being remodelled and when much more of the archaeology of the sanctuary was revealed. The excavators found a statue base to one M. Poplicius Hilarus, pearl dealer who established the shrine, (*CIL* 6.30973b) which had been dedicated in Hilarus' honour<sup>99</sup> – by the *collegium dendrophorum Matris deum et Attidis*.

Though our knowledge of the structure of the shrine is incomplete, certain things are known about it. It was apparently half underground and one descended a flight of twelve steps revetted with marble and came then into the vestibule with the mosaic and inscription described above. The mosaic showed an eye pierced with a spear and surrounded by a ring of birds and animals.<sup>100</sup> Beyond it was a *tabula ansata* with an inscription which said, *intransibus hic deos/propitios et basilic(ae) Hilarianae*<sup>101</sup> – and there was also a threshold with the outline of feet entering and leaving. This gave onto a room with a rectangular basin which resembles an *impluvium* but is 0.70 metres deep and is where the statue base of M. Poplicius Hilarus was found.

The building, though not showing the normal architectural characteristics of a basilica, was undoubtedly built by Hilarus for a collegium of *dendrophori* associated with the cult of the Magna Mater and Attis.<sup>102</sup> In the third century remodelling, a chapel was built to keep the pine that was sacred to Attis; the structure was over thirty metres long. The shrine certainly survived for cult worship until the end of the fourth century or possibly very early into the fifth century, by which time the temples were shut and Symmachus was dead.<sup>103</sup> The *Basilica Hilariana* is a fascinating relic of one of the most interesting and exotic of the so-called mystery or oriental religions. That it has survived at all is remarkable and its location so near the town *domus* of Symmachus demonstrates that pagan shrines were still surviving on the Caelian right up to the beginning of the fifth century, probably aided here by being in the

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<sup>98</sup> *CIL* 6.30973a; Richardson 1992: 52.

<sup>99</sup> Richardson, 1992:52.

<sup>100</sup> Richardson, 1992:52.

<sup>101</sup> *CIL*.6.30973a; Richardson, 1992: 52; LTUR v 1, 1993: 175.

<sup>102</sup> Richardson, 1992: 52.

<sup>103</sup> In conversation with Pavolini, 4/9/13.

vicinity of such a great pagan family. Early in the fifth century the assets of all remaining colleges of the priests of Cybele were confiscated by the emperors;<sup>104</sup> and about the same time, no longer a shrine, the usage of the temple changed completely and part of it became a dye works or dry cleaners. However the Gothic Wars of the sixth century devastated this part of the Caelian anyway so that the de-population of the area was intensified. Finally it was completely abandoned in 618, probably because of an earthquake.<sup>105</sup> Nowadays the remains of the cult building are found in the grounds of the Ospedale Militare and I was lucky enough to be shown these by their excavator, Professor Carlo Pavolini on 4th September 2013. Figure 24 shows these remains in an enlarged aerial photograph.



Fig 24: Aerial photo of the *Basilica Hilariana* within the Ospedale Militare grounds.

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<sup>104</sup> C. Th. 16.10.20.2.

<sup>105</sup> LTUR, v1, 1993: 176.



Fig.25: A close up of the excavated *Basilica Hilariana*



Fig. 26: The author with Professor Carlo Pavolini in the interior of the *Basilica Hilariana*.

There is no real evidence that Symmachus was a devotee of the Mother of the Gods – a mystery cult which had come to Rome many centuries before but whose extravagances of worship and castrated priests would have little interest for a restrained aristocrat such as

Symmachus devoted to the old Roman ways. However the only reference to any of the mystery cults in Symmachus' correspondence is the letter he sends to Flavianus in which he refers to the festival of the Mother of the Gods.<sup>106</sup>

*Adornare te reditum quod sacra Deum Matris adpeterent, arbitrabar*

*I thought you were preparing to return because the festival of the Mother of the Gods approaches*

Iara argues that the *Basilica Hilariana* would have been included as a location to be visited in the procession connected with the main festival to Cybele on 25th March.<sup>107</sup> If Iara is right we can therefore possibly link Symmachus to a religious celebration held in his own locality as we know that this festival, and therefore presumably the procession associated with it, was held in 394 when Virius Nicomachus Flavianus was consul.

The statue base to Symmachus found on the site of the Villa Casali in the seventeenth century (Chapter 1, page 8) only lists his official priesthood – *pontifex maior* - as does that of the one to Flavianus senior (Chapter 4, page 78). Space and balance are probably the main reasons for this as the statues were a pair. Bloch and Matthews take the view that the silence of the statue dedications regarding any priesthood within an oriental cult does not rule out the possibility that either individual could in fact have held such a position.<sup>108</sup> Cameron, for reasons partly connected with his arguments for the true identity of the Prefect who is the subject of *Carmen Contra Paganos*, disagrees with this.<sup>109</sup> However I am here concerned only with Symmachus and I do not think that the *existing* evidence supports him being a cult adherent though the letter is evidence that Flavianus possibly was. But Symmachus because of this may well have given his tacit support to a temple to the Mother of the Gods which was located literally on the edge of his town estate. The reference in the letter is brief and in many ways is similar to other references to religious festivals elsewhere in his correspondence which are to be found among a variety of topics in the same letter. Symmachus adopts almost a reproachful tone to his friend for his failure to be present in Rome for a major festival of a deity he supports. This may be an indication that Symmachus is worried lest non-attendance by pagans at their festivals gave ammunition to the Christians.

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<sup>106</sup> *Ep.*2.34

<sup>107</sup> Iara, K. 'Connecting the Remains: Cult Places in Late Antique Rome', *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome*. M Salzman, M Sághy, R Lizzi Testa, Rome. (20<sup>th</sup> September), 2012.

<sup>108</sup> Cameron, 2011: 156.

<sup>109</sup> Cameron, 2011: 156.



## Domus Valeriorum

If one looks again at Figure 7 on page 76 it can be seen that the *domus* of the great Valerii family was only across the road from that of Symmachus; and the Valerii were ardent Christians to whose family the excessively devout and ascetic younger Melania belonged. This house was excavated to some extent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries being located below the Ospedale dell'Addolarata and may be the great house that Melania, one of the last self-proclaimed descendants of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, and her husband Pinianus, when they entered the ascetic life tried to dispose of with most of the rest of their immense property. However they demanded such a high price for their imposing town house that it remained unsold much to the relief of their relatives who were appalled at the extent to which Melania and her husband were embracing Christian poverty and their desire therefore to dispose of their huge material assets.<sup>110</sup> These early excavations went largely unrecorded but ten statues or groups of statuary were recovered – and also a little silver bottle decorated with busts of Saints Peter and Paul and a silver cup with an inscription to the Valerii. Also found was a fourth century lamp in the form of a ship with Peter praying and Paul at the helm, evidence of the conversion of this old, aristocratic, Roman family to Christianity.<sup>111</sup>

This house was partly burned in the sack of Rome in 410, demonstrating that soon after the death of Symmachus the destruction of one of the great *domus* on the Caelian occurred. A new representation of domestic religion was to be found within this house that was becoming increasingly common at this period – a private chapel.<sup>112</sup> This new usage of domestic space for private Christian worship was to become progressively more important. This can be compared to its equivalent in the *domus* of a follower of the traditional religious cults such as Symmachus - the *lararium*. The religious topography of the Caelian then, as this survey has shown, was varied with pagan elements and temples still being strongly represented but with Christian churches beginning to encroach on the area and beginning to be built in greater numbers towards the end of Symmachus' life, although this was not yet in a planned way. The religion of the Caelian was changing on a domestic level also as the evidence of the *domus Valeriorum* shows.

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<sup>110</sup> Sodini, 2003: 36.

<sup>111</sup> Sodini, 2003: 36.

<sup>112</sup> Bowes, 2005: 188.

#### 4.4 The Road to the Forum Romanum

In the next part of this chapter I want to expand the picture and look at how the religious topography of a Rome wider than just the Caelian impacted on Symmachus, by examining the structure of the Forum Romanum, so central to his public life, in a religious sense. Here too, especially in the Temple of Vesta we can situate him in religious terms in his daily life and routine. I will explore what temples might still have been functioning in this most sacred heart of pagan and Imperial Rome in the second half of the fourth century, especially the Temple complex of Vesta. Which were the last temples to be repaired? Even here things were beginning to change so an assessment of this angle of the religious topography of the Forum is necessary.

Symmachus would have taken the way of the ancient *Caput Africae* from his Caelian house down to the Colosseum. This route can be seen in Figure 18 running from left to right. In his time the modern Via Claudia, the route which one would take now, was not there and the modern Capo D’Africa crosses the Caelian east-west rather than north-south like the *Caput Africae*. He would probably have been carried by his slaves in a litter, *lectica*, although it is possible that he might have gone by carriage. There is no direct evidence for this but Symmachus does refer to an unfortunate suffect consul who was thrown out of a carriage and broke his leg in *Ep.* 6.40. If so it would have been a simpler conveyance than the elaborate *carruca* prescribed for the Urban Prefect by Theodosius, the use of which Symmachus challenges in *Relatio* 4.

#### The Colosseum

On his way he would have passed the Temple of the Divine Claudius, situated to the left of his route, which has already been discussed. Then his journey would have taken him past the front of the Colosseum, a building which also had a ‘religious’ function although it was not a temple but an amphitheatre dedicated to the games, fights and displays of the circus. The games had been an essential part of Roman life since the late Republic and long after the banning of sacrifice and the closure of the temples, ritual associated with spectacles held in the amphitheatre, which had a strong pagan content, survived. This was because it was linked with a public and civic spectacle as essential to the Roman psyche as the state religion once

had been but which spectacle was not seen by its largely Christian spectators as being **religious** but part of civic life. There is evidence within Symmachus' later letters of consular and other games being held here which is discussed in Chapter 8.

There is no doubt that Christian authorities did try to prohibit the festivities associated with the games because of their previous religious affiliations. However in 399 this prohibition was specifically disallowed by the emperors on the grounds that paganism had already been banned and that it was possible to celebrate secular festivities, games, shows and banquets divorced from their previous 'religious' links.<sup>113</sup> They were ever conscious that the populace demanded *circenses* as well as *panem*. Indeed this is explicitly stated in *Relatio* 6 where Symmachus reminds the Emperors Theodosius and Arcadius that the Roman population expects not just the normal free subsidies of corn, wine, oil and pork but also the normal entertainments of the circus.<sup>114</sup> These have been voluntarily promised by the Emperors and Symmachus politely asks that their promises be honoured. Beneath the polite tone he is actually reminding the princes that it was never wise not to fulfil promises of this kind because the populace could riot very easily.<sup>115</sup> This was a world with which Symmachus would have been extremely familiar and which was almost within his immediate neighbourhood. He himself went to an immense amount of effort to put on spectacular games on the occasion of his son Memmius' becoming a quaestor in 393 and praetor in 401 which is referred to again in Chapter 8.

After crossing in front of the Colosseum, Symmachus would then have passed into the beginning of the Via Sacra, passing between the Meta Sudans fountain on his right and the Arch of Constantine on his left. Immediately after turning right, and on his right hand side, he would have seen the Temple of Venus and Rome. Figure 27 shows the remains of pillars from this temple with the Colosseum in the background.

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<sup>113</sup> Markus, 1997: 108-9; C.Th. 16.10.17.

<sup>114</sup> Barrow, 1973: 57.

<sup>115</sup> Barrow, 1973: 56.



Fig.27: The pillars from the temple of Venus and Rome

The personification of Rome was of course very important in the rites of the *sacra publica* and so to Symmachus. The temple of Venus and Rome was built by Hadrian in 121 and was on the slope of the Velia along the north side of the Sacra Via as it goes down into the Forum. It was a double temple, in all likelihood the largest and most splendid temple of Rome,<sup>116</sup> probably dedicated in 135. The two *cellae* stood back to back so Venus faced east and Roma towards the Forum Romanum. Only the podium of Hadrian's temple remains. It burnt in 307 and was restored by Maxentius. The interior seen today with porphyry columns, polychrome pavement and a deeply coved ceiling is Maxentius'.<sup>117</sup> Prudentius made the temple even more famous in *Contra Symmachum* when he paints a dramatic picture of the rite of sacrifice in its vicinity which may never have been accurate but certainly by the time he is writing, circa 395, had long since ceased to happen.<sup>118</sup> I will consider the likelihood of Prudentius being an accurate source of the religious topography of late fourth century Rome again in 4.7.

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<sup>116</sup> Richardson, 1992: 409.

<sup>117</sup> Richardson, 1992: 410.

<sup>118</sup> Prud. *Cont. Symm.* 1.215-24, H J Thompson (trans).

*And then when he (the young heir) went abroad, and lost in wonder viewed the public festivals on national holy days with their games, and saw the lofty Capitol, the laurelled priests standing at the festivals on national temples of their gods, and the Sacred Way resounding with the lowing of cattle before the shrine of Rome (for she too is worshipped with blood after the fashion of a goddess), the name of the place is reckoned as a divinity, the temples of the City and Venus rise to the same high top and incense is burned to the pair of goddesses together.<sup>119</sup>*

Symmachus would from this point have travelled further along the Via Sacra, through the Arch of Titus, until he descended south again into the heart of the east end of the Forum Romanum past the Regia and into the complex which consisted of the Temple of Vesta and the Atrium Vestae. The photo in Figure 28 allows one to visualise very clearly how the Sacra Via and the Arch of Titus would have appeared to a Late Antique Roman travelling this route up into the Forum.



Fig. 28: Looking up the Sacra Via towards the Arch of Titus.

#### **4.5 The Forum Romanum in Late Antiquity**

The Forum that Symmachus knew was a collection of structures built in the location of the Republican Forum, a new form of which had first been envisaged by Julius Caesar and added to by emperors from Augustus to Constantine. However there was a great fire in 283 which resulted in a really substantial remodelling of the Forum by Diocletian. The emphasis of the area shifted away from the temple of Divus Julius, and the Basilica Julia and the Senate

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<sup>119</sup> Prud. *Cont. Symm.* 1.215-24, H J Thompson (trans).

House were both rebuilt.<sup>120</sup> The Forum was shortened to coincide with the eastern end of the Basilica and a new Rostra was constructed. The Late Antique Forum in turn gathered a range of monuments built around it in a variety of pagan, civic and Christian initiatives. Figure 29 shows a plan of the Forum displaying clearly the route Symmachus would have followed once through the Arch of Titus, following the Sacra Via – which is to the middle right of the plan – and then turning left down to the Temple of Vesta past the Regia. Figure 34 shows the remains of the Temple of Vesta looking towards the Arch of Titus; and demonstrates the short distance involved between the two buildings. Symmachus, once through the Arch of Titus, did not have far to travel to the Temple of Vesta.

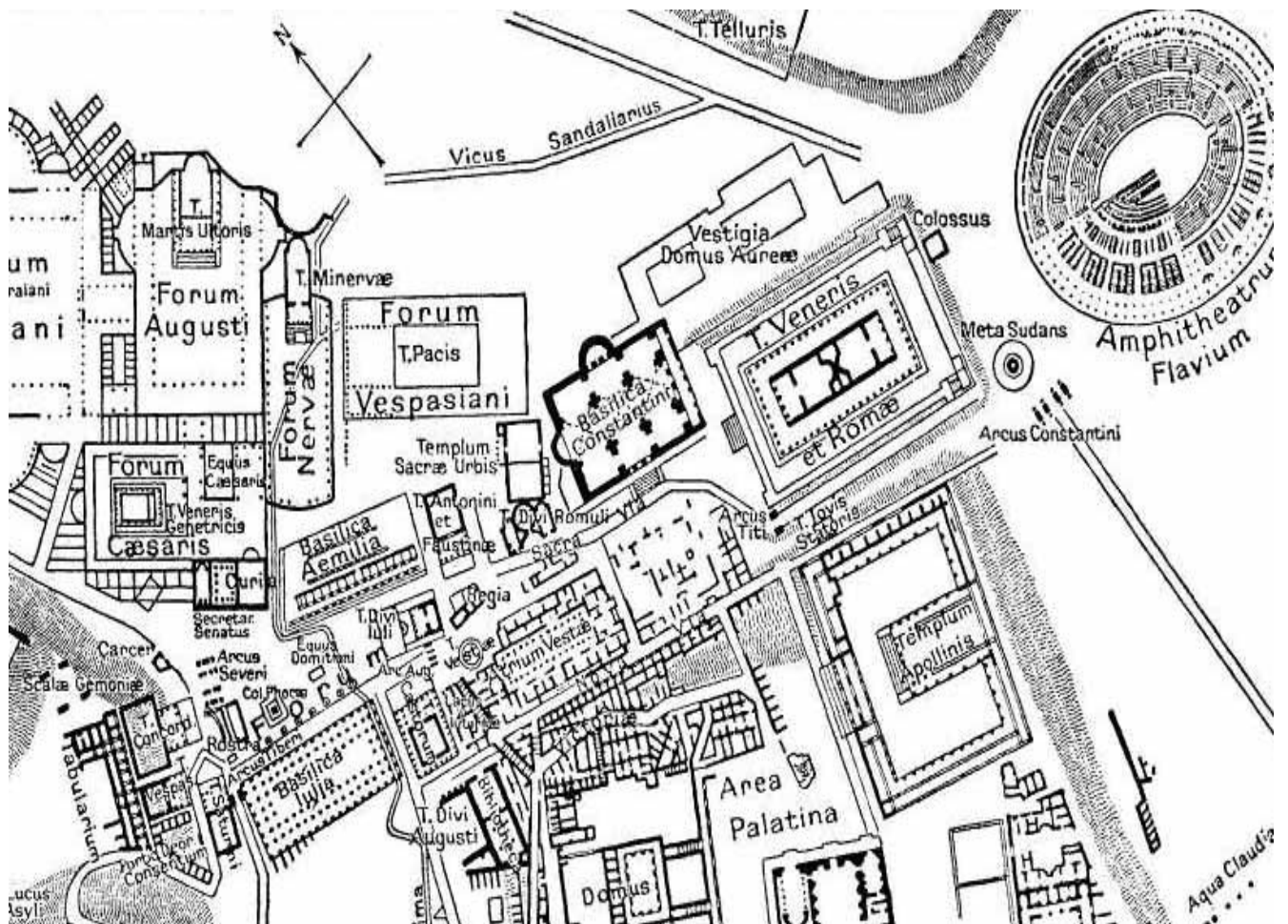


Fig. 29: Map of the eastern end of the Forum Romanum

<sup>120</sup> Claridge, 2010: 66.

Late emperors still valued the Forum's historical importance so civic building continued and repairs were made to public buildings if not to pagan structures. Late edifices included the Arch of Constantine, the Basilica of Maxentius/Constantine, and the Temple of Romulus, not the founder of Rome but the son of Maxentius. In its last stages, the fourth and fifth centuries, the Forum became was dedicated to commercial activity.<sup>121</sup> Honorary dedications were still being made in the fifth and sixth centuries; the last one we know about is the pillar of the Byzantine Emperor Phocas in 608 which can be seen in the middle of Figure 29. It is with the erection of this pillar that the history of the Forum concludes, states Coarelli.<sup>122</sup> By this stage, some pagan buildings were being transformed into Christian sanctuaries – for example the *Curia Iulia* became the Church of San Adriano during the seventh century.<sup>123</sup> By then, however, the population of Rome may have been as little as ten thousand and they did not need, and could not maintain, the structures of a Forum which no longer fulfilled any real purpose.

Christian churches did not appear in the Forum Romanum in Symmachus' time, when the area was still politically very important and there was a pagan majority in the senate till late in the fourth century. But with the ending of paganism and the gradual decline in the importance of Rome's traditional government and the rise of the Papacy it became possible eventually to build churches even in this most hallowed place of Roman tradition. Although the temples were closed in 394 they were largely protected by the state as the Theodosian Code shows.<sup>124</sup> This legislation however was aimed to prevent further destruction rather than actively restoring pagan buildings.<sup>125</sup> In time some of the buildings were reused for imperial or papal officials but not many temples in fact were ever converted into churches. The first church to be built in the Forum itself was Santa Maria Antiqua sometime in the middle to second half of the sixth century. It was built in part of what had been a huge hall constructed by Domitian, immediately behind the Temple of Castor. It had to be abandoned however in the ninth century because of the earthquake of 847.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> LTUR, v 2, 1993, 342

<sup>122</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 47

<sup>123</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 47.

<sup>124</sup> C. Th. 16.10. 3 and 18; Sym. *Rel.*21.

<sup>125</sup> Mulryan, 2008: 45.

<sup>126</sup> Claridge, 2010: 96-97.

During the fourth century there was at first a gradual removal of imperial funds and support for pagan temples and shrines which became an absolute removal after the legislation of 382. Certainly there is no evidence after 400 for restorations or new building of pagan sites although protective legislation went on until the sixth century. This does not mean that the remaining pagan families did not do such repairs privately – this is certainly possible – but there is very little evidence for this and nothing about it in the writings of Symmachus. Earlier in the fourth century there is evidence of a fluid approach to the repair or restoration of pagan sites being done both by the senate, still with a pagan majority, and under the auspices of the urban prefect of the time which means that public money would have been used. As far as the Forum is concerned Praetextatus when urban prefect in 367 restored the Portico of the Temple of the Consenting Gods beneath the escarpment of the Capitol Hill below the Tabularium at the rear of the Forum.<sup>127</sup> This is usually held to be the last repair of a pagan temple by a state official.

But there is also evidence of Claudius, the Urban Prefect for 374 repairing or building a portico attached to the Temple of Bonus Eventus in the Central Campus Martius.<sup>128</sup> This repair or construction was obviously not in the Forum Romanum but is important because of the scarcity of evidence for the fixing of pagan buildings by this date. It, like Praetextatus' structure, was a portico rather than a temple, but like that attached to the Temple of the Consenting Gods benefited pagan worshippers. As far as the senate is concerned, the Temple of Saturn within the Forum itself is generally held to have been restored between 360-80 with senate funding, although it is possible this occurred much earlier in the fourth century.<sup>129</sup> Certainly any repairs like this would have become unlikely after the 382 legislation. It would, from this evidence, be true to say that the Forum in Symmachus' time was still very much a traditional-looking site, if decaying, with no visible display of Christianity.

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<sup>127</sup> Mulryan, 2008: 40.

<sup>128</sup> Mulryan, 2008: 40; Amm. Marc. 29.6.19.

<sup>129</sup> Mulryan, 2008: 41.



#### 4.6 The Temple of Vesta and the Atrium Vestae

Whatever other temples there other individuals may have restored, Symmachus' religious interest in the Forum Romanum centred upon the structures associated with the cult of Vesta whose priest he was and whose rites, supervised by Symmachus among others, continued till 394. The idea of religious continuity can be emphasised here for Symmachus was performing the same rituals, in the same place as priests of Vesta before him had done for hundreds of years. His active participation in these rituals is surely another sign of how important the correct execution of the rites of the *sacra publica* was to him – and another indication of the depth of his religious feeling. Symmachus' involvement in these rites could just be attributed to a need to respect the status quo, but if one takes together all Symmachus' religious actions they do point very strongly in the direction of a personal religious motivation.

The functions of this priesthood and the priestesses will be dealt with in Chapter 5 so here I am concerned with giving some account of the archaeology and history of the buildings themselves. It can be seen that Symmachus' domiciliary proximity to the Forum would have allowed him to carry out these priestly duties very easily. It would have been a mile in distance from his house to the Temple of Vesta which in a *lectica* would have taken about twenty minutes. These duties would have been most intense at the time of the great annual *Vestalia* festival from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> June as in 393 when he writes to Flavianus about returning to Rome for this from his estate on the Appian Way<sup>130</sup> but he would have descended into the Forum to supervise the Vestals at regular intervals during the rest of the year as well.

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<sup>130</sup> *Ep.*2.59.



Fig. 30: Close up of the remains of the Temple of Vesta, looking east, towards the Arch of Titus. The modern reconstruction of the temple is discussed on the next page.

The cult of Vesta was central to the *Sacra Publica* and the rites of protecting the city and one of the oldest cults in Rome. The Temple of Vesta or the *Aedes Vestae* stood at the eastern end of the Roman Forum close to the *Lacus Iuturnae* and *Aedes Castoris*. Its tholus shape is probably derived from that of the early Latin huts belonging to the earliest stage of the history of Rome when there was a collection of villages on the Palatine and other hills which eventually joined up. What remains we see nowadays of the *Aedes* and *Atrium Vestae* are those of the restoration of Julia Domna, the wife of Septimius Severus after the 191 fire.<sup>131</sup> Because it stored the sacred fire, the temple was obviously also prone to fire which happened at frequent intervals, although it was the main duty of the Vestals to watch the sacred flame. The temple is composed of a circular podium which is made of *opus caementicum*, about fifteen metres in diameter. It had a marble revetment which supported the bases which held the peristyle of Corinthian columns. The *cella* or heart of the temple was also round and within this the sacred fire was kept burning continuously, presumably in some kind of basin

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<sup>131</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 85.

with a smoke hole in the roof.<sup>132</sup> An image of the temple taken from the Digital Forum Project demonstrates what it probably looked like.

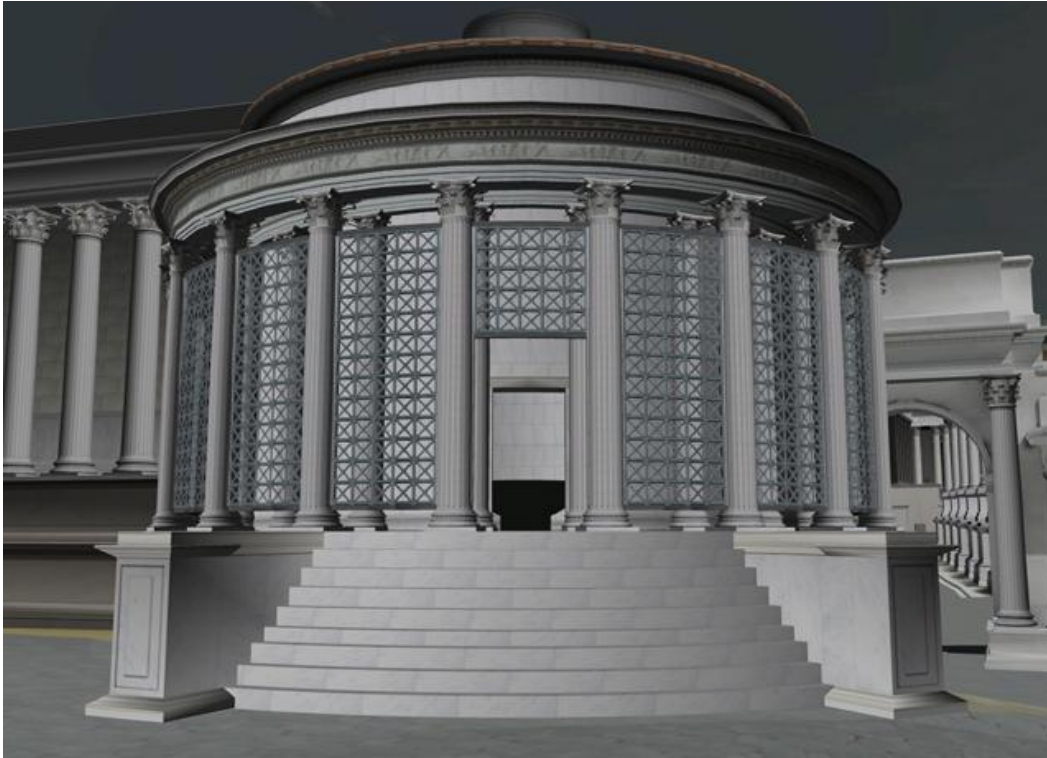


Fig 31: Reconstruction of the Temple of Vesta c 400 CE from the Digital Roman Forum Project.

The modern partial reconstruction of the temple uses some of the original marble, supplemented with travertine. This was done in the 1930s by order of Mussolini as part of his restoration of the glories of ancient Rome. The temple held the sacred objects brought, according to legend, by Aeneas when he fled from Troy. This included the holy of holies the *palladium*, an image of Minerva.

The entrance to the House of the Vestals or the *Atrium Vestae* lay to the east of the Temple. This building went through many transformations in its long history and what can be seen now is in the form of a peristyle house built entirely in brick. It maintains the dimensions of the structure created after the fire of 64 and a new orientation that follows the north west/south east axis of the Forum. It was closed after the battle of Frigidus in 394 when all

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<sup>132</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 86.

the pagan temples were permanently shut and the last Vestals had to leave. Later on the building was occupied by Imperial functionaries and even later by those of the Papal Court.<sup>133</sup> The battle of Frigidus and the closure of the temples occurred in the later lifetime of Symmachus. There is nothing in his correspondence about what happened to the Temple of Vesta or the individual Vestals after 394. To those who regretted the passing the Vestals, the Christians could point to the many Christian women espousing the ascetic life compared with the small number of Vestal Virgins.<sup>134</sup>

The central part of the *Atrium Vestae* in its last phase comprised a huge rectangular courtyard surrounded originally by a portico with a two-storied colonnade though it is not clear whether Symmachus as a *pontifex Vestae* would have had access to this. There are three basins, two square ones at the ends and a rectangular one in the centre. This was replaced, possibly during the time of Constantine, by an octagonal structure made of brick which might have served as a garden. Many statues of Vestals were also found, many in pieces in a heap on the western side where they were waiting to be turned into lime. Some of these, of the presiding Vestals, would have originally been displayed beneath the portico. Some of them, surrounding the pleasant pool, still remain in place on their bases;<sup>135</sup> but their present positions are entirely random as their original location is unknown. Others are now displayed in various museums.

#### **4.7 Me paenitet tempora moresque transuisse**

In this chapter so far the religious landscape associated with Symmachus has been traced, from his principal town *domus* on the Caelian Hill, then round the wider Caelian looking both at old temples and newer churches, and finally following the route he would have taken to the Forum and the complex of Vesta via the Colosseum and the Upper Via Sacra. This final section of Chapter 4 will consider whether or not Symmachus, when travelling in his neighbourhood or in the wider Rome on his regular religious business, saw what was actually there – the temples gradually being abandoned and the growth of new churches; or did he blank reality out and imagine that he was actually moving through a glorious pagan past. This pagan past is evoked very clearly and dramatically by Prudentius, one extract of whose work

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<sup>133</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 86, 88.

<sup>134</sup> Clark, 1993: 51.

<sup>135</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 88.

we have already considered in relation to the temple of Venus and Rome. Prudentius, a Spaniard, who was contemporaneous with Symmachus and who may have only once visited Rome, describes in his *Contra Symmachum* and other works rituals set in Rome itself that were redolent of the past, perhaps the past of the time of Cicero. This is, however an **imagined** Rome which was derived mainly from literary sources, as was that of Macrobius' *Saturnalia* written round about 430 which is considered in Chapter 5. The rituals described in Prudentius owe more to descriptions in Virgil and other authors than to anything he could have seen himself; for example his blood curdling account of the *taurobolium* rite in *Peristephanon* 10, lines 1011-50, in which he is describing a ritual where the event has become unbelievably dramatic and gory and where the technical description of the mode of sacrifice and the actions and apparel of the priests is extremely inaccurate as this extract shows:<sup>136</sup>

*Do you not realise, unhappy pagan, the blood I speak of – the sacred blood of your ox, in the sacrificial slaughter of which you soak yourselves? The high priest, you know, goes down into a trench dug deep in the ground to be made holy, wearing a strange headband, his temples bound with its fillets for the solemnity and his hair clasped with a golden crown, while his silken robe is held up with the Gabine girdle.*

He seems here to imagine this reflects the practices still current in Late Antique Roman religion so recently banned. Prudentius, however, is an ardent Christian who is detailing activities to which he is very antagonistic but he is not doing it as someone who has actually observed the rites he describes. As a devout Christian, attendance at such rites would have been anathema to him and much of his diatribe can be put down to normal anti-polytheistic polemic. More importantly, his descriptions of cult practices do not come from real life. He describes what he **imagines** goes on. He is not describing the still partly pagan Rome of the late fourth century that was inhabited by Symmachus and his fellow devotees in which some temples were still functioning but where many were shut, deserted, neglected or even destroyed and where the number of churches was steadily growing. It is very unlikely that he would ever have seen sacrifice and the *taurobolium* was a private religious rite indulged in by a few aristocratic devotees.<sup>137</sup>

Symmachus' adherence to the traditional religious rites of Rome is demonstrated in *Ep.* 2.7, written to Flavianus in 384, when he was experiencing great difficulties as Urban Prefect. He

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<sup>136</sup> Prud. *Peristeph.* 10.1011-50, H J Thompson (trans).

<sup>137</sup> McLynn, 1996: 312.

laments the neglect of the ancient cults in Rome which was presumably caused by Gratian's actions in 382 towards banning the Altar of Victory in the senate and terminating imperial cult subsidies. There is famine and Symmachus blames this on the neglect of the old gods:<sup>138</sup>

*Dii patrii, facite gratiam neglectorum sacrorum!*

*O gods of our native land pardon us for neglecting your rites!*

This is a powerful prayer and is a very clear statement of Symmachus' core religious belief – that without the *sacra publica* which has served her so well in the past, the fate of Rome and her greatness will suffer. With the cutting of the public religious subsidies by Gratian of course this link had effectively been broken and this letter demonstrates Symmachus' fears and conviction that there will be suffering because of it. After all Symmachus represents this as if it is already happening.

Another letter, referred to in Chapter 3 on page 50, which does reveal both his antiquarian religious knowledge and interests and shows regret at the passing of the old ways, is *Ep.4.33.2*, to Protadius.

*Do you not see that the oracles which once spoke have ceased, neither can anything be read from the books in Cumae's cave, nor does Dodona utter any more from its leaves, nor is any song heard from Delphi's breath*

These short sentences cover the major oracles of the Classical world and, I feel, show a real yearning for the past and regret for its passing. Not even these great religious Classical sites would survive the onslaught and brave new world of Christianity. This again demonstrates a poetic and spiritual side to Symmachus and is a very good example of his regret at the loss of the old religious customs.

The Emperor Julian is supposed to have received the last oracle from Delphi although in reality it continued until shut by Theodosius in 394. This supposed fact was immortalized by Swinburne in the following lines from the 'Last Oracle' who shows here a dramatic licence worthy of Prudentius:<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Ep. 2.7.3.*

<sup>139</sup> Swinburne, 1917: 5.

*Tell the king on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling,  
And the water springs that spake are quenched and dead.  
Not a cell is left for the God, no roof, no cover  
In his hand the prophet laurel flowers no more.*

Dodona was thought by Herodotus to be the oldest oracle in Greece,<sup>140</sup> sacred to Zeus and whose oak tree is mentioned by Homer both in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>141</sup> It was visited by Hadrian in 132 and Julian is also said to have consulted it.<sup>142</sup> There appears to be evidence that the oak tree was uprooted before the end of the fourth century, an example of how even the sites of the oldest of the pagan cults were not respected or held sacred by this period.

Finally we must consider the Sibylline books, Rome's domestic oracle which were supposed to have been bought by Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome, from the Sybil at Cumae on the bay of Naples. They were stored in the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol and when these original books perished in a fire in 83 BCE they were replaced with another set. The Roman Senate kept a close hold on them.<sup>143</sup> They were moved by Augustus in his role as *pontifex maximus* to the temple of Apollo Palatinus on the Palatine from which they were rescued when the temple burnt in 363.<sup>144</sup> The last occasion on which anyone sought counsel from them appears to have been Julian who ordered them to be consulted before his ill-fated Persian expedition. The advice he received warned him not to leave his borders that year.<sup>145</sup> It is tantalising to wonder what might have happened if he had heeded this warning. They survived until 405 when Stilicho, a devout Christian, had them burnt. Symmachus by then had been dead for about three years but with the temples having been closed and paganism banned completely for over ten years by this time it is unlikely that even his friendship with and influence over Stilicho could have saved them.

I do not think that Symmachus, moving about Rome on religious business was normally concerned with dwelling on the pagan past. His practical and pragmatic approach to religion and to life would seem to exclude that and the letters do not suggest this to be the case. He seems to me in his correspondence to dwell usually very much in the present and in a 'real'

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<sup>140</sup> Curnow, 2004: 58.

<sup>141</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, 2.750, *Odyssey*, 14.327-8, 19. 296; Curnow, 2004: 58.

<sup>142</sup> Curnow, 2004: 59.

<sup>143</sup> Orlin, 2002: 97.

<sup>144</sup> Amm. Marc. 23.3.3.

<sup>145</sup> Cameron, 2011: 214.

landscape. He is concerned with the problems that his religious practices caused in the present day, even if in some of his letters he aired his interest in ancient cult matters. Above all his devotion to *amicitia* meant that he made this his main focus in his relationships with people and events, rather than religion, as I discuss in Chapter 6. It allowed him to rise above the fact that in the last stages of his life many of his contemporaries and social equals, such as the Valerii, had become firm Christians. In spite of this pragmatism however there is regret sometimes in his letters for the religious past that was once so great and important to the sanctity and lifeblood of the Roman state, and this is demonstrated on several occasions and in a variety of different ways.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have investigated how the de-paganisation of the Caelian Hill where Symmachus lived proceeded, and also how the gradual encroachment of Christian structures into the ancient sacred space would have impacted on a committed pagan like Symmachus. I have done this by analysing his relevant writings, by using a series of related photographs and maps, and by visiting the area. This process allowed me to explore the changes in the religious topography of his locality during the last decades of the fourth century, and to try to determine Symmachus' feelings about this. By examining one locality under a microscope, we can get an overview of pagan and Christian interaction and use this local data to understand the changes in the wider religious scene of Rome itself. We can get some idea of Symmachus' perceptions about the religious changes from his writings but we do not know what he said in private or what he thought about the momentous transformation that was taking place. It would appear from interpreting the religious topography of the Caelian Hill in his lifetime that for much of the period pagan religion was not necessarily a lost cause, but something which the physical setting would encourage Symmachus to think could co-exist with Christianity if it had the chance.

The Caelian Hill had always been important in Rome's religious life as it was in the direct line taken by the augurs from the time of the foundation of Rome when they stood on the Arx and faced south east over the city and made their augural prayer to Jupiter. The view to the south east is the longest view over the city. It travels down the Forum Romanum over the low crest of the Velia, fingers the south west flank of the arch of Constantine, and rises to the



summit of the Caelian above which, in the distance, towers the Alban Mount where Jupiter Latiaris had an ancient and very important shrine.<sup>146</sup> There is no doubt also that pagan Rome showed a clear correlation between the pagan centres and its hills. This meant that temples were major landmarks of the old Rome and clearly indicated the importance of religion in the city to its inhabitants and visitors. This was the religious Rome that Symmachus knew and loved, which we have traced during the assessment of his ‘religious landscape’ in Chapter 4. The Caelian Hill and the approach from the south east to the Forum had its fair share of important pagan monuments and shrines as is obvious from this survey. But things were beginning to change in a radical way that in time was completely going to transform and reorganise sacred space. The Caelian Hill in Symmachus’ time was starting to acquire churches, even if their development was yet sporadic and if like SS Giovanni e Paolo in the Clivo Scauro these in their early stages were house churches and so not obvious when pagans like Symmachus passed them by.

Pope Damasus, who died in December 384, wanted to make Rome as great a Christian city as it had once been a pagan one. He endeavoured to achieve this in part by encouraging the cult of the martyrs and placed epigrams which he had composed in the style of Virgil on large marble plaques in their tombs.<sup>147</sup> This started the process of developing pilgrimage paths through Rome which came to redefine sacred space in the Imperial city and helped significantly in the process of turning it from a pagan city to a Christian one.<sup>148</sup> This period certainly sees the initial stages of the Christianisation of Rome by the papacy. What was still fairly tentative in Symmachus’ time when some degree of paganism was still active – even if by the mid 390s all ritual was banned and the temples closed – became in the course of the fifth century an unstoppable flood. By this time Christian confidence had grown and church building becomes much more evident and planned. In the end my survey of the evidence suggests that Symmachus at least retained for most of his life his traditional ‘religious landscape’ in his own locality and on his route to the Temple of Vesta in the Forum Romanum. But the closure of the temples and the abandonment of traditional cult undoubtedly saddened him which is evident in his letters. Even if he was too pragmatic to dwell in his everyday life on an ‘imagined’ religious Rome of the time of Cicero or the early Empire and found in his later life other outlets for his energies, he did, in his private

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<sup>146</sup> Richardson, 1978: 241.

<sup>147</sup> Casiday and Norris (ed), 2007: 552.

<sup>148</sup> Saghy, 2000: 273:

correspondence at least, show regret for the religious past. In a sense also, by revealing his true religious affiliations in his letters, he was taking a stand for what he believed as he intended to publish at least some of these epistles.

## Chapter 5

### Symmachus' Religious Ritual

Having explored Symmachus' everyday exposure to religion through his language and topographical landscape, this chapter will consider the ritual associated with traditional paganism that was part of Symmachus' daily religious practices and those of his closest associates. This investigation will be conducted primarily, but not exclusively, by examining a series of his religious letters (in Section 5.1) from which it is possible to understand many of the rites and responsibilities of the state religion at this late stage, in particular those associated with the college of *pontifices Vestae*. These letters are extremely important because they belong to a world in which *religio* still meant the ancient *sacra publica* and *superstitio*, on the other hand, unreasonable ideas about religion. However, because the prevailing religious ethos of the elite changed so quickly, certainly within a generation and possibly within Symmachus' own lifetime, these letters, almost as soon as they were written, became merely historical artefacts; therefore as a means of religious identification they became obsolete. It will be demonstrated in this chapter that Symmachus was scrupulous in his religious duties as a priest of Vesta and equally scrupulous in his dealings with the Vestals themselves; and it will also be hypothesized that, in spite of his affection for Praetextatus who undoubtedly was one, Symmachus did not have much in common with 'florid' pagans.

Section 5.2 will examine Symmachus' closest religious companions Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and Virius Nicomachus Flavianus and using available inscriptional epigraphic, literary and epistolary evidence, how and if their traditional religious ritual differed from that of Symmachus. This section will also consider the various female cults that Aconia Paulina, the wife of Praetextatus, was associated with and their difference from the traditional cult of Vesta whose priestesses were the only significant ones associated with the traditional Roman pantheon and the state cult. Both are models of religious power that **women** as opposed to men could aspire to in the late Roman world. My comparison of male and female models of priesthood takes a different viewpoint from that of many scholars. Section 5.3 will examine Macrobius' *Saturnalia* and how he treats Praetextatus, Symmachus and Flavianus. Section 5.4 examines the changing nature of pagan ritual by seeing if there was any marked alteration in traditional state cults from the time of Cicero to that of Symmachus and Section 5.5 will

outline what happened to the pagan priesthood. The chapter will finally conclude in Section 5.6.

Ritual within religion can be defined as the prescribed or established form of a religious ceremony.<sup>1</sup> This definition can be associated with the ritual of the state cults of Roman paganism whose main *raison d'être* was, by particular rites, above all sacrifice, to ensure the benevolence of the Roman gods to the state. The simple cult acts invoking the favour of the gods for agricultural purposes in Cato's *De Agricultura* favour us with a rare and early view of how this ritual could be accomplished, as where the author gives us the correct ritual to be observed when thinning a grove;<sup>2</sup> though this rite was about getting the gods' favour for the individual, not the state. The passage declares:

*A pig is to be sacrificed and the following prayer uttered: 'Whether thou be god or goddess to whom this grove is dedicated, as is thy right to receive a sacrifice of a pig for the thinning of this sacred grove, and to thy intent, whether I or one at my bidding do it, may it be rightly done. To this end in offering this pig to thee I humbly beg that thou wilt be gracious and merciful to me, to my house and household, and to my children. Wilt thou deign to receive this pig which I offer thee to this end?'*

The letters assessed in this chapter give other insights to and illuminate different aspects of the ritual acts of the *sacra publica* at the end of paganism, six hundred years later, and also the duties of the priests of Vesta. Scholars have in the past seen Symmachus as being purely formalistic and traditional in his approach to religion but the intention, in this chapter, is to take further the hypothesis by which I try to demonstrate that he had more profound religious beliefs too. The aim by the end of this thesis is to try to prove this hypothesis.

## 5.1 Symmachus' daily religious ritual

The *cursus honorum* of Symmachus from the statue base found in 1617 in the gardens of Sertorius Theophilus on the Caelian hill, (see Chapter 1, p 9), clearly states that he is a *pontifex maior* or priest of Vesta. The position of the title on this inscription is quite high up, indicating the fact that he probably obtained his priesthood fairly early in his career as the offices seem to be in chronological order. Cameron agrees with Matthews,<sup>3</sup> that the fact

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, *Eng. Dict.*, 1983: 1259.

<sup>2</sup> Cato, *De Agr.* 139, W.D. Hooper (trans.).

<sup>3</sup> Cameron, 2010: 156; Matthews, 1973: 188.

there is no reference on the statue base to any other priesthood of Symmachus does not mean he could not have had one, for example in one of the mystery religions. It was just not included because of lack of space on the monument, as on Flavianus' which forms a pair with it. However there is no evidence within the letters or indeed the *Relationes* to indicate that Symmachus was an adherent of any of the mystery religions, just that he may have probably attended the festivities associated with Cybele. So the statue base inscription most likely reflects his priestly reality whereas the one to Flavianus, who we know was an adherent of the *mater deum*, was tailored to match the Symmachean one. The *pontifices* were an elite priesthood which had nine members in 300 BCE; from the time of Sulla there were fifteen. Julius Caesar raised them to sixteen and from the time of Augustus there were a few more.<sup>4</sup> They were called the *pontifices maiores* from the end of the third century and this appellation became the *pontifices Vestae* towards 340.<sup>5</sup> The title applied to them all, not just the most senior.<sup>6</sup> This form of address stressed the link between the priests and the cult of Vesta – and the charge that they had of the Vestal Virgins whom they supervised. For the first time this link appeared in the title even of the simple priests of the college.<sup>7</sup> Symmachus' posthumous inscription carries the form *pontifex maior* rather than *pontifex Vestae*. This may well reflect Symmachus' own preference but would seem, in any case, to be a bit of deliberate archaism.

**Table 5: The Religious Letters concerned with the cult of Vesta**

1.46	Concerning Cult Acts
1.68	About the treasurer of the College
2.36	Concerning post-mortem statues for Praetextatus
9.108	A Vestal wants to leave the order
2.59	The feast of Vesta
9.147 and 148	Symmachus demands the traditional punishment for an unchaste Vestal
1.47	Praetextatus is neglecting his priestly duties
1.51	Concerning the lack of adherents for the pontifical college

<sup>4</sup> Rüpke, 2009: 223.

<sup>5</sup> Van Haepelen, 2002: 84.

<sup>6</sup> Rüpke, 2009: 223.

<sup>7</sup> Van Haepelen, 2002: 84.

The letters of Symmachus that deal with the activities of the pontifical college are important because, even though the references within them are often brief, they are one of the few means of gaining a real feel for this aspect of late paganism. Because of this, various modern authorities have considered and interpreted them. Only some of these epistles can be truly said to deal with ritual; others are more concerned with the administration of the college. But the rites of any cult have to be administered effectively or they do not work – so there is an obvious crossover between the two groups. The list of letters concerned with the day to day activities of the *pontifices Vestae* can be seen on the previous page and are discussed in the order listed; the first three, *Ep.* 1.46, 1.68 and 2.36 are concerned with administrative matters. Number 9.108, which comes next, can also be classed as an administrative letter as it deals with an un-named Vestal who wants to leave the order. The later letters on the chart however are concerned with ritual and are *Ep.* 2.59, 1.47, 1.51, and 9.147-8; these will be analysed in more depth primarily because they appear to be the most important – 2.59 because it is the only letter dealing with the daily rituals of the Vestals at their annual festival, 1.47 and 51 because both give us further insight into the pressures that the pontifical college was facing and 9.147-8 because they reveal that the penalties of the traditional *sacra publica* as applied to the Vestals could be demanded if not actually applied. Finally *Ep.* 1.49 is an extremely important letter in that it deals with an act of actual sacrifice at Spoleto, so this will be examined in this context. It is not however on the chart on the previous page because it is not concerned with the *pontifices Vestae*.

### **Administrative Letters**

The administrative letters are interesting and informative but not as vital in terms of what I am trying to elucidate as the ritual group. All the letters considered in this section belong to the third class of the *tria genera theologiae* which I used to categorise Symmachus' religious language in Chapter 3, which is the *theologia civilis* or *sacra publica*. Letter 2.36 concerns the desires of the Vestals to put up statues to Praetextatus after his death in December of 384 and is more correctly informative about Symmachus' religious companions and so will be discussed in Section 2. 1.46, which is concerned with cult acts, is obscure; and 1.68 concerns a practical mission in 380 by Rufus the pontifical treasurer to Vaga in North Africa. This trip apparently was to conserve fundamental sources of wealth (woods and pastures) for the college. Rufus' visit was made necessary for two reasons: a simple problem with an inheritance and a fiscal seizure by a local authority which was now Christian – Vaga had

possessed a bishopric since 258.<sup>8</sup> This is an interesting letter which gives a different side to the work of the college, which is usually concerned, at least in Symmachus' letters, with ritual aspects. Presumably these lands were confiscated later under the anti-pagan legislation of Gratian although this is not certain and at the time of the letter there had not yet been legislation against property ownership by pagan colleges. An aggressive bishop with a co-operative governor might however do what he liked in this respect; Jews also did not always get the protection of the law according to local circumstances.<sup>9</sup> An example of this was the burning of the synagogue at Callinicum on the Euphrates by a Christian mob in 388 which Ambrose forced Theodosius to countenance.<sup>10</sup>

Letter 9.108, though still concerned primarily with administration, is a very different kind of letter for it is written to an unnamed Vestal who wants to leave the order. It is also very unusual because it is, as far as we know, the only letter written by Symmachus to a woman in the *Epistulae*, except for his daughter, the joint recipient of the letters in Book 6. It is dated by Callu only to before 402, but in reality it must have been written prior to 394 when the Temple of Vesta was closed as after this date it would not have been relevant. Symmachus is very stern in his approach to this lady and there is a possibility that he was, in fact, the *pontifex* who controlled discipline within the order. Traditionally this was carried out by the *pontifex maximus*. He states:

*Omnia quae sine auctore iactantur incerta sunt; sed ego in sacrae uirginis famam nihil patior licere sermonibus. Quare officio pontificis, fide senatoris admoneor proferre comperta. Diceris ante annos legibus definitos uestali secreto uelle decedere. Nondum credo rumori, sed adsertionem tuae uocis expecto, quae opinionis dubium aut agnoscat aut respuat.*

*All is uncertain which is spoken of without a known authority: but I allow nothing to affect the reputation of a sacred virgin by way of gossip. This is why I am engaged, by my office of pontifex by my faith as a senator in producing known facts. You are said to wish to leave the Vestal unseen life before the length of years fixed by the laws. I do not yet believe the rumour but I await the formal declaration of your voice which either may confirm or deny the uncertain conjecture.*

It may well be that apart from his natural scrupulosity towards his religious duties, Symmachus is being extra vigilant to avoid any suggestion by Christians of laxity due to the

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<sup>8</sup> Callu, 2003, Tome 1: 229, p 124, n 2.

<sup>9</sup> Noy by email, 24/7/12; G Schiemen, 'Ius;', in *Brill's New Pauly online*, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/enris/brill-s-new-pauly/ius>

<sup>10</sup> Matthews, 1975: 232.

uncertain position of paganism by this period. He certainly is being very careful to protect the integrity of the unnamed Vestal involved and perhaps this is one reason for not giving her name at the beginning of the letter as the recipient; she must be seen to be above reproach, although it is possible the name was removed before publication. She also, however, may be taking advantage of the changing times to try and repudiate her vows before the end of her term of office – feeling that this course of action could now be possible in a way which traditionally would have been impossible. Presumably the closure of the temple complex meant the Vestals' vow was annulled and that the remaining Vestal Virgins either returned to live with their families or possibly together in a house suitable for their rank. This letter is important in informing us about the uncertainty possibly felt by the Vestals in the period leading up to 394 and is unusual in that it gives us Symmachus' view of a rumour he has heard about an individual, mature Vestal who now wants to rescind her vows. The selection of this letter for publication in a volume which were published later, often to unnamed recipients and therefore originally considered unimportant is interesting. Salzman surmises that volumes 8-9 of the letters were published in the late fifth or early sixth century at a time when Symmachus' reputation as a letter-writing was growing in Byzantine circles and prospective readers wanted more of the letters as examples of style but were not concerned with their content.<sup>11</sup> The way in which the main body of Symmachus' letters were selected for publication however has been already dealt with in Chapter 1 on page 3-4.

### **Letters to do with ritual**

In letter 2.59 Symmachus writes to Flavianus to tell him that he is about to return to Rome for the great June festival of Vesta, the *Vestalia*, (see the next page). This letter is the only one in the Symmachean corpus to deal with the daily rites of the Vestals. It would have been a very important point in the year for the *pontifices Vestae* as well and they would have definitely needed to be present in Rome for this. The main day of the *Vestalia* was 9<sup>th</sup> June; but the days both before and after this date were also dedicated to Vesta<sup>12</sup>. On 7<sup>th</sup> June the inner sanctum of the temple in the *Forum Romanum* was opened to women; it was closed again on 15<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>13</sup> Not much is known about the public celebrations to do with this festival but millers and bakers kept it as a holiday and the millstones and asses that pulled them were garlanded

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<sup>11</sup> Salzman, 2011: lx.

<sup>12</sup> H. Cancik-Lindemaier, 'Vestals', in *Brills New Pauly*, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/Vestals> - accessed 26/10/15

<sup>13</sup> Adkins and Adkins, 1996: 237.



with violets and small loaves. The refuse from the temple of Vesta was swept out on 15th June into an alleyway halfway up the Capitoline Hill from where it was swept away into the Tiber.<sup>14</sup> There was also another festival of Vesta on 1<sup>st</sup> March when the flame in the temple was extinguished and then rekindled by rubbing two sticks together.<sup>15</sup>

This letter is dated to 393 which means that the main festival of Vesta was still being celebrated in Rome a year before Theodosius ordered the doors of the temple shut permanently after Frigidus. This reveals that even after the 391 legislation closing the temples the pagan aristocracy was still able to celebrate this festival; and the fact that Eugenius was the resident Emperor in Rome at this period probably also aided the celebrations. Eugenius, even though he did not himself support the pagan cults, did not actively discourage them during his period in Rome, allowing his officials, prominent among them Flavianus, father and son, a fair degree of latitude in this respect. Symmachus did not actively support Eugenius unlike the Flaviani which I discuss in Chapter 8 on page 255-6. The antiquity and possibly popularity of this festival may have been contributing factors as well. There is regrettably very little information about the daily routine of the Vestals in the letters but we must assume that Symmachus and his brethren would have concerned themselves with the Vestals' normal daily religious practices, if necessary, as well as being present at the festivals. We do not have any specific information about the festival in the fourth century so must suppose that it was celebrated much as it had been in previous centuries.

One important function of the Vestals that continued until they were disbanded was that of purificatory agents – this was tied up with their need for *castitas* to keep the city pure<sup>16</sup> and may be a partial explanation for Symmachus' desire for the traditional punishment to be served on the unchaste Vestal and her lover (letters 9.147 and 148 on page 133, 137-8). Other important Vestal roles that Symmachus and his brethren would have supervised were the ritual thrice annual preparation of unleavened bread called *mola salsa* from spelt, salt and water. This action was a rite connected to their role as the keepers of Rome's symbolic food stores. Above all the Vestals had an extremely important function in being the guardians of

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<sup>14</sup> Adkins and Adkins, 1996: 237.

<sup>15</sup> Adkins and Adkins, 1996: 237.

<sup>16</sup> Wildfang, 2006: 16.

the *penus* of Rome situated, with its sacral contents, within the *aedes Vestae*. All these acts continued till the closure of the Vestal complex.<sup>17</sup>

Letter 2.59 tells us that Symmachus has been at a suburban villa he owned along the Appian Way and he states that he does not know if he will stay in Rome or return to the villa. It is interesting because it indicates how an important religious festival was dealt with by Symmachus. Flavianus has been away for some time on the cause of ‘justice’ but Symmachus now needs to know what he intends to do for not only does the Festival of Vesta beckon – and Flavianus is also a *pontifex* – but Memmius is about to celebrate his quaestorship and Flavianus’ presence is needed in the Senate as soon as possible. Symmachus ends the letter with a rather nice compliment to his friend. He says:

*Vocat enim te in curiam nostram diis auctoribus quamprimum candidati mei designatio, cui supra omnes ornamento eris, qui nos uel adfinitatis uel amicitiae officiis prosequuntur*

*For the appointment of my son to the quaestorship summons you to our Senate as quickly as possible, by the authority of the gods; to which you will be a decoration above all the others who will accompany us from duty, either of family relationships or of friendship.*

The letter loses none of Symmachus’ usual elegance but is as straightforward as his style is ever able to be. It is also interesting because Symmachus’ reference to the gods, when he has no need in this context, could indicate an inner belief in their active role.

### **The Vestals and the appropriate punishment for lack of chastity**

The next two letters to be considered in this section, 9.147 and 148, both concern the appropriate punishment for an erring Vestal, Primigenia, formerly chief Vestal of the Alban college, who has taken a lover and for whom Symmachus wants the traditional punishment, burial alive. The beginning of 9.147 states:

*More institutoque maiorum incestum Primigeniae dudum apud Albam Vestalis anstitis collegii nostri disquitio deprehendit.*

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<sup>17</sup> Wildfang, 2006: 16.

*The investigation by our college has taken place into the lack of chastity of Primigenia, formerly Chief Vestal at Alba, by custom and ancestral tradition.*

Though there was a separate house of the Vestals at Bovillae in this period, the cult was obviously organised by the priests in Rome itself. Presumably there would have been regular visits from the Roman *pontifices* to the Bovillae Vestal establishment; Symmachus may well have gone there when in residence at one of his houses on the Appian Way. There is, however, a paucity of information about this Vestal establishment. According to Roman legend the Vestal cult originally had come to Rome from Latium, from Alba Longa, being introduced to the city by either Romulus or Numa.<sup>18</sup> Alba Longa was on the *Albanus mons*, according to Livy<sup>19</sup> and Dionysius, in the vicinity of the Pope's modern summer residence, Castel Gandolfo, which is on Lago Albano, south of Rome in Lazio. The town of Castel Gandolfo now covers the site of Alba Longa; in Imperial times there was a great royal villa there used by Domitian.

The Vestal cult at Alba is briefly mentioned in Juvenal.<sup>20</sup> Symmachus however does not specify where these Vestals actually resided; it cannot, obviously have been at Alba itself for it did not exist as a place, having been destroyed by Rome during the seventh century BCE. The most likely contender would seem to be nearby Bovillae, a colony of Alba Longa, founded according to legend by the latter's second king Latinus Silvius. After the destruction of Alba, Bovillae must have inherited its cultic functions, including that of the Vestals.<sup>21</sup> Roman families like the Julii preserved sacred ties with Bovillae in later centuries.<sup>22</sup> The 'Alban' traditions of Bovillae were apparently revitalised by the Julio-Claudian emperors; Tiberius established the *Sodales Augustales* who had responsibility for honouring the cult of the *gens Iulia* in a shrine, also founded by Tiberius.<sup>23</sup> A circus and theatre were also built but little of these remain today and most of ancient Bovillae is buried under modern Frattochie. Figure 32 shows the remains of the *carceres* of the Bovillae circus, today situated in the midst of modern houses.

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<sup>18</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.64. 5 ff; Serv. *Aen.*1.273; Hornblower and Spawforth, 1999: 1591.

<sup>19</sup> Livy. 1.3.4

<sup>20</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 4.61

<sup>21</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 501.

<sup>22</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 501.

<sup>23</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 501.



Fig. 32: The *carceres* of the circus at Bovillae

Bovillae was twelve Roman miles from Rome, today marked on the left of the Via Appia Nuova by the concrete core of a large tomb called ‘Il Torraccio’.<sup>24</sup> Evidence of the connections of the Vestals with Bovillae, and of them being known in Asconius’ day, is found in Asconius on Cicero’s *Pro Milone* where in the trial of Milo for the murder of Clodius in 52 BCE at Bovillae some of the Vestals gave evidence at the trial; ‘Then some Virgins from Alba stated that an unknown woman had come to them, to give thanks for the death of Clodius’.<sup>25</sup>

On a tablet found in 1728 near the eleventh milestone on the Via Appia, therefore approximately a mile from Bovillae, was inscribed the following inscription cut from a marble base. It dates to 157 CE but was probably erected in either 158 or 159 - that is during the reign of Antoninus Pius:<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Coarelli, 2014: 500.

<sup>25</sup> Asconius, *Pro Milone* 40. S Squires (trans).

<sup>26</sup> *CIL*, 14.2410: *locus adsignatus ab C Dissinio C F Qui[r(ina) Fusco] curatore reipublicae Bovillensium dedi[cata] VIII k(alendas) Ianuar(ias) Sex. Sulpicio Tertullo Q Tinei[o Sacer=]dote co(n)s(ulibus) cuius ob dedicationem dedit ordin[i] decuri=]onum sing(ulis) ((sestertios)) VIII item ordini Augustalium si[ng(ulis) ((sertertios)) ---] quod permiserunt in clupeo quod ei posuerun[t ante] templum no<v>um pingere effigiem Man[liae?] Severinae virginis Albanae maxi[mae soro=]ris suae post excessum vitae eiu[s. Hic] primus comitia magistratuum [creandorum] causa instituit M Civica Barba[ro M. Metillio] Regulo co(n)s(ulibus) anno urbis conditae DCCCCX? [con]sentiente C Dissinio Fusco cur(atore) [rei publi(cae) o -atore]*

*Place assigned by Gaius Dissinius Fuscus, son of Gaius,  
of the Quirine Tribe, Curator of the town of Bovillae,  
Dedicated on 24<sup>th</sup> December in the consulship of Sextus Sulpicius Tertullius and  
Q Tineius Sacerdos on account of the dedication of which he gave to the order of the  
decurions*

*8 sesterces each, likewise to the order of the Augustales --- because they allowed to be  
painted on the shield which they put up to him in front of the new temple, an effigy of Manlia  
Severina, Chief of the Vestals of Alba Longa, his sister, after the end of her life.*

The rest of the inscription, the Latin of which is given in full in footnote 26 on the previous page, states that he first built an election hall for the purpose of electing magistrates.

So Manlia Severina had been the chief Vestal sometime before 158 when, after her death, she was portrayed on a clipeus or shield. This inscription is interesting in its own right showing an aspect of the organisation of town life in the mid second century. However it is especially relevant as evidentiary proof that the Alban Vestals can be traced in a direct line of descent from the first century due to their mention by Cicero and Juvenal, through the period of the High Empire to the end of the fourth century when they appear in the letters of Symmachus.

The photo below is a view of the Via Appia, not far from Bovillae. In 2013 road moving equipment uncovered the original road surface. Until a few years ago the very last stretches of the Via Appia Antica were not inviting: people had to find their way through weeds and rubble and the ancient tombs were used as shelters by squatters. That situation has now largely been rectified and we can see down the way towards Bovillae much as Symmachus would have done.



Fig.33: Via Appia Antica looking towards Bovillae, between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> milestones.

One of the most fascinating things about the cult of Vesta is that the rituals connected with her continued much as they had done from the days of the Republic when we get examples of the gruesome end of various Vestals from Livy as in the case of the Vestal Oppia<sup>27</sup> who in 484 or 483 BCE was *damnata incesti* and *poenas dederit*. Many of these Vestals were put to death at times of extreme political unrest which is not the case with Primigenia. Presumably the execution of Vestals could also be justified originally as an extension to the *pontifex* of the paterfamilias' *ius uitae necisque* which was long obsolete by the late fourth century.<sup>28</sup> It is not appropriate here to discuss the ritual associated with this rite or whether it should be considered a form of human sacrifice or an execution, although most authorities would seem now to favour the rite as a kind of execution.<sup>29</sup>

What is really interesting about this pair of letters, dealing with an unchaste Vestal Virgin, is the severity and decisiveness that Symmachus displays here in his religious actions and the very fact that at this late date Symmachus, because of his rank and priestly status, could actually propose such penalties. Apart from her mention in these letters, there is no reference to Primigenia elsewhere. Symmachus states to an unknown urban prefect:<sup>30</sup>

*Quod et ipsius quae contaminavit pudicitiam sacram et Maximi cum quo nefandum facinus admisit confessionibus claruisse gesta testantur. Restat ut in eos qui caerimonias publicas abominando scelere polluerunt legum seueritas exeratur.*

*That both she, who so greatly has tarnished her sacred chastity and Maximus with whom she has committed the abominable crime, have, by their avowals, clearly established the facts as their written confessions attest. It only remains to deploy the full severity of the law against those who have sullied the rites of the city by an abominable crime.*

This is a clear demonstration that to its adherents and believers it was necessary that the appropriate rites of the *sacra publica* still be carried out in the time-honoured way and the sacred pollution caused by the lack of *castitas* of Primigenia be expiated. It could be that Symmachus expected the cult to be abolished and thus anticipated this in his correspondence although there is no real evidence for this. Certainly one could hardly find a more marked contrast in Symmachus' desires as expressed in these epistles to the merciful approach that was so much a feature of Christian writings. One explanation for this severity might be the

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<sup>27</sup> Livy 2.42.

<sup>28</sup> Noy by email, 27/1/12; G Schieman, 'Ius', in *Brill's New Pauly*, Section E.2, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/ius>, accessed. 8/8/12

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, 2011: 103.

<sup>30</sup> *Ep.*9.147

need for late paganism to be seen to be as ideologically pure as possible in its rites. Certainly Symmachus' practice as a priest of Vesta was scrupulous and strict in its adherence to the old rites of the *sacra publica*, in order in part not to give offence to Christians. Another would seem to be Symmachus' own devotion to the need to carry out the sacred rites appropriately and scrupulously especially if he was, in fact, responsible for disciplining the Vestals; it might also be an indication of the depths of his belief and could indicate that he was frightened of offending the gods. It would presumably, politically, have been much easier just to have ignored it.

While this event certainly demonstrated that pagan practices associated with one of the oldest and most important cults associated with the *sacra publica* were still very much alive, at least in people's minds, Symmachus' desire to exercise the extreme, if traditional, penalties for the offence must also have been totally abhorrent to Christian sensibilities. Callu suggests that the pair of letters, written before 382, that is before Gratian's removal of the Vestals' state privileges, were written to show Symmachus' inexorability.<sup>31</sup> He adds that however, in spite of the correctness of Symmachus' case, the vacillation of the Prefect involved probably indicates that this event took place not long before the edicts of Gratian became law<sup>32</sup> - and that the guilty couple as a result escaped punishment. This is in marked contrast to the Vestals in the reign of Domitian. Suetonius states that in his reign the traditional severity applied to Vestals guilty of *incestum* was fully applied. Three Vestals, Varronilla and the sisters Oculatae were tried and found guilty of *incestum* but were allowed to choose the manner of their own death. A fourth Vestal, Cornelia, the *uirgo maxima* who had earlier been acquitted was condemned at a later trial and buried alive.<sup>33</sup> This accords with Domitian's revival of Augustus' moral legislation. Compared with these ladies Primigenia was lucky in that she escaped any penalty, although, unlike them, she did have the option of converting to Christianity and thus avoiding the punishment altogether.

### **Problems with daily ritual**

1.47 and 1.51 are linked and deal with the absence of priests due to various reasons and the problems this was causing the college. These are clearly then both letters dealing with ritual.

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<sup>31</sup> Callu, 2002, Tome 4: 136, 9.147, n 2.

<sup>32</sup> Callu, 2002, Tome 4: 136, 9.147, n 2.

<sup>33</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 8.3; Wildfang, 2006: 104.

They are both to Praetextatus and show something of the daily life and problems of the *pontifex* at this period. The style of both letters is intimate and the fact that Symmachus is thirty years Praetextatus' junior does not stop him reproving him when he considers it necessary. In the first missive, 1.47, we have Symmachus writing to Praetextatus reproaching him for lingering in Campania while Symmachus himself is occupied with the concerns of the pontifical college in Rome. They have both been dilatory in writing, though for different reasons, but now Symmachus takes up his pen. This is an interesting letter, again written in an elegant style and showing the author's familiarity with the *Odyssey*; it demonstrates clearly the problems of carrying out the work of the pontifical college when its essential members were absent. Callu states that if the two letters are contemporaneous that would date it to September 383<sup>34</sup> – and states it was composed at a time of stress for the remaining pagan senators of Rome for Gratian had refused the position of *pontifex maximus* some months before although he was now dead, murdered on 25<sup>th</sup> August.<sup>35</sup> Salzman however dates this letter any time from 360/65 to before 385.<sup>36</sup> Symmachus would only have been twenty in 360 and twenty-five in 365 although admittedly he held his priesthood of Vesta from the earlier age, or not long after. It would seem probable that Salzman's dating here is too wide, whereas Callu's proposed dating seems to be more likely than a date early in the reign of Valentinian I.

The *pontifices Vestae* carried out their duties for a month at a time and Symmachus had been kept by his pontifical month of duties in Rome.<sup>37</sup> Holidays must have been one of the main reasons *pontifices* were absent; and having properties in nice locations obviously made this temptation hard to resist. Praetextatus is not the first to fall victim to the allure of Campania, states the letter. Symmachus does not really appear to reproach Praetextatus for this absence severely, though it is causing inconvenience. Rather one senses that it is Praetextatus' laziness in writing which is almost causing him more annoyance though Symmachus understands that the joys of Baiae are profound and difficult to leave. Praetextatus is not unvirtuous but his lingering on the Campanian coast is not in the best spirit of friendship. Symmachus would like to hear from him and the college needs him. The epistle ends with the

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<sup>34</sup> Callu, 2003: Tome 1, 110, n 1.

<sup>35</sup> Callu, 2003: Tome 1, 110, n 1.

<sup>36</sup> Salzman, 2011: 103.

<sup>37</sup> Callu, 2003: Tome 1, 110.



mock threat that Praetextatus will feel the force of Symmachus' pontifical authority unless he responds promptly as a friend:<sup>38</sup>

*Senties ius sacerdotis, nisi inpleueris ius amici.*

*You will feel my function as a pontifex unless you discharge your function as a friend.*

The whole subject of Symmachus and *amicitia* is dealt with in Chapter 6. The tone of this letter is couched in light banter, but there is a serious note from Symmachus underneath possibly revealing a level of anxiety. One thing this letter establishes is that Symmachus probably took his pontifical responsibilities more seriously than did Praetextatus: it was after all a difficult time with imperial authority becoming ever more inclined towards Christianity, leaving the members of the pontifical colleges with increasing problems. It must also have been easier for Symmachus – he had one priesthood compared to Praetextatus' many. Presumably though, none of Praetextatus' priesthoods were held in Baiae. It may also be an indication of Symmachus' underlying devotion to his religion, not just from necessity but because of a fundamental belief. This office was probably not politically necessary for Symmachus but he would have seen it as his duty to carry out priestly duties as his forefathers did.

In the second of these linked letters, 1.51, written also in 383 according to Callu, we have an altogether more serious situation regarding the availability of *pontifices* to carry out the ritual work of the college. There would appear to have been serious problems at Rome in the autumn of this year, in part due to the murder of Gratian and the change of regime. The city was suffering from poverty (possibly bad harvests) which may have caused food shortages, which Callu states to have been common to the whole Mediterranean area;<sup>39</sup> and these various ills caused Symmachus' return to Rome. This is a clear case where the public good required the care and attentions of the city's traditional public priests. Salzman however states that the 383 shortages cannot be proved as the ones responsible for the situation in this letter so again dates it to 360/365-December 384.<sup>40</sup> Symmachus' religious scrupulosity is once again seen. Praetextatus, however, is absent again – this time in Etruria where he had lands; he had at the start of his career many years before been *Corrector* or governor there. Symmachus again asks him to return, the college and city need him. Symmachus' turn on the

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<sup>38</sup> *Ep.* 1.47.2.

<sup>39</sup> Callu, 2003: Tome 1, 113, n 1.

<sup>40</sup> Salzman, 2011: 109.

pontifical rota has come up and because of negligence by other *pontifices* he cannot bear to put in a delegate, even if he could find one. This letter gives important information about the structure and duties of the late Roman priesthood.<sup>41</sup> Van Haeperen has suggested that by the late fourth century the *pontifices* routinely divided the priestly tasks between them with a minimum of two being needed for each stint of a month.<sup>42</sup> Rüpke and others, however, think that this organisation of the priestly college may date back to the religious reforms of Aurelian.<sup>43</sup> The subsequent statement is the heart of this letter – the English here is from the Salzman/Roberts translation.

*Fuerit haec olim simplex diuinae rei delegatio: nunc aris deesse Romanos genus est ambiendi.*

*Once this sort of delegation of religious affairs was straight forward; now to desert the altars is for Romans a kind of careerism.*

Cameron argues that this does not refer, as is usually thought, to the decreasing number of pagans<sup>44</sup>, but is a complaint as to the small number of pontiffs who took the trouble to turn up for duty. However though I think Cameron is probably right in this assertion, Symmachus' statement does also, I would suggest, indicate a decline in the numbers of pagans as the implication must be that the pool of believers among the elite from which members of the pontifical college were traditionally recruited was growing thinner. If one assumes a correlation with the activities of the Arval Brothers where a quorum of three priests was usually needed<sup>45</sup>, it is likely that by the last decades of the fourth century, this quorum was sometimes difficult for the *pontifices Vestae* to attain.<sup>46</sup> Salzman sees this 'desertion of the (pagan) altars' as the first stage in the conversion of the aristocracy since some aristocrats would have removed themselves from the pagan priesthoods out of concern for their status at court.<sup>47</sup> In reality the aristocrats in this group would have removed themselves from the pagan altars much earlier than 383. It is likely that some of these aristocrats would have actively renounced their priesthoods, while others just would have failed to perform their duties. It is not clear, however, if Symmachus is talking about both groups.

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<sup>41</sup> Salzman, 2011: 108.

<sup>42</sup> Van Haeperen, 2002: 209-10; Salzman/ Roberts (trans).

<sup>43</sup> Salzman, 2011: 110, n 5.

<sup>44</sup> Cameron, 2010: 164.

<sup>45</sup> Van Haeperen, 2002: 210.

<sup>46</sup> Van Haeperen, 2002: 210.

<sup>47</sup> Salzman, 2011: 102.

Salzman traces the gradual abandonment of the priesthoods of the pagan cults, for a variety of reasons, during the fourth century. She describes the gradual turning away from pagan institutions, a process which started during the middle of the fourth century.<sup>48</sup> However the first steps of the acceptance by the elite of an ecclesiastical career path were laid from the time of Constantine when the hierarchy of the church, developed over several centuries, were granted the same privileges as the priests of the *sacra publica*, financial support and tax exemptions. The next stage of this process was the gradual amalgamation of the traditional *cursus* with a new Christian career path, which started as early as the time of Constantius,<sup>49</sup> even though until the 380s, pagans still made up the majority in the traditional aristocratic *cursus*. As the court became ever more Christian however, and there was now anti-pagan legislation as well, the aristocracy, dependent upon imperial favour, would have increasingly seen the value of following the Christian path and abandoning that of the old gods and their priesthoods. One point that should be made is that the Christian career path was normally exclusive – one could not be both a bishop and a provincial governor.

While aristocratic conversion to Christianity became much more common, the Christian church as a career path for aristocrats was still very unusual at the end of the fourth century though as aristocratic family and network groups converted it was becoming much more acceptable. However one can still sense the absolute shock experienced by the contemporaries of Paulinus of Nola at the surrender of his senatorial lifestyle and wealth for a life of asceticism. It was the ascetic nature of this career that caused the sensation, not the fact that Paulinus sought a career within the church, although it is only at the end of the fourth century that one begins to find aristocrats becoming bishops. Ambrose was one of the first but it was not until the fifth century that this career path became really accepted for the elite with paganism even for this group now being a distant memory. The integration of clerical office into the imperial bureaucracy made church office attractive to the Roman aristocracy, and reshaped the hierarchy of clerical offices as an ecclesiastical *cursus honorum*.

It is of course possible that if Julian had lived to fully implement his scheme for a unified pagan priesthood, the abandonment of the pagan cults would have been halted though it was probably already too late. The *Letter to Arsacius* indicates that in this Julian was inspired by

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<sup>48</sup> Salzman, 2002: 136.

<sup>49</sup> Salzman, 2002: 136.

the example of Christianity.<sup>50</sup> Julian states that major attractions of Christianity are Christian charity, care for the tombs of their dead and also because their priests lead holy lives.<sup>51</sup> He wished therefore to establish a pagan priesthood which would emulate these virtues and practices presumably in the hope that thus the lure of Christianity would lessen.<sup>52</sup> The establishment of such a priesthood, however, would not have solved Symmachus' problems as this would have been a salaried, professional group, rather than the traditional amateur kind that Symmachus is talking about. Symmachus' letter 1.51 shows the practical consequences of the gradual abandonment of paganism for a traditional pagan priestly college. Symmachus is probably right to state that favour at court by this period was more likely if one was a Christian and that being a pagan priest was no longer likely to bring Imperial favour. But there must have been an element of genuine piety and conversion as well which influenced those who would formerly have served at pagan altars so his somewhat bitter conclusions are only partly true.

### **Problems with sacrificial ritual to avert impiety after a bad omen**

1.49 is one of the most interesting letters of Symmachus, dated by Callu around 378, because it describes an actual occurrence of public sacrifice, in Spoleto where a prodigy had appeared and public sacrifice was needed to appease the gods and to atone for the impiety.<sup>53</sup> It is discussed here because of its importance, although it is not one of the group concerned with Vesta. Prodigies were traditionally regarded as unlucky in Roman religion and when things were especially bad, many prodigies could be expected.<sup>54</sup> Livy gives lists of these at various points in his *Histories*, for example in 27.4 when recounting a phase of the Second Punic War and Hannibal's incursion into Italy.<sup>55</sup> Roman writers did not think that prodigies were a result of direct intervention by the gods, but an implication that something connected with the gods had gone seriously wrong.<sup>56</sup> A *remedium*, carried out by skilled priests was necessary to avert the danger; this might be sacrifice as on this occasion, but could also be new festivals or new

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<sup>50</sup> Tougher, 2007: 58.

<sup>51</sup> Julian, *Ep.22*: 362; Tougher, 2007: 58.

<sup>52</sup> Tougher, 2007: 58.

<sup>53</sup> Salzman 2011: 106, 104 n1; Callu, Tome 1, 2003: 110, n 1. Callu's dating presumably comes from Seeck, who associated the event with defeat at Adrianople, Seeck, 1883, lxxxix – Salzman's reasons for not accepting Callu's dating is because Symmachus' text is not specific enough.

<sup>54</sup> Beard, North, Price, 1998: 1.37.

<sup>55</sup> *During the summer in which these events occurred many portents were reported from neighbouring cities and from the country; eg. that at Tusculum a lamb was born with an udder full of milk and that the ridge of Jupiter's temple was struck by lightning and stripped of almost all its roofing.*

<sup>56</sup> Beard, North and Price, 1998: 1, 37.

entertainments. The primary aim of these was to redress things with the gods; another to boost public morale by civic display.<sup>57</sup>

This letter gives us a snapshot view of what late blood sacrifice actually involved and demonstrates that the *sacra publica* were still being carried out in the provinces at this date. It is interesting that the ritual takes place at Spoleto to which location Symmachus' friend Naucellius had retired and which, by this time, had a bishopric.<sup>58</sup> Symmachus is disappointed at the failure of the sacrifice in the letter he writes to another believer and indicates a true belief in the necessity and efficacy of sacrifice. The rite is carried out with exceptional zeal,<sup>59</sup> and is reminiscent of the level of sacrifice that Julian indulged in because Symmachus states:<sup>60</sup>

*quod sacrificiis multiplicibus et per singulas potestates saepe repetitis necdum publico nomine Spoletinum piatur ostentum. Nam et Iouem uix propitiavit octaua mactatio et Fortuna publicae multiuigis hostiis nequiquam undecimus honor factus est.*

*(I have great distress of spirit) because even with multiple sacrifices often repeated by each of the authorities, the prodigy of Spoleto is not yet officially atoned for. For the eighth slaughter scarcely propitiated Jupiter and the honour to Public Fortune was done eleven times with multi-yoked sacrificial animals but in vain.*

It can be seen from this description that the number of animals used in a sacrifice could be immense. Apparently at the time of Plutarch (*Coriol.* 25) sacrifice could be restarted up to thirty times.<sup>61</sup> It must have also been very costly, wasteful of good animals and even without the religious reasons behind the abandonment of animal sacrifice by Christians and Jews, quite unpleasant, though Julian did not find it so. There must have been a whole industry in producing animals for sacrifice, which was presumably in serious decline by this time. The repetition of sacrifice was required if the internal organs (*exta*) showed unacceptable markings which the *haruspices* interpreted as a sign of divine displeasure. In this case, the expiation of the prodigy, such signs were particularly sinister.<sup>62</sup> Salzman states that Symmachus' reference to Public Fortune here probably meant there was a cult to this deity at Spoleto.<sup>63</sup> Yet here Symmachus shows real distress at the apparent failure of the rites to

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<sup>57</sup> Beard, North and Price, 1998: 1, 38.

<sup>58</sup> Callu, 2003, Tome 1: 112, n 1.

<sup>59</sup> Callu, 2003, Tome 1: 225, 112 n 2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ep.* 1.49

<sup>61</sup> Callu, 2003, Tome 1: 225, 112 n 3.

<sup>62</sup> Salzman, 2011: 107.

<sup>63</sup> Salzman, 2011: 107, n 6.

expiate the ill omen of the prodigy. He appears distressed because something connected with the gods and Spoleto has gone wrong, and the sacrificial ceremony to put this right and restore the correct balance between god and man has not worked. This surely must demonstrate his belief in and reliance on the ways of the old state religion.

Yet however genuine his belief in the old ways was, one can see how much thought had changed by Symmachus' time, even within pagan circles, in relation to the practice of animal sacrifice. The act of blood sacrifice may well have been revived towards the end of paganism to try to revitalise traditional pagan practices but non-blood sacrifice had always been present, even within pagan cult, for example, the offering of fruits, incense and libations of wine. The influence of the Pythagoreans and the writings of the Neoplatonists tended to increase this trend towards non-blood offerings, particularly in Porphyry, who was an advocate of vegetarianism and argued that animal sacrifice replaced cannibalism.<sup>64</sup> Plotinus himself with his emphasis on mystical union with the One by implication denies the need for actual sacrifice. Even Iamblichus who in Book 5 of his *Mysteries of Egypt* opposes Porphyry's vegetarianism says that superior beings have no need of sacrifices for they are suited only for material gods. Blood sacrifices demonstrate the material aspect of a cult, but worship rendered to the gods should also be spiritual.<sup>65</sup> The influence of the Neoplatonic philosophers upon Late Antique and Christian thought was considerable. Their teachings on vegetarianism accorded, at least to some extent, with Christian teachings on the ascetic life.

Within Judaism, with the fall of the Temple in 70 CE which was for Jews the only legitimate place of sacrifice, sacrifice had to become internalised because the priests could no longer carry it out in the appropriate place.<sup>66</sup> Christianity from the beginning had no blood sacrifice. The death of Christ on the cross was once and for all the eternal sacrifice for all mankind. No other was needed and Christianity spiritualised the idea of sacrifice. The death of Christ however is modelled on the Abraham/Isaac paradigm of the Old Testament.<sup>67</sup> The Passover lamb of the Jews is replaced by Christ, in a sense the sacrificial lamb, on the cross, also at the time of Passover, now Easter.<sup>68</sup> It can be seen from this how far theology had

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<sup>64</sup> Stroumsa, 2009: 60.

<sup>65</sup> Iamblichus, *Myst. Egypt*: 5.15; Stroumsa, 2007: 61.

<sup>66</sup> Stroumsa, 2007: 64.

<sup>67</sup> Hedley, D. 'Sacrifice in the Occidental Philosophical Tradition'. Sacrifice Workshop, University of Cardiff, Wales (18<sup>th</sup> January), 2012.

<sup>68</sup> Rev D Handley in conversation, 23/1/12.

advanced in terms of models of sacrifice, influenced albeit by several different strands of reasoning, from the *raison d'être* of public sacrifice in the old Roman cult.

Letter 1.49, however demonstrates that in spite of the growing domination of Christianity and the evolution of various strands of pagan philosophical thought which had come to see blood sacrifice as unnecessary or even repellent in religious rite, traditional pagans like Symmachus were still carrying out the old rituals of the *sacra publica* to placate the gods, in spite of the inconvenience, because they still adhered to the efficacy of blood sacrifice, at least in some situations. The edicts in the Theodosian Code against sacrifice, attributed to Constantius in 341 and other emperors after him (see Appendix 4) were obviously still not taking effect whenever this rite actually took place – although we do not know what the frequency of blood sacrifice at this period still was.<sup>69</sup>

## 5.2 Religious rituals associated with Symmachus' pagan companions

Symmachus' closest pagan companions were Virius Nicomachus Flavianus and Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. This section will examine the religious rituals associated with them to see where these differed from those of Symmachus and what they entailed, using epigraphic and epistolary evidence. It will be also necessary to evaluate whether there is evidence for the influence of Neoplatonism on Symmachus' religious companions. Cameron states, 'but not all late Roman aristocrats saw the world through Neoplatonic spectacles. More specifically there is no evidence that Symmachus, Flavianus or even Praetextatus had any knowledge of Neoplatonism'.<sup>70</sup> This is a bold statement with which I would take issue, certainly in the case of Praetextatus; and this is discussed in the section on him later in this chapter. The influence of Neoplatonism on Symmachus and Flavianus is dealt with in Chapter 7. Consideration will be given to the rituals associated with Praetextatus' beloved wife, Aconia Paulina who in her own right must be considered one of the pagan circle around Symmachus and is one of only two women actually named by Symmachus in his correspondence.<sup>71</sup> The evidence relating to Aconia Paulina will be examined to see how this can expand our knowledge of female priesthoods and the contrast between the traditional cult of the Vestals and the esoteric range of religions in which she participated.

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<sup>69</sup> C.Th.16.10.2; Salzman, 2011: 107, n 4.

<sup>70</sup> Cameron, 2011: 717.

<sup>71</sup> *Ep.*1.48.

## Virius Nicomachus Flavianus

The fictional Flavianus of the *Saturnalia* – obviously viewed with approbation by the author – is described at the end of this chapter in the section on Macrobius but what of the real man? Like Symmachus the career of the elder Flavianus is known to us through the statue base illustrated above. On this statue base – for a photo see page 75 – is inscribed Flavianus' *cursus* including his priesthood of Vesta in similar terms to that of Symmachus himself for they are a matching pair;<sup>72</sup> and the ritual involved with that found within the surviving letters of Symmachus has already been fully described in Section 5.1. A transcription of this *cursus* is shown on page 75. The other inscription to Flavianus erected by his grandson Appius Nicomachus Dexter in 431 in the Forum of Trajan and associated with the lifting of the *damnatio memoriae* inflicted on him after his death at the battle of Frigidus contains no mention of his pagan religious affiliations which is natural enough in a period when paganism was largely a thing of the past.<sup>73</sup>

If this were the only surviving evidence of Flavianus' religious propensities, then his religious practices would seem to be as traditional as those of Symmachus himself but there are hints of another side to him. To Bloch and his followers he was a devotee of the oriental cults in a way that Symmachus was not.<sup>74</sup> The one real piece of evidence linking Flavianus to any of the mystery cults is the letter of Symmachus already analysed in Chapter 4, where Symmachus writes of his expectation that his friend will return to Rome for the annual festival of *Mater Deum* or Cybele, 25<sup>th</sup> March.<sup>75</sup> This is the only evidence for assuming therefore that Flavianus was an adherent of the cult – at least to the extent of taking part in its annual great festival – unless one assumes that he was the intended recipient of the *Contra Paganos* poem. It is intriguing to speculate, though there is obviously no evidence for this speculation, that Flavianus might have worshipped the Goddess not only in her main sanctuary on the Palatine but also in the little cult temple on the Caelian Hill, the *Basilica Hilariana*.

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<sup>72</sup> *CIL* 6.1782; *CIL* 6.1699.

<sup>73</sup> Hedrick, 2000: 1.

<sup>74</sup> Bloch, 1945: 210.

<sup>75</sup> *Ep.*2.34.



The identity of the anonymous pagan senator attacked in the Late Antique poem *Carmen Contra Paganos* was ascribed firmly by Matthews<sup>76</sup> to Flavianus as I stated in Chapter 4; and this is presumably why Bloch and others thought Flavianus was a mystery cult devotee. This attribution has now satisfactorily been overturned by Cameron<sup>77</sup> and others, who not only makes a very convincing case for the senator to have been Praetextatus but even suggests that the author of this poem may have been Pope Damasus himself, aided and abetted by Jerome.<sup>78</sup> The writer of this piece of invective, whoever he was, was similar to Prudentius in his use of anti-pagan polemic, except that Prudentius does not use invective. The description of the rites of Cybele held in March is extremely vivid, not to say lurid. If the identification of Flavianus as the unknown senator is discounted in favour of Praetextatus who we know was tauroboliate, then there must be some doubt if Flavianus himself was. But if the evidence of Symmachus' letter to him about the festival of the Mother of the Gods is added into the equation, then it is possible that Flavianus also was tauroboliate; though really the letter does not connect Flavianus with the cult any more than Symmachus. One interesting piece of numismatic evidence from the contorniates of the late fourth century – commemorative medallions – is the fact that some show the Great Mother. On three of these contorniates, she is shown seated at the entrance of a distinctive temple, tentatively associated with the Vatican Phrygianum, with the legend *Matri Deum Salutari*.<sup>79</sup> The case for these contorniates being distributed when Flavianus was praetorian prefect must be possible at least; and Cybele's presence on them would support the suggestion that the importance her cult had in the setting of the short-lived pagan reaction at Rome in 393-4, with which he was involved, was more than marginal.<sup>80</sup>

### **Vettius Agorius Praetextatus**

Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, whose *ara funeraria* (in the Musei Capitolini, Rome) is shown Figure 38, is perhaps the greatest known exponent of the variety of cults of late paganism. He was born c 310 and died in December 384 so was thus thirty years older than Symmachus. Symmachus' reactions to Praetextatus' death itself – and the reaction of the aristocratic Roman establishment – will be dealt with in Chapter 7. The section on Aconia Paulina later

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<sup>76</sup> Matthews, 1973: 189.

<sup>77</sup> Cameron, 2011: 285.

<sup>78</sup> Cameron, 2011: 308 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Smith, 1995: 175.

<sup>80</sup> Smith, 1995: 175.

in this chapter will investigate the affair of the statue that the Vestals wanted to erect to Praetextatus after his death.



Fig.34: The Funerary Altar of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and Fabia Aconia Paulina.

Praetextatus was not only a senior pagan; he was in addition a close friend and fellow *pontifex Vestae* with Symmachus and Flavianus. Kahlos states that Praetextatus was *augur*, *pontifex* and *quindecimuir*, therefore holding three of the four priesthoods of the traditional Roman *sacerdotum amplissima collegia*.<sup>81</sup> The priesthoods were not listed in chronological order on *CIL* 6.1779; however on the inscription now listed as *CIL* 6.1778 they are given in a different order – *pontifex Vestae*, *pontifex Solis*, *quindecimuir*, *augur* – which might be in order of importance.<sup>82</sup> However, he held a wide variety of other priesthoods which are detailed upon the altar above (*CIL* 6.1779), which is inscribed upon all four sides. The front gives his *cursus honorum* and lists his priesthoods and religious affiliations. Praetextatus was very active, not only in the traditional cults but in several of the mystery

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<sup>81</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 63.

<sup>82</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 63.

cults also. There is no doubt that the evidence of these public inscriptions presents him as a serious polytheist. The inscription *CIL.* 6.1779 reads:

D M  
VETTIUS AGORIUS PRAETEXTATUS  
AUGUR . P[O]NTIFEX VESTAE  
PONTIFEX SOL[IS] . QUINDECIMVIR  
CURIALIS HERC[ULIS] . SACRATUS  
LIBERO ET ELEUSI[NIS] . HIEROPHANTA  
NEOCORUS TAUROBOLIATUS  
PATER PATRUM

The use of the invocation to the *Dis Manibus* at the start of this inscription is very interesting as a deliberate statement of religious intent. The mix of cults is a very varied and eclectic one in which a wide variety of ritual was practised. The accession of Julian and his attempt to restore the traditional polytheism must have seemed wonderful to Praetextatus, as some of his particular religious interests were very similar to those of the Emperor. Praetextatus was appointed governor of Achaëa, and was still in this post at the time of Julian's death.<sup>83</sup> While there he was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, a mystic and ancient secret cult re-enacting the story of Demeter and Persephone.<sup>84</sup> Later Valentinian I passed an edict which banned night sacrifices during the mysteries. Praetextatus maintained that this made it impossible for pagans to follow their creed and managed to get Valentinian, normally fairly liberal in religious matters, to overturn his edict.<sup>85</sup> Symmachus writes three letters dated by Callu before 402 to a Hierophant<sup>86</sup> who has been identified by Roda as being the High Priest of Eleusis (either the last one or one of the last) - whose name could neither be spoken nor written.<sup>87</sup> In reality, as the cult of Eleusis was swept away in 394, the dates of these letters must be prior to that year. Praetextatus was a *neocorus* so participated in the cults of Isis and Serapis<sup>88</sup> and a *curialis Herculis*. According to Mommsen the status of this office is unclear in the fourth century but was probably equivalent to a *sacerdos Herculis*. This might have therefore been a priesthood within a society or *collegium* of worshippers of Hercules.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Amm. Marc. 22.7.6.

<sup>84</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 82.

<sup>85</sup> C. Th. 9.16.7; Zos. 4.3.

<sup>86</sup> *Ep.* 5.1-3

<sup>87</sup> Roda, 1973: 91, n129 NS; Callu, Tome 2, 2003: 156, n 1.

<sup>88</sup> Kahlos, 2002, 62.

<sup>89</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 69.

Praetextatus was a *pontifex solis*, which office Celsinus Titianus, Symmachus' brother also held, although not Symmachus himself.<sup>90</sup> There had always been sun gods in Rome and gradually during the Empire these conflated, so Apollo/Helios became identified with Mithraism in its sun god aspect. The Emperor Elagabalus from Syria (218-22) tried to make the Sun the chief cult in Rome but was assassinated before his deity really became popular. Aurelian, emperor from 270-5, introduced the *Sol Inuictus*, the unconquered sun, also from Syria particularly from Palmyra. Aurelian built his god a large temple and established a special set of priests, the *pontifices solis*. This cult became very important to the emperors until Constantine.

There is even evidence in the tomb of the Julii in the Necropolis under the Vatican (Mausoleum M) of the transfer of sun god imagery to Christianity. In this Christian tomb, built for Julius Tarpeianus, an infant of less than two at the time of his death, by his parents in the second half of the third century CE, Christ is shown in a mosaic as Helios/Sol, driving a chariot in the sky with white horses as can be seen in Figure 35.<sup>91</sup> The importance of Julian in his attempt to bring back the Empire to paganism in his reign lies at least in part in the syncretism of sun god worship in its various elements and Neoplatonism in his particular belief system. This can be seen in Julian's *Hymn to Helios* which shows links to Mithraism,<sup>92</sup> and the very strong influence of Iamblichus' theurgy. Praetextatus with his strong links to Julian in religious terms probably shared his beliefs in the supremacy of the Sun God and was, like him, influenced by Neoplatonism. This is discussed further in the section on Macrobius' *Saturnalia*.

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<sup>90</sup> Salzman, 2011: 138, n2.

<sup>91</sup> Zander, 2014: 99.

<sup>92</sup> Smith, 1995: 129.



Fig. 35: Christ as Helios-Sol in the Tomb of the Julii in the St Peter's Necropolis

Praetextatus also was tauroboliate, as already stated, so active within the cult of Cybele and this forms another link with Julian.

The ceremony of the *taurobolium* had been revived in Late Antiquity as the epigraphic evidence of the Phrygianum to Cybele on the Vatican mount opposite St Peter's shows.<sup>93</sup> Originally this act was part of the *sacra publica* and was some kind of bull sacrifice but seems to have been reinvented as a private cult act in the later fourth century. The last record of someone undertaking this rite can be dated to 390.<sup>94</sup> Prudentius in *Peristephanon* 10 has a gory description of this act as already stated in Chapter 4 – probably completely fictional as he would never have seen this private ritual, being uninitiated and Christian anyway. In this rite the devotee standing under a grill has his face bathed in the blood of the slaughtered bull.<sup>95</sup> There is a series of extant inscriptions from the Phrygianum celebrating the participants in this rite, whatever it was, which may have simply involved receiving the

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<sup>93</sup> McLynn, 1996: 322.

<sup>94</sup> Smith, 1995: 173.

<sup>95</sup> Prud. *Perist.* 10.1036-40; McLynn, 1996, 312-3.

blood, not through a grill, as described in graphic detail in the work, but in some sort of sacrificial bowl or *cernus*.<sup>96</sup>

McLynn suggests that the ritual might have terminated in a way which linked the new *taurobolium* ceremony with the old, with the consecration of the *cernus* and its contents, blood or testicles or both.<sup>97</sup> These Phrygianum inscriptions derive from a series of top aristocratic families, which included women as well as men. It is perhaps an example of the tendency of Late Antique pagan aristocrats to be associated with many cults – Praetextatus being a good example of this – and to follow a path of a more ‘florid’ kind of paganism. By this I mean a multi-layered worship of a plethora of assorted exotic gods far removed from the traditional *sacra publica* that Symmachus followed. This was almost in defiance of the Christianisation of many of the pagan aristocracy. Cameron suggests that ‘these dedications suggest not so much a vigorous pagan revival as a small group of individual pagans unwilling to embrace Christianity and desperately searching for an alternative route’.<sup>98</sup> The epigraphic evidence of the Vatican demonstrates that the aristocrats concerned listed, in one case, as many as five priesthoods, with several others recording four.<sup>99</sup> Symmachus is most unusual therefore in being publicly at least associated with only one cult. The stridency of Prudentius in attacking the rite of the *taurobolium* is an example of Christian polemic being particularly virulent where a pagan cult or ritual was especially popular.<sup>100</sup>

Praetextatus also held the highest rank in the cult of Mithras, *pater patrum*, the representative of the god on earth who was normally depicted as wearing the clothing of the god. The depiction of Mithras killing the bull, shown on the altar sculpture astride and holding the horns of his victim and wearing the traditional clothing - which the *pater patrum* would have worn in Mithraic religious ceremonies - can be seen on the Altar in the *mithraeum* at San Clemente, Figure 17, on page 92; and on the altar of the *mithraeum* located below the *carceres* of the Circus Maximus, Figure 36. Usage of this *mithraeum*, Bjernebye states may

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<sup>96</sup> McLynn, 1996: 322.

<sup>97</sup> McLynn, 1996: 322.

<sup>98</sup> Cameron, 2011: 163.

<sup>99</sup> McLynn, 1996: 324.

<sup>100</sup> Smith, 1995: 176.

have survived into the fifth century.<sup>101</sup> This is another religious link with Julian who was also initiated into Mithraism.



Fig. 36: The Mithraic Tauroctony in the *mithraeum* below the *carceres* of the Circus Maximus.

The listing of Praetextatus' rank within Mithraism is revealing information in view of the fact that there was a *mithraeum* on the Aventine where Praetextatus had a house. The location of this house is proved by the fact that Praetextatus' son was the author of an inscription found in this location.<sup>102</sup> The *mithraeum* was located below the Church of S Prisca in the area and it is intriguing to speculate that Praetextatus may have worshipped there. The possible end of this *mithraeum* is discussed in on page 90. It is fascinating to think that with his Aventine house so near, the *mithraeum* at Santa Prisca was probably the one he would have worshipped at and, as *pater patrum*, been in charge of. Bjornebye states that *pater patrum* indicates that the holder of this cult title could have been in charge of several *mithraea*;<sup>103</sup> so, though it is conjectural, there is a possibility if Bjornebye's position is correct, that Praetextatus might have not just controlled the Santa Prisca *mithraeum* but other *mithraea* also.

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<sup>101</sup> Bjornebye in Salzman, Sághy and Lizzi Testa, 2015: 208.

<sup>102</sup> *CIL* 6.1777.

<sup>103</sup> Bjornebye in Bull, Lied and Turner (eds.), 2012: 368

## Aconia Fabia Paulina

As already mentioned this is one of only two women actually mentioned by name by Symmachus. This occurs in a letter to Praetextatus, *Ep.* 1.48, written before 385 according to Callu. Paulina has been ill and Symmachus is commiserating with Praetextatus and hoping that she will soon recover.

*Nunc habitum laetio rem mentibus suadeamus, quando Paulinae nostrae ualetudinem rursus locauit in solido pax deorum*

*Now let us turn our thoughts to a happier frame of mind when the peace of the gods has returned again the health of our Paulina to strength.*

The term *pax deorum* is an interesting one, only used in Symmachus' writings this one time.<sup>104</sup> This letter shows a caring side to Symmachus, concerned with the health of the wife of one of his greatest friends and allies, but someone obviously who he valued; a lady who in her own right was an initiated member and priestess of several cults. These are listed on the front of the funeral altar depicted above, under those of her husband, Praetextatus and show the various exotic cults that a woman in Late Antiquity could both belong to and hold a priestly role within.

*And Aconia Fabia Paulina, initiate of Ceres and of the Eleusinian (mysteries), initiate of Hecate at Aegina, tauroboliate, hierophant.*

But the altar is inscribed not just on the front but on all four sides as already stated. It is elaborately conceived and decorated as is appropriate to a senior senator and his beloved wife. The altar belongs to the type characterised by an architectural framework with figured capitals and decorations<sup>105</sup> – as can be seen in its depiction in Figure 34 on page 149.

Praetextatus addresses Paulina lovingly on the two sides. This is from the right side.<sup>106</sup> She

*was devoted to the temples and friend of the divinities, who put her husband before herself, and Rome before her husband, proper, faithful, pure in mind and body, kindly to all, faithful to her household gods.*

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<sup>104</sup> Lomanto, 1983: 662.

<sup>105</sup> Ara di Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, 2000-1: 507.

<sup>106</sup> *CIL* 6.1779; Lefkowitz & Fant, 2005: 305.



On the back Paulina in turn speaks to her husband in verse.<sup>107</sup> Her religious practices are laid out in detail.

*My husband by the gift of your learning you keep me pure and chaste from the fate of death; you take me into the temples and devote me as the servant of the gods. With you as my witness I am introduced to all the mysteries; you, my pious consort, honour me as priestess of Dindymene and Attis with sacrificial rites of the taurobolium; you instruct me as minister of Hecate in the triple secret and make me worthy of the rites of Greek Ceres.*

But that is not all, for this whole inscription talks of the love this couple, who were married for forty years, had for one another. Paulina ends:

*I would have been happy, if the gods had given me a husband who had survived me, but am still happy because I am yours and have been yours and will now be yours after my death.*

This last statement is enlightening because it hints at belief in an afterlife; the mystery religions, unlike the old state cults did promise this. The so-called Orphic Gold Tablets even laid out the path that was to be followed into the afterlife;<sup>108</sup> Dindymene is a reference to the Mother of the Gods, Cybele with her consort, Attis.<sup>109</sup> Paulina would have been initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries in Greece while Praetextatus was Governor of Achaëa. She was also a priestess of Isis, whose rites we know best in the Roman period from Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, Book 11. Praetextatus was unusual in that he took the religious education of his wife very seriously.<sup>110</sup> Most wives would just have been expected to follow the religious avocation of their husband without question. It demonstrates again the caring nature of their relationship but whether or not it would have increased the status of Praetextatus is not clear. Symmachus however approves of Paulina judging from the tone of 1.48; her religious credentials make him respect her. The description of Paulina's offices and cult membership on the funerary altar gives a graphic description of what one type of late female pagan religion was like and the ritual that membership of these cults involved. The Vestals had power and authority of one kind but the mystery cults in particular offered women a much wider range of non-domestic roles that could be combined with a normal marriage and children and did not imply enforced celibacy. With the coming of Christianity, many of these

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<sup>107</sup> *CIL* 6.1779; Lefkowitz & Fant, 2005: 305-6.

<sup>108</sup> Bowden, 2010: 148.

<sup>109</sup> Lefkowitz & Fant, 2005: 357 n 86.

<sup>110</sup> Lefkowitz & Fant, 2005, 357, n 86.

roles were lost, although in time women began to discover new ways of serving in the new church; for example through the ascetic movement and through religious patronage.

There is another glimpse of Paulina after Praetextatus' death in December 384 in a letter written by Symmachus to Flavianus, *Ep.* 2.36. Praetextatus appears to have been genuinely mourned by the populace who did not as a result attend the theatrical spectacles that started on 12<sup>th</sup> December<sup>111</sup> – and the Vestal Virgins, led by Coelia Concordia wanted to put up a statue to him. Symmachus with a small group of the pontifical college opposed this on the grounds that it was inappropriate for the Vestals to pay such homage to men. It also did not accord with tradition because that honour had never been given even to any *pontifex maximus*, not even Numa himself.<sup>112</sup> Symmachus did not want to express these opinions too loudly for fear of harming the pagan cause.<sup>113</sup> Matthews has pointed out correctly, in the view of Kahlos, that Symmachus did not oppose this scheme from narrow mindedness but because he was concerned with the present conditions of pagan religion, *condicio temporis praesentis*, as well as the traditional religious activities.<sup>114</sup> This therefore is an example of Symmachus dealing with things as they really were, not just as a mindless traditionalist. Nevertheless Symmachus lost this dispute and the chief Vestal Coelia Concordia, ignoring him, erected a statue to Praetextatus in the name of all the Vestals probably in the house of the Vestals.<sup>115</sup>

Paulina erected a statue of Coelia Concordia in gratitude to her in the atrium of her residence on the Esquiline Hill.<sup>116</sup> The statue was found in the sixteenth century but is lost – though the statue base, *CIL*.6.2145 is extant. With this a fragment with the name of Praetextatus was also found, so we now know the location of one of the residences of the Praetextati.<sup>117</sup> Paulina declares that Coelia Concordia has erected a statue to her late husband, an outstanding man and worthy of being honoured by Vestal Virgins and priests alike.<sup>118</sup> The affair of the statue demonstrates an independence of thought by Paulina. She was held in respect and affection by Symmachus, as letter 1.48 proves, both because of her relationship to Praetextatus and because in her own right she was a prominent pagan; as all her roles as a priestess and

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<sup>111</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 155.

<sup>112</sup> *Ep.* 2.36; Kahlos, 2002: 155.

<sup>113</sup> *Ep.* 2.36; Kahlos, 2002: 155.

<sup>114</sup> *Ep.* 2.36; Kahlos, 2002: 155; Matthews, 1973: 192, n.111.

<sup>115</sup> *CIL*.6.2145; Salzman, 2011: 95.

<sup>116</sup> *CIL*.6.2145.

<sup>117</sup> *CIL*.6.1781

<sup>118</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 156.

memberships of cults described above indicate. But Symmachus was a conservative man and deeply concerned about how paganism might appear to its enemies and critics, so opposed the erection of a statue of Praetextatus by the Vestals, while asking for and obtaining the erection of public statues to him by the state after his death.

Callu implies in the notes to Ep. 2.36 that this private statue was possibly erected before the public ones.<sup>119</sup> Paulina, however, was deeply attached to her husband and obviously very grateful to Coelia. She probably could not erect in the circumstances a public statue to the Chief Vestal in appreciation but what she did in her own house was quite another matter. It is interesting as well to contrast the religious activities of both Aconia Paulina and Coelia Concordia, which brought them into the world of public affairs normally the sole preserve of men, sometimes even into conflict with them, with those of the women closest to Symmachus, his wife and daughter about whose religious actions and roles we learn very little. Presumably they would have been involved in the domestic sacred rites of the home, but it does not appear that they played a more prominent or public role in any other religious cult. This might explain in part also Symmachus' response to Coelia Concordia's request; he perhaps found it difficult to allow women to take the initiative in religious affairs because the women of his own family conducted such affairs in private; even if he occasionally expressed admiration of another kind of woman such as Aconia Paulina.

### **5.3 Macrobius' Saturnalia and its portraits of Symmachus, Flavianus and Praetextatus**

This section of Chapter 5 examines Macrobius' *Saturnalia* and how the author presents his versions of Symmachus, Flavianus and Praetextatus. The work deals with an imagined world involving Symmachus and his immediate religious circle. It is an encyclopaedic compilation of antiquarian lore, cast as a dialogue, that gathers together members of the Roman aristocracy in the late fourth century, and their entourage to discuss 'matters ridiculous and sublime'<sup>120</sup> – and above all the poetry of Virgil.<sup>121</sup> Virgil is presented as the fount of all human knowledge, from diction and rhetoric to philosophy and religion and makes explicit a 'view long implied by the scholarship gathered around the poems and anticipating the

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<sup>119</sup> Callu, 2003: Tome 1, 179, n 1.

<sup>120</sup> Kaster, 2011: xii.

<sup>121</sup> Kaster, 2011: xii.

miraculous figure of ‘Virgil the magician’ known to the Middle Ages’.<sup>122</sup> The discussion of ritual by the participants of this work makes this the right place in the thesis to assess the literary tour de force which is the *Saturnalia*. It is an important opus in relation to Late Antique paganism but was written thirty years after the last of the trio to die, Symmachus. It therefore is literary, not factual, evidence. For a long time it was thought that the *Saturnalia* dated to the 380s or 390s and therefore could be seen as a contemporaneous piece of evidence for the practices and personalities of late paganism.<sup>123</sup> Macrobius himself was seen as a pagan. Cameron however has effectively proved that this work can be dated to 430<sup>124</sup> and that Macrobius was probably Christian. In this work we are given a snapshot of an idealised pagan world, by then lost in history.

This work therefore depicts a historical, and perhaps not very realistic, past rather than an actual present. The opus describes an idealized gathering of pagan greats at the Saturnalia of 384, mimicking in its organisation that of Cicero’s *Natura Deorum* in its series of imaginary philosophical dialogues. Like Macrobius, Cicero uses the recently deceased in some of his dialogues; for example *De Senectute* is set a year before the death of the elder Cato in 149 BCE.<sup>125</sup> In a sense the *Saturnalia* is a collection of *nugae*; and like the *Noctes Atticae* the *Saturnalia* has preserved much varied and antiquarian material which would otherwise have been lost. This obviously gives it great value which is enhanced by the Virgilian criticism contained in the work;<sup>126</sup> but it is important to emphasise that the depictions of Praetextatus, Flavianus and Symmachus in this work are *literary* and to some degree idealized constructs, like that of the elder Cato in Cicero. However the fact that this work was produced only thirty years after the death of Symmachus, though fifty years after the date of its setting, means that its evidence is valuable – as long as it is seen essentially as a work of fiction, not fact. The *Saturnalia* is worth studying because Macrobius portrays the various men depicted in the *Saturnalia* plausibly and in a more rounded way than we get from any other source.

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<sup>122</sup> Kaster, 2011: xii.

<sup>123</sup> Cameron, 2011: 238.

<sup>124</sup> Kaster, 2011 : xiv.

<sup>125</sup> Cic. *De Sen.* 5.

<sup>126</sup> Davies, 1969 : 3.

## Symmachus

The Symmachus of Macrobius is depicted as a much more moderate individual and less rigid in his belief structure than the fictional Praetextatus.<sup>127</sup> His oratorical style is described as being rich and ornate<sup>128</sup> and it is he who demonstrates the most elaborate of Virgil's rhetorical devices.<sup>129</sup> The elaborate politeness of Praetextatus is contrasted with Symmachus' livelier manner and the latter chairs a session in the *Saturnalia* where the guests recall witty sayings of the great men of old. Symmachus himself introduces many of Cicero's jests.<sup>130</sup> Symmachus' love of quoting Cicero in his letters was obviously well known to posterity, possibly suggesting that he did this in his speech in real life as well – which is quite likely considering his admiration for the first century orator and politician; it could also indicate that Symmachus' letters circulated quickly. This picture does not however tell us much about Symmachus' use of ritual.

## Praetextatus

Praetextatus was regarded by his own peers as one of the last great pagans. This is probably why Macrobius chose him to be one of the principals of his work. He is depicted as being serene and strong of character,<sup>131</sup> but with a certain lack of humour and fairly rigid in his belief systems. His antiquarian interests are well depicted in his discussion of the origins of the festival of the *Saturnalia* and the Roman calendar.<sup>132</sup> He demonstrates a very great knowledge of pagan observances both in his long discourse on the pontifical law of Virgil and in the monologue where he argues that the gods of the Graeco-Roman pantheon are attributes of the Supreme Sun<sup>133</sup> – an obvious link with Julian's belief system. The theology of the speech does fit in with Praetextatus being an adherent of the cult of Sol/Helios. We have no independent primary evidence which indicates that these were Praetextatus' religious beliefs; but his association with Julian, and the similarity of some of his cults to those of the emperor allow us to speculate that he too was influenced both by Julian's cult of Helios and by some of the emperor's other sacred observances. Praetextatus' portrayal by Macrobius certainly agrees with the picture of the historical Praetextatus of the funerary

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<sup>127</sup> Davies, 1969: 5-6.

<sup>128</sup> *Mac. Sat.* 5.1.7.

<sup>129</sup> *Mac. Sat.* 4; Davies, 1969 : 6.

<sup>130</sup> *Mac. Sat.* 2.3.

<sup>131</sup> *Mac. Sat.* 1.5.4

<sup>132</sup> *Mac. Sat.* 1.7-10; 1.12-16

<sup>133</sup> *Mac. Sat.* 3.4-12; 1.17-23

inscription with its description of his many cults, and their multi-faceted use of ritual. However it must be stressed strongly, as Liebescheutz has indicated, that Praetextatus' discourse is not in itself an exercise in Neoplatonic theology.<sup>134</sup> Rather Praetextatus in the *Saturnalia* seems to take a single premise that the individual gods can be identified with the Sun and assemble a highly selective catalogue of data from etymology, myth, iconography, historical fact and historical fiction which can be taken to support or exemplify the premise provided one accepts it as valid.<sup>135</sup> There is no evidence from Symmachus' letters to his older pagan companion which gives historical verification to Praetextatus being influenced by Neoplatonism - especially Iamblichus. Nevertheless, as with Julian, there are inferences which suggest that in all likelihood Iamblichus, and his florid, theurgic version of Neoplatonism, did influence Praetextatus.

### **Flavianus**

Macrobius paints the literary Flavianus with approval. He is said to have surpassed even his father Venustus in the distinction of his character, the dignity of his life, and in the abundance and depth of his learning.<sup>136</sup> The prominent nature of his paganism is emphasised and Flavianus promises to discuss augural law in the proposed discussion on Virgil.<sup>137</sup> Unfortunately this sequence has been lost but it is suggested that it probably was part of the incomplete Book 3.<sup>138</sup> Augural law was very ancient and had its own set of rituals and rites, so again if this picture is accurate historically it shows Flavianus being involved with religious rituals Symmachus had no part of. Certainly Rufinus has Flavianus consulting the entrails of sheep before Frigidus and from this divination proclaiming certain victory for Eugenius.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Liebescheutz, 1999: 198; Kaster, 2011: xix.

<sup>135</sup> Kaster, 2011: xx.

<sup>136</sup> *Mac. Sat.* 1.5.13 ; Davies, 1969 : 7.

<sup>137</sup> *Mac. Sat.* 1.24.17.

<sup>138</sup> Davies, 1969: 7.

<sup>139</sup> *Ruf. Hist. Eccles.* 11.33. P Amidon (trans).

#### 5.4 Changes in cults and cult ritual between the time of Cicero and Symmachus

In this section I would like to very briefly examine the changes in cult ritual between the time of Cicero and that of Symmachus. The public performance of the *sacra publica* in the time of Cicero was always associated with the correct and necessary functioning of the state. Cicero in *De Legibus* produces as part of his description of his ideal state a set of religious laws which are conservative and traditional and reflect the accepted Roman public religious practice.<sup>140</sup> These laws cover the gods, religious ritual, rites, holidays, priests, prodigies, sacrifice and sacrilege among other things.<sup>141</sup> I examine Cicero's religious laws in more detail in Chapter 7, pages 230-33. Symmachus too was a conservative in his religious practices with a love of the antiquarian and the tried and tested rules and ways of religion. In Symmachus' time as in Cicero's, the performance of the *sacra publica*, as he saw it, was part of the preservation and protection of the state, as the letters studied in 5.1 attest. The public face and practice of traditional religion remained very much the same. It is the area of their private beliefs which I contend are rather different, where these two men are a good comparison with one another. Symmachus, while his support for the public cult was as firm as that of his great predecessor, reveals indications of a privately held religious belief going beyond public display and expectation, as I have argued in the previous chapter.

Cicero firmly believed in the need for public cult to cement the well-being of the state; he 'upholds the form of religion inherited from the *maiores*, even if he would considerably strengthen its moral content, and lays great stress on the importance of the beliefs that underlie it'.<sup>142</sup> At a time when religion was sometimes used cynically for political purposes, publicly expressed opinions did not necessarily reflect private beliefs and this would certainly seem to be the case with Cicero. It is fair to say that Cicero's philosophical bent was a sceptical one as applied to religion, and certainly he was very selective in what he did accept as being possible, if not absolutely definite – not perhaps un-natural in a philosopher. What is certain, however, is that Cicero believed strongly in the performance of correct ritual for the gods of the state. His philosophical writings show a belief in some sort of divine power but he does not show any sign of expecting the gods to intervene in his personal life. His approach to ritual therefore is a pragmatic one. This therefore demonstrates a large element of

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<sup>140</sup> Rexine, 1959: 38.

<sup>141</sup> Rexine, 1959: 38.

<sup>142</sup> Goar, 1973: 79.

continuity in cult worship and ritual between Cicero's time and that of Symmachus, despite the increasing impact of Christianity.

Symmachus' letters give us a flavour of the decline in enthusiasm for traditional ritual; how for example the officials of the pagan colleges found increasing problems with carrying out the correct rites because of the declining numbers of priests.<sup>143</sup> However if Cicero had returned to Rome during Symmachus' lifetime, he would have found the varied elements of polytheistic cults still very familiar. The rituals of the *sacra publica* were still much the same and the mystery religions of Cybele and Isis were practised in Rome in the first century so he would have been knowledgeable about the ritual associated with these sects, even though he probably strongly disapproved of Isis and the cult was liable to state suppression during his lifetime. The two cults that would have been unfamiliar to him would have been Mithraism, which developed in its Romanised form in the early Empire but was always a private religion which never had any official status - and of course the imperial cult itself.

Some of the aristocratic pagans who still followed the old ways were extremely zealous in their devotions, particularly in their involvement in the mystery religions. Another symptom of their zeal may be the number of priesthoods which some of these aristocrats held which is found in epigraphic evidence;<sup>144</sup> though admittedly there are many priesthoods listed in the *Res Gestae* of Augustus. However these multiple priesthoods may also be a sign of the declining number of potential aristocrats to serve as priests. In a sense then there are two versions of late paganism in Rome; the first is the version practised by Symmachus as a priest of Vesta which was scrupulous and strict in its adherence to the old rites of the *sacra publica* in order in part not to give offence to Christians (as I have discussed earlier in this chapter in reference to the errant Vestal Primigenia) – and to perhaps keep waverers to the old ways. The second version of late paganism is the practices to be found in some of the so-called Oriental cults with their exaggerated ritual and rites – and perhaps Cicero would not have really approved of these.

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<sup>143</sup> *Ep.* 1.51.

<sup>144</sup> McLynn, 1996: 324.



The first owed nothing to the influence of Neoplatonism but many traces of this philosophy are to be found in the oriental cults; this is another reason that these sects were so denigrated by Christians who owed much to the legacy of Plotinus and his successors in their own belief system. This could have provided a link between the worshippers of Christianity and those of the mystery religions influenced by Neoplatonism but the intolerance of Christians towards any other belief system rendered this an impossibility. The adherents to the mystery religions tolerated Christianity but not the other way round. The exclusivity of belief and religious practice demanded by Christians left no room for compromise or acceptance of any other belief systems. I deal with this phenomenon in Chapter 7 where I also analyse Neoplatonic influences on Symmachus (and Flavianus). But the religious mix of the Rome of the Late Republic and that of the late fourth century, excluding Christianity, was remarkably similar and in its preservation of pagan cults showed a great continuity with the Roman religious past. In its openness to innovation as well as tradition Late Antique paganism followed a pattern which had already been established by the Late Republic. The initial suppression but later endorsement of the cult of Isis by the emperors is a good parallel with how Christianity developed. However, the total religious saturation and takeover by Christianity from the end of the fourth century can be seen as producing a homogenisation of religion which was totally unfamiliar in Roman history and to the Roman psyche.

### **5.5 The end of the priesthoods**

The letters between Symmachus and Praetextatus are unique. They give us a snapshot of the role and work of one particular priestly college and the priests within it at a particular point in time. But these were the last priests of Vesta – there were to be no more after them or of the other priestly colleges because of the anti-pagan legislation of Theodosius in 391-2 and the closing of the temples in 394. Symmachus' holding of just one priesthood, that of Vesta is also notable; the majority of late pagans held many, like Praetextatus. Perhaps Symmachus thought it was truer to traditional practice to only hold one priesthood, he might have been trying to leave room for more potential priests and he may have disapproved of Praetextatus and others spreading themselves too thinly but was too polite to say so, though this is just supposition.

Rüpke has analysed the number of priests in his *Fasti*,<sup>145</sup> which demonstrates just how the polytheistic priesthoods decreased in number and finally ceased to be filled at all, as a result of the stance against paganism and the Christianisation of the aristocratic elite who traditionally had held these priesthoods. He has consulted all the available documentary sources for the Roman, Greek, Oriental, Jewish and Christian cults in question which he demonstrates in a series of introductory essays before the lists of the various cults and their priests.

It is very clear in this compilation how the numbers in the priestly colleges started declining markedly from 394 until by 408 they had disappeared altogether. What is also noticeable is that the same names keep appearing, some of them holding several priesthoods. There are obvious family links as well. As these individuals' names disappear from the priestly lists, presumably because of death, they are not replaced. The total number of pagan priests for each year is given in Table 6 and demonstrates how the numbers of these priests first begins to decrease and then stop altogether in the period between 374 and 408. Appendix 5 contains a breakdown of the specific cult or priestly college involved with the names of their actual priests. This data is all derived from Rüpke.

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<sup>145</sup> Rüpke, 2008: 421.

**Table 6: Number of pagan priesthoods in specific years, from 374 to 408 though certain individuals**

Date	Total Number of Pagan Priests
374	52 <sup>146</sup>
384	53 <sup>147</sup>
394	16 <sup>148</sup>
395	14
396	3
402	3
404	2
405	2
406	1
407	1
408	1

395 is the last year when there are any priests of Mithras listed. If however Bjornebye's thesis is right regarding the continuation of some of the *mithraea* in Rome after 400 as stated on page 152, then there must have still been still some Mithraic priests. If this is so, then Rüpke found no evidence for them although Bjornebye's research is more recent. However Rüpke only lists dateable and identifiable individuals. 405 is the last year in which anyone is listed as a *pontifex Vestae* and between 405 and 408 the only other priest named by Rüpke is one Flavius Macrobius Longinianus whom Rüpke ascribes to a group named *sacerdotes collegiorum ignotorum* because he was not able to identify to which college this priest belonged. Presumably Flavius Macrobius Longinianus died in 408 and Rüpke could find no evidence of any other pagan priests after this although this does not mean that none existed. What is certain is that after this date the only priests noted in the *Fasti* are those of the Christian persuasion.<sup>149</sup> If this compilation is right, a thousand years of public pagan sacred

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<sup>146</sup> Includes as Pontifex Maximus Emperor Valentinian I

<sup>147</sup> No Pontifex Maximus

<sup>148</sup> No Pontifex Maximus

<sup>149</sup> Rüpke, 2008: 436.

practices had ended with the death of the last pagan priest. Lee supports Rüpke's conclusions in his 2013 article.<sup>150</sup>

Rüpke's opus was published in November of 2008 and Lizzi Testa's article in the volume entitled *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity* during 2009 so it is likely that she was not aware of his conclusions when her article was produced. She states that:

'the principal traditional priesthoods continued to function for at least another half century after 382, both because they still had various other activities to perform and because nothing really stood in the way of the Roman aristocracy holding of organised priesthoods as long as they continued to have an interest in them'.<sup>151</sup>

This gives a very different viewpoint from that in the *Fasti*. According to her, the conversion of senators who held office as *luperci*, *flamines* and *pontifices* reported in the *Peristephanon* of Prudentius (dated probably between the 390s and 404/5)<sup>152</sup> indicates the survival of these priesthoods during these years; but the vast diminution of the number of priests and colleges in Rüpke's *Fasti* does not accord with this picture. As already stated, Rüpke found no evidence in the period after 408 for the survival of the pontifical colleges. The festival of the *Lupercalia* survived until the end of the fifth century in Rome but were pagan priests involved in these celebrations?<sup>153</sup> Lizzi Testa also states that the festivals of the *Carmentalia*, *Quirinalia*, *Regifugium*, *Floralia* and *Volcanalia* were still being celebrated in 448/9 according to the calendar of Polemius Silvius, produced in Gaul, at which the *flamines* and *pontifices* traditionally had officiated; and that the priests who celebrated these festivals must also therefore have continued to be nominated.<sup>154</sup> However even if this is the case, were these festivals still being celebrated in Rome by this date, and if so, where is the proof of this and for attendant priests?

To support her thesis, Lizzi Testa also advances evidence from Salvian of Marseilles who declared that the practice of augury using the flight of birds continued in the mid-fifth century. It apparently occurred when the consuls would make predictions – *auguria* – based

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<sup>150</sup> Lee, 2013: 529-30.

<sup>151</sup> Lizzi Testa, 2009: 264.

<sup>152</sup> M J Roberts, 1993: 2-3, n 7.

<sup>153</sup> Lizzi Testa, 2009: 269.

<sup>154</sup> Lizzi Testa, 2009 : 269.

on the manner in which the chickens at their food and the movement of birds.<sup>155</sup> If this is true and the college of augurs still existed and was electing priests, then Rupke found no evidence of their existence; for him all the traditional pontifical colleges by this date had long been extinct. Therefore the conclusion that can be drawn from these conflicting opinions is that probably the pagan priesthoods did die out in the very early fifth century, but that possibly (if Salvian of Marseilles is to be believed) some rituals such as augury were resurrected occasionally by superstitious officials who perhaps felt that something extra than Christian prayers on occasion was needed.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined ritual associated with Symmachus' religious world in a number of ways. By means of a series of Symmachean letters the rites associated with the cult of Vesta and her *pontifices* have been examined and it is argued that Symmachus was scrupulous in his religious duties as a *pontifex Vestae* and equally scrupulous in his dealings with the Vestals themselves. An exploration of the alternative religious rituals practised by his closest associates, Flavianus, Praetextatus and his wife Paulina have also been assessed. The two types of paganism of this period that this examination has analysed have been discussed extensively by other scholars and this chapter has demonstrated that Symmachus did not have much in common with the so-called 'florid' pagans. However, my focus here is above all Symmachus himself - and his personal religious world and inner religious beliefs. Therefore on the basis of the available evidence, the differences in cult practices and therefore in ritual between the three men are demonstrated on the table below.

Symmachus is seen from this to be much more **concentrated** in his approach to religion; he holds just the priesthood of Vesta as do the other two. With just one priesthood he is in a strong position to motivate the other two into performing their priestly duties – and if necessary try to bring pressure on them if they are not doing these for whatever reason. Flavianus' serious involvement in at least three cults means he has less time for pontifical duties connected with Vesta. However of the three of them it is Praetextatus who, superficially involved with many cults, probably had little time for the practice of any of

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<sup>155</sup>Salvian, *De gub. Dei*, 6.12-13 (SCh220.370-1) ; Lizzi Testa, 2009: 272.

them and it is Praetextatus who would appear to show the normal face of late paganism if the evidence of the Vatican Phrygianum is to be believed.

The inscriptions of this cult site have been discussed in this chapter and demonstrate a group of people who liked the dramatic experience that the mystery cults could give them and were not content with the more state-orientated rites of the *sacra publica*. A modern equivalent might be Anglicans dissatisfied with a normal Anglican service who turn to the emotional appeal of the more elaborate ritual and pageantry to be found in the Anglo-Catholic rite. Certainly it was probably only when early Christianity adopted some of the more common pagan ritual practices, apart from sacrifice, for example the use of incense, that some of its newer adherents began to feel really at home in their new religious setting. It can therefore be seen that late fourth-century pagans were extremely varied and eclectic in their cult choices and practices and were no more united than Anglicans are today; so the idea of an aristocratic, homogenous pagan party opposing an aristocratic Christian party, is one for which there is frankly no evidence. Table 7 shows the priesthoods held by Symmachus, Flavianus and Praetextatus.

**Table 7: A comparison of the priesthoods held by Symmachus, Flavianus and Praetextatus**

<b>Symmachus</b>	<b>Flavianus</b>	<b>Praetextatus</b>
<i>pontifex Vestae</i>	<i>pontifex Vestae</i>	<i>pontifex Vestae</i>
	<i>augur</i>	<i>augur</i>
	<i>tauroboliatus</i>	<i>quindecimuir</i>
		<i>pontifex solis</i>
		<i>tauroboliatus</i>
		<i>pater patrum</i>
		<i>neocorus</i>
		<i>curialis Herculis</i>
		<i>Liberio et Eleusi[ni]s</i>
		<i>hierophanta</i>

It would appear that examination of ritual concerned with Symmachus and his colleagues helps to further elucidate the inner Symmachus in religious terms and so take us further along the path of trying to identify what might have been his personal religious motivation.

Another important factor to consider is Symmachus' own psychological makeup and the part that this played in his approach to religion and this too will be considered in Chapter 7. He emerges in the studies undertaken in this chapter as a conscientious man in public religious ways who is trying to keep things together under increasingly difficult circumstances. This could be down to natural scrupulousness and indeed this is one of Symmachus' characteristics. However it appears to be much more than this; the letters discussed in Section 1 of this chapter reveal a Symmachus, still worshipping in the traditional fashion, who regrets the passing of the old ways and would like to return to the kind of religious ceremonies that would have been familiar to Cicero – who had the freedom to pursue them in a way that Symmachus did not. In this sense his religious rituals do reflect his belief system because in many ways his belief system is encompassed in devotion to public ritual. But Symmachus' adherence to his religious rituals goes deeper than just public observance; for him *religio* was not just public scrupulosity but symptomatic of a deeper religious belief structure.

## Chapter 6

### Symmachus' Cult of *amicitia*

Symmachus starts off letter 7.99 to Longinianus with the words: *Cultum amicitiae libenter exerceo* or *I exercise willingly the cult of friendship*. These words sum up Symmachus' central code of values, his cult of *amicitia* by which he wrote letters to his contemporaries, carried out his day to day business and lived his life.<sup>1</sup> It pervaded his being to such an extent that even his most trivial letters were written according to the literary code of *amicitia* – quite apart from the fact that he enjoyed and pursued the normal aristocratic life of *amicitia* and *otium*. This is why, in what is a religious biography of Symmachus and his world, this chapter is devoted to considering Symmachus' cult of *amicitia*.

In this chapter, therefore, I want to analyse what can be considered Symmachus' central core values, his version of *amicitia*, by which he followed a code established by upper-class Romans centuries before and which can be seen to its full effect in the letters of Cicero and of Pliny. While Salzman has examined Symmachus' relationship with *amicitia* in a detailed article, I develop her approach in this extensive study of this aspect of Symmachus' life. Salzman concentrates on Book 1 of the letters where it is her contention that Symmachus arranged this book to show how much the pagan and Christian elites shared in terms of culture, literature, material concerns, civic values and even to some extent religious values.<sup>2</sup> Book 1 of the *Epistulae* therefore was a deliberate attempt to counteract the new Christian definition of *amicitia*.<sup>3</sup> I discuss Symmachus' cult of *amicitia* not just in terms of Book 1, important though it is, but by examining letters from the other books also and go further than Salzman in analysing Symmachus' devotion to *amicitia* as a kind of cult which for him was more important than any religious divide.

The first part of this chapter will attempt to define what the Romans meant by *amicitia*. Then, by creating a series of circles demonstrating Symmachus' epistolary community and demonstrating this by means of a Venn diagram, I will look at who exactly Symmachus' correspondents were, outline the reasons for his letter writing, provide some analysis and

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<sup>1</sup> I discuss this letter further on in this chapter, page 181.

<sup>2</sup> Salzman, 2007: 250.

<sup>3</sup> Salzman, 2007: 250.



exemplars of his epistolary style and language and in this fashion show how literary *amicitia* worked in practice. An important part of this exercise will be to examine Symmachus' patronage letters comprising at least twenty five percent of the whole and as part of this evaluate how aristocratic patronage worked. This is followed by a section comparing a short extract of a Symmachus letter with similar examples from Cicero and Pliny to evaluate similarities and differences in literary *amicitia* between the three authors; also in this part of the chapter the similarities between the pagan Symmachus and the Christian Jerome's letter styles are examined briefly. His style in writing to his pagan correspondents is then examined to see if it differed markedly from that used for his Christian ones, and what can be deduced from this. I will argue in this part of the chapter that Symmachus' conviction of his religious rightness allows him to write to Christians about pagan rites and to recommend a Christian bishop for a North African town. The final part of the chapter looks at *amicitia* becoming Christian *caritas* in the last years of the fourth century and how **this** pattern of *amicitia* survived into medieval times.

### 6.1 *Amicitia* - a definition

The word *amicitia* means friendship. Originally it could be friendship between Rome and another state or between individuals.<sup>4</sup> In Roman social and political life the *amici* of a prominent man acted as his advisers in personal and public affairs and might form a group of political followers. The word suggests equality of rank but could apply as well to those subordinate in status. Cicero's *De Amicitia* shows that ideally this relationship involved love and mutual respect; certainly the final chapter of this work concludes with the statement that excepting virtue, nothing is more important than friendship.<sup>5</sup> In practice, however, these friendships might only be an alliance to pursue temporary shared aims and when these alliances changes there could be conflict.<sup>6</sup> The same ideas of friendship also applied to poets of the Early Empire who yearned for a more independent status, the true friendship advocated by Cicero - but for whom in reality *amicitia* with a patron could describe an unequal relationship between patron and client as Martial bemoans in several epigrams.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hornblower and Spawforth, 1999: 72.

<sup>5</sup> Cic. *De Amic.* 27.104.

<sup>6</sup> Hornblower & Spaworth, 1999: 72.

<sup>7</sup> *Epg.* 1.70, 9.100, 10.82, 3.46, 11.24.

It can be seen from the Symmachean corpus of letters that Cicero's definition of *amicitia* applies as readily in the late fourth century as it would have done in Cicero's own day at the end of the Republic, though it is possible that some of Symmachus' friends might have seen their relationship more like that decried by Martial. It also seems to have remained important in Western medieval monasticism as can be seen in Aeldred of Rievaulx's *De Spirituali Amicitia*, written in the twelfth century.<sup>8</sup> Cicero's definition of friendship<sup>9</sup> is an essential part of *De Spirituali Amicitia* where it appears four times:

*Friendship is nothing else than entire fellow feeling as to all things human and divine with mutual good-will and affection*

This could well have been a maxim to which Symmachus subscribed.

## 6.2 Symmachus' Circles of Community

Symmachus corresponded with a whole range of people, over one hundred and thirty of them, and these can be termed his 'community'. They included family, close friends, and a vast array of people who represented the shifting political alliances that were typical of the period. These are the people with whom he pursued the cult of *amicitia* in all its aspects. These mutually advantageous, not to say crucially important distance relationships were practically maintained through the medium of letters. By the late fourth century, letter exchange had become a standard tool for maintaining a variety of long-distance relationships.<sup>10</sup> He also wrote patronage letters on behalf of other people, *litterae commendaticiae* which comprise at least twenty five percent of his total correspondence<sup>11</sup>, some examples of which are examined later in this chapter. The editing and arrangement of the letters has already been discussed in Chapter 1, pages 3-4.

Symmachus counted some of the most powerful men in the Roman Empire among his correspondents. While many of the people he communicated with were pagan, many also, especially towards the end of his life, were Christian. Mini-biographies of the most important of these people are contained in Appendix 2. The correspondents of Book 1 which

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<sup>8</sup> Aeldred, *De Spir. Amic.* Bracewell (trans.)

<sup>9</sup> Cic. *De Amic.* 6.20.

<sup>10</sup> Ebbeler/Sogno, 2007: 234-5.

<sup>11</sup> Matthews, 1974: 61.

chronologically goes up to 385 include some of his family, close friends and those among the elite whom he corresponded with for other reasons. As I stated in Chapter 1, there are reasons to think that Symmachus himself edited this book so the arrangement of recipients reflects Symmachus' own authorial intentions and valuation of their importance to him.<sup>12</sup> Among these personages are his father Avianus Symmachus, and his brother Celsinus Titianus, the poet and consul Ausonius and his son Hesperius, Praetextatus the most prominent pagan until his death at the end of 384, Petronius Probus, consul four times and a member of the ardently Christian Anicii family, Fl. Claudius Antonius, an important member of the Imperial bureaucracy and Flavius Syragius who rose to eminence having originally been a notary in Gaul and probably a friend of Ausonius. Book 2 is entirely devoted to the correspondence with his great friend, fellow pagan and relative through marriage, Virius Nichomachus Flavianus.

Book 3 contains the correspondence to Ambrose, Bishop of Milan and possibly a distant relative of Symmachus, Eutropius, historian and Richomerus, a pagan general and a Frank who rose to the rank of consul at Constantinople and was a friend of Libanius. In Book 4 Stilicho appears, guardian of the Emperor Honorius after the death of Theodosius, Christian and *Magister Militum* of the West. This book also lists Bauto among the correspondents of Symmachus, another pagan who in 384 supported Symmachus in the Altar of Victory Dispute. Later Bauto's alliances changed and his daughter Eudoxia married the Emperor Arcadius who shared the consulship with him in 385 when he replaced Praetextatus as consul, because Praetextatus died before he could assume the magistracy. Contained in books 5 and 7 are many letters to Symmachus' other friends and acquaintances including fourteen letters to his son Memmius at the beginning of Book 7. Book 6 is like Book 2 except that here we have two recipients – his son-in-law Nicomachus Flavianus Junior, the elder son of Virius Flavianus, and Symmachus' un-named daughter. Cameron states that all letters from Symmachus to his son-in-law before the battle of Frigidus were destroyed.<sup>13</sup> He gives as his explanation for this stance that it would have been foolish to have kept or published them because they might have been treasonable. This is rather peculiar reasoning as many other letters of this period to pagans were kept and were subsequently published. The only letters

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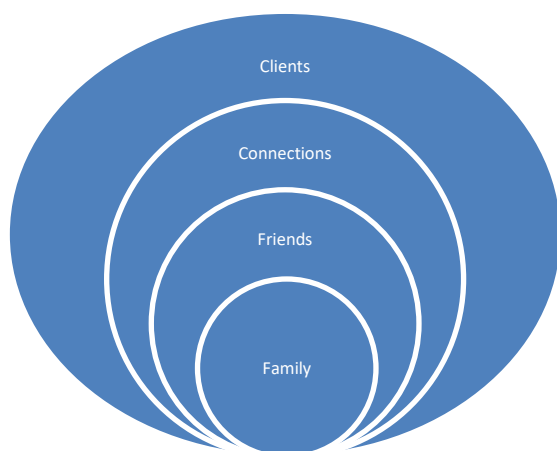
<sup>12</sup> Salzman, 2011: xiv.

<sup>13</sup> Cameron, 2011: 371

which might have been problematic were those written around the period of Frigidus itself, August/September 394 so it would have been prudent to destroy these.

Symmachus, like Cicero, Pliny and others was bound to his contemporaries, with whom he corresponded, by this concept of *amicitia*. In essence, however, Symmachus' correspondents, the ones listed above and others with whom he associated with various and differing kinds of *amicitia*, made up what Twelvetrees calls a community interest group – that is not a group bound by a specific location, but one comprising individuals who are linked by common interests, for example, class, friendship, political alliances or social interests.<sup>14</sup> These links can be extremely diverse, and as the needs of the person at the centre of the particular network changes, so the networks themselves change; they can be extremely fluid.<sup>15</sup> The Venn diagram below shows Symmachus' circles of community which can be associated with his broad alliances of *amicitia*. At the bottom is Symmachus himself with his family associates in the circle nearest to him, then comes the friendship circle – this includes his genuine friends, in the modern sense, such as Flavianus and Praetextatus as opposed to the connections, people with whom he has an alliance for convenience or for political reasons who are placed in the second outermost circle. In the top and outermost circle are the links due to patronage. Thus with this figure Symmachus' alliance structure can be seen at a glance. These people would all count as *amici*.

**Table 8: Venn diagram illustrating Symmachus' circles of community**



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<sup>14</sup> Twelvetrees, 1991: 16.

<sup>15</sup> Twelvetrees, 1991: 16.

### 6.3 *Amicitia*, politeness and literary style

*Amicitia* was part of a way of life where leisure, or *otium*, and the running of estates were the norm punctuated in some cases, like Symmachus, with public service, or *negotium*.

Symmachus and his contemporaries, of course, inherited the concept of *amicitia* from their ancestors, particularly from Cicero and Pliny; writing letters was an essential part of *amicitia*.

Much aristocratic letter writing was produced with an awareness that it might well be distributed beyond the named addressee. Such letters could be classified as semi-public though the writer could not be sure how many people the epistle might reach. One could say then that the semi-public nature of epistolary encounters was a form of social performance.<sup>16</sup>

Linguistic excellence helped the development of personal relationships if displayed with finesse as it could demonstrate social accomplishment and *savoir faire* on the part of the writer.<sup>17</sup> Elegant compliments and general displays of respect allowed the aristocrat to portray himself in flattering and sophisticated terms, as one possessed of *urbanitas*.<sup>18</sup> The exchange of polished, witty letters could help to cultivate a sense of community and camaraderie between similar individuals.<sup>19</sup> This is one trait of epistolary *amicitia* which can be seen in Cicero, Pliny and Symmachus.

Symmachus and his contemporaries, such as Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola all corresponded with each other as part of the lifestyle of *otium* and *amicitia* and their letters reflect the literary politeness that is associated with *amicitia*. This is true even of the churchmen such as Ambrose and Jerome because they all had experienced the same literary and classical education. They came from the same background – very helpful for being part of the community of *amicitia* – and they all knew its unwritten codes: and the letters reflected the manners and linguistic usages of their face to face meetings. Paulinus however, having rejected *otium ruris* and the *amicitia* of the world to the distress of his friend and mentor Ausonius, ultimately developed a new concept of friendship – *caritas*, through his Christian practice and belief.<sup>20</sup> He, like some of his contemporaries, was moving beyond Ciceronian concepts of aristocratic *amicitia* and embracing a new way – that the grace and love of God

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<sup>16</sup> Hall, 2009: 25.

<sup>17</sup> Hall, 2009: 25.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, 2009: 25, n108.

<sup>19</sup> Hall, 2009: 25, n109.

<sup>20</sup> Trout, 1999: 210.

rather than individual human sympathy and shared traditional values must be the source and *modus vivendi* of Christian friendship.<sup>21</sup> This is discussed further in 6.9.

Symmachus would have been educated privately although we know that he studied rhetoric with a master who may have been Tiberius Victor Minervius whom Ausonius lauds in a poem.<sup>22</sup> Letter writing remained, however, only on the edges of formal rhetorical education throughout antiquity. This then meant that there were never any standard templates for different kinds of letters as there were for rhetorical speeches.<sup>23</sup> However the rules of certain types of rhetorical speeches could be adapted for letters of a corresponding type. For example a letter of consolation written by someone with rhetorical training could show traits of an appropriate address of consolation. A rhetorical work called *On Style* which is the earliest extant work which deals with letter-writing was wrongly attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum (c 350-280 BCE) but actually published much later. This discusses well developed traditions and conventions of letter writing associated with Greek friendship and had great influence. At about the same time, as we can see with Cicero, these traditions became fully integrated into the Roman world. All the great Roman later letter writers such as Seneca, Pliny and Fronto, were the product of schools of rhetoric. In the third century Philostratus of Lemnos wrote a now lost book on letter writing which reflected the controversies among ‘rhetoricians concerning the proper epistolary usage by letter writers in government service’.<sup>24</sup> And Julius Victor in the fourth century added a discussion on letter writing in his rhetorical handbook.<sup>25</sup> Symmachus in letter 7.9 to his son Memmius, which is quoted in this chapter on page 182, compliments his son on his style of writing, ‘to this style of writing you mix the serious and the pleasant: which I also believe your rhetor teaches you’ – living proof that the dictates of rhetorical writers concerning letter writing were both being observed and being taught. However, the teachers of rhetoric must have concentrated mainly on spoken oratory rather than on the written letter, because it was the former which would earn their pupils an income and status in later life if they had been taught well.

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<sup>21</sup> Trout, 1999: 210.

<sup>22</sup> Aus. *Prof.* 1.

<sup>23</sup> Stowers, 1991: 34.

<sup>24</sup> Stowers, 1991: 34

<sup>25</sup> Stowers, 1991: 34.

It is therefore extremely likely that Symmachus, like his contemporaries, did receive some formal training in correct epistolary style as part of the training in rhetoric, and that Symmachus' extreme formality and involved word structure in his letters do owe something to his rhetorical training, transferred to his literary style. He seems to me certainly to have a more involved style than Jerome for example. This formality is often shown at the beginning of Symmachus' epistles where elaborate language, figures of speech and quotations from earlier writers are used although this is also the case in speeches, narrative, historiography and poetry of the period as well. An example of a letter which commences with elaborate phraseology is in *Ep.* 1.92 to Antonius (after 370)<sup>26</sup> which Symmachus starts by saying:<sup>27</sup>

*Dulce certamen est familiaris officii et ideo iure ambo cauimus ne alternis epistulis uinceremur*

*Rivalry in performing the duties of friendship is sweet, and for that reason we are both rightly careful not to be outdone in the exchange of letters*

The use of letters as a means of aesthetic expression and literary artistry has received much study in modern times. Pliny is one of the great exponents of the elite letter in this way;<sup>28</sup> and Symmachus, who in many ways is similar to Pliny, in his turn, emulates him in this way too.

The chart below compares a series of abstract nouns used and how often they are utilised in the letters. Above all it emphasises the importance of the concept of *amicitia* by the number of times it and its cognates are used. The total number of instances that *amicitia* and *amicus* appear totals 338 times. Only *officium* has more. This demonstrates how important both the concept of 'friendship' and the people he called his 'friends' were within his epistolary landscape.

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 2

<sup>27</sup> Salzman/Roberts trans. 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Stowers, 1991: 35.

**Table. 9: List comparing use of abstract nouns in Symmachus' letters**

Word	Number of times used <sup>29</sup>
<i>amicitia</i>	198
<i>amicus</i>	140
<i>officium</i>	351
<i>beneficium</i>	111
<i>iustitia</i>	57
<i>laetitia</i>	40
<i>otium</i>	31
<i>prudentia</i>	9
<i>imprudentia</i>	3
<i>maestitia</i>	2
<i>inimicitia</i>	0

Symmachus' letters frustrate many of their readers for their involved formality and verbosity – and lack of real information. Since their editing by Seeck Symmachus' letters have been characterised as extremely dull and uninformative about the great events of his day, written, even to close friends in an artificial and archaic manner. One recent critic is O'Donnell,<sup>30</sup> who states:

‘Yet it is precisely the vapidness of the letters which is their most fascinating quality; rarely do we get so comprehensive a literary portrait surviving from antiquity of so thoroughly wearisome, fatuous, and pompous an individual. The letters are simply as preposterous as their author was.’

The majority of the letters are of only a few lines. Even Symmachus could get frustrated however with the lack of substance in his letters sometimes as he states to Flavianus senior in 2.35.2:

*Quousque enim dandae ac reddendae salutationis uerba blaterabimus, cum alia stilo materia non suppetat?*

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<sup>29</sup> These numbers are derived from Lomanto, 1981.

<sup>30</sup> O'Donnell, 1979: 13 (my page numbering as online version of article has unnumbered pages)..



*For how long are we to go chattering, giving and returning words of salutation due to the lack of anything worthwhile to write?*

He then remarks that the restricted political life of his own day offered nothing compared to that which their ancestors (as in the time of Cicero) had filled their letters.<sup>31</sup> Symmachus was cautious in his correspondence and often only touched on sensitive political affairs in a roundabout and elliptical fashion. This was sensible in view of the fact that he intended at least some of his correspondence for publication.

Matthews feels that this criticism of Symmachus' writing style is perhaps a little unjust as, apart from judicious editing before publication, the letters were often mere cover notes and the real information would have been entrusted to the courier who delivered them.<sup>32</sup> Written on Symmachus' preferred writing medium of papyrus, they were normally dictated to a secretary:<sup>33</sup>

*Aegyptus papyri uolumina bibliothecis foroque texuerit.*

*Egypt has woven the rolls of papyrus for the libraries and the courts*

It must be noted that Symmachus was neither an historian nor social commentator. His main intention with his letters was the pursuit of *amicitia* with his friends and acquaintances; the prime aim of the letters 'was to manipulate, to produce results'.<sup>34</sup> Matthews develops this point by saying that one can trace the progress of a new acquaintance with Symmachus calculating its benefits in terms of patronage.<sup>35</sup> Like Cicero he made extensive use of affiliative politeness; that is explicit statements of goodwill and friendship for the purpose of forging political alliances.<sup>36</sup> Formal correspondence had a definite place in the upper class routine and was governed by firm rules. Even if these letters were very brief, a mere *salutatio*, as Symmachus' often were, they had to be sent and acknowledged in a courteous manner when received.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ep.* 2.35; Matthews, 1974: 62, 92, n 19.

<sup>32</sup> Matthews, 1974: 63.

<sup>33</sup> *Ep.* 4.28.4

<sup>34</sup> Matthews, 1974: 64.

<sup>35</sup> *Ep.* 7.42; Matthews, 1974: 64.

<sup>36</sup> Hall, 2009: 13.

<sup>37</sup> McGeachy, 1942: 118.

An example of a letter using the term *amicitia* to a connection, Longinianus, is as follows and is a very good example of the excessive politeness and formality of Symmachus' epistolary style.<sup>38</sup> I refer to this letter in the first paragraph of this chapter.

*Cultum amicitiae libenter exerceo. Video enim mihi a te talionem curae parilis non negari; magnus autem diligentiae incentor est amor tuus. Quare beneficii loco exprobare non possum quod ex debito officio defero. Ipse enim tibi auctor es officiorum meorum quae scribendi adsiduitate sollicitas. Vale*

*I exercise freely the cult of friendship. For I see that you do not deny a retaliation of like care for me; for your love is a great setter of the tune of diligence. On which account I cannot reproach in the place of kindness that which out of due service I honour. For you are the originator, for yourself, of my services that you solicit by your regular correspondence.*

This letter, brief as it is, demonstrates many of the features which frustrate Symmachus' readers because it says nothing; it may even have had elements of being a private joke between the two correspondents. This is of course the type of letter which could well have just been the cover for a verbal message entrusted to the courier. It could certainly be seen as the epitome of a 'visiting card' type of letter.<sup>39</sup> Its formality is exquisite; it is very well structured and demonstrates perfectly the epistolary version of a face to face meeting exchanging pleasantries without discussing anything serious, between people who need each other for mutual advantage and who therefore profess *amicitia* to one another. Lewis and Short give various translations of *cultus*; one meaning however is an honouring, reverence, adoration or veneration.<sup>40</sup> This almost denotes quasi-religious qualities and indeed *cultus* is normally used in a religious sense. This is only one of two letters which describes friendship in terms of a cult; however neither of these examples seem to take the religious meanings of cult seriously. Symmachus seems to have been using it in a non-religious sense – much as we might use the phrase, 'cult of personality'. The other example is 7.60.1 to Patricius written before 402 when Symmachus says:

*ut imparem me stilo fatear, quamuis cultu amicitiae parem non negem.*

*to confess to you the inferiority of my pen although in the cult of friendship, I do not refuse to be your equal*

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<sup>38</sup> Ep. 7.99.

<sup>39</sup> Matthews, 1974: 62.

<sup>40</sup> Lewis and Short, 1991: 488.

However in another letter 5.68 where we encounter the concept of *cultui amicorum*, of the *cult of friends*, things are rather different as Symmachus here seems to be more intense and serious in his treatment of this concept. This letter is analysed later on in this chapter on page 193.

#### 6.4 Symmachus' Latin and Syntax

At this stage it would be useful to outline briefly some points about Symmachus' Latin and syntax. Symmachus essentially writes in a literary Latin which shows much resemblance in terms of grammar and construction to that of Cicero or Pliny. The problem that his letters give for the translator is caused primarily by the rhetorical construction and over-elaborate use of words and phrases, rather than by the syntax used in his sentences. At the level of grammar and usage, Symmachus in his writings shows familiarity with a range of Latin authors from whom he tends to quote including Cicero, Terence, Horace, Plautus and Virgil.<sup>41</sup> Haverling estimated that ninety five percent of Symmachus' Latin was still very much like the kind of Latin used four centuries earlier in the High Classical period.<sup>42</sup> Therefore the proportion of other words used, archaic or Late Latin was actually quite small.

Symmachus was an archaist, however, and therefore used old Latin words like *dapalis*, deliberately, which had not been in normal parlance for a long time. He could almost be accused of 'worshipping' early Latin. He also occasionally deliberately uses archaic grammatical constructions such as in *Ep.* 1.46.2 where *fungetur* takes the accusative, *indicium* instead of the ablative, *indicio*. He also makes *fruor* and *potior* take the early Latin accusative instead of the Classical ablative.<sup>43</sup> It is possible that Symmachus' attempt to retain linguistic purity in this manner by using archaic forms of words and syntax was in fact part of the religious struggle that was going on; but I think it is more probable that it is another example of his general conservatism and preference for the ways of antiquity.

Symmachus' archaisms were influenced both by Aulus Gellius and Fronto, both second century CE. Haverling states:

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<sup>41</sup> Salzman, 2011: xxi.

<sup>42</sup> Haverling, 1988: 30.

<sup>43</sup> Haverling, 1988: 212-13.

‘These earlier archaists wanted to refresh Latin prose style not only through the re-introduction of obsolete expressions, but also through the imitation of the greater freedom that they thought characterised word-formation and modes of expression in early Latin’.<sup>44</sup>

Aulus Gellius and Fronto both had created new words, and Symmachus imitated them also in this. For example he uses *prefamen*, an otherwise unknown word, instead of *prefatio* in *Ep.2.34.2*.<sup>45</sup> Language of any type continues to develop however, and there were differences therefore between Classical and Late Latin; the latter contained many new word formations and new word usages. And of course the language that Symmachus wrote in was far more formal than that which he would have used to speak; and light years away from the *sermo uulgaris* of Jerome. Christianity brought new words into the vocabulary such as *episcopus*, *christianitas* or *baptizatio*<sup>46</sup> - and new Christian meanings for old words emerged. One fascinating example of Christianity changing the meaning of a word is *hostia* which originally meant, ‘an animal slain in sacrifice’.<sup>47</sup> This is naturally the way in which Symmachus uses it in *Ep.1.49*, *multiugis hostiis* or *multiple sacrificial animals* which I discuss in Chapter 5. This word however comes into Christianity as ‘host’, meaning the bread or wafer used in the Eucharist, signifying Christ’s sacrifice for man. In general, however, Symmachus in his language and syntax was largely imitating Cicero and Pliny in style as well as in genre, but with inevitable influences from contemporary language and the deliberate usage of archaisms.

## 6.5 Letters to family, friends and acquaintances

In the following pages a short series of letters is examined in terms of Symmachus’ style. They demonstrate different aspects of Symmachus’ epistolary style in respect of the different groups of people he wrote to, the different parts of his community. In these letters he demonstrates constantly his second ‘religion’, the *cultus amicitiae*. It can be seen that his formality and verbosity are constant even with his own family, but to the people nearest to him he did write in a more interesting and intimate fashion. One nice family example is the

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<sup>44</sup> Haverling, 1988: 25.

<sup>45</sup> Haverling, 1988: 25-26.

<sup>46</sup> Haverling, 1988: 35.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis and Short, 1991: 867.

following to his son Memmius.<sup>48</sup> This letter was written to Memmius, sometime between 399-402, when he would have been between sixteen and nineteen years of age.

*Scintillare acuminibus atque sententiis epistulas tuas gaudeo; decet enim loqui exultantius iuuenalem calorem. Sed uolo ut in aliis materiis aculeis orationis utaris, huic autem generi scriptionis maturum aliquid et comicum misceas; quod tibi etiam rhetorem tuum credo praecipere. Nam ut in uestitu hominum ceteroque uitae cultu loco ac tempori apta sumuntur, ita ingeniorum uarietas in familiaribus scriptis negligentiam quandam debet imitari, in forensibus uero quater arma facundiae. Sed de his non ibo longius. Perge interim quo te aetatis impetus et naturae ardor inpellit. Mei uoti caput est ut bene ualeas et supra annos tuos litterarum dote ditescas.*

*I rejoice that your letters sparkle with sharpness and aphorisms, for it is fitting to a young man's ardour to speak more boastfully: but I want you to in other matters to employ the sharpness of oratory, but to this style of writing you mix the serious and the pleasant: which I also believe your rhetor teaches you. For just as in the clothing of men and in the cultivation of the remainder of life what is selected fits time and place, so variety of character in private writings ought to imitate spontaneity when, in truth, in court matters indeed (it must) wield the arms of eloquence. But I will not go any further about this. Continue meanwhile where the impetus of your age and the ardour of your nature drive you. The heart of my wish is that you may be well and that you may grow rich with a dowry of learning beyond your years.*

This letter demonstrates natural pride of a very fond father in his son's achievements but in spite of the affection it can be seen that Symmachus is still fairly formal. The style also loses nothing of his normal involved but extremely elegant and literary way of writing. However there is an ease of diction within this letter which shows us the human and paternal face of Symmachus.

The second circle of his community I have called 'Friends' and this comprises the people who were his intimates, not the mass of his recipients with whom he was trying to do business and advance his affairs. The example I have chosen is a letter from Symmachus to Ausonius, who was Christian, written before 380. Ausonius and Symmachus met at the court of Trier in 368 when Symmachus had been sent north as part of a deputation by Praetextatus, carrying the customary *aurum oblativum* on Valentinian I's quinquennialia and to deliver the customary panegyric. They became friends, both undoubtedly gaining political advantage from this. However, what may well have started as a relationship of convenience developed into something quite different – they had after all many literary interests in common.

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<sup>48</sup>Ep. 7.9

Ausonius, like Praetextatus, was a generation older than Symmachus. In this letter, *Ep.*1.33 we see a very typical example of Symmachus using familial words for correspondents who were not in fact members of his family. Its tone is one of respect and affection, commensurate with the age and position of its recipient, and Symmachus' erudition and love of literary verbiage and quotation can also be seen. Symmachus is very fond of quoting Plautus from whom the first sentence is derived,<sup>49</sup> and whom he would have known through studies while he was being educated. Symmachus' use of Plautine language is also typical of his literary archaizing. The available evidence would suggest that Plautine plays were not seen by audiences in the late fourth century.<sup>50</sup> The late Romans seem to have seen mime and dancing performed in the theatre but not plays, even traditional Roman comedy. There is evidence that *Querolus*, a late antique comedy in the style of Plautus was written to be read at banquets and recitals but not on the stage.<sup>51</sup> Symmachus also however quotes many other traditional authors, Virgil and Cicero being particular favourites.

*Aiunt cocleas, cum sitiunt umoris atque illis de caelo nihil liquitur, suco proprio uicitare. Ea res mihi usu uenit, qui desertus pastu eloquii tui meo adhuc rore sustentor. Diu scribendi operam protulisti et uereor ne forte in nos parentis claudat adfectio. Si falsa me opinio habet, facito, ut ceteris negotiis tuis respondendi cura praeuortat. Vale*

*They say that snails when they thirst for moisture and nothing flows down to them from the sky can live on their own juice. This is my experience, for deserted by your nourishing eloquence, I am sustained, thus far, by my own dew. For a long time you have postponed bothering to write and I am afraid that your parental feeling for us may be faltering. If my opinion in this matter is wrong, pray bring it about that concern for replying takes priority over your other business. Farewell.*

The Connections circle of his community contains the people with whom he was on less intimate terms. Symmachus uses terms such as *parens*, or *frater* very often in addressing these people. They are not of course relatives but are long-term or temporary contacts with whom he is working to attain particular ends. The fake friendliness and intimacy is just part of his style in writing to them. It makes his correspondents feel valued, even if the acquaintance is purely by letter and only for a short time. Letter 7.99, quoted on page 179 as an exemplar of pure epistolary *amicitia*, is one example of this part of his correspondence as is the one quoted below.<sup>52</sup> We know nothing about Iohannes who is presumably a Christian in view of his name, but Symmachus brings him into his epistolary circle for a particular

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<sup>49</sup> Plautus, *Cap.* 80-1; Callu, Tome 1, 2003: 98.

<sup>50</sup> Conte, 1994: 670.

<sup>51</sup> Conte, 1994: 670.

<sup>52</sup> *Ep.*8.35;

reason and time by using the same kind of language to him that he would have done to someone with whom he was more intimate. The letter is written sometime before 402.

*Quod sero ad te scribo, amicitiae tenacis indicium est cuius memoria repetitis ex interuallo probatur officii. Ipse quoque silentium tuum non aliter interpretor. Nam etsi stili honorificentiam quaero, certus fidei tuae etiam de tacito amore non dubito. Sed uereor ne ista sententia tibi suadeat negligentiam scriptionis et haec amicitiae munia iudicii mei securus omittas. Hortor igitur quaesoque ut illam potius cogites partem quae assiduitati gratiam parit, non quae promittit ueniam raritati. Vale*

*That I write to you late is a sign of tenacious friendship of which the memory is proved by duties repeated after an interval. So, also, I do not otherwise interpret your silence. For even if I request the honour of your pen, I do not doubt your affection even if silent, certain (as I am) of your faithfulness. But I fear lest this opinion might persuade you to neglect writing and sure of my judgement, to disregard this duty of friendship. Therefore I urge and beseech that you think rather of that part (of duty) which produces gratitude for assiduity (and) not that which promises pardon for rarity. Farewell.*

The final circle of Symmachus' community is that entitled 'Clients'. In some ways this is the most understandable of all Symmachus' epistolary activity. It has been estimated that at least twenty five per cent of the Symmachean letters are what one might call patronage letters, that is letters which try to influence people in authority or which try to find official positions for friends, acquaintances or connections, or the connections of Symmachus' friends and connections.<sup>53</sup> Letters to friends and connections may be about clients. It was of course a perfectly normal role of the affluent and influential senator to do this for his own and other people's clients. In this, Late Antiquity does not markedly differ from the time of Pliny. It was an essential part of the culture of *amicitia*. Patronage was exercised by all who had influence to gain advantage for their friends and relatives – and for the friends and relatives of friends and relatives. It was an essential part of life in a culture where getting on depended very much on who you or your family knew.

Like all Symmachus' letters they are formal, involved and use literary constructions to ask for favours. Symmachus has an infinite number of ways of expressing his desires. One surprising correspondent of Symmachus who falls into this category is St Ambrose, Symmachus' opponent in the Altar of Victory affair, which will be dealt with in Chapter 7. Ambrose, who may have been a distant cousin of Symmachus, is the recipient of eight letters from him all asking for favours. These show that Symmachus considers the needs of the

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<sup>53</sup> Matthews, 1974: 61.

people on whose behalf he writes and the general rules of *amicitia* and polite society to be more important than the fact that Ambrose was the most eminent Christian of his day. Symmachus did not let a different religion get in the way of an activity that was an essential component of his everyday lifestyle. Senatorial and elite life rose above such petty differences. The following letter, written sometime after 390 is typical of their correspondence:<sup>54</sup>

*Dysarius, clarissimus uir, qui inter professores medendi summam iure obinet locum ad finem suum eundemque cognominem tradi patrocinio tuo meo optauit oratu. Libens amicissimi uiri desiderio satisfeci, ut una uia et te excolerem salutem dicendo et illius usui commodarem. Fac igitur oro, ut commendatum tuearis auxilio, me sermone uicario munereris. Vale*

*Dysarius, vir clarissimus who among professors of medicine reaches the highest place by right, wishes that his connection by marriage of the same name, be handed over to your patronage at my request. Gladly I have satisfied the desire of this very dear man so that in one way I may express both my greeting to you and serve his interests. See, therefore, I beg you, that (you) look after my protégé by supporting him with your help (and) you present me with a communication as substitute.*

This code of conduct is carried to the ultimate extent in a fascinating letter, 1.64, sent in 380 to Symmachus' brother Celsinus Titianus, also a pagan, when Symmachus recommends a Christian bishop. This has not been included in the Family category because it is a clear case of religious patronage. The favoured person is one Clemens who has defended nobly his native town of Caesarea, (Cherchel in modern Algeria), against the rebel Firmus where the Symmachi family had lands. Symmachus admits the irony involved but defends his recommendation on the grounds of Clemens' patriotism and the personal links that Symmachus had with this part of Africa.<sup>55</sup> It is Clemens the man who Symmachus feels is worthy of his recommendation – the fact that he is Christian is irrelevant.

He states:<sup>56</sup>

*Commendari a me episcopum forte mireris. Causa istud mihi, non secta persuasit. Nam Clemens boni uiri functus officium Caesaream, quae illi patria est, conciliata maximorum principum pace tutatus est.*

*Perhaps you are surprised that I am recommending a bishop. His cause has persuaded me to do so, not his affiliation For Clemens performed the duty of a good man in guarding Caesarea, which is his homeland and gaining the good will of the greatest of princes.*

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<sup>54</sup> Ep. 3.37

<sup>55</sup> Salzman, 2007:267.

<sup>56</sup> Ep. 1.64.1, Salzman/Roberts (trans).



The letter shows a situation replete with evidence of how far aristocratic influence could be extended; and is a wonderful example of Symmachus' code of *amicitia*; where the right character, elite background and good traditional Roman upper class qualities such as *honor*, *uirtus*, and *gravitas* supersede everything else. The code of *amicitia* as developed by Cicero and his successors was 'a benevolent and loving accord in all matters human and divine'<sup>57</sup> and survived into the late fourth century in a form that would have been recognisable to earlier ages ; but first the emergence and then the dominance of Christianity was to revolutionise this concept as the aristocratic Christian letter writers of Late Antiquity tried to replace the *mores* of traditional friendship, *amicitia*, with a more Christian definition, *caritas* as already stated.<sup>58</sup>

The following short letter is another, very typical example of the numerous patronage letters of Symmachus to more ordinary correspondents.<sup>59</sup> It is on behalf of one Felix and was sent to Flavius Eusignius, proconsul of Africa and later praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyria:

*Facio quod suadet humanitas, ut amicitiae tuae uiros frugis adiungam. Horum unus est Felix honorabilis gradu atque exercitatione militiae, cui si quid amoris inpenderis, ad meam gratiam pertinebit. Vale*

*I act as fellow-feeling advises so that I may join to your friendship men of good standing. One of these is Felix, honourable both by position and by the practice of his military service. If you give him some affection, you will receive my thanks. Farewell*

Short and to the point, this letter conveys all that is needed. The use of the word *amor* towards someone he does not know is interesting. It indicates a concern in Symmachus' approach to recommendation even to those inferior to him. Bowersock makes an interesting comment regarding Symmachus' letters of recommendation which I think is relevant here and sheds light on Symmachus' attitude to his patronage letters.<sup>60</sup>

'Further to M. Callu's inquiry concerning the percentage of recommended persons who are of an inferior social level to that of Symmachus himself, it is important to remember that many letters of recommendation set up a complex interplay involving both the subject of the recommendation (of whatever level) and the recipient of it in relation to the writer'.

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<sup>57</sup> Salzman, 2007: 249.

<sup>58</sup> Salzman, 2007: 250.

<sup>59</sup> *Ep.* 4.73.

<sup>60</sup> Paschoud, 1986: 205-6.

The Felix letter demonstrates just how complicated the network of recommendation could be and how seriously Symmachus took his responsibilities within it. Symmachus was a consummate player at the epistolary game of appropriate politeness to the recipient of a particular epistle and this skill is more than evident in his patronage letters as the recommendation of Felix to Eusignius shows.

## 6.6 Symmachus' epistolary Latin and style compared to that of Cicero and Pliny

The following section will briefly compare short sections of letters of Cicero, Pliny and Symmachus to illustrate their various epistolary models and see what comparisons can be made between them in terms of style and Latin; and also to see if there is any evidence from this for epistolary *amicitia* changing in the intervening centuries between the authors. All the writers involved composed correspondence as one of the duties of *amicitia*. Three letters have been selected which are similar in that they are either to close friends or near family – Symmachus to Ausonius, *Ep.* 1.23.1, Cicero to Atticus, *Att.* 15.1a and Pliny to his wife's grandfather, Calpurnius Fabatus, *Ep.* 5.11 They therefore can act as reasonable comparators to each other in letter type. The first fifty words or so of each are used as a sample so that the comparison of the three letters in terms of style and syntax may be balanced as equally as possible. Cicero's letters were later published in an unedited form, Pliny's were polished up prior to publication and probably the same happened to those of Symmachus, published by his son and son-in-law.

Below are the three examples under investigation. I will then analyse each in turn under headings of the introduction, first sentence, use of rhetorical devices, conveying of information and reason for writing. First Symmachus:

*Post longum silentium tuum non minus desiderabam quam sperabam litteras largiores. namque his uicibus humana uariantur, ut defectui succedat ubertas. Ea me opinio frustra habuit siquidem breuis in manus meas pagina recens a te profecta peruenit. Erat quidem illa Atticis salibus aspersa et thymo odora sed parcior, quae magis fastidium detergeret quam famem frangeret*

*After your long silence I was expecting as much as desiring a fuller letter from you, for the cycle of human affairs is such that abundance follows dearth. In that opinion I was deceived, for a short missive recently sent by you has come into my possession. It was*

*indeed sprinkled with Attic wit and scented with thyme but was rather meagre, able rather to dispel fastidiousness than assuage hunger.*<sup>61</sup>

Then Cicero:<sup>62</sup>

*Heri dederam ad te litteras exiens e Puteolano deverteramque in Cumanum. ibi bene ualentem uideram Piliam, quin etiam paulo [post]Cumis eam uidi; uenerat enim in funus cui funeri ego quoque operam dedi. Cn. Lucceius, familiaris noster, matrem effer[eb]at. Mansi igitur eo die in Sinuessano atque inde mane postridie Arpinum proficiscens hanc epistulam exaravi. erat autem nihil noui quod aut scriberem aut te quaererem...*

*I dispatched a letter to you yesterday as I was leaving Puteoli and then turned in at my place near Cumae. There I found Pilia in good health. Indeed I saw her soon afterwards at Cumae where she had gone to attend a funeral at which I too put in an appearance. our good friend Cn. Lucceius was burying his mother. So I stayed the night at my place near Sinuessa and am scribbling this letter early the following morning before I leave for Arpinum. I have no news either to tell or enquire of you.*

Finally Pliny:<sup>63</sup>

*Recepi litteras tuas ex quibus cognoui speciosissimam te porticum sub tuo filiique tui nomine dedicasse, sequenti die in portarum ornatum pecuniam promisisse, ut initium nouae liberalitatis esset consumatio prioris. gaudeo primum tua gloria, cuius ad me pars aliqua pro necessitudine nostra redundat: deinde quod memoriam soceri mei pulcherrimis operibus uideo proferri;*

*Thank you for your letter telling me about your dedication of a handsome public colonnade in your own name and that of your son, followed on the next day by your promise of a sum of money for the decoration of the doors, thus making your second act of generosity the consummation of the first. I am glad of this primarily on account of your own reputation, from which I have some reflected glory through my connexion with you; I am glad too to see my father-in-law's memory perpetuated in such a fine monument ...*

**Symmachus** starts his letter as is normal for him with the greeting, *Symmachus Ausonio*; he then however comes out with an involved introduction where he expresses his frustration at only getting a short letter when he had expected, after a long silence, a much fuller one. This flowery exposition of Symmachus' insistence on longer letters from Ausonius was an epistolary commonplace which indicated how close the two correspondents were.<sup>64</sup> Ausonius however was quaestor of the Sacred Palace and so did not have much time to write, which Symmachus obviously knew. His comments in the section under examination are therefore ironical, something which we do not see in either of the other two letters under review.

Symmachus' rhetorical skill is shown in the next sentence when we learn that Ausonius'

<sup>61</sup> Symm. Ep. 1.23 M. Salzman/M Roberts (trans.), 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Cic. Att. 15.1a D..Shackleton-Bailey (trans.) 1967.

<sup>63</sup> Pliny Ep.5.11 B. Radice (trans.), 1969.

<sup>64</sup> Salzman, 2011 : 60.

letter was *sed parcior, quae magis fastidium detergeret quam famem frangeret*; Symmachus demonstrates elaborate and elegant wordplay here and rhetorical dexterity, showing that he was playing with a food metaphor; this indicates that Ausonius' letter is seen rather a dainty titbit than the substantial meal that Symmachus wanted.<sup>65</sup> However in terms of information giving we learn very little. Symmachus' purpose in writing to Ausonius is probably connected as much with the need to keep in touch with suitable contacts – one purpose of *amicitia* – as to keep up an undoubtedly genuine friendship but we are not given any direct comment as to the purpose of this letter in its early stages. It is possible also that it is the covering note accompanying a verbal message though the length of this particular letter probably makes that unlikely.

**Cicero** is writing to Atticus, his lifelong intimate friend. This is probably not someone therefore to whom Cicero needed to write in terms of political *amicitia*; their friendship was that described in Cicero's *De Amicitia*:<sup>66</sup> 'yet in (true) friendship there is nothing false, nothing pretended; whatever there is, is genuine and comes of its own accord'. The address on the Cicero letter is *Cicero Attico Sal.* which is a version of the normal Roman epistolary greeting, *salutem dicit*. Cicero then goes straight into his subject matter in the first sentence where he tells us at the start of the missive, in clear, plain Latin, that he dispatched a letter to Atticus yesterday as he was leaving Puteoli.<sup>67</sup> Compare this with the involved way Symmachus writes about his reactions to the receipt of Ausonius' letter. There are no clever quotations to show Cicero's literary knowledge and no evidence of rhetorical ornamentation in this particular letter, though obviously Cicero does use rhetorical devices in his epistles. His style is clear and succinct as in the following example:

*Cn. Lucceius, familiaris noster, matrem efferebat.*

The paragraph cited is straightforward and to the point and full of information. We are immediately drawn into, and become interested, even involved in Cicero's world. The

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<sup>65</sup> Salzman, 2011 : 62, n2.

<sup>66</sup> Cic., *De Amic.* 8.26; Falconer (trans).

<sup>67</sup> Cic. *Att.* 15.1a

purpose of this letter is undoubtedly to keep Atticus abreast of Cicero's movements and occupations in his peregrination around Campania and it succeeds admirably in its aim.

Finally let us examine the **Pliny** sample. Like Cicero he writes in a clear style demonstrating the excellent education he had undoubtedly received. The salutation is similar to that of Cicero demonstrating that epistolary style had not changed in this matter much in two hundred years, *C Plinius Calpurnio Fabato Prosocero suo S.* He then in the first sentence, like Cicero, immediately takes us into his subject matter: He thanks his correspondent, with whom he is obviously on good terms for his informative letter. Again there are none of the rhetorical or literary flourishes of Symmachus. Pliny, like Cicero, writes, at least to someone well known to him, in a readable, fluid manner which engages our interest and involves us in his concerns. He conveys his information with clarity, and manages to use polished language in a much more natural way than Symmachus does, for example:<sup>68</sup>

*Gaudeo primum tua gloria, cuius ad me pars aliqua pro necessitudine nostra redundat*

This author conveys his information in a manner which even on reading the text seventeen hundred years later still is clear and interesting. His purpose in writing is to thank his wife's grandfather for writing to tell him about the dedication of a colonnade in his own name and that of his son with the wherewithal to pay for it, and like the Cicero example, Pliny succeeds in clearly expressing this purpose.

It is very noticeable that the style of the Symmachus letter is more polished than either of the other two, less informative and much wordier which reflects his epistolary style exactly even when he is writing to close friends or family and which is discussed in Section 6.5 of this chapter. The polish of his epistolary style is shown in the food comparison in the sample examined, where Ausonius' letter is deemed to have been, *Atticis salibus aspersa et thymo odora*. Both the other two authors produce elegant letters but with an intimacy and clarity of information lacking in Symmachus. Pliny and Cicero are able to drop the need for rhetorical show when writing a letter to an intimate, which Symmachus seems unable or unwilling to do. This makes the letters of the other two writers in this sample easier to read for a modern audience which is one reason why Symmachus gets so little attention; and they are both more informative than Symmachus.

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<sup>68</sup> Pliny, *Ep.* 5.11.

It may also reflect the fashion of his time - there is some evidence that St Jerome, a contemporary of Symmachus, also sometimes started his letters in a very involved way as in *Ep. 7*, written in 374, when the author was living in the desert, to three young friends of his, Chromatius, Iovinus and Eusebius who all later became bishops.<sup>69</sup> The letter starts:

*Non debet charta diuidere, quos amor mutuus copulauit, nec per singulos officia mei sunt partienda sermonis, cum sic inuicem nos ametis, ut non minus tres caritas iungat, quam duos natura sociauit.*

*Those whom mutual love has joined together ought not to be separated on a written page. Therefore, I must not divide between you individually the words that I owe to you all. Two of you as brothers are already natural partners, but so strong is the love which we feel for one another that affection unites the three in a bond that is equally close.*<sup>70</sup>

The opening of this missive undoubtedly reflects the literary and rhetorical training that Jerome had received in his youth. It also shows that the cult of friendship, so important to Symmachus, was important to Jerome also. Jerome's corpus of letters in fact comprises a wide range of religious subjects as one would expect, such as ascetic exhortation, religious polemics, biblical exegesis and monastic advice. Occasionally however, as we have seen in the beginning of *Ep. 7*, he could write in a manner which reflects rather the type of communication associated with his social standing and is more like that of Symmachus, revealing that he has not entirely left behind his classical education or the involved manner that characterised much epistolary *amicitia*. This can be seen in *Ep. 31* to Eustochium, the daughter of Paula where the young Roman aristocrat has written to Jerome on the occasion of the feast of St Peter and has sent him gifts, bracelets, doves and a basket of cherries.<sup>71</sup> In his reply Jerome thanks her and reflects upon their allegorical meaning; his response observes the traditional standards of communication between the educated elite. Such a letter offered the golden opportunity of displaying a classical (and biblical) education.<sup>72</sup> Jerome was particularly fond of quoting Cicero who had been part of his education when studying in Rome with the grammarian Aelius Donatus. This was an author from whom Symmachus too often quoted.

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<sup>69</sup> Jerome, *Select Letters*, 1933: 18, n 1.

<sup>70</sup> *Ep. 7*, F. Wright (trans.).

<sup>71</sup> Rebenich, 2002: 79.

<sup>72</sup> Rebenich, 2002: 79.

However on the subject of whether the style of epistolary *amicitia* changed over the centuries separating the three senators, Symmachus, Cicero and Pliny, I would have to say that all three demonstrate a complete mastery of the art of letter writing in this way. It is obvious also that the lifestyle of *amicitia* and *otium/negotium*, of which letter writing was an essential part, was as important to Symmachus as it was to Cicero or Pliny. There do not appear to have been tremendous changes in this manner of living in the four hundred years separating Cicero from Symmachus. It is in the years after Symmachus that this world irrevocably begins to change.

### **6.7 A Comparison between the language Symmachus uses towards Pagans and that used towards Christians**

It is extremely important that Symmachus writes to pagans and Christians alike in a very similar style. In the aristocratic Roman society of the age of Symmachus it is sometimes very difficult to determine whether a given correspondent was a pagan or Christian and adherents of both were among his friends.<sup>73</sup> So for example we find him invoking the deity in a letter in Book 2 to Flavianus which is one of the most common ways in which his religious vocabulary is demonstrated:<sup>74</sup>

*Si adiutu dei optata processerint*

*If, with the help of the deity our wishes are realised*

But this kind of expression is found scattered throughout his correspondence and not just with his fellow pagans and is analysed in depth in Chapter 3 in the section entitled ‘Symmachus’ Religious Invocations’.

Another example to a known pagan is also very typical of his religious language and is mundane and not out of the ordinary. It is to the Hierophant, his first correspondent in Book 5 - before 402 - whose name originally was thought by Seeck, probably rightly, to be just a title to conceal his real identity. Roda has recently identified this individual as being almost certainly the last High Priest of Eleusis whose name could neither be written or spoken:<sup>75</sup> This letter, one of a small group, is very interesting because of the eminence of this particular

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<sup>73</sup> McGeachy, 1949: 225.

<sup>74</sup> *Ep.* 2.26.1.

<sup>75</sup> *Ep.* 5.2; Callu, 2003: Tome 2, 155, n 1.

pagan priest – and is very much a snapshot of an ancient cult now almost at an end. It is also interesting in its use of *deos*, the gods, plural.

*Opulento me adficis bono quotiens amicitiam nostram salutis tuae indicio muneraris. Deos igitur conprecor ut te pro tanta in nos religione fortunent. Vicissitudini autem, litterariae parem diligentiam libenter inpendo ut ad officia promptius inciteris cum uideas apud memorem scriptorum gratiam non perire. Vale*

*You present me with great wealth every time you endow our friendship with information about your health. I pray therefore to the gods that they may bless you for such great respect towards us. However I expend freely equal diligence to a reply to your letter so that you may be urged to fulfil your duties more promptly, since you may see that gratitude does not perish with one mindful of letters. Farewell*

When Symmachus writes to his Christian correspondents we find that the terminology in these letters is similar to the pagan ones. Cameron argues that most pagan references in the letters are to known non-Christians among his correspondents, and that his polytheistic terminology is deliberately vague in the later letters when many of the recipients of his letters were Christian.<sup>76</sup> This may well be true but Symmachus, if vague, is not afraid of using pagan terminology in letters to Christians, and as stated above it can be difficult from an individual letter to know the religion of its recipient. However, a most interesting example of his religious language to non-pagans is found in a letter to Olybrius and Probinus, the sons of Petronius Probus and therefore Christian as they came from the Anicii who were among the first of the great senatorial families to be converted to Christianity.<sup>77</sup> This demonstrates one of the aspects of Symmachus' religious language which is assessed in Chapter 3 – where he uses religious language both in a poetic way and in a manner which demonstrates knowledge of traditional cult practices.<sup>78</sup> He had read at least the first five books of Livy according to Cameron, and it is possible that Livy's antiquarian interest in traditional cult rubbed off somewhat on him. Cameron, however, states that it was 'poets, epitomators and rhetoricians from whom Symmachus derived most of his knowledge of Roman history'.<sup>79</sup> This is the other letter to use 'cult' in terms of 'friendship', although here it is used rather with 'friends'. The relevant text of the letter to Olybrius and Probinus states:

*Nam ut honori numinum datur cornua sacrare ceruorum et aprugnos dentes liminibus adfigere, ita amicorum cultui dedicantur libamenta siluarum.*

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<sup>76</sup> Cameron, 2011: 381

<sup>77</sup> Barnes and Westall, 1991: 51; see Appendix 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Ep.* 5.68.

<sup>79</sup> *Ep.* 5.68; Cameron, 2011: 512.



*For just as it is given to the honour of the deities to consecrate the antlers of deer and the teeth of wild boar are fixed to thresholds, so the offerings of the woods are dedicated to the cultivation of friends.*

This letter, shows that it is not so much his religion which permeates his correspondence, rather his devotion to the cult of *amicitia* and epistolary politeness, the need to write to or answer one's correspondent in the appropriate way to him, whatever the religious affiliation of the letter's recipient. Can one then in fact say that *amicitia* itself is a kind of religion? In the sense of it being a kind of *religio* or obligation certainly this is possibly how Symmachus interpreted it himself, even though it was not of course his official religion in the modern sense. This is why it is possible to elevate his feelings for his friends, his embracing of *amicitia* in all its manifestations, both literary and in lifestyle, to correspond with a mode of worship as this letter shows. Symmachus has deliberately used the word *cultus* here and also in the letters to Longinianus and Patricius, dealt with earlier in the chapter, a word derived from pagan practices, whether he is using it literally or metaphorically. Actually in this example he deliberately contrasts the way the gods of the greenwood in old traditional Roman cult, possibly Silvanus a tutelary deity of woods and fields, used to be honoured by being given the antlers of deer, thus literally honouring the gods, with the practice of dedicating the offerings of the woods now to the cult of friends, *amicorum cultui*, where he is using the term *cultus* metaphorically. This usage of religious language demonstrates how important friends are to him; he is indulging in almost a ceremony of worship in his description of the cult of friends in this example.

### **6.8 *Amicitia* becoming *caritas*.**

By the 390s the traditional *amicitia* of the aristocracy was giving way to *caritas* among the Christian intelligentsia. One very interesting example of where *amicitia* and *caritas* begin to meet is in Augustine's sojourn at Cassiciacum in the summer of 386 when the future bishop and Church Father left his post as official rhetor at the court of Milan, which had been given to him by Symmachus<sup>80</sup> in the autumn of 384 when the latter was Urban Prefect of Rome. Ebbeler claims that there is no indication that the two actually met and that there is some evidence that Symmachus recommended Augustine for the post of rhetor on the basis of a

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<sup>80</sup> Aug. *Conf.* 5.13.23.

written speech and the strength of his African supporters some of whom Symmachus may well have known because of his own links with Africa; nevertheless this is a very interesting demonstration of the practical application of patronage and *amicitia*.<sup>81</sup>

Augustine withdrew with a few companions to a country estate belonging to one Verecundus. He remained there until winter had almost arrived when he returned to Milan to prepare for an Easter baptism.<sup>82</sup> Augustine is following the example of Pliny indulging in literary and philosophical *otium honestum* at a *uilla rustica* and it is fascinating that the first step to self-realisation was by following the traditional path of the elite, the practice of *amicitia*, here in a pleasant rural setting. It was a means to start leading a less complicated life. Peter Brown states in his biography of Augustine that ‘the ancient tradition of *otium liberale* appealed to Augustine just because his life had recently been far too complicated. He needed a firm, traditional mode of life’.<sup>83</sup> For a while this way of living was followed by Augustine and his companions at Cassiciacum where philosophical ideas were mooted and discussed and Virgil too was on the agenda.<sup>84</sup> Augustine in this retreat, a brilliant mind among other exceptional minds, was following a well established route followed by Cicero and others. It was from this idyllic setting that Augustine emerged ready to face his new life as a Christian; but for the future father of the Church the old way was not enough and in time he was to follow the new ascetic models. Augustine had a formidable intellect and rightly became regarded as one of the most important divines of the early church but it took time to throw off his early training and to redefine friendship in Christian terms.

Perhaps the most celebrated case of a Christian aristocrat choosing to follow this new ascetic way of life is that of Paulinus of Nola, known also, like Symmachus, for his correspondence with Ausonius. Symmachus had the same kind of relationship with Praetextatus and Ausonius as Paulinus of Nola did with Ausonius before his embracing of the ascetic life, essentially that of a son or a pupil, *iuvenis*, to a much older father or mentor, *senex*. Certainly Paulinus regarded Ausonius as a father figure. Ausonius was from an old Gallic family as was Paulinus. Paulinus of Nola, though not in the first rank of Christian divines, is however a very important example of how the old normality could be replaced totally by the new model

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<sup>81</sup> Ebbeler/Sogno, 2007 :231.

<sup>82</sup> Trout, 1988: 132.

<sup>83</sup> Brown, 1967: 109; Trout, 1988: 132.

<sup>84</sup> Trout, 1988: 137.

of Christian asceticism in the late fourth century. Paulinus was born about 355 into a family whose holdings were vast and comprised lands in Campania, northeast Spain, and round Narbonne as well as Bordeaux. It was in the latter city that he probably studied rhetoric. He became *consul suffectus* in 378, the year before Ausonius himself became consul. In 381 he became *consularis* in Campania.<sup>85</sup>

Having led, apparently contentedly, the normal aristocratic life for some time, he gradually became influenced more and more by ascetic Christianity. It was not such a speedy process as that of Augustine, Paulinus for example married Therasia in 384, a Spanish heiress who too was an ardent Christian; this marriage, however brought Paulinus into contact with Melania the Elder and through her the great Christian aristocratic family of the Anicii.<sup>86</sup> For a few years he followed the normal life of his class, managing his estates and corresponding with various people including a lively exchange of letters and literary compositions with Ausonius. One fragment of a letter from this period demonstrates *amicitia* in deed if not in actual word<sup>87</sup> – and an adherence to the life of *otium*. This letter could well have been written by Symmachus.

*Give no thought to the rich gifts you send to me, so that the affectionate present of a poor friend may be pleasing to you. .... To offer you a share of these resources, I have sent over to you sixteen shellfish still smelling of the nectar of the sea, their sweet inwards bulging with twin-coloured meat. I beg you to accept them gladly and not to disdain them as cheap. Their size is small, but the love with which I apportioned them is great.*

This adherence however was not to last. During this period he came into contact with Martin of Tours who had converted northern France to Christianity. He was also influenced by Delphinus, Bishop of Bordeaux from 380-404, who baptised Paulinus in 389 prior to his moving to Spain to live on his wife's estates. It was Delphinus, also a correspondent of Ausonius and of Ambrose, whom the senator and poet charged with Paulinus' withdrawal from him, though difficulties of distance may as well have played a part.<sup>88</sup>

Between 390 and 394 the letters first faltered and then ceased. In 395 Paulinus moved to Nola in southern Italy with Therasia and spent the rest of his life there promoting and aggrandizing

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<sup>85</sup> Friend, 1974: 101.

<sup>86</sup> Friend, 1974: 105.

<sup>87</sup> Paul. *Carm.* 2

<sup>88</sup> Trout, 1999: 64.

the cult of the martyr Felix, disposing of his lands and becoming bishop after his wife's death. He died in 431, widely revered and remembered and became a saint of the Catholic Church. Uranius, a presbyter at Nola, took on the task of writing down the account of Paulinus's death. His *De obitu Sancti Paulini* 'related and illustrated the virtues Uranius deemed characteristic of Paulinus' entire Christian life'.<sup>89</sup> Two of these virtues were *auctoritas* and *caritas*.<sup>90</sup> Paulinus' *Carmina* 10 and 11 written to Ausonius in 393 and 394 respectively are beautiful literary poems which show the influence of Neoplatonism on Paulinus as on Augustine (on whom Paulinus was a great influence.) But they both also unmistakably show how much Paulinus' attitude to *amicitia* has changed and how much he is now in subjection to Christ. In *Carmen* 10 Paulinus states:<sup>91</sup>

'Likewise, if you chance to hear that I have chosen the vocation of dedicating my heart to holy God, that I follow Christ's revered service with attentive belief, and that I am convinced by God's prompting that an eternal reward is in prospect which man purchases by sustaining losses in this world, I cannot think that this is so repugnant to a conscientious father that he consider it mental aberration to live for Christ in the way that Christ laid down. This 'aberration' is what I want, and I do not regret it.'

*Carmen* 11 reiterates Paulinus' personal devotion to Ausonius and denies the charge of neglect of friendship – *crimen amicitiae*; but tries to deepen Ausonius' comprehension of the nature of Christian friendship, *caritas*. Paulinus, in this poem, seizes on a concept familiar to an educated Roman, and demonstrates the enhanced value which it gains when baptised by the Christian faith.<sup>92</sup> *Caritas* traditionally meant love, affection or esteem<sup>93</sup>; and it was to become the word most used by Christians to mean selfless love, the kind of love described in the New Testament.<sup>94</sup> So Paulinus embraced the ascetic life with all his heart, all the while trying to reassure his old friend. But in spite of his new ascetic resolutions he could not altogether extinguish Ausonian poetic values; *variatio* is still to be discerned in his poetic compositions.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Trout, 1999: 264.

<sup>90</sup> Trout, 1999: 263.

<sup>91</sup> Paul. *Carm.* 10.

<sup>92</sup> Walsh, 1975: 24.

<sup>93</sup> Lewis and Short, 1991: 292.

<sup>94</sup> Corinthians I.13.

<sup>95</sup> Roberts, 1989: 133.

The old ways were passing and it was the ascetic Christian model of love, *caritas*, that was to endure, rather than the traditional *amicitia*. But traditional *amicitia* as a concept did not die altogether, although it was now reinterpreted in a Christian way. It re-emerges within medieval clerical circles where ‘the expressions of friendship (*amicitia*) in medieval literature, derived from the classical concept of disinterested bonds, cultivated among the virtuous for the public good have been interpreted variously as indicative of political allegiances, individual spirituality and private sentiment’.<sup>96</sup> It is exemplified in Aeldred of Rievalux’s twelfth century masterpiece, *On Spiritual Friendship*, which I mentioned earlier in the chapter, in the Prologue of which work he demonstrates the lasting influence of Cicero’s *De Amicitia*. He states:<sup>97</sup>

*Musing on Cicero’s thoughts again and again, I began to wonder whether perhaps they might be supported by the authority of the Scriptures .... I decided to write on spiritual friendship and to set down for myself rules for a pure and holy love.*

## 6.9 Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter the contention was that the importance of *amicitia* in all its aspects to Symmachus was such that it defines him absolutely and can be seen as a kind of ‘religion’ which allows us an insight into his essential psychology and belief patterns. It was also stated that this is the reason for including a chapter on the study of *amicitia* in all its manifestations in what is a religious biography of Symmachus because the cult of *amicitia* can be seen in many ways as being as important to him as his adherence to the traditional cults of the *sacra publica*. To demonstrate this Symmachus’ literary *amicitia* has been analysed in a series of letters and consideration given to the importance to him of *amicitia* and *otium* as a way of life. As part of this analysis comparisons of his literary style and way of life with that of Cicero, Pliny and Jerome have also been undertaken. I have concluded that there are a great number of similarities in literary *amicitia* between these individuals, although Symmachus’ writing is far more involved and elliptical than that of Cicero and Pliny; the way of life of *otium* and *negotium* seems not to have changed a great deal in the centuries between them either. The content of Jerome’s letters is different because he is largely writing on church matters though he displays his classical education in his phraseology and quotations and shows strong stylistic similarities to Symmachus.

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<sup>96</sup> Haseldine, 1997: 237.

<sup>97</sup> Aeldred, *De Spirit. Amic.* Prologue: 5.

I argue in the chapter that Symmachus' conviction of his religious rightness allows him to write to Christians about pagan rites and to recommend a Christian bishop for a North African town. Being the 'right kind of chap' is more important to him than religious affiliation and, as Salzman has shown in her commentary on Book 1 of the letters,

Symmachus hoped to show in this letter collection how much the pagan and Christian elite shared in terms of culture, literature, civic concerns and religious values.<sup>98</sup> In my study of *Ep.* 5.68, it has been demonstrated that the cult of friends can almost be raised to a religious rite. Finally the chapter has ended by tracing the course by which pagan *amicitia* became Christian *caritas*. In conclusion there is no doubt of the huge importance of literary and lifestyle *amicitia* to Symmachus and how it defined him; this analysis is essential within a religious biography of Symmachus and his world in order to understand him and his deeper religious motivation.

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<sup>98</sup> Salzman, 2007: 250.

## Chapter 7

### Symmachus and the Religious Crisis

This chapter will examine the seven months between July 384 and January 385 when Symmachus was *Praefectus Urbi Romae*. It is to this period that his *Relatio* 3 can be dated and it is certainly the most intensive and difficult period concerned with religion that he experienced in the whole of his career. It started with him hopeful of achieving much and ended during January 385, soon after the death of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, grieving and dispirited. This chapter will also attempt to demonstrate the depth and genuineness of Symmachus' religious beliefs and convictions. It will be argued that the passion Symmachus displays in *Relatio* 3 shows a man prepared to defend his religious beliefs and who has deep religious convictions.

Section 1 will describe the role of prefect and how Symmachus carried out the duties of this post. Symmachus has left us forty nine official despatches, written to the Emperors during the seven months of his tenure. These describe every aspect of the position and both the problems and successes that he experienced. *Relatio* 3 is usually seen purely as a religious document but it was also a political one, but one among many. Putting the *Relationes* within their political context and arranging them chronologically will show the sequence of events in these months. The second part of the chapter will analyse how *Relatio* 3 can be seen as a literary artefact, one which richly deserves the reputation that it is Symmachus' best piece of writing which owes much both to rhetorical practice and his own consummate rhetorical skill. Having investigated *Relatio* 3's literary credentials, Section 3 outlines the background both political and religious to *Relatio* 3 and particularly the role of Bishop Ambrose of Milan. Section 4 is the most crucial part of the chapter and will examine here what Symmachus is attempting to do in this *Relatio*, and whether or not it shows his deeper religious feelings and if so why. Part of this investigation will see if there is any influence of Neoplatonism on Symmachus. Section 5 will compare Cicero's religious rules for the ideal state in *De Legibus* 2 with Symmachus' ideal *sacra publica* outlined in *Relatio* 3. Section 6 analyses the impact the death of Praetextatus had both on other pagans and on Symmachus himself and then at Symmachus' exiting of the prefecture. It will then be possible to draw the various threads of the chapter together in the final part which is an assessment of the events of 384 and see if, in the momentous happenings of 384, Symmachus can truly be shown to have a measurable

depth of religious feeling, as manifested by *Relatio* 3, or whether his aim was solely financial and political as some scholars have tried to argue.

### 7.1 The *Relationes* in their political context

Symmachus was appointed urban prefect in the spring of 384, his friend and fellow pagan Praetextatus having recently become praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyria. With two such prominent pagans in very powerful positions the time must have seemed right to try to reverse the anti-pagan measures of Gratian in 382. Gratian had died in suspicious circumstances in the summer of 383. Symmachus' last official appointment had been in 375 as *consularis* in Roman Africa, an area where he held estates. The gap in his *cursus honorum*, was not unusual among senatorial holders of official posts and certainly need not be put down to his being pagan. He was to go on to become consul in 391.

Three phases of his prefecture can be identified. The first period, from July 384, sees him trying to collaborate with the court and includes his attempts to overturn Gratian's measures against paganism of 382; the second phase is characterised by increasing problems, and the third and final stage comprises the death of Praetextatus in early December 384 and the premature resignation of Symmachus, a month later in January 385 when he surrendered his office, sick at heart.<sup>99</sup> The forty-nine *Relationes* or official despatches to the Emperors that he composed while in this office give us an unrivalled view of the administrative structure of the Late Roman Empire and of this, one of its most important posts which Symmachus was greatly honoured to be awarded. There is nothing quite like them in textual terms surviving from the late Roman period. The nearest comparison must be those between Pliny and the Emperor Trajan although here we do not have the responses by the emperors. The letters between Pliny and Trajan, however, although they discuss official business, have an intimacy completely absent from those of Symmachus. Symmachus' official dispatches exemplify the summit of his surviving writings and are executed in the best literary and rhetorical style. The survival and textual transmission of the *Relationes* has already been discussed in Chapter 1. Even those dealing with purely legal matters show off his learning and style. In true rhetorical fashion he frequently quotes examples from history.<sup>100</sup> But these are official, public

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<sup>99</sup> Sogno, 2008: 31.

<sup>100</sup> Sogno, 2008: 32.



documents and this makes him write in a way that is normally less convoluted and more succinct than many of his letters and also less allusive and obscure. Their content reveals the daily round of activities which the prefect was involved in but his audience is not composed of friends, relatives or connections but the emperors themselves. This largely determines the way in which he constructs these epistles.<sup>101</sup>

The purpose of this section is to put *Relatio 3* within its position among the other *Relationes*, that is its political context, while the controversy surrounding it will be examined in later parts of the chapter. The urban prefect was the most important man in Rome since the emperors no longer resided there. On one hand, the occupier of this position was the leader and spokesperson for the senate; and on the other he was an imperial appointee and was ultimately responsible to the *princeps*. This position therefore could at times involve a difficult balancing act. Essentially this official was the mayor of Rome, chosen among the municipal councillors who were the senators, but a mayor nominated by the imperial court and sometimes imposed upon the senators.<sup>102</sup> During the fourth century he took the position previously held by the praetorian prefect.<sup>103</sup> The praetorian prefecture had been split up by Constantine when he abolished the praetorian regiments because they had fought for Maxentius in the battle of the Milvian Bridge. Ultimately there were four praetorian prefectures but none based in Rome. The prefect of the city conveyed the decrees of the senate to the emperor either by letter or in person by leading deputations; and the emperor conveyed his orders by laws which were transmitted to the prefect which he was entrusted to reveal to the senate and then execute. Sometimes, though, the emperor would communicate his desires directly to the senate.<sup>104</sup> Symmachus only held the role for about seven months but a year was more normal.<sup>105</sup>

The prefect and the *officium urbanum* under him controlled every aspect of the urban administration and public works as well as games, theatres, supervising schools and the *annona*. Kahlos states with reference to the job description of the prefect: '*praefectus annonae, praefectus uigilum, comes riparum et alvei Tiberis et cloacorum, comes portus,*

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<sup>101</sup> Sogno, 2008: 32.

<sup>102</sup> Chastagnol, 1960: 66.

<sup>103</sup> Chastagnol, 1960: 66.

<sup>104</sup> Chastagnol, 1960: 68.

<sup>105</sup> Kelly, 2006: 194

*magister census* – all these people worked under the prefect'.<sup>106</sup> Ultimately the success or failure of the city prefect largely depended on the *annona* – if the distribution of grain was successful the prefect had nothing to worry about as the population was kept happy and would acclaim him. If however there were problems with the grain supply, things could go badly for the prefect; because then the rage of the populace would fall on him in the shape of riots and he might have his house burnt and have to temporarily flee the city as happened to Symmachus' father.<sup>107</sup> The *praefectus* was extremely powerful but if anything went wrong with the lines of supply, extremely vulnerable. He was totally dependent on the emperor for support in this matter, for his own ability to solve it was very limited. Several of the *Relationes* demonstrate these problems.

The prefect also controlled the urban cohorts responsible for keeping public order and the *uigiles* who among other duties fought fires.<sup>108</sup> He was the supreme legal judge, whose jurisdiction extended to one hundred miles from Rome; he judged senators alone in civil cases and with a board of senators chosen by lot in criminal cases. Ammianus described Praetextatus's activities as a judge while he was prefect in 367 and compared him with M. Iunius Brutus, the Roman symbol of virtue.<sup>109</sup> Another aspect of the post was to control the guilds, weights, measures, prices and money. Praetextatus apparently established standard weights in every region of the city in order to avoid malpractice by greedy persons.<sup>110</sup> The prefect also controlled public works and the restoration and construction of public buildings. As has already been mentioned in Chapter 4, Praetextatus in this context had removed the walls of public buildings which had been illegally joined to temples.<sup>111</sup> The prefect also was a great source of patronage, being able to control appointments of many different kinds. One noted example of this is, already described in Chapter 6, is when Augustine was appointed as rhetor at the imperial court in Milan on the basis of a satisfactory rhetorical exercise – Symmachus having been asked by the court to find a suitable candidate.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 36, n 149.

<sup>107</sup> *Ep.* 1.44; *Amm.* Marc.27.3.4.

<sup>108</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 37.

<sup>109</sup> *Amm.* 27.9.10.

<sup>110</sup> Kahlos, 2002: 38.

<sup>111</sup> Kahlos, 2002, 38.

<sup>112</sup> Matthews, 1975: 213.

From this brief description it can therefore be seen that the post was extremely varied and responsible, covering all aspects of daily life in Rome. The post carried enormous status and also involved responsibility for a large staff. The *Relationes* of Symmachus reveal this. A very large part of the prefect's time was spent dealing with legal cases and a great many of these despatches are concerned with the law.<sup>113</sup> Others involve issues to do with the corn supply or harvest, the games, religion, problems with officials, presents to the emperor from the senate and presents from the emperor to the senate – and statues. Two of the most poignant, numbers 10 and 11 report the death of Praetextatus in December 384.

A reasonable number of the *Relationes* can be dated but quite a few have no date. Table 8 on pages 207-8 therefore attempts to chart Symmachus' time as *praefectus urbi Romae* by listing twenty seven of these official letters in date order. This is based upon Barrow's dating.<sup>114</sup> This different way of displaying these documents shows the variety of topic of the *Relationes*, lists those I consider to be most important and easily demonstrates the sequence of events from July 384 to January 385.

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<sup>113</sup> Barrow, 1973: 2.

<sup>114</sup> Barrow, 1973.

**Table 10: Symmachus' *Relationes* organised in date order.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject of <i>Relatio</i></b>	<b>Number of <i>Relatio</i></b>
July 384	Thanks to the Emperors for making Symmachus prefect	1/2
July 384	Symmachus writes to the emperors with the required schedule of cutting expenditure on the games	8
Summer 384	Symmachus asks the emperors again to restore the Altar of Victory to the senate house, removed by Gratian	3
Summer 384	Symmachus writes about the scarcity of the corn supply which is causing concern and could lead to riots if not satisfied	18/37
July/August 384	Gratian ordered the prefect to ride in an ornate carriage on special occasions. Symmachus objects to this. <i>Relatio</i> 20 refers also to this subject but is somewhat later than 4.	4/20
End September/ Early October	This concerns the olive oil supply. This dispatch was sent after 18/37 as the olive harvest came after the grain harvest.	35
End October/Early November 384	Symmachus complains that he has all the responsibility but poor officials who he did not appoint are of inferior quality	17
Undated but perhaps in the autumn	This is a letter congratulating the emperors on recent victories. Possibly the victory was in 383. The army belonged to Theodosius but the general is unknown.	47
Early October/Early November 384	This relates to the onus placed on the Emperor who has placed his own appointee in a civil service post. How can this be reconciled with official appointment rules? This is linked to <i>Relatio</i> 27 which is similar.	22
Just before 22 November 384	Concerns presents to the Emperor Valentinian II for his Decennalia celebrations	13
November 384 but a little after above	Symmachus complains with justification of complaints about him by his officials. His authority is being undermined but eventually he is cleared.	23
Before 29/11/384	This is a legal case and concerns a land dispute connected to one Scirtius	28
Before 29/11/384	This <i>Relatio</i> concerns a will	16
After 29/11/384	This is also a legal case and concerns an appeal by a <i>suarius</i> in a case of <i>possessio</i>	33
End November 384	This was also a legal case linked to <i>Relatio</i> 33. Symmachus asked the Emperor not to believe reports about his slowness in hearing a case.	36
November 384	A very important <i>Relatio</i> linked to 3. Symmachus was being accused of maltreating Christians. He refutes this and in fact was exonerated but was obviously feeling very isolated.	21
Early December 384	This is the report of the death of Praetextatus. The whole city mourns him. Symmachus is stricken, still affected by the events of <i>Relatio</i> 21 and wants to resign his prefecture. The dispatch is sent to Valentinian II as he made the appointment.	10

Date	Subject of <i>Relatio</i>	Number of <i>Relatio</i>
Early December 384	This <i>Relatio</i> also refers to the death of Praetextatus. Symmachus sent it by special messenger to anticipate <i>Relatio</i> 10 which is the more formal of the two.	11
December 384	Symmachus sends the senate's greetings to the Emperors with presents – <i>strenae</i> . These are a symbol of loyalty. <i>Strenae</i> were condemned by Christians because of their pagan associations.	15
December/January 384-5	The emperors had sent a New Year's present (not specified) to the senate and Symmachus thanks them on their behalf. This must be read in conjunction with 15.	7
December/January 384-5	Symmachus asks the emperors leave to erect statues of Praetextatus on behalf of the senate. Symmachus renders tribute to Praetextatus but leaves the emperors to render fullest acknowledgement of his greatness.	12
December/ January 384-5	It is the duty of the prefect to convey to the emperors the deliberations of the Senate including acclamations. The emperor now asks for an account of Praetextatus' utterances and Symmachus sends these with a covering letter.	24
After 9/1/385	This dispatch is a covering letter which goes with a return of newly elected magistrates – quaestors, praetors and suffect consuls. The election was held that day so the letter is dated after 9 <sup>th</sup> January. <i>Relatio</i> 46 is another covering letter supplementary to 45. <sup>115</sup>	45

Symmachus must have been delighted when he was awarded the post of urban prefect and his enthusiasm at the beginning of his prefecture reflects this. But as time goes on, his enthusiasm wanes and both the stress of the minutiae of the post and very real problems he had with officials begin to take their toll. This was compounded by his inability to obtain the rescinding by Valentinian II of Gratian's anti-pagan measures and finally the death of Praetextatus. The cumulative nature of all these events caused him to ask to be replaced prematurely which duly happened in January 385, probably between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of that month.<sup>116</sup> His successor, Pinianus, was certainly in place by 24<sup>th</sup> February 385 which is shown by a letter written to him by the emperor confirming the appointment of Pope Siricius

<sup>115</sup> Barrow, 1973: 224.

<sup>116</sup> Chastagnol, 1962: 225.

to succeed Damasus, who, like Praetextatus, had died early in the December of 384.<sup>117</sup> Upset and ill, Symmachus retired for a while to recover in the peace of his Campanian estates where rest and the pursuit of leisurely activities, as detailed in the letter to Helpidius<sup>118</sup> quoted on page 1, helped him to recover his *joie de vivre*.<sup>119</sup>

## 7.2 The stylistic and literary qualities of *Relatio 3*

In 7.1 I have outlined the history of the *Relationes*, located *Relatio 3* within this, and described Symmachus' time as Urban Prefect. In 7.2 I begin an intensive examination of *Relatio 3* by considering its superb literary construction which brings out a neglected angle in the way in which this dispatch is usually considered. In my opinion *Relatio 3* is a literary masterpiece for this document richly deserves its reputation of being Symmachus' best piece of writing, owing much both to rhetorical practice and his own consummate oratorical skill. It is a long epistle which consists of 2,100 words, written as stated in the previous section near the beginning of Symmachus' time as urban prefect in July 384. Infused with sophisticated imagery and language and literary allusions, this letter has all the hallmarks of a good speech, although it was probably never intended to be read aloud.

Symmachus had been extensively trained in all the correct rhetorical and oratorical techniques. He had studied with a Gallic rhetor and these professionals were well known to be skilled in demonstrating myriad devices which could adorn elegant prose.<sup>120</sup> The use of figures of speech in the finished declamations was legion. In the rhetorical schools which gentlemen attended in the fourth century after having been educated by grammarians, the students would learn how to compose epideictic speeches of praise and how best to declaim. They were trained in part by oratorical exercises of praising or blaming using Cicero as an example for suitable phrases to convey admiration or contempt – *Pro Marcello* for admiration and *In Catilinam* or *In Verrem* for contempt. Virgil was also widely quoted.<sup>121</sup> There is evidence that by the fourth century orators used what was called *cursus mixtus*, or prose marked by both word and metrical accent and that this was a well established

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<sup>117</sup> Chastagnol, 1962: 225.

<sup>118</sup> See Appendix 2

<sup>119</sup> *Ep.* 5.78.

<sup>120</sup> Nixon and Rodgers, 1994: 21

<sup>121</sup> Nixon and Rodgers, 1994: 16.

phenomenon.<sup>122</sup> Cribiore's very interesting reconstruction of Libanius' rhetorical school<sup>123</sup> gives us valuable insights into the whole world of rhetorical training. It would appear that there were two paths that students could follow in this discipline. The students who were most valued were those who would stay for several years to pursue an intensive programme of learning but in reality these were probably fairly few. More common were those who wanted to follow a public career for which some degree of training in rhetoric was essential but who did not need the full in-depth course that professional rhetors themselves had followed. It would undoubtedly give the future lawyers or administrators a certain cachet if they could demonstrate they had learned these techniques at the foot of a master such as Libanius. Obviously Symmachus was not trained by Libanius, but the example of the latter's teaching is relevant in that it demonstrates how rhetoric as a subject was taught.

Rhetorical technique used in panegyric in the period of Late Antiquity, both Latin and Greek, owed much to two manuals traditionally ascribed to Menander of Laodicea.<sup>124</sup> In reality there were probably two authors who came to be known jointly as 'Menander'. 'Menander' produced in his manuals plans for successful panegyrics which rhetors could copy. The whole scheme of these treatises or manuals is closely bound up with the rhetorical practice of the late Empire. Menander does not only make use of prose examples but also those from poetry, which were of particular use in epideictic oratory.<sup>125</sup> He deals in Treatise II with the subject of the imperial oration, the *basilikos logos*. He says:<sup>126</sup>

*The imperial oration is an encomium of the emperor. It will thus embrace a generally agreed amplification of the good things attaching to the emperor, but allows no ambivalent or disputed feature, because of the extreme splendour of the person concerned.*

He gives an example of this in a possible *proemium* where the orator might say:<sup>127</sup>

*The two greatest things in human life are piety towards the divine and honour to emperors; these therefore we should honour and hymn to the best of our ability.*

*Relatio* 3 is a letter not a speech and is an appeal for the restoration of traditional religious rites not a panegyric; but nevertheless it is fashioned in a way which demonstrates that it has

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<sup>122</sup> Nixon and Rodgers, 1994: 19.

<sup>123</sup> Cribiore, 2007: 174.

<sup>124</sup> Nixon and Rodgers, 1994: 11.

<sup>125</sup> Russell and Wilson, 1981: xxxi.

<sup>126</sup> Russell and Wilson, 1981: 77.

<sup>127</sup> Russell and Wilson, 1981: 77.

been influenced by various panegyrics; and if declaimed aloud its construction would have been familiar.

Nixon and Rodgers state that the earlier part of the panegyric of Pacatus to Theodosius in 389, number two in the *Panegyrici Latini*, seems to conform to Menander's precepts but that the other orators whose works have been preserved in the *Panegyrici Latini* depart wildly from these rules. Other rhetorical handbooks and a variety of influences rather than just Menander undoubtedly helped to shape the epideictic speeches of Late Antiquity to emperors and other notable people.<sup>128</sup> So though the style and form of *Relatio 3* is influenced by rhetorical theory and Menander's idealised panegyric construction, its shape and structure is Symmachus' own and is tailored to what Symmachus needed to say on this occasion. The *Relatio* is addressed to all the reigning emperors as is appropriate, although it was sent only to Valentinian II. If one examines the style of *Relatio 3* it can be seen to be full of sweeping statements and the figures of speech which were essential to the rhetorician. A few of these have been chosen for comment. It is written in fluent, moving language showing Symmachus to be a master of the written word. In the construction of suitable speeches the correct proemium, the preface or introduction is very necessary. Symmachus' *proemium* is respectful and immediately sets out the purpose of the letter – to render to Valentinian complaints from the senate. Sections 2 and 3 amplify this following Menander's prescription (in sections 2-3 of his *schema*) where Symmachus elaborates on and develops his subject; Symmachus is acting both in his public capacity as urban prefect and as an envoy of the senate presenting the requests of fellow citizens. Section 2 gives us a nice example of where verbs are used one after the other to hammer home a point, *amari, coli, diligi*, 'to be loved, to be held in veneration and affection', reminiscent of, though not quite the same as, *tricolon*. This was one of the first rhetorical devices that the aspiring student learnt and here it is indeed used to masterly effect. In Section 3 we get to the heart of the complaint and the senatorial desire, 'That is why we ask you to give us back our religious institutions for as long as they are of value to the state'. This is then developed in the main part of the *Relatio*.

Sections 4 and 5 develop the topic but do not have the 'comparison' of Menander's *Schema*, parts 4-5. I would say that, from this point, the structure of *Relatio 3* follows Symmachus'

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<sup>128</sup> Nixon and Saylor, Rodgers: 12.



own design; in much of the body of the text the main influence of Menander to be found is not his plan but the usage of the same kind of rhetorical devices and *topoi* that are found in the *Panegyrici Latini*. Sections 6 and 7 have a very powerful impact; Section 7 uses the repetition of a word or phrase which intensifies the effect while building to a climax.

*Nihil ille decerpit sacrarum uirginum priuilegiis, repleuit nobilibus sacerdotia. Romanis caerimoniis non negauit inpensas, et per omnes uias aeternae urbis laetum secutus senatum uidit placido ore delubra, legit inscripta fastigiis deum nomina, percontatus templorum origines est, miratus est, conditores, cumque alias religiones ipse sequeretur,has seruauit imperio.*

*He (Constantius) stripped away nothing from the privileges of the Vestal Virgins; he filled the priesthoods with men of noble birth, he allowed the cost of Roman ceremonies, he followed an overjoyed senate through all the streets of the Eternal city and, with no sign of disapproval in his face, he saw its shrines, he read the inscriptions giving the names of the gods on the pediments; he put questions about the origins of the names of the gods on the pediments; he put questions about the origins of the temples; he showed his admiration for their founders; though he himself followed other rites, he preserved established rites for the Empire.*

Section 9 is dramatic; its visual images are very powerful. It utilises *prosopopoeia* which is defined as being a rhetorical device in which a speaker or writer communicates to the audience by speaking as another person. This figure of speech is often used in Sections 23-25 of Menander's *schema*, where the orator speaks of battles fought, especially if the ruler has been in them – and his armour. Here Symmachus does this with great effect by using the persona of *Roma*;

*Romam nunc putemus adsistere atque his uobiscum agere sermonibus*

*Let us imagine that Rome herself stands in your presence and pleads with you thus:*

This section also uses another well worn literary and rhetorical *topos* – the use of Republican figures, here Hannibal and the driving of the Senones (Gauls) from the Capitol. Military figures of the Punic wars were especially popular and were often grouped together. Other examples of this type of figure commonly used were the early kings of Rome or the early emperors.<sup>129</sup> And in late panegyric emperors had to be praised whether the author of the panegyric felt capable of it or not. In this *Relatio* 3 does resemble the *Panegyrici Latini*. Symmachus does this with great effect in various parts of this *Relatio* as in Section 12 where

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<sup>129</sup> Nixon and Rodgers, 1994: 24.

Symmachus says of the Emperor Valentinian II, ‘Greed is inconsistent with your character.’ Constantius II is praised extensively in Section 6 for his respect for the traditional rites on his visit to Rome in 357. He is seen in this respect as an ideal emperor, which would fit in with sections 19-21 of the *Schema* where the orator extols the deeds and virtues of the ruler.

Section 10, however, is justifiably the most famous section of the *Relatio* for it is here that we get Symmachus’ most famous line:<sup>130</sup>

*eadem spectamus astra, commune caelum est, idem nos mundus inuoluit : quid interest, qua quisque prudentia uerum requirat ? uno itinere non potest perueniri ad tam grande secretum*

*We gaze up at the same stars, the sky covers us all, the same universe compasses us. What does it matter what practical system we adopt in our search for the truth? Not by one avenue only can we arrive at so tremendous a secret.*

This shows Symmachus to be something of a poet with a beautiful and powerful turn of phrase. There is also evidence of Neoplatonic influence which will be discussed in Section 4 of the chapter.

Just as an appropriate *proemium* was necessary to start the panegyric so the appropriate *peroratio* was also considered essential to conclude the declamation as Cicero roundly declared.<sup>131</sup> Here Symmachus does keep to the *Schema* of Menander. The *peroratio* is contained in Section 20 and rounds the whole topic up in a moving way with a deceased Emperor (Valentinian I) looking down from the stars at the tears of priests and believing that he himself ‘has come under blame now that the custom which he himself was glad to preserve has now been broken’. Symmachus has written a moving oration in *Relatio* 3: it is a great display of rhetorical skill; although inevitably one’s opinion as to whether it is truly a masterpiece of its genre is subjective. It should have moved mountains and achieved its desired effect of restoring the withdrawn rites and subsidies of the *sacra publica* – assuming the emperor had an open mind in the first place. Unfortunately for Symmachus the eloquence and the influence of his major opponent in the Altar of Victory dispute Ambrose of Milan prevailed, and this caused the *Relatio*, superbly constructed as it was, to fail. Ambrose’s role in the ‘Altar of Victory Dispute’ is discussed in Section 7.3.

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<sup>130</sup> Barrow (trans).

<sup>131</sup> Cic. *Brut.*33.127.

### 7.3 Ambrose of Milan and the Altar of Victory Dispute

Section 7.2 has attempted to analyse the stylistic and literary qualities of *Relatio* 3. In 7.3 a development of the investigation of this document, by looking at it from a political standpoint, will be carried out by considering the role of Bishop Ambrose and the Altar of Victory dispute. There is no doubt that Ambrose succeeded in scuppering Symmachus' attempts to have the Altar replaced once again in the Senate in 384, and the rescinding of Gratian's anti-pagan measures of 382 which was the purpose of Symmachus' writing *Relatio* 3; he did so in a brilliant pair of letters, *Ep.* 17 and 18. Having heard about Symmachus' petition but not having seen it, he wrote *Ep.* 17 to countermand it. Later, having read *Relatio* 3 he wrote a lengthier rejoinder, *Ep.* 18. As a result of being the victor, and also because until recently late Roman paganism was very much seen through a Christian-orientated agenda it is only probably now that a real and detached evaluation of Ambrose's role in the affair is possible. Several eminent scholars have done this already,<sup>132</sup> and the intention here is not to contradict their findings; rather it is to evaluate the available evidence and see if any new conclusions can be drawn. This is very relevant to the topic of this thesis because Ambrose was very much part of Symmachus' religious world. There is no doubt that Ambrose deserved his reputation of being one of the doctors of the Church; he was indeed a formidable theologian. But my purpose here is to explore both the background to the Altar of Victory dispute, Ambrose's handling of it and in the course of this to bring to the fore his skill in this affair as a politician rather than as a theologian. This has already been superbly done by Neil McLynn<sup>133</sup> but I still hope that my analysis can shed some new light on the crisis that came to a head during the summer of 384. To do this it is necessary to trace the sequence of events that led up to the writing by Symmachus of *Relatio* 3 – and its successful refutation by Ambrose.

In 382 Gratian passed anti-pagan legislation which removed the Altar of Victory from the Curia in which building the senators from the time of Augustus had burnt incense on their entry to the Senate. This in itself was not new – it had been removed before by order of Constantius II on his visit to Rome in 357.<sup>134</sup> It was subsequently re-introduced probably by Julian. As well as removing (this time permanently) the Altar of Victory from the Senate

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<sup>132</sup> McLynn (1994) Liebeschütz, (2005) Cameron (2011), Sogno (2008)

<sup>133</sup> McLynn, 1994.

<sup>134</sup> Sogno, 2008: 45.

house, Gratian also passed three more crucial anti-pagan measures. The state would no longer pay for the public cults, the financial privileges of the Vestal Virgins were abolished and the landed properties of temples and some collegia were appropriated to the public treasury.<sup>135</sup> The legislation of Gratian has not survived but both *Relatio* 3 and Ambrose's epistles in response (*Ep.* 17 and 18) spell out its content fairly clearly. These restrictions were devastating to the leading pagans and several attempts were subsequently made to get this legislation repealed.

The first of these attempts occurred in 382 when Symmachus was dispatched to Milan with an embassy from the senate who resented the laws undermining paganism by the imperial court. Symmachus was chosen, according to Sogno, as much for his oratorical ability and court connections as for his pagan beliefs.<sup>136</sup> Whatever the senate hoped to gain from this mission was not realised as it was a total failure – the ambassadors were not even received into the imperial presence. This may well have been due to the influence of Ambrose who was on his home ground in the court at Milan<sup>137</sup> - but may also have been due to the machinations of court officials. The second attempt to achieve the rescinding of these edicts was the one made by Symmachus in 384 when urban prefect. *Relatio* 3, though lauded for its rhetorical brilliance and eloquence, also failed due to the opposition of Ambrose. McLynn avers that it was by the skill of Ambrose's *Ep.* 17 that the appeal of *Relatio* 3 was short circuited in the Imperial Consistory and that at this point the bishop had not even read Symmachus' letter. This is a viewpoint with which I agree. McLynn further states that the detailed rebuttal of Symmachus' arguments contained in *Ep.* 18 was almost unnecessary as it was compiled after the Altar of Victory question had been settled.<sup>138</sup> Ambrose however probably felt it would do no harm to reinforce the Emperor's decision. Later appeals to various emperors to restore the benefits of the *sacra publica* also did not succeed – to Theodosius in 389 or 390 and to Valentinian II in Gaul in 391 or 392.<sup>139</sup> There is also another source which mentions yet another effort to reverse the fortunes of paganism. This may have been in 391 when as consul Symmachus gave the normal *gratiarum actio* to the imperial

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<sup>135</sup> Sogno, 2008: 45.

<sup>136</sup> Sogno, 2008: 46.

<sup>137</sup> *Amb.Ep.* 17; *Symm. Rel.* 3.1.; McGeachy, 1943: 142.

<sup>138</sup> McLynn, 1994, 264

<sup>139</sup> McGeachy, 1943, 147; Cameron, 2011:82, states that there were at least five attempts to get Gratian's anti-pagan enactments overturned

court in Milan.<sup>140</sup> It is, however, *Relatio* 3 that we are considering here and I would now like to look at why Ambrose was able to defeat Symmachus so thoroughly in 384. I will not in this section analyse **textual** content – which will be dealt with in 7.4; rather I want to concentrate on Ambrose as a political opponent.

Aurelius Ambrosius was born probably c340 when his father was Praetorian Prefect of Gaul<sup>141</sup> and as he died in 397, this makes him an exact contemporary of Symmachus. They may have been remote cousins as Barnes argues<sup>142</sup>; though the evidence is tentative at least as McLynn points out.<sup>143</sup> Ambrose was raised initially in Trier as a Christian. After the death of his father his widowed mother moved to Rome where he was brought up along with his brother Satyrus who until his early death showed equal promise and his sister Marcellina who was professed a consecrated virgin by Pope Liberius (352-66).<sup>144</sup> After the normal education for aristocrats he left Rome and became first an advocate. He was so successful at this that the very influential Petronius Probus, then praetorian prefect gave him first a place in his council and then in 374 appointed him governor of Liguria and Aemilia with its centre at Milan.<sup>145</sup> He had only occupied this post for a short time when he became involved in an acrimonious dispute upon the retirement of Bishop Auxentius of Milan who was an Arian.

The outcome of this was that Ambrose became bishop in Auxentius' place at the unanimous request of the populace. He remained so until his death and is one of the greatest of the political players of the last quarter of the fourth century wielding far greater influence than the popes of the period. Milan became the new northern capital of the Western Empire and as its bishop he possessed not just great theological authority – probably being responsible for the conversion of Augustine after his arrival in Milan in 385 – but also great political clout influencing no less than three emperors. He had close and affectionate relationships with both Gratian and Valentinian II, though he certainly bullied the latter in respect of *Relatio* 3 and above all became famous for excommunicating Theodosius after the massacre at

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<sup>140</sup> Pseudo-Prosper, *De promissionibus et praedictionibus Dei*, III. 38.2 (Migne, P.L ; LI, 834) – attribution to Prosperus Aquitanus uncertain: McGeachy, 1943: 146, n 5.

<sup>141</sup> PLRE I, 1971: 52.

<sup>142</sup> T Barnes, 1992 : 7-13.

<sup>143</sup> McLynn, 1994 : 263.

<sup>144</sup> OCD, 1999 : 71.

<sup>145</sup> OCD, 1999 : 71.

Thessalonica.<sup>146</sup> It seems to me that the political actions of Ambrose with the emperors emulate and foreshadow those of medieval clergy in their conflicts with medieval kings; indeed he initiated a new model of interaction. Symmachus failed, among other reasons because he did not take into account that Ambrose played by new rules.

The eight letters from Symmachus to Ambrose in his correspondence all concern patronage<sup>147</sup> start before 386, and would appear to continue until not long before Ambrose's death in 397, that is long after the events of 384. They exemplify above all Symmachus' code of *amicitia*; Ambrose whether related to him or not was a very useful contact and Symmachus' way of life was all about useful contacts – as I have discussed previously in Chapter 6. The Altar of Victory affair did not stop them having a polite relationship which is more evidence that the elite were not divided into opposing camps. A social nexus bound Milan, the fledgling capital, and Rome together. The one needed Roman talent and the cachet of Rome's traditions. Roman senators on the other hand needed outlets at the court of Milan.<sup>148</sup> The letters however are austere and do not include any personal warmth.<sup>149</sup> It is also fascinating that in Symmachus' correspondence Ambrose is sandwiched between two nonentities which could mean that those who edited this particular volume did not regard these letters as being of great importance.

We now need to consider the various reasons why Ambrose was able to defeat Symmachus so decisively over the Altar of Victory dispute in the second half of 384. There are several possible explanations for his success. Firstly Valentinian was twelve or thirteen years old, and Ambrose lived, worked and ruled in Milan – the city where Valentinian's court was located. Ambrose must have wielded great influence over the young emperor who was probably greatly in awe of him in spite of his superior rank. And in this very Christian court other people with influence over Valentinian would not have opposed Ambrose in this. Ambrose was paternalistic in his approach to the juvenile and Arian emperor and tried to turn him towards Catholicism. This could indicate a limitation to Ambrose's influence. In reality the bishop was probably not nearly as secure in his position in Milan as he appeared and made out – there were many diverse Christian groups and Milan after all until his succession

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<sup>146</sup> OCD, 1999: 71.

<sup>147</sup> *Ep.* 3.30-37.

<sup>148</sup> McLynn, 1994: 264.

<sup>149</sup> McLynn, 1994: 264.

had had an Arian bishop;<sup>150</sup> he curried Valentinian's favour because he needed his political support.<sup>151</sup> Ambrose for overwhelming political reasons quite apart from any theological or other considerations needed to win the Altar of Victory dispute.<sup>152</sup> However these are not the reasons he did win.

Secondly Ambrose had travelled to Trier from Milan in late 383 after Gratian's assassination in order to forestall Maximus' invasion of Italy by misleading him into believing that Valentinian intended to submit to him. Ambrose now called in the favour and forced Valentinian to disallow Symmachus' wish. Sogno states that Ambrose reminded Valentinian 'rather crudely' about this debt in *Ep. 17.12 – memor legationis proxime mandatae mihi*.<sup>153</sup> This reference has now rightly been ascribed not to Ambrose's intervention in 382 but his trip to Trier in 383 when Maximus invaded Italy.<sup>154</sup> This **was** a debt that Valentinian obviously owed Ambrose, and Sogno believes that with Ambrose reminding Valentinian of this even Symmachus' superb rhetoric had no chance.<sup>155</sup> She may well be right but it is possible that Ambrose's overwhelming devotion to Christian doctrine and belief must also be taken into account

Thirdly Ambrose threatened Valentinian with excommunication (*Ep. 17.10*) if he granted Symmachus' petition. This is very interesting as it shows the power that Christian prelates now could exercise over even emperors. Even if the bishop of Milan did not actually need to carry out his threat, it must have seemed a real one to the young and impressionable Valentinian. And Ambrose showed in his later excommunication of Theodosius over the Thessalonica affair that he was perfectly capable of carrying out his threats though by that stage of his episcopacy he was probably a lot more secure than he had been in the summer of 384. It seems the excommunication weapon, used to such effect by medieval popes was equally effective here. The tone of both epistles to Valentinian is both cajoling and minatory; Ambrose uses both the carrot and the stick.

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<sup>150</sup> McLynn, 1994: 40.

<sup>151</sup> In conversation with Dr Augustine Casiday, 4/7/12

<sup>152</sup> In conversation with Dr Augustine Casiday, 4/7/12

<sup>153</sup> Sogno, 2008: 50.

<sup>154</sup> Sogno, 2008: 50.

<sup>155</sup> Sogno, 2008: 50.

He was undoubtedly motivated also in his approach to Valentinian by the fact that although influenced by pagan philosophy he saw Christianity as the only morally right path. He therefore would stop at nothing to ensure that his religion was defended at all times and would fight off any pagan theological attack. It may have been the conflict with Symmachus which prompted Ambrose to write the now lost: *De sacramento regenerationis siue de philosophia* in which the bishop refuted the opinions of those Platonists who claimed that Christ derived his teachings from the books of Plato.<sup>156</sup> In fact Ambrose uses philosophy to indicate the hindrances and impedimenta of which we have to rid ourselves in order to obtain Christ's vision.<sup>157</sup> He may well have seen *Relatio 3* as being the thin end of the wedge, an attempt to preserve the toleration to the old cults of Valentinian's father. To a Christian such as Ambrose this was anathema and there is no doubt that the partial pagan re-establishment under Eugenius might have taken a much stronger hold if Valentinian II had granted Symmachus' request and removed the restrictions of 382 on paganism.

Fourthly, Symmachus' literary and rhetorical skill in *Relatio 3* was superb but Ambrose's was as good; he had, after all, been trained in the same classical rhetorical methods that had schooled Symmachus and made full use of this in his response to *Relatio 3* in his *Ep.* 17 and 18. In letter 18 Ambrose writes in as polished a fashion as Symmachus, making great use of Virgilian references. However, he comes straight to the point in the first sentence addressing Valentinian II politely as 'clemency' but then adding 'you, Emperor'. The Latin is: *ad clementiam tuam [retulisset, ut ara, quae de urbis Romae curia sublata fuerat redderetur loco] et tu, imperator.....* Valentinian was instructed firmly to ignore Symmachus' fluency of language and concentrate instead on what the orator actually says.<sup>158</sup> Ambrose's refutation answers Symmachus in a fashion which though giving praise for his oratory and fluency in fact damned his arguments. His very emphasis of these qualities of Symmachus in fact belittles the message that they convey.<sup>159</sup> After the introduction he answers Symmachus' three main arguments.

a) Rome needs its ancient cults (3.8)

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<sup>156</sup> Lenox-Conyngnam, 1993: 121.

<sup>157</sup> Lenox-Conyngnam, 1993: 122.

<sup>158</sup> Moorhead, 1999: 126.

<sup>159</sup> Matthews, 1975: 205.



b) Vestals and state priests should have state subsidies (3.11-13)

c) Famine has arisen because these have been denied (3.16-17)

Ambrose refutes the first of these arguments by stating, in a tone of heavy sarcasm that history could be used to prove the contrary. Rome herself then enters the fray arguing that the trophies of victory were won by military might, not animal sacrifice.<sup>160</sup> This may well be a deliberate riposte to Symmachus who also uses the figure of Rome. When Symmachus states that one cannot arrive at God by only one path, he shows his ignorance of the nature of God.<sup>161</sup> As a Christian Emperor, Valentinian must revere solely the altar of God and the Vestal Virgins are inferior to Christian virgins. As for Christianity causing famine and other ills, faith is more important than the strength of soldiers and the statue of Victory.<sup>162</sup> Where Symmachus consistently advocates the claim of antiquity, Ambrose urges the possibility of improvement: all things are making progress and will get better.

The structure of Ambrose's response to Symmachus in *Ep.* 18 is formidable and shows the thoroughness and effectiveness of his repudiation of Symmachus' case - even though he can exaggerate his point. For example three of the historical personages named in Sections 34-37 were born too early to be potential Christians. Ambrose is willing to see religious progress as a good thing as long as that progress is Christian (Sections 23-28), yet denies that right of progress or change to paganism when in Section 30 he asks why, if the old rites of Rome are good, did the pagans adopt new gods. In fact this ability and willingness to assimilate other faiths was one of Rome's great strengths which undoubtedly helped to cement the settlement of new territories and their entry into the Roman way of life - and so the growth of empire. This point Ambrose ignores. His all-encompassing version of Christianity is intolerant of any other religion so when he objects to Christian senators being forced to attend pagan worship in the Senate, (Sections 31-33), he presumably is quite happy to force pagan senators to attend Christian ceremonies there.

Fifthly, although the Roman Senate still had some influence, the re-fashioning of the Empire and Imperial court along Christian lines now saw the emperors as becoming the

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<sup>160</sup> Amb. *Ep.* 18.7

<sup>161</sup> Amb. *Ep.* 18.8; Moorhead, 1999: 127.

<sup>162</sup> Amb. *Ep.* 18.10; Moorhead, 1999: 127.

representatives of God on earth. The main point is that the emperor's role in the state is now quite different. The capital therefore could be anywhere – it did not have to be at Rome. In spite of the continuing influence of the senate, Rome therefore automatically lost its privileged status and there was no need for the old *sacra publica* to safeguard the Roman state.<sup>163</sup> The purpose of the state under a Christian emperor was to serve the Kingdom of God to which the State owed its justification. There was no other justification that a state could possibly have from a Christian perspective.<sup>164</sup> Augustine re-emphasises this function in the *City of God* when he holds up a mirror of the good prince, modelled upon Theodosius, who spread Christianity throughout the world and destroyed pagan cults.<sup>165</sup> This could be seen as part of serving the kingdom of God.

Ambrose seized upon the narrow political implications of the issue and indeed played the Altar of Victory card again ten years later.<sup>166</sup> McLynn states that this sequence of events has been interpreted as a lack of commitment by Symmachus to a 'losing cause'<sup>167</sup>; but that Symmachus himself seems blithely unaware that any cause existed. Certainly there is no indication of the massive changes that Christianity brought within his letters.<sup>168</sup> I would agree with this statement on the whole but think it perhaps needs to be tempered. There is after all evidence for Symmachus' concern with the growing problems that Christianisation of the aristocracy was causing in some of the letters to Praetextatus, especially in *Ep.* 1.51, see pages 138-9.<sup>169</sup> The Altar of Victory Affair has descended to us within a framework designed by Ambrose which was developed to specifically appear to show that he had defeated Symmachus on the orator's own terms. The success of this account is shown by the fact that Ambrose himself appealed to it (in *Ep.* 57 to Eugenius) when the pagans attempted to raise the question once again; and later Prudentius used the bishop's version of events when he wrote a verse refutation of Symmachus' *Relatio* 3 in 402, *Contra Symmachum II*.<sup>170</sup> The preservation of *Relatio* 3 within Ambrose's letters where it was packaged alongside *Ep.* 17 and 18 – although it was also preserved separately by Symmachus – ensured Ambrose's view

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<sup>163</sup> Brown, 2012: 108.

<sup>164</sup> Lenox-Conyngham, 1993: 125.

<sup>165</sup> Aug. *City of God*, 5.24-26; Riedl, 2010: 65.

<sup>166</sup> Amb. *Ep.* 57.2; McLynn in Rousseau, 2009: 582.

<sup>167</sup> McLynn in Rousseau, 2009 : 582.

<sup>168</sup> McLynn in Rousseau, 2009 : 582.

<sup>169</sup> 'Once this sort of delegation of religious affairs was straightforward; now to desert the altars is a kind of careerism' - (M Salzman/M Roberts, 2011.)

<sup>170</sup> Prud. *Contra Symm.* 2; McLynn, 1994: 264.

prevailed and the Altar of Victory affair was seen as essentially a Christian triumph until modern scholars began to re-examine it at a time when the triumph of Christianity was no longer the dominant intellectual paradigm, and Ambrose's response to Symmachus could be analysed in political terms.<sup>171</sup> On the other hands Symmachus' collected *Relationes* were published privately after his death for his friends and relatives to savour, not, as in Ambrose's case, a propaganda exercise.<sup>172</sup>

Finally it can be seen, therefore that the Altar of Victory dispute and Ambrose's triumph over Symmachus within it is not mono-causal but multi-dimensional. The conflict after all took place in the highest echelons of state, the senate, the bishopric of Milan and the court. The political reasons for Ambrose's need to triumph are many and very important as McLynn and others have demonstrated. However it is essential to consider the theological implications as well. There is no doubt that the wily and accomplished Symmachus met, in a political sense, his nemesis in Ambrose. But both men were also firmly driven by their respective beliefs and causes. The most important thing which emerges from considering this affair is the argument that if Ambrose was as dedicated a Christian as he presents, he could not possibly allow Symmachus to win. He was absolute in his Christian belief and conversely Symmachus mirrors him in this because he was as fixed in his pagan one – though his demands were more moderate and he knew he had to compromise. Above all, therefore this conflict between Ambrose and Symmachus can be read as a *religious* one. Evidence correlating this can be seen in Ambrose's many quotations from scripture in advancing his arguments in *Ep.* 17 and 18.<sup>173</sup>

#### **7.4 An analysis of *Relatio* 3 as a religious document**

This section will analyse the religious content of *Relatio* 3 and try to assess whether or not it can be seen as a true statement of Symmachus' religious feeling. The argument is that it can be seen as just this. It is an official letter, written with all Symmachus' literary and rhetorical abilities; but in this epistle Symmachus nevertheless gives us his religious *raison d'être* which is extremely moving despite its artistry and literary fluency. Until recently, the importance of *Relatio* 3 was overshadowed by Symmachus' bad reputation with scholars. Ambrose's

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<sup>171</sup> McLynn, 2009: 581

<sup>172</sup> McLynn, 2009: 581.

<sup>173</sup> For example, *Ep.* 17, Ps.95.5, 'For the gods of the gentiles are idols'; *Ep.* 18.9, Prov.2.1 'the heart of the king is in the hand of god'.

response to and handling of the Altar of Victory affair coloured these specialists' interpretation; and Symmachus' plea for the fees and legacies that had always been paid to the pagan priests and the Vestals to be restored was seen as merely pique because the pagan senatorial priesthods were now having to find these dues out of their own purses, rather than having them paid by the state.<sup>174</sup> Paschoud was probably the severest of these critics. The rehabilitation of Symmachus really began, however, with Matthews' thoughtful and provoking 1974 essay<sup>175</sup>; and has since been continued by a new generation of academics who bring new insights to Symmachus himself and the dispute<sup>176</sup> – as discussed in Chapter 2, page 18.

The viewpoint can be taken that this is a religious document which lays out Symmachus' version of the ideal religious laws for the state. It can therefore be compared to Cicero's *De Legibus* and I present such a comparison in the conclusion to this chapter. Matthews is undoubtedly right in arguing that Symmachus' version of pagan religion had been superseded practically and politically by Christianity becoming the official religion and by the increasing conversion of the senatorial class; and that Ambrose was very effective in stating emphatically that Rome did not need the old gods or state cults to protect it because this could now be done much better by the championship of a new and vigorous religion.<sup>177</sup> Symmachus did believe, however, fundamentally that the state was protected and supported by adherence to the *sacra publica* so that if protection was to continue, the state must continue to support the old gods and their temples and priests, alongside the new religion if necessary. The measures taken by Gratian against paganism in 382 may on one level appear trivial but in reality they struck at the core of the old alliance between Rome and her gods. They separated permanently the link between the state and the old religious rituals: giving a fundamental message to the remaining adherents of paganism that Rome was abandoning her traditional godly protectors and instead putting her faith in the new Christian god.<sup>178</sup> Symmachus was not alone in trying to hold back time – Libanius, another old-style pagan, also tried, with equal skill and eloquence, in 386 in his *Oration 30 to Theodosius, For the Temples* - but he too failed.

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<sup>174</sup> McGeachy, 1942: 142; Paschoud, 1965: 215-35; Matthews, 1975: 209.

<sup>175</sup> Matthews, 1974: 58-99.

<sup>176</sup> Cameron, Sogno, Salzman et al.

<sup>177</sup> Matthews, 1975: 208.

<sup>178</sup> Matthews, 1975: 208.

Symmachus' language in *Relatio* 3 is moderate, but underlying this I feel there is a very real passion. For example one can look at the beginning of Section 3 where Symmachus says:<sup>179</sup>

*Repetimus igitur religionum statum, qui reip. diu profuit*

*That is why we ask you to give us back our religious institutions as they used to be which for so long were of value to the state.*

This statement has a very powerful punch and hints at a real depth of religious feeling in Symmachus when he asks this from Valentinian II – although the tone and vocabulary are moderate and it may just be rhetorical theatrics. The repeated use of words with 're', *repetimus, religionum, reipublicae*, creates alliteration and hammers the meaning of *repetimus* home. Would Symmachus be so emotional and emotive if he was just asking for the restoration of the previous religious status quo for financial reasons as Paschoud implied in his 1967 article? It is unlikely. Symmachus certainly shows a real sense of tradition – the past is good, the old gods have served Rome well and ought not to be abandoned and the Altar of Victory has unifying properties:<sup>180</sup>

*illa ara concordiam tenet omnium, illa ara fidem conuenit singulorum*

*That altar preserves the concord of all, that altar appeals to the good faith of each.*

These too are emotive words made more so by the repetition used. Symmachus' belief in portents and the wrath of the gods is also shown as in Sections 15 and 16 where because of the state's abandonment of the Vestals, the gods have looked unfavourably on Rome and there has been a famine.<sup>181</sup>

In the past, the Vestal Virgins had been essential for the wellbeing of Rome. This may seem mere superstition but potentially demonstrates again a genuine underlying religious belief on the part of Symmachus. Above all he is asking for the maintenance of traditional religion because it is essential to the state, even if it has to co-exist with Christianity. As part of this he is asking for Rome's habitual official support for religious institutions to once more be applied, for Valentinian to follow the example of his predecessors Constantius and his own father Valentinian I; and for those rites which in the past served Rome so well to be restored

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<sup>179</sup> Barrow, 1973: 34.

<sup>180</sup> *Rel.* 3.5.

<sup>181</sup> *Rel.* 3.15.

and once more be integrated into the fabric of the state – and that means the state once again paying for the Vestals and the rituals of the *sacra publica*. There is irony here, perhaps unintentionally, however, as Constantius also removed the Altar of Victory. Underneath the seemingly moderate language in which he couches this request, however, is a fundamental belief in the old values, the old religion, because without them Symmachus genuinely thinks Rome cannot really exist. So in reality what he most wants is for the state to go back to its old dependence on the *sacra publica*.

Section 7 is very reminiscent of Ammianus' description of Constantius' visit to Rome and therefore it is likely that Symmachus knew of this work.<sup>182</sup> It is an interesting passage because Symmachus is presumably in favour of Constantius because **he** came to Rome and in spite of his devotion to Arian Christianity looked at the pagan symbols of the Eternal City and allowed them to remain – apart from the Altar of Victory. However the core of the *Relatio* lies in Sections 8-10. Here is the greatest plea, the invocation of Rome herself – and the greatest demand for religious tolerance which Symmachus believes in above all else. The deeply held nature of Symmachus' religious beliefs resonates through these paragraphs. Passion and poetry are intermingled in his pleas to the Emperor. In Section 8 he argues eloquently that worship of the old cults is valid:<sup>183</sup>

*Iam si longa aetas auctoritatem religionibus faciat, seruanda est tot saeculis fides et sequendi sunt nobis parentes, qui secuti sunt feliciter suos*

*If long passage of time lends validity to religious observances, we ought to keep faith with so many centuries, we ought to follow our forefathers who followed their forefathers and were blessed in so doing*

In Section 9, Symmachus allows Rome, that ancient but venerable queen of cities to plead her own case and what she is asking for is the right to worship in her old way, in her own way – not just because these rituals made Rome great in the past, drove her enemies away and protected her but because of the religious toleration that was also part of the *pax Romana*. Lind states that such abstract personifications as Roma entered Roman religion as far back as the fourth century BCE when temples began to be erected to such deities as Fortuna, Libertas, Victoria, Salus and Honos.<sup>184</sup> Cicero discusses the origin of such personifications in *De Legibus* 2.11. 28 and in *De Natura Deorum* 2.78-79. While there appear to have been no new

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<sup>182</sup> Amm. Marc.16.10.4-15

<sup>183</sup> *Rel.*3.8.

<sup>184</sup> Lind, 1973: 108.

abstract personifications in the last century of the Republic they were revived under the Empire when they appeared on coins, in poetry, myth and in art.<sup>185</sup> The personification of Roma therefore had a long and distinguished history which Symmachus now utilises. She says:<sup>186</sup>

*Uiuam meo more, quia libera sum! hic cultus in leges meas orbem redegit.*

*Let me live in my own way for I am free. This worship of mine brought the whole world under the rule of my laws.*

But it is in Section 10 that we are confronted with what is the core and the most profound of Symmachus' arguments. He states;

*aequum est, quidquid omnes colunt, unum putari ? eadem spectamus astra, commune caelum est, idem nos mundus inuoluit : quid interest, qua quisque prudentia uerum requirat ? uno itinere non potest perueniri ad tam grande secretum.*

*Is it reasonable that whatever each of us worships is really to be considered one and the same? We gaze up at the same stars, the sky is common to us all, the same universe encompasses us. What does it matter what practical system each of us adopts in our search for the truth? Not by one avenue only can we arrive at so tremendous a secret.*

This reference to the starry heavens was not just at this period limited to pagans. It can be found in Christian religious verse also as in the beautiful funeral inscription on the sarcophagus of Bassa, who died sometime in the late fourth century and was buried in the Catacomb of Praetextatus on the Appian Way. This demonstrates the common threads which in spite of the fundamental differences still could be found between pagan and Christian theology. Praetextatus' catacomb fell into disrepair but the epitaph was reconstructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from eleven of the more than thirty fragments of her sarcophagus which were recovered.<sup>187</sup> Part of this inscription states:<sup>188</sup>

*Stelliger accepit polus hanc et sidera caeli*

*Star bearing heaven and the stars of the sky have received her*

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<sup>185</sup> Lind, 1973: 111.

<sup>186</sup> *Rel.3.9.*

<sup>187</sup> Trout in Elsner and Huskison, 2011: 337, n 1.

<sup>188</sup> Inscription on Sarcophagus of Bassa, Column A, Catacombs of Praetextatus, Rome: Trout in Elsner and Huskison, 2011: 341.

The ceiling of the so-called tomb of Galla Placidia in Ravenna is covered with the same stars invoked both in the poem to Bassa and by Symmachus in *Relatio* 3 – see Figure 48, page 280. Heavenly spheres also appear in the *katasterismos* or star-legend. This is a type of myth explaining the genesis of constellations and asterisms by means of a human or god being placed in the heavens as a star or constellation. This stellification equals a deification or apotheosis and is interesting in view of the Apotheosis diptych produced for the family of Symmachus after his death which may link to some belief of an afterlife spent among the stars.<sup>189</sup>

Symmachus' plea in Section 10 is the words of someone who displays a deep religious conviction that his way is the right way, because it is necessary to retain the *sacra publica* to preserve the state and which is essential to defend to the reigning emperors – even though he is prepared to accept that for other people there are other right ways. As he points out in Section 8, 'The divine mind has assigned to different cities different religions to be their guardians'.<sup>190</sup> This is Rome's traditional toleration of other cults being proclaimed loud and clear. Symmachus in these utterances is fluent, passionate and ought to be persuasive; it is Ambrose with his response to the emperors against *Relatio* 3 who now appears bigoted with the trumpeting of his single minded conviction that Christianity is now the only way for the true *religio* and that all else is mere *superstitio*.

It is evident from the language that Symmachus uses in Section 10 of *Relatio* 3 that he had to some degree at least been influenced by, or at least exposed to, Neoplatonic theory. Its probable influence on Praetextatus in Chapter 5 has already been referred to. There have been many academic arguments about this in the past. Cameron, for example, states that there is no evidence that Symmachus, Flavianus or Praetextatus were influenced by Neoplatonism. He says:<sup>191</sup>

In the East, with its unbroken succession in both Athens and Alexandria, pagan Neoplatonism managed to maintain itself, among tiny groups of the faithful, down into the sixth century. In the West (it seems) it was effectively dead before the end of the fourth.

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<sup>189</sup> Loehr, Johanna (Heidelberg). "Katasterismos." *Brill's New Pauly*. Antiquity volumes edited by: Hubert Cancik and, Helmuth Schneider. Brill Online, 2015. Reference. 02 June 2015  
<http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/katasterismos-e12201850> First appeared online: 2006

<sup>190</sup> *uarios custodes urbibus cultus mens diuina distribuit*

<sup>191</sup> Cameron, 2011: 566.



There is simply no basis for the assumption that Praetextatus, Flavian and Symmachus were well informed and devoted students of Porphyry, where they found an intellectual underpinning for their pagan convictions’.

This is a very emphatic declaration which may also concur with the views of Riedl and Klein regarding the lack of influence of Neoplatonism on Symmachus<sup>192</sup>; but is also a statement which needs to be treated with some caution. Porphyry’s work and ideas were very influential in the Latin West with both Christian and pagan authors of the fourth century and beyond. One source of the dissemination of these ideas was the translations of the author’s philosophical works into Latin (and also some by Plotinus) by Marius Victorinus, grammarian, rhetorician and Neoplatonic philosopher who was converted to Christianity around 350.<sup>193</sup>

There is also evidence for the dissemination and influence of the Neoplatonic doctrine of religious plurality which Symmachus demonstrates in *Relatio* 3, Section 10, *uno itinere non potest adueniri ad tam grande secretum*. This is clear evidence that he was aware of at least one Neoplatonic theory though it probably also could also be seen as a conventional statement of religious toleration. John Vanderspoel,<sup>194</sup> shows quite clearly that there had been knowledge of this theory for a long time pre-dating Symmachus; and that this can be traced in a line of philosophical descent from Porphyry (c 234-305 CE) who argued for this doctrine among other things in a polemic entitled, *Against the Christians*. The intention of this work was probably to try to counter the growing influence of Christianity and it seems to have been a source for Julian’s *Against the Galileans*, written much later in the early 360s. Porphyry indeed in his *De animae regressu*, a work now lost except for excerpts in Augustine’s *City of God*, states that he had not committed himself to any particular sect because none of them offered the universal way to the liberation of the soul.<sup>195</sup> Themistius, a prominent figure in education and government at Constantinople for more than thirty years, was also aware of Porphyry’s doctrine when, on 1<sup>st</sup> January 364 in a panegyric to Julian’s short lived Christian successor Jovian, he also begs for religious toleration.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Riedl, 2010: 62; Klein, 1986: 123.

<sup>193</sup> Vanderspoel, 1990: 185 and 192, n 16..

<sup>194</sup> Vanderspoel, 1990: 179 ff.

<sup>195</sup> Vanderspoel, 1990: 181.

<sup>196</sup> Them. *Or.*5; Vanderspoel, 1990: 185.

Jovian was very cautious in religious matters initially after his succession but by the time of Themistius' panegyric was showing some signs of favouring Christians. Zealous Christians once again began to attack pagan temples though Jovian certainly did not support these activities openly.<sup>197</sup> The second half of Themistius' oration,

'begs for religious tolerance and for the peaceful co-existence of a variety of religions. The philosopher's key argument is the desirability of religious plurality, based on the diversity created in the world by God. In other words, God had created differences with mankind and consequently wanted to be worshipped in different ways by different peoples. In effect, more than one road to God was possible'.<sup>198</sup>

The similarities of the arguments of Porphyry and Themistius to those of Symmachus later – given on the previous page – are self-evident. It is also known that Praetextatus translated some of Themistius' philosophical works from Greek into Latin, and that the philosopher visited Rome in 376 to deliver a panegyric to Gratian when he met leading intellectuals and senior aristocrats who may well have included Praetextatus and Symmachus.<sup>199</sup> There is some proof therefore that Symmachus was aware of at least some Neoplatonic doctrines even if he does not appear, except in his correspondence with Praetextatus, and in *Relatio* 3, to be much influenced by philosophy.

Vanderspoel also argues very persuasively that Augustine himself initially, soon after his conversion, basically accepted the doctrine of religious plurality which he withdraws in his *Retractions*, written towards the end of his life.<sup>200</sup> Augustine says:

*Item quod dixi, 'Ad sapientiae coniunctionem non una uia perueniri', (Lib.1, c.13, n.23), non bene sonat; quasi alia uia sit praeter Christum, qui dixit: 'Ego sum uia' (Joan. XIV,6). Uitanda ergo erat haec offensio aurium religiosarum*

*Again my statement, "Union with wisdom is not achieved by a single road," [Book 1, c.13, n.23] does not sound right, as if there were another way apart from Christ, who said 'I am the way' [John 14.6]. Therefore this offence to religious ears ought to have been avoided.*

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<sup>197</sup> Vanderspoel, 1990: 185.

<sup>198</sup> Vanderspoel, 1990: 186.

<sup>199</sup> Vanderspoel, 1995: 184.

<sup>200</sup> Aug. *Retractions* 1.4.3 ; Vanderspoel, 1990: 179.

Symmachus in *Relatio* 3.8, as I have already stated, talks about the ‘divine mind’ – a possible Neoplatonic One or Supreme God – ‘who has assigned to different cities different religions to be their guardians’; or in the Latin:

*uarios custodes urbibus cultus mens diuina distribuit*

This directly imitates Julian, who was a devotee of the Iamblichean version of Neoplatonism in *Against the Galileans* and surely shows Symmachus’ knowledge of this work – or at least a common source. Julian states:<sup>201</sup>

*Our writers say that the creator is the common father and king of all things but that the other functions have been assigned by him to who administers his own department in accordance with his own nature.*

This is remarkably similar to what Symmachus later writes in *Relatio* 3 and would, I argue, indicate his absorption of some at least of the various Neoplatonic ideas proliferating in Rome in the late fourth century.

### **7.5 Cicero and the religious laws in *De Legibus* and their relevance to *Relatio* 3 as a religious document**

Before examining the death of Praetextatus and the end of the urban prefecture, it is necessary to consider briefly the religious laws of Cicero in *De Legibus* as a comparator to *Relatio* 3. *De Legibus* is of particular interest because it contains an actual constitution for an ideal state with a detailed commentary on many of its provisions, though based on Roman law and custom.<sup>202</sup> They are modelled on Plato, who it appears did try to put his *Republic* into practice though not his *Laws*.<sup>203</sup> Cicero’s religious laws are listed in *De Legibus* 2.8-2.9 and there are twenty four in number covering a wide range of topics; sacrifice, purity before the gods, shrines in cities and groves in the country, prodigies and portents, how to arrange sacred holidays, and a variety of other related topics. Symmachus would have known *De Legibus* and would certainly have found its religious laws recognisable and desirable as being exactly the religious status quo he was desperately trying to preserve. There are therefore

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<sup>201</sup> Julian, *Against the Galileans*, 115-D: Momigliano, 1986: 293.

<sup>202</sup> Cic. *De. Leg.*, C W Keyes (trans).

<sup>203</sup> Edwards by email, 14/3/13.

comparisons between Symmachus' work and Cicero's religious *Laws*. The work is heavily influenced by Stoic ideas, particularly those of Diogenes of Babylon.<sup>204</sup>

The second one of these laws states:<sup>205</sup>

*No-one shall have gods to himself, either new gods or alien gods, unless recognised by the state. Privately they shall worship those gods whose worship they have duly received from their ancestors.*

The supreme role of the state deciding which gods will receive public worship and which are in partnership with it is articulated firmly here. Cicero's ideal system accepts those gods being worthy of public honour, 'who have always been regarded as dwellers in heaven and also those whose merits have admitted them to heaven....They shall perform the established rites'.<sup>206</sup> Included in this group is the normal pantheon of the Roman gods, the pantheon which Symmachus appears still to worship, plus various heroes and personifications. Symmachus also would seem to revere personifications as he invokes *Roma* in *Relatio* 3. In *Relatio* 3.7 Symmachus asks the Emperor not to strip away the rites of the Vestal Virgins, to continue to fill the old priesthoods, to permit the old ceremonies, in other words to permit the continuation of the old *sacra publica* with its many faceted deities as identified in the religious *Laws*.

There are other comparisons between the Ciceronian system and that of Symmachus. In the *Laws*, Cicero talks about *Deus*, singular which can obviously compare with the examples in *Relatio* 3 where Symmachus uses the singular as in Section 4, *omnia quidem deo plena* or *all things are full of God*. Cicero's system appears to leave plenty of scope for continued additions to the cults recognised in the *sacra publica*. This is echoed in *Relatio* 3.8 where Symmachus declares that the divine mind (God) has assigned to different cities different religions. Then in *De Leg.* 2.9.21 where Cicero states, *si senatus iussit*, he is obviously not envisaging a system under one supreme leader, but one which was controlled by the Senate. Symmachus however might have imagined that this same system could still work under the Senate without the emperor needing to be involved. Cicero in 2.9.22 states that the best of ancestral rites should be preserved, not necessarily all of them, which Symmachus would

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<sup>204</sup> Edwards by email, 14/3/13.

<sup>205</sup> Cic. *De Leg.* 2.8.19 *Separatim nemo habessit deos neue novos neue aduenas nisi publice adscitos; priuatim colunto, quos rite patribus cultos acceperint..*

<sup>206</sup> 2.8.19

probably have agreed with. There are also additional links between both authors in that they both revere and see the need for the Vestal Virgins. Symmachus' arguments for the restoration of the traditional financial benefits from the State that the Vestals had enjoyed (and thus by implication the restoration also of their traditional place in society) continue until Section 15. Cicero also sees the importance of the Vestal Virgins in guarding the sacred fires of the city as he states in *De Leg.* 2.9.21; and Symmachus' demand for the restoration of the old religious status quo represents the application of Ciceronian ideas to the circumstances in which he found himself.

As well there is similarity in approach to private family worship. In *De Leg.* 2.9.22 Cicero argues that the sacred rites of families should remain forever, *sacra priuata perpetua manento*. Symmachus would have thoroughly endorsed this viewpoint as he celebrated the cults of the *Lares et Penates* in his house on the Caelian Hill which is discussed in Chapter 4; but for him the most important thing would have been the freedom to continue to conduct private family cult in the old way as he had always been able to. Symmachus and Cicero are writing for very different reasons and to different audiences; but both believe that for the state to be properly balanced it needs the morality and the strength of the old state and private cults. In other words the traditional religious toleration that Symmachus advocates in *Relatio* 3 is the model that Cicero promotes in his religious *Laws*. The problem for Symmachus was that this traditional toleration was not to the liking of the system of religion which had come to dominate Roman cultural and religious life – Christianity demanded exclusivity.

The religious laws of *De Legibus* demonstrate how important it was to Cicero that the state regulated worship. For a state to be strong, legal and effective therefore it must control and direct the religion of its subjects. Here Cicero is entirely acting as a public official and servant – no hint of his private belief system is allowed to emerge or be recognised. Between them then it can be said that Cicero's religious *Laws* outline strong, utilitarian structures for a civic religion. Symmachus would have recognised and approved of these structures as being the identifiable practices and ritual strands of the *sacra publica* of the Late Empire to which he adhered. But Cicero fully supports the utilitarian argument that traditional cults need support because they make the state strong. He is essentially a supporter of the *sacra publica* for the good of the state. In the end he was probably harkening back to a more stable religious

world at a time when the Republic was disintegrating and traditional religion was under strain.

Symmachus was essentially the same as Cicero - a supporter of the old *sacra publica* – as it has been good for the state in the past. So why throw all this away when barbarian hordes are about to invade? This is one of the central appeals of *Relatio* 3. Symmachus was also harkening back to an ideal world of paganism at a time when Christianity is the *religio uera* and paganism *superstitio*. I do not think that Symmachus has given up upon Cicero's idea of state approved religious acts; but Christianity must be taken into account as it is the religion of the court, so therefore would come under Cicero's heading of new religions approved by the state. In the end Symmachus may genuinely have believed that a version of Cicero's ideal religious state was possible and that Christianity could be incorporated into it. The problem and reality was, as I stated on the previous page, that the Christian state, increasingly dominant, would not admit any other gods into its universe.

## 7.6 The Death of Praetextatus and the end of the Urban Prefecture

In this section the focus reverts from *Relatio* 3 itself and moves back into the more general consideration of the events of Symmachus' prefecture. The final crisis of Symmachus' prefecture was caused by the death of senior pagan Vettius Agorius Praetextatus from natural causes<sup>207</sup> in December of 385 which has been well covered by Kahlos.<sup>208</sup> The effects of this sad event, added to all the other problems Symmachus faced during the period of his short prefecture were enough for him to ask for and be granted an early release from his post. We know from Jerome's disagreeable letter, *Ep.* 23 to Marcella commiserating with her on the death of the widow Leah that Praetextatus, as *consul designatus* had ascended to the Capitol as if celebrating a triumph, as he puts it, a few days before his death. Symmachus in *Relatio* 21.1-6, which Barrow dates to November 384<sup>209</sup>, refers to Praetextatus as *uiri excellentis* so he was obviously still alive at that point.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Cameron, 2011: 277; if Praetextatus is indeed the subject of the *Carmen Contra Paganos* as Cameron believes then he had been suffering from dropsy and died an agonising death according to the poem.

<sup>208</sup> Kahlos, 2002.

<sup>209</sup> Barrow, 1973: 113.

<sup>210</sup> Kahlos, 2002 :96.

This very important *Relatio* is strongly connected to *Relatio* 3. Barrow states that ‘the circumstances of this letter have to be inferred from the letter itself, for we do not possess the constitution, only a reference to it. Praetextatus and Damasus are alive, but the opposition to Symmachus is great’.<sup>211</sup> In this letter Symmachus refutes a false charge of harming Christians with the aid of Pope Damasus who demonstrated to the authorities that the charge was false; however his isolation is obvious and he offers his resignation during the course of this epistle though he did not actually resign until January 385; the death of Praetextatus in December 384, his great ally, must therefore have been the final straw. This isolation can be seen also in comments in his letter to Flavianus which demonstrates the pessimism evinced in his Prefecture from October 384.<sup>212</sup>

The triumphal procession to the Capitol took place in the first days of December 384, the start of what should have been a glorious year at the top of the *cursus honorum* for Praetextatus as he celebrated his consulship – yet a few days later he was dead. This ‘triumphal’ reference could just be sarcasm on Jerome’s part, but it would appear to have been an actual triumphal procession connected with gladiatorial games celebrated after a victory over the Sarmatians.<sup>213</sup> Valentinian II offered some of these Sarmatian prisoners for the gladiatorial games and is thanked for this by Symmachus in *Relatio* 47. Symmachus called this event a *spectaculo triumphali* although it cannot be regarded as a real triumph since the person who would have celebrated it and the army were not present in Rome.<sup>214</sup> It is likely that Symmachus too would have been in the procession as urban prefect. In *Ep.* 23 Jerome imagines the great pagan praetorian prefect, who a few days before was celebrating his imminent high office in an idolatrous fashion, being consigned to the darkest realms of Tartarus – *ut designatum consulem de suis saeculis detrahentes esse doceamus in tartaro* – while the humble widow Leah has ascended to glory in heaven with the risen Christ.<sup>215</sup> Pope Damasus, Jerome’s benefactor died at almost the same time as Praetextatus and Jerome left Rome soon after these events.

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<sup>211</sup> Barrow, 1973: 113.

<sup>212</sup> *Ep.* 2.7.2, *Iam primum consilio locus nullus est, dum in deliberando persona censentium pondus sententiis facit.. Quando resistitur potiori, quando ceditur pari? Dehinc praesens status non sapientiam sed fortunam requirit* : Chastagnol, 1960: 224-226 : Callu, 2003: Tome 1, 156, n 1.

<sup>213</sup> Vera, 1983: 140-142; Kahlos, 2002: 151.

<sup>214</sup> Kahlos, 2002.151.

<sup>215</sup> *Jer. Ep.* 23.2-3

Symmachus sent two *Relationes* to Valentinian informing him of the death of Praetextatus, *Relatio* 11 was probably sent first to anticipate *Relatio* 10 as it is the more formal of the two. While there is some exaggeration undoubtedly in Symmachus' account of the mourning of the people when they heard the news of the death of Praetextatus, there is no reason to think that the senator had not been held in the highest respect by the populace. In their grief they forsook the pleasure of the theatre so that they could honour Praetextatus' memory with *acclamations*.<sup>216</sup> In *Relatio* 12 Symmachus asks on behalf of the Senate for statues to be erected to Praetextatus and this request was eventually granted. Evidence of his speeches had to be provided however, and these and accounts of the *acclamations* to his memory were duly sent to the emperor, with eventually a felicitous result.<sup>217</sup>

For Symmachus on a personal level, however things were not so felicitous. In *Relatio* 11 he states that he suffers *crudo adhuc dolore* from the death of Praetextatus, a great friend and eminent among the pagan senators. In *Relatio* 10.3 he states, 'I will not dwell on the other reasons which prevent me from sustaining my office as prefect with equanimity; even by itself the loss of a close associate would justify asking and obtaining release'.<sup>218</sup> Sick at heart and dispirited by opposition from colleagues, his failure to reverse the state ordinances against paganism and in grief at the death of Praetextatus he resigned the prefecture and took again for a while to the life of *otium* and *negotium* in the country away from Rome.

## 7.7 An Assessment of the Events of 384

Symmachus undoubtedly started his period in office as Urban Prefect in July 384 with confidence; after all the pagan star was riding high with Symmachus himself in office in Rome and Praetextatus as praetorian prefect for Italy and Illyria. By January 385 things were entirely different. The interests of the elite pagans had suffered two major setbacks that they never really recovered from in that Symmachus' attempt to get a reversal of Gratian's measures against the state cults had grossly failed and Praetextatus, the senior pagan, was dead. It is hardly surprising that the former urban prefect, temporarily at least, was sick at heart. I would however agree with Matthew's analysis of the whole 'Altar of Victory Affair'

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<sup>216</sup> *Rel.* 10.2: Sogno, 2008; 55.

<sup>217</sup> *Rel.* 24: Barrow, 1973: 136; Sogno, 2008: 55.

<sup>218</sup> Barrow, 1973: 75, *sileo cetera, quae me non sinunt praefecturam ferre patienter: uel haec una consortis amissio iusta est ad impetrandam uacationem.*



as not being a final confrontation between pagans and Christians following the model of Bloch, but rather as an ‘uncharacteristically lucid episode in the untidy and unplanned process by which the Roman governing classes abandoned their patronage of the old forms of religion in favour of the new’.<sup>219</sup>

It is in this light that I think one must regard the religious events of 384. However polarised Symmachus and Ambrose were seen to be by their responses in the Altar of Victory affair, the whole episode is only one event of many in the story of the conversion of the aristocratic classes to Christianity. What is obvious, however, and most important to me in the whole series of events, is the absolute conviction of the main protagonists for their various belief systems; and it is argued throughout this chapter that the passion Symmachus displays in *Relatio* 3 shows a man prepared to defend his religious beliefs. No-one after all queries the religious convictions of Ambrose, so why then should those of Symmachus be doubted and even disparaged? This last position owes a lot I would argue to the influence Christianity still has on Western scholarship. The fact that Symmachus tried to reverse the declining fortunes of paganism by writing this *Relatio* proves his religious conviction. It would have been so much easier to have done nothing.

So while the political reasons behind the failure of Symmachus and the triumph of Ambrose are crucial to an understanding of the whole episode, it is the religious beliefs, both Christian and pagan, which I think must in the end be emphasised. These are examined in 7.3 and 7.4 – and are ably explored by McLynn and others. Cicero’s religious laws in *De Legibus* undoubtedly stand as a blueprint for an ideal religious state along the traditional Roman model. They have therefore been compared in Section 7.5 to *Relatio* 3 where Symmachus defends his version of the ideal religious state and pleads for its continuation even in a largely Christian world. There is no doubt of the similarity between the two models.

Ambrose would never have taken the steps he did to defeat Symmachus purely for political reasons – these, though important, were overshadowed by his absolute conviction of the rightness of the Christian cause. This however has not always been sufficiently understood or emphasised by modern scholars who may be investigating the sequence of events of 384 from

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<sup>219</sup> Matthews, 1975, 210-11

a non-religious background. Symmachus in turn has in many ways been judged purely by his own prose as analysts find it hard to penetrate its florid nature to see the real Symmachus below; and assumptions have been too readily made that his stance over the Altar of Victory affair was purely for political reasons also.<sup>220</sup> I do not share this belief as I have argued in this chapter, particularly in 7.4, where I have demonstrated the extent of Symmachus' religious conviction. My conclusion from the analysis of *Relatio 3* is that it confirms my opinion that religion was a vital part of Symmachus' life. The concluding chapter, Chapter 9, *Symmachus' Religious Epitaph*, will return to the whole theme of Symmachus' deeper religious beliefs.

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<sup>220</sup> As Paschoud does in his 1965 article

## Chapter 8

### Symmachus and the Twilight of the Gods

In Chapter 7 I explored the religious elements of what were probably the worst six months of Symmachus' life – the period when he was Urban Prefect in Rome from July 384 to January 385. Chapter 8 will examine the period from when he ceased to be Urban Prefect until his death in the spring of 402 and to try to identify the religious elements of his life during this period, and of the situations he found himself in. The events of this period which pertain to Symmachus' 'Religious World' have not received as much attention as other aspects of Symmachus' life and career though Matthews and Sogno deal admirably with the political happenings and the intention therefore is to rectify this within this chapter. It was a momentous period generally for the pagan cause. This chapter is entitled 'Symmachus and the Twilight of the Gods' because it was in these years that the polytheistic cults ceased to be allowed. The chapter therefore allows us glimpses of a religious world which was truly heading into night.

We know from the statue base with his *cursus honorum* on page 8 that the only official post Symmachus held during the last seventeen years of his life was that of ordinary consul; one must not assume from this inscription, however, that once his consulship was over Symmachus had no influence – in fact his opinion carried immense weight. Symmachus' community of friends and acquaintances with whom he corresponded and networked so effectively as described in Chapter 6, was still very important and it is to the 390s that the most intensive period of his correspondence belongs. He wielded a great deal of political authority in these years, being sent on many occasions as an ambassador from the senate in Rome to the imperial court in Milan. He was operating in this role just before his death. From 388,<sup>1</sup> Symmachus was also *princeps senatus*, one of only three known incumbents of this post in the fourth century.<sup>2</sup> *Princeps senatus* was an ancient title and the post-holder was the first member by precedence of the senate, chosen by his senatorial peers and not appointed by the throne. The position was officially outside the *cursus honorum* and carried no *imperium* but enormous prestige and influence. Some of the functions associated with it were speaking first in a debate, summoning and adjourning the senate, deciding its agenda, imposing order

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<sup>1</sup> Chastagnol, 1960: 71.

<sup>2</sup> Chastagnol, 1960: 154.

and other rules of the session, deciding where the session should take place and writing letters and despatches. There was a law passed by Gratian in 382 which stated that when the consuls were in Rome they voted in the senate before the urban prefect but all voted after the *princeps senatus*.<sup>3</sup>

The chapter is divided into four parts. In Part 1, 'Consulship' will look at Symmachus' time in this role and consider what pagan traditions still remained within it. Part 2 explores the events leading up to the battle of Frigidus in 394, which used to be considered to be the last battle fought under Roman standards, but is now considered to be more Theodosius defeating yet another rival Western emperor. It also examines the battle itself and its consequences, one of which was the permanent shutting of the temples by Theodosius. Part 3 discusses the marriage in 401 of Memmius with his cousin and the pagan ceremonial involved. In Part 4 the pagan religious rites surrounding Symmachus' death and funeral in the spring of 402 will be analysed and the chapter ends with a discussion of what Symmachus and his family might have believed in respect of the afterlife – and memorials to him.

### 8.1.1 Consulship

Because we have very little information from Symmachus himself regarding his consulship, the methodology used is to employ the evidence from other people holding the same rank and position in Late Antiquity to envisage the nature of Symmachus' own consulship. The awarding of the ordinary consulship was still the apogee of a senatorial career, the *cursus honorum*.<sup>4</sup> By 391 when Symmachus was awarded this singular honour, his pagan beliefs notwithstanding, this was no longer an elected position appointment as it had been in the days of the Republic but an honorific appointment, normally the prerogative of the imperial family or barbarian generals, although important senators were still appointed to it. Children could also hold this most prestigious of positions by this stage as shown by Claudian's panegyric of 395 to the two young Anicii, sons of the dead Petronius Probus.<sup>5</sup> Its main function was to give games upon the assumption of the post at the January Kalends and to preside over other games held because of their association with the various festivals in the Roman calendar. There were two consuls at this period, one for the Eastern and one for the Western empire. In

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<sup>3</sup> Chastagnol, 1960 : 71.

<sup>4</sup> Mathisen, 2009: 140.

<sup>5</sup> Claud. *Panegyricus Dictus Probino et Olybrio Consulibus*

the Eastern Empire the inauguration of the consul of the year and the associated inaugural games were held in Constantinople, the seat of the Eastern Emperor; however in the West the consul's inauguration and games would be held in whatever capital the Western Emperor was residing in, Trier under Valentinian I and Gratian, then Milan and finally Ravenna under Honorius and his successors from 402 – but not in Rome itself. This was because the consul was invested by the emperor, if the consul was not the emperor himself. Symmachus had participated in the celebrations associated with the beginning of the third consulship of Valentinian II at Milan in January 387.<sup>6</sup>

However he then seriously blotted his copybook by delivering a panegyric for the Western imperial rival emperor Maximus when he invaded Italy, perhaps for Maximus' second consulship in January 388. Sogno certainly places Symmachus in Milan at the start of 388.<sup>7</sup> This delivery of a panegyric possibly was at the behest of the Roman senate; however Theodosius defeated and then executed Maximus in the summer of 388 and Symmachus for a while was distinctly out of favour, as he was undoubtedly seen as a collaborator with the previous regime.<sup>8</sup> The year that elapsed between the death of Maximus on 28<sup>th</sup> August 388 and the visit to Rome by Theodosius, June to September 389, was a hard one for Symmachus, and one of his properties at Ostia was even occupied for a time by soldiers.<sup>9</sup> Symmachus, in a letter written to Nicomachus Flavianus<sup>10</sup> mentions a *defensio panegyrici* to Theodosius which he composed soon after Maximus' death in apology to the emperor. This was certainly delivered before Theodosius' trip to Rome in the summer of 389. In this he apparently touched upon Theodosius' many virtues. However this panegyric was not totally successful. Symmachus was invited to Rome for the period of Theodosius' sojourn there, not at that point being resident in the city, but was not among the lucky senators allowed to address the emperor on that occasion.<sup>11</sup> He, however, was eventually returned to favour due to the influence of Nicomachus Flavianus and Symmachus' own patient cultivation of his community of friends and contacts; and, after a period of intense anxiety and insecurity, Symmachus learnt he was to receive the most prestigious post of the *cursus honorum* when he received the letter appointing him as Western consul, sometime in late 390.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ep.* 3.52 and 3.63: Chastagnol, 1962: 226

<sup>7</sup> Sogno, 2006: 68.

<sup>8</sup> Sogno, 2006: 70.

<sup>9</sup> *Ep.* 6.72, 2.52; Sogno, 2006, 71.

<sup>10</sup> *Ep.* 2.13

<sup>11</sup> *Ep.* 3.55 to Ricomer, 8.69 to Valerianus; Sogno, 2008, : 76.

Though the consulate had no political power, it was still an immense personal honour for an individual to be awarded it in an age when these posts were normally held by the emperor(s), other members of the imperial family or barbarian generals – and a privilege much sought after still by aristocratic families. While the main function of the role at this late date was to give the consular games, the consuls of the year still had the honour of having the year dated after them, and their names appended to the legislation passed in that year with the name of the Eastern consul being given first – unless the Western consul was an emperor. Such is one of the laws banning pagan practices from the Theodosian Code, C.Th.16.10.10 (see Appendix 4, page 320). It is ironic that such a law was passed in Symmachus' consular year, so his name was associated with the law in the official text.

The most interesting letter associated with Symmachus gaining the consulship is that which Symmachus wrote to Flavianus stating his relief and delight in being accorded this immense honour in a letter dated to 390 (presumably fairly late in the year though this is not specified).<sup>12</sup>

*Postquam Gaudentio apparatori tuo indicem peracti a me itineris epistulam dedi, agens in rebus mihi adportauit sacras litteras spei et desiderio congruentes, quibus cognoscerem clare in aures publicas designationem consulatus mei debere proferri*

*After I had given to Gaudentius your steward, the letter informing you of the completion of my journey, an agent brought me the imperial communication which corresponded with my hopes and desires by which I was about to learn clearly that my appointment to the consulship would be conveyed to the ears of the public.*

The general paucity of letters concerned with Symmachus gaining the consulship are surprising in view of the eminence of the position; but this can be accounted for by the fact that the main ceremonies connected with the post did not take place in Rome itself. All his normal correspondents would therefore have been present at his inauguration in Milan, as he was present at many of theirs. Due to him accepting or rejecting invitations to non-Imperial consular celebrations, we know that Syragius (consul 381), Richomeres (consul 384), Bauto (consul 385), Neoterius (consul 390), Atticus (consul 397), Theodorus (consul 399) and

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<sup>12</sup> Ep.2.62

Stilicho (consul 400) all celebrated their inaugurations there.<sup>13</sup> Indeed Bauto was lauded in the consular panegyric, given in January 385 on his behalf by the court rhetor at Milan, none other than Augustine prior to his conversion to Christianity; Bauto was the replacement for Praetextatus who had died in December 384.<sup>14</sup>

### 8.1.2 Inauguration and inauguration games

So Symmachus, when he travelled north to Milan, just before the Kalends of January 391 for his inauguration, may well have been comforted by the fact that tradition associated with the role of consul still continued, even if the sacrifices that would once have been part of the ceremony were no longer performed. Obviously if the Western consul of the year left Rome for the capital to celebrate his new role, he could no longer celebrate in the traditional way on the January Kalends in the city itself.

Ausonius gives us an idea of the joy he felt on becoming consul in 379 in the following lines:<sup>15</sup>

*Anne, bonis coepte auspiciis, felicia cernis  
Consulis Ausonii primordia : prome coruscum  
Sol aeternae, caput solitoque illustrior almo  
Lumine purpureum iubar exsere eoa.*

*O year having begun with good auspices, you see the happy beginning of Ausonius being consul; Bring forth your brilliant head, eternal sun and display more brightly than is your custom. With a bountiful light put out the purple radiance of the dawn.*

If Symmachus had produced a poem at the time of his elevation in 391 no doubt it would have contained similar sentiments. This is one area where the old gods could still make an appearance – in poetry. Ausonius is Christian but does not hesitate to use pagan imagery if

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<sup>13</sup> Cameron, 2013: 204; brief biographies of all these gentlemen can be found in Appendix 2.

<sup>14</sup> Aug. *Confess.* 8.23.

<sup>15</sup> Aus. *Item. Prec. Kal. Ianuariis*

appropriate. Further on in the same poem we have:

*from the month of two-faced Janus to December's wintry end.*

Claudian too in his 395 consular panegyric uses the old gods and personifications to emphasise his theme. Theodosius, after winning the battle of Frigidus is likened to Mars while Roma herself 'appears with a flying chariot, her hair flowing in the breeze with threatening helmet and blazoned shield.'<sup>1</sup> His use of mythological comparisons is outstanding as well in panegyrics delivered to devout Christians; to Stilicho, *De consulatu Stilichonis*, Honorius, *Panegyricus de sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti* and to Serena, *Laus Serenae*.<sup>2</sup> Claudian was pagan, but the use of mythic allusion in epithalamia and other Late Antique poetry was expected by his now Christian audience.

The inauguration itself was a splendid occasion. Traditionally in Rome the new consul climbed to the Capitol and sacrificed to Jupiter. Obviously, with the ceremonies occurring in Milan, this part of the proceedings was omitted – and there would be no sacrifice in a Christian court anyway. But the rest of the ceremony with all its antique splendour was still extant and this would both have given Symmachus pleasure and would have comforted him with its continuation of long-standing tradition. The new consul would have processed in the *processus consularis*, preceded by his lictors with their *fascēs* and accompanied by his friends and senators. The culmination of this procession was the arrival of the consul at the senate for a meeting with the senators and magistrates. Here he would have been seated on a curule chair as shown in Figure 37, and the new *fasti* would have been presented with the names of both consuls. The new consul made a speech of thanks to the emperor called the *gratiarum actio* and manumitted a slave. He would also have presented money as seen in Figure 38. Later he would have proceeded to preside over the circus games where he would have given the signal to begin by throwing down the *mappa*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Claudian, *Panegyricus Dictus Probrino et Olybrio Consulibus*, 73 -75; Cameron, 1970: 33.

<sup>2</sup> Stirling, 2005: 142, 262, n 21.

<sup>3</sup> Mathisen, 2009: 141.



The consular robe was called a *trabea*, *toga picta*, *toga palmata* or *vestis palmata*. It was coloured purple and decorated with palms, rosettes and even portraits inlaid in gold.<sup>4</sup> In his *Panegyric on the Fourth Consulate of Honorius*, Claudian describes the emperor's toga as being encrusted with jewels, embroidered with pictures in golden thread and studded with pearls and jasper cameos.<sup>5</sup> For an actual description of a consular inauguration, albeit later than Symmachus we have a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris who as a young man attended the consular celebrations of Astyrius or Asturius in 449 at Arles and tells his friend Namatius about it in a letter dated to 480, *Ep.* 8.6.5. Flavius Astyrius, Figure 41, is shown in his consular diptych in full regalia. Sidonius tells his friend:

*consul Asturius anni sui fores uotium trabeatus aperuerat. adhaerebam sellae curuli, etsi non latens per ordinem, certe non sedens per aetatem mixtusque turmae censualium paenulatorum consuli proximis proximus eram. itaque ut primum breui peracta, nec breuis, sportula datique fasti .....*

*the consul Asturius had entered upon his year as wearer of the coveted consular robe. I was standing close to the curule chair (for although my age forbade me to be seated my rank entitled me to some prominence); and so mingling with the crowd of cloaked Census-officials. I was next to those who were next to the consul. Well, as soon as the largesse had been distributed (and it was quickly distributed though of no small amount), and when the consular mementos had been distributed...*

Later in the same letter he talks about the consular panegyric given by one Nicetus:<sup>6</sup>

*Dixit disposite grauiter ardentem, magna acrimonia maiore facundia maxima disciplina, et illam Sarranis ebriam sucis inter crepitantia segmenta palmatam, plus picta oratione, plus aurea conuenustauit.*

*The oration he then delivered was well ordered, dignified, and glowing, of great energy, greater fluency, and artistry greatest of all, and that consular robe of his, soaked in Tyrian dye, with palm leaves among the crackling fringes was enhanced in its splendour by a speech more richly coloured and more golden still.*

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<sup>4</sup> Mathisen, 2009: 141.

<sup>5</sup> Claud. *IV Cons. Hon.* 585-92; Roberts, 1989: 113.

<sup>6</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.6.6, W B Anderson (trans).

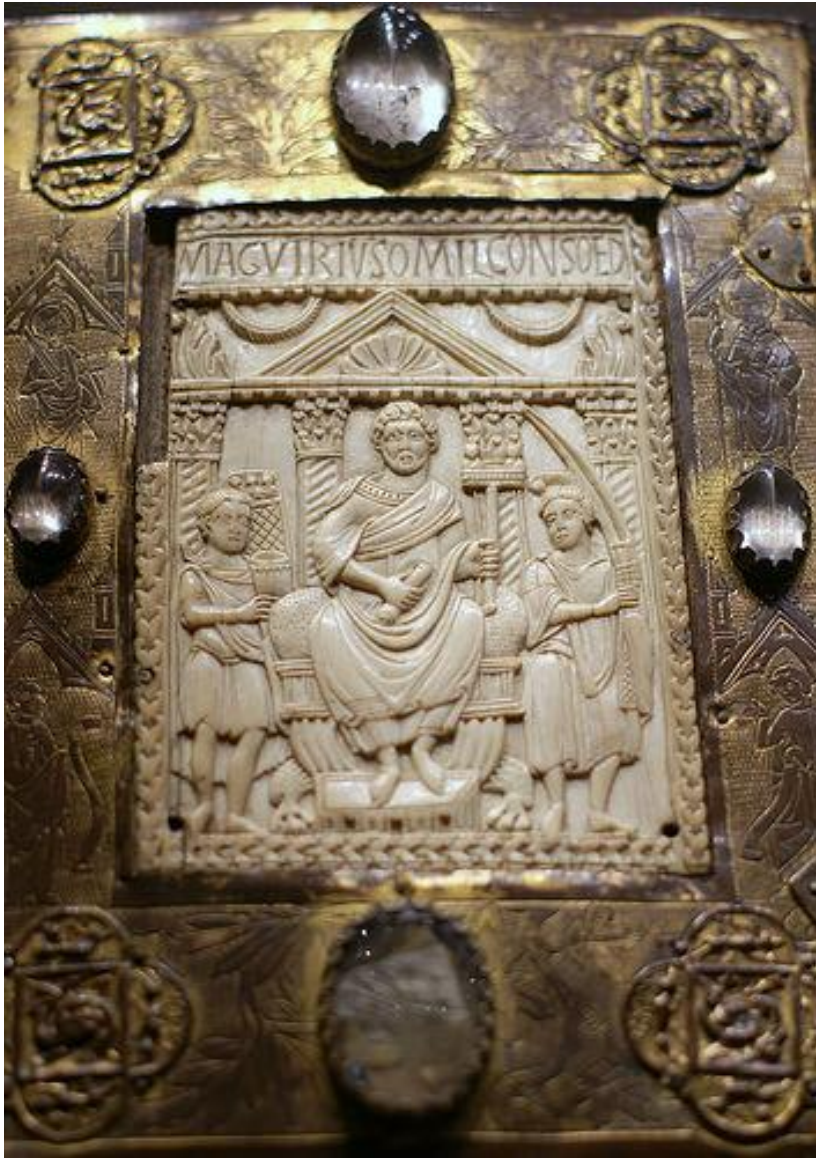


Fig.37: Diptych of Flavius Astyrius

Symmachus delivered his own panegyric and although we do not have a copy of it, one can imagine it being both richly coloured and golden – and probably rich in pagan metaphor. The *gratiarum actio* of Ausonius given at the inauguration of his consulship is a good example of the genre. We do know that Symmachus again asked for the restoration of the Altar of Victory and the fees formerly paid to the Vestals, but with no success.<sup>7</sup> This episode therefore gives us a glimpse of Symmachus, still trying when he could during these years to advance the pagan cause.

<sup>7</sup> Pseudo-Prosper, *De promissionibus e praedictionibus Dei*. III.38.2 (wrongly ascribed to Prosperus Aquitanus); McGeachy, 1942: 146.



Fig.38: Constantius II as consul dispensing largesse from the 354 calendar

By the end of the fourth century, the new consul, while still dispensing gold at the inauguration ceremony also had started giving ivory diptyches to his friends, a custom that continued until the abolition of the position of consul by Justinian in the sixth century.<sup>8</sup> Many of these diptyches show the consul sitting on his *sella curulis*, in one hand the sceptre or *scipio*, in the other the *mappa*. The picture of Constantius II, Figure 38, shows him holding the *scipio* while dispensing gold but this is earlier in production than the diptyches. The Astyrius diptych of 449 does not show a *mappa*. However many of the other surviving ones do, including the diptych shown in Figure 39, which is c 417 and of Constantius III, husband of Galla Placidia. This is nowadays in the Treasury of Halberstadt cathedral, Germany and shows the consul on the right hand leaf with *mappa* raised, holding the *scipio*. This particular iconography is replicated in Figure 40, the superb diptych of the Eastern consul Areobindus dated to 506. These diptyches are a valuable example of social history because they demonstrate the way the consuls themselves wanted to be depicted in their most prestigious role – as games givers. They were probably pre-produced in Constantinople in workshops

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<sup>8</sup> Symm. *Ep.* 9.93.

which may have had Egyptian antecedents<sup>9</sup> – and from there the fashion spread west. The diptychs produced for Stilicho's consulship of 400 are the first western ones known.<sup>10</sup> Each consul as he acceded would have had his name put on a quantity, which were then given to his friends.<sup>11</sup>



Fig.39: Consular diptych of Constantius III

<sup>9</sup> Morey, 1940: 46.

<sup>10</sup> Cameron, 2013: 205.

<sup>11</sup> Morey, 1940 :46.



Fig.40: Areobindus, Eastern consul of 506

There is no diptych surviving of the consulship of Symmachus but there is a statue dated to the right period of a magistrate holding the *mappa* which possibly is of him – see the discussion of this in Chapter 1. This is now in the Centrale Montemartini, Museo Capitolini in Rome and when I went to see it, a curator there stated to me that it has been tentatively ascribed to Symmachus because of its style of clothing and it being of the right period. This attribution, however, must be treated with some suspicion as it could equally well be any Western non-emperor consul of the period. The statue and its young companion who may be Symmachus' son were found in gardens by the so called Temple of Minerva Medica on the Esquiline Hill.<sup>12</sup> Bertolletti et al think the fact that the pair was found together adds credence to the possibility that these are indeed Symmachus and Memmius<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> M Bertolletti et al., 2007: 95.

<sup>13</sup> M Bertolletti et al, 2007: 96.



Fig. 41: So called statue of Symmachus, in the Museo Centrale Montemartini, Rome.

These are the only two such statues in the Roman West though there are several examples in the east such as those at Ephesus and Aphrodisias.<sup>14</sup> This may therefore be an art form more common in the East.

Having surveyed some of the diptychs which show the consuls officiating at the games, what would these games in fact have consisted of? The celebratory entertainments given at court on the inauguration of the consul would have consisted of chariot races, gladiatorial fights and theatrical events. In an interesting letter dated 400 concerned with Stilicho's consular games Symmachus writes to his son that:

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<sup>14</sup> Cameron, 2013: 201.

*Circensium sollemnitati consularis magnificentia satisfecit; ludorum adhuc  
et muneris splendissimae imminent functiones.*

*The consular magnificence has been satisfied by the festive circus events; and the very  
splendid performances of the games and gladiators are yet to come.*<sup>1</sup>

Cameron states that Stilicho gave three days of games in Milan (postponed by bad weather till February) and then a similar set in Rome, ‘the first time Rome had seen games presented by an ordinary consul in office in nearly a century’.<sup>2</sup> Fifty years later in *Carmen* 23 Sidonius gives us a vivid picture of the chariot races:<sup>3</sup>

*micant colores  
albus uel uenetus, uirens rubensque,  
uestra insignia. continent ministri  
ora et lora manus iubasque tortas  
cogunt flexilibus latere nodis  
hortanturque obiter iuuantque blandis  
ultro plausibus et uoluptuosum  
dictant quadrupedantibus furorem.*

*Brightly gleam the colours, white and blue, green and red, your several badges. Servants’  
hands hold mouth and reins and with knotted cords force the twisted manes to hide  
themselves, and all the while they incite the steeds, eagerly cheering them with  
encouraging pats and instilling a rapturous frenzy.*

The *opus sectile* depiction of an aristocrat and a chariot which was found in the lay basilica on the Esquiline built by Junius Bassus, consul in 331, Figure 42 has the same excitement as demonstrated in Sidonius’ *Carmen* though it appears to be a hunt rather than a chariot race.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 7.4

<sup>2</sup> Cameron, 2013: 205: Cameron states that the greater games reserved for Rome are mentioned by Claudian in *Stil.* 3.225.

<sup>3</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carmen*, 23, ll 323-30. W B Anderson (trans).

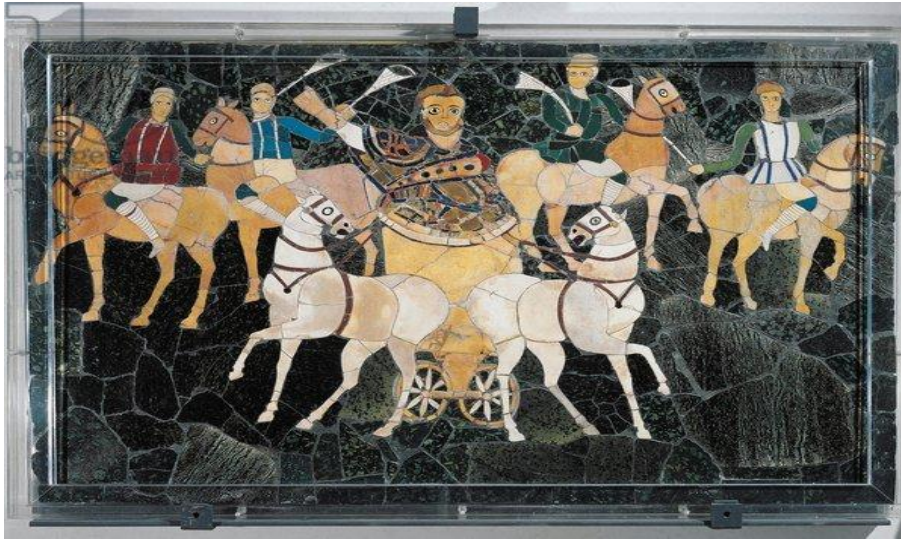


Fig.42: An aristocrat in his chariot from the Basilica of Junius Bassus.

There is a lack of information about whether any of the cycles of games associated with the various festivals would have been graced by the presence of the consul when in Rome although Cameron asserts that the *Natalis Urbis* games of 21<sup>st</sup> April were normally the only games held under the auspices of a consul, albeit a suffect consul. We know from a letter of Symmachus to Stilicho in 401 that the consular games were normally held in the Colosseum – or as Symmachus calls it, *ampitheatrum*.<sup>4</sup> Quaestorian and praetorian games were normally held elsewhere, presumably the Circus Maximus. Symmachus asks Stilicho to expedite the permission, already requested, for Memmius' praetorian games to be held in the Colosseum, because it would hold greater crowds, and this permission was forthcoming<sup>5</sup> – so that indeed, *Romeam caueam leopardorum cursus impleuerit*.<sup>6</sup> So if the only games at this time to be held in Rome under the auspices of a consul were the *Natalis Urbis*<sup>7</sup>, were these the consular games referred to by Symmachus which were held in the Colosseum?

There are some problems, I feel, with Cameron's theory that only suffect consuls held games in Rome for most of the fourth century, because the Consular *Fasti* list in PLRE 1 contains the names of only nine suffect consuls for this period, although Symmachus writes of another in 401 who was thrown out of his chariot and broke his leg on the way to celebrate the

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<sup>4</sup> *Ep.*4.8.2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ep.*4.8; 6.33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ep.*4.12.2.

<sup>7</sup> Cameron, 2013: 204.



festival of 21<sup>st</sup> April.<sup>8</sup> Even if the names of some of the *suffects* have been lost, there would appear to be a lot of years without such an appointment. So presumably during these years it was the ordinary consul who presided over the *Natalis Urbis* games, held in the Colosseum; and also some of the other *circenses* and *ludi* belonging to the traditional annual festivals may well have been held there also, as well as in the Circus Maximus.

The fourth century still saw most of the historic feast days being celebrated. We know for example that the Lupercalia was commemorated until the end of the fifth century.<sup>9</sup> As it is difficult to find evidence of consular presence at the traditional festal occasions, it is also difficult to find evidence for what pagan aspects the games associated with these festivals still contained, though the auspices would no longer have been taken and obviously there was no sacrifice before they started. But their popularity was such that the emperors tampered with them sparingly. The calendar of 354 lists these festivals as Salzman has exhaustively demonstrated;<sup>10</sup> and Ausonius in his poem entitled *De Feriis Romanis*, contemporary with Symmachus, mentions a whole list of festivals which are broadly comparable to those listed in the late Roman calendars.<sup>11</sup> Some of these are Apollo's festival, the *ludi Apollinares* of 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> July, the *Megalensia* of 4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> April sacred to Cybele, the *Quinquatrus*, held on 19<sup>th</sup> March sacred first to Mars and then to Minerva, the *Floralia* from 28<sup>th</sup> April to 3<sup>rd</sup> May, the *Isis navigium* of 5<sup>th</sup> March, the *Saturnalia* in December which concludes the poem and several others. Symmachus must have enjoyed the traditional celebrations, and have been reassured by the continuing of pagan influence in the familiar ancient festal rhythm of the year.

Certainly by the end of the century the emperors were legislating to make the old festival days available for business; so that it was the Christian calendar, not the pagan one which began to determine public life as in the act of 392, in the consulships of Arcadius and Rufinus, when circus events were banned on Sundays, except on royal birthdays, lest sport keep people from church.<sup>12</sup> But it was still necessary to keep the public sweet so the public festivals and their associated sporting activities continued under imperial patronage – these

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<sup>8</sup> *Ep.* 6.40

<sup>9</sup> McLynn, 2008: 161-2.

<sup>10</sup> Salzman, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Green, 1991: 429.

<sup>12</sup> C.Th. 2.8.20

were ‘the long established amusements (*priscae uoluptates*) of the Roman people’.<sup>13</sup> However by re-orienting the festal calendar towards Christian rather than pagan ceremonies and calling these festivities, *uoluptates* rather than the older terms of *ludi* or *munera*, the emperors were trying nevertheless to de-sacralise these festival days and make them more religiously neutral.<sup>14</sup> For the mass of the people it must be said that it was the *panem* and the *circenses* that mattered more to them than the pagan elements of the *pompa*; Symmachus’ *Relatio* 6 is evidence of that.<sup>15</sup> But no emperor could afford to alienate the plebs; and so in spite of the preaching of Christian bishops and the rise of charitable benevolence by the Church, the traditional festivities, funded by the aristocracy, continued well into the sixth century when the Gothic wars and Byzantine invasion finally put an end to them. In the middle of the fifth century Pope Leo in frustration could yet declare that, ‘mad spectacles draw greater crowds than blessed martyrdoms’.<sup>16</sup>

### 8.1.3 Reflections on Symmachus’ consulship

In my attempt to show how Symmachus’ consulship still contained pagan elements, material from other relevant sources has been extensively used to prise out information because very little is known about his consular year. However these sources have demonstrated conclusively that pagan elements were still in evidence in spite of the Christianisation of society. One important aspect of this is that this antique ceremony of being inaugurated as consul, with all its traditional pomp, was still celebrated in the way it always had been although now it came under Christian management. Another continuing source of traditional pagan practices was the old cycle of games associated with various deities which still continued at the time of Symmachus’ consulship. These games however were now modified in terms of ceremonies connected with them that would have formerly been performed such as sacrifice. Lim argues that the culture of the games allowed for the creation of a common bond that linked the Imperial court and the *Curia* and rose above religious controversy.<sup>17</sup> The aristocratic payment for games was also an important method of demonstrating power and influence for the great families of Late Antiquity yet there is some evidence for the thesis that

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<sup>13</sup> C.Th. 16.10.3; Lee, 2013: 528.

<sup>14</sup> Lee, 2013:528.

<sup>15</sup> *Rel.* 6.2, *And so it begs that your Clemencies, after granting those subsidies which your generosity has made towards our sustenance, should furnish also the enjoyments of chariot races to be held in the circus [Circus Maximus] and in Pompey’s theatre.*

<sup>16</sup> Leo, *Serm.* 84.1 (CCSL 138A, 525-6); Lim, 1999: 281.

<sup>17</sup> Lim, 1999: 271.

pagan senators used the public games to assert traditional *mores* in the face of the challenge of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> There is also evidence of pagan imagery still being used in imperial panegyric and poetry by Christians such as Ausonius; and Claudian, pagan poet and panegyricist to a Christian court. Symmachus himself would undoubtedly also have composed a *gratiarum actio* in the traditional style and he seems to have used this to again ask for restoration of the Altar of Victory and the dues traditionally paid to the Vestals albeit with no success. And with his characteristic aplomb he would still while celebrating his consular year and carrying all before him have felt satisfaction in following his ancestors' footsteps in a way which they would still have recognised in spite of the Christianisation of the age.

## 8.2 Frigidus and its Aftermath

In the previous section the year 391 was investigated when Symmachus was consul and an attempt made to try to evaluate aspects of this, and its ceremonial, that were still pagan. This section will examine how the battle of Frigidus affected Symmachus– the so-called 'last battle under pagan standards' and its anti-pagan fallout. Symmachus himself was not directly involved in the battle of Frigidus itself or the regime of Eugenius that preceded it. He had had his fingers badly burnt by his involvement with Maximus seven years earlier and it took him some time to recover his position after Maximus was defeated and executed by Theodosius in August of 388. So he sat on the sidelines during the period when Valentinian II either committed suicide or was murdered by Arbogastes his magister militum in 392, and while the regime headed by Eugenius took up residence first in Milan, then Rome. It was as well he did so because he was therefore in a position to save the career and fortune of his son-in-law, Flavianus junior, after the defeat of the insurgents which included Nicomachus Flavianus senior who committed suicide on the battlefield. This section then will examine glimpses of Symmachus' religious life through the actions of his greatest friend and fellow pagan– actions which forced Flavianus at the end into an honourable suicide.

Flavianus was born in 334 which makes him six years older than Symmachus.<sup>19</sup> He came from a senatorial family native to Rome itself though only his father is known, Virius

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<sup>18</sup> Lim, 1999: 274.

<sup>19</sup> PLRE 1, 1971: 347.

Volusius Venustus.<sup>20</sup> The name Virius is Italian and the family first comes to prominence in Roman politics during the second century CE; by the third it could proudly boast of two consuls among its ranks but it fades from view after the period of Symmachus and Flavianus the younger.<sup>21</sup> Flavianus' career can be reconstructed from the inscription on his statue base and also from an inscription on the base of a statue put up in 431 by his grandson Appius Nicomachus Dexter in Trajan's Forum.<sup>22</sup> This celebrated the removal of the *damnatio memoriae* placed upon Flavianus the elder by the emperors after his involvement with and death at Frigidus in 394.<sup>23</sup> It gives his *cursus honorum* as including the posts of *quaestor*, *praetor*, *pontifex maior*, *consularis* of Sicily (364/5), *vicarius* of Africa (376/7), *quaestor sacri palatii* during the 380s and *praefectus praetorianus* of Italy and Illyricum at least twice.<sup>24</sup> Finally in 394 he was consul in the West, though this was never recognised by Theodosius who put up his own candidate for this role. He also was an historian and wrote a set of *Annales*, probably when he was *quaestor sacri palatii* in the 380s. It was similar in genre to the *Annals* of Tacitus and probably carried on where they left off, was dedicated to Theodosius but is now unfortunately lost. This was an illustrious career indeed, even if he had not become consul in the months before his death. It begs the question therefore why he ever got involved with Eugenius and the rebellion which culminated in Frigidus and led to his death.

Matthews sheds some light on this. It would appear that it was the capitulation of Theodosius twice to Ambrose, first over the burning by Christians of a synagogue in Callinicum on the Euphrates when Ambrose threatened Theodosius with excommunication if the emperor retaliated against the Christians;<sup>25</sup> and secondly in 390 over a serious riot in Thessalonica when a barbarian commander was murdered and the massacre ordered in retaliation by Theodosius got seriously out of hand. Once again the Emperor had to give way to Ambrose in order to receive communion.<sup>26</sup> These two incidents demonstrated to Flavianus that the power of the Emperor now appeared less than the power of the Church. Added to this was the very Christian court of Constantinople, Theodosius' natural piety and his anti-pagan

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<sup>20</sup> Macr. *Sat.* 1.5.13.

<sup>21</sup> Hedrick, 2000: 16.

<sup>22</sup> Hedrick, 2000: 2.

<sup>23</sup> *CIL* 6.1783

<sup>24</sup> Hedrick, 2000: 21-23.

<sup>25</sup> Matthews, 1974: 234.

<sup>26</sup> Ruf. 11.18; Matthews, 1975: 236.

legislation of 391-2 – see Appendix 4 – going much further than any such legislation had previously gone.

Flavianus was present at court and saw the humiliation of an emperor by a Christian bishop. He might even have had to be present on occasion at church and as praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyricum would certainly have had to transmit the anti-pagan legislation. He must have seen the writing on the wall for the traditional cults. The evidence of his desertion of Theodosius probably indicates that with Theodosius back in Constantinople with all its Christian influence, Flavianus may have felt that as a pagan he had little chance of becoming consul, even though Theodosius had left him as praetorian prefect of Italy and Illyricum. Cecconi states that in spite of the undoubted ties between Theodosius and Flavianus, there is evidence of a clear split in 392.<sup>27</sup> Cecconi says: ‘I believe that the relationship between Flavianus and Theodosius got broken for very concrete reasons; the new lines of public [religious] policy in Constantinople, legislative steering and the attempt to remove manoeuvrability from Flavianus and his entourage in the West.’<sup>28</sup> So Flavianus threw in his lot with the administration of Eugenius who was proclaimed Emperor by Arbogastes in Lyons on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 393 after the death of Valentinian II. The two embassies sent by Eugenius to Theodosius, one of them composed of clerics, met with no success. This is evidence that the conflict was not primarily Christian versus pagan but was a personal bid for imperial power by Arbogast, with Eugenius as his front man, although for Flavianus the reasons for joining the Eugenius camp may have been primarily religious. By April 394 Eugenius accepted the inevitable coming conflict with Theodosius, moved to Italy and took up residence in Rome.

### **8.2.1 Flavianus as consul**

Flavianus senior was duly honoured with the consulship of the West for 394 and his son, the husband of Symmachus’ daughter became urban prefect of Rome for 393-4.<sup>29</sup> Symmachus congratulated his friend on his high honour<sup>30</sup> - and several of their acquaintance made the journey to Milan for Flavianus’ inauguration as consul and the attendant festivities which, as

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<sup>27</sup> Cecconi, 2013: 156.

<sup>28</sup> Cecconi, 2013: 156.

<sup>29</sup> Matthews, 1975: 241-2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ep.* 2.83 and 2.84

I discussed earlier in this chapter, still had much traditional rite associated with them. One of these was Alypius, recommended by Symmachus in *Ep.*2.83, who was an ardent Christian. So the fact that Flavianus was an ardent pagan obviously did not deter his contemporaries of the dominant religion attending his inauguration, nor the fact that Eugenius was seen as a pretender by the Eastern court. Symmachus did not go to Milan and steered clear of Eugenius generally. However he did send the western Emperor a diptych, *auro circumdatum*, as a response to Eugenius' liberality on the occasion of Memmius' quaestorian celebrations planned long in advance, which also took place in 393.<sup>31</sup> The letter in which we find the information is to Flavianus, not Eugenius, although Symmachus does call the pretender, *domino et principi nostro*.<sup>32</sup> This gift was a gesture as Symmachus states which he considered to be of an equivalent value to that of Eugenius' liberality towards Memmius; Symmachus did not want to be beholden to the Emperor as the letter reveals.

The *Carmen Contra Paganos* was for a long time thought to refer to Flavianus senior and his sojourn in Rome as consul where he returned in the spring of 394. This theory has been contradicted effectively by Cameron and the poem is now thought to refer instead to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus.<sup>33</sup> It is this poem that gives us the descriptions of the florid rites of Cybele and Attis which Flavianus is supposed to have revived and which I have discussed in Chapter 5. The consul was said to have been present when the sacred pine-trunk was hauled into the city on 21<sup>st</sup> March and when the statue of Cybele was escorted into the city on a wagon drawn by lions. As I have also stated in Chapter 5, the ritual procession to the temple of Cybele on the Palatine would have taken in the *Basilica Hilariana* on the Caelian; as consul, Flavianus would have been present, and we can situate Flavianus therefore in the little *aedes* on the Caelian at that date.

Even if the poem is not about Flavianus the elder, it is possible, in view of the earlier letter from Symmachus to Flavianus concerning the imminent festival of the Mother of the Gods and whether the latter was coming back to Rome for this festival, that some kind of modified ceremony in honour of this deity was celebrated by the consul in the spring of 394.<sup>34</sup> For Eugenius, while Christian, wanted to placate Flavianus and the other powerful pagans of the

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<sup>31</sup> *Ep.* 2.81

<sup>32</sup> *Ep.*2.81

<sup>33</sup> Cameron, 2011: 273 ff.

<sup>34</sup> *Ep.*2.34.

senate and gave some private monies to them even though no state funding for the temples was restored.<sup>35</sup> It is possible that some of this money might have been used for this festival to Cybele and Attis. Flavianus would also have attended shows in the Colosseum which would have had pagan ritual. There is evidence for his presence on occasions in an extant inscription to Virius Nicomachus Flavianus discovered by the archaeologist Silvia Orlandi. She stated in a lecture that Flavianus would have had a portable seat near the front of one side of the auditorium with his name carved in the parapet in front in a variety of types of marble.<sup>36</sup> The inscription of Flavianus' name has survived on the podium slabs of the Colosseum, in the *loca* that had been reserved for him though the letters are very thin and irregular.<sup>37</sup> This privilege was accorded to only a very few. Originally there would have been two of these inscriptions, one for each side of the Colosseum. This privilege may have also been extended to Symmachus during his time as consul although there is nothing in the correspondence to corroborate this, nor has verification by a surviving inscription been found.

### 8.2.2 The Battle of Frigidus and the death of Flavianus

Nevertheless Flavianus' time as consul was cut short. By the late summer the confrontation with Theodosius that had been looming since the death of Valentinian II at Vienne in 392, had become imminent and Flavianus the Elder left Rome with Eugenius and Arbogastes for the coming battle which took place at Aquileia on 25<sup>th</sup> September 394. It was perhaps the pre-eminence of Flavianus and his status as a prominent pagan which made scholars previously see the battle as primarily a Christian-pagan conflict.<sup>38</sup> Cameron, however, as well as correctly dating the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius and finding the right recipient for the *Carmen Contra Paganos*, has also finally established that the battle of Frigidus can be seen primarily as Theodosius simply defeating another yet pretender in the western half of the Empire.<sup>39</sup>

Accounts of the battle vary and, apart from Zosimus and Claudian, were written from the Christian point of view. The first surviving mention of the victory was by Ambrose in his *De*

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<sup>35</sup> Matthews, 1975: 240-41.

<sup>36</sup> Orlandi, 'Re-editing *CIL* VI. Inscriptiones in Amphitheatro Flavio repertae: new methods and results'. British Epigraphy Society Autumn Colloquium and AGM 2011, London. (19<sup>th</sup> November) 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Orlandi, 2013: 81.

<sup>38</sup> Matthews, 1975, 237-8

<sup>39</sup> Cameron, 2011: 94.

*Obitu* on the death of Theodosius in 395.<sup>40</sup> Claudian is next writing in 396 when Theodosius' victory is described using much pagan imagery.<sup>41</sup> After this follows the account of Rufinus, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a continuation of that of Eusebius, a greatly imagined account, written sometime in the early 400s. Rufinus seems to have been the model for most of the accounts, produced long after the battle itself. He was a cleric and was writing an account of a Christian victory for a Christian emperor and his reporting has obviously influenced later historians.<sup>42</sup> Prudentius' *Contra Symmachum* is also contemporaneous, the first part having been written about 395 and the second not long after Symmachus' death in 402.<sup>43</sup> Augustine covers the battle in his *De Civitate Dei* written after 410<sup>44</sup> as does Paulinus the Deacon in his *Vita Ambrosii*, a biography of Ambrose commissioned by Augustine which was written before 411.<sup>45</sup> Sozomen, writing between 440-443 deals with it in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*<sup>46</sup>; Socrates likewise, writing his *Historia Ecclesiastica* between 439-443<sup>47</sup> and Bishop Theodoret in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* which ends in 429 but was written in 449-50.<sup>48</sup> These are all Christian authors, writing from a strong Christian perspective and emulating Rufinus. Zosimus is much later than any of these as he wrote his *Historia Nova* between 498 and 518.<sup>49</sup> However, he is a pagan and writes an account of the battle which avoids Christian polemic.

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<sup>40</sup> Amb. *De Ob.* 7 and 10.

<sup>41</sup> Panegyric on the Third Consulship of Honorius (396), lines 88-101; it is however mentioned in several other of Claudian's works.

<sup>42</sup> Ruf. *Hist. Eccl.* Bk. 11.33 and 34.

<sup>43</sup> Prud. *Cont. Symm.* Bks. 1 and 2.

<sup>44</sup> Aug. *De Civ. Dei.* 5.26

<sup>45</sup> Paul. *Vit. Ambr.* 31. 1-3.

<sup>46</sup> Soz. *Hist. Eccl.* Ch. 24

<sup>47</sup> Soc. *Hist. Eccl.* Bk. 5, Ch. 25.

<sup>48</sup> Theod. *Hist. Eccl.* 4.24

<sup>49</sup> Zos. *Hist. Nov.* Bks. 53-58.





Fig.43: Map showing site of the battle of the Frigidus

The battle itself was fought over two days in the vicinity of Aquileia and Figure 43 shows its location. Theodosius, according to Rufinus, was pre-ordained to win the battle.<sup>50</sup> Eugenius was found after the battle, dragged unceremoniously into the presence of Theodosius, who had him beheaded.<sup>51</sup> Arbogastes wandered around aimlessly for a couple of days and then committed suicide. Flavianus, whom we can also situate on or near the battlefield, also took his own life, although unfortunately none of the authorities give any details of this. Several of the writers do not even mention the presence of Flavianus at the battle. In Rufinus we are informed that:

*but the pagans who are always reviving their errors with new ones, renewed the sacrifices and bloodied Rome with horrid victims, examined sheep guts, and from the divination of entrails proclaimed that victory for Eugenius was assured.*<sup>52</sup>

Flavianus the great pagan indulges in horrid rites and is believed; but the favour of God prevails with miraculous wind, and the cabal of Eugenius is defeated. Rufinus here appears to be making up what he expects a pagan would do in the circumstances rather than relying on factual evidence. Socrates does not mention Flavianus at all, and though his is an account of a Christian victory with Rufinus' miraculous wind giving Theodosius victory, it has less purple

<sup>50</sup> Ruf. *Hist.Eccl.* 11.33, P Amidon (trans).

<sup>51</sup> Ruf. *Hist.Eccl.* 11.33, P Amidon (trans).

<sup>52</sup> Ruf. *Hist.Eccl.* 11.33, P Amidon (trans).

prose than Rufinus. Claudian, interestingly enough as a pagan, writing poetry replete with pagan images, has Theodosius, whose family are his patrons, winning because God wills it, but again there is no reference to Flavianus; neither does Zosimus mention him. Sozomen's account of the battle in Chapter 24 of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* is very detailed but also very Christian with a 'sacred wind' tossing away the evidence of paganism. In Chapter 22 he mentions Flavianus, here praetorian prefect, as persuading Eugenius to take up arms. He is valued here as being an adept politician and able to tell the future, but there is no mention of him on the battlefield. His reputation as having connections with divining the future was detailed in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, dated to 430 in which Flavianus the elder is one of the principal characters as I have discussed in Chapter 5. The later authorities writing on Frigidus would have known of this work. While modern scholars now rightly do not think that this conflict was a religious one, it was very much in the interests of fourth and fifth century Christian historians to depict it as such.

Flavianus' suicide has not been discussed to any great extent by other scholars. He presumably killed himself with a sword or a dagger, striking himself in the chest or the stomach.<sup>53</sup> Christianity had put an end to the tradition of honourable suicide but Flavianus was not a Christian. It is probable that Flavianus killed himself in order to avoid the confiscation of his property rather than from shame. He knew that he could trust Symmachus, his great friend and kinsman to look after his family's affairs. There is no surviving evidence that Symmachus would have openly supported Eugenius if he had won Frigidus but it must remain a possibility. Flavianus was certainly the most prominent pagan to support Eugenius but there may have been others that we do not know about. There were certainly pagan troops with Theodosius as Rufinus and Zosimus mentions barbarian auxiliaries, some of which would have been pagan.<sup>54</sup> The presence of these pagan troops on the side of Theodosius is further evidence that Frigidus was not pagan-Christian confrontation but the extirpation of an Imperial rival by Theodosius.

Flavianus' trust in Symmachus was not misplaced as the latter managed to save the Flavianus estates; and by 399 Flavianus the younger resumed what was to be a glittering career although he had to become Christian. Theodosius was certainly merciful as Flavianus the

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<sup>53</sup> Matthews, 1975: 246.

<sup>54</sup> Ruf. *Hist. Eccles.* 11.33.

younger had also served Eugenius. Perhaps the elder Flavianus could not cope with failure, even though there must have been some chance that Theodosius might show mercy towards him. However he was also following in the great Roman tradition of aristocratic suicides when a cause was lost – the most celebrated example here was that of Cato the Younger, who committed suicide at Utica after the death of Pompey because he would not ask for mercy from Caesar, ‘who had acquired the power to save through his position as tyrant which he[Cato] did not recognise’.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps Flavianus felt about Theodosius as Cato did about Caesar although again there is no evidence of this.

### 8.2.3 After Frigidus

Symmachus must have been devastated by Flavianus’ death and there is an extant letter to Protadius that Callu dates to (late) 394, and which reflects this grief. He says at the start of the letter:<sup>56</sup>

*Sum quidem nimis aeger animi et prae tanto luctu obeundis impar officiis*

*I am yet too much sick in my soul and because of such a great grief unequal to attending to my duties*

However soon he resumed his normal correspondence and in time managed both to save his friend’s estates and his son-in-law’s career. What however of the wider picture regarding paganism? We know that the comprehensive and almost savage anti-pagan legislation of Theodosius dating to 391-2 was already law – and this prohibited pagans to enter temples, (See Appendix 4). One result of Frigidus was the enforcing of this legislation, which had probably been largely in abeyance during the short regime of Eugenius, and the closing of the temples permanently in the West. According to Zosimus, Theodosius visited Rome after his victory and addressed the senate, ordering the senators to ‘cast off their previous [pagan] error as he called it and choose the Christian faith which promises deliverance from all sin and impiety’.<sup>57</sup> This is fiction – Theodosius did not come to Rome in the wake of Frigidus but retired to Milan where he died a few months later. It is also fiction Zosimus implying that all Eugenius’ supporters were pagan. However, the closing of the temples would obviously have affected Symmachus’ priesthood of Vesta and presumably the temple in the Forum

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<sup>55</sup> Plut. *Cato Minor*, 66; Griffin, 1986:194.

<sup>56</sup> *Ep.*4.17.

<sup>57</sup> *Zos. Hist. Nov.*4.59

Romanum would have been shut immediately as it was so prominent; although it is possible that the one at Bovillae in Latium which I discussed in Chapter 5 might have survived a little longer. There is evidence for some of the temples staying open after 394 such as the *Basilica Hilariana* on the Caelian, detailed in Chapter 4.

### 8.3 Celebration of a Marriage

In 401 Symmachus' only son Memmius was married to a granddaughter of Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, the daughter of Flavianus' second son Venustus thus doubly linking the Symmachi and Nicomachi families. This ceremony - presumably celebrated with traditional pagan rites - was another way in which ancient polytheistic ritual could still be preserved. The stemma of the Flaviani family shown in Figure 44 indicates the linked relationships of the families, because, as already stated, Nicomachus Flavianus junior was married to Memmius' sister.

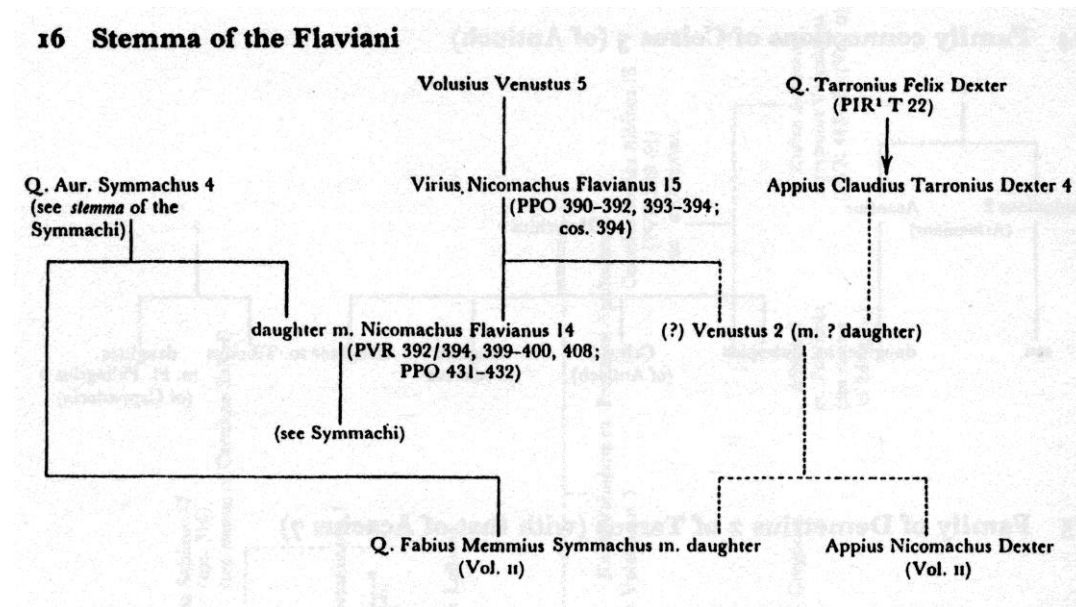


Fig.44: The linked family relationships of the Symmachi and the Flaviani.

### 8.3.1 Late Antique Marriage

By the late fourth century the normal form of marriage for those of aristocratic rank was ‘essentially a reproductive contract between two kin groups, the contract by which the son of one family could borrow the reproductive power of another man’s daughter in order to continue his father’s line’.<sup>58</sup> For legal purposes the wife did not join the family of the husband but remained within her birth family. She remained under the *potestas* of her father until his death when she became *sui iuris* and could enter into a further marriage in her own right.<sup>59</sup> Divorce in traditional Roman society was comparatively easy but became progressively more difficult from the time of Constantine when new Christian attitudes to marriage gradually permeated traditional Roman law.

The union of Memmius and Galla was however a traditional Roman aristocratic marriage made between two families of equal rank and close friendship for their mutual advantage and presumably celebrated in the ancient pagan style. One thing that is unusual about this marriage is the relative youth of the bridegroom, who would have been probably at the most only nineteen at the time of the wedding. Memmius’s birth has been tentatively placed somewhere between 382-4 by Cecconi.<sup>60</sup> The normal age for a Roman male to marry was between twenty five and thirty though male members of the imperial family did tend to marry earlier. The bride on the other hand was presumably the usual age of fifteen or sixteen at the time of her wedding although she too may have been younger than usual. One reason for this early union might have been Symmachus’ desire to see his son married and hopefully the birth of a grandson achieved before his death, in view, possibly, of his deteriorating health. He did not survive the marriage by long, dying in the spring of the following year, 402.

Symmachus’ political connections at the highest level granted approval to the joining of the two families as a letter to Stilicho shows which offered the *Magister Militum* of the Western Empire a *sportula* or token of the marriage; this approval was however not necessary so Symmachus in his language here is piling on the flattery.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Cooper, 2008:148.

<sup>59</sup> OCD, 1999: 928.

<sup>60</sup> Cecconi, 2002: 214-6 and 313-15; Sogno, 2010: 72 n 10.

<sup>61</sup> *Ep.*4.14.

*Cum filios nostros iugali foedere sociare uellemus, primam super hoc magnificentiam tuam meditatio nostra consuluit, ut coepti felicitis auspiciam a parente publico sumeretur. Effectum nuptialibus uotis deus praestitit. Nunc honor sportulae suscipiendae culmini tuo et more et amore soluendus est. Quaesumus recipiendo obsequio manum atque animum benignus admoueas.*

*When we wished to unite our children in a marital contract, our first thought was to consult your Magnificence about this so that the auspices of a happy beginning, by the Father of the State might be obtained. The god has granted execution to these marriage vows. Now I must show respect to your Highness by the offering of a basket both by custom and by love. We entreat that by the receiving of this mark of respect, you may have the kindness to open your hand and spirit.*

Other friends were not forgotten either and were sent *sportulae* in the shape of a gift of a gold *solidus* or two:<sup>62</sup>

*Pro filiis nostris deo iuuante coniunctis in duobus solidis ad te misimus sportulam nuptialem quam, cum prompta dignatione susceperis, documentum dabis omnia amicorum festa esse communia.*

*The god being willing that our children be joined in matrimony, we have sent to you this wedding gift of two solidi which when you receive with prompt courtesy, you will give proof that among friends all celebrations are in common.*

It is interesting to contrast the language used for the joining of bride and groom in a marital contract in these two letters. The phraseology of the second epistle with *filiis nostris coniunctis* is brief and more intimate. In the Stilicho letter however, *filios nostros iugali foedere sociare* is much more formal and legalistic, fitting language for an aristocratic marriage contract. Also in both these letters Symmachus evokes a god who has helped to execute the union of the two young people. While 9.106 was sent to an anonymous recipient whose religious affiliations we are not made aware of, Stilicho was an ardent Christian. By using vague religious terms Symmachus could maintain his own private beliefs without offending those who believed differently.

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<sup>62</sup> Ep. 9.106

### 8.3.2 The Wedding

The traditional Roman wedding was under the auspices of many different gods and goddesses who protected the bride and groom and directed the ceremony.<sup>1</sup> Juno, mentioned in the following letter, the queen of heaven and wife of Jupiter was considered in traditional Roman cult to have a great influence over weddings. Other gods and goddesses traditionally associated with weddings were Concordia, Venus, Hymen to whom a song was sung when the bride was brought in to either the groom's house or bedchamber, Vesta and Ceres. There is unfortunately no letter surviving from Symmachus telling us about the ceremony itself but there is one to his friend Attalus dated to 397 which states:<sup>2</sup>

*Sino ut amici tui nuptiale festum curae uacuis exerceas et urbem Tiburtem quae nuper tibi faces, praetulit communem Iunoni et Herculi facias*

*I allow that, free of care, you may celebrate the marriage festivities of your friend, making the city of Tibur which formerly carried the torches for you, common to Juno and Hercules*

Unfortunately we do not have any reliable descriptions of late fourth-century weddings so we have to rely on literary evidence.

It could have been assumed that the Christian wedding ceremony by the beginning of the fifth century would have been markedly different from that of pagans, probably being celebrated in church. However it would appear that much of the traditional pagan ceremonial around weddings still remained common for both Christians and pagans at this date and for some time after. Christian marriage rituals developed late,<sup>3</sup> although clerical presence and blessings gradually became more common.<sup>4</sup> In general Christians followed the traditional nuptial rights except sacrifice to pagan gods. The traditional taking of auspices at the bride's house before the procession to the house of her bridegroom had probably also largely disappeared by the end of the fourth century. One could perhaps argue therefore that the blessing by a priest or bishop took the place of this in the Christian ceremony. There was no standard or required church wedding ceremony in either the Latin West or Greek East until well into the Middle Ages<sup>5</sup> although the Verona Sacramentary, reflecting sixth-century

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<sup>1</sup> Hersch, 2010: 231-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* 7.19.

<sup>3</sup> Harper, 2012: 684.

<sup>4</sup> Harper, 2012: 684..

<sup>5</sup> Grubb, 1994: 389.

practices, finally presents a fully-fledged Christian liturgy of marriage, including a nuptial mass.<sup>6</sup> Significantly Augustine never mentions a Christian ritual of marriage.<sup>7</sup> There are many denunciations by church leaders of their flocks for their acceptance of traditional pagan wedding rites including inebriated carousing and serenading of newlyweds with drunken songs.<sup>8</sup> The feast held on the day after the wedding by the bridegroom for his friends, mentioned in the Attalus letter, would have had plenty of those.

Harper states that some form of the ancient rite of *deductio in domum* remained the dominant marriage ceremony.<sup>9</sup> In this the bride, dressed in white and wearing a yellow veil called a *flammeum*, was led by her attendants, including the *pronuba* or married woman who later led her into the bedchamber, from her own home to that of the bridegroom. It was this procession from the bride's home to the groom's which symbolised the transfer of the girl to her new husband's family and was a sign that the marriage had taken place.<sup>10</sup> The bride would also be crowned with flowers, *corona*, and wore a belt, *cingulum*, which showed the links between the couple.<sup>11</sup> During the procession torches would be carried as mentioned by Symmachus his letter to Attalus.

The *flammeum* is interestingly referred to quite a lot by Jerome, for example in a letter in connection with the veiling of a holy virgin, a linking of this most Christian of ceremonies with ancient pagan marriage rites by the use of the normal word for a bridal veil:<sup>12</sup>

*I am aware that the bishop has with words of prayer covered her holy head with the virgin's bridal veil ...Thus she is a professed virgin*

The bride's hair may have been parted with a spear called the *hasta caelibaris* into six portions or plaits, *crines*, according to ancient tradition, which was similar to and possibly associated with, the hairstyle of the Vestal Virgins. This Venus does in Claudian's *epithalamium* of 398 to Honorius and Maria before putting on the bride's veil which may

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<sup>6</sup> Harper, 2012: 684.

<sup>7</sup> Harper, 2012: 684.

<sup>8</sup> Grubb, 1994: 389.

<sup>9</sup> Harper, 2012: 684.

<sup>10</sup> Hersch, 2010: 56.

<sup>11</sup> Hersch, 2010, 113-4

<sup>12</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 130.2: Alberici and Harlow: 2007, 201.



indicate that this kind of hairdo and veil, linked to the Vestals, were still being used by brides at the end of the fourth century, even Christian ones:<sup>13</sup>

*ipsa caput distinguit acu, substringit amictus; flammea uirgineis accommodat ipsa capillis*

*She parted her hair with the spear's point, girded up her dress, and with her own hands set the veil over the maiden's hair.*

The *epithalamia*, or marriage songs, of this period and later, continuing a tradition dating back as far as the first century poet Statius,<sup>14</sup> and Catullus (Poem 64), embedded in the *epyllion* genre, indicate that at least in verse some of the old traditions survived. Specimens of the *Fescennines*, or traditional songs sung at weddings can be found for example in Claudian's *epithalamia* to Honorius and Maria and in Ausonius' *Cento Nuptialis*.<sup>15</sup> The pagan Claudian certainly uses much of the traditional imagery of the Greek-Roman pantheon in describing the Christian marriage of Honorius with Maria; for example Venus rides to Italy on the back of Triton followed by a crowd of Nereids to prepare Maria.<sup>16</sup> Cameron however argues that this is mere literary convention which even the Christian court of Honorius allowed and that this convention is true too of the Christian Sidonius in his *epithalamium* on the marriage of Ruricus and Hiberia over fifty years later and in the other *epithalamia* that he composed:<sup>17</sup>

*hic redolet patulo Fortunae Copia cornu, hic spargit calathis, sed flores Flora perennes  
hic Cererem Siculam Pharius comitatur Osiris*

*here Plenty casts fragrance from Fortune's open horn; here Flora scatters flowers from  
baskets, flowers ever blooming; here Egyptian Osiris accompanies Sicilian Ceres*

Sidonius also uses mythological stories of love and marriage in his *epithalamium* for Araneola and Polemius where Araneola weaves them into a consular *trabea* for her father Magnus. The style here is pure fantasy but recognisably that of the 354 calendar (see Chapter 8, page 246), subjected to poetic amplification.<sup>18</sup> The gods and mythic imagery survived in poetry long after Christianity became the norm and the old gods had descended into the twilight. But the descriptions of bridal rites in his wedding poetry by Claudian does indicate

<sup>13</sup> Claud. *Epithal. Hon. et Maria*. 284-5. M Platnauer (trans).

<sup>14</sup> Statius, *Silvae*, Bk 2: *Epithal. to Lucius Arruntius Stella and Violentilla*.

<sup>15</sup> M Öhrman by email, 27/2/2015

<sup>16</sup> Claud. *Epithal. Hon. et Maria*. ll 128 ff: M Platnauer (trans); Cameron, 1970: 194.

<sup>17</sup> Sid. *XI Epithalamium*, 114-7: W Anderson (trans).

<sup>18</sup> Sid. *XV Epithal.* 158-84; Roberts, 1989: 114.

that in the late fourth century there was still much in common between the Christian and the pagan wedding in terms of ritual, even if the ancient and polytheistic meaning behind these rituals was no longer taken seriously.

It is only with Paulinus of Nola that we begin to see what eventually was to become the Christian norm, a marriage inside a church at the altar, as in *Carmen* 25, 119-232. In this poem, the most unusual *epithalamium* of the period, Paulinus describes a Christian union where it is the Christian virtues that are lauded and Christian and pagan marriage is contrasted. This marriage song was written to celebrate the union of Julian of Eclanum and Titia, sometime between 400 and 406.<sup>19</sup> Julian later became Bishop of Eclanum. It is probable that in those parts of the poem which mention undesirable pagan luxury, Paulinus reveals his familiarity with the work of Statius whom he quotes elsewhere as in *Carmina* 6.141-2 which is influenced by Statius *Thebaid* 12.427. In his condemnation of the rich and festive elements of the marriage feast Paulinus demonstrates why he did not write a conventional epithalamium like Claudian; because here he shuns paganism which was both the literary and actual religion of Statius.<sup>20</sup> Venus here does not ride to Italy on the back of Triton, followed by a crown of Nereids to prepare the bride – she, with Juno and Cupid, ‘those symbols of lust, must keep their distance’.<sup>21</sup> The poet rejects ornaments as superfluous for a Christian woman<sup>22</sup> and warns her not to pile her hair too high to increase the size of her head.<sup>23</sup> This seems to reflect aristocratic women’s hairdos which ‘could be parted in the middle and taken back into a plait or several braids ... The plait may be taken back up to the crown or wound round in a circlet. This towering hair (*turriti crines*) is part of the standard account of the vain woman’<sup>24</sup> – and did not even have ancient custom behind it as did the *sex crines* of the traditional wedding hairdo. In lines 3-4 of *Carmen* 25 Paulinus pleads that Christ yokes the couple like a pair of doves and makes them obey the reins.<sup>25</sup> This is a very powerful poem but the impression is that although the sentiments were well meant, the reality of marriage at the end of the fourth century and long after meant that the customary ancient pagan rites and celebrations were followed rather than a ceremony where Christian values and virtues prevailed.

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<sup>19</sup> Walsh: 399, Poem 25, n.1.

<sup>20</sup> Pavlovskis, 1965: 165.

<sup>21</sup> Paul. 25. 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> Paul. 25.45, 51-2; Pavlovskis, 1965: 165.

<sup>23</sup> Paul. 25.79-80; Pavlovskis, 1965: 165.

<sup>24</sup> Clark, 1993: 108.

<sup>25</sup> A reference to Matthew, 11.30; Walsh, 1975: 400, Poem 25, n.2.

This section attempted to show that a pagan wedding in 401, such as that of Memmius and Galla, still preserved many of the old marriage rites and was one area where paganism could still be practised - and the surviving evidence would seem to support this attempt. However the reality is rather more interesting because it would appear that wedding ritual for **both** pagan and Christian at the end of the fourth century was still very similar and traditional, even if rituals like blessings by a priest or bishop were gradually becoming more common in Christian weddings.<sup>26</sup> Social customs such as those practised at weddings are slow to change, as our own time shows with brides clad in white, even if the reasons behind those customs are long forgotten. So one can conclude that ancient pagan traditions were still alive and flourishing in the wedding ceremonies practised by both pagans and Christians alike at the end of the fourth century; and presumably with religious significance still attached by pagans.

#### 8.4. In Memoriam, O Symmache

This section will look at Symmachus' death, funeral, burial, beliefs about the afterlife and the ways in which he was remembered, establishing how paganism was still apparent and manifested in the rituals connected with the end of his life.

##### 8.4.1 Death

In the winter of 401/402 Alaric and the Goths invaded Venetia and Liguria, having crossed the Alps the previous late summer and autumn, thereby creating an extremely dangerous political situation.<sup>27</sup> He was confronted by the half Vandal Stilicho, the supreme *magister militum*. Symmachus was chosen to lead a senatorial embassy to the Milanese court because Rome was suffering a lack of supplies because of the political crisis<sup>28</sup> – thus proving that his prestige remained high, as he writes in a letter to Stilicho:<sup>29</sup>

*Cum sublimi excellentia tua legationem mihi amplissimus ordo mandavit, ad quam suscipiendam me et necessitas impulit patriae et tui culminis procauit auxilium.*

*In concert with your Sublime Excellence, the noble senate has conferred [the leadership of] an embassy on me to which both the need of country has compelled me and the help of your Highness has invited me.*

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<sup>26</sup> Harper, 2012: 684.

<sup>27</sup> Sogno, 2008: 85.

<sup>28</sup> Callu, Tome 2, 2003: 236, 92, n 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ep.* 4.9

Notwithstanding his pagan sympathies, his diplomatic skills were called on to help in this affair. It was at this moment, also that repairs were made to the walls of Rome by the Urban Prefect, Flavius Macrobius Longinianus, a court supporter sent for the purpose.<sup>30</sup>

The trip was extremely arduous, putting pressure on Symmachus' health because the embassy was delayed by contradictory reports (*famae varietas*) and had to find a roundabout way of reaching Milan which they eventually did via Pavia on 24th February 402.<sup>31</sup> Symmachus writes thus to Memmius:<sup>32</sup>

*quod sextum kalendas Martias Mediolanum multo anfracto circumuectus intrauerim ueneratusque dominum et principem nostrum cuius sermo diuinus itineris mei compensauit laborem, in praesentiam uiri cuncta praecelsi comitis agenda produco; quem mox deo iuuante adfore nuntiorum confirmat adsertio.*

*After having been carried round on a circuitous route, I entered Milan on the 24<sup>th</sup> February; and having paid my respects to our lord and prince whose divine speech compensated for the arduous of my journey, I promoted in the presence of this individual the whole agenda of the honourable count, [Stilicho] who, as the declaration of messengers confirms, will soon arrive with the god's help.*

Symmachus' efforts and those of the rest of the embassy to get help from the emperor for the re-provisioning of Rome were successful in spite of the fact that Stilicho remained absent, confronting the forces of Alaric.<sup>33</sup>

Symmachus writes of this success to his friend Helpidius:<sup>34</sup>

*Mediolanum sum missus a patribus ad exorandam diuini principis opem quam communis patriae sollicitudo poscebat. Celerem mihi reditum praefata dei uenia res prosperae pollicentur.*

*I have been sent to Milan by our conscript fathers to entreat our divine prince for the help that the problems of our native land were earnestly demanding. With the aforesaid pardon of the god, the (diplomatic) affairs prospering promise my speedy return.*

Here Symmachus, as I have already explored in Chapter 3 uses the phrase *praefata uenia dei*. This is typical of his use of religious terms and is deliberately ambiguous. Symmachus soon sent Helpidius another letter:<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Matthews, 1975: 273.

<sup>31</sup> Sogno: 2008, 85; *Ep.* 7.13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ep.* 7.14

<sup>33</sup> Callu, Tome 2, 2003: 236, p. 92, n.1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ep.* 5.95

*Romam redisse me nuntio. Atque utinam sanitatis quoque meae index esse potuissem, quam labefactavit peregrinationis iniuria et hiemalis asperitas. Sed otio redditus spero meliora. Ipse ut ualeas, diuina praestabunt*

*I announce my return to Rome. And would that I could have been a witness of my own good health which the injury of the journey and the harshness of the winter has impaired. But restored by rest, I hope for an improvement. Divine powers will guarantee that you yourself have good health.*

He was apparently genuinely ill at this point although he often complained about his health; but this does not prevent him wishing Helpidius that ‘divine powers’ will grant his friend the same good health he himself desires. This is a fairly vague phrase which would not give offence to a Christian but is completely acceptable to Symmachus himself as a literary demonstration of pagan belief, especially when writing to an old friend who had been pagan.

Symmachus’ desire for a return to normal health, which had been affected both by the rigours of the journey to Milan and the winter, was not to be granted. He wrote to Stilicho announcing his return to Rome but he was obviously still not well. He was presumably on sufficient terms of intimacy with Stilicho to think that the latter would want to know about his health concerns:<sup>36</sup>

*Ad patriam redisse me nuntio necdum conpotem sanitatis. Sed si tuus aduentus adriserit, spero in gratiam mecum bonam ualetudinem mox esse redituram.*

*I announce to you that I have returned home but am not yet fully restored to health. But if your coming smiles upon me, I hope that good health and I will soon find ourselves again on good terms.*

This is the last datable letter of Symmachus. Stilicho won a victory over Alaric at Pollentia in Northern Italy on 6<sup>th</sup> April 402 but there is no response from Symmachus to this event congratulating the general – inconceivable if he were still alive at that point if one assumes such a letter would have survived. So Symmachus died somewhere in the period after reaching Rome from Milan – at the latest very soon after the battle. Using a calculation done by means of the *Omnes Viae* Digital Program of Roman Roads, the return journey from Milan to Rome would have taken about twenty five days, possibly even more if the weather was still bad or Alaric still threatening Milan;<sup>37</sup> Symmachus presumably would have been transported in some kind of carriage on the journey home. So assuming he spent a maximum

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<sup>35</sup> *Ep.*5.96

<sup>36</sup> *Ep.*4.13

<sup>37</sup> URL ://omnesviae.org ; accessed 6/1/15

of two weeks in Milan, probably less, he would not have reached Rome much before the end of March. This means he died very soon after his return to the capital, his demise probably occurring in the Caelian house. As far as I am aware, his death has not previously been dated this precisely.

#### 8.4.2 Funeral and Burial

Having outlined the sequence of events leading up to Symmachus' death we next need to consider where his burial might have taken place. Most burials in Rome at this period were in large-scale Christian catacombs though there is some evidence of private underground burial including pagans in the fourth century, for example, the Via Latina burials.<sup>38</sup> There is no evidence that this was still an option in the fifth century, for which there is only Christian evidence. The most likely place, however, for the last resting place of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus is a mausoleum on one of the family estates. Which estate is this likely to have been? There is no reference in the letters to a family grave complex and although we know Symmachus' father Avianus died in 377, we do not know where he was buried. Pagan or Christian, by the late fourth century inhumation was universal. During the second century inhumation began to take the place of cremation in Roman society and the Roman emperors followed the new fashion. The Emperor Antoninus Pius was the first emperor to have been buried.<sup>39</sup> The use of sarcophagi is a strong indication of burial and these were documented in the case of burials of emperors such as Balbinus, Diocletian and Julian who was embalmed. Ambrose made it very clear that Maximian *inhumatus est*.<sup>40</sup> Christians rejected cremation because of their religious beliefs and Christian emperors were therefore inhumed.

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<sup>38</sup> Elsner, 1998: 219.

<sup>39</sup> Johnson, 2014: 15.

<sup>40</sup> Ambr. *Ep.*53; Johnson, 2014: 15.

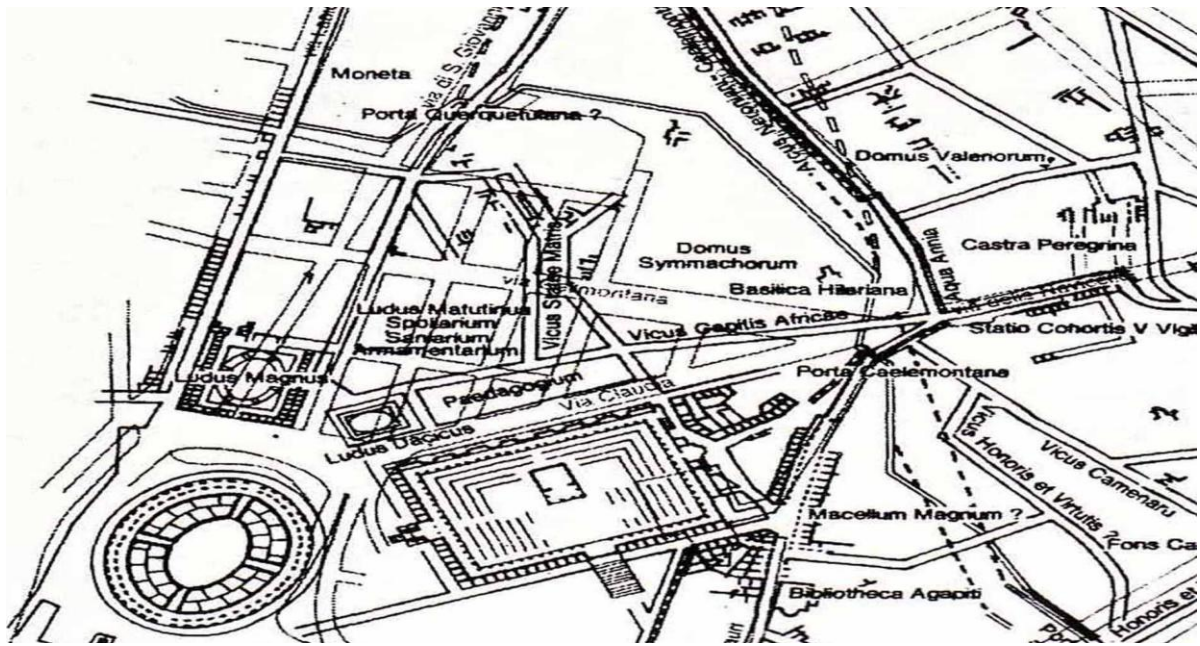


Fig.45: The *domus Symmachorum* and its immediate environs

Just as there is no mention of his father's passing and the ceremony involved with this, Symmachus says nothing about his own intentions regarding his funeral and burial. There is also no mention anywhere of his will. However, his last rites would have been celebrated in a traditional polytheistic fashion. The *domus* on the Caelian Hill was certainly a grand one but it was nevertheless in a built up area with other houses in front of it, and flats and a commercial area off to the side.<sup>41</sup> I conclude from this topography that it is unlikely that he would have been buried in the grounds of this property. Professor Pavolini concurred with this opinion at our meeting in September 2013. Pagan practice precluded burial within the *pomerium* except in exceptional cases as this was believed to cause pollution. It is unlikely however that his relatives would have wanted to carry the body a great distance pre-burial. The most likely location therefore for Symmachus' tomb may well have been one of his properties along the Appian way which was of easy access from the Caelian Hill, like the property he describes in a letter to Flavianus, *cui Arabianae nomen est*.<sup>42</sup> Here there may well have been a family mausoleum.

<sup>41</sup> Carignani, 2000: 149.

<sup>42</sup> *Ep.*2.57, 2.59.

The death itself would have been signified by closing of the eyes and the calling of the name of the deceased three times, the *conclamatio – per intervalla conclamentur*.<sup>43</sup> Servius is commenting on the *Aeneid* here and is not necessarily describing the practice held in his own time; however, there is no reason to think that this custom did not still take place. Women then prepared the body for burial; however aristocratic families in Rome hired *pollinctores* or funeral assistants who did the preparatory work and organised the funeral.<sup>44</sup> After the traditional coin had been placed in its mouth the body would have been washed, anointed with sacred oils, clad in white clothing, a senator being clad in a *toga praetexta*<sup>45</sup> – and laid out on a bier in the atrium with the feet facing the front door. The aim was to make the corpse as lifelike (or at least sleep-like) as possible.<sup>46</sup> Once prepared it lay in state, until the funeral, on a *lectus funebris*<sup>47</sup>. The burning of incense, the lighting of torches and the playing of funeral music marked the space of the funeral ritual.<sup>48</sup> As this would have been a pagan funeral, one can assume that some kind of purification rites would have taken place. Both men and women walked in the funeral procession clad in black attire, *lugubria*.<sup>49</sup> Special female mourners, *praeficae*, however, would be hired to walk with the musicians singing funeral songs or *neniae*, but after the actors who carried the wax masks of the ancestors, *imagines*, who had held public office.<sup>50</sup> These rites are believed to be the elements of a standard pagan elite funeral but are based on putting together a lot of scattered sources and we do not know how standardised was the procedure or how much of it was still followed in the very early fifth century. There are no descriptions surviving of pagan funerals in the fourth century or later but one may assume that the Symmachi family would have wanted as many traditional elements as possible; and the Apotheosis panel which is discussed later in this section would support this assumption.

Except in very rare cases, the funeral was private, as opposed to public, in the Imperial period. Once the funeral procession - *pompa* - left the Caelian *domus*, it would have exited Rome by the Porta Capena and followed a slow route down the Appian Way to the estate where the body was to be interred. Once arrived at the burial location, men would have

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<sup>43</sup> Serv. *Aen.* 6.218.

<sup>44</sup> Toynbee, 1971: 45

<sup>45</sup> Noy, *Deathbeds Study*. WIP.

<sup>46</sup> Noy, *Deathbeds study*, WIP

<sup>47</sup> Toynbee, 1971: 44

<sup>48</sup> Erker, 2011: 47.

<sup>49</sup> Toynbee, 1971: 46.

<sup>50</sup> Erker, 2011: 49.



carried the bier to outside the mausoleum which is where it is assumed Symmachus was buried - and the funeral speech, presumably delivered by Memmius Symmachus would have been given.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that as in ancient rite, funeral gifts such as vases with oil, clothing, ornaments and jewellery would have been placed in the sarcophagus when Symmachus' body was placed within the mausoleum. There was a funeral feast after the ceremony which was a way of expressing affiliation with the community and solidarity among its members. This custom was also followed by Christians. This meal was one of the traditional ways in which one might purify the family although this act of purification did not become a Christian custom.<sup>52</sup> Much of the traditional pomp associated with pagan funerals, not just the custom of the funeral feast, passed into Christian usage as well. Candles were used by both pagans and Christians to illuminate night time funerals, incense continued to be used as well. When Jerome asserted that Christians did not use candles and scent in vigils in imitation of pagans, he was in fact admitting that the outward show was the same at this period.<sup>53</sup> Like in the marriage ceremony, funeral rites retained much of their old ancestral form.

What might Symmachus' mausoleum have looked like? The evidence from Imperial mausolea is that over several centuries they evolved from the tumulus type used in the tombs of Augustus and Hadrian, into the two storied domed rotunda of which an early example is the ruined tomb of Gallienus on the Appian Way.<sup>54</sup> A good mid-fourth century example of the rotunda tomb type is the Mausoleum of Constantina, daughter of Constantine and wife of the Caesar Gallus, nowadays the church of Santa Costanza in Rome.

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<sup>51</sup> Cameron, 2002: 290.

<sup>52</sup> Erker, 2011:52.

<sup>53</sup> Jer. *Ad. Vig.* 7, *Illud fiebat idolis et idcirco destestatandum est; hoc fit martyribus, et idcirco recipiendum est;* Harries, 1995: 60, n. 16, p. 66.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, 2014: 48.



Fig.46: The mausoleum of Constantina

It seems very probable that aristocratic mausolea would have followed Imperial fashions, whether the occupant was Christian or pagan. Because the surviving funerary monuments of the period are entirely Christian, it is really on the basis of Christian examples that we must speculate as to the decoration and shape of the mausoleum of Symmachus. In the area behind Old St Peter's were some spectacular mausolea of the period, especially the magnificent one of Petronius Probus, an exact contemporary of Symmachus, consul and four times urban prefect of Rome. This survived until the destruction of Old St Peter's. Made of marble it was decorated inside with many columns and inscriptions including the famous metrical inscription celebrating Probus and his wife Proba.<sup>55</sup> On the plan drawn by Tiberio Alfarano in the second half of the sixteenth century it was shown as a basilica – 12 x 18 metres – and had an apse and three naves separated by pillars. The tomb was built as an underground complex (partially or completely), back to back with the Vatican apse and right next to the *martyrium* of St Peter.<sup>56</sup> One can imagine its splendour to be replicated in the Symmachi example although Symmachus' tomb might have been less splendid being on a rural or semi-rural estate. The decoration of Symmachus' tomb would again be a place where pagan imagery could be freely used both in mosaic and in *opus sectile* which we know Symmachus used in the Caelian house<sup>57</sup> - like the superb *opus sectile* aristocrat with his chariot found in the basilica of Junius Bassus, Figure 46, page 251 of this chapter. This was the basilica of the

<sup>55</sup> *CIL* 6. 1755; Machado, 2008:510.

<sup>56</sup> Machado, 2008: 510; Liverani, 1999: 147-8.

<sup>57</sup> Carignani, 2001: 150.

*domus* of Junius Bassus on the Esquiline that later became the church of Sant'Andrea Catabarbara during the second half of the fifth century, the first church to be dedicated to St Andrew in the Roman suburban area. The church stood where the modern Pontifical Seminary is located in Rome, in Via Napoleone III.<sup>58</sup>

There are examples of mosaics from Santa Costanza. The vault of the main niche shows a pattern of dark blue stars on a white background and on the walls of the ambulatory vault are dolphins, roundels with heads and figures, a Paradise design of scattered fruits, vases, birds and plants and Cupids and Psyches.<sup>59</sup> This type of design was originally associated with Dionysus. Elsner states that the theme of vintaging children and cupids became very popular in Late Antique religions and especially in Christianity whose founder had declared, 'I am the True Vine' (John 15.1).<sup>60</sup> Though this is a Christian tomb, much of this mosaic decoration is very religion-neutral and would have been just as much at home in the tomb of Symmachus who in his final repose could have enjoyed the vibrant images shown in Figure 47.

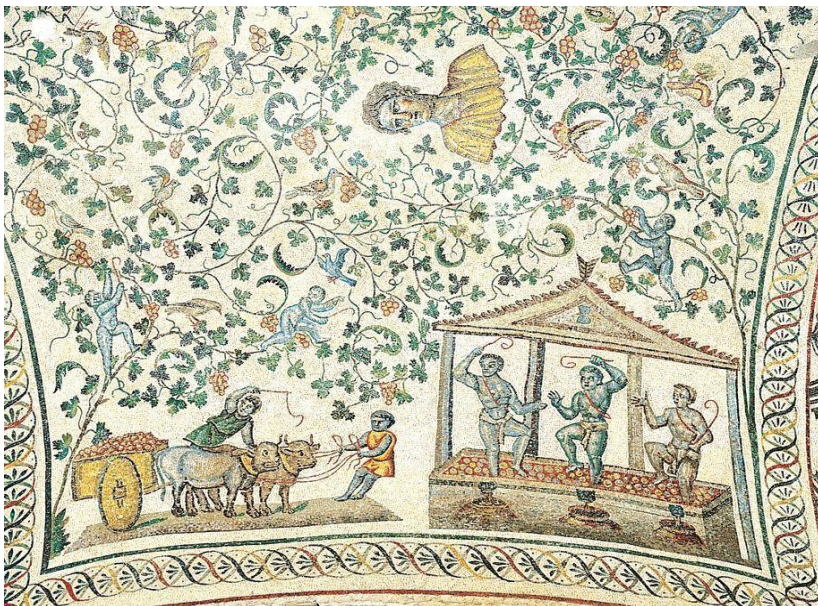


Fig.47: Images from the ambulatory vault of Santa Costanza

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<sup>58</sup> James by email 22/1/16.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, 2014: 149.

<sup>60</sup> Elsner, 1998: 164, fig. 112.

The Via Latina Catacombs in Rome, although pre-Constantinian, contain wall paintings which combine a fusion of pagan and Christian symbols, and which can be compared to those used in the Mausoleum of Constantina. Its subject matter ranges widely between scriptural, non-scriptural and pagan imagery and provides a way of understanding how pagan religious icons become appropriated and re-loaded with Christian significations.<sup>61</sup> For example in *cubiculum* E a winged Victory stands, launching herself into the oncoming wind. She is a celebration of hard-won goals. An old and powerful pagan symbol, dear to Symmachus, this Victory also resonated with Christians who saw her as victory over the flesh, the victory over death and decay with eternal life as the reward for living a Christian life.<sup>62</sup>

Some mention must also be made here of the so-called mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna. This is because it too is a comparator for the mausoleum Symmachus was buried in. When the princess acted as regent for her son, Valentinian III, she effectively ran the Western Empire from Ravenna. She became an active patron of the church in the city, funding the building of the Basilica of Santa Croce where work got underway in a limited fashion between 426-32. The basilica of Santa Croce was the expression, both in its layout and in its dedication of the propensity for the cult of the True Cross, traditionally linked to the imperial family.<sup>63</sup> A second building session at Santa Croce, 432-50, saw its expansion and completion with the addition of a *martyrium*, the Galla Placidia mausoleum, although the princess who died in 450 was not buried there but in a mausoleum attached to St Peter's in Rome.

The structure is a centrally-planned, cruciform edifice, its arms covered by barrel vaults and its crossing surmounted by a dome supported by pendentives which is one of a set of curved wall surfaces which form a transition between a dome (or its drum) and the supporting masonry.<sup>64</sup> It is a stunning visual experience as one leaves the glaring sunshine and monochrome exterior and enters into the realm of glimmering candle-lit mosaics, brilliant colours and reflected light. However though the mosaics are absolutely superb, they are very Christian with, for example, the Good Shepherd in royal clothing like Christ the King.<sup>65</sup> But

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<sup>61</sup> Hadel, 2012:1.

<sup>62</sup> Hadel, 2012: 2.

<sup>63</sup> David, 2013: 75.

<sup>64</sup> Harris, 1975: 355 NS

<sup>65</sup> David, 2013: 76.

the gold stars on a blue ground seen in the dome suspended over the crossing, a ribbed vault at the intersection of the arms, represent the heavens and are one of the first ‘nocturnal’ depictions in Western art;<sup>66</sup> and though there is a cross in the centre, the idea of the soul reposing in the stars after death was not a specifically Christian one but one very familiar to pagans. The roof of Symmachus’ mausoleum may well have been decorated with golden stars as vibrant as these which can be seen in Figure 48. He would also surely have approved of the use of polychrome mosaics to make the effect.

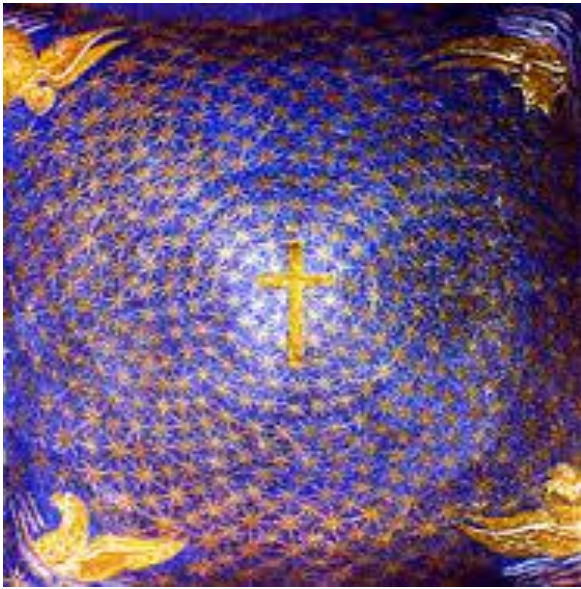


Fig. 48: The gold stars from Galla Placidia’s mausoleum

The sarcophagus in which Symmachus’ body would have been placed is unlikely to have been made of porphyry like those of the emperors but would undoubtedly have been very fine, probably made of marble and carved with the biographical or mythological themes which had become so popular during the period of the Second Sophistic under the influence of the Emperor Hadrian’s enthusiasm for all things Greek. Figure 49 shows a superb Phrygian marble sarcophagus of great monumental form and rich iconography.

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<sup>66</sup> David, 2013:90.



Fig.49: Roman Sarcophagus showing the Triumph of Dionysos and the Seasons

Purchased from the Duke of Beaufort, it is now in the Metropolitan Museum of New York. It depicts the Triumph of Dionysos, seated on a panther as the central motif surrounded by the four Seasons. Worked in Rome, it dates to c260-270, and though executed a long time before Symmachus' death, his sarcophagus would almost certainly have had similar pagan themes.<sup>67</sup> It is probable that Symmachus' sarcophagus would have been of this quality judging from the superb working of the ivory in the Symmachi-Nicomachi Diptych and the Apotheosis panel. This was a family who could afford the best.

The sarcophagi whether adorned with biographical or mythological imagery was purchased by a dead person's relatives – or the deceased making preparations in advance – to celebrate and aggrandise the dead person.<sup>68</sup> However, during the course of the fourth century the themes on the sarcophagi began to change, reflecting the Christianisation of the aristocracy. Constantina, the daughter of Constantine, died in 354 – see the discussion of this mausoleum earlier in this chapter – and was buried in a magnificent porphyry sarcophagus which in theme is largely religion neutral, displaying panels with garlands enclosing Putti and bunches

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<sup>67</sup> McCann, 1978: 94.

<sup>68</sup> Elsner, 1998: 147.

of grapes. Cupids and elements of the cult of Dionysus are now transferred into a Christian setting.



Fig. 50: The Sarcophagus of Constanza/Constantina daughter of Constantine who died in 354.

Sarcophagi could also be reused as was the one, Figure 51, depicting a lion hunt with a central hunter from the Cimitero Maggiore in Rome which dates originally to 290-300 but which was reutilised twice, the final time in 364 which can be proved by the names of the two consuls of the year who are mentioned in the inscription on the sarcophagus. This final occupant of the sepulchre was a fourteen year old boy called Valerius Sabinus described as *filio dulcissimo*.<sup>69</sup> Although all the occupants of this sarcophagus were Christian, the last one a generation after the first, the original creator of this artefact had chosen to depict a worldly scene of hunting which both Christians and pagans enjoyed and which indicated that the family who originally commissioned the artefact, though Christian, wanted their social status emphasised over perhaps their religious one. The families of the later occupants also chose to

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<sup>69</sup> Birk, 2013: 112.

‘construct their post-mortem identity through a motif that traditionally symbolised status in society and not in heaven, in contrast to the iconography of more explicitly Christian sarcophagi’.<sup>70</sup> This can be equated to the representations of consuls on the diptychs they gave to their friends as souvenirs upon taking office. On these they are depicted at the games which they gave - the main function of the consul in Late Antiquity - about to throw down the *mappa* or cloth to start the proceedings. These officials also wanted to be commemorated in their secular role, not in a Christian one.

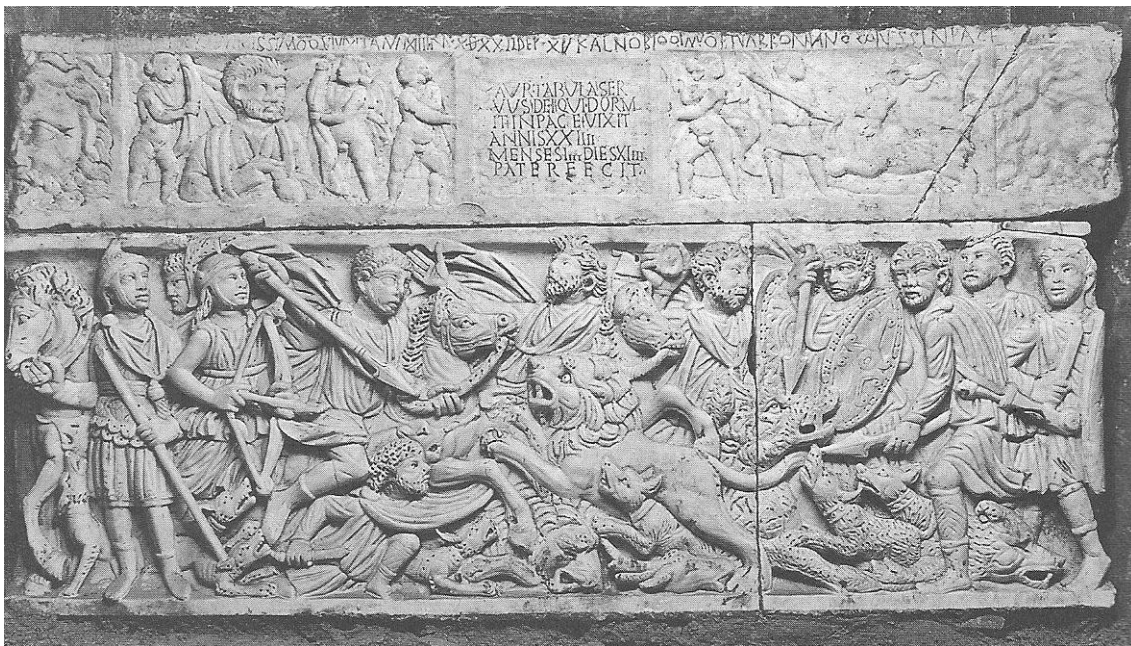


Fig.51: Lion Hunt Sarcophagus, Rome, Cimitero Maggiore, Regione delle Cattedre, Cubiculum K.

However as the fourth century advanced, particularly towards the end of the century, the sarcophagi of wealthy Christians increasingly became decorated with a new Christian iconography where the art of mythological narrative is transferred into a typological fusion of Old and New Testament images creating a new sacred mythology.<sup>71</sup> For example representations of the sleeping Endymion were transformed into representations of Jonah

<sup>70</sup> Birk, 2013: 113.

<sup>71</sup> Elsner, 1998: 147.



asleep under his pergola.<sup>72</sup> The best known example of the change of iconography must be the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Figure 52 who died in 359 as Urban Prefect of Rome.<sup>73</sup>

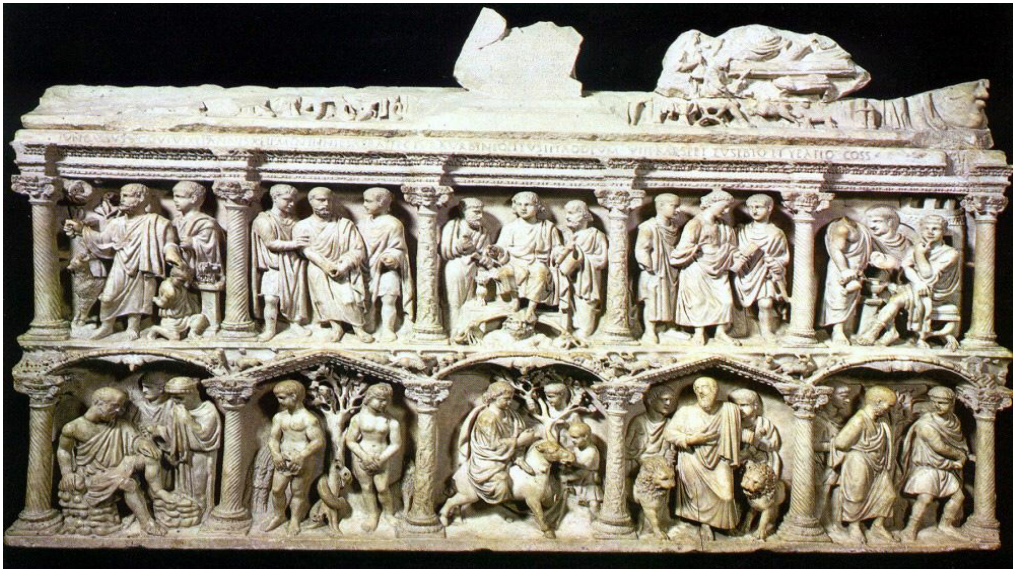


Fig.52: The sarcophagus of Junius Bassus

He was buried with great pomp in his family tomb which was in Old St Peter's in front of the altar of the crypt, a singular honour.<sup>74</sup> This is a columnar sarcophagus which shows a maturing Christian iconography with among other things, images of Christ in glory, giving the law to Peter and Paul the great Roman saints, the sacrifice of Isaac and Christ entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.<sup>75</sup> In spite of the increase of Christian themes, the style of later fourth century Christian sarcophagi is not that different from earlier pagan ones – and the demand for mythological themes must have continued to some extent, at least until the end of the century although Rutgers states that after the early fourth century CE pagan sarcophagi are few and far between.<sup>76</sup> What is certain is that these sarcophagi do not seem to have survived as they, unlike Christian ones, would not have been placed in churches.

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<sup>72</sup> Elsner, 1998: 152.

<sup>73</sup> Cameron, 2002: 288.

<sup>74</sup> Machado, 2008:509.

<sup>75</sup> Elsner, 1998:194-5.

<sup>76</sup> Rutgers, 2013: 513.

### 8.4.3 Afterlife and Memorial

Just as there is no mention of a family mausoleum in Symmachus' writings so there is also no mention of belief in a life after death. Ausonius in his *Parentalia* or poems commemorating the deceased does not dwell on this issue either. The dead for him are not aware of the earth they have left,<sup>77</sup> and are generally peaceful shades.<sup>78</sup> Symmachus, however, would have undoubtedly been aware of the extremely important Neoplatonic theories about the immortality of the soul and the afterlife even if he did not subscribe to them. One interesting Neoplatonic idea of the afterlife was that the cosmic soul left the body to seek a home in the stars.<sup>79</sup> This also found resonance in Christian belief as shown in the inscription on Bassa's sarcophagus in the Catacomb of Praetextatus which I discuss earlier in Chapter 7.<sup>80</sup>

*Stelliger accepit polus hanc et sidera caeli*

*Star-bearing heaven and the stars of the sky have received her*

This concept is one which Symmachus may well have found attractive and which he refers to himself in *Relatio* 3.20 which will be referred to again in the next section.

As stated in the conclusion of Chapter 3, the one indication for some belief in the afterlife within the Symmachus canon is the Apotheosis or *Consecratio* panel with the monogram on top, Figure 53 which is housed in the British Museum. Its importance cannot therefore be emphasised enough. This artefact can be seen both in terms of being a statement of some kind of belief in an afterlife by members of the Symmachi family and also the active proselytizing of a key pagan custom at a time when paganism was under threat.<sup>81</sup> In spite of the monogram being identified by Weigand as *Symmachorum* back in 1937,<sup>82</sup> many scholars thought that the figure in the panel was an emperor, probably Julian, but the personage is bareheaded, wrong if it is an emperor. However Cameron argues persuasively that Weigand's identification of Symmachus should be endorsed.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Green, 1991:300.

<sup>78</sup> Aus. *Parent.* 2.7.

<sup>79</sup> Harries, 1992: 60.

<sup>80</sup> Trout, 2010: 340.

<sup>81</sup> Elsner, 1998:32.

<sup>82</sup> Weigand, 1937, 125-6; Cameron, 2011: 721.

<sup>83</sup> Cameron, 2011: 720 ff.

The diptych's companion leaf is missing but presumably this celebrated the Nicomachi family, like the Symmachi-Nicomachi diptych which is discussed in this chapter on the next pages. The genitive form of the names which is replicated on the other diptych is common in funeral memorials. The Apotheosis ivory therefore was presumably produced in commemoration of Symmachus' death in April 402 and copies of both diptyches would have been distributed to friends of both Symmachus himself and the elder Flavianus in their memory. At about the same time statues of both individuals were erected by Memmius in the atrium of the Caelian house, another private memorial to two great pagans – and the only one possible at the time for Flavianus because of the *damnatio memoriae* attached to his name.



Fig.53: The deification of Symmachus.

The bearded figure in the foreground bottom of the Apotheosis panel, which Cameron speculates may be an actual portrait of Symmachus,<sup>84</sup> wears a senatorial robe and sits in a carriage drawn by elephants, carrying a staff and laurel branch. Beyond this is a draped funeral pyre, surmounted by a quadriga bearing a youthful god. However, as already stated in this chapter, the funeral pyre is not to be taken literally as the assumption is that Symmachus was buried. The eagles flying from the pyre signify the departed soul. At the top winds carry the man up into heaven where he is welcomed by five figures, probably ancestors.<sup>85</sup> This shows the importance in traditional Roman cult of the veneration of the ancestors and their beliefs. The Apotheosis panel therefore shows a private individual whose soul is joining his ancestors beyond the stars as Cicero describes in the *Somnium Scipionis*.<sup>86</sup> Symmachus himself uses this metaphor in *Relatio* 3.20 when he describes Valentinian I looking down from ‘his citadel among the stars’, *ex siderea arce*.<sup>87</sup> This iconography can also be compared with the peacocks depicted in the *arcosolium* of *cubiculum* E in the Via Latina Catacombs. These represented to pagans the human soul which would rise toward the heavens at the end of its earthly tenure.<sup>88</sup> Presumably Symmachus’ family did not really think that Quintus Aurelius had become a god on his death and there is nothing in the content of the diptych which really suggests this. Nevertheless the Apotheosis diptych is a powerful statement of a belief in or desire for some kind of heaven or afterlife with its depiction of pagan imagery and deliberate inclusion of the pyre, stressing the importance of the ancestors and **their** mode of commemoration. Cicero, devastated with grief after the death of his beloved daughter Tullia, talks about doing something similar in spite of his possible atheism – ‘I wish to have a shrine (*fanum*) built ..... in order to attain as nearly as possible to an apotheosis’.<sup>89</sup>

Although previously the Symmachi-Nicomachi diptych, pictured in Figure 54, was considered to be a mark of celebration of marriages between the two families, this view has now been discounted. Rather it is considered to be a memorial to two great pagans, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus and Virius Nicomachus Flavianus by Cameron, Sogno and others. There is nothing particularly festive about the two female figures and the downturned torches on the Nicomachi half are symbolic of a funeral not a wedding.

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<sup>84</sup> Cameron, 2011: 726.

<sup>85</sup> Buckton, 1994: 58.

<sup>86</sup> Cic. *De Rep.* 6.16; Cameron, 2011: 725.

<sup>87</sup> Cameron, 2011: 726.

<sup>88</sup> Hadel, 2012:1.

<sup>89</sup> Cic. *Ep.* Att. 12.36.



Fig.54: The Nicomachi-Symmachi Diptych

Both sides show a priestess, the Symmachi lady in the act of dropping kernels of incense on to an altar. She wears a chiton and an ivy wreath and fillet in her hair. The Nicomachi priestess has her right breast exposed and is inverting the funeral torches of the Eleusinian cult of Ceres; she stands beneath a pine tree from which hang cymbals, denoting perhaps a link with the cult of Cybele which as we have already seen was associated with Flavianus.<sup>90</sup> Cameron has proposed a production date of about 402, the year of Symmachus' death<sup>91</sup> and the carbon dating shows the elephant from which the ivory came died during the first half of the fourth century.<sup>92</sup> Williamson argues convincingly that the ivory could have been stockpiled in a workshop somewhere for some time after the death of the elephant.<sup>93</sup> So in terms of time, the idea that these objects were produced at the time of the death of Symmachus in late March to early April 402 is a perfectly reasonable one. These objects would also, like the ceremony in the funeral, the decoration on the sarcophagus, and within

<sup>90</sup> Williamson, 2010: 37.

<sup>91</sup> Cameron, 2011: 730.

<sup>92</sup> Williamson, 2010: 38

<sup>93</sup> Williamson, 2010: 38.

the mausoleum be another way of celebrating both the pagan antecedents of Symmachus and Flavianus and pagan beliefs themselves.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has traced the course of Symmachus' last seventeen years and the instances of pagan practice that can be found in them through a series of social events, his consulship in 391, the usurpation of Eugenius in the West, the battle of Frigidus and the death of Flavianus senior, his son's marriage to a lady who was both granddaughter of Flavianus senior and niece to Flavianus junior, and his own death, burial and afterlife. The evidence for these events can be found both in his own writings, which have been analysed where appropriate, but also in the writings of his contemporaries and near successors whose experiences can shed light on those of Symmachus himself when there is little or no evidence in his own writings for a particular event. By analysing these occurrences, it has been possible to demonstrate that there were still pagan practices being carried out in this period, and that Symmachus' beliefs and religious lifestyle was probably not affected a great deal in spite of the closure of the temples and the constant stream of anti-pagan legislation (see Appendix 4). Symmachus' deepest religious beliefs have been exposed, and an attempt has been made to prove that these were much more fundamental than other scholars have given him credit for.

## Chapter 9

### Symmachus' Religious Epitaph

This final chapter of the thesis tries to amalgamate the picture of Symmachus' religious world that has been defined and explored throughout this work. It falls into two parts. First some conclusions are listed about were Symmachus' public and private religious worlds in the light of the evidence of the various approaches of the preceding chapters; and then there is a discussion as to whether the criteria set out in the introduction has been met. The final part of the chapter assesses Symmachus' relevance and significance in religious terms for his own time and society and summarises what were his most important religious achievements.

The introduction stated that it was the intention of this work to create a religious biography of Symmachus and his world as a counterpart to the political biography of Symmachus created by Christina Sogno. This would be carried out using a variety of different sources and would analyse his world utilising various methodologies and approaches. Theoretical models from other disciplines were employed and literary, archaeological, topographical, statistical and epigraphical tools were utilised to investigate the subject and religious world he inhabited. The investigation needed to be as broad as possible and the intention has been also to try to ascertain what Symmachus' inner religious beliefs as opposed to the ones ascribed to him were, and if in fact there was any difference. Symmachus has always been perceived as being merely a fairly passive follower of the ancient rites of the *sacra publica* so part of the aim in this thesis is to prove that this assumption was not in fact the whole religious story. The thesis is constructed in different ways to analyse and reveal different aspects of Symmachus' paganism and his pagan world; and as stated in the introduction, it is important that religion in Late Antiquity is investigated not just from the Christian side, but from the pagan which is what this study mainly concerns. Cameron has covered much of the same ground in his monumental work published in 2011 but he takes an encyclopaedic approach to the topic, investigating a much wider range of subjects and people than is done in this work. The focus in this thesis is entirely on Symmachus himself and an examination of areas of his world which have not really been dealt with before such as religious topography and social events. As stated earlier in this thesis, by examining micro as well as macro issues and events in Symmachus' religious world we can learn a great deal about him, his world and his religious motivation. Chapter 1 stated that it was important not just to see Symmachus as an

individual but also to see him as a representative of a late antique Roman aristocrat so where relevant this aspect of the study has been emphasised. Chapter 2 was the Literature Review and identified and discussed the most important works connected with Symmachus and his age.

Chapter 3 examined Symmachus' religious language and usage in a variety of ways, using the medium of his letters. This was an appropriate place to start, both in researching evidence of his activities in the religious field and for indications of his inner religious beliefs. Four main groups of religious language were primarily examined – the way the names of gods, goddesses and religious personifications were dealt with in Symmachus' correspondence, the way Symmachus dealt with religious words used in a non-religious way, those terms used in a religious way and the method by which religious invocations like 'by the gods' could be interpreted. It was argued that his usage of the names of gods, goddesses and personages was mainly poetic. The exercise demonstrated that the way he deals with a wide range of religious words is very varied and shows that his antiquarian interest and knowledge of these terms goes deep. After all this was a means in which he could express his interest in and devotion to the traditional cults of Rome through the medium of his private correspondence, in a world being rapidly Christianised. This interest seems to be more than just antiquarian but hints at more profound religious depths. The statistical exercise carried out to find out if he used the term *deus* more than *dii* in his later years, did not prove conclusively as hoped that Symmachus was becoming more monotheistic in his later years. Nevertheless, it is likely that he may have been influenced by Neoplatonic theories of the 'One'. There is however absolutely no evidence of any interest at any stage in Christianity or any desire for conversion, although he was willing to make compromises. He remained devoted to polytheism until the end of his life.

Chapter 4 was devoted to situating Symmachus physically in his religious world by describing the changing topographical religious landscape around his main residence on the Caelian Hill. The period during which Symmachus was alive contained a more dramatic religious change in the Roman Empire than had occurred for a thousand years. This is the age where not only monotheism triumphs over polytheism, but the Christian monotheism that triumphs is intolerant of any other creed. This leads to an ever more active remodelling of Roman religious society in Christian terms. The chapter commenced, after a general



description of the Caelian Hill, by positioning Symmachus within his town mansion and examining how, within this house, religious activity might have taken place, and defining his own religious space. We can physically envisage him here as the *pater familias* carrying out the rites of the household gods. In spite of the prohibition by the Theodosian anti-pagan legislation of these rituals it is unlikely that Symmachus paid much attention to this prohibition; and undoubtedly the Lares and Penates would have been continued to be worshipped in his house until his death. This physical situating of the people of Symmachus' religious world within their own environment is investigated throughout the thesis.

Archaeological approaches therefore were very important. I was introduced to Professor Carlo Pavolini at a conference in 2012, the archaeologist who has carried out the recent excavations on the Caelian Hill in a variety of locations including the Ospedale Militare where remains of the *Domus Gaudentii*, the *Domus Symmachorum* and the *Basilica Hilariana* were found. He showed me the site of the Ospedale Militare in the autumn of 2013 – and the exposed remains of the *Basilica Hilariana*, the little temple of Cybele. This allowed me both to gain a much better idea of the physical location of Symmachus' house, and to so place him within its boundaries and link him, and especially his friend Virius Nicomachus Flavianus to another religious structure.

Also in Chapter 4 we can place Symmachus sitting in his library writing or dictating letters to his numerous correspondents on a variety of fairly trivial religious topics. Here we see the Symmachus who in his inimitable way was knowledgeable about and devoted to the ancient Roman pantheon. He probably got a lot of pleasure in discussing these somewhat arcane religious topics with his friends with whom he corresponded. His literary world of letters was one place where, even after the loss of his **public** religious world and priestly functions, he could still experience in a sense and discuss freely ancient cults and rituals. He was an antiquarian and probably gained a lot of knowledge of ancient cult practices from his reading and editing of Livy. His liking for antiquarian words is another aspect of this. He knew about the augurs and all the other traditional priests, rites and feasts associated with the ancient cults which he takes pleasure in describing in his letters and discussing with his correspondents.

Having explored in detail religion associated with the house, there followed a discussion of the growth of churches in Symmachus' locality and the possible impact of this on him – and

also the gradual cessation of use and closure of temples in the vicinity. It has proved almost impossible to find accurate dates for the latter including the *Basilica Hilariana* discussed above. The chapter concluded by describing Symmachus' journey from his house to the Temple of Vesta in the Forum, and the structures he would have encountered on his way. In this chapter it has been argued that investigating Symmachus' religious letters tells us much about traditional Roman pagan cult and its rituals – and Symmachus' overarching interest in antique religious rites. It has also demonstrated that situating Symmachus within his domestic physical location shows how the religious topography was changing in Rome and how this impacted on a committed pagan.

Chapter 5 used the correspondence largely between Symmachus and Vettius Agorius Praetextatus to provide a view of practical paganism in its last days; and archaeology was also very important in constructing this chapter. One of the most important of the letters considered was that to do with classical animal sacrifice. Others involved the Vestals both of the Roman house and of that in Bovillae, twelve miles out of Rome on the Appian Way, the location and history of which I do not think has been studied before by other scholars, and where again we can physically locate Symmachus. In this chapter as well, the parallel but different religious lives of Symmachus' pagan contemporaries were analysed; in particular, Praetextatus, Virius Nicomachus Flavianus and Praetextatus' wife, Aconia Paulina. This broadened out the whole picture of Late Antique paganism and revealed the differences between Symmachus and some of his pagan contemporaries. In this chapter also it was possible to bring to light further evidence of Symmachus' real and deep devotion to his traditional Roman religious way of life especially indicated in *Ep.* 1.49, the sacrifice letter, and *Ep.* 1.51, the letter describing the difficulty of filling the gaps in temple service by the pontifical college. Chapters 3 to 5 therefore have looked at different themes connected with Symmachus' religious world.

Chapter 6, on the other hand, took a rather different approach by considering what could describe almost as his second religion – the cult of *amicitia* – and its associated partners, *otium* and *negotium*. The cult of *amicitia* can be traced back to the days of Cicero and seems to have changed little in four hundred years. It was just as important in Symmachus' day as a means of making friends and influencing people as it had been at the time of the Civil War. I felt this chapter was essential in understanding Symmachus' attitude to the religious changes

around him because he, at least on the surface, seems to have regarded religion as less important than what class someone was and whether the normal rules of *amicitia* applied to him

In this chapter Symmachus' extensive correspondence with the great and the good both in the Western and Eastern halves of the Empire, and his links and networks, were analysed by examining a series of letters. Community Work theory was used to divide his private correspondence into four groups of 'Circles of Community', comprising his family, his close friends, his connections who were often people who cultivated Symmachus because of his influence and networks – and whom he cultivated for the same reasons, and finally his clients. Appendix 2 contains short biographies of the most important of these correspondents. Patronage was still a crucial part of Late Antique society as it had been in the Late Republic, and at least twenty five per cent of the Symmachean corpus of private letters are devoted to patronage of one kind or another. These private letters were used to discover how Symmachus wrote letters concerned with *amicitia* and constructed with oratorical skill to personages in the various groups described above. This was followed by a subsection where the epistolary styles of Symmachus, Cicero and Pliny were contrasted. To do this, a letter from Symmachus to his closest friend Flavianus was compared with one from Cicero to Atticus and another from Pliny to one of his close friends. It was very interesting to see the differences in style. Some comparison in this section was also made with letters by Jerome. After a short passage comparing the language Symmachus used towards pagan correspondents with that he utilised with Christian ones, the chapter concluded by tracing how the cult of *amicitia* changed into Christian *caritas* in the personages of great Christians like Augustine and Paulinus of Nola at the end of the fourth century. Most enlightening also was the fact that the whole idea of *amicitia* and its cult of letter writing survived into clerical circles of the Middle Ages where it could still be linked to Cicero and his *De Amicitia* as evidenced in the example of Aeldred of Rievaulx.

If Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are thematic and Chapter 6 considers Symmachus' other religion, then Chapters 7 and 8 are chronological as between them they cover the last eighteen years of Symmachus' life from July of 384 when he became urban prefect of Rome until his death in April of 402. Chapter 7 covers the six months of Symmachus' tenure in as urban prefect while Chapter 8 covers the remaining seventeen years of his life. Chapter 7 describes the

‘Altar of Victory Affair’ which is the event that most people know Symmachus by and which has already been extensively written about. The task in this chapter therefore was to throw light on this year by new approaches, which I have attempted to do by analysing the events in a variety of different ways, political, religious and literary. Symmachus’ *Relatio* 3 is not usually regarded as the literary artefact which it is and this is one of the ways I have tried to differentiate my treatment of the ‘Altar of Victory Affair’ from the approaches of other scholars. Symmachus’ dispatches to the various emperors regarding the business of the state which the urban prefect was concerned in are rightly regarded as extremely important in understanding the working of Late Antique government and this aspect also has been emphasised.

This chapter is the most important in understanding Symmachus’ deepest religious feelings. It is argued that he emerges from the Altar of Victory affair showing a real devotion to the ancient cults and the traditional toleration of other religions by Rome – not just as someone who, like Cicero in all probability, followed them because they benefited the state and because it was the right thing to do. Symmachus passionately believed in the old rites certainly in part because they had benefited the state over many centuries but I think that his religious views go further and deeper than this. He was not afraid to put his head over the parapet and show what he believed when he thought it was necessary. In *Relatio* 3, his appeal to the Emperors Valentinian II and Theodosius to restore the Altar of Victory to the Senate House and the funding to the Vestal Virgins, is in fact a statement of his *raison d’être* in religious terms. He is using his position as urban prefect to fight in his own way for freedom of religion to be preserved and for the old cults of Rome which made her great to be allowed to continue. Symmachus is not a revolutionary and, as already stated, is moderate in religious terms; but in this document he really lays his value system on the line. It is here that his public and private religious worlds come together.

*Relatio* 3 is essentially a religious document which is not the way in which it is usually regarded. Paschoud originally<sup>94</sup> ascribed mere financial motives to Symmachus as the reason he sent this dispatch to the emperors – a viewpoint which he later moderated.<sup>95</sup> While there is no doubt that the senators who still ran the various priestly colleges now had to fund them

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<sup>94</sup> Paschoud, 1965: 215-35.

<sup>95</sup> Paschoud, 1986.

themselves without recourse to state funds, this is not the reason that Symmachus pleads unsuccessfully with the emperors for the restoration of the old religious ways so eloquently in this *Relatio*. He genuinely believes that the old cults of the *sacra publica* are best for Rome. This then is no surface view; it is the key to the understanding of Symmachus. The central words of the *Relatio* in Section 10, *uno itinere non potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum*, are the heart of Symmachus' religious world. The words 'so great a secret' appear to reveal a belief in some kind of central religious truth; even though Symmachus thinks that there are many paths to this truth and he does not try any further to define what the 'truth' might be. Symmachus' religious world is certainly one where the old cults are valued and seen as an important function of the state like Cicero's; but it is also one where all religions are tolerated – and it was a continuation of the traditional Roman religious toleration that he was trying to obtain from the emperors.

Symmachus has been criticised because after the events of 384 he seems not to have been prominent again in promoting the cause of the ancestral cults in the last seventeen years of his life. Chapter 8 explored events which other scholars have not really dealt with, and show that even if religion was not very evident in his daily life, his beliefs and religious structures were still there; and that there were pagan elements still in the important events of these years, both private and public. The biographical approach therefore came to the fore in this chapter. Symmachus tried several more times, still unsuccessfully for the restoration of funding for the state cults and the Altar of Victory in the Senate House. In spite of his paganism and the anti-pagan legislation of 391, he was Western consul in that year; and his inauguration and the performance of the public festival functions of the post could still boast ancient tradition and echoes of the polytheistic past. His son's marriage and his own funeral rites would have been carried out under the auspices of the old cults; nor was his family afraid to issue diptychs of various kinds after his death which celebrated his paganism and that of Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, and which also in the Apotheosis Panel hint at some belief in an afterlife

The criteria for the examination of these themes have been covered, and thus the construction of a religious biography has been possible. This has been carried out using a variety of disciplines and approaches. Symmachus has been placed physically in his religious world along with other major personages considered in this thesis, both pagan and Christian.

Finally, Symmachus' own correspondence has been analysed along with other evidence of what I consider to be his most fundamental religious beliefs. It is my contention that this analysis has produced a figure who was devoted to the traditional public cults, pursued and served them successfully during his life, was prepared to stand up for them when Christian domination was threatening to extinguish pagan practices – and who in spite of the closing of the temples and the discontinuation of these practices stayed a resolute pagan until his death. I would argue that I have shown that Symmachus was not purely the man of tedious formality and superficial beliefs described by Seeck, McGeachy and Paschoud but actually someone for whom traditional Roman religion was a fundamental part of his identity.

Even Symmachus' religious adversaries thought highly of him. If in religious terms he belonged to the old school of the *sacra publica* and the public cults, he was able to surmount and survive this possible disadvantage. In spite of the anti-pagan legislation of Theodosius and the closure of the temples, he remained committed to polytheism until his death in 402. This thesis has attempted to prove that his religious beliefs were not merely part of his public status but were much more deep seated than that, even if most of the evidence is fairly tangential; and in *Relatio 3* it would appear we have his *raison d'être*, a statement of what his deepest feelings were and his way of life. His passion in this document for his cause cannot be denied and the important thing is to remember is that though he was ultimately unsuccessful he had tried. Symmachus was realistic enough to know that there was no chance of Christianity disappearing but all he wanted was the status quo practised by Valentinian I where Christianity and the old cults could co-exist. Symmachus then stands for the traditional Roman toleration of religious cults, the right of individual freedom in religion, the right to choose more than *uno itinere ad deum*. This is his real epitaph.

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## Appendix 1

### Religious and Political Timeline of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus

Each event is listed first by date. Imperial Anti-Pagan Legislation is listed in some detail in Appendix 4, so where it occurs in Appendix 1 it is just mentioned briefly.

Date	Event
312	Battle of the Milvian bridge in Rome. Battle fought by Constantine under the Christian cross against Maxentius. Constantine won the battle making him sole ruler of the Western Empire.
313	Constantine passed the Edict of Milan making Christianity legal in the Western Empire
318-22	The building of Old St Peter's on Mons Vaticanus across the Tiber from Rome started by order of Constantine
324	Official dedication of St John's Lateran, basilica and palace by Pope Sylvester I. It becomes the office church of the popes, the Bishops of Rome and their palace. This is approximately one mile from Symmachus' residence on the Caelian Hill.
337	Death of Constantine who is baptised Christian just before he dies.
337-350	Constantine's three sons, Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans succeed to their father's throne upon his death. In 340 Constans and Constantine clash over the Western portions of the Empire. Constantine II dies and Constans become sole ruler of the West until he is overthrown and assassinated in 350 by the usurper Magnentius. Constantius will not accept Magnentius as co-ruler and defeats him at the battles of Mursa Major and Mons Seleucus. After the second battle Magnentius commits suicide and Constantius becomes sole ruler of the Empire until his death in 360. He is an Arian Christian.
c340	Quintus Aurelius Symmachus is born, the oldest of five. He has three younger brothers and a sister. All his brothers die before him, the last Celsinus Titianus in 380.
341	The beginning of anti-pagan legislation. Constantius II orders the abolition of sacrifice C.Th. 16.10.4
346, 354, 356	Constantius again orders the abolition of sacrifice and the closure of the temples. C. Th. 16.10.4
355	On 6 <sup>th</sup> November Julian is made Caesar by Constantius and sent to Gaul
356	On 20 <sup>th</sup> February Constantius and Julian Caesar order that those who sacrifice or worship images are condemned to capital punishment: C. Th. 16.10.2
357	Constantius II visits Rome. The Altar of Victory is removed from the Senate House but otherwise the pro-pagan Senate and their beliefs are largely left untouched. The visit is chronicled by the historian Ammianus Marcellinus
Unknown	Symmachus as a young man becomes firs quaestor and the praetor but there are no known dates for these events.
361	On 3 <sup>rd</sup> November Julian becomes Emperor after setting up his standard against Constantius who dies, however, of natural causes before they can meet in battle. Though Julian has been brought up a Christian, he has become a secret pagan being influenced especially by Mithraism, Neoplatonism and Helios the Sun god. He tries by a variety of measures to turn the Empire back to paganism appointing pagan priests and allowing and celebrating sacrifice. The Altar of Victory is replaced in the Senate House.

363	Julian dies on 28 <sup>th</sup> June in battle in Persia. Succeeded by Jovian for eight months who is cautious initially about changing pagan approach of Julian but after six months seems to becoming less tolerant according to Themistius.
364	Jovian dies and is succeeded by Valentinian I in the West who makes his home in Trier. He appoints his brother Valens as co-Emperor in the East. Valentinian and Valens are Christian but take a tolerant approach to paganism.
364	Avianus Symmachus, Symmachus' father is urban prefect in Rome. Symmachus' letters start, the first being to Flavianus senior.
365	By, or roundabout this date Symmachus already holds the <i>pontifex Vestae</i> , his only priesthood. It may have come through his family. He is also <i>corrector Lucaniae et Brittiorum</i> where his family owned lands.
367	Vettius Agorius Praetextatus Urban Prefect. He restores the Portico of the temple of the Twelve Consenting Gods in the Forum Romanum which is one of the last pagan monuments to be so restored.
369	The start of Symmachus' career when he goes as part of a senatorial embassy to Trier. While there he gives three laudatory orations to the Emperors Valentinian I and Gratian.
369	Symmachus receives the <i>comes ordinis tertii</i> from Valentinian I, an honorary position which he holds for life.
370	Symmachus returns to Rome and marries Rusticana, daughter of Orfitius (Callu dating).
371	Symmachus' unnamed daughter is born, (according to Callu) the joint recipient of the letters in Book 1.
374-5	Symmachus becomes <i>proconsularis Africae</i> based in Carthage.
374	Ambrose, the civilian governor of Milan becomes its bishop after the retirement of the Arian Auxentius. Ambrose may have been a distant cousin of Symmachus who sent seven letters concerned with patronage to him.
375	Valentinian I dies of natural causes and is succeeded in the West by his older son Gratian. Valens is still emperor in the East.
377	Death of Avianus Symmachus who is <i>consul designatus</i> at the time of his death.
377	Destruction of a <i>mithraeum</i> in Rome.
378	Disastrous battle of Adrianople in the East when the forces of Valens are heavily defeated by the Goths and he himself is killed.
378	Symmachus writes to Praetextatus in <i>Ep. 1.49</i> about an unsuccessful sacrifice at Spoleto to expiate a prodigy.
379	Theodosius I becomes Emperor in the East. He is an ardent Christian.
381	More anti-pagan legislation on behalf of the Emperors, Theodosius, Gratian and Valentinian II. This is enshrined in C. Th. 16.10.7
382	The Emperor Gratian refuses the title of <i>pontifex maximus</i> , takes away the Altar of victory in the Senate House, this time permanently and confiscates the state fiscal revenues of the priests of the <i>sacra publica</i> especially of the Vestals. A senatorial embassy which includes Symmachus which is sent to Milan to ask the Emperor to rescind these decisions is not even received. These measures are not listed in the Theodosian code.
383	Gratian is murdered at the hand of the British imperial contender Maximus who is initially recognised by Theodosius as being emperor of Britain, Gaul and Germany. He makes his court in Trier. In 387 he turns his eyes on the rest of the western Empire controlled by Valentinian II. Valentinian and his mother Justina flee from Milan to Constantinople.

383	The birth of Symmachus' only son Memmius.
384	July 384-January 385, Symmachus Urban Prefect of Rome.
384	Augustine appointed rhetor to the court of Milan by Symmachus while Urban Prefect.
384	The Altar of Victory dispute between Bishop Ambrose and Symmachus takes place sometime in the summer, which is the reason for Symmachus' sending of <i>Relatio 3</i> to the emperors.
384	The death in December of Praetextatus deprives Symmachus of his great supporter. Pope Damasus also dies in December which causes Jerome his acolyte to leave Rome because he has fallen out of favour.
385	More anti-pagan legislation under the names of Theodosius, his older son Arcadius and Valentinian II.
386	Augustine becomes a Christian in the summer of 386 in Milan after leaving his post as court rhetor. He is baptized by Ambrose at the Easter of 387.
388	Symmachus' daughter marries Nicomachus Flavianus junior, the older son of the older Flavianus, as his second wife. (Callu dating).
388	Theodosius and Valentinian invade from the East and confront Maximus who is defeated, then executed. Valentinian is restored as emperor in the West. During 388 Symmachus becomes <i>princeps senatus</i> . His unwise panegyric to Maximus causes him to be seriously out of favour for a while. However he is eventually restored to favour and declared <i>consul designatus</i> for 391.
391	Symmachus is consul in the West and Titianius in the East
391	The most savage anti-pagan legislation yet is enacted by the emperors on 24 <sup>th</sup> February: C.Th. 16.10.10. The great Serapeum, the greatest pagan temple in Alexandria, is destroyed by a Christian mob, or possibly by soldiers.
392	More savage anti-pagan legislation is passed by the emperors on 8 <sup>th</sup> November: C.Th. 16.10.12.
392	On 15 <sup>th</sup> May Emperor Valentinian II is found hanging in his apartment. He either committed suicide or was murdered by his barbarian <i>magister militum</i> Arbogast. Arbogast then raises a professor of rhetoric, Eugenius to the Western throne.
393	Memmius celebrates his quaestorship with games at Rome.
394	Flavianus senior become consul under Eugenius in the West although this is not recognised by Theodosius. Some pagan worship is restored though not sacrifice. Symmachus does not court Eugenius; Ambrose leaves Milan and goes into exile.
394	Battle of Frigidus on 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> September. In spite of this being described as the last battle to be fought under the pagan flag, it has now been proved to be a straightforward suppression of an imperial contender by Theodosius. In the event, the Theodosian forces were successful, Eugenius was executed and Arbogast and Flavianus senior committed suicide. Ambrose returns from exile.
394	Theodosius ordered the final closing of the temples, although this edict has not been preserved.
394+	Symmachus manages to save the Flaviani estates and in time the career of Flavianus junior is restored although he has to convert to Christianity.
395	Theodosius dies in Milan in January, the last emperor to rule both halves of the Empire. Ambrose delivers the elegy <i>De Obitu Theodosii</i> at his funeral. Honorius becomes emperor in the West under the guardianship of the half-Vandal <i>magister militum</i> Stilicho. Arcadius becomes emperor in the East. Both are children.

395	Arcadius and Honorius pass further anti-pagan legislation on 7 <sup>th</sup> August. The fact that this is necessary shows that pagan practices are hard to eliminate.
395	Augustine becomes Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, a post he holds until his death in 430.
395-402	Symmachus' last years. He continues his career as a diplomat and senior senator, remaining <i>princeps senatus</i> until his death. Many of the surviving letters date to this period of his life. He is a friend of and has influence with Stilicho to whom there are several surviving letters. Symmachus' views carry weight in the Senate during the North African rebellion of Gildo in 397.
396	All privileges conveyed by ancient custom to pagan priests, ministers or hierophants of the ancient mysteries are completely abolished: C.Th. 16.10.15.
397	The death of St Ambrose. In the same year Augustine writes his <i>Confessions</i> .
399	On 10 <sup>th</sup> July Arcadius and Honorius order the destruction of temples in country districts – if there are no temples, people will have nowhere to go for pagan worship. However on 20 <sup>th</sup> August the Augusti declare that temples are state property and are not to be touched: C.Th. 16. 10.18.
401	Memmius celebrates his praetorian games in Rome. In the same year he marries the niece of his brother-in-law Flavianus junior.
401-2	The Goths under Radagaisus enter Italy and prove a threat to the Imperial court.
402	In February Symmachus is sent by the Senate to get help from the court as Rome is starving. He hopes to meet Stilicho in Milan but this does not happen as Stilicho is away opposing the Goths. Symmachus does receive the required help from Honorius but he leaves Milan ill although he does manage to return to Rome where he writes his last known letter to Stilicho. Symmachus dies in late March or early April 402, but before the battle of Pollentia where Stilicho defeats Radagaisus which is on 6 <sup>th</sup> April.
402+	Memmius puts up the statues to his father and to Virius Nicomachus Flavianus in the atrium of the <i>domus Symmachorum</i> on the Caelian Hill. About the same time, the Nicomachi-Symmachi diptych and the Apotheosis diptych are produced. All these, in some way, are a means of celebrating the paganism of both Symmachus and Flavianus senior.
402	Alarmed at the Gothic incursion into Italy, the Western Court moves to Ravenna which is situated with the sea on one side, marshes on the landward sides and is just north of Classe where the Illyrian fleet was traditionally kept.
404	The Emperor Honorius pays a visit to Rome which is recorded for posterity by the court poet Claudian.
404	The poet Prudentius writes his Christian apologetic in two volumes, although the first book may have been written soon after Frigidus. This work, twenty years later, is another refutation of Symmachus' <i>Relatio 3</i>
408	Disgrace and subsequent execution of Stilicho.
410	Sack of Rome by Alaric and his Goths. Some of the big estates on the Caelian Hill such as that of Melania, Christian associate of Jerome, are badly damaged.
c410	Construction begins of SS Giovanni e Paolo on the Caelian Hill. The money for the church comes from the estate of Pammachius, friend of Jerome, who has become a monk before his death.
413+	Augustine start the <i>De Civitate Dei</i> , in part Christian polemic, in part to reassure his own Christian congregation. The real city of God is not like any city on earth – because their glories are merely mortal ones and they can fade away like Rome has done. The real city is now the celestial one.

## Appendix 2

### Prosopographical List of Symmachus' Major Correspondents

The prosopographical list of personages with whom Symmachus corresponded that I have constructed here, shows the most important of Symmachus' correspondents and is organised in the order of the book of Symmachus' letters that they appear in. However members of his immediate family and his closest pagan associates are not included because much biographical detail about them is already included in the text.

#### **Book 1**

##### **Decimus Magnus Ausonius<sup>1</sup>**

From an aristocratic family, he came from Bordeaux and was a Christian. For many years he was a teacher of rhetoric in Bordeaux and an eminent poet. His wife died young but he had children. In 369 he met Symmachus when both were attached to the court at Trier and they corresponded for several years. Symmachus was attracted to him in part by his poetic reputation and in part by his position at court. Ausonius wanted links with the Senate in Rome. He became tutor to Gratian and later consul after the death of Valentinian I. Born in 310 he was still alive in 393.

##### **Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus<sup>2</sup>**

A very rich and immensely powerful senator, he was proconsul of Africa, praetorian prefect of Italy four times and consul. He married into the Anicii clan who were among the first of the Roman senatorial families to become Christian. His dates are c328-c388.

##### **Decimus Hilarianus Hesperius<sup>3</sup>**

A son of Ausonius who did very well out of his father's preferment and who was proconsul of Africa and praetorian prefect of Gaul, then Italy and Gaul, then Italy and Africa. By 384 he was *vir clarissimus, illustris, comes* and visited Rome when Symmachus was urban prefect. He had at least three children including a son called Pastor Ausonius.

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<sup>1</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 140.

<sup>2</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971:736.

<sup>3</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 427.

### **Flavius Claudius Antonius**<sup>4</sup>

He was quaestor of the sacred palace, 370-3, prefect of Gaul, 376, and then of Italy, 377-8. He was a relative by marriage of Theodosius, to whom he owed his consulship. Honorius' wife Maria may have been his sister. He was consul in 382.

### **Flavius Syragius**

He was *notarius* in Gaul who was cashiered in 369 because he was the sole survivor of a military expedition across the Rhine. He was praetorian prefect of Italy between 380-2 and consul in 381. Symmachus was unable to attend his consular celebrations because of his brother's death.

## **Book 2**

### **Virius Nichomachus Flavianus**<sup>5</sup>

## **Book 3**

### **Sextus Rusticus Iulianus**<sup>6</sup>

He was of non senatorial, fairly humble origin, was *magister memoriae* from 367, proconsul of Africa between 371-3, where he ruled harshly; and died 387-8 as urban prefect of Rome during the occupation of Maximus. He was the father of Synesius, mentioned by Symmachus in *Oratio* 7.4 and was probably a follower of Mithras. He was a wealthy man.

### **Iulius Naucellius**<sup>7</sup>

His *nomen* is variously given as Iulius or Iunius. He was a senator and friend of Symmachus who lived to a great age, possibly as much as ninety five. His family came from Syracuse and he owned at one time a house in Rome where he lived with his wife Sabina who owned

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<sup>4</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 77.

<sup>5</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 347.

<sup>6</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 479.

<sup>7</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 617.

property in Spoleto where he eventually retired. He had sons; one called Sabinus translated from the Greek a work on *Prisca Republica* and some poetry.

### **Proculus Gregorius**<sup>8</sup>

He was prefect of the *annona* in 377 and was quaestor in 379 and it was by his influence that Symmachus got to read out an imperial message that year. He became prefect of Gaul in 383, but the usurpation of Maximus stopped his career. He was dead by 400 but left a son.

### **Marianianus**<sup>9</sup>

He was Spanish and began his career by teaching law at Rome. He was sent to Spain as vicar in 383 and had a daughter there. He was probably a protector of the Priscillianists and therefore probably a pagan. He had a son Maximilianus for whom he paid a ransom of 30,000 solidi to Alaric in 409.

### **Aurelius Ambrosius**<sup>10</sup>

He was better known as Saint Ambrose, one of the four major doctors of the early church and may have had a slight family connection with Symmachus. He was born in Gaul, but brought up in Rome. He had a conventional civil career, the apogee of which was consularis of Aemilia and Liguria in 374 which included the civil governorship of Milan. In the same year he was elected Bishop of Milan on the retirement of the Arian Auxentius, a post which he held till his death. His dates are c 340-397.

### **Siburius**<sup>11</sup>

He came from Bordeaux and was probably *magister officiorum* in the West 375-9. In 379 he became prefect of Gaul but was accused of some charge of which he was acquitted but was dismissed from his office. After that however, he dedicated his life to literature, writing especially about medicine. Like Symmachus, he approved of archaic language. He had a brother and a son and was still alive in 390.

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<sup>8</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 404.

<sup>9</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 559.

<sup>10</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 52.

<sup>11</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 839.



### **Eutropius**<sup>12</sup>

This man was an historian and probably a native of Bordeaux who accompanied Julian on his Persian expedition. He was proconsul of Asia in 371-2 but was accused of treason by his successor Festus but was acquitted. He later went to Gratian's court and visited Rome. He was praetorian prefect of Illyricum in 380-1 and became consul in 387 with Valentinian II although he was a pagan. He owned estates in Asia Minor and wrote the *Breviarum* of Roman History down to the death of Jovian. He was also interested in medicine and was still alive in 390.

### **Flavius Richomeres**<sup>13</sup>

He was the uncle of Arbogast, a Frank, a pagan and a military man. *Comes domesticorum* of Gratian 377-8, he fought at Adrianople but survived and by 383 was *magister militum per orientem*. He was consul at Constantinople in 384 and a friend of Libanius. He was *comes et magister utriusque militum* of the East from 388-93. He was appointed to lead the cavalry of the expedition against Eugenius in 393 in spite of being the uncle of Arbogast but died before the armies left for the campaign.

### **Flavius Timasius**<sup>14</sup>

Like Ricomer he was a soldier. He was an officer under Valens, then became *comes et magister equitum* to Theodosius in 386, *magister equitum et peditum* in 388 and consul in 389. He then lead the infantry in the re-conquest of the West and in 391 stopped the Goths near Thessalonica. He was supplanted by Rufinus in the imperial favour but participated at the Battle of the Frigidus, serving under Stilicho. He was exiled after Theodosius' death to the Great Oasis but died trying to escape. An experienced soldier, he was over-proud and a heavy drinker.

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<sup>12</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 317.

<sup>13</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 765.

<sup>14</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 914.

### **Flavius Promotus**<sup>15</sup>

After holding a post in Africa, Promotus commanded the infantry in Thrace where he triumphed over the Ostrogoths. He was *magister militum* in the East between 386-9, and *magister equitum* between 388 and 391. He was consul in 389. Transferred in 388 to become leader of the cavalry, he was involved against the pretender Maximus. In 391 after a violent quarrel with Rufinus, he fought in Macedonia against the Goths. He died in Thrace at the end of 391 in an ambush which Rufinus may have engineered.

### **Flavius Rufinus**<sup>16</sup>

He was a very important man who came from Elusa in Gaul. He was *magister officiorum* of Theodosius in 388 who he accompanied to Rome in 389 where he met Symmachus. He returned to Constantinople with Theodosius in 391 and became consul in 392 with Arcadius. He was praetorian prefect of the East 392-5. When Theodosius left for the Battle of the Frigidus in 394 Rufinus was left as chief adviser to Arcadius. After the death of Theodosius there was a standoff between Stilicho and Rufinus and Stilicho engineered the death of Rufinus outside Constantinople in the presence of Arcadius in November 395. After his death, his wife and daughter were allowed to retire to Jerusalem.

## **Book 4**

### **Flavius Stilicho**<sup>17</sup>

Product of a Vandal father and a Roman mother, he was *magister militum* of the West 394-408 and after the death of Theodosius in 395 he was effective ruler of the West until his execution in 408. Among other things he was *comes sacri stabuli* in 384, *comes domesticorum* from 385-92, consul in 400 and again in 405. He took many initiatives in public works and the penal laws of Honorius against pagans are attested to him. He was patron of the poet Claudian who addressed panegyrics to him. His wife was called Serena who met the same fate as her husband after his murder, as did their son Eucherius. His daughter Maria married Honorius but died 407-8. He then married her sister Thermantia but divorced her after the death of Stilicho.

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<sup>15</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 750.

<sup>16</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 778.

<sup>17</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 853.

### **Flavius Bauto**<sup>18</sup>

He was a Frank and a pagan who between 380 and 388 played a great role militarily first under Gratian, then under Valentinian II. He was *magister militum* in the West between 380 and 385. In 384 he, like Symmachus, was opposed to the Altar of Victory being removed from the Senate House but his alliances later changed. His daughter Eudoxia married the Emperor Arcadius who shared the consulship with him in 385 when he replaced the *consul designatus*, Praetextatus after the latter's death. He lived in Constantinople from 395. He was a pagan.

### **Minervius, Protadius and Florentinus**<sup>19</sup>

These were three brothers who all attained prominence, probably came from Trier and were from a good family. Minervius was the oldest and was *magister epistularum* and *comes rerum priuatorum* in 397. In 398-9 he was *comes sacrarum largitionum*. Protadius was known to Symmachus from 394. He visited Milan in 395 but otherwise resided in Gaul. He was urban prefect however in 401. In 417 he was in Pisa when Rutilius Claudius Namantianus, the poet, paid him a visit. Florentinius was *comes sacri largitionum* in 385-6, quaestor in 395 and then urban prefect from September 395 to the end of 397, that is during the Gildo affair. Towards 400 Claudian dedicated to him the second book of *De Raptu Proserpinae*.

### **Flavius Eupraxius**<sup>20</sup>

He came from Mauretania Caesariensis. He was *magister memoriae* in 367, *quaestor sacri palatii* 367-70. He was apparently very effective in this sort of post, being able to quell successfully the notorious rages of Valentinian I. He was urban prefect in 374. Some of the letters to Euphrasius about whom nothing is known were probably addressed to him.

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<sup>18</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 159.

<sup>19</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 603.

<sup>20</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 299.

### **Flavius Eusignius**<sup>21</sup>

He was proconsul of Africa in 383 and in 386-7 held the praetorian prefecture of Italy and Illyrica. He owned an estate in Sicily.

### **Book 5**

### **Flavius Mallius Theodorus**<sup>22</sup>

This is a very interesting correspondent of Symmachus because he combined intellectual activities with an important administrative career. Of humble birth he began his career in 376 as an advocate in the service of the Italian praetorian prefecture, then in 377 as governor of an African province. He then successively held the posts of consular of Macedonia in 378; *magister memoriae* or *quaestor*, then *comes sacrarum largitionum*. By 382 he was prefect of Gaul. Then there was a long gap in his career due to Gratian's assassination but he later became praetorian prefect of Italy, Illyrica and Africa. Claudian dedicated a panegyric to him which extols his career.

### **Magnillus**<sup>23</sup>

He was consular of Liguria, and then as a result of the influence of Virius Nichomachus Flavianus was promoted vicar of Africa before 19<sup>th</sup> January 391, a post he held until 393. After he left his position he was accused of a crime but though he was acquitted his career did not seem to recover. He was a close friend of Symmachus and probably a pagan.

### **Hephaestio**<sup>24</sup>

He went to the East with Flavianus senior in 382 and was then involved in a dispute with him. He held a high palatine post from 389 in which he could find employment for skilled rhetors. He might have been *primicerius notariorum* or *magister* of one of the *scrinia*.

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<sup>21</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 309.

<sup>22</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 900.

<sup>23</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 533.

<sup>24</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 416.

### **Flavius Neoterius**<sup>25</sup>

Notary in 365, he occupied in turn the three great praetorian prefectures: the East in 380-1, Italy in 385 and Gaul in 390. He deliberately placed himself within the orbit of influence of Theodosius. We know from his correspondence with Symmachus that he was still around in 398.

### **Felix**

He served under Eugenius but nevertheless survived after the latter's defeat and death and was quaestor in 395-7 and urban prefect in 398.

### **Sallustius**<sup>26</sup>

He was urban prefect in 387 and had lands in Spain from where horses were supplied to Symmachus for Memmius' praetorian games in 400. His daughter was married in Ostia in 398.

### **Aemilius Florus Paternus**<sup>27</sup>

He was a Christian and his grandson was interred near to the tomb of St Felix of Nola. He was possibly Spanish. Paternus was proconsul of Africa in 393. Symmachus asked him to supply hunters for his son's quaestorian games.

### **Anicius Hermogenianus Olybrius and Anicius Probinus**<sup>28</sup>

They were the sons of Petronius Probus (Book 1), born and reared in Rome; and, completely uniquely, because they were still children they were joint consuls in 395. This was celebrated by a panegyric from Claudian. Olybrius, father of the ardent Christian Demetrias, died before 410; Probinus was proconsul of Africa in 397 and they were both amateur poets.

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<sup>25</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 623.

<sup>26</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 797.

<sup>27</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 671.

<sup>28</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 639.

## **Licinius**<sup>29</sup>

He held an unknown office probably a provincial governorship c 383, possibly *vicarius Africae*, 385 and another unknown office in 387. The letters to Licinius and Limenius have been mixed up.

## **Limenius**

*Comes sacri largitionum* in the winter of 400-1 and Prefect of Gaul at the time of the usurpation of Constantine III of Britain, he took refuge in Italy and died soon afterwards with Stilicho in the military revolt at Ticino.

## **Helpidius**

Spanish and a supporter and friend of Theodosius I. He held a provincial governorship in 396 and by 402 was in Africa responsible for re-supplying the capital. He and Symmachus had been friends since boyhood and he was certainly originally pagan. Some of Symmachus' last letters are addressed to him.

## **Book 6**

### **Nicomachus Flavianus junior and the daughter of Symmachus – (Galla?)**

## **Book 7**

### **Attalus**

Like Symmachus he lived on the Caelian Hill and is mentioned in several letters. He was made Roman Emperor in the West in 409 by Alaric before his sack of Rome in 410. He was removed from this post and again in 414 was briefly the puppet Emperor of the Visigoths in Bordeaux from which post he was also removed. He died in exile in the Lipari Islands post 416.

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<sup>29</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 508.

**Books 8 and 9 are filled with letters to largely unknown correspondents, when named, and many unnamed ones**

## **Book 10**

### **Flavius Theodosius Senior**<sup>30</sup>

Spanish and *comes rei militaris* in the West, 368-9. He was *Magister equitum* in the West 369-75 and was a Christian and was baptised late in life. He was executed probably in Africa in 375. After his son became Theodosius Augustus he was honoured by the province of Apulia and Calabria by a gilt equestrian statue and by the Senate in 384 with an equestrian statue.

### **Gratianus Augustus**<sup>31</sup>

Born in 359 he was the older son of Valentinian I. He assumed the purple on his father's death from natural causes in 375. However though initially ruling energetically, he later became too indolent and addicted to hunting and came too much under the influence of Merobaudes, the Frankish general and Bishop Ambrose of Milan. He was an ardent Christian and is famous for his conflict with Symmachus regarding the Altar of Victory. When Maximus invaded Gaul in 383 Gratian's troops deserted him and he was murdered near Lyons

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<sup>30</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 902.

<sup>31</sup> *PLRE* 1, 1971: 401.

### Appendix 3

**The Last Pagan Priests from the *Fasti* compiled by Jorg Rüpke, listed by name and cult.**

**The first table covers the period from 374 to 394, the second, 395, the last, 396-408.**

<b>Cult</b>	<b>374<sup>32</sup></b>	<b>384<sup>33</sup></b>	<b>394<sup>34</sup></b>
Pontifex Maximus	Flavius Valentinianus Augustus Imp.	Vacant ( The Emperor Gratian refused the title in 382)	Vacant
Pontifices Vestae	Clodius Octavianus; L. Aurelius Avianus Symmachus; P. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus ; Virius Nicomachus Flavianus ; Q. Aurelius Symmachus ; Petronius Apollodorus ; Rufinus Caecionius Sabinus ; Publilius Caecionius Caecina Albinus	P. Agorius Praetextatus ; Virius Flavianus Nicomachus ; Q. Aurelius Symmachus ; Rufius Caecionius Sabinus ; Publilius Caecionius Iulianus Kamenius ; Q. Clodius Flavianus ; L Ragonius Venustus ; Arcadius Rufius	Virius Nicomachus Flavianus; Q. Aurelius Symmachus; Publilius Caecionius Caecina Albinus; Q. Clodius Flavianus; L. Ragonius Venustus
Pontifices Solis	C.Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; P.Agorius Vettius Praetextatus ; Q. Clodius Flavianus	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; P. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus; Q. Clodius Flavianus	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; Q. Clodius Flavianus
Vestales	Coelia Concordia ; Anonymus 38	Coelia ; Concordia ; Anonymus	Coelia Concordia
Augures	P. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus ; Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus ; Rufius Caecionius Sabinus	P. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus ; Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus; Rufius Caecionius Sabinus; L. Ragonius Venustus	L. Ragonius Venustus
Quindecimviri Sacris Faciundis	Claudius Hermogenianus Caesarius ; Aradius Rufinus ; Turcius L.f. Secundus ; L. Aurelius Avianus	Aradius Rufinus ; P. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus ; Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius ; Q. Clodius Flavianus	Q. Clodius Flavianus

<sup>32</sup> Rupke, 2008: 421.

<sup>33</sup> Rupke: 2008: 428.

<sup>34</sup> Rupke, 2008: 432.



<b>Cult</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>394</b>
Quindecimviri Sacris Faciundis	Symmachus ; Petronius Apollodorus ; Celsinus Titianus ; P. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus ; Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius		
Epulones	Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius ; Q. Clodius Flavianus	Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius. Q. Clodius Flavianus	Q. Clodius Flavianus
Externi et Regionales – Vestales Albanae	Primagenia		
Duodecimviri Urbis Romae	Caelius Hilarianus	Caelius Hilarianus	
Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum			Flavius Macrobius Longinianus
Religiones et Templa – Sacerdotes Culti Ignoti		Anonymous	
Graecosacranae Cereris		Fabia Aconia Paulina	
Hierofantae Hecatae	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; Caelius Hilarianus ; Rufius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius ; Ulpus Ignatius Faventinus	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; Caelius Hilarianus; Rufius Caeonius Sabinus ; Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius ; Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus ; Fabia Aconia Paulina	C.Ceionius Rufius Volusianus
Curialis Herculis	P. Agorius Vettius Praetextatus	P. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus	
Archibucoli Liberi	Alfenius Ceionius; Iulianus Kamenius; Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus	Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius; Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus	

<b>Cult</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>394</b>
Sacerdotes Liberi	Caelius Hilarianus	Caelius Hilarianus	
Sacerdotes Matris Magna	....V <sup>35</sup>	....V	
Isis – Sacerdotes  Neocori  Isiacae	C. Ceionius Rufius Hilarianus; Caecina Lolliana  P. Agorius Vettius Praetextatus Fabia Aconia Paulina	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus; Caelius; Caecina Lolliana; Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus P. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus Fabia Aconia Paulina; Volumnia	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus; Caecina Lolliana
Mithras – Magister Ordinis Sacerdotum Pater Patrum  Patres	Aurelius Victor Augentius ; Sextilius Agesilaus Aedesius C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; Petronius Apollodorus ; Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus ; Caelius Hilarianus ; Anonymous 13; Rufius Caeionius Sabinus; Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius	Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius  Sextilius Agesilaus ; Q. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus ; Caelius Hilarianus ; Rufius Ceionius Sabinus ; Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus
Hierocercyces	Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus; Caelius Hilarianus; Alfenius Ceionius Iulianus Kamenius	Ulpus Egnatius Faventinus ; Caelius Hilarianus	

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous but probably the unnamed wife of Q. Clodius Flavianus (CIL.6.502); Rupke, 2008: 513.

**The incumbents of the priestly colleges for 395<sup>36</sup>**

<b>Cult</b>	<b>Priests</b>
Pontifex Maximus	Vacant
Pontifices Vestae	Q. Aurelius Symmachus; Publilius Ceionius Caecina Albinus. Q. Clodius Flavianus; L. Ragonius Venustus
Pontifices Vestae	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; Q. Clodius Flavianus
Vestales	Coelia Concordia
Augures	L. Ragonius Venustus
Quindecimviri Sacris Faciundis	Q. Clodius Flavianus
Epulones	Q. Clodius Flavianus
Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum	Flavianus Macrobius Longinianus
Religiones et Tempia – Hierofantae Hecatae	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus
Isis – Sacerdotes	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus ; Caecina Lolliana
Mithras – Patres	C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus

**The incumbents of the priestly colleges from 396 to 408.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Cult</b>	<b>Priests</b>
396	Pontifices Vestae Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum	Q. Aurelius Symmachus; Publilius Ceionius Caecina Albina Flavius Macrobius Longinianus
402	Pontifices Vestae  Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum	Quintus Aurelius Symmachus (died late March-Early April); Publilius Ceionius Caecina Albinus Flavius Macrobius Longinianus
404	Pontifices Vestae  Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum	Publilius Ceionius Caecina Albinus Flavius Macrobius Longinianus
405	Pontifices Vestae  Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum	Publilius Ceionius Caecina Albinus Flavius Macrobius Longinianus
406	Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum	Flavius Macrobius Longinianus
407	Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum	Flavius Macrobius Longinianus
408	Sacerdotes Collegiorum Ignotorum	Flavius Macrobius Longinianus

<sup>36</sup> Rupke, 2008: 433.

## Appendix 4

### Anti-Pagan Legislation in Book 16.10 of the Theodosian Code.

The translation is from C Pharr.

Number	Date	Law
16.10.1	17 <sup>th</sup> December 320 at Sofia	Emperor Constantine to Maximus: Should lightning strike any part of our palace or of any other public building, haruspices may be questioned about what is going to happen according to ancient preserved customs, and the response must be the most diligently referred to our knowledge. To other people permission must be accorded to follow this custom, provided that they do not do private sacrifices which are above all forbidden. You then know that must be referred to us the response and interpretation written about the lightning at the amphitheatre, about which you wrote to the tribune Heraclianus and to the <i>magister officiorum</i> .
16.10.2	341	Emperor Constantius to Madalianus, stand-in for the praetorian prefect: Superstition shall cease, insanity of sacrifices must be abolished. Therefore, the penalty provided by the law and by the present sentence will be imposed on anyone who dares to perform sacrifices against the law of the divine prince our father and the order imposed by our benevolence.
16.10.3	1 <sup>st</sup> November 346	Emperor Constantius to Catullinus, urban prefect: Though we must completely eradicate every superstition, we nevertheless demand that the buildings of temples outside the city walls remain untouched and uncorrupted. In fact, since games, plays and <i>agones</i> come from some of them, it is not opportune that we eradicate those celebrations that amuse the Roman people according to an ancient custom.
16.10.4	1 <sup>st</sup> December 354?	Emperor Constantius to Taurus, praetorian prefect: It is appropriate to immediately close all temples in every place and in every city, so that denying access to them all and preventing all corrupted people acting against the law. We also demand that everyone avoids sacrifice. So if by any change someone has made such a thing, the avenging sword has cut him down. We also decree that the possessions of the condemned must be assigned to the state revenue and the same must happen to those governors of provinces who neglect to punish these crimes.
16.10.5	23 <sup>rd</sup> November 353	Emperor Constantius to Cerealis, urban prefect: Night sacrifices, allowed by Magnentius, shall be abolished, and henceforth such nefarious licence shall be forbidden.
16.10.6	19th February 356 at Milan	Emperor Constantius to Julian Caesar: We decree the death penalty for those who openly worship images.

16.10.7	21 <sup>st</sup> December 381	Emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius to Florus, praetorian prefect: If someone, as insane and profane as he is, tries to consult future events by forbidden sacrifices by day or by night, and for this takes possession of or goes to a shrine or temple to perform such a crime, he will know that he will be banished, because we warned, according to our legitimate faculty, that god must be honoured by chaste prayers and not insulted by evil hymns.
16.10.8	30 <sup>th</sup> November 382 at Constantinople	Emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius to Palladius, chief officer in Osroene: We decree, for the authority of the public Council, that temples once used for gatherings and already for common use, can stay open, if there are statues in them more appreciable for their artistic value than for the deity depicted, and we do not allow any imperial response, obtained with excuses, to be opposed to our decree. Since they are reason for unity in the city and when it is clear that gatherings happen often, your experience can decide whether or not the temple should be open for any festive assembly, according to our edicts, but without meaning that forbidden sacrifices are allowed during these occasions.
16.10.9	25 <sup>th</sup> May 385 at Constantinople	Emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius to Cynegius, Praetorian Prefect: No mortal shall dare to perform sacrifices in order to obtain, with the reading of livers and entrails, hope in a vain promise or, that is worse, the knowledge about the future after so despicable a consultation. Therefore harsh torture will be applied to he who tries to explore the truth of present and future events in spite of our prohibition.
16.10.10	24 <sup>th</sup> February 391 at Milan	Emperors Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius to Albinus Praetorian Prefect: Nobody shall pollute himself with sacrificial victims, nobody shall kill an innocent victim, nor shall get close to sanctuaries visit temples and look at statues made by a mortal hand, or he will be subject divine and human punishment. Judges also shall be bound by the general rule that is any of them should be devoted to profane rites and should enter a temple for the purpose of worship anywhere, either on a journey or in the city, he shall immediately be compelled to pay a like sum with similar haste, unless they resist the judge and immediately report him by a public attestation. Governors with the rank of consular shall pay six pound of gold each, their office staff a like amount; those with the rank of corrector or praeses shall pay four pounds each and their apparitors, by equal lot, a like amount.
16.10.11	16 <sup>th</sup> June 391 at Aquileia	Emperors Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius to Evagrius, Augustalis Prefect and to Romanus Comes in Egypt: Nobody shall be allowed to perform sacrifices, nobody shall go around temples, and nobody shall

		<p>venerate sanctuaries. Everybody shall know that profane access to them is forbidden according to the prohibition of our law he shall learn that he shall not be exempted from punishment by any special grants of imperial favour. If any judge also, during the time of his administration should rely on the privilege of his power and as a sacrilegious violator of the law should enter polluted places, he shall be forced to pay into our treasury fifteen pounds of gold, and his office staff a like sum, unless they opposed him with their combined strength.</p>
16.10.12	8 <sup>th</sup> November 392 at Constantinople	<p>Emperors Theodosius, Arcadius and Honorius Augustuses to Rufinus, Praetorian Prefect: No person at all of any class or order whatsoever of men or of dignities, whether he occupies a position of power or has completed such honours, whether he is powerful by the lot of birth or is humble in lineage, legal status and fortune, shall sacrifice an innocent victim to senseless images in any place at all or in any city. He shall not, by more secret wickedness, venerate his lar with fire, his genius with wine, his penates with fragrant odours; he shall not burn lights to them, place incense before the, or suspend wreaths for them. But if any man should dare to immolate a victim for the purpose of sacrifice or to consult the quivering entrails, according to the example of a person guilty of high treason, he shall be reported by an accusation which is permitted to all persons, and he shall receive the appropriate sentence, even though he has inquired nothing contrary to or with reference to, the welfare of the emperors. For it is sufficient to constitute an enormous crime that any person should wish to break down the very laws of nature to investigate forbidden matters, to disclose hidden secrets, to attempt interdicted practices, to seek to know the end of another's life, to promise the hope of another person's death. But if any person should venerate, by placing incense before them images made by the work of mortals and destined to suffer the ravages of time, and if, in a ridiculous manner, he should suddenly fear the effigies which he himself has formed or should bind a tree with fillets, or should erect an altar of turf that he had dug up, or should attempt to honour vain images with the offering of a gift, which even though it is humble, still is a complete outrage against religion, shall be punished by the forfeiture of that house or landholding in which it is proved that he served a pagan superstition. For we decree that all places shall be annexed to our fisc, if it is proved that they have reeked with the vapour of incense, provided, however, that such places are proved to have belonged to such incense burners. But if any person</p>

		<p>should attempt to perform any such kind of sacrifice in public temples or shrines, or in the buildings or fields of others, and if it is proved that such places were usurped without the knowledge of the owner, the offender shall be compelled to pay twenty-five pounds of gold as a fine. If any person should connive at such a crime, he shall be held subject to the same penalty as that of the person who performed the sacrifice. It is our will that this regulation shall be so enforced by the judges, as well as by the defenders and decurions of the several cities, that the information learned by the defenders and decurions shall be immediately reported to the courts and the crimes so reported shall be punished by the judges. Moreover, if the defenders and decurions through favouritism or overlooked through carelessness, they shall be subjected to judicial indignation. If the judges should be advised of such crimes and should defer punishment through connivance, they shall be fined thirty pounds of gold; their office staffs also shall be subjected to an equal penalty.</p>
16.10.13	7 <sup>th</sup> August 395 at Constantinople	<p>We decree that no person shall have the right to approach any shrine or temple whatever, or to perform abominable sacrifices at any place or time whatever. All persons, therefore, who strive to deviate from the dogma of the Catholic religion, shall hasten to observe those regulations which we have recently decreed, and they shall not dare to disregard former decrees with reference either to heretics or to pagans. They shall know that whatever was decreed against them by the laws of our sainted father, by way or punishment or fine, shall now be executed more vigorously. Moreover, the governors of our provinces and the apparitors who serve them, the chief decurions also and the defenders of the municipalities, as well as the decurions, and the procurators of our possessions in which we learn that illicit heretical assemblies come together without fear of loss, because these possessions cannot be annexed to the fisc, since they already belong to its dominion: all the foregoing persons shall know that if any such offence has been attempted contrary to our statutes, and if it has not been avenged immediately and punished in its very inception, they shall be subjected to all the losses and punishments that were established by the ancient decree. But specifically by this law, we sanction and decree more severe penalties against the governors. For if the aforesaid provisions are not enforced with all diligence and precaution, the governors shall be subject not only to that fine which was decreed against them, but also the fine which was established against those persons who appear to be the authors of the crime. However, such</p>

		<p>finis shall not be remitted in the case of the persons on whom, because of their contumacy, they were justly inflicted. In addition, we judge that the office staffs shall suffer capital punishment if they ignore our laws.</p>
16.10.14	7 <sup>th</sup> December 396 at Constantinople	<p>Emperors Arcadius and Honorius to Caesarius, Praetorian Prefect: If any privileges have been granted by ancient law to civil priests, ministers, prefects, or hierophants of the sacred mysteries, whether known by these names or called by any other, such privileges shall be completely abolished. Such persons shall not congratulate themselves that they are protected by any privilege, since their profession is known to be condemned by law.</p>
16.10.15	29 <sup>th</sup> January 399 at Ravenna	<p>Emperors Arcadius and Honorius to Macrobius, vicarius of Spain, and to Proclianus, vicarius of the five provinces: Just as we forbid sacrifices, so it is our will that the ornaments of public works shall be preserved. If any person should attempt to destroy such works, he shall not have the right to flatter himself as relying on any authority, if perchance he should produce any rescript on any law as his defence. Such documents shall be torn from his hands and referred to our wisdom. If any person should be able to show illicit post warrants, either in his own name or that of another, we decree that such post warrants shall be delivered and sent to us. Those persons who have granted the right to the public post to such persons shall be forced to pay two pounds of gold each.</p>
16.10.16	10 <sup>th</sup> July 399 at Damascus	<p>Emperors Arcadius and Honorius to Eutychnianus, Praetorian Prefect: If there are still temples in the countryside, they shall be destroyed without disorders and riots. Once they are destroyed, superstition will no longer have any place.</p>
16.10.17	20 <sup>th</sup> August 399 at Padua	<p>Emperors Arcadius and Honorius to Apollodorus, Proconsul of Africa: Since we have already abolished the profane rites with a salubrious law, we will not allow the abolition of festive gatherings of citizens and of common festivals. Therefore we decree that amusements and gatherings can be performed according to ancient customs, as requested by public will, but without sacrifices or exhibition of any condemned superstition.</p>
16.10.18	20 <sup>th</sup> August 399 at Padua	<p>Emperors Arcadius, Honorius and Theodosius to Apollodorus, Proconsul of Africa: nobody shall try to destroy a temple pretending it is with our approval, if the temple is already empty of illicit things. We want the building to remain intact. But if someone is caught performing a sacrifice, he will be punished according to the laws, and, after the investigation of the magistrate, the idols will be destroyed, since it still happens that the devotion of a vain superstition is offered to them.</p>



16.10.19	15 <sup>th</sup> November 407 or 408 at Rome	Emperors Arcadius, Honorius and Theodosius to Curtius, Praetorian Prefect: He Annonae shall be taken away from temples and devolved to military expenses. The simulacra, if still there are any in the temples and sanctuaries, that received or still receive the worship of pagans, must be removed from their seats; we know that we have implemented repeated penalties for these actions. The buildings of temples, inside or outside cities, inside or outside the walls, must be re-employed for public use. Altars in every place shall be destroyed and all temples within our possessions must be employed for more suitable use; landowners shall commit to destroy the temples in their lands. In these very evil places no gatherings shall take place for a profane rite or whatsoever celebration. Moreover, we confer on bishops the faculty of preventing access to these places by exerting their episcopal power; magistrates shall undergo a fine of twenty pounds of gold and their office staffs an equal sum, if they should neglect the enforcement of these regulations by their connivance.
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## Appendix 5

### Religious letters of Symmachus

These are the private and public letters of Symmachus which have at least a short mention of a religious institution, event or deity. They are organised in ascending number order under the headings of Book letter is contained in followed by number of letter, date, recipient, subject. The private letters come first, then the official *Relationes*.

Number	Date	Recipient	Subject
1.20	378	Ausonius	A letter regretting that Symmachus cannot be present for the ceremonies in honour of Ausonius' consulship. The sacred spring of the <i>Camenae</i> or Muses mentioned in paragraph one of the letter was on the lower reaches of the Caelian Hill.
1.20	378	Ausonius	In the same paragraph of the same letter, the double temple of <i>Honos et Virtus</i> is mentioned which was at the Porta Capena not far from the Caelian hill.
1.46	Before 380	Praetextatus	A letter concerning the ordinary business of the college of <i>pontifices</i>
1.49	378	Praetextatus	Reporting on a disturbing but unnamed omen at Spoleto which has to be expiated by the traditional sacrifice. The sacrifice was unsuccessful.
1.51	c383	Praetextatus	A letter concerning ordinary business of the college where Symmachus bemoans the difficulty of the current time with the phrase, <i>aris deesse Romanos genus est ambiendi</i>
1.68	380	Celsinus Titianus	In this letter Symmachus recommends the treasurer of the college to his brother in his capacity as proconsul of Africa where the treasurer was going on official business.
1.71	380	Celsinus Titianus	Here Symmachus is knowledgeable about a localised cult in Lavinium in Latium where traditionally there were cults dedicated to Vesta, the Dioscuri, Ceres, the Penates and Aeneas.
2.7	383	Nicomachus Flavianus senior	This letter laments the neglect of religious rites in Rome (after Gratian's 383 edicts) and blaming the famine of that year on the neglect of the gods
2.34	Before 390	Nicomachus Flavianus senior	A letter from Symmachus to Flavianus in which he announces that the Feast of <i>Deum Matris</i> or Cybele is approaching and he

			wonders why Flavianus is not returning to Rome for the feast
2.36	385	Nicomachus Flavianus senior	This letter concerns the deliberations of the college on the matter of the Vestal Virgins wanting to put up a statue to Praetextatus after his death.
2.53	Before 3.90	Nicomachus Flavianus senior	A reminder of the approach of <i>caerimoniae deorum et festa diuinitatis imperata</i> . This letter is connected with the feast of Ceres, celebrated on 4 <sup>th</sup> October of each year.
2.59	393	Nicomachus Flavianus senior	A letter in which Symmachus announces he is returning to Rome for the feast of Vesta on June 9 <sup>th</sup> .
4.18	396	Protadius	Symmachus writes to Protadius of <i>uenatica festa</i> , a reference to the feast of Diana which was on the Ides of August. These festivities involved processions with hunting dogs which of course were dedicated to Diana
5.68	397	Olybrius and Probinus	Symmachus here is writing to Christians but citing ancient pagan rites to do with appeasing the gods of the woodland and of hunting in an analogy for friendship: <i>For as to the honour of the deities is given the antlers of deer in sacrifice and the teeth of wild boar are fixed to thresholds</i>
5.85	395	Helpidius	Symmachus asks Helpidius to his house, to celebrate a simple meal with him in honour of the feast of Minerva, 19 <sup>th</sup> March. Artisans and schoolmasters in particular celebrated this feast. <sup>1</sup>
6.29	Oct./Nov. 397	Nicomachus Flavianus junior	A letter referring with tantalizing obscurity to a legal dispute involving an interventions of ‘priests’, <i>anstites</i> , leading to a clash of interests between ‘justice and innocence’ and ‘religion’. Symmachus is not impressed with this and the priests must be Christian, but the allusion is too obscure to be otherwise clarified. <sup>2</sup>
6.40	401	Nicomachus Flavianus junior	Symmachus recounts a bad omen to his daughter and son-in-law. A suffect consul whose inauguration into office was celebrated on the feast day of Rome itself, the <i>Parilia</i> on April 21, was thrown out of his coach during the procession and suffered a broken leg. Callu states that the festivities associated with this inauguration

<sup>1</sup> Callu, Tome 2, 2003: 218, n 1.

<sup>2</sup> Matthews, 1974: 87.

			were some compensation to Rome because the ordinary consuls by this time always celebrated their inaugurations in Milan, later Ravenna. <sup>3</sup>
9.108	Before 402	To an Unnamed Vestal	A Vestal seeks to leave the order before her 30 years were up
9.147-8	Before 382	To Unnamed Officials	The former head of the Vestal House at Bovillae in Latium, Primigenia has been unfaithful with a lover and Symmachus seeks to have her, and the lover, punished with the traditional penalty for lack of <i>castitas</i> , death.
<i>Relatio</i> 3	384	The Emperor Theodosius	An appeal to have the Altar of Victory restored to the Senate House, and fiscal support restored to the Vestals. This is Symmachus' great plea for traditional Roman religious toleration to continue to be observed.
<i>Relatio</i> 10	Dec. 384	The Emperors Theodosius and Arcadius	Reporting the death of Praetextatus, the great pagan, and the grief of all the citizenry of Rome. Symmachus offers his resignation in part 2 of this dispatch.
<i>Relatio</i> 11	Dec. 384	The Emperors Theodosius and Arcadius	Dealing with the same sad event as 10. It would appear that Symmachus sent this letter by special messenger to anticipate 10 which is the more formal of the two letters. <sup>4</sup>
<i>Relatio</i> 21	Nov. 384	Presumably to the Emperors Theodosius and Arcadius – but though they are referred to in the plural, this is not specified.	This is a very important <i>Relatio</i> which is linked to 3. Symmachus was being accused of maltreating Christians. He refutes this and was in fact backed up by Pope Damasus and exonerated. But he was obviously feeling very isolated and here offered his resignation for the first time.

<sup>3</sup> Callu, Tome 2, 2003: 161, 25 n1,

<sup>4</sup> Barrow, 1973: 76.

## Appendix 6

### List of Symmachus Letters Used in Text

A list of all letters used in text organised by chapter, then number of book of letters, number of letter within book in ascending order and finally which page mentioned on in text. If letter is mentioned in chapter more than once, then pages where mentioned listed in ascending order. The private letters come first, then the official despatches. The Book and Number order follows that of Otto Seeck and Jean Callu.

#### Chapter 1

**Book 2.27** p 9

**Book 5.78** p 1

#### Chapter 3

**Book 1.3** p 58; 1.8 p 36; 1.8 p 37; 1.8 p 49; 1.9 p 63; 1.20 p 39; 1.20 p 52; 1.20 p 58; 1.23 p 49; 1.29 p 44; 1.29 p 45; 1.46 p 46; 1.46 p 70; 1.47 p 45; 1.49 p 35; 1.49 p 50; 1.49 p 54; 1.49 p 54; 1.49 p 68; 1.49 p 70; 1.51 p 45; 1.51 p 47; 1.53 p 37; 1.57 p 63; 1.64 p 45; 1.68 p 70; 1.71 p 52

**Book 2.3** p 58; 2.3 p 63; 2.6 p 59; 2.6 p.63; 2.11 p 62; 2.11 p 63; 2.24 p 41; 2.34 p 37; 2.34 p 53; 2.36 p 38; 2.36 p 52; 2.47 p 64; 2.49 p 60; 2.50 p 62; 2.52 p 62; 2.53 p 48; 2.59 p 47; 2.59 p 62; 2.60 p 39

**Book 3.3** p 53; 3.44 p 43; 3.44 p 70; 3.47 p 34; 3.74 p 34

**Book 4.14** p 54; 4.14.p 56; 4.18 p 50; 4.18 p 70; 4.22 p 41; 4.33 p 51; 4.33 p 55; 4.33 p 56; 4.54 p 62; 4.69 p 62; 4.72 p 40; 4.72 p 41

**Book 5.17** p 62; 5.17 p 63; 5.68 p 49; 5.68 p 53; 5.68 p 55; 5.68 p 70; 5.85 p 33; 5.85 p 34; 5.95 p 41; 5.95 p 62

**Book 6. 14** p 54; 6.19 p 62; 6.19 p 63; 6.29 p 43; 6.49 p 41; 6.65 p 62; 6.65 p 63; 6.68 p 62

**Book 7.14** p 62; 7.19 p 35; 7.19 p 39; 7.19 p 40; 7.59 p 52; 7.60 p 49; 7.68 p 51; 7.74 p 57;  
7.74 p 59; 7.80 p 60

**Book 8.2** p 62; 8.13 p 64; 8.26 p 55; 8.27 p 62; 8.40 p 41; 8.47 p 62; 8.47 p 63; 8.58 p 13;  
8.58 p 63; 8.61 p 59

**Book 9.9** p 40; 9.22 p 62; 9.28 p 46; 9.39 p 62; 9.68 p 50; 9.72 p 33; 9.73 p 60; 9.83 p 62;  
9.106 p 62; 9.122 p 33; 9.125 p 62; 9.128 p 48; 9.128 p 62; 9.137 p 62; 9.137 p 63; 9.147/8 p  
42; 9.147 p 42; 9.147 p 48; 9.151 p 62

#### **Chapter 4**

**Book 1.20** p 102

**Book 2.7** p 120; 2.7 p 121; 2.34 p 107; 2.59 p 116

**Book 3.88** p 77

**Book 4.33** p 121

**Book 5.85** p 83

**Book 6.37** p 71; 6.40 p 109

**Book 7.18** p. 77; 7.19 p 77

*Rel.4* p 107

*Rel. 6* p 110; 21 p 114

#### **Chapter 5**

**Book 1.46** p 128; 1.46 p 129; 1.46 p 130; 1.47 p 128; 1.47 p 129; 1.47 p 136; 1.47 p 138;  
1.47 p 139; 1.47 p 140; 1.48 p 146; 1.48 p 155; 1.48 p 156; 1.48 p 157; 1.49 p 129; 1.49 p  
141; 1.49 p 143; 1.49 p 144; 1.49 p 146; 1.51 p 128; 1.51 p 129; 1.51 p 138; 1.51 p 139; 1.51  
p 140; 1.51 p 141; 1.51 p 143; 1.51 p 163; 1.68 p 128; 1.68 p 129

**Book 2.34** p 147; 2.36 p 128; 2.36 p 129; 2.36 p 157; 2.36 p 158; 2.59 p 128; 2.59 p 129;  
2.59 p 131; 2.59 p 132; 2.59 p 133

**Book 5.1** p 150; 5.2 p 150; 5.3 p 150

**Book 9.108** p 128; 9.108 p 131; 9.137 p 134; 9.147 p 126; 9.147 p 128; 9.147 p 129; 9.147 p 132; 9.147 p133; 9.147 p 134; 9.147 9 137; 9.147 p 138; 9.148 p 126; 9.148 p 128; 9.148 p 129; 9.148 p 132; 9.148 p 133; 9. 148 p 137; 9.148 p 138

*Rel.* 3.13 p 130

## **Chapter 6**

**Book 1.23** p 189; 1.23 p 188; 1.23 p 191; 1.23 p 190; 1.33 p 185; 1.46 p 182; 1.49 p 183; 1.64 p 187; 1.64 p 188; 1.92 p 178

**Book 2.26** p 194; 2.34 p183; 2.35 p 179; 2.35 p 180

**Book 3.37** p 187

**Book 4.28** p 180; 4.73 p 188; 4.73 p 190

**Book 5.2** p 194; 5.2 p 196; 5.68 p 182; 5.68 p 195; 5.68 p 196; 5.68 p 199

**Book 7.9** p 177; 7.9 p 184; 7.42 p 180; 7.60 p 181; 7.78 p 197; 7.99 p 171; 7.99 p 181; 7.99 p 183

**Book 8.35** p 185; 8.35 p 186

## **Chapter 7**

**Book 1.44** p 205; 1.51 p 225

**Book 2.7** p 234

**Book 3.30-37** 217

**Book 5.78** p 209;

*Rel.* 1 p 207

*Rel.* 2 p 207

**Rel. 3** p 207; **Rel. 3.1** p 215; **Rel. 3 2-3, 4-5** p 209; **Rel. 3 6-7, 9** p 212; **Rel. 3.12, 6 10** p 213; **Rel.3.7** p 215; **Rel. 3.9** p 216; **Rel. 311-13, 16-17, 30, 31-33** p 220; **Rel.3.3** p 224; **Rel. 3.7,8 9,10**; **Rel.3.9, 10** p 226; **Rel.3.8,10**; **Rel.3.8** p 230; **Rel.3.4,7** p331

**Rel. 4** p 207

**Rel. 7** p 208

**Rel. 8** p 207

**Rel. 10** p 207; **Rel. 10.2** p 235; **Rel. 10.3** p 235; **rel. 10** p 235

**Rel.11** p 206; **Rel. 11** p 235; **Rel.11** p 235

**Rel. 12** p 208; **Rel.12** p 235

**Rel. 13** p 207

**Rel.15** p 208

**Rel. 16** p 205

**Rel. 17** p 207

**Rel. 20** p 207

**Rel. 21** p 207; **Rel.21.6** p 233, 234

**Rel. 22** p 207

**Rel.23** p 207

**Rel. 24** p 208; **Rel.24** p 235

**Rel.28** p 207

**Rel. 33** p 207

**Rel. 35** p 207

**Rel. 36** p 207



**Rel. 45/46** p 208

**Rel. 47** p 207; **Rel.47** p 234

## **Chapter 8**

**Book 2.13** p 240; 2.34 p 255; 2.52 p 240; 2.57 p 274; 2.59 p 274; 2.62 p 241; 2.81 p 257;  
2.83 p 257; 2.84 p 257

**Book 3.52** p 240; 3.55 p 240; 3.63 p 240;

**Book 4.8** p 251; 4.9 p 270; 4.12 p 251; 4.13 p 272; 4.14 p 264; 4.14 p 265; 4.17 p 262

**Book 5.95** p 271; 5.96 p 269; 5.96 p 272

**Book 6.33** p 251; 6.40 p 252; 6.72 p 240

**Book 7.4** p 250; 7.4 p 254; 7.13 p 274; 7.14 p 271; 7.19 p 266

**Book 8.69** p 240

**Book 9.93** p 246; 9.106 p 265

**Rel. 3.20** p 287

**Rel. 6.2** p 253

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