

History and Religion

Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten



Herausgegeben von
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Band 68

History and Religion

Narrating a Religious Past

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with the support of Andrés Quero-Sánchez

DE GRUYTER

ISBN 978-3-11-044454-4

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-044595-4

e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-043725-6

ISSN 0939-2580

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2015 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

∞ Printed on acid-free paper

Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

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History and Religion

History is one of the most important cultural tools to make sense of one's situation, to establish identity, define otherness, and explain change. As a consequence, the scientific discipline of history is not only practiced, but the study of historiography has advanced to a thriving field of research. In fact, an impressive amount of theoretical literature on historiography has been brought forward over the past decades. We have learned from studies focussing on the issue of narrativity that historiography is usually imbued with tendentious rhetorical patterns and 'generic story types' that significantly influence the selection and interpretation of the 'sources' it allegedly relies on.¹ The debate on postmodern history has, particularly through its core notion of 'master narrative', once again highlighted the problem of historical 'truth' and thereby also problematised the instrumentalisation of historiography for numerous other (non-historiographic) purposes.² Postcolonial scholars have enhanced this critique by pointing to the unavoidably contingent (that is, time- and culture-bound) position of historiographers and stressed the issues of political power, reciprocal interferences, and multi-perspectivity.³ Out of these circumstances arose lively debates on whether historical thinking is *per se* 'Western',⁴ or how one ought to produce non-eurocentric, comparative, multiperspective, or entangled historiography.⁵ The vast area of historical discourse analysis⁶ as well as studies on historiographic practices⁷ have further complicated the matter by bringing long-neglected background factors of historiography to the fore – such as the dependence on culture-bound terminology and rules of argumentation, religious and societal influences, or monetary requirements and career perspectives.

1 The literature is overwhelming, thus all following references are exemplary; however, special attention is given to standard works and recent introductory handbooks, readers, or companions; see on the issue of narrativity White 1973 and 1978; Ricœur 1984–1988; id. 2003 and 2004; Munz 1977 and 1997; Ankersmit 2001; Conermann 2009; Hühn et al. 2009; Jobs, Lüdtke 2010; Martínez, Scheffel 2012; Georgi et al. 2015.

2 Cf. Conrad, Kessel 1994; Jenkins 1997; Cox, Stromquist 1998; Windschuttle 2002; Roberts 2004; Stuart 2005.

3 Cf. Freitag 1997; Codell, Macleod 1998; Duara 2002; Conrad, Randeria 2002; Cooper 2005; Chakrabarty 2008 and 2010.

4 Cf. Rüsen 2002; Kramer, Maza 2002; partly Feldherr et al. 2011.

5 Cf. Rüsen 1996; Wang, Iggers 2002; Fuchs, Stuchtey 2002; Budde et al. 2006; Haupt, Kocka 2009.

6 Cf. Barthes 1997; Bieder 1998; Sarasin 2003 and 2006; Stuckrad 2013.

7 Cf. de Certeau 2005 (1988); Rau, Studt 2010.

When combing through this vast array of theoretical literature on historiography, one makes a surprising discovery: religion is largely absent from these studies.⁸ Of course, religious traditions have been used to exemplify certain theoretical arguments, or novel historiographical tools have been applied to specific religious arenas. However, religion has rarely been treated as an independent, potentially interesting, exceptional, or problematic case in the theoretical literature on historiography. To our knowledge, there is no systematic (overall and/or comparative) scholarly study devoted to determining or disentangling the complex relationship between history and religion, taking into account religious traditions both as *producers* of historical narratives as well as distinct *topics* of historiography (consider the genres of hagiography, salvation history, or conversion stories).⁹ It thus seems to us that religion has not yet received appropriate attention in the theoretical literature on historiography.

This is surprising in so far as religion, in very different traditions of research, is acknowledged as a major factor for the construction of identities as it is addressed as a major factor in the course of history. Historical claims relating to religion are of utmost importance for a large number of historical as well as present (and pressing) political conflicts over territory and dominance, within Europe as much as globally. Religious groups have adopted history to strengthen their identity, justify theological or ritual matters, conceptualise extraordinary beings and events, or exclude theological oppositions and non-believers. A vast number of historical narratives has been composed by religious elites or has been produced under the patronage of religious institutions: Roman priests or magistrates writing about their own or others' cults, bishops writing for their dioceses, cardinals writing for the Roman-Catholic Church, Buddhist monks or 'lay' historians writing for monasteries or temples, Muslim biographers writing hadiths or universal chronicles (to name only a few examples addressed in this volume). As a consequence, our 'sources' for religious as well as secular history are often imbued with religious terminology, arguments and modes of thought (and these have, to a greater or lesser degree, also made their way into scholarly historiography). In fact, until today religious traditions are not merely topics, but producers and world-wide distributors of historical narratives. Religions have been and

⁸ See the following introductory handbooks on historiography: Kocka, Nipperdey 1979–1990; Bentley 1997; Kramer, Maza 2002; Lambert, Schofield 2004; Tellingly, within the three volumes of Burns 2006, only one article – Rudolph 2006 – is devoted to religious historiography; see also Feldherr et al. 2011.

⁹ Apart from rather specific studies on sacred history (Lewis 2007, Van Liere et al. 2012) or the impact of religious pluralisation on historiography in early modern times (Rau 2002; Wallnig et al. 2012; Rau, Laudin 2014).

still are important protagonists in the public negotiation of historical events, agents, periods or, more generally, ‘truth’.

The impressive productivity of religions in the field of historiography is mirrored by the academic discipline of the History of Religion. Having been crucial for the establishment and early reputation of the academic Study of Religion,¹⁰ it still forms an important part of that discipline and given the apparent ‘resurgence of religion’,¹¹ hardly a scholar will question the manifold historical dimensions of contemporary religious conflicts. Nonetheless, within the methodological scope of the Study of Religion, the importance of history seems to have receded in past decades, with sociological, political, ethnographic, or cognitive approaches coming to the fore.¹² In fact, the majority of handbooks, readers or companions published since the late 1990s in the field of Religious Studies have given only little importance to, or even entirely neglected, the notions of ‘History’ or ‘Tradition’.¹³

This may explain why scholars devoted to the historical dimension of religion only rarely partook in the aforementioned theoretical debates in the study of historiography. In fact, the neglect of religion by theorists of historiography has an unexpected flipside: historians of religion, conversely, tended to overlook or disregard critical or deconstructionist approaches in the study of historiography and have thus missed the opportunity to strengthen their own historical methodology. When reading through recent standard works on the history of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, or Judaism (to name only these), one rarely finds fundamental doubts as to the trustworthiness of the presented historical narratives or the sources these allegedly rely on. Put bluntly, notions of ‘historical realism’ often pervade these works, as if historians of religion are among the dwindling species of historiographers capable of showing *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (‘as it actually was’; cf. Ranke 2010 [1824], VII). This is surprising not only given the unmissable critique of ‘historical realism’ in the theoretical literature on historiography, but also given the often tendentious, arbitrary or entirely misleading character of the majority of historiographic sources composed by the religious groups under investigation (consider, for example, Eusebius’ late ancient *Historia ecclesiae* which is still one of the bases of most scholarly histories of the early Church).

¹⁰ Cf. Kippenberg 2002; Stausberg 2007.

¹¹ See e.g. Riesebrodt 2000 and 2000a; Zeidan 2003.

¹² See on this observation Uehlinger 2006; Rüpke 2011; Stuckrad 2013.

¹³ See, exemplarily, Taylor 1998; Braun, McCutcheon 2000; Antes 2002; Hinnells 2005; Segal 2006; Orsi 2012; exceptions to this observation are Rüpke 2007; Stausberg, Engler 2011 (cf. Rüpke 2011).

There are some exceptions to this observation, such as the special attention given to religion in the postcolonial debate, or the notion of ‘invented tradition’ that has been widely discussed in the Study of Religion.¹⁴ However, it seems that the two aforementioned disciplines, the Study of Historiography and the History of Religion, have hitherto operated largely independently of each other. It is this double desideratum – the neglect of religion in the theoretical literature on historiography and the neglect of a critical historiographic stance in the History of Religion – that the present volume intends to address. This is done foremost by asking questions which, from the viewpoint of the editors, have been asked much too seldom in either discipline. How, under which conditions and with what consequences are religions historicised? How do religious groups employ historical narratives in the construction of their identities? What are the biases and elisions of current analytical and descriptive frames in the History of Religion?

1 Specifics of religious historiography

If religion is a rare topic in historiographical reflection, it is certainly an interesting one. If one compares religious historiography – i.e. historical narratives created by religious groups – with modern (or pre-modern) ‘secular’ historiography, one encounters a range of unique features.

- (i) One of the main characteristics of religious practices is that they attribute agency to actors that are underdetermined and not equally accepted in their properties or situational relevancy by the human actors involved in that situation (cf. Rüpke 2015). Expectably, such actors also play a major role in historical narratives composed by religious groups, even though they can take many different forms. An all-powerful god could be envisaged as being behind all historical change. Personalised (but not necessarily anthropomorphic) gods could be narrated to exert specific or even competing influence. Intermediate beings like angels could defy the classifications of gods and humans and slip in as agents in specific episodes or as intrinsic motivators of human actors. Such ‘divine’ agency may also modify the agency of human actors, enabling them to mobilise super-human powers in order to defeat enemies, foretell the future, help and heal the needy, or simply demonstrate one’s being ‘chosen’. They could command a superior con-

¹⁴ See on the latter issue Hobsbawm, Ranger 1992; Henten, Houtepen 2001; Engler 2005; Lewis, Hammer 2007.

tact with the gods, as prophets do, or could even be accorded with a post- or pre-divine status such as Buddhist ‘boddhisattvas’ or ancient Greek ‘heroes’. However, in religious historiography agency is not restricted to agents conceptualised on the model of a human body. Objects like stones or streams or impersonal powers like the ‘holy spirit’ or ‘karma’ might advance to carriers of historical agency. This leads to the second characteristic.

- (ii) Religious narratives on the past often include unique modes of historiographical argumentation. Impersonal fate or personal providence of the ‘gods’ are perhaps the most important modes. But even without direct divine steering, particular modes of movements in time could be invoked. History might be conceptualised as timeless, circular or as a period of decay that steers towards a final catastrophe or triumphal end. Imaginings of such large-scale processes and ever more detailed scenarios of endings have seen particular rises in situations of inner- or inter-religious conflicts, e.g. in colonial contexts that provoked literary and religious practices directed against ruling empires. Such narratives are often combined with religious concepts of history as a period of trial and individual or collective probation. The strategies of such narrative patterns vary widely. They might concentrate on a founding phase or try to integrate as much of the ‘history’ remembered by a society as they can. Mythology and history are not opposites but rather variants of historical narratives, maybe including different time indicators. Canonisation is a frequent instrument to stabilise such narratives, which could also serve as solutions to doctrinal problems or logical incoherencies.
- (iii) Religious narrative and recollection of the past need not be tied to historiography, but enjoy a particularly wide range of media (cf. Conermann 2009; Rüpke 2012). Religion, in fact, provides numerous alternatives to narrative – even if narrative remains crucial and probably indispensable for the generation of a (religious) concept of time and historical consciousness (Ricoeur). Hymns and prayers, for example, enable frequent repetition and memorising; liturgical recital functions in a similar manner. Rituals beyond the verbal support imaginings of the past in mimetic form or dramatic play or even competition, if we think of the ancient Mediterranean traditions of ‘games’ (cf. Bernstein 2007). Specific objects could be embedded in such rituals and thereby become imbued with historical meaning or activate such associations due to their role in mythical narrative. Images can focus on constellations and scenes, pointing to and systematising previous narratives, or even gain narrative powers. Rituals are frequently reflected in calendars that could gain independent status as popular transmitters of chronological schemes of beginnings and ends and a past that is remembered throughout

the year in a sequence of festivals. At the end of the scale, buildings and monuments may reflect or shape such rituals and recitals or allude to past events by means of symbolic architecture (cf. Rüpke 2006).

- (iv) Finally, religious historiography might arise not only in all those established contexts and routines of professional historiography as described by Michel de Certeau (de Certeau 2005 [1988]). Particularly situations of inner- or inter-religious conflicts – due to competing authorities or doctrinal strife – frequently gave (and give) rise to narratives that sketch different pasts (and even futures) and different genealogies. This might justify separation or legitimise authority, but it could also imply attempts to form alliances or include people otherwise conceptualised as out-groups. Histories of religions thus seem to arise in contexts of diversity and plurality. The construal of the past is a difficult thing, and it is necessary to negotiate the delicate balance between the memories of historical change narrated by others or simply in other contexts, and the continuity which is crucial for legitimating central religious tenets and institutions.

All in all, religious historiography is certainly a unique genre of historiography and the many forms of narrating the past for direct or indirect orientation of future action. Needless to say, there are numerous aspects that invite a focused analysis. However, in what follows we can only give attention to the aspect that appears most crucial to us, namely, to the relationship of religious historiography with a critical History of Religion.

2 From religious historiography to the History of Religion

The results of the efforts undertaken by religious communities to interpret and identify themselves through their past form a vast array of practices, objects, and texts that are sometimes accorded an elevated status or even entered into a body of canonical texts. Naturalising a complex situation and an even more complex past within a particular religious framework yields results that are usually not superficial propaganda. In fact, the task of religious historiography is often pursued with much ingenuity and energy, up to the standards of other contemporary historiography. Thus, religious authors produced (and produce) accounts with a correspondingly dense veneer of plausibility. Wherever practices of ritual mimesis or repetitive recitation or reading accrue, such narratives might form the very skeleton of a whole world view and produce a ‘master nar-

rative', which, despite many variations, additions and omissions, is underlying countless accounts.

This produces a very difficult situation for historical research (cf. Rüpke 2011). Scholars of the History of Religion do not only have a large body of 'sources' due to these enterprises. Often these sources are imbued with tendentious narrative patterns that were composed to serve the purpose of identification with the communities (or authors) who produced these narratives. Such narratives that were, so to speak, produced within the objects of research – one might also use the term *emic* here (see on the *emic/etic*-distinction McCutcheon 1999 and therein particularly Pike 1999) – are not only one of many sources, but by their very form and rationality are often accorded a privileged status in any historical reconstruction, even if all caution of the historico-critical method is applied. Thus, historians of religion – supposed to produce *etic* accounts in the language not of the observed, but the observer, and striving to apply a methodology of understanding (*Verstehen*) of their scholarly objects – necessarily tend to follow the constructs produced by their sources and to ignore the subjective and interpretive nature of the framework that underlies these sources. One cannot question everything at the same time. Critique can only operate on particulars: the religious framework need not be, but is often exempted from it. As a result, there is often no clear dividing line between *emic* and *etic* historiography in modern scholarly narratives of a 'religious past'.

This is true, above all, for the very subject of the historical narrative. This subject is usually identified in *etic* historiography as elaborated by *emic* historiography, that is, as a specific 'religion', 'Church', 'school' or 'sect'. The alternative would be to address religious actors as the subject(s) of *etic* historiography who often, but not always grouped together. In our view, the fact that these actors are admonished by functionaries to construe their identity mostly by reference to their belonging to or 'membership' in a group or organisation should be observed and described in *etic* historiography, but not taken as its main starting point.

Nonetheless, such 'narrated identities' are often taken over by scholars as if these may legitimately be used as valid models for studying the History of Religion. For example, we continue to hear and read about the 'Church of the martyrs', about the 'victory of Buddhism', or the 'Hellenisation of Christianity' and even about 'Christianity', 'Judaism', and 'paganism' (in the late antique Mediterranean context, for example), as if these were all separate, stable and unified entities that deserve distinct treatment in *etic* historiographical accounts. In the same manner as the first of the above notions ('Church of the martyrs') is put forward already by ancient historiographers (most famously Eusebius), the notion of 'Hellenisation of Christianity' – which is clearly an extrapolation

from a false dichotomy and portrayal of the appearance of Christianity on the world stage as a separate and new entity – is likewise proffered by Christian writers from Late Antiquity onwards; in fact, both notions are continuously evoked, but also critically assessed in theological literature until this day. Note that these narratives are in contradiction to the ambiguity and ambivalences which obtain in the field of religion. To be more precise, such constructions of clear-cut and unified identities obscure the analysis of the processes, functions and forms of religious practices and beliefs shared beyond the boundaries of ‘religions’. In fact, many areas of the world were and are home to multiple (or rather indistinct) religious identities.

3 The concept of ‘religion’

The concept of ‘religion’ is itself an important and problematic consequence of the methodological issue sketched so far. Recently, the critique of this concept has even led to general reserves against the historical approach implied in the discipline of History of Religion (e.g. Masuzawa 2005; Taira 2013). Thus, a brief detour is necessary.

The academic study of the History of Religion in the nineteenth century was characterised by a general trend towards (philology-based) historical research. For the representatives of ‘historicism’ (an important intellectual trend in the nineteenth and early twentieth century)¹⁵ the historicisation of religion was a matter of absolute necessity in defending religion, as it allowed them to deal with the vast variety of religions and the anti-religious criticism they faced. The process of acknowledging that the present was the result of historical development was reflected in the establishment of museums and the ‘restorations’ of medieval castles during that time, e.g. in England, France or Germany. Thereby, scholars began to think that everything was subject to change; on the other hand, every period seemed to have its own dignity and could not simply be erased by ‘progress’. Hence, everything became contingent. Yet critics of historicism looked for ways to remedy this issue of contingency: history had to be overcome by history, as Ernst Troeltsch, a towering figure of German Protestantism, postulated in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Troeltsch 1924; cf. Graf 2006). According to him, even lasting values were not ahistorical and thus

¹⁵ View for different perspectives Popper 1972; Kippenberg 1992; Krech 2000; see also Wyrwa 2003.

bound only to systematic reflection, but were to be found in history by means of historical research.

The ‘History of Religion’ became the dominant approach to the ‘Study of Religion’ (*Religionswissenschaft, sciences religieuses*) throughout this period and was only slowly supplemented by anthropology and sociology. Historical accounts in the form of handbooks and lexica abounded.¹⁶ The explanatory power of narratives that could assess relationships of origin, influence and chronological transition, became highly valued by scholars. Apart from theologically or philosophically minded scholars who worked towards systematic accounts of religion and paid attention to the early phenomenology of religion (cf. Rüpke 2009), most historians of religion proceeded without further methodological ado – thus raising the question whether the discipline could be regarded as historical at all (cf. Martin 1994; Crossley, Karner 2005; Segal 2006; Uehlinger 2006). Philologists subjected textual sources to critical historical analysis and used marginal or newly found texts as counter-histories of suppressed groups (like Manicheans: cf. Baur 1831). They also drew on writings in popular fiction (like the pseudepigraphical Acts of Apostles, if we think of early Christianity) in order to interpret canonical texts (e.g. Norden 1893). However, these canonical documents – precisely those texts that are most closely attached to the identities of religious communities – still remained the standard reference points for numerous overviews of the history of ‘religions’. Equally central were traditional forms of genealogy and periodisation.

The boundaries construed in religious historiography, such as the exclusion of ‘heretics’ in Christianity, the chain of ‘witnesses’ or rather ‘transmitters’ in early Islam or the genealogy and limited number of Buddhist ‘schools,’ have thereby been accepted and reproduced unchallenged by many scholars. If we look back, already Ernst Troeltsch described the process during which the term ‘Church’ was replaced with the expression ‘Christianity’ in the beginning of the twentieth century, looking at post-Reformation Churches that had been multiplying across Europe in the centuries before (cf. Troeltsch 1925). However, even though the plural form ‘Christianities’ occasionally appears in ‘Church history’, it is seldom put to use as a heuristic or descriptive device. In recent years, scholars have attempted to write global histories of Christianity by studying diffusion from a post-colonial perspective instead of merely looking at the pure history of missionary activities (e.g. Pietri, LeBoulluec, Mayeur 2000; Chidester

¹⁶ For instance the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by Hastings 1908–1921; Alfred Bertholet and Edvard Lehmann, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte: Band 1–2* (Tübingen 1925). Cf. Stausberg 2007.

2004; Gilley, Stanley 2006; McLeod 2009). Yet the concept of ‘globalisation’ is treated rather additively in these works, sequencing new chapters onto the religious history of different regions and continents. Impulses from the history of mentalities or social history have claimed to represent histories of piety or ritual (e.g. Angenendt 1997; Flanagan 2001), but they typically work within narrow boundaries that presuppose established religious and confessional categories.

On a global scale, the concept of ‘religion’ and the self-organisation of social groups as ‘religions’ have proven to be highly successful formats for establishing oneself as a national or international agent. This proliferation of the Western concept of ‘religion’ (often as a parasite construct riding on the back of national identity) has brought with it the construction and continuous cultivation of an interpretive account of such groups and their history, whether this is done to create boundaries by pointing to old feuds and differences or to forge alliances on the basis of a common ancestry (‘Abrahamic religions’: cf. Hughes 2012). For historians of religion, the potency of religious histories in international relations today brings with it the urgent challenge of renewing and revising the manner in which the historiography of religion is approached. In our view, the dangerous coupling of religious identity and historiography of religion (familiar from a tradition of ‘national history’) in what we might term ‘confessional historiography’ must be undone through the development of alternative and more complex histories of religion. Here, reflecting on the biases and concealments of (*emic*) religious historiography and on the history of its analytical and descriptive adoption in (*etic*) modern research is vital for any History of Religion in the twenty-first century.

4 Emerging alternatives

Have alternatives been developed? Only recently has the position of minorities been reconstructed on a larger historical scale.¹⁷ One example of such work is the history of ‘Western Esotericism’, which has attempted to analyse a strand of religious thought and practice across the boundaries of religion, philosophy and art history, as well as beyond confessional frontiers (e.g. Zander 1999; Faivre 2000; Hanegraaff 1996 and 2012; Stuckrad 2005 and 2010; Otto 2011). This approach offers more analytical perspectives than isolated treatments of ‘paganism,’ even if it is termed a ‘world religion’ (e.g. York 2003; Harvey 1997). Some

¹⁷ See the concept of ‘minority histories’ and ‘subaltern histories’ used by Chakrabarty 2008 (in particular 97–113).

studies on the scale of countries or larger regions exist. However, approaches which investigate religion in a particular region (rather than the various religious traditions of a particular region in an additive collection) are still not widespread. For Europe, the problem of a ‘history of religion in Europe’ or ‘history of European religion’ came to be a matter of discussion around a decade ago in Germany (cf. Kippenberg, Rüpke, Stuckrad 2009). Yet, the historiography of Europe remains focused on the characteristics of (central) European Church-State relationships and above all dealing with the secularisation hypothesis. Religious interaction in the Ancient Near East has been intensively studied since the end of the nineteenth century by the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, but remained focussed on developments leading to or interacting with ‘ancient Israel’, early Judaism and early Christianity. Here, theoretical discussions – on the conceptualisation of groups which gradually differentiated themselves from each other (‘parting of the ways’), on intellectual religion with and without a basis in local groups (Gnosticism, Hermeticism), on the notion of ‘religion’ and on the role of public law in institutionalising religions and marginalising heretics – have been intense and could serve as a starting point for establishing new paradigms. As they stand right now, however, these studies still proceed from the separate identities promoted by the ancient historiographers, although scholars increasingly admit close and complex relationships between ‘religions’ (e.g. Becker, Reed 2003).

Beyond narrativity and the role of historiography in religious group formation, other approaches have been developed in recent years. There are, for example, field analyses (following the works of Bourdieu) or histories of institutions that analyse institutional parameters for the making of history and the development of methodological standards (cf. Eckel, Etzemüller 2007). By shedding more light on the complex process of history making, we have learnt that writing history is not only an intellectual exercise, but that the path from the event to the written result has to pass a series of successive stages including taking notes, collecting information, scholarly networking, archiving, ordering material, talking to eye-witnesses (if possible), comparing documents, taking excerpts, writing drafts, passing censorship, finding a printer, looking for different ways of diffusion and so on (cf. Rau, Studt 2010; Jobs, Lüdtke 2011; Badea 2011; Benz 2011; Wallnig et al. 2012; Georgi et al. 2015). This *practical turn* has not yet been fully applied to the study of religious historiography, but individual studies, especially on the confessional quarrels of the early modern period, have already shown the impact and accelerating effect of religious historiography on the de-

velopment of historical methodology.¹⁸ In this sense, historiography, as well as its methodology, is always contingent as it emerges from a specific historical context. The present volume offers rich evidence for this contingency in different historical epochs and religious traditions, thus inviting historians of religion to reflect on their own methodological repertoire.

5 Structure of the volume

Even a multi-authored volume can map out only some inroads into the vast area of research sketched above. Starting from a conference hosted by the University of Norrköping and financed by the European Science Foundation in September 2012 – which unfortunately had to cut the relevant line of support shortly afterwards – and modifying, enlarging or adding further contributions, the volume aims at initiating a comparative historiography of religion and combines disciplinary competences of Religious Studies and the History of Religion, Confessional Theologies, History, History of Science, and Literary Studies. By applying literary comparison and historical contextualisation to those texts that have been used as central documents for histories of individual religious groups, their historiographic themes, tools and strategies shall be analysed. The volume thus also hopes to stimulate the history of historical research on religion by identifying key steps in the early modern and modern history of research. This is a vital task of scholarly self-reflection aimed at assessing how religion has been conceptualised, described and historicised in scholarship, on which traditions of study we as scholars are drawing, and which we are neglecting. With such an aim in mind, the combination of different traditions of research and case studies from different periods and areas promises fresh insights. The comparative approach will hence address circum-Mediterranean and European as well as Asian religious traditions from the first millennium BCE to the present.

The contributions to this volume are divided into three main sections, which will each be introduced by a brief section summary. In section one ('Origins and developments') the question of contexts of origins and ensuing developments will be pursued. The focus here lies on the triggers for applying historicisation to religion, on founding narratives and early stages in narrative traditions, and on the strategies and purposes of such narratives. The second section ('Writing histories') explores moments and processes of writing religious histories in different cultural contexts and milieus. Here, history is mostly interpreted as a proc-

¹⁸ See Susanne Rau's contribution to this volume.

ess of writing and as the result of this process. Seen from this perspective, history is nothing but a social construction and it is thus the agents of historical change – be they members of religious groups or intellectuals considering themselves mere ‘observers’ – that lie at the epicentre of analytical reflection. Finally, both perspectives will be taken up and interpreted from the perspective of the history of research in the third section of the volume (‘Transforming narratives’). Naturally, modern scholarly narratives of ‘religious pasts’ are considered more trustworthy and coherent than pre- or non-academic accounts. The articles assembled in this section, however, point to a more complex relationship between *emic* and *etic* historiography in the realm of religion.

* * *

We would like to thank the federal state of Thuringia for its substantial support of the project ‘Religion and History’ between 2011 and 2014. We would also like to thank Andrés Quero-Sánchez for his thorough copy-editing of the whole text, and Sandhya Fuchs and Linda Finnigan for their linguistic revisions and improvements.

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Section I **Origins and developments**

Introduction

The first section of this volume explores founding narratives and early stages in narrative traditions. It is not the rise of historical narrative *per se* which is the subject of this first group of articles. Within the comparative framework of the present volume they ask: What are the circumstances, what are the triggers to apply strategies of historicisation to religion? Quite often, religion is seen as, or claims to be, outside of the realm of historical change. The chapters by Rüpke and Bronkhorst for instance focus on traditions which have been classified as ‘cold’ traditions. Their findings clearly contradict such views. Here, history comes in a plurality of histories. Historical narratives might have become important for purposes of legitimation, but legitimation is asked for when claims are rivaled or contested.

In his article ‘The historiography of Brahmanism’ JOHANNES BRONKHORST focusses on the self-projected image of Indian ‘Brahmanism’ (which Bronkhorst also labels a ‘re-invented form of Vedic religion’) as being eternal, founder-less and unchangeable since the beginning of time. Against the prevalent assumption that ‘India did not and could not have history’ – itself a result of the ‘non-historical attitude of Brahmanism’ and the relative absence of historical events in most Brahmanic texts – Bronkhorst identifies a fairly short phase in Indian history (‘the centuries surrounding the beginning of the Common Era’) where history may have been of greater importance to some Brahmins. He reveals traces of a ‘milleniarist’ attitude in the *Yuga Purāṇa* and parts of the *Mahābhārata*, presumably driven by a series of catastrophes (such as foreign invasions) that took place at that time. Especially in the *Yuga Purāṇa* these catastrophes are interpreted as signs of the upcoming end of the last of four world eras, the Kali-Yuga. Compared to later Sanskrit sources (such as most later Purāṇas), this text extensively referred to historical persons, places and events as, from the viewpoint of its author(s), these were signs of the upcoming end of the world and thus of cosmic dimension. However, as the end of the world did not come as expected, Bronkhorst notes a ‘major change [...] in the brahmanical conception of history’ in the subsequent centuries: the ‘milleniarist’ outlook made way for a prolonged interpretation of the Kali-Yuga and thus for a cyclical interpretation of historical events which turned them into mere ‘imitations of what had happened before’. The author also uses this scheme to interpret the focus shift from foreign invaders to religious ‘heretics’ in Sanskrit sources of that time, as well as the later tendency to identify rulers with ‘mythical heroes’.

In ‘Construing religion by doing historiography’ JÖRG RÜPKE analyzes early stages of ‘the historicisation of religion’ in different genres of the late Roman re-

public. It is not in genuine historical narratives that arguments about the historicity of religion can be found. Conceptualisations of what the lost books of the founding figure Numa might have been, and the identification of historical change in the Roman calendar are identified as incipient forms of historicisation of religion and thereby as incipient forms of conceptualisation of religion. But what are the interests of such arguments, what is their expressive value? It is in the comprehensive account of Roman religion provided by Varro in mid-first century BCE that a full-scale historical narrative of religious changes is to be found. Here, the question of triggers and alternatives is helpful. It is not narrowly bordered local identities, Rüpke claims, which drive this account. In the context of a nascent empire, Varro's text seems to be interested in balancing local and universal developments and in building bridges and thus tapping resources of other religious traditions rather than boundary work in the construction of a Roman religion. Within the landscape of historical accounts of religious practices, Varro's endeavour of creating a comprehensive, yet internally differentiated, circum-Mediterranean history of religion constitutes a minority position, which deserves further exploration.

Historiography – *in statu nascendi* – is the subject of the following chapter on 'The use of historiography in Paul'. In his analysis of the letters of Paul, 1/2 Corinthians and Galatians in particular, ANDERS KLOSTERGAARD PETERSEN demonstrates how the basically argumentative letters are undergirded by a historiographic narrative. It is not in the reconstruction of any Pauline 'salvation history' that the chapter is interested. Rather, it is the construction of a historical narrative on the basis of a highly selective use of what Paul's audience would have accepted as privileged 'scripture' which is the focus of the analysis. This narrative is not just one of many motifs of the letters, but takes on argumentative value at crucial points of Paul's reasoning.

In 'Flirty fishing and poisonous serpents' INGVILD GILHUS analyses a paradigmatic text for the tradition of heresiography. The encyclopaedic approach of that genre has not rendered it a centre piece of historiography. And yet, the enumeration of dangerous aberrances usually employs genealogical principles to relate the origins and developments of individual heresies to the larger history of Christianity. Epiphanius, writing in Cypriote Salamis in the second half of the fourth century, is competing within that genre to be the most prolific writer, amassing around one thousand five hundred pages, and thus tries to bolster his authority as a bishop within the theological conflicts of his time. Part of his strategy to create an image of ongoing danger and his own heroic role is, as Gilhus demonstrates in two exemplary interpretations, his inscribing himself into the text by means of autobiographical narratives. She shows how this illustrates different types of threats as well as the different roles of Epiphanius, point-

ing to possible heresies underlying ascetic and monastic practices and the way of life of members of the church. These threats are gendered, embracing sexual temptation and spiritual fatherhood which might lead into deviance. Historiographically, such scenes help to veil the massive invention of ‘heretical groups’ that frequently were seen as neither groups nor heresies by their contemporaries.

SYLVIE HUREAU, in her article ‘Reading sutras in biographies of Chinese Buddhist monks’, sheds light on the oldest collection of Chinese Buddhist monks’ biographies, the *Biographies of eminent monks (Gaoseng zhuan)* which was compiled around the first half of the sixth century. Hureau struggles with the tension between biography and hagiography in this text corpus: on the one hand, various types of ‘historical’ information about the lives of respective monks are given (such as birth-and-death-dates, provenance, physical appearance, or former profession). On the other hand, recurring hagiographic *topoi* are woven into each narration – Hureau here differentiates the fields of asceticism, thaumaturgy, and outstanding scholarship. While discussing a series of exemplary biographies, Hureau reveals allusions to at that time well-known Buddhist *Sūtras* (such as the *Sūtra on the emission of light [Fangguang jing]* or the *Sūtra of the wise and the foolish [Xianyu jing]*), which are here exemplified within an individual monk’s life. Hureau also demonstrates adaptations to Chinese thought and culture in these texts, for example when ‘Indian’ animals (elephants) are exchanged for ‘Chinese’ ones (birds). According to Hureau, scholars have far too long devaluated the ‘scientific’ value of these ‘tales’: in effect, they ‘were full of sense and meaning for their readers [and] played a significant role in the acceptance of the Buddhist faith in China’.

Explosion of fictive narrative detail is part of CHASE ROBINSON’s analysis of the earliest phases of written accounts on Muhammad’s life. Again the focus of ‘History and *Heilsgeschichte* in early Islam’ is however not on historicity, but on the contexts of the rise of many and competing narrative accounts. Political functions, in particular the legitimation of an Umayyad dynasty under attack, are one part of the story; but first and foremost the narrators themselves are in need of authority, which is provided by the plausibility of their narratives as well as by their professional access to details and soon to chronology also. Interests in phases beyond the original interest in the prophetic role and the necessity to take up and neutralise polemical discourses accrue. The past is malleable, but to a limited extent only. Established images of prophets constrain the new and greater prophet.

In his article ‘The development and formation of religious historiography in Tibet’ PER SØRENSEN gives an overview of the most prominent forms of historiographical writing in medieval Tibet. These forms were naturally adapted from Tibet’s grand neighbours – Buddhist India and Imperial China – but soon evolved

into an array of historiographic genres with distinct perspectives, narration styles, and stereotypic religious motifs, thereby reflecting the unique development of Buddhism in Tibet. Sørensen begins with the earliest surviving sources from the medieval period and proceeds alongside the fragmentation of Tibetan Buddhism into numerous local monastic seats and ruling houses, revealing a development that led to an ever-increasing importance and textual output of historiographic writing in Tibet. In fact, Sørensen stresses the fact that one can hardly distinguish ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ historiography in medieval Tibet and continuously struggles with the interwovenness of historical ‘facts’ and religious *topoi* such as thaumaturgy, providence, or the workings of Buddhist ‘deities’ (such as Avalokiteśvara, who allegedly administered the proliferation of Buddhism in Tibet) in Tibetan historical writing. He provides a typology of medieval Tibetan genres of historiography consisting of five items and highlights the example case of ‘treasure literature’ which supported the adaptation of a medieval Buddhist founding myth during the institutionalisation of the Dalai Lamas. Sørensen finally points to the great importance of rituals and their manifestation in historiography and delineates an emic, threefold taxonomy of biographies which apparently reflects Tibetan Buddhist doctrine.

In ‘Medieval memories of the origins of the Waldensian movement’ PEKKA TOLONEN traces back the textual sources on the origins of the medieval European Waldensian movement. He presents texts from 1174 to the 1360 s that adopted very different narratives and ideological patterns while dealing with the movement. These memories are constructed on very different patterns and communicative settings. The thin strand of accounts produced by or for lay people try to understand the action of Valdes on the basis of older hagiographic models. In contrast, the accounts written by or for inquisitors and their classificatory interests organise their narratives on the basis of questions regarding the origins, the name and the error of the heresy persecuted. In both cases, origins are deeply rooted in preceding history. Heresies enrich and modify, but also stabilise competing accounts of the history of the Church. In its quest for origins, later Waldensian historiography based its judgment on the motifs of sanctity of the founder and apostolic origins developed in these early accounts.

YVES KRUMENACKER analyses ‘The use of history by French Protestants and its impact on Protestant historiography’ with a focus on a later period. French Protestant historiography of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is presented by his chapter as a sort of text answering the question ‘Where was your church before the Reformation, before Luther and Calvin?’. The heuristic apparatus developed includes dogmatic inventions and critique before 1500, individuals who spread new ideas, and the continuity of groups from Apostolic times onwards who served as ‘witnesses of the truth’ against the majority of the papal

Church. Here again the Waldensians and the apostolic origins credited to them are of foremost importance, but accompanied for some time by such unlikely companions as the Cathars and Christians of Ethiopia. The contribution demonstrates the role of narratives of martyrdom for the historiography of groups that remained defeated minorities in their struggle with French Catholicism and the importance of historiography for a specific Protestant identity.

Johannes Bronkhorst

The historiography of Brahmanism

1 Classical Brahmanism

‘Brahmanism’ is the term I use to refer to a movement that arose out of Vedic religion. Vedic religion was what the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann might call a ‘primary religion’ (Assmann 2003). It was a priestly religion, not unlike the priestly religions of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. As such it was indissociably linked to one single culture, to one single society, and to one single language. It had a close association with the rulers of the society to which it belonged, for whom it provided ritual services. Like other primary religions, Vedic religion had no exclusive truth claims of a religious nature, and did not try to make converts. Like other primary religions, it depended for its survival on the continued existence of the society to which it belonged.

The society to which it belonged did not continue to exist. Beginning in the fourth century BCE northern India became unified into an empire, or rather a sequence of two empires, the first one under the Nanda dynasty, the second under the Mauryas. The centre of these two empires lay in the eastern part of the Ganges plane, outside the realm of traditional Vedic religion, which was centred in its western part. Therefore, its rulers did not continue the Vedic traditional sacrificial cult. The degree of centralization, especially of the Maurya empire, though weak by modern standards, was high enough to discontinue traditional rulership in the Vedic heartland. This meant the end of traditional support for Vedic religion. Without regular and systematic support from the rulers, the Vedic ritual tradition was threatened. Vedic religion, if it wanted to survive at all, had to reinvent itself.

Vedic religion did reinvent itself, and the result is what I call ‘Brahmanism’ (or ‘the new Brahmanism’, to distinguish it from the preceding Vedic period). Brahmins, i.e., the successors (and, at least in theory, descendants) of the Vedic priests, now offered their services to new customers, also outside their traditional heartland. Some of these services were continuations of the elaborate rituals they had performed in the good old days, but the demand for these expensive sacrifices was now limited. New services were however added. These included other uses of the Brahmins’ supernatural powers, such as predicting the future through reading the stars and bodily signs. Ritual services related to major

I thank Vincent Eltschinger for valuable feedback.

transitions in the lives of individuals (birth, death, weddings, etc.) were on offer, too. Brahmins also developed a vision of society, how it should be, and how it should be run, and offered counselling services to rulers.

We know that Brahmanism, this reinvented form of Vedic religion, became extraordinarily successful, and that without the help of an empire, military expansion, or even religious missionary activity. Brahmanical notions spread from a rather limited area during the last centuries preceding the Common Era and ended up, less than a thousand years later, imposing themselves all over the Indian subcontinent and in much of Southeast Asia. One factor that may have played a major role in this remarkable expansion is the spreading conviction among rulers that they could not risk to rule their kingdom without the supernatural and practical advice that Brahmins could provide.

Brahmanism was much concerned with the image it projected of itself. Its representatives, the Brahmins, had to live exemplary lives, especially in terms of ritual purity, which became a major issue. This affected almost all aspects of a Brahmin's life, and included purity of descent: with few, precisely specified exceptions, the only way to become a Brahmin is through birth from parents who are both pure Brahmins.

There is another aspect of the self-projected image of Brahmanism, and this one has a direct bearing on the theme of this volume. Brahmanism projected an image of its history that is, in its basic outline, extremely simple. Brahmanism, in this image, has always been there and does not change. Indeed, it made this claim with regard to the world, but also with regard to the corpus of texts it preserved, the Veda, and its sacred language, Sanskrit: they had all been there since beginningless time. There is therefore no such thing as a founder of Brahmanism, and indeed, the historical reconstruction of Brahmanism I just presented, of its reinvention as a response to political changes that had taken place in northern India, all this has no place in the manner Brahmanism visualized its own past. Brahmanism had always been there, and had neither been reinvented nor otherwise adapted to changing circumstances.

This particular vision of the past found its perhaps most striking expression in the school of Vedic interpretation, *Mīmāṃsā*, that may be regarded as close to the most orthodox, and orthoprax, form of brahmanical culture. The Vedic corpus of texts, I had occasion to observe, was looked upon as beginningless, and therefore authorless. Brahmanical students learnt to recite a portion of this literature from a teacher, who had learnt it from his teacher, who in his turn had learnt it from an earlier teacher, and so on without beginning. No one had composed this literature or any of its parts, and this conviction was the basis of an intricate interpretative strategy. The fact that the Veda had no author, for example, implied that it was pure word, not soiled by human (or divine) interference,

and therefore necessarily faultless. Faults can occur in verbal communication, but analysis shows that such faults result from the speaker's shortcomings: speakers may wish to mislead their interlocutors, or may not be properly informed about the situation they talk about. In the case of the Veda, there is no author who may wish to mislead, or who may not be properly informed; no faults therefore attach to the Veda. Numerous further consequences were drawn from the presumed authorlessness of the Veda, and a complicated technique of analysis was based on it for which the *Mīmāṃsā* remained famous until today.

The beginninglessness of the Veda had another consequence. The Veda could not possibly refer to any historical event. It could not do so, because it existed already before the historical event concerned took place. Passages that seem to describe or refer to historical events had to be reinterpreted in such a manner that they no longer do so.

Anonymity and absence of historical events was in this manner anchored in the Veda, the corpus of texts indissociably associated with Brahmanism. It is possible – and Sheldon Pollock has actually argued – that the impersonal and non-referential nature of *Mīmāṃsā* (remember that the Veda has no author) is partly responsible for the impersonal and non-referential nature of most of Sanskrit literature.¹ However, this is not the whole story, far from it.

2 The end of time

Two things happened that had a profound effect on the vision of history of at least some Brahmins. On the one hand a series of historical events during the centuries surrounding the beginning of the Common Era forced them to rethink their position.² This new challenge was combined with a new historical scheme that came to be adopted in Brahmanism during this same period.

1 Cf. Pollock 1989, 610: 'When the dominant hermeneutic of the Vedas eliminated the possibility of historical referentiality, any text seeking recognition of its truth claims – any text seeking to participate in brahmanical discourse at all – was required to exclude precisely this referential sphere. Discursive texts that came to be composed under the sign of the Veda eliminated historical referentiality and with it all possibility of historiography'. Roy W. Perrett criticizes this view (Perrett 1999, 314f.).

2 Strictly speaking I do not, of course, know whether the same Brahmins who initially believed in the eternity of the world then adopted a different scheme. Different (groups of) Brahmins may have held, or adopted, different positions. Or the new scheme was added onto the old one: series of Yugas succeed each other for ever from beginningless time. Eltschinger informs me that the *Yogācārabhūmi* refers twice to Brahmins that are *kaliyugika*. This suggests that a

A series of catastrophes befell Brahmanism during the final centuries preceding the Common Era. After the collapse of the Mauryan empire, around 185 BCE, the north of India suffered a succession of foreign invasions. The Indo-Greeks were among the first to extend their power on the ruins of the Mauryan empire. Indo-Scythian (or Śaka, to use the Indian term) invasions followed soon. The result was a breakdown of society. For the Brahmins this was felt to be a breakdown of the brahmanical order of society. A number of texts give expression to the brahmanical disarray during this period. The most important from among these is the so-called *Yuga Purāṇa*,³ which describes the events in the form of a prophecy. It does so in great detail, and in this respect it is quite unique in early India (Parasher 1991, 239). It mentions the Greeks (*yavana*) and the Śakas and the war and destruction these invaders bring. Most interesting from our present perspective is that it views these disasters as indicators of the approaching end of an era, of a Yuga. The *Yuga Purāṇa* elaborates this notion by distinguishing between four Yugas that succeed each other, each succeeding one being worse than the one that precedes.⁴ The invasions of the Greeks and the Śakas take place at, and signify, the end of the last of these four Yugas, the Kali-Yuga. The text concludes with an indication that a new series of four Yugas will begin soon.⁵

It seems clear from this text that its author really believed that the end of the Kali-Yuga was at hand (Mitchiner 2002, 86; González-Reimann 2002, 98–9; id. 2009, 417). He thought it would take place soon after the invasions of the

sub-group of Brahmins may be at stake. A passage in the late *Siddhāntamuktāvalī* (which is to be dated between 1550 and 1650 CE, depending on whether one accepts Kṛṣṇadāsa Sārvabhauma or Viśvanātha Nyāyasiddhānta Pañcānana as its author) still confronts a critic who does not believe in the creation and destruction of the world; in response it points out that the destruction of the world has been taught in the Scriptures; cf. Wada 1995, 123f.: *na ca pralaya eva nāstīti kutaḥ sargādīr iti vācyam, pralasyāgameṣu pratipādyatvāt*.

³ The *Yuga Purāṇa* is really part of a longer work called *Gārgīya-jyotiṣa* (and other names; see Mitchiner 2002, 1 f.). Another part of this work is studied in Kenneth G. Zysk's forthcoming *Physiognomy in the Gārgīyajyotiṣa*.

⁴ The idea that there is a beginning and a violent end to our world fits in with what Witzel calls 'Laurasian mythology', which covers most of the mythologies of Eurasia and the Americas; even the notion of the Four Ages is Laurasian according to him (Witzel 2012, 86f.). The idea of an eternal world, without beginning and without end, does not find a place in Laurasian mythology, and looks more like an intellectual construct.

⁵ This circumstance allows us to use the expression 'millenarianism' here (see Thapar 2000). Note however that Christian millennialism 'describes the hope for a final "Golden Age" to come *before the end*' (McGinn 2002, 136; my emphasis). The term 'millenarianism' can no longer be appropriately applied to the classical Purāṇic vision of history, which we will consider below.

Śakas, and this is indeed the time when the text must have been composed.⁶ Other accounts of the impending end of time have been preserved, as portions of larger texts. The *Mahābhārata*, for example, contains a prophecy about the end of the Kali-Yuga, in the form of a discussion between King Yudhiṣṭhira and the sage Mārkaṇḍeya.⁷ It adds to the list of oppressive ruling dynasties, and one of these (the Ābhīras) appears to justify the conclusion that this prophecy was written, or given its present shape, in 250 CE or later (Mitchiner 2002, 46).

This concrete prophecy may be a late addition of the *Mahābhārata*, but clearly earlier portions were very much aware of the notion of the end of the Yuga,⁸ for the *yugānta* is frequently invoked in comparisons (as shown in González-Reimann 2002, 64–73). These comparisons give us a clear image of how the end of the Yuga was thought of:

It is a time of great destruction, caused mainly by natural forces: torrential rains, implied by the rolling clouds and the thunder; earthquakes, hinted at by the shaking produced by Arjuna's conch as well as by the fallen guardians of the quarters; terrible winds ...; and an intense, resplendent Sun; but most of all fire, an all-consuming fire that destroys everything. There are also comets or meteors, as well as negative planetary configurations. ... In the Epic ... this destruction is often associated with the god Rudra (Śiva), who ... is said to rage at yugānta. (González-Reimann 2002, 71).

6 Second half of the first century BCE, according to Mitchiner 2002, 93. Interestingly, the Vikrama era, which begins 'in the autumn of year 58/57 or in spring 57/56 BCE', is called *kṛta* in early inscriptions; its first inscriptional occurrence dates from 239 CE (D. R. Bhandarkar in *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* vol. III, revised edition, 187 f.; Falk 2007, 131). *Kṛta* is, of course, also the name of the first of the four Yugas, and therefore of the beginning of a new cycle. Is this a coincidence? Indian tradition links this era to a King Vikramāditya who presumably was victorious over the Śakas in that year (Mitchiner 2002, 81 f.; González-Reimann 2002, 99; Witzel 2003, 95 f.; Kulke, Rothermund 1998, 72 f.). Understandably, already Bhandarkar (ibid., 197 f.) considered the possibility that the Kṛta era might have been thought of as the new Kṛta-Yuga. R. S. Sharma states: 'It is argued that the Kali description of the *Yuga Purāṇa* belongs to c. 50 BC but the Purana seems to have been a work of the third century AD' (Sharma 1982, 202 f., n. 79; id. 2001, 62, n. 97, with a reference to Dhruva 1930). Dhruva himself, however, dates the text 'to the beginnings of the first century BC, that is to say, to the first or the second decade thereof' (Dhruva 1930, 45).

7 Mhbh 3.186–9. Here, and only here, the *Mahābhārata* directly describes the end of the Kali-Yuga (using the expression *yugānta*; everywhere else this expression is used in comparisons) (cf. González-Reimann 2010, 69; id. 2002, 64 f.).

8 Cf. González-Reimann 2002, 71 f.: 'This destruction at yugānta, which clearly does not refer to the transition between one individual yuga and the next, seems to allude either to an undefined long period of time, or to the end of the cycle of all four yugas (Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali) taken as a whole. The four yugas taken together are commonly referred to as a yuga, what the Purāṇas would call the mahāyuga, the great yuga, or the caturyuga, the fourfold yuga'.

The chronological position of the *Mahābhārata*, perhaps roughly contemporaneous with the *Yuga Purāṇa* (presumably first century BCE), even though later additions were made to the *Mahābhārata* at least until the prophecy of Mārkaṇḍeya (third century CE?), strongly suggests that these comparisons with the end of the Yuga were not mere innocent poetic metaphors. They rather compared events in the *Mahābhārata* with horrors that might arrive to the composers of the text in a not too distant future.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the *Mahābhārata* contains, in the so-called ‘Āpaddharma-section’ of its twelfth book, advice for kings as to how to deal with the difficulties accompanying the end of the Yuga. Yudhiṣṭhira here asks: ‘When *dharma* and the world are in decline in consequence of the *yuga* coming to an end (*yugakṣayāt*), and when bandits oppress them [*dharma* and *loka*], grandfather, how can one stand firm?’ (Mhbh 12.138.1; translation by Bowles 2007, 264; cf. Fitzgerald 2004, 529f.). Clearly, the then following advice is meant to be practical advice. This is only possible if the end of the Yuga was considered near enough to justify receiving advice about it. We now know that this is exactly what the author of this passage may have believed.

The approaching end of time may also find expression in the lists of royal dynasties that have been preserved in a number of Purāṇas (Pargiter 1913). These lists end in the early years of the Gupta dynasty (early fourth to mid sixth century CE), and describe in this connection the evils of the end of the Kali age (Pargiter 1913, 56 [*kaliśeṣe*]; translation p. 74; Rocher 1986, 116). However, the continuing rule of this same dynasty may have convinced brahmanical authors that time was not yet coming to an end.⁹

The brahmanical sources we have so far considered create the impression that the Yugas they talk about, or at any rate the last one, the Kali-Yuga, were thought of in manageable historical terms. Indeed, the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* (Manu 1.68–70) gives the four succeeding Yugas a length of respectively 4,000, 3,000, 2,000 and 1,000 (human) years.¹⁰ The Kali-Yuga, according to later Purāṇas, began at the moment of Kṛṣṇa’s death, i.e. soon after the *Mahābhārata* war (González-Reimann 2002, 51; further Thapar 1996, 29; Kane 1973, 896f.). As we have seen, it was expected to come to an end soon after the invasions by Greeks and Śakas according to the *Yuga Purāṇa*, some centuries later according to other, younger, sources.

⁹ So Kulke 1979, 106: ‘Es war m. E. dieser Widerspruch zwischen dem alten, zyklischen Weltbild sich stets verschlechternder Zeiten und dem “linearen” Verlauf der ruhmreichen Geschichte der frühen Gupta-Kaiser, der zum Abbruch der frühen Königsgenealogien führte’.

¹⁰ To each of these Yugas a preceding and following twilight must be added, so that it all adds up to 12,000 human years, equal to one single Yuga of the gods (Manu 1.71).

3 The end of time reconsidered

Events did not quite follow expectations.¹¹ One reaction, it appears, was to move the end of the Kali-Yuga forward, while yet holding on to the view that this end was near. When the end did still not come, and when presumably the succession of foreign invasions and other catastrophes had come to an end, an altogether different appreciation of the situation gained the upper hand. Rather than thinking that the end of the Kali-Yuga was very near, brahmanical authors now came to think that this Yuga would extend far into the future. This change of perception was based on a number of reflections, among them the following. Time spans were no longer thought of in terms of human years, but rather in terms of divine days, or years, which lasted very much longer than their human equivalents. This made it possible to think of the end of the Kali-Yuga as being far away. The expectation of a speedy transition to a happier Yuga revealed itself in this manner premature.¹²

If this understanding of the early brahmanical texts on Yugas is correct, the notion of the Kali-Yuga, when it was first introduced into Brahmanism, had a very concrete historical sense. It had immediate relevance for the present, because the present was thought of as being the end of the Kali-Yuga, an observation that explained the political and social disasters of the time. It was concrete enough to be testable, to use an anachronistic term, and it turned out to be incorrect: the world did not come to an end during the first centuries of the Common Era. The length of the Kali-Yuga was therefore reconsidered, with the result that henceforth Brahmins lived no longer near the end of the Kali-Yuga, far from

11 Fussman 2012, 26, observes: ‘The first century A.D. was a time of great turmoil and changes in Northern India. Wars raged between the last Indo-Greeks, the Śakas, the Indo-Parthians and the Kushans till Wima Kadphises, c. A.D. 50, was able to bring some peace. There may have been later local revolts or internal strifes, of which no evidence remains, and the rule of the Kushans may have been hard, but at least foreign invasions were stopped for more than two centuries’. We must assume that Kuṣāṇa rule did not quite correspond to Brahmanical expectations of the new Kṛta-Yuga.

12 Note that the question of linearity and circularity of time plays no role in the observations here made. Both the ‘short’ and the subsequent ‘long’ Yuga were part of a cyclic vision of time, but the very length of the ‘long’ Yuga made it more linear than the ‘short’ Yuga: ‘Where cyclic time takes a spiral form, it can be seen as almost linear when sufficiently stretched’ (Thapar 2011, 292). Yet ‘historical awareness’ played a far greater role when people believed in the ‘short’ Yuga. Strictly speaking, ‘the Indians did not believe in “cyclic time”, if by that is meant an endless and beginningless recurrence of events. It is true that the narratives recounted in the Purāṇas allude to vast cosmic cycles of repeated creation and dissolution (the *kalpas*), but these are cycles of change *within* linear time’ (Perrett 1999, 314).

it: hundreds of thousands of years were to pass before its end would arrive. Disasters and mishaps could no longer be attributed to the *end* of the Kali-Yuga; instead they were attributed to the Kali-Yuga as such. A short but intense period of catastrophic events that announced the arrival of better times was in this way replaced with a very long period of hundreds of thousands of years characterized by misery and injustice throughout. Texts no longer speak of the *end* of the Kali-Yuga, but of the Kali-Yuga *tout court*.¹³ General conditions, including most notably social conditions, will go from bad to worse, to be sure. But this process of deterioration is nowhere near its end.

4 Traces in Purāṇas

If our reflections so far are correct, a major change took place in the brahmanical conception of history. The earlier conception finds expression in some of the texts considered so far, while the so-called Purāṇas are our main testimony for the updated version. However, the Purāṇas also contain traces of the transition.

Consider the following observations about the presentation of the Yugas in these texts, made by Ludo Rocher in his book *The Purāṇas*:

One feature that sets the *yugas* apart from similar systems in other civilizations is that, in India, the world ages have been assigned specific durations. The four *yugas* extend over periods of 4000, 3000, 2000, and 1000 years. Each of these is preceded by a dawn (*saṃdhyā*) and followed by a twilight (*saṃdhyāṃśa*) equal to one tenth of the duration of the *yuga* proper. The figures for the *yugas* which appear most often in the purāṇas are, therefore, 4800, 3600, 2400, and 1200, the *caturyuga* being equal to 12,000 years. More often than not these years are said to be divine years. To convert them into human years they have to be multiplied by 360, i.e. 1,728,000 + 1,296,000 + 864,000 + 432,000 = 4,320,000. (Rocher 1986, 124)

Note the words ‘more often than not’ in ‘More often than not these years are said to be divine years’. Some Purāṇas say no such thing. An example is the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (see especially 32.58–65), presumably one of the earliest surviving texts of this kind (Rocher 1986, 245).¹⁴ This Purāṇa contains a vivid description of the hardships connected with the end of the Kali-Yuga in chapter 58. This description culminates in the introduction of a destructive ruler called Pramiti who kills countless human beings (primarily foreigners [*mleccha*]); following this, people start killing each other, and suffer untold miseries. Then, however, the

¹³ See the example of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, below.

¹⁴ Hazra 1940, 16, proposes 200–75 for the portion on Yugas.

Yuga changes overnight (*ahorātraṃ ... yugaṃ ... parivartate*, 58.101), and a new Kṛta-Yuga comes about (*kṛtam avartata*, 58.102; *pravṛtte ... kṛtayuge*, 58.103). An almost identical account is found in *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 1.2.31. Nothing prevents us from assuming that these two Purāṇas preserve an understanding of the Yugas that prevailed before their lengths were multiplied by 360, i. e. before their lengths exceeded anything measurable in terms related to ordinary human experience.¹⁵

Vincent Eltschinger has drawn attention to the fact that the apocalyptic passages from the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* just considered say nothing about foreign invasions, and all the more about heretical views¹⁶ as harbingers of the end of the Yuga (Eltchinger 2012). It seems fair to explain this in chronological terms. These passages date from a time when Gupta rule had put an end to foreign invasions, and the main threat facing Brahmanism was felt to come from non-brahmanical religious currents including Buddhism and Jainism.¹⁷

An example of a Purāṇa that represents the more recent position, in which the Yugas are thought of as being of exceedingly long duration, is the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.¹⁸ Significantly, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.1, which repeatedly refers to the Kali age, and a few times to the increase or progress of the Kali age (*kaler vṛddhi*), never refers to its *end* (cf. Kirfel 1959, 11 f.). This confirms our earlier impression that now the Kali-Yuga as such, and not its end, preoccupied the minds of the authors concerned. The brahmanical worries of the Kali-Yuga in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* concern, as once again pointed out by Eltschinger, heretical competitors rather than foreign invaders.¹⁹

15 Note that the Yugas are, also in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, placed in a wider context of Manvantaras and Kalpas, periods of far greater length than the individual Yugas.

16 The terms ‘heretic’ and ‘heretical’ are far from ideal in this context. For a discussion, see Doniger O’Flaherty 1983.

17 The suggestion has been made that the story of Pramiti was a reflection of historical rulers ‘such as Candragupta II Vikramāditya (r. 375 – 415) or Yaśodharman of Malvā, who defeated the Hūṇas around 530’ (Eltchinger, 2012, 55, with references to further literature).

18 *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.3.11 and 6.1.5 state in so many words that 12,000 *divine* years constitute a *caturyuga*.

19 Eltschinger points out that the brahmanical Yugas did end up finding their way into certain buddhist texts (Eltchinger 2012). A particularly interesting example is the tenth chapter (*sagāthaka*) of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, which must have been added to the text between its first translation into Chinese in 443 and the second one in 513. Unfortunately the information about Yugas is full of contradictions: there are no Buddhas in the Kali-Yuga (v. 804); Śākyamuni lived in the Kali-Yuga (v. 794); long after Śākyamuni, the Kali-Yuga will begin (v. 784 – 6); Buddhism will disappear at the end of the Kali-Yuga (v. 786). Verse 786 informs us that the Kali-Yuga will come after the Mauryas, the Nandas, the Guptas and then some unspecified foreigners

5 Relevance of historical events

Let me sum up what we have seen so far. Brahmanical identity was, most of the time, not so much connected with a historical narrative in which significant events took place. The main characteristic of brahmanical historical narrative was rather that, when it really came to it, nothing of fundamental importance happened in the present.²⁰ This could take the form that the world had essentially always been as it is today, since beginningless time. Alternatively, it could take the rather pessimistic shape that we live in a time of great depravity that will go on for hundreds of thousands of years to come. Both these views – that of beginningless and endless time, and that of enormously long world periods – were in the end variants of the idea that the world at bottom does not change, or changes so slowly that we cannot notice it; the two do not even exclude each other. Events occurring at present are therefore without deeper significance.²¹ However, we have also seen that there was a time, during the turbulent centuries surrounding the beginning of the Common Era, when at least a number of Brahmins

(*mleccha*), i. e., presumably at the time these verses were added to the text. If that was the *beginning* of the Kali-Yuga, one wonders what would be its end. The text provides no answer.

20 Contrast this with the Christian West: ‘The impact of the Bible on Christian conceptions of history, from the earliest Christian centuries to the nineteenth, was radical and pervasive. It was not only that the sin of Adam, the Incarnation and the Last Judgement framed all history. The fact that biblical history presented the dealings of God with his Chosen People in something like a recurrent pattern of transgression, punishment and deliverance meant that the same pattern could be expected to be repeated so long as history lasted: history presented a recurring series of types and situations within the historical macrocosm of primal sin and final judgement. [...] But above all the Bible offered an archetypal pattern, repeated many times, of covenant with God and entry to the Promised Land, of collective transgression and its punishment by devastation, exile, captivity, followed by deliverance and return, symbolized by the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. It is a pattern, it may be noted, which makes human beings the prime movers of history only through their transgressions: transgression is their role in the historical dynamic, though there is a subsidiary one for the instruments of punishment, whether tyrants or barbarians, and for the individual bringers of deliverance – types of Moses and the Messiah’ (Burrow 2007, 182f.).

21 Cf. Kane 1973, 923: ‘Since only 5046 years have elapsed (in 1945 A.D.) from the beginning of the Kali age and as Kaliyuga extends to 432000 years according to Paurāṇic computations we are just on the threshold of the Kaliyuga and it is beyond one’s comprehension to visualize what will happen towards the end of the vast period of about 427000 years that are still to pass before Kaliyuga ends. It is very small consolation to read in the Purāṇas in a prophetic strain that at the end of that colossal period Viṣṇu will be incarnated as Kalkin in a village Śambhala, will destroy all Mlecchas, śūdra kings and heretics and will establish dharma, so that the Kṛta age will then be ushered in’.

did attribute deeper significance to the distressful events that were taking place.²² They thought that the end of the Kali-Yuga was near, and that a new Kṛta-Yuga might begin soon.²³ If we agree with Pollock that, for an event to become historical, it must be seen to contribute to the development of a plot (Pollock 1989, 605), we cannot but conclude that the events of that time were historical in the strictest sense. They were interpreted as signs of the approaching end of a world period, more precisely: as playing a role in bringing about the end of the Kali-Yuga. This period, during which current political and social events were seen, not as more of the same but rather as of profound and unique significance, did not last very long.²⁴ Indeed, the urgency of the approaching end appears to have weakened, with the result that less and less attention was paid to the precise events that supposedly announced it. An altogether static vision of history soon came to predominate again.

It has been observed that ‘we can read thousands of pages of Sanskrit on any imaginable subject and not encounter a single passing reference to a historical person, place, or event – or at least to any that, historically speaking, matters’ (Pollock 1989, 606). We have come across an important exception to this observation. The early texts that testify to the then reigning belief that the end of the Kali-Yuga was near refer extensively to historical persons, places and events. The *Yuga Purāṇa*, mentioned earlier, is the best example. We had occasion to mention the incursions by Indo-Greeks and Śakas, related in this text. It also mentions a number of contemporary rulers, whose existence is to at least some extent confirmed by other sources of information.²⁵ These persons and events were mentioned because they played a role in bringing the Kali-Yuga to a close.

Subsequent Sanskrit literature does not normally refer to historical persons and events, even where it complains about the sufferings brought about by the Kali-Yuga. At first sight this is remarkable. Why, for example, are there so few ref-

22 This period coincides rather closely with the one during which the character of classical Brahmanism was formed through the composition of Dharmaśāstras, the introduction of the sacrificial cord (*yajñopavīta*) and of the notion of *dvija* ‘twice-born’ to refer to the upper three *varṇas* and especially to Brahmins (cf. Olivelle 2012).

23 The examples we have considered show that Kane’s remark to the extent that ‘all works that are extant think that they are in the midst of a very sinful age and there is not a single work which thinks that the era of perfection may dawn in the very near future’ (Kane 1973, 886) is not correct.

24 One reason why this period has so often been overlooked in modern scholarship may well be that scholars, struck by what they considered the non-historical attitude of Brahmanism, concluded that India did not and could not have history. Madeleine Biardeau may count as a prime example (cf. Colas 2012).

25 See Mitchiner 2002, 55 f.: ‘The historicity of the account’.

erences to the Hūṇas and other invading armies that brought endless misery in their wake in the middle of the first millennium?²⁶ The answer suggested by our reflections so far is as follows. These other invaders played no crucial role in bringing about the end of a Yuga, as the Indo-Greeks and the Śakas had. The sufferings inflicted by these more recent invaders were perhaps not less severe than the earlier ones, but they were, historically speaking, unremarkable, part of a process that would repeat itself numerous times before the present Kali-Yuga will come to an end. Let me quote John Burrow's observation as to what is a story:

A story is inherently whiggish, and the longer its timescale the more marked this will be, requiring an artificial protagonist enduring beyond the span of individual lives and therefore, generally, of individual purposes. A story is selective, looking forward to its later episodes or its eventual outcome for its criteria of relevance. (Burrow 2007, 474)

Well, the events that these more recent brahmanical authors experienced, unlike those experienced by their predecessors around the beginning of the Common Era, were no longer part of a story, they were no longer relevant to anything in particular. Rather than dwelling upon their specific misfortunes, many brahmanical authors – and most specifically the authors of the Purāṇas – turned their attention to the competitors that were there to stay: various heretics disrespectful of the proper order of society, among them Buddhists and Jainas (cf. González-Reimann 2002, 170; Eltschinger 2012).

It now becomes understandable that brahmanical authors from the time of the Gupta empire onward have a tendency to identify their rulers with (what we would consider) mythical heroes. Hermann Kulke draws attention to the Gupta emperor Samudragupta, who in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* repeats many of the heroic feats of the mythical Rāma (Kulke 1979, 106f.). The deeds of King Harṣa, according to Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, correspond to deeds of the mythical Kṛta-Yuga. Sandhyākaranandin wrote his biography of King Rāmapāla of the Pāla-dynasty, the *Rāmacarita*, in such a way that it can also be read as a description of the deeds of the mythical Rāma. The *Pr̥thvīrājaviṅaya* of Jayānaka is a further example, for the poet here systematically identifies King Pr̥thvīrāja with

26 It is likely that the unspecified foreigners of *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* 10.786 (see note 19, above) were Hūṇas. According to Verardi 2011, 156f., 'The destructions brought to India by the Hūṇas, described at length in a number of books of Indian history, are nothing else than the devastations inflicted on Indian adversaries by increasingly confident Brahmans who recruited anyone on whom they could exercise their influence'. This, if true, would give the Brahmans little to complain about.

Rāma (Pollock 1993, 274 f.). The feats of those mythical heroes had been relevant and meaningful, they were part of a coherent story, and in this sense they were historical. The frequent identifications of rulers with gods must no doubt be understood in the same manner (cf. Veluthat 2009, 70 f.).

Brahmanism was a second time confronted with a situation that threatened its very foundations, and it will be interesting to consider how it responded that second time. Roughly from the twelfth century onward, invaders from Central Asia instituted a new social and political order that had no place for the brahmanical order. This time, as Sheldon Pollock has argued, the brahmanical reaction did not invoke an approaching end of the world (Pollock 1993). Quite on the contrary, this new threat came to be interpreted as a repetition, or imitation, of the war between good and evil depicted in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. More than before, ‘good’ kings came to be identified, in inscriptions and literature, with the divine king Rāma, and the invading Turkic peoples were designated ‘demons’ (*rākṣasa*, *asura*).

Pollock’s important observation confirms the main picture drawn in this article. The first series of catastrophic events had been interpreted in the brahmanical tradition as indicative of the approaching end of the world. The second series was interpreted altogether differently: as an imitation of what had happened before. In a way, Brahmanism in the second millennium was no longer in a position to introduce an end-of-the-world scenario, because it had settled for an overall picture of history that would continue for a long time. This was apparently not yet the case at the beginning of the Common Era.

6 Insignificance of contemporary events

We should be careful not to deny brahmanical India a sense of history, as has so often been done. A number of texts, including Sanskrit texts, and numerous inscriptions, show that awareness of what happened in earlier generations was not lacking in India.²⁷ However, our reflections suggest that ordinary historical events were not significant in a deeper sense for brahmanical thinkers, most of the time.²⁸ The exception that proves the rule is the relatively short interval

²⁷ See, e.g., Kulke 1979 and Thapar 2011; further the various contributions in *Religions of South Asia 5/1–2* (2011), an issue dedicated to ‘Genealogy and history in South Asia’.

²⁸ In this connection it is relevant to recall the difference between history and record-keeping; see Burrow 2007, 1–8 (‘Prologue’) and 231: ‘History as a genre [...] characteristically involves extended narrative, relevant circumstantial detail, and thematic coherence; the recording of

in brahmanical history (barely more than three hundred years) when Brahmins (or at least some of them) believed that the end of the world (i.e. the end of the Kali-Yuga) was near, so that political and social events gained a uniqueness which they did not habitually have.

During most of the time following (and presumably preceding) this relatively short interval, ordinary historical events – including big, perturbing events, such as wars and conquests – were at best more or less close imitations of events that had occurred before, and would occur again in the future. Rulers, it seems, liked to compare their own feats to feats carried out by legendary or mythological figures that lived an indeterminate number of years ago. These ordinary historical events had no deeper significance, they did not contribute to the development of a plot whose importance went beyond the actors directly involved. Events of world-wide significance had taken place in the remote past, and would take place in an equally remote future. They were duly remembered, or anticipated, and are all of the kind we would call mythological or religious. In between these world-shaking events, much happened, but nothing that could compare in significance to those events long past, or hidden in the distant future. Brahmins knew what counted in this world. During the centuries surrounding the beginning of the Common Era they thought that the events they lived through counted on a cosmic scale. They gradually found out that they had been mistaken, and that the events that really matter did not take place right now: they had taken place in a remote past, or would take place in an equally remote future.

7 The increased importance of heretics

Vincent Eltschinger, in an article already referred to, draws attention to a ‘sudden transposition of mutual rivalry to the philosophical level’ that took place in or at the end of the fifth century CE, and that finds expression in new polemical treatises that oppose brahmanical and buddhist thinkers (Eltchinger 2012). Eltschinger is tempted to link this development with the prominence heretical thinkers gain in the Purāṇas from Gupta times onward. Piotr Balcerowicz, too, notices a sudden change in jaina philosophical texts, presumably in the fifth century (Balcerowicz 2008, 57–9). Like their brahmanical and buddhist counterparts, jaina texts become polemical and argumentative at that time. Something seems to have happened in or around the fifth century that had this profound

facts is dictated by thematic, dramatic and explanatory considerations, rather than just chronological juxtaposition and convention’.

effect on philosophical writing. Could the brahmanical transition – from the expectation of an approaching end of the world followed by ‘redemption’ for those who remained pure, to the conviction that present circumstances would continue for countless years – have played a role?

It is difficult to answer this question with confidence. If our reflections so far are correct, millenarian expectations continued until the early Guptas in the fourth century CE, even though they appear to gradually lose much of their fervour, and stop attributing eschatological significance to each and every event. Also under the Guptas, it seems, the extended vision of the Kali-Yuga began to replace those millenarian expectations. An increased hostility toward heretics is already manifest in the last texts associated with the short Kali-Yuga, and therefore with millenarian expectations: (the relevant portions of) the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*. The temporal correspondence between abandoned millenarian expectations and anti-heretical polemical activity is therefore not perfect. This does not mean that the two are unconnected. I would rather favour the idea that they *are* connected. It is easier to ignore one’s intellectual (and political) opponents if one is convinced that history itself will soon judge in one’s favour: in the new Kṛta-Yuga there is clearly no place for heretics of various hues. Once this conviction weakens or disappears, on the other hand, one is on one’s own; history will then no longer solve your problems for you. Finding oneself in the wicked Kali-Yuga, and this for a long long time to come, one has to take matters in one’s own hands. This is perhaps what brahmanical philosophers did, for example by writing polemical treatises and engaging in inimical debates.

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Abbreviation

Mhbh = *Mahābhārata*. Crit. ed. by V. S. Sukthankar etc. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona. Poona. 1933–66

Jörg Rüpke

Construing 'religion' by doing historiography: The historicisation of religion in the Roman Republic

1 Religion and history

Some practices and beliefs that we usually classify as 'religious' are very old. Regardless of the specific 'theory of religion' one may be referring to – whether it be the belief in the afterlife, the existence of superhuman agents, or non-pragmatic behaviour that forms the definitional kernel of said theory – religion has been identified in some prehistoric images and burial practices of the last 100,000 years and has even been traced back to the age of Australopithecus and his predecessors. As the discovery of Göbleki Tepe has shown, monumental buildings that can hardly be interpreted as anything but ritual sites and thus seem to suggest superhuman agents or an afterlife, have existed since 9000 BCE. The same theories of religion tell us why human beings, defined as a species that exists in a cultural world, came up with or invented religion. Why would a culture create a concept like 'religion'? Inventing such a concept presupposes an interest in making distinctions between a phenomenon like 'religion' and something that is 'non-religious'. Such interest could be of a political nature, as societies wish to distinguish between matters that can be decided by officials whose authority is legitimated by annual elections, and affairs that fall under the influence of those individuals or families who are closer to the gods. Alternatively the aforementioned distinction could be motivated by the economic need to draw a line between those objects that can be subjected to property transfer and those which are *sacer* and thus fall outside the realm of profitable transactions. Moreover, the demarcation of a separate religious realm could be triggered by legal concerns as people attempt to discriminate between those cases that fall under positive law and those that are subject to divine command – abortion in the US or the specific rulings for employees in Churches in Germany are recent examples. Finally the reason behind this division may be a philosophical one arising from human beings' attempts to distinguish what is knowable from that, which is not. In a way all these possible motivations are second-order interests compared to religious practice and beliefs. However, they clearly interact with the latter.

Such observations or speculations are not merely petty historical details. In global politics the concept of 'religion' and of the self-organisation of social

groups in terms of ‘religions’, has proven a highly successful format in efforts to establish oneself as a national or international agent of the ‘non governmental’ type. The proliferation of the Western concept of ‘religion’ (as a parasite construct riding on the back of the notion of national identity that began to flourish from the nineteenth century onwards) and the necessity to construct (or continuously cultivate) interpretive accounts of such religions, has brought along with it the creation of an entirely new discipline, namely the ‘History of Religion’ or *Religionswissenschaft*.

Yet, I am not looking to trace the history of religion as a scientific concept in this article. Instead, I want to return to my initial question: Why would a culture generate a *concept* like ‘religion’? The question is not targeted at the exploration of the term ‘religion’ or *religio* but at the very idea of the religious. In other words I seek to investigate any idea that is at least vaguely comparable to our notion of religion, as it is employed in everyday speech. Turning to ‘religion’ in the Roman Republic and the sources that are available from that time, it becomes apparent that semantics are vitally important if one wishes to outline basic differences between various ideas and terminologies. *Sacer* and *religiosus* are crucial idioms within the context of a hierarchy of property rights (Rüpke 2007, 8). *Feriae*, the Latin word for ‘festival days’ is etymologically related – and we do not know exactly how – to the expressions *fas* and *nefas*, which denote divine property in time (Rüpke 2011, 50f. and 55–8). *Mos maiorum*, tradition (‘the way of the ancestors’), might be corrected by piecemeal actions ascribed to divine interventions – as for instance by *prodigia*, Sibylline oracles –, but is not systematically differentiated from the concept of ‘gods’ will, divine revelation or even from written divine law like the *torah*.

History is not only a mighty instrument of ordering the past for the purposes of academic research but also carries much wider importance. The argument put forth in this chapter is that the historicisation of religion was an important element of the creation of a concept of religion in the late Roman Republic. This claim presupposes a concept of ‘history’ that needs some explanation before I start to analyse the Roman evidence.

Historical thinking has widely, though not universally, taken the form of narratives, of organised historiography:

There is no human culture without a constitutive element of common memory. By remembering, interpreting, and representing the past peoples understand their present-day life and develop a future perspective on themselves and their world. ‘History’ in this fundamen-

tal and anthropologically universal sense is a culture's interpretive recollection of the past serving as a means to orient the group in the present. (Rüsen 1996, 8)¹

Historical narratives generated by a given group seem to be important for many other groups. Others might or might not have a place in these histories. A group's history need not overlap with that of other societies, although it certainly might. The orientation given by such a history for the future might be explicit or implicit. Understandably, religious convictions contribute enormously to their adherents' or cultures' conceptualisation and narrations of the past – a past that is predefined by god(s), often repeats itself, or even represents a period of trials. Such historical narratives are variously furthered by professionals in their historiographic enterprises, embodied through large-scale monuments (Hartmann 2010), memorised through schooling and even physical exercise (Connerton 1989, 72–95) and finally commemorated in public speeches (Bücher 2006, especially 137–40) and rituals.

Similar efforts to interpret or constitute a group as a 'city' or 'people' through one's past could be undertaken by, or for religious communities, thus creating 'confessions' or 'religions' and emphasising differences. It is here that my interest in identifying the historicisation of religion in the late Roman Republic fits in: Such an exploration would be an important element of any process to develop a concept of religion (cf. Metzger, p. 287, in this volume). However, this conceptualisation is not its only benefit.

Through its chronological framework history allows for various stories to relate and speak to one another. It is likely that conflicts and contesting claims have frequently served as triggers for the production of alternate narratives. History, then, does not occur in the singular. Instead it tends to be disputed and endangered. History introduces contingency from the very beginning in order to question the established truths of others. Religion may not seem a very likely candidate for historicisation. Featuring meta-historical claims, gods outside of time and displaying an inherent immunity to change, religion as a social phenomenon possesses strong traditional authority in a Weberian sense. Frequently myths tell stories of a distant past and thereby establish binding norms. These norms continue to be valid, not despite the fact that this past is categorically different from contemporary life, but precisely for this reason. How could one narrate a history for a system of rituals, for a 'cold' sector of culture?² A polytheist

¹ To this definition the element of space must be added (cf. Wescoat, Ousterhout 2012; Tweed 2011; Leach 1988; Rau 2013; and more generally Löw 2001). Basic lines of the following are taken from Rüpke 2014.

² For 'cold' and 'hot' societies see Lévi-Strauss 1966, 233f.

religion or an embedded religion that is at home in a specific city would be an unlikely candidate for such a strategy. Instead such an approach appears to be best suited to a monotheistic, prophetic religion with a sound and compelling theology of the history of salvation. What are the reasons for the rise of the history of religion and of historicizing strategies in ‘religion’ – a cultural practice introducing an alternative order and fighting contingency –, when, in scriptural societies, canonisation is frequently used to stabilise narratives, as well as doctrinal solutions, and thus to exclude alternative interpretations from the tradition?³ It is at this juncture that my second interest in the late republic arises. If there is a historicisation of religion, one has to ask what purpose it serves.

2 Religion in late Republican history

Such an interest is new. This statement does not imply that questions regarding history and religion in Roman culture have not been addressed before. Social memory that has been turned into history is available and accessible in written form from the beginning of the third century BCE onwards. We have evidence of honorific funerary inscriptions, increasing in scale with the sarcophagi and *elogiae* to the members of the noble family of the Scipiones in the third and second centuries. The earliest known funerary oration (*laudatio funebris*), which has survived in fragmentary form presumably stems from a speech recorded in writing in 221; it concerns the twice consul and – this information is, however, absent from the textual fragment – *pontifex maximus* L. Caecilius Metellus. By the middle of the third century, the *pontifex maximus* Ti. Coruncanius began to record pontifical *commentarii*. He kept a log of membership protocols, noted down the number of prodigies and chronicled the decisions that were taken. Ascription of agency to actors, and hence the situating of specific priesthoods within a network of ever more formalised and differentiated authorities, seems to have been the dominant function of the *comentarii*. Thus we know that in 275 or 274 L. Postumius Albinus was the priest who held the title *Rex sacrorum*. In this capacity he witnessed the introduction of a new divinatory practice, which demanded that the *haruspices* begin to pay attention to the heart of the sacrificial victim in their scrutiny of entrails (Pliny, *Nat.* 11.186). Evidently, the office of the *Rex sacrorum*, supplemented by Olympiads in the underlying source had been used as a tool for historical organisation and the dating of eras.

³ For canonization see Assmann, Assmann 1987; Folkert 1989; Reinhard 2009; exemplary Rajak 2009.

From the late third century BCE onwards, Romans developed a historiography of the rise of their city along the lines of Greek historiography, into which also data on religious practices entered. Evidently, religious data were seen as a factor in secular history. This chapter's interest is however more specific: When and why are the memories and historical dates about what we would denote as religion woven into a history of such religious practices and events, thus establishing an actual concept of 'religion'?

My research is inspired by the work of Hubert Cancik but I am not satisfied by his answers. In a paper published in 1997 Cancik inquired into the historicisation of culture in antiquity and posed the aforementioned question shortly after: 'How can religion, how rituals, how could the divine have a history?' (Cancik 2008, 30). Embedded in his brief analyses of Varro and Tacitus is a reflection on the epistemological basis of such historicisation. Through the analysis of his sources he comes to see religion as an *institutum*, something 'set up' that consists of practices created and traditionalised by humans or even formally regulated and monumentalised in the form of temples (ibid., 28). Yet, I want to argue that this view is in itself not a given fact but rather the consequence of an even more fundamental effort at historicisation by Roman intellectuals. Religious events (like all others) could easily be remembered in a piecemeal fashion. In order to detect 'historicisation' this is not sufficient. A necessary precondition would be a sequencing of events, their temporalisation and an awareness of change. There must be a common subject to the events that are narrated. I will look for the temporalisation of a field that could be termed 'religion'. Some incipient forms of 'historicisation' can be detected in the second century BCE. These will be presented before the analysis concentrates on the first century BCE and Marcus Terentius Varro's *Antiquitates Rerum Diuinarum*, a fully-fledged historicisation of religion which occupies a strategic position in a particular historical context.

3 The books of Numa

The historiographic treatment of an incident that occurred in 181 BCE illuminates the changing modes of temporalisation in Roman historiography. In that year it was claimed that the sarcophagus of Numa, the second king of Rome, had been found. The details of the discovery and its plausibility have been the object of many later discussions; interest at the time focused on the books that were recovered. After intensive public scrutiny they were burnt (Livy 40.29). The event was a clear attempt at pseudo-epigraphy (Rosen 1985; Pailler 1988, 623–703; Rüpke 1995, 372, n. 16). The supposedly Pythagorean contents of the books that declared

Numa – against all chronological possibility – a pupil of the famous Greek philosopher Pythagoras, indicate the lack of a unified chronological framework for Roman history at the time. The writings situated an authoritative Roman religious figure within the realm of Greek philosophical thinking. This contextualisation is in itself a statement about the place of Rome in the Mediterranean world after the victories of the Second Punic, and the wars on Greek soil that followed. It is a systematic rather than a historical argument.

However, the views on these now-lost books eventually changed.⁴ For the earliest stages we have to rely on a passage in Pliny the Elder:

[...] *libros eius [scil. Numa] repertos P. Cornelio L. f. Cethego, M. Baebio Q. f. Tamphilo coss. – eosque combustos a Q. Petilio praetore, quia philosophiae scripta essent. Hoc idem tradit Piso Censorius primo commentariorum, sed libros septem iuris pontificii totidemque Pythagoricos fuisse, Tuditanus quattuordecim Numa decretorum fuisse.*

([...] his books were found during the time of the consuls P. Cornelius L. f. Cethegus and M. Babius Q. f. Tamphilus and they were burnt by the praetor Q. Petilius because they were books of philosophy. Piso Censorius reports the same in his first commentary but said that there had been seven books of pontifical law and the same number of Pythagorean philosophical works. Tuditanus maintains that there had been fourteen books of decrees of Numa). (Pliny, *Nat.* 13.84–6)

Whereas the only potential contemporary, Cassius Hemina, speaks of Pythagorean, that is Greek philosophy, by the last third of the second century BCE, Calpurnius Piso and Sempronius Tuditanus added or concentrated on an originally Roman element in the small library, raising the number of books from three to two times (namely Greek and Latin books) seven (to grow to two times twelve by the first century BCE). However, Tuditanus adds a clearly historical dimension with the introduction of the ‘decrees of Numa’: We are moving from timeless veracities written down by a famous man to datable change and positivistic law. Nearly a century later, *sacrorum institutorum causae*, ‘reasons (and origins) for the institutionalisation of ritual practices’, had been found, according to Varro (as quoted by Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 7.34). Therefore historical change is in itself a result of circumstances and motifs.

⁴ See more general Rosenberger 2003 for the changing views on the contents of the sarcophagus.

4 Ennius and the *fasti*

A crucial case of new historical writing is nearly as old as the Pseudo-Numa. In 189 Marcus Fulvius Nobilior was consul along with one Manlius Vulso and assumed military command of the Aetolian front (Livy, 37.50; 38.1–11). Traditional records maintain that the most important event of this campaign was the siege and capture of the city of Ambracia, which is located north of the Gulf of Actium. In fact it was the booty from this city in particular that the victor displayed in the triumphal procession that took place upon his return to Rome in 187 (Livy, 39.5.14f.). Fulvius not only brought the treasures home, he actually put a roof over their head. He transformed a temple of Hercules into a 'museum' in the true, modern sense of the term: It became a *Museion*, a sanctuary of the Muses, and the first of its kind in Rome (Pape 1975; Östenberg 2009). Fulvius also undertook the expansion of an existing temple of Hercules, probably that of Hercules Custos, after reconciling with Aemilius, his former antagonist and fellow censor in 179 BCE. He added a hall with columns and then installed the statues of the nine muses that he had taken from Ambracia. Hercules became *Hercules Musarum*, 'Hercules of the Muses'. The institutionalisation of the new name and this new tutelary role of Hercules signified powerful protection of cultural production, a sphere of activity of increasing importance to the self-image of the Roman elite. A *terminus post quem* for the foundation of the temple is the beginning of Fulvius' censorship in 179; its completion and dedication would have occurred in the subsequent years.⁵

In addition *Fulvius* installed a calendar known as *fasti* in the *aedes Herculis Musarum* in the form of a wall painting (Rüpke 2012, 93–5). He also added a meeting place for poets in the interior and furnished it with many statues and Greek paintings. The few quotations from this calendar indicate that the inscribed dedication might have stated the following:

The consul and censor M. Fulvius Nobilior set up this calendar after the Aeolian War: Romulus had named ten months, the first in honor of his father and foremother; after having divided the people into older and younger to ensure that one group should defend the state by advice, the other by arms, he named the third and fourth in honour of both; the rest was named by numbers. Numa named the two that were added for Ianus and the Gods of the Netherworld. A thirteenth month was intercalated according to a law by the consul Acilius in the year 562.

⁵ See Rüpke 2012, 88–90, and the critical evaluation of the dating by Feeney 2007, 143, n. 24.

This is not a faithful reconstruction, but a rather basic hypothesis that could help explain all the quotations of, and references to Fulvius' calendar (Rüpke 2012, 95; id. 2006, also for the following). The calendar as a cultural product is thereby given a history. However, we have to ask ourselves whether this is already a history of religion. It is likely that at the time no encompassing concept of religion existed that would have formed the basis for an answer to this query. The creator of the painting added another element, a list of the annual consuls and occasional censors. It has been hypothesised that this list covered all such officials from the Gallic Sack of Rome onwards, as this event was construed as the second (or even third) birth of Rome. The artistic ensemble was clearly an attempt at 'systematic' history. It tried to summarise and unify the most important eponymous agents, that is those employed in dating, in a coherent list that had been extracted and reworked from historic narratives.

The combination of these elements proves the historicizing significance of the third element (and at the same time important innovation) that formed part of Fulvius' mural calendar: The calendar recorded *dies natales templorum*, the foundation days of urban temples. In the half-century that ensued after the end of the war against Hannibal, temples financed from war booty shot up like mushrooms in Rome. They were dedications to the gods that had granted the Romans victory in individual battles and hence commemorated military success. After they had seen, heard, and smelled the victories in lavish processions and games, Romans could now view history in much more tangible terms in those very temples. While up to that point the purpose of the public calendar had been to document the political and juridical year, it now functioned additionally as an embodiment of history. Previously calendars had merely included those religious dates that served (or, unexpectedly, did not affect) said purpose, festivals like the *Vestalia* or *Neptunalia* (dedicated to Vesta and Neptune respectively) that rendered days forbidden for some political and juridical business. Temple foundations rank highly on the list of those historical events that were most precisely retained in Rome's collective memory (Rüpke 2006a). However, temples were likewise monuments dedicated to a god. A temple was owned by a deity and usually housed his or her statue. As such it was the most concrete sign of the deity's presence and a testimony to its relationship with the Roman people. A deity might publicly enter the city as a statue, but frequently temples were built first. Within the possibility of a polytheistic system open to additions and multiplications of divine figures, it is the production of statue and temple that brings the god into social life – regardless of his earlier ontology.

Our analysis of the introduction of the temple-foundation days into the *fasti*, and the way they were combined with the magistrate lists, has shown that there was a historical perspective to the integration of alien elements into this calen-

dar. The timeless character of the dedication days distributed across the year was thus transferred and attributed to the historical phenomenon of successive temple foundations. As a result the religious reading of these events, as embodying the history of divine epiphanies and cult diversifications, obtained a political dimension. In the history of ideas, this kind of inversion is referred to as euhemerism. Interestingly it was Ennius, a protégé of Fulvius and a contemporary intellectual, poet and historian, who introduced this type of thinking to Rome.

Ennius' narrative *Euhemerus* is not merely eponymous for the Latin tradition. In this treatise, which was probably written before the *Annales* were begun in the latter half of the 180 s BCE (see Ennius/Skutsch [ed.] 1985, 3–6), he concerned himself directly with the origins of temples and – in this order – annual festivals. In his work Ennius followed a Greek model and the fragments that survive contain no explicit history of the origins of the *dies natales templorum* in the city of Rome. It is therefore difficult to arrive today at an appropriate assessment of his Ennius' view of these days. Nonetheless, the elements of critique that do survive can appear downright radical to modern eyes. It may, however, not even have occurred to Ennius and his readers that an explanation of the genesis of the gods and the origin of the cult dedicated to them necessarily implied atheism and denial, or even scepticism. Nor did he seem to think that such exploration and documentation implied a call for action in the real world. In fact this would certainly have been the last thing the temple's patron needed. Even to readers in the ancient world (e. g. Cicero, *nat.*, 1.119; cf. Winiarczyk 1990), a philosophical treatise such as *Euhemerus* constituted less an attack on religion than the application of historical instinct to religion, despite its critical implications. It was a powerful instrument of ordering in a quickly changing world.

The incipient use of historicisation must have been already apparent in aetiological myths. Yet, these aetiologies tend to remain anecdotal as historical examples in political rhetoric (stressed by Jehne 2002, 71, to be characteristic for the first century BCE). Ennius' *Annales* replaced anecdotal forms of family memory (whether in the form of inscriptions or of funerary speeches) with a coherent and sequential history. This is what the Fulvian *fasti* did as well, although the means used in this case were not narratives but instead the chronographic form of the calendar.

5 Varronian History and systematics⁶

With Varro's sixteen books of *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum*, 'Antiquities of divine things', the systematisation of religion reaches its climax at the end of the republic. The work was dedicated to Julius Caesar in 46 BCE. In this opus religious historicizing goes well beyond aetiological stories. The existence of two chronologically ordered passages has been acknowledged since Agahd's edition of the first and the last books.⁷ Fragments 35 to 39 of the first book of Varro's *Antiquitates rerum diuinarum* list the introductions of deities and cults into the city of Rome by the earliest kings (fr. 35f. Cardauns = fr. 39a Agahd). These fragments form the first sequence. The second chronological sequence occurs in book 15. Fragments 214 to 221 (according to the reconstruction of Burkhard Cardauns 1976) add further cults and thus enlarge the chronological realm, so that it comes to encompass Hercules' visit to Rome. The historical data roughly conforms to the narratives found in the general historiographic literature of the time. In his listing of sacred places in *On Latin Language*, Varro himself refers to the introduction of Sabine deities by Titus Tatius and attributes his data to the 'annals' (*Ling.* 5.74). The impulse to record such information and to organise historical reflection around it is clearly akin to the aforementioned efforts at combining lists of consuls and temple foundations in the *fasti* of the temple of Hercules Musarum. By chronologically relating objects and actors, causation and responsibility is suggested. The manner in which Varro frames the account of Roman religion through these sequences, places Varro in the realm of historiographic genres. The loss of knowledge about the gods is above all (as is stressed in fr. 2a) the loss of memory.

This observation is crucial since, according to Varro, religion is chronologically and logically secondary to the foundation of society. Religious institutions constitute historic data, even if contingency does not rob them of their obligatory character for all those people who lived posterior to the founders' decisions (fr. 12). Political history and art history mark major stages in the history of religion. The introduction of divine images is one such step, chronologically related to the construction of the large Capitoline temples. Jupiter and Summanus were originally deities of equal power – another example of Varronian reasoning. One was responsible for lightning at daytime, the other at night. Due to the construction of the Capitoline temple, an utterly contingent factor, Summanus fell into

⁶ The following paragraphs on Varro summarise the findings published in Rüpke 2014.

⁷ See Varro/Agahd (ed.) 1898. This edition has been replaced by Varro/Cardauns (ed.) 1976.

near oblivion (fr. 42). To an extent unknown to us, Varro might have noticed the foundation of temples down to his own time (e. g. fr. 43 f.).

The assumption formulated above that conflicting claims trigger the telling of historical narratives most intensively, be it to criticise counter-claims or to fortify one's own, could now be turned into a heuristic device. Why did Varro write his history in addition to, or rather as a framework for, his systematic, antiquarian handbook and his philosophical interpretations of religion? Religion had not yet been established as a clearly differentiated concept; historicisation itself acts as a means of establishing such a concept. Thus, we cannot expect specific ritual or theological controversies to be the driving force behind histories of religion. Which ends could historicisation serve?

The painting in the temple of Hercules Musarum might be seen as a tool to establish the history of the Roman calendar, Roman temples, and Roman consuls as a subject worthy of literary elaboration. Against the backdrop of Greek literature this would clearly imply the 'We' of Latin-speaking Romans. The focus is an urban one. Varro, in contrast, took a universalistic stance. This is not only true for the philosophical foundation of his arguments. In fact an astonishing number of fragments does not necessarily imply an urban Roman context.

Varro wrote during a time when Roman citizenship was extended to most of Italy. Certainly, his focus was as wide as that. He did not only acknowledge the introduction of Italian deities to Rome by the early kings, but also investigated numerous local, mid-level Italian deities that were to be belittled (and preserved) more than two centuries later by Tertullian as *deos decuriones cuiusque municipii*, 'town council deities' (fr. 33b = Tert., *apol.* 24.8; see Rüpke 2011a, 187 f.). Despite Tertullian's derision, Varro should have been as serious here as he had been in naming Nona and Decima as goddesses of timely birth (fr. 98; see Rüpke 2005).

Varro did not distance himself from Rome. Varro's *theologia civilis*, his 'theory of practice' (Rüpke 2005a, 118 and 124), dignified traditional Roman religious practices within the framework of universalistic Greek philosophy. Clifford Ando has shown this approach to parallel the juridical notion of *ius civile*, the set of norms that belongs to a specific people (Ando 2010, 78). Consequently, the plurality of local regulations has to be understood within a wider framework. There is a clear difference between philosophy and history, and it is epistemological. In his last book, dedicated to 'special and selected deities', Varro dealt with those gods who were defined by Roman places of worship and represented by statues but also had to admit the limits of his own interpretations:

I will write in this book about the public deities of the Roman people, to whom they have dedicated temples and whom they have marked out by many images, but, as Xenophanes

from Colophon wrote, I say what I believe, not what I claim. A human can only surmise these things, only a god knows them for sure. (Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 7.17, p. 295.22 introducing fr. 228)

As indicated in fr. 12 of his work, the history of an old people had more binding authority. Nevertheless, history's authority did not imply intellectual consent. The very special, yet binding, history of the urban territory and its people told of the poor decisions made by the old Romans – and perhaps even by Varro's contemporaries. As his reference to Egyptian cults and his comments on the 'levelling of temples' (fr. 46a) demonstrate, Varro referred to the conflicts of his time. Narrating these events in such a manner allowed for distancing. Varro supported Roman religious tradition despite the crucial historical mistakes made by its agents, at the time of the foundation of the city as in later periods, for instance when images were introduced.

The facticity of contingent history – a history that could have taken other directions and could have produced alternative outcomes – gave rise to institutions that could not only be compared to those of other social groups, but were also connected to each other through the transfer of Penates and the spread of Bacchic cult images. In the very beginning I pointed to the manner in which history can be used to consolidate group cohesion and create boundaries. Varro did not use the histories of religions in order to mark boundaries. He appears to have been interested in the potential inherent in shared history to bridge intercultural gaps, rather than in its capacity to tie people together. I have proposed to term this approach a focused universalism (Rüpke 2014, drawing on Yarrow 2010 and Van Nuffelen 2010). Examined through this lens Varro's three types of theology did not aim at deepening dividing lines, but rather aspired to bring divergent developments together in a meaningful way. Roman poetry frequently featured embarrassing stories about the gods, which had high entertainment value and could be performed in the theatre, while still serving the civic cult (fr. 11). In turn, philosophy not only produced physical interpretations of religion that should be confined to smaller elite circles, but equally offered something to civic theology (*ibid.*). Poetry, as well as philosophy are universal phenomena and hence they shared reservoirs for the many local civic variants of religion (see fr. 9).

The Varronian approach can be situated within a wider context. Surely, a lot of Roman historiographical writing was partisan history used to advance the claims of particular families to official posts and noble ancestors. Yet, there was a strong current in Roman historiography that aimed to create a history common to all Roman families, regardless of their geographical location in Italy or their social position. Annalistic history presented a new opportunity to write history in a non-hierarchical fashion. Through the documentation of Roman history

over the years with its ever-changing protagonists and by projecting a long line of military victories into the calendar via the use of founding dates, differences in individual or gentilician contributions were levelled out. In the second century BCE Cato the Elder attempted to narrate history without naming individuals and also tried to include Italy and Italian prehistory into his narratives. Roman society at the time was still facing the challenge of integrating peninsular Italy, as was gruesomely demonstrated by the civil war that commenced at the beginning of the first century BCE. In the following period waves of massive expansion, Pompeii's push into the East and Julius Caesar's subjugation of Gaul, demonstrated the necessity for an even wider, universalistic stance with regard to local claims in order to secure the stability of an empire. Like his contemporaries Diodorus Siculus or Pompeius Trogus, who were themselves writers of universal histories, Varro aimed to composing a unified historical account. Given the contemporaneous production of historiography, this was a polemical attitude of the sort postulated above. History is never written in the singular but instead organises memories in an alternative manner.

It is for precisely this purpose that Varro defined *religio* not as a tradition, but as an institution (*institutum*), something that has been 'set up' by humans. According to Varro, the differentiation of the divine into endless lists of names has been contingent, or in other words historical. Contingency acts as a distancing method: one can reflect on historical decisions or even criticise them. Yet, it is important to remember that in a contingent world, decisions are necessary even if they turn out to have negative implications, like the expulsion of Egyptian cults. Before the age of historicism all decisions of this kind would have been considered binding, as long as they were taken by people invested with proper, legitimate authority. This notion of inevitability was held up despite the fact that decisions may have been viewed critically.

This insight forms the basis for how Varro proceeded as a systematizing thinker. Within the aforementioned historical framework he created a recipe book for religion. In his *De natura deorum*, written in the year following the publication of Varro's work, Cicero accepted Varro's concept of religion as the contingent human reaction to a conviction that the divine existed. What is more, in Cicero's formulation it is only this latter transcendent truth that forms the legitimate object of philosophical inquiry, whereas religious practice, that is, the contingent reaction of humans to that truth, merely requires a form of control (Rüpke 2010, 750).

6 Religion in the History of Religion

The late republican reflections point to a specific problem in our use of the concept of ‘religion’, and in particular of its plural form ‘religions’. Historians of religions have a large body of sources at their disposal, which are imbued by narratives that were produced to serve the very purpose of creating boundaries. Therefore ‘religions’, as units of religious practice and beliefs, appear to be clearly distinct from one another. The task of ‘emic’ historiography is pursued with much ingenuity and energy by religious innovators. This enthusiasm may be exemplified by Chinese or Japanese Buddhists arguing for the continuity of their reforms by aligning themselves with one of the existing seven schools or by Christian jurists’ attempts to legitimise claims to power and land through appeals to the donation of Constantine. Similarly, Muslim chronographers’ and biographers’ efforts to prove the reliability of the chain of tradition (*hadith*) also represent an exercise in ‘emic’ historiography. All of these intellectuals produce accounts with a thick veneer of plausibility. Thus, historians of religion, who are supposed to produce ‘etic’ accounts and strive to apply a methodology of understanding (*Verstehen*) to their scholarly objects, often uncritically adopt emic constructs and ignore the subjective and interpretive nature of these frameworks. Even in cases where authors and the primary audience do not belong to the same religious group (which is often the case and needs not be regarded as the norm), there exists no clear dividing line between ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ contents of historiographic writing. ‘Etic’ reconstructions of history largely depend on ‘emic’ narratives.

As a consequence, scholars often took the identities and interpretations generated by religious groups for granted. They treated these analyses as legitimate and valid models for the study of the history of religion. Thus, we continue to hear and read about ‘the church of the martyrs’ or of the ‘victory’ of Buddhism in its dealing with local Japanese cults in classical Japanese historiography (see Bowring 2008 for Japan). We are told about the ‘Hellenisation of Christianity’ and even about Christianity, Judaism, and paganism (in the late antique Mediterranean context, for example) as if these were all separate, stable and unified entities that may or may not have influenced and interacted with each other in various ways. The concept of the ‘church of the martyrs’, which construes survivors as legitimate successors to those that were killed, is often put forward by professional religious historiographers.⁸ Likewise Christian historiographers’ depiction of the ‘Hellenisation of Christianity’ is based on the extrapolation of false dichot-

⁸ Most famously the fourth-century church historian Eusebius (cf. Grafton, Williams 2006).

omies and portrayals of Christianity as a separate and new entity on the world stage. These sharply defined identities exist in contradiction to the ambiguity and ambivalences that have always permeated the field of religion. However, the production of boundaries by historiographers and group leaders must not be allowed to completely obscure the existence and historical significance of the vast array of shared practices of daily life. In areas of the world where multiple (or indistinct) religious identities were the norm, many functions and forms of religious practice and beliefs arose in a shared space that lay beyond the boundaries invoked by distinct groups.

The very concept of the plural 'religions' is itself one important and problematic consequence of the historical approach sketched above. The units of description might be self-evident from an emic point of view. The internal discourse of a group, which is frequently adopted by political commentators and journalists who share an interest in clear-cut boundaries, as well as in the exclusion of heretics and the inclusion of wavering allies, treats religious categories as obvious phenomena. Similarly the term 'religion' has frequently been essentialised in the historiography of religion, and hence been justified on the basis of normative claims. The uncritical usage of 'a' religion and the plural 'religions' has even led to fundamental criticism of the paradigm of 'history of religion' as such (cf. Uehlinger 2006).

As I stressed in the beginning, the concept of 'religion', as well as the self-organisation of social groups as 'religions' has proven highly successful. For scholars of religious history, the influence of emic and etic religious histories on international relations, as well as on contemporary local conflicts, brings along with it the urgent challenge of renewing and revising the manner in which historiography of religion is approached. The direct and inextricable link between religious identity and the historiography of religion (familiar from a tradition of 'national history') in, what we might term 'confessional historiography', can be counteracted through the development of alternative and more complex histories of religion. While, evidently, every group is entitled to construe itself as the legitimate keeper of its tradition, it should be the task of scientific 'History of Religion' to highlight the manner in which emic histories have selected and excluded particular events and people. Reflecting on the biases and concealments of traditional narratives and the historiography of religions, as well as on the history of its analytical and descriptive terms is vital for any 'History of Religion' in the twenty-first century. The variety of Roman attempts to write such histories of religion, strengthening local political identity or building bridges in an incipient imperial situations, encourages us to take a harder look at the biases and options implied in our 'sources'. There are alternatives to confessional historiography.

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Anders Klostergaard Petersen

The use of historiography in Paul: A case-study of the instrumentalisation of the past in the context of Late Second Temple Judaism

Does it make sense to speak about historiography in the context of the Pauline letters? And in case of an affirmative answer, to what extent is it meaningful? It goes without saying that Paul did not have any second order concept at hand that would have allowed him to engage in meta-theoretical reflections on the use of historiographical traditions. Nevertheless, it does make sense to apply the concept of historiography with respect to Paul if one acknowledges that the discussion is taking place at the *etic* level of analysis. There is enough material in Paul to justify such an analysis, since he has continuous recourse to the past as an intrinsic and inevitable part of his mythmaking. After all, it is Paul who in 1 Corinthians in the context of a discussion about idol meat (chapters 8–10) has recourse to the narrative of the fathers in the desert (10:1–13), and, subsequently, historicizes the tradition of the trespass offering and the sacrifice of the peace offering of Lev 7:6 and 7:15 by applying it to the state of the Corinthian community. Similarly, in 2 Cor 3 Paul takes up the metaphor from Jer 31:31–4 of the new covenant that will be a covenant of the heart and inculcated on the minds and inscribed on the hearts of the Israelites and applies it to his Corinthian addressees. The discussion of the Law in Galatians also testifies to Paul's use of traditions from Scripture which he embeds in a historical framework that connects his intended audience with the history of Israel.¹ Chapters 9–11 of Romans too is one long catena of traditions of Scriptures which Paul in a historicizing manner applies to the current state of his audience. And at an earlier point in the same letter, he takes up the story of Adam and develops

¹ I deliberately avoid terms such as the Old Testament, Hebrew Bible, and Jewish Bible. At the point at which Paul wrote his letters the process of canonization defined in terms of the final determination of the number of books to be included in the canon had not been fixed nor had the final wording of the individual books been determined. This is a process that continued well into the third century and, possibly, early fourth century CE. By Scripture/s I basically designate books that are attributed a particular state of authority (cf. Klostergaard Petersen 2009, 32–5).

the view that the universal significance of the fate of Christ can only be truly understood when seen in the light of the narrative of Adam.²

This provisional survey makes it patently clear that there is enough evidence in Paul to call for an examination of his use not only of traditions from Scriptures but also the manner by which he applies these traditions to create a historiographical narrative that unites his different audiences, his co-apostles, his apostolic colleagues in Jerusalem, the present Israel, contemporary non-Jews, and the resurrected Christ with a story-line that Paul finds on the basis of his eclectic use of Scripture. Needless to say, in terms of the overall generic mode the Pauline letters do not exhibit narrative but discourse.³ That said, it is also obvious that not only does Paul at various instances have recourse to narrative *per se* but also that there is a narrative underlying his discursive exchanges, formulated as they are in first and second person singular and plural. This narrative which underlies Paul's various epistular interventions is of a historiographical nature, since it presupposes a history of development that involves the Scriptural narrative. At this point, some may likely object that such an observation mirrors an unacknowledged desire to carry coal to Newcastle, since the whole tradition of an influential trajectory of especially German theology of the 1940's to the 1960's, *Heilsgeschichte*, had a profound appreciation of Paul's use of historiography. Over and against that current of German theology which defined itself in continuity of dialectical theology, scholars such as Oscar Cullman and Gerhard von Rad promoted salvation historical readings of the Bible as their theological agenda. By virtue of their interests, they had a strong appreciation of the historiographical aspects of the Bible although they translated it into salvation historical terms.

Without engaging in direct discussion with this line of scholarship, I shall underscore the difference compared to the approach I am pursuing. First, I do not promote any theological agenda. I do not think it makes sense to speak of salvation history in the context of Paul if by that term one understands a homogeneous, uni-linear and irreversible story that stretches from the narratives of the Bible dealing with primordial time to the end of days. Paul's inclusion of Scriptural traditions in what to us may sometimes appear as a partly historiographical account are always strongly determined by the heat of the argument, the particular circumstances of the audience he is addressing, as well as eclecticism. There

² For a thorough discussion of Rom 5:12–21 and the impact which this typology has on Paul's thinking in general, see Davidsen 1995.

³ For the difference between mode, genre, and sub-genre, see Fowler 1982. For my use of this differentiation with respect to ancient literature, see Klostergaard Petersen 2009a, especially 31–6.

is no unified account of history in Paul based on Scripture. Secondly, I think it would be misguided – as the *heilsgeschichtliche* theological tradition does – to constrain Paul’s alleged use of history to a Jewish Scriptural frame of reference. As Stanley Stowers persuasively has documented in his *A Rereading of Romans*, Paul’s creation of a story of decline and fall and subsequent recuperation and improvement cannot be confined to the context of Jewish Scriptural writings. This was a far more prevalent cultural script in the Graeco-Roman world to which Paul also wholeheartedly belonged. Thirdly, I shall once again stress that I consider it wrong to claim that Paul endorsed thinking *per se* about history. Paul does neither provide any meta-theoretical statements in the form of concepts about history, nor does he unfold his general understanding of history. We may, however, reconstruct such thinking on the basis of his letters – but to argue that Paul himself was advocating a view of salvation history is rather problematic as I hope to show. Fourthly, I do not think that a traditional salvation historical approach satisfactorily takes into account what may be dubbed the apocalyptic aspect of Paul’s thinking. There is a further rejoinder to this argument, since I consider Paul’s apocalypticism to be of great importance for his world-view. It constitutes what should be understood in terms of history of religion as a utopian or an axial age type of religiosity.⁴ The argument I am espousing with respect to Paul’s instrumentalisation of history is that it may be seen as a particularly bombastic version of an axial age type of religiosity. In my use of the term ‘bombastic’ I am inspired by a famous statement by Nietzsche in his preface to *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in which he claims that Christianity should be conceived of as ‘Platonism for the people’.⁵ By this statement Nietzsche perceptively demonstrated how he took the basic world view of Christianity to be intrinsically related to that of Platonism. There are certain resentments underlying Nietzsche’s assertion of Christianity as popular Platonism with which I do not concur, but I subscribe to his overall assessment. It makes extremely good sense to conceive of the basic structure of meaning endorsed by all forms of early Christianity as a massive or bombastic spatial, apocalyptic rendering (heaven

4 For the distinction between locative and utopian forms of religion, see Smith 1978, 139; id. 1990, 121. For an extensive discussion of axial age religions, see Bellah 2005 and 2011. The two terms ‘utopian’ and ‘axial’ age are not identical. Smith is very adamant that he does not mean his distinction to be of a historical nature. It is meant to describe differences in terms of content between different types of religion. However, I take them to be very similar, since we do not find utopian forms of religion proper prior to the emergence of axial age religion (cf. Klostergaard Petersen 2013, 10–3).

5 Cf. Nietzsche / Colli, Montinari (eds.) 1999, 12: ‘denn Christenthum sei Platonismus für’s “Volk”’.

vs. earth) of the foundational structure of significance of Platonism (ideas vs. phenomena).⁶ Unlike Nietzsche however, who took early Christianity to constitute a popular and bombastic form of Platonism, I argue that it is better to think of Christianity in this manner as a massive reverberation of the fundamental structure of axial age religiosity.⁷ Apart from the fact that the traditional salvation historical approaches to Paul do not take this dimension into account, they also fail to pay heed to those particular aspects implied by such an observation: that is ultimately the question how one should combine Paul's apocalyptic message with his staging of history on the basis of particularly chosen traditions originating in Scriptures. In order to proceed with the argument, we shall take an in-depth look at some of the Pauline passages previously referred to, namely 1 Cor 10; 2 Cor 3:1–4,6; Gal 4:21–31; Romans 5:12–21.

1 Paraenetic instrumentalisation of historiographical traditions in 1 Corinthians 10

1 Cor 10 constitutes part of a longer section that deals with a particular example of the overall problem which Paul is facing with regard to the Corinthian community, i.e. internal divisions occasioned by a general conflict between two different factions in terms of cultural and social standing.⁸ In the context of 1 Cor 8–10, the discussion is focused on the consumption of idol-meat. One faction of the community, numerically fewer but in terms of political influence and affluence the most important group, is causing problems to the larger group which we, in continuity of Paul's talk about a weak conscience (*suneidēsis asthenēs*, 8:8), are wont to designate the Weak.⁹ As Martin persuasively has argued the core of the problem pertains to different conceptions of contamination and pollution. To understand the crisis it is important to realise that all meat available in the ancient Graeco-Roman world, whether in conjunction with the temples or in the butcher shops, to a greater or lesser extent had been sacrificed to the gods (cf. Gooch 1993, 37–46). The Weak of the Corinthian community are representa-

⁶ Such an understanding has also been persuasively argued by Tronier 1993; 1994 and 2001.

⁷ For an extensive discussion of this view, see Klostergaard Petersen 2015 and 2015a (both forthcoming).

⁸ For an excellent description of this whole situation, see Martin 1995, especially 55–68. For the overall structure of 1 Cor., see Mitchell 1991 (with respect to 1 Cor 8–10, see in particular 241–3).

⁹ For the Strong and Weak factions and their relationship to social divisions, see Theißen 1974, and Meeks 1983, 97–100.

tive of an understanding of the body whereby the eating of meat sacrificed to the Olympian gods is interpreted as introducing demons into individual bodies as well as into the Christ-adhering community. The Strong, on the contrary, have a level of culture that makes them unconcerned about this. They do not see their consumption of meat as a threat. Additionally, in order to remain part of the Corinthian establishment they could hardly have avoided the eating of meat in connection with city festivals. Paul on his part seems to waver between the two points of view and cannot really find his own position. Martin emphasises this ambiguity:

Paul's argument in chapters 8–10 is rather confusing. At times he appears to agree with the Strong that idols are 'nothing' – that is, nonexistent or absolutely powerless (8:4) – and that food has nothing to do with our relationship with God (8:8); that 'the earth and all its fullness are the Lord's', and so all food is edible (10:26); and that a Christian may without scruples eat whatever is sold in the marketplace or served at a dinner, even a dinner hosted by an idolator (10:25, 27). In chapter 10, however, Paul seems to be saying something different, admitting that idol-meat has been sacrificed not to figments of someone's imagination but to daimons – his actual word is *daimonion*, the diminutive, which a Greek speaker would understand as a god or some divine being quite near to a god (10:19). Thus, eating the sacrificial food might constitute commensality between the Christian and the daimons, rendering the Christian a 'partner' (*koinōnos*) with the daimons and disrupting the firm boundary between the realm of Christ and the cosmos of daimons (10:20–2). As was the case with sex in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6, the body of the erring Christians becomes the site of permeation between the two separate, opposed realms of meaning. (Martin 1995, 182)

The decisive factor for Paul is the conscience (*suneidēsis*) of the Christ-adherent.¹⁰ To the extent that the Christ-follower has a strong conscience he is protected from falling victim to thinking that by virtue of meat consumption he has been infused by demonic powers. Although Paul's differentiation between weak and strong conscience runs counter to parallel contemporary philosophical distinctions, his own view is quite clear.¹¹ The Weak faction, conversely, are characterised by a weak conscience, which is likely to succumb to thinking that the community – due to the Strong group's eating idol-meat – has become polluted and infused by demons.

10 For ancient notions of conscience as radically different from a modern Western concept of conscience, see Pierce 1955, 111–9.

11 Cf. Martin 1995, 181, with reference to Horsley 1978, 582: 'Its [i.e. the *suneidēsis*] function is to prevent the soul from wrong and/or to accuse and "convict" the soul of having acted unjustly'. Martin correctly points out how: 'Logically, therefore, a strong *suneidēsis* is one that successfully convicts a person and correctly influences behavior and recognition of past misdeeds'.

In chapter 9:8–10, Paul has recourse to two Scriptural examples, which he conceives to have a binding character for the present community. The implication of the two verses from Deut 25:4 and Sirach 6:19 is that the community should support Paul economically. This is even more so, since Paul and Barnabas are the only ones among the apostles who have not received economic support from the congregation. Yet, Paul has refrained from using this privilege. To make it palpably clear to the audience, Paul instrumentalises history in a very direct sense by locating himself in the role of a priest serving at the Jerusalem temple: ‘Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?’ (cf. Num 18:8,31; Deut 18:1–3).¹² The inference is explicated in the subsequent verse by the particle *houtōs* which makes it clear that the same principle applies to the apostles: since they are also officiating in sacred things they should be allowed to live from the Gospel (*ek tou euangeliou zēn*). Yet, Paul once more underlines how he did not take advantage of this right, which obviously puts him in a superior position compared to the other apostles. We shall leave this example and proceed to the further instrumentalisation of history in the same argumentative section.

In 10:1–13 Paul introduces part of the Exodus narrative in order to inculcate his overall point that the Strong should abstain from their right to eat idol-meat for the sake of the conscience of the Weak. As we saw above it is the same argument Paul attempted to instill on his addressees, primarily the Strong, by pointing to his own example. By his apostolic behaviour he has provided a model they should emulate. To strengthen the importance of the situation and, thereby, to increase the gravity of the argument Paul has recourse to the past. He reminds his audience of the past that they should not be unaware of (*ou thelō gar humas agnoein*): the fact that all their fathers were under the cloud, that they all passed through the sea, that they all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, that they all ate the same spiritual food, and that they all drank the same spiritual drink (10:1–4a). The quintuple repetition of ‘all’ (*pantes*) and the redundant emphasis placed on ‘the same’ (*to auto*) serves to underline that there is no exemption for the addressees. They are all embedded in the same genealogy.¹³ Although there is a difference with respect to the present community in terms of the contrast between past and present, fathers and sons, there is also a similarity. The rock from which the Israelites drank during their

¹² I use my own translations of Scripture throughout the article.

¹³ For the importance of genealogical arguments in Paul, see Hodge 2007, as well as Buell 2005. While Hodge’s book focuses on Paul, Buell’s has a wider scope which pertains to formative Christianity in general.

stay in the desert (Ex 17:6 and Num 20:7–11) is identified by Paul as Christ. It is important to notice that Paul does not say that the rock constituted a pre-figuration of Christ, but that he identifies Christ with the rock. In the further argument of 1 Corinthians, this identification allows him to argue that already the fathers partook in some form of communion.¹⁴ Despite the fact that the fathers had access to Christ, God was not well pleased with most of them. Therefore, they were scattered in the wilderness (10:5).

Paul proceeds to argue and, thereby to instrumentalise history, that the fathers were examples (*tupoi egenēthēsan*) to his audience and himself for the lesson that they should not desire evil things (*eis to mē einai hēmas epithumētas kakōn*) as they desired (*kathōs kakeinoi epethumēsan*) (10:6).¹⁵ In the subsequent verse, Paul makes his warning explicit. The Corinthian community is in danger of becoming idolaters like some among the fathers. Once more the past is invoked to underline the seriousness of the matter. Paul explicitly calls upon Scripture (*hōsper gegraptai*) to emphasise the precarious character of the current situation among his addressees: ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play’ (10:7), which is a quotation from the story of the rebellion of the Israelites with the golden calf in Ex 32:6. In the present context, Paul attributes to the event idolatrous connotations that are likely also to imply matters pertaining to internal factionalism and strife (cf. Mitchell 1991, 139). In 10:8 he refers to the shameful incident of Baal Peor, when the Israelite men committed harlotry with the women of Moab and became guilty of cultivating Baal at Peor (Num 25:1–9). The general prohibitions pertaining to vices related to the Ten Commandments are further elaborated in verse nine in which Paul encourages his addressees not to become tempters of Christ (*ekpeirazōmen*) – as some of the fathers had tempted and were destroyed by serpents (Num 21:5f.). Similarly, in verse ten he admonishes the community not to embark on complaints (*gonguzete*) – as some among the fathers did and were consequently destroyed by the Destroyer. Paul here refers to the revolt of Korah (Num 16) who in some contemporaneous Jewish traditions was considered the heretic or apostate *par excellence* (cf. Dochhorn, Klostergaard Petersen 1999, 460).¹⁶

¹⁴ This has been persuasively documented by Tronier 1994, 42–9.

¹⁵ In Jewish thinking as well as Graeco-Roman moral philosophy *epithumia* constituted together with *pathē* the vice *par excellence* that had to be mastered in order to attain self-control (cf. Stowers 1994, 58–61). For the importance of self-mastery with respect to the various Hellenistic forms of Graeco-Roman philosophy, see Nussbaum 1994.

¹⁶ This picture accords well with the overall theme of the section about factionalism in the context of consumption of idol-meat. Mitchell points to Josephus and Philo who both mention Korah in the context of sedition and revolt (Mitchell 1991, 139).

Parallel to his previous statement in verse six about the typological character of the events recounted, in verse 11 Paul emphasises how these various incidents happened to the fathers as examples (*tauta de tupikōs sunebainē ekeinois*, v. 11a). However, they are of even more significant nature to the present situation, since they were narrated for the support of our mind (*pros nouthesian hēmōn*, v. 11b). In this manner, Paul makes a very deliberate distinction between the historical aspect by which he asserts a correspondence between the entities of the past and the current situation of the community (spiritual drink = communion in the Christ-community; baptism in the sky and in the sea = baptism in the Christ-community; rock = Christ) and Scripture. Although there is a correspondence between the incidents of the past and the present situation, there also should be a negative relationship in the sense that the Corinthians, contrary to the fathers, should behave ideally.¹⁷ With regard to Scripture, a positive relation should reign since the incidents have been written down (*egraphē*) for the support of our mind (*pros nouthesian hēmōn*), but this, of course, depends on the Corinthian community's ability to comply with the goal of Scripture. This is even more so, since Paul and his audience constitute the group to whom the end of ages have come (*eis hous ta telē tōn aiōnōn katēntēken*, v. 11c). Due to the gravity of the present situation, Paul calls upon every one of his recipients who thinks of himself as upstanding to take heed (*blepetō*) lest he fall. Paul threatens the addressees by telling them that so far they have been tested only by human temptation (v. 12), but at the same time he assures them that God will not allow that they are tempted beyond their ability (v. 13). The argument is provisionally summed up (expressed by *dioper*) in the inculcation in verse 14 to flee idolatry.

This section documents how Paul in the context of a paraenetic argument inscribes himself and his addressees in the past history of Israel. They are genealogically connected with this history as children to fathers;¹⁸ but simultaneously there is a direct correlation in the sense that they are in an exemplary manner exposed to the same phenomenon. The rock that accompanied the Israelites in the desert was, in fact, Christ, who manifested himself to the fathers in this way. Additionally, what happened to the fathers in the past conveys a meaning only to be appreciated in the present on the premise that one understands how to interpret Scripture in the proper manner. To the extent that one is bequeathed with this ability, the Scriptural story of the fathers serves to uphold or to

¹⁷ In terms of argument, this has been succinctly pointed out by Tronier 1994, 54.

¹⁸ I have here used the gender-neutral term 'children', but have otherwise preferred to render Paul's argument by the gendered notion 'sons', since it is obvious that Paul's genealogical thinking is determined by a patrilineal and masculine line of thought.

strengthen the minds of the present Christ-adherents (*pros nouthesian hēmōn*). The section vividly shows Paul as an instrumentaliser of history in the context of social-moral exhortation. This is slightly different in the next example taken from 2 Corinthians.

2 A historiographical exposition of hermeneutics in 2 Corinthians 3–4:6

2 Corinthians constitutes a highly contested letter with respect to a number of unresolved questions among which the integrity of the letter itself features largely. I shall not go into this moot question here but simply state that I consider the letter to be coherent by nature. Contrary to the situation that occasioned the writing of 1 Corinthians, I think the situation is quite different at the time Paul embarked on composing 2 Corinthians. The strife with Apollos, which in my view is the core of the problem in 1 Corinthians, has been resolved and so has the concomitant factionalism related to the division between the Strong and Weak segments of the community. In 2 Corinthians Paul is faced with the emergence of a group of rivalling apostles who seem to preach a message very comparable to Paul's, but at the same time they emphasise their Jewish ethno-religious prerogatives and are not willing to subject to Paul's authority. The first seven chapters of the letter constitute Paul's attempt to win the audience to himself. The subsequent two chapters rhetorically serve to affirm this envisioned and hoped for result by imagining the benevolent participation of the addressees in a collection organised by Paul for the saints of Jerusalem, i. e. the Jerusalem community/ies headed by the original group around Jesus as well as his brother James. In the next three chapters (10–2) Paul proceeds to a belligerent attack on his opponents, before he sums up the purpose of the letter and resolves his argument in peace and harmony in the final chapter.

Throughout the argument Paul places his opponents in the role of sophists attempting to exploit the Corinthians (cf. 2:17; 4:2) and as hopeless boasters of their own merits. Paul – in line with parallel currents in notably the Stoic tradition – emphasises his lack of prerogatives and achievements,¹⁹ whereby he espouses a basic thought scheme characteristic of axial age religiosity: that truth is to be found in a world categorically located outside the realms of this world (cf. Klostergaard Petersen 2013; 2015 [forthcoming]; 2015a [forthcoming], and 2015b

¹⁹ For Paul's use of catalogues of hardships, *peristaseis* catalogues, which contain the enumeration of various types of suffering, see Fitzgerald 1988, 117–201.

[forthcoming]). In Platonism, for instance, it is a basic thrust that divine truth is only accessible in a weak and deficient reflection of the heavenly light. The same pertains to the fundamental structure of the Christ-movement in which the collision of the two spheres, the heavenly and the earthly, has been considerably sharpened by being formulated within a Jewish apocalyptic cloak of thought.

In the passage immediately preceding the chapter we shall examine, Paul introduces God as the ultimate agent for his travels and travel plans: a continuous point of contention in 2 Corinthians. By closely uniting his travels with divine agency, Paul obtains that accusations against him from the recipients of his letter become charges against God and therefore mirror blasphemy. In 2:14 he praises God for leading him and, potentially, his closest co-workers in triumph (*tō de theō charis tō pantote thriambeuonti hēmas*) in Christ.²⁰ This does not refer to any triumphal appearance, but rather Paul being displayed as a captive and victim of God as the military general.²¹ Such an understanding correlates well not only with the basic pattern of axial age religiosity but also with the essential structure of meaning exhibited by 1 Corinthians, in which God's wisdom can only appear in this world under the contrary denominator of weakness. Similarly, what is reckoned as wisdom in this world comes forward as folly in the perspective of the heavenly world (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–2:16).²² So when Paul is led as captive in triumphal march by God, so the logic, he exhibits the wisdom of God in this world. Far from being a statement of humiliation, modesty, and self-renunciation, the metaphor conveys the diametrically opposite meaning. There is a further aspect to that, since suffering in contemporary lists of hardship of the Graeco-Roman moral philosophical tradition is understood to be the token *par excellence* of the sage.²³ Superficially then Paul comes out as a weakling, but within the argument of the letter as well as a pivotal structure in contemporary forms of thinking, he represents the wandering index of God's wisdom.

This understanding is further elaborated in the subsequent olfactory metaphor in which Paul argues that God makes the fragrance of his knowledge (*hē osmē tēs gnōseōs autou phaneroun*) manifest at every place through the ministry of Paul. Paul proceeds to say that to God he is the sweet smell of Christ (*Christou*

20 I concur with Frank J. Matera, who argues that Paul's use of the plural throughout this section seems primarily to include himself (Matera 2003, 70). Therefore, I use 'Paul' and 'he' in my rendering of the section.

21 For a discussion of the various possibilities of interpretation of this metaphor, see Hafemann 1986, 18–39 and 51–4. See also the fine discussion in Matera 2003, 70–3.

22 For an elaboration of this point, see Klostergaard Petersen 2002, 405–32 and 422–8. See also Theißén 1983, 382–4.

23 See for instance Epictetus, *Arrian Discourses* 1.24.1; cf. Fitzgerald 1988 and Ebner 1991.

euōdia) among those who shall be saved and those who shall perish. In a chiasmic formulation he argues that to the latter group the odour has the nature of death and leads to death, whereas to the former group the aroma smells of life and results in life. It goes without saying that it is the same basic structure of understanding which he espouses here: a radical turning over of existing values (*Umwertung aller Werte*, as Nietzsche would say) by which that which is attributed positive value becomes negative and concomitantly that of negative character is assigned positive meaning. He closes the paragraph by implicitly differentiating himself from his opponents by emphatically stating that he is not like the many who are peddling (*hoi polloi kapēleuontes*) the word of God.²⁴ Contrary to such persons exhibiting the character traits of sophists (cf. Plato *Prt.* 313c-314b; *Sph.* 222e-224d), Paul claims to speak with sincerity (*all hōs ekeilkrineias*), of God before God in Christ.

Thereby he has set the scene for the subsequent argument in which he by necessity of the preceding passage has to reject his present errand as an instance of boasting. Paul discards the idea that he is boasting which would also bring his argument into a delicate controversy with the attempt to delineate his opponents as sophists. On the contrary, he claims that in contrast to others – whom we shall later meet as his opponents – he is not in need of letters of recommendation. In fact, the Corinthian community is his letter written in his heart, known and read by all men (3:2). In fact, the Corinthians should be summoned to make it manifest (*phaneroumenoi*) that they are a letter of Christ ministered by Paul. At this point, Paul begins to make use of history by having recourse to the Exodus tradition of stone tablets written by God and given to Moses (Ex 31:18; 32:15). Paul's instrumentalisation of history, however, is not a direct take-over of the Exodus story, since he connects it with the notion of the new covenant written on the hearts of the Israelites from Jer 31:31–4. In this manner, he sets up a novel contrast between the interior and the exterior, between what has been written with ink in contrast to the spirit of the living God, on stone tablets rather than tablets of fleshly hearts (3:5). Additionally, Paul combines this tradition with the notion of Ezekiel that God has promised to grant the people a new spirit as well as a new heart (cf. the emphasis placed on spirit in 3:6; 6:17 f.) (cf. Matera 2003, 80).

This contrast between the interior and exterior is an additional epitome of the difference which we have already noticed to be the basic structure of meaning in Paul's world. The contrast located at the vertical scale between heaven and

²⁴ The attack is only of an indirect character, since the confrontational clash with his opponents does not begin until 2 Cor 10.

earth, between the sphere of God and the sphere of men, is thus transposed to a scale of depth, and as we shall see the same difference is furthermore being projected onto a horizontal scale at which it becomes a contrast between the past and the present.

In the subsequent verses 4–6, Paul unfolds the contrast located at the scale of depth further by applying it to the case of potential boasting. Paul's sufficiency (*hikanotēs*) does not originate with himself but with God, who has made him sufficient as minister of the new covenant, which does not rely on the letter but on the spirit (3:6). The idea of the novel covenant is explicated in verse seven in which the present is put in contrast to the past situation, thereby introducing the horizontal scale of thinking. Although prefigured in the preceding verses, in 3:7 f. Paul instrumentalises history by introducing the story of Moses:

But if the ministry of death, engraved with letters on stone tablets, came into existence in glory, so that the sons of Israel could not steadily peruse the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance the glory of which was passing away, how will the ministry of the spirit not be more glorious?

We have already seen a similar contrast in the previous section on 1 Cor 10 in which Paul also places emphasis on the difference between the fathers and Christ-adherents, but simultaneously points to their connection by *a fortiori* inferences.

Based on a slightly idiosyncratic interpretation of the Exodus narrative Paul summarises the ministry of Moses as leading to death, since the glory of Moses was only of an ephemeral nature (3:7. 11. 14). The point is neither to discard Moses nor denigrate the glory that pertained to his ministry. Paul takes the glory radiating from the countenance of Moses as his point of departure in order to emphasise the much greater glory that belongs to his own ministry.²⁵ This glory attributed over-whelming significance is expressed through three *a fortiori* deductions: (i) If the ministry of death came in glory ... how much more will the ministry of the spirit be in glory (v. 7f.). (ii) For if there was glory to the ministry of condemnation, how much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory (v. 9). (iii) For if what was passing away emerged through glory, how much more that which remains in glory (v. 11). The whole point of the exemplary comparison, however, is the present situation and, in particular, Paul's mode of preaching (behaving) with respect to the Corinthian com-

²⁵ It is likely that Paul's opponents pointed to the Moses tradition in order to emphasise their status over that of Paul. Although I cannot pursue this argument here, I think it likely that this is the background why Paul has recourse to this particular Scriptural tradition.

munity. In verse 12 he points to the fact that he may speak boldly based on the hope expressed in the inferences *a fortiori* of the previous verses.

Once again Paul has recourse to the Exodus story. The fact that Moses had to put a veil over his countenance prevented the sons of Israel from seeing the end of that which was being abolished. To Paul this testifies to the veiled nature of Moses' ministry. At this point it also becomes clear that similar to our previous example of 1 Cor 10 the text revolves around hermeneutics. The minds (*ta noēmata*) of the Israelites had become blinded. In fact, according to Paul a veil has unto the contemporary situation remained over the reading of Scripture. Instrumentalising Scripture, Paul advocates the view that, similar to Moses who took off the veil when speaking with the Lord, the veil has been dismantled for the one who turns to the Lord. As is evident from the first verses of chapter four, this argument is an occultation for Paul's own preaching. The one who turns to the Lord is, in fact, the one who acknowledges 2 Corinthians along the lines that Paul wants to have his letter received. Paul, however, moves on to say that the Lord is spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord hovers, there is freedom (v. 17). To sum up his use of the Exodus story and the argument in which it is embedded or instrumentalised, he emphatically states that: 'but all we, with an unveiled countenance, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord' (v. 18). The use of 'all' (*pantes*) indicates that Paul resumes having the community before his eyes as well. And he strongly underlines their new status on the premise that they have turned to the Lord which as we have noticed is a prefiguration of the hoped for effect of the letter. Contrary to the Israelites who were not able to see the glory of God, Moses saw the glory of God, but he was not transformed into it. The Christ-adherents are already in their current state being transformed so that they by looking at the Lord are reflecting his glory and are, thereby, undergoing a process of increasing glorification or transformation into enhanced glory.

The subsequent six verses resume the theme of Paul's ministry. In conclusion of the argument (expressed by *dia touto* in 4:1), he avows how he has been granted the ministry as he has received mercy by God and, therefore, does not faint. Once again, there is an implicit and anticipatory attack on his opponents. Paul has renounced the hidden things of shame by not walking in craftiness (*mē peripatountes en panourgia*), nor handling the word of God deceitfully (*mēde dolountes ton logon tou theou*), but commending himself in a manifestation of truth to the conscience of all men before God (v. 2). Recapitulating the theme of the preceding verses but now directly applying it to his own case, Paul declares that his gospel (*euangelion hēmōn*) is only concealed to those who shall perish and who, similar to the Israelites, are not able to see the

glory radiating from the countenance of Moses and not capable of seeing the light of the gospel pertaining to the glory of Christ (v. 4b-c). This lack of ability is due to the fact that the god of this aeon has blinded the minds (*noēmata*, cf. 3:14) of the unbelievers (v. 4a). Contrary to this category, Paul does not preach (i. e. boast of) himself, but Jesus Christ and himself as a servant of the Corinthians through Jesus. The implicit attack obviously is a repetition of the previous accusation against Paul's opponents that they are trying to exploit the Corinthians, whereas Paul, taking Christ as his model, has been acting as a servant to the recipients of the letter. Before we leave this example, Paul has once again had instrumental recourse to the past. Concluding the argument pertaining to the metaphor of interiority and externality, concealment and disclosure, stone tablets and tablets of the heart, he returns to the very beginning by connecting his ministry to the God of creation: 'For it is the God who said: "Light shine out of darkness", who enlightened our hearts with the light of knowledge oriented towards the glory of God by the countenance of Jesus Christ' (4:6).

We have seen how Paul in a situation of strife with rivalling preachers, in which it is crucial for him to win his audience over to his understanding of the gospel and his status as their sole apostle, does not abstain from using every possible means to persuade them. In this context, instrumentalisation of Scriptural past traditions plays an important role. They are used as rhetorical ammunition in his war against preachers who threaten what he conceives of as his apostolic monopoly on the Corinthian community.

3 Galatians 3:6 – 4:9: Instrumentalising Scripture in the fight for a gospel to non-Jews void of Jewish ritual identity-markers

Similar to 2 Corinthians, Galatians is a letter originating in a heated situation of strife. Contrary to Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians, however, the Paul of Galatians is confronted with another front of rivalling apostles. Although the opponents of 2 Corinthians were also of Jewish nature, there is nothing to indicate that the discord in 2 Corinthians had to do with matters pertaining to the Law. On the contrary, in 2 Corinthians the trouble focused on the person of Paul and particular Jewish markers of status proclaimed by his opponents. The argument was very much concerned with Paul's failure to epitomise these status prerogatives. In Galatians on the contrary, Paul's opponents are proclaimers of a form of Christ-adherence which asserts that followers of non-Jewish ethnic background will nevertheless have to obey Jewish religious identity markers such as

circumcision and observance of dietary rules.²⁶ There is also abundant evidence that these opponents are closely connected with James, the brother of Jesus.²⁷

Much ink has been spilled on the introductory questions pertaining to Galatians. This problem is not discussed in any detail here.²⁸ Rather, I shall focus on the section 3:6–4:7, which contains an extensive *midrash* on Abraham. It constitutes a vivid example of Paul's instrumentalisation of Scripture. The introductory five verses of chapter three set the stage for the *midrash*. Paul rebukes the addressees by reminding them of their initial acceptance of his proclamation: 'Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?' (3:1a-b). Jesus Christ was written before their eyes as crucified (*estaurōmenos*) (v. 1c), but they have nevertheless given up their first teaching. As a teacher Paul summons the recipients in order to learn from them whether they received the spirit by the works of the Law (*eks ergōn nomou*) or by the hearing of faith (*eks akoēs pisteōs*). In Paul's view, the answer is self-evident. Despite the fact that the Galatians began in the spirit, they are currently perfecting in flesh (*nun sarki epiteleisthe*). The uncompromising and austere language refers to the preceding chapters in which Paul has argued that the addressees' yearning for circumcision and obedience to the dietary rules of the Torah is representative of a relapse to their previous life in the flesh (cf. 1:6–9; 2:3–10. 12–4). This is spelled out in detail in the harsh language of the opening of chapter three.

Immediately preceding the section is an intermediary passage which provides the rationale for the *midrash*. In 2:16–21, Paul summarises the desire of his recipients under the rubric 'works of the Law'. This he sets in contrast to

26 Mark D. Nanos has presented a strong argument that Paul's opponents were seeking to bring the members of his Galatian Christ-communities under the sovereignty of the synagogues with the status of honorable proselytes. According to this argument, Paul's rivals were not Christ-adherents, but representatives of another form of Judaism concerned about maintaining a good relationship with the non-Jewish surrounding and, thereby, avoiding allegations that they challenge the *pax Romana* by virtue of their religiosity. These local Jewish leaders were concerned 'not to offend the local pagan population with whom mutual interests were at work' (Nanos 2002, 257–83, especially 262).

27 In my view, this is the crucial point which makes Nanos' otherwise ingenious interpretation falter. It cannot account for the connection which Paul establishes between James and the opponents. My own position on the letter is very similar to the one worked out by John M. G. Barclay, who sees the letter in the context of a struggle between Paul and rival missionaries sent by James (Barclay 1987, 73–93).

28 For the main positions in the classical and current history of research on the letter, see the very useful collection of articles by Mark D. Nanos 2002a.

the notion of ‘faith of Jesus Christ’.²⁹ In 2:16 he appeals to the knowledge (whether actual or envisioned) of the recipients. They should know (*eidotes*) that no human is justified on account of works of the law but rather on the basis of the steadfastness of Jesus Christ. In fact, ‘they have come to believe (*episteusamen*, ingressive aorist) in Christ Jesus in order that they may be justified on account of the faithfulness of Christ and not works of the law, because no flesh shall be justified on the basis of works of the law’. The redundant and chiasmic formulation underlines the importance of the assertion. The significance is also emphasised in the last verse of the section in which Paul argues that he does not demolish the grace of God (2:21a): ‘For if justice were through the law, Christ would have died for nothing (*dōrean*)’ (v. 21b-c). Then follows the unforgiving verses on the Galatians (3:1–5), before he has recourse to Scripture in 3:6–22.

To have his case come through persuasively, Paul takes up the Abraham narrative in order to substantiate the argument of 2:16–21. Without at first explicating to the addressees that he is citing Scripture (Gen 15:6 LXX – there is no marker like *hōs gegraptai* to state the scriptural status), Paul appeals to the case of Abraham who ‘trusted (*episteusen*) God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’ (3:6). He then calls upon the envisioned knowledge of the recipients that they should know (*ginōskete*) that those who are of faithfulness (*hoi ek pisteōs*) are the sons of Abraham (v. 7). Similar to 1 Cor 10, we see how Paul construes a genealogy between Abraham as the father of steadfastness and the Christ-believers.³⁰ In the subsequent verse, he makes it patently clear that the view he is advocating has a firm grounding in Scripture: ‘And the Scripture foreseeing (*proïdousa de hē graphē*) that God would justify the gentiles out of faith-

29 In recent years there has been a great controversy about the exact meaning of *pistis Christou*, whether it should be conceived as an objective genitive in line with the time-honoured especially Protestant understanding (‘belief in Christ’), a subjective genitive (‘the faith or faithfulness/steadfastness of Christ’) or the intermediary reading of an auctoritative genitive (‘the belief pertaining to Christ’). I am still not entirely resolved in my understanding although as should be clear I am inclined to favour the subjective reading on the basis of its congruence with what I consider the basic narrative undergirding all the exchanges of Paul (see below on Rom 5:12–21). Hence my translation ‘the faith or faithfulness/steadfastness of Jesus Christ’. The first one in modern scholarship to vigorously espouse this view was Richard Hays (cf. Hays 2007). For the so-called *pistis*-debate, see especially Williams 1987 and Matlock 2000. For an excellent summary of the whole debate, see Bird, Sprinkle 2009.

30 On the use of genealogy in the context of Gal 3 f., see Hodge 2007, 84–6 and 103–7. Hodge rightly emphasises that: ‘By linking the gentiles to this moment [i.e. the story of Abraham] in the history of Israel, Paul constructs for them a myth of origins which is intimately tied to Jewish origins’ (ibid., 85).

fulness, preached the gospel *beforehand* (*proeuēngelisato*) to Abraham that “in you shall all the nations be blessed” (Gen 12:3; 18:18)’ (v. 8). Similar to one aspect of the argument of 1 Cor 8–10, Paul underlines how Scripture exhibits a positive correspondence between the present situation of the community and that of the past. Scripture foresaw the current situation, and in terms of incident God’s interaction with Abraham was a proleptic proclamation of the gospel. In this way, there is a positive relationship between Scripture and the present situation of the addressees, since their story has been prefigured in the narrative of Scripture unfolding the story of Abraham. The inference Paul makes from this is that the very same situation that pertained to Abraham applies to current adherents of Christ, since those who are of faithfulness are blessed with the faithful Abraham (*sun tō pistō Abraam*) (v. 9).

In the subsequent verses 10–4 Paul draws the consequences concerning the law by garnering the argument with additional Scriptural evidence: ‘For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not remain in all the things written in the book of the law by doing them”’ (Deut 27:26; 28:58; 30:10). The point is to make it patently clear (*dēlon*) that nobody can attain justice before God in the law (v. 11), since the righteous shall live by faithfulness as stated in Hab 2:4. Thus, according to Paul the law is not of the faithfulness descentance trajectory, but at the same time he nevertheless holds – quoting Lev 18:5 LXX – that the one who follows them (i.e. the commandments of the law) shall live by them (v. 12). One decisive point of the fate of Christ was that he bought the Christ-adherents free from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for the sake of the Christ-adherents. Once more, Paul makes use of Scripture to garner his argument. He has recourse to Deut 21:23: ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’. The purpose of the death of Christ is now spelled out in combination with the Abraham story. The crucifixion has endowed gentiles with the possibility of obtaining the blessing of Abraham by Christ Jesus in order that they may receive the promise of the spirit by faithfulness (v. 14).

The instrumentalisation of history is continued in the subsequent verses in which Paul subordinates the law to Abraham by virtue of his temporal priority over and against the emergence of the law. This is elaborated in a slightly enigmatic depiction of a testament in 3:15–8. Although the analogy is of a human nature (*kata anthrōpon*), the addressees will recognise, so Paul, that no one annuls or adds to a testament that has been ratified (v. 15). By recourse to a conjunction of sayings from Gen 13:15; 17:8; 24:7, Paul makes it clear that the promises were made to Abraham and his seed and not his seeds. This is redundantly emphasised by stating that this pertains ‘not to of many but to of one’ whom Paul identifies with Christ (v. 16). On the basis of his own established relation-

ship between Abraham, Christ and the promise made to Abraham, Paul infers that the testament ratified by God as testator preceded the law by four-hundred and thirty years and that the law, therefore, cannot annul the promise by annihilating it. The conclusion makes it clear that if the inheritance were of the law it would not be of the promise – a promise graciously granted by God to Abraham (v. 18).

Needless to say, this argument raises the question about the role of the law altogether if justice not only worked in total independence of the law but also had to in order to avoid the damaging effects of the law. Paul attempts to explicate this in the subsequent verses (v. 19–29).³¹ Very frankly he poses the question in verse 19a: ‘What then is the law?’, but he is quick to respond that it was added because of transgressions (*tōn parabaseōn charin*) and as such served a role until the seed (*to sperma*) appeared to whom the promise was made (*epēngeltai*), and furthermore that it was conveyed through angels into the hand of a mediator. Now, in order not to pull the rug from under his previous argument about the particularly significant role assigned to Abraham, Paul has by virtue of his own argument to downplay the function of Moses and the law. Although verse 20 may appear as a conundrum, the verse makes good sense if seen on this background: ‘But a mediator is not of one, but God is one’. Once again, Paul is forced to raise the question prompted by the uncertain status he has assigned to the law if the law is against the promises of God. Paul vehemently rejects the question by the strongly abjuring phrase *mē genoito*. If the law had been capable of vivifying, truly justice would have been by the law (v. 21): ‘But Scripture confined all things under sin in order that the promise stemming from the faithfulness of Jesus Christ may be given to those who are faithful’ (v. 22). Paul goes on to say that the law had a prophylactic effect until faithfulness appeared. Until the emergence of faithfulness both he and the addressees were confined under the law with a view to the future steadfastness to be revealed. In that sense, the law served as a guardian (*paidagōgos*) with respect to Christ and the future justification based on faithfulness (v. 23f.). With the appearance of steadfastness, however, Paul and his recipients have been freed from the guardian function

31 Due to constraints of space and the particular topic of this essay, I shall not delve into Paul’s understanding of the law which here seems to have a more ambiguous status compared to the one it holds in Rom. Ultimately, I think this has two reasons. First, it is very much determined by the specific social-historical circumstances underlying Galatians. Secondly, Paul’s conception of the law in Rom. is slightly different from his interpretation in Galatians, which indicates that he has developed his understanding of this moot question presumably in reaction to the continuous problems with which he was faced with respect to the precise nature of the law in the Christ-movement.

of the law (v. 25). For they have all become sons of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in which they were invested (*enedusasthe*) at the time of their baptism (v. 26 f.). Thereby a new genealogy has been created that excludes the differentiations between Jew and Hellene, slave and free, man and woman, since they have all become one in Christ Jesus (v. 28). In this manner, Paul's gentile addressees have been adopted into a new family genealogically determined by Christ and Abraham. A provisional conclusion is drawn in verse 29 in which Paul has the various important entities brought together: in as much as his addressees belong to Christ, i.e. by being descendants in a newly determined form of genealogy, they are also descendants of the seed of Abraham and thereby heirs of the promise, i.e. the one granted to Abraham.

The next seven verses serve to make it irreversibly clear to the addressees that there is no way back to the situation reigning between Abraham (specifically Moses as the receiver of the law) and Christ.³² Retaining the metaphor of the slave, Paul states that as long as an heir was under age he did not differ from a slave despite the fact that he was lord over all things.³³ Therefore, the father put him under the guidance of guardians and stewards until the appointed time (4:1 f.). The analogy is once more explicated to make it inescapably clear to the addressees that this is exactly what applies to them as well as Paul. During the period they were under age they were held in slavery (*dedoulōmenoi*) subordinated to the elements of the world (*stoicheia tou kosmou*) (v. 3). At the fullness of time a crucial change was brought about when God sent his son born of a woman and born under the law in order to free those under the law that they may obtain sonship (*huiothesia*). The same applies to Paul's addressees. Since they have obtained sonship by being sons, God has sent the spirit of his son into their hearts to cry Abba, i.e. father. Emphatically, he inculcates to every one of his recipients individually in second person singular: 'But if you are a son, then also you are an heir through God' (v. 7). In conclusion, Paul claims that it is understandable that at the time when the addressees did not know God (*ouk eidotes theon*) they were slaves to those who by nature were not gods. Now, however, at the time when they have come to know God (*gnontes theon*) and even more so have become known by God (*mallon de gnōsthentes hupo theō*), Paul has to question them why they have (again) begun turning to

³² One is, of course, tempted to raise the question about the 430 years period between Abraham and Moses, but Paul does not provide us with any clue as to how he understood this interim; but then again Paul was no writer of academic theology but a man of the field taking part in very concrete and pressing interactions.

³³ For Paul's use of the slavery metaphor, see the excellent book by Dale B. Martin (Martin 1990).

weak and poor elements of the world (*epi ta asthenē kai ptōka stoicheia*) to which they will once more become slaves (v. 9). Ultimately, he poses the serious consequence before his recipients. By their observation of days, months, seasons, and years he fears he has worked in vain among them (v. 11).³⁴

In conclusion to this section, we have once again seen how Paul instrumentalises history in an attempt to have his argument come through with respect to his addressees. In order to have them understand that their current practices are incongruent with their newly obtained status in Christ, Paul has recourse to the Abraham story, which he uses as an attack on another stage in Jewish history, i. e. the giving of the law by angels to Moses. The latter is subordinated to the former in order to admonish his audience that they shall have to abandon their attraction to circumcision and other practices held incompatible by Paul with their status as Christ-adherents. He attempts to imbue the new status on his addressees by use of history. He holds that by being baptised into Christ, his recipients have been grafted onto the genealogy of Abraham as heirs of the promise given to him by God: a promise that has now come true to them by their adoption as sons of Christ, the ultimate heir of the promise made to Abraham.

4 Rom 5:12 – 21: Paul’s fundamental narrative

My last example focuses on Rom 5:12–21, which I (in continuity of Ole Davidsen) hold to be the fundamental narrative impregnating all parts of Paul’s world-view with significance (for the central argument, see Davidsen 1995). I am not saying that 1 Cor 15 and Rom 5:12–21 are the central texts of Paul’s seven letters. What I argue is that these textual passages are a manifestation of the basic structure that organises all other elements in Paul’s world-view. In technical semiotic language, they are an occurrence in the surface structure of that underlying narrative which structures all other information. We may use them in order to understand what is at stake in other passages. This will become clear as we go through the text. At the same time, we find in this text an extreme example of Paul’s instrumentalisation of history, since he conveys not a part of history, not a particular event. In fact, he aspires to provide his audience with an entire history of

³⁴ In the history of research there is a long discussion about these practices – whether they are pertaining to Jewish observances or rituals pertaining to the imperial cult. A stance on this issue is not crucial for my argument since Paul, whether it refers to Jewish or gentile practices, considers it to be a return to a phase which his recipients should have left once and for all by their incorporation into the genealogy of Abraham-Christ. For the discussion of the practices referred to, see Nanos 2002, 267–71.

the world from beginning to the end. Nothing less, nothing more! This is veritably an epitome of axial age religiosity that cannot tolerate the existence of rivaling interpretations. What we see is Paul taking over the interpretation of the world by endowing his addressees with a complete narrative that in Paul's view can account for everything and, thereby, eradicate or silence competing narratives. It suffices to say, that therefore this text will also constitute a very suitable conclusion to an essay on how Paul instrumentalises history.

Romans is different from the remaining six genuine letters of Paul by virtue of the fact that he here addresses a community/ies which he has not founded. Yet, he needs the support of the Roman community/ies for his further travel towards Spain, and he presumably also needs its acknowledgement in his standing fight with the authorities of the Jerusalem community. That said, it would be a gross mistake to think that Paul is solely introducing himself and his particular version of Christ-faith in the letter. As is evident from the paraenetic section of the letter, he also has very much to say to the recipients by interacting in a current controversy in the Roman community/ies presumably originating from polemics between Christ-adherents of gentile and of Jewish ethnic backgrounds with different views regarding the observance of time-honoured Jewish rituals such as the dietary laws (see in particular chapters 12–4).³⁵ Be that as it may, we shall leave the introductory questions pertaining to Romans and proceed to the argument of the letter.

The central theme of the letter is stated in the thesis of 1:16 f., in which Paul asserts that he is not ashamed of the gospel, since it is the power of salvation for everyone who is faithful, to the Jew first and also the Greek (v. 16): 'For the justice of God is revealed in him [i.e. Christ] from faithfulness to faithfulness as it is written: "The righteous shall live by faithfulness"' (v. 17). In the subsequent verses, Paul proceeds to depict the general predicament of humankind. It is a cultural fall myth comparable to other ones found in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world.³⁶ He subsequently spells out in detail this inevitable situation of humans – with respect to both gentiles and Jews – in order to make it palpably clear in 3:21–6 that justice has now been revealed by God without the law although witnessed by the law and the prophets (3:21).³⁷ As in Galatians, Paul makes it clear that the justice of God has come about by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ (*dia*

³⁵ For the discussion of the precise background of Romans, see the very useful collection of essays by Donfried (Donfried ²1991).

³⁶ This has been persuasively shown by Stanley K. Stowers in an ingenious book (Stowers 1997).

³⁷ From 2:17 Paul introduces an imaginary Jewish interlocutor with whom he discusses how gentiles might be justified before the God of Israel (cf. Stowers 1997, 126–75).

pisteōs Iēsou Christou) to all who are adhering faithfully (*eis pantas tous pisteuontas*). In this sense, there is no difference (*ou gar estin diastole*) between Jew and gentile (v. 22), since they all fell victim to sin and fell short of the glory of God (v. 23). They were justified freely (*dōrean*) by an act of God's grace that occurred through the redemption (*dia tēs apolutrōseōs*) of Jesus Christ (v. 24) whom God put forward as a propitiation effected by faithfulness (*hilastērion dia tēs pisteōs*) through his blood for demonstration of his righteousness through the forgiveness of previously committed sins by God's forbearance (v. 25). The conclusion is that justice is now shown in the present time as God is just and justifies the one who comes out of the faithfulness of Jesus (*eis to einai auton dikaion kai dikaiounta ton ek pisteōs Iēsou*).³⁸

On the basis of this argument, Paul can triumph over his Jewish law-abiding interlocutor and rhetorically ask about boasting (i.e. the boasting which Paul ascribes to claims of ethnic-religious superiority of Jews over gentiles by virtue of possession of the law). Emphatically, Paul states that boasting is out of the question: it is excluded (*eksekleisthe*) on the basis not of the law of works but on the basis of the law that comes from faithfulness (*dia nomou pisteōs*, v. 27). Similar to the argument of Galatians, Paul by virtue of his argument is put in a parallel precarious situation by both wanting to have his cake and eat it. It therefore becomes necessary for him to engage in a fuller discussion of the law in order to show that by his understanding he does not annihilate the law but affirms it. Similar to the Galatian argument, he develops his understanding by extensive *midrash* on Abraham as the father of faithfulness. Since we have already looked extensively at this in the context of Galatians, we may here proceed to chapter five in which Paul draws a provisional conclusion: 'Having then become justified by faithfulness we have peace with God through our lord Jesus Christ' (5:1).³⁹

The point of 5:1–11 is to describe the present situation of Christ-adherents as the particular group in the world that has been reconciled with God through the redeeming death of Christ (5:10a). Enmity between humans and God has thereby been brought to an end. However, this is not only a matter of bringing the negative consequences of the previous human predicament to a halt. The positive results are even greater, since humans can now expect to be saved on the basis of Christ's life (v. 10b). Thereby, room has been created for a legitimate form of boasting. Christ-followers may boast in God through their lord Jesus Christ who has granted them their current situation of reconciliation. Based

³⁸ See Hodge 2007, 91, who poignantly paraphrases the expression: 'The one whose descent springs from Christ's faithful death and resurrection'.

³⁹ Troels Engberg-Pedersen has persuasively shown how 5:1–11 and 8:14–39 constitute a closely related section that surround the intermediary chapters (Engberg-Pedersen 1995).

on these claims, Paul is forced to unfold his understanding of the world, i. e. how enmity, peace, reconciliation, etc. have come about. This is exactly what he does in the section 5:12–21 in which he specifies how all this has happened, while in 6:1–14 applying it with respect to the individual Christ-adherents.⁴⁰

Traditions do not float around. They come into existence only in retrospect by being created and evoked as that past which imbues the present with significance. They pay remedy for the deficiencies of the present by being invoked as the ideal past to be emulated in order for the present to overcome the deficiencies of the current place and era. This is what mythmaking is about, and it is as such that we see Paul evoking the past by instrumentalising history. Since he is forced by the contingencies of his argument to present to his addressees his fundamental understanding of the world, we are in 5:12–21 getting a unique manifestation of the basic structure of his world-view. His essential claim is that the fate of Christ can only be understood on the basis of the story of Adam. Everything else that has occurred in human history (as well as to the world, since his story also has cosmic, creational dimensions that pertains to all of creation), so Paul, has to be understood in light of these two arch-figures.

In 5:12 he returns to his general assertion that the world has fallen victim to the predicament of sin and death, but rather than as in the opening of the letter depicting this in general terms he now fleshes it out in the figure of Adam. Sin has come into the world through the one man and through sin, death. The fateful destiny of Adam, however, also had consequences for his successors whose fate has been dictated by the mythical progenitor. This did not happen, however, by a direct causal effect for which the successors were freed of responsibility. Death came to all humans, because they all sinned (v. 12c). Similar to Paul's quandaries in Galatians with respect to the precise status of the law, he proceeds to argue that although sin could not be reckoned prior to the arrival of the law, sin was there from the beginning when Adam sinned (v. 13). This raises another question about the particular relationship between the transgression of Adam and subsequent forms of sin, which Paul has to deal with. He confronts this question in verse 14 by arguing that sin made itself king (*ebasileusen*) from Adam to Moses and even to those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression (*epi tō homoiōmati tēs parabaseōs Adam*). Once again, the law constitutes a quandary to Paul, which he has to fit in to his overall understanding. After hav-

⁴⁰ For the relationship between 5:12–21 and chapter six, in particular 6:1–14, see my unpublished dissertation (Klostergaard Petersen 1994), and a number of subsequent publications on this topic among which the most important is Klostergaard Petersen 1998.

ing pointed to Adam, Paul emphasises how he is the type of the one who was to come (*tupos tou mellontos*).

Having located the law in his overall understanding of the course of the world it becomes crucial for Paul to emphasise the asymmetrical relationship that pertains to Adam and Christ and the respective consequences of their actions. The transgression cannot be directly compared to the free gift, since the gift involves a cornucopial surplus: ‘for the free gift from the many offenses led to justification’ (v. 16c). The same point is redundantly repeated in verse 17: how death made itself king by the transgression of the one, but how much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. Verse 18 is another emphatic repetition to sum up the argument expressed by the particle *oun* and the recurrence of the central terms. Though the disobedience of the one caused condemnation over all humans, a similar effect took place with the righteous act (*dikaiōma*) of Christ that led to justification of life to all humans. This, however, is a qualified truth since justification only potentially pertains to all humans. In actuality, it is bequeathed upon the group which has become the embedded descendants of Christ’s faithfulness: ‘For as by one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so also by one man’s obedience many will come forward as righteous’ (v. 19). The statement is odd in the sense that with respect to the first part of the sentence Paul means by the many (*hoi polloi*) all – as is evident from the preceding verses. Yet, the use of this *polloi* is presumably provoked by the *hoi polloi* of the subsequent sentence, since only Christ-adherents shall obtain salvation.

The importance of the law and the problems it causes for Paul to locate it within his overall depiction of the past is evident from the last two verses of the chapter, in which he again sees himself forced to take up the question of the law. One would obviously think, as rivalling Jewish groups did, that the law came into existence to mitigate or prevent the committing of sin or even more to enable Israel to abide by the covenant with God. Yet, this is not Paul’s understanding since that would undermine the importance he ascribes to the Christ-event. He, therefore, has to defy such an understanding, but at the same time he cannot let the law go. As I have already stated, Paul is confronted with the quandary that he both wants to have his cake and eat it. Rather than claiming (as contesting forms of Judaism would do) that the law saved Israel, Paul asserts that the law came into existence in order to make offence abound. Paul’s argument is that the accumulation of sin and transgression made grace proliferate in abundance (*hupereperisseusen hē charis*) (v. 20). Finally, he concludes the argument by recapitulating the central entities. As sin made itself king by death, so did grace become king by virtue of the justice leading to eternal life through the lord Jesus Christ.

Although we only find manifestations of this central structure in the surface texts of Rom 5:12–21 and 1 Cor 15, it should be abundantly clear how we here see an occurrence of Paul's basic world-view, i.e. that narrative structure which organises all other information in his narrative universe and endows it with meaning. Needless to say, Paul did not compose narratives. His letters are representative of discourse. Yet, we also see in these letters how Paul often has recourse to narrative, i.e. story recounted in either third person singular or plural. This is not surprising since discourse, too, is cognitively structured by an underlying narrative. As we have seen through the various examples highlighted in Paul these stories delve very much into the past. Paul has recourse to history in order to frame a narrative that by linking the present with the past creates a tradition, which Paul argues is decisive for an appreciation of the present. This is made palpably clear by the Adam-Christ typology.

5 Conclusion

As stated in the introduction it would be fallacious to think of Paul as a *createur* of historiography in the sense of a second order discourse pertaining to the past. There is no evidence of meta-reflexivity on history in Paul, such as we find in the historiographers of antiquity proper. Yet, it would be an erroneous jump to conclusions were we to infer from this that Paul did not engage with history. He certainly did if thereby we also include mythmaking, which in order to make sense of the present has recourse to the past. As Michel de Certeau in particular elegantly has documented, any work with the past – be it that of professional historians or exponents of mythmaking – is strongly engaged in matters of the present. One has recourse to the past in order to pay remedy for the deficiencies of the present with the aim in mind to create a future void of the current imperfections.⁴¹ Some historians will oppose such an understanding with respect to the writing of professional history or second order forms of history writing, but it is crucial to acknowledge that the corrections of the present may be thought of in terms of intellectual problems as well as social, moral, political, etc. As such it is not very difficult to subsume second order discourses on history under the understanding of de Certeau as well.

Contrary to the Gospels, it is conspicuous to see that Paul's predominant recourse to the past is not dictated by an attempt to create warrants for his Chris-

⁴¹ This is the main argument of Michel de Certeau's wonderful *L'écriture de l'histoire* (de Certeau 1975).

tological assertions. It is more a matter of very contingent issues that have to do with his intervention in practical affairs of the communities he has founded as well as the vibrant and often heated defiances of his contesting missionaries.⁴² Through four extensive examples, we have observed how Paul instrumentalises the past in order to create a present for his audiences that in Paul's view will force them to abide by his instructions. The myths of the past that he creates should make it inevitable for his recipients to stay within the parameters dictated to them by these constructed myths.

Additionally, we have noticed how Paul the mythmaker is also Paul the *bricoleur* and creator of traditions. Although the signs of which the Pauline myths are made were Scripturally available to Paul, it is Paul who by assembling these signs creates the particular traditions. They are his particular mythic assemblages or constellations which only in hindsight appear as traditions *per se*. Instrumentalisation of history in the ancient world frequently was an intrinsic part of mythmaking and an inevitable generation of traditions. Paul is an epitome of this in a world saturated by mythmaking by his perpetual recourse to the past in order to obtain those elements that formed the traditions of the future.

Finally, we have seen in several of the chosen examples how Paul exhibits an axial age or utopian type of religion. The values of this world are defied in favour of values held to correlate to the wisdom of God. Paul stages himself as an apocalyptic mediator between God and the Christ-communities which he has founded. The general utopian or axial age world-view results in a complete turning of values upside down. What is wisdom in the heavenly world appears as folly in this world, and what is ascribed status in this world is reckoned to be of negative value when meted *sub specie aeternitatis*. Corollary with this radical turning over of existing values at the vertical axis is a parallel transition at the axis of depth. Inner values are preferred at the cost of outer values. Thereby the status that the law enjoys in most forms of late Second Temple Judaism is changed. The law and its various identity markers such as, for instance, circumcision and dietary laws are neglected in favour of moral values held to represent an inner state of mind congruent with the heavenly world. The same move takes place at the horizontal axis. The past is ascribed a negative value in comparison with the present, i. e. the present exhibited by the Christ-communities guided by the spirit of God. Since it would be difficult for Paul to retain his Judaism and, thereby, his positive understanding of Scripture he drives in a wedge between an ideal positively ascribed past and the generally negative one.

⁴² This is one of the main arguments of Richard B. Hays with which I fully concur (Hays 1989).

In terms of Scripture, the positively attributed past correlates with the present of the Christ-communities, whereas the negatively ascribed past is identified with the views and behavioural traits identified by Paul with his various opponents. In this manner, Paul's use of the past may be seen as exemplary of his basically axial age type of religiosity to the extent that we see a fusion of values taking place at three complementary axes, i.e. the vertical one, the one pertaining to depth, and the horizontal one, as the figure below illustrates. In order to understand how Paul instrumentalises history it is crucial to acknowledge this dependence and correlation between what occurs at the individual axes constituting the abstract features of his world-view, and narratively incarnated by his opposition of Adam with Christ.

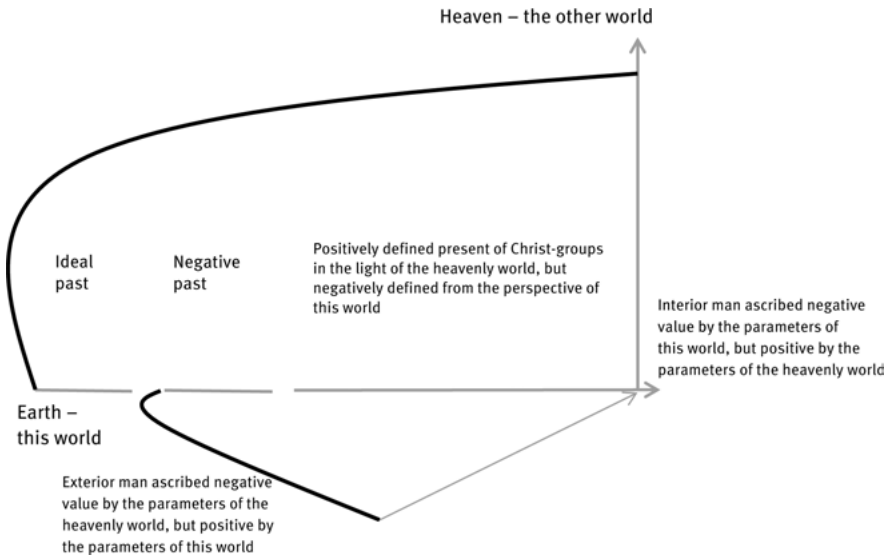


Fig. 1

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Ingvild Sælid Gilhus

Flirty fishing and poisonous serpents: Epiphanius of Salamis inside his *Medical chest against heresies*

1 Introduction

In his *Panarion*, the *Medicine chest against heresies*, written in the 370 s, Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis on Cyprus, describes eighty ‘heresies’ (*haireisis*) and schematizes the religio-political situation in the Roman Empire.¹ Chief themes and conflicts in the church in 370 CE are described in his work. The bishop signals an intense opposition to all types of deviations from the Church’s beliefs and practices, an opposition which he also expresses in a few autobiographic passages.

The *Panarion* presents a kaleidoscopic portrait of religion and a colourful pattern of movements and groups in the Roman Empire, but it cannot be taken as a correct sociological and historical description. On the contrary, the *Panarion* has been regarded as a somewhat embarrassing and difficult text (Cameron 2003, 472f.; Kim 2010, 283; Jacobs 2012, 31f.). It is embarrassing because of the slanderous style of its author – has the bishop really no boundaries? It is difficult to divide fiction and facts in this huge work, which makes it problematic to use as a historical source. In the words of Andrew S. Jacobs, it is ‘a heresiological treatise based on previous sources, personal experiences, and downright fabrication’ (Jacobs 2012, 31). However, in recent years, when research interest has turned to discourse analysis, cultural processes and the cultural work of texts, these approaches have opened up the *Panarion* in new ways.²

In this chapter, I shall concentrate on two episodes in the *Panarion* where Epiphanius describes his interacting with so-called heretics. What message does Epiphanius wish to convey to his readers when he writes himself into the *Panarion*? Why does he write himself into the text on the points that he does? What cultural work do his self-descriptions do and what course of action do

¹ The quotations from the *Panarion* are taken from Williams 2009 and 2012. The Greek text consulted is from Epiphanius / Holl, Bergemann, Collatz (eds.) 1915/2013; Epiphanius / Holl, Dummer (eds.) 1922/1980 and 1933/1985.

² The recent contributions of Cameron 2003, Boyarin 2006, Schott 2007, Kim 2010 and Jacobs 2012 are examples of fruitful new approaches to the *Panarion*.

they promote? What can we learn about the contemporary religious situation in the Roman Empire from the snapshots of Epiphanius' career as a heresy-hunter?

2 Autobiographic elements

The purpose of writing the *Panarion* was to offer an antidote to heresy – knowledge about the sects shall help the readers to avoid them. Epiphanius' ambition is to create a scholarly text, the preface is written for the 'scholarly' at the request of 'scholarly people' and for 'scholarly presbyters' (*philokalos* [I 155, 14 f.; I 156, 6; I 170, 23; I 170, 27]). Some of the things that Epiphanius tells, he owes to his 'zeal for knowledge' (*philomathos*, I 170, 14). He shares with his reader information of what type of sources he has used in the *Panarion*:

Some of the things about sects and schisms which I shall be telling the reader, I owe to my fondness for study. Certain things I learned from hearsay, though I happened on some with my own ears and eyes. I am confident that I can give an account, from accurate report, of the origins and teachings of some sects, and part of what goes on among the others. Of the latter, I know one from the works of ancient authors, another by listening to learned men who confirmed my notion precisely. (Proem II, 2,4)

Epiphanius returns to his sources in the middle of the description of the Gnostics: 'I indicated before that I have encountered some of the sects, though I know some from documentary sources, and some from the instruction and testimony of trustworthy men who were able to tell me the truth' (*Panarion* 26,18,1). He builds on the works of Irenaeus and others, especially on the lost *Syntagma* of Hippolytus and he transmits substantial parts of their texts in the *Panarion* (Pourkier 1992, 26 and 477). He has further read and refers to books. Some of the texts that he mentions have mythological elements in common with the Coptic texts found at Nag Hammadi in 1945. In the *Panarion*, Epiphanius uses mostly literary sources, but in some cases he also adds oral information.³

In addition to his general presence in a personal, lively and very long text – 1500 pages in modern editions of the Greek text – Epiphanius writes himself more directly into the *Panarion* in three ways. One is when he, in the introduction, tells the reader how he created his heresiological work at the urge of scholarly persons, and he mentions especially the presbyters Acacius and Paul. The second is when he, for rhetorical effect, strikes up a conversation with past her-

³ Personal contact is, for instance, indicated in relation to the Manichaeans (*Panarion* 46,36,4) and to Miletius, the Egyptian (*ibid.* 48,3,1).

etics, as, for instance, Zeno, the Stoic (*Panarion* 5,2,1–3,1), and Saturnilus, a Christian-Gnostic who lives ca. 120 CE. In fact, Saturnilus has little to say for himself in Epiphanius' reanimated version of him and is in the end characterized by Epiphanius as a 'supreme fool' (*Panarion* 23,4,1–4,7).

The third type of self-appearance in the *Panarion* is when Epiphanius claims to have actually interacted with the people and sects he describes. There are only a few cases of such self-biographical snapshots scattered among the eighty heresies. One example is when Epiphanius presents one of his informants, Josephus, a Jew who has converted to Christianity.⁴ But while the stories of Josephus get a lot of attention in the text, the description of the actual interaction between Josephus and Epiphanius is limited to them having dinner and a conversation in Josephus' house in Scytopolis (*Panarion* 30,5,1–5,3). Epiphanius also mentions, in relation to the Sethians, that, 'I think I may have met with this sect in Egypt too – I do not precisely recall the country in which I met them. And I found out some things about it by inquiry in an actual encounter, but have learned other things from treatises' (*Panarion* 39,1,2). Epiphanius is in this case vague and the reader is left with the impression that it is uncertain whether he has met the Sethians at all.

There are, however, two places in his *magnum opus*, where Epiphanius takes a more active role and appears as a hands-on guy in his own text. In the first episode he describes how in his youth in Egypt he became the object of flirty fishing (*Panarion* 26,17,4–26,17,9). The second episode takes place later when he, as leader of a monastery in Palestine, unmasked an old monk and condemned him as a Gnostic (*Panarion* 40,1,1–40,1,9). The two episodes illustrate two distinct periods in Epiphanius' life, one when he was a young student in Egypt, the other when he was head of a monastery in Palestine.

3 Flirty Fishing

In his youth, Epiphanius became the object of flirty fishing, according to the information he gives in the *Panarion* (Gilhus 1997, 245–7). The concept 'flirty fishing' was originally used about the proselytizing methods of women in the Children of God, who in the late 1970 s and 80 s attempted to attract new members

⁴ According to Daniel Boyarin the story about Josephus helps to create an orthodox Jewish identity, which Josephus leaves behind when he converts to Christianity. Josephus illustrates a pure (former) Judaic identity opposed to the hybridities of Judaeo-Christian sects (Boyarin 2006, 211–4). It was Josephus' 'initial complete separation from Christianity as an 'orthodox' Jew that enabled his transformation into a purely orthodox Christian' (ibid., 214).

by means of sexual approaches. This is similar to what the women whom Epiphanius met in his youth in Egypt allegedly tried on him. The episode is described in the account of the Gnostics, sect number 26. According to Epiphanius, the group had several names, for instance ‘Koddians’, ‘Borborians’, ‘Stratiotics’, ‘Phibionites’, ‘Zacchaeans’ and ‘Barbelites’ (*Panarion* 26,3,5). The listing of names gives the impression that Epiphanius has made this sect up from disparate elements. The reader is further offered the names of various texts used by the group and some of the content of these texts, which includes mythological systems and entities, is disclosed. Peculiar cultic practices with orgiastic meals, intercourse where procreation is prevented as well as sacramental use of semen and menses are described in some detail (*Panarion* 26,1,1–16,8).

After these disclosures, Epiphanius introduces his own role in the sect and his meeting with the Gnostics in what Aline Pourkier has described as ‘un passage pittoresque’ (Pourkier 1992, 30). He has already told the reader how difficult it is for him to reveal these things: ‘It is truly a misfortune for me to tell all this’ (*Panarion* 26,14,1). ‘Really these things should neither be said, nor considered worth mentioning in treatises’ (*Panarion* 26,14,4). He is rather coy, plays hard to get and shows a curious mixture of eagerness and reluctance before he at last gets to the point and lets the readers know what happened:

But what else should I say? Or how shall I shake off this filthy burden since I am both willing and unwilling to speak – compelled to, lest it appear to be concealing any of the facts, and yet afraid by revealing their horrid activities I may soil or wound those who are given to pleasure and lusts, or incite them to take too much interest in this? (*Panarion* 26,17,1)

With this titillating introduction Epiphanius finally comes to the point: ‘For I happened on this sect myself, beloved, and was actually taught these things in person, out of the mouths of people who really undertook them’ (*Panarion* 26,17,4). After having excelled in condemnations of the use of deviant sex and strange sacraments, this comes as a bombshell. One must presume that the bishop savours the effect he expects the disclosure will have on his readers. And then, at last, Epiphanius tells us what he wants us to know.

What he tells, in short, is that the women in the sect of the Gnostics tried to seduce him and recruit him to their sect. He did not surrender, even if the prettiest of them tried her best to make him. The episode has been much discussed, and the words Epiphanius puts in the mouth of these women have frequently been quoted: ‘We can’t save the kid; we’ve left him in the hands of the archon to perish’ (*Panarion* 26,17,6) as well as the boasting of the prettiest of them: ‘I’m an elect vessel and can save the suckers, but you couldn’t’ (*Panarion* 26,17,7). After Epiphanius had read their books and understood what they were

up to, he reported them immediately ‘to the bishops who were there, and finding out which ones were hidden in the church. Thus they were expelled from the city, about 80 persons, and the city was cleared of their tare-like thorny growth’ (*Panarion* 26,17,8). Then he assures the readers, that ‘I could speak plainly of it because of things which I did not do – heaven forbid! – but which (I knew) by learning them in exact detail from persons who were trying to convert me to this and did not succeed’ (*Panarion* 26,18,2).

There are several reasons why this episode has been much discussed. One reason is that there is a desperate need to connect texts to groups and social facts, and since the description of the Gnostics seems to give us a snapshot of things that really happened, it is easy to accept it for fact. Epiphanius’ information has given abundant material for entries in encyclopaedias on the groups he mentions. A second reason is that blaming so-called Gnostics with orgies and immorality has suited Church-history well. A more general reason for the interest in the description of the Gnostics is that sex and frivolous girls always sell. In the *Panarion* they sell stories about the benefits of the ascetic life to ancient readers and ‘social facts’ to modern researchers.

Scholars have, in the words of Averil Cameron, ‘in the main read heresiologists and other writings on heresy as indicative of real situations’ (Cameron 2003, 474).⁵ A recent example is Frank Williams, who sees the Gnostics as a threat to Epiphanius’ particular version of Christianity:

One such threat came early in the form of a sexually oriented group which Epiphanius encountered in Egypt and identified as ‘Gnostics’ (*Panarion* 26,17,4–9). This episode, which endangered Epiphanius’ chastity as well as his faith, may help to explain his particular detestation of anything Gnostic. (Williams 1987, xi)

In the introduction to the revised version of his translation of the *Panarion*, Williams says: ‘Although we cannot know this, this episode, dangerous to his chastity and described by him, even years later, in an emotional manner, might have been a turning point’ (Williams 2009, xiii-xiv).

In recent years, however, there have been critical voices (cf. Eshleman 2011, 205). There are reasons to be cautious in the interpretation of this episode, because there is always the ugly ditch between the texts and the extra-textual world, described by Elizabeth Clark: ‘Nonetheless, the leap from “representa-

⁵ Several scholars have wanted to rescue a historical core: ‘Even after all due allowance has been made for tendentious and distorted representation, it will appear that there is an element of factuality, a historical core in these reports’ (Gero 1986, 288; cf. also Benko 1967; van den Broek 2005).

tion” to the extra-textual world crosses a wide and ugly ditch whose expanse we historians should take care not to underestimate’ (Clark 1998, 430). It is, for instance, striking that the description of the Gnostics is so vague. There are several slighting names on the sect, but no names of people and places. The sacramental use of blood and semen are mentioned and condemned in two other texts as well, *Pistis Sophia* and the *Book of Jeu*. The problem with these descriptions is, as has been pointed out several times, most recently by Bart D. Ehrman, that they are at odds with the primary sources, such as the Nag Hammadi texts, which speak rather in unison about asceticism (Ehrman 2013, 19–24).⁶ The sacramental semen/blood reference could very well be an anti-heretic *topos*. It may also be pointed out that in the middle of the description, Epiphanius returns to his sources as if he wants to persuade the reader to take this not-very convincing description of the Gnostics seriously (*Panarion* 26,18,1, see above).

Instead of taking the story of the Gnostics and the flirty fishing at face value as a description of a part of the Egyptian religious scene in the 330 s-40 s, one can rather ask what sort of cultural work the story does in the text. Why does it work for Epiphanius? Why was it important for him to let his youthful self appear on the same pages as the allegedly libertine Gnostics?

4 Self-biographies and worldmaking

The self-biographic element is of special interest. On a more general level, self-biographic elements are always a challenge to an historical interpretation. It is tempting to agree with Jeff Todd Titon who said that ‘no matter how sincere the attempt, remembering the past cannot render it as it was, not only because memory is selective, but because the life storyteller is a different person now than he was ten or thirty years ago; and he may not be able to, even want to, imagine that he was different then’ (Titon 1980, 290). Or in the words of Lisbeth Mikaelsson: ‘The Self-biography, in all its subtypes should be met by the hermeneutics of suspicion, even when one does not think that the author has unethical motives’ (Mikaelsson 2003, 30 [my translation]). And for that matter, there is little in the *Panarion* that should lead us to suspect that the Epiphanius harboured high ethical concerns in his treatment of the people he regards as the adversaries of the Church.

⁶ Another researcher who has been sceptical to the historical value of Epiphanius’ report is Michael A. Williams (cf. Williams 1996).

One question is what we can get out of self-biographical descriptions. Jerome Bruner presents the relationship between the hero of an autobiography and its author in this way:

A narrator, in the here and now, takes upon himself or herself the task of describing the progress of a protagonist in the there and then, one who happens to share his name. He must by convention bring that protagonist from the past into the present in such a way that the protagonist and the narrator eventually fuse and become one person with a shared consciousness. (Bruner 1991, 69)

If we follow Bruner a bit further, his ideas about worldmaking and self-biography are very much in line with how the self-biographical aspect of the *Panarion* might fruitfully be conceived:

So, given that autobiography is also a form of 'taking a stand', it is perforce rhetorical. And when one combines the rhetoric of self-justification with the requirements of a genre-linked narrative, one begins to come very close to what Goodman describes as 'worldmaking' in which the constructed Self and its agentive powers become, as it were, the gravitational center of the world. (Bruner 1991, 76)

In what follows, we will, in line with Jerome Bruner's suggestions, see Epiphanius' self-construction in the *Panarion* as a worldmaking activity and his narrative *persona* as an attempt to constitute himself as the centre of the world. The suspicion is that Epiphanius' tales about his life has much in common with life storytelling in general – 'life storytelling is fiction, a making, an ordered past imposed by a present personality upon a disordered life' (Titon 1980, 290).⁷ This means that in the *Panarion*, Epiphanius lets his past be subject to re-interpretation based on current circumstances. His life storytelling is a source to the present and to the religious, cultural and social processes that are at work at his time (cf. Clark 1998, 430). This also implies that he transports his present self back in time, the better to promote present action. Epiphanius creates a self-biographical narrative identity, which makes him into the unrivalled hero in his own story and an ideal to be imitated by others.

It is interesting that the bishop, who writes his own life into the *Panarion* only a few times, chooses to do so at exactly this point, which is in a description of the libertine Gnostics. The episode he describes here is, in Epiphanius' view, crucial and there is good reason to try to mine it for information. What does Ep-

7 Cf. Elder, Hitlin 2007, 174: 'One's past is not a stable part of the self, but subject to re-interpretation based on current circumstances'.

iphanianus want to impress upon his readers? Is there anything he does *not* want us to know?

In the second Proem of the *Panarion*, Epiphanius states: 'I happened on some (sects) with my own ears and eyes' (*Panarion* 2,6). He conveys to his readers that he was sexually attractive in his youth, since the most beautiful of the Gnostic girls tried to seduce him. When Epiphanius tells what happens, he refers to the story about Joseph in the Old Testament and the wife of Potifar who tried to seduce him, 'that murderous, villainous Egyptian wife of the chief cook' (*Panarion* 26,17,4). But this story is more ambiguous than Epiphanius is willing to let us know. In *Genesis* Joseph fled from the seduction, but, all the same and as revenge, Potifar's wife blamed him for rape and Joseph was put in jail (*Genesis* 39,7–20). This does not happen to the young Epiphanius in the old Epiphanius' text. The young Epiphanius is really the uncontested hero in the old bishop's story. In real life, who seduces whom and who is to blame is not always so easy to know as it apparently is in the stories of Joseph and Epiphanius. It is also a question what Epiphanius' status is. According to Church history he spent his youth in Egypt, first as a student of rhetorics in Alexandria and then ten years in lower Egypt as a novice and monk (Pourkier 1992, 20 and 30). It is, however, hard to see him as being part of a monastery or a systematic ascetic program when one reads his description of himself and his dalliances with the so-called Gnostic women, so the narrative is probably connected to his years as a young student.

The climax in the *Panarion* story about the Gnostics is when Epiphanius reports them to 'the bishops who were there' and eighty persons were expelled from the city. The guess has been that the city is Alexandria, but it has been noted that this city had no more than one bishop (Gero 1986, 295). The plurality of bishops could signal that some sort of meeting among bishops is presupposed, but most important the plurality serves to make Epiphanius' deed even greater. According to Claudia Rapp: 'The emperor, the holy man, and the bishop. These were the most powerful and evocative figures in late antiquity' (Rapp 2005, 3). The young Epiphanius comes through, not only as sexually attractive, virtuous and one who sees through heresy, but also as a young man who has important information to give to his superiors, the powerful bishops. He sees what the bishops did not see even if it took place right under their noses.

The episode of Epiphanius and the flirty fishing is the culmination of the long description of Sect number 26. As already mentioned, in addition to having peculiar rituals and sexual practices, the Gnostics also used books. Epiphanius records the names of several of them (Dummer 1965), which makes these books far more real to us than the people and places he describes. The books become even more real because it is possible to recognize some of their themes and her-

oes from the Nag Hammadi texts.⁸ Epiphanius also volunteers that the reading of their books makes him understand how dangerous the girls were. There is a correspondence between the texts that he refers to and the ‘flirty fishers’, because the texts include female mythological heroes who play leading roles, especially Noria, Eve, Barbelo and Mary, and several of the books are named after these women. By connecting the texts and their female heroes with ‘sexually oriented groups’ (Williams 2009, xiii) headed by seductive women, Epiphanius places unwanted texts in a compromising context. One of the themes in the *Panarion* is heretical literature, a theme Epiphanius repeatedly returns to when he comments on the sects. The texts that are mentioned are probably the most historically correct elements in the description of the so-called Gnostics, even if Epiphanius’ reading and interpretation of them most likely is extremely biased.

Another concern in the *Panarion* is the right balance between sexuality, procreation and asceticism. The ideal of Epiphanius is expressed in this way: ‘Now the holy Catholic Church reveres virginity, monogamy and purity, commends widowhood, and honors and accepts lawful wedlock; but it forbids fornication, adultery and un-chastity’ (*Panarion* 48,9,1). Sex and procreation loom large as chief themes in the Christian religious universe, not least because of the promotion of the ascetic life and because sexuality is linked tightly to procreation and should only happen within lawful marriages. This is what Kathy L. Gaca has labelled ‘procreationism’ (Gaca 2003). It means that sexual engagement between men and women should rather not take place, and if it does, only within marriage and only with the intent of conceiving offspring. In line with this ideal, competing religions and religious groups were accused of deviant sexual practices (Knust 2006). The *Panarion* is part of the fourth century Christian discussions about the right balance between sex, procreation, marriage and asceticism, and the portrayal of the Gnostics can be seen as a caricature or an inverted projection of the concern for this balance. While the ideal of the Church is procreation without sexual passion, the Gnostic inversion is, according to the *Panarion*, sexual passion without procreation.

The varieties in views and practises concerning asceticism, sexuality and procreation can be expressed in a diagram. The diagram has two crossed axes where the horizontal axis goes from no procreation to procreation and the vertical axis from no sex to sex. The Gnostics (sex, but no procreation), as described by Epiphanius, are in the upper left square; the Encratites (no sex, no procreation) in the lower left square. Epiphanius’ ideal Christians will be in the left

⁸ Aline Pourkier gives a survey of the *Panarion* and Gnostic literature (Pourkier 1992, 31; see also Williams 2009, xxvii-xxviii).

lower square (ascetism) and the right lower square (marriage for the sake of procreation).

The strict views on sex and sexuality in early and not so early Christianity are closely connected with views of women. According to Kendra Eshleman, ‘complaints about the seduction of female adherents by their gnostic gurus are a running theme for Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses*, 1,6,3; 13,3; 24,2), and tap into a venerable cliché that projects anxieties about the permeability of the community onto the bodies of the female members’ (Eshleman 2011, 205). In Epiphanius’ description of the flirty fishing, women are the religious and sexual seducers. Sexual seduction and religious initiatives of women are interconnected and condemned (cf. Knust 2005).

Epiphanius places dangerous texts in a context of loose women and sexual promiscuity; he creates a caricature of the ideal of the church with the Gnostics indulging in sex and forbidding procreation; and he connects heretic religious initiatives with sexually active women. The bishop also airs another important theme, which is the hidden nature of heresy. Heresy is difficult to detect and Epiphanius’ greatness lies in his being able to spot it, and in the tremendous effort he has put down to teach others to do the same by writing the *Panarion*. For that purpose he appears in his own text as a model of how to treat heretics.

The idea of the hiddenness and secrecy of heresy runs through the description as a red thread. In the description of the Gnostics it is combined with a general misogyny. The women are lovely on the outside, but ugly on the inside; they are seductive, but with murderous clutches. When they say they are saving their victim, they are in reality destroying him. The women whisper, an activity which signals secrecy and things that do not stand the light of the day, and they are compared to ‘a tarelike, thorny growth’ (*Panarion* 26,17,9). The word for ‘tare’ is *zizania*. In the Bible it is used only in Matthew (Matt. 13,24–30). This plant may have been *Lolium temulentum*, a plant that grows together with wheat, has the same life cycle and is difficult to detect. The tare is a striking illustration of how heresy grows among true Christians without being noticed. In the case of the Gnostics, the plant is ‘a tarelike, thorny growth’, which probably is meant to make the imagined plant even worse than the proverbial tare (cf. *Panarion* 26,17,9).

5 The poison of Peter and Eutactus

A second passage where Epiphanius inscribes himself into the *Panarion* is in the description of the Archontics.⁹ Similar to the group of the Gnostics, the Archontics are not found in the heresiologies of Epiphanius' predecessors (cf. Pourkier 1992, 103f.). It might be that the description of these two sects covers more complex realities, and it is striking that Epiphanius has not come up with a founding father for these groups. This does not mean that he does not rely on earlier sources, but in these cases the descriptions seem also to be built on personal encounters and on several primary sources.

Epiphanius introduces the story about the Archontics (sect number 40) with a story about the former presbyter Peter and his disciple Eutactus, whom Epiphanius obviously knew. This description is more credible than the story of the flirty fishing, not least because it includes names of people and places. The description of the Archontics seems, except for the account of Peter and Eutactus, in the main to be based on texts (Williams 2009, 283, note 1).

The story starts with Eutactus, who had lived in Palestine, but had brought the teaching of the Archontics to Armenia. Eutactus had learnt it from an old man, Peter, who lived in the district of Eleutheropolis and Jerusalem. Peter appears to be a hermit. Earlier in his life Peter had been banished from his presbyterate because of heresy. Now he has returned to Palestine. Epiphanius stages his guest appearance in the story in two pregnant sentences: Peter 'went unrecognized by everyone until finally, from things he had whispered to certain persons, he was exposed for what he was and anathematized and refuted by my poor self. And after that he took up residence in the cave, abhorred by all and isolated from the brotherhood and from most who cared for their salvation' (*Panarion* 40,1,6–7).¹⁰ Eutactus had learnt from Peter and when he returned to his homeland in Lesser Armenia he brought the message with him and influenced several people of high standing, for 'he had unfortunately become acquainted with certain rich men, with a woman of senatorial rank, and with other persons of distinction, and through these prominent people he ruined many of his countrymen' (*Panarion* 40,1,9). Eutactus soon died, but his message had already been spread.

⁹ The sect of the Archontics comes after the sect of the Sethians. The Sethians were those that Epiphanius thought he had met in Egypt, but without divulging any details.

¹⁰ Andrew S. Jacobs discusses whether Peter belonged to Epiphanius' monastery or not (Jacobs 2012, 36, note 34).

Epiphanius' strategy is to show that each and every fact that appears in the story is not like what it seems to be. To begin with, the names do not fit their owners. Eutactus, whose name means 'order' is 'disorderly' rather than orderly and the 'old man is unworthily named Peter' (*Panarion* 40,1,3). The dress of Peter is stuffed with hypocrisy and he wears a sheep's fleece on the outside, and 'it was not realized that on the inside he was a ravening wolf' (*Panarion* 40,1,4). Peter 'appeared to be' (*dokeo*) a hermit, which means that it is implicit that he was not really a proper hermit. Peter has a hidden past, which Epiphanius knows: He had belonged to many sects in his youth, had been accused of being a Gnostic and had been deposed from his presbyterate and banished. The metaphor of poison is used repeatedly: Peter was secretly carrying the emission of poison within. Eutactus got the poison from Peter, like from an asp, and may now have brought it to Greater Armenia. It is further said that Eutactus 'imbibed the old man's wicked doctrine and, receiving the poison as choice merchandise' (*Panarion* 40,1,8). Eutactus polluted and ruined many, and it is said twice that he had sown his tare (*zizania*) in Lesser Armenia. The only neutral information about Peter and Eutactus, is that Peter had distributed his possessions to the poor, and that he gave alms daily. Peter was, according to Epiphanius, unrightfully called 'father'.

Epiphanius constructs a heretical tradition, separate from the Christian tradition. In line with this strategy, he presents teachers who have taught their heretical views to disciples, who have in their turn taught it to new disciples – like Peter, the 'father', did with Eutactus, who spread his message among well-to-dos in Armenia. Epiphanius took over the Irenaeian genealogical model according to which Simon Magus was the arch-heretic and the original father of all heresies.¹¹ He uses the genealogical principle generously in his descriptions of lineages and connections, especially to show how the different heretics are related to each other.¹² The aim of the genealogy is, in the words of Averil Cameron 'to produce a *traditio haereticorum*, the perfect antithesis of the *traditio legis*' (Cameron 2003, 477). The heretical sects are built on father-son relationships, but instead of rightful fatherhoods and son-ships there is a devilish imitation of it, metaphorically described as poisonous snakes, which infuse their poison to other snakes, just like Peter did with Eutactus. The Gnostics stand in the genealogical line from Nicolaus, 'they sprout from Nicolaus like fruit from a dunghill' (*Panarion*

¹¹ The Irenaeian genealogical system seems to be dependent on Justin Martyr's lost *Syntagma*.

¹² Aline Pourkier has shown how Epiphanius presents heresy as a succession and how he establishes broad series of heresies (Pourkier 1992).

26,1,1) and ‘are hatched by him like scorpions from an infertile snake’s egg or basilisks from asps’ (*Panarion* 26,1,3).

There are at least three types of fatherhood, which are presupposed in the *Panarion*: An ordinary fatherhood where, according to Aristotle and others, a father creates and forms a son in the female womb. A second type is the fatherhood of the Church, where a father creates and forms spiritual sons as his successors. The fatherhood of the heretics is a third type, which is an inverted form of the second type. This type of fatherhood implies that a heretic infuses his poison into his successors.¹³

In these father-son universes where true fathers and false fathers are played out against each other,¹⁴ there are at best only marginal and ambiguous mothers. The females in *Panarion*, except for Mary when worshipped in the right way, tend to appear as false prophetesses, whores and flirty fishers. Metaphorically, women appear as the eighty concubines of Salomon opposed to the one and unique bride, which is Epiphanius’ description of the eighty heresies opposed to the Church.

Similar to the story of the flirty fishing, the message in the story about Peter and Eutactus is that heresy is hard to detect, and there is a fright for a silent take-over of heretical views. It takes an Epiphanius to spot such views. In the case of Peter, his heresy was even more difficult to detect than the heresy of the Gnostics, because Peter did not necessarily do anything wrong. On the contrary, even Epiphanius must admit that he gave alms and possessions to the poor, but Peter taught things that were wrong and did it in a whisper, which signals secrecy and reflects heresy.

13 In addition to these three types of fatherhoods, there are cosmological genealogies that are extremely important, not least in the so-called Gnostic texts, and which are frequently referred to by Epiphanius.

14 In her book, *‘Begotten not made’: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity*, Virginia Burrus discusses the Trinitarian doctrine from Nicea as a crucial site for reinventing manhood in the late Roman Empire – ‘fourth-century Trinitarian doctrine both pervades and is permeated by emergent late-antique claims for masculinity’ (Burrus 2000, 3). Masculinity was established in a patriarchal and potent way outside the traditional family (ibid., 7). She discusses especially the masculine self-fashioning of Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa and Ambrose of Milan and shows how the Trinitarian doctrine is intertwined with new claims of masculinity that are ascetic and patriarchal.

6 Consequences

The heretical movement is a construction made by Epiphanius and his predecessors; especially the *Syntagma* of Hippolytus and Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses* are important. The groups and religious leaders included in the *Panarion* did not regard themselves as heretics and, more important, were not necessarily regarded as such, a fact that Epiphanius also admits: 'Even today, in fact, people call all the sects, I mean Manichaeans, Marcionites, Gnostics and others, by the common name of "Christians", though they are not Christians' (*Panarion* 29,6,6). The challenge that Epiphanius has taken on himself to meet is to reveal what is hidden and to make clear what views and practices do not count as Christian.

From his base on Cyprus, Epiphanius played a leading part in the Church-political and theological scene of his time. In the words of Kim, 'an underlying "function" of the *Panarion* was the increase of personal power and authority, because through this text Epiphanius solidified his personal reputation as an expert in heresy [...] the *Panarion* was a highly rhetorical text that served an indulging power-generating function' (Kim 2010, 385). The last part of the *Panarion* (sects 58–80) is an attack on contemporary bishops and other Christian leaders. In addition to being part of the Church-political struggle in the period when the *Panarion* was written, Epiphanius chooses to write himself into his text in two crucial phases of his life, as a young student in Alexandria and as a leader of a monastery in Palestine. The two episodes illustrate two different types of threats to the Church, one connected to deviant practices and ordinary members of the Church, the other connected to deviant teaching in the monasteries and among the ascetics. The episodes also illustrate Epiphanius' dual identity, as a priest and monk and his preoccupation both with the Church and the monasteries. The moral in the two episodes is to keep a weary eye on what members of a Church are up to as well as on what pious monks and ascetics really believe, read and teach. *Panarion* is a text where false fathers are systematically exposed and where Epiphanius establishes himself as a model shepherd of the Church and his monastery.

It is also worth pointing out what Klaus Koschorke mentioned several years ago about the Gnostics of Epiphanius, his sect number 26, namely that 'diese 80 Mitglieder umfassende Gruppe noch in der "Kirche" stand' (Koschorke 1978, 231f.). Epiphanius' two self-biographic narratives, where he stands firm against flirty fishing and false teaching, are, according to him, about what happens within the Church, not about what takes place outside it. And even if the flirty fishing might be wishful thinking on the part of the old bishop, his views of sexual mores and the roles of women, here caricatured and pushed

to the extreme, reflect real concerns, fantasies and fears within Church and monasteries.

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Sylvie Hureau

Reading sutras in biographies of Chinese Buddhist monks

1 Introduction. The genre of biographies, and biographies of monks

Biographies occupy a major place in historiographical Chinese records. After Sima Qian's (145–86 BCE) first attempt to write *Historical records (Shiji)* of China since its beginnings, each dynasty has been the subject of a history written by historians under the following dynasty's command, composed of annals, of some essays and of hundreds of biographies (of emperors, empresses, princes, high-ranking officials, local officials, military governors, literati, craftsmen, examples of perfect pious sons, of wonder-workers, etc.).¹ Apart from these official histories, separate biographical works circulated independently, being collections or other works on individuals.²

Buddhist monks, who are scarcely present in dynastic histories, were subjects of such writings composed by monks as well as lay historians, individually or grouped according to the region or the temples they were living in, or a field of activity where they were recognized as specialists. Although the earliest works disappeared long ago, there still exist several collections of biographies, each of them recording hundreds of stories. Those collections were – and still are – collected in monasteries, and read by later monks who could find in the stories of their predecessors' lives not only historical facts but also models to imitate throughout their own lives. They are also useful for the knowledge of the history of religions in China. Historians and readers of any time could find there information concerning the great figures, the spread of Buddhism, and its circumstances.³

1 Sima Qian's *Shiji (Historical Records)* have been partly translated into French by Édouard Chavannes (Sima Qian/Chavannes [transl.] 1895–1905 [repr. 1967–1969]) and into English by Burton Watson (Sima Qian/Watson [transl.] 1961).

2 On collections of biographies, see Hu 2005, 132–58.

3 Chinese Buddhist nuns have also been subject of biographies, though less than monks. Only one collection of this genre was ever produced. Called *Biqiuni zhuan (Biographies of bhikṣuṇīs)*, published in 516, it constitutes invaluable information on the history of the beginning of the Chinese female Buddhist order. It has been translated into English by Kathryn Ann Tsai (Baochang / Tsai [transl.] 1994).

Biographies follow an identical pattern, defined by Sima Qian and repeated in dynastic histories, with obviously specific details characterizing them as Buddhist monks. They start by providing for each monk his family name, where he originated from, and if he had well-known ancestors. They sometimes add details on a physical feature like tall height, extreme ugliness, or bodily marks distinguishing him from ordinary people and foretelling a peculiar and glorious destiny.⁴ Then the biography tells, if need be, the kind of life he had before entering the religion. Certain persons entered the order late in life, after their parents' death, or after a late conversion. It then indicates when, at what age, how and where he entered the religion, which monk instructed him and which kind of instruction he received (which specific texts he studied, which specific practice he performed, like chant or meditation). It gives details about the place(s) where he lived and what he did as a monk, the texts he studied, how he practiced, if he had relationships with *literati* or members of the aristocracy as well as ordinary people, if and what he wrote. It ends by indicating when (and sometimes how) he died, and where he was buried or cremated, and in certain cases, whether an epitaph was engraved on a funerary stele.

Like any of their counterparts in other religions, Buddhist biographies are not neutral accounts. Behind the apparent description of facts, they define and depict certain qualities and ideals which their readers are expected to recognize, model themselves on and imitate. They also use these models to prove the powers of Buddhist monks and the superiority of Buddhism over other religions and beliefs, with the aid of marvel and the supernatural, ubiquitous throughout biographies.

The tension between biography and hagiography which we find since the earliest records up to recent times is a well-known fact.⁵ It has been the topic of a seminal article written by Arthur Wright ('Biography and Hagiography: Hui-chiao's *Lives of Eminent Monks*'), for whom the author of the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* acted as a biographer, following the conventions of Chinese historiography, as well as a hagiographer, seeking to demonstrate the reward of piety and faith and the workings of Buddhist universal laws (Wright 1954, 385). It is also the subtitle of a book by John Kieschnick (*The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography*), who shows three qualities ideal-

⁴ Such details are not limited to Buddhist monks, but appear also in secular biographies, of some Chinese rulers in particular. We see examples for the case of two rulers living during the fourth century CE, Fu Jian and Lü Guang; cf. the translation of their respective biographies in Rogers 1968, 111, and Mather 1959, 28.

⁵ For a recent study on the case of the Buddhist master Xunyun (ca. 1864–1959), see Campo 2013.

ized by Buddhist biographers since medieval times: asceticism, thaumaturgy (the ability to do miracles due to supernatural powers that come along with an intensive practice of meditation) and scholarship (the high degree of mastery of Buddhist knowledge and practices, in writings and meditation techniques) (Kieschnick 1997, 14).

2 Reading biographies at different levels

When we read biographies, we expect to find information about the person they concern. In fact we do, be they hagiographic or not. But, just as a teaching will be received diversely according to the nature of the listeners,⁶ there are different levels of comprehending written biographical accounts, according to the understanding of the reader. One will see a description of facts where another one will see a lesson. In the following paragraphs, I will give some examples taken from the oldest collection of Chinese Buddhist monks' biographies preserved at time in its entirety, named *Biographies of Eminent Monks (Gaoseng zhuan)*, which was compiled during the first half of the sixth century (based on previous works).⁷ My main intention is to show that the accounts bear sometimes strong similarities to certain sutras, concerning the Buddha or some of his followers, or more simply concerning Buddhist ideas.

Before starting, I will repeat the well-known observation that one of the essential means used by biographers was to record events which fit the teaching of Buddhist scriptures, proving their accuracy and efficacy (Tsai 1985, 93).⁸ For example, in the case of a monk called Huida (ca. 373–435), the biographer reports that before entering the religion, the man had been a hunter. After a sudden death, he was taken to the purgatory, where he saw people suffering all kind of tortures. He also met a monk who, given the fact that Huida was offered

6 The *Lotus Sutra* illustrates this idea with the famous parable of the various species of plants which benefit from the rain falling down from one cloud according to their nature. The rain is the metaphor for the teaching of the Buddha, and the plants represent human beings. See *Miaofa lianhua jing* (T. 262, 9.19a-20b) (English translation in Watson 1993, 97–106; French translation in Robert 1997, 145–54). References to Buddhist texts are given according to the *Taishō* edition of the canon, *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (T.).

7 The *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (T. 2059) were composed by the monk Huijiao around the year 530. Modern edition by Tang Yongtong and Tang Yixuan (Huijiao / Yongton, Yixuan [eds.] 2004). On the compilation of that collection and the works Huijiao drew on, see Wright 1954, 383–432, and Kieschnick 2012.

8 Tsai gives two examples taken from a collection of nuns biographies (*Biqiumi zhuan*) compiled during the sixth century, a few years before the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*.

the chance to go back to life, exhorted him to become a monk, unearth ancient stupas and statues which were located in several places in China, revere them and repent his former sins of killing animals. The biography continues saying that after being ‘reborn’ he acted according to the injunctions.⁹ In such a story, the reader finds confirmation of the Buddhist idea that after death one goes to the purgatory where he endures punishments related to his former sins, but that penance allows him to diminish them.

Sometimes, we encounter tacit references to, or quotations of, specific scriptures. The biography of a monk of Central Asian origin, Kumārajīva (350–409), contains a scene which fits the *Sūtra on the Emission of Light* (*Fangguang jing*). It says that in his youth, Kumārajīva got the sutra, but as soon as he started to read it, was bothered by the devil (Māra) who concealed the text, leaving behind the young monk with a blank tablet. But, since Kumārajīva understood that it was a trick of the devil, he redoubled his intention to study the text, and the words immediately reappeared. Another time, Kumārajīva heard the devil’s voice coming from the air and trying to persuade him to stop reading the text, but the monk answered that his mind was as firm as the earth, and that he would not change.¹⁰ The *Sūtra on the Emission of Light* says on diverse occasions that the devil Māra tries to prevent readers from reading and/or studying the content of this kind of texts.¹¹ The biography confirms and proves it.

Several years after those events, the kingdom where Kumārajīva had lived fell into the hands of a Chinese general, and eventually Kumārajīva was brought to Chang’an (present day Xi’an), as part of a war-treasure. There, installed at the head of a translation team sponsored by the king, he translated several dozens of texts, among them a new version of the *Sūtra on the Emission of Light*, as well as other sutras belonging to the same category, called ‘perfection of wisdom’ (sk. *prajñāpāramitā*, ch. *banruo boluomi*). At the end of Kumārajīva’s biography, we read that after his death, his body was cremated, and his tongue was found intact among the ashes of the pyre.¹² In fact, in one of those ‘perfection of wisdom’ texts which Kumārajīva also translated, called the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (*Da zhidu lun*), it is said that those who recite texts belonging

⁹ Huijiao, *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, T. 2059, 50.409b13–8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.331a14–8. Translation of the passage from Kumārajīva’s biography in Lu 2004, 18.

¹¹ *Sūtra on the Emission of Light* (*Fangguang jing*), T. 221, 8.18a, 49a-b, 71b-c.

¹² Huijiao, *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, T. 2059, 50.333a5f.

to that very category during their lifetime will have their tongue preserved intact after their cremation.¹³

We do not know whether the events happened or not, but we can question their accuracy, saying that since they fit so perfectly the biography in which they are inserted, and since no other biography records such events, they have been inserted intentionally. Nevertheless, for the story with the demon, we cannot charge the biographer with inventing it from nothing, since a rumor of Kumārajīva's taming of Māra was already spread during his lifetime (Lu 2004, 19). Be that as it may, readers of biographies who had some knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures (not necessarily erudite knowledge, since the two abovementioned scriptures were among the most well-known ones) could recognize motifs from the two scriptures in the biography.

The reference can be subtle. In the case of Xuanchang (416–484), the biographer tells that the monk ran away from the place where he was living, in order to escape a wave of anti-Buddhist persecution in 445–446. In his flight, he brought along two things: a willow branch and spring-onions. While he was approaching a ford in order to cross the Yellow river, he was threatened by cavalymen who were chasing him. Then, he swept up the ground with the willow branch, giving rise to a cloud of sand so thick that horses could not move forward. While cavalymen were waiting for the sand to fall down, Xuanchang got to the bank of the river and, putting onion stems in his nostrils in order to breathe, plunged into the water and crossed the river, invisible to soldiers. Thus, he could save his own life.¹⁴

The use of willow branch for its apotropaic, prophylactic and healing values, which spread during the Tang dynasty (618–907) with the rise of Tantric rituals, began to appear precisely at, or around, Xuanchang's time. The *Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī Inviting the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin to Dispel Poisons* (*Qing guanshiyin pusa xiaofu duhai tuoluoni zhou jing*) advocates their offering to images of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara before reciting incantations calling for his protection.¹⁵ Avalokiteśvara is, *per se*, the bodhisattva capable of protecting all sentient

13 *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom (Dazhi dulun)*, T. 1509, 25.127a13f. Translation of the passage in Lamotte 1949/1966, 556: 'Enfin, dans un pays, il y avait un bhikṣu qui récitait l'*A mi t'o fo king* (Amitābhabuddhasūtra) et la *Mo ho pan jo po lo mi* (Mahāprajñāpāramitā). [...] Après sa mort, ses disciples élevèrent un bûcher et le brûlèrent. Le lendemain, ils découvrirent dans les cendres (*bhasman*) la langue (*jihvā*) du bhikṣu qui n'était pas brûlée. Parce qu'il [...] avait récité la Prajñāpāramitā, sa langue n'avait pu être brûlée'.

14 Huijiao, *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, T. 2059, 50.377a11–5.

15 The *Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī Inviting the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin to Dispel Poisons* (T. 1043) was translated between 317 and 420 CE.

being from any kind of illness, suffering or danger.¹⁶ The master Zhiyi (538–597), considered the founder of the Tiantai school of Buddhism in China, explains how to use willow twigs, purified water and recitation of the sutra's incantations in a ritual to which is given the name of 'Method of confession by invoking Avalokiteśvara' (*Qing guanyin chanfa*).¹⁷

As I said in introduction, teachings and stories are received according to the level of understanding of the reader. The abovementioned case can be simply read as a funny anecdote of a tricky monk. Still, educated readers may see a lesson in the fact that the monk in danger thought of bringing along a willow branch, as if he had the intention to carry on his practice of offerings and prayers to the bodhisattva, and was saved by using it, just as if Avalokiteśvara secretly intervened on his behalf. They would certainly see a link between the use of a willow branch and the fact that he escaped death.

The following example is a case in point of the bisection of a sutra narrative in two biographies. The biographies are recorded within a category of monks who excelled in singing hymns, and, unlike Kumārajīva, these two monks were native Chinese. One biography says that the monk, Tanping, had such a beautiful voice that elephants and horses who listened to him stopped and refused to move forward.¹⁸ The other biography says that the monk, Fadeng, was of a young age but so ugly that one day when he went to the house of a prince who sponsored a ceremony at home, the prince laughed at his face, but when the prince heard him singing, he recognized his mistake, and cited a thought of Confucius saying that he had been mistaken by judging people only by their faces.¹⁹

16 The role of Avalokiteśvara as protector is the topic of a whole chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Mi-aofa lianhua jing*, T. 262, 9.56c-58b (English translation in Watson 1993, 298–306; French translation in Robert 1997, 363–71). On the place of Avalokiteśvara in Chinese miracle stories, see Company 1993; in monks biographies, Kieschnick 1997, 103–5; on both, Yü Chün-Fang 2001, 151–222.

17 See *The Great Calming and Contemplation* (*Mohe zhiguan*, T. 1911, 46.15a-b), translation in Stevenson 1986, 72–5.

18 Huijiao, *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, T. 2059, 50.414c1.

19 *Ibid.*, 50.413c16–9. The exact saying of Confucius is 'I have chosen people according to their physical appearance, and I made a mistake concerning Ziyu [i.e. Dantai Mieming]'. The citation of Confucius is taken from Dantai Mieming's biography, recorded in the *Historical records* (*Shiji* 67.2206). Dantai Mieming, was a young disciple of Confucius but, due to his ugliness, he received no attention from the master. He withdrew, and after several years showed himself as a person talented in public affairs. His reputation became known to Confucius, who admitted his mistake. Translation of Dantai Mieming's biography in Pimpaneau 2009, 83. Watson translates 'If I had judged by looks alone I would have sadly mistaken Tzu-yü' (Watson 1961, I, 151), missing Confucius' regret about a mistake which he has already made.

The two stories are totally disconnected in time and place. The two monks live at different times and in different areas of China (the first in present day Nanjing in the first half of the fifth century, the second in present day Sichuan in the second half of the fifth century). They seem real (they maybe are) and they sound truly Chinese: the view that animals are sensitive to music and respond to it is common in China (it refers to the myth of the creation of twelve pitch pipes),²⁰ and is exemplified in other biographies.²¹ Moreover, nothing sounds more Chinese than a Confucian saying.

But, once again, Chinese readers who had knowledge of Buddhist scriptures could find a parallel in the following narrative reported in the *Sūtra of the wise and the foolish*.²² During the Buddha's lifetime, in India, a certain king was on the way to attack another kingdom. Passing with his troops alongside the monastery where the Buddha was living, they heard the supremely beautiful voice of a monk who was chanting a sutra. The soldiers slowed down and listened attentively; the animals (the text says exactly: elephants and horses) pricked up their ears and stopped. The king got out of his cart and, with the soldiers, entered the temple to see who was singing, but the person he saw was a dwarf of an extremely ugly appearance, so ugly that the king could not stand watching him. He asked the Buddha how it could be possible that such a monk could have a beautiful voice, and the Buddha explained in a long story that it was the fruit of karmic roots that the monk planted in a previous life (which is the main idea of the text).

Here too, we will never know if the narrated events really happened to the two Chinese monks, or if they are hagiographical topoi invented by the biographer. But we know that this precise sutra narrative was well known in the Buddhist circles, since it had been selected and cited in an anthology of edifying sto-

20 The legendary Yellow emperor put his minister Ling Lun in charge of making twelve pitch pipes (*lii*). The latter went toward the West, and collected on the northern slope of the Kunlun a bamboo pipe, which he cut. After blowing into it he decided that the sound it made was to be the standard pitch. He made eleven other flutes whose sounds reproduced the voices of phoenixes, six male and six female. After going back to the palace, Ling Lun cast twelve bronze bells according to these twelve pitches. Thus the court music reflected the harmony between heaven and earth, between *yin* and *yang*. The story of Ling Lun is reported in the chapter 'Ancient music' (Guyue) of the *Lüshi chunqiu*, translated in Kamenarovic 1998, 92–4, and in Knoblock, Rigel 2000, 147.

21 The *Biographies of Eminent Monks* report that Sengbian was singing at night during a fasting ceremony, when cranes landed outside the room where he was standing, listened to him, and departed only after he had finished (Huijiao, *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, T. 2059, 50.414b12–3).

22 *Xianyu jing*, T. 202, 4.424b10f.

ries which the biographer knew and used.²³ Thus, one can easily surmise that a Chinese Buddhist monk or a lay person who read the biographies could see the sutra account in filigree, and find in the Chinese monk's story the replication of the Indian one. Maybe they found even more than a replication. In the sutra it is said that according to his karma, the ugly monk would have a beautiful voice during 500 lives and thus the Chinese monk could be seen as one of his incarnations. Furthermore, it seems that in the process of copying and editing the text of the biographies, an editor (or a copyist) of the biographies worked on the text of the second story to make it closer to Chinese ideas, while all other editions are closer to the Indian model. The Kōryō edition (published between 1236 and 1251) of the text does, in fact, not read 'elephants and horses' but 'birds and horses'. That birds would be sensitive to music is in perfect accordance with genuinely Chinese thought, more than elephants. The replacement of one word by another, which is not a mistake by a copyist since the two characters are very different, was, in any case, intentional.

3 Conclusion

Modern historians often consider such stories as meaningless and of no interest from the strict historical point of view. In his famous *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*, Kenneth Ch'en wrote:

It would be straining credulity too much to accept all of these tales concerning the magical prowess of monks; these were undoubtedly embellishments added by pious biographers later on [...] to glorify the mysterious powers of the Buddha, who was able to endow his followers with such extraordinary faculties. (Ch'en 1964, 79)

But is one, according to Ch'en, supposed to expurgate all the hagiographical, stereotypical, and suspect stuff, in order to 'scientifically' reconstruct Chinese religious history? I think not. As Michel de Certeau said, one cannot evaluate hagiography according to its 'authenticity' and 'historical value' (de Certeau 1975, 317). In other words, one cannot submit one literary genre to the laws of another

23 *The Garden of Duties: Anthology of the History of Various Origins [of Buddhist Rites and Ceremonies]* (*Fayuan zayuan yuanshi ji*), compiled at the beginning of the sixth century by Sengyuan (445–518). The work is lost but the table of contents (*mulu*) is available for consultation in the *Collection of Notes concerning the Issuing of the Three Baskets [of Buddhist Teachings]* (*Chu sanzang jijī*, T. 2145, 55.90b-93b; here 92a23 for the reference). The story is summarized in a later anthology, published in 660, the *Pearl Forest in the Garden of the Dharma* (*Fayuan zhulin*), T. 2122, 53.574c28–575a5.

one. I hope to have shown that, at the time of their composition, these stories were full of sense and meaning for their readers. They played a significant role in the acceptance of the Buddhist faith in China and should therefore be seen as an important part of its history.

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Chase F. Robinson

History and *Heilsgeschichte* in early Islam: Some observations on prophetic history and biography

As one Western medievalist put it, '[t]he natural vice of historians is to claim to *know* about the past' (italics added). Nicholas Howe, here quoting James Campbell, was lamenting that especially naïve form of positivism that makes knowledge claims about a past for which contemporaneous and near-contemporaneous evidence has been largely obliterated (Howe 2005, 26). His field was the post-Roman West, but Islamicists have diagnosed the same problem in theirs. An example is Wim Raven, who has written of the *horror vacui* that drives some to answer questions about the seventh century by treating ninth- and tenth-century compendia of historical narratives as if they were databases of Prophetic history (Raven 2005; cf. Wansbrough 2006, 2). Raven's observation came decades after historians of early Islam had begun a long-overdue critical turn,¹ but, as surely we all know, vices are hard to escape: the very term, 'database', has been used to describe those compendia in a recent and monumental account of the seventh century that belongs to a Byzantinist, who accordingly offers the reader a seductively minute and nuanced reconstruction of many of the political and military events that reshaped the Middle East. His account is a model of the historian's craft (Howard-Johnston 2010).

And there's little scientific about it. 'If nature abhors a vacuum, historiography loves a void because it can be filled with any number of plausible accounts', Howe also wrote (Howe 2005, 25). Surely this is one reason why philosophers so frequently held (and hold) historians in disrepute: too often we can appear to be mere purveyors of the plausible. We may understand and advertise our project as one of description and explanation, accentuating how that project differs from the edifying, entertaining, moralizing or satirizing intentions of our pre-modern counterparts, but one does not have to commit to the 'linguistic turn' to acknowledge that our best attempts are ensnared by pre-commitments to all manner of convention (of plot, description and more besides);² nor does one have to espouse post-colonial theory to concede that representation – be it anthropologi-

1 Cf. Wansbrough 1977 and 2006; Crone, Cook 1977; Noth 1994; for a fairly caustic appraisal of the field, see Robinson 2015.

2 I echo, of course, the insights typically associated with Hayden White, especially White 1987.

cal, sociological or historical – always carries the heavy freight of social and political power. We should not kid ourselves in thinking that our ‘training’ as historians or skills as philologists allow us to control bias and strip away inaccuracies or irrelevancies so as to secure unmediated data. As Jenkins has written, we must rid ourselves of the idea that the

traces from ‘the before now’ which historians work on contain *in themselves* a specifically historical kind of information and that the ‘knowledge’ based upon it is a specifically historical kind of knowledge. Rather it is the application of the historian’s particular discursive practices – the application of a ‘historical’ genre (rather than a geographical or a literary or a legal one; rather than a mythical, a legendary or a fabular one) that *turns* such traces of ‘the before now’ into something historical; nothing is ever *intrinsically* historical – least of all ‘the before now’. (Jenkins 2003, 38f.)

What kind of *knowledge* results from our efforts, especially when they are directed at a target as elusive as the seventh- or eighth-century Middle East? A realistic answer would call it ‘provisional and probabilistic’, and insist that a clearer purpose is to advance goals that are propaedeutic or political. There is no shame in practicing a discipline that is more didactic or heuristic than forensic, of course; and, at least to some, there is much to be said in favor of one that advances progressive causes.

It is in that spirit that the following set of observations should be judged. Largely synthetic and partially provisional, they may have some heuristic value to non-Islamicists concerned with the historicization of religious claims. I shall focus upon how belief and memory about Muḥammad, the Prophet, was transformed into recognizable history during the seventh and eighth centuries, mainly in Arabia and Iraq, and largely in terms of biography (*sīra*).³ Insofar as my approach here, as elsewhere, can be characterized as revisionist – as another modest installment in an ongoing process of penetrating the fog of Islamic *Heilsgeschichte* – my observations about historicization are historicizing in their own right; they advance a line of research that aims to describe at least some of the creative dynamism and diversity of the formative period of Islam – that is, before the emergence of what might be called the ‘consensus culture’ of the ninth and tenth centuries, when, as El Shamsy puts it, ‘the basic cultural vocabulary of Islamic concepts, practices and institutions’ was coined (El Shamsy 2013, 2). We historians are all historicists by default, but some may find it surprising

³ Muḥammad and the origins of Islam have now become the subject of sustained and controversial research; some of the most noteworthy recent examples are Chabbi 1997, Prémare 2002, Nagel 2008 and 2008a, Powers 2009, Donner 2010, Schoeler 2011 and Shoemaker 2012. A useful overview can be found in Brockopp 2010.

that Islamicists have turned to this task of a properly critical and systematic historicization relatively recently.⁴ It is, I suppose, some consolation that our disciplinary torpor has saved us from many of the costly excesses committed in the course of pursuing various theoretical ‘turns’.⁵

As we shall see, Muslim biographers were also purveyors of the plausible; and they also had discourses to apply and causes to advance. If the dividing line between Christian and non-Christian doctrine runs across the claim for Jesus as Son and Messiah, the one between Muslim and non-Muslim runs across Muḥammad’s prophecy.⁶ And if the history of religion has taught us anything, it is surely that the shape of a given event, text or person, especially one of seminal or foundational significance for a religious tradition, is plastic. In fact, Muḥammad was to be many things to many people – a legislating prophet for jurists, a legitimizing symbol for caliphs, the ‘light’ and ‘friend’ of God for Neoplatonists and Sufis, a pious exemplar and intercessor for virtually all Muslims, and a cynical or delusional anti-Christ for Christian polemicists. The demand for these Muḥammads being so high, there were multiple suppliers working in virtually every genre and medium of Islamic culture. Indeed, a history of their production would probably amount to a cultural history of Islam itself. Precisely because Muḥammad’s prophecy lay at the heart of Islamic belief, he stood at the center of what might be called the ‘early Islamic imaginary’.⁷ In what follows I merely outline the history of one supply chain, the one that produced the Muḥammad who dominates ninth-century scholarship, paying particular attention to how scholarly practices reflect the broader socio-political concerns of the caliphate.⁸

4 For all the interpretive difficulties that he himself posed, Wansbrough 1977 and id. 2006 (originally 1978) were instrumental.

5 For a set of essays evaluating the ‘turns’, see ‘Forum’ 2012.

6 I leave aside long-extinct, always-marginal (and sometimes fictional) ‘extreme’ Shi’ite sectarians, who, appearing in Iraq and Iran, held radically contrary views, e.g. to the effect that the imams are angelic beings, etc. So far as I am aware, there is no evidence for Gnosticism in seventh-century Arabia.

7 The bibliography is enormous, but a catalog of some of at least some of the material can be found in Brockopp 2010, Khalidi 2009, Schimmel 1985 and Katz 2007.

8 Throughout I limit myself to *sīra* material as preserved in Ibn Ishāq (*apud* al-Ṭabarī 1901), Ibn Hishām, Ma‘mar b. Rāshid (*apud* ‘Abd al-Razzāq 1972), Ibn Sa‘d and al-Wāqidi, leaving aside not only later and non-Prophetic *sīra* works (cf. Robinson 2003, 61–6), but also the vexed question of the significance of terminology: *sīra* in this period always includes sections on the Prophet’s (military) expeditions (*maghāzī*), a term that is sometimes used interchangeably with *sīra* to denote the genre. For an overview of the genre see Kister 1983.

1 Fundamentals

1.1 Biographical basics

Here it is important to recognize what is *not* at stake. No historian familiar with the relevant evidence doubts that in the early seventh century many Arabs acknowledged a man named Muḥammad as a law-giving prophet in a line of monotheist prophets, that he formed and led a community of some kind in Arabia, and, finally, that this community-building functioned, in one way or another, to trigger conquests that established Islamic rule across much of the Mediterranean and Middle East in the middle third of the seventh century. We may never understand the religious, social, economic or discursive connections between claims to prophecy and conquest movements, but it is hard to account for the success of Muḥammad's followers in bringing down the late antique world without attributing some agency to those claims, including *jihād*. With the exception of views expressed by a hyper-sceptical fringe,⁹ these fundamentals are beyond controversy, in part because the radical rejection of the entirety of the Islamic literary tradition has itself been rejected, non-Islamic sources offering modest – but crucial – corroboration for the fundamentals.¹⁰ So what is at stake is not whether Muḥammad existed. For the historian determined to reconstruct the origins of Islam, it is whether we can discern the ‘general outline of the events’ that constituted his life (Schoeler 2011, xii). For the historian determined to understand how the past was constructed, it is whether we can track the passage from memory to literary narration – and serial re-narration (Peterson 1964; Borrut 2011; Keaney 2013). I, for one, am considerably more sanguine about the prospects for the second of these two projects than I am for the first.

Earliest Muslims and their non-Muslim interlocutors did not need to ask if Muḥammad had existed. ‘Who was this Muḥammad?’, by contrast, was a question posed already during his lifetime,¹¹ and the Qur’ān, our very best – and most

⁹ One example is Nevo, Koren 2003 (on which see Robinson 2007). Much of the extreme skepticism about Islamic origins now orbits around the work of Christoph Luxenberg (see, for a very recent example, Ibn Warraq 2014).

¹⁰ For a summary, see Hoyland 1997. Much of the non-Islamic evidence is terse, but for two relatively expansive (and translated) examples (the first in Armenian, and the second in Syriac, both of which are independent of the Islamic literary tradition) see (ps.-)Sebeos 1999, I, 95 f., and the Anonymous Zuqin Chronicler (Anonymous Chronicler / Harrak [transl.] 1999, 141 f.).

¹¹ I leave aside the question of what those who followed Muḥammad called themselves; Fred M. Donner proposes ‘believers’ (Donner 2010), but few find convincing his description of the contours of their belief (an ecumenical pietism driven by an impending eschaton). We still

difficult – source, provides both negative and positive answers.¹² We read that he was not a poet (36:69), or a magician, soothsayer or possessed (10:2; 34:43; 52:29); nor was he a fantasist, a liar or forger (16:24; 21:5). He was in most respects an ordinary man (18:110), though not a father of men (33:40), who had come from a poor and orphaned background (93:6), to become, by virtue of receiving messages from God, a warner (of God's punishment) and guide (to His mercy) to his and all people (*passim*). The recited 'book' that God 'brought down' to Muḥammad suffices to allay any doubt that he is God's prophet (29:51; 2:23), for no created being has produced the likes of the Qur'ān (17:88); nor did Muḥammad produce miraculous signs, even by his own admission: 'The signs are only with God, and I am a plain warner' (29:50). Combined with a doctrinal commitment to Muḥammad's illiteracy, an idea that is not mooted in the Qur'ān itself, the 'inimitable Qur'ān' would become Muḥammad's probative miracle *par excellence*.¹³ Though mortal like all other prophets (3:144), Muḥammad was the 'seal of the prophets' (33:40), an elusive term that may best be translated in this original context as 'ultimate'. Whatever its sense in the early seventh century, scholars would eventually settle on a consensus that 'seal' clearly meant 'final'. In so doing, they would align scripture and prophecy: the Qur'ān, delivered by God's last prophet, was definitive; as such, it abrogated previous laws and norms set down in what were regarded as the two most important predecessor scriptures, the Torah (*tawrāt*) and Gospel (*injil*).

To judge by the Qur'ān and such exiguous seventh-century evidence as we have, Muḥammad was thus held to be a man (that is, the offspring of the union of a man and woman), who, having been chosen by God, followed what elsewhere in the Middle East might have appeared to be an archaic model of prophecy. Muḥammad's theatre was the oasis towns of western Arabia, where his prophetic imagination lay beyond the grasp of the cosmopolitan Near East's 'hegemonic interpretive power', to import Brueggemann's evocative language

lack an adequate taxonomy of seventh-century belief – monotheist and polytheist, alike; for now, see Crone 2005.

¹² We are still in the wake of the *Dekonstruktionsversuch* of Wansbrough, Crone and Cook (cf. Neuwirth 2010, 91), and so the history of the Qur'ānic text remains controversial, but here I treat the Qur'ān as a seventh-century witness to the original, West Arabian context in which Muḥammad is conventionally said to have lived. Views differ on when the text was closed and stabilized, but very few would disagree with the relatively conservative position that I take here. Patricia Crone argues against Mecca in favour of an agricultural location in the north (Crone 2005).

¹³ One may note in passing that this commitment – to revelation as a source of knowledge unmediated by learning – features in the epistemology of al-Kindi (d. ca. 870) (cf. Adamson 2007, 43).

(Brueggemann 2001, xiv). There he delivered God's salvific message, in both word and deed, apparently for the purpose of creating a community that restored God's order in advance of the *eschaton*, be it imminent or otherwise. In so doing, he was far more Abraham than Jesus. For not only does the Qur'ān record all manner of preaching – exhorting, consoling, inspiring, interrogating, scolding, demanding – but it reflects a fair amount of legislating, leading and community-building too (Neuwirth 2010, 394–560). In fact, on the basis of the Qur'ān's explicit statements and unambiguous allusions, the testimony of an exceptional document that records a pact between Muḥammad and tribes in Medina, and, finally, some stray references from outside of the Islamic tradition, one can draw the bare outlines of an activist – even restless – prophet, who established a militant community of Arab monotheists. He then died, leaving behind a set of ideas that were to guide the religio-political community that he had formed. His death marked the end of his role in sub-lunar history.

This accounting is not as banal as it sounds. This is because it surfaces what seems to have been the central plank of Islamic prophetology from the very start: embedded in conceptions of God and the world that would eventually crystallize into systematic theology, it reflected a crisp distinction between God and Creation.

Given the religio-cultural matrix in which Muslims were negotiating their doctrines – a continuum of belief, ritual and practice, overlapping multiplicities of Neoplatonism, monotheism and polytheism that elude the familiarly exclusive categories of 'Christianity', 'Judaism', 'Zoroastrianism', 'polytheism', etc. – Muslims certainly had several models of religious charisma to choose from. It may be that the Gospels were translated into Arabic only in the late eighth century,¹⁴ but the context that produced the Qur'ān itself seems to have been swimming with scriptural and extra-scriptural traditions, some of which had a more direct effect upon its composition than previously thought.¹⁵ As one would expect in a late antique context, the created world included not just human and animal crea-

14 Even if biographers of the Prophet might have it otherwise, doubtlessly in order to demonstrate that Arabian monotheists acknowledged Muḥammad as a genuine prophet; thus according to Ma'mar b. Rāshid, Warāqa b. Nawfal wrote the *injīl* in Arabic ('Abd al-Razzāq 1972, V, 323). On this and other confirmatory miracles, see below.

15 At issue in a great deal of its preaching is not monotheism as such, but rather (re-)establishing *correct* monotheism, as Qur'ān 2:113 makes clear: 'The Jews say that the Christians are groundless, the Christians say the Jews are groundless, all the while reading [the same] book; even those who do not know [anything] say the same. On the Day of Reckoning God will judge between them on what they disagree about!'. For the argument that anti-pagan rhetoric disguises monotheist controversy, see Hawting 1999; for reviews of the current scholarship on the Qur'ān, McAuliffe 2006.

tures, but also liminal beings. Angels thus have their place, albeit a fairly marginal one in the Qurʾān, which may belie their significance more generally. So, too, do Jinn, who in one place (51:56) are paired with humanity as the object of Muḥammad's mission;¹⁶ in their case one can also reasonably assume greater significance – indeed, perhaps even a ubiquity – than our elite source material would have it.¹⁷ Given all the variety available, Muslims chose modestly. What may have been a difficulty – Muḥammad's mortality – was accepted, and from Adam through to Muḥammad, messengers and prophets (thousands of them), were all held to be, simply, human.¹⁸ The idea is rooted in the Qurʾān, and was firmly institutionalized in Sunni thought. It fell to Shiʿites of various stripes to elaborate, less modestly, on alternative models of prophecy and messianism.

1.2 The tradition

Certainly more can be said about Muḥammad than this. But as an example of the difficulties necessarily involved in saying a great deal more, we may take the circumstances of his death.

Every Islamicist and hard-working student knows the details: he died in Mecca in the middle of year 632, after a short illness. At least so says the closest there is to something like a canonical biography (*sīra*), which is attributed to a scholar named Ibn Iṣḥāq (d. 767); although opinions differ sharply on its composition and transmission history, one of its many recensions survives in a vigorously edited and expurgated version that was assembled by a later scholar named Ibn Hishām (d. 835). According to Ibn Hishām, Muḥammad fell ill (initially with a headache) at the end of the month of Ṣafar or the beginning of al-Rabīʿ al-Awwal of year 11; the Islamic calendar having started at his emigration from Mecca to Medina, this corresponds to late May or early June of 632. It seems that he first mentioned his ill health after having visited a cemetery called Baqīʿ al-Gharqad in order to perform late night prayers. His last days, we read, were spent mainly with one of his wives, ʿĀʾisha, in whose arms he would

16 Or, as Ibn Saʿd reports it, 'I was sent [as Prophet] to the red and the black'. ʿAbd al-Malik (caliph; rg. 685/92–705) said: 'The red is humanity, and the black are the Jinn' (cf. Ibn Saʿd 1996, I, 92).

17 At least in Iraq, as was the case for other seventh- and eighth-century polytheists and monotheists, who defended themselves by inscribing (in Syriac, Aramaic and Mandaic) their anxieties on incantation bowls, thousands of which survive; for a survey, see Morony 2003.

18 Sometimes, even the tens of thousands; for one relatively short list, see Ibn Saʿd 1996 I, 23.

die; his health declined, but he had the strength to make rounds and received visitors. His last act was to clean his teeth with a green chewing stick that ʿĀ'isha had softened for him.¹⁹ He was buried in his house in Mecca.

Student and teacher alike know all this because the Sunni literary tradition, chiefly prophetic biography, but also chronography and prosopography, tell it so. Accounts of Prophetic and post-Prophetic history were reproduced across these genres, sometimes differing one from the next, especially in circumstantial details and chronology; authors reproduced and modified accounts while omitting others; some supplemented the corpus that the previous generation had assembled with fresh reports of their own. Still, transmitters and scholars (the line is difficult to draw early on) had a high tolerance for inconsistency, and scholarship put a high value upon volume.²⁰ The central drama of the Sunni *Heilsgeschichte*, adumbrated above and fleshed out in hundreds of thousands of traditions that were compiled during the ninth and tenth centuries in thousands of volumes (the great majority of which attributed to eighth- and seventh-century transmitters), follows a common script: prefigured by a succession of prophets that began with Adam, and meticulously 'preserved' by generations of scholars so as to serve as exemplar and inspiration for future Muslims, Muḥammad phenomenalizes prophecy in Arabia, a figure both mythic and specific (as we shall see). It is only when one escapes the gravitational pull of the Sunni tradition that one finds disagreements about fundamentals, rather than details.²¹

Here it should be emphasized that there is nothing exceptional about the detailed narratives that describe the circumstances of Muḥammad's death. At least starting with Muḥammad's 'call to prophecy' (*mab'ath*), the green chewing stick is the rule, not the exception. That is, the modern historian's path leads into mountains of reports, stories and anecdotes, many of which purport to narrate in astounding detail the foundational phases of Islamic history.

We read in biographies by Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Hishām and many others that Muḥammad was forty years old when he received his first revelation from the angel

19 Cf. Ibn Hishām reprints, II, 642–56; for a translation of the account, see Ibn Hishām 1955, 678–83; see also Ibn Sa'd 1996, II, 366–7 ('Account of the chewing stick with which Muḥammad cleaned his teeth during the illness of which he would die'); and for an exhaustive treatment of that chewing stick, which begins with this account, Raven 2008.

20 Islamic traditionism – the collection and evaluation of Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*) – emerges in the eighth century, and its impact upon the law, theology, biography and historiography was far-reaching; it reflected and accelerated the more diffuse phenomenon of traditionalism – that is, a reverence for the past; for traditionism, traditionalism and Islamic history, see Robinson 2003, especially 85–92.

21 Thus there is no mistaking al-Ya'qūbī 1980, II, 6–123 (whatever the precise inflection of his Shi'ism) with his Sunni counterparts.

Gabriel: 'Recite in the name of your Lord who created!' (96:1). About ten years later, in 622, after a period of public and private preaching amongst the Meccans, he was forced to emigrate to Medina, which, we can read in voluminous detail, he made both a laboratory for religio-social engineering and a base for a series of military expeditions and raids that would bring much of the Arabian Peninsula under his authority. In 630 Mecca itself capitulated, more or less peaceably. Immediately upon his death he was succeeded by a kinsman named Abū Bakr (d. 634) and, two years later, by 'Umar (d. 644), who, ruling as the first two caliphs, inaugurated the conquest movements that destroyed the Sasanian empire and reduced the Byzantines to about one third of their seventh-century domains. According to the tradition, Muḥammad himself had led armies that reached as far as the town of Tabuk, in northwest Arabia, but no farther; Syria and Palestine fell to armies campaigning under 'Umar. Two more caliphs, 'Uthmān (d. 656) and 'Ali (d. 661), followed, each contributing to the articulation of Islamic belief and rule, each a contemporary of Muḥammad and a member of his tribe of the Quraysh, each ruling the incipient state and empire from Medina, and each legitimate by virtue of acclamation by the Muslim tribal elite.

In sum, God had renewed His pledge to mankind by choosing Muḥammad to deliver His merciful guidance. And prophecy had delivered power to Arab Muslims, whose task it now was to institutionalize God's rule and expand His hegemony. And all of this is knowable in near granular detail.

2 Fundamental problems

Such, in any case, is a summary of what one conventionally reads as 'history', and which might actually be more properly understood as narrativized theory – mainly theological and political. The case of Muḥammad's death poses several problems; and these can cast some light on the challenges one faces in making sense of the biographical tradition.

The first is the complete absence of contemporary or even seventh-century evidence, be it archaeological, documentary or literary, for the conventional dating of 632.²² The earliest secure and datable reference to the fact of Muḥammad's death appears to be an Egyptian tombstone that was cut and erected to memorialize a woman named 'Abbāsa bt. Juray[j], apparently in one of the cemeteries in Aswan. 'Abbāsa, one reads, died on 14 of Dhū al-Qa'da of year 71 (21 April

²² Or, to be more precise, for the conventional dating as expressed according to the lunar calendar, either explicitly or inferentially.

691), and the tombstone, which was presumably erected soon afterwards, speaks of the *muṣība* (literally ‘calamity’, here ‘death’) that befell ‘the Prophet, Muḥammad’, ‘the greatest calamity of the people of Islam’ (*a‘ẓam maṣā’ib ahl al-islām*). As it happens, this is the second oldest surviving tombstone from earliest Islam, one of a small handful of pieces of evidence (e. g., graffiti, inscriptions, coins and papyri) that date from its first decades. Several reflect the quick uptake of the Islamic calendar (from 622); this one is also notable for its use of ‘*ahl al-islām*’, which, in combination with the name (Juray[j], apparently George), can be taken to suggest that ‘Abbāsa was a convert. Especially against the Christian background of seventh-century Aswan, its insistence that ‘[...] she died [...] confessing that there is no god but God, alone and without partner, and that Muḥammad is his servant and messenger’ may be of some note (cf. Grohmann 1966, 13f.; Halevi 2007, 20f.; and, for a longer discussion, now Bacharach, Anwar 2012).

The absence of *any* mention of Muḥammad across all the surviving material evidence for most of the seventh century is well known, and contrasts sharply with the frequency with which his name appears, starting in the 680s, particularly on coins, which circulated widely across the caliphate. Too much can be made of the silence (cf. Johns 2003). What appears to be the most promising explanation for the change lies in the transformations – in both scale and language of legitimacy – of the Umayyad state at the end of the seventh century. It appears that in the 680s opponents to Umayyad rule had seized upon Muḥammad as a symbol; and the ruling clan of the Umayyads, the Marwanids (692–750), responded in kind, initiating a series of reforms that, *inter alia*, featured the profession of monotheism and prophecy of Muḥammad. Putting things in structural terms, one might say that as Umayyad *Staatlichkeit* grew at the expense of less formal networks of loyalty and obedience in the late seventh and early eighth centuries, so, too, did the need for a transcendent symbol of rule (cf. Robinson 2005, 81–121; Hoyland 1997, 545–59; id. 2006; Johns 2003; Donner 2010, 194–224). The material evidence can thus document the Umayyads’ patronage of Muḥammad as legitimizing symbol, a fact that is presumably not unrelated to the patronage they offered to scholars collecting accounts that would be included in Prophetic biography, as we shall see.

The second problem is posed by a set of contradictions: eleven alternative accounts, some first discussed by Patricia Crone and Michale Cook forty years ago, but recently filled out and thoroughly examined in a monograph by Stephen Shoemaker, which would have it that Muḥammad was alive at the time of the conquest of Palestine. Since these events can be securely dated to 634 or 635, his death in 632 is obviously thrown into some doubt (Crone, Cook 1977; Shoemaker 2012). The earliest is a Greek text composed in about 634; after that follow

a Hebrew source written between 635 and 645, a Syriac account from about 660, several more Syriac texts from the later seventh and eighth centuries, a Coptic account (translated from a now-lost original Arabic), one in Latin (written in 741), a piece of Samaritan Arabic and, finally, a document that is conventionally known as *‘Umar’s letter to Leo*, which survives in eighth-century Armenian. It is a pretty good haul of evidence: Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Armenian, Latin, and Coptic sources, written by Christians and Jews of multiple confessions and orientations, who were composing in a wide variety of literary genres, for varying audiences, in Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Northern Mesopotamia and south-west Iran.

This said, there is no question of *necessarily* privileging non-Muslim sources over Muslim ones, of replacing 632 with 634 or 635; they may be early, but they are often subject to severe bias of their own, and besides, some can be adduced to corroborate the Islamic tradition on matters both major and minor (Hoyland 1997; Robinson 2004). But such an impressive spread of texts, the majority of which pre-date the earliest biographical accounts from within the Islamic tradition, cannot be wished away, especially, as Shoemaker argues, because accounts from within the Islamic tradition can be adduced to support their claim that Muḥammad’s message was principally eschatological, and that his geographic focus was Jerusalem, rather than Mecca (Shoemaker 2012; cf. Crone, Cook 1977, and Donner 2010, 142–4). The *eschaton* having failed to appear, one may further argue, such accounts were marginalized, and the Prophet was accordingly reconceived as a social reformer. In this connection, one cannot resist the obvious attractiveness in viewing Muḥammad as an eschatological seer: it nicely explains the absence of Muḥammad as a legitimizing symbol early on – that is, while memories were still fresh. Why ground one’s program of legitimation in claims that had proven wrong? Besides, the Umayyads were in the business of ruling for the long run. Given that dating schemes were introduced only secondarily into *sīra* material, as we shall see, it seems to me that the burden of proof now lies with those who would defend 632.

The third problem generated by the death narratives is their very quality: what exactly are we to make of the astounding level of detail? Sustained criticism of the earliest examples of *sīra* tradition has only recently begun; and although the methods and results are controversial,²³ we know enough to know that un-

²³ The one sustained attempt that has been made to stratify Ibn Ishāq’s narrative (Sellheim 1965/66) posits a foundation (*Grundschrift*) that provides the modern historian with direct access to genuinely historical material about Mecca and Medina, and upon this two subsequent layers were accreted: the first, influenced by Christian, Jewish and Persian narratives, constructs a legendary Muḥammad; the second also bears residues of post-prophetic history in its echoes of

derstanding the biographical tradition requires tracking the evolution of the oral and literary practices that produced it.

2.1 Orality, aurality and writing

Muḥammad and his immediate successors operated in west Arabian towns naïve of sophisticated written culture, indeed one in which Arabic was still in formation as a system for delivering information beyond graffiti, simple contracts, treaties and the like. The Qurʾān (‘the Book’, literally ‘recitation’) is not coincidentally both the founding book of Islam and the first book in Arabic, albeit one that was experienced principally aurally, as recited from memory or read aloud. What we have is a culture of mainstream orality and marginal writing, where poetry and other forms of oral performance were Arabian tokens of pride and cultural distinctiveness amidst the more broadly lettered Near East, and where accounts of the past were told and re-told without the benefit of memorization techniques necessary to fix prose narratives. News of Muḥammad and his contemporaries circulated by word of mouth from the start, vectors for the transit of information not only to subsequent generations of Muslims, but also to non-Muslims (Hoyland 1997; Howard-Johnston 2010).

There certainly were good reasons for those generations to retell and reshape the stories that they had received: reputation, status, pensions and privileges were conditioned by the legacy, real or imagined, of primordial Islamic history, whether it was made within Arabia during the Prophet’s time or in the aftermath, especially during the reigns of Abū Bakr and ‘Uthmān. The descendants of early converts (such as the Emigrants [*muhājirūn*, from Mecca] and Helpers [*anṣār*, in Medina] had pasts to glory in and crow about; so, too, the ‘Alids (descendants of Muḥammad’s son-in-law and cousin, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib), who not only had a case to make for leadership of the entire community, but also specific tax concessions to defend.²⁴ Meanwhile, the descendants of later adopters or even opponents of the Prophet had legacies to inflate or rehabilitate. Such family interests are often

the evolution of the Islamic polity. One can agree that these are ingredients without following the analysis itself, which is doomed by its very stratigraphy. Compare, however, Görke, Schoeler 2008, 278f., who, claiming to have isolated accounts within ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr’s corpus that come from close contacts of Muḥammad, some of whom were eyewitnesses, speak of the ‘basic structure of events’ (*Grundgerüst der Ereignisse*). For more, see below.

²⁴ A good example is the controversy surrounding the dispensation of the settlement of Fadak, for which Muḥammad’s descendants claimed ownership (cf. al-Wāqidi 1966, II, 706f.; al-Ṭabarī 1901, I, 1589).

betrayed by family *isnāds* – chains of transmission in which multiple generations narrate a given account.

Naturally, story telling was not the exclusive preserve of the descendants of those who had participated; anybody could attract attention (and compensation) by telling stories, provided that they told them well enough. We know that storytellers, entertainers, preachers and demagogues worked crowds in and around mosques, some telling tall tales, others circulating more prosaic stories and explanations. Indeed, anyone with a religious or political axe to grind could participate in the collective endeavor of narrating the oral history of nascent Islam, the stories transforming as memories dimmed and circumstances changed.²⁵ What better way to improve one's family name or advance a political cause than by locating an ancestor as a protagonist at a seminal moment in the Prophet's lifetime, or by fudging a date of conversion? And what better way to counter such claims than by generating alternative narratives? It is little wonder that lists are such a salient part of *sīra* – lists (often called 'naming', *tasmiyyat*) of converts, of Emigrants, Helpers, of leaders, of Jews, Christians and polytheists, of martyrs, of women, of stops, destinations, halts and places (between settlements), of witnesses, of recipients of spoils, of killers, of tax collectors, of military expeditions (usually 26 or 27) and raids, and of wives.²⁶ In sum, the religio-political life of the community was negotiated in part through narratives of presence and absence at Prophetic moments, as good an illustration as any being the Prophet's final days.

Including and excluding individuals were done routinely and shamelessly, as good an example as any being the circumstances that obtained when Mu'āwiya, the fifth caliph (rg. 661–80), is said to have converted: one version has it that he converted only after the capitulation of Mecca, which would make it embarrassingly late and even the source of mockery; an earlier – and more seemly – conversion story also circulated, one which had the suspicious advantage of claiming that the conversion was covert (Abbott 1957, 85). To return momentarily to Muḥammad's death: given the absence of institutionalized succession arrangements for the incipient Islamic polity, what had Muḥammad said in his last hours? Might it have been in 'Alī's arms that Muḥammad actually passed away? And where, exactly, and with which wife, did Muḥammad spend those final days? (see, for example, Ma'mar b. Rāshid *apud* 'Abd al-Razzāq 1972, V, 428–39; Ibn Sa'd 1996, II, 352–81). Similar examples could be multiplied *ad*

²⁵ The secondary literature on the storytellers' contribution to history is growing, but see, for examples, Crone 1987, 215–26, and van Ess 2001, 323–36.

²⁶ And this is just to name a few. I draw the list from the index to Guillaume 1955; and I draw the number from al-Ṭabarī 1901, I, 1756–9.

nauseum. There was *every* reason to participate in that collective endeavor to creating the community's history, and many of the resulting stories eventually found their way into written narratives. The history (*ta'rikh*), *sīra* and exegetical literature that survives from the later eighth and ninth centuries drew liberally a reservoir of storytelling that was filled during the seventh and early eighth.²⁷

For the better part of a century, then, Muḥammad's experience and exploits were remembered and recounted, rather than documented, although the transmission of some written material (e.g. contracts, pacts, lists and the like) took place on a small scale. Thanks to the work undertaken over the last two decades – painstaking research that analyses select events by evaluating thousands of accounts, often along with their chains of transmission (*isnāds*) – one can occasionally trace the passage of accounts back from the surviving texts, through the ninth, eighth and, perhaps, even into the seventh centuries. This is a considerable achievement, which allows the historian to hear what appear to be, at least in some cases, genuine echoes of second- and third-generation memories of Muḥammad (Examples are Motzki 2000; Görke, Schoeler 2008; and Schoeler 2011). Very different are essentially apologetic arguments sometimes made to the effect that the written composition and transmission of historical prose began already in the early to mid-seventh century; they are wholly unpersuasive. Instead, the consensus across the field holds that as far as the religious tradition is concerned, non-Qur'ānic religious writing was controversial (many expressly prescribed the writing down of Prophetic traditions, *ḥadīth*), and that if Muslims transmitted accounts about Muḥammad in the decades following his death – as they doubtlessly did – they did so initially by telling stories (Schoeler 2009; Cook 1997).

But, unpromising as it may sound, a 'writerly' culture would emerge during the eighth century, driven in part by the growth of the Umayyad state (661–750) and its bureaucracy, and the assimilation of regional norms. As the physical insularity of Muslim Arab settlements in Iraq dissolved – garrisons were swamped by non-Muslims as Islamic rule generated unprecedented urbanism – so, too, did their cultural insularity; to stake successful claims in the 'sectarian milieu', Muslims, inheritors of power and possessors of religious truth, had to negotiate in writing. Under Abbasid rule, this writerly culture would explode: fed by the material resources and political-cultural appetites of empire, eighth- and ninth-century Iraq produced mountains of written prose in a wide range of genres. *Sīra* was one example of this explosion, and apparently the earliest form of historiography to mature. Pasts that had belonged to individuals, families, tribes and

27 For some recent examples of a lengthening literature, see Tottoli 2002 (for the exegetical).

storytellers thus came – selectively, of course – into the possession of scholars, who, through practices of note taking, lecturing, dictation and the ‘publishing’ of a given scholar’s notes or lectures (often by his student), transformed stories, lore and information into professional knowledge.

Because charting exactly how these practices came about is difficult, describing the origins of Prophetic *sīra* is inferential. On an optimistic reading, the first example of what might be called ‘biographical prose’ can be ascribed to a figure named ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 712), but arguments that a corpus of genuine material from ‘Urwa existed and subsequently survived the vicissitudes of transmission to ninth-century texts can be sharply rebutted.²⁸ The nature of the relevant sources – large and on many occasions huge compilations of discrete but overlapping accounts, each usually with its own putative transmission history annexed – makes distinguishing between composition, redaction and transmission devilishly hard. Similar problems plague our understanding of the work undertaken by al-Zuhrī (d. 742), who frequently appears as a prolific compiler of Prophetic accounts.

Even in the case of Ibn Ishāq (d. 767), the single most significant figure in the evolution of Prophetic biography, we are left to infer things. That he collected, worked with, lectured on and wrote a great number of traditions about the Prophet’s life can scarcely be doubted; it appears that in his day he was considered the pre-eminent specialist on the Prophet’s life, and his accounts were copiously cited and recycled by later authors. But was he an *author* – indeed, *the* author of the first biography of the Prophet, as is so often claimed? If, by ‘authorship’, we understand the production of a literary work in a validated (‘authorized’) form (be it definitive or otherwise), the question remains open, not least of all because his putative work survives, subject to vagaries of transmission, and apparently only in part, as transmitted in a large number of redactions. He may not have understood himself to be composing prose that would circulate in a closed (book) form under his name. Depending on one’s view of things, he had either the fortune or misfortune to carry out his work before scholarship had settled upon practices of narration that distinguished, more-or-less scrupulously, between composition and transmission (al-Samuk 1978; Muranyi 1991; Robinson 2003, 20–38; cf. Schoeler 2011, 26–30). The Prophet’s life was written, it might be said, before there were authors.

So oral histories of the Prophet, retold and reshaped as oral history invariably is, gave way to oral-aural-literary practices, which intertwined composition,

²⁸ See Motzki 2000; Görke, Schoeler 2008; Schoeler 2009; and Schoeler 2011; cf. Shoemaker 2011, to which, while the ink is still drying, Görke, Motzki, Schoeler 2012 respond.

redaction and transmission, and these, in turn, were eclipsed by compositional practices that would produce stable and closed – and so ‘authored’ – books. A protean past was finally being fixed. Given the ambivalence of our evidence, the *terminus a quo* for this can only be approximated to the early to mid-ninth century.²⁹

3 Context and composition

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the distinct feature of Islamic traditionism, the *isnad* (‘chain of transmission’), is less susceptible to manipulation, and more accurately records the transmission of legal, exegetical and historical accounts than had been previously thought. The scholarly tradition, in other words, was more continuous than skeptics have been willing to concede. But what was the more proximate framework in which accounts – some atomized and free-floating, some more securely part of lectures, notes, lists and the like – were assembled and reshaped into something like monograph form? Put another way, atomized stories can sometimes be recovered from the first century, but transmission history can only take us so far; to understand the historiographic vision that determined eighth- and ninth-century compilations, we need to consider context, especially in two respects: patronage and traditionalism. Both require appreciating the scale of change.

With Ibn Ishāq we find ourselves in early Abbasid Iraq, at some chronological, cultural and geographic distance from the Arabian setting in which the events in question unfolded. Ibn Ishāq himself was born in Medina, the very ‘City of the Prophet’, as it was called, but his youth and intellectual formation took place in provinces (Arabia and Egypt) of an increasingly bureaucratic empire ruled by the Umayyads of Syria (rg. 661–750). His employment in Abbasid courts in Northern Mesopotamia and Baghdad itself (in the late 750s and early 760s) put him at the heart of a revolutionary regime in which the past, recent, Prophetic and pre-Islamic, was taking on new meanings (Lassner 1986; Drory

²⁹ On the one hand, in the *Risāla* of al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 820) we seem to have a text that was closed and stable by the time of its author’s death (cf. al-Shāfi‘ī 2013, xxx-xxxi; El Shamsy 2012); on the same hand, we have the *sira* of Ibn Hishām (d. 834), a ‘fixed’ text in Schoeler’s view (Schoeler 2011, 33). On the other, the *Ṭabaqat* of Ibn Sa‘d (d. 845) features necrologies that post-date his death, including that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855); and so for Melchert, at the passing of Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ (d. 854) ‘texts were still characteristically unstable’ (Melchert 1999, 322–25). For *adab* (‘belles lettres’) especially, see Toorawa 2005, 7–12. There are presumably too many variables (genre, reputation, etc.) to generalize.

1996; Borrut 2011, 80–5). For the Abbasids' overthrow of the Umayyads was more than military; it was an ideological victory that featured political and biological claims to the Prophet's inheritance through both his uncle (al-'Abbās) and his cousin and son-in-law, 'Alī. The Abbasids, in the words of a panegyrist composing lines during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, were 'those closest, if their genealogy were examined, to Aḥmad [Muḥammad, the Prophet] in [securing] redemption' (*al-furqān*) (al-Ṭabarī 1901, III, 631f.). In this and many other ways, they staked claims in who the Prophet was, and what he had said and done. The reason why al-'Abbās, the rulers' ancestor, appears so frequently in crucial parts of Muḥammad's life is that such appearances registered political claims (Kister 1983, 362f.).

So more than the regime had changed. In fact, there was a conceptual ocean separating first- and second-generation Arabian tribesmen-fighters from the bookish scholars who now possessed their history. For all that the biographical, historical and legal tradition would conflate things, acknowledging Muḥammad as God's prophet in the first century was hardly incompatible with acknowledging other sources of legal and political authority. There is plentiful evidence that Umayyad and early Abbasid caliphs conceived of themselves not as successors to the Prophet, but rather as God's deputies, in some instances claiming religio-political authority that outstripped that of the prophets (Crone, Hinds 1986; Hakim 2009). The Abbasid caliph, al-Manṣūr, claimed in his own words to be 'God's authority on His earth' (*sulṭān allāh fī arḍihi*) (al-Ṭabarī, 1901, III, 426). It was only during the course of the late eighth and early ninth century that Muḥammad fully emerged as the primary source for normative conduct (*sunna*), such that the lawyers could articulate a legal discourse that was based on the Qur'ān and Prophetic *ḥadīth* which, they held, was transmitted, generation by generation, preserving and disseminating the Prophet's *sunna*. Alongside the Qur'ān, it functioned thus as the *fons et origo* of normative conduct, both individual and collective.

'Classical' doctrines that make the learned class the conservators of a prophet-based law, and caliphs the guardians of a society ordered by that law, were the result of a protracted process, which was constituted by legal, historical and biographical texts. The terms *sunna* and *sīra* are twin progeny of this process: both denote a given individual's paradigmatic practice;³⁰ and, without qualification, both denoted the *Prophet's* practice.³¹

³⁰ Thus Bravmann 1972, 123–39, which provides as good an explanation as any for the overlapping terminology.

3.1 Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī and Ibn Hishām

It is within this dynamic – a powerful Abbasid state, the rising influence of traditionalism, and the increasing appeal of the Prophetic past as a source for paradigmatic authority – that the biographical work of Ibn Ishāq (d. 767), al-Wāqidī (d. 823) and Ibn Hishām (d. 835) needs to be understood.

Elsewhere I have drawn attention to an apparent affinity between *sīra*-writing and politics, especially ruling courts (Robinson 2003, 25f. and 122). Given that one of the leitmotifs of pre-modern Islamic learning is the independence of scholars of the law, history and biography, it is striking how frequently the bio-bibliographic accounts of *sīra*-specialists (biographers or proto-biographers alike) record court connections of one kind or another – and this from as far back as the record goes.³² The case for al-Zuhri (d. 742) is strong enough already that Borrut describes what boils down to the creation of an official Marwanid historiography under al-Zuhri and his caliph-patron, Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik (rg. 723–743); it may even be inferred that court commissions played an important role in shifting the emphasis of his working practices from orality to writing.³³ We know that Ibn Ishāq was commissioned to write a major work of history by the caliph, al-Manṣūr (754–775), some time in the early to mid-760s; he was thus working in a court that was as universalist in its ambition as it was determined to legitimize its new-found rule. Is it unreasonable to assume a connection between the vision of the patron and the commission of the client?

Describing the shape of this work is matter for inference – he was lecturing, writing, re-writing and redacting throughout his life, it would seem – but there is some evidence to suggest a grand, coherent and integrated historical vision that began with Creation, carried through the Prophet’s life, and concluded with a history of the caliphs. Expressed in the tradition’s genres, Ibn Ishāq’s *Major History* (*Ta’rikh kabīr*) thus consisted of pre-Islamic history (from Creation; *mubata-da’*), Prophetic biography (inclusive of Muḥammad’s ‘call to prophecy’ and

31 The prestige forms of historiography (including *sīra*) are nearly all imbued with traditionalist values, even though *ḥadīth* scholars were often quick to criticize *sīra*-specialists, especially for their failure to cite their sources properly (cf. Robinson 2003, 24–38 and 55–79).

32 Ābān b. ‘Uthmān (flourished late seventh/early eighth centuries), ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 712), Wahb b. Munabbih (d. ca. 730), al-Zuhri (d. 742), Ibn Ishāq (d. 767), al-Wāqidī (d. 823) – there’s a virtual ‘Who’s who’ of *sīra* authorities who are associated with ruling courts. Many of the pre-Abbasid notices are usefully assembled and discussed in Horovitz 2002, but see also Schoeler 2011, 30f.

33 Cf. Borrut 2011, 73–6; Schoeler 2011, 23–6; for much more, Lecker 1996, who compiles an enormous amount of information, including accounts that al-Zuhri served as a tax collector; cf. Abū ‘Ubayd 1986, 573, which has ‘Umar II direct him to write about levying the *ṣadaqāt*.

‘[military] expeditions’; *mab‘ath*; *maġhāzī*) and caliphal history (*ta’riḫ al-khulafā’*). This, in any case, is what the relatively late accounts describing the commission suggest.³⁴ *Sīra*, in this project, is recognizable ‘biography’; but it is also an episode in the larger unfolding of salvation history; Muḥammad has been made the pivot of human history, his life the fulcrum upon which God redirects His providential guidance from prophecy towards caliphate. On this provisional reading,³⁵ we may well have a Muḥammad fit for al-Manṣūr; at the very least, Ibn Ishāq is the kind of scholar that the writer-translator Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d. 756) had prescribed for the first Abbasid caliphs, when he advises the deployment, in service of the regime, of ‘specialists in religious understanding, normative conduct and practices, and counselors’ (*ahl al-fiqh wa’l-sunna wa’l-siyar wa’l-naṣiḥa*) (Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ 1976, 61–3).

What is clearer is that we have a discernibly early Abbasid construction of Prophetic history, one which predates the crystallization of at least one classical doctrine. For, as Kister has shown, the recension of Ibn Ishāq that is credited to Yūnus b. Bukayr (d. 815) contains an account of meat slaughtering that posed sufficient problems for the dogma of Prophetic inerrancy (*iṣma*) such that it was dropped by Ibn Hishām (Kister 1970, 267–75). It may be that Prophet has been subordinated to caliph. This is one of many indications that the passage from Ibn Ishāq to Ibn Hishām (via al-Bakkā’ī, d. 800) was one of essential transformation, rather than prudent editing (cf. Faizer 1996). Ibn Hishām’s work, as measured by both its use and its survival, certainly swamped Ibn Ishāq’s in popularity. Why Ibn Ishāq’s putative work was largely superseded by Ibn Hishām’s is a complicated question, which turns on several variables. For one thing, Ibn Ishāq was working before scholarly practices had stabilized and distinct genres had crystallized; if his vision did integrate pre-Islamic, Prophetic and caliphal history into a single project, it was well ahead of its time. And by the standards of generations to come, it seems probably that he simply knew too little about the Prophet, as we shall see.

From this perspective, Ibn Hishām’s *sīra*, which is both relatively narrow in focus and studiously parochial in outlook, became the safe choice. Having cut

34 That is, a *ta’riḫ kabīr*; I follow al-Samuk 1978, 149f., but see also Schoeler 2011, 26–9. One might thus imagine a work that in form (if certainly not content) approximated al-Ya‘qūbī 1980.

35 Which is anticipated by, among others, Rudolph 1966, 301: ‘Sein [Ibn Ishāq’s] *Kitāb al-maġāzī* stellt wohl als erstes den Propheten in weltgeschichtliche Zusammenhänge. Für ihn ist der Islam Fortsetzung und Vollendung der “heiligen Geschichte” der Juden und Christen; Moh. ist der Zielpunkt der Heilgeschichte, zugleich aber auch Vertreter des zur Weltthron gelangten Arabertums’.

away material that did not directly concern Muḥammad, Ibn Hishām makes a brief genealogical nod in the direction of Muḥammad’s descent from Adam through Ismā‘īl, and then, the Ḥimyarī antiquarian that he is, he rushes off to indulge his interests in south Arabia, this first section, and indeed the following on Muḥammad’s ‘call to prophecy’, being dwarfed in size by his detailed reconstruction of the military expeditions led by Muḥammad against Arabian tribes, which occupies about five sevenths of the whole. In this – the growing emphasis upon Prophetic raids – Ibn Hishām was following a pattern even more discernible in the work of al-Wāqidi (d. 823). As it happens, we know that al-Wāqidi received the patronage of the vizier Yaḥyā b. Khālīd and was appointed a judge in Baghdad by none other than Hārūn al-Rashīd (rg. 763–809). As tempting as it is to draw a line from al-Manṣūr’s universalizing and absolutist ambition to Ibn Isḥāq’s biographical vision (Ibn Isḥāq died in the year that the final bricks of his world-bestridding Round City were laid), so, too, is one tempted to draw a line from Hārūn, the ghazi [crusader]-caliph *par excellence*, to al-Wāqidi’s three-volume celebration of Prophet-as-campaigner. Certainly one finds Prophetic *maghāzī* catalogued in support of *jihād* elsewhere (e.g. twelfth-century Andalusia) (Robinson 2003, 122).

3.2 Details and dates

The hallmark of Islamic traditionalism is reverence for past generations, and this dictated that the task of the author-compiler lay mainly in selecting, modifying and arranging inherited material in the service of his historiographical project. Whereas *ḥadīth* literature documents the Prophet’s *sunna* in reports that are, on the whole, stylistically homogeneous, *sīra* can accommodate a range of literary forms, especially first- and third-person narratives (including dialog), lists, poetry, speeches and addresses, and, naturally, Qur’ānic citations. What brings these materials into narrative coherence is a commitment to the proposition that the theatre of Muḥammad’s operation was the early seventh-century Hijaz. *Sīra* thus historicizes prophecy by emplotting particular human events in geography and sequence (or chronology). Put even more provocatively, through the employment of traditionalist methods, it provides the *mis en scène*, the dramaturgy and *dramatis personae* for the main act of Islamic salvation history.

As we have seen, the historicizing project was in part one of framing narratives about the exemplar-Prophet according to a given scheme. Historicizing also meant identifying, specifying and numerating – that is, filling the frame with the bright colors of finely rendered details. What resulted then, as now, marked the

assiduity and industry of the scholar; the more he knew, the more he was authoritative. What were the names of the Prophet's horses, mules, (riding and milch) camels, sheep, swords, bows, lances, coats of mail and shields? Authorities such as al-Wāqidi had answers, and since few of such answers can be attributable to individual or collective interests of transmitters, they clearly reflect a scholarly enthusiasm for listing for listing's sake.³⁶ It might even be proposed that tradition became knowledge through such professionalization – the deployment of obscure and arcane details that only a scholar could provide.

What had been either poorly understood or irrelevant thus became knowable and employable as narrative, a lean past being fattened by the larding of secondary details. Where did this material come from? Cook has noted the remarkable growth of information about the circumstances of the Prophet's birth, which became available in the half century or so that separates Ibn Ishāq (d. 767) from al-Wāqidi (d. 823) (Cook 1983, 61–7; cf. Lecker 1995). Now, the explosive growth of legendary details is perhaps what one should expect in this instance, at least insofar as we can assume that the earliest generation of Muslims focused mainly on Muḥammad's prophetic career, rather than his pre-prophetic childhood or early adulthood. Nativity narratives in other traditions are often hopelessly legendary ('who knew?'), and as much as early Christians focused upon preaching and passion, early Muslims presumably focused on prophecy-in-action (Brown 1999). The growth of information is systemic. In his account of the battle of Hudaibiyya, for example, Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d. 770), citing al-Zuhrī, includes the barest details about the Prophet's departure from Medina. Again, two generations later, al-Wāqidi is able to give a long list of sources (reassuring his reader that he wrote down what they narrated to him), and to provide a long description of the relevant circumstances ('Abd al-Razzāq 1972, V, 330; al-Wāqidi 1966, III, 571–3; Crone 1987, 223–30). There was an appetite to 'know' the Prophet on the part of the scholar, working within a confessional and professional milieu in which such knowledge was prized.

There was also an appetite to understand a text that had become obscure with the passing of time and effacing of genuine memory. *Sīra* complements the austerity of the Qur'ān itself, which offers the sparest allusions to its community's geography, chronology or prosopography; in the form in which we have the Qur'ānic text, 'Makka' (Mecca) is mentioned once and Muḥammad four times. In fact, given the indeterminacy of scriptural data, there could scarcely be better proof of *sīra's* spectacular success in historicizing origins than how

36 I draw the example from al-Ṭabari 1901, 1782–8, but similar material can be found elsewhere, e.g. Ibn Sa'd 1996, I, 234–48.

naturally – how unselfconsciously, even – the Islamic tradition and modern scholarship alike assume those origins to be the pagan Hijaz. To propose otherwise – say, to read the Qurʾān as intra-monotheist polemic, or to accept its geographic indeterminacy, and, on a wider base of evidence, argue that Jerusalem, rather than Mecca, was the focal point of earliest Muslim piety – requires considerable critical effort and iconoclastic spirit (Hawting 1999; Crone, Cook 1977; Shoemaker 2011, 241–60).³⁷

An example comes in another battle, which can also serve to illustrate one aspect of the relationship between *sīra* and scripture. The Qurʾān itself says virtually nothing of what *sīra* calls the ‘Battle of Uḥud’, and the early stages of the tradition, so far as we can trace them, betray little interest or understanding of what happened either (Görke, Schoeler 2008, 125–44). What the third chapter of the Qurʾān does include is a small handful of verses that suggest some kind of disappointing setback (e.g., 3:155, ‘those of you who turned away on the day when [or battle that] the two hosts met’), which, as is characteristic of the Qurʾān’s moralizing geography, it situates on a flat continuum of belief, disbelief, error and God’s mercy. The reader or listener is to understand that a setback has occurred and that belief in the Prophet has faltered (3:144); still, believers should hold firm, confident in God’s reward.

But can one understand more? The question was certainly being asked in the eighth century, and the answer came in the affirmative, Ibn Ishāq himself claiming that the third chapter of the Qurʾān included no fewer than sixty verses that were relevant to Uḥud.³⁸ The historicizing project in this case is typical. The event, given a name from familiar geography (Uḥud is a flat mountain about three miles north of Medina), is dated relatively and absolutely (after the ‘Battle of Badr’; in Shawwāl of year 3 or year 4); the participants, leadership, and size of the armies (3,000 Meccans against 1,000 Muslims), are all specified, as is the course of the battle (including how movement related to topography and also to season, the crops now ripening). And of course the account offers details about the decisive turning point, when fifty (or a hundred) Muslim archers abandon the flank (or rear) of Muḥammad’s lines, thus giving the Meccan commander (Abū Sufyān) a fateful opportunity. Some sixty-five (or seventy) Muslims were killed in the resulting melee, there even being rumors that Muḥammad himself was among them. What the Qurʾān offered by way of allusion and generalized moralizing, *sīra* had made specific and particularized – in a blizzard of inconsistent

³⁷ Which is not to say that I doubt the Hijazi context; the point is that it is assumed, rather than argued.

³⁸ For some exhaustive treatments of Uḥud, see al-Ṭabarī 1901, I, 1383–425; al-Wāqidi 1966, I, 199–334; and Ibn Hishām reprints, II, 60–168.

and overlapping details; in such ways, an imperative to understand scripture has generated what in many cases can only safely be described as pseudo-knowledge.³⁹

Conspicuous here are not merely numbers, but also dating. One finds the same in accounts of Muḥammad's final illness, which go to great pains to determine his age at death.⁴⁰ Insofar as attention to chronology is a *sine qua non* for historiography, the transformation of past narratives into disciplined, historical prose is a feature of the middle decades of the eighth century.⁴¹ Biography would follow suit: dating is as much as absent in the material ascribed to 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 712), for example; it is only in succeeding generations that author-compilers made sustained efforts to move from sequence to proper chronology, although some remained disinclined.⁴² Especially good examples come in Ibn Ishāq and Abū Ma'shar (d. 786), both of whom, perhaps not coincidentally, are credited not only with *sīra-maghāzī* works, but also chronographies (*ta'rikh*) (Donner 1998, 230–48; Görke, Schoeler 2008, 272). In al-Wāqidi one finds a historian who seems reluctant to transmit accounts *without* dating them. While for some it suffices to say that Muḥammad received his first revelation on a Monday, al-Wāqidi must identify *which* Monday in *which* month in *which* year of his life (Ibn Sa'd 1996, I, 93). This is a feature of his rhetoric that goes some way in explaining his stubborn popularity amongst modern historians.⁴³

Muḥammad died on a Monday, so we read – as it was also on a Monday that he was born and on a Monday when he made his emigration from Medina. This is but one of many stock formulae, *topoi* and tropes, which add texture to narrative. They do more than that too. Such stereotyping was not necessarily arbitrary,

39 The starting point for this line of criticism is Wansbrough 2006 (originally 1978), 6–10. On occasion, one can even trace how hermeneutic problems posed by Qur'anic allusions left their mark on *sīra* narratives, elbowing aside good data for bad (thus Crone 1987, 224–30).

40 'Abū Ja'far [al-Ṭabarī] said: 'There is no disagreement amongst those who transmit historical accounts about the day that Muḥammad died – it was a Monday in the month of Rabī' al-Awwal; they do disagree, however, about which Monday [...]' (al-Ṭabarī 1901, I, 1815f.; for a translation, Poonawala 1990, 183f.).

41 On dating as a 'secondary theme', see Noth 1994, 40–2. To move outside of the biographical tradition briefly, in the space of a single page Khalifa b. Khayyāt (d. 854) adduces no fewer than 16 reports to the effect that Muḥammad was 60, 62, 63 (by far the most popular) or 65 at the time of death (Khalifa 1995, 46f.).

42 A good example is the *sīra* material ascribed to Ma'mar b. Rāshid *apud* 'Abd al-Razzāq, which, judged by what became the standard sequence and chronology, is nothing if not disheveled.

43 A case in point is Nagel 2008, on whom see Schoeler 2011a.

and their deployment can sometimes be shown to follow well-established Biblical traditions: when we read that the Prophet's age at the point of his first revelation was forty, we come into contact with a well-established trope for plenitude, which is why numerous people and things are so frequently numbered at forty (e.g. the number of men participating in the expedition to Bi'r Ma'ūna) (Abbott, 1957, 76 f.), and why 'maturity' is represented by forty (Conrad 1987 and 1988). When twelve converts pay obedience to Muḥammad in Mecca we are to be reminded of antecedents from both the Hebrew Bible and Gospel. Whatever the background motifs may be, however, dating functions beyond the semantic level, at least inasmuch as it can be said to freeze in time events that had previously been fluid, pinning them down in a chronological scheme determined by nothing less than the divine clockwork of the Hijra calendar.

Numerating and dating thus do the double duty of particularizing and universalizing, making the Prophet's life both specific and mythic. Something similar can be said about miracles.

3.3 Miracles

I have already noted a contrast between the uneven coverage of Muḥammad's life: what is transmitted about his youth and early adulthood compares poorly with the dense narratives of his life as a Prophet. Still, the more-or-less blank sheet of Muḥammad's pre-prophetic life is given some color by the infilling of manifestly apologetic and legendary accounts. Miraculous birth narratives, which align Muḥammad's mother Amina with Jesus' Mary, are a case in point (McAuliffe 2003). And as infant became boy, confirmation continued: there is a large cluster of accounts that variously propose Christian, Jewish and pagan recognition and confirmation for Muḥammad's prophetic credentials.

The best known of these has Muḥammad traveling in Syria as a boy, when he meets a character named Bahīrā who duly recognizes 'signs of prophecy' between his shoulder blades. Such confirmation legends relate in complicated ways to Christian polemics, which often drew a different conclusion from such meetings. Far from confirming his prophecy, they document his plagiarism and confusion: Muḥammad's aberrant views came from the teaching of heretical Christians.⁴⁴ Of course, there is no question here of identifying a historical kernel; a quick *sondage* reveals fifteen examples, all 'equally fictitious versions of

⁴⁴ The literature is enormous, but one can work backwards from Roggema 2009, and Szilágyi 2008.

an event that never took place' (Crone 1987, 219f.). Featuring miracles of their own (e.g., a cloud that constantly shades Muḥammad from the Syrian sun), such accounts can be understood as pre-prophetic complements to the miracle stories that fill the *sīra*'s treatment of Muḥammad's life after his 'calling to prophecy'. No later than the early ninth century, accounts of 'confirmatory signs' had proliferated to the point that typologies were being used, including one that neatly drew the same distinction between pre-Prophetic and Prophetic signs (Ibn Sa'd 1996, I, 71–91; Kister 1983, 356f.).

The Qur'ān exercises all manner of influence upon *sīra*, but the historical imagination was sufficiently plastic to recast Muḥammad as miracle-wielding prophet – indeed, as someone who is 'fully human yet substantially different [...] not a deification but a transformation of essence all the same' (Saleh 2010, 29). Beyond remarking upon the fairly obvious – that vivid and probative miracle stories reflect both popular storytelling and apologetic concerns explicable within a rich and contentious culture of Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Manichean contact⁴⁵ – one should note how miracle stories signal the systematic (if implicit) operation of Biblical archetypes and templates upon *sīra* material, most notably upon the construction of prophecy itself. The prophet who hesitates to acknowledge his special role, the prophet who is reviled or oppressed by his people, the prophet who leads his community to a different land – these are but the most obvious ways in which template frames narrative (Rubin 1995 and 1999). Indeed, nothing less than the concept of prophetic finality – and, with it, ideas of epochs and the like – cannot be understood absent late antique antecedents commonly associated with Manichaeism, especially the shibbolethic use of 'seal'.⁴⁶ So whatever the provenance or shape of the Arabian raw material that was supplied to Ibn Ishāq, the finished product bears the unmistakable stamp of Iraqi manufacture.⁴⁷ Dogma may dictate that Muḥammad's monotheism was beamed directly from God, rather than learned or pinched from 'the peo-

⁴⁵ Kister is able to adduce some direct evidence for the early Abbasid context in which apologetics were generated: Hārūn commissioned a work on the 'proofs of prophethood', which, based on 'books of the foreigners' (viz. non-Islamic religious material), was sent to Constantinople (cf. Kister 1983, 355).

⁴⁶ That Mani regarded himself as both paraclete and seal is fairly clear; that some Muslims claimed that Muḥammad was paraclete and seal is about as clear. How Muḥammad regarded himself is unknowable. For obvious reasons, the scholarship on Manichaeism is underdeveloped, but things are now starting to change; see, for example, Tardieu 2008, and Reeves 2011.

⁴⁷ I am oversimplifying, of course, mindful of the fact that material collected from Medinan (or Meccan) sources was not left behind by Ibn Ishāq or al-Wāqidi in moving to Abbasid Iraq (cf. Petersen 1964, 83f.).

ple of the Book', but the scholars' Muḥammad follows models mooted in pre-Islamic scripture and extra-scriptural material.

There is nothing odd in this principle of emulation. For it is in the nature of God's benevolent guidance that prophets re-enact received models, locking themselves into paradigms that could, in turn, provide guidance to man. As one eighth-century scripturalist saw it, 'God did not send one prophet after another without making it incumbent on them to confirm the prophets who had gone before them and to follow their example'. For

God said to those who believed, 'You have been given a good example in God's Messenger for whosoever hopes for God and the last day, and remembers God oft' (33:21). Thus He ordered them to follow his example, (just as) He ordered him to follow the example of those whom God had guided before him, in (a verse) He sent down to him as a sign, 'Those are they whom God has guided; so take their guidance as your example'. (Crone, Zimmermann 2001, 57 and 74f.)

Nor does the operation of model and miracle denude the Prophet of his distinctiveness. *Sīra* prophetology in this period is sometimes implicit, perhaps in some respects restrained, in that it expresses itself principally through the employment of monotheist stereotypes, and the dense embedding of the miraculous in the chronologically disciplined mundane – or, to put it more daringly, in an Arabian mundane made miraculous. An especially vivid example is the handling of the Battle of The Trench (*al-khandaq*), which is usually dated to the fifth year of the *Hijra*. Here Muḥammad responds to military imperative, dissolves Arabia's hard rocks by sprinkling water, multiplies its dates for hungry workers, and sends lightning-like sparks from his pick into its soil, each spark foretelling conquest. Whatever their genuineness, these and other accounts function to particularize the universal, or, one might rather say, phenomenalyze Israelite prophecy in northwest Arabia (al-Ṭabarī 1901, I, 1468–70; Ibn Hishām reprints, II, 217–9). In this, as in other respects, *sīra* in this period contrasts with examples from later periods, when the moorings of the specific and the concrete are often more or less broken, letting a miracle-making Muḥammad float freer of time and space.

4 Conclusion

If the preceding has accomplished anything, it should have given the reader who is unfamiliar with early Islamic history and historiography some sense of the complex processes and concerns that gave rise to eighth- and ninth-century Prophetic biography. Recently much has been made of these texts in the service of reconstructing the events of nascent Islam; but much more can and should be

made of it for the purposes of understanding what might be called first-order questions.⁴⁸ These include problems that have also seen some recent attention, such as the scholarly practices that created, redacted and transmitted texts, as well as those that remain largely under-researched, especially what Wansbrough conceived as the composition, through the deployment of specific narrative techniques, of Islamic salvation history. What we lack in primary sources for the seventh century, we have in primary sources for the late eighth and ninth.

As we have seen, historicization is a salient – perhaps even the defining – feature of *sīra*, which emerged in recognizable form in the mid- to late eighth century. It concentrates its narratives upon the life of Muḥammad as a scripture-bearing prophet, one who restores monotheism to Arabian descendants of Ismā‘īl, who have fallen away from God into paganism. It thus records a mode of theophany (or, more strictly, hierophany), but it is a theophany of a special sort. For it marked not just the manifestation of God, but also the advent of a divine order. Inaugurated by prophecy and institutionalized permanently by caliphate, this order became during the seventh and eighth centuries the political and economic hegemon of the Near East. Muḥammad’s prophecy thus had the burden of comparison with early moments of what might be called ‘God’s iterative providence’.

How, in the contentious milieu of the late antique Near East, could the claims of both political power and religious authority be made persuasive? At least part of the answer seems to have been historical narrative: prophecy is reified as Muḥammad is securely situated in an epochal chain of prophets *and* the measured units of days, months and years of the Hijra, his life unfolding in the unmistakable physical and human geography of western Arabia. Islam is thus anchored in a sacred space – the Arabian heartland and homeland of the Quraysh, custodians of the caliphate. It is a considerable achievement, which forms only one part of a much grander conceptualization of the past, both Islamic and non-Islamic, that was undertaken by Muslim scholars in Abbasid Iraq.

Wansbrough understood historicization as part of the tradition’s midrashic impulse. Whether or not one follows Wansbrough and others in explaining the *generation* of ‘before now’ narratives (as Jenkins would put it) in the light of this hermeneutic, one can scarcely doubt that those narratives reflect a historiographic culture that exhibits some significant features of its own. One is fierce

48 An illuminating parallel comes in Ron Sela’s recent discussion of the ‘imaginary biographies’ of Tamerlane, chronologically ordered prose narratives in anecdotal form, which recount all manner of miracles, dreams, derring-do, heroic battles and the like. In Sela’s view, they say little about Tamerlane’s fourteenth-century life, but much about anxieties and crises of the first half of the eighteenth century (Sela 2011).

competition for narrative depth and breadth – the proliferation of ‘data’ (geographical, ethnographic, chronological and confessional) in service of authority. Another, closely related, is toleration for ambiguity and inconsistency (cf. Bauer 2011). Biographers and historians staked their claims by knowing more than others did, but they seem to have agreed on a polyvalent past, one approximated by the careful arrangement of overlapping reports that came on the authority of figures who, at the very least, possessed verisimilitude as witnesses, transmitters and collectors. As much as the grand historiographical enterprise impresses as an intellectual and scholarly achievement, so, too, does the high level for tolerance impress as cultural achievement.

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Per K. Sørensen

The development and formation of religious historiography in Tibet

How are we to understand historiography, here understood in the restricted sense of referring to the process of inventing, rendering or reproducing records (oral or written) of historical events? Major civilizations and cultures down through history, whether Western or Oriental, were incessantly preoccupied with drafting treatises and records in their attempt to come to terms with either recording, commemorating or legitimizing their past, real or fictitious. In an Asian context, home of major civilizations, most of these similarly boast a long tradition of mainly medieval secular historiography.¹

Just like ancient Greek and Roman historiographers, medieval Oriental historians too were vexed by the problems they faced when inventing or constructing history and in devising and defining strategies for both formulating and categorizing historical narratives. In other words, they are struggling with what counts as or constitutes an historical record; what we have learned from studying their traditions and sources is that most cultures and civilizations proved only moderately successful in delimiting the all too porous boundaries prevailing between what we today categorize as myths, historical fiction and traditional historiography.

Tibet, popularly known as the 'Roof of the World' – remote, inaccessible and isolated over long stretches of time, and largely unknown to most people – includes a civilization of great antiquity. Yet, a few idiosyncratic features characterize Tibetan historiography. Compared to her immediate neighbors, India, China, and for that matter Mongolia – major civilizations and countries with whom Tibet over time was to entertain strong and enduring cultural, political and historical bonds – national and historical writing for over a millennium remained strongly influenced and dominated by religion and ecclesiasticism. In due course of time, writing history therefore primarily meant writing or retelling the history of religion, its foremost representatives and their institutions.

Evidently, historical consciousness and recollections of the past in Tibet prevailed both among men of letter as well as among unlettered members of society.

¹ To mention just a few standard works mainly within classical and medieval historiography: For Chinese and Japanese historiography: Beasley, Pulleyblank 1961; Vogelsang 2007; Davies 2004; for Indian historiography: Warder 1972; Phadke (2005); for Perso-Islamic historiography: Waldman 1980; Khalidi 1994.

In no way should we overlook the fact that oral transmissions of a whole repertoire of historical narratives were and still are vibrant and wide-spread up to this very day, nonetheless, the written medium was the vehicle dominated by the social and religious *élite*. The reason for this is at first glance evident. By far the largest segment of literary production in all its diverse forms was simply either orally transmitted from master to pupil as dictated by tradition, or was conveyed in written form composed with a mindset shaped by an exclusive Buddhist viewpoint. A crucial issue is worth mooting: under which conditions and with which consequences was or is religion historicized? Indeed, to answer the last question presupposes that some amount of conceptual tension or opposition reigned between secular and religious norms, not to mention between institutions and agents representing these, in Tibet the tension within these categories often proved complex.

The present essay sets out to offer a brief overview of the most prominent forms of historiographical writing that were to prevail in Tibet. The overview is preceded by a brief presentation of the initial phases of historical writing prior to the dominance of Buddhism. Tibetan literature reaches back almost 1300 years of continuous documented history and in terms of production and size it counts as one of the most productive and most influential in Asia, carrying witness to an unbroken chain of narrative, doctrinal and literary growth and improvement. Literary production exploded in the wake of the Buddhist renaissance or revival that took place roughly a millennium ago, following the demise of the Tibetan imperial period (ca. 600–850 AD). The extraordinary literary, scholastic and hermeneutical output that originated from the pen or from prints was suffused with religious rhetorics, intellectual and doctrinal topoi, and the scriptural production was largely created by a prolific body of monk scholars (to a far lesser degree, by a number of lay *literati*, themselves groomed by the literary and religious canon). Many of the Tibetan scribes, historians and scholars, over time all trained in monastic institutions with their distinct programmatic religious curriculum and Buddhist science, should turn out to be illustrious authors of ecclesiastical erudition. Their influence exerted on culture, religion and the gradual evolution of an historical consciousness and perceptivity remained formative and pervasive. As indicated above, the scriptural output and xylographic production in numerous monastic scriptoria was staggering, and hence the love for the pen was so ubiquitous that one can only endorse an oft-repeated stance, namely that the Tibetan's quest for writing was due to pious outbursts of a sort of obsessive *furor scribendi* on the brink of resembling merit-accumulating grapholatry (Goody 1968, 16). The diverse narrative material traced in religious sources to an appreciable extent consists of various historical narratives – a feature, incidentally, that can be witnessed in the religious litera-

ture of China, Japan and Korea too, where the boundaries between biographical and historical literature remained fluent. A major vehicle of historical writing with a distinct religious setting was life-stories of religious masters, a tradition that long had enjoyed widespread popularity and dissemination in India and China. In Tibet, it soon constituted a prominent genre that recorded the ideal life experiences and exploits of countless masters, narratives mostly framed in a historical setting, and a format that soon proliferated throughout the country. The biographical and hagiographical production soon ran into thousands, of which only a part has reached us.

1 An historical overview

A brief overview of the Tibetan culture and civilization enables us to immediately understand how Tibet all along remained an appreciative recipient of external civilizatory influences, in the first place from its grand neighbours: imperial China and Buddhist India. Much of the literary and intellectual development in Tibet is hardly conceivable without these enduring cultural and intellectual impacts.

The waves of such cultural incentives both fertilized as well as mobilized the gradual development of literature in Tibet, eventually paving the way for indigenous literary forms. Among the earliest historical, paleographic records in Tibet that so far have come down to us count the Dunhuang scroll documents (traced among a polyglot cache of ancient manuscripts in a tenth century sealed-up library cave of the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang in present-day Ganzu Province of China). Found there were manuscripts that evince strong Chinese influence in recording and documenting historical affairs. Importantly, the fragmentary scrolls should alter for good our knowledge of imperial Tibet. They display no or only little Buddhist influence, being compiled by court scribes and historians in a state-administrative ambience. Without these scroll manuscripts, along with the discovery of minor text fragments in Tibetan language unearthed in Central Asian oasis along the Silk Road once controlled by the Tibetans, we would have been banned from knowing the names, the titles, and identity of major historical figures. In addition, we would have been short of numerous details related to state and court affairs, to a host of historical events and to the expansion of the empire, which in this period counted among the major powers in Asia. Most importantly, its discovery enabled us to establish a firmer and more reliable chronology that until then had been marred by yawning gaps, filling up a number of chronological lacunae. It supplemented the information culled from the

Tang Annals, so far the most reliable early source on the history of Tibet at the dawn of the Tibetan empire in the seventh century.

However, the Tibetans were to be recipients too, on a much larger and enduring scale, of the immense impetus that was exerted by the grand intellectually and spiritually refined Buddhist scriptural tradition inherited from India. This is no surprise, since the strong influence that Indianization over centuries exercised is vividly traceable all over South, Central, East and South-East Asia. In the cultural, artistic and intellectual area, Indian models of literature, and entire religious systems, notably Hinduism and in particular Buddhism, left their indelible print on all neighbouring cultures. Following the invention of a Tibetan script derived from an Indian alphabetic model in the mid-630's, an essential tool was created that ensured the swift drafting of law codes, indispensable for the functioning of a nation-state, followed by waves of translation activities, in particular of Indian (but also Chinese) Buddhist classics into the Tibetan language. The dominance of Indian Buddhist thought and cultural models in Tibet must also be accounted for by the circumstance that for almost a millennium, Buddhist institutions remained powerful economical and political entities in a politically fragmented society. Since the fall of the dynasty in the ninth century, the country was characterized by the lack of a centralized unifying secular state for centuries, allowing major religious centres to expand with substantial power.

Tibetan literary and linguistic development thus was early, in some cases from the very outset, subject to a Buddhist calcification of eruptive dimensions, an entirely new tincture of Buddhist provenance that in countless ways was to suffuse the writing modes and hence determine much of the course of Tibetan literature and serve as a model of imitation and adaptation. At the core of the scriptural and later xylographic production stood the careful transmission of the Buddhist canon, and the huge accompanying body of commentatorial and exegetical literature. No doubt, the canonical literature itself contains a great variety of narrative and biographical material and in terms of topoi and plot, these narrative models clearly served as an added resource for numerous attempts to invent and compose indigenous historical and biographical literature. Both native as well as foreign scholars relegate secular and semi-religious historical writings to the rubric known as mundane sciences in their topical or typological classification of the enormous corpus of Buddhist literature. The problems with classifications: secular themes often are set within a religious frame or, alternatively, religious works incorporate matters that by nature are considered secular, for which reason within the indigenous genre-schemes we find no sharp boundary (Cabezón, Jackson 1996, 28–32).

The earliest historiographical sources are the celebrated manuscripts denoted *Old Tibetan Annals* (P.T. 1288, I.O. 750, B.M. Or. 8212) and the so-called *Old Tibe-*

tan Chronicle (P.T. 1286 and 1287).² The first is classified as an annalistic, chronological work, and doubtlessly constitutes the oldest extant history and the single most important source on the early Tibetan history available to us. The second constitutes a mixture of narrative-poetic discourses on the early Tibetan rulers, equally the earliest known epic narrative dedicated to a heroic retelling of the feats of Tibet's emperor and ministers in pre-historic and historic time combining legend and myth coupled with historical data. The *Old Tibetan Annals* testifies to the bureaucratic influence exerted by Chinese administrative conventions and their celebrated archival standards. As genre the incomplete and sole surviving sample available to us executed by Tibetan court historiographers, evidently trained in China, displays some common features with the Chinese annalistic *benji* or *biannian ti* historical genre. The work surely stood at the beginning of an extremely affluent historiographical tradition in Tibet. Our sparing knowledge of imperial Tibet prior to the moment when this text was detected, had been hinged upon a few monolithic, epigraphic inscriptions, or stray quotations of similar imperial edicts traced in later medieval, historiographical sources. In addition to a row of contemporary pillar inscriptions and fragments of wooden slips, another early extant source is *dBa' bzhed* (Diemberger, Wangdu 2000), which is a primary biographical source of one of the most important eighth century kings that records contemporaneous events; however, the only known versions of this important historical source that have come down to us are later redacted versions, stemming at the earliest from the eleventh century. Similar imperial-era documents, records and chronicles must have existed in archives as may be gauged from quotations from a number of eighth century documents preserved in later historical treatises. Yet, recording history gradually became a victim of dogmatic, polemic and ideological manipulations, almost all subsequent historical treatises in the post-imperial period were exclusively written by monks with a strict sectarian or ideologically framed agenda and hence were dismissed as being less correct and trustworthy as historical sources due to their mythologized content. Tibetan historiography is, it cannot surprise, therefore suffused with narratives that fatefully merged the occurrence of the nation with the emergence of religion. The orthodox presentation is laced with religious ideology, invariably espousing the apologetic position of the author's own creed, and the overly myth-laden historical sensibilities characteristic of his creed.

² It is a bureaucratic annual register of state affairs (replete with minutiae on military conquest, taxes, promotion and censuses) in the first half of the Tibetan empire, doubtlessly written down contemporaneous with the events it records (cf. Dotson 2009; van der Kuijp 1996).

2 Post-imperial Tibetan Buddhist historiography

Seen in retrospect, it was the financially burdensome introduction of the alien religion of Buddhism that in ninth century led to the slow disintegration of the outwardly powerful, but inwardly fragile empire. After the breakdown and an interregnum that lasted for some one hundred years, it now was the rise or rather renaissance of the Buddhist religion and the proliferation of its numerous ecclesiastic and clerical institutions (monasticism in form of competing sects or schools) that from the beginning of the tenth century shaped the course of history in Tibet (almost up to the annexation of Tibet by China in 1950). This development was to dictate the perception and writing of history, an accentuation that focused in the first place on the monastic and clerical history of their institutions characterized by waves of monastic expansionism with phases of consolidation of distinct clerical orders, followed by the gradual rise of monastic rulers. Countless monastic histories have been composed, an entire genre in itself that delineates the abbatial succession and the monastic history in great detail with a wealth of historical information and these narratives remain important religio-historical resources in unravelling the regional history of numerous sites. Nonetheless, when looking for general histories throughout several centuries during the medieval epoch, when seen in a *longue durée* perspective, the absence of such national histories is accounted for since the country remained bereft of a stable centralized (i.e. state-based) authority. The political landscape remained quintessentially decentralistic, allowing petty ruling houses and regional hegemonies to vie for power and supremacy, in fact a delicate co-existence and fragile hegemonic equilibrium mostly reigned between the numerous local monastic seats and ruling houses. These ruling seats often displayed a similar pattern, consisting of an intimate symbiosis of religious authority invested in spiritual lines and supported by old local aristocratic clans and its ruling gentry, with clan members often occupying or laying claim on the abbatial seat. Historical treatises and local sources inform us that these religio-political entities competed with one another for political power and influence or were locked in disputes over territorial expansion, while competing for religious influence too (Sørensen, Hazod 2007).

This is the ideological and intellectual ambience in which the writing of history gradually took shape: Almost from the very outset a tension can be observed between religion and clerical affairs, in other words between the sphere of the sacred (*chos*) versus temporal affairs, or the sphere of the profane (*srid*), a blurred demarcation as much as a tension that were repeatedly thematized both in religious and historical literature. Its enduring discourse dominated the interpre-

tation, perceptivity and nature of historical processes. To understand this discourse, it is significant to recognize that in a Tibetan context exerting authority (and indeed the entire concept of human ruling in a Buddhist context) often rested upon two interlinked pillars, upon an overarching concept that generally was described as a conceptual merging of religion and policy, considered an idealized nexus commonly known as or coined 'religion versus state/government/secularity paired/joined/united' (*chos srid gnyis ldan*, *chos srid gnyis 'brel*, *chos srid zung 'brel*) (Cüppers 2004; Schuh 2004). The merging of the apparently opposing pair culminated most visibly in the theocratic rule of the Dalai Lamas, who both represented and embodied in one person the execution and exertion of both religious and secular authority. His dual-based government was to rule Tibet from the seventeenth century until most recently but it had its precursors throughout the earlier centuries.

The gradual development and topical interdependence of classical literary or narrative discourse dominant in Tibet meant that one of its stepchildren, historiography never asserted a strict thematic or compositional autonomy of its own with any finely calibrated structure. The most common terms for historical writing as genre, *chos 'byung*, *lo rgyus*, *rgyal rabs*, *deb ther* etc. therefore more often than not were used indiscriminately to represent a historical narrative, and this has not changed up to the current historical writings produced in Tibet prior to the Chinese occupation. Characterizing these genres and following here Hayden White, the term 'historical narrative' may well describe the annalistic forms prevailing within Tibetan historiography, a historical narration that represents the very reporting of events and of memorized reality, whereas the term 'narrativity' could be used to represent the imposition of the form of a story on those events and on reality itself. The Tibetan historical narrative essentially remained a genre in flux, in some regards resembling 'narrativity' as described by Hayden White. The historian Gabrielle Spiegel has equaled such attempts with an allegorization of history (Spiegel 1997, 95f.).

Let us look more closely at the most prevalent genres within historiography. Regarding the various genres and types that became prevalent, by far the most dominant genre is denoted *chos 'byung* or 'history of the origin of religion (= Buddhism)'. In a sense, it reflects what we would term 'religious historiography', a (quasi-)historical narrative model that merges the modes of ecclesiastical and doctrinal historiography. The earliest exemplar of this genre originated in the eleventh century where an upsurge could be witnessed, an interest in recording the history of religious institutions or the history and development of entire religious teaching systems in time and place, either in the sense of chronicling the origin of religion in Tibet and the neighboring countries or the origin and development of specific doctrinal cycles (van der Kuijp 1996). The genre, true to its

original format, offers a pious retelling of the life of the historical Buddha and the origin of Buddhism in India, followed by the initial indigenization of Buddhism onto Tibetan soil, its spread and the fortunes of the religious legacy until the moment when the treatise in question was composed. With the surfacing of religious sects and entire schools, and with the thematic proliferation that followed in the aftermath of the Buddhist invasion into all fields of Tibetan society, historical recording too expanded its compositional structure or compilatory narrative architecture into encompassing a plethora of religious tropes, seen from an historical and doctrinal context. Its topical expansion included a retelling of the origin of a school or denomination, and often employed to delineate the origin and history of any related issue as seen in an historical perspective. Many subsequent *chos 'byung* contain lengthy, patchwork-like quotations and excerpts from other works. Soon the genre bore little resemblance to its original format in scope and structure.

Another cognate genre stands closer to an original historical format, namely the *lo rgyus*: literally 'tidings of the year' i.e. '*Jahreskunde*' or 'annals'. The initial usage of the expression might have originated during the later imperial period (ninth century), albeit our earliest documented, still inaccessible sample of this genre points to the eleventh century 'Grand Annals' (*lo rgyus chen mo*). Albeit the full content of this source remains unknown, quotations from this early exemplar in terms of subject-matter reveals that at this point, the title had little in common with a chronographic or annalistic treatise that lists a strict consecutive rendition of historical events, already at this point the contents constituted a mixture of historical narratives or stories.

The next, major historiographical format was the *rgyal rabs* type, literally, 'account/story of kings = genealogy' or 'royal chronicle'. It surely had precursors during the imperial era and, as the expression indicates, it highlights the imperial past of the country (seventh to ninth century), yet available specimens are first known from the twelfth century. The genre should prove extremely popular as an historical narrative format, most readily (but not exclusively) when containing 'royal genealogical matter'. Notwithstanding partisan and sectarian readings of local or national histories, we here even encounter prominent cases of what may constitute national histories, again religiously embedded. Some of these may be labelled a Tibetan 'Master Narratives' (or *Meistererzählungen*). The most prominent among these was the fourteenth century *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (cf. Sørensen 1994; Breitfeld 2010; Middell, Gibas, Hadler 2000, 23f.). A master narrative is here understood as a grand national history of sorts common and comprehensive to all that offers a row of *sinnstiftende* (often legendary, not infrequently religiously embedded) narratives that *in toto* was to acquire model character. The source mentioned indeed was to assume

the role as the national model narrative of Tibet *par excellence*, being copiously quoted by most subsequent historians as the most authoritative representation or retelling of Tibet's history. Authored or rather compiled by a leading religious authority, this historical treatise highlighted the origin and the heydays of the Tibetan empire, however seen almost exclusively from a Buddhist perspective. The core part was largely dedicated to a pious retelling of the royal genealogies of the dynasty, and the life and exploits of each individual king. These stories and narratives of the origin of the Tibetan people were to turn into national epics.

A collateral genre was the *deb ther* genre (originally a Greek loanword (*diphthera*, lit. "parchment") that reached Tibet via Mongolia and Persian (*daftar*)), and as such it may have indicated a register of sorts, yet the surviving samples like the thirteenth century *Deb ther dmar po* and the fifteenth century *Deb ther sngon po* cover topics that reflect a sort of 'global history' or 'world history' as seen from a medieval Tibetan perspective. This format too allowed for a miscellanea of topics, compiled in a traditional 'scissor-and-paste' style. Like similar historiographical works, it indiscriminately blends contents of secular and religious origin.

An endemic, truly indigenous genre within Tibetan 'historical' narratives, and a genre permeating most of the narrative models delineated above is the so-called 'treasure' or 'hidden' literature (*gter ma*). As an independent format, its earliest occurrence can be situated to the tenth/eleventh century. It represents texts (often in form of scrolls) once hidden or concealed by religious masters in the eighth century only to subsequently surface as 'rediscovered' treasures, hence the name. We shall consider these texts and this kind of scripture that partly consists of revelations, visions and spiritual visitations, but also contains narratives with historical material, as 'mythopoetic' narratives, ascribed to a former master or a divine inspirator, and as such they are generally considered apocryphal. The origin of the complex and arcane process of textual transmission in form of hidden texts that were later 'detected' may be recognized in the earlier and quite pragmatic Tibetan custom of burying politically sensitive items underground as a means of preventing their destruction by political foes or religious opponents.

3 A national myth

Let us end this brief essay with a salient example of how in Tibet religion was conceived or rather an instantiation of how its historicization came into being. The example is taken from a corpus of 'treasure texts' commonly known as *Ma ni bKa' 'bum* and the *bKa' chems Ka khol ma*. The narrative topics introduced

originally were born or deployed precisely in the mythographical or apocryphal treasure literature known to Tibetology from as early as the eleventh century. Already at this early point, the texts conveying these historical myths were putatively ascribed to Songtsen Gampo (died 649 CE), the founding king of the Tibetan dynasty (seventh century), and they constituted the narratives that offered the readers and later historians a template for a national myth. *In nuce*, it offered a new cosmological vision of Tibet based upon the belief that Avalokiteśvara, a tutelary deity and the Buddhist patron deity of Tibet, assumed a key role in shaping Tibet's history: The central role and apotheosis of the founding king of the Tibetan dynasty, Songtsen Gampo, here assumes the role as the narrative's key protagonist and in fact its central message is his role in establishing Buddhism in the initially inaccessible realm of Tibet, by being identified and recognized as an embodiment of Avalokiteśvara. The origin and destiny of Tibet is thus placed in the hands of this patron deity. It is little wonder that the institution of Dalai Lama constitutes a continuation of this national myth and its religious set-up. The myth's immense popularity is strictly due to its serving as a *porte parole* of Tibet's most enduring national legend, namely that Tibet was to become Avalokiteśvara's own field of Buddhist conversion and saintly activity. The theogonic and anthropological myth further bespoke that the deity originally had generated a race of humans (= the Tibetan race) in Tibet, originally in the form of a monkey, and the goddess Tārā, another key Protectress in the Buddhist pantheon, in the form of a rock demoness. The pair begat six children whose offspring eventually became the first six tribes of Tibet. With Avalokiteśvara – now seen as the father of all Tibetans – towering as Tibet's patron deity, this myth fostered a compelling and normative narrative behind the cultural unification and national identity that proved to stand the test of time. The national myth was disseminated in this kind of literature but soon found its way into most historical treatises.

By deploying this myth or 'founding legend', unique for the national identity of the Tibetans and as topic a standard, all-dominating theme in Tibetan historical works delineating the history of Tibet, it was to constitute the rationale behind the rise and the enduring legitimation of the Dalai Lama institution. The Dalai Lamas were considered manifestations of this deity and they are drawing their entire legitimacy from this emanational nexus.

In retrospect, the narrative style in Tibetan historical writings clearly was reportative and episodic, rather than argumentative or critical – with a few refreshing exceptions. The approach chosen by indigenous Tibetan historians seldom reached beyond the traditional or mechanical scissor-and-paste compilatory style bereft of much reflexive critical exercise. Entire narrative settings and plots chronicled in Tibetan indigenous literature remind us of similar narratives

in European or East-Asian classical historiography when in the histories confronted with historical events of the past medieval modes of perception and techniques of argumentation in retelling the past differ from contemporary conventions and norms. Historical narratives and episodes conveyed in written sources often remain incomprehensive to an outsider contextually. To the medieval Tibetan mind, it never remained irrational that supranatural or otherworldly agencies regularly intervened through signs in order to indicate their approval or rejection of human endeavour. To the contrary, it was wholly rational. A tendency to historiographical providentialism or to hermitic histories is present in much historical narrative writing, a narrative strategy replete with properties and prodigies, or dreams, visions and miraculous manifestations (or 'discoveries' such as those encountered or recounted in the above-mentioned mythographic or apocryphal *gter ma* literature in Tibet). These elements were significant components in the political and ritual discourse. The *modus operandi* of such relations and the strategies chosen therefore often remained consciously obscure or vaguely understood. Historical events moreover often were accompanied by, conveyed along or garbed in anecdote, magic or thaumaturgic narratives (*per se* outside the realm of normal behaviour and comprehension). Such symbolic or allegorical narrative tropes never remained arbitrary, and the inexplicable often could only be communicated in such formats. Rituals of communications and ceremony – (whether between social classes, between superiors and subordinated, or between rulers and gods, etc.), or issues related to social contracts (marriage bonds, etc.), etiquette and audience – required a finely structured set of performative acts of deference or obeisance as well as of dominance, all observed and executed to uphold hierarchial order and structures. Tibetan historical narratives, undoubtedly similar to other great traditions, thus contain numerous samples of the transformative power of rituals interacting with politics within an historical context. It implied the involvement of cultural symbols and signs – in other words the language of rituals – which were significant for the creation and maintenance of hegemonic order. The true hallmark of power is the construction of reality, wherefore rituals here become all the more important. The Tibetan society, throughout most of the medieval epoch, constantly remained politically unstable. The frequent shift of political power led to multivalent and ambiguous meanings of numerous symbols and human symbolic acts, enforced on account of the changing nature of society or due to revalorized identities. In Tibet, political actions were highly ritualized, and their execution remained essential for the functioning of the tiered, hierarchial order of society.

As it appears, in dealing with the past to the native historian a certain amount of the epistemological presupposition seems to prevail in Tibetan narrative discourse, a circumstance no doubt grounded in their Buddhist worldview

and perception. These circumstances often blurred the distinction between historical fact and any legendary allegorizing of historical matters. It is not insignificant to bear in mind that the Buddhist perception of reality or truth was grounded in or worked on two levels: conventional truth versus ultimate truth as seen by religious masters and canonized in innumerable scholastic and philosophical treatises. Constantly the world of phenomena (and ‘reality’) was seen or could be distinguished by way of two distinct levels, one representing ‘conventional truth and reality’ to be perceived by normal individuals. And at the same time the very same world and conventional reality by any advanced master or saint was seen and perceived of as being ‘unreal’, a reality that constituted the ‘ultimate reality or truth’. The interplay between ‘these realities’ seems to permeate much biographical and historical writing. When applied to the very process and norms of writing, in scholastic writings as much as in writing history and most notably in dealing with representations of biographical material, the working of these epistemological categories of a ‘dual reality worldviews’ determined the nature and character of writing. This is most evident in the classification and taxonomization of biographies, writings that simultaneously were even categorized in a threefold set, into an inner, outer and secret biographical classification scheme. Biographies and narratives often were written from three or even more perspectives: The threefold classification into an external (exoteric, *in casu* worldly and ordinary), an internal (spiritual, internalized, mystic) and a secret (esoteric, otherworldly and hence quintessentially indescribable, abolishing the difference of, or merging the former two former levels) is very common in Tibetan hagiographical literature and is fundamentally intended to signal not only different levels of reality but also distinct modes of representation of reality.

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Pekka Tolonen

Medieval memories of the origins of the Waldensian movement

Waldensians, or the ‘Poor of Lyon’ as they were also called in the Middle Ages, were a medieval lay movement and heresy. They have an interesting place in the historiography of European history of religions. As Peter Biller writes, medieval heresy in general has been made to wear different masks in literature, and Waldensians especially have been ‘puppets’ in confessional church history debates of Catholic and Protestant writers. Protestant historiographers wanted to establish a link between their times and the early Church as a counterargument to the Catholic emphasis on their tradition. Thus e.g. the Protestant Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–75) named his work as *Catalogus testium veritatis qui ante nostram aetatem reclamarunt Papae* (*Catalogue of the witnesses of truth who before our times cried out against the Pope*) (1556). From this point of view medieval heretics were martyrs persecuted by the Catholic Church. The dispute went on to next centuries and during it there were even voices placing the origins of the Waldensian movement to times before the founder Valdes of Lyons. The usual consensus of the origins of the movement is that it started during the early 1170s in the city of Lyon by the actions of the aforementioned citizen Valdes (Friesen 1998; Biller 1994 and 2006; Cameron 1984, 230–52; id. 2000, 285–96).

My interest, however, is not with the later historiography of the debate on the origins of the movement. My focus is on the medieval period and medieval texts: the traces the movement left and the seeds that were sowed for later debates. The theme of the conference hosted by the University of Norrköping in 2012 ‘How, under what conditions and with what consequences are religions historicized?’ is rendered in my article to ‘How, why and in what contexts were the origins of the Waldensian movement narrated in the Middle Ages?’.

My article has two starting points: the notions of narratives and communities by Tuula Sakaranaho, and the term ‘cultural memory’ as defined by Aleida and Jan Assmann. According to Tuula Sakaranaho one can find in all religious traditions constitutive events embodied in beliefs and actions. These events can be seen as historical or mythical, and in many cases the division between the two is not an easy one to make. Accounts and narratives of such events are often related to founding figures of traditions. Narratives of these persons and their actions serve as a source of the behaviour and values of the adherents and they have a normative status. Members of the group find in these narratives sources and legitimation of their identity. The past thus legitimates the present

and it also includes a perspective on the future. In close connection to the knowledge of who the members of a group are, is the opposite: who they are not (Sakaranaho 2011, 141–5). In this article I will analyse accounts and narratives of such constitutive events and different identities in contexts branded by medieval debates on heresy and orthodoxy.

Building on Maurice Halbwachs' notion that all memory is social Aleida and Jan Assmann have further studied the idea of collective memory. They have made a distinction between communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memory is generational and mainly oral. The horizon thus is at maximum 80 to 100 years. This memory is always closely bound with the use of the past. The past is remembered because it is needed. Remembering means always selecting: some things are brought to light, others pushed to shadow. The perspective of cultural memory is wider. According to the Assmanns oral societies also have cultural memory but it overlaps almost entirely with communicative memory. With the aid of different technologies of memory, however, the written societies can store more than they use. Thus Aleida Assmann has made a distinction between 'functional memory' and 'stored memory'. The border between these two constantly moves and that, according to her, makes change and renewal possible (Assmann 2006, 1–30).

What makes the study of the narratives of the origins of the Waldensian movement interesting is that the movement was branded quite early as a heresy. The voices we hear more clearly come from the condemning side, from the adversaries of the movement. Given the conditions of transmission, the views of the adherents of the movement are more distant and usually indirect. So the two voices struggling over the legitimacy of the movement will be heard. What is chosen to be remembered and what is actively forgotten varies and depends on the context. The different contexts are different functional memories of the origins of the movement. Some narratives were stored but forgotten for long times in libraries. The totality of these, the still today extant sources, makes up the cultural memory of the movement.

Medieval culture is a mixture of written and oral communication. These spheres, sometimes also characterised as learned and unlearned, literate and illiterate, were not in isolation from each other. One attempt to exemplify the meeting points between these two are the 'textual communities' so-named by Brian Stock (Stock 1990). These communities were formed around a shared understanding of texts held authoritative, but literacy was not a condition to the members' participation and belonging. It was enough that there were one or more literate persons who could read the texts over which a common interpretation was made. When we think of communicative memory and its oral nature it is possible to see a connection here. Within these so-called 'textual communities'

new groups of people are drawn to the process where oral and written, or functional and stored, memories are in contact, and where change and renewal becomes possible. Medieval Waldensian groups are a good example of this.

In the following I will more or less chronologically review the narratives and the contexts in which the origins of the movement were written down.

1 First narrative and the context of the events

The first narrative of the conversion of Valdes has been identified only quite recently and has been commented on by Olivier Legendre and Michel Rubellin, the latter of whom has studied with care the contemporaneous local context of Lyon (Legendre [ed.] 2005 [*Collectaneum exemplorum et visionum Clarevallense*]; Legendre, Rubellin 2000; Rubellin 1998, 2000 and 2003).

The story is an *exemplum* of a conversion and it is found in the earliest Cistercian collection of *exempla* dated to ca. 1174. The narrative differs from the rest of the stories of the origins of the Waldensian movement. It was written down so early that it records only the spectacular conversion of a layman, not the beginnings of a movement. According to the story there was a rich and famous man in Lyon, who gave all his wealth to the poor and begged on the streets for his living. When the astonished and horrified fellow citizens asked the reason for this sudden change of life, he answered that, if they had seen the future torments as he had seen and if they had believed in them as he had, they would have done the same (Legendre [ed.] 2005 [*Collectaneum exemplorum et visionum Clarevallense*], lxxi-lxxiii, 364).

The conversion of a rich man is not a unique phenomenon in the history of Christianity. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there was the general revived idea of reform and return to apostolic ideas behind the many movements and actions of both 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' reformers (cf. Grundmann 1961; Constable 1996; Bolton 1983). However according to Michel Rubellin the origins of the Waldensian movement are still best understood in the local context of Lyon.

Guichard, the former Cistercian abbot of Pontigny, was elected as archbishop of Lyon in 1164. It seems that the canons of Lyon were divided into two parties, some in favour of the archbishop's ideas of reform and others against it during the election. Guichard wanted to heighten the moral standards of the clergy and to channel some private incomes of the canons back to the use of the Church. He also changed the political milieu in the city. An important agreement in 1173 with the count of Forez to divide properties and lands brought to an end the lengthy political quarrels between the two competing feudal lords of the area. The tone of Guichard's endeavours of reform was typical and can easily be seen in connec-

tion to his background in the Cistercian order, in which he was still active after his election to the see in Lyon. As Rubellin argues, it is in Lyon and its milieu of reform and renewal that the actions of Valdes should be seen (Rubellin 1998).¹

All the details of the early years of Waldensian history cannot be reiterated here. It seems that the movement was tolerated and probably even supported. Valdes got followers, who would also pursue voluntary poverty. Public actions of the group led to a conflict with authorities. Representatives of the movement most likely visited the Curia in Rome during the Council of Lateran in 1179 and around the same time a written *propositum* of Valdes' orthodoxy and lifestyle was drawn. After the death of Guichard in 1181, the next archbishop, John of Canterbury (Jean Belles-mains), expelled the Waldensians from the city (cf. Rubellin 1998). Soon after this he started the building of a new bridge together with the citizens. The model for this kind of effort might have come from Avignon where there was an active lay fraternity involved in building a bridge (Rubellin 2003, 391f.). It seems that after the expulsion of the Waldensians there remained a demand for lay spirituality in Lyon and some of that enthusiasm was rechanneled to the building.

The narrative of the conversion of a rich man illuminates Christian morals, humility and apostolic imitation. As such the story was worth writing down and easily found its place in a Cistercian collection of *exempla*. It was most likely Guichard, the archbishop of Lyon, possible supporter of the movement and active Cistercian, who brought the story to the knowledge of the order and ultimately into preservation in the collection.

Nevertheless the later actions of Valdes, and the fact that the movement was soon labelled as a heresy, had consequences. Later Cistercian collectors of *exempla* did not include this story in their works. There can be many reasons for this, but one surely is that it preserved a positive interpretation of the origins of a heterodox movement. There was no place nor need for this kind of erroneous memory. Thus according to the vocabulary of the Assmanns: it did not fit in the functional memory of the adversaries of the movement. It was nearly forgotten and it slipped into the stored memory to be found some 800 years later.

¹ Accordingly if the economy in the city was centred around the feudal lord, the archbishop, and Valdes could have had an auxiliary position in the administration of it, then it can be added that a large economic rearrangement, such as the 1173 agreement with the count of Forez, most likely had an effect on such positions, either direct or indirect, and could have been in the background in motivating someone to a sudden conversion and to pursue voluntary poverty.

2 Names, etymologies and legitimation

After the expulsion from Lyon, the Waldensians were often criticised but sometimes tolerated and even supported. There were two Waldensian groups that became reconciled with the Church in the early 1200s under the leadership of Bernard Prim and Durand of Huesca. These groups were known for their antihetical activities of preaching against the so-called ‘Cathars’. At the same time there was also a discussion in the circle of Peter the Chanter in Paris whether and in which conditions it would be possible to accept lay-preaching – an example of this being the *lugdunenses* (cf. Selge 1967; Rubellin 1998; Buc 1993; Lauwers 1997). During the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there were many texts that mentioned the movement. They cannot be counted as narratives of the origins of the movement, but they tried to define the movement with names and etymologies.

In the Middle Ages there was a ‘passion for etymologies’ as Bernard Guenée coins it. With a long tradition dating back to Antiquity it was thought that the etymology or an explanation of a name would reveal the true essence of the bearer of the name. Place names and names for groups of people were explained in this way. One widely spread example of the etymologies of names is Jacobus de Voragine’s (d. 1298) *Golden Legend*, the hagiographical collection of some 180 short lives of saints, written in the 1260s. He gives explanations of the names of the saints, some of which would today be judged as play with words and letters. This passion for etymologies was also in close interaction with historical thinking: in both, origins and true meanings were sought and one would not be without the other (Guenée 2011, 184–91; see also the introduction of the editors in Isidorus of Sevilla/Barney et al. [eds.] 2006).

In *The Etymologies* of Isidore of Sevilla (d. 636) medieval writers found a neat list of Christian heresies starting with a description that ‘some heretics, who have withdrawn from the Church, are named from the name of their founder, and some from the positions that they have selected and established’ (Isidorus of Sevilla/Barney et al. [eds.] 2006, 175–8). In their own descriptions of heretical movements the medieval writers would continue to do the same. There are not many texts which did not mention Valdes as the founder. Some of those which did not, employed the strategy of explaining the movement’s name, with the aim of mocking the movement as a whole by revealing its ‘origin’. Thus Premonstratensian abbot Bernard of Fontcaude, writing around 1190, tells that the *Valdenses* are so called from *valle* and *densa* (‘dense valley’) because they are so deeply covered by a thick darkness of error. Similarly Ebrard

Bethunensis also writes of etymologies and calls them *Vallenses*, because they stayed in a valley of tears (Gonnet 1958, 65 and 144).

Most of the texts nevertheless mention Valdes as the founder of the movement. There are several polemical texts against the Waldensian movement from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries which concentrated on the errors of the movement and often underlined the novelty of it. Writers like learned theologian Alain of Lille were not that much interested in the historical events and origins of the movement. It was enough that the founder could be named (Waldus) and the origins thus could be set to a man, who was inspired by his own spirit and was not sent by God and lacked the authorisation of the Church (Alain of Lille). Similarly, Cistercian abbot and biographer of Bernard of Clairvaux, Geoffrey of Auxerre referred to the new apostles and their founder, *Wandesius*, whose name derives from his place of birth, and tells how their error can be based on their disobedience – as when they first vowed to leave their error, but after a while returned to it like a dog to its vomit (Geoffrey of Auxerre/Gastaldelli [ed.] 1970, 179). Walter Map, royal clerk under king Henry II of England mentions them in his *De nugis curialium* (*Courtiers' trifles*). According to him the Waldensians were 'simple' and 'unlearned' (*homines ydiotas, illiteratos*) and named after their leader. He also tells how in Third Lateran Council they were questioned and laughed at because of their mistakes in connection to the nature of Holy Trinity (Walter Map/James et al. [eds.] 1983, 124–8). Valdes is also mentioned as the founder by Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay and Ermengaud (Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay/Sibly [transl.] 1998, 14; cf. Gonnet 1958, 156 f.).

Naming the founder of the movement had to do with the legitimisation of the movement. A founder needs the qualities of a saint and preferably miracles as divine authorisation of his deeds to found a successful movement. The movements rise and fall with the founder and his *fama*. If a movement starts with an error, then the whole movement is doomed to fail. If the founder is an ordinary man without supporters in high positions and his deeds are not legitimised by miracles, the movement does not have much possibility to succeed. Simplicity and illiteracy were recurring elements in depictions of the Waldensian movement by its adversaries.

Another often iterated theme is that of the novelty of the movement. Unlike in our times the novelty of things was not valued. New things were not esteemed highly, whereas old things with long traditions were. It is no wonder then that in a Waldensian text from the 1190s written by Durand of Huesca the writer defends the movement's vocation against its critics by claiming that their vocation came directly from Christ and thus it is not a new 'religio', but old (Gonnet 1958, 41). This claim, that their vocation is from Christ and the primitive Church, is challenged later in the texts of Dominican inquisitor Moneta of Cremona. He writes

in the early 1240s that it was not a long time ago, only some eighty years earlier, that Valdes founded the movement. Thus they are not followers of the primitive Church and not of the Church of God. If, however, they claim that their movement was founded before Valdes it cannot be true. Salvo Burci, a Piacenzan layman with connections to the Dominican order, and Peter of Verona, Dominican inquisitor, had presented similar arguments on the novelty of the Waldensian movement in texts written slightly earlier (cf. Gonnet 1998, 63–5, 79–82, 83–98 and 140–4; Salvo Burci/Bruschi [ed.] 2002, 69–74).

These arguments and discussions about what was the ‘true’ Church, or the Church of God, belong to the vocabulary of Church reformers and also earlier radical reformers like Arnold of Brescia and others.

3 Premonstratensian narrative

The following narrative has been cited most often in the modern scholarship on Waldensianism. It is a peculiar story, because it tells the origins of the Waldensian movement and actions of Valdes in detail and while it concludes that the story had a bad ending, the writer seems to have some sympathy with the movement. It has been noted that the story includes fragments of a *vita* of a saint (Selge 1967a; Sullivan 2005). Olivier Legendre and Michel Rubellin have argued that the substance of the story can partly be paired with the Cistercian *exemplum* (Legendre, Rubellin 2000).

The text is found in the *Chronicon universale anonymi Laudunensis* written in Laon in northern France around 1220.² There are some similarities with the chronicle of the Premonstratensian historiographer Robert of Auxerre, but I have not been able to identify direct textual loans although they are reporting

² It was edited only partially in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* and *Recueil des historiens de la France*. As a universal chronicle it starts from the creation and ends in 1219. The chronicle uses known written sources mostly from Eusebius and Jerome and also from the famous historiographer Sigebert of Gembloux. In Laon there were already two continuations of this chronicle: the so called *continuatio laudunensis* and the *continuatio premonstratensis*. From 1095 the texts change more clearly to annalistic form. The end of the chronicle has interested many researchers. From the 1160s to the end of the chronicle the writer most likely uses oral sources or possibly unknown written sources (cf. Backmund 1972; Kaiser 2006; Chazan 1999). The writer of the chronicle belonged most likely to the Premonstratensian order and possibly had English origin or at least knew the language. This latter fact is revealed in a story where the writer tells of an anchoress living in a nearby village, Lappion, and who he himself had met. Many people had thought that she was Scottish, but according to the chronicler she spoke English (cf. Tolonen 2013).

the same events from the late twelfth century. Maybe they were using the same oral sources. The path from oral to written remains unclear, as is always the case, but it is possible that stories were circulated in Premonstransian annual general meetings (cf. McGuire 1998, 122–8).

I will sum up this version of the story of Valdes very briefly: In 1173, Valdes, a wealthy merchant in Lyon, who had become rich by lending money, heard in the street one day the story of Saint Alexis. He decided to emulate the saint and become voluntarily poor. He asked advice from local clergy on how to choose the surest path to salvation. He was quoted the famous passage ‘If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you have’ (Matt. 19, 21). This is what he did: he became voluntarily poor – to the sadness of his wife and the astonishment of his fellow citizens. He placed his daughters in a convent, left *immobilia* to his wife, sold everything else and gave the proceeds to the poor. His wife was sad about this but became upset when she saw Valdes receiving food as alms from a former fellow. The wife hurried to the archbishop’s palace to tell this and it moved everyone to tears. Valdes was brought there and the archbishop ordered that in the city he was not allowed to eat anywhere else but at his wife’s table.

Later the chronicler tells how Valdes got followers and how they asked permission from the pope for their way of life. Preaching was prohibited without the consent of local clergy. Valdes and his followers obeyed this for a time. According to the chronicler, the later neglect of this prohibition ruined them.

This story is quoted most often in modern literature when telling about the origins of the Waldensian movement. German scholars have cast doubt on the reliability of the narrative. They preferred a later *exemplum* written by Stephen of Bourbon, which will be discussed below. This led to some scholarly debate whether the nucleus of the movement was poverty or preaching (cf. Mohr 1957, 339f.; Selge 1967a and 1974; Lambert 1977; Merlo 1990). It was thought that the *Chronicon universale anonoymi Laudunensis* emphasised poverty, and Stephen of Bourbon preaching. This is partly true, but I think that the tone of the story of the chronicle is slightly misunderstood. As far as I know it has never been read in its context in the chronicle. The reason for this seems to be the fact that in older editions from the nineteenth century the chronicle was edited partially, leaving many stories unedited. Even if medieval chronicles sometimes seem a collection of random events not related to each other, they are not. They are functional and communicative memories in their contexts. Historical writings create and reinforce the identity of the community.

For the year 1173 the chronicler tells four stories in two pairs which, I think, are thematically connected. First the chronicler tells how King Louis replaces secular clergy with Benedictine monks in Saint Corneille in Compiègne. The king is presented as a proponent of reform and critical towards the wealth of

the clerics. In the next story the king raises critique of Count Henry of Champagne's donation to clerics in Troyes. He felt the donations would corrupt the clergy. According to the chronicler the count had answered that it is better to give prebends to canons who could only misuse their own share, whereas a prodigal abbot or provost could ruin a whole monastery and leave all begging for their living. The people who were present thought that he had answered wisely.

The next stories continue with the themes of earthly possessions and the virtuous way of life. Just before the narrative of the conversion of Valdes the chronicler tells a short story of Count William II of Nevers, who after his mundane victories and crusading became a lay brother, a herdsman, in the Carthusian order. When he was watching the herds, two other lay brothers came to milk the goats and on their way they were quarrelling over a milking pail and a vase, and accusing each other of lying. William became very sad. And the prior and others came quickly to the crying herdsman saying that they knew that the beasts in the woods were violent. But William answered that he was full of sorrow because, if it is true what it says in Wisdom of Solomon – that 'the mouth that lies, kills the soul' –, then one of the brothers would die. William was said to have been sorrowful for several days. Then the chronicler continues to tell the story of the conversion of Valdes in Lyon (Cartellieri, Stechele [eds.] [*Chronicon universale anonymi Laudunensis*] 1909, 20–2 and 28f.).

From the point of view of modern historiography there are grave errors of chronology in the chronicle here. Some of the stories are misplaced by several years. The conversion of Valdes is probably placed where it should be in the chronicle, but according to other sources the reform at Saint Corneille took place in 1150 (Constable 1987, 21) and William II of Nevers had died already in 1149. It seems the writer had something other than chronology in his mind when he wrote these stories in their particular order.

The stories of King Louis touch the issue of voluntary poverty and right lifestyle of canons and monks. The writer seems to be saying that while in some cases it is wise to aim at reform and to intervene when there is corruption, one nevertheless should not be over-zealous in the demands and should respect tradition. The next two stories present two different conversions of laymen. William is a nobleman who retires in his old age to a monastery. He followed the model for repenting warriors, who wanted to make good for their sins before dying (Miramon 1999; Lauwers 2002). Valdes, on the contrary, belongs to a new social strata emerging in the cities. He is presented as a merchant who had sinned in moneylending, and who acts ignorantly and does not listen to the advice he gets from three levels of hierarchy in the Church: the priest, the bishop and even the pope. He also shakes up the social system in the city by

his sudden conversion. He breaks unilaterally with his wife, as did his model in the narrative, Saint Alexis.

The chronicle was written in Laon, close to Flanders where lay piety was forming in emerging urban areas. The model of Saint Alexis was important in this. The chronicler knew well the story of this saint and the model it gave to lay piety. This model and its problems was also touched upon in other texts coming from the same area.³ The chronicler clearly ties the conversion of Valdes to this tradition and understanding of the model of Saint Alexis (cf. Stock 1990, 24–9). A layman's conversion to poverty is difficult to carry through. They should be humble like William II of Nevers and convert entirely. Staying partly in society and performing voluntary poverty publicly is not the right path. A partial conversion of a layman is not likely to succeed and causes trouble. The Premonstratensian chronicler had knowledge and understanding for lay religiosity. He is able to describe the intentions of Valdes as good. Nevertheless, the outcome of the actions of Valdes is bad due to his ignorance which in turn stems from his social and marital status. The writer is not interested in the later history of the movement. He places Valdes as part of the discussion of voluntary poverty and the limits of lay piety.

In the Middle Ages this interpretation of the actions of Valdes did not spread. It became more widely read only after it was edited in the thirteenth volume of the *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France* at the end of eighteenth century (1786) and re-edited in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* in the nineteenth century.

4 Inquisition and a local memory of the events

Now we turn to the rest of the stories, which were written by inquisitors and for the use of inquisitors. The situation is now different. The previous texts are preserved to us in only one or two manuscripts. With the appearance of inquisitors the number of manuscripts rises dramatically and these stories are copied with

³ Abstract of the *vita* of the saint is found in Sigebert of Gembloux's chronicle and it is copied also into the *Chronicon universale anonymi Laudunensis* (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. Phill. 1880, fol. 63r). Mentions of the saint are found also in a text by Herman of Tournai. Slight criticism of the model of Saint Alexis is found in the *vita* of Saint Simon of Crépy. Both these texts are from the late eleventh century (Engels 2002; Herman of Tournai/Nelson [transl.] 1996, 101; Lauwers 2002a). Ulrich Mölk has shown that the cult of Saint Alexis was especially popular in northern France (Mölk 1978, 349–51). The cult in Rome was handed to the Premonstratensians in 1231 (Engels 2002, 131).

small variations over and over again. The inquisitors compiled manuals including all kinds of texts concerning the heresies and practical formulas for arranging hearings and so on (cf. Dondaine 1947).

The Dominican Stephen of Bourbon (d. 1261), a first generation inquisitor, compiled in the 1250s in Lyon a large collection of *exempla* arranged on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit known as the *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus*. The whole work was never finished. On the gift of force he wrote of the seven capital sins and there, under the sin of pride, he included stories of heresies, partly based on his own experience (cf. Berlioz 1995, 91–6; Stephen of Bourbon/Berlioz [ed.], 2002, xxi–xxx). His knowledge on the origins of Waldensians is based on several paths of information. As Peter Biller notes he wrote based on ‘a mixture of eye-witnesses, their memory, transmission via conversation, and finally his own memory’ (Biller 2001d, 197). It is important that he was in touch with the eyewitnesses of the origins of the Waldensians presumably after his entry into the Dominican Order in Lyon (1223), that is, some forty years after the expulsion of Waldensians from Lyon.

Stephen writes that knowledge on heresies is divided into: a) what are their origins; b) what are their names and where do the names come from; c) what are their errors. This structure comes from heresiologists of the Late Antiquity through Isidore of Sevilla, mentioned above and also quoted elsewhere in Stephen’s work. So according to him they are called ‘Waldensians’ from Valdes, and ‘Poor of Lyon’, because that is where they started the movement. They called themselves ‘poor in spirit’ and according to Stephen this was true: they were poor in spiritual goods and in holy ghost, *spiritu sancto* (Stephen of Bourbon/Lecoy de la Marche [ed.] 1877, 280 f. and 290–3).

Next in the text we find some local details. There is a short mention that Stephen knew two clerics, Stephen of Anse and Bernard Ydros, who had translated passages of sacred scripture for Valdes: a grammarian and a young (and therefore innocent) scribe. The grammarian later died suddenly, tells Stephen. It is implied that this was a divine punishment for his deeds. In a way this part of the story functions like an eye-witness guarantee of the veracity of his story. It has other functions too, which will be dealt with below.

After this begins the story of the origins of the Waldensians. Valdes is depicted as a rich man and not very literate. He was interested in the scriptures he had heard in the church. He commissioned the two clerics to translate certain parts of sacred scripture and other books. The one dictated and the other wrote down. These texts he learned by heart and then he decided to devote himself to the apostolic life. He gave all that he owned to the poor and persuaded others, men and women, to do the same. The movement spread and archbishop John prohibited them from preaching. They were obstinate and were expelled from

the city. Later they were excommunicated as schismatics at a Council of the Lateran. They further spread and mixed with other heresies. Then Stephen adds a short story about how difficult it is to identify Waldensians and concludes by telling that the movement started around the year 1170 under the archbishop John.

In this story the laity and simplicity of Valdes is emphasised. There are no miracles or passages of the Bible to inspire his conversion. The only biblical quotation is placed in the mouths of the disobedient Waldensians – ‘one should obey God rather than a man’ (Acts 5,29) – and this is thus presented as the core of their heresy: disobedience based on a wrong interpretation of scripture. It was a story of the origins of a heresy. It is also a story of how the translations in vernacular came into existence in the hands of Waldensians.

The *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus* was a widely copied handbook of preachers in the Middle Ages and thus the story was quite widespread. The story is also found in later manuscripts within the inquisitorial circles, but without the explanation of the names and details from local history. It is not easy to say whether Stephen adapted parts of the story from other texts of the inquisition or whether the entire story was written by him and then got copied in other texts. It's found in a revised form in the *Manual of Inquisition* by Bernard Gui from the early fourteenth century (Bernard Gui/Mollat [ed.] 1926, I, 34–8) and some other texts belonging to the same French inquisitorial context (cf. Pat-schovsky, Selge 1973, 15). It nevertheless seems that these versions are later and the version by Stephen of Bourbon the earliest (Selge 1974, 22f.).

As a story of the origins of a heresy the text was suitable to the needs of the inquisitors. The local history was nevertheless later cut out, and the more general tone of the beginnings was preserved. To understand why Stephen emphasised the local details in his story, we need to think about the context of Stephen of Bourbon in Lyon. After the expulsion of the Waldensian movement, some of the efforts of lay spirituality were channelled to the building of the bridge as mentioned earlier. The bridge collapsed in the 1190s, but the charitable association, a hospital, remained until the fourteenth century. A new bridge was erected in 1244 just before the first Council of Lyon during which Pope Alexander IV and his Curia were in residing in Lyon for six years (Boyer 1964).

Stephen had come to Lyon in 1223. He had then met the two clerics mentioned in his text who had translated the texts for Valdes. The testament of Stephen of Anse, dated to ca. 1225, includes mention of a Waldensian oven, *furnum qui fuit valdesii* (Guigue 1885, 281–4). He is also mentioned in the *obituarium* of the cathedral and there his name is found in a later manuscript dated to after 1226 (Guigue, Laurent 1951, 103f.). The Waldensian heritage must have been a topic of discussion in the city. The movement was quite often referred to as

the ‘Poor of Lyon’. It was a stain on the city. It is quite revealing that in 1455 notables in Lyon asked the pope for permission to end the custom of cursing the ‘Poor of Lyon’ every Good Friday (cf. Pouzet 1936, 30). How early this tradition was, is difficult to say.

When Stephen wrote his description of the origins of the movement and mentioned the two clerics involved by their names, it is possible to see the reason behind this. It is quite plausible that in the city there was speculation on the involvement of the clerics in the movement and Stephen gives a clear explanation. What is interesting is that he does not mention Guichard, the earlier Archbishop of the 1160s and 1170s, at all. It was simply forgotten and thus Guichard could be remembered as a stainless good person in the *obituarium* of the Cathedral (Guigue, Laurent 1951, 113f.). The blame was put on one cleric, the translator, who was guilty of supporting the movement. He got his punishment in the form of a sudden death. The scribe was young, and therefore innocent. In a later thirteenth century manuscript these local details are heavily abridged and placed as a unique prologue to a different version of the origins (Martène, Durand 1717, 1776). In this the scribe is depicted as a young and poor student (*pauper scholaris*) and that reinforces the idea that as a scribe he was innocent.

Stephen of Bourbon wrote for two audiences. He had acted as an inquisitor and preacher and he wrote for his fellows in the encyclopedical and etymological tradition in the wake of Isidore of Sevilla. In addition to this he wrote for the populace in Lyon and explained how Waldensians or the ‘Poor of Lyon’ had their origin in the city. The memory of the origins was in the name of the movement and also in the ‘Waldensian oven’ that appeared in local written documents (Pouzet 1936, 16 and 30). Stephen probably was also the last one who had had direct contacts with the people who were involved in the origins of the movement. If he didn’t write the ‘truth’ about the events there could have been open speculation and misunderstandings, especially at the time of composition when the pope and his curia were present in the city. In later texts which used Stephen’s version as their source, e.g. the story by Bernard Gui, the local names and details were dropped out because they only had function and meaning in the communicative memory of the local milieu.

5 Inquisition and the origins of a heresy

As mentioned above, the story by Stephen of Bourbon was copied in some of the later manuals of inquisition. As the Waldensian movement had spread to Italy and German-speaking areas north of the Alps, there were also other contexts and consequently other stories of origins.

At least in 1218 there already were Waldensians north of the Alps as is attested by a letter of the Waldensians that discusses the unity of the movement and some central issues of conduct. The letter has been preserved in manuscripts of an inquisitor's manual compiled by an anonymous Dominican in the diocese of Passau. The text is dated to the 1260s.

This text includes writings against the Waldensians – with whom the anonymous inquisitor had had personal contact – and Cathars who he knew only through literary sources. The collection also includes texts against the Jews and Antichrist. There are more than forty manuscripts in six different lines of transmission (cf. Patschovsky, Selge 1973, 12f.; Patschovsky 1968).

In this work there is a short story of the beginnings of the Waldensian movement. According to the writer the notable citizens were together in Lyon and one of them suddenly died. This so moved one of the citizens that he immediately gave the poor a large sum. More poor people gathered around him and he taught them to be voluntarily poor with him and to imitate Christ and the Apostles. He was a bit literate and he taught New Testament in the vernacular. For this temerity he was called before the bishop but he still preferred their own way of life. They were still obstinate after excommunication by the pope and they then spread to many other areas.

The story includes the same elements as the story by Stephen of Bourbon: voluntary poverty, preaching in vernacular and stubbornness in front of ecclesiastical authorities. But the details of conversion and the cause for it are original and remind of stories of sudden conversion in collections of exempla. It is worth noting that Valdes is not mentioned by name.

The next story is similar in its tone. It is also found in a collection of inquisitorial texts and it is known in several manuscripts. It has been attributed to David of Augsburg, but later scholars have been reserved about this. The time of the writing is late thirteenth century, maybe the 1270s. (Preger 1878; Dondaine 1947, 93f., 104f. and 180–3; Biller 2001, 227).

The writer tells that he has received his knowledge on the origins of the sect of the 'Poor of Lyon' directly from many people, including some who have returned to the faith. The story goes that in Lyon there were simple laypeople inflamed by a spirit. They thought that they were better than others and started imitating the apostles. They asked from Pope Innocent licence to do this, thus confirming that the pope had apostolic powers. Later they started to preach, motivated by the apostolic model. When the Church denied them the right to preach because they were simple, they were obstinate and did not obey. As a result of this they were excommunicated. They continued to scorn the keys of the Church and they said that the clergy was against them out of jealousy, because they had a larger following. They also took the excommunication as a benediction and

thought they were successors of the Apostles who were driven out of the synagogue by the Scribes and Pharisees. This pride disguised in saintliness drove them to heresy although they should have been humble ([Pseudo]David of Augsburg/Preger [ed.] 1878, 225 f.).

It is quite interesting to note that in this story the movement does not have a founder. His figure is rendered in the faceless mass of the simple and illiterate followers. The inspiration came from a spirit, which surely was not of divine origin. Both of the stories, by Anonymous of Passau and Pseudo-David of Augsburg, demystify the origins. The impudence, rather than humbleness, of the followers is underlined in all of the stories originating from the inquisition. What is also interesting is that in this last story the theme of apostolic succession is present. The argument that if they do not recognise the pope as the successor of apostles why did they go to him asking permission, is also known in the writings of Moneta of Cremona and Salvo Burci mentioned above.

6 Waldensian view of their origins

The question of legitimation and apostolic succession became closely tied to the issue of the Donation of Constantine. If in some circles it was discussed in political terms as part of the bitter quarrel of the emperor and the pope over the heritage of Rome, in other circles this discussion and issue became interpreted as the moment when the church forgot its true self, when it went astray. This is found in the work of poets and also in the critique of the church by the radical reform movements. There were not many working with the actual texts of the donation, but it became part of collective memory and it was said that even unlearned laypeople, namely shop-keepers and women, were reported to be willing to teach the learned (cf. Fried 2012; Laehr 1926). According to the Dominican inquisitor Anselm of Alessandria, writing around 1270, it was a common belief of different branches of Waldensians that the devil had induced Pope Sylvester to corrupt the Church, and from then on it was no longer the Church of God (Dondaine 1950, 320; Laehr 1926, 176–8). Hints of this kind of discussion are found also in Salvo Burci, Moneta of Cremona and others mentioned above. It is worth noting that all these texts are located in the north of Italy. In these areas we also hear a story of the origins of the movement by a certain Peroneta, who confessed in 1335 to the inquisition. According to her, when Christ had ascended to heaven four Apostles kept his books. The other eight Apostles made gardens and chanted from other books. The eight drove the four out, forcing them to visit the faithful during the night. This mirrors the clandestinity of the Waldensian preachers of that time (Cameron 2000, 153).

The dispute over legitimation of the Waldensian movement goes back to the early years. It was already in the writings of Durand of Osca in the 1190s that the new versus old religion juxtaposition was present. During following years, and moulding in the disputes with their adversaries, the Waldensians created their own understanding of their origin and legitimation. There are hints of a literate culture of the Waldensians and oral argumentation about the critique of the donation of Constantine during the thirteenth century. According to Peter Biller it was between 1335 and 1350 that an Italian Waldensian brother wrote down a structured understanding of the origin of the Waldensian movement. It was memorised by Johan Leser in Austria who, with some other brothers, reconciled with the Church in the 1360s. They started to criticise their former brothers, who then asked for help from their Italian brethren. This correspondence is partly extant. Through it, we have two interconnected sources of the Waldensian understanding of their history with only minor differences. The first is called *Liber Electorum* and the second is preserved as *Letter of the Brothers of Italy* (cf. Biller 1974, 208–70; id. 2001a; id. 2001d; Segl 2000, 121–32; Patschovsky 1994).

According to the *Liber Electorum* the Church remained in poverty and humility for 300 years until the time of Emperor Constantine and Pope Sylvester. Then by the Donation of Constantine the Church became corrupted, but a *socius* of Sylvester remained true to the apostolic life. Afterwards started a time when evil grew, but after 800 years someone called Peter came from a place called Waldis. He was wealthy and honest and had read or heard the word of God and distributed all his wealth to the poor. He preached and got following and went to Rome to dispute with the heresiarch about faith and religion. A cardinal from Apulia was friendly to him and favoured him. Nevertheless the Roman Church could not accept his words and according to the text they were cast out of the synagogue. The movement grew and God acted miracles for them. This fruitful time lasted some 200 years and after that persecutions started. This was also the time when the *Liber Electorum* was composed. The rest of the document is description of the earlier history in context to the then present day situation and the writer is trying to inspire courage and perseverance in the audience (cf. Biller 1974, 264–70).

Letter of the Brothers of Italy is a text that discusses matters of faith and identity and tries to provide answers to brothers on issues they are criticised of. In it Valdes (Petrus de Walle) is identified as a *reparator* of the movement and he is said to have had a companion called John of Lyon (Iohannes Ludinensis). This letter also comments on the Waldensian understanding of their own history. It mentions the *Liber Electorum* and that it was written by a certain *historiographus*. In both of these texts the oral and written tradition are clearly sep-

arated by the use of words like *secundum antiquas hystorias, legitur, ut audivi* and *ut dicunt nostri* (cf. Biller 1974, 243; id. 2001d; Segl 2000).

It has been noted that this is the first time that the founder of the movement is given the first name Peter – probably to link him with the apostolic model of Saint Peter. These are also texts that frame the idea in a narrative form that the basis of the movement is in the imitation of the apostles. It is a counterstory to the historical based understanding of apostolic succession of the Church and its legitimation. This Waldensian understanding of their history is closely tied to their own identity and legitimation. The story interestingly connects the debate on legitimacy (known already from the writings of Durand of Osca) and the historical origin of the movement in one narrative, and ties it with the metahistory of the Church. The story of *Liber Electorum* is found later in vernacular versions and the themes pop up in inquisition hearings. It is written down in books, but it is transmitted mainly through oral communication.

7 The counterstory of the counterstory

There is yet another text originating from the same context, the so called *Cum dormirent homines*. There are 46 known manuscripts of it and it once was thought that it was compiled by Peter of Pilichdorff. However, Peter Biller has shown that it was written in 1395 by Peter Zwicker, a Celestine provincial working as an inquisitor in the end of fourteenth century in various German-speaking areas. It draws some information from the *Liber Electorum* and the connected correspondence mentioned above. Zwicker also knew the treatise written by Moneta of Cremona, the *De inquisitio hereticorum* attributed to David of Augsburg and the treatise of Anonymous of Passau (Biller 2001b and 2001c, 272).

The text starts with an observation that the heretics claim that their sect is from the time of Pope Sylvester when the Church started to have its own possessions. This claim and the issue of the poverty of the Church is discussed at length. Then the text continues that some 800 years after Pope Sylvester and during the time of Innocentius II, in the city of Walden in France, there was a rich man (*civis dives*) who either read or heard the words of the Lord (Matt.19,21) ‘If you wish to be perfect [...]’. This rich man, Petrus Waldensis, decided to follow the admonition because he thought that there was no Apostolic Life on earth. He gathered followers and soon after this they started to preach in imitation of the Apostles. Among his followers was a certain John (Ioannes) who was from Lyon. When the pope heard about this, he forbade them to preach, but they did not obey and as a result they were excommunicated (Zwicker / Gretser [ed.] 1613, 204–6).

It is interesting to note that the text of Peter Zwicker is a synthesis of the material at his hand. He based his story on the *Liber Electorum*, but for some details he clearly uses facts from Pseudo-David of Augsburg's *De inquisitione hereticorum*. For instance he reads there that the conversion of the heresiarch occurred during the time of Innocent. Pseudo-David of Augsburg most likely referred to Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) but his text does not indicate which Innocent it was. Peter Zwicker calculated 800 years from the time of Constantine (d. 337) and arrived at the beginning of the twelfth century and was able to check from other sources that in fact Innocent II (1130–1143) was on the See at that time (cf. Biller 1974, 262f.).

The importance of the text *Cum dormirent homines* is that it was copied to later confessional historiographical works and debates on the historical justification of the reformed churches. It served as a source for writers like Matthias Flacius Illyricus and Jacob Gretser, and later others. It fitted well in the functional memory of the movement on both sides while the two earlier stories and the *Liber Electorum* were stored in libraries to be found and brought into communication only later.

8 Conclusions

The contexts for narrating the events and origins of the Waldensian movement have varied quite a lot. The Cistercian exemplum, the first story, records only the passing enthusiasm of a spectacular conversion. As soon as it became controversial whether the movement was heterodox or orthodox this narrative was forgotten. The memory of it was nevertheless kept orally. How the long and detailed story found its way to a chronicle in northern France remains open, but always the context of writing affected the interpretation. The local memory and the point of view of the eye-witnesses are present in a later story written in some 80 years after the events. This story is also written by the inquisition, which perceived a need to demystify the origins of a movement that claimed to have apostolic origin.

Orally transmitted memory of the Waldensians themselves surely did exist, but was written down only in the fourteenth century. Earlier evidence of this are just hints from the words of adversaries. What kind of breaks in communication there were is difficult to say. It seems that two somewhat separate discussions on the legitimation and origins of the movement were amalgamated in one narrative that answered both questions. This happened as a circle. The movement was attacked on the grounds that its founder was an ordinary man who lacked ordination and divine inspiration. The movement answered by going further back be-

fore the times of the founder to the source of ordination, the apostolic times. This in turn made the adversaries emphasize yet more, in their historical narratives, the actions of the simple laymen. In this process, identities were argued and shaped in contrast to each other and meanings negotiated. The communicative memory of the different groups chose to remember and forget depending on the respective contexts. Forgotten memories and narratives were stored in libraries. From these traces it is possible to narrate a story of the stories of the origins of a lay movement.

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The use of history by French Protestants and its impact on Protestant historiography

It is often said that French Protestants show a particular interest in history. Indeed, many French historians are Protestants. Special issues of journals dedicated to Protestantism always meet with great success in France, and articles dedicated to Protestantism in general revues are among the most read. One example in France is the *Revue Historique*, one of the oldest and most prestigious historical journals, which was founded by free-thinkers, Jewish and Protestant historians (like Gabriel Monod). Another example is one of the oldest of French academic journals, the *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, founded in 1852. And a further indication is that Protestant publishers are numerous and nearly all their catalogues contain a History collection (Labor et Fides in Geneva, Max Chaleil – Les Editions de Paris, Les Presses du Languedoc, Ampelos in France).

But we need to ascertain how and why this interest appeared, and then, to study the effects that this interest has on the writing of history. First we must return to the origins of Protestantism. The Reformation was first and foremost a question of theology which stressed the doctrine of salvation through grace alone and not through good works. Therefore, the advent of Protestantism appeared as an innovation and an error to the faithful Christians in Rome. It was evident to all Christians that the innovation on its own was not able to express the truth. It had to be guaranteed by ancient time-honoured values. Catholic polemicists and controversialists constantly asked the same question: 'Where was your Church before the Reformation, before Luther and Calvin?'

Luther himself had tried to answer this question. When he became aware of the rupture he was dismayed. 'How often did my heart tremble and reprehend me by objecting their strongest and only argument: are you the only wise one? Is everyone else mistaken and have so many generations been in the wrong?' (Luther, *De abroganda missa privata* [...] *Sententia* [1521], quoted by Minerbi-Belgrado 2004, 17). But he was relieved to find that he was not alone in advocating a return to the Scriptures and the origins of the Church. This had been considered by others before him and in particular by Jan Hus. Luther translated four of Hus'

letters in 1536 followed by a larger number in 1537 plus a text inspired by one of Hus' sermons.¹ Although Luther broke away from the Czech reformer in later writings, he still saw him as a precursor of the Reformation. Certain followers of Luther like Brunfels and Agricola took a particular interest in Hus (Polman 1932, 196). Hus is also depicted in iconography as presenting the new religion as an established church (Scribner 1981, 221). For centuries he was also used by the Roman Catholic Church to represent Protestantism as the continuity of former heresies. In the Jesuit Church of the Gesù at Rome, e.g., he can be seen together with Luther in a group sculptured by Legros on the left of the altar situated in the chapel devoted to St. Ignatius. The statue 'Religion flagellating Heresy and Hatred' depicts a woman scourging the two Protestant heretics (1695–1697/8).

The starting point then of the search for an alternative ecclesiastical tradition lay in the desire of the Reformers to show that there had been predecessors before them. As a result, Luther studied Eusebius of Caesarea for a better understanding of the first centuries of Christianity. Thus the first Protestant historical studies showed both the de-formation of the true faith due to papacy, as well as a continuous resistance to this deformation of the true faith. Protestant historians sought to imagine a continuity of the true Christian tradition. It was Flacius Illyricus who was the first to posit that the precursors of the Reformation were not only opponents of the pope, but also advocates of the truth. This was shown in his *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1556), the *Catalogue of witnesses of the truth*, and above all in the *Magdeburg centuries*, the enormous ecclesiastical history which he edited (Polman 1932, 213–34; id. 1931, 27–73). The *Catalogus* was published in France in Lyon in 1597 by Simon Goulart (Flacius Illyricus 1597).

As a result, a list of 'witnesses for the truth' gradually appeared objecting to the Pope's authority and maintaining an intact Christian doctrine. For example a collection of witnesses for the truth was produced by Jean Crespin and continued after his death by Simon Goulart in reality in Geneva, but it was above all read in France. The *Livre des Martyrs* was republished several times between 1554 and 1619. Other *Books of Martyrs* were published in England (John Foxe, 1554), in Germany (Ludwig Rabus, 1554), in the Netherlands (Adriaan van Haemstede, 1559), etc. Similarly, *l'Histoire Ecclesiastique des Eglises Réformées de France* edited by Théodore de Bèze (de Bèze 1580) drew up a list of martyrs at the beginning of

¹ *Vier Briefe aus dem Gefängnisse an die Böhmen geschrieben*, [Wittenberg], 1536; *Etliche Brieue Johaniis Huß des Heiligen Merteres aus dem Gefengnis zu Costanz an die Behemen geschrieben [...]* mit einer Vorr. D. M. Luthers, Wittenberg, 1537; *De immensa Dei misericordia erga Germanos: ex collatione Sermonum Husi ad unum sermonem Martini Lutheri*, Lipse, 1538.

each book. This link between persecuted faithfuls and adherence to the doctrines of the Church of the Apostles appeared again in the *Tragiques* by Agrippa d'Aubigné.² This context of persecution and martyrdom was especially strong in France, most probably because the Reformation failed. Protestants fought during the so-called wars of religion in the sixteenth century, then they were only tolerated in the seventeenth century and were persecuted again in the eighteenth century.

An alternative history had gradually emerged with 'pre-Reformers' like Peter Valdo, Wycliffe, Hus, Jerome of Prague, Savonarola, Reuchlin, and Erasmus. It possessed its own chronology (the purity of the Church during the first three or four centuries, the collusion of the Church and the State since Constantine, the growing importance of papacy under Gregory I, and in the later centuries, corruption of the doctrine – for example, the appearance of the doctrine of transubstantiation between the ninth and the eleventh century, etc.) and its own problem areas (the progressive introduction of Satan within the Church leading to the idea that papacy was the work of the Antichrist, etc.).

For the French Protestants this history took on a particular form. One of its characteristics was the significant place given to the so-called heretics, especially to the Cathars and the Waldenses. This is because French Protestant historians and theology scholars considered them to be the ancestors of the French Reformation. What is interesting is that these advocates for the truth were also persecuted witnesses, which is a reminder that the first Protestant historical studies occurred in a context of Martyrdom.

1 Birth and death of a French protestant historiography

This alternative history was established and written in a particular way, which is revealed through reading the French (or French-speaking) Protestant historical studies of the Church from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Theodore Beza was probably the first to formulate the idea in 1580 that the Church of Waldenses originated in that of the Apostles, and that their doctrines were similar.³ He did however add that their faith had degenerated before it was revived once more with the Reforms (de Bèze 1580, 36–41). This idea had already been briefly

² Work begun in 1577 and published in 1616. See on the subject of the Protestant culture of the martyr, Lestringant 2004.

³ See also the chapter by Pekka Tolonen in this volume.

referred to by Flacius Illyricus.⁴ Several years later in *Bibliothèque historique* Nicolas Vignier explained that the persecuted Waldenses had spread throughout Europe conserving their doctrine ‘that they had learnt from their master, passing it on through their successors until our days’.⁵ The link was further developed in the *Recueil de l’Histoire de l’Église*, published after his death by his son (Vignier 1601). Like everyone in his time he tended to confuse the Waldenses with the Cathars or the Albigensians. Similarly in 1599 Philippe de Marnix wrote a history in which the Waldenses were the ancestors of the Hussites, and the Cathars were persecuted witnesses for the truth taking refuge throughout Europe and especially in the Savoy region (Marnix 1599–1605, I, 149–52 [fourth edition]).

But the Protestants had already shown an interest in the Cathars as early as 1572. At this period the national synod at Nîmes had decided that

Monsieur Berauld & his Colleagues from the Church of Montauban would remove the task of writing the History of the Albigensians in their Language from Monsieur Comerard from Toulouse and Monsieur d’Alcier would translate it into French, then according to the rules of the Discipline communicate it to the Colloquy and have it printed. (Aymon 1710, I, 123)

This led to the *Histoire des Albigeois* written in 1595 by the Protestant minister Jean Chassanion who considered the Albigensians to be Waldenses who had settled in the region of Albi and had produced the Huguenots. In 1603 the Synod of the Dauphiné Province asked the minister Daniel Chamier to write the ‘history of the state, doctrine, life and persecutions of the Albigensians and the Waldenses’ (Quoted by Gonnet 1974, 329 f.). In fact it was Jean-Paul Perrin who finally carried the work to completion in 1618 (Perrin 1618).⁶ According to him the Waldenses who were identified with the Albigensians originated from the period when Leon of Constantinople protested against the Church’s riches, and this gave rise to the Huguenots. This version was adopted by Agrippa d’Aubigné in the second edition of his *Histoire Universelle*, and also by Goulart in the 1619 edition of the *Histoire des Martyrs*. This same version with one or two variations was to be found throughout the first half of the seventeenth century.

For his part, Du Plessis-Mornay intended to trace the history of the truth in his *Mystère d’Iniquité* (1611) defining two types of forerunners to the Reformation: those who were persecuted by Rome and those who were opposed to the papal doctrine. In this way he showed that the Papacy had evolved gradually to-

⁴ Cf. Flacius Illyricus 1556, 709: *alios vero etiam inde ab Apostolis*.

⁵ Vignier 1587, III, 130 f.: ‘qu’ils avoient apprise de leur maistre la baillant de main à main à leurs successeurs jusques à notre temps’.

⁶ The book contains a second part entitled *Histoire des Vaudois appelés Albigeois*.

wards a state of iniquity and that this process culminated in Luther and Calvin with a focus on the Scriptures (Du Plessis Mornay 1611; cf. Dompnier 1977). Charles Dumoulin however took the Church of Ethiopia to be the ancestor of Protestantism (cf. Rébelliau 1892, 349). All the great theologians of the seventeenth century (Aubertin, Daillé, Drelincourt, Languet Du Fresnoy, Jurieu, Claude) (cf. *ibid.*, 350 f.) expressed similar ideas. They can be summarised in the following three points:

- (i) The chronology, as already explained.
- (ii) The maintenance of the truth in the Church, in the communities who were opposed to the pope. At first, the historians focussed on individuals, like John Scot, Bertramne, John Berenger, Peter Valdo, or even saint Bernhard or saint Francis of Assisi. According to the Protestant historians, their ideas had spread all over Christendom. But very quickly they claimed that these individuals were leaders of real communities.
- (iii) The existence of continuity from the apostles to the Reformers because of the relationship between these so-called communities. It was a continuity of doctrine, too: all believed in the same faith as the Protestants. Therefore, it was necessary to deny the charges made against the heretics. For example, according to Jean-Paul Perrin, Charles Drelincourt, Pierre Gilles or Pierre Boyer, Albigensians were not Manicheans, they were the heirs of Christians who had never known the corruption of Rome; all the charges were fabrications of the Roman Church (cf. Perrin 1618; Drelincourt 1660; Gilles 1648; Boyer 1691).

With this focus on the Waldenses and the Cathars, the history of Protestantism was a French one. In the seventeenth century the Huguenots were Calvinists and not Lutherans, claiming their autonomy from Luther and the Lutherans and preferring Zwingli and Calvin. But Zurich and Geneva were not in France. Added to that, for many Frenchmen, the Huguenots were not good French citizens: they were not party to the national feeling based on the cult of Mary, they rejected the legend of the monarchy's miraculous power and refused to believe in thaumaturgic kingship. This was highlighted in a book written in 1618 by the lawyer of the Grenoble Parliament, Josué Barbier, a converted Protestant: *Les miraculeux effets de la sacrée main des rois de France très-chrestiens, pour la guerison des malades et la conversion des heretiques* (Lyon, published by Jean L'Autret). In their claims that the origins of the Reformation were French or at least that the apostolic doctrine existed in France before Luther's Reformation, the Waldenses and the Albigensians were in the right place at the right time to assert the French origins of the Reformation.

The other characteristic aspect of the French accounts of Protestant History was the omnipresence of violence, albeit with some nuances. It is true that persecutions had been studied by Protestant historians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: for example, Nicolas Pithou, one of the founders of the Reformed Church of Troyes (Champagne) in 1559, wrote in *Histoire ecclésiastique de l'Eglise de la ville de Troyes* of the 'constance du temps des feux' (the 'consistent burnings at the stake'). The historical studies of 'witnesses of the truth' highlighted the persecutions, as in Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Tragiques*: the fourth volume's title is 'Les Feux'; the next volume is entitled 'les Fers'. Published in 1616, they told of the stakes, the fetters and the wars of religion.

But martyrdom was not the only issue. Although lists of martyrs appeared at the beginning of each volume in the *Histoire ecclésiastique des Eglises réformées au royaume de France*, directed by Theodore de Bèze (de Bèze 1580), the main purpose was to show how the Reformed Churches were being established in the French kingdom. In the seventeenth century the past history of the Church was upheld to show the errors of the Church in Rome and the perpetuity of faith of those who were persecuted. But violence returned at the end of the century. With the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685), which revoked the Edict of Nantes and which forbade Reformed worship, persecutions against Protestants became common under the implementation of the Dragonnade police. Soldiers invaded houses to compel Protestants to become Catholics. This represented a real trauma for the French Protestants. They were unable to understand why God allowed the persecutions, unless He wanted to punish his flock because of its numerous sins. So, at this time, the Protestant historians emphasised the sins of the Reformed people and the terrible persecutions that they had to suffer. This was almost the only issue they covered in their historical accounts. They described the abuses and the atrocities committed by the soldiers. Other accounts were published by Huguenots, who wanted to protest against the French policy, like Jean Claude, Pierre Bayle or Pierre Jurieu. In their memoirs, refugees talked above all about this short but traumatic experience, much more than about the rest of their lives. An example of this was Jean Migault's Journal (Krumenacker 1995), where 3,8% of the text related the years 1630–1680; the year 1681 (the first 'dragonnade') took up 25,2%; the years 1682–1684 (a calmer period but including Migault's wife's death) 6,6%; 1685 (the second 'dragonnade') 13,2%; 1686 (prison and abjuration) 15,4%; 1687–1688 (wanderings and attempts at exile) 35,2%. These types of narrative were sent to the writers' children, copied and sometimes published. As a result they have formed an important part of the Protestant memory. To this are added the accounts of preachers who were arrested and condemned to death because of their faith, and the popular songs and poems about their subsequent deaths.

This memory of persecutions also persisted in the sermons and in the books that related the history of French Protestantism, like Elie Benoist's *Histoire de l'Edit de Nantes* (1693–1695). This is in fact a history of the attacks on the Edict of Nantes. Persecution was emphasised too in the speeches for toleration, for example by Antoine Court his son Court de Gébelin, or La Beaumelle, in the second half of the eighteenth century. The wars of religion, Saint Bartholomew's day, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the War of the Camisards all played very important roles in the shaping of the Protestant identity in France.

The eighteenth century on the other hand focussed less on the French origins of Protestantism and the role of the Cathars and the Wallenses. This is because the history of the Cathars was better known. In *Variations des Eglises protestantes* (1688), Bossuet cast doubt about the related identity of the Waldenses and the Albigensians, which led to such violent attacks from Jurieu, Basnage, Allix, Aymon, Renoult and others that he was forced to publish the *Défense de l'Histoire des Variations* (1691) (cf. Rébelliau 1892; Darricau 1979). With his insistence on the diversity of the doctrines, Bossuet prevented the Protestant theologians from establishing the Reformation over a long time. At the same time Antoine Varillas followed the same line of criticism in *Histoire des Révolutions arrivées en Europe en matière de religion* (1686–1690), which was also attacked by the Reformed controversialists. All the same it was difficult not to take into account the Catholic arguments, especially as the Dutch minister Philippe van Limborch also concluded in *Historia Inquisitionis* (1692) that the Waldenses (who were according to him close to the Mennonites at that time) were completely different from the Albigensians (cf. Berkvens-Stevelinck 2004; Duvernoy 1989). This point of view was also shared by Pierre Bayle (Bayle 1714, 308).

Thus, Protestant historians and theologians gradually came to admit the Manichaeism of the Cathars which prevented them from being the ancestors of the Reformed. At the most they remained the persecuted enemies of Papacy with their attempts to reform the Church. Any links made between the heretical movements of the Middle Ages and Protestantism would only be a question of similarity but not of a continuity of ideas. Some resistance did exist to this more historical vision. The *Histoire de l'Eglise* by Jacques Basnage (1699) continued to assert that the evangelical truth was maintained without interruption until the eleventh century. Basnage claimed that the truth was transmitted to the Reformers by the Albigensians through a branch which was not Manichean and was not different from the Waldenses. He added that the Waldenses were probably at the origin of Wycliffes' ideas and if not, they had welcomed him in Bohemia and consequently were at the origin of the Hussites (Basnage 1699). This book by Basnage managed to draw a link between all the protests against the Church of Rome in the Middle Ages and Protestantism but in an ab-

solutely anachronic way. The issue of who were the forerunners of the Reformation – whether they be French or from elsewhere – disappeared almost completely during the eighteenth century even though there did exist some works which advocated the continuity between the heretics of the ninth century and the Albigensians and the Protestants. An example is the *Histoire de la Réformation* by the baron de Seckendorf published in Bâle in 1785.

2 Historiography and Protestant identity

The question arises whether historical erudition and perhaps disdain on behalf of theologians for the idea of a visible continuity in the Church triumphed over the writing of historiography by French Protestants in the seventeenth century. A rapid overview of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century will prove the contrary and allow us to understand the importance of this historiography for the Protestant identity.

In fact from the middle of the nineteenth century several studies tried to show that France was ahead of Germany in the triggering of the Reformation. In this way Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples was without a doubt a 'pre-Reformer'⁷ and the idea of a Pre-Reformation in France with a good dose of Christian reforming humanism was quickly accepted. This then permitted support of the idea that France began the work of the Reformation before Luther or Zwingli, so before Germany or Switzerland. This did not stop the Albigensians or the Waldenses from being considered once again as the ancestors of Protestantism. In 1859, the minister Triquetti recalled that the Waldenses had preserved the Gospels since the times of the Apostles even if Lefèvre d'Étaples was the first true Reformer (de Triquetti 1859). Laurent Aguesse suggested that Luther could have been inspired by the ideas of the Waldenses and the Albigensians which had remained pure (Aguesse 1886).⁸

But what is most interesting is that these histories developed mostly after 1870 in a nationalist context (cf. Robert 1977). Jules Bonnet, secretary of the Society of French Protestant History considered the Albigensians to be the ancestors of Protestantism. Orentin Douen denied that the French Reformation descended from German Protestantism. According to Emile Doumergue the Reformation started in 1512. In his *Histoire des Albigeois* (1880), Napoléon Peyrat

7 Cf. Graf 1842, and in a more direct style, Merle d'Aubigné 1853. On the subject of the French advance see Encrevé 1977.

8 Posthumous work with the author's death in 1862.

turned the Waldenses into the ancestors of the Protestants with the Albigensians as their brothers and the Cathars assimilated with the Huguenot martyrs. According to Gaston Bonet-Maury the Reformation became the new phase in the continual upsurge of the truth with regard to ecclesiastical errors and lies. But this truth often manifested itself in Latin countries and was not exclusive to Germany.⁹

The thesis that the Reformation originated in France met with immediate criticism including that of other Protestant historians. It was little supported subsequently even if the idea of a humanist Pre-Reformation in France with the Waldenses as the ancestors of the Protestants still exists today in the Protestant imagination. This idea is stronger than that of the Cathar affiliation, which is only defended by regionalist militants in their 'eternal' resistance of Occitania against French or Roman imperialism. But the fact that it developed at the end of the nineteenth century played a significant role in the declaration of the French identity of Protestantism. With Lutheranism as the religious confession of Germany, the preeminent Protestant country, France refused to follow suit and had to put Calvin forward. The French Protestant otherwise became a bad citizen likely to betray his country (cf. Sacquin 1998; Baubérot, Zuber 2000). This is why Calvin had to be put in the spotlight which Doumergue did in his monumental biography (Doumergue 1899–1927), and why Protestantism had to be shown not to be German. This can be likened to the historiography of the seventeenth century when the Protestants at that time had to be seen as good French citizens. This has resulted in a very French historiography of Protestantism with emphasis on the French situation and little attention paid to links from abroad.

Another point of continuity with the past is the enduring history of persecution. The *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, which had proclaimed its aim to ensure factual accuracy, dedicated the majority of its articles in the second half of the nineteenth century to persecution. Consequently it published articles on clandestine meetings in the eighteenth century, the St Bartholomew's Day massacre, the galley slaves, the synods, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.¹⁰ Many other works from the same period dealt with the same themes. Violence and suffering forced themselves on the memory. When the General Assembly of the Société d'Histoire du Protestantisme Français was held for the first time in the Provinces in 1883 in Nîmes, visits were organised to the tower of Constance in Aigues-Mortes, where Huguenot women were locked up in the

⁹ On the subject of all these authors see Krumenacker 2006.

¹⁰ According to the list of articles 1582–1902.

eighteenth century, and to the birthplace of a Camisard leader. At the end of the century an increasing number of meetings were organised to commemorate the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, St Bartholomew's Day, and the Camisards war. Then in 1911 the Desert Museum was inaugurated in the Cévennes, and ever since an assembly has been held every year with an open-air service modelling the times of persecution, a visit of the museum, and a pause in front of the list of the galley-slaves. In 1921 was added a 'Memorial to the times when our Church bore the Cross' dedicated to ministers and predicant martyrs, refugees, galley-slaves and prisoners (cf. Joutard 1992). The reading of the commemorative plaques hung up in the first half of the twentieth century, together with the setting up of Protestant museums, are proof of the association between the French Reformation, persecution, the Desert, the Camisards and the Cévennes.

A significant example of the use made of history by the Protestant community in order to gain an identity is the case of Marie Durand (1711–1776) – the only true French Protestant heroine. She was the sister of a Protestant minister preaching in secret in the Vivarais region and was arrested at the age of nineteen to incite her brother to give himself up. She remained a prisoner for thirty-eight years in the Tower of Constance in Aigues-Mortes. What is even more significant is that she only emerged from obscurity in 1884 when she became the subject of a biography. Then after the First World War and more so after the Second World War she became the ideal figure to illustrate the constantly persecuted but always resistant Protestant (cf. Krumenacker 2009).

Finally, it is important to take into account this historiography to establish this specific Protestant identity. We need to remember that the History of the Reformation in France is a history of failure. The country did not switch over to Protestantism. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes put a definite end to any hope that could have existed in the seventeenth century. Today, the French Protestants, who are a very small minority, pose questions about their survival. They also query why what they take as the truth did not compel recognition. It is through history that they try to resolve the problem by stressing the power of oppositions, the persecutions, the martyrs. When they write their history, the Protestants write a history about the vanquished. But they assume this defeat and transform the vanquished into heroes, into men and women chosen by God. This history of persecutions is a key to understanding the situation of Protestantism in France since the seventeenth century.

In addition, another key can be found in earlier modes of functioning like the necessity to overcome any trauma caused by abjuration. This was especially the case after the Revocation of Nantes. Certainly abjuration existed in the sixteenth century, but the period was uncertain with the success of Catholic violence sometimes being interpreted as a sign that God was on Rome's side (cf.

Benedict 1981; Wanegffelen 1997). This was not the case in 1685, probably because the Reformation had been established for several generations. But then a fundamental question arose for the Protestants who intended to remain truthful to their faith in spite of forced abjuration. They questioned how God, who protected His chosen, could allow the apostasy of a whole group of people. They also questioned how those predestined to salvation could renounce without this weakness jeopardising the certitude of their being chosen by God, without it being a sign of reprobation. So in order to survive, the Protestants had to be confident of belonging nevertheless to the chosen. A solution was to select only the painful and stressful episodes in their memory. In this way the chosen were shown to have resisted as much as possible the extreme acts of violence to which they had been victims. Only extreme violence could prevent a temporary abjuration from leading to absolute non-election. Consequently, even before persecutions became a fundamental element in the Protestants' understanding of their own contemporary identity, the history of persecutions had already been etched in their collective memory.

This history has also served as a basis for the sets of behaviour of the Reformed community. For example, the reminder of the existence of martyrs encouraged resistance – whether it be to Catholicism under the Ancien Régime, or to secularisation and de-Christianisation in the twentieth century. Appealing for mercy in the eighteenth century allowed for more lenient conditions for those who wanted to remain truthful to their faith. But this required a collection of stories of persecution and the omission of references to Protestant violence, internal conflicts, coexistence with the Catholics, etc. Consequently, at different periods, the situation in which French Protestants found themselves led them to develop strategies of memory which, on the one hand, focussed on suffering and, on the other, on resistance to attacks from others. The historiography provided them models and conversely, the expectations of the Protestant society directed the research of historians. In contrast, the important theme of historical continuity from the origins of Christianity until the Reformation with a focus on the 'French' movements such as the Cathars or the Waldenses is of hardly any relevance today. This theme corresponded to precise moments in history when the national character of French Protestantism had to be proved. The issue is no longer at stake today, and this explains why the theme is no longer treated in recent historical research work.

In conclusion, we can advocate that the French Protestant identity is quite different from other European Protestant identities, mainly because of the failure of the Reformation in France. The history of French Protestantism remains a history of violence, persecution and recently one of toleration and coexistence since the easing of relations with Catholics and the efforts being made to strive for ecu-

menism and community life sharing. This historiography plays a very important role especially as non-Protestant historians of Protestantism have been very few, at least until the 1980 s. It also helps explain why other topics, like daily life, material culture or the Protestant imaginative world are not very commonly treated by French historians of Protestantism, in contrast to historians from other countries.

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Section 2 **Writing histories**

Introduction

The second part of this volume focuses on the question how, under what circumstances and with what consequences, religions were historicised – and explores moments and processes of writing religious histories in different cultures. The articles assembled in this part hence interpret history mostly as a process of writing and as the result of this process. However, the practice of writing is anything but neutral or timeless. It is an utterly social process in the sense that writing is influenced by the social, religious and political environment. Accordingly, the result – history – is a social construction. This is true despite all assertions by authors of impartiality, which pop up even in moments of interreligious disputes. The seven contributions to this part deal with case examples that range from the early modern period to the twentieth century and highlight different parts of the world: Europe, China, India, and Persia.

The first contribution in this section, ‘A Perso-Islamic universal chronicle in its historical context: Ghiyās al-Dīn Khwādamīr’s *Ḥabīb al-siyar*’, authored by SHAHZAD BASHIR shall remind us that all forms of universal history – as much as any other form of historiography – are products of a particular time and place. What could be considered a viable historical narrative on a universal scale varies from one context to another and is conditioned by the overall epistemological, ideological, and socio-political environment in which it is born. By choosing *Ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār-i afrād-i bashar* (*The beloved of biographies reporting on multitudes of people*), authored by a historian and scholar named Ghiyās al-Dīn Muḥammad Khwādamīr (1475–1535), Bashir takes an Islamic universal chronicle as his example, which was composed in Persian in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. This universal chronicle is characterised by its complexity of time concepts – which appear in a parallel and interwoven manner.

The chapter ‘Conditions for historicising religion: hindu saints, regional identity, and social change in Western India, ca. 1600–1900’ written by JON KEUNE offers a broad, diachronic survey of the different contexts in which a regional Hindu tradition’s past became an object of attention. At the centre of this examination is the question, what were the conditions under which remembering the past became valuable? His object of study is a Hindu devotional (bhakti) group in Western India, the Varkari tradition, which traces its roots to the thirteenth century and has millions of followers today. Keune highlights different kinds of conditions, *emic* as well as *etic*, under which the past of a religion becomes valuable to remember. He takes examples from poetry, hagiography, regional identity and social or religious reform.

The practitioners of religious historiography in early modern Europe, a period characterised by religious plurality and concurrence, are the centre of attention in SUSANNE RAU's contribution: 'Practitioners of religious historiography in early modern Europe'. She stresses that religious historiography is not written by the religious groups, collectively, but by individuals (belonging to their own or to an adverse party). These writers were hardly full-time academics during the early modern period, but often priests or preachers, sometimes secretaries of a city council or high school teachers. For the purpose of an analysis of power we should not only unveil motives and purposes, but also analyze the impact and influence of the historical discourse formed by chronicles. In these chronicles, religion can be involved in many purposes. One of the results of an interconfessional comparison of historiography is that each confessional group produced their histories, but they did it in many different ways, depending not only on the confession, but also on the social group the writers were writing for: the whole Church, a congregation, a town, a confessional movement. While Catholics collected information on the lives of saints, Protestants were among the first who wrote historical-critical methodologies. Or, while Catholics had a bias towards universal chronicles, Protestants and Calvinists wrote town chronicles and martyrologies – not without exception to the rules ...

In his article 'Impartiality, individualisation, and the historiography of religion: Tobias Pfanner on the rituals of the ancient Church' MARTIN MULSOW sheds light on the emergence and usage of impartiality as an argument and *habitus* in seventeenth century Europe. This aspect concerns religious historiography insofar as in the context of confessional divide a so-called impartial Church history was emerging, for which the most prominent example is Gottfried Arnold's *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie* of 1699. Mulsow analyses the specific environments in which the argument of impartiality was used and concludes that this was the case in remote areas, protected by local patrons or dukes, rather than in urban centers. His case of study is Tobias Pfanner, son of protestant emigrants, historian, lawyer and 'Hofrat' at the court of Saxe-Gotha (a small duchy in the Holy Roman Empire) around 1700. Beyond his duties as a court jurist, Pfanner was interested in Church history and was writing himself – not for the duke and rather offside the line of orthodox theologians at the court. But his personal view of theology, based on reason and tradition, and of Church history was tolerated. Through an analysis of Arnold's *Ketzerhistorie* he developed a concept of impartiality and applied it to his juridical expertise as well as to historical analysis and writing. Here, he understood himself as even more radical than Arnold.

The nineteenth century is yet another confessional age in Europe with a deepening of confessional borders, where Church history played an important

role for State formation and in theology. Two contributions address themselves to this field of study. HANNAH SCHNEIDER analyses in her contribution, entitled ‘The gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it’ – the narrative of the victorious Church in French Church histories of the nineteenth century’, the introductions of a series of Church histories written for priests and candidates to priesthood published between 1840 and 1905. They have in common an aim to present the unity of the Church throughout history, as if the French Revolution never happened. The narrative seems timeless insofar as the French Church is presented as victorious against her ‘persecutors’ of the first three centuries: against the ‘heretics’ and against the ‘laxity’ of the faithful and the clerics. Schneider asks if this argument is really timeless or rather an effort to tie up with a lost past. What we can observe here is construction of continuity. Most of the authors do not negate political changes but consider them as irrelevant for the history and unity of the Church. A real change eventuated only when Church history started to be written by laymen and professional historians around 1900.

The second contribution on the ‘second confessional age’ in Europe – entitled ‘Conflicting historiographical claims in religiously plural societies’ – addresses Catholic Church histories in nineteenth century Switzerland, which means especially Church history in a religiously plural environment. FRANZISKA METZGER’s approach is to describe the communicative production of memory or, the other way round, the production of memory as a communicative process. The objective of her study group of writers is to establish a Catholic counter-narrative, which they tried to realise in many different ways: by collecting sources, writing handbooks and even a Catholic encyclopaedia which was undertaken according to the motto of scientificity. This scientific habitus comprised source-basedness and impartiality. Moreover, the project of Catholic history in Switzerland was linked to the discourse of national history. Metzger votes therefore for an entangled history of religion, history and nation through the analysis of discursive fields, discursive practices of formation of discourses and different communicative communities. She concludes that the construction of a Catholic meta-narrative ranges between historicisation and sacralisation. Historical narratives of saints remained similar to representations of lives of saints that had no claim of scientificity; furthermore, the code ‘true/untrue’ is rather discourse than reality, which means that there is no real boundary between (presumed scientific) historiography and memory.

In his article ‘Religion and economic development: on the role of religion in the historiography of political economy in twentieth century China’ PHILIPP HETMANCZYK focuses on politico-economic historiography composed in China. In China, the term ‘feudal’ is one of the most prominent attributes seen to disqualify religious beliefs and practices from the scope of officially tolerated religious ac-

tivity throughout the twentieth century. As the term feudal indicates, this process of political dismissal is based on historiographic considerations towards religion. The paper argues that it was especially the emerging discipline of political economy, during the first half of the twentieth century, which made an important contribution to these considerations. By presenting history as a sequence of stages of economic development, the connection between religious traditions and 'feudalism' drawn by writers of political economy would allow them to identify religion as a specific problem for China's economic modernisation. Thus, the placement of religion within histories of economic development was not only part of politico-economic historiography, but it also contributed to an evaluation of religion along economic lines, which still influences the history of religions in China to this day.

Shahzad Bashir

A Perso-Islamic universal chronicle in its historical context: Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Khwāndamīr's *Ḥabīb al-siyar*

Surveying current academic literature, interest in historiographical analysis covering long time periods and vast geographical regions appears very much on the rise. This trend has various manifestations: 'global' histories that vary vastly in terms of their topics as well as scope (cf. Moyn, Sartori 2013; Mazlish, Buultjens 1993); the notion of 'big history' that attempts to include evidence ranging between pre-historic geophysical data and the literary records traditionally used by historians (cf. Brown 2007; Christian 2004); the interest in 'interconnected' histories that attempt to correlate modern globalization to earlier eras in which far distant parts of the planet came into conjunction through the movement of goods and people (Subrahmanyam 2005); and the use of the environment as an agent that is thought to have a determining influence in the making of human histories over long periods (cf. Lieberman 2003/2009). Recent proponents of grand-scale history are often critical of other modern historiography for being too fragmentary and devoid of interest in determining universal patterns that can make human existence understandable across places and time periods. Such scholars' sense that they represent a new vanguard of history writing is expressed in statements such as the following: 'My wish/prediction is this: a major development in historical scholarship and teaching over the next fifty years will be the return of what was once called "universal history". But this will be a new form of universal history that is global in its practice and scientific in its spirit and methods' (Christian 2010, 7).

I begin this essay with this comment on contemporary scholarly trends in order to underscore the fact that all forms of *universal* history, as much as any other forms of historiography, are products of *particular* times and places. Scholarly works feeding into the movement for new universal histories that I have mentioned above are made possible by modes of knowledge based in new technologies and methods (statistics, databases, digital mapping, 'big' data, and so on). Self-proclamation of universality notwithstanding, these new universal histories represent an overall intellectual perspective that is particular to our times and represents a development out of (or perhaps a reaction to) the dominant way of academic history writing over the past century. What can be considered a viable historical narrative on a universal scale varies from context to context and is conditioned by the overall epistemological, ideological, and sociopolitical envi-

ronment in which it is born. Somewhat ironically, then, examining forms and contents of universal history in a given time and place has the potential to reveal a substantial amount about the local circumstances in which such narratives were produced.

In this article, I wish to present a celebrated Islamic universal chronicle composed in Persian in the first quarter of the sixteenth century CE. The work in question is entitled *Ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār-i afrād-i bashar* (*The beloved of biographies reporting on multitudes of people*), authored by a preeminent historian and prolific scholar named Ghiyās al-Dīn Muḥammad Khwāndamīr. The author was born circa 1475 in Herat (present-day Afghanistan) and died around 1535 in India. The *Ḥabīb al-siyar* is a massive work – about 2600 pages in small-print text in the modern published version – and builds on the author’s encyclopedic knowledge of earlier Persian and Arabic literature.¹ The author belonged to the prestigious mainstream of Islamic intellectual life of the times and served ministers and kings in three different dynasties that dominated Iran, Central Asia, and India in the period (Timūrids, Ṣafavids, Mughals). It is easy enough to write many monographs on a work of this scope (although none has actually appeared as of yet), and a short article such as the present discussion can only provide a synoptic and topically focused overview. I do so below in two sections: a brief description of the author’s career and the place of his work within the tradition of writing universal history in the Islamic context (1); and a consideration of the work’s structure and thematic content, which provides us a sense for primary facets of the author’s understanding of time (2). The two sections together can act as a brief introduction to a major venue of literary production regarding the past in Islamic societies.²

My secondary aim in this article is to contribute to the general discussion about the relationship between religion and historiography. This field has, to date, been concentrated almost exclusively on materials originating in Euro-American societies. Recent critical scholarship has provided details for the many ways in which we can correlate religious (particularly Christian) understandings of the past to the way modern academic historians undertake the tasks of the profession (cf. Levitin 2012; Rau 2002; Young 2000). The persistent

1 The *Ḥabīb al-siyar* is available in print as a four-volume set, although this is not a critical edition (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984). For the large number of extant manuscripts, partial editions, and translations into other languages see Storey 1927, 104–9. The third volume of the work is available in English translation as well (Khwāndamīr/Thackston [transl.] 1994).

2 For an overall view of the chronicle tradition in Persian see Melville 2012. Chapters 4 and 5 in this edited volume are particularly helpful for appreciating the general scholarly environment within which Khwāndamīr composed his work.

but attenuated connections between religious and non-religious perspectives highlighted in these studies are related to the rise of the highly contested notion of ‘scientific’ historiography since the Enlightenment (cf. Grafton 2007; Lorenz 2009; Trevor-Roper 2010). While I do not have here the space to undertake a full-fledged comparison between Christian and Islamic forms of universal history and their modern transformations, I hope that scholars familiar with Euro-American materials will find my descriptions interesting for contrastive purposes. Like the case of Christian Europe before the eighteenth century, pre-modern universal chronicles written under Islamic auspices contain a triangulation between dynastic claims, religion, and the authority of the past to create legitimizing discourses. However, the Islamic paradigms differ significantly from European ones, reflecting distinctive rhetorical structures and arrangements of power. By providing a sense for a major genre of Islamic historiography, I aim to contribute to broadening the scope of the theoretical discussion about religion and history, leading eventually to better appreciation of particularities pertaining to different societies.³

1 The author and the tradition of Islamic universal history

Khwāndamīr’s career as the foremost chronicler of his generation writing in Persian was, at least in part, the fulfillment of familial destiny. His father served as a vizier in the Tīmūrid court of Samarqand, Central Asia, marking the family’s credentials as part of the class of learned administrators. More significantly, his maternal grandfather, who acted as Khwāndamīr’s mentor in early life, was the pre-eminent chronicler of his own generation. The significance of this fact is evident in the choice of the very name ‘Khwāndamīr’, a sobriquet that the author adopted in homage to the name of the grandfather, Khāwand Shah b. Maḥmūd ‘Mīrkhwānd’ (d. 1498).⁴

Khwāndamīr’s first major work was a relatively short universal history entitled *Khulāṣat al-akhbār fī bayān aḥwāl al-akhyār* (*Summary reports on the affairs*

³ For a brief but useful comparison between universal history written under Islamic and Christian auspices see Breisach 1994. On the Islamic side, this discussion is limited to Arabic narratives available in translations in European languages.

⁴ Khwāndamīr’s biography has not been the subject of significant academic attention. For the most detailed treatment see Jalāl al-Dīn Humāyī’s introduction to the printed edition of *Ḥabīb al-siyar* (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, I, 1–44). For a brief account in English see *sub voce* the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, second Edition.

of those gone by) (cf. Storey 1927, 102–4). In this work, Khwāndamīr states that, right from the time of reaching the age of reason, he was absorbed by stories of the past. In the year 904 AH (1498–99 CE), he was brought to the attention of a great patron of scholars, the vizier ‘Alīshīr Navā’ī (d. 1501), who provided him free access to his own vast library of existing writings on the subject of history. After immersing himself in this material and absorbing all that he could from the work of his predecessors, he decided to write a summary universal chronicle that stretched from the beginning of creation to his own present time (Khwāndamīr, n.d., 2a-3a). The *Khulāṣat al-akhbār* can be seen as a kind of practice run for the author, composed more than two decades before he took up the task of writing the much more detailed and distinctive *Ḥabīb al-siyar*.

Khwāndamīr’s early education and initial professional forays took place in the context of the relatively stable political environment in Herat under the rule of the Timūrid king Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (d. 1506). His report on his beginnings as a chronicler mentions a second important authority, the powerful administrator and litterateur ‘Alīshīr Navā’ī, who presided over a kind of renaissance of arts and sciences in Herat during the last quarter of the fifteenth century (cf. Subtelny 2007). The patronage provided by the king and the vizier was critical for Khwāndamīr’s training as well as for shaping his view of the purposes of writing about the past. It socialized him in the world of scholar-administrators who had formed the backbone of bureaucratic practice in the dynastic polities that had dominated the eastern Islamic world for many centuries by this time. The fact that Khwāndamīr began his career with a universal chronicle was not an accident but a reflection of the pretensions of the courtly culture in which he had been born and raised. Irrespective of the actual size of his dominions, a ruler such as Bāyqarā espoused titles pretending universal kingship. The composition of universal chronicles by Mirkhwānd (Khwāndamīr’s grandfather) and Khwāndamīr himself during Bāyqarā’s rule can be seen as a way of exerting authority over the known world through assimilating it within the knowledge base of contemporary society. The composition of such works also came in the centuries-old tradition through which earlier Muslim kings and dynasties had argued for their authority as legitimate rulers.⁵

‘Alīshīr Navā’ī, the emblematic figure of the celebrated Timūrid court in Herat, died in 1501, presaging the end of an era. In the beginning years of the sixteenth century, the king, Bāyqarā, was beset with internal revolts and a constant threat from his Uzbek rivals who had eliminated his consanguine Timūrid

5 For the overall scope of the tradition of writing universal chronicles in Persian see the extensive list of works described in Storey’s bio-bibliographical survey (Storey 1927, 61–158).

courts in Central Asia. The king's death in 1506 resulted in contestation between his heirs and, eventually, the Uzbek conquest of the city of Herat in 1507. This event marked the demise of the sociopolitical order that had been Khwāndamīr's world since his birth. Although Khwāndamīr and other scholars in Herat found employment with the new rulers, the narrative in the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* indicates a lack of enthusiasm for the new regime in the local milieu (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, IV, 376–83). But the Uzbek interlude was itself very short-lived because a new ruler, this time coming from Iran in the west rather than Central Asia in the east, captured Herat in 1510. This was Shāh Ismā'īl the Ṣafavid (d. 1524), the young descendent of Sufi masters who had crowned himself king of Iran in 1501 and declared his allegiance to the Twelver Shī'ī sect of Islam. The new Ṣafavid regime presented itself as an admirer and rightful successor to the court of Bāyqarā and assumed patronage over the city's scholar-administrators as much as its material assets. Khwāndamīr thus passed from being a chronicler trained in a Timūrid court to becoming one for Shāh Ismā'īl and the Ṣafavid dynasty (cf. Szuppe 1992).

The *Ḥabīb al-siyar* starts with an account of creation like other Islamic universal chronicles and ends with a description of the rule of Shāh Ismā'īl. The account of the most recent events provides the work with its specificity and we can safely assume that behind the author's descriptions of victorious and righteous kings over the ages stands the image of Shāh Ismā'īl as the representation of the prototype in the present period. Although the king as reigning sovereign was, in a sense, the ultimate patron of the universal chronicle, Khwāndamīr tells us that he was commissioned to write the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* by Ṣafavid viziers appointed in Herat. These men were, in effect, successors to 'Alishīr Navā'ī, the chronicler's first patron. The work's preface tells two tales with respect to its sponsorship that provide us a sense for the relationship between patrons and scholars. The first of these is presented as a tragedy: Khwāndamīr reports that in the beginning of the year 927 AH (1520 CE) the vizier Amīr Muḥammad al-Ḥusayni requested him to write a universal chronicle, making available all material provisions necessary for the task. But this patron was soon murdered in the course of a political intrigue, an event that Khwāndamīr commemorates with the appearance of tulips, the symbol of martyrdom. The following verses, given after the account of the death, convey Khwāndamīr's personal despondence at this event as well as a sense for the relationship between patronage and the act of writing:

The collar of patience torn from that sorrow,
reed pen on the ground, from grief, thrown away.
The inkpot, in anger, turned one with soot;
its mouth open with the intensity of grief.

It was overcome, becoming the picture of surprise,
finger in its mouth, the pen a mark of dismay.

When the pen's tongue came out, un-moist,
that pain had caused it to become dumb.

A tear dropped down and marked the page.

Tulips grew from eyes' blood,

adorning the blank surface, splayed.

Brides of speech rushed away, hiding behind veils,

boarding up doors of hope they had earlier faced. (Khwādamir/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, I, 5)

Shortly after this event, Khwādamir acquired a new patron, Khwāja Ḥabibullāh Sāvajī, who asked him to take up the pen once again in composition. His description of the resumption of his work is again encapsulated in a poetic hyperbole:

The sun's sphere was in the throes of sorrow,

the talkative nightingale become a prisoner.

Silenced by the autumn that was the oppression of fate,

it was speechless, separated from the beneficent rose.

Suddenly a spring wind began to blow,

and there arrived the fragrance of the garden, your grace.

Once the workshop turned into your rose garden,

the sad heart was gladdened,

losing the pricking thorn that was the cause of its pain.

Once again, it was accosted by the memory of speech,

it began to articulate words in your praise.

This wondrous speech is, I hold hope,

like a knot of pearls, brought to order.

It will aid in making manifest what is hidden,

presented to the skillful, those unmarred by flaws.

The measure of generosity is infinite grace;

it works to correct errors inscribed by the pen. (ibid., 9)

From these poetic citations, we get the sense of the chronicler's words being a creative form of speech whose purpose is to reveal hidden matters through virtuosity. The writing of the chronicle is thus an intellectual as well as political exercise, made possible by the intimate relationship between patrons and a scholar, who is an expert wordsmith as well as the possessor of knowledge about the past that can be linked to the concerns of the present. The flowing of ink from an author's pen is tied to the human relationships that connect him to those who possess financial means and political authority.

Reinstated after the intervention of the new patron, the task of writing the universal chronicle was completed in 1524, although Khwādamir added to the text to create further redactions that include an account of his journey to

India in the year 933/1527 (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, I, 586). Khwāndamīr states that he chose the name *Ḥabīb al-siyar* for his work since it is concerned with the acts of those who follow ‘God’s beloved’ (*ḥabībullāh*), meaning Muḥammad (ibid., 9). However, we can be sure that the work’s title is also meant to refer to his patron, Ḥabībullāh Sāvajī.

Although Khwāndamīr seems to have been appreciated well enough as a scholar in Ṣafavid Herat, he eventually decided to migrate to India. This may have been in part to seek greener pastures and perhaps also because Bābur (d. 1530), a prince of the Timūrid dynasty, established himself as a new king in India in 1526. Khwāndamīr presented himself for service to Bābur (d. 1530) in 1527 and also served Humāyūn (d. 1556), the second ruler in the dynasty, as both an administrator and an author. His last major literary work is entitled *Qānūn-i Humāyūnī* (sometimes also called *Humāyūnnāma*) and is dedicated to this second Mughal ruler’s acts and ordinances (Khwāndamīr/Muḥaddiṣ [ed.] 1993). Khwāndamīr died in 1534 or 1535–36 and is buried in Delhi.

Khwāndamīr’s career reflects the opportunities as well as hazards of the times in which he lived his eventful life. This was a period of momentous political transformations, with armies marching all across the area where Persian was the dominant language of high culture (Iran, Central Asia, and India). While the political turmoil brought dislocations and disruption to ordinary life for most, it could be lucrative for people like Khwāndamīr as new rulers sought the services of administrators and scholars to write chronicles and other works to legitimize their claims. His reputation already established because of the fame of his ancestors and his existing work, Khwāndamīr was an attractive target for patronage by both the Ṣafavids and the Mughals. The writing of a universal chronicle such as the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* was the ultimate vindication of his abilities as a chronicler in the service of rulers who proclaimed themselves equal to the great conquerors and rulers of times past.

2 The structure and thematic content of *Ḥabīb al-siyar*

From the benedictions to God and Muḥammad in the preface to the myriad citations of the Qur’ān and other authoritative religious sources in the work’s body, the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* is an unmistakably ‘Islamic’ work. But this does not mean that Khwāndamīr espoused a naïve religious view of history in which time is simply the playing out of a providential myth. Rather, the work is a distinctive iteration within the larger genre of Persian universal history in which quantitative and

qualitative views of time are interwoven in a sophisticated manner. At the broadest level in this genre, we see time being understood simultaneously and inextricably as both an objective fact and a subjective experience representable through qualities associated with human lives. The objective side is reflected in the constant concern with dates, whenever these can be had and can be rationalized with moments that are taken to be most certain. The subjective side comes out in the fact that the story is not told through a straightforward movement from one year to the next but reflects forward and backward movement as the author attempts to include multiple strands of historical memory that were relevant for his context. Within this arrangement of time, the narrative is held together through recurrent topical attention to the roles of rulers and administrators. To appreciate these matters in greater measure, I will describe the arrangement of time that forms the infrastructure of the *Ḥabīb al-siyar*.

While Khwāndamīr's overall organization of time follows from the established tradition of writing works of universal history, the particular division into volumes and sections we see in the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* is the result of his own intention. Indeed, his own first universal history, the *Khulāṣat al-akhbār*, is arranged somewhat differently, being divided into the following parts: an introduction (on the creation of the world), ten chapters (biblical prophets, philosophers, pre-Islamic Iranian and Arab kings, Muḥammad, four caliphs and Shī'ī Imāms, Umayyads, 'Abbāsids, local dynasties concurrent with the 'Abbāsids, Genghis Khan and his descendants, Timūrids), and a conclusion (contemporary Herat and its scholars and nobility) (Khwāndamīr, n.d., 3a). In comparison, the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* is divided into three volumes, each of which has four parts (Figure 1).⁶ The division of the work into twelve parts may reflect a reference to the Twelver Shī'ī creed of his patrons, the Ṣafavids, although this is not articulated in the work itself. Within the twelve sections, we can observe the interlacing together of three different strands of times that were relevant for the self-understanding of someone living in the eastern Islamic world in the beginning of the sixteenth century. These are: the Islamic religious view of time anchored in the Qur'ānic version of the biblical account of creation; the time represented in Persian mythology, concerned with ancient kings who had ruled until the Islamic conquest of Iran; and Mongol time as present in the history of Genghis Khan and his descendants. For all these three strands of time, the periods that fall before the rise of Islam are narrated without dates. The dated part of history is thus concomitant with the beginning of the Islamic calendar in 622 CE.

⁶ See below, 215.

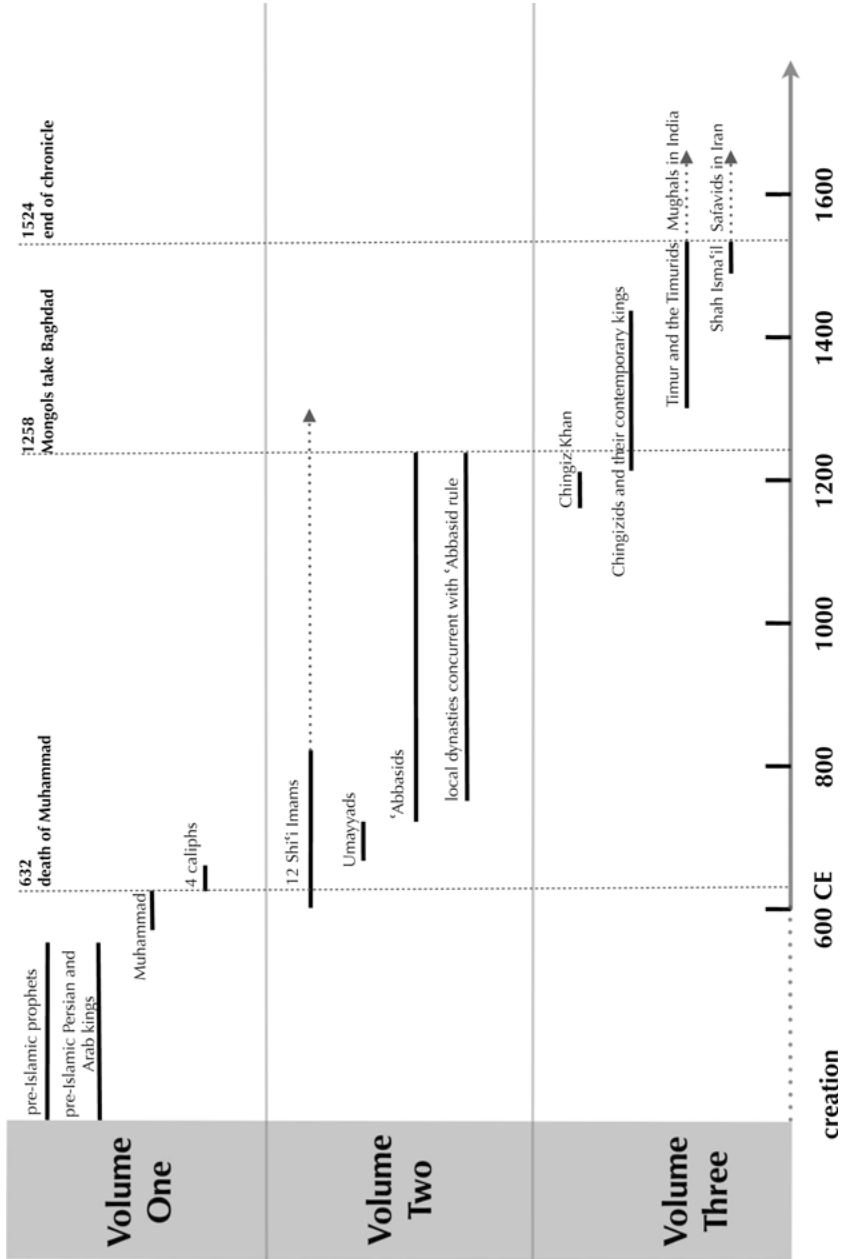


Fig. 1 Timelines in Khwandamir's *Habib as-siyar*

The first strand of time that runs through the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* may be called religious time in the limited sense in that it originates in statements in the Qur'ān and was part of the triumphalist religious rhetoric espoused by Muslim rulers who justified themselves in religious terms. This strand begins with the biblical story of creation in its Qur'ānic version, following the line of individuals regarded as prophets such as Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and so on (Volume I, Section 1). This history also includes the mention of Greek philosophers and Iranian sages (Pythagoras, Socrates, Jāmāsp, etc.) whose work had continued to influence intellectual life in the Islamic period. The life of Muḥammad (Volume 1, Section 3) represents the end point of prophetic time since he is regarded as the last prophet. The religious timeline continues after Muḥammad in the form of Muslim rulers who saw themselves as the prophet's legitimate successors. However, the strand is split into two based on the sectarian division between Sunnīs and Twelver Shī'īs. Khwāndamīr provides both the Sunnī version of early Islamic history in the form of the lives of the so-called 'rightly guided' caliphs (*khulafā' rāshidūn*) (Volume 1, Section 4) and the Twelver Shī'ī version through the lives of the Twelve Imāms (genealogical successors to Muḥammad) (Volume 2, Section 1).⁷ The account of the Imāms includes an aspect of the future as well since the Twelfth Imām is supposed to have gone into an occultation in the year 874 CE. Khwāndamīr's narration of Shī'ī history ends with a description of prophecies about what will happen at the time this Imām returns to normal presence just before the apocalypse and the end of the world (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, II, 111–3).

The question of Islamic sectarian affiliation was a burning matter in Khwāndamīr's own time. His first patrons, the Timūrids, were Sunnīs who nevertheless held 'Alī and other early Shī'ī notables in high esteem. However, Shāh Ismā'īl declared Twelver Shī'ism to be the religion of his domains upon his declaration of the Ṣafavid dynasty in 1501.⁸ The Sunnī-Shī'ī differentiation is based very substantially on alternative understandings of early Islamic history. For Sunnīs, Muḥammad's first four successors represent the golden age of Islam, while Shī'īs regard this same period as having set a pattern of tragedy in which Muḥammad's legitimate heirs were denied their rights as rulers and religious guides of the Muslim community. In the *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, Khwāndamīr mentions the fact that the two versions of history represent alternatives (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.]

⁷ The *Ḥabīb al-siyar* does not present versions of Islamic history espoused by non-Twelver Shī'īs such as Ismā'īlis and Zaydīs. These groups find only occasional mention in the work, within accounts of events in which they represented a significant faction.

⁸ The religious history of this period is quite complex and includes considerable fluidity between the dogmas of major Islamic sects. For details see Manz 2007 and Bashir 2003.

1984, I, 444 f.), but then narrates them separately so that the traditions are conveyed on their own terms rather than through adjudication between them. In other words, the chronicler does not champion one side of the conflict in an explicit manner. This pattern of representing alternative histories as independent streams of time is a general principle followed throughout the work.

After the early Islamic period, Khwāndamīr's narrative moves to the two Islamic dynasties that made up the period until the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century. Khwāndamīr treats the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsids in succession, followed by accounts of local dynasties in the Iranian region that were, in effect, independent rulers even though they affirmed the 'Abbāsīd caliph as the nominal legitimate sovereign (Volume 2, Sections 2, 3, and 4). The dynastic kingship described in these sections rests on the amalgamation of two different timelines: one, the religious one I have described above, and two, the account of pre-Islamic Persian and Arab kings that Khwāndamīr provides following the narrative about biblical prophets (Volume 1, Section 2). Stories associated with pre-Islamic Persian kings in particular carried tremendous cultural prestige in the Iranian geographical area, commemorated in such celebrated works as Abū l-Qāsim Firdawsī's epic work *Shāhnāma* (*Book of kings*). This book was composed in Persian in the early eleventh century and had lasting influence on later perceptions (cf. Melville, van den Berg 2012). Values associated with Persian kingship fed into Khwāndamīr's work directly through the Iranian heritage of the region, where he worked, as well as in the form that these had been absorbed and naturalized in the ideals of Islamic kingship among the 'Abbāsids and the local dynasties that maintained allegiance to them. By the time Khwāndamīr was writing, Persian royal time was equal in significance to Islamic religious time, accounting for its salience in the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* and other similar works.

Islamic societies of Central Asia and Iran underwent a radical transformation in the thirteenth century CE with the arrival of the Mongols. Genghis Khan's descendants eliminated the 'Abbāsids from Baghdad as the titular heads of Islamic polities and inaugurated a new era in which Mongol royal descent was the marker of political legitimacy. With the conversion of the Mongol rulers to Islam in the late thirteenth century, Mongol descent became a prominent feature of Muslim ruling ideologies in combination with Islamic religious and Persian royal ideas of earlier periods (cf. Manz 2000). The Mongol past is the third strand of time reflected in Khwāndamīr's account of universal history, comprising sections on Genghis Khan and his descendants (Volume 3, Sections 1 and 2). Tamerlane and his descendants, the Timūrids, were a continuation of Mongol dominion in that they respected Mongol customs and prestige. But during the fifteenth century CE, the Timūrids increasingly derived their authority from Tamerlane's own prestige and synthesized a new royal culture that com-

bined Islamic religious, Persian, and Mongol understandings of the past (cf. Bernardini 2008). This was the milieu in which Khwāndamīr was born and raised, forming the background to his quite extensive account for the fifteenth century (Volume 3, Section 3). The last historical section of the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* describes the rise of Shāh Ismāʿīl and the establishment of the new dynasty, the Ṣafavids (Volume 3, Section 4). The work ends with a conclusion that contains a brief geography of the inhabited world.

As I have mentioned in the case of Khwāndamīr's presentation of Sunni and Shīʿī versions of early Islamic history, the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* presents alternative pasts on their own terms without consistent effort to rationalize them into a single timeline. This is quite clear from a visual representation of the work's narrative progression as I have provided in Figure 1.⁹ This perspective is apparent in his treatment of the way the three strands of time I have described above come across in the narrative in matters such as his descriptions of the earliest periods of human history. Reflecting the religious timeline, his account of creation includes the familiar biblical narrative about Adam, which is placed at the head of the stream of prophets (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, I, 17–23). When he comes to the representation of the Persian past, he mentions the mythological figure of Kayūmarṣ, whose genealogical origins are disputed. He indicates that Zoroastrians consider Kayūmarṣ to be the originator of the human species (that is, he is an alternative to Adam) while Muslim chroniclers regard him as either Adam's eldest son or a fourth generation descendent of the first man. Citing the work of his own grandfather, Khwāndamīr considers the last of these possibilities to be the truth (*ibid.*, 175). Following this partial attempt at correlation, he then moves on to describing royal Iranian and Arab genealogies that all issue forth from Kayūmarṣ and do not correlate directly with the lines of prophets he describes earlier in the work. Apart from the issue of the disputed relationship between Adam and Kayūmarṣ, Persian time appears quite separate from the biblical progression of prophets described in the work.

Later in the work, he follows the same pattern again by describing the Mongols and the Turks as descendants of Yāfaṣ (Japheth), a son of the biblical prophet Noah. However, his description of the Mongols' ultimate ancestors, Yāfaṣ's early descendants, reads like a genesis story in that they are shown discovering matters like the use of salt and honey in food and the utilization of animal skins to clothe their bodies. Apart from the initial connection, they seem to inhabit a genealogical evolution all their own for centuries. As in the case of the Persians, the narrative of the Mongol past continues as an independent stream from these

⁹ See above, 215.

early stories until it reaches the life of Genghis Khan and the arrival of his descendants in Islamic lands in the thirteenth century (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, III, 4–16). The net result of this perspective is that time in general comes across as being multivalent by definition – a kind of repository of sedimentation of human experience in multiple strands – rather than being an un-stoppable sequence of moments.

My description of the work so far follows the author's own arrangement from the distant past to his present. This suggests a highly segmented narration of universal history. What happens when we regard the work as a symptom of the social imagination of its own time and place, going from the present to the past? This view highlights historiographical *topoi* that provide the work its narrative coherence. Among the significant human prototypes that run throughout the narrative in this regard are the righteous and religiously sanctioned king and the competent vizier who manages administrative affairs. Khwāndamīr's extensive descriptions of the acts of Ḥusayn Bāyqarā and Shāh Ismā'īl, the kings of his own times, resonate with references to earlier kings as well as aspects of the narratives about the prophets and the Imāms. Similarly, his eulogistic appraisals of 'Alishīr Navā'ī, Amīr Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, and Ḥabībullah Sāvajī reflect a general investment in the capacity of learned administrators to run affairs of state as well as act as patrons for scholars like Khwāndamīr himself.¹⁰

Khwāndamīr's description of Shāh Ismā'īl's accession to the throne in the city of Tabriz in 1501 CE (906 AH) – which occurred when the author was about twenty-five years of age – provides a useful illustration for his work's thematic focus on kings and viziers. He begins the account by identifying Shāh Ismā'īl as one among the series of religious renewers whom God causes to be born in the world every hundred years. This idea has a long history in Islamic thought, though it is usually applied to religious scholars rather than kings. The very strong religious sanction evocated here for Ismā'īl is then redoubled by the report that he declared Twelver Shi'ism the religious persuasion of his domains. His soldiers were instructed to eliminate anyone who refused to obey the performance of public religious actions according to the rites deemed correct by this Islamic denomination. The overall effect of Ismā'īl's new royal dispensation is celebrated through verse:

¹⁰ Khwāndamīr's particular concern with viziers is reflected in two further works he wrote concerned specifically with this office: the *Makārim al-akhlāq*, dedicated to the person of 'Alishīr Navā'ī (Khwāndamīr/Ganjah'i [ed.] 1979), and the *Dastūr al-vuzarā'*, a compilation of stories and sayings of great Muslim viziers through time (Khwāndamīr/Nafisī [ed.] 1938).

The king, sitting resplendent like Saturn, traveling like the moon,
 with Jupiter's nature and the sun's radiant mind.
 When he occupied the throne to reign,
 he issued the proclamation of justice and equity.
 Putting out the flag of benevolence,
 he extended his protecting hand over believers' heads.
 He made his friends become laden with jewels,
 seeming the way an orchard appears in spring.
 His exercise of the sword in the path of jihad,
 opened up wide wounds in the bodies of his enemies.
 There remained, then, no trace of treasonous dissenters (*khavārij*),
 save in the confines of the fires of hell. (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, IV, 468)

Once enthroned, Ismā'īl proceeded to appoint men named Ḥusayn Bēg Lala, Amīr Zakarīya, and Qāzī Shams al-Dīn Jīlānī to administrative posts. The account then ends with noting that the king spent that winter season in Tabriz, making the environs of the city a place of justice reminiscent of the days of the pre-Islamic Sassanian king Anūshīrvān (d. 579), famous for his sense of equity (Khwāndamīr/Siyāqī [ed.] 1984, IV, 467 f.).

Khwāndamīr's description of Ismā'īl at one of the most poignant moments of his career is concerned to relate the event with generic characteristics associated with kings sanctioned by religion as well as royal mythology. Here and elsewhere, Khwāndamīr's models for kings and viziers are multivalent and easily accommodate not only Islamic exemplars but non-Islamic ones as well, who are placed both before and after Muḥammad. The fact that the pictures of the kings and viziers are topological does not mean that the chronicler was not vested in the specificity of events. Indeed he was, and the density of detail in representing events is highest for the periods closest to him. Universality over time and specificity in location coexist, with the explicit understanding that both are necessary for making sense of human experience in a chronological vein.

The length and scope of the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* are such that this short treatment can, at best, do it only partial justice.¹¹ By providing some details for Khwāndamīr's method and the work's structure I hope to have created an overall impression of the complexity of the universal chronicle as an Islamic literary genre. The work's narrative may be conceived as a vast net within which arrangements of time, *topoi* related to kings and administrators, and a concern with the contingency of particular events run as threads joining parts with each other. Enlarging this picture, we can regard the work as symptomatic of a social imagination in

11 The tremendous extent of material covered in the *Ḥabīb al-siyar* is visible even from a simple concordance of names culled from the work (cf. Navā'ī 2000).

which the past was a matter of fundamental concern in the shaping of ideologies and the general sense of personal and communal identity in Islamic societies of the relevant period.

3 Conclusion

Khwāndamīr's *Ḥabīb al-siyar* provides us a window into the way a learned Muslim scholar from the early sixteenth century saw fit to portray the world's past. His view incorporated both the state of knowledge available to him and the social and political exigencies that pertained to elites in his society. As I hope to have shown, an author such as Khwāndamīr was an active producer of the past, well aware of the power of rhetoric and narrative construction as mechanisms for the generation of meaning. The wide circulation of his work from the sixteenth century to the present, in manuscripts and in print, indicates the overall extensive footprint of this form of universal history throughout societies where Persian was a major language of literary production.¹²

From its name to the sentiment expressed on most pages of its contents, *Ḥabīb al-siyar* is the work of an author who saw himself working within an Islamic tradition of scholarship. This work's perspectives on time and the past indicate the complexity of a historical imagination couched within Islamic terms and reflecting a longstanding literary tradition that parallels works of universal history in other traditions such as Christianity (cf. Breisach 1994). The story of Muḥammad's life certainly occupies a central place here, but the work is also shaped substantially by the author's concern for the histories of Persian kings and the Mongols. The chronicler's religious commitment thus does not amount to a permanently blinkered vision, incapable of incorporating information generated outside of the Islamic milieu. Where multiple versions of the same events or religion and logical causality seem to come into contradiction, this chronicler's preference seems to be to tell multiple stories in parallel rather than to attempt to adjudicate the matter to prove the primacy of one side. This inclination makes the work reflect perspectivism as a major methodological choice, which we can observe in the way the narrative represents historical investments particular to Sunnī Muslims, Shī'ī Muslims, upholders of the values of Persian kingship, and the Mongols, all largely on their own terms.

The very brief glimpses of a single voluminous text that I have presented in this article highlight a methodological point relevant to this volume as a whole.

¹² For details regarding the work's popularity see sources cited in note 1 above.

As we become ever more cognizant of the fact that the ‘scientific’ history we ourselves do as modern academics derives from highly specific presumptions particular to our times, it makes sense to look at other modes of historicization as pre-eminent *loci* for understanding the social imagination of contexts we try to grasp through fragmentary evidence. I suggest that paying attention to issues such as arrangements of time can lead to better understandings of producers as well as readers of texts in the original contexts. The elements in Khwāndamīr’s work that I have highlighted – interdependency of objective and subjective time and the balance between *topos* and event in narrative projections – are issues that matter to our historiographical practice as much as they did for an author writing in Persian in the sixteenth century, although obviously in very different arrangements. Most significantly, the literary and intellectual tradition from which Khwāndamīr writes espouses no commitment to historiographical empiricism that has been a deterministic feature of modern practices. Nevertheless, the partial kinship between his and our ways of conceptualizing the past seems to me to be a far more interesting matter to explore than the oft-asserted difference between seemingly naïve religious pre-moderns and us modern scientific historians. Among other matters, appraising the universality of a different time and social context has the potential to highlight the particularities of our own practices.

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Jon Keune

Conditions for historicising religion: Hindu saints, regional identity, and social change in western India, ca. 1600 – 1900

1 Prolegomena

By aiming to use and transmit information deemed to be of ultimate importance – about ritual performance, insights into reality, or the legitimation of authority – religious traditions are deeply invested in remembering the past. This concern is readily apparent in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions, which presume a temporal progression from creation to some kind of final resolution, between which revelations or divine communications are understood to have occurred at particular points. Linear time and teleology are so central to these traditions that many scholars working within their intellectual climates, from Hegel onwards, have often assumed that an overt concern about history was basic for a well-developed human rationality. History as a modern academic discipline in Europe in many respects emerged from and in reaction to Christian theological interpretations of the past.

The post-Enlightenment departure of historians from beneath the sacred canopy was accelerated by the surge of information from Asia that flowed into Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This new material kindled a minor industry of orientalist research that was carried out under various intellectual, ideological, and aesthetic agendas (cf. Schwab 1984; Osterhammel 1998; App 2010). Especially confounding to early orientalists was that Asian religious traditions and their histories could not be easily accommodated in biblical narratives of universal history that assumed the Euro-Mediterranean world as its centre (e.g. Trautmann 2012, 176–81). This reckoning with difference and acknowledgment of plurality were essential to the modern conceptualisation of ‘religion’ and the development of religious studies as an academic field in the West (cf. Smith 1998).

India and ‘Hinduism’ posed especially difficult cases when it came to writing history. European scholars could not identify a foundational figure that filled a role similar to Jesus or Muhammad in the tradition they identified (and, in some ways, constructed) as Hinduism. While holding onto a stereotype of Indian culture as timeless and otherworldly, orientalists searched their newly-discovered ancient Sanskrit texts in the hope of reconstructing the history of India and Hin-

duism, of which Hindus themselves had allegedly never noticed. In the eyes of most European and American interpreters from the late eighteenth century through much of the twentieth century, Indians appeared to lack historical consciousness until the British imported it along with their colonial project (cf. Perrett 1999, 308–11).

This dismissal of Indian historical consciousness was deeply skewed, of course, since it arose from holding up ancient Sanskrit literature to post-Enlightenment European standards of history, while also wilfully neglecting Persian and vernacular Indic literatures, in which narrations of the past were more readily apparent. In recent decades, the image of India as ahistorical has been roundly critiqued and rejected as an orientalist fantasy, and scholars of various Indian literary traditions set themselves energetically to identifying how precolonial Indian authors marked the passage of time.¹ One of the most provocative of these attempts is *Textures of Time*, whose authors argued that historical consciousness was evident in some genres of early modern South Indian literature in the form of subtle narrative ‘textures’. They argued that by detecting these textures, original audiences would have understood when an author of a given composition was operating in a mythological as opposed to a historical mode (cf. Narayana Rao et al. 2001). Although the theory of textures proved controversial, even its critics praised the authors for paying attention to vernacular materials that had been long overlooked (cf. Pollock 2007; Guha 2004), and research on historiography in vernacular Indic languages has subsequently increased (cf. Aquil, Chatterjee 2008).

Whereas orientalist scholarship focused disproportionately on religious literature in search of Indian history,² modern scholarship on Indian historical consciousness tended to avoid religious traditions and texts altogether. One reason for this is an urge to compensate for the extremes of earlier generations and combat the orientalist impression that India was obsessed with religion (Pollock 1993, 81). Similarly, a deep-seated uneasiness about handling religion in historiography impelled modern historians of India to sanitize their narratives from references that smacked of mythology, theology, and the supernatural (cf. Chakrabarty 2000; Mandair 2005, 279). Until quite recently, discussions of historical

¹ Some attempts to theorize different modes of Indian historiography include Johannes Bronkhorst’s essay in this volume, essays on the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* in a special issue of *Indian Economic and Social Review* (50/2 [2013]), Schalk 2010, Pollock 1995 and 1989, and Kulke 1979.

² An exception to this pattern that may indicate a broader but overlooked form of orientalism is the eighteenth-century German historian Matthias Christian Sprengel, as discussed in Keune 2013.

consciousness in precolonial India thus tended to steer clear of religion, unless it could be checked against ‘secular’ documentation of official sources such as royal patronage records.

The very public destruction of a mosque, the Babri Masjid, in the city of Ayodhya in 1992 demonstrated that the wall that kept religion out of modern academic history writing in India was highly problematic. This event, the anti-Muslim rhetoric that led up to it, and the electoral success of Hindu nationalist parties at the onset of the new millennium proved that ideas about the past, couched in religious discourse, still had very effective motivational power. Consequently, scholars began paying especially closer attention to the ways in which political and ethnic identities were constructed in premodern times, partially in a quest to problematize the alluringly simple narrative of perpetual Hindu-Muslim antagonism that modern Hindu nationalists so successfully propagated. Additionally, the field of memory studies, which had previously focused on history in Europe, Israel, and North America, was increasingly brought to bear on the study of religion in India. At the forefront of this approach was Christian Novetzke’s analysis of how memories of the poet-saint Nāmdev signified different things in different publics and historical contexts (Novetzke 2008). The realm of cultural memory in popular media and sacred biography became a legitimate subject of historical scholarship. Thus religion has come to be perceived again as an important site of investigation among historians of India and Hinduism.

2 A case study in the historiography of a Hindu devotional tradition

Hindus have indeed cared about remembering the past, although such remembering is more observable in some contexts than others. This chapter considers one example by surveying four instances in which a regional Hindu tradition’s past became an object of attention. At the core of this approach is a basic historiographical question: ‘Under what conditions did the past become valuable to remember?’.

My case study is a Hindu devotional (*bhakti*) group in western India, the Vārkarī tradition, which traces its roots to the thirteenth century (cf. Keune, Novetzke 2011). The Vārkarīs are especially provocative for considering religion and historiography for two reasons. First, they defy common assumptions about what constitutes a religious tradition, and we find little about them in places where scholars would usually look for evidence of Hindu religious groups’ past. The Vārkarīs thus can illuminate aspects of methodology that are taken for granted

in more ‘standard’ historiographies of religious traditions. Second, although some scholarship has been written about Vārkarī literature, customs, and performance traditions, our understanding of the tradition’s history *per se* remains quite fragmentary. When scholars refer to Vārkarī history, they typically repeat common tropes about the tradition’s development that unreflexively stand in for history, overlooking the means by which those tropes were formulated. A critical survey of important contexts in which the past has been remembered is a necessary step toward writing a history of this Hindu tradition.

3 Conditions for historicizing the Vārkarīs

The Vārkarī tradition stands within the devotional or *bhakti* stream of Hinduism. *Bhakti* traditions – of which there are diverse regional examples across India – tend to be characterized by a strong emphasis on personal devotion to a deity, the self-conscious use of accessible vernacular languages for their compositions rather than elite Sanskrit, and a relatively greater inclusivity of women, lower castes, and Untouchables than other Hindu traditions. In Marathi-speaking western India, the largest group of this sort is the Vārkarīs, whose name derives from the annual walking pilgrimage (*vārī*) that devotees undertake to the regional holy city of Paṇḍharpūr. The city hosts the main temple of the god Viṭṭhal, who some people associate with the more famous, trans-regional deities Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu. Devotional poetry and songs that were composed in Marathi between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries by figures called saint-poets make up the Vārkarīs’ sacred literary corpus. These songs feature prominently in the pilgrimage and other performance settings, and the compositions of the saint-poets are regarded as the foundation of Marathi literature more generally. Nowadays the tradition has over several million followers, mainly of lower caste and agrarian background, and it is a major cultural feature of Marathi-speaking western India.

Two factors complicate efforts to write a scholarly history of the Vārkarīs. First, the tradition has no central authority or clear institutional structure but instead is comprised of a loose network of devotees and independent local leaders who are scattered across western India. What unites them is their participation in the great annual pilgrimage and in musical/homiletic events (*kīrtans*), at which the saint-poets’ songs are performed and expounded upon by local leaders. It is impossible to identify a single geographic centre or spiritual lineage that represents the tradition as a whole. Without a clearly defined subject at the centre of a narrative about the Vārkarīs, historiography becomes more difficult.

The other major challenge is that the Vārkarīs are not known to have received patronage from any rulers. The Viṭṭhal temple in Paṇḍharpūr, the destination of the annual Vārkarī pilgrimage, did receive royal patronage in the thirteenth century, but it is problematic to equate this with patronage of the sect. The temple is run by traditional brahman priests who uphold orthodox brahminical ritual stands and do not tend to describe themselves as Vārkarīs. At least in modern times, there is a tension between pilgrims and temple priests, and pilgrims are instructed by their local leaders to visit and see Viṭṭhal in Paṇḍharpūr but not to donate money to the priests or to sponsor rituals (cf. Reenberg Sand 1987). Groups of Vārkarī pilgrims themselves are not known to have received patronage from rulers. The lack of official patronage may be a consequence of the relative political instability in the region where the Vārkarī saint-poets lived, as power changed hands significantly among rulers between 1300 and 1650. During this period, two major sultanates (the Bahmanis and Nizam Shahs) as well as smaller *generalissimos* more or less controlled the region. Although we do find examples of Muslim rulers patronizing Hindu authors writing in Sanskrit (cf. Keune 2015), there is no extant evidence of that beneficence being extended to the saint-poets, who composed in Marathi.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the political scene calmed down somewhat, as the Maratha kingdom – the last major Indian empire to resist British colonization – grew in power, subjugated much of the Indian subcontinent, and adopted Marathi as their official courtly language (cf. Gordon 1993). However, although the Marathas patronized Marathi poets and literature, when it came to religion, they favoured brahmanical, sanskritic Hindu traditions that explicitly legitimized their kingship. The Maratha rulers (who flaunted their high-caste status) appear to have shown little interest in the Vārkarīs. Due to the region's instability and the Marathas' high-caste preferences, the most common method of ascertaining the historical presence of a religious tradition – comparing the traditions' stories to official patronage records – is mostly unavailable in the case of the Vārkarīs. Without an authoritative institution to investigate and with scant information on official state records to scrutinize, one must turn to the source material that is available, as fragmentary and indirect as it may be. The Vārkarīs present a problem for conventional approaches to the historiography of religion, but a greater focus on memory and uses of the past make it possible to proceed.

There are four major contexts in which the Vārkarī past became valuable to remember. The first two occurred within the tradition itself, as authors invoked past heroes of faith and consolidated Vārkarī identity. The second two contexts were in the colonial era (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), as non-Vārkarī intellectuals and reformers used the tradition's past to underwrite modern political and social projects.

3.1 The intertextual past of poetry and performance

The compositions of the poet-saints are diverse, ranging from Marathi renderings of classic Sanskrit texts (the *Bhagavad Gītā*, parts of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa*), to a handful of philosophical treatises, to many thousands of short poems and songs about a wide variety of devotional and spiritual topics. One subject that poet-saints regularly addressed in their songs was the lives of earlier poet-saints, which thereby imbued the revered scriptural corpus of Vārkarīs with a hagiographical as well as an intertextual dimension. The low-caste poet Nāmdev (thirteenth/fourteenth centuries) narrated episodes from the life of brahman poet Jñāndev (late thirteenth century). The servant girl Janābāi described the compassion of her protector and employer Nāmdev. The brahman Eknāth (sixteenth century) wrote often about these three as well as about the potter Gorā, the gardener Savatā, the barber Senā, and the Untouchable labourer Cokhāmeļā. The low-caste poet Tukārām (sixteenth/seventeenth centuries) similarly invoked the names of his predecessors and recited their wondrous deeds.³ Most elaborately, Tukārām's disciple Bahiṇābāi (a brahman woman from the early seventeenth century) presented a famous poem that rehearsed the four major Vārkarī saints' contributions through the metaphor of a temple: Jñāndev laid the foundation, Nāmdev built the wall around it, Eknāth erected its pillars, and Tukārām became the pinnacle (Bahiṇā Bāi/Abbott [transl.] 1929, 114).

These short compositions were meant to be performed (cf. Novetzke 2008, 74–90), and singing is one of the most basic and ubiquitous activities that Vārkarīs do while walking on pilgrimage, which usually takes two to four weeks, depending on their starting point (cf. Keune 2013). Through repeated singing of these songs, the past is remembered, the saints' names are invoked, and key features of their lives are re-presented to pilgrims and listeners alike. So the Vārkarī poet-saints display a sense of the past's relevance to the present and even, in the case of Bahiṇābāi's temple metaphor, an appreciation for historical sequence. Absent in these songs, however, are dates and information about the contexts in which the saints lived. Nonetheless, remembering the saint-poets has always been a part of the tradition; memory of the past is inscribed in the poets' texts themselves.

³ The standard modern compilation of these songs in Marathi is the *Sakaṣsantaḡāthā* (*Songs of All of the Saints*), which has been reprinted many times in the twentieth century (Gosāvi 2000). Only small fragments of some saints' poetry have been translated into western languages.

3.2 Collective hagiography

The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a second phase of historicizing the Vārkaṛī tradition, whereby individual poet-saints started to be remembered explicitly as parts of a group. Bahiṇabāī's temple metaphor could be considered as a basic example of this. Also in the seventeenth century, poems comprised of lists of saints' names (called *nāmāvalīs* or literally, name-rows) also began appearing in Marathi. Extending the accumulative precedent of the *nāmāvalīs*, authors began assembling hagiographical stories about individual saints into massive compilations that I refer to as 'collective hagiographies' (the Marathi term *caritra* does not distinguish between individual and collective hagiographies). More than just sacred encyclopaedias, collective hagiographies situate many diverse figures within a single text, sometimes with an overarching narrative. This pattern occurred in other regional bhakti traditions earlier (e.g. Cekkīlār's twelfth-century Tamil Śaiva compendium, the *Periyapurāṇam*), perhaps spurred on by institutional patronage relationships that induced those traditions to codify their collective memory sooner. In Marathi, the most prominent example of this is the Vārkaṛī poet and performer Mahīpati, who composed three large collective hagiographies between 1762 and 1774. Mahīpati begins his compositions with a story about Viṣṇu in his divine court commanding various deities and sages to descend to earth and become the great *bhakti* saints, in a style similar to what Romila Thapar has termed *itihāsa-purāṇa* (Thapar 2001). Novetzke has described this mode of narration in Mahīpati as combining both historiographic and theological or 'theographic' dimensions (Novetzke 2007). Mahīpati thus pulled many past saints' stories into an overtly sectarian orbit around Viṣṇu, including some figures who historically were not followers of Viṣṇu.

Nāmāvalīs and collective hagiographies represent early modern attempts in western India not only to remember the saints, but to start using their pasts for the purpose of codifying and expanding the historico-mythological worldview of the tradition. Collective texts such as these build on the intertextuality of the saints' poetry but go beyond them in emphasizing the saints' membership in something larger – the coalescing tradition.

3.3 Representing regional identity

British colonial rule in western India (1818–1947) provoked Indians to envision and assert themselves in new ways, which often involved adapting local cultural resources to respond to social critiques by British administrators and missionaries. History writing and Indian intellectuals' perceptions of their past changed

significantly during this time, as British styles of historiography became increasingly normative.

In the mid-nineteenth century, disturbed by the English-centred curriculum of British-administered Indian schools following Thomas Macaulay's notoriously chauvinistic *Minute on Indian Education*, some Marathi intellectuals insisted that their local literature also belonged on the syllabus, alongside the works of Shakespeare, Milton, and Coleridge. With this in mind, Parshuram Ballal Godbole, a prolific Sanskrit paṇḍit working for the British government, began publishing the series *Navnīt* or *Selections of Marathi Poetry* in 1854.⁴ Ultimately running into seventeen volumes, *Navnīt* brought a great deal of Marathi literature to the printed page for the first time, with the purpose of instilling in Marathi readers an awareness of and pride in their vernacular literature (cf. Naregal 2002, 184f.). Among the compositions published in *Navnīt* was a substantial amount of Vārkarī devotional poetry (it comprised nearly one fifth of the entire series), including sections of the archetype of all Marathi literature, Jñāndev's thirteenth-century rendition of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. *Navnīt* thus packaged Vārkarī poetry as classical literature that all Marathi speakers could appreciate on the grounds of its aesthetic value alone. For educated Marathi readers, the Vārkarī devotional canon came to occupy a central place in the literary canon. Even staunch critics of the Vārkarīs, such as the nationalist historian V. K. Rajwade, held Jñāndev's composition in uniquely high regard as the foundational piece of Marathi literature (cf. Wakankar 2010). Whether or not one was in accord with their devotional leanings, the Vārkarī poet-saints were understood to have played distinguished roles in Marathi literary history.

Marathi scholars asserted that the Vārkarīs contributed crucially to the region's political history as well. Amidst growing Indian nationalist fervour at the turn of the twentieth century, many leaders in western India held up the first Maratha king Shivaji (seventeenth century) as a heroic model for how Indians should unite and throw off foreign rule. In the four centuries preceding Shivaji, the major rulers in western India were Muslim: the Bahmani and Nizam Shah sultanates. Intriguingly, nearly all of the Vārkarī saint-poets are believed to have lived during this time. Recent scholarship has highlighted the integral relationships and porous boundaries between Hindus and Muslims in this period, the complexities of which are not reducible to perpetual communal antagonism (cf. Fischel 2012; Guha 2010; Eaton 2005). Such a nuanced view of history was not shared by Marathi scholars at the turn of the twentieth century, however.

⁴ After the *Navnīt* series concluded, it was reprinted in its entirety multiple times, such as Priyolkar et al. 1990.

When the historiographical question of how to account for the rise of Shivaji after centuries of (assumedly oppressive) Muslim rule arose, the most persuasive answer, as put forth by leading thinkers such as Mahadev Govind Ranade, lay with the Vārkarīs (Rānaḍe 1900 [1961]). According to him, the Marathi poet-saints preached against the hierarchy of caste which had previously kept Hindus internally divided. The gradual effect of this egalitarian message was that Hindus came together and were thus available for mobilization by Shivaji. Although not promoting an explicitly political message of their own, the Vārkarīs were perceived to have played a vital role in preparing the ground for political action. This colonial-era reading of the Vārkarīs' historical significance proved immensely popular, and despite serious shortcomings in terms of historical evidence, it remains a common view of history in the region today.

Although the literature and traditions of bhakti traditions in western India has long been foundational for a sense of regional cohesion (cf. Feldhaus 2003), the colonial-era use of selected Vārkarī literature and their supposed historic political contribution transposed their significance into a new, non-sectarian, more explicitly nationalist context.

3.4 Modelling social and religious reform

M. G. Ranade's interest in the egalitarian nature of Vārkarī teaching went beyond interpreting political history; it was vital to the reformist agendas that he and some of his contemporaries pursued. Ranade was a founder and active leader of the Prārthanā Samāj (Prayer Society), which was modelled somewhat on the famous Hindu reformist group, the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal (cf. Naik 1999). Although not technically Vārkarīs themselves, members of the Prārthanā Samāj drew on Vārkarī poetry as sources of inspiration and used it in rituals at their meetings. They also regularly cited the poet-saints as examples of Hindus who had transcended caste prejudice, which they urged modern Hindus to emulate.⁵ The Prārthanā Samāj along with other, mainly brahman reformers (e.g. Bhāgvat 1890), sought to promote a modified form of Hinduism that they argued was free of caste prejudice.

In a separate but related vein, the turn of the nineteenth century also witnessed a few Untouchable leaders lift up the fourteenth-century Untouchable saint-poet Cokhāmeļā as figure around whom modern Untouchables could mo-

⁵ One example of this interpretation of the poet-saints is the depiction of the sixteenth-century saint Eknāth in Rānaḍe 1940.

bilize and demand better treatment (cf. Constable 1997). Consequently, Kisan Fagoji Bansode led efforts to gather information about Cokhāmeļā's life and to collect poetry that was attributed to him (Zelliot 1980, 141; id. 2005, 170). This interest in Cokhāmeļā among modern Untouchables was pursued independently of the main Vārkarī tradition (in which observance of caste distinctions had persisted in practice) and had little effect to changing the tradition. Following Bhimrao Ambedkar's advice from the 1930s onward, most Untouchables in western India renounced any connection to Cokhāmeļā and the Vārkarīs, and converted instead to Buddhism.

Although the reformers' agendas of overcoming caste and realizing social equality met with little lasting success, they represent a noteworthy effort to envision the Vārkarī past as setting a historical precedent for modern social change. Moreover, this precedent was celebrated as indigenous to western India, thus allowing reformers to appeal to the sense of regional identity mentioned in the previous section. In the reformers' eyes, the progressive change they called for did not entail abandoning Hindu tradition in favour of capitulating to English values or accepting Christianity. The egalitarian Hinduism they envisioned was based overtly on what they interpreted in the past of the Vārkarīs.

4 Conclusion

Concern for the past has been an enduring component of this popular Hindu devotional tradition known as the Vārkarī *sampradāy*, and in this respect the Vārkarīs are hardly unique among Hindus. This chapter has highlighted several different conditions, both within the tradition and outside, under which the past of the tradition was valuable to remember. Methodologically, this illuminates a presupposition about how historiography of religion is usually carried out. The Vārkarīs continued through the centuries without an institutional structure or authoritative body – the two major sites of investigation that scholars would normally turn to in order to apprehend the history of a religious tradition, on the model of ecclesiastical institutions in Europe. The Vārkarīs demonstrate clearly that historicisation proceeds even without institutional and authoritative centres, although the lack of them does present challenges for writing a critical history of the tradition. In the absence of a central institution and authority, examining the conditions under which the past was remembered is a crucial way to proceed in the historiographical project.

In terms of historiography itself, this chapter highlights several layers of historicisation that are usually conflated. By paying closer attention to the conditions of historicising religion, we can identify these historiographical layers

more clearly and appreciate how the Vārkarī past has been interpreted and used for different ends. This is essential for understanding how this group consolidated as a tradition. Coming to clarity about how and why modern interpreters found the Vārkarī past useful also enables us to mitigate the biases of those interpretations more effectively in order to carry out more precise historical research on the early modern period.

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Susanne Rau

Practitioners of religious historiography in early modern Europe

If we intend to gain deeper insight into the questions regarding the conditions under which religious groups are historicized, it could be helpful to take a closer look at the practitioners of historiography, whether they be writers, copyists or commissioners of such historical narratives. This aspect is in particular interesting on account of the fact that as a general rule histories are not written by groups but by individuals. These individuals tend to mobilize the moments and motives of historical writing for their own purposes, purposes that should be unveiled in order to better understand the construction of religious identity. The following contribution will shed light on some of the narrative tendencies that can be spotted in the historical accounts of early modern Europe. It will hardly be surprising that full-time academics were rarely the main writers of religious historiography during these times. Instead this position was frequently occupied by priests or preachers. Questions regarding the manner in which these historians described religious practices have not been taken into consideration here.

1 Preliminaries

In order to advance research on the historiography of religious groups it is helpful, as well as challenging, to be confronted with a vast array of expertise from various disciplines and regions. In fact, specialists on the religious historiography of the major religious groups around the globe, who focus on both past and present religions, hail from all continents and scholarly fields. The present volume might well be such an aggregation of expert knowledge. Only an occasion such as this one provides us with the unique opportunity to exchange views on various phenomena pertaining to the historiography of religions. We have to ask ourselves, whether it is possible to identify sets of comparable events, persons, strategies that led to the writing of history and perhaps even to the formation of a historiographical culture? Or do the reasons underlying such developments differ in different places? At this point I briefly want to situate my own work within this scholarly debate. From a post-colonial perspective the following chapter may appear very Euro-centric as it focuses almost entirely on white males raised in the Western context. Some of these practitioners or, as we also might call

them, scholars were heterosexuals and/or married, while some lived celibate lives, either solitary or in religious communities.

Before exploring this subject matter further, I would like to make a few preliminary remarks on a number of particular phenomena, which, due to the limited scope of this chapter, cannot be analysed in detail here:

- (i) The noun 'practitioner' as cited in the title may sound a little unusual and could be replaced by other terms, such as 'author' or 'key figure'. However, the notion of a practitioner is supposed to evoke the type of praxis that is linked to this particular kind of historiographical scholarship (cf. Zedelmaier, Mulsow 2001; Rau, Studt 2010; Fiska et al. 2012, 8). Furthermore, the word reflects the concrete activities carried out by these European scholars – whether they be epistemological, religious, political or material. Finally, the notion of a 'practitioner' allows for profiling. In other words it can help to answer questions regarding the identity of these 'figures' who, at a particular point in history, decided to write histories of religion.
- (ii) As with other contributions to this volume, which discuss Brahmanism or early Islamic history, I too prefer to limit myself to a specific (historical) context at a particular point in time. This is not merely due to limitations in scope, but also springs from methodological concerns. The historical research and writing, which we are investigating, can only be truly understood within its own social context. For the purposes of this contribution the said context is defined by early European modernity and by the Christian tradition (with a few references to Judaism and Islam, or, in other words, the important religious minorities at that time). The specific situation I am concerned with here is the sixteenth century schism within Christianity that followed the Reformation. On the one hand this rupture resulted in widespread religious pluralisation, while on the other hand the very historicisation of religion was, paradoxically, a result of confessional rivalries between religious groups occupying the same space (cf. Polman 1932; Rau 2002, 20–3).
- (iii) There is one last issue that needs to be addressed here: the separation of the formerly unified Catholic Church into various denominations, all of which considered themselves the true followers of Christ, was not the only reason behind the emergence of historiography in the early modern period. Other factors that played a role in this process of historicisation relate to the creation of states and the legitimization of rulers (cf. *Revista de Historiografía* 2014). Within the context of the religious wars in the second half of the sixteenth century, official French historiographers strove to reconstruct the unity of the kingdom and of the French nation (Grell 2006a, 139). Genealogical narratives are a typical product of this time. French origins were traced

back to Troy, Rome or Germania and sometimes even to Alexander the Great or various mythological gods or demi-gods (they appear in imperial chronicles – i.e. of the emperor Maximilian – as well as in town chronicles). The purpose of these attempts at genealogical reconstruction was not merely the justification of a particular religious history, but also the assertion of specific demands and rights in the context of regional allocation or demarcation. When, for example, a Free Imperial City within the Holy Roman Empire hoped to retain its independent position (Rau 2011), such genealogical claims could be used as supporting evidence for the city's special status.

Let us now return to the main topic at hand. Between the middle of the sixteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century a series of historical narratives appeared, for which the main motivation and inspiration can be traced back to inter-denominational rivalry. In these accounts theological arguments or narrative strategies were presented to demonstrate either the 'rightness' or the 'wrongness' of the Reformation. Therefore, history or historiography in this setting can be seen as an important means for the creation of a confessional group identity, an argument that has been made in a number of other studies over the course of the last decade (cf. Rau 2002; Benz 2003; Pohlig 2007; Wallnig et al. 2012). However, as earlier literature has claimed, this kind of historical writing can also not be classified as a purely Protestant phenomenon. In a monumental study Stefan Benz discussed a thousand Catholic historians from the early modern period, both in the Holy Roman Empire and under the Habsburg Monarchy (Benz 2003 und 2012). The work does not only investigate court historiographers and town chroniclers, but also looks at historians belonging to the monastic world, such as the mendicant friars and the Jesuits. In addition the volume addresses the contributions of selected female historians from convents and various religious orders for women in Switzerland and Southern Germany.

We have now arrived at the issue that lies at the heart of this chapter. Studies of confessionalisation in the aftermath of the Reformation, which have dominated the field of early modern history since the 1980s (at least in German speaking areas), have barely touched on the topic of early modern historiography. It is an established fact that historiography as a medium for the creation of confessional groups has rarely been the subject of that branch of research. The focus has generally been on other themes, such as the formulation of the various doctrinal confessions of the Christian fractions (Lutheranism, Calvinism and Catholicism). Alternatively previous scholars have investigated the professionalization of clerical administrative elites that took place in order to promote unique modes of confessional expression which helped to assert these group identities through art, literature and devotional practices (e.g. pilgrimages; hymns). Finally earlier

researchers have looked at the way in which distinct concepts of the ‘enemy’ (i. e. other Christian groups) came about and the effects these norm-generating strategies and attempts at unification had on the ‘mentalities’ of various confessional groups (cf. Kaufmann 2007). It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with the wide variety of critical literature on ‘confessionalisation’ or to discuss the hypothesis regarding the functional equivalence of the three main confessional systems in early modern history. Here my basic point is this: if one wishes to investigate which factors led to the formation of a particular confessional identity, one must ask what self-image a particular denomination has created for itself and what role the construction of the group’s ‘own history’ has played in the creation of their religious identity.

To reiterate, I am arguing that historiography is an important cultural tool to create a sense of purpose and identity. At the same time, this does not absolve scholars from the responsibility to carry out a more detailed analysis of the complex and multi-faceted relationship between historiography and religion. The connection between these two phenomena is not solely confined to ecclesiastical history since religious (or confessionalised) narratives crop up just as frequently in world histories (see below). Religious narratives can also be integrated into municipal histories, national histories and dynastic histories. Likewise, it should also be pointed out that historical accounts are hardly ever composed by religious communities. Some are written by individuals (in the Catholic context: priests, canons, members of religious orders; in the Protestant context: pastors, scholars, teachers, professors), while others were recorded by groups like municipal councils and their secretaries. In the latter case the residents of the city in question formed a community that lent a unified character to the religion or confession. Nonetheless, the question arises whether the entirety of the aforementioned residents did indeed share the same view, or whether the municipal secretaries at the time recorded their own, conveniently coherent, interpretation of the social situation at hand. What this consideration reveals is that the interconnections between identity, religion and history are multifaceted. If we want scholarly claims regarding the relationship between history and identity to be based on evidence, we, therefore, have to investigate the discourse within which historical narratives are produced, as well as the manner in which they were received – a point which cannot be addressed here in detail.

Finally we have to ask ourselves what is meant by the terms ‘history’ or ‘historiography’ before the nineteenth century. We must constantly remind ourselves that these phenomena neither constituted a clearly circumscribed field of knowledge (Völkel 2006, 196) nor an established discipline with clear rules and a clear-cut methodology at the time (cf. Grell 2006, 9; Rau, Studt 2010; Benz 2010, 360). History only gradually became (starting around 1650) established

as an academic discipline (at universities, colleges and grammar schools). The people who wrote histories were called ‘*historicus*’ or ‘*antiquarius*’, sometimes even ‘historiographer’ (in France the title ‘*historiographe du roi*’ was used). However, historiographers mostly had a primary employment or another source of income. Often they were secretaries, lawyers, clerics, schoolteachers or university professors.

2 Practitioners: Writers

After these rather sceptical and critical remarks, I would now like to make a more positive point in relation to our central question. By briefly portraying the life stories of a few selected historians and the basic outlines of their historical works I would like to illustrate the following points:

It should not be surprising that a considerable number of theologians (mainly preachers and canons) emerged as so-called ‘practitioners’ in early modern Europe. Frequently such practitioners were also secular scholars, who failed to conceal their confessional stance. Yet, it has long been acknowledged that this latter circumstance should by no means lead scholars to underestimate the methodology of early modern historiography. Similarly, it would be misleading to maintain the absolute division between the early modern period (characterized by salvation-based history) and the modern period (characterized by Enlightenment philosophy and claimed rationality or objectivity), that has previously been made within the discipline of the philosophy of history (from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel to Karl Löwith) and within the history of historiography (this forms the basic assumption of the first three volumes of the influential series *Geschichtsdiskurs*; cf. Küttler et al. 1993/1994/1997). As I will demonstrate historiography from the age of confessionalisation made an important contribution to the development of historical methodology either in the production of methodological treatises or at least by reflecting on argumentative strategies within their histories.

The following section of this chapter is dedicated to short portraits of five typical practitioners of early modern historiography: David Chytraeus (1530–1600), Christoph Pezel (1539–1604), Friedrich Lucae (1644–1708), Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704), and Claude-François Ménestrier (1631–1705). These historians who come from a range of confessional backgrounds, address various elements of an analytical matrix, which comprises aspects of rationality, interest groups, genres, media, and narratives. An exploration of particular working and writing practices will momentarily be put on the backburner. Chytraeus and Pezel have both composed treatises on the methodology of historical writing,

while simultaneously recording their own historical accounts. By employing dialogical style as an alternative to the usual chronological method with its linear time sequence, Lucae presents a distinct mode of historical presentation. The following two figures are both Frenchmen and Catholics, one a bishop, court preacher and tutor to the Dauphin, the other a Jesuit and a professor at Jesuit colleges. Bossuet writes a theological world history, Ménestrier a town history focused on antiquity.

2.1 David Chytraeus: theologian, Lutheran, methodologist

David Chytraeus, born in 1530 in Ingelfingen in the Hohenlohe, matriculated at the University of Tübingen. After completing his studies in the *artes liberales* he moved to the University of Wittenberg to attend lectures given by Luther and Melancthon. In 1561, he gained a doctoral degree in theology at the University of Rostock and became a professor of theology. Chytraeus became involved in the Reformation as a reformer of schools, universities and the Protestant Church. He became an active politician and finally also a historian. One example of Chytraeus' work is his history of the Augsburg Confession. Earlier he had given lectures in history at the University of Rostock where he had also written some manuscripts on methodology.

I shall now take a closer look at his work entitled *De lectione historiarum recte institvenda* (Chytraeus 1563). This instruction manual on how to read (and thus indirectly how to write) history opens with an explanation concerning the use of history in both public and private daily life. Gradually it then turns into a topographically oriented compendium of source material. By writing history, past events are preserved and handed down; history paints a picture of the world, in which readers can see their own reflection.¹ While historiography covers events from the beginning of time up to the present day, particular forms of historiographical presentation tend to apply to specific types of content. Howev-

¹ Cf. Chytraeus 1585, [B 3]: *Vt Totvm Hoc Pvlcerimum mundi theatrum, caelum, lumina, stellas, elementa, plantas, animantia, & nostros ipsorum animos ac corpora condidit Deus, & vult ea à nobis aspici, & impressa illis diuinae bonitatis & sapientia vestigia considerari: quae aspectio & consideratio perpetuorum aut certis vicibus renascentium mundi corporum, historia naturalis ab eruditis appellatur: ita etiam Rerum, quae in hoc mundi teatro, à Deo & hominibus illius incolis, animaduersione & memoria dignae, ab initio ad nostrum vsq[ue] aetatem, actae & gestae sunt seriem continuam in Historia mundi conseruauit: in qua, velut in tabula pictum, aut velut in excelsa specula collocati, oculis nostris subiectum, cernamus, & contemplemur, quicquid in orbe terrarium, inde vsq[ue] à prima creatione, memorabile gestum est. Cf. Bollbuck 2006, 374.*

er, Chytraeus's highly theoretical and methodologically sophisticated interpretation of history still does not forgo a salvation-based component. According to Chytraeus history needs to be written – and even altered – since many biblical prophecies have already been fulfilled and the Antichrist (who in the Protestant milieu is always identified with the Pope in Rome) has already appeared. For this reason, the historian should also include episodes taken from the Bible and stories about miracles in his account. As with previous and later writers, the Bible is the main source for descriptions of the dawn of time for Chytraeus. For him *historia sacra* should be an encomium of the Church and of divine wisdom.² Despite these opinions, Chytraeus should also be remembered for his ability to combine ancient mnemonic devices with a humanistic commitment to source materials. He conceptualised history as an academic and scientific subject alongside theology, ethics, politics and physics. He also bestowed an official history upon the North German Protestant movement. Finally, Chytraeus possibly found the best way to extract himself from the dilemma of having to choose between secular and sacred history by referring to the Bible as a historical source. He did not attempt to write a history of the world as such and, thus, left it up to his readers to decide whether the world had indeed begun with Adam and Eve's fall from grace. Instead, he placed several narratives of the origin of mankind alongside each other.

2.2 Christoph Pezel: theologian, Philippist, methodologist

Christoph Pezel's academic career unfolded in similar ways, although he belonged more to the Philippine branch of Lutheranism, i.e. to the followers of Philipp Melancthon. This choice in his confessional path once cost him his freedom and led to a two-year long period of incarceration in a dungeon in the city of Bautzen. Born in 1539, Pezel became a Professor of Theology and Ethics at the then recently opened institute of higher education in Bremen – which was reformed along Calvinistic lines –, after he had acted as a preacher for an extended period of time. In Pezel's account, the synthesis of Reformation and Humanism took a different course than in Chytraeus' writings, as he introduced a salvation-based historical system, which awarded particular importance to the secular role of history. Although he quotes ancient writers such as Polybius and Cicero, who referred to history as the *magistra vitae*, Pezel believes the real task of history is to present divine truth and to honour God, the founder of the Church, and guard-

² On *historia sacra* see the contribution of Reinhard Kratz in this volume.

ian of all political order.³ In his historical narrative Pezel is on the quest for the truth of salvation and in his *Mellificium historicum, complectens historiam trium monarchiarum* (Pezel 1610), he integrates world history to continue the work of Johannes Carion and Melanchthon in order to ultimately create a historical scheme of salvation.⁴ This is why history and theology are closely connected for Pezel. While in his eyes the study of history should above all else serve to recognize the truth of the salvation story that he takes for granted, he still makes a distinction between what has happened and the actual historical account:⁵ we need to recognize what actually happens, if we then want to conscientiously describe the events to praise the glory of God.

2.3 Friedrich Lichtstern: preacher, Reformist, dialogist

Whenever a historical narrative of the world, a nation or a town is set up in a chronological order, the events are given temporal value. At this point, other forms of presentation come into play so that alternative types of description are now at the forefront. The dialogue form is one possible substitute for conventional annals by which historical events are narrated to give lasting value to key events, and thus create specific group identities. This historical format is illustrated by Friedrich Lucae's (the Latin name for Lichtstern) *Schlesische Fürsten-Krone* (*The Crown of the Silesian Princes*). Lichtstern was born in 1644 in Brieg in the principality of Silesia. He studied in Heidelberg, lived in the Netherlands for some time and finally moved to Frankfurt on the Oder. After returning to his hometown Brieg, he became a court preacher. However, when the duke (Christian von Liegnitz and Brieg) died, there arose the sudden danger of the Emperor

3 Cf. Pezel 1568, BI: *Sed scopum ultimum & summum, qui praecipuè spectandus, & collimandus est accuratè eum uterq' praeterijt. Ad alium enim finem longè potiore & maiorem omnis historiarum lectio referenda est: Nimirum ad Deum ipsum, conditorem Ecclesiae, & authorem ac custodem ordinis politici, & ad societatem communem generis humani.*

4 This work was supplemented by Lampadius with contemporary history and a prognostication of the future in 1626. It was only then that the vision became apocalyptic; this is connected with West European struggles for faith and for freedom, which resulted in an apocalyptic awareness in the Reformed circles.

5 Cf. Pezel 1568 (conclusion): *Agnoscamus ergo has causas, & pro tanto beneficio Deo reuerenter gratias agamus, & eo rectè utamur, Quod fiet, si diligenter historias euoluerimus, & ad usum, Ecclesiae & communi uitae necessarium, ad Illustrandam ac tuendam, non opprimendam ueritatem coelestem, ad refutandos errores perniciosos, damnatos iudicio ueteris Ecclesiae, ad iuuanda & instruenda, non turbanda aut impedienda factiosorum more, recta, iusta & salutaria consilia gubernationis contulerimus.*

‘taking over’⁶ the principality, which would in all likelihood have resulted in the withdrawal of financial support for the reformed (Calvinistic) court chapel. Therefore Lucae moved to Kassel where he became a court preacher (1684).

In his chosen exile Lucae wrote a history of Silesia in twenty discourses. In concrete terms, this work comprises fictitious dialogues between two speakers called Ehrenfels and Warenschild respectively. Lucae regarded his ‘discourses’ as probable rather than ‘true’ events. He let his dialogue participants speak for themselves and refrained from inserting his own narrator voice into the discussion. The geographical and cultural framework of Lucae’s dialogues is the state of Silesia. The highest level of the structural hierarchy in his work consists of basic themes (such as names, rulers, religion, coinage and customs etc.), whereas chronology – after topics and geography – is only important for the third level of said hierarchy. The key dates in his chronology of religious events include the years 962 (the introduction of Christianity in Silesia), 1517 (the Reformation) and, most importantly, 1618 (the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War and the Battle of the White Mountain that represented a disastrous turning point in the history of the Silesian Lutherans and the Reformed churches).⁷ Nonetheless, the dialogue form tends to be less authoritarian than chronicle-based state and world history. Since Lucae’s history does not start with the beginning of the world at creation, but instead with the first documentary reference to the state of Silesia, historical references to salvation are omitted. Nor is the course of events presented in a teleological fashion as predestined and directed towards the end of time (this circumstance can likely be ascribed to the influence of the jurist and political philosopher Samuel Pufendorf, whose lectures Lucae had attended in Heidelberg, and to the teachings of the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, with whom he had corresponded on a regular basis).

2.4 Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet: bishop, Catholic, world historian

However, the world history model had not been universally abandoned, although it was subject to severe criticism in the state in the sixteenth century (Bodin 1566) and, in fact, achieved new popularity within German Protestantism. In the seventeenth century a group of erudite monks and clerics rose to promi-

⁶ *Einziehen* in the German original version.

⁷ The presentation of these events stems from an unambiguously confessional perspective – in this case, from the reformed point of view.

nence as writers of history within the world of French scholarship. One of these new historians was Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. Born in 1627 in Dijon, he chose the priestly vocation at an early age and attended the Collège des Godrans, a classical school run by the Jesuits of Dijon. After various positions in Metz and Paris, he became Bishop of Condom in the Gascoigne region. Subsequently he was summoned by Louis XIV to become the tutor to the prince. He was well known as a pulpit preacher and as an opponent of Calvinism (in this capacity he took on an active role in the abrogation of the Edict of Nantes). He was equally opposed to Jansenism and Quietism, but was also aware of his importance as a historian and political advisor (in 1697 he was nominated as a member of the Council of State).

His work entitled *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (*Treatise on the History of the World*), a brief history of the world from Adam and Eve to Charlemagne, was initially written for the benefit of the royal heir, but then became popular among the wider public (Bossuet 1681). The remaining part of Bossuet's world history, from Charlemagne onwards, was going to appear in a continuation but was left incomplete (cf. Sommer 2006). The work was divided into three parts: At the beginning stood an overview of the sequence of epochs, followed by 'continuations' or 'developments' (*suites*) of religion and the empires as the two structural principles behind every world history. The chapter on religion is seen as a history of Christianity and as the history of God's revelation. In the final chapter Bossuet demonstrates how God uses empires to preserve His people – particularly in relation to cases of divine punishment – as well as to ensure the eternal duration of the Christian faith. In every event he sees the will of God at work whose final aim is the spread of Christianity. Theology thus becomes so intertwined with history that history's supernatural purpose embraces all possible natural causes. Similarly, secular powers are subordinated to God's providence with the result that the destiny of empires lies in the fulfilment of God's plan.

This all-embracing Christian world history is also best understood in conjunction with political theories based on the Bible, such as the work entitled *Politique tirée des propres paroles de l'Écriture Sainte*. This account was written for the Dauphin, as it presents the absolute power of his father Louis as divinely ordained and hence as an inalienable right (Bossuet 1710). Bossuet's main concern was to reveal to the prince the significance of history, to present history as actual and virtual experience, so that he could attain the necessary knowledge and virtues for becoming a king. However, this possibility was never realized because the Dauphin did not outlive his father. Bossuet's work appeared in several editions and achieved considerable success. However, this does by no means imply that every French historian followed his model of history.

2.5 Claude-François Ménéstrier: Jesuit, Catholic, town chronicler

Another scholar of significance is Claude-François Ménéstrier. Ménéstrier, born in 1631 in Lyon, was a member of the Society of Jesus. He worked as a professor in several of their colleges (Chambéry, Vienne/Isère, Grenoble, Lyon), was an active organizer of public spectacles and acted as the director of several festivities (entries of princes, marriages, Te Deums and so forth). In 1667 he became the librarian of the Collège de la Trinité, where he was not only responsible for the books, but also for the cabinet of antiquities and medals. Based on information found on medals, emblems and armories, as well as in inscriptions and other objects he wrote a history of the reign of Louis XIV and was henceforward considered one of the greatest authorities on heraldry of his time. Ménéstrier must have already started to work on producing a history of his hometown upon the city's very foundation in the 1660s (cf. Bruyère 2009, 221). However, he only finished the first volume after moving to Paris in 1670, where he also worked as a preacher (cf. Ménéstrier 1696). As the oeuvre ends in the late middle ages, he could not treat the confessional divide. Still, Ménéstrier had clearly conceptualized the difference between historiography and religion. As an agent of (late) humanism he had no scruples to quote ancient, often pagan sources in order to reconstruct the early age of the city of Lyon. As an antiquarian he collected all types of sources (written sources and archaeological findings) and included them in the annex of his *Histoire civile*, which was dedicated to the city council, as proofs ('preuves').

He states in the preface to his work that both religion and history aim at conveying the truth. Their distinct character lies in the fact that religion is eternal truth, whereas history depends on the human word and thus belongs to the realm of the probable. Human reason is less certain, as histories can only be based on chronicles, which have been written by human beings and then been handed down, and on monuments that have survived the ravages of time. A historian has to unravel the complex web of threads woven by tradition and arrange them according to his best knowledge.⁸ The divine truth is certain, unchangeable

⁸ Cf. Ménéstrier 1696, preface, 1: *Il en est presque de l'Histoire comme de la Religion, puisque l'une & l'autre se propose de représenter aux Hommes la Vérité, que la Raison, qui fait leur Caractère, les porte naturellement à rechercher. Il est vray que la Religion a cet avantage sur l'Histoire, qu'elle sûre de la Vérité qu'elle propose; puisque c'est la Vérité divine, Vérité inalterable qui subsistera éternellement, & qui est toujours la même, de quelques nuages qu'elle soit enveloppée, & de quelques artifices que l'on se serve pour tâcher de la déguiser. Au contraire la Vérité que l'Histoire fait profession de chercher, dépend d'une foy humaine, si peu sûre en ses raisonnements, que S. Pierre ne donne point d'autre nom à nos foibles connoissances que celui de Doctes Fables, sembl-*

and eternal; the only access to this truth is through sources whose authors were blessed with divine revelation. Keeping in line with these insights there are two types of truth that coexist in the world. 'Religion' in this sense should not be confused with the history of the Church, which Ménestrier also intended to write for Lyon. He planned to begin his account with Saint Pothin, the first bishop of Lyon, and hoped to paint a picture of the Church and the opulence that characterized it up to the seventeenth century (cf. Bruyère 2009, 225). Unfortunately, the manuscript was never delivered to a printing press.

3 Conclusion

To conclude I would like to underscore a demand made by scholars at the 2012 research conference in Norrköping, Sweden, to include the historiographical aspect in the discipline of the History of Religions. If we do not conduct further investigations in this area, we would have to accept the widespread or at first sight obvious assumption that religious groups and their practices are timeless and that religious communities are immune to any form of historicization. Not only do religious groups undergo historical changes but these changes are often accompanied by a historical self-consciousness, which appears in different forms and to different degrees of intensity.

Similarly we should extend the history of historiography to take into account the contribution of religious groups from the early modern period, including those of religious orders (particularly in the context of confessional struggle). Examples of such groups include the well-studied Benedictine monks of the Congregation of St. Maur, the Jesuits and other erudite clerics (cf. Kriegel 1988; Hurel 2003; Benz 2003; Sawilla 2009; Wallnig et al. 2012). These historiographical explorations represent a highly complex area of scholarship since each confession has played its own part in the development of historical consciousness. Some groups collected information on the lives of saints, others wrote annual reports or annals of their own order or congregation. Again others referred to the apostolic age in early Christianity (as the 'golden age') and a few communities even developed historical-critical methods. Only if we take these developments into consideration can we gain differentiated insight into the formation of history,

ables à ces fictions de la Poësie qui cherchent plutôt le vraysemblable que le vray: parce que leur but est de plaire en instruisant, & de s'éloigner autant qu'elles peuvent de cette severe Philosophie, qui ne considere les détours ingénieux de la Poësie, que comme des déguisements, qui offensent la vérité sous pretexte de la parler.

in Western, European, Christian milieus, as an academic subject and into the origin of methodologies within their specific ‘social’ contexts.

From this we can retain that historiography in the (European) confessional age has the following five implications:

- (i) Like in previous times, historians in this day and age still considered history a product of God’s will. They saw his hand at work in all events in both an explicit and an implicit way (superhuman power as agent).
- (ii) History was broadly interpreted within the paradigm of salvation and is thus often narrated according to a teleological progression.
- (iii) However, the former circumstance does in no way imply that the historian’s view of the past was blocked out in any way.
- (iv) Historical writing could sometimes reflect very pragmatic interests (e.g. legal or political concerns) and these interests did not necessarily have to take recourse to biblical prophecies or transcendent arguments.
- (v) Finally, along with the monastic enlightenment that took place around 1700, the confessional debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also contributed to the development of historiographical methodology and created a new awareness of the importance of historical sources, historical evidence and historiographical narratives.

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Martin Mulsow

Impartiality, individualisation, and the historiography of religion: Tobias Pfanner on the rituals of the Ancient Church

1 Impartiality

The emergence of impartiality as a habitus in the seventeenth century was a complex process, which was comprised of various elements, such as the argumentation *in utramquem partem*, religious tolerance, eclecticism, literary practices like the inversion of perspectives, the separation of the spheres of politics, religion, and morality, philological criticism and the discarding of the theological *elenchus* (cf. Traninger, Murphy 2013; Gierl 1997). During this time ‘*unpartheyisch*’ grew to become a catchword. It was most prominently used in Gottfried Arnold’s 1699 *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*, a volume that tries to give an account of Church history not determined by the criteria of dogmatics but only by the authenticity of religious search (Arnold 1699/1700). Here one can already see that impartiality could – and indeed was – linked to religious individualisation. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that certain virtues – especially epistemic virtues – play a decisive role in the transformation of a dogmatic historiography into an unbiased, impartial, detached one. Moral qualities such as authenticity, truthfulness and justice epistemically replace a simple statement of ‘the truth’, which encapsulates and reflects the opinions shared by the mainstream and, especially, the ruling elites. Contemporary orthodoxy called this process ‘indifferentism’, because the usual normative criteria were discarded (cf. Gierl 1997; Mulsow 2003; Sdzuj 2008). Nonetheless, recent philosophical developments like the ‘virtue epistemology’ popularised by Ernest Sosa, Linda Zagzebsky and others provide us with a much better understanding of what happened during this difficult transformation (cf. Baehr 2011).

As I have mentioned previously, the assumption I make is that impartiality and religious individualisation worked hand in hand throughout, but particularly, in the latter half of the seventeenth century. One crucial reason for this development lies in the fact that impartiality almost necessarily leads one to leave behind the religious consensus and mainstream and walk less well-trodden paths. Simultaneously, however, the experience of individualised religiosity calls for a revision of the historiographical canon. In this context the following question prominently arises: What type of environment made this kind of development

possible? In early modern Europe one specific environment conducive to the marriage of impartiality and religious individualisation was the retreat from urban centers to small villages, remote areas protected by local patrons, or liminal places like border towns. Gottfried Arnold left the university of Gießen and ended up becoming a minister in the small town of Perleberg in Brandenburg. Arnold's friend Johann Wilhelm Petersen retreated from Lüneburg to an estate near Magdeburg.¹ Yet, there was another, more risky environment that allowed for the emergence of impartiality: the court. This meant to stay at the very center of power and to be out on a limb, so that church authorities would not dare to attack you. In the following I will explore such a case. I will investigate the impartiality and religious individualisation of Tobias Pfanner around 1700. Pfanner (1641–1716) was a lawyer, historian, archivist and 'Hofrat' at the court of Saxe-Gotha (the modern the state of Thuringia, which was the strongest power in the region) (cf. Büchsel 2011; Friedrich 2013; Mulsow forthcoming).

Pfanner was born in Augsburg in 1641 as the son of protestant emigrants from Austria. Hence, his family had traditionally had a strong religious background. He built a career as a lawyer and historian, but was evidently always a theologian at heart as he published works on Church history, especially in the field of patristics throughout his entire life. After Pfanner had completed his daily work concerning the juridical-historical problems of treatises or the hereditary titles of the Gotha dynasty with respect to surrounding territories, he put his legal reference volumes aside and dove into his perusal of the Church fathers and Greek philosophers.

The puzzling thing is that Pfanner's Church historical and theological books are not at all typical for the Lutheran orthodoxy of his day. Although the phalanx of court theologians of Saxe-Gotha considered itself the keeper of the seal of the Reformation and, hence, the foremost authority on religious orthodoxy (demonstrated by their recruitment of arch orthodox theologians such as Feustking in 1712 and Cyprian in 1713), it was Pfanner, an exceptionally learned and prolific jurist, who published a thick tome on rather unusual Church historical topics every other year.² His first major work, *Systema theologiae gentilis purioris*, appeared in 1679, a few years after he joined the Gotha court (Pfanner 1679). The book expressed high esteem for the virtues and thought of the ancient pagans. Moreover, it referenced the concept of a 'theologia purior' that had been developed by Calvinists in Leiden not long before, in order to describe a kind of the-

1 On Arnold, see Blaufuß, Niewöhner 1995, and Mißfeldt 2011; on Petersen, see Matthias 1993 and Luft 1994.

2 On Gotha's religious policy see Westphal 2007.

ology, which was based on the two pillars of reason and tradition.³ Pfanner did not rely on faith alone (*sola fide*), nor Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*), nor the doctrine of justification (which he depreciated), but rather on the Catholic-sounding principles of reason and tradition, coupled with a Calvinist sounding title in an work that was published in Basle, not Gotha.⁴ The main idea of the book was similar to that developed in the *Demonstratio evangelica* written by the French Catholic bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet and published in the same year (Huet 1679; cf. Shelford 2007). However, Pfanner still built his career in Gotha

3 Cf. Pfanner 1679, 518 (the last sentence of the book): *Pariter et nos, ut ingenue fateamur, non omnem de Ethnicorum salute spem projecimus, quam, ratione nobis incognita, Dei miseratione diligentissime caventis, ne ex cultoribus suis quispiam sibi periret, indipisci potuere; at cum id conjectura tantum nitatur, nullis certis argumentis suffulta, merito suspiciones, ut sic loquar, nostras, perspicuis divinatorum Librorum verbis posthabemus, Dei, si quid miseris, nobis inscientibus, indulgere velit, arbitrio clementiaeque committentes, cujus solius de omnium nostrum salute atque exitio notio atque potestatis est.*

4 For the Calvinist origins, see Polyander a Kerckhoven 1625/1642. For the Catholic view, see the letter by the Catholic theologian and politician Johann Friedrich Karg von Bebenburg to Tobias Pfanner, Würzburg 25.10. 1679, FB Gotha Chart A 420, fol. 134r-v: *Nihil mihi gratius transmitti poterat à Donatione Tua, quam praelectum à me jam nuper, beneficio Clementissimi Principis mei, Systema [...] è puriore Gentilium Theologia depromptum tessellate Scribendi genere, quod sub primum illico intuitum magnam veterum Philosophorum Bibliothecam legenti exponit. Quamvis autem ea omnia, quatenus res divinas concernunt, et purius et illustrius è voluminibus Sacrae Scripturae Sanctoremque Patrum hauriri posse in propatulo sit, unde et ab ipsemet Pythagorae, Platone, Aristotele, ac aliis sive Graecis, sive Chaldaeis dogmata Divina homini naturali adaptantibus furtire subducta fuerunt, cum Pentateuchum Saltem jam ante Persarum Imperium constet in linguam Graecam translatum; multasque peregrinations à Graecis in Aegyptum discendi gratia Susceptas fuisse: duplex est tamen fructus, quem è doctissimo Systemate Tuo perceptum iri profiteor, primo quidem denudatam tot involueris antiquorum Scientiam, qui Sua olim tam religiose celaverant; Tum vero insignem Christianae Religionis nostrae cum lumine naturae consensum, jam tum ab Origene, et apud S. Gregorium Thaumaturgum videre est, prae oraculis habitum, è quo memini à P. Honorato Fabri // non dudum argumentum pro veritate Catholicae Religionis nostrae, in libello (ni fallor) Dilingae, vel Augustae Vindelicorum impresso, Romae solum à me viso, fuisse desumptum. Unde mihi spes non levis consurgit, admovendas confestim à Te manus consecratio operi, quatenus è Religionibus hodie in Imperio Romano vigentibus recte rationi conformior, adeo inter Theologias etiam Christianas purior sit, Catholica, an vestra, an illa Reformatorum? Nec sine fructu ingenti: cum enim nec in verbis, nec in Sensu Scripturae ac Patrum una nimes simus, adeo ut in Suavissimis tuis ad Pacificas cogitationes meas repositis asservare non dubites, dissidia Religionum nostrarum nunquam ex toto abolenda videri: ad eam non vane provocari posse existimo, quae una est in omnibus, rectam rationem, non quasi fidei nostrae mysteria supra eandem non posit, quam rectae rationi adversam noverimus. Age igitur Vir eruditissime, non Gentiles duntaxat, sed et Christiadas vindica, aut citra acerbitatem indica Saltem, more Tuo, quid videtur praestari hac in re utiliter posse; meque Tui amantissimum redamare perge, et vale. Datum Herbipoli in Castro Montis Mariana 25. 8bris 1679.*

as a court jurist and not as a theologian. It appears that he was so valuable to the duke that the latter turned a blind eye to his peculiar religious thinking.

2 Beyond court duties

Nonetheless, the question remains whether Pfanner's impartiality – the fact that he had a mind of his own –, affected his official work as well. Research seems to reveal that it did. Pfanner's definition of impartiality was: 'to face only truth, and not to get distracted or alienated by any emotion, intention or cause'.⁵ This attitude is also evident to his historical analysis and his juridical expertise. When Johann Ernst, duke of Saxe-Saalfeld, brother of the Gotha duke Friedrich I. commissioned Pfanner to draw up an assessment of patterns of future succession in the Ernestine dynasty, the latter did not write the type of account Johann Ernst wanted, but instead, composed a plea for primogeniture, the policy which Friedrich I. favored. Even when Pfanner was in the service of Friedrich himself, his juridical reports from the archives and his historical books – for instance an account of the peace of Westphalia – produced a nuanced view (cf. Pfanner 1679a). It is possible that this earned Pfanner some criticism from his employer, but if so, it was merely a tacit one. Even after 1699, when Pfanner, who did not enjoy the ostentatious court life, was called away from his workplace in the dusty Weimar archive to Gotha, and received fewer and fewer official assignments, he was never officially dismissed. Rather, he was gradually marginalised as a scholar.

3 The difficulty to distinguish

Apparently Pfanner drew his self-confidence – and self-confidence is a necessary precondition for epistemic virtue – from the excellence of his learned skills and scholarship. In the eyes of other scholars his high authority was grounded in the quality of his work, as well as in his status as a *Gotha Hofrat*. The theological books he wrote betray great curiosity in subjects like piety, penance, and even

5 Cf. Pfanner 1701, 1: 'Es hat mir zwar sofort im ersten Anblick und auff der Schwelle die inscription der unpartheilichen Historie, nur aber deswegen / nicht angestanden / weilen ich davor gehalten / daß der Titul der Historie, und also ipsa nominis professio die qualität der Unpartheylichkeit schon von selbst mit sich bringe / als deren vornehmste und wesentliche Eigenschafft ist / in recensirung der Geschichte auff die Wahrheit mit unverwandten Augen zu sehen / und von solchem Zweck durch keinerley affect, Absicht oder Ursach / wie selbige auch seyn möge / einigermaßen sich divertiren / und abwendig machen zu lassen'.

castigation and rigorous moral life. Therefore, one is inclined to pigeonhole Pfanner as an early ‘pietist’. This seems to be confirmed by Pfanner’s contact with August Hermann Francke and his intense and amicable correspondence with the aforementioned radical pietist Gottfried Arnold. In addition, several of his theological works are dedicated to persons of outstanding religious piety, such as Ämilie Juliane in Rudolstadt or Henriette Katharina von Gersdorff, grandmother of count Zinzendorff (cf. Pfanner 1711 [dedicated to Ämilie Juliane]; id. 1694/95, vol. II [dedicated to Henriette Katharina von Gersdorff]). But things are much more complicated.

Pfanner was never really part of the pietist movement – his name is absent from histories of pietism. His exchange with Arnold was not only friendly, but also critical. Pfanner published his *Unpartheisches Bedencken* against Arnold precisely because they shared many opinions and intentions. Like Arnold, Pfanner extensively explored and analyzed the history of the early Church because of his discontent with the contemporary establishment. Both men were ardent promoters of impartiality. Yet, unlike Arnold, Pfanner did not automatically side with the suppressed sects of the Church, the Arians, Donatists or spiritualists. He accused Arnold of not being impartial enough, and at times of not being impartial at all (cf. Pfanner 1701).

In contrast, Pfanner wrote his *Unpartheyische Bedencken* in order to really find out whether or not a religious thinker could succeed in promoting true piety. In 1707, for instance, at a time when Pfanner almost worked in total isolation in his study at home in Gotha, and never left his house or even his bed – yet still retained the authority of a *Hofrat* – he wrote *Unpartheyische Bedencken* about the case of Johann Georg Rosenbach, a Franconian spurrier who prophesised, uttered radical religious thoughts and was fiercely attacked by the Lutheran church as a result (cf. Weigelt 2001, 135–7). Pfanner took this case very seriously, considered the pros and cons at length and in the end defended this particular religious individualist.

Perhaps it was the scrupulousness and open-mindedness that Pfanner displayed, the fact that he never simply took one side or the other, that provides the key to understanding the crucial term ‘*geistliche Anfechtungen*’ (‘spiritual temptations’), which has been used by contemporaries to describe Pfanner’s state of mind.⁶ To be sure, he was of melancholic temperament, perhaps, in

⁶ Cf. Rathlev et al. 1743, 220f.: ‘Den einzigen berühmten Hofrat Tobias Pfanner konnte er niemals zu sehn und zu sprechen bekommen, ohnerachte er fast alle Woche in seinem Hause etwas zu bestellen hatte. Dieser Mann, der in hohen geistlichen Anfechtungen steckte, lag beständig zu Bette, ließ auch niemand vor sich, ohne den Herrn Nitsch und wenige andere, zu welchen er Vertrauen hatte, daß er sein Herz mit Thränen ausschütten konnte’. see also Jöcher 1750,

modern terms, even depressed, but this psychological diagnosis does not help us very much.⁷ Rather, Pfanner struggled with the total indeterminacy of the outcome of his investigations in each and every case. In 1708 the *Unschuldige Nachrichten* – the main public voice of Lutheran Orthodoxy – dared to attack him because he sided with Rosenbach. The Halle Pietist Joachim Lange defended him (cf. *Auctores varii* 1708; see also Pfanner 1708). However, it seems doubtful to me that this party struggle would have mattered very much to Pfanner. Instead, what mattered to him was the difficulty in detecting real piety. In the preface of his *Unpartheyische Bedenken* he wrote that in an age of dissimulation it was almost impossible to distinguish impious and godless people who were just pretending to be pious, and those who simply imagined they were communicating with God, from the truly pious. The term he chose to describe this specific situation is ‘angustien’, ‘anxiousness’, ‘hardship’, ‘constriction’.⁸ It is at once a logical dilemma and a psychological state.

1485 f.: ‘[Pfanner had] in der Religion einige besondere Principia, erwies sich in Abwartung des öffentlichen Gottesdienstes, Beicht- und Abendmahlgehen nicht gar zu emsig, war aber von Jugend auf vielfältig mit Melancholey und innerlichen Anfechtungen geplaget’.

7 On seventeenth century religious melancholy see Koch 1992 and Steiger 1996.

8 Cf. Pfanner 1707, 3 f.: ‘Es ist die rechtschaffene Pietet solchen angustien unterworfen / daß sie entweder von denen Gottlosen / oder auch von solchen Leuten / welche sich in diese Claß gar nicht bringen lassen wollen / sondern vielmehr sich kräftiglich einbilden / sie meinten es gut mit Gott / und thäten ihm einen Dienst daran / verfolgt / von denen Scheinheiligen aber zu ihrer Verstell- und Beschönung gemißbraucht wird / und also von allen Seiten her ihre Bedrängniß oder andere Anfechtung leiden muß / daß sie nemblich entweder ex professo und unverhohlen gehasset / gedrückt / verjagt / oder doch quocumque animo geängstigt / oder auch (so etwa das ärgste ist) durch und über diejenigen / welche den Schein der Gottseligkeit haben / ihre Krafft aber verleugnen / dergestalt profaniret und zugerichtet wird / daß oftmahls unmöglich / eine von der anderen zu distinguiren / sondern sie darüber / weil dergleichen Verstellung theils so gemein / theils so geschickt eingerichtet ist / allem Gespött / Verachtung und Haß / welchen die Scheinheiligkeit verdienet / sich exponiret sehen muß / indeme eine der andern iezuweilen so gleich siehet / daß man Zeit und Arbeit / noch vielmehr ein besonderes Licht bedarf / auf den Grund und Gewißheit / ob es eine wahrhaftige oder angestellte Pietet sey / zukommen; wie es dann eben daher so weit mit der unschuldigen Pietets-Geflissenheit gerathen / daß es nunmehr von nöthen seyn will / diejenige / so zu einem sinceren Christenthum gebracht und angeführt werden sollen / zu erinnern / von der wahren Gottseeligkeit darüber / daß andere so eine affectirte Figur davon machen / sich nicht abwendig und zurücke stossen zulassen’.

On the art of dissimulation see e.g. Geitner 1992.

4 Ritual in Protestantism

But how did Pfanner develop his own idiosyncratic, individualised profile as a scholar? What kinds of topics did he choose when he was not busy passing judgment on others but, rather, forging his path through the jungle of Church history?⁹ He became increasingly interested in ritual. Ritual is an unlikely topic for Protestants and has much more frequently been a subject of interest for Catholics. Scholars from Baronio to Casali have written about early Christian ceremonies and liturgy (cf. Baronio 1588–93; Casali 1644 and 1647). However, Pfanner adopted a slightly different approach and started his investigation of ritual with a publication on gifts and miraculous donations in the old Church entitled *De charismatibus sive donis miraculosis antiquae ecclesiae* (Pfanner 1680). He then continued his work by authoring a large volume on the preparations for adult baptism in antiquity, which he called *De catechumenis antiquae ecclesiae* (Pfanner 1688), and another two-volume opus named *Observationes ecclesiasticae*. The latter dealt with those objects or events that were forbidden among the early Christians, such as games, anointing, coronation or sacrifices (Pfanner 1694/95). Why, we have to ask ourselves, did Pfanner choose these outlandish themes?

The answer to this question is not a simple one. Like Gottfried Arnold, who cited his findings, Pfanner was attracted to early Christianity because he was under the impression that the Church of his own time – the post-Westphalian Church – was corrupt and only home to a small number of truly pious Christians. Therefore, he thought a normative perspective on original uncorrupted Christianity to be appropriate. However, Pfanner was far too good a scholar to embark on such an intellectual journey naively. Like Antonius van Dale (whom Pfanner, of course, did not cite) who argued against modern, self-acclaimed prophets by pointing out that oracles had ceased to exist soon after Christ, Pfanner emphasised that the ‘charismata’ had disappeared after they had fulfilled their temporally limited function of converting pagans (cf. Pfanner 1680, chapter VII; van Dale 1700).¹⁰ One could not, like Luther as late as the sixteenth century, apply the term to Church offices. In his treatise on the subject Pfanner makes a similar argument regarding the catechumenate. He starts his analysis with a chapter ‘On ecclesiastical ceremonies in general’. According to Pfanner, Church rites had their origin in the Mosaic rites, introduced by God for particular purposes. One is reminded of John Spencer’s well-known book on Jewish ceremonial laws,

⁹ On the early modern historiography of religion see Wallnig, Stockinger, Peper 2012.

¹⁰ On these debates see Ossa-Richardson 2013.

which is again not cited since Pfanner, as he usually refrained from citing literature from his own time (Pfanner 1688, 1f.; Spencer 1685). Pfanner goes on to explain that after the appearance of Christ a new law was introduced and much fewer outward ceremonies were necessary, since there was inward piety. All rites were valid only insofar as they were accompanied by devoutness – as Pfanner states, citing the medieval churchman Radulphus Tungrensis, as well as, especially, the Church father Tertullian. However, Pfanner points out that in later times society became more luxuriant (*luxuriavere*) and that this type of corruption also entered the Church (Pfanner 1688, 5). At heart Pfanner's books on early Church rites may, thus, contain oblique criticism. Whether this can be interpreted as an inclination to 'pietism', however, is unclear. One should not forget that piety and devoutness were features of Gotha's own tradition since Ernest 'the pious' and Johann Gerhard – within orthodoxy, so to speak.¹¹

5 A 'Jansenist' historiography?

Perhaps 'pietism' also represents too narrow a perspective in the geographical sense and, as a result, we may have to broaden our scope. If we consider Pfanner's historiography on early Christian ritual and penance in combination with his 'melancholic' habit, we might ask if they betray some influences of Jansenism. From the times of Saint-Cyran onwards, permanent doubt and penitence are the key to a real Christian life in Jansenism (cf. Sainte-Beuve 1840–1859; Baustert 2010; Lehmann et al. 2002). No easy hope of being the recipient of divine grace is allowed, and the believer can never be sure if he or she will be, or has really been, saved. The attitude of *contritio* ('contrition', *Zerknirschung*) is an essential aspect of the *habitus* in this respect (cf. Asmussen et al. 1980). Within the framework of quietism in the late seventeenth century this *habitus* grew further into a sort of self-annihilation of the believer. This not only served as a precondition for a morally good life, but also for good scholarship. Pierre Poiret defines *eruditio solida* as the insight into the total incapacity of human cognition and people's complete dependency on God (Poiret 1694).

What does all of this mean for historiography? If Pfanner's *geistliche Anfechtungen* – his 'spiritual temptations' – are the expression of a quasi-Jansenist and Quietist contrition, then his historiography on rituals, liturgy and penance must originate from his roots in these traditions. Hence, we should set out to compare Jansenist historiography of the Ancient Church – by looking at scholars such as

11 On Ernest I of Saxe-Gotha see Albrecht-Birkner 2001.

Sebastien Le Nain de Tillement (cf. Neveu 1966) – with Pfanner’s own works and take the entire European debate on Church fathers, rituals and true piety into account (cf. Quantin 2009). Pfanner had a wide intellectual horizon, and we can give him credit for having been well versed in these debates.

6 Religious individualisation

Let me conclude. We may understand religious individualisation as a deviation from expected religious behavior and an increase of individual agency with respect to the norms of the religious community (cf. e.g. Rüpke 2011). Viewed from this perspective, we can find in Pfanner’s life story a case of individualisation at court, a place that was close to the center of power but simultaneously remote from direct ecclesiastical hierarchy. His individualised religion and scholarship became possible through his shift from theological dogma to piety (in the religious sphere) and impartiality (in the intellectual sphere). Combined, these religious and epistemic virtues made a peculiar and prolific historiography possible, which was very different from the usual Lutheran books of his time. Pfanner focused his work on rituals of the early Christian Church displaying an attitude of stark ambivalence: on the one hand these rituals contained aspects and norms of uncorrupted piety that could have been the basis of possible moral amelioration in his own time, while, on the other hand, they also held the seeds of all later corruption and impious ceremonialism. I have suggested that this attitude may be close to contemporary Jansenist and Quietist ideals. Focusing attention on Pfanner’s own peculiar concepts such as *angustien* or *morositas*, but also *theologia purior*, may help us to find an adequate description of his position, beyond the far too simplistic opposition of ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘pietism’. His impartiality, in any case, lies at the core of his self-understanding.

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Hannah Schneider

‘The gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it’: The narrative of the victorious Church in French Church histories of the nineteenth century

In 1778–1790 Antoine-Henri de Bérault-Bercastel published a *Histoire de l’Église* which he dedicated to his King, Louis XVI, integrating him with a long lineage of illustrious French monarchs: ‘Sire, it is to the successor of Clovis, of Charlemagne and Saint Louis, it is to the oldest son of the Church that it is right to present this history’. Further on, he expresses the hope that his readers will imitate the King ‘to fight the enemies of faith and morals’.¹ In 1820 the book was republished with some minor modifications and a chronological update. However, the first volume – and the same can be said in 1829 and 1835 when the book is edited again – still contained that dedicatory letter to the King. The letter is not dated and the King is still only referred to as ‘Sire’, only now it is the reign of Louis XVIII (and respectively Charles X and Louis-Philippe for the later editions). Another contemporary example: in 1787 Charles François Lhomond published a Church history for young people. The title can be translated as follows: *An abridged history of the Church in which one sets out its combats and victories at the times of persecutions, heresies and scandals and where one proves that its conservation is a work of the divine, and its establishing, to be used as a continuation of the History of the Bible* (Lhomond 1787). The introduction enumerates three dangers against which the Church has successfully defended itself throughout history: the persecutors of the first three centuries, the heretics and the laxity of the faithful and the clerics. With a third edition in 1801 that reproduced the same text (and many more during the nineteenth century [cf. Lyons 1985]), the mind of the reader of 1801 almost inevitably would have wandered to recent events of French history when he read the following lines from the original conclusion published shortly before the outbreak of the French Revolution: ‘The Church has to last to the end of the age: its fate does not depend on the

¹ Bérault-Bercastel 1778, I, s.p.; second edition, 1820, I, VI-VIII: ‘Sire, c’est au Successeur de Clovis, de Charlemagne et de saint Louis; c’est au Fils aîné de l’Église qu’il est juste d’en offrir l’Histoire. [...] nous combattrons [...] les ennemis de la foi et des moeurs’. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

stability of the states where it is taken in: the different revolutions that they suffer do not shake it; it remains after they are destroyed, it survives their ruin'.²

Both authors used a narrative that presented the unity of the Church throughout history and its invincibility against enemies. The narrative seems timeless, enabling its reutilization in the nineteenth century despite profound political changes. It was probably even used *because* of these changes, in an effort to renew with a lost past (cf. Martin 2003, 116). It could apply to different situations, offering consolation and a perspective to the contemporary reader. Should one conclude that the narrative of the victorious Church was a kind of *topos*, a timeless equation of old and new enemies? Was this narrative always reused unchanged or, as one could suspect, was it adapted to the contemporary context as the situation of Catholic religion changed in nineteenth century France (first it was the religion of the State, then it became the 'religion of the majority of its citizens' and a separation between State and Church was finally instituted in 1905)? Who are these enemies against whom confessional identity is constructed and is there a clear line between the victorious and the vanquished protecting the Church from the outside? Initially advanced for the case of nineteenth century's Germany, the existence of a second confessional age has been proposed, a return to religion as opposed to an understanding of the period as an age of secularization and, more importantly, a deepening of confessional borders recalling the Confessional Age (Blaschke 2002). In the case of mid-nineteenth century France, it has been asked if conversion is the purpose of apologetics (Kirschleger 2012). In general, apologetics has a twofold face: one being that of controversy – thus negative and destructive to refute attacks; the other being positive – a face trying to convince the other (cf. Kirschleger 2012, 14). Church history, as a classical terrain for confessional controversies since the Magdeburg Centuries and Baronius's *Annales Ecclesiastici*, is likely to engage in a dialogue trying to convince the adversary. On the other hand, the Church histories – the sources that will be analysed in this contribution – were mostly destined to teach future clerics, future apologists of the Church, which would ask for a more self-reflexive identity construction in opposition to an adversary. I propose to answer these questions by analysing the programmatic introductions of twelve Church histories published between 1841 and 1905.³ After a short intro-

² Lhomond 1801, 622: 'L'Église doit durer jusqu'à la consommation des siècles: son sort ne dépend point de la stabilité des États où elle est admise: les différentes révolutions qu'ils éprouvent ne l'ébranlent pas; elle subsiste après leur destruction, elle survit à leur ruine'.

³ The *terminus post quem* is imposed by the sources themselves, no new French Church history for the education of the Catholic clergy having been published in the first decades of the nineteenth century. 1905 – year of the law of separation between the Church and the State – is the

duction to the sources, this study consists of two parts. First I am going to focus on the self-image of the victorious Church throughout the centuries and the role of History. Second I will focus on the concept of an enemy. Thus the outline reflects both the inclusive and the exclusive aspects of identity construction (cf. Koselleck 2013, 212).⁴

1 The sources: French textbooks of Church history of the nineteenth century

The establishment of specific courses of Church history in French seminaries can be observed from the eighteen-forties onwards (cf. Launay 2003, 104). The socio-professional profile of the authors of textbooks is characteristic of the milieu in which Church history was being written during large parts of the nineteenth century (cf. Carbonell 1976, 215–25; Hilaire 1999).⁵ Most of the authors were professors in seminaries – *grand séminaires* – (Blanc, Rohrbacher, Rivaux, Rivière, Aubry, Marion) and had themselves been educated there. One of them later worked as a private preceptor for a noble family (Darras), two authors taught in the State faculties of theology (Jager, Receveur), and one author was a nobleman, magistrate and amateur-historian (Henrion). These general histories of the Church (or histories of the French Church in two cases), covering at least eighteen centuries (if not more, depending on the ecclesiology of the author, some of them equating the origin of the Church with the origin of mankind), can be of very different scales: from one to three or four volumes in the case of textbooks, to about ten volumes to over twenty or even over forty volumes in some cases (Henrion, Rohrbacher, Jager, Darras).⁶ Their conceptual forms vary from very linear text structures – found often in the most voluminous books predisposed to be read in refectories – to books with clear didactical dimensions. Blanc, for ex-

terminus ante quem chosen for this article. For my PhD, which I am currently writing at the University of Montpellier III, I have identified 'only' fifteen general histories of the Church and two histories of the French Church published in France between 1801 and 1914 by Catholic authors if one excludes schoolbooks. Thus, even if this article does not refer to all of these books, the choice is still largely representative for the general production of Church histories published in France throughout the nineteenth century.

⁴ Koselleck chooses the example of the term 'Church' to illustrate that the construction of a political or social entity is linked to a concept or a term that creates a consolidated group by limiting it and by excluding others from it, every concept calling for its opposite.

⁵ A short biography of each author can be found in Mayeur, Hilaire 1996.

⁶ On the general development, see Moulinet 2000.

ample, regroups at the end of chapters some ‘historic problems’, with bibliographical indications, and several times he proposes questions to be answered in the form of an essay or a dissertation. The common factor that unites all these Church histories is the fact that they were primarily intended for readers that were candidates for the priesthood (who, in nineteenth century France, were generally trained in the seminaries and, more rarely, also in the theological state faculties [cf. Launay 2003; Neveu 1998]) as well as priests – whether this specific public is mentioned in the subtitle, or in the approbation of the bishop who recommends the book for the seminaries of his diocese, or whether the author targets it in his introduction. The conditions of commercialisation (sometimes a special discount to *Messieurs les prêtres*) or the book series of which they are part (Henrion’s *Histoire ecclésiastique* is part of the *Encyclopédie théologique* of the abbé Migne) confirm this focus.

2 History and the victorious Church in history

The narrative of the victorious Church, as expressed in the title of Lohmonds’ book, can find expression in different levels: in the paratext (cf. Genette 1987) and in the storytelling itself. Matt 16:18 is very often used like a watchword in the paratext. Blanc puts the *Portae inferi non praevalerunt adversus Eam* on the title page of the second volume of his Church history. Rohrbacher in his *Histoire universelle de l’Église catholique* quotes the whole verse in his introduction, thus insisting on his loyalty to Rome which for him is the predominant thought of his Church history: ‘you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it’ (Rohrbacher 1842–1849, VI). His title page bears witness to this with the quotations of two Church Fathers. First ‘the beginning of all things lies in the holy Catholic Church’ (Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* I, 1, c. 5), and second an extract from an Ambrosian psalm (40, n. 30) which reads *Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia*. Darras uses Matt 16:18 in the last phrase of his conclusion, after having asked a rhetorical question about the fate of the heretics that had attacked the Church; he concludes that the Church has been ‘founded on the indestructible rock that the gates of hell will never overcome’.⁷ The Sulpician Church historian Léon Marion also uses it in quotation and associates it with another verse of the gospel of Matthew (Matt 28:20), the *ecce vobiscum sum [omnibus diebus]* (Marion 1905, III, 834).

⁷ Darras 1862–1907, IV, 575: ‘fondée sur le rocher indestructible contre lequel les forces de l’enfer ne prévaudront jamais’.

It is from this unity even in times of despair that the Church gathers its strength. This is how Blanc sums it up in the last phrase of his Church history: 'this Church [has always been] one, troubled and trodden on, and always triumphant'.⁸ It is, referring to the *credo*, 'one, holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman' (see Rivaux in the introduction and in the conclusion and Rohrbacher).⁹ According to the authors, this unity can only be found in the Church, more importantly in Rome, and they insist on the contrast with the divisions that reign amongst the heretics. Rivaux stands for many others, and a long tradition, when he claims that outside of the Catholic Church, 'the evangelist truth is in fragments, confused and horribly disfigured' [...] heretics are divided up and opposing each other'.¹⁰

Different episodes are used to illustrate the victorious march of the Church throughout history. This march can be summarized as follows:

At the time of its greatest weakness in its beginnings, the Church vanquished all united forces of Judaism and paganism, it has civilized the barbarians and held back Islam. It survived the religious revolution of the sixteenth century and the religious and political revolution of the late eighteenth century rejuvenated and stronger. The Church that watched so many sects, schools and hostile systems die, will live; its future is inscribed in the history of the past.¹¹

The narrative of the victorious Church against the heretics is a way to visualise the effect of Providence: 'Is there any better thing than the study of this great accomplishment that is the destruction of the heresies, the defence and development of the doctrines, the most beautiful, the most intimate of Christianity where the action of Providence appears?'.¹²

8 Blanc 1841–1850, III, 918: 'cette Église une, toujours agitée et foulée, et toujours triomphante'.

9 Rivaux 1851–1853, III, XI and 508: 'une, sainte, catholique, apostolique et romaine'; Rohrbacher 1842, I, II: 'une dans l'Église catholique, apostolique et romaine'.

10 Rivaux 1851–1853, I, 10: 'La vérité évangélique [...] a été morcelée, confondue et horriblement défigurée [...]. Les milliers d'hérétiques [...] ont été [...] aussi divisés et opposés les uns aux autres que les philosophes païens'.

11 Marion 1905, III, 834: 'L'Église qui, lors de sa plus grande faiblesse, à ses débuts, est sortie victorieuse de sa lutte contre toutes les forces réunies du judaïsme et du paganisme, l'Église qui a civilisé les Barbares et endigué l'Islam, qui est sortie rajeunie et plus forte de la révolution religieuse du XVI^e siècle et de la révolution politico-religieuse de la fin du XVIII^e siècle, l'Église qui a vu naître et mourir tant de sectes, tant d'écoles, tant de système ennemis, cette Église vivra; son avenir est écrit dans l'histoire du passé'.

12 Aubry 1895, VII, VII: 'Peut-on rien préférer à l'étude de ce grand travail de la destruction des hérésies, de la défense et du développement de la doctrine, le plus beau, le plus intime du chris-

History (and sometimes modern scholarship in general) as a discipline can be perceived as dangerous and the Church cannot afford to leave it to others. It has to reappropriate it because it is the tool that the enemies of the Church use for their attacks. As Blanc puts it: ‘today all attacks against the Church are based on false historical systems’.¹³ To escape the danger that emanates from history, Henrion concludes, ‘the surest way is to beat it with its own arms’: the priest needs to have recourse to history not to ‘devastate them with their anathemas but to build a wall to protect it against itself if needed’.¹⁴ J. Bareille, the first author to continue Darras’s monumental *Histoire générale de l’Église depuis la création jusqu’à nos jours* after his death in 1878, is even harsher: ‘Nobody can ever measure the harm that history does to us. One is led to break up with God, disgusted by mankind; it plants a dreadful scepticism in the spirit [of men], it dries up the purest emotions and the most generous enthusiasm in the heart’.¹⁵ He calls for a reform of history and sees his book as a first step. According to Rivière, it is the task of the priest to fight this battle and the debate does not always have to take place in the heights of intellectual Olympus:

If these enemies were all remarkably learned and talented, maybe it would only be up to selected spirits to fight them, but for every man of merit that vows his capacities to serve the defence of truth, there are ten more who stupidly rush against it, without any other support than passion, without any other arms than some ideas borrowed from some bad books.¹⁶

tianisme, celui où l’action de la Providence apparaît [avec un caractère plus lumineux d’assistance divine et d’intervention surnaturelle]?’ The introduction is written by the brother of Jean-Baptiste Aubry who publishes the book after his death, but it consists mainly of quotations from Jean-Baptiste.

13 Blanc 1841–1850, I, IV: ‘Aujourd’hui que toutes les attaques contre l’Église partent de systèmes historiques erronés [...]’.

14 Henrion 1852–1879, I, 553: ‘[...] le plus sur moyen est de la combattre avec ses propres armes [...], non pour la foudroyer de leurs anathèmes, mais afin de s’en faire, au besoin, un rempart contre elle-même’.

15 Darras/Bareille 1862–1907, XXVI, XXI: ‘Le mal que l’histoire nous fait, nul ne pourra jamais le dire. Elle détache de Dieu, elle dégoûte de l’homme; elle sème dans les esprits un désolant scepticisme; elle tarit dans les cœurs la source des pures émotions et des généreux enthousiasmes’.

16 Rivière 1885, I, XIII: ‘Si ces ennemis étaient tous remarquables par leur érudition et le talent, il n’appartiendrait peut-être qu’à des esprits d’élite de les combattre; mais, pour un homme de mérite, qui consacre à l’erreur des facultés qui ne devraient servir qu’à la défense de la vérité, il y en a dix qui se ruent sottement contre celle-ci, sans autre ressource que la passion, sans autres armes que les emprunts faits à quelques mauvais livres’.

The *incrédule* is often presented as someone who, even if he does not believe, is searching for an answer. Provided with adequate knowledge, he will be convinced if he is intellectually honest. Honesty is all that is needed to refute these 'inept accusations that have been passed on for three hundred years in books and schools'.¹⁷ A frequent complaint in these introductions was that most of the attacks ensue from a lack of knowledge about the Church: 'it is the objection now that is better known all over the world than the facts themselves'.¹⁸ Providing this knowledge was one of Henrion's main motivations: 'It is to procure this knowledge to so many men [...] who submit to us their theories without preliminary studies that we publish this *Histoire ecclésiastique*'.¹⁹ He also gives a long quote from the book of Prosper Guéranger about the *Origines de l'Église romaine*, where the Benedictine complains that the eighteenth century and Voltaire in particular at least knew the dogmas they set out to destroy, and that nowadays too many authors write without understanding what they are writing about.

Guettée explicitly aims at historians of a *nouvelle école historique* and complains about their lack of religious culture (probably a sideswipe at François Guizot whom he had mentioned earlier):

Our modern writers found themselves in an unknown territory, which is the field of the Church; they imitated those frivolous tourists who after putting only one foot on some foreign seashore, promptly return to tell their blunder and their errors with the self-assurance of learned and conscientious travellers.²⁰

It is not only an opposition against modern historians that is at stake here. The authors frequently complain about historians from within their own ranks. The former missionary and seminary director Aubry, for example, complains about the influence of Protestantism that goes beyond the 'camp of radical non-believ-

17 Darras 1862–1907, XXVI, II: '[...] il suffira de la probité pour faire justice des ineptes accusations qui se transmettent depuis trois cents ans dans les écoles et les livres'.

18 Darras 1862–1907, I, I: 'L'objection est maintenant plus universellement connue que ne le sont les faits eux-mêmes'.

19 Henrion 1852–1879, V, 13: 'C'est afin de procurer cette connaissance à tant d'hommes qui, [...] nous présentent leurs théories sans études préalables, que nous publions cette *Histoire ecclésiastique*'.

20 Guettée 1847–1856, I, s.p.: 'Nos écrivains modernes se sont trouvés en pays inconnu dans le domaine de l'Église, et ils ont imité ces touristes frivoles qui, après avoir seulement posé le pied sur une plage étrangère, reviennent bien vite nous raconter leurs bévues et leurs erreurs, avec l'aplomb de voyageurs érudits et consciencieux'.

ers, rationalists and protestants in the strict sense'. He complains about Catholic historians who have been contaminated by what he calls the

Protestantism of history and tradition that frees itself from the living authority of the Church, disregards tradition, pretends to be based solely on the monuments of the past, with private meaning as interpreter, and abuses history, either to deny the most venerable traditions if they are not based on an inscription or a parchment, or to directly attack the Church.²¹

What the authors were complaining about was very often not so much the active altering of sources, but the biased presentation of facts. Impartiality is the value most frequently referred to in these introductions and it concerns both dealing with the so-called 'dark pages' of the history of the Church and the attitude to adopt versus the adversary. In these introductions, the critique of history can be encapsulated by two keywords: *ignorance* and *lies*. Ignorance is supposed to be specific to the modern author, and lies and falsifications are said to be the tools of all critics of the Church throughout history. The underlying idea is that if these two factors are overcome, conversion or a return to the Church will inevitably eventuate.

Something is considered to have fundamentally changed in the nineteenth century. Not only do the attacks take the particular form of historical reasoning, but the nature of the enemies has changed, too. For Rivière, attacks against the Church have never been so violent:

It never lacked the hate of its enemies, but this hate now takes on a particular character of supreme contempt. Religious polemics do not take place anymore between Catholics and heretics that still are Christians; those who attack us now have given up all faith in the Gospel.²²

21 Aubry 1895, VII, 9: 'le camp des incrédules radicaux, des rationalistes et des protestants proprement dits. [...] un protestantisme de l'Histoire et de la tradition qui s'affranchit également de l'autorité vivante de l'Église, méprise la Tradition, prétend s'appuyer sur les seuls monuments du passé, avec le sens privé aussi pour interprète, et abuse de l'Histoire, soit pour nier les traditions les plus vulnérables, lorsqu'elles ne sont pas appuyées par une inscription ou un parchemin, soit pour s'attaquer directement à l'Église'.

22 Rivière 1885, I, XIf.: 'La haine de ses ennemis ne lui a jamais fait défaut; mais cette haine a revêtu aujourd'hui un caractère particulier, c'est celui d'un souverain mépris. La polémique religieuse n'est plus entre des catholiques et des hérétiques demeurés chrétiens: ceux qui nous attaquent ont dépouillé toute croyance à l'Évangile'.

3 Eternal enemies of the Church

There is a wide range of enemies or 'heretics' that are brought up in the introductions: Protestants, Gallicans, Jansenists, Voltarian philosophy, Rationalism, the French Revolution, liberalism, modern scholarship, socialism and communism. These enemies are often presented in an order, like a logical consequence, one deriving from the other.

The baron Henrion quotes from Joseph de Maistre's famous *Du Pape*: 'Every Church that is not catholic is protestant [...]. What is a protestant? A man who protests. And what does it matter if he protests against one or several dogmas? [...] he will always protest against unity and universal authority'.²³ Later on, Henrion (or one of the authors he quotes extensively without always giving them clear credit) talks about ancient and modern religious and philosophical Protestantism, and in a footnote he elaborates his understanding of Protestantism: 'We do not want to talk only about the sects that the so called Reformation has fathered, but about all doctrines protesting against the Church since the first of men'.²⁴

When unity can only be found in the Catholic Church, all 'others' are defined and thus united by their otherness and opposition to it and seen as one eternal enemy in different disguises. This leads to the question as to which role is played by the classical adversary of Catholic confessional controversy – Protestantism (most authors do not distinguish between its different branches). Justin Fèvre, commencing volume XXXIII of Darras's *Church History* (he had taken over authorship after J. Bareille with a *Vue générale sur le temps modern*), considers the fate of heretics and heresies (Arius, Macedonius, Nestorius, Eutyches, Monothelism, Iconoclasm) throughout time and reflects on their short life-spans. He then identifies the philosophy of *liberum examen* (freedom of enquiry) as the essence of any anti-Christian sentiment (*antichristianisme*). Even if it had already made an appearance with Wycliffe and Jan Hus, it really came to life with Protestantism and 'for four centuries it has been stretching out constantly and does not appear ready to limit the course of its damage'.²⁵

²³ Henrion 1852–1879, I, 307: 'toute l'Église qui n'est pas catholique est protestante [...]. Qu'est-ce qu'un protestant? C'est un homme qui proteste. Or qu'importe qu'il proteste contre un ou plusieurs dogmes? [...] toujours il proteste contre l'unité et l'autorité universelle'.

²⁴ Ibid., IV, ###: 'nous ne voulons pas parler seulement des sectes engendrées depuis trois siècles par la prétendue réforme, mais de toutes les doctrines qui, depuis le premier homme, ont protesté contre l'Église'.

²⁵ Darras/Fèvre 1862–1907, XXXIII, 33: '[...] ne fait, depuis quatre siècles, que s'étendre et ne paraît pas prête de borner le cours de ses ravages'.

Stricto sensu, Protestantism can be presented as weak. Jean-Nicolas Jager in his *Histoire de l'Église de France* believes that Protestantism has never been able to spread in France and does not exist there. Even if it is not completely dead outside France at the time of writing (1862), it has been defeated by means of scholarship (Jager 1862–1875, I, XI). Four decades later, Marion identified it as the most flourishing sect in numbers, but it considered the Gospel to be of human work and its followers did not believe in Revelation any more. In Germany, and as proof he quotes from an article of Louis Veuillot's *Univers* from 1901, nine out of ten pastors did not believe in the divinity of Christ anymore. Signs of vitality like Protestant missionizing are interpreted as a last – desperate – convulsion (Marion 1905, III, 824).

Yet, Protestantism, when seen as the root of all modern evil that opened the gate to questioning the Church, was considered very much alive and it is under this aspect that it was mainly discussed in the introductions. One of the dominant ideas prevailing in all introductions is the parallelism between old and new enemies of the Church. According to Henrion, quoting an article from the *Correspondant*, it is only the name that changes: it is called “Protestantism” in the world of religion, “rationalism” in the intellectual and moral world, “deism” in the world of nature, “republicanism” in politics, “socialism” of all colours in society’.²⁶ Or, as Rivaux puts it: ‘Protestantism transformed liberty into permissiveness’ opening the door to ‘so-called rights that are destructive of all society: the right to scepticism, to irreligion, to impiety and insurrection; the right to be a philosopher, an atheist, a pantheist and a socialist’. He establishes a direct link between the Reformation and the French Revolution as he refers to the triad of the French revolution: ‘We saw our civilization on the verge of ruin, in the most horrible agony, in the name of liberty, equality and fraternity’.²⁷ Justin Fèvre also establishes a link between theological and political contestation. He expresses this thought in a radical tone that is so typical for him: ‘If the dogs of Luther, Calvin and Jansenius encounter the bitches of Mirabeau, Ro-

²⁶ Henrion 1852–1879, V, 15: ‘[...] protestantisme dans le monde religieux, rationalisme dans le monde intellectuel et moral, déisme dans le monde de la nature, républicanisme dans le monde politique, socialisme de toutes couleurs dans le monde social’.

²⁷ Rivaux 1851–1853, III, 508: ‘[...] le protestantisme a changé la liberté en licence. [...] une foule d’autres prétendus droits destructifs de toute société: le droit de scepticisme, d’irreligion, d’impiété, d’insurrection ; le droit d’être philosophe, athée, panthéiste et socialiste. Ainsi avons-nous vu notre civilisation sur le point de périr, dans les plus horribles angoisses, au nom de la liberté, de l’égalité et de la fraternité’.

bespierre and Napoleon, they court them willingly'.²⁸ Receveur is an author with a more balanced opinion. In the last chapter of his book, he covers the French Revolution and the 'hateful and violent persecutions that came upon [the Church] by the triumph of the philosophical sects'. For him, these persecutions are the result of human passion, but he approves the underlying principles of tolerance and liberty of conscience. On the last page, he reflects on the situation of the Church with the following words: 'the result is a new situation for the Church that can have its disadvantages, but it has also some advantages that cannot be denied'.²⁹ Probably, as he was a professor at a State faculty, teaching courses that were very often frequented by laymen, a more nuanced if not to say liberal opinion was in Receveur's interest. The contrast with most of the other authors is vivid.

The impression of a profound disagreement with the present is reinforced when the authors denounce atheism or a certain 'neutrality' and condemn legislation in the matter of education that neglects the place of the Church (in institutions but also in the contents of teaching). Education, the Church's prerogative in the matter, and religious education even more so, are controversial topics throughout the nineteenth century. In the conclusion of the second edition of his book, published in 1885, Rivière explicitly refers to the Jules Ferry Laws. The law of the 28th of March 1882 relegated religious education, that had still existed in public schools, to venues outside of the schools or to private schools, and replaced it in the public schools with lessons of morals and civics. For Joseph Rivière, this was a dramatic event, equal to or even more distressing than the French Revolution:

Blood has not been shed yet [even if] it could happen, but forbidding religious education in schools and installing an obligatory system of neutrality, that, if it is not atheism, inevitably leads there, is maybe even more monstrous than seeing temples destroyed and priests led to the scaffold.³⁰

28 Rohrbacher/Fèvre 1900, XV, 5: 'Lorsque les chiens de Luther, de Calvin et de Jansénius rencontrent les chiennes de Mirabeau, de Robespierre et de Napoléon, ils les courtisent volontiers'.

29 Receveur 1842, IX, s.p.: 'les odieuses et violentes persécutions amenées par le triomphe des sectes philosophiques [...]. Il en résulte pour l'Église une situation nouvelles qui peut avoir ses inconvénients, mais qui offre aussi des avantages incontestables'.

30 Rivière 1885, III, 634: 'Le sang ne coule pas encore, ce qui pourra venir; mais interdire l'enseignement religieux dans les écoles et rendre obligatoire un système de neutralité qui, s'il n'est pas l'athéisme, y mène inévitablement, n'est pas chose plus monstrueuse encore que de voir les temples détruits et les prêtres conduits à l'échafaud?'.

And in 1879, Bareille writes with similar indignation about atheists and their conquests in France: 'it is a war to the death, a war of extermination', and he describes it as a manoeuvre aiming to 'deprive Him [God] of the heart of the woman'.³¹ He thus alludes to the law of the 21st December 1880 that established secondary schools for girls and he also complains that atheism has infiltrated public education – referring to classes of morals that are part of the curriculum of public secondary schools (Darras/Bareille 1862–1907, XXVI, IX).

In 1905, the year of the law of separation between the Church and the State, Marion (even if he ends on a more confident note with his *non praevalent*) paints a catastrophic picture of society in the last chapter of his *Histoire de l'Église*. The spirit of the dedicatory letter written by Bérault-Bercastel with the osmosis between the King and his Church seems far away when Marion accuses the states of 'Machiavellian politics' and he deplores that 'even in France, a country that is still so Christian despite everything, the laws disregard not only Christianity, but even God'.³²

By reading most of the other authors that write in the last decades of the century, one gets the impression of a fracture between the Church and modern society, a more pessimistic view of society and the place of the Church in it. This accords with direct allusions to the political situation, whereas this does not seem to be a priority for earlier authors from Blanc to Darras, whose books were mainly published in the July Monarchy (when Catholicism was defined as the religion of the majority of the citizens in the charter of 1830) and in the first decades of the Second Empire. In a note to Darras's Church History of 1854, Monseigneur Louis-Gaston de Ségur, foresaw a deepening fracture (that seems to concern Christian religion in general and not only Catholicism):

In our century of good sense and logic, good and evil tend to separate more and more, and without question there will soon be only two camps in the world: the Catholic Church and Christians on one side, the Revolution and socialist philosophers on the other.³³

31 Darras/Bareille 1862–1907, XXVI, X: 'c'est une guerre à mort, une guerre d'extermination'; 'Les voilà déjà qui manœuvrent pour lui ravir en dernier lieu le cœur de la femme'.

32 Marion 1905, III, 828: '[...] une politique toute machiavélique. Déjà en France, pays si chrétien encore malgré tout, les lois font abstraction non seulement du christianisme, mais même de Dieu'.

33 Darras 1854, IV, s.p.: 'Dans notre siècle de bon sens et de logique, le bien et le mal tendent de plus en plus à se séparer, et bientôt, sans doute, il n'y aura plus que deux camps dans le monde: l'Église catholique et les chrétiens d'un côté, la Révolution et les philosophes socialistes de l'autre'.

Yet, the concept of the enemy that is constructed in these introductions is not as unilateral as this quotation leads to believe. As is to be sensed in Aubry’s critique on ‘Protestantism of history’, he writes not only against an exterior adversary, but just as much to defend the Church against reproaches from the inside. Rohrbacher acknowledges this as the main motif for his book. He wanted to ‘justify the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church against the reproaches made by some of their own children, for that [he needed] to restore the facts that have been distorted, the accounts that have been deleted and thus to refute the calumnies that they have been accredited’.³⁴ Certainly, he calls Luther an ‘unfroked monk from Germany’, but he primarily wrote his book against the Gallican Church historian of the seventeenth century Claude Fleury (1640–1723), an author still widely read in French seminaries in the first half of the nineteenth century, and later on also against Félicité Robert de Laménais, to whom he had been close once.³⁵

Twenty years later, Jean-Nicolas Jager published a *Histoire de l’Église catholique en France* to respond to Wladimir Guettée. Guettée was a priest, seminarian and Church historian who ultimately became a Greek-orthodox priest because of his troubles with the Congregation of the Index over his *Histoire de l’Église de France* (cf. de Franceschi 2011). So urgent was his need to refute Guettée that Jager gave up his initial project of composing a Church history of his own. The one that was published under his name 1862–1875 is actually a slightly modified new edition of the classic *Histoire de l’Église gallicane dédiée à nosseigneurs du clergé* begun by the Jesuit Jacques Longueval and continued later by Pierre-Claude Fontenai, Pierre Brumoy and Guillaume François Berthier. Jager tells us that ‘Grave and dangerous errors have been spread about the History of the French Church’, and he continues by saying that the goal of Guettée was ‘to humble the authority of the pope, to lower the decisions of the Church, to rehabilitate the memory of heretics and to tarnish the memory of the bishops and Church fathers that have fought against them’.³⁶

34 Rohrbacher 1842–1849, I, VII: ‘[...] justifier l’Église catholique, apostolique et romaine, contre les reproches que se permettent à son égard quelques-uns de ses propres enfants, de rétablir pour cela les faits qu’ils ont altérés, les témoignages qu’ils ont supprimés, et de réfuter ainsi les calomnies qu’ils ont accréditées’.

35 Cf. Rohrbacher 1842–1849, I, IV: ‘un moine défroqué d’Allemagne’. On Rohrbacher see Costigan 1980.

36 Jager 1862–1875, I, VI: ‘Des erreurs graves et dangereuses ont été répandues [...] sur l’Histoire de l’Église de France. [...] abaisser l’autorité des souverains pontifes, d’affaiblir les décisions de l’Église, de réhabiliter la mémoire des hérétiques et de ternir celle des évêques ou des docteurs qui les ont combattus’.

Last on the dock are those qualified as liberal Catholics. Here, too, this is necessarily an amalgam for a variety of affiliations (cf. Poulat 1974). If Aubry complains in general about ‘the spirit of liberalism that has invaded all branches of scholarship and today it prevails in most of our textbooks and schools’,³⁷ it is against liberal Catholicism that Justin Fèvre’s invectives against enemies of the Church culminate: ‘no, no, a liberal is not and can not be a Catholic’.³⁸

In conclusion, it can be said that the concept of an enemy and the defining of borders is omnipresent in the paratext of these Church histories (and one could easily enlarge the question to search for its reflection in history writing itself) and concerns just as much exterior as interior enemies (the appendix of many books and their *pièces justificatives* clearly refer to controversial receptions *inside* the Church, and even more so to the role of the Congregation of the Index). One can distinguish between two things: first a general discourse about the victorious Church and the fall of heretics throughout time and an equation of old and new enemies forming one eternal enemy of the Church in almost all the books, and secondly and more concretely, a discourse about these enemies.³⁹ This discourse can sometimes be very closely linked to the contemporary political situation in times of crises, especially at the end of the nineteenth century (for example if the prerogative of the Church for the education of children and adolescents is questioned): an ‘eschatology fostering the present situation’, as E. Poulat coined it.⁴⁰ Certainly, most of the authors do not fail to assure their readers that they will be impartial versus their adversary. But the tone and the vocabulary that they use in the introductions or in the conclusions to express the idea of a victorious Church – words like *combattre* or *armes* that belong to the same semantic field – often beg to differ.

In 1904 under the title *Avenir du christianisme*, Albert Dufourcq published the first of ten volumes of a history of the Church. Amongst other quotations that he uses as a watchword on one of the first pages of his book, appears the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer: *Pater noster qui es in coelis*. And some pages

37 Aubry 1895, VII, 16: ‘[...] l’esprit de libéralisme qui a envahi toutes les branches de la science et qui prédomine aujourd’hui dans la plupart de nos manuels et de nos Écoles’.

38 Darras/Fèvre 1862–1907, XLI, 24: ‘Non, non, un libéral n’est pas et ne peut pas être catholique’.

39 The hypothesis of M. Jeismann’s study on the concept of an enemy in France and Germany during the nineteenth century is that the political, economic or social background does not suffice to explain the animosity between two nations. To fully understand this phenomenon one has to look at the birth of a national consciousness (*nationales Selbstverständnis*) that implicates the dissociations versus ‘the other’ (Jeismann 1992, 16).

40 Poulat 1974, 340: ‘une eschatologie qu’alimente l’actualité’.

later he dedicates his book to Pope Leo XIII. These elements of the paratext do not differentiate him from his predecessors. Yet, the ending of his preface illustrates what has been accomplished at a time of writing when the history of the Church or, more accurately, history of Christianity, can be studied in a new institutional framework, when clerical scholars evolve in this framework and when a Church history is written by a layman and a 'professional historian' like Dufourcq:

Is it necessary to add that our greatest desire is to write not a word that could offend anybody? Without neglecting exactitude, we will try not to say anything that could injure our 'separated brothers', the Protestants, or our 'oldest brothers', the Jews. We ask forgiveness in advance for every deviation of our quill.⁴¹

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⁴¹ Dufourcq 1904, IX: 'Est-il besoin d'ajouter que notre plus cher désir est de ne pas écrire un mot qui puisse choquer personne? Sans manquer à l'exactitude, nous tâcherons de ne rien dire qui blesse, ni nos "frères séparés", les Protestant, ni nos "frères aînés", les Juifs. De tout écart de plume qui nous échapperait, nous demandons d'avance pardon'.

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Franziska Metzger

Conflicting historiographical claims in religiously plural societies

In 1868, the publishers of the newly established *Archiv für die Schweizerische Reformations-Geschichte*, a series of volumes focusing primarily on the publication of sources from the Reformation period, declared that it was their main objective to enable the writing of a ‘source based, impartial, critical history of the Reformation period’ (‘Vorwort’ 1868, V) and to refute the so-called ‘faults’ and ‘disfigurements’ in historiography with a ‘critical discussion of singular facts that in historiography had hitherto been represented erroneously or of personages judged faultily’ (ibid.).¹ The central theoretical and methodological motivation behind the publication of this catholic series that concentrated specifically on historiography and was published in six volumes between 1868 and 1904 was the compilation and launch of a virtual archive.

It is our duty to fill these gaps, to expose these falsities and to rebuff these deformations and suspicions by collecting and publishing our records in order to establish the source-based, historical truth. We owe this our fathers, our church, our fatherland and ourselves. (ibid.)

The series combines an emphasis on reflexivity with the discourse of scientificity that was not only codified in the handbooks of the Catholic Church history, but also in the catholic encyclopaediae of the German-speaking area during the second half of the nineteenth century.² It focused on ‘source-basedness’, so-called ‘critic’ and – closely linked to the first two dimensions – the notion of ‘impartiality’ (cf. von Hefele 1851; Alzog 1841; Hergenröther 1876; Knöpfler 1891 and 1895; Hüffer 1880). Against the backdrop of this methodological discourse, the establishment of archives both as institutions and – in a more abstract form – as a publication series can be interpreted as part of the communicative production of memory (cf. Metzger 2010 and 2010a). Very explicitly, the *Archiv für Reformations-Geschichte* invites scholars to rewrite the history of the Reformation period based on its source collection. The catholic counter-narratives to protestant historiography were legitimized by a discourse of scientificity.³

1 All translations from the German original by the author.

2 See on the encyclopaedia Steinmetz 2001 and Koselleck 2002.

3 See on discourses of scientificity Stichweh 1987; Bann 1990 and Novick 1988.

In pluri-denominational countries such as Germany and Switzerland, in the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century competing discourses of religious history were linked with competing discourses of national history. Conceived of as cultural construction of meaning, historiography constituted a system of interpretation directed at the self-positioning of different communities within society, especially within (developing) nation-states.⁴ The appropriation and transformation of historicist meta-discourses played an important role in the entanglement of religious and national discourses in catholic historiography (cf. Metzger 2010). In the following I shall, therefore, focus on the complex relationship between religion, nation and history in religiously plural societies such as Switzerland and Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This complex relationship shall be approached through an in-depth analysis focusing on discourses and the mechanisms of their production. When thought of as mechanisms of memory,⁵ historical narratives and other discourses of memory – in the sense of *‘Erinnerung’* or *‘souvenir’* – are complex acts of communication. They result from a plurality of mechanisms of selection: discourses of memory and experience; interpretations regarding the functioning of society, knowledge on possible structures and norms of social reality and expectations regarding the future of society; self-reflexive (theoretical, methodological, philosophical) discourses of historiography; and aesthetic and rhetorical structures as modes and strategies of narration.⁶

1 Entanglements of religion, history and nation: some methodological reflexions

The complex discursive relationship between religion, nation and history can be conceptualised as an entangled history on three levels (cf. Metzger 2010). The first dimension addresses the overlap and amalgamation of different discursive fields, especially of religion and nation. How did the confessional factor affect

4 For comparative perspectives on national historiography see Berger, Lorenz 2008; Porciani, Tollebeek 2012; Berger, Eriksonas, Mycock 2008; Conrad, Conrad 2002. – On the catholic community of symbols see Geyer, Lehmann 2004; Haupt, Langewiesche 2004 and 2001; Hölscher 2007; Graf, Große Kracht 2007; Altermatt, Metzger 2007.

5 Regarding the still very controversially treated relationship of history and memory see for a position of complex entanglement: Hölscher 2003 and 1995; Oesterle 2005; Young 2001 and Koselleck 2000.

6 For a systematisation see among others Bann 1984 and Berkhofer 1995.

the construction of master narratives in general and such regarding the nation in particular?

On a second level, we can look at entanglements of discursive practices and at the mechanisms through which discourses are formed – Michel Foucault’s ‘conditions of possibility’ (cf. Foucault 1969 and 1972) – that is at the logics that structure discourses and action. Comparisons of liberal-national(ist) and catholic historical discourses in Germany and Switzerland have shown that differing, even conflicting, narratives could be formed through the same mechanisms, such as sacralisation of history, *topoi* of a national or religious community’s divine election, or constructions of continuities and teleological perspectives (cf. Metzger 2010).

On a third level, the relationship between history, religion and nation can be conceptualised as an entanglement of different communities of memory. Similar elements of memory can give rise to different communicative communities that construct diverging interpretations of the past. I consider the following dimensions to be central characteristics of modern communicative communities: an abstract, supra-individual structure regarding the spatial and social dimension, a supra-generational persistence for which discourses of memory and history played a central role, the generation of participative identities through common codes, symbols and discourses, a competing, partially overlapping, relationship between different communities, and an orientation towards the whole of society (cf. Metzger 2011). In the context of history and memory, communicative communities can be described as communities of memory, experience and expectation. The focus on the supra-generational dimension awards special consideration to the complex connection between communities of experience and of memory and their respective synchronic and diachronic overlap. In the context of historical discourses, the concept of communities of knowledge or – in a narrower sense – of scientific communities has to be included as a further analytic tool, for which the characteristics delineated above are equally valid. As a community of knowledge, the Catholic community of communication defined the relationship between religion and history, both philosophically, and theoretically.

All three dimensions of entanglement enhance our perspective on processes of appropriation and the redefinition of discourses and semantics in the construction of competing and overlapping historical narratives, thereby helping us to deconstruct a number of ‘canonised’ interpretations in history of historiography. Concepts of homogeneous paradigms of historical production, based on a modernisation-theoretical notion of ‘scientific’ progress (cf. Rüsen 1983 and 1997; Blanke 1991 and 1993; Blanke, Fleischer 1988) that insufficiently includes different synchronic narratives from different communities of discourse, are challenged by a focus on the synchronic presence and interrelation be-

tween different discourses and communities of memory. Modernisation-theoretical conceptions of the ‘professionalization’ and ‘scientification’ of historiography in the nineteenth century based on one-dimensional perspectives on the dominant (national) form and means of historical production and, mostly, on the analysis of a number of prominent historians – excluding, among others, catholic historians as ‘not modern’, ‘not scientific’ and ‘not professional’ – are refuted through the emphasis on the discursivity of the concepts of ‘scientificity’ and ‘professionalization’.

In the following I will focus on the entanglements of religious and national discourses in historical narratives, their theoretical and methodological foundation in the pluri-confessional contexts of Germany and Switzerland and their mechanisms and strategies of legitimisation.

2 Contested nations: the dominance of the religious factor for competing discourses of history and communities of memory

Taking into consideration the effect various factors of identity construction have had on the historical narratives of nineteenth and twentieth century Germany and Switzerland, I formulate two initial hypotheses: First, among a plurality of factors, such as ethnicity, religion and class, religion/confession constitutes the dominant factor for the construction of differing and competing historical narratives of the nation (cf. Metzger 2010). National-liberal and protestant master-narratives of historiography have superposed national with confessional discourses and have, thus, imagined Germany and Switzerland more or less explicitly as protestant nations (cf. for Germany: Kuhlemann 2004; Cramer 2004; Gramley 2002). At the same time, the confessional dimension has to be regarded as the central factor in the construction of competing catholic narratives. In both cases we can speak of an amalgamation of national and confessional discourses as an expression of a confessionalisation – and moralisation – of politics and a politicisation of religion since the 1830s when conflicts between State and Church on the one hand, and about hegemonic conceptions of the nation on the other superposed one another (cf. Altermatt 2007; Haupt, Langewiesche 2004a). Second, religion was the most important factor in the construction of a competing catholic community of memory that partially overlapped with the national community. The religious dimension not only determined the construction of catholic master-narratives regarding the nation and therefore the Catholics’ participation in the construction of national identity (external perspective),

but also that of narratives regarding its own religious community (internal perspective).

The dominant effect of religion/confession compared to that of other factors, such as language and class, that had only had a marginal effect on the production of competing narratives of the nation, can be explained along three lines: an exclusive impact of the amalgamation of different discursive fields, especially of the national and – politicised – religious field; the identity of communities of memory and experience; and an institutionalization and ‘canonization’ of historiography. All three dimensions were reflected most prominently in historical narratives regarding the ascription of meaning to the Reformation period and to the contemporary history of the revolutionary, nation-building and *Kulturkampf* period from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century (cf. for Germany: Armbrorst-Weihs, Wiehl 2010; Haupt, Langewiesche 2004; Geyer, Lehmann 2004).

An effect of exclusion through the amalgamation of national and religious discourses was constitutive for, both, the dominant historical narratives of the nation and the catholic counter-narratives. The entanglement of national and religious/confessional discourses was exclusivist and created difference within the nation, whereas inclusion and exclusion was neither organized along ethnic or linguistic lines, nor along class differences.

A constitutive factor for the exclusive amalgamation of religion and nation can be seen in the superposition of historical and contemporary conflicts. Competing narratives particularly emerged where contemporary conflicts with some longevity could be converged with lines of conflict in history (cf. also Brechenmacher 1996; Klug 1995; Metzger 2010). In Germany and Switzerland, the confessional factor fostered the emergence of differing communities of experience because of its immediate role in the conflicts of nation-building. The Reformation period, the so-called ‘confessional age’ and the revolutionary period at the end of the eighteenth century were instances of strongly confessionalised conflict that, allegedly, forestalled the struggles of the nation-building period in the historical imagination of the nineteenth century, and found their crystallization in confessionalised interpretations of the modern State and the nation under construction.

The institutionalisation of historiography through the foundation of journals, archives and the canonisation of historical discourses in handbooks and popular narratives has to be mentioned as another important factor for the establishment of a catholic historiography. In Switzerland, as well as in Germany, catholic historiography had become increasingly institutionalised since the middle of the nineteenth century. The institutional anchorage was accompanied by the appropriation and redefinition of discourses that created the discipline’s self-perception through a number of philosophical meta-narratives.

Although counter-narratives based on class and class conflict were developed in Germany towards the end of the nineteenth century (cf. Welskopp 2010; Deneckere, Welskopp 2008; Kössler 2005) and to a lesser degree also in early twentieth century Switzerland (cf. Degen 1997), class was not a dominant discourse in national master-narratives; rather, class conflicts were exterritorialised. At the same time, socialist historiography remained thematically heterogeneous and unstable, to the extent that we can only marginally speak of a competing community of memory that manifested itself in historical production. Neither in dominant narratives, nor in minority discourses was language used to construct internal national differences in pluri-lingual Switzerland (cf. Furrer 2003). Linguistic differences did not generate differing communities of memory. Linguistically inclusive notions of the nation were made plausible through the common foundational myth, and pluri-lingualism became a discourse of demarcation against other nations.

In the following, I shall focus on the self-reflexive dimension of catholic historiography before looking at national and catholic narratives on the Reformation period and on contemporary history as well as on their discursive functioning.

3 Self-reflexive discourses: the construction of a catholic meta-narrative between historicisation and sacralisation

The self-reflexive meta-discourse of catholic historiography was fundamentally defined by the religious dimension (cf. von Hefele 1851; Knöpfler 1891; Seider 1907; Bigelmair 1933). The identitary relation between the theoretical and philosophical foundation of Church history and history in general was based on the dominance of a discourse of salvation history (Alzog 1840; Binder 1847). Salvation history bound together an ahistorical concept of history based on the providential, transcendental dimension and a historically dynamic notion. These approaches were not thought to contradict each other; rather, their entanglement was constitutive for the meta-discourse of catholic historiography. In explicit opposition to the conception of historicism, the ultimate objective of history was seen in God – focusing on ‘God’s hidden plan’ and the ‘the course of God’s kingdom on earth’ (Knöpfler 1891, 529; cf. von Hefele 1851; Hergenröther 1876; Stiefelhagen ³1893). This meta-discourse was the central legitimising argument for the rising importance of Church history as a theological discipline to

the point of defining it as ‘fundament for all other theological disciplines’ (Alzog 1841, 20; cf. Steinhauf 1999).

In his *Handbuch der Universal-Kirchengeschichte* of 1841, the German Church historian Johannes Alzog had already established three factors, namely the ‘critical’, the ‘religious’, and ‘the pragmatic’ as constitutive for Church history and general world history. He linked them to the criteria of the study of sources, ‘love of truth’ and ‘impartiality’ (Alzog 1841, 10; cf. von Hefele 1851; Knöpfler 1895; Rolfus 1896; Brück 1872; Marx 1903). These criteria established the theoretical pattern underlying the catholic conception of ‘scientific’ historiography. Through appropriation and rewriting, as well as demarcation from and critique of contemporary concepts of historiography, this conception generated a meta-narrative resulting in a dogmatic, additive definition of scientificity that comprised both critique of sources and a teleological perspective. On the whole, we can speak of a homogenisation and canonisation of self-reflexive discourses of history since the mid-nineteenth century (cf. also Steinhauff 1999; Weichlein 2005).

Inasmuch as catholic historiography presented itself as scientific communication, it followed the binary code ‘truth/untruth’ that is constitutive for scientific discourses (cf. Stichweh 1987). The fact that also for the religious system the dichotomy between ‘true/untrue’ was a central code (cf. Luhmann 2000; Ebertz 2007), was seminal for the catholic discourses of philosophy of history. The superposition of the two codes, ultimately, had an integrating effect on the understanding of the relationship between religion and history. Based on salvation history, a first dimension of absolute truth transferred the claim of the universal validity of Christian revelation to historiography. This dogmatic, supernatural discourse of truth was static and a-historic.⁷ It included godly providence and a teleological perspective. The *Staatslexikon* of 1927, for example, states: ‘It [i. e. the Absolute] extends into history in a very obliging way as will and as eternal validity in every supra-historical meaning. As ultimate reality it constructs and governs over and within history’ (Steinbüchel 1927, 597). Also the second dimension of truth that pertained to the societal – ecclesiastical or national – aspect of history tended to be static, but could be dynamicised through a conception of progress in history. The third dimension of truth was related to methodology. It determined the additive structure of the notion of scientificity of Church history. An ‘objective’ conception of truth and the vision of impartiality were directly related to the transcendent dimension of ‘Godly truth’: Only a ca-

7 On a comparable mechanism in protestant anti-historist positions in the early twentieth century see Graf 1988.

tholic perspective enabled an impartial assessment of (Christian) history. This becomes explicit in Georg Hüffer's introductory words to the first volume of the *Historische Jahrbuch*, in which he delineates the 'objective truth of the Godly doctrine' as the 'only objective norm of historical truth' (Hüffer 1880, 16).

The three dimensions of truth historicised and sacralised the perception of the past (cf. Lehmann 2002; Assmann 1993; Metzger 2014). The concept of history itself was sacralised. Thus, for example, the historical discourse on Carlo Borromeo (the sixteenth century Cardinal and archbishop of Milan) was sacralised in Swiss catholic historiography and became an integral part of the mythicisation of the so-called 'counter-reformation' figure. Even in the sources that were edited with great vigor in anticipation of the third centenary of Borromeo's canonisation in 1910, the cardinal's holiness was created metaphorically. In a passage regarding the Swiss correspondence of Borromeo Eduard Wymann maintains: 'Borromeo's correspondence could be likened to the human blood circuit. Saint Charles was the central focus and the meeting point of an active religious-political life, and like from a heart, the most powerful impulses emanated from him in all directions' (Wymann 1897, 269f.). Moreover, the salvation-centered dimension of truth established a universal orientation of Church history. This universality was simulatenously exclusive, as it was only ascribed to the catholic conception of truth. It was also a temporal universality, inasmuch as Church history was used as evidence of the Church's eternity – and that of the catholic community of memory.

4 National-liberal and protestant narratives of confessionalisation

In national-liberal and protestant historical narratives, especially on the Reformation period, two dimensions can be identified regarding the relationship between religion and the nation. The first dimension pertains to mechanisms of sacralisation of the nation on the semantic level through *topoi* of divine election, biblical motives and teleological construction. Through religious semantics the nation could be essentialized. Rites and celebrations of the nation, along with monuments and figures of memory that did not relate to the religious field, such as Schiller, were expression of a public staging of sacrality (cf. Assmann 1993).

The second dimension is that of discourses of confessionalization of the nation, inasmuch as the nation was defined as protestant and, therefore, confessionally exclusive. In the construction of an identity relation between nation

and Protestantism, historical discourses on the Reformation period – and other modes of memory construction, such as the foundation of associations like the *Gustav-Adolf-Verein* in Germany – played a central role, defining – in the German case – the national mission in a continuity from the Reformation to the Napoleonic wars and the nation-building period. The Reformation was stylized as a national movement and Luther as the deliverer of the German nation (e.g. Droysen 1861). The teleological perspective brought about a superposition of the religious dimension with political conceptions on the postulated, contemporary nation-state (e.g. Sybel 1853–1868). Thus, narratives of progress were founded on the nemesis of the ‘old’ empire and the rise of Protestantism in the seventeenth century.

Whereas we can speak of the construction of an identity relationship between nation and Protestantism in Germany, the confessional dimension was not fundamental for the Swiss foundational myth. Instead it represented an integrated part of narratives on Switzerland’s history since the Reformation period, as well as of the construction of continuity from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, thereby bringing about a partially identity conception with an increasing exclusivity towards the end of the century. Swiss republicanism was retraced to Zwingli and the national-liberal conception of the modern State essentialized: Zwingli was ‘nationalised’ (in the modern sense of the nineteenth century) as bearer of those ‘eminent patriotic ideas’, which were thought accomplished in the nineteenth century (Oechsli 1919, 190; cf. id.. 1890 and 1883; Egli 1910; Stähelin 1884). Confessionalized narratives overlaid the inclusive, medieval foundational myth. The Reformation was integrated into a salvation historical, eschatological interpretation of Swiss history culminating in a discourse of national mission.

5 Ultramontanism and nationalisation: catholic reinterpretations of the nation and redefinitions of tradition

Unlike national-liberal mechanisms of sacralization, which could also appear in a de-transcendentalised mode, their catholic counterparts were always defined by a transcendental dimension. Discourses of the confessionalization of the nation and of the nationalisation of religion overlapped, linking the construction of religious and national continuities in history, and tying together internal visions of the religious community with external discourses of the confessionalization of the nation.

The most immediate catholic reformulation and reinterpretation of Reformation history can be detected in the ascription of a continuity of national history to Catholicism (Metzger 2010b). Such discourses rather explicitly formulated a dual line of continuity, both towards the past and towards the future. Internal confessionalization found its expression above all in an ultramontanisation of historical narratives; external confessionalization manifested itself in the superposition of discourses of a confessionalization of the nation and of a nationalization of confessional/religious discourses. In the German catholic historiography of the Reformation period, Tilly was represented as catholic national figure of integration, a narrative that enabled to ascribe national unity to the catholic confession (cf. Kuhlemann 2004). A central part was also the nationalization of the politics of the medieval emperors: They were represented as the central warrantors of the unity of the empire, whereas the conflicts between State and Church of the *Kulturkampf* era were retro-projected into the ‘confessional age’ (cf. Janssen 1878–1894; Pastor 1886–1933).

In Swiss catholic historiography on the Reformation, the difference between Zwingli and humanism was minimized and continuities from pre-Reformation reforms were emphasised. Above all, this interpretation deconstructed the national-liberal discourse on Zwingli. The Reformation was exterritorialized and appraised as ‘foreign’. Catholic discourses of external confessionalization created both backwards-oriented continuities, and continuities oriented towards the present. In a discourse of progress not only the preservation of the federalist structure of the ‘old *Eidgenossenschaft*’ and the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* were ascribed to the Catholics, but also the organising principles of the ‘modern’ State (cf. Schwegler 1935). Such constructions of continuity essentialized the conception of the Swiss nation state.

The discourse of continuity and the politicisation of religion included – and I shall focus on Switzerland here – narratives on the French Revolution up to 1848 and the *Kulturkampf*. For this period of contemporary history, narratives with a strong regional reference to catholic central Switzerland dominated. Myths of resistance and of defeat were intertwined in a stylized fight of the Catholics for ‘faith and liberty’ (cf. Suter 1912; Marty 1880; Durrer 1910; Bösch 1948 and 1945; Dommann 1922–1924). In the intersection of regional, confessional and national discursive fields and their relation to medieval history, we can detect a prominent mechanism of mythicisation through temporal fading (cf. Assmann 1993): Mythical discourses of medieval history overlapped with narratives on the early nineteenth century through constructions of continuity and effects of ritualization. This mechanism is expressed most clearly in the construction of a discourse of a ‘community of interest and experience’ of – mythologized – central Switzerland from the medieval to the revolutionary period and the war of the

Sonderbund of 1847 (cf. Durrer 1910; Dommann 1943; Hürbin 1900–1908). The discourse of a special community constructed on the basis of religious and political consciousness of prototypical democracy – the so-called *Urdemokratie* – and of a *Sonderbund* was ascribed a key function in the fusion of national and religious identities. This discourse essentialized a catholic community of origins that was stylized as community of experience and memory, and synchronized with regard to three key narratives: 1) in relation to central Switzerland as medieval cradle of the nation; 2) with regard to catholic reform, which enabled an exclusively catholic reinterpretation of the integrative medieval narrative; and 3) vis a vis the time of the French revolution and the *Sonderbund*. Thus, the prolific and influential historian and archivist Robert Durrer wrote in 1910: ‘The religious interests united the Catholic cantons into a tight special community [i. e. at the time of the Reformation], in which their national consciousness is concentrated’ (Durrer 1910, 170). The synchronization of different discourses of memory that homogenized tradition and traditionalized community, had a detemporalizing effect and, hence, created an ahistorical presentism, while, simultaneously, politicizing history and making religion public.⁸

6 National, ultramontane, providential – the narrative creation of *lieux de mémoire*

Quantitatively speaking, catholic historical writings on the Reformation period between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century focused predominantly on catholic reform, or the so-called counter-reformation and the ‘confessional age’. Such narratives, which concentrated on the regional level, could produce a catholic narrative of triumph by historicizing ultramontane popular religiosity, as well as elite efforts for catholic renewal (cf. Hürbin 1900–1908). The religious and national dimensions of the historicization of ultramontane religiosity had the most haunting effects in personalised narratives that were often integrated within a broader ultramontane culture of memory. Saints of the ‘confessional age’, but also of the medieval period, such as Bonifatius in Germany and Niklaus von Flüe in Switzerland, were constructed as pivots of counter-narratives to protestant and national-liberal discourses centring on Luther and Zwingli. The originally integrative medieval figure Niklaus von Flüe (a fifteenth century hermit) became confessionalized and stylized as symbol of a pre-reformatory Catholic *Eidgenossenschaft*. Mechanisms of detemporalization, personal-

⁸ Regarding detemporalisation see Soeffner 2004, 61–72; id. 2000.

ization and charismatization produced an astonishing longevity for these narratives. This was also the case for figures of contemporary history, for example the ultramontane politician Joseph Leu von Ebersol who was murdered in 1845, and Constantin Siegwart-Müller, the leader of the *Sonderbund* regarding whom narratives of the mid-twentieth century still drew upon discourses presented in commemorative narrations of the mid-nineteenth century (cf. Bösch 1945). Leu von Ebersol, an ultramontane *lieu de mémoire*, was especially suited to an exclusive catholic counter-narrative on the *Sonderbund* and the *Kulturkampf* period that was paralleled to that of Niklaus von Flüe or Borromeo. Using an example from 1945, the *topos* of Niklaus von Flüe becomes particularly apparent in Gottfried Bösch's depiction of Josef Leu von Ebersol's death and funeral: 'Since Brother Klaus [i.e. Niklaus von Flüe] was carried to his final resting place, there could really not have been a people who more unanimously mourned their true father' (Bösch 1945, 217; cf. also Siegwart-Müller 1863). Bösch also describes Leu as the 'father of the fatherland', adding: 'The great annual pilgrimage to Sachseln, where hundreds of men with all their authority move to the graveside of their nation's father, will remain a memorial to Leu's sacrificial death' (Bösch 1945, 217). We can speak of a mythicization of the most recent past through an established, religion-based medieval myth that fostered and legitimized an exclusively Catholic counter-narrative on the nineteenth century period of Swiss nation-building.

Let us shortly turn to discourses on Borromeo in catholic Swiss historiography and their functioning in the context of discourses of scientificity and other modes of memory production. Borromeo was created a symbolic figure within whom the inner-worldly was intrinsically linked to a supernatural perspective on history. More explicitly than in other instances, the relationship between transcendence and immanence was staged: Borromeo was inscribed a providential character and function for his own time, as well as for Church and world history at large. Beyond Borromeo's life and, therefore, the internal religious sphere, the superposition of the religious and the national discursive fields was explicitly transcendentalized. The providential dimension was always directly related to Switzerland – with regard to both the regional and the national level. Accordingly, in his edition of sources, Eduard Wymann spoke of 'providence through the most manifold threads' through which Borromeo was tied to the destiny of the fatherland (Wymann 1910, 12). In his description of Borromeo's journey into central Switzerland, Wymann described an idyllic, clichéd countryside – he speaks of a 'gigantic landscape painting' –; an actual heroization and mythicization of nature as *pars pro toto* for the Catholic *Eidgenossenschaft* is presented:

Winding around the Mythenstein [i.e. a natural obelisk in Lake Lucerne in central Switzerland that was transformed into a monument commemorating Wilhelm Tell in 1859], and with a genuine feeling of elation, the governing mayor of Nidwalden showed his guest the precious area of his homeland, which, surrounded by light and resplendent in the richest of summer jewels, only revealed its beauty piece by piece to the church dignitary and his entourage. [...] Here and there on the nearby bank, the tranquil sound of a grazing cow's bell would ring out alongside the rhythmic sweep of the farmer's scythe; as the farmer felled the grass under the heavily laden fruit trees, and sang out a happy yodel that echoed far around the county and over the lake, greeting the cardinal's ears, or the gentle chime of bells floated across the water from the modest village church of St. Heinrich in Beckenried, half hidden behind the widely sweeping branches of a great walnut-tree, it broadcast its welcoming greeting in the name of the canton of Nidwalden. (Wymann 1910, 198–201)

The strategy of appresentation (*Präsentmachung*; cf. Soeffner 2004) becomes explicitly manifest in the historical fading of two saints from different centuries. In an article from 1916, the priest and archivist Wymann temporally synchronized the two central Catholic *lieu de mémoire* Borromeo and von Flüe: 'Two patrons of Catholic Switzerland greeted one another in the old Sachseln church [where Niklaus von Flüe supposedly lived] and in this way became a spectacle for the world and the angels' (Wymann 1916, 235; cf. id. 1917, 55–60; id. 1910/1911, 161–6). We can detect a double staging of mythicization here: in the narrative itself and in the scene presented or, in other words, the 'spectacle' alluded to in the citation. Wymann stylized the depicted scene as the 'unique and unforgettable earthly meeting' of the two figures, an event that came to be an 'unsoluble heavenly blessing covenant for Catholic Switzerland' (Wymann 1916, 235).

An in-depth analysis of historical discourses on Borromeo and of their discursive mechanisms clearly brought to light the closeness and entanglement of different genres of memory production (cf. Metzger 2014). Even through their use of primary sources and their respective self-reflections, Catholic historical narratives on saints remained similar to the representations of lives of saints that made no claims to scientificity. Conversely, popular publications, mostly by clerics, did not differ significantly in their narrative structure and semantics from works like Ludwig Pastor's *Charakterbilder katholischer Reformatoren* (Pastor 1924), from the condensed depictions in handbooks, or from more specific and detailed articles and monographs. The code 'true/untrue' could neither mark, nor guard the desired and ardently constructed boundary between 'scientific' historiography and memory.

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Religion and economic development: On the role of religion in the historiography of political economy in twentieth century China

1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to focus on a particular, yet influential, part of the historiographical discourse on religion in modern China. It is *particular* in the sense that it was not formulated within the evolving disciplinary fields of religious studies, anthropology or sociology, for which the category of 'religion' constituted a subject of central interest. Instead, this rather particular contribution to the historiographical discourse on religion became influential because it was formulated within the epistemic scope of a discipline that became an important field of knowledge production during the Republican era (1912–49), namely political economy.

Within this field, it was especially the politico-economic brand of Marxism that had, and still has, a crucial impact on historiography in China and that, in addition, exerted great influence on the administration and organization of religious activity in the country. The connection between these two dimensions of influence becomes particularly visible in the terminology of 'feudalism' or 'feudal' which was a core set of vocabulary used for the classification and political treatment of religion in twentieth century China. Although the terminology of 'feudalism' or 'feudal' is not specifically Marxist, it plays a prominent role in Marxist historiography itself and its philosophical grounding – Historical Materialism. Therefore, the establishment of the term is closely connected with the raise of Marxism in China, especially since the latter turned out to become the orthodox politico-economical approach after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949.

Accordingly, the influence of this terminology on religion is most visible in the context of the religious policy of the PRC, where the exclusion of certain religious practices from the category of officially acknowledged 'religion',¹ often

¹ Buddhism, Daoism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam are basically the only officially acknowledged religions in the PRC, which makes the term 'religion' a political category from

functions through the labeling of the respective practices as ‘feudal’ or ‘feudal superstition’. As a consequence such practices are considered socially harmful and in need of political reform (Goossaert, Palmer 2011, 161–5). Therefore, it can be stated that the dichotomy between the category of ‘religion’ and ‘feudal superstition’ has been one of the basic structures of the religious policy in China until today.² As one of the crucial categories to order the religious field in China, it appears useful to have a closer look at the composition of this category during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Regarding ‘superstition’ as opposed to ‘religion’, this scheme dates back to the modernist discourse of the early twentieth century, when it was taken over by the early Marxists and was, simultaneously, part of a general discourse of social reform during the Republican era. Within this discourse, ‘superstition’ subsumed religious practices and beliefs, which, did not fit the specifically modern notion of ‘religion’. The latter especially referred to a model, which resembles a ‘post-reformation’ idea of religion (cf. Goossaert, Palmer 2011, 50–2). This model reached China by the beginning of the twentieth century through translations from Japan, where the term was established slightly earlier to refer to the religion of the Christian missionaries. Equally associated with the ‘civilization’ of the ‘West’ and its moral and modernizing force alike, ‘religion’ was considered something essentially positive. What became accepted among intellectuals and politicians was, accordingly, the idea that ‘bad’ aspects of a tradition could be cropped out. While these latter aspects would fall under the category of ‘superstition’, the purged tradition would then become a ‘religion’ acceptable for modernist views. In fact, it was the National government that first established this terminology as the basis of its religious policy (cf. Nedostup 2009, 6–10). Although Chen Duxiu, founding member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), subordinated all kinds of religious practice under the term ‘superstition’, his overall critical view towards religion did not become representative for the CCP, neither terminologically, nor practically. Thus, for most parts of the history of the PRC, its religious policy was organized around the outlined differentiation between tolerated ‘religion’ and outcast ‘feudal superstition’.

In the classification of certain religious practices as ‘feudal superstition’ the term ‘feudal’ signals that the respective classification is also grounded in historiographical considerations. As I have outlined above, the category of ‘religion’

which other forms of religion are excluded. I use ‘religion’ therefore only to refer to this special category and its underlying model while, in contrast, I speak of *religion* in general terms, irrespective of the implications connected to ‘religion’.

² Note, however, that a lot of religious activity previously suppressed as ‘feudal superstition’ now takes place under different labels such as ‘tradition’, ‘culture’, or ‘intangible heritage’.

implied a specific model, according to which the diverse religious traditions present in China were to be cropped out and adjusted to a specific idea about how a religious tradition should be designed in 'modern' China. Thus, while 'religion' has been associated with modernity, one can assume, that the designation of certain religious practices as 'feudal superstitious' also locates these practices (and their respective beliefs) in a pre-modern past. The effects of being classified as a survival of pre-modernity are not only apparent in the problems of religious traditions that fall under the label of 'feudal superstition', but also became visible during periods like the Cultural Revolution, when even the politically acknowledged 'religions' were contested and accused of being strongholds of 'feudalism' (cf. MacInnis 1972).

It is well known that ever since its appearance in modern China, Marxism had a big influence on Chinese historiography and that, with the founding of the PRC in 1949, it became even more important by providing the interpretative framework for the official narrative of China's national history as a whole. However, less attention has been paid to the historiography of religion, which is entailed within the Chinese Marxist viewpoint on history, and to the fact that the issue of Marxism and religion is not only limited to the Marxist claim on religion as 'ideology' and 'false consciousness'. Accordingly, the first problem, which will be addressed here, is the question of feudalism within Marxist historiography and how it has been connected to religion. Yet, this problem will not be treated exclusively, since the connection between Marxist historiography and religion hints at a second problem, which I will outline briefly:

Since feudalism is part of a materialist conception of history within the Marxist historiographical framework, the labeling of certain religious practices as 'feudal' raises the question of the role of religion in such a materialist conception of history. Thus, equating history with a process of economic development, the question of the role of religion within materialist history becomes a question about the relationship between religion and economic development. In this regard, Marxism was part of a broader politico-economic discourse, which took shape during the Republican years, addressing this latter problem of religion and economic development.

Given the crucial function of political economy as a discipline directly connected to the task of modernizing China, as well as to its perspective on state and society as factors of national production, the influence of political economy and its conceptual implications about what was considered 'economically rational', were, likewise, not limited to the field of economy proper. Instead, the politico-economical discourse of Republican China not only addressed the problem of religion, but also provided the justification to reform certain religious practices, which were considered as 'unproductive' and 'economically irrational'. That

Chinese religious traditions fostered ‘wasteful’ customs in burials or marriages through an ‘unproductive’ expenditure for sacrifices and feasts was a common argument used by modern reformers who polemicized against these traditions (cf. Nedostup 2009, 10).

Thus, the historiographical location of certain religious beliefs and practices in a backward ‘feudal’ state of production not only joined a general discourse on the economic dysfunctions of Chinese traditions, but likely also contributed to the formulation of a specific requirement represented in the modern concept of ‘religion’, namely that ‘religion’ should be conceptualized in accordance with standards of ‘economic rationality’ and society’s productive task.

In addressing these problems, I will start with a general introduction to the connection between political economy and historiography in twentieth century China. Secondly, I will focus on religion in the historiographical debates on feudalism by analyzing two authors more closely: Tao Xisheng and Guo Moruo. Thirdly, I will locate the Marxist classification of religious practice as feudal in the context of Republican political economy.

2 Political economy and historiography in twentieth century China

In its early use, the term ‘political economy’ referred to questions and themes, which by the end of the nineteenth century, were being increasingly addressed through the category of ‘economics’. With the gradual replacement of the former by the latter, the term political economy was especially connected with the work of Karl Marx. While political economy was widely used as equivalent for economics in the countries of the former eastern bloc, western states would use the latter term (cf. Bürgin, Maissen 1999, 181). A similar terminological order applies in the case of China: the term ‘economics’ was first translated in several variants as *fuguo xue*, *licaixue*, or later *jingji xue*. ‘Economics’ in a Marxist sense was then translated as *zhengzhi jingjixue* by adding the adjective ‘political’ (cf. Lippert 2004). Thus, political economy was thought to overlap with economics but in a way that, at the same time, would differentiate it from the latter as a discipline especially connected to Marxism. I find this differentiation important because, although the main focus of this paper will be on Marxist writers, I will use the term in its broader sense to refer to a disciplinary discourse in which theories of economics, as well as Marxist perspectives on economy were debated. In fact, although Marxism not only had a huge influence on the field of political economy, but also on intellectual life during the Republican era, Chinese polit-

ical economy was a highly diverse discipline with different theoretical perspectives. With the growing reception and translations of economic writings from Russia, Japan, Europe and the United States, political economy became a pluralistic discourse covering a range of perspectives from the complete affirmation of free market economy to less liberal approaches, especially represented through the influence of the so-called German historical school of economics. On the side of State centralized economics, Marxism as well as Italian and German fascist organization of economic units were influential. However, although translations were an important channel for the early politico-economic debates led by forerunners like Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, or Sun Yatsen, missionary schools and the return of those who had studied economics abroad were likewise important. The institutionalization of political economy as a discipline took shape with the establishment of university departments, journals and study societies, especially during the 1920s with a fast raising number of students and publications (cf. Trescott 2007, 206).

However, to subsume Marxism under the term ‘political economy’ is not unproblematic, since Marxism was not only influential in the field of political economy, but also in the humanities and social sciences, or was generally used as a theoretical platform for social criticism. Moreover, the treated authors, Tao Xisheng and Guo Moruo, were not bound to the evolving discipline of political economy in China, but were historians, politicians and prose writers (the last at least in the case of Guo). What still makes them an essential part of the politico-economic discourse of their time is that their respective writings, to which I will refer later, are economic interpretations of history (and, thus, provide narrations of economic history) and that the historical insights gained from these interpretations of the past were seen as means to understand and *change* the present according to Marxist politico-economic visions of socioeconomic organization (cf. Dirlik 1978, 4).

Precisely this potential to transform Chinese society and the State into a modern nation gave specific significance to political economy. The urge to transform China into, what was considered, a modern nation State resulted from a deep political crisis. After domestic uprisings and the Chinese concessions towards Britain, France, Japan or Germany following the defeat in the Opium wars, China found itself politically marginalized. This meant a rupture in the self-conception of the Chinese State, which had imagined itself as the imperial center of the world and which was now not only downgraded to a position of one State among many, but also as one that seemed to lag behind technically, economically and militarily. Reacting to this crisis, Chinese government officials called for a ‘self-strengthening’ program. The very foundation of this concept of ‘self-strengthening’ was, on the one hand, a mixture of military, educational and

economic reform measurements. Zhang Zhidong, the central figure of this movement, spoke of ‘saving the country through business’ and stressed economic development as a tool for modernizing China (Zanasi 2006, 17). On the other hand, self-strengthening was based on the formula ‘western learning for practical use’,³ which meant that western knowledge should be practically attributed to the problems of China while the latter’s cultural ‘essence’ should remain unchanged. Accordingly, although debates about economic organization were nothing new in China’s intellectual history (cf. Hu 1988), the evolving discipline of political economy was mostly associated with western theories, to which a capacity of modernizing, and thereby saving, China from political decline was ascribed (cf. Trescott 2007, 12f.).

This means that the different approaches towards economic organization had not only been seen as useful knowledge for specific questions like finance or land property, or for a general reshaping of China’s economic policy, but also as means for solving a historical problem: political economy presented history as sequences of economic stages from hunting to industrial production, which inextricably linked modern civilization to the economic form of capitalism, either as affirmed goal of history or as the stage yet to overcome. Thus, China’s economic situation appeared to be a case of historical backwardness and only economic development could bring China back in the stream of history towards modernity. The progressive, teleological view of history underlying this perspective was triggered by evolutionist and social Darwinist thought. Yan Fu, a central figure who translated Thomas Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* had a huge impact on Republican intellectuals. It was again Yan Fu who translated Herbert Spencer’s *The Study of Sociology*, where Spencer identified the industrial stage as the peak of human evolution. Benjamin Schwartz has pointed out that it was precisely this synopsis of evolutionism and economic development that formed the perspective from which Yan Fu would then start his undertaking of translating Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. Thus, ‘the main message, which Yan Fu’s readers derived from this work, was not so much the specific message of economic individualism as the gospel of economic development in general’ (Schwartz 1964, 129). Hence, figures like Liang Qichao, one of the most vibrant Chinese thinkers of the early twentieth century, who held an ambivalent view on Adam Smith’s ideas presented in the writings of Yan Fu, was still in accordance with a progressive idea of history expressed in terms of economic development as history’s one and only way to modernity (cf. Zanasi 2006, 27).

³ The formula proposed was ‘Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical use’ (中学为体·西学为用, *Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*).

The same can be said about the early Marxists in China. Arif Dirlik has characterized the receptions of Marxist historiography until the 1920s as materialist versions of evolution theory. He understands the Historical Materialism of authors like Li Dazhao, Hu Hanmin and Tai Jitaos as a primarily historical scheme of economic progress with a direct nexus of basis and superstructure that, nevertheless, lacked sensibility for the issue of class and class relations as a dialectical problem intermediating between these two concepts (Dirlik 1978, 29). The result of this strong evolutionary undertone was a rough framework that equated history with the process of economic development itself, progressing from agricultural through commercial to industrial conditions, tied to respective forms of social organization: tribal, feudal and national (cf. Zanasi 2006, 27).

The problem implied here is that if a modern national economy is the result of a historical process of development, then the Chinese shortcomings in productive power could not simply be interpreted as a consequence of past or present failures of economic organization, but as the result of a deficient Chinese economic history as a whole. Hence, the questions at hand were: where in this scheme had China to be located and what were the defects of China's development? As Timothy Brook has shown, these questions especially circled around the notion of 'capitalism', which functioned as a specific point of reference to mark the historical difference between China and the western nation-states (Brook 1999, 114f.). Thus, an important part of the historiographical reflection during the first half of the twentieth century in China was dedicated to finding reasons for the self-diagnosed lack or underdevelopment of capitalism. Accordingly, non-Marxist authors were dedicated to writing histories of "Chinese economic thought" in which they identified, among other reasons, religious ideas and respective practices as obstacles to economic development.

In contrast, Marxist writers approached the question of capitalism and history from a different perspective. For them, the question why China had deficits in capitalist development was bound to the question whether China was still in a feudal or already in a capitalist- although underdeveloped- stage of production. The category of feudalism was, thus, of special importance for Marxists because a very practical concern depended on it. Depending on whether China was considered as still in the feudal or already in the capitalist stage, the conditions of a revolution leading to socialism would be different (cf. Dirlik 1978, 90). However, although the Marxist approach did not focus primarily on the role of ideas but tried to explain China's crisis with a focus on the socio-economic basis, religious ideas still played a very specific role in Marxist' argumentation.

3 Feudalism and religion in the early works of Tao Xisheng and Guo Moruo

Before analyzing the nexus of feudalism and religion in Tao Xisheng's and Guo Moruo's early writings, I will situate them in the context of a Marxist debate that took place between the end of the 1920 s and 1930 s. This debate has already been analyzed in depth by authors such as Benjamin Schwartz, Timothy Brook and Arif Dirlik; accordingly, I will only present some very basic positions within the debate in order to provide the necessary background to understand the connections drawn between feudalism and religion in the writings of Guo and Tao.

Arif Dirlik differentiates three phases in the reception of Marxism in China. According to Dirlik, the first (1899–1910) and the second (1918–mid 1920 s) phase only produced a rudimentary grasp of Marxism in general and Historical Materialism in particular. It was only after 1918 that Marxist historiography appeared as a subject of intellectual debates, when the reception of Marxist theory was triggered through the revolution in Russia in 1917 (Dirlik 1978, 20). As stated earlier in this text, the writings from this period of Marxist reception have been considered variants of economic evolution theory. Finally, Dirlik locates the beginning of the third phase in the last years of 1920 s. It is then that a specific debate became important, not only for the history of Marxism in China, but also for modern Chinese historiography as a whole. It is in the years from 1928 to 1937 that the so-called 'Social History Controversy' took place, a debate that dealt precisely with the question of where China should be located within a given Marxist model of materialist history.

The prerequisite of the debate was a Marxist model of five economic stages of history: primitive communism, ancient slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism. This model was either partly or completely adopted and it provided the framework for three different positions presented in the debate. These were the positions associated with the left wing of the Guo-Min-Dang Party (GMD), the Trotskyites and the Soviet Marxists. Even though, the Trotskyites and the left GMD had both argued that China was not feudal anymore, their explanations were different. While for the Trotskyites the argument that China was already capitalist was grounded in the assumption of a ruling bourgeoisie that was in league with foreign capital, the GMD leftists argued that China had already overcome feudal modes of production by the middle of the Zhou Dynasty (1045–256 B.C.). In contrast to these two positions, the Soviet Marxists thought the economic basis of China to still be characterized by Feudalism (cf. Brook 1999, 133 f.). The Chinese debate on this subject mirrored certain developments in Russia insofar as the Trotskyites' position came to be marginalized. Meanwhile, Tao Xisheng,

representing the left GMD position, and Guo Moruo, representing Soviet Marxism, became two of the most influential figures in the historiographical debate.

3.1 Tao Xisheng and feudal forces in Chinese history

Arif Dirlik provided several in-depth studies on Tao Xisheng and the Social History Controversy, yet the aspect and weight of religion in Tao Xisheng's argumentation has remained rather unexamined. I will therefore first follow Dirlik's illustrations of Tao's historical-economic analysis and then focus on the role of religion in Tao's argument.

According to Tao Xisheng, the feudal economy in China had vanished a long time ago, namely during the late Zhou Dynasty when commerce and trade started to transform the economic basis of the country. However, Tao argued further, so-called 'feudal forces' (*fangjian shili*) would still exist in the political and ideological superstructure of society (cf. Dirlik 1978, 96). Defining feudalism, Tao described it as the concentration of economic and political power within the same class, a feature, with which he characterized the old Zhou nobility. According to Tao, this feudalist nexus of political and economic power dissolved with the establishment of new economic and political elites. The rise of commerce had established new economically empowered elites of landowners and wealthy merchant families, while new constellations in the sphere of politics fostered the rise of an educational elite of scholar officials, which became an influential force at court after the end of the Zhou Dynasty. These scholar officials (*Shidaifu*, I will use the Chinese term in the following) functioned as carriers of the Confucian ideology which preserved central aspects of the feudal Zhou society, most and for all, the patriarchal organization of the family, but also a preference of agriculture over merchant activity. It is due to these 'feudal' elements within the Confucian doctrine that Tao labeled the *Shidaifu* as 'feudal forces' (cf. Dirlik 2005, 51f.).

Tao explained the Confucian preference for agriculture through the Confucian's 'parasitic' character. He described them as an elite that lived on the work and production of others. Therefore, a specific goal of their political power was to uphold and sustain their basis of economic supply. Accordingly, the bureaucratic regime of the *Shidaifu* tried to suppress commercial activity as much as possible and, instead, fostered the preservation of agriculture and land as the main focus of economic activity (cf. Dirlik 1978, 118). Tao argued that the result was that the further development of capitalist structures was blocked and paralyzed on a low level of productivity. Thus, already beyond a feudal economy, but still occupied by feudal forces in its political superstructure,

China was stuck in a transitional mode without having completed the development towards the stage of capitalism (cf. Dirlik 2005, 51). Tao's argument was based on the assumption that a society's ideological and political superstructure is determined by a respective socio-economic basis, but that this superstructure could for some time persist quasi-independently detached from it and even become an obstacle for the further development of the economic basis itself (cf. Dirlik 1978, 96). This suggests that Tao's theoretical move to detach the superstructure from the basis implied a shift in his conception about the progressive dynamics of history. Since the economic drive of historical development was paralyzed by the politics of the Shidaifu, Tao instead identified the determining forces of history in the political superstructure. This ascribed not only a special role to the influence of the Confucian officials, but also to their respective ideology.⁴

The nexus between religion and feudalism becomes obvious when Tao comes to analyzing the ideology of the Confucian *literati*, which he outlines in a religious terminology.

First, Tao states programmatically that the power of the Shidaifu, although their preference for an agriculturally centered economy, is not based on landownership but on 'Religion' (Tao 1929, 179). To explain this statement, Tao contrasts the *Shidaifu* to the clerics of the European "feudal" past and to clerics at the court in ancient China. This latter group consisted of religious specialists (*wu, xi*) responsible for divination practices and communication with the ancestors. What, for Tao, made them different from the European clerics is that their activity was restrained to the political center of the palace and that they had no impact on the religious life of the common people outside the court. Since they had no persistent 'Church' (*jiaohui*) infrastructure, as it was the case with the European clergy, their influence vanished with the political changes at the end of the Zhou Dynasty, when their institutional framework disappeared (*ibid.*, 187f.).

However, although the absence of a 'Church' was also true for the Confucian *Shidaifu*, their social influence was, according to Tao, comparable to the Christian influence in the West. Accordingly, Tao called the teaching of Confucius the 'State religion' (*guojiao*) of China (*ibid.*, 188). For Tao, the religious role of the

⁴ Although the main arguments for Tao's analysis are related to early and imperial China, the scope of his research was not restrained to the Chinese past. Another special interest was in the modern situation of China and the role of imperialism. Tao's analysis was furthermore criticized from several sides. Especially his treatment of class issues and his conception of a superstructure partly detached from an economic basis become subject to opposition. I will not go into these aspects, neither the problem of imperialism nor the critique on Tao since it does not contribute to the question of religion and its connection to feudalism.

Shidaifu was therefore that of administrators of a State-religion, comparable of the European clerics. The important difference for Tao was, however, that the *Shidaifu* did not operate through the clerical infrastructures of a Church, but through a 'feudal construction of society', ranging over all levels of the social spectrum (ibid., 191). This construction was related to the patriarchal clan family, ritually organized through the 'religion of the ancestor cult' (*zuzunjiao*), which was mirrored on the political level through the emperor as the son of heaven, the highest ancestor, which had its correspondence in the commoner's worship of his own ancestors (ibid., 190). It is this allegory of State and family based on the religion of the ancestor cult which for Tao defines the power of the *Shidaifu*. Not central for his argument, but at least remarkable seems that one of Tao's conclusions by comparing the *Shidaifu* to the clerics of Christian Europe is his hesitance to call the *Shidaifu* 'clerics'. He explained, that according to their reputation, the *Shidaifu* could be seen as clerics, but since ancestor worship as central to the Confucian teaching would operate independently within the social unit of the family and without a centralizing clerical institution, the *Shidaifu* are rather a 'status group' (*shenfen*) than a clerical class (ibid., 189f.).⁵ This means, that Tao grounds the *Shidaifu*'s power solely on the Confucian religion and its functioning within the framework of the family (opposed to the institutionalized framework of a clerical class).

Tao's explanation implies that, in the case of Confucianism, religion had a dominating effect over the economic basis, since the influence of the *Shidaifu*'s teaching resulted in paralyzing the overall spread of mercantile activity and the conservation of agriculture. One can therefore conclude, on the one hand, that the aspects Tao ascribed to the Confucian religion, like an ideology of patriarchal organization of the clan-family and a pre-capitalist ideal of economic production, seemingly defined for Tao what might be termed as 'feudal-religion'. On the other hand, it is precisely these feudal aspects ascribed by Tao to religion which then shift the role of religion to a prominent, yet harmful, place within his sketch of history as economic development. This approach was not only new in terms of systematically connecting the problem of economy and religion in the framework of materialist historical analysis, but added also an important aspect to the Republican discourse on Confucianism. While it had already become common ever since the New Culture Movement (*xin wenhua yundong*) of the 1910 s and 1920 s to associate Confucianism as the representation of a feudal

⁵ Although Tao is not coherent on that point, it seems that the main reason not to speak of class in regard to the *Shidaifu* is that the notion of class would imply a closer connection to the economic basis as it might fit into Tao's analytical framework.

society, especially in terms of family structure and gender inequality (cf. Goossaert, Palmer 2011, 227), Tao stressed the economic dysfunction of Confucianism as a main reason for China's 'historical backwardness'.

3.2 Guo Moruo and the formation of orthodox Marxist historiography

Guo Moruo provided another history of the stages of China's economic development. While Tao Xisheng's version had already been very influential among Chinese Marxists, Guo Moruo formulated the new historiographic orthodoxy in 1930 (cf. Brook 1999, 134). His *Studies in Ancient Chinese Society* adopted a five stages model of history which was inspired by Marx' *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* and formalized by the Soviet Marxists. This model presented history as the progression from the stages of primitive communism, ancient slavery, feudalism and capitalism to its final conclusion, socialism. When this conception of history became the official historiographic framework in the Soviet Union in 1938, Guo Moruo's historical writings reached the rank of a defining standard for historical analysis in China. This development became particularly pronounced after 1949, when historians came under the direct control of the party state and Guo Moruo's version of Chinese history received official sanction (cf. Dirlik 1978, 208).

In contrast to Tao Xisheng's position, Guo held the opinion that China's socioeconomic basis was still feudal in nature, which meant that Guo proposed a different periodization of the historical development of Chinese productive forces. According to the five-stage model, Guo presented China's past as a development from gens society to slave society, after which followed the long imperial period of feudalism. Again in contrast to Tao Xisheng, who classified the first half of the Zhou Dynasty as the heyday of feudalism, Guo came to the conclusion that the Zhou Dynasty was a slave society, thereby shifting the feudal organization of society to the imperial period after the Zhou (cf. Dirlik 1978, 145).

Accordingly, Guo used another idea of feudalism, which he defined as a stage that evolved out of slave society, whose main productive activity is agriculture, whereby the means of agricultural production are held by an exploitative class of landlords. Although Guo revised his definitions of feudalism several times, the emphasis on agriculture, on the one hand, and on the exploitative relations between landlords and peasants or between apprentices and masters within the guild organization of craft and trade, on the other hand, were recurring features of Guo's writings on feudalism (cf. Dirlik 1985, 206). Since he anchored feudalism in a socioeconomic basis, Guo avoided Tao's issue of having to

propose the existence of feudal forces that would persist separately from the basis. Thus, Guo ascribed to the feudal basis of society a politico-ideological superstructure, which he supposed to have come into formation with the appearance of private property as a means of class exploitation during slave society. This development towards a society based on private property was mirrored politically in the concentration of power, first, in the hands of the Zhou nobility and then, after the Zhou, in the hands of the emperor.

For Guo, this overall trend in the politico-ideological superstructure was also related to a development in religious thought and the respective appearance of the idea of “heaven”. For Guo, the concept of heaven indicated a turn from “polytheism” to forms of ancestor worship which served as religious legitimization of the emperor, the “son of heaven” (Guo 1930, 59; cf. Dirlik 1978, 156). Furthermore, the transition from slave to feudal society was marked by another change in religious worldview which became manifest in the production and the interpretative development of the classical book of the *Yijing*. Following Dirlik’s synthesis of Guo’s argument, the *Yijing* conceptualized “change” as an alteration process from one extreme pole to the next. This process was encapsulated in the formula that one extreme would cause another extreme. For Guo, this formula promoted an ethical teaching that tried to deal with this specific concept of “change” through the ideal of the ‘middle way’, which taught to avoid extremes in one’s conduct. This ethical strategy of avoiding change represented, for Guo, the central ideology of Confucianism during the feudal period in China, leading to the idealized norms of eclecticism, opportunism and reformism (Guo 1930, 65 f.; cf. Dirlik 1978, 157). According to Guo, this teaching of avoiding change was enforced by later commentaries on the *Yijing*, which presented the concept of change as a cosmic principle detached from human action. Since change was located outside the realm of human action one should accept one’s role within the given social strata by fulfilling one’s respective moral and ethical obligations. For Guo, the Confucian ethics, therefore, promoted an ideal of social harmony in opposition to historical change. For Guo, this was an ideological justification of economic exploitation with the effect that the revolutionary mechanisms of historical progress were paralyzed (Guo 1930, 87; cf. Dirlik 1978, 157). In sum, for Guo, religion seemed to have played a crucial role in mediating between the economic and political spheres, or the spheres of basis and superstructure respectively. This is shown in the religious sanctioning of the political concentration of power, which itself was thought to mirror equivalent processes in the sphere of economy. Furthermore, Guo connected religion to the economic basis by stating that the former dissolved the revolutionary tensions between exploiters and exploited through an ideology of the ‘middle way’ and a cosmological concept of change.

With this, Guo formulated a Marxist analysis of feudalism and religion, which could be termed ideal-typical since religion appears as ideological representation which supported feudal modes of exploitation and paralyzed the economic drive of revolutionary change. Yet, it seems remarkable, that although Guo made China into a Marxist sketch of materialist universal history, it is religious history in particular that then excludes China from this universal framework again: for Guo, the history of Christianity from the arrival of Jesus (at the stage of slave society) to scholastic philosophy (feudal period) to Luther and the Reformation (capitalist society) seems to represent the universal pattern for the relation between economic and religious history. Confucianism cut this history short at the stage of feudalism (Guo 1930, 87).

4 Economic historiography of religion in the context of contemporary politico-discourse

In the examples of Tao and Guo feudal religion has been presented as an ideological representation of a stagnating society due to the former's function of paralyzing the economic drive of history. However, they were not the only ones who concluded that religion in China was an obstacle to economic modernization. Authors like Li Quanshi or Tang Qingzeng wrote extensively on the history of economic ideas in China. Refraining from applying a Marxist-materialistic approach to history but, instead, understanding history as a process of economic development driven by economic ideas, they stressed that China's lack of capitalist entrepreneurship was due to the absence of a respective religious worldview, which would trigger such an economic behavior. What the religious traditions of China had to offer instead were practices based on an "uneconomic waste" of wealth for weddings, funerals and ancestor worship, and, according to Tang, a passive belief in faith and the dominance of the clan-family, which both discouraged individual entrepreneurship (cf. Tang 1936, 15–7). Accordingly, in a curriculum for productivity education of the Chinese people, which Li Quanshi presented in the renowned *Journal of the Chinese society for the study of economics*, he proposed the idea to make religion an object of his planned economic education program, subordinating it to 'education in indirect economic productivity' (*jianjie shengchan jiaoyu*) (Li 1933, 26).

How far the individual member of society could contribute to the task of China's economic modernization was subject to a debate about the location of economic rationality. Liberal economists argued that economic rationality was part of every economic agent. This theory was grounded in the idea that economic

activity followed the goal of satisfying certain needs defined by the agent itself. In contrast, collectivist approaches to economic rationality proposed that economic rationality can only be the outcome of economic education, and accordingly, for as long as this educational goal is not achieved, it is the State's responsibility to define which needs are economically rational and which should be regulated due to their unproductive character (cf. Zanasi 2012, 263f.; Lipkin 2006, 48 f.). This position was especially held by the Nationalist Government during the Nanjing decade and had a direct impact on the religious policy of that time. Religious specialists that would come under suspicion of promoting superstitious practices like spirit mediums or geomancy masters were classified as so-called 'unproductive elements' and became the object of the government's program for 'productive transformation' (cf. Nedostup 2009, 197). These measurements were part of an economic utopia of the Chiang Kai-Shek rule that hoped to transform China into a modern economy through a mixture of disciplinary, productive and frugality measurements. That is, an increase of productivity should be reached through collective discipline and military values, on the one hand, and sensitivity towards a "waste of resources", on the other. The latter meant frugal ethics of consumption, including abstention not only from "unproductive" substances as for example Opium, but also from non-Chinese goods (cf. Zanasi 2012, 263) and, last but not least, from "wasteful" religious practices like the burning of ghost money during festivals, extravagant funerals or marriages (cf. Nedostup 2009, 197 f.).

It has to be stated that the economic critique of certain religious practices as 'wasteful' or economically "irrational" are not modern phenomena in China's history. On the contrary, the critique on extravagant funerals is a discourse that dates back to antiquity. What is somewhat of a riddle is why these practices, which were identified for a long time as 'wasteful' and dangerous to the socio-economic order, had not been the target of reforms since the general display of luxury was seen as violation against the Confucian idea of a socially stratified ethic of consumption. Moreover, ritual expenses on a large scale, for example for funerals, were indeed seen as potential source of social unrest since it would impoverish a big part of society (cf. Rosner 1974, 325). However, despite such critiques, the respective practices were seemingly never subject to a more rigid religious policy (ibid., 326 f.).

It can therefore be argued that the modern reformulation of the economically motivated critique of certain religious practices in the context of political economy seemed to have been more successful in triggering projects to reform 'unproductive' forms of religion. Or, to put it another way, it seems that the task of reforming the religious field of modern China was, to a certain extent, part of politico-economic programs which, although different in their ideals and

goals, were consistent in the evaluation of Chinese religion requiring “economic rationalization” by purging it from its ‘wasteful’ and ‘unproductive’ aspects.

Thus, the Marxist debate about feudalism contributed to a discourse in which different aspects of Chinese religion were considered a hindrance to historical modernization through economic development. However, not only did the Marxist debate add very specific aspects to this discourse, but its historiographically defined terminology on the ‘feudal’ nature of certain religious traditions, beliefs or practices also shaped, and still shapes, the history of religions in twentieth century and present China.

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Section 3 **Transforming narratives**

Introduction

The third section of this volume assembles articles that, in one way or another, shed light on the prehistory and early developments of modern scholarly historiography and the academic discipline of the History of religion. The timeframes of the following articles thus range from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries (with some exceptions), while particular attention is given to authors, discourses and sources that have been crucial for modern scholarly narratives of a 'religious past'.

The title of this section – 'Transforming narratives' – alludes to dynamics that may (or may not) have accompanied the apparent transition of writer milieus that forms the historical backdrop of this section. Certainly, the historiographic methods, writing styles, narrative patterns and literary motivations applied in (*emic*) religious and (*etic*) scholarly historiography have changed to a more or less considerable degree. However, a fundamental distinction between *emic* and *etic* narratives of a 'religious past' should not be posited too hastily. As pointed out in the main introduction of this volume, academic historians devoted to the History of Religion often have – consciously or not – adopted terminologies, concepts, chronologies and genealogies or entire narrative patterns from questionable sources that had been produced by the very religious groups under investigation. Archaeological evidence notwithstanding, how should historians of early Christianity verify the Apostolic succession or the topics of ancient synods and councils without using historical reports written by ecclesiastical chroniclers? Obviously, there is a close relationship between *emic* and *etic* historiography which yields a range of unique problems in the realm of religion (e. g., how should academic historians deal with miracle reports or the frequently evoked historical agency of spiritual beings?). Even though historians of religion habitually profess that they handle the peculiarities and limitations of their sources in a controlled and reflected manner, it seems to us that the *emic-etic*-relationship has not been sufficiently problematised or thought through in the History of Religion. The following articles thus aim at elucidating said relationship within the scope of selected case studies. The reader may keep in mind that the distinction between primary and secondary literature (applied in the bibliographies) is, particularly in this third section, nothing but pragmatic.

BENEDIKT KRANEMANN focusses on the Roman Catholic history of liturgy in his article 'The notion of tradition in liturgy'. In a comparative survey of theological texts ranging from early Christianity to post-Conciliar writings of the late twentieth century, Kranemann unveils a fundamental ambivalence in the way the Roman Church has historicised its own ritual portfolio. On the one hand,

the ideal of an original, uncorrupted ‘service that was close to its biblical or apostolic origins’ was evoked continuously throughout the centuries. Often enough, liturgy ‘reforms’ really aimed for the ‘restoration’ of a presumed ritual prototype. On the other hand, Kranemann unveils that, the ‘desire to be close to the origins’ notwithstanding, the theological debate was quite aware that liturgy was a ‘living’ tradition open to change and innovation, e.g. to different local adaptations or theological re-interpretations. This twofold approach influenced the theological use of the Latin term ‘*traditio*’ which, expectably, adopted varied semantic nuances among different theological authors. Particularly from the nineteenth century onwards, ‘different notions of tradition stood side by side’. Kranemann thus concludes that ‘tradition’, in the realm of the Roman Catholic history of liturgy, is by no means self-evident but constantly negotiated. Its establishment was and is an act of power that ‘depends on the here and now’ and is ‘continually redefined by its specific context’.

In her article ‘Verbs, nouns, temporality and typology: Narrating about ritualised warfare in Roman antiquity and modern scholarship’ GABRIELLA GUSTAFSSON exemplifies mechanisms of ancient as well as modern historiographical distortions. Her case study is the historiographical construction of a ritual imagined as a stable sequence of ritual gestures. The cases are taken from the historiography of the Roman republic, starting from ancient general historiographic accounts like the Roman History written by Livy at the end of the first century BCE down to recent accounts of Roman religion in ‘scientific historiography’. With reference to the ‘calling out’ of a tutelary deity of a beleaguered city (‘Evocation’) and the self-sacrifice of a Roman general on the brink of losing a battle (‘devotion’), Gustafsson points to the gradual transformation of verbal ideographic accounts in early narratives (e.g. *evocare*, ‘they called out the god’) into abstract and generalising nouns (*evocatio*, ‘the calling out of gods’), suggestive of established and formalised rituals. Gustafsson thereby elucidates the development of typologies and concludes that shifts from *emic* to *etic* terminology within historical accounts may – by their tendency to simplify – obfuscate the analysis or rituals.

In her article ‘Judaism: An inquiry into the historical discourse’ CRISTIANA FACCHINI sheds new light on the (Jewish) history of the historiography of Judaism while challenging the controversial argument of Yosef H. Yerushalmi (*Zakhor: Jewish Memory and Jewish History*, Philadelphia 1982). Against Yerushalmi’s claim that the historiography of Judaism properly began in the nineteenth century, Facchini points to the early modern humanist discourse, particularly to the work of Yehudah Aryeh Modena, also known as Leon Modena (1571–1649). According to Facchini, Modena was the first Jewish author to compose an adequate contemporary image of Judaism (focusing on Jewish ritual, but

also on its historical dimensions) through what we today ‘might call a “phenomenological” lens’. By tracing the explicit and implicit reception of Modena’s *Historia de’ riti hebraici* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Facchini reconstructs the problematic interconnectedness of Christian and Jewish accounts of the history of Judaism and also demonstrates the conceptual roots and historiographic motivations of the nineteenth century ‘historicist era’ which was so important for the development of ‘modern’ Jewish self-conceptions and historiography. Finally, while discussing the case of the Italian scholar David Castelli, Facchini expounds the great difficulties Jewish Studies had to face in early twentieth century Italy.

RENÉE KOCH-PIETTRE, in her article ‘President de Brosses’s modern and post-modern fetishes in the historiography and history of religions’, illuminates a mostly unnoticed facet of Charles de Brosses’ (1709–1777) concept of ‘fetishism’. Koch-Piettre argues that de Brosses, unlike other prominent scholars of the eighteenth century, was one of the first ‘comparativist’ historians of religion, due to his neglect of enlightenment and theistic narratives, and his more homogeneous evaluation of various types of (non-Christian) religiosity. In this respect, de Brosses did not construe the concept of ‘fetishism’ to merely devalue the ‘direct’ worship of objects, but, to the contrary, to denote the latter as a type of religion that is in no way inferior to ‘figurative’, i. e. allegorical or theistic creed. Koch-Piettre suggests that de Brosses – even though frequently polemicising against both ‘fetishism’ and ‘figurism’ in his work *Du culte des dieux fétiches* – may have preferred the former as ‘*fétichistes* stick to the facts, to solid realities, while allegory speculates on all hot air’. As it turns out, this nuanced evaluation has been mostly neglected in the reception of De Brosses’ work. Koch-Piettre, however, sees therein the beginning of a more unbiased study of religions – as ‘the quest of truth was no more of doctrinal or mystical truth, but of historical and anthropological truth’.

In ‘*Historia sacra* and historical criticism in Biblical scholarship’ REINHARD KRATZ discusses the relationship between the fundamental claim to normativity of religious traditions on the one hand, and modern, critical scholarship of these traditions on the other. Kratz points to the example of the Biblical scholar and Arabist Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) and carves out a continuous narrative pattern that underlies Wellhausen’s view of the historical roots of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In all three cases there ‘is the idea of a development of, or more properly the opposition between, the original beginnings of a religion or culture which grew up naturally and are still completely earthy, and the later stage, in which things have assumed an institutionally established, artificial and dogmatic state’. Wellhausen thus shines out as one of the most radical Biblical scholars of the late nineteenth century who fundamentally challenged his-

toria sacra (i. e. religious foundation legends that claim normativity and absolute validity). While discussing the reception of Wellhausen's works, Kratz poses the general question whether the 'deconstruction of the *historia sacra* is intrinsically linked to the destruction of religion itself'. Both approaches – historical criticism on the one hand, and the uncritical adoption of *historia sacra* on the other – are rejected by Kratz who suggests that the relationship is far more complex. He alludes to the long, pre-academic legacy of 'sacred philology' or 'sacred criticism' that had already negotiated *historia sacra* on rational grounds before the nineteenth century, and points to the general context-dependence of truth claims, be they uttered by pre-modern theologians or contemporary academic authors. By concluding that 'sacred criticism' and 'higher criticism' do not necessarily exclude each other, Kratz seems to evoke the recent epistemological debate of 'methodological agnosticism'.

BERND-CHRISTIAN OTTO shifts the reader's attention from the historiography of 'religion' to the historiography of 'magic' in his article 'A Catholic "magician" historicises "magic": Éliphas Lévi's *Histoire de la Magie*'. Otto discusses the first extensive history of 'magic' written by a Western learned 'magician', i. e. an insider and practitioner of the art, namely, the *Histoire de la Magie*, published in 1860 by Éliphas Lévi Zahed *alias* Alphonse Louis Constant. Otto carves out three main narrative patterns within this text: (1) Lévi's tendency to construe 'magic' as a mysterious, unalterable baton that wanders through time and space – from God's creation of the world to nineteenth century France; (2) Lévi's distinction of two types of 'magic' and his evaluation of the history of the entire world from the viewpoint of this differentiation; (3) Lévi's peculiar amalgamation of 'magic' and Catholicism and his self-portrayal as the ultimate prophet of the new, 'magical' era of the 'Universal Church'. In his conclusions, Otto sheds light on the reception of Lévi's narrative, highlighting biases that pervade even recent scholarly narratives of a 'magic past'.

GIOVANNI FILORAMO, in his article 'Locating the history of Christianity between the History of the Church and the History of Religions: The Italian case', casts a critical glance on the institutionalisation of the academic discipline of 'History of Christianity and of the Christian Churches' in Italy. Due to its historical positioning between the poles of traditional ecclesiastical historiography on the one hand, and the emergence of modern, secular academia on the other, Italy shines out as a particularly difficult case in point with respect to the establishment of 'a range of studies of the history of Christianity devoid of any theological debt'. Filoramo discusses various authors and developments that took part in this establishment and points, in particular, to the continuous influence of the papacy, the heritage of idealist Enlightenment accounts of the history of Christianity (which mostly focussed on 'uncorrupted' ideas and origins), and fi-

nally, the ‘modernist crisis’ of scholarly historiography in the wake of the ‘historicist’ debate. Due to these competing factors of influence, the ‘secularised’ discipline of ‘History of Christianity and of the Christian Churches’ was properly institutionalised in Italy only after the Second World War. Filoramo, however, warns in his conclusive chapter that we are currently witnessing in Italy ‘the threat of the extinction of this discipline’, due to renewed attempts of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences to claim control over this area of research.

Benedikt Kranemann

The notion of tradition in liturgy

1 Introduction

To this day varied references to the past continue to play a significant role in Christian liturgy. The primary purpose of these allusions is not so much to express interest in the historical forms of liturgy as such, but rather to build and reinforce traditional ties of worship, which reflect and express the story of Jesus Christ in its original, present and future eschatological completion. Liturgical history has undergone a plethora of changes and deliberate reforms, for which its connection to tradition, and thus to the history of salvation, has been crucial. Church and liturgy co-exist in constant tension between traditional ties and processes of renewal. The term ‘tradition’ denotes both the course of transmission itself and the acceptance of what is transmitted (*traditio*), i.e. the process of establishing tradition, as well as the very subject matter of what is being passed on (*traditum*).

Inspired by an interest in liturgical research and by drawing on specific examples, I attempt to explore the diverse ways in which ‘tradition’ has been employed throughout liturgical history and still continues to be used today. In one sense such an approach is meant to guarantee proximity to those very origins that the religious community considers essential, both as a key to strengthening its identity and as a confirmation of loyalty to its mission. In a number of contexts, however, ‘tradition’ becomes the critical standard against which contemporary liturgical practices, and reforms in particular, are measured. In liturgy both permanence and movement are significantly involved when dealing with tradition of one kind or another. This will be demonstrated in brief chapters, drawing on selected theological texts and ecclesial documents. From this perspective, the origin and evolution of liturgy are closely intertwined. In what follows the focus is on Roman Catholic liturgy. Other Christian liturgies may well relate to ‘tradition’ in very different ways.¹

¹ Cf. the examples in Wainwright, Westerfield Tucker 2006 in particular for liturgical history of different confessions.

2 The emergence of liturgical traditions in early Christianity

Some important characteristics of the Christian tradition already crystallize in Paul's epistles. The paradosis of the Eucharist in 1 Cor 11:23–6 refers to Christ's revelatory actions. It invokes a pneumatological reality.² Through this tradition instituted by Christ himself in the Last Supper, he is ever present in the assembly's celebration of the meal. Viewed from this perspective, the Lord's Supper receives its salvific power through its close connection with its original establishment.³

Yet, at the same time tradition is passed on by the apostles and, thus, does not exclusively relate to Christ. It is thus possible to distinguish two levels of tradition. This fact is further emphasized in 1 Cor 11:23 ('For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you'), where it is described as a 'moulded tradition' (see also 1 Cor 9:14; 1 Thess 4:15). The apostle and his teachings gain authority through the testimony that is transmitted. Disputes in the community, which may, for example, concern the appropriate way of celebrating the Lord's Supper, are settled by recourse to established tradition. Tradition in Paul's sense refers to the processes of transmission through history guided by the Holy Spirit. At its centre stands the Kyrios Jesus Christ.

The Deutero-Pauline epistles further elaborate on this point. In the text all religious communities are asked to follow the tradition that has been passed down (cf. among other New Testament passages 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12.14) (cf. Schrage 1999, 29).⁴ In this way, a community of faith emerges, which posits the apostles as a so-called 'community of tradition' that exists in communion with Christ. A more developed notion of tradition can be found in the gospel of Luke. Due to the temporal distance between the historical time of Jesus Christ, and thus to the original event, and the time of Luke, chains of tradition emerge. In relation to his gospel as a whole Lukas emphasizes that he draws on, and fol-

² See e.g. 1 Cor 15:3f.: 'For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received'; followed by an extended passage on Christ's resurrection.

³ Cf. Fürst 2008, 23f.: the Eucharist has 'a very close relationship with Jesus's life and works, and Jesus himself has interpreted the last supper in this way. It is characteristic of his works to relate salvation to himself. Messenger and message are identical. [...]. The meaning of the last supper lay in the direct relation of the community of the Eucharist to the person of Jesus, and the early Christians celebrated their Eucharist in continuation of this community with Jesus'.

⁴ The 'I' was meant to, thus Schrage 1999, 30, 'in fact either to emphasise his own holding on to what has been passed on, set against Corinthian practice, and the correspondence of his teaching with the tradition or – more likely – to bolster the tradition's validity through apostolic authority'.

lows reliable oral witnesses ('from the beginning') as authoritative primary sources (Lk 1:2–4). For historiography, eyewitness testimonies are crucial; this refers to a methodology that is based on the need to distinguish true and false tradition.⁵ The Church is rooted in the apostolic tradition that acts as its glue (cf. Acts 1:8, 21f.). Hence, the normative character of tradition is now established among the community of believers.

The process of revelation is believed to have been concluded by the time of the apostles.⁶ Therefore, their testimony takes on a special normative character. It compels followers to receive, as well as further pass on their beliefs, including, of course, liturgy. Simultaneously, it demands close affinity to the original testimony from believers and attaches importance to those locations where tradition is passed on. Without doubt the Church's liturgy 'has to be considered the most effective means of passing on the acts' (Ratzinger 1965, 295). Decisive for the liturgy is the question of whether or not a particular tradition is historically accurate or authentic. Such historical authenticity of a given tradition assures its authority within a given community.

3 Liturgical tradition since early Christianity – A guarantor of orthodoxy

The transmission of the apostolic tradition remains a central theme of liturgical history and represents a recurring motif of liturgical reforms (cf. Klöckener, Kranemann 2002, 1092f.). Aside from the written tradition, which initially only encompassed the books of the Old Testament, the verbal apostolic tradition begins to gain ground. According to Yves Congar, it was considered particularly relevant and of normative importance for liturgical customs (Congar 1965, 90). This tradition has been traced back to the early days of ecclesiastical life.

As stated by the fathers, liturgy has to prove its derivation from tradition in both its theology and its rituals since continuity with the origin, the Christ event, is considered the foundation of worship. Recourse to the apostles is therefore es-

⁵ Cf. Bovon 1989, 36: 'To have seen is better than to have heard. For Luke's faith, eyewitnesses are however at the same time witnesses of divine salvation history: not only of Jesus's resurrection [...], but also of Jesus's life as a whole'.

⁶ See also the later decrees by the Council of Trent (fourth session, 8 April 1546) (Denzinger, Hünermann 1991, No. 1501); the decree of Pius X. from the year 1907 rejects the following sentence as statement of the modernists: *Revelatio, obiectum fidei catholicae constituens, non fuit cum Apostolis completa* (ibid., No. 3421).

sential.⁷ 1 Clem recalls the accurate way of performing the offerings and services according to the Lord's instructions (1 Clem 40,1–5). Subsequently, the hierarchical order, which builds on the apostolic succession is described: Christ, who came from God, imparted the gospel to his apostles; they then passed it on to their 'first-fruits', those whom they had instituted as bishops (1 Clem 42,1–5). Liturgical order and apostolicity are thus interlinked.

Numerous statements and regulations related to liturgy are traced back to the apostolic tradition, which can only be illustrated by referencing selected examples (cf. in more detail Congar 1965, 74f.). For instance, Tertullian indirectly legitimizes particular baptism rituals, Eucharist, the annual commemoration of the dead, Sunday observance and the sign of the cross with apostolic precept (*De corona*, 3 [Tertullian/Kroymann (ed.) 1942, 157f.]). According to Origen the Church's tradition of baptising infants originates from the apostles (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5,9,13 [Origen/Hammond Bammel (ed.) 2010, 440]). Cyprian traces the conventions of episcopal elections back to divine tradition and apostolic custom (*Epistula* 67, 5 [Cyprian/Diercks (ed.) 1996, 454]).

Basil of Caesarea, states that both the written and oral traditions enjoy the same significance with regards to the Christian faith (*De spiritu sancto*, 27,66 [Basil of Caesarea/Pruche (ed.) 1968, 188 A-192B]). He even goes as far as to say that one should not be satisfied with what can be learned from the apostles or the evangelists, but that one should equally rely on unwritten teachings which hold great significance for the Mysterion. Siricius, *Epistula* 6, 35 (PL XIII, 1166) and Innocent I in his letter to Decentius of Gubbio (PL XX, 551) recommend strict observance of the tradition: *ab Apostolis vel apostolicis viris* ('from the apostles or from apostolic men'). Siricius even further underscores his statement by saying: *ut unam fidem habentes, unum etiam in traditione sentire debeamus* ('if they have the same faith, they must also be in the same tradition'). For Augustine, the authority of the *Ecclesia universa* and thus of the tradition seem to be incontestable, since their authority is based on the scripture (*Contra Cresconium*, I,33,39 [Augustine/Petschenig (ed.) 1909, 357f.]). Pope Stephen's dictum, which was conveyed by Cyprian of Carthage (*Epistula* 74, 1f. [Cyprian/Diercks (ed.) 1996, 563f.]), and Eusebius (*Historia ecclesiastica*, VII,3 [Eusebius/Bardy (ed.) 1953, 167f.]), states (with regard to the acceptance of the baptism of heretics) that one should stick closely to traditions and refrain from introducing innovations. This has been regarded as a 'fundamental principle of Roman Catholic cult tradition' (Dölger 1929, 80).

7 See e. g. in principle the headings of the Didache in the different manuscripts; cf. Ign Mag 6,1; Ign Trall 2,2; 7,1; Polycarp I,2.

The term ‘traditio’ is not employed uniformly.⁸ Leo the Great, for example, not only uses the term to directly refer to the apostolic tradition, but also to describe what has developed out of it (cf. Lauras 1960). Likewise, Tertullian considers the continuation of tradition to be ensured by the fact that Churches follow customs of apostolic origin and participate in their testimony (*De praescriptione haereticorum*, 20,5–9 [ed. by R. F. Refoulé, in Tertullian/Dekkers (ed.) 1954, 202]). At this point it becomes obvious that in the context of liturgy the significance of a living tradition is emphasised. Irenaeus, for example compares traditional faith with a precious good that remains fresh in a vessel and in turn keeps its container fresh (*Contra haereses*, 3,24.1 [Irenaeus/Rousseau, Doutreleau (eds.) 1974, 472]). Traditions may grow and also evolve.

In the work of Vincent of Lérins, we see a partial systematisation of the notion of tradition, which also touches upon liturgy. It should be kept what is believed everywhere, forever and by everyone (*Commonitorium*, 2,3; 29,41 [Vincent of Lérins/Demeulenaere (ed.) 1985, 189 f.]). Here tradition is not only preserved: the Church is also bound to it.

Many similar statements can be found in the works of theologians and in conciliar decrees. The liturgy of the respective day primarily owes its authority to its traceability to the origins. The material aspect of tradition is evidently of lesser importance than its roots in the mystery of Christ and its authentic testimony. According to this view, the congregation comes face to face with God’s revelation through liturgy. God’s spirit is at work in the living tradition. Therefore, and above all, historicity has to be understood theologically. It manifests itself in the apostolic succession.

4 Liturgical tradition in the Middle Ages and the early Modern period

The later development of the concept of tradition in liturgy can only be briefly discussed here as it is very complex. The insistence on tradition endured, yet what was understood by ‘tradition’ varied. Moreover, different actors and institutions claimed to be authoritative representatives of the tradition. Increasingly liturgy lost its character as a *locus theologicus* with all of the consequences this had on the theological reflection of the mass. Furthermore, liturgy came to be seen as a

⁸ This corresponds with variety of liturgical developments (cf. Johnson 2006; Bradshaw 2006; Meßner 2003). It stands in contrast to references which highlight ‘the’ early Church’s liturgical tradition, (repeatedly) referred to in liturgical reforms of later centuries.

holy ritual that did not allow for change. Yet, this did not preclude additions and enhancements (cf. Angenendt 2011 and ³2014, 97–103). Its hermeneutics shifted with respect to the cultural context. The ritual tradition lived on while the theological context changed. The allegorical explanation of liturgy was meant to reveal its hidden spiritual significance. The meaning of liturgy and its symbolic understanding had to be enhanced. The goals were, among others: to reawaken the linkage between liturgy with salvation history (*in memoriam reducere*) (cf. Meßner 1993), the transmission and re-presentation of the corpus Christi (cf. Lentes 2009, 343) as well as its integration into the liturgy (cf. Petersen 2004, 59–71).

According to Rupert of Deutz, the offices had been established by the Catholic and Apostolic fathers (*De divinis officiis*, prologus [Rupert of Deutz/Haacke (ed.) 1967, 5 f.]). The details of Deutz' exposition reveal the obligatory nature of said offices. They penetrated Christian mystery deeply and proclaimed it through word, writing and signs. The Holy Spirit is the source of all sacraments and inspired the fathers to institute them. For Durand of Mende, the service is an event rich in symbols, but difficult to interpret. It, therefore, requires an explanation, though this explanation itself is limited, since not everything that has been transmitted is accessible through reason. The exposition of what has been passed on is based on an extensive web of interpretation, which ensures that liturgy – as something that evolved historically – is received in completely new ways (*Rationale divinarum officiorum*, prooemium 1 [Durand of Mende/Davril, Thibodeau (eds.) 1995, 3 f.]). In the oldest German commentary on the mass (approx. 1480) even the description of preparatory activities is preceded by the passage 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Lk 22:19) and, thus, constitutes a reference to the theological tradition. As a result, the priest who follows the prescriptions gets drawn into the holy events. The moment he exits the vestry is likened to the virgin giving birth:

Thus, the sacristy gives birth to the priest who has clothed himself there and who goes forth in place of the Lord Jesus Christ and wants to fulfil the service, as does the virgin Mary who brought Jesus her son into this world who has fulfilled the will of his heavenly father.⁹

At the same time reform movements emerged in the Middle Ages, and, especially, within the religious orders. These movements provided accounts of their respective traditions of the mass, engaged critically with these traditions and devel-

⁹ Both quotes: Reichert 1967, 14: 'Das thund in meiner gedechtnuß' – 'Also gebirt die sacristei den priester, der sich darinne an gekleydet hat, der dar auß geet an der stat des herren Cristi Ihesu und volbringen wil die messe, als die junckfraw Maria Ihesum, iren sun, in diese Welt gebar und der volbracht den willen seins hymelischen Vaters'.

oped criteria for liturgical reform. The Carthusian Order renewed its liturgy by retaining those elements of its own tradition that were considered suitable. Tradition was only one, though a very important element of the service, along with simplicity, the holy scripture and order (cf. Becker 2002). The Cistercians removed inherited supplementary prayers and offices, as well as processions, precisely because they wished to follow tradition. Yet, they also thought tradition to be obstructed by historical errors (cf. Altermatt 2002). The Bursfeld Congregation reformed its liturgical books by following the rule of Benedict and reason. In order to return to a liturgy that was more clearly aligned with their own tradition, their liturgical manuscripts were examined and certain passages were expunged or reworked (cf. Rosenthal 1984).

This approach to tradition and the historicity of the liturgy was only feasible in the context of theological expertise, scholarly infrastructure (such as libraries) and the existence of an organised reform. An intellectual basis was required to enable the necessary engagement with the tradition.

Liturgical renewal has been explicitly guided by tradition since the sixteenth century. The Council of Trent, or rather the post-Tridentine reform of Roman liturgical writings, followed the ‘standard of the fathers’.¹⁰ This was the case in the *Missale Romanum*, which openly speaks of taking its direction from the *sanctorum Patrum norma ac ritus* (cf. Klöckener 2006, 44 f., No. 4; Kranemann 2014). The authoritative introduction of the post-Tridentine *Breviarium Romanum* and *Missale Romanum* – which was compulsory in those bishoprics that did not possess their own liturgical tradition of at least 200 years of age –, as well as the foundation of the Congregation of Rites in 1588¹¹ illustrate that tradition and power were directly linked, even with respect to liturgy. The pope and hierarchy claimed the right to determine which tradition appeared to be orthodox and thus suitable to guarantee the historical foundations of liturgy. However, a distinction has to be made: With regards to liturgies of religious orders, and also the diocesan liturgies, significantly different paths were taken. This is particularly applicable to those rituals that took into account contemporary requirements and regional beliefs while maintaining liturgical traditions; some of these survived until the nineteenth century as authentic diocesan rituals (cf. Kranemann 2015 and 2011, 197 f.).

¹⁰ See on this reform Jungmann 1951 and Haunerland 2002.

¹¹ On this Congregation which urgently requires further research, see McManus 1954, Haunerland 2002, 449 f., Ditchfield 1999, 216–9, and id. 2002, 97 f.

5 Liturgy and tradition in the nineteenth century

In the Catholic Enlightenment tradition was used to denote the service of an idealized *Urchristentum* or, respectively, of early Christianity, and this service became the touchstone for the renewal of liturgical life.¹² The essential characteristics of an appropriate liturgy were thought to be contained within it. This was based on the notion that the service of the early days had been celebrated according to the instructions of Jesus Christ and the apostles, although the original forms, which in their intentions corresponded to a rational divine service, had been distorted throughout later periods of liturgical history. Thus, the original liturgy became a normative standard for the reform of the liturgical life.¹³ However, there was no homogenous notion of tradition. For theologians such as Ludwig Busch, Vitus Anton Winter or Ignaz Heinrich von Wessenberg everything that dates back to the instructions given by Christ ('founder') or the apostles was considered to be timelessly valid (cf. Kranemann 1995). This was extended to include those 'institutions' that had been set up by the universal Church. In contrast, everything dependent on time was considered open to change. Yet, historical examples illustrate the extent to which each respective decision depends on philosophical-theological premises. Liturgical history was interpreted wholly in the light of the Enlightenment.

Within a framework of general adherence to the structures of the inherited rituals,¹⁴ those traditional elements that ran counter to contemporary theology were changed or omitted, as for example exorcisms. The preservation and critique of tradition co-existed and at times contradicted one another during the Catholic Enlightenment.

Theologians and liturgical experts of the following period, such as Franz Anton Staudenmaier, Johann Baptist Lüft, Jakob Fluck and Sebastian Drey, developed a theology founded on salvation history. They were interested in the continuing impact of salvation on the Church and service throughout the centuries. In their view the Church is continually evolving. God's spirit acts upon the Church and is at work within it as the institution moved closer to god himself. Sebastian Drey considered the Christian liturgy to be linked to salvation history, thereby representing it and making it relevant to the present. Here, too, the focus is on tradition: the original Christian reality is meant to transmit itself to the

¹² Mayer 1929/1971, 213, refers to 'Catholic [Neo-]Classicism'.

¹³ See the contributions in Kohlschein 1989, Kranemann 2004 and Burkard 2012 on the liturgy in this period and the ideals that characterised it.

¹⁴ See most recently Ignatzi 1994.

present. For the abovementioned theologians the liturgy is (among other things) a ‘result partly of the desire to perpetuate the history of early Christianity and the Christian Church through image and action’. Thus, it should ‘exert its effect [...] on the soul and sensations’ (Drey 1824, 228). These theologians assign a particular quality to the interplay of form and content that was displayed in the tradition of the early Church. The spirit of antiquity lives on in later epochs and functions as a yardstick against which to measure the level of proximity a particular liturgy has to the original event. For example, Staudenmaier assumes that liturgy is fundamentally shaped by the past and has only been complemented by certain cases in later centuries. Therefore liturgical history is understood as archaeology (cf. Plock 1978, 94).

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the French specialist Benedictine Prosper Guéranger, a leading light in the liturgical restoration, saw the Roman tradition as the sole guarantor of a service that was close to its apostolic origins.¹⁵ The Roman liturgy offered the possibility of renewal and succor for the Church during difficult times. The disputes over the so-called ‘Neo-Gallican’ diocesan liturgies – which ultimately had to give way to the Roman liturgy (cf. Petit 2011) – demonstrate, how one liturgical tradition supplanted others. A liturgy that had been recognized as original provided the impulse to re-organise the liturgy in line with the historical context of the day. In order to preserve its beauty this tradition had to be cleansed of impurities. Nonetheless, it was the post-Tridentine form of this tradition that became the standard. Thus, the restoration stopped with the Roman liturgy of the late Middle Ages.

6 Liturgical and tradition in the Liturgical Movement

Likewise, the German-speaking Liturgical Movement of the twentieth century explored the theological and practical significance of tradition. This took place against the backdrop of the mystery-theology articulated by Odo Casel which grew out of a reception of the writings of the New Testament and the study of the Church fathers (cf. Gozier 1986; Schilson 1987; Häußling 2011). The notion of the presence of Christ’s mystery in the liturgy was a defining factor. Understood as *traditio normans*, this was meant to lie at the heart of the renewal of Church and faith. To rediscover the material liturgical traditions respectively

¹⁵ Cf. Johnson 1988; Oury 2005 and 2013; cf. also Petit 2010, 39–50: ‘Dom Guéranger et la construction d’une identité catholique’.

and to reform the inherited liturgy, were natural consequences. This went along with a fresh approach in liturgical research that led to new insights, particularly regarding the history of the various strands of the Christian liturgy in the ancient Church. However, periods such as the late Middle Ages have not been taken into account sufficiently and appropriately (cf. Angenendt ²2001). This also had consequences for how tradition was understood and perceived.

Thus, the Abbot of Maria Laach, Ildefons Herwegen, called for a return to the gospel, the apostles and the ‘Church of the first fruits’, which once again ought to become sources of Christian life. The inherited liturgical forms carry ‘within themselves divine life’ and are able to generate new life (Herwegen ²1922, 16). Ultimately, the call *ad fontes* demands turning towards Christ himself. By means of the tradition, liturgy leads to the knowledge of god.

Romano Guardini considers liturgy to be ‘positively set’ by the Church (Guardini 1923, 78). It remains in this way as long as the Church adheres to it. Guardini speaks of the objective in the liturgy. Liturgy in its historical form becomes an object of liturgical instruction, which is meant to facilitate new religious experiences by conveying basic liturgical behaviors (looking, walking in procession, communal action) in a new way.

Different notions of tradition stood side by side, as is clearly evident from the debate around the programmatic direction and practice of the Liturgical Movement. The archbishop of Freiburg, Conrad Gröber, complained in his *Memorandum* of 1943, which was critical of the Liturgical Movement, that representatives of liturgical renewal fell back to ‘earlier and earliest times, norms and forms’ (Maas-Ewerd 1981, 545). Against the Liturgical Movement’s suggestion of mistaken developments in the history of liturgy, Gröber set a virtually necessary evolution of dogmas and liturgy. The historicity of liturgy therefore manifests in its historical continuity.

The opposite position was adopted in the Viennese *Memorandum* of 1943. The *memorandum* warned against a ‘lifeless traditionalism’ (ibid., 603) that could not accept that tradition had to be newly appropriated in every new historical period. They argued that the ‘essential in the church and the Christian gospel [has to] continually become part of [...] each actual new era’ (ibid.). For these authors the desire to open up new possibilities for the future of Christianity was a sign of their true regard for the past.

The papal encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947), which was of great significance for the future direction of the Catholic liturgy as an ecclesiastical document that validated important concerns of the Liturgical Movement, displays a new notion of tradition. The beginnings of liturgy can be traced back to the foundation of the Church by God (Pius XII., *Mediator Dei* 1948 [1947], 21). Yet, the Church has always made changes to rituals, established them in new forms and extended

and enriched them. What is thus at stake is the core principle that animates ecclesiastical life (cf. *ibid.*, 20) and not simply a collection of laws and prescriptions (*ibid.*, 25). Therefore worship must be external and internal (*ut externus, ita internus*; *ibid.*, 23). Anthropological reasons (man as a unity of body and soul), as well as theological ones (revelation of the unity of the mystical body) have to account for this exteriority. Yet, a liturgy that is so explicitly directed at the human senses cannot be unchangeable. *Mediator Dei* consistently asserts the principle of a living tradition whose continuation is the responsibility of the ecclesiastical hierarchy (*ibid.*, 43), while preserving the substance of the sacraments (*ibid.*, 48). Human and divine elements co-exist within the liturgical tradition. The flexibility of the former is considered an expression of the vital force of the Church by *Mediator Dei* (cf. *ibid.*, 49). The evolution of liturgy in Church history is a function of the evolution of the discipline of the sacraments (*ibid.*, 52), the development of piety (*ibid.*, 53f.) and, finally, of cultural progress (*ibid.*, 55); examples for each aspect are given. Within the Church – perceived as a living organism – liturgy also has to evolve (*vivens membrorum compages*; *ibid.*, 58). Thereby, the integrity of the ecclesiastical doctrine has to be safeguarded (*tectaque servata suae doctrinae integritate*; *ibid.*). The historicity of liturgy is, thus, preserved by a living and changing tradition. Which strands of tradition are considered crucial is decided by the ecclesiastical authority based on the parameters outlined previously.

7 Liturgical tradition in the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar liturgical reform

The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy during the II. Vaticanum's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*¹⁶ and the post-conciliar renewal of liturgical life are both indebted to the liturgical tradition.¹⁷ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* employs the term '*traditio*' almost exclusively in order to explain the shaping of the liturgy through the history of rites, while tradition in the sense of the presence of salvation history is expressed by the theological term 'paschal mystery'.

¹⁶ See on this the commentaries of Lengeling 1965 (with German translation of the Council text) and Kaczynski 2004.

¹⁷ See on this liturgical reform the contributions in Stuflesser 2011 and Gerhards 2013.

7.1 *Traditio* in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

For the council fathers tradition was an indispensable point of reference for liturgical reform (cf. explicitly *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23; cf. Lengeling 1975). Tradition is explicitly referenced with regards to different liturgies (liturgy of the penitential season of Lent [*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 109]; liturgy of hourly offices [ibid., 84]), as well as in relation to specific texts such as the Psalter (ibid., 91), to the renewal of sacral music (ibid., 112) and the Latin language of liturgy (ibid., 101). Finally, it is also mentioned in the context of saintly veneration (ibid., 111).

Yet, the precise meaning of *traditio* in each particular case remains undetermined. This tends to be generally the case with council texts that speak of preserving, as well as opening up, traditions and offer very diverse notions of tradition alongside each other. It also applies to a term like *sana traditio* (ibid. 4; 23), which suggests the inference to traditions of varying value. According to *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23 what should be preserved has to be clarified by means of thorough research into liturgical history and – paying particular attention to the laws governing liturgical form and meaning (among which counts the distinction between ‘immutable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change’ made in article 21) – its utility for the Church and the physical shape of the liturgy. The Constitution does not settle the question which tradition is considered normative. At the same time and with its specific appeal to ‘tradition’ the Constitution indicates the Church’s indebtedness to the broad stream of tradition along with the freedom to reshape the liturgy based on the plentitude of historical expressions.

Tradition does not only signify the act of preserving inherited forms and elements of a particular story or faith as an organizing principle of reform, but also the continuous process of transmission out of which the faith may grow in the present. Article 21, therefore, allows the liturgy of the dead to be adapted to the traditions of individual regions. Article 65 refers to *traditio* of the people in the context of inculturation. Tradition is measured in terms of its relevance to the religious life of the present and, thus, according to the criterion of *participatio actiuosa*, is meant to allow liturgy to become the foundation of each individual person’s life as a Christian once again. We are dealing with a historicity that proves itself to be a living and a reliable foundation of the faith. With regards to liturgy one may refer to tradition as a process of communication (cf. Fre-sacher 1996, 298; on ‘tradition’ see ibid., 288–333).

7.2 ‘Paschal mystery’ in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

Wherever *Sacrosanctum Concilium* refers to tradition in its theological sense and, hence, to salvation history, the term ‘paschal mystery’ comes into play, which refers to all sacraments and sacramentals (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 61), as well as to the liturgical year (*ibid.*, 107).¹⁸ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 106 traces the celebration of the paschal mystery back to an apostolic origin, which is rooted in the event of resurrection itself and, as one may be able to infer, has been carried on over the centuries. The article summarizes crucial statements of the council’s liturgical theology and serves as a theological “shorthand” for God’s self-communication through salvation history’ (Häußling 1999, 164).

The council interprets the liturgical tradition from the perspective of paschal mystery in a salvation-historical manner. Liturgical tradition is not something that has come to completion in a past to which one simply looks back (an interpretation of liturgy which would result in its objectification), but as a living event which realises itself anew through God each and every time. A Christian congregation gathering for liturgy represents a community with a shared memory that demonstrates the actuality of the tradition of salvation history by means of its reception. This is possible due to the transcendental nature of salvation history. Its background is constituted by the belief in God’s presence on each particular day. In relation to liturgy this is elucidated by referring to the ways in which Christ is present in the liturgical celebrations (presentist actions of Jesus Christ during the assembly of the faithful), as for example in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7. This presence has a soteriological quality. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 8 expresses the eschatological dimension of this notion of tradition by anticipating the heavenly liturgy in which the earthly one already takes part (penetration of salvation history into the realm of human history). One central locus of the aforementioned transmission of divine revelation, which according to the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* 7 shall ‘abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations’, is liturgy as symbolic action of representation.

Such an interpretation of tradition indicates that liturgy must necessarily be an act of reception. This changes the understanding of liturgy as it primarily emphasizes – without losing sight of its ritual dimension – the antecedent actions of God and their ecclesial perception, and further stresses their reception through the lenses of the life and faith of each individual believer (personal un-

¹⁸ See on this term among others Jeggle-Merz 2010 and Haunerland 2012.

derstanding of the liturgy). The actual human being is a ‘target of divine engagement’ (Gerhards 2000, 29).

7.3 The notion of tradition in post-conciliar writings

The post-conciliar Roman writings about liturgy adhere to the theological concept of tradition, while, simultaneously, documenting the debates about tradition with respect to the material reform of liturgy that circulate within the Church. Since liturgy is so closely linked to tradition, as well as to history and historiography, the question about the authenticity of historical interpretation will necessarily arise. This is especially the case where inculturation and processes of renewal and reform are concerned, as illustrated by the various Roman instructions for the ‘proper execution’ of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The first instruction *Inter Oecumenici* (1964) explicitly refers to and encourages active participation in the construction of principles of reform. Additionally, it mentions a life informed by the paschal mystery as the ultimate purpose of pastoral care (*Inter Oecumenici* 1964/2013, 322). The third instruction *Liturgicae Instaurationes* (1970) states that the Church’s liturgical prayer derived from the most ancient, living, spiritual tradition – a tradition, which the reform of liturgy intends to perpetuate (*Liturgicae Instaurationes* 1970/2013, 442). The fourth instruction *Varietates Legitimae* (1994/2013) is characterised by a narrow focus on ritual and, thus, the tradition of the Roman Church, although regional cultures and their significance for liturgy are repeatedly highlighted. Questions regarding inculturation particularly demonstrate that, with respect to liturgy, competing models of tradition exist which are, in turn, related to differing ecclesologies.¹⁹ The instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (*Liturgiam authenticam* 2001/2013) which comments on translating liturgical texts from Latin narrows the notion of tradition even further. In dealing with tradition ‘the identity [...] of the Roman Rite’ has to be maintained – ‘not as a sort of historical monument, but rather as a manifestation of the theological realities of ecclesial communion and unity’ (ibid., p. 13 and par. 5). Tradition is meant to be safeguarded by a translation which should be as literal as possible. The notion of the lively transmission process recedes into the background. The Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum*, which newly approved the pre-conciliar rite in the Roman Church, goes further. According to this letter, we find ‘growth and progress, but no rupture’ in liturgical history. ‘What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sa-

¹⁹ Cf. Fresacher 1996, 302–28, on the transcendental and contextual concept of tradition.

cred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful' (Benedict XVI, *Summorum Pontificum* 2007/2013, 647). This way of understanding history has led to disputes within the Church and also provoked significant discussion between Church leaders and academia. In the context of this paper these discussions show how much the interpretation of tradition and historiography on the one hand, and liturgical-ritual identity and ecclesial self-image, on the other, are interdependent.

8 Conclusions

This paper has merely afforded the opportunity to reflect on a few, selected stages in the history of the liturgy. Moreover, an emphasis on the Catholic Liturgy has been necessary in modern times. Yet, a number of aspects that appear to be crucial for the relationship between history and religion have become clear:

- (i) What is understood by tradition varies and is continually redefined by its specific context. Which tradition comes to be regarded as 'the' tradition that is normative in a particular present setting is always determined within that very present. What constitutes tradition depends on the here and now. A more informed knowledge of history contributes both to the construction and deconstruction of tradition.
- (ii) Tradition is of theological relevance. Throughout liturgical history, the concern has not been to engage with history in such a way as to fix historical developments, but rather to identify a liturgy that has not been corrupted by later developments and can, therefore, guarantee a continuity between today and the early Church and, even more so, the time of Christ. The desire to be close to the origins is an incentive to struggle for tradition.
- (iii) Tradition has an ambivalent effect. It is committed to the idea of preservation, yet, concurrently, opens the doors to reform and innovation. On the one hand, it is possible to describe those ceremonies, rituals and texts that should be retained. On the other, it is possible to distinguish what is primary and what secondary and to mark out the space not defined by tradition.
- (iv) Tradition is, thus, endowed with a normative power, since what is sound and to be codified can be derived from it. At the same time, the history of liturgy illustrates repeatedly how tradition leads to dynamic interactions. Liturgies are changed with reference to tradition by creating new scope for processes of renewal and reform.

This renders the question how liturgy was understood and reflected upon during different historical periods all the more important. This is not only a central con-

cern for liturgical historiography, but also sheds light on the relation between history and religion. A wide field for further research remains beyond the initial observations set out here.

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Gabriella Gustafsson

Verbs, nouns, temporality and typology: Narrations of ritualised warfare in Roman Antiquity

1 Introduction

Writing a history of religions inevitably involves simplification and typology. Historical narratives of religion rely as much on the available sources, as on systematic scholarship and the state of the art. Taking an example from the history of Roman religion I hope to show that basic decisions about the style of narration and the selection of linguistic forms have enormous consequences. We tend to ignore the extent to which our reading of historical sources is informed by systematic notions of phenomena. Instead, we tend to consider ourselves mere innocent readers or consumers of said sources. The concept 'religion' itself already implies an over-simplification of a wide field of human behavior, emotional expression, ideas, power structures, etc. No doubt, simplification and typology are not only convenient but often also necessary for practical purposes. Religious phenomena repeatedly encountered, either in direct observation or in narrative texts, require at least a certain amount of common and widely accepted terminology. For these reasons we are habituated to the use of generic nouns, such as 'ritual', 'god', and even such truly vague and complicated terms as 'myth' and 'theology' in the History of Religions. In the various sub-fields, we are even used to terms with very limited applicability. In both cases, we use *nouns*. In this article, I will concentrate on two specific examples taken from the field of ancient Roman religion, namely the linked ideas of '*evocatio*' and '*devotio*', that can be found in both Latin and Greek sources and in later historiography.¹ I will illustrate how the rather trivial process of replacing a verbal phrase with a noun may result in an image of a ritually fixed practice that sometimes even includes various subtypes. By 'ritually fixed practice' I mean an identifiable ritual with well-defined forms that are static and unchanging in principle.

Since I have already exhaustively analyzed much of the material on *evocatio* elsewhere (Gustafsson 2000),² I will concentrate mainly on *devotio* in this article.

¹ Note that I here initially use the nouns. This is because I am discussing the notions and the terms, as such, and not (here) the history of religious phenomena thus labeled.

² Cf. especially, Blomart 1997, Ferri 2006 and 2010, and Kloppenberg 2005.

The focus will neither be on rituals as such, nor on source-critical aspects of the historical evidence (or lack thereof) but on the successive shift in historiography from ‘*evocare*’ and ‘*devovere*’ over ‘*evocatio*’ / ‘*devotio*’ to ‘(the) *Evocatio*’ and ‘(the) *Devotio*’, sometimes even including postulated subclasses. With the help of categories borrowed from anthropological ritual theory, which addresses different types of rituals, I suggest a possible explanation of how the ideas of fixed rituals in these particular historical cases came into being.

2 *Evocatio*

Evocatio refers to a possibly formalised ritual performed by a general before conquering a city: it is characterised by the act of ‘calling out to the tutelary deity’ and the dedication of a temple in Rome after the conquest (see for example Kloppenborg 2005, 419–50). The canonical case is the *evocatio* of Juno Regina from Veii in 396 BCE, mentioned by Livy, Plutarch and Dionysios of Halicarnassus.³ Apart from this, other cases of possible *evocationes* have been discussed;⁴ and a few Roman authors also mention the custom in more general terms. Macrobius even claims to cite the proper prayer formula.⁵ There is no archaeological evidence of the ritual, even though an inscription dating to 75 BCE has been interpreted explicitly as evidence of an *evocatio* or, more cautiously, a ritual ‘similar to *evocatio*’ (Hall 1973, 570).⁶ Thus, the historical evidence supporting individual events is weak, and even though Macrobius claims to cite an old prayer formula, none of the ancient sources actually mention a fixed ritual termed ‘*evocatio*’.

³ Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 5, Plutarchos, *Camillus*, 5–7, Dionysios of Halicarnassos, *The Roman Antiquities*, 13.

⁴ Especially the conquest of Carthage in 146 BCE.

⁵ E.g. Macrobius 3.9.2–9a. Macrobius is not discussing this particular case, but the *devotio* ritual in general terms, citing ‘book 5 of Serenus Sammonicus’ *Secret History*, a work which according to Macrobius was based on ‘the very ancient book of a certain Furius’. This Furius may possibly have been L. Furius Philus, a friend of Scipio Aemilianus, who conquered Carthage in 146 BCE (cf. Macrobius / Kaster, Robert A. [trans.] 2011, 67, note 75).

⁶ See Le Gall 1976, 520, and Alvar 1985, 247, who both find it reasonable to suppose that it was in fact a case of *evocatio*.

3 Devotio

Devotio is the established term for a Roman general's ritualised act of self-sacrifice during which he 'devotes,' both, his own life and the lives of the enemy. In modern scholarship the historical texts that focus on the different types of *devotiones* have been analyzed from a number of perspectives. These writings have asked questions about the various *devotio* rituals. Here, I will provide a brief summary of three separate variants of the ritual – *devotio ducis*, *devotio hostium*, and *devotio iberica* – and discuss the historical evidence in support of the existence and practice of these different categories.

3.1 One for all: *devotio hostium* and *devotio ducis*

What is the evidence for *devotiones*? Livy recounts how the Roman army and people were saved thanks to general Publius Decius Mus who sacrificed his life to the gods of the underworld (Liv. 8.9.5–10, cf. *ibid.* 9.1–11, 10.28.12–6, and 10.29.1–5). This event is said to have taken place in 350 B.C. Much later, in connection with his discussion of *evocatio*, Macrobius cites what he claims to be the prayer formula used to call upon the tutelary god of a city about to be conquered (Macr. 3.9.9b-15).

According to H. Versnel, the *devotio* rituals described by Livy and Macrobius, respectively, are, in fact, two different forms of the ritual: the ritual described by Macrobius (Sat. 3.9.9b-13), – in Versnel's terminology *devotio hostium* – is thought to be closer to the original form (Versnel 1976). The main reason behind this assumption is that Macrobius' description clearly refers to a form of *votum* ('vow'), whereas the episodes described by Livy can rather be defined as a consecration – *consecratio*. Versnel notes that the term '*devotio*' implies that the ritual corresponds to the definition of a *votum*, which is true of the *devotio hostium*, whereas the ritual described by Livy is a combination of *devotio* and the self-*consecratio* of the general. Versnel also points out that according to Livy, *devotio* differs from most forms of *vota* since what is asked for and what is promised to the gods are, in fact, the same (Versnel 1976, 399). L. F. Janssen questions some of Versnel's conclusions and suggests that the *devotio ducis* was actually a different ritual and should, therefore, be understood as a kind of 'contra-*votum*', 'destroying the *vota* of the enemies' (Janssen 1981, 374).

While I find Versnel's arguments and conclusions to be convincing, I do wonder to what extent it is really possible to find a 'true' or 'original' form of a ritual of this kind. I will return to this question in my final paragraph. For now, it shall suf-

fice to highlight the fact that all the texts discussed here are historical narratives of actions that are described in the form of contingent events, using verbs to describe these actions. They do not speak of the *devotio* as a traditional, fixed practice (Liv. 5.21.2; Liv. 8.6.8–13 9.1–11; Liv. 10.28.1–9; Macr. Sat. 3.9.9–13).⁷ There is no doubt that both Livy and Macrobius intend to present ritualised behaviors that are performed in traditional ways: It is apparent that Macrobius wants to describe the ritual in general terms, and hence he provides examples of historical cases where such actions have been performed.⁸ He concludes by asking: ‘have I convinced you that the depths of Maro’s poetry cannot be appreciated without a knowledge of divine and human law?’ (Macr. Sat. 3.9.16). In the ‘*devotio*-stories’ found in the writings of Livy, it is said that the Decii performed the sacrifice in a traditional form (Liv. 8.10–1). However, this does not necessarily mean that the authors were speaking of a fixed ritual, or, even something that they, themselves, thought to be a fixed ritual. They are obviously discussing cases of *devo-vere*, that is, of devoting the enemy city to the gods, but even though they are referring to traditional ways of action, both narratives are using verbs to describe specific actions. When Livy claimed that the generals carry out sacrifices in traditional ways, he may have been referring to the fact that they showed reverence to the gods and to the *mos maiorum*. It is certain that in 9.10.3, Livy is alluding to the *devotio* of Decius through the use of a noun, however, he is discussing a particular historical event, and not necessarily an act understood as a specific ritual. The ‘*devotio*’ of Decius is mentioned but it remains unclear whether the reader is really being told about Decius performing ‘a *devotio*’, or rather about an action that later became known as a particular episode in history. Similarly, Macrobius claims that his story is based on *antiquitates*. Yet, even if the prayer formula he cites was an authentic quotation from the capture of Carthage, there is no evidence that the same formula was used in earlier (or later) cases or that it was perceived as a fixed ritual. He mentions several cities that had been ‘devoted’ over the course of Rome’s history but this passage in the *Saturnalia* is the only instance one can find where

7 As Versnel and others have pointed out, the noun *devotio*, referring to ritualistic phenomena, is also found in a few texts. However, these texts are not discussing particular historical cases of rituals being performed, but commenting on general phenomena (cf. Versnel 1976, 370, n. 10).

8 Cf. Macrobius/Kaster [transl.] 2011, 3.9.9–13: ‘The same words should be used in offering a sacrificial victim and inspecting the meaning of entrails, so that they give a guarantee of the future. On the other hand, once the divinities have been called forth, cities and armies are devoted to destruction with the following words, which only dictators and generals are able to use for the purpose: [...] In the accounts of antiquity I have found these towns devoted to destruction: [...] Fregellae, Gabii, Veii, Fidenae; besides the towns just named in Italy, Carthage and Corinth [...] and other nations that the old-time annals mention’.

he presents a detailed prayer formula. Moreover, Macrobius does not explicitly claim that the same formula was used in the other cases. It is very likely that he thought the prayer formula was part of the knowledge learnt from accounts of antiquity. Nonetheless, he only maintains that the formula was used in the case of Carthage and that several other cities had also been devoted (*Sat.* 3.9.13: '*devota*'). Livy, on the other hand, merely states that the generals consulted ritual experts in order to perform the sacrifice properly. He does not quote the prayer formula himself, but, instead, only describes the actions of the general.

Thus, the relevant literature does not provide evidence for the supposition that there was a traditional, established form of *devotio*. What we do have are Late Republican narratives about ritual sacrificing in the context of earlier historical conquests on the one hand, and a very detailed prayer formula on the other, a formula that, according to Macrobius, was used in one particular historical instance. From a linguistic perspective Versnel is convinced that the prayer formula contains ancient material. He states: 'it does seem that the *carmen* was put together by a priest or an antiquarian on the basis of ancient material, when circumstances made another *devotio* necessary. The result is not a success in all respects' (Versnel 1976, 386).⁹ Partly based on Versnel's conclusions, it seems likely that there was never a fixed version of a 'true' *devotio* ritual. Rather, generals often ritually 'devoted' the enemy to the gods before a conquest. However, the ritual forms, as well as the words used, varied considerably according to circumstances.

In an article by Peter J. Burnell from 1982, he discusses Virgil's *Aeneid*, paying particular attention to the *devotio*-motif (Burnell 1982). 'It is certainly true, for instance, that the Romans admired extreme bravery and stubbornness in the service of Rome', he claims, and cites 'the renowned and ancient custom of *devotio*' (*ibid.*, 64). Burnell points out that Vergil also mentions the Decii among the heroes of Roman history. He stresses that the tradition of the *devotiones* of the Decii is not Livy's own construction since aspects of it can be recognised in a fragment of Ennius: 'But is it Livy, rather than the Roman tradition more generally, that makes a *devotio* practical and solemn? No. Both elements are present in a fragment of Ennius apparently describing a *devotio*; part of a

⁹ Cf. Greenland 2006, 244: 'The Roman *devotio* was a spur-of-the-moment pledge undertaken to avert defeat'. However, Greenland also notes (*ibid.*, 244, n. 26) that although the acts of the Decii were decided upon on the spot, there seems to have been a certain degree of forethought to the acts. Still, her conclusion is: 'A general may have suspected his fate before the battle, but the decision to devote oneself was apparently taken during battle, when vicissitudes of military fortune were made clear' (*ibid.* 244f.).

speech'.¹⁰ In my opinion, the key word here is 'apparently'. While it is true that the fragment from Ennius is about a prayer that seems to depict a similar kind of self-sacrifice that Livy describes, we can hardly conclude that it specifically refers to 'a *devotio*'? I would say: yes, with regard to a concept that is defined by later historiography, but no, if such a classification is understood, explicitly or implicitly, as based on a supposedly fixed Roman ritual. In scholarship, the repeated use of substantive forms has created an ahistorical image of the ritual and its status as an (imagined or historical) ad-hoc practice assembled from traditional ritual elements. This becomes even more evident when I now turn to what is clearly a creation of later historiography: the concept of *devotio Ibérica*.

3.2 Loyalty till death

In 1924, the Spanish lawyer Ramos y Loscertales published an article that argued that in Roman times the tribes of the Iberian peninsula had a custom slightly similar – although different in some important aspects – to the Roman *devotio* ritual, namely the '*devotio Iberica*' (Ramos y Loscertales 1924, 7). According to Loscertales 'the Iberians' were uniquely willing to die for their leader and this is what the Iberian form of *devotio* is about. He claims that the Iberian peoples of Antiquity had a tradition based on personal pacts of loyalty in the context of war. However, he continues by saying that what he calls '*devotio Ibérica*' was not only a question of social ties but also religiously based, and that even though this Iberian custom was not identical to the Roman *devotio*, there were still close analogies between the two (*ibid.*, 14 f.).

Robert Étienne took up the idea and postulated that the cultural tradition of *devotio Ibérica* was crucial for the success of the imperial cult among the peoples on the Iberian Peninsula (Étienne 1958). He also discussed the relationship between *devotio Ibérica* and *devotio Romana*. Étienne concludes that the two rituals were different, although both related to a context of warfare. According to Étienne, *devotio Ibérica* was decisive when the Roman imperial cult was established in Spain, and he claims that 'loyalty' (to superiors) was an important part of the mentality among the peoples on the Iberian Peninsula (*ibid.*). The phenomenon is also discussed by Duncan Fishwick, who writes: 'What it all amounts to is a tremendous outpouring of that *devotio Iberica* which R. Étienne identified

¹⁰ Cf. Burnell 1982, 65 (quoting Enn. *Ann.* 6, fr. 214–6 Vahlen): *Divi, hoc audite parumper / ut pro Romano populo prognariter armis / certando prudens animam de corpore mitto* ('Gods, give this a moment's hearing, as I on behalf of the Roman people, in conflict of arms, with presence of mind, knowingly send my soul from my body').

some 35 years ago' (Fishwick 1996, 184). Leonard A. Curchin is of a similar opinion, stating that in the West emperor worship had a precedent in the custom of *devotio Iberica*.¹¹

Fiona Greenland is critical of Loscertales' (as well as Étienne's, Curchin's and Fishwick's) use of historiography (Greenland 2006). She argues that Loscertales is influenced by the political ideals of early twentieth century Spain and, hence, thinks of collective loyalty to the leader as a 'native' cultural ideal. Thus, Greenland discusses the concept of *devotio Ibérica*, as formulated and analyzed by Loscertales and others, in terms of the 'manipulation' of Spain's ancient history, arguing that this idea was primarily motivated by ideals brought forward in Spanish politics from the 1920s as well as later during the twentieth century. Greenland proposes that the *devotio Ibérica* must be understood as fiction, invented by modern historians during the dictatorship of Franco, in order to produce an idealised image of ancient Spain. She also concludes that *devotio ducis* (that is, *devotio* in the form described by Livy) and *devotio Ibérica* differ in both purpose and ritual form, although they share the function of being tools for a political, national agenda (ibid., 251).

Greenland's analysis is convincing, but I find it remarkable that she still seems to accept Loscertales' and Étienne's assumption that there is, necessarily, a connection between the two forms of *devotio*. As we have seen, Loscertales, Étienne, Curchin and Fishwick, all consider *devotio Ibérica* a ritual, which makes explicit culturally embedded loyalties to a leader or a regime and entails practices expressing such loyalty. Loscertales based his arguments on texts by Sallustius, Plutarchos (both on how Sertorius was rescued) and a few others. Loscertales also noted that Polybius, Caesar and Tacitus mention specific forms of loyalty to leaders with regards to Gallic and German peoples. However, the connection to Livy's *devotio* is in fact stronger in Greenland's account when she claims that 'the point of reference for Sallust, Strabo, Plutarch and Ramos y Loscertales, consciously or unconsciously, is Livy's recounting of the *devotiones ducis* of Publius Decius Mus and his son, Decius, in 340 BCE and 295 BCE, respectively' (ibid., 243).

11 Cf. Curchin 1996, 143: 'Just as it is conventional to associate the success of the imperial cult in the East with the precedent of Hellenistic ruler worship, so at the western end of the Mediterranean the origins of emperor worship are traced to the institution of *devotion* or *fides Iberica*, whereby the clients of a Spanish leader would accompany him into battle and forfeit their own lives if he died. In the words of Valerius Maximus, "The Celtiberians also considered it abominable (*nefas*) to survive a battle when the man to whose safety they had vowed their lives had been killed"'.

None of these ancient authors use the term *devotio* in these contexts. Plutarch narrates how in the second century BCE, Quintus Sertorius was saved on the battlefield by his Iberian clients, an episode supposed to have taken place in 150 BCE (Plutarchos, *Sertorius*, 14.5). Furthermore, Strabo maintains that the practice among Iberians was to offer their lives to the general with whom they had made a pact of loyalty (Strabo, *Geography* 3.4). Strabo uses the word *kataspendein* (ibid., 3.4.18), which Greenland translates with the word ‘devote’. Even though it may be reasonable to translate both the Greek *kataspendein* and the Latin *devovere* with the English term *devote*, this does not necessarily lead one to conclude that Strabo was referring to a traditional and fixed ritual similar to *devotio*. Moreover, even if one or all of the texts had actually contained the word *devovere*, this does not mean that this term had an intertextual relation to the Decii and their ritual self-sacrifice on the battlefield on a conscious or subconscious level. Such a conclusion would not only presuppose that *devovere* was in fact used as a technical term for a specific and well-known ritual – *devotio* – but also that it was exclusively used in this specific sense. Consequently, this also assumes aspects of intertextuality, along with a very specific relationship between different uses of the verb *devovere* in both ancient texts and modern accounts of Roman antiquity. What is more: the noun *devotio* (and even subclasses of the concept) is obviously so well established that Greenland almost automatically writes not only about ‘*devotiones*’ but more specifically about ‘*devotiones ducis*’. Finally, she equates Strabo’s *kataspendein* with *devotio* without any further discussion.

On the one hand, Greenland’s analysis of Loscertales is both interesting and important. She discusses the concept *devotio Ibérica* in terms of the ‘manipulation’ of Spain’s ancient history and concludes that the *devotio Ibérica* should be understood as fiction, invented by modern historians. She demonstrates how antiquity and myths about the past are used in modern political discourse and also shows how certain notions of ‘the Other’, which are far from unusual in Latin texts, are uncritically transmitted and applied to new contexts in ancient Spanish history. The problem is that Greenland seems to accept exactly those points of departure she is criticising. Like Loscertales and others, she comes to the conclusion that *devotio ducis* (that is, the story of Decius in Livy’s version) and *devotio Ibérica* are undoubtedly different in both purpose and form, but that there are similarities in the sense that they have both been used as tools for a political, national agenda. However, almost any historical fiction, regarding warfare etc. could function as a tool for a political agenda. It seems as if Greenland never really questions the claims of Loscertales *et. al.* that *devotio ducis* and *devotio Ibérica* are historically related and should, therefore, be connected in historiographical analyses. In my opinion, this results in a circular argument.

3.3 *Devotio* from Ennius to Loscertales?

Before finally turning to my observations regarding different ritualistic categories, I shall now try to sum up my understanding of the ‘historiographical history’ of *devotio*. As we have seen, the oldest attested description of a possible *devotio* – without utilisation of the term – is found in a fragment of Ennius, where a general asks the gods to bear witness to his self-sacrifice for the Roman people and army. It is, thus, evident that Roman warfare was to a certain extent ritualised and that death on the battlefield was perceived in sacrificial terms by poets of the period as early as the third century BCE. Later, Livy provides a detailed description of the manner in which consul Decius sacrificed his own life and the lives of the enemy in ritual. In these stories, the word *devovere* is used several times, always in verbal form and never as a noun. Macrobius equally uses the word in verbal, narrative forms but also claims to have knowledge of the prayer formula used when Carthage was devoted in 146 BCE. A prayer formula can be uniquely invented for a specific event, but we usually suppose that such formulas are conventional and associated with a fixed ritual.

In modern historiography, the ancient Roman custom of a general sacrificing himself and/or the enemy to the gods has been commonly termed *devotio*, and different forms of this ritual practice have been discussed and analyzed. According to some interpretations, the people living on the Iberian Peninsula in Antiquity had a custom of making loyalty pacts with the leader that may be termed *devotio Iberica*.

There seems to be no reason to doubt that Roman warfare was ritualised, in both performance and perception, including acts of a general sacrificing his life in order to rescue the Roman state and people. The question is: was there ever an actually fixed form of ‘*devotio*’, or should we rather see the phenomenon as a custom that took very different forms under different conditions, among which some acts of *devoting* to the gods were later narrated as having been decisive for winning the war?

4 Categorising rituals

So far, I have argued that even though the noun ‘*devotio*’ is used in ancient historical texts, there is no convincing evidence to support historiographical claims that there was a fixed ritual termed *devotio*; the concept of *devotio Ibérica* appears to be a modern invention and it seems reasonable to label it a ‘fiction’, as Greenland did. The question remains: how did such fiction come into being in the modern historiography of Antiquity?

There has been a tendency in modern religious studies, to categorise religious practices into different general ‘types’. On the basis of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner’s theories (van Gennep 1909; Turner 1967), Lauri Honko works with a typological trichotomy: rites of passage, calendric rites, and crisis rites (Honko 1979, 372–80). A basic feature in any definition of religious rituals is their periodic recurrence. However, while this is undoubtedly true of calendar rituals and rites of passage, the situation is quite different when it comes to ‘crisis rituals’. These rituals are invented anew for each individual case. Modern examples of common rituals performed after political or natural catastrophes show that in order to recognise them as ‘rituals,’ they must include traditional ritual forms and notions. It seems likely that the same holds true for the Romans in Republican times. I will exemplify this in due course by providing a number of examples. It is, therefore, highly probable that Camillus performed some kind of ‘ritual’, before the statue of Juno was taken out of the temple in Veii, although I find it difficult to believe that such a performative act was seen as a specific, fixed form of a traditional ritual in his day. In my opinions none of the soldiers (or any priests possibly present) recognised it as such. It is particularly doubtful that the performances were following an established ritual script. It is also unlikely that the same ‘ritual’ was performed in later times, as, for example, by Scipio during the conquest of Carthage in 146 BCE. The formula cited by Macrobius may well be historically authentic. Nonetheless, Macrobius only remarks that he learned about the formula from older sources, which may go back to the actual conquest of Carthage. He does not claim that the same prayer formula was used in the other conquests he lists.

The typologies produced in modern comparative religious studies are sufficient to explain the notion of fixed crisis rituals in Roman religion. Even though it is true that Livy and other historians do not mention an ‘*evocatio*’ and only rarely a ‘*devotio*’, Livy still maintains that the Decii did what they did in accordance with traditional custom (see for example Liv. 8.10–1). In 9.10.3, he uses the noun *devotio* and later Macrobius claimed that certain passages in Vergil’s *Aeneid* were in fact allusions to a traditional ritual. So how can I question not only the modern notions of an *Evocatio*, a *Devotio hostis*, *Devotio ducis* and *Devotio iberica*¹² but also the views of Macrobius, not to mention those of the much earlier Livy?

My answer is that I do not in fact question that Livy might have believed – or even known – that the traditions of the conquests he was describing included some kind of old and well-established ritual. I definitely do not question that

12 I here use capital ‘E’ and ‘D’ to mark the ideas of actually fixed rituals.

this was the impression he wanted to give his readers. However, he was writing history and he was writing about events and heroes in Roman history that were well-known and perceived as particularly important in the narration of historical conquests. Moreover, he likely wanted his readers to understand that in earlier times the Romans were much more pious, and this message is strengthened by giving the impression that the cities of the enemies were conquered in accordance with the *mos maiorum*. Nonetheless, religious practices governed by *mos maiorum* do not necessarily mean fixed rituals. Thus, what I am questioning is the idea of *devotio* as a fixed ritual.

Now, if we look at Honko's typologies it seems obvious that calendrical rites and rites of passage were both regular and regulated in Roman antiquity. In terms of calendric rites, the preserved calendars prove they existed from a very early time in Roman history, while several Roman authors clearly account for well-established rituals in relation to rites of passage. However, the situation is quite different when we look at 'crisis rituals'. The category is no doubt a modern construct, and, therefore, it has limited applicability for comparative studies, as well as for the analysis of ancient literary sources. However, even though the category as such does not 'exist' outside of our modern typologies, it may still be useful for analyzing and comparing similar aspects of certain kinds of ritual practices.

Regardless of various definitions and typologies, rituals performed especially in situations of crisis and immediate danger, have to be adapted to each individual situation, which is *per definitionem* unique. It is only after the fact that similarities between different examples of ritual practice, both in the same culture and sometimes even in quite different cultures and historical eras, can be identified. Yet, this does not mean that they were identical or that they were perceived as examples of the same traditional ritual by the people of their time. In order to illustrate my point I will turn to modern parallels: Over the last thirty years Sweden has experienced a number of events and catastrophes that may be viewed as 'national traumas': the murder of the prime minister Olof Palme in 1986, the wreck of Estonia in the Baltic sea in 1994, the tsunami in Thailand in 2004 (with many Swedish tourists among the victims) and the murder of the foreign minister Anna Lind in 2003. When Olof Palme was killed in 1986, roses and hand-written notes were spontaneously placed on the spot of his death. Seventeen years later, another minister was shot dead, an event followed by similar expressions of collective mourning. The catastrophes of Estonia and the tsunami evoked different kinds of collective reactions, which are generally perceived as 'traditional'. All these examples are not varieties of the same ritual and cannot be called aspects of a traditional, let alone a fixed ritual. Looking back and analyzing all four cases from a birds-eye view, it is possible to identify

certain common traits (such as roses, specific church ceremonies and radio speeches given by the king of Sweden and/or the prime minister). But there is no manual for this kind of event, and it seems impossible to imagine what such a manual would look like. A *Handbook for national crisis rituals* is in fact unthinkable.¹³

Even though it would be absurd to actually compare contemporary Swedish society with the Roman republic more than two thousand years ago, the fact remains that categories and perspectives applied in our modern analyses of Roman State religion are necessarily colored by our modern world-views and experiences (individual as well as collective). My question is therefore, again: is it reasonable to assume that the generals of the Roman republic understood their own activities at Veii and other places as performances of ‘traditional rituals’, or can we assume that Livy and Macrobius and other ancient authors knew about such fixed and established ritual programs?

Lauri Honko explains the category of ‘crisis rituals’ as a trichotomy:

They are organised by an individual or a community, in situations that upset the normal world and threaten the life of the individual or the community, or the achievement of their immediate aims. [...] The aim of the rites is to indicate the cause of the accident, to reveal the guilty person, and to ease the problematic nature of an unexpected incident by means of explanations and counter-action. *This happens in the language of myth by finding a precedent for a strange new phenomenon from the sacred primordial times* in the history of creation: for example, an illness is cured by recalling a myth which tells about the first occurrence of the illness and its cure. *The event of the myth is brought into the present*, the cure is re-enacted here and now, and the illness is reassigned to its own place in the world order, just as in primordial times; the disorder is eliminated. (Honko 1979, 377f.; my italics).

According to Honko, the rites are expressed through the language of myth, narrating a prior incident of crisis that was solved ritually (ibid.). I have highlighted those passages in his analysis that I consider key to the narratives of Livy *et. al.*, as well as later receptions: connecting a conquest with events from ‘mythical’ times gives it meaning and makes the outcome predictable. The quotation from Honko primarily concerns non-literate cultures but he explicitly states that he views the trichotomy as a ‘cultural universal’ (ibid., 379). In the case of Livy and the other authors, it seems reasonable to replace the word ‘myth’ with ‘legend’ and the term ‘primordial times’ with ‘the Early Republic’.

¹³ Such similarities may be explained theoretically from the perspective of cognitive studies. See for example McCauley, Lawson 2002.

5 Verbs and nouns revisited

In the preceding sections I have presented a few examples of religious practice or events that are mentioned or even discussed in Latin and Greek historiography; in modern scholarship these instances are portrayed as fixed rituals. I argued that verbal forms in Latin sources – *evocare*, *devovere* – are generally presented and analyzed as substantives in modern scholarly historiography. Utilising substantives in headings seems largely unproblematic, and also very practical; it might even be adequate to use them as labels for particular forms of ritual practice. However, when these technical terms in substantive form are employed to describe fluid practices and phenomena as clearly identifiable and fixed rituals – which seems to happen very easily when the substantive forms are repeated over and over again –, a shift seems to occur that is worth exploring in more detail.

As I have been trying to highlight it is probable that acts of self-sacrifice and of sacrificing a conquered city were sanctioned religiously and could be elaborated through a ritual framework in Roman antiquity. It is also highly probable that ideals brought forward in traditions about particularly important heroes in Roman history were consciously emphasised with the help of intertextual references to such practices. I am not questioning the historical conclusion that warfare – and especially conquest – was somewhat ritualised during the early and middle Republic. Instead I am questioning the far-reaching conclusions made on the basis of assumptions that lack solid evidential support in the form sources, as well as the supposition that various subcategories of a particular ritual existed. Thus, my conclusions do not really differ much from those of, for example, Greenland and Versnel both of whom note that the *devotiones* of the Decii seem to have been invented in adaptation to the particular historical circumstances (cf. above, note 9). I conclude that it is clearly reasonable to consider the events in Roman historiography discussed here examples of ritualistic performances that had traditional forms. It is probable that there were a number of distinctly traditional rituals in Roman State religion but there is not sufficient reason to suppose that ritual practices performed in critical and historically unique phases of warfare also had fixed forms. Applying perspectives from anthropology and comparative religious studies to Roman religion and its reception history, it seems likely that ‘crisis rituals’ have occasionally been presented as being based on very old precedents, and this seems true for the historical narratives of Livy, Macrobius and Ramos y Loscertales. Although there is evidence for the existence of old ritual forms, we also encounter examples of scholars either over-stressing the fixed ritual forms or drawing unreasonable parallels between practices that have very little in common. Loscertales’ *devotio Ibérica* and the

terms later used exemplify this phenomenon. Especially in the context of *devotio Ibérica*, it should not be forgotten that the verb *devovere* can have a variety of different meanings other than religious and ritualistic. It seems likely that the historical narratives about ritual practices generally termed *evocatio* and *devotio* are all about unique events and can, therefore, not be made to fit into static ‘categories’. Historically, the particular events that have been discussed here are all distinctly unique, and even though it is reasonable to suppose that conquests and other military actions were ritualised to some extent, it seems unlikely that there were ever any written scripts or oral traditions that formed the basis of such rites. Applying the concept of ‘crisis rituals’, borrowed from anthropology and comparative religious studies, I have been trying to show how ritualised conquests during particular periods of Roman religious history differ from ‘calendrical rites’ and ‘life cycle rites’, respectively. Crisis rituals must, necessarily, have been invented specifically for each individual case.

The regular use of substantive forms in the description of rituals that are in fact mainly known from narratives of historically unique events can largely be assumed to be pedagogically motivated. Whatever the reasons may be, it is possible to identify some recurring consequences of this circumstance. A certain amount of typologising seems to be almost unavoidable and it is quite unproblematic as long as one does not forget that these nouns are generally only categorisations and inventions of stereotypes in later historiography. Thus, I am convinced that *etic* categories like *evocatio* and *devotio* are in fact unproblematic and perhaps even necessary when studying Roman religion. However, this particular field of research is different from many others: in a sense, a typological term in Latin stands between – and/or overlap – *emic* and *etic* when it comes to a culture where Latin was the language used by the religious culture itself. The reader tends to suppose that such Latin terms are terms taken from ancient discourse. The same may be said about Greek religion and terms with a Greek etymology, as for example the categories ‘theology’ and ‘myth’ (and the same could just as well be said about modern examples from cultures where the first language is English, German or French). Therefore, it is particularly problematic to study and analyze ancient Greek and Roman religions as far as the distinction between *emic* and *etic* terminology is concerned. By the continuous use of an *etic* noun, the ritual practice may appear as systematical and static, and this may in turn contribute to preserving an image of an innate and ‘original’ religious culture more or less unaffected by changing historical contexts. Transforming ancient narratives into modern historiography of religion poses numerous methodological challenges.

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Cristiana Facchini

Judaism: An inquiry into the historical discourse

An article published in 1945 in response to German Anti-Semitism argued that its racism could be traced back to biblical times, namely, the books of Ezra and Nehemia, and, accordingly, might be linked to the notion of the ‘chosen people’ as it was developed in some parts of the Bible. According to the author, Adolfo Omodeo, racism was the by-product of the ancient Jews’ inferiority complex, which, combined with the doctrine of Messianism, nurtured the concept of Jewish superiority.

Ideas such as these were not new, and appeared in published articles especially during the 1930s, when anti-Semitism became a State doctrine in many European countries. In Italy, this concept was expounded in the works of Catholic scholars influenced by the teachings of the notorious Swiss Catholic theologian Herman De Vries de Heekelingen (cf. Facchini 2012; Connelly 2012; Moro 2003). What is surprising, though, is that such views were articulated at the end of World War II by Adolfo Omodeo, an important Italian historian of early Christianity and a member of the *Partito d'azione*, which had fought against the fascist regime (cf. Finzi 2006). That these views were expressed by a noted historian and prominent leader of a liberal political party with a strong antifascist background indicate, I believe, how the history of Judaism and the history of the Jews were uncharted territory even for eminent scholars and major public figures. They also point to a second question: the relationship between scholarship on religions and its impact on a larger public, especially before World War II and in particular in Italy. In the early nineteenth century, Jewish scholars like Leopold Zunz and Abraham Berliner felt that educating people about the past would slowly eliminate anti-Semitism and other religious hatred.¹ These scholars thus embarked on a massive project aimed at reconstructing the whole history of Judaism, conceived as a religion, a culture, and, later on, a civilization (cf. Eisenstadt 1992).

Several decades ago, the prominent Jewish American historian Yosef H. Yerushalmi published an insightful book entitled *Zakhor: Jewish Memory and Jewish History*. The book, which reached a large audience, posed a number of topical questions exploring the way Judaism had dealt with the perception of the past (Yerushalmi 1982). Yerushalmi emphasized that Jewish modes of relating to the

¹ Remarks on the ability of education of Zunz in Mendes-Flohr, Reinhartz 2010 and Berliner 1899.

past had changed radically from biblical to rabbinical times, and that historical writing, as a shared practice, was established only in the nineteenth century. During the Renaissance, a period marked by widespread interest in the past and a deep involvement with historical writing, Jews produced a number of both important and lesser-known historical works. For Yerushalmi, the historical writings among Jews at that time were prompted by the 'trauma' of the Spanish expulsion, which fueled an intense search for its causes and meaning (ibid., chapter 3).

Although brilliant and highly acclaimed, *Zakhor* was nonetheless not entirely convincing, and to this day, it continues to provoke debate among scholars of different persuasions. The Israeli historian Robert Bonfil, for example, has pointed out how Jews conspicuously wrote chronicles and engaged in historical writing in various areas of the diaspora and at different time periods (cf. Funkenstein 1993). Moreover, among the most relevant historical works from the early modern period, only a few were written by Jewish refugees from the Iberian lands, whereas the majority were composed in accordance with the shared cultural needs of the time. The historical writing addressed a range of topics, among them, chronology and reckoning of time, polemics with Christians of different denominations, and self-reflection on the Jewish tradition. The broad dissemination of Josephus Flavius's works in the Renaissance and its great influence especially among Protestant scholars aroused a similar, though still unexplored, interest among Jews.

Yerushalmi unequivocally claimed that history played a pivotal role among Jewish intellectuals at the start of the nineteenth century, a time when 'Judaism [had to] prove its utility to history, by revealing and justifying itself historically' (Yerushalmi 1982, 84). It is worth noting that at this moment, Judaism's historical relevance helped advance the process of political emancipation, defining Jewish historiography in relation to ideology. The search for a viable past was used to bolster the creation of a modern image of Judaism that could be deployed in the public arena. Moreover, as Immanuel Wolf had emphasized, Judaism was in need of a historical outlook and a philosophy of history (ibid., 85). Whether one agrees or takes issue with Yerushalmi's interpretation of Jewish historiography, in this article I focus on two different time periods, when, I suggest, the historical perceptions of Judaism were elaborated. At the conclusion of the article, I will offer a case study on Italy that will attempt to explain these introductory remarks.

1 Rereading the early modern period

In a letter sent from a Christian Hebraist in Silesia to an Italian rabbi in Padua in the early eighteenth century, one encounters the question explored by Yerushalmi. Christian Theophil Unger, who had actively collaborated with Jacques Basnage on the compilation of the *Histoire des juifs* and was in the process of helping J. C. Wolf edit his monumental bibliography of Hebraic literature (Wolf 1713–1733), asked the rabbi why the Jews had produced a limited number of books about their own history.² The rabbi's response was very simple: Jews were unable to write about their own history in conditions of exile and under duress, and thus prevented from recording their stories and affairs in the manner that other nations were doing so convincingly. However, the rabbi was deceiving his correspondent, because he himself had authored a chronicle about the Jews of Padua, and had even considered writing a comprehensive history of Italian Jewry. He had also penned a short treatise on blood libel, in which he skillfully deployed his talents of historical analysis (cf. Facchini 1999 and 2014). Nevertheless, the problem of the lack of historical accounts of Judaism and Jewish history constituted an object of discussion among scholars of different religious persuasions.

We should therefore ask a number of questions. Why did Christians and Jews alike feel compelled to delve into issues regarding the history of Judaism, with respect to both biblical and rabbinical aspects and the system of doctrines and rituals? When was Judaism conceived as a 'religion'?³ When and why did Jews begin to adopt historical perspectives and attempt to explain and write histories of Judaism? In doing so, were they reacting to heated debates over the history of Christianity? What fueled the curiosity and assessment of Judaism as a religious tradition?⁴

As to the question of when these developments emerged, one might first be tempted to respond: in the nineteenth century. And that would be quite a sound answer. However, I would like to offer a different insight. Leaving aside the period of late antiquity, when religious communities of Christians and Jews underwent a process of radical change and reassessed their historical outlooks accord-

² See the correspondence between Isaac Cantarini and C. Theophil Unger in Facchini 2011.

³ More than the term 'religion', early modern scholars used the adjective, 'religious'. One of the most important descriptions of Judaism appeared in *Tous les ceremonies du monde*, penned by the Huguenots Bernard and Picart (cf. Hunt, Jacob, Mijnhardt 2010).

⁴ The most striking historiographical conflict in the early modern period, in full polemical guise, was between the Catholic historiographer Baronius and the Calvinist Casaubon over the interpretation of the rise of Christianity (cf. Grafton, Weinberg 2011).

ingly, the early modern period, as I indicated above, constitutes a logical point of departure.⁵ The rise of humanism and philology, combined with the evangelical movement of Erasmian origin, emphasized the understanding of ancient texts, with a special focus on the Bible. This intellectual movement was influential in the rediscovery of the Hebrew language, and consequently, Hebrew literature. Jews were also drawn to philology and antiquarian erudition as powerful tools of inquiry, especially in those geographical areas where they were in contact with Christian scholarship. The first scholar who fully engaged with issues related to the treatment of Jewish sources and rabbinical chronology was Azariah De' Rossi, who composed a lengthy treatise, *Me'or enayim*, analyzing different issues of historical nature, among them the role of the Letter of Aristeas, the historical relevance of haggadic sayings, and Jewish chronology. Although space does not permit me to analyze De' Rossi's contribution, suffice it to say that he played a major role in promoting interest in the Jewish past, while also prompting strong criticism from conservative rabbis who feared his modern methodology (De' Rossi/Weinberg [transl.] 2001).

Furthermore, if we focus on the early modern period, we encounter such developments as the rise of the Reformation, the discovery of America, and the critique of the Aristotelian corpus, all of which contributed to the 'crisis of the European mind', to invoke the title of a famous book (Hazard 1935). According to some historians, the Reformation gave rise to a deepening of religiosity, and was then followed by the Counter-Reformation, which set forth a number of decrees intended to bring about the conversion of Europeans living in rural areas as well as non-Europeans.⁶ The seventeenth century is well understood as comprising a long period of antithetical attitudes toward life and religion, namely, the expression of deep religious devotion, alongside the rise and establishment of new approaches to science and libertine attitudes.⁷ In the realm of political thought, this century witnessed a debate over the nature of the State and its relation to theology, accompanied by an enduring attempt to foster and implement religious tolerance. It is precisely at this moment that new historiographical insights into Judaism were elaborated.⁸

The social actors in this process were Christians as well as Jews. I will here focus on several leading members of Jewish culture who contributed to the de-

⁵ See few polemical remarks in Bonfil 1988.

⁶ There is no consensus over the quality of religious life in post-Reformed Europe. I recall the works of Prospero for Italy (Prosperi 2009). For the paradigm of 'confessionalization' see Headley, Hillerbrand, Papalas 2004.

⁷ For a different approach see Coudert 2011.

⁸ For the relationship between religion and politics see Nelson 2010.

velopment of a new reading of Judaism during the first decades of the seventeenth century.

The first author deserving of comprehensive treatment is the rabbi and scholar Yehudah Aryeh Modena, also known as Leon Modena (1571–1649). Among the most important rabbis and scholars of the early seventeenth century, Modena was a controversial and prolific author who lived and worked mainly in Venice, the capital port city of the Serenissima Republic. In 1637/38, Modena published a short book on Jewish rituals, entitled *Historia de' riti ebraici*.⁹ First and foremost, this work belongs to a peculiar genre – what has recently been termed ‘Jewish ethnography’ – written by Christian scholars in an attempt to understand, and sometimes denigrate, post-biblical Judaism (cf. Hsia 1994; Burnett 1994; Stroumsa 2010; Deutsch 2012; for a critical appraisal Grafton, Weinberg 2011). Many of these works started to appear by the late sixteenth century and became quite specialized during the seventeenth. *Historia de' riti ebraici* is unique of its kind both because it was composed by a Jew and because of its author's attempt to counter the famous *Die Judenschul* compiled by the Protestant Hebraist J. C. Buxtorf in 1603. The tract was translated into Latin as *Synagoga Judaica* and became widely acclaimed (cf. Burnett 1994). In his book Buxtorf described in details the rites of the Jews trying to convey the idea that contemporary Judaism was superstitious and ridiculous, very distant from its biblical roots (cf. Deutsch 2012).

The *Riti* may be labeled a Jewish ‘ethnography’ in accordance with the development of this genre or, with some caution, may be characterized as a type of ‘autoethnography’ written by a Jew for a Christian audience.¹⁰ The perspective is *emic* but not fully devoid of polemical insights, even though the writer highlights his condition as that of a ‘neutral writer’.¹¹

The book appeared in octavo format and although brief, it conveyed a clear and sharp image of Judaism. It was reprinted in Italian many times over the course of the seventeenth century, and was soon after its initial publication translated into the most important European languages.¹² At first glance, it does not resemble a historical account, although if read carefully it is possible

⁹ On the history of the text see Cohen 1972.

¹⁰ For this notion see Pratt 1992 and Facchini 2013, where I suggest ‘autoptic imagination’, drawn from Pagden 1993.

¹¹ Cf. Leon Modena (1638, Proemio): ‘Nello scriver, in verità, che mi sono scordato d'esser Hebreo, figurandomi semplice, e neutrale relatore’ (‘In writing, to be true, I have forgotten that I am a Jew, thinking that I am a neutral composer’).

¹² Translations: English (1650, 1703, 1712), French (1674, 1681), Dutch (1683), Latin (1693), Hebrew (1867).

to discern historical perceptions of Judaism mixed with historical information. Modena's intention was to offer an appraisal of Judaism as rooted in biblical writings, even after the loss of the ancient state and the emergence of the rabbinical tradition. Moreover, his depiction of Judaism focuses on its rational features, whereas the mystical tradition is obliterated. It leaves no space for the individual, albeit with a few exceptions: the individual's ritualistic attitude toward certain life cycle rites and man's relation to science and the textual tradition. Modern scholars, such as Cohen and Stroumsa among others, have observed how Modena, influenced by other works on Jewish rituals, consciously overlooked the dimension of beliefs. I suggest that he preferred to focus on ritual not because it was more relevant in the seventeenth century, as Guy Stroumsa has argued, but precisely because belief is indeed central to the core of polemical thought (Stroumsa 2010). Modena offers a brief discussion of the belief system, while trying to avoid the official censorship of the Inquisition on specific issues (for example, the Thirteen Articles of Faith or the belief in reincarnation). He believed that actions encoded in rituals were more relevant than beliefs (cf. Guetta 2000). From where did he derive this conviction? His reference to Maimonides is apt, as far as the latter was concerned with defining Jews through their allegiance to Jewish rituals, which are binding for the group. Beliefs, according to Modena, were not powerful enough to sustain the religious community.¹³

Even though much of the information in Modena's book comes from textual evidence (and is therefore prescriptive inasmuch he drew from *halakhic* material), there are a number of details that are gleaned from historical data and from his concrete knowledge of Italian Jewish communities.¹⁴ Modena provides many examples of Jewish rituals supported by historical documentation, related to preaching, synagogue practices, mourning, charities, Jewish languages, and poetry, among others, all of which contribute to the creation of an accurate portrayal of Italian Judaism. His masterwork is both an attempt to convey an image of Judaism in his lifetime and to promote an ideal vision of the Jewish religion, in order to downplay currents of mystical thought that he deemed dangerous for the religion. From the perspective of the science of religion, the *Riti* is one of the first treatises to present Judaism through what we might call a 'phenomenological' lens, with the intent to reconstruct religious practices from the perspective of an insider. There is no space here to further elaborate on this notion, but

¹³ This position is evident if one compares his *Riti* to Simone Luzzatto's *Discorso circa il stato de gli hebrei*, published in Venice in 1638.

¹⁴ The most comprehensive analysis of Modena's *Historia de' riti* is provided in Cohen 1972.

suffice it to say that this aspect of the work might explain its immensely successful reception among a non-Jewish readership, both Catholic and Protestant.

Modena applied a historical perspective in other of his Hebrew writings as well, namely, his anti-Kabbalah treatise *Ari nohem*, which circulated in manuscript form and was published only in 1840 (cf. Dweck 2011), and his anti-Christian tract, *Magen wa-herew* (cf. Modena/Simonsohn [ed.] 1960). In the first treatise the Italian rabbi demonstrates that the *Zohar* could not have been an ancient text. In the process, he masterfully deploys the tools of humanist culture developed in the previous centuries. Why did he feel the urge to historicize the text of the *Zohar*? There are a number of possible answers, but in any case it is quite clear that the goal was polemical. For the moment, let us merely state that in doing so, Modena was the first to historicize the Kabbalah, in an attempt to diminish its importance within Jewish and Christian culture.

In *Magen wa-herew* he endeavors to depict the historical Jesus in a more positive light, overcoming the legacy of the *Toledoth Yeshu*, a medieval text which depicted the life of Jesus in heinous terms. In this composition Modena emphasizes Jesus's Jewishness and consequently describes the development of Christianity as a betrayal of Jewish practices (cf. Guetta 2000; Berger 1998; Fishman 2003; Facchini 2015). In doing so he attempts at portraying both a historical picture of Judaism and early Christianity.

Modena's work is better understood in relation to other similar texts from the same period, especially those of his younger colleague Simone (Simcha) Luzzatto. In *Discorso circa il stato de gl'hebrei*, published in Venice in 1638, Luzzatto presents a concise history of rabbinic literature, the role and place of Judaism in contemporary society.¹⁵ In chapter 16 of that work, Luzzatto's attempt is therefore to provide a positive image of rabbinical Judaism, a task he shares with Modena's representation of Judaism in the *Riti*. Luzzatto, in contrast to Modena, who chose a normative model dependent on traditional legal codes, frames his description of postbiblical Judaism on Flavius Josephus' works. Posing as a modern Josephus, he states that post-biblical Judaism consists of three main schools of thought, strictly related to the interpretation of the Bible, to which Luzzatto adds a fourth one, the Karaites.

Luzzatto's account of the Kabbalah appears as one of the first attempts to sketch a short historical outline of the esoteric Jewish tradition for a more general readership. This section of chapter 16 is lengthier than the others, and should be compared to Leon Modena's treatise on the Kabbalah (*Ari nohem*,

¹⁵ On this author see Ravid 1978, Ruderman 1995, Luzzatto/Veltri (ed) 2013. On the representation of Judaism see Facchini 2011.

whose final composition dates at 1639). In my opinion Luzzatto was one of the first Jewish scholars who described the Kabbalah by utilizing a comparative approach: while following certain Christian traditions, he was able to highlight the similarities between Kabbalah and Pitagorism. Moreover, he was one of the first to establish a nexus between the esoteric doctrines of the Kabbalah and early Christian heretical groups, such as Gnostics and Valentinians (Luzzatto 1638, chap. 16 [In Luzzatto/Veltri (ed.) 2013, 84–101]).

2 The problematic couple: Judaism and Christianity

It comes as no surprise that new means of apprehending the collective identity of Judaism arose during the seventeenth century, a period of great change and turmoil. I would here like to explore the successful reception of *Historia de' riti hebraici* in order to focus on a different issue: the relationship between the history of Judaism and that of Christianity.

The famed Oratorian priest Richard Simon played a pivotal role in the reinterpretation of Modena's text, exerting a great influence on scholars of early Christianity and Judaism. A closer look at his work will clarify a number of questions.

Simon translated Modena's Italian text into French in 1674. The first version appeared under a pseudonym (Don Recared Scimeon), with two very important essays on the Karaites and Samaritans (cf. Simon/Le Brun, Stroumsa [eds.] 1998, Introduction, XIII-XLIX). He published a new translation in 1681, after his expulsion from the Oratorian order as a result of his controversial *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (1678). It is important to note that Simon's translation of Modena's book was itself a new work, because he merged the 1637 Parisian edition with the one published in Italy in 1638, thus incorporating portions that Modena had deleted (Simon/Le Brun, Stroumsa [eds.] 1998, 34). Moreover, in the 1681 edition, which was reissued many times (*ibid.*), Simon edited his translation and added an important short treatise, entitled *Comparaison des cérémonies des Juifs et de la discipline de l'église*. In 1998, Jacques Le Brun and Guy Stroumsa published a new edition of Simon's work, highlighting its relevance for the history of comparative religion (cf. Stroumsa 2010). Simon's introduction clarifies his intentions, among which the understanding of the rise and development of the history of the early Church along the lines of the development of rabbinic Judaism. The rabbinic oral tradition – as recorded in Mishnah Avot 1:1 – is useful for explaining the apostolic tradition. Simon stresses the many similarities be-

tween Jewish rituals, as they were described by Modena, and early Christian practices. Prayer, marriage, ethical values and laws, institutions, ceremonies, and festivities are compared in order to discern similarities that enable a better understanding of Jesus's *Sitz im Leben* (Simon 1681, Preface [In Simon/Le Brun, Stroumsa (eds.) 1998, 5–211]).

Elsewhere, I argue that through these comparisons, Simon freezes the image of Judaism in time and space (Facchini 2002). The Jewish rites and customs that Modena so vividly described are taken out of context and used in order to decipher early Christian practices, rather than ideas. Modena's type of 'autoethnography', heavily reliant on Venetian as well as more generally Italian ritual practices, is brought back to the time of Jesus, thus making those practices somewhat universalized. The critical elements here are Jews being frozen in the time of Jesus, Jesus's status as a Jew, and the relevance of Judaism (not yet historically reconstructed) for the understanding of his teaching. In short, Simon's reinterpretation of Modena historicizes Jesus through the use of a text on Jewish rituals – *les cérémonies des Juifs* – that was meant to describe the Jews of the seventeenth century.¹⁶ Eventually, Simon succeeded in further disseminating Modena's treatise, combined with his own reading of early Christianity.

Second, Simon outlined, although through a critical lens, a short history of rabbinic literature, similar in structure to the one written by Simone Luzzatto, but with a more negative twist (cf. Simon/Le Brun, Stroumsa [eds.] 1998, 200–7). Here, Simon pinpointed what he took to be the negative features of rabbinic Judaism, such as mythology, legends, and kabbalistic beliefs, all elements he likely despised in Christianity, on the ground of his conception of 'enlightened religion' (ibid., 151–5).

Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt's more recent collective effort to analyze the famous multivolume *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (1723–1734), written and printed with beautiful engravings in Amsterdam by the Huguenots Bernard Picart and Jean Frédéric Bernard, pays tribute to Modena and Simon as regards the depiction of Judaism (Hunt, Jacob, Mijnhardt 2010).¹⁷ The authors stress how the text's portrayal of Judaism relies on the works of Leon Modena, Richard Simon, and Jacques Basnage.

It is also important to note that Basnage, another great exile of the Huguenot diaspora, composed the first history of the Jews, in a multivolume work that grew

¹⁶ Some remarks in Facchini 2002.

¹⁷ The depiction of Judaism appears in volume I of the *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*.

over time (Basnage 1707 and 1716). The Huguenot diaspora's contribution to the study of comparative religions and the history of Judaism should not be underestimated. Although Yerushalmi described Basnage's history of the Jews as biased and fraught with error, it was nonetheless epoch-making in its impact. It provided a model for future Jewish historians, among them Heinrich Graetz in his *Geschichte der Juden*, while also placing a vast amount of scholarly research amassed in the previous centuries into a historical narrative. Infused with anti-Jewish overtones as well as criticism of the Catholic Church, Basnage's opus might be understood amid the backdrop of the rise of new theories of religious tolerance and civic emancipation. Basnage, like Luzzatto, modeled himself on the Jewish historiographer Josephus Flavius, and contributed largely to the dispersal of the political myth of the Hebraic republic.¹⁸ Even more interesting is his network of correspondents that reached out to Italian Jews, who assisted his collaborators in gathering manuscripts and information about Jewish culture, operating somewhat as ghost advisors. Despite its covert message – which, according to some scholars, aimed at converting the Jews in view of the second coming of Christ – Basnage's oeuvre was immensely influential (cf. Elukin 1992; Yardeni 2008; Vidal Naquet 1977). At the start of the eighteenth century, history of Judaism and early Christianity, not to mention Church history, were well established, even upholding, at times, theological implications. This historiographical tradition followed certain patterns and was more widely disseminated in northern Europe, probably due to the censorship still practiced through the Index of Prohibited Books in areas such as Italy. Nevertheless, the *Histoire des juifs* was also spread in France, though heavily edited for a French Catholic audience.

3 The historicist epoch

As one may deduce, the historiography of Judaism at its infancy appears greatly intertwined with that of Christianity. This problematic relationship will also manifest itself during the nineteenth century, the historiographical and historicist century *par excellence*. During this period, theories of history were increasingly elaborated, and philology became a powerful and sophisticated tool for analyzing literary traditions. A better grasp of Oriental languages considerably improved the professional outlook of nineteenth-century scholars, who, in turn, would be influenced by a number of ideologies of science, helping enable

¹⁸ On the political interpretation of the Hebrew republic see Nelson 2010.

them to revisit their individual identities, sometimes provoking ‘conversions’ from religion to science (cf. Facchini 2008).

Another important aspect to consider in the relationship between the history of Judaism and the history of early Christianity is the political context of Western Jewry, which underwent a seismic transformation during the nineteenth century. I am referring to the process that led to full political emancipation, which should not be disconnected from the development of Jewish studies and Jewish historiography.¹⁹

The late eighteenth century onward witnessed a geographical shift that would transform Germany – and specifically, cities such as Breslau and Berlin – into the center of a Jewish cultural renaissance. One could well describe this shift as from an Italian renaissance to one in German-speaking regions, especially in regard to efforts to *translate* one culture into the categories of modern scholarship, to quote Ismar Schorsch (Schorsch 1994). It is important to note this shift, because the development of Jewish historiography and the historiography of Judaism had been linked with Protestant theology and the struggle for political freedom since the beginning of the nineteenth century. In this context, there emerged the great and unique enterprise of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, whose aims since its inception were both scholarly and religious (one could also say the same for German Protestant scholarship, as discussed in Suzanne’s Marchand’s work on German Orientalism) (Marchand 2010).

Although strongly associated with Italian Jewish scholars of the northeastern portion of Italy – Jews from Venice, Padua, Mantua, Udine, and the Hapsburg Trieste – the epistemological revolution of the study of Judaism had been launched by German Jews, some of whom were actively involved in the reform of Judaism as well. The religious confrontation and at times deep conflict intensified by Reform Judaism gave rise to a deepening of institutional and educational activities, which, in turn, strengthened the scholarly endeavor and achievements of German Jewry. While the first modern rabbinical seminary was established in Padua under the impact of Hapsburg reformist policies that attempted to modernize the clergy of a multireligious empire, the succeeding rabbinical seminaries were established in German-speaking areas. The most important of these were Breslau, Berlin, Budapest and Vienna, in which scholarly research and religious training were developed in a new and modern manner.²⁰ This phase is clearly related to the development of the humanities in German states, even though the impetus to modernize Judaism came from France,

¹⁹ For basic sources on this process see Mendes-Flohr, Reinhartz 2010.

²⁰ For a brief account see Del Bianco Cotrozzi 1995.

where full emancipation had been granted at the end of eighteenth century. But the cultural project that was to be elaborated as a systematic program for the study of Judaism and its historical development was closely connected to German culture, its philosophy of history, and its methodological achievements (cf. Meyer 2001; Schorsch 1994).

The interlinking of political programs, religious identity, and scholarly endeavor was instrumental in integrating Jewish minorities within a new kind of political entity – the nation-state – even though the majority of Jews were still living in the multinational and multicultural Hapsburg monarchy. The emerging ideology of scientific inquiry in the realm of the humanities had an enormous, groundbreaking impact on Jewish culture in Europe, one that is better evaluated in the context of rising nationalism and the politics of secularization.²¹

At its inception, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was not strictly related to a specific educational institution, like a university department or a rabbinical seminary, but is better described as a loose agglomeration of scholars of diverse backgrounds interconnected by formal and informal ties, and coming from varied geographical regions. Even though the movement's ideologues were German, their network reached out to Italy, France, Hungary, England, some areas of the former Polish Commonwealth, and the Hapsburg Empire. If we approach it spatially, we may describe the movement as dispersed all over Europe, and also open to non-Jewish members. Its main goal was to apply scientific analysis to the immense corpus of Hebrew texts – many of which lay neglected in many collections of Judaica, gathered and assembled in many European libraries – in order to grasp the rich and diverse features of Judaism and its historical development. What I want to stress is that the *Wissenschaft* movement regarded the need to understand Judaism in historical terms, to thoroughly investigate its different historical phases and its forms of creativity, as the only way to preserve it in a world that was changing at a disruptive pace. It was through science – that is, the systematic reconstruction and analysis of texts, the precise description of historical contexts, the detailed recovery of the transmission of ideas and practices – that Judaism could finally be presented to the wider public of non-Jews, and its culture could become part of a more universal culture, part of a system of 'world religions'.²² Yerushalmi is therefore partially accurate when he states that Judaism had to justify itself historically. One should also add that an accurate and unbiased historical reconstruction of Judaism would also save Judaism in

²¹ For a model of this relationship see Facchini 2008. I relate to the theory of Hirschmann 1970, but see also Baumann 1988.

²² For a different approach to the rise of Judaism as a 'world religion' see Masuzawa 2005.

the modern world (cf. Facchini 2005). Writing the history of post-biblical Judaism was much more complicated than initially thought, and the rise of racism and anti-Semitism, often embedded in the works of historians of religion and social scientists, had an impact on the historical interpretation of the Jewish religion (cf. Olender 1989 and 2009). Judaism was often conceived as a relic of a past that had no future. Many scholars liked to claim that Jews made minimal contribution to the ‘process of Western civilization’ (especially Renan 1855). *Wissenschaft des Judentums* therefore had to cope with a number of challenges, cultural supersessionism being one of them. One could at least emphasize, and I think it is very important to do so, that through science and the meticulous analysis of Judaism from a historical perspective, authors such as Abraham Geiger and Leopold Zunz were able to offer a historical picture of Judaism that was universal, ethical, and modern. While revealing Judaism’s rich and complex past, their work simultaneously succeeded in defining Judaism as a ‘modern religion’. To this end, they actually constructed a form of modern religion, opposing representations that rejected such elements.²³

Unsurprisingly, Leon Modena’s works attracted a great deal of attention among the members of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Geiger, an author of important works on Jewish history and himself a rabbi and outstanding supporter of Reform Judaism, wrote a monograph on Modena (Geiger 1856). For a short time, the Italian Jewish Renaissance provided the model for an ‘enlightened religion’ (cf. Barzilay 1960/1961). Other German scholars, such as Heinrich Graetz, focused on medieval Jewry, emphasizing the encounter between philosophy and religion, intending to place the modernity of Jewish past in the Middle Ages.²⁴

Heinrich Graetz’s controversial multivolume *History of the Jews* presented a coherent philosophy of history, integrating and discussing all the relevant scholarly issues that had emerged during the nineteenth century. He was among the first to address the problem of Gnosticism and Judaism, which would be handled by scholars of the history of Christianity and later be at the center of Gershom Scholem’s characterization of Messianic movements (Graetz 1846; Scholem 1971). I suggest that this treatment of heresies in relation to Christianity and Judaism had already been approached during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Scholars belonging to *Wissenschaft des Judentums* addressed a wide range of topics related to the history of Judaism. Their contribution was especially felt in

²³ On the notion of Judaism as a ‘modern religion’ see Facchini 2008.

²⁴ See especially, in regards to the reception of Maimonides in nineteenth century Jewish German culture, Kohler 2012.

the dispersal of the results of their research through the publication of scholarly journals, the founding of publishing houses, and their pedagogical activities. They often worked on the margins of the most established academic institutions, a feature thrown into sharp relief when compared to their Protestant colleagues or their coreligionists who worked at universities or state academies in France, Italy, or England. The diversity among the Jewish scholars notwithstanding, their religious commitment should not be disregarded or marginalized, because it contributed to the shaping of modern Jewish culture and identity. In order to summarize and arrive at a conclusion, it is interesting to observe the processes of *cultural transfer*, by which I mean the process of the translation of the products of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* into other cultural contexts. Not all ideas, concepts, or publications could be transferred to other locales. North America proved to be the most congenial place for German Jewish scholarship, with many works by Geiger, Zunz, and Moritz Steinschneider translated into English.

The late nineteenth century witnessed the founding of rabbinical seminaries in the United States, providing a place and role for the strengthening of the science of Judaism outside Europe (cf. Giuliani 2008; Facchini 2008). Nevertheless, the establishment of endowed chairs of Jewish history was a much more difficult goal, finding its realization in the first decades of the twentieth century. The history of Judaism as a religious system had to cope with new challenges in the United States and elsewhere. One may argue that German scholarship became slowly embedded in American culture, where the social and cultural framework, including patterns of secularization and models of modernity, was very different from that in Europe. Following the American path, Judaism also became denominational. Indeed, German Jewish science experienced a rebirth in a country where the role of history became less relevant and where Jews mainly had a future, rather than a past (cf. Sarna 2004).

4 A case study: Historical perceptions of Judaism in Italy

The example of Italy provides an interesting case study of the cultural translation of academic and scientific traditions. Despite the legacy of the Renaissance, Italian scholars of the nineteenth century faced a number of challenges when dealing with the history of both Judaism and Christianity. The achievements of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, combined with the historical explanation of post-biblical Judaism, encountered strong resistance among the intellectual elite. This is seen in the reception of David Castelli's work. A Jew from Livorno who

after Italian unification became professor of Hebrew at the University of Florence, Castelli was among the leading Italian scholars of the time, appropriating both the methodology and results of Protestant biblical scholarship and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* research on post-biblical Judaism (cf. Facchini 2005 and 2014).

In the midst of a deep and strained conflict between the Italian State and the Catholic Church, Hebrew chairs were endowed at State-funded universities after the closing of theological seminaries of the Church in 1872. In contrast to his German counterparts, David Castelli succeeded in teaching and conducting research within the university setting, thus acquiring an important symbolic role at least within the context of the elite of the new country. He symbolized how Italian Jews – alongside French Jewish scholars – could afford to pursue their research and careers within the relatively protected context of universities, which also brought symbolic status and a feeling of integration within the Italian State and society.

Castelli's career was tied to the ideology of 'Orientalism', and the consequent dissemination of Oriental studies. The analysis and inquiry of the Bible was therefore placed within the context of Oriental and ancient literature, alongside the establishment of the study of Arabic and other so-called 'Semitic languages'. Orientalists were also committed to unearthing the history of Indo-European languages and cultures. As a biblical scholar, Castelli sought to introduce German scholarly achievements – in particular, Julius Wellhausen's theory of biblical religion, although through the prism of Ernest Renan's work – to Italian audiences (cf. Facchini 2005). For many Italian intellectuals, Renan was akin to a national hero.

The introduction of biblical scholarship in a country that faced strong resistance from the Catholic Church proved to be a difficult task. It is worth mentioning that the Bible was conceived as a source of modernization in nineteenth-century Italy. This ideology derived from French influences – especially the work of Joseph Salvador, Ernest Renan, and James Darmesteter – and from the widespread conviction that Protestantism contributed to the rise of modern society.²⁵ Moreover, the French model of secularism, coupled with its strong anti-clerical stance and universalist outlook, provided an alternative path to the discourse about religion. I cannot develop further on this issue, suffice it to mention that this model was connected with the politics of culture of the French organ-

²⁵ For a summary of these ideas see Facchini 2005. These convictions fueled the debate over the 'lack of Protestant reform', which was identified as one of the causes of economic and cultural under-development.

ization *Alliance israélite universelle*, which often supported a strong secularism and universalism (cf. Rodrigue 2004).

Castelli was probably more confident about, and well-versed in, rabbinical and post-biblical literature. His works on the history and development of Messianic ideas represented an important contribution to research on this topic. His edition of rabbinical literature was also quite important, but his conception of Jewish history was the product of his own internal struggle. As a liberal Jew – or, better, a *juif d'état* – in a country where emancipation and integration had been quite successful, the Jewish past and, consequently, history, were difficult to situate. If the Bible was a code of civilization and the Jews were part of that literary creation, justifying post-biblical Judaism proved to be very difficult. As an example of the difficulties encountered by Italian scholars, one should underline the lack of Italian translations of rabbinic literature, from the *Mishnah* to both *Talmudim*. Although projects of translating Hebrew literature were discussed and launched among the Italian *Wissenschaft*, they were never fully realized.²⁶ In a country with low literacy and therefore little knowledge of biblical literature, and where Jews and Protestants were tiny minorities, it was difficult to conceptualize Jewish history and the history of Judaism.

This project was made even more challenging by the rise of Idealism – the type of Italian *Ersatzreligion* described by Robert Bellah – as one of the dominant philosophical worldviews (Bellah 1974). Idealism, preached by powerful scholars such as Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, left an indelible mark in Italian scholarship on religion, precisely because of its ideology of supersessionism according to which religion was deemed to merge into philosophy.

At the start of the twentieth century, Jewish scholars arriving from Galicia who had studied mainly at German universities and the rabbinical seminary of Breslau, attempted to modify a cultural process where Jewish culture and the history of Judaism were still marginalized. With the rise of fascism, the alliance between the Church and the State, and the signing of the Lateran Concordat (1929), the fields of the history and science of religion were endorsed, albeit through a complicated system of combined censorship. With a few exceptions, such as William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, none of the major works of international scholarship were translated (James 1902). A review of books and articles published during the first three decades of the twentieth century reveal a growing interest in the history of Judaism and Christianity, even though biblical scholarship and the history of early Christianity were selectively censored. I

²⁶ Talmudic literature is still not translated into Italian. The Mishnah was translated at the beginning of the twentieth century (Castiglioni [transl.] 1920).

would argue that, during the first half of the twentieth century and amid the fascist regime and the rise of Idealism, each religious group developed its own historical research, trying to avoid interaction with other groups and potential conflicts with the regime. Biblical scholarship was put under the control of the Catholic Church, which by then had trained its own scholars and persecuted those who were too liberal (cf. Verucci 2010; Vian 2013). Thus, Omodeo's views on modern-day anti-Semitism in Italy addressed at the beginning of this essay can be better understood if placed within the context of the problematic development of Jewish and religious studies in that nation.

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Renée Koch Piettre

President de Brosses's modern and post-modern fetishes in the historiography and history of religions

1 Life and work

Charles de Brosses (1709 – 1777) was a man of small height¹ but he deserves high notoriety: in the time of French Enlightenment, although he contributed to the *Encyclopédie* on one occasion² and corresponded with notorious philosophers (Montesquieu, Diderot, Hume ... [cf. David 1966 and 1974]) and academies (cf. Bézard 1939; Rogister 2007), he remained a humanist and a member of a provincial conservative élite. He devoted forty years of his life to a restoration and edition of Sallustius' *Roman History* (cf. Flammarion 1997; Foro 2007), and he published in 1750 (including inscriptions in Oscan language) the first book about the old city of Herculaneum, which had been recently unearthed. His acute *Letters written from Italy*, published after his death, delighted Sainte-Beuve, Pouchkine and Stendhal and is now acknowledged as a true literary masterpiece. He was active as a contributor to the Parisian *Académie des Inscriptions* as well as in a literary circle of his hometown Dijon, which finally merged in 1760 with the better known *Académie de Dijon*.³ Unfortunately, he came up against the hatred of his tenant Voltaire, in a sordid affair of unpaid-for firewood (cf. Sainte-Beuve 1852, 116–7), and Voltaire took vengeance for it by opposing several times De Brosses's entry into the *Académie Française*. Yet de Brosses contributed highly to Enlightenment in another way. He had been the school-fellow of the naturalist Buffon at the Jesuits' school of Dijon and remained his life-long close friend. His all-embracing intellectual curiosity dealt with scientific as well as philological,

1 About his life and works see Sainte-Beuve 1852, 85 – 126; Mamet 1874, and Florence 1964. A small man: for his last law exam, *on fut obligé de le faire monter sur un escabeau, sans lequel il n'eût point été aperçu derrière le pupitre affecté aux récipiendaires* (Sainte-Beuve 1852, 87).

2 Cf. *Encyclopédie*, vol. VI (1756), art. 'Étymologie' (rewritten by Morellet and Turgot). Cf. David 1966, 137.

3 The *Académie de Dijon* set the prizes to which we owe both famous discourses of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Arts and Sciences* (1750) and *What is the Origin of Inequality among Men, and is it authorised by Natural Law?* (1755): the second one did not win the prize. In fact, the Dijonian burghers' opinions as well as de Brosses's own intellectual, sociological and political positions were quite opposite to Rousseau's life and ideas.

historical, ethnological and architectural topics, over and above the fact that he was a brilliant jurist and a conscientious magistrate with civic courage: he became at twenty-one years old a Councillor, and from 1741 to his death, President at the Burgundy parliament, although he opposed the absolute power of the French king and was exiled twice (1744 and 1771). His theory about the ‘mechanism’ of language acquisition became authoritative for a long time (cf. Porset 1980; Nobile 2005 and 2007). He published (1756) a two-volume plea for an exploration campaign in the Southern seas (including a digest of all known related navigations),⁴ in order to discover the Austral continent he supposed to exist there, inventing the names *Australasie* and *Polynésie*: this book convinced Bougainville to undertake his famous voyage around the world (1767–1769), and proved to be very helpful for Captain Cook in his discovery of Australia (1770) (cf. Taylor 1937; Ryan 2002; Leoni, Ouellet 2006). Last but not least, his anthropological essay *Du culte des dieux fétiches ou parallèle de l’ancienne religion de l’Égypte avec la religion actuelle de la Nigritie* (*On the cult of fetish gods, or parallel [comparison] between the religion of ancient Egypt and the present religion of Black people*), was published abroad in 1760, without the author’s name, and distributed secretly in France, after the atheistic claims of Helvetius (in his book *De l’esprit*) underwent censorship in France. In Marcel Mauss’s eyes, due in particular to the creation of the word and notion of ‘fetishism’, this book proved to be the first essay of comparative religion (Mauss 1969, 395). Auguste Comte (cf. David 1967), Karl Marx (see e.g. Artous 2006), and Sigmund Freud borrowed the word ‘fetishism’ from de Brosses’s essay and made their own and very well known use of it.

The work included three chapters: the first one on the ‘fetishist’ worship of Black Africa, called ‘Nigritie’, the second one comparing these cults with those of Ancient Egypt, the third one showing that the same mechanisms of thought explain both traditions, without any hidden symbolic meaning.

In this paper my aim is to point out a quasi post-modern feature of de Brosses’s theory about fetishism.

4 Cf. Ryan 2002, 157: ‘For the first time ever systematically translated, summarised and analysed 250 years of written accounts by European voyagers to the southern hemisphere’. Ryan stresses also de Brosses’s true scientific and anthropological originality and advance.

2 Du culte des dieux fétiches⁵

A dissertation about Egyptian 'fetishism' had been first presented by de Brosses in three lectures at the *Académie des Inscriptions* during the year 1757, coinciding with the publication of David Hume's dissertation on *The Natural History of Religion*.⁶ It seems the paper was not at all to the taste of his fellow academicians: de Brosses removed his text (cf. David 1974, 146, n. 8), and handed it over to Diderot. Diderot gave the text an enthusiastic reception, and attracted de Brosses's attention to the closeness of relation between his and Hume's argument.

2.1 Hume and de Brosses

Hume considered that monotheistic creed and theistic rationality were not definitive progress in human history: people could always lapse into a kind of polytheism again. Yet de Brosses's point was first independent from Hume's demonstration, although about twenty pages of his third chapter in the final book are devoted to a summary and discussion of *The Natural History of Religion* (cf. David 1966; id. 1974; id. 1977). We find indeed in both essays a critical view about the dogma of primitive monotheism, of revealed or natural 'theism' (this was their word): an increasing confusion of mind should have caused monotheistic creed to be forgotten by mankind, except for the People of God and for a learned or inspired happy few, in particular in ancient Egypt. But Hume criticized that dogma from a general, psychological and rational point of view (the first religion necessarily was polytheism, which predated monotheism and theism), while de Brosses's essay was a book of history and comparative religion, focusing on a bulk of evidence from ancient Egypt and modern Black Africa: he displays a very erudite argument, equally learned about Antiquity and about ethnography. Without denying his christian beliefs, he coyly admitted that the first true religion had vanished because of the biblical Flood, and maintained that 'fetishism' had been – and actually remains for many people and cultures in modern times – the primitive initial step of post-diluvian religion, followed first by 'sabeism' ('direct' cult of celestial bodies), and second by 'strictly speaking idolatry' (the expression 'idolâtrie proprement dite' occurs several times and means a cult of images representing gods, spirits or even deified

⁵ Here and in the following all unreferenced page numbers refer to de Brosses 1760, in the edition of 1988.

⁶ This first text is lost.

men).⁷ Hume opposes only polytheism and theism, since he considers polytheism to be the primitive religion of mankind, into which people regularly fall back again, even after they have learned theism, while de Brosses describes four stages of religion in the history of mankind. Hume speaks of polytheism without clearly distinguishing ‘polytheism’, ‘paganism’, and ‘idolatry’ in the theological sense, just admitting that the cult of rude objects was a first awkward outline of anthropomorphic idols (cf. David 1977, 89). Contrasting with that vagueness, we may underline that the use of the words ‘strictly speaking polytheism’ (‘polythéisme proprement dit’, 84) by our President occurs only in one passage of the second chapter: the expression replaces the frequent ‘strictly speaking idolatry’ and the specific word ‘théosynodie’ applied to ancient pantheons (Chapter II, 82f.), in an obvious answer to Hume’s demonstration, in order to underline the anteriority of fetishism (which, of course, survives in many parts of the world) and the strict succession of historical steps (cf. David 1974, 159f.). In short, Hume works out a criticism about religion, while de Brosses, following Lafitau (1742), draws the framework of a comparative history of religions.

2.2 Egyptianism⁸

The starting point of de Brosses was very precise, although encompassing a general view. His underlying issue was how to read the Egyptian hieroglyphic scripture. The hermetic interpretation, predominant from Antiquity onwards (Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*; *Poimandres*; Horapollo...), had enjoyed a strong revival during the seventeenth century, in particular owing to the enthusiastic mysticism of Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), who considered hieroglyphs as talismanic figures of a divine secret wisdom, later transmitted to Moses himself (cf. David 1965 and 1969). Meanwhile, the Jesuit Fouquet (de Brosses met him in Rome and was not at all impressed by his gossip: the story is in his *Lettres d’Italie*), claimed that the Chinese ideograms descended from hieroglyphs and contained the same monotheistic revelation (cf. Fréret 1729; about this debate: Pinot 1932; Etiemble 1966). De Brosses, who had better archeological information (cf. Granger 1745; Caylus 1752–1767; Norden 1755), was concerned about fighting against what he named ‘figurisme’, which means allegorical and symbolic interpretation:⁹ he maintained Egyptian priests had no hidden knowledge about true di-

⁷ See for instance ‘Introduction’, page 12 of the *editio princeps*.

⁸ For ‘Egyptianism’ see David 1965; in general: Iversen 1961; Baltrusaitis 1967.

⁹ See in de Brosses’s times Warburton 1744.

vinity. He argued the Egyptian cult addressed the very animals people honoured living or dead or 'in effigie': it was no matter of high symbolic meaning. And, in order to give a sense of proportion, he selected, I guess, the most injurious comparison in his view, and pointed out that Black African people share just the same religion as ancient Egyptians did, praying to and worshipping the very snakes or trees or stones, or whatever object they would bump into and consider as 'magic'.

2.2.1

We may refer to the critical review of a certain Sir de Grace in the *Mercure de France* (de Grace 1760) and to the author's long reply (de Brosses 1760a), in order to get a sense of the proportion of this debate. De Grace, following Kircher, Bossuet (1681, III.3) and many others, completely sides with the allegories and with the idealized image of ancient Egypt. De Brosses replies with concrete evidence borrowed from the ancient texts (Manetho, Hecataeus...): he bases himself on true erudition. He concludes: 'In short, I agree that it would be hoped that things were as you say, and I think it is true that they were as I say' (de Brosses 1760a, 135; my translation).¹⁰

2.2.2

Now in his book de Brosses extended his scope beyond Egypt and Black Africa. He suggested, with numerous parallels borrowed e.g. from the Jewish Bible, from Diodorus, Plutarch or 'Sanchoniathon' (summoned by Philo of Byblos, who was quoted by Eusebius),¹¹ that most ancient cults involved the same kind of 'direct' worship. Plato, and later on the Neoplatonists and the Christian authors, tried to save polytheistic religion and mythology, including 'direct' cults, while applying allegorical meanings never thought of by average people. De Brosses demonstrates that these 'direct' superstitions never faded even under the light of the

¹⁰ See the French original version: *En deux mots, je conviens qu'il serait plus à souhaiter que les choses fussent comme vous le dites, et je crois qu'il est plus vrai qu'elles étaient comme je le dis.*

¹¹ We may find in his book a bulk of examples which put together a standard set of evidence used until the twentieth century by any historian of comparative religion. The set was not completely new: many references occur already, for instance, in the widely broadcasted *Dictionary* of Pierre Danet, *sub voce* 'Animal' (Danet 1701): see e.g. Lucan 10.159; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5, 318f.; Herodot II; Lucien, *Deorum concilium* [...].

Revelation of the One God (here, prudently, he mentions only ‘Mahometism’ ; Hume, the protestant, did not hesitate to mention the Roman Church too).

3 Fetishism¹²

While coining for such a religion the word ‘fétichisme’, de Brossettes referred to an etymology of the portuguese word *fetisso*: ‘enchanted or divine thing, or a thing which utters oracles’. He thought the term was borrowed from the latin *fanum* (‘sanctuary’), *fatum* (‘destiny’), *fari* (‘to speak’), the linguistic root meaning ‘to speak’, ‘to say’. So a fetish should be a speaking, animated, enchanted object. In de Brossettes’s view, the superstition of fetishist people cannot be separated from magic and divination, which the Bible so much rejected. A fetish may be considered a god as well as used as an amulet. Of course, every etymologist today knows the portuguese *feitiço* derives from the latin *factitius*, which means ‘fabricated’, ‘artificial’, and also ‘talismanic’, ‘enchanted’ object (should we think of the french ‘objet-fêe’?) (see e. g. Latour 1996, 16–8): so it should better be applied to a hand-made idol. But for de Brossettes the important point was that the objects or animals honoured by ‘fétichistes’ are nothing else in their view than just these animals or objects. The stone is god, is enchanted. Fetishism was the most primitive stage of religion, some kind of rude cult below idolatry, below every sense of representation: the ‘fétichiste’ does neither worship an object as representing a god, nor create emblems or symbols of gods, but he fears and praises and prays just what he is anointing or feeding, or the river he is throwing his offerings into, just this fabricated object, just this natural object, a snake, a tree, a stone, a spring, which he foolishly supposes to be alive and acting like himself.

We note that de Brossettes describes this kind of religion repeatedly as ‘direct’: just the opposite of allegory, which turns away from concrete things and seeks a hidden meaning beyond reality and experience.

4 A paradoxical mockery

The fact remains that this is a paradoxical position. De Brossettes used a controversial strategy which somehow caused him to contradict his own argument and remains until today a source of misunderstanding. ‘Figurisme’, he says, was first

¹² For ‘fetishism’ see Lang 1900; Gossiaux 1981.

intended by the defenders of allegories to convince their audience that the worship of natural or fabricated objects (or of celestial bodies) achieves (or hides) a high level of spirituality. De Brosses himself does not want to idealize that rude worship: on the contrary, he does not stop denigrating his 'fétichistes' with abusive, injurious language. So, for instance, in his 'Introduction':

There does not exist any superstition, as absurd or ridiculous as you will find it, which was not caused by ignorance attached to fear: see how easily the rudest worship stood in stupid minds affected by that sickness, and is rooted in the custom among savages who spend their lives in endless childhood. (de Brosses 1760, 13; my translation)¹³

Absurdity, rudeness, childishness qualify the worship of fetishes. Now for de Brosses the enemy to be defeated was not the fetishism, but, as we have seen, 'figurisme' or allegory. So his reasoning eventually reverses the values: we are led to conclude that at the very least 'fétichistes' stick to the facts, to solid realities – while allegory speculates on all hot air. It would be better to remain a worshipper of onions like the aforementioned Black people, than to be a 'figuriste' like Athanasius Kircher or the Jesuit Fouquet! I do not pretend this inversion to conceal a deliberate bias in favour of fetishism: of course, Charles de Brosses could not like the savage nations as much as did the Calvinist Jean de Léry, who spent three months among some South American man-eaters during the year 1557, and nevertheless asserted that they were less inhuman than European Christians, since they killed people before they roasted them, while the Christians roasted them alive! Nor was he as benevolent as Lafitau, who sought in the North American Indians' hearts some seed of the true creed. Nor did he redeem a confused mythology thanks to a great poet like Homer, and refer it to the inspiration of Providence, as did Giambattista Vico in his *Scienza nuova* (1725–1744). I guess that de Brosses was led unintentionally to be less critical of fetishes than of allegories. He was stressed by hot struggle and also by intellectual honesty. Let us read, for instance, this remark at the end of the book:

Rite is only related to simple fact, as it was transmitted by old tradition; it denies all that so-called meaning, drawn from abstract or supernatural things, all that 'figurisme' invented by some Sophists who boast of it in such fine words. (de Brosses 1760, 139; my translation)¹⁴

13 Cf. the French original version: *Il n'y a point de superstition si absurde ou si ridicule que n'ait engendrée l'ignorance jointe à la crainte, quand on voit avec quelle facilité le culte le plus grossier s'établit dans des esprits stupides affectés de cette passion, et s'enracine par la coutume parmi les peuples sauvages qui passent leur vie dans une perpétuelle enfance.*

14 Cf. the French original version: *Le rite n'a rapport qu'au fait simple, tel que la vieille tradition l'a transmis: il dément l'appareil de ce sens prétendu tiré des choses abstraites ou naturelles; de ce*

De Brosses opened the way for a scientific and anthropological study of fetishism, as he called it, as well as of ‘sabeism’ and of ‘strictly speaking idolatry’: Religion (including the ‘false religions’ of Antiquity and among savage people)¹⁵ was not a matter of abstract meaning, but of concrete rites and human behaviour.

5 Facts, fetishes and ‘faitiches’

So the quest of truth was no more of doctrinal or mystical truth, but of historical and anthropological truth. In the three chapters of his book, de Brosses sought first to establish the facts: by means of ethnographical evidence in part one, and of ancient evidence in part two. Then, in his third chapter, he went back to the causes, that is to say to the nature of faith, to the reasoning and psychological behaviour which prompted the creed: he methodically refuted all existing theories about the origin of untheistic beliefs. And he discovered at the very end that fetishism was not completely foolish: for an Egyptian or a Black man the moon is the moon, a cat is a cat, and there may exist as many real gods as cats and a thousand other animals, not to mention garlic or onions!¹⁶ Fetishes were reduced to facts, i.e. to the same kind of realities which form the very basis of science for an enlightened man like our President!¹⁷ We may remember here the story of the golden tooth: once upon a time a golden tooth appeared in a child’s mouth and soon became the topic of many theological debates among pretentious and learned German scholars, until a goldsmith became aware of the fact that the tooth was artificial (cf. Fontenelle 1728).

figurisme inventé par des Sophistes qui en font trophée en si beaux discours. See also *ibid.*, 130: *Il n’y a guère moins d’imbécillité à prendre un chat pour la Lune qu’à l’adorer lui-même* (‘There is no less stupidity to confuse a cat with the moon than to worship the cat himself’ [my translation]).

15 The word ‘Religion’ (with the capital letter) is widely used about any kind of cult in de Brosses’s book.

16 Juvenal, *Satire* 15, 9 (*Porum et cepe nefas violare et frangere morsu*) was a commonplace about idolatry and superstition. See for instance Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs* (in Voltaire 1827, 109).

17 I do not totally agree with Pietz’s formulation: ‘[the theory of de Brosses] identified religious superstition with false causal reasoning about physical nature, making people’s relation to material objects rather than to god the key question for historians of religion and mythology’ (Pietz 1993, 138). ‘False causal reasoning’ would better suit to the rationalism of Frazer. De Brosses was not an atheist. The relation of the worshippers with fetishes was a relation with *their* god, a god who was not the true God.

5.1

Alas, such an easy lesson remained largely ignored. Scholars never grew tired of seeking beyond the facts either lying priests (Voltaire and many others) or false reasoning (Frazer) or emblems and symbols (C. G. Jung). They rarely acknowledged that the believers know what they do, so far as they can, or that they describe their actual experience with their own words within a cultural system: of course, superstitious people do not achieve scientific truth, but they do not base themselves on a disguise or denial of reality, although their words and deeds add a lot to reality. This theory seems very hard to understand for Western philosophers. Eighteen years after de Brosses's death, Charles-François Dupuis (1742–1809) published *L'Origine de tous les cultes, ou la religion universelle* (1795) (*The Origin of all religions, or universal religion*), a Bible of pseudo-enlightened theism, where he intended to demonstrate that the primitive belief of Egyptians as well as of Greeks, Chinese, Persians, Arabs *and Christians*, was one and the same: a theism based on observation of celestial bodies by the first human ancestors.¹⁸ It was the big come-back of hidden knowledge and science of symbol. Dupuis enjoyed far more success than de Brosses. When Benjamin Constant and Auguste Comte borrowed from de Brosses's essay the word 'fetishism', they nevertheless recognized the deep eternal wisdom of mankind even behind these faltering steps (for an overview, see van Gennepe 1914, 161–78; David 1967; Assouline 1994, 24–42).

5.2

We have seen de Brosses's theory about fetishism was perhaps no more, no less, than the first appearance of just this 'fact of religion', *le fait religieux*, which allowed religion to become a matter of science; a 'fétichiste' was no more, no less foolish than a modern theist *and figuriste*. Yet a French scholar (Latour 1996) recently reversed the lesson of de Brosses's fetishes. Facts, he says, are pure 'faitiches' (this word is a forgery from the french *fait* ['fact']): they are artificial, cultural elaborations of our Western epistemology. Every scientific fact is socially constructed, although this construction is not without true observation and real effects. Moreover, an ethnologist may describe the rites, but he cannot explain them: he remains unable to account for how rituals operate, with real effects on minds, bodies, health, success or misfortune, life and death, peace and

¹⁸ See also the theories of Pluche 1748 and de Guignes 1759.

war Science of religion may be knowledge against religious illusion, but illusion too has effects on the practical life, no less effects than scientific knowledge: see, beyond what we name 'religion', Freud's sexual fetishes or Marx's commodity fetishism! (Marx 1867/1981; cf. Spurk 2009). False gods merge with true facts and both direct the course of our psychical and practical life and experience. Is that post-modern idea a simple result of the 'linguistic turn'? Or does it reveal the true infernal machinery of the destiny of mankind?

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Reinhard G. Kratz

***Historia sacra* and historical criticism in biblical scholarship**

All three or, in fact, four monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism – are based on certain sacred texts: the Hebrew Bible, Old and New Testament, the Qur’ân, in Zoroastrianism the Gathas and the later Zoroastrian literature. Furthermore these religions are based on a legend or account of their individual founding, which is explicated in these texts. This foundation legend in the sacred texts can be called a ‘sacred history’ or *historia sacra*. Both, the sacred texts as well as the sacred history, claim normativity and absolute validity. They transport a picture of how the four monotheistic religions understand themselves and how they would like to be understood by others. This picture continues to flourish in the four religions to the present day and determines the religious feeling and thought as well as religious practice.

In modern age another picture of the three or four monotheistic religions emerged next to *historia sacra*. It is the portrait constructed by enlightened scholarship that began to approach the traditions of the monotheistic religions without necessarily being part of the religious community or sharing the community’s convictions, beliefs and dogmatics. The difference is that such scholarship does not follow the *historia sacra* but uses the sacred history as the object of historical and critical enquiry. As a result, scholarship does not confirm the sacred history but instead deconstructs it.

Using the example of the famous Göttingen biblical scholar and Arabist Julius Wellhausen, I would like to sketch out briefly the scholarly picture of three of the monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and, subsequently, I want to ask how this picture relates to the self-understanding of the three religions. I am using Julius Wellhausen not only because he was from Göttingen but mainly because he worked in all three fields (Hebrew Bible, New Testament and Qur’ân) and constructed an impressive portrait of the history and development of these three religions that – in its basic assumptions – is still valid today (cf. Kratz 2003 and 2009; Smend 2006).¹ We will see that his method, ‘higher criticism’, as it was called, did not emerge out of the blue but had precursors in ‘sacred philology’ (*philologia sacra*), otherwise called ‘sacred criticism’ (*critica sacra*). In my opinion, this form of philology or criticism (sacred philology and sacred criticism) is the connecting link between the self-understanding of the in-

1 The following article is partly based on Kratz 2009.

dividual religions and the perspective of modern scholarship. First, however, let us take a closer look at Wellhausen's picture of the three religions.

1 Deconstructing the Sacred History: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the work of Julius Wellhausen

During the course of his life Wellhausen was active in the spheres of Old Testament studies, Islamic studies and New Testament studies, and did pioneering work in all three areas. While one of his earliest works was devoted to the textual criticism of the Books of Samuel in the Old Testament,² towards the end of his life he turned his attention to the Jesus traditions of the Gospels.³ Source criticism, i.e. the analysis of the tradition and history of ancient Judaism⁴ and early Islam,⁵ stands between these two poles, textual criticism and Gospel.

If we survey the whole of Wellhausen's work, we come upon a pattern of interpretation which is there from the beginning and keeps recurring in all three

2 *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen, 1871).

3 Commentaries on the Gospels of Mark (Berlin 1903; 2nd edition 1909), Matthew (Berlin 1904; 2nd edition 1914), Luke (Berlin 1904), and John (Berlin 1908); *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin 1905, 2nd edition 1911); the four commentaries and the introduction are reprinted in Wellhausen 1987.

4 Mainly four works are to be mentioned here: 1) *Die Pharisäer und die Sadducäer: Eine Untersuchung zur inneren jüdischen Geschichte* (Greifswald, 1874; repr. 2nd edition Hannover, 1924; 3rd edition Göttingen, 1967); 2) 'Die Composition des Hexateuchs', *Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie* 21 (1876), 392–450 and 531–602; *ibid.* 22 (1877), 407–79 (repr. in Julius Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, Zweites Heft [Berlin, 1885]; third enlarged edition: *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* [Berlin, 1899] [4th edition 1963 = repr. of the 3rd edition]); 3) *Geschichte Israels*, Erster Band (Berlin, 1878); since the second edition: *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin, 1883; 6th edition 1905 [repr. 1927, 1981, and 2001, engl. translation of the 2nd edition 1885, repr. 1994]); 4) *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (Berlin, 1894; 7th edition 1914 [repr. = 8th-10th edition 1921, 1958/1981, and 2004]). See also the short sketches in Wellhausen 1965.

5 The main works are: 1) *Muhammed in Medina* (Berlin, 1882); 2) *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, in Julius Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*. Drittes Heft (Berlin, 1887; 2nd edition 1897 [repr. 1927]; 3rd edition 1961); 3) *Medina vor dem Islam, Muhammads Gemeindeordnung von Medina, Seine Schreiben, und die Gesandtschaft an ihn*, in *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*. Viertes Heft (Berlin, 1889 [repr. 1985]); 4) *Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams*, in *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*. Sechstes Heft (Berlin, 1899), 1–160 (repr. 1985); 5) *Das arabische Reich und sein Sturz* (Berlin, 1902).

areas of Old Testament, Arabic and New Testament studies. It is the idea of a development of, or more properly the opposition between, the original beginnings of a religion or culture which grew up naturally and are still completely earthy, and the later stage, in which things have assumed an institutionally established, artificial and dogmatic state.

In Wellhausen's works on the Old Testament, as he himself writes to the orientalist Justus Olshausen, it is 'Judaism and ancient Israel in their oppositions' which concern him from the beginning.⁶ What does this mean? The programmatic opening of his *magnum opus*, the *Prolegomena der Geschichte Israels*, puts it like this:

In the following pages it is proposed to discuss the place in history of the 'law of Moses'; more precisely, the question to be considered is whether that law is the starting-point for the history of ancient Israel, or not rather for Judaism, i.e. of the religious communion which survived the destruction of the nation by the Assyrians and Chaldeans. (Wellhausen/Sutherland, Menzies [trans.] 1885, 1)⁷

Wellhausen concluded that the law of Moses, on which the biblical ideal of the chosen people of Israel and the later Jewish tradition are based, does not belong to the beginning but to the end of the history of the religion of Israel, and puts the biblical tradition in the right order. He reversed the biblical sequence of Moses and the prophets and saw both as an innovation by comparison with the original form of Israelite religion. Accordingly, Israelite religion was originally in no way different from the religions of the environment of Syria and Canaan and 'only gradually raised itself from paganism'.⁸ The opposition between 'ancient Israel' and 'Judaism' is identical with the opposition between pre-Jewish, perhaps better pre-biblical, 'paganism' and the 'religion of the law' (*Religion des Gesetzes*).

The key word 'paganism' inevitably recalls Wellhausen's investigation *Reste arabischen Heidentums*. Of all Wellhausen's works in the field of Arabic studies,

⁶ Thus in a letter dated on the 9th of February 1878, Wellhausen 2013, 55: 'Seit zehn Jahren haben mich geschichtliche Studien ausschließlich in Anspruch genommen, Judentum und altes Israel in ihrem Gegensatze'.

⁷ Cf. the German original version: 'Das Thema [6th ed. 1905: Problem] des vorliegenden Buches ist die geschichtliche Stellung des mosaischen Gesetzes, und zwar handelt es sich darum, ob dasselbe der Ausgangspunkt sei für die Geschichte des *alten Israel* oder für die Geschichte des *Judentums*, d.h. der religiösen Gemeinde [1st ed. 1878: Sekte; 6th ed. 1905: Religions-gemeinde], welche das von Assyren und Chaldäern vernichtete Volk überlebte' (Wellhausen 1883, 1).

⁸ Cf. the German original version: 'Die israelitische Religion hat sich aus dem Heidentum erst allmählich emporgearbeitet; das eben ist der Inhalt ihrer Geschichte' (Wellhausen 1914, 32).

this book is perhaps closest to the much-quoted testimony with which he explained his change from the theological to the philosophical faculty. The testimony is to be found in his first publication in his new area of research, which appeared in 1882, and runs as follows:

I have made the transition from the Old Testament to the Arabs in order to get to know the wildling on which the scion of Yahweh's Torah is grafted by priests and prophets. For I do not doubt that the comparison with Arabic antiquity best allows us to get an idea of the original endowment with which the Hebrews entered history.⁹

Here, as in the Old Testament and the Jewish tradition, Wellhausen sees paganism and, if we add his other works in Arabic studies, the state at the beginning of the development which issues in the later tradition. Pre-Islamic Arab paganism corresponds to pre-biblical Hebrew paganism with its popular syncretism, the early Islamic state to the early Israelite and Judahite state with its historic connection between monolatry and monarchy which have grown up naturally, and the Islamic tradition to the biblical and Jewish tradition with its strict monotheism and religion of the law. The institution of the Imam (imamate) appears alongside the rabbinate.

Finally, early Christianity also fits into this picture. Granted, with good reason Christianity is not derived from pre- or non-Christian paganism, from which it has received much. But here too everything turns on an opposition, namely that between simple piety which has grown up naturally *and* the later, artificial and doctrinaire theology. In the case of Christianity everything is concentrated on the person of Jesus and the question how the human and pious Jew Jesus, who expected the coming of the Messiah, himself became the Messiah and Son of God. Wellhausen's *dictum* 'Jesus was not a Christian, but a Jew'¹⁰ has become famous. Only the later tradition of the Gospels brought about the change from the historical Jesus to the Messiah after the death of Jesus: 'Thus there was a tremendous leap from the real Messiah to another, who had only had

⁹ Cf. the German original version: 'Den Uebergang vom Alten Testament zu den Arabern habe ich gemacht in der Absicht, den Wildling kennen zu lernen, auf den von Priestern und Propheten das Reis der Thora Jahve's gepropft ist. Denn ich zweifle nicht daran, daß von der ursprünglichen Ausstattung, mit der die Hebräer in die Geschichte getreten sind, sich durch die Vergleichung des arabischen Altertums am ehesten eine Vorstellung gewinnen läßt' (Wellhausen 1882, 5). For the implications of this testimony cf. Kratz 2004.

¹⁰ Cf. the German original version: 'Jesus war kein Christ, sondern Jude' (Wellhausen 1911, 102).

the name in common with him and in fact was not one. And this leap cannot be understood *a priori*, but only *post factum*.¹¹

Christianity, a Church with a constitution, and finally the Christian state emerged from this 'sudden metamorphosis'. So Wellhausen saw the same pattern of historical genesis in all three world religions. This has to do not least with the nature of the tradition, which is very similar in all three cases: a tradition which is firmly fixed and complex in literary terms, and on which there has been much theological reflection, a tradition which in part caricatures the historical beginnings polemically and in part transfigures them. So sharp eyes and a critical method are needed to see through the 'obfuscation' (*Verdunkelung*) (Wellhausen 1897, 71) of Jewish, Christian or Islamic tradition and to recognize in this tradition the various stages which in each case precede it.

The means used in Wellhausen's investigations are the classical instruments of criticism developed by the Enlightenment scholarship of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. First comes textual criticism. The tradition that has been preserved is surveyed with its help and the earliest attainable text is discovered. Then come the methods of 'higher criticism': literary criticism (*Literarkritik*) and tendency criticism (*Tendenzkritik*). With their help the literary or oral prehistory of the earliest attainable text is investigated and broken down into the various literary layers of which it is composed. Linguistic indications and the tendency make it possible to assign the literary layers and building blocks to different authors and times and thus put them in a historical sequence. This is, as Wellhausen himself emphasizes, a creative act of de- or reconstruction: 'History, as it is well known, always has to be constructed [...]. The question is whether one constructs well or ill' (Wellhausen 1885, 367).¹²

It is the eye for the individuality of literary entities and the right instinct for the literary-historical process which characterize Wellhausen's analyses. In addition there is the extraordinary precision of the questions and solutions and the clarity of the language, which make Wellhausen's picture of the origin of Judaism, Christianity and Islam so convincing and reading his works so very enjoyable.

11 Cf. the German original version: 'Es geschieht also ein ungeheurer Sprung von dem eigentlichen Messias zu einem anderen, der mit ihm nur den Namen gemein hatte und in der Tat keiner war. Und dieser Sprung läßt sich nicht *a priori*, sondern nur *post factum* begreifen'. (Wellhausen 1911, 81); similarly *ibid.* 149, where the 'sudden metamorphosis' is explained in terms of 'christophanies'.

12 Cf. the German original version: 'Construieren muss man bekanntlich die Geschichte immer [...]. Der Unterschied ist nur, ob man gut oder schlecht konstruiert' (Wellhausen 1883, 389).

2 Sacred criticism and ‘higher criticism’

However, reading Wellhausen’s work was and still is not necessarily enjoyable for everyone. Beyond doubt he was a recognized historian of the first order, in his field of research perhaps the only historian that one can set alongside Eduard Meyer or Theodor Mommsen. But even in his time, more than anyone else he caused a stir. Hardly had his works appeared they often came up against misunderstanding, and also bitter resistance and annoyance.

This negative reaction primarily has to do with the fact that Wellhausen’s literary and historical analyses of the Bible, his deconstruction of the *historia sacra*, went against prevailing Church dogmatics of his time. They inexorably brought to light the fundamental problem which arises for all three religions of the book, namely how historical criticism relates to the claim of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to the normativity of their sacred traditions. As we all know, the problem has still not been solved today. In Judaism and in Christianity it has died down somewhat and is limited more to marginal groups – at least for the moment – but in Islam it is a burning issue; in Zoroastrianism it is not seen yet at all.

However, the problem did not first come into the world with Wellhausen. It was raised by the Enlightenment and rationalism and made more acute by historicism (cf. Kratz 2003a). The problem is not only present in the Churches but also in biblical scholarship and by no means limited to Wellhausen’s time. To be sure, biblical scholarship today – at least in a university setting and in scholarly publications – presents itself as a historical-critical discipline and generally presupposes explicitly or implicitly Wellhausen’s conclusions. However, one cannot deny that biblical scholarship still has some difficulties with him. In the scholarly community things are just the other way round compared to the religions themselves: Arabic studies most easily recognize and appreciate Wellhausen’s importance for the discipline (cf. Becker 1918; Rudolph 1983);¹³ Old and New Testament studies, however, have always found this more difficult. What are the reasons for such difficulties?

The main reason is most certainly a hermeneutics of suspicion that makes it difficult for Biblical scholarship – especially in a confessional environment – to take over and use strictly the principles of enlightened thought and the premises of ‘higher criticism’. The most important premise is that ‘higher criticism’ does not follow the laws of religious tradition but of human reason. This means that the normativity of the sacred texts can no longer be taken for granted.

¹³ Appreciation, of course, does not exclude contestation (cf. Nagel 1998, 128f. and 152f.).

From here a certain anxiety emerges that one's own religious tradition that is the object of academic study will become less true or even a forgery.

The year 1895 – seventeen years after the publication of Wellhausen's *Prolegomena* of 1878 and one year after his *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* of 1894 – saw the publication of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Antichrist*. The book itself, as well as the highly intelligent way it utilized the insights of critical biblical scholarship in a polemic against Jewish and Christian tradition, are no longer known to everyone but one cannot deny that Nietzsche's critique still haunts scholars and believers:

The old god no longer could do what he used to do. He ought to have been abandoned. But what actually happened? Simply this: the conception of him was changed – the conception of him was denaturalized; this was the price that had to be paid for keeping him. – Jahveh, the god of 'justice' – he is in accord with Israel no more, he no longer visualizes the national egoism; he is now a god only conditionally... The public notion of this god now becomes merely a weapon in the hands of clerical agitators, who interpret all happiness as a reward and all unhappiness as a punishment for obedience or disobedience to him, for 'sin': that most fraudulent of all imaginable interpretations, whereby a 'moral order of the world' is set up, and the fundamental concepts, 'cause' and 'effect', are stood on their heads. (Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, § 25)¹⁴

Wellhausen lurks behind every sentence of this quotation from Nietzsche's *Antichrist*. However, the view expounded in Nietzsche's work no longer represents a historical picture that results from a sober analysis of the sources and from the deconstruction of the *historia sacra* but is simply an attack on religion itself. Critical biblical scholarship is used for anti-religious propaganda. As a result many biblical scholars have the impression that the deconstruction of the *historia sacra* is intrinsically linked to the destruction of religion itself.

This impression, however, is not limited to the discipline of Theology alone. Other branches of academia, such as Cultural Studies and Religious Studies present similar views. In contrast to Theology, however, the deconstructing tendency of historical criticism is explicitly welcomed and triggers (already existing

¹⁴ Cf. the German original version: Nietzsche 1969, 193,31–194,11: 'Der alte Gott konnte nichts mehr von dem, was er ehemals konnte. Man hätte ihn fahren lassen sollen. Was geschah? Man veränderte seinen Begriff, – man entnatürlichte seinen Begriff: um diesen Preis hielt man ihn fest. – Javeh der Gott der "Gerechtigkeit", – nicht mehr eine Einheit mit Israel, ein Ausdruck des Volks-Selbstgefühls: nur noch ein Gott unter Bedingungen... Sein Begriff wird ein Werkzeug in den Händen priesterlicher Agitatoren, welche alles Glück nunmehr als Lohn, alles Unglück als Strafe für Ungehorsam gegen Gott, für "Sünde", interpretieren: jene verlogenste Interpretations-Manier einer angeblich "sittlichen Weltordnung", mit der, ein für alle Mal, der Naturbegriff "Ursache" und "Wirkung" auf den Kopf gestellt ist.

and mostly ill-reflected) anti-religious or anti-theological affects of modern human beings. Such an approach has little or nothing to do with enlightened and critical scholarship.

Is there a way out of that dilemma, or put differently, is it even possible to avoid it? Or are there only two ways to go left? Do we have to either switch off our critical understanding and follow the religious tradition by simply repeating *historia sacra* or do we have to reject any sympathy for a religious tradition in order to become able to analyze critically and to deconstruct such tradition?

Scholarly discussion today offers several strategies to avoid the aforementioned dilemma. There is a tendency in biblical scholarship and theology to argue that historical criticism applies the rational criteria of modern logic, which are alien and inappropriate to the thought of the ancient texts. What may seem to us to be complex and contradictory need not necessarily have appeared to the ancients in such a way. Others such as Cultural or Religious Studies rather claim scientific objectivity and simply remain descriptive. As a result scholars sometimes tend to state that they are not equipped to explain the normative claim of religions. From a hermeneutical and academic point of view both approaches are fairly shortsighted. The relationship between *historia sacra* and historical criticism is much more complex. Because of limited space, let me only sketch out briefly in two short points what I mean by that.

Firstly, it is beyond question that the laws of modern logic and human reason are not necessarily the main concern of ancient texts but we have to realize that the element of rationality is not just an invention of the age of Enlightenment and was not alien even to antiquity. It is truly the case that Jewish, Christian and Islamic tradition takes no offence at the complexity and contradictory nature of its sacred texts. But it is not the case that this was not noticed and also felt to be a problem, perhaps even a logical problem. The many text-critical variants and countless discussions in the ancient scholarly tradition bear witness to this. They are concerned to balance out unevennesses in the text, reduce complexity by harmonization and explain contradictions internally. They often already follow a rational logic.

'Sacred philology' (*philologia sacra*) or 'sacred criticism' (*critica sacra*), the precursor of 'higher criticism', displays this element of rationality even more explicitly. It is a method which critically surveys and analyzes the tradition on the basis of the tradition. It is older than the Enlightenment and dates back to antiquity itself. Already the learned Jewish and Christian tradition such as the Rabbis (in Talmud and Midrash) or Church Fathers (Justinus, Hieronymus, Origenes, Hippolytus) addressed questions of textual transmission and questions of 'higher criticism', i.e. questions relating to authorship and date of the biblical (or canonical) writings. These questions continued, though with more and more refined

and sometimes different methods, during the Middle Ages (Saadia ben Joseph, Salomo ben Isaak = Rashi, Abraham ben Meir Ibn Esra, David Kimchi), Humanism and Reformation (Konrad Pelicanus, Johannes Reuchlin, Joseph Justus Scaliger, Polyglottes) (cf. Wellhausen 1965, 110–9; see furthermore Sæbø 1996–2013, esp. vols. I/1 [1996], I/2 [2000], and II [2008]).

In sum, we certainly have to concede that the logic of the observer is not necessarily the logic of the observed object. This lies in the nature of the matter as soon as the observer enters into a substantial and historical distance from the object and begins to take this distance into account. However, the example of sacred criticism demonstrates that it is neither excluded nor forbidden that one undertakes such an enquiry on the basis of a religious tradition.

Secondly, we have to take into consideration that no description or investigation – no matter how objective it claims to be – is free from the premises of its time. As a result we always have to take these premises into account for both the subject under scrutiny as well as the scholar scrutinizing the subject.

In Wellhausen's case it is obvious that his critical analysis and deconstruction of the *historia sacra* is rooted in the premises of his time, the nineteenth century: a mixture of objectivity and subjectivity in the application of textual, literary and tendency criticism and in the historiographical account, a sympathy for great personalities like the prophets and for the profane state with a monarchical constitution, the predilection for 'natural' origins, paganism and the symbiosis of nation and religion, and the antipathy to any form of religious dogmatism and institution combined with the notion of a development from one to the other. Here Wellhausen represents a way of thinking which combines elements of Romanticism, German Idealism and Historicism and finds its fulfilment in the foundation of the German Reich under Bismarck. Wellhausen's roots in his period were often used to discredit his scholarly results. But the fact that he was rooted in his time does not exclude the possibility that he can have seen some things correctly.¹⁵

At the same time we have to ask ourselves how much our investigation of religion, be it in Biblical Studies, Cultural or Religious Studies, touches upon currents and trends. In short, how much are we influenced by the premises of our times? Against the argument often stated by Theologians that our logic is not the logic of the ancient text we will have to say that we no longer live in antiquity but in the period after the Enlightenment, and no one can shed his skin. Against the tendency of a pseudo-objective claim in scholarship it must be said that no one

¹⁵ For the historiographical and ideological implications of Wellhausen's work see Boschwitz 1938, Perlitt 1965, Kratz 2013. For the wider background see Howard 2000.

who has even a spark of seriousness in himself can claim to confirm or dispute the self-understanding of the sacred tradition as normative texts by means of historical criticism. Rather, criticism, especially tendency criticism, includes the claim of the tradition to normativity as a historical factor and makes this the object of historical analysis.

In this respect, too, Wellhausen himself is a good example. The following quotation shows quite clearly that he took into account both the historical process of the history of Israelite religion, and the normative claim that was explicated in this historical process and is still valid today. In his *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* he writes:

Why from approximately the same beginning Israelite history arrived at quite a different end result from, say, Moabite history cannot ultimately be answered. But a series of transitions can be described in which the way from paganism to rational worship, in the spirit and in the truth, was taken.¹⁶

Maybe we can summarize the discussion as follows: pre-critical and critical exegesis – or sacred criticism and ‘higher criticism’ – are two different ways to approach the text, which cannot be refuted by each other. If a person believes in the normativity of the texts of his or her individual religious tradition, she or he simply believes in them, no matter what a modern historian or religious scholar may think of them. Equally, it is not forbidden for a person who historically challenges the claim to normativity to believe – on a different level – in the normativity of the texts. To put it differently, both approaches do not exclude each other if one is careful to avoid a common mistake triggered by a fear of historical relativization to ban historical criticism altogether and thus to set *historia sacra* as an absolute. Similarly it would be a mistake to exclusively favour historical criticism as an approach that replaces the normativity of the sacred texts with one’s own scholarly view.

16 Cf. the German original version: ‘Warum die israelitische Geschichte von einem annähernd gleichen Anfange aus zu einem ganz andern Endergebnis geführt hat als etwa die moabitische, läßt sich schließlich nicht erklären. Wol aber läßt sich eine Reihe von Übergängen beschreiben, in denen der Weg vom Heidentum bis zum vernünftigen Gottesdienst, im Geist und in der Wahrheit, zurückgelegt wurde’ (Wellhausen 1914, 33).

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A Catholic ‘magician’ historicises ‘magic’: Éliphas Lévi’s *Histoire de la Magie*

1 Introduction

One of the arguments made in the present volume is that narratives of a ‘religious past’ are inevitably construed and that they usually conceal this deficiency through various strategies. The use of an overly persuasive tone – i. e. the narrator’s exhibition of a ‘heavy form of confidence’ (Ricoeur 2003, 58) – with the intention of supporting the ‘presumed “coherency”’ (White 1978, 103) of the respective narrative is such a strategy, which is often grounded in a more or less naïve idea of ‘historical realism’. The present article intends to show that the same applies, perhaps even more strongly, to narratives of a ‘magic past’ or, briefer, to ‘magic historiography’. ‘Magic historiography’ appears to be even more problematic than ‘religious historiography’ as the precise nature of its subject (‘magic’) is perpetually disputed, not only in scholarly literature¹ but throughout the entire conceptual history of ‘magic’, which covers no less than 2.500 years of textual sources (cf. Otto 2011). In fact, ‘magic historiography’ is not at all a novel genre, but goes back as far as, say, the beginning of book 30 of Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, a remarkably construed text that can be viewed as the prototype of one specific subgenre of ‘magic historiography’, namely, *polemical* ‘magic historiography’.²

Polemical ‘magic historiography’ represents one side of the coin that could be held to symbolise the Western discourse about ‘magic’ in its entirety. As I have argued elsewhere (Otto 2011; Otto, Stausberg 2013), the concept of ‘magic’ entails highly polyvalent and versatile semantics, due to its wide-ranging and complex conceptual history. In order to reduce this complexity, I proposed to differentiate two major Western discourses about ‘magic’, which I have labelled the ‘discourse of exclusion’ and the ‘discourse of inclusion’ respectively.³ The main criterion for differentiating these discourses is not a semantic, but a social one: authors partaking in the ‘discourse of exclusion’ speak about ‘magic’ from an *outsider’s* perspective, i. e. they construe ‘magic’ as something opposed to

1 For an overview, see Otto, Stausberg 2013.

2 For the text and a short analysis, see Otto, Stausberg 2013, 23–7.

3 See Otto 2013, corresponding to *Ausgrenzungsdiskurs* and *Aufwertungsdiskurs* in Otto 2011.

their own social, religious, or scientific identity. Accordingly, they would never label themselves a ‘magician’, and they usually associate the concept with persons or groups that are themselves marginalised outsiders (in Pliny’s narrative, these would be Greek philosophers, Jews, or the Celtic druids). In contrast, authors participating in the ‘discourse of inclusion’ speak about ‘magic’ from an *insider’s* perspective; ‘magic’ is something that *they* do, and they often identify themselves as ‘magicians’ in the very sense (and etymology) of the word. As a consequence, the semantics of ‘magic’ differ fundamentally in texts belonging to the ‘discourse of exclusion’ and the ‘discourse of inclusion’. The *outsider* perspective is often accompanied by semantics of hostility and devaluation; here, ‘magic’ is usually regarded as an areligious, ineffective, and/or asocial ritual art. ‘Magicians’, however, tend to perceive of their art as being absolutely efficacious, morally legitimate, and spiritually valuable (or even as the peak of all religious aspiration).⁴

‘Magic historiography’ naturally reflects these two perspectives. We expect narratives of a ‘magic past’ that were written by self-referential ‘magicians’ (i. e., practitioners of the art) to differ fundamentally from narratives that were produced by Church officials or Historians of science. Whereas the latter will tell stories of how human hubris, religious aberration, irrationality and superstition wanders through time and culture (either overcome by religion or science or simply ineradicable), ‘magicians’ rather speak of some ultimate, infinite truth that was unjustifiably prosecuted, continually abused, or simply misunderstood in the course of human history. We find numerous examples of both subgenres of ‘magic historiography’ in the textual heritage of the West, both from pre-modern times as well as modern discourse.

The present paper analyses one fascinating example from the ‘discourse of inclusion’, namely, the *Histoire de la Magie*, published in 1860 by the French self-referential ‘magician’ Alphonse Louis Constant *alias* Éliphas Lévi Zahed (1810–1875).⁵ Lévi’s *Histoire de la Magie* is a text predestined to be studied in the framework of this volume as it is the first comprehensive history of ‘magic’ written by a learned ‘magician’,⁶ i. e. an insider and practitioner of the art, comprising no less than 531 pages.⁷

⁴ See, for an overview of these notions, Otto 2011, 615 f.

⁵ Alphonse Louis Constant is his birth name; Éliphas Lévi Zahed is a hebraicised pseudonym that Constant used from 1854 onwards.

⁶ Extensive *positive* ‘magic historiography’ is indeed not attested before the nineteenth century. There are short pseudohistorical statements already in the late Ancient *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (see, e. g., PGM IV.2290f., 2446 f.) and particularly early modern humanist authors partaking in the discourse on ‘*magia naturalis*’ have historicised ‘magic’ in positive ways (see, e. g., Pico della

Éliphas Lévi is certainly an author that has not yet received appropriate scholarly attention and parts of his life – particularly his *modus vivendi* after his 'occult transition' in the 1850s – still remain to be investigated in greater depth.⁸ Yet, his biographical motivation for writing the *Histoire* seems fairly easy to grasp. Lévi wrote the work some five years after his coming out as a 'magician' in 1854, when he had published the first volume of his acclaimed theoretical-practical work *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1854–56). In other words, Lévi's conscious choice to take on the traditional Western outsider identity of a 'magician' in his early 40s (which retained its precarious status even, or even more, in the post-Enlightenment era) obliged him to justify and consolidate this identity. The *Histoire de la Magie* accomplishes this task in the most accurate way, namely, by rooting (*positive*) 'magic' in a solid historical back-story of virtually biblical dimensions.

Viewed within the context of this volume, Lévi's *Histoire* is a striking example of the self-historicisation of a deviant religious group (even a lone fighter, in this case) that construes a fictitious image of its past to establish, justify and strengthen its identity and thereby hold its ground in an inhospitable or even hostile cultural and religious environment. As Lévi neglects or even inverts former polemical (ecclesiastical or enlightenment) narratives on the history of

Mirandola's *Oratio de hominis dignitate* [1486] or Agrippa of Nettesheim's *De Occulta Philosophia* [1531/33]), but these narratives are rarely more than a few pages long. Extensive positive historiography of Alchemy and Rosicrucianism was published as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy's *Histoire de la philosophie hermétique* (1742) or Antoine-Joseph Pernety's *Faibles Egyptiennes et Grecques dévoilées et réduites au même principe* (1758). These works bear some conceptual similarities with Lévi's *Histoire* (such as the recourse to similar founding fathers and authorities, e.g. Zoroaster, Hermes, or Solomon), but do not focus on 'magic' in greater depth. In the nineteenth century, two extensive positive histories of 'magic' were published before Lévi's work, namely Joseph Ennemoser's enormous (1000-page) *Geschichte der Magie* (1844) and John Campbell Colquhoun's equally voluminous (750-page) *History of Magic, Witchcraft and Animal Magnetism* (1851). However, these texts were written by Mesmerists who merely adopted 'magic' as one of the various historical manifestations of the *fluidum*; as a consequence, their arguments and interpretations regarding 'magic' differ quite substantially from Lévi's narrative who, reversely, interpreted Mesmerism as just one contemporary manifestation of 'magic'. Éliphas Lévi can thus be regarded as the first self-referential 'magician' who wrote an entire volume about the history of 'magic' from an exclusive insider perspective.

⁷ Referring to the French text (Lévi 1860); the English translation used here consists of 525 pages (Lévi/Waite [transl.] ²1922).

⁸ On Lévi's life see Mercier 1974, McIntosh 2011 and the forthcoming work by Julian Strube (Heidelber); highly problematic due to its hagiographic tendencies but still fascinating is Chacornac 1926.

‘magic’ with the explicit intention to provide a positive counter-narrative,⁹ and is also relevant for understanding recent scholarly narratives of a ‘magic past’ (see below, ch. 4), he falls into what this volume calls ‘Transforming narratives’.

2 Lévi’s ‘magic’

In order to understand Lévi as a historiographer of ‘magic’, we must first understand Lévi as a ‘magician’. As I have argued elsewhere, Lévi’s concept of ‘magic’ is extremely multifaceted and includes all sorts of things (cf. Otto 2011, 518–46). In his *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, we find chapters about astrology, alchemy, Tarot, Kabbalah, divination, medicine, Mesmerism, hypnosis, electricity, possession, conjuring spirits (such as planetary beings or spirits assigned to the elements), conjuring Satan, necromancy (i.e. divination by means of the dead), rituals to induce love or to harm others, miraculous abilities (such as animal transformation or flying), all sorts of symbols and symbolism, and descriptions of the equipment ‘magicians’ ought to fabricate and employ within their rituals (such as staff, robe, lamp, crown, or hotplate). This puzzling diversity reflects a phenomenon observable in the majority of texts belonging to the ‘discourse of inclusion’: Western learned ‘magicians’ usually adapt to their cultural and religious environments, but they tend to adopt systems of knowledge that are marginalised or rejected in contemporary mainstream or elitist discourses. Thus, there need not be a conceptual ‘red thread’ pervading all those phenomena that Lévi subsumes under ‘magic’ (and he omits a plausible definition in his *Dogme et Rituel*). Even in the ‘discourse of inclusion’, ‘magic’ operates as some sort of ‘waste-basket category’ of ‘the Other of science and rationality’ (cf. Hanegraaff 2012, 254) and/or religion – now, however, described from an insider’s perspective by means of rhetorics of idealisation and glorification.

Yet, there are some basic concepts that provide an underlying rationale to Lévi’s understanding of ‘magic’. One core concept is the idea of an ‘astral light’ that pervades all things and beings and, accordingly, ought to be controlled by the ‘magician’. Lévi’s reception of Kabbalah and Tarot provide the overall

⁹ See Lévi/Waite (transl.) ²1922, 30: ‘So far the History of Magic has been presented as annals of a thing prejudged, or as chronicles – less or more exact – of a sequence in phenomena, seeing that no one believed that Magic belonged to science. A serious account of this science in its re-discovery, so to speak, must set forth its developments or progress. We are walking in open sanctuary instead of among ruins, and we find that the Holy Places, so long buried under the débris of four civilisations, have been preserved more wonderfully than the mummified cities which excavation has unearthed, in all their dead beauty and desolate majesty’.

structure of *Dogme et Rituel*, as both volumes consist of 22 chapters each, thereby referring to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the 22 cards of Tarot's 'major arcana'. Lévi puts particular emphasis on the human will and its liberation and governance by the 'magician' (this notion, in particular, represents a novel approach, arising from Lévi's critical attitude towards Mesmerism and Somnambulism). Techniques of conjuration still constitute a substantial part of the 'art', even though we now find psycho-spiritual (as in the case of Satan)¹⁰ or psycho-physical (as in the case of the elementary beings)¹¹ interpretations of their nature, and we even witness Lévi's declared scepticism towards the sudden 'appearance' of Apollonius of Tyana's spirit during a 'necromantic' performance.¹²

Pondering about Lévi's role within the 'discourse of inclusion', he could be held to be one of the great 're-sacralisers' of learned 'magic' in the nineteenth century. Lévi, of course, adopted argumentative patterns from the early modern discourse on 'magia naturalis'; his appreciation of Kabbalah, in particular, arises from this context. However, Lévi's main driving force as an author on learned 'magic' apparently was the dissemination and popularity of cheap French *Grimoires* during his lifetime. As Owen Davies has shown in great detail (Davies 2009, 95 f.), tens of thousands of such 'penny' *Grimoires*, distributed within the publication genre of *Bibliothèque Bleue*, had flooded the French market since the late eighteenth century (an obviously undesired consequence of the invalidation of 'magic' by Enlightenment authors: fooleries are easier to publish than heresies). Now, some of these *Grimoires* focussed on simple ritual recipes for everyday needs, such as the *Petit Albert*, hence criticised by Lévi as being nothing than a 'book of vulgar magic' (Lévi 1856, 121; my translation). But others – such as the *Grimoire du Pape Honorius*, *Le Grand Grimoire* or the *Grimorium Verum* – included unmistakable evocations of Lucifer, Satan, or the Beelzebub (in marked contrast to the earlier and more 'pious' texts of the Solomonic cycle, such as the *Clavicula Salomonis* or the *Lemegeton*).¹³

10 Cf. Lévi/Waite (transl.) 1896, book I, chapter 15, 126 f.; book II, chapter 15, 288 f.

11 Cf. *ibid.*, book II, chapter 4, 214 f.

12 Cf. *ibid.*, 117: 'Am I to conclude from all this that I really evoked, saw, and touched the great Apollonius of Tyana? I am not so hallucinated as to affirm or so unserious as to believe it. The effect of the probations, the perfumes, the mirrors, the pantacles, is an actual drunkenness of the imagination, which must act powerfully upon a person otherwise nervous and impressionable'.

13 All these texts still await proper scientific investigation. From a bird's eye perspective, however, it could be argued that these French offshoots of the Solomonic cycle (dating mostly to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) seem to illustrate the tendency of learned 'magicians' to trivialise the devil in the course of the eighteenth century – a development, that could be in-

Lévi condemned these texts by adopting an old idea – the distinction of two types of ‘magic’ –, which he garnished with ‘scientific’ rhetorics:

There is a true and a false science, a Divine and an Infernal Magic – in other words, one which is delusive and tenebrous. It is our task to reveal the one and to unveil the other, to distinguish the magician from the sorcerer and the adept from the charlatan. The magician avails himself of a force which he knows, the sorcerer seeks to misuse that which he does not understand. If it be possible in a scientific work to employ a term so vulgar and so discredited, then the devil gives himself to the magician and the sorcerer gives himself to the devil. The magician is the sovereign pontiff of Nature, the sorcerer is her profaner only. The sorcerer is in the same relation to the magician that a superstitious and fanatical person bears to a truly religious man. (Lévi/Waite [transl.] 1896, 29)

This distinction corresponds to Lévi’s ‘magical law’, the ‘law of equilibrium’, that is somewhat hard to grasp as he assigns it to all sorts of things (such as physical forces, human behaviour, or theological concepts).¹⁴ In its most general meaning, it seems to refer to a dyadic principle underlying all existence, but this principle is transcended and united on a divine level¹⁵ (thereof arises Lévi’s rejection of ‘dualistic’ doctrines – such as Manichaeism, ‘this monstrous heresy’: *ibid.*, 291 – and his appreciation of the number three and Christian trinity: *ibid.*, 44 f.; cf. Hanegraaff 2012, 245 f.). Lévi utilises the ‘law of equilibrium’, among other things, to explain the existence of ritual techniques to conjure Satan (as attested in various *Grimoires*), holding that the ‘magical law of two forces constituting universal equilibrium [has] caused some illogical minds to imagine a negative divinity, subordinate but hostile to the active Deity’ (Lévi/Waite [transl.] 1896, 291). For Lévi, these illogical minds go astray because ‘as a superior personality and power Satan does not exist. [...] The absolute affirmation of good implies an absolute negation of evil: so also in the light, shadow itself is luminous’ (*ibid.*). Nonetheless, Lévi emphasises that conjurations of Satan are powerful and dan-

terpreted as yet another undesired consequence of the devil’s ridiculisation by Enlightenment authors.

14 See, e. g. Lévi/Waite [transl.] 1896, 89 f.: ‘Now the ancients, observing that equilibrium is the universal law in physics, and is consequent on the apparent opposition of two forces, argued from physical to metaphysical equilibrium, and maintained that in God, that is, in the First Living and Active Cause, there must be recognized two properties which are necessary one to another – stability and motion, necessity and liberty, rational order and volitional autonomy, justice and love, whence also severity and mercy’.

15 Cf. *ibid.*, 46: ‘the two principles of universal equilibrium are not contrary, although contrasted in appearance, for a singular wisdom opposes one to another. Good is on the right, evil on the left; but the supreme excellence is above both, applying evil to the victory of good and good to the amendment of evil’.

gerous as they are able to affect and influence the 'astral light', albeit in curious and inadequate ways. In other words, Lévi here aims at undermining ritual techniques of conjuring Satan by re-interpreting the latter as an impersonal ('astral') force that merely reflects the wicked mind of the conjuror: 'In black magic, the Devil is the great magical agent employed for evil purposes by a perverse will' (ibid., 126). Lévi's ironic list of 'conditions of success in infernal evocations' thus includes '1, Invincible obstinacy; 2, a conscience at once hardened to crime and most prone to remorse and fear; 3, affected or natural ignorance; 4, blind faith in all that is incredible; 5, a completely false idea of God' (ibid., 297 f.).

Having disposed the enemy in this way, Lévi further re-sacralises 'magic' in his *Dogme et Rituel* by means of (1) moralisation, (2) purification, and (3) innovation. Lévi's desire to (1) moralise is visible in his frequent polemics against the careless instrumentalisation of the devil in the afore-mentioned *Grimoires*: 'The devil-making Magic which dictated the Grimoire of Pope Honorius, the ENCHIRIDION of Leo III, [...] is truly a thing to be condemned [...]. It is above all to combat these unhappy aberrations of the human mind by their exposure that we have published this book' (ibid., 303). For Lévi, such *Grimoires* are nothing but 'catch-penny mystifications and impostures of dishonest publishers' (ibid., 235); he even claims that most 'known magical rituals are either mystifications or enigmas, and we are about to rend for the first time, after so many centuries, the veil of the occult sanctuary' (ibid., 191). Lévi's desire to (2) purify shines out in his exclusion of malevolent¹⁶ or amoristic¹⁷ ritual goals from 'magic' which he also labels 'sanctum regnum, the holy kingdom, or kingdom of God' (ibid., 28) (needless to say that, by doing this, Lévi ignores or consciously rejects many texts of learned 'magic'). Lévi's purification strategy is even more apparent in his practical instructions. Compared to one of the few Solomonic ritual texts which Lévi deemed trustworthy – the *Clavicula Salomonis* (Lévi was familiar with various French manuscripts of the Colorno group which he had found, in all likelihood, in the Bibliotheque d'Arsenal: cf. Davies 2009, 176) – the conjuration instructions in *Dogme et Rituel* are of much lower complexity.¹⁸ Obviously,

¹⁶ See his polemics against 'witchcraft and spells' (ibid., book II, chapter 16).

¹⁷ See his polemics against love potions, ibid., 329: 'A magician of any spirit will need no other philtres than these; he will also use flattering words, magnetic breathings, slight but voluptuous contacts, by a kind of hypocrisy, and as if unconscious. Those who resort to potions are old, idiotic, ugly, impotent. Where, indeed, is the use of the philtre? Any one who is truly a man has always at his disposal the means of making himself loved, providing he does not seek to usurp a place which is occupied'.

¹⁸ See the 'conjuration of the four' (elementary beings) in book II, chapter 4, and the 'conjuration of the seven' (planetary beings) in book II, chapter 7.

Lévi sorted out a vast variety of preparatory rites, he simplified the complex symbolism that pervades the *Clavicula Salomonis* (especially with respect to the composition of sigils, ritual circles, or incisions on ritual devices), and he significantly reduced the amount and duration of evocation formulas. Finally, Lévi aims at (3) innovating ‘magic’ by including new features – such as Tarot, Mesmerism, or electricity – and by creating novel rituals (such as the ‘conjunction of the four’) that deem him valuable enough for the ‘holy art’.

Recapitulating these strategies is crucial for understanding the role and importance of Alphonse Louis Constant *alias* Éliphas Lévi Zahed within the history of Western learned ‘magic’ in the nineteenth century. In fact, Lévi’s re-sacralised (i. e. moralised, purified, and innovative) version of learned ‘magic’ significantly influenced important figures of the subsequent ‘discourse of inclusion’ – such as Gérard Encausse (the founder of the Martinist Order, also known as Papus), Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, or Aleister Crowley. For the purpose of this article, however, these strategies are equally important because they also underlie the narrative in the *Histoire de la Magie*, which shall now be discussed.

3 Lévi’s *Histoire*

To sum up the argument so far, Lévi’s concept of ‘magic’ consists of a vast variety of phenomena, sub-disciplines, symbolic systems and ritual practices, and is characterised by a moralising, purifying and re-sacralising ductus. Seen from a modern scholarly perspective, we should imagine that a proper historicisation of such an overarching concept would ultimately lead to writing complex (and partly entangled) multiple-histories: necromancy, obviously, has different historical roots than astrology, Kabbalah, Tarot, or animal magnetism, to name just a few examples. However, in his *Histoire de la Magie* Lévi rather blinds out this multifacetedness of ‘magic’ (as sketched out in *Dogme et Rituel*) and purports, instead, to portray a coherent, monolithic ‘art’ (or, in Lévi’s words, ‘science’) that wanders through time and space. The main objective of the *Histoire* is thus to provide ‘magic’ with a wide-ranging historical foundation and, thereby, to re-sacralise it not only by means of theoretic reinterpretation or ritual purification (as in *Dogme et Rituel*), but also by historiographic narration. Expectably, we are dealing with a highly fictitious text that employs numerous narrative strategies to conceal its fictionality and create the impression of a trustworthy and coherent history. In what follows, these strategies shall be discussed. Lévi’s *Histoire* is a bulky and often confusing text so that we can only highlight

exemplary parts of his narrative, in order to attest the underlying strategies just mentioned.

3.1 Magic, the baton

Let us first try to determine what it is, essentially, that wanders through time and space in Lévi's history of 'magic'. Conceptually, the main label used in the *Histoire* is 'kabalah'. In his previous work *Dogme et Rituel* Lévi had already outlined 'kabalah' as the main foundation of 'magic', elevating it to a timeless, ahistorical entity that forms the basis of and pervades all religion (see, e.g., Lévi/Waite [transl.] 1896, 89). In a similar vein, 'kabalah' forms some sort of vehicle for 'magic's' voyage through time in Lévi's *Histoire*¹⁹ but it is historicised in more variegated ways. Most importantly, Lévi portrays 'kabalah' not as a specifically Jewish tradition, but rather as a universal symbolic system of numbers and letters that may serve as a hermeneutic key for the decoding of all levels of creation²⁰ (the components of this symbolic system and its precise functionality are, however, only alluded to in the *Histoire*).²¹ In fact, 'kabalah' enters Judaism fairly late in Lévi's narrative – namely, in the person of Abraham – and even abandons Judaism with the emergence of Christianity. This universalist interpretation of 'kabalah' corresponds to Lévi's choice of primary texts that have preserved it in the course of human history. As is to be expected, Lévi mentions the *Zohar* and the *Sepher Yetzirah* but he also includes various non-Jewish texts, such as the *Tabula Smaragdina*, the *Chaldean Oracles*, the *Key of Solomon*, or, as representatives of the Christian tradition, the Gospel of John (due to its Prologue on the creative power of God's Word) and the Apocalypse of John (due to its numerological implications). The latter text is particularly important for Lévi because it represents not only *the* Catholic manifestation of 'kabalah', but also 'summarises, completes and surpasses all the science of Abraham and Solomon' (49).

¹⁹ Here and in the following all unreferenced page and chapter numbers refer to Lévi/Waite (transl.) ²1922. See 20: 'The primal tradition of the one and only revelation has been preserved under the name of Kabalah by the priesthood of Israel. Kabbalistic doctrine [...] is that of Transcendental Magic'.

²⁰ Lévi may thus be regarded as an advocate of a 'Christian Kabalah' that relies mostly on patristic foundations (cf. Hanegraaff 2010 and 2012, 245 f.).

²¹ See, e.g., book 1, chapter 7 on 'the Holy Kabalah', where Lévi gives an introduction to the hidden meaning of some numbers and letters but remains unclear what the 'magician' actually ought to do with that knowledge.

Apart from identifying such texts, Lévi also subsumes more specific phenomena under ‘magic’/‘kabalalah’ in his *Histoire*, such as various types of divination, the Tarot system as an instance of Hermetic (that is, for Lévi, Egyptian) ‘magic’, ancient (world) wonders, instances of pre-modern electricity (!), alchemy, Freemasonry, or contemporary Mesmerism. Interestingly, stereotypical (negative) notions of ‘magic’, such as necromancy, conjuration of the devil, demon possessions, malevolent ‘witchcraft’ and the like, are mostly portrayed as inferior digressions and perversions in the *Histoire* and do thus not properly belong to Lévi’s idea of the history of ‘magic’ – an approach perfectly in line with the moralising and re-sacralising ductus of his *Dogme et Rituel*.

However, these tentative semantics of ‘magic’ shall not hide the fact that it is actually quite difficult, if not impossible, to figure out what it is precisely that wanders through time in Lévi’s *Histoire*. Overall, ‘magic’ appears rather as some ultimate, infinite religious truth, some *mysterion* that underlies human history but cannot be grasped with profane words. Lévi’s narration of the emergence and ancient transmission of ‘magic’ in the first three books of the work is an illuminative case in point that shall be sketched out in the following.

‘Magic’, Lévi suggests in the introductory chapter, came into being in the course of God’s creation of the world: ‘God created it on the first day, when He said: “Let there be light”’ (17). In the next chapter (book one, chapter one), Lévi concludes from the apocryphic *Ethiopian Book of Enoch* that God’s angels transmitted ‘magic’ to the first men (‘Those angels, the sons of God, of whom Enoch speaks, were initiates of Magic, and it was this that they communicated to profane men’ [40]). However, he relocates this act of transmission from the days of Enoch and Abraham (which is the timeframe in the *Book of Enoch*) to the days of Adam, thereby following a spurious text called *The Penitence of Adam*. Lévi gives a short re-narration of that text which echoes the common medieval legend that the paradisiac tree of life was handed down from Adam’s son Seth and his descendents to Moses, David, Solomon and, finally, the Jewish executioners of Jesus Christ (who was thus crucified on the very tree of life). Lévi identifies the wandering wood with ‘kabalalah’/‘magic’ and concludes: ‘Seth, Moses, David, Solomon and Christ obtained from the same Kabalistic Tree their royal sceptres and pontifical crooks. We can understand in this manner why the Christ was adored in His manger by the Magi’ (43; Lévi of course refers to Mt 2:1).

After this peculiar allegory of the voyage of ‘magic’/‘kabalalah’ via core biblical figures, Lévi introduces a second narrative pattern that is based on the anonymous *Liber mirabilis* (a popular compilation of predictions by Christian saints published in France in 1522). While referring to (Ps.-) Bemechobus’ chapter in this work, Lévi holds that ‘magic’ was not only passed on to Adam’s son Seth

(as in the above narrative), but also to his elder brother Cain. From then on Lévi distinguishes two main trajectories of 'magic' and postulates – again in line with the dualistic agenda of *Dogme et Rituel* – a 'distinction between good and evil Magic, between the Sanctuary of the Sons of Seth and the profanation of science by the descendants of Cain' (45). This is not only an allegorical distinction but one with direct historical consequences: Lévi concludes from the *Liber mirabilis* that

Seth migrated eastward with his family and so reached a mountain in the vicinity of the Earthly Paradise. This was the country of initiates, whilst the posterity of Cain invented a spurious or debased Magic in India, the land of fratricide, and put witchcraft into the hands of the reckless. (ibid.)

This crucial distinction of two types of 'magic' has important consequences for the entire narrative of the *Histoire*, which shall be discussed below.

In the subsequent chapters, Lévi follows the path of (good) 'magic' alongside biblical figures in greater detail (apart from an interlude on 'India as the mother of idolatry' in book one, chapter three). For example, he claims that 'magic' was handed down to Noah by the descendants of Seth – Noah then preserved it in his ark and bequeathed it to his own children up to the fore-fathers of Abraham who lived in Mesopotamia, the land of the Zoroastrians. Here, Lévi claims, the followers of Zoroaster achieved 'mastery over the occult powers of Nature' (that is, over 'transcendental pyrotechny', which includes electricity [55]) but their religion degenerated over time so that the Assyrian empire ultimately collapsed. Accordingly, when Abraham and his family left Ur of the Chaldeans for Canaan, he 'carried its mysteries with him' (63). It is thus only with Abraham that 'magic'/'kabalah' properly entered Jewish culture.²² Later on, when the Israelites came under slavery in Egypt, the doctrine spread there as well. In Egypt, Lévi claims, 'Magic attains the grade of completion as a universal science and is formulated as a perfect doctrine' (73), as attested in the hieroglyphs, the pyramids, the *Tabula Smaragdina*, or Tarot. However, like in Assyria, someone had to save the 'doctrine' from decay when 'the priests, abusing the implicit confidence of the people, allowed that knowledge to degenerate into bru-

²² Only at this point, Lévi seems to differentiate 'magic' and 'kabalah', but this distinction is neither explained nor followed up in the subsequent parts of the *Histoire*: 'So ended the first empire of Assyria, and the civilization founded of old by the true Zoroaster. Thus also ended Magic, properly so called, and the reign of the Kabalah began. Abraham on coming out from Chaldea carried its mysteries with him' (63).

talising idolatry' (80). Now 'Moses triumphed and led the Israelites out of the land of bondage' (*ibid.*), again taking 'kabalah' with him.

We have arrived at book 1, chapter 4, and in the following two books Lévi discusses a multitude of ancient sources and developments with respect to 'magic'. Whereas he finds some snippets of the 'doctrine' here and there (for example among Orpheus, Pythagoras, or Plato), pagan culture for him mostly reflects 'the story of materialised hieroglyphics and of ancient rites degenerated' (81). In these days, 'magic' is preserved in its full and integer form only among the Jews. Then, with Jesus Christ, 'a breath of love' descended from the sky and 'the wraiths of philosophy gave place to men of true wisdom; the Word was incarnate and alive; [...] Magic was transformed into sanctity, wonders became miracles, the common people – excluded by ancient initiation – were called to the royalty and priesthood of virtue' (172). 'Kabalah' finally abandons the Jews, having found its true home among the Christian Church: 'Christianity, as expected by the Magi, was in effect the consequence of their secret doctrine; but this Benjamin of ancient Israel caused, by the fact of its birth, the death of its mother' (181).

We shall halt in our re-narration at this point and reflect on Lévi's introductory narrative on a more theoretical level. First of all, it has become clear that Lévi's *Histoire* is basically a world history from the perspective of a Judaeo-Christian or, more precisely, a *Catholic* learned 'magician'²³ – the more so as Lévi, a late believer in the biblical *anno mundi*, envisions the world's history to cover some 6.000 years (that is, he adopts the Jewish computation, attributing the creation to the year 3761 BCE: see, e. g., page 500). Within this timeframe, Lévi back-dates 'magic' to the earliest moment possible – that is, to God's creation of the world –, and then purports to reconstruct its continuous transmission from Adam and Eve up to nineteenth century France.²⁴ This transmission is essentially

23 Note that Lévi first pursued an ecclesiastical path: he underwent ecclesiastical schooling at the Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet and then studied theology at the Saint-Sulpice. However, he abandoned his theological career shortly before his formal ordination as Catholic priest in 1936 (he had already received the ministry of deacon in 1935), partly due to his love for one of his female protégés at the seminar (as he admitted later on: cf. McIntosh 2011, 81f.).

24 The first three books of the work thus cover 'magic's' voyage from Genesis to Jesus Christ, whereas books four and five deal with medieval and early modern European developments and books six and seven mostly treat developments in eighteenth and nineteenth century France. There seems to be a French focus not only due to Lévi's nationality, but also because he partly relied on Jules Garinet's *Histoire de la Magie en France* (1818) and was thus able to draw on more material with respect to France. Note that, as in *Dogme et Rituel*, Lévi injects the chapter structure of the *Histoire* with symbolic meaning: 'On the pattern of the Great Masters, we have followed the rational order of sacred numbers in the plan and division of our

construed alongside biblical figures (the 'descendants of Seth') and concluded by Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church as 'magic's' final stakeholder. In fact, despite the polemics and prosecutions that have characterised Christian dealings with 'magic' throughout 'real' history, Lévi by no means portrays Catholicism and 'magic' as adversaries. To the contrary: as 'magic' represents the hidden nucleus of Catholicism, the Church stands out as the ultimate and only legitimate vessel of 'magic' in Lévi's narrative. This curious amalgamation of 'magic' and Catholicism – which obviously springs from Lévi's primary education and self-understanding as a Catholic dignitary²⁵ – makes the *Histoire* an exceptional (if not unique) case of 'magic' historiography, both within the 'discourse of exclusion' and the 'discourse of inclusion'. In fact, compared to positive 'magic' historiography of the nineteenth century that was written by Mesmerists (Ennemoser, *Colloquin*: see Hanegraaff 2012, 266 f.), the *Histoire* differs particularly with regard to its strong reference to biblical chronology and authorities, including the adoption of a vast variety of stereotypical Christian motifs, such as genesis, epiphany, covenant, biblical lineage, teleology, providence, the transmission of the 'holy', etc. In other words, we are dealing here with a fascinating case of positive Catholic 'magic' historiography!

Lévi was well aware of the oddness (or at least heterodoxy) of his *Histoire* and adopts various narrative strategies and historiographical tricks to strengthen its trustworthiness. Let us first ponder his narrative strategies, the most important ones being (1) backdating, (2) appropriation and (3) identification. (1) Backdating is more or less self-explanatory: 'The older, the better' has been a common motif in numerous religious traditions and has, expectably, also played a crucial role within the 'discourse of inclusion'. At least since early modernity the notions of 'prisca theologia' and 'philosophia perennis' were adopted to justify and consolidate the concept of 'magia naturalis'.²⁶ Lévi certainly adopts this early modern narrative pattern in his *Histoire de la Magie*, but he pushes it to an extreme by suggesting that 'magic' is and has always been there, as an integral, unalterable part of God's creation of the world. Of course, backdating also has

works, for which reason this History of Magic is arranged in seven books, having seven chapters in each' (33).

²⁵ See above, footnote 23; Lévi's self-understanding as an 'orthodox' Catholic (or at least his desire to appear so) even manifests itself in several formal declarations of submission to the authority of the Church (see e.g. 13 and 212); see also the cover page of the French 1860 edition where Lévi grandiloquently places the phrase *opus hierarchicum et catholicum* under his name (quoting Heinrich Khunrath).

²⁶ See, for an overview, Hanegraaff 2012, chapter 1.

the advantage of being difficult to either prove or falsify since it mostly relies on the alleged plausibility of the narrative (or the willingness of the reader).

Lévi's most important tool for backdating is a second narrative strategy here labelled (2) appropriation. As a narrative strategy within historiography, appropriation refers to the adoption and incorporation of someone *else's* history within one's *own* history. In 'magic' historiography, appropriation usually implies the (retroactive) identification of someone as a 'magician' who would never have labelled or understood himself as such (in a similar vein, things, concepts or texts are misleadingly and/or anachronistically identified as 'magical'). In other words, by acting as if core biblical figures were stakeholders or transmitters of 'magic', Lévi appropriates and instrumentalises large parts of biblical history to prolong the history of 'magic'. In fact, Lévi 'magiologises'²⁷ numerous other figures over the course of his *Histoire*, thereby heightening its historical depth and alleged plausibility.

Finally, the narrative strategy of (3) identification facilitates the synchronisation of large parts of heterogeneous historical data and sources. Apparently, despite his unconventional thinking, Lévi was a widely read man who processed a plethora of texts, authors and historical events in his *Histoire*. 'Identification' conceals inconsistencies in these sources by equating persons, things, or concepts. An illuminate passage is found in book one, chapter four:

The hieroglyphic alphabet was the great secret which Moses enshrined in his Kabalah; its Egyptian origin is commemorated in the Sepher Tetzirah in which it is referred to Abraham. Now this alphabet is the famous Book of Thoth, and it was divined by Court de Gebelin that it has been preserved to our own day in the form of Tarot cards. (76f.)

Here, largely distinct and historically incoherent texts, people, and concepts are identified with each other. There are numerous further passages in the *Histoire* that attest to Lévi's 'identificatory' method which he adopted whenever he deemed it necessary, thereby actually 'inventing' the tradition that is allegedly historicised.

Last but not least, Lévi adopts various tricks and cheats on the technical level of historiography. Of course, he works with fantasy but this is not his main approach; in most chapters, Lévi indeed refers to other texts, that is, 'sources'. However, Lévi naturally tends to eclecticism and arbitrariness, deliberately choosing some sources while omitting (numerous) others, thus arriving at a pe-

²⁷ In 'magic' historiography, the strategy of 'appropriation' could be labelled 'magiologisation', as it miraculously transmogrifies someone into a 'magician' (or something into 'magic', respectively) in retrospect.

cular mixture of references that serves his agenda. Even those few texts mentioned in his first chapter imply numerous contradictions which he ignores, conceals or synthesises: 'Magic' is certainly not mentioned as an integral part of the creation in Lévi's main work of reference, the Bible; Bemechobus does not mention 'magic' at all in the *Liber mirabilis*; the timeframe of the *Book of Henoah* does not correspond to that of the *Penitence of Adam*.

3.2 Cain, the corrupter

As previously noted, one of the most important organising principles within Lévi's *Histoire de la Magie* is the distinction between good and bad 'magic'. In what follows, the historiographical consequences of this distinction shall be discussed, focusing particularly on bad 'magic' and the 'descendants of Cain'. As we will see, Lévi does not only adopt this distinction to moralise and re-sacralise 'magic', but also to *explain* large parts of cultural and religious history.

Let us first try to understand Lévi's basic criteria for differentiating between good and bad 'magic'. In the *Histoire*, these appear to be rather vague categories, apparently allowing for a flexible adaptation of the distinction. There are at least five different notions. First, there is the stereotypical differentiation based on the identification of beneficent and malevolent intentions, as represented by Seth and brother-murderer Cain, respectively (Lévi also uses the terms 'black magic' [see, e.g., 71] or 'witchcraft' [see, e.g., 350] when referring to malevolent 'magic' in this sense). Second, there is Lévi's conviction that true 'magic' demands a high level of responsibility and maturity, and that it should therefore remain mostly concealed and only be revealed to chosen ones (see, e.g., 46). This goes along, thirdly, with Lévi's rather pessimistic assessment of the human constitution: true 'magic', he claims, requires practitioners who control their feelings by means of their superior intelligence and will, whereas ordinary men will rather be controlled by their 'yoke of brutal passion' (46) and tend to abuse and instrumentalise 'magic' for egocentric goals. Out of this circumstance arises 'magic's' frequent tendency to decay and degenerate, even within the illustrious circle of the 'descendants of Seth'.²⁸ Fourthly, Lévi identifies a variety of 'dualistic' philosophies with bad 'magic' (such as Zoroastrianism [212], Manichaeism [213], or Gnosticism [see 209 and further]) in line with his doctrine of

²⁸ See 46: 'it is this which was the sin of Adam, and hereof are its fatal consequences. Of such also was the Deluge and its wreckage; of such at a later period the malediction of Canaan. The revelation of occult secrets is typified by the insolence of that son who exposes his father's nakedness. The intoxication of Noah is a lesson for the priesthood of all ages'.

‘equilibrium’. Finally, Lévi adopts mainstream Catholic polemics towards necromancy, i. e. conjuration of the dead and/or of demons (or Satan), thereby associating these practices with the bad type of degenerated ‘magic’ (see, e. g., 144). To the contrary, true ‘magic’ leaves the dead in peace, refrains from demons, and controls the ‘astral light’ by other means (these means are, again, only alluded to in the *Histoire*).

By means of these notions, Lévi is able to assign individuals, groups, religious currents and/or entire cultures to either one of the two types of ‘magic’ in the course of his *Histoire*. Apart from the aforementioned biblical stakeholders he counts among the ‘descendants of Seth’ the ‘true’ Zoroaster,²⁹ Orpheus, Plato, Pythagoras (as ‘the great promoter of the philosophy of numbers had visited all the sanctuaries of the world’ [92]), the mysteries of Eleusis and Thebes, Hermes Trismegistos, Confucius, Raimund Lull (‘a disciple of the great Kabalists’ [329]), Albertus Magnus, various early modern scholars (such as Agrippa of Nettesheim or Giordano Bruno), various alchemists (such as Nicholas Flamel or Heinrich Khunrath), Emanuel Swedenborg, Franz Anton Mesmer³⁰ and other Mesmerists (such as Baron du Potet: cf. 471 f.), Count Allesandro di Cagliostro, or the Polish philosopher Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński (who ‘had the glory and the happiness to rediscover the first theorems of the Kabalah’ [459]). As ‘descendants of Cain’ Lévi identifies the Indians (see, e. g., 47), the ‘second’ Zoroaster, Manichaeism, Simon Magus,³¹ further Gnostic groups (such as the Marcosians), the ‘impious doctrines of Mohammed’ (325), the Templars (269 f.), the gipsies,³² various ‘necromancers’ (such as Gilles de Rais), Martin Luther (here, Lévi engages in furious polemics),³³ and contemporary Somnambulists (mostly because they offend the

29 Following an early modern historiographic topos (cf. Stausberg 1998, 328 f.; Hanegraaff 2012, 246), Lévi distinguishes two Zoroasters; see, e. g., 53: ‘As a fact, there are two Zoroasters, that is to say, two expounders of mysteries, one being the son of Ormuzd and the founder of an enlightened instruction, the other being the son of Ahriman and the author of a profanatory unveiling of truth.’

30 See 398: ‘The great thing of the eighteenth century is not the Encyclopedia, not the sneering and derisive philosophy of Voltaire, not the negative metaphysics of Diderot and D’Alembert, not the malignant philanthropy of Rousseau: it is the sympathetic and miraculous physics of Mesmer’.

31 According to Lévi, Simon had the ability to control the ‘astral light’ but lacked responsibility (181 f.).

32 The gipsies ‘were a sect of Indian Gnostics, whose communism caused them to be proscribed in every land’ (317).

33 See, e. g., 347: ‘This square-shouldered monk could boast only obstinacy and daring, but he was the needful instrument for revolutionary ideas. Luther was the Danton of anarchic theology; superstitious and rash he believed that he was obsessed by the devil; it was the devil who dic-

churchly prohibitions of divination). In fact, from late Antiquity onwards, Lévi often adopts mainstream arguments of Catholic heresiology. This makes perfect sense as, with the emergence of Jesus Christ, 'magical orthodoxy was transfigured into the orthodoxy of religion' (180), whereby all later Christian aberrations lacked legitimacy and were justifiably condemned by the Church. In other words, Lévi's differentiation between true and false 'magic' not only marks the path of the 'true doctrine', but also operates as a hermeneutic tool to evaluate, classify and explain large parts of cultural and religious history that can even expound the collapse of entire civilisations – as we have seen in the cases of Assyria and Egypt. By means of his distinction between good and bad 'magic', Lévi construes a *dyadic* world history.

Apart from this overall function, Lévi's interpretation of formal accusations and court cases is particularly noteworthy, due to the difficulties they might raise within the design of the *Histoire*. Lévi, of course, cannot conceal the multitudinous polemics against and prosecutions of 'magicians' in Western history, many of which were performed under the patronage of the Catholic Church. Why did Catholicism proceed against 'magic' so severely, albeit being its true and final carrier? It is Lévi's differentiation between the two types of 'magic' that allows him to justify some of these prosecutions (and maintain his self-image of an orthodox Catholic), while, at the same time, retaining true 'magic' as an integer truth of Christianity. Thus, Lévi adopts a dyadic approach even when dealing with famous court cases: for example, he holds that Gilles de Rais has been a real necromancer and was thus sentenced with good reason (279f.), whereas others, such as Joan of Arc³⁴ or pope Sylvester (293f.), have been unjustifiably prosecuted. Lévi thus acknowledges the possibility of false or unjust prosecutions (also in the case of the early modern witch persecutions)³⁵ but he holds that some of these were nonetheless justified as they dealt with 'real' Satan conjurers.

All in all, by adopting the distinction between two types of 'magic', Lévi is able to strengthen the plausibility of his narrative in various ways. Most importantly, Lévi purports to show that the Catholic Church was right to condemn

tated his arguments against the Church, made him declaim, spout nonsense, and above all things write'.

34 See 272: 'It was not [...] the Church which judged and condemned the Maid of Orléans, but a bad priest and an apostate'.

35 See 282: 'Hundreds of wretched idiots and fools were burnt on admitting their former commerce with the malignant spirit; rumours of *incubi* and *succubi* were heard on all sides; judged deliberated gravely on revelations which should have been referred to doctors; [...] unfortunately the method of the times confused the diseased with malefactors and punished those who should have been cared for with patience and charity'.

‘magic’, albeit being its true and final stakeholder: ‘The war which the Church has been forced to make against Magic was necessitated by the profanations of false Gnostics, but the true science of the Magi is catholic essentially, basing all its realisation on the hierarchic principle’ (29).

3.3 Lévi, the prophet

A crucial aspect of the *Histoire* that has not been touched upon yet is Lévi’s adoption of teleological and milleniaristic arguments. These go along with his blatantly counterfactual interpretation of the role of the Catholic Church, which includes his own part and self-perception in the history of ‘magic’.

Expectably, teleological and providential arguments pervade the *Histoire*. They are mostly connected to the concept of ‘equilibrium’ which, on a global scale, corresponds to the concept of the ‘world soul’. Lévi adopts said (Neoplatonic) concept from the early modern discourse on ‘*magia naturalis*’ and equates it with the ‘astral light’ (164). Since the ‘soul of the world is a force which automatically tends to equilibrium’ (283), Lévi holds that certain historical events were inevitable because the universal ‘equilibrium’ had been out of balance. For example, Lévi adopts a teleological interpretation of ‘equilibrium’ to prove the superiority of the Catholic Church as the ‘fundamental dogma of transcendental science which consecrates the eternal law of equilibrium attained its plenary realisation in the constitution of the Christian world’ (256). It was God himself who paved the path for the triumphal march of Christendom (and ‘magic’) by means of his superior providence and miracles (see, e.g., 193). Accordingly, the Church superseded its dualistic offshoots and ‘sects’ in late Antiquity because its doctrine was solely in line with ‘the equilibrium of the universe’.³⁶ Similar teleological arguments are applied to medieval, early modern and contemporary history; Lévi even expounds the French revolution (422f.) and Napoleon Bonaparte’s conquering expeditions (443f.) by discussing alleged prophecies of these events (such as the *Apocalypse* of Ps.-Methodius, the *Vaticinia de Summis Pontificibus* attributed to Joachim of Fiore, or the *Prophecies* of Nostradamus).

³⁶ See 213: ‘In declaring the Son consubstantial with the Father, the Council of Nicaea saved the world, though the truth can be realised only by those who know that principles in reality constitute the equilibrium of the universe’.

Unsurprisingly, Lévi believed to live in a crucial period of the evolution of 'magic'. The final chapters of the *Histoire de la Magie* thus include an overly optimistic outlook on 'magic's' triumph in future times:

The crook of the priesthood shall become the rod of miracles; it was so in the time of Moses and of Hermes; it will be so again. The sceptre of the Magus will be that of the world's king or emperor; [...] Magic, at that time, will be no longer an occult science except for the ignorant; it will be one that is incontestable for all. (524)

Here, the idea of 'equilibrium' is given yet another conceptual twist when Lévi asserts that 'religion' and 'science' are by no means counterparts but need to be conjoined to ensure a proper evolution of humanity. This argument corresponds to Lévi's frequent polemics against both religious 'fanatics' and scientific 'sceptics': 'Blind believers and sceptics are on a par with one another, and both are equally remote from eternal salvation' (500). Thankfully, 'at last it is God Himself Who impels the world towards believing reason and reasonable beliefs' (*ibid.*). Lévi thus believes that in his days 'magic' assumes its final form as 'the absolute science of equilibrium' (503) or, in other words, as the perfect 'equilibrium' between 'science' and 'religion'.³⁷ In fact, this has been the essence of 'magic' all along:

It has been the purpose of this History of Magic to demonstrate, that, at the beginning, the symbols of religion were those also of science, which was then in concealment. May religion and science, reunited in the future, give help and shew love to one another, like two sisters, for theirs has been one cradle. (524)

Here, Lévi is even able to integrate the social utopianism that had characterised his political life prior to his coming out as a 'magician':³⁸ Having been purified and brought out of 'chaos', Lévi forecasts on the last page of his work, 'magic' will 'give birth naturally to an infallible ethic, and the social order will be constituted on this basis. Systems which are now in warfare are dreams of the twilight; let them pass. The sun shines and the earth follows its course' (525).

The question that remains is how Lévi brings these ideas in line with the 'real' Church and his self-understanding as an orthodox Catholic. Lévi must have been quite aware that his portrayal of the Catholic Church as the official and final stakeholder of 'magic' may have appeared odd and entirely counterfac-

³⁷ Note that 'science' is not just a hollow metaphor as Lévi also envisions 'a synthetic plan of all the natural sciences. The law of equilibrated forces and of organic compensations will reveal a new chemistry and a new physics' (518).

³⁸ See on this issue the forthcoming work of Julian Strube (Heidelberg).

tual to potential readers. Lévi reduces said counterfactuality by claiming that the Church has, up till his days, not been aware of its true identity: ‘Considered as the fully realised and vital expression of the Kabbalah [...] Christianity is still unknown, and hence that Kabbalistic and prophetic book called the *Apocalypse* yet remains to be explained, being incomprehensible without the Kabbalistic Keys’ (174). Lévi even portrays ‘magic’ as a unique attribute of the Church which it may employ to invalidate widespread nineteenth century polemics against Catholicism: ‘Distracted also are those who say that Catholicism is only a dead trunk and that we must put the axe thereto. They do not see that beneath its dry bark the living tree is renewed unceasingly’ (525).

Obviously, Lévi’s millenarian outlook in the final chapter of the *Histoire* does not envision the Catholic Church in a common sense. What Lévi has in mind is rather what he labels ‘Universal Church’ (521), that is, a Church that has realised and accepted its ‘magical’ essence, history, and responsibility. It is from this universalist interpretation of the Church (which corresponds to Lévi’s universalist interpretation of ‘kabbalah’) that Lévi’s self-understanding as a Catholic results. Apparently, it is not that of a spurious ‘magician’ at the margins of religious history. When Lévi refers to Joseph Marie de Maistre’s prediction that, one day, ‘the natural affinity which subsists between science and faith should combine them in the mind of a single man of genius’ (5) in the introductory chapter of the *Histoire*, he tentatively brings himself into play. He may not be a genius, as he humbly claims, but, nevertheless,

The prediction of Count Joseph de Maistre is in course of realisation; the alliance of science and faith, accomplished long since, is here in fine made manifest, though not by a man of genius. Genius is not needed to see the sun, and, moreover, it has never demonstrated anything but its rare greatness and its lights inaccessible to the crowd. The grand truth demands only to be found, when the simplest will be able to comprehend it and to prove it also at need. (5)

In other words, Lévi sees himself as a fundamental re-interpreter and reformer of Christianity. By means of his *Histoire*, Lévi is not only able to back up his new identity with a wide-ranging, fictitious past. He also manages to establish himself as the prophet of the new, ‘magical’ age of the ‘Universal Church’.

4 Conclusions

Alphonse Louis Constant *alias* Éliphas Lévi Zahed is certainly a curious figure in the history of Western learned ‘magic’ and his *Histoire de la Magie* is an even more curious attempt at ‘magic historiography’. In terms of historiographical

strategies, the curiousness of the *Histoire* mostly arises from Lévi's excessive and entirely counterfactual employment of the historiographical strategy of 'appropriation'. In fact, throughout the *Histoire*, Lévi appropriates a vast variety of historical figures, events, and sources that were mostly immaterial within the 'real' history of Western learned 'magic'.³⁹ Lévi's 'magiologising' strategy is so overarching that one is tempted to coin the notion of 'interpretatio magica' for this overall impetus of his narrative. Much like in 'interpretatio graeca', Lévi appropriates and explains numerous *others'* beliefs, myths, religious and philosophical currents, historical events and figures from the viewpoint of his all-embracing 'magical' doctrine. In fact, Lévi pushes this strategy to an extreme by transmogrifying the history of the entire world into a mere blueprint of 'magic's' voyage through time and space.

This strategy leads to an unexpected result: Lévi does not actually historicise 'magic' in his *Histoire de la magie*. Apart from its frequent tendency towards decay and abuse, 'magic' is mostly portrayed as an invariable, static (albeit mysterious) 'substance' that wanders through time and space but does *not* change over time. Lévi mainly focusses on its correct or fragmentary transmission, its legitimate preservation – or decay among heretics –, and its concealment or oblivion in the course of history. Lévi's *Histoire de la magie* is thus a fine example of what Wouter Hanegraaff has recently coined 'history of truth': quite paradoxically, it is a 'history of something that is immutable and beyond change'.⁴⁰ In other words, it is a type of 'ahistorical' historiography.

As a consequence, Lévi's *Histoire de la Magie* is a mostly utopian text that is hard to digest for the scientific reader⁴¹ as much as for later learned 'magicians' who have criticised the work for various reasons (such as Arthur Edward Waite

³⁹ In my terminology, large proportions of Lévi's 'descendants of Seth' really belong to the 'dis-course of exclusion'. From a comparative viewpoint, one might thus argue that a *lack of sources* enhances an author's tendency to adopt the strategy of 'appropriation'.

⁴⁰ According to Hanegraaff, the intention of a 'history of truth' is 'to discuss the sources of true knowledge and wisdom, trace the paths they had followed through time, and make clear how those trajectories harmonized or coincided with the unquestionable truth' (Hanegraaff 2012, 5). While posing crucial questions to this type of historiography ('how can truth be absolute and yet subject to historical development, or conversely, how should we imagine a history of something that is immutable and beyond change?' [ibid., 6]), Hanegraaff refers to Renaissance thinkers but his observation can readily be applied to Lévi. In a similar vein, Hanegraaff uses the term 'religionist' historiography, see ibid., 148f.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Butler 1949, 284: 'One cannot deny him a highly-wrought imagination, flashes of poetry, moments of great penetration; but his work as a whole amounts to a mere accumulation of brilliant verbiage, pretentious, high-flown, allusive, allegorical, and often ambiguous'.

or Francis King).⁴² Lévi's historiographic endeavor is thus perfectly suited to illustrate the tendency of narratives of a 'religious past'⁴³ to sacrifice historical accuracy and integrity in favor of other functions of historiography. In the case of Lévi, these functions have been carved out: Lévi, an autodidactic, post-Enlightenment learned 'magician', felt the need to justify and strengthen his identity by providing 'magic' with a wide-ranging historical foundation. He fought the loathsome and what in his eyes were degenerated French *Grimoires* by re-sacralising and moralising learned 'magic' and designed the *Histoire* as a fundamentally dyadic history, whereby he could exclude the 'descendants of Cain' from the history of the 'true doctrine'. Finally, he synchronised his primary socialisation as a Catholic dignitary with his secondary socialisation as a learned 'magician' by elevating the Catholic Church to the level of the ultimate and legitimate representative of the 'true doctrine'. By doing so Lévi even managed to adopt a unique position within his vision of ecclesiastical history, standing out as the prophet and reformer of the new, 'magical' era of the 'Universal Church'.

Even though from a modern scholarly perspective Lévi's narrative seems mostly odd and fictitious, it is nonetheless suited to illustrate fundamental problems of 'magic' historiography. Is there actually a stable object – 'magic' – that can plausibly be historicised? How should historiographers of 'magic' deal with the problem of ambivalent sources in Western history (an obstacle arising from the inescapable 'magic-science-religion triangle': cf. Otto, Stausberg 2013, 4f.)? What are scholars to do with the extreme diversity of insider and outsider perspectives? A plethora of 'magic' historiography, both from polemical and identi-

42 See Arthur Edward Waite's enthusiastic but historically critical foreword in his English translation of the *Histoire* (Lévy / Waite [transl.] ²1922), e. g. xix: 'Readers of his History must be prepared for manifold inaccuracies, which are to be expected in a writer like Eliphaz Levi. Those who know anything of Egypt – the antiquities of its religion and literature – will have a bad experience with the chapter on Hermetic Magic; those who know eastern religion on its deeper side will regard the discourse on Magic in India as title-deeds of all incompetence; while in respect of later Jewish theosophy I have had occasion in certain annotations to indicate that Levi had no extensive knowledge of those Kabalistic texts on the importance of which he dwells so much and about which he claims to speak with full understanding'; in a similar vein, Francis King complains that Lévi 'completely romanticised the whole magical and alchemical tradition' and devalues him as a 'Gothic vulgarizer' (King 1970, 23).

43 'Religious historiography' is here regarded the superordinate category of 'magic historiography'. In this respect, Lévi's *Histoire* seems to verify my claim in Otto 2011, particularly 617 f., that Western 'magic' discourses owe most of their narrative strategies and semantics to established cultural-religious discourses, thus qualifying the historical concept of 'magic' as an 'empty signifier' (even though it sometimes appears to be semantically overflowing).

ficatory perspectives, has been brought forward in the aftermath of Lévi's work, so that we can only highlight a few chosen examples.

With respect to the 'discourse of inclusion', Lévi's *Histoire* has certainly served as a role model for numerous narratives of positive 'magic' historiography in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries – be it from learned 'magic', Wiccan, New Age, or Neopagan milieus. As is to be expected, strategies of 'appropriation' and 'interpretatio magica' have been omnipresent in these works,⁴⁴ even though Lévi's extreme 'backdating' and 'magiologisation' of the Christian Bible remain his personal peculiarity.⁴⁵ An interesting contemporary case in point is the work of Nevill Drury who holds a PhD but also writes from a practitioner's perspective. Drury focuses on the tradition of Western learned 'magic' and possesses substantial insider knowledge so that his choice of sources is (compared to Lévi) by no means arbitrary and the employment of 'interpretatio magica' is strongly reduced. However, in his broad historical survey *Magic and Witchcraft: from Shamanism to the Technopagans* (2003), Drury cannot resist to 'magiologise' an alleged primeval 'shamanism' (chapter 1), ancient temple oracles and mystery cults (chapter 2), 'gnosis' (chapter 3), or science fiction movies (chapter 13) (cf. Drury 2003) to name only a few examples. The appropriation of these topoi follows a certain logic but Drury nonetheless follows in Lévi's footsteps, with the presumed intention of enlarging the historical foundations of 'magic' by creating a wide-ranging, coherent 'tradition'.

Taking into account two recent scholarly publications we encounter more differentiated, source-based narratives but are facing similar methodological obstacles. Neither Michael Bailey (in his *Magic and Superstition in Europe*, 2007) nor Owen Davies (in his *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*, 2009) provide convincing definitions of 'magic' at the outset of their works, with the result that the very object of their narratives, including their choice of sources, is sometimes difficult to grasp. Bailey mostly adopts a discourse-historical perspective (i.e. he follows the path of Western discourses of 'magic', taking both insider and outsider perspectives into account). However, one is left wondering about his 'magiologisation' of Nordic people (Bailey 2007, 59 f.), of practices of medieval instrumental religion (ibid., 79 f.), of the 'shamanic' *benandanti* (ibid., 146 f., thereby following the disputed argument of Carlo Ginzburg: see Ginzburg 1983 and 1991) or of the exorcisms of Johann Joseph Gassner (ibid., 223). In a similar vein, Davies, whose *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* is undoubtedly a land-

⁴⁴ See, with respect to in-group Neopagan and Wiccan historiography, Hutton 1999.

⁴⁵ However, Lévi's universalist interpretation of 'kabalah' was adopted by MacGregor Mathers in his introduction to *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (1912) – which was then picked up (par for par) by Israel Regardie in his *The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic* (Regardie 1984, I, 31 f.).

mark study, sometimes tends to ‘magiologise’ texts and traditions that belong to the history of individual or instrumental Western religions rather than to the quite narrow textual tradition of Western learned ‘magic’.⁴⁶ In both cases, conceptual vagueness (i.e. the absence of a convincing clarification of the very object of the historical narrative) leads to the inclusion of questionable material. At the same time, both scholars neglect sources – especially from the extremely vital twentieth and twenty-first centuries – that have played an important role in the history of Western learned ‘magic’. Finally, even though both Bailey and Davies frequently acknowledge the discursive ambivalence and conceptual multifacetedness of ‘magic’, they nevertheless tend to portray it as a stable object of study that wanders through time and space.⁴⁷ In other words, major methodological obstacles and counter-strategies that underlie Lévi’s *Histoire* – such as ‘appropriation’, the neglect of relevant sources or the counterfactual portrayal of ‘magic’ as a stable historical object – still pervade modern narratives of a ‘magic past’.

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⁴⁶ See Davies 2009, e.g. 22f. (where he refers to Medieval *leechbooks*), 76 (referring to Moriscan *alherces*), 80f. (referring to the *Prayer to Saint Martha* and the *cartas di voler bene*), 114f. (referring to the Spanish *Libro de San Cypriano*), 155f. (referring to Caribbean indigenous religions), 166f. (referring to ‘the Islamic folk magic tradition’).

⁴⁷ In my assessment, a thorough historicisation of Western learned ‘magic’ should focus on the continuous fluidity, adaptability and changeability of the ritual techniques that are to be found in texts belonging to the ‘discourse of inclusion’ (including the versatile theories of ritual efficacy in these texts). In contrast to what has been dubbed ‘history of truth’ above (see footnote 40), the actual mutability of ‘magic’ would then form the object of historiography, thus arriving at a description of *historical change*. See Otto forthcoming.

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Giovanni Filoramo

Locating the history of Christianity between the history of the Church and the History of Religions: The Italian case

Premise

The aim of this paper is to show how disciplines such as the History of Christianity became established in Italian public universities during the twentieth century. In a predominantly Catholic country like Italy – which was the seat of the papacy and simultaneously subject to special treatment by the *Magisterium* of the Catholic Church, and which stood under the influence of a dominant historicist tradition that has Neapolitan philosopher Benedetto Croce as its most distinguished representative – the development of these disciplines was particularly remarkable.

1 The beginnings in Italy

The History of Christianity first appeared on the curriculum of an Italian State university in 1887.¹ The facts behind this development are themselves significant: at the time the chairmanship of the University of Rome was given to Baldassare Labanca, a former priest (1829 – 1913) (cf. Preti 2004). In 1873 schools and departments of theology had been closed in Italy. However, unlike the French Government, the Italian regime, which had been in strong conflict with the Church for some time, did not make efforts to set up historical-religious courses in the State universities. It was only in the 1880 s that the tide changed. This resulted in Labanca's summoning to Rome in 1886 to teach the History of Religions, a course that he would adjust the following year to specifically cover the History of Christianity. The fact that Rome, a city that had been the capital of the new kingdom of Italy since 1870, and was also home to the Pope, offered a course on the History of Christianity – taught by a former priest – provoked a heated debate. As a

On each of the themes touched upon the bibliography is uncontrollable. The notes are therefore limited to essential references.

1 For an overview of these events, see Siniscalco 1994.

result, the course was elevated into a chair by direct intervention of a government minister in 1893.

Thus, the History of Christianity as a taught subject began in Italy in a highly polemical atmosphere that was based on tensions between the secular, liberal State and the Roman Church, which had been deprived of all temporal power by the State since 1870. Finally, the fact that Labanca's studies of the History of Christianity were almost exclusively focused on the origins of Christianity, and shaped by the beliefs and dogmas of the Protestant school of Tübingen and its leader, Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), reveals the origins of the discipline: there was a rising demand to investigate Christianity as a scholarly object and, particularly, as a historical reality distinct from the theological reality of the Church.

2 The origins of the historical-critical Study of Christianity as a religion

The distinction between the History of the Church and the History of Christianity emerged during the age of Enlightenment. Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693–1755), who is widely regarded as the Father of scientific ecclesiastical historiography, did not yet make this distinction. Rather, it gradually arose over the course of the eighteenth century, expressing criticism of the Church as an institution that smothered the original Christian message. Influenced by Hegelian historical philosophy, the distinction was then adopted against an idealistic background. Within this framework, the History of Christianity constitutes the inclusion of the history of the Christian idea into world history – a process that occurs through dialectical moments from successive eras of Church history up to the final synthesis that took place in the Protestant Reformation.

Influenced by the philosophy of Hegel, Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) takes up this approach from a historical perspective, ushering in a new and historical way to study Christianity. For a long time during the nineteenth century, traces of this idealistic matrix were apparent in the History of Christianity: a characteristic that positioned the subject in stark contrast to the History of the Church, and incorporated the history of the Christian idea and of Christian ideas themselves.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Catholic countries like Italy and France that were characterized by secular governments and lively anticlericalism, adopted this distinction with its clearly controversial meaning. The History of the Church was seen as a kind of theological discipline that one typically en-

countered in ecclesiastical schools and departments and which, ultimately, served their apologetic agenda. It was seen as attempting to justify the foundations of a hierarchy and structure that restricted the fundamental freedom of the believer. Ironically, however, the History of Christianity represented the study of the development of the Christian idea. It aimed to trace and discuss the religious ferment in the world that was announced by Christ and his disciples prior to the existing structure of any Church. Hence the History of Christianity was clearly anti-ecclesiastical.²

It was thought that such type of history of Christianity – fully in line with the more general blooming of historical sciences, and in particular of the comparative history of religions in the second half of the nineteenth century – must be addressed with non-theological presuppositions. A special position is reserved for the study of religious experience as the foundation of all religious life. As a consequence, both the Bible and the New Testament assume a particular significance. The former is the record of the religious experiences of a series of individuals, leading up to Jesus Christ. In this perspective, Christ experiences such a sense of God's fatherhood that he considers himself His divine filiation. In turn, the story told by the evangelists predominantly aims to allow others to relive the same religious experience, albeit without the same intensity. Through this experience one can perceive the divine revelation, which is, therefore, not restricted to a privileged few but accessible to all believers. No Church can claim to be the exclusive repository of a revelation considered a *datum* now complete, although not yet fully understood. All the more reason for any Church to avoid claiming to be the true one: indeed, any ecclesiastical organization carries the risk of destroying, in the believer, all direct contact with God, and therefore, the religious experience. This reading is typical of liberal Protestant theology. Yet, it also came to pervade the Catholic world through biblical exegesis and the study of Christian origins. The interpretation finds a mature expression in a famous statement by Alfred Loisy, the French leader in this field of study, *Jésus annonçait le Royaume, et c'est l'église qui est venue (Jesus announced the Kingdom, and it is the church that came)* (Loisy 1902, 111). At first there was the Christian announcement. It was only later that, for a variety of reasons (including the loss of eschatological hope), the ecclesiastical institution emerged. Gradually the new institution distanced itself from Christ's original announcement. As is well-known, this branch of study – known as Biblical Modernism – was strongly condemned by Pope Pius X's encyclical *Pascendi* in 1907.

² For the Italian case see Spineto 2012. For the French situation the essays collected in Hilaire 1999.

3 The Church as a historical object

The aforementioned process of the historization of Christianity – which transformed the religious tradition into an object of historical-critical research – had, within the Catholic environment, important effects on the History of the Church as a theological discipline. One should keep in mind that the beginnings of the modern History of the Church reach back to the development of Catholic theology after the Council of Trent and, particularly, to the rise of legal ecclesiology that led to conception of the Church as a *societas perfecta* (cf. Jedin 1970).

In connection with the development of ecclesiology, the need for historical knowledge of the Church as a divinely founded institution began to crystallize. This view was corroborated by the central position the discipline occupied in Catholic schools and departments of theology. Within a *ratio studiorum*, the History of the Church was seen as a functional discipline that aimed to further students' understanding of the historical-salvific tradition: grasping God's providential plan that was hidden under the veil of historical events. It is no coincidence that the first author to address the problem of the relationship between the theological understanding of the Church as *societas perfecta* – which was typical of Tridentine ecclesiology – and the perspective of historicism that gained strength in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century, was Johann Adam Möhler (1796–1838). Möhler was the founder of the Catholic school of Tübingen, and challenged the work of his fellow Protestant scholar F. Chr. Baur.

Clashing with German idealism and influenced by Baur, Möhler emphasizes the essential historicity of Christianity as an organic development of the supernatural revelation. In his famous *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845), Cardinal Newman (1801–1890) makes arguments along similar lines. The outcome is a dynamic concept of the Church: as an institution that is subject to the influences of history, but which cannot be the result of the historian's arbitrary definition. In Möhler's view it is necessary to distinguish between the object of the History of the Church, given by theology, and the method of its study, which is characterized by a historical-critical approach. The definition of Church put forth by the theologian allows the historian to go about his work, bearing in mind a very specific object of research: the Church as a continuator and performer of the mission of Christ as God incarnate throughout the centuries, until His coming again in glory.

One particular consequence of this position, which involves the interpretation of the history of the Church in terms of the history of Salvation, deserves to be highlighted: the study of the history of the Church, delineated in such a

way, implies a faithful acceptance of its object of study, that is, a particular type of experience (in this case, the Catholic one). As such, it is exclusively for the believer who positions himself within the Church, partaking of its faith and its eschatological tension. Möhler's position, that sought to mediate between a self-understanding of the believer and the critical perspective put forth by historicism, would become fashionable again in the second half of the twentieth century.

4 The Italian case

Against the backdrop of the historical background outlined above, we can now turn our attention to the Italian case, which is characterized by the efforts of several Catholic scholars in the second half of the twentieth century. They hoped to introduce, in Italy, a range of studies of the history of Christianity devoid of any theological debt. This approach, which prevails in Italian universities until today (albeit with some difficulties that I will hint at towards the end of this paper), had to avoid two opposing traps. The first was the historicist perspective itself. Where should such a historical discipline be placed within the university's curriculum? Croce's historicism did not account for an independent reality like religion; as a result his theories proved to be antithetical to the idea of teaching the history of Religions. From a historicist view, an independent history of Christianity had no reason to exist: the study of Christianity, as proposed in the interwar period by historians like Luigi Salvatorelli (cf. D'Orsi 2008) and Adolfo Omodeo (cf. Musté 1990) – who were influenced by Croce's thought – had to be taken up in the context of the general study of history, adjusted to specific historical periods (cf. Salvatorelli 1950).

If Christianity was essentially a cultural phenomenon, the consequences of this status soon became apparent: it had no scientific autonomy. It should therefore be approached within a more general history of the culture of its time and be examined under these conditions. For the sake of our discussion one important fact should be stressed: Croce's concept of history, specifically as history of the present, tied history and historiography together in an inextricable way. Deeply influenced by this perspective, Omodeo's works reveal that a historical-positivist study of sources from a particular period in the history of Christianity cannot be separated from deeper historiographical knowledge of the way religion was born and gained strength in modern Europe. This is why Omodeo combines historical papers on early Christianity with historiographical studies on the religious history of modern Europe, which had thus far been non-existent. The meeting point between these two lines of research is found in the new concept of religion

that was born in the nineteenth century. These concepts simultaneously gave rise to the modern concept of history (cf. Filoramo 2013, 22f.).

One danger entailed by this approach was the potential disappearance of the History of Christianity as a scholarly discipline, which could either be subsumed under the *mare magnum* of the various historical disciplines, or eventually be turned into more general studies on the history of religions. The other stumbling block that historians of Christianity had to overcome was the field's relationship with the history of the Church. After the end of World War II, the Italian State universities began to include courses on the History of Christianity as well as on the History of the Church in their curricula. These adjustments were made to alleviate the neglect of previous governments and were likely prompted by a political climate in which the Christian Democrats were the majoritarian party. Out of convenience a distinction was established between the two disciplines that was meant to reflect their different developments. While the History of Christianity is mainly concerned with Christian origins and the appearance of specific phenomena, such as heresies, marginalization or spiritual effervescence, the History of the Church is mainly focused on the medieval and modern ages and is portrayed as a history of ecclesiastical structures, institutions and law. This division ultimately reflects the until recently prevailing Catholic ecclesiology that presented the Church as a legal institution. The Church was depicted as a structure grounded primarily in the law and then in the Word of God. Behind the study of the History of Christianity lurks the study of religiosity, while the History of the Church is presented as an effort in historical-legal research. So remains – albeit quite in disguise – the Enlightened and idealist distinction: the Church as a structural and static element, Christianity as a religious and dynamic one.

5 The state of the History of the Church

The distinction discussed above collapsed in the 1970 s after the Second Vatican Council, which proposed an ecclesiology of the people of God that differed from Tridentine juridical ecclesiology.³ At this point the History of the Church became the history of the religious experience of the Christian people, even under the pressure of Gabriel Le Bras' religious sociology (cf. Delumeau 1979). However, this shift in the object of study did not remove the central problem of the relationship between faith and history – the very core of the modernist crisis (cf.

³ See the essays collected in Kottje 1970.

id. 1996). It also failed to address the problematic relationship between Christianity and history: to what extent is a historicist approach likely to devour, as Cronus did his children, its own object of research?

For our purposes, two aspects of this debate are worth mentioning, inasmuch as they are characteristic of the Italian case. Due to a variety of different factors, mainly related to the profound changes that have occurred in the field of historical studies, the Italian academy proceeded to justify the autonomous existence of a discipline named 'History of Christianity and of the Christian Churches'.⁴ After the rejection of the idealistic and the enlightenment distinction previously made between the two genres of history, it was determined that both disciplines fit into the broader context of the historical sciences. Their specificity was determined by their focus on religious histories; their field of study are the facts that express religious consciousness. Since the research of the historian is focused on the social and cultural facts that express the religious experience in its various forms (including the institutionalized ones) these facts are, of course, explored in their various manifestations.⁵ However, the old problem outlined by Möhler, namely the pre-understanding (*Vorverständnis*) of the historian's faith, has also been reintroduced. This particular issue concerns the way in which the History of the Church is taught, and whether or not an experience of faith and of ecclesial participation should be a prerequisite for its historical study.

The necessity for pre-understanding, which was supported by authorities on the History of the Church such as H. Jedin (1900–1980), was eventually defeated by those Italian scholars who interpreted the history of the Catholic Church from a historicist perspective. This development is exemplified in the case of Giuseppe Alberigo (1926–2007), a pupil of Jedin and perhaps the most authoritative Italian representative of this position. For him, the History of the Church cannot be considered a theological discipline. Instead, it has a particular status that comes from being part of the historical environment and aims to study the visible manifestations of the Church as a society, beyond the beliefs of all its members. Finally, the discipline is founded on a definition of 'Church' that was borrowed from theology, whether biblical, speculative or historical (cf. Alberigo 1988).

Nowadays, a secularized vision of the History of Christianity and of the Christian Churches seems to have been firmly established in Italian State universities. However, we have to ask whether this chapter can truly be considered closed. In fact, the threat of the extinction of this discipline is alive and well in contemporary Italy. On the one hand, it has been subsumed by other historical

⁴ See the essays collected in Siniscalco 2002 and more generally Menozzi, Montacutelli 2011.

⁵ Compare the essays collected in Repgen 1985 and Pirotte, Louchez 2000.

disciplines, while on the other hand, it has been subjected to much criticism and competition from a *Magisterium* that defends the traditional view. I would like to conclude the paper with a number of reflections on this matter.

6 Conclusion

In 1954, Pope Pius XII ordered the establishment of a Pontifical Committee of Historical Sciences, as an expression of, and instrument for Catholic cooperation with the *Comité International des sciences historiques*, in view of the International Congress of Historical Sciences to be held in Rome the following year. This was an important decision, which foretold some of the changes that were introduced by the Council a few years later when it recognized the rightful freedom of inquiry, thought and expression in the fields of research and teaching in its Constitution *Gaudium et spes* 62 (7.12.1965). Nonetheless, the question remains: to what extent is this freedom recognized today?

In a speech delivered in 2002, Walter Brandtmüller, secretary of the Pontifical Committee of Historical Sciences since 1998, summarized the perspective of those supporters of a History of Christianity in a relativist position: In fact, it represents an abstract concept that has no match in historical reality, where there is no generic ‘Christianity’, but only different ‘Churches’ amongst which the Catholic Church has a central place (cf. Siniscalco 2002, 59 f.). According to Brandtmüller’s view, the historical method, while important, is only a starting point that is essential for the transmission and corroboration of religious facts. While the discipline does allow religious scholars to take some first steps towards an historical interpretation, nevertheless this method is not by itself sufficient when attempting to provide a complete overview of connections, causes and consequences, or a fair assessment of the object. For this reason, he maintains that a theological method is most crucial when studying Christianity.⁶

This position was authoritatively sanctioned by Pope John Paul II towards the end of his pontificate. By doing so the Pope essentially revived a reading of the relationship between the Church and history based on the Tridentine ec-

⁶ In Menozzi, Montacutelli 2011, 17f.: ‘The history of the Church is the process in which the Church, as the *ecclesia* set up and hierarchically and sacramentally structured by Jesus Christ, carries out its mission, which consists in the transmission of the Gospel, understood in the fullest sense of Word and Sacrament, and in doing this, it realizes its own being. The science of the history of the Church sees its own task in the research, representation and interpretation of the self-fulfilment of the Church along the two millennia of its existence. This is the interpretation of the history of the Church that emerges from the Catholic concept of Church’.

clesiology previously questioned by the Second Vatican Council. A message sent to the President of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences on April sixteenth 2004 provides clear evidence of the *Magisterium's* renewed attempt to claim control over this area of research.⁷

According to this approach the History of the Church returns to being a mere history *événementielle*, made up of victories, persecutions, wars, battles, decrees and errors, even though these occurrences were exclusively depicted as the result of personal weaknesses and deviations: in short, a history of the superficial changes, external to its organism. All truly relevant aspects (faith, doctrine, piety, laws and fundamental relationships) essentially remain static, removed from the contingencies of time, and therefore unreachable for an analysis based on a historical approach. Considering these limitations, a History of Christianity and the Christian Churches, like the one that has laboriously established itself in Italian State universities, can be a useful tool for knowledge. However, this knowledge remains superficial and is unable to penetrate the mystery of the Church's self-awareness. In the long run, it is a useless – if not a dangerous – instrument. At least in Italy, the battle for an autonomous and fully historicized History of Christianity and of the Christian Churches is far from over.

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⁷ www.vatican.va/.../speeches/2004/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20040417_historical-sciences_it.html – 10k – 2004-04-17

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