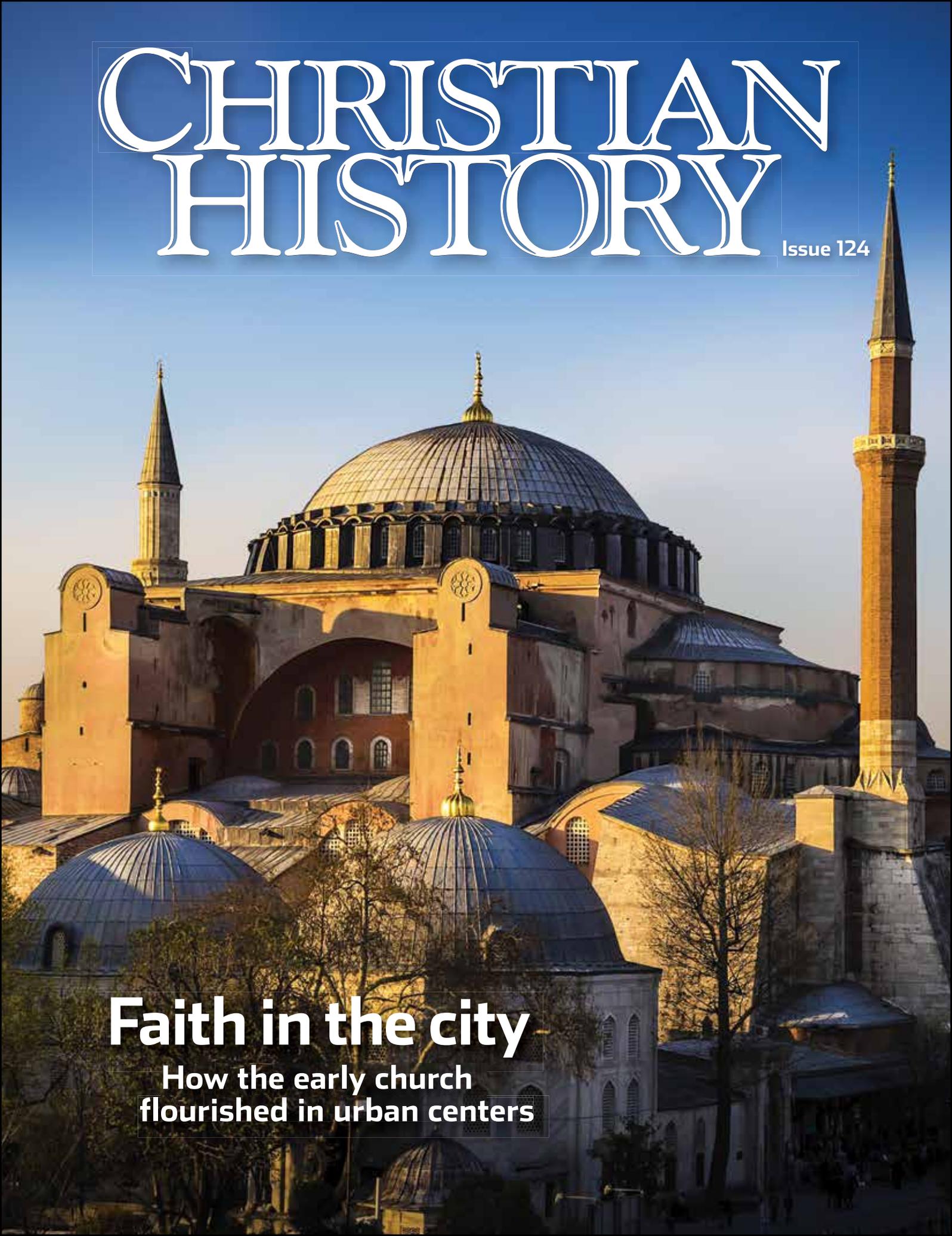


CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 124

Faith in the city

How the early church
flourished in urban centers





UNITED IN DEATH A married Roman couple (and the god Cupid) adorn this marble family sarcophagus.

Did you know?

WHAT DID ROMAN CITIES LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?

WHEN IN ROME . . .

- All citizens of the Roman Empire had more privileges than non-Romans—think how Paul repeatedly appealed to his privilege as a citizen. But they were divided into social classes by wealth. At the top were the emperors, followed by patricians (wealthy nobility),



PRIVATE OASIS A Roman *domus* had bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining room, and maybe even a private library—all built around a courtyard.

senators (also wealthy), equestrians (business and military leadership), and plebeians (average working people and rank-and-file soldiers).

- Slaves generally did the most menial work, though some worked as doctors or tutors to children of wealthy families.
- The basic unit of Roman society was the family, and the father, called the *paterfamilias*, was its absolute head. He could even reject his own children from the family or sell them as slaves.
- Women had no political rights. They could not vote, stand for office, or speak in public. As time wore on, wealthier women gained the right to own property and manage their own affairs; we catch glimpses in the New Testament of some who supported the early church.
- Women were not supposed to appear in a civic capacity, but the interior of the home was considered to be the woman's domain, and men generally did not interfere with household management.

LIFE IN A ROMAN CITY

- Cities were noisy and crowded, with different trades practiced, restaurants and taverns available, and a wide selection of entertainment: circuses, chariot races, plays, athletic games. Many people emigrated from rural areas looking for jobs, which they usually did not find.
- Great marble public buildings dominated the cityscape. Streets were haphazardly laid out until after the great fire (64) of Nero's reign. People lived in crowded, unsafe tenements called *insulae*; only the more spacious lower floors of an *insula* had running water and indoor plumbing. Affluent Romans lived in luxurious multiroom houses (*domus*). Both *insulae* and *domus* had shops or offices in front for conducting business.
- Roman men enjoyed going to the free public baths in the middle of the day, the only place where different classes mixed freely. The baths had areas for exercise, food, and hot and cold bathing. Slaves attended wealthy bathers.
- In the late 200s, Emperor Diocletian gave Rome a bath that covered over 30 acres and could accommodate up to 3,000 bathers. By the year 400, Rome supported over 900 baths.
- All Romans joined in observing dinner at 4 p.m. after visiting the baths; a family would observe rituals to its particular gods at the meal. The wealthy reclined on



couches, ate exotic spices, and threw lavish multicourse dinner parties; the poor ate bread and gruel, supplemented rarely with meat, fish, and vegetables. (They received a monthly allowance of grain.)

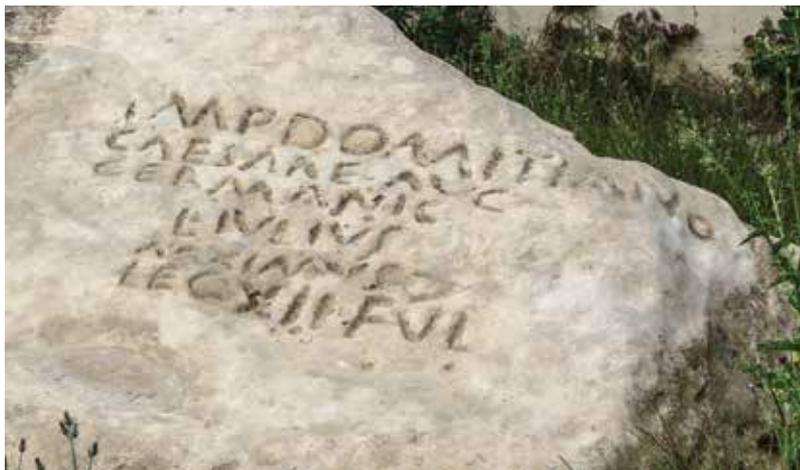
OF GODS AND CHRISTIANS

- The Roman state maintained colleges of priests and priestesses: the *augures*, elected for life, studied omens to decide if the gods were pleased; the *pontifices* helped the emperor in his religious duties; the *flamines* served individual gods; the *rex sacrorum* and his wife, the *regina sacrorum*, spent their lives performing sacrifices for the state; and the vestal virgins oversaw the temple of Vesta in Rome.
- Atheism, one of the leading charges against Christians, meant “against gods” or refusing to participate in the social and civic activities honoring pagan deities. Christian observance of the Eucharist and love feasts also led to accusations of cannibalism and incest.
- Some Romans believed Christians were a funeral society because they observed the anniversary of a relative’s death on the third, ninth, and thirtieth (or fortieth) days after the death. They gathered at the tomb, sang psalms, read Scripture, prayed, gave alms to the poor, and ate a meal. Later this practice developed into feasts to honor martyrs. Perhaps the first such feast was for Polycarp, shortly after his death around 155.

EVANGELIZING PAGANS

- For more than 150 years, Christians had no official church buildings and worshipped

ON DUTY This inscription honors the “Thundering Legion,” a famed Roman unit.



RUSTIC RETREAT *Left:* This was once a wealthy Roman’s villa outside Carthage.

RUNNING HIS RACE *Below:* This 4th-c. silver spoon shows the apostle Paul as an athlete.

mainly in homes. The first part of worship was open to all, including strangers. The second part of the service involved the Lord’s Supper, which only the baptized could consume; the unbaptized departed.

- Persecution in the Roman Empire was sporadic and, in the first two centuries, usually localized. A long peaceful period lasted from 211 to 303, briefly interrupted by persecutions in 235 and again between 250 and 258.
- Persecution often grew out of animosity rather than deliberate government policy.

Faced with persecution, some Christians complied with imperial directives.

- The numbers of those who fell away produced a crisis for the church in the 250s: the question of whether to readmit the lapsed produced several schisms.
- Once legal, Christianity often “baptized” paganism by building churches on old shrines, like San Clemente and Santa Prisca in Rome. The Church of Santa Pudenziana in Rome may be named, not after a martyred Christian, but after Roman senator Pudens who originally owned the land. ☒

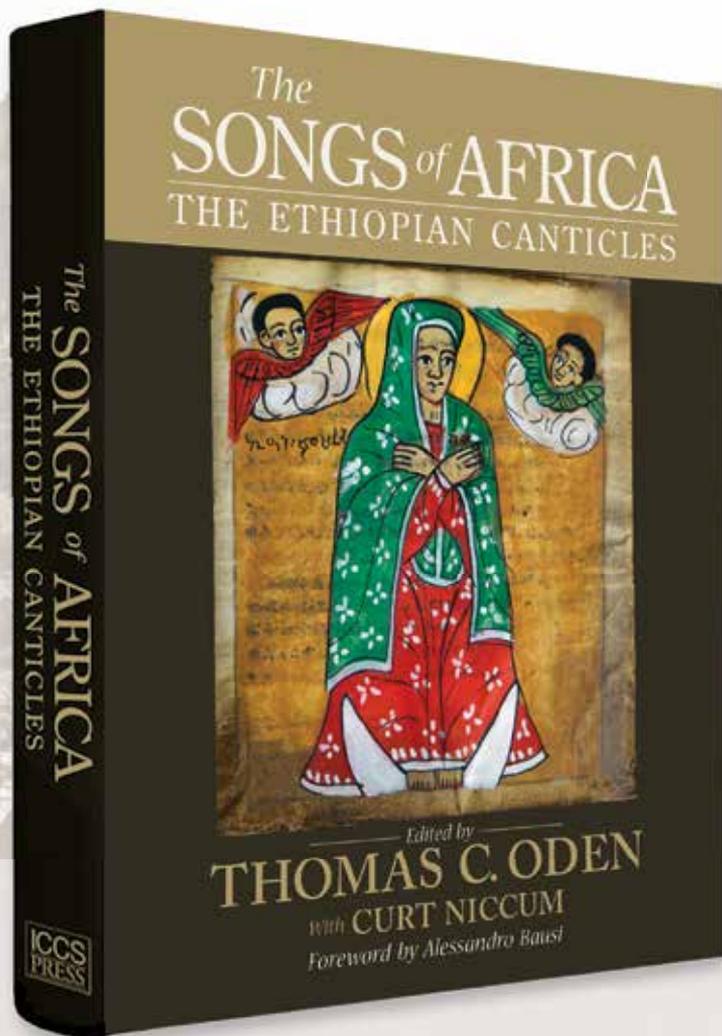
John O. Gooch, retired United Methodist pastor and freelance writer, and Eoerett Ferguson, distinguished scholar in residence at Abilene Christian University, contributed to previous Did you know? articles from which a few of these entries were taken.



NEW! From ICCS Press:

The SONGS of AFRICA

THE ETHIOPIAN CANTICLES



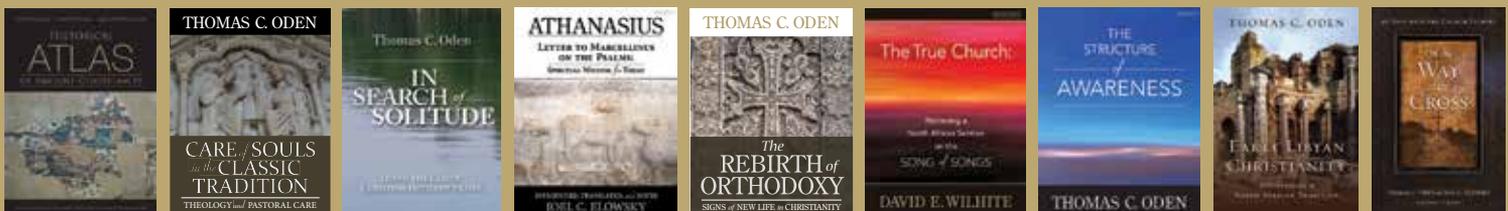
Thomas C. Oden was a remarkable scholar and teacher whose long and varied life touched many areas of theology and spirituality. In his last years, Oden's attention turned to African Christianity, and he began a project on the Ethiopian Canticles. The superb essays gathered in this volume represent some of the fruit of those labors. They shed new light on one of the earliest layers of historic Christianity, a living tradition in which liturgy, theology, and poetry coinhere in the vitality of faith.

—**Timothy George**, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University and general editor of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*.

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PRESS

Letters to the editor

Readers respond to *Christian History*

PRAISE FROM OUR READERS

Once again, a superb issue on the Catholic Reformation. I think this is my favorite of the four Reformation issues because it contains information not usually presented. Thanks! Keep up the good work! Lord Bless!
—Tom Edmunds, Washington, NJ

There are many emails that I often delete before I even read. Not so with your daily email. I so enjoy each article. . . . I use Strong's concordance often and to now know it took 35 years to compile is nothing short of amazing! Such discipline!—Cindy Dingeldein

Hi—I greatly enjoy your daily emails, and they are good also for instructing my daughter. I would like to bring to your attention Helen Roseveare. She is worthy of an article.—C. J. McArthur

Always happy to hear from readers who enjoy what we are doing! Our new website design makes it easy to find great content any time you need it, including daily! And we've talked about doing an issue on medical missions; Roseveare would be a good person to profile there.

WHERE WAS BUNYAN?

I do enjoy *CH* always, but I was disappointed with issue #123. I was eagerly waiting to read a few pages about John Bunyan. . . . As he spent 12 years in jail for non-conforming, he would be a perfect subject.—Shane Rouse, Sagamore Beach, MA

We covered Bunyan in our recent issue on 25 Writings That Changed the Church and the World (#116), where you will not be surprised to learn he was #6!

TEACHING AND PREACHING

Our adult S.S. is currently studying *Great Women*, and this summer we will be working with [the video series] *This Changed Everything*.—Mark Deeter, Topeka, KS

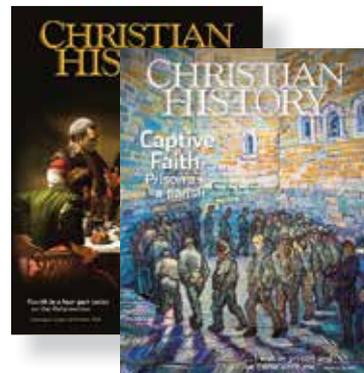
I must thank you for the Reformation issues, which I sent to several special pastors in our lives. They have expressed such delight to have received them and are grateful to you for them. One young pastor told us that they are a resource for his preaching! Hoping to find the film productions on our local PBS in Minneapolis.—Joan Knudtson, Minneapolis, MN

We love to hear of our materials being used in local churches. Thanks so much! Our award-winning documentary This Changed Everything has aired on about a dozen PBS stations.

INCARCERATED READERS RESPOND TO CH #123

I feel all alone and helpless sometimes even though I have Jesus and my Catholic faith. Your magazine helped me feel less alone. . . . I find myself feeling that I'm the only one suffering in prison, but your issue shows inmates who had it a lot worse, and some paid with their lives.

This puts my suffering into perspective.—Kevin Owens, Florida City, FL



How happy I was to get issue 123. Everyone here [in the prison] is reading the issue and loving it. We'll keep you in our prayers. . . . —Johnny L. Wooten, Lovelady, TX

MORE WAR STORIES

Once again you delivered a riveting and timely issue [#121]. However, for my own personal reasons I was left wanting more about conscientious objectors. . . . My grandfather served time in Leavenworth as a WWI CO, and my dad and uncle both served at a CPS camp during WWII. Both my dad and mom later served in relief efforts in Europe after the war. This ultimately led to lifelong mission service in the Congo. Thanks for covering this important aspect of war.—Royce Buller

I enjoyed the recent issue of faith in wartime. My grandmother was a "Rosie the Riveter," working on fighters and bombers in WWII. She said the ladies prayed over each plane they worked on, asking Divine protection for the young men who would go to war in them. Keep up the good work! Blessings in Messiah.—Scott Neel, Cleveland, TX

Thanks for sharing your family stories, Royce and Scott. Want to help us choose a future issue of Christian History? Look for our annual Ministry Update in your mailbox, and be sure to return the readers' survey! The survey is also available on www.ChristianHistoryInstitute.org.

P.S. We are continually contacted by people asking us to reprint back issues. Most recently we reissued Wycliffe (#3), Women in the Early Church (#17), and Worship in the Early Church (#37). Find the most up-to-date information on available back issues at www.ChristianHistoryMagazine.org.

In issue #122, Theodore Beza's death date was erroneously reported as 1565 instead of 1605 on p. 36.

Editor's note



WHEN I WAS A CHILD, decades ago, it seemed that everyone I knew was moving out to the suburbs. Houses were being built in marked-off subdivisions; shopping malls were being nestled amid seas of black-top; and churches were acquiring sprawling campuses with acres of space. (I remember how excited I was that the church my father pastored in the late 1970s had a creek on the property.)

More recently it seemed that everyone I knew was moving back to the city—in search of varied walkable communities that might make for a more engaged, less isolated lifestyle than we had found in our subdivisions.

I became a pastor at a church in the late 1990s which had just voted to remain downtown rather than move out to the suburbs. It was a radical decision then. Now it's a decision that many churches are making. Staying in the city means being ready to respond to the needs of the city and being ready to offer Christianity in a marketplace dominated by competing distractions.

PREACHING, GROWING, NEGOTIATING

In preaching Christ in the city, we are following in the footsteps of Christians who transformed the Roman Empire's cities 2,000 years ago. From Jesus' small group of early disciples, the Christian movement grew within 350 years to 56 percent of the population of the empire.

Christian History has visited the early church in 11 other issues, but we've never talked about early Christianity specifically as an *urban* faith. Before Christianity was legalized, Christians had to negotiate how to live with their pagan neighbors, most of the time in cities: crowded, noisy, smelly, hedonistic cities, where they lived, worked, played, and worshiped alongside nonbelievers. In the lulls between local or

empirewide persecutions, Christians held down jobs, joined the army, founded schools, created art, and bought property.

After Christianity was legalized in the third century, the church finally began to move into the countryside. But the cities continued to feel the most drastic effects as Christians built hospitals and churches, sometimes on the foundations of pagan temples they knocked down.

In this issue of *CH*, we're putting the ancient "city movement" and the modern one together. In our main articles and their accompanying images of art and architecture, we'll explore how early Christians thought, worked, prayed, obeyed, fought, served, and talked to their neighbors in cities. In a series of accompanying interviews, we'll meet people who are doing the same things today. We'd like to thank *Christianity Today's* "This Is Our City" series for alerting us to the work and witness of some of our interviewees, and the Fieldstead Foundation for a generous donation to support the production of this issue.

One of my favorite Bible passages is the image in Revelation 21–22 of the redeemed city, where the glory of the Lord is its light and the leaves of the tree there are for the healing of the nations. It's worth remembering that it is specifically a glorious *city*. Something about heaven will look like a city, in all its activity and diversity, its motion and possibility. Whether you live in a

large city or amid wide open spaces, we hope this issue of *CH* inspires you to make your home a place where the healing of the nations can begin. ☑



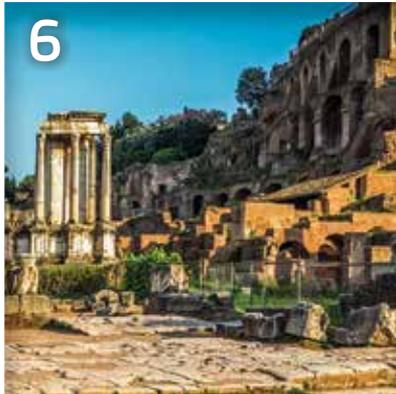
Jennifer Woodruff Tait
Managing editor

Find *Christian History* on Facebook as Christian History Magazine, or visit our website at www.christianhistorymagazine.org. Find more Christian history at www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/today/.

Don't miss our next issue on food and faith. From the Lord's Supper to potlucks to soup kitchens, food has been a part of Christian practices for over 2,000 years!

Readers like you keep *Christian History* in print. Make your annual donation at www.ChristianHistoryInstitute.org, or use the envelope in the center of this magazine.

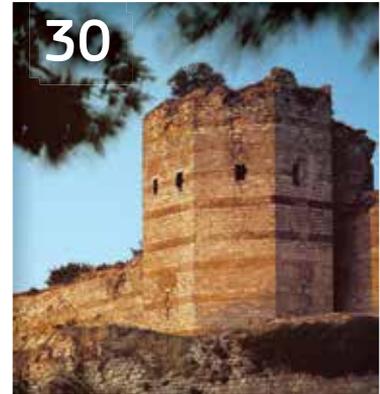
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THE ROMAN FORUM, ROME, ITALY (PHOTO) / PHOTO © KEN WELSH / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
DETAIL OF A WARRIOR CHRIST (MOSAIC), ROMAN, (6TH CENTURY AD) / CAPPELLA ARCIVESCOVILE, RAVENNA, ITALY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
THEODOSIAN WALL, BUILT DURING REIGN OF THEODOSIUS II (408-50) IN AD 412-22 (PHOTO), BYZANTINE, (5TH CENTURY) / ISTANBUL, TURKEY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

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Life in the earthly city

CHRISTIANS ADVOCATED FOR “THE WAY” IN THE MIDDLE OF URBAN DISTRACTIONS MUCH LIKE OUR OWN

Joel C. Elowsky

FROM THEIR FIRST HEADQUARTERS in the holy city of Jerusalem, to their future Western hub in the imperial city of Rome, the apostles’ mission was an urban one. As they set out to fulfill Jesus’ final commission, recorded in Matthew 28:19, their route from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) leapfrogged from one ancient Near Eastern city to the next.

The apostle Paul pursued this path with such zeal that he eventually thought he had saturated the area “from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum” (Rom. 15:19, 23) and so headed off toward Spain. By the late second century, the Way (one of the earliest names applied to Christianity) began to look like a truly global urban movement. The *Epistle to Diognetus* (second century) claims, “What the soul is in the body—that is what Christians are in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world.”

FIT FOR A RULER The Basilica of St. Ambrose (Sant’ Ambrogio) in Milan was originally built in 379 by the famed magistrate-turned-bishop.

DOCKING IN EVERY PORT

The apostles started by targeting the ports—bustling urban crossroads akin to modern airport hubs. There they found an environment conducive to their message. For one thing there were a lot of people: population density estimates for the time run as high as 200 per acre—about 15’ x 15’ of living space for each man, woman, and child. Even better, those people were educated, employed, and cosmopolitan—the sort of folk who welcomed the open exchange of ideas about everything, including religion. Where commerce and trade flourished, education thrived and ideas percolated.

Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, was a city boy himself. He had grown up in Tarsus—“a city of



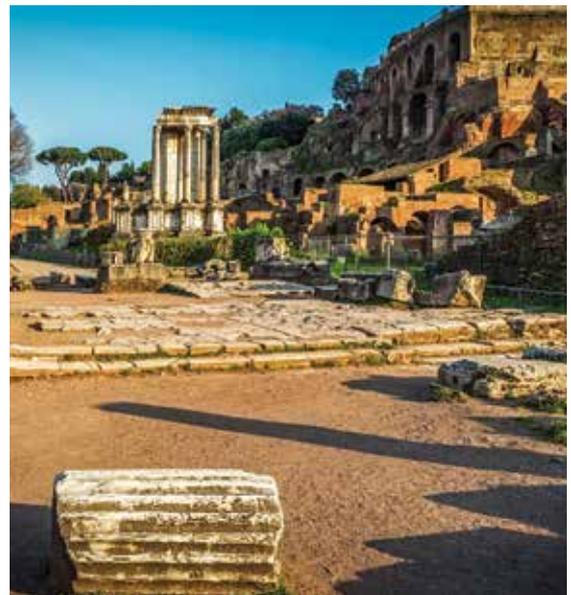
THE MOST CELEBRATED MEETING PLACE IN HISTORY

Above: Everything from trials to processions to elections to business to gladiatorial combat happened at the Roman Forum (also shown at *right*).

Based on the accounts of apostles like Peter and Paul preaching in the public square, sometimes performing signs and wonders, and occasionally reeling in a large catch of new believers, one might expect to find such public displays in church services. But the church's target audience was already used to being welcomed at civic pagan rites and ceremonies. These showy public spectacles compelled little commitment, just as long as the gods were honored. Christian churches, by contrast, largely closed their services to outsiders, allowing only those instructed for baptism into the "mysteries of the faith" to participate. Their *disciplina arcani* (ancient disciplines) called not only for a life of renunciation, but also a promise to keep secret the mysteries (sacraments) of the church.

WAYS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Would-be joiners must also have had a sponsor invite and vouch for them. No one just walked into church. Nor was entry quick or automatic for the seeker. The program of instruction for new members was dauntingly thorough—sometimes lasting as long as three years. New believers were required to commit themselves not only to learn the doctrine of the early creeds, but also to practice a new "Way" of life contrasting with the city's way of death. As the early Christian behavior manual, the *Didache* (first/second century), put it, "There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but a great difference between the two ways."



Given these rigorous requirements, how did the church grow? As historian Alan Kreider put it, in the first centuries of the church, growth was more like a "patient ferment" than an explosion. Like yeast spreading through dough, missionaries worked along a web of connections made possible by life in the city. In each of these connections, a potential convert would come into contact with the countercultural Christian *habitus*. Even one convert could yield an abundant harvest as Christians rubbed shoulders with their neighbors and the yeast continued to spread.

Paul often had "chance" encounters with individuals as he was led by the Spirit. A single conversion

ROME, ITALY. THE ROMAN FORUM. TEMPLE OF VESTA. THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF ROME IS A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE. / PHOTO © KEN WELSH / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
THE ROMAN FORUM, ROME, ITALY (PHOTO) / PHOTO © KEN WELSH / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

FOLLOW ME The *Didache* outlined the difference between a pagan way of death and the Christian “Way” of life.

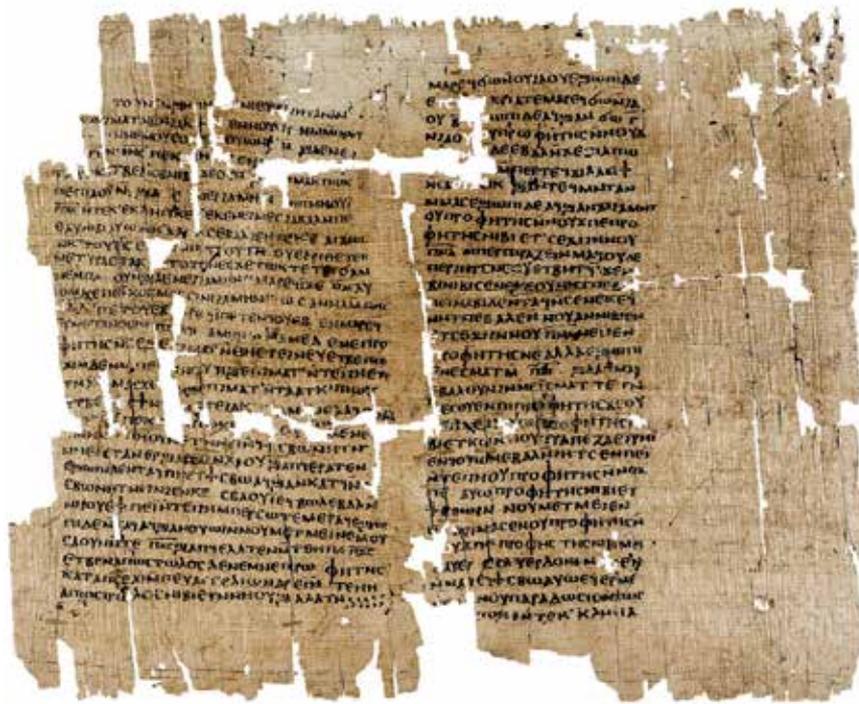
often resulted in the rest of the household being baptized as well: Cornelius in Joppa (Acts 10), Lydia in Philippi as well as Paul’s jailer there (Acts 16), Crispus in Corinth at the house of Titius Justus (Acts 18)—all confessed their faith and were baptized, along with their entire households. Households in the cities at the time of the early church were extended affairs under one roof. They included the *paterfamilias*, or head of the household, his spouse, his children, his servants and slaves, former slaves who might now be clients, and often tenants or people with whom he did business.

Work was another avenue of connection. Paul may have worked his trade in the tentmakers’ section of each city. Just like New York’s garment and meat-packing districts, Ephesus might have had a leatherworkers’ district or a metalworkers’ district.

The tent workshop may have even been a base of operations for Paul’s preaching and teaching in Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, and other places. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, “Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you” (1 Thess. 2:9).

Besides business connections, there were also voluntary associations—like today’s clubs. Tertullian speaks of these types of associations in his *Apology*. Clubs provided social interaction but also identity; they might include members of a particular trade or religion, or be organized around certain civic duties or associations. Many of these clubs would hold banquets or festivals in honor of patrons, living or dead. In fact belonging to such a society would ensure one a burial place, no small concern in antiquity when many of the poor were simply buried in mass graves with nothing to mark their existence.

To many outside observers, Christianity and its secret meetings seemed like a type of private club or society as well. But it was also different, as Tertullian (160–220) made clear. A great theologian and apologist, Tertullian lived in the prosperous city of Carthage (in modern Tunisia, North Africa). The Christian community to which he belonged provided a support network for the benefit of needy members and the larger community alike. Members



voluntarily contributed to a “treasure-chest” once a month; Tertullian called these gifts “piety’s deposit fund.”

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND DISTRACTIONS

The Christians around the empire were plugged into the social network of the cities, and to that network they modeled an alternative *habitus*, adaptable across classes and cultures, eras and economies. The *habitus* centered on the two poles of the Law Moses had taught and Jesus had reiterated: Love God and love your neighbor (Matt. 22:37–39). The love of God was cultivated in the liturgy and the gathering together; the love of neighbor was cultivated at home, at work, in the marketplaces, and in the streets.

We don’t take the gifts and spend them on feasts, drinking-bouts, or fancy restaurants. Instead we use them to support and bury poor people, to supply the needs of boys and girls who have no means and no parents. We support the elderly confined now to their homes. We also help those who have suffered shipwreck. And if there happen to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in the prisons—for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God’s Church—they then become the nurslings of the confession they hold [as we take them in to help them]. Primarily it is the acts of love that are so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. “See,” they say, “how they love one another” (Tertullian, *Apology*, chapter 39).



“GREAT IS ARTEMIS OF THE EPHESIANS” At this amphitheater in Ephesus, Acts 19 tells us, “there arose a great disturbance about the Way” resulting in a riot by pagan craftsmen.

But Greco-Roman cities were filled with distractions to stimulate the appetites. Gladiators and charioteers of the ancient world were like modern sports stars; beyond their public violence and thirst for blood, a lot of sex, drinking, and gambling went on as well. The graffiti in Pompeii is quite revealing—recording sexual slurs and conquests (heterosexual and homosexual) along with bar fights and thefts, among other things.

The theaters held classic comedic productions by artists such as Seneca and Terrence, but the subject matter often revolved around sex and infidelity with plots that today would be rated R if not NC-17. John Chrysostom (d. 407) excoriated his congregation at Antioch for coming to

church—if they even could make it there—and then leaving Christ lying in the manger to rush off to the theater to see “naked women swimming.” Citizens were bombarded constantly with images: erotic art appeared everywhere, and the baths invited promiscuity and prostitution. The Romans had at least 50 different words to identify the various types of prostitutes one could find in the cities. Society and culture were structured to tempt; and if not to tempt, then to distract; and if not to distract, then to coarsen and desensitize.

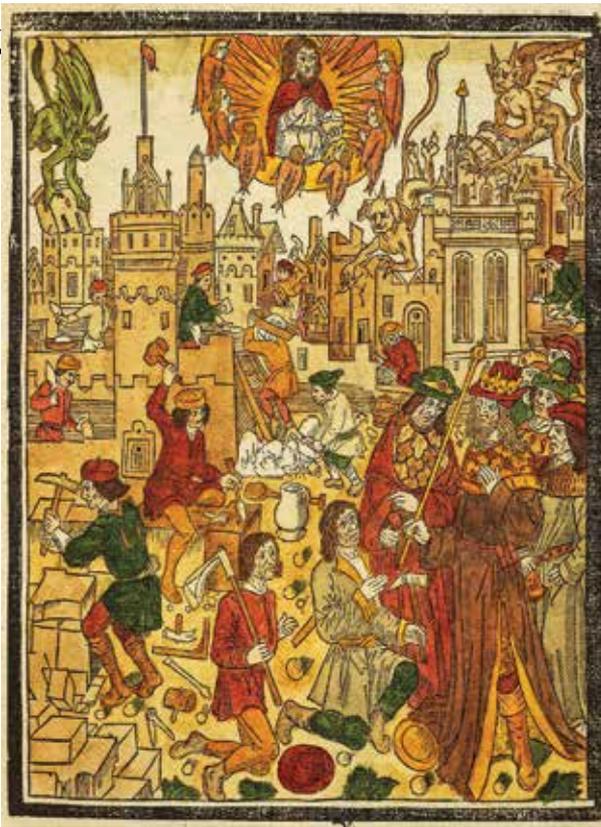
IN THE CITY AS A DESERT

Christians did not live indifferently in the face of such temptation and violence. Theophilus of Antioch (2nd c.) explained in a letter to Autolykus, a pagan friend, that Christians avoid sex outside of marriage and “are forbidden so much as to witness gladiator shows lest [they] become partakers and abettors of murders.” Clement of Alexandria noted in his *Stromata* (or *Miscellanies*, a book of miscellaneous comments on the Christian life) that a Christian, while “inhabiting the city, despises the things in the city which are admired by others. He lives in the city as in a desert, so that he may not be pressured into conforming to his environment, but instead chooses to exhibit a life lived justly.”

Ambrose praised the fourth-century bishop Eusebius of Vercelli, who was capable of “living in the city [while] observing the rules of the monks, and ruling the Church with fasting and temperance. For the grace of the priesthood is much increased if the bishop constrain young men to the practice of abstinence, and to the rule of purity; and forbid them though living in the city, the manners and mode of life of the city.” All of this attracted people who knew the culture of the Greco-Roman city was dragging them down but didn’t know what to do about it. Christianity offered another way—the Way.

One of the most promising escape routes from trouble, some city-dwellers thought, was wealth: enough money could take care of most, if not all, of life’s problems. Great wealth could be obtained in the cities. But the rich often got richer while the poor got poorer. The second-century churchman Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) lived in probably one of the wealthiest cities of the empire. He preached a sermon on whether the rich could even be saved in the face of the distractions and distortions to the faith their wealth could produce. His conclusion was ambiguous: wealth definitely had its drawbacks, but where would the church get its funding for helping the poor and the destitute if not from the wealthy?

[Christians] follow the local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life, while at the same time demonstrating the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their own citizenship. . . . They marry like everyone else, and have children, but they do not expose their offspring [to death]. They share their food but not their wives. They are in the flesh, but they do not live according to the flesh. They live on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws; indeed in their private lives they transcend the laws. They love everyone, and by everyone they are persecuted. They are unknown, yet they are condemned; they are put to death, yet they are brought to life. They are poor, yet they make many rich; they are in need of everything, yet they abound in everything. They are dishonored, yet they are glorified in their dishonor; they are slandered, yet they are vindicated. They are cursed, yet they bless; they are insulted, yet they offer respect. When they do good, they are punished as evil-doers; when they are punished, they rejoice as though brought to life. (*Epistle to Diognetus*, chapter 6)



NEW ROME, NEW ROMANS Above: After Christianity became legal, the center of urban gravity in the empire began to shift to Constantinople, where this 6th-c. ivory showing a procession of relics was produced.

WE'RE STILL CITY FOLKS Left: The *City of God* impacted centuries of Christians (this is a 15th-c. illustration).

Ambrose (c. 340–397) served as a city magistrate and was well aware of the temptations, but also the advantages, that wealth and power could provide. In fact many of the leading bishops of the early church occupied sees that put them close to the seats of power. Rome, Milan, Antioch, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Carthage all offered considerable power, wealth, and prestige.

Some bishops, like Ambrose, were themselves former government officials. They knew how the system worked and were often tapped to provide governmental services. They resolved disputes and provided aid for the poor and indigent—often from their own funds. Many of the bishops originally came from wealthy families and used that wealth in service to the church and their communities.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Basil (330–379), bishop of Caesarea, built a city within a city—actually on the outskirts of the city—to provide for the sick and the sojourner. He also encouraged his wealthy parishioners to put their money where their faith was. Combining his own wealth and theirs, he built one of the first hospitals, the Basileiad (named after him). It was a place of refuge for the poor, sick, and destitute; not only a hospital but a soup kitchen, a homeless shelter, a place where people had their needs met during difficult times and where the aid they received was accompanied by compassion and respect—providing a “double relief.”

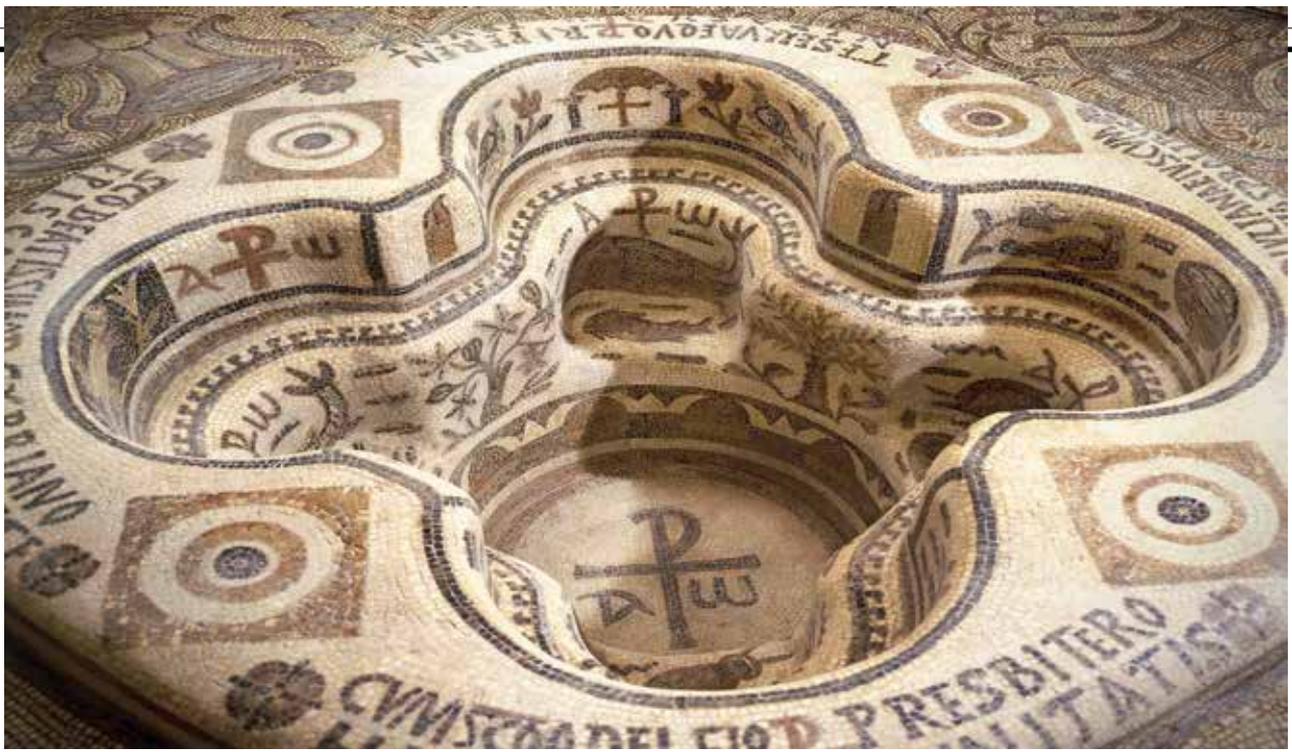
Basil’s friend Gregory of Nazianzus (329–390) called Basil’s project a “new city,” the “storehouse of piety and

the treasury of the wealthy . . . where disease is regarded in a religious light, and disaster is thought a blessing, and sympathy is put to the test.”

Urban centers presented the early church with challenges and opportunities. The extent to which Christians dealt with these depended on how they viewed their ultimate citizenship: they were to be in the city but not of the city. No one knew this better than Augustine (354–430). Augustine’s *City of God* is the original tale of two cities. There is “a City of God whose Founder has inspired us with a love and longing to become its citizens.” There is also an earthly city whose inhabitants “prefer their own gods to the Founder of the holy City, not realizing that He is the God of gods.” These two cities compete for our attention.

Christians are called to dual citizenship, however, until Christ returns. At that time he will bring with him a new city, “the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God” (Rev. 21:2–4). God’s plan of salvation began in a garden, but it ends in a city—a new city, a holy city, a city where there will be no more sin, death, mourning, crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away because God himself will live with his people in his city. ☑

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A bishop's work is never done

DURING AND AFTER PERSECUTION, NEW COMPLEXITIES CHALLENGED CHURCH LEADERS

Helen Rhee

IN AD 249 ROMANS THOUGHT a thousand years had passed since their empire's legendary founding. People feared this millennium would bring calamity: when everyone made it through alive, Emperor Decius (who had usurped power in December 249) ordered a sacrifice on January 3, 250, aimed at restoring Rome's "golden age." Everyone except Jews (exempt by law) had to sacrifice to the gods in the presence of a Roman official and get a certificate. When Christians refused, one of the most famous eras of persecution began.

Hiding in the hills during the Decian persecution, bishop of Carthage Cyprian (c. 200–258) wrote letters to his flock to counter mass apostasy. He was largely unsuccessful; many sacrificed or obtained false certificates, causing profound pastoral repercussions.

FROM BISHOP TO BISHOP

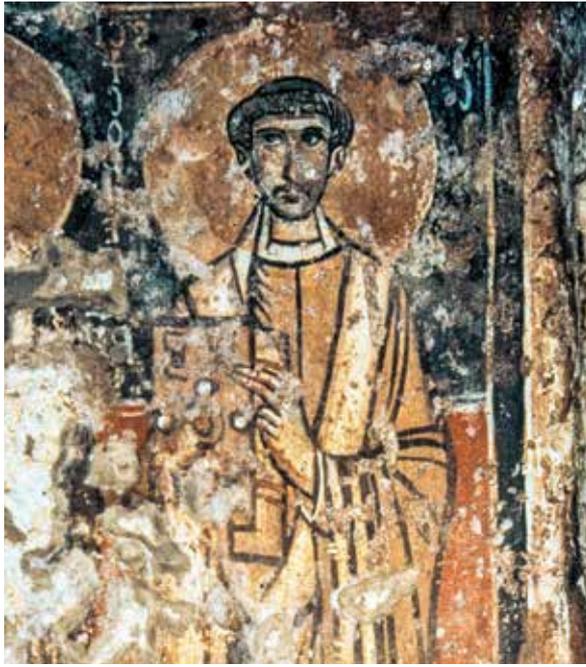
Upon his conversion from an elite pagan background to Christianity around 246, Cyprian had given away almost all his wealth for the relief of the poor. Just two years later, the young Christian was elected bishop of Carthage (in modern Tunisia). For 10 years as bishop, he carried his people through wave after wave of crisis: political, socioeconomic, natural, and ecclesiastical.

WATER OF LIFE This 6th-c. Tunisian font, decorated with a mosaic, is dedicated to Cyprian in honor of his martyrdom.

After a brief lull (and a terrible plague), Emperor Valerian launched another wave of persecution in 257. This time Cyprian was captured and martyred. Supposedly his only words before his execution were "Thanks be to God!"

How different was the episcopal tenure of Basil of Caesarea (330–379). History bestowed on him the rare honorific "the Great"—and he certainly did much to earn it. Despite beginning amid persecution, his Christian life and ministry took a very different path. Basil was born of an aristocratic Christian family in Cappadocia (modern central Turkey) prominent for piety, wealth, and social status. After his baptism, like Cyprian, he sold his possessions, distributed the proceeds to the poor (citing Matthew 19:21), and founded communal monastic communities across Cappadocia.

But now Christianity was legal, so Basil could focus his main energy on public efforts. Ordained bishop of Caesarea and metropolitan bishop of Cappadocia in 370, he proved a skillful church administrator, dealing



BUSY BISHOP *Left:* Cyprian, shown here in a 6th-c. mural, developed Christian identity and theology through his writings.

GIVE IT TO CAESAR *From top to bottom:* These coins reflect changing scenes of culture: Theodosius, a shekel, Constantine, and an anti-Jewish coin.



the celebration of the Eucharist and baptism. Second he preached and taught the true doctrine to guard the apostolic tradition from heresies. And third he supervised the community's works of mercy to their poor, their sick, and their widows and orphans (see "Healing the city," pp. 17–20).

In fulfilling these duties, bishops defined acceptable boundaries between Christians and non-Christians and helped organize communal Christian identity around shared theology and practices. The



bishop expected the congregation and other clergy (priests and deacons) to obey and support him and his office, especially in the times of crisis (such as false teachings, schisms, and persecutions). Cyprian, for example, functioned during one of the most challenging crises of the Carthage church, already a formidable social and



economic institution with a massive charitable operation. As a result, he enhanced the bishop's authority in light of a controversy over the reconciliation of those who had lapsed during persecution. He taught that only the bishop—not priests or "confessors" (those who had held up under persecution)—could oversee the penance of the lapsed.



with political and ecclesiastical negotiations. He could also fully exercise his gifts as an astute theologian, a powerful preacher, and an effective social activist on behalf of the poor. By 372 he had built his famous complex just outside Caesarea—the "Basileiad"—considered by many the world's first hospital. Gregory of Nazianzus said it outshone the Great Wonders of the ancient world. Like Cyprian Basil died relatively young, but his was a natural death around age 50 from liver disease.

These two bishops' stories show how Christians changed their interactions with their non-Christian neighbors through time and how their bishops led them in doing so. The Christian population grew at an amazing rate, from about 2 percent of the empire at the time of Cyprian (250) to about 12 percent at the time of Constantine's Edict of Milan (313). Growth centered in the Greek-speaking eastern part of the empire. By the mid-fourth century, Christians exceeded a majority of the empire's population (56 percent).

At first Christians and pagans (upholders of the traditional Greco-Roman and Mediterranean gods and customs) met on a daily basis. However at times those neighborly relationships turned to misunderstandings and accusations about Christian beliefs and practices. The pagans' fear that the Christians had incurred the traditional gods' wrath by abandoning them sometimes led to violent acts.

They may have been in the minority, but the first Christians were a busy group. They quickly set about laying the groundwork for growth, led by their bishops. As the chief pastor of his locality, the bishop served and led his people in three main roles. First he oversaw

FROM PERSECUTED TO POWERFUL

As Christianity changed its status from a persecuted superstition to the favored religion of emperors, unprecedented imperial resources and support ensued. And as the empire was increasingly "Christianized," interactions between pagans and Christians changed. In the Constantinian era, the bishops gained new power and responsibilities—political, institutional, and economic—not only in the Christian community but also in Roman society as a whole.

Constantine restored church properties along with religious freedom. Then he took things a step further. Churches and bishops were exempted from compulsory public service and taxes and were given a

ST. CALLIXTUS (ID. 222) AND ST. CYPRIAN (C. 200–258) (6TH CENTURY (MURAL PAINTING)) / CATACOMBS OF SAN CALLIXTO, ROME, ITALY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
 SOLIDVS OF THEODOSIVS I BEARING IMAGE OF EMPEROR, RECTO, ROMAN COIN, 4TH CENTURY AD / DE AGOSTINI PICTURE LIBRARY / G. DAGLI ORTI / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
 ANCIENT SILVER HALF SHEKEL COIN, ANCIENT PALASTINE, THE JEWISH WAR AGAINST ROME 66 AD (PHOTO) / HOBERMAN/UG / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
 AUREVS OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT, AD 306–37 (OBVERSE) (GOLD), ROMAN, (4TH CENTURY AD) / FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, UK / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
 ANCIENT ROMAN COIN, VESPASIAN 69–70 AD CAPTIVE JEWESS SEATED, TIED TO A PALM TREE (SYMBOLISING THE SUBJUGATION OF JUDEA) (PHOTO) / HOBERMAN/UG / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



SWEETER THAN HONEY? *Left:* As the patron saint of beekeepers, Ambrose is often pictured on a hive.

BORROWED GLORY *Right:* Theodosius I moved a 1,700-year-old Egyptian obelisk to Constantinople in 390 and put himself on its new pedestal.

financial subsidy and sometimes land. As Eusebius put it, Constantine provided the church with “the abundance of good things.” He even granted bishops the final judicial authority in civil suits, especially on behalf of the poor, and his successors gave bishops the unusual privilege of manumitting slaves in the church.

As Constantine made the church officially visible, he also made it accountable to the public for these very public gifts. Up to this point, the church had received offerings from the faithful, especially the “middle class” and the wealthy, primarily to care for its *own* poor. Now

traditional Christian charity came to be regarded as a service to the public.

Not just Christians but also non-Christians now identified the church closely with its care of the poor in Roman cities. Theodosius’s code of laws stated, “The rich must assume the secular obligations and the poor must be supported by the wealth of the churches.” The church thus acted as a mediator between the rich and the poor, and bishops emerged as “lovers of the poor” and “governors of the poor” in their public role.

OLD HABITS DIE HARD

For a while elite pagan senators lived in relative harmony with Christianizing emperors and bishops as Christianity gradually infiltrated Roman society. The inclusion of pagan imagery in Christian catacombs such as the Via Latina indicates the fluidity of ideas and the reality of coexistence in upper-class society. The Christian Council of Elvira in Spain (c. 305) banned sharing fine clothing with pagan neighbors and attending public sacrifices, showing that Christians of a certain status were interacting more comfortably with pagan neighbors than bishops found acceptable.

In fact some ordinary folks protected their houses against sudden disaster through the practice of both pagan and Christian rituals. Even at the turn of the fifth century, many Christians would have agreed with a member of Augustine’s congregation in North Africa: “To be sure, I visit the idols, I consult magicians and soothsayers, but I do not forsake the church of God. I am a Catholic Christian.”



But increasingly Christians focused suspicion and hostility on large urban temples to pagan gods. For instance, at Aegae (a city in southern Turkey), the great temple of Asclepius, a popular healing god, was razed in 331 and its columns either removed or reused in the Christian church on the site. Pagans viewed this as an outrage and an insult to the many thousands who had flocked there in search of healing.

The great temple of Serapis of Alexandria was also destroyed in 391, and a nearby shrine of Isis (a popular Egyptian goddess) converted around the same time into the church of St. John the Evangelist. Worshipers of Isis nevertheless continued to visit to receive healing and consult the oracle. In response the bishop of Alexandria fostered devotion to Christian miracle healers Saints Cyrus and John, placing their shrine opposite that of Isis.

Basil of Caesarea was concerned about Christians lapsing into pagan cults. Sacrifices to pagan gods put Christians at risk of apostasy—offenders could be readmitted to the sacrament only at the point of death. Such severe penalties suggest an attempt to stamp out participation in sacrifices by baptized Christians wishing to blend in; they might do so as members of civic communities during pagan festivals, public and private.

At times Basil had to minister to divided aristocratic families when one of their children accepted Christian baptism. So he wrote to the pagan Harmatius: “Since [your son] has preferred the God of us Christians, that is the true God, before the gods of your people, which are numerous and are worshiped through material symbols, do not be angry with him but admire instead his nobility of soul.”

EATING WITH JEWS

The Christian relationship to Judaism was also changing. Christians had always defined their identities in contrast to Jewish beliefs and practices. As Romans began noticing the difference between Christians and Jews in the second century, the two faiths developed

BEEHIVE WITH AN IMAGE OF ST. AMBROSE (WOOD). GERMAN SCHOOL / PRIVATE COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
ISTANBUL, HIPPODROME, BASE OF EGYPTIAN OBELISK DEPICTING THEODOSIUS I WITH VICTOR S LAURELS PRESIDING. HE BROUGHT FROM EGYPT IN 390 AD. WATER ORGAN OF CTASIBIUS (PHOTO) / PHOTO © GEOFF GARVEY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

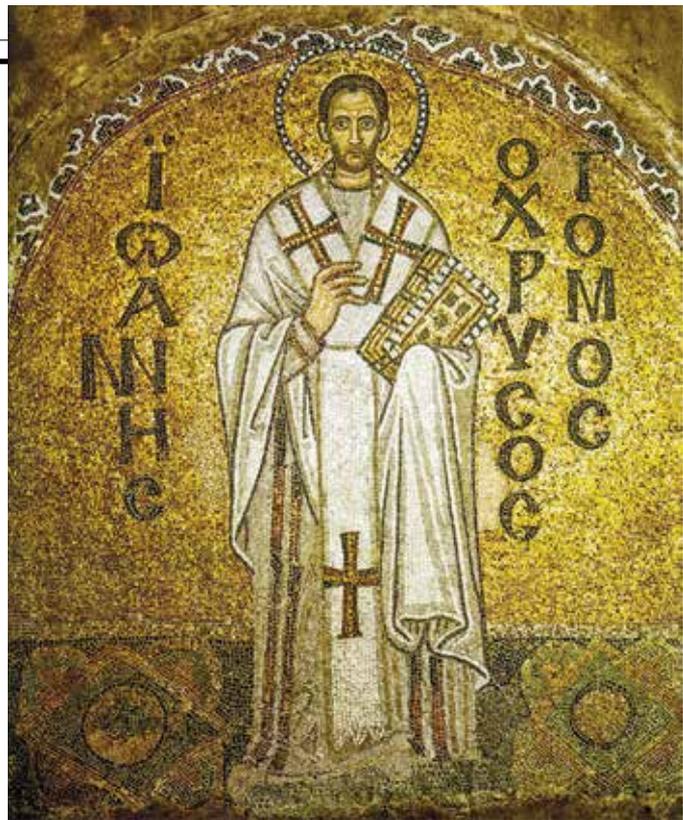


polemics against each other. Under Constantine and after, as church leaders gained political power, they used it to aid and pressure emperors to suppress Judaism.

John Chrysostom (c. 349–407) served as bishop of Constantinople in the early fifth century, but he wrote *Against Judaizing Christians* when he was a celebrated preacher and priest at Antioch (386). The Jewish community there was vibrant; apparently there were enough Jewish-Christian interactions to cause concern, and some Christians found Jewish rites irresistible. Chrysostom warned Christians against participating in Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, as well as observing the Jewish Sabbath. His harsh language shows the extent to which he feared Judaism's power of attraction.

Around the same time in an infamous letter to Emperor Theodosius I (347–395), Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397) opposed the emperor's decision to punish Christians responsible for burning down a synagogue in Callinicum, a town on the Euphrates. To enhance his case, Ambrose listed cities where Jews had burned churches—Gaza, Ascalon, Beirut, and Alexandria—and pointed out Jewish “acts of calumny” against Christians. Although Theodosius reaffirmed in legal documents the right of Jews to meet unhindered in their synagogues, Ambrose's opposition reflected a growing mood among Christians.

As both the legal and social situations of Jews seriously deteriorated in the late fourth century, sometimes with the unfortunate support of Christian



IN THE PULPIT Above: John Chrysostom's preaching earned him the nickname “Golden Mouth.”

UNDER THE CROSS Left: This relief depicts Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge, which he attributed to the Christian God.

mobs, church councils discouraged social interaction between Jews and Christians. The Council of Elvira prohibited intermarriage; the Council of Vannes (461) strongly limited Christian interaction with Jews by stating that it was “shameful and sacrilegious for Christians to eat [the Jews'] food.” Laws and sentiments against Jews would outlast the empire itself, with repercussions echoing to the Crusades and beyond.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD BISHOP?

In the late fourth century, Augustine (354–430), the man whose name is perhaps more synonymous with Western theology than any other, had become first a convert, then a priest, then a bishop. In his famous comparison of earthly and heavenly cities, *The City of God*, he noted, “No man can be a good bishop if he loves his title but not his task.” Amid all these controversies and crises, bishops at their best exercised their authority as passionate advocates and statesmen to protect their flocks, their communities, and their cities. **■**

Helen Rhee is professor of church history at Westmont College and the author of several books on wealth, poverty, and early Christianity.



GETTING TO KNOW OUR NEIGHBORS

A Muslim man and a non-Muslim woman engage in dialogue at a London vigil in June 2017. “Our neighbors may not know anything about us,” Beaty says.

with going back and forth between those two kingdoms. The church has been through worse times and has survived and learned to thrive.

“An expanding circle of love and justice”

We spoke to Katelyn Beaty, editor at large for Christianity Today, on how Christians today interact with their non-Christian neighbors.

Christian History: What do you think the future of dialogue is going to look like?

Katelyn Beaty: I recently finished reading *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989) by Lesslie Newbigin. It helps us as modern Western Christians to understand how increasingly odd we are going to look to our non-Christian neighbors. We can no longer assume that Christianity has a privileged place in Western society. Nonaffiliation with any kind of faith tradition is up, especially among millennials. This presents a challenge.

In contemporary conversation about how Christians should relate to their neighbors, there is a great mourning and coming to terms with how we have a new responsibility for living out the faith, different than we did 50 to 60 years ago.

We’re compelled to be comfortable with being odd while remaining very familiar. We live in the same neighborhoods, enjoy the same public benefits, the access to roads and parks and everything that makes a civil society. We are not in private Christian communities.

Most of our neighbors are not going to be disciples of Jesus. We should understand our non-Christian neighbors have the same concerns as we do: schools, providing for their families, politics. We should be comfortable with basically living as dual citizens. That’s not my language, of course, but Paul’s (Phil. 3:20). We need to be citizens of this world but also citizens of another world, comfortable

CH: How well do you think Christians are doing this?

KB: It depends who you are talking to. Many white Christian communities are struggling, and probably reacting on some level in fear that the institutions and faith communities that have enjoyed promise and privilege and power in Western society are losing them. When we are being driven with fear, we are not good at meeting needs. Black and immigrant churches in the United States provide a really compelling model of what it looks like to live and thrive on the margins. They’re not mourning the loss of power. There’s an incredible sense of resilience and hope from those communities.

CH: One way of living in these times has been outlined in Rod Dreher’s book *The Benedict Option*.

KB: The “Benedict option” rightly calls Christians to form deep, long-lasting communities, working out our faith through discipleship, prayer, confession, and fasting in the community setting. It’s a call for the church to be the church. But elements of it continue to engage in the rhetoric of the culture war. I think that, whatever the *New York Times* thinks about Christians, many non-Christians would be heartened to meet a committed traditional Christian and see the love and hope and charity that permeate our daily life. We shouldn’t think our neighbors are out to get us. Our neighbors may just not know anything about us.

The Christian faith is not just about hospitality, it’s about repentance and confession. It’s a call to a different way of life. The church exists not just for its own sake and its own preservation but for the sake of the world, for the renewal of the world, for the healing of the nations. Believers need to create an ever-expanding circle of love and justice and mercy and righteousness and personal and systemic flourishing. That vision is inherently compelling to a lot of our neighbors.

INTERVIEW

FINSBURY PARK CONVERSATION—BETTINA STRENSKE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Healing the city

HOW CHRISTIANS HELPED THE SICK AND POOR IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE'S CITIES

Gary B. Ferngren

IF YOU HAD THE MISFORTUNE of becoming sick in classical Greece or Rome, it was your problem.

Responsibility for health was regarded as a private, not a public, concern. In spite of the damage wrought in the ancient world by several well-known epidemics, virtually all victims of infectious disease were left to deal with their symptoms themselves. Public officials did not believe they had any responsibility to prevent disease or to treat those who suffered from it.

Philanthropy among the Greeks did not take the form of private charity, nor was it driven by a personal concern for those in need. There was no religious or ethical impulse for almsgiving; philanthropic acts were undertaken for the purpose of increasing one's personal reputation.

The classical world did not recognize emotion or pity as a desirable response to suffering or as a motive for personal charity. And when donors did make gifts or perform services, they intended them for the entire community. Any benefaction (civic gift), endowment, or foundation had to be provided for all members of the city-state, rich and poor alike; this was true all the way from Greek

PICK UP YOUR CHAIR In this 6th-c. mosaic in Ravenna, Italy, Christ heals the paralytic man.

city-states in the fifth century BC up to large thriving cities of the Roman Empire in late antiquity, over 700 years later.

The sick poor simply did not have an identity as a defined group that deserved special consideration. Classical society required a new movement, arising outside the traditional framework of the classical world, to challenge this assumption. That movement was Christianity.

WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

From the beginning Christian charity stood in stark contrast to that of the Greeks and Romans. The church displayed a marked philanthropic imperative, showing both personal and corporate concern for those in physical need (as in Acts 6:1–6).

Christians regarded charity as motivated by *agape*, a self-giving love of one's fellow human beings that reflects the redemptive love of God in Jesus Christ. Ordinary Christians were encouraged



SCRUB UP *Left:* This marble relief from a pagan cemetery depicts surgical instruments and a patient having his feet washed. Wealthy Romans received care in their homes.

THIS WON'T HURT—MUCH *Below:* These surgical instruments were found in the excavation of Pompeii.



to visit the sick and aid the poor as an individual duty. But the early church also established organized assistance.

Each church had priests and deacons who directed the corporate ministry of the congregation. Deacons, whose main concern was the relief of physical want and suffering, had a special responsibility to visit the ill and report on their condition to priests.

Churches received collections of alms every Sunday for those who were sick or in want, which were administered by priests and distributed by deacons. Widows who did not need assistance formed a separate class that later developed into the office of deaconess. They were expected to help the poor, especially women, who were sick.

So, although their numbers and resources were often small, Christians were equipped, even in the most adverse of circumstances, to undertake considerable charitable activity on behalf of those who were ill. Owing to a combination of inner motivation, self-discipline, and effective leadership, the local Christian church created in the first two centuries of its existence a system that effectively and systematically cared for its sick.

PRIESTS, DEACONS, AND DOORKEEPERS

In the third century, the rapid growth of the church, particularly in the large cities of the Roman Empire, led to the organization of benevolent work on a larger scale. Roman cities were crowded, often unsanitary, and for many lonely. Large numbers of city-dwellers had no family or support network because they had migrated from rural areas hoping to find jobs (see “Did you know?,” inside front cover).

As the number of those who benefited from the church’s charitable activity increased, there were too few deacons and priests to deal with the demands made on them. Congregations began to create minor clerical orders to assist them.

We can thank church historian Eusebius for preserving a letter written in 251 by Cornelius, bishop of Rome, to Fabius, bishop of Antioch. In it we learn the specifics of Rome’s extensive efforts. They supported 46 priests, 7 deacons, 7 subdeacons, and 42 acolytes, as well as 52 exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers—a staff of considerable size!

Apparently the church in Rome had divided the city into seven districts, each under a deacon, who was assisted by a subdeacon and six acolytes. They cared for 1,500 widows and distressed persons who were supported by the church; the Roman church may have spent each year from 500,000 to one million *sesterces* on the maintenance of those in need. (A *sesterce* would buy you approximately two loaves of bread, and 500 of them would buy you a donkey; the *denarius* often mentioned in the Bible as a day’s wage was worth four *sesterces*.)

And Rome was not alone. John Chrysostom wrote a century after Cornelius’s letter that the Great Church in Antioch supported 3,000 widows and unmarried women along with other sick and poor people and travelers.

All this—the establishment of minor orders to assist priests and deacons, the creation of sizable

CURES FOR WHAT AILS YOU *Right:* If you were sick in an ancient city, you might visit a temple (like this one to Hathor in Egypt, possibly founded by Cleopatra), and you would certainly visit the baths for fresh water and warmth (like these in Rome, *below*).



staffs of clergy in large churches, the churches' regular support of considerable numbers of the poor and sick, and the expenditure of large sums of money—suggests that churches devoted a good deal of attention to corporate philanthropic activity.

Before the legalization of Christianity in AD 313, ongoing care for the sick was viewed as only one part of the church's charitable ministry. Much care was directed toward relieving individual suffering rather than to therapeutic treatment to make the patient better. In many cases the care was rudimentary: Christian care of the sick relied primarily on the clerical orders, composed of men chosen for their spiritual rather than medical qualifications.

THE ZEALOUS ONES

Two nonclerical groups founded in the late eastern Roman Empire that administered medical assistance in the urban churches were the lay orders of *spoudaioi* ("the zealous ones") and, in Egypt, the *philoponoi* ("lovers of labor"). These men and women were attached to large churches in the great cities of the east: Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Beirut, and Jerusalem, most prominently, although they are attested in other smaller cities as well. A chief function of both groups was to provide assistance to the homeless sick of the urban areas in which they lived.

Greek writings refer to indigent sick who thronged the streets of Greek cities. Uncared for in public places, they were without resources, and either had no one to care for them or had family and friends who had set them out to die. There existed no provision for public or private shelter or care of any kind for the destitute. Hence they were often forced to live on the streets, or in porches, tombs, or makeshift dwellings.

Public baths provided fresh water essential for hygiene and furnished some warmth in cold winters. Some of the sick of all classes sought the assistance of Asclepius, the Greco-Roman god of healing, in his temples. But those afflicted with mental disorders or loathsome diseases were often driven away, as is recorded in several instances in the Gospels.



Even in time of plague, municipalities made no provision for burying the dead, who were often thrown into the streets. It was to these urban poor, sick or dying on the streets, that the *spoudaioi* devoted their service. They would frequently search the streets and alleys at night for those who were ill, distribute money to them, and take them to public baths.

This overall perception that the church had an obligation to care for the sick poor was basic to the founding of the earliest hospitals (see *CH* issue 101). The hospital was, in origin and conception, a distinctively Christian institution.

There were no pre-Christian institutions in the ancient world that served the purpose that hospitals were created to serve, namely, the offering of charitable aid, particularly health care, to those in need. Roman infirmaries, called *valetudinaria*, were maintained by Roman legions and by slaveholders, but they provided medical care to a restricted population of soldiers or slaves, and they were not charitable foundations.

The earliest hospitals, called *nosokomeia* or *xenodochia*, grew out of the long tradition of care for the sick by deacons in Christian churches. The best known,



PLACE OF HEALING Tiber Island was once the site of a temple to Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine and healing. This is how it looks today, its broken bridges dating to before the birth of Christ.

As late as the fourth century, despite Christians' activities, the concept of being a "lover of the poor" (*philoptôchos*) was still a novel one in the Greco-Roman world. The community was still viewed as a collective whole, one in which all citizens of the city, rich or poor, shared in public benefactions. Therefore, a specific group defined as "the poor" (*hoi ptochioi*) was still not singled out as recipients of charity.

Many wealthy pagans continued to espouse the traditional classical view that the poor were passive targets of malevolent fates, and

they looked down on them as base and ignoble in character. Christians—influenced by biblical texts that speak of the care of the poor as a duty—saw the poor instead as especially blessed by God, endowed with grace, and even in their poverty bearing the image of God.

The faithful regarded philanthropy as demonstrating love for Christ. Both donor and recipient came to regard themselves as fellow servants, a theme that one finds in sermons of Christian clergy in the fourth and fifth centuries.

After the legalization of Christianity, distinctive Christian ideas of charity finally enjoyed public recognition by the government. The lower classes of the city came over time to replace all citizens as the main beneficiaries of assistance.

This little-noticed movement—the belief that the sick poor were everyone's problem—marked one of the truly revolutionary changes in human sentiment in Western history and constituted a significant feature of the transition from a classical to a Christian society. ■

*Gary B. Ferngren is professor of history at Oregon State University and professor of the history of medicine in the I. M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University. He is the author of *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity and other books on the history of medicine and faith. This article is excerpted from selected portions of *Medicine and Religion: A Historical Introduction* by Gary B. Ferngren (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014) and is reprinted by the permission of the publisher.**

and the earliest, was the Basileiad, begun about 369 and completed about 372 by Basil the Great, who became bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (see "A bishop's work is never done," pp. 12–15).

GENERAL HOSPITAL

Basil's hospital employed a regular live-in staff that provided not only aid to the sick, but also medical care in the tradition of Greek medicine. It included a separate section for each of six groups: the poor, the homeless and strangers, orphans and foundlings, lepers, the aged and infirm, and the sick.

Hospitals spread rapidly in the eastern Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries, with bishops taking the initiative in founding them. They appeared in the western empire a generation after they were established in the east, but their growth was much slower owing to economic difficulties in the west.

Only a minority of hospitals had the resources to employ physicians, and those that did were situated in the Byzantine east. In western Europe there were few physicians in hospitals until the end of the Middle Ages in the fifteenth century.

Hospitals were founded specifically to provide care for the poor (Basil called his hospital a *ptochotropheion*, or poorhouse). This pattern of hospitals caring for the poor would persist until the mid-nineteenth century, and for centuries hospitals remained institutions for the indigent. In some cases these unfortunates were taken off the streets and given a place in which to die. Those who could afford a physician's care received it in their homes.

IN THE HEART OF THE ACTION All Souls Knoxville meets for prayer and worship in this building (left) alongside shops and restaurants. "People that move into the city, at least this city, are there because they are rejecting suburban values," says the pastor.



"The only stumbling block is the cross"

We spoke to Doug Banister, the pastor of All Souls Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, about how his church does urban ministry.

Christian History: Tell us how you began ministry downtown.

Doug Banister: I pastored a church in the suburbs for 15 years. But I became interested in how monasteries tried to seek the peace of the city. We don't always think of this, but a number of medieval monasteries were in urban areas. Then there were religious orders living in the world, like the Franciscans, and Devotio Moderna, a lay religious reform. Practicing hospitality in an urban space seemed like a good way to care for the city. I've now been at All Souls for almost 14 years.

CH: How does All Souls seek the peace of the city?

DB: Jeremiah 29:7 is our mission statement. We don't own a building, but we were able to be part of renovating one in the heart of the city. We rent space there and have a chapel. We try to pray the hours. We haven't been able to staff it like we'd like, but we do have services on Sunday nights. We have about 125 people attending.

Early on I got a call from a man named Robert, who had a reputation as an intelligent businessman downtown. He asked if this was a monastery. I said "kind of"; we're trying to pray and be here and practice hospitality. He lived nearby, and one night had the epiphany that God was real. He asked us to help him know God, and he became a follower of Christ. He recently died of a heart attack and is now buried in a monastery in New Mexico.

We put emphasis on partnering with other ministries that are already here. In the suburbs you might buy 20 acres and do your own thing. Here, sharing and collaborating is more important. We partner with an urban swim team, a health clinic for the working uninsured and underserved, and a mentoring program. We also have a fund where people in the congregation can apply for up to \$1,000 for health care.

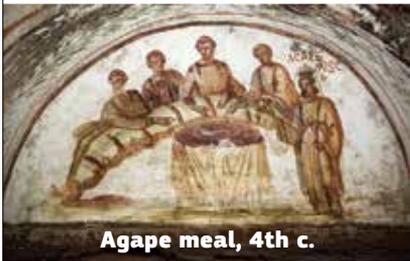
CH: How has All Souls affected the downtown?

DB: Our people are involved in nonprofits, jails, schools, and shelters, with both their money and time. I'd also like to think that we help in the renewal of downtown. We've encouraged people to support area restaurants. When we first started the church, the downtown was at a crossroads: not many stores, restaurants, and people. Some of the people starting to buy property weren't doing good things with it. One building had a lot of drugs run out of it. I like to think that having a presence and offering prayers has helped create a healthy spiritual presence in the heart of the city.

If you try to plant an urban church with suburban values, or assume you'll get a lot of Christians looking for a church, it won't work very well. One of the things we decided to do early on was approach doctrine in a different way. We call it consensual orthodoxy. We ask our members to affirm the Nicene Creed as the doctrinal core of our church but give them the freedom to disagree and discuss all other issues. We don't take positions on many controversial issues, but we care deeply about those issues and we work hard at talking about them. For urban post-Christian people, the only stumbling block we want to put before them is the cross.

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THE TUMULTUOUS LIFE OF EARLY URBAN CHRISTIANITY

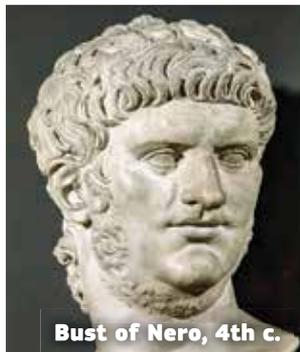


Agape meal, 4th c.

- c. 800 BC Carthage is founded.
- 753 BC Rome is founded.
- c. 657 BC Greeks settle Byzantium.
- 332–331 BC Alexandria is founded.
- 300 BC Antioch is founded.
- 27 BC–AD 14 Augustus Caesar rules as Roman emperor.
- 14–37 Tiberius rules as emperor.
- c. 33 First deacons are appointed in the church.
- **C. 40** The word *Christians* is first used to describe believers in Antioch.
- 43 Rome invades Britain; London is founded.
- 47 Paul undertakes his first missionary journey.
- c. 48 Jerusalem Council meets.
- c. 50–95 Books of New Testament are written.
- 54–68 Nero rules as emperor.
- 64 Fire ravages Rome; Nero launches four-year persecution.
- 70 Romans capture Jerusalem and destroy the Temple.
- 79 Mt. Vesuvius destroys Pompeii.
- c. 100 The *Didache*, earliest church service book, comes into use.
- 106 Rome conquers Dacia (Romania); empire reaches greatest size (see map, p. 39).

118 Population of Rome exceeds 600,000.

- c. 112 Pliny consults Emperor Trajan on how to deal with those accused as Christians.
- 140 Justin founds school of Christian philosophy at Rome.
- 161–180 Marcus Aurelius rules as emperor.
- 165 Fifteen-year plague breaks out.
- c. 170 Celsus writes the first full book opposing Christianity.
- c. 180 Irenaeus of Lyons begins preaching to Celts in Gaul.
- 197 Tertullian begins writing apologetics in Carthage.
- c. 200 First mention of Christians is made in Britain.
- 203 Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas occurs in Carthage.
- 212 Roman citizenship is extended to every freeborn person.
- c. 215 Hippolytus of Rome compiles the *Apostolic Tradition*, an influential set of guidelines for church practice.
- c. 232 The earliest house church we have archaeological evidence for begins meeting in Dura Europos.
- 248 Cyprian is appointed bishop of Carthage.



Bust of Nero, 4th c.

— 249–51 Decius rules as emperor and begins the first general persecution of Christians. Church leaders are arrested and martyred; many Christians deny the faith.

250 Christians represent about two percent of the Roman Empire's population.

— 252 Plague of Cyprian breaks out.



Plaster cast from Pompeii, 1st c.

- 255–256 African bishops insist on rebaptism of heretics and schismatics; Rome disagrees.
- 268 Goths sack Athens, Corinth, and Sparta.
- 270 Monasticism begins to spread in Egypt and Syria.
- 284–305 Diocletian rules as emperor.
- 285 The Roman Empire is divided into east and west.
- 293–303 Diocletian creates administrative tetrarchy; reforms army, currency, and taxation; establishes price controls.
- 298–302 Christians in the army are forced to resign.
- 303–304 Diocletian implements Great Persecution. Edicts call for church buildings to be destroyed, sacred writings to be burned, Christians to lose civil rights, clergy to be imprisoned, and all people to sacrifice to pagan gods on pain of death.

ESCO DEPICTING BANQUET SCENE (FRESCO), ROMAN, 4TH CENTURY AD / CIMITERO DEI S.S. MARCELLINO E PIETRO, ROME, ITALY / DE AGOSTINI PICTURE LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
 BUST OF NERO (87–68 AD) (STONE), ROMAN, 1ST CENTURY AD / MUSEI CAPITOLINI, ROME, ITALY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
 POMPEII, C. 1946–89 (B/W PHOTO) / © SZ PHOTO / MANFRED STORCK / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Partially adapted from timelines in issues 27, 37, 51, and 57 of CH, by W. H. C. Frend (1916–2005), University of Glasgow; David F. Wright (1937–2008), University of Edinburgh; and Bradley Nassif, North Park University, with additions by the editors.

— c. 305 Council of Elvira in Spain sets rules for Christian behavior.

— 306–337 Constantine I, “The Great,” rules as emperor.

— c. 310 Constantine gives the Lateran Palace to the bishop of Rome.

— c. 311 Eusebius of Pamphilius writes *Ecclesiastical History*.

— 312 Constantine converts to Christianity.

— **313** Edict of Milan provides official toleration for Christians, who are about 12 percent of the imperial population.

— c. 315 Eusebius is appointed bishop of Caesarea.

— c.318 Arianism gains popularity; Athanasius writes *On the Incarnation*.

— c. 319 Constantine begins building St. Peter’s Basilica.

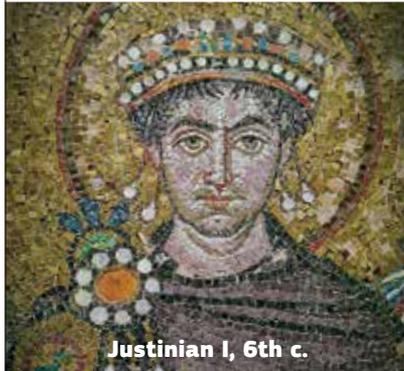
— 320 The 40 martyrs of Sebaste are killed.



House church, Syria, 3rd c.

— 324 Constantine defeats Licinius to become sole Roman emperor; chooses Constantinople (formerly Byzantium) as his new capital.

— 325 Council of Nicaea, called by Constantine, affirms the divinity of Christ; also sets norms for liturgical celebrations and the date of Easter.



Justinian I, 6th c.

— 328–361 Temporary triumph of Arianism; Nicene bishops are deposed and banished.

— 330 Constantinople is dedicated and made capital of Roman Empire.

— 331 Christians raze the famous temple of Asclepius and replace it with a Christian church.

— 336 First evidence exists (at Rome) of December 25 celebration of Christ’s birth.

— 337 Constantine is baptized shortly before death.

— c. 340 Roman legislation begins to favor Christianity.

— **C. 350** Frumentius converts the royalty of Axum, Ethiopia; Christians represent 56 percent of the empire’s population.

— 355 Marius Victorinus, one of Rome’s most famous rhetors, converts to Christianity.

— 360 First Hagia Sophia built in Constantinople; it burns down in 404.

— 372 Basil of Caesarea builds his famous hospital.

— 379–395 Theodosius I rules as emperor.

— c. 380s Egeria writes an influential account of worship in Jerusalem.

— **380** Theodosius I makes orthodox Christianity the official religion of the empire.

— 381 Council of Constantinople affirms Nicene orthodoxy.

— 391 Pagan temple to Serapus in Alexandria is destroyed.

— 393 Theodosius I bans all pagan festivals including the Olympics.

— 410 Visigoths sack Rome.

— 415 Theodosius II has a new Hagia Sophia built.

— 426 Augustine completes *City of God*.

— 431 Council of Ephesus condemns Pelagianism.

— 438 Theodosius II issues laws allowing only Christians into the military.

— 451 Council of Chalcedon proclaims that Christ has two natures.

— 467 Western Roman Empire falls.

— 527–565 Justinian I, “The Great,” rules in the east.

— 529 Justinian begins issuing a famous code of laws.

— 532 Fire destroys Hagia Sophia.

— 537 Rebuilt Hagia Sophia is consecrated.

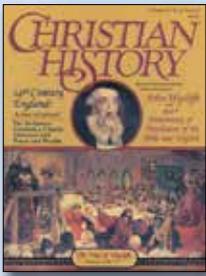
— 698 Muslim Umayyad Caliphate destroys Carthage.



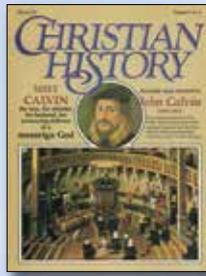
Two Egyptian brothers, 3rd c.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

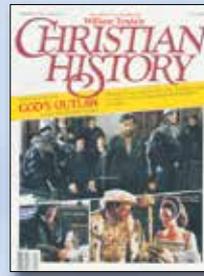
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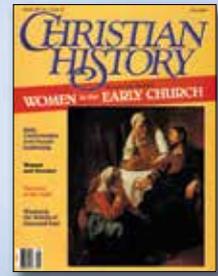
#3: John Wycliffe



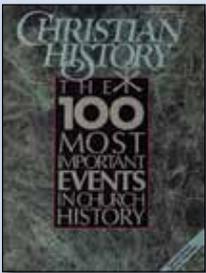
#12: John Calvin



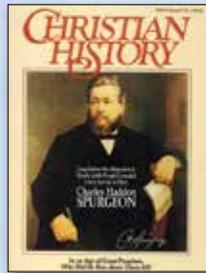
#16: William Tyndale



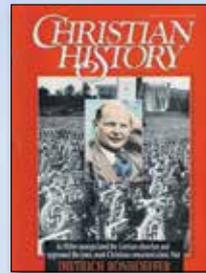
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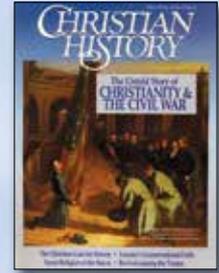
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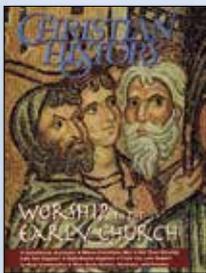
#29: Charles Haddon Spurgeon



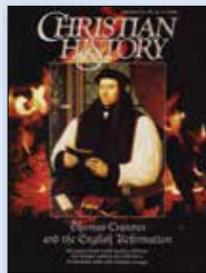
#32: Dietrich Bonhoeffer



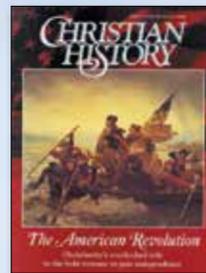
#33: Christianity and the Civil War



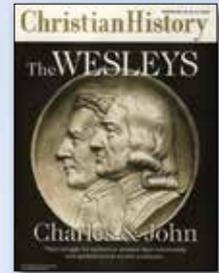
#37: Worship in the Early Church



#48: Thomas Cranmer and the English Reformation



#50: The American Revolution



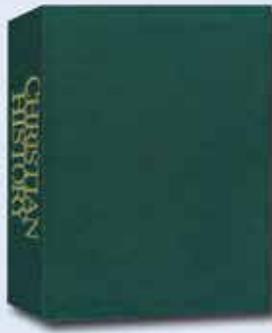
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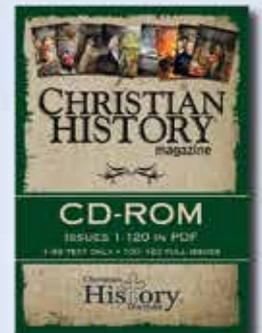
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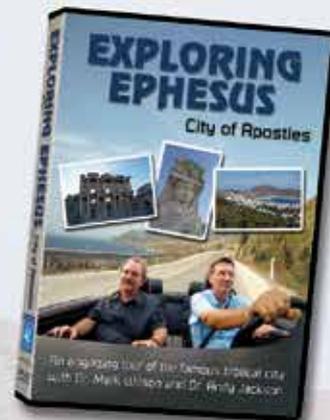
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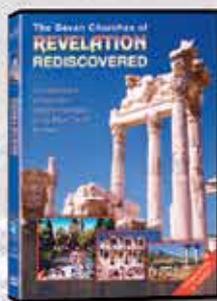
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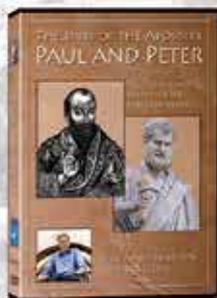
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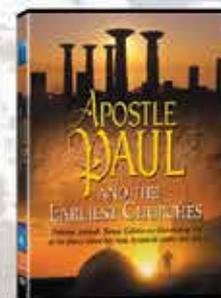
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The things that are Caesar's

HOW CHRISTIANS BEHAVED AS CITIZENS, SOLDIERS, AND PUBLIC SERVANTS

Rex D. Butler

THE PHARISEES expected to hang Jesus on the horns of a dilemma—God or Caesar? Sacred or secular? Or in our terms, church or state? They inquired: “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” After examining a coin bearing the emperor’s image, Jesus resolved the dilemma: “Give, then, to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:17–21). In just a few words, Jesus distinguished God and Caesar, yet commanded obedience to them both.

TWO KINGDOMS

After Jesus’ death and Resurrection, as Christianity moved into the uttermost parts of the empire, the church wrestled with its ultimate allegiance to God and its lesser loyalty to the state. What did it mean for a Christian to be both a resident of the Roman Empire and a citizen of the Kingdom of God? The apostles gave different answers at different times.

During the early decades of church expansion, Roman authorities viewed Christianity as a subset of Judaism, which was a legal religion. In 57

FIGHTING FOR CAESAR Romans battle Galatians on a 2nd-c. marble sarcophagus (*left*); the tombstone of a soldier named Longinus shows a stunned barbarian at his feet (*right*).

AD, basking in the protection of the civil government, Paul wrote to instruct the church in Rome: “Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God” (Rom. 13:1; 1 Tim. 2:1–2; Tit. 3:1). Even during the unsettled years before Nero’s persecution, Peter sent a letter from Rome to a group of exiles in Asia Minor (now Turkey), urging them: “Fear God. Honor the Emperor” (1 Pet. 2:17).

In spite of these expressions of loyalty, both Peter and Paul are traditionally said to have died martyrs’ deaths during Nero’s persecution from 64 to 68. About three decades later, Emperor Domitian instigated the second round of imperial persecution, most severe in Rome and in Asia Minor. The apostle John fell victim and was exiled to Patmos, an island off

DETAIL OF A SARCOPHAGUS DEPICTING A BATTLE BETWEEN ROMANS AND GALATIANS (STONE), ROMAN, (2ND CENTURY BC) / MUSEI CAPITOLINI, ROME, ITALY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES ENGLAND, COLCHESTER, CAMULODUNUM, FUNERARY STELE OF THE SOLDIER LONGINUS, THE BAS-RELIEF DEPICTS HIM RIDING A HORSE WITH A SUBMITTED BARBARIAN AT HIS FEET / DE AGOSTINI PICTURE LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



A COMMON ROMAN PROFESSION Above: Soldiers of the Praetorian Guard adorn a marble relief.

“CAESAR AUGUSTUS ISSUED A DECREE...” Right: This famed statue pictures the emperor at the time of the birth of Christ: Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus.



the coast of Ephesus. During these troubled times, he recorded the Book of Revelation, expressing a much different attitude toward government.

John used apocalyptic language that could be interpreted to refer to the Roman Empire, or to any government opposed to God. In Revelation John saw such governing authority as a beast that blasphemes against God and makes war on his people (Rev. 13:1–10), or a harlot from which “a voice from heaven said: ‘Come out of her, my people’” (Rev. 18:4). Paul advocated for submission to the state; John for separation from it.

The early church maintained these dual views of the state as expressed by the apostles. In the year of Domitian’s death, Bishop Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthian church. He began with a reference to the recent persecution: “the sudden and successive calamitous events which have happened to us.” In the same letter, however, he modeled for the Corinthian Christians a prayer for the government:

Make us obedient both to your almighty and glorious name and to all who rule and govern us on earth. For you, Master, in your supreme and

inexpressible might have given them their sovereign authority that we may know the honor and glory given to them by you and be subject to them, in nothing resisting your will. Grant to them, Lord, health, peace, harmony, and security that they may administer the government you have given them without offense.

HONORING THE EMPEROR

Clement’s prayer for the governing authorities, expressed even in the context of persecution, exemplifies most Christians’ attitudes during the second and third centuries of the church. Apologists writing in defense of the faith often insisted that Christians prove their loyalty to the government by praying for their leaders while worshiping only God.

Justin Martyr addressed his *First Apology* to Emperor Antoninus Pius, the Roman senate, and the people: “Therefore, we adore only God, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as emperors and sovereigns, praying that along with your royal power you may be endowed too with sound judgment.” And Theophilus of Antioch wrote in a letter to the pagan Autolycus: “Therefore, I honor the emperor, not indeed worshiping him but praying for him.”

Even the fiery-tempered Tertullian of Carthage claimed that Christians served the emperor better than others did because “our God has appointed him [the emperor]. Since he is my emperor, I take greater care of his welfare . . . because I pray for it to one who can grant it.”



WHAT THE WELL-DRESSED SOLDIER MIGHT WEAR

Examples of Roman armor include a 1st-c. brooch from the Tenth Legion (*below*) and the helmet of a 2nd-c. legionary under Emperor Trajan (*left*).

What was the attitude of early Christians toward civil servants and their own possible public service? Much of what we find in the New Testament and among the church fathers' writings deals generally with the emperor and governing authorities. Occasionally, however, we read reports of specific encounters involving individual Christians.

The New Testament writers record several interactions with governmental representatives—Roman centurions and other soldiers; tax collectors, who collaborated with the Roman occupiers; a royal official from Herod Antipas's court; proconsuls, including Sergius Paulus of Cyprus, who believed Paul's and Barnabas's preaching; imperial guards in Rome, who heard the Gospel from Paul; governors; and even kings.

Some of these encounters resulted in conversions to Christianity, but even then none were instructed to quit their jobs except Levi (Matthew), who left his tax booth to follow Jesus. Even tax collectors and soldiers who responded to John the Baptist's call to repentance were not told to resign, but only to perform their duties honestly.

Nonetheless in early church writings, we find no evidence for Christians in the military prior to 170 or in government service until even later. In fact catechumens applying for baptism were interrogated about their service in the military or the government. In the *Apostolic Tradition*, an early third-century church manual, Hippolytus of Rome outlined restrictions on occupations for Christians:

A soldier who is in authority must be told not to execute men; if he should be ordered to do it, he shall not do it. He must be told not to take the military oath. If he will not agree, let him be rejected [from joining the church].

A military governor or a magistrate of a city who wears the purple, either let him desist or let him be rejected. If a catechumen or a baptized Christian wishes to become a soldier, let him be cast out. For he has despised God.

TAKING THE SWORD FROM SOLDIERS

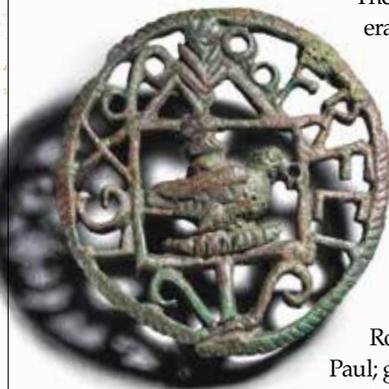
During the several-years-long process of catechism to prepare for baptism, *Apostolic Tradition* explains that baptismal candidates agree to limitations. Soldiers and magistrates were rejected unless they resigned from their positions.

An exception was usually made for soldiers who served as police or during peacetime. Tertullian, however, made no exceptions, writing in *On Idolatry*: "But how will a Christian war? Indeed how will he serve even in peace without a sword, which the Lord has taken away? . . . The Lord, in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier."

This absence of Christians from public service provoked criticism from their detractors; such civic duty was important in Roman society. The pagan Caecilius complained to the Christian Octavius that Christians "do not understand their civic duty." Celsus, a Greek philosopher and opponent of Christianity, insisted that Christians should "accept public office in our country"; otherwise, they were shirking their duties to society and neglecting their obligation to protect the empire while receiving its benefits.

Origen of Alexandria, responding in *Against Celsus*, defended his fellow Christians on the basis of their higher calling: "But they keep themselves for a more divine and necessary service in the church of God for the sake of the salvation of men. Here it is both necessary and right for them to be leaders and to be concerned about all men, both those who are with the Church . . . and those who appear to be outside it." Tertullian agreed: "We have no pressing inducement to take part in your public meetings. Nor is there anything more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state."

Early Christian apologists put forward many reasons for Christians not to perform military service. First the law of Christ called for Christians to "beat their swords into plows and their spears into pruning knives" (Isa. 2:4) and to love their enemies. On this Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen all agreed.



HELMET OF A LEGIONARY FROM THE TIME OF EMPEROR TRAJAN (98-117) (IRON AND BRONZE); ROMAN, (2ND CENTURY AD) / THE ISRAEL MUSEUM, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL / GIFT OF PROFESSOR W. WEINBERG / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES
BROOCH WITH TENTH LEGION INSIGNIA (BRONZE); ROMAN, (1ST CENTURY AD) / THE ISRAEL MUSEUM, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL / GIFT OF JACK AND JANE WEPPIN / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



NO SHOVING, PLEASE Above: Roman senators form a procession for a consul's appointment. Christians in public office were rare until the 4th c.

IMMORTAL ARMY Left: The 40 Martyrs of Sebaste (4th c.) were still being celebrated in this 10th-c. relief.

Second, as Tertullian noted, Christians would be forced to participate in Roman idolatry and oaths to the emperor, including emperor worship.

Third, said Origen, "The more pious a man is, the more effective he is in helping the emperors—more so than the soldiers who go out into the lines and kill all the enemy troops that they can." *Spiritual* soldiers take up the full armor of God, he said, and engage in prayer on behalf of all in authority. Indeed Christians composed "a special army of piety through our intercessions to God."

In reality some Christians did serve in the military. In 173 the Thundering Legion included those recruited from the strongly Christian region of Armenia. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius wrote that during a campaign on the frontier of the Danube, the Roman army, under the leadership of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, suffered from drought, whereas their enemies had ample supplies of water. After Christian soldiers prayed for rain, not only did rain refresh the Romans, but the accompanying thunder and lightning frightened their opponents.

Tertullian passed along this same story as part of his defense of Christianity, but he still disapproved of Christians in the military. No baptized Christian is able to enlist, he said, and anyone already in military service must abandon the army at the time of baptism: "There is no agreement between the divine and the human oath, the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the

camp of light and the camp of darkness." Nonetheless even his protests are evidence that Christians served in the army at the turn of the third century.

FIGHTING FOR CHRIST

Many of these Christian soldiers, however, suffered persecution and martyrdom. During Decius's persecution in 250, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage related the story of two soldiers who were martyred. In 298 a centurion named Marcellus refused to worship the Roman gods, renounced his position in the army, and at his trial, testified: "It is not fitting that a Christian, who fights for Christ his Lord, should fight for the armies of this world."

During the prelude to the great persecution of Diocletian and Galerius, the first to suffer were Christian soldiers, Eusebius said—presumably because their commitment to the empire was questioned.

One of the great stories of persecution among Christian soldiers is the *Acts of the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste*. The Edict of Milan had supposedly ended persecution in 314, but Emperor Licinius reneged on this agreement and attempted to purge his army of Christians. Evidently he feared their loyalty to Constantine, who had granted them toleration.

Licinius's edict was eventually delivered to the Twelfth Legion, successors of the Thundering Legion and now stationed in Sebaste (in modern Turkey). In 320 this famed legion still included 40 committed Christians.



THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD By the 6th c., artists were rendering Christ in the garb of a soldier, as in this mosaic.

When they refused to recant their faith, the governor conceived a torturous punishment that he hoped would break their defiance: he ordered them to strip and to stand naked upon an icy lake until they relented.

Throughout the night the Christians encouraged each other to remain faithful and to maintain the sacred number of 40. Sadly one soldier relented and left the lake to seek refuge in a heated tent on the shore.

But then a guard on the shore decided to confess his faith in Jesus Christ, to join the Christians in their suffering, and to take the place of the deserter. He stripped off his clothes and confessed, "I am a Christian!" Thus, the story relates, God answered the martyrs' prayers that their number would be complete. By the next day, all 40 Christian soldiers had died—but each martyr had earned the crown of life.

FROM GOVERNOR TO BISHOP

While unknown numbers of Christians enrolled in military service before 314, few reports tell of public service among Christians. In 278 Bishop Paul of Samosata also held the post of civil magistrate, but Eusebius criticized him for his arrogance and pomp, not to mention his heretical views. Evidently public jobs were further out of reach for Christians than military service was.

This situation, of course, completely reversed with the conversion of Emperor Constantine. Upon achieving sole rule as emperor in 324, he set upon the task of Christianizing the Roman Empire. He appointed Christians to public offices and took many as his personal advisers, opening government jobs to Christians. He ordered all soldiers to worship the supreme God on

Sundays. Whatever he meant by that decree or however it was interpreted by soldiers, he had legitimized the service of Christians in the army and the magistracy.

Perhaps the story that best illustrates the cooperation of church and state in the fourth-century empire is that of Ambrose, bishop of Milan. Ambrose began his public career as governor of Milan, and his ambitions were political. But in 373 the death of the Arian bishop Auxentius threatened the peace of his city, which was divided over Arianism and Nicene orthodoxy.

Ambrose decided to preside over the election of Auxentius's successor. Surprisingly a child in the crowd began to cry out, "Ambrose, bishop!" The crowd took up the chant. Ambrose had no intention of accepting an ecclesiastical position, but Emperor Gratian insisted that his secular governor would now serve the empire best as bishop of Milan.

It is ironic that Ambrose, who was not yet a church member, was selected as the best choice for bishop. At the time he was only a catechumen, so he submitted to baptism, ordination, and consecration as bishop all in eight days!

Church and state, however, did not always harmonize. When Emperor Theodosius I commanded the slaughter of 7,000 Thessalonians, Ambrose condemned him and demanded clear signs of his repentance.

The next time the emperor appeared at the church in Milan, the bishop met him at the door and refused him entrance: "Stand back! A man such as you, defiled by sin, with hands covered by the blood of injustice, is unworthy, without repentance, to enter this sacred place, and to partake of holy communion." Theodosius made his contrition publicly; in this case, the state yielded to the church.

In 380 that same emperor completed the interlocking of church and state by declaring orthodox Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Two generations later his grandson, Theodosius II, instituted a law that permitted *only* Christians to serve in the military, thereby expecting divine favor to rest upon the imperial armies.

The distinction between "the things that are Caesar's" and "the things that are God's" established by Jesus and the apostles had had now become less clear. Today we still look back to the complicated legacy of the early church as we try to obey God and Caesar, to live as citizens of heaven while residing in the world. ☞

Rex D. Butler is professor of church history and patristics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the author of The New Prophecy and "New Visions": Evidence of Montanism in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas.

AFFECTING THE WORLD Whether on the world stage, or at a local school, concert hall, or backyard barbecue, Christians are called “to be prophetic and present,” Prior says.



“The same kind of Christians we have always been”

We spoke to Karen Swallow Prior, author of *Booked* (2012) and *Fierce Convictions* (2014) and professor of English at Liberty University, about how Christians ought to live as citizens in the culture.

CH: What is culture? How do we live within it?

Karen Swallow Prior: Culture is part of what it means to be human. God could have chosen to skip the whole earthly part when he created us—to skip culture. It’s very clear to me that God intended us to work out our salvation, individually and collectively as a church, within culture. It’s not only necessity but God’s design. Understanding that automatically eliminates the option of separatism. I don’t think separatism is biblical; God designed human beings to exist as part of groups.

Now this looks different in different times and places. Different government structures can be more or less godly. Christian roles can change, and we have to faithfully work it out wherever we are. The only overall rule is that Christians should never violate the explicit moral will of God as revealed in the Bible. There are some very strict and severe limitations on what we can do; but beyond that there is freedom.

CH: How do we handle post-Christian culture?

KSP: We need to be the same kind of Christians we have always been; this is a challenge, but an opportunity. Most Christians through 2,000 years have not lived in truly Christian cultures. Medieval Christendom was a Christian culture, at least in theory, but that’s only 500 years of Western civilization.

In some ways living in an allegedly Christian culture is more challenging because you have trouble distinguishing between what is truly Christian and what is

cultural. A “Christian culture” can inoculate you against true Christianity. It can be a stumbling block to live in a time and place where Christianity is assumed rather than consciously or deliberately embraced and adopted.

Today Christians need to have an honest struggle with how much our role is to be prophetic and how much it’s to simply be present. Some of us are called more to one than another, but both are legitimate.

CH: Can you give an example?

KSP: Hannah More [the subject of Prior’s book *Fierce Convictions*] presents a great model of living as a Christian in a particular time and place, within severe limitations. Born a poor woman in a place that wasn’t kind to poor people or women, her natural gifts and skills might have been oppressed by her culture. When she first explored and used those gifts it was not really in service to the Lord. But eventually she did submit her work to the Lord, and God used all of her experiences and talents to serve the church and the culture. What she did affected the world forever. We all have limitations. We can look at them as obstacles or as pruning shears.

CH: How does education relate to culture?

KSP: I think that all of Christian education should help students to do what St. Augustine exhorted: love God and do what you will. Christian education should automatically form in students a deeper and greater appreciation for the things of God; if they love him and love the things that he loves, they can use their gifts and talents to work wherever he has placed them.

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Christianity goes to town

HOW CHRISTIANITY CHANGED THE ROMAN EMPIRE'S URBAN SPACES

Allan Doig

TODAY YOU DON'T NEED TO TRAVEL to Rome to view classic Roman architecture: its stately columns, arches, and domes have been copied worldwide. The originals invoked stability and continuity in Rome's diverse empire, embracing all of the world that Rome thought mattered.

Marble temples and basilicas provided visible stability and continuity for religious cults and imperial institutions. And the emperor himself, or at least his image, oversaw business agreements and legal deals. His likeness had the same legal and religious force as the man in the flesh; sacrifice was to be offered to the emperor, and his image, as divine.

Of course Christians had a problem with this, and thus the empire had problems with them. What began as mere rooting out of troublesome "anarchists" resulted in a conflict between the claims of a universal state and the claims of a universal religion. Over the course of his reign, Constantine managed to align these previously conflicting interests.

CHRISTIANS ARE EVERYWHERE

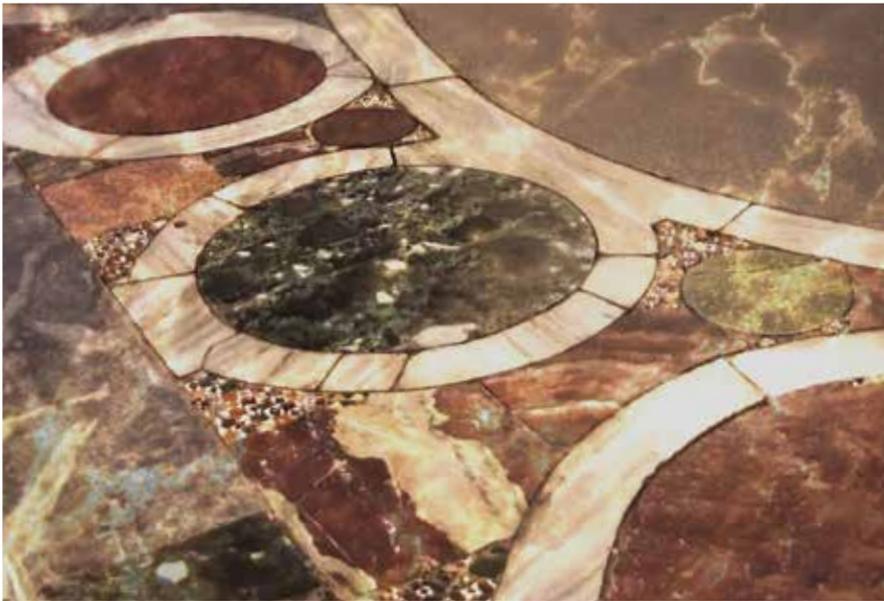
Tertullian (c. 155–c. 240) proclaimed that Christians filled "cities, villages, markets, the camp itself, town

GLORIES OF THIS WORLD Even today at Hagia Sophia you meet a mosaic in which Justinian offers his church to the Virgin, while Constantine offers his city.

councils, the palace, the senate, the forum. All we have left you is your temples. . . . Nearly all the citizens of all your cities are Christians."

Tertullian's enthusiasm may have run away with him, but it is true that by his time Christians were numerous, if still a minority. During the Decian Persecution (249–51), a church flourished at Dura Europos, an important garrison town on the edge of the empire. Converted from a house (probably around 232), it was much less visible than pagan temples and even the synagogue, but its existence must have been public knowledge.

The Christian presence in Dura Europos seems to have had little effect on the townscape. But things were different in Rome, particularly by the time of Constantine. His gift of the imperial Palace of the Lateran in Rome, his building of imperial basilicas, and the grant of imperial honors to the bishop of Rome helped make the empire's capital a stage for the symbolic confrontation between Christianity and



BOUNTIFUL GIFTS Above: The floors in Hagia Sophia feature materials from all over the empire (see p. 33).

SELF-PORTRAIT Right: Constantine's 4th-c. column still stands in Istanbul today.



paganism. The senate building and the ancient temples of the old religion still occupied the heart of the city, encircled by parish churches (*tituli*) and basilicas in the residential areas.

At the end of the fourth century, the apse of Santa Pudenziana in Rome was given a mosaic showing Christ enthroned on what appears to be the rock of Golgotha—pictured in the courtyard of the Great Church of Constantine in Jerusalem, where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre now stands. The city was now a figure of the City of God.

TRAVELING LITURGIES

In the primitive church, all Christians gathered with their bishop on Sundays and feast days to celebrate the liturgy. As membership grew sheer force of numbers made it impossible for all to gather in one place as a single congregation.

From the pilgrim Egeria in the late fourth century, we have a description of Jerusalem over the course of the liturgical year. Worshipers used prayers and readings appropriate to the day in places associated with biblical events, often with processions between sites. Jerusalem had only recently been rebuilt with magnificent imperial basilicas, and the traveling liturgies folded all the sites into a sumptuous liturgical cycle of prayer and praise and thanksgiving.

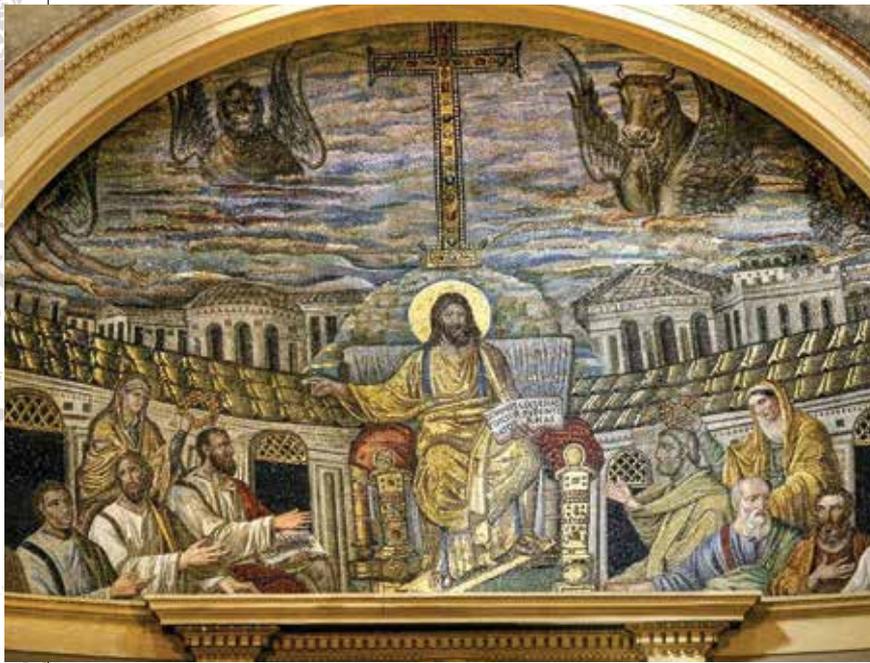
By the fifth century, we see the church in Rome doing this too: calling it the “stational” liturgy, the pope processed with a military guard and banners

to different churches on appropriate days (such as Santa Maria Maggiore, where the relic of Jesus’ manger was kept, on Christmas). With each visit consecrated bread from the previous Eucharist was included with the new bread; at the end of the service, new bread from the service was distributed and some reserved for the next celebration.

In 330 Constantine chose Byzantium as the empire’s new capital and renamed it Constantinople after himself. Much has been made of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, but the unfolding of that conversion is complicated. Constantine staged public displays of Christianity and was adept at self-promotion. He had been a devotee of the sun god *Sol Invictus*, the Invincible Sun. On top of a huge column in what was then the Forum of Constantine, he placed a statue of Apollo, the Roman sun god, adapted with his own features and including rays around his head made of nails reputedly used in the crucifixion of Christ.

Constantine dedicated his city with 40 days of ceremony culminating with the first games staged in his new hippodrome, filled with thousands of people. The games ended with a wooden statue of the emperor bearing the *tyche*, or spirit of the city, being borne around the track to halt before Constantine in his royal box. This was to be repeated annually: “The reigning emperor should arise and pay homage to the statue of the emperor Constantine and the Tyche of the City.” (To see a tyche, check out p. 35.)

Constantine is said to have included a variety of relics in the base of the column: the palladium (the statue of Athena that Aeneas had carried from Troy to Rome), the ax with which Noah built the ark, the basket from the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, and Moses’s stone



OLD ROME AND NEW *Left:* This image at Santa Pudenziana in Rome shows Jesus surrounded by a court of apostles, while the pagan mosaic (*above*) graces Constantinople's Great Palace.

from which water sprang during the Exodus. All this imagery is a curious mix of Christian and pagan.

THE THIRTEENTH APOSTLE

Bishop Eusebius (c. 263–c. 339), a friend and counselor of the emperor, was willing to overlook the pagan elements of Constantine's civic pride. This pioneering church historian described the city and its architecture as Christianized:

Honoring with special favor the city which is called after his own name, [Constantine] adorned it with many places of worship and martyrs' shrines of great size and beauty. . . . He determined to cleanse of all idolatry the city which he declared should bear his own name; so that there should nowhere appear in it statues of the supposed gods worshiped in temples, nor altars defiled by pollutions of blood, nor sacrifices burnt by fire, nor demonic festivals, nor anything else that is customary among the superstitious.

There is no doubt that Constantine had brought sculptures from despoiled pagan shrines throughout the empire, and Eusebius must have known this. Perhaps his point was that Christianity visibly eclipsed their previous fame as cult images as Constantine collected them together. This is read differently now by different people and doubtless was then too. This type of ambiguity was necessary for Constantine; he needed the political allegiance of the still overwhelmingly pagan Roman senate as well as the more Christian one in Constantinople.

On Constantine's death in 337, the Roman senate requested that his body be sent to Rome, presumably for traditional pagan ceremonies, but the senate of

"New Rome" refused. Constantine was laid to rest at the Apostoleion, a church built to house relics of the apostles—symbolically elevating him in death to the status of the "thirteenth apostle." Eusebius described the ceremony in language familiar to the Roman senate, but in a later text he calls Constantine "Savior" and "Good Shepherd," identifying the emperor of this world with the emperor of heaven.

Church and city would continue to intertwine at Constantinople, with imagery of empire used alongside that of heaven on earth. The tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* describes how both characterized the coronation ceremony for Leo I in 457.

It began on the Hebdomon, a military parade ground outside the walls of the city near the sea where the commanders placed a circlet on Leo's head; the army, then the people, acclaimed him as "a new David, a new Constantine." The clergy returned to Hagia Sophia to await his arrival. The new emperor made his way via two shrines to John the Baptist where he dedicated his diadem on the altars.

Then Leo entered into the city via the Golden Gate where the keeper of the palace met him. Clothed in purple and taken by chariot to the Forum of Constantine, he was greeted by the Prefect of the city before processing to the open space between the Great Palace and the Great Church. There he greeted the patriarch of Constantinople and processed to the sanctuary with him: the two halves of the rule of Christ on earth.

PALE YELLOW AND SWIRLING RED

Justinian assumed the throne in 527, his own coronation ceremony much abbreviated, as he



had been acting as regent for his dying uncle. In 532, during the Nika Riots, fire destroyed most of Constantinople, including much of the Great Palace and Hagia Sophia. Very nearly toppled from the throne, to reassert power Justinian rebuilt a far greater city, palace, and church with astonishing speed.

Less than six years later, the awe-inspiring new Hagia Sophia was consecrated. The whole of the empire had yielded up its riches, “forty thousand pounds’ weight of silver” embellishing the sanctuary alone. In early 563 Paul the Silentiary wrote a poetic description of Hagia Sophia:

You may see the bright green stone of Laconia and the glittering marble with wavy veins found in the deep gullies of the Iasian peaks . . . the pale yellow with swirling red from the Lydian headland; the glittering crocuslike golden stone which the Libyan sun, warming it with its golden light, has produced on the steep flanks of the Moorish hills; that of glittering black upon which the Celtic crags, deep in ice, have poured here and there an abundance of milk. . . . Such works as these our bountiful Emperor built for God the King.

Only the emperor himself had the power to command these far-flung resources on such a vast scale: the geography and geology of empire was literally built into the fabric of the church.

Emperors including Justinian made ceremonial processions across the Great Palace and into Hagia Sophia on high feast days. These began

WALLS OF POWER These walls were built in Constantinople by Theodosius II around 412.

in the throne room where the emperor was presented with the relic of Moses’ rod, still in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul today: the emperor was assuming the role of a new Moses, the empire was the new Promised Land, and the city the New Jerusalem.

Procopius, Justinian’s chronicler, described in considerable detail the way Justinian built and renovated palaces, harbors, cisterns, baths, and visitors’ accommodations. He even recorded the emperor’s suppression of brothels and provision for former prostitutes to enter the cloister.

This demonstrated the impact of Christianity on the development of the city, but perhaps the most important thing was how, by the time of Procopius, the theology of empire had become thoroughly modeled in the fabric of the city. No less than the entryway into Hagia Sophia (see p. 30) claims the peace and unity of the empire, the church, and the city. But beware of easy assumptions—sometimes strong imagery is necessary to shore up weak realities. ■

*Allan Doig is fellow, chaplain, and tutor for graduates at Lady Margaret Hall and a member of the faculty of theology in the University of Oxford. He is the author of *Liturgy and Architecture: From the Early Church to the Middle Ages and the forthcoming The History of the Church through Its Buildings.**



DORM OF THE FUTURE

Kurtz was sustainability consultant for these dormitories at Swarthmore College. “The buildings we are building today will last for 50 years and are part of the legacy we leave,” she says.

certifications. I’ve also taught other architects how to think about sustainability in their work.

If we think more strategically, we can save energy and create more environmentally connected spaces. We used to design a lot more like this

when we didn’t have air conditioners and had to rely on passive cooling. I like to teach people how to design with the environment and therefore minimize the need for air conditioning in the first place.

CH: How do you exercise your faith as an architect?

JSK: To me it’s a very Christ-driven calling to be an architect. I see what I do as a mission. A lot of architects think the apex of their career is to design a museum, but that was never me; I felt it was contrary to my faith. I was always interested in designing for people who went after me and for those who don’t typically have access to design services. I often think, if Jesus were an architect, who would his clients be? Creating places of community, serving those overlooked, and being a steward of resources would probably be core to his practice.

There’s a larger movement of public interest design, like public interest health. Access to health is something a whole society benefits from; public interest design is in line with that. It’s not just sitting at your desk; it’s more collaborative with end-users; it’s designing for neighborhood change. It can be a really powerful opportunity to cast visions for the future, designing for how the facility might grow. Design can have a measurable impact on economic, environmental, and social issues.

Thinking about how to create more resilient buildings in the wake of climate changes should also be key to our thinking. Flooding is commonplace here in Houston, and it’s important for those involved in the building industry to be planning for floods so that when that happens our cities and our buildings bounce back.

Our Christian faith asks us to be a voice for the voiceless. I think environmental stewardship falls in line with that, and advocacy for responsible use of finite resources. God has given us the earth as a gift, and we should treat it like one.

“God has given us the earth as a gift”

We spoke to Jill Sornson Kurtz, a professional architect with a particular interest in designing sustainable buildings for everyday life, on her work as a Christian in the building industry today.

CH: Tell us how you chose your current career path.

Jill Sornson Kurtz: I knew what I wanted to do pretty young, but I struggled with how that aligned with my faith. I thought to be missional I had to be a missionary. But the missional life my dad lived changed my perspective; he was a general contractor and became Christian later in life. He realized he could have a bigger impact with the people he was with every day on the job site than he ever could from a pulpit. That was very formative for me. The separation between sacred and secular is not as drastic as I once thought.

I spent a year working in India after I graduated with the nonprofit EMI, Engineering Ministries International. They further God’s work by helping design facilities for local ministries. Taking bucket baths to conserve water, frequent brownouts from not enough power, and learning to design with nature because that was part of the culture all solidified my interest in sustainability.

Coming back to the United States, I realized that here it was considered an economic luxury to design sustainably. But if we’re not thinking about future energy issues, then we are doing a disservice to our children and the world God has given us. My mission is to make environmental stewardship a building imperative.

During the past 11 years, I’ve been focused on helping sustainable projects achieve green building

INTERVIEW

SWARTHMORE DORMITORIES—JILL KURTZ



Citizens of no mean cities

A TOUR OF THE GREATEST CITIES OF LATE ANTIQUITY

Angelo Di Berardino

WHAT MAKES A CITY GREAT? A large population, an extensive territory, and an impressive organization are hallmarks of modern great cities. But, in the Roman Empire, what made a city was its legal status.

The term “city” derives from the Latin *civitas*, a place whose members are citizens (*polis* in Greek) bound by a common law. In Acts 21:39, Paul identified himself as a *polites* of Tarsus, “no mean city” (as the KJV has it). In Acts 22:28 and other places, Paul claimed Roman citizenship by birth as well.

GREAT CITIES, FEW PEOPLE

Ancient cities all had a forum with temples, a *curia* (hall of justice), an aqueduct, a theater, and other public buildings. They were small in comparison to their modern counterparts. One could walk down the long narrow roads from one end to the other in a day, even in the relatively large cities of late antiquity.

Residents were packed in, with little privacy. How easy it was to get food to the population determined the dimensions of a city. No ancient city exceeded a million inhabitants, even Rome. In fact if a city

THEATER OF WONDERS Above: Perhaps nothing says “Rome” more than the famed Colosseum, once host to every kind of imaginable entertainment.

WOMAN IN CHARGE Right: This is the *tyche* (Roman ruling deity) of Constantinople; on succeeding pages are *tyche* images of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria.

reached 100,000 inhabitants, it was called and considered great.

Scholars today agree that it is impossible to precisely determine the number of inhabitants of ancient cities. Since data records are spotty, scholars use interpretive models and make hypotheses and projections to estimate population. For all the vast physical spread of the Roman Empire, the entire population is thought to have been between 50 million and 120 million. (In the same area today live many hundreds of millions of people.)

The size of any given city population varied wildly, due to plagues, earthquakes, wars, and illness. Living in high-density housing, the lack of basic hygiene and medical care put poorer classes at the greatest risk of





illness and death. The quality of their food was also lower, while the upper classes could afford a more varied and healthy diet.

Let's visit a few of the empire's famous cities in late antiquity and find out what they were really like.

ROME, CITY OF IMMIGRANTS

Step into Rome in the first or second century, and you'd find a great cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic capital of a vast centralized empire. Rome's inhabitants were both Roman citizens and numerous *peregrini* (free people, but not Roman citizens) from all over the empire. Rich families had many slaves and ate lavishly, while the poor lived in crowded apartments and ate gruel.

If you were a Christian here in the first century, perhaps you would have been acquainted with Peter or Paul, the two apostles who died in the city. Or maybe you would have been among the first to hear Paul's famous epistle to the Romans read aloud to your church community.

Evidence suggests that people lived in the area of Rome for over 10,000 years before Christ, but tradition claims the city itself was founded around 753 BC. The population during the early church era is best surmised from records of *capita civium*, adult male citizens. We have some reasonable records of the rich, who could afford tombs with inscriptions, and we know something of the poor, based on the numbers of people receiving free food from the city.

Based on all this, one of the best estimates is that the first-century population was around 600,000,

THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM Above: On this mosaic in Antioch, Greek hero Orpheus plays his lyre, charming the onlooking animals.

GRAB A SEAT Left: Like the Colosseum, Alexandria's amphitheater would have hosted games and dramas.

decreasing at the time of the great epidemics at the end of the second century.

Citizens of Rome enjoyed better living conditions than their counterparts in the rest of the empire, resulting in a longer life expectancy; and women in the capital married at a young age, giving them more years to bear children. These two factors help explain the population growth of the city relative to others.

Immigrants further added to Rome's growth in the first and second centuries. People from all over the Roman Empire, especially its eastern part, immigrated to Rome. They did not usually gain Roman citizenship, but they came anyway, often seeking jobs or better living conditions. Some even came from outside the empire's borders.

Rome had been since its foundation a city of immigrants with an ongoing process of integration. Membership in ancient Roman society was not based on race, language, or culture, but on *ius* (the rights or laws that citizens were entitled to, the root of our modern word "justice").

At the time of Constantine, inhabitants numbered between 700,000 and a million. This number diminished during the fourth century. The population regained steam again until the fifth century, followed





by a final sharp decline when the Visigoth Alaric sacked Rome in 410.

The Christian community increased in the second and third centuries, and Rome's bishop soon became the connection between Christian communities in the empire. Famous early Christians associated with Rome (besides Peter and Paul) include the first bishop of Rome, Clement (c. 35–99); theologian Hippolytus (170–235); and apologist Minucius Felix (died c. 250).

ALEXANDRIA, A CENTER OF CULTURE

Those lucky enough to visit Alexandria in the first century would have been met by a cosmopolitan mix of Greeks, Romans, Jews, Egyptians, and Africans. By the second century, Christians too could be found in this eclectic city.

Alexander the Great founded this second-largest city in the empire on the Nile Delta in 332–331 BC. Its magnitude grew with rule by the Ptolemies, and it became the capital of Egypt, remaining so even after Rome conquered Egypt around 30 BC. The Roman period lasted until the arrival of the Arabs in the seventh century. It was the largest cultural center of the east, bigger than Athens and Antioch in Syria. In this context it was also an important cultural center first for the Jews and later for the Christians.

Evidence on Alexandria's size from literature, archaeological digs, and inscriptions is very scarce. Greek historian and geographer Strabo did visit Alexandria in 25 BC, offering us a list of public buildings. The Sicilian Diodorus (who died around 27 BC) recorded a figure of 300,000 people in 60 BC, making it a bit more than half the size of Rome. According to

THE PEACEABLE KING This 5th-c. mosaic in Ravenna of Jesus as the Good Shepherd seems to borrow artistically from depictions of Orpheus like the one on p. 36.

some scholars, Alexandria had no more than 500,000 to 600,000 inhabitants in the late fourth century.

Christianity grew quickly in Alexandria in the third century, and the city was a veritable hotbed of great theologians: Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215), Origen (185–254), Dionysius (d. 264), Athanasius (c. 296–373), and Didymus the Blind (c. 313–398). (For more on all of these, see our issue 105, *Early African Christianity*.) At the Council of Nicaea (325), the Alexandrian bishop's seat was placed second after the Roman bishop's.

ANTIOCH, THE WINDOW TO THE EAST

Third in our tour of great cities is Syria's Antioch on the Orontes River, founded in the year 300 BC. It was the capital of the Seleucid monarchy and also often served as an imperial residence. Here you might meet traders from all over the known world. With its easy river access, the city was a meeting point for ancient trade routes and was one of the two poles (with Edessa) of the Roman strategic system of defense. In fact you might glimpse emperors leaving from Antioch for wars to the east.

Antioch was also a cosmopolitan city where many people from the Middle East came for commercial and cultural reasons. The population was mainly Greek in culture and used Greek as the official language,





but Syriac was also spoken, especially in the surrounding countryside. Here was a strong Jewish community, so Jesus' followers arrived early. The believers in Antioch have the distinction of being the first to bear the name "Christians" (Acts 11:19–26). Paul set out from Antioch for his first missionary journey. Later it came to be considered one of the five great seats of the patriarchs.

Antioch often suffered major earthquakes, the most devastating in 115 and 526. Destruction also came in the form of attacks by the Persians (in 256) and by the Arabs (from the seventh century on). The ancient city is buried today beneath modern buildings and the sediments of the River Orontes.

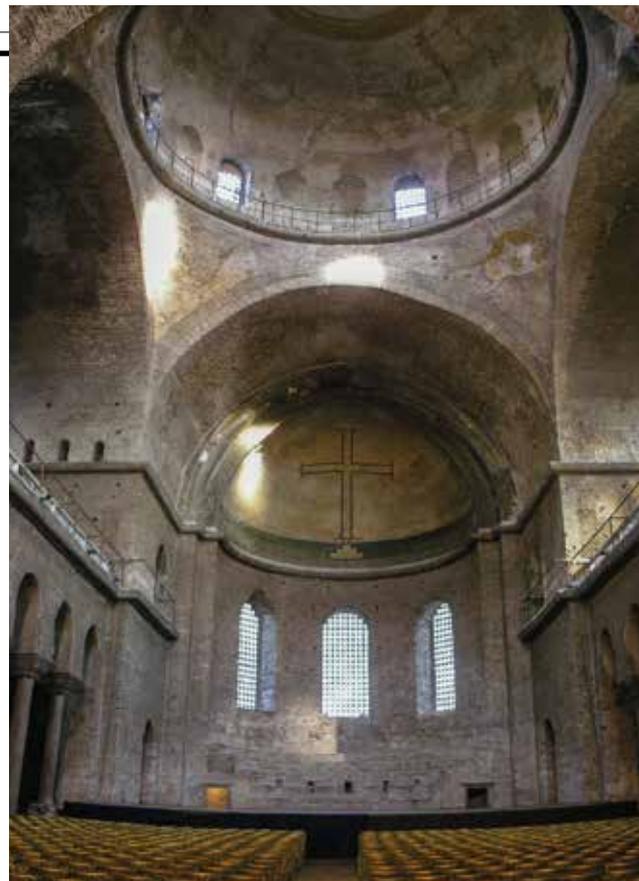
Even in the fourth century, Antioch was called a "splendid and eminent city for public works." It had fewer inhabitants than Alexandria, but it is not easy to offer any precise number, because very little information exists. Common estimates place the population at about 150,000. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–c. 107) was one of its most famous early church fathers, and John Chrysostom (c. 349–407) was born and ordained there. He became a popular preacher in Antioch before being named archbishop of Constantinople.



CARTHAGE, VIBRANT FAITH COMMUNITY

Our next stop is Carthage, in Africa Proconsularis (modern Tunisia), near the city of Tunis. Here, in the empire's fourth largest city, we find a thriving and vibrant Christian community.

Carthage was founded by the Phoenicians in the ninth century BC, destroyed by the Romans, then rebuilt by the two Caesars, Julius and Augustus. Its inhabitants were in close contact with Rome for study, trade, and cultural relations. The Arabs destroyed the city in 698.



ANCIENT HISTORY *Above:* Hagia Eirene in Constantinople stands next to the Topkapi Palace, now a museum.

SERMON SITE *Left:* Augustine may well have preached in the Damous el Karita Basilica in Carthage; today only ruins remain.

Many archaeological remains have been preserved in Carthage, though in recent decades modern people have covered some of them with residential villas. Inscriptions also abound. The number of Carthage's inhabitants might have reached about 100,000.

Born in Thagaste, Augustine (354–430) moved to Carthage at the age of 21 in 375 and lived there until 383, when he went on to Rome and then Milan. Carthage became the site of many of his youthful indiscretions. In Carthage he left Christianity for a time for Manichaeism, and he fell in love with the unnamed mother of his son Adeodatus. After his conversion Augustine returned to Carthage several times as a visiting preacher.

CONSTANTINOPLE, THE "NEW ROME"

Finally we'll cross back over the Mediterranean Sea to the city modeled after Rome itself: "New Rome," Constantinople. Here you will discover magnificent historical monuments and works of art collected from all over the Greco-Roman empire (see "Christianity goes to town," pp. 30–33). You will also find the first



THE GROWTH OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1ST CENTURY 2ND CENTURY 3RD CENTURY ROMAN EMPIRE c. 313 6TH CENTURY

intentionally “Christian city” and marvel at the impressive Hagia Sophia and the Great Palace.

Emperor Constantine chose the ancient city of Byzantium in 324 as the new imperial seat, renaming it “City of Constantine” (Constantinopolis). Sometimes it was called simply “the city” (*polis* in Greek) for its excellence, and its name today, Istanbul, derives from the expression “to the city” (*eis ten polin* in Greek). Constantinople continued to expand, making a growth spurt that same century during the reign of Theodosius I.

After the fifth century, Rome’s population declined—in the year 600, Rome may have had only 100,000 people—and the population of Constantinople increased until it became the largest city of the Middle Ages, with 300,000 to 400,000 residents. For 11 centuries after Constantine made it his capital, it was the seat of the eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, and its bishop became the second in prominence after the pope, bishop of Rome.

The emperor built many places of worship at Constantinople, housing relics of martyrs and sacred objects as a way of acquiring new political and ecclesiastical prestige. Thus began the great rivalry between Constantinople and Rome.

OTHER STOPS ON THE TOUR

These were not the only important cities of late antiquity; others had large numbers of inhabitants and

administrative, cultural, and religious importance. Traveling around the eastern Mediterranean, your tour could include Corinth, to whose church Paul addressed two letters; Smyrna, home of the early church martyr Polycarp (69–155); and Ephesus (in modern western Turkey), to whose church Paul also wrote and where a famed council convened in 431 to condemn Nestorianism.

Moving on you might stop at Edessa (in Mesopotamia), home of theologian Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306–373); Damascus (in modern Syria); and Caesarea (in Palestine), where Eusebius (c. 260–339), a pioneering Christian historian, was bishop. In the south of Mesopotamia, you could visit the twin cities of Seleucia-Ctesiphon on the Tigris, south of the later site of Baghdad and destroyed by Arab conquest in 637. Edessa and Seleucia-Ctesiphon (capital of the Sasanian kings) were the centers of Syriac and Persian Christianity.

Touring the Mediterranean cities of antiquity demonstrates that Paul was not the only citizen of no mean city. 🏛️

Angelo Di Berardino is past president and current professor of patrology at the Augustinian Patristic Institute (Augustinianum) in Rome, author of the Historical Atlas of Early Christianity, and editor of the Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity.



IS THIS A PULPIT?

“Christians have various models of how churches should engage culture and citizenship, and all those models need to learn from one another,” Forster says.

“The transformative love of God in our lives”

Greg Forster is director of the Oikonomia Network at the Center for Transformational Churches, Trinity International University. These reflections on Christians and culture are adapted from a blog series at [The Green Room](#).

It’s only a coincidence that I wrote this, my final post in my series on the kingdom of God, on the doorstep of Easter. But I might as well have planned it, because I want to propose a reversal of our inadequate models of the Kingdom that will bear some resemblance to death and resurrection.

To equip Christians for whole-life discipleship, fruitful work, and wisdom about human flourishing, our churches need a fresh vision of the kingdom of God, transcending three inadequate visions that now dominate in different churches. Greg Thompson calls them the domination, fortification, and accommodation paradigms (in everyday language, we might call them culture-war, fundamentalist, and seeker-sensitive churches). I want to give up trying to articulate a single “right” vision of the kingdom and instead look at how churches in each of the three inadequate camps can grow by learning from the strengths of the others.

One thing I’ve considered is suggesting new, more constructive names for the three models. I want to tentatively suggest that these models could be called transformative justice, transformative holiness, and transformative grace, and that it is these three elements building upon their own strengths while striving toward one another’s

strengths that represent the cosmic in-breaking of God’s transformative love...

Domination or culture-war churches, rightly enthusiastic for justice, could think of themselves as promoting transformative justice. Calling it “transformative” would force them to consider how real justice requires the local-church-based growth in personal holiness and the symbolically savvy cultural contextualization that the other two models point toward.

Fortification or fundamentalist churches, rightly enthusiastic for holiness, could think of themselves as promoting transformative holiness. Calling it “transformative” would force them to consider how real holiness requires sanctification and discipleship within (rather than apart from) the surrounding culture, as well as the constant emphasis on supernatural grace, that the other two models point toward.

Accommodation or seeker-sensitive churches, rightly enthusiastic for a cultural hermeneutic of grace, could think of themselves as promoting transformative grace. Calling it “transformative” would force them to consider how real grace requires the sacrificial calls to holiness and justice that the other two models point toward.

And if churches based on transformative justice, transformative holiness, and transformative grace were to learn to think and work together, seeking to learn from one another and self-sacrificially partner in enterprises that advance the Kingdom of God, that would really demonstrate what the transformative love of God—the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit for one another, extended to us in creation and redemption—would look like in our lives. If we took it seriously.

INTERVIEW

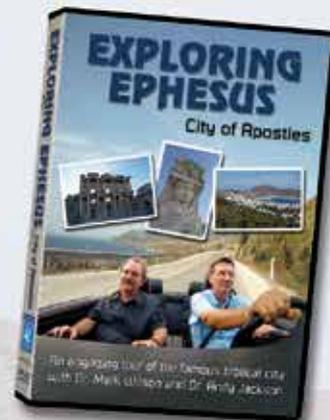
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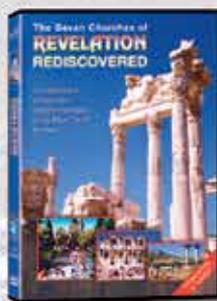
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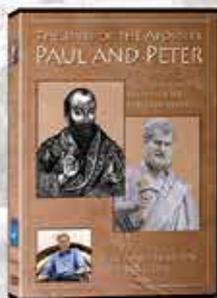
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The Lives of the Apostles Paul and Peter (2 segments)

Join public television host Rick Steves as he travels to modern-day Turkey and Greece where he recalls what happened to Paul in places such as Ephesus, Philippi, Athens, and Corinth. Then Steves follows the story of the Apostle Peter from his early days as a fisherman to the tumultuous events surrounding Jesus' death and Resurrection. 69 minutes total.

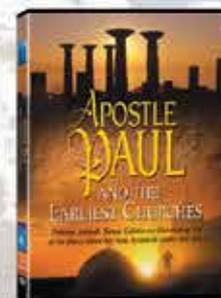
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This fascinating production presents an archaeological treasury of mosaics, frescoes, statues, amphitheaters, agoras, temples, and more. Beginning with Paul's conversion, it reenacts his missionary journeys on Anatolian soil (modern Turkey), explaining the historical, religious, and archaeological background of each region. The film's archaeological emphasis is enhanced by 3-D-animated maps and footage of cities important to Paul's ministry. 48 minutes.

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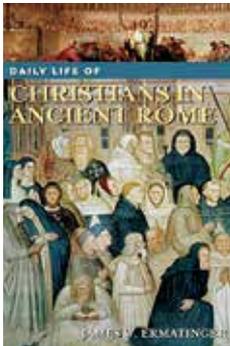
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Recommended resources

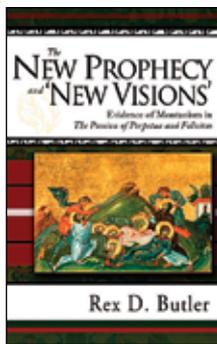
HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CH EDITORIAL STAFF AND THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE EARLY CHURCH AS AN URBAN MOVEMENT.

BOOKS

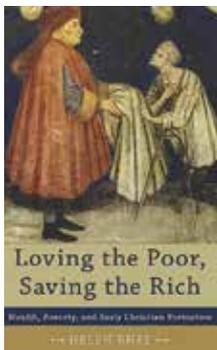
To read more about **life in the Roman Empire** for both Christians and pagans, check out Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150–750* (1971), *Late Antiquity* (1998), and *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (2002); Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry* (1980); Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (1983); Florence Dupont, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (1993); Gregory S. Aldrete, *Daily Life in the Roman City* (2004); James W. Ermatinger, *Daily Life of Christians in Ancient Rome* (2006); Thomas Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* (2007); L. de Ligt and S. J. Northwood, eds., *People, Land, and Politics* (2008); and Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome* (2017).



For more on the **growth and development of Christianity**, look at Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (1967, 2000), *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (1992), *The Rise of Western Christendom* (1995, 2002), *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (1972, 2007), and *Through the Eye of a Needle* (2012); Rex Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions"* (2006); Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (1996), *Cities of God* (2006), and *The Triumph of Christianity* (2011); and Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* (2016).

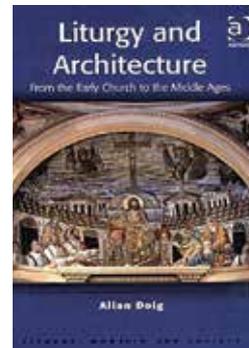


Christians engaged in **charity to their neighbors** figure in Ronald Numbers and Darrel Amundsen, *Caring and Curing* (1986); Darrel Amundsen, *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (1995); Gary Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity* (2009) and *Medicine and Religion* (2014); Peter Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul* (2015) and *Treasure in Heaven* (2016); and Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich* (2012) and *Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christianity* (2017).



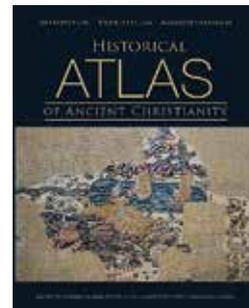
For **Christians in art and architecture**, see John Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (1970); Cyril Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (1972); John Lowden,

Early Christian and Byzantine Art (1997); Linda Safran, ed., *Heaven on Earth* (1998); and Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (2008).



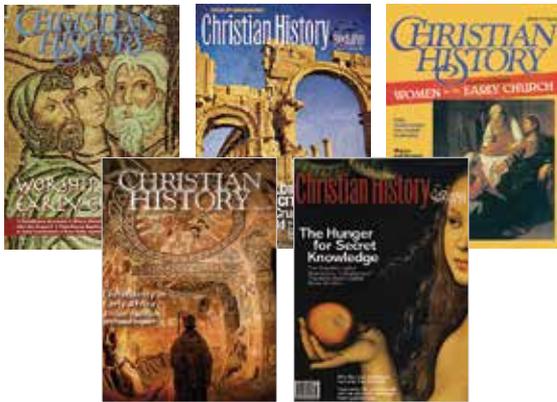
And for **relations between church and state in the Roman Empire**, read Sidney Ehler, *Twenty Centuries of Church and State* (1957); Roland Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace* (1960); Agnes Cunningham, *The Early Church and the State* (1982); and Hugo Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity* (2006).

It's worth reading some **important reference works** about the early church that illumine its context: the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* edited by Everett Ferguson (1990); and the *Historical Atlas of Ancient Christianity* (2014) and *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (2013) edited by Angelo Di Berardino. *The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, *The Ancient Christian Doctrine*, and *The Ancient Christian Text* series are excellent references edited by Tom Oden and/or Gerald Bray.



Finally you can hear from some leaders promoting **modern civic engagement** in Andy Crouch, *Culture Making* (2008); William Droel, *Church, Chicago-Style* (2008); Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling* (2011); Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith* (2011); Timothy Keller, *Center Church* (2012); Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation* (2014); Peter Greer and Chris Horst, *Entrepreneurship for Human Flourishing* (2014) and Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option* (2017).

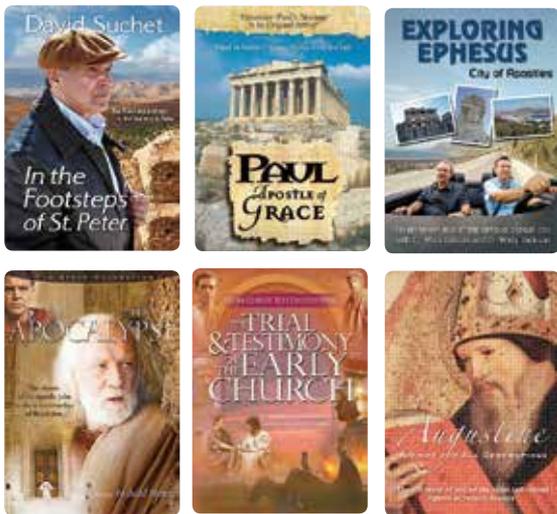




CHRISTIAN HISTORY ON THE EARLY CHURCH

Read these past issues of *Christian History* online; some hard copies are still available for purchase:

- 17: *Women in the Early Church*
- 27: *Persecution*
- 37: *Worship*
- 51: *Heresy*
- 57: *Early Church Growth*
- 64: *Desert Fathers*
- 80: *First Bible Teachers*
- 85: *Council of Nicaea*
- 94: *Building the City of God*
- 96: *The Gnostics*
- 105: *Christianity in Early Africa*

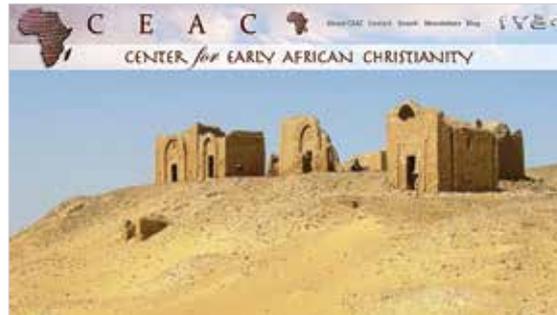


VIDEOS FROM VISION VIDEO

Videos on the theme of this issue include *The Apocalypse*, *Augustine*, *Crossing Rome*, *Exploring Ephesus*, *In the Footsteps of St. Peter*, *History of Christian Worship*, *Paul the Apostle*, *Paul the Emissary*, *Perpetua*, *Pioneers of the Spirit: Augustine of Hippo*, *Polycarp*, *Restless Heart*, *The Story of the Twelve Apostles*, *Trial and Testimony of the Early Church*, and *Torchlighters* episodes on Augustine and Perpetua.

WEBSITES

The Fordham Ancient History Sourcebook and the Christian Classics Ethereal Library are, as always, great sources for primary texts discussed in this issue. *Early Christian Writings* focuses on texts from both orthodox Christianity and other varieties of belief up



to the Council of Nicaea. The [Center for Early African Christianity](#) has timelines, maps, and other resources, and [Bibliographies for Theology](#) by William Harmless gives many suggestions for further reading on the early church. There are also extensive sites devoted specifically to [Tertullian](#) and [Augustine](#).



PBS has a good introductory site on the [Roman Empire](#) in the first century, and you may also want to look at the [Illustrated History of the Roman Empire](#). The BBC Bitesize guide to ancient Rome is great for kids.



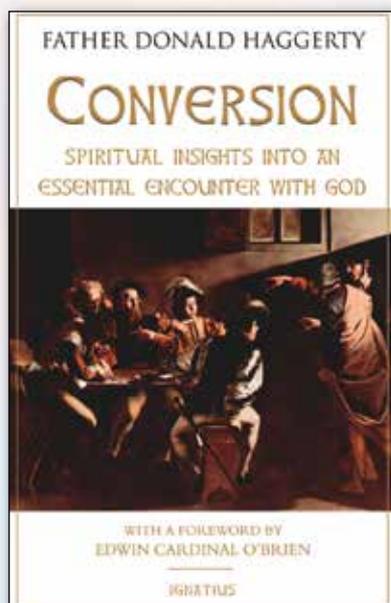
The best online introduction to the modern city movement is *Christianity Today's This Is Our City*. You may also enjoy the website (and the film series) [For the Life of the World](#).

WORKS THAT INFORM, INSPIRE, ILLUMINATE

“The esteemed Fr. Haggerty uses a clear, direct style to show that conversion is the daily heartfelt response of a disciple to the Master.

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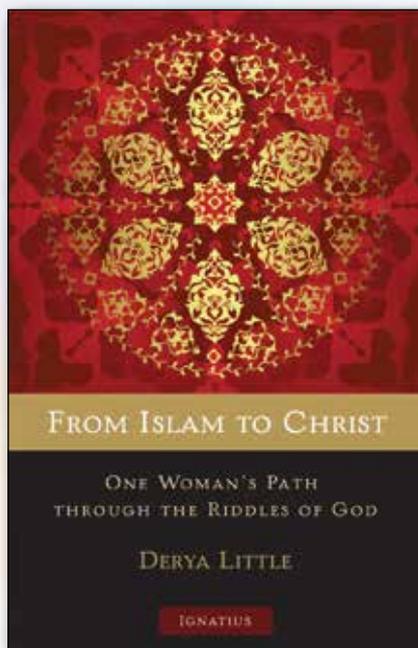
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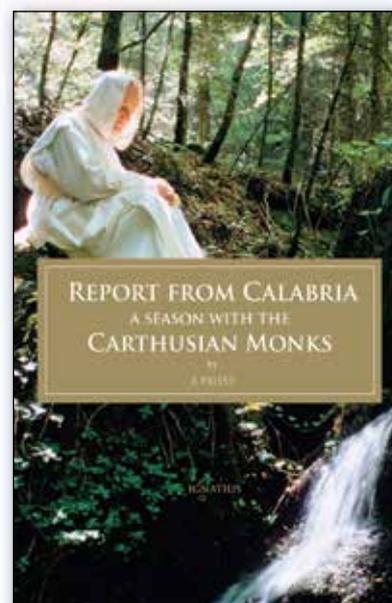
◆ **FROM ISLAM TO CHRIST**
One Woman's Path through the Riddles of God
Derya Little

Raised as a Muslim in Turkey, Little wandered far in search of the truth. She rejected the Islamic faith and became an atheist. She tried to convert a Christian missionary to atheism but was converted to Christ instead. Later, during her doctoral studies in England, her amazing spiritual journey led her into the Catholic Church. Her story provides a window into both Islam and modernity. It shows that the grace and the mercy of God know no bounds.

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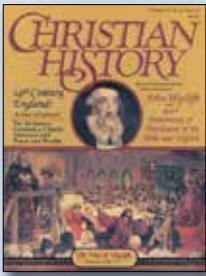
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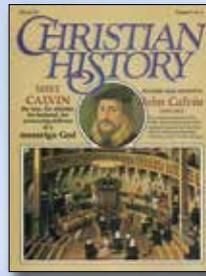
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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

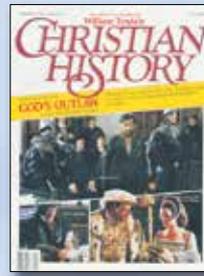
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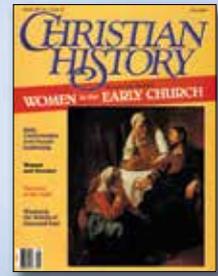
#3: John Wycliffe



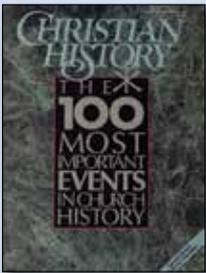
#12: John Calvin



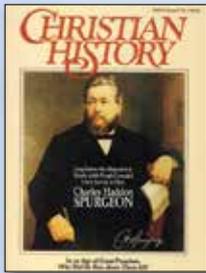
#16: William Tyndale



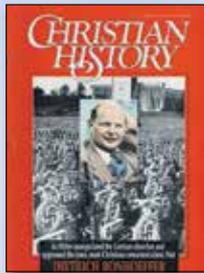
#17: Women in the Early Church



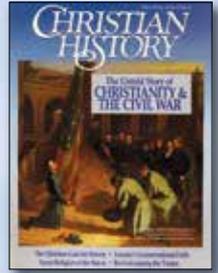
#28: The 100 Most Important Events in Church History



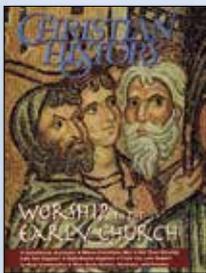
#29: Charles Haddon Spurgeon



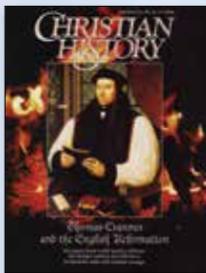
#32: Dietrich Bonhoeffer



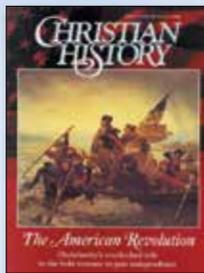
#33: Christianity and the Civil War



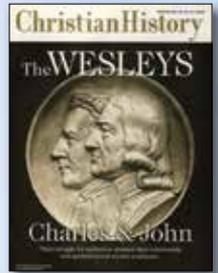
#37: Worship in the Early Church



#48: Thomas Cranmer and the English Reformation



#50: The American Revolution



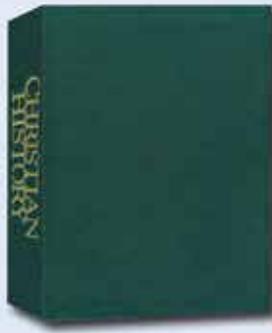
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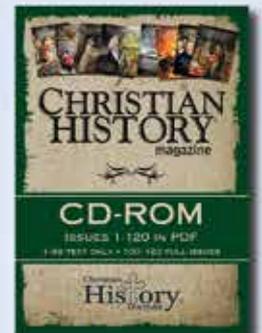
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