

Chapter 2

Continuity and change in Trier and Cologne: Christianity and Christianisation

Introduction

In Chapter One, we saw how imperial withdrawal from the Rhineland in the late fourth and early fifth centuries paved the way for a series of barbarian incursions, which, to judge by Salvian of Marseilles' *On the Government of God*, had devastating effects for Trier and Cologne. The cities were perhaps also directly affected by the invasions of 406 and 451. However, Salvian's account was intended to be a commentary on what he perceived to be deteriorating Christian morality, and, as such, is notoriously problematic. In order to understand how the cities were really affected by the barbarian attacks in the short- and long-term, therefore, we must seek to look beyond his account and to test his claims. Charting the development of the cities' Christian communities is one particularly promising way in which we might try to achieve this, since the Christian Church's importance as a social institution from as early as the fourth century in both Trier and Cologne makes it a meaningful barometer for assessing how other, less visible, aspects of city life may have been affected by the turbulent decades of the first half of the fifth century.

Understanding how the Christian communities of Trier and Cologne were affected by the political upheaval of the fifth century is also highly relevant to the prominent and vociferous debate with which this thesis began, concerning whether cities should generally be said to have declined or been transformed in Late Antiquity. Whilst the failure to maintain and repair monumental public buildings and the decline of civic administration are frequently deemed good reasons to believe that cities were in

decline in the fifth century,¹ the increasing influence of the Christian bishop and the construction of churches are seen by many as indications of the continued vitality of urban life in a transformed environment.² Although it is now widely accepted that aspects of urban decline and transformation took place concurrently, it is clear that there was no consistent pattern of change, and the extent to which the Church was able to offer a form of continuity, and how it managed to do so, could vary significantly from city to city.³ Trier and Cologne provide a particularly good opportunity for comparison of two cities' experiences, since, in addition to their geographical proximity, both cities are known to have had Christian communities with bishops and churches by the fourth century, and both suffered from repeated barbarian raids in the first half of the fifth century. Their differences in terms of size, composition of population, and political function in the fourth century, meanwhile, may provide some indications of the circumstances under which the Christian community was best able to endure and to help the cities to continue and adapt.

In addition to its relevance to these important historical and historiographical issues, however, the focusing of our attention on the development of Christianity in Trier and Cologne is also pragmatic. All of the textual sources of fifth- and sixth-century date containing information about Trier or Cologne were written from a Christian perspective, whilst many sites of late antique Christian churches in both cities have been extensively excavated. In addition, epigraphic evidence, including over a thousand early Christian inscriptions from Trier, provides some insight into the mind-sets of individuals living in the cities, about whom we would otherwise know nothing.

¹Liebeschuetz, *Decline*, pp. 5-7, 29; Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity*, pp. 14-24, 35, 38-9.

²P. R. L. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 74, 78; Gauthier, 'From the ancient city', p. 51; Harries, 'Christianity and the city', pp. 77-80.

³Loseby, 'Decline and change', p. 93; Witschel, 'Trier', p. 223; Liebeschuetz, *Decline*, p. 415, despite the stance he expressed in the title of his book.

Nonetheless, this evidence is not without its limitations. For the fourth century, a relatively substantial corpus of textual, archaeological and epigraphic evidence exists, but, as we shall see, the individual snippets of information are difficult to knit together to create a meaningful overall impression. Bishops of Trier and Cologne, for example, only appear in our textual sources in reference to their involvement in wider ecclesiastical affairs, which does not help us to understand their role in their local communities, and in particular in the construction of churches, for which we have only archaeological evidence. For the fifth century, meanwhile, there are hardly any sources to work with: not a single bishop of Cologne is known, whilst those of Trier crop up only occasionally; excavations have failed to find evidence of building works at the cities' late antique churches that is conclusively dateable to this period; and there was a marked decline in the production of funerary inscriptions. This limited volume of fifth-century evidence means that we lack sufficient contextual information to confidently interpret the few sources we do have at our disposal, and, in order to overcome this difficulty, it will be necessary to extend the scope of our study beyond its usual chronological parameters, and on into the sixth century.

2.1 The rise, fall, and resurrection of the late antique bishop

One obvious way in which the growth of Christianity manifested itself was in the proliferation of bishops in the Empire's cities. The period immediately following Constantine's conversion was crucial for this development, since it was through the emperor's favour that Christianity grew at an unprecedented rate and the episcopal

office began to be seen as prestigious, attracting men from the curial class.⁴ By the end of the fourth century, many cities had their own bishop, whose authority was upheld by an extensive ecclesiastical infrastructure based on that of the secular administration, and who participated regularly in Church councils to resolve organisational and doctrinal issues, in which the emperors were frequently involved.⁵ In his city, the bishop achieved a social standing comparable to that of leading secular elites, but also possessed the unparalleled spiritual primacy that came with his post. In practical terms, this made him a prominent local patron, with the means and the opportunity to finance building projects, offer charity, and provide not only spiritual but also more generalised social leadership and guidance.⁶ As Brown has noted, ‘the Christian bishop and his clergy claimed an ever-increasing share in the exercise of authority in the city’.⁷

The bishop’s rapid ascent to the pinnacle of his city’s social hierarchy has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, and has given rise to its own historiographical discourse. This discourse emphasises, in the first place, the importance of the bishop as an increasingly authoritative figure in secular as well as religious matters, and as a bearer of continuity into the post-Roman period. Rapp, for example, reports that although the bishop’s authority always consisted of spiritual, ascetic and pragmatic elements, his pragmatic authority came to dominate by the fifth century, such that he could be involved in organising funding for the construction of walls, prisons, granaries or aqueducts as well as churches.⁸ Lizzi Testa, for her part, argues that in the

⁴C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2005), p. 183; R. Lizzi Testa, ‘The Late Antique Bishop: Image and Reality’, in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 526-7; P. Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries* (Harlow, 2002), p. 188; R. Van Dam, ‘Bishops and Society’, in A. Casiday and F. W. Norris (eds), *Cambridge History of Christianity* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 343.

⁵W. Löhr, ‘Western Christianities’, in Casiday and Norris (eds), *Cambridge History of Christianity*, p. 30; Van Dam, ‘Bishops and Society’, pp. 343-4.

⁶Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, p. 221; Van Dam, ‘Bishops and Society’, p. 343-4.

⁷P. R. L. Brown, *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 77.

⁸Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, p. 222.

fifth and sixth centuries in regions including Gaul, bishops had significantly more resources at their disposal than even the wealthiest of secular elites, and duties that far exceeded their spiritual mandate; as *primores* under the first barbarian kings, they assumed responsibility for political functions ranging from negotiating with military leaders to ransoming prisoners and securing tax remissions for their city.⁹ Additionally, the discourse of the rise of the late antique bishop suggests that the growing significance of the episcopal office was connected with, and in some measure assisted by, the Empire's failures. Van Dam, for instance, wonders whether the 'failure of cities' and the erosion of the curial class, caused by local notables entering central imperial service or evading their duties, may have reduced the incumbent bishop's competition for local authority. Indeed, he asserts that the decurions' willingness to abandon their traditional duties to themselves become bishops may have stimulated the erosion of the classical city.¹⁰

The difficulties with this discourse are the amount of emphasis it places on the bishop as the central figure in facilitating urban continuity, and the insufficient volume of evidence put forward in its support from those cities most affected by the Empire's failures, where we might expect the bishop's leadership to have been most important. In light of these difficulties, Trier and Cologne are particularly good prospects for testing its validity. Both cities fulfil the necessary precondition of having an established episcopal see with identifiable bishops in the fourth century, whilst the presence of the imperial court in the region gives us some insight into the nature of the interaction between imperial and episcopal authority at that time. In the fifth century, both cities were particularly badly shaken by the Empire's withdrawal from the Rhineland and the

⁹Lizzi Testa, 'The Late Antique Bishop', p. 536.

¹⁰Van Dam, 'Bishops and Society', p. 349.

subsequent barbarian attacks; a context in which, according to the conventional discourse, we might expect the bishop to come to the fore.

First and foremost, the consistency of occupation of the episcopal sees of Trier and Cologne must be established, since any lengthy periods in which either city was without a bishop would present a serious challenge to the familiar narrative of ‘the rise of the bishop’. For both Trier and Cologne, bishop-lists produced in the high Middle Ages provide the most useful starting point for identifying the individuals who held the episcopal office, especially since most of the bishops named in the lists can be confirmed using late antique texts. It is not clear whether the compilers of these *Fasti* had access to earlier lists that are no longer extant, or drew them up for the first time in the later medieval period from late antique documents, but their general validity is clear. There are nine such lists for Trier, the earliest of which is tenth-century. Six of the lists coincide almost completely in their sequence of names, notwithstanding minor deviations in spelling, whilst a seventh list is similar but considerably less complete. The remaining two lists differ from the rest, in that they seek to push the first three bishops back to the apostolic period, in support of a medieval legend that these bishops were sent to Trier by St Peter, filling the gap they thereby create in the list with duplicates of known bishops’ names or other invented names. For the later third to fifth centuries, the episcopal succession supplied by the lists is as follows: Eucharius (after 250), Valerius (after 250), Maternus (c. 300), Agricius (c. 314-329), Maximinus (c. 329-346), Paulinus (c. 347-358), Bonosus (c. 358-373), Britto (c. 374-386), Felix (c. 386-399), Mauricius (c. 399-407), Leontius (c.414-445), Severus (c. 449), Cyrillus (c.

450/458), Jamblychus (c. 475), Emerus, Marus, Volusianus, Miletus, Modestus (all dated to pre-500), and Maximianus (c. 502).¹¹

The only potentially dubious entry in this succession is Maternus, the third-named bishop. Doubts about him arise because both Trier and Cologne claim a bishop of that name in the early fourth century, which is a curious coincidence, and because only Cologne's Maternus is firmly evidenced. Furthermore, local tradition holds that Trier's Maternus was buried alongside his predecessors, Eucharius and Valerius, yet there is no mention of him in the fifth-century inscription which adorned their tomb, which is peculiar.¹² Since Maternus of Cologne attended the Council of Arles of 314 with Agricinus of Trier, who is listed as Maternus of Trier's successor, the Trier Maternus would have to have held office at a slightly earlier date than his Cologne namesake.¹³ There seem to be four possible explanations for Maternus' incorporation into Trier's episcopal succession, some more plausible than others: first, Trier's Maternus might not have existed and his name in the bishop-lists may be a duplicate of the eponymous first bishop of Cologne; second, both cities did indeed have a bishop named Maternus, and the fact that they were namesakes is either coincidental or because they were related; third, Trier might never have had its own bishop Maternus but there

¹¹*Series Archiepiscoporum Treverensium*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH SS XIII* (Hannover, 1881), pp. 296-301; L. Duchesne, *Fastes Episcopaux de l'ancienne Gaule III* (Paris, 1915), pp. 30-44. The dates provided in parentheses are, of course, not derived from the lists, but have been established on the basis of surviving late antique material and are provided here for information. For a particularly good overview of the episcopates of these bishops, see Gauthier, *L'évangélisation*, pp. 43-81 and 128-36.

¹²Doubts are raised by: H. Heinen, *Frühchristliches Trier: Von den Anfängen bis zur Völkerwanderung* (Trier, 1996), pp. 54-6; A. Binsfeld, 'Das Bistum Trier von den Anfängen bis zum Ende der Römerzeit (3. – 5. Jahrhundert)', in H. Heinen et al (eds), *Im Umbruch der Kulturen: Spätantike und Frühmittelalter. Geschichte des Bistums Trier, Band I* (Trier, 2003), pp. 32-4. The tradition has been given some scholarly credence in the past, notably by: R. Schindler, 'Trier im merowingischer Zeit', in H. Jankuhn et al (eds), *Vor- und Frühformen der Europäischen Stadt im Mittelalter I: Bericht über ein Symposium in Rheinhausen bei Göttingen vom 18. bis 24. April 1972* (Göttingen, 1973), p. 145; W. Neuss and F. –W. Ödiger, *Das Bistum Köln von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne, 1964), pp. 38-9. For the inscription, see N. Gauthier and H. Marrou (eds.), *RICG I* (Paris, 1975), no. 19, pp. 146-9. The relevant section of the inscription reads: 'Eucharium loquitur Valeriumque simul'. For a fuller discussion of the inscription, see below, pp. 150-1.

¹³*Concilia Arelatense*, in *Concilia Galliae*, *CCSL* 148, p. 15.

might have been some connection, familial or otherwise, between Maternus of Cologne and the city of Trier; or, finally, Maternus of Trier and Maternus of Cologne might have been one and the same person, who transferred from one see to the other.

The first of these possibilities, that the name Maternus was deliberately incorporated into the *Fasti* by the compilers to fill the only hiatus in an otherwise complete succession, is arguably the most plausible. We can see something similar in those Trier lists that attempt to push Eucharius, Valerius and Maternus back to the apostolic period; genuine bishops' names are inserted alongside fabricated names to fill out the gap that this created between Maternus and his historically-evidenced fourth-century successor, Agricius.¹⁴ If this is indeed what happened, however, Bishop Maternus was invented and became part of local tradition long before the lists were compiled, since he is mentioned as bishop of Trier in a *Vita* of Maximinus dated to the second half of the eighth century, written by a monk of St Maximinus' abbey at Trier.¹⁵ The second explanation, that both cities really did have a bishop named Maternus, is not wholly implausible, since it was only in the Middle Ages that sources would begin to claim they were one and the same person, and it is conceivable that one family could have monopolised the episcopal sees in the region.¹⁶ The third possibility, that Trier never had a bishop named Maternus, but that Maternus of Cologne was somehow associated with Trier, whether through family ties or his tomb or relics being preserved there, is similarly credible, since one can envisage how this situation could have led to the mistaken assumption that he was a bishop of Trier. Even if this were the case, however, it is unlikely that the local tradition that claims he was buried alongside

¹⁴*Series Archiepiscoporum Treverensium*, p. 301.

¹⁵The text was revised in the following century by Lupus of Ferrières: *Vita Maximini Episcopi Trevirensis*, *MGH SSRM* III, 11, p. 79. For Maternus' own *Vita*: *Vita SS. Eucharii, Valerii et Materni*, *AA SS Ian.* II (Antwerp, 1643), pp. 918-22.

¹⁶F. W. Ödiger, *Die Regesten der Erzbischöfen von Köln im Mittelalter* (Bonn, 1954), p. 1.

Eucharius and Valerius is reliable, since, as we have seen, he is not mentioned in their epitaph.¹⁷ The final possible explanation, that Maternus was indeed bishop of Trier before transferring to Cologne, is least convincing.¹⁸ In the first place, although bishops did occasionally move to other sees, this generally occurred only in exceptional circumstances, and they were ordinarily expected to remain faithful to the see in which they were first ordained: ‘a see was a bishop’s wife’.¹⁹ Furthermore, given the prestige of office-holding in the imperial residence of Trier, it is difficult to see why Maternus would have wanted to transfer to Cologne. Nor can he have been pushed out of Trier in favour of a more prestigious candidate, since Maternus of Cologne was a person of some standing, who had close connections with Constantine.²⁰ On balance, therefore, the existence of a Bishop Maternus of Trier cannot be ruled out, but it seems most likely that he was a fabrication of the medieval period, designed to bridge the only gap in the city’s known episcopal succession. The circumstances that led the compilers of the *Fasti* to invent him need not concern us here, since the explanation probably lies in events occurring in the tenth and eleventh centuries. However, the fact that Maternus is the *only* name we have reason to doubt is important. Trier otherwise has a complete episcopal succession throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, with many of the names contained within the bishop-lists affirmed by independent sources.

In contrast to Trier’s apparently complete episcopal succession throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, Cologne’s *Fasti*, the earliest of which were produced in the eleventh century, name only three fourth-century bishops: Maternus (c. 314), Euphrates

¹⁷*RICG* I, no. 19, p. 146-9. As quoted above, the relevant section of the inscription simply reads: ‘*Eucharium loquitur Valeriumque simul*’.

¹⁸Although this is what is suggested by Duchesne, *Fastes* III, p. 34.

¹⁹Van Dam, ‘Bishops and Society’, p. 353.

²⁰For a fuller discussion of Maternus’ imperial connections, see below, p. 126.

(c. 343-346), and Severinus (c. 397).²¹ This means that even if the earliest three names in the Trier lists are discounted, leaving only the bishops of certain fourth-century date, the Trier lists still contain twice as many names as those of Cologne. It is extremely unlikely that the episcopates of Maternus, Euphrates, and Severinus could have covered the entire century, even if all three of them were unusually long-lived, so it seems that Cologne either had genuine hiatuses in its fourth-century episcopal succession, or that information about all but three bishops was lost before the lists were compiled. The latter appears the more plausible explanation, since Cologne was a flourishing provincial capital in the fourth century, and once its episcopate had been established, it seems unlikely that it could have fallen vacant for lengthy periods. The social standing of those bishops who are known supports this interpretation, since the first two were personal acquaintances of the emperors, and it is difficult to believe that Cologne fluctuated repeatedly between having bishops of this eminence, and having no bishops at all.²² Quite why all information of the other bishops came to be lost is, of course, unknowable, but it is tempting to point to the tumult of the fifth-century invasions and incursions as one plausible context. In any case, it appears that by the point when the first Cologne bishop-list was compiled, only the fourth-century bishops who appear prominently in earlier sources were remembered, whilst the existence of other bishops who held office between the episcopates of Maternus, Euphrates, and Severinus were forgotten.

A more worrisome hiatus in Cologne's *Fasti* follows Severinus' name, since his successor is given as Ebregisel, who was a contemporary of Gregory of Tours,

²¹*Series Archiepiscoporum Coloniensium*, MGH SS XIII, pp. 282-7; Duchesne, *Fastes* III, pp. 175-84. Such sparsely populated bishop-lists are not unusual for northern Gaul, and especially not for the Germanic provinces; only two bishops are named in the Mainz lists for the period of the fourth and fifth centuries: Duchesne, *Fastes* III, pp. 153-61.

²²See below, p. 126.

demonstrating that the compilers did not know of a single bishop of Cologne who held office between the end of the fourth century and the late sixth century. This may simply be an evidential issue, since we have seen in Chapter One how the survival of fifth-century sources concerning the Rhineland is decidedly patchy. Nonetheless, for this far lengthier period, we must consider much more carefully whether we are perhaps dealing with a genuine abandonment of the episcopal see, rather than merely a further loss of information. If the former can be shown to be more probable, this may suggest that the barbarian incursions had destroyed social structures in Cologne to an extent that they did not in Trier, and this would fundamentally undermine not only the discourse of the rise of the bishop in Cologne, but also the likelihood of continuity of urban life in the city in the fifth century.

Only one piece of evidence exists to suggest that the hiatus in the lists may not correspond to a genuine and longstanding absence of episcopal leadership. This takes the form of a poem written by Venantius Fortunatus, in which he praises an otherwise unknown bishop of Cologne, Carentinus. He is very likely to be the direct predecessor of Bishop Ebregeisel, with whom the bishop-lists recommence, since Fortunatus only arrived in Gaul around 566 and so cannot have befriended Carentinus before this date.²³ The omission of Bishop Carentinus from his city's *Fasti* reveals a conspicuous lack of thorough research by the compilers, since Fortunatus' work was known to and esteemed by the Carolingians, whilst the poem's title, *On the Bishop Carentinus of Cologne*, makes its relevance to Cologne's episcopal succession explicitly clear.²⁴ It may be that this lack of research compounded the obvious failure to hold certain bishops in the

²³Venantius Fortunatus, *De Pontifice Carentino Coloniae*, in *Opera Poetica*, ed. F. Leo, *MGH AA IV*, 1 (Hannover, 1881), p. 67.

²⁴Venantius was a source of inspiration to important Carolingian literary figures, including Paul the Deacon and Alcuin, both of whom explicitly praised his work within their own writings: P. Godman, *Poets and Emperors: Frankish Politics and Carolingian Poetry* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 1-39.

city's collective memory and ensured that some bishops were permanently forgotten, leading to a misleading record of the degree of occupation of the episcopal see in the fifth and sixth centuries.

On the other hand, the compilers' failure to carry out even fairly basic research is puzzling, and we have to wonder why they felt it to be unnecessary. We can be fairly confident that it was not because they had a late antique list to work from, since such a list would either have been so short as to be barely worth keeping if it featured only the bishops we know of, or else would have preserved the names of the forgotten fourth-century bishops for inclusion in the new list. We can also dismiss a suggestion made by Ewig that Cologne's unknown bishops were frequently drawn from the local Roman middle class and were therefore not deemed prestigious enough to be worthy of remembrance, and that the reappearance of identifiable holders of the see thus occurred when Frankish kings came to hold episcopal office in high regard, and to fill the role with men of greater social prestige.²⁵ This hypothesis is not only arbitrary, but is also contradicted by the list Gregory provides of the past bishops of Tours, which includes Bishop Injurius, who 'came from a poor family'.²⁶ The most logical explanation, therefore, is that the compilers of the list did not carry out thorough research because they knew very well that the see had been abandoned in the fifth and sixth centuries, and thus they did not expect to find any more bishops than those whom they included. If this were the case, and especially if it were common knowledge, it would explain not only the overlooking of Carentinus, but also why the compilers of the Cologne lists did

²⁵E. Ewig, 'Das Bistum in Köln im Frühmittelalter', in Ewig (ed.), *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien*, p. 94.

²⁶Gregory of Tours, *History*, X, 31, p. 533.

not show the same concern as their counterparts in, for example, Trier and Metz for presenting an unbroken episcopal succession.²⁷

On balance, therefore, despite the doubts his omission casts over the completeness of his city's bishop-lists, it would be wise to avoid reading too much into the existence of the neglected Bishop Carentinus. Although he is proof that Cologne was not without a bishop for quite as long as the *Fasti* indicate, the dating of his episcopate to soon before that of Ebregisel suggests that, rather than Carentinus being indicative of a series of forgotten bishops, the compilers of the lists were merely mistaken in their understanding of when and with whom the re-establishment of the episcopal office occurred. Carentinus was most likely one of the first holders of the newly re-established office, which had previously been abandoned for around a century and a half. The period of abandonment of the see means that, insofar as Cologne is concerned, the discourse of the rise of the bishop simply cannot explain any indications of urban continuity in the fifth century, nor can an interpretation of urban transformation be built around the growing social influence of the Church. The abandonment itself, meanwhile, may be a symptom of the upheaval caused by the barbarian attacks of the fifth century, and may indicate that Salvian's account of extreme disruption was closer to the mark in Cologne than in Trier.

Even in Trier, the probable presence of bishops throughout the fifth century tells us nothing of their importance, and merely means that the potential exists for us to test the relevance of the interpretations of episcopal power provided by Rapp, Lizzi Testa and others. One important way in which we might put these interpretations to the test is by exploring the dynamics of the relationships between the bishops of both Trier and

²⁷ *Catalogi Episcoporum Mettensium*, MGH SS XIII, pp. 303-307; Duchesne, *Fastes* III, pp. 44-58. No dates are provided for the episcopates, but the list is well-populated with names, many of which are not evidenced in contemporary sources.

Cologne and the secular rulers, to understand how the bishops' authority was affected by changes in their cities' political leadership, and what connection existed between the bishops' power and the Empire's failures. In order to achieve this, it will be necessary to extend our survey beyond our usual fourth- and fifth-century timeframe, and to consider events and individuals of the sixth century. This can provide crucial contextual evidence regarding the ongoing process of Christianisation in Trier and Cologne, and will help to inform our understanding of the fifth century, from which relatively few sources survive.

The evidence from Trier suggests that in the fourth century, the extra-regional standing of the cities' bishops, and whether or not they were later remembered, was dependent both on the individual bishop's ability to gain access to the emperor, and on the involvement of that emperor in church affairs in which the bishop might also become involved. To quote Wightman: 'if a few bishops of Trier emerge from the shadows, it is because of the imperial court and their involvement in questions concerning heresy'.²⁸ This connection is particularly clear with regard to the city's pre-eminent bishops, Maximinus (c. 329-346), and Paulinus (c. 347-358). Maximinus is known to have been personally acquainted with the Emperor Constans, since Athanasius of Alexandria explained in his *Apologia ad Constantium* that he had never met Constans alone, but rather was introduced to him by bishops in various cities, including Maximinus in Trier.²⁹ Constans' residence in Trier clearly gave Maximinus regular, direct access to him, whilst Athanasius probably came to Trier to seek the emperor's support, having been exiled by Constans' brother Constantius for his uncompromising opposition to Arianism. Maximinus is elsewhere confirmed to have

²⁸Wightman, *Belgica*, p. 289.

²⁹Athanasius of Alexandria, *Apologia ad Constantium*, 3, in *Select Works and Letters*, ed. and trans. A Robertson, *NPNF* series II, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971), p. 239.

been a bishop who was held in considerable regard; Jerome described him as such in his chronicle, and stated that he received the visiting Athanasius honourably.³⁰ Maximinus' successor, Paulinus (c. 347-358), is similarly known as a supporter of Athanasius, the two presumably having met whilst Athanasius was in exile in Trier. Through this friendship, Paulinus likewise became embroiled in the Arian controversy, and was himself exiled as a result of his refusal to support the condemnation of Athanasius at the council of Arles in 353.³¹ Paulinus' involvement in this wider controversy obviously ended badly for him in his lifetime, since he died whilst in exile in Phrygia, but his resultant renown and his staunchly orthodox position contributed to his posthumous veneration as a saint.³²

Bishop Felix (c. 386-399) is, however, by far our best example of a bishop of Trier being drawn into a major controversy by virtue of his city's imperial standing and his own imperial connections. This controversy began during the episcopate of Felix's predecessor, Britto, and concerned the fate of the ardently ascetic Spanish bishop, Priscillian, and his followers, who had been condemned as heretics.³³ The crucial moment came when, having appealed against the decision of the council of Bordeaux of 384, which deposed his fellow-bishop and supporter Instantius, Priscillian and several of his companions were controversially beheaded in Trier in 385 under the authority of the usurper Magnus Maximus, despite the intervention of Martin of Tours, who came to

³⁰Jerome, *Chronicon*, Olympiad 280, 6, ed. R. Helm, *Eusebius Werke, Band VII: Die Chronik des Hieronymus. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte* (Berlin, 1956), p. 236.

³¹*Concilium Arelatense*, in *Concilia Galliae, CCSL 148*, p. 30; Athanasius of Alexandria, *Apologia de Fuga*, 4, in *Select Works and Letters, NPNF series II*, vol. 4, p. 256; Jerome, *Chronicon*, Olympiad 283, 17, p. 239.

³²*Epistula Marcellini et Faustini de confessione verae fidei*, 77, in *Collectio Avellana*, ed. O. Günther, CSEL 35, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1895), p. 28; Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History*, II, 45, in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins and John Cassian*, ed. and trans. A. Roberts, NPNF series II, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), p. 119; Jerome, *Chronicon*, Olympiad 284, 21, p. 241.

³³For an overview of the controversy and Trier's role within it, see: H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 111-69; Binsfeld, 'Das Bistum Trier', pp. 59-63.

Trier to plead Priscillian's case.³⁴ It must be emphasised that this controversy initially had nothing to do either with Trier or with its bishops; the fact that Priscillian came to Trier and met his fate there, and that Britto and Felix became embroiled in the controversy, derived solely from the city's status as an imperial capital. Maximus' willingness to participate in the controversy ensured that 'all whom the process [against Priscillian] embraced' were brought to Trier, and the controversy became focused within the city.³⁵ Under these circumstances, Britto and Felix could hardly have done anything but endorse the usurper's actions. However, this explicit endorsement was significantly to the detriment of Felix in particular, since it placed him in direct opposition to Pope Siricius, who argued forcefully that ecclesiastical matters should not be decided by secular authorities.³⁶ As bishop of the imperial capital of Trier, Felix's office made him a symbolic figurehead of the Gallic Church, and the individual with whom the split between the Church in Gaul and the Church in Rome came to be associated.³⁷ It is no coincidence that this dispute concerning the acceptability of secular involvement in Church matters has come to be known in secondary literature as the Felician controversy.³⁸

Conversely, it is interesting to note that those bishops whose episcopates coincided with the reigns of Valentinian and Gratian, who were often in Trier but were not drawn into major ecclesiastical controversies, are rarely mentioned in our late antique sources. Bonosus is known only from his inclusion in his city's bishop-lists, whilst his successor, Britto, is unattested during Gratian's reign, although he was still in

³⁴*Concilium Trevirense*, in *Concilia Galliae*, CCL 148, p. 46; Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History*, II, 46-51, pp. 119-22; Ambrose of Milan, *Letter XXX*, 12, in *Ambrosii Opera, pars Decima: Epistulae et Acta*, ed. O. Faller, CSEL 82, part 10 (Vienna, 1968), pp. 214-5.

³⁵Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History*, II, 50, p. 121.

³⁶In a letter written to Pope Siricius, Magnus Maximus revealed that the Pope had opposed the ordination of a presbyter named Agroecius, which had taken place at a council apparently convened by the usurper: *Epistula Maximi ad Siricium Papam*, 1-2, in *Collectio Avellana*, CSEL 35, I, p. 91.

³⁷Anton, *Trier*, pp. 80-1.

³⁸See, for example, Mathisen, *Factionalism*, p. 14.

office by the early 380s and therefore crops up in accounts of Priscillian's execution. Although they probably enjoyed considerable local prestige by virtue of their access to the emperors, the more limited wider renown of Bonosus and Britto during the reigns of Valentinian and Gratian confirms that the emperors' involvement in wider ecclesiastical affairs, rather than merely their presence, was of decisive importance in drawing the bishops of Trier into controversial matters.

The only exception to this pattern for Trier is Agricius (c. 314-329), who held office for much of Constantine's reign, yet features rarely in our sources and does not appear to have been drawn into the contemporary Donatist or Arian controversies any more than were other metropolitan bishops whose cities were not imperial capitals. On the basis of the later experiences of Maximinus, Paulinus, and Felix, this seems peculiar, especially since Constantine himself was very often resident in Trier until 316, and members of his family remained in the city thereafter. However, Agricius' marginal role in wider church affairs can probably be explained by the presence at Constantine's court of other more favoured ecclesiastical figures, such as Ossius of Córdoba, and the fact that Agricius was still relatively new to his office when Constantine ceased to reside in Trier on a regular basis. Agricius' circumstances therefore do not seriously undermine the pattern we have established, but they do emphasise the need for a more nuanced approach. It was evidently not the case that only three elements – the bishop himself, an emperor in Trier who was willing to engage in church affairs, and a controversy – were required for a bishop of Trier to come to the fore; the situation was far more complicated, and the other elements, including which other ecclesiastical figures were in the city, how long the bishop had been in post, and how well he got along with the emperor, could prove significant.

Although Cologne was not a regular imperial residence in the fourth century, the scant available evidence suggests a similar correlation existed there between the emperor's presence, the bishop's status, and their mutual involvement in church affairs. Cologne's first known bishop, Maternus (known from 313), was most likely the first incumbent of a newly-created see, since no tradition claiming any earlier bishops is known. His subsequent rise to prominence was extremely quick, and reveals the impact that access to the emperor could have on a local bishop's authority in an extra-regional context. Maternus was one of only three Gallic bishops called to Rome in 313 by the Emperor Constantine to take part in efforts to resolve the Donatist controversy, and was probably chosen as a result of having gained Constantine's favour.³⁹ The emperor's residence in Cologne in 310 probably provides the explanatory context for this summons, since although he had not converted to Christianity by the time of his visit to Cologne, his presence there would nonetheless have enabled him and Maternus to make one another's acquaintance. The next known bishop of Cologne, Euphrates, was similarly involved in Empire-wide issues in the mid-fourth century, attending the Council of Serdica in 343. It is not obvious how he came to establish his close relationship with the Emperor Constantius, but that he did so is clear; he was chosen to travel to Antioch to seek Constantius' acceptance of the Council's decision to restore the anti-Arian Athanasius of Alexandria and other bishops to their sees.⁴⁰

Clearly, then, various fourth-century bishops of both Trier and Cologne found themselves able to enter court circles, and, by virtue of their acquaintance with one of the resident emperors, became prominent figures in major ecclesiastical controversies

³⁹Optatus of Mileve, *Against the Donatists*, I, 23, ed. and trans. M. Edwards (Liverpool, 1997), p. 23; Eusebius, *Church History*, X, 5, 19, in *Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, ed. and trans. A. C. McGiffert, *NPNF* series II, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1952), p. 381.

⁴⁰Athanasius of Alexandria, *Historia Arianorum*, III, 20, in *Select Works and Letters*, *NPNF* series II, vol. 4, p. 276.

that had originated in distant parts of the Empire, and that initially had nothing to do either with them or with their city. Within their own city, meanwhile, their imperial connections would have provided considerable kudos, such that their social standing probably outstripped that of many secular aristocrats. On this basis, it certainly seems that the interpretation of burgeoning episcopal authority put forward by Rapp, Lizzi Testa, and Van Dam stands up to scrutiny. However, an important caveat must be added: the status of the bishops of Trier and Cologne appears to have depended less upon their own actions or initiatives, than upon their imperial connections, and the willingness of the resident emperor to participate in ecclesiastical controversies in which the bishop might also become involved. This ensured that some bishops were of lesser renown than others, and does not bode well for the persistence of the bishops' privileged standing in the fifth century, once the imperial authorities had withdrawn from the region and the bishops could no longer join the emperor's court. It is to this period that our attention must now turn.

Given that our information concerning the bishops of Trier and Cologne in the fourth century is predominantly derived from texts written outside the Rhineland, and that the bishops were mentioned in these texts because of their associations with the emperors and their involvement in extra-regional Church affairs, it is hardly surprising that we know relatively little, if anything, of the cities' fifth-century bishops. For Cologne, as we have seen, we have no textual sources, either contemporary or later, and no epigraphic evidence for any bishops of fifth-century or early sixth-century date.⁴¹ For Trier, meanwhile, the bishop-lists suggest consistent occupation of the episcopal see, although only one fifth-century bishop appears in our sources in the context of his relationship with his city's secular ruler. The bishop in question is Jamblychus (c. 475),

⁴¹See above, pp. 118-19.

who is mentioned in two letters discussed in the previous chapter, both written to Arbogast, who was *comes* in Trier in the 470s.⁴² The first of these letters was written by Auspicius of Toul, who praised Arbogast's government of Trier and his Christian belief, and encouraged him to bestow favour on Bishop Jamblychus.⁴³ The precise context for this letter is not made clear by its contents, although, as we have seen, it has echoes of the letter sent by Bishop Remigius of Reims to Clovis, and this might suggest a recent change in Arbogast's position, whether political or religious.⁴⁴ The second letter to make reference to Jamblychus, although not by name, was written to Arbogast by Sidonius Apollinaris, in reply to a letter Sidonius had received from the *comes* of Trier, asking for an exegesis of Christian texts. Sidonius tells Arbogast to make his request to Auspicius, Lupus of Troyes, and Arbogast's own bishop, who is not mentioned by name but, for reasons of chronology, must be Jamblychus.⁴⁵ Both of these letters are extremely important for our understanding of episcopal authority in later fifth-century Trier. Auspicius' letter demonstrates that a clear connection between ecclesiastical and secular authorities continued to exist in the Trier region in the fifth century, albeit in a more localised context. His description of Jamblychus as 'the first among us all', meanwhile, probably denotes the Bishop of Trier's metropolitan status as the holder of office in the provincial capital.⁴⁶ Sidonius' letter, on the other hand, demonstrates that Arbogast and Jamblychus were known to southern Gallic aristocrats, despite the breakdown of the imperial system. Additionally, Sidonius reveals that Arbogast was a devout Christian who wanted to improve his understanding of the faith, a situation which could have worked to Jamblychus' advantage.

⁴²See above, pp. 97-9.

⁴³Auspicius of Toul, *Letter to Arbogast*, in Mathisen, *People*, pp. 37-8.

⁴⁴*Austrasian Letter 2, Epistulae Austrasicae, MGH Epp.* III, p. 113; see above, pp. 98-9.

⁴⁵Sidonius Apollinaris, *Letter IV*, 17, 3, p. 128.

⁴⁶H. Heinen, 'Das Bistum Trier in der Zeit der Völkerwanderung. Vom Ende des Theodosius I bis zum Ende der Römerzeit (395 – Ende des 5. Jahrhunderts)', in Heinen et al (eds), *Im Umbruch der Kulturen*, pp. 110-1.

Jamblychus and Arbogast are our only clear example of secular and Christian rulers of Trier working together in the fifth century, and, as such, our only evidence that the basic framework of co-operative political and Christian leadership in the city is likely to have continued from the fourth century onwards. As a result, the letters of Auspicius and Sidonius would be pivotal to any attempt either to argue for the augmentation of episcopal authority, or to suggest that Christianity was a vital force for continuity in post-Roman Trier. However, we should be wary of taking either of these interpretations too far. Although the letters demonstrate that the bishop of Trier still held prestige and commanded respect in the later fifth century, we should bear in mind that, in contrast to his fourth-century predecessors, Jamblychus' sphere of influence was fairly local. Moreover, we should keep an open mind regarding the extent of continuity in the Christian sphere earlier in the fifth century, especially when, as we have seen, Cologne appears to have been so destabilised by the barbarian attacks that the episcopal see was abandoned.

In both Trier and Cologne, the reassertion of episcopal authority took place in the sixth century. In Trier, this began with Bishop Nicetius (526 – 566), whose episcopate is, exceptionally, attested by a handful of his own writings and letters, as well as in the works of others, notably Gregory of Tours, who enthused about Nicetius' spiritual virtues and authority in devoting one of the books of his *Life of the Fathers* to the saint.⁴⁷ Most strikingly, Gregory's accounts of Nicetius emphasise the close relationships that he enjoyed with a succession of Merovingian kings, who occasionally used Trier as a residence. Even before becoming bishop of Trier, Nicetius was 'very respected and honoured by King Theuderic, because he had often revealed to him his sins, in order to improve him'. Following Theuderic's death, Nicetius berated his son

⁴⁷Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, XVII, trans. E. James (Liverpool, 1985), pp. 104-13.

and heir, Theudebert, for the ‘unjust things’ he did, and went on to excommunicate Theubert’s successor, King Clothar, several times for his ‘unjust deeds’, ignoring Clothar’s threats to exile him.⁴⁸ Nicetius’ own correspondence, meanwhile, includes letters he sent to the Eastern emperor, Justinian, forthrightly urging him to abandon the Nestorian heresy and his persecution of orthodox Christians, and to the Frankish queen, Clodoswintha, encouraging her to convert her husband Alboin, king of the Lombards, from Arianism to Catholicism.⁴⁹ In light of these letters in particular, it is clear that Nicetius represents another level of episcopal authority than that which we have seen before, even in the fourth century. His interaction with secular political rulers extended far beyond reliance on them to involve him in wider ecclesiastical issues, unlike his fourth-century predecessors, and saw him adopt an extremely assertive position. He felt himself able not only to reprimand members of the Merovingian royal family without fear of the consequences, but also to send letters offering instruction to the Eastern emperor. This represents a degree of episcopal authority that would seem to epitomise the claims that have been made for the rise of the bishop, but Nicetius was an exceptional case.

Nicetius’ successor according to the bishop-lists, Magneric, did not achieve quite his levels of renown or sanctity, but nonetheless appears to have enjoyed considerable influence and, like Nicetius, a close relationship with the Frankish royal household. Once more, Gregory of Tours is our crucial source of information. He reveals that King Childebert’s son, Theudebert, born around 586, was baptized by Magneric; a significant sign of favour.⁵⁰ According to Gregory, the bishop was also

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, XVII, 1-3, pp. 106-9.

⁴⁹*Austrasian Letters* 7 and 8, *Epistulae Austrasicae*, *MGH Epp.* III, pp. 118-22; I. Wood, ‘The Franks and Papal Theology’, in C. Chazelle and C. Cubitt (eds), *The Crisis of the Oikoumene: The Three Chapters and the Failed Quest for Unity in the Sixth-Century Mediterranean* (Turnhout, 2007), p. 225.

⁵⁰Gregory of Tours, *History*, VIII, 37, p. 405.

present at a meeting between King Guntram and his nephew, Childebert, at which Guntram Boso was adjudged 'guilty of various offences'. The kings ordered Boso's execution, and when Boso heard of this, he fled to Bishop Magneric's residence and threatened the bishop with death if he should refuse to intercede on his behalf. Gregory claims that Boso acted as he did because he believed that Magneric could influence Childebert. He reports Boso's words to have been, 'you are as a father to the king's son'; a reference to the baptismal relationship between the bishop and the prince. Boso's pleas came to nought; Magneric was rescued and Boso cornered and killed.⁵¹ Assuming Gregory's account is accurate, this incident is very revealing. First, Magneric's presence at the meeting and Boso's choice of him as intercessor emphasise the bishop's close relationship with the kings. Additionally, Boso's hope that the bishop might intervene on his behalf can be interpreted as an example of the roles of bishops as mediators in important secular disputes and as players in court politics.⁵²

The existence of a close connection between the bishops of Trier and the Merovingian kings in the sixth century sheds important light on the relationship between Arbogast and Jamblychus in the fifth century, in that it reinforces our impression that the framework of co-operative political and Christian leadership was familiar in Trier, and makes their dealings seem a deliberate attempt at continuing to operate within this framework on a more local scale and under difficult conditions. Indeed, it is very likely that Arbogast and Jamblychus were not the only fifth-century bishop and political leader of Trier to work together for the good of their city; the fact that we know only of these two could easily be an accident of the evidence. We have seen how bishops of Trier generally appear in our sources in the context of their

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, IX, 10, pp. 424-6.

⁵² For a clear and well-written overview of the legal and intercessory role of sixth-century bishops, see: E. James, 'Beati Pacifi: Bishops and the Law in Sixth-Century Gaul', in J. Bossy (ed.), *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 25-46.

interactions with kings and emperors, rather than because of their activities within their localities, and how fifth-century sources from the Rhineland are rather scarce, so the lack of further examples can hardly surprise us.

For evidence of the re-establishment of the relationship between episcopal and secular political power in Cologne, one must wait until the late sixth century, and the episcopate of Ebregisel. Gregory of Tours tells us how he himself, Maroveus of Poitiers, and Ebregisel were sent to resolve the scandal that arose at the Holy Cross nunnery in Poitiers in the late 580s, and involved female members of the royal family.⁵³ Ebregisel's involvement suggests that he was of some standing within the Frankish Church and close to King Childebert; both Gregory of Tours and Maroveus of Poitiers were local bishops and were already involved in the case, so Ebregisel was probably introduced as an outside metropolitan bishop, trusted by the king, to help bring about a resolution. It appears, therefore, that despite the earlier hiatus of around a century and a half in their city's episcopal succession, the bishops of Cologne of the late sixth century once again enjoyed similar interaction with the political ruler as did their counterparts in Trier.

The sixth-century evidence, when compared with that from the fourth and fifth centuries, plainly indicates that enhanced episcopal power was fundamentally connected with stable political leadership, irrespective of whether that leadership was provided by Roman or non-Roman rulers. In periods of political instability, such as existed in the first half of the fifth century, the bishops' authority seems, however, to have been badly affected. In Trier's case, it was reduced to the local sphere, whilst in Cologne the situation appears to have been serious enough that the episcopal see was completely abandoned. The extent to which episcopal authority diminished in the fifth century by

⁵³Gregory of Tours, *History*, X, 15, p. 503.

comparison with the preceding and subsequent centuries may be an indication that the barbarian attacks that Salvian described caused significant disruption in Trier and Cologne. It also casts real doubt over the validity here of the historiographical approaches outlined at the beginning of this chapter, making it difficult, for instance, to assume episcopal power to have followed a steadily upward trajectory. For these same reasons, the assertions that Christianity aided urban continuity or promoted transformation are somewhat problematic, although admittedly the bishops' limited wider influence does not preclude them having acted as important local leaders. It is to the development of Christianity in the localities of Trier and Cologne that our attention must now turn.

2.2 The building of churches and the cult of the saints

Just as bishops are seen as key figures in promoting urban continuity in Late Antiquity, so the churches they helped to build are considered central to the transformation of cities, enabling them to remain relevant in the post-Roman period. Churches both symbolised and promoted a fundamental change in mentality and culture within the wider population, signifying the importance of the Church as a social institution and as part of the new fabric of city life.⁵⁴ Whilst the construction of grand complexes reflected the emperor's support of the Christian Church, the building of smaller churches and *memoriae* should be regarded as an expression of piety and a means of garnering prestige on the part of newly-Christianised élites, whose families had traditionally patronised public building projects, but who now redeployed their

⁵⁴Harries, 'Christianity and the City', pp. 80, 87, 89.

considerable resources towards church-building initiatives.⁵⁵ Additionally, the construction of imposing churches did much to confirm and enhance the bishop's local prestige at a time when his office had achieved unprecedented social prominence. His role in organising the building works demonstrated his ability to mobilise resources, to appeal to local pride, and to encourage local aristocrats to redirect their munificence from civic or personal projects to the Church.⁵⁶ Thereafter, the often grand and elaborately decorated church buildings, which in some cities had also benefited from imperial sponsorship, provided a fitting and lasting context from which the bishop and his successors could express their authority.⁵⁷ Finally, extra-mural Christian buildings were also symbolic of a new attitude to the dead and to the extra-mural areas in which their remains were buried. As the occupants of some tombs came to be recognised as holy, taboos isolating burial areas from settlement areas began to disintegrate, and certain mausolea or *memoriae* became celebrated and integral parts of the city's topography and identity.⁵⁸

These local saint cults, like bishops, have also come to play an important role in the conception of post-Roman urban communities in modern scholarship, both because of their remarkable proliferation in Late Antiquity, and because of the diverse range of spiritual and social needs that they fulfilled. In the first place, the cults are said to have been another means of consolidating and reinforcing episcopal power; a bishop could enhance his prestige and legitimise his episcopate through successfully associating himself with a saint's cult, whether by presiding over the translation of relics,

⁵⁵Brown, *Authority*, p. 20.

⁵⁶Brown, *Christendom*, pp. 78-79.

⁵⁷W. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 63; Rousseau, *Christian Centuries*, p. 203.

⁵⁸Loseby, 'Decline and change', p. 69; P. R. L. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: its Rise and Function in Late Antiquity* (London, 1981), pp. 1-2, 4.

organising works to monumentalise the saint's tomb, or witnessing miracles.⁵⁹ Moreover, the predominantly local nature of many cults meant that the saints came to be regarded as their city's own spiritual patrons, with whom the Christian community could personally identify.⁶⁰ Since they were deemed able to be present simultaneously in their tomb and in heaven, they were also believed to be effective intercessors with God on behalf of members of the Christian community, able to offer healing and protection.⁶¹ Finally, their perceived ability to root out and punish sinners ensured that saints were often assigned a mediating role in disputes.⁶² In short, the prevalent modern interpretation of the cult of the saints in Late Antiquity emphasises not only the spiritual fulfilment that saint cults were able to offer, but also their potential to structure social relations, filling voids left behind by imperial collapse and providing continuity through to the post-Roman period. There is, however, a significant difficulty with modern accounts of the cult of the saints; they create a sense of uniformity and homogeneity around the ways in which cults came into being, how individual sites developed in material terms, and what spiritual and social needs the saints fulfilled, which sits uneasily alongside the widespread recognition of the local character of individual cults and of the regional peculiarities that shaped their development.⁶³

In what follows, we will first establish the origins of the various churches and saint cults of Trier and Cologne, and will trace their subsequent development in material

⁵⁹Brown, *Cult*, p. 8; P. A. Hayward, 'Demystifying the role of sanctity in Western Christendom', in J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Hayward (eds), *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1999), p. 117.

⁶⁰Brown, *Cult*, pp. 86-8; G. Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 57; A. Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum: the significance of place in the study of the saints', in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (eds), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), p. 1; Van Dam, *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), p. 6; Harries, 'Christianity and the city', p. 78.

⁶¹See, in particular, Brown's discussion of 'praesentia' and 'potentia' in *Cult*, pp. 86-128. See also: Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, pp. 54, 57; Helvetius, 'Hagiographie und Heiligenverehrung', in Kaiser (ed.), *Die Franken*, p. 401; J. Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of the Saints in the Early Christian West* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 16-17.

⁶²Hayward, 'Demystifying', pp. 117, 140.

⁶³Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum', p. 2; Van Dam, *Saints*, p. 12.

terms. The primary aims here are to identify what factors and which people drove their development, and to establish whether individual churches and cults have the potential to have acted as vehicles for continuity through to the post-Roman period in the cities. Thereafter, we will consider what social and spiritual functions the churches and cults can be seen to have fulfilled in the fourth to sixth centuries, in order that we may better understand how they might have helped to redefine the importance of Trier and Cologne in the period following the Empire's collapse. The obvious place to begin is with the origins of the cathedral churches, which, although not known to have been associated with local saints in Late Antiquity, were important physical markers of the growing status of Christianity in the cities, and were closely tied to the bishops' exercise of their spiritual authority.

The cathedral in Trier was under construction for much of the fourth century, with work carried out in numerous stages. Much of its site had previously been occupied by residential houses, one of which featured a small apsidal hall, orientated on an east-west axis.⁶⁴ In the 310s, this house and an adjacent one to the north were demolished, and a three-aisled basilica with three small rooms in its eastern end was constructed (24.3 metres in length and 27.5 metres in width).⁶⁵ Next, probably during the episcopate of Bishop Maximinus, the residential buildings on the surrounding *insulae* were cleared, making way for three more basilicas, two to the north of the original basilica, and one to the east of it. The new south-easterly basilica was joined to the earlier south-westerly one, forming an H-shaped complex, the northern and southern parts of which were separated by a substantial baptistery (64 square metres). The whole

⁶⁴This summary follows Weber's recent interpretations: W. Weber, 'Neue Forschungen zur Trierer Domgrabung: Die archäologischen Ausgrabungen im Garten der Kurie von der Leyen', in S. Ristow (ed.), *Neue Forschungen zu den Anfängen des Christentums im Rheinland* (Münster, 2004), pp. 225-6; W. Weber, 'Archäologische Zeugnisse aus der Spätantike und dem Frühmittelalter zur Geschichte der Kirche im Bistum Trier', in Heinen et al (eds), *Im Umbruch der Kulturen*, pp. 422-35.

⁶⁵Weber, 'Neue Forschungen', pp. 226-7.

complex occupied an area of some 9, 500 square metres.⁶⁶ Sometime around the mid-fourth century, the north-eastern basilica underwent further remodelling to create a square building with corner towers, inside which a polygonal podium structure was erected. This is probably the phase of building that Athanasius of Alexandria claimed to have witnessed.⁶⁷ This phase was, however, left incomplete for a substantial period, before being finished to a slightly altered design in the last third of the fourth century, during the reigns of Valentinian and Gratian.⁶⁸ There is no doubt that this building complex was a Christian church, probably the cathedral, since graffiti of clearly Christian character, consisting of acclamations of ‘*vivas in Deo*’ or similar, have been discovered on two walls used to separate the chancel from the nave.⁶⁹

Imperial involvement in building this complex is reflected by its enormous dimensions, its prestigious location in the imperial palace quarter, and its elaborate decoration. The cathedral’s eventual footprint covered an area of four *insulae*, and it is difficult to see how such dimensions could have been achieved without imperial backing, and probably the direct provision of resources.⁷⁰ In terms of location, it was not only situated at the northern end of the palace complex, but also blocked the north-south road that passed in front of the palace and the *Kaiserthermen*. It seems inconceivable that this could have been done without imperial authorisation.⁷¹ Its interior decoration, meanwhile, appears to have been of a grandeur comparable to that of the imperial audience hall (the *Basilika*), since excavations in the nineteenth century found red-brown, green, blue and gold *tesserae*, and marble panels of various colours.

⁶⁶These works are dated to the 330s and 340s by coins discovered in foundation trenches: Weber, ‘Neue Forschungen’, p. 229.

⁶⁷Athanasius of Alexandria, *Apologia ad Constantium*, 15, p. 244.

⁶⁸The later fourth-century works are dated by coin finds and dendrochronology: Weber, ‘Neue Forschungen’, p. 230; S. Ristow, *Frühes Christentum im Rheinland* (Cologne, 2007), p. 199.

⁶⁹See below, pp. 141-4.

⁷⁰Wightman, *Trier*, p. 231.

⁷¹Witschel, ‘Trier’, p. 265. Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 914, also confirms the abandonment of this road, though does not ascribe the same significance to it.

The excavator, Wilmovsky, concluded that the walls were marble-clad to window height, with elaborate mosaic decoration above.⁷² Decoration of this type in a complex of this size would have been extraordinarily expensive, and beyond the financial reach of all but the Empire's wealthiest individuals. More ambiguously, the remains of an elaborate ceiling painting of Constantinian date, discovered in the area of the aforementioned polygonal structure, have been interpreted as evidence that part of the cathedral complex occupied a site which had been donated from the imperial palace. The remains of this painting were first located underneath a floor surface dated by coins to around 326 during post-war excavations by Kempf, but the final pieces were not retrieved until between 1965 and 1968.⁷³ By 1976, all but two of its fifteen images had been reconstructed, including seven larger-than-life-sized portraits of four women and three men. It was the depiction of nimbi and other insignia around the women that led Kempf to believe them to be members of the imperial household, and therefore the hall to which the painting belonged to have been part of the palace complex.⁷⁴ While it is possible that the portraits are simply generic,⁷⁵ the hall's location and the extravagance of the painting tend in favour of Kempf's interpretation. Thus, we can be reasonably confident that the cathedral complex in Trier was directly sponsored by the Constantinian imperial family.

⁷²*Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, catalogue, no. 62, pp. 163-4; see below, p. 212.

⁷³Th. K. Kempf, 'Die Constantinischen Deckenmalereien aus dem Trierer Dom', *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 7 (1977), pp. 147-149.

⁷⁴Kempf, 'Deckenmalereien', pp. 153-155.

⁷⁵E. Simon, *Die Constantinischen Deckengemälde in Trier* (Mainz, 1986), p. 15.

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 2.1: Cathedral complex in Trier. Adapted from H. –P. Kuhnen, ‘Dom und Liebfrauen: Die Anfänge der Trierer Bischofskirche’, in H. –P. Kuhnen (ed.), *Das römische Trier* (Stuttgart, 2001), p. 118

It is easy enough to explain why Constantine and his successors wanted to build and embellish an episcopal complex in a capital city such as Trier. Following Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, the new imperial religion became an important component of the Emperor’s identity, and of how he and his successors sought to represent themselves and the power and values of their Empire. A cathedral symbolising this became an essential addition to the imperial palace quarter, and, in light of its representative significance, it had to be appropriately large, splendid, and prominently located. However, we should not assign all credit and glory for the construction of the cathedral to the emperors; the new building also expressed the status of Christianity as a powerful social institution, and its enormous dimensions, colourful mosaics and marble cladding provided a frame for the spiritual authority of the bishops, serving as a suitably splendid setting in which to exercise their office. Moreover, even if the emperors and other wealthy local patrons were the direct instigators and organisers of construction of

the cathedral, their efforts would have required episcopal endorsement at some stage. Bishops Agricinus, Maximinus, and Bonosus, whom the dating evidence suggests were in office during the major construction phases, would surely have been accorded significant prestige within their own city by virtue of their association with the building works.

The interior of the cathedral was destroyed during the fifth century, but its importance in reaffirming episcopal power and in enhancing the status of those bishops responsible for its construction and renovation is confirmed by the lengths to which Trier's pre-eminent sixth-century bishop, Nicetius, went in order to get it repaired.⁷⁶ Rather than merely patching up the building using the skills of local workmen, a letter sent to Nicetius by Bishop Rufus of Turin reveals that the bishop of Trier had requested specialist Italian craftsmen be sent to assist with the building work.⁷⁷ For these endeavours, Nicetius was praised by Venantius Fortunatus.⁷⁸ However, his apparent failure to rebuild the south-western basilica, and the reconstruction of the other three parts of the complex on a reduced scale, warns us of the downside of Trier's imperial heyday; the size of the cathedral complex bequeathed to the city was far too large for even the most powerful local magnates to maintain in the centuries following the Empire's collapse.⁷⁹ Moreover, the apparent failure to carry out repairs before the sixth century clearly suggests that although the Church's leadership remained intact throughout the fifth century, the institution was not immune to the effects of the political instability and social change, and its physical presence and material resources

⁷⁶Evidence for this destruction takes the form of a layer of burnt material found throughout the complex during excavations, containing coins of the Theodosian dynasty: Weber, 'Neue Forschungen', p. 230; Kempf, 'Trierer Domgrabungen 1943-1954', in *Neue Ausgrabungen in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1958), p. 374; Weber, 'Zeugnisse', pp. 476-7.

⁷⁷*Austrasian Letter 21, Epistulae Austrasicae, MGH Epp.* III, pp. 133-4.

⁷⁸Venantius Fortunatus, *De Nicetio episcopo Treverensi*, in *Opera Poetica, MGH AA IV*, 1, pp. 63-4.

⁷⁹Weber, 'Neue Forschungen', pp. 230-4.

were significantly diminished.⁸⁰ We should bear this caveat in mind when assessing the overall extent to which the Church redefined the importance of the city and offered a source of continuity in the post-Roman period.



Figure 2.2: The northern part of Trier's cathedral complex as it appears today. Much of the square structure with corner towers, built in the mid-fourth century, is preserved. Copyright author.

The cathedral site in Trier is believed by some to have housed a saint's relics in the fourth century, thanks to the graffiti of clearly Christian character, mentioned above, which consist of individuals' names together with acclamations of '*vivas in Deo*' or similar. These graffiti were discovered on two walls that separated the chancel from the nave in the south-eastern basilica. The later wall onto which the graffiti were carved has a *terminus post quem* of 367 to 375 on the basis of a *centenionalis* of Valens found embedded in its plaster, whilst the wall that preceded it was probably built in the later 330s, to judge by coins found under the earliest floor level of the building.⁸¹ That these graffiti were indeed inspired by the presence of an intra-mural saint cult is certainly the most obvious explanation for their presence, since, as Handley notes, people believed it

⁸⁰Kempf suggests that initial repairs took place within the southern church in the fifth century, which helps to answer the question of where people worshipped before Nicetius' repairs were carried out: 'Domgrabungen', p. 374. However, more recent studies suggest that Nicetius' repairs were the first of any significance: Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 199; Weber, 'Neue Forschungen', pp. 230-4.

⁸¹A. Binsfeld, *Vivas in Deo: Die Graffiti der Frühchristlichen Kirchenanlage in Trier: Trierer Domgrabung 5* (Trier, 2006), p. 20.

beneficial to have their names recorded near the relics of a saint.⁸² However, given the importance we might later wish to assign to saint cults in encouraging conversion and sustaining urban life, it is important that we test this interpretation, and consider all other possibilities.

The most prominent advocate of the interpretation of an intra-mural saint cult is Binsfeld, who, in her detailed study of the graffiti, notes that other comparable examples are all at very holy sites, including the grave of St Peter in Rome, where ‘*vivas*’ acclamations were also used. On this basis, she suggests that the relics could be those of Bishop Paulinus, which, on this hypothesis, would have been brought back from Phrygia relatively soon after his death and venerated in the cathedral prior to the erection of a basilica in his honour by Bishop Felix in the late 380s or 390s.⁸³ This is, of course, entirely speculative; there is no evidence to suggest Paulinus’ remains were returned to Trier at an earlier date, whilst an intra-mural cult would be an extreme rarity in the fourth century.⁸⁴ Instead, if we are to believe there was a cult here, it seems more conceivable that a member of the imperial family had arranged for the provision of apostolic relics, since such tales as Helena’s discovery of the True Cross were current in the second half of the fourth century.⁸⁵ However, this is also wholly hypothetical, since no contemporary text makes reference to relics at the cathedral in Trier, whilst the

⁸²Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 197; M. Handley, ‘Beyond Hagiography: Epigraphic Commemoration and the Cult of the Saints in Late Antique Trier’, in R. Mathisen and D. Shanzer (eds), *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 194.

⁸³Binsfeld, *Vivas in Deo*, pp. 150-3, 158-9. For a discussion of Paulinus’ own church, see below, pp. 157-9.

⁸⁴W. Weber, ‘Von der frühchristlichen Kirche zum gotischen Juwel – archäologische Ergebnisse zu den Vorgängerbauten und zur Gründungsphase der Liebfrauenkirche’, in “*Die Rose neu erblühen lassen...*”: *Festschrift zur Wiedereröffnung der Liebfrauen-Basilika zu Trier* (Trier, 2011), pp. 38-9.

⁸⁵Rufinus, *Church History*, X, 7-8, in *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia*, ed. and trans. P. R. Amidon (Oxford, 1997); Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* I, 17, at www.newadvent.org/fathers [accessed 15 November 2012]; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* II, 1-2, at www.newadvent.org/fathers [accessed 15 November 2012]; Theoderet, *Ecclesiastical History* I, 17, at www.newadvent.org/fathers [accessed 15 November 2012]; Ambrose of Milan, *Oration on the death of Theodosius I*, 40-49, in *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches*, trans. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz (Liverpool, 2005), pp. 197-200; Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History* II, 33-4, pp. 112-3.

dedication of the cathedral to Peter is unknown before the eighth century.⁸⁶ Although the survival of late antique evidence is patchy, enough knowledge of the early Church in Trier has survived that one would expect to find some late antique reference to the presence of apostolic relics in the city, if they existed. One might, therefore, doubt this explanation for the presence of the graffiti.

Among the alternative explanations to have been advanced are that the graffiti were appeals on behalf of children about to be baptised, or pious wishes by Christians for their loved ones.⁸⁷ Both of these suggestions are plausible, especially given the enthusiasm with which the epigraphic habit was embraced by Christians in Trier. Another possibility is that the graffiti were intended to be visible and permanent markers of the presence in the cathedral of individuals to whom the building symbolised the direct and tangible connection between imperial glory and Christianity. Although this may at first seem far-fetched, we should remember that Trier was a city shaped by the presence of the imperial household, and one in which people marked out their social status through the commissioning of inscriptions at a rate unparalleled in Gaul. Moreover, although the Christogram, commonly found amongst the graffiti in the cathedral, was associated with the commemoration of the dead in Trier and appears frequently on Christian epitaphs dated to the fourth century, one should bear in mind that a clear connection had also already been established since Constantine's reign between the victorious emperor and the symbol, which his soldiers had placed on their

⁸⁶N. Gauthier, *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule: des origines au milieu du VIIIe siècle, 1. Province ecclésiastique de Treves (Belgica Prima)* (Paris, 1986), p. 25; *Diplomata Karolorum I: Pippin, Karlmann und Karl der Grosse*, 66, ed. E. Mühlbacher, *MGH DD Kar. I* (Berlin, 1906), p. 96. Ewig speculates that this dedication may date to the episcopates of Agriculus or Maximinus: E. Ewig, *Trier im Merowingerreich. Civitas, Stadt, Bistum* (Trier, 1954), p. 51. The first reference to the dedication of the southern *Liebfrauenkirche* is even later, and takes the form of a charter of the Archbishop Ruotpert: H. Beyer, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der, jetzt die Preussischen Regierungsbezirke Coblenz und Trier bildenden mittelrheinischen Territorien I* (Koblenz, 1860), no. 198, pp. 258-9.

⁸⁷M. Ghetta, *Spätantikes Heidentum: Trier und das Trevererland* (Trier, 2008), p. 74; Wightman, *Trier*, p. 231.

shields before victory over Maxentius.⁸⁸ This means that its presence amongst the cathedral graffiti is at least as plausibly an indication of people wishing to associate themselves with the emperor and his religion, as it is of their wishing to mark their presence before apostolic relics. However uncertain the specific explanation for these graffiti, perhaps the most important point to derive from them, at least in the context of this chapter, is that they clearly reveal a change in mentality on the part of Trier's inhabitants, which the cathedral building on its own could not. They show that many people had converted to Christianity, and had claimed a little piece of the church wall as their own in order to assert this.

In Cologne, meanwhile, one might reasonably assume that an episcopal church complex must have been built in the fourth century, since it is unlikely that Bishops Maternus (c. 313) and Euphrates (c. 343), with their imperial connections, could have been satisfied with a makeshift house-church. It is possible that Ammianus referred derogatorily to this church, when he described the little Christian assembly room (*'conventiculum ritus christiani'*) into which the usurper Silvanus fled before being killed.⁸⁹ The most likely site for this fourth-century bishop's church is that occupied by the current Gothic cathedral. However, the late antique remains in many parts of the site were destroyed through the building of Carolingian and medieval structures, whilst no consensus exists as to whether or not those that remain intact should be interpreted as a church. There have been four phases of excavation at this site since the Second World War: first, by Doppelfeld in the immediate post-war years; secondly, by Weyres and

⁸⁸Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, I, 28, in *Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, NPNF series II, vol. 1, p. 490; Lactantius, *Of the Manner in which the Persecutors Died*, 44, ed. and trans. A. Cleveland Cox, in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysus, Apostolic Teachings and Constitutions, Homily and Liturgies*, ANF vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970), p. 318; A. Binsfeld, 'Zeugnisse früher Christen in Trier: Die Graffiti unter der Liebfrauenkirche', *Neues Trierisches Jahrbuch* 47 (2007), p. 23; Brown, *Christendom*, p. 84.

⁸⁹Ammianus Marcellinus, XV, 5, 31, p. 152.

Wolff; thirdly, by Back and Hauser in the 1980s and 1990s; and finally, since the millennium.⁹⁰ These excavations have identified a building phase of fourth-century date consisting of a small apsidal space, the walls of which abutted the eastern and western fronts of an existing building. Two north-south running walls identified close by are probably part of a larger structure to which this apsidal space belonged.⁹¹

None of these remains clearly indicate that this complex was used by the Christian community, and, as such, the findings have given rise to a wide spectrum of interpretations. At one end of this spectrum, Doppelfeld and Weyres allowed their aim and expectation of uncovering the cathedral to dictate the interpretation of their findings, meaning that they viewed the existing structure against which the fourth-century apsidal structure was built as a temple, on the basis of their understanding that cathedrals and temples were built adjacent to one another, and the supporting evidence of an inscription conveniently found nearby in the nineteenth century, which recorded the rebuilding of a temple to Mercurius Augustus in the reign of Titus.⁹² At the other end of the spectrum, more recent scholars, including Ristow and Hauser, have challenged the methodologies of Doppelfeld and Weyres, and have emphasised the lack of proof that the complex with the apse was a church. Hauser has been particularly critical of the excavators' reconstruction of a temple, stressing that the Mercurius Augustus inscription does not in itself support their interpretation, since it lacks any clear association with the site, whilst the idea that churches were constructed alongside

⁹⁰S. Ristow, 'Die Spätantiken Kirchen unter dem Kölner Dom', in Ristow (ed.), *Neue Forschungen zu den Anfängen des Christentums*, p. 97.

⁹¹The *terminus ante quem* for this apsidal structure is provided by a coin of 388, which was found in the demolition rubble of the existing building against which the apsidal structure was built: W. Weyres, 'Die Domgrabung XVI: Die Frühchristlichen Bischofskirchen und Baptisterien', *Kölner Domblatt* 30 (1969), pp. 509-10, 516.

⁹²O. Doppelfeld, 'Köln von der Spätantike bis zur Karolingerzeit', in H. Jankuhn et al (eds), *Vor- und Frühformen der europäischen Stadt* (Göttingen, 1975), pp. 113, 123; Weyres, 'Die Domgrabung XVI', pp. 509-10, 516.

temples has been proven incorrect in countless examples from numerous cities.⁹³

Ristow, meanwhile, has warned that their desire to identify the cathedral led Doppelfeld and Weyres to draw together various walls as part of the same structure, despite the building techniques and stratigraphy of the remains not conclusively supporting such an analysis.⁹⁴

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 2.3: Plan of the remains of the cathedral complex in Cologne. Adapted from G. Hauser, 'Das fränkische Gräberfeld unter dem Kölner Dom', in R. Kaiser (ed.), *Die Franken: Roms Erben und Wegbereiter Europas* (Mainz, 1996), p. 439

Based on the archaeological evidence described in published material, it is doubtful whether the findings of sections of walls and floors can be deemed an adequate basis for confident reconstruction of the architecture of the building Doppelfeld and Weyres excavated, let alone for an analysis of its function. Instead, our strongest indication that the building served as a church in the fourth century is the fact that it had certainly become one by the sixth century. This is clearly suggested by the discovery of two splendidly furnished graves of a woman and boy, clearly members of the Merovingian aristocracy, found undisturbed during excavations in 1959 and dated to c.

⁹³G. Hauser, 'Fragen zu einem Römischen Tempel unter dem Dom', *Kölner Domblatt* 58 (1993), pp. 313-8.

⁹⁴Ristow, 'Die spätantiken Kirchen', pp. 95-6.

537.⁹⁵ Alongside these burials, numerous other robbed-out graves were identified. Intra-mural burial was still extremely uncommon in the sixth century, so these graves are unlikely to have been located anywhere other than in a church, which must have been in existence before the graves were cut, since its floor had to be broken through to enable the burials to take place.⁹⁶ Sometime after the woman and the boy were interred, the church in which their graves were located was radically altered or replaced, and an ambo and solea were installed, for which the graves provide a *terminus post quem*. Ristow has suggested that the ambo pre-dates 600, on the basis of typological comparisons.⁹⁷ As well as being diagnostic of the presence of a church, these graves are also significant in that they are our only clue that Bishop Carentinus may have had a sixth-century predecessor, who led the Christian community to which the woman and boy belonged, and who exercised his authority in the church in which they were buried.

In comparison with our detailed understanding of the various building phases of the cathedral complex in Trier in the fourth century, therefore, our knowledge of the origins of the cathedral in Cologne is decidedly patchy. Although it must have existed, and it most likely stood on the site occupied by the Gothic cathedral today, doubts persist because the fourth-century structures discovered on the site offer nothing to aid us in identifying their function. This is not surprising, given that Christian architecture did not yet have its own distinctive features, but nonetheless it hinders our efforts to engage with the historiography with which this section began. It is impossible to

⁹⁵G. Hauser, 'Das fränkische Gräberfeld unter dem Kölner Dom', in Kaiser (ed.), *Die Franken*, p. 438. On the presence of burials increasing the likelihood that the building is a church, see: O. Doppelfeld, 'Das fränkische Frauengrab unter dem Chor des Kölner Domes', *Germania* 38 (1960), p. 265; Ristow, 'Zur Frage einer frühchristlichen Bischofskirche unter dem Kölner Dom', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 40 (1997), pp. 198-9. On the presence of robbed out graves alongside the undisturbed princely burials, see Steuer, *Die Franken*, p. 66.

⁹⁶Weyres, 'Die Domgrabung XVI', p. 510; Ristow, 'Zur Frage', p. 180; Doppelfeld, 'Köln von der Spätantike', p. 123. Ristow, 'Die spätantiken Kirchen', p. 120.

⁹⁷S. Ristow, *Die frühen Kirchen unter dem Kölner Dom* (Cologne, 2002), pp. 62-3.

ascertain either when or by whom Cologne's cathedral church was built, or how far it may therefore have acted as a focus for urban life in the fifth century.

Turning our attention to the extra-mural churches of Trier and Cologne, it is certainly the case that by the late sixth century in both cities, several *memoriae* had become associated with saint cults. Unfortunately, however, our knowledge of how these sites developed from tombs into churches is as inchoate as is our knowledge of the origins of the cities' cathedrals. What is clear, on the other hand, is that the developments at these sites in Trier and Cologne cannot be seen to fit into the chronology usually associated with the development of the cult of the saints in modern scholarship. According to this chronology, the emergence of saint cults was an integral part of the process of Christianisation that proceeded apace in the fourth and fifth centuries.⁹⁸ In Gaul in particular, but also elsewhere, however, saint-making is said to have really taken off only from the later fifth century, and to have reached its more evolved stages, with elaborate rituals and grand buildings over the tombs of the saints, only in the sixth century.⁹⁹ In Trier, by contrast, convincing archaeological and textual evidence suggests that veneration of the city's bishop-saints, Eucharius, Maximinus, and Paulinus, began well before the end of the fourth century. This is precociously early, particularly for the cults of episcopal saints, but Trier was not an ordinary Gallic city, and, as we shall see, the specific evidence pertaining to the individual cults is bolstered by the wider context of the rapid development of Christian life in the city. In Cologne, meanwhile, no evidence exists to suggest that any saint cults emerged before the mid-fifth century at the very earliest, whilst two of the city's cults are likely to have

⁹⁸Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, p. 57; Helvetius, 'Hagiographie', p. 401; Van Dam, *Saints*, p. 11.

⁹⁹Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum', p. 25; J. Crook, 'The Enshrinement of Local Saints in Francia and England', in Thacker and Sharpe (eds), *Local Saints and Local Churches*, pp. 189-200; Hayward, 'Demystifying', p. 117.

originated only in the sixth century. For quite different reasons, then, the evidence from both Trier and Cologne causes us to question the chronology that prevails in modern scholarship.

The unusually early date at which Trier's saint cults began, relative to those of other Gallic cities, and especially for cults of episcopal saints, has attracted surprisingly little comment from modern scholars, even though numerous accounts discuss the early development of one or all of the cults of Sts Eucharius, Maximinus, and Paulinus.¹⁰⁰ This is perhaps attributable to the fact that Trier itself was an extraordinary city, thanks to its status within the imperial system, since this provides a ready explanation for any out-of-the-ordinary developments. Nonetheless, closer examination is needed of the particular religious context that enabled the cult of the saints to flourish in fourth-century Trier. First, it should be recognised that Christianity undoubtedly developed deep roots in organisational terms very quickly in the city in the fourth century, thanks to the emperors' efforts to promote their new religion. We have seen how imperial involvement facilitated the construction of the cathedral complex, and how the local bishops were able to use their imperial connections to become influential individuals beyond their own city. In addition, Trier's population appears to have converted to Christianity at a remarkable rate, since over 1, 100 Christian inscriptions and fragments of late antique date have been discovered thus far.¹⁰¹ Finally, there are some clear suggestions that Trier in the fourth century was a place in which ideas of sanctity were becoming current, and sometimes controversial Christian ideas could be discussed. For example, Augustine of Hippo's account of his acquaintance, Ponticianus, coming across

¹⁰⁰This is not an unfair observation to make regarding any number of modern accounts, but see, for example: Ghetta, *Heidentum*, p. 76; Witschel, 'Trier', pp. 265-6. On the more usual fifth- and sixth-century chronology for the emergence of saint cults in Gaul, see: Thacker, '*Loca Sanctorum*', p. 25; Crook, 'Enshrinement', pp. 189-200; Hayward, 'Demystifying', p. 117.

¹⁰¹See below, p. 181.

the *Life of St Antony* in a house in Trier reveals that *Vitae* and other Christian texts were being written and disseminated, or at least collected and read, in the city in the late fourth century.¹⁰² Jerome, meanwhile, recalled that it was after moving to Trier with his friend, Bonosus, that he became interested in asceticism and copied out the works of St Hilary of Poitiers.¹⁰³ All of this suggests that a particular context existed in Trier, which may have been conducive to the precocious development of saint cults. We must bear this context in mind as we turn our attention to establishing the precise origins of the cults of Sts Eucharius, Maximinus, and Paulinus.

Since Trier's saint cults were all associated with deceased local bishops, their approximate dates of death provide *termini post quem* for an investigation into when their cults might have developed. Trier's first bishop, Eucharius, who appears to have been sanctified because of this distinction, is known to have been venerated in a church to the south of the city, although, not unusually, the precise location of it has not been discovered. The earliest clear evidence for the veneration of St Eucharius comes in the form of the aforementioned inscription of mid-fifth-century date, produced to commemorate the embellishment of a building and the erection of an altar ('*altare*') in honour of him and his successor, Valerius, by Cyrillus, Trier's bishop at the time.¹⁰⁴ The dating of this inscription to the mid-fifth century places Cyrillus' project at a time when building efforts designed to monumentalise the tombs of saints were just becoming commonplace throughout Gaul.¹⁰⁵ There are, however, important indications

¹⁰² Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 6, pp. 432-4; Brown, *Augustine*, pp. 99, 152; see above, p. 17.

¹⁰³ Jerome, *Letter*, 3, 5, p. 6; *Letter*, 5, 2, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ RIGG I, no. 19, pp. 146-9. The text of the inscription reads: '*Quam bene concordia divina potentia iungit / membra sacerdotum, quae ornate locus iste duorum / Eucharium loquitur Valeriumque simul. / Sedem victuris gaudens componere membris, / fratribus hoc sanctis ponens altare Cyrillus, / corporis hospitum sanctus metator adornat*'. For a detailed discussion of the inscription, see N. Newel, 'Die Cyrillus-Inschrift von St Matthias in Trier (RIGG I 19): Neue Quellen zu ihrer Überlieferungsgeschichte – Auswertung ihres Formulars', *Trierer Zeitschrift* 58 (1995), pp. 211-59.

¹⁰⁵ Thacker, '*Loca Sanctorum*', p. 25; Crook, 'Enshrinement', pp. 189-200; Hayward, 'Demystifying', p. 117.

that Cyrillus' measures did not belong to an initial building phase, and instead amounted to an upgrading of an existing grand *memoria*. First, the inscription itself clearly states that Cyrillus installed an altar ('*ponens altare*') and embellished ('*adornat*') the building, rather than constructing it from scratch.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, the dense concentration of as many as four thousand burials found in the southern graveyard and the high volume of clearly Christian inscriptions known from this vicinity suggest that this was an extremely significant Christian burial area in the fourth century, and was considerably more popular than the northern graveyard.¹⁰⁷ This popularity is most readily explained by the presence of a burial focus, such as could have been provided by the promotion of the cult of St Eucharius. The significance of the building measures commissioned by Bishop Cyrillus does not, therefore, derive from the fact that they represent the origins of the saint's cult. Instead, they are an important indication of the continuity of the cult in mid-fifth-century Trier, and of the bishop's ability to organise building works, which flies in the face of Salvian's claims that the city was brought to its knees by the series of barbarian attacks in the preceding decades.

Unfortunately, notwithstanding these volumes of burials and epigraphic evidence, excavations of the late antique structures on the site associated with the veneration of St Eucharius have not yielded any confirmation of the presence of a cult in the fourth century. The most promising structure for identification as St Eucharius' tomb discovered to date was excavated by Heinz Cüppers between 1959 and 1963, although his specific interpretations of the archaeological evidence appear more optimistic than well-founded. Within the context of the many memorial buildings and

¹⁰⁶As Weber points out, the inscription does not mention an earlier building, although the *Gesta Treverorum* does: Weber, 'Zeugnisse', pp. 451-2; *Gesta Treverorum* 16, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SS VIII* (Hannover, 1848), p. 148.

¹⁰⁷Cüppers estimates that around four thousand graves were installed here between the third century and the fifth century: H. Cüppers, 'Trier – St Matthias', in Cüppers (ed.), *Rheinland-Pfalz*, archaeological section, p. 641.

tombs of the southern graveyard, Cüppers identified a building he interpreted as a villa – which would be somewhat surprising here – with an associated basilical hall and crypt. This building complex with crypt was located alongside three other memorial buildings with vaulted crypts, as well as eighteen more mausolea of fourth- and fifth-century date, and numerous Christian inscriptions of likely fourth-century date. An elaborately-carved, colourfully-painted sarcophagus was found in the south-western corner of the crypt attached to the basilica, and should probably be seen as the prestigious burial for which the crypt was originally intended. Cüppers postulated that the sarcophagus was moved because Sts Eucharius and Valerius were buried in the crypt until a new structure was created in their honour, perhaps by bishop Cyrillus.¹⁰⁸ This hypothesis is unsubstantiated, however, and draws upon the highly questionable medieval legend of a widow named Albana, who is said to have given part of her villa to the Church in Trier.¹⁰⁹ In reality, the remains of various tombs and monuments, some grander than others, that Cüppers discovered are precisely what we would ordinarily expect to find in a graveyard of a city as important as Trier. On balance, therefore, it is entirely likely that St Eucharius was already the focus of the city's first saint cult by the fourth century, although excavations have so far failed to identify anything structural that proves that this was the case.

¹⁰⁸Cüppers, 'Trier – St Matthias', in Cüppers (ed.) *Rheinland-Pfalz*, archaeological section, pp. 637-9. Weber has revealed that another building of 20m x 8m has been excavated and should be regarded as an alternative possibility, although the findings have not been published: Weber, 'Zeugnisse', p. 453.

¹⁰⁹*Vita SS. Eucharrii, Valerii et Materni*, III, 13, p. 920; *Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, catalogue, no. 92, pp. 205-6; Heinen, *Frühchristliches Trier*, pp. 60-2; Weber, 'Zeugnisse', pp. 419-21.

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 2.4: Site of the church of St Eucharius in Trier. Adapted from L. Clemens, 'St Matthias', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe in Trier* (Trier, 2005), p. 137

Eucharius' fourth-century successors, Maximinus and Paulinus, became 'prime candidates' for recognition as saints because of their involvement in efforts to establish and maintain orthodoxy during the Arian controversy.¹¹⁰ They were essentially venerated at the same site in the northern graveyard, since the current church of St Paulin and former abbey of St Maximin are located less than two hundred metres apart. Gregory of Tours' writings are our earliest textual evidence for the existence of a cult of Maximinus, who died in c. 346. Gregory describes St Maximinus as 'an effective advocate' with God on behalf of Trier's Christians, and recounts tales of miracles, including one in which a dishonest priest named Arbogast, perhaps a relative of the eponymous count of the 470s, disputed with a Frank in the presence of King Theudebert

¹¹⁰Handley, 'Beyond Hagiography', p. 190.

(533-548). Upon the king's request, the sinful priest swore an oath of affirmation on the tomb of St Maximinus, and died shortly thereafter.¹¹¹

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 2.5: Church of St Maximinus in Trier. Adapted from W. Weber, 'St Maximin', in *Rettet das archäologische Erbe in Trier* (Trier, 2005), p. 131

Handley warns us of the dangers of taking Gregory's words at face-value; he 'did not hesitate in multiplying the miraculous'.¹¹² There are, however, important reasons to believe that the cult of St Maximinus, like that of St Eucharius, actually had its origins as early as the fourth century. In terms of its building history, the late antique *memoria* of St Maximinus is quite well understood, since the remains of the building are preserved under the deconsecrated Benedictine abbey church of St Maximin. As Ristow has warned, however, it is difficult at present to assign anything other than broad chronological parameters to the various construction phases that have been identified, since work with the finds from excavations carried out in 1936-40, 1958-9, and 1978-90

¹¹¹Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 91, trans. R. Van Dam (Liverpool, 1988), p. 95.

¹¹²Handley, 'Beyond Hagiography', p. 191.

is ongoing.¹¹³ The first phase of activity on the site is marked by a building dated by Cüppers, on the grounds of building technique, to the late third century. Like the tomb of St Eucharius, Cüppers identified this building as part of a villa.¹¹⁴ Once again, this would be rather peculiar, since the building's location in one of Trier's extra-mural graveyards suggests that it was always a burial place.¹¹⁵ In the early fourth century, the site also included a rectangular hall orientated north-south, constructed partly out of *spolia*, a further grave chapel close to the west containing four sarcophagi, and a mausoleum.¹¹⁶ Next, in a construction phase dated only imprecisely by individual burials and stratified finds to the mid-fourth century, the northern and western walls of the rectangular hall were removed and a substantial further hall was added to the west, incorporating the temple-like building. The thickness of the walls suggests that this building, which, as we shall see, was probably Maximinus' *memoria*, had an elaborate upper elevation. The building was filled with sarcophagi, and has no traces of a floor surface, either because it is lost, or, more simply, because the building was intended purely as a burial place and, as such, never received a proper floor. In the northern part of the building were smaller rooms that could have served as private burial chambers.¹¹⁷ Subsequent extensions, perhaps in the later fourth century, then created a large, three-aisled basilica, with sandstone columns clad or painted to look like marble or granite. This decoration reveals a desire to create an illusion of grandeur and suggests that the interior of the building was intended to be seen, but the floor was again filled with sarcophagi, some of which protruded above the ground, so it is unlikely that the

¹¹³Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 203. The most comprehensive publication of finds to date is A. Neyses, *Die Baugeschichte der ehemaligen Reichsabtei St Maximin* (Trier, 2001).

¹¹⁴Cüppers, 'Trier – St Maximin', in Cüppers (ed.), *Rheinland-Pfalz*, archaeological section, p. 642; *Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, catalogue, no. 118, p. 233.

¹¹⁵Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, pp. 203-4; Weber, 'Zeugnisse', pp. 454-5.

¹¹⁶Cüppers, 'Trier – St Maximin', in Cüppers (ed.), *Rheinland-Pfalz*, archaeological section, p. 642.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 643; Weber, 'Zeugnisse', p. 455.

building was as yet used for liturgical purposes.¹¹⁸ The piecemeal expansion of this building is probably a marker of the growth of local piety in Trier, as opposed to a state- or individually sponsored project such as we have seen was the case at the cathedral. Affluent individuals might have contributed to financing the measures as an expression of their devotion, and in order to secure for themselves an *ad sanctos* burial place.



Figure 2.6: A column painted to look like marble, discovered during excavations of the church of St Maximin. Copyright author.

There can be little doubt that this structure housed the venerated tomb of St Maximinus, despite Ristow's cautionary note that the archaeology does not show whether or not the bishop was actually buried here.¹¹⁹ Although neither the precise location of Maximinus' burial nor his sarcophagus can be identified amongst the many others discovered in the building, the modern association of the site with St Maximin and the high concentration of burials in the immediate area are persuasive indications to this effect. Additionally, the sequence of building measures described above, involving the gradual elaboration and extension of a single tomb through the incorporation of

¹¹⁸Cüppers, 'Trier – St Maximin', in Cüppers (ed.), *Rheinland-Pfalz*, archaeological section, p. 644; Weber, 'Zeugnisse', pp. 455-7; *Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, catalogue, no. 118, pp. 233-4; Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 204. In terms of more concrete dating evidence, James mentions a coin from Arcadius' reign (395-408), which was found in the masonry of a crypt located at the eastern end of the complex, and which offers a *terminus post quem* for that part of the structure: J. E. James, *Early Christian Cathedral Architecture in Trier* (Indiana, 1993), p. 257.

¹¹⁹Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, pp. 205-6.

other *memoriae*, is precisely the type of pattern modern scholarship indicates we should expect to find at a site housing the relics of a saint.¹²⁰



Figure 2.7: Sarcophagi under the church of St Maximin. The building was densely filled with sarcophagi, many of which were stacked on top of one another. Copyright author.

The origins of the nearby cult of St Paulinus (d. 358) are comparatively difficult to establish, since, unlike Eucharius and Maximinus, Paulinus is not mentioned by Gregory of Tours, and the area underneath the current church bearing his name has not been subject to extensive archaeological investigations, although one crypt of late antique date has been identified.¹²¹ A probably sixth-century inscription commemorating a sub-deacon named Ursinianus has been regarded as the earliest implicit reference to the cult of St Paulinus, since it was found in the immediate area of the building thought to be Paulinus' *memoria*, and records that Ursinianus was buried *ad sanctos*. The inscription states that: 'the bones of Ursinianus the sub-deacon rest

¹²⁰Crook, 'Enshrinement', pp. 189-90.

¹²¹Weber, 'Zeugnisse', p. 460.

under this tomb, who deserved to be associated with the graves of the saints, and whom neither the fury of hell nor the fierce punishment will harm'.¹²² At first glance, one might assume the reference to 'saints' in the plural denotes Paulinus and Maximinus, especially given the provenance of the inscription. However, its interpretation is not necessarily so straightforward. The sixth-century date of the inscription means that another extremely important figure from the Church in Trier, who had only recently been interred in the northern graveyard, may be considered an additional candidate: Nicetius.¹²³ This means that we must admit the possibility, albeit unlikely, that the use of the plural does not include Paulinus.

The first unequivocal references to the cult of St Paulinus are, therefore, the considerably later and somewhat problematic *Vitae* of bishops Agricius (314-329), Paulinus, and Felix (c. 386-399), which suggest that Paulinus' cult had its origins in the late fourth century, when his remains were returned to Trier from Phrygia, where he died in exile. The versions of the *Vitae* differ, however, on who should be held responsible for Paulinus' repatriation, since the latest *Vitae* of both Paulinus and Felix, written after the opening of the crypt in 1072, claim that Felix was the orchestrator, whilst the earliest *Vita* of Paulinus, written in the second half of the tenth century, maintains that it was a collective endeavour carried out by the Christian population of Trier. The earliest *Vita* of Felix makes no comment on the manner of Paulinus' repatriation.¹²⁴ The textual tradition that Felix constructed a *memoria* for Paulinus has achieved some credence amongst historians, and its credibility is bolstered by the

¹²²Ursiniano subdiacono sub hoc tumulo ossa / quiescent, qui meruit sanctorum sociari sepulc[ra] / quem nec tartarus furens nec poena saeva nocebi[t]. / hunc titulum posuit Ludula dulcissima coniux. / r(ecessit) (ante diem) V K(alendas) D(ecembres). viixit annis XXXIII': Gose, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften*, no. 466, p. 70; *RICG* I, no. 170, pp. 426-30, which dates the inscription to the eighth century; *CIL* XIII, no. 3787. Translation after Crook, *Architectural Setting*, p. 16, note 74.

¹²³Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 92, p. 96.

¹²⁴*De Sancto Felice Archiepiscopo Trevirensi*, II, 6, p. 623 = *BHL* 2892; *BHL* 2893; *Vita S. Paulini ep. Treverensis*, II, 13-16, *AA SS Aug. VI* (Antwerp, 1743), p. 678 = *BHL* 6562; *BHL* 6563; *Vita S. Agricii ep. Treverensis*, II, 12, *AA SS Ian. II*, p. 57; F. -J. Heyen, *Das Stift St Paulin zu Trier* (Berlin, 1972), p. 268.

existence of a coffin in cedar wood, as commonly used in the late antique East, which is believed to have housed Paulinus' remains.¹²⁵ The coffin, dated to the fourth century on stylistic grounds and decorated with silver fittings bearing Christograms and other Christian imagery and expressions, was housed in a late antique crypt under the church of St Paulinus, and was opened in 1883. Inside, the remains of a garment were found that tests have determined to be of eastern origin and late antique date.¹²⁶ All of the indications therefore suggest that the coffin did indeed belong to Paulinus, and may even have been the same one in which his remains were repatriated. Thus, although we cannot yet definitively confirm that a cult of St Paulinus existed in Late Antiquity, it certainly seems a strong possibility.

In Cologne, meanwhile, Severinus is the only local bishop who came to be regarded as a saint in Late Antiquity. Although we have no textual reference to a church or *memoria* associated with him, one might assume that the veneration of his relics began in the decades immediately following his death, since this would be the most obvious and logical explanation of how memory of him was perpetuated until Gregory of Tours' time. Severinus' precise date of death is unknown, but Gregory mentions him in his account of the death of Martin of Tours, and thereby provides a *terminus post quem* of late 397.¹²⁷ Archaeological evidence suggests that Severinus' cult may always have been focused at the site upon which the church bearing his name stands today, since this site, in Cologne's southern graveyard, saw a number of phases of building work in Late Antiquity. The first of these phases may antedate Severinus' death, prompting Fremersdorf, the building's excavator from the 1920s to the 1950s, to

¹²⁵See, for example: Cüppers, 'Trier – Paulinuskirche', in Cüppers (ed.), *Rheinland-Pfalz*, archaeological section, pp. 636-7; Heyen, *Das Stift St Paulin*, pp. 268-9.

¹²⁶*Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, catalogue, no. 127, pp. 239-240; Weber, 'Zeugnisse', p. 461.

¹²⁷Severinus heard a chorus of angels singing upon the death of St Martin: Gregory of Tours, *The Miracles of the Bishop St Martin*, I, 4, p. 206.

speculate that it may have housed the remains of early fourth-century martyrs. There is, however, no evidence that the building was of any importance, either as a burial focus or to Cologne's Christian community, before the fifth, or perhaps even the sixth, century.¹²⁸ Fremersdorf's dating of the first building on the site in Late Antiquity, a small structure with a western apse, to circa 320 should be doubted for two reasons: the building contained a significant quantity of *spolia* from pagan monuments, which are unlikely to have been destroyed in significant numbers at such an early date in the fourth century;¹²⁹ and a nearby burial thought on typological grounds to be of early fourth-century date was discovered deeper in the ground than the walls and graves of the structure, suggesting that the building was of later, mid-fourth-century, date at the earliest.¹³⁰

The approximate *terminus ante quem* for the first phase of building is provided by a floor surface dated to the mid-fifth century, which overlaid several sarcophagi. It is possible, therefore, that Bishop Severinus, who is known only through the aforementioned reference to him by Gregory of Tours, was interred in an existing structure, built in the fourth century. On the other hand, it is equally credible that construction took place as late as the first half of the fifth century, and that the building was intended from the outset to serve as the bishop's *memoria*.¹³¹ In any case, as at St Maximinus' church in Trier, the subsequent series of building measures carried out to extend and enhance the structure imply that its significance grew during the fifth and sixth centuries, in accordance with the developments we might expect if the building did indeed house the remains of an individual who had come to be regarded as a saint. A second phase of building saw the construction of a narthex (3.5 metres by 18 metres)

¹²⁸F. Fremersdorf, 'Ergebnisse der Forschungen bei der St Severinskirche in Köln', in *Neue Ausgrabungen in Deutschland*, pp. 330-1, 334.

¹²⁹W. Schmidt-Bleibtreu, *Das Stift St Severin in Köln* (Bonn, 1980), p. 39.

¹³⁰Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 133.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p. 133.

across the full width of the original structure. The building was also extended to the north and south, possibly to create a three-aisled basilica. Clear dating evidence for this phase is lacking, and archaeologists' suggestions, informed primarily by the locations, forms and contents of burials found within the building, range from the end of the fourth century to sometime before 600.¹³² Thereafter, possibly in the second half of the sixth century, as suggested by one of the site's excavators, Pääffgen, a simply constructed atrium was added, a floor was put down in the main church, and a podium was installed. As Pääffgen suggests, this podium might conceivably have been where Severinus' relics were kept.¹³³ The building's importance to Cologne's inhabitants is confirmed by the installation of numerous graves, including some of mid-fifth-century date furnished with expensive grave goods.¹³⁴

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Figure 2.8: Church of St Severinus in Cologne. Adapted from V. Bierbrauer, 'Romanen im fränkischen Siedelgebiet', in R. Kaiser (ed.), *Die Franken: Roms Erben und Wegbereiter Europas* (Mainz, 1996), p. 115

This evidence is admittedly not conclusive proof that a cult of St Severinus developed from as early as the fifth century, but, as at the sites associated with Sts

¹³²Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, pp. 246-247; B. Pääffgen, 'Die Ausgrabungen in St Severin zu Köln und ihre Bedeutung für die Christliche Archäologie im Rheinland', in Ristow (ed.), *Neue Forschungen zu den Anfängen des Christentums*, pp. 182-3; Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 134.

¹³³Pääffgen, 'St Severin', pp. 183-4.

¹³⁴Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 138; Fremersdorf, 'Ergebnisse der Forschungen', p. 337; Pääffgen, 'St Severin', p. 183.

Eucharius and Maximinus in Trier, it is nonetheless an important indication to that effect. As such, the cult of Severinus may be vital evidence for the continuity of Christianity in Cologne during the period in which no bishops are known. However, there is a major problem with dating the cult of St Severinus to the fifth century: as we have seen, Severinus has no known successors of that period to whom one can attribute the promotion or maintenance of his cult, and, in the turbulent times of the fifth century, it is difficult to envisage who else might have been in a position to do so. As such, we should avoid setting too much stall by the possible indications of a cult at this site in the fifth century, and must remain mindful of the various other signs that the nascent development of Christianity in Cologne was halted at that time.

Gregory of Tours also provides our earliest clear evidence for the existence of a sixth-century saint cult at the site that now houses the church of St Gereon in Cologne. In recounting a miracle through which Bishop Ebregisel of Cologne was cured of a headache, Gregory describes the bishop sending a deacon to the ‘Church of the Golden Saints’, where he collected some dust from a well or pit in the middle of the church, into which the Theban martyrs were said to have been thrown after their death.¹³⁵ Gregory’s reference to the ‘Golden Saints’ is commonly taken to denote the internal decoration of the oval main room, where gilt *tesserae* that must once have been part of an elaborate mosaic have been found.¹³⁶ No trace of the well has been discovered during excavations, despite Gregory’s assertion that it was located ‘in the middle of the church’, but then it would probably be unwise to rely upon Gregory for topographical precision. The saints themselves, meanwhile, must have been invented, or their relics translated to Cologne from elsewhere, since the Theban legion is not known to have

¹³⁵Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, 61, trans. R. Van Dam (Liverpool, 1988), p. 85.

¹³⁶Brown, *Cult*, p. 4, suggests that such gilt or shimmering decoration reflected the light cast from candelabra, and was a relatively common internal decoration for grand *memoriae*. For more on the decoration of St Gereon, see below, pp. 165-6.

ever been in the vicinity of the Rhine frontier, and the martyrdom of its members is usually said to have taken place in Agaune, in modern Switzerland.¹³⁷ Epigraphic evidence from Cologne itself appears to substantiate Gregory's claim of a sixth-century cult at St Gereon, since Deckers notes that all the inscriptions produced in Cologne which can, in his view, be ascribed a probable fifth- to sixth-century or sixth- to seventh-century date were found in its vicinity.¹³⁸ It is, moreover, very likely that renovation work in the building took place in the sixth century, under the direction of Bishop Carentinus. In his poem honouring the bishop, Venantius Fortunatus describes his construction or reconstruction of a 'golden temple' (*aurea templa*), including the installation of galleries. The similarity between Fortunatus' description and that of Gregory of Tours implies that the building to which Fortunatus referred was St Gereon's church.¹³⁹

Clearly, then, at some point between its construction in the fourth century and its restoration by Bishop Carentinus, the building known today as St Gereon's church became associated with a cult of Theban martyrs. Whilst we can only guess at how and when this might have happened, there are some clues that point to the *inventio* of the saints or the translation of their relics in the second half of the sixth century. In the first place, such a date would make contextual sense, since the discovery or rediscovery of local saints began to take off in Gaul from the later fifth century, but, as we have seen, Cologne had no bishops of this period to whom we might attribute the unearthing or procurement of the martyrs' relics. It also had very little memory of its own early

¹³⁷Gregory refers to them elsewhere as the 'Agaune martyrs': *History*, X, 31, p. 534. Gregory explicitly claims that the soldiers were martyred in Cologne, on the site of the church, but this is probably an example of Gregory's use of creative license: Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, 61, p. 85.

¹³⁸J. G. Deckers, 'St Gereon in Köln. Ausgrabungen 1978/79', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 25 (1982), p. 128.

¹³⁹Venantius Fortunatus, *De Pontifice Carentino Coloniae*, line 21, p. 68.

bishops, who could otherwise have served as cult foci in their own right.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, we know that this form of saint-making was current in Cologne in the late sixth century, since Gregory of Tours described how Ebregisel was responsible for discovering the lost relics of a martyr named Mallosus in Birten, near Xanten, and for erecting a church in his honour.¹⁴¹ Ebregisel obviously cannot have been similarly responsible for identifying the Theban martyrs in Cologne, since Carentinus' building measures at the church of St Gereon suggest that their discovery antedates, or dates to, his episcopate. In light of this, it seems likely that Carentinus himself is the bishop to whom we should attribute the discovery or acquisition of the relics and the initial promotion of the cult. He is not merely the only known predecessor of Ebregisel for almost two centuries, and therefore the only identifiable possible candidate, but he also had a clearly-established connection with the church in question through the building work he commissioned there.¹⁴²

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Figure 2.9: Church of St Gereon in Cologne. Adapted from H. Ament, 'Frühe Funde und archäologische Erforschung der Franken im Rheinland', in R. Kaiser (ed.), *Die Franken: Roms Erben und Wegbereiter Europas* (Mainz, 1996), p. 23

¹⁴⁰Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum', p. 25.

¹⁴¹Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, 62, pp. 86-7. As Brown points out, this discovery of martyrial remains followed the example set by Ambrose of Milan in the fourth century: *Cult*, p. 39.

¹⁴²Duchesne, *Fastes III*, p. 179.

The building history of the site of St Gereon's church is rather better understood than are the origins of the cult with which it became associated. The magnificent building was constructed in the fourth century, and its location, in Cologne's oldest extra-mural Roman graveyard, on a minor road around 350 metres to the north-west of the city wall, obviously suggests that it was originally a mausoleum or *memoria*.¹⁴³ In terms of date, a clear *terminus post quem* is offered by a coin of Constans contained within the foundations of a pillar on the north side of the main building.¹⁴⁴ On account of the discovery of several more coins dated to shortly before the mid-fourth century and no coins of the Valentinianic dynasty, a date of circa 350 to 365 has been suggested.¹⁴⁵ The building complex consisted of a main building to the east, an ante-room, and an atrium to the west, and made use of a significant amount of *spolia*.¹⁴⁶ The main building was oval and was orientated on an east-west axis, with four conch-shaped niches to the north and south and a larger niche or apse at the eastern end.¹⁴⁷ Its interior was spectacularly decorated. In the southern niche nearest to the ante-room, pieces of yellow-flecked marble cladding were found roughly inserted into the wall, whilst the discovery of pieces of red porphyry from Egypt and green porphyry from Greece suggests other walls were clad in similarly luxurious imported stone. It is not clear whether these expensive foreign materials were brought in especially for this project, though it is likely that some at least were being reused.¹⁴⁸ Large pieces of late antique mosaic floor were also found, made of large and sometimes irregular red brick, yellow

¹⁴³H. Hellenkemper, 'Köln – Kultbauten (christlich)', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 487; K. H. Krüger, *Königsgrabkirchen der Franken, Angelsachsen und Langobarden bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1971), p. 90.

¹⁴⁴A. Von Gerkan, 'St Gereon in Köln', *Germania* 29 (1951), p. 215. The coin was embedded in a votive inscription to Isis, and is dated to c. 346.

¹⁴⁵U. Verstegen, 'Spätantike Grabbau oder Kirche?', in Ristow (ed.), *Neue Forschungen zu den Anfängen des Christentums*, p. 142.

¹⁴⁶Verstegen suggests around five hundred and fifty pieces: Verstegen, 'Spätantike Grabbau', p. 134.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 132.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 140.

and white limestone and black marble tiles.¹⁴⁹ There must likewise have been extensive wall mosaics, perhaps above the niches, since approximately eighteen hundred individual mosaic tiles have been unearthed, made out of coloured and gilt glass and marble.¹⁵⁰ There is, however, no clear indication that the building was of any significance to the city's Christian community at this time, since of the twenty-three inscriptions to have been found in the area, only seven may be from as early as the fourth century, and only four of these have the '*hic iacet/it*' formula, which is our strongest hint in Cologne that the deceased may have been Christian.¹⁵¹ The only clue from the building itself that it may have been to commemorate a Christian is its orientation on an east-west axis, but this is not, in itself, necessarily meaningful.

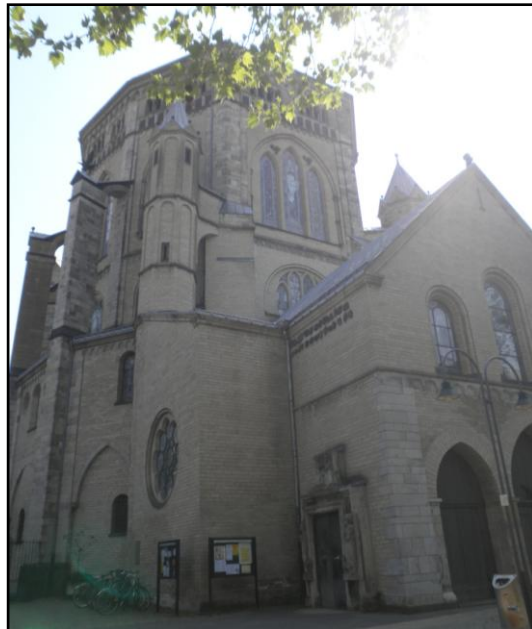


Figure 2.10: The modern-day church of St Gereon, which preserves the octagonal shape of the fourth-century main building. Copyright author.

¹⁴⁹Deckers, 'St Gereon', pp. 116-17.

¹⁵⁰Verstegen, 'Spätantike Grabbau', pp. 138-9.

¹⁵¹These figures are based on dates assigned to inscriptions by Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', pp. 649-705. See also Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, pp. 116-117. The lack of evidence for a Christian use of the building has not prevented it being widely interpreted as such; see, for example: Esmonde Cleary, *Roman West*, pp. 176-7.

The site in Cologne that became the church of St Ursula, located around 500 metres to the north of the city walls, demonstrates no clear evidence of the existence of an associated saint cult in the fourth or fifth centuries, although the conversion of an existing building to Christian liturgical use in the sixth century, marked by the installation of an ambo and solea, certainly suggests that it had previously been of some importance to the city's Christian community. The first structure on the site was an apsidal hall, for which an initial Christian function cannot be conclusively established. The area has produced no Christian inscriptions that have been conclusively dated to the fourth century, and only a very small number of burials with explicitly Christian finds, alongside a greater number of unfurnished graves, the east-west orientation of which suggests that they may have been Christian, although this cannot be confirmed.¹⁵² The chronology of this earliest building is also more imprecise than that of St Gereon or St Severin, such that it can only be broadly dated to the fourth or fifth century.¹⁵³ This situation is not helped by the existence of two features suggestive of entirely conflicting dates. On one hand, the building has the same orientation as Roman graves of the third and fourth centuries, suggesting a fourth-century date. On the other hand, the manner of construction is suggestive of a date later than the fourth century, since the technique used to construct the foundations was rudimentary and without mortar, whilst the upper courses were mortared but featured significant amounts of *spolia*.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵²Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', pp. 706-13; G. Nürnberger, 'Die frühchristlichen Baureste der Kölner Ursula-Kirche', in Ristow (ed.), *Neue Forschungen zu den Anfängen des Christentums*, p. 164.

¹⁵³Nürnberger, 'Die frühchristlichen Baureste', pp. 155, 159, and 163-164, says that rough dating through relative chronology can be achieved. Ceramic fragments found in a layer associated with the first building have been dated to the fourth century, whilst a child's grave built up against the already-completed apse has been dated to the fourth or fifth century, through comparison with other similar graves.

¹⁵⁴Hellenkemper, 'Köln – Kultbauten (christlich)', in Horn (ed.), *Nordrhein-Westfalen*, archaeological section, p. 486.

(Image removed for copyright reasons)

Figure 2.11: Church of St Ursula in Cologne. Adapted from G. Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne* (Cologne, 2003), p. 254

The reason for the building's conversion to Christian liturgical use is unknown, since it certainly cannot be explained on the basis of the legend associated with the church from the ninth century, which describes the martyrdom of a large group of virgins led by a maiden named Ursula.¹⁵⁵ This tale appears likely to have been stimulated by an epitaph, dated to the fifth or sixth century and rediscovered close to the church building, which commemorated Ursula, an 'innocent virgin'.¹⁵⁶ It is lent support by another inscription, which records the renewal of the church from its foundations by a nobleman named Clematius, and mentions a cult of virgin saints. Despite some claims that this inscription was produced in Late Antiquity and later re-carved, it should be seen as a new Carolingian creation, perhaps produced in the context of the emergence of the Ursula legend.¹⁵⁷ This is confirmed by Levison and Nürnberger's convincing comparisons of the language of the inscription with the '*Sermo in Natale*' in honour of

¹⁵⁵N. Gauthier, 'Origine et premiers développements de la légende de Sainte Ursule à Cologne', *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions* 117, 1 (1973), p. 108.

¹⁵⁶Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, p. 106.

¹⁵⁷Gauthier, 'Sainte Ursule à Cologne', pp. 111-12; Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, p. 106; Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', p. 768; *CIL* XIII, no. 1313. The text of the inscription reads: '*Divinis flammis visionib(us) frequenter / admonit(us) et virtutis magnae mai- / estatis martyrii caelestium virgin(um) / imminentium ex partib(us) orientis / exhibitus pro voto Clematius V(ir) C(larissimus) de / proprio in loco suo hanc basilicam / voto quod debebat a fundamentis / restituit si quis autem supertantam / maiestatem huius basilicae ubi sanc- / tae virgines pro nomine XP(is)T(i) san- / guinem suum fuderunt corpus alicuius / deposuerit exceptis virginib(us) sciat se / sempiternis tartari ignib(us) puniendum*'.

St Ursula and her followers, which was preached in the church on their feast day at some point in the first half of the tenth century, probably in conjunction with a building phase.¹⁵⁸ At the time of its production, the late antique inscription for the virgin Ursula was merely a family's memorial to their deceased daughter, but the inspiration that it provided for the martyr legend that emerged in association with the church is obvious. Thus, although the building's conversion to liturgical use makes it appear probable that an unknown saint cult existed in Late Antiquity at the site of the church that now bears the name of Ursula, it appears that the memory of this cult was lost by the Carolingian period, prompting the invention of the new legend.

To summarise, a genuine and significant disparity almost certainly existed between Trier and Cologne in terms of when and under what circumstances their saint cults and associated churches developed. In Trier, the cults of Sts Eucharius, Maximinus, and Paulinus appear to have developed strikingly early, in the fourth century. This is persuasively suggested by the numbers of inscriptions and burials discovered in the immediate areas of the sites associated with the saints, and by written sources confirming that ideas of sanctity were current in the city at that time. Cologne's saint cults, on the other hand, appear likely to have originated in the fifth or sixth century in the case of the cult of St Severinus, and in the sixth century at the sites known today by the names of St Ursula and St Gereon. This sheds important light on a number of issues and questions raised in this chapter.

First and foremost, the disparity in terms of the cults' dates of origin implies that we need to question how far Christianity was able to act as a vehicle for continuity in cities in the Rhineland in the post-Roman period. Although the religion certainly seems

¹⁵⁸W. Levison, 'Das Werden der Ursula-Legende', *Bonner Jahrbücher* 132 (1927), pp. 5-6; Nürnberger, 'Die frühchristlichen Baureste', pp. 151, 155.

to have had potential to act as an important form of urban continuity in Trier, it is much harder to claim this was the case in Cologne, where no fifth-century bishops are known, and the veneration of St Severinus at this time is no more than a possibility.

Additionally, we must consider how far modern scholarly accounts of the cult of the saints are really applicable to Trier and Cologne; whereas such accounts often date the pivotal period for the growth of the cult of the saints to the fifth century, placing it in the context of social and political change, the cults of our cities were respectively very early and somewhat late in relation to this general trend, and usually developed in the context of comparative political stability.¹⁵⁹

In terms of understanding why the saint cults and extra-mural churches of Trier and Cologne developed at such markedly different dates, we must evidently think more carefully about how a city's specific context, and in particular its status and function within the Empire, could influence the development of its saint cults and the types of saints venerated. In Trier, the convincingly-attested, unusually early origins of the cults, particularly for cults of episcopal saints, are most plausibly explained by the particular set of circumstances that existed in the city in the fourth century. Imperial patronage accelerated and exaggerated all aspects of the process of Christianisation, to the extent that by the mid-fourth century, the city not only had renowned bishops and an enormous, imperially sponsored cathedral, but also a large and affluent Christian community, familiar with ideas of sanctity. The effects of this far outlasted imperial withdrawal; the cults persisted thereafter, despite the upheaval of the fifth century, and this ensured that the city's Christian community in the sixth century felt itself adequately supplied with purely local spiritual patrons, and its leaders did not feel any need to invent further martyrs. In the militarised frontier city of Cologne, by contrast, all

¹⁵⁹On the relative stability of the political situation in the fourth-century Rhineland, see above, pp. 21-33.

of the evidence suggests that Christianity developed more slowly, and that the city did not have any saint cults before the fifth century at the earliest. By that time, political turmoil and the apparent absence of episcopal leadership may have caused the city's remaining Christian community to forget its history and even the identity of all of its early bishops, aside from Severinus. As a result, Severinus was the city's only episcopal saint, whilst demand for local spiritual patrons by the sixth century prompted the living bishops to invent martyrs, whose relics they translated into extra-mural churches.

It is interesting, moreover, to note that the origins of these buildings that served as churches and *loca sanctorum* - the topographical foci for the cities' saint cults - in Trier and Cologne were markedly dissimilar. Whereas the church of St Maximinus in Trier appears to have begun as the individual or family tomb in which the bishop's remains were housed, before undergoing various extensions to meet demand for a larger and grander building, the Theban martyrs of Cologne were probably always venerated in a magnificent *memoria*, which may or may not have had a prior connection to the city's Christian community, but which was clearly appropriated by the Church, perhaps through the convenient discovery of martyrial remains on its site. In other cases, including probably Paulinus' church in Trier and Mallosus' church built by Ebregisel in Birten, churches were constructed from scratch by bishops who had discovered or acquired the saint's relics. It is possible to detect a pattern here: where cults developed at the tombs of individuals who had been buried in one of the city's cemeteries soon after their death, the building at which the cult was venerated grew gradually out of the original *memoria*. If, on the other hand, relics were discovered or translated by the city's living bishop, they were more commonly interred in a grand building, sometimes purpose-built, from the outset.

The obvious correlation between episcopal authority and the establishment of churches and saint cults in Trier and Cologne also reveals something of the local dimension of episcopal power, which is familiar elsewhere, but otherwise largely absent from the evidence for these two cities. We can now establish that the construction or renovation of churches and the promotion of saint cults were important manifestations of the bishop's authority within his own city. Episcopal involvement in such activities is explicitly revealed in some cases, such as Felix's construction of St Paulinus' church in Trier, Carentinus' building measures at St Gereon, or Ebregisel's building of Mallosus' church at Birten. In other instances, circumstantial indications suggest the bishop's likely involvement. For example, Maximinus' successors in Trier are most likely to have been responsible for the various extensions to his *memoria* in the fourth century. As we shall see, however, the circumstances underlying individual bishops' decisions to promote the cults of the saints were diverse, and this requires closer consideration if we are to clearly understand the relationship between episcopal and saintly power in Trier and Cologne.

Having investigated the origins of the episcopal and funerary churches of Trier and Cologne, it remains to examine what evidence exists concerning the social significance of the cults with which they were associated. This will, it is hoped, enable us to determine how far the Christian religion was able to act as a vehicle for continuity into the post-Roman period in the cities, and whether the saints can be seen to have fulfilled the roles attributed to them in modern scholarship. As has been implied, promoting saint cults was an important means by which bishops sought to consolidate and legitimise their power in Trier and Cologne, particularly in the wake of the collapse of imperial control in the Rhineland and in the early years of Merovingian rule. In Trier, it is significant that the city's saints were all deceased local bishops, since their cults

provided a constant reminder of the importance of the episcopal office, and a basis upon which the living bishop, as successor of the bishop-saints, could claim authority. Bishop Felix (c. 386-399) is the first bishop of Trier shown by our sources to have deliberately sought to associate himself with one of his esteemed predecessors. The two versions of his *Vitae*, one of which is dated to the turn of the eleventh century and the other to after 1072, claim that he had an extra-mural building constructed at the end of the fourth century in which he deposited Paulinus' relics, which had been transferred back to Trier from Phrygia.¹⁶⁰ This claim is at least credible, thanks to the discovery of the coffin that can plausibly have belonged to Paulinus.¹⁶¹ If it could be definitively proven, it would show Felix actively connecting himself with the memory of one of his city's celebrated orthodox bishops, probably as an attempt to enhance his own prestige in light of the predicament he had been put in by Magnus Maximus, and the lasting damage caused to his reputation by the execution of Priscillian.

The inscription commissioned by Bishop Cyrillus of Trier in the mid-fifth century to record the altar he had built in honour of Eucharius and Valerius provides firmer evidence of a bishop of Trier seeking to associate himself with his saintly predecessors, both in life, and, as he intended, posthumously.¹⁶² Through commissioning such works, Cyrillus was able both to enhance his prestige in a way that was independent of secular political authorities, and to display the resources still at his disposal, despite the significant upheavals that had recently beset Trier, reinforcing his position as one of the city's most powerful individuals. It might also be the case that he was promoting a cult favoured by his family; Wood has made a strong case for the

¹⁶⁰*De Sancto Felice Archiepiscopo Trevirensi*, II, 4-6, p. 623 = *BHL* 2892; *BHL* 2893.

¹⁶¹See above, pp. 158-9.

¹⁶²*RICG* I, no. 19, pp. 146-9. To remind ourselves, the text of the inscription reads: '*Quam bene concordia divina potentia iungit / membra sacerdotum, quae ornate locus iste duorum / Eucharium loquitur Valeriumque simul. / Sedem victuris gaudens componere membris, / fratribus hoc sanctis ponens altare Cyrillus, / corporis hospitem sanctus metator adornat*'.

episcopal see of Clermont coming to be monopolised by certain prominent families who associated themselves with particular saints, and it is conceivable that something similar was occurring by the mid-fifth century in Trier.¹⁶³ However, Cyrillus' actions also had significant consequences beyond enhancing his own power. In restoring the church of St Eucharius and installing an altar, presumably to enhance the prominence of the saint's relics, Cyrillus emphasised the importance of the saint's tomb as a focus for spiritual piety, and in so doing, one might suggest that he was responding to some of the social concerns raised by Salvian.¹⁶⁴ A similar project is said to have been undertaken by Marus, Cyrillus' successor bar two, who is described in the early twelfth-century *Gesta Treverorum* as having organised building works to repair damage to St Paulinus' *memoria*.¹⁶⁵ The later date of this text means that it could well be simply perpetuating a local legend without factual basis, whilst extensive excavations under St Paulinus' church, which could verify or disprove its claim, have not yet taken place. Nonetheless, the building works known to have been carried out by Cyrillus at the opposite end of the city certainly create a context in which Marus' renovation of St Paulinus' church seems plausible.

In the sixth century, Bishop Nicetius, despite his powerful position within Merovingian society, invoked the supernatural power of his saintly predecessors in order to protect himself and his flock from a bubonic plague. Gregory of Tours described how, as fears of the plague mounted, a booming voice could be heard reassuring people that Eucharius and Maximinus were protecting the city at its south and north gates respectively, whilst Nicetius, the living bishop, prayed for his city's

¹⁶³I. Wood, 'The Ecclesiastical Politics of Merovingian Clermont', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. P. Wormald et al (Oxford, 1983), pp. 34-57.

¹⁶⁴Salvian's moral concerns have been discussed above, pp. 71-2.

¹⁶⁵*Gesta Treverorum* 23, *MGH SS VIII*, p. 158.

safety from within its walls.¹⁶⁶ A more tangible connection between Nicetius and Maximinus was then created following the sixth-century bishop's death, as he was interred alongside his fourth-century predecessor.¹⁶⁷ Evidently, then, even renowned and well-regarded bishops could achieve greater success and higher esteem by virtue of being seen to be working in conjunction with their city's saints.

It is clear, therefore, that the saint cults of Trier were an important means through which the city's bishops could derive legitimacy and maintain their authority in difficult times. For Felix, we can hypothesise that his promotion of the cult of St Paulinus helped him to overcome his personally difficult position within the Priscillianist and Felician controversies, whilst Cyrillus' promotion of the cult of Eucharius enabled him both to reinforce his own standing and to provide direction to his flock in a politically and socially unstable period for the whole city. Even Nicetius, one of the most renowned bishops of Trier, is said to have benefited from the assistance of his saintly predecessors to protect his city from a deadly pestilence. Importantly, the purely local character of the saint cults provided the bishops with a means of bolstering their positions which was independent of secular political authority, and which was, therefore, in some sense immune to its transformation. These examples of saintly and episcopal collaboration are also an important reminder of the special nature of episcopal power, which combined spiritual and secular elements.¹⁶⁸ The bishop's position as one of his city's most powerful magnates did not derive merely from his reduced number of competitors for local leadership, as city councils disintegrated and central imperial influence in Trier diminished, but also from the spiritual dimension of his authority, which gave him a status and legitimacy that could transcend confusing periods of

¹⁶⁶Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, XVII, 4, pp. 110-11.

¹⁶⁷See above, p. 158.

¹⁶⁸Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, p. 6.

political uncertainty, and which allowed him to invoke the assistance of divine patrons to provide protection from threats no secular ruler could stave off.

Cologne's saint cults, with the exception of the cult of St Severinus, were focused, by contrast, not upon the relics of the city's own early bishops, but upon those of legendary martyrs. As such, the city's bishops could not rely to the same extent as could their counterparts in Trier upon the favourable image of episcopal authority conveyed by the veneration of saintly predecessors. We have no data from Cologne of comparably early date to that which survives from Trier concerning Bishops Felix and Cyrillus, but, nevertheless, two examples suggest that Cologne's living bishops were engaged in comparable efforts to associate themselves with their city's saints by the sixth century. In the first instance, as we have seen, Venantius Fortunatus' poem about Bishop Carentinus appears to indicate his responsibility for building measures carried out at the 'Church of the Golden Saints', now known as St Gereon's.¹⁶⁹ Carentinus' actions are comparable to those of Cyrillus of Trier approximately a century earlier, but the context in which they took place was markedly different. Whereas Cyrillus probably sought to reaffirm the status of the episcopal office in the aftermath of half a century of invasions and incursions and the collapse of imperial power, Carentinus is likely to have been one of the first holders of a re-established episcopal see, who was looking to consolidate his position in local aristocratic society.¹⁷⁰

The second example from Cologne concerns Carentinus' probable successor, Ebregisel, whose association with his city's Theban martyrs came about by virtue of him benefiting directly from their miraculous powers. We have seen how Ebregisel,

¹⁶⁹Venantius Fortunatus, *De Pontifice Carentino Coloniae*, line 21, p. 68; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, 61, p. 85; see above, p. 163

¹⁷⁰ For full discussion of the likelihood that Cologne's episcopal see was abandoned prior to Carentinus' episcopate, see above, pp. 118-21.

when suffering from a headache, sent his deacon to the church to gather dust from a well where the bodies of the fifty Theban martyrs are said to have been thrown. As soon as the dust touched Ebregisel's head, the bishop was cured.¹⁷¹ Whilst the origins of the cult of these Theban martyrs of Cologne are obscure, the essence of Gregory's story of Ebregisel's miraculous recovery with the aid of the saints is likely to be based on a first-hand account; we know that he was personally acquainted with Ebregisel, since they had worked together to resolve the aforementioned scandal involving members of the Merovingian royal family at the Holy Cross nunnery in Poitiers.¹⁷²

These examples indicate that although Christianity may have become moribund in fifth-century Cologne, by the sixth century, the recent invention of the Theban martyrs, the presence of unknown saints at St Ursula's church, and the promotion of St Severinus enabled the city to catch up with Trier, where saints' cults had been developing organically since the fourth century. This provided Cologne's bishops with the same opportunity to bolster their standing within their own community as their counterparts in Trier had long since enjoyed. As such, the cults of the saints, with their particular local significance, may have been an important element in cementing the bishop's authority once the episcopal see of Cologne had been restored, and thereby in organising social relations in the first full century of Merovingian rule.

However, the saint cults of Trier and Cologne were not merely important as instruments through which the cities' bishops could enhance their legitimacy and social standing. The number of burials and early Christian inscriptions discovered in and around the saints' churches is a striking indication of another major reason for the cults' significance; they became a major focus for piety, as ordinary Christians had themselves

¹⁷¹Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, 61, p. 85; see above, p. 162.

¹⁷²Gregory of Tours, *History*, X, 15, p. 503.

buried *ad sanctos*, in the hope of improving their chances of salvation when the Day of Judgement came.¹⁷³ The clearest indication of this is the intensity of burial around the presumed *memoria* of St Maximinus in Trier, where excavations discovered a vast number of sarcophagi stacked several deep within and immediately outside the extensive complex. In places, the burials nearest the surface protruded through the floor of the later church.¹⁷⁴ As we have seen, St Eucharius' relics appear to have provided an equally significant burial focus at a slightly earlier date, with literally thousands of graves installed there.¹⁷⁵

Large concentrations of burials can also be identified inside and immediately outside the churches of St Gereon and, particularly, St Severinus in Cologne. A lesser number have been discovered at the church of St Ursula.¹⁷⁶ However, the most famous and most significant probable example of *ad sanctos* burial from Cologne comes from the cathedral church, where, as we have seen, two graves, of a woman and a young boy, dated to c. 537, were discovered by chance in 1959. These clearly high-status individuals were buried alongside numerous others, whose graves had been robbed centuries before they were excavated.¹⁷⁷ If we accept that these burials are indeed likely to have been *ad sanctos*, it seems most likely that the relics alongside which the aristocrats wished to be interred belonged to St Peter, since this is known to have been the dedication of the cathedral by the mid-seventh century, when, during the episcopate

¹⁷³Handley, 'Beyond Hagiography', p. 197.

¹⁷⁴See above, pp. 155-6.

¹⁷⁵See above, p. 151.

¹⁷⁶St Gereon: Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 117. St Severinus: Päßgen, 'St Severin', p. 183. St Ursula: Nürnberger, 'Die frühchristliche Baureste', p. 164.

¹⁷⁷Doppelfeld, 'Das fränkische Frauengrab', pp. 89-113; Doppelfeld, 'Köln von der Spätantike', pp. 123-4; Hauser, 'Das fränkische Gräberfeld', pp. 438-47; Neuss and Ödiger, *Das Bistum Köln*, pp. 91-2; see above, pp. 146-7.

of Bishop Kunibert, King Sigibert III donated a rural estate to the church of that name in Cologne.¹⁷⁸

Significantly, several inscriptions recording *ad sanctos* burial from both Trier and Cologne serve to validate our interpretation that it was the saints' presence, and the supernatural protection they were believed to offer, that prompted these numerous burials in their churches. In Trier, an aforementioned, probably sixth-century inscription, found near the church of St Paulinus, commemorates a sub-deacon named Ursinianus and records that the deceased 'deserved to be associated with the graves of the saints'.¹⁷⁹ Although this phrasing is, admittedly, slightly opaque, it is reasonable to infer that Ursinianus was buried *ad sanctos*, whilst the use of the plural indicates that the inscription was probably intended to refer to the presence nearby of Sts Paulinus, Maximinus, and possibly Nicetius. Ristow has warned that the vague phrasing used in the inscription does not necessarily substantiate this interpretation, but this is probably over-cautious, and one should remember that the nearby visible presence of the saints' *memoriae* would have clarified the ambiguity in the text.¹⁸⁰ The inscription's expression of the belief that 'neither the fury of hell nor the fierce punishment will harm' Ursinianus is confirmation from Trier itself of the belief that the city's saint cults would protect its inhabitants come the Last Judgement. Ursinianus' epitaph is not an isolated example, since two other incomplete inscriptions, which are too fragmentary to confidently date, similarly allude to the *ad sanctos* burial of the deceased.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸Weyres, 'Die Domgrabung XVI', p. 514.

¹⁷⁹Gose, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften*, no. 466, p. 70; *CIL XIII*, no. 3787; see above, pp. 157-8.

¹⁸⁰Ristow, *Frühes Christentum*, p. 210.

¹⁸¹Gose, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften*, nos. 481 and 482, pp. 76-7; *CIL XIII*, no. 3914. A small number of further inscriptions recording *ad sanctos* burial have been discovered, but are as yet unpublished.

From Cologne, direct confirmation of *ad sanctos* burial is found in only one inscription, of sixth-century date, for a girl whose name is unclear because of damage to her epitaph, but who may have been called Rusufula. The inscription uses the expression ‘associated with the martyrs’ (*sociata martyribus*), with the word ‘*martyribus*’ abbreviated to ‘MS’; an abbreviation unique to Cologne. It is also the only inscription from the city to use the familiar Christian iconography of a Christogram centred between two doves.¹⁸² On the basis of these differences between Rusufula’s epitaph and others found in Cologne, it is possible that her family moved to the city from elsewhere. The precise provenance of this inscription is unknown, but one might reasonably assume that the martyrs to whom it referred were those of the Theban legion; we do not know of any other group of martyrs of similarly early date, and the use of the plural means it cannot have referred to St Severinus.

To summarise, the various saint cults of Trier and Cologne demonstrate important similarities in terms of the roles they fulfilled, and this enables us to create a broad overview of their social importance in the sixth-century Rhineland. By and large, this overview supports many of the points made in modern scholarly accounts of the cult of the saints.¹⁸³ Trier and Cologne’s saint cults can be seen to have offered a source of comfort and support to those living in the cities in the early Merovingian period, by providing healing, protection, and a greater hope of salvation for those buried nearby. Additionally, they could be used by bishops wishing to boost their status, since associating oneself with one of the saints created a perception that one’s episcopate was sanctioned by a higher power. In some ways, however, the evidence from Trier and Cologne fits less neatly with the familiar grand narrative of the development of the cult of the saints, and this reminds us of the importance of taking account of local

¹⁸²Schmitz, ‘Grabinschriften in Köln’, no. 45, pp. 739-41; *CIL* XIII, no. 8486.

¹⁸³See above, pp. 134-5.

circumstances when seeking to understand the cities' saints' cults. Most importantly, the cults in Trier appear to have developed particularly early, having become firmly established in the fourth and early fifth centuries, and to have remained significant burial foci thereafter; Bishops Eucharius, Maximinus, and Paulinus were never forgotten. This means that we can infer from their social roles in the sixth century that they might have been an important source of continuity and support for their city's inhabitants in the troubled fifth century, when we lack a convenient source such as Gregory of Tours to confirm conclusively that this was the case. In contrast, we certainly cannot find such confirmation for Cologne, where there is no convincing evidence for the persistence of a Christian community, save for the possibility that Severinus' cult originated at this time. Cologne's saint cults can certainly be said to have assumed their familiar functions as sources of healing, upholders of episcopal authority, and burial foci in the later sixth century, but not before. Despite the cults of both cities fulfilling similar social needs by the late sixth century, therefore, the trajectories by which they arrived at this point are clearly very different.

2.3 Continuity and change: the epigraphic evidence

Trier has produced the largest volume of inscriptions of any city in Gaul by some distance, with the most recent estimates placing the tally at between 1,100 and 1,300.¹⁸⁴ For every one inscription surviving from Cologne, more than ten are extant from Trier.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the epigraphic evidence from both cities is an excellent, but

¹⁸⁴M. Siede and L. Schwinden, *Inscriptiones Graecae Treverenses: Edition der spätantiken und frühchristlichen griechischen Inschriften in Trier mit Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Trier, 2012), p. 15; H. Merten, 'Christliche Epigraphik und Archäologie in Trier seit ihren Anfängen', *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* (2011), p. 5.

¹⁸⁵A recent study of Cologne's epigraphic evidence by Schmitz dealt with only around 50 inscriptions and substantial fragments: Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln'.

often under-exploited, source of information, which can tell us about many things, including demography, familial relationships, and vernacular language.¹⁸⁶ For the purposes of this chapter, however, it will be used to understand firstly how and why the Christian communities of Trier and Cologne changed over time, and secondly how they responded to changes to their cities and the world around them. It is hoped that this will shed important light on the issues raised at the beginning of this chapter, of how the cities' Christian communities were affected by the tumultuous events of the fifth century, and how far developments in the Christian sphere helped people to view their cities in a new light. Thereafter, inscriptions will provide our means of establishing how closely connected the Christian communities of Trier and Cologne were, and how much exchange of ideas took place between them. This can further illustrate the clear differences between the cities outlined so far in this chapter, and may provide an additional indication of how feasible it is to provide generalised overviews of the process of Christianisation in the Rhineland. It goes almost without saying that the significantly more substantial volume of evidence from Trier makes it easier to achieve these goals, whereas the more limited number of inscriptions means that our conclusions for Cologne must be more tentative. In respect of both cities, our efforts are hampered by the fact that almost no inscriptions can be dated more precisely than to a particular century or, in some cases, half century, and even then usually on general

¹⁸⁶Handley, 'Beyond Hagiography', p. 189.

stylistic grounds, rather than any explicit dating formulae in the inscriptions themselves.¹⁸⁷

In Trier, the weight of evidence makes it possible to trace noticeable differences in the formulae and content of inscriptions between the northern and southern graveyards. Kramer's detailed study of the opening phrases of the inscriptions, although now several decades old, remains a valuable resource. He revealed that epitaphs discovered in the southern graveyard tended to use a narrower and more standardised range of formulae, whereas those from the northern graveyard interpreted a broader range more freely, and more commonly offered additional information, including the day of death. Moreover, certain formulae appear to have dominated in one graveyard, but not the other; Kramer identified seventy-one inscriptions in total beginning with '*hic quiescit/et*', of which forty-two were found in the southern graveyard and only nineteen in the northern graveyard.¹⁸⁸ This suggests that '*hic quiescit/et*' was one of the dominant opening formulae to the south, but for some reason was a less popular choice amongst those who buried their dead to the north.¹⁸⁹ Significantly, Rosenwein's more recent study of the 'emotional communities' of Trier, Clermont, and Vienne offers conclusions that independently support those of Kramer, in terms of perceiving a clear difference in vocabulary choices between the southern and northern graveyards of Trier, despite the

¹⁸⁷Important studies of Cologne's epigraphic evidence include: B. and H. Galsterer, *Die Römischen Steininschriften in Köln* (Cologne, 1975), and supplementary articles as follows: 'Neue Inschriften aus Köln: Funde der Jahre 1974-1979', *Epigraphische Studien* 12 (1981), pp. 225-64; 'Neue Inschriften aus Köln: Funde der Jahre 1981-1982', *Epigraphische Studien* 13 (1983), pp. 167-206; 'Inschriften aus Köln III: Funde der Jahre 1983-1987', *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 20 (1987), pp. 83-109; Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', pp. 643-776. On inscriptions from Trier, see: Gose, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften*; K. Kramer, *Die frühchristlichen Grabinschriften Triers* (Mainz, 1974); H. Merten, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften des Bischöflichen Dom- und Diözesanmuseums Trier* (Trier, 1990); Gauthier and Marrou, *RICG*. A detailed study of the inscriptions discovered in the area of St Maximin in Trier is currently being prepared by H. Merten.

¹⁸⁸The provenance of the remaining ten inscriptions is unknown.

¹⁸⁹Kramer, *Die Grabinschriften Triers*, pp. 10-25. Kramer's study was carried out in 1970, at which time he placed the number of inscriptions at around 1,000. More recent studies have raised this figure to around 1,100-1,300. This means that Kramer's precise figures are out-of-date, but the tally has not increased so dramatically as to invalidate his conclusions.

fact that Rosenwein's focus was not on entry formulae, but rather on the words used to express emotion.¹⁹⁰ In her study, she dealt with fifty-eight inscriptions in the southern graveyard, which used a range of eight different emotion words, of which *carissimus* and *dulcissimus* were by far the most common, with fourteen and twelve appearances respectively. For the northern graveyard, on the other hand, she identified fifty inscriptions displaying nine emotion words, among which *dulcissimus* was by far the most prevalent, at twenty appearances. Interestingly, *carissimus* was dramatically less popular in the northern graveyard, with only three appearances, whilst an alternative tendency emerged to express sorrow, *dolor*, seen eight times.¹⁹¹

Rosenwein stresses that this difference between north and south is unlikely to be down to the existence of two separate, contemporary emotional communities, one to the south of Trier and one to the north.¹⁹² Instead, both she and Kramer, and others, are in agreement that the changes identified above reflect a chronological distinction, and that the shifts in vocabulary accompanied a shift in popularity from the southern graveyard to its northern counterpart around the early fifth century.¹⁹³ This interpretation is supported by general observations of the palaeography of the inscriptions from the Trier corpus.¹⁹⁴ Whereas epitaphs from the north generally are consistent in the style of their lettering, those from the south demonstrate a more varied and differentiated alphabet, wherein certain letters were formed differently in the context of different words.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, with some clear exceptions, one can easily observe that the southern

¹⁹⁰Neither Rosenwein's text, nor her footnotes, nor her select bibliography contain any reference to Kramer's work.

¹⁹¹B. H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2006), pp. 64-5.

¹⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁹³Kramer, *Die Grabinschriften Triers*, p.54; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, pp. 64-5; Handley, 'Beyond Hagiography', p. 197.

¹⁹⁴However, it is important to note that such palaeographic studies are not a failsafe way of dating the inscriptions from Trier, since we lack a sufficient number of precisely dateable examples to enable us to form a sound understanding of stylistic changes: Kramer, *Die Grabinschriften Triers*, p. 8.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 78.

graveyard's epitaphs are generally more neatly carved, whilst those from the north have a heightened propensity towards irregular or untidy lettering.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, of the fourteen epitaphs almost certainly dated to the end of the fifth century or later on the basis of palaeography and formulae, ten were discovered in the northern graveyard, and only two in its southern counterpart.¹⁹⁷

The most likely explanation for this growth in the popularity of the northern graveyard was the development there of the cults of Bishops Maximinus (c. 329-436) and Paulinus (c. 347-358).¹⁹⁸ This is suggested, above all, by the approximate date at which the shift from south to north occurred, and the close correspondence of this date with our evidence for when the cults of the saints are likely to have begun. We have seen how archaeological evidence suggests that the building in which Maximinus' relics were housed had evolved through numerous extensions during the second half of the fourth century, whilst late textual sources describe how Felix had arranged for a new *memoria* to be built nearby at the end of the century, to house the recently-returned relics of St Paulinus. It is possible that people identified more readily with the cults of Sts Maximinus and Paulinus than they did with that of St Eucharius, since their episcopates were within living memory for some, and they were part of the community's relatively recent history. A concentration of inscriptions certainly appears to suggest that imperial officials in particular were drawn to the cult of St Maximinus, perhaps because of his own connections with the imperial household during his lifetime. These imperial officials include a *protector domesticus* and a *palatinus*, whose epitaphs both date from the second half of the fourth century, and possibly a *clarissima femina*,

¹⁹⁶Notable exceptions include: Gose, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften*, no. 4, p. 2, for Amanda; no. 33, p. 11, for Marcus (*CIL* XIII, no. 3858); and no. 68, p. 21, for Ursula (*CIL* XIII, no. 3909) from the southern graveyard; and no. 406, p. 50, for Amantia (*CIL* XIII, no. 3795) from the northern graveyard.

¹⁹⁷The provenance of the other two is unknown: Kramer, *Grabinschriften Triers*, p. 56.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, pp. 64-5; Handley, 'Beyond Hagiography', p. 197.

whose inscription is an original and very personal poem, revealing the death of the woman's child shortly after her own death.¹⁹⁹ Nonetheless, our understanding of the chronology of the building works at St Maximinus' church, and of the shift from the southern graveyard to the northern one, implies that popular devotion to the cults of Sts Maximinus and Paulinus came *after* the construction of grander *memoriae* in their honour by the living bishop or another wealthy patron; local Christians responded to, rather than caused, the introduction of new spiritual patrons. This responsiveness to changes in the city's Christian topography is a powerful indication of the way in which the religion was beginning to influence how people used and conceived of urban space.

The changes over time in the vocabulary and formulae used in the inscriptions are somewhat harder to explain, although they certainly appear to be connected to imperial withdrawal and the subsequent series of barbarian invasions and incursions. Kramer has convincingly shown how, during what he describes as the time of the dissolution of the empire, Trier ceased to be influenced by formulae in common use elsewhere, and began instead to develop its own, distinctive epigraphic vocabulary, which did not spread much beyond the city.²⁰⁰ This is seen, for example, with the formula '*hic requiescit*', which began to appear on inscriptions in Trier in the first half of the fifth century and occurs only very rarely outside the city.²⁰¹ We might speculate that this isolation may also help to explain the wider variety of formulae used from the early fifth century; devoid of information of what was popular elsewhere, people may have made increasingly independent choices. Changes in the popularity of words used to express emotion, meanwhile, may simply be down to changes in fashion within the

¹⁹⁹ *Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, nos. 109, 110, and 112, pp. 224-5, 227; *CIL XIII*, nos. 3681 and 3675; on these imperial officials, also see above, p. 18.

²⁰⁰ Kramer, *Die Grabinschriften Triers*, pp. 16, 21.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47. Examples include: Gose, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften*, no. 29, p. 9; no. 33, p. 11 (*CIL XIII*, no. 3858); no. 402A, p. 49; and no. 450, p. 64.

city, just as we use different words to express ourselves today than twenty years ago. It may be, however, that there was some intangible connection between the difficult times that Trier's residents experienced in the fifth century, and their increasing tendency to express sorrow in inscriptions.

Arguably the most striking and dramatic change in the epigraphic habit in Trier over the course of the fourth to sixth centuries was the astonishing decline in the number of inscriptions produced. Whilst more than a thousand early Christian inscriptions had been discovered in the city by 1970, Kramer was able to date only fourteen to the end of the fifth century or later with relative certainty, ten of which were discovered in the northern graveyard. He saw a further eleven as potentially of this period, of which nine, again, are from the north.²⁰² This remarkable downturn in production is almost certainly explained in part by the departure from Trier of aristocrats associated with the imperial court and praetorian prefecture at the end of the fourth century, since the commissioning of inscriptions is generally held to have been the preserve of the aristocracy. It may also indicate a significant drop in population, perhaps connected to the barbarian attacks of the first half of the fifth century. However, it seems unlikely that demographic change alone can explain so dramatic a falling-off in the production of inscriptions as seems apparent, so we should consider other possible social and cultural factors. It is conceivable, for example, that local people set less store by the Roman practice of commissioning funerary inscriptions once the impetus provided by the imperial presence was removed. Additionally, it may have been that social changes accompanying the end of the empire and the beginning of Merovingian rule brought an end to the widespread literate mentality that had led to the

²⁰²Kramer, *Die Grabinschriften Triers*, p. 56. As we have seen, these figures are now out-of-date thanks to the discovery of in excess of a hundred more inscriptions, but nonetheless suffice to illustrate the point until such time as newer figures become available.

commissioning of so many inscriptions, such that use and appreciation of the written word increasingly became the preserve of the clergy and the very wealthy. This is supported by the evidence of the later inscriptions from Trier, since of the fourteen such epitaphs Kramer identifies, five are too badly damaged for us to properly interpret them, whilst a further five were for clergy, of which two mentioned the deceased's membership of the aristocracy.²⁰³ These include a 'vir venerabiles' (*sic*) named Ludubertus, whose epitaph reveals that he bequeathed his wealth to St Peter and became a cleric; a presbyter and monk named Gerola; and a priest named Hlodericus, whose noble wife commissioned his epitaph.²⁰⁴ Moreover, of the remaining four, two make it clear that the deceased was of high social standing, including one for Numodoal, a 'vir venerabiles adoliscens' (*sic*).²⁰⁵ A final possible supplementary explanation, suggested by Kramer, is that inscriptions came to be carved on wood, rather than on stone, either because wood was a cheaper material or because stone was less available in the post-Roman period, when state-operated quarries no longer supplied the city.²⁰⁶ This seems implausible, however, on the basis that the dereliction of many of Trier's stone buildings, discussed in the following chapter, would have ensured that a significant quantity of worked stone would have been available in the form of *spolia*.

In summary, therefore, there are various possible indications in the epigraphic record of Trier's Christian community responding to changes in their city. On one hand, people reacted to the introduction of new spiritual foci, as the northern graveyard's popularity grew, reflecting the recognition of Maximinus and Paulinus as saints. This implies that despite the emperors' presence in Trier having catalysed conversion to the

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Gose, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften*, no. 29, p. 9; no. 437, p. 59; no. 440, p. 60 (*CIL* XIII, no. 3683).

²⁰⁵ Gose, *Katalog der Frühchristlichen Inschriften*, no. 450, p. 64.

²⁰⁶ Kramer, *Die Grabinschriften Triers*, p. 57.

new imperial religion, people were nonetheless actively engaged with Christianity in its local form, such that it may indeed have offered a source of support and a form of continuity following imperial collapse. On the other hand, the epigraphic evidence also suggests that the city's Christian community was severely affected by political circumstances; changes in the volume and the content of inscriptions appears to reflect changes in the size and composition of the city's population, as many aristocrats departed and the commissioning of funerary epitaphs became the preserve of the clergy and the upper echelons of the local aristocracy.

The much smaller volume of epigraphic evidence from Cologne is problematic, not least because the reduced scope for comparison between inscriptions means that their dates are more often disputed.²⁰⁷ Moreover, many late antique inscriptions from Cologne lack symbols or phrases to allow us to be confident that the deceased was Christian, so any developments we identify should not be considered to pertain exclusively to the city's Christian community. Nonetheless, we are able to draw a number of helpful conclusions. In the first place, inscriptions assigned an earlier date are more likely to have relatively simple and standard content, whilst those allocated a later date commonly feature highly unusual and individual expressions, or misspellings of Latin words. Examples of straightforward inscriptions assigned a comparatively early date include the almost identical epitaphs of Fugilo and Aetherius, which consist of the '*hic iacit/et*' opening, the deceased's age, and the closing phrase '*fidelis/es in pace recessit*', and are dated to the fifth century, and that of Poppia, which is dated to the fourth century and demonstrates both neat carving and simple content but lacks any

²⁰⁷With regard to disputed dating, examples include inscriptions for Catulus, which is dated to the sixth century by Schmitz but to the fourth or fifth century by the Galsterers, and Principius, which is dated to the fifth or sixth century by Schmitz but to the fourth or fifth century by the Galsterers: Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', no. 2, pp. 655-8; no. 30, pp. 721-3. This section consistently adopts the dates suggested by Schmitz, both because the reasoning provided is convincing, and because the publication is recent.

indication that the deceased was Christian.²⁰⁸ The epitaph of a man named Leo is a good example of a later inscription, meanwhile, since its opening phrase, ‘*in oh tumolo*’ is a clear corruption of the phrase ‘*in hoc tumulo*’, whilst its reference to the ides of October misspells ‘*octobris*’ as ‘*ohtuberes*’.²⁰⁹ Unusual expressions found in other later inscriptions include the opening phrase ‘*si quis dignatur recire meo nomine Rusufula dicor*’ (‘if it is deemed worthy by anyone to know my name, it is said ‘Rusufula’), and the phrases ‘*funere captus*’ (‘captured by death’) and ‘*in caelis habetur*’ (‘passing [time] in heaven’).²¹⁰ There are, inevitably, important exceptions to these patterns. The inscription for Viatorinus should be dated to the fourth century, on the basis that the deceased was a soldier who is described as having died fighting the Franks in their territory, and the chronology we established in Chapter One suggests such campaigns across the Rhine did not occur after the fourth century, whereas its lettering would otherwise suggest a later date.²¹¹ Meanwhile, that for Lupassius is assigned a fourth- or early fifth-century date on palaeographic grounds, but contains several highly unusual expressions, including ‘*blanda pietas*’, ‘*mors in pia*’ and ‘*funere tristi*’.²¹² Nonetheless, the overall patterns identified in Cologne’s epigraphic evidence are convincing.

These indications of the evolution of the epigraphic habit in Cologne are quite suggestive, even though they are based on a smaller volume of evidence than one would ideally prefer. First, the individuality of many of Cologne’s inscriptions, particularly those from the later period, may imply that the city, like Trier, became isolated from wider developments in epigraphy in Late Antiquity. The reasons for this isolation were

²⁰⁸Schmitz, ‘Grabinschriften in Köln’, nos. 5 and 24, pp. 666-9 and pp. 709-10 (*CIL* XIII, nos. 8479 and 8477); no. 9, pp. 678-80.

²⁰⁹Schmitz, ‘Grabinschriften in Köln’, no. 6, pp. 670-2; *CIL* XIII, no. 8481.

²¹⁰Schmitz, ‘Grabinschriften in Köln’, no. 45, pp. 739-41 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8486); no. 11, pp. 684-7 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8484); no. 28, pp. 717-8.

²¹¹For Viatorinus’ inscription, see above, pp. 18-19; for the cessation of imperial campaigns across the Rhine by the fifth century, see above, pp. 80-1.

²¹²Schmitz, ‘Grabinschriften in Köln’, no. 29, pp. 719-21; *CIL* XIII, no. 8404.

probably the reduced imperial presence in the region as a whole, and the damaging effects of the invasions and incursions, which may have deterred outsiders from coming to the Rhineland, and certainly prompted some residents to flee.²¹³ The corruptions and misspellings of words, meanwhile, may point to deteriorating levels of literacy in Cologne, to attempts to reflect vernacular language and pronunciation in writing, or to Germanic influence beginning to modify the Latin that was written and spoken in the city.²¹⁴ This may indicate that Roman and non-Roman elements of the population were becoming more closely integrated, as local people recovered from whatever damage had been caused in the attacks Salvian described, and they and the newcomers settled down to adjust to their new social and political circumstances.

Based on the complete or almost complete inscriptions discussed by Schmitz, it is also possible to carry out an analysis of changes in the volume of epigraphic material produced from one century to the next. This analysis is not definitive, since it disregards the fragmentary inscriptions and is, as we have seen, based on often controversial dating, but it is nevertheless instructive. The inscriptions can be grouped into five categories, according to whether they most likely date to the fourth century, the fourth or fifth century, the fifth century, the fifth or sixth century, or the sixth century. Schmitz dates four inscriptions to the first category, to which a fifth should be added; as we have seen, the manner in which the soldier Viatorinus died clearly places his death in the fourth century.²¹⁵ A further five inscriptions are assigned a date in the sixth century.²¹⁶ Three inscriptions are thought to date to the fourth or fifth century, two to the fifth

²¹³On these refugees, see above, pp. 74-5.

²¹⁴Wolff, *Roman-Germanic Cologne*, p. 105.

²¹⁵See above, pp. 18-19, 190. Schmitz dates Viatorinus' epitaph to the fourth or fifth century: 'Grabinschriften in Köln', no. 12, pp. 687-90; *CIL XIII*, no. 8274. The other fourth-century inscriptions, according to Schmitz, are: no. 3, pp. 658-62; no. 4, pp. 663-6 (*CIL XIII*, no. 8331); no. 9, pp. 678-81; no. 10, pp. 681-4 (*CIL XIII*, no. 8483).

²¹⁶Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', no. 2, pp. 655-8; no. 6, pp. 670-2 (*CIL XIII*, no. 8481); no. 13, pp. 690-2; no. 14, p. 693 (*CIL XIII*, no. 8487); no. 45, pp. 739-41 (*CIL XIII*, no. 8486).

century, and six to the fifth or sixth century.²¹⁷ The outcome of this categorising by period is striking in two ways. First, the assignment of only two inscriptions to the fifth century seems to suggest something of a downturn in the production of inscriptions during that period, and it is tempting to associate this with the political upheaval and the absence of episcopal leadership Cologne is known to have experienced. On the other hand, however, the dating of inscriptions is a somewhat subjective exercise, and it is conceivable that scholars are reluctant, whether consciously or not, to date inscriptions decisively to the fifth century, rather than to the preceding and subsequent periods, precisely because of the political and religious context they know to have existed. Secondly, it is intriguing to note that there is no apparent difference between the number of inscriptions produced in the fourth century and in the sixth century in Cologne; if the rate of production did tail off in the fifth century, it did not remain depressed for long. This is in clear contrast to Trier, where the fifth and sixth centuries saw a marked and sustained drop in the volume of inscriptions produced. This can be most plausibly explained on the basis that, although the population of Cologne may have been significantly reduced by the withdrawal of Roman troops and the barbarian attacks of the fifth century, it was not transformed anything like as dramatically as that of Trier was in the aftermath of the transfer of the imperial residence and praetorian prefecture. Moreover, as the numbers of inscriptions involved indicate, the commissioning of stone epitaphs was always the preserve of only a small group of affluent residents in Cologne, including both soldiers and civilians, and thus the level of output required in the sixth century in order to match fourth-century levels was far more readily achievable.

²¹⁷Fourth or fifth century: Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', no. 7, pp. 673-5; no. 8, pp. 676-8 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8410); no. 29, pp. 719-21 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8404). Fifth century: no. 5, pp. 666-9 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8479); no. 24, pp. 709-10 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8477). Fifth or sixth century: no. 1, pp. 650-4 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8478); no. 11, pp. 684-7 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8484); no. 25, pp. 711-2 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8485); no. 28, pp. 717-8; no. 30, pp. 721-3; no. 44, pp. 737-8 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8482).

Finally, the epigraphic evidence offers a rare and valuable insight into the question of how much communication and interaction took place between the Christian communities of Trier and Cologne. Basing our judgement upon the epigraphic evidence is arguably the best available means of approaching this issue, since textual sources shed precious little light, and the archaeological remains from church sites in both cities are, as we have seen, too imperfectly understood to allow meaningful comparison. Study of inscriptions, on the other hand, allows us to use words and expressions as a proxy for the exchange of ideas, and therefore for wider connections between the two cities. In providing an answer to this question, it is hoped that we will be able to further clarify the extent to which it might be permissible to make generalisations about the Christianisation of the late antique Rhineland; if the communities were evidently connected, we might more reasonably assume that developments in one city would be paralleled to some extent in the other. A better understanding of the degree of integration of the two Christian communities might also help to provide key contextual information for understanding the various differences in episcopal authority, the growth of saint cults, and the development of churches outlined so far in this chapter.

It seems sensible to begin, as we have done so far in this section, with the opening formulae of the inscriptions. In this respect, the inscriptions from Trier and Cologne differ markedly. In Cologne, *'hic iacet/it'* was the most commonly recurring entry formula, appearing on eleven out of the fifty-two inscriptions Schmitz discussed.²¹⁸ In Trier, on the other hand, it appears on around thirty-five out of the thousand inscriptions discussed by Kramer.²¹⁹ In numerical terms, therefore, the formula was obviously more common in Trier than in Cologne, but as a proportion of the total number of inscriptions produced in each city, it was considerably more

²¹⁸Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', p. 652.

²¹⁹Kramer, *Die Grabinschriften Triers*, p. 10.

prevalent in Cologne. A quick calculation reveals that twenty-one percent of the inscriptions from Cologne discussed by Schmitz begin with '*hic iacet/it*', whilst the formula appears on only three-and-a-half percent of the figure of one thousand inscriptions mentioned by Kramer in his study of Trier's epigraphic evidence. As we have seen, '*hic quisit/et*' was more frequently used in Trier, but this formula does not crop up at all in Cologne.²²⁰

This observed difference in language and vocabulary choices between the two cities is emphasised if we turn our attention to other words commonly used in the text of inscriptions to convey sentiment or provide additional information. For example, Schmitz identifies five inscriptions from Cologne that describe the deceased as '*innocens*', as opposed to only three from Trier.²²¹ Once again, the disparity in the volume of epigraphic evidence from the cities makes this difference more striking in proportional terms than the numbers themselves suggest. The word '*carissimus*', meanwhile, which appears relatively frequently on inscriptions from the Trier corpus, is found in only one late antique epitaph from Cologne, although it appears more commonly on those dated to the second and third centuries.²²²

There are, on the other hand, some indications that expressions that were relatively commonly used in Trier occasionally found their way into inscriptions produced in Cologne. The clearest example of this is the word '*fidelis/es*', which appears in at least twenty-two inscriptions produced in Trier, and in five from Cologne.²²³ Since this is a word which does not form part of a formulaic expression, these are quite significant totals. Similarly, a number of inscriptions from Cologne

²²⁰See above, p. 183.

²²¹Schmitz, 'Grabinschriften in Köln', p. 652.

²²²*Ibid.*, no. 9, p. 678.

²²³*Ibid.*, no. 5, p. 668.

replicate the common tendency in Trier of providing the age of the deceased in years, months, and days, although it should be noted that this was also quite a common practice elsewhere.²²⁴ The opening formula ‘*requiescit in pace*’, which originated in Trier and did not much disseminate beyond the city, is also known from one inscription from Cologne, remembering Leo, whose epitaph was mentioned earlier.²²⁵ We should, however, be wary of reading too much into this, since it is likely that an isolated example of this type resulted from the relocation of a family from one city to the other, rather than from any more widespread exchange of ideas.

There was, therefore, a clear difference in terms of which formulae and expressions were most commonly used in Trier and Cologne, and this suggests at least some degree of isolation of the cities’ respective Christian communities. Ideas of how to express one’s Christian belief in the context of the commemoration of the dead were not, insofar as we can tell, widely exchanged. This lack of regular interaction amongst Christians from the two cities is further suggested by the overall disparity in the volume of inscriptions they produced, which implies that the enthusiasm with which the epigraphic habit was embraced in Trier was in no way replicated in Cologne. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that some degree of exchange did occur, as one would reasonably expect to find in two neighbouring cities connected by river and road. This picture of relatively limited interaction between the cities’ Christian communities complements our understanding of episcopal authority and of the development of the cults of the saints, and heightens our sense that we are dealing with two cities that underwent distinct processes of Christianisation, in near isolation from

²²⁴Examples from Cologne include the epitaphs of Leontius, Valentiniano, and Donatus: *ibid.*, no. 44, p. 737 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8482); no. 10, p. 681 (*CIL* XIII, no. 8483); no. 3, p. 658. From Trier, the many examples include the epitaphs of Amelius, Calvio, and Piolus: Gose, *Katalog der frühchristlichen Inschriften in Trier*, no. 5, p. 3 (*CIL* XIII, no. 3796); no. 12, p. 5; no. 51, p. 16 (*CIL* XIII, no. 3872).

²²⁵Schmitz, ‘Grabinschriften in Köln’, no. 6, p. 670; *CIL* XIII, no. 8481; see above, p. 190.

one another. It is this isolation, together with the cities' very different circumstances in the fourth century, that helps to explain why Trier's bishops were able to remain in office in the fifth century whilst the see in Cologne was abandoned, and how Trier's saint cults came to be established in the fourth century, whilst the Christians of Cologne apparently had no local spiritual patron until the fifth century at the earliest, and possibly even the sixth.

Conclusion

We began this chapter with the intentions of testing Salvian's claims of widespread destruction in Trier and Cologne in the fifth century, and of determining how far the cities were transformed and then sustained by the growth of Christianity. By tracing the extent of episcopal power in Late Antiquity, we have not only cast doubt over the applicability to these cities of the modern discourse of the rise of the bishop, which implies that the scope of episcopal power persistently grew, but have also established grounds to suggest that the cities were indeed seriously affected by the chain of political events that began with imperial withdrawal at the end of the fourth century. Trier's fifth-century bishops appear to have been of markedly lesser standing outside their own cities than were either their fourth-century predecessors or their sixth-century successors, whilst a dramatic downturn in the production of funerary inscriptions in the fifth and sixth centuries suggests that their congregation within the city itself was also significantly diminished. In Cologne, meanwhile, the episcopal see appears to have been entirely abandoned in the fifth century, and this is reflected by the discovery of only two probably Christian inscriptions of likely fifth-century date. Given that both cities' fourth- and sixth-century bishops enjoyed significant status beyond their own

communities, this implies significant social upheaval. One important explanation for the persistence of the episcopal office in Trier probably lies in the city's fourth-century circumstances; the emperors' presence in the fourth century catalysed the development of a large, well-organised Christian community, which was better able to uphold episcopal authority on a local basis once the imperial superstructure broke down. Additionally, the continued presence in the fifth century of important local magnates, such as Arbogast, preserved the city's political stability, and provided local bishops, including Arbogast's contemporary, Jamblychus, with a secular partner in the exercise of authority.

The evidence from Trier and Cologne does, however, indicate that the construction of churches and the establishment of saints' cults genuinely did transform the appearance, use, and conception of the townscape. The cathedral church and various extra-mural *memoriae* were constructed in Trier in the fourth century, and rapidly became focal points for expressions of piety. This is reflected, above all, by the sheer volume of fourth-century Christian inscriptions produced in the city, and, more specifically, by the sudden growth in the popularity of the northern graveyard associated with Sts Maximinus and Paulinus following the installation of their graves, as revealed by our epigraphic evidence. These graveyards remained integral elements of the city's Christian topography, providing a form of continuity and a reason for maintaining the urban environment in the post-Roman period. This is clearly revealed by various textual references to the local saints' cults, notably in the works of Gregory of Tours, and by the number of inscriptions of fourth- to sixth-century date found in their vicinity. In Cologne, on the other hand, the development of churches and saints' cults, with the possible exceptions of the construction of the cathedral and St Severinus' church, were sixth-century phenomena, meaning that they were important elements of the city of the

Merovingian period, but did not offer a form of stability across the decades that followed imperial collapse.

Perhaps the most important contribution this chapter makes to future scholarship on Christianity in Trier, Cologne, the Rhineland, and even Gaul more generally, however, is in highlighting the extent of difference between Trier and Cologne insofar as the process of Christianisation is concerned. We have seen how, although the general pattern of decreasing episcopal authority in the fifth century is common to both cities, a crucial difference existed in that Trier did at least have bishops throughout that period. Similarly, although both cities developed a Christian topography and numerous saint cults that transformed them and provided them with lasting importance despite the Empire's disintegration, Trier's cults pre-dated those in Cologne by almost two centuries, and therefore developed under very different circumstances. Analysis of the epigraphic evidence from Trier and Cologne also enables us to conclude that the cities' Christian communities developed independently from one another, making use of different formulae and other expressions. All of these differences encourage us to think twice about making sweeping generalisations regarding any aspect of the process of Christianisation in the Rhineland, and demonstrate the importance of developing the practice of comparative history within this region of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity.