The Minor Orders of the Early Church

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Dedication

In Memory of my Grandfather Lawrence and Grandmother Pat, who did not get to see this project completed

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Abstract

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This thesis explores the Minor Orders as part of the Diaconate between 200 and 451CE, as the Diaconate (especially the concept of *diakonia*) covered more orders than the Deacon. Through examining these little-researched orders, more could be understood about the role of the Deacon, Diakonia and the diaconate. This is achieved by collating and examining the evidence for the presence of the assisting orders (such as Subdeacons, Readers, Widows, and Virgins) across the Late Antique Roman Empire. This evidence is subsequently examined within the context of gender, beliefs, literacy and law to highlight areas of convergence and divergence with existing historical and ecclesiastical scholarship. In this way, the research contributes to understanding Ecclesiology in Late Antiquity, especially concerning the concept of diakonia, as it extends from the Minor Orders to the Deacon. The investigation also reveals much about how the early church worked with a cultural contextualization of gender relationships and activities. This research opens new avenues of contextualisation within the study of Ecclesiology and provides new insights for historical research in Late Antiquity.

Keywords: Diaconate, Minor Orders, Late Antiquity, Ecclesiology, Women, Literacy

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Abbreviations

AC   *Apostolic Constitutions* - Donaldson 1867 translation

ACO   *Apostolic Church Order* - Stewart 2021 translation

ANF   *Ante-Nicene Fathers* - Schaff 1885 translation

AT   *Apostolic Tradition* - Stewart, 2015 and Bradshaw, 2021 translations

CIG   Corpus inscriptionum graecarum. 4 vols. Berlin 1828-1877.

CTh   *Codex Theodosianus* - Pharr, 1952 translation

DA   *Didascalia Apostolorum* - Stewart, 2009 translation

EH   *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius – Kirsopp, 1926 edition with translation

TD   *Testamentum Domini/Testament of the Lord* - Stewart, 2018 translation

NPNF   *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* Schaff and Wace 1886-99 translation

1 Introduction

This thesis will address the gap in the historical ecclesiology research on Minor Orders, using historical research to contextualise the origins and early development of these Orders.[1] This historical contextualisation will allow ecclesiology to be juxtaposed with the current understanding of Late Antique culture. There has been considerable research on early Deacons and the early diaconate since the mid-1980s, paralleled by research in Early Church liturgics. Historical contextualisation, ecclesiology and liturgics are all key areas which will influence the exploration of the Minor Orders within this thesis, including their position within the Late Antique Church and society.

The rest of this introduction will set out the specific aims and limits of this thesis, along with the academic and ecclesiastical context of the research. Then it will define within the historical context what the Minor Orders are and the structure of the thesis.

1.a Aims

This study aims to survey the mentions of Minor Orders of the (imperial) Christian Church in literary sources between 200 and 451 CE, exploring the relationship between the Major Orders, particularly the Deacon, and the Minor Orders. This investigation includes considering the possible understanding of the Minor Orders as an extension of the diaconate rather than a distinct type of ministry. The framework for this thesis is provided by an examination of the extent to which this ecclesiastical interpretation adds to our understanding of the involvement of women in the church, literacy amongst Christians in liturgical and non-liturgical contexts, and the legal framework for these clerical relationships.

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[1] The titles of members of both Major and Minor orders are being treated as proper nouns throughout the thesis.

1.b Boundaries of the study

This thesis focuses on the period of 200CE to 451CE, as the greatest concentration of primary sources on Minor Orders occurs between these dates. In the late-second and early-third centuries, there was an increase in the production of ecclesiological texts which have been preserved within the historical record, making it an appropriate starting point for this study which focuses on such texts – and therefore, the year 200CE is chosen as a conventional marker. These texts reflect the wide diversity in the church at the time, a variety which had been present since the early second-century.[2] The council of Chalcedon in 451CE is used as the endpoint for this study as it marked a significant split within the Church of the Roman Empire. The concentration of sources during these centuries facilitates the investigation of ecclesiology, including that of the Minor Orders.

The ecclesiastical sources will be linked to Late Antique socio-political history via four areas: Women, Beliefs, Literacy and Law. As discussed in the literature review, these active research areas within socio-political history are essential for contextualising the primary sources. They have been chosen because they provide insights into key areas of life, with the intention of a realistic contextualisation within the size constraints of this study. The inclusion of beliefs originates from the understanding that society and belief were interdependent in Late Antiquity.[3] Women are an important focus because their story and participation in ecclesiastical life has not been included in much past research. Literacy and Law are included to provide a fuller appreciation of socio-political history. These four areas provide the nucleus around which each of the interpretive chapters is constructed and a contact point with scholarship outside of the specific field of diaconate ecclesiology within which Minor Orders ecclesiology occurs. This approach also facilitates interaction with other areas of active historical research, creating a multidisciplinary aspect of this project. In this way, this thesis will engage with the ongoing conversations within diverse areas of history about the interpretation of Late Antique sources.

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[2] Jeffrey S. Siker, "Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries," in *The Early Christian World*, vol 1-2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 231-257, at 232.

[3] Philip F. Esler, "The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity," in *The Early Christian World*, vol 1-2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 3-25, at 21.

This thesis investigates the occurrences of Minor Orders in the Literature of Late Antiquity and seeks to understand these texts in the context in which they were written. This means that the thesis will not directly engage with interpreting these sources for application within a modern context since this context is very different from the one in which the texts were created. This thesis engages with existing studies, some of which mine history for proofs to refute them, where a text is misrepresented or the original context is distorted in favour of a theological point, a methodology that contradicts this study's approach.[4] This study is a contextual examination that will recognise that Late Antique societal structure focused on the group rather than the individual, with identity and honour being dependent on a person's position within the community, including gender, and reflecting differences in cultural contexts.[5] This recognition of societal structure allows for the identification of gender function within the community studied, but within the understanding that in most communities, the survival of the family or group was more important than the individual and that sources reflected this.[6] Any history that mines history for proof or to support current practices distorts the past events it is examining, as it forces it into the constructs of a modern paradigm, practices which are commonly seen in confessional and Whig histories.[7] This study will be primarily historical in its methodology to avoid the limitations presented by these methods, although the implications of the results of this research on the study of Deacons in ecclesiology will also be discussed.

1.c Academic context

As this thesis investigates the presence of Minor Orders within the context of the imperial church, it is a part of Ecclesiastical History. The intention to connect this relationship within the church to the wider socio-political structure of the Roman Empire means that the study occurs within the ongoing negotiation of the position of Ecclesiastical History in the broader study of History and Theology. Foot explored the relationship between Ecclesiastical History

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[4] Cf. John Ramsey, *The Minor Clergy of the Orthodox Church: Their Role and Life According to the Canons* (Scotts Valley: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2016). Aspects of the discussions in this book are refuted at various points throughout this study.

[5] Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y Macdonald, and Janet H Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 7-9.

[6] Esler, "Mediterranean Context", 16-18.

[7] Peter Claus and John Marriott, *History: An Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice,* (London: Routledge, 2012), 154.

and other aspects of History and Theology in SCH 49.[8] This study draws on a range of established approaches for studying history within and beyond the immediate context of the church, as it is faced with the challenge of assumed knowledge in individual parts of history and the difficulty this can present in understanding what the evidence says.[9] Through drawing on a range of scholarship, this study makes use of a variety of interpretations, in this way mitigating the effect of assumed knowledge.

This thesis attempts to reduce the impact of assumed knowledge and male bias in the study of ecclesiology by using minority history research, specifically in the areas of women and the lower classes, areas traditionally underrepresented in scholarship.[10] This focus on the groups who tend to be underrepresented is helpful for this study as the Minor Orders themselves are not extensively recorded, meaning that the methods employed in minority histories can help discover information about these functions. The lens of Minor Orders ecclesiology brings a new perspective to the ongoing debates on the relationship between theological and historical research by providing an additional context to examine the evidence. By taking this approach, the thesis addresses a neglected area of ecclesiology with historical rigour for the first time, including the use of contextualisation by examining the embodiment of faith within the expression of ecclesiology.[11] The neglect of Minor Order ecclesiology is noticeable in the following literature.

1.c.α Ecclesiastical context

Alongside the relevant academic context, the ecclesial context must also be acknowledged due to the influence it has on contemporary academic debates. While such influences on this research are recognised, contemporary debates will not be allowed to influence the conclusions. The way this will be achieved is discussed in the methodology chapter. For various reasons, multiple churches have become involved in the debates around the diaconate

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[8] Sarah Foot, "Has Ecclesiastical History Lost the Plot," in *The Church on its Past,* SCH49, ed. Peter D Clarke and Charlotte Methuen (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 1–25.

[9] Ally Kateusz, *Mary and Early Christian Women: Hidden Leadership* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 13.

[10] Suzanne Dixon, "Introduction," in *Childhood, Class and Kin in the Roman World*, ed. Suzanne Dixon, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 1-18, at 2.

[11] Harvey, Susan Ashbrook. "Patristic Worlds," in *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: Proceedings of an International Conference to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the International Association of Patristic Studies*, ed. Carol Harrison, Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, and Theodore de Bruyn, (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015), 25–53, at 26.

and diakonia; here, these approaches and the influence of the most actively involved traditions will be briefly surveyed. Most of the relevant papers come from the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox traditions, although there are also papers from other Protestant groups which focus on the biblical texts.

1.c.α.1 Roman Catholic Church

There is an ongoing discussion within the Roman Catholic church regarding the position and function of the Deacon. The re-evaluation of the Deacon began with the second Vatican council and has produced a large volume of texts in the form of official documents and studies on the diaconate and woman Deacons; however, there has been little practical change in many areas.[12] In the Roman Catholic church, there is a very polarised debate around woman Deacons and how this impacts the understanding of the diaconate. As shown in the literature review, this debate has produced a wealth of scholarship on the early diaconate, although both sides may sometimes sacrifice rigorous history for the sake of ideology. These recent discussions on deacon ecclesiology have omitted any reference to the Minor Orders because of the changes introduced during and after Vatican II. The encyclical of Pope Paul VI redefined the Minor Orders concerning their active function under a new name, removing any link with the historic Minor Orders which performed the functions along with the link to any form of ordination.[13] The fact that there is an active debate on the role and position of Deacons and the diaconate means the research is relevant for this study even without a direct link to Minor Orders.

1.c.α.2 Anglican Church

The understanding of the Deacon within the Anglican tradition is varied; for simplicity, the focus will be on the understanding in the Church of England (CofE) since it is in this part of the tradition that the debates are most developed. The CofE has two distinct forms of the diaconate: one is the transitional diaconate, which is an intermediate stage for those who are

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[12] Sr Bernadette Mary Reis, FSP, "Pope Institutes New Commission to Study Women Deacons - Vatican News", www.vaticannews.va, April 8, 2020, https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-04/pope-commission-women-deacons.html.

[13] Paul VI Ministeria Quaedam [Encyclical letter by which the Discipline Related to the First Tonsure, to the Minor Orders and to the Subdiaconate is Reformed in the Latin Church], Accessed July 07, 2022 https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19720815_ministeria-quaedam.html.

subsequently ordained priests, and the other is the distinctive (permanent) diaconate. The most common is the transitional form of the diaconate, but there is complexity in the CofE: with the ongoing presence of distinctive Deacons and consideration of abolishing the diaconate altogether.[14] The Diaconate as a distinctive role was important as a stage in the acceptance of ordained women during the 1980s, with the current form of distinctive Deacons emerging among those who remained Deacons after women were allowed to become priests.[15] The representation and acceptance of Deacons and other auxiliary ministries tend to be championed by individual dioceses within the CofE, with varying levels of acceptance of reports on these forms of ministry at a national level.[16] The focus of Anglican scholarship tends to be on using Deacons within parishes and how to fund their presence; this can involve a tweaking to the received understanding of the order but not a radical reimagining of the tasks of the Deacon.

1.c.α.3 Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church has a liturgical assumption of the presence of the Deacon, although this is usually not realised in practice. There has been a limited amount of English language scholarship in the field: focused on the history of women Deacons in the church culminating in the work of Kyriaki Karidoyianes FitzGerald, who developed in the English language the Greek language work of Evangelos Theodorou.[17] FitzGerald's work is complemented by Chryssavgis's exploration of the diaconate as a living office within the Orthodox church, reflecting on both the past of the office and its current form within the Orthodox tradition.[18] Both works notably omit mention of Minor Orders, although they include women Deacons, for whom most evidence is found within the Eastern regions of the Roman Empire. FitzGerald includes an appendix with an excerpt from the 1988 consultation on women's ordination, which notes the lack of evidence for women in Minor Orders.[19]

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[14] Rosalind Brown, "Expanding the Theological Foundation of the Deacon's Ministry," *Ecclesiology* 13, no. 2 (May 23, 2017): 197–223, at 201-2.

[15] Brown, "Expanding the Theological Foundation," 202.

[16] Brown, "Expanding the Theological Foundation," 202-3.

[17] Kyriaki Karidoyanes Fitzgerald, *Women Deacons in the Orthodox Church: Called to Holiness and Ministry* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1999).

[18] John Chryssavgis, *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia: the Diaconate Yesterday and Today* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2009).

[19] FitzGerald, *Women Deacons,* 205-6.

The active debate within the Orthodox church about Deacons in contemporary practice has polarised around the ordination of women Deacons and perceptions of the results of their existence.[20] On the one hand, some claim that women Deacons were not ordained to the Major Orders and insist on using the term Deaconess even when historical sources do not warrant this.[21] On the other hand, some groups argue for the complete restoration of the woman Deacon, led by the Phoebe Centre in America.[22] Due to the still-active use of the Minor Orders within the Orthodox Church, these orders have also been drawn into the debate by writers such as Ramsey, stating that in no way should women be admitted to the Minor Orders, let alone the Major Orders.[23] However, the Patriarchate of Alexandria restored the order of women Subdeacons and women Catechists in 2017.[24]

Within the Orthodox churches' diaspora communities, women often lead the singing and within women's monastic communities fulfil the Minor Order functions.[25] Such active participation by women in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church has triggered debates within the community and inspired some research on the history of women performing the role of Reader and Cantor.[26] The most recent contribution to the female Deacons debate comes in the form of an edited book exploring the theology around the ordination of women, which tackles the significant challenges in the field and refers to the Minor Orders in passing.[27]

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[20] Kyiaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, "*Laudanum*: Praising the Life and Witness of Prof. Evangelos Theodorou, Principal Proponent for the Rejuvenation of the Ordination of Deaconess," in *Women and Ordination in the Orthodox Church*, ed. Gabrielle Thomas and Elena Narinskaya (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020), 27-35, at 33.

[21] Ramsey, *Minor Clergy,* 54-8. The complexities of these translations is discussed in 3.d.α.2.

[22] "Home", St. Phoebe Center, accessed August 18, 2022, https://orthodoxdeaconess.org/.

[23] Ramsey, *Minor Clergy,* 54-8.

[24] Catherine Clark, "Orthodox Church Debate over Women Deacons Moves One Step Closer to Reality", *National Catholic Reporter*, March 9, 2017, https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/orthodox-church-debate-over-women-deacons-moves-one-step-closer-reality.

[25] Dimitris Salapatas, "The Role of Women in the Orthodox Church," *Orthodoxes Forum* 29, no. 2 (2015): 177–94, at 183.

[26] Salapatas, "Role of Women," 177.

[27] Gabrielle Thomas and Elena Narinskaya, *Women and Ordination in the Orthodox Church: Explorations in Theology and Practice* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020).

11.d Literature review

As a work of Ecclesiastical History, this thesis draws on research from that field and the neighbouring areas of History and Theology. This section identifies the key influences from these fields and positions the study within existing Late Antiquity research. The literature review focuses on the English language works in these fields and some translated works on ecclesiology as the most relevant for this study. Most studies on the Minor Orders occur in English as the principal interest is within the English Language Orthodox Communities, which have already translated the relevant modern studies from Greek.

1.d.α Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology is a large and complex field with many competing interpretations of how it developed and is utilised practically in church communities. For the study of the Minor Orders, Deacon ecclesiology is the most relevant area within the field of ecclesiology, as will be explored in chapter 3. A range of books and papers considered Deacon ecclesiology based on methodologies which support or challenge current ecclesiastical practice, with a few taking a distinctly historical-critical approach and a small number of studies investigating the Minor Orders. This review of existing literature will survey the parallels and differences between the methodology of this study and existing ecclesiological literature, followed by a brief survey of related studies of Deacon ecclesiology that do not directly relate to the Minor Orders. Following this, older studies on Deacons and Minor Orders will be acknowledged but these texts will have little impact on the study, and then a discussion on areas that need to be re-examined within this thesis and in future research will be conducted. This exploration will include using a wide range of texts with strongly confessional approaches, which are included for a balanced understanding of the field.

Within the broader study of ecclesiology, some pieces of research indicate the need to challenge established viewpoints and allow the historical texts to speak for themselves. Macy's exploration of Women's Ordination is an important example and precedent for using historical-critical methods in ecclesiology research. Macy does this by focusing on historical

references to "the ministries of episcopae, presbytetae, deaconesses, and Abbesses,"[28] creating the groundwork which facilitates my research and that of Bates.[29] Macy developed ideas expressed by Methuen, among others and changed the dominant reading of Church history.[30] These investigations are necessary for contextualising the study of the diaconate.

Additionally, there is some research on the presence and activity of the Laity in the Late Antique Church. While this is a distinct aspect of ecclesiology, it is important to include since some texts also cover the Minor Orders, meaning their inclusion is vital for understanding the church's functioning and context. Faivre's *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church* investigates the development of the structural organisation of the church; the academic context and the methodologies utilised within Faivre's research, however, limit the usefulness of the conclusions of this study.[31] Faivre also has a clear agenda of talking about the laity, which leads to him reading sources in a way inconsistent with the internal theology of the source document. Bailey's recent work on the Laity in Gaul is also a crucial contextualising work for this research, especially in understanding relationships within the church.[32]

1.d.α.1 Parallels

There are few mentions of the Minor Orders in the published studies of the diaconate, meaning it is important to set the research within the context of the wider discussions on the diaconate. One book which mentions these orders is Olson's *One Ministry Many Roles*.[33] Olson identifies Subdeacons, Acolytes, Exorcists, Readers, Doorkeepers, Virgins and Widows as having a distinct relationship with Deacons. One of the most critical aspects of this is the recognition that the order of the Reader developed separately from the Deacon.[34]

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[28] Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 49.

[29] Carrie L Bates, "Gender Ontology and Women in Ministry in the Early Church," *Priscilla Papers* 25, no. 2 (2011): 6–15.

[30] Charlotte Methuen, "Vidua — Presbytera — Episcopa Women with Oversight in the Early Church," *Theology* 108, no. 843 (May 2005): 163–77.

[31] Alexandre Faivre, *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).

[32] Lisa Kaaren Bailey, *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

[33] Jeannine E Olson, *One Ministry, Many Roles: Deacons and Deaconesses through the Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992).

[34] Olson, *One Ministry Many Roles*, 38.

Olson's work is also influential as it surveys the whole development of the role of the Deacon, allowing the contextualisation of specific studies. Collins frames studying the Deacon through his investigation of the nature of διακον- words and develops this into discussing practical aspects of the Deacon within the church.[35] The ideas and concepts explored by Collins are developed in the recent collection of studies, *Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity,*[36] which provides critical contextualising information for this research by providing an overview of the understanding of the Deacon in the earliest centuries of the church. This collated work on the Deacon in the early church continued in a series of seminars across 2020-21 on 'What did Deacons do?' with future conferences planned.

The only current study on the Minor Orders which addresses them with academic rigour is that of Wipszycka, which provides an overview of the situation in Egypt.[37] Wipszycka's work is an important starting point that has not subsequently been developed. There have also been specific studies into individual orders, such as; Widows by FitzGerald and Wilkinson, Virgins by Dunn, predominantly within the Western traditions.[38] Comparable explorations into women's ministry were carried out in the East by Karras and Mayer,[39] building on existing scholarship, such as the influential work of Behr-Sigel, who addressed the ecclesiastical position of women in the tradition of the Orthodox church.[40]

1.d.α.2 Differences

This study differs from the existing studies profoundly in that this thesis will explicitly explore the regional variations in the expression of traditions. Most existing literature,

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[35] John N Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); idem, *Deacons and the Church: Making Connections between Old and New* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2002).

[36] Bart J. Koet, Edwina Murphy, and RyökäsEsko, *Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity: The First Two Centuries,* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

[37] Ewa Wipszycka, "Les Ordres Mineurs Dans l'Eglise d'Egypte Du IVe Au VIIIe Siècle," *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 23 (1993): 181–215.

[38] J.T. Fitzgerald, "Orphans in Mediterranean Antiquity and Early Christianity," *Acta Theologica* 23, no. 1 (2016): 29–48; Kevin W. Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows in Codex Theodosianus 9.25?," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2012): 141–66; James D G Dunn, *World Biblical Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1988).

[39] Valerie A Karras, "The Liturgical Functions of Consecrated Women in the Byzantine Church," *Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (February 2005): 96–116; Wendy Mayer, "Constantinopolitan Women in Chrysostom's Circle," *Vigiliae Christianae* 53, no. 3 (1999): 265–88.

[40] Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women in the Church* (Younkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991).

including Olson, treat the sources as if they refer to one unified way things happened or at most refer to Greek and Latin variants. As will be illustrated by the collating of historical sources in Appendix 2, things were far from this simple.

This study will also not follow overtly doctrinal views that assert a fact categorically and then go on to try and prove that point. For instance, after selectively reviewing the evidence for Minor Orders, Ramsey concludes that there is no systematic, organised development of these orders "at any stage but only evidence of the various orders being an established part of the clergy."[41] Ramsey writes from the assumption that there has been little change in the liturgical and practical use of the Minor Orders apart from the removal of women Deacons, whom he regards as Minor rather than Major Orders, despite the evidence to the contrary. Ramsey makes selective use of historical sources and modern scholarship to argue his point. His treatment of the texts dating from the era of this study is abysmal as there is little engagement with the ongoing debates within the διακον- field, Late Antique history or linguistic complexity. Although Ramsey illustrates the need to examine the Minor Orders critically and listen to the sources, he does not achieve this as his need to prove his predetermined conclusions hinders his engagement with broader scholarship. Ramsey's study also lacks recognition of regional variation and temporal changes as these contradict the simplistic conclusion he wishes to make. There is also an older article by Davies, which, although containing some valid points, is superseded in some areas.[42]

These are not the only occurrences of doctrinal viewpoints colouring interpretation to the point that some parts of scholarship are challenging to use. Another example is the writings of Wijngaards, who has written extensively on woman Deacons in the Early Church.[43] One of the noticeable tools used within this work is to construct a plausible image of what might have happened based on scant evidence.[44] This image convinces the reader despite not being

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[41] Ramsey, *Minor Clergy*, 50.

[42] J. G. Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses and the Minor Orders in the Patristic Period," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14, no. 1 (April 1963): 1–15.

[43] John N. M Wijngaards, *The Ordination of Women in the Catholic Church: Unmasking a Cuckoo's Egg Tradition,* (Delhi: Media House, 2002); idem, *Women Deacons in the Early Church: Historical Texts and Contemporary Debates,* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co, 2006); idem, *The Ordained Women Deacons of the Church's First Millennium,* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2011).

[44] Wijngaards, *Women Deacons*, 3-4.

fully supported by the evidence presented later in the text. This use of hypothetical images also masks the true complexity of the issue, as it uses information from numerous sources from different places and times to create a single image. This way of creating an image is poor historiography as it does not respect history's sources or integrity. This thesis will present what can be asserted from a single document but not try to construct a scene since it is impossible to create a picture from the small amount of evidence available. Wijngaards' writings are included in this research as he acknowledges the existence of the Minor Orders and challenges some of the ways texts are usually read. The extent of the polarization of the scholarly differences in the Roman Catholic tradition provides a wealth of scholarship, although other areas must balance it to contribute to historical research.

This thesis will seek to avoid the excesses in some texts presented in this section. The purpose is to prove or disprove a hypothesis by the available data and examine the sources in context rather than combining different layers of evidence to create a picture with little basis in the sources. The importance of the scholarship presented is in illustrating why a historical-critical study is required and providing a variety of viewpoints when examining existing interpretations of historical texts.

1.d.α.3 Other studies on Deacons

While the preceding two subsections have explicitly dealt with studies on the diaconate that have direct and substantial relevance to this thesis, there are also many other studies within the field. These texts come from a range of theological and ecclesiastical viewpoints but bear inclusion to thoroughly examine the field and contextualise this study. Barnett's *The Diaconate, a Full and Equal Order* and Plater's *Many Servants, an Introduction to Deacons* are both texts written for the training of Deacons within the context of the Episcopal Church in America.[45] Both writers draw on the historical evidence for the role of the Deacon without necessarily fitting it to the specific confessional bias of their audience. While both books

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[45] James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate--a Full and Equal Order: A Comprehensive and Critical Study of the Origin, Development, and Decline of the Diaconate in the Context of the Church's Total Ministry and the Renewal of the Diaconate Today with Reflections for the Twenty-First Century* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995); Ormonde Plater, *Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2004).

contain some confessional interpretation, this is balanced by rigorous scholarship, which allows them to be utilised in historical-critical research.

There are two texts from a Protestant confessional approach: Biette's *Our Sister Phoebe, a survey of Biblical and Historical Support for the Deaconess in the Modern Church*, and Hübner's *A Case for Female Deacons*.[46] Biette and Hübner contribute to the ongoing discussions about the presence and importance of women Deacons in the early Church. The underlying ecclesiology is bible-centred and limits their research's applicability to this project. The studies provide an alternative approach to those found in other research with a strong confessional bias.

The Roman Catholic tradition has produced considerable scholarship on both sides of the argument about the theology of women Deacons. *The Deacon Reader,*[47] edited by Keating in 2006, is constructed to fit the official line of the Roman Catholic Church. There is also the extensive work of Wijngaards, discussed in the previous section. These two writers provide significant insight into the development of the Deacon but are limited by the strong influence of doctrinal positions on the studies.

Within the Eastern Orthodox tradition, at least in English, diaconal studies is a relatively underdeveloped field. While there has been an extensive study by Evangelos Theodorou in the Greek language, none of this work has been translated and has received relatively little attention outside Greek academic circles. The initial move to study the Deacon within the English language context came from FitzGerald, who focused on the historical reality of women's ordination within Greek texts.[48] While this study is important, especially as it makes scholarship by Greek writers accessible in the English language, its focus is on tracing the rise and decline of the woman Deacon rather than a detailed exploration of their duties. More recently, John Chryssavgis has challenged the exclusively liturgical understanding of

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[46] Jason Biette, *Our Sister Phoebe, a Survey of Biblical and Historical Support for the Deaconess in the Modern Church,* (Troy: Oakwood Covenant Press, 2013); Jamin Hubner and D Clair Davis, *A Case for Female Deacons,* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

[47] James Keating, *The Deacon Reader,* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2006).

[48] Fitzgerald, *Women Deacons*.

the Deacon by investigating the historical records about the Deacon.[49] An extensive multi-authored book on Deaconesses in Orthodox theology has been published that collates research conducted for a 2015 conference on the subject.[50] This text provides an important contribution as it both summarises the existing Greek language scholarship and connects it with related English language work, providing an overview of the complex ecclesiastical and theological discussions occurring within the Eastern Orthodox tradition. These three texts are important as they draw on Greek language scholarship on the history of the Deacon. There are other papers on the diaconate in English from the Eastern Orthodox perspective, as noted in the ecclesiastical context; however, they do not present sufficient academic rigour to be helpful for this research.

There are also studies of the Deacon within a specific geographically limited tradition or even a single text. Pylvänäinen's work on the Deacon in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, published in 2020, sets the standard for investigating Deacons in the context of a single source document.[51] Pylvänäinen's study raises nearly as many questions as it answers about the function of the Deacon within the community and how the text investigated relates to the broader tradition from which it developed and the nature of the redactional process. Her continuing work on the Deacon within the *Apostolic Constitutions* is a benchmark for Deacon scholarship becoming more historically contextualised.

Another area of specialised study within ecclesiology that will influence this thesis is the research on Sons and Daughters of the Covenant within the Syrian Church. Harvey's "Revisiting the Daughters of the Covenant" provides a concise introduction to this field of ecclesiology, especially the challenges for historical research.[52] Harvey's paper, and others in this field, are vital for contextualising Syrian ecclesiology.

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[49] John Chryssavgis, *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia: The Diaconate Yesterday and Today* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2009).

[50] Petros Vassiliadis, Niki Papageorgiou, and Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, *Deaconesses, the Ordination of Women and Orthodox Theology* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

[51] Pauliina Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy, Charity and Communication: The Tasks of Female Deacons in the Apostolic Constitutions* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

[52] Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Revisiting the Daughters of the Covenant," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 8, no. 1 (2011): 125–50.

1.d.α.4 Early literature on Minor Orders

Several late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century writers mentioned the Minor Orders in their work which will be discussed briefly in this section, and it will be shown where more recent studies have developed the research.

Adolf von Harnack writes on the Minor Orders in the context of the *Apostolic Canons*, providing a baseline for understanding some orders.[53] Von Harnack, as one of the leading German scholars of the Early Church in the nineteenth-century, influenced the interpretation of texts discovered at that time and their use within the Western academic world, especially concerning studying offices other than the Bishop. He highlights the need for research into Readers, an area which Gamble and others have extensively investigated. Likewise, von Harnack's brief mentions of Deacons have been developed by the work of Theodorou and Collins, among others. While von Harnack's writings are important as background due to the shift in historical methodology over the last century and more recent detailed research in critical areas, his work does not feature extensively in this thesis.

Lindsey's work is a product of the historical methodologies of the time that relied on a substantially different paradigm to the current historical methodology.[54] Lightfoot's contribution to this discussion is small, but within the context of his time, he identifies that various Minor Orders are named in several early texts and that there was a difference between East and West in practice.[55] While this limited intervention is given prominence as it was quoted by Schaff and perhaps was valuable at the time, it does not add anything today to the debate about the origins or activities of the Minor Orders since it only states they exist.[56]

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[53] Adolf Von Harnack and John Owen, *Sources of the Apostolic Canons with a Treatise on the Origin of the Readership and Other Lower Orders /Adolf von Harnack; with an Introduction Essay on the Organisation of the Early Church and the Evolution of the Reader by John Owen* (London: F. Norgate, 1895).

[54] Thomas Martin Lindsay, *Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903).

[55] J B Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers. Part 2, S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp: Revised Texts, with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations and Translations*, revised, (London: Macmillan, 1889), 258.

[56] Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils* (NPNF214, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 144.

These writers all work from within the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century historical paradigms, which advances in historical methodology have superseded during the twentieth-century. These shifts and their influence on this study are discussed in the section on the study's boundaries. One of the principal methodological approaches of these studies is the principle of a primitive uniformity of both liturgical and ecclesiastical practice, which the work of Bradshaw has since disproved.[57] While both von Harnack and Lightfoot acknowledge the difference between East and West, that difference is negligible in their work, and the Latin West is assumed to be the dominant and proper tradition to which all others are compared.

Finally, the most recent of the texts not extensively engaged with despite its frequent references to various Minor Orders is the work of Martimort on Deaconesses.[58] This text, while important in the development of the study of the Deacon, has been superseded by more recent studies and a greater understanding of regional variations in church practice.

1.d.α.5 What needs re-examining?

Many aspects of the approach and practice of historical ecclesiology need re-examining because of developing historical practice. In particular, the developments in the understanding of liturgical history have challenged the principles of primitive uniformity.[59] This improved understanding of the diversity of liturgical practice and cultural diversity within the Roman Empire means that it is necessary to contextualise the occurrences of orders that did not appear uniformly across all regions of the church. This contextualisation is critical when dealing with the occurrences of Minor Orders, as these show more variation and contextual usage than the other orders. By contextualising sources accurately, it is possible to identify and reflect within scholarship on the significant geographic and temporal variations. Consistent and appropriate use of historical methodology is also needed to achieve this in a

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[57] This is explored by Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1-8, 14-20, and will be considered further in the next part of the literature review.

[58] Aimé Georges, Martimort, *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*, trans. K D Whitehead (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986).

[59] This is explored by Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1-8, 14-20, and will be considered further in the next part of the literature review.

way that respects the historical documents and their context. The series of conferences looking at the Deacon and the Diaconate run by the University of Eastern Finland and Tilburg University has started this process, but the results have not yet filtered into more comprehensive ecclesiological discussions.

The other area that needs serious examination is the influence of modern denominations on Deacon scholarship. As discussed, only three significant pieces of scholarly literature reviewed rely predominantly on historical methodology. This influence of denominational funding and agendas on the exploration of the Deacon historically has led to biased interpretations of the sources.[60] When read alongside the current work on Late Antique history, much of the Deacon literature is noticeably out of step regarding methodology and contextualisation due to their need to meet denominational expectations. This doctrinal influence has led to research deficits in the field and limited the secondary literature available to this thesis since the Minor Orders side of the diaconate is rarely included in these studies. A wholesale re-evaluation of the way Deacon studies, and possibly the whole of historical ecclesiology, is conducted is needed to make the best use of the sources and scholarship available. Key within this will be the interpretations of the διακον-words, as this debate currently risks splitting the field in such a way that there are two sets of scholarship which develop in an almost mutually exclusive way. The ecclesiology in this area needs re-examining in a way that is both culturally contextualised and considers the liturgical expression of ecclesiology which is key to understanding the Late Antique Church.

1.d.β Liturgical

The thesis uses research in the early development of liturgy alongside ecclesiological texts as a background for the research. Two key streams of thought influence the understanding within the historical research of liturgics, one being the work of Bradshaw and McGowan and the other being the influence of Temple Theology on the church promoted by Barker and others.

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[60] E.g., the two opposite views expressed by the official and alternative lines of scholarship within the Roman Catholic tradition.

Both Bradshaw and McGowan have developed an understanding of the Early Church,[61] bringing the practices in line with current historical methodology.[62] Bradshaw's work challenges the eighteenth to late-twentieth-century approach to liturgical study, which assumed a primitive uniformity. Bradshaw uses an approach based firmly on historical methodology and the hermeneutics of suspicion. This approach is a departure from the previous model, which assumed it was possible to find an early single practice from which all other liturgical forms developed.[63] While Bradshaw has explored the liturgics of ordination, he recognises the difficulty of tracing the ordination of Minor Orders, so he attempts no more than a passing mention of them in a way similar to the texts on Deacons discussed above.[64] Both writers predominantly look at the synagogue tradition as the origin of early Christian practice basing their explorations on this preposition. This research based on the Synagogue tradition is influential, but in utilising modern historical methodology, it is essential to consider all possible influences on the tradition, which is why the tradition associated with the Jewish temple is important to include.

The approach to researching Temple Theology promoted by Barker[65] is a crucial influence on this study as this model provides an alternative to the synagogue model for contextually understanding the Early Church. Beale also discusses the use of Temple Theology to understand ecclesiology.[66] Despite very different theological starting points, both Beale and Barker show the importance of considering the influence of Temple Theology when examining the Early Church. The inclusion of Temple Theology is essential, as many primary texts show clear influences from temple practice.

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[61] Key texts include: Paul F Bradshaw, *Ordination Rights of the Ancient Churches of East and West* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company Inc, 1990); idem "Difficulties in Doing Liturgical Theology," *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies* 11, no. 2 (1998): 181–94; and idem, *Origins of Christian Worship*; Andrew Brian McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2014).

[62] Discussed in chapter 2.

[63] Bradshaw, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 1-2, 14-20, 1-8.

[64] Paul F Bradshaw, *Rites of Ordination: Their History and Theology* (London: S.P.C.K., 2014), vii.

[65] Key texts; Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004); and eadem, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

[66] G K Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Apollos, 2004).

This study will use both synagogue and temple theology understandings of the origins of Christianity for interpreting the primary sources as they show influences from both, meaning forms of interpretation as relevant rather than accepting the artificial academic divide between them. This both/and approach is also consistent with Pylvänäinen's discussion of the most recent theories on how the Jewish and Christian practices diverged.[67] This acceptance and use of multiple forms of contextualisation and interpretation are important for this study as it recognises diverse influences on the sources and the possibility of diverse contextual interpretations. This recognition of the diversity of origin and interpretation is a core part of how the unity and diversity within the church are explored in this study, as it allows for the acceptance of multiple influences on the sources and contextualised interpretation, which resulted in distinct let linked regional practices.

1.d.γ Historical

The historical aspect of this thesis builds on the wide-ranging research into the socio-political realities of Late Antiquity. In this review, the texts which influence the contextualisation of the Minor Orders will be examined, specifically studies from the sector histories investigating Women, Beliefs, Literacy, and Law. Women made up half of society and are therefore integral in understanding how society worked, but most existing studies on women focus on the family rather than cultural context.[68] Beliefs and rituals formed the fabric of life, therefore are vital to understanding the expression of beliefs within church practice and contextualising these practices.[69] For practical reasons, literacy is included as it played a crucial part in the development of Ecclesiology. Finally, Law provides a framework for the other areas by expressing the ideals and problems in society. Law is also a key source of contextualising data as it is the easiest to date, as discussed in the next chapter. One aspect of the aim of this thesis is to contextualise the sources culturally to increase the understanding of how the Church interacted with its context. The aspect dealing with women will receive greater attention than the other areas due to the profound impact gender had on ecclesiology. These

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[67] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 17-25.

[68] Dixon, "Introduction," 2.

[69] Sulochana Ruth Asirvatham, Corinne Ondine Pache, and John Watrous, *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), xi.

investigations will also recognise the impact that geographic differences in cultural practices had on the way the practices of the church developed. These differences are presented by the geographic grouping of sources in appendix 2 and by recognising geographically specific expressions in the analytical chapters. This regional variation is most clearly noted in chapter 4 on Women in the church, as this is one area where the differences are particularly noticeable though not the only one.

The presence of women is important in understanding the inculturation of the church and ecclesiology. While the gender of those ordained is not a vital part of this investigation, there is no way to avoid the debate and present a balanced assessment of the sources. Clark acknowledges the challenge of studying Late Antique women "all we can construct is a patchwork, piecing together scraps of material for a different purpose and to a different effect from that intended by their original makers."[70] This situation is very much like the study of the Minor Orders, which are equally poorly recorded during the time frame of this study.

There is a concerted interest in the experiences of Late Antique women, especially within the church. One example of this is Cloke's study *This Female Man of God*,[71] which links the history and church history fields and explores important conceptual issues about how religious women were perceived. Clark, in *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles*,[72] also links the study of Late Antique women and women in the church. Hylen's *A Modest Apostle: Thecla and the History of Women in the Early Church* takes a more specific look at the role of women in the primitive church and how this related to the complex socio-political norms of the Roman world.[73] Hylen's book challenges many of the assumptions made by church historians about the role women played in society.

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[70] Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Life-Styles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press1994), 4.

[71] Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350-450* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[72] Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity,* 1.

[73] Susan Hylen, *A Modest Apostle: Thecla and the History of Women in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

As this study focuses on the interplay between Late Antique Church and society, the beliefs and ritual practices forming the fabric of life will be an aspect of considering the sources.[74] While the focus in this area will predominantly be ecclesiology, the impacts of cultural beliefs and practices will be recognised when these affect the localised expressions of church practice. An example of this is Wilhite's exploration of how culture influenced the expression of the church in Roman North Africa.[75] This study will also draw on specific regional beliefs around the ability of women to actively participate in the church at any time and specifically the varying restrictions relating to the menstrual cycle within exploring the regional differences in liturgical and ecclesiological practices. Alongside this, understanding the practice of the church and the expression of beliefs is vital for comprehending Christian self-expression, as these things cannot be separated from each other. Davis, and Young,[76] both provide clear contextualisation of the Early Christian Councils and their literature, which is important for the contextualising aspect of this research. These studies provide a basis for the interpretation and understanding of the doctrinal background of the primary sources used within the study.

The third aspect of historical research important to this thesis is Literacy because it influenced ordination practices, as discussed in chapter 5. Changes in literacy and language are often overlooked in discussions about the Church's development and spread and its impact on society. One important text is Gamble's *Books and Readers in the Early Church, a History of Early Christian Texts*.[77] Gamble's contribution to the field and his work inspired research by Kloppenburg, Miller and McCarty.[78] While only dealt with in a limited way within his book, Gamble's conclusions on literacy rates have been supported by Moorhead's paper 'Reading in Late Antiquity.'[79] In writing on the history of Literate Education, Teresa

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[74] Richard Valantasis, *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

[75] David E Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity: An Introduction to a Unique Context and Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[76] Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990); Frances M Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: a Guide to the Literature and its Background* (London: SCM Press, 2010).

[77] Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven: Yale University, 1995).

[78] John S. Kloppenburg, "Literate Media in Early Christ Groups: the Creation of a Christian Book Culture," *JECS*, 22 (2014): 21-59; J. D. Miller, "What can we say about Phoebe?," *Priscilla Papers*, 25 (spring 2011): 16-21; V.K. McCarty, "Phoebe: Paul's Sister in Gospel Leadership: 16.1-2," *International Congregational Journal,* 15 (2016): 103–20.

[79] John Moorhead, "Reading in Late Antiquity," in *The History of Reading,* ed. Shafquat Towheed, Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 52-66.

Morgan discusses the literacy rate and the relationship between reading and writing,[80] which provides context for this research. Morgan supports what Gamble says about the level of literacy, although she believes that only a minority ever benefited from becoming literate. Watts' exploration of education in Athens and Alexandria parallels Morgan's study with a closer focus on two specific examples between the mid-third and the early-seventh centuries.[81]

The fourth area of this study is Law: the *Codex Theodosianus* is the principal primary source for this thesis. The theoretical underpinning for this study comes from a range of literature on Roman Law and related cultural practices. Robinson provides a background to legal practice in the Roman Empire and gives clear explanations of areas such as the age of legal responsibility and the power of the Paterfamilias.[82] Harries provides a thematic guide to the working of Roman law in *Law and Crime in the Roman World*, building on previous research in Roman law and other areas. [83] Arjava contributes to understanding the practice of law from the female perspective, facilitating other aspects of contextualisation.[84] All these texts contribute to understanding Roman law's workings within this research context.

Related to the studies of Roman law are the explorations of the relationship between state law and canon law. Helmholz's chapter 'Canon Law and Roman Law'[85] briefly introduces the relationship between the developing Canon law and Roman law. In *The Challenge of Our Past*, Erickson explores the origins and implications of the Canons within the Orthodox tradition. Erickson wrote for an Orthodox readership but also challenged the legalistic interpretation of canons while exploring their historical context at the time of composition.[86] L'Huillier, in *The Church of the Ancient Councils: The Disciplinary Works of the First Four*

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[80] Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[81] Edward Jay Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[82] O F Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Ancient Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1995).

[83] William Vernon Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[84] Antti Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).

[85] R. H. Helmholz, "Canon Law and Roman Law," in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Law*, ed. David Johnston. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 396–422.

[86] John H Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past: Studies in Orthodox Canon Law and Church History* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 9.

Ecumenical Councils, explores the context of the councils and each canon that was published, making it an important text for this research.[87]

1.e Definitions of Minor Orders

In focusing on what Minor Order ecclesiology expresses of the relationship between the Church and society, it is necessary to define the Minor Orders. As there are no agreed definitions of the Minor Orders before the twelfth-century in the west, the definitions posited here are based on the primary sources.[88] This reliance on historical sources will help to exclude later interpretations and assumptions by allowing historical sources to speak from their context. The separation of Minor and Major Orders is unclear in Late Antique sources, as the clergy are usually described as a whole or by order. While accepting that using this division is controversial, a distinction must be made for clarity in discussions, and an alternative will be proposed in chapter 3.

1.e.α Minor Orders as opposed to Major Orders

As will be explored in chapter 3, the precise definitions of Major and Minor Orders were not developed in Late Antiquity, so they are anachronistic. There have been studies of the Episcopate, the Presbyterate and the Diaconate in Late Antiquity, as all three Orders are closely linked with liturgical service in the sanctuary, both by ancient texts and modern scholarship.[89] The link occurs in the ordination prayers and practical actions, for example, maintaining order in the church, reception of the Eucharist in the sanctuary and the ability to distribute the Eucharist.[90] The inclusion of the woman Deacon within this definition is explored by FitzGerald, building on the historical research of Theodorou.[91] Despite the

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[87] Peter L'Huillier, *The Church of the Ancient Councils: the Disciplinary Work of the First Four Ecumenical Councils* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996).

[88] Macy, *Hidden History,* 23-5.

[89] Both genders are included in the Diaconate since the current consensus is that female Deacons had equivalent roles and authority to the male Deacon, see writings of Chryssavgis, Barnett, Olson, Karras and FitzGerald.

[90] FitzGerald *Women Deacons*, 78-104; Wijngaards, *Ordination of Women,* 123; Valerie A Karras, "Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church," *Church History* 73, no. 2 (June 2004): 272–316, at 290-1.

[91] Kyiaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, "The Eucharistic and Eschatological Foundation of the Priesthood of the deaconess," *Women and Ordination in the Orthodox Church*, ed. Gabrielle Thomas and Elena Narinskaya, (Eugene: Cascade Books,

liturgical unity of these three orders, they each also have a distinct character, as discussed by Frost.[92] The three orders of Episcopate, the Presbyterate and the Diaconate are now commonly referred to as Major Orders, and this study uses this shorthand for simplicity and clarity of discussion.[93] While recognizing that the term Major Orders is not without controversy in Late Antique scholarship, there is a need to refer to these three orders clearly and succinctly as a group.

This thesis uses Minor Orders as a shorthand for the collection of functionaries who served and were supported by the local church in an organized way. The critical factor distinguishing all of the Minor Orders from the three previously mentioned orders is where prayers for their consecration are performed, outside the sanctuary and the eucharistic service.[94] This distinction of where and when is one of the factors identified by Theodorou when distinguishing Deacons from Minor Orders. Within the prayers for the Minor Orders, which originate in Late Antiquity and are still in use in the Orthodox Church, there is also a clear distinction in how the Holy Spirit is invoked on the Minor Orders as opposed to the Major Orders.[95] A range of assisting functionaries is attested to in the documents, but not consistently with regional variations in which assistants are recorded. Within this context, it is evident that the offices described do not automatically confer a leadership role.

1.e.β Definition of each of the principal Minor Orders

Although each role is defined separately, there is considerable overlap in descriptions of the order's functions in the primary sources, which allows them to be examined as a group. Most references relating to specific functions occur in letters rather than other documents during the third-century. When the orders are mentioned by name, the canons of the fourth and fifth-century councils describe them as subordinate to the Deacon and heavily regulated in their

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2020), 129-148; FitzGerald *Women Deacons*, 78-104, Evangelos Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women and Orthodox Theology," *Deaconesses,* ed. Vassiliadis, Papageorgiou, and Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, 37-43, at 41-2.

[92] Carrie Frederick Frost, "A Flourishing Diaconate Will Ground – not Predetermine – Conversations about Women in the Priesthood", *Women and Ordination in the Orthodox Church: Explorations in Theology and Practice,* ed. Gabrielle Thomas and Elena Narinskaya (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020), 152-165, at 152.

[93] Macy, *Hidden History,* 23-4.

[94] Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women," 39-42.

[95] FitzGerald, "Eucharistic and Eschatological Foundation," 136.

activities. The Virgin and Widow are distinct from the other orders in the sources, while the Reader is linked with the Cantor or the Singers, especially in later canons. The Subdeacon's role is the most difficult to define, being linked and sometimes conflated with the Doorkeeper and Acolyte. The roles of Teacher and Exorcist are described as separate orders in some places, while in others functions of senior clergy. The relationships between orders will be discussed in chapter 3. Many of these orders are recorded in the *Codex Theodosianus* which provided the starting point for this list, with additional orders being added from other sources as they emerged. A list of the working definitions for each of the principal Minor Orders follows.

1.e.β.1 Consecrated Widow, χήρα

For this thesis, Consecrated Widow refers to those who officially served the Church through prayer, whether supported by the Church or by family members.[96] The key feature of this was that the women undertook to stay in their single state as part of their life of prayer.[97] Their distinct choice to remain single and be dedicated to a life of prayer in the service of the church sets Consecrated Widows apart from those who just happened to be single. The Greek term χήρα denotes a single woman (literally a woman without a man); these may be women who used to have a spouse and no longer do for any one of a variety of reasons or a woman who has never had a husband.[98] Within the source texts, three types of Widows are encountered: the young Widow with no ongoing family commitments, the wealthy Widow and the poor Widow dependent on charity.

In many cases, it is difficult to distinguish between these groups in the texts without carefully considering the relevant contexts, as the subgroup is distinctly mentioned only in a minority of cases. Examples of this are instructions that young Widows should marry and raise children or the observation that a Widow is a patron of a church.[99] The poor Widow was most likely consecrated to the service and supported by the church as younger Widows were

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[96] Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: the Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 167.

[97] Hylen, *Modest Apostle,* 37.

[98] Charlotte Methuen, "The 'Virgin Widow': A Problematic Social Role for the Early Church?," *Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 3 (1997): 285–98, at 287-8.

[99] 1 Tim 5:11-14; John Chrysostom, *Letter to a Young Widow*, 2; John Cassian, *Conferences*, Ch 14.

strongly encouraged to marry and rich Widows were more often patrons of the church or founders of monastic communities, rather than being supported by the church.

1.e.β.2 Consecrated Virgin, or ever Virgin, ἀειπάρθενος

In the context of this study, the consecrated Virgin is a man or woman set aside in celibacy for the service of God and the Church. This consecration could be from personal choice or parents dedicating their child.[100] The focus is on those who lived and served within parish communities as part of the ecclesiastical structure rather than the monastic communities, which is a separate study area. An early example of the ecclesiastical Virgin comes in the writings of Justin Martyr, who speaks of both men and women choosing to abstain from sexual relationships.[101] The recognition method varied between regions and over time, with some regions developing practices of public consecration before others. The Virgin consecrated within a parish community is distinct from the development of monasticism, although they could be linked. The consecrated Virgin is distinct from the use of the term Virgin for an unmarried girl as the designation of a Virgin or a girl was used interchangeably for unmarried women since the onset of womanhood was linked to marriage within Roman society.

1.e.β.3 Teacher or Catechist, διδάσκαλος

The role of a Teacher or Catechist was to receive and instruct new Christians in the faith, potentially over a period of years.[102] This role seems to have been a task carried out by a member of the Major Orders or a specifically consecrated Minor Order, depending on local practice. There is significant variation in the presence and use of this role around the Roman Empire and over time.

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[100] Carolinne White, *Lives of Roman Christian Women,* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), x.

[101] Justin Martyr *On the Resurrection*, Ch 3.

[102] AT, 15, 17.

1.e.β.4 Reader, ἀναγνώστης

The Reader was a person, usually, a man, set aside to read in services due to their literacy. Readers, in some situations, acted as scribes and letter carriers for the Bishop.[103] Due to the model of education used in Late Antiquity, those who could read fluently could generally also write to some extent, although fluency and a good hand are typically related to education beyond the basics, as discussed in Appendix 2.3.a.α. The presence of this order as literate members of the community gave them importance in Late Antiquity when literacy was uncommon.[104] As the church evolved, there came to be an expectation that the clergy would be literate, meaning that the distinctiveness of this order was lost. As a result, the Reader went from being compared to the Presbyter in importance to an entry-level order, which preceded other ordinations.[105]

1.e.β.5 Cantor or Singer or Chorister, ψάλτης

The Cantor or Choristers were assistants to the Reader who led the congregational singing. Cantor, Choir and Singers are used interchangeably as the translation of ψάλτης as the title for this order. They are frequently recorded with the Reader in canons.[106] These assistants may have been those with lower levels of literacy which allowed them to read and follow simple texts but not sight-read or younger members of the congregation who were becoming literate and had reached the stage of reading poetry, for whom singing in church acted as part of their continued literate education alongside study.[107]

1.e.β.6 Exorcist, ἐξορκιστής

The role of the Exorcist was to care for those in the church viewed as being possessed, giving them a function in initiation and healing rituals due to a strong cultural link between the activities of spirits and sickness. Cyril wrote the most precise description of their function in

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[103] Cyprian, *Letter,* 16, 28, 31.

[104] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 219.

[105] DA, Ch9, Synod of Sardica, *Canon,* 10.

[106] Synod of Laodicea, *Canon*, 23.

[107] This is discussed further in the third paragraph of 5.b.β.

the initiation process of Jerusalem.[108] There is limited evidence for this order, beyond its name, meaning that it is impossible to say if there were gender requirements; however, there is evidence that some Exorcists also belonged to other orders.[109]

1.e.β.7 Subdeacon, ὑποδιάκονος

The Subdeacon is closely linked to the role of the Deacon, as the *Apostolic Tradition* states, "Each deacon should wait upon the Bishop with the Subdeacons."[110] The Subdeacon is also described as being installed by "being named so that he might go after the deacon."[111] The *Apostolic Tradition* is typical of documents describing the Subdeacon, meaning the understanding of this order depends on that of the Deacon. The Subdeacon is also described in some sources as fulfilling either or both of the final two roles.

1.e.β.8 Acolyte, ἀκόλουθος

The order of the Acolyte appears to be dependent on the role of the Subdeacon. The name for the order, Acolyte, comes from the Greek ἀκόλουθος which means the one who accompanies, although it has also developed the additional meaning of one who carries a candle due to the liturgical activities of the minister bearing this title.[112] Since there are very few references to the order in Late Antiquity and none of them describes the duties of an Acolyte, there is little evidence to go on. The key indication is Cyprian of Carthage linking Acolytes to Subdeacons.[113]

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[108] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, 9

[109] Examples of Exorcists in other orders can be seen in, Eusebius, *Martyrs in Palestine*, The Confession of Alphaeus, and Zacchaeus, and Romanus, the Confession of Pamphilus, and Vales, and Seleucus, and Paulus, and Porphyrius, and Theophilus (Theodulus), and Julianus, and one Egyptian.

[110] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Apostolic Church Order: the Greek Text Edited and Translated with an Introduction and Notes,* (Macquarie Centre, NSW: SCD Press, 2021), 189.

[111] Hippolytus of Rome *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 2nd ed. trans. Alistair C Stewart (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2015), 112.

[112] G.W.H Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 110.

[113] Cyprian of Carthage, *Letters*, 27.3, 77.3 78.

1.e.β.9 Doorkeeper, πυλωρός

Cyril of Alexandria was the first to clearly describe Doorkeepers as a distinct order with an associated theology.[114] The Doorkeeper, as an assistant to the Subdeacon and therefore the Deacon, performed a specific part of their function in guarding the doors. In the earliest mentions, such as the Synod of Laodicea, the role is given to the Subdeacon.[115] There is little evidence for Doorkeepers as a separate order rather than a function of another order. Cyril of Alexandria notes that this order can also be known as a Porter, a title that also appears in the writings of John Chrysostom and the *Apostolic Constitutions* without a clear explanation.[116]

1.e.β.10 Other orders with limited evidence

There were several other orders for which there is some evidence but occurred in a limited number of sources. These include Gravediggers, who are mentioned in a few laws and the *Gesta Apud Zenophilum*.[117] Within the writings of Basil the Great, there is evidence of a Canoness (κανονική).[118] Basil only mentions this order in one letter and there is no description of her duties.

1.f Structure of the thesis

Through the thesis, the Minor Orders will be explored in their context, and the effect of this newly collated knowledge on various areas of the understanding of Late Antique history will be examined. Chapter 2 will set out the methodologies used and examine the key considerations in using historical sources.

Chapter 3 will explore the Minor Orders in the context of diaconal ecclesiology. Chapter 4 will examine women within the Church and Late Antique socio-political context. Chapter 5

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[114] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 6.10.5.

[115] Synod of Laodicea, *Canon*, 43.

[116] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 6.10.5; John Chrysostom, *Statutes on the people of Antioch,* 20; AC, 2.25.15-6.

[117] CTh 16.2.15.1, Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, Appendix 2 The Proceedings before Zenophilus.

[118] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 173.

will explore what the evidence for Minor Orders can add to the understanding of Literacy in Late Antiquity and chapter 6 will discuss the interplay between the Church and State Law. Finally, chapter 7 will contain the conclusions and directions for further research.

Appendix 1 contains timelines outlining the relationships among the ecclesiastical sources used. Appendix 2 consists of the survey of sources relating specifically to the Minor Orders during the study era. Appendix 2.1 covers the Eastern Region of the Empire, Appendix 2.2 covers Africa, including Egypt and the province of North Africa, Appendix 2.3 covers the Western and northern parts of the Empire and Appendix 2.4 presents a quantitative summary analysis of the sources used. These appendixes will support the analysis of the chapters and collate sources otherwise dispersed due to geographic and temporal spread.

2 Methodology

This chapter sets out the approach used in this study of the Late Antique church and the methodological tools used. The first part of this chapter will set out the philosophical approach and positioning of this study within the field of Ecclesiastical History. Then the methodological practices will be set out along with how they are applied within the study, including secondary sources. Following this, the primary sources utilised by this study are explored and how the survey of sources relating to Minor Orders was compiled.

2.a Positioning and approach to study

As a historical study, this thesis will be written from a specific academic, theological, ecclesiological, and philosophical viewpoint. As an author, I am writing from an Eastern Orthodox Ecclesiological context as a practising member of the Antiochian branch of this tradition. I trained and practice within Western academia, which means that both aspects influence my interactions with historical texts. This study occurs within the context of the ongoing negotiation of the position of ecclesiastical history within the study of post-enlightenment history, along with the ongoing development of the specific field of the early diaconate. Recognizing this complex context is important as history is always written within the context of the writer, there being no such thing as an objective history divorced from its context.[1]

As this study is written in the specific context set out in the previous paragraph, there is a separation between the context in which the source texts were created and the context of analysis. The context in which the analysis is performed is influenced by the author's specific context and the philosophical legacy of the Enlightenment and English tradition along with the philosophical influences of modernism and post-modernism on academic history. This philosophical legacy and influence facilitate the study of minority and sector histories within the fundamental understanding of history created by the academic context. The study of church history is not only influenced by the patterns in history research but the specific

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[1] Claus, and Marriott, *History: an Introduction,* 18.

doctrinal and confessional influences on the writer of a given history.[2] This study faces the same issues identified by Bradshaw as affecting liturgical history since the history of ecclesiology can be as difficult to quantify and as prone to the projection of ideas as liturgical history.[3] Due to challenges inherent in studying Ecclesiastical history, this study is conducted as a piece of history that happens to be within the sector of church history. This study substantially overlaps with socio-political histories, so the assumptions of confessional histories will be excluded through rigorous contextualisation and challenging existing assumptions. The point of this study is not to mine history in support of a given viewpoint but to examine sources in their ecclesiastical context. Within this contextual examination of the sources, it is vital to recognise the varied contexts in which the texts originate and to highlight the impact that this has on interpreting the evidence found. Through contextual examination, this thesis intentionally challenges the Eurocentric models of church history that dominate the current conversation - although there will inevitably be the influence of the modern context, which is wholly different from that in which the relevant sources originate.[4] While contextualising the sources, this is an indicative rather than an exhaustive study of the evidence.

2.b Methodological theory

In line with the philosophical approach to this study, the methodologies utilized will be drawn from the relevant existing sectors and adapted from other disciplines to create a rigorous exploration of sources and contextual interpretation. This methodological approach is fundamental to recognising the difference between the past and the present as expressed in diachronic history. Additionally, as this study examines sources over two and a half centuries, the synchronic approaches to history that help recognise the changes over time will also be utilised. These two approaches underpin the historical-critical approach to studying history, which is the key methodology for this thesis. The literature review shows the need for this historical-critical investigation, as almost all the ecclesiological texts have a confessional

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[2] For a full exploration see, Delbert Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 10-12.

[3] Bradshaw, "Doing Liturgical Theology", 181.

[4] An explanation of the diversity of early church history is presented by David G. K. Taylor, "Christian Regional Diversity," in The Early Christian World, vol 1-2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 330-343, at 330-1.

bias. The hermeneutics of suspicion, as adapted by Bradshaw for the study of liturgics, will be used in this study as it is as applicable to historical ecclesiology as to historical liturgy.[5] This is because liturgy and ecclesiology in Late Antiquity face similar problems with interpretation and the tendency to proof text ideas or interpretations rather than examine the whole text or practice in its wider context.[6] The principles of source criticism and triangulation will be used to contextualise the sources reducing the effect of modern interpretations, thus facilitating the dialogue of hermeneutics allowing the sources to speak within their context. While this is primarily a qualitative study due to the nature of the source material available, quantitative analyses will also be used to observe the patterns of information within the sources. This combination of methodologies will allow history to be investigated in context while minimising the influence of later ideas and debates. The details of how this was conducted are discussed below in the textual sources section.

This contextualised approach to historical study will facilitate the discussion with sector and minority histories within the study and those beyond the study's remit. The discussions will be most evident in the analytical chapters, where the sources are examined in context. The highly contextualised approach is consistent with that advocated by Foot, as it places Ecclesiastical History as a sector history among other sector histories with its distinct contribution to the conversation.[7] The significance of this approach is illustrated by Macy, who showed the importance of using historical-critical methods when working with ecclesiology to challenge assumptions that creep in based on current practice.[8] Alongside Macy and Bradshaw,[9] this thesis is influenced by the work of Collins on the meaning of the διακον- family of words and the more recent detailed historical investigation by Pylvänäinen of the Deacon within the Apostolic Constitutions.[10] Within drawing on the practices of sector and minority histories, this thesis will use gender and women's history to provide other perspectives on the ecclesiology of Minor Orders through this attempt to read the texts as

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[5] Bradshaw, *Origins of Christian Worship,* 14-17.

[6] Bradshaw, "Doing Liturgical Theology," 187.

[7] Foot, "Ecclesiastical History", 20-2.

[8] Macy, *Hidden History,* 4.

[9] Bradshaw, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 1-8, 14-20.

[10] Collins, *Diakonia,* 63-70, 195-244; Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 40-4.

records of what was happening as the author saw it.[11] This includes recognising that information will have been omitted as common knowledge and that when specific instructions are given, it is codifying an oral tradition rather than imposing something which did not originate in the community. This presence of oral tradition dictating practices that were later codified is recorded by Basil the Great in his writings *On the Holy Spirit*, where he strenuously refutes the idea that oral tradition is inferior to written records.[12] For this reason, it is justified to say that the extent of oral tradition was greater than what has survived in the written texts and would have explained many aspects that seem illogical even when contextualized.

This thesis will avoid using the confessional and Whig approaches to history as the confessional approach leads to mining historical sources to prove a point, not allowing the sources to speak. Burkett examines the difficulties of a confessional approach in biblical studies and these approaches are incompatible with a historical-critical approach to history since they import set ideas and moral values to an alien context.[13] For this thesis, it is important to avoid such a backreading of ideas to facilitate distinguishing this study from the few other published studies.

The methodologies selected for this study relate to positioning ecclesiastical history as a sector history. The approach draws on the practices of historical studies along with the previous work of Macy, Collins, Pylvänäinen, and Bradshaw, who have pushed forward the methodological approaches for the study of ecclesiology and liturgy in historical contexts.

2.b.α Key terminology used

Several key terms and concepts used within this thesis need explaining due to the technical nature of the words used. The definitions provided in this section will relate to the Greek language origin of the words and the technical usage within secondary literature.

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[11] A discussion of the difference between gender and women's history can be found in, Charlotte Methuen, "'For Pagans Laugh to Hear Women Teach': Gender Stereotypes in the Didascalia Apostolorum," in *Gender and Christian Religion,* SCH 34 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998), 23–35, at 23-4.

[12] Basil the Great. *On the Holy Spirit*, Ch 27 (par 66).

[13] Burkett, *Introduction to the NT,* 10-12.

In this study, the term Ecclesiology is used to mean the study of the church, especially concerning the church's organisation and self-understanding. Church or The Church is a direct translation of the Greek ἐκκλησία. Unless otherwise stated, the concept of the Church is used to mean one eucharistic assembly gathered around their Bishop or his delegate.[14] Clergy as a term is used as a shorthand for all people within the church set aside to serve the church in whatever capacity.

The technical distinctions between Ordination (χειροτονία) and consecration or literally from the Greek laying on of hands (χειροθεσία) are significant for this study. The distinction used is based on Theodorou's research, which has extensively detailed the differences within the Greek liturgical tradition. Theodorou identifies the core differences as relating to where and when the prayers are said, along with specific formulas within the prayers themselves. This thesis uses the definition posited by Theodorou and expanded in English by FitzGerald as the basis for understanding the differences between these practices.[15]

Related to the technical distinctions in the types of service to set ministers apart are technical terms around the structure of the church building. Another principal term which needs to be clarified is the Altar; within this study, the term Altar is predominantly used to denote the table on which the Eucharist service is offered, except when quoting from sources or academics who use the term to mean the whole eastern end of the church (sanctuary). Both meanings of the word Altar occur within the source texts used for this study.

2.c Secondary Literature

The use of secondary literature in this thesis is challenging due to the high prevalence of confessional bias in the sources, as noted in the literature review. The influence of any individual viewpoints expressed in the scholarly literature is mitigated by including a wide range of these sources since excluding these texts is impossible. The history of ecclesiology

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[14] This understanding of the Church is discussed in John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2004), 143-5.

[15] Theodorou, "Deaconesses, the Ordination of Women," 41-2; FitzGerald, *Women Deacons,* 111-129.

is as difficult to trace with certainty as the history of the liturgy,[16] which means that while it is possible to hypothesise liturgical practice in the first centuries and to develop an idea of liturgical functions, no definite or overarching descriptions can be made. Specific problematic statements or analytical passages will be directly addressed in the following chapters to illustrate where the bias has affected the reading of history.

Just as time limits for primary sources were set out in the study's boundaries, it is also necessary to define the parameters for the inclusion of secondary literature. These parameters are required due to shifts in history practice from the 1950s, noted by Foot, that began to affect the study of church history in the 1980s and 1990s.[17] Due to significant methodological and paradigmatic differences, studies published before the 1950s will receive only limited attention, as will those published between 1950 and 1990 in ecclesiastical history.[18] As discussed in the literature review, the methodological differences between literature produced before 1990 and this study's approach means these pieces of research have limited applicability in this work.[19] Within the study of ecclesiology and liturgics, 1990 marks a significant change in the fields as a result of the publications of Bradshaw.[20] Likewise, the publication of Collins' seminal study has led to the complete rewriting of the understanding of the diaconate within a significant section of English language academic discourse.[21] Since this study, as noted in the literature review, builds on the work of Bradshaw, Collins and others, these studies serve as the principal starting point for secondary literature.

2.d Primary source types and tools used to analyse

Primary sources are key for this thesis and those which come from within the limits of this study set out in the introduction will be used to provide an outline of the use of and thought

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[16] Bradshaw, *Origins of Christian Worship*, 20.

[17] Foot, "Has Ecclesiastical History," 4-16.

[18] This limited used of older texts is based on the significant shifts in historical paradigm and the practice of historical study which has rendered most studies before 1990 obsolete and/or anachronistic.

[19] See 1.d.α.4.

[20] Bradshaw, *Origins of Christian Worship,* ix.

[21] John N Collins, "A Monocultural Usage: Διακον - Words in Classical, Hellenistic, and Patristic Sources," *Vigiliae Christianae* 66, no. 3 (2012): 287–309, at 288.

about Minor Orders within Late Antiquity. The Late Antique primary sources for this thesis come in various forms and levels of preservation. Since a wide range of sources will be used in this research, this section sets out the source types used and the issues with each. This collective analysis of types of primary sources allows for an exploration of how they relate to each other and an examination of common issues. While most sources used will refer directly to one or more named Minor Orders, those texts which imply the presence of these orders through references to all clergy will also be included to assist in understanding the scope of liturgical practices and canons.

One key issue with all the sources, especially the literary sources, used in this study is that they were created and preserved by the intelligentsia, which consisted almost exclusively of elite men.[22] The result of this is that literary evidence for other groups is scarce, fragmentary and often superficial, to mitigate the effects of this, the best practices of minority history research and the broadest possible range of historical and archaeological sources will be used. The nature of primary sources means that the focus will be on creating a patchwork of contextualised images rather than a grand narrative. There is also not a continuous sequence of sources meaning there are noticeable gaps in the textual evidence. This section will explore the textual and archaeological source types utilised.

2.d.α Textual sources

The principal source type for this thesis is textual and this section explores textual sources and how these are interpreted within the historical-critical and hermeneutical methodology. The process used to identify sources with relevant information for the study will also be set out. As the author has insufficient Latin to explore the Latin sources directly, English translations have been consulted for the investigation of texts originally written in Latin. Greek sources were however consulted in the original language with interpretations crosschecked with English translations, critical editions or manuscripts of the text, the author's Greek being sufficient to access untranslated Greek texts and manuscripts.

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[22] Macy, *Hidden History,* 52.

The sources were identified first through the secondary literature and tracing the sources used in these to identify potential sources of information. Compendiums of the major works of influential Late Antique writers were also consulted.[23] Additionally, any other texts found while looking for texts in the first two categories or cross-referenced by translations were included. The focus of this study is predominately literary sources, although it also draws on other source types such as papyri and inscriptions, where identified in the secondary literature. The initial sources were identified through the secondary literature by tracing the sources used in existing ecclesiology and liturgy research. These documents were then found in translation (or Greek where possible), along with including in the collated sources any other documents encountered when searching for documents with known relevant information in digital archives or catalogues. In addition, the Oxford Saints project was used to locate any references to the identified Minor Orders in additional manuscripts or inscriptions. Once potentially relevant primary texts had been identified, they were read to find all relevant mentions and those that were irrelevant to the study (such as references to a church without a Bishop as a widowed church) were then discounted.[24] All relevant source documents were recorded by age and region, including notes on the relevant content, with the information displayed visually on a regionally segregated timeline so that patterns and clusters of data could be identified. Considerably more potential information was investigated than was included, as many primary sources were discounted as they contained no relevant information. Information from the sources not directly included in the study and secondary literature was used for contextualisation and interpretation of the sources that mention the Minor Orders specifically. While an exhaustive study of the primary sources which mention both Deacons and the Minor Orders would be beneficial to the study of the diaconate, it is not the purpose of this study of the assistants of the Deacon.

Textual sources come in the form of literary and documentary texts,[25] along with Church Orders which do not fit into the principal two categories. Each genre of textual sources has its

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[23] The ANF and NPNF series by Schaff are used as the starting point for the research, the Popular Patristic Series published by St Vladimir's Seminary Press are also used as a principal collection of sources, and the findings are then cross checked with other scholarly translations and publications.

[24] An example of this concept is found in the Council of Chalcedon, *Canon* 25, which refers to a see without a bishop as a widow church.

[25] Wendy Mayer, "Approaching Late Antiquity," in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009), 1–14, at 2.

issues and advantages in research, which means using a wide range is essential for reliable results. Fragments of ancient texts have been found in archaeological contexts, which provides insight into textual traditions and their variants.[26] Most documents available to historians have survived through the process of hand-copying.[27]

Copying a text, or having a scribe copy it, was the way to obtain a text in antiquity unless the text was received as a gift.[28] Scribes took pride in copying texts exactly; inevitably however, differing traditions developed as minor discrepancies crept into texts and some texts were edited to fit changing theology and social norms.[29] The processes of transcribing texts allowed for decisions on what content to preserve, or forget, or obscure within the preservation of texts.[30] This practice of selective preservation is especially noticeable when investigating women's history, as women are often written out of texts by later transcribers and even translators.[31] The hand-copying process ceased being used only after the invention of the printing press, which also marked the beginning of text standardization.[32] A palimpsest is a partially erased text where the material has been reused for another document, but the older text has been recovered through various means.[33] These texts often provide older versions of texts which are preserved elsewhere.

2.d.α.1 Genres of documents

Literary sources include poems, plays, histories, philosophical treatises and letters, Christian apologies, theological treatises and sermons.[34] In Late Antiquity, literary writers had typically completed rhetorical education; therefore, this distinct rhetorical style can make interpreting

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[26] Barker, *Temple Themes*, 183.

[27] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 43.

[28] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 84-5.

[29] Macy, *Hidden History,* 4.

[30] Kateusz, *Early Christian Women,* 184.

[31] Kateusz, *Early Christian Women,* 186-7.

[32] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 43.

[33] "Palimpsests and Scholarship Sinai Palimpsests Project," sinaipalimpsests.org, accessed March 19, 2019, http://sinaipalimpsests.org/palimpsests-and-scholarship.

[34] Lee*, Pagans and Christians,* 5.

the texts challenging for modern readers.[35] Literary texts tend to have a distinct purpose behind the writing: this polemic sets a text within a specific political or philosophic school, meaning that all texts record the viewpoint of a person or group. Although it is impossible to use any literary source as an unbiased account, the internal polemic can be used to place it within context. Documentary sources are more practical, recording everything from imperial proclamations, epitaphs, and dedications to tax receipts and contracts.[36] Documentary sources provide clearer evidence of specific events than many literary sources, as they were written in context for a specific purpose.

The principal collection of Late Antique legal texts relevant to this study is the *Codex Theodosianus*.[37] The history of this collection of laws will be examined when exploring the evidence, it provides for this study. Within the Church, collections of canons had a parallel function to secular law and will be examined alongside the law codes. These legal and quasi-legal texts provide an important insight into how Late Antique society worked since such texts are reactive.[38] The responsive nature of laws or canons can give insights into what was happening at the time of composition in a more precise way than texts with a polemical purpose.[39] While there are many parallels in the reactive and idealistic nature of Laws and Canons, there are also some significant differences, not least the underlying understanding of the purpose of the text.[40] Laws focused on responsibility for actions and maintaining social order underpinning the whole way life was lived.[41] Canons had a similar impact on the whole

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[35] Juana, Torres, "Rhetoric and Historical Distortion: the case of Mark of Arethusa," in *Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches (4th-8th Centuries),* ed. Marianne Saghy and Edward M Schoolman, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018), 69-80, at 69.

[36] Lee*, Pagans and Christians,* 5.

[37] David Ibbetson, "Sources of Law from the Republic to the Dominate," in *the Cambridge Companion to Roman Law*, ed. David Johnston, (Cambridge Companions to the Ancient World. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 25–44, at 41.

[38] Kaius Tuori, *The Emperor of Law: the Emergence of Roman Imperial Adjudication,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 258.

[39] Cloke, *Female Man of God,* 23.

[40] Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity AD 375-600* (London: Routledge, 1993), 86; Erickson, *The Challenge of Our Past*, 18-9.

[41] Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: the Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities.* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2003), 2.

of life, however, their focus was on practical regulations within the church community along with living a virtuous life within the church context.[42]

While the so-called Apocryphal Acts, attributed to various apostles and their disciples, were a common literary form in the Late Antique church, they were found not to contain relevant details for this study. While these texts refer to Virgins or Widows, this is in passing or in a context that makes it clear that these were not comparable with the organised or semi-organized groups recorded in other text genres. Additionally, many of these texts were considered spurious and debatable when accepted authorities mentioned them in the church's texts, such as Eusebius or the councils which defined the accepted texts for use in worship.[43] The listing described by Eusebius delineates between the accepted texts of the New Testament, the probably authoritative and the rejected ones, which, among others, contains a list of Acts.[44] This dubious status of such texts in the writings of accepted Late Antique authorities makes it more probable that they only reflected the activities or beliefs of specific regional, cultural or marginal groups that did not significantly impact the overall practice of the church. It is possible to recognise texts which were considered widely authoritative by their use across multiple regions and cultural groups over significant time periods and either the text itself or the writer is mentioned in the documentation of official church or state activities. On the other hand, although texts which are not recorded as part of the wider tradition are harder to place both geographically and temporally due to the more fragmented nature of their preservation, they can however provide insights into the local variations within the wider developing tradition. The apocryphal Acts are examples of these texts which while not providing direct information on the practice of the Imperial church, are important contextualising sources for wider practice within Roman society, especially when the document can be geolocated and accurately dated, as the texts provide an expression of the diversity within the developing traditions. As there are some mentions of Virgins or Widows in apocryphal Acts, these texts were included in the sources examined; however, this did not produce any conclusions helpful to this thesis.

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[42] Erickson, *Challenge of Our Past*, 14 -5.

[43] Edmon L Gallagher and John Daniel Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 55.

[44] Eusebius, EH, 3.25; rejected texts listed at Eusebius, EH, 3.25.6-7.

There are also Church Orders that will be treated as a separate genre. The other category requiring specific explanation is liturgical texts, which also need a contextualised understanding. These two genres, as they are not widely discussed in historical studies, will be examined here before covering other aspects of contextualising historical documents.

2.d.α.1.a Church Orders a form of Typica

The genre of Church Orders provides a witness to the development of an organised church before the promulgation of canonical codes. As a piece of living literature, Church Orders closely resemble the Typicon of the Orthodox Church, as both document types contain theological, liturgical and canonical texts. Both document types guide practice and are highly contextual to individual dioceses, monasteries or parishes while sharing the greater part of the content with the whole church community.

Bradshaw explores the history and interrelationship of these documents in *Ancient Church Orders,* which is the basis in this study for dating and understanding the relationships of the various documents.[45] All these documents were living literature that was written and redacted over time into the present form. This evolution of the text means that there are several layers of theology and practice within the documents that are self-contradictory in places. These layers of redaction and interpretation make Church Orders challenging to date as each redactional event adds another layer of interpretation and context to the preserved text.[46] As living texts, the Church Orders survived continually being reinterpreted for the community to which they belonged while also preserving the community's liturgical and pastoral heritage in a way still seen in modern Typica documents. While probable dates have been proposed for Church Orders, these tend to be which part of a century the text probably comes from and are frequently disputed as new information or ways of interpreting texts are discovered.

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[45] Paul F Bradshaw, *Ancient Church Orders*, vol. 80 (Norwich: Hymns Ancient and Modern, 2015).

[46] Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition Reconstructed: A Text for Students*. Trans. Paul F Bradshaw. (Norwich: Alcuin Club and the Group for Renewal of Worship, 2021), 7-10.

Engaging with the texts and their internal logic makes it possible to understand how the writers and redactors viewed the Church and its practices. The self-understanding of each text will be engaged with and presented so that the voices from history can provide insights which are normally obscured by external categories. Where possible, recent critical translations will be used for interpreting these texts. Unlike authored texts, some background will be given to these texts in exploring the sources, especially where the text is used infrequently for ecclesiology research.

2.d.α.1.b Liturgical texts

The Liturgical texts used in this study are important as they are practical records of activity. They are not without issues, however, since no complete copies of any Late Antique liturgy survive. The Liturgies of St Basil and St John Chrysostom exist in an eighth-century book of liturgies, which as with all ancient liturgical texts, does not contain written rubrics.[47] These manuscripts contain only the parts of services for the altar clergy as those for the Reader are preserved in different manuscripts. The Liturgy of St James is even harder to analyse as only parts of the service exist and the rubrics given in translations are unlikely to have been present in the first written forms as practices were transmitted by oral tradition.[48] The challenges with the Liturgy of St Mark are similar as no original rubrics survive.[49] This lack of rubrics is common for Late Antique liturgical texts since there was no unified way of performing a given service but a set of common traditions adapted to local needs. This oral preservation of practices is recorded by Basil the Great in his writing *On The Holy Spirit,* where he asserts that turning east in prayer, the way people cross themselves, and the form of the blessing of the Eucharist were preserved in oral rather than written teachings by the Apostles.[50] The lack of written rubrics means it is difficult to trace the development of practices during Late Antiquity, but it does not mean that there was not a set way of doing given activities rather, it was just not recorded in a physical form.

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[47] Codex Barb.gr.336 "DigiVatLib", Vatlib.it, accessed November 17, 2020, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.gr.336.

[48] Lester Ruth, Carrie Steenwyk, and John D Witvliet, *Walking Where Jesus Walked: Worship in Fourth-Century Jerusalem* (Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2010).

[49] Geoffrey J Cuming, *The Liturgy of St. Mark* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1990).

[50] Basil the Great. *On the Holy Spirit*, Ch 27 (par 66).

2.d.α.2 Dating

Most literary texts are relatively easy to date as they name their author and may even contain a date. When the text is anonymous, the style of writing and context can assist with the dating, as can references to it in other documents. Legal texts are always dated; canons are likewise relatively simple to place as they are associated with specific councils or Bishops. Documentary texts often contain a date (which can be as specific as a single day) within the text. When a text is undated, it is necessary to rely on the text's content and where fragments of the original have survived the formation of the script for an approximate date.[51] Where textual evidence is found in an archaeological context, this can also be used to interpret the data via the relationship with archaeologically datable artefacts. Pseudepigraphal literature poses the most significant difficulties when dating them, as the text purports to be of one era while belonging to a later one. These texts are identified through triangulation which contextualises them to the correct era via internal and external evidence. The complexity of this process is illustrated by the challenges of dating Church Orders, as discussed in section 2.d.α.1.a

Although a form of literary text, histories pose an additional challenge, as although they are historical documents, they preserve an interpretation of older events or even events of their day.[52] These texts are neither truly primary nor secondary sources and are sometimes called grey texts. Historical texts reflect the theological and cultural standpoint of the time in which they were written, and their author informs us about their context of writing as much as the events, historical or contemporary. This is achieved by the selective inclusion or exclusion of sources as well as interpretation, including preserving texts that do not otherwise survive.[53] This research uses historical histories in the same way as modern studies regarding the context for their composition.

As discussed in the section on Church Orders, the dating of these pieces of living literature is changing and disputed. As Church Orders are living literature, it has been through multiple

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[51] Lee, *Pagans and Christians,* 7.

[52] Kenneth Lipartito. "Historical Sources and Data," *Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods*, ed. Bucheli, Marcelo, R. Daniel. Wadhwani (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 296-7.

[53] Macy, *Hidden History,* 4, 50.

layers of redaction so it can be difficult to identify the various redactions of the text. The challenge in dating Church Orders is probably second only to dating the Typica in current use in the historical Orthodox Churches. An overview of these texts is offered in Appendix 2 including a brief discussion of dating for each text.

2.d.α.3 Language and linguistic considerations

Language is also a consideration in dealing with Late Antique primary sources. Most texts are in Greek or Latin; however, texts also occur in Syriac, Coptic, Aramaic, Ethiopian and Punic (although this is mostly untranslated).[54] The writers of texts may have been literate in multiple languages, especially in areas such as Egypt, where the local language was not the language of administration, as much of the population would have required translations to conduct business with the state.[55] The nature of a polylinguistic society means that there was significant fluidity in all the languages, with sharing of words and concepts: an example of this can be seen in the adoption of Greek titles for Major Orders in other languages. The existing translations into English were influenced by the context in which they were translated, meaning the commentaries and interpretations they contain reflect that theological context. More recently discovered texts and those in languages other than Greek and Latin are less likely to have been translated into English. Digital humanities projects have simplified access to original texts, but language proficiency is still needed to access the texts themselves.

Within this research, where texts are available in Greek, the original text was consulted alongside critical translations, and where relevant, the Greek text was referenced or quoted. For Latin, Syriac, Coptic and Aramaic recent critical translations into English were used as the basis for the interpretation and other publications that address specific issues in the text were also consulted. When there is doubt about a text, scholarly articles dealing with this were consulted and referenced. Where it was impossible to find a recent critical translation, an older translation was used while referring to recent critical discussions. Admittedly, this is not a perfect solution to the complexities of working with texts in multiple languages for a

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[54] Lee, *Pagans and Christians,* 6-7. Wilhite, *African Christianity,* 52.

[55] Penelope Fewster, "Bilingualism in Roman Egypt," in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*, ed. J.N. Adams, Mark Janse, and Simon Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 220–45, at 225-8.

researcher who is not proficiently polylinguistic and it is undoubtedly one of the limitations of this study.

2.d.α.3.a Gender

When discussing both genders together, Greek defaults to using the grammatical masculine definite article, which poses challenges for this research. This is because, other than Widows, it is impossible to identify female members of Minor Orders. In the case of women Deacons, ἡ διάκονος is often used for women specifically (some later texts use διακόνισσα, but this is not universal and can be inconsistent in the fourth and fifth centuries). With the use of the second declension when referring to the order in general or members of the order in the plural,[56] the practice when describing the Minor Orders was the same, following the standard grammatical construction of words in the second declension Greek. As Collins points out, both διάκον- and αποστολ- (Deacon and apostle) linked words are second declension words in Greek, so, therefore, they were customarily formed in the grammatical masculine but can apply equally to both genders.[57]

The same use of grammatical masculine occurs in Latin, with most occurrences of mixed-gender groups defaulting to the masculine plural when the group is described as a single entity.[58] As a result, this study works according to the principle that unless the text excludes the possibility of both genders being represented, a plural group described could contain women as well as men.[59] The grammatical realities in gendered languages and the interpretive assumptions still present in some aspects of scholarship can create challenges in identifying women in orders when their names are not recorded, but it also indicates the potential for parity between the genders.[60] Nevertheless, as this study relies exclusively on

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[56] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 121-4.

[57] John N Collins, *Dismantling the Servant Paradigm and Recovering the Forgotten Heritage of Early Christian Ministry* (Chişinău: Generis Publishing, 2020), 64.

[58] P V Jones and Keith C Sidwell, *Reading Latin,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 519.

[59] For example, if the primary source is connected to a male-only monastic community or elsewhere explicitly states women are not to hold an office stated in the plural in another part of the document it will be read as single-gender. The only cases where this differs is with Virgins and Widows which form in the first declension Greek when only women are involved so if they form in the masculine both genders are represented.

[60] Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y Macdonald, and Janet H Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006)*,* 6.

translations of Latin texts, without being able to check the sources in the original language, this study depends on the interpretations and understandings of the translators regarding the subtleties of the gender of an individual or a group. This is a significant limitation for the present study due to the nuances involved in translation. While consideration was given to working with Greek sources only as a more geographically limited study, the eventual decision was taken that it is better to accept and acknowledge the limitations and risk of relying on critical translations rather than to exclude a significant part of early Christianity from this study.

2.d.α.4 Validating sources

The form, dating and language of a text are essential in establishing the credibility and validity of sources. From linguistic and form analyses, it is possible to confirm internal dating and recognize pseudepigraphal texts by triangulating internal and external factors to validate time and place of origin. The source's credibility is related to this, as the ability to validate the time and place of composition affects how much credibility a source can be assigned about the events recorded.[61] The importance of this process is visible in the extended discussion on the placement of the *Testamentum Domini* in Appendix 2.1.

Some scholars present an assumption, especially in some areas of biblical scholarship, that the shortest versions of texts are the oldest. Kateusz argues that the practice of assuming the shortest is the earliest is not always correct, as the abbreviation of texts was more common than expansion in Antiquity.[62] This understanding is parallel to what Macy states about the participation of women in the church and the obscuring of relevant records through transcription and interpretation,[63] combined with the fact that titles for ministers are generally male, as discussed above, means it is challenging to identify the women's presence in primary sources or secondary literature.

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[61] Kenneth, "Historical Sources and Data," 289-91.

[62] Kateusz. *Early Christian Women,* 22-23.

[63] Macy, *Hidden History*, 4.

2.d.β Archaeological sources

Alongside the textual sources, there is a range of archaeological and architectural evidence from Late Antiquity. Within archaeological contexts, inscriptions are the key form of textual evidence. In a few situations, it has also been possible to find preserved fragments of texts on pottery shards and scratches on wooden tablets which contained wax or had been whitened to act as a writing surface.[64] These rarer forms of text preserved in archaeological contexts are important as they can provide insights into parts of society that are generally not recorded. Texts found in archaeological contexts are important as they provide dating evidence for the archaeological context in which they are found and can be used within the triangulation process to help date otherwise undated manuscripts which use similar scripts and language.

Other forms of evidence discovered in archaeological sites, such as; pottery, sculpture and miscellaneous items, can provide a wealth of information about daily life. These small items, dropped, broken, or lost, show intimate aspects of daily life that contemporary writers did not record. The importance of archaeology in understanding early Christianity is most notable in the additional information about the practicalities of daily life. Through archaeology, liturgical historians can contextualise textual sources in the actual worship spaces. Two examples of early worship spaces are the Syrian early house church in Dura-Europos[65] and the Lullingstone villa in Kent.[66] Fourth- and fifth-century texts are easier to contextualise as there are more records on the format of early basilica churches and more of them survive.

Archaeological research will be used to contextualise the sources and build images of how the church worked within the physical environment. Archaeology cannot give clear evidence of Minor Orders outside inscriptions; however, the evidence can be indicative in support of textual sources. Such indicative or inferred presence of Minor Orders can include the size of the building or the presence of rooms used for specific functions auxiliary to worship.

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[64] Morgan Teresa, *Literate Education,* 39.

[65] Richard Krautheimer and ĆurčićSlobodan, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 27.

[66] "History of Lullingstone Roman Villa," English Heritage, accessed May 11, 2019, https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/lullingstone-roman-villa/history/.

2.e How sources are organised

The sources for Minor Orders during the period of the study are analysed in the four major chapters of the thesis, following the thematic divisions set out at the end of chapter 1. The principal literary sources used for this analysis of the presence and activities of Minor Orders are set out in Appendix 2. The sources are arranged according to a tripartite division to reflect the similarities within regions while highlighting the internal diversity. While it would be possible to split texts into groupings via the Roman diocese from which they probably emerged or according to the division of territories between emperors, this would be impractical. The first division by diocese would have led to many words spent justifying the texts' placements and obscuring the regional similarities. The second method is unreliable as the borders shifted several times and it would have been an arbitrary decision: such a division also obscures the contribution of the African churches, which would be split despite the internal consistency being stronger than with the other regions. The adopted approach attempts to respect the internal connections of regions while also recognising the diversity of practice and inter-regional influences.

Appendix 2 is divided into four parts corresponding to three geographic regions with high cultural and liturgical similarities and a quantitative analysis. Each of the three chapters will start with an overview introduction, which will set out the principal social situation and any notable considerations, such as language and specific local customs. The sources within the Appendix sections are then grouped according to regions based on liturgical practice and ecclesiological structures; the liturgical practices are important as markers since these are relatively easily identified within texts, although there are always places where several traditions merge, making placements challenging. Within each section, after dividing the texts by placement with a region, they will then be dealt with chronologically; in a few cases, the city and surrounding country areas will be distinguished if there is a known difference in practice. The three-way spit allows texts to be dealt with according to family resemblance while acknowledging the diversity in texts which have survived. This division also makes it easier to trace how the differing traditions developed and interacted while maintaining and developing distinct characters along cultural and linguistic lines. Each chapter will conclude with a summary of the principal themes noted in examining the sources.

As in most sources, the references to Minor Orders are scattered and fragmentary a summary of the content will be provided in preference to quotations. The sources are collated by author and then Minor Orders named in the text, irrespective of the type of text in which the orders are named. The sources included in this study are primarily those that name an order and clearly indicate their duties or theology. When a writer was identified as recording information on Minor Orders, all their works were checked for references to Minor Orders clergy and included. Summaries and Paraphrases of information are used to facilitate the presentation of sources without excessive numbers of short quotes. A quotation is used to highlight an important point, such as the gender used, or because it is a list that is efficient to quote. The quotations tend to be taken from Greek as this is the language the author is proficient in and can read directly and translate.

Appendix 2.1 focuses on the eastern region of the empire and is split into sections that correlate with areas that became autocephalous regions of the church in the form of the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem. These regions in the East each had distinct liturgical traditions which had grown out of local practices into regional traditions by the fifth-century and were reflected in the ecclesiology.[67] While the divisions were less clear at the beginning of the study period, some regional variations based on underlying cultural practices were already present.

Appendix 2.2 focuses on the African region, comprised of Roman North Africa and Roman Egypt, along with some evidence from the Ethiopian tradition. Since Africa had a distinct theological and liturgical tradition, it is artificial to join it entirely to the western traditions and splitting Africa between East and West creates issues in understanding how the region functioned. As Stewart-Sykes points out, the practices of the North African Church were distinct from other regions.[68] This thesis treats texts from Africa as separate from the other regions to enhance the contextualisation of sources and address identified limitations in existing studies. Wilhite's exploration of Christianity in North Africa is an influential

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[67] Stefano Parenti, "Towards a Regional History of the Byzantine Euchology of the Sacraments," *Ecclesia Orans* 27 (2010): 109–21, at 109.

[68] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Ordination Rites and Patronage Systems in Third-Century Africa," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 2 (2002): 115–30, at 115.

contribution to understanding Christianity's development in context.[69] The African region is considered independent but a distinctive region with an active relationship to other parts of the Roman Empire. This chapter also recognises how the cities of Carthage and Alexandria were influenced by yet were separate from their respective contexts of Roman North Africa and Roman Egypt.

Appendix 2.3 deals with the church in the Western Empire, which includes the North-Western Provinces but excludes Western Africa, which is dealt with in the previous section of Appendix 2. This chapter is split according to the political territorial regions where possible and distinguishes the metropolis of Rome from other areas. In the Western region section, the texts which cannot be geographically categorised by origin are included under the Latin section, as these texts were part of that developing tradition that incorporated many ideas and profoundly influenced the development of the liturgical and pastoral practices of the later Western Roman Empire.

In Appendix 2.4, there will be a wide-ranging discussion of what the surveying of sources reveals about Minor Orders and wider church practice. This section will include specific discussions of the way different types of primary sources occur across the Roman Empire and how this impacts interpretation.

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[69] Wilhite, *African Christianity,* ix.

3 Diaconate/Diakonia and the Minor Orders

The Diaconate was part of the church's functioning historically; the understanding and expression of this has changed over the centuries as the context in which the church functions changes. Nevertheless, after the twelfth-century, the position of Deacons and Minor Orders within Latin ecclesiology is clear.[1] The ecclesiology was not as evident within the churches of the Eastern Roman Empire at any time in history as a relational liturgical model was used. While the Church of the Greek-speaking Roman Empire did not develop a distinct theology of different clerical roles, the roles are distinguished linguistically and liturgically. The difference between χειροτονία (ordination) and χειροθεσία (appointment or blessing, sometimes rendered as consecration) has been studied by Theodorou.[2] This chapter will investigate the relationship between Deacons, the concept of Diakonia and the presence of Minor Orders within the Church and wider societal context. While aspects of context such as gender and literacy will be mentioned in passing in this chapter, they are more fully explored in later chapters.

Within this chapter, the work of Collins on the understanding of διακον- family of words is important, along with the collected essays in *Deacons and Diakonia* edited by Koet, Murphy, and Ryökäs. The work by Bradshaw and McGowan on liturgical theology and how this is related to ecclesiology and cultural context is also important to this chapter due to the interdependence of liturgy and ecclesiology, which is discussed later in this chapter.[3] The work of Theodorou and FitzGerald will also be influential in the discussions due to their work with Greek sources without translation from a position of profoundly understanding the ecclesiastical tradition in which the texts originated. These works by Collins, Koet, Murphy, Ryökäs, Theodorou and FitzGerald are important contributions to understanding deacons; however, there has been considerably less research into the Minor Orders. FitzGerald mentions Minor Orders in passing, including the excerpts from *The Place of Woman in the Orthodox Church*, which includes the existence of these orders but does not discuss it.[4] One

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[1] Macy, *Hidden History,* 23.

[2] Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women," 41-2.

[3] Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*; McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*.

[4] FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 204-7.

of the few studies of Minor Orders is by Ramsey, who interpreted historical canons for modern use; while limited in scope, his work has initiated the discussion on the presence and use of these orders.[5] This chapter directly addresses the lack of engagement with the Minor Orders in the historical record beyond the canonical sources by exploring their occurrence within various ecclesiastical sources.

This chapter explores the understanding of the diaconate through the relationships between the Minor Orders and the Deacons themselves. This will be achieved by first setting out the ecclesiastical context within the social-political and ritual framework of Late Antique society. While exploring the ecclesiastical context, the link between ecclesiology and liturgy will be a central point of discussion. Once the ecclesiastical context is defined, the specific expressions of the Minor Orders will be explored in the context of regional ecclesiology and theology. Following this, the interactions between Deacons and Minor Orders within the concept of Diakonia will be investigated. The implications of this research and its effects on understanding the Deacon will be summarised.

3.a Late Antique Ecclesiology

The study of Late Antique ecclesiology has tended to focus on one specific order to prove a point, such as Wijngaards' work on the woman Deacon,[6] or overviews of the whole history of one order, such as that by Olson.[7] Both types of work are essential for broadening the understanding of ecclesiology and contextualising it within the wider development of the church. Discussions on the relative importance of the Episcopate and Presbyterate in Late Antiquity have created an equal amount of discussion with arguments coloured by the writer's opinion. However, these debates typically lack an engagement with the liturgical practices of the time.

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[5] Ramsey, *Minor Clergy.*

[6] Wijngaards, *Ordination of Women;* idem, *Women Deacons;* idem, *Ordained Women Deacons.*

[7] Olson, *One Ministry Many Roles.*

The posited understanding of the ecclesiology of the Minor Orders in this chapter works from the premise of the interdependence of ecclesiology and liturgy incorporating regional variations. Since ecclesiology developed from the life of the Church in the community, it is that common life and worship which should govern how the ecclesiology is understood and presented.[8] This section will work from a broader cultural context through specific aspects of church practice to present an ecclesiology for the Minor Orders.

3.a.α Ritual Authority and Family Leadership

There was a link between family leadership and participation in cultic practices in Roman society. The Paterfamilias led the family's devotion to the household gods and performed public acts of worship, with the household practices and devotions being a microcosm of public practice.[9] This religious leadership, combined with the assumption that the whole household shared the Paterfamilias' beliefs, meant that his ritual authority depended on his practical authority. This authority came partly from the fact that all people were embedded within kinship-based social structures and had to play their part in the social structure, for outside of these, they had no authority.[10] While this is more evident and has been better investigated for women, the format and control of kinship groups and social structures were the building block of society and consequently influenced the development of the Church.

Within the Church, the co-dependence of ritual and practical authority also existed since the Church was theologically viewed as the household of God from apostolic times.[11] This theological understanding meant that the practice of liturgy directly reflected the church's practical authority, which was maintained by the liturgical practices alongside patronage. The clearest example of this reflection of the family structure and the influence of temple imagery in the textual record is in the *Didascalia* chapter 9. In this passage, the Bishop is described as; "to you a teacher, and your father after God, who begot you through the water. This is your

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[8] Erickson, *Challenge of Our Past,* 54-5.

[9] Fanny Dolansky, "Household and Family," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual*, ed. Risto Uro, Juliette J. Day, Rikard Roitto, and Richard E. DeMaris,(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 171-186, at 171-3.

[10] Bruce J. Malina, "Social Levels, Morals and Daily Life," in *The Early Christian World*, vol 1-2 ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 369-400, at 391-2.

[11] Eph 2:19; 1Tim 3:15; 1Pet 4.17.

chief and your leader, and he is your mighty king. He rules in the place of the Almighty: but let him be honoured by you as God, for the Bishop sits for you in the place of God Almighty."[12] This passage links liturgical authority, practical authority and a form of familial authority within the community. Kinship and household formation provided the foundational tool for control within the church as they exemplified the form of relationships as witnessed by the family-based codes of conduct promulgated by the church and utilised the culturally understood concepts of honour and shame.[13] While these relationships were voluntary and of the non-jural type, as there was no legal obligation, the internal functioning of the church reflected the established parameters of social interaction but with some new criteria for prestige relating to the church's beliefs.[14]

In this thesis, where the focus is on the Minor Orders, the link with wider practices is less clear due to the scarcity of records on the internal management of households. What can be seen from the relationships detailed in this chapter is that there was a hierarchy within the Minor Orders which probably mirrored the organisation within a large household. Including the dual hierarchies of men and women reflecting the different functions they performed. These hierarchies are only visible in the records of liturgical relationships, as the canonical and other references to Minor Orders make little if any mention of authority. These cultural and contextual factors highlight the importance of examining ecclesiology in a liturgical context.

3.a.β Liturgy-Ecclesiology overlap

The link between liturgy and ecclesiology occurs within several Late Antique texts. The most apparent link is in the Church Orders; however, these are not the only ones. The links also appear within the liturgical texts, most clearly in the intercession prayers (litanies). Exploring this link will then be followed by the examination of the descriptions of the liturgy which appear in some Church Orders. The other obvious overlap comes in the ordination prayers

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[12] DA, ch9.

[13] Malina, "Social levels, morals," 389-90, examples of these conduct codes such as the two ways text can be found in the *Letter of Barnabas* and *The Didache*.

[14] Malina, "Social levels, morals," 392.

and practices, yet due to the complexity of the prayers concerning Deacons, they will be examined in their own subsection.

The intercessions recorded in the liturgies provide a witness to the link between ecclesiology and liturgical practice since the prayers included those serving the church. The Liturgies of St Mark and St James are important as they provide complete lists of the orders. The Liturgies of St Basil and St John Chrysostom are not explicitly included as they do not list types of orders, only the "τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ διακονίας (the Deacons who serve in Christ)."[15] This quotation implies that the Deacon's role was more complex than just a liturgical assistant. Within the consideration of what liturgies say about Ecclesiology, these fleeting references are important before the routine recording of rubrics highlighting the nonspeaking roles and who did which parts. The regional variations in liturgical practice also indicate regional variations in the use of Minor Orders. The two extremes are the highly idealised lists from Rome (which indicate an attempt at unified worship practices) and the writings of Egeria (which indicate ritualised but highly place-specific practices, for example, in Jerusalem).[16] Cornelius of Rome sets out a clear list that is presented as normative for the organisation of Western ecclesiastical and liturgical practice. At the same time, the evidence from the Eastern traditions is exemplified by Egeria's writings which focus on liturgical practice, which is space relevant and contextually dictated. These differences indicate differing approaches to ecclesiology and whether it is theologically or liturgically based.

This overlap between ecclesiology and liturgy is important in understanding the Late Antique church. It would not be an overstatement to say that the liturgy and ecclesiology of the church were co-dependent, with the liturgy expressing the ecclesiology. The clearest example of this occurs in the Church Orders; an example of this is the *Didascalia* chapter 9. The first image given in the *Didascalia* chapter 9 is of the Presbyter and the Deacons gathered around their Bishop, which is seen in Egeria's descriptions of liturgical practice.[17] The close link between

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[15] John Chrysostom, *The Divine Liturgy of Our Fathers among the Saints John Chrysostom, the Greek Text Together with a Translation into English,* Trans. Ephrem Lash (Chipping Norton, U.K.: Nigel Lynn, 2011), 20 and 48 (Own translation).

[16] See section on Cornelious of Rome Appendix 2.3.b.γ, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.43.11; Egeria, *Travels*, 24.1-25.6.

[17] Egeria, *Travels*, 24.4-5.

liturgical practice and practical ecclesiology is described in the rest of *Didascalia* chapter 9, where the two aspects are described together.[18] The idea of discrete categories of liturgy and ecclesiology does not apply to the Late Antique Church as Christianity was a way of life, where ecclesiology, Christology, and liturgy were constituent parts of the whole. In like manner, the individual functions within the Church were co-dependent and defined by both practical and liturgical needs.

3.a.β.1 Ordination prayers

The earliest ordination prayers are recorded in the Church Orders, which clearly list who was ordained and an outline of how. These early records are important as the compilations of prayers, including those for ordinations, do not begin to appear until the eighth-century in the Codex Barb.gr.336. This text has not been translated into English, but it is the earliest catalogued surviving example of what developed into the Great Book of Needs within the Orthodox Church. The ordination prayers provide one of the key sources of information about orders as they link specifically named orders to functions; the other source is the canonical record. The current scholarship relating to ordination practices is mixed, with some scholars, such as Bradshaw, focusing on translating the ordination prayers and others, such as Martimort and Theodorou, exploring the differences between prayers and the implications of these differences. These discussions about the interpretation of the differences between the ordination prayers for male and female Deacons are an essential aspect of the debates about the ecclesiastical status of women Deacons.

There is a dispute over the similarity or differences in the two prayers recorded for the ordination of Deacons of different genders. Both these prayers are recorded in the Codex Barb.gr.336 with minimal rubrics beyond where they occur in the Eucharist liturgy. Both versions contain a special prayer and litanies only heard at the ordination of senior clergy and occur in the sanctuary rather than the nave. The first special prayer which occurs at the point at which the additions to the service for ordinations start is a special prayer of invocation which starts "ἡ Θεία Χάρις ἡ πάντοτε τὰ ἀσθενῆ θεραπεύουσα… (the divine grace that

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[18] DA, ch9.

always heals the sick…).”[19] The Codex Barb.gr.336 contains this prayer in full only in the ordination of the Bishop, but it is stated in the other ordination prayers that it is read in full.[20] Additionally, for the Major Orders, a distinctive set of intercessions for the person being ordained is said between the two ordination prayers by a member of the order that the person is joining. This set of intercessions is only found in the ordinations of the Major Orders.[21] The inclusion of this set of intercessions in the ordination of the woman Deacon is important in marking it as a Major Order ordination rather than a consecration to a Minor Order. According to Theodorou, these two areas that have been discussed align with the others listed in his article and are key to distinguishing the ordination of Deacons and other Major Orders from the Minor Orders.[22] The similarities in the prayers themselves discussed over the following paragraphs are also a crucial part of Theodorou's argument for both genders of Deacon belonging to the same order.

In liturgical placement and internal rubrics, as far as these are recorded, the ordinations of male and female Deacons are identical in all but a few places, as can be seen by the way they are presented in the Codex Barb.gr.336 and Bradshaw's complete translation of the prayers.[23] The first difference, to which some writers have given much attention, is that the Deacon knelt while the woman Deacon bowed. While it is not stated in either case in the Codex Barb.gr.336 that the head of the one being ordained touches the altar, it is witnessed by other sources outside of the period of this study; however, it is something that Martimort highlights as a difference between the ordination of the Deacon and the woman Deacon. The difference in position, which is noted by Martimort as a significant difference, alongside the other differences from the prayer for the male Deacon, made the ritual significantly different for two distinct orders to be represented.[24] Skaltsis also discusses this difference in his overview of the liturgical practice, but he sees it as a minor difference in a practice that is otherwise identical; meanwhile, FitzGerald suggests that the difference was for reasons of cultural

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[19] Codex Barb.gr.336 159r-v (own translation).

[20] Codex Barb.gr.336 159r-v, 163r, 166r, 169v.

[21] The importance of this is noted by Panagiotis I. Skaltsis, "The Ordination of Deaconesses in the Orthodox Liturgical Tradition," in *Deaconesses*, ed. Vassiliadis, Papageorgiou, and Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 171-77, at 176.

[22] Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women," 40.

[23] Codex Barb.gr.336, 166r-171v; Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites,* 136-9.

[24] Martimont, *Deaconesses,* 154-5.

propriety.[25] This means that some may use the distinction based on a minor difference to support a view not inherent in the texts themselves, which can bear witness to greater diversity in practice between regions for orders recognised as the same. An example of this liturgical diversity which is not considered to affect the validity of the service is the difference between the Liturgies of John Chrysostom and Basil the Great. These two services have substantial differences in the Anaphora prayers but both are regarded as valid consecrations of the Eucharist rather than as separate sacraments with different results.[26] The differences in the wording of the prayers for the consecration of Deacons' male and female are no more significant than the differences between the two Eucharist services used in the Orthodox Church: indeed, the differences are minimal and substantially less significant by comparison. The context (being one of the two Divine Liturgies) and content of the ordination prayers does not warrant classifying them as different orders, especially when the prayers are compared to that of the Subdeacon, which is substantially more different from either set of prayers for Deacons than they are from each other.[27]

The prayers within the Byzantine tradition differ slightly within the Epiclesis for the ordination. The rubrics for the first consecration prayers indicate the Bishop making the sign of the cross over the head of the one to be ordained three times, a practice common to all Major Order ordinations and only described in full for the Bishop's ordination.[28] In the first prayer, for the Deacon, the focus is on sending down grace as it was sent to Steven the Protomayter (and Deacon), while for a woman Deacon focuses on the grace imparted to women via the incarnation.[29] In both cases, after the first prayer, the Deacon serving says a litany before the second Epiclesis.[30] This second prayer is centred on the granting of the grace to fulfil the role of the Deacon: in the case of male Deacons, this is linked to the gospel command to service in general, while for the woman Deacon, it is explicitly linked to the

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[25] Skaltsis, "The Ordination of Deaconesses," 176; FitzGerald *Women Deacons*, 79 note.

[26] Anaphora prayers are the name given to the principal consecration prayer within Orthodox Divine Liturgies, the Prayer occurs after the Creed before the elevation of the Bread and Wine being a recalling of the whole of salvation history. The length and detail of the prayer differs between divine liturgies ascribed to different writers.

[27] Codex Barb.gr.336, 166r-173r; Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites,* 136-9.

[28] Codex Barb.gr.336, 166r, 169r-v; Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites,* 133; Skaltsis, "The Ordination of Deaconesses," 176.

[29] Codex Barb.gr.336, 167v-9r, 170v-2r; Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites,* 136, 138.

[30] As discussed above this is a key marker for a Major Orders ordination.

service of St Phoebe.[31] Both prayers then conclude with a petition that God will receive the newly ordained in grace and make them worthy of the kingdom. While these textual differences are present, they are less substantial than those between the Deacon and the Presbyter or the Deacon and the Subdeacon. The very similarity of prayers and actions indicates that they are closely linked and as Theodorou states, "during the ordination of the Deaconess, all the essential elements of the ordination of the Deacon are present."[32]

The other rubrical differences occur at the end of the ordination prayers in the vesting, where the Bishop places the diaconal Orarion on both genders of Deacons, yet in different ways.[33] The way the woman Deacon is described wearing the Orarion, with both ends at the front rather than over the right shoulder, is the customary position for the Orarion to be worn when Deacons receive communion. According to Karras, the difference was primarily functional rather than indicative of a different order; the Deacons, who were charged with various functions, such as reading the Gospel and intoning petitions, used the Orarion during these functions.[34] This difference in the manner of usage reflects differences in practical actions and potential to serve publicly within divine offices, as the role of women Deacons was focused on pastoral work and overseeing the Choir rather than the liturgical office of the Deacon the variation in the way vestments were worn represents a different focus of function rather than different ecclesiastical orders.[35] The important point is that Deacons of both genders are vested with the same symbol of office, the Orarion, a symbol that was only conferred on the Deacon, as is discussed in chapter 6.

The differences in the fine detail of the ordination prayers and some aspects of how the rubrics are expressed between the ordination of the Deacons male and female do not suggest a different type of ministry. The variations between particulars in the way an ordination service in different liturgical traditions all create members of the same order, as compiled by Bradshaw, are considerably more significant than between the two genders within the

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[31] Codex Barb.gr.336, 166r, 169r-v; Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites,* 137, 138.

[32] Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women," 40.

[33] Codex Barb.gr.336, 166r-171v; Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites,* 136-9.

[34] Karras, "Female Deacons," 306.

[35] Karras, "Female Deacons," 306, Skaltsis, "The Ordination of Deaconesses," 176.

Byzantine tradition where it is argued that very small differences create different and distinct orders.[36] My conclusion is that there was one order of Deacon expressed in two gendered practices in agreement with the conclusions of Theodorou, FitzGerald and others regarding the similarities between the two versions of the Deacon representing the same form of Ordination with differing duties.

3.a.γ Minor Orders in context

The Minor Orders functioned within the context of the Church community and liturgy but had a special relationship with the Deacon. As ecclesiology and liturgy were co-dependent in the Late Antique church, meaning it is necessary to set the Minor Orders within their larger context to understand their position.

Late Antique Church writings indicate that many Bishops saw the church as set apart within the world, as expressed in the *Letter to Diognetus,* which affirms, "that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body."[37] This concept in the *Letter to Diognetus* draws on the concepts expressed in the High Priestly Prayer recorded in the gospel of St John and the letter to the Hebrews.[38] John Chrysostom develops a similar theme in his preaching about the passage in Hebrews focusing on how Christians are strangers to the world.[39] The implication is that the Christians were in the world, yet not of the world. Christians lived among the wider community sharing their culture but also living in a way distinct from theirs, as is implied in the *Letter to Diognetus.* While this theological concept is present within a range of texts, one of the infrequent uses of the letter in modern theology writing is by Doru Costache, who uses the *Letter to Diognetus* as a basis for alternative theological approaches to the relationship between the church and the world.[40]

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[36] For example, the versions of the deacon ordination prayers, Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites*, 136-7, 143-5, 178-80, 191-4, 205-8.

[37] Diognetus, "From a Letter to Diognetus: the Christian in the World," Vatican.va, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010522_diogneto_en.html.

[38] John 17:14-16; Heb 11:13-16.

[39] John Chrysostom, *Homily on Hebrews* 24.

[40] Doru Costache, "Christianity and the World in the Letter to Diognetus," *Phronema* 27, no. 1 (2012): 29–50.

The separation between the church and the world was not complete or absolute, as when oil and water are mixed. Instead, there was a grey area inhabited by catechumens, hearers and penitents between the world and the church, which was neither fully one nor the other but a liminal state between the two. Within the baptised Christian community, there was a repeated setting aside of some to minister to the larger group. The Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons were set aside for special tasks while remaining part of the baptised community. It can be argued that the Deacon was a liminal minister due to their liturgically and practically ambiguous role.[41] Along with the concentration of diaconal ministry at the transitional stages of life, the Minor Orders as assistants to the Deacon who expressed specific aspects of the Deacon's role shared the ambiguous nature of the diaconal role. Just as the church is within the world and separate from it, the clergy of all ranks are within the baptised people of God and distinct from them. The transitional zones of entering the church or entering the clergy provide a time of training and preparation while bridging the difference in quality rather than the type of life. Legally those in the transitional stage are counted with those they will become; in the records of persecutions, catechumens are martyred alongside the baptised and in law, Minor Orders are treated the same as the Major Orders.[42]

Although the expectations and symbolism increased in one direction towards the Bishop, the humility and service expected increased proportionately. The Bishop was there to serve the whole of his church, assisted by the Presbyters and Deacons. However, those not part of the select ministries were not passive recipients. The people of God were expected to serve the wider community helping the poor, travellers and the like, irrespective of beliefs. Dionysius of Alexandria shows this happening during a plague in Alexandria.[43]

Before the late-fourth-century, it is impossible to say that there were passive recipients of ministry in the church and a separate active subgroup. This is due to the relatively small numbers of Christians and the inherent risk involved in the profession of faith, meaning members of the church were actively committed. It was more of a qualitative difference

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[41] Phoebe Kearns, "The Liminal Nature of the Diaconal Role," in *Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity*: *the Third Century Onward*, ed. B J Koet, Edwina Murphy, and Esko Ryökäs, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

[42] Stuart George Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2011), 15; CTh 5.3.1.

[43] Eusebius EH, 7.22.

between types of ministry, with the clergy acting as an example and symbol of the work of the whole people of God. Within this approach to understanding ministries, the Minor Orders serving as assistants to the Deacon provided stepping stones between the generalised ministry of all believers and the highly specialised version conducted by the Major Orders. By providing specialised functions, the Minor Orders facilitated the working of the community, but they also had greater involvement in the day-to-day tasks of all Christians than those exclusively dedicated to the service of the church.

An alternative way of expressing this understanding can be developed from the paralleling of Ecclesiology with other images. If, as in the *Didascalia,* the Bishop represents the Father, the male and female Deacons Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the Presbyters the Apostles,[44] it is appropriate to suggest that the implied image for other believers is the wider group of the disciples, male and female. The Temple image used by some of the Fathers is also relevant in that if the Bishop stands in place of Christ as High Priest, the Presbyters like the other priests, the Deacons and conceivably their assistants as Levites, then the baptised Christians take the place of the people of Israel. The term Levite was also used for Deacons in a range of Late Antique texts, further suggesting the survival of temple theology within the development of ecclesiology.[45] Neither of these images indicates a passive laity who receives ministry; instead, they imply that all Christians are active and called to minister to and on behalf of the world. In this context, the Minor Orders are one specific expression of the work of the people of God that required specialist skills and supported the whole church in performing its proper tasks.

3.a.δ The importance of Church Orders

Church Orders are important in understanding the development of both liturgical practice and ecclesiology as they provide an important witness to the development and diversity of these practices. The witness of the Church Orders is critical concerning ordination prayers as they provide the earliest records of these prayers. The texts, as living literature, combined the

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[44] DA, ch9.

[45] e.g., *1 Clement* and post the era of this study by Gregory the Great in *Letter* 44.

practice of the time in which they were written and an idealised view of the past.[46] As mentioned in chapter 2, these documents parallel many other forms of text but are most comparable with the Typicon as it exists in the current practice of the Orthodox Church. The importance of these texts comes from the fact that they combine ecclesiology, prayers and some descriptions of liturgical actions. Despite their importance to the understanding of Church history and ecclesiology, the texts contain only limited references to the focus of this study, predominantly contributing theology or liturgical context rather than direct references to orders.

This combination of source types is most clearly seen in the records of ordination prayers, such as those found in the *Apostolic Tradition*. These descriptions contain the prayer and action along with an implicit indication of the theology. Texts such as the *Didascalia* are not as explicit but use images to portray the relationship between orders and instructions on liturgical behaviour.[47] Some passages in the *Didascalia* have also been linked to later prayers recorded in eucharistic liturgies and baptism services. An example of this is the Greek practice in an Episcopal liturgy, where the Bishop is surrounded by Presbyters and Deacons, who do most of the practical activities of the service. This relationship between Presbyters, Deacons and the Bishop can be seen most clearly in an Episcopal liturgy during the Little Entrance or Entrance of the Gospels.[48] The descriptions and images preserved in Church Orders are essential for understanding church practice before the recording of rubrics within liturgical texts. The first rubrics did not appear until after the eighth-century and remained uncommon for several centuries in a form comparable to modern rubrics.[49]

Church Orders are important in understanding the development of the Church because they combine liturgical and ecclesiological content. They contain a mixture of pragmatic realism, symbolic theology and idealised memories of the past, providing considerable information on the church's self-understanding. This composite nature makes them unparalleled as a

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[46] Bradshaw, "Ancient Church Orders", 47.

[47] For an exploration of one aspect of this: Kearns, "Liturgical Expression,".

[48] Rubrics for the hierarchical divine liturgy can be found, "Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese," ww1.antiochian.org, accessed July 13, 2022, http://ww1.antiochian.org/1102194997.

[49] Few if any rubrics can be found in the Codex Barb.gr.336.

historical source but underutilised as they are complicated to interpret unless appropriately contextualised, and the image-based descriptions are understood as images rather than literally.

3.a.ε Summary

Late Antique Ecclesiology was a complex situation closely linked and co-dependent with liturgical practice and theology. This close relationship mirrored the practice of the Paterfamilias being the cult leader within a household, wielding considerable authority over what happened practically and the worship within the family. The key sources for understanding the developing ecclesiology are the Church Orders which make no distinction between the liturgical and ecclesiological understandings, often portraying them in a single description. This conceptual link between ecclesiology and liturgy is essential in understanding how both evolved and how church practice interacted with the ritual context of the Late Antique world in which it existed.

3.b Minor Orders ecclesiology

As demonstrated in the preceding section and discussed in the Introduction, the idea of a distinct ecclesiology of Minor Orders is probably a misnomer due to the close interrelationship between ecclesiology, liturgy, and doctrine within the Church of this era. The position of Minor Orders could be explored through the medium of their liturgical roles or theology as simply as the ecclesiological perspective used here. Within examining the specific relationships between Minor Orders and their theology, the intention is to place the emerging Minor Orders within their ecclesiastical context.

3.b.α Relationships between Minor Orders

The documents set out in Appendix 2 reveal that the Minor Orders did not exist in isolation but rather in relationship with other clergy. This relationship is implied by the shared context of multiple orders recorded in a single source. The two clearest relationships in the sources are those between Virgins and Widows, along with Readers and Cantors. While there were

almost certainly relationships between other orders, especially involving the Subdeacon, these links are based on shared roles rather than direct evidence. The relationship with the Deacon is also important and will be discussed in the next section. However, the relationships between individual Minor Orders need to be explored without the complicating factor of the Deacon.

3.b.α.1 Virgins and Widows

These two orders are mentioned together in the earliest texts in this thesis, and there is sometimes significant overlap. In exploring the concept of the 'Virgin Widow' Methuen makes the point that χήραι meant a woman who lived without a man, rather than the narrower English definition of a Widow.[50] This enables the linking and in places merging of the two concepts but also adds a degree of ambiguity to the understanding of the order of the Widow and its relationship to that of the Virgin. The first noticeable linking of these orders comes in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, who in the letter to the Smyrneans mentions, "τὰς παρθένους τὰς λεγομένας χήραι (The Virgins who are called Widows [without men])",[51] implying a close link between the two groups even in the late-first-century. The linking of the two orders of celibate women is also indicated by Clement of Alexandria when he talks of a Widow returning to a Virgin-like state through her commitment to chastity.[52] Tertullian makes a similar link between the two orders in *On the Resurrection,* where he describes both as an offering to God.[53] In the mid-third-century, Cyprian of Carthage mentions both Virgins and Widows supported by the Church.[54] However, there is no clear indication in Cyprian's writings regarding the relationship between these orders.

Methodius links Virgins and Widows to the altar in the fourth-century, developing older theological images that will be discussed later in the chapter.[55] The fact that Methodius uses the image of an altar for both Virgins and Widows indicates that for him, there must have

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[50] Methuen, "Virgin Widow," 287-8.

[51] Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Smyrneans,* 13(Own translation).

[52] Clement of Alexandria*, Stromata,* 7.7.

[53] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection,* Ch 8.

[54] Cyprian, *Letter*, 2, 35, *Treatise* 12.

[55] Methodius, *On Chastity,* 5.6.

been some similarities between the orders to justify expanding the image to incorporate both. Later in the fourth-century, Basil the Great writes his canonical letters in which he sets out the position of a Virgin, significantly making the Virgins superior to Widows.[56] The range of sources and approaches indicates a developing understanding of the roles of the unmarried in the church. The interpretation in these canons differed significantly from the approach implied by some other fourth-century texts, which indicate that in their communities; the Widow held a role similar to that of a Presbyter with parallel requirements for selection.[57] In some cases, the translation may not always be accurate, as the title Widow is sometimes given even when the underlying text uses a different word indicating specific selections made during the translation process.[58]

The practice of Virgins and Widows continued to develop over the fourth and fifth centuries across multiple traditions within the imperial church. At the end of the fourth-century, John Chrysostom also mentions Virgins and Widows, both supported by the church, indicating their presence in the Antiochian and Constantinopolitan traditions. In the fifth-century, the *Codex Theodosianus* makes a clear link between the orders of Virgin and Widow, including them within the same set of laws, as is explored in chapter 6, indicating a degree of parity or relationship between them. This link between celibate orders is also expressed by the fourth ecumenical Council, which issues parallel legislation for Virgins and Widows who marry suggesting a parity in the expected behaviour, if not a direct relationship between the orders.[59] Ambrose of Milan, also in the late-fourth-century, describes a parity between the two orders.[60] Augustine of Hippo talks about Virgins and Widows together in the context of shared living, including cases of widowed mothers and their Virgin daughters or working together.[61] These texts suggest a widespread linking of Virgins and Widows by theological writers for various reasons.

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[56] Basil, *Letter* 199, Canon 18.

[57] TD 1.29, 40.

[58] Methuen, "Virgin Widow," 294-5.

[59] Council of Chalcedon, *Canons,* 16.

[60] Ambrose, *Letter*, 42.

[61] Augustine, *Letter,* 98, 97, against Petilian.

The exploitation of Virgins and Widows by clergy for their vanity is mentioned by Sulpicius Severus in the late-fourth-century, which suggests the church utilised the skills of the women dependent on the church for support when it came to the provision of material items the church needed.[62] This seems to be the case within the records relating to the Daughters of the Covenant, whose activities were canonically limited so that they could focus on their liturgical duties within the church.[63] When linking the restrictions in the Syrian tradition to the comments by Sulpicius Severus, it is possible to conclude that the church in other areas may also have used this pool of skilled labour for its own needs. This linking of Virgins and Widows is also taken up by the historian Socrates in the early to mid-fifth-century, recording that both Virgins and Widows were subject to persecution by Arians.[64] Vincent of Lerins comments similarly on how heretical groups mistreat the Virgins and Widows.[65] This suggests that Virgins and Widows were particularly vulnerable to persecution and closely linked in many respects. Jerome also wrote extensively on virginity and widowhood in connection to celibacy, expressing his understanding of the relative position through his interpretation of the parable of the sower. Jerome is clear in this that his preference is for Virgins, whom he equates with the hundredfold crop, followed by Widows, whom he equates to the sixtyfold crop, while he equates married life with the thirtyfold crop.[66] This reflects Jerome's theology which was influential within the Latin part of the Empire, along with some impact on the approaches of the Eastern empire, where his views were very similar to the other Eastern writers. Leo the Great makes it clear that the Virgins are superior to the Widows.[67] This suggests that a hierarchical understanding of the relationship between these two orders was present in Rome by the mid-fifth-century.

The two celibate orders occur not only in theological and historical writings but are also recorded in the Church Orders. The *Apostolic Tradition* links these orders through the instruction to pray for the church, although the relationship between the orders is unclear due

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[62] Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogue,* 1.21.

[63] Harvey, "Daughters of the Covenant," 126.

[64] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History,* 2.28.

[65] Vincent of Lerins, *The Commentary for the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith Against the Profane Novelties of all Heresies*, 11.

[66] Jerome, *Letter* 48 To Pammachius, 2-3.

[67] Leo the Great, *Letter*, 12.

to the variations in textual traditions.[68] The *Apostolic Constitutions* links' the two orders in that they are dealt with in the same way within the text and separately from other women.[69] The linking of the two orders within these two Church Orders is of limited use for this research, as they give less information than other contemporary sources. Other Church Orders mention either only one of the orders, normally Widows, or do not connect them in any way that indicates a relationship; consequently, they do not add to the understanding of the relationship between the two orders.

In most incidences where Virgins and Widows are recorded together, there is no direct evidence of how the relationship worked in practice. There was undoubtedly a practical aspect to the relationship as there are records of the two orders working and possibly living together. Only in the canons of Basil the Great and the writings of Leo the Great is a clear definition of the relationship presented, with Virgins given priority over Widows.[70] The relationship between these two orders is partly unclear as the term Widow is used to describe more than one group of older women within the church with differing social positions. The complexities of the different aspects of those described as Widows are explored in chapter 4. When discussing the relationship of Virgins with Widows, it is predominantly the poor Widow who was dependent on the church for support with whom the relationship existed. While the evidence indicates that the two celibate orders were related, the details of this do not survive beyond a few fragmentary records and in a situational-specific way. The concentration of evidence comes from the Eastern Region of the empire, but there are more sources for these orders in all parts of the empire than any other order.[71]

3.b.α.2 Readers and Cantors

The link between Readers and Cantors is less well recorded than that between Virgins and Widows, but there is an indication of some form of relationship between the two orders. The function of reading, at the very least, would link the orders since literacy was a specialised

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[68] AT 11,12, for discussion on textual variations see 5.b.β.

[69] AC, 2.57.14.

[70] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 199 canon 18; Leo the Great, *Letter*, 12.

[71] This is demonstrated by fig 2 in Appendix 2.4.

skill in Late Antiquity. The fact that Readers are also mentioned with Cantors or Singers indicates some form of relationship and closely associated duties.

The first identifiable reference to Readers and Singers in the same context occurs in the canons recorded in the *Apostolic Constitutions,* where both are mentioned alongside Subdeacons.[72] This mention comes in the context of regulating these clerics' behaviour around alcohol and marriage, the regulations acting as a staging post between that expected of the ordinary Christians and that expected of the Major Orders. This does not provide any details about the relationship apart from Singers probably being the most junior order since they were listed last. The tendency in Late Antique church documents was to name people in order of precedence, starting with the most senior and finishing with the least important, something that can be observed in the intercessory prayer in the liturgies where the Bishop is listed first and the people last.[73]

The mid-fourth-century *Liturgy of St Mark* lists Singers among the commemorated orders after Readers.[74] The letter of pseudo-Ignatius to the Antiochians reflects the same form of record in that both orders are mentioned, but their relationship is not expounded.[75] Jerome, on the cusp of the fifth-century, also mentions both orders as subservient orders.[76] These sources indicate the presence of both orders but not the relationship between them.

Purely from the texts, it is impossible to say what the relationship between Readers and Singers (or Chanters) was. The presence of a clear relationship is found in later ordinational texts of the Byzantine tradition, where the only difference is that a Reader receives a copy of the book of the Epistles, and the Chanter receives a Psalter.[77] Since the ordination prayers of the Greek-speaking church seem to have remained stable from the earliest surviving

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[72] AC, 8 canon 43.

[73] see Liturgy of St Mark discussed at 4.d.η.

[74] Cuming, *Liturgy of St Mark*, 33.

[75] Pseudo-Ignatius, *To the Antiochians* 12.

[76] Jerome, *Letter*, 8, 52.

[77] Bradshaw, *Ordination Rights*, 139.

records,[78] it is reasonable to conclude that the ritual actions accompanying these prayers (for instance, the presenting of a book or laying on of hands) did not change substantially either.[79] This stability of ritual practice held in oral tradition can be seen in the similarities in the Anaphora prayers of the eucharistic service between the Church Orders and the later written Eucharist services. A clear example of this liturgical conservatism is visible when comparing the recorded consecration prayer in the Apostolic Tradition to the Anaphora prayer of St John Chrysostom.[80] When this comparison is made, the forms of words which introduce the prayer in the form of a call and response between the Deacon and the congregation are the same as the words quoted from the Gospel about the Eucharistic institution. While the exact words differ, the themes of praise and salvation history are common.[81] This pattern of prayers is also recorded by Cyril of Jerusalem, whose explanation of the prayers matches both those found in the Apostolic Tradition and the Liturgy of John Chrysostom.[82] These parallel descriptions provide more evidence of the shared history and arrangement of the Eucharistic service even if there are variations in the detail of the anaphora prayer itself. This evidence for liturgical conservatism, which was maintained in a strong oral tradition as mentioned by Basil,[83] means that it is highly probable that the practices of setting apart Minor Orders clergy recorded in the eighth-century Great Book of Needs were the same as in the preceding centuries. There is no guarantee of this, as illustrated later in the chapter, there were relative changes in authority during Late Antiquity, but these did not impact the relationship between the Reader and the Singer.

To conclude, the sparse and scattered evidence for Readers and Singers means it is difficult to say what the relationship was with certainty. Nevertheless, liturgical practices indicate that there probably was a relationship between the orders. The clearest evidence is from the Eastern Region, which is partly inferred from later practices and oral tradition. Potentially the

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[78] At least when comparing the eight-century Codex Barb.gr.336 with latter practice.

[79] The rubrics described by Bradshaw in *Ordination Rites* for the eastern practice seem to parallel those recorded in the *Apostolic Tradition* and other Church Orders in relation to the Reader closely and the other orders to a lesser extent due to developments in practices, but the overall form remains comparable.

[80] AT 4, Chrysostom, *The Divine Liturgy,* 44-5.

[81] It is worth noting here that the difference between the Apostolic Tradition and the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom are equivalent to that which can be observed between the Liturgies of John Chrysostom and Basil the Great both of which are still in active use in the Orthodox Church.

[82] Cyril, *Mystical Catechesis*, 5.4-7.

[83] Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, Ch 27, (par 66).

distinction between these orders was only made in the fourth-century and in larger congregations to separate the more experienced practitioners who could be trusted to perform the readings clearly from those who were learning the craft. The function of singing in the church may have been related to those learning to read, as discussed in chapter 5, since learning syllables and words and then poetic phrases was a core part of literate education.[84] It is possible that the singers were children or others learning to read or people with limited literacy, while Readers were drawn from people with more advanced literacy skills. The distinction is most likely related to age, the level of literacy or the ability to sing, but the evidence is unclear.

3.b.α.3 Subdeacon and Acolyte

The relationship between Subdeacons and Acolytes is one of the few where there is a record. Cyprian writes about the two orders together when he is sending messages and Cornelius mentions Acolytes follow Subdeacons in his list of clergy in the mid-third-century.[85] These two sources indicate that the orders had a relationship, but the full nature of it is not explicit within the period of this study. The description by Cyprian of both orders being involved in the delivery of letters indicates that they both performed the same task in some situations, implying some form of relationship on a practical level.[86] This relationship is most apparent in the southern part of the western region and the Carthage area of North Africa due to the writings of Cyprian. The evidence from Cornelius only shows that both orders exist and it is from later documents that the nature of the relationship can be discovered, as it is detailed within Roman practice after the study period.

3.a.α.4 Subdeacon and Doorkeeper

This relationship is probably one of the clearest as there are distinct references to Subdeacons acting as Doorkeepers. One of the clearest of these is a story told by Abba John of the Cells;

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[84] Johnson, "Learning to Read and Write," 137-9.

[85] Cyprian, *Letter,* 27; Eusebius, EH, 6.43.

[86] Cyprian, *Letter,* 27.

There was in Egypt a very rich and beautiful courtesan, to whom noble and powerful people came. Now one day she happened to be near the church and wanted to go in. The sub-deacon, who was standing at the doors, would not allow her to enter saying, "You are not worthy to enter the house of God for you are impure." The bishop heard the noise of their argument and came out. Then the courtesan said to him, "He will not let me enter the Church." So the bishop said to her, "You are not worthy to enter the house of God for you are not pure." She was filled with compunction and said to him, "Henceforth I will not commit fornication any more." The bishop said to her, "If you bring your wealth here, I shall know that you will not commit fornication any more." She brought her wealth and the bishop burnt it all in the fire. Then she went into the church, weeping and saying, "if this has happened to me below, what would I not have suffered above?" So she was converted and became a vessel of election.[87]

The function of Subdeacons at the doors is also recorded within the canonical texts during the fourth and fifth-centuries. The practice of guarding the doors is expressed particularly clearly in the church order texts which assign the duty to the Deacon.[88] The documents also provide some evidence of the relationship between Deacons, Subdeacons and Door Keepers as the function of guarding the doors is assigned to both Deacons and Subdeacons in the Apostolic Constitutions. As is explored below the Subdeacon is often described as the Deacon's assistant creating a link between all three orders.[89]

The growing congregations and resulting increase in the duties of the Subdeacon were probably influencing factors in the development of the Doorkeeper as a separate order in response to specific congregational needs. This implies that the order was formed to delegate a specific task that needed doing, which exceeded the capacity of the assigned minister. It is a matter of speculation due to the number of sources available, but it is based on the observations of how roles develop in most complex organisations. As discussed later in this chapter, the function of door keeping is assigned to the Deacon in some texts and it is unclear

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[87] Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: the Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 2004), p105-6, Abba John of the Cells, *saying* 1.

[88] DA, 12; AC, 2.7.

[89] AC, 2.7.

in other texts whether the references to Doorkeepers refer to that order or either Deacons or Subdeacons performing the function.

3.b.β Theology of Minor Orders

The theology of Minor Orders, as with all theology underlying ecclesiology, is very scant in the sources. Most of the theology associated with ecclesiology comes from Antioch and Syria, except for the second-century writer Irenaeus.

The *Didascalia* in chapter 9 mentions that the Widows had the symbolic position of the altar due to their role as intercessors for the church. This image is likely to have been part of local oral tradition, as the symbolism used for orders into which it is inserted most likely developed from the first-century writings of Ignatius of Antioch. Methodius of Olympus, writing in the early-fourth-century, develops this image further to include Virgins as well as Widows.[90] Methodius' image is heavily steeped in the tradition of the Jerusalem temple and the church as the true successor to that worship, employing images that only make sense with a detailed knowledge of the workings of the Jerusalem temple. The theological association of Virgins and Widows with altars or prayer indicates that the theology reflected a specific role or function in the church and their separateness from the life of most of the community. The paralleling of this image in the Ethiopian Didascalia also indicates that the idea is of ancient origin and understood even if not expressed across varying regions of the eastern empire and beyond.[91]

What ecclesiastical theology there is seems to be closely linked with the celibate orders. What can be said theologically about other orders is linked to the role and theology of the Deacon and is explored later in this chapter. No distinct theology of the Minor Orders can be identified other than the theology of specific orders such as Virgins and Widows, which is limited to the Antiochian tradition.

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[90] Methodius *On Chastity,* Discourse 5.6.

[91] *Ethiopic Didascalia*, 6.

3.b.γ Regional Variation

While the basic relationships within the Minor Orders can be observed in a wide range of texts from different periods and regions within this study, the evidence is very fragmentary. As a result of this scarce and fragmentary evidence for most of the orders, it is probably more accurate to talk about their occurrence in specific times and places than across regions and traditions.

As illustrated in Appendix 2.4, the largest absolute number of documents that refer to at least one minor order is found in the eastern region, while the greatest diversity of orders is found within Africa. There is only one corpus of texts, that of Cyprian of Carthage, which suggests a wide range of orders in a single place at one time, while the relationship between specific orders such as the Subdeacon and Doorkeeper occurs in multiple texts from more than one region.

The only orders which can with moderate certainty be said to have been present across most of the Roman Empire in some form, are the orders of Virgin and Widow. The exact form of these orders varied and as will be discussed in chapter 4 the designation Widow was complex as it covered a wide range of women, not all of whom needed the support of the church. While there seemed to be a relatively universal understanding of what it meant to be a celibate within the church, this was linked with the developing monastic tradition, although not exclusively.

3.b.δ Changing positions of authority

The relative positions of Minor Orders seem to have been stable. The exception is the order of the Reader, which changed relative position within the church as ecclesiology and practice developed. As discussed at length by Gamble, the Reader was vital in the first and second centuries due to the relative rarity of literacy.[92] The importance of literacy did not decrease;

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[92] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 9-10.

there was, however, a gradual evolution in practice within the Church regarding the clergy. Meaning that it became expected for clergy of all ranks to be literate, rendering the Reader's job less important.[93] This is illustrated by the importance Cyprian of Carthage gives to Readers, which includes the reading of the Gospel, a task that in the fifth-century was reserved for the Presbyters and Deacons.[94] This change represents a considerable decrease in status from the Church Orders, which declare that Readers need a level of virtue comparable to that of the Deacon and are entitled to similar remuneration.[95]

3.c Deacons and Minor Orders

The relationship between Deacons and Minor Orders is an area overlooked by Deacon scholars, but it is as significant to the understanding of early ecclesiology as the relationship between Bishops and Presbyters. As proposed in the aim, the role of the Deacon can be understood through the roles of their assistants and likewise, the understanding of the roles of the assistants is only evident in their relationship to the role and theology of the Deacon. The relationships between individual orders and the Deacon illustrate as much the function and position of a Deacon as the other orders mentioned and potentially widen the understanding of what it meant to be a Deacon. As Pylvänäinen mentions in her conclusion, "the tasks of the female Deacon cannot be understood separately from the other people in the congregation."[96] This understanding is as true for the wider diaconate as it is for one specific aspect thereof, as will be illustrated in this section. This section begins to address the relationship between the deacon and the wider church in the context of the relationship between Deacons and their assistants through their shared functions. Key to this is the interpretation of διακον- words as words of agency and mediation rather than of purely humble service, as discussed in the implications section of this chapter.

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[93] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 9-10, 222.

[94] Cyprian, *Letter,* 39.4.2; Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 223.

[95] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 222-3.

[96] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 247.

3.c.α Deacon and Subdeacon

The relationship between the Deacon and the Subdeacon is comparatively easy to assert from the sources examined in Appendix 2. The most detailed description of this relationship comes in the *Apostolic Tradition,* which states, "A hand is not laid on the subdeacon; rather he is named so that he might go after the deacon."[97] The *Didascalia* also indicates a relationship in that Bishops are to appoint Deacons and Subdeacons according to the church's needs.[98] The *Apostolic Constitutions,* alongside the forms of ordination, states that Subdeacons are ministers to the Deacon.[99] Alongside the evidence in the sources, Davies mentions this relationship in his exploration of Deacons and Minor Orders.[100] There is, however, little recognition of the regional differences in the development and use of these orders given in any scholarship except those with clearly defined geographic limits.

The canonical records of the Subdeacon's relationship with the Deacon are limited within the era of this study, with the only mention being in the canons of the synod of Laodicea. Canon 20 places the Subdeacon under the charge of the Deacon and canon 22 forbids the Subdeacon from vesting like the Deacon. These show that in Asia Minor, the relationship between the orders was clearly understood and that the Deacon was the senior order, hence the need to limit the Subdeacon's activities. The canons do not set out the tasks the Subdeacons are to do, they only forbid certain activities.

The other evidence for this relationship comes in letters from various Bishops. Cornelius of Rome lists seven Deacons before seven Subdeacons.[101] This clear ordering indicates that the Deacon was senior to the Subdeacon, and implies that the seniority of all the orders listed relates to their position on the list. Pseudo-Ignatius greets Deacons and Subdeacons in the same way at the end of his letter to the Antiochians.[102] Leo the Great insists on Subdeacons

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[97] AT, 13.

[98] DA, ch9.

[99] AC, 7.3.

[100] Davies, J. G. "Deacons, Deaconesses," 7-8.

[101] Eusebius EH, 6.63.

[102] Ignatius, *To the Antiochians,* Ch7.

being celibate in the way the Major Orders are, indicating that he regarded the role of the Subdeacons as closely linked with the Major Orders, unlike roles such as the Reader.[103]

These sources, though limited, suggest that the Subdeacon had a role closely related to that of the Deacon. The exact nature of this relationship is not clear from sources before 451CE. However, the canons mentioned in preceding chapters that limit the activities of the Subdeacon suggest that the line between the two roles was not defined in all circumstances. This ambiguity parallels the overlap between Subdeacons and Acolytes, or Subdeacons and Doorkeepers discussed in the previous section. It is noticeable that in sources which discuss the woman Deacon, like the *Didascalia* and its derivative, the *Apostolic Constitutions,* the Subdeacon, if mentioned, is always in relation to the male Deacon, this reflecting the scarcity of information on the woman Deacon.[104] This lack of direct evidence for the woman Deacon could also be the result of the writers not repeating information that is implied by the masculine plural and only specifying activities for one gender of Deacon where they differed. The clearest understanding of the relationship between Deacons and Subdeacons seems to come from Rome and Carthage, as they developed early there. The mentions of Subdeacons appear something of an afterthought in other regions where the mentions are considerably more fragmentary than in Rome or Carthage. This may relate to the existence of the Subdeacons being contingent on a community large enough to support them in addition to other orders.

3.c.β Women Deacons and celibates

The relationship between women Deacons and female celibates is difficult to trace as there are very few sources where they are mentioned together. The picture will not be complicated with monastic texts as these are not directly comparable to celibates in the wider community. While there is an overlap between the practices in monastic communities and the wider church, these two are not synonymous, especially before 451 CE. The point of this section is

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[103] Leo the Great, *Letter,* 14

[104] The nature of this relationship and how it affected the functions of the deacon is explored by Pylvänäinen in *Agents in Liturgy,* 121-54.

to examine the relationship between women Deacons and celibates, both Virgins and Widows, within dioceses, rather than in monastic communities.

Few sources directly talk about Deacons and groups of celibate women in the form of Virgins and Widows. One of the most notable is a letter by Basil the Great, where a Deacon who has led a group of Virgins astray is mentioned in the process of Basil asking his brother Bishop to send the Virgins back.[105] This letter's content suggests a relationship between the Deacon and the Virgins before the incident mentioned in the letter. The letters of Pseudo-Ignatius mention women Deacons followed by Virgins,[106] which could indicate some form of relationship, but it is unclear.

The clearest evidence comes from the *Life of St John Chrysostom* by Palladius, where mention is made of the Deacon Olympias.[107] These few lines are some of the most important for understanding the role of the woman Deacon in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries. Palladius, talking about Olympias, makes a passing reference to her support of other ascetics, including Virgins.[108] John Chrysostom further links Olympias with Virgins in his letters to her.[109] The other mention of the interaction between Deacons and celibate women comes in the *Apostolic Constitutions,* where the Deacons are to seat the Virgins and Widows away from other women.[110] There is a similar reference to Deacons organising the people in the church in the *Didascalia*; this passage does not explicitly mention Virgins or Widows but instead gives more generic instructions about all congregation members.[111] These scattered and limited mentions are all from the Eastern region and linked with the Syrian and Antiochian traditions. This scarcity of evidence reflects where the records of the woman Deacon are found rather than anything else.

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[105] Basil, *Letter* 169.

[106] Pseudo-Ignatius, T*o the Antiochians* Ch 12.

[107] While this text of Palladius is not without controversy, it is not the only evidence for the deacon Olympias and reflects the wider contextual understanding of the role even if it is not a completely reliable witness to given events.

[108] Palladius, *Dialogue Concerning the Life of Chrysostom*, The Life of Olympias, Olympias' Charities.

[109] John Chrysostom, *Letters to Saint Olympia*, Letter 8. 6.C`, 7.A.

[110] AC, 2.57.14.

[111] DA, ch12.

The evidence for a clear relationship between women Deacons and female celibates is found in the texts relating to the ordination of women Deacons, which state they should be drawn from the ranks of Virgins, or if not, from Widows.[112] The scarcity of sources before the mid-fifth-century means it is impossible to accurately say what happened or identify the extent of intra-regional variation. While a relationship and distinctions between the woman Deacon and either Virgins or Widows, can be observed, there are also similarities and connections between the Orders.[113] The only clear aspect is that the relationship between women Deacons and celibates only occurred where both were present, so predominantly in the Eastern regions of the Roman Empire.

The limited evidence indicates that the key relationship between women Deacons and female celibates, whether Virgins or Widows, was that these two categories were a preferred source of candidates for selection to ordination as Deacons. The only other relationships we can see are practical within liturgical contexts or spiritual guidance. These relationships fit within the described role of the woman Deacon within the Church Orders in the pastoral and liturgical care of women in the community. The principal distinguishing part of the relationship between Deacons and Virgins or Widows seems to have been that the woman Deacon was drawn from these categories.

3.c.γ Minor Orders as functions of the Deacon

The varying descriptions of the order of the Deacon, which are found in Late Antique texts, overlap with the descriptions of Minor Orders found in other texts. This is because the Minor Orders probably developed from the Deacon's role, as argued by Gamble.[114] Davies also discusses this relationship, seeing the Subdeacon, Acolyte and Doorkeeper as direct derivatives of the Deacon, while Exorcists and Readers developed independently and were then placed under the control of the Deacon.[115] Various key areas illustrate this overlapping

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[112] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 140.

[113] FitzGerald, *Women Deacons,* 18-19.

[114] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 222.

[115] Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses," 14-5.

relationship between Deacons and the Minor Orders and how it evolved. This overlap and shared functionality are key reasons why the order of the Deacon and their assistants cannot be fully understood apart from each other, as a variety of orders make up the diaconate in its varied forms, which cannot be understood as one simple function. While this section provides an overview of the functions assigned to both Deacons and various other clergy, this is only indicative as there was significant regional variation in the occurrences of orders. How specific roles gained their functions and were separated from an existing order or integrated under another is complex and likely varied between regions. This area needs more research, and this section sets out only what seems to be the overarching principles to facilitate further research and exploration of this area of the diaconate and Minor Orders ecclesiology.

3.c.γ.1 Reading

The task of reading sacred texts developed separately from the other roles in the church,[116] relating to the ability to read rather than any other function. The prevalence of literacy and the literate culture in the early church is discussed further in chapter 5. The importance of reading is seen in how the task is assigned to the Reader by Cyprian of Carthage.[117] This had changed by the fourth-century when the Deacons and Presbyters had assumed the privilege of reading the Gospels and subordinated the Reader to the Deacon, an example of which is seen in the *Apostolic Constitutions*.[118] This suggests that as the church organised and a greater proportion of clergy were literate, literacy became a selection criterion for admittance to orders, subsequently resulting in the reduction of the importance of the role of the Reader.

3.c.γ.2 Keeping order

The aspect of the Deacon's role which involved keeping order is clearly expressed in the *Didascalia*, which instructs;

> And if anyone be found sitting in a place which is not his, the deacon within should warn him and make him stand up and seat him in the place which is his own… And

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[116] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 222.

[117] Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter,* 38.2.1-2, 39.4.1-3, 5.2.

[118] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 223; AC, 2.7.

the deacon should observe that each who enters goes to their proper place, and that nobody is sitting in the wrong place. And the deacon should also observe that nobody is whispering or going to sleep or laughing or gesticulating.[119]

This quote illustrates the Deacon's function in keeping order. The instructions in chapter 16 of the *Didascalia* make it probable that the woman Deacon performed a parallel function to her male counterpart in the congregation. In this chapter, the Bishop is instructed to "choose and appoint Deacons from all the people who are pleasing to you, a man for the administration of the many things which are necessary, a woman however for the ministry of women."[120] The functions a woman Deacon is needed for are then spelt out, including instructing newly baptised women in proper behaviour. The chapter then discusses the character type of the Deacons and reasserts that "a woman should be devoted to ministry among female and a male Deacon to the ministry of men. He should be ready and willing to serve and minister at the command of the bishop."[121] The switch from referring to the two genders separately to male pronouns does not exclude the woman Deacon from the duty to serve the Bishop as in Greek, nouns and pronouns tend to be grammatically masculine when referring to both genders.[122] This passage on order keeping in the *Didascalia* is paralleled in the *Apostolic Constitutions* as an almost exact quotation, reflecting the continuity of tradition in the Syrian/Antiochian region.[123]

The link between the Deacon and Subdeacon already examined would suggest that the Subdeacon would have assisted the Deacon in these duties. However, there is no direct evidence for this before 451CE apart from that relating to door keeping. The close association of the two orders means it is probable that when a Subdeacon acted on a Deacon's behalf, he was obeyed just as when a Deacon acted on behalf of a Bishop.

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[119] Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia* 175-6.

[120] DA, ch16.

[121] DA, ch16.

[122] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 124.

[123] AC, 2.57.

3.c.γ.3 Door keeping

The role of door keeping is difficult and complex to trace as it is not routinely assigned to one group of people but instead seems to be a task performed by different people in different contexts. The practical function of guarding or keeping the doors of a house where early Christian gatherings took place occurs within Christian writings as early as the book of Acts.[124] While church communities predominately met in houses, the function of door keeping is likely to have been provided for by the householder in the same way as at other social gatherings. Even in the use of hired halls, it is likely that the patron who provided for the hire would have seen to the practical needs utilizing members of their household. This means it is difficult to trace any formal function of guarding the doors before the third-century and the earliest records assign the function to the Deacon or the Subdeacon depending on context.

The function of door keeping is most clearly found in the Antiochean Church Orders of the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. The *Didascalia* assigns door keeping to the Deacon, "But of the deacons let one stand always by the oblations of the Eucharist; and let another stand without by the door and observe them that come in."[125] This indicates that at least in this community in the third-century, the role of door keeping was a Deacon's task, possibly assisted by the Subdeacon.[126] As this is the only mention of a Subdeacon in the *Didascalia,* Stewart-Sykes suggests that it is likely to be an early addition to the text, a suggestion which is in keeping with a living text being amended as practices change.[127] This task of keeping the doors is given to the Doorkeepers and women Deacons in the *Apostolic Constitutions*.[128] Pylvänäinen uses this passage to point out the disparities between the tasks assigned to male and female Deacons in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. She recognises, however, that those called Doorkeepers may have been Deacons assigned a specific task based on other parts of the same passage.[129] The pairing of Subdeacons with women Deacons

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[124] Acts 12.13-16.

[125] DA, ch12.

[126] DA, ch9.

[127] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum: An English Version* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 157n44.

[128] AC, 2,57,10.

[129] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 183-4, 188(n107).

in book eight of the *Apostolic Constitutions* probably reflects the composite nature of the text and the fact that there was not one unified way of doing door keeping.

The *Testamentum Domini* describes the Deacon's functions in a way analogous to those given to the Doorkeeper in other texts. The *Testamentum Domini* describes that the Deacon should examine every person who comes to the services to separate the faithful from the unfaithful and prevent those who are late from joining the congregation.[130] There is also a reference to the women Deacons staying near the Holy Gates, which may parallel the instructions in the *Apostolic Constitutions,* but the mention is so brief it is difficult to tell.[131] The close association of door keeping with the Deacon or an assistant to the Deacon suggests that within the Church Orders, the function of door keeping is linked to the Deacon's role in keeping order, either directly or through a delegate.

The Synod of Laodicea, in assigning the Doorkeeper's duties to the Subdeacon provides one of the clearest pieces of evidence for the role.[132] This is the clearest evidence of the Subdeacon performing the Doorkeeper's role in the Eastern region of the empire; however, there is also evidence from Africa of the use of Subdeacons in this way.[133] Despite the clear assigning of the role, the exact functions of the Doorkeeper are unclear as the task is not described in the sources. Probably, those who kept the doors, whether a Deacon, Subdeacon or Doorkeeper, were responsible for separating the faithful from those not in communion with the church and seeing that different categories of people went to their assigned places in the church. This certainly seems to be the function assigned to Deacons or their helpers when they performed this role within the Church Orders. While the exact function of the Doorkeeper is unclear, it seems to be explicitly linked with the Deacon's task to keep order.

The separate role of Doorkeepers is poorly recorded before 451CE, with either the Deacon or Subdeacon performing this role. As discussed in the relationships between Minor Orders, the

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[130] TD, 36.

[131] TD, 19.

[132] Synod of Laodicea, *canons*, 22,43.

[133] Ward, *Sayings of the Fathers*, 105, Abba John of the Cells, *Saying* 1.

Doorkeeper as a role began to develop where there were insufficient Subdeacons for the task. The first record of Doorkeepers was in Rome,[134] where the numbers of Deacons and Subdeacons were limited by custom and canon. Although there are clear indications that the Deacon was responsible for guarding the doors or seeing the task was performed, the role was probably delegated to Subdeacons or Doorkeepers in larger parishes. The need for assistants depended on the number of Deacons and how the tasks were assigned, which varied significantly between local practices. The need for Doorkeepers may also reflect the move to meeting in basilica churches and larger spaces rather than the house churches as congregations grew and more space was needed. This change of location would have made it more difficult for the Deacon to oversee all activities and necessitated the creation of assistants with specialised roles. The woman Deacon, having fewer liturgical duties, was able to guard the door herself, although this does not mean that she did so without other women assisting her. In most cases where the community had Deacons of both genders due to the cultural separation of the genders in public, as described in the *Apostolic Constitutions,* the women Deacons would have guarded the doors for women while the male Deacon or his assistant did so for the men's doors.[135]

3.c.γ.4 Exorcism

Although the role and function of Exorcists are not widely reported in direct relation to a specific order, there is a clear relationship between it and the office of the Deacon. Some Deacons are described as Exorcists in the primary sources, indicating a link between the orders; other sources, such as the letters of Cyprian, mention Exorcists as an independent order.[136] Exorcism was a distinct part of the catechumenate and an aspect of the rite of initiation, with some larger churches retaining a specific member of the clergy to assist in the regular exorcism of catechumens.[137] Firmilian's letter to Cyprian also indicates that the role of the Exorcist had a specific function in aiding the other clergy in looking after those who were perceived to have demons.[138] Davies explores the function of the Exorcist as a specific

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[134] Cornelius of Rome, *Letter,* to Flavian of Antioch.

[135] AC, 2,57,10.

[136] Cyprian *Letter*, 23.

[137] Cyril, *Protocatechesis*, 14.

[138] Firmilian *Letter to Cyprian,* 10.

Minor Order attested to across the third and fourth-century Imperial Church.[139] He notes it is hard to trace the separate order of the Exorcist before this, as the function is recorded chiefly as one performed by a Bishop; although, in theory, this was an ability inherent to all baptised Christians. The lack of detailed records of the role outside of lists of clergy or Cyprian's letters makes the order hard to define.[140] Davies suggests that the order of the Exorcist was developed to assist the Bishops and Deacons with the care of a specific group of the sick considered to be possessed and while initially not a derivative of the Deacon, they are later made subordinate to the Deacon.[141]

3.c.δ Summary

This section shows a practical link between the Deacon and the majority of Minor Orders. The most apparent relationship is between Deacon and Subdeacon as set out in the sources, although a relationship between Subdeacons and other orders can also be identified. The relationship between the Deacon and the Reader is complex due to how the role of the Reader developed and was made subordinate to that of the Deacon - the strict canonical limits placed on Readers in the fourth-century and beyond chart this change. The link is such that it is possible to describe the Minor Orders as exhibiting facets of the Deacon's role, with each Minor Order representing one specific aspect while the Deacon represents the whole of which they are part. Karras recognises this relationship between the Deacon and the Minor Orders while examining if the woman Deacon were part of the Major Orders, including recognising the liminal position of a Deacon who seems to inhabit the world of the Major Orders and that of the laity simultaneously.[142] This way of expressing Minor Orders is part of the overarching role of the Deacon's work within the wider definition of Diakonia envisioned by Collins.[143] The result of this is that it is probably more accurate to talk of the greater diakonate, which included the Deacons and all the orders who assisted them, than talking about Deacons and Minor Orders. This approach and its repercussions will be discussed in the implications section of this chapter.

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[139] Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses,"8.

[140] Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses," 8-9, Cyprian *Letter* 23.

[141] Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses," 9-10, 14.

[142] Karras, "Female Deacons," 291.

[143] Collins, "Monocultural Usage: διακον-," 295-6.

3.d Implications

The implications of the areas discussed in this chapter are significant. Firstly, if the Minor Orders are considered as demonstrating aspects of the Deacon's function, the impact on the understanding of the Deacon's role is profound. This is because by re-examining the Minor Orders, presence, status and activity, the diversity of practice and the reach of diaconal activity has been highlighted. This means it is necessary to re-examine the position of the Deacon within the church and how words relating to the Deacon are interpreted and translated. Such a re-evaluation necessitates re-examining the relationship between the Deacon and Bishop as the orders are interdependent.[144] The increasing understanding of diversity within the role of the Deacon also necessitates an acceptance that the presence of both genders would be required in societies where there was strict gender separation (as discussed in chapter 4), which would probably include Minor Orders with members of both genders. The tendency linguistically in Greek to use the masculine noun to represent the whole order means that it is difficult to recognise the presence of women unless they are specifically mentioned.

3.d.α Status of Deacons

The status and position of the Deacon and the roles dependent upon the Deacon are the focus of sustained research and debate, as shown in the literature review. These discussions focus on the translation of the διακον- words; this is a complex area of scholarship with significantly entrenched positions. This chapter has illustrated that the roles of the Deacon and the Minor Orders are intrinsically linked within the concept and function of Diakonia, so the Deacon's status directly impacts their assistants' status.

The primary evidence for the role of the Deacon and how Deacons interacted with the Minor Orders in this period is limited and sketchy, as discussed earlier in this chapter. What can be suggested from the evidence is that the Deacon inhabited the complex position within the

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[144] In Late Antiquity the relationship between Bishop and Deacon was the key relationship, as the Presbyter had less liturgical importance than in later centuries.

church and wider Roman society of both being a client (of the Bishop) and the patron of others (specifically the Minor Orders). This form of brokered client relationship with the middleman, who is simultaneously both a client and patron, is discussed by Esler.[145] An example could be a moderately wealthy person who was the client of a higher-status patron while also having clients of their own from among the poor. As the relationship between patron and client was reciprocal, there were situations in which the patron would authorise a client to perform an act on their behalf, especially if it required a difficult or dangerous journey. In addition to sending clients to represent them, the wealthy could send trusted household members to act on their behalf in transactions or govern far-flung parts of their estates. This means that the Deacon acting on behalf of their Bishop would have seamlessly blended into the existing social structures.

The liturgical functions of a Deacon demonstrate the complex role of an obedient yet potentially independent actor, illustrating their wider role. Within Late Antique liturgies, the Deacon is seen acting with the Bishop but also independently of him to facilitate his role. The liturgical functions can be described as liminal, a concept that is not regularly used in exploring the Deacon but has been applied to exploring the Deacon in the *Didascalia*.[146] The ecclesiological function of a Deacon is the same, constantly referring to the Bishop but capable of sustained independent action to perform delegated tasks. The Deacon was a servant, messenger, agent and attendant, with different aspects of this complex role visible in different situations; Pylvänäinen explored these aspects of the Deacon in the context of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.[147] These complexities also mean that the status interpretation is difficult as it is in any situation where a person is both a client and a patron.

The liturgical and theological images suggested work with a multiplicity of people, including multiple Deacons and the Minor Orders. The prayers quoted above mention the diaconate rather than a Deacon in most cases, with the theology intertwined with liturgy in Church

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[145] Esler, "The Mediterranean Context," 18-19.

[146] Kearns, "The Liminal Nature,".

[147] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy*, 155-240.

Orders such as the *Didascalia* and later liturgical texts.[148] The strong link between the diaconate and the priesthood, found in some writers whom Wijngards accuses of systematic bias, does not stand up to the investigation of historical sources.[149] The Deacons seem to have a close working relationship with the Bishop and shared functions with their assistants, the members of the Minor Orders. Vatican II recognises the special nature of the diaconate and its importance, but this recognition is not seen in most renderings of the theology of the Deacon.[150] As discussed, this thesis deals with the diaconate in the broadest terms, linking the specific duties of the Deacon with the orders who assisted them, roles which were practically different to those of the Bishop whom they served but theologically closely linked. This interdependent relationship is vital for understanding the diaconate in context and their distinctive service in the church; a service which was not part of the sacramental priesthood in Late Antiquity as it was the prerogative of the Bishop to preside at the Eucharist.

3.d.α.1 διακον- words

The interpretation of the status and function of the Deacon is complex, but a crucial part of the understanding presented revolves around the interpretation of the διακον- family of words. How this family of words is contextualised and interpreted underpins how the Deacon's ministry is approached and described. The most significant contribution in the field is that of Collins, who explores the contextual use of διακον- words in Greek which influence his and others' writings on the development of the order of the Deacon.[151] This contextualised understanding which identifies the διακον- family of words as having a core meaning of agency (acting as an agent of the Bishop), is the dominant conclusion of Collins' work and stands in contrast to the twentieth-century consensus, which emphasises humble service.[152] The identification by Collins of διακον- as mediation and agency words is

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[148] DA, ch9.

[149] Wijngaards, *Ordained Women*, 144.

[150] Paul VI, "Lumen Gentium," www.vatican.va, November 24, 1964, https://w2.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. par 29.

[151] Collins, *Diakonia Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources.*

[152] Collins, "A Monocultural Usage," 295-6, Collins, *Dismantling the Servent Paradigm*, 72-3.

supported by the work of Hentschel.[153] The two contrasting interpretations stand at the centre of the contested understanding of the Deacon seen in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries.[154] The influence of this debate is significant as it underpins the interpretation of ecclesiology used within this thesis and the proposed theology of the Minor Orders discussed earlier in this chapter.

As explored above, the Deacon was a client of the Bishop and performed client duties in a culturally unremarkable way. This culturally based approach provides an alternative way to understand the διακον- words which synthesise the two existing meanings of servanthood and agency while also expanding upon them. In most contexts, the διακον- words can refer to a position of service in the form of agency or attendance rather than servile service. The deacon's position was not subservient but was often a senior position with considerable autonomy while being responsible to the Bishop/patron/master. The Deacon's role in the church is best compared to a client acting on behalf of his patron with a reasonable amount of autonomy. This understanding would also parallel the father-son relationship where an adult son could act on behalf of his father, an image implied by the *Didascalia* chapter 9. The διακον-words debate should not be an either-or between servanthood and agency, but rather a both/and approach respecting the complexities of the lived situation, where a Deacon was both a liturgical assistant and servant but could also act as an agent and messenger for the Bishop with relative autonomy. This conclusion corresponds with Collins' understanding which is that διακον- words convey a meaning which covers message, agency and attendance for human or divine entities.[155]

3.d.α.2 Woman Deacon or Deaconess

The second aspect of this discussion concerns the status of the woman Deacon and whether references should be translated as woman Deacon or Deaconess. The existence from the mid-fourth-century of two distinct words in Greek, which in some contexts are used

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[153] Koet, Murphy, Ryökäs, *Deacons and Diakonia*, 10-11; Anni Hentschel, "Paul's Apostleship and the Concepts of Διακονία in 2 Corinthians," in *Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity*, ed. Bart J. Koet, Edwina Murphy, and Esko Ryökäs, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 103-115.

[154] Collins, "A Monocultural Usage," 295-6.

[155] Collins, *Dismantling the Servant Paradigm*, 80.

interchangeably and in others with distinct meanings, complicates the situation. This section will first address the two forms of διακον- words which occur and their translation, then mention the history of the use of the words within Greek as this is important in understanding their translation and contextual interpretation. Then deal with the challenges relating to specific meanings connected to Deacon words in English.

The first relevant occurrences of διακον- words in the feminine form occur in the letter to the Romans, "Φοίβην τήν ἀδελφήν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς, (Phoebe the sister of us who is Deacon of the church in Cenchrea)."[156] In this instance, the second declension διάκονον is feminine due to the context of the feminine noun Φοίβην, which dictates the gender of the sentence. As Mowczko points out, διακον- words form in a common gender, meaning that it is always the second declension whatever the gender implied by the context.[157] The result is that when a διακον- word is paired with a female name or female participle or the word women in Greek, it should be translated with both the name of the person in question and the title Deacon (i.e. Phoebe the Deacon), Deacon then the name (i.e. Deacon Phoebe) or woman Deacon. The English word Deaconess is more appropriately linked with the Greek διακόνισσα, a word which first occurs in the canons of the council of Nicaea, making all translations of a διακον- a word associated with a woman before this point anachronistic and reading later distinctions into texts which did not exist.[158]

The first occurrence of διακόνισσα is found in canon 19 of the first ecumenical council, where it is used about women who served in the heretical sect of the Paulicians, who are described as "Deaconesses" of that community.[159] The mentioning of the word διακόνισσα here is to illustrate the first usage rather than to debate the status of women mentioned in this canon and the relationship of this to the status of ordained women in other circumstances. After introducing this first declension format of the Deacon words, there was mixed usage with the first and second declension forms used interchangeably in many texts. Pylvänäinen

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[156] Romans 16:1 (own translation).

[157] Margaret Mowczko "What did Phoebe's Position and Ministry as Διάκονος of the church at Cenchrea Involve?," in *Deacons and Diakonia in Early Christianity*, ed. Bart J. Koet, Edwina Murphy, and Esko Ryökäs, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 91-102, at 97.

[158] A point also made by Mowczko "Phoebe's Position," 97-8.

[159] Nicaea *Canon,* 19.

explores an example of this complex usage in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, where the second declension form occurs 11 times and the first declension 5 times.[160] The exact interpretation of any given usage is contextual, as Pylvänäinen discusses at length.[161]

While the Greek is complex and the reading of texts is affected by the more modern practice of giving the courtesy title of διακόνισσα (diakonissa) to the wife of a Deacon in Greek language churches, this is a different problem from the way διακον- words are translated into English. The technical aspects were discussed in the preceding section, but there is also a specific translational issue related to the feminine occurrences of these words due to distinct divergent meanings between Deacon and Deaconess in English. The title Deacon is associated with a recognised ecclesiastical rank, the word having migrated to English via Latin from Greek, being recorded identifiably as early as 900CE, with various related caveats to specific uses of the word.[162] The word Deaconess in English is comparatively newer, with the first identifiable use of the word in 1536CE; both primary forms of the meaning are functions parallel to a Deacon's role for women and assisting the Deacon in the care of women.[163] The definition given in the OED provides a clear distinction which is not present in the Greek during Antiquity even after the development of the first declension meaning, and therefore the most accurate translation of either διακόνισσα or ἡ διάκονος in antiquity is woman Deacon. While Deacon is a possible translation, this is not always an accurate reflection of the text since the Greek sometimes makes it specifically clear that the female gender is involved if a female noun or pronoun is used, yet since English does not use gendered words or definite articles more explicit defining of gender is required.

3.d.β Summary

The implications for understanding the church based on re-evaluating the Deacon are significant, as it challenges many assumptions on how status was understood within the Church community. Contextualising texts is particularly important within this as the

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[160] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 122-3.

[161] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 123-53.

[162] "Deacon, N.1," in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, March 2022), https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/47603?rskey=nXCt5t&result=1.

[163] "Deaconess, N.," in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., March 2022), https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/47607?redirectedFrom=deaconess.

exploration of διακον- words debate shows since through cultural contextualisation, it became possible to see a solution which made use of both potential understandings of the words as appropriate to the specific context of the occurrence. Contextualisation is also key for understanding the feminine forms of the word and their associated meanings, which contain considerably less difference in antiquity than is given to their equivalents in modern English, where there is a noticeable technical difference in meaning.

3.e Conclusions

The Late Antique ecclesiology of the diaconate and the Minor Orders is anything but straightforward. Within the context of ecclesiology, this chapter explored the relationship between individual Minor Orders, the Minor Orders and the Deacon, and posited some reflections on the nature of these relationships. The chapter also explored what this illustrates about Late Antique ecclesiology and its relationship with existing scholarship.

This chapter has established what can be asserted from the sources regarding the relationships between the Minor Orders. These relationships are challenging to identify and describe due to the minimal information from scarce sources; however, four key relationships were identified. The identified relationships indicate a clear organisational hierarchy developing around liturgical function. This hierarchy recognises the distinctiveness of those who consecrate, serve and receive, roughly equating to Bishops, Deacons and laity. The relationships between Minor Orders were also noticeably dependent on the functions of the Deacon from which most were derived. This interdependence of the Deacon with the Minor Orders was the principle behind the posited description of Minor Orders as aspects of the Deaconate. This relationship description fits the evidence and significantly broadens the understanding of the word Diakonia to encompass all who assist the Bishop in services.

Late Antique Ecclesiology is as complex a situation as dealing with the specific ecclesiology of the wider diaconate. This chapter describes what can be drawn from the documents examined in this thesis within a cultural context. The focus here was the interdependence of ecclesiology and liturgy, which also relies on theology. This triple interdependence is present

in contemporary sources but is not mentioned in recent scholarship as it challenges neat category boundaries.

4 Women in the Church

The subject of women in the church is a highly charged and controversial topic, with the key arguments often occurring within the study of ecclesiology. FitzGerald points out that although the Eastern Roman Empire was a highly organised and androcentric society, the church did recognise the inherent value in women as is expressed in the ordination prayers of the woman Deacon.[1] The controversy and charged polemic around the study of women in the church developed from the study of minority histories and a need to prove dogmatic standpoints concerning current practice. This polemical approach has resulted in some advances and a considerable volume of poor-quality historical scholarship and emotional exchanges.[2] These debates are not new since, as Cloke points out, the debate around the position of women within the Church was contentious during Late Antiquity, meaning the current debates are an extension of this ongoing negotiation of the place of women in the church.[3]

This chapter, as well as facing the difficulties present within church history, is also affected by the challenge which impacts all research into the history of women, namely that "evidence has had centuries to be lost, misfiled, unindexed, rewritten, suppressed."[4] Castelli calls the search for women in the church a herculean effort listing the many challenges faced by the historian.[5] These challenges are compounded further in the investigation of Minor Orders whose history has suffered a similar fate to women's history. In addition to the debates around the position of women within the church, there is also the ongoing debate about sex and gender as biological occurrences or social constructs.[6] While the socially constructed nature of the relationship between genders is explored in this chapter, the fundamental nature

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[1] FitzGerald, "Eucharistic and Eschatological Foundation," 138.

[2] This is illustrated by the rhetoric shown within writing on the subject in both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions examined within the Literature review.

[3] Gillian Cloke, "Women, Worship and Mission the Church in the Household' Renunciation," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 422-451, at 422-24.

[4] Elizabeth Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2, no. 1 (1986): 61–88, at 62.

[5] Casstelli, "Virginity and its Meaning" 62.

[6] Teresa M. Shaw, "Sex and sexual renunciation," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 401-421, at 402.

of this difference found within the source texts is followed as to do otherwise is imposing later philosophical concepts onto the texts.

This chapter will examine the position of women in the church and how it relates to Minor Orders, recognising that gender-defined roles are a social construct, meaning that the wider societal context of women is as important as the specific historical references to women in the church for building understanding. This will be done by providing a summary of the role of women as leaders in the church and how this reflected the way women exercised leadership in wider Late Antique society both directly and as the power behind the scenes, including recognising the role of social status in several interactions. The types of celibacy found within the Church are also surveyed in this chapter, although it is difficult to distinguish different expressions of the practice into clear categories. Finally, this chapter highlights specific regional variations concerning women's function and position in the Church and focuses on menstruation, public speaking and the recognition of women clergy. These observations will then be applied to understanding Minor Orders drawn from the evidence surveyed in Appendix 2. In this way, the chapter provides a new understanding of the presence of women within these specific aspects of church life beyond the specific discussions of the ordination of women as Deacons or only as lay members of the church.

4.a Women in leadership

The position of Late Antique women has been of increasing interest to historians over the last thirty or so years with the move towards minority histories.[7] The existing studies tend to focus on discrete areas of life. These studies provide a general understanding of the position of women in society, which was parallel to their position in the Church. The understanding seems to have been that the women's place was predominantly in the home and related to home-based rather than overtly public activities.[8] The expression of this division of

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[7] Important writers for this study include, Hemelrijk, Malina, Winter along with Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch.

[8] Emily Ann Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives, Public Personae: Women and Civic Life in the Roman West,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11.

household and public spheres of activity was mediated by cultural contexts, which varied significantly between different regions of the empire.

4.a.α Women in Late Antique society

The social position of a freeborn woman related directly to that of her male kin, as she took her position from her father or husband.[9] While a woman's position depended on her male relatives, a woman could still have significant influence over her children and other household members of both genders and clients.[10] The woman's position depended on that of her father, husband and finally son in widowhood, with the concept of an unattached woman as a Virgin or divorcee being an abrogation of social order,[11] while society was highly gendered, this meant that all women were subordinate to male kin but allowed to act in a way perceived as male when defending the family honour. The social class of the family was also important as a "female of a higher ranking kin group is worth more than all the males of the ranks below her!"[12] As a result of these expectations, under Roman Law and custom, women could not hold political power or pass laws directly but could wield power through their influence and patronage of men, including relatives in political positions.[13] This influence could take many forms, from sponsoring candidates for political positions, including the new emperor and funding civic projects to providing expectations for other Roman women on behaviour and as tools for propaganda.[14]

Women of Senatorial or Equestrian rank could wield influence in proportion to their wealth and prestige through patronage within their social circles, alongside the influence within the family.[15] Women of wealth and social status exercised their influence on the political stage through their husbands, sons, other relatives and clients, and complex webs of patronage. The

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[9] Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives,* 13.

[10] Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives,* 228.

[11] Malina, "Social levels, morals," 391.

[12] Malina, "Social levels, morals," 391.

[13] Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives,* 228.

[14] Jill Harries, "Armies, Emperors and Bureaucrats," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 26-52, at 48; Winter, *Roman Wives,* 181.

[15] Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch, *Woman's Place,* 24-5, Carolyn Osiek, "Diakonos and Prostatis: Women's Patronage in Early Christianity," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 61, no. 1/2 (2005): 347–70, at 352-3.

webs of patronage existed across the empire and acted similarly, with slight variations relating to local customs.[16] While women had influence based on their social rank, this was always less than men of the same social rank but more than men of a lower rank.[17] This influence held by women was not without its detractors even at the time, as some men thought men should always have precedence over women.[18]

Towards the end of Late Antiquity, along with the ability to wield power through male relatives and patronage, some women found themselves serving within local administrations or providing significant donations to civic projects. According to Hemelrijk, this was due to a lack of men with sufficient wealth for full civic functions.[19] This phenomenon of women holding civic positions is more clearly attested to in the Eastern Empire, both in official local government and as patrons for clients.[20] The power of a Widow on behalf of her young son(s) must also not be underestimated, especially if these Widows were in charge of their finances and acting as legal guardians for their children in eras when this was permitted.

While there were certain commonalities in the position of women throughout the Roman Empire, it must also be recognised that there were substantial cultural differences between different regions. The most noticeable and well-known is the difference between Greek and Roman attitudes to the public presence of women at events such as dinner parties, in that within Roman culture, the presence of women was common and expected, a practice which differed from that of the Hellenistic culture from which the Roman practice had developed.[21] Osiek and MacDonald note these complexities in their exploration of the primitive church,[22]

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[16] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 181-93.

[17] Malina, "Social Levels, Morals," 391.

[18] Emily Ann Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna* (London: Routledge, 2004), 11.

[19] As is explored in, Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives,* 24-6, 182.

[20] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 181-93.

[21] Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta* 8; Winter, *Roman Wives,* 33-5.

[22] Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch, *Woman's Place,* 3.

including the potential for regionally mediated concepts of honour and shame for women, in particular, along with the regional variations discussed later in this chapter.[23]

4.a.β Christian Women

Within the church, it is difficult to assess the role of women in leadership positions, but this has been the focus of research by a few writers.[24] Various records relating to the existence of women in leadership positions are explored in Appendix 2. The authority of women fell into four principal categories: clergy in the form of the woman Deacon and the possible accounts of women Presbyters and Bishops, spouses of the clergy, women in monastic leadership positions and women patrons, especially in the form of wealthy Widows. women Deacons and senior monastics are the least controversial positions of authority and there is noticeable evidence for their roles. The influence of a spouse on a clerical husband is also noted in some historical records. The sources mentioning women as Presbyters and Bishops are more challenging to analyse and would require an independent study to fully assess. This aspect of the study, however, is heavily impacted by the western Medieval, Reformation and Counter-Reformation scholarship, which despite recent advances in the study of minorities, still provides the background for understanding Ecclesiology and the history of Ecclesiology. FitzGerald identifies this situation in her discussion of how the theology of the Eastern Tradition has been affected by the influence of Western theological trends; Macy has also identified how theological views in the West have affected the preservation and reading of historical texts.[25] This social and intellectual context of discovering neglected texts or interpretations provides the background to this study.

4.a.β.1 The Woman Deacon

The presence of the woman Deacon in at least some areas of the Late Antique Roman Empire, particularly the Eastern Empire, is undisputed.[26] However, the function and position

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[23] Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch, *Woman's Place,* 7.

[24] Notable writers in this field include FitzGerald and Wijngaards.

[25] FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 140-3; Macy, *Hidden History*, 4.

[26] demonstrated by, Wijngaards, *Ordination of Women*; idem, *Women Deacons;* FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*; Hübner. *A Case for Female Deacons*; Chryssavgis, *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia*; Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women,".

of these women are vigorously debated, due in part to the influence of entrenched denominational positions.[27] The position presented in this study follows that taken by both Greek and English language liturgists that the ordination services for Deacons of both genders were of the same type and linked with the Ordination of Bishops and Presbyters and are distinctly different from the consecration of the Minor Orders.[28] This position is based not only on the ordination texts but also on the work of FitzGerald, who looks at the structure of the prayers and concludes that both orders for ordaining Deacons follow the same pattern of two prayers of ordination and an Epiclesis, which only occur in the ordination of Major Orders.[29] The closeness of ordination practices between the two genders of Deacons is also noted by Theodorou, who states:

> It becomes obvious that during the ordination of deaconesses, all the essential elements of the ordination of the deacon are present. The deaconess is vested, like the deacon, in the diaconal *orarion* and she communes at the time of Holy Communion, like the deacon, inside the sanctuary, taking the Holy Grail from the hands of the bishop and placing it on the Altar.[30]

The explorations conducted by Theodorou, FitzGerald and Bradshaw all indicate that while not identical in words, the ordination prayers were considered canonically the same by the church in Late Antiquity and beyond.[31] The differences seem gender-related and would fit with Karras' conclusion that the way the genders are linked in the ancient texts indicates a complete parity in ordination save the cultural gender differences.[32] This parallels practice in secular society in that the woman Deacon was subordinate to men of the same rank but superior to those of a lesser rank. This arrangement would not have been unusual and would have fitted within societal expectations.

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[27] These differences are discussed in chapter 1.c.α.

[28] As is implied by the ordination texts, Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites,* 136-39, 157-60, 162 and Codex Barb.gr.336.

[29] FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 78-104.

[30] Evangelos Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women and Orthodox Theology," *Deaconesses,* Vassiliadis, Papageorgiou, and Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 37-43, at 40.

[31] The text of the prayers is explored in chapter 3.a.β.1 Ordination Prayers.

[32] Karras, "Female Deacons," 292.

Like a male Deacon, the woman Deacon's authority was drawn from her relationship with the Bishop and exercised within a specific context. The Deacon was appointed to assist and extend the Bishop's reach within the community, as indicated by Ignatius of Antioch, the *Apostolic Tradition*, and the *Didascalia*.[33] This subordination within the order of the Deacon is present in historical sources such as the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. As Pylvänäinen discusses in, *Agents in Liturgy* and 'More than Servants,' the Deacon's functions were complex and closely related to the Bishop and other clergy while also being thoroughly enculturated.[34] Women Deacons were Virgins, Widows or wives of Bishops, with some explicitly attached to monastic communities, a situation which became normative after the period of this study.[35]

The pastoral aspects of the woman Deacon's role are both noticeable and important in the life of the Late Antique church. The male Deacon would have taken a prominent role in services; however, the practical pastoral roles of the woman Deacon would have profoundly impacted the congregation's life. The woman Deacon's role was not limited to assisting in baptism as she fulfilled a range of functions to women on behalf of the Bishop, which were equivalent to the pastoral activities of the male Deacon.[36] The woman Deacon was ideally placed to minister to women, including catechumens who could not attend church or were housebound through illness or childbirth, especially those who lived in non-Christian households.[37] This duty to attend to women who could not attend church means it is reasonable to suggest that women Deacons were appropriately placed to be present at births alongside the midwife, although there is no direct evidence for this. However, concern about the death risk for new mothers and newborns is recorded along with the importance of midwives.[38] This suggestion of an ecclesiastical presence would fit with the later practice of the Western church in the Middle Ages and early modern period which licensed Midwives to administer church rites to

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[33] Ignatius, *Letter*, to the Trallians 2-3; AT, 8; DA, 16.

[34] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 247; Pauliina Pylvänäinen, "More than Serving: The Tasks of Female Deacons in the Apostolic Constitutions and the Letters to Olympias," *Phronema* 33, no. 1 (2018): 73–90.

[35] AC, 6.17; Skaltsis, "The Ordination of Deaconesses", 172; Theodorou, "Deaconesses, the Ordination of Women", 42.

[36] FitzGerald, *Women Deacons*, 22.

[37] Karras, "Female Deacons," 278.

[38] Christian Laes, "Infants between Biological and Social Birth in Antiquity: A Phenomenon of the 'Longeu Durée,'" *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 63, no. 3 (2014): 364–83, at 374-5.

a sickly infant or dying mother.[39] Additionally, due to the education received by most midwives and women physicians in the Roman world, they would have also been candidates for ordination as Deacons.[40] This is because the literacy related to being a Midwife would have made them clear candidates for Ordination since literacy was one of the defining characteristics of those chosen for ordination by the third-century.[41] This visible presence of the woman Deacon in the lives of members of the congregation meant that the male authorities of the church took pains to reinforce the subjugation of women Deacons to their male counterparts. This reiteration of position is particularly evident in the passages on baptism in the *Apostolic Constitutions,* as discussed by Pylvänäinen.[42]

4.a.β.2 Women in Minor Orders?

The evidence for women in Minor Orders is sparser than that for Deacons, except for Widows and Virgins. Other orders such as Subdeacons, Readers and Cantors are not directly mentioned in the historical record.

However, as discussed in chapter 2, one of the challenges to identifying women in Minor Orders is that Greek defaults to the masculine when referring to both genders. The only consistent exception is the order of the Widows, although Virgins are formed in the feminine in some sources. The tendency to refer to both genders in the same grammatical construction indicates parity between the orders. Karras specifically mentions this in her exploration of the woman Deacon in examining the records of ordination.[43] The evidence indicates that women in orders, if present, used the same titles as men, except for the Virgins and the Widows. The female titles are very rare in the period of this study, and it is difficult to assess when they are

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[39] Ginger L. Smoak, "Midwives as Agents of Social Control: Ecclesiastical and Municipal Regulation of Midwifery in the Late Middle Ages," *Quidditas*: Vol. 33(2012): Article 7.

[40] Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch, *Woman's Place,* 55; Soranus *Gynecology*, 1.3; Emily A. Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women in Ancient Rome," *A Companion to Ancient Education,* ed. W. Martin Bloomer, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015), 292-304, at 294.

[41] See the discussions on clerical literacy and literate women in chapter 5.

[42] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 168-9.

[43] Karras, "Female Deacons," 280.

used whether they refer to women in orders or wives even when carefully assessing the context.

If the theology of the Minor Orders posited in the previous chapter is followed, it makes sense for women to be in Minor Orders assisting the women Deacons. The scarcity of evidence makes it difficult to assert with certainty the existence of women in Minor Orders. This means that while it is impossible to contradict the conclusions of Sorci that women were not consecrated in Minor Orders, neither is it possible to support these conclusions fully.[44] The history of the women in the orders has suffered the fate of most history of women, which is to be forgotten, a situation exacerbated by the lack of interest in the Minor Orders as a whole.

4.a.β.3 Women Presbyters and Bishops?

There has been some scholarship on the presence of women Presbyters and Bishops in the Late Antique church.[45] These studies have been the source of much controversy and debate, especially on the historical methodology involved in the more assertive arguments on both sides of the debate. The rights and wrongs of both sides of this debate are not the focus of this study, so only the relevant aspects of the debate are included.

There are undoubtedly cases where the title Presbyter or Presbytera are used for women on tombstones or memorials.[46] These are surveyed by Madigan and Osiek, who make it clear that the inscription records could relate to spouses of clergy or older women as much as to ordained women. The council of Laodicea also forbids the ordination of women Presbyters, which indicates that in some churches, there was a role with the title, but it is not clear what their responsibilities were.[47] There have been extensive discussions over exactly what is

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[44] Pietro, Sorci, "The Diaconate and Other Liturgical Ministries of Women," in. *Women Deacons? Essays with Answers,* Phyllis Zagano ed (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016), 57-95, at 93.

[45] See, Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*; Chinedu Adolphus Amadi-Azuogu, *Gender and Ministry in Early Christianity and the Church Today* (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2007).

[46] Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women,* 169-71.

[47] Council of Laodicea, *Canon*, 11.

meant by the canon as uses of the Greek feminine for presbyter are rare, fragmentary and scattered as Karras explains, meaning it is difficult to come to a clear conclusion even if more definite ideas have appeared in Latin-based scholarship.[48] The phrase woman Presbyter could be an older woman or the senior woman Deacon rather than genuinely comparable to the male Presbyters because the word 'presbyter' in Greek literally means 'elder', and sometimes it was used in that sense.[49] It is also possible that in the earliest centuries, the Presbyter was an older man who assisted in the running of the church and was not ordained in the same way as the Bishops. This would fit with the idea of Presbyters presented within the writings of Ignatius of Antioch and the *Didascalia*. If this interpretation is what happened, the later empowerment of men bearing the title Presbyter to act on behalf of the Bishop in increasingly complex dioceses means that there was a significant change in the understanding of this role into that of effectively an assistant Bishop, which was not the original form of the order. The interest in Presbyters is based on the current intense interest in the Presbyterate during Late Antiquity despite the relatively minor role this order played in the developing ecclesiology of the Church during the first four centuries.[50] While the extent of the role of the Presbyter in the church is debated, the insights from the liturgical expression of the theology as in Church Orders and fourth-century writers on the priesthood of the Bishop indicate an episcopally centred system not often mentioned in theological debate.[51] Many of the arguments for the presence of women Presbyters are based on images of women praying in the *orans* posture, although this is far from definitive and as Karras argues, the figures depicted are probably Deacons.[52]

The feminine titles *Presbytera* and *Episcopa* are rare in the historical texts and Late Antique inscriptions, making it difficult to analyse the usage accurately.[53] Additionally, as Karras points out, "the evidence of women in major orders other than the diaconate in the early

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[48] Valerie A. Karras, "Priestesses or Priests' Wives: Presbytera in Early Christianity," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 51 2-3 (2007): 321-45, 328-9; Mary M Schaefer and Joyce Louise, *Women in Pastoral Office: the Story of Santa Prassede, Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 152-5; Ute E Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000): 121-3.

[49] Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women,* 164; Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 119-20.

[50] This more peripheral role can be seen by texts like the DA comparing presbyters to the Apostles while bishops and deacons are linked with members of the Trinity.

[51] For example, John Chrysostom on the Priesthood is focused on the role of the bishop.

[52] Karras, "Priestesses or Priests' Wives," 326.

[53] Methuen, "Vidua - Presbytera – Episcopa," 163-4.

church is spotty, unclear and unconvincing."[54] There is no sufficient evidence to say that there were or were not women Presbyters or Bishops in Late Antiquity. According to Macy, this lack of evidence is partly due to the transmission and interpretation of historical documents and recording bias.[55] While Methuen argues that the references to feminine titles may have referred to women ministers who worked alongside their male counterparts at all levels,[56] this argument is not provable from the Greek (where the titles originate) as the masculine is used for ministers' titles, meaning the identification of gender relies on the context of the whole sentence. The Council of Tours is sometimes used to say there were women clergy due to the use of female titles in a canon forbidding their existence. This argument does not make sense in the context of most other Late Antique documents in Greek or Latin, as both use the masculine for women who were ordained and where it occurs, the feminine is used to identify those not ordained or not properly ordained.[57]

4.a.β.4 Spouses

The evidence for married clergy consists of the council's arguments about whether clergy should be married. The right for clergy to be married was vigorously defended at various ecumenical councils.[58] The spouse's influence on a cleric would have been comparable to that which occurred in the rest of society and variable. The core aspect of the spouse's role in a clerical family would probably have been running the household and raising children.

The importance of mothers in raising children in clerical households can be seen in the lives of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory the Theologian, both of whom owed much to the influence of their mothers, although their fathers were Bishops.[59] Wives of the clergy may also have

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[54] Karras, "Priestesses or Priests' Wives," 339.

[55] Macy, *Hidden History,* 3-5.

[56] Methuen, "Vidua — Presbytera — Episcopa," 170.

[57] E.g., the canon 19 of the council of Nicaea where διακόνωνσσα is used for the Paulist women who are not properly ordained.

[58] Davis, *Seven Ecumenical Councils* 65; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1.11; Apostolic Canons, *Canon,* 26; Council of Chalcedon, *Canon*, 14; Basil the Great, *Letter,* 217 canon 69.

[59] Harrison. *St Basil the Great,* 11-13; Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus,* 3,6,9-11.

been active in working with women within the church community, alongside women Deacons or in their absence.

4.a.β.5 Within monastic communities

Women's leadership presence within the burgeoning monastic communities is relatively well-attested. Monastic communities were, in their essence, lay organisations that may contain clergy who provided necessary services for the community under the authority of the local Bishop. Macrina, the sister of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, is one of the better-known women monastic leaders.[60] The writings of Jerome also indicate the presence of influential, wealthy women who became monastics and ran monastic houses.[61] Additionally, stories within *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* suggest that women held the same spiritual authority as men within desert communities.[62]

The role of women in authority within the monastic traditions seems to have been predominantly over other women within early monastic houses. Often these early monastic houses were converted upper-class estates, with the founder or her daughter taking the lead, such as in the case of Macrina the younger.[63] The other occurrences are within the radical desert hermit communities, where a few women struggled alongside the men in small groups and achieved recognition for their spiritual wisdom.[64] These two situations show that women could hold power in women-only households and communities while remaining within wider societal norms concerning women in authority.

4.a.β.6 Widows

The class of women recognised as Widows within the church was not one homogenous group; instead, this category contained several subsets of women. The category Widow

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[60] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, 8-9.

[61] White, *Roman Christian Women*, 59; Jerome, *Letter*, 108.

[62] Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 229-35, sayings of Amma Sarah and Syncletica.

[63] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, 8-9.

[64] As can be seen by the recording of the saying of women alongside those of men in the collected sayings of the desert fathers.

covered all women who lived without a man (the literal meaning of χήραι), but the church invested in supporting those who had fallen into poverty.[65] There were also noticeable regional variations regarding which groups of women were recorded most frequently. The historical texts discuss three recognisable groups of Widows: poor Widows with no familial support, young Widows with no ongoing familial responsibilities and wealthy Widows. Identifying which of these three broad groups a text is talking about at any given time can help to explain what can seem to be conflicting messages about the status and function of Widows. It is also important to recognise that the status of the Widow changed noticeably in the church throughout this study, partly due to the emergence of monastic communities, which gave other options for single women to live outside of the control of their families.

The church saw a need and responsibility to support poor and destitute Widows, especially those who were older, as is reflected in the documents which set out the qualifying criteria for Widows to be accepted onto the church rolls.[66] These older women and their dependants, whether their own children or foundlings placed in their care, are those described by texts like the *Didascalia* as the Altar and noted as worthy of support.[67] The second group of young Widows are encouraged to remarry and occupy themselves with the duties of a wife. The broader meaning of χήραι could mean young women who are orphans (so without a father) or for some other reason detached from the family structures, as well as young women who have lost their husbands.[68] This instruction concerning the distinction in types of Widows first appears in the first letter to Timothy but is reiterated over time, including restrictions on the age of accepting Widows onto the church rolls.[69] The complaints about Widows wandering from house to house and being idle are probably linked to young Widows who did not have children rather than those with children. John Chrysostom takes this view when he is explaining why St Paul limits the classification of a true Widow within the church who are therefore worthy of support, something that parallels the interpretation of the *Didascalia*.[70]

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[65] Methuen, "Virgin Widow," 287-8.

[66] E.g., DA, ch14, TD 1.40-43; AT, 10-13; Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins,* 3.4, 3.2; *Concerning Widows,* Ch 1, 9; *Ethiopic Didascalia*, 12.

[67] See 3.b.β.

[68] Methuen, "Virgin Widow," 292-3.

[69] 1Tim 5:9-15.

[70] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy*, 15, DA, ch 14-15.

The final group of wealthy Widows overlaps strongly with women who were church patrons. These women were unlikely to need the church's support since they had independent wealth. An example of one such Widow in Alexandria asked the church for a poor Widow for whom she could provide rather than herself needing the church's support.[71] To this sort of Widow, Jerome writes his letters encouraging them to stay single and become ascetics.[72] The rich and high social strata of women with whom Jerome corresponds are those who support the church and fledgling monastic communities, including his own community.[73] Other incidences of rich women becoming monastics include the mother and sister of Basil the Great, despite his sister being a very young Widow, so typically being encouraged to remarry.[74] Olympias of Constantinople was a young Widow but rich enough to refuse the social and church pressure to remarry; instead, she founded a monastic community.[75]

The *Didascalia*'s description of the Widow's proper function and restriction of tasks is interpreted by Methuen as part of restricting the function of women in the Church. Methuen notes that the Greek versions of both the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions* used πρεσβυτέρα or πρεσβῦτις meaning older women rather than χήραι, which are all rendered as Widow by translators, potentially confusing the points made.[76] The implication is that the women mentioned in the *Didascalia* and *Apostolic Constitution* are forbidden from performing functions parallel to those assigned to Widows in the *Testamentum Domini.* Within the *Testamentum Domini,* Widows were located with Presbyters as the female equivalent to this order, a position which could be described by the word Presbytera (πρεσβυτέρα or πρεσβῦτις), the comments in the *Apostolic Tradition* about those who must not be ordained also suggest that an ordained role was known.[77] While the transfer of duties in some texts associated with the Widow to the woman Deacon can be observed, especially in

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[71] John Cassian, *Conferences*, Ch 14.

[72] Jerome, *Letter*, 38, 54, 120, 123.

[73] White, *Roman Christian Women*, 58.

[74] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, 8-9.

[75] Palladius, *Dialogue*, 10, 16.

[76] Methuen, "Virgin Widow," 294-5.

[77] Methuen, "Virgin Widow," 294-5.

the Church Orders,[78] it is not possible to say if this was a planned orchestrated change or a gradual drift in practice. This shift in duties is primarily related to the assistants present at the baptism of women; for example, in the Gospel of Thomas, a conveniently believing woman is used; in the *Didascalia*, women Deacons are the preferred assistants for baptism, but another woman is permissible, while in the *Apostolic Constitutions* only a woman Deacon is permitted.[79]

It is likely that the rules restricting the activities of Widows were primarily aimed not at the Widows who needed financial support but the patron Widows who were used to using their money to get their way.[80] The concern arose because women with sufficient wealth to patronise the church would have expected the patronage of a given congregation or even cleric to have set up a normal patronal relationship between the giver and recipient, even with the countercultural understandings of power expressed in Christian teaching.[81] The woman patron would expect to gain the same level of influence and prominence as the male patrons of the church as in other cases of civic patronage.[82] The ordination of a woman Deacon from among some of the more assertive wealthy Widows who had not become monastics may have been a method of controlling this expectation of influence by bringing them within the ecclesiastical structure of the church by providing them with an official position in recognition of their generosity. There is evidence that wealthy women Deacons acted as patrons in their own right and as agents of the Bishop in the same way as the male Deacons.[83]

Some texts indicate that in specific congregations' Widows held liturgical positions or authority. The *Testamentum Domini* is probably the clearest of these texts, although there are also indications in the writings of Tertullian.[84] Additionally, there is a suggestion that in some communities, Widows or older women held a position in pastoral care, which is more

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[78] E.g., the DA, ch14, 15 and AC, 3.1-3.9.

[79] Acts of Thomas 157, DA, ch16, AC, 3.16.

[80] E.g., the DA, ch14, 15 and AC, 3.1-3.9.

[81] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 193-5.

[82] Osiek, "Diakonos and Prostatis," 351.

[83] Osiek, "Diakonos and Prostatis," 367.

[84] TD 2.4. Tertullian, *De Pudicitia,* 13.7.

apparent in the functions of a woman Deacon.[85] These texts are few and outnumbered by texts which indicate the majority of Widows were poor and in need of charitable support by the church, along with careful boundary setting on the role of women and Widows in particular. There is no unambiguous evidence to argue that women held an important role that was systematically and universally suppressed; instead, some Widows in some communities likely held essential roles at one stage of the development of the church in that area.

Considering the multiple positions in the church held by no longer married women, it is possible to say that the church respected and supported those Widows who were in real need of financial support. The young single woman (whether Widowed or divorced), especially without the care of children, was encouraged to remarry and fulfil the role of a dutiful Christian wife and mother. Based on the evidence examined, it would seem those wealthy women patrons of the church or who were at least financially independent, related to the church authorities differently than women who required the church's support. These women who acted as church patrons may have felt entitled to the same recognition as male patrons. This complex situation with women who needed to be supported by the church sharing the characteristic of no longer being married, with financially independent women who were patrons of the church, has led to a nuanced and contextualised situation within the documents.

It is challenging to reflect the full complexity of identifying the types of Widows within this study, but when possible, the type of Widow discussed is identified. This complicated situation is worthy of sustained independent research as it is highly contextualised and complex in a way that has not necessarily been reflected in existing scholarship. This situation is compounded by the way many texts are translated, which can conflate an elder woman (πρεσβυτέρα or πρεσβῦτις) with a no longer married woman (χήραι) as Widow when the meaning of the Greek texts is far more subtle and complex. While Thurston has made an impact in this field, it would benefit from concerted research considering developments in historical methodology since this study.[86]

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[85] ACO, 21.

[86] Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Women's Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

4.a.γ Church and secular parallels

Women's positions in leadership within the church seem to parallel what women did within wider society. Most of the evidence within the core tradition of the church points to women assisting the male leaders in many aspects of church life, most visibly as Deacons or spouses of the clergy. This assisting of men in leadership would not have been unexpected, significantly when it facilitated their influence reaching the women's quarters. The role of women within the monastic communities was similar, paralleling their role as head of a female household more generally. The discussions around the potential presence of women Presbyters and Bishops are impossible to prove due to the scarcity of evidence. Where such titles are recorded, it is more likely that these were given to spouses of clergy than independent roles, although the actions of breakaway groups suggest a minority who wanted women to lead.

4.b Power behind the scenes

The impact of men and women in advisory positions on leaders has been significant throughout history. Such influential people can be described as the power behind the scenes, a phenomenon that occurred in the church as in the rest of society. This section will explore how this happened and compare the influence of Late Antique women within secular and religious contexts.

4.b.α Secular influence of women

Within Roman society, women presumably influenced men in their lives, especially sons, and through this, exerted influence on male aspects of society. This feminine influence is primarily recorded in inscriptions or other memorials of thanks in the same way as other acts of patronage.[87] The evidence is that women with money may have been influential in contributing to local civic finances to aid the political careers of male relatives alongside the public recognition they would gain for themselves and their families.[88]

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[87] Suzanne Dixon, *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres and Real Life* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 102-4.

[88] Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives,* 24-5.

4.b.β Within the church

The situation within the church would have been similar, with mothers, sisters and wives affecting the decisions of their menfolk. Examples include Macrina, sister of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, who influenced their decision to serve the church.[89] Additionally, John Chrysostom was strongly influenced by his mother, Anthousa and the Deacon Olympias.[90]

Another way women would have supported the church would have been through their economic activity. Tax law suggests that clerical households who produced on a small scale were not taxed on their produce as it was used to support the household and the poor.[91] Such activities by women would have been essential in supporting the male clergy so they could focus on their church roles. Direct evidence of small-scale production comes in the clergy being instructed not to exploit the Daughters of the Covenant for their own needs when the tasks of these consecrated women were meant to be for the benefit of the church.[92]

4.b.β.1 Patrons

Women could gain influential positions as patrons of the Church, as they provided significant financial support.[93] Jerome illustrates the financial importance of patrons in his letters, where he mentions the philanthropic activities of female letter recipients.[94] There is also evidence of women being involved in sponsoring building churches.[95] These two sources (documentary and archaeological) suggest that women played an important role, in financially supporting the Church. This support was necessary for early monastic communities and the upkeep of the smaller churches that did not benefit from imperial support.

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[89] Gregory of Nyssa *Life of Macrina*, 6-15.

[90] Palladius, *Dialogue*, Ch5, 10,11.

[91] see 6.c.

[92] Harvey, "Daughters of the Covenant," 126.

[93] Osiek, "Diakonos and Prostatis," 367.

[94] Jerome, *Letter*, 108.

[95] E.g., the church building activities of Constantina, see Julia Hillner, "A Woman's Place: Imperial Women in Late Antique Rome," *Antiquité Tardive* 25 (January 2017): 75–94, at 69.

As Stewart-Sykes discusses, patronage was important within the church, especially in supporting the clergy.[96] By the time of Cyprian, clergy in North Africa were effectively clients of the Bishop in that they received support from him and acted on his behalf.[97] Stewart-Sykes also explores the importance of lay seniors who performed patronal roles in the church. This research applies specifically to third-century North Africa; however, the principles have an impact on understanding patronage in the church more widely and the role of women within it. If women Deacons and members of the Minor Orders, like their male counterparts, were clients of the Bishop, it explains how they could act on behalf of the Bishop and the power dynamics in some pastoral literature and canons. It would also position laywomen's patronage as parallel to that of the male seniors in the congregation but usually with a specific interest. Records suggest that many women patrons focused on Widows or monastic groups.[98] The patronage activities of financially independent Deacons such as Olympias provide another layer of complication not seen when men act as patrons due to the social expectations around women who practised patronage.

4.b.β.2 As clergy

Women were also recognised as clergy in some parts of the church alongside being patrons of churches and the family of clergy. The woman Deacon probably had a significant influence on her congregation, being the first contact person for the women within the community.[99] This meant that within some parts of the church, women's influence was clear and regulated within the clerical hierarchy.

The importance of women clergy is shown by the imagery of the *Didascalia,* which represents the woman Deacon as the Holy Spirit.[100] The theological and liturgical representation of the woman Deacon as the Holy Spirit shows equality yet difference from

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[96] Stewart-Sykes, "Ordination Rites," 117-19.

[97] Stewart-Sykes, "Ordination Rites," 127.

[98] John Cassian, *Conferences*, Ch 14, Jerome, *Letter*, 108.

[99] DA, ch16.

[100] DA, ch9.

the male Deacon, who is described as Christ in the same image. The diaconal equality comes from both being compared with members of the Trinity, but the differentiation from the linking with different aspects of the Godhead. This distinctiveness is a key part of the way that the Diaconate is expressed as a ministry which is inherently liminal rather than a fixed point.[101]

While Widows and Virgins do appear among those supported by the church and are linked with the clergy, especially Deacons who are supposed to support these women, there are relatively few direct links. The clearest is the requirement that a woman Deacon is chosen from among these groups of women.[102]

The records of women clergy are not confined to the theological realm. The well-recorded relationship between John Chrysostom and Deacon Olympias exemplifies this.[103] John's letters indicate that the relationship was both practical and deeply spiritual. Olympias performed the practical role of both Deacon and wealthy patron to the Church while relying on her Bishop's spiritual guidance and comfort in times of trouble.

The presence and influence of woman clergy are complex, as discussed later in this chapter. The fact remains, however, that there were women clergy who undoubtedly influenced decision-making and the church's management. The influence was subtle but present in women-centred imagery in the historic record and oral traditions that have survived.

4.b.β.3 too much influence?

The influence women could have over others was not always accepted and there were protests of some women having undue influence within their community. One example of this was the influence powerful wealthy Widows could have. This was far from the only

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[101] See, Kearns "The Liminal Nature,".

[102] AC, 6.17.

[103] John Chrysostom, Letters to *Olympias.*

situation in which women could be accused of having too much influence. There are examples within sources that give evidence for Minor Orders that also indicate the presence of women whom the writer considered to have an improper influence on the community. Firmilian's letter to Cyprian is a clear example of a Bishop accusing a woman of having unseemly amounts of power within a church group outside of the church.[104] Firmilian probably includes some rhetorical exaggeration to enhance the difference between his community and the outsiders. The reality is that very little is known about women's perspective on their position, as most records are of the male perception of the position of women in both the Church and society.

4.b.γ Summary

The power exerted by women within a male society is difficult to trace, as it would be unlikely for most men to admit the influence of women in their lives. The few records showing women in a relationship with powerful men and their influence suggests significant under-recording of women's influence. However, the methods used to exert this influence are unlikely to have significantly differed between the church and wider society.

4.c Virgins and celibates

Celibates, especially in the form of Virgins, held a special position within the church. This section will explore the types of celibacy practised in the Christian community. The range of expressions of celibacy is not mentioned in many texts due to the complexity of the localised practices. Overall, it is far too simplistic to say that after the emergence of monasticism, celibates attached to the church became monastics after a period of adjustment.

The presence of Virgins within Late Antique Christian communities is distinct, except for the Vestal Virgins; women were expected to marry by their late teens, with it being common for women from wealthy families to have married as young as twelve.[105] According to Harvey,

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[104] Firmilian, *Letter to Cyprian,* 10.

[105] Casstelli, "Virginity and its Meaning," 81, 86; Abbe Lind Walker, *Bride of Hades to Bride of Christ: the Virgin and the Other worldly Bridegroom in Ancient Greece and Early Christian Rome* (London: Routledge, 2020), 132.

the practice of virginity within the church was less about denying sexuality (although it certainly included physical celibacy) and more about redirecting sexuality to a heavenly Bridegroom.[106] The practices of celibacy and asceticism were considerably more noticeable in the Syrian tradition than in other areas due to local developments in church practice.[107]

4.c.α Types of celibates

There are two distinct types of celibates in the historical records: the ecclesiastical and the monastic celibate. The reality of this is not as straightforward as it can seem, there was always some drifting between the two roles, and they were not mutually exclusive, as discussed later in this section. The roles were also not specifically male or female, as celibacy was open to both genders. The texts seem to differentiate by talking of Virgins and monastics, although the exact meaning is not always clear.[108] Virgins as celibate women held an unusual position in the church compared to wider society: they had ceased to be girls but had not transitioned into classical womanhood.[109] While Ambrose of Milan used the image of the Virgin as a Bride of Christ to provide a reference point for the social position of these women,[110] their position was still inherently liminal. This liminality is part of the link between Virgins and women Deacons, who were often also Virgins by profession. While Widows were also celibates within the church, their position was distinctly different to that of Virgins since they had completed the normal transition to womanhood, so their position was theologically less complicated.

4.c.α.1 Ecclesiastical

The ecclesiastical celibate is not a single role but a collection of orders and roles that were or could be performed by celibates. The distinction between ecclesial celibates is partially gender-defined.

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[106] Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Women in the Syriac Christian Tradition," The Canadian Society for Syriac Studies Journal, 3, (2003,), 44-58, at 44-5.

[107] Harvey, "Syriac Christian Tradition," 45.

[108] An example can be found in the intercessions of the Liturgy of St Mark translate at Appendix 2.2.d.η, St Mark *Divine Liturgy,* 33.

[109] Walker, *Bride of Hades,* 2.

[110] Walker, *Bride of Hades,* 127-8.

The ecclesial Virgin or Widow was a woman dedicated to the church's service and supported by the church. As Methuen points out, these two categories could overlap, and the distinctions were not always clear among women.[111] The most recognisable form of Virgins serving the church occurs in Syria in the form of the Daughters of the Covenant with their male counterparts, the Sons of the Covenant providing the clearest example of male Virgins. In addition, Goessens' chapter on "Singles and Singleness" argues for the existence of a specific category of the '*Virgo Dei*' of women who served God and the Church from a position of virginity.[112] Goessens' idea is compatible with the concept of the Ecclesiastical Virgin and the definition of the Minor Order of the Virgin posited in the Introduction. The practice of consecrated Virgins within the home environment is explored by Vuolanto, who suggests that, although the sources are unclear, they were present among the elite of Rome and that there were specific expectations for their conduct, including the theological links between marriage and celibacy.[113] This theology of the Virgin as a Bride of Christ encapsulates the concept of consecrated virginity and the constraints it imposes on women who were simultaneously a Virgin awaiting marriage and a Wife.[114]

By the fourth-century, there was a highly developed theology of the consecrated Virgin within the church, but the theological discussions which are the foundation of the understanding of the consecrated Virgin were written by men.[115] There is undoubtedly a disconnect between the idealised images presented by male writers, including Late Antique canons and law codes and the unrecorded reality. The discussion by Ivanovici and Undheim about where Virgins stood in the church in specific relationship to reliquaries misses the information that in the Eastern region, at least Virgins were under the charge of a woman Deacon during the liturgy and formed a Choir.[116] By the nature of its role, the Choir was

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[111] Methuen, "Virgin Widow," 287-9.

[112] Goessenes "Singles and Singleness," 237.

[113] Ville Vuolanto, "Single Life in Late Antiquity? Virgins between Earthly and Heavenly Family," in *The Single Life in the Roman and Later Roman World,* ed. Sabine R. Huebner and Christian Laes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 276-308, at 280, 289.

[114] Walker, *Bride of Hades,* 60-1.

[115] For example, the writings of Methodius.

[116] Vladimir Ivanovici and Sissel Undheim, "0228 Consecrated Virgins as Living Reliquaries in Late Antiquity," *RIAH Journal*, (2019), par14, Karras, "Female Deacons," 279.

placed close to the sanctuary, just as the male Cantors were. Ivanovici and Undheim focus on the Latin tradition, which also means that although they recognise the association of the Virgin and the altar, they miss the profound symbolism of this association within the Antiochian tradition.[117] The descriptions of specific dress for Virgins are consistent with the premise of this thesis that Virgins in an ecclesiastical setting were part of the clergy. The way Ivanovici and Undheim describe this use of clothing as being most present in the Western provinces ignores the literature on the Daughters of the Covenant in Syria.[118]

While the position of Virgins as clergy or very closely related to the clergy is attestable from the sources, the identification of Widows as clergy is more challenging. The identification of which Widows were supported by the church and so potentially recognised as clergy was explored earlier in this chapter. Widows are probably the most consistently mentioned order in the sources after Virgins, and as Davies points out, there is no part of early Church history where they are not mentioned.[119] As Winters explains, the support of Widows by the church was a departure from standard Roman practice where it was a familial duty to support aged relatives; an understanding paralleled by the Jewish tradition where supporting elderly relatives was a religious duty.[120] As discussed, the description of Widows alongside orphans as the altar and a close association with prayer is a key part of understanding the Widow in the church.[121] While there is significant evidence for Widows, they are more challenging to fix within the ecclesiastical hierarchy due to their position as a supported group rather than a liturgically active function. The social position of Widows was not as precarious as that of Virgins since they had followed the accepted root of entering adult life, but both had a position in the church which challenged the certainties of life in Late Antiquity.

Celibacy for men was not synonymous with membership of a monastic community, as it also occurred within all ranks of the clergy. The sources suggest this was particularly encouraged within the Western region, although expectations and reality were not always the same, as

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[117] Ivanovici and Undheim, "Consecrated Virgins," par15.

[118] Ivanovici and Undheim, "Consecrated Virgins," par19.

[119] Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses," 4-5.

[120] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 126-7.

[121] As can be seen by their association in DA9.

seen in the reiterations of this expectation of celibacy. There were similar expectations in Africa, although the sources are unclear and the enforcement probably varied. In the East, it tended only to be Bishops who were celibate, although there developed a practice of ordaining married men who could remain with their spouse while not letting those ordained when single marry. This was a nuanced and pastoral response to the realities of life and a practice defended vigorously even by the monastic Bishops.[122] The practice of celibacy even among Bishops was not absolute during the period of this study as there were married Bishops such as Gregory the Elder of Nazianzus and Basil the Elder of Cappadocia, both of whom had Bishops for sons. There were also women celibate clergy in the form of women Deacons (drawn from the ranks of Virgins or Widows or occasionally the spouse of a Bishop) and their assistants within the eastern region.[123]

The ecclesial celibates are difficult to fully describe as they come in many forms from both Minor and Major Orders. This means any simple description has a significant number of exceptions, such as male Virgins or married Bishops and women Deacons. Celibates serving within the church formed a significant and influential group, practically and in terms of rhetorical examples.

4.c.α.2 Monastic

Monastics are easier to define as there is a separate strand of literature about them from the late-third-century onwards. Most of these monastic texts come from the Egyptian or Palestinian deserts, witnessing the development of small communities far from population centres.[124] The other aspect is the development of communities close to holy sites such as those in Jerusalem, mentioned by Jerome, or Mount Sinai, mentioned by Egeria. Their distinct literature makes these intentional communities easy to identify and has been the subject of other studies.

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[122] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1.11.

[123] AC 6.17, Skaltsis, "The Ordination of Deaconesses," 172; Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women," 42; Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 140.

[124] Collections such as the Alphabetical and Anonymus sayings of the Desert Fathers are examples of the evidence for these practices from the time of this study.

Other monastic communities developed around an individual in a specific situation. Often a widowed noblewoman who turned her house into a monastery acted as the nucleus of the new community; for example, Macrina the younger and her mother converted their house after the death of Basil the Elder. These communities are more difficult to identify as members were often involved in the local churches in practical ways: one of the most well-known being Olympias the Deacon, who also led a small monastic community.

4.c.α.3 Overlaps

There were overlaps between the ecclesiastical celibates and early monastics. Olympias the Deacon, as already mentioned, was the head of an urban monastic community, but as a Deacon in the church, she was heavily involved in projects to assist the poor of Constantinople. John Chrysostom was another person who spent some time as a monastic yet served most of his life as a celibate cleric in the city. The overlap between the early monastic communities and the ecclesiastical celibates was noticeable in that some clergy spent time in monasteries and some ecclesiastical celibates retired to a monastic community later in life. The most noticeable overlap is the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant, which seem to be a hybrid of the two traditions.

4.c.α.4 Syriac tradition

This picture of celibacy in the church is complicated by the distinct practices of the church in Syria. The existence of the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant is an essential aspect but not the only one due to the complicated nature of the Syrian tradition. The existence and activities of the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant have been explored at length by others, most notably Harvey, in a range of journal articles.[125] The full particulars do not need to be repeated here, but these groups seem to have been forms of ecclesiastical celibates who lived in distinct communities attached to individual churches. The discussion by Vööbus is of particular interest as it suggests that the rules for these groups in many ways paralleled the

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[125] Harvey, "Daughters of the Covenant," 125-149; Arthur Vööbus, "The Institution of the Benai Qeiama and Benat Qeiama in the Ancient Syrian Church," *Church History* 30, no. 1 (March 1961): 19–27.

canons controlling the Minor Orders in other geographical areas and may indicate that the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant fulfilled those roles in the churches where they existed.[126] These households are not dissimilar to early monasteries but are under the direct control of the parish clergy rather than an Abbot or Abbess.

4.c.β Celibates in the church

This evidence suggests that celibates had a role within the church alongside families. Ecclesiastical celibates were present in all levels of clergy, both as part of their role and incidentally to their primary function. This recognition of married and single life forms indicates that the church recognised both, even while celibacy was not widely accepted outside the church.[127] It is also clear that celibates did not only exist in monastic or clerical communities (which occurred in the Western part of the empire) but were scattered throughout the church in the same way as the married. It also seems that the functions of an ecclesiastical celibate and monastics were not mutually exclusive as some ecclesiastics spent a part of their lives in a monastery and the monastic communities were served by a few of their number who were ordained clergy. The place of celibacy in the church was nuanced, which reflected local customs and practices and the larger traditions and practices of the church.[128]

4.d Regional variations

As illustrated in Appendix 2, there was significant regional variation within the Roman Empire over the roles and recognition of clergy. The most noticeable aspect of this was the existence of women clergy, which was concentrated in Syria and the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire while being completely outlawed in the western parts of the empire.[129] Although this legislation within the western provinces is probably a reaction to the presence, real or perceived, of these orders. This complexity reflected the varying position of women in

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[126] Vööbus, "Benai Qeiama and Benat Qeiama," 21-4.

[127] Council of Gangra Canons 9, 10.

[128] Aristeides Papadakis and Alexander Kazhdan, "Celibacy," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[129] Council of Orange, *Canon* 26.

wider society and the overall approach to women in the Church in different regions. These variations can, to some extent, be related to the different recording methods illustrated in Appendix 2.4.

There are also fundamental regional differences in the approach to ministry and the interpretation of the tradition of the church leading to a significantly different emphasis in different regions of the empire. There was also considerable cultural variation in the position of women in society within the Roman Empire, which profoundly affected their functioning in the church and influenced the acceptance or otherwise of married clergy.

4.d.α Menstruation and the Church

The place of women in the church varied significantly across the Roman Empire, as it did in the wider community, with churches being closely integrated into the surrounding society in many respects. It is difficult to say what a woman would have experienced in each church at a given time since the records for the daily experience of the laity are rare. It is possible to say that there was significant variation in the ways that women experienced the church relating to their context.

One of the key areas when it comes to regional variation, reflecting the variations in beliefs held by wider society and the reaction to these beliefs, is the response within the church to the realities of women's reproductive cycle. In many respects, concerns about purity are an interloper in the church tradition and are not reflected in the gender ontology or canons of the Church.[130] Many early Christian texts treat menstruation as an abnormality despite the understanding of many physicians that it was part of womanhood.[131] The impact of societal views, which held that blood could both be a purifier and defiler, was significant in the

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[130] Paul. Ladouceur, "The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, A Theological Issue or a Pastoral Matter," in *Women and Ordination in the Orthodox Church,* ed. Gabrielle Thomas, and Elena Narinskaya, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020), 166-186, at 167-8.

[131] Juliette J. Day, "Women's Rituals and Women's Ritualizing," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual,* ed. Risto Uro, Juliette J. Day, Rikard Roitto, and Richard E. DeMaris, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 644-660, at 645-6.

developing understanding and practice of the Church.[132] This complicated relationship with societal context eventually led to two early practices which were opposed and reflected the beliefs, cultural practices and understandings of women in the areas they developed as they directly reflected the acceptance or rejection of wider societal views in those regions. This is because the understanding of menstrual blood was complicated, not always related to defilement and could change between contexts, meaning the interpretation of sources on this matter is not simple.[133] Branham suggests that the controllability of the blood was involved in whether it was sacred or polluting in certain situations, with menstrual blood being ultimately polluting as it could not be controlled in the way the shedding or letting of other blood could be.[134]

The Latin-speaking parts of the Roman Empire and church were suspicious and fearful of women and menstruation, which reflected the understanding that blood could both purify or defile a person.[135] One example is Pliny the Elder, who attributed many occurrences in the natural world to the vagaries of the woman's cycle.[136] Soranus had a far more pragmatic and practical approach, discussing the nature of the menstrual cycle and the need to facilitate bearing children but making no suggestion that this process affected the rest of the cosmos.[137] The views expressed by writers like Pliny, according to Wijngaards, influenced the Latin Fathers in their writing about women and prohibiting the receipt of communion during menstruation.[138] This prohibition was codified within the Alexandrian tradition in a letter by Dionysios of Alexandria around 200CE when a canon was propagated that banned women from receiving communion during their monthly menstruation; however, these canons do not attempt to connect this ban to any Old Testament prohibitions.[139] The letter of Dionysios of Alexandria is included within the *Rudder* and interpreted at length through various other

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[132] Joan R. Branham, "Blood in Flux, Sanctity at Issue," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 31 (1997): 53–70, at 53.

[133] Branham, "Blood in Flux," 53-4.

[134] Branham, "Blood in Flux," 62-3.

[135] Branham, "Blood in Flux," 66.

[136] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 28.23.

[137] Soranus, *Gynecology*, 1.4-6.

[138] Wijngaards, *Cuckoo's Egg,* 75.

[139] Dionysius of Alexandrea, *Encyclical Letter*, canon 2.

sources associated with the teaching in nineteenth-century Greece.[140] These early canons and prohibitions seem to have been based on the prevailing cultural understanding and while not explicitly endorsed by the Western councils, the practice followed this same pattern.[141]

While writing in the Eastern Part of the Empire, Jerome was influenced by his Latin education, reflecting the Latin views within his writing, but Eastern Theology also influenced him. Jerome calls menstruation "God's Curse" in the context that Sara had ceased to be a married woman due to having passed menopause.[142] This comment comes within a wider discussion on the primacy of celibacy over marriage, reflecting Jerome's often-expressed views that celibates are more holy than the married. Jerome's other passing mention of menstruation comes in his commentary on Zechariah, where he uses menstruation as an example of ultimate uncleanness.[143] These two fleeting mentions would not have had a noticeable impact on later discussions if they had not reflected the views already expressed in the Alexandrian tradition.[144] Jerome's influence seems to have been more significant in the Latin-speaking Church as Jerome wrote in Latin and his views were endorsed by Anslem of Canterbury in the eleventh-century.[145]

The approach in the Greek-speaking Antiochian part of the church was very different, at least in some areas. The council of Antioch excommunicated anyone who attended church but did not receive communion,[146] showing how seriously receiving communion was taken by the Church of Antioch. This Antiochian approach to the frequent receipt of communion is also

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[140] Hieromonachos Agapios and Nicodemus, *Πηδάλιον της νοητής νηός της μιάς Αγίας, Καθολικής και Αποστολικής των Ορθοδόξων Εκκλησίας, ήτοι άπαντες οι ιεροί και θείοι κανόνες των αγίων και πανευφήμων αποστόλων, των αγίων οικουμενικών τε και τοπικών συνόδων και των κατά θείων πατέρων, ελληνιστί μεν χάριν αξιοπιστίας εκτιθέμενοι, δια δε της καθ' ημάς κοινοτέρας διαλέκτου προς κατάληψιν των απλουστέρων ερμηνευόμενοι. (the Rudder (Pedalion): Of the Metaphorical Ship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Orthodox Christians, or All the Sacred and Divine Canons of the Holy and Renowned Apostles, of the Holy Councils, Ecumenical as Well as Regional, and of Individual Fathers, as Embodied in the Original Greek Text, for the Sake of Authenticity, and Explained in the Vernacular by Way of Rendering Them More Intelligible to the Less Educated.* (Athēnae: Astēr, 1886), Footnotes to Dionysius the Alexandrian footnote 19.

[141] The influence can be seen in Gregory the Great's letter to Augustine of Canterbury, Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.29.

[142] Jerome, *Against Helvidius*, 20.

[143] Jerome *Commentary on Zacharias* 13.1.

[144] Dionysius of Alexandrea, *Encyclical Letter*, canon 2.

[145] William E. Phipps, "The Menstrual Taboo in the Judeo-Christian Tradition," *Journal of Religion & Health* 19, no. 4 (1980): 298–303, at 300.

[146] Council of Antioch, *Canon*, 2.

apparent in the teachings of John Chrysostom, who was rather outspoken in his view that attending church meant receiving communion.[147] John Chrysostom encouraged his listeners to receive communion as the climax of the service rather than considering the sermon the climax and the reason for attending. The *Didascalia,* in making a specific mention of the woman Deacon's duty to take communion to women who were at home unable to come to church,[148] also indicates that receiving communion took precedence over other considerations. The *Didascalia* was reinterpreted in later centuries to separate the rebuttal of the belief of the desertion of the Holy Spirit during menstruation from permission to receive communion.[149] This reinterpretation reflects the tension which remained even once the Antiochian approach was subordinated to the views of other areas.

This approach involving the importance of receiving communion is also apparent in the *Didascalia* and its derivative, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, standing in stark contrast to the other Church Orders, especially the *Testamentum Domini*. The *Didascalia* makes it clear that the Holy Spirit's presence is not affected by the body's natural functioning, explicitly challenging the belief that women could not receive the Eucharist or perform other spiritual activities during menstruation.[150] "Now if, women, you think that you have been deserted by the Holy Spirit in the seven days of your menstruation, and if you die during these days you go forth empty and devoid of hope. Yet if the Holy Spirit is with you constantly there is no reason to stay away from prayer and from Eucharist and from the scriptures."[151] This citation indicates that the tradition in and around Antioch did not always consider menstruation a barrier to receiving communion, church attendance, or the possibility of being ordained. The explicit inclusion of this probably relates to the fact that at least some women in the community believed the very things which were contradicted in this passage.

FitzGerald picks up on this discussion about purity and menstruation not being a barrier to ordination for women Deacons, examining how the *Didascalia,* John Chrysostom and others

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[147] John Chrysostom, *Homily*, 3 On Ephesians, *Homily*, 2 On Titus.

[148] DA, ch16.

[149] See, Agapios and Nicodemus, *Πηδάλιον (the Rudder),* Footnotes to Dionysius the Alexandrian 19.

[150] DA, ch26.

[151] DA, ch26.

exemplify that the ideas of purity were not part of the core tradition of the church.[152] The distinctiveness of this approach is also discussed by Berger at length in her investigation of bodily flows and liturgical practice, recognising that the *Didascalia*, while challenging Judaizing practices, is also heavily gendered.[153] Berger suggests that the non-observance of purity rules was a way of marking the church community as distinct while noting that the *Didascalia* and its derivatives were a minority voice.[154] The approach in the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions* that menstruation is a natural part of a woman's life and not to be considered improper reflects the view expressed by Soranus that it is a natural part of reproductive life and makes no insinuation of pollution.[155]

The liturgical tradition in the East was not without recognition of worthiness issues but dealt with them not by excluding people but by inviting them to approach trusting in God's mercy, as is made plain by John Chrysostom in his liturgy where the priest prays:

> Πάλιν καὶ πολλάκις σοὶ προσπίπτομεν καὶ σοῦ δεόμεθα, ἀγαθὲ καὶ φιλάνθρωπε, ὅπως, ἐπιβλέψας ἐπὶ τὴν δέησιν ἡμῶν, καθαρίσῃς ἡμῶν τὰς ψυχὰς καὶ τὰ σώματα ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, καὶ δῴης ἡμῖν ἀνένοχον καὶ ἀκατάκριτον τὴν παράστασιν τοῦ ἁγίου σου θυσιαστηρίου. Χάρισαι δέ, ὁ Θεός, καὶ τοῖς συνευχομένοις ἡμῖν προκοπήν βίου καὶ πίστεως καὶ συνέσεως πνευματικῆς δὸς αὐτοῖς πάντοτε μετὰ φόβου καὶ ἀγάπης λατρεύειν σοι, ἀνενόχως καὶ ἀκατακρίτως μετέχειν τῶν ἁγίων σου μυστηρίων, καὶ τῆς ἐπουρανίου σου βασιλείας ἀξιωθῆναι.

> (Again and frequently, we fall down before you and we ask you, who are good and benevolent, to look on our prayers and purify us in body and soul from all defilement of flesh and spirit, so that without guilt or condemnation, we can serve at your holy altar. By your grace, God, may we continue to live and grow in faith and spiritual wisdom; grant that they may always serve you with true respect and love, without

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[152] FitzGerald, *Women Deacons,* 66-75.

[153] Teresa Berger, *Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History Lifting a Veil on Liturgy's Past* (London: Routledge, 2016), 103-5.

[154] Berger, *Gender Differences*, 106-7.

[155] Soranus, *Gynecology*, 1.19-23.

guilt or condemnation, to share in your Holy Mysteries and be counted worthy of your heavenly kingdom.)[156]

This liturgical prayer shows an acknowledgement that none are worthy (ἄξιος) to approach, but this is made possible only through the grace of God, with human effort being the secondary consideration. This trust that God is not limited by human understanding of sin, weakness or purity is also woven into the epiclesis prayer culminating in the petition "ὥστε γενέσθαι τοῖς μεταλαμβάνουσιν εἰς νῆψιν ψυχῆς, εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ Ἁγίου σου Πνεύματος, εἰς βασιλείας οὐρανῶν πλήρωμα, εἰς παρρησίαν τὴν πρός σέ, μὴ εἰς κρῖμα ἢ εἰς κατάκριμα. (So that we who receive come into sobriety of life, the pardon of sins and communion of the Holy Spirit; boldness to enter the fullness of the kingdom of Heaven, not into judgment or condemnation)."[157] These prayers recognise the division between human and divine, rather than relative human purity; the hymn of the laity further emphasises the concept as the people respond to the priest's exclamation "Τά ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις (the holy things for the holy people),"[158] by saying "Εἷς Ἅγιος, εἷς Κύριος, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ Πατρός. (One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father)."[159]

The diversity of ideas about purity is beyond the scope of this study; however, the liturgical and doctrinal expressions of purity are linked with all other areas of faith and practice in the Late Antique Church.[160] The universal spread of canons such as those promulgated in Alexandria was a slow process, Karras noting that it was not until the ninth-century that menstruation-related purity arguments were used almost universally.[161] There were indications of it in the seventh-century as the Alexandrian canons were accepted and given universal status by the council in Trullo in 692CE.[162] It seems that in the Eastern regions of the church, at least purity was not an issue around women serving in Late Antiquity, the picture in Africa and the Western regions is, however, more complex, with a gradual process

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[156] Chrysostom, *The Divine Liturgy,* 36 (Own translation).

[157] Chrysostom, *The Divine Liturgy,* 47 (Own translation).

[158] Chrysostom, *The Divine Liturgy,* 52 (Own translation).

[159] Chrysostom, *The Divine Liturgy,* 52 (Own translation).

[160] Concepts of purity and sacred space around discharge have been examined at length by Joan Branham (Branham 1997, 2003, 2006, 2012).

[161] Karras, "Female Deacons," 295n108.

[162] Karras, "Female Deacons," 132-3

of women's participation being restricted. Most of these changes in practice, which lead to one view dominating, happened outside the era of this study; however, the diversity highlights the importance of regional traditions and practices, which could be opposed to each other in letter and spirit during the early development of the church.

4.d.β Women speaking in Church

One passage often used to say that women could not and did not have power in the church is 1 Corinthians 14:34-6. This passage does not reflect the realities of what happened in the Late Antique Church; instead, it is the viewpoint of one writer. There is also a high probability that these verses in 1 Corinthians were a later addition to the text to address a specific problem.[163] The historical evidence suggests that women were present and spoke within the church. Probably, this happened according to the prevailing social customs of the time. As Winter mentions, the addition of this passage was probably linked to the challenge facing the church and Roman society concerning those women who defied social norms.[164]

Clear evidence for women speaking, singing and even teaching through the medium of leading the singing of worship songs comes from the Syrian tradition. The Daughters of the Covenant, according to Harvey, are vital to the practice of Christianity in the Syrian tradition and a rare occurrence of women having a leading role in worship.[165] Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch also highlight that women served in teaching roles during the first two centuries of the church.[166] Such a gender-specific teaching role continued as witnessed by the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*.[167] The role may have changed name and become the specific concern of the woman Deacon; however, gender-specific instruction remained. Such instruction is rarely recorded, making the mentions in the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions* important and it is consistent with gendered religious practices. These practices, while gendered, are also related to community status, with teaching restricted to the

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[163] This is explored further by, Wijngaards, *Cuckoo's Egg,*75; John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, Homily 37.

[164] Winter, *Roman Wives,* Part II.

[165] Harvey, "Patristic Worlds," 32-3.

[166] Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch, *Woman's Place,* 13.

[167] DA, ch16; AC, 3.2.16.

recognised leaders of the church community, specifically the Bishop and his assistants. The instruction not to teach is imposed not only on Widows but also on all laymen. The justification is not allowing the Word of God to be blasphemed by poor explanation, a risk perceived as greater if women speak.[168] Methuen argues that these instructions in the *Didascalia* are the result of introducing a patriarchal hierarchy and therefore controlling the congregation, especially the women, through imposing patriarchal authority onto the congregation.[169] Although this understanding may be simplistic, the theological expressions of ecclesiology within the *Didascalia* Syrian tradition do not indicate the presence of a commanding Bishop but of a father who nurtured the community within the social norms common to the Syrian provinces.[170] This means that while looking at practices in contemporary parts of the church to aid our understanding of the overall church, it is also essential to recognise the differences in the local cultural context, which suggests a highly complex picture that this thesis is only able to indicate.

The greatest debate is often seen around the liturgical functions of women Deacons, with some claiming that they only had limited functions and no speaking role.[171] This assertion about the limited function of women occurs while also emphasising the inconsistency of women serving as Cantors or Readers with the passage from 1 Corinthians.[172] These assertions by Ramsey have a long academic pedigree and form the central argument on the segregation of the church,[173] to the point that Faivre questions if women could even be classed as laity.[174] This exclusion of women is challenged by other texts, most noticeably the Syrian Church Orders, which give importance to the role of the woman Deacon within the community. There is also little written about the liturgical functions of Deacons, so it is impossible to say with certainty that a Deacon of either gender performed a given function outside the baptismal liturgy. In other cases, when the order of the deacon is only named in

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[168] DA, ch 15.

[169] Methuen, "For Pagans Laugh," 25.

[170] DA, ch 4, 6-9.

[171] Ramsey, *Minor Orders,* 55-6.

[172] Ramsey, *Minor Orders*, 55.

[173] Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 12-14.

[174] Faivre, *Emergence of the Laity*, 213.

relation to a given activity, it is not possible to say which gender of deacon performed the task as in Greek, the word deacon forms in a common gender.

Ramsey's assertion that women did not serve as Readers or Cantors is directly contradicted by the existence of the Daughters of the Covenant.[175] According to Harvey, the Daughters of the Covenant were found throughout Syria and Persia by the fifth-century and mandated by canon.[176] Such a mandate would require their literacy but also shows that a form of woman Cantor, admittedly one who was also a consecrated Virgin, was part of the tradition of the church. This history suggests that the injunction for women not to speak was not uniformly interpreted in an absolute way, leaving open the possibility that in some circumstances, women held speaking positions in Minor Orders, especially in areas where literate men were not available for the role. The records of differing traditions also mean that we cannot take the proclamation of one area to hold in all cases; rather, the complexity and diversity of tradition and theology must be respected.

The biblical injunctions used against women serving as they were not permitted to speak in the church are highly situational and it is anomalous to read them as universally absolute while other passages in the same letter are contextualised for understanding.[177] Likewise, there is significant evidence explored in other parts of this thesis that women were present in speaking or singing roles in the Late Antique church and not only within monastic contexts. The sources show women with active, literate roles in some areas and forbidding it are regionally specific and reflect local customs and theology. The fact that some writers felt the need to forbid it indicates that, at least in some areas, women were speaking or singing liturgically and possibly showing the men up, as Harvey implied.[178] Although there is a highly complex and contextualised picture, it is impossible to say that women did not hold the offices of Reader and Cantor at all, nor that they did so universally: either would not be

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[175] Ramsey, *Minor Orders*, 55.

[176] Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Performance as Exegesis: Womens Liturgical Choirs in Syriac Tradition," in *Inquiries into Eastern Christian Worship, Selected Papers of the Second International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy Rome, 17-21 September 2008*, ed. Bert Groen, Steven Hawker-Teeples, and Stefanos Alexopoulos (Eastern Christian Studies, Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 52.

[177] Wijngaards, *Cuckoo's Egg,* 72-3.

[178] Harvey, "Performance as Exegesis," 51-2.

faithful to the evidence. Instead, whether women performed these roles related to the specific church in question was probably the decision of the local Bishop.

4.d.γ The complex picture of women clergy

The situation of women clergy within the Late Antique Church is complex and regionally specific. The balance of evidence is for the presence of women Deacons and Minor Orders in the Eastern Empire and potentially further East. There is minimal evidence in Africa, meaning it is impossible to make definite statements about the situation. In the West, there is little evidence of women Deacons or Minor Orders, mainly in the form of them being banned by local councils; this suggests they know of them, but they were not meant to be used in the West. The exception is the orders of Virgins and Widows, who seem to have been universal and independent of the presence of other women in Minor Orders. Despite this, the interpretation of these orders varied greatly, and it is impossible to trace one form of either order across the whole church, with differing expressions occurring even in communities that were not geographically distant from each other. As discussed, the position of the Widow was complex and contextual, with significant variation between documents which can be challenging to trace. This complex and contextual situation means it is not possible to make grand sweeping statements about women's ministry in the era of this study.

4.e Conclusions

The position of women within the church parallels the position of women in society as complex and situational. This paralleling of position included the subordination within their social strata, e.g., women Deacons subordinate to male Deacons but superior to male Subdeacons, although some sources suggest other arrangements. Within this mirroring of women's societal behaviour, women were very much the power behind the scenes in the church, through being patrons of churches, the spouses or mothers of senior clergy and to a lesser extent, women Deacons.

Specifically, within the Minor Orders, women were most noticeable as Virgins and Widows, as these orders provided almost all the candidates for women Deacons or other Minor Orders

if they existed.[179] The evidence shows the presence of Daughters of the Covenant, but this does not preclude the presence of women in other capacities for which evidence has not survived. This lack of clear evidence is most noticeable with women Readers as the records of other orders imply that this order should exist, but there is only circumstantial evidence for them. The presence of literate women within the church is discussed in chapter 5.b.δ.

Overall, women played an important but under-recorded role in the church, just as in wider Late Antique society. The role of women across the empire was focused on personal piety and patronage of the church. The Eastern provinces augmented this with practical and liturgical roles specific to that cultural context. This regional complexity and diversity is an important development in the understanding of the position of women in the Church, along with the cultural influences of regional differences in the positions women were allowed to fill. The situation is still unclear in many areas and there is a need for continued research, especially utilising the insights of social history into the church context.

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[179] AC 6.17; Skaltsis, "The Ordination of Deaconesses" 172; Theodorou, "Deaconesses, The Ordination of Women," 42; Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 140.

5 Literacy in the Church

An important aspect of understanding how the church related to the Late Antique society is the function of literacy and the role played by literate people within the church. This chapter will survey the background of Late Antique literacy, also touching on educational practices because the ability to read and write at a basic level was inextricably linked. The evidence of literate church members and their role within the church community will then be examined, making specific use of the work of Gamble concerning literacy in the church. Gamble's work is an important marker in the developing understanding of reading and book culture within the church, and as discussed in the literature review, his work has been supported by other more recent studies in the field of education history.[1] Within this chapter, Gamble's work is utilised alongside other studies of reading in the church and educational history texts to explore the link between literacy and church practice, including regional variations. This chapter will set out an overview of the current understanding of literacy in Late Antiquity, literacy in the church in and beyond liturgical contexts; then, it will highlight any regional variations which are observable in the sources. Within each section of the chapter, any gendered aspects within the evidence for literacy will be noted. This chapter attempts to summarise the disparate aspects of the history of literacy and what is known about Church practice to help expand the understanding of both areas.

5.a Literacy in Late Antiquity

Literacy was important in Late Antiquity as a skill and a means of increasing social status.[2] The presence of a literate person was also noticeable in everyday conversation as proper pronunciation was a core part of the basic education in letters and syllables before a student started to read.[3] Despite the power and importance of literacy, it is difficult to assign a percentage to the functionary literate population due to the lack of surviving evidence.[4] It has

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[1] Moorhead, "Reading in Late Antiquity,"; Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education.*

[2] Morgan, *Literate Education,* 4.

[3] William A Johnson, "Learning to Read and Write," in *A Companion to Ancient Education*, ed. W. Martin Bloomer (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 137–48, at 140-1.

[4] Johnson, "Learning to Read and Write," 146-7.

been argued that the literacy rate was between 10% and 20% of the population.[5] The accurate literacy level is harder to gauge in communities whose language was not one of the dominant languages of the empire, Latin or Greek, as the surviving texts were often translated into one of these languages for administrative purposes, as Fewster mentions about Egyptian sources.[6] Even in communities where vernacular literacy occurred alongside that in the prevalent language of trade, very few people ever studied grammar or rhetoric. Those who continued their education at some point would have transitioned from student to practitioner who taught the lower levels of education while pursuing their advanced studies.[7] The literacy rate within the church would have arguably been identical to that of the wider context, given that there is no evidence that it differed except for cultural or economic reasons.[8]

This study takes the view that literacy includes the ability to read and write, although one might have been more advanced than the other, due to the teaching methods used.[9] While there is some evidence for literate education in situations other than a school or tutor at home, this is scant and inconclusive; how much informal instruction varied from more formalised education is impossible to show beyond some ancient scholars disapproving of the practice of not sending children to organised schools.[10] In incidences where literacy was passed from one literate member of the household to children of the house, it is likely to have followed at least the outline of the normal curriculum methods. There is evidence for this in the way Jerome instructs that young Paula should be educated: the only variation from the standard in his instruction was the use of the Bible rather than classical texts as educational material.[11] Since the principal skills required for reading were the same and there seems to have been a consistency in education methods around the Mediterranean, it is unlikely that such methods

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[5] William Vernon Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Gamble, *Books and Readers.* 5, Alan K Bowman, "Literacy in the Roman Empire: Mass and Mode," in *S3 Literacy in the Roman World* (JRA, 1991): 119–32, at 119-20.

[6] Fewster, "Bilingualism in Roman Egypt," 226-8.

[7] Morgan, *Literate Education*, 7.

[8] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 7.

[9] W. Martin Bloomer, "The Ancient Child in School," in *The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World*, ed. Judith Evans Grubbs and Tim Parkin (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2013), 444–61, at 451, 458.

[10] Bloomer, "The Ancient Child in School," 453.

[11] Jerome, *Letter,* 107.

varied very much but there may have been more focus on the aspects needed for a given trade.

5.a.α Education

During Late Antiquity, formal literate education preserved those who could afford to send their children and sometimes bright child slaves to school or hire a tutor.[12] This chapter focuses on literate education, as this is the aspect relevant to this study. There were many forms of education relating to specific trades and social levels, but these are not relevant to the church's literate background.[13] Literate education itself was considered key to the formation of character and often, affluent households would put time and care into choosing a wet-nurse (if the mother did not feed the child) and a *paedagogus* for a freeborn child.[14] The character of those who attended to a child during infancy and early childhood was considered important for the child's overall development. Formal education, under a tutor at home or at school, always started with the rudiments of literacy and numeracy before progressing on to the grammatical stage, which was taught using the classical texts of the Greek or Latin language (depending on where the education happened) generally between the ages of 7 and 11.[15] This primary education which led to literacy, followed the classical pattern in Late Antiquity with exercises to initially learn the alphabet, then proceed to syllables using oral and physical means, including writing, meaning that by the time a student could begin to read, they also had the rudiments of writing.[16] However, the physical evidence of this can be limited due to the use of wax tablets or other reusable surfaces for writing practice and because there was a heavily oral component in this kind of teaching.[17] The physical sites of schools were also often ephemeral, leaving little or no trace that archaeology could explore, making the reconstruction of the school environment hard to describe as it is dependent on what literary evidence exists and rare archaeological finds.[18]

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[12] Bloomer, "The Ancient Child in School," 451.

[13] Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women," 292.

[14] The selection of a wet-nurse is a complicated process which must be done with care according to Soranus, *Gynecology* 2.19-20.

[15] Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta,* 16-17; Bloomer, "The Ancient Child in School," 451.

[16] Johnson, "Learning to Read and Write," 137-9.

[17] Johnson, "Learning to Read and Write," 144-5.

[18] Bloomer, "The Ancient Child in School," 452-3.

Upon completing primary education, the boys could study under a *grammaticus,* covering grammar through literature and poetry, orthography, metrics, mythology, and geography. The curriculum might also include mathematics, music and gymnastics, although the inclusion of the latter subjects was more common in Greek than in Roman practice.[19] Once a boy reached 15 or 16 and could wear the *toga virilis,* the final stage of his education in rhetoric commenced in preparation for public life. As young adults, this might be conducted in their home city, or they may travel to one or more of the renowned centres of rhetorical and philosophical study to continue or expand their education before settling into public life.[20] This process might include the study of medicine and law, among other aspects of the natural sciences, as observed in the latter part of Late Antiquity; although these studies normally required travelling to a specific city, as only a few cities had schools in these subjects.[21] A core part of education at all levels was the development of virtues that prepared a child to become an upstanding citizen of his city and the Empire.[22] There was an association between literacy, good pronunciation and virtue in popular understanding. The system of education used through the Late Antique world, however, relied heavily on repetition and memorisation both orally and in writing, meaning that there was little distinction between being able to read and write at least at a basic level, although the wealthy would augment their ability with the use of skilled slaves.[23]

Education was not always split into neat parts as it varied greatly over the territories of the Roman Empire and also through time.[24] It is noticeable that many people from less well-off households, if they got the opportunity to gain literacy, would have only attended the primary stage to gain the functional level needed for the family business, as starting the education process did not mean that all would eventually study rhetoric. The primary stages of literacy

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[19] Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta,* 16, 17.

[20] Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta,* 16, Elżbieta Szabat, "Late Antiquity and the Transmission of Educational Ideals and Methods," in *A Companion to Ancient Education,* ed. W. Martin Bloomer, (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 252-266, at 255.

[21] Szabat, "Transmission of Educational Ideals," 256.

[22] Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta,* 17.

[23] Bloomer, "The Ancient Child in School," 458.

[24] Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta,* 16-17.

are well-exemplified from what is known of the Egyptian practice, which involved basic writing as part of acquiring familiarity with the letters and syllables before learning to read, as the ability to recognise them made reading *scriptio continua*(text written with no breaks or punctuation) possible.[25] There was also a distinction between being able to read the block text standard in teaching models along with the codices used by the church and the cursive script used by the more highly educated.[26]

5.a.β Literacy in societal practice

Given that literacy was a relatively rare skill and the ability to read beyond a very basic functional level even rarer, the practice of public and communal reading of texts was necessary for disseminating ideas. The publication of a text often occurred through public reading or the giving of manuscripts to specific individuals. The publication process made a text available and meant that the author relinquished control of the copying and editing of the published text.[27] Reading was usually a public or communal event such as the symposia aspect of a banquet and through it far wider parts of society than those who could read gained access to texts and the learning they contained.[28] Due to this public aspect of reading, the ability to read and enunciate clearly and well was a respected skill, especially considering that the texts were handwritten with varying amounts of clarity in *scriptio continua*.[29] This form of writing meant that the rigorous exercises in recognising letters and syllables, which made up a substantive part of early education and knowledge of the subject, were required to read fluently.[30]

The function of a letter bearer was also distinct in Late Antiquity and required literacy. The person taking the letter would usually have been present at its composition and possibly would have even been the scribe to whom it was dictated. This knowledge of the content was important as the person who carried the letter would have performed the first and crucial

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[25] Johnson, "Learning to Read and Write," 138-40.

[26] Choat and Yuen-Collingridge. "A Church with No Books," 126-7, 129.

[27] Gamble, Books and Readers, 83-4; Kim Haines-Eitzen, "'Girls Trained in Beautiful Writing': Female Scribes in Roman Antiquity and Early Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 4 (1998): 629–46, at 630.

[28] Alikin, *The Earliest History*, 148-50.

[29] Alikin, *The Earliest History*, 179.

[30] Johnson, "Learning to Read and Write," 138-40.

reading to the recipient as they would remember the exact way words were expressed at the time of writing since the performance conveyed much of the meaning of the letter.[31] The letter's importance was also because it was considered an expression of the author and equivalent to their presence when conveying ideas.[32] The initial reading was essential, as a text written in *scriptio continua* is rather difficult to read unless its content is known, meaning that subsequent readings, once the text was known, could be done by the local literate person, but the initial reading had to be done by a person knowing the content of the message. While the knowledge of the content was less critical for reading texts like imperial decrees as they usually followed a distinct formula, the initial reading by someone who knew the author's intent was vital for interpreting the text for heavily rhetorical texts such as letters.

5.a.γ Women's Literacy

There is some evidence in pre-Christian Roman society that women worked as "*librariae*, *a manu* and *amanuenses* (scribes, clerks and secretaries) and *lectrices* (Readers)."[33] Nevertheless, in many cases, the education of women or slaves took place for a limited number of reasons: to show off wealth, the need for literate people to run household finances, or for specific female-orientated professions.[34]

It tended only to be the primary education that girls could attend with boys outside the home, although there were always far more boys than girls,[35] with further progression occurring through private tuition.[36] The formal education of girls was considerably less common than that of boys, but this did not preclude girls from obtaining some functional literacy as with the case of many men who did not have the opportunity to gain a literate education formally.[37] The education of girls was never as consistent as for boys and relied more on the

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[31] Mayer, "Approaching Late Antiquity," 2.

[32] Alikin, *The Earliest History*, 159.

[33] Cloke, *Female Man of God,* 160.

[34] Morgan, *Literate Education,* 4; Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women," 293-4.

[35] Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta,* 18, 19.

[36] Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 135.

[37] Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women," 293.

will and capacity of their families to provide an education.[38] The point of educating women was more than practical, as education also included a strong moral element considered necessary in virtuous conduct and to equip daughters to be matrons who could be involved in raising their children.[39]

Records for literate women are less common than for literate men, but there is also reliable evidence that they existed. They did not just function within households; there are also cases of women who practised rhetoric in private (predominantly teaching other women), who had become accomplished lawyers or who practised medicine along with more rudimentary literacy and numeracy for those working in shops.[40] As noted in chapter 4, many midwives were functionally literate since midwives, women physicians, secretaries and bookkeepers were typically non-elite, often slaves or freedwomen. The implication is that at least some girls from these backgrounds must have gained literacy before receiving career-specific training.[41] This literacy facilitated their acquisition of medical or legal knowledge but also indicated a level of virtue since a core component of education was in virtuous behaviour as much as the acquiring of literacy.

5.b Literacy in the church

Within the church, literacy levels would not have differed greatly from wider society and may even have been lower than average in some congregations, especially small communities.[42] This limited number of literate congregation members would have led to a reliance on the few literate people to read texts to the rest of the community and retell stories from memory. While the education of children was important within the Jewish community, especially learning the Jewish faith and culture, this expectation did not necessarily lead to the boys receiving a literate education outside of the elite for economic reasons. At the same

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[38] Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women," 293.

[39] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 112, 148.

[40] Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women," 294.

[41] Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta* 18; idem, "The Education of Women," 294; Haines-Eitzen, "Girls Trained in Beautiful Writing," 636-9.

[42] Gamble, *Books and Readers,* 5.

time, it was strongly encouraged for boys to receive an education.[43] While Gamble makes much of the expectation to educate the boys and how valuable this was to the early Christian community, the true extent of Jewish literacy is unclear.[44] It is, however, likely that most of the rural Judean population was illiterate, while the urban centre of Jerusalem would have had higher literacy levels.[45] This suggests that when literacy was present, it was important to the church community as it was in wider society, due to its rarity.

The rarity of literacy was also complicated because there were varying levels of functional literacy and multiple languages, both spoken and written, with Greek being the literacy benchmark in the Eastern Empire. This complicated aspect of functional literacy within the church is evidenced by the references in Egypt to a Reader who "does not know his letters,"[46] and the fact that the first incidences of Greek texts with spaces between words and other reading aids such as punctuation occur within church texts.[47] The situation of literacy would also have been complicated by the fact that many people were poly-linguistic in antiquity, speaking both the local language and that of commerce (normally Greek), with some people being literate in multiple languages. The educational practices of the Christians do not seem to have differed from their non-Christian counterparts, as the children attended the same schools and did the same exercises with limited evidence of the work being differentiated.[48]

5.b.α Background, pre-200

While the church before 200CE is not the focus of this study, the prevalence of literacy and the status of the literate members of the community are essential for understanding later developments in the church. While there is very little direct evidence for literate church community members, there is some for the first two centuries of its existence. The likely

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[43] Amram Tropper, "The Economics of Jewish Childhood in Late Antiquity," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 76 (2005): 189–233, at 217-9.

[44] Gamble, *Books and Readers,* 7.

[45] Catherine Hezser, "The Languages of Palestine at the Time of Jesus," *Biblica et Orientalia* 89, no. 1 (2020): 58–77, at 74-5.

[46] *P.Oxy.* 33.2673, 34.

[47] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 74.

[48] Raffaella Cribiore, "Why Did Christians Compete with Pagans for Greek Paideia?," in *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Karina Martin Holgan, Matthew Geff, and Emma Wasserman (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 359–74, at 361-3.

format of Christian gatherings as a form of voluntary association supper during the first two centuries indicates the probable presence of literate community members.[49] Such events usually contained reading during the symposia after the food, providing an expected context for reading to occur.[50]

While the evidence for the use of literacy in the church is in part contextual, there is direct evidence for literate members of the Christian community in the first two centuries CE. In the texts which became the New Testament, there is an indication that Luke (who is referred to as a physician) was literate: this would have been essential for him to achieve medical training. The writer of Revelation also seems to have been literate due to the instructions given at the start of the vision:[51] likewise, Paul seems to have been literate, although he usually chose to use a scribe when writing his letters.[52] The use of letter carriers is most clearly seen in the letters of Paul, especially the letter to the Romans, which includes the recommendation for Phoebe, the carrier of the letter within the text.[53] While it is acknowledged that there has been some debate about the original inclusion of some or all of Romans 16 in the letter to the Romans, both Kerk and Dunn say that this view has generally been abandoned in favour of the original inclusion of the chapter.[54]

Other first and second-century texts also indicate the presence of literacy and the respect with which this was held. The author of *The Shepherd* of Hermas is instructed to write the message down in three volumes for distribution to the church.[55] Additionally, the genuine letters of Ignatius of Antioch indicate the presence of literate people in the communities

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[49] Valeriy A Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 17-23, 57-65.

[50] Alikin, *The Earliest History,* 18, 21-2, 62-5, 157.

[51] Rev 1.11.

[52] Rom 16.22.

[53] Rom 16.1; Anthony C Thiselton, *Discovering Romans: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (London: SPCK, 2016). 253.

[54] Leander E Keck, *Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 27-8, 368; James D G Dunn, *World Biblical Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Dallas: Word Incorporated, 1988), 884-5.

[55] Hermas, *The Shephard*, 8 (Vision 2.4).

because he wrote to the various churches and instructed one community to write to the church in Antioch.[56]

5.b.β Liturgical use

Reading within the church mirrored the function of literate people in wider society, relying on a small group of literate people to read texts to the rest of the congregation. The challenge of reading fluently, especially with little-known texts, led to congregations preferring to appoint a known good reader for doing all the reading performed publicly, giving rise to the office of the Reader.[57] From the third-century, it seems the Reader functioned as an official functionary within the Church, assisting yet independent of the other orders present, in some areas counted as equal to the Deacons and Presbyters.[58] Although the order of the Reader was later universally subsumed into the Minor Orders under the Deacon.[59] This change in status reflected the use of literacy as a selection criterion for the Major Orders and the consequential reduction in the importance of the Reader within the community.[60] Literacy remained a respected skill in the Church through its inclusion as an entry criterion for formal clerical roles.

The development of standardized liturgical services (reflecting the need to avoid the significant known heresies) increased the importance of clerical literacy since the service performance relied on the ability to read already written texts rather than improvising prayers based on a known theme. While written liturgical texts are rare, as with all manuscripts from the era of this study, only a few Eucharistic prayers survived the period embedded in larger documents.[61] Later manuscripts show a continuity with the surviving texts suggesting there were collections of prayers and services in use before the earliest surviving book of services which dates to the eighth-century.[62]

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[56] Ignatius, *To the Smyrneans* 11.3.

[57] Alikin, *The Earliest History*, 179.

[58] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 221-4

[59] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 221-4; Alikin, *The Earliest History*, 179-80.

[60] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 9-10.

[61] E.g., those preserved in Church Orders.

[62] Codex Barb.gr.336.

While the expectation for the Major Orders to be literate, especially the Bishop, developed over the first three to four centuries, it was not taken for granted that the Bishop or Presbyter presiding would be highly literate. This expectation of literacy can be seen in the surviving texts of the Liturgies of Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, where the Deacon has two principal tasks, one being the reciting of the litanies and the other telling the presiding cleric what to do. The situation of an illiterate Bishop also arises within the *Apostolic Church Order,* which gives specific instruction in this situation, a parallel provision being made in the *Didascalia*.[63] While literacy was important within the church, there was also a recognition that not all senior clergy would be literate, which contributed to the enduring importance of literate assistants for the senior clergy.

As noted in Chapter 3, the Cantor or Singer functions were linked to those of the Reader in the church canons and recorded ordination prayers.[64] The later practice in ordination where the chanter is given a Psalter indicates that at least by the eighth-century, the chanter was expected to be able to read the Psalms.[65] While this is not definitive evidence for Cantors being literate, when it is viewed alongside the expectation discussed below concerning the Daughters of the Covenant, it suggests that the Cantors were at least minimally literate in that they could recognise the sound blends which syllables make even if the meaning of the words was not always clear. There is evidence of this in some form of at least partially organised Choirs as early as the second-century, which are mentioned by Ignatius of Antioch.[66] By the mid-third-century, Choirs of children seem to have occurred in the church, following the pattern of wider society.[67] It is possible that some of these Choirs were made up of children who were learning to read, as part of the process of education discussed earlier in this chapter. It would have led to memorising verses and passages, which influenced Jerome's instructions to start with the poetic verses for a child's education.[68] With the evidence

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[63] ACO, 16, DA, ch4.

[64] 3.b.α.2.

[65] Bradshaw, *Ordination Rights*, 139.

[66] Ignatius, *To the Romans* 2.2.

[67] Valeriy A Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 224-5.

[68] Jerome, *Letter,* 107.

available, it is not possible to say if Cantors were literate adults, adults who had memorised the music or children and teenagers who were becoming literate who sang in church alongside their other studies.

5.b.γ Other church uses

The function of literate members within the community was not restricted to liturgical functions. The sources suggest that in many places Readers fulfilled a dual role, often acting as curators of the community's books, whether kept in a communal library or the Readers' households.[69] These tasks were not exclusively the preserve of Readers since there is a suggestion in Alexandria that there were women scribes involved in the copying activities of the catechetical school.[70] Jerome also used literate assistants to transcribe his writings when he could get them.[71] This utilisation would suggest that the role and function of literate members of the church community were wide and varied, reflecting the many local needs of the community.

5.b.δ Literate women

The διάκονος (Deacon) Phoebe as a letter bearer is the clearest example of a literate woman in the church before the era of this study and indicates not only a literate woman but that the primitive church accepted her as such, placing her in a position of authority.[72] Literacy in the church is a complex and poorly recorded issue, complicating looking for literate women in the church compared to investigating literacy in general. Women made up only a small number of the literate and it was almost exclusively women from the upper classes who achieved a functional level of literacy sufficient for ordination.[73] Some of these literate women would have studied philosophy, law, or medicine, as there are records of women in all these professions.[74] Few records of who and how reading was done during services

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[69] Lorne D Bruce, "A Note on Christian Libraries during the 'Great Persecution,' 303-305 A.D.," *The Journal of Library History (1974-1987)* 15, no. 2 (1980): 127–37.

[70] Eusebius EH, 6.23.2.

[71] Gamble, *Books and Readers,* 139.

[72] Letter to the Romans Ch16.1.

[73] Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women," 293.

[74] Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women," 294.

survive, meaning it is impossible to recognise women in this function apart from an allusion in the catechism of Cyril of Jerusalem to women reading among themselves.[75] Outside official Church functions, there are records of women writing to communicate with spiritual elders.[76] There is also evidence that some wealthy women composed Christianity-themed texts to express their beliefs outside of an official setting in the church, which was not always well received.[77]

5.b.δ.1 The problem with evidence

Evidence for literate women in the Church is scarce and mostly preserved in the letters written by and to women.[78] There are other types of writing by women, namely the martyrdom of Perpetua and Egeria's travel diary, along with Melania's lost notebooks.[79] Additionally, there are two incidences of a Canto being composed by a woman, one by Faltonia Betitia Proba and the other by Empress Eudocia.[80] This evidence shows that there were literate women but not whether they had official positions in the church. women also commissioned inscriptions, but this is not direct evidence of literacy, even though it shows respect for the written word, as the mason, fresco painter or mosaicist may well have been literate even if the customer was not.[81] This evidence for women's literacy is considerably scarcer than for men's literacy, but it consists of the same types of writing.

There is slightly stronger evidence for literacy among the Daughters of the Covenant since they had the task of singing within the church. Singing would have required some literacy due to the range of texts and music required in church services. The Canons in eastern Syria mandated that Daughters of the Covenant were educated to be able to perform their

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[75] Cyril Protocatechesis 14.

[76] E.g., Jerome, *Letter*, 22, 54, 107, 108, 120, 123, 130.

[77] Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Gospel "according to Homer and Virgil": Cento and Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 141-2.

[78] E.g., John Chrysostom *Letters to Olympia.*

[79] Joy A Schroeder and Marion Ann Taylor, *Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters through the Centuries* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2022), 20.

[80] Schroeder and Taylor, *Voices Long Silenced,* 20-1.

[81] Hemelrijk, "The Education of Women," 294.

function.[82] This area is very complex and is most appropriately explored by scholars who specialise in this. There is also evidence of literate women within Egypt through the *Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea,* which instructs Virgins to read upon waking.[83] As already noted, midwives in Antiquity were expected to be literate as they had an important role in labour and birth and throughout a woman's life.[84] Literacy also guaranteed a level of moral education due to the education methods, which were considered important by higher class families when engaging the services of a midwife.

5.b.δ.2 What can be said?

What can be said about women and literacy is that there were literate women in the church. The role of literate women in the church is more difficult to assert than the role of literate men, as there is no clear and consistent evidence outside the early monastic communities. The Daughters of the Covenant provide one clear example of women singing within a liturgical setting. It is impossible to definitively affirm or deny the presence of women serving as Readers due to insufficient evidence. The presence or absence of women in literate orders is probably a case of absence of evidence rather than evidence of absence in almost all situations. The only clear evidence is from the Daughters of the Covenant and within some monastic communities. There is evidence of women's involvement in singing within the church as Cantors between the second and sixth centuries and having a role as late as the thirteenth-century.[85]

This evidence is scarce even within the generally limited evidence for Cantors or Singers. The scarcity of evidence means that while it is possible to say that women were performing the function of Cantors or Readers in some parts of the Church in the East during the first millennium and probably during the era of this study, it is not possible to say with clarity at any given time and place that it occurred. Part of the challenge faced in seeking records of women singing is that the feminine for Chanter – ψάλτρια or ψάλτις – is a recent invention

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[82] Harvey, "Performance as Exegesis," 49.

[83] *Gnomai* 6.5.

[84] Osiek, Macdonald, and Tulloch, *Woman's Place,* 55; Soranus *Gynecology*, 1.3.

[85] Salapatas, "Role of Women," 178-81.

and all historical documents use the masculine.[86] As previously discussed, this does not exclude the presence of women holding literate positions in the church community; it just makes it nearly impossible to detect.

5.c Regional variations in the church

The evidence for literacy in the church is not evenly distributed by region or time, as the presence was assumed by many of the ancient writers. As illustrated by Appendix 2.4, while there is widespread evidence for Reader and some evidence of the Cantors, this evidence is not distributed uniformly. The records are also not uniform across the time period of this study, with some writers paying more attention to the order than others. The three regions used in this study show similarities in recording the Reader but differences in the functions Readers perform and the acknowledgement of literate women within the church.

5.c.α Eastern region

What is noticeable is that the records of Readers and other literate orders in the eastern region occur in the fourth and fifth centuries, apart from one, third-century Church Order. The references are also distributed across multiple source types, as discussed in chapter 6. This evidence indicates widespread knowledge of the Reader and the associated order of the Cantor in this region; however, it does not give us the whole picture of the levels of and use of literacy within the church. The relatively high numbers of letters that have survived in the eastern region of the Empire suggest a prevalence of literacy among some classes. The fact that most surviving letters were written by Bishops or others who can be associated with the higher social strata of society is unsurprising as this is the part of society most likely to be educated.

The earliest mentions of the literate orders in the church are in Church Orders, the *Didascalia* and its direct derivative, the *Apostolic Constitutions*. These passing references, while indicating the role and importance of the Reader, do not give a more comprehensive

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[86] Salapatas, "Role of Women," 181.

understanding of their function. The various canonical references throughout the fourth and fifth centuries manage the ability of the literate orders to marry and what they were permitted to wear when serving. Literary sources provide the bulk of the evidence for literacy in the church and the application of this literacy. The historical texts describe Readers acting as the chair in council meetings, as translators and directly involved in church politics, often highlighting their less than appropriate schemes.[87]

One of the notable things about the eastern sources is the clear evidence of women's literacy. The letters to Deacon Olympias in response to her letters indicate her literacy, stemming from her privileged upbringing.[88] Additionally, the fact that Basil the Great corresponds with women indicates their literacy as does the recognition that his sister was involved in his early education.[89] The detail provided by Jerome in his letter on the upbringing of young Paula also gives an insight into the pedagogical practices employed for engaging small children, including girls, in learning, along with Jerome's interest in ensuring that girls from families with high social standing were literate.[90] The passing comment by Cyril of Jerusalem that women catechumens could read quietly among themselves from the scriptures while awaiting the ritual's completion for others also indicates that at least some of those approaching baptism were literate.[91] The canonical requirement for Daughters of the Covenant to be sufficiently literate to perform their tasks in church is also worth noting as evidence of the spread of literacy. There is clear evidence for the presence of women who had functional literacy, although the evidence explored for this thesis cannot provide a complete picture of the situation of women's literacy within the wider picture of literacy in the Eastern Empire.

5.c.β Africa

The evidence distribution for literacy in the African region is sparser than for the Eastern region, with a smaller number of overall sources. This evidence is spread unevenly from the

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[87] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* book 5.10, 6.2.

[88] In that as a woman from one of the richer families of the empire she would have had access to education as a child, see earlier discussion in this chapter on literate women.

[89] See discussion in Appendix 2.1 on who Basil the Great wrote letters to.

[90] Jerome, *Letter*, 107.

[91] Cyril, *Protocatechesis* 14.

early third to mid-fifth centuries, meaning that there is a strong indication that literate people held a place of importance in the church of Africa throughout this study, even though the evidence is limited in other ways. As with the other regions, the evidence for Readers occurs across a range of source types, but there is little evidence for Cantors assisting them.

The earliest evidence for the region comes from Tertullian in the form of inferred evidence through his criticism of heretical groups.[92] It is also from this time in the early third-century that evidence for literate women occurs in the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity,* which is presented as an autobiographical text. As examined in Appendix 2.2, the autobiographical nature of the work is mostly accepted by scholars and means that it provides a rare piece of probably direct evidence for women's literacy in Late Antiquity.[93] The numerical bulk of the evidence comes from the later third-century in the letters of Cyprian of Carthage. Cyprian's letters are important as they show Readers acting in services along with being scribes and letter carriers, as discussed in Appendix 2.2.

The other records show scattered occurrences of recording the Reader's order across North Africa and Egypt. Most of these sources only indicate their presence and their liturgical importance. As also discussed in Appendix 2, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 33.2673 provides significant non-church evidence for Readers and their function in looking after the books of the church. This text also indicates the possibility of literacy in local languages rather than Greek or Latin. Additionally, the *Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea* records not only the instruction that Virgins should read upon waking but stresses that attending church to hear the scriptures read and know the readings are a core part of the Christian life.[94]

5.c.γ Western region

The western region has the least evidence for the literate orders within the texts which have survived, and all the mentions are datable to third-century Rome and fourth-century southern Gaul. Fewer than ten references to the Reader and one to the Cantor means that it is difficult

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[92] Tertullian, *Against Heretics* Ch91.

[93] See discussion at 4.b.β and Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1055.

[94] *Gnomai* 6.5, 8.11, 10.4-5.

to assess the presence of literate clergy in the western region. The reasons for the sources' scarcity are discussed in Appendix 2.3, but the fact that there are limited sources makes the analysis more difficult.

The third-century texts suggest the presence of the Reader and give some indication as to their function in the community's liturgical life. The *Apostolic Tradition* gives details of function or orders, including the Reader, while the letter of Cornelius lists the presence of the orders.[95] While important, these do not help in the contextual understanding of literacy. While giving evidence for functions, Ambrose of Milan's late-fourth-century discussion does not associate these with named orders.[96]

There are other indications of literacy within the Roman church through the letters of Jerome, who communicated with Roman women on many subjects, including girls' literary education.[97] The evidence is not as obvious or plenteous for this region as the other regions within the church documents.

5.d Conclusions

Literacy and education had an important role within Late Antique society, as historians have discussed, especially those focusing on education. The link this had to the developing church is less researched, although the leaders of the Late Antique church often benefited from an advanced secular education before they entered the church. The texts examined and the work of other writers suggest that literacy levels and practices within the Church were comparable to those in the local social context. There is enough evidence to suggest that the clergy, including the Minor Orders, had a higher literacy level than the local social context.

Most of the evidence for literacy as important liturgically in the church comes from the recording of the literate orders of the Reader and Cantor. There are other more practical indications in the letters exchanged among Bishops, between Bishops or senior monastics and

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[95] AT, 10-13; Eusebius EH, 6.43.11.

[96] Ambrose, *Duties of Clergy*. 1.44.

[97] Jerome, *Letter*, 107.

those seeking guidance, and other mentions of literate activity within the community, such as that by Cyril of Jerusalem. There is also a wide-ranging corpus of theological writings by Bishops and others, reflecting the church leaders' educational level.

Literacy was influential in the Late Antique church for liturgical practice and other aspects of church management. There is also evidence that some women were literate and used this skill in private devotions and communications, except for the Daughters of the Covenant, who had a public function. While it is difficult to assess accurately the level of literacy in the church from these sources, they can contribute to more comprehensive studies of literacy in the era.

6 Church and Law

The relationship between the church and secular Law within the Roman Empire was complex and evolving, meaning it changed substantially over the first four centuries of the common era. This chapter will talk about the legal developments through the period of this study and then use four case studies to explore the relationship between the Church's internal discipline, recorded in Church Orders and Canons, with the state law in the *Codex Theodosianus.* The aim is to show that the two sets of regulations complemented each other, and both were responses to or results of societal changes rather than drivers of change. The dating of both laws and canons is discussed in Appendix 2.1a. The case studies focus on the relationship between clergy and secular responsibilities, consecrated celibacy, regulations around the appointment of clergy, and dress codes.

The interplay between church practice and state law was complex and evolved significantly during Late Antiquity. The legalisation of Christianity resulted in a gradual systematization and harmonization of canons and Roman Law, although within the church, the Canons were given preference if the two forms of governance disagreed.[1] This complex relationship grew out of the labyrinthine complexities of Roman Law, which resulted from the law's developing scope and the expansion of Roman citizenship.[2] The interactions between Christian practice and Roman Law started early, the authorities viewed Christianity as a legitimate part of the Jewish faith during the first centuries CE, therefore legal, even when the populace wanted to persecute Christians.[3] There was no specific legislation outlawing Christianity during the first two centuries; instead, when prosecutions were brought, it was under the guise of other accusations, such as illicit beliefs or avoiding the tax levied on Jews.[4] While not protecting Christians, the Antonine Emperors also did not allow unrestricted persecution, defining it as individual transgression and forbidding seeking Christians out, while not prohibiting bringing

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[1] Erickson *Challenge of Our Past,* 18-9.

[2] Jill Harries, "Armies, Emperors and Bureaucrats," 41-7.

[3] Marta Sordi and Annabel Bedini, *The Christians and the Roman Empire,* (London: Routledge, 1983), 23-5,43.

[4] J. E. A. Crake, "Early Christians and Roman Law," *Phoenix* 19, no. 1 (1965): 61–70, at 61-2, 67; Sordi and Bedini *Christians and the Roman Empire*. 31, 47-9.

charges against them in the late-first and throughout the second-century.[5] In 249 CE, the first official separation of Christianity from other religious practices occurred, requiring every person in the empire to perform a public sacrifice. The deity in question was not specified, leaving it up to local custom, yet the fact of the sacrifice set observant Christians apart from other people.[6] Later anti-Christian initiatives continued to connect the traditional ritual worship of ancestral gods with the proper behaviour of Roman citizens.[7] The early-fourth-century persecution of Christians was not universally enforced with the edicts of 303CE lapsing in the Western empire as early as 305CE and the dying Galerius granting clemency to Christians in 311CE.[8] After rising to power Constantine with Licinius officially recognised Christianity in the 313CE Edict of Milan, which brought an end to persecution across the Empire.

The immediate situation after the legal recognition of Christianity by Constantine was not triumphal domination of Christianity but rather a cohabitation of Christianity alongside other beliefs.[9] While Julian did attempt to reinvigorate Pagan practices combined with active persecution of the Church, the legal situation predominantly favoured the increasing Christianisation of the Empire.[10] The legislation, as recorded in the *Codex Theodosianus*, illustrates a progression of laws that limit animal sacrifices and related activities; laws also protected temples, shrines and non-Christians who lived quietly from attacks from hostile Christians.[11] The persecutions in the fourth-century were predominantly inter-Christian, involving the Imperial Church, which recognised the Nicaea to Chalcedon councils as they occurred and various other groups which rejected one or more of these councils. The persecution was also against the Nicene church at intervals when the Emperor supported one of the other sects. Examples of this relationship can be seen in the imperial suppression and persecution of all churches other than the imperially sponsored Nicene church by the end of

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[5] Sordi and Bedini *Christians and the Roman Empire*. 57-8.

[6] Mattias Gassman, *Worshippers of the Gods Debating Paganism in the Fourth-Century Roman West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 7.

[7] Gassman, *Worshippers of the Gods,* 7-8.

[8] Gassman, *Worshippers of the Gods,* 20; Sordi and Bedini *Christians and the Roman Empire*, 116, 122-7.

[9] Jaclyn Maxwell, "Paganism and Christianization," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 849–67, at 849-50.

[10] Maxwell, "Paganism and Christianization," 849-50, 855-6.

[11] Maxwell, "Paganism and Christianization," 862; CTh 16.10.2-6, 16.10.104-111, 16.10.24.

the fourth-century.[12] Another example can be seen in the political persecution of John Chrysostom for ecclesiastical reforms.[13] It becomes necessary to ask what persecution means and recognise the complexities of the relationship between the Church and the imperial law, which varied between groups that understood themselves to be Christian.[14]

Within the complex and changing legal situation, this chapter focuses on the Nicene expression of the Church, which was eventually formally recognised by the Empire. All forms of Christianity recognised or otherwise laid out behaviour expectations for congregation members. This expression of expectations happened in the form of direct teachings, Church Orders and canons, the last of which is the focus of this chapter. In many respects, canon law or other church codes of conduct paralleled Roman law in proclaiming what the leaders thought the people should be doing rather than reflecting the realities of life.[15] There were also differences in the expression of expectations; the church used Canons to present ideals against which actions were measured, not a minimum of behavioural expectations.[16] The Canons underwent reinterpretation after the legalisation of Christianity and continued to be adapted to the new legal situation of the church as it evolved with the highest degree of systematization occurring within the Eastern Roman Empire.[17]

6.a Secular roles

The involvement of clergy in secular roles was a complex situation during Late Antiquity. By the beginning of the third-century, it was expected that the Bishops would support the clergy serving under them through the resources of the Church, possibly augmented by their resources. This support for the clergy as leaders of the church is witnessed in the letters of

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[12] Geoffrey E. M. De Ste. Croix, "Heresy, Schism, and Persecution in the Later Roman Empire," in *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, ed. Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 201–52, at 204-6, 223-4.

[13] Palladius, *Dialogue*, Ch5, 8.

[14] Éric Fournier, "The Christian Discourse of Persecution in Late Antiquity: An Introduction," in *Heirs of Roman Persecution: Studies on a Christian and Para-Christian Discourse in Late Antiquity*, ed. Éric Fournier and Wendy Mayer (New York: Routledge, 2020), 1–16, at 1-2.

[15] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 3; Salzman, "Conversion of the Roman Empire," 362.

[16] Erickson Challenge of Our Past, 14.

[17] Erickson Challenge of Our Past, 17-8.

Cyprian and the expectation in Church Orders that people would support the clergy financially.[18] With the legalisation of Christianity came a new set of problems related to cultural practices and beliefs, along with government finances. This case study will examine the non-church beliefs and laws around the secular responsibilities of the clergy and the Church's expression of such understandings before comparing the two approaches.

Codex Theodosianus, 16.2 is dedicated to regulating clergy within the Roman empire. The notable thing about this collection of laws is the repeated insistence that clergy are exempt from responsibilities relating to the governance of towns and cities. There are restrictions on this exemption, but it is a clear tenet of the legal regulation of clergy that they are exempt from serving on town councils and being supported by the church, as is shown in 16.2.6. This law also restricts this exemption from service on councils and limits the numbers the church can have as clerics so that the city councils are still appropriately staffed and funded.[19] The underlying principle is that the local elites should take the secular obligations and the church support the poor.

The range of laws in 16.2 expresses the challenges faced by the legislator in controlling who received exemptions from service on town and city councils. These restrictions on the recruitment of clergy may have been related to the funding challenges faced by the empire, a problem which members of the decurion rank exacerbated by fleeing their responsibilities in urban centres to their rural estates or joining the clergy who were exempt from these duties.[20] The clarifications provided by 16.2.6, limiting recruitment of clergy, reflect this need to prevent men of the decurion rank from avoiding their duties by becoming clergy. The traditional priesthoods had not conflicted with service on city councils and, in some circumstances, were linked with such service.[21] The total exemption of all Christian clergy posed a governance problem for the Empire, which relied on local councils for the upkeep of urban areas exacerbating the problems coursed by the lack of people with the financial ability

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[18] E.g., Cyprian, Letter, 39, DA, Ch 9.

[19] CTh, 16.2.6

[20] Esler, "The Mediterranean Context," 12; CTh, 16.2.2.

[21] Hans-Josef Klauck and Brian Mcneil, *Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 32.

to serve on city councils.[22] While Bishops from the mid-fourth-century took over some aspects of patronage from the church's funds, most of the remedying for the problems came from new laws to try and make people serve and eradicate abuses.[23] The clerical exemption also provided a visible way for the Emperor to support the Church publicly and may have been a way of encouraging conversion even with the discussed limitations on who could be enrolled as clergy.[24]

The exemption of Christian clergy from various forms of public service was parallel to the exemptions granted to the priests of the traditional Roman religions.[25] The continuation of this exemption meant that the value of the church's prayers was equated with those of traditional beliefs for the empire's protection. The official recognition marked a considerable change from the popular understanding of Christians in the second and third centuries that their failure to sacrifice to or participate in the spectacles of the traditional gods was both unusual and the cause of the problems besetting the empire.[26] The new privileges indicate a continuation of underlying beliefs about the importance of protection by divine powers, but an external shift in allegiance leads to the granting of traditional exemptions to the new spiritual elite in the church.

Church practice laid out restrictions on clergy about serving in secular roles, although the first explicit restrictions applied to the whole church came in the Council of Chalcedon. The canons were enacted in two ways: in restrictions on who may be ordained and in regulating the actions of existing clergy. Chalcedon reiterates earlier canons banning paying to be ordained and requiring ordinations to be to a specific church rather than of a general nature.[27] There is also a list of the few exceptions to a total ban on clergy performing business transactions. The only time such activities were permitted was when a cleric had the guardianship of children (when there was no alternative) or for the cleric entrusted with the

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[22] Harries, "Armies, emperors and bureaucrats," 45-6.

[23] Harries, "Armies, emperors and bureaucrats," 46-7.

[24] Salzman, "Conversion of the Roman Empire," 365-6.

[25] Salzman, "Conversion of the Roman Empire," 366.

[26] Margaret Ruth Miles, *The Word Made Flesh: A History of Christian Thought* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Education, 2012), 12-13, 18-19.

[27] Council of Chalcedon, *Canon* 2, 6, 10.

necessary business dealings of the church.[28] The church's ruling is stricter than that of state law, as is exemplified by canon seven of Chalcedon:

> Τοὺς ἅπαξ ἐν κλήρῳ τεταγμένους, ἢ καὶ μοναστάς, ὡρίσαμεν μήτε ἐπὶ στρατείαν, μήτε ἐπὶ ἀξίαν κοσμικὴν ἔρχεσθαι· ἤ, τοῦτο τολμῶντας, καὶ μὴ μεταμελομένους, ὥστε ἐπιστρέψαι ἐπὶ τοῦτο, ὃ διὰ Θεὸν πρότερον εἵλοντο, ἀναθεματίζεσθαι.

> (Those who at any time who has been appointed clergy or made monks we have commanded that they shall not serve in the army, nor shall they accept a secular position or honour. If they dare to do these things through presumption, and they refuse to repent and return to their former choice for God, let them be anathematised).[29]

Before Chalcedon, no direct legislation on serving in civic or military positions existed; instead, the church was governed through its tradition and customs, as exemplified by the Apostolic Tradition.[30] This view within the church, that it is not proper for practising Christians to be involved in various specific industries, reflects the moral codes outlined in the *two ways texts* and the fluctuating relationship with the Roman state outlined in the introduction to this chapter.[31] These ancient moral ideals are continued in the canons issued at Chalcedon, which develops the tradition of adapting these practices to the reality of living in a Christianized Empire. This adaption is achieved by expecting the highest level of behaviour from the clergy and monastics, along with addressing the reality of complex ecclesiastical and political interactions, which were especially fraught in the reign of Theodosius II, preceding the council of Chalcedon.[32] There is evidence of Christians serving in civic positions throughout the period of this study, both before and post the official recognition of Christianity: this presence of Christians within civic structures is witnessed by the specific targeting of Christians in civic positions by Diocletian and Galerius, alongside the laws which relieve clergy of the duties of civic government.[33] The canons of Chalcedon show that it was

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[28] Council of Chalcedon *canon* 3.

[29] Council of Chalcedon *canon* 7 (Own translation).

[30] AT 16.

[31] Examples of *two ways texts* are found in *the Letter of Barnabas* and *The Didache.*

[32] Evagrius Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History:* 1 and 2.

[33] Sordi and Bedini *Christians and the Roman Empire*. 126-7; CTh 16.2.

considered that clergy and monastics should still be held to a higher standard of non-involvement in any activities related to governance. The Bishops were meant to be leading non-political figures in their community, providing patronage and funding for specific projects that benefited everyone.

In several respects, the laws recorded in the *Codex Theodosianus* and the canons of Chalcedon have the same intention: to preserve the dignity and honour of those serving the church. In this case, the canon stating that clergy should not be involved in civic affairs postdates the first issuing of the law by over 100 years. The reason for this secular legislation is difficult to assess as the original preamble of the law is lost; it is probably in response to a question by a local governor; later recorded laws in responding to other questions or queries repeat the principle for a specific situation. The canons in this area express a similar sentiment to the law code but adapt to the concerns and internal politics of the church.

6.b Consecrated Celibacy

Consecrated Celibacy was influential in the Late Antique Church. The orders of Virgin and Widow were well established by the start of the third-century. Celibacy was not part of the Roman culture before the ascent of Christianity except for some small religious groups, such as the Vestal Virgins in Rome.[34] This expectation of marriage and childbearing was not only culturally strong but set out in legislation by Emperor Augustus.[35]

The change began in the early-fourth-century when the emperor Constantine partially repealed the law of Augustus and removed the penalties for childlessness.[36] There are many reasons for this change, and it did not simply reflect the influence of Christian Bishops, as some writers assert.[37] The policy change is as likely to have been pragmatic as ideological: a new emperor would have needed to curry favour with the establishment to secure his rule. A

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[34] Harris, *Law and Crime* 91-3.

[35] Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Family and Inheritance in the Augustan Marriage Laws," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 27 (1981): 58–80, 60.

[36] CTh 8.16.1.

[37] Arjava, *Women in Late Antiquity,* 79.

new emperor often caused a renegotiation of power and instability within the governing elite of the empire,[38] meaning he had to find a way to win allegiance to secure his rule.

The family was always an area where emperors tried to win favour with the nobility, although family virtue and a woman's fertility were controlled by custom and *Raptus* laws. The *Raptus* law required the death of all involved or implicated in the event, as the woman or girl was viewed as complicit by default, except in particular circumstances, for instance, in the Christian Empire, the Consecrated Virgin.[39] These laws were principally about maintaining family honour and wealth through the proper procedure of betrothal: the laws governing this were found with the other laws on property in 9.24 and 25 of the *Codex Theodosianus*. The original intention of the laws recorded as 9.25.2-3 seems to have been the protection of Consecrated Virgins. Wilkinson argues that all the laws included in 9.25 were interpreted to apply to both Virgins and Widows in the context of the *Codex Theodosianus*, even if this was not in their original intent.[40]

The *Codex Theodosianus* records the change in how consecrated women of the Church were viewed in Roman society over the fourth and fifth centuries. Wilkinson suggests that 9.25.1 was written originally to include Widows under the existing protection against *Raptus* and proposes that the interpretation evident within the *Codex Theodosianus* is the result of the understanding of the laws evolving in response to societal change.[41] Wilkinson's proposal suggests an evolution in the interpretation of laws in some circumstances, reflecting a change in societal views on particular subjects. This proposal provides a way to understand Wilkinson's perceived mismatch between later use of laws such as the one at 9.25.1 with what can be ascertained from their original purpose and context. The interpretation of the three laws recorded in *Codex Theodosianus* 9.25 as applying to both Consecrated Virgins and Widows affected the reception and interpretation of the laws as much as their original context. According to Wilkinson, this reinterpretation has affected the understanding of the

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[38] Blockley, R. C. "The Dynasty of Theodosius," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 13 ed. Peter Garnsey and Averil Cameron, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997),111-137, at 128-9.

[39] Robinson, *The Criminal Law*, 72. CTh. 9.25.3

[40] Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows," 165.

[41] Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows," 142-9.

laws to the extent that further clarification was required in the *Codex Justinianus*.[42] The *Raptus* laws of the *Codex Theodosianus* 9.25 provide an example of changing interpretation reflecting changes in wider society without promulgating new laws since the older texts still applied with interpretation.

In addition to these laws in book 16.2, there are recorded laws around the conduct of male clergy. 16.2.20 is primarily concerned with inheritance and states that clergy should not be visiting celibate women. 16.2.44 instructs that clergy may "have within the bounds of his own home his mother, daughters, and sisters german; for in connection with these, the nature permits no perverse crimes to be considered."[43] This law only applied to celibate clergy, as the subclause allowed those who had married before ordination to remain with their spouse.[44] The permitted categories of companion are all biological in nature, mother and daughter being self-explanatory, the sister german being a rarely used term for a full biological sister.[45] This choice of translation is specific to the Pharr translation of *germana* to 'sister german' or full (genuine) sister, as the translation of the *Codex Justinianus*, simply uses sister in the translation, indicating that it is a variation in methods of translation rather than the original text.[46] The parallel legislation in the First Ecumenical council in the Greek record of the Canons only states sister.[47] All these laws are concerned with the overt behaviour of the clergy and keeping them beyond reproach.

The Church recognised the vocation of celibacy from the very early days,[48] with celibate Widows and consecrated Virgins being mentioned throughout church literature of the first and second centuries. The first organisational rather than theological discussions of the practice are found in Church Orders. The *Didascalia* also makes mention of Widows in the

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[42] Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows," 165.

[43] CTh 16.2.44.

[44] CTh 16.2.44.1.

[45] "Sister-German, N.," in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, March 2022), https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/180436?redirectedFrom=sister+german.

[46] *Codex Justinianus* at 1.3.19;

[47] Agapios and Nicodemus, *Πηδάλιον (the Rudder),* Council of Nicaea *canon* 3.

[48] Matt 19.12; 1Cor 7.7.

context of temple imagery and theology.[49] The *Didascalia* links theology with liturgical practices while it sets out the place and conduct of celibate women within the Church. The *Apostolic Tradition* mentions Widows in its earliest form, with Virgins being added in the second redaction suggesting the development of the orders in the western region was contemporary with that in Antioch.[50]

The codification of the Church's position began with the Councils of Elvira and Ancyra. The Council of Elvira created three canons concerning consecrated women, two on Virgins and one on Widows.[51] The Council of Ancyra deals with consecrated Virgins who marry and celibates who cohabit.[52] Over these two councils, there are three canons about Virgins and one referring to Widows, suggesting there may have been more challenges in governing Virgins than Widows. The concerns about celibates cohabiting were not unfounded, as some celibates practised cohabitation to prove they had overcome the desire of the flesh; to prevent people only pretending to be celibate or making accusations of such pretence, the Church insisted on separation.[53] This concern also appears in secular law, which distinguishes between lawful marriage and cohabitation of the clergy.

The First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea issued canons on celibates suggesting that their control was an issue in the East as well as the West.[54] As discussed in chapter 4, the position and situations of Virgins within the church were complicated and varied from place to place, following regional customs and traditions.[55] The Eastern tradition defended the sanctity of clerical marriage alongside that of celibacy, a defence which also appears in the *Codex Theodosianus*.[56]

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[49] DA, ch9.

[50] AT, 10, 12.

[51] Council of Elvira, *Canon,* 13, 14, 72.

[52] Council of Ancyra, *Canon,* 19.

[53] Arjava, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 162; John Chrysostom, *Sermons, 1Corinthians,* 44.

[54] Council of Nicaea, *Canon* 3.

[55] See 4.c.

[56] CTh, 16.2.44.1.

The dual recognition of marriage and the celibate life is upheld at the local council of Gangra in Asia Minor in the mid-fourth-century, explicitly defending these two ways of living.[57] These canons seek to uphold the sanctity of marriage and the celibate life, showing the parity of sanctity in the eyes of the Church in the Eastern Empire. The parity is also borne out by the canonical letter of Basil the Great, who rules that Virgins who have a relationship are to be treated in the same way as adulterers.[58]

The synod of Carthage in 419CE allowed Readers to be married before consecration, which follows the pattern observed in other texts that allowed Readers to marry.[59] In the same canon, it sets the age of consecration of Virgins at 25, the same age as that of Deacons. This relatively high age requirement reflected the high theology around celibacy and possibly the influence of earlier Carthaginian writers. 25 was also the age of full legal majority in Roman law, which may have influenced the age for the consecration of both Virgins and Deacons.[60]

Since the nature of canon law is reactive, it suggests that there were not as many concerns around consecrated women as around other areas in the early fourth-century, except that some women were leaving orders to marry.[61] While reactive, the formulation of canon law also seems to seek to prevent the possibility of accusations of misbehaviour and to balance an overzealous promotion of celibacy by some groups.[62] The canons of the church dealt with the whole range of problems related to having long-term celibate clergy within the church, while the laws deal with specific crimes which occur at the intersection of the sacred and the rest of the world.

Although the Church undoubtedly influenced state law since Bishops could hold influential positions in the imperial court, this has been overstated as wider societal shifts also had an

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[57] Council of Gangra, *Canons* 9, 10.

[58] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 217 Canon 60.

[59] Synod of Carthage *Canon* 16.

[60] Lewis, Andrew. "Slavery, Family, and Status," in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Law,* ed. David Johnston, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 151–74, at 162-3.

[61] Arjava, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 156.

[62] This was a problem as can be observed in the canons which censure those who promote celibacy above marriage.

effect. The application of *Raptus* laws to celibates seems to be primarily independent of the canonical tradition, although there are parallels in some regions. The *Raptus* laws preserved in the *Codex Theodosianus* are probably influenced by the popular perception of Christian celibates being like the Vestal Virgins as a direct influence from the Church. The wider discussions on women's behaviour may also have significantly influenced the development of these laws. The interplay between perception and the codification of practice in law or canon is an area that could benefit from further research.

6.c Appointment of clergy

The Acts of the Apostles and the letters of St Paul record that the selection and appointment of the clergy were important to the church from very early on. As the church became more organised, a system of choosing clergy within congregations with the people's assent developed. This selection of clergy was not free of problems and especially after the legalisation of Christianity, constraints began to be placed on who could be set aside as clergy. The theology of ordination evolved through Late Antiquity and into the Early Middle Ages. This evolving theology also led to the development of a complex web of canonical traditions around ordination. Paralleling the development of internal regulations, emperors also legislated to limit who could become clergy. These laws were often linked to the laws exempting clergy from civic duties.

The principal concern of the emperors was that those chosen for the clergy were not from the classes which could be called on to perform public duties. This is a result of how funding for towns and cities was organised in the Roman Empire, with the wealthy of a city being responsible for the upkeep of public facilities and monuments through locally raised taxes and from their private wealth.[63] Clergy with private wealth or who had been registered as traders were expected to continue to pay tax on either inherited estates or trade profits as expressed in 16.2.15 of the *Codex Theodosianus*. Those Minor Clergy, such as Gravediggers who also did some minor trading based on the work of members of their household or garden produce to subsist, were exempt from the local trade taxes (16.2.15.1). Clergy with wealth

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[63] Klauck, and McNeil translator, *The Religious Context*, 32.

were expected to provide the normal financial support and horses for imperial messengers (16.2.15.2) while being exempt from serving on councils. In 16.2.24, the exemptions are expanded to cover all clergy suggesting a development in the practice or perception of clergy in society.

As discussed in the case study on secular responsibilities, the exemption from serving on public councils was significant for the clergy.[64] Nevertheless, it came with specific legislation limiting whom the church could appoint to serve as clergy, as detailed in 16.2.6. Besides this, there were also specific regulations on the appointment of women clerics in the form of women Deacons set out in 16.2.27. This legislation on appointing women Deacons also details the disposal of their property so their children would not be deprived of their inheritance. This provision suggests that the imperial powers were more concerned about the loss of wealth from families via women entering the clergy than men. The concern is probably justified seeing that they had already legislated against men of wealth serving in the clergy, whereas this prohibition did not exist for women. There was probably also a concern over the woman Deacon being taken advantage of by some male clergy for their wealth, as discussed elsewhere.

The appointment of clergy within the church evolved as a practice and, as mentioned previously, the first signs of this appear in New Testament texts. The final decision seems to have lain with the Bishop or council of Bishops who performed the ordination.[65] In the third-century, Cyprian defended his unilateral actions in appointing Readers and Subdeacons.[66] This need to defend the decision suggests that this was a departure from normal practice, which envisioned the involvement of other clergy in the process. Although this evidence is only clear for the practice in Carthage, it indicates how things may have happened more widely.

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[64] See section 6.a especially the fourth paragraph.

[65] Instructions for this are preserved in various Church Orders including the AT, 10-13; AC 2.1, 3.1.1, 3.1.9-10.

[66] Cyprian, *Letter*, 23, 38.2.1-2, 39.4.1-3, 5.2.

Once the councils of the Church begin to legislate on who may become clergy, the focus is on moral behaviour. This was a response to unsuitable people who found their way into the ranks of the clergy as the church grew, along with evolving definitions of suitability as contexts changed. These rules were set out most clearly in the canons of the Ecumenical councils, although they also appear in local collections of canons. One of the most important canons of Nicaea was canon 2, which forbade neophytes from being raised to the status of the clergy. A consensus had developed that the time of testing people's behaviour before elevation to leadership should be separate from that for entry into the church.[67] This practice of delay led to the expectation that people would serve for a time in the lower orders of the clergy before ordination. This process was intended to span multiple years to prove the suitability for promotion, although history records some notable exceptions, such as Ambrose of Milan.

Many other canons detail the behavioural expectations for clergy in all areas of life, which could act as a barrier to being consecrated as clergy or lead to removal from those ranks. The expectations put forward at Nicaea and later councils for clergy were considerably stricter than was enjoined by the same councils on other members of the church community. This difference is seen in greater laxity permitted for laity rather than greater expectations for clergy, as the clergy were always supposed to live up to the ideals of the Church. As noted, Tertullian did not see this split between clerical and lay behaviour, and before the legalisation of Christianity, there was no noticeable difference in expectations.

Although the church governed various areas of the behaviour of clergy, the canons had very little to say on how the clergy or clerical families earned extra money to support themselves if they did not charge interest on loans, as instructed by canon 7 of Nicaea or engage in prohibited professions. The prohibited professions applied to all Christians who could not be in good standing with the church if practised. Such professions were prohibited due to their close link to pagan practices (including teaching) because they involved bloodshed or denigrated another person. These are similar to the list in the *Apostolic Tradition* of those

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[67] Council of Nicaea, *Canon*, 2.

who could not be received as hearers of the Gospel.[68] Small-scale craftwork within households, which produced a little surplus for helping the poor, was the expected behaviour of clergy as set out in the tax laws.[69] Non-clergy had greater freedom of profession but were still expected to live up to the church's moral standards.

The problems of indiscriminate ordination do not appear directly in the church's canons beyond the restating of the complex rules regarding who was eligible for ordination. Greater clarity on the situation and the problem behind the civil law comes in the complaint from Basil the Great about unworthy clergy and his instructions that he must approve all future ordinations to any rank.[70] Basil's canonical letter also details the conduct expected of clergy and practical things such as setting the minimum age of consecration of Virgins at 25, which aligns with the age of legal maturity.[71]

Church practice and state law coincided in many areas regarding whom to ordain. The civic laws were mostly concerned with protecting family wealth and taxes. On the other hand, the Church was more concerned with moral conduct and maintaining high standards within the clergy. This differing focus meant that in many areas, the two sets of regulations ran in parallel on different grounds as they dealt with different aspects of the appointment of clergy.

6.d Dress codes

Law and custom around clothing within Late Antique society performed a function very much like that earlier in Antiquity; effectively, clothing displayed social status.[72] This meant there were socially enforced norms regulating who could wear what in the third-century, especially concerning women. As Winter explores in *Roman Wives, Roman Widows,* this

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[68] AT 16.

[69] CTh 16.2.10.

[70] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 54.

[71] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 199 canon 18.

[72] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 4-5.

profoundly impacted the early development of the Church for various reasons.[73] The church had a clear conservative moral standpoint, which emphasised fidelity and the production of children within marriage; however, this was not always adhered to by believers. The evidence for this comes from the social problems Winter describes as occurring in the first and second centuries, which were still present in the church between the third and fifth. The developing monastic and ascetical communities were radical in their rejection of family but formed an internal family-like structure for their governance.

These social challenges, specifically those related to the behaviour of certain women, meant that the law recorded as 16.2.27 includes a paragraph on the appointment of women Deacons specifically addressing clothing and hair.

> Women who cut off their hair, contrary to divine and human laws, at the instigation and persuasion of some professed belief, shall be kept away from the doors of the churches. It shall be unlawful for them to approach the consecrated mysteries, nor shall they be granted, through any supplications, the privilege of frequenting the altars which must be venerated by all.… This shall indisputably serve as a law for those who deserve correction and as a customary practice for those who have already received correction, so that the latter may have a witness, and the former may begin to fear judgment.[74]

This law is very clear about the inappropriate types of apparel for women within the church. This law probably relates to women's behaviour in some ascetic groups that were not under the control of the church and had been censured by the council of Gangra.[75] The nature of the ascetic groups which engaged in practices such as women shaving their heads was outside the societal norms, which may have influenced the writing of laws against the practices to try and control these undesirable groups, especially due to their effect on the aristocratic women of Italy.[76] There was also potentially a risk of scandal since cutting short a women's hair was one element of the punishment of adulterers under Roman law.[77] Since once the act was

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[73] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 77-169.

[74] Pharr, *The Theodosian Code,* p444-5.

[75] Salzman, "Conversion of the Roman Empire," 374.

[76] Salzman, "Conversion of the Roman Empire," 374.

[77] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 82.

done, it would not be possible for outsiders to know if it was a voluntary act or a legal punishment, both the Church and law sought to prevent confusion by stating that women with hair cut short could not be admitted to the church, whatever the reason for this was.

There are extensive discussions by authors such as Tertullian on the proper attire of women,[78] while other writers like John Chrysostom discuss it when they are providing commentary on relevant biblical passages.[79] However, the church's canons are comparatively silent on what Virgins or other virtuous women wore beyond modesty and veiling, which seem to have been relatively universal expectations. These expectations for modest unadorned dressing are set out in the *Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea*: the instructions here read like a catechism on behaviour with clothing among moral expectations and reinforcing social normality.[80] The *Gnomai*, however, are not canon; rather, they are moral instructions and as such, they indicate practice in one area of the church, which reflects the moral institutions given in other regions (often in different ways).

There was an agreed convention for the dress of modest matrons.[81] Since the writings indicate that consecrated Virgins were considered married to Christ, their clothes are likely similar in form to those of married women, but also distinct. The veiling service for Virgins alluded to in some writings paralleled the veiling of a bride within the wedding.[82] The modest wife wearing a veil as a symbol of her status and the veil of a consecrated Virgin would have acted similarly as a visible indication of her societal position.[83] This parallel dressing, even before the specific legal protection of Virgins, would have meant that Virgins were seen in wider society as respectable wives and would have received the same protection.[84]

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[78] Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins, Exhortation to Chastity*, 1, *Monogamy*, 11, *To His Wife,* 3,6,7.

[79] John Chrysostom, *Sermon* 8 on 1 Timothy.

[80] Gnomai, 5.7, 6.1-2, 6.4-5, 6.9-16.

[81] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 78.

[82] Ambrose, *Duties of Clergy*, 1.44.

[83] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 78-81.

[84] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 83-4.

The Minor Orders were one area where the Church set out canons about dress codes. The Subdeacons and Readers were prohibited from wearing the same clothes as the Deacons, indicating that there were some attempts by Minor Orders clergy to claim a higher position by wearing the same clothes as their superiors.[85] Such behaviour was a breach of social etiquette, relating to what clothes people in different positions could wear, although not strictly illegal in state law as it pertained to positions within the church.[86] The vigorous enforcement by the synods of the proper dress codes reinforced the idea that the Church abided by the same principles as the rest of society over clothing indicating position.

The fact that civic law restated this dress code practice resulting from a specific incident shows how important the legislator considered it. The church was content to employ teaching and preaching to remind her people of what was expected of them.

6.e Conclusion

These case studies suggest that the Roman legal code and church canon system ran parallel in the four areas investigated. In many situations, the canons provided practical details on how laws were enforced within the Church community; in others, they held Christians and especially clergy to a much higher standard than the civil law did. In a few areas, such as dress codes, the church did not feel it necessary to legislate specifically in all areas since the social convention was sufficient, except for a few canons regarding clerical clothing.

The two sources of evidence are complementary; both indicate that the Church was an integral part of society influencing and being influenced by the wider context. This evidence of contextual influence reinforces the idea discussed elsewhere that the Church acted within the social customs and norms of society. This acting within social customs was not as restrictive as is sometimes portrayed by historians; it was complex and dynamic, with various people wielding power differently. The paralleling of customary privileges granted to priests of the traditional gods for the church's clergy also reinforces this understanding that the

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[85] Synod of Laodicea, *Canon* 22, 23.

[86] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 2.

Church replaced older beliefs within the functioning of the Empire, at least legally. This close relationship between the Empire in the later centuries of this study means both laws and canons are important sources for understanding the place of the Church in society, along with a broader conception of how the interactions occurred.

7 Conclusion

This chapter summarises the principal findings of this thesis and addresses the various aspects of the aims presented in the introduction. This study aimed to survey the mentions of Minor Orders of the (imperial) Christian Church in literary sources between 200 and 451 CE. The relationship between the Major Orders, particularly the Deacon, and the Minor Orders were explored, including a specific consideration of the possible understanding of the Minor Orders as an extension of the diaconate in chapter 3. The involvement of women in the church, especially in recognised orders was the focus of chapter 4, with a specific discussion of how this related to the involvement of women in the wider socio-political context. The societal literary and educational context was presented in chapter 5, with a focus on how this impacts the understanding of literacy amongst Christians and the use of literacy in the liturgy. Chapter 6 explores the legal framework behind clerical relationships and how this was codified in both church canons and state laws, adding to the understanding of the relationship between the Imperial Church and the Roman Empire.

This chapter summarises the thesis' findings from the preceding chapters and then explores what this means for the understanding of the relationship between Minor Orders and Deacons within the period of this study. The study's findings on the interrelationship between the church and its wider social context where relevant to the exploration of ecclesiology are then explored. Finally, the implications for wider scholarship in ecclesiology and church history are considered, including the impact on existing approaches and where to take the research next.

7.a Summary of findings

The principal understanding which has come out of this research is that Late Antique ecclesiology is complex and contains considerable regional and cultural variation. This complexity comes from a greater contextualisation of sources than had previously been used routinely in ecclesiology, resulting in the identification of several aspects of local variations which had been glossed over in previous scholarship. The complexity is also true in relating

the information on Minor Orders and clergy more generally to the wider socio-political context.

Chapter 3 explored Minor Orders' ecclesiology and their close link with the Deacon. Along with showing the complex web of interactions between the Minor Orders themselves and the Deacon, a theological understanding of the Minor Orders as facets of the diaconal role was posited. This theological understanding was also partnered with an exploration that expanded the idea of Christians as the soul of the world to refute some previous scholars' ideas and suggest one understanding of how the Late Antique Christians conceived their internal relationships. This chapter also challenged the way Deacons are portrayed in some current scholarship, including exploring the intricacies of translating διακον- words in both genders. A compromise to the διακον- words debate is also suggested, as the Deacon's situation was not as simple as having one set of defined roles.

Chapter 4 focused specifically on women in general society and women within the diaconate, including the Minor Orders, incorporating how this related to the social position of Late Antique women. This chapter provided an overview rather than situational representations due to the complexity of the issues being considered. The overall conclusion was that women in the Church were meant to behave in the same way as those outside it, guided by the same cultural expectations. This practical conservatism was linked to a theological revolution so that it did not scandalise those outside the church community. This chapter also highlighted the regional variations in how women participated in ministry, which reflected the inculturation of the Church into the local context.

Chapter 5 investigated literacy and education, providing an overview of the Late Antique context and then applying it specifically to the church. This overview was achieved by drawing on the history of literacy and education as well as ecclesiastical research to develop an understanding of the context in which the church sources were composed. Within the church context, the importance of literate clergy in the form of Readers and Cantors within and beyond liturgical practice is illustrated. The presence of literate women within the church is also shown, but while there is evidence for women's literacy the evidence for women

performing official literate functions is minimal and subsequently non-conclusive. While evidence of the literate orders occurred across the Empire, the sources are difficult to draw a conclusive understanding from beyond the development of literacy as a defining characteristic of the clergy.

Chapter 6 examined the laws which specifically related to Minor Orders or clergy in general. These showed that in most cases, the state law codified something first and the church added its gloss through the canons afterwards. In some cases, there is evidence that a custom in the church was codified in law and then became canon. The historical evidence suggests that legal codes were reactively developed in response to specific questions or petitions to the emperor, who normally ruled according to the social consensus. The social conventions were paralleled in the church through the production of canons by councils; however, a direct influence in either direction is impossible to prove.

7.b What can be said about Minor Orders and Deacons?

When defining each Minor Order, the definitions presented in 1.e.β are a good working basis for our understanding, as they categorise the principal and shared characteristics of the orders. The evidence from the era of this study supports the definitions but would need testing in other eras as the roles of the orders continued to develop as the church's liturgical practices and cultural conditions changed. When defining the orders in the context of the existing ecclesiology, the image suggested in 3.c.δ of the Minor Orders as facets of the Deacon seems to sum up both their position within the church hierarchy and their practical activities. This clear association with the Deacon, as is discussed at 3.c, especially in subsection 3.c.γ, allows them to be incorporated into the ecclesiological images of Late Antiquity. Including Minor Orders into the concept of the diaconate and understanding diakonia is a breakthrough in understanding both. However, this new concept presented requires further practical and ontological exploration within Late Antiquity and other eras.

The idea of Minor Orders as facets of the diaconal function relates to the concept posited in chapter 3 for the understanding of the order of the Deacon. That positioning of the Deacon in

the established patronage structure allows for the contextualisation of the Deacon within the complex patterns and webs of patronage, practically and liturgically. Once the contextualised image was constructed it was used to engage with the ongoing debates on the understanding of διακον- words, the result of this was the creation of a new interpretation that accommodated and harmonised both existing interpretations of these words.

7.c What can be said about the interrelationship of the Church and the World?

The evidence examined suggests that the church paralleled wider society in expectations of behaviour, suggesting that the Late Antique church was part of the wider community and differed significantly only in religious practices before the church became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. The cultural expectations about the relationships between different social strata were paralleled between levels of clergy and the relationships between clergy, laity, and catechumens within the church. This transfer of expectations included recognising how clothes identified a person's place in society, as examined in 6.d. The preservation of the patron-client structure and paterfamilial authority, which centred on the Bishop, was essential within this. In this way, the church navigated its social contexts by adopting and adapting secular structures.

7.d What needs to be reconsidered and where next?

The investigations within this thesis have shown the need to explore ecclesiology within a socio-political context as part of its society, and not external to it, whilst recognising the profound social differences between geographic regions. This contextualised approach to the study of ecclesiology is somewhat uncommon, as shown in the literature review, with only a few scholars treating the Late Antique Church as a fully integrated part of the wider society. This approach is effective in the limited range of this study and could be applied to the study of Minor Orders in other eras and all other aspects of ecclesiology. Alongside the contextualisation of ecclesiology, it is also important that the study of theology and liturgy are incorporated into historical studies of the church, as these three aspects were not discrete

entities but part of a whole. The investigation of ecclesiology and diaconate, including Minor Orders, must be reconsidered in the light of a church that was in, yet not of, the world. Other areas of history could then inform about the social interactions and customs, illuminating further obscure passages in church texts. So, alongside our colleagues in other branches of history, there is considerable scope for improving the understanding of the relationship between the Church, Christianity as a way of life and the wider social context.

There also needs to be a reconsideration of the way ecclesiology is presented. As expounded in 3.a, the Late Antique church's self-understanding was not as a fixed hierarchy but as levels of service set apart for God, which centred on the service of others rather than a structure of authority. This reconsideration would also include the current debate around the διακον- words; in 3.d α.1, which suggests the two current interpretations do not have to be mutually exclusive but represent different aspects of understanding, especially once the full breadth of the meaning of the word "servant" in English is understood. Additionally, in 3.d α.2, the understanding of feminine uses of διακον- words and their translation is explored to clarify what can be complicated uses with subtly different meanings.

This research also creates new opportunities to explore the practicalities and understanding of the diaconate in its most comprehensive form. This means that it is possible to speak to the active conversations about the diaconate detailed in 1.c.α, addressing both the historiographical aspects and the practical uses of the research. The contextualisation of this research counterbalances the extremes seen in some areas of Deacon scholarship as to the presence of women in clerical roles. The present research also illustrated the wide range of functions inherent within the diaconate and expressed within the Minor Orders, and therefore it contributes to the discussion of the roles the Deacon can take within the church. This work is also pertinent to the resurgence in explorations of the diaconate in various traditions, as scholars struggle with the relevance of the diaconate in traditions centred on the Presbyter. This relevance is achieved by highlighting the inherent adaptability and variety in the diaconal functions and by shifting the focus from the question 'what did Deacons do?' to 'what did it mean to be a Deacon?'. This change in focus is needed because the ontological understanding of Deacons, diakonia and the diaconate provides more significant

opportunities for interpreting the understanding of the Deacon's functions and adapting it to new and changing contexts as it has been adapted in the past.

This research provides an alternative contextualised account of the situation of women in the ancient church and their ecclesiastical positions, which can provide opportunities to develop discussions with various aspects of the ecclesiastical context of this research. The present conclusions are relevant to the current debates in the Roman Catholic tradition about Deacons, their position in the church, and the presence of women in this role from a historical standpoint. The contribution of this thesis to the diaconate discussions in the Anglican tradition relates more to the theological expression of the diaconate and a greater understanding of the role and function of the Deacon as a minister distinct from the Presbyter. The contribution of this study to the discussions within the Orthodox Church is twofold in explicitly addressing the challenge of what the Deacon is from an ecclesiological perspective and illuminating the myriad functions of the Minor Orders as they are still in active use in this church, as a separate but equally important area in the functioning of the Church. Besides this direct contribution to the ecclesiological debate about the Deacon, the proposed theological understanding also provides a clear function and position for the laity within the church community, a debate often linked to the Deacon's function.[1]

New opportunities are opening for the contextual and ontological investigations of ecclesiology, as already stated: alongside this is the chance to reconsider certain assumptions in the understanding of the diaconate. The study of the Minor Orders themselves also shows promise as an area of study within diaconal ecclesiology, as an area that could aid in the understanding of specific functions and activities of the Deacon. The need for specific geographically limited studies alongside those of individual texts to illuminate the regional complexity in the Late Antique church is also illustrated by this study. This more specific contextualisation will aid the development of the understanding of the church's growth more significantly than with historical study alone, which tries to encompass the widely variant traditions in one narrative.

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[1] Discussed in full at, 3.d.α

7.e Final Thought

This research has shown the complexity of looking for little recorded functionaries within the church and understanding them within their cultural context. While the specialised research is only summarised, this has allowed the covering of far more areas than would otherwise have been possible. The aim to define the Late Antique Minor Orders within their context has been achieved, but within this process, many new questions have arisen about how Ecclesiology and its highly enculturated expressions are understood. As Pylvänäinen points out, "there is still much to discover during the twenty-first-century,"[2] a sentiment with which the author agrees. As we begin to contextualise sources and reintegrate areas in which academia has artificially separated, many new understandings will be explored and assumptions overturned.

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[2] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 248

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Glossary

Altar – (a) the table which may be fixed or movable upon which a sacrifice is made, also known as the Holy table in some texts: (b) the area in which the Altar or holy table is situated, in western texts and translations often rendered as the sanctuary.

Anti-donatist – writings or people opposed to the Donatist movement.

Anathematize - ἀναθεματίζω - literally to curse, used in Church texts to describe the process of declaring that an idea or writings were heretical.

Arian Christianity – the form of Christianity which taught that Jesus was a created being

Arius – a fourth-century Presbyter in Alexandria.

Autocephalous – self-governing.

Byzantine tradition – the oral and written tradition of the Orthodox Church, especially that associated with the See of Constantinople.

Canon - ὁ κανών - rule, standard, in church usage normally refers to guidelines issued by councils, local synods or individual Bishops which set out standard behaviour in the church community.

Christology – the study of Jesus Christ according to His divine and human nature and their characteristics.

Church – ἐκκλησία – refers to the community of Christians and the organisation of this community can refer to the community at a local, regional or pan-regional level.

Church Order – a document that records how the church was meant to be organised and aspects of theology, concerning the congregation or group of congregations for which it was created.[1]

Confessional polemic – the assertion of an opinion or approach to a subject is correct based on a confessional understanding which does not necessarily hold up to scrutiny from alternative viewpoints.

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[1] Discussed at 2.d.α.1.a.

Confessional approaches – an approach to research guided by a specific belief; in the context of theology or church history, this is often the need to prove or disprove the narrative of a specific confessional group or church.

Council of Chalcedon – synod of Bishops held in the city of Chalcedon in 451CE, also known as the 4th Ecumenical Council.

Creed - σύμβολον τῆς πίστεως – Symbol of Faith, or rule of faith, principally used in baptismal confessions of faith and the Nicaea-Constantinopolitan declaration of faith.

Deacon – ὁ/ἡ διάκονος- (a) the lowest of the major orders, second declension occurring in both genders, (b) messenger or agent commissioned to act on behalf of another, (c) attendant possibly but not necessarily in a ritual context[2] (d) a servant.

Diakonate – διακονία- adjective referring to the order actions of the Deacon in a broad sense.

Deaconess - ἡ διάκονισσα - (a) the wife of a Deacon, (b) a woman Deacon unordained (as in canon 19 of the council of Nicaea), (c) rarely an ordained woman Deacon mostly in later texts.

Diachronic approach to history - This approach focuses on the change process, whether dramatic or gradual.[3]

Donatism - ὁ Δονατισμός (Latin: Donatismus) – a schismatic highly puritanical group which developed in fourth-century North Africa in response to persecution, notably this group rejected any compromise with the Roman State and rejected the validity of any sacraments performed by a cleric who had in their view been compromised during the persecutions.

Eastern Orthodox –an alternative term for the Orthodox Church is less used now due to the presence of diaspora communities globally.

Ecclesiology – the study of the church.

Ecclesiastical History – the history of the church or the church in context.

English tradition – a specific narrative tradition of writing history which developed in the sixteenth-century and profoundly influenced the way history is studied and taught in

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[2] b and c based on Collins, "A Monocultural Usage: διακον-," 295-6.

[3] Lipartito, "Historical Sources and Data," p286.

the British Isles, which is intrinsically linked to one understanding of the English and, to some extent, British identity. This tradition is the principal methodology behind several philosophic interpretations of history, heavily relying on narrative presentation to prove their point. This is explored further by Claus, Peter and John Marriott in chapter 8 of *History: An Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice*.[4]

Episcopos - ὁ ἐπίσκοπος, **-** (a) Bishop, (b) overseer, (c) guardian.

Episcopate – the office of the Bishop or overseer.

Espiscope – ἐπισκοπή - (a) literal care, oversight, supervision, (b) wife of the Bishop, (c) woman Bishop, rare use, (d) Bishopric.

Gnostic Christianity – a dualistic form of Christianity that focused on special or secret knowledge and the need to escape or overcome the physical world, which was regarded as inherently evil.

Grey texts – a historical history; these are important texts for understanding how people in the past understood their past; they can persevere texts which are otherwise lost but are more reliable about their situation than the past events they record.

Great Book of Needs – the priest's book of prayers and services in the Orthodox Church.

Healing rituals – religious rights or practices performed in the hope of achieving healing via divine intervention.

Hermeneutics of suspicion – the methodology of examining the origin and context of a document, including assuming that the received context and interpretation are not necessarily the original ones.

Heresy – ἡ αἵρεσις – a group which has separated from the dominant tradition for theological reasons.

Historical critical – a form of historical study where the author tries to prevent their standpoint from affecting the text.

Initiation – (a) the process of entering an organisation, (b) in a church context, the process of entering the church.

Late Antiquity – approximately late-second to mid-fifth-century CE.

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[4] Claus and Marriott, *History: An Introduction*, chapter 8.

Liturgy – λειτουργία –the work of the people; it refers to Eucharistic services and also to the sacramental life in general.

Metropolis - ἡ μητρόπολις – a large city, often the chief city in an administrative region.

Minority history – the name given to the study of any minority group in a historical context, often applied to any focus that is not about educated men of European heritage. Minority histories often overlap with sector histories, but the minority can also be present across multiple sectors within history.

Modern approaches to history – approaches to studying history linked to the philosophical concept of modernism or modernity.

Montanist – a group focused on ascetical practices emphasising prophecy and apocalyptic beliefs that originated in the second-century CE.

Mysteries – an alternative name for sacraments used within the Eastern church tradition.

Narrative tradition – the practice of telling history as narratives and meta-narratives often closely linked to a teleological view of history.

Oriental Orthodox - the communion of churches that reject the council of Chalcedon; this includes the Syrian and Coptic traditions, among others.

Orphan – in Roman law, any minor who had lost their father even if they still had a mother; it is also used in the writings of some Church Fathers to describe the congregation of a church that did not have a Bishop.

Orthodox Church – sometimes known as the Greek Orthodox due to the traditional use of Greek as the core theological and liturgical language (as opposed to Latin, which defined the Western ecclesiastical tradition), there are currently between 14 and 16 autocephalous churches within this communion of churches.

Paterfamilias –*sui iuris* head of a family and property owner, normally male, principal legal actor within a Roman family.[5]

Patriarchate – the senior diocese in a group of dioceses, the Late Antique patriarchal sees were Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem.

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[5] Osiek, Macdonald and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place,* 154-5.

Postmodern approaches to history – the approach of studying history through the philosophical concept of postmodernism.

Potestas – literally power – was used for the (male) guardian of orphaned children in Roman law who was appointed by the father's will to act in his stead until the children came of age.

Presbyter - ὁ πρεσβύτερος, - (a) old man, (b) elder, (c) intermediate grade of Major Orders within the Church.

Presbyterate – τό πρεσβυτέριον - order of the Presbyters.

Presbytera - ἡ πρεσβῦτις/πρεσβυτέρα – (a) old woman, (b) wife of a Presbyter, (c) woman Presbyter (rare).

Primitive church order – the Church Orders and practices coming from before approximately 200CE.

Primitive uniformity – the viewpoint that the church was uniform in practice at the beginning and diversity developed later; liturgically, this was debunked by Bradshaw in *The search for the Origins of Christian Worship.*

Pseudepigraphal texts – texts which purport to be written by a particular writer but are proven for various reasons to have been written by another writer, often at a later date.

Raptus – abduction possibly including sexual assault.

Roman Empire – an empire centred on Rome from 27BCE until the mid-fifth-century, the Empire contained two distinct parts: the predominantly Latin-speaking western regions, which collapsed in the mid-fifth-century, and the predominately Greek-speaking Eastern region centred on Constantinople, which continued until the fifteenth-century.

Rubric – the instructions included in liturgical texts to say what people should be doing, often printed (or written) in red ink.

Schism – separation within or from the local church community can be on ideological or practical grounds.

Sector history – the study of history within a specific sector, i.e. medical, or looking at a specific section of society, i.e. women.

Secular - nonreligious, in the context of this thesis, is used to refer to philosophies or activities not overtly connected to religious practices.

See – the seat and jurisdiction of a Bishop.

Socio-political history – the study of history through social and political lenses, often one of the principal components of minority and sector histories.

Sons and Daughters of the Covenant - Bnay and Bnat Qyama – a celibate group within the Syrian Christian tradition that has strong similarities to the order of the Virgin in other areas of the church but also some specific characteristics.

Sub-Roman - the term used to designate the period and society of Britain after the withdrawal of the Romans but before the invasions of the Saxons, Jutes and Angles.

Synchronic approach to history- In this approach, the very pastness of the past is of primary importance, along with demonstrating the difference from the present.[6]

Synagogue model of ecclesiology – the model that works from the principle that early ecclesiology developed out of the Synagogue practices of Late Antiquity Judaism.

Syrian Church – the church in Syria and further East, after Chalcedon was not in communion with the See of Antioch, often split into East Syrian and West Syrian traditions.

Teleological tradition – the tradition in history that views history as working towards a definite endpoint or telos in the future.

Temple Theology – the theology of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, by some writers, the distinct theologies of the first and second temples are distinguished.

Theologian – Θεολόγος – (a) the one who undertakes the academic study of theology, (b) title given within the Orthodox tradition to a select number of highly influential saints in recognition of their sanctity and contribution to the study of theology.

Typicon – the rule of life of a community incorporating worship, work, food and rest, commonly associated with the monastic tradition within the Orthodox Church; it also covers parish and diocesan practices as the guiding principle of common life.

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[6] Lipartito, "Historical Sources and Data", p286.

Whig History – a historical tradition that grew out of the political views of the Whig party in the 18th and 19th centuries; this tradition stressed individual freedom and looked at the current British society as the pinnacle of history.[7]

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[7] For future information see, Faculty of History, *The Whig Tradition*, University of Cambridge, accessed May 30, 2020, https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/prospective-undergrads/virtual-classroom/secondary-source-exercises/sources-whig.

Appendix 1, Timelines

Africa
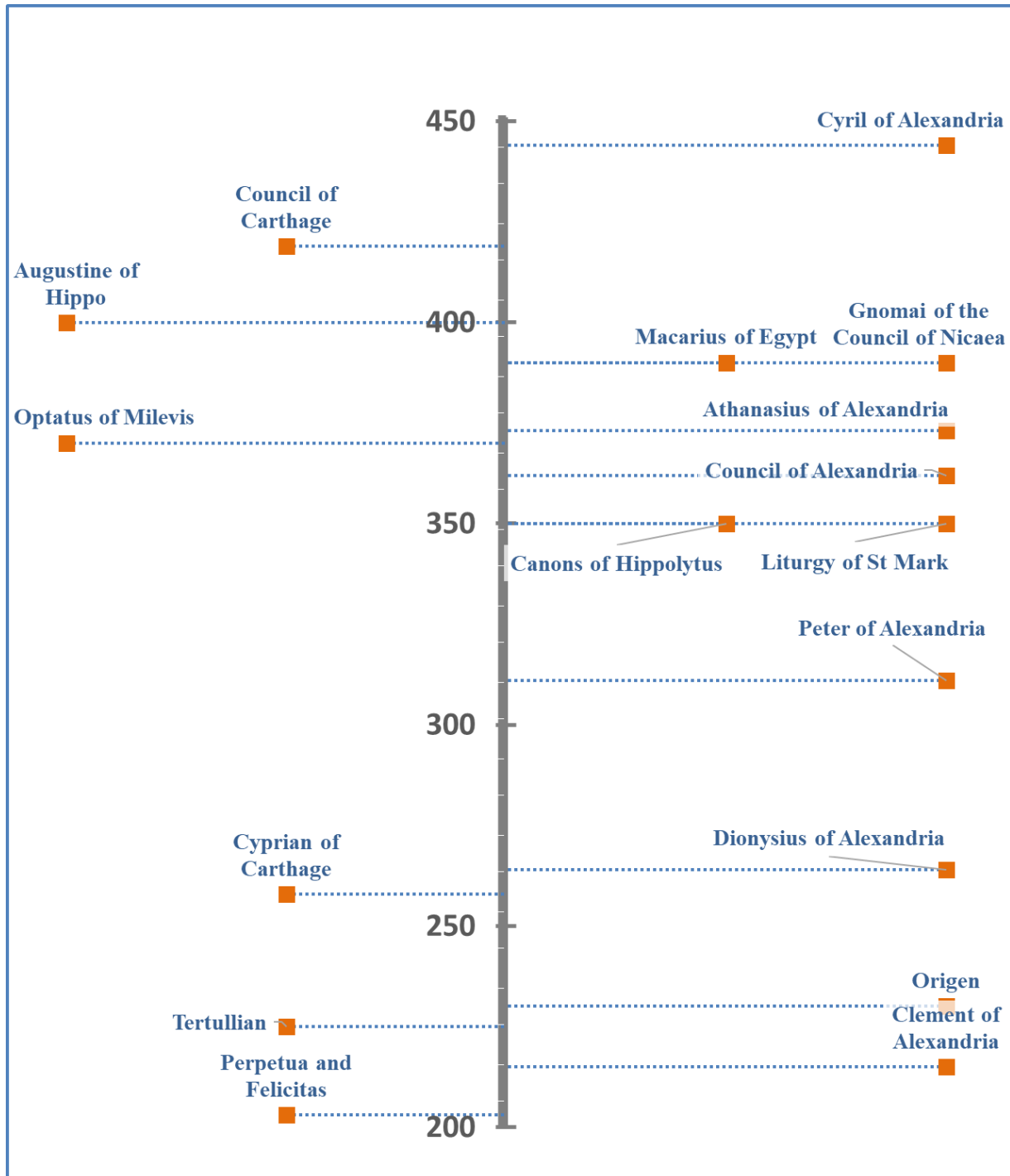
East Region

Western Region

Leo the Great

Vincent of Lerins

450

Patrick of Ireland

Council of Orange

John Cassian

Sulpicius Severus

Ambrose of Milan

400

Council of Saragossa

Council of Aquileia

350

Council of Arles

Council of Elvira (Spain)

300

Apostolic Tradition

Minucius Felix

Cornelius of Rome

250

Commodianus

Hippolytus

200
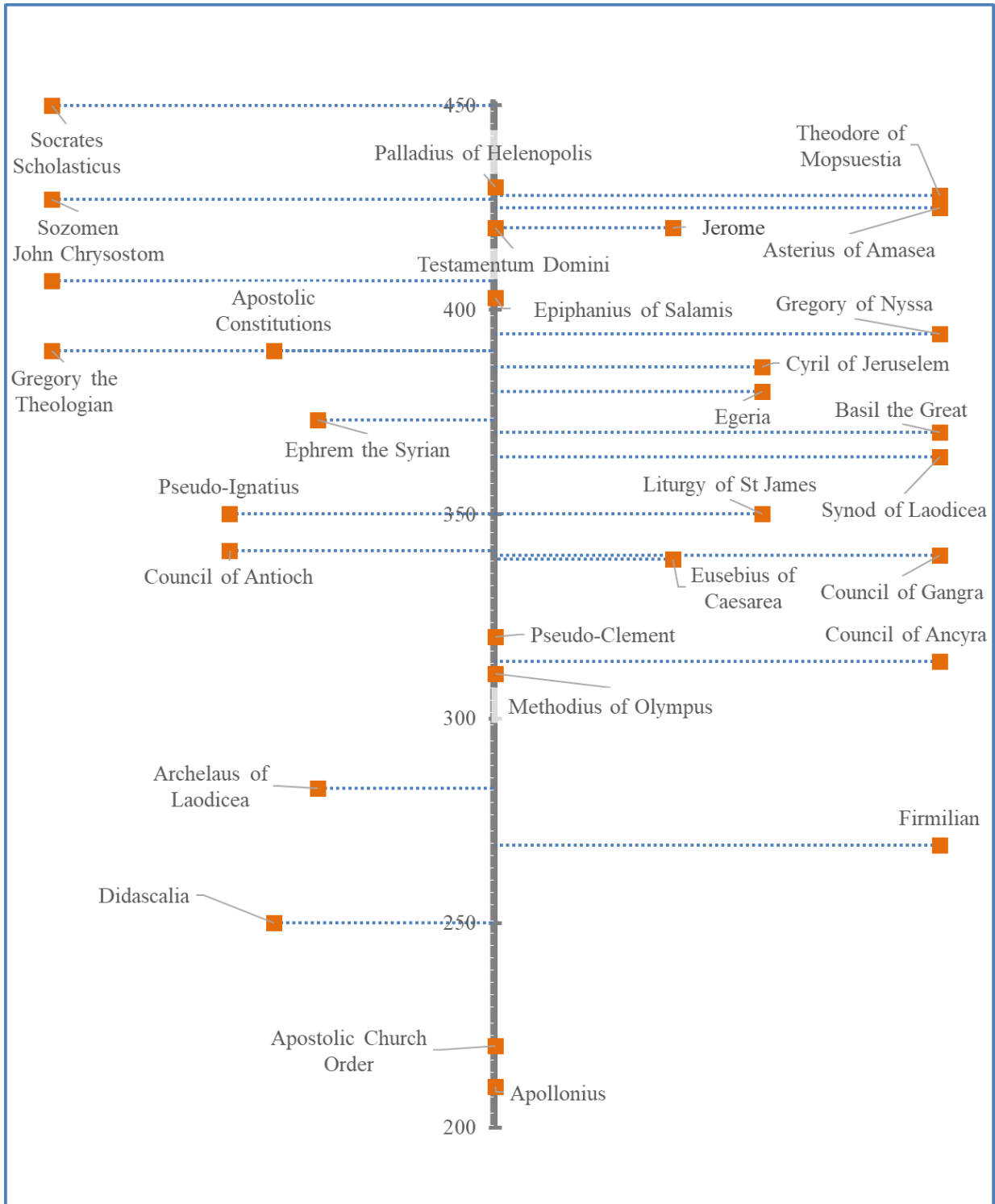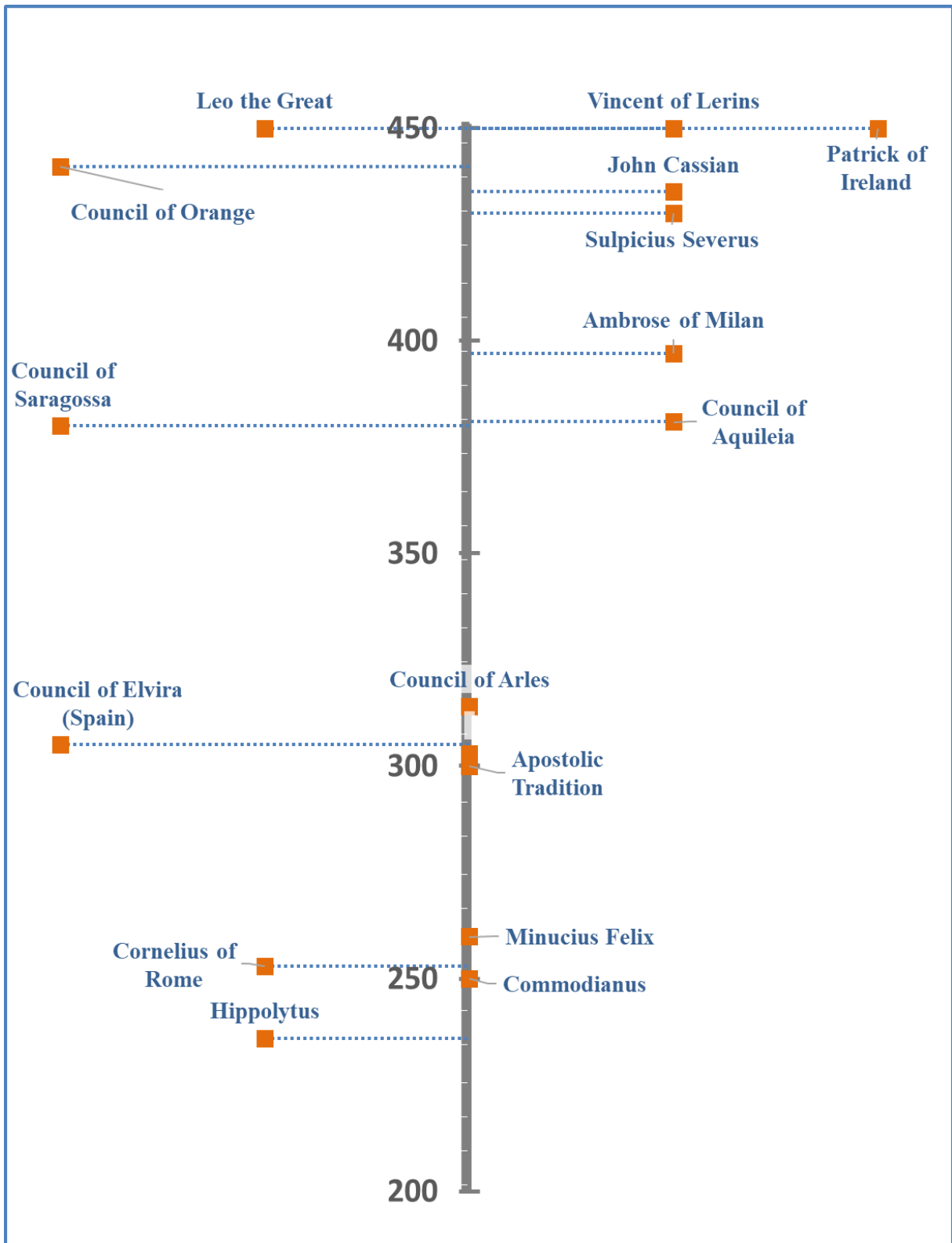
Appendix 2

2.1 Eastern Region

The eastern regions of the Late Antique Roman Empire are the source of much of what is known about the Early Church. Document survival is partly a result of climate and relative political stability through the early medieval era. The wide dissemination of texts was also important, as even documents which were lost often survive in translation.[1] The language of civil administration and the Church in the Eastern regions of the empire was Latin, but this was gradually replaced by Greek which became dominant in the mid-sixth-century; however, the vernacular was used within local congregations; additionally, Latin was used in legal texts and spoken in pilgrimage centres such as Jerusalem.[2]

This chapter will explore the texts according to the patriarchate or region from which they originated. The temporal relationship between the writers can be seen in Appendix 1 under Eastern sources. Where a region contains distinct traditions, these will be split into separate subsections. Texts which do not fit within these categories will be discussed first.

2.1.a Non-placeable Eastern texts

This section deals with those texts linked to the Eastern part of the Empire that is not contextualised to a specific city or regional tradition. This section will cover the *Codex Theodosianus* as it was compiled in the Eastern Empire, the temporally relevant Ecumenical Councils containing pertinent information, and several other texts.

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[1] Greek language texts most commonly survive in translation into Syriac, Arabic or Latin either in addition to the Greek or without the Greek original. Some Syriac texts were also translated into Greek and/or Arabic in antiquity and only survive in these translations. From the tenth-century Slavonic versions of texts also start to appear.

[2] John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 3rd ed, (Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 1999), 163.

2.1.a.α Codex Theodosianus

This is the only relevant surviving Roman Law codex compiled in the era of this study.[3] The *Codex Theodosianus* includes laws on ecclesiastical practice, which had developed from the time of Constantine as part of state law, these are recorded in Book 16.[4] While the issuing of the *Codex Theodosianus* across the whole empire is in little doubt, the overall impact is difficult to assess due to the historical circumstances over the following century and the fact that the complete text does not survive.[5] For this study, the laws are grouped thematically by; the estates of clergy, celibacy, Raptus and other laws relating to clergy.

The translation by Pharr, which is used in this study, is not without issues.[6] One of the most notable is the translation of *Raptus* as Rape: this does not indicate the full scope or nuanced meanings of *Raptus* in Late Antiquity. The Latin term Raptus in Antiquity covered not only the modern concept of rape as non-consensual sex but also the abduction and eloping of girls or women who were not married, in effect paralleling the full scope of adultery laws.[7] This means that the nuances of translation are not always expressed and articles by other scholars have been consulted to identify potential challenges with transmission or translation. All the laws came into force anew with the *Codex Theodosianus*, and their relative position and interpretation within the text are as important as the law's original dating and intent. While the background of the composition of the Codex is interesting and useful, the use of laws within the Codex is more directly relevant to this study.

2.1.a.α.1 Estates of clergy
Book 5 records inheritance law; 5.3.1 (434CE) deals specifically with clergy and monastics who died intestate. The law lists those covered by the law as: "bishop, priest, deacon,

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[3] Ibbetson, "Sources of Law," 41.

[4] Michele Renee Salzman, "The Evidence for the Conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity in Book 16 of the "Theodosian Code", *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 42, no. 3 (1993): 362–78, at 362; Benet Salway, "The Publication and Application of the Theodosian Code. NTh 1, the Gesta Senatus, and the Constitutionarii," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome - Antiquité* 125, no. 2 (2013): 11.

[5] Salway, "Publication and Application," 2-3.

[6] Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

[7] Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows," 142-3.

deaconess, sub-deacon, or cleric of any other rank whatsoever or a monk or a woman who has been dedicated to the monastic life."[8] The law responds to a practical issue in the fourth-century concerning how to dispose of the estates of the clergy who died intestate. The content of the law also gives an insight into the esteem in which ministers of the church were held.

2.1.a.α.2 Celibacy

Clerical celibacy was a key issue in the fourth and fifth centuries in Law as in the Church; the interplay between the two sets of regulations was examined in chapter 6. The first noticeable shift in legal practice around celibacy is in the law of Constantine in 320CE on celibacy.[9] This law provides a specific exemption for celibates and unmarried women from the laws requiring them to have children. This law removed the penalties for the unmarried while maintaining the legal imperative for those married to have children, which was distinct protection from the legal penalties for being childless and unrelated to the protection from Raptus discussed in the next section.

The 368CE law of Emperors Valentinian I and Valens takes celibates' protection further. The law recorded as 13.10.4 in the *Codex Theodosianus* states "that those women who live in perpetual virginity and those Widows whose very maturity of age promises that they will now marry no man shall be freed from the indignity of the plebeian capitation tax."[10] While the first part of this law discusses perpetual Virgins and Widows who are too old to have children, this probably alludes to the Virgins and Widows of the church, although it could also cover all women who had undergone menopause. The law also mentions an exemption from the tax for those who were unmarried through age, "Likewise pupils of the male sex, up to their twentieth year, must be exempt from a duty of this kind, and women also, until each one obtains a husband."[11]

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[8] CTh, 5.3.1.

[9] CTh, 8.16.1.

[10] CTh, 13.10.4.

[11] CTh, 13.10.4.

2.1.a.α.3 Raptus

The Raptus laws occur alongside violent and capital crimes in book 9 in chapters 24 and 25, the latter focusing on consecrated women. These three laws are facilitated by Constantine's amendment of the marriage laws[12] and demonstrate the shift in the legal understanding of singleness. The three laws in this chapter were issued under three different emperors: the first by Emperor Constantius II in 354, the second by Emperor Jovian in 364, and the third by Emperor Honorius in 420.[13]

The first law extends Raptus laws to cover Widows. The original intent of this law is unclear, but it may have been the protection of all Widows. According to Wilkinson, during the compiling of the *Codex Theodosianus*, it was considered to apply to consecrated Widows, so it was included in this chapter.[14] The Law states:

> Ravishers of both kinds shall be punished with equal severity: there shall be no distinction between the man who is discovered to have violated, by the atrocious crime of rape, the honour of sacrosanct maidens and the one who violates the chastity of such a widow. Nor shall any man be able to delude himself by the later consent of the woman he ravished.[15]

Pharr translates the second law of the *Codex Theodosianus* as "If any man should dare, I say not only to rape but to solicit consecrated maidens or Widows for matrimonial union, he shall suffer capital punishment."[16] Nevertheless, according to Wilkinson, the text of the second law was corrupted at some point in antiquity, probably before or during the compiling of the *Codex Theodosianus*,[17] arguing that the inclusion of Widows occurred due to a transcription error, something that is not visible in Pharr's translation, which predates Wilkinson's observations.[18] This disagreement about the precise text aside, the key point of the second

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[12] CTh, 8.16.1.

[13] Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows," 147, 154, 160.

[14] Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows," 165.

[15] CTh, 9.25.1.

[16] CTh, 9.25.2.

[17] Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows," 149-160.

[18] Wilkinson, "Dedicated Widows," 149-57.

law is extending Raptus law to the soliciting of consecrated Virgins, with Wilkinson arguing that the inclusion of Widows occurred due to a transcription error. Notwithstanding the corrupted text, the law marks a societal shift since it separates consecrated maidens from other women, even if there is a debate over whether this included Widows before the composition of the *Codex Theodosianus.*

The third law states:

> If any ravisher, prodigal of his own life, should solicit a maiden consecrated to God, his goods shall be confiscated and he shall be punished with exile by deportation. The right is granted to everyone to make accusation without the fear of charge of being an informer. For a person must not be considered an informer if his humanity invites him to this course of action for the sake of the purity of his religion.[19]

The law reduced the punishment and protecting the informant marked a shift in understanding in the later Roman Empire. These two shifts indicate a change in understanding of Raptus of a consecrated woman, from a property matter to a religious crime.

2.1.a.α.4 On clergy

The most extensive collection of laws concerning clergy in the *Codex Theodosianus* occurs in book 16.2. Some laws refer to clergy in general and others name specific Minor Orders.

The first relevant law is 16.2.2 (319CE), which exempts clergy from compulsory public service, such as serving on town councils. This decision to treat Christian clergy like the priests of traditional gods by Constantine develops from the Roman beliefs about the importance of those who worship on behalf of the community.[20] 16.2.6 (326CE) restricts to whom 16.2.2 can apply, suggesting the abuse of exemptions. Specifically, the church is instructed to draw its clergy from those too poor to have civic responsibilities. In 16.2.7 (330CE), the exemptions are reiterated and the Governor of Numidia is rebuked for tolerating the situation that allowed the "lectors of the divine scriptures, subdeacons, and the other

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[19] CTh, 9.25.3.

[20] Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002), 31.

clerics who through the injustice of heretics have been summoned to the municipal councils."[21] The exemption from civic duties is expanded to include tax relief for clerical families in 16.2.10 (353CE), on the proviso that clergy will use any profits made within their households for the benefit of the poor.

16.2.11 (354CE) reiterates the clerical exemption from public service and includes the sons of clergy within this until they reached the age of 25; the reiterating of this law suggests that it was not being observed consistently. 16.2.15 (360CE) is rather more convoluted, as the introduction states that church lands are exempted from tax, with the subsections providing detail, including the naming of Gravediggers as a specific order. 16.2.19 (370CE) provides an amnesty for clergy of the decurion class who has been in office for more than 10 years, preventing the municipal councils from demanding that they serve on the council after this point. This resolved a problem that had emerged because of councils trying to reclaim clergy of long-standing but upholding previous laws, which required the church to no longer ordain clergy from those who could serve on councils. 16.2.24 (377CE) reiterates the exemption from public service for all, "priests, deacons, subdeacons, exorcists, lectors, doorkeepers, and likewise all persons who are of the first rank in the Church."[22]

The exploitation of religious women by unscrupulous male clergy is the subject of 16.2.20 (370CE), 16.2.27 (390CE) and 16.2.28 (390CE). All these laws are specifically written to prevent such exploitation. The concern is primarily the maintenance of wealth within families, with 16.2.20 (370CE) focusing on Widows and 16.2.27 (390CE) on women Deacons.[23] The latter are allowed to keep control of their estates for their support; however, they must transfer their mobile property to their children. These laws limited who could legally be the heir of a consecrated religious woman and were designed to keep wealth within families. This legislation seeks to maintain familial property and common social practice within the church. While these specific laws refer to women, the primary concern is protecting property, family wealth and social order, not the individual women concerned.

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[21] CTh, 16.2.7.

[22] CTh, 16.2.24.

[23] The translation uses the word deaconess, but I have used woman Deacon as per my discussion at 3.d.α.2.

16.2.41 (412CE) states that clergy must be tried by their Bishop rather than by civil courts and that those who bring spurious unprovable accusations against clergy must be punished for assailing their innocence. 16.2.44 (420CE) set in law the decision made at the council of Nicaea on celibate clergy, including a subsection defending the right of clergy married before ordination to have ongoing relations with their wives and father children.[24]16.5.19 (389CE) imposed a penalty on the clergy for introducing heresy to the church. This law specifically names Lectors alongside the Major Orders, indicating that Lectors, by the nature of their position, were likely to be implicated in this. In book 16, the laws are predominantly concerned with the liability of clergy (as those formally set aside for the service of the church) for tax or public service, mostly exempting them from it. The other laws seek to protect vulnerable women from exploitation. A few laws on topics like clerical marriage reflect the canonical practice discussed below.

2.1.a.α.5 Summary

The *Codex Theodosianus* witnesses the presence of Subdeacons, Exorcists, Lectors, Doorkeepers, Gravediggers, Virgins and Widows in the Church. Apart from specific laws about women such as Virgins or female monastics, clergy or otherwise, there is no differentiation in general laws for women clergy where they existed. Unless there was a specific need to refer to gender, Roman Law did not differentiate between the genders.

2.1.a.β Ecumenical councils

The church held many councils of Bishops to deal with local or regional problems, and these records are dealt with in the relevant sections. The pan-regional Ecumenical councils occurred in the Eastern part of the Empire. Three of the four councils that occurred before 451CE have relevance to this study, so they are explored here. The council of Constantinople has been omitted as the documents produced do not reference the Minor Orders.

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[24] Davis, *Seven Ecumenical Councils,* 65; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* book 1.11; Apostolic Canons, *Canon,* 26; Council of Chalcedon, *Canon*, 14; Basil the Great, *Letter,* 217 canon 69.

2.1.a.β.1 First Council, in Nicaea (325CE)

Constantine convened this council in 325CE to address the issues relating to Arius' teachings which were dividing the church. Besides resolving this doctrinal issue, the council issued a set of common canons for the governance of the church, some of which reveal the presence of Minor Orders.

The council issued canons on who may become clergy; canon one regulated which eunuchs could be admitted to the clergy. In that, men who had been involuntarily made eunuchs while slaves to foreign powers or as a result of illness could be elevated to the status of the clergy, but not those who sought out the operation due to dualist beliefs.[25] This reflected the challenge represented by dualist views present among Gnostic and Arian interpretations of Christianity to the officially established form of the Christian faith. Those convicted of crimes and returned apostates are also forbidden from being ordained.[26] These canons seek to preserve the honour of the clergy and their dignity compared to the rest of the populace.

The sexual lives of the clergy were also of interest to the council, with celibate male clergy being forbidden from cohabiting with women who were not close biological relations.[27] The Arabic version of the canons additionally stipulates that the women must be a close relation and of advanced age along with applying the celibacy rule to all clergy.[28] This differs from the Greek version, which did not apply the canon to all clergy, as the Fathers of the council defended the right of married clergy to have relations with their wives.[29] Additionally, there is a prohibition on clergy from charging interest on loans.[30]

Other canons deal with ecclesial discipline, specifically that those excommunicated can only be readmitted by the Bishop who expelled them while allowing appeals to the regional synod

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[25] Council of Nicaea, *Canon,* 1.

[26] Council of Nicaea, *Canons,* 9, 10.

[27] Council of Nicaea, *Canon,* 3.

[28] Council of Nicaea, *Arabic Canon,* 4.

[29] Davis, *Seven Ecumenical Councils,* 65; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.11; Apostolic Canons, *Canon,* 26; Council of Chalcedon, *Canon*, 14; Basil the Great, *Letter,* 217 canon 69.

[30] Council of Nicaea, *Canon,* 17.

is made a universal practice.[31] The tradition that clergy must remain in the church of their ordination is also enforced with significant penalties; the implication here is that the clergy are ordained to serve the church in a given city or settlement and cannot move except under very specific and limited circumstances.[32] The reception of people from heretical groups is formalised, including which of their sacraments can be recognised.[33] The doctrinal differences of heretics receive differing treatment from the discipline differences of schism.[34]

2.1.a.β.2 Third Council, Ephesus (431CE)

The council of Ephesus in 431 CE dealt with the Christological controversies principally caused by Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. The council exposed the theological and practical divides which were growing in the church at this time in the form of an embittered war of letters.[35] The council, although divided, issued eight canons, of which only canons 3 and 4 are relevant to this study.

One of the key actions of this council was to restore clergy who had been anathematised by Nestorius and forbid all clergy from serving with heretics; this action explicitly includes the Minor Orders in the ruling.[36] The Fathers logically continue in the following canon to depose all clergy who hold the anathematized doctrines of Nestorius or Celestius.[37] Besides the new canons, the canons and creed issued by the preceding two councils were affirmed by the assembled Bishops.

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[31] Council of Nicaea, *Canon,* 5.

[32] Agapios and Nicodemus, *Πηδάλιον (the Rudder),* Council of Nicaea, *Canon,* 16 and Interpretation, 454-5.

[33] Council of Nicaea, *Canons,* 8, 19.

[34] Heresy here means that there is a substantial difference in the understanding of God, or the way God can be represented form the recognised form of Christianity. Schism refers to a split between groups which hold the same basic beliefs but differ on certain specific practices such the donatist schism in Africa which related specifically to the readmittance of lapsed christians. Historically schisms are far more common than heresies with minor or moderate schisms between parts of the church being an almost permanent fixture in church history.

[35] Davis, *Seven Ecumenical Councils,* 140-53.

[36] Council of Ephesus, *Canon,* 3.

[37] Council of Ephesus, *Canon,* 4.

2.1.a.β.3 Fourth Council, Chalcedon (451CE)

The council of Chalcedon in 451CE was called to address a Christological discussion that had developed in importance after the previous council. The council was as divisive ecclesiastically and politically as the third council and a resolution was only achieved by careful debate and the threat that the Emperor would reconvene the council in the Western part of the empire.[38] This council produced thirty canons, of which thirteen have relevance to this study, which occur in four thematic groups.

The first group is of canons referring to ordination, prohibiting people from giving payment for ordination and deposing those who had done so, along with the Bishop who accepted the money.[39] The council goes on to insist ordinations are to be to a specific church (in that ordinations are always to serve in a named church and not in general) and forbid clergy from being on the list of more than one church.[40] Specifically that members of the clergy could only be listed on the official list of clergy in the church of one city, which was normally the city in which the person was consecrated or ordained as a member of the clergy, as separate canons required clergy to remain in or return to the church of their ordination on the threat of being deposed.[41] The second group of canons censures actions of clergy which relate to them enriching themselves at the expense of others, including being the guardians of minors unless there is no alternative, along with forbidding clergy or monastics from accepting military honours.[42] These three canons aim to protect the clergy's reputation by controlling who can be ordained and their activities.

The third group of canons deals with church disputes and protects the Bishop's honour as the head of the ecclesiastical household. In that, the Bishop is the arbitrator of disputes among his clergy and has the power to depose clergy or monks who are caught conspiring against their Bishop or fellow clergy.[43] The fourth group deals with marriage practice within the church

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[38] Hall, *Doctrine and Practice,* 230-4.

[39] Council of Chalcedon, *Canon,* 2.

[40] Council of Chalcedon, *Canons,* 6, 10.

[41] Council of Chalcedon, *Canon,* 20, 23.

[42] Council of Chalcedon, *Canon,* 3, 7.

[43] Council of Chalcedon, *Canon,* 9, 18.

for clergy, recognising that clergy can be married but that only Readers or Singers may marry after taking office according to local customs.[44] Those consecrated to celibacy are forbidden from marrying, elevating synodical canons to ecumenical status.[45] Finally, Raptus is made an offence meriting the penalty of being deposed for clergy and ex-communication for the laity.[46]

2.1.a.β.4 Summary

The Canons of the Ecumenical Councils mostly deal with clergy as a homogeneous group or as individual orders. There are a few Minor Orders named in the canons: Virgins, Readers and Singers. This is consistent with the way canons mention only areas where there are issues to be addressed.

2.1.a.γ Non-placeable writers

This section contains relevant sources by individual writers, which can be placed to the Eastern region of the Empire but not more specifically to a tradition within this region.

2.1.a.γ.1 Apollonius ~d200/210CE

Apollonius wrote in the early-third-century against the Montanist movement; what little of his writings survive are preserved within the writings of Eusebius. The only order mentioned in the surviving fragments is that of the Widows supported by the church. What Apollonius objects to is that the Montanist prophets and Teachers take money for themselves at the expense of the poor, including Widows, so proving themselves to be false Teachers.[47] This text only shows the existence of Widows, not their position in the church or type, but it is still important in understanding the development of the order of the Widows.

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[44] Council of Chalcedon, *Canon*, 14.

[45] Council of Chalcedon, *Canon,* 16.

[46] Council of Chalcedon, *Canon,* 27.

[47] Eusebius EH, 5.18.

2.1.a.γ.2 *Constitutio Ecclesiastica Apostolorum* (Apostolic Church Order)

In its current form, this text dates to the fourth-century[48] and incorporates a range of source texts, including other church order traditions and the *two ways texts*.[49] The document was originally written in Greek and survives in Latin, Syrian, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopian translations. The text possesses many similarities to the *Didascalia,* which Stewart argues indicates common sources and traditions incorporated within the development of the texts.[50] There are debates about the origin of this text which may be placed within Syrian or Asian traditions. [51] As with other Church Orders, it is difficult to assign a definite place of origin as there are still too many unanswered questions about the text's provenance.

The text contains a list of the orders in the church in the first chapter, where it states, "Πρὸ τοῦ μέλλησαι κληροῦσθαι τὰς ἐπαρχίας καταλογίσασθε τόπων ἀριθμούς, ἐπισκόπων ἀξίας, πρεσβυτέρων ἕδρας, διακόνων παρεδρείας, ἀναγνωστῶν νουνεχίας, χηρῶν ἀνεγκλησίας, (You are to assign provinces, by considering the number of places, the dignity of Bishops, the seats of Presbyters, the assistance of Deacons, the understanding of Readers, the blamelessness of Widows)".[52] This gives clear evidence of the Reader and Widow within the community as recognised orders, with details provided in subsequent passages. It is indicated that a Reader, who in addition to reading the text, had an interpretive or teaching function within the community, which necessitated them having specific qualities in addition to literacy.[53] The directions given for the appointment of Widows suggest two functions, one of which was prayer and the other practical service to women, the latter function including coordinating with the Presbyters.[54] This text, in many ways, is like other Church Orders in that it records the presence of Readers and Widows and provides some idea of their functions within the community that produced the text.

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[48] Stewart-Sykes, *Apostolic Church Order,* 132.

[49] Stewart, *Apostolic Church Order,* 45-6, 64.

[50] Stewart, *Apostolic Church Order,* 124-30.

[51] Stewart, *Apostolic Church Order,* 116.

[52] ACO, 1 (Own translation).

[53] ACO, 19.

[54] ACO, 21.

2.1. a.γ.3 Methodius of Olympus d311CE

Methodius was Bishop of Olympus in Lycia and martyred in the Diocletian persecution.[55] Of his surviving work, *On Chastity* provides the most information about the functioning of the church and the theological understanding of the practice of Virginity. One of the key parts of this for Methodius was that the number of true Virgins, in his view, was few compared to the congregation of the saints.[56] Methodius then states that celibacy does not abolish marriage; rather, Virgins are betrothed to Christ.[57] Elsewhere he records Virgins singing antiphons in the church.[58] Methodius also develops the tradition of describing the Virgins as an altar,[59] linking it with the image of Widows as an altar. This image of two altars he links to the two altars in the Jewish temple,[60] an image also seen in the *Didascalia,* where it is integrated into the ecclesiology more explicitly.[61]

2.1.a.γ.4 Pseudo-Clement ~300-320CE

There are early-third-century pseudographic texts attributed to Clement of Rome, which are preserved in Greek and partially in Latin, along with a variant tradition in Syriac.[62] The content and narrative of the texts indicate an Eastern origin of the text despite the literary connection to Rome. The two epistles attributed to Clement, while containing evidence of Virgins and Teachers, are not included since they have been dated to the late-first or second-century.[63] The Greek and Latin variants of the text will be dealt with first and then the Syriac variant will be examined separately.

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[55] "Methodius of Olympus, St.," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Livingstone, E. A.: Oxford University Press, 2006. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198614425.001.0001/acref-9780198614425-e-3805.

[56] Methodius, *On Chastity,* 1.5.

[57] Methodius, *On Chastity,* 3.8.

[58] Methodius, *On Chastity,* 11.2.

[59] Methodius, *On Chastity,* 5.6.

[60] Methodius, *On Chastity,* 5.8.

[61] DA, ch9.

[62] J. K. Elliott, "The Pseudo-Clementine Literature," in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 432.

[63] Theodore A Bergren, *1 Clement: A Reader's Edition* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), vii.

Within the Greek homilies and letters, there are references to Widows and Catechists. The duties of the Catechist are enumerated in the letter to James; in this, they are compared to midshipmen in their care for other Christians within the metaphor of the Church as a ship.[64] The Catechist is also mentioned in the homilies as someone to be honoured along with the elders, Deacons and Widows.[65] Widows are also discussed within the homilies, with praise given to a Christian who, after being divorced by her pagan husband, chose not to remarry but adopted two slave boys instead of sons and gave her daughter in marriage to another Christian.[66] Additionally, Widows are mentioned as dedicated or instituted alongside the Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, potentially indicating the clerical status of the Widows discussed.[67]

The Syriac version of the texts has been translated from a manuscript dated 411/12CE and contains significant variations from the Greek and Latin texts[68] discussed previously. The occurrences of the mention of Widows in redactions 3.66 and 6.15 are effectively identical to what is recorded in Latin and Greek. The translation of the Syriac used did not include the letters which contained more detailed information.

The Pseudo-Clementine letters and Redactions show the preoccupations of the third and fourth centuries with church order and Apostolic heritage. The Greek and Latin texts also provide a rare reference to Catechists who are not consistently included in the descriptions of Minor Orders.

2.1.a.γ.5 Epiphanius of Salamis 315-403/4CE

Epiphanius of Salamis was born and grew up in Palestine before travelling to study in Egypt and then returning to Palestine to establish a monastic community. Around 367CE, he

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[64] Pseudo-Clement, *Letter to James*, Ch13.

[65] Pseudo-Clement, *Homily*, 3.71.

[66] Pseudo-Clement, *Humility*, 2.20.

[67] Pseudo-Clement, *Redaction*, 3.66, 6.15.

[68] Joseph Glen Gebhardt, *The Syriac Clementine Recognitions and Homilies: The First Complete Translation of the Text* (Nashville: Grave Distractions Publications, 2014), 4.

emigrated to Cyprus, where he was elected Bishop of Salamis, a post in which he remained until his death.[69]

In his *Panarion* against heresies, Epiphanius makes mention of Minor Orders in the context of heretical groups before discussing the practices of the true church. In listing the heresies of the Cathari, he mentions that they allow clergy, including Subdeacons, to father children while the true church insists that they are celibate.[70] He discusses this further in *De Fide,* where he describes the practice of the church regarding who can be ordained relating to their marital status distinguishing Readers from the other clergy, including Subdeacons, concerning whether they are allowed to be married.[71] These passages show a clear influence of the Western tradition and ignorance of or disdain for the canons of the first ecumenical council. This shows how the variant traditions interacted, especially in places like Cyprus, which was a crossroads of trade. Epiphanius also mentions Exorcists, translators and undertakers among the clergy but as more junior than the Reader.[72] This means that Epiphanius provides a witness to a range of orders being present in the fourth-century, most likely on the island of Cyprus.

2.1.a.γ.6 Palladius of Helenopolis 363/4-430CE

Palladius was a monk of the Egyptian desert who was involved in the controversies surrounding John Chrysostom. Palladius' writing suggests that he had received a moderate education but not completed rhetorical training as he does not show the grounding in the classics this gives.[73] In his *Lausiac History*, Palladius makes five clear mentions of the consecrated Virgins indicating their antiquity and function within the church. Palladius' understanding is that the office of the Virgin originated in the first-century.[74] He describes the functions of the Virgin as fasting and prayer, including stories as to when the prayers of a Virgin have protected villages in which they live, along with praising a Widow who had

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[69] Bigham Stéphane, *Epiphanius of Salamis, Doctor of Iconoclasm?: Deconstruction of a Myth* (Rollinsford, N.H.: Orthodox Research Institute, 2008), 1-2.

[70] St Epiphanius, *Panarion,* Against the impure "Purists" 1 (Cathari), 39, but 59.4.1-4.

[71] St Epiphanius, *Panarion,* De Fide, 21, 7-9.

[72] St Epiphanius, *Panarion,* De Fide, 21, 10.

[73] Demetrios S Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis: The Origenist Advocate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9-10.

[74] Palladius, *Lausiac History,* ch65.

chosen a celibate life over remarriage, while in a later he chapter indicates that he knew of developing monastic communities which included both Virgins and Widows.[75] Palladius is realistic that not all celibates live up to expectations and uses examples of this to clarify the ideals of the order of the Virgin.[76] Additionally, Palladius makes mention of Widows when he discusses the reforms of Christian life instituted by John Chrysostom in Constantinople, indicating their presence in that city.[77]

Palladius also bears witness to the order of the Reader in his writings as a preparatory stage within sequential ordination practices. His discussion of the order of the Reader also contains one of the cautionary tales common in monastic literature, which indicates the sanctity of the order through the miraculous resolution of a false accusation.[78] In his *Life of St John Chrysostom*, Palladius mentions that John was a Reader in 371CE and served at the altar for three years (presumably, but not explicitly stated, as a Subdeacon) before his ordination as a Deacon in 381CE.[79] Palladius' writings indicate the presence of Virgins, Widows (these being both parish-based and monastics) and Readers within the church.

2.1.a.γ.7 Testamentum Domini/Testament of The Lord

The translation of this text is based on the Syriac version, as the original Greek does not survive.[80] This text bears a lot of similarities to the *Apostolic Tradition,* which is its most important source, but the content also reflects the fourth and early-fifth-century date of composition.[81] This date is not certain as the *Testamentum Domini* reuses earlier texts in many areas, but it is unlikely to be significantly later than this due to the way ecclesiology changed significantly in the late-fifth and sixth centuries. There is debate over where this text is from,[82] which is why it has been placed among the non-placed writers and texts rather than

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[75] Palladius, *Lausiac History,* ch10, 31, 46, 41.

[76] Palladius, *Lausiac History,* ch6, 28.

[77] Palladius, *Dialogue,* ch5.

[78] Palladius, *Lausiac History,* 38, 70.

[79] Palladius, *Dialogue,* ch5.

[80] Bradshaw, "Ancient Church Orders," 19.

[81] Alistair Stewart, *The Testament of the Lord: An English Version* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2018), 52-3.

[82] Most writers and translators place *The Testament* as a Syrian text however Stewart has challenged this.

in a geographic area. Since the geographical placement of the text is important for understanding and contextualising the text, it will be discussed first and then the orders mentioned within the text itself will be addressed.

As the debates around the provenance of the *Testamentum Domini* are summarised, it is important to remember that this text is the product of a living tradition and that there are multiple texts and textual fragments.[83] These fragments disagree with each other in some areas reflecting the fact that the written text only preserves a snapshot of the overall tradition, which may have covered a group of communities over an area rather than one specific community. Based on the Anaphora prayers and the baptismal practice, Stewart suggests that the text comes from "Palestine, Antioch or Asia Minor,"[84] although later, he goes on to suggest that it is most likely to be Asia Minor,[85] probably Cappadocian or Phrygia.[86] There are, however, problems with this assignment of origin:[87] all four of these provinces are landlocked, but there is an instruction at 1.34 which tells the Deacon to check for drowned people cast up by the tide periodically. This means that the text must have been redacted and used in places near the sea at some stage in its development, which counts against an origin in a landlocked province. It must also be noted that by the early-fourth-century, monasticism was established within Cappadocia as both Basil of Caesarea and Gregory the Theologian spent time in established monastic communities, and Macrina assisting her mother established a double community with her younger brother Peter heading the male community on the family estate.[88] These communities were distinct from the ecclesiastical communities, as is made clear by Gregory of Nyssa in his *Life of St Macrina*, where he speaks of their brother Naucratios joining an established group of old men in the monastic life: also in the description of Macrina's funeral, the clergy come to the house from the church which is in the settlement indicating a distance between the monastics and parochial clergy.[89] This means

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[83] Stewart, *Testament of the Lord,* 13-14.

[84] Stewart, *Testament of the Lord,* 36.

[85] I can only assume this it is using the term Asia Minor to refer to the whole of the area covered by the Roman Dioceses of Asiana, Pontus and the western most part of Oriens as they were after the reorganisation of the early-fourth-century.

[86] Stewart, *Testament of the Lord,* 58.

[87] Notwithstanding incorrectly identifying the provinces of Phrygia and Cappadocia as from eastern Asia when a quick check of a map shows that Phrygia I and II were in the east of Asian diocese and Cappadocia I and II were in the west of Pontus all four of these regions being situated in the uplands of what is now Turkey.

[88] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina,* 12, 37.

[89] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, 8-9, 34.

that the descriptions in the *Testamentum Domini* identified as semi-monastic by Stewart are not concordant with the known descriptions of monastic settlements in the Cappadocia provinces, meaning the text is unlikely to have come from the Cappadocian province.[90] The descriptions, however, are more like the descriptions of practice within Syria, where some communities required high levels of asceticism to be received into the church, as the content reflects what is known from other texts from this region.[91]

Now to address the other conclusions in support of a Cappadocian origin by Stewart in his introduction to his translation.[92] The recycling of apocalyptic texts is very common in the eastern Christian traditions and repeatedly happens in Late Antiquity and beyond, so says little about the provenance of the text overall. The identification of the liturgical practices as late-fourth-century and originating from the west of the Oriens diocese or the diocese of Asiana or Pontus makes sense and the instructions within the *Testamentum Domini* illustrate early forms of the baptismal practices still used by churches who have their liturgical roots in that area. The pattern of prayer described for a Widow is neither unusual nor remarkable; the key instruction is that she is to pray continuously with a particular instruction to pray at night:[93] this style of instruction is seen in fourth-century Cappadocian texts along with third-century texts for Syria but also occurs among the desert fathers.[94] While the council of Laodicea does forbid Presbytides (πρεσβύτιδες) or venerable women in the mid-fourth-century, it does not follow that the *Testamentum Domini* comes from a region near where this council was held, but rather it is more likely to have come from one at some distance where that regional synod did not have authority. This is because it is unlikely a community would have openly opposed a synodical decision when they were within easy communication distance of the Bishops involved in the synod. The comments about the prophetic elements being congruent with fourth-century Cappadocia do not fit with the known Cappadocian writings, which do not support the practice of prophecy beyond the practical aspects of discernment. While it is the case that the *Testamentum Domini* is dominated by the Bishop-

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[90] As explored by Stewart, *Testament of the Lord,* 43-5.

[91] Columba Stewart, OSB "Monasticism," in *The Early Christian World,* vol 1-2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 344-366, at 346-8.

[92] Stewart, *Testament of the Lord,* 59.

[93] TD 1.40.42.

[94] E.g., Epiphanius Saying 3 and 7.

Deacon pairing, the association of this with Cappadocia is not guaranteed, as this arrangement is observable in most of the sources in the Eastern Roman Empire.

The ascription of the *Testamentum Domini* to Syria by most other scholars relates to the fact that most Church Orders come from various parts of the Oriens diocese, mostly the provinces of Syria.[95] There is little direct evidence and while it can be said that the text bears resemblance to known texts from the Antiochian region it also has some significant differences not explained by the presence of materials from the *Apostolic Tradition*. What can be said is that it is likely to have come from or been used in a seashore or port community and close to a major road, due to the instructions relating to the care of travellers given to the Deacons. Due to this, it is likely to have come from the coast of the Oriens diocese. Although the more westerly coast of the Asiana diocese could be argued, this is unlikely as the regional synod of Laodicea would have held power in this area. There is also a probable tradition overlap with that which produced the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant in the Syrian tradition and the much higher lay asceticism found within this tradition. With the current research situation, it is not safe to attribute this text to more than the eastern region of the Roman Empire. The prominence of asceticism and the type of liturgical practice means this text resonances with the monastic typica of later centuries rather than the diocesan or parochial ones. Due to this, the origins of this text are probably in communities where there was a high prevalence of asceticism in the community rather than in distinct, separate monastic settlements, which points to the region in and around the Roman provinces of Syria.

The text itself provides some clear mentions of orders and can contribute to understanding the developing ecclesiology of the Church in the Eastern Roman Empire. The first distinct order mentioned after the three principal orders of Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon in this text is that of the Widow. The consecrated Widow is defined by a long list of requirements and provided with detailed instructions on how to behave and pray.[96] Additionally, the Widows are given a position of authority liturgically as they are placed with the other clergy in the altar during the liturgy and ahead of the Readers, Subdeacons, and Deaconesses. This indicates an important

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[95] Discussed by Simon Corcoran, and Benet Salway. "A Newly Identified Greek Fragment of the 'Testamentum Domini'," JThS 62.1 (2011): 118–135 at 134.

[96] TD, 1.40-43.

position and status and suggests, based on the similarity of instructions for the Presbyters and Widows, that they may have been gender-differentiated parallel roles in the community.[97] The Widows are also instructed to perform the practical tasks of anointing associated with the baptism of women,[98] a task in other Church Orders given to the woman Deacon. The positioning of the Widow within the *Testamentum Domini* is only comparable to that in the *Apostolic Tradition,* which is the primary identified source for the text and reflects that tradition. The prominence given to the ascetical practices of the Widow and the paralleling of their role to that of the Presbyters is an area that needs specific research.

The *Testamentum Domini* also provides witnesses to the existence of Subdeacons, Readers and Virgins of both genders in that order.[99] It is important to note that at this point in discussing the serving of the liturgy and receiving of communion, the *Testamentum Domini* is very clear that any bodily emission, voluntary or involuntary, prohibits someone from serving or receiving.[100] These rules, as noted by Stewart, bear a similarity to the Jewish purity laws and are in stark contrast to the stance of other texts from the eastern part of the Roman Empire, as discussed in chapter 4.[101]

The Subdeacon and Reader are described as needing specific virtues related to the offices they will perform, which means that they will be able to rise to higher offices later.[102] The prayer for the Subdeacon also indicates a hope they will rise to higher office; the Reader is given a book with a short bidding prayer which reflects the earlier practice in the *Apostolic Tradition*.[103] There is mention of Virgins and as Stewart notes, the title in Syriac refers to both genders,[104] detailing how they are to behave,[105] while the instructions on how they are to

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[97] Stewart, *Testament of the Lord,* 53-4.

[98] TD, 2.8.

[99] TD, 1.44-46.

[100] TD, 1.23.

[101] Stewart, *Testament of the Lord,* 101n87.

[102] TD, 1.44-5.

[103] TD, 1.44, 1.45. AT 11.

[104] Stewart, *Testament of the Lord,* 140n169.

[105] TD, 1.46.

set themselves apart follow the *Apostolic Tradition*.[106] Instructions on Virgins also appear in other places in the *Testamentum Domini*; the Virgins are instructed to pray separately from other women.[107] Within the instructions on Pascha, Virgins and Widows are also specifically mentioned in that they maintain the vigil with the Bishop and Presbyters, unlike the married, who are allowed to go home.

2.1.a.δ Funerary inscriptions

Archaeological records of Minor Orders are rare and important since these have not suffered the interpretation of later copyists. This means that although there are only limited numbers of such inscriptions, they provide definite datable evidence for what they record. On the island of Melos in the Aegean, an early-fourth-century tombstone has been found commemorating two Virgins among other members of the family, including Presbyters and Deacons.[108] This suggests that in the fourth-century, there were clerical families and that the young women were consecrated Virgins rather than just unmarried.

Madigan and Osiek include an inscription that they claim names a woman Subdeacon, based on the work of Jeanne Robert and Louis Robert.[109] Jeanne and Louis Roberts give the Greek as "Αλεξάωδπα ὑποδιάχον (Alexandra Subdeacon)".[110] This does not agree with the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum,* which records it as "ὑποδι-άκον(ος) Ἀλέξαν-[δ]ρος (Subdeacon Alexandros)".[111] This is clearly in the second declension and a masculine name, meaning that this is not evidence of a woman Subdeacon, although it is of the existence of a Subdeacon. Robert and Robert do not explain their alternative reading of the text, meaning that it is not possible to say why the alternative reading is given – most likely, it is simply an erroneous transcription.

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[106] AT, 12.

[107] TD, 2.4.

[108] CIG 4.9288.

[109] Madigan, Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 70; Jeanne Robert and Louis Robert, "Bulletin Épigraphique," *Revue Des Études Grecques* 76, no. 359 (1963): 121–92, at 152.

[110] Robert and Robert, "Bulletin Épigraphique," 152, (own translation).

[111] SEG 24.899. (own translation).

Within the Eastern texts, which do not fit into a specific regional tradition, there is clear evidence for the Minor Orders. The archaeological evidence in the form of Funerary monuments and the writings of individuals indicate the presence of Virgins, Subdeacons, and Lectors, along with possibly Widows. The legal and canonical texts witness Subdeacons, Exorcists, Readers, Singers, Doorkeepers, Gravediggers, Virgins and Widows. This evidence suggests that the orders were known throughout much of the Church in the Eastern Empire, but that does not mean all orders were used in all places.

2.1.b Constantinople

The region directly surrounding the imperial city of Constantinople was always different from other regions due to the influence of the imperial court. The church within the city drew Bishops from the Cappadocian, Antiochian and Alexandrian schools of theology. This led to the city often being at the heart of theological controversies.

2.1.b.α Gregory the Theologian/Nazianzen/Constantinople 329-390CE

Gregory was the son of Gregory Bishop of Nazianzus and met Basil of Caesarea in Athens while studying philosophy. After completing his education, he returned to Nazianzus in late 361CE or early 362CE, finally being persuaded to accept ordination to the Presbyterate to assist his father. In 372CE, he was appointed Bishop of Sasima and in 379CE, elected Bishop of Constantinople by the synod of Antioch, a position he abdicated at the first council of Constantinople in 381CE.[112] Within his extensive writing, Gregory mentions ecclesiastical orders from multiple perspectives. Gregory can correctly be titled Gregory of Sasima or Gregory of Constantinople as he was Bishop of these cities; he was never legally Bishop of Nazianzen. Within this thesis, he will be referred to by the courtesy title of the Theologian as this title is both ancient and avoids the discussions as to where he was Bishop.

Within the orations of this well-respected writer, there is mention of three orders. Virgins are mentioned in *Oration Four*, where he is speaking about how Emperor Julian defiled the

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[112] Brian Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (London: Routledge, 2007), 3, 6, 9-11.

Virgins of the church.[113] Later in the same text, he shows Julian's hypocrisy since Julian wanted to create pagan versions of the very Christian institutions he had ransacked. In *Oration Five*, Gregory praises the modesty of the Virgins, extolling them to light their lanterns for the bridegroom as he celebrates the death of Julian.[114] Gregory also mentions the Widows when speaking of his sister's care for them in his funeral address for her.[115]

In *Oration Four,* Gregory discusses Readers since Julian had been a Reader in the church before his apostasy.[116] Gregory mentions Readers again in his farewell address at the second ecumenical council, where he praises their good conduct.[117]

2.1.b.β John Chrysostom 349-407CE

John Chrysostom was born the only son of Anthousa, a Widow in Antioch, where he received his education before joining a monastic community in 367CE. He was ordained Lector in 371CE, Deacon in 381CE and Presbyter in 386CE, then Archbishop of Constantinople in 397CE (on the repose of Nectarius). John worked to reform the Christian life in Constantinople, yet these reforms were not popular with many clergy or the imperial court, leading to his exile in 404CE and subsequent death in 407CE.[118] John's letters as a Bishop and while in exile provide information on the Minor Orders, especially celibates.

Within John Chrysostom's writings, various Minor Orders are mentioned, the most frequent being Virgins. In letter eight to Olympia, John makes mention of the Choir of Virgins when reminding her of Paul's injunction not to wear jewellery or sumptuous clothing. In the next paragraph, he linked this putting away of ornaments with the way athletes strip down for contests. Following this, the life of virginity is described as the angelic life which only some can live while on earth.[119] Virgins are also discussed in sermons: in the *Second Homily on*

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[113] Gregory, *Oration,* 4.87.

[114] Gregory, *Oration,* 5.29-30.

[115] Gregory, *Oration,* 8.12.

[116] Gregory, *Oration,* 4.97.

[117] Gregory, *Oration,* 42.11.

[118] Palladius, *Dialogue*, Ch5, 10,11.

[119]John Chrysostom, *Letters to Saint Olympia,* Letter, 8.C, D.

Eutropius, John talks about the diverse ways to enter the kingdom of heaven, mentioning Virgins but also emphasising the interdependency of the celibate and married in the church.[120] John links Christ's saying on eunuchs to the Virgins of the church, while in another sermon disapproving of Virgins living with male celibates.[121] John also reiterates his commands to Olympia not to wear sumptuous clothing to all Virgins in a sermon due to the loss of respect for Virgins due to the behaviour of some.[122]

Alongside the mentions of Virgins, there is a letter written *to a Young Widow* in which John extols the virtue and honour of this calling along with the challenges. In this letter, he explains why young Widows are not enrolled on the books due to the challenges they face that are greater even than the priesthood.[123] Widows are also mentioned by John in his sermons on 1 Timothy, where he discusses what Paul says about Widows,[124] where he discusses some of the same ideas as are in the letter *to a Young Widow*.

Besides the texts on Virgins or Widows, there are also incidences of John discussing the two groups together. This is entirely consistent with the Antiochian practice in which John was trained. John talks about the number of Virgins and Widows supported by the Church in Constantinople, intending to shame the rich who do not support the poor.[125] In addition, John speaks of the Choir of Virgins and the assembly of Widows alongside the married and how all types of people need each other while also elsewhere lamenting that the Virgins and Widows of his time are not as virtuous as those in earlier times.[126]

John witnesses the presence of Readers in that he wrote two letters to the Lector Theodotus. The more practical references to Readers come from John's sermons as he describes the

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[120] John Chrysostom, *On Eutropius,* 2.6.

[121] John Chrysostom, *Sermons on Matthew,* 78, *Sermons 1Corinthians,* 44.

[122] John Chrysostom, *Sermons 1Timothy,* 8.

[123] John Chrysostom, *Letter to a Young Widow*, 2.

[124] John Chrysostom, *1Timothy,* Homily 15.1.

[125] John Chrysostom, *On Matthew,* Homily 66.

[126] John Chrysostom, *Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians,* sermon, 30, 34.

procedure around Readers reading scripture in the services.[127] This description of Readers reading after the Deacon calls the congregation to order reflects the rubrics which are present in later liturgical texts that are ascribed to John. The other order mentioned in passing is the order of the Porter; the lack of context means that it is not possible to identify the duties of this order.[128]

The writings of John provide a valuable witness to the presence of Minor Orders in primary sources and aspects of the context in which these orders occurred. While the amount of material is limited, it is important as it comes from a primary source.

2.1.b.γ Socrates Scholasticus 380-450CE

Socrates was a lay member of the church who was a practising historian and lawyer.[129] His *Ecclesiastical History* continues the work of Eusebius in chronicling both church and imperial history. This work provides important insight into sources and opinions which would otherwise be lost to history. In describing how the Arians attacked the church in Alexandria, Socrates mentions the indignities aimed at the Virgins and Widows of the church during the attacks, particularly focusing on the injustices perpetrated against the Virgins of the church.[130]

Later, Socrates mentions Readers both positively and negatively. He records a Bishop deferring to his well-educated Reader in the management of a church council.[131] This indicates that those in the Minor Orders could be well educated and trusted to act on behalf of their superiors. In a less positive description, a Reader is recorded revealing the secret dealings of his Bishop to try and promote his Presbyter over a better-qualified Presbyter to the See of Constantinople.[132]

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[127] John Chrysostom, *Acts of the Apostles Homily* 19, *1 Thessalonians homily* 3.

[128] John Chrysostom, *Statutes on the people of Antioch,* 20.

[129] Jill Harries, "Socrates Scholasticus, Lawyer," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[130] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.28.

[131] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History,* 5.10.

[132] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History,* 6.2.

2.1.b.δ Sozomen b380/427CE

Sozomen was both a lawyer and a layman who is noted for his literary style in his nine-volume *Ecclesiastical History*.[133] Much of Sozomen's focus is on the internal disputes of the church, although he does not detail the theology behind them. This interest leads to Sozomen extensively recording and discussing the clergy within his *Ecclesiastical History*, where he mentions clergy of various ranks suffering martyrdom, including a specific reference to Virgins suffering at the hands of the Persians.[134] Sozomen mentions Virgins along with Widows as clergy while discussing the persecutions of Julian the Apostate.[135] The final mention of Virgins is of the elder sister of the young Emperor Theodosius; she is described as taking a vow of virginity and serving as regent for her brother.[136]

Sozomen also records Subdeacons in two contexts within his history. The first is discussing the council of Nicaea, where he mentions Bishop Paphnutius defending the right of the clergy, including Subdeacons, to have relationships with their wives.[137] He also discusses a Subdeacon who was martyred alongside a Singer and Reader during the Arian controversy.[138] Additionally, a Reader is mentioned as being summoned to answer for things about the persecution of John Chrysostom by some other Bishops.[139] A different Reader is described as being tortured to reveal information about a fire at the Hagia Sophia soon after John Chrysostom was exiled.[140] Through his history, Sozomen provides clear corroborating evidence of the existence of various orders, which are attested to in other texts.

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[133] Alberto J Quiroga Puertas, "Sozomen, Church Historian," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[134] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.11-13.

[135] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.5.

[136] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.1.

[137] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.23.

[138] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.3.

[139] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 8.17.

[140] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History,* 8.24.

2.1.b.ε Summary

The texts suggest that in Constantinople consecrated Virgins and Widows were a key part of the church community. Some of these women are linked with the order of the Deacon, such as Olympias. There are also multiple mentions of Readers and Subdeacons suggesting they were present in the church. The last two sources are grey texts, so they do not provide as certain evidence as other sources, which are the writings of specific people within their context; however, they show the development of mythology around certain orders. These histories also provide an insight into how people understood the councils which had produced the canons that governed the church.

2.1.c Asia Minor, the dioceses of Asiana and Pontus

The region of Asia Minor, especially the provinces of Cappadocia I and II, were key areas for theological thought and writing during the third and fourth centuries. This region produced liturgical and ecclesiological texts alongside theological writings. This diversity of sources allows for a dynamic understanding of how the church in this region worked.

2.1.c.α Firmilian of Caesarea d269CE

Firmilian was Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia from 230CE until his death in 269CE.[141] He was involved in resolving controversies in the Eastern and Western parts of the church. In the mid-third-century letter from Firmilian to Cyprian, Firmilian recounts at length how a woman deceived by a demon had disrupted the Church in his area some years before and how one of his Exorcists had dealt with the situation.[142] Although this story is included to make a rhetorical point against the heretical Bishop of Rome, it provides valuable evidence for the existence of Exorcists and their duties.

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[141] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Firmilian, St," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[142] Cyprian, *Letter* 75.10.4.

2.1.c.β Council of Ancyra 314CE

The local council of Ancyra produced two canons that refer to Minor Orders. Within the canons of the council, it is ruled that all clergy must at least eat vegetables served with meat.[143] This was directly aimed at certain schismatic groups who took asceticism to an extreme; this canon does not forbid fasting, which is required by other canons, but rather forbids the disdaining of food given by God. This is relevant as it is a canon which includes all clergy in a way wider than just the Major Orders, and it implies the presence of the Minor Orders. The other relevant ruling is on how the church responds to consecrated Virgins who marry, reflecting a problem that had developed in this community.[144] This canon applied only to consecrated Virgins, not all Virgins, as the canon explicitly talks of Virgins who had made and then broken their promise.[145] It is because of their promises that these Virgins are forbidden to live with men, even in a celibate household.

2.1.c.γ Council of Gangra 340CE

This local council produced two canons on Virgins, the first stating that the choice of celibacy must be positive and not because of despising sexual relationships.[146] The second anathematises the celibates who abuse those who are married.[147] Both canons had the aim of reinforcing the parity of the celibate and married ways of life; the penalty indicates it was as much aimed at lay monastics as those in ecclesial orders. The relevance of these canons is due to the witness they provide for the presence of Virgins within the church community.

2.1.c.δ Basil the Great 329-379CE

Basil became Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia in 370 after studying Greek literature and Philosophy as a youth before being baptised and withdrawing into monasticism. Alongside his considerable influence on the theological debates of his time, Basil was an active pastoral

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[143] Council of Ancyra, *Canon,* 14.

[144] Council of Ancyra, *Canon,* 19.

[145] Council of Ancyra, *Canon,* 19.

[146] Council of Gangra, *Canons,* 9.

[147] Council of Gangra, *Canons,* 10.

Bishop who arranged for the support of the poor and sick in his diocese.[148] As a Bishop, Basil was a copious writer, and his letters discuss a range of clergy.

The most frequently referenced order in Basil's writings is that of the Widow, with five letters addressed to women who were Widows. The indication that Widows were regarded as clergy comes from the fact that Basil, as Bishop of Caesarea, sent a letter of recommendation when a Widow travelled to another community.[149] This is especially important as letters of recommendation were given to clergy, while the laity received letters of peace.[150] Basil also speaks of Virgins in two letters; in one case, he instructed a consecrated Virgin on the nature of her office after she has fallen into sin.[151] In another letter, he asks a brother Bishop to send some Virgins belonging to his church back after they fled his diocese with a rebel Deacon.[152] Basil also indicates the presence of an otherwise unknown order of a Canoness (κανονική),[153] as he sends a letter to one; this order was probably one of those under the control of the woman Deacon. Additionally, Basil mentions the order of the Reader both practically and as a letter bearer.[154]

Basil also wrote several canonical letters, one of which contains canons on the conduct of consecrated Virgins among other clergy. Within this, he sets a minimum age for profession and structures for disciplining consecrated Virgins and makes Virgins senior to Widows.[155] Additionally, he rules that Virgins alongside monastics who commit sexual sins, are to be treated as adulterers.[156] The recognition of consecrated virginity only existed for those

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[148] Basil of Caesarea and Verna E F Harrison, *On the Human Condition* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 11-13.

[149] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 315.

[150] Canons of Antioch 7, 8, 11. Letters of Peace which laity received enabled them to be recognised as Christians of good standing so able to receive communion when they visited churches other than their home one. Letters of recommendation served a similar purpose but identified the person as clergy so that they would receive the customary honour appropriate to their position as a representative of their bishop.

[151] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 46.

[152] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 169.

[153] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 173.

[154] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 98, 198.

[155] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 199 canon 18.

[156] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 217 canon 60.

professed within the Church.[157] Basil sets out the principles for how to deal with clerical sin in ways appropriate to the severity of the act, illustrating this with the differing penalties he lays on Readers who have sex outside of marriage depending on whether they are betrothed.[158] Basil also expels from the clergy all who have lapsed from the faith.[159]

2.1.c.ε Gregory of Nyssa 335-394CE

Gregory of Nyssa was the younger brother of Basil the Great and Macrina the Younger. Although he married while young, he later retired to monasticism and was appointed Bishop of Nyssa in 371 CE. Despite Gregory's extensive writings, there are only a few indications of Minor Orders in his surviving texts. A clear reference to Minor Orders comes in the *Life of Macrina*; within the description of her funeral service, a Cantor is named along with the allusion to other clergy in addition to the Deacons.[160] Within this text, Gregory also refers to Virgins, but the context makes it clear they are monastics of whom Macrina had been abbess rather than those who served a church community. In two other places, Gregory makes mention of Minor Orders: in his dogmatic treatise *On Virginity,* he alludes to consecrated Virgins while focusing on the Mother of God.[161] The final reference is to a Choir of Virgins.[162] These Virgins are associated with a church; they may have been the Virgins of that church or nuns.

2.1.c.ζ Asterius of Amasea 330/335-~425CE

Asterius was a Bishop in Cappadocia and within his surviving texts, both Virgins and Widows are mentioned.[163] In sermon four, he encourages people to give to the Virgins and Widows who sing in the church.[164] This came within the context of his second sermon, where

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[157] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 199 canon 20.

[158] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 217 canon 69, 70.

[159] Basil the Great, *Letter,* 217 canon 51.

[160] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, 34.

[161] Gregory of Nyssa *On Virginity*.

[162] Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter* 3.

[163] Barry Baldwin, "Asterios of Amaseia," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* ed Alexander P. Kazhdan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[164] Asterius of Amasea, *Sermon* 4.

he admonished people to give to the poor, especially Widows, rather than to live in luxury.[165] These sermons indicate that the Virgins and Widows had a position within the church and were supported by other members of the community.

2.1.c.η Theodore of Mopsuestia 350-428CE

Theodore of Mopsuestia was an Antiochian-trained Bishop and contemporary of John Chrysostom in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries.[166] He leaves only one reference to the existence of Minor Orders. He refers to the importance of the Exorcist in the second chapter of his commentary on the *Lord's Prayer Baptism and Eucharist*.[167] This text provides valuable insight into how the exorcism of catechumens worked in the detailed description of the exorcisms which preceded baptism. This is one of the few descriptions which explains the relevant process and theology clearly and identifies a separate minister called an Exorcist rather than the task being done by another member of the clergy.

2.1.c.θ Synod of Laodicea 363-4CE

The synod of Laodicea in Phrygia, which convened to address the conduct of clergy and laity in the Church after the time of Julian the Apostate, provided copious canons for Minor Orders and clergy in general. The reasons for this concentration of canons are complex and relate to the influence of local Bishops, who were using the council to enforce discipline. The most numerous canons were aimed at the Subdeacons: who are placed under the charge of the Deacon, banned from the eastern end of the temple, from wearing the Deacon's vestments or distributing the Eucharist, while they are assigned the duty of keeping the doors.[168] Additionally, two canons relate to Readers and Singers, whose functions are limited to recognised members of the orders and forbidding them to wear Deacon's vestments.[169]

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[165] Asterius of Amasea, *Semon* 2.

[166] Barry Baldwin, "Theodore of Mopsuestia," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* ed Alexander P. Kazhdan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[167] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer, Baptism and the Eucharist,* Chapter 2.

[168] Synod of Laodicea, *Canon,* 20, 21, 22, 43, 25.

[169] Synod of Laodicea, *Canon,* 15, 23.

The other canons refer to clergy more generally or specifically named Orders. The council reiterated existing prohibitions on clergy charging interest, mixed bathing, involvement in magic or amulets including mathematics (possibly wherever there was a connection with pagan cults), or attending parties unless they left before the actors arrived.[170] Limited permissions are given for clergy to give catechesis, although it is unclear as to if it was a separate order or others who are given a blessing to do it alongside existing functions.[171] The council also ruled that clergy could only travel with the blessing of their Bishop and a letter from him, additionally only permitting clergy to enter taverns if travelling. The council also forbade anyone from taking food from an agape meal to consume later and from creating clubs to fund drinking parties.[172]

2.1.c.ɪ Summary

Within Asia Minor, the most well-attested order is that of the Virgin, which is mentioned by four writers. Most mentions are in passing or of a theological nature; however, in his letters and canons, Basil provides a more detailed picture of the consecrated Virgins within his diocese. Three writers mention Widows alongside Virgins often in the same text and linked theologically. Basil produces the most evidence for the Widow, including a letter of recommendation, which shows that some Widows were recognised as clergy. Four other orders are mentioned by only one source, Readers and Canonesses by Basil, Exorcists by Theodore, and the Porter by John Chrysostom.

The councils held in Asia Minor also provide a valuable source for the existence of Minor Orders and what they did. The most common topic is Virgins, which seems to have been the most challenging order to control. The Synod of Laodicea also mentioned Subdeacons, Readers and Singers, predominantly restricting their duties. The councils also set out many other rules specifically for clergy on personal conduct, often reflecting or reflected by the Ecumenical councils discussed above. The content of canons in places suggests that the

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[170] Synod of Laodicea, *Canon,* 4, 30, 36, 54.

[171] Synod of Laodicea, *Canon,* 26.

[172] Synod of Laodicea, *Canon,* 41, 42, 24, 27, 55.

church in these centuries was far from organised and ordered. Firmilian is an outlying source which is earlier than the others.

2.1.d Antioch and Syria

The region of Syria in Late Antiquity covered much of the Middle East between Asia Minor, the border with the Persian Empire and Palestine. Antioch was the principal administrative city and was thus chosen by the Church as the chief See. The city of Antioch and its metropolitan area were in some ways theologically distinct from the other parts of Syria, the differences becoming more pronounced the further east texts originate. The theology of Antioch is noticeably influenced by Syrian asceticism and practices. Often Antioch acted as the translator of these practices to the wider church, notably in the form of the stylite monastics and the songs of Ephrem the Syrian.

As texts of the Syrian tradition are principally recorded in Syriac or Arabic with few translated into English, studying this area can be challenging. What is commonly accessible was translated into Greek or Latin in Late Antiquity apart from Church Orders. There is also a noticeable difference between the Greek-speaking and writing areas of western Syria around Antioch and the seacoast and the Syriac-speaking areas. Most scholarship focuses on texts which predate the council of Chalcedon.

2.1.d.α Texts common to both areas

Some texts cannot be placed with certainty in either Antioch or the wider Syrian region but were highly influential in both areas.

2.1.d.α.1 *Didascalia Apostolorum*

The *Didascalia* is a Church Order that developed into its final form probably by the mid-third-century and expresses the early development of ecclesiology in the Greek-speaking region of Syria and Antioch. The text was originally written in Greek but survived only in Syriac and Latin, with some fragments of Greek. Due to the nature of this text as a piece of living literature, it is impossible to assign it to a single place of origin, but through similarities

to other comparable texts, it is possible to suggest a region or tradition from which it comes. Stewart-Sykes has thoroughly explored the identification of the origins, provenance and dating and these conclusions are currently uncontested.[173] This study takes the approach that the text came from the Greek-speaking region of Syria, either around Antioch or an area influenced by the presence of a Greek colony. The version of the *Didascalia* translated by Stewart-Sykes is one version of the living tradition as maintained within one community, or rather a composite from the surviving texts, meaning it reflects local practices at the time of writing, practices which undoubtedly varied in some ways even from another congregation within the same tradition of practice. The *Didascalia,* like all Church Orders, gives only one image of church practice in one context, but since the context is unclear, it is not possible to understand the text fully.

The discussions on the roles and support of Widows reflect the writings of earlier Bishops from Antioch and the surrounding area. Widows were described as in receipt of the support of the Bishop and theologically as the altar, as they are by Polycarp.[174] There are also detailed descriptions of how a Widow is to behave and who can be enrolled in this order, as explored by Methuen.[175] The *Didascalia* defines Widows separately from the other clergy and the laity.

The *Didascalia* also refers to both Readers and Subdeacons. The Reader is mentioned in chapter 9, stating, "If there is a reader he should receive in conjunction with the presbyters."[176] Later in the same chapter, Subdeacons are listed after the Deacon as to be appointed by the Bishop in service of the church, although it is noted that as this is the only mention of Subdeacons, it may have been an editorial addition to the original text.[177] The

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[173] Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum.* 3-91.

[174] DA, ch 9.

[175] DA, ch 14; Charlotte Methuen, "Widows, Bishops and the Struggle for Authority in the Didascalia Apostolorum," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46, no. 2 (1995): 197–213.

[176] Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia Apostolorum,* 153.

[177] DA, ch9, Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 157.

ecclesiology of the text itself focused on the roles and duties of Deacons of both genders serving the Bishop.[178]

2.1.d.α.2 *Apostolic Constitutions*

The *Apostolic Constitutions* is a late-fourth-century derivative text of the *Didascalia*, *Didache* and the *Apostolic Tradition*, although it also contains significant independent traditions or a different version of a shared tradition.[179] This text likely originated in a metropolitan area and Pylvänäinen suggests this might have been Antioch.[180] However, due to the nature of living literature, it is not possible to assign the document to one source city. The text witnesses the evolution from Church Orders to collections of canons as the document contains both forms of texts. The combination of liturgics, practical instruction and canons are seen particularly clearly in this document which gives it a close parallel with the later Typicons of the Orthodox Church.[181]

The most mentioned order in this document is that of the Widow. In book two, there is a discussion on how the Bishop should support Widows. Specifically, the free will offerings given to the church are to be used to support Widows.[182] In book three, the Widows are instructed to pray for those who support them and on appropriate conduct, along with instructions to the Bishop on whom may be placed in the order.[183] In book two, the Widows are linked with Virgins in the instructions that Deacons are to seat them apart from other women.[184] Virgins are mentioned in book four, where there are instructions on how the Virgins are to behave.

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[178] DA, ch16.

[179] Bradshaw, "Ancient Church Orders," 20-1; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Deacons in the Syrian Church Order Tradition: A Search for Origins," in *Diakonia, Diaconiae, Diaconato,* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2010), 112, 116.

[180] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 52.

[181] see 2.d.α.1.a.

[182] AC, 2.25.1.

[183] AC, 3.1.1-3.2.

[184] AC, 2.57.14.

In book two, the instructions on the ordering of worship include how readings are to be conducted, alongside the sections on Widows and Virgins. The Reader is instructed to stand in a high place in the centre of the congregation to read the books of the Old Testament, Acts and the Epistles. The Gospels, however, are the prerogative of the Deacon or Presbyter to read.[185] This illustrates that by the mid-fourth-century, the Reader's role was still prominent but had reduced in importance compared to even a century earlier. In book two, there is also a reference to Doorkeepers standing at the doors for men alongside the woman Deacons at the women's doors; in book eight, the instruction is repeated, but it is the Subdeacon at the men's doors.[186] In discussing these passages, Pylvänäinen suggests that the Doorkeepers referred to here could be Deacons performing a specific function rather than a separate order, as the two genders of Deacons worked closely together to fulfil their tasks.[187] Additionally, there is a passing reference to the respect due to Teachers in a version of the *two ways text* contained in book seven; it is unclear whether this is a distinct order or an aspect of another order.[188]

Within discussions of clergy in general, there are indications of the presence of the orders of interest to this study; these indications come from wider instructions and theological images. In book two of the Apostolic Constitutions, the primacy of the Bishop is emphasised with Readers, Singers, Porters, Virgins and Widows included with Deacons as an image of Levites.[189] In book three, limits on who may baptise are set out, specifically differentiating between senior clergy and others.[190] Book eight provides the forms of ordination for Subdeacons, Readers, Virgins, Widows and Exorcists.[191] The instructions on ordination also contain details of the functions of the orders, with the Subdeacons specifically tasked to look after holy vessels and Readers to read.[192]

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[185] AC, 2.57.7-8.

[186] AC, 2.57.11, 8.11.11 and Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 183 n89.

[187] Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 181, 183-6; edem, "More than Serving", 73-90.

[188] AC, 7.9.1.

[189] AC, 2.25.15-6.

[190] AC, 3.20.2.

[191] AC, 8.3.21-6.

[192] AC, 8.3.21-2.

Book eight contains a collection of canons that purport to be by the Apostles but reflect the concerns of the late-fourth-century church. Canons seventeen, eighteen, nineteen and twenty-seven deal with marriage regulations, the last of these specifically mentioning Readers and Singers. Canon fifteen commands clergy to stay in their parish of ordination, a common concern of the fourth-century, as was the content of canon fifty-four forbidding clergy to eat in taverns. The forty-third canon forbids Subdeacons, Readers and Singers from gambling and drinking. Canons fifty-one and sixty-nine then legislate on fasting - the timing and why it is conducted.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* witnessed the existence of Widows, Virgins, Subdeacons, Readers, Doorkeepers and Exorcists. The content reflects the concerns of order and discipline of preceding Church Orders and the canons of contemporary councils. The link with the *Didascalia* discussed above is particularly strong, suggesting a continuity of tradition; this link and how it affects interpretation is discussed in chapter 3.

2.1.d.β Texts associated with Antioch

Antioch is one of the oldest sees in the Christian East and home of one of the two principal theological traditions of the Greek-speaking church. Antioch also makes a significant contribution to the understanding of Late Antique ecclesiology.

2.1.d.β.1 Council of Antioch or the Dedication council ~341

This local synod in the city of Antioch created three canons for clergy, amongst other rulings. The council is dated to 341CE, but as Stephens explores, assigning it to one year is arbitrary and based on ancient historians, while it is more likely that the creedal statements and canons were the product of an ongoing series of councils that happened over several years.[193] The canons have been redacted at least twice through the councils.[194] The dating dispute does not affect the ecclesiological conclusion of this Thesis as the period involved is relatively insignificant in the development of ecclesiology, unlike doctrinal theology.

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[193] Christopher W. B Stephens. "The Dedication Council," in *Canon Law and Episcopal Authority: The Canons of Antioch and Serdica,* ed. Christopher W. B Stephens, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 86-131, at 86-9.

[194] Stephens. "Dedication Council," 119-21.

In Canon 3, the Nicene principle that clergy must stay in their ordaining parish is reiterated. Canon 6 also repeats an earlier canon that only the excommunicating Bishop can restore a person. Canon 10 deals with an issue arising from how previously schismatic Bishops were integrated into the church, stating that village or subordinate Bishops can only consecrate Lectors, Subdeacons and Exorcists. This canon bears witness to the existence of these three Minor Orders and codifies customary practice on the ordaining authority of subordinate bishops.

2.1.d.β.2 Pseudo-Ignatius

In addition to the genuine letters of the first-century Bishop and martyr Ignatius of Antioch, twelve pseudepigraphal letters have been dated to the fourth-century, although exactly when is still debated. These texts illustrate how the Antiochian school of theology developed between the second and fourth centuries. Although the interloping expansions to the genuine letters of Ignatius and the pseudepigraphal letters are distinct from each other, they are of the same school and interpret the teaching of Ignatius for a later audience which faced problems of divisions within the church.[195] Within these, the clearest and most extensive references to the Minor Orders come in the letter to the Antiochians;

> I greet the sub-deacons, readers, singers, doorkeepers, those who labour, exorcists, confessors. I greet the keepers of the holy gates, the deaconesses in Christ. I greet the virgins betrothed to Christ, of whom, in the Lord Jesus, may I delight. I greet the most serious-minded widows.[196]

This passage indicates the presence of several orders and aids in dating the text since some of these orders did not exist in the second-century, although their full development within the Antiochian tradition is still debated. There are similarities to the lists of orders in the Council of Antioch discussed above and parallels to the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*.[197] While most of the orders are recognisable, not all are. The phrase "Keepers of the holy gates" probably refers directly to the function of the woman Deacon within the addressed

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[195] Ignatius of Antioch and Alistair C Stewart, *The Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), 112-3, 116-8.

[196] Pseudo-Ignatius, *To the Antiochians,* 12.

[197] DA, Ch12; AC, 2.57.11; Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 183-4.

community and fits with the function ascribed to women in that position by other texts such as the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a link identified by both Stewart and Pylvänäinen.[198] The link to the *Didascalia* in this instance of discussing the "Keepers of the holy gates" is more difficult to establish as the instructions in *Didascalia* chapter 12 talk of the Deacon generically, which might include the woman Deacon but without a clear indication in the text, it cannot be asserted as a certainty. The reference to "those who labour" is more obscure as it could mean those who did practical service within the church but could also mean those who laboured spiritually, such as monastics; there is not enough within the passage to identify what was meant. Including Confessors and women Deacons or Deaconesses, among orders identifiable as Minor Orders relates to the liturgical and pastoral nature of the letters rather than following a strict order of listing of people who serve in the church. The development of the assistants of the Deacon and how this varied over regions is explored in chapter 3, as there are considerable regional variations.

Elsewhere in the letter to the Antiochians, the writer describes the Virgins as being consecrated and in the letter to Hero, they are described as treasures of Christ. Virgins are connected to the order of Widows in the letter to the Philippians, where both are recognised as distinct orders. Widows are mentioned in the letter to Hero as an order whom Deacons are to honour. The order of the Reader as the letter carrier is acknowledged in the letter to the Philippians.[199]

These texts show how the fourth-century writers perceived the importance of appearing to hold to the most ancient traditions rather than innovation and provide insights into how schools of theology developed. They also witness the enduring importance of Virgins and Widows within the church alongside other orders. The Pseudo-Ignatian texts are notable in that they refer to the Deacon as Christ, something that also occurs in the genuine letters of Ignatius of Antioch and seem to include the woman Deacon in this association with Christ rather than the Holy Spirit as occurs in the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. The Greek of the letter to the Trallians says, "τοὺς διακόνους ὡς Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν,"[200] in the

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[198] AC, 8.10-11; Stewart, *The Letters of Ignatius,* 204n39; Pylvänäinen, *Agents in Liturgy,* 184-5.

[199] Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Antiochians* 8, *Philippians* 15, *To Hero* 3.

[200] Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Trallians* 3.

plural, which can include women as well as men since the plural masculine is used to mean all of a category as well as multiple men in the category. It is also interesting to note that the Pseudo-Ignatian texts are predominantly faithful to the theology and orders listed in the genuine letters except for the letter to the Antiochians quoted above, which gives a list more comparable with those from third-century North Africa or Rome than any Eastern text.

2.1.d.β.3 Theodoret of Cyrrhus/Cyrus 393-457CE

Theodoret entered the monastic life young and later served as Bishop of Cyrrhus. He had a turbulent career attending the councils of Ephesus in 431 and 449 CE and Chalcedon in 451 CE.[201] Theodoret was a prolific writer, and his *Ecclesiastical History* provides a counterpoint in understanding to those of his Constantinopolitan contemporaries. Although he covers a significant amount of theology in his writings, he also provides insights into the presence and use of various clerical orders.

This early-fifth-century writer provides a witness for a wide range of orders within the Antiochian tradition. Within his *Ecclesiastical History,* Virgins are mentioned in three places. In books 2 and 4, he describes the mistreatment of Virgins by Arians in Alexandria, the later account including the *Raptus* of consecrated Virgins.[202] A passage in book 3 recounts an encounter between an aged woman Deacon who led a Choir of Virgins and the apostate emperor Julian. While commenting on the treatment of the Virgins, Theodoret also mentions the abuse suffered by Widows.[203] Theodoret additionally makes it clear in a letter that he considers all members of the congregation responsible for the protection and support of Widows; it is not explicitly stated in this letter if this covers only those Widows officially supported by the church or all Widows within the community.[204]

The other order which receives significant attention from Theodoret is that of the Reader, highlighting the importance of obedience and the loss for the church when they fall into

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[201] Barry Baldwin, "Theodoret of Cyrrhus," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* ed Alexander P. Kazhdan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[202] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.11, 4.19.

[203] Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.14.

[204] Theodoret, *Letter* 14.

heresy.[205] Elsewhere he mentions a Subdeacon in passing when requesting that an acquaintance not defend a member of the congregation who had wronged a member of the clergy.[206]

The writings of Theodoret indicate that he was familiar with the orders of Virgins and Widows and their place within the Church, even if the former were not common in the church of his time. The letters suggest that Widows, Readers and Subdeacons were present in his ecclesiastical context.

2.1.d.γ Texts associated with other parts of Syria

The Syrian tradition is more obscure due to limited access to texts as most only exist in Syriac and only a limited number have been translated. Over recent decades more writings have become accessible as scholars have researched specific aspects such as Sons and Daughters of the Covenant. There has also been a move by scholars of this tradition to publish in English.

2.1.d.γ.1 Archelaus of Laodicea d283

Archelaus was educated and, according to Eusebius, a successful diplomat.[207] Archelaus lists Virgins among the other clergy sending greetings in a letter.[208] The wider context of the text suggests that the Virgins mentioned may have been some form of monastic community rather than ecclesial celibates; however, the reference is so brief that it is not possible to say with certainty.

2.1.d.γ.2 Ephrem the Syrian 306-373CE

Ephrem the Syrian was an important composer of church hymns in Syriac, and predominantly he is remembered for his compositions of Church music. This composition of church music

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[205] Theodoret, *Letter*, 11, 142.

[206] Theodoret, *Letter,* 60.

[207] Eusebius EH, 7.32.

[208] Archelaus, *Acts of the Disputation*, Ch 5.

and related exegesis, including sermons and commentaries, was important to the community, in which he held a title that translates as interpreter or exegete.[209] This may suggest that Ephrem held a role that was comparable to the function of a Catechist in other areas, especially with the fact that he founded a catechetical school later in life,[210] meaning he fulfilled a function comparable to that of Origen. The theology of Virginity shown by Ephrem's hymns on the subject suggests that Virginity was seen by him and potentially the whole community as a superior way of being Christian in dedication to God.[211] Harvey, in "Revisiting the Daughters of the Covenant", mentions a tradition that Ephrem himself founded the Daughters of the Covenant for liturgical singing.[212]

2.1.d.γ.3 Sons and Daughters of the Covenant (Bnay and Bnat Qyama)
The Sons and Daughters of the Covenant are a specialist expression of the order of the Virgin in both the Western and Eastern versions of Syrian Christianity. According to Harvey, they appeared before the third-century independently of the early stages of monasticism, being a parochial liturgical role.[213] These men and women lived within the community under vows of poverty and chastity with a position distinct from the role of monastics or Deacons.[214]

One of the key sources for these celibates is Aphrahat in his *Demonstrations*.[215] This stresses the importance of celibacy for both men and women who were part of this community. Aphrahat also expounds on the rewards they will receive, explicitly describing them as betrothing themselves to Christ.

This area is one of specialist research beyond the scope of this wider study, apart from its relevance to the order of the Virgin and the indication that Daughters sang within the

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[209] Kathleen E. McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian," in *The Early Christian World*, vol 1-2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 2 1228-50, at 1229.

[210] McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian," 1229.

[211] McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian," 1241.

[212] Harvey, "Revisiting the Daughters," 132-3.

[213] Harvey, "Daughters of the Covenant," 126.

[214] Harvey, "Daughters of the Covenant," 126.

[215] Aphrahat, *Demonstrations,* 6.

Church.[216] Harvey asserts that this is in contrast to the restriction of women to only serve women in other areas of the church in the canons of the fourth-century.[217] The importance, especially of the Daughters of the Covenant as Virgins, reflects the Antiochian theology as the golden altar of incense. The boys mentioned by Egeria as singing in the church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem may also have been related to the practice.[218]

2.1.d.δ Archaeology

The Dura-Europos house church is the only surviving example of a pre-Constantinian church that has been systematically examined archaeologically.[219] This evidence means it is possible to look at the size of the building and hypothesise about the potential space for clergy within the church itself. The small size, accommodating around 75 people according to Peppard,[220] means it is unlikely there was a large number of clergy due to the limited space available. This relatively limited capacity for the community means that it is likely that it had only a small number of clergy and the surviving texts from other areas mean it is appropriate to suggest that a Bishop, Deacons and someone literate made up the core of what was needed to run a service. It is, therefore, possible to speculate that a community such as that at Dura-Europos was most likely served by a Bishop or presiding Presbyter and was assisted by one or two Deacons and possibly an assistant Presbyter, along with a Reader and possibly a Subdeacon – of course, this is simply a speculation based on the space.

2.1.d.ε Summary

The sources from Syria and Antioch suggest a wide range of Minor Orders. The Church Orders provide a clear witness to the existence of Minor Orders and some of the earliest ordination practices; although these texts would benefit from studies that concentrate on the individual document such as Pylvänäinen's work on Deacons in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. The documents and other sources from the region suggest the presence of Subdeacons,

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[216] Harvey, "Patristic Worlds," 32-3.

[217] Harvey, "Daughters of the Covenant," 129-30.

[218] See 3.e.β.

[219] Michael Peppard, *The World's Oldest Church Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 15.

[220] Peppard, *World's Oldest Church*, 17.

Readers, Virgins, Widows, Teachers and Exorcists. The noticeable departure from other regions in the Empire comes with Sons and Daughters of the Covenant. This anomaly is important in understanding the position of women in the Church and is explored in chapter 4.

2.1.e Jerusalem and Palestine

The City of Jerusalem and the surrounding region of Palestine had distinct traditions, often with a stronger Jewish influence than the rest of the Church. Until the council of Chalcedon, the See of Jerusalem was subordinate to that of Caesarea and the Patriarchal See of Antioch. There were specific liturgical practices in the City of Jerusalem relating to the concentration of Holy sites in and around the city. This section looks at the evidence coming from both Palestine and Jerusalem since there were significant overlaps and differences in practice. The influence of practices from this region on other areas of the church, especially liturgically, must be noted but should not be overemphasised, as the pilgrims influenced the development of practices and took them back to their places of origin.

2.1.e.α Eusebius of Caesarea 265-339CE

Eusebius was a Presbyter and then Bishop of Caesarea, the metropolitan See of Palestine. He wrote theological texts and Scriptural commentaries, although his most important work is his *Ecclesiastical History*. This text sets the pattern for later histories and preserves sources which have not survived independently.

Eusebius was a prolific writer who left references to the Minor Orders in many of his works. The greatest number of references are to the consecrated Virgin. In *Proof of the Gospel,* Eusebius mentions Virgins as a distinct group within a larger group who have dedicated themselves to the service of God.[221] In *The Theophania,* Eusebius goes further, mentioning the distinct category of Virgins. The most important of these is in book five, where he mentions that Virgins are of both genders.[222] Virgins also feature repeatedly as martyrs and confessors in the *Ecclesiastical History* and *Martyrs of Palestine,* which includes those called

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[221] Eusebius of Caesarea: *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Book 3.

[222] Eusebius*, Theophania,* Books 3-5.

the Lord's Virgins and others called Holy Virgins, indicating an official position. The text also suggests that these Virgins were often persecuted by being condemned to brothels when not killed outright.[223] The only mention of Widows is in the *Martyrs of Palestine,* where one of the martyrs is mentioned as having supported Widows during his life.[224]

Within the *Martyrs of Palestine,* Eusebius also mentions a variety of Minor Orders who suffered in the Diocletian persecution. One group contained a Reader, a translator of Syriac and an Exorcist.[225] Another named martyr is described as both a Reader and an Exorcist, while there are also unnamed Readers mentioned in a group of clergy; a Deacon Exorcist is recorded and described as vigorously defending the faith.[226] Additionally, a Subdeacon is mentioned among a group of martyrs.[227] These groupings of orders and examples of one person holding multiple roles indicate some aspects of the relationships between orders. The presence of Catechists can also be inferred due to the references to the Catechetical School of Alexandria and a direct reference to a Teacher.[228] The *Ecclesiastical History*, as it contains preserved texts from other regions, provides evidence for Minor Orders in those areas, these texts are explored in their originating context.

Eusebius's most evidence-heavy writings are histories which means that although they indicate the presence of Minor Orders, there is no certainty these existed in the context in which the text was written. Since the orders are mentioned, it is clear they form part of the self-understanding of the church of Eusebius' time, although there is little detail on their functions.

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[223] Eusebius EH, 6.5; Ibid, *Martyrs in Palestine,*5.3, 7.1, 7.4, 8.5-8, 9.6.

[224] Eusebius*, Martyrs in Palestine,* 11.22.

[225] Eusebius*, Martyrs in Palestine*, 1.1.

[226] Eusebius*, Martyrs in Palestine*, 1.5e, 11.1g, 2.1.

[227] Eusebius*, Martyrs in Palestine*, 2.2.

[228] Eusebius EH, 6.13.

2.1.e.β Egeria

This name is given to a fourth-century woman who travelled extensively in Palestine and surrounding areas. Only the central portion of her travel writing survives; however, this gives a clear account of what she witnessed in the form of church and liturgical practices.[229] There are ongoing academic debates about the quality of the Latin in which Egeria wrote; however, it was usual for women at the time to receive less education than their male counterparts.[230] Egeria's evidence for liturgical practices is vital for understanding late-fourth-century worship in Jerusalem and the few descriptions of the clergy are the valuable primary evidence for this research.

The writings of Egeria, unlike the surviving liturgical texts, indicate the people who performed certain roles within the services. The clearest mention in the surviving parts of Egeria's writings is boys singing the responses to the Deacon's petition during the evening services.[231] There are two other mentions of clergy, which by context are not Presbyters but may include Deacons in the description of the Sunday services and when explaining the reception of catechumens for baptism.[232]

2.1.e.γ Cyril of Jerusalem 313-386CE

The Catechism of Cyril provides an important insight into the working of the church and liturgical practice in fourth-century Jerusalem, especially when used in consultation with the writings of Egeria. Within the Proto-Catechesis, Cyril refers to Teachers within the catechism process, which may mean specific Catechists or another member of the clergy with this task.[233] Within the same part of the catechism, Exorcists are mentioned, and it is reasonable to assume that this aspect could likewise refer to specific clergy with that task or other clergy performing the role. Later in Mystical Catechesis 5 Cyril in describing the liturgy says, "Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀκούετε τοῦ ψάλλοντος μετὰ μέλους θείου προτρεπομένου ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν

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[229] Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 1.

[230] Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 2.

[231] Egeria *Travels*, 24.6.

[232] Egeria *Travels*, 24.9-10, 45.1-3, 46.1-2.

[233] Cyril, *Protocatechesis* 12.

κοινωνίαν τῶν ἁγίων μυστηρίων καὶ λέγοντος… (After this, you hear the Cantor with holy voice urging you to the communion the holy mysteries and saying…).”[234] This suggests that Cyril knew the functions of Teacher and Exorcist during his Bishopric; he also clearly knew of and used Cantors during services.

2.1.e.δ Liturgy of St James

The original text of this liturgy has not survived and in common with other Late Antique liturgical texts, no original rubrics exist. This means there is a reliance on scholars' interpretation, often through modern practice, to reconstruct how the liturgy worked. Within the reconstructed text, there is an indication of the presence of Singers or Readers in that they are, in some translations, shown as doing things.[235] It is difficult to ascribe the definite existence to them since there is no certainty of the age of the rubric included in the translation.

The content of the prayers provides a more certain way to say who was in the church. The specific petitions for those who serve the church suggest that there were more than just the Deacon and Presbyter assisting the Bishop.[236] This happens in two sets of prayers within the service, one said by a Deacon and one by the presiding Bishop or Presbyter. This is a difficult reconstructed text to deal with, but it suggests that there were assistants to the senior clergy in Jerusalem, especially when taken in the context of the writings of Egeria and Cyril.[237]

2.1.e.ε Jerome 345–420CE

Jerome was a writer and translator whose primary influence has been through his biblical translations and polemical writing.[238] Jerome also wielded significant influence among upper-class Roman women with whom he conversed predominantly by letters and encouraged them

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[234] Cyril *Mystical Catechesis,* 5.20 (Own translation).

[235] E.g., Ruth, Steenwyk, & Witvliet, *Walking Where Jesus Walked,* 99.

[236] Ruth, Steenwyk, & Witvliet, *Walking Where Jesus Walked,* 105.

[237] Egeria *Travels*, 24.9-10, Cyril *Mystical Catechesis,* 5.20.

[238] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Jerome, St," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

to adopt ascetical practices.[239] Ecclesiastically Jerome's influence is primarily seen in his many letters, which instruct on practical matters.

Jerome was a prolific writer, mostly in the form of letters and very influential on the church. In his letters, his focus was primarily on the conduct of Virgins and Widows, with whom he is communicating, with three of his letters dealing with both groups together. In *The Life of Paula the Elder*, Jerome describes her as a patron to both the Virgins and the Widows.[240] Ecclesiologically, Jerome seemed to be guided by the region in which he lived (Palestine) in that he placed Virgins above Widows theologically, which was usually there.[241] He is practical in that he insists that when clergy visit Virgins or Widows, they should not go alone but, at minimum, take with them a Reader, Acolyte or Psalm-Singer (Jerome transliterated Greek ψάλτης as psaltes, meaning Chanter or Singer).[242]

Jerome discusses Virgins and their benefits at length in letters and other works.[243] He insists that girls and Virgins are not to read secular works.[244] Going further in instructing how a girl should be raised in virginity from infanthood, Jerome provides a very clear and exacting pedagogy.[245] Jerome also provides instruction to older women who have chosen the life of the Virgin, but his ascetical suggestions are more tempered in a letter that comes from later in his life, suggesting he was able to temper his advice to the needs of his hearer.[246]

In several letters, Jerome also discusses appropriate conduct for Widows and instructs them on this in response to their questions.[247] He explores the theological nature of widowhood in

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[239] White, *Roman Christian Women*, 59.

[240] Jerome, *Letter*, 108.

[241] Jerome, *Letter*, 74.

[242] Jerome, *Letter,* 52.

[243] Jerome, *Letter,* 22.

[244] Jerome, *Response to Rufinus*, 3.32.

[245] Jerome, *Letter,* 107.

[246] Jerome, *Letter*, 130.

[247] Jerome, *Letter*, 54, 120, 123.

defending a young Widow who had chosen the ascetical life.[248] Jerome also shows his integration into the local church structures in that he records the decision of a local synod to remove from the Church's rolls, Widows whom heretics had erroneously added.[249]

Additionally, to his focus on Virgins and Widows, Jerome makes one mention of a Subdeacon.[250] He also makes one reference more generally to other orders beyond the key three, but this is passing and gives no information about what he means.[251] Jerome's focus on the celibates reflects his issues and priorities and the influence of Latin and Western Mediterranean thinking on his theology.

2.1.e.ζ Summary

Within this region, some of the strongest evidence for the Exorcist both as an independent order and a function of those in other Orders. The other orders named are Virgin, Widow, Reader, Subdeacon, Cantor and boy Singers. Much of the evidence is circumstantial as it is derived from grey texts or attempted reconstructions of liturgical practices; however, the large churches probably had teams of assistants for practical reasons, even if they are not recorded.

2.1.f Regional conclusion

The Eastern region of the Roman Empire produced a large volume of sources on the existence of the Minor Orders in the era of this study, along with some evidence for their function. The most well-evidenced individual orders are that of the Virgin and the Widow. This indicates that the celibate orders were well established in this region, to the extent that celibacy had separate mentions in the writings of some councils and the *Codex Theodosianus*.

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[248] Jerome, *Letter,* 38.

[249] Jerome, *Letter,* 92.

[250] Jerome, *Letter,* 8.

[251] Jerome, *Letter,* 52.

Of the other Minor Orders, the Reader is the most mentioned; this indicates that the functions of the literate members of the community were important in the Greek and Syriac-speaking East. Singers or Cantors, while more scarcely mentioned, are linked to the Reader, suggesting this order was dependent on and subordinate to the Reader. The other well-attested order is that of the Subdeacon, including four mentions in canons that restrict their duties. The Exorcist is mentioned mostly without explanation, but there are also texts which illustrate their task. The Doorkeeper, Teacher and Acolyte are all mentioned without substantive explanation meaning that the texts only indicate their existence. In addition to named Minor Orders, there are mentions of the general clergy implying their presence.

The sources of this region suggest a noticeable presence of Minor Orders clergy in the form of Readers and Subdeacons along with Virgins and Widows. The exact roles are unclear in most sources and there is little theology, although the subordination to Major Orders Clergy is clear.

2.2 Africa

This section deals with the texts from Africa as a distinct collection of traditions.[252] These traditions are significantly different from those in the Greek-dominated East of the Roman Empire and the Latin-speaking northern and western parts of the Empire. This difference results from the unique character of African culture and theology. As a result of the clear regionally defined theological traditions, the ecclesiological contribution of the African sees is important. The region's practices developed at differing times from other areas creating the unmistakable contribution of North African and Egyptian ecclesiology. Wilhite explores the unique context and contribution of North African Christianity.[253] The contribution of theology from Carthage and the Roman Province of North Africa is related to, yet recognisably different from, the Alexandrian school, which influenced the traditions in Egypt. These African traditions provide a collection of sources equal to the other two regions discussed in this thesis, with common themes and internal regional diversity.

The two dominant schools of African theology - the Alexandrian, which focuses on the city of Alexandria and the surrounding region, and the Carthaginian, which is centred on the city of Carthage - were distinct yet closely related. The Alexandrian area in the East is strongly influenced by Greek culture; this is most clearly seen in the theological writings, which are the most influential product of this school. The Carthaginian school, in contrast, was strongly influenced by Latin and the local Punic culture because of the region's history. This history in the Carthaginian region profoundly affected the theology produced there and its impact on the wider church. The relationship between the writers over time can be seen in Appendix 1 under African sources. Some texts from cities elsewhere in the North African province reflect the influences of both dominant schools and will be dealt with first. After addressing the principal theological traditions, the Ethiopian texts will be examined, as these are distinct from the rest of the African traditions but also reflect some of the same cultural heritage. While the Ethiopian texts provide an additional facet to this research, they do not affect my overall conclusions.

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[252] In this Chapter the sources come from the known extent of Africa during Late Antiquity.

[253] Wilhite, *African Christianity,* Introduction.

2.2.a Cities in the Roman province of North Africa

Some texts by writers based outside the principal metropolitan cities of North Africa have survived. These provide a distinct witness to the developing diversity of traditions, including Ecclesiology. These writers are addressed here before focussing on the principal traditions found in Carthage.

2.2.a.α Optatus of Milevis d397CE

Optatus in the 370s, mentions a range of Minor Orders in his writings. Virgins occur as a named category of people in the church, as mentioned in books 2 and 6 of his work *Against the Donatists*. Most of these references to the Virgins are related to how they were mistreated by the Donatist schismatics, who forced them to do penance or marry, notwithstanding their chastity.[254] Optatus also describes Virgins as spiritual seeds within the Church, indicating his theology of virginity. [255]

In book 1 of his writings, Optatus mentions a Reader who had gained that status within the church but was promoted later by a heretical group.[256] This passage does not indicate the Reader's duties but clarifies that Readers existed as a distinct group within the Church. In *Pseudo-Optatus passage B,* there is a further comment stating, "The mouths of the lectors keep not silence. The hands of all are full of volumes."[257] This shows that Readers had a specific function relating to books and their reading in the church. Besides this, when discussing the parable of the Marriage feast, Optatus also mentions Doorkeepers in passing.[258]

Within the corpus of documents associated with Optatus are several trial records of Donatists in the 320s, one of these before *Gesta Apud Zenophilum.* The record of the trial mentions three distinct Minor Orders, the Readers, who are described as keepers of the books, along

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[254] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 2.26, 6.4.

[255] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 2.11.

[256] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 1.9.

[257] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 7, Pseudo- Optatus passage B the Proceedings before Zenophilus.

[258] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, 5.10.

with Subdeacons and Gravediggers, who are named as those giving evidence.[259] Since this is the record of a trial, it provides clear evidence of the existence of these orders outside a liturgical or theological context.

The writings of Optatus are important as they show the existence of Virgins, Readers, Subdeacons and Gravediggers in the North African Church. There is little indication of the duties or functions of any of these orders apart from Readers caring for the books.

2.2.a.β Augustine of Hippo 354-430CE

Augustine was an African by birth and his theology was profoundly influenced by this, and by his explorations in faith as a young man,[260] along with his education which followed the normal pattern and the catechism he received from Ambrose of Milan.[261] Although Augustine received his catechetical training under Ambrose of Milan, he is as much an African writer as a Roman one since his African identity shaped his outlook.[262] Augustine's encounter with Monasticism in Milan and his distinct theology of Baptism is a complete break from his previous life and heavily influenced his views on sexuality and asceticism.[263]

Within his extensive corpus of writings, Augustine mentions various orders in varying degrees of detail. Augustine makes six mentions of Subdeacons in his letters, and in two cases, the letters are entrusted to a Subdeacon to deliver.[264] Augustine also objects to a certain Subdeacon, who left the church for a heretical sect after being defrocked for misbehaving, along with referring to Subdeacons within a heretical sect in another letter.[265] Augustine also affirms the tradition of clergy staying in the diocese of their initial ordination, as he

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[259] Optatus, *Against the Donatists*, Appendix 2 The Proceedings Before Zenophilum.

[260] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Augustine of Hippo, St," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[261] Late Antique Education is summarised in chapter 5.

[262] Wilhite, *African Christianity,* 251.

[263] Stewart, "Monasticism," 363.

[264] Augustine, *Letter,* 39, 68.

[265] Augustine, *Letter,* 35, 53.

voluminously objects to one of his fellow Bishops ordaining one of his Readers to the Subdiaconate, contrary to the canons of the church.[266]

Beyond the letter objecting to his fellow Bishop usurping his prerogative in promoting a Reader, Augustine makes seven other mentions of Readers. Augustine criticises the heretical sects for unstable orders; within this context, he makes passing mention of a Reader.[267] Through this criticism, he makes it clear that the orders in the church are (or should be) stable. Augustine asserts that not everyone who reads in Church is a Reader,[268] indicating that there must be a way of recognising the order beyond the basic function. Within his preaching, Augustine mentions Readers reading the Psalms in his homilies on the Gospel of John and Soliloquies on the Psalms, indicating their presence and activities within the church. This also reflects that Augustine thinks it is important to mention a Reader appearing in a dream.[269]

Augustine mentions Virgins six times in his writings. One of the most important of these is when he describes how some Virgins adopted abandoned children.[270] Augustine also describes the practice of a household dedicating one of their girls to virginity.[271] He links the Orders of Virgins and Widows by describing them as living and working together intentionally as a community and mentions the orders together in the context of a dream and as mothers and daughters.[272] He also indicates that women had taken vows to be recognised as Virgins of the church, which is mentioned in the Soliloquy on the Psalms, and in rebuking a Virgin who has not fulfilled her vow.[273]

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[266] Augustine, *Letter,* 63.

[267] Augustine, *Letter*, 43.

[268] Augustine, *Letter*, 64.

[269] Augustine, *Treaties,* 22, *Soliloquy*, 41, 59, 80, *Letter*, 158.

[270] Augustine, *Letter*, 98.

[271] Augustine, *Letter* 90.

[272] Augustine, *Letter*, 98, 97, against Petilian.

[273] Augustine, *Soliloquy* 74, *Letter*, 263.

The only other mention of a specific order is that of the Teacher in Augustine's writings on doctrine.[274] In this, he gives specific instructions on how teaching should be conducted. It is not clear if the instructions were for a specific order of people who taught or guidance for Bishops and Presbyters. Besides the specific mentions, there are three incidences of Augustine referring to clergy more generally. In that, he refers to lower clergy after mentioning Presbyters and Deacons.[275]

Augustine provides a clear witness to the existence of Subdeacons, Readers, Virgins, Widows and possibly Teachers. His writings are also important as they bear witness to stable orders and that there was a recognised form of installing people in these orders. The writings on Virgins show their close association with Widows, to whom they might be related and their service to the wider community.

2.2.a.γ Archaeology

There is a small amount of Archaeological evidence for Virgins in the form of a fragment of a chancel screen.[276] This could imply a separate space for Virgins within the worship space during the fourth-century. The evidence, however, cannot prove whether there was an order of Virgins but can show that in at least some congregations, there was an intentional separation of different groups of people.

2.2.a.δ Summary

Within the texts from smaller cities of North Africa, there is clear evidence for the presence of Virgins; this is also supported by archaeological evidence. Augustine provides witness to the presence of Readers and Subdeacons. Additionally, there is an indication of the presence of Widows and Gravediggers along with possible evidence for Teachers.

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[274] Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine,* 4.4, 4.9, 4.11.

[275] Augustine, *Letter*, 43.

[276] Joan R Branham, "Women as Objects of Sacrifice? An Early Christian 'Chancel of the Virgins'," in *La Cuisine et l'Autel: Les Sacrifices En Questions Dans Les Sociétés de La Méditerranée Ancienne* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 371–86, at 371-1, 386.

2.2.b Carthage

The Church in Carthage and the area directly surrounding the metropolis are important for understanding the church's development, especially in the third-century. This is because Carthage was the focal point for the prominent controversies of this century, especially the Donatist controversy. Carthage and the Carthaginian region of northern Africa were distinct from the eastern areas in and around Egypt, having much closer ties with Rome and the northern Mediterranean than the cities further east. These links were built on trade but were also a legacy of the Roman conquest of Carthage in the Third Punic War during the late-second-century BCE.[277] The destruction and later refounding of Carthage as a Roman colony forged a close relationship between the cities, as is demonstrated by letters exchanged between Cyprian of Carthage and several Bishops of Rome.

Most texts discussed in this section come from the third-century and relate to the repercussions of a period of persecution and subsequent controversy over the restoration of the lapsed. These texts give a valuable insight into the workings of the church during the turbulent early-third-century. Tertullian wrote theological texts that have some bearing on ecclesiology; however, Cyprian sets out ecclesiology in a way that is otherwise only found in Church Orders during the third-century. Knowledge of the Church in North Africa during Late Antiquity relies predominantly on Cyprian's correspondence. The final sources from Carthage are the councils' Acts that occurred in the early-fifth-century.

2.2.b.α Tertullian 160-225CE

Tertullian, writing in Carthage in the late-second and early-third centuries, was the first to write theology in Latin. His extensive writings show the early development of many areas of theology and ecclesiology, some of which are unique to his North African context. Tertullian was African and Roman, with both cultural influences affecting his writings; the current consensus is that he belonged to the Church as a lay member his whole life.[278] Within this

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[277] Allen Mason Ward, Fritz M. Heichelheim, and Cedric A. Yeo, *History of the Roman People*, 16th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc, 2014), 111.

[278] Wilhite, *African Christianity,* 108, 115-16, 112-4.

study, the most notable legacy of Tertullian's theology is his distinct approach to celibacy and its impact on the development of Western canonical practice.

Tertullian was the first to indicate a stable form of orders in that he sharply criticizes the heretics for having unstable orders, where a single person changes function almost daily.[279] Within *The Prescription Against Heretics,* Tertullian specifically mentions Readers, among other functions, although he does not say what Readers do.[280] In his *Apology,* Tertullian mentions reading the sacred writings in services.[281] It is reasonable to infer that Tertullian's community had a small group, most likely men, set aside to read the readings in an organized way at services, hence his objection to groups who did not operate in this way.

The other notable ecclesiological theme in Tertullian's writings is celibacy, both for the Virgins and the Widows. Tertullian parallels themes in the writings of Polycarp, who describes Virgins and Widows as an offering to God and says that Virgins are dedicated to Christ.[282] In discussing prayer and the format in which it occurs, Tertullian again makes mention of a special class of women called Virgins, who are not treated in the same way as other women.[283] This interest in Virgins takes its fullest form in the treatise *On the Veiling of Virgins*, which is one of the most extensive discussions of Virgins around the cusp of the third-century.[284] These themes are paralleled by the praise of both Virgins and Widows in *Exhortation to Chastity, Monogamy* and writings *To His Wife.[285]*

Despite the extensiveness of Tertullian's writings, the only orders which can be identified are those of Virgins and Widows, although it is possible to infer the presence of Readers from his criticism of other groups. Tertullian's writings provide a valuable witness to the development

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[279] Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics,* Ch91.

[280] Tertullian, *Against Heretics,* Ch91.

[281] Tertullian, *Apology,* Ch39.

[282] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection,* Ch8, 61.

[283] Tertullian, *On Prayer,* Ch21.

[284] Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins.*

[285] Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity*, 1, *Monogamy*, 11, *To His Wife,* 3,6,7.

of the ecclesiology of stable orders and the evolution of the theology of chastity, which profoundly affected the Latin-speaking Church. Tertullian's impact is greater on theology than on early-third-century ecclesiology.

2.2.b.β Perpetua et Felicitas ~203CE

The *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* is an interesting text as it is a partially autobiographical account of martyrdom and sets the format for many Latin martyrdom texts which follow over the rest of the century.[286] Perpetua was a relatively high-class citizen who converted to Christianity and Felicity was her slave. The text is presented as an autobiographical account and the consensus is that Perpetua was probably involved in the earlier stages of the text's composition, making it a rare example of a woman's composition.[287] It is also possible that the text was related to a visitor who then wrote it as if the principal protagonist authored it; this is an area of ongoing debate.[288] The text itself does not indicate the date beyond late February or early March, and the contemporary mention of the martyrdom by Tertullian and the edict of Septimius Severus means most scholars date it to the early-third-century.[289]

The Martyrdom provides a valuable insight into the catechetical process of the Carthaginian church. Firstly, a spiritual Teacher is distinct from the Deacons who visit them while imprisoned. The spiritual Teacher seems to have had a special duty in training the candidates for baptism to the extent that he voluntarily gave himself up to be with them in prison.[290] This suggests that preparing candidates for baptism was important for the church, meriting a person dedicated to the task. The text does not give us any information about preparing candidates for baptism but clearly expresses the belief that martyrdom could stand instead of baptism in water for catechumens.[291]

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[286] White, *Roman Christian Women*, 4.

[287] Ross S. Kraemer and Shira L. Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," in *The Early Christian World*, vol 1-2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 2 1048-68, at 1048; Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta*, 27.

[288] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1055.

[289] Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1051-2.

[290] The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity, 4.

[291] The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity, 21.

2.2.b.γ Cyprian of Carthage ~200-258CE

The mid-third-century Bishop of Carthage, Cyprian was a prolific letter writer, with the focus of his writing being the management of his diocese, through which he has provided considerable information about how the third-century church operated. Cyprian's letters show that he benefited from receiving rhetorical training and practice before he entered the church. These letters provide a clear and reliable source of information about clergy in Carthage, as Cyprian conducted much of the management of his diocese through letters while in hiding.[292] Although the information drawn from the letters is far from complete, the level of detail is not replicated by any other source within the period of this study.

Within his letters, Cyprian uses various members of the Minor Orders as messengers who take his letters to other Bishops, providing valuable insights into the existence of the orders and their usage. The principal order recorded as letter carriers by Cyprian are Subdeacons, either alone or accompanied by an Acolyte or a Reader; sometimes, an Acolyte is recorded as carrying the letter alone.[293] Those who carried the letters may also have other roles in the correspondence process, as one Reader is described as a scribe and a messenger,[294] and in another case, a Reader and an Exorcist are described as present when the letter was written.[295] There is also evidence for Cyprian's use of the Minor Orders in letter carrying, in letters sent to Cyprian which thank him for letters written by him and carried by a Subdeacon and three Acolytes.[296] The use of Minor Orders for letter bearing suggests that members of these orders had far more responsibilities than just liturgical in Cyprian's church which overlapped with the non-liturgical functions of the Deacon.

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[292] Edwina Murphy, *The Bishop and the Apostle Cyprian's Pastoral Exegesis of Paul* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 79-10.

[293] Cyprian, *Letter*, (subdeacon) 8.1.1, 20.3.2, 36.1.1, 47.1.2, 79.1.1, (Subdeacon and Acolyte) 45.4.3, (Subdeacon and Reader) 29.1.2, 35.1.2, (Acolyte) 7.2, 59.1.1.

[294] Cyprian, *Letter*, 32.1.2.

[295] Cyprian, *Letter*, 23.

[296] Cyprian, *Letter*, 77.3.2, 78.1.1.

Cyprian writes about the Minor Orders in his letters, indicating their function and activities beyond carrying letters. One of the principal themes is how the church should support Widows he identifies as at risk of being exploited.[297] The presence of the Virgins and Widows as confessors of the faith and martyrs is also found in Cyprian's writings.[298] They are commended for preserving physical purity and refusing to sacrifice to the Roman gods. The importance of purity is also found in a text on the advantages of chastity attributed to Cyprian.[299] This text builds on the earlier writings of Tertullian on Virginity. Cyprian also continues dictating the appropriate dress for the Virgins of the church, insisting that such Virgins do not cohabit with men.[300] The complexities of understanding the position of the Virgin in Cyprian's writings and whether they were a permanent order are explored by Murphy.[301] Cyprian's concern for appropriate dress and behaviour shows more of the practical side of running a diocese than is recorded in many theological texts.

Cyprian talks about the appointment of young men to the Minor Orders and the requirements to be met for ordination. A situation where he seems to involve a process of consulting between the Bishop and the Presbyters, as is illustrated by the case of three young men who had suffered persecution where Cyprian deviates from this established practice. Cyprian explains why he deviated from the established practice to his Presbyters in justifying his unilateral appointing of the young men to the office of Reader and one as a Subdeacon for their confession of the faith under persecution.[302] With this explanation, Cyprian defends his decision because he considers them worthy of the Presbyterate in all respects apart from their age, so he installed them in Minor Orders until they became of the age to be placed among the Presbyters of the congregation.[303] It is worth noting that in the third-century redaction of the Apostolic Tradition, Confessors were afforded a position and honour similar to that of the Presbyters, only receiving ordination if appointed Bishop.[304] It is also worth noting that

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[297] Cyprian, *Letter* 7.2, 52.1.2 and *Treatises* 2.19-20, 9.20, 12.3.32.

[298] Cyprian, *Letter*, 66.7.2 and *Treatise* 3.2.

[299] Cyprian, *Of the Discipline and Advantage of Chastity.*

[300] Cyprian, *Treatise*, 2.20 *Letter*, 4.2.1-3.1.

[301] Murphy, *The Bishop and the Apostle,* 137-40.

[302] Cyprian, *Letter*, 38.1.2-2.2, 39.4.1-3.

[303] Cyprian, *Letter*, 38.2.1-2, 39.5.2.

[304] AT 9.

Cyprian places the duty of reading all the scriptures with the Reader, including the Gospel, which was a task later assigned to others.[305] Cyprian also mentions a Deacon who had previously been a Reader, suggesting that there was some form of progression between orders, an idea also seen in the above discussion of the Readers and Subdeacon who have confessed the faith.[306]

Additional evidence for Minor Orders within the corpus of Cyprian's letters includes a discussion of an Acolyte and two Subdeacons who had been involved in a schism but had subsequently returned to the church.[307] Cyprian also speaks of the Teachers of the faith, but it is unclear if they are in a separate order as he also mentions a Subdeacon who reads for Presbyters who fulfil this function.[308]

Cyprian was an extensive writer for the benefit of his diocese and in communication with other Bishops both in Rome and the eastern parts of the empire. The collections of his letters and treatises give a valuable insight into the church of the mid-third-century, in Carthage specifically, but to a lesser extent more widely within the Empire. From Cyprian's writings it is possible to say that within the diocese of Carthage, the orders of Virgin, Widow, Subdeacon, Reader, Acolyte and Exorcist existed. Cyprian also bears witness to the functions of the orders, which could be used as messengers, along with the relative importance of the Reader who reads the Gospels along with the rest of the scriptures.

2.2.b.δ Council of Carthage 419CE

Carthage, as a metropolitan see, hosted several councils. The only one of these relevant to this study is the council in 419CE which extensively regulates the activity of the clergy. The canons of this council are important to the developing canonical tradition of the Latin Church

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[305] Cyprian, *Letter*, 39.4.2.

[306] Cyprian, *Letter*, 13.7.

[307] Cyprian, *Letter*, 34.4.1.

[308] Cyprian, *Letter,* 73.3.2, 29.1.2.

and reflect what became common practice in the fifth-century. Many precepts were also found among other canonical collections across the Roman Empire.

Five canons deal specifically with consecrated celibates, particularly women. The council states that only Bishops may consecrate Virgins and sets the minimum age for this consecration at twenty-five unless there is a danger of imminent death.[309] The council also shows concern for preventing accusations against clergy in that celibate male clergy are forbidden from visiting celibate women (Virgins or Widows) alone.[310] This concern for proper behaviour and virtue extended to placing young women dedicated to celibacy with older women if they left the parental home and came under the care of the Bishop.[311]

The canons specifically regulate Readers as a distinct order, members of which must be married or professed celibate. The canons also forbid the Reader "to salute the people."[312] The former instruction suggests that a Reader was expected to behave the same way as the other clergy; the second possibly means that they were not to direct their speech to the people, suggesting that they were to read the scriptures but not expound them. Under the same principle, the Reader as a member of the clergy is tied to their diocese of ordination.[313]

The other relevant canons deal with general clerical discipline, which included both Minor and Major Orders within the injunctions. The synod reiterated the ancient principle that clergy could not receive interest on loans.[314] The canons also set out disciplinary procedures and limited the Bishop's power to act alone, indicating the proper appeal route.[315] The

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[309] Synod of Carthage, *Canon,* 6, 16.

[310] Synod of Carthage, *Canon*, 38.

[311] Synod of Carthage, *Canon*, 44.

[312] Synod of Carthage, *Canon,* 16.

[313] Synod of Carthage, *Canon,* 90.

[314] Synod of Carthage, *Canon*, 5.

[315] Synod of Carthage, *Canons,* 20, 28, 125.

council reiterates the Bishop's prerogative in disciplining his clergy and how the other clergy should respond to this.[316]

2.2.b.ε Summary

Within the region of Carthage, there is clear evidence of Virgins, Widows and Readers during the late-second and third centuries. Additionally, there is evidence of Subdeacons, Acolytes and Exorcists in the documentary and literary contexts during the third-century. Although there are indications of the role of a Teacher or Catechist, this is not clear enough to say if it was a separate order or functions of another order. The roles of the Virgin and Reader are still present in the fifth-century as they are mentioned in the Council's canons. Carthage provides clear evidence for the early development of the Minor Orders, but this definite evidence is largely limited to the time before the mid-third-century, with one later source. Despite this lack of continuity in the sources, the evidence is still important.

2.2.c Egypt outside Alexandria

Egypt as a region is difficult to define in Antiquity as it merged into the lands beyond the edge of the Roman Empire and was desert apart from the Nile valley. The theology of this region was distinct from that of Alexandria, although influenced by it, reflecting the process of Christianisation which occurred over several generations as traditional beliefs were combined with the new religion.[317] This process occurred in all areas but is in some ways more noticeable in Egypt due to the influence of the monastic communities which flourished around desert oases in Egypt. Coptic, a form of ancient Egyptian, was the language of most of the populace, which meant that the Greek concepts and nuances of theology were not always understood clearly.

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[316] Synod of Carthage *Canon,* 62.

[317] David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Woodstock: Princeton Univ Press, 2017), 1-6.

2.2.c.α Macarius of Egypt 300-390CE

This fourth-century ascetic founded the influential monastic settlement of Scetis.[318] He also significantly influenced the development of the monastic and spiritual tradition in Egypt and the Eastern Roman empire.[319] As his writings are of the short question and response format common in monastic literature with a practical focus on the present,[320] there is little within them useful for studying ecclesiology. Minor Orders are mentioned in the Homilies traditionally ascribed to him. In homily 3, during the discussion of the benefits of one person's activity for the whole community, he mentions a Reader.[321] This is an ambiguous passage, and it is unclear if he means an official Reader of the church. The text provides a theological basis for understanding mutual interdependence within the church.

2.2.c.β P.Oxy. (Oxyrhynchus Papyri) 33.2673, 304CE

This text gives clear evidence of a Reader associated with a small Christian community during the Diocletian persecution. The community is described as poor since it owned only some bronze articles which had already been surrendered. The Reader is also described as being illiterate (not knowing letters), "αὐτοῦ μὴ εἰ(δότος) γρά(μματα)."[322] This phraseology probably means that he did not read or write Greek in which the Papyrus is written rather than that he was completely illiterate. There is considerable debate over this point as to whether there was a refusal to sign on ideological grounds, whether he was illiterate in Greek yet literate in Coptic, or he was only able to read but not write, or even if he was only minimally literate so could not read the cursive text of official documents.[323] The complexities around literacy and literacy levels were discussed in chapter 5.

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[318] John Bowker, "Macarius, St, of Egypt," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[319] Marcus Plested, *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

[320] Plested, *Macarian Legacy,* 2.

[321] St Macarius the Egypt, *Homily,* 3.

[322] *P.Oxy.* 33.2673, 34.

[323] Malcolm Choat and Rachel Yuen-Collingridge. "A Church with No Books and a Reader Who Cannot Write the Strange Case of *P.Oxy.* 33.2673," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists,* 46 (2009): 109-138, at 122-130.

2.2.c.γ Canons of Hippolytus ~350CE

The canons are traditionally attributed to Hippolytus, based on the ascriptions within the text.[324] The text is an early derivative of the Apostolic Tradition dated to the mid- or late-fourth-century.[325] While most scholars assert that it was probably composed in northern Egypt, Stewart has argued for a Cappadocian or Antiochian provenance.[326] As a piece of living literature, it reflects the needs and concerns of the community, which revised the canons into the form which has survived. As discussed in chapter 2, this redactional process does not prohibit the text from being influenced by the practices of multiple places.[327] Like other Church Orders, this text conforms to one of the formats a Typica can take - in this case, probably a community with ascetical tendencies.

Within the ordination instructions and prayers, the canons proceed from the Bishop to the Presbyters, Deacons and Confessors before Readers and Subdeacons. The distinction made for these last two is that they are installed without laying on of hands.[328] Readers and Subdeacons are mentioned together in the canons, most notably canon 7, where their selection and ordination are discussed., The Reader is described as needing to be of good conduct, like the Deacon and to be installed by the presentation of the Gospel, while the only requirements for the Subdeacon relate to celibacy.[329] There is an instruction that Readers and Subdeacons are to gather with the whole congregation for a service at dawn.[330] Further detail is given about the Reader: they are to vest in white garments like the rest of the clergy and perform readings while the people gather for the service.[331] This gives valuable insight, especially into the function of the Reader. These sections also probably come from the oldest part of the tradition which formed the document due to the prominence given to the Reader, which was waning by the mid-fourth-century.

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[324] Canons of Hippolytus, prologue, a translator's postscript.

[325] Bradshaw, "Ancient Church Orders," 17-8.

[326] Bradshaw, "Ancient Church Orders," 17-8; Hippolytus of Rome *Apostolic Tradition*, 61-2.

[327] 2.d.α.1.a.

[328] *Canons of Hippolytus*, 1-7.

[329] *Canons of Hippolytus*, 7.

[330] *Canons of Hippolytus*, 21.

[331] *Canons of Hippolytus*, 37.

Widows are described as the objects of charity by the congregation but especially the Deacon's responsibility, although the Widow is also given the responsibility to pray, fast and serve the sick.[332] In one place, the presence of consecrated Virgins is implied due to them being named with Widows in fasting.[333] The tradition behind these canons also seems to have an origin well before the compilation of the text as they reflect widely practised traditions and the lack of prominence afforded to the Virgin suggests an early origin of the tradition.

2.2.c.δ Sayings of the desert monastics

Between the fourth and fifth centuries, various collections of the sayings within the flourishing monastic communities of Egypt were written down. These have survived as lives of specific fathers of the desert and are collated in alphabetical and systematic collections of sayings.[334] Within the alphabetical collection, one saying attributed to Abba John of the Cells contains a story of a courtesan's conversion involving a Subdeacon who was acting as a Doorkeeper.[335] This suggests that the office of the Subdeacon was present in Alexandria and known in the wider Egyptian church. The fact that the story is even included is a departure from the form of most of these sayings, which are short one or two-phrase concepts, stories are a relative rarity in the sayings which got written down, and the inclusion of clergy is even rarer apart from the sayings telling monks to avoid Bishops. This focus on short sayings and relative ignoring of clergy apart from where there is direct interaction with the community is common across monastic texts.

2.2.c.η Summary

The sources from the region of Egypt provide evidence for the orders of the Widow, Reader and Subdeacon. These orders performed roles that mirrored those in other areas of the empire. The limited evidence from before the mid-fifth-century on ecclesiological topics makes it difficult to ascertain the church's functioning in these small communities.

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[332] *Canons of Hippolytus*, 5, 35, 9.

[333] *Canons of Hippolytus*, 32.

[334] Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, xix-xxi.

[335] Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, 105, Abba John of the Cells, *saying* 1.

2.2.d Alexandria

The City of Alexandria, as the capital of Egypt, was influential over the whole region but also had a distinct theology not always shared by the region. The See of Alexandria was also influential in the fourth and fifth centuries as a centre of theological learning, only losing influence with the rise of Constantinople. Alexandria, a metropolitan port city, was a cosmopolitan community with multiple Hellenistic and Jewish cultural influences.[336]

2.2.d.α Clement of Alexandria 150-215CE

Clement was of Greek heritage culturally and academically,[337] he was probably born in Athens,[338] and most of his texts were either apologetic or instructional. Clement wrote three major works: the *Protreptikos*, the *Paidagogos* and the *Stromateis.*[339] The influence of Clement on the early Alexandrian tradition is difficult to overstate as he set the basis for the development of that theological school within the catechetical school of Alexandria.

Clement makes two comments on the behaviour of the unmarried in the *Paidagogos*. He instructs that unmarried women should not be present at banquets of men, within the context of disapproving of the presence of any woman at such events. He continues later by admonishing unmarried women to devote themselves entirely to God.[340] Clement also refers to Virgins in the *Stromateis*; however, only in one case are the Virgins described as consecrated. This suggests that there were some consecrated Virgins in Alexandria during the time of Clement. However, it is unclear if consecrated Virgins were treated separately from other Virgins on a day-to-day basis because the text is more focused on theology than practicalities. Clement's high view of celibacy meant he linked the celibacy of Widows to that of Virgins, with an emphasis on the theological aspects of this understanding. He also

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[336] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Alexandria," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[337] This refers to his probable place of birth and the fact he would have received a standard Late Antique education.

[338] Gerald Bray, "The Early Theologians," in *The Early Christian World*, vol 1-2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 552-579, at 558.

[339] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Clement of Alexandria," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[340] Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor*, 2.8, 11.

viewed Widows, especially those who fulfilled their familial duties, more positively than the rich in the community. Additionally, Clement refers to the presence of Widows when he is expounding the instructions contained within the scriptures.[341] Like any other city, Alexandria in the time of Clement had its share of Widows; however, whether the church supported any is unclear.

Reading and study of the scriptures also seems to have played an important role in Clement's understanding, as he expounds on the importance of all Christians reading or at least hearing the scriptures read.[342] This linked with his use of scripture to develop arguments for the support of Widows, indicating that the reading and study of scripture were important for Clement. The texts hint at the presence of literate people in the community who read for all present, but the office of the Reader is not explicitly named.

Clement's writings indicate he knew of celibate women, but it is not clear that they are those who have undertaken to remain in this state. It is also clear that there were literate members of the community and that they read for everyone and not just for their edification, although how this related to the order of the Reader is unclear.

2.2.d.β Origen 185-254CE

Origen was an early-third-century theologian, writer and head of the catechetical school in Alexandria. Origen developed his theology in a systematic and Neoplatonist way. In the 230s, Origen retired to Palestine after disagreements with the Bishop of Alexandria, and although Origen taught the faith, he never used or was accorded the title Teacher. While not initially part of the ecclesial structure of the Church, he was eventually ordained by a Palestinian Bishop.[343] Despite the change of location, the theology expressed by Origin was always of an Alexandrian character. Origen's Biblical Exegesis and much of his writings are foundational for later doctrinal developments, despite the Church's (later) rejection of the speculative

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[341] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.4, 3.16, 7.12, 7.34, *Instructor,* 3.12.

[342] Clement of Alexandria, *Instructor*, 3.11.

[343] Fred Norris, "Origen," in *The Early Christian World*, vol 1-2, ed. by Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 2 1005-26, at 1005.

philosophical side of his work and how this had been developed over the succeeding centuries.[344]

Within his writings, Origen makes several allusions to celibates in the church. In *Philokalia,* Origen references the instructions given to Widows in the *Shephard of Hermas*.[345] Origen mentions Widows to whom the church is indebted due to their prayer ministry.[346] He also includes instructions on how Widows are to be appointed, indicating that there were officially recognised Widows within the Alexandrian Church.[347] Origen mentions Virgins, although the context makes it clear that he is referring to men within his interpretation of the Gospel. He also refers to a Teacher in the context of early leadership of the church but does not describe a clear function for them.[348]

Origen's writings give little insight into the day-to-day functioning of the church in Alexandria. The few existing indications suggest that Origen knew of Widows as a key and active part of the community and the existence of Teachers and Virgins.

2.2.d.γ Dionysius of Alexandria ~d264CE

Dionysius, the mid-third-century Bishop of Alexandria, ascended the Episcopal see after serving as the head of the catechetical school.[349] He makes mention of several Minor Orders within his writings, suggesting his knowledge and use of them within his diocese. Dionysius refers to holy Virgins and how they suffered persecution in his letter to Fabian.[350] Additionally, Dionysius lists Teachers separately from Presbyters in his *On the Promise*, indicating that the two functions were not identical in his understanding.[351] These texts

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[344] Timothy E Gregory, "Origen," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[345] Origen, *The Philocalia,* 11.

[346] Origen, *On Prayer,* 18.

[347] Origin, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mathew,* 22.

[348] Origen, *Commentary on John*, 2, 5.

[349] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Dionysius the Great, St," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[350] Eusebius EH, 6.41.7.

[351] Eusebius EH, 7.5-7.

suggest that Dionysius was familiar with the position of the Virgins and respected them along with recognising the separate function of Teachers.

2.2.d.δ Peter of Alexandria d311

Peter of Alexandria was only active in his see for a short period during the Diocletian persecutions and drew up a procedure for restoring the lapsed.[352] According to Eusebius, he was also instrumental in drawing up the rule for deciding the date of the celebration of Pascha.[353] In his life, he is closely associated with monastics and Virgins, which is not an unexpected link, especially in the Egyptian tradition where monasticism developed early.[354]

Peter wrote a collection of canons preserved in a canonical epistle, which set out the rules by which the governance of the province of Africa was conducted. As the Patriarch of the region, Peter ruled that lapsed clergy who have repented were to be reduced to the rank of laypeople.[355] This canon sets a clear distinction between those who refused to sacrifice and those who did, echoing the debates in Africa during the early-fourth-century in the aftermath of the Diocletian persecutions. The solution is also very similar to that which Cyprian ruled in Carthage. Although the writings of Peter give no direct evidence of the Minor Orders, his rulings for clergy, in general, imply the presence of more orders than just the key three.

2.2.d.ε Athanasius of Alexandria 296-373CE

Athanasius was first Archdeacon, then Bishop of Alexandria and notable for his contribution to the Council of Nicaea.[356] He was influential not only in his organisation of the See of Alexandria but also in his works on the monastic life, which were composed during and after his exiles among the monastics of the Egyptian desert.[357] Athanasius' influence is primarily

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[352] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Peter of Alexandria," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[353] Eusebius EH, 7.32.

[354] Anastasius the Librarian, *The Genuine Acts of Peter.*

[355] Peter of Alexandrea *Canon,* 10.

[356] Carey, and Linhard, *Biographical Dictionary*, 34-5.

[357] Carey, and Linhard, *Biographical Dictionary*, 34-5.

in his support for the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity, while his ecclesiology can be found in his letters.

Within the extensive writings of Athanasius, there are only a few records of those who can be classified as Minor Orders. In his encyclical letter, Athanasius describes the atrocities committed by the Arians over the celebration of Holy Week and Easter 339CE.[358] He explicitly mentions the Virgins' presence and how they were mistreated. The description parallels those of other writers in the treatment of Virgins by Arians. Another order mentioned by Athanasius is that of the Catechist when he is defending the creedal statement of the council of Nicaea.[359] The Martyrdom of a Subdeacon also occurs in his history of persecution in Alexandria while writing the history of the Arians.[360] These mentions hint at the presence of Minor Orders in the Church of Alexandria during his time as Bishop of the city, as do other allusions to functions that do not directly name orders.

2.2.d.γ *Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea*

This text is probably of Egyptian origin and more likely to have come from an urban area, so it is placed in the Alexandria section.[361] The text is dated to the late-fourth-century by Stewart.[362] The text is sometimes described as a Church Order; although it does not entirely fit the pattern of these texts,[363] the content does fit the wider definition of typica as these come in a much more comprehensive range of forms depending on the community which created them. The text also follows the format of shot instructional verses reminiscent of the Wisdom literature found in the Septuagint, with many of the concepts paralleling those found in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon.

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[358] Athanasius of Alexandrea, *Encyclical Letter,* 4.

[359] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Defence of the Nicene Definition*, 4.

[360] Athanasius, *Arian History*, 60.

[361] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Gnomai of the Council of Nicea (CC 0021): Critical Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (Piscataway, Nj: Gorgias Press, 2015). 8.

[362] Stewart, *The Gnomai,* 10.

[363] Stewart, *The Gnomai,* 11.

The only order relevant to this study mentioned is that of the Virgin, which is the subject of a noticeable number of the ethical instructions in the *Gnomai*.[364] These sayings do not add substantially to the understanding of the order in that the instructions focus on not adorning the self, fasting, reading and practical work. In this way, the sayings act like catecheses on moral behaviour found in documents from antiquity.

2.2.d.η Liturgy of St Mark

The *Liturgy of St Mark* parallels the other surviving third and fourth-century liturgical texts in that rubrics are not included in the oldest surviving copies but inferred from later records and practices. There are, however, forms of words that acted as a cue for a response from Cantors or laity, which are a common occurrence in all the surviving texts of ancient liturgies. The prayers themselves illustrate the presence of Minor Orders. Within the intercessory prayers for the clergy and people the priest says, "Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, καὶ τῶν ἀπανταχοῦ ὀρθοδόξων ἐπισκόπων, πρεσβυτέρων, διακόνων, ὑποδιακόνων, ἀναγνωστῶν, ψαλτῶν, μοναζόντων, ἀειπαρθένων, χηρῶν, ὀρφανῶν, λαϊκῶν. (Remember, Lord, the orthodox everywhere; Bishops/overseers, Presbyters/elders, Deacons, Subdeacons, Readers, Cantors/Chanters/Singers, Monks, ever-Virgins, Widows, orphans and the laity.)".[365] The list of offices is given in the plural, implying that the offices listed were held by more than one person, which could include multiple representatives in the community present at the liturgy and the church in eternity. This act of naming within prayer is evidence of the existence of these orders since they would only be included if they existed in the church when the prayers were composed. The inclusion of orphans and laity within this suggests a will to include all members of the church in the prayers, indicating there was not perceived to be a radical difference between people with different functions in the community.

2.2.d.θ Cyril of Alexandria 376-444CE

Cyril was Bishop of Alexandria during the tempestuous early-fifth-century and is known for his leadership at the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE. His principal writings were on

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[364] Gnomai, 5.7, 6.1-2, 6.4-5, 6.9-16.

[365] Cuming, *Liturgy of St Mark*, 33(Own translation).

Christology linked to the Nestorian controversy.[366] Despite his theological importance, Cyril has little to say about ecclesiology.

Cyril makes multiple mentions of the role and office of the Teacher. Within this, he describes teaching as a specific ministry linked to the office of the Bishop, with the role of the Teacher being identical to that of a Bishop described by other writers.[367] Due to this, it is unlikely that Cyril was discussing a separate order of Teachers or Catechists as is found in other writings but was predominantly describing the role of a Bishop as a Teacher. This does not exclude the possibility that he knew of other Teachers who could be recognised as members of the Minor Orders. The lack of explicit mention of the assistants in the Church does not mean they were not there; it just means they were not recorded in texts which have survived.

Cyril also mentions the Doorkeeper or Porter when discussing the parable of the Good Shepherd.[368] This is only a passing reference to the order but indicates that the doorkeeper's role was known to Cyril and that he linked it to this passage in the Gospels.

2.2.d.ı Summary

The evidence for celibates within the church is particularly strong in Alexandrian sources, with all the sources mentioning Virgins. There are also mentions of Widows, Readers and Teachers or Catechists in the texts of four writers. Subdeacons appear in two sets of texts and Singers in one. The sources from this region suggest a strong presence of celibates in the Alexandrian church along with other orders while giving little detail about their activities within the church.

2.2.e Ethiopian Didascalia

This text is a derivative of the Greek language *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, with Platt viewing it as a "very loose and inaccurate translation of the *Apostolic*

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[366] Matthew R Crawford, "Cyril of Alexandria," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[367] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke,* Sermon, 3, 12, 25, 29, 33, 47, 49, 50, 55, 58, 60, 61, 93, 119, 129, 134.

[368] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 6.10

Constitutions."[369] The *Ethiopian Didascalia* being a derivative of the Syrian texts is consistent with the historical records of Syrian Christians evangelising the Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum,[370] meaning that the ecclesiastical texts known to the evangelists would have been those of Syrian heritage despite the organizational link to Alexandria. In this way, it provides important evidence of the interconnected nature of church ecclesiological traditions, but also the regional variations. Although Platt's translation of this text into English dates from 1834, this text has received less attention than the Syriac version in investigating the early development of the church and the diversification of traditions.

Within this text are several clear references to orders who assist the Deacon, such as "the Sub-deacon, behold, he is the same: and the Reader and the skilful Singers…"[371] which occurs in the introductory paragraph. Later, when discussing ministries, it stated that Christ appointed "High-Priests, and Priests, and Deacons and Sub-Deacons, and Readers, and Singers, and Door-keepers, and Deaconesses: and moreover Widows, and Virgins, and orphans."[372] This provides a comprehensive list of the people supported by the church. The fact that the list is this comprehensive indicates that the traditions behind this text are probably third or early-fourth-century in date, as this level of detail or number of orders is not seen before the mid-third-century in the writings of Cyprian and Cornelius. There are mentions of all these orders in other texts, but they are not comprehensively listed together as in this document before the third-century at the earliest.

The symbolic theology in this tradition differs slightly from the Syrian *Didascalia* in describing the theology of Widows and orphans, who in this text are compared to the church, while Virgins are referred to as the altar of incense.[373] This suggests a parallel tradition with minor variations reflecting local understandings, but the functions of Virgins and Widows were just as important in both traditions. The fact that clear directions are given for who may be appointed as Widows in chapter 12 also suggests their importance in the community. This

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[369] Thomas Pell Platt, *The Ethiopic Didascalia, or, the Ethiopic Version of the Apostolical Constitutions: Received in the Church of Abyssinia: With an English Translation* (London: Richard Bentley, 1834). ix

[370] Taylor, "Christian Regional Diversity," 336

[371] *Ethiopic Didascalia,* preface (Platt, *The Ethiopic Didascalia,* 1).

[372] *Ethiopic Didascalia*, 6.

[373] *Ethiopic Didascalia*, 6.

is almost identical to the *Didascalia,* indicating that the regulations are ancient and predate the diverging traditions.

In discussing the conduct of services, the Reader's function is more plainly described than in any other text, listing the books of the Old and New Testaments they are to read.[374] This is an important contribution to understanding the Reader's function and assists in dating the text as the Gospel is not assigned to the Reader, suggesting a date more towards the fourth-century than the third. This dignity accorded to the Reader is balanced by the instruction in chapter 14 about who may baptise where Readers, Chanters and Doorkeepers are forbidden to do so.[375]

The *Ethiopian Didascalia* shows a continuity between the eastern traditions, which produced many of the Church Orders and the traditions of eastern Africa, while there was also some divergence. The Ethiopian version shows some influence of local traditions in the metaphors used and practices that did not get included by the redactors of the *Didascalia*. These local variations in descriptions do not noticeably affect how the orders which are the subject of this thesis are understood. This text is an important witness to the presence of Subdeacons, Readers, Cantors or Singers, Doorkeepers, Virgins and Widows within the wider African tradition. However, how this text sits within its native tradition needs to be explored in depth.

2.2.f Regional Conclusions

The earliest records from this region come from the two big population centres of Alexandria and Carthage, representing Africa's two dominant schools of theology. These early sources suggest a clear presence of consecrated celibates in the form of Virgins and Widows, along with the presence of Readers. Although early, Cyprian of Carthage falls outside this pattern in that he records a large range of orders not attested to in other sources, the closest parallels coming in the Latin and Roman traditions. The Subdeacon whom Cyprian frequently mentions also occurs in Egyptian and Alexandrian texts in the fourth-century. The other long lists of orders occur in the *Canons of Hippolytus* and the *Liturgy of St Mark*. These lists are

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[374] *Ethiopic Didascalia*, 10.

[375] *Ethiopic Didascalia*, 14.

paralleled by the *Ethiopian Didascalia,* which includes these orders in an independent aspect of the African tradition.

Augustine of Hippo provides nearly as long a list of Minor Orders as Cyprian. However, Augustine's practices were as influenced by the Latin practices of Milan, where he received his theological education, as the native practices of North Africa. Similar points can also be made about the *Canons of Hippolytus* derived from Church Orders in other regions.

The sources suggest that celibates (Virgins and Widows), along with Readers and Subdeacons, were relatively commonly known and used across Africa between the late-second and mid-fifth centuries. Besides this, some areas at specific times also had other orders. The absence of continuous evidence across the two hundred and fifty years does not mean that they were not present: it just means there is not enough evidence to show they were. For example, since Tertullian and Cyprian recorded the Reader in the 200s along with the council of Carthage in 419CE, the order was probably present through the intermediate time, although there is no direct evidence for this. This evidence also suggests that although there was a unity in practice within Africa, the population centres and their theology and ecclesiology were linked with their dominant trade roots and the common language of trade and administration. The western region of Carthage and other North African ports show a clear relationship with the Roman and Latin practices, while Egypt and Alexandria are more closely linked with the Greek-speaking Eastern practices. Despite the outside influences, the importance of native African cultures should not be discounted as the Punic heritage of the province of North Africa is distinct from the Egyptian heritage in the province of Egypt and the independent Ethiopian traditions.

This chapter only scratches the surface of the unity and diversity present in Africa. Wilhite points out the need for more research into the writings and traditions of smaller settlements in Roman North Africa which is true,[376] but further, more culturally sensitive research is needed across all the Christian sources in Africa. There also needs to be a serious investigation of the ecclesiology of Africa as it seems that there are distinct practices only found in this region

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[376] Wilhite, *African Christianity,* 361.

that is poorly understood. Further investigation would allow for a broadening of our understanding of how the regional practices of the church developed and interacted with each other.

2.3 West

The Western region of the Empire, excluding the Western parts of Africa, is explored in this section. There are fewer surviving written sources in the Western region than in other areas, making the examination of Minor Orders in this area more challenging. The documentary evidence is particularly limited in the territories of northern Gaul, Spain and beyond the Rhine, along with the province of Britannia. The focus of this section is what can be attested about the Minor Orders from contemporary evidence rather than what is implied by later historical or theological texts. Archaeological evidence will also be considered to give insight into church practices.

2.3.a Latin

The Latin tradition is being dealt with separately as its theology is distinct from that of Rome or Gaul despite practical overlaps. This tradition has been identified as separate because of the substantial influence it had on the later theological and ecclesiological developments in Western Europe, which became closely identified with the Latin language. The term also provides a useful bracket for texts that are difficult to place geographically but influence practice in the Latin-speaking world. The Latin practices are closely linked with those of Rome and Latin-speaking North Africa, especially Carthage. Once the Latin tradition merges with the practices of Rome in the early Middle Ages, it becomes the principal tradition of Western Christianity.

2.3.a.α Commodianus ~250CE

This mid-third-century writer is not noted for his ability in Latin, and there are ongoing debates about where he originated, which is why he is discussed in this section.[377] In his *Instructions* to the church, Commodianus mentions a Reader reading while chastising those who gossip in church.[378] He insists that all present should be silent while the Reader reads, indicating that there was the function of reading in the church but not if it is a distinct order of clergy.

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[377] J. H. D Scourfield, "Commodianus," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[378] Commodianus, *Instructions*, 76.

2.3.a.β Council of Arles 314CE

This council produced two canons relevant to this study: the first was that clergy who charge interest are to be excluded from the Church.[379] This command is a recurring theme, as shown in other chapters, with the key mention being in the council of Nicaea. The second canon details the removal from the clergy of those who cooperated during persecutions.[380] Although this gives an idea of clerical discipline, the exact composition of the clergy is unclear. In addition, the Council of Arles reaffirms the other ancient canons of clergy not moving between churches, which affirms the pan-regional nature of the understanding that people were ordained to serve their home community.[381]

2.3.a.γ Victorinus of Pettau 250-303/4CE

This writer fits within the Western designation since he writes in Latin rather than Greek, but even more so because he looked West to Rome rather than East. Victorinus praises the Virgins who keep their virginity in both body and mind.[382] This suggests that he knows of Virgins in the church, some of whom are honourable and some not. This source demonstrates the presence of Christian Virgins in a small province on the northern border region of the Empire.

2.3.a.δ *Apostolic Tradition*, fourth-century

The *Apostolic Tradition* is a church order text traditionally attributed to Hippolytus. There is no internal evidence for this attribution and most scholars now regard it as a piece of living literature that cannot be attributed to a single writer.[383] The dating of the text is challenging, as is the case in all pieces of living literature, due to the repeated redactions of the texts, which according to Bradshaw, occurred in three phases, with the original document dated to the second-century, the second phase in the early to mid-third and a third during the late-third

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[379] *Canons of the Council of Arles (AD 314),* Canon, 13.

[380] *Council of Arles*, Canon, 14.

[381] *Council of Arles*, Canon, 2.

[382] Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of John*, Ch 20.

[383] Bradshaw, "Ancient Church Orders," 33-4.

or early-fourth.[384] The geographic origin of the text is unclear due to the multiple influences on the sources incorporated at each of the stages of redaction.[385] The text of the *Apostolic Tradition* was originally written in Greek; only fragments of this survive, with the current text being reconstructed from a range of ancient translations.[386]

The presentation of the chapters on the ordination of the orders of interest to this study is given by Stewart as Reader, Subdeacon, Virgins, Widows following the *Canons of Hippolytus,* and Bradshaw as Widow, Reader, Virgin, Subdeacon.[387] These variants reflect the living nature of the document and the continuing editorial process through translation into other languages,[388] a process that does not exclude modern academic translations. Since the Major Orders are presented in a hierarchical order of precedence-Bishop (and instructions on his blessing of various articles), Presbyters, Deacons and Confessors,[389] it is reasonable to presume that the writer did the same with the orders subsequently listed. It is a debatable point on which side of the divide Confessors (people who were on their way to becoming martyrs and who for this reason enjoyed considerable respect and authority) should be placed since they do not fall within the traditional understanding of Major Orders, but neither are, they a function of the Deacon. The *Apostolic Tradition* says that Confessors should be placed with the Presbyters, so they are included in the definition of Major Orders based on the internal evidence for this study.[390]

The giving of a book appoints the Reader.[391] The fact that the Reader is installed by action and not in the same way as the Orders discussed elsewhere within the *Apostolic Tradition* indicates the difference in understanding of the type of function performed in the community. In a comment on his translation, Bradshaw indicates that this order is likely to have been included in the first version of the text. The instructions about the installation of the

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[384] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition Reconstructed*, 9.

[385] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition Reconstructed:* 9-10.

[386] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, 15-16, 55-57; idem, *Apostolic Tradition Reconstructed,* 5-7.

[387] AT, 10-13.

[388] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, 110-1; idem, *Apostolic Tradition Reconstructed,* 5-7.

[389] AT, 2-9.

[390] AT, 9.

[391] AT, 11.

Subdeacon are likewise concise: they are described as being named assistants of the Deacon.[392] Bradshaw suggests that this passage is likely to have been added in the second phase and additional changes in the third; this reflects what can be observed about the development of the Subdeacon in other sources. Elsewhere in the *Apostolic Tradition*, Subdeacons are instructed to wait on the Bishop with the Deacons, although the inclusion of Subdeacons in the passage seems to have been added at the same time as the addition of ch13.[393]

The order of the Widow is mentioned directly after Confessors in the commonly used numerical system for the sections based on the numbering of the A*postolic Canons,* although it is placed last by Stewart in his translation. Comparing Stewart's translation with that done by Bradshaw, it is likely that the position of Widows at the end of the list of orders in Stewart's translation relates to one of the reworkings of the text.[394] This section gives a level of detail parallel to that given for the ordination of the Bishop or Deacon, potentially indicating the age of the tradition behind the appointment of the Widow. The clear statement that Widows are not ordained, but only set aside for prayers, mirrors the text in many other Church Orders.[395] The firmness of the statement also indicates that this may not always have been the case, for stating that something should not happen implies that it has happened. The Virgin, according to Bradshaw, belongs to the third phase of the document's development and does not occur in all versions of the text.[396] This passage is often understood as a reference to women only, but according to Stewart, the text is mirrored in the *Testamentum Domini,* which includes a reference to male Virgins.[397] Additional detail is given within the *Apostolic Tradition* on the behavioural expectations incumbent on Virgins and Widows, who are expected to "fast often and pray for the Church,"[398] in a way that was greater than the rest of the community, with Bradshaw suggesting that Virgins were included in this passage during the same phase of redaction as their inclusion in the rest of the document. This text

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[392] AT, 13.

[393] AT, 34.

[394] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, 108-5; idem, *Apostolic Tradition Reconstructed,* 18-19.

[395] See chapter 3.a.δ on the importance of Church Orders.

[396] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition Reconstructed,* 19n17.

[397] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*, 113.

[398] AT 23.

mirrors the descriptions of Virgins and Widows in contemporary documents in other regions, which also assign them a specific ministry of prayer.[399] The *Apostolic Tradition* also describes the Widows' specific responsibilities when receiving alms as gifts to support those under church patronage and suppers provided for poor Widows.[400] These texts class Widows as recipients of the Church's support as the objects of charity whilst maintaining the dignity of those serving the church.

Chapter 25 in Stewart's translation references Virgins singing at the meal, a passage which only exists in the late Ethiopian version of the text.[401] This chapter refers to Virgins, along with children having a specific role in the service and probably reflects the practices in the Ethiopian tradition of the text.[402] The passage referring to children and Virgins is found in the Stewart translation but not in the Bradshaw translation, as Bradshaw made different decisions in reconstructing the text. The text is paralleled though not exactly, by the *Testament of the Lord,* which shows the breadth and interrelationships of such traditions.[403]

The *Apostolic Tradition* provides an important witness to the existence of the Minor Orders and how the roles of these orders were negotiated within the church community. This evolution of understanding is reflected in how different versions of the textual tradition record the chapters in different orders. Additionally, indicating that the text was edited by more than one hand over time, as the variant surviving versions also bear witness to the text being adapted to local situations in a manner like other Church Orders.

2.3.a.ε Summary

The early Latin tradition represented here gives clear evidence of the presence of Virgins and the Reader, except for the wider evidence of orders in the *Apostolic Tradition*. While the *Apostolic Tradition* originates in the Greek language, its impact is most recognisable within

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[399] See the church orders in Appendix 2.1.a.γ.7, 2.1.d.α, and regional variation in chapter 4.d.

[400] AT, 24, 30.

[401] AT, 25.11; Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*, 164-8.

[402] Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*, 165-6.

[403] TD 13.

the Latin tradition. These sources also show the beginnings of the focus on celibacy which is a notable influence on the later development of this tradition. The range of sources also indicates the variety which underpins the development of regional variations, which ends in the eventual dominance of this linguistically based tradition.

2.3.b Rome

The metropolis of Rome, as the principal city of Italy and the Empire, had considerable influence on the surrounding region. In antiquity, Greek and Latin-speaking communities in Rome and the rest of Italy drew their influences from writers in both languages. The usual language of the church until at least the mid-fourth-century was Greek, with most Bishops of Rome being bilingual. As the chief see of Italy, Rome had a noticeable influence on the region; the pan-regional influence of Rome only developed significantly after the First Ecumenical Council. For much of the church's early history in Rome, each community was self-governing, but the communities also had a system through which they coordinated.[404]

2.3.b.α Hippolytus 170-236CE

Hippolytus was a Presbyter of the church in Rome, probably holding a position of importance within the wider community of Christians in Rome beyond his congregation.[405] Hippolytus was probably eastern in origin, possibly Alexandrian and he wrote in Greek.[406] While he wrote extensively, most texts do not survive or do not contain information pertinent to this study.

In *On the End of the World* (a text traditionally attributed to Hippolytus), two references extolling virginity exists. One of these refers to maidens who desire Christ's bridal chamber,[407] possibly hinting at consecrated celibates, but it is unclear. Later the author also states that virginity alone will not lead to salvation if the works of mercy incumbent on a

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[404] Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition,* 16-20.

[405] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Hippolytus, St," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[406] Gerald Bray, "The Early Theologians," 555.

[407] Hippolytus, *Discourse on the End of the World*, Ch 42.

Christian are not completed.[408] These two incidences parallel much of what is said in the *Apostolic Tradition* about Virgins and the earlier *Shepherd of Hermas*.[409]

2.3.b.β Minucius Felix d240/60CE

Minucius Felix was a leading advocate in Rome; although probably originating in North Africa and influenced by North African practice, he wrote within the Roman tradition and presented Christianity to those outside the faith.[410] The *Octavius* mentions pagan Romans' atrocities against the Virgins when they invaded other nations and those who belonged to the church.[411] When defending Christians against the accusations of outsiders, he mentions those who stay in perpetual virginity.[412] Minucius sharply contrasts the promiscuity, incest and infant abandoning practices of pagan Romans with the monogamous or chaste practices and value of life shown by Christians. This indicates that by the mid-third-century, when he was writing, the sexual ethics of the church were well developed and set the community apart from that of the societies they inhabited, including the practice of perpetual virginity by some.

2.3.b.γ Cornelius of Rome d253CE

Cornelius was elected Bishop of Rome during a lull in persecutions, probably in part due to his compassionate and pastoral approach to dealing with the lapsed, unlike his main rival Fabian who was a rigorist.[413] The only surviving texts of Cornelius' letters are found in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius translated into Greek from the original Latin, preserving this lost source.

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[408] Hippolytus, *End of the World*, Ch 48.

[409] The *Shepherd of Hermas* is not included in this study as it is normally dated to before 200CE therefore outside of the time period covered by this thesis.

[410] Eric Osborn, "The Apologists," in *The Early Christian World*, vol 1-2, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), vol 1 525-551, at 547.

[411] Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, Ch25, 31.

[412] Minucius Felix, *Octavius,* Ch31.

[413] J. N. D Kelly and Michael J. Walsh, "Cornelius, St," in *A Dictionary of Popes,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

The most important of Cornelius' letters quoted by Eusebius is one to Flavian of Antioch, which includes an extensive list of ministers:

> ὑποδιακόνους ἑπτά, ἀκολούθους δύο καὶ τεσσαράκοντα, ἐξορκιστὰς δὲ καὶ ἀναγνώστας ἅμα πυλωροῖς δύο καὶ πεντήκοντα, χήρας σὺν θλιβομένοις ὑπὲρ τὰς χιλίας πεντακοσίας, οὒς πάντας ἡ τοῦ δεσπότου χάρις καὶ φιλανθρωπία διατρέφει.

> seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers and door-keepers, above fifteen hundred widows and persons in distress, all of whom are supported by the grace and loving-kindness of the Master.[414]

This quoted portion of Cornelius' letter shows that a range of Minor Orders was known in Rome during the third-century, which was comparable with those known in Carthage and recorded by his contemporary, Cyprian. This letter gives no clear indication of the duties of these ministers, only that the church in Rome kept a list of the clergy of all ranks and the numbers in each order. The Master or δεσπότης in this passage refers to the Bishop in Greek, the word δεσπότης (master) was adopted early for addressing the Bishop. The reference to the Bishop's grace and loving-kindness indicates that in this letter, the Bishop is the community's patron, in the same way as in Cyprian's writings.

2.3.b.δ Leo the Great d461

Leo the Great, as a fifth-century Bishop of Rome, was important in the controversies leading up to the council of Chalcedon, both as an emissary for his predecessor and as Bishop of Rome. Theologically Leo was a maintainer and expounder of tradition, focusing on refuting the various heresies of the fifth-century.[415] Leo mentions Minor Orders in many letters and propagates Western ideas about celibacy. Leo also mentions the Western practices of ordination, which dominate records in later centuries, along with being a protagonist for the ecclesiastical supremacy of Rome.

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[414] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.43.11.

[415] J. N. D Kelly and Michael J. Walsh, "Leo I, St," in *A Dictionary of Popes,* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2010).

In the first of his surviving letters, Leo, as senior Bishop of the West, is writing to the Bishop of Aquileia and rebukes him for allowing some of his clergy to fall into heresy.[416] The way the letter is phrased suggests that besides the clerical orders named, there were others as well. In writing to Anastasius, Bishop of Thessalonica, Leo refers to those who are ordained Deacon or Presbyter as having advanced "through all the ranks of the clerical office,"[417] over time rather than in a rushed way. This indicates that there are orders below that of the Deacon in Roman understanding and practice, but not what they are. This provides further evidence for the presence of Minor Orders mentioned in other sources. This concept of not allowing people to advance quickly is reiterated by Leo when writing to all the Bishops of Mauritania Cæsariensis in Africa, while in the same letter, he also rules that Virgins who are victims of *Raptus* are to be classed between undefiled Virgins and Widows.[418] This indicates that the Church in Rome recognised both the orders of the Virgin and the Widow during the mid-fifth-century.

The other key theme in Leo's writings around ordination is the marital status of those ordained. He strictly lays down that those who are ordained must be married only once to a Virgin,[419] and although he mostly speaks of the Priesthood in a few letters, he explicitly expands this to include the lower orders.[420] Leo goes on to insist that Subdeacons must abstain from relations with their wives,[421] as the higher orders do in the West, a principle he also reiterates in his letters.[422]

2.3.b.ε Summary

There are only limited sources on how the church in Rome used Minor Orders. The orders of Virgin and Widow are well attested to in all the documents. This expounding of orders is expressed most clearly by the writings of Cornelius of Rome, with Leo the Great suggesting

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[416] Leo the Great, *Letter,* 1.

[417] Leo the Great, *Letter,* 6.6.

[418] Leo the Great, *Letter,* 12.4. 12.8.

[419] Leo the Great, *Letter,* 4.3, 6.3, 12.3.

[420] Leo the Great, *Letter,* 10.3.

[421] Leo the Great, *Letter,* 14.5.

[422] E.g., Leo the Great, *Letter,* 167 Question 3.

the orders and practices were still known in the mid-fifth-century. These sources from Rome indicate the presence of Minor Orders in Rome but give little indication of their roles. It is also notable that there are gaps in this record where no relevant sources were found.

2.3.c North-West Mediterranean coast and neighbouring areas

The Roman region of Gallia was split into seven provinces and little evidence survives from most of these. The concentration of surviving sources is in the northern part of the Italia province and the Narbonensis province. The texts and traditions that survived the upheavals of the end of the Western Roman Empire were incorporated into the Latin tradition as it developed while maintaining some regional distinctiveness. Texts of the Gallic tradition show an approach distinct from the other areas in the western region. Bailey identifies the difficulties in codifying the position and social role of members of the Minor Orders and how little is known about them within the context of Late Antique Gaul, as these orders inhabited a grey zone which was both lay and clerical, making them hard to define.[423] This provides an important contextual background to my research into these orders.

2.3.c.α Ambrose of Milan 339-97CE

Ambrose was a trained lawyer and governor in fourth-century Northern Italy when he was elected Bishop of Milan while still a catechumen. Ambrose was an astute politician tempering the expression of his Nicene Orthodoxy to the political situation of the time while not being afraid to hold the Emperor to account for his actions.[424] He developed existing theological ideas and trained others capable of taking theology and ecclesiology forward.

Ambrose was a prolific writer and many of his texts survive. For this study, one of the most important is the *Duties of Clergy*, where he discusses suitability for ordination:

> One is more fitted for the post of reader, another does better for the singing, a third is more solicitous for exorcising those possessed with an evil spirit, another, again, is held to be more suited to have the charge of the sacred things. All these things a priest

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[423] Bailey, *Religious Worlds,* 31.

[424] David Farmer, "Ambrose," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

should look at. He should give each one that particular duty for which he is best fitted. For whither each one's bent of mind leads him, or whatever duty befits him, that position or duty is filled with greater grace.[425]

This expresses Ambrose's view on who should be ordained and indicates that there were at least four separate functions for reading, singing, exorcism and practical service, equating to the various orders discussed. Elsewhere in this text, he specifically states that clergy are to defend the property of Widows but that young clergy must be careful about visiting Virgins and Widows.[426] This last statement indicates that there was always a degree of risk to male clergy visiting women, which was greater when the clergy were young. There is also a clear reference to a Reader holding authority within the community.[427]

Ambrose deals with both Virgins and Widows in his treatise *Concerning Virgins*. He talks about women who have come to him in Milan specifically to receive the veil of the Virgin.[428] In addition, he refers to a vowed Virgin who had suffered martyrdom for her faith in Antioch, which indicates his knowledge of practices in other areas of the Roman Empire.[429] In book three of this work, Ambrose specifically focuses on Widows, discussing their way of life, virtues, who should remain in this celibate state and how they can be examples for Virgins.[430]

The most extensive witness to Widows and Virgins comes within Ambrose's letters. He discusses Widows as patrons of the church along with the characteristics of the recognised Virgins of the church.[431] Ambrose elsewhere describes the parity between Virgins and Widows as well as marriage and celibacy.[432] Additionally, he expresses his reverence for celibacy, defends the theological need for the orders, and expresses the special gifts of grace related to them.[433] He also explores the difference between Christian Virgins and the Vestal

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[425] Ambrose, *Duties of Clergy,* 1.44.

[426] Ambrose, *Duties of Clergy,* 2.29, 1.20.

[427] Ambrose, *Letter,* 20.

[428] Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins,* 1.11.

[429] Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins,* 2.9.

[430] Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins,* 3.4, 3.2, 3.1, 3.9.

[431] Ambrose, *Letter,* 18.13, 18.15.

[432] Ambrose, *Letter,* 42.3, 42.8.

[433] Ambrose, *Letter,* 72.16, 63.

Virgins of Rome.[434] Ambrose likewise complains about the injustices suffered by clergy and Virgins of the Church when responding to the *Memorial of Symmachus* while distinguishing between the behaviour of Christians and non-Christians.[435] Ambrose discusses Virgin martyrs, although it is not entirely clear if some of these were monastics due to the ambiguity in his writings.[436]

Ambrose provides a clear and extensive witness to the presence of consecrated Virgins and Widows in his writings. Besides this, Ambrose provides evidence for Readers by naming them and implying the presence of orders like Singers and Exorcists. This range of information makes Ambrose an important witness to the development of the Minor Orders in the West.

2.3.c.β Council of Aquileia

The proceedings of this council are recorded by Ambrose in his letters to other Bishops and provide a detailed record of the decisions.[437] The proceedings provide two instances of a Reader acting as a facilitator in the discussion.[438] This indicates that the Reader had a specific function, although it is unclear exactly what this was. The mentions indicate that the tasks of Readers, as literate members of the clergy, were more extensive than purely liturgical activities.

2.3.c.γ Sulpicius Severus ~360-430CE

Sulpicius Severus, a monastic historian and hagiographer, provides an insight into the Church in Gaul through his history and letters.[439] In his *Life of St Martin*, he mentions that St Martin was an Exorcist and a Deacon.[440] This suggests that the function of an Exorcist could be

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[434] Ambrose, *Letter,* 72, 63, 17.

[435] Ambrose, *Letter,* 18.

[436] Ambrose, *Letter,* 12, 37.

[437] Ambrose, *Letter,* 10.

[438] Ambrose, *Letter,* 10.

[439] E. A Livingstone, ed., "Sulpicius Severus," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[440] Sulpicius Severus, *Life of St Martin,* Ch5.

performed by those in other orders as well as those specifically consecrated for the task. Later there is also a passing mention of a Virgin who lives in seclusion.[441] This probably refers to some form of hermit monastic rather than a Virgin who served within the local church community, although there was an overlap.

Sulpicius' letters witness the presence of Virgins within the community, whom he discusses in the context of St Martin, and therefore possibly refers to monastics. He also discusses the importance of the Virgins to the Church and their conduct. There is likewise criticism of both a Widow and a Virgin who are not living up to the church's expectations. These letters suggest that people consecrated to these orders did not always live up to their high ideals.[442]

Within Sulpicius' first dialogue, there is a further mention of Virgins and Widows. In this reference, proud clergy used celibate women to serve their needs for clothing beyond the basics, suggesting that a few clergy abused their position.[443] This indicates that, at least in some places, the consecrated women provided what fabrics, clothes and vestments the church needed through their handiwork.[444] Additionally, in another text, a Subdeacon is mentioned among those who come to hear the telling of St Martin's life, indicating the presence of this order.[445]

2.3.c.δ Vincent of Lerins 450CE

Vincent was a monastic theologian who did much to explore the relationship between Scripture and tradition, he also disagreed with Augustine on the matter of predestination.[446] *The Commentary for the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith Against the Profane Novelties of all Heresies* is probably Vincent's most significant text, in which he makes two

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[441] Sulpicius Severus, *Life of St Martin,* Ch12.

[442] Sulpicius Severus, *Letters,* 3, 2.1, 2.13, 2.8.

[443] Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogue,* 1.21.

[444] This could conceivably include the basic clothing required by celibate clergy who did not have family to provide for these needs, the liturgical vestments used by all ranks of clergy, the vestments of the holy table (equivalent of the altar-cloth) and other miscellaneous fabrics used liturgically.

[445] Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogue,* 3.1.

[446] David Farmer, "Vincent of Lérins," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

relevant references for this study. In discussing the persecutions incited by Arians and Donatists, he describes how they abused Widows, Virgins and lower clergy alongside the Presbyters.[447] Later in expounding 1 Timothy, Virgins are mentioned with all the clergy and other ranks of people who are to be united with Christ.[448] These two passing references indicate that Vincent knew of Minor Orders, most clearly the order of Virgins and that these orders were part of how he understood the church.

2.3.c.ε John Cassian 360-435CE

John Cassian was a significant monastic writer in the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries, and he was influential in bringing Eastern monastic practices to the Western Roman Empire.[449] Most of the texts he produced are associated with the early development of monasticism within Gaul. In his *Conferences* is a story of a wealthy woman asking Athanasius of Alexandra for a Widow to support from the church lists.[450] This provides evidence of John's knowledge of the order of the Widows in Alexandria but not about their presence in his adopted home.

2.3.c.ζ Summary

Within this region, there is clear evidence for the presence of the order of the Reader along with the Virgins and Widows. The functions of Exorcists and Singers were also present, although it is unclear whether they constituted separate orders.

2.3.d Other

There are also texts from places such as the region of Hispania and the province of Britannia, which refer to Minor Orders. These regions of the Empire also contain archaeological evidence that can influence the understanding of the early church. This archaeological

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[447] Vincent of Lerins, *The Commentary for the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith Against the Profane Novelties of all Heresies*, 11.

[448] Vincent of Lerins, *Against the Profane Novelties*, 61.

[449] Augustine Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p1.

[450] John Cassian, *Conferences*, Ch 14.

evidence can only give implicit rather than explicit evidence for the presence of Minor Orders.

2.3.d.α Council of Elvira (Granada)

This council which met at some point between 300-309CE, created canons related to the Minor Orders and clergy in general, with a focus on sexual conduct.[451] Three canons specifically consider how consecrated celibates who have sex or marry are to be dealt with: canons 13 and 14 deal with Virgins and 72 with Widows. Canon 30 legislates on who can be made Subdeacon, with specific reference to sexual conduct. Besides these canons around sexual behaviour, the council also legislated against clergy charging interest in canon 20.

2.3.d.β Synod of Saragossa 380CE

This synod made only one ruling relevant to the exploration of the Minor Orders that Virgins were not to be veiled before the age of forty.[452] This was older than the Greek canonists insisted at that time but was comparable with the age given for the consecration of the woman Deacon stated in the canons of the fourth ecumenical council at Chalcedon.[453]

2.3.d.γ Council of Orange 441CE

This council, presided over by Hilary of Aries with seventeen Bishops present,[454] produced a small collection of canons that impacted the church in Gaul. While most of these canons reiterated what is seen in the canons of preceding councils, it provides evidence of constancy in practice. The council produced two canons that directly relate to the Minor Orders as they regulate Virgins and Widows.[455]

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[451] Agapios and Nicodemus, *Πηδάλιον (the Rudder)*, regional Council of Granada, 323-30.

[452] Vuolanto, Ville. "Single Life in Late Antiquity? Virgins between the Earthly and the Heavenly Family," in *The Single Life in the Roman and Later Roman World*, ed. Sabine R. Heubner and Christian Leas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 276–91, at 279.

[453] Chalcedon, *Canon*, 15.

[454] Edward H Landon and Perceval Landon, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: Grant, 1909), 1.

[455] Council of Orange, *Canons,* 27, 28.

2.3.d.δ Patrick 388/408-~460CE

There is very little evidence from before the seventh-century of the church in the province of Britannia. This means that the only evidence is secondary through the oral tradition and preserved in the later lives of saints. This is far from definite evidence as grey literature; it indicates what may have been happening in the church at that time. However, such lives say more about the time in which they were told and recorded than the time they purport to be, as the concerns of the time of writing affect the narrative. The one exception to this lack of textual evidence is the writings of the enigmatic figure of Patrick, Apostle to the Irish, who lived in the early-fifth-century.[456]

The *Confession* of Patrick and his epistle gives a piece of rare primary evidence for the church in Britain in sub-Roman times. The *Confession* indicates the presence of Virgins and Widows within the community, both in semi-organized monastic communities and within the wider community. The exact dating of the confession and letter are debated, but they show that there were ascetical communities in the British Isles during the fifth-century.[457] Despite the challenges with dating the *Confession* and *Epistle* of Patrick, these are valuable primary evidence. The text also shows the importance of celibate women throughout the Church, as these are the only potential Minor Orders which could be assigned to the province of Britannia before the Augustinian mission.

2.3.d.ε Summary

Within these written sources from the western region, there is clear evidence for Virgins and Widows. This indicates that celibate orders were known throughout the Western Empire. The only other order attested to being that of the Subdeacon in one source, but this too is closely related to sexual conduct suggesting the councils had a preoccupation with the subject.

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[456] R P C Hanson, *Saint Patrick: His Origins and Career* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 171-188.

[457] Hanson *Saint Patrick,* 155.

2.3.d.η Archaeology

The archaeological sources in the West are not as extensive or clear as in other regions, often because later churches were built directly on top of earlier ones and in some regions churches were not built of stone until the tenth-century, meaning there are few archaeological remains. Within the Western Empire, most archaeological remains are in the form of buildings, which poses challenges due to the constant rebuilding of basilicas in urban centres such as Rome. This means that the evidence from buildings is usually unclear as later phases of the building obscure the original designs. Other archaeological sources are rare to non-existent before the sixth or seventh centuries. This absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, but it just means the evidence has not survived in the archaeological record or has not been found yet.

There is extensive archaeology of Rome showing fourth or fifth-century basilica churches. These large aisled buildings with circulation space would allow for the numbers of clergy described by authors like Cornelius of Rome. The number of clergy listed in his letter would not have been needed or fitted in a small house church, although they might have if it was hosted in a sizable villa. The probability is that they were dispersed through the smaller congregations within the city before the legalisation of the church. This is speculation as there is no clear evidence to support the theory; it is just one idea of how to explain the problem of reconciling large numbers of clergy with small spaces. There is no clear link between documentary evidence and archaeology here, as in other regions.

Fourth-century Rome also produces a few examples of funerary inscriptions referring to Minor Orders. In examining them, Goessene identifies three which probably refer to consecrated Virgins.[458] There are also examples of Widows in Catacomb inscriptions which Schenk explores at length.[459] An important consideration in this for Schenk is the use of the Greek word χήρα, a title which was uncommon in Antiquity, the use of a fourth-century inscription to interpret a second-century one is however problematic due to the intervening

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[458] Thomas Gossens, "Singles and Singleness in the Christian Epigraphic Evidence from Rome (c.300-500)," *The Single Life in the Roman and Later Roman World,* Ed. by Sabine R. Huebner and Christian Laes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 227-75, at 231-2.

[459] Christine Schenk, *Crispen and her Sisters, Women and Authority in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2017), 137-8.

changes in church practice.[460] This exploration of funerary inscriptions is a specialist historical and archaeological project and is beyond the scope of this study, focusing on documentary evidence. For this thesis, it is enough to note that both the Virgins and the Widows were commemorated in a way that indicates they had an official function in the church since the inscriptions add no other knowledge to the subject.

The late-fourth-century Villa church at Lullingstone is one of the best-preserved Villa churches and, to date, the only one in Britain positively identified as a church within a villa complex.[461] Evidence suggests that part of the villa was in use as a church from around 385CE until around 420CE providing a snapshot of how Villa churches were organised during this period.[462] The apse is on the western end of the room, which differs from later planned churches, but there are many reasons for this arrangement, including the simple fact that the room was repurposed, so the community worked within the constraints of an existing building. The surviving mosaics and wall paintings from this villa are early evidence of the use of images within the Christian space. However, the small size of the villa church indicates that it was both a small community and likely to have been served by only one or two clergy with a small number of assistants. If the number of liturgical assistants followed patterns observed elsewhere, one would have been sufficiently literate to read and either that person or another would have seen to the practical needs within the service. This would equate approximately with the presence of a Reader and possibly a Subdeacon, although if the community had a Deacon, the Subdeacon might not have been required.[463]

2.3.e Regional Conclusion

The Western region of the Empire during this formative period does not produce quantities of information that increases our understanding of ecclesiology beyond the presence of orders. Archaeology gives us little help, as it is not directly relatable to documents with any accuracy

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[460] Schenk, *Crispen and her Sisters,* 137.

[461] Geoffrey Wells Meates, *The Roman Villa at Lullingstone, Kent* (London: Kent Archaeological Society, 1979), 18-9.

[462] Meates, *Roman Villa at Lullingstone*, 42.

[463] While in modern practice it is common for a Subdeacon or Acolyte to serve directly with a priest without the presence of a deacon this was not the case in antiquity where the presence of the deacon was expected in preference to more junior orders. The Reader was a separate position with their own duties and existed independently from the existence of the deacons as explored in chapter 3.

and the relevant inscriptions only provide the names for orders with no apparent link to documentary evidence.

Virgins and Widows, along with celibacy in general, frequently occur in writing, almost to the point of being the only orders mentioned, within a whole corpus of writing or canons on ecclesial discipline. This probably reflects the writers' principal concerns more than the prevalence of the orders since, as shown in chapter six, the distribution of source type and content is not even. The other orders which occur in multiple texts are Exorcists and Readers. The Western texts are important in understanding the function of the Exorcist since they describe their function in treating demoniacs. The mentions of Readers also clarify their function, along with the age-old problem of getting people to listen and not chat during the services. This means that there is clear evidence for the existence of Virgins, Widows, Readers and Exorcists within the region, but most sources only deal with one order, and not all of them.

The only sources which mention more than one order at a time (excluding celibates) are the *Apostolic Tradition* and Cornelius, which provide a list of Minor Orders. Neither of these sources makes it entirely clear if this is a theoretical list or literally what was in the church of Rome at the time of writing. The lists are certainly the most extensive of the era, which makes them valuable in themselves even though the application is uncertain. Additionally, in writing about people who may be suited to orders, Ambrose of Milan gives an idea of his theology about the gifts of the Spirit and is intently practical. Using this theology of Ambrose alongside the lists from Rome, it is possible to find an origin to the theology present in the later developments of the Latin tradition, although the use in understanding church practice at the time of writing is limited.

Overall, the Western texts are focused on order, money and celibacy, mostly ordering the last and trying to eradicate abuses. These themes are the most prominent in the texts, which mention the Minor Orders revealing the preoccupation of the Bishops in this area as they managed a large diocese. The frequent references to clerical celibacy that appeared during the study show that the theology at times did not match the practicalities of everyday life. It

seems the Bishops and councils often had to work hard to impose it on people who wanted to live as they always had but with a veneer of Christianity. In that, people wanted to carry on as they always had and use Christian rituals as they had the pre-Christian ones since it was now what gave a political and social advantage, which would have affected their views on appropriate behaviour. The sources surveyed in this chapter also indicate the beginnings of the tensions and traditions which came to define the Western expression of Christianity as it developed in a different direction than that seen in other areas of the Roman Empire.

The evidence for Minor Orders shows that some orders existed in the West and had roles comparable to their counterparts in other areas. The theology of ordination, however, is distinct and becomes more so after 451CE when this study ends. The differences observed between this and the other regions were the product of linguistic and cultural differences: these underlying differences affected the development of ecclesiology just as much as all other areas of life within the Roman Empire.

2.4 Source Meta-analysis

The preceding three sections provided a survey of the relevant primary sources about Minor Orders between 200 CE and 451 CE. Through this, creating an indicative study of the documentary evidence for the Minor Orders, focusing on sources that provide information in addition to the names of individual orders. This is the first time an attempt to systematically collate these sources and explore the evidence for functionaries within the church has been attempted. The author is confident in having located and used all the relevant information from documentary sources surveyed in the preceding chapters to create this indicative overview.

This chapter sets out the overall observations about the data and the trends which have become evident from the sources included and explores the importance of different types of primary sources. The data presented in this chapter is based only on documentary evidence, with each document counting once for each order mentioned, regardless of how many times the order is mentioned in the text. Since this is an indicative rather than exhaustive study, the numbers used to construct the graphs are taken solely from the sources utilised in earlier sections of Appendix 2. To allow a comparison of relative numbers of references to Minor Orders in different sources and between regions, each source will count as one reference for each order mentioned to provide as clear an illustration of distribution as possible with an incomplete data set. Due to the indicative nature of this analysis, time differentiation has not been used; further exhaustive studies would be beneficial in understanding the occurrence of all clergy in Late Antiquity. This form of metadata analysis of the occurrence of orders within source material has not been done before; therefore, all conclusions are my own unless otherwise specified.

2.4.a Overview

The sources referring to Minor Orders are asymmetrically distributed across the Roman Empire and types of sources, as seen in Fig1. The greatest number of sources occur in the Eastern region across the most significant source types (the exception is letters where more relevant ones are produced in Africa), but within this, the evidence is not evenly distributed geographically or temporally, an aspect not represented by the graphs. This uneven

distribution of sources results from factors including greater production of documents and better preservation in the fourth and fifth centuries. The true reasons for any individual document's survival are always complex, but the stability of the Roman Empire in Constantinople would have aided in the survival of texts. Political stability is a good factor in the survival of documents, compared to unstable periods, which often lead to the destruction of documents, contemporary and historical.

Fig 1: Frequency of occurrence in different document types all refrences
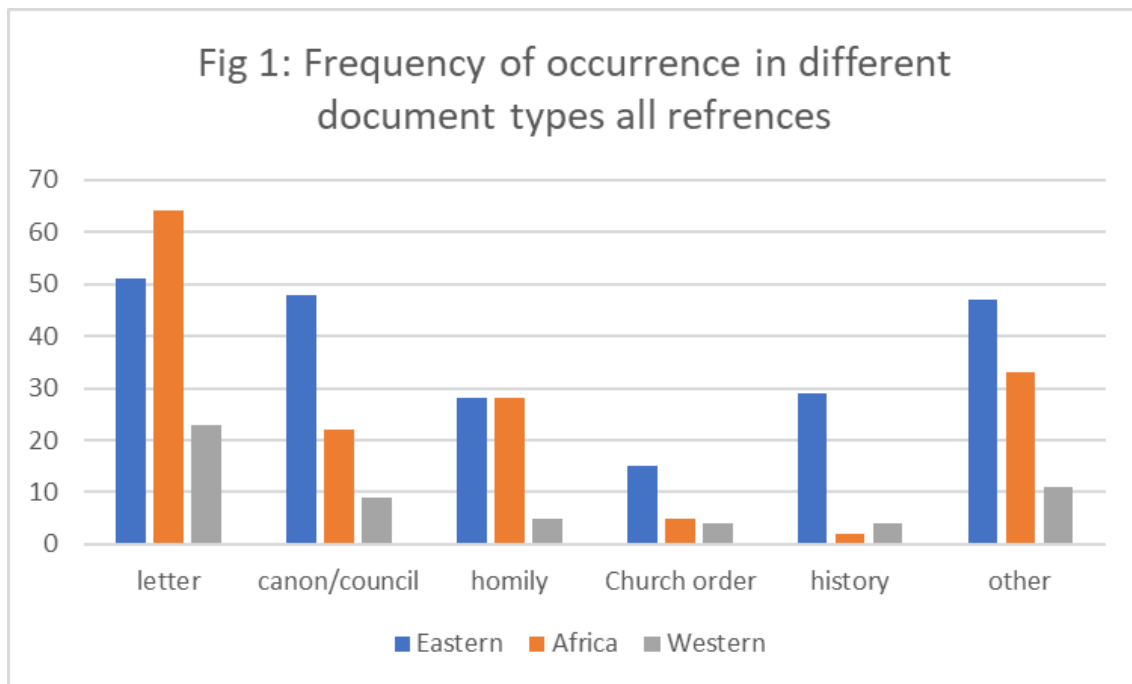
2.4.a.α Patterns of the presence of Orders

The presence of orders collectively described as the Minor Orders is highly variable across the Roman Empire, as shown in Fig2.[464]

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[464] Within all graphs the reference to other/clergy covers all mentions of clergy in general and orders which are not covered by the other categories, within the documents used in this project.

Fig2: Frequency of Orders in all sources
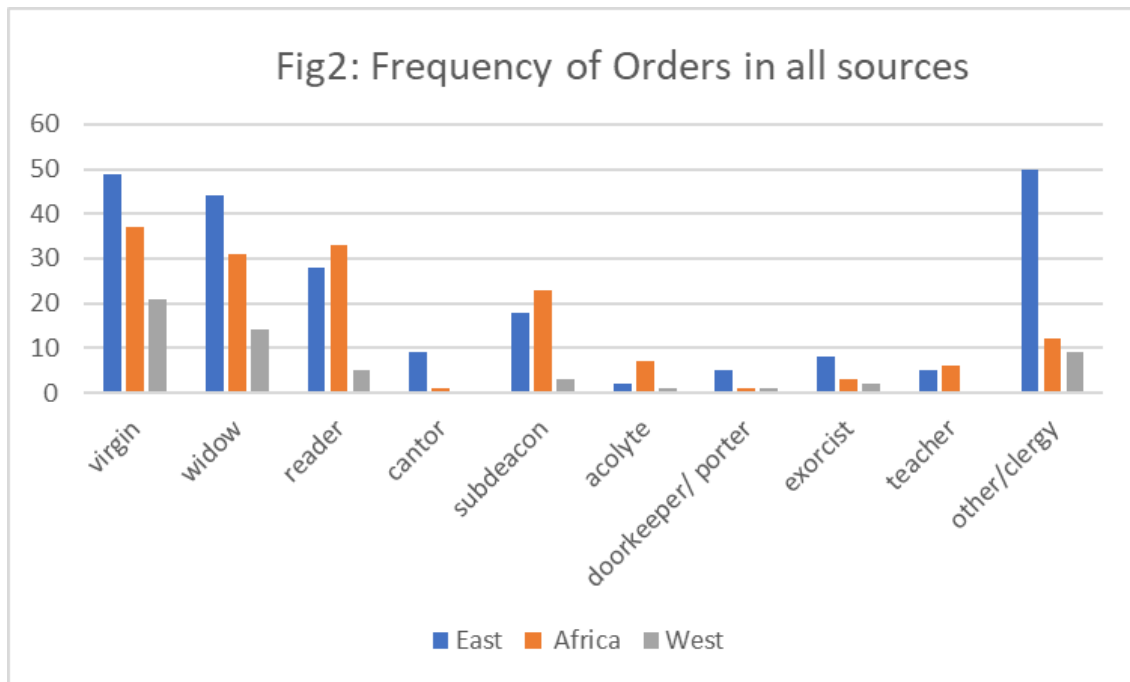
What is noticeable is the focus on celibates, especially in the form of Virgins and Widows across the Roman Empire, including in the canon and law texts. In fig2, most canons are placed under the "other" category as they refer to clergy in general: canons and laws produced the most frequent mention of the clergy. The importance of celibacy to the developing ecclesiology varied considerably between regions but was present in all regions, if not all sources. The Latin tradition drawing on the writings of Tertullian of Carthage and other North African writers shows a strong tendency towards promoting celibacy among all clergy, not just Virgins and Widows. This was at odds with Eastern practices, which permitted married people to enter orders while remaining married and fathering children. This permission for married clergy in the East did not negate the presence of celibate clergy; however, there was an ideological parity between celibate and married clergy, as seen in the Canons of Chalcedon.[465]

Reader and Subdeacon are the other orders attested to, which occur across all regions but not consistently. The variation in the mention of these orders and how they are described means it is impossible to trace one line of development for the orders. Readers were involved in liturgical reading within services and possibly other activities that required literacy outside

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[465] Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History,* 1.11; Apostolic Canons, *Canon,* 26; Council of Chalcedon, *Canon*, 14; Basil the Great, *Letter,* 217 Canon 69.

the services. The activity of Subdeacons is more difficult to assess, as they seem to have fulfilled a wide range of duties under the direction of Deacons. The specific nature of the relationship between Deacon and Subdeacon was explored in chapter 3.

2.4.a.β Patterns in recording

Most of the lists of Minor Orders are from North Africa, providing some of the most extensive indications of the types of Minor Orders used during Late Antiquity. It is observable that the most useful references to Minor Orders with indications of duties occur in the writings of Cyprian of Carthage. These North African lists, along with the letters of Cyprian and later Latin sources, are commonly used as the main source of definite descriptions of the Minor Orders.[466] However, the practice of making a universal definition from a limited number of sources is not historically helpful. The level of diversity between regions and over time means that it is challenging to distil a recognisable definition of the orders, as posited in the introduction, let alone describe the practices as universal. The impacts of this diversity were discussed in chapter 3.

The evidence for the legal texts and Ecumenical Councils reflects what is stated in the other evidence for Minor Orders. The legal texts and council canons do not specifically add to the knowledge of which orders were used, but they indicate that the orders existed over substantial parts of the Roman Empire. These sources will be important for examining how the church and state law developed in parallel in chapter 6. The canons, both regional and local, provide important information about what people did based on the instructions about what they are not to do, meaning that they are important witnesses to Minor Orders across this study. The evidence about what was happening can be understood by the simple fact that there would not be instructions to do or not do unless the opposite occurred.[467] While this is not as clear as definite statements that a person did a certain action at a given time and place, it is possible to identify patterns of action or inaction through these sources.

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[466] This can be observed in the writings of Lightfoot, Lindsay, and Ramsey among others.

[467] Winter, *Roman Wives,* 3.

2.4.b Types of evidence

As the preceding three sections show, most of the evidence for this research comes from documentary sources supported by a limited amount of archaeological and architectural information. This section looks at the frequency of the references to orders in different source types and discusses the importance of each source type in building understanding.

2.4.b.α Documentary sources

Documentary sources of varying types make up most of the evidence for the orders that assisted the Deacon during the period of this study. As Fig1 shows, there is a greater number of sources from the eastern region and an uneven distribution of the source types in which the orders are recorded. The recording of orders in different source types by region will be dealt with later in the chapter, along with examining the distribution of source types within the evidence for each order. This section explores each source type separately and their impact on this research.

2.4.b.α.1 Letters

Letters or Epistles are one of the most reliable forms of documentary evidence which can be used for historical research as they are written by a specific person to another person or group of people within a defined context, although they may also acquire a wider readership. Letters are also often dated, which aids in their contextualisation. There are pseudepigraphal letters as well, but these, once recognised, can be correctly placed in time through their theological content and literary style. As Fig1 shows, letters are an important source for understanding Minor Orders, Fig3 breaks down the references within letters to which orders are mentioned.

Fig3: References in letters
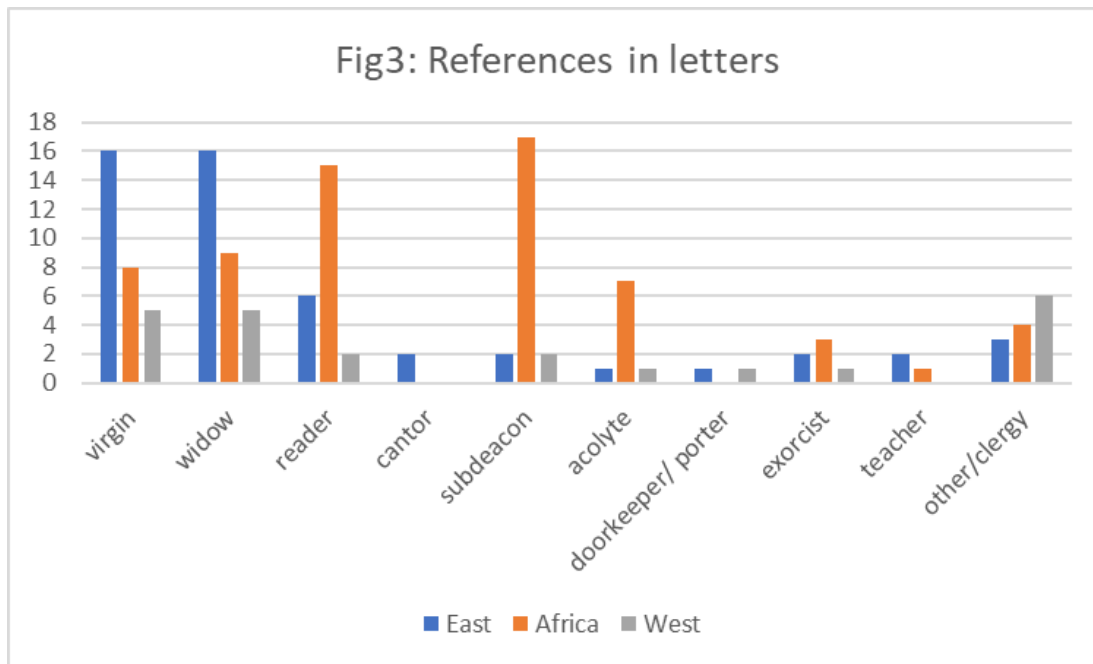
It is clear from the graph that the two celibate orders of Virgin and Widow are consistently referred to, with 38 references to the Virgin and 29 to Widows. The references to these two orders are also predominantly from the Eastern region of the Empire, with the next highest number coming from Africa. The other three orders with noticeable numbers of mentions are the Reader, the Subdeacon, and the Acolyte, all of which are significantly more extensively mentioned in Africa than in any other region. The prevalence of references to these orders can be traced to the writing of Cyprian of Carthage, the volume of whose letters noticeably affects the data.

While the presence of all the other orders can be attested through letters, the numbers are so small that it is not possible to identify trends or concentrations of usage from letters alone. It is possible to identify when one or two writers significantly impact the recording of an order in a single region.

2.4.b.α.2 Canons and councils

The church councils and canons are combined as councils produced most canons and in many cases, there are few records of council proceedings other than the canons they produced. This data includes the canons of the ecumenical councils but not laws, which are the focus of

chapter 6. Canons are an important source for this thesis as they record instructions on what not to do, indicating that at least some people were doing said activity.


Fig4: references in Canons and councils
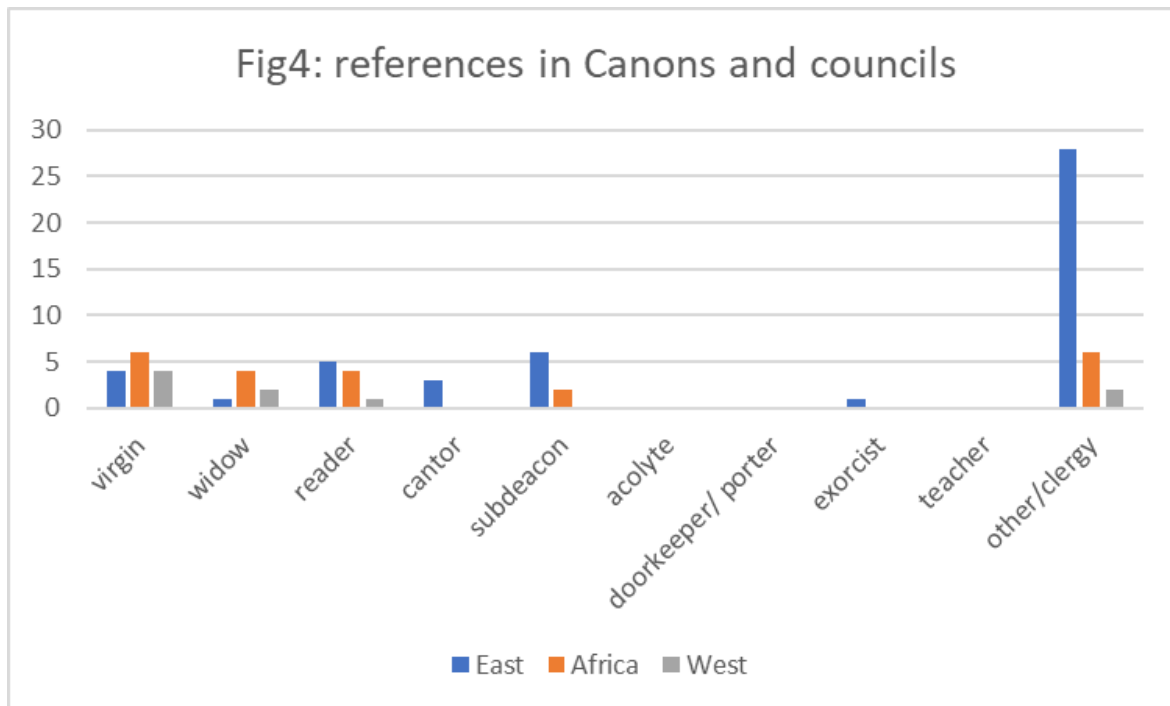
Most canons do not refer to orders individually but state that a precept applies to "the clergy" or to the "other clergy" or the "bishop and the clergy". This means that it is not easy to identify individual orders through this type of source alone or what their activities were.

The Reader and the Subdeacon merit the most mentions of named orders, with a greater concentration of records occurring in the East. This suggests that there was a greater need to define these roles than others. As examined in chapter 3, both roles were closely linked with that of the Deacon and this link may have been part of the reason for a clear demarcation between orders.

The low number of Canonical references is unexpected, considering the dominance of the Virgins and Widows in the letters. The concentration of canons occurs in Africa rather than the Eastern region, where there are more mentions in letters. This shows the differences in ways of recording but also the perception of how the church managed its members.

2.4.b.α.3 Homilies and scriptural exegesis

This category covers homilies, soliloquies, treatises and commentaries as forms of scriptural exegesis, and they are grouped due to common subject matter and the fact that different areas used different names for the same type of exegesis. These texts reveal the ecclesiastical understanding of the writers about the orders they discuss through the expounding of the scriptures.

Fig5: references in Homilies and scriptural exergesis
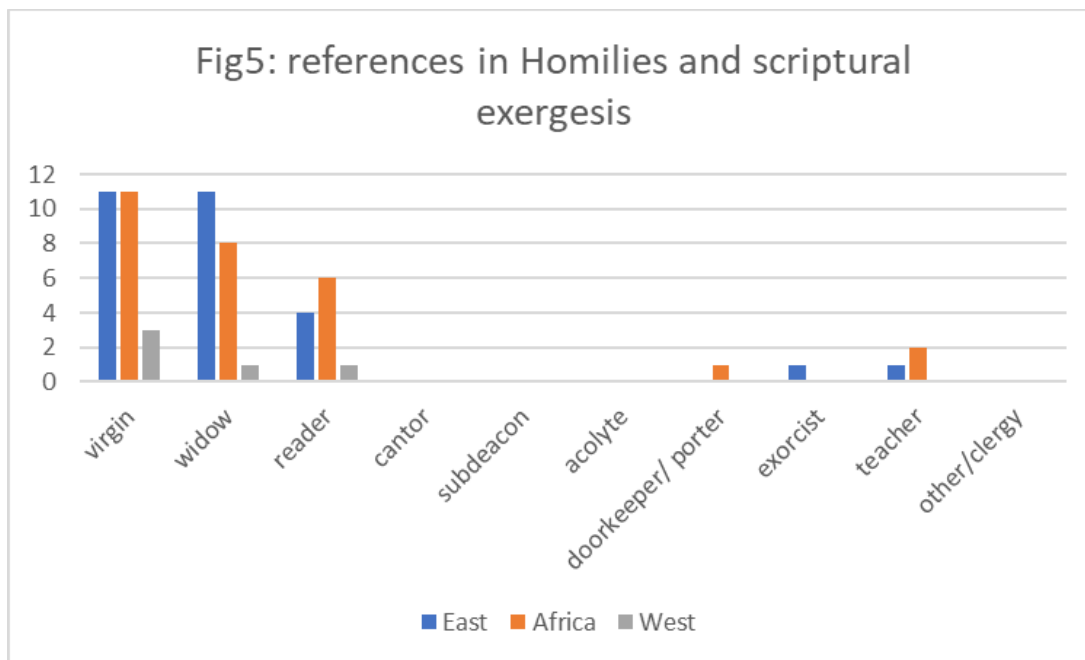
The data in fig5 shows that Virgins and Widows were by far the greatest interest of the writers in this type of text. They mentioned these orders in the context of specific biblical passages, in expounding the duties of Christians and in extended explorations of theology. It is noticeable that the highest number of mentions other than to the two celibate orders relates to the Reader and instructs the congregation on what they should do while the Reader performs their task as any theological expounding. However, relatively few of these forms of the text provide detail of expectations and theology in a way not found in other sources.

2.4.b.α.4 Church Orders

Church Orders are one of the key sources for understanding the working of the Late Antique church because of the combination of theology, ecclesiology and descriptions of liturgical practices they contain. As is visible in the graph, there is a more significant number of references in the eastern region as most Church Orders come from this region.

Fig6: references in Church Order Documents
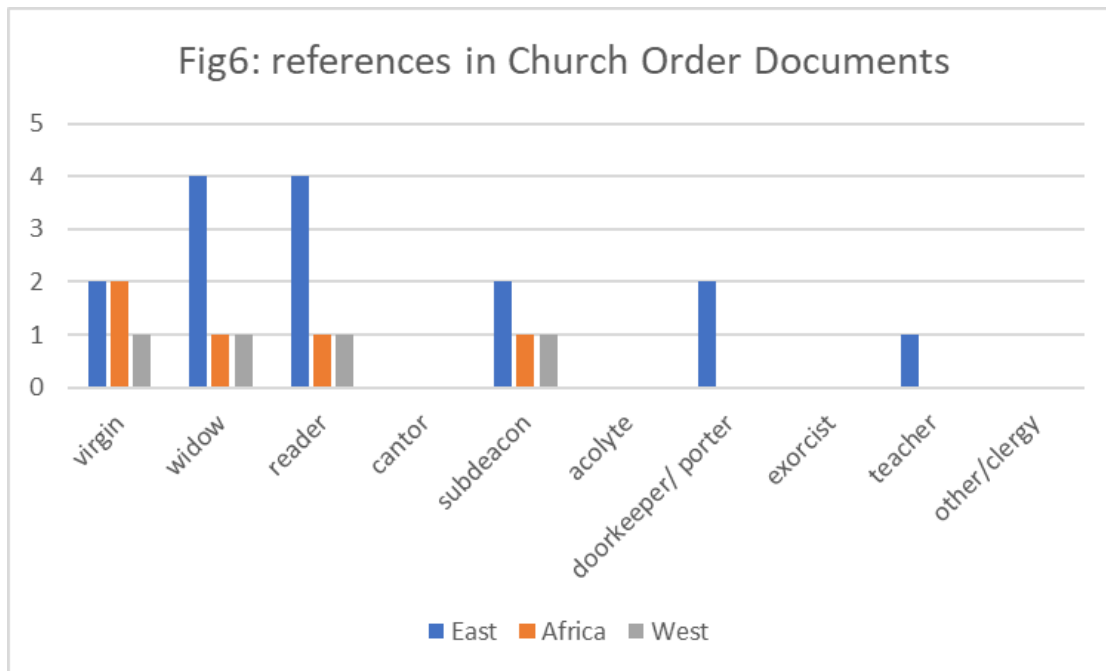
Once the differences in sources in different regions are considered, the Church Orders provide clear evidence of the Reader's presence and function. The relatively lower number of references to Virgins and Widows reflects the fact that these orders only receive passing mention in this type of document. The low number of mentions of Virgins and Widows within these documents is due to the nature of Church Orders as predominantly liturgical guides rather than canonical or theological texts, so there was little reason to include orders which did not have a liturgical function.

2.4.b.α.5 Histories and lives

These two types of text are grouped as they are both forms of grey text, so while they provide evidence, it is not as clear or reliable as other forms of documentary sources. These texts provide an important witness to the events they record and preserve texts that would not otherwise have survived.

Fig7: references in History and other grey texts
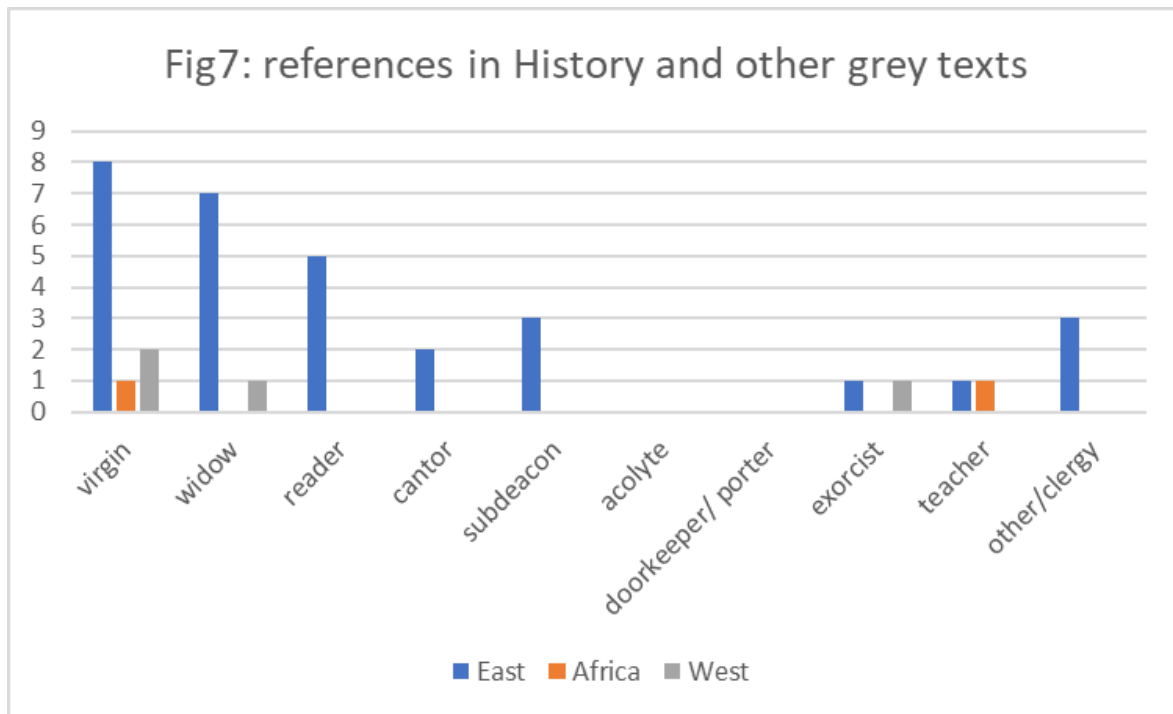
The dominance of data from the eastern region seen in Fig7 relates to the fact that most of the histories included in this study come from this region. The lives included, of which there are three, are one from each region. The dominance of references to the Virgin, Widow and Reader reflects the relatively high rate of recording of these orders in all the texts examined. The mentions in the text do not add a huge amount to the understanding of the orders but reflect consistency in recording across types of documents.

2.4.b.α.6 Other

As with any categorisation system, some documents do not fit into a category and so these are collated under the heading of other documentary sources. This grouping of texts includes apologies, teaching texts, liturgies, travel logs and monastic rules, which, although very different from each other in this era, do not occur in sufficient numbers to warrant separate examination as the numbers of mentions would be so small as to be meaningless.

Fig8: other documentary sources
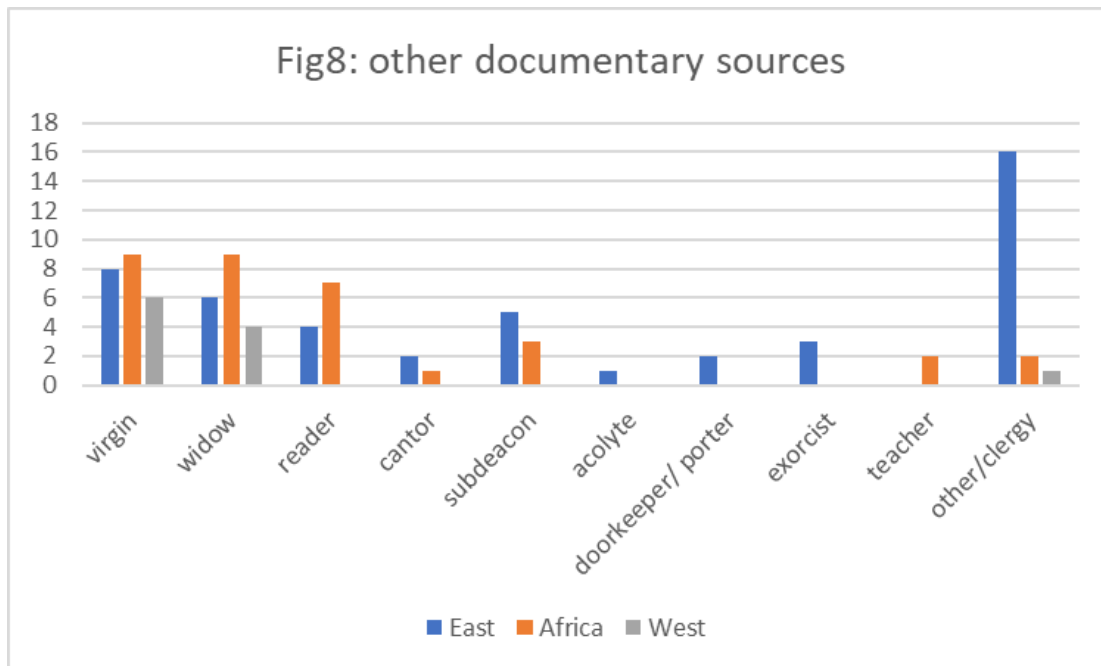
Most of these texts come from North Africa and the Western Region of the Empire, unlike all the other categories, which explains why the eastern region is considerably less represented in the references to orders than in the other graphs. As with all the other types of documents, most references are to Virgin and Widow, with the Reader being the next most mentioned. The pattern in which orders are referred to matches the overall pattern seen in Fig1 and observed in the other source-specific breakdowns.

2.4.b.β Observations

While this study uses a wide range of source types reflecting those which have survived, the analysis will rely on specific document types and individual writers due to the level of preservation and detail within the texts. While some types of texts, such as letters, produce a lot of individual mentions, they do not record much about the activities of the people listed, limiting their use in the investigation of the orders in their context. Other sources provided detailed information about an order in the context, allowing for a qualitative discussion in later chapters. This qualitative difference is not seen in the quantitative analysis in this section; both aspects are important for exploring the presence, use and understanding of the orders below the Deacon.

2.4.c Orders recorded

Having investigated the way the evidence for the Minor Orders is distributed according to the type of documents, the focus in this subsection is on the records for orders in different types of sources in each region. This analysis is limited to a review of the data at a regional level, but the sources are so scarce that comparing individual Roman diocese or groups of provinces would not yield meaningful answers. The overall trends can give some insight into how the orders were recorded and indicate their prevalence in each region.

2.4.c.α Eastern Region

The Eastern region of the Roman Empire, as shown in fig1 and fig2, has the greatest density of sources of all types, this concentration of references, however, is not equally spread across source types, as is shown in Fig9. As discussed in Appendix 2.1, the sources are also not evenly distributed across the Eastern Roman Empire. While this quantitative analysis can help identify trends, it is impossible to extrapolate from this to a uniform practice in the large geographic area covered by the region.

Fig9: Distribution of references to orders in different sources, East region
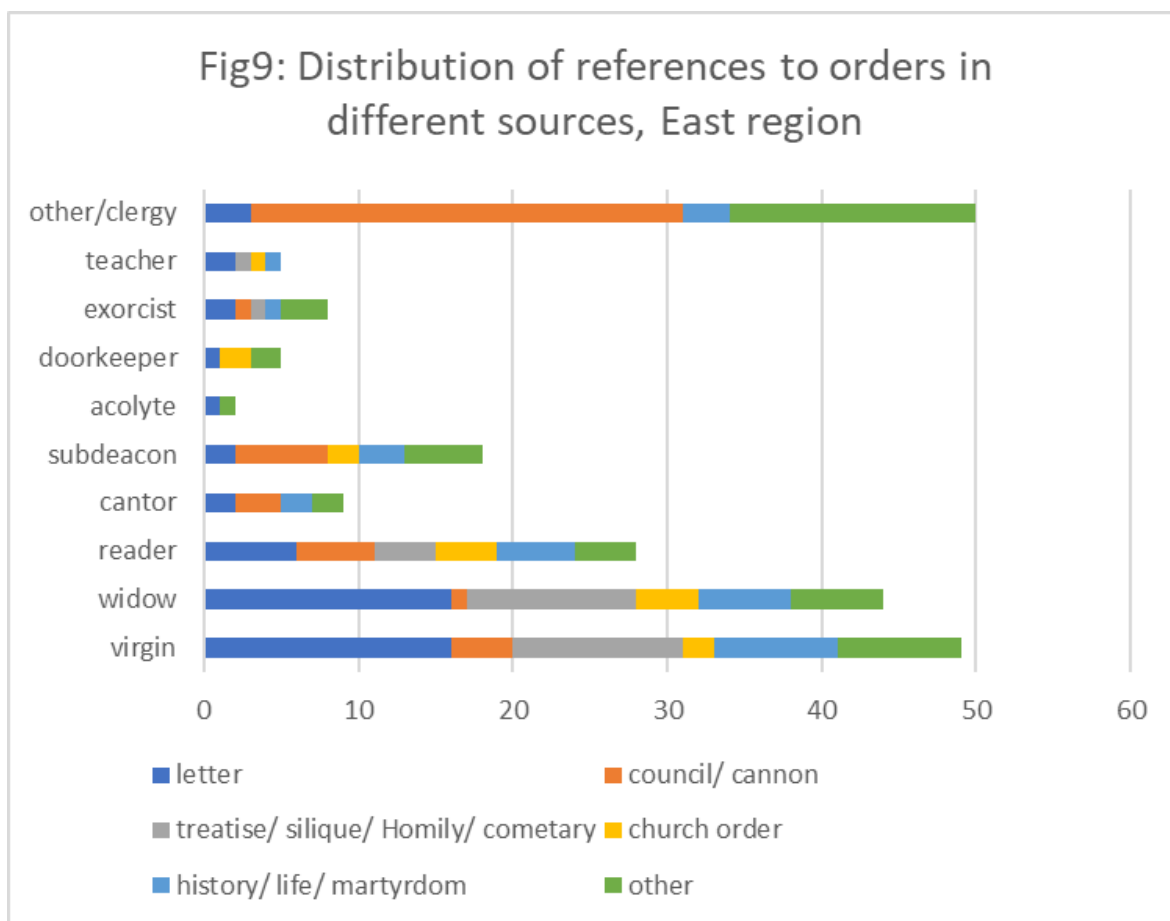
As can be seen in fig9, the data concentrates on the orders of Virgin and Widow along with the Reader in the named orders. In contrast, the high number of references to other orders and clergy are supported by the significant number of records of this type occurring in canonical texts. As observed in fig3, all the orders occur in letters originating in the Eastern Region, which underpins the direct evidence of their existence. Church Orders provide the other significant evidence for most of the orders, while canons bear witness to many of the orders: as noted when exploring the texts, the canons themselves give very little detail about the activities of orders; they only witness their existence.

The distribution of references across multiple documentary sources for all orders within this region means that it is likely that the orders were present. It must also be noted that there are under fifty references to Virgins in an ecclesiastical context, which is the most well-recorded order. As shown in Appendix 2.1, the sources are scattered and fragmented, so any relatively high concentrations of references cannot be normative but only indicative of the importance and concern about specific orders.

2.4.c.β Africa

Within the African region, the distribution of sources between orders, as observed in fig2, differs from that in the Eastern region, as do the types of documents. This results in a different balance of importance to sources in understanding the region, the relationship between order types and numbers recorded being visible in fig10.

Fig10: Distribution of references to orders in different sources, Africa
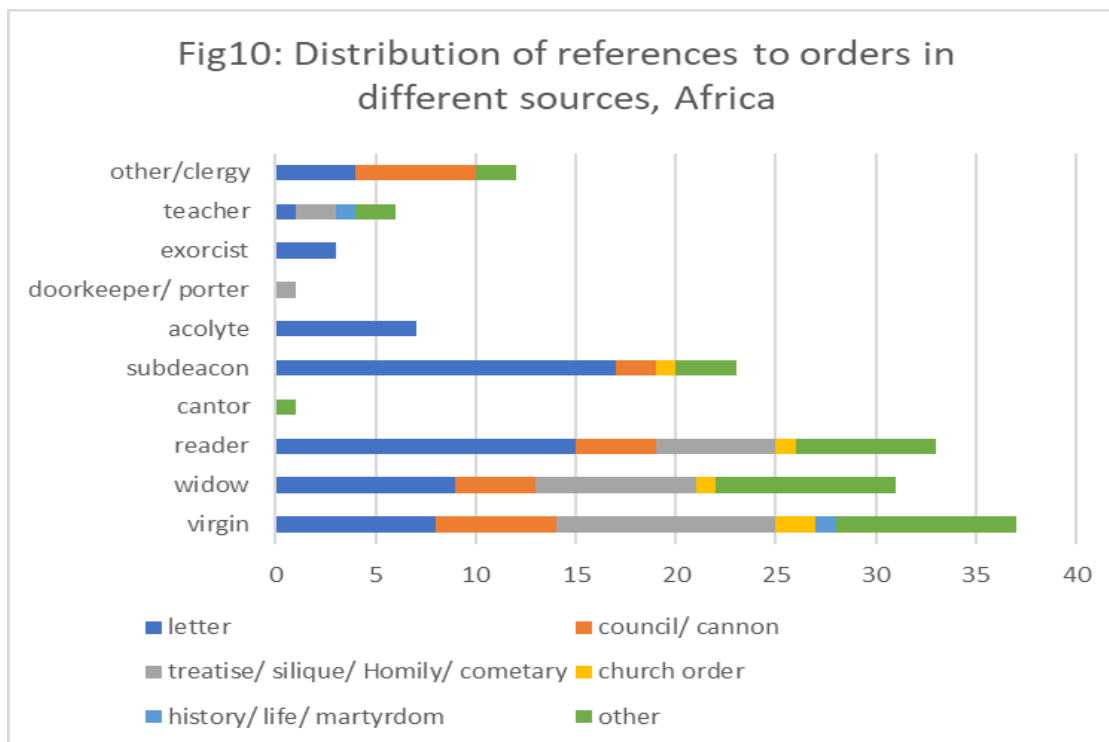
What is first noticeable in this collation of the data is the significantly smaller number of records of any type that occur compared to the Eastern region. The importance of letters as a source is subsequently enhanced as they provide a greater proportion of the sources, despite a similar absolute number of sources as in the Eastern region. While the recording patterns are different, it is still clear that the two celibate orders plus the Reader make up most of the orders discussed. The higher number of references to the Subdeacon, both in absolute and relative terms, reflects the concerns of Cyprian of Carthage as a significant proportion of the references to this order occur in his letters. As demonstrated in Appendix 2.2, there is a significant difference between the orders recorded and how they have been recorded between Alexandria and Egypt and the area of Carthage and Roman North Africa. This means that despite the trend to focus on celibate orders, Readers and Subdeacons can be observed across the whole area. However, there are also significant differences not shown in this data analysis between the African regions due to cultural differences.

2.4.c.γ Western Region

Within the Western region, there are still fewer sources, as illustrated by fig1 and fig2: however, the pattern of the importance of orders and source types is broadly similar, as can be observed in fig11.

Fig11: Distribution of references to orders in different sources, Westen region
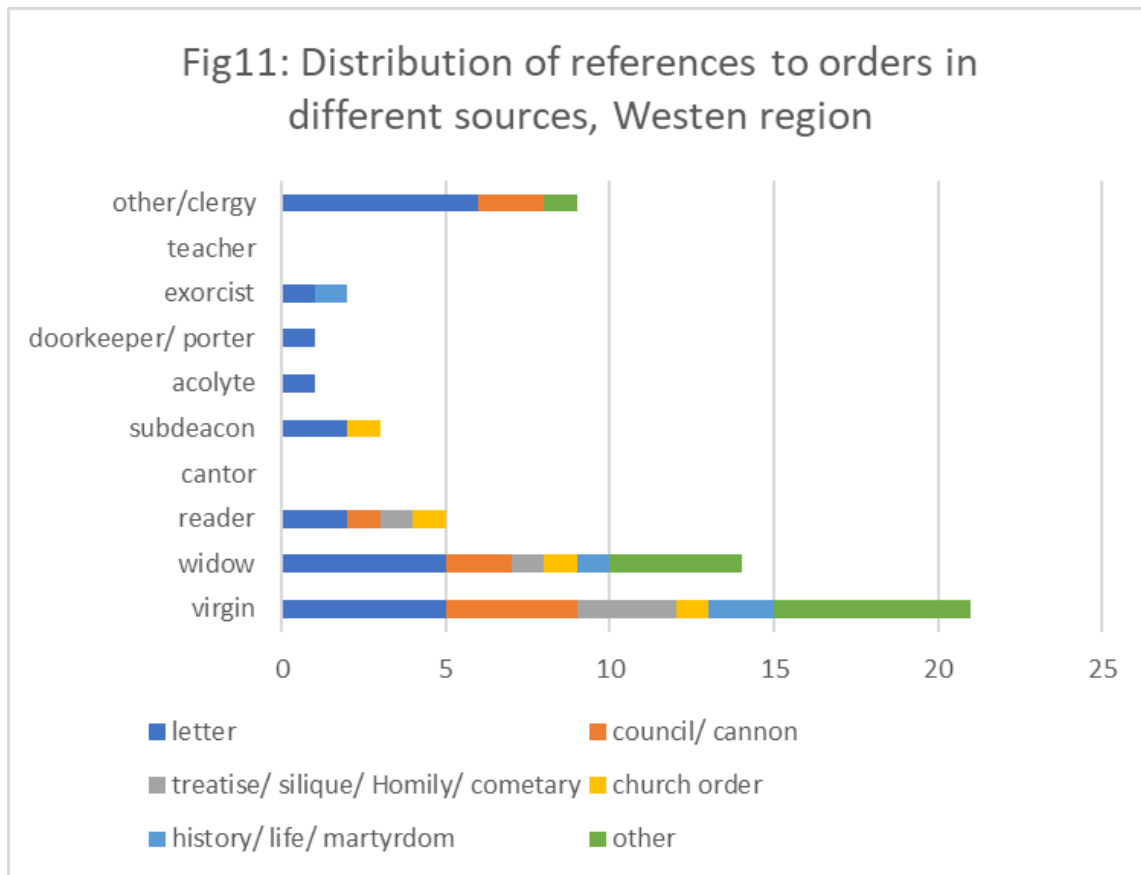
The proportion of sources in this region's 'other' category reflects the importance of texts such as apologies and anti-heretical works. The pattern of celibates' importance is still clear, as is the recording of both Readers and Subdeacons. The numbers of records and texts in the Western region are so small that, except for specific contexts, it is impossible to draw any clear conclusions beyond noting probabilities relating to the presence of orders.

2.4.c.δ Summary

The tendencies observed in fig1 and fig2 of the prevalence of letters as sources and the recording of the celibate orders are also clearly visible when the types of recording of orders are collated by region. This tendency to record the celibate orders in various source types, especially letters, has led to the perception that celibacy was important in the Late Antique church. This observation is based on the relative levels of recording; it was not the most important factor in the recording of the clergy.

While it is important to consider the relative levels of recording of orders across the Roman Empire, it is important to view this in the church context. The recording of the clergy of any form tended to be incidental to the topic at hand, although there are instances such as canons or instructions where the numbers and types of the clergy are the focus. Within this, it is more common to observe the references to Bishops, Bishops and Deacons, Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, or Bishops and the clergy in general, than it is to see specific mentions of the Minor Orders. This is an area in need of further research and evaluation.

2.4.d Complex picture of where and when

As the rest of Appendix 2 has shown, the complexity and regional variations in the use of Minor Orders indicates just how nuanced the situation was. The cultural differences between and within the three principal regions used for analysing the sources are part of the underlying reason for the complexity observed. These cultural variations, visible in the texts, underpin the development of diverse theologies, which are subsequently expressed as a range of ecclesial practices consistent with the church's unity and reflected local needs and beliefs. Due to the fragmented evidence, it is impossible to trace the development of orders clearly, even in one city over the two hundred and fifty years of this study. The fragmentation of sources also means that it is challenging to trace the interrelationship between areas; for instance, the similarities in the practices between North Africa and the Latin traditions are clear, but the point at which the distinctive North African ideas gained prominence in Rome and the other Latin speaking areas is difficult to trace.

Nevertheless, studies over a longer period, in a restricted geographical area, are certainly warranted with the information found. Such geographically limited studies would be able to bring depth and breadth to the exploration of texts from one locality and focus more explicitly on contextualisation than is possible in a study this large in scope. This contextualisation is especially important when discussing topics such as women and literacy, which had a significant cultural component and therefore impacted how the church expressed itself in different contexts. The most noticeable expression of this in the sources explored is the presence of woman Deacons in the Eastern region archaeology, while the canons of the Western region forbade even the possibility of this. The disparity between regions is also visible in legislation on who could be married since this is related as much to the understanding of women as to ideas of purity, as explored in chapter 4.

2.4.e Conclusion

This chapter shows that the evidence available for the Minor Orders is reminiscent of a fragmented mosaic or several connected mosaics from which some idea of the overall picture can be drawn, along with how they relate to each other. The statistical analysis presented in this chapter made the comparisons of quantitive aspects possible; the qualitative will become more apparent when contextualising the information. Trying to build a coherent picture of the presence of Minor Orders across the Roman Empire from the evidence available is not dissimilar to reconstructing a Roman Villa from the archaeological evidence: it is possible, yet the image cannot be completed from only the evidence found on site, it needs to be contextualised to be accurately interpreted.