<u>Introduction</u>

In recent decades, the study of Late Antiquity – the period between the end of Classical Antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages, c.250 to c.750 – has flourished. Within this field, considerable attention has been devoted to the question of what happened to the cities of the later Roman Empire in the West when the Empire ceased to exist, and was replaced by barbarian kingdoms. This interest is hardly surprising, given that cities were the political, social, cultural, economic, and religious centres of the Roman world. Broadly speaking, historians have been inclined to discuss urban change either in terms of decline or deterioration, or in more neutral terms of transformation or transition. Interpretations of the former type frequently emphasise, amongst other things, the abandonment of the aesthetic and monumental ideals of the classical city, and the disintegration of traditional civic munificence and municipal administration.[1] Analyses in the latter category, meanwhile, are usually value-neutral, making room for concurrent changes that tend in different directions, and allowing the evidence to speak for itself.[2] In some cases, however, discussions of 'transformation' explicitly aim to minimise evidence of decline, usually by accentuating the regenerative effects on cities of the process of Christianisation.[3]

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[1] J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 5-7, p. 29; J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, 'The End of the Ancient City', in J. Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity* (London, 1992), pp. 1-22; A. H. M. Jones, *The Roman Economy: Studies in Ancient Economic and Administrative History* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 16-18; B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Building in Northern and Central Italy* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 14-24.

[2] N. Christie and S. T. Loseby (eds.), *Towns in Transition: Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1996); S. T. Loseby, 'Decline and Change in the Cities of Late Antique Gaul', in J. –U. Krause and C. Witschel (eds), *Die Stadt in der Spätantike – Niedergang oder Wandel* (Stuttgart, 2006), p. 73, pp. 83-4, p. 93; C. Witschel, 'Trier und das spätantike Städtewesen im Westen des römischen Reiches', *Trierer Zeitschrift* 67/8 (2004-5), pp. 223-4.

[3] J. Harries, 'Christianity and the City in Late Roman Gaul', in Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity*, pp. 80-1, p. 89; N. Gauthier, 'From the Ancient City to the Medieval Town: Continuity and Change in the Early Middle Ages', in K. Mitchell and I. Wood (eds), *The World of Gregory of Tours*, (Leiden, 2002), p. 51; C. La Rocca, 'Public Buildings and Urban Change in Northern Italy in the Early Mediaeval Period', in Rich (ed.), *The City in Late Antiquity*, pp. 161-3.

The aim of this thesis is to offer a new perspective on late antique urban change in arguably the two most important cities of the Empire's Rhineland provinces: Trier and Cologne. It is hoped that this will be achieved through a systematic, comparative study of the cities' political circumstances, their roles as Christian centres, and the topographical developments they experienced over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries. At first, our focus will need to be fairly broad, as we seek to understand how and why the cities' political circumstances – that is, their roles and significance within the imperial system and in the aftermath of its collapse – changed. This insight into the cities' political situations will establish the framework through which we can better understand the themes addressed in the subsequent two chapters. In the first of these, we will deal with the issues of how Trier and Cologne became Christianised, and how, in developing these Christian environments and communities, the cities not only tapped into developments taking place on an Empire-wide basis, but also developed new reasons for their importance on a more local level. In the third and final chapter, the focus will narrow to the built environments of the cities themselves, and we will concern ourselves primarily with the archaeological evidence, which reveals how the very structural fabric of Trier and Cologne was affected by the political changes they experienced.

It is important to emphasise the limitations of this study, in terms of both its scope and its implications. This work does not purport to offer a definitive or all-inclusive account of late antique urban change in Trier and Cologne, since time and space constraints, together with the restrictions placed upon us by our evidence, mean that the focus here remains on two crucial centuries and three central themes, whilst other areas deserving of consideration, notably the theme of the economy and the period of the sixth century, have had to be largely excluded. Additionally, although the

developments in Trier and Cologne will be situated within the context of contemporary urban trends, the focus is firmly upon the urban centres, rather than the entire *civitates*, and, as such, the only extra-mural areas to which significant attention will be paid are the suburban graveyards immediately beyond the walls, within which some of the cities' earliest churches were built. Where rural sites – notably villas – are briefly discussed, it is with the aim of informing our understanding of what may have been happening within the city walls. Finally, the intention is certainly not to provide a comprehensive account of urban change in the Rhineland as a whole, and still less for the whole of Gaul, or the entire Western Roman Empire. As we shall see over the course of this thesis, urban change in Late Antiquity is far too complex an issue for such extrapolation to be possible.

The decision to concentrate this study upon the cities of Trier and Cologne derives primarily from their extremely important but very different roles within the imperial system, and from their geographical proximity to one another. Located in the vicinity of the Rhine frontier, both cities were situated at the Western Empire's geographical periphery, which became one of its foremost political centres for much of the fourth century. In addition to being the provincial capital of Belgica Prima, Trier was elevated to the status of a main imperial residence towards the end of the third century, following a series of crises that had threatened the Empire's hold over Gaul as a whole, and over the Rhineland in particular. Shortly thereafter, in the early fourth century, the city also became the seat of the Gallic praetorian prefect. It retained this political and administrative pre-eminence until close to the end of the fourth century, when both the imperial court and the praetorian prefecture were transferred elsewhere. Trier's geographical location was ideal for a city of such importance. It is situated in the Mosel valley, with the Eifel mountain range to its north and the Hunsrück plateau to its

south. As the crow flies, it is approximately seventy-five miles south of Cologne, so the distance between it and the Rhine frontier could be covered in a couple of days' march, but was still far enough away to protect the imperial household from immediate danger in the event of an unexpected invasion. The Mediterranean could also be easily reached from the city via the Mosel, Saône, and Rhône rivers, as well as the road network, providing the emperor with ease of access to his Empire's traditional heartlands. Cologne, meanwhile, was the capital of the province of Germania Secunda, but also owed its significance to its position right on the Empire's Rhine frontier, which ensured that it served as a crucial military centre with a key role in the Empire's defensive strategy. Its *Praetorium* may have been the main seat of the commander of the Rhine troops in the fourth century. Its location on the bank of the Rhine, around two hundred kilometres from the mouth of the river, also ensured that it held an important role in long-distance exchange via the North Sea, whilst its road and river connections to Trier facilitated the movement of personnel and information between the frontier, the interior of Gaul, and the Mediterranean. Trier and Cologne were, therefore, among the foremost cities of the later Roman Empire in the West, and for this reason alone would certainly warrant our attention. Moreover, we can reasonably assume that their respective roles in the imperial system in the fourth century ensured that they would have been significantly affected by the Empire's withdrawal from the Rhineland and its eventual collapse in the fifth century.

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Figure 1.0: Map of the Rhineland. Adapted from H. Ament, 'Die Franken in den Römerstädten der Rheinzone, in R. Kaiser (ed.), *Die Franken: Roms Erben und Wegbereiter Europas* (Mannheim, 1996), p. 130

An additional motive for the selection of Trier and Cologne for the purposes of this study is that, despite the cities' importance within the late Roman political system, they have received surprisingly little attention in modern English-speaking scholarship. Whereas Metz, which lies some ninety-five kilometres up the River Mosel from Trier, has been the subject of a fairly recent book by Halsall, the most important and most recent major work on Trier in English remains Wightman's *Roman Trier and the*

Treveri, published in 1970.[4] Cologne, meanwhile, has been discussed at some length by Carroll, but the focus of her analysis remained squarely upon the period from the city's foundation in the first century AD until the Empire's heyday in the German provinces in the early fourth century, and she therefore devoted comparatively little space to the transitional period of the later fourth and fifth centuries.[5] Aside from these works, Trier and Cologne tend to crop up only in studies of broader chronological and thematic scope, in which they appear as two cities among many, and are discussed at no great length.[6] All of this is not to say, however, that the cities are under-researched in general terms, since, predictably, both of them have been the subjects of more concerted and thoroughgoing research efforts by German historians and archaeologists. Of the numerous major works one could name, Anton's *Trier im frühen Mittelalter*, Heinen's *Trier und das Trevererland*, Eck's *Köln in römischer Zeit*, and Steuer's *Die Franken in Köln* deserve to be regarded as particularly important syntheses.[7] These authoritative single-city monographs are complemented by very many regional studies, in which Trier and Cologne feature prominently.[8] Innumerable other valuable books and articles have also appeared, and are referred to throughout this thesis, which have as their subject matter one theme, or one specific research question, relating to one or both of

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[4]G. Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organisation: The Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge, 1995); E. M. Wightman, *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (London, 1970).

[5]M. Carroll, *Romans, Celts and Germans: The German Provinces of Rome* (Stroud, 2001).

[6]The best recent example is probably C. Wickham's *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005). There are, however, innumerable other examples.

[7]H. H. Anton, *Trier im frühen Mittelalter* (Paderborn, 1987); H. Heinen, *Trier und das Trevererland in römischer Zeit: 2000 Jahre Trier, Band I* (Trier, 1985); W. Eck, *Köln in römischer Zeit: Geschichte einer Stadt im Rahmen des Imperium Romanum* (Cologne, 2004); H. Steuer, *Die Franken in Köln* (Cologne, 1980).

[8]For example: E. M. Wightman, *Gallia Belgica* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985); T. Bechert, *Römisches Germanien zwischen Rhein und Maas, die Provinz Germania Inferior* (Munich, 1982); C. Brühl, *Palatium und Civitas: Studien zur Profantopographie spätantiker Civitates vom 3. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert. Band II: Belgica I, beide Germanien und Raetia II* (Cologne, 1990); H. Cüppers (ed.), *Die Römer in Rheinland-Pfalz* (Stuttgart, 1990); H. Cüppers et al (eds), *Die Römer an Mosel und Saar* (Mainz, 1983); E. Ewig, *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien* (Munich, 3 vols, 1976-9); T. Grünewald (ed.), *Germania Inferior: Besiedlung, Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft an der Grenze der römisch-germanischen Welt* (Berlin, 2001); H. von Petrikovits, *Rheinische Geschichte* I (Düsseldorf, 1978); H. G. Horn (ed.), *Die Römer in Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Stuttgart, 1987).

the cities. Nonetheless, as far as I am aware, no study exists, in any language, in which a systematic and rigorous effort has been undertaken to analyse and compare the changes that took place in Trier and Cologne, and these two cities alone, in Late Antiquity. Where the cities are discussed in conjunction, it is in the context of studies of wider geographical or thematic scope, whilst direct comparisons involving either city usually involve Trier, and are made with other cities that also served as imperial capitals.[9]

There are, nevertheless, various reasons to believe that a comparative study of Trier and Cologne may enhance and refine our understanding of how the cities changed in Late Antiquity. In the first place, by comparing only two cities, rather than attempting a wider-ranging study, we have time and space available to do justice to the complexities of urban change, and to explore each of our chosen themes, in each city, in considerable detail. We can come to reasoned conclusions that take account of local peculiarities as well as overall trends, and can avoid the pitfalls of trying to create a one-size-fits-all narrative.[10] We can take the trouble to discuss quite specific, but nonetheless important, research questions, which inevitably have to be overlooked completely or at best touched upon in passing in studies of broader scope. Additionally, we can eschew the temptation to view political, religious, and topographical changes predominantly from the viewpoint of the central imperial authorities, and can instead attempt to understand how the changes really affected the inhabitants of the cities themselves. On the other hand, by implementing a comparative approach, rather than concentrating all of our efforts solely upon one city, we are able to maintain a clear sense of regional context, which is often lost in single-city monographs. This context is essential, if we

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[9]E. Bolognesi and R. Franceschini, 'Der Kaiserliche Bezirk in Trier und die vergleichenden Aspekte mit dem Kaiserpalast in Konstantinopel', in M. König (ed.), *Palatia: Kaiserpaläste in Konstantinopel, Ravenna und Trier* (Trier, 2003), pp. 123-9; E. Riemer, 'Konstantinopel – Ravenna – Trier', in König (ed.), *Palatia*, pp. 13-26; R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (Berkeley, 1983), p. 18, p. 45.
[10]The importance of this has been recognised in recent scholarship. See, in particular: A. S. Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West, AD 200-500: An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 149.

are fully to appreciate the magnitude and significance of any specific changes we are able to uncover. Finally, the incentive to adopt a comparative approach also derives from the fact that Trier and Cologne lend themselves particularly well to it. The cities are sufficiently alike, thanks to their geographical proximity to one another and their analogous roles as provincial capitals, for such comparison to be meaningful, and for us not to be comparing chalk with cheese. Equally, however, they are adequately dissimilar, owing to their individual roles within the Empire's overall administrative and defensive strategy in the fourth century, for points of similarity to be suggestive of wider patterns, but for us also to be able to discover notable and important differences in the changes they experienced.

Before we proceed, it remains to explain the rationale behind the choice of themes addressed in this thesis. The theme of political change, examined in Chapter One, is of central importance, since the cities' political circumstances can be seen to have underpinned the developments in other spheres, discussed in Chapters Two and Three. In order to understand why the cities' Christian communities and townscapes changed at the rates they did and in the ways they did, we must first reconstruct the political context that influenced their development. However, political change is also an essential analytical problem in its own right, since a number of questions concerning the political developments experienced by Trier, Cologne, and the Rhineland more generally over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries have not yet been satisfactorily answered. These include, but are not limited to, questions of why the Empire withdrew from the region, and why barbarian groups attacked the frontier provinces. Attempting to address these questions whilst seeking to understand the changing political circumstances of arguably the region's two most important cities amounts to a novel approach, which, it is hoped, will prove revealing.

With regard to the theme of Christianisation, one reason for its selection is simply pragmatic. Many of our surviving sources relating to fourth- and fifth-century Trier and Cologne were written from a Christian perspective and refer to bishops of the cities, whilst the sites of churches are amongst the most extensively and thoroughly excavated areas of the two cities, and numerous epitaphs of deceased Christians shed light on otherwise anonymous members of their urban communities. As such, the religion provides a particularly visible means of assessing the extent of urban change and continuity in the fourth and fifth centuries. Moreover, historians' assertions that cities retained their importance following the collapse of the Empire, even as their built environments were transformed, often hinge upon evidence for the growth of Christianity. It is, therefore, imperative that we discuss this theme, if we are to engage in any consequential way with the long-standing question of how to understand urban evolution in Late Antiquity.

Finally, the theme of topographical change will, as aforementioned, serve to narrow our focus, firmly situating our discussion, in its closing stages, around the cities of Trier and Cologne. Thanks to the extensive use of archaeological evidence, we will be able to go beyond the rhetoric of our textual sources, to understand how the townscapes altered in physical terms, and how far Trier and Cologne continued to be functioning urban environments in the fifth century. In addressing this theme, moreover, we can gain at least some insight into a variety of aspects of city life, which we have neither time nor space to discuss in greater detail. By investigating the cities' fora, for example, which served as marketplaces and seats of local government, we can acquire some understanding of how the cities' economies and municipal administrations fared. Consideration of their bathing complexes, meanwhile, will help us to establish how far the cities remained social and cultural centres. By exploring residential areas, we can

determine what sorts of people inhabited the cities, and how the size and composition of the cities' populations may have been affected by the political changes they experienced.

Let us begin, however, with these political changes themselves, and with the thorny yet important issues of how and why Trier and Cologne lost their centrality within the imperial political system, and what caused the Roman Empire in the Rhineland to collapse.