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SCOUTING POLYPHONY IN LATE ANCIENT
CHRISTIANITY

AN OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF OTHERNESS BASED
ON THE JUXTAPOSITION OF INSTITUTIONAL AND NON-INSTITUTIONAL
VOICES

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Abstract <p>The purpose of this thesis is to problematize the complexity and the variety of voices that dialogued by the end of the third century a.D. in Rome in order to contribute to shape the phenomenon we have come to know as Christianity. The research question is: as opposed to using just a source associated with the Church, what additional perspectives are provided by the juxtaposition of more voices in order to conceptualise alterity within Christianity in this foundational moment? In order to answer it, I use three sources (Eusebius' <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>, Lactantius' <i>De Mortibus Persecutorum</i> and the <i>Memoria Apostolorum</i> graffiti in Via Appia, Rome), which provide a variety of voices associated with a range social actors. The objective is to give a broader account of Christian alterity in late antiquity by means of applying a dialogic approach. Originally proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, this hermeneutic paradigm seeks to juxtapose the voices of all the social actors implied in order to show the conflict between. Given that it would not be possible to juxtapose all the possible sources, I base my analysis in a historical framework grounded on secondary literature that also acts as a metadiscursive context to interpret the sources.</p> <p>I make use of mixed methods based on content analysis, using MaxQDA to code segments in all three sources and then analyse their frequencies in order to delineate which variables are more relevant to analyse. I thereafter present comments; first analysing only Eusebius' text, then analysing all three together and showing the conflict between them. Finally, I contrast both conceptualisations. My main conclusion is that an open ended account of history represents alterity in a more complex way that allows researchers to make folk discourses visible, as was the case for these three sources, despite having the risk of being more chaotic.</p>		
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List of Abbreviations

<i>Con A.</i>	Conceptualisation A (as described in the introduction).
<i>Con B.</i>	Conceptualisation B (as described in the introduction)
<i>ICUR</i>	Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae

0. Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to problematize the complexity and the variety of voices that dialogued by the end of the third century a.D. in Rome in order to contribute to shape the phenomenon we have come to know as *Christianity*. This is based on the fact that the study of antiquity presents scholars with a fundamental difficulty: the uncertainty of the narratives that are created to account for past events. On one hand, there is an epistemological problem: how can we know for sure that such happenings took place the way we suggest – or even took place at all? Unfortunately, there is no definite answer, as we have to rely only on what remains of past societies in order to understand them. As time goes by, more remains continue to be discovered, unveiling variables that might completely change previous paradigms. Therefore, sources are sometimes insufficient – great gaps need to be filled by educated conjectures –, and sometimes they are over-sufficient – a structured system seems to make sense until new evidence is discovered, and suddenly the pieces do not fit that perfectly anymore. To make the situation even more controversial, a political question arises: according to whom were these sources written and what was the relationship of the author or authors with the other individuals and groups presented in the texts? Power, thus, becomes the main variable to discuss: both the power held by the scholars who propose theories, as well as the power the authors of our sources had over the rest of the social actors involved in the dynamics that are accounted for.

While it could be claimed that this issue could undermine the whole academic enterprise, I believe that it should only reshape the approach we assume as scholars towards our sources and the way we interpret them. Along these lines, several authors have proposed new methodological paradigms over the last half of a century; for instance, French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard¹ proposed that it is the *meta-narratives*² that have ceased to be influential in academic studies, while our attention should be drifted towards smaller-scale, local narratives³. Complementarily, Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin⁴ introduced the idea of *polyphony*, which encompasses the plurality of voices that are present in a narrative and create meaning only when juxtaposed with each other. It is *conflict*,

¹ LYOTARD 1984.

² Or grand narratives that seek to systematically explain a society as a structured whole.

³ *Petits récits*.

⁴ BAKHTIN 1981

argues the author, that is meaningful; and each voice involved presents an equal value despite its being ultimately incompatible with the other ones at times. The narrative in what Bakhtin calls *dialogism*, thus, ceases to pursue the construction of a consistent, structured system, and favours in turn the creation of an open-ended whole where all the *characters* involved are treated as subjects rather than objects⁵. This idea of conflict can also be found in Karl Marx's⁶ critique to a neo-Hegelian vision of historiography as a succession of illustrious ideas, along with his proposition of a material-life-based history where the dynamics surrounding labour force and the clash between the classes that emerge from them are what trigger the major changes in history. Drawing on Lyotard's theory, I shall disregard Marx's metanarrative as such; however, Indian literary theorist Gayatri Spivak⁷ proves that his ideas are still useful, as she proposes a notion of subjectivity that is based upon them. In my reading of Spivak's theory, there is not such a thing as an undivided subject whose interests and desires are harmoniously unified, but rather there is a schism between these two.

Several paradigms can be associated with these theories (e.g. post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-colonialism), and this will be further addressed in the following sections of this thesis; yet, at this point one main idea should be kept in mind: modern day historiographical representations of the past should consider the interaction and conflict between a plurality of voices present in the sources in order to account for phenomena that are utterly open-ended wholes, rather than compact, cohesive stories. However, in order to do so, scholars need to find a way to compensate for the lack of access to such voices. In the case of Christianity in late antiquity, the amount of insights into the characteristics of religious everyday life is deeply limited, as well as heavily restricted to those accounts written by ecclesiastical authorities. For this reason, I propose to expand the scope of primary sources that can shed light on this matter, having the idea of power and authority as an axis point.

For this thesis, the later part of the third century a.D. and the beginning of the fourth have been selected to delineate the time span in which the polyphony of religious life will be scouted; also, Rome will constitute the locus of this

⁵ Bakhtin's ideas originally referred to literary works, Dostoyevsky's being particularly characteristic. Nevertheless, over the course of the years his theories have been adapted to the analysis of social phenomena (EMERSON & MORRISON 2005 [1994]).

⁶ MARX & ENGELS 1972 [1845].

⁷ SPIVAK 1993 [1988].

enterprise. This is mainly due to two reasons; namely, accessibility to sources and historical relevance.

As for the sources, I propose that a possibility to unveil non-institutional discourses can be found in the study of unofficial inscriptions. These have been carved in several roman catacombs, yet according to epigrapher Danilo Mazzoleni⁸ only those under the basilica of St. Sebastian can be dated with relative accuracy. These are known as *Memoria Apostolorum*, and a transcription of them has been compiled in the *Inscriptiones christianae urbis romae* collection⁹. Fortunately enough, the time in which these carvings were allegedly produced – which corresponds with the period stipulated above – was an important time of transition: the beginning of a Christian Roman Empire. From the perspective of the State, this major change had several political implications and this made it worth preserving accounts of relevant events for the future. A source for this is *De Mortibus Persecutorum*¹⁰, a treatise produced by Lactantius: a Christian advisor to Constantine I¹¹. However, simultaneously the Church was consolidating as an institution, and Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* stands as one of the fundamental documents for this matter¹². From this source, books VII and VIII¹³ are the most relevant for this endeavour, as they pertain to the persecutions and the breaking point towards a Christian era. Therefore, this period and location provide us with a confluence of sources from various voices from a spectrum of social actors with different access to power, and which gives an account of a time historically relevant both for the State and for the Church, as well as socially and culturally relevant for the common people of the time.

When conceptualising Christianity, it could sound sensible to propose that the Church should be in charge of defining it since nowadays the various Churches are regarded as the ultimate authority in this issue. However, both now and then, individuals and other groups have and had had a word on what they believe to be Christianity, sometimes drifting away to an extent from the

⁸ MAZZOLENI 2000; FIOCCHI & BISCONTI & MAZZOLENI 2009.

⁹ DE ROSSI & FERRUA (eds.) 1971, pp. 8-40. This will be the source material for this thesis.

¹⁰ For this thesis I will use as a source the English translation found in CREED 1984, pp. 4-79.

¹¹ As will be discussed further in Chapters 2 & 5, I find this text to resonate with a Christian perspective, yet not so similar in style and content to those of the bishops. Given this trait and the author's deep link with state affairs, I have resolved to identify it as a voice more associated with the Christian Empire than with the Church as an institution.

¹² More about why I have selected this source as associated with an institutional voice from the Church can be found in Chapters 2 & 5.

¹³ Source material for this thesis, an English translation, can be found in DEFERRARI 1955, pp. 91-205.

boundaries established by such institutions. Are these voices more or less Christian than the institutional discourse? The answer to this question depends on the affiliation and epistemology of the one who replies. This issue will be further addressed in the epistemological framework of this work, but now it should suffice to say that I, as author of this thesis, agree with the postmodern and post-structural notion that discourses are deeply rooted in power, and that reality is – and was – more complex than what a consistent account made from an institutional – or any other – perspective can tell. Nevertheless, as my own voice is also just one more amongst many, my approach is neither infallible nor definitive; therefore, I would like to put it on trial by problematizing whether or not including, so to say, *outsider* voices in this research is useful to understand more deeply the characteristics of Christianity in such a critical time for its definition. Based on this, **my research question is:**

As opposed to using just a source associated with the Church, what additional perspectives are provided by the juxtaposition of those voices present in the three sources mentioned above in order to conceptualise alterity¹⁴ within Christianity in this foundational moment?

Three sub-questions follow from it:

1. What is the discourse on alterity within Christianity in the given time span that can be found only in Eusebius' text? (*Result: Conceptualisation A*)
2. What other discourses on alterity within Christianity in the given time span can be found by considering the polyphony created by the juxtaposition of all three sources? (*Result: Conceptualisation B*)
3. What perspectives are found in *Conceptualisation B (Con. B)* that are not present in *Conceptualisation A (Con. A)*?

Figure 0.1 below shows the logic that I will follow in order to answer these questions. Sub-question 1 will be answered by analysing books VII and VIII of *Historia Ecclesiastica* and proposing an approach as to how Christianity can be understood based solely on this discourse. Therefore, the resulting categorisation will be regarded as my *final conceptualisation* for this first thinking line (Con. A above). Afterwards, the other two sources will be analysed in a similar way, thus giving two sets of abstractions on the understanding of Christianity in the given

¹⁴ Basically, *otherness*.

time span; namely, those based on them independently and those that rise from the dialogue between them when put together.

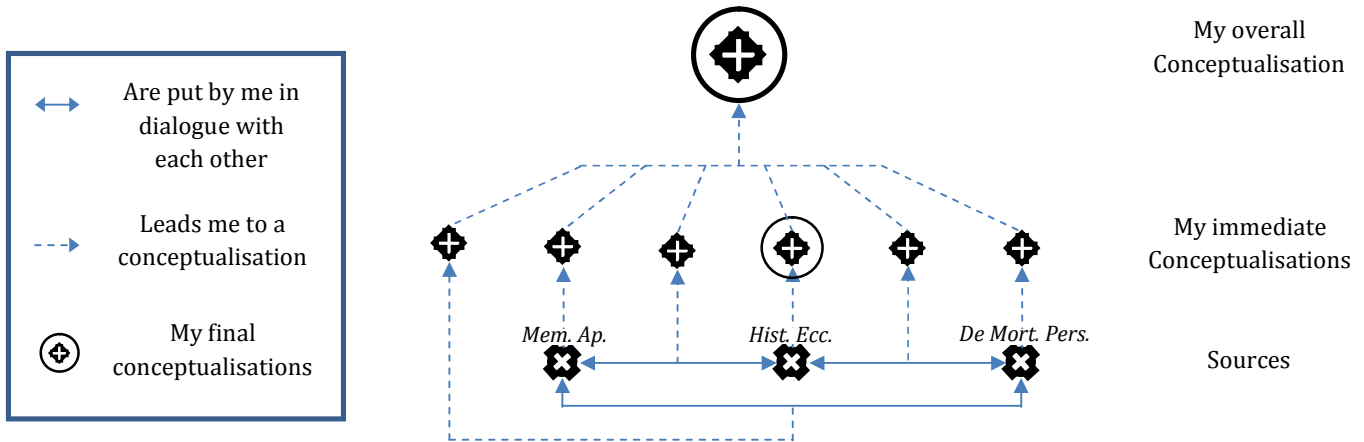


Fig. 0.1 Logical process for the present research

In this second line of thinking, the result of the analysis of Eusebius' text will not be regarded as one of my *final conceptualisations*, but rather as one as equally valid as the others. Subsequently, the conflicts between these *immediate conceptualisations* of mine will allow me to propose an *overall conceptualisation* (Con. B above), although it should be kept in mind that this one will have the peculiarity of being open-ended¹⁵.

Finally, Con. A and Con. B will be contrasted with each other in order to suggest what perspectives that are present in the latter are not so in the former. This will answer my research question, and thus corresponds with the conclusions of this thesis; whereas the answers to sub-questions 1 and 2 will serve as the partial conclusions to chapters 6 (*Conceptualisation A: an abstraction based on a source associated with the Church*) and 7 (*Conceptualisation B: an abstraction based on the juxtaposition of multiple voices*), respectively. These two chapters will comprise the second section of this thesis, which will be dedicated to the presentation and analysis of the discourses present in my sources. The previous section will deal with preliminary information that must be taken in consideration while analysing the data, and will be divided in 5 chapters; namely:

¹⁵ For practical matters, this means that even though I will propose a model, I do not claim it to exhaustively cover all the possibilities. Also, I will leave some open questions unanswered, my intention being both to disregard those ideas that I do not consider relevant for my analysis and to encourage future research.

- Chapter 1 – Epistemological & Ontological Framework

A detailed comment on how I will approach the basis of the construction of knowledge in order to process my data.

- Chapter 2 – Historical Framework

A brief account of the historical events that provide a metadiscursive framework within which to understand the narratives I will analyse.

- Chapter 3 – Conceptual Framework

A brief discussion of the theories and terms that I will use to analyse the data.

- Chapter 4 – State of the Art

An exposition of some of the previous research that I find most significant (to the best of my knowledge) about the topics I address in my thesis.

- Chapter 5 – Methodological Framework

A detailed introduction to the sources used and how they will be operationalised, followed by the tools used to analyse them, a description of the procedure and evidence of reliability and validity for my claims.

My **hypothesis** – that is, what I was expecting to find at the beginning of the research – with regard to the research question will be that Con. B will provide a broader spectrum of worldviews on the phenomenon in question; more specifically, Con. B will:

- Evidence some social actors that do not appear in Con. A
- Also show theological discourses different to the one in Con. A
- Echo the voice of common people while Con A. will not
- Show different intentions for the production of discourse while Con. A will only show one
- Shed light on the lives of common Christians (non-institutional individuals) within the given time span while Con. A will not
- Show practices that are not accounted for in Con. A

However, there are certain limitations to the scope of this thesis' conclusions. As it was mentioned earlier, there is an unavoidable degree of uncertainty as to whether accounts of past events are accurate. While I am trying to explicitly include several voices (including my own) in my narrative, I am still exercising power over the degree of truth assigned to it. In the end, I cannot escape the fact that it is my condition as an educated researcher that allows me to speak for the authors of these three sources: to ultimately use my interpretations to

make sense of what they might have meant. Additionally, there is a gap between my readings of Eusebius' and Lactantius' texts and the actual discourse intended by them, as I am using English translations. The reason why I am doing so is because it grants me fluency in my reading, drawing on the skills of much more experienced translators. However, this creates a chain of authorities in which power is not only exercised by me, but also by the translators: they speak for the authors, and thus increase the distance between my interpretations and the actual original voices. The same could be said of the inscriptions in *Memoria Apostolorum*, but with regard to the fact that I am using a compilation of transliterations of the original carvings according to the best understanding of an epigraphist. On top of this, the voices that I will refer to are by no means all the possible ones: I have admitted that access to the sources has largely determined the scope of the research, as it is extremely difficult to put together texts written from different perspectives about specific situations that took place during the first centuries a.D.

Unfortunately, there is no way to fully solve this dilemma, for which it must be kept in mind that while I propose that a dialogic approach to differentiated sources might bring us closer to the complexity of the conceptualisation of Christianity in Late Antiquity, it does not provide us with an infallible narrative, utterly superior to previous ones. However, this thesis' value draws on the fact that it assigns importance to non-conventional sources, which I believe might shed light on a complexity that could not be observed otherwise. Non institutionalised forms of religion in modern times suppose an important element to consider from a scholarly point of view in order to better understand religiosity in a world where globalisation has allowed several different systems of beliefs to converge. Similarly, the time span selected for this research is also characterised by a change in the policies towards religion within a state that accepted a variety of them. Therefore, the method proposed in this thesis proves to be useful in as much as it allows me to document, at least partially, shades of a spectrum that could otherwise be neglected despite their cultural, historical, social and political relevance.

Chapter 1 ~ Epistemological & Ontological Framework

“‘When I use a word’, Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more, nor less.’

‘The question is’, Alice said, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’

‘The question is’, said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be Master – that’s all.’”¹⁶

This Chapter seeks to answer to the following question: **based on what premises do I understand the construction of knowledge on history and religion?** The main reason why I find it necessary to answer this question is because I acknowledge that the position I will develop in this thesis towards these two domains can be regarded as controversial for certain groups. As can be seen from my introduction, the issues I will address will be mostly political in nature, meaning that I will seek to shed light on a present-day understanding of the power plays involved in the development of a notion of otherness in Christianity in a foundational moment of its history. This is essentially irreconcilable with a perspective towards history that depicts it as the unquestionable account of past events as they certainly occurred, and it is essentially irreconcilable with a perspective towards religion that portrays it as the unquestionable divine account of reality founded on faith. However, I do not dismiss any of these perspectives as erroneous or, as the evolutionists would put it, as primitive; instead, I consider them to be parallel discourses that contribute to the polyphonic understanding we have of these two domains.

Therefore, it is not due to a desire to discredit anyone’s view on history or religion that I have selected this approach, but rather because I judge that it allows us to see certain elements that might not be visible otherwise. However, at the same time, I acknowledge this will definitely blind us from other factors. Metaphorically speaking, it could be understood as a microscope: it allows us to see a world that based on the naked eye we could not possibly imagine, but it stands as a terrible tool to use to watch a football match. As a note to this idea, and directly linked to the understanding of religion, I remember having a conversation with a Sufi Master in Istanbul – who was ironically Canadian – in

¹⁶ BELSEY 2002, pp. 1-2.

which he told me that no matter what I did, neither I nor the academia would ever be able to even grasp the divine nature of religion in a research, although we could experience it as individuals. I believe truer words have rarely been spoken, but I also believe that it is not my duty as a scholar to understand or explain the emotional, supernatural or numinous experiences inherent to religion. Other figures, of which a priest is the first to come to my mind due to my background, will have to deal with that aspect, and in fact they already do.

However, while there are many people reproducing and re-presenting these, so to say, *spiritual discourses* for different religions, it is less likely to have access to a narrative that analyses the human side of the equation from a critical point of view. This is why I seek to problematize the transparency of my sources, not in order to make a political statement against one or another social actor, neither to judge institutions of the past with criteria of the present, but rather to broaden our understanding of complex phenomena of that time by using academic tools that were not available before. With regard to the discourse of heresiologists, scholar of early Christianity Karen King¹⁷ points out that in some modern-day studies, their:

“[...] tone of derogation and ridicule are judged antithetical to modern canons of impartiality and even appear unseemly, intolerant, and uncivil. Not only [their] accuracy but [their] moral character have come into question.”

Such critiques are out of the question in this thesis both because they would also show a very narrow scope of the notion of alterity in early Christianity, and because it is not my goal to comment on the moral character of the social actors whose discourse I am analysing. Along this chapter I will briefly explain the main paradigms that constitute the core of my research’s epistemology, as well as the way in which I will assume the nature of religion to be for this particular document.

1.1. Epistemology

The scope of the guiding theories discussed hereafter is too wide to be detailed in this chapter. Instead, I present the main characteristics that I identify for each case and then contrast it with my position for this thesis.

¹⁷ KING 2008, p. 29.

1.1.1. Postmodernism

The main scope of this theory is efficiently summarised by the following quote:

*“Postmodern critique, which emerged in the 1960s, is chiefly a neo- Nietzschean variant of the practice of contesting the authority of forms of knowledge derived from Enlightenment philosophy. Its goal is to delegitimize these institutional orders of knowledge by exposing the contingent nature of their authority and the oppressive power relations inscribed within them.”*¹⁸

Four basic elements can be associated with postmodernism: textualism, constructivism, the relationship between power and knowledge and particularism¹⁹. The first element, textualism, emphasises the impact of rhetoric in the use of the language of particular discourses, which in turn implies that a pure and pristine text would be impossible to reach and there will always be only interpretations. The second element, constructivism, is based on the claim that all social phenomena are culturally and historically constructed by human beings, who at the same time create or re-create their *selves* as the result of opposing conflicting subjective positions. The third element refers to the proposition that the authority of knowledge is produced by the interplay of discourses within institutional frameworks. The last element, particularism, favours a *micropolitical* model over a *macropolitical* one, meaning that power relationships transversal to all aspects of social life give a more accurate account of politics than a perspective relegated to class or the State. It also challenges the authority of the scientific discourse in order to position it as just one more among several heterogeneous possible languages.

Additionally, it could be said that postmodernism's:

*“[c]ore common elements are: (a) avoiding recourse to a set of universally valid assumptions as theoretical and methodological foundations, together with (b) the key role ascribed to notions like subject, identity, text, and symbol in the analysis of society.”*²⁰

Is my approach postmodern? It definitely calls upon a critical view of traditional historiography, and in order to do so I assume a particularist view of the social dynamics that produced different Christian discourses on alterity. However, I do not seek to *delegitimise* the institution of academia, but rather to propose alternatives that might enrich our perceptions of the past. In order to do so, analysing the rhetoric used in my sources is essential, and I do believe that

¹⁸ MALTBY 2001, p. 302.

¹⁹ MALTBY idem.

²⁰ PREDA 2001, p. 11865.

what is presented in them as truth is founded on the power relationships that I seek to analyse.

1.1.2. Poststructuralism

Broadly speaking:

“[p]oststructuralism names a theory, or a group of theories, concerning the relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of making and reproducing meanings.”²¹

Meanings will be essential to understand this theory, as its most essential claim is that it does not originate in consciousness, but rather human beings learn to reproduce it through communication²². Symbolising systems thus rise from human action instead of existing extrinsically to us, which implies that ideas are the product of meaning and not its source. However, a language entirely private to an individual – that is, one that is based on the premise that *any* word could arbitrarily mean *anything* – would fail to be efficient for communication, for which it is important to keep in mind that a shared and public set of possibilities for the signifiers is fundamental to discourse.

This has a solid political implication, and that is that *truth* is nested in the subjects’ circulation of meanings. This is why authors such as Foucault²³ care less about how accurate of a representation of an alleged objective reality a discourse is, and more about the mechanics by which one discourse is erected as dominant within an institutional framework.

Is my approach poststructuralist? It definitely stresses the importance of a socially constructed and legitimised meaning as the basis of the interplay of different discourses. Religion, as will be seen in the next chapter, will be understood essentially as a system of symbols and, thus, the claim that it is not possible to access a pristine, extrinsic meaning is essential to my research in this thesis. This is why I propose to juxtapose a multiplicity of voices instead, not as a means of triangulation to reach the ultimate truth, but rather to broaden the spectrum of perspectives.

1.1.3. Postcolonialism

According to postcolonial writer R.S. Sugirtharajah:

²¹ BELSEY idem, p.5.

²² BELSEY idem.

²³ MILLS 2004 [1997].

*“Postcolonial studies emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical, and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed by the historical reality of colonial presence”*²⁴

As such, they integrate a deeply politicised paradigm, founded on the analysis of the procedures by which the colonised peoples were depicted by the colonisers, and on how the former managed to liberate themselves from such strategies and produce an identity of their own. This is to be understood historically, at least originally, around the latter half of the 20th century when former European colonies started to struggle for independence. According to one of the most known postcolonial writers, Homi Bhaba: *“Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries, and the discourses of ‘minorities’ within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South.”*²⁵

The critical attitude of this approach reveals a very clear and transparent agenda against the colonisers, which Sugirtharajah claims that can be applied to *expansion, domination and imperialism* involved in the definition of biblical narratives and interpretations. This is because this focus on the 19th century is not intrinsic to this criticism’s nature. Therefore, it could be said that *“[p]ostcolonial is both a historical and an epistemological category”*²⁶. In this second sense, despite its original scope centred in denouncing the conquest and control of another country, it can be used to conceptualise – and criticise – a relationship of domination backed up by an ideology that claims cultural supremacy²⁷. In the end, then, the very essence of postcolonialism is that it *“[...] heralds an ethical reflection concerning, rather more broadly, relations between self and other.”*²⁸

Is my approach postcolonial? It definitely seeks to reveal power relationships in which a powerful institution suppressed certain discourses of alterity and claimed theological supremacy. However, I do not mean this as a critique to this procedure, but rather seek to show it as the way the construction of tradition and identity normally works²⁹. Moreover, the domination that I will analyse is that of the church over other forms of Christianity, which means that the “other” that is being restricted is essentially *similar*. The extent to which this thesis will make use of a postcolonial epistemology, then, will be limited to

²⁴ SUGIRTHARAJAH 2006, p.7.

²⁵ BHABA, as quoted by SUGIRTHARAJAH idem, p. 8.

²⁶ CHEW 2010, p.1.

²⁷ HIDDLESTON 2009.

²⁸ HIDDLESTON 2009, p.5.

²⁹ Due to this, the concept of “tradition” will be very important to define in the next chapter, given that the invention of tradition is grounded on the exercise of power.

pointing out that certain groups were suppressed (rather than oppressed) through the power play that gave authority to the church's theological discourse as it became the religion of the Empire.

1.1.4. Historical Revisionism

*“Broadly defined, revisionist history refers to efforts by scholars to revise the shared, conventional understanding of the past based on the examination or re-examination of historical evidence”*³⁰. On the one hand, it could imply a negative nuance, as some revisionist historians may be ideology driven and seek to justify past atrocities by means of even manufacturing evidence to defend their theses. However, in this case I do not subscribe to this understanding of revisionism, but rather to what scholars of civil rights Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic describe as:

*“[...] replacing comforting majoritarian interpretations of events with ones that square more accurately with minorities' experiences. It also offers evidence, sometimes suppressed, in that very record, to support those new interpretations.”*³¹

Philosopher Jason J. Campbell³² describes revisionist history as the process by which a present-day scholar may revisit an event that already happened and assign a new meaning to it. Despite facts having indisputably happened and being fixed in the timeline, the meaning of those happenings is in an ongoing, never-ending state of flux that permits new interpretations to emerge constantly. Modern-day social perceptions influence our readings of the past and unlock new perspectives that would not have existed otherwise, and it is under this light that history is to be revised in order to explore meanings that had not been seen before.

Is my approach historical revisionist? It definitely seeks to draw on modern-day perspectives in order to analyse the construction of alterity in Christianity within the given parameters. As I said, the objective is not to criticise the behaviour or morality of the social actors accounted for in my sources, but rather to conceptualise parallel forms of religiosity in late antiquity³³.

1.2. Ontology

Substance dualism, as founded by René Descartes, refers to the position that *body* and *mind* are made of different substances³⁴ (i.e. physical and non-physical –

³⁰ SHEPARD 2010, p.470.

³¹ DELGADO & STEFANCIC 2001, p. 20.

³² CAMPBELL 2011, April 10.

³³ This draws on the notion of “folk” or “vernacular” religion, as will be defined in the next chapter, and in that sense my approach does make use of social perceptions of the future in order to broaden our understanding of the past.

³⁴ BLASCOVICH & BERRY MENDES 2010 [1935].

spiritual?) Another form of dualism is *property dualism*, which claims that body and mind possess independent properties despite the fact that the mental arises from the brain but cannot be reduced to it. It is essential to note, however, that they are not said to be made of different substances. Renowned scholars of psyche based disciplines Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung can be counted within this second paradigm³⁵. Finally, monism would be characterised by the claim that mind and body are not ontologically made of different substances.

Moreover, dualism assumes there to be a mutual causal relationship between mind and body. Given that this “mind” could essentially be equated with a *soul* or *spirit*, it becomes relevant to problematize which of these paradigms will be used in this thesis. As I stated earlier in this chapter, I do not seek to explain the divine or transcendental side of religion, albeit not denying – or confirming – that it may exist. For this reason, I have opted for a monist ontology following philosopher John Heil’s definition of “neutral monism” as a “[...] *denial that there is a mental-material chasm to be bridged*”³⁶. Consequently, religion will be understood to be real in as much as it was real for the authors of my sources; that is, discursively and as a *worldview*. As *worldview*, I will understand “*any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world and man's relations to God and the world*”³⁷

These are the guidelines that I will follow for this research, and the most salient implication of having stated them like this is that the conclusions of this thesis will only make sense if this epistemological and ontological framework is accepted. If the reader were not to agree with them, a discussion on the theoretical claims that I will make would lack a common ground to support it. This is because in order to have a debate, certain premises on the way knowledge and reality are understood must be shared. If such agreement were not to be met, then the only possible outcome of a hypothetical debate would be to *agree to disagree*; if they were met, on the other hand, a true debate on the arguments that I will present in the next chapters could take place.

Focusing on discourse, as I will, is not a perfect strategy. I could have focused on ritual or identity, for instance; and while I do make use of these terms, my entry is not to analyse them directly but rather to use them as assets in order to understand discourse. Discourse studies alone do not provide an overall infallible

³⁵ BLASCOVICH & BERRY MENDES idem.

³⁶ HEIL 2000 [1998], p. 208.

³⁷ NOEBEL 2006 [1991] p. 8.

perspective, but it is my hope that future researches on a similar topic and with different approaches might stand along this one and, together, increase our understanding of the notion of alterity in early Christianity.

Chapter 2 ~ Historical Framework

*“A story can be new and yet tell about olden times. The past comes into existence with the story.”*³⁸

As will be detailed in the next chapter, discourse cannot be understood just in terms of language. I will propose that language constructs meaning only within a given social and cultural context, which is key to the understanding of the intricate nuances of these messages. For this reason, I find it necessary to contextualise my sources within what is *known to us* to have happened during the times when they were written. I have claimed before that this period of history was crucial for the development of Christianity, and this has to do mostly with the relationship that the Church and the State had. As scholar Jacob Neusner puts it:

*“Although [some] matters remained in doubt, the main fact is unmistakable: In the beginning of the fourth century Rome was pagan; by the end of the century, it was Christian”*³⁹.

However, not only did the Church gain institutional power over the Empire, it also gained institutional power over Christians, to start with. The history I will present hereby is then not only that of the Empire, but also that of the Church within it. I will claim that Eusebius’ narrative draws heavily on a writing pattern that started to develop with Irenaeus of Lyons, which stressed tradition and succession as the main points to legitimise his discourse over that of other Christians. Likewise, I will claim that this trait is not present in Lactantius’ account, or in the graffiti in the *Memoria Apostolorum*.

The purpose of this chapter is thus to follow the development throughout time of a discourse that I will later ascribe to Eusebius; and also to display the political and social events that were representative of the time span selected for this thesis and drastically drifted the role of Christianity in the Empire. Nevertheless, when put together with the previous chapter this calls upon an apparent contradiction: I say will revise the construction of meaning in the conflict between my three sources claiming that there is no such thing as a compact, cohesive history; but on the other hand it would seem that in order to do

³⁸ ENDE 1983 [1979], p. 210.

³⁹ NEUSNER 1987, p.17.

so I will ground my analysis precisely on a compact, cohesive account of history. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned before, we have to assume as scholars that our sources are not a complete deceit and that certain events did take place in the past in order to unravel the present. Within the boundaries of revisionist history, I will use secondary literature in this chapter not to state an unquestionable account of the past, but to access a multiplicity of events that should also be kept in consideration while studying my three primary sources, and that I could not possibly include otherwise. It would be a titanic endeavour to juxtapose all the primary sources that account for the events I will address in this chapter, and to subsequently analyse the conflict between all of them; therefore, I rely on the work of other scholars – and in that sense I dialogue with them – in order to provide a glance into such events. That is to say, the historical context I will provide stands as *the account of what happened to the best of my knowledge*.

I will structure this chapter based on five major periods that I have identified as relevant to the development of a Christian Church that eventually became equated with the Empire. Most of them are stated in terms of the emperors governing at those times, mostly because this approach provides a simple way to conceptualise the chronology of the events. In every case, dates are provided as a reference. With regard to the reign of Constantine, several dates could be taken as the beginning⁴⁰: first, he was proclaimed emperor after his father's death in 306 a.D., but he did not become the sole emperor of the whole Empire until 324 a.D. Yet, I find that the most decisive moment to start accounting for Constantine's rule is his victory over Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 a.D. The result was the edict of Milan that started to shape Constantine's actual bond with the Church, which is what I state as most important for this thesis.

2.1. Pre- Third Century (– 200 a.D.)

According to Christian theologian Lewis Mudge, *the church* is “*the visible community in which Christians come together for worship, prayer, communal sharing, instruction, reflection, and mission*”⁴¹. The same author also claims that the Pauline epistles might account for the common influence of geographically dispersed centres of worship in places such as Antioch or Alexandria that are referred to in the New Testament. Yet, scholar John Lynch⁴² suggests that a

⁴⁰ The following dates have been taken from GRANT 2004 [1970].

⁴¹ MUDGE 2005 [1987], p. 1770.

⁴² LYNCH 2005.

threefold hierarchy composed of bishops, presbyters and deacons was did not precede 110 a.D.⁴³ and started to expand from Antioch as the Church's organisation slowly adapted to the Empire's social divisions. This is consistent with Mudge's⁴⁴ idea that this spread of a connected ecclesial community started with *diocesan bishops*⁴⁵ like Irenaeus of Lyons and Cyprian of Carthage, who claimed a succession to the apostles and regulated a shared theology by excluding groups they identified as "heretic". Ecclesiastical historian Stuart Hall⁴⁶ adds that by the turn of the first and second centuries local congregations were led by presbyters and bishops and their offices usually overlapped with each other's.

Irenaeus is maybe the most influential person I have identified in the development of the discourse of the early Church, precisely because of this emerging practice of defining the *self* in opposition to the *other*. In a work he titled *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)* around 180 a.D., he claimed there was only one Church; and that all groups whose succession could not be traced to Jesus' apostles shared a "false *gn sis*"⁴⁷ that originated in an early wizard-like figure called "Simon Magus"⁴⁸. In spite of this, historian of Christianity David Brakke⁴⁹ suggests that at that moment diverse forms of Christianity that were thereafter labelled as "heresies" already existed, and could in fact even antedate what he calls a "proto-orthodox branch". The author goes on to suggest that before 150 a.D. a single authoritative Church was not present in Roman Christianity, for which authors who could be assigned to the early 140's a.D., such as Irenaeus – but also Clement and Origen of Alexandria and even the Valentinians –, were often engaged in a dialogue that best accounts for evidence against another group identified as "Gnostics".⁵⁰

Early dialogue can thus be seen in critiques made by Valentinus to the Gnostics' portrayal of the nature of Adam, using not only Neoplatonism but also

⁴³ Although the *Didache*, a ritual that was intended as a guideline for church authorities dated to 100 a.D., already speaks of bishops and deacons (HALL 2006 a).

⁴⁴ MUDGE idem.

⁴⁵ Being that "diocese" was originally a term used to divide the State (DRAKE 2006).

⁴⁶ HALL idem.

⁴⁷ That is, a false knowledge.

⁴⁸ BRAKKE 2006.

⁴⁹ BRAKKE idem.

⁵⁰ Brakke (idem) also comments that "Gnostics" is basically an umbrella concept created by Irenaeus, within which he categorised several groups to whom he ascribed a common origin in Simon Magus. However, as to the relationship or association between these groups, Brakke suggests that there is no base to assume that they belonged to a common branch. Chapter 4 will include a brief contextualisation of how some scholars have problematized the notion of "Gnostic".

the emerging New Testament as sources⁵¹. Also, Brakke suggests that even “non-(proto)orthodox” authors such as Marcion and Valentinus established responses both to the Gnostics and to each other that were later carried on by those who continued their respective traditions. Drawing on this, I understand that early Christianity was characterised by a complex discursive arena within which all Christian groups engaged in dialogue and issued responses and counter responses to each other. This I propose in opposition to the image of a cohesive Christian Church fluently and unquestionably dismissing others.

Nevertheless, I would like to allocate more focus to Irenaeus’s strategies to respond to other groups’ claims, as I will later propose that it shaped the discourse of the Church thereafter and set the base for Constantine’s policies that entitled a more defined Christianity as the State’s religion. As mentioned above, Irenaeus’ discourse portrays the others as heretics that have distorted the message that he claims to be true, at the same time he speaks of a faith that is unanimously common to all the small, locally based communities ascribed to what he claims to be *the one and only Church*⁵². This idea of the *universality of the Church* then constitutes the core of his depiction of Christianity, conceptualising in the process not only *otherness* but also *sameness*. Dominican monk and scholar Denis Minns⁵³ suggest this was inspired by Justin Martyr and Teophilus of Antioch, but acquired more complexity in the work of Irenaeus because the former were apologists mostly concerned with justifying Christianity (in broader terms) to non-Christians as something that was neither offensive nor inhumane. On the contrary, Irenaeus spoke of a *genuine and authentic* form of Christianity, as he opposed it to what he found to be *deviated*.

Therefore, Irenaeus started a discursive tradition influenced by pagan rhetoric⁵⁴, that sought to stress the value of an apostolic lineage within his Church or “[...] *the idea of a succession of teachers, who passed on and developed the insights of the original master(s) [...]*”⁵⁵. This was mostly opposed to the Gnostic claim that their teachings could not be found directly in the scriptures because they were based on an arcane, esoteric tradition that was kept in secret to the public, but Brakke claims that his main target was the Valentinian school “*which established itself as an attractive, more explicitly Christian alternative to the*

⁵¹ BRAKKE idem.

⁵² MINNS 2006.

⁵³ MINNS idem.

⁵⁴ MINNS idem. Pagan in as much as it drew on Hellenistic influenced thinking.

⁵⁵ BRAKKE idem, p. 254.

Gnostics”⁵⁶. For these reasons, Irenaeus engaged in the development of a set of *heresiological strategies* that I will later claim that influenced Eusebius’ discourse, and “*ranged from outright rejection through heresiological rhetoric and withdrawal of fellowship, to adaptation and Christianisation of the Gnostic myth, to more personalised or philosophical modes of authority*”⁵⁷, founding his arguments on the presupposition that there was only one true tradition based on apostolic succession and that there could not be such thing as a “secret tradition”⁵⁸. Because of this, “tradition” becomes very important to analyse in further chapters of this thesis, and will constitute one of the key concepts that will be explained in the next chapter.

2.2. Pre-Decius Third Century (200-250 a.D.)

In the third century a theology more focused on Jesus developed by Clement, Origen, Justyn and Valentinus, along with the use of texts that would then become the New Testament, aided into creating a more clear difference between Judaism and Christianity⁵⁹. Also, the Church in Rome began to be ascribed with certain primacy over the others by the end of the second century, not only in terms of Christian orthodoxy but also a centre of the whole Church’s finances⁶⁰. Also, according to historian Robert Grant:

*“By the beginning of the third century the Christian movement had practically completed its most crucial development of metamorphosis. Most of its leaders, the bishops of such leading sees as Rome, Carthage, Alexandria and Antioch, had taken firm stands against the spiritualizing syncretism of the Gnostics and the apocalyptic revival of the Montanists.”*⁶¹

However, during this period, critiques to Christianity made by non-Christians also started to emerge. They would slowly permeate the higher tiers of the State’s hierarchy and eventually influence the emperor Diocletian into starting his State-wide Christian persecution⁶². The first critique comes from Celsus, a philosopher that is otherwise unknown, and is accounted for only in Origen’s refutations⁶³. His main argument was that he found it impossible to tell exactly

⁵⁶ BRAKKE idem, p. 256.

⁵⁷ BRAKKE idem, p. 254.

⁵⁸ MINNS idem.

⁵⁹ BRAKKE idem.

⁶⁰ GRANT idem.

⁶¹ GRANT idem, p. 163.

⁶² Grant (idem) suggests that previous to this there might have been mobs that persecuted Christians and other isolated cases, but nothing as systematic and State based as what Decius started. Also, despite Eusebius’ claims that emperors such as Maximin had persecuted Christians, there appears to be no other evidence to support these claims.

⁶³ DUNGAN 2007.

what was it that Christians believed because they disagreed too much between themselves, thereby accounting for a multiplicity of voices within Christianity also in this period. Origen's response, *Contra Celsum (Against Celsus)* came around seventy years later in 248 a.D.⁶⁴, again stating a difference between the *one Church* and the *heretics*. In this text, however, Origen also pointed out that the gospel could not have been delivered if it had not been for Augustus' put together of several kingdoms into one Empire, which brought peace⁶⁵. This suggests that the relationship between the Church and the State at this point was not tense, for it was not necessary to antagonise the latter in the former's official discourse. Later in this thesis, I will suggest that especially Lactantius portrayed the persecuting emperors as radical enemies to the Church, a clear contrast with Origen's vision of a respectable Empire a little under half a century before.

Indeed, previous to Decius, emperors had been lenient to Christianity; some were even interested in it according to Grant, who claims that Alexander Severus (222-235 a.D.), for instance, even kept statues of Christ, Abraham, Orpheus & Appolonius and maintained a closer relationship between the Church and the court.⁶⁶ Under a similar non-antagonistic relationship with the State around two decades earlier, when Septimus Severus was emperor, Origen published⁶⁷ a work entitled *De principiis (On First Principles)*, as an opposition to the Valentinian's dominance in what Brakke calls "the intellectually inclined Christians"⁶⁸. Again, an unbroken apostolic lineage was essential to his discourse, which sought to create a "body of thought" grounded on this succession and that should not be questioned thereafter.

Similarly, Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, claimed that the "universal episcopate" was the only authority under which an individual could be judged, showing a deep influence of his background in civil government⁶⁹. By doing so, he provided a way to rule the church empire-wide from a top to a bottom. Due to these innovations, Hall has suggested that the Church worked as a State within the State: they were neither Jews, nor Greek or Roman.⁷⁰ Also, bishops determined

⁶⁴ GRANT idem.

⁶⁵ GRANT idem.

⁶⁶ GRANT idem.

⁶⁷ At some point between 202 and 203 a.D. (BRAKKE idem).

⁶⁸ BRAKKE idem.

⁶⁹ HALL idem.

⁷⁰ HALL idem.

who belonged to the Church and who did not, thus acting both as priests and governments for the Christians.

A set of strategies for self-differentiation and regulation were thus created and legitimised, consisting of the following⁷¹:

1. Personalised authority rooted in the succession of teachers and bishops.
2. Development of canon texts (Old & New testaments).
3. Allegorical and typological methods of reading the scriptures that articulated together the two testaments
4. A “rule of faith” as a limit to these interpretations.
5. Heresiological discourse that diminished the opponents and glorified their own position.
6. Withdrawing people from communion (excommunicating).

2.3. Decius – Diocletian (250-284 a.D.)

The end of this pacific relationship between Church and State came when Philip was overthrown by his general Decius in 250; according to Grant⁷², anti-Christian sentiment began to rise and Fabian, bishop of Rome, was executed. Decius’ policy consisted of demanding sacrifices to be made to the Gods, a task that Christians could not fulfil due to their own beliefs. Being that this could not be reconciled with the State’s religion, they were imprisoned and tortured until they accepted to make the sacrifices. Some did and became *apostates*, but several others did not, and ended up dying in the process and becoming *martyrs* or being released and becoming *confessors*⁷³.

This distinction between martyrs and confessors, says Hall, originated as they began to proliferate, mostly because some confessors started to claim authority within the Church drawing on scriptures that attributed it to *martyrs*. Given that they did not die, they proposed that they should bear such authority already in this world; an initiative that was strongly opposed by Cyprian’s ecclesiology, which stated that only duly appointed bishops should be considered authorities despite any favours given to confessors by God. Under such a rigid government, around 251 a.D. schisms started to appear in Cyprian’s church, for which he wrote *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate (On the Unity of the Catholic Church)*. In this work, he does not point out the specific people he criticises, but

⁷¹ BRAKKE idem.

⁷² GRANT idem.

⁷³ HALL 2006 b.

provides a general criticism of schism within what he considers the one true church. *Unity*, once again, was portrayed as the only truth that should be obeyed.

This time was thus characterised by both schisms and a simultaneous proliferation of martyrs and apostates due to Decius' persecutions. These would last between 250 and 253 a.D., when Valerian became emperor and halted them; yet, peace would not last long as Valerian himself would start persecuting Christians by 258 a.D., and continue until the end of his reign two years later⁷⁴. According to Grant, persecutions originally targeted only Christian leaders, as bishops and deacons were forced by an edict to offer sacrifices to the Roman Gods⁷⁵. At the same time, churches and cemeteries were banned for Christians⁷⁶, but it was not until 258 a.D. that the obligation to sacrifice was extended through another edict to Christians from senatorial and equestrian classes, and eventually to all Christians⁷⁷.

At the time he was passing these edicts, nevertheless, Valerian was preparing for war against the Persians, and was captured and killed by them in 260 a.D. Gallienus, the succeeding emperor, did not continue with the persecuting policy, and issued an edict allowing bishops to resume their jobs and the Church's property to be restored to its owners, as well as the right to visit cemeteries; all of this shortly after Dyonisius was appointed as the new bishop of Rome⁷⁸. One of the reasons why the persecutions subsided could be, according to scholar of New Testament studies David Dungan, that the empire had been weakened so much by the war that it could not endorse them until well into Diocletian's reign.⁷⁹ Be as it may, Christians enjoyed nearly forty years of peace that allowed the Church to grow and spread within important cities like Rome, Antioch and Alexandria like never before, according to this author. However, once again a multiplicity of Christian voices could be found, being that Dungan identifies the spectrum as

⁷⁴ DUNGAN idem.

⁷⁵ GRANT idem.

⁷⁶ This is of utmost importance, because one of the graffiti in the *Memoria Apostolorum* is dated to this very period. It thus means that the *refrigeria* – a mortuary rite that I will describe in Chapter 5 – they performed there continued to take place in spite of the State's prohibition. This supports the argument I will later present that there must have been a special charisma attached to this place in order to justify not only a pilgrimage, but also risking one's life by opposing State regulations ultimately enforced with capital penalties just to perform such *refrigeria*. As I will explain in the forthcoming chapters, I propose this was because there was a ritual function that transcended a mere prayer and was intrinsically inherent to magical practices.

⁷⁷ GRANT idem.

⁷⁸ DUNGAN idem.

⁷⁹ DUNGAN idem.

composed of Jewish Christians, Marcionites, Montanists, Gnostics and “the universal assembly” (*katholik ekkl sia*) by the latter half of the third century.

2.4. Diocletian – Constantine (284-312 a.D.)

Diocletian assumed power in 284 a.D. and subsequently created what came to be known as the *tetrarchy*; namely, the simultaneous reign of four emperors (two *Augusti* and two *caesars*)⁸⁰. This took place slowly, as he first named Maximian as Caesar in 285 a.D. and elevated him to the rank of Augustus in 286 a.D. after a successful battle in Gaul. It was not until 293 a.D. that Galerius and Constantius, two soldiers, were named as Caesars to the two Augusti. In Lactantius’ terms⁸¹, the emperor “chopped the empire into slices” in order to make it possible to administrate it⁸².

At this point, by the end of the third century, the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry of Tyre wrote a book titled “*Adversus Christianos*” (“*Against the Christians*”), where he posed four main objections to Christianity; namely, 1) Christians relinquish their Roman cultural heritage and follow Jews (considered deviated by him), 2) they also abandon Jews and follow a *fabled* crucified saviour, 3) they fight and oppose each other more than they do non-Christians, and 4) their beliefs present contradictions and inconsistencies⁸³. These critiques were later answered by Eusebius of Cesarea, but not before another author, Sossianus Hierocles, contributed to anti-Christian literature in 301 or 302 a.D. Hierocles was the newly appointed governor of Bithynia, and he claimed that Jesus was a pitiful and pathetic person, around whom lies had been told in order to glorify him; in clear contrast to him, a true great figure was the first-century Cappadocian Appolonios of Tyana⁸⁴. What had started earlier with Celsus had found backing in Porphyry, and later even support from a State figure with Hierocles. As I mentioned before, a growingly solid argumentation against Christians slowly made its way to a position that could directly influence the emperor – and eventually did.

Diocletian’s perspective towards Christianity, however, was triggered by Galerius according to Lactantius’ *De mortibus persecutorum*, and it was directly

⁸⁰ GRANT idem. The following data on the formation of the tetrarchy is also grounded on this author’s suggestions.

⁸¹ As quoted by GRANT idem.

⁸² In Chapter 5 I will address Lactantius’ disconformity with the tetrarchy as evidence that would suggest a political subtext within his theological discourse.

⁸³ DUNGAN idem.

⁸⁴ DUNGAN idem.

grounded on an event that took place between 298 and 301 a.D. Diocletian was seeking omens while Christians made the sign of the cross to “avert demons”; these omens did not succeed. Hence, the emperor ordered everybody to sacrifice, but precisely at around that time the synod of Elvira in Spain decreed that those Christians who sacrificed to idols would be excommunicated⁸⁵. Martyrs, thus, appeared once again. Simultaneously, an economic depression resulted from a massive spending of the treasury in military and civil issues⁸⁶, which ultimately led Diocletian to issue the edict on *Maximum Prices* in 301 a.D. as a counter measure. Under these circumstances and with anti-Christian influence Diocletian started the persecutions with an edict on February 23, 303 a.D. on the day of the Terminalia, and massive arrests took place⁸⁷.

Late Antique and Byzantine historian Averil Cameron⁸⁸ claims that the stability of the tetrarchy started to shatter in 305 a.D. when the two Augusti Diocletian and Maximian retired by request of Galerius, who subsequently assumed the most influential position in power. Meanwhile, Eusebius responded to Hierocles’ critiques, and devised a more schematised reply to Porphyry⁸⁹. Within this strategy, Eusebius’ first book was the *Chronological Canons*, a history of peoples relevant to the development of Christianity such as Chaldeans, Greeks, Hebrews and Assyrians; the second one was *Against Porphyry* and directly addressed the points raised by the philosopher. Thereafter, Eusebius designed a greater refutation in four books: 1) *Preparation for the Gospel*, 2) *Proof of the gospel*, 3) *Ecclesiastical history*, and 4) *Sections and Canons*. In this work, particularly the third book, Eusebius developed a concrete strategy to obtain a coherent set of canonical texts that utterly shaped Christianity forevermore, this will be further discussed in Chapter 5 when detailing the importance of my three sources, out of which precisely the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is the one I have selected to represent a discourse mostly linked to the Church.

In 308 a.D. Diocletian emerged from retirement and named Licinius as Augustus of the west⁹⁰. After this, between 310 and 311 a.D. Dungan⁹¹ states that three of the four emperors in the original tetrarchy died in *humiliating* ways:

⁸⁵ GRANT idem.

⁸⁶ GRANT idem.

⁸⁷ GRANT idem; DUNGAN idem.

⁸⁸ CAMERON 2006.

⁸⁹ DUNGAN idem.

⁹⁰ GRANT idem.

⁹¹ DUNGAN idem.

Maximian was forced by Constantine to hang himself, Galerius contracted a terrible disease, and Diocletian lost desire to live, stopped eating and died. In 311 a.D. Galerius passed an *edict of toleration* before dying, stopping persecutions and asking Christians to pray to their god for his health, a measure that was emulated by Maxentius, who was by then the sole Augustus of the West⁹². Shortly later, in 312 a.D., Maxentius was defeated at the battle of the Milvian Bridge as Constantine pushed his troops out of Rome and forced him to fall into the Tiber and die. Before this battle Constantine converted to Christianity inspired by a dream⁹³ and order to have a talisman crafted with Christian motifs, which was labelled the *Labarum*⁹⁴.

This period thus was characterised by a sudden and drastic shift in the role of Christianity and its relationship with the State. Although institutional changes would begin to take place after Constantine's consolidation as ruler of the Empire, a coherent and meticulous system to legitimise tradition and exclude non-orthodox Christian groups from the official Church had been crafted by Eusebius. This would have big consequences thereafter as the State started to assimilate the Church as an official institution, something that could have not taken place if not for this clear delimitation of tradition. This is not to mean, nevertheless, that a Christian plurality of voices had been suppressed, indeed it continued well into Constantine's reign most notably in the form of *Donatists* and *Arians*⁹⁵, as I will explain in the next section.

2.5. Constantine (312-337 a.D.)

Constantine's ascent to power established the beginning of a flexible and symbiotic relationship between him and the Church, by which the latter partook a process of enculturation by which it changed from the persecuted Church of the martyrs into the State religion, and adjusted to the Empire⁹⁶. When Constantine defeated Maxentius, he did not ascend to the Capitoline hill to pay tribute to Jupiter Maximus; however, he did immediately send letters to the eastern emperors to halt persecutions, lest the Christian god would punish them like he

⁹² GRANT idem; DUNGAN idem.

⁹³ Constantine's conversion is accounted for both by Eusebius (*Vita Constantini* [*Life of Constantine*]) and Lactantius (*De Mortibus Persecutorum*). This is one of the main reasons why I suggest that they were influential authors within institutional frameworks; Eusebius being more linked to the Church, while Lactantius was closer to the State. Still, both were Christians with and influence that spread empire-wide

⁹⁴ GRANT idem.

⁹⁵ GRANT idem.

⁹⁶ DUNGAN idem.

had punished Galerius, Maxentius and Diocletian⁹⁷. However, Constantine's personal conversion *per se* lacked significant ecclesiological consequences⁹⁸, it would be along his reign that multiple edicts and other official actions changed “[...] *the status, structure, and beliefs of the Christian Church [more] than during any previous period of its history*”⁹⁹.

The first of these official acts would be the *Edict of Milan* in 313 a.D., which according to historian H.A. Drake, established Christianity as one more valid religion and not the only one, because

“[o]rthodoxy did not necessarily require the suppression of paganism, but it did require the suppression of heresy, the wrongful teaching that jeopardized every Christian's prospects for immortal life”¹⁰⁰.

Far from banning paganism, thus, it states that Constantine ascribed to the *summa divinitas*¹⁰¹, restored Christian property and also assumed that there was one cohesive corpus of Christians distinct to other religions¹⁰². By this act, Constantine gave the Church official recognition and a legal presence¹⁰³, and was backed up by edicts between 312 and 313 a.D. that fostered monetary compensations for the families of martyrs and gifts for confessors, enhanced the Catholic Church and clergy, and recognised the latter as officials of the Roman government and allocated them a payment¹⁰⁴. In scholar John Lynch's words, thus, “[b]y the fourth century the beginnings of a patriarchal system could be detected in the large regional groupings of provinces”¹⁰⁵.

Additionally to the official recognition of clergy, the Church also adopted the State's geographical division of dioceses and massive temples were decreed to be erected, which supposed a clear contrast with the previous houses of prayers that had been used by earlier Christians¹⁰⁶. In theologian Lewis Mudge's point of view, these adaptations were consistent with the ecclesiology Eusebius had built by outlining a doctrine based on strong canonical sources and structures of

⁹⁷ DUNGAN idem.

⁹⁸ MUDGE idem.

⁹⁹ DRAKE idem, p. 111.

¹⁰⁰ DRAKE idem, p. 132

¹⁰¹ Which was a category ambiguous enough to allow Constantine to exercise his role as *Pontifex Maximus* while also leading the Christian Church (Mudge idem).

¹⁰² GRANT idem.

¹⁰³ CAMERON idem.

¹⁰⁴ DUNGAN idem.

¹⁰⁵ LYNCH idem, p. 1763.

¹⁰⁶ DRAKE idem.

leadership, whereas Tertullian of Carthage's discourse from the latter half of the second century was more sectarian¹⁰⁷.

However, schisms continued to emerge, as a group of North African and Libyan bishops that were being led by presbyter Donatus of Casae Nigrae claimed that they had stayed faithful to the Church during the persecutions while many had abandoned it, for which they could not tolerate that Caecilian, bishop of Carthage, had received the apostates back into the Church¹⁰⁸. Caecilian, nonetheless, obtained funds from Constantine, which increased the tensions between the Donatists and the rest of the Church, leading to Donatus' excommunication in 313 a.D.¹⁰⁹. In order to solve this, Constantine convened a synod in Arles in 314 a.D. since the emperor's responsibilities included the State's religion, but it failed to solve the problem and the schism persisted for years¹¹⁰.

Two years later, Constantine engaged in a war with Licinius that lasted until 324 a.D, throughout which the eastern emperor aligned his forces with the Roman gods and Constantine used the Labarum once again to lead his troops into battle¹¹¹. After his victory at the Battle of Chrysopolis, Constantine became the sole ruler of the whole Roman Empire, which further enforced the power of the Church throughout the State. Yet, another controversy arose, as a group of bishops aligned with the Libyan presbyter Arius in a disagreement pertaining to the nature of Jesus as son of God. To oversimplify it, Arius proposed that since fathers precede sons, at some point only the Father must have had existed¹¹². As a result, once again the emperor interceded and issued letters to both parties disregarding this issue as a "slight difference" and scolding them for creating this division. Subsequently, he held a council in Nicaea in 325 a.D., hoping to avoid public disorder and achieve unity, assuming control during the conference and adding the term "*homoousios*" (of one substance) to the creed by the end of the council, thereby making official that Jesus and the Father were of one substance and none had come after the other¹¹³.

The main point I identify in Constantine's intervention is the search within the Church for unity: that very same ideal that started to develop with Irenaeus'

¹⁰⁷ MUDGE idem.

¹⁰⁸ DUNGAN idem.

¹⁰⁹ DUNGAN idem; GRANT idem.

¹¹⁰ DUNGAN idem.

¹¹¹ DUNGAN idem.

¹¹² DRAKE idem.

¹¹³ DUNGAN idem.

claim that there was only one tradition. At this point in history, however, it had achieved official status. Throughout this chapter I have followed the history of the State and of the Church separately, but this is the merging point where they become one and the same. According to Dungan¹¹⁴, Constantine passed canons and laws dealing with church order and promotions within its hierarchy, and in Eusebius' "*Vita Constantini*" there is even a moment in which the emperor is quoted to have said to the clergy "*you are bishops of those within the church, but I am perhaps a bishop appointed by God over those outside*"¹¹⁵. It becomes clear that Constantine took the Church's affairs into the State's legal framework, which supposes a clear contrast with the several treatises bishops issued to their opponents, creating a discursive dialogue that dismissed "the others" from an orthodox point of view but did not censor them. As a consequence:

*"[n]o longer would it [the Church] have to give reasoned, honest replies to difficult questions from critics and fellow theologians; now it could simply compel agreement and punish disagreement."*¹¹⁶

This by no means implied a cease of the Church's development, which ultimately became the sole licit religion of the State in 380 a.D. under the reign of Theodosius¹¹⁷. Also, the "holy Catholic Church" is not mentioned in the earliest versions of the Nicene Creed, as it was added in 381 a.D. along with the nuance of now having to *believe in* the church and not just *believe* the Church as a witness to the truth¹¹⁸. Not long before, in 367 a.D. the first known list of canonical texts accepted into the New Testament we have today emerged as a work of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, and complete agreement on the content of the canon was attained even later¹¹⁹. Therefore, while Constantine's role was fundamental in the history of the Church and the State, and Eusebius' own role within the church was highly influential and constituted a turning point, the innovations they provided did not consolidate until much later. Still, I believe the brief account made in this chapter proved that their actions constituted this period of time as particularly important, as I claimed in the introduction of this thesis. Bearing this context in mind, my analysis of the discourse in my primary sources will be

¹¹⁴ DUNGAN idem.

¹¹⁵ Eusebius, as quoted by DUNGAN idem, p. 117.

¹¹⁶ DUNGAN idem, p. 125.

¹¹⁷ MUDGE idem.

¹¹⁸ MUDGE idem.

¹¹⁹ MUDGE idem.

grounded on this chapter as its theological, political and cultural metadiscursive framework.

Chapter 3 ~ Conceptual Framework

“Poe: Exactly what is meant by force?”

Doc: That’s a large order, Mr. Poe, if I could answer that I’d be ten Einsteins rolled in one.”¹²⁰

3.1. Religion & Magic

The first concept that needs to be revised is that of religion. However, defining religion as a holistic system of social and spiritual processes would fall into the domain of *metanarratives*, for which I will avoid doing so and will, in turn, present a working characterization of the variables that I find intrinsic to religion and relevant for this study. My starting point will be Clifford Geertz’s approach towards it as:

“[...]a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”¹²¹

“Symbols”, according to Geertz, can be understood as “*concrete embodiments of ideas*”¹²² that constitute sources extrinsic to the subjects who use them¹²³, and whose main purpose is to guide their behaviour. By doing so, symbols give meaning to the social and psychological realities through a dialectical process by which they change and adapt to such realities but, at the same time, shape them. As for the “long-lasting moods and motivations”, Geertz explains them as:

“[...] a certain distinctive set of dispositions (tendencies, capacities, propensities, skills, habits, liabilities, pronenesses) which lend a chronic character to the flow of his activity and the quality of his experience. A disposition describes not an activity or an occurrence but a probability of an activity being performed or an occurrence occurring in certain circumstances [...].”¹²⁴

That is, not a continuous action, but rather the probability of the occurrence of an action; in essence, then, a *habit*. These habits arise as a result of

¹²⁰ CAPRA & CULHANE (producers), CAPRA & HURTZ (directors), and BAXTER & BAIRD & BAIRD (performers) 1957, 34:47 – 34:54.

¹²¹ GEERTZ 1973, p. 90.

¹²² GEERTZ idem, p. 91.

¹²³ i.e. They are external to the organisms that are influenced by them.

¹²⁴ GEERTZ idem, p. 95.

the interpretation of conceptions that deal with affairs beyond human limitations (as understood by the subjects), which subsequently leads to the objectification of a worldview.

Complementarily, Rappaport clarifies what this existence “beyond human limitations” could be understood as:

*“[it] denotes the Holy, the constituents of which include the sacred, the numinous, the occult and the divine, and also ritual, the form of action in which those constituents are generated.”*¹²⁵

“Ritual” is, perhaps, the most important concept that can be taken from this quote, as it can be approached as the principal method by which social beings reproduce their experiences pertaining to the numinous. Hence, the symbolic nature of religion that was introduced by Geertz becomes more specific and intimately embedded into ritual behaviour. Such conduct, moreover, is to be conceived as a continuously and dialectically, socially constructed reality¹²⁶. In terms of religion, this would mean a common goal for several individuals that act together to objectivate a specific system of meanings, institutionalising in the process a shared symbolic universe, linking everyday life with a transcendental realm¹²⁷. As we see, social interaction then becomes crucial to the understanding of the symbolic relationship that human beings establish with the divine.

Social and spiritual constituents, however, should be balanced in order to understand religion. In order to define spirituality, I draw basically on Jesuit intellectual Michel de Certeau’s ideas, which are very efficiently summarised by Dutch philosopher Marc de Kesel in the following quote:

*“In spirituality, modern man is looking for a ‘support’ or ‘subjectum’ that is broader than the Cartesian one he is supposed to have. He suspects both the pretension and the narrowness of that Cartesian support. He feels that the support of his life does not coincide with the narrowness of an all too self-assured ‘self’: that is why he looks for experiences that bring him out of his ‘self’, or at least deconstruct his ego in order to feel again what it is to share life with life as such, to feel the primacy of life or of that ‘other’ that both transcends and holds him at the same time.”*¹²⁸

This is what is metaphorically condensed by Certeau as “being a drop of water in the sea”: spirituality represents that desire of the modern human to go beyond his or her individuality and embody a transcendental essence of being. Described this way, the concept is framed in an unquestionable time which is

¹²⁵ RAPPAPORT 1999, p. 23.

¹²⁶ BERGER 1981; BERGER & LUCKMAN 2003 [1966].

¹²⁷ LUCKMAN 1967.

¹²⁸ DE KESEL 2012, p. 2.

closer to us than to antiquity; yet, reading it alongside Geertz' definition, it could be extrapolated to include a desire to transcend the limits of the self as opposed to the "conceptions of a general order of existence" objectivated by the spiritual person. Then, it could be applied to non-modern humans as well. However, this raises the question: how does one *become* religious in the first place? How are those conceptions internalised as objective truths?

Perhaps the most appropriate theory to take as a base to answer this question is Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman's famed "The Social Construction of Reality"¹²⁹, which fundamentally states that social reality can only exist due to human actions, at the same time that human beings themselves are a product of society: persons become more than just individuals and develop an *identity* through social interaction. Going back to Geertz's understanding of religion, we could argue that that identity is the result of the creation and reproduction of "pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations" that could only happen in a social group.

As for understanding how they are "clothed in an aura of factuality" that pictures them as "uniquely realistic", I propose to turn to Berger's and Luckman's suggested tripartite mechanism of *exteriorisation*, *objectivation* and *internalisation*¹³⁰. Within an already institutionalised world, the first would be the process by which an individual conceptualises it as already existing externally to him or herself; which in turn implies that she or he needs to learn about it by exploring and studying it and not through introspection. Through objectivation, the knowledge of such a world is regarded as a basis not only for its externality, but also its objective existence. This means that its reality is learnt to be unquestionable, and is *perceived* as something beyond its human creators' limitations (despite it still being *ontologically* subject to them). Finally, internalisation would be how a collectively objectivated world is reabsorbed into the individual, who finds a personal (subjective) meaning in it; In other words, after learning the objectivated meanings, the individual identifies her or himself with them. This means that the perceived reality of a system of symbols relies on its collective recognition; which is why Berger ultimately defines *socialisation* as

¹²⁹ BERGER & LUCKMAN idem.

¹³⁰ BERGER & LUCKMAN idem.

“[...] the [ontogenetic] processes by which a new generation is taught to live in accordance with the institutional programs of the society.”¹³¹

Therefore, I propose that religion seeks to transcend the individual both spiritually and socially; that is, to situate him or her within a realm that goes beyond an everyday, mundane reality through a set of activities, which ultimately leads to a shared experience that reproduce the system of symbols that he or she objectivates and *subjectivates* (internalises) within this collective.

There is another term that could be associated with this idea of transcending the quotidian world: magic. In anthropological tradition, the veil between magic and religion is very thin, and depends mostly on the paradigms used by different authors. As a working definition, “[m]agic, as anthropologists use the term, refers to activities, usually rituals, by which a person can compel the supernatural to behave in certain ways”¹³². Historically, this idea is more or less present in the work of the most influential authors, being that nuances rise when magic is contrasted with religion¹³³. For instance, British scholar Edward Tylor saw magic as a logical procedure very much like science, albeit based on what he found to be flawed premises about the world; and, unlike his animistic-based concept of religion, it did not involve spirits. Sir James Frazer, who wrote extensively on categorising magic, did so from an evolutionist point of view, and proposed that it was an earlier stage of religion (which was, in turn, more refined); the main difference being that the former implied a manipulation of supernatural forces, while the latter consisted of a persuasion of supernatural beings. Émile Durkheim, one of the cornerstone authors on the sociology of religion, suggested that religion tended to involve the whole community (and, in fact, to be the foremost constituent of social cohesiveness), while magic was based on the desire to satisfy the needs of individuals. Bronislaw Malinowski, the legendary ethnographer of the Trobriand Islands, claimed that while religion supposed an end by itself, magic was more of a means to an end (which, within his functionalist paradigm, was to satisfy human needs).

Drawing on these remarks within my epistemological standing point, and given the way I have introduced religion at the beginning of this chapter, for this thesis I will use the term “magic” to refer to those ritual activities that deal with

¹³¹ BERGER 1967, p.15.

¹³² STEIN & STEIN 2005, p. 136.

¹³³ Coming up next is a comparison between four scholars whose work was fundamental for the development of anthropology, based on Stein & Stein’s [idem] account.

the supernatural, but coerces it to grant an effect that will satisfy the desire of an individual or a small group (eg. familial). However, unlike Frazer, I will not accept an evolutionist line of thought, thus claiming that magic and religion can be practised by the same people, even simultaneously (ie. a given ritual could have both religious and magical features). Moreover, in terms of the social impact of magic, although it might directly act in the interest of an individual or a few of them, those individuals are not to be understood as alien to the greater societies they belong to. This is efficiently expressed by Randall Styers, a scholar interested in the relationship between religion and policy making: “[w]hile the theories [of magic] often focus on subjective desires and individualized notions of piety and rationality, they are informed by far broader social and economic concerns”¹³⁴. The same author also suggests that magic is “[...] far more commonly seen as characteristic of those with little access to legitimate forms of social power.”¹³⁵ In my interpretation, then, the initiative to resort to magic arises from a lack of access to the means to satisfy one’s desires, among which the most basic needs can also be found; hence it should not surprise to find it among marginal populations.

Complementarily, on the *magical epistemology*¹³⁶, French philosopher of religion Lucien Lévy-Bruhl proposed the notion of *participation mystique*, which was in turn defined by psychiatrist Carl Jung as a relationship that:

“[...] denotes a peculiar kind of psychological connection with objects, and consists in the fact that the subject cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship which amounts to partial identity.”¹³⁷

According to anthropologist of magic Susan Greenwood¹³⁸, participation mystique draws on the notion of *pars pro toto*, or the idea that a whole and a part of it are equivalent. It could be said, then, that a direct relationship between the part and the whole is assumed, leading to an identity of the latter with the former. This is what Greenwood quotes from Lévy-Bruhl as a *psychic connection*, which also justifies how a person can exist as a spirit after her or his death, since she or he exists simultaneously as a corpse and a spirit that are intrinsically and essentially in unity through feeling.

¹³⁴ STYERS 2004, p. 192.

¹³⁵ STYERS idem, p. 204.

¹³⁶ ie. The way of understanding the world and life that justifies magical procedures as objectively legitimate.

¹³⁷ JUNG 1946 [1921], paragraph 781.

¹³⁸ GREENWOOD 2009.

These ideas are very similar to Frazer's¹³⁹ definition of *sympathetic magic*. He poses as "the law of sympathy" that magic relies on the association between the objects used in the ritual, and between these and the subjects implied in it as well. It is further subdivided into the "law of similarity" and the "law of contagion", which respectively state that those things that are alike are also essentially the same, and that if two or more things were in contact at some point that connection would persist even after that contact is lost. I will dismiss the categorical value of these so-called laws as such, but I find useful the distinction Frazer makes between *homeopathic magic* – based on understanding similar things as essentially the same – and *contagious magic* – based on evoking the connection of two or more things that used to be in contact but are not anymore. For this thesis, these will be taken as *ideal types*¹⁴⁰.

Another set of ideal types that is useful to understand magic is envisaged through the spectacles of Bourdieu's¹⁴¹ revision of Max Weber's work. Bourdieu stresses the importance of *laymen* as those who receive religious services, whether these should come from *prophets* or *priests*¹⁴², or from *magicians*. The latter are somewhat more charismatic and thus less rational figures, who work independently rather than within an association, and use special abilities intrinsic to themselves and not to their roles in order to coerce supernatural beings. In Bourdieu's conceptualisation, a clear relationship is established in which a certain group of people (*laymen*) lacks complete agency over religious or magic happenings and is limited to a mere consumption of what priests, prophets and magicians provide; namely, reproduction of religious *habitus*¹⁴³, a quasi-systematic answer to religious demands, and magic cure, respectively. However, according to Stein and Stein the term "magician" should be dealt with cautiously "because it implies that there are specialists in magic when in fact most, if not all, members of the community may be well versed in how to do magic."¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ As described by STEIN & STEIN idem.

¹⁴⁰ An ideal type, in Weberian (1974) terms could be summarised as a theoretical construct devised by the sociologist, exaggerating the typical traits of a social action or relation. It is also a methodological tool, whose sole purpose is to be compared with the actual, real phenomena. Thus, an ideal type is not meant to depict reality, but rather to allow the researcher to make the intellectual exercise of a comparison, further enhancing the analysis.

¹⁴¹ BOURDIEU 1971.

¹⁴² The rationalizers and systematisers of religious ethics, according to Weber [as cited in BOURDIEU idem.]

¹⁴³ In essence, the notion of "habitus" is not distant from the meaning ascribed to its English counterpart, "habit". This concept will be further addressed when discussing "memory and tradition" later on in this same chapter.

¹⁴⁴ STEIN & STEIN idem, p. 136.

Therefore, magic and religion will be posed as two different phenomena that, nevertheless, might happen simultaneously and address the same elements of the *numinous* or *divine*. The functionality of magic, nevertheless, stands as its most important trait, along with the fact that the realm of the transcendental is manipulated by these *magicians*. They resort to special abilities and knowledge intrinsic to themselves, and thus do not need to occupy a social role of authority in order to obtain the agency to perform magic. As a result, anybody can potentially be a magician, as anybody could also potentially be religious. As a result, as well, ritual practices might merge elements from both of these two domains (the religious and the magical), which ultimately constitute ideal types themselves.

As for the relevance of these two concepts in my future analysis within this thesis, the relationship between both as described in the previous paragraph will be essential to the understanding of the graffiti carved in the *Memoria Apostolorum*. In Chapter 2 I briefly mentioned that the Christian pilgrims performed *refrigeria*¹⁴⁵ at the cemetery below the basilica of St. Sebastian, an action that is fundamentally ritual. I will claim that this ritual presents magical features as well as religious, in as much as it involves sympathetic associations between the authors of the inscriptions and the deceased (or the future deceased). The writing of the names along with prayers, I will argue, link them with the actual person within a *pars pro toto* logic that seeks to obtain salvation of some sort.

3.2. Discourse

As a system of symbols, religion is in a way part of culture, which is in turn transmitted through language. When language is used by people to communicate their ideas and opinions, discourse comes into existence. Foucault defines discourse as a systematic structuration of thoughts, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that represent the building blocks of the subjects' worlds as referred to in their speeches¹⁴⁶. It is, then, a way of putting together knowledge and social practice, and this is influenced by power relationships. Hence, both domination and resistance might be associated to discourse, for *meaning* is not intrinsic to words by themselves, but is rather constantly created by human interaction while it is also shaped by it at the same time. This dialectical feature evokes

¹⁴⁵ In a nutshell, ritual meals held at the cemeteries in order to commemorate the deceased (MCGUCKIN 2005 [2004]). This concept will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁴⁶ FOUCAULT 1980.

remembrance to the concept of socialisation that I discussed earlier, for which I find pertinent to sum up these first ideas on discourse by claiming that it provides a means for socialisation to happen through language. In other words, it comprises “[...] *practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.*”¹⁴⁷

According to researcher Sara Mills’ reading of Foucault, it is important to highlight that constant conflict between discourses (and between them and other social practises) is a fundamental characteristic of them¹⁴⁸. It is within this conflict that *truth* is defined, as a given discourse’s authority is established over the other ones; this process gives rise to a variety of behaviours, out of which one becomes restricting. As an example, Foucault explains a case in which educators and doctors attempted to eliminate child male masturbation by censoring and sanctioning it, only to produce, as a result, secret onanism and the suspicion that every boy was actually doing it¹⁴⁹. Therefore, a truth was established by those who managed to reproduce their authority through their discourse (educators and doctors), creating at the same time a restricting behaviour (censorship of onanism) and also other behaviours (secret masturbation).

As a last remark, and besides the political implications of discourse, I find it useful to quote anthropologist Greg Urban’s claim that it is impossible to understand discourse just with mere linguistic skills, since it is framed in a meta-linguistic, cultural context¹⁵⁰. The author gives as an example the account of how a man called Wāñèkī and two friends killed a tapir, ripped off its skin and took out all the inner organs, after which they became afraid and walked away only to see the tapir standing when they looked back. Urban quotes a transcription of Wāñèkī’s tale without giving any further information about it, and it is only after the story finishes that he reveals that his informant had been telling him one of his dreams. At the beginning, the reader could not have guessed that it was a dream: it could have perfectly been the telling of a hunting trip. Furthermore, even after been revealed that it was a dream, the reader could not possibly understand the implications of this tale in Wāñèkī’s understanding of reality without being aware of all the cultural background that Urban knew because he had lived among Wāñèkī’s people¹⁵¹. This is the framing he refers to, and he adds that:

¹⁴⁷ FOUCAULT 1972, p. 49 as quoted by MILLS idem, p.15.

¹⁴⁸ MILLS idem.

¹⁴⁹ FOUCAULT 1978, p. 32 as quoted by MILLS idem, p. 18.

¹⁵⁰ URBAN 1966.

¹⁵¹ The reality of dreams within the informant’s culture was not relegated to a psychological construction, but rather as part of the same world he walked and lived in.

“[s]uch framing determines how a given instance of discourse is to be understood, and, in interpreting an instance, it also shapes and builds up an understanding of the world, of reality.”¹⁵²

To round up, discourse will be understood for this thesis as the systematic use of language to address perceptions and behaviours within a given social and cultural context. Several discourses arise and engage in a conflictual relationship between each other, generating truth in the process only through the establishment of authority. In order to understand the meaning of those perceptions and behaviours, then, it is necessary to recognise the tension between the different social practises that develop from this conflict of discourses, as well as the meta-linguistic background that surrounds it.

Drawing on these ideas, the notion that I described in Chapter 2 of unity and universality developed over time by several authors ascribed to the early Church could be understood as a *truth* that emerged from the conflict between several discourses. As in the case of the prohibition of onanism described by Foucault, a restricting behaviour gradually arose (worship within a tradition grounded on apostolic succession), as other behaviours either became restricted over time (like the Marcionite, Montanist or Valentinian schools) or emerged in response as already restricted within the power grid (like Donatism or Arianism). Also, as in the case of Wāñèkī’s dream, this makes sense only within a given framework, which in this case is that of the relationship between the Church and the State. At first, apologetics focused more on distancing themselves from pagans and Jews, in Irenaeus’ and Origen’s times it became more important to distance the Church from the “heretics”, and in the age of Constantine the need for dialogue and rebuttal became secondary to that of censorship of the emerging “heretics”.

3.3. Authority & Power

One of the most known approaches to the concept of power in sociology is Max Weber’s¹⁵³. Its foundation would be the idea of a *social action*: a form of behaviour whose meaning is intended to interact with any action that any other person is doing, might do or might have done. These actions are said to occur in regular patterns that sociologists might use to predict future ones, which takes us to a more abstract domain as we no longer need to refer to specific events that we observe. In Weber’s terms, the probability of a social action to happen in a

¹⁵² URBAN idem, p.9.

¹⁵³ WEBER 1978.

specific way would be called a *social relationship*. Finally, power would be the chance of being able to impose one's will upon other people within a social relationship while withstanding any sort of opposition.

“Opposition” is the key word, and it leads us to bring obedience into the discussion. According to this author, power is the result of a fight: a social relationship in which two or more parts struggle to impose their respective wills. Winning this fight confers power, but it does not imply the immediate cessation of resistance. However, if this resistance were to cease – that is, if there were obedience in response to the exercise of power –, then *authority* would be achieved. It can be defined thus as the chance of obtaining obedience as a result to a mandate. Additionally, these mandates would have to happen within an order: a social relationship that is regulated by a set of maxims that can be stated. A valid order seeks *legitimacy*; in other words, that individuals will see those maxims not only as compulsory, but also as exemplary.

However, Weber's conceptualisation is limited in as much as it depicts power as a linear relationship between two sets of social actors: the rulers and the ones they rule. Despite having been a turning point in Weber's time, this model, like other such *metanarratives*, appears to me rather simplistic in the same way 19th century science may appear naive under the light of more recent discoveries. As “Doc”, a scientist character in Capra's documentary “the strange case of the cosmic rays” puts it:

“[...] as late as 1932, science had the universe all neatly wrapped up in three little basic packages – electron, proton, neutron. Just twenty five years later, in 1957, the number of separate and distinct particles of matter had jumped to at least twenty [...].”¹⁵⁴

Similarly, I propose that Foucault's approach to power had an analogous effect in the conceptualisation of this term. As discussed previously, it is deeply linked to the idea of discourse, for which it can be understood that power permeates all domains of social life. In Foucault's own words:

“*Par pouvoir, je ne veux pas dire « le Pouvoir », comme ensemble d'institutions et d'appareils qui garantissent la sujétion des citoyens dans un Etat donné. Par pouvoir, je n'entends pas non plus un mode d'assujettissement qui, par opposition à la violence, aurait la forme de la règle. Enfin je n'entends pas un système général de domination exercé par un élément ou un*

¹⁵⁴ CAPRA & CULHANE (producers), CAPRA & HURTZ (directors), and BAXTER & BAIRD & BAIRD (performers) idem, [40:06-40:27].

*groupe sur un autre, et dont les effets, par dérivations successives, traverseraient le corps social tout entier.*¹⁵⁵

The author goes on to state that posing the concept of power in terms of the State's sovereignty would be limiting the scope to only its *final* forms, neglecting the relevance of a multiplicity of relationships of force that rise from the interplay of interests, perceptions and behaviours of the various social actors. Hence, Foucault's theory opens our eyes to the fact that power relations are immanent to other types of relationships (such as economic, cognitive, sexual and, why not, religious); just as scientific discoveries subsequent to the nineteen thirties showed that matter was composed not only of neutrons, protons and electrons, but also of positrons, muons, neutrinos and so on. In both cases, this complexation of the theory leads to a more detailed and scrutinised understanding of reality.

A binary, global opposition between rulers and those ruled thus becomes obsolete, and perhaps one of the most interesting implications of leaving this perspective behind is the recognition that wherever there is power, there is also resistance. It is this continuously emerging resistance that emphasises a *conflict* of discourses throughout time. In other words, this viewpoint allows us to analyse power not as a stagnated structure, but rather as a process by which different discourses might become more or less authoritative (that is, allocated with an order of *truth* through the exercise of power) at different points. In other words, metaphorically speaking, it allows us to see it not as a *picture*, but as a *film*.

To sum up, power can be regarded essentially as a network of relationships deeply connected to the ideas of knowledge and truth, as actors make concrete choices based on their understanding of what is or is not true. This implies a strong subjectivity attached to it, because:

*“power is not an institution, a structure, or a certain force with which certain people are endowed; it is the name given to a complex strategic relation in a given society.”*¹⁵⁶

It is within this framework that I contextualise Weber's theory, thus understanding that a particular discourse's power resides in the probability it has of imposing itself upon other discourses even against their resistance. Understood

¹⁵⁵ FOUCAULT 1976, p. 121. My translation: “By power I do not mean ‘the power’ as a set of institutions and apparatuses that guarantee the subjection of the citizens within a given State. By power neither do I understand a mode of subjugation that, by opposition to violence, would take the form of a rule. Finally, [by power] I do not understand a general system of domination exercised by an element or a group over an “other”, and where the effect, by subsequent derivations, would cross the entire social body.”

¹⁵⁶ Foucault in: GORDON (ed.) 1980, p. 238.

in this way, a given discourse's *authority* would not consist on a unanimously, anachronistically unquestionable power, but rather on the fact that it finds a source of legitimation despite the fact that some groups may oppose it. In the case of the Church, as described in Chapter 2, it gradually acquired legitimation for its claims of unity and universality both as it developed a lineage of apostolic succession and as the State eventually incorporated it as the official regulator of religion in the Empire. The proto-orthodox discourse, which then became the catholic discourse, was challenged by other Christian groups that engaged in dialogue with them, either through written works or within the context of synods or councils.

3.4. Tradition & Memory

Along this chapter, I have mentioned several times how social actors identify themselves with particular discourses, thus stating the relevance of *identities* in an intra-societal level to assign symbolic meanings and values to social life. Being so, and in accordance with French sociologist Jean-Claude Ruano-Borbalán's vision, such identities are shaped throughout the interactions between individuals, groups and their respective ideologies¹⁵⁷. A colleague of his, Catherine Halpern, adds that this implies that they are not pre-existent entities, but rather the result of social construction¹⁵⁸. Philosopher Jennifer Todd's perspective complements these ideas, as she suggests that such socially constructed identities can be understood by drawing on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*¹⁵⁹.

According to the author, the process of reproduction of *habitus* begins at early childhood, progressively giving a solid structure to collective values and interpretations, internalising them. These embodied shared categories – mostly not different from those culturally codified symbols introduced while discussing religion – allow individuals to develop an immediate, intuitive feeling of belonging and affinity towards those they recognise as similar to themselves. The main conclusion we draw from this is that, while identities are functional and socially constructed, they might not always be instrumentalised; that is, they might emerge spontaneously from *habitus* without a particular agenda. Nevertheless, Todd strongly affirms that this does not imply it to be unconscious: it is the result, she says, of a moment of intentionality, of a process of accepting or

¹⁵⁷ RUANO-BORBALÁN 2004.

¹⁵⁸ HALPERN 2004.

¹⁵⁹ TODD 2005.

rejecting meanings that are not irrelevant to these groups and can be deeply rooted values with important political or sacred implications.

Based on this, one question arises: what kind of values are these? Naturally, they may vary in different cases, but ethnographer Lin Poyer¹⁶⁰ suggests that historiography can be a recurrent constituent of identity. By analysing the Sapwuahfik people from Micronesia, she draws attention on how they symbolically build up their notion of who they are based on self-validating critical historical events. Briefly explained, a massacre took place in 1837, in which European colonisers destroyed several settlements, resulting in considerable casualties. They see themselves as victims of murder, but at the same time are influenced by a Christian Evangelical ideology that makes them conceive the massacre as a cleansing process that took them to the “true religion”. Another important issue is that they claim to have given up sorcery after this event, unlike their neighbour group, the Pohnpei.

Poyer sees in this ethnographic case an example of how a salient critical event embodies a source for a society’s population and, hence, cultural identity. Also, the Sapwuahfik define themselves by means of a contrast with neighbouring groups despite their being related linguistically, biologically and culturally in many ways. The author, thus, identifies past, present and future as elements of the same conceptual scheme that manifests in the Sapwuahfik case as a linear “tale of progress”, although it could be different in other cases (i.e. cyclical). Anyway, this form of historical discourse represents an objectified depiction of the past that is approached as an undeniable truth in a synchronic way, one that is metaphorically applied to current, ongoing events that are viewed as related to this past. No explanation is required for this interpretation of the present based on the past, which is regarded as a transparent validation for history itself. Also, it must be put together with other cultural domains – or discourses, as we have conceptualised previously –, such as Evangelical ideology in the Sapwuahfik case.

The past, then, is usually crucial to the definition of identity, and archaeologist Gregory Wilson¹⁶¹ draws on a typology proposed by British social anthropologist Paul Connerton to shed light on this. He claims that a constant reinterpretation of the past is due regularly in every society, associated with changes in the economy and politics. He, thus, quotes a distinction between

¹⁶⁰ POYER 1988.

¹⁶¹ WILSON 2010.

inscribed memory and *incorporated memory*. The first one would be a discourse explicitly intended to remind of a particular vision of the past that seeks to help achieve future goals: a social biography that can legitimise a society's authority and its rights over specific resources. The second one, on the other side, would allude to routinized practices inherent to the bodies that are mimicked from peers through constant repetition. Hence, this sums up most of what has been discussed here, implying that identities are considerably based on a historiography and are sometimes instrumentalised to achieve specific purposes and sometimes emerge spontaneously, always having effects on the way social, political and economic life takes place.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, and rephrased in the light of what I just discussed lines above, in terms of religion the main vehicle for this habitus to manifest is ritual. Ritual, furthermore, is embedded in specific discourses, whether it is regarded as a text or as a performance. According to early entries of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, ritual can sometimes refer to “*a book directing the order and manner to be observed in performing divine service in a particular church, diocese, or the like*”¹⁶². Scholar of ritual studies Talal Asad mentions that this notion can be traced back up until the ninth century, although restricted to monasteries¹⁶³. While more modern definitions tend to prefer the performative approach, what remains clear is that the original sense of the word is strongly linked with an authoritative coding of how it must take place, and why. A “*church, diocese, or the like*”¹⁶⁴ acts like such authority in a present time, but diachronically these institutions generate what we have conceptualised as *restricting discourses*. These are then internalised by their adherents and reinterpreted through time by means of memory, generating the rise of identities. This particular discourse I call *tradition*.

Tradition, nevertheless, can change albeit its tendency towards being considered as invariable. According to sociologist Anthony Giddens:

*“All traditions [...] are invented traditions. No traditional society was wholly traditional, and traditions and customs have been invented for a diversity of reasons. We shouldn't suppose that the conscious construction of tradition is found only in the modern period.”*¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² “The Encyclopædia Britannica” 1797, as quoted by ASAD 1993, p. 74.

¹⁶³ ASAD idem.

¹⁶⁴ ASAD idem, p. 74.

¹⁶⁵ GIDDENS 1999, as quoted by LEWIS & HAMMER 2007, p. 39.

This idea can be complemented by anthropologist Joanne Rappaport's emphasis on how histories/stories are created amongst social groups; not in a linear or academic way, but drawing on a series of different sources such as law, orally transmitted information, mythology and literature (which I address as *discourses*), all of which become relevant within a particular context and situation¹⁶⁶. In the making of such narratives, she adds, distinct perspectives towards the same happening change its meaning. Tradition, thus, is shaped very much in the like of a palimpsest, in as much as histories/stories are written upon one another and re-written depending on the particular juncture within which this happens. This would mean that it will always remain somehow uncertain how an ancestral past actually was in detail.

If these narratives of the past, these traditions, are essentially discourses, then that means that there should be a conflict between them in a competition for establishing the truth through authority. In his book "Black reconstruction of America", sociologist and historian William E. B. Du Bois addresses a similar idea, applied to the descendants of the slaves in the United States of America. Du Bois uses the term *historical memory* to refer to a narrative about the past that shapes the present, thus giving rise to a *shared historical memory* that is extensive to a whole nation¹⁶⁷. In being so, it represents the main constituent of a political identity. In the case of the descendants of the slaves, Du Bois argues that their historical memory becomes marginalised in the same way they are segregated as subjects; consequently, their political identity is also segregated, creating a schism. As a result, he points out an *orthodox* master narrative, and a *heterodox* one in response. This acts as a counter-discourse to the dominant one in as much as it seeks to eradicate that segregation: if the racist dominant discourse is perceived as dehumanising, the heterodox historical memory seeks to humanise the segregated subjects. The final result is an opposition of two completely different political identities, but in both cases they identify themselves as citizens of the same nation.

Therefore, extrapolating, a group of individuals belonging to a given institution might be segregated by others, making this behaviour a key part of their historical memory. The segregated group ("the oppressed"), then, develops a heterodox discourse to imagine their past – that is, a heterodox *tradition* –, which

¹⁶⁶ RAPPAPORT 2005 [1996].

¹⁶⁷ DU BOIS 1998.

leads to an identity drastically different from the orthodox one. However, in both cases they identify themselves as part of the same institution. This is possible because traditions are invented by social groups with the re-interpretation of memory over time, and the imagination of the past as a founding element for their identities.

This conceptualisation of tradition allows understanding both the differences between the discourses of the Church and the “heretics” during the first centuries a.D., as well as the schisms that emerged during the age of Constantine. Furthermore, it accounts for the development of an imagination of the past that legitimised the identity of the church in what was “the present” for the authors of the texts I will analyse. Just as the Sapwuahfik people re-imagined their past as a foundation for their emerging identity opposed to the Pohnpei (who were otherwise more similar than different), the authors that ascribed to the early Church re-imagined a past and a link with it through apostolic succession in order to erect a tradition that differentiated them from those they judged as heretics (who were not pagans, but Christians). On one hand, this accounts for an instrumentalised, reasoned vision of the past but, at the same time, a habit that developed based on their faith¹⁶⁸. I thus claim that my three primary sources represented discourses that re-invented to an extent and reproduced tradition through theological interpretations of history. Finally, the Church’s discourse gradually became a master narrative to which heterodox ones opposed based on their understanding of their own memory.

3.5. Hegemony & Subalternity

Bringing back Weber’s notion of obedience, how could it be understood within the framework I have built so far? The answer lies in the notion of *hegemony*. Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci makes a distinction between a *political society* and what he calls a *civil society*¹⁶⁹. The former refers to those domains of public, social life that represent an arena in which power is directly disputed, whilst the latter would allude to those in which ideas and beliefs are fashioned. Marxist as he was, Gramsci claimed that in order for there to be a true revolution, a struggle for new ideas has to take place first. If the proletariat

¹⁶⁸ Functionalist approaches usually tend to give the impression that social actors were hypocritical with their beliefs and sought only to control the masses; yet there is no way to claim that they were either pious or not. For as it is worth, we may just as well assume that their faith was spiritually important to them despite – or moreover, precisely because of – their instrumentalised intentions to administrate a social group. This is the approach I will assume.

¹⁶⁹ GRAMSCI 1971.

accepted that they should be oppressed as a true fact and, thus, did not seek to change it, a political reversal would not even be desirable. In a broader sense, hegemonic ideas are those that are considered archetypal, publicly recognised as correct and never defied. Drawing on Weber's terminology, we could say they are authoritative ideas. Also, given that knowledge is socially constructed, certain ideas can be supported in order to legitimate roles of power and consent can be manufactured. Consequently, broadly speaking, if hegemony is associated with powerful people, subalternity is the condition of those who accept such domination unquestionably, or those whose voices are usually not accounted for.

Drawing on this, the key to understanding how *obedience* might exist even after having stated that there will always be resistance in the form of conflict between discourses is essentially to avoid equivocation between *discourses* and *social actors*. While a repressing discourse will always give rise to resisting discourses, the *subjects* that identify themselves with either one of them suppose a transversal variable. It might help to imagine a grid, where the horizontal axis could list discourses A, B, C and D, while the vertical axis would list the king, the farmer, the blacksmith and the duke. If discourse A were the repressing, dominant one, it would not surprise to see the king and the duke identifying with it. Perhaps, if discourses B, C and D were resisting ones, the farmer could be associated with either one of these in this little scheme of ours. However, what if the blacksmith identified herself with the repressing discourse? What if she had been socialised into thinking that this is the right order to be followed? Then obedience would be found, not among discourses but from social actors to discourses.

These social actors can be regarded as the *oppressed* within a power relationship. Previously I have discussed oppression when referring to a heterodox revisionist history as a narrative that fostered a political identity in response to segregation from the orthodox one. What is the difference then between the *oppressed* and the *subaltern*? Philosopher Jason Campbell¹⁷⁰ theorises on this question precisely drawing on De Bois'¹⁷¹ terms. Campbell suggests that the key feature of the subaltern is that they lack the possibility of creating such a heterodox historical memory in response to their oppression: they lack the conduit for recognition and, as a result, do not have access to a revisionist history. An example of this might be found in Gayatri Spivak's essay "Can the subaltern

¹⁷⁰ CAMPBELL *idem*.

¹⁷¹ DU BOIS, *idem*.

speak?” when she addresses the practice of *Sati*. It roughly consists of a ritual by which widows must jump into the funerary pyres of their deceased husbands, an idea that was regarded as inhumane by the British colonisers. As a result, they banned the ritual and made it illegal, generating a response from nativists who claimed that the widows did it voluntarily and it should not be made illegal. In Spivak’s words, it was a case of “*white men saving brown women from brown men.*”¹⁷² I read this “brownness” in Spivak’s statement as the condition of oppression, meaning that *brown* men and *brown* women shared their being oppressed; however, I believe that Spivak stresses that the “woman-ness” of the widows relegated them to an even *more oppressed* category. Thus, while the *brown* men had access to revisionist history and could create a counter narrative to the *white* men’s discourse, the *brown women* were never asked whether they wanted or not to jump into the fire.

It is precisely this ultra-oppression in which those segregated cannot even speak that I understand as *subalternity*, and it is in this sense that I will use the term for this thesis. Moreover, I will extend it to include another situation in which the oppressed cannot speak; namely, when they ascribe to the dominant, segregating discourse and hence do not produce a counter narrative either. Additionally, variables such as literacy, institutional position, social prestige and access to resources for publication can restrict who can get to express their voice publicly.

This way, *subalternity* could not be applied to Donatists or Arians, for example even though they were eventually officially segregated by the Church and the State. However, the graffiti in the *Memoria Apostolorum* may act as a source to elicit a perception of Christianity that could not produce a recognised discourse, either orthodox or heterodox. In that sense, analysing them implies a form of reconstruction, an interpretation of the discourse that might have guided their actions. In this sense, they are subaltern because there is no direct account of their voices available, and to our eyes in the present this implies that for practical matters they must have ascribed to another discourse.

3.6. Vernacular Religion & Heresy

Previously, I introduced “spirituality” as a search to transcend the Cartesian limits of one’s own individuality and to experience a connection with a greater

¹⁷² SPIVAK idem, p. 93.

realm; based on the subsequent discussion, I can now claim that it can additionally be conceptualised as a particular discourse. This means that there must be different discourses on spirituality conflicting with each other, which makes it pertinent to introduce another understanding of this concept to complement my previous definition. Peruvian priest and anthropologist Manuel Marzal¹⁷³, supplies it: he defines it as a way of living faith that presents variation not only amongst various religions, but particularly shows differences with other ways of understanding the same one. In other words, different groups within the same religious affiliation could express their faith in different ways, in the process building different relationships with their gods and colleagues.

Referring to present day phenomena in rural Peru, Marzal¹⁷⁴ coined the term “Popular Catholicism”; it is characterised by the existence of rituals that involve a way of penance in order to obtain forgiveness, usually also leading to a better future in terms of health, love or access to resources. Outside Marzal’s theory, “popular” as understood in this terminology is usually regarded as a synonym of “folk”. Nevertheless, such categorisation might imply a bias on behalf of scholarship that ends up portraying the practises encompassed by them as within a lower status compared to “official” variations. As to escape this issue, I follow folklorist Leonardo Primiano¹⁷⁵ in his understanding of “folk” or “vernacular” religion as a flexible system of beliefs produced by a social minority.

Another way of understanding this vernacular religion could be inspired by astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson’s following quote:

*“Newton discovered that some light, or white light, is a mixture of all the colours of the rainbow. Major discovery. He named the displays of colours a “spectrum” from the Latin for ‘phantom’ or ‘apparition’”*¹⁷⁶.

Only after passing it through a prism could Newton see that what was seen by the naked eye as an unquestionably single coloured light was in fact made of several varieties that composed it. Similarly, I claim that an analogous spectrum (although not necessarily limited to seven components) could be traced to the understanding of a particular religion. Additionally, turning to Certeau’s theory, it could be said that such spectrum’s variety rises from the subjects’ spiritual

¹⁷³ MARZAL 2000; 2002.

¹⁷⁴ MARZAL idem.

¹⁷⁵ PRIMIANO 1995.

¹⁷⁶ HANICH & HOLTZMAN (producers), POPE (director), and TYSON (performer) 2014, 17:57 – 18:13.

appropriation of the religious discourse¹⁷⁷. The already existing discourse provides the subject with a *locus* from where to *convert* to it and this in turn transforms the subject itself into the locus from which that discourse might be displaced. This happens as the discourse becomes embodied in the subject, thus bringing all of its potential manifestations into a finite state. A dialectical process of *conversion* thus happens, where the subject is converted to the religious discourse and converts it into a finite variation of it. This process could be regarded as the spiritual counterpart to socialisation, as the subjectivation of religion produces a particular spirituality.

To sum up, not only a political resistance rises as a response to a dominant discourse, but also a variety of interpretations emerges from the subjects' understanding of tradition. An incorporated memory re-presented in a way that slowly drifts from the discourse that acted as an initial locus shapes a new one that might not even be aware of its difference. Should it be considered *resisting*, then? I suggest it would not be quite accurate because although it provides an alternative to the hegemonic one, there is no conflictual dialogue with it. This is the essence of what I will call a *folk discourse*; that is, a spontaneously emerging discourse that drifts away from the original one without opposing it politically. However, if the dominant discourse were to address and confront such folk discourses, we would be back to the opposition between a restricting one that segregates the restricted ones. Then, the oppressed social actors would either develop a heterodox revisionist history, or would be relegated to a subaltern silence. This is considerably close to the concept of *heresy*.

According to German researcher on Gnosticism Kurt Rudolph, the Hellenistic usage of the term *haireo* did not denote any derogatory value, and had the meaning of "seizure", "choice" or "election" and thus emphasises the free choice of a doctrine¹⁷⁸. The author claims that it could even refer to a party or school. However, the Christian use of it categorically opposed *hairesis* to *ekklesia*, the former being associated with "sect", "division" and "erroneous teaching". Rudolph claims that the emergence of heresy in this sense is typical of what he calls "confessional religions": religions that have a founder and develop a doctrine that is used to separate "true" from "false". Among the criteria that might trigger a schism between these two poles, the author mentions the influence of charismatic

¹⁷⁷ Certeau as quoted by DE KESEL idem.

¹⁷⁸ RUDOLPH 1988.

leaders, discrepancies in dogmatico-theological questions, a differentiated ritual observance and the impact of social problems.

On a more historical line of thought, theologian Michael C. Thomsett claims that disagreements on the *true meaning* of the basic doctrine arose since the earliest moments of Christianity and

*“As the doctrine was expanded and specific issues addressed (including the nature of the Holy Spirit, Christ’s role in eventually defeating the Devil, and the removal of barriers between God and mankind) the questions raised became larger and more complicated as well.”*¹⁷⁹

Theologian Thomas A. Robinson suggests that heresy might have been perceived as a potential danger for the emerging church, for which it developed ways to spot and sanction it¹⁸⁰. Four of the tools used this way, according to the author, were *canon, creed, clergy* and *councils*. According to this perspective, it would seem that orthodoxy shaped heresy by defining it; nevertheless, sociologist Lester Kurtz advises to acknowledge that by doing so it shaped itself as well.

*“Beliefs”, he says, “are most clearly and systematically articulated when they are formed via negative – that is, when the boundaries of what is true and acceptable are marked out through a systematic identification of what is false and unacceptable.”*¹⁸¹

Therefore, *“[...] it is through battles with heresies and heretics that orthodoxy is most sharply delineated”*¹⁸².

On the other hand, while the concept of heresy had a constructive effect in the church’s identity, it labelled these restricted discourses in a way that silenced their voices from being able to write history. As stated above, the church developed an apparatus to do it, and scholar of Early Christianity Karen King claims that the inscribed perspective of *heresiologists* follows a strategy that underlies the rhetoric used by these authors¹⁸³. Among these strategies, she counts: stating a difference between a unified church and a divided variety of heretics; implying that heresies are the result of the contamination of a pure faith, posing orthodoxy as prior in time to subsequently polluted heresies, attacking the exponents of the *heretic* discourses and institutionalising a canon of texts and ritual practises.

This rhetoric construction of the other directly relates to the dynamics of power and conflict between discourses that I presented earlier, and therefore it is

¹⁷⁹ THOMSETT 2011, p. 25.

¹⁸⁰ ROBINSON 2005.

¹⁸¹ KURTZ 1986, p.1.

¹⁸² KURTZ idem.

¹⁸³ KING idem.

useful not only to conceptualise those presented as *heretics*, but also the *heresiologists* themselves. Being so, I propose that for the case of late ancient Christianity *folk discourses* appeared whenever the church did not find them to be threatening to its structural survival; whereas it designated some of these parallel discourses as heretic whenever it judged it prudent to take a distance and sanction it, thus engaging in a conflict that dialectically shaped both.

Throughout this chapter, my goal has been to weave together terms and ideas coming from different authors in a way that I consider logical, with the intention of providing tools that could make sense to use in order to analyse the different voices present in Books VII and VIII of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* and the inscriptions of the *Memoria Apostolorum*. In accordance with the epigraph at the beginning, I do not seek to provide the ultimate theory to understand these concepts, but rather to limit to a particular and concrete understanding the potential infinity of meanings ascribed to terms such *religion* or *discourse*.

Chapter 4 ~ State of the Art

This Chapter is intended as a brief sample of scholarly work similar to this research, its objective being to show a *bigger picture* within which to understand it. As I explained in Chapter 1, my approach is characterised by a critical hermeneutic dedicated to problematizing the notion of *otherness* within a discourse that has become authoritative over time. Since the main domain for the topics I address is religion, I judged it necessary to distance myself from a spiritual epistemology founded on faith. By doing so, I also identified such discourse as an alternative. Therefore, one of the main characteristics of my present work is the use of a critical theory in order to uncover and analyse variables within texts that have already been studied at length. Surely, alterity is one of those variables – and the only one I address in this thesis –, but gender could have been another one.

Gender studies within theology have been led by feminist theorists. *Feminism*, like *postcolonialism*, is a heavily politicised paradigm that assigns a significantly prominent role to women as an opposition to the traditional relegation of them. In its introduction, “*Women and gender in ancient religions: interdisciplinary approaches*” emphasises how this feminist approach started to allocate importance to the study of women in Christian antiquity, but has also

subsequently opened the door for scholars from different hermeneutical and methodological standing points to address the issue¹⁸⁴. This means that the use of this theory to approach theology allowed a change in scope to take place that eventually transcended the originally critical analysis and has thereon included less politicised studies. Similarly, my own work in this research seeks not to criticise the social actors of antiquity, or denounce their deeds as right or wrong, but rather it has drawn on a postcolonial and postmodern epistemology in order to provide a broader understanding of the issue at hand.

Feminist theology's critique, however, does not just suppose an attack on traditional views of Christianity, but rather makes use of its agenda in order to conceptualise alternative understandings of gender within the given context, and contrast them with a tradition that they claim to segregate the importance of women. A good example of this is the following quote from historians Joseph Martos and Pierre Hégy:

*“The fact that gender-based roles have existed throughout the history of Christianity is therefore taken as evidence that sexism has been a perennial part of social and ecclesiastical practice rather than as evidence that God wants some roles to be reserved to men and other roles to be reserved to women.”*¹⁸⁵

Martos and Hégy challenge, indeed, an idea with deep theological implications that directly addresses the nature of god's will; in that sense, it as revolutionary. However, this potential revolutionary colour of feminist theology is grounded in an epistemology that is not far away from the one I have chosen for this research. Feminist and postcolonial writers Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stitch call this method “mapping” and it is a process that is very similar to the drawing of charts to represent geography¹⁸⁶. Thus, it creates a relationship between a “source” and a “target” that can be understood also for social analysis: the discourse created by scholars would be analogous to a map. If the *source* was regarded as a particular domain with certain potentialities, the target is a *second domain* creatively generated out of it. Consequently, the way in which gender is mapped generates the display of a novel entity, the text, which should be problematized by questioning the affinities and proximities between the author and the people they write about. They propose as a working list of variables for this endeavour: gender and masculinity, gender and sexuality, gender and the

¹⁸⁴ AHEARNE-KROLL 2010.

¹⁸⁵ MARTOS & HÉGY 1998, p. 181.

¹⁸⁶ PENNER & VANDER STITCH 2007.

body, and gender and empire; which are, in turn, the main divisions of the book they edited.

To this brief conceptualisation of what has been done from the perspective of feminist theology, I would like to add one last example. Parting from the premise that:

*“A fundamental methodological insight of historical criticism of the Bible was the realization that the Sitz im Leben or life setting of a text is as important for its understanding as its actual formulation.”*¹⁸⁷

theologian Elisabeth Schüssler names four approaches that have risen throughout the history of scholarship of religion¹⁸⁸. Additionally, throughout the book she develops what she calls “feminist critical hermeneutics”, which I have decided to include as a fifth paradigm despite her allocating feminist theology within the fourth one. The models are the following ones:

1. Doctrinal approach.

The Bible constitutes divine revelation itself, and as such it holds canonical authority. Its value is not contextualised within a given history, but rather accepted as dogmatic, drawing on the alleged inerrancy of the source.

2. Positivist historical exegesis.

It confronts the alleged dogmatic authority of the Bible and seeks an objective description of past events embedded in a rationalist, factual historiography.

3. Dialogical – hermeneutical interpretation.

Claiming a theoretical impossibility of factual historiography, it shifts its attention to the interaction between text and community and between text and interpreter. It questions the role of the authority of ecclesiastical figures and scholars in the academic enterprise.

4. Liberation theology.

It challenge the value neutrality of scholarship, claiming that by definition a researcher is always engaged for or against the oppressed (whether they are segregated, ignored or defended).

5. Feminist critical hermeneutics.

It problematizes the patristic patriarchal rejection of women in Christianity, claiming that such discourse was established as

¹⁸⁷ SCHÜSSLER 1992, p. xv.

¹⁸⁸ SCHÜSSLER idem.

orthodox only as a result of a gradual historical process. In that sense, it assumes a historical reconstructionist approach.

Continuing with this notion of proposing an alternative understanding of tradition and contrasting it with the previous paradigm, within the domain of alterity *Gnosticism* and *the Gnostics* represent a focus on alterity. As I already explained in Chapter 2, scholar David Brakke has analysed this issue, stating that the category of “Gnostics” was originally used by Irenaeus to describe a set of groups that he identified as similar. Parting from this premise, however, other approaches arose over time, starting with Adolf von Harnack’s innovative concept of “Gnosticism” as “the acute Hellenization of Christianity”¹⁸⁹. In 1969, Henry Moore equated both terms by claiming that Gnosticism encompassed all the groups that were addressed and sanctioned by Irenaeus. Additionally, the German History of Religion School that dominated the academic circles throughout the 20th century gave rise to yet a third term; namely, “Gnosis”: a different religion from Christianity despite its common points with it. This religion, typically defined by Wilhelm Bousset and Rudolf Bultmann, covered groups that shared a “single primal man myth” that claimed that a common founder had brought it to the Mediterranean through Persia. Hans Jonas’ “The Gnostic religion” interpreted it as an independent worldview altogether.

As a result of this debate, Drakke has systematised the following three approaches as the ones most commonly used by contemporary scholars:

- 1) To assume a *typological approach*; that is, to use “Gnosis” or “Gnosticism” as an ideal type, a construction used to categorise phenomena with related content without claiming that the social actors historically ascribed themselves to a common institution.
- 2) To stop using the categories of “Gnosticism” and “Gnostic” altogether and study these texts as unique and individual.
- 3) To stop using “Gnosticism”, but accept “Gnostic” as a category accurately used by Irenaeus to refer to a school of thought that, despite not necessarily claiming a common institutional adherence, had several shared theological points.

This example shows how modern academic works once again challenged a traditionally established depiction of an “*other*” in early Christianity. The *others*

¹⁸⁹ As told by DRAKKE idem, p. 246. The whole conceptualisation of “Gnosticism” that I will account for is based on DRAKKE idem.

in the previous case were women; now it was this dubiously defined category of groups of people that shared certain Christian elements but were not part of the (proto) orthodox discourse. Albeit not directly studying *Gnostics* or *Gnosticism*, this thesis seeks to perform a similar task, in as much as it aims to shed light on the different conceptualisations of *otherness* within the three primary sources that I established in the introduction.

These sources will be described in more detail in Chapter 5, but at this moment it is pertinent to discuss a very salient characteristic of one of them. The inscriptions in the *Memoria Apostolorum* are clearly different from the narratives found both in Eusebius' and Lactantius' *texts*. Surely, the graffiti are mostly composed of letters put together to codify a message¹⁹⁰, but they do not share cohesive narration of the other two sources. This is because they are individual, short passages, which only constitute a collection or a whole because scholars have addressed them as such, putting them together in the same category due to similar characteristics (location, probable intention, content). However, one of these characteristics is precisely that they were written by Christian pilgrims who did not require an institutional position in order to create them.

Due to this, it is likely that voices associated with common people could be found in this collection of messages, a notion that has been shared by other studies of *ancient graffiti*. An example of this is classicist Roger Bagnall's "Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East"¹⁹¹, which comprises an analysis of different archaeological material from the Basilica of Smyrna. His sources also include inscriptions made by pilgrims, which he addresses as evidence of informal writing in a public space. However, his account is mostly descriptive and does not pose any methodological conclusions; rather he focuses on the material conditions of the inscriptions, and also concludes that those who made them must have had a relatively advanced education. In this sense, could it be regarded as a *popular source*, so to speak? Perhaps not, since the authors remain anonymous in most cases. Still, it is a source that can be associated with voices coming from common Christians, at least to an extent.

Graffiti is also a main topic in archaeologist Karen Stern's research, notably a chapter in "The gift in Antiquity"¹⁹² called "graffiti as gift: mortuary ad devotional graffiti in the late ancient Levant". There, she examines the Beth

¹⁹¹ BAGNALL 2011.

¹⁹² STERN 2013.

She'arim necropolis in southwest Galilee, where several burials dated to the Roman Palestine are found. While this text conceptualises graffiti as a form of gift, she also observes how these messages can help access popular voices like “a giant Facebook page of the ancient world”¹⁹³. Finally, another case is the study of the ancient graffiti found in Pompeii about which many scholars have written. As an example, there is the book “Daily life in the Roman city: Rome, Pompeii and Ostia” by Gregory S. Aldrete, from where we can quote the following relevant statement:

*“The graffiti of Pompeii offer rare insights into the lives of ordinary people and help compensate for the bias of the literary sources toward the rich and powerful. Through graffiti, we can learn about the attitudes, fears, and aspirations of the average Roman, who is able to speak to us directly via his or her impromptu scribbles.”*¹⁹⁴

Also, most notably within the University of Helsinki’s immediate circle, Zejian Zeng’s ThM thesis about pre-Constantine Christian epitaphs stresses the relevance of epigraphic sources by saying that:

*“[a]s for anyone who wish to read into the mind of the ancients, especially those of lower classes, inscriptions in many ways provide the primary clues: once being “set in stone”, these ancient utterances stand the corruption of time and still echo the long-lost world upon their discovery.”*¹⁹⁵

Finally, I will briefly discuss studies pertaining to the archaeological location of the *Memoria Apostolorum* in Via Appia. This is relevant because, as I will explain in Chapter 5, there is a polemic debate as to whether the cemetery underneath the basilica of St. Sebastian was indeed the location where the remains of St. Peter and St. Paul were, or whether the Vatican and Via Ostiensis were home to the relics of the apostles, respectively. Citing several sources some claimed that they could even have been translated from one location to the other¹⁹⁶. According to archaeologist Robert Ross Holloway, since the report on the excavations in 1940, four approaches to the veracity of the location of St.

¹⁹³ LYDEN 2011, June 18. Again, the extent to which so called “popular voices” can be ascribed unquestionably to the totality of these inscriptions should be problematized. This declaration was made by the author to the news media, and should be regarded as a comment meant to be concise understandable to all audiences.

¹⁹⁴ ALDRETE 2004, p. 233.

¹⁹⁵ ZENG 2014, p.1.

¹⁹⁶ HOLLOWAY, 2004.

Peter's relics have risen; which I hereby quote and to which I add his own view as a fifth one¹⁹⁷:

1)Theodor Klauser:

Also known as the "two traditions theory": it claims that the tradition assigning St. Peter's bones to the Vatican is true, but early Christians were divided and some thought the bones were at Via Appia. Constantine honoured both places, but there was no translation of bones.

2)Armin von Gerkan:

Peter was buried in the Vatican, but not where the *Memoria*¹⁹⁸ was erected. This was rather built to commemorate Peter's martyrdom. In 258 bones now linked to Peter and Paul were momentarily taken to St. Sebastian, only until they were taken back to the basilicas in Vatican and Via Ostiensis.

3)Hans Georg Thümmel:

The *Memoria* in Vatican is older than the tomb, but the bones were also originally in this location. At via Appia there was only a cult, not a tomb.

4)José Ruyschaert:

Following Louis Duchesne, bones were taken to Via Appia under the threat of the Valerian persecution. They were then taken back.

5)R. Ross Holloway:

Bones were originally in via Appia until 251 (according to *Liber Pontificalis*), then they were taken to Vatican during persecutions because Valerian's edict prohibited Christians from visiting cemeteries, but the place in Vatican was not one at that moment.

For the scope of this thesis, perhaps it is not very important to delineate whether St. Peter and St. Paul's bones were or were not buried at Via Appia. What neither of the authors named above can deny is that there was indeed a cult to the apostles in the location underneath the basilica of St. Sebastian. What concerns me, thus, is the fact that the pilgrims walked to this place to perform a ritual and a prayer invoking these two apostles.

This sample of previous works shows that this thesis does not stand alone. On the contrary, it shares approaches, topics and sources with all the researches discussed in this chapter. I acknowledge that this list is by no means exhaustive, but my goal has been for it to be representative of a broader context.

¹⁹⁷ HOLLOWAY, idem. The names of the most notable scholars associated with each approach are included

¹⁹⁸ As will be explained in Chapter 5, a mortuary arrangement was found under the basilica of St. Peter in Vatican, which was named a *memoria*. This is not to be confused with the *Memoria Apostolorum*, found in Via Appia.

Chapter 5 ~ Methodological Framework

5.1. Methodological Paradigms

This thesis' methodology will heavily draw on paradigms originally inherent to ethnography, which will be applied by means of using *content analysis* and stressing the value of *polyphony*. For those reasons, I will start with a brief contextualisation of what ethnography is and how it can be translated into a historiographical study.

Nowadays, an extensive fieldwork orientated towards the understanding of a different society might sound inseparable from social or cultural anthropology, but the fact is that it was not always part of its agenda. In fact, the first researchers – generally lawyers – based themselves only on secondary sources, for which they are usually called *armchair anthropologists*¹⁹⁹. In 1914, nonetheless, one researcher acted as a hinge between that paradigm and the newly arising one: Bronislaw Malinowski. Ethnography was truly born when he was impeded to go back to England during the war – him being Austro-Hungarian – and decided to stay at the Trobriand Islands in Melanesia, where he undertook his famous fieldwork until the war was over²⁰⁰.

After Malinowski's incursion into this new methodology, not only was his account of the Trobriand islanders used by many scholars, but also many started to emulate his long term exposition to informants. However, while the methodological paradigm might have had changed, the theoretical approach remained similar to that of his predecessors. The "British school" was characterised by a functionalist scope, still obsessed with the nomothetic search for general laws governing societies and an always synchronic study of them and as naturally balanced, closed structures²⁰¹. This, would change with Franz Boas' *historical particularism*²⁰² and *cultural relativism*²⁰³²⁰⁴

Ethnography became intrinsic to anthropology and, over the years, it began to be used by other disciplines, such as sociology²⁰⁵. However, it was maybe Clifford Geertz²⁰⁶ who best defined this concept with his idea of *deep description*:

¹⁹⁹ MARZAL 1997.

²⁰⁰ MARZAL idem.

²⁰¹ MARZAL idem.

²⁰² Summarised as: every society is a result of its unique historical development.

²⁰³ Summarised as: a specific social context should be the only framework for the interpretation of that society's ideas and social interactions.

²⁰⁴ HARRIS 2001.

²⁰⁵ WHYTE 1955.

²⁰⁶ GEERTZ idem.

to unveil those hidden meanings inherent to culture and interpret them as to make them intelligible for outsiders. In order to do so, a sort of familiarity²⁰⁷ must always underpin this observation²⁰⁸.

This brief historical account sought to portray how an idea developed; thus, not being a sacred, untouchable maxim, but a paradigm that resulted of past experiences, sometimes even incidentally. Maybe because of this, as of the nineteen sixties there was a critique towards ethnography; Geertz himself²⁰⁹ posed the idea of understanding the *ethnographer as an author* in as much as his account of another society is subject to his own biases not only on gathering the information, but also on communicating it. Similarly, James Clifford²¹⁰ suggested that every text supposed a fiction of content and forms, and that every story told would tend to generate a different one in the mind of those who read or heard it. Also, Said²¹¹ claimed that the West depicted Orient as it imagined it and not necessarily as it really was or as it would have depicted itself. All of this leads to the postmodern critique that alleges that the ethnographic enterprise has political implications and that it is not possible to portray a society without incurring in a bias – intended or unintended – that will depict them only as perceived by the ethnographer. The epistemological implications of this have already been addressed for the case of historiography, and certainly apply for this case as well; yet methodologically it calls upon ways of verification that require the possibility of interacting with the informants after having gathered the data.

Now, what would happen if we transfer this idea to the study of the past? It is advised that ethnographers should procure the *polyphony* of different *voices* by showing the informants the text and accepting some of their modifications²¹². But what if the source is not a living human being, but another text? It is not surprising that similar postmodern critiques would apply to *historiography* too. For instance, historiographer Frank Ankersmit²¹³ states that this discipline has traditionally searched for an *essence* of the past; which he equates with a *metanarrative* that obscures the fact, he alleges, that a past reality cannot be scientifically reconstructed. Historians should, hence, see their researches as mere

²⁰⁷ Which can be equated to an extent with Urban's metadiscursive framework, as described in Chapter 3.

²⁰⁸ WHYTE idem.

²⁰⁹ GEERTZ 1988.

²¹⁰ CLIFFORD 1986.

²¹¹ SAID 1977.

²¹² CLIFFORD idem; WHYTE idem.

²¹³ ANKERSMIT 1989.

interpretations rather than accounts of true facts. Unlike modernist historiography, its postmodern form is methodologically recognises that it is impeded of accessing the past itself, for which only *style* and not *content* can be interpreted²¹⁴.

Naturally, such claims call upon responses from academia; for example, historian Perez Zagorin's statement that "[i]t *trivializes history and renders it void of any intellectual responsibility*"²¹⁵. He, thus, suggests that historiography must seek to understand past realities; and, while any asseveration made by any scholar may be questioned at some point, features such as the generation of a canon and the distinction between truth and fictionality are key to the concept of history. Therefore, the revision of historiographical literature would conduce to debates, yes, but they would only be significant in as much as they intend to conclude with a fair approximation to how the past itself was. Nevertheless, one question still persists: by which procedure does the historian access the data? In order to find it out, I propose the following subsequent question: what underlies both ethnography and historiography, making it so difficult to achieve any degree of objectivity? The following quote might evoke an answer:

*"Initially, it might seem that Geertz's method of carefully describing cultural symbol systems in action cannot be applied to Mithraism because the cult's performances are inaccessible to us. [...] In answer, it is worth observing first that Geertz himself uses the written record of the past as effectively as field work, his own or others', in the present. [...]. The past, in itself, raises no insuperable barrier. Certainly, then, it is possible to take a Geertzian approach to rituals and other formalized activities in antiquity which are well documented in extant literature [...]."*²¹⁶

In other words, in the end we face the same vehicle through which information reaches us: discourse; therefore, the question really is: by which procedure is it possible to access the data rooted within discourse? Beck, a historian, implies that an ancient text can be approached as a form of fieldnotes; quite interestingly, on the other hand, Urban²¹⁷, an anthropologist, poses that fieldnotes can be seen as "textual artefacts". Indeed, he shows a picture of a fieldwork notebook as an unquestionably empirical entity. Howbeit, those forms, shadows and contrasted colours in the picture confer a meaning understandable through language. But is knowledge of grammar enough to understand it? – he

²¹⁴ As the language used by the historian draws attention upon itself rather than on specific realities.

²¹⁵ ZAGORIN 1990, p. 266.

²¹⁶ BECK 2006, pp.69-70.

²¹⁷ URBAN idem.

asks. His answer would be negative, claiming that a ‘metadiscursive framing’ is in duty; that is, to consider “*how this discourse itself is represented through other signs*”²¹⁸. The narrative is framed, then, by means of *familiarity*²¹⁹: previous encounters with akin discourses. The first step in this procedure is thus developing a familiarity with the texts by understanding the larger cultural context in which it is embedded²²⁰. Once again, epistemologically it is as impossible to be absolutely certain about the unquestionable reality of this context as it is to be absolutely certain about the unquestionable reality of the meaning of the sources themselves; yet the juxtaposition of several sources provides us as scholars with a hint that methodologically allows us to interpret the *content* of the sources.

The key term here is “content”, as I will propose that *content analysis* is the procedure by which it is possible to access the data rooted within discourse. French human scientist Laurence Bardin²²¹ as a set of techniques for analysing communications, whose main target is to systematically devise indicators (quantitative or not) that could contribute to inferring knowledge related to the conditions of production or reception of the messages. Bardin calls the concrete product of this procedure “inferred variables”, which I identify as the sociological or psychological variables that derive from the semantic structures that we directly²²² access, thus articulating language with social situations²²³.

However, I do not contextualise it as a means to achieve an inherent meaning because I have already argued that I do not find it possible to do so. Instead, my goal will be to obtain a group of inferred variables, some of which I will put together in order to provide an open interpretation. This implies that by no means will I claim to have exhausted all the possible variables. Following Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory²²⁴, albeit providing my own interpretation, I will mention alternative variables that I will not incorporate in it, my intention being to make explicit that those voices exist and could be used by other researchers, along with the myriads of other possibilities that I could not see and they might. Also, following Certeau’s perception of history as “a rhetorical operation that strives to make its rhetorical performance invisible” and “masks the *constructedness* of the

²¹⁸ URBAN idem, p. 6.

²¹⁹ WHYTE idem.

²²⁰ Which I have already provided for the case of my three primary sources in Chapter 2.

²²¹ BARDIN 2000.

²²² Although mediated by interpretations and translations.

²²³ Trognon as quoted by GHIGLIONI & MATALON 2001.

²²⁴ EMERSON & MORRISON 2005 [1994].

written account”²²⁵, I will analyse not only the content but also the style used in my sources.

5.2. Sources

5.2.1. Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*

According to Holloway²²⁶ and Drake²²⁷, Eusebius’ and Lactantius’ works are the main sources we have for the beginning of the age of Constantine, in the case of the former mostly due to the fact that he was the emperor’s biographer. In *Vita Constantinii*, Eusebius portrayed him as an instrument of divine grace. However, Eusebius most famed book is perhaps *Historia Ecclesiastica*, where he gives an account of the succession of the bishops that came after the apostles, drawing on this chronology in order to propose a history of the institution they belonged to. In that sense, Neusner²²⁸ suggests that Eusebius wrote history in order to develop a political theory; posing himself as the first Christian historian, uncovering and recording what he saw as a divine plan. The result was a theology of history by which he accounted for the shift from persecutions to the ascent of a Christian emperor, in the process drawing on “history to derive proof for rules of theology”²²⁹.

Historia Ecclesiastica was probably written between 303 and 312 a.D., after which he began working on *Vita Constantinii*²³⁰. As I have already explained in Chapter 2, authors such as Irenaeus and Tertullian had claimed that a succession of bishops could be demonstrated and was the main source for determining which writings were legitimate to be used by the Church. Eusebius continues with this style, claiming that he will display the lineage of “ecclesiastical writers”, a term he never uses to refer to Marcionites, Gnostics or Montanists²³¹. Book 1 of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* discusses God’s revelation to Jesus; Book 2, the events that took place between the reigns of Tiberius and Nero (14 – 68 a.D.); Book 3, from Vespasian to Trajan (69 – 117 a.D.); Book 4, until Marcus Aurelius (117 – 180 a.D.); Book 5, until Septimus Severus (180 211 a.D.); Book 6, until Decius (211 – 251 a.D.); **Book 7, until Gallienus (251 – 268 a.D.);** **Book 8, the persecution of Palestinian Christians under Diocletian and the**

²²⁵ HIGHMORE 2005 [1994], p. 183.

²²⁶ HOLLOWAY idem.

²²⁷ DRAKE idem.

²²⁸ NEUSNER idem.

²²⁹ NEUSNER idem, p. 32.

²³⁰ CAMERON idem.

²³¹ DUNGAN idem.

death of Galerius (284 – 311 a.D.); and Books 9 and 10 a contemporary history that accounted for Constantine’s total victory²³².

Names, dates and locations associated with the succession of bishops in Churches funded by the apostles are the core of the text, but Eusebius there is also a search for stating which writings were unanimously acknowledged as genuine by all of them. Dungan interprets Eusebius’ understanding of “acknowledged” as “*unanimously acknowledged by all orthodox bishops in apostolic succession churches throughout the empire, all the way back to the beginning*”; and “genuine” as “*actually produced by one of Jesus’ disciples or their immediate assistants (Luke, Mark)*”²³³. As a result, the same author identifies four groups of texts within Eusebius’ selection; namely, 1) those “acknowledged as genuine by all”, 2) those “disputed” though “known and approved by many”, 3) those “disputed” and “spurious” (i.e. not “known and approved by many”), and 4) those rejected by all. This was the result of applying a threefold test referred to by Dungan as a “three layer sieve” used “*to screen out fraudulent, fictitious, or heretical writings*”²³⁴, which consisted of evaluating whether the texts were or not:

- 1) True: did they accurately teach the gospel of Jesus? (*test of theological orthodoxy*)²³⁵
- 2) Genuine: were they actually written by the apostles or Paul? (*test of apostolic authorship*)
- 3) Acknowledged: did bishops in legitimate apostolic succession use them? (*test of use*)

Finally, style and consistency with other texts were used as corroborative criteria, never relying on the use of divination, dreams, visions, voices from heaven, or divine inspiration²³⁶. This implies that the main razor, so to speak, used to delineate which texts were considered traditional and legitimate was reason. This is what I meant when I claimed that Eusebius’ historiography was used as proof of validity for tradition and theology. At the same time, Dungan²³⁷ suggests

²³² DUNGAN idem.

²³³ DUNGAN idem, p. 71.

²³⁴ DUNGAN idem, p. 83.

²³⁵ The names of the tests displayed between brackets within this list were proposed by DUNGAN idem.

²³⁶ DUNGAN idem.

²³⁷ DUNGAN idem.

that all the methods mentioned above that were *not* used by Eusebius were usually associated with “heretics”. On the other hand:

“Eusebius cites public tradition, explicitly names his sources, and frequently quotes them verbatim and at length – a fairly uncommon thing to do in his day. His writing is clearly meant to be part of a public, collaborative search or an objective historical decision as to whether a particular writing was actually written by one of Jesus’ disciples or not.”²³⁸

which bishops

“[...]sought not only to identify and preserve [...], but interpret them accurately.”²³⁹

This theology of tradition legitimised by a historiographical analysis based on reason is to be understood within the context of a need of auto definition of the Church, as presented in chapter 2. It is due to this that I find this source useful to juxtapose with the others, being that I chose Books 7 and 8 because they account for a period more or less similar to the one Lactantius describes in *De Mortibus Persecutorum*.

5.2.2. Lactantius’ *De Mortibus Persecutorum*

Eusebius was indeed a key figure for the development of the Church, but Lactantius’ work also played a fundamental role in the transformation of the Church throughout the age of Constantine²⁴⁰. Nevertheless, as I have stated before, this is a time in which the history of the Church and of the State merge with each other and become one. In accordance with this, Lactantius was important despite him not being a bishop and not being referenced by the Church fathers²⁴¹. He was, however, a Christian and a member of the emperor’s most intimate circle²⁴², as well as Constantine’s son Crispus’ tutor²⁴³. His two most influential writings, in my interpretation, are *De Mortibus Persecutorum* (*On the Deaths of the Persecutors*) and *Institutae Divinae* (*Divine Institutions*). The former was probably written between 313 and 315 a.D.²⁴⁴ and includes the victory of Constantine over Maxentius and the other emperors that integrated the tetrarchy at some point (except for Licinius). Particularly, along with Eusebius’

²³⁸ DUNGAN idem, p. 91.

²³⁹ DUNGAN idem, p. 91.

²⁴⁰ DUNGAN idem.

²⁴¹ SÁNCHEZ ALISEDA, 1990.

²⁴² HOLLOWAY idem.

²⁴³ CAMERON idem.

²⁴⁴ DRAKE idem; DE PALMA 2000.

Life of Constantine, it is the only other source for the battle of the Milvian Bridge, given only a small variation between both accounts²⁴⁵.

Lactantius was, above all, a *rhetor* not only in style, but also because Diocletian had him summoned to teach rhetoric in Nicomedia²⁴⁶. J.L. Creed, whose translation of Lactantius I am using as a source for this thesis, comments that it is not clear whether he converted to Christianity there or in Africa shortly before moving there²⁴⁷. In any case, his discourse shows influence of both a strong Christian position and a structured rhetorical critique; this is evidenced by his portrayal of the deaths of the persecutors as a “punishment and destruction of the enemies of his [God’s] name”. In that sense, unlike other texts by the same author like *De Ira* or *Institutae Divinae*, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* seems to have been written for fellow Christians²⁴⁸. Nonetheless, it deals with imperial politics much more than Eusebius does, providing a clearly hostile interpretation; as Creed suggests, the raise of taxes is shown as evidence of the emperor’s greed, while a decrease in them represents nothing more than a search for popularity in Lactantius eyes, and the motivation for the persecutions is utter cruelty and greed.

This amalgam between a Christian point of view and a critical political discourse is also present in Lactantius’ other major work, *Divinae institutiones*. This treatise was written as an apologetic text before Galerius ceased persecutions within his domains²⁴⁹, responding to pagan arguments against Christianity²⁵⁰ and defending toleration for all religions²⁵¹. However, historian Elizabeth de Palma identifies a political subtext by which, she claims, Lactantius equated the divine institutions with this world’s institutions in order to criticise Diocletian’s tetrarchy²⁵². This is consistent with Grant’s quote of Lactantius’ claim that the emperor “chopped the empire into pieces”²⁵³ in order to administrate it. De Palma proposes that Lactantius’ defence of a sole *ruler of the world* was twofold: both implying *one God* and *one emperor*; similarly, given that Diocletian and Maximian had taken Jupiter’s and Hercules’ names for themselves (*Jovius* and *Herculius*), Lactantius’ critique of polytheism focused on these Gods as targets

²⁴⁵ DE PALMA idem.

²⁴⁶ CREED 1984.

²⁴⁷ CREED idem.

²⁴⁸ CREED idem.

²⁴⁹ CAMERON idem; CREED idem.

²⁵⁰ Very much like Eusebius’ own work did (see Chapter 2, Diocletian – Constantine (284-312 a.D.)).

²⁵¹ CAMERON idem.

²⁵² DE PALMA idem.

²⁵³ GRANT idem.

also addressed the emperors implicitly²⁵⁴. Thus, in De Palma's reading of the text, Lactantius proposed an ideal Roman state ruled by one emperor and criticised the tetrarchy as an "impious innovation", mimicking the institutes of civil law that were essential knowledge to students of Roman law.

Therefore, although *De Mortibus Persecutorum* having a style and intention that seems to address other Christians (not necessarily the clergy), it still shows similarities with texts like *Divinae Institutionae* in as much as it presents vituperations based on an *epideictic oratory*: his objective is to evaluate (and *morally evaluate*, I would add) past events²⁵⁵. Here I see a strong contrast with Eusebius' historiographic rhetoric that seeks not to evaluate past events, but rather to document a line of succession in order to legitimise the authority of a particular set of texts. To sum up, the main difference I see is that Lactantius provides a more politically nuanced view, and definitely a more critical approach.

5.2.3. Late Ancient Christian Pilgrims' Memoria Apostolorum

The inscriptions carved on the walls of the Memoria Apostolorum under the basilica of St. Sebastian in the old Roman Via Appia are the protagonists of a polemic debate regarding the tomb of St. Peter, as I discussed in the previous chapter. There I accounted for different hypothesis scholars have provided as to what could have happened to the bones of the apostle and where they might have been located; here I shall provide a brief description of the place of the Memoria Apostolorum, contextualised with a shorter description of the Memoria under the basilica of St. Peter.

According to Holloway²⁵⁶, the basilica now located in Vatican used to receive great numbers of pilgrims, and was accessible to common people²⁵⁷. The excavations revealed many structures including a porphyry monument²⁵⁸ alleged by the *Liber Pontificalis* to have been built by order of Constantine, but most importantly a wall covered with graffiti on the northern side. It was tagged "wall g" by the excavators, and its foundations were deeper than the wall in front of it (*wall s*). Between both walls, a cavity was found and identified as the place venerated as the tomb of St. Peter, on top of which it was concluded that a small structure that reminded of a display of ash urns typical in pagan cemeteries used

²⁵⁴ DE PALMA idem.

²⁵⁵ CREED idem.

²⁵⁶ HOLLOWAY idem. The whole account of the two memoriae are based on Holloway unless indicated otherwise.

²⁵⁷ i.e. Not restricted to the clergy.

²⁵⁸ Important to note, porphyry as in the building material and not the anti-Christian philosopher.

to be. This structure was named “*Memoria*”. Within the place, 1 418 coins were found, out of which only five are prior to 270 a.D., for which this date is assumed as the beginning of the deposition of coins. This suggests that the pilgrimage must have been active around that date.

As for the graffiti carved on wall g, names were identified (mostly initials) and names of dead people were followed by “VIVAS IN CHRISTO”, written with the Constantinian ✠. St. Peter’s name was identified only on the Red Wall adjacent to wall g. This is to be understood alongside with an interesting quote of Gregory of Tours (who lived in the 6th century) made by Holloway:

“*And should he [the visitor] wish to take away some talisman, he lowers a bit of cloth that he has weighed before. Then keeping vigil and fasting, he prays most earnestly that the apostolic power may assist his devotion. Wonderful to relate! If his faith prevails, the cloth emerges from the tomb so imbued with divine power that its weight is increased beyond what he found it weighed before. Then he who lowered it knows that together with it he has raised the grace he sought.*”²⁵⁹

This accounts for a magic ritual practice: on the one hand, the crafting of talismans²⁶⁰ and the writing of names on the wall in order to link the prayer with the dead person²⁶¹. This last point I will claim that was also present in the *Memoria Apostolorum*. Within the cemetery under the basilica of St. Sebastian pre-Constantinian remains were found. A republican quarry had become a burial place; on top of this the western part of the basilica would then have been erected. To the west of this pit, a house (named Villa Grande) is claimed to have been built within early imperial times, and it seems to have been in use also in the third century. North from the house there were two rows of tombs. In the second century the pit was transformed into a cemetery and the emperors of the year 238 a.D. seem to have been buried there. There are also other tombs with no indication of the dead having been Christian. At some point after 238 a.D., this pit was filled and on top of it a group of structures was built that served for Christian *refrigeria*. This is the area known as the *triclia* were a portico, on whose rear wall there are frescoes of birds, animals and flowers, can be found. These frescoes are covered by 190 graffiti that record Christian *refrigeria* and evoke St. Peter and St. Paul: the *Memoria Apostolorum*, my third primary source.

²⁵⁹ HOLLOWAY idem, p. 122.

²⁶⁰ Which I cannot claim that happened in the third century based on a 6th century source, but nevertheless seems to have developed at some point.

²⁶¹ As mentioned in Chapter 3, I claim that this constitutes an act of sympathetic magic, because the names (the parts) are equated with the persons (the whole), and are written within very a specific ritual context that allows this connection to be established.

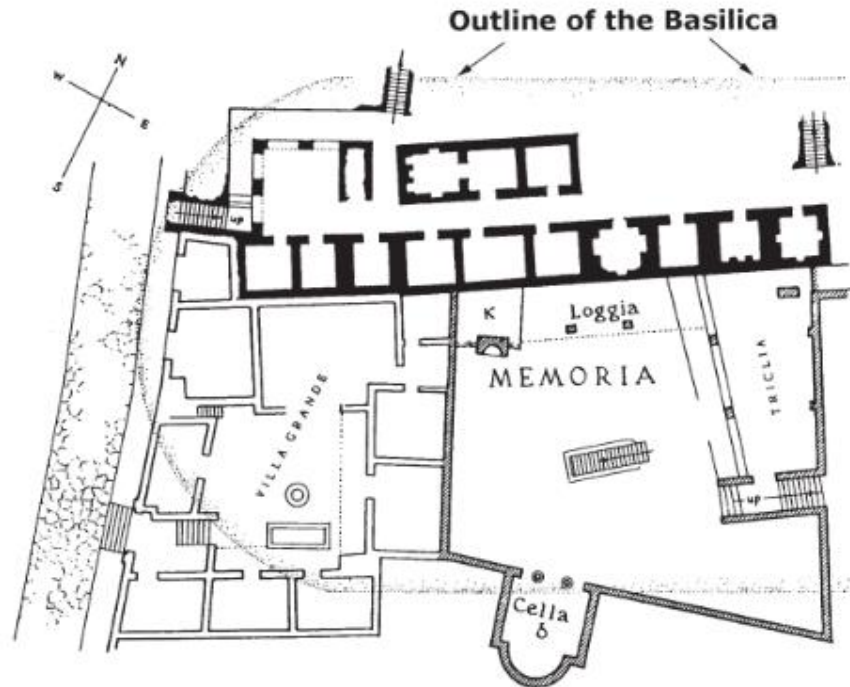


Fig. 5.1 Outline of the cemetery beneath the basilica of St. Sebastian²⁶²

One of these graffiti is dated to August 9, 260 a.D.²⁶³, and it is due to this that it is inferred that the pilgrimage to this cemetery was active during the third quarter of the third century, starting already ten years before the earliest proof in the basilica of St. Peter. Nonetheless, there is no evidence of a tomb, although the *Liber Pontificalis* – which had been right about the monument in Vatican – claimed that Pope Cornelius and a certain matron *Lucina* had moved the remains of St. Peter and St. Paul that had originally been there to Vatican and Via Ostiensis, respectively. Also, the inscription of Pope Damasus originally displayed at the Basilica Apostolorum states that Peter and Paul had been buried there. Nevertheless, a quote of Gaius in Eusebius’ *Life of Constantine* suggests that Vatican and Via Ostiensis were home to the remains of those who founded the church. This gave rise to the controversy already covered in the previous chapter.

In conclusion, the graffiti that integrate the Memoria Apostolorum were carved during the *refrigeria* that Christian pilgrims celebrated there, featuring the inscription of names in a very similar fashion to those on wall g under the basilica of St. Peter. Refrigeria, therefore, become an important term to explain, because

²⁶² Fig. 4.25 in: HOLLOWAY idem, p. 147.

²⁶³ GRANT idem; HOLLOWAY idem.

its ritual implications will be essential to understand my arguments in the next chapters. The following quote from McGuckin summarises it efficiently:

“Burial places ranged from small niches (loculi) in towering subterranean walls that contained layers and layers of dead, to larger mausoleum chambers (cubicula) with one wall fashioned into an archway over the tomb (arcosolium) that was often decorated with frescoes [...]. At Rome, North Africa and many parts of Asia Minor, the cubicula were also the site of commemorative meals (refrigeria) that the family would celebrate for the dead, a practice the Christians shared with their pagan neighbors. For the pagans the scent of meals and graveside sacrifices “refreshed” the ghost. Christians (generally) understood the meals as more of a commemoration, without the sense that the departed spirit needed anything other than prayer. [...] By the fourth and fifth centuries the practice of refrigeria was becoming increasingly rare [...].”²⁶⁴

This applies directly to the case I am addressing for this thesis, and supports my argument that the carving of these graffiti constitutes a magic act. It must be said that McGuckin’s differentiation between a “pagan” and a “Christian” refrigerium is based on normative accounts, written by Church authorities. Without asking the social actors, it is impossible to know what was in their minds at the moment their actions took place. In Chapter 7, I will analyse this with more detail, but for now it shall suffice to say that religious devotion is being complemented by a performance that seeks to have an effect on the transcendental realm that will subsequently affect the persons (dead or alive) whose names are being written.

Finally, a general comment on the inscriptions is due. By looking at them, the first idea that might strike the reader is how little of them has been fully preserved over time. As the editor of *Inscriptionae Christianae Urbis Romae* says:

“Sed difficillimae lectu illae sunt non tantum sua ipsa natura et pessima litteratura, ut solent fere esse inscriptiones parietariae, sed quod in minutis uel minutissimis tectorii fragmentis diuisae et mutilatae ad nos peruenerunt.”²⁶⁵

Given these two variables (the complexly unorthodox writing, and the damage imposed by time over them), the extent to which I could make any observation is very limited and intrinsically controversial. Consequently, treating them as textual sources would prove to be of little or no use. It could appear that this factor nullifies the source’s validity as such; yet, I propose to analyse them as manifestations of material culture, essentially different from books, despite their (mostly) textual nature. I approach them, thus, as the product of a social action, as

²⁶⁴ MCGUCKIN 2005[2004], p. 49.

²⁶⁵ DE ROSSI & FERRUA idem, p. 8.

the long lasting result of a ritual that took place at that Catacomb, and that served a symbolic function for the pilgrims that travelled all the way there in order to carve them. Thus, the meaning of the messages encoded in them will naturally be relevant and important for this research, but only in as much as it can tell us something about what the pilgrims were doing at the moment of writing them.

5.3. Operationalisation

Based on the historical implications explained in Chapter 2 and the definition of concepts in Chapter 3, I have delineated a set of five variables that I will analyse for each source. Each of these five variables can be disaggregated into more concrete instances to observe. I will now describe each of them.

❖ STATE ACTIONS

This encompasses all the official actions of the Roman Empire carried away through edicts and policies, as told by the authors of the three primary sources.

Lenience towards Christians

This covers those instances in which a State authority fosters a policy that is convenient to Christians.

Prohibitions

This covers those instances in which the State makes a particular behaviour illegal.

Confiscations

This covers those instances in which the State takes for itself the property of others.

Intervention in Church affairs

This covers those instances in which the State actively modifies the regulations, traditions or hierarchies of the Church.

Persecutions

Economic policies

Surveillance

Wars

This covers the instances in which battles and political tensions are alluded to.

❖ DISCURSIVE CONTENT

This covers the topics included by the authors of the three primary sources in their narratives. Most of them do not require further explanation.

Mention of god

Mention of Jesus**Mention of a specific ecclesiastic authority**

This covers those instances in which the name of an apostle or a bishop is mentioned.

Mention of martyrs**Mention of Satan / demons****Mention of sin****Mention of the State**

This covers those instances in which the authors allude to the Empire or its rulers.

Mention of dates**Author(s)' self-reference**

This covers those instances in which the authors mention themselves.

Depiction of similarity / unity

This covers those instances in which a notion of “the one true Church” is mentioned.

Inclusion of other voices

This covers those instances in which other social actors are directly quoted by the authors.

❖ THEOLOGICAL PECULIARITIES

This covers the topics and perspectives essential to the authors' theological discourse.

Appeal to succession

This covers those instances in which an apostolic lineage is stressed in order to claim legitimacy.

Depiction of tradition

This covers those instances in which tradition is quoted and re-defined by the authors.

Relationship between holy figures and the unfolding of events

This covers the agency of holy figures; that is, their capacity or lack of it to influence the course of history.

❖ RITUAL CHARACTERISTICS

This encompasses the text's ritual functions or the mention of an essentially ritual action.

Ritual orthopraxy

This covers those instances in which the authors state how a ritual should be performed effectively and according to tradition.

Link with a transcendental realm

This covers those instances in which the author establishes a link with the numinous, or cites a moment in which this was done.

Magical practices

This covers those instances in which the author performs an act characterised as magical according to my definition in Chapter 3, or cites a moment in which this was done.

❖ **RHETORICAL AND STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS**

This encompasses the ways in which the authors shape their narratives in order to achieve a particular purpose.

Epidictic discourse

This covers those instances in which the authors evaluate an event from the past.

Historiographical discourse

This covers those instances in which the authors give an account of past events that systematically and chronologically builds upon others.

Appeal to emotion

This covers those instances in which the authors use language that evokes a strong emotional response.

Reference to the scriptures

This covers those instances in which the scriptures are invoked and quoted by the authors.

Portrayal of non-Christians as “wicked”

This covers those instances in which a social actor is associated with negative, implying that it is associated with him or her not being a Christian.

Use of heresiological strategies

This covers those instances in which the strategies that legitimate the (proto)orthodox discourse by rejecting and sanctioning *resisting* or *folk* Christian discourses are used.

Evidence of the author(s)' intended audience

This covers those instances in which it becomes clear who the authors are writing for.

Prayer

This covers those instances in which the authors directly pray to a holy figure.

Invocation of Peter and Paul

This covers those instances in which the authors directly mention St. Peter or St. Paul in the vocative.

5.4. Tools & Procedure

The variables described above will be used as codes and assigned to segments of the texts. In order to do so, I will use a program called MaxQDA, version 11.1.0, developed by Foxit Software Company. The software is designed for qualitative data analysis and mixed methods; that is, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. After assigning the codes, the frequencies will be counted for each of the five parent variables (state actions, discursive content, theological peculiarities, ritual characteristics and rhetorical and stylistic characteristics) and displayed in order to analyse the balance of them in the text. A pie chart will be used to illustrate this. Afterwards, a map called “one case model” will be generated, in which the source text will be displayed in the middle and the nine codes with the higher frequencies (this time out of the full list) will be shown around it, linked by a line. The width of the line will show a higher or lower frequency. Finally, these nine codes will be contrasted with the five parent codes in order to see how deeply associated they are. This will be displayed in a matrix, the parent codes in the rows and the high-frequency codes in the columns. The intersection of two variables will show the frequency of segments coded for both at the same time. This information will also be displayed in a radial chart that will provide a visual aid to identify the relationships between codes. MaxQDA will provide the “once case model” map, but graphics will be created using Microsoft Excel 2010 and the matrices will be made using Microsoft Word 2010.

This procedure will guide my analysis, showing the most relevant trends and relationships between variables. I will then provide commentaries, given that the quantitative methods represent only an aid in this research. This procedure also allows me to keep a systematic way to contrast the three sources. Therefore, Chapter 6 will apply this process to Eusebius’ text only and Chapter 7 will apply it to the other two sources separately. Additionally, Chapter 7 will also feature a matrix with the absolute and relative frequencies of the parent codes for all sources, which will then be translated into a bar graph. Finally, the final products

of both chapters (Con. A and Con. B) will be contrasted in the conclusions to this thesis.

5.5. Evidence of reliability and validity

As stated above, this research includes the use of mixed methods to analyse the discourse of the three primary sources. However, the use of quantitative approaches does not imply a statistical representativeness for my conclusions. The process of coding is intrinsically subjective in as much as I am using my own criteria in order to determine which segments are associated with which codes. Therefore, it should be regarded as a way to simplify the identification of the most representative trends within the texts. However, the validity of my claims should be found in the argumentations I will provide as comments to the graphics, cross-referencing the sources and justifying my suggestions by drawing on the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3 and the historical context in chapter 2.

It should be stated clearly that I am not using my three sources as a *sample* of voices associated with the Church, the State and common people, but rather as an *example* of such voices. Being so, my generalisations will apply only for these three sources and may act as a base line for future researches, but by no means seeks to draw conclusions that could apply to all the possible Christian voices from late antiquity. In that sense, it is open ended, as suggested in the introduction. Yet, the cross-references between different secondary sources, the historical contextualisation of the primary sources and the extensive conceptual base account for a complex dialogue with other scholars that justifies the validity of my claims, which are not just isolated conjectures.

Chapter 6 ~ Conceptualisation A: an abstraction based on a source associated with the Church

Throughout chapter 5 **The goal of this chapter is to analyse Eusebius' discourse and generate a conceptualisation of alterity in Christianity based on it.** I will start by presenting the balance in the frequencies of the parent codes for this source²⁶⁶.

²⁶⁶ The absolute frequencies can be found in table 7.3.

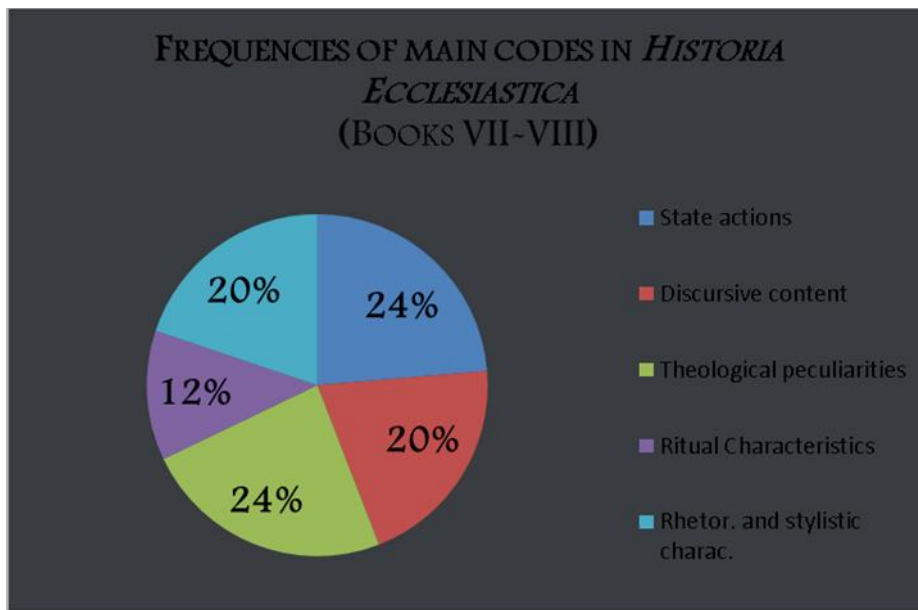


Figure 6.1

It is clear that there is an overall equilibrium between most of the codes, but I propose three further observations. First, state actions are referred to just as much as the theological peculiarities of Eusebius' discourse are discussed. Second, the discursive content and the rhetorical and stylistic characteristics seem to present the same hierarchy (only 4% behind the codes with the most segments). Third, ritual characteristics are referred to only half as much as State actions and Theological peculiarities, rendering them to a secondary plane within the source.

The first observation implies that the author has allocated attention to the role of the Empire within his history of the Church just as much as he has developed ideas directly linked to the nature of faith. I suggest that Eusebius alludes to the State's actions as frequently as to his own theology because those actions were intrinsically repressive towards the Church. This must be put together with the audience he is probably speaking to when writing, which seems to be the Christians of the future, those who will need to know what happened during his time. Unlike the previous books of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, as discussed in Chapter 5, Books VII and VIII address events that took place during the life of Eusebius. Sentences such as "*Such are the things that happened to Dionysius at that time*"²⁶⁷ or "*In the present book I shall append to what has been said the recantation of what was done to us and of what happened since the persecution, for they are most profitable for those*

²⁶⁷ DEFERRARI idem, p. 112.

who will read them”²⁶⁸ support this interpretation. Being so, accounting for restrictive actions stands as a paramount objective, but it also has to do with one of the peculiarities of Eusebius’ theology being a claim that the *divine providence* had a direct effect on the course of history. Throughout the end of his account, he states that:

“[...] *the evident visitation of Divine Providence itself was responsible, becoming reconciled to the people on the one hand, but at the same time attacking the author³ of the evils, and becoming angry at him as the chief source of the wickedness of the entire persecution.*”²⁶⁹

This justifies the end of the persecutions, but the beginning of them is also justified by a similar token, as can be seen in the following quote:

“*But when, being insensible, we took no care to make the Deity well-disposed and propitious, but, like some kind of atheists, thinking that our affairs were unheeded and without supervision, we continued to add one wickedness upon another, and those seemingly our shepherds, thrusting aside the bond of piety, were inflamed with mutual contentions, doing nothing else but to heap up strifes and threats and jealousy and enmity and hatred against one another, and claiming vehemently their ambitious ends like a tyrant's spoils, then, indeed, then, according to the spoken word of Jeremias, 'the Lord covered with obscurity the daughter of Sion in his wrath and hath cast down from heaven the glory of Israel; he hath not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger; but the Lord hath also swallowed up all that was beautiful in Israel, and hath destroyed all his strongholds cowardice.*”²⁷⁰

This relates to my second observation; namely, that the content and style are equally important to Eusebius. Being that his style is mainly characterised for being historiographical, he still shows heresiological strategies of dismissing those he calls “heretics” that are just as important for his discourse as the content he narrates. In order to see this more clearly, I will link this with the third observation, which implies that this is not a ritual text; that is, its main function is not to delineate or guide the proper course of action during ritual performances. Nevertheless, he discusses one ritual issue: baptism. He does so mostly, I claim, to oppose the position of the Church of only baptising once to a practice that he identifies as “heretic”: baptising several times. In order to do so, he quotes letters that reflect the voices of other ecclesiastical authorities, but he also shows the case

²⁶⁸ DEFERRARI idem, p. 190.

²⁶⁹ DEFERRARI idem, p. 199.

²⁷⁰ DEFERRARI idem, pp. 165-166.

of a common Christian asking to be baptised again. This is a glimpse into a popular voice, and can be seen in the following quote:

*"[...]having been present with those who were recently baptized, and having heard the questions and answers, came to me weeping and lamenting himself and falling before my feet, confessing and swearing that the baptism with which he had been baptized by the heretics was not this nor did it have anything at all in common with this, for it was full of impiety and blasphemies, and saying that he had great compunction in his heart,' and did not have the courage to lift up his eyes toward God," setting out from those unholy words and deeds for this reason, and begging to obtain this most pure cleansing and reception and grace. This very thing I did not dare to do, saying that his long-standing communion had been sufficient for this. For, him who had heard the Thanksgiving, and had joined in saying the Amen, and had stood beside the Table, and had stretched forth his hands to receive the holy food, and had received it, and had shared in the Body and Blood of our Lord for a long time, I would not dare to build up again from the beginning."*²⁷¹

This first analysis of the parent codes thus reveals that Eusebius contextualises a heresiological discourse within a historiographical account of both the succession of bishops and the agency of god, both of which he links with the restrictive policies of the State towards Christians.

ONE CASE MODEL FOR *HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA* (BOOKS VII-VIII)

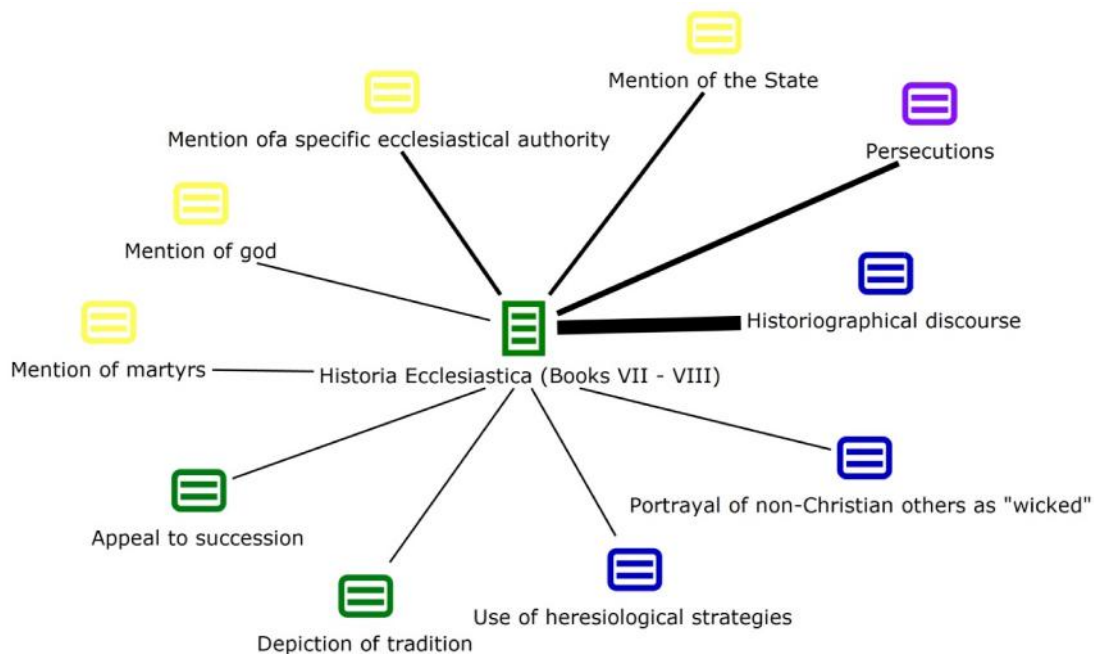


Figure 6.2

²⁷¹ DEFERRARI idem, p. 101.

In Chapter 5, Eusebius' text was introduced as a source that emphasised a historiographical discourse. This made sense on the basis that it followed a style that started with Irenaeus, which emphasised the importance of succession from the apostles. This was corroborated by my previous observations, yet this graph shows more effectively how. Persecutions are the Empire's actions that Eusebius deals with the most, for which he continuously mentions the State. His mention of ecclesiastical authorities is more linked to the appeal of succession and the portrayal of an orthodox tradition, but along with the mention of a god that acts directly over the events that are taking place and the mention of martyrs, it also alludes to the persecutions. The use of heresiological strategies makes sense within this discourse that seeks to distance a Church he judges as legitimate from others that do not share this privilege in his eyes. Thus, not only does he distance himself from Christians he names "heretics", but also from non-Christians that are depicted as presenting an evil nature. *Portrayal of non-Christian others as "wicked"* applies for the persecutors, but also for other pagans, as can be seen in the following examples. The first one links the persecutions with the actions of a pagan priest; the second one portrays Valerian as an emperor that turned from pious to wicked; and the third one shows how common pagans mistreated the bishops until they converted and, thus, left this wicked nature behind.

"But the master and ruler of the synagogue of the Magi from Egypt persuaded him to make away with them, bidding him to kill and persecute the pure and holy men[...]"²⁷²

"Therefore, he [Valerian] became an enemy of His Catholic Church, and he alienated and estranged himself from the compassion of God, and went into banishment as far away as possible from his own salvation"²⁷³

"At first we were persecuted, we were stoned [by common pagans], but later some, not a few, of the pagans abandoned their idols and turned to God. Then for the first time was the word spread through us among those who had not received it before, and, as if for this purpose, did God lead us to them [...]"²⁷⁴

²⁷² DEFERRARI, p. 103.

²⁷³ DEFERRARI, p. 104.

²⁷⁴ DEFERRARI, p. 108

FREQUENCIES OF SEGMENTS ACCOUNTING FOR THE RELATIONSHIP
 BETWEEN MOST RELEVANT CODES FOR *HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA*
 (BOOKS VII-VIII)

Total amount of segments: 1078

	HIST. DISCOURSE		PERSECUTIONS		MENTION OF THE STATE		MENTION OF AN ECC. AUTHORITY		MENTION OF GOD		MENTION OF MARTYRS		APPEAL TO SUCCESSION		DEPICTION OF TRADITION		HERESIOLOGICAL STRATEGIES		NON-CHRISTIANS AS "WICKED"	
	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%
State actions	139	12.9	70	6.5	91	8.4	26	2.4	52	4.8	54	5	10	0.9	4	0.4	8	0.7	24	2.2
Discursive content	292	27.1	165	15.3	104	9.7	91	8.4	102	9.5	60	5.6	52	4.8	42	3.9	49	4.5	60	5.6
Theological peculiarities	91	8.4	36	3.3	22	2	47	4.4	32	3	12	1.1	30	2.8	29	2.7	31	2.9	6	0.6
Ritual characteristics	10	0.9	6	0.6	4	0.4	8	0.7	10	0.9	4	0.4	4	0.4	12	1.1	8	0.7	6	0.6
Rhet. & Stylistic characteristics	176	16.3	145	13.5	126	11.7	89	8.3	95	8.8	75	7	50	4.6	46	4.3	39	3.6	43	4

Table 6.1

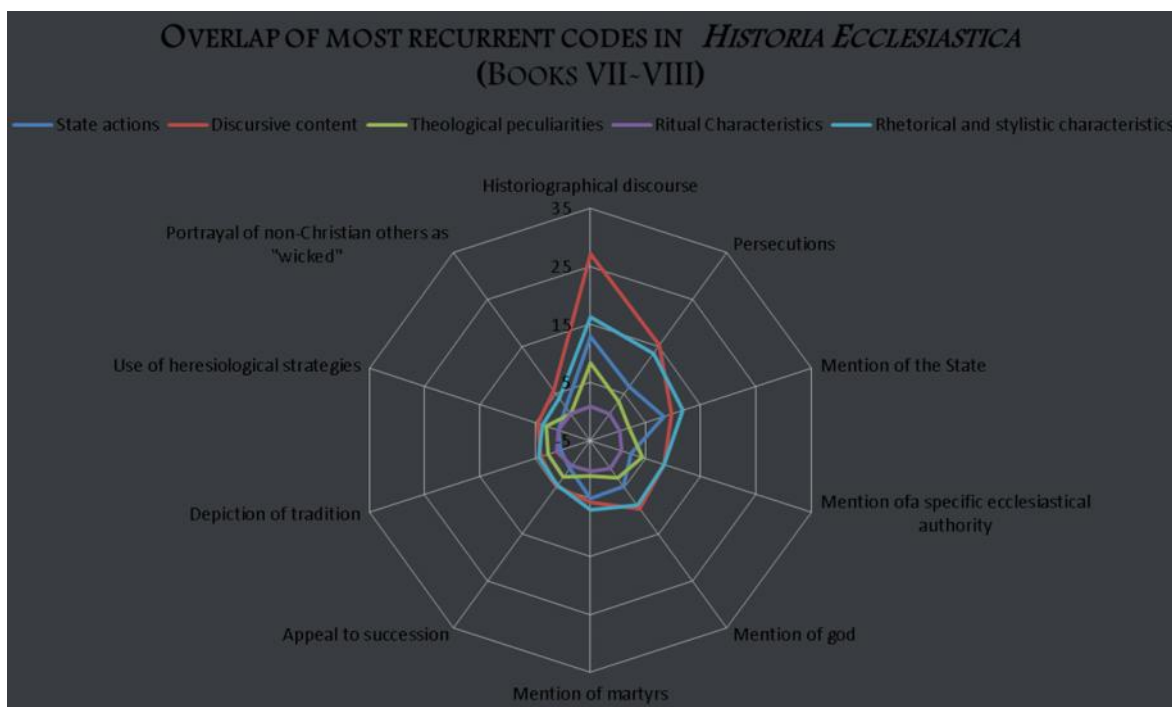


Figure 6.3

Finally, this graphic shows which codes interacted the most with each other. The bigger the area of the shape delineated by each colour, the more relevant that variable is to be contrasted with the other ones. The peaks in the shapes represent the most important associations, which are the following: the one between discursive content and a historiographical approach; and the one between the Stylistic and rhetorical characteristics and this same historiographical approach, persecutions and the mention of the State at an almost equal extent.

Thus, I understand that most of the content in Eusebius' text is shown within a discourse that ultimately seeks to narrate events as they happened. This idea is very strong, as it has been supported by all three graphics. Also, it is consistent with what the previous literature announced that should be expected from this source, mostly associating this approach with the importance of apostolic succession to the Church's agenda. Nevertheless, this graphic also shows that Eusebius' rhetoric deals with the State and persecutions at least as much as with ecclesiastical authorities and god. This suggests that Eusebius' history of the Church transcends this mere objective of legitimising a tradition based on succession and proceeds to link it with the history of the State. The segments quoted above, especially the one narrating the end of the persecutions, provide an insight into what the cause of this unexpected conclusion might be; namely, that god and the persecutions are intrinsically linked because god's will is subjacent to them. It was god's will to punish the Christians due to an unacceptable behaviour (according to the author) and it was god's will to halt them and punish those who initiated them (the emperors). It is because of this deep relation between god and the persecutions that the State becomes relevant to talk about.

In Chapter 2 I discussed how the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was part of a broader set of texts that sought to answer to the anti-Christian critiques. Also, in the same chapter it becomes clear that Eusebius is writing already in a Christian Rome, and that he is turning to another endeavour, the *Vita Constantinii*, which is to be understood within a framework that favour even more the role of the State in his theology. Therefore, I suggest that the author is as inclined towards a discourse of *unity* as he is towards one of *opposition to alterity*. This rhetoric of unity, then, becomes the main conclusion of this chapter, as it shapes the way in which *otherness* can be conceptualised. The following quotes are examples of the discourses of opposition and of unity, respectively.

“With good reason do we feel hatred for Novatian, I who split the Church, and dragged some of the brethren into impieties and blasphemies, and introduced most unholy teaching about God”²⁷⁵

“[...] all the churches in the East and still farther away, which had formerly been separated, have been united, all those in charge of these churches are of one mind [...]”²⁷⁶

Con. A will then be as follows. Eusebius differentiates two kinds of alterities, *Christian alterity* and *non-Christian alterity*. Both of them are portrayed as hectic in nature, although in different ways. Christian others, “heretics” in his words, are deviated and their misdeeds consist of leading common Christians through a wrong way²⁷⁷; however non-Christian others are imbued with such a degree of evil that they may even develop and enforce policies that kill Christians²⁷⁸, an act that has no justification or reason in his eyes. Moreover, these persecutions fostered by these “others” are an offence to god, who in turn punishes them just as the persecutions are justified within a discourse that allocates infinite agency to god by claiming that it was also a punishment for acting in deviated ways within the Church. This returns to the Christian alterity, as those Christians that act in ways that are despicable by Eusebius are precisely the “heretics”. Thus, any position that does not align with an orthodox Christian discourse, associated with the church and embedded within apostolic succession, fosters the wrath of god and offends god. Alterity in Con. A is thus segregated by the authority of the Church, whose discourse erects itself as restricting. Nevertheless, the only glimpse of a popular voice that is included in this source shows that a folk discourse that asks for a ritual to be practised in a way that is not orthodox is considered innocuous and no heresiological strategies are used against it.

Chapter 7 ~ Conceptualisation B: an abstraction based on the juxtaposition of multiple voices

The objective of this Chapter is to juxtapose all three sources and develop a conceptualisation of alterity in late ancient Christianity based on the colfict between the voies they present. First, I will present the same

²⁷⁵ DEFERRARI idem, pp. 99-100.

²⁷⁶ DEFERRARI idem, pp. 94-95.

²⁷⁷ For example, the one who asked to be baptised again because he spiritually rejected the non-orthodox Christian group that had baptised him in the first place

²⁷⁸ At some points, Eusebius uses a language so harsh that it evokes strong emotions towards the martyrs.

analytical resources that I applied to Eusebius' text in the previous chapter, and then I will postulate Con. B. Based on the comparison between all three.

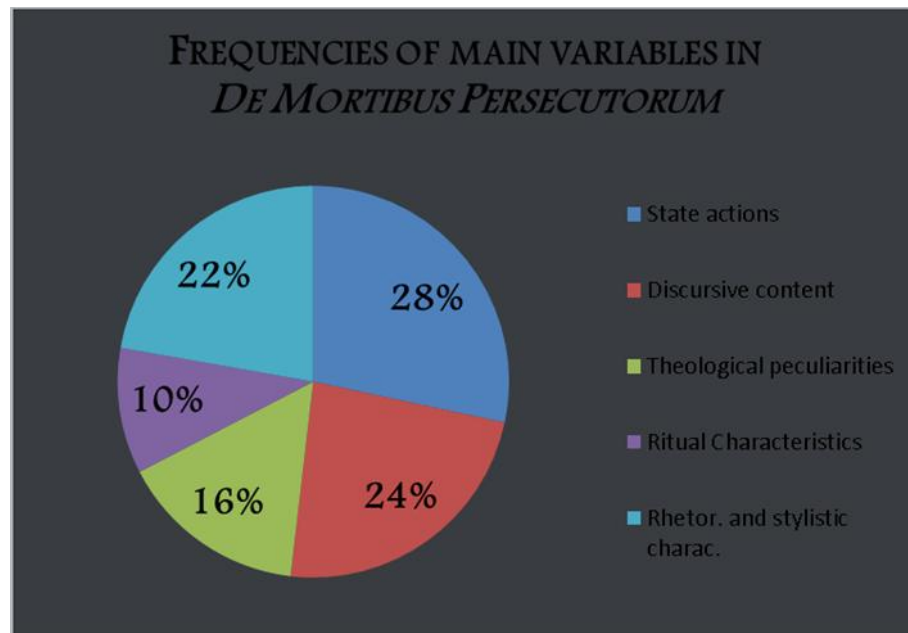


Fig. 7.1

Unlike *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Lactantius' source does not present much balance between all five parent codes. There is a clear predisposition towards State actions, that is almost one and a half times more frequent than the theological characteristics. Rhetoric and content, however, do show relative balance between themselves, as in the case of Eusebius. Finally, ritual characteristics are once again relegated to the least relevant place. This is linked to a characteristic that I had already discussed in Chapter 5; that is, the epideictic tendencies of Lactantius towards criticising the State. The following quote is an efficient example:

*"For God has raised up emperors who have repealed the wicked and bloodthirsty commands of the tyrants and have taken thought for the human race, so that now, with what we may call the cloud of that most sombre epoch dispersed, a joyful and serene peace gladdens the minds of all."*²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ CREED idem, 1:3.

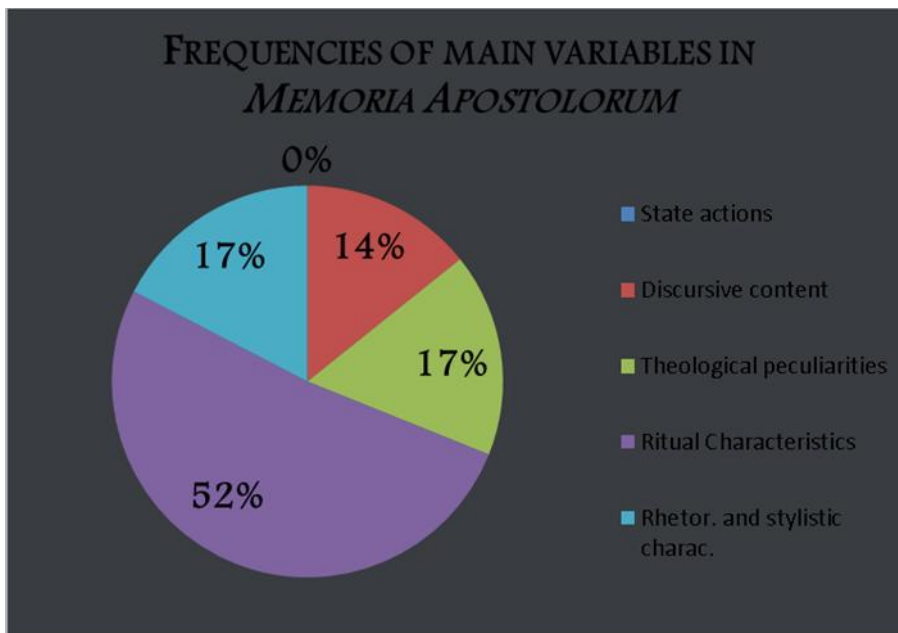


Fig. 7.2

The graffiti in Via Appia show a drastic difference to the two previous sources: ritual characteristics represent over half of the codes assigned to them. Equally notably, there are no occurrences of segments codified as "state actions", which was one of the most relevant codes in the other two texts. The other half of the frequencies is well balanced between theological peculiarities, discursive content and rhetorical and stylistic characteristics, which suggests that although the ritual function of the inscriptions was clearly primordial, it reflects a content that shows the pilgrims' perception of Christianity to an extent, based on a way of communicating that makes them visible.

ONE CASE MODEL FOR *DE MORTIBUS PERSECUTORUM*

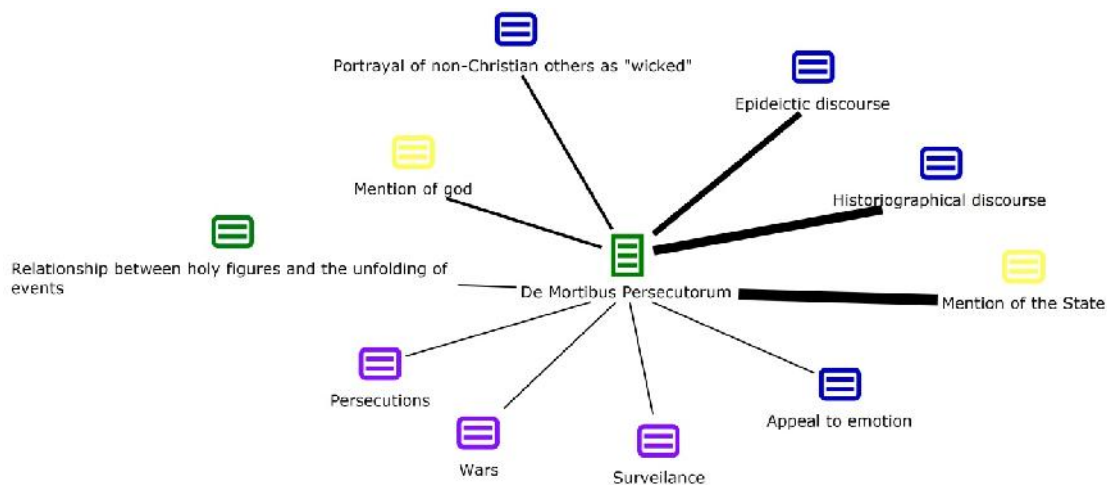


Fig. 7.3

The model shows that although Lactantius also has a historiographical approach, the most frequent code is the “mention of the State”. Also, regarding his style, his historiography is characterised by an evaluation of past events according to his morality, a trait that is not exclusive of him but that is stronger in his text than in Eusebius’. Once again, emperors are portrayed as “wicked” due to their not being Christians, but this time this notion is reserved to them only and does not encompass other non-Christians. The following quote stands as an example:

“In his greed and anxiety he turned the world upside down. He appointed three men to share his rule, dividing the world into four parts and multiplying the armies, since each of the four strove to have a far larger number of troops than previous emperors had had when they were governing the state alone.”²⁸⁰

Also, Lactantius addresses State policies that do not exclusively affect the Christians, an element that was not present in Eusebius’ account:

“The persecution fell with equal violence on the rest of the population, as the judges, sent out around all the temples, compelled everyone to perform sacrifice.”²⁸¹

Wars and surveillance thus constitute an important part of Lactantius’ discourse, an element that is interesting to put together with Eusebius’ case. However, one thing they do have in common is the use of language that evokes strong feelings, although once more it is more common in the case of *De Mortibus Persecutorum*:

“Men were thrown to these animals not to be devoured outright, but to be swallowed bit by bit; and as their limbs were broken up, the emperor would laugh delightedly; he never dined without human blood being shed.”²⁸²

²⁸⁰ CREED idem, 7:2.

²⁸¹ CREED idem, 15:4

²⁸² CREED idem, 21.6.

ONE CASE MODEL FOR *MEMORIA APOSTOLORUM*

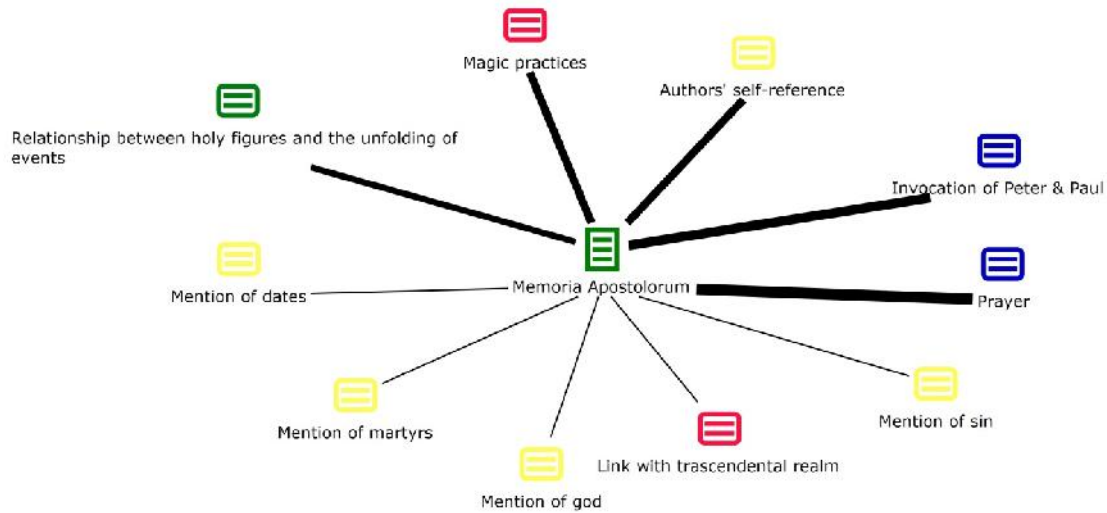


Fig. 7.4

The model shows that for the case of this source, most of the segments are prayers that involve invoking St. Peter and St. Paul. The self-references made by the authors are inscriptions of their own names²⁸³. I have coded most of them as “magical practices” precisely because the relationship between the holy figures (mostly Peter and Paul in this case) and the unfolding of future events indicates that these prayers seek to have a direct effect on reality. Sometimes dates are also mentioned, out of which one is essential because it contextualises the graffiti in the end of the third century, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Earlier I showed that ritual characteristics supposed the most important code for this source, now I suggest that it is a religious ritual with magical traits, as discussed in Chapter 3. The inscription that inspired me into thinking this was the following one:

Π Ε τ ρ ε
*pau*ER PETRE PETITE
pro NOBIS OMNIBVS
ascl EPIVS BENI²⁸⁴

²⁸³ And other, some indicating that they are those of the members of their families

²⁸⁴ ICUR 12918.

The name “*ascl EPIVS*” followed by “BENI” suggest the possibility that the pilgrim that made this inscription was asking Peter and Paul to intercede for him in order to obtain Asclepius’ benediction. The blessing of Asclepius could therefore be linked with health and the desire to obtain it. It is highly polemic to which extent it is reliable to make such a claim, but nevertheless the thought of it raises a subsequent question: what are the pilgrims praying for? If it cannot be supported that they sought health, could it be salvation for their souls? In any case, the important issue is that they have travelled long distances, risking their lives under the prohibition of visiting cemeteries at some points, under persecutions at some others, in order to carve the prayer on the walls. This is begging the question: why not just pray at home? This leads me to think that there must have been a special charisma inherent to the location, associated with the cult of the apostles and maybe even with their bones being there²⁸⁵.

Also, several inscriptions use “Peter” and “Paul” in the vocative, both in Latin and in Greek, as the following examples show:

*paule et PETRE IN Men
tem hABETOTE SPIritu
santA MARCV*²⁸⁶

ΠΑΥΛε πέτρε
ΜΝΗΜΟΝεύετε
ΚΑΛΛΑC Ο...
ΟΛΥΜΠι...²⁸⁷

The names of the authors and their families are added to this equation, as can be seen here:

...
VALERI IN . .
3 diE IOVIR
inMENTE Abete
theoFILVM²⁸⁸
... E VIBAS

²⁸⁵ The polemic as to whether the bones of Peter and Paul were at Via Appia or not has already been addressed in Chapter 4.

²⁸⁶ ICUR 12954.

²⁸⁷ ICUR 13060.

²⁸⁸ ICUR 12985.

3 PERE ET PAVLE IM MENTEM HABE
 TE PRIMVM ET PRIMAM VXORE EIVS
 ET SATVRNINAM CONIVSEM FI EIVS PRIMI
 ET VICTORINVM PATREM IN
 6 SEMPER IN AETERNO ET E²⁸⁹

Therefore, I suggest that the inscriptions use sympathetic magic by equating the names with the people (whether living or deceased), in order to appeal to the special charisma of the place that may act as a conduit to foster Peter’s and Paul’s intervention in the course of history in order to grant them something. That particular wish could be health, perhaps, or maybe salvation; in any case, it was worth overcoming several adversities just to perform the ritual in order to attain it. It is in this sense that I consider these inscriptions to be the result of an act of magic that rendered the pilgrims with a reward in exchange. It is needless to say that this is not present in any of the other sources.

FREQUENCIES OF SEGMENTS ACCOUNTING FOR THE RELATIONSHIP
 BETWEEN MOST RELEVANT CODES FOR *DE MORTIBUS*
PERSECUTORUM

Total amount of segments: 667

	PERSECUTIONS		SURVEILLANCE		WARS		MENTION OF GOD		MENTION OF THE STATE		HOLY FIGURES / EVENTS		EPIDEICTIC DISCOURSE		HIST. DISCOURSE		APPEAL TO EMOTION		NON-XTIANS AS “WICKED”	
	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%
<i>State actions</i>	26	3.9	21	3.2	18	2.7	19	2.9	103	15.4	15	2.3	84	12.6	83	12.4	13	2	40	6
<i>Discursive content</i>	43	6.5	26	3.9	33	5	55	8.3	118	18	51	7.7	117	17.5	163	24.4	26	3.9	69	10.3
<i>Theological peculiarities</i>	2	0.3	4	0.6	8	1.2	30	4.5	40	6	24	3.6	20	3	45	6.8	4	0.6	14	2.1
<i>Ritual characteristics</i>	2	0.3	0	0	2	0.3	8	1.2	12	1.8	6	0.9	4	0.6	14	2.1	2	0.3	2	0.3
<i>Rhet. & Stylistic characteristics</i>	65	9.7	39	5.9	41	6.2	70	10.5	228	34.2	59	8.9	119	17.8	129	19.3	24	3.6	74	11.1

Table 7.1

²⁸⁹ ICUR 13084.

FREQUENCIES OF SEGMENTS ACCOUNTING FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOST RELEVANT CODES FOR *MEMORIA APOSTOLORUM*

Total amount of segments: 290

	MENTION OF GOD		MENTION OF MARTYRS		MENTION OF SIN		MENTION OF DATES		AUTHORS' SELF-REFERENCE		HOLY FIGURES / EVENTS		LINK WITH TRANSC. REALM		MAGIC PRACTICES		PRAYER		INVOCATION OF PETER AND PAUL	
	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%
<i>State actions</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Discursive content</i>	5	1.7	7	2.4	4	1.4	7	2.4	28	9.7	13	4.5	0	0	21	7.2	24	8.3	2	0.7
<i>Theological peculiarities</i>	4	1.4	3	1	0	0	2	0.7	9	3.1	19	6.6	0	0	36	12.4	39	13.5	10	3.5
<i>Ritual characteristics</i>	4	1.4	0	0	0	0	6	2.1	14	4.8	36	12.4	4	1.4	21	7.2	44	15.2	9	3.1
<i>Rhet. & Stylistic characteristics</i>	6	2.1	4	1.4	0	0	2	0.7	17	5.9	41	14.1	2	0.7	45	15.5	33	11.4	32	11

Table 7.2

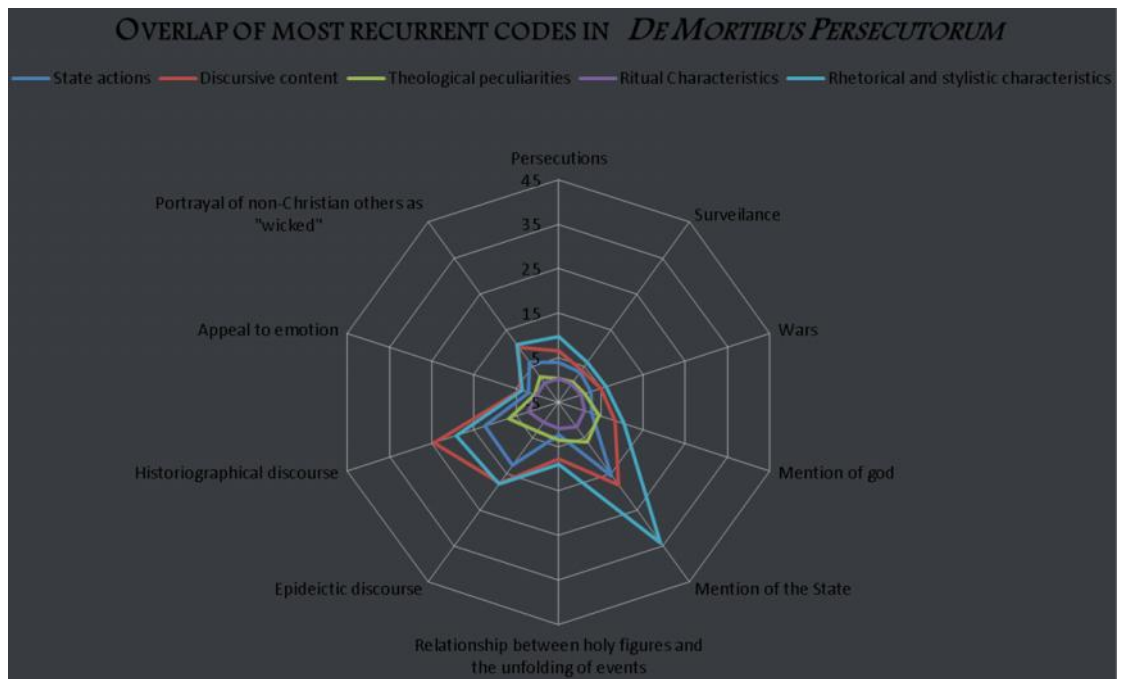


Fig. 7.5

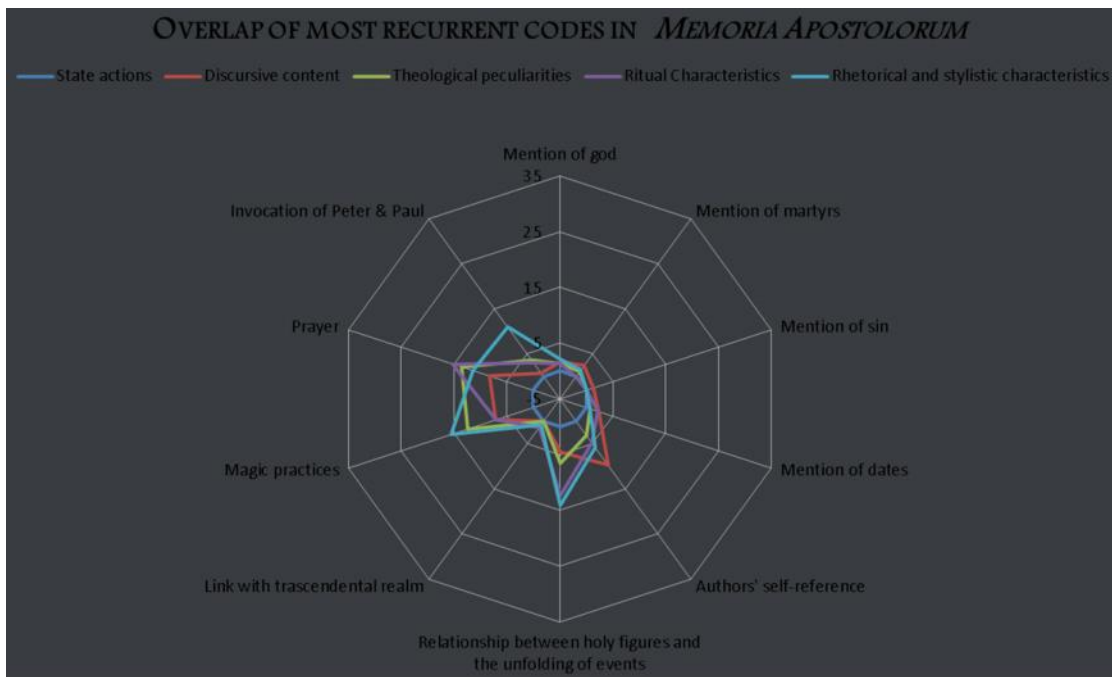


Fig 7.6

Figures 7.5 and 7.6 are widely different, and also very different from figure 6.3. Figure 7.5 supports the claim that State affairs were far more relevant for Lactantius to mention than they were for Eusebius (also, they are not even present in the graffiti); and figure 7.6 shows that the style and rhetoric of the brief and segmented discourse in the *Memoria Apostolorum* serves a ritual purpose that oscillates between prayer and magic. In that sense, they are all three very different discourses. However, Lactantius' and Eusebius' texts share a historiographical style and a theological claim that holy figures have agency over future events; the latter also being present in the *Memoria Apostolorum*.

As to whether Lactantius has a political discourse against the tetrarchy, it cannot be fully supported based on this source. However, what is clear enough is that he evaluates the Empire in a way that dismisses their actions as condemnable even by god, as can be seen in the following quotes:

*"Their punishment has come late, but it has been heavy, as it deserved to be. [...] [P]osterty might learn both that there is one God and that He as Judge imposes punishments which are clearly deserved on the impious and on persecutors"*²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ CREED idem, 1:6.

“We ought to give thanks to His eternal goodness in that He has at last looked upon the earth and seen fit to repair and bring together again His flock, of which part had been ravaged by voracious wolves, part scattered abroad, and to exterminate the evil beasts who had trampled down the pastures of the divine flock and broken up their resting-places.”²⁹¹

FREQUENCIES OF MAIN CODES IN ALL SOURCES

SOURCE	STATE ACTIONS		DISCURSIVE CONTENT		THEOLOGICAL PECULIARITIES		RITUAL CHARACTERISTICS		RHETORICAL & STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS	
	<i>fi</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>Hi</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>hi</i>
<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>	77	60.2 %	142	52%	72	60.5 %	15	31.2 %	149	50.5 %
<i>De Mortibus Persecutorum</i>	51	39.8 %	90	33%	26	21.8 %	7	14.6 %	92	31.2 %
<i>Memoria Apostolorum</i>	0	0%	41	15%	21	17.7 %	26	54.2 %	54	18.3 %
TOTAL	128	100 %	273	100 %	119	100 %	48	100 %	295	100 %

Table 7.3

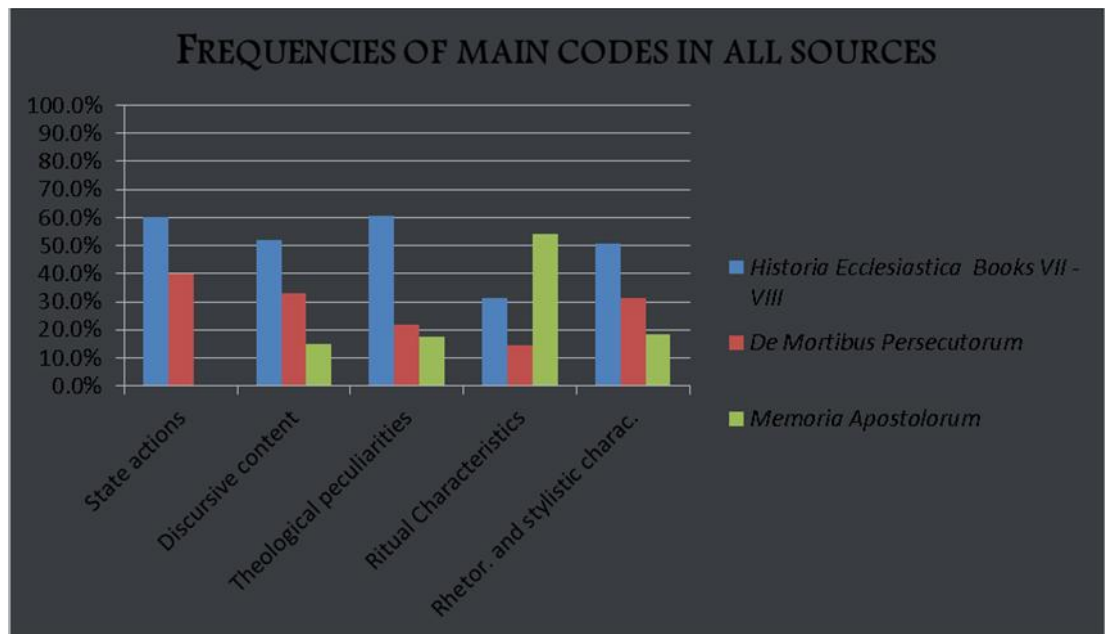


Fig. 7.7

Finally figure 7.7 displays a comparison between all three sources based on the frequencies of the codes. State actions seem to be important for both

²⁹¹ CREED idem, 52:2.

Eusebius and Lactantius, although more for the latter. Discursive content is important in all cases, but there are more instances in the case of Eusebius' text. Theological peculiarities are nonetheless much more important for Eusebius than for the other authors and ritual characteristics are the most important feature of the graffiti while they are barely present in the other two sources. Finally, rhetoric and style are more important to Eusebius discourse than they are to the other authors, although Lactantius draws heavily on it as well.

Con. B will then be as follows. Two of the sources present a discourse that segregates those who are not orthodox Christians, although Eusebius shows a division between "heretics" and "non-Christians". Lactantius equates the wickedness of non-Christians with the persecuting emperors, while common pagans are depicted as people as non-evil as Christians, unlike in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. The *Memoria Apostolorum*, however, present a folk discourse that is not confronted by the other two sources, and thus is rendered invisible if not for this source. It includes rituals that are both religious and magical, in as much as they appeal to charisma in order to obtain favours in exchange, all of this while having their faith as a guideline. Also, Lactantius' discourse expresses a disapproval of the State, including comments that are not present in any of the other sources. This would change with the rise of Constantine, something that pleases both Lactantius and Eusebius, and in the case of the graffiti is present indirectly in the form of the construction of the basilica over the cemetery. These are, thus, three discourses on alterity that have some irreconcilable points, but that all together account for a broad phenomenon and different discourses within it.

Conclusions

Throughout this thesis I have grounded my epistemological approach to history and religion, given a historical account and a conceptual framework in which to embed my analysis, provided the reader with a sample of similar researches and described my sources and procedure. Based on this, I have delineated two conceptualisations, one based on one source (*Historia Ecclesiastica*) and one based on the juxtaposition of three sources that conflicted with each other in some points (The previous one, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* and *Memoria Apostolorum*). Within each source I have identified several voices, although specific ones were more present in each case. Eusebius' text showed more affinity with an agenda and a strategy that had been developing within the

(proto) orthodox church for a long time; Lactantius' discourse shows a political critique mixed with a theological conception of an infinite agency ascribed to god; and the graffiti at Via Appia proved to be the source for a ritual activity that could be regarded as folk and was not accounted for in any of the other more textual sources. Con. B thus proved to provide a broader understanding of alterity in late ancient Christianity, but at the same time it was more chaotic. This is a risk of applying a dialogic point of view, but at the same time it makes explicit and visible the fact that a cohesive historiography denies to show the complexity of social reality.

Based on these ideas, my conclusions are as follow. Con B. did show social actors that were not present in Con A.; however, equally *popular* voices were echoed through Eusebius' continuous quotations of other authors and their experiences. Indeed, Con B. showed three different theological discourses while Con. A only showed one; Con. B. allowed magic to be possible and common pagans to be regarded as non-evil people. Also, while Eusebius' and Lactantius' discourse was intended for the people of the future to read, the graffiti were written for the apostles, within a ritual context: something that could only be seen in Con. B. However, Con. A did shed light on the lives of common (non-authoritative) Christians, this was not a feature exclusive to Con. B. It is needless to say that the practices shown in Con. B by means of the *Memoria Apostolorum* could not possibly be conceptualised based only on Eusebius' account.

Therefore, as opposed to using just sources associated with the Church, the juxtaposition of the voices present in these three sources allowed folk perspectives to emerge. That is, while restricted discourses were already present in (and indeed targeted by) Eusebius historiographical account, only through Con. B were we able to see those that did not ascribe to the institutional discourse, or drifted slightly from it, and were not opposed by it either. Therefore, this open ended conceptualisation, chaotic as it may be, adds to academic research the advantage of suggesting a methodology that can be used to display conflicting discourses and re-present a complex reality in a way that traditional, modernist historiography could not.

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Relevance of Research:

This thesis presents at least three issues that contribute to its relevance in modern day scholarship. The first one is epistemological, and has to do with the problematization of the reconstruction of past events. As is discussed in Chapter 1, we cannot be certain that the sources we have efficiently account for a factual reality. Therefore, along with other hermeneutical paradigms such as postmodern and feminist, my approach contributes to find new ways to re-present and re-imagine the past without dismissing scholarly endeavours altogether.

The second one is methodological, and is basically the fact that I used mixed methods in my thesis. This implies the use of quantitative procedures as aids to the discussion of discourse, by no means pretending to achieve statistical representativeness by using them. However, there seems to be a schism between quantitative and qualitative researchers that is difficult to be alleviated. Fostering mixed methods leads to an easier understanding of more complex phenomena.

The third one is conceptual, and has to do with the fact that my main conclusion is that an open ended account of history represents alterity in a more complex way that allows researchers to make folk discourses visible. In modern times, folk religion is easy to access (at least to an extent) when using methods such as ethnography. However, analysing the past creates an addition barrier in order to achieve this, which contributes to the perpetuation of discourses that segregate and render invisible folk religion as an ancient phenomena. It is important to consider it and to devise new ways to conceptualise it for the past as well, as it endows us with a broader understanding of reality.