Ecclesiastical Networks and the Papacy at the End of
Late Antiquity, c. 550–700

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List of Abbreviations

AASS  Acta sanctorum
ACO  Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum
CCSG  Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca
CCSL  Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSCO  Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
MGH  Monumenta Germaniae Historica
AA  Auctores antiquissimi
SRG  Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
SRL  Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum
SRM  Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum
PG  Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Graeca
PL  Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina
PO  Patrologia Orientalis

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Abstract

The history of the late-antique papacy has long fascinated historians, but studies of popes and their allies have rarely considered both Latin and Greek sources on equal terms. This thesis aims to fill this unfortunate lacuna by considering together networks of individuals aligned with papal interests from both the Roman Empire (‘Byzantium’) and the post-Roman West. In the process, a new interpretation of the careers of particular popes and the course of the monothelete controversy will be presented. While the seventh century is still often seen as a time when the unity of the Mediterranean world and late-antique Christendom fractured, by examining Palestinian monks, Frankish bishops, and Anglo-Saxon pilgrims together, the case is made that, from the perspectives of contemporaries, the divisions were perhaps not yet so obvious.

This study begins with the friends and acquaintances of Gregory the Great, whose pontificate often looms large in histories of the early medieval West. Events in Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, however, should still be integrated into narratives of the pope’s actions, for specific parallels to Gregory’s projects, most especially the Gregorian mission to England, can be detected in the available Greek sources. Similar connections in the seventh century are highlighted in the second chapter, which revisits papal history after Gregory’s death to 649. This period remains a poorly understood and poorly documented one, but here I argue that fresh insights can be drawn from the words of the Venerable Bede and the writings of the monastic circle that gathered around the Cilician John Moschus. A revised narrative of the opening salvos of the monothelete controversy completes this analysis, for recent reinterpretations of this doctrinal debate have changed considerably our understanding of the Christological furore consuming the empire.

The third and fourth chapters continue the story by venturing far beyond imperial borders. The consequences of the Lateran Synod of 649 in Visigothic Spain and Merovingian Gaul are discussed in detail first, for the imperial ‘heresy’ also left a tangible mark among the ‘barbarians’. The hagiographical and conciliar evidence are certainly difficult to work with, but new possibilities can still be raised for how these western churches responded to pleas from Rome. The final chapter meanwhile surveys both the struggles of the anti-monothelete dissidents after the condemnation of their leaders, Pope Martin and Maximus the Confessor, and developments in Anglo-Saxon England. The careers of Wilfrid of York and Theodore of Tarsus, two men who loom large in any history of the early Anglo-Saxon church, are given particular attention. Indeed, this thesis argues that they too can be situated within imperial history, for their entanglements with Rome had exposed them to the very real consequences of papal dissent against Constantinople.

Throughout this study, I argue that a transregional reading of the sources can provide more nuanced interpretations of even well-known texts. Latin histories, for example, can help to fill the gap in contemporary Greek historiography, while Greek writings are invaluable for understanding the often obscure twists and turns of papal politics. The interpretations offered here of events from Egypt to Northumbria and between Visigothic Spain and caliphal Palestine still present only a limited picture of the networks and exchanges possible in the seventh century, but the connections outlined in this thesis are, nonetheless, important additions to narratives of the end of late antiquity.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Beyond the seventh century, thanks must go to Aaron, Mark, and Georgia for all our adventures together, as well as Jules, who made our time in the office far more enjoyable than it should have been through her encouragement and good humour. Further afield, I am likewise thankful for the support of Justin, Pauline, Sayantantee, Jamie, Lynn, and Mubarak, whose company and conversations have sustained me since the very beginning of this project. Last but not least, I would like to thank my family, who had to hear about my obscure interests for far too long. This thesis is dedicated to them.
Introduction

In 680–1, bishops from across the Roman Empire travelled to Constantinople to attend the Sixth Ecumenical Council, a dramatic gathering that saw the repudiation of monotheletism, a ‘heresy’ that had been dominant in the capital in the previous decades. Many documents were cited and discussed as participants bickered over doctrine, all of which were then collated in the Acts of the council, including a unique record of an earlier synod held in Rome in 680. In itself, this is hardly unusual, but among the list of attendees who subscribed to the Roman synod there is a curious figure, a bishop of York from the island of Britannia, whose name had evidently proved troublesome for a Greek scribe working with the manuscript. If we do not also have the Latin original, this attendee’s identity would not have been obvious, for his name was confusingly rendered in Greek as ‘Οὐλβυνθρίδους’ (Oulbunthridous).¹ The Latin is thankfully more helpful, making it clear that this bishop was Wilfrid (‘Ulfridus’), one of the foremost figures in the early Anglo-Saxon church.²

This was not the first time an Anglo-Saxon featured in the mind of a Greek author, for Procopius, the premier imperial historian of the sixth century, made a note of the Angles who accompanied a Frankish embassy to Constantinople c. 550.³ Half a century later in 601, Pope Gregory the Great happily reported that the news of an Anglo-Saxon king’s conversion was even known to the emperor, so we can imagine that some attempt was made to transliterate the name of Æthelbert, the newly Christian king of Kent, for the Greek-speaking Emperor Maurice.⁴ Wilfrid’s appearance in the conciliar Acts of 680–1 is, however, the earliest surviving record of an Anglo-Saxon name rendered in Greek, even if it was mangled in the process.

Of course, Wilfrid’s presence in the Acts of a council in Constantinople is very much the result of mundane bureaucracy, of records being made to remember a momentous event in church history, rather than Wilfrid being a particularly

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memorable attendee at the Roman synod. But his appearance also presents an interesting proposition: was Wilfrid’s attendance at the Roman synod of 680 a unique occurrence, or was Wilfrid an unexceptional figure, just one ‘barbarian’ among many who were connected to the doctrinal struggles within the seventh-century empire? If nothing else, although Northumbria and the Roman Empire were seemingly two very different worlds at the end of late antiquity, it is still tempting to wonder if the unlucky scribe who encountered Wilfrid’s name had any understanding of who the Anglo-Saxons were and, vice versa, whether the Northumbrian had given the politics of Constantinople much thought. Both Wilfrid and the monothelete controversy are well-known topics for specialists of Anglo-Saxon England and the empire respectively, but the connections between them are rather less explored. At its heart, this thesis is an examination of these possible links, to consider whether we can write a history of the imperial church that also includes events in the post-Roman West.

Partly due to the nature of the surviving evidence, but also as a result of the papacy’s growing influence across Christendom, a significant number of the individuals examined here were themselves popes or aligned with the papacy in some fashion. In particular, I will highlight the experiences of Pope Gregory the Great, who cultivated a vast network of correspondents both within the empire and beyond, and the circle of eastern monks who gathered around John Moschus and Maximus the Confessor, respectively from Cilicia and Palestine but both figures who had sheltered in Rome during the crisis of empire in the seventh century. In distant England, I will consider both the turbulent Wilfrid of York, who had travelled three times to Rome, first as a pilgrim, later to seek justice for his numerous depositions from office, and the more cerebral Theodore of Tarsus, a Cilician whose unlikely appointment to the see of Canterbury in 668 by Pope Vitalian had catalysed an age of church reform and scholarly pursuits among the Anglo-Saxons. All these figures were certainly very different, in the last two cases even personal enemies on occasion, but their shared respect for Rome is undeniable, making the papacy’s role a topic worth exploring when tied to the extent of travel and communication in this period.

John Moorhead’s recent history of the late-antique papacy is a particular inspiration, for he approached the topic not from an institutional perspective, but
sought to write ‘the history of a Christian community in late antiquity’. The same is attempted here, to write about church history at the end of late antiquity by focusing on the friendships, acquaintances, and feuds that bound bishops and monks together, which in turn will shed new light on regional histories far from the doctrinal disputes consuming Rome and Constantinople. Where I differ from Moorhead is my emphasis on both the East and the West, to bring together not only stories of Rome’s allies from Frankish Gaul, Visigothic Spain, and Anglo-Saxon England, but also to place them in context by considering the words of Rome’s admirers from the Levant.

Given the broad scope of this thesis, it would be impossible to document in their entirety the events of this transformative period, but a focused effort at reassessing the sources can nevertheless yield new insights, if only through reading Greek and Latin texts together. Byzantinists, for example, have long lamented their discipline’s insularity from other fields, both in absorbing developments elsewhere and in transmitting their own findings to other scholars. The same is true from the other side, for, as Ian Wood notes, the approaches that have increasingly characterised cultural studies of late antiquity, the Totalgeschichte favoured by Peter Brown (i.e. the integration of ‘political’ and ‘religious’ history together in one narrative), have not been adopted by historians of the early medieval West to the same extent.

Yet as recent research has made clear, the past cannot be so easily divided. ‘East’ and ‘West’ were not definitive categories and signs of cross-cultural contact are consistently visible across European Christendom. These new studies are not conclusive and far from the final word on the topics considered, but they do demonstrate the value of a deeper reading of the sources and of scholarship from across multiple fields. More simply, even if direct connections are not the focus, it is still worth considering events in wildly different regions, for example in

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5 J. Moorhead, *The Popes and the Church of Rome in Late Antiquity* (Abingdon, 2015), xii.
8 For example, A. Fischer and I. Wood (eds.), *Western Perspectives on the Mediterranean: Cultural Transfer in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, 400–800 AD* (London, 2014), and S. Esders *et al.* (eds.), *East and West in the Middle Ages: The Merovingian Kingdoms in Mediterranean Perspective* (Cambridge, Forthcoming). More examples will be discussed over the course of this thesis.
contemporaneous Palestine and England, through the same lens, as unexpected parallels may emerge from well-known texts when they are examined together.

More specifically, this thesis aims to build on recent revisions to papal history and present a new interpretation of the role played by the bishops of Rome in the tumultuous seventh century. Within the scope of this study, the papacy worked harmoniously with the emperor on occasion, yet was also at other times embroiled in bitter disputes with Constantinople, leading to many contending hypotheses for Rome’s place within the empire in this particular period. Some see in the increasing number of eastern popes a transformation of the city’s culture, while others see in the political crises the genesis of an independent ‘Republic of St Peter’. A new approach, taking into account trends beyond the papacy, such as contemporary events in the eastern provinces and in Gaul, can only strengthen our understanding of this period, as these distinct developments need not be seen as mutually contradictory.

In short, this thesis is an attempt to bridge this gap between studies of the seventh-century Roman Empire and its neighbours in the West. By approaching traditional church history, under which analyses of the papacy must surely fall, from a transregional perspective, it is the intent here to tease out patterns that are less visible when individuals or institutions are examined in isolation. The end of late antiquity is still often seen as a time when the Greek East and the Latin West parted ways, but if the focus is shifted instead to networks and the mobility of people and ideas, a rather different story can perhaps be told.

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Historiography

At its most broad, this thesis engages with scholarship around the consequences of the ‘fall’ of the Western Roman Empire, particularly the long-standing question of whether the Eastern Roman Empire (still anachronistically often described as ‘Byzantium’) remained connected to the post-Roman West. The debate over change and continuity has already received much attention in recent years, yet interpretations still vary on the extent of the transformation(s) experienced by the Roman and post-Roman world(s). This can perhaps be best seen in the debate over periodisation. As an example, even though both The Cambridge Ancient History and The New Cambridge Medieval History overlapped in the sixth century, differences remain in their coverage. The former aims to focus ‘on the Mediterranean, and to treat northern Europe as somewhat peripheral’, thus anchoring itself in the classical view of antiquity.\(^\text{10}\) The latter is broader in outlook, providing dedicated chapters on the Slavs and Scandinavia, but even so the extent of its coverage is uneven. Judging by the number of chapters, more attention was paid to the geographically much smaller British Isles in the seventh century than to contemporary events in the eastern Mediterranean.\(^\text{11}\)

It is of course impossible to give equal attention to every region in Europe and among its immediate neighbours, but the two projects’ different goals and backgrounds of the scholars involved have evidently influenced their respective emphasis. This difference in attitude can often be found elsewhere, for although they may well work on contemporaneous topics, ‘early medieval’ is a term far more prominent among those studying the ‘barbarian’ kingdoms of Western Europe, while ‘late antique’ has become ubiquitous for those working on the Roman Empire and its neighbours.\(^\text{12}\) People living at the time, particularly those who had travelled from the medieval ‘periphery’ to the late-antique Mediterranean, would have surely been puzzled by this distinction.


After all, these differing approaches were very much the results of modern developments. ‘Late antiquity’ itself was a construct of the twentieth century, first made popular in Anglophone scholarship by the work of Peter Brown, particularly through his *The World of Late Antiquity* in 1971. Since its publication, ‘late antiquity’ has become an important interpretive framework for many historians examining the Roman Empire and its immediate surroundings, as it offered a more positive account of this period compared to the reconstructions provided previously. Brown focused on Christian culture and its strong links with the Roman past, an aspect neglected by both Edward Gibbon, whose thesis of decline and decadence continues to resonate after more than two centuries, and A. H. M. Jones, who focused more on the social and administrative aspects of the late empire and whose influential survey ended with the execution of Emperor Maurice in 602, a moment that, for him, ushered in a new era.

For more than four decades late antiquity has been a prominent and growing field of research, presenting the (admittedly nebulous) period instead as a time of diversity and continuity, with a particular emphasis on cultural history. This view has been challenged more and more in recent years, with late antiquity being criticised, for example, for being too broad or too narrow in its chronological coverage, and for how its more positive reimagining of the past has overshadowed the plentiful evidence for violence and instability. Others, such as Bryan Ward-Perkins, Wolf Liebeschuetz, and James O’Donnell, have also once again made the

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case for using ‘decline’ as an accurate descriptor of the end and aftermath of the Western Roman Empire, primarily through the use of the archaeological evidence.\(^{17}\)

Taken together, a counter-narrative to Brown’s world of holy men and worldly vitality is being created, portraying the sixth and seventh centuries as less Roman, less connected, and ultimately less impressive than their classical predecessor. Combined with the traditional hesitation of medievalists to embrace late antiquity, there is certainly a case to be made to eschew this periodisation when discussing European history as a whole.

But as noted by both Ian Wood and Walter Pohl recently, these different approaches need not be contradictory.\(^{18}\) In particular, Pohl suggests that such stark divisions between different schools of thought are ultimately reminiscent of the grand narratives of a previous era; overarching paradigms are useful, but their scope, regardless of their position in the debates between continuity and catastrophe, ‘movers’ and ‘shakers’, and myriad other disputes, can also be rather limiting.\(^{19}\) A return to human agency, he suggests, could potentially provide a refreshing alternative, if they can be integrated into larger arguments on the many transformations visible in this period.\(^{20}\)

An influential example of such a grand narrative is Henri Pirenne’s *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, which emphasised how the cultural and trade connections of the Roman world continued into the early seventh century, when the Arab conquests finally severed these long-standing links.\(^{21}\) This view has been undermined by the archaeological evidence that the Mediterranean-wide trade network had already begun to collapse in the fourth century, but there is still something to be said for Pirenne’s famous argument that ‘without Mohammed, Charlemagne would have been inconceivable’.\(^{22}\) This adage had referred to the negative impact of the Arab


\(^{20}\) Ibid., 57.


conquests on long-distance trade, but it captures some sense of the importance of studying particular individuals, whose actions may have had far-reaching consequences well beyond their places of origin.

It is fortunate then that modern overviews of this period are now increasingly comparative in nature and fully incorporate sources in multiple languages in their arguments, making it possible to write a history of cross-cultural interactions grounded firmly in sound scholarship. Chris Wickham’s *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, for example, delineated in broad terms the economic and social situation and offered a new comprehensive overview that did not rely on either Pirenne or his critics. The role of religion among these transformations, however, remains a topic that has yet to be explored in the same detail, particularly given Ian Wood’s recent study of the extent of the wealth granted to the church in the post-Roman West.

The study of mobility and communications has similarly benefited from Michael McCormick’s *Origins of the European Economy*, which outlined in detail the mechanics behind travel in the Mediterranean in the early Middle Ages, but more can likewise be drawn from the sources. In his own words, the accounts he gathered ‘revealed much about a human world in motion around the Mediterranean’, in which evidence from many different regions converges and agrees with ‘sources produced a world away’. This picture is a fascinating one indeed, but his compilation of known journeys remains incomplete for the seventh century, leaving the space open for further studies on how travel and communication functioned in this earlier period.

Moreover, it is worth questioning McCormick’s assertion that the ‘seaborne economic world of Constantine and Justinian’ was truly dead at the end of the

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seventh century. McCormick focused on one particular aspect of the late antique world, large-scale seaborne trade and modes of travel, rather than considering the economy as a whole or its social and cultural context; he viewed the Mediterranean in terms of its structures and so placed more importance on the decline of imperial shipping, with minimal coverage given to how individuals experienced this change. References to figures also examined in this thesis, such as McCormick’s interpretation of Gregory the Great and Maximus the Confessor’s apocalyptic sentiments as evidence of a contemporary awareness of the end of the ancient economy, can and should be taken much further. How, for example, did their ecclesiastical and political background shape these negative views? The dataset McCormick compiled of journeys crossing the Mediterranean is immensely useful, but the context behind each account of travel has been elided. True, in many cases we can say little else about the motivations behind their journeys, but in the rare cases where we can it is necessary to study in more depth the sources, a project that can only strengthen McCormick’s arguments.

In turn, this approach can add an important nuance to the study of the seventh century, which is often seen as a turning point, for example as the ‘end’ of late antiquity or when the Roman Empire became instead ‘Byzantium’. From the perspective of individuals who travelled and migrated in this period, these transformations were perhaps rather less dramatic. As Mark Handley argues, beneath the broad trends examined by Wickham, McCormick, and others, individuals on the ground continued to go on pilgrimages and migrate to destinations far from their places of origin, an ever-present process across the sixth and seventh centuries regardless of structural changes. In his case, it was the epitaphs of foreign-born migrants that illustrate the hidden mobility possible within this world, but other likely connections have also been identified in recent years. Exile, the sorry fate of

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29 This can be most recently seen in P. Sarris, Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500–700 (Oxford, 2011), 378, where the eastern Mediterranean and the Roman Empire in the seventh century are described as ‘a world that must have seemed to be falling apart’ while the western kingdoms were ‘gradually piecing themselves back together’. We should not, of course, deny the extent of the changes experienced by the seventh-century empire, but these transformations nonetheless need to be analysed in more nuanced ways, as noted in J. Haldon, The Empire That Would Not Die: The Paradox of Eastern Roman Survival, 640–740 (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 283.
30 M. A. Handley, Dying on Foreign Shores: Travel and Mobility in the Late-Antique West (Portsmouth, 2011), 112–4.
many churchmen in late antiquity, for example, opened up new opportunities for the
condemned and helped in the formation of new networks on the fringes of the
Roman Empire, as amply demonstrated by the Clerical Exile project at the
University of Sheffield. 31 From a different perspective, Jonathan Conant has
catalogued the spread of the cult of saints from North Africa. Different regions
received these foreign saints in different ways, but it remains clear that there was no
particular turning point for North Africa’s place within this Christian world, whether
during the wars and controversies of the sixth century or even after the Arab
conquest at the end of the seventh.32

A survey of these religious developments is therefore still needed, if only to
integrate in full new interpretations of ecclesiastical disputes and the spread of
religious ideals into oft-told narratives of the seventh century. Judith Herrin’s The
Formation of Christendom, for example, is a particularly prominent overview of this
period and which placed a strong emphasis on the impact of doctrinal disputes, but
its material disproportionately focused on the struggles at the top between New and
Old Rome, rather than the church as a much larger social, cultural, and political
entity, ultimately neglecting events beyond imperial borders (apart from a detailed
excursus on Visigothic Spain).33 ‘Christendom’, as examined by Herrin, was a very
exclusive club. With recent revisions now presented for the monenergist and
monothelete ‘heresies’, most prominently in the work of Marek Jankowiak and Phil
Booth, even the struggle between Rome and Constantinople ought to be revisited.34

More specifically for Rome, Moorhead’s recent history of the papacy is, as already
noted, an excellent survey and is more innovative in considering also Rome’s
western admirers, but more can still be said for the city’s links to the Greek East,
particularly in incorporating the foundational work of Jean-Marie Sansterre on Greek
monasteries in the Eternal City.35

31 The project and other papers from the resulting conferences are published in: J. Hillner, J. Ulrich,
and J. Engberg (eds.), Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity (Frankfurt, 2016), and D. Rohmann, J. Ulrich,
and M. Vallejo Girvés (eds.), Mobility and Exile at the End of Antiquity (Frankfurt, 2018).
34 M. Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, à partir de la correspondance entre les
empereurs byzantins, les patriarches de Constantinople et les papes de Rome, unpublished PhD thesis
(Paris and Warsaw, 2009), and P. Booth, Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late
Antiquity (Berkeley, 2013).
35 J.-M. Sansterre, Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne
(milieu du VIe s.–fin du IXe s.), 2 vols (Brussels, 1983).
From the other side, it is true that scholars of the eastern Mediterranean have increasingly realised the wider implications of events in the Near East, a fact evident in how the wars of the seventh century have been recently described as, among other things, a ‘world crisis’. Unfortunately, the rhetoric is not matched by these historians’ coverage of Western Europe, which is generally paltry compared to their focus on the eastern material, with the notable exception of Stefan Esders’ analysis of the impact on the West of the ‘Mediterranean world war’ between the Romans and the Arabs. Similarly broad terms, such as the ‘first Byzantine commonwealth’ proposed by Garth Fowden, were likewise only applied to the East. In this particular instance, both Anthea Harris and Peter Sarris have noted that such a model could be applied to the West, though again neither authors pursued this line of argument in any detail, leaving the space open for a more thorough analysis that considers both ends of European Christendom on equal terms.

It is perhaps rather appropriate to end with the words of Peter Brown, for in his survey of the history of Christian Europe, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, he fully acknowledges Christendom’s dynamic nature in the sixth and seventh centuries, a quality that he encapsulated through a term he coined: ‘micro-Christendoms’. For each ‘micro-Christendom’, a mirror of Rome was adapted for local circumstances in the imagination of contemporary writers to reinforce local identity, a reconstruction that naturally implied a great deal of diversity rather than uniformity. Although there is a danger here in overemphasising the distinctive character of each ‘micro-Christendom’, Brown is surely correct to abandon the obsolete centre and periphery model of the papacy’s influence on the ‘fringes’ of Christendom and to write a history of Christianity unmarked by stark geographical

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39 A. Harris, *Byzantium, Britain and the West: The Archaeology of Cultural Identity*, AD 400–650 (Stroud, 2003), 189–94, a statement only made in the conclusion; note though the problems in the overall argument presented, as discussed in R. Mathisen, ‘Review of A. Harris’ *Byzantium, Britain and the West*, *Speculum* 80.4 (2005), 1300–3. Brief references to a western commonwealth are also found in Sarris, *Empires of Faith*, 204 and 226.
divisions. The Middle East, for example, was accurately discussed as a ‘vast echo chamber’ of ideas, the results of which continued to resonate in the West for centuries afterwards.\(^{41}\) The same principle is adopted here, to trace how ideas and people rippled westwards from the eastern Mediterranean, particularly via Rome. The papacy, in many ways the focus of this thesis, was after all an institution within the Roman Empire, but nonetheless also possessed strong connections with the kings and bishops of the ‘barbarian’ West. By considering anew the history of the papacy through its networks, a different perspective can then be offered for the place of the seventh century in European history.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., xix and 2–3.
The Sources and Their Context

Before considering in more depth how this study proposes to approach the networks analysed here, it is necessary first to outline the available evidence. For all its reputation as a ‘Dark Age’ dimly lit by a small number of sources, there is still a considerable amount of material to examine at the end of late antiquity, particularly if non-historical sources are brought into the equation. The contemporary Greek historical tradition, for example, disappeared after c. 630, with the next surviving history only produced in the late eighth century, which no doubt contributed to the grim picture of the seventh century often painted in the scholarship.\(^{42}\) Even before this ‘break’, Evagrius Scholasticus, Theophylact Simocatta, and the Paschal Chronicle, the most important contemporary accounts of the late sixth and early seventh centuries, presented a very limited picture of their empire, for their attention was disproportionately focused on the East, giving the impression that these historians were generally uninterested in western events, if only because of their lack of material on North Africa, Italy, and the world beyond imperial borders.\(^{43}\) Given each source’s very limited interests, as seen in Evagrius’ myopic focus on his home province of Syria or Theophylact Simocatta’s minimal coverage of his native Egypt, it is worth treating this assumption with caution, for their coverage was shaped by their own careers and experiences, not by a need to represent in full the world-views of the imperial elite.\(^{44}\)

This is all the more apparent in later Greek sources, the most important being Nicephorus and Theophanes the Confessor.\(^{45}\) Given their distance from the seventh

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\(^{42}\) The last Greek histories and chronicles to survive in full are Evagrius Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, eds. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with the Scholia (London, 1898), Theophylact Simocatta, History, ed. C. de Boor, rev. P. Wirth, Theophylacti Simocattae Historiae (Stuttgart, 1972), and the Paschal Chronicle, ed. L. Dindorf, Chronicon Paschale (Bonn, 1832). The date for the revival of Greek historiography is dependent on when we date Nicephorus’ Short History. For the 780s: C. Mango, Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History (Washington, D.C., 1990), 11–2; for c. 790: W. Treadgold, The Middle Byzantine Historians (Basingstoke, 2013), 27. On these sources more generally: L. Neville, Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing (Cambridge, 2018).


\(^{44}\) On Evagrius’ horizons: Allen, Evagrius, 16–8. There are only two mentions of contemporary Egyptian events in Theophylact: Histories, 7.16 and 8.13 (de Boor, 273–4 and 309–11). Egypt was mentioned elsewhere on occasion, but only in discussions of classical authors.

\(^{45}\) Nicephorus, Short History, ed. Mango, Nikephoros, and Theophanes the Confessor, Chronicle, ed. C. de Boor, Theophanis Chronographia (Leipzig, 1883).
century and their own difficulties in finding sources for the earlier period, they are far from trusted authorities, a fact most dramatically demonstrated in Marek Jankowiak and Vivien Prigent’s recent redatations of the first Arab siege of Constantinople, conventionally dated to the 670s, to instead the late 660s.46 Though they no doubt did their best to chronicle the mysterious seventh century, Nicephorus and Theophanes’ mistaken reconstructions had instead led scholars astray for more than a millennium. As a result, it is now more important than ever to utilise more fully non-Greek sources. For the sixth century, John of Ephesus’ Syriac Ecclesiastical History is essential for a miaphysite perspective on events up to 588, but it is in the seventh century that non-Greek sources become truly essential for historians of the empire.47 From lands recently lost to the rising caliphate, we possess the Armenian History attributed to Sebeos, completed c. 660, and John of Nikiu’s Chronicle from Egypt at the end of the century.48 Both are complex texts and the latter in particular has a tortuous transmission history, with the surviving text being an Ethiopic translation from an Arabic edition of the original Coptic work, making it difficult to establish the intent behind its production. Even so, these sources nevertheless offer an important corrective to Greek ‘orthodox’ histories written much later, as they provide a valuable non-Constantinopolitan perspective on the same events.

More familiar to western medievalists is the Liber Pontificalis, a collection of papal biographies, but this text also shares much in common with the available Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian evidence.49 After all, although the medieval Roman Empire is still frequently stereotyped as a Greek empire, it is necessary to remember that at the dawn of the seventh century Roman popes, Egyptian monks, and Armenian princes were all still subjects of the emperor. Despite the collapse of the once-expansive boundaries of the empire in the following decades, it would be

unwise to assume that its people’s cultural horizons had fragmented along with it, and it is necessary to test this view by considering all the available sources. In Rosamond McKitterick’s recent reconstruction of the Liber Pontificalis’ origins, for example, papal biographies were written in batches during moments of particular tension with Constantinople, making the information relayed not only the biographical details of particular popes, but also invaluable evidence for imperial history more broadly.\(^\text{50}\)

The same approach can be extended further still to beyond the empire, as contemporary Latin histories, most prominently Gregory of Tours’ Ten Books of Histories and John of Biclaro’s Chronicle for the late sixth century, are likewise neglected in the scholarship of the eastern empire.\(^\text{51}\) The anonymous chronicle later attributed to Fredegar, probably written in Burgundy around 660, is another important example, particularly given the wave of recent studies on this remarkable source’s depiction of Roman responses to the Arab conquests.\(^\text{52}\) The first three books are largely summaries of previous works of history, albeit with additional intriguing passages on the adventures of Justinian and Belisarius.\(^\text{53}\) But it is in the fourth book that the chronicle comes into its own, as it provides a unique window into how events elsewhere were viewed in contemporary Gaul. Now that it is generally recognised that Fredegar, far from a careless collator, was in fact an effective historian capable of shaping their far-ranging narrative to serve specific purposes, this chronicle’s status as a contemporary historical account of the mid-seventh century becomes all the more valuable.\(^\text{54}\)

More surprisingly, the words of the Venerable Bede can still be helpful for

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\(^\text{53}\) Fredegar, Chronicle, 2.62 (Krusch, 85–8).

\(^\text{54}\) R. Collins, Die Fredegar-Chroniken (Hannover, 2007), and A. Fischer, ‘Rewriting History: Fredegar's Perspectives on the Mediterranean’, in Fischer and Wood, Western Perspectives on the Mediterranean, 55–75.
historians of the empire. The Northumbrian’s *Ecclesiastical History* was of course concerned largely with events in England, particularly the genesis of the Anglo-Saxon church, but in situating Anglo-Saxon England within the wider Christian community whenever his narrative required it, Bede had also, however inadvertently, shined a light on many obscure events taking place elsewhere, at a time when detailed narratives were non-existent or deeply problematic.\(^{55}\) Although Anglo-Saxon England and the Roman Empire are rarely discussed together, given the lack of contemporary Greek historical sources for the seventh-century ‘world crisis’, the utility of even such a distant source surely should not be ruled out.

As this brief survey attests, this thesis aims to place each source in its much larger late-antique milieu. These sources, however, are only of limited help for constructing the biographies of individuals. In this regard, documentary sources and hagiographies are far more helpful. One only has to look at the documents resulting from the Lateran Synod of 649. Not only were the *Acts* at least partially drafted by an alliance of rebellious Greek monks and the papal chancery, a fact that sheds much light on the role played by particular individuals, the more mundane lists of participants also allow us to discern regional loyalties (or lack thereof) to the papacy.\(^{56}\)

Letter collections were similarly drafted and collected for specific purposes, but they are nonetheless particularly excellent indications of the relationship between specific individuals. The most impressive surviving collection, that of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604), includes letters from both princes beyond the empire’s borders and imperial courtiers in Constantinople, with the pope demonstrating a particularly adroit awareness of imperial rhetoric and how to use it for his own ends.\(^{57}\) As contemporary Greek voices remain plentiful during Gregory’s pontificate, it is possible for us to compare his networks with that of his contemporaries, making this

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a unique opportunity to examine both Latin and Greek sources together.

Similar collections unfortunately do not exist for the seventh century, but hagiographical sources provide some indications still of the networks that bound together the papacy with its eastern admirers. The *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus, a collection of edifying tales compiled by the Cilician in Rome c. 630, is perhaps the best example, for the sources of these tales (allegedly) included patriarchs and abbots encountered by Moschus and his disciple Sophronius from their extensive travels throughout the Roman Empire.\(^58\) If an inexact guide, we can nonetheless still recover from the *Spiritual Meadow* a sense of who Moschus admired and how the networks of Gregory the Great lasted into the seventh century. More generally, Greek saints’ lives make up, to a certain extent, for the lack of contemporary histories, for from the three surviving *Lives of John the Almsgiver* and the Constantinopolitan *Miracles of St Artemios* we can glimpse other aspects of Roman life beyond the seemingly all-consuming crisis of empire.\(^59\)

Finally, to further assess the reality (or not) of the ‘shared world’ of late antiquity, it is also the intent here to bring together sources previously studied entirely in isolation from each other. From Palestine, we have the unique Syriac *Life of Maximus the Confessor*, written by George of Resh’aina sometime after 681, in which George poured vitriol on the famous monastic dissident’s career.\(^60\) Though an author writing in Palestine within the Umayyad Caliphate, George was still able to cite imperial sources and was concerned with events in the Mediterranean, even in Rome, which surely speaks volumes about his links to the wider world. On the other side of the monothelete controversy, although Maximus was eventually placed on trial in 655 and sentenced to exile, the story of his network did not end there, for a cache of biographical documents commemorating his sufferings have nonetheless

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survived, providing us with a unique record of how new alliances continued to be forged despite the condemnation of their leader.  

More surprisingly, we can also consider the *Life of Wilfrid*, composed by one of Wilfrid’s followers, a certain Stephen, around 712–4. This is a crucial source for the early Anglo-Saxon church, for it recounted in detail the career of the influential yet also oft-deposed Northumbrian bishop, as well as his contacts with the Merovingian Franks and the papacy. Wilfrid and Maximus’ involvement in the political sphere and their frequent exiles were the genesis for this project, but the careers of the two men can also be tied together by their mutual admiration for the bishops of Rome. In this context, a study that fully interrogates the evidence provided by a Syriac polemic, fervent Greek tracts, and a Latin *Life* may well be fruitful for scholars of both the Anglo-Saxons and Constantinopolitan politics.

As seen from these select examples, this thesis intends to take a sweeping view of the available sources, both chronologically and in terms of geographical range. Many of these texts are far from understudied, but it is hoped that a comparison with their contemporaries on the other side of European Christendom can yield new insights into their individual context. It is not the intent here to mimic previous grand narrative of cultural continuity, but this study does seek to examine an underexplored part of late antique history. To what extent were these writers aware of events elsewhere, and what did these attitudes mean for the protagonists who did move across Christendom?

61 These texts are edited in P. Allen and B. Neil (eds.), *Scripta saeculi VII vitam Maximi Confessoris illustrantia*, CCSG 39 (Turnhout, 1999); the same documents are reprinted in P. Allen and B. Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions: Documents from Exile* (Oxford, 2002), with the addition of helpful chapter headings. However, as the latter edition does not include crucial scholia to the texts, citations in this thesis will refer to the earlier edition.


Methodology and Structure

As this thesis seeks to understand the extent to which certain individuals were connected to the wider world, the intent here is to fully incorporate the diverse range of sources discussed above into the argument from the start, to read the same well-known sources alongside their contemporaries across the Latin-Greek linguistic barrier and occasionally even further afield. Of course, it cannot be assumed that such a reading will automatically result in direct links between different sources, but parallels are nonetheless possible, particularly given the paucity of research bridging different fields, for example, between insular historians who focus on Anglo-Saxon England and scholars of Syriac chronicles.64

At the very least, historiographical developments, occasionally over matters as fundamental as the narrative, ought to be brought together and considered for their impact elsewhere, if only to bring to prominence the latest research across divergent disciplines. To take just one example, the community of non-Chalcedonian Christians frequently termed the ‘monophysites’ will instead be referred to here as the ‘miaphysites’, a recently proposed descriptor that better captures their beliefs.65 The same goes for the ‘Nestorians’, as their association with the ‘heresiarch’ Nestorius’ teachings is a rather tenuous one, and they will instead be described here as East Syrian Christians.66 Although minor, these changes are still indicative of the need to bring together different fields, for obviously these so-called ‘heretics’ would not have considered their beliefs to have been ‘heresies’. A more scholarly approach would instead be to place these Christian communities on the same level as the Chalcedonian ‘orthodox’ church that remained dominant within the empire and Western Europe, rather than to refer to ‘non-orthodox’ groups with polemical terms once used to critique them. As this study aims to explore the divided, and rather flexible, loyalties of individuals active during the monothelete controversy, it is all

the more important to avoid assumptions about ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ in the argument that follows.

More broadly, the importance of such a transregional approach has been emphasised by historians working in the topical field of global history. In a thought-provoking essay, James Belich, John Darwin, and Chris Wickham rightfully point to the role played by mobility in world history, questioning in turn the conventional interpretive frameworks favoured by historians:

The vehicle for many if not most of these [changes] is the incessant mobility of human societies. Tracking that mobility across the world through its complex circuits and networks may be the main contribution that ‘global’ history can make to the wider discipline. But those circuits and networks should also remind us that for historians of every period and specialism understanding mobility is foundational. Why, asks a Saharan historian, should we give precedence to place over movement? Why indeed?67

It would, I hope, not be unfair to suggest that regional distinctions remain visible in the secondary literature, with, for instance, Merovingianists and Byzantinists focusing primarily on their respective interests. For many topics a regional focus is indeed very reasonable, but for others, such as cultural developments, to be restricted by the boundaries of the Merovingian kingdoms and Roman Empire is perhaps instead rather limiting. The ‘place’ of any given event remains crucial in understanding the past, but the people involved were themselves rarely so immobile, making it necessary to take a far broader perspective. Along with a transregional approach then, this thesis begins with the assumption that people and ideas were fundamentally mobile. This is of course not new, for the ‘mobilities turn’ is already a prominent development in sociology.68 The same trend can be seen in archaeology, as there is considerable interest, for example, in the presence of Mediterranean trade goods in sixth-century England, which has been variously interpreted as indicators of

a vigorous trade with the empire and, perhaps less convincingly, as evidence of
direct political influence being exerted by Constantinople over the region.⁶⁹ This
study does not, unfortunately, engage with the archaeological evidence, but it must
be emphasised here that more studies are published every year demonstrating the
interconnectedness of communities in this period. Even from the well-studied site at
Sutton Hoo, there is now the surprising discovery that Syrian bitumen formed part of
the grave assemblage, in addition to the famous silver dish from the time of Emperor
Anastasius (491–518).⁷⁰ It is impossible to uncover the true extent of mobility in the
sixth and seventh centuries or write histories of particular individuals through the
archaeological evidence, but these developments are nevertheless also hints for
church historians of what more could be done with even well-trodden sources.

For the textual sources that are the foundation of this study, the thesis will
concentrate on the individuals involved and their networks. Although only a minute
minority of men and women ever traversed the length of European Christendom,
their significance as connectors between these ‘small worlds’ has increasingly been
highlighted. As an example, Søren Sindbæk’s reconstruction of ninth-century
networks strikingly proposed that there were ‘a maximum of eight links separating a
milkmaid in Uppland from a shepherd in Tuscany’.⁷¹ Unlikely though it might seem,
eyearly medieval Europe had perhaps been a world just as ‘small’ as the far more
connected world of today. A study of a select few individuals from the end of late
antiquity would no doubt produce rather different conclusions, if only because of the
nature and number of the available evidence, but delineating how large or small the
worlds of late-antique churchmen were surely remains a useful endeavour. Frankish
bishops, Palestinian ascetics, and Northumbrian exiles all lived profoundly different
lives, yet at a time when universalising tendencies flourished, it is likely that some
did cast their eyes far beyond the horizon.⁷²

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⁶⁹ E. Campbell, Continental and Mediterranean Imports to Atlantic Britain and Ireland, AD 400–800
(York, 2007); and the more speculative interpretations of Harris, Byzantium, Britain and the West.
See now the broader analysis of M. Duggan, Links to Late Antiquity: Ceramic Exchange and
Contacts on the Atlantic Seaboard in the 5th to 7th Centuries AD (Oxford, 2018), who fruitfully
compares insular finds with the evidence from France, Spain, and Portugal.
⁷⁰ P. Burger et al., ‘Identification, Geochemical Characterisation and Significance of Bitumen among
the Grave Goods of the 7th Century Mound 1 Ship-Burial at Sutton Hoo (Suffolk, UK)’, PLoS ONE
⁷¹ S. Sindbæk, ‘The Small World of the Vikings: Networks in Early Medieval Communication and
⁷² An effective summary of the notion of ‘one God, one empire, one emperor’ can be found in
Fowden, Empire to Commonwealth; for its implications for the study of the sixth and seventh
To understand more precisely these connections, or the lack thereof, useful lessons can be drawn from more anthropological and sociological approaches to studying the interconnectedness of particular individuals. An important strand of thought in sociology, for instance, is the focus on ‘weak ties’, that is, the idea that it is people on the fringes of networks, such as the acquaintances and the occasional visitors, who do the ‘heavy lifting’ in the building of networks and in spreading their influence. 73 This is perhaps counter-intuitive to historians more familiar with identifying key allies and strong friendships in the sources, but it is surely correct that these ‘weak ties’ were essential to the growth of transregional groups, as local networks could hardly expand if their impact was instead limited to a number of closely linked and likeminded individuals. Through the mobility of a few, ‘weak ties’ bound (and still bind) together an interconnected world. It is therefore useful to go beyond examining the authors of the sources, to instead bring to prominence their acquaintances, especially their role in shaping our protagonists’ world-views, and to give them equal or greater space when analysing the familiar pool of primary sources. No man, after all, is an island.

It is unfortunately impossible for modern historians to reconstruct in full a specific individual’s circle of contacts, but in a few fortunate cases it is possible to get a sense of what their networks may have looked like. It is, for instance, rather easier to analyse together friends of Rome in the late sixth century, compared to the less well-recorded networks active in the mid-seventh century, if only because of the guidance provided by the letters of Gregory the Great. The later period is more difficult to explore in the same way, but the exceptional pool of sources connected to John Moschus, Maximus the Confessor, and Wilfrid of York are still helpful. Any conclusion reached for their world will be more tentative compared to those of the previous century, but it is hoped that new light can nonetheless be shed on the world they all lived in.

These lessons will constantly inform the analysis of the following chapters. The friends and colleagues of Pope Gregory the Great are the focus of chapter one. By emphasising in particular the experiences of the patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria, a better sense of Gregory’s uniqueness can be gleaned from the well-

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known sources. In the process, dramatic events in the East, most prominently the flight of the Persian ruler Khosrow II, are brought into the picture, for the pope was certainly aware of the latest news from the East, making it possible to consider whether Gregory’s western projects, the most famous being the Gregorian mission to England, had been influenced by the stories relayed to the pope by his friends. Gregory’s words, though not a demonstration of his uniqueness, remain therefore an indication of how a well-informed leader of the imperial church involved himself in this dialogue.

Perhaps more importantly, the pope’s legacy can be felt over the next century, a topic considered in the second chapter and which allows us to recover some sense of continuity between Gregory’s world and that of his successors. The troubled reign of Emperor Phocas (602–610) is considered first, for this understudied period still requires revision, in particular via an analysis of western sources. The views of John Moschus, the Cilician compiler of the *Spiritual Meadow*, and his friends, most importantly Sophronius of Jerusalem and Maximus the Confessor, will then be sketched out in some detail, for their actions set the stage for the later confrontation between Rome and Constantinople over monotheletism. The opening stages of this doctrinal struggle form the conclusion of this chapter, as conventional tellings of this ‘age of division’ can be made more nuanced through a reconsideration of the divided loyalties visible in the Levant, North Africa, and Italy.

The third chapter ranges beyond the Roman Empire and explores how the Visigoths and the Franks responded to the monothelete crisis. The evidence is certainly limited and rarely straightforward enough to give us a detailed timeline, but indicators of western interest in this eastern dispute can nonetheless be gathered from the disparate conciliar records, letters, and hagiographies written in the post-Roman West. These connections both within and outside of the empire are brought together in the final chapter, which reviews the final fate of the Moschan circle in the face of imperial persecution. I argue here that even as the crisis of empire in the Roman world deepened, contact across Christendom was still possible. From England, future leaders of the church, Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop, made the journey to Rome as pilgrims sponsored by royalty, even as the defiant papacy looked for help beyond the empire for its battle against Emperor Constans II. In 668 the aforementioned links became all the more obvious, as Theodore of Tarsus, once a dissident against Constantinople, and Hadrian, an occasional imperial ambassador,
travelled together to Canterbury, supposedly inaugurating a golden age for the nascent Anglo-Saxon church according to their admirer Bede.

By situating biographical discussions of these monks and bishops alongside a revised narrative of the monothelite controversy, I argue here that a different story of persistent mobility at the end of late antiquity, at least for individuals linked to the papacy, can be drawn from the sources. The Roman Empire is often said to have experienced an unprecedented crisis in the seventh century as a result of its wars against Persia and the Arabs, eventually transforming the late-antique empire into the more medieval ‘Byzantium’. In time the empire perhaps did become more insular and parochial in its dealings with the West, but it is the contention here that this profound shift in attitude was not yet visible in its ‘darkest’ century. The same goes for the papacy and its admirers in the West, for their histories likewise cannot be written in isolation from events in Constantinople. All too often, the seventh century is characterised as a time of division, when differences outweighed commonalities, but it is perhaps more useful to discard such a paradigm for the moment, in order to revisit the sources through contemporary eyes, for whom such a dramatic change was not yet obvious.
1. The World of Gregory the Great

Thanks to the plentiful sources available for Pope Gregory the Great and his friends, the 590s are a uniquely suitable starting point for an investigation of the papacy and its networks. The future pope, a scion of Roman aristocracy, first reached prominence as the prefect of the city of Rome, before embracing the monastic life. Even so, his ability was quickly noted by Pope Pelagius II and he soon became a deacon, then the apocrisiarius, or papal envoy, to Constantinople. His election in 590 to the papacy itself was a significant moment, for from then on his surviving letters shine a light not only on him as a person and the papal institutions he managed, but also that of his contacts; a rare insight at a time when other letter-collections are far smaller or non-existent, let alone with a range of correspondents that stretched from Kent to Egypt.¹

It is still necessary, however, to remind ourselves that Gregory was only one individual within his world. Even today, texts pertaining to Gregory and the papacy are rarely placed into conversation with non-Latin sources. In their preface to the Companion to Gregory the Great, Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo rightfully point to the ‘need to bring Gregory’s output into dialogue with texts, in Latin, Greek, Syriac, and Arabic, from his own age and from across the Mediterranean world whose horizons, as far afield as Arabia, Gregory clearly scanned’.² The approach taken here follows their lead, though only a small number of comparisons can be discussed in detail, with Greek sources, perhaps unusually, taking pride of place when analysing narratives of the pope’s career.

This chapter will first survey the parallels between Gregory and his fellow patriarchs. In the process, the pope is presented as a man who acted very much within the same cultural milieu as those in Constantinople and Antioch. As influential as the pope may seem today, in his immediate context it is important to remember that he was not such a unique figure for his contemporaries. His later fame was instead due to the efforts of those who came after him who promoted his memory, friends and acquaintances who found the pope’s writings and legacy

relevant for their own time and place.³

More importantly, it was the pope’s contacts in his own lifetime who informed him of events far away and engaged with his ideas, men and women who must be taken into account when tackling the thought-world of Gregory the Great. The focus here then is on Gregory’s networks, not his words, and how they contributed to his actions, rather than his personal attributes and achievements. This will also sidestep the long-standing debate over the extent of ‘decline’ experienced by Rome.⁴ Regardless of changes to material standards of living, Gregory and his contemporaries still lived their lives and carried out their duties, and it is through this perspective that the pope’s world, as well as the crises afflicting the empire in the seventh century, will be examined.

With this background in mind, I consider next the fabled ‘conversion’ of the Persian shahanshah, Khosrow II, during his sojourn within the empire in 590/1 – a stay that left a tangible mark in the imagination of contemporaries, even in the post-Roman West. A wider discussion of other related trends within the empire, especially the interest in conversion, the apocalypse, and the pursuit of a more irenic policy towards non-‘orthodox’ churches, all visible in sources for this curious encounter between Rome and Persia, will also highlight further common ground between the imperial patriarchs. Taking all this together, the Gregorian mission to Kent is revisited in the concluding part of this chapter. The timeline and the sources for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons are all well-studied, but more can still be made of the eastern material. Indeed, the argument made here is that eastern events weighed also on the pope’s mind, alongside news from Spain and Gaul, when he dispatched Augustine to England. Just as Elva Johnston has fruitfully re-examined


the Christianisation of Ireland by reconceptualising insular developments as a frontier phenomenon, one among many in the world of late antiquity, I suggest here that an eastern perspective for the sixth century can likewise offer new interpretations for histories of the papacy and Anglo-Saxon England.⁵

⁵ E. Johnston, ‘Ireland in Late Antiquity: A Forgotten Frontier?’, *Studies in Late Antiquity* 1.2 (2017), 107–23.
1.1 Imperial Patriarchs

In the past, Gregory was seen by some historians to be the originator of later papal influence over Latin Christendom, on one occasion described by Walter Ullmann as the ‘Father of [Western] Europe’ whose ‘prophetic vision’ of a Christian commonwealth proved to be essential for the future identity of the West. More recently, Peter Brown suggests that Gregory had also created a ‘Europe-wide language of power’, albeit ‘unwittingly’, by promoting a universal vision for the relationship between church and state, an ideal undifferentiated by political boundaries. These positions, and others like it that afforded Gregory an exalted place in European history, have now been contested and a wide range of scholars have offered an alternative view, in which the pope was very much a man of his time, not one ahead of it. He was a loyal, if sometimes critical, servant of the emperor, as one would expect for someone who was the godfather of the imperial heir and whose appointment was welcomed by the emperor himself.

A grand strategy to promote papal independence was certainly unrealistic given the history of imperial interventions against disobedient popes before and after Gregory. Indeed, a survey of Gregory’s successors, as attempted in later chapters, reveals that throughout the conflicts of the seventh century, the position of the papacy as an institution set firmly within the empire was never in doubt. The bishop of Rome was a unique figure in many ways, but in this period their careers also have to be understood within their imperial context. Gregory himself recognised this and consulted his fellow patriarchs in matters of importance; the same, then, ought to apply to studies of the papacy as well.

A look at the pope’s correspondents is enough to show how comfortable

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6 W. Ullmann, A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages (London, 1974), 35.
7 Brown, Rise of Western Christendom, 211.
Gregory was in dealing with both the East and the West, all the while remaining the very model of an imperial bishop. An apt comparison can be made with two contemporary patriarchs of Antioch. The first, Gregory (570–592), had his deeds recorded in some detail by a confidante, Evagrius Scholasticus, while the second, Anastasius (patriarch in 559–570 and 593–598), was a personal friend of the pope and the recipient of a number of his letters. The latter’s friendship with Gregory would not have surprised contemporaries, for most patriarchs in the late sixth century can be placed in a circle of high-ranking Chalcedonian clergymen bound together by friendship and acquaintance. Three had served previously beyond their later jurisdiction: Eulogius, the patriarch of Alexandria, as a priest in Antioch, Anastasius of Antioch was once an apocrisiarius to Alexandria from Palestine, and Gregory of Antioch was previously an abbot on Mount Sinai. Gregory of Rome meanwhile was once a papal envoy to Constantinople and became friends with Anastasius and Eulogius as a result of his time there, in addition to the future patriarch of Constantinople, John the Faster. In this regard, the future pope’s background as an apocrisiarius was far from unusual.

Though lacking direct evidence, a friendly association between Pope Gregory and Gregory of Antioch is also likely. As we will see, Gregory of Rome’s close

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9 Although Gregory’s friendships with these men are often noted, their common background is not discussed in any detail in standard biographies of the pope.
12 Gregory’s friendship with Anastasius: Gregory the Great, Letters, 1.7 (Norberg, 9–10). With Eulogius: John Moschus, Spiritual Meadow, 147 (Migne, 3012). With John the Faster: Gregory the Great, Letters, 1.4 (Norberg, 4–5). The same network extended beyond the empire, for Leander of Seville had likewise befriended both the future pope and John the Faster in the capital: Isidore of Seville, On Illustrious Men, 26–7, ed. C. Codoher Merino, El ‘De viris illustribus’ de Isidoro de Sevilla (Salamanca, 1964), 147–49, and J. Wood, ‘Playing the Fame Game: Bibliography, Celebrity, and Primacy in Late Antique Spain’, Journal of Early Christian Studies 20.4 (2012), 613–40, at 626. Goubert, ‘Patriarches d'Antioche et d'Alexandrie’, 70, notes ‘les excellentes relations de Grégoire d'Antioche avec le pape saint Grégoire’, citing Gregory the Great, Letters, 5.44 and 9.157 (9.156 in Goubert). The two letters, however, provide only posthumous references to Gregory of Antioch (Norberg, 329 and 714), so it is uncertain whether the respectful terms used are reflective of an earlier close friendship.
friendship with Archbishop Domitian of Melitene implies an awareness of Gregory of Antioch’s importance in the East, since Domitian and the patriarch had cooperated closely in the early 590s. The Antiochene patriarch was furthermore a friend of Eulogius of Alexandria and all three, the two Gregories and Eulogius, were portrayed positively by John Moschus, a Cilician monk sheltering in Rome during the latter stage of the Persian war of 603–628. Moschus, by virtue of his travels and his wide network of friends in the Levant, Egypt, and Italy, had evidently deeply admired this ecclesiastical circle, since he promoted these men’s memories after their deaths, most notably in describing Gregory of Rome as ‘the Great’ c. 630 in his *Spiritual Meadow* – the first author to assign the honorific to the pope. Evagrius’ *Ecclesiastical History* likewise portrayed both Gregory of Antioch and Anastasius positively, perhaps indicating then that the two patriarchs had held each other in high esteem, even though the former had replaced the latter after Anastasius was deposed by Justin II. The pope’s inclusion of ex-patriarch Anastasius among recipients of his synodical letter in 590 is another indirect indication that there was no great enmity between Anastasius and his successor Gregory, for it could easily have been interpreted as a grievous insult against the current holder of the office.

Finally, both the Antiochene patriarchs and Eulogius of Alexandria had been monks, a not uncommon situation in the East, so although Gregory the Great was the first monk to become the bishop of Rome, his previous experiences would not have been out of place among his colleagues. The Roman *apocrisiarius’* stay in the East had thus immersed him among men following similar career trajectories, presenting another possible cause for Gregory to know the contemporary Antiochene patriarch, at least by reputation. Gregory of Antioch can therefore plausibly be situated within the same circle, or at least had been similar enough in outlook to have shared a common admirer decades after their deaths, in the case of Moschus, and to have mutually respected the same figure, as was the case for Anastasius of Antioch.

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The last of the five patriarchs, that of Jerusalem, did not feature frequently in Pope Gregory’s letters or in other surviving sources, but Gregory still knew of the patriarchate of Jerusalem’s dispute with a local monastery, which implies some degree of knowledge of the patriarchate’s local affairs beforehand, as well as a Palestinian monastery’s ability to appeal to Rome.\(^{19}\) The only other mention of Amos, the patriarch of Jerusalem, in Gregory’s writings is a request by Gregory for Amos to detain and return a functionary serving the papal *apocrisiarius* who had seemingly fled to Jerusalem’s jurisdiction in 597, a notably impersonal letter compared to Gregory’s missives to Eulogius or Anastasius.\(^{20}\) Nonetheless, John Moschus, in yet another indication of his closeness to the same episcopal circle, also recounted a vision of St Peter that appeared to Pope Leo the Great, a tale narrated to a group of Palestinian monks by Patriarch Amos of Jerusalem upon his elevation.\(^{21}\) Given that Amos’ tenure in office was entirely within Gregory’s time as the pope, a plausible context for this anecdote concerning Leo to be passed eastwards was through papal communications.\(^{22}\)

Intriguingly, Moschus may have written another tale that criticised Amos as a ‘monk-hater’ (μισομόναχος), a term that would be appropriate for Amos, as from Gregory’s letters we learn of the patriarch’s ongoing struggle against the New Monastery in Jerusalem.\(^{23}\) As Phil Booth’s recent study has shown, there were significant tensions between monks and clerics in the Roman East, both in practical terms and in more theological matters, and it was only in the crises of the seventh century that a new integrated model of the ecclesial hierarchy and the monastic world was formulated.\(^{24}\) It is therefore tempting to draw a comparison with Gregory’s own struggles, as conflict between monastic and clerical ‘factions’ in

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\(^{19}\) Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 7.29 and 11.28 (Norberg, 487–9 and 914–7).

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 8.6 (Norberg, 523).

\(^{21}\) John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, 149 (Migne, 3014).

\(^{22}\) Amos came into office after Gregory’s synodical letter in February 591 and had died by February 601: Gregory, *Letters*, 1.24 and 11.28 (Norberg, 22 and 914). Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.24 (Bidez and Parmentier, 240), implied that Amos began his tenure after August 593, for he noted that a new patriarch of Jerusalem had yet to be appointed when he finished his history between August 593 and August 594; on dating Evagrius: M. Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus* (Liverpool, 2000), xx–xxi. Alternatively, Theophanes, *Chronicle*, A.M. 6085 (de Boor, 270), dated Amos’ eight-year tenure from some point between August 592 and August 593.


\(^{24}\) Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 33–43 and 336–42.
Rome has long been suggested for the late-antique papacy. Moschus’ words, if genuine, provide yet another unexamined parallel between the complex politics within the five patriarchates, as well as a plausible, if unprovable, cause for why Amos was less closely associated with other patriarchs from a monastic background.

Strikingly, Pope Gregory may even have been known to John Climacus, a prominent Greek monk and ascetic writer based in the Sinai, active sometime between 579 and 659, which provides another indication of shared monastic values within the empire. As Andrew Louth notes, while the question of whether Gregory the Great had communicated with John is rightfully disputed, there is a reference to a ‘Gregory the Theologian’ in John’s Ladder of Divine Ascent. Whereas Gregory Nazianzus, the other possible identification for the ‘Theologian’, had said nothing about the subject at hand, Gregory the Great did, so this citation of Gregory may be a very early mention of the pope’s writings being known in the East. This is only a possibility, since John would not have called Gregory ‘the Theologian’, which Louth has suggested to be a later addition by a scribe confusing Gregory for his namesake, Gregory Nazianzus, a far more well-known figure in the East. Despite this rather speculative point, it is tempting to once again return to Moschus, for he recorded for posterity the edifying words of a ‘John the Cilician, higoumen of Raithou’, who may also be identified as the dedicatee of John Climacus’ magnum opus, also a John,

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26 Curiously, Fredegar, Chronicle, 4.11 (Wallace-Hadrill, 9), reported that a Thomas (for Amos?) of Jerusalem, Gregory of Antioch, and John of Constantinople together carried a newly discovered relic of Christ to Jerusalem in 590. The timing is problematic, as Amos became the patriarch in 593/4 (following the lead of the contemporary Evagrius rather than the later evidence of Theophanes) and Gregory of Antioch died in 592, but an erratic chronology is to be expected for a Latin source in this period. However, as this event is not reported in any eastern source, whether this is evidence of Amos’ relationship with the patriarchs of Antioch and Constantinople remains uncertain.


30 Ibid., 346.
higoumen of Raithou.\textsuperscript{31} Even if Gregory did not communicate with John Climacus directly, it seems reasonable to suggest that both John Moschus and John Climacus had admired the same monastic leader. As Gregory the Great was another one of Moschus’ heroes, shared values between these ascetic-minded authors also appear likely – an understandable state of affairs given Gregory’s immersion in the imperial church.

From this perspective, the Roman pope did not stand out from his contemporaries, but belonged to a group of men with similar careers and similar friends. Of the eastern patriarchs, four had been monks (Eulogius, Anastasius, Gregory, and Amos), three had served outside of their later sees (Eulogius, Anastasius, and Gregory), and three became friends with the future pope from his time in the East (Eulogius, Anastasius, and John the Faster). A later effort to mobilise this network to support the papal position during the controversy over the patriarch of Constantinople’s use of ‘ecumenical’ in his title should therefore be viewed in the same light.\textsuperscript{32} An argument it was, but it was not one fought by Rome from the fringes, for it was led by Gregory, with the reluctant support of his friends, against those of the same elite circle.

Even when the pope debated with his doctrinal opponents, he was doing so within an imperial framework, not least because the pope had a more capable grasp of Greek than he cared to admit in his letters, for a passable level of conversational Greek was surely needed for Gregory to have done his job as an apocrisiarius and to maintain his wide web of friends in the East afterwards.\textsuperscript{33} This affinity with contemporary intellectuals is clearly demonstrated in Dal Santo’s recent study of the


\textsuperscript{32} For a recent overview: G. Demacopoulos, ‘Gregory the Great and the Sixth-Century Dispute over the Ecumenical Title’, \textit{Theological Studies} 90 (2009), 600–21.

pope’s engagement with the contemporary Greek debate on the post-mortem activity of human souls. Gregory had first waded into the dispute when he was an *apocrisiarius* in the capital. Against Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople’s view that resurrected human bodies would be impalpable, Gregory argued that they would instead remain fully corporeal, a position that ultimately won over the emperor, Tiberius II Constantine, leading to the burning of Eutychius’ writings on this matter.\(^{34}\) While this incident has often been interpreted as evidence for the division between western and eastern theologies, Gregory’s stance cannot have been exclusive to Latin churchmen, for Stephen Gobar, an obscure figure whose work is only preserved by Photius of Constantinople’s ninth-century summary, noted the various positions held by his contemporaries on this very topic. Gobar’s late sixth-century text is then an effective demonstration that the future pope’s views were not alien to the East. Instead, Gregory’s intervention demonstrates just how integrated he was into the intellectual world of the sixth-century empire, for he advocated a position that was also known to a Greek theologian.\(^{35}\)

Through a comparison of Gregory’s *Dialogues* and his contemporary Eustratius of Constantinople’s *On the State of Souls after Death*, Dal Santo further proposes that similar debates on the saints’ post-mortem activity were present in Rome and Constantinople, with the two texts representative of a common reaction to ‘rationalist speculation’ within the empire.\(^{36}\) The fact that both the pope and Eustratius had to defend the soul’s activity beyond the grave also has an important implication for the cult of saints, as their writings indicate that the activity of holy men and women after their deaths was not taken for granted in an ‘age of faith’. Rather, miracles and sainthood were disputed, not only by individuals on the ground, but also by those more intellectually minded.\(^{37}\) This certainly reflected a wider trend. Analogous examples can be found among East Syrian authors, while in the West, we can turn to the contemporary words of Gregory of Tours in Gaul.\(^{38}\) The bishop of Tours’ world was also one full of scepticism, for this Gregory was similarly

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\(^{36}\) Ibid., 21–83. Eustratius was also the disciple of Eutychius of Constantinople, which is another indication that the earlier debate between the *apocrisiarius* and the patriarch is not evidence of Gregory’s isolation from Greek theological debates.

\(^{37}\) Examples are discussed throughout P. Sarris, M. Dal Santo, and P. Booth (eds.), *An Age of Saints? Power, Conflict and Dissent in Early Medieval Christianity* (Leiden, 2011).

enthusiastic in countering the arguments of his detractors. Most tellingly, one of Gregory of Tours’ own priests doubted the possibility of a corporeal resurrection – a point that surely would have annoyed Gregory of Rome and Eustratius no less than Gregory of Tours.\textsuperscript{39} The bishop was, naturally, the victor in these disputes in his works, but the fact that he had to make these arguments is nonetheless indicative of the existence of a more sceptical world-view, an alternative that was similarly disputed in Rome and Constantinople.\textsuperscript{40} This is not to say that all these individuals were aware of a wider debate in the Christian community, but it is surely still notable that they wrote on similar issues around the same time. By turning to both the East and West, we can then place Gregory of Rome comfortably in both Greek and Latin contexts, instead of drawing a firm distinction between the two.

Nor should we imagine that the pope’s links were limited to his friends and other intellectuals, for in Rome itself Gregory would have encountered a microcosm of wider imperial society. From his letters, we learn of a Syrian trader who sought the pope’s help, the visit of a ‘bishop of Arabia’ seeking relics from Rome, as well as a ‘close friend’ who had once studied medicine in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{41} In his capacity as one of the five patriarchs, Gregory also dealt with the petitions of disgraced clerics from Constantinople, a messenger bringing relics from Jerusalem, and deacons from the patriarch of Alexandria, who brought news from his friend Eulogius and acquired Italian lumber for the Egyptian fleet.\textsuperscript{42} Last but not least, we must note a striking anecdote relayed in Moschus’ \textit{Spiritual Meadow}, in which a certain ‘John the Persian’, who apparently later dwelt in Egypt, retold the story of a chance meeting with Gregory during his pilgrimage to Rome.\textsuperscript{43} This tale was no doubt shaped by

\textsuperscript{39} Gregory of Tours, \textit{Histories}, 10.13 (Krusch, 496–500).
\textsuperscript{42} Gregory the Great, \textit{Letters}, 3.52, 7.29, and 13.43 (Norberg, 197, 489, and 1049).
\textsuperscript{43} John Moschus, \textit{Spiritual Meadow}, 151 (Migne, 3016–7). Moschus’ network also led to the diffusion of another Gregorian story involving pilgrims and a relic of St Peter to both England and Palestine: Thacker, ‘Memorializing Gregory the Great’, 64–7, but note that the Palestinian author was not Moschus as Thacker suggests: Booth, \textit{Crisis of Empire}, 114n113.
Moschus to suit his own needs, but the presence of a ‘Persian’ pilgrim in Gregory’s Rome surely cannot be discounted.

Beyond Gregory’s own social circle and acquaintances, we can also find other distinguished easterners in Rome. A well-known example for historians of medicine is the Greek doctor Alexander of Tralles. Born to a family of polymaths in imperial Lydia, Alexander travelled widely, apparently even to Gaul and Spain to study local remedies, before settling in Rome after being offered a position of great prestige.\textsuperscript{44} The often-cited year of death for Alexander, 605, has no basis in the sources and must be doubted, but a reconstruction favouring an expansive career in the mid-sixth century, with his death placed at some point before 579‒82, seems prudent, as around then Agathias stopped working on his \textit{History}, the main source for Alexander’s life.\textsuperscript{45} In Gregory’s own lifetime, we have therefore a doctor renowned even in Constantinople dwelling in Rome.\textsuperscript{46}

The city’s image as an uneducated backwater can likewise be questioned via an Armenian source, Anania Širakac’i’s seventh-century \textit{Autobiography}, which noted that his teacher, Tychikos, had studied in Alexandria and Constantinople, along with a year-long sojourn in Rome c. 618.\textsuperscript{47} The purpose of the stay in Rome is not described, but given the explicit indication earlier that Tychikos’ wound in battle

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\textsuperscript{46} For context, see also the Greek doctors active in contemporary Ravenna: N. Everett, \textit{The Alphabet of Galen: Pharmacy from Antiquity to the Middle Ages} (Toronto, 2012), 21–4, and J. Irvine and O. Temkin, ‘Who was Akilläös? A Problem in Medical Historiography’, \textit{Bulletin of the History of Medicine} 77.1 (2003), 12–24.

\textsuperscript{47} Consulted via the translation provided in T. Greenwood, ‘A Reassessment of the Life and Mathematical Problems of Anania Širakac’i’, \textit{Revue des études arméniennes} 33 (2011), 131–86, at 140; see also the discussion of the timeline at 147.
c. 614 had converted him from seeking gold to seeking knowledge, the text strongly implies that Tychikos was attracted to Rome for its learning. The high standard of learning possible in Rome is also implicitly demonstrated at an institutional level, judging by the use of Latin prose rhythm in official letters composed in the papal chancery. As Richard Pollard put it, some papal scribes had evidently ‘upheld an older standard of Latinity […] that the pope had either abandoned or never learned’, meaning that Gregory was only the public face of a still-learned administration.\(^{48}\) Combined with the presence of Alexander and Tychikos in the city before and after Gregory’s pontificate, it is tempting to suggest that Rome’s dismal reputation in the historiography may have been exaggerated, with Gregory’s city having more in common with the seats of his fellow patriarchs than hitherto supposed.\(^{49}\)

In more secular terms, we can also question whether Gregory’s Rome operated on the fringes of imperial administration. For instance, of the officials with whom Gregory had to interact, a significant portion must have been sent from the East, though exact numbers cannot be determined, as names are hardly accurate indicators of ethnic or geographical origin.\(^{50}\) But as Maya Maskarinec has recently argued, a more subtle influence can be found in four churches around the Roman Forum, which were dedicated to saints favoured in Constantinople after Justinian’s reconquest, perhaps even with the involvement of imperial administrators.\(^{51}\) If not an exact indicator of non-local Romans’ influence on the city, it does at the very least suggests that Rome’s religious life in the age of Gregory the Great was becoming more and more in tune with that of the capital.

Finally, a note must be made of a letter from Gregory to Innocent, the praetorian prefect of Africa, in 600, which mentioned a curious figure, ‘Anamundarus’, on whose behalf the pope interceded, perhaps to the emperor as...

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Irfan Shahîd suggests, after a request from the prefect. It has been argued that this was a reference to al-Mundhir, an important Arab client of the empire who was exiled to Sicily with his family, with a mistake in the transliteration resulting in the erroneous ‘Anamundarus’; a not unlikely scenario, since another western author, John of Biclaro, named the chief as Aramundarus (admittedly a closer transliteration) in his account of the Arab’s visit to Constantinople in 575. This can be corroborated somewhat by the Syriac Chronicle of 1234, which records that al-Mundhir was able to return from exile after Maurice’s death in 602, making it a (late) account of al-Mundhir being alive in exile until that point, hence placing him in the vicinity of Gregory the Great, for whom Sicily was of great importance, and so makes the pope’s intercession rather more plausible.

Gregory’s wide web of contacts surveyed here would not surprise specialists of the pope, though it is still helpful to gather together all the evidence in one place, to showcase in full his immersion in imperial society. What is still needed, however, is a study of how these contacts influenced the pope’s actions and whether Gregory truly stood out from his contemporaries in the Greek East. As Dal Santo astutely notes, the bishop of Rome’s responsibilities for the city were far from abnormal after Justinian’s reforms, and a more detailed analysis, as attempted here, only confirms this hypothesis.

52 Gregory the Great, Letters, 10.16 (Norberg, 844–5). Shahîd, Byzantium and the Arabs, 1.602.
The pope’s role in managing papal properties, for instance, was not unique. In Rome itself, he continued previous popes’ micro-management of their patrimony, as highlighted by the work of Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen on Popes Gelasius and Pelagius I. We lack the sources for other contemporary patriarchs’ involvement in civil affairs, but the Lives of John the Almsgiver (610–620) provide some indication of how the wealth of Alexandria was spent, or at least how it ought to have been spent according to John’s allies: primarily for refugees and the poor, but also to outfit its fleet for trade and to manage its existing properties. Indeed, in Pope Gregory’s own lifetime, the patriarch of Alexandria had evidently maintained a healthy demand for Italian timber for his fleet, demonstrating therefore the reach of Eulogius’ administration.

The life of the pope’s namesake, Gregory of Antioch, also provides several excellent parallels to the Roman Gregory from his long career. At his lowest points, the Antiochene Gregory was accused of conducting a human sacrifice in 577 and was put on trial in Constantinople for financial irregularities in 588, even if we exclude his unorthodox elevation into office after his predecessor, Anastasius, was removed by Emperor Justin II in 570. Despite these moments of crisis, Gregory of Antioch’s tumultuous life remains relevant for studies of Gregory of Rome. Most interestingly for the purposes of this thesis, as the eastern army had allegedly recruited men from near the Rhine in 574 and the patriarch played an important role in military administration, it is tempting to argue that the Antiochene Gregory’s diversity of contacts was likely comparable to Gregory of Rome’s.

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59 Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.18, 6.7, and 5.5–6 (Bidez and Parmentier, 212–4, 225–6, and 201–3). Allen, Evagrius Scholasticus, 230–2, 250, and 214–8, provides important context for these controversies. John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.27–34 and 5.17 (Brooks, 114–24 and 202–3), conflated Gregory’s two misfortunes together but is a valuable miaphysite source for these events.

60 Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.14 (Bidez and Parmentier, 209); John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical
not possess other patriarchs’ letter-collections, this is yet another reminder that it is unwise to presume that the pope was the only bishop to have had such far-ranging connections.

More mundanely, the Antiochene evidence shows that Gregory the Great was not alone in (sometimes) paying for the costs of war and urging the soldiers to obey their commanders, for Gregory of Antioch paid the wages of soldiers passing through Antioch and then restored order twice after soldiers mutinied against their generals in 589.61 The fact that Pope Gregory had to do the same in emergencies should not be surprising, for both Rome and Antioch were close to the frontier.62 Yet despite the similarities between the two Gregories, the pope’s self-reference to him being a pseudo-paymaster for imperial forces is instead seen by some as part of a process, no matter how unwilling, of the bishops of Rome accruing more power.63 On the contrary, if the patriarch of Antioch was doing the same on a frontier that had far more resources devoted to it, then perhaps we can read Gregory’s unwilling involvement in military affairs quite differently. The pope’s complaints about soldiers’ pay and friction with the military administration may, for instance, be the result of personal disagreements with the exarch or Gregory’s own misgivings about fulfilling his duty, rather than because Gregory had to intervene in hitherto unprecedented spheres.64

Gregory of Antioch’s other claim to fame, his negotiations with the Persian shahanshah, Khosrow II, who had fled to the empire after a usurper deposed him in 590,65 was attested via two inscriptions: B. Forlas, ‘Ein Komplex frühbyzantinischer Silberobjekte aus einer Kirche des heiligen Konstantin’, in F. Daim et al. (eds.), In Spätantike und Byzanz: Bestandskatalog Badisches Landesmuseum. Objekte aus Bein, Elfenbein, Glas, Keramik, Metall und Stein (Mainz, 2017), 145–61, at 148 and 158. For Frankish soldiers in Egypt in the second half of the sixth century: N. Underwood, ‘When the Goths Were in Egypt: A Gothic Bible Fragment and Barbarian Settlement in Sixth-Century Egypt’, Viator 45.1 (2014), 25–38, at 34–8; cf. R. Bagnall and B. Palme, ‘Franks in Sixth-Century Egypt’, Tyche 11 (1996), 1–13, at 7, who argues that these soldiers were ‘surely Franks in name only by the late sixth century’. As we will see, the Antiochene patriarchs also possessed strong links with Persia.

History, 6.13 (Brooks, 234), noted an imperial army of ‘60,000 Lombards’ active in the eastern theatre. In the same context, the presence of Frankish auxiliaries in Syria is also attested via two inscriptions: B. Fourlas, ‘Ein Komplex frühbyzantinischer Silberobjekte aus einer Kirche des heiligen Konstantin’, in F. Daim et al. (eds.), In Spätantike und Byzanz: Bestandskatalog Badisches Landesmuseum. Objekte aus Bein, Elfenbein, Glas, Keramik, Metall und Stein (Mainz, 2017), 145–61, at 148 and 158. For Frankish soldiers in Egypt in the second half of the sixth century: N. Underwood, ‘When the Goths Were in Egypt: A Gothic Bible Fragment and Barbarian Settlement in Sixth-Century Egypt’, Viator 45.1 (2014), 25–38, at 34–8; cf. R. Bagnall and B. Palme, ‘Franks in Sixth-Century Egypt’, Tyche 11 (1996), 1–13, at 7, who argues that these soldiers were ‘surely Franks in name only by the late sixth century’. As we will see, the Antiochene patriarchs also possessed strong links with Persia.

61 Evagrius, Ecclesiastical History, 6.11–4 (Bidez and Parmentier, 228–32).
64 On the pope’s conflict with Exarch Romanus: Markus, Gregory the Great, 102–5. Again, this is paralleled by Gregory of Antioch’s struggles with Asterius, the comes Orientis: Evagrius, Ecclesiastical History, 6.7 (Bidez and Parmentier, 225–6).
590, is likewise helpful for understanding Gregory of Rome’s relationship with Constantinople. The pope had famously negotiated a truce with invading Lombards, for which he was criticised by imperial officials, forcing Gregory to defend himself in a letter to the emperor in 595. From an imperial perspective, this was not exceptional, for in the following century leading bishops continued to take a lead in managing military threats and in negotiation treaties, namely Sophronius of Jerusalem with the Arabs in the late 630s and Cyrus of Alexandria in 636 and 641 when Arab armies threatened Egypt. Where Gregory the Great erred was not in the fact that he did so, but that he agreed a truce with the Lombards without imperial sanction, just as Cyrus and a Roman commander in Mesopotamia did with the Arabs in the 630s. Understandably, all three received imperial censure as a result. Gregory of Antioch’s involvement with Khosrow II, on the other hand, was the result of a direct order from Emperor Maurice, making this an act to be celebrated and not condemned.

In short, the pope’s role in administration and diplomacy, so extraordinary in the eyes of many historians, would not have been out of place had Gregory been elevated in Antioch or Alexandria instead of Rome. Imperial patriarchs faced similar pressures (the two Gregorys examined here even shared the same affliction, gout), dealt with similar responsibilities, and can even be said to have reacted in similar ways to problems facing the empire. With this important contention in mind, the following section will turn to examine events around 590 in more depth, for the arrival of Khosrow in the empire was a unique moment in late antiquity and which, I

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66 Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 5.36 (Norberg, 304–7)
69 On gout: Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.24 (Bidez and Parmentier, 240), and Gregory the Great, *Letters*, 9.228, 9.232, 10.14, and 11.20 (Norberg, 804, 814, 840, and 890). Gout is interpreted as a particularly important influence on the pope’s theology and diplomatic effectiveness in J. Hosler, ‘Gregory the Great’s Gout: Suffering, Penitence, and Diplomacy in the Early Middle Ages’, in M. Frassetto, J. Hosler and M. Gabriele (eds.), *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Essays on Medieval Europe in Honor of Daniel F. Callahan* (Leiden, 2014), 11–32; one wonders if this approach can be strengthened or weakened when other afflicted individuals are also taken into account, including Gregory of Antioch and Leander of Seville.
argue, helped to shape the Roman Gregory’s thinking about conversion and the apocalypse.
1.2 The ‘Conversion’ of Khosrow II

The attempted conversion of Khosrow provides another excellent illustration of how Pope Gregory’s actions can be reviewed next to that of Gregory of Antioch, for the Roman pope’s most famous project was the Gregorian mission to the Anglo-Saxons in 596, which quickly resulted in King Æthelbert of Kent’s conversion. It is safe to say that studies of the papacy and Anglo-Saxon England have not generally turned to the contemporary eastern interest in conversion when considering the cause of the Gregorian mission. Indeed, Robert Markus, who otherwise argues for Pope Gregory’s immersion in imperial culture, nonetheless notes that it is ‘more profitable to look West rather than East’ when seeking a specific reason for Gregory’s decision to evangelise the Anglo-Saxons.70 Given the proximity of the Roman Gregory to eastern events, it is worth exploring here the politics of the Roman-Persian frontier, to consider whether religious developments in the Near East might have been factors in shaping the pope’s thinking.71 Though at first glance entirely irrelevant to Latin Christendom, I argue here that by examining the ‘conversion’ of Khosrow, we can recover some sense of the imperial Zeitgeist in the 590s and so shed new light on Gregory’s western projects.

Khosrow’s arrival in the empire can be recounted in some detail, for this surprising turn in the war between Rome and Persia evidently fascinated contemporaries. The revolt of the general Bahram Chobin in 589 was the spark, for it led to the deposition of the then-Persian ruler Hormizd and the elevation of his heir, Khosrow II. Bahram, however, continued the revolt, forcing young Khosrow to flee to Roman territories in 590. After some wrangling with Constantinople, support was sent by Emperor Maurice and a combined imperial-Persian force was victorious against the usurper in 591, finally concluding the decades-long Roman-Persian

71 Again, another point that is very briefly noted in Dal Santo, ‘Gregory, Empire and the Emperor’, 78.
conflict. Crucial imperial envoys during these events were Archbishop Domitian of Melitene, the emperor’s nephew, and, as already noted, Gregory of Antioch.

Not only did Domitian enjoy the emperor’s trust, he can also be placed in the same circle of friends identified previously. He was apparently on friendly terms with Eulogius, as the patriarch of Alexandria had dedicated one of his anti-miaphysite works to the archbishop of Melitene, indicating therefore a shared rapport against non-Chalcedonians, a claim corroborated by the twelfth-century miaphysite historian Michael the Syrian’s account of Domitian’s persecution against the faithful. Domitian was also on friendly terms with Gregory of Rome, for three of the popes’ letters were addressed to the bishop of Melitene. Intriguingly, in one letter from 593 Gregory even expressed disappointment that the ‘emperor of the Persians’ had not been converted to Christianity, indicating therefore that the pope was aware of his friend’s recent involvement with Khosrow. Gregory of Antioch, Domitian of Melitene, and Gregory the Great had thus all moved in the same elite circle, making the former two ideal partners to deal with Khosrow’s exile, an apt result of these high-ranking bishops’ overlapping ties.

Given that the pope’s contacts were so closely involved with Khosrow, it is then worth pointing out that conversion was very much on the mind of imperial authors writing about these events. Indeed, Khosrow had most likely played up his links to Christianity. Even as he fled Persia, Khosrow had attempted to persuade the East Syrian catholicos to accompany him. Once in imperial territories, Khosrow

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74 Photius, Bibliotheca, 225 and 230 (Henry, 4.99 and 5.48), and Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, 10.23, trans. J.-B. Chabot, Chronique de Michel le Syrien, 2 (Paris, 1901), 372–3. See also Domitian’s persecution against Jews and Samaritans recorded in John of Nikiu, Chronicle, 99 (Zotenberg, 415), and a synod organised by Eulogius against Samaritans: Photius, Bibliotheca, 230 (Henry, 5.61).


76 Ibid., 3.62 and 3.64 (Norberg, 212 and 214–5).

77 Khuzistan Chronicle, trans. N. al-Ka’bi, A Short Chronicle on the End of the Sasanian Empire and Early Islam (Piscataway, 2016), 8; note that the translator eschews the two prevalent name in the historiography for this chronicle, the Khuzistan Chronicle or the Anonymous Guidi. Though she is left unnamed, a reference to Khosrow’s wives travelling with him may also imply that Shirin, his Christian and most favourite wife, accompanied the fugitive: Evagrius, Ecclesiastical History, 6.17 (Bidez and Parmentier, 234).
sent a letter and envoys to Constantinople, which no doubt exaggerated his ‘desire’ for conversion, for there had been significant imperial opposition to aiding the exile.\(^78\) It does not help that the conversion of the Persian ruler was very much a late-antique topos, and Khosrow’s own grandfather was said to have converted on his death-bed.\(^79\) The prominent role given to two bishops in negotiations further implies that Maurice was interested in converting Khusrow, in addition to the obvious political and military motives for dealing with the exiled ruler.\(^80\)

Contemporaries in the know, such as Pope Gregory the Great, knew that the effort failed, but it is notable that later sources described it as a success, the earliest Greek account being that of Theophylact Simocatta, c. 630, which noted that after his first victory against the usurper Khosrow explicitly converted to Christianity.\(^81\) Michael Whitby further suggests that Gregory of Antioch had, by implication, believed in Khusrow’s genuine conversion, though this strikes me as unlikely given that Evagrius, an earlier author with close ties to Gregory of Antioch, did not make a similarly explicit statement.\(^82\) In any case, Theophylact is hardly the most reliable of authors, given the positive attitude he held towards the reigning emperor, Heraclius (610–641), and the fact that he wrote in the aftermath of Khusrow’s war against the Romans (603–628).\(^83\) If Khusrow had already ‘repudiated’ his Zoroastrian faith, but in 614 still sacked Jerusalem, then the reader could not help but condemn the perfidious Persian further. That said, Allen is surely correct to say that Khusrow would have continued to play up the prospects of his conversion even after he was restored to his throne, so we should not condemn too readily the sources’ ignorance.\(^84\)

Nonetheless, this tall tale, or a variation of it, enjoyed an after-life beyond the Roman Empire. First of all, a barebones account of Khusrow’s conversion is recounted in John of Biclaro’s *Chronicle*: ‘the emperor of the Persians received the

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\(^{80}\) P. Peeters, ‘Sainte Golindouch, martyre perse’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 62 (1944), 74–125, at 120.

\(^{81}\) Theophylact, *History*, 5.2 (de Boor, 191).

\(^{82}\) Whitby, *Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 300.


\(^{84}\) Allen, *Evagrius*, 265.
faith of Christ and established peace with Emperor Maurice’.\textsuperscript{85} This was written shortly after 604, thirteen years after Khosrow’s restoration and nearly three decades before Theophylact’s \textit{History}, making this an important indication of how fast such rumours had already flown to the opposite side of the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{86} A much more elaborate account of the ‘conversion’ can be found in Fredegar’s \textit{Chronicle} and later in Paul the Deacon’s \textit{History of the Lombards}, the first written c. 660 in Burgundy and the latter in northern Italy in the late eighth century.\textsuperscript{87} According to Fredegar, a certain ‘Caesara’, the wife of the Persian emperor ‘Anaulf’, had fled to Constantinople and was baptised. Anaulf sought her return and in the end travelled to Antioch with 60,000 men, all of whom converted to Christianity.

Intriguingly, the Burgundian chronicler also added the detail that the queen was baptised by John, bishop of Constantinople and that Gregory of Antioch became Anaulf’s godfather – the correct patriarchs at the time of Khosrow’s flight to the empire. Afterwards, Anaulf asked Maurice for priests to establish the faith in his homeland, with the result that all of Persia was swiftly brought to Christianity. Though no doubt rather similar, the tradition preserved by Paul was presumably not dependent on Fredegar, as his account is a little different, placing this event after the death of Heraclius (641) and with the Persians arriving at Constantinople to be baptised, as well as neglecting to mention the two patriarchs from Fredegar’s narrative.\textsuperscript{88}

Even the more detailed fable found in Fredegar is of course ahistorical, but it is worth pointing out that Khosrow was received with imperial favour and that he did indeed have a Christian wife (possibly two, if we follow al-Tabari and the \textit{Khuzistan Chronicle}).\textsuperscript{89} Furthermore, both the patriarchs John and Gregory were tied to the

\textsuperscript{85} John of Biclaro, \textit{Chronicle}, 92 (Cardelle de Hartmann, 82): ‘imperator Persarum Christi suscepit fidem et pacem cum Mauritio imperatore firmauit’.
\textsuperscript{86} Cardelle de Hartmann, \textit{Iohannis Biclarensis Chronicon}, 142.
\textsuperscript{88} C. Heath, \textit{The Narrative Worlds of Paul the Deacon: Between Empires and Identities in Lombard Italy} (Amsterdam, 2017), 205–6.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Khuzistan Chronicle} (al-Ka‘bi, 16). Shirin’s existence is certain, but some are more sceptical of Maria’s historicity: P. Wood, \textit{The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq} (Oxford, 2013), 185–96, 206–12, and 215n108, and B. Dignas and E. Winter, \textit{Rome and
story; the former for his opposition to Maurice helping Khosrow and the latter for his involvement in Khosrow’s return to power. Though Khosrow never visited Antioch, he had been based in Syria during his stay in imperial territory, making Fredegar’s notice somewhat more grounded in reality. Similarly, although Persia as a whole obviously never converted to Christianity, a number of Syriac sources alleged that Gregory the Great’s friend, Anastasius of Antioch, consecrated (presumably Chalcedonian) churches in Persia after Khosrow’s return. Together with the inroads made by Christianity in the previous centuries, Fredegar may be forgiven for thinking that ‘all Persia was speedily converted to Christianity’.

More speculatively, it is tempting to suggest that some Franks were already aware of the latest news from the East in 591, for in that year an Armenian bishop named Simon arrived in Tours, with the intent of seeking unspecified aid from the pious according to Gregory of Tours. As Simon was apparently once a prisoner of the Persians until he was ransomed from the Persian king at an unknown time, it is not far-fetched to suggest that the Armenian was aware of Khosrow’s flight and had told others during his travels. Simon certainly told the bishop of Tours about Syria, for Gregory repeated Simon’s story of a miracle in Antioch immediately after introducing the Armenian. It is improbable that Simon’s words were related to Fredegar’s story in any meaningful way, but the presence of this bishop in Tours in 591 is yet another salutary reminder of the connections possible in the Mediterranean and how news (and rumours) from the East could have easily reached contemporary Gaul.

Finally, the life of Golinduch, a female Persian convert to Christianity, also provides some surprising parallels to consider, for after miraculously surviving her ‘execution’, the ‘living martyr’ fled Persia c. 590 and was soon invited to visit

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Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals (Cambridge, 2007), 230.
90 On John the Faster: John of Nikiu, Chronicle, 96 (Zotenberg, 408).
91 Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, 10.23 (Chabot, 372), and Chronicle of 1234, 81 (Chabot, 217).
93 Gregory of Tours, Histories, 10.24 (Krusch, 515–6).
94 Ibid. (Krusch, 516–7). The story about Armenian martyrs in Glory of the Martyrs, 95, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 1.2 (Hannover, 1885), 34–111, at 102–3, may also have been relayed by Simon. Given the historical details included, I concur with T. Greenwood, ‘Armenia’, in S. F. Johnson (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity (Oxford, 2012), 115–34, at 116, that although Gregory of Tours no doubt manipulated the material to suit his own purpose, there is no reason to doubt that Gregory did indeed talk to an Armenian bishop.
Constantinople by Maurice. She died before she was able to make the journey, but in the meantime she had mingled with both Khosrow and Domitian, the archbishop sent by Maurice to help the deposed king. Golinduch’s death in July 591 did not prevent her from being remembered in multiple traditions, by Chalcedonians and miaphysites, by those who favoured Maurice and those who did not, in Greek and in Coptic, all of which speaks for her fame and importance at this juncture. Her hagiography, in particular, deserves attention, for the Georgian Life is a translation of a text written by her contemporary, Bishop Stephen of Hierapolis, making this work a valuable source for this period. The Greek Life composed by Eustratius of Constantinople in 602 meanwhile was written, partly at least, to defend the ideological underpinnings of Emperor Maurice’s regime, thus providing historians with a more ‘official’ interpretation of events.

Golinduch’s contact with Domitian and Khosrow, both characters in the two Lives, is therefore a good indication of contemporary interests and one wonders if Golinduch’s serendipitous association with the ‘Persian problem’ had muddied the waters further for the rumourmongers and historians of this period. Khosrow, after all, had followed in the footsteps of a Persian convert to the Roman Empire in the two Lives of Golinduch, just as the Persian emperor had followed his empress in Fredegar. If we see the two Lives as being sanctioned by imperial authority and Golinduch’s presence in the empire as linked to Persian efforts to build support for Khosrow, as recent scholarship is inclined to suggest, then both Rome and Persia had an interest in playing up the role of conversion to their audience.

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95 Presumably Gregory of Antioch too, as they were all in Hierapolis at the same time; Allen, Evagrius, 258–9. Peeters, ‘Sainte Golindouch’, 117–8, further suggests she was in the Roman entourage that accompanied Khosrow to Hierapolis.


98 See in particular the favourable prophecies given to Domitian and Khosrow: Georgian Life of Golinduch, 17.11 (Garrtite, 438–9), Eustratius, Life of Golinduch, 22 (Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 169), Theophylact, History, 5.12 (de Boor, 211–2), and John of Nikiu, Chronicle, 96 (Zotenberg, 408).
Eastern reports of Khosrow and Golinduch do not confirm the words of John of Biclaro, let alone the more imaginative tales of Fredegar and Paul the Deacon, but their stories surely drew upon elements that would have been recognisable to contemporaries in the late sixth century and are evidence of a western fable based on the skeleton of a historical narrative, much like the similarly fantastic account in Fredegar’s *Chronicle* of Justinian and Theodora. In the eyes of the well-connected and well-informed Gregory the Great, the whole effort was ultimately a disappointment. But for those who came after him, whether Theophylact in Constantinople or Fredegar in Burgundy, who had less reliable access to earlier events, a more confused account is surely to be expected. Nonetheless, these later authors were all aware of the raised prospects of Persians converting to Christianity, as well as the role of the empire in trying to bring this about. This, I suggest, is an essential piece of the background to the Gregorian mission to England, for Khosrow’s alleged ‘conversion’ was quickly followed by more tangible successes, conversions that continued to draw in other members of Gregory’s circle.

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1.3 The Gregorian Mission in Context

Khosrow’s stay in the Roman Empire marked a turning point, for in the following decade there are numerous reports of co-operation between the two great powers. But first it is worth considering the clearest parallel between events in the East and the West: the conversion of al-Nu’man, the chieftain of the pagan Lakhmid confederation, a prominent Arab client of the Persians, sometime in the early 590s. Al-Nu’man was admittedly converted by East Syrian Christians, thus forming a seemingly unbridgeable divide with the Chalcedonian Christianity followed by Gregory the Great, not to mention the distance between the Roman-Persian frontier and Rome itself.

The gap, however, was rather narrower in the sixth century than it might appear today, for the divisions between different churches have been overstated. Patriarch Anastasius of Antioch was apparently welcomed to consecrate churches in Persia, and there also survives a mangled report of an earlier East Syrian catholicos agreeing on a statement of faith with Gregory of Antioch and Cyriacus of Constantinople.100 This is naturally problematic, since not only is this unattested in contemporary sources, the patriarchates of Cyriacus (594–606) and Gregory (570–592) did not overlap either.101 However, combined with other indications of Maurice and the Antiochenes’ esteem for East Syrian clergy, particularly the stories of Gregory the Great’s friend, Anastasius of Antioch, the inclusion of the names of genuine patriarchs in the text do add some veracity to this tale and lends further credence to an imperial policy of engagement with East Syrian Christianity beyond its borders, if an imprecise one.102

The only Greek source for al-Nu’man’s conversion, Evagrius, was likewise positive about his conversion to a ‘heretical’ brand of Christianity, noting the melting down of a golden idol of Aphrodite and the distribution of the melted gold to

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Evagrius directly followed up on this notice with Gregory of Antioch’s missionary efforts among miaphysites, even converting ‘whole tribes’, which presumably referred to Arab groups in the region, and which may imply that Evagrius viewed the conversion of pagans and miaphysites as related achievements. The Antiochene historian also apparently had an interest in earlier conversions of ‘barbarians’ bordering the empire, for despite his abridgement of Procopius, the earlier historian’s account of the Christianisation of the Heruls on the Danubian frontier after 528 and the Abasgi in the Caucasian mountains in the 540s are both retained. Combined with Gregory of Antioch’s earlier involvement in trying to convert Khosrow, it would appear that both the patriarch and his historian had a keen interest in converting pagans and miaphysites. The lack of criticism of East Syrian Christianity and its hold over al-Nu’man also provides a helpful context for the actions of Anastasius of Antioch in Persia, for his consecration of Persian churches was described without criticism by later East Syrian authors, implying therefore that the Chalcedonian patriarch, just like Evagrius, were content to be more accommodating with the East Syrian Church.

The Antiochens’ enthusiasm for conversion may not on the surface be related to the pope in Rome, but it is important in showing a contemporary desire to further the reach of Christianity, one that Gregory of Rome surely shared. The pope, having spent years dealing with imperial officials in Constantinople, would have in Rome heard news both of the recent conversion of the Visigoths to ‘orthodox’ Christianity as well the efforts of his friend Domitian, and perhaps that of his acquaintance Gregory of Antioch, in converting the East. Indeed, another one of the pope’s correspondents, Aristobulus, can be identified as an imperial envoy who met

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104 Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.22 (Bidez and Parmentier, 238).

105 Ibid., 4.20 and 4.22 (Bidez and Parmentier, 170).

the newly converted Golinduch, so it might even be possible that Gregory had heard of the Persian ‘living martyr’ from either or both of his contacts.\footnote{Peeters, ‘Sainte Golindouch’, 82–4 and 113–5, Gregory the Great, Letters, 1.28 (Norberg, 36), and Theophylact, History, 3.3 (de Boor, 115). J. M. Petersen, ‘“Homo omnino Latinus”? The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great’, Speculum 62.3 (1987), 529–51, at 546–7, also suggests intriguingly that Golinduch’s miracles shared an affinity with the miracles recorded in the pope’s Dialogues.}

It would be too far to suggest that eastern events had directly influenced Gregory’s thought-process, but taken together, they do hint at a contemporary missionary impulse at a time when the empire was militarily successful and the church buoyed with confidence and patronage. No wonder then that the pope renewed efforts to convert the pagans of Sardinia in 594 and sought to acquire Angle slaves in 595 – if success can be found in the East, why not in the West?\footnote{Gregory the Great, Letters, 4.23 and 6.10 (Norberg, 241–2 and 378–9). Studies on the causes of the Gregorian Mission are of course legion, though studies generally focus on the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon context, for example: I. Wood, ‘The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English’, Speculum 69.1 (1994), 1–17, at 8.}

As others have already noted, the mission to imperial Sardinia followed the same strategy as the later mission to non-imperial Kent, so Gregory was certainly drawing on lessons from inside the empire when planning the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons.\footnote{Markus, ‘Augustine and Gregory the Great’, 43, and Markus, Gregory the Great, 81–2. See also the forthcoming work of Mateusz Fafinski.}

Even the rhetoric used by the pope to exhort King Æthelbert had imperial roots, for when Gregory urged the king to follow in Constantine’s footsteps, Gregory’s comparison mirrored a trend in imperial propaganda since the death of Justinian, which revived the Constantinian exemplar as a model to describe emperors.\footnote{Demacopoulos, Gregory the Great, 147. On ‘New Constantines’ generally: M. Whitby, ‘Images for Emperors in Late Antiquity: A Search for New Constantine’, in P. Magdalino (ed.), New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries (Aldershot, 1994), 83–93, and M. S. Bjornlie, ‘Constantine in the Sixth Century: From Constantinople to Tours’, in M. S. Bjornlie (ed.), The Life and Legacy of Constantine: Traditions through the Ages (Abingdon, 2017), 92–114; I intend to take the argument further in a future paper.}

The clearest evidence, however, comes from 598. In that year Gregory wrote to his friend Eulogius in Alexandria, first and foremost to gain his support for his ongoing battle with the ‘ecumenical’ patriarch of Constantinople, but in between he spoke of something very different: his missionaries’ recent achievement in England. Eulogius certainly would have approved, for the pope’s letter was evidently a reply to a missive from Eulogius, one that announced his success in converting miaphysite ‘heretics’ in Egypt.\footnote{Gregory the Great, Letters, 8.29 (Norberg, 550–3). On Eulogius’ anti-miaphysite works: Photius, Bibliotheca, 225–7 (Henry, 4.99–114); cf. also Eulogius’ apparently inadequately anti-miaphysite
Rome, so too did Gregory to his friend in the East, noting in particular how events in Kent and Alexandria were tied together: ‘I described this so that you would know what you achieve by speaking to the people of Alexandria and through your prayer at the edge of the world’.112 Dealing with miaphysites is very different from dealing with pagans, but evidently Gregory thought the two cases to be quite similar. More speculatively, there may indeed have been some structural affinities between Alexandria and England, for the Gregorian mission also had to contend with the local, and schismatic, British church.113

If we trust Gregory’s claim that the Anglo-Saxons’ conversion was also reported to Maurice, then we can suppose that both the ecclesiastical and secular elite within the empire heard the news, if only through the pope’s frequent letters.114 In a context when religious missions had been frequently used in the sixth century as a part of Roman diplomats’ toolkit, it is unlikely that the recipients of Gregory’s news would have been surprised. Another people had been won over to Christianity through the efforts of an imperial bishop, an event entirely in keeping with the times, even if they were ultimately less strategically important when compared to, say, the conversion of the Arab confederates serving Persia. The successful mission in Kent was news worthy of report, but it was, perhaps, just one among many and better understood alongside other contemporary conversion events in the late sixth century, events that Gregory was in the perfect position to know about and be inspired by.

Another parallel to consider is the contemporary interest in the apocalypse. As many historians have noted, Gregory’s mission to England had an apocalyptic undertone, for converting non-Christians was an increasingly urgent mission given the waning of the world.115 Yet if the pope was indeed motivated by his eschatology and the need for evangelisation, then he surely would have found further confirmation for his beliefs in events of the 590s: the attempted ‘conversion’ of

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112 Gregory the Great, Letters, 8.29 (Norberg, 551–2): ‘Quod idcirco narraui, ut cognoscatis quid in Alexandrino populo loquendo et quid in mundi finibus orando’.
114 Gregory the Great, Letters, 11.35 (Norberg, 924).
Khosrow, the conversion of the Lakhmid Arabs, and his fellow-patriarchs’ battles against miaphysitism.

Nor was Gregory alone in his outlook, for the sixth-century empire was alive with speculation about the End. Around 500, some Romans had considered the emperor, Anastasius I, to be the Antichrist, likewise for Justinian in his old age.¹¹⁶ The historian Agathias reported the foolish doomsayers active after an earthquake hit Constantinople in 557, which is an interesting parallel to the disasters in Italy often said to have influenced Pope Gregory.¹¹⁷ The same attitude was more pronounced in miaphysite works. For John of Ephesus, whose Ecclesiastical History continued up to 588 and was written in Constantinople, only two years after Gregory the apocrisiarius had left the imperial capital, the wars and disasters in the post-Justinianic era were for the historian real signs of the End.¹¹⁸ A curious line put into the mouth of a Turkish leader by John further indicates the global dimensions of his apocalyptic mindset, as the Turk recounted that there was a tradition among his people that if a Roman envoy entered these lands, then they would know for certain of the impending apocalypse.¹¹⁹

More obliquely, there are some indications that figures in Gregory’s own circle understood the pope’s anxieties. First of all, we can again point to Eulogius, the patriarch of Alexandria, who, as explained already, received a letter from the pope describing St Augustine’s success in converting the Anglo-Saxons. It was certainly a success worth boasting about to a friend, but the conversion of a fringe pagan people was also an eschatologically-sensitive matter for Gregory. It is then possible to reread the letter for a deeper meaning, in which both Gregory and Eulogius understood the message and that was why the pope informed his friend of events in distant England: the End, unknowable though it may be, had drawn one

¹¹⁷ Agathias, Histories, 5.5 (Keydell, 169–70).
¹¹⁹ John of Ephesus, Ecclesiastical History, 6.23 (Brooks, 244–5); this was perhaps an anecdote hinting at how later identifications of the Turks as Gog and Magog were made: J. van Ginkel, ‘The End is Near! Some Remarks on the Relationship between Historiography, Eschatology, and Apocalyptic Literature in the West-Syrian Tradition’, in W. van Bekkum, J. Drijvers, and A. Klugkist (eds.), Syriac Polemics: Studies in Honour of Gerrit Jan Reinink (Leuven, 2007), 205–17, at 208n10; other possible eschatological references in John of Ephesus are discussed in 207–10.
step closer.\textsuperscript{120} Similarly, during the same dispute over the use of the ‘ecumenical patriarch’ as a title, the pope commented that such prideful claims were portents of the Antichrist to Empress Constantina, Patriarch Cyriacus of Constantinople, and even Emperor Maurice.\textsuperscript{121} If Gregory’s fears were only due to the chaotic situation in Italy, then these remarks would hardly be taken seriously by the most senior figures in the empire. It would instead make much more sense if these claims were also intelligible to eastern contemporaries, especially if Gregory was as capable a debater as scholars have generally portrayed him.\textsuperscript{122}

Finally, we can also return to Golinduch, the Persian ‘living martyr’ who was so widely-remembered in the sources. According to both surviving Lives, the Persian holy woman met a ‘great monk’ in Jerusalem who recounted to her what he had been told, by his master, of the impending approach of the Antichrist.\textsuperscript{123} More significantly, following Golinduch’s predictions to Khosrow and Domitian about the future, the Georgian Life continued to warn of the End and tied it closely to the Romans’ triumph.\textsuperscript{124} Eustratius’ Greek Life further noted that Golinduch predicted not only Khosrow’s restoration, but also that ‘the kingdom of the Persians will be destroyed’ afterwards; as the empire’s victory over its enemies was a prelude to the end times, it would appear that Eustratius’ pro-Maurice propaganda was infused also with eschatological speculation.\textsuperscript{125} Gregory the Great, friend of Domitian and (possibly) Gregory of Antioch, and someone who wrote in the same intellectual context as Eustratius, is well-placed to know of these predictions, even if no western sources remembered Golinduch.

These sources, all recording contemporary anxieties about the apocalypse, should not be read as a reliable reflection of what imperial intelligentsia thought as a whole, for it is necessary to take on board Averil Cameron’s point that we ought not to view these apocalyptic sentiments as all-consuming.\textsuperscript{126} Yet these ideas were nonetheless still present in the world of Gregory the Great and an in-depth study is

\textsuperscript{120} Palmer, Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages, 65.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 62–6; Gregory the Great, Letters, 5.39, 7.28, and 7.30 (Norberg, 316, 487, and 491).
\textsuperscript{122} Demacopoulos, ‘Gregory the Great and a Post-Imperial Discourse’.
\textsuperscript{123} Georgian Life of Golinduch, 15.5 (Garitte, 437), and Eustratius, Life of Golinduch, 20 (Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 168).
\textsuperscript{124} Georgian Life of Golinduch, 17.12 (Garitte, 439).
\textsuperscript{125} Eustratius, Life of Golinduch, 21 (Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 169); Dal Santo, ‘Imperial Power and Its Subversion’, 159–60.
needed to determine in full the differences and similarities between the pope’s eschatology and the evidence found in other imperial sources. How these ideas interacted together is a broader question ripe for future exploration, but it seems reasonable to conclude for now that ideas from both East and West were likely to have been in dialogue with each other, not developed in isolation, if only because of the ecclesiastical networks that bound elite churchmen of this period together.

As later chapters will bring to light other connections between the Anglo-Saxons and the empire, it seems appropriate to conclude here that the genesis of the Anglo-Saxon church was also a product of wider trends in late antiquity, occurring at a time when the pope was fully engaged with the intellectual and cultural worlds of the Greek East. Given the nature of the sources, a direct correlation between events is never likely, but the parallels analysed here do provide some compelling reasons for rethinking Pope Gregory’s career. This mode of analysis will also be applied to the seventh century, for the personal ties that bound together the papacy with the wider imperial church were not unique to Gregory’s pontificate, but continued to play a prominent role in secular and church politics in the following decades – even as Constantinople endured a renewed crisis of empire.
2. The Papacy and the ‘World Crisis’

The first chapter dealt with the world of Gregory the Great, with a particular emphasis on the personal connections that can be drawn from the rich pool of available sources. The networks outlined so far have revealed some surprising results, but their existence and impact are perhaps not unexpected. This is not the case for the century after the death of Emperor Maurice in 602. The conventional narrative of the following crisis of empire begins with the accession of the usurper Phocas, whose bloody reign ushered in renewed warfare in the East, the consequences of which would, seemingly, cripple whatever influence Constantinople still possessed in the West.

A broader perspective on the sources, however, allows us to refine that narrative and to point to multiple examples of continuity with the world of Gregory. In this chapter I will revisit the history of the papacy in the early seventh century, again prioritising the views of Rome’s friends abroad. The sources available are certainly not as extensive as Pope Gregory’s letters or Evagrius’ *Ecclesiastical History*. By one count, 43% of surviving papal letters from 590–882 were written by Pope Gregory, and only 7% (144) survive from the rest of the seventh century, while famously there are no surviving Greek histories from between c. 630 and the 780s.1 Such a paltry pool of sources does not, however, mean that there was a sharp break intelligible to contemporaries.

Texts relating to John Moschus and his circle in particular provide an essential resource for understanding Rome’s place in the battered empire and they will be repeatedly interrogated in the remainder of this thesis. Nor will the Latin West be neglected; as I will argue in the first part of this chapter, the words of Bede, the first historian of Anglo-Saxon England, in fact shed an invaluable light on the papacy during the reign of Phocas, and the role played by Latin texts in the discussion will only become more significant as the ‘world crisis’ gathered pace. After a brief study of Rome’s relationship with Phocas, attention will fall on the Cilician Moschus and his Damascene friend, Sophronius. Their attitudes to Rome will be outlined in some detail, for they are evidence of how Rome was never disentangled from the eastern Mediterranean. Parallel to their links, I will also

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consider how seventh-century popes, in particular Honorius, continued to draw upon imperial inspirations for their actions abroad, similarly to the discussion of Gregory in the previous chapter.

By the 640s, Rome and the already-discussed eastern network were drawn even closer thanks to their mutual dislike for the monothelete ‘heresy’ emanating from Constantinople, culminating in the treasonous Lateran Synod of 649, a council that in rhetoric sought to frame itself as an ecumenical council.² It would nonetheless be a mistake to see in the fierce struggle a sharp division between the Latin West and the Greek East, for signs of debate are visible across the Roman Empire. Just as Gregory the Great’s career can be situated within an imperial framework, so too can both support and opposition for monotheletism. In short, although crises and deep fault lines appear to be omnipresent, the vociferous debates of the same period also shine a light on the continuation of exchange and mobility in the Mediterranean.

2.1 Phocas and Heraclius

For many historians, the beginning of the seventh-century ‘world crisis’ can be traced to the reign of the usurper Phocas, who seized power from Emperor Maurice in 602. The civil war launched six years later by another usurper, Heraclius, was accompanied by much violence in the eastern provinces, setting the stage for the Persian and Arab conquests of previously untouched Roman heartlands. Little, however, is known of the attitudes of the imperial West, or indeed much about Rome at all between the death of Gregory and the fall of Phocas. The Liber Pontificalis informs us about the pontificates of Sabinian, Boniface III, and Boniface IV, while from Paul the Deacon we learn of a truce negotiated between the Lombards and Constantinople. We can speculate that within the papacy there was some sense of continuity, for Boniface III and Boniface IV (607 and 607–15) have been argued to have been aligned with Pope Gregory’s vision, and that peace in Italy was valued, but we can say little more than that.

As a result, even though Heraclius’ revolt was launched from North Africa, there remains a poor understanding of how Italy reacted to the rebellion. The material evidence consists of a solidus minted in the name of Phocas from Ravenna between September 609 to September 610, based solely on the inclusion of the indiction year on the coin. The literary evidence is no better, with scholarly speculation limited to Phocas’ possible grant of permission for the Pantheon in Rome to be turned into a church in May 609 or 610, as well as an unclear report that African grain-fleets did not sail to loyalist Rome at the beginning of the revolt. Walter Kaegi’s suggestion that Sicily was taken en-route to Constantinople by the African rebels in order to secure the flank of their advance is plausible enough.

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3 Liber Pontificalis, 67–9 (Duchesne, 1.315–7); Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards, 4.32 and 35 (Bethmann and Waitz, 127–8).
4 Llewellyn, ‘Legacy of Gregory’, 365–6, and Moorhead, Popes and the Church of Rome, 147–57. If nothing else, their predecessor and postulated opponent in Rome, Pope Sabinian, also paralleled Gregory’s career in an institutional sense, for he too was once an apocrisiarius in Constantinople: Gregory the Great, Letters, 3.51–2 (Norberg, 196–9).
6 The conversion of the Pantheon will be considered in detail below. For the possible halt to African grain shipments to Rome: D. Olster, The Politics of Usurpation in the Seventh Century: Rhetoric and Revolution in Byzantium (Amsterdam, 1993), 122n27, citing the unclear evidence of Theophanes, Chronicle, A.M. 6100 (de Boor, 296).
strategically, but is entirely lacking in evidence.\textsuperscript{7}

A still more speculative suggestion has been made based on a tenth-century catalogue of Byzantine monuments, the \textit{Patria of Constantinople}, according to which a patrician Bonus built a bath in the capital after coming from Rome during the reign of Heraclius.\textsuperscript{8} For lack of other known imperial involvement in Italy that could have included such a character, the venerable \textit{Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire} suggests that this Bonus can be identified as the general who defended Constantinople during the Avar siege of 626, with the \textit{Patria}'s evidence perhaps an indication of his involvement in the rebels’ western advance during the earlier civil war.\textsuperscript{9}

This is of course a claim found only in a late and often unreliable source that provides no other identifying information, making this suggestion no better, but also no worse, than the interpretations noted above of the fate of imperial Italy. In the context of the argument here on Rome’s crucial place within the empire, however, it is worth pointing out that if this Bonus who came from Rome was the same Bonus who was appointed essentially as Heraclius’ regent in the emperor’s absence, his service in Italy must have been rather impressive. We hear of imperial appointees being sent to North Africa, Italy, and Spain, but little of westerners rising to such an elevated position in the other direction, making this enigmatic Bonus potentially an interesting historical footnote in his own right.

In any case, it can be surmised from this brief survey that we know very little about the loyalties of imperial Italy, even as the East was seemingly tearing itself apart. This picture can, however, be supplemented by a source from beyond the empire, for Bede’s \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, surprisingly, provides a hitherto unconsidered hint of the papacy’s stance in 610. After describing the success of the Gregorian mission to Kent, the Northumbrian historian noted several instances of the successors of Augustine of Canterbury communicating with the pope in Rome. Of the recorded visits, the first five took place in 600–1, 609–10, 619–20, 624–5, and 633–4.\textsuperscript{10} Following Richard Shaw’s analysis, these visits all sought a papal pallium

\textsuperscript{7} W. Kaegi, \textit{Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium} (Cambridge, 2003), 46.

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Patria of Constantinople}, 2.72, ed. T. Preger, \textit{Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum}, 2: Ps.-Codini origines continens (Leipzig, 1907), 189: ‘Βῶνος πατρίκιος ἀνελθὼν ἀπὸ Ῥώμης’.

\textsuperscript{9} PLRE III, ‘Bonus V’, 244. Cf. doubt in A. Berger, \textit{Accounts of Medieval Constantinople: The Patria} (Cambridge, MA, 2013), 301n97, that this Bonus came from Rome, but also the acknowledgement that his Latin name may imply that the more famous Bonus indeed had a western origin.

\textsuperscript{10} Bede, \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, 1.29–32, 2.4, 2.7–8, 2.17–8 (Lapidge, 1.138–52, 194–6, 206–12,
for the new metropolitan of Canterbury, a request dictated by the death of the previous office-holder. For the journey of 609–10, Bede further noted that Mellitus, the envoy from England, had attended a synod in Rome dealing with monastic life in Italy, which took place in ‘the eighth year of the reign of Emperor Phocas, the thirteenth indication, on the 27th of February [610].’

The precise, and formulaic, dating clause is likely an indication that papal documents, whether the synodal acts themselves or a letter from Rome containing this detail, were available to Bede. As noted by Kenneth Harrison, this is the only example of Bede using indication years in the *Ecclesiastical History* without it being a direct quote from an official document, a fact that is certainly suggestive of this formula’s origins in records of the Roman synod, as Bede is unlikely to have used the imperial dating system if he had arrived at that date himself or through non-documentary sources.

If Bede’s dating clause was indeed lifted from an official record, then we can say with certainty that this particular synod took place in interesting times, for in early 610 the forces of Emperor Phocas were in full retreat, particularly in Egypt, and soon coins would be minted in the name of the usurper Heraclius in Cyprus and Alexandretta in Syria. In this situation, the invocation of Phocas in this dating formula may well have had a political meaning. As the usurper Heraclius had eschewed the name of Phocas and instead used his and his father’s image (albeit wrapped in consular imagery) on his coins, it would be reasonable to suppose that if Heraclian forces were in control of Rome, another dating formula that did not

256–64).


reference the regnal year of Phocas would have been used. In turn, this could potentially help Byzantinists to narrow down Heraclius’ itinerary for his attack on Constantinople, as it becomes plausible that Italy, or at least Rome, was ignored by the rebels and that their eastern gains were made while their western flank was left open to men still loyal to Phocas. Last but not least, the fact that bishops could allegedly be gathered from across the province further suggests that the conflict was not an all-consuming one in Italy, at least when compared to the brutal back-and-forth then occurring in Egypt. The inclusion of Phocas’ regnal year in this clause is then significant, as it is an otherwise unknown indicator of Rome’s loyalty to Constantinople in 610.

Nonetheless, some doubt must be raised over this particular formula, as the arrangement of regnal year, indiction, then the date, as found in this dating clause, is a rare find in the sources. Other papal letters quoted by Bede, both that of Gregory the Great and Honorius I, begin with the date, then the regnal year and the indiction. Formulas used in large-scale councils within the empire meanwhile placed the regnal year first, then the date and the indiction, for example at the Lateran Synod in Rome in 649 and the Third Council of Constantinople in 680–1. As Bede’s record followed neither of these models, it remains possible that his order of the dating formula may be because he had worked out the concordance himself, or that he had interpolated Phocas’ regnal year into the formula because he knew that the synod took place during his reign, rather than it being a genuine dating clause directly lifted from a pro-Phocas source.

The spurious record of a 679 synod held in Rome under Pope Agatho, however, opens up an alternative. Although the content of the conciliar Acts were heavily interpolated in the eleventh century, Wilhelm Levison rightfully argued that the dating clause and other elements of the Acts were genuine products of the seventh century, partly due to the lengthy, and correct, invocation of the three reigning co-emperors, a detail that would have surely eluded later Anglo-Norman

17 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 1.23–4, 28–30, 32, and 2.18 (Lapidge, 1.96–8, 138–44, 152, and 264).
18 Acts of the Lateran Synod (Riedinger, 2–3, 30–1 etc), and Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople (Riedinger, 14–5, 26–7 etc).
19 Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 407–8, instead dates the synod to 678.
forgers. Crucially, this dating clause followed the same model that Bede recorded for the 610 synod: first the regnal years of Constantine IV and his brothers Heraclius and Tiberius, then the indiction and the month. We may then suggest that the seventh-century papal chancery followed a number of different dating conventions, making it plausible that Bede had indeed derived the full formula for the 610 synod from an official document of some sort.

Finally, another clue that Bede did have access to a papal record can be found after this crucial dating clause, in which Bede narrated Mellitus’ return to England, supposedly bringing with him letters ‘the same pope sent to the beloved of God, Archbishop Laurentius, and all the clergy, likewise to King Æthelberht and the English people’. As noted again by Shaw, although this appears to be a broad and rather vague statement, it does nonetheless reflect the contemporary papal practice of addressing their letters to large groups, if the many instances in Gregory the Great’s letters of him addressing the secular officials, clergy, and people together in general terms are any indication. We should, however, add that Bede did introduce at least one known interpolation – for he had granted the title ‘archbishop’ to Laurentius, before such an office had existed in England.

Admittedly the lack of other synodal acts during the civil war, on either side, makes it impossible to confirm whether such a dating formula, as preserved in Bede, was indeed a firm indication of one’s loyalty, but even so, it remains a previously

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20 W. Levison, ‘Die Akten der römischen Synode von 679’, Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Kanonistische Abteilung 2.1 (1912), 249–82. Authenticity of the first part of the document is also helped by the preponderance of Greek names in the list of attendees, which is representative of their prominence in imperial Italy and again a minor detail unlikely to be picked up by later forgers. Note also the comments in W. Levison, ‘Zu den Akten der römischen Synode von 679’, Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Kanonistische Abteilung 19.1 (1930), 672–4.

21 Levison, ‘Die Akten’, 277: ‘imperantibus dominis nostris piissimis Augustis Constantino maiore imperatore anno vicesimo sexto, post consulatum eius anno decimo, sed et Heraclio atque Tiberio novis Augustis, eius fratribus, vicesimo secundo, indictione septima, mense Octobre’. The various regnal years do not result in the same year when aligned together, but this is probably the result of scribal errors, as it is hard to see any forger after the seventh century being capable of remembering that Constantine IV was a junior emperor before his father’s death, making his regnal year and post-consulate year very different (as correctly recorded here); see the discussion in 265–6, and Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 407–8.

22 Shaw, Gregorian Mission to Kent, 116–7, also considers the topics discussed in this synod mentioned by Bede to be accurate reflections of papal interests in the early seventh century.

23 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 2.4 (Lapidge, 1.196): ‘quas idem pontifex Deo dilecto archiepiscopo Laurentio et clero uniuerso, similiiter et Aedilberco regi atque genti Anglorum direxit’.

24 Shaw, Gregorian Mission to Kent, 117. Cited examples include Letters, 1.58, 5.22, and 10.19 (Norberg, 69, 290, and 848)

overlooked clue for the papacy’s actions in this enigmatic period. Such an interpretation certainly corroborates with the story from other sources, for Phocas was portrayed rather favourably in papal texts, a consistent pattern dating back to Gregory the Great’s reaction to the usurper’s rise in 602.26

Gregory’s dealings with Phocas had long troubled historians, for how could the pope have dealt in such neutral, or even positive, terms with an apparently bloodthirsty tyrant? Perhaps the pope was thoroughly disillusioned with Maurice, or he had simply obeyed Phocas because he was the rightful emperor, but in all interpretations Gregory emerges as a diminished character.27 A hitherto unconsidered alternative might simply be that the usurper’s vices had been greatly exaggerated by Heraclius’ rewriting of history, as it has long been demonstrated by David Olster and recently re-emphasised by Mischa Meier, so the pope’s words were perhaps not cowardly or shaped by Realpolitik, but instead representative of a more mundane reception of Phocas’ rise.28 Indeed, as Meier points out, modern historians’ preference for Heraclian sources over Gregory’s contemporary letters is a testament to the success of Heraclius’ propaganda.29 True, Phocas’ purges were undoubtedly bloody, but Roman history is awash with massacres and some of the most murderous emperors, such as Justinian, continue to be received positively, so more care is still needed when evaluating the reigns of problematic ‘tyrants’.30 Gregory may not even have been alone among his fellow patriarchs in being so generous to Phocas, for we also possess a later miaphysite report of Eulogius, Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria and the pope’s friend, informing Phocas of the miaphysite patriarch’s anathematisation of the emperor. To thank Eulogius for reporting this insult, Phocas then rewarded the Chalcedonian patriarch with a church taken from the miaphysites.31 If this biased account is representative of reality, one might suppose

26 Gregory the Great, Letters, 13.32 and 39–40, as well as Appendix 8 (Norberg, 1033–4, 1042–4, and 1101).
30 An analogous point is made by G. Greatrex, ‘Perceptions of Procopius in Recent Scholarship’, Histos 8 (2014), 76–121, at 84–90, for Emperors Anastasius and Justinian.
31 History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, ed. and trans. B. Eve, PO 4/1.4 (Paris, 1904), 381–518, at 479–80; Wipszycka, The Alexandrian Church, 437n31. The fierce fighting in Egypt can likewise be
that Gregory and Eulogius, old friends and colleagues, were of one mind in their loyalty to Phocas.

Beyond this possible personal connection, we must also consider the emperor’s ongoing generosity to the papacy. According to the Liber Pontificalis, Phocas had not only declared Rome to be ‘the head of all the churches’ (contrary to the pro-Constantinople stance of Maurice) at the request of Pope Boniface III in 607, but also seemingly granted Boniface IV’s request to consecrate the Pantheon as a church.\(^{32}\) The dating of this conversion is disputed between May of 609, 610, or 613, but the last dating is perhaps the least convincing, for it seems unlikely that a papal author writing in the 640s under Heraclius’ grandson, when this continuation of the Liber Pontificalis was likely composed, could mistake Phocas for Heraclius or have had a plausible cause to deliberately name the incorrect emperor, making the former two options more likely.\(^{33}\)

A May 609 date would certainly be fitting, since the grant of the Pantheon would be an appropriate imperial gift in return for the erection of the Column of Phocas in Rome in August 608.\(^{34}\) But if the Pantheon had been rededicated in May 610 (admittedly the less likely of the two options), it would be an even more striking demonstration that papal loyalty to Phocas was still firm only five months before his downfall. In either case, the pro-Phocas message remains clear, as North Africa had already revolted in 608 and the papacy was evidently content to be on the legitimate emperor’s side for at least the first half of the civil war. Rome’s loyalty in 608–10 is similarly indirectly affirmed by the Greek Life of Theodore of Sykeon, for its brief considered evidence of Phocas’ popularity, for evidently Heraclian forces were not able to walk comfortably into the East.

\(^{32}\) Liber Pontificalis, 68–9 (Duchesne, I.316–7).

\(^{33}\) For a 613 dating: S. de Blaauw, ‘Das Pantheon als christlicher Tempel’, in U. Real, M. Jordan-Ruwe, and H. Brandenburg (eds.) Bild und Formensprache der spätantiken Kunst. Hugo Brandenburg zum 65 Geburtstag (Münster, 1994), 13–26 at 13. On dating the seventh-century recensions of the Liber Pontificalis: McKitterick, ‘Papacy and Byzantium’, 267, though McKitterick follows de Blaauw and favours 613; note also the interesting suggestion, at 254, that the conversion was backdated in the Liber Pontificalis to the reign of Phocas to indicate Pope Boniface IV’s sympathies for the emperor.

comment on a Photios the patrician, who afterwards became the ‘exarch of Rome’, is a possible reference to a new exarch of Italy being dispatched to replace Exarch Smaragdus, who is not attested after 608.\(^{35}\)

While it is not possible to expand on the papacy’s political position in this enigmatic period, when compared to the non-existence of sources indicating any relationship with Heraclius in 608–10, these hints of Phocian sympathies in Rome, even until February 610, are certainly suggestive. From this perspective, the papacy was not simply a bystander in the opening stages of the seventh-century ‘world crisis’, but rather a more involved player who had perhaps favoured one particular side during the civil war. In this case, Bede’s words illustrate both the utility of ‘post-Roman’ sources for events within the Roman Empire and the more mundane fact that the papacy remained an imperial institution, one that still needs to be integrated fully into the empire’s history.

Even if we disregard the potentially problematic part of the dating clause, the regnal year of Phocas, there is little reason to dismiss Bede’s account of a synod held in Rome that year. The report that this synod dealt with the conduct of monks certainly meshes well with Pope Boniface IV’s contemporary needs, as he is generally seen to be a member of the monastic ‘wing’ within the papacy that competed with a clerical ‘wing’ for the papal seat in the years following the death of Gregory the Great.\(^{36}\) Such a distinction is perhaps too broad a generalisation, but if this synod was indeed attended by ‘the bishops of Italy’, as Bede reports, the synod is still a telling indication of Boniface’s domestic priorities in the opening stages of the crisis of empire. Indeed, one might suppose that Italy was already an island of stability within an empire that was otherwise wracked by riots, rebellion, and invasions on all sides – a state of affairs that would become even more crucial in the following decades.


\(^{36}\) Llewellyn, ‘Legacy of Gregory’, 366. If not part of a factional struggle, Boniface would have at least felt more affinity for Gregory’s ideas: Demacopoulos, *Gregory the Great*, 123.
2.2 The Moschan Circle in Egypt

Despite Phocas’ imminent exit from the narrative, it is worth dwelling on his reign a little further, since the network identified in the previous chapter, that of John Moschus the well-connected Cilician monk, also made itself known during Phocas’ reign. For in Egypt Sophronius, Moschus’ friend and travel companion, wrote an anacreontic poem praising the emperor’s clemency for a certain Menas who was accused of treason.\(^{37}\) This was written sometime between 603 and 610, with a later year being more probable to accommodate an earlier stay in Antioch.\(^{38}\) As Olster rightfully notes, this poem was a hagiographical one designed to praise the holy man who advised Phocas to show mercy, so this is not necessarily a direct indication of Sophronius’ fondness for the usurper.\(^{39}\) Even so, the poem remains evidence that Phocas was not solely a brutal tyrant, for it would appear that he was still advised by holy men and did not blindly execute those accused of treason, especially considering that Menas was apparently accused of aiding Maurice’s heir, Theodosius, surely one of the more grievous crimes in those troubled years.\(^{40}\)

As we will see, apathy or outright opposition to Constantinople, or perhaps more accurately Heraclian emperors, would be the hallmark of this circle’s actions over the following half-century, so it is nonetheless useful to note here this early signal of Sophronius’ attitude to Phocas and how this mirrored Rome’s loyalty to the emperor. We should not assume that Sophronius’ opinions were in constant lockstep with that of the papacy, but nor should we study the two perspectives separately, for both are early witnesses to Phocas’ reign and provide a decidedly positive view of the emperor. Indeed, if we also consider Eulogius’ possible loyalty to the emperor, then we can perhaps glimpse a circle of bishops and monks who not only admired each other, but also shared a common political stance. As other shared values can be discerned in later texts, it seems reasonable to propose that similar sympathies between these individuals helped to strengthen Moschus and Sophronius’ admiration

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for Rome, as well as Maximus the Confessor’s eventual alliance with Pope Martin I.

This affinity with Rome is clearly demonstrated in the next set of texts composed by this circle, Sophronius’ hagiographical dossier dedicated to the healer saints Cyrus and John, which consisted of a preface, an encomium, and a miracle collection, all written in Egypt between 610 and 614. Of the seventy miracles, Sophronius specifically highlighted the last twenty stories, which featured non-Egyptians from the Levant, Asia Minor, Constantinople, and, most interestingly for our purposes, one blind patient from Rome. The Roman pilgrim, John, experienced the penultimate miracle in the text, coming just before the final tale based on Sophronius’ own experiences, which is likely to be an indication of its importance. Indeed, as Maskarinec astutely notes, Sophronius’ statement that the first will be the last and vice versa, as well as his explanation that he did not wish for the more ‘local’ miracles to be overshadowed, implicitly highlighted the importance his own miracle and that experienced by John the Roman. Rome’s importance is then further confirmed by Sophronius’ list of the pilgrims’ places of origin, as it was placed first, well before ‘Byzantium’. That there is only one western pilgrim described in the collection is not evidence for the imperial West’s peripheral nature in eastern eyes, since there were likewise only two named visitors from Constantinople, a city surely far more significant to the people of Alexandria. It is tempting to follow Dominic Montserrat’s reasoning here, that as the cult of Cyrus and John was primarily an incubatory one, it necessitated the physical presence of the sick at the shrine itself, which would explain the lack of eulogiai from this shrine and, just possibly, the small number of non-local pilgrims.

But despite John the Roman’s lonely appearance, Sophronius took care to further emphasise the Eternal City’s reputation. When introducing the pilgrim,

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41 The dossier is conventionally dated to 610–20, but the suggestion in Booth, Crisis of Empire, 46n13, of a narrower dating to 610–4 is plausible. Likewise P. Bringel, Sophrone de Jérusalem: Panégyrique des saints Cyr et Jean, FO 226/51.1 (Turnhout, 2008), 5: ‘peu après 610’.
44 Ibid., 52 and 60 (Marcos, 365 and 376).
Sophronius explained that Rome now sought to acquire more splendour to add to its already considerable fame as the city that had ruled over others. In itself, this means very little and is hardly a unique form of praise, but when viewed in context with Sophronius’ friends, it becomes rather more interesting. In the early 610s, neither Sophronius nor Moschus had visited Rome, yet they have already encountered individuals who were in contact with the papacy. As noted in the previous chapter, Patriarch Amos of Jerusalem had allegedly relayed a story of papal origin to Moschus in 594, and some personal connection to Eulogius of Alexandria is also possible, as it is likely that Moschus and Sophronius arrived in Alexandria under his tenure. As we then hear from Moschus’ *Spiritual Meadow* that Eulogius’ acquaintances had relayed several tales to Moschus, and given the patriarch’s favourable appearances in Sophronius’ *Miracles*, it would be reasonable to suggest that the two travellers at least admired Eulogius and frequented social circles associated with the patriarch.

The immersion of Moschus and Sophronius in the circles linked to Eulogius is significant, for these acquaintances were not minor figures. The two named contacts supplying Eulogian stories were an abbot of a monastery near Alexandria and the *syncellus* (close advisor) of the patriarch; the latter in particular must be reasonably close to Eulogius, both personally and in terms of their world-views. Furthermore, two out of the three miracles related by the two men concerned Pope Leo the Great, with the one relayed by the abbot originally a tale passed along by Gregory the Great to Eulogius in Constantinople. Last but not least, another tale narrated by a certain ‘John the Persian’ that included, as already noted, the first instance of Gregory being termed the ‘Great’, was likewise derived from an informant living in Egypt. We then have several indirect indications that Moschus and Sophronius already admired Rome, and that the two men had met individuals with similar sympathies in Palestine and Egypt. Although this eastern admiration of

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48 John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, 149 (Migne, 3013); Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 45n8 and 115n119.
49 John Moschus, *Spiritual Meadow*, 146–8 (Migne, 3009–13), and Sophronius, *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, 1, 8, 9, and 62 (Marcos, 243, 253, 257, and 379). An epigram dedicated to a *xenodochium* built by Eulogius is also attributed to Sophronius, which would certainly be a firmer indication of their mutual acquaintance, but Alan Cameron has deemed it unlikely to be a Sophronian composition: ‘The Epigrams of Sophronius’, *Classics Quarterly* 33.1 (1983), 284–92, at 290–1.
50 Ibid., 147 (Migne, 3012).
51 Ibid., 151 (Migne, 3016–7).
52 Ibid., 151 (Migne, 3016–7).
Rome does not feature much in modern histories of the papacy, it will, as we will see, become increasingly significant as easterners ventured to North Africa and Italy.

Of course, some of these connections were only mediated by Moschus in a piece of writing composed around 630, after he had arrived in Rome and presumably became even more positive towards the papacy, which must have affected his selection of edifying anecdotes here. The framing device in these tales, however, remains his conversations with his sources from Moschus’ stay in Egypt, so it would be too far to throw out these anecdotes entirely as evidence for pro-papal sympathies two decades earlier. Combined with Eulogius’ known friendship with Pope Gregory the Great and Sophronius’ emphasis on the Roman pilgrim in his Miracles, genuine ‘Eulogian’ sentiments favourable to Rome, as recorded by Moschus, is hardly out of place in Egypt. Such existing connections would surely have also been necessary in order to facilitate his network’s later alignment with papal interests and, more mundanely, their choice of the imperial West as a destination when fleeing the Persians.

Besides these personal links, it is also in Egypt that we can detect the first indicators of the hard-line stance taken by the same individuals towards doctrinal innovations. After the triumph of Heraclius in 610, both Moschus and Sophronius became close advisors to John the Almsgiver, the new patriarch of Alexandria appointed by the new usurper. We do not know how these men first met, but it is a sign of the two monks’ political adaptability that they survived the fall of Phocas and became prominent spiritual advisors of a patriarch aligned with Heraclius. All three men appear to be keen proponents of enforcing boundaries between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians, though the Almsgiver’s Lives presented a rather more exaggerated picture of ‘orthodox’ success, since in miaphysite texts the patriarch was not remembered as a persecutor. This provides a remarkable parallel to

53 Particularly given that John the Almsgiver was the ritual-brother of Nicetas, Heraclius’ cousin: Anonymous Life of John the Almsgiver, 2 (Delehaye, 20).

54 On conflict with non-Chalcedonians: Anonymous Life of John the Almsgiver, 5 (Delehaye, 21), Epitome of the Life of John the Almsgiver, 5 (Lappa-Zizicas, 275), and Leontius of Neapolis, Life of John the Almsgiver, 5, 16, 33, and 37 (Festugière, 349, 364, 383, and 386–7). But note also that during John’s tenure there was a spectacular doctrinal union between Egyptian and Syrian miaphysites, dated to 617 in Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 18–20. See also Booth, Crisis of Empire, 51–4, 88 and 104. Leontius’ voice is nonetheless valuable, for one of his works was available in Rome according to the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea, ed. E. Lamberz, Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum, ACO 2.3, 3 vols. (Berlin, 2008–16), 348–9, which may be a clue to his alignment with Rome and its friends. On the text: V. Déroche, ‘L’Apologie contre les Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis’, in G. Dagron and V. Déroche, Juifs et chrétiens en Orient byzantin
Sophronius’ *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, for as Booth points out, these texts all promoted ‘a strict sacramental differentiation between orthodox and heretic’ and ‘a relative moderation in the denunciation of heretics and explicit promotion of Chalcedon’.

This détente did not last. As Booth has argued, due to persistent military failures in the 610s (most importantly the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians in 614) and the escalation of doctrinal negotiation with ‘heretics’, the Almsgiver and his allies radicalised over time. Indeed, the *Lives* of John the Almsgiver all culminate in the fall of Egypt and the circle’s flight to Cyprus to escape the Persians, followed by hints of John disobeying Constantinople and subsequent imperial attempts to secure the fugitive patriarch. Though these stories only allude to deeper tensions, they are nonetheless telling signs that all was not well between the Moschan circle and the emperor after 619.

It is rather unfortunate then that Moschus and Sophronius’ journeys after leaving Alexandria remain unclear, making it difficult to trace the precise twists and turns of their ideological evolution. From the available evidence, it appears that they both travelled, via assorted islands, to the imperial West. Historians have speculated that North Africa and Italy were suitable destinations because of their stability, their distance from the Persians, and, most recently, because financial patronage was thin on the ground in Constantinople. But it is worth noting that Italy was not entirely peaceful, for c. 615 the exarch of Ravenna was murdered, followed by a revolt led by a certain John of Conza. This was put down by the patrician Eleutherius, but he revolted in turn in 619, only to be defeated when he marched on Rome – a rebellion that coincided with the fall of Egypt or its aftermath.

Beyond stability, we therefore have to also weigh the importance of ideological affinity between the Moschan network and the papacy, several aspects of

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55 Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 54.

56 Ibid., 99–106.

57 Ibid., 108–11.

58 *Liber Pontificalis*, 70.2 and 71.2 (Duchesne, 1.319 and 321); *Copenhagen Continuation of Prosper*, 23, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH AA 9 (Berlin, 1892), 249–339, at 339. On these revolts’ links to eastern defeats: Kaegi, *Heraclius*, 93–4. But note also the arrival of Tychikos in Rome c. 618, probably to study: Greenwood, ‘Anania Shirakac’i’, 140, which is a possible indication that conflicts in Italy were not too disruptive.
which have been identified here. Though the West still harboured dangers, their common admiration for Pope Gregory’s circle and, just possibly, the now much maligned Phocas, would have certainly imbued Moschus and Sophronius with a strong interest in Rome as they searched for new patrons. Constantinople, on the other hand, had continuously dealt with ‘heretics’ and faced endless military defeats as a result, making it perhaps a less palatable choice for friends of the Almsgiver. It would be a mistake, however, to see Rome as an entity separated from the political and ecclesiastical history of the empire, for Moschus was still entering a city fully attuned to events in the Mediterranean. Turning briefly away from the dissension visible in the words of Moschus and Sophronius, Rome itself now comes into focus.
2.3 Honorius’ Rome

Both Moschus and Sophronius stayed first in North Africa, but Moschus ventured to Rome sometime in the 620s and remained there until his death c. 634. Sophronius on the other hand stayed in Africa before returning to the East, and we can only note that he later visited Rome in 634 to collect John Moschus’ body for burial in the Sinai.\textsuperscript{59} We can do little better than that from the available Greek sources, but evidence from the West allow us to reconstruct some sense of Moschus’ time in the city. From this perspective, the connections we considered previously for the world of Gregory the Great had not disappeared, but instead intensified in this era of crisis, making it an ideal refuge for Moschus and his friends.

The key figure considered here is Pope Honorius (625–638), under whose tenure Moschus would have been in Rome the longest, regardless of how long Moschus’ earlier sojourns in the western Mediterranean were. Honorius was placed by Peter Llewellyn in the monastic ‘wing’ of the church, but as observed already, such a sweeping division of seventh-century popes into two broad factions is perhaps not the most helpful approach.\textsuperscript{60} Demacopoulos instead suggests that a better distinction between different popes can be made over the extent to which they followed Pope Gregory’s ideals.\textsuperscript{61} Based on the evidence and the individual-centric focus adopted here, this provides a more helpful way to navigate papal politics. Indeed, if we see Gregory as an imperial pope embedded in contemporary Mediterranean norms, as I argued in the previous chapter, then Honorius was very much an heir to Gregory in that sense, for many of his actions were directly influenced by Constantinople.\textsuperscript{62}

Out of all the popes in this era, Honorius was certainly the most explicitly Gregorian pontiff. Not only was Gregory named in Honorius’ epitaph, one of only three references (in a papal context) to the earlier pope from the seventh century, Honorius was also the only known pope to send reinforcement to the aging

\textsuperscript{59} Booth, \textit{Crisis of Empire}, 231–2.
\textsuperscript{61} Demacopoulos, \textit{Gregory the Great}, 123.
\textsuperscript{62} Cf. J. Richards, \textit{The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages}, 476–752 (Abingdon, 1979), 259, who, while noting Honorius’ alignment with the Gregorian faction and Moschus, places them, curiously, in opposition to Maximus the Confessor. The flawed list of easterners active under Honorius, purely based on their names, in Ekononomou, \textit{Byzantine Rome}, 96, is likewise unhelpful.
Gregorian mission in England. According to Bede, Honorius sent the missionary Birinus to convert pagans in Britain where no missionaries had reached before, presumably with the intention of building on Gregory’s project, but Birinus decided to convert the West Saxons instead. The date of Birinus’ arrival is not noted by Bede, but as an Anglo-Saxon delegation visited Rome in 633–4 and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* placed Birinus’ preaching among the Anglo-Saxons in 634, it seems reasonable to propose that Honorius dispatched him after receiving news from the envoys sent by Canterbury. This was surely a telling declaration of intent, for no additional support had been sent from the empire since 601.

To supplement Bede, we can also point to the Frankish Amandus, later a bishop active in the kingdom of Austrasia, who journeyed twice to Rome and was allegedly inspired by a vision there to pursue missionary work. No exact dates can be determined, though visits during the tenure of Honorius were deemed likely by both Llewellyn and Collins, as well as in Stefan Esders’ recent study of Amandus’ missionary strategy. We should not discount the possibility that the pope’s predecessors were also interested in conversion despite the silence in the surviving sources, but it is notable nonetheless that under Honorius we first encounter tangible evidence of (renewed?) papal interest abroad.

In this regard Honorius was very much in tune with his contemporaries within the empire, for doctrinal negotiations with miaphysite and East Syrian Christians lasted throughout the Roman-Persian War (603–628) and continued after the peace, culminating in the union with Egyptian miaphysites finalised in 633. Converting pagans likewise remained on the agenda, for in eastern sources there are stories of Heraclius variously converting ‘Huns’, Bulgars, and even allegedly Serbs

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64 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.7 (Lapidge, 2.36).
If we then bring in attempts to convert pagans in the West connected to Rome, as attested by the actions of Birinus in England and Amandus in Ghent, one is struck by the remarkable parallel with the 590s, when imperial patriarchs had similarly favoured converting pagans and co-operation with the East Syrian Church.

An indirect comparison can also be drawn with the unprecedented attempt to forcibly convert Jews ordered by Heraclius in 632, a persecution that left a particular mark in western sources, for we hear of forced conversions in North Africa, Rome (as implied by Honorius’ own epitaph), and even in Merovingian Gaul, where King Dagobert and perhaps Bishop Sulpicius of Bourges also enforced the imperial policy.

More extraordinarily, Honorius had allegedly heard reports of the Visigoths’ laxity in dealing with Jewish communities in their kingdom and sent his delegates to Spain to investigate in 638, which is another unique demonstration of the pope’s foreign interests.

As Esders suggests, though seemingly of a different nature today, a distinction between converting Jews and pagans would not have been obvious to Constantinople in the 620s and 630s, and the campaign to forcibly

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Christianise Jews ought to be seen in the same light as the conversion of pagans. At a time when the Christian community was growing by means both fair and foul, it is tempting to wonder if Birinus’ mission to the West Saxons was driven by similar impulses, particularly as his arrival in England, c. 634, immediately followed these developments in the Mediterranean.

More subtle influences between Honorius’ Rome and Constantinople have now also been highlighted by Maskarinec, whose study of sanctity in Rome argues that even the saints chosen by the pope for new churches were calculated to make a particular point, to emphasise Rome’s co-operation with Ravenna and Constantinople. The most prominent example is the conversion of the old Senate House in 630 and its dedication to St Hadrian, ‘an eastern provincial [saint] raised up from relative obscurity and placed center stage in Rome’s most venerable governmental building’. Maskarinec considers this dedication to have affirmed the Roman elite’s place within the empire and that it promoted a ‘Christian vision of government’, making this a very imperial church indeed. Even if a more sceptical approach is taken, given that the conversion of a public building almost certainly would have required permission from the emperor, Honorius’ ties to Constantinople cannot have been disastrous by any means. Heraclius also loomed large in the liturgical life of Rome, for the emperor’s recovery of the True Cross from the Persians was retold in two Latin liturgical texts, both dating to the 630s according to Stephan Borgehammar. As Heraclius only recovered the Cross in 629, Rome had evidently embraced the very latest religious fashion from the East, once again situating Honorius’ city firmly within the imperial church.

Moschus had therefore arrived in a Rome that continued to have much in common with the eastern Mediterranean. He was then far from out of place when he composed his *Spiritual Meadow*, a collection of edifying tales gathered from across the empire. Unsurprisingly, Moschus included stories he had heard from Alexandria

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74 Maskarinec, *City of Saints*, 46–7. Note also the contemporaneous dedication of a nearby building to St Martina, a particularly astute choice given Empress Martina’s influence in Constantinople: 49–50.
75 Ibid., 47.
and Jerusalem about the popes in Rome and portrayed Rome as the defender of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, for the city he encountered was both familiar in religious terms and just as welcoming as the Rome he had heard about from others. He presumably even found much to admire in Honorius, the heir to Gregorian ideals.

We should not, however, imagine that Moschus was entirely content with the status quo, for the tensions briefly considered above from his circle’s stay in Egypt still simmered beneath the surface. In Booth’s words, the *Spiritual Meadow* nonetheless ‘points to the need for continuous submission to the eucharist and celebrates the clerical vocation alongside the ascetic’. This emphasis may appear on the surface rather mundane, but as Constantinople marched towards embracing the monothelete ‘heresy’, sacramental differentiation became an increasingly political act, all the more so in the face of diktats from the emperor. Honorius’ Rome would likewise be drawn into the struggle, for its very integration into imperial religious life meant that popes could not help but be involved in matters of doctrine.

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79 On Greek settlement in Rome: Sansterre, *Les moines grecs*, 1.9–51. See also Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 111–2 and 115, for the possibility that Moschus’ lived in Cella Nova, a continuation of one of Gregory’s foundations.

80 Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 139.
2.4 Age of Division

Monotheletism, the ‘heretical’ view that Christ possessed one will, and its origins remain a difficult subject to grasp, but recent works have provided numerous important revisions to the conventional narrative. No longer can the ‘heresy’ be seen solely as an artificial compromise, for it was instead one with its own history and loyal adherents. Jack Tannous, for instance, has convincingly demonstrated that both monenergism, often dismissed as the failed predecessor to the later ‘heresy’, and monotheletism had popular appeal in the early seventh century and possibly even before, most especially in Syria.\(^8^1\) Similarly for Palestine, Milka Levy-Rubin has argued for the importance of the sixth-century background for the seventh-century struggle among the monasteries over monotheletism.\(^8^2\) Even if there was no groundswell of support for the ‘heresy’, it is important to note still that a Chalcedonian consensus did not exist over these Christological questions, making later debates organic developments, not constructs designed to advance imperial policy.\(^8^3\) This provides the essential background for the following chapters, for the ‘heresy’ must always be considered as a potentially ‘orthodox’ doctrine with its own base and intellectual support, not a formulation destined for failure.

When the monenergist formula first found favour in Constantinople, it certainly achieved a great deal of success, most prominently in forging unions with East Syrian Christians from Persia and the miaphysites in Egypt by the early 630s.\(^8^4\) Sophronius, recently returned to the East and then elevated to be the patriarch of Jerusalem in 634, quickly became a dogged opponent of this doctrine. Honorius in Rome was also drawn into the dispute, for in a letter to the patriarch of Constantinople in 634/5 the pope (in)famously confessed that Christ possessed one will – in the process coining the doctrine of monotheletism.\(^8^5\) This move is widely critiqued in the scholarship, with Honorius still described recently as ‘theologically

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\(^8^4\) Booth, Crisis of Empire, 200–8.

\(^8^5\) Ibid., 209–41, and Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 96–133.
inept’ and his formulation a ‘fatal mistake’ or a ‘thoughtless reply’. 86

Some credit, however, must be given to Honorius. One might, for instance, suggest that Honorius was in fact given a position of honour, for his voice was valued by Constantinople and his position eventually given the stamp of imperial approval. To argue that his theology was flawed is also problematic, for Honorius’ emphasis only on Scriptural evidence in his letter to Constantinople is not necessarily a sign of ignorance, but instead harked back to the methodology of Gregory the Great, who was similarly sparing with evidence from the Church Fathers, particularly Greek ones. 87 Few scholars today, of course, would condemn Gregory to be in the same category as Honorius. In any case, the monothelete formula was not yet ‘heretical’, or even controversial, when Honorius wrote them and, as we will see, there are a number of indicators that monotheletism was supported in both North Africa and Italy. 88 The formula’s eventual failure should not therefore affect our judgement of Honorius’ ability.

Indeed, in the mid-630s Honorius’ words were a major step towards ecclesiastical unity, for in 636 a semi-ecumenical council gathered in Cyprus, with representatives from all four active patriarchates (the Antiochene see was vacant), to debate this issue. It resulted in major success for Constantinople, as all four patriarchs subscribed to the resulting imperial edict that laid out the monothelete formula, the Ekthesis, even the discontent Sophronius. 89 This peace did not last, but as Booth points out, one must also take into account the Arab conquest of the Near East, Lombard incursions in Italy, and the persistent campaigns of the Palestinian network around Sophronius, all of which contributed to the reopening of this dispute and the eventual doctrinal volte-face of the papacy. 90 Viewed from this perspective, Honorius’ missteps, if they were indeed missteps, had been greatly exacerbated by circumstances well beyond his control. Indeed, since the Moschan circle too had shifted their positions over time, with both Sophronius and his disciple Maximus the Confessor backing down in the face of opposition, it seems rather unfair to condemn

87 Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 131.
88 Ibid., 132, and Booth, Crisis of Empire, 264–5.
89 Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 139–60, and Booth, Crisis of Empire, 239–41.
90 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 263–4.
only Honorius, while ignoring a whole host of later ‘orthodox’ figures who were similarly ‘compromised’ in the 630s.91

True, Honorius’ successors were undoubtedly more confident anti-monotheletes than their aforementioned contemporaries. By the 640s, it is apparent that the papacy expended a great deal of resources to bolster their cause, not the least of which was the extension of the Liber Pontificalis, which presented a shaped narrative of an assertive papacy treated poorly by Constantinople – precisely when Popes Theodore and Martin were preparing for the Lateran Synod of 649.92 Imperial attempts to avoid the debate, by banning discussion over the number of Christ’s wills (the Typos of Constans II issued in 647/8) and the sending of delegates to negotiate with the papacy, presumably just before 649, both came to nothing in the face of papal intransigence.93 These glimpses of a firmly dyothelete papacy, however, present a far too tidy picture of the dispute, which remained no less complicated in the 640s than the 630s.

Before we go further into the divisive situation within the imperial church, it is worth introducing in full the figure of Maximus the Confessor, whose career will shape much of what follows. Until the publication of a seventh-century Syriac Life in 1973, later Greek Lives’ account of a Constantinopolitan, aristocratic origin for Maximus was favoured. Since the publication of the Syriac text, however, interpretations favouring a Palestinian origin have gathered momentum and are increasingly strengthened by new work on Maximus’ networks beyond the capital, particularly that of Christian Boudignon.94 Some questions remain, but the weight of modern scholarship exhibits a marked preference for a Palestinian origin, meaning that Maximus, whose travels extended to Carthage, Rome, Thrace, and finally the Caucasus, was an extraordinarily mobile figure amidst the ‘world crisis’ experienced

92 McKitterick, ‘Papacy and Byzantium’, 262.
93 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 291.
by the empire.  

Regardless of his background, all the evidence suggests that Maximus was a member of the circle of John Moschus and Sophronius. Although it is impossible to confirm that all three men travelled together, their mutual acquaintances with prominent Alexandrians may imply a joint stay there in the 610s. More certainly, Maximus can be associated with Sophronius in North Africa in the 620s, while Booth has strikingly suggested that Moschus and Maximus had both resided in the Cella Nova monastery when they lived in Rome. Similarly to Moschus and Sophronius, Maximus was also closely tied to the imperial elite. In North Africa we learn that Maximus was essentially the spiritual advisor to the general Peter of Numidia and the eparch George. He also attracted there a notable follower, Anastasius the Monk, who had once served in the imperial household. Last but not least, Maximus is perhaps most famous for his alliance with the papacy, with the help of which he organised the Lateran Synod of 649, a unique demonstration of a Palestinian monk’s influence in Rome.

Given his far-flung connections and his own vociferous campaigns for dyotheletism, the doctrine that Christ possessed two wills (and which Maximus may have invented himself in 640/1), there is perhaps a tendency to emphasise the key roles played by Maximus and his papal collaborators, most prominently Pope Martin (649–654). It is important nonetheless to highlight the diversity of views then prevalent in the empire, for they will repeatedly impact upon the following narrative of the papacy and its supporters. Maximus’ journeys across the Mediterranean provide an apt illustration of these disputes, for nowhere in the empire did Maximus encounter a fully monothelete or dyothelete region.

In Palestine, there are several indications that all was not well in Maximus’ homeland. Although Sophronius was the patriarch of Jerusalem after 634, it is evident that he had pro-imperial followers in his retinue, for one of his disciples,

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95 The consensus is most recently challenged in S. Mitrulexis, ‘Review of the Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor’, Vigiliae Christianae 70.4 (2016), 467–71, at 469–70.
96 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 149–51.
97 Ibid., 151–3
George of Resh’aïna, was the author of the polemical *Life* defaming Maximus’ doctrines. Nor could bishops appointed by Sophronius be relied upon, for Pope Martin accused them in 649 of undermining the patriarch and so ordered them to be removed immediately. From Martin’s letters, we also gather a sense of how poorly the Palestinian dyotheletes had fared by the time of the Lateran Synod – they had support from three bishops around Philadelphia in Palestine, but no other contact with the local episcopal hierarchy is attested. As we will see in the final chapter, even monks in the monastery of St Theodosius in Jerusalem, once the home of Moschus and Sophronius and its abbot the recipient of another letter from Martin, would name Constans II in their prayers in the 650s. The loyalty of Palestine to dyotheletism evidently cannot be depended upon, particularly as their stance is unlikely to have been shaped by imperial pressure, for the province had been conquered by the Arabs in the late 630s.

Maximus’ second sojourn in North Africa, having returned there by 641 at the latest, likewise brought him into a province debating the same issue. We learn, for example, of a certain monk named Luke, allegedly the only man in the province who argued for monotheletism against Maximus, who was also the recipient of three books from Makarios, the monothelete patriarch of Antioch. These claims are admittedly found in the polemical Syriac *Life of Maximus*, but Luke’s existence and doctrinal position are confirmed by records of the 680–1 Ecumenical Council, which noted that Makarios had indeed sent an anti-Maximian tract to this North African monk.

More generally, while the North African church does appear to have been entirely anti-monothelete on the surface, two subtle hints of accommodation with the capital can still be discerned. Curiously, the bishop of Carthage had visited the capital before 646 and attended mass with the monothelete patriarch of

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100 George of Resh’aïna, *Life of Maximus*, 5 (Brock, 315).
102 Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 296. Jankowiak, *Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme*, 275, further suggests that this bastion of support was short-lived.
Constantinople, while the anti-monothelete synods in 646/7 were held when the see of Carthage was vacant. It is possible then that an important bishop in the province was rather ambivalent (or worse) in his attitude to the monothelete ‘heresy’, a perspective that was occluded in the anti-monothelete sources. Political pressure from the exarch of Africa, who rebelled against Constantinople in 647, no doubt further disguised the level of debate in the region.

The same pattern continued into Italy. While travelling to Rome from North Africa in 645/6, Maximus debated with a group of Sicilian monks and was apparently criticised on numerous points, resulting in him writing a more detailed explanation of his arguments. Combined with the poor attendance of Sicilian bishops at the rebellious Lateran Synod in 649, it is tempting to suggest that a significant portion of the island remained loyal to Constantinople. The seventh-century Life of Zosimus of Syracuse provides another implicit hint of Sicilian indifference towards the controversy, as it praised Eupraxius, an imperial official who can probably be identified as an advisor to Constans II who later helped to suppress the Lateran Synod. This interpretation is helped further by the non-appearance of any religious tension in the text, even though Zosimus was allegedly appointed by Pope Theodore, one of the more actively anti-monothelete popes of this period. If nothing else, we can suppose that the hagiographer of the bishop of Syracuse had carefully presented a picture of doctrinal peace, despite the interesting times Zosimus lived through.

In the north, Ravenna too remained unconvincing, if the absence of its bishop and his all too diplomatic letter to Martin are indications of his desire to avoid attending the synod in Rome. In the Eternal City itself, while there is no direct evidence of pro-monothelete sympathies, through later events we can glimpse signs that Rome did not stand united behind the pope. As Jankowiak rightfully notes, aside

112 Life of Zosimus of Syracuse, 12 (Gaetani, 838).
from the arrest of the ringleaders (three or four at most), no-one from Italy is known to have been arrested or deposed after the collapse of the rebellion. 114 The non-appearance of members of the Roman clergy in the records of the Lateran Synod and the swift appointment of a new pope after Martin’s trial may likewise be indicators of some Romans’ more conciliatory stance towards Constantinople. 115 Higher up the hierarchy, as Martin’s envoys to Thessalonica were apparently convinced by its bishop’s decision to dissent from papal policy, one might suppose that some of Martin’s own subordinates were less than comfortable with the Lateran Synod. 116

The evidence from the 640s suggests therefore that even the imperial West was far from united in fighting Constantinople’s ‘heretical’ doctrines. Combined, with recent insights into the eastern popularity of monotheletism, particularly Tannous’ study of Syriac sources and Tim Greenwood’s analysis of an anonymous Armenian chronicle, a more interesting history of monotheletism can now be written. 117 No longer can it be seen as a ‘heresy’ doomed to fail, for we instead detect a far-ranging debate on the wills of Christ, with adherents and opponents visible across the empire. In this light, a neat division between East and West, or between Latin and Greek churches, is surely a problematic framing of this debate. The papacy then was not a stalwart defender of ‘orthodoxy’, but instead one voice among many. This does not diminish Rome’s role in the seventh century. Far from it, for the papacy instead emerges as an active player fully involved in a very imperial dispute.

The Lateran Synod in 649 was the culmination of the trends elaborated upon here, a declaration of both the papacy’s doctrinal condemnation of Constantinople and an attempt to remove the monothelete ‘heresy’ by political and military means. In the East, the papacy sought nothing short of a revolution, both against the regime in Constantinople and the eastern patriarchs, sanctioning in particular the removal of irregular bishops in the jurisdiction of Antioch and Jerusalem. Likewise in the West, where Martin took the unprecedented steps of writing to the Franks, with other hints of a campaign to gather ‘barbarian’ support also visible in the scattered sources. Of course, these efforts were contested and resulted in limited success at best, but it is

115 Ibid., 292–3.
unlikely that the attendees of the Lateran Synod could have predicted that their missives to churchmen in both the East and the West would be so ineffective.118

For contemporaries, Constans II’s regime must have appeared to be tottering on the precipice. Under the helm of a young, inexperienced emperor plagued by military revolts and ecclesiastical divisions, not to mention the seemingly invincible Arab caliphate, 649 must have appeared to be the nadir of Roman fortunes, adding to the urgency of papal and Palestinian actors in Rome to end the ‘heresy’ at the root of these disasters. Little did they know that the following decade would witness an impressive revival of Roman power under a new Constantine, a revival noted by contemporaries in both Gaul and the Caucasus. Having established the religious context for the seventh-century papacy, the next section will turn to how others responded to this crisis. Though as always the evidence is not plentiful, recent advances in the study of the mid-seventh century have shed new light on the political and religious context of the empire, Visigothic Spain, and Merovingian Gaul, refining further the narrative presented here of a Mediterranean world on the move.

118 Liber Pontificalis, 76.3 (Duchesne, 1.337).
3. Aftershocks of 649

Viewed with hindsight, the Lateran Synod was ultimately a failure. Its organisers, Pope Martin and Maximus the Confessor, would both be brought to trial in Constantinople and sentenced to exile, while monotheletism remained broadly unchallenged within the empire until 680–1. The recent wave of studies on the 640s and 650s has, however, opened up new avenues for discussion. By drawing together evidence from Visigothic Spain, Merovingian Gaul, and the Roman Empire, from both political and religious narratives, a better sense of how the anti-monothelete movement stood within the wider Mediterranean can be gleaned. Moreover, it will be argued that western involvement in the struggle against imperial ‘orthodoxy’ must be interpreted with more care. Whereas recent scholarship tends to either note the lack of knowledge among the Franks and Visigoths of this doctrinal struggle or, taking the opposite view, suggest that there was significant western enthusiasm for papal activities, this chapter will argue for a middle ground between the two positions, one that takes into account the full range of views offered by the sources.1

In the process, western links with the papacy will also be critically examined and I posit here that a great number of possible connections with the papacy and the empire can be uncovered among the fragmentary sources.

The political and religious storm after the Lateran Synod will be traced below in some detail, but it is apropos of the overarching argument in this thesis to begin with a curious reference to foreigners present in Rome in the same year. According to the Liber Pontificalis, Olympius was sent by Constans II as the new exarch of Italy to ensure the province’s adherence to the Typos, the latest imperial pronouncement on doctrine, and to arrest Pope Martin.2 Intriguingly, Olympius was apparently ordered to enforce the subscription to the Typos by bishops, church officials, and ‘peregros [peregrinos]’.3 The latter ‘foreigners’ have been interpreted to mean the Greek monks then present in Italy by Jankowiak and Booth, an entirely sensible position given the easterners’ prominent role in opposing the Typos.4 Given the word’s usage in the West to refer to pilgrims, however, one wonders if it was

2 Liber Pontificalis, 76.4–7 (Duchesne, 1.337–8).
3 Ibid., 76.4 (Duchesne, 1.337).
4 Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 243 and Booth, Crisis of Empire, 300n101.
used here too as a reference to non-imperial visitors to Rome, whom Constantinople had wanted Olympius to coerce as well.

This possibility becomes all the more important when this part of the *Liber Pontificalis* is likely a Latin translation, more or less, of a genuine Greek document, as both Duchesne and Jankowiak suggest. The usage of ‘a Deo conservandae urbis’ when describing the see of Paul, patriarch of Constantinople, and ‘Martinum qui hic erat apocrisarius in regia urbe’ in this passage are particularly suggestive of its Constantinopolitan origins. The former is a typically Greek formulation to refer to the capital, being a natural translation of θεοφύλακτος πόλις (‘God-protected city’), while the latter would be an appropriate imperial description of Martin, as his elevation to the bishopric of Rome was not recognised by the emperor, and which stands in contrast to the otherwise hagiographical account of his tenure in the *Liber Pontificalis*. We are then left with the very real possibility that Constantinople had directly ordered Olympius to secure the (religious) loyalties of foreigners in Rome.

There is still a need for caution, particularly as we cannot ascertain who these ‘foreigners’ in Rome actually included, nor can we determine the extent of interpolation by the anonymous scribes behind the *Liber Pontificalis*. For instance, if McKitterick is correct to assign this section of the text to a batch composed in the lead-up to the Ecumenical Council in 680–1 and written so as to promote a particular vision of papal authority, the inclusion of ‘peregros' may be more reflective of Rome’s later interests, perhaps to highlight negatively how Constantinople had dared to impose its ‘heresy’ on the western faithful.

As it is impossible to determine precisely who exactly the ‘peregros’ were and the motivations for its inclusion in this text solely from examining the *Liber Pontificalis*, the approach taken here will be to consider the question from the

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opposite perspective, to explore instead the complex religious and political landscape of Western Europe c. 650. The following analysis of the Visigothic and Frankish contacts with Rome may not provide a definitive identification of the ‘peregros’ whose loyalty Olympius was ordered to secure, but they do place the exarch’s actions in their context. It will, for instance, clarify just how involved westerners were in the monothelete controversy, in the process shedding some light on the western horizons of Constantinople, then mired in its crisis of empire. Martin’s pontificate, though short, had nonetheless shaken the Mediterranean and the following discussion will situate the Lateran Synod and its aftermath among events in Spain, Gaul, and Constantinople, providing thus a holistic analysis of Rome and its networks.
3.1 Visigothic Spain

We turn first to Spain, whose relationship with both the empire and the papacy in the seventh century was uneven, to say the least. The last remnants of the imperial province of Spania fell to the Visigoths in 625–6, while more negative attitudes towards Constantinople persisted at least into the following decade, as Isidore of Seville emphasised the Romans’ defeats by Persia, their ‘heretical’ tendencies, and of course the empire’s eclipse by the ascendant Visigoths. With regards to the papacy, the Visigoths were respectful, but certainly not willing to accept uncritically Rome’s rulings, most clearly seen in Braulio of Zaragoza’s letter to Pope Honorius in 638, which responded to the pope’s concerns regarding the Visigoths’ allegedly lax attitude towards Jews.

It was in this context that the abbot Taio, the eventual successor to Braulio to the see of Zaragoza in 651, visited Rome to collect missing manuscripts of Pope Gregory the Great’s writings. As Taio’s journey has been dated wildly differently in the existing scholarship, a discussion of the sources is needed before we turn to the implications of his travels and their relevance to the events of 649. This visit was first noted by Braulio, when he requested a copy of the text brought back to Spain by Taio. Based on its place in Braulio’s (roughly chronological) letter collection and a reference to his declining eyesight, studies of Braulio have placed this letter c. 649/50, and certainly before the end of 651, the year of Braulio’s death. Taio also described his experiences in a letter to Eugenius II of Toledo; as Taio referred to himself as a bishop and Eugenius died in 657, this letter must date to some point in 651–7, but it does not otherwise provide any dating information for the journey itself. Finally, there is the more elaborate eighth-century account in the Mozarabic Chronicle of 754, which placed Taio’s journey after the Council of Toledo in 646.

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10 Braulio of Zaragoza, Letters, 42 (Riesco Terrero, 162).
11 Miguel Franco, Braulio de Zaragoza, 63–6, J. Madoz, Epistolario de S. Braulio de Zaragoza. Edición crítica según el códice 22 del Archivo Capitular de León, con una introducción histórica y comentario (Madrid, 1941), 52, and C. Lynch, Saint Braulio, Bishop of Saragossa (631–651), His Life and Writings (Washington, D.C., 1938), 19 and 208. Lynch on 189–90 further notes that later traditions of Braulio’s death on March 18 or 26 are unreliable, and that ‘the year only is certain’.
12 Taio’s letter to Eugenius is edited as Eugenius of Toledo, Letter 4, ed. F. Vollmer, MGH AA 14 (Berlin, 1905), 287–90.
and attributed its origins to an order from King Chindasuinth (642–653). Taio’s visit may then be tentatively placed sometime between 646–651, around the time of the Lateran Synod.

Although the *terminus post quem* is hardly ironclad, since it is attested only in the *Chronicle of 754*, there are reasons to give this dating some credence. The Visigothic kingdom at this time had a particularly harsh attitude towards travel abroad, as seen in one law issued by Chindasuinth, which proscribed the death penalty (or, if the king was generous, blinding) for those who travelled abroad without permission, as well as in the first canon of the 646 Council of Toledo, which noted that churchmen leaving Spain without permission will be deposed. These edicts did seem to have an effect on the ground, as in the *Life of Fructuosus of Braga* (d. 665) from c. 680, the saint’s attempt to visit the ‘East’, via Gaul, was scuppered by royal officials. As a result, it is likely that Taio’s visit to Rome in the mid-seventh century was indeed dependent on Chindasuinth’s approval, matching the story preserved by the anonymous chronicler. This royal commission also adds a plausible political angle to Taio’s hunt for manuscripts, and Margarita Vallejo Girvés has argued that this particular journey should be seen as part of a wider anti-imperial and anti-monothelete initiative under King Chindasuinth, perhaps even involving the Lombards.

It is further interesting then that the *Chronicle of 754* included a meeting between Taio and an unnamed pope, who has been identified by Kenneth Baxter

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17 C. Martín, *La géographie du pouvoir dans l’Espagne visigothique* (Lille, 2003), 257; this interpretation is also followed in ODLA, ‘Chindasuinth’, 326.
Wolf and Ian Wood as Martin. Both, however, date Taio’s journey to 651–3 and assume that he was a bishop when he travelled to Rome, neither of which can be the case. As discussed above, Braulio, the first source to make note of Taio’s time abroad, wrote to Taio the abbot at some point before 651, the year of Braulio’s death and Taio’s elevation to the same see. The possibility of Martin as the anonymous pope is nonetheless a plausible one, particularly Wood’s association between the journey and the monothelete controversy, as Martin’s short tenure (649–654) was consumed entirely by the Lateran Synod and its fallout. An earlier visit would have landed Taio an audience with Pope Theodore (642–649), but it makes little difference, since Theodore was just as fervent an anti-monothelete as Martin and had begun preparations for the Lateran Synod before his death. As this meeting and its purpose remain far from conclusive, it must be approached with some caution, but at the very least, we can say that Taio must have been aware of the wider contours of the doctrinal controversy and brought some news of it home to Spain.

A hint of this knowledge can perhaps be found in a fragment of Taio’s letter to Braulio, in which he asked the bishop of Zaragoza whether the ‘blood of the Lord’ persisted after Christ’s resurrection. In Braulio’s response, the same letter in which he requested the writings brought back to Spain by Taio, the bishop of Zaragoza further implied that Taio had mentioned Christians who venerated the blood of Christ as a relic; a brief comment that has been interpreted by Caroline Walker Bynum to refer to eastern practices, as such veneration did not occur locally in Spain, and was thus perhaps reflective of what Taio saw within the empire. Taio’s question is certainly resonant of the late sixth-century interest in the nature of the soul and body post-mortem, a dispute that drew in Gregory the Great and Eustratius of Constantinople, as discussed in chapter one. More speculatively, there is perhaps a tinge of Christology involved, since Taio’s full question may have engaged with the nature(s) of Christ post-Resurrection. Though we should not assume any direct influence by the anti-monotheletes on Taio, it is certainly tempting to speculate that

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21 This is edited among Braulio’s letters as a *Fragmentum* (Riesco Terrero, 154); Miguel Franco treats it instead as Letter 34 in *Braulio de Zaragoza*, 157.
Taio’s question to Braulio was brought to the forefront of his mind after his experiences in Rome, a city then seething with the very real consequences of doctrinal debate.

Taio’s wider circle presents further circumstantial evidence for a bolder interpretation of Visigothic knowledge of eastern affairs. As a correspondent of and eventual successor to Braulio of Zaragoza, the only known Visigoth to make contact with the papacy since the tenure of Gregory the Great, Taio was presumably a well-placed candidate to once again grapple with papal policy. The two bishops were certainly keen to imitate Gregory, as both had used the pope’s trademark self-reference, ‘servus servorum’, to refer to themselves in their letters.

The final two letters in Braulio’s collection, and hence the last surviving letters chronologically, were moreover a question from Fructuosus of Braga and Braulio’s reply – as Fructuosus was the only other attested churchmen to wish to travel abroad from contemporary Spain aside from Taio, this is another indication of this group’s eastern horizons.

Taio’s contact in the 650s, Eugenius II of Toledo, was no different, as he was not only interested in Pope Gregory’s writings, but also had his own contacts abroad, as at some point in his career Eugenius wrote a treatise on the Holy Trinity that was supposed to be sent to ‘Libya [western North Africa] and the East’, only for the attempt to flounder due to storms. Intriguingly for the argument here, this treatise has been interpreted by Roger Collins and Luis A. García Moreno as an attempted Visigothic contribution to the contemporaneous monothelete controversy. Such a document would, like Taio’s visit to Rome, also imply the involvement of Chindasuinth. Eugenius was once a ‘cleric of the royal church’ and then archdeacon in Zaragoza, before he was forcibly made the bishop of Toledo, the Visigothic capital, by Chindasuinth, all of which suggest further close ties with the king. As a

25 Braulio of Zaragoza, Letters, 43–4 (Riesco Terrero, 162–82). Fructuosus may also have been Braulio’s relative: Lynch, Saint Braulio, 11.
28 Ildefonsus of Toledo, On Illustrious Men, 13 (Codoñer Merino, 614); Braulio of Zaragoza, Letters,
result, Eugenius’ work on the Trinity, if indeed tied to other western efforts to refute monotheletism, was a very political response against the imperial ‘heresy’ as well. More hesitatingly, it is also tempting to note the broader interest in Gregory the Great among Visigothic bishops, for in the Eighth Council of Toledo in 653 Gregory was honoured for his works and virtues, a sentiment that was shared by Maximus’ circle within the empire.29

Despite the overall paucity of evidence for this period and the harshness of contemporary legislation, we can therefore still note multiple points of contact between Taio’s correspondents and the Roman Empire, though the details remain obscure. This fondness for the Eternal City may seem harmless, but given the explosive context in Rome itself, one must also consider whether the same respect would have also placed this Visigothic circle against the interests of Constantinople.

A negative attitude towards the empire is certainly appropriate for the reign of Chindaswinth, as there are several indications that he pursued an anti-imperial policy, providing a political mirror to the religious factors highlighted already. To begin with, it is worth considering a strange, and often dismissed, anecdote from the tenth-century *Chronicle of Alfonso III*, which noted that in the time of Chindaswinth a certain ‘Ardavastus’ arrived from Greece, having been expelled from his country by the emperor (presumably Constans II), who was then offered the Visigothic king’s niece in marriage, resulting in a son, Ervig, who later plotted to overthrow King Wamba.30 This story has been treated with a great deal of suspicion, with one scholar commenting on the ‘novelistic character of the story’, particular the appearance of a ‘half-Byzantine villain’.31 More interestingly, both García Moreno and Vallejo Girvés argue that this story was a deliberate projecting back into the seventh century of the well-known Roman usurper Artabasdos, who opposed Constantine V in the 740s, perhaps to further tarnish the reputation of Ervig.32

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29 *Canons of the Eighth Council of Toledo*, 2, eds. Martínez Díez and Rodríguez, *La Colección Canónica Hispana*, 365–485, at 410, but cf. the argument that this praise was intended to raise the stature of Isidore: Wood, ‘A Family Affair’, 51.
32 L. A. García Moreno, ‘El linaje witizano de Artaba(s)do’, in L. Adao da Fonseca, L. C. Amaral,
late source is certainly an unreliable guide to the past, most obviously in its account of the Battle of Covadonga, an identity-defining battle between the proto-Asturians and the Arabs, but circumstantial evidence can be raised in defence of this account.\textsuperscript{33}

For one, Ardavastus (Artavazd) was a common Armenian name, with two attested for the seventh century in the \textit{History} of Pseudo-Sebeos alone, who wrote c. 660.\textsuperscript{34} Moreover, Chindasuinth’s eleven-year reign had overlapped with the most unstable decade of Constans’ rule. Of the two known purges that took place in Constantinople, around 643 and 651, both involved Armenians. In the first case, the imperial regent Valentinus, himself an Armenian, was lynched by a mob for attempting to usurp power, while the later liquidation of Georgios \textit{Magistros} led to the murder of one Armenian commander and the exile of another.\textsuperscript{35}

Of course, we should not assume that names are accurate indicators of ethnic origin, but the instability indicated here is still significant, for the empire had now experienced decades of political infighting – as a result, many individuals are known to have been exiled to the imperial periphery. Indeed, in the 630s imperial exiles were frequently sent to the empire’s western provinces, including Ceuta (across the straits from Gibraltar), Malta, and North Africa proper, according to John of Nikiu and Nicephorus.\textsuperscript{36} While these earlier exiles may not seem relevant to events after

\textsuperscript{33} R. Collins, \textit{Caliphs and Kings: Spain, 796–1031} (Chichester, 2012), 63 and 81–2.

\textsuperscript{34} Pseudo-Sebeos, \textit{History}, 28 and 52 (Thomson, 50 and 149). Many more can be found in the eighth century and later, as 21 are listed in the PmbZ (641–1025) and 13 in the PBE (641–867).


\textsuperscript{36} The imperial treasurer Philagrios was exiled to Ceuta in 641 according to Nicephorus, \textit{Short History}, 30 (Mango, 80); cf. John of Nikiu, \textit{Chronicle}, 120 (Zotenberg, 460), which states that Philagrios was exiled to Tripoli and joined by Pyrrhus, the patriarch of Constantinople. The magister Theodore was exiled to Malta in 637: Nicephorus, \textit{Short History}, 24 (Mango, 72). Cyrus, the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, was briefly exiled to ‘an island in the west of the province of Africa’ in 641, according to John of Nikiu, \textit{Chronicle}, 116 (Zotenberg, 444), as amended in Booth, ‘Last Years of Cyrus’, 522–3. These exiles are considered in more detail in E. Motos Guirao, ‘Crisis institucional y política de destierros: el año 641 en Bizancio’, in M. Vallejo Girvés, J. Bueno Delgado, and C. Sánchez-Moreno Ellart (eds.), \textit{Movilidad forzada entre la Antigüedad clásica y tardía} (Alcalá de Henares, 2015), 197–230; see 222–3 in particular for the presence of Ceuta in four other seventh-
641, it must be noted that in the following years the pool of available imperial sources shrinks dramatically, as the eighth-century Nicephorus provided no information on Constans’ reign and John of Nikiu ended his chronicle with the Arab conquest of Egypt in 641. Given the political instability of Constans’ early reign, as highlighted by Pseudo-Sebeos and the endless struggle over monotheletism, it is likely that long-distance exile to the imperial West continued to be a fashionable punishment in Constantinople, despite the silence of the sources. As we will see, the anti-monothelete dissidents were eventually exiled to Crimea and the Caucasus; due to their western connections, it was a logical choice to exile them to the eastern fringes. The opposite might be the case for individuals with eastern support, but unfortunately this poorly documented period does not allow us to reconstruct where the few political exiles mentioned ended up or what they did in exile. In the case of the 651 purge, for instance, the general Smbat was exiled, but Pseudo-Sebeos was silent on his destination. Without further information, it is nonetheless tempting to suggest that Smbat ended up in the imperial West, as both his father and grandfather had been exiled to North Africa, respectively in 637 and 589, making this punishment almost a family tradition. A later parallel can likewise be found in the case of Makarios, the monothelete patriarch of Antioch, who was exiled to Rome after monotheletism was repudiated in 681. Given the proximity of Spain to these places of exile, an exile escaping to the Visigoths is surely not so implausible in the mid-seventh century.

Another clue is found in the Greek Life of Gregory of Agrigento, recently redated to c. 700 by Salvatore Cosentino, and which contains three intriguing references to Spain. In the first case, the titular Gregory (from the late sixth century) considered escaping his responsibilities by fleeing to Spain, and in the next two references, Pope Gregory the Great sentenced two of the saint’s detractors to the

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37 Pseudo-Sebeos, History, 47 (Thomson, 134).
38 Ibid., 20, 41, and 44 (Thomson, 40, 93, and 107).
39 Liber Pontificalis, 82.3 (Duchesne, 1.359–60).
same region. These references, among other indicators, have been used by Cosentino to date the *Life* to before 711, as the Arab conquest of Spain would have made the peninsula a rather less plausible destination for the *Life*’s imperial audience. None of the examples in this *Life* were exiled to Spain for political reasons, but together they do leave open the possibility that Spain and the empire remained connected, at least in the collective imagination of a seventh-century Greek hagiographer and his audience in Rome.

Once the crucial imperial context is taken into account, the presence of a dissenter opposed to Constans II (of an Armenian origin?) at the court of Chindasuinth is not an improbable one. Indeed, this perspective strengthens Vallejo Girvés’ overall argument of Visigothic hostility to the empire, as both the shelter and the royal marriage given to the exile would have further burnished Chindasuinth’s anti-imperial credentials, particularly given the empire’s continued presence across the Strait of Gibraltar and in the Balearic Islands. Other ‘barbarians’, certainly, had supported Romans who had abandoned the empire, as seen in the revolt of the Roman general Saborios, who was backed by the Arabs in 667, and the deposed Justinian II, who was famously restored to his throne thanks to the Bulgars in 705. If the Visigoths were as interested in the monothelete controversy and the resulting political chaos as Vallejo Girvés suggests, then the arrival of Ardavastus at a foreign court in the West should not be surprising.

Finally, we must consider García Moreno’s argument that beyond Taio’s mission, which he held to be a diplomatic initiative to make contact with the papacy and the exarch of Ravenna, King Chindasuinth also sent embassies to Berbers in imperial North Africa. This conjecture relies on two later sources, the *Chronicle of Pseudo-Isidore* and *Chronicle of the Moor Rasis*. The former survives in a manuscript dating to the twelfth century, the latter in a Portuguese translation from the fifteenth century; both, in all probability, rely on earlier Visigothic and Al-Andalusian historiography, but it is a challenge to determine whether the unique

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42 Cosentino, ‘*Vita di Gregorio di Agrigento*’, 23.
44 *Theophanes, Chronicle*, A.M. 6159 and 6196 (de Boor, 348–51 and 372–4).
information they provide can lead to a reliable picture of the seventh century.\(^{46}\)

Leaving these textual problems aside, however, we should not dismiss this interpretation out of hand, as contact between Spain and North Africa is widely attested, including Eugenius II’s ill-fated treatise mentioned above, so Chindasuinth’s otherwise unknown diplomatic effort in North Africa is not as outlandish as it might seem at first glance.\(^{47}\) In particular, we can highlight the career of the last ‘Arian’ bishop of Merida, Sunna, who was exiled to imperial Mauretania in 587, who apparently then experienced success in his missionary activities there, presumably with the local Berbers, a report that eventually filtered back to Merida and was included in the *Lives of the Meridan Fathers* composed in the mid-seventh century.\(^{48}\) In terms of timing, Chindasuinth’s mission can perhaps be associated with the revolt of Exarch Gregory of North Africa against Constantinople in 646/7 or the chaotic aftermath following his defeat by the Arabs, but that is purely a suggestion based on the lack of sources for other political events in the province, and a more open-minded approach to dating Chindasuinth’s embassies and in considering their cause might be more appropriate.\(^{49}\) Given the other scraps of evidence already discussed, however, we can suppose that whatever Chindasuinth’s aims were, they were not likely to be aligned with the interests of Constantinople.

The same problem afflicts the other sources discussed already and much of the foregoing is admittedly circumstantial, but the discussion has nonetheless highlighted the wide range of possibilities offered by the available texts, despite the limited information we have for the Visigoths’ relationship with the empire during the monothelete controversy. At its most expansive, this interpretation suggests that both the Visigothic church and state had an interest in the turmoil within the empire

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\(^{46}\) A. Christys, “‘How can I trust you, since you are a Christian and I am a Moor?’” The Multiple Identities of the Chronicle of Pseudo-Isidore’, in R. Corradini et al. (eds.), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages* (Vienna, 2007), 359–72, at 360.


\(^{49}\) Theophanes, *Chronicle*, A.M. 6138 (de Boor, 343); W. Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa* (Cambridge, 2010), 143–4.
and sought to meddle in its affairs in Italy and Africa, as well as expressing agreement with the papal position, if Taio did indeed have ulterior motives for his journey to Rome and if his alleged meeting with an anti-monothelete pope did take place. A more cautious reading of the evidence meanwhile still throws up interesting avenues for discussion, as Taio visited Rome when it was mired in doctrinal conflict with Constantinople and so must have brought knowledge of this debate home to Zaragoza. Likewise, if Eugenius II of Toledo’s work on the Trinity was unrelated to the monothelete controversy, then his choice of audience in Africa and the East still raises questions about his (perceived) audience and pre-existing contacts in those provinces. Combined with the evidence for Spanish-African exchanges from before this poorly documented period, a more conservative interpretation would still reveal a connected circle of elite Visigothic bishops, who viewed Rome with respect and saw travel to the empire as a realistic prospect, even if they were not concerned with the very latest news from the East.

A comparative look at the same crucial years in Merovingian Gaul, I suggest, could offer a potential way out of this dilemma, as it has received a great deal of attention in recent years. Similarly to the Visigoths, there is only a small pool of evidence for Frankish contact with the Roman Empire in the seventh century, certainly when compared to the wide range of sixth-century sources for diplomatic and cultural exchanges. Even so, the greater range of hagiographical evidence provides a helpful corrective to the more limited material from Spain, and the following section will seek to reconstruct a more rounded picture of both Rome and the Roman Empire’s connections with the ‘barbarian’ West on this basis.
3.2 Merovingian Gaul

Unlike Spain, we have direct evidence that papacy had requested Frankish support in the aftermath of the Lateran Synod, as we still possess a letter from Pope Martin to Amandus of Maastricht, which asked for news to be spread of events in Rome, that a council be gathered by Sigibert III of Austrasia, and for a Frankish delegation to be sent to Constantinople, all in support of the Lateran Synod. For some scholars, this letter is a lone indication of the papacy’s ineffectual attempt to rally support for anti-monotheletism in the West. It is clear, after all, that this particular letter was in response to a missive from Amandus, who had written to request permission for his abdication, as well as to seek relics and manuscripts from the papal collection. Martin was therefore replying to a messenger from Amandus who was conveniently already in Rome and did not write to the bishop solely out of his own initiative. Amandus’ two visits to Rome previously had, perhaps, made him familiar to the papacy, making him the prime (and only available?) Austrasian candidate to contact in 649. Moreover, although Amandus certainly received the letter and the Acts of the Lateran Synod, there is also no indication that he or the Austrasian Franks ever convened a council in support of the papacy. As Ian Wood notes, the letter to Amandus is indicative of contact only at an individual level, not at an institutional level, between the Frankish kingdoms and Rome.

Martin’s request for a Frankish mission to be sent to Constantinople, however, was at least not implausible given recent history, as a Frankish delegation to Constantinople was recorded in 552, at the height of the earlier controversy over the Three Chapters. The letter to Amandus itself hints at a more substantial effort

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52 Martin, Letter to Amandus: ‘vacatione ab episcopatus laboribus eligere et silentio atque otio uitam degere’, and ‘Reliquias uero sanctorum, de quibus praesentium lator nobis ammonuit, dare praecipimus; nam codices iam exinaniti sunt a nostra bybliotheca [...]’ (Riedinger, 422 and 424).
53 Life of Amandus, 6–7 and 10 (Krusch, 434–5).
56 Letter from the Church of Milan to the Frankish Envoys, ed. E. Schwartz, I Vigiliusbriefe. II Zur Kirchenpolitik Justinian (Munich, 1940), 18–25.
to influence the Austrasian Franks, as a missive directly addressed to King Sigibert was also mentioned, which would have surely enhanced our understanding of Frankish-papal relations if it had survived as well.\textsuperscript{57} Finally, there can be no doubt that Martin’s letter was a genuine product of the papal chancery. As Richard Pollard has argued recently, this letter contains the ‘unmistakable stamp of the [seventh-century] Roman curia: it strictly obeys the rules of Latin prose-rhythm’.\textsuperscript{58} The presence of several ‘translator words’ in the same letter, moreover, also testifies to a collaborative effort with Greek monks in Rome, the same figures who had been so involved in the Lateran Synod.\textsuperscript{59} Although the letter to Amandus remains the sole documentary evidence of Martin’s attempt to rally western support, we can still therefore grasp a sense of how Rome strategically mustered its resources to campaign for its cause.

Recent reassessments of the western side of the monothelete controversy have further bolstered the case for Martin’s western contacts by highlighting a number of other potential links. The \textit{Life of Eligius of Noyon} provides the most explicit demonstration. The first version was completed by Eligius’ friend, Audoin of Rouen, shortly after Eligius’ death in 660, then edited or added to three more times in the seventh century, though the final form is Carolingian.\textsuperscript{60} This text noted that a papal letter was sent to Gaul and emissaries sought from the Kingdom of Neustria-Burgundy; although Eligius had wished to go to Rome to take up the cause with a companion, he was prevented from doing so for an unknown reason.\textsuperscript{61} This chronology is certainly not straightforward, as although the historical setting is in

\textsuperscript{57} Martin, \textit{Letter to Amandus} (Riedinger, 424): ‘hoc namque et per eius epistolam exortare eum cognoscimur’.

\textsuperscript{58} Pollard, ‘Cooperative Correspondence’, 306.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, 306–9; this study adds an important nuance to R. Riedinger, ‘Wer hat den Brief Papst Martins I an Amandus verfaßt?’, \textit{Filologia Mediolatina} 3 (1996), 95–104, which emphasises exclusively the Greek contribution.


\textsuperscript{61} Audoin, \textit{Life of Eligius of Noyon}, 1.33, ed. B. Krusch, MGH SRM 4 (Hannover, 1902), 663–742, at 689–90; on why Eligius failed to go to Rome: ‘nisi ei quaedam causa impedimenti fuisset’.

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649, its place in the *Life* implies that it took place before Eligius became a bishop in 641. Its status as a genuine Merovingian digression written by Audoin has, however, been convincingly argued by Clemens Bayer and it is possible therefore to use elements of the story to refine our knowledge of the Frankish response to monotheletism.\(^{62}\)

Although the *Life* is not explicit on this point, noting only that the pope requested educated men to help suppress this ‘heresy’, studies of Eligius’ involvement in the monothelete controversy have also argued that the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône, held on 24 October between 647 and 653 and attended by bishops of Neustria-Burgundy, was the result of Martin’s campaign to solicit Frankish support for Rome.\(^{63}\) None of its decrees mention monotheletism, but its first canon has been read as an implicit reference to the controversy:

> In this way, together with one mind and one intention, we declared and outlined everything, in order to conserve the rule of faith in its entirety and by all, just as it was strengthened at the Council of Nicaea by a pious profession, handed down from and exhibited by the holy fathers, and strengthened afterwards by the holy Council of Chalcedon.\(^{64}\)

This strong declaration of adherence to the doctrines laid down at the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon is key to proponents of an association with the

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\(^{62}\) Bayer, ‘Vita Eligii’, 469–70, 478, and 485–6; Bayer’s overall conclusions are accepted in M. Heinzelmänn, ‘L’histoire mérovingienne. Panorama des documents potentiels’, *Beihefte der Francia* 71(2010), 27–82, at 69–70. Cf. Krusch, MGH SRM 4, 648–9; and Westeel, ‘Quelques remarques’, 40. The implications of this digression being partly based on an eye-witness account, as Audoin, *Life of Eligius*, 1.34 (Krusch, 690) suggests, will be discussed in the next chapter.


\(^{64}\) Canons of the *Council of Chalon-sur-Saône*, 1, ed. de Clercq, *Concilia Galliae*, 303–9, at 303: ‘Ita omnes una conspiratione et connibente animo sentientes definiuimus, ut fidei normam, sicut in Niceno concilio pia est professione firmata uel a sanctis partribus tradita atque ab ipsis exposita uel in postmodum a sancto est Calcidonense concilio firmata, in omnibus et ab omnibus conservetur’.
Lateran Synod. Duchesne, for example, noted how maintaining Chalcedonian orthodoxy was already of interest in the West in the sixth century, thanks to the Three Chapters controversy; as the papacy in 649 sought to maintain the same position, this canon was read as a reference to events within the empire. André Borias meanwhile pointed to how rare this declaration of faith was in Frankish councils, which for him is a sign of how seriously the Neustro-Burgundian Franks took matters of doctrine at that particular moment. By emphasising their belief in the teachings of two councils, the first canon thus implicitly condemned anything that was not endorsed by previous councils. Wood also highlights a comparable canon from the Council of Orléans in 549, which condemned specifically the Eutychian and Nestorian ‘heresies’, respectively the focus of Chalcedon and Ephesus, making the Orléans canon a fittingly strong statement amidst the Three Chapter controversy. Given the timing of the later council at Chalon-sur-Saône, the argument goes, the gathered bishops similarly had the monothelete ‘heresy’ in mind when they honoured the professions of faith at Nicaea and Chalcedon.

This interpretation, however, remains debatable, as in the seventh century only miaphysite Christians opposed Chalcedon – supporters of monotheletism and its predecessor monenergism, both extensions of neo-Chalcedonian theology developing within the empire since the late sixth century, would have found the formulation expressed by Frankish bishops to be perfectly acceptable. There would no doubt be debates over the details, for example over the Three Chapters, but a general declaration of loyalty to Chalcedon, as it is the case here, is hardly controversial. Elphège Vacandard already noticed this discrepancy in 1902 in his discussion of Duchesne’ analysis, and so argued that the first canon of Chalon-sur-Saône was not a reference to the Lateran Synod, therefore dating the council to October 647–9, before the Franks received the Acts from Rome. Odette Pontal, in

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65 Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux*, 1.372. One can also consider Chrodebert of Tours, *Letter to Boba*, ed. Gundlach, MGH Epistolae 3, 461–4, at 461, which listed the councils non-chronologically (Nicaea, Chalcedon, Ephesus, and Constantinople), perhaps shedding light on which councils were the most important for Chrodebert.  
68 On the importance of Chalcedon to the imperial regime, see Constant II’s attempted imposition of Chalcedonian ‘orthodoxy’ and Leo’s Tome on the miaphysite Armenians in 649, as reported in Pseudo-Sebeos, *History*, 45 (Thomson, 113).  
69 Vacandard, *Vie de Saint Ouen*, 223n1.
her handbook of Merovingian councils, took a slightly different approach, accepting that such a declaration of faith was likely a response to a ‘heresy’ of some sort, but also placed Chalon-sur-Saône before the Lateran Synod had condemned monotheletism.\textsuperscript{70}

Borias too has noted that the canon did not explicitly discuss monotheletism, but countered this by noting the Franks’ lack of knowledge about the specifics of Christological dispute, as well as how it would be inappropriate to mention the Lateran Synod when the conclusions had not been confirmed by the emperor.\textsuperscript{71} The former point is not convincing, as Amandus of Maastricht in Austrasia had received the Latin text of the Lateran Synod from Rome, which outlined precisely what was at stake – the \textit{Ekthesis} and the \textit{Typos}, the two edicts that represented the imperial position – along with a shorter précis focusing on the \textit{Typos} in Martin’s letter.\textsuperscript{72} Eligius, if he had received Martin’s letter and took the request from Rome at all seriously, would have also surely known to be more specific than to speak in the most general terms about doctrine.

Borias’ latter point meanwhile raises further questions, as it would suggest that the Franks were rather non-committal to Pope Martin’s position, since they also had to take into account the interests of Constantinople. Indeed, the same train of thought can be taken further, as this canon may in fact be interpreted in the opposite way: that it is evidence of the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône being entirely in line with imperial ‘orthodoxy’. This is because the \textit{Typos}, effectively the most-up-date imperial pronouncement on monotheletism, had not sought to impose monotheletism at all, but aimed rather to silence the debate by barring any discussion of the number of wills and operations possessed by Christ.\textsuperscript{73} Instead, it urged the audience to follow the Scriptures, the teachings of the ecumenical councils, and that of the approved church fathers.\textsuperscript{74} The position ordered by the \textit{Typos} is therefore entirely compatible,

\textsuperscript{70}Pontal, \textit{Histoire des conciles mérovingiens}, 218n1: ‘La condamnation du monothélisme par le pape Martin (31 octobre 649) suivit de peu ce concile [Chalon-sur-Saône]’.

\textsuperscript{71}Borias, ‘Saint Wandrille’, 60.

\textsuperscript{72}The \textit{Ekthesis} and \textit{Typos} are quoted in full, and in Latin, in \textit{Acts of the Lateran Synod} (Riedinger, 157–63 and 207–11); Martin, \textit{Letter to Amandus} (Riedinger, 423–4).

\textsuperscript{73}\textit{Acts of the Lateran Synod} (Riedinger, 208–9): ‘Διόπερ θεσπίζομεν τοὺς ἡμετέρους ὑπηκόους [...] μὴ ἴδεαις ἐχειν πρὸς ὕλημα ὑπὸ τοῦ παρόντος περὶ ἕνος ἑλήματος ἢ μῖας ἐνεργειῶς, ἢ δύο ἐνεργειῶν καὶ δύο θελημάτων οἰκονόμησε προφέρεπεν ἀμφισβήτησιν, ἐρίν τε καὶ φιλονεικίαν’/Quapropter sancimus nobis subiectis [...] non habere licentiam inuicem a praesenti de una uoluntate aut una operatione, aut duarum uoluntatum aut duarum operationum qualemcumque proferre alterationem aut rixam’.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., (Riedinger, 208–9): ‘ταῖς τε θείαις γραφαῖς καὶ ταῖς τῶν ἁγίων πέντε οἰκουμενικῶν συνόδων
almost suspiciously so, with that mandated by the first canon of the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône, which highlighted both the professions of faith at Nicaea and Chalcedon and the contribution of the church fathers. As the Typos did not impose monotheletism on its audience, it is easy to then imagine a more positive response from the Franks, compared to the much more hostile reception to Justinian’s intervention a century earlier, which had involved revising the decisions made at Chalcedon. Indeed, if the recent suggestion that the ‘orthodox’ dyotheletes were the true ‘innovators’ in terms of theology, given the dyothelete formulation’s ‘invention’ in 640/1 by Maximus the Confessor, is correct, then the imperial case would not have been obviously problematic either; assuming, of course, that the pro-Typos alternative was given a fair hearing by the Franks.

Judging by Pope Martin’s letters in the aftermath of the Lateran Synod, the Typos was the defining issue separating ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’, as he deposed Paul of Thessalonica and refused to recognise the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch, all due to their acceptance of the document. The same is true in accounts of Maximus and his disciples’ later tribulations, as even when on trial they highlighted the Typos as the crucial difference between ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’. The only documentary evidence of the Franks’ knowledge of this affair, Martin’s letter to Amandus, was no different and described the Typos as a document of ‘total infidelity’ and the root cause of the Lateran Synod. Chalcedon, on the other hand, was not mentioned at all. If the Neustro-Burgundian bishops were gathered in support of the papal position, then one would surely expect at least an allusion to the Typos, the crucial document condemned by the gathering in Rome, if only to differentiate themselves from adherents of this ‘heretical’ document. As it is, the often-cited first canon at Chalon-sur-Saône leaves much to be desired, and certainly

παραδόσει καὶ ταῖς ἁπλαίς ἀπεριέργως τῶν ἐγκρίτων ἁγίων πατέρων χρήσειν ἣγουν φωναῖς’/diuinas scripturas et traditiones sanctorum quinque universalium conciliorum et simplicibus sine quaestione sanctorum probabilium patrum usibus siue uocibus’.


Martin, Letters, 11–2 (Migne, 178 and 183–6).

Record of the Trial of Maximus the Confessor, 135‒52, eds. Allen and Neil, Scripta vitam Maximi Confessoris illustrantia, 14–51, at 23, and Dispute at Bizya, 629‒37 (Allen and Neil, 131).

Martin, Letter to Amandus (Riedinger, 423‒4): ‘Paulus, temerator fidei, exeipiscopus Constantinopolitanus [...] imperialem Tyump sacrilego auso totius plenum perfidia et clementissimo principe nostro fieri persuasit, in quo promulgatum est, ut omnes populi Christiani credere debuissent. ideoque nesse habuimus [...] coetum generalem fratum et coepiscoporum nostrorum in hac Romana ciuitate congregare’.
compares very unfavourably with the ringing endorsement of the Lateran Synod at the Anglo-Saxon Council of Hatfield in 679. Indeed, Chalon-sur-Saône also measures poorly compared to the Frankish Council of Orléans in 549, which explicitly condemned the Eutychian and Nestorian ‘heresies’, anathematisations that at least alluded to the doctrinal conflicts within Justinian’s empire.

Yet of all the canons resulting from Chalon-sur-Saône, only the first can be interpreted to have had any relevance to the recent turmoil within the empire, as the remaining record of the council contains no hint of monothetism, dealing primarily instead with issues of jurisdiction and clerical discipline. Perhaps more significantly, nor can any trace of the controversy be found in later Merovingian councils or at the Visigothic Eighth Council of Toledo in 653. The anti-monothelete interpretation of the first canon then must be treated with more caution due to its ambiguity. Perhaps the council was held between 646–9, as Vacandard suggests, or it was convened later with full knowledge of the Lateran Synod, but no explicit mention was made of monotheletism for now-lost reasons. Last but not least, some consideration ought to be given to the ‘heretical’, pro-Typos alternative, that the first canon of the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône implicitly recognised the theological position (or, perhaps more accurately, the lack of position) then promoted by Constantinople.

This ‘heretical’ interpretation, at least, has the added value of providing a plausible explanation for an otherwise puzzling part of Eligius’ Life, as despite the bishop’s desire to go to Rome and support the papacy, Eligius was mysteriously prevented from doing so for an unknown reason. If this council was adhering to the Typos instead of the Lateran Synod, or was at least not explicitly anti-monothelete in nature, then it might suggest that there was some institutional reluctance among the bishops of Neustria-Burgundy against intervening on behalf of the papacy. Or, as Borias himself has suggested, it is possible that King Clovis II (or, more likely,  

80 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 4.15 (Lapidge, 2.240): ‘anathematizamus corde et ore quos anathematizaram, et quos susceperunt suscipimus’.  
81 Canons of the Council of Orléans, 1 (de Clercq, 148–9). Likewise for the fifth canon of the Council of Clichy (626/7), which condemned the Bonosians (ed. de Clercq, Concilia Galliae, 290–6, at 292), if Fischer is correct to link the condemnation to the contemporary debate on Christology: ‘Orthodoxy and Authority’, 155. Cf. Y. Fox, ‘“Sent from the Confines of Hell”: Bonosiacs in Early Medieval Gaul’, Studies in Late Antiquity 2.3 (2018), 316–41, on the Bonosians being only rhetorical tools used to strengthen institutional power.  
83 A point also made by Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 272.  
84 Audoin, Life of Eligius, 1.33 (Krusch, 690): ‘quaedam causa’.
Erchinoald, the mayor of the palace) did not wish for Eligius to proceed further. The fact that Eligius’ friend and ally, the well-connected Audoin of Rouen, also subscribed to the same council is of note as well, as he would later write the first version of Eligius’ Life in the 660s. Given his own involvement at Chalon-sur-Saône and their circle’s general pro-papal sentiments, Audoin would therefore have had an excellent reason to obfuscate the cause for Eligius’ inaction, despite a papal request, in the celebration of his friend’s sanctity. This is a significant departure from recent publications on this subject, but given the meagre evidence available for this council and its context, it is a possibility that must be considered.

That said, there is no reason to doubt Eligius’ personal loyalty to Rome, or indeed that the Neustro-Burgundian Franks had received a letter from Pope Martin. Just as the argument that the Franks were enthusiastically behind the pope’s antimonothelete campaign needs to be qualified, the alternative view, that Gaul was rather distant from imperial affairs, is similarly in need of further revision. Audoin would himself later visit Rome to acquire relics in 675/6 and one of the monasteries he founded, Rebais, may have received privileges from Pope John IV (640–642).

In this instance, Borias’ suggestion that Audoin was the unnamed companion who had planned to go with Eligius to Rome remains a plausible one, since Audoin was

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86 Canons of the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône (de Clercq, 309).
87 Ibid., 308.
88 The sceptical Vacandard still agreed, in Vie de Saint Ouen, 242, that Martin would have found a receptive audience in Gaul.
both in the perfect position to be aware of this endeavour and would have had good
goals for maintaining anonymity later, particularly if Chalon-sur-Saône had resulted in
Frankish inaction.90

A still more convoluted connection can be found between Martin and Eligius,
as according to the tenth-century Life of Hunegund of Homblières, its protagonist, a
seventh-century holy woman, had also travelled as a pilgrim to Rome and even
encountered an unnamed pope.91 The pontiff is then further identified as Martin in
the eleventh-century metrical Life of the same saint.92 This is a far from secure
identification, as Hunegund was allegedly baptised by Eligius as an infant, which
must have taken place after Eligius’ elevation to his see in 641.93 It is then
implausible for Hunegund to have travelled to Rome and met Martin, at the latest by
653 (when Martin was arrested by imperial authorities), as Hunegund would at most
be twelve years old, yet was still accompanied on the pilgrimage by her fiancé. The
situation is made worse by the reference to this pilgrimage taking place under a King
Chlothar, who was the father of a King Dagobert. The two possible candidates are
Chlothar II (584–629) and Chlothar III (657–673), but neither reign overlapped with
Martin’s time as pope.94 As the editor of the metrical metrical Life notes of the text, in terms
of chronology, ‘l’incohérence est totale’.95 Furthermore, the appearance of a pope
(who may or may not be Martin) and Eligius in this late Life can be attributed to later
hagiographers appropriating already famous saints for their work, particularly the
topos of a holy person visiting Rome.96 Nonetheless, the slim possibility that this
narrative does preserve some earlier tradition, however confused it might have

90 Borias. ‘Saint Wandrille’, 60–1.
91 Berner of Homblières, Life of Hunegund of Homblières, 6–12, eds. J. Pinius, G. Cuperus, and J.
92 Metrical Life of Hunegund of Homblières, 91, ed. J. van der Straeten, ‘Sain de Hunegonde
Homblières, Son culte et sa Vie rythmique’, Analecta Bollandiana 72 (1954), 39–74, at 67. On
dating the metrical life, see 60. The identification of Martin is followed in T. Evergates,
The Cartulary and Charters of Notre-Dame of Homblières (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 1.
93 Metrical Life of Hunegund, 25–30 (van der Straeten, 65); Berner of Homblières, Life of Hunegund,
3 (Pinius, Cuperus, and Stiltingus, 227).
94 Metrical Life of Hunegund, 104 (van der Straeten, 68); van der Straeten, ‘Hunegonde
Homblières’, 59–60. The editors of the prose Life left open the possibility of a later pilgrimage,
offering Pope Vitalian (657–672) as a potential option: AASS August 5, 230.
95 van der Straeten, ‘Hunegonde d’Homblières’, 59–60.
96 L. Little, Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France (Ithaca, 1993), 109,
but his approach is perhaps too sceptical, as he is dismissive of otherwise accepted accounts of
Frankish travel to Rome, like that of Amandus. On Hunegund’s hagiographer and his motivations: F.
McNair, ‘A Saint, An Abbot, His Documents and Her Property: Power, Reform and Landholding in
the Monastery of Homblières under Abbot Berner (949–82)’, Journal of Medieval History 41 (2015),
155–68.
become by the tenth and eleventh centuries, must be considered, if only for the sake of completeness. Even disregarding Martin, Hunegund’s pilgrimage to Rome can, after all, be seen as another instance of communication with Rome among Eligius’ circle.

Going further, both Audoin and Eligius’ wider network, which can broadly be characterised as a generation of bishops inspired by Columbanus, were all invariably promoters of Roman customs and teachings, as well as intimates of royalty.97 One of Audoin’s relatives, Agilbert, ought to be highlighted first. Not only was the Frank successively a bishop in Ireland, Wessex, and Paris, he was also a pro-Roman advocate at the Anglo-Saxon Synod of Whitby in 664 and a mentor to the pre-eminent, or at least the loudest, Romanophile in Northumbria, Wilfrid.98 Wilfrid in turn had been a protégée of Aunemundus of Lyons, another bishop who was educated at the court of Dagobert I, the same court Eligius and Audoin had thrived in before their appointment as bishops.99 Aunemundus was also said to have been the godfather to (or had baptised) Chlothar III, meaning that he must have known Eligius at the very least, who was also described as Chlothar’s godfather according to the well-informed Audoin.100 Finally, Aunemundus’ predecessor but one at Lyons, Candericus, had subscribed to the canons of Chalon-sur-Saône, and we might suppose then that Aunemundus would also have had some grasp of the monothelete crisis, if the council had any connection with the imperial ‘heresy’.101


98 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 3.7 (Lapidge, 2.38), provides the bulk of Agilbert’s biographical details. C. I. Hammer, ‘‘Holy Entrepreneur’: Agilbert, a Merovingian Bishop between Ireland, England and Francia’, Peritia 22–3 (2011–2), 53–82. Cf. P. Fouracre, ‘The Origins of the Carolingian Attempt to Regulate the Cult of Saints’, in J. Howard-Johnston and P. Hayward (eds.), The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown (Oxford, 1999), 143–67, at 157–8, and P. Fouracre, ‘Wilfrid and the Continent’, in Higham, Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint, 186–99, at 192–3, who argues that Agilbert was in forced exile and so is unlikely to have been an ‘entrepreneur’ as Hammer suggests. It is perhaps also of interest that Agilbert succeeded Birinus, the only papal reinforcement sent to the Gregorian mission, as the bishop of the West Saxons, for it might be another indicator of Agilbert’s alignment with Rome.


100 Deeds of Aunemundus, 2 (Chifflet, 695), and Audoin, Life of Eligius, 2.32 (Krusch, 717).

Moreover, Audoin and Eligius can both be tied to Amandus of Maastricht, their Austrasian counterpart in anti-monothelete activism, as Amandus’ Life featured Audoin and Eligius as two royal envoys sent to persuade Amandus to baptise a royal prince; this prince, Sigibert, then grew to be the same ruler Martin had sought support from. At an ideological level, Eligius and Amandus’ shared interests also place them together within a circle of mission-minded bishops, albeit with Amandus being a relatively distant member from the others. As discussed in the previous chapter, the focus on conversion had a Mediterranean angle as well, since Esders has convincingly demonstrated the influence of Heraclius’ forced conversions on Amandus’ approach to mission. Last but not least, another indication that Amandus’ associates shared the same fondness for Rome can be found in the Life of Gertrude of Nivelles, written before 670. Nivelles was founded with the persuasion of Amandus, c. 647–50, and its abbess, Gertrude (d. 653), was noted for the acquisition of relics and books from Rome. In itself, this may be dismissed as a hagiographical topos, but in another chapter a miracle occurred when the saint was praying at an altar dedicated to St Sixtus in a certain basilica. This Sixtus probably referred to the martyred Pope Sixtus II (257–258), whose relics had been strategically deployed by Gregory the Great to convert the Anglo-Saxons. If not an exact indication, it is certainly suggestive of how other members of Amandus’ circle also had an ongoing interest in Rome, or at the very least saw the city as a font of sanctity.

The clearest example of a personal affinity with papal anti-monotheletism within this circle, however, is Wandregisel, the founder and first abbot of the Fontanelle monastery. Wandregisel too had served at the court of Dagobert I, but he can be more closely tied to Audoin, as it was with the latter’s help that Fontanelle was founded. Although the abbot’s late seventh-century Life did not record any visit to Rome, his second Life, from the 830s, did note his pilgrimage to the Eternal City. This is indeed a slim base for an exploration of his politics, but as Borias

102 Life of Amandus, 17 (Krusch, 442–3).
104 Fouracre and Gerberding, Late Merovingian France, 303.
106 Life of Gertrude, 4 (Krusch, 458).
107 Fouracre and Gerberding, Late Merovingian France, 323n107.
pointed out in 1987, later relic catalogues noted that Wandregisel had brought home from Rome two boxes of relics, including one that contained the knee of Pope Leo the Great. Moreover, one catalogue specifically states that these relics were acquired from Pope Martin I, which also gels well with the praise heaped on Martin from a ninth-century malediction composed at Fontanelle, allegedly due to the pope confirming the community’s privileges. The editor of the latter text, Lester Little, argues that Martin’s involvement is the result of ‘historical imagination’, especially as ‘the very idea of a seventh-century holy man traveling from northern Gaul to Rome is suspect’. Given the foregoing discussion, it would be fair to say that Frankish travel to Rome was far from impossible and so later communal memory of Wandregisel’s links to Pope Martin should not be dismissed out of hand.

The gift of relics associated with Pope Leo, for example, would be particularly appropriate in the doctrinal milieu of the mid-seventh century, since a set of anti-monothelete frescoes in the Church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome, probably dating to Martin’s lifetime, feature a quotation from Leo (along with three other church fathers appropriated by the anti-monotheletes for their cause), not to mention the Palestinian network’s fondness for Leo noted previously. Combined with the tight chronology involved, Martin having been elevated in 649 and then arrested by June 653, Borias’ core contention that Wandregisel’s visit to Rome was tied to the monothelete controversy in some fashion remains one worth considering. It is interesting then that according to the ninth-century Deeds of the Fathers of Fontanelle, Wandregisel’s nephew, Godo, perhaps following his uncle’s example, also set out for Rome and was granted the requested books by Pope Vitalian (657–672). As I will argue in the next chapter that Pope Vitalian was


111 Ibid., 54–6. The malediction is edited in L. Little, ‘Formules monastiques de malédiction aux IXe et Xe siècles’, Revue Mabillon 58 (1975), 377–99, at 390–9, note in particular the exceptional honorifics (compared to other popes) given to Martin on 390–1; on dating the malediction, 383.

112 Little, Benedictine Maledictions, 108.


115 Deeds of the Fathers of Fontanelle, 1.6, ed. P. Pradié, Chronique des abbés de Fontenelle (Saint-
sympathetic to the anti-monothelete cause (or, at least, more than recent studies have allowed for), it is tempting to associate a familial loyalty to the papacy and its positions with Godo as well.

Doubts concerning these later sources’ account of a personal meeting with the pope meanwhile can be further allayed by a look at more contemporary texts. In his own words, we learn that Theodore Spudaeus, along with his brother Theodosios of Gangra, both monks from Jerusalem, also met with Martin and were asked to spread the records of the Lateran Synod.\textsuperscript{116} The hagiographer of Wilfrid of York, writing c. 713, meanwhile famously described the young pilgrim’s audience with an anonymous pope in the 650s, who can probably be identified as Eugenius, though an earlier meeting with Martin remains possible, given the still unclear chronology of his life.\textsuperscript{117} The eighth-century account of Taio of Zaragoza, the Spanish pilgrim who went to Rome to search for manuscripts, meeting another unnamed pope, also possibly Martin, provides yet another early parallel. Combined with the repeated mentions of Martin in later documents relating to Wandregisel, an encounter between the pope and an admirer of Rome is entirely plausible, though the ever-present possibility of this being a hagiographical topos must also remain under consideration.

Less convincing than a face-to-face meeting with the pope and the resulting spread of the anti-monothelete message in Gaul, however, is Borias’ argument that Wandregisel was directly deputised by the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône, particularly given the discussion above of the ambiguous nature of the council’s first canon.\textsuperscript{118} Although we can be confident in attributing pro-papal sentiments to particular individuals, who were then called upon to promote anti-monotheletism, it would be too far to suggest that Wandregisel’s journey was linked to the council, all the more so since his pilgrimage cannot be dated with the available evidence. At best, we can narrow the window of his visit to 649–53, the years of Martin’s pontificate. Wandregisel would have certainly encountered a city in revolt against


\textsuperscript{117} Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid’, 335. The only dating information available is provided by Bede, \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, 5.19 (Lapidge, 2.412), placing Wilfrid’s arrival in Kent, one year before he set out for Rome, in the time of Honorius of Canterbury (d. 653). This pilgrimage’s context will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.

\textsuperscript{118} Borias, ‘Saint Wandrille’, 61.
Constantinople, a cause that the pilgrim presumably approved of, but it would be too speculative to link it to an institutional response from Neustria-Burgundy.

Regardless of Wandregisel’s precise role, this wider exploration of Eligius and Amandus’ circle has nonetheless demonstrated that they were loyal to Rome’s teachings, making it likelier still that Martin had indeed sent a letter to Eligius, as his Life claims. We can then finally consider another curious episode from the Life of Eligius. Immediately after the Life’s digression on monotheletism, the narrative moves to the arrival of a foreign ‘heretic’ in Autun from ‘across the sea’, who was then naturally defeated by a bishop named Falvius and a council at Orléans instigated by Eligius and Audoin.119 Doubts concerning the historicity of this anecdote can be further allayed by the presence of another Falvius who allegedly inspired St Sigiramn (d. c. 657) to journey to Rome, this time in a ninth-century Life, which suggests that Falvius was a historical figure active at this time and who had indeed admired Rome as the Life of Eligius implies.120 The Carolingian Second Life of Audoin, interestingly, also noted that the ‘heretic’ was from ‘Asia’ – an ambiguous word, but surely still a reference to the empire and so another possible clue to the nature of the ‘heresy’.121 Of course, the Carolingian Life is of dubious merit, as it remains unclear whether this later composition preserved genuine earlier traditions or that the author had creatively elaborated on events they encountered in the Life of Eligius. In any case, given this story’s position in the Life of Eligius, one is tempted to suggest that this ‘heretic’ was someone preaching monotheletism, a possibility also taken up by Ian Wood and Andreas Fischer, particularly given Bayer’s persuasive argument that this chapter is a thematically relevant section linked to the previous digression.122 More, however, can be made of the Council of Orléans, now generally dated to c. 639–41.123

This incident, for instance, can be interpreted as evidence that shockwaves of

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119 Audoin, Life of Eligius, 1.35 (Krusch, 691–2); cf. Krusch, MGH SRM 4, 648–9, and Westeel, ‘Quelques remarques’, 40, both of whom suggest that this chapter is an eighth-century interpolation.
121 Second Life of Audoin, 2.12 (Pinius and Cuperus, 813).
122 I. Wood, The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751 (Harlow, 1994), 246, and Fischer, ‘Orthodoxy and Authority’, 155; Bayer, ‘Vita Eligii’, 478. Carolingian authors may have known the monothelete ‘heresy’ quite well, for Emperor Philippicus’ revival of monotheletism was well-recorded by the Liber Pontificalis and Bede.
the monothelete crisis had already reached Gaul before the Lateran Synod. This is entirely plausible, since, as seen in the previous chapter, monotheletism and its predecessor monenergism had been an ongoing issue within the empire since 628. If Eligius already had pre-existing knowledge of these doctrinal controversies, then there is yet another parallel to Amandus’ experiences, for Martin’s letter to the bishop of Maastricht implied that Amandus already had some awareness of the imperial ‘heresy’, with the pope noting that Amandus must have heard of Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople’s error from roughly fifteen years before the Lateran Synod – a reference surely to Sergius’ doctrinal manoeuvrings around 633.124

Amandus may have acquired this knowledge through his visits to Rome, but we must also consider the possibility that information from the empire, or Rome more specifically, also filtered into Gaul independently of Amandus’ pilgrimages. As the papacy did not fully turn against eastern ‘innovations’ until 640/1, it is possible that news of Sergius’ ‘heresy’ only reached Amandus after this point, as when Amandus was in Rome as a pilgrim in the 630s the papacy was rather more accommodating towards Constantinople, most clearly under Honorius. Unfortunately, we know little about Frankish-Roman contacts following the alliance forged between Heraclius and Dagobert, apart from the vague report of ‘Roman, Italian, or Gothic legates’ who allegedly met Eligius from his time at court (i.e. before 641), making Martin’s allusion to Amandus’ experiences impossible to corroborate – unless we consider the ‘heretic’ in Autun we encounter in the Life of Eligius.125

If this particular chapter does indeed preserve a genuine incident from the saint’s early career, then Eligius must have surely been acquainted with outlines of the monothelete controversy, at the very least, thanks to his hands-on experience with containing the ‘heresy’, via a church council no less. The same incident also provides a plausible conduit for Amandus to acquire his knowledge of Sergius’ ‘errors’, given the connections between the two bishops highlighted already. It is then easy to see why Amandus and Eligius were contacted in 649, as both had already proven their dedication to Rome and would have had a rough sense of the

124 Martin, Letter to Amandus (Riedinger, 423): ‘credimus etenim ad uos peruenisse, quomodo in conturbatione rectae fidei et catholicae ecclesiae conculcatione ante hos plus minus quindecim annos a Sergio falso episcopo Constantinopolitano [...]’. On the twists and turns of imperial doctrine in the early 630s: Booth, Crisis of Empire, 200–24.
125 Audoin, Life of Eligius, 1.10 (Krusch, 676).
doctrinal issues involved.

More intriguingly, the Autun incident also bolsters the more ‘heretical’ case, outlined above, that Chalon-sur-Saône may instead have been a pro-Typos council, for it suggests that monotheletes from within the empire were actively seeking the support of non-imperials. To bring this full circle, we can also bring in the orders received by Exarch Olympius in 649, which, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, may have aimed to gather the support of foreigners in Rome for the Typos. As noted previously, the imperial church’s links with East Syrian Christians outside of the empire can be detected from the late sixth century, while the Council in Trullo in 692 explicitly had several canons aimed at the western churches, so a campaign involving the Franks is not necessarily out of character.¹²⁶

There is, naturally, no explicit hint in imperial sources that the monotheletes ever extended their reach abroad, but it must be remembered that although the surviving monothelete corpus is minuscule and only survives in Syriac or in quotations from anti-monothelete documents, the same cannot have been the case in the mid-seventh century, before the condemnation of the imperial doctrine as ‘heresy’ and the resulting destruction of ‘heretical’ literature.¹²⁷ As always, the silence in the surviving sources cannot be interpreted as representative of contemporary voices, but instead a narrow snapshot, one that is largely anti-monothelete in opinion, and we must be open to the possibility of there being more extensive contact between the empire and its neighbours.

This is an important nuance to add to the foregoing discussion of the Visigoths and Franks’ alignment with Rome. Although all the available evidence paints Eligius as a bishop loyal to Rome and a plausible candidate to support Martin’s campaign, his efforts, no matter how driven he was, had apparently failed, as Eligius was an attendee at the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône and subscribed to its decrees, including the ambiguous (or, just possibly, ‘heretical’) first canon. Even worse, if the Council is dated instead to 647–9 and so before Martin’s letter, then we have no evidence that Eligius managed to do anything of consequence to support Rome.

Taking a broader perspective, it is remarkable how other suggested instances

¹²⁶ Sarris, Empires of Faith, 297.
of western involvement with the papacy all fizzled out as well. Amandus in Austrasia resigned his see c. 650, despite a request by Pope Martin to not resign and instead convene a council with the help of King Sigibert. As we have no record of any Austrasian council being convened to support Martin, it is probable that Amandus had either failed to gather wider support or had abandoned the papal commission altogether, though it is impossible to reach a firm conclusion. In Spain, Eugenius II of Toledo’s treatise on the Trinity had meanwhile conveniently been stopped by a storm, preventing as well his audience in ‘Libya [western North Africa] and the East’ from reading his intervention. More speculatively, given dyotheletism’s eventual triumph as Christian ‘orthodoxy’, any tangible Frankish and Visigothic efforts to support it would surely have been lionised in later sources, instead of resulting in the palpable silence we see today. All in all, although the evidence is still scanty, there is room to argue that at an institutional level there were no successful interventions by either the Franks or the Visigoths into the monothelete controversy, despite the enthusiasm of certain Frankish bishops and the ambitions of King Chindasuinth.

Why then did all these efforts fail, or at least did not leave behind concrete traces in the sources? Older scholarship would suggest that the western kingdoms were broadly uninterested or lacked the required knowledge to be fully involved in a debate about Christology. More recent studies, and the evidence discussed here, have shaken this consensus, as there is plentiful evidence to suggest that the East and West were far from disconnected. Likewise, the argument that western churchmen were unable to grasp eastern theology surely has no place in modern scholarship, relying as it were on an ahistorical understanding of a ‘Byzantine’ East mired in doctrinal minutiae compared to a more ‘sensible’ West. The limited evidence for a successful mobilisation of western Churches to support the papacy, in the face of plentiful indications that many remained enthusiastic for Rome, is nonetheless striking and deserves further exploration. The final part of this chapter will then attempt to solve this conundrum. The answer, I argue, lies, at least partially, in picking through the Roman Empire’s political history, particularly the remarkable

128 Life of Amandus, 18 (Krusch, 442–4); Price, Acts of the Lateran Synod, 392, speculates that the relics Amandus wanted to acquire from Rome were being gathered to support his existing plans for future missionary work.
129 A more nuanced interpretation of Roman/‘Byzantine’ religion is helpfully laid out in Cameron, Byzantine Matters, 87–111.
efforts of Constans II in renewing his empire.
3.3 Imperial Triumph

The 650s is perhaps not an obvious time to associate with a triumphant Roman Empire, due to it falling at the heart of the seventh-century ‘crisis of empire’, both with regards to the Arab conquests and the monothelete controversy. Recent studies have, however, rehabilitated both the reputation of this period and Constans II more specifically. This revision to the empire’s political and military history may on the surface have little bearing to the religious struggles outlined already, but as the monothelete controversy was also a political conflict, the successes and failures of the anti-monotheletes ought to be considered from this angle as well. Indeed, I argue here that by revisiting the political and diplomatic history of the empire in the mid-seventh century, new light can be shed on why the western interventions were minimal, for as before, events both inside and outside of the empire remained intertwined.

Firstly, we must remember that Martin’s actions after the Lateran Synod cannot be examined separately from the revolt against Constantinople that followed. Even as western friends of the papacy were receiving letters from Pope Martin, the new exarch of Italy, Olympius, entered the scene. It is unknown when exactly Olympius reached Rome, though the Liber Pontificalis noted that when he was in the city ‘all the bishops, priests, and clergy of Italy’ were united with the papacy, which may be an indication that his visit coincided with the Lateran Synod, which drew its participants primarily from Italy. As Jankowiak points out, the exarch’s arrival during the council would have been very disruptive, explaining perhaps the two long gaps between synodal sessions. In any case, shortly after his arrival Olympius attempted to fulfil his orders, even extending to orchestrating an assassination of the pope in public. Martin, naturally, survived thanks to divine intervention.

Perhaps convinced by Martin’s holiness, or by more pragmatic calculations, the exarch then reconciled with the pope and, if the polemical account of Pope

130 Best summarised in Sarris, Empires of Faith, 279–93, particularly at 293: ‘Yet even the prejudices and distortions of Theophanes cannot entirely obliterate the traces of what was clearly a reign of breathtaking creativity as well as extraordinary courage and imagination’.
131 Liber Pontificalis, 76.5 (Duchesne, 1.337): ‘Qui praedictus Olympius veniens in civitate Romana invenit sanctum Romanam ecclesiam quoadunatum cum omnes episcopos Italie seu sacerdotes vel clerum’.
132 Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 244.
133 Liber Pontificalis, 76.6–7 (Duchesne, 1.337–8).
Martin’s trial is to be believed, declared himself emperor. There remains a debate on the veracity of this interpretation, but as Booth astutely notes, this revolt would have been seen by Constantinople as the action of a usurper, regardless of its precise aims. Indeed, the very act of holding the synod was problematic even without the following revolt, for claims of the Lateran Synod’s ecumenical status were likewise a ‘blatant usurpation of imperial prerogative’. Martin’s Frankish correspondents (and perhaps a Visigothic visitor) most likely approved of the synod, but it would have been much more difficult to persuade them to then commit to a papacy backing a full-blown rebellion. Given the role of Frankish kings and their mayors of the palace in convening councils, the challenge of making an explicitly anti-monothelete statement must have been greater still, for secular authorities had to be convinced of Martin and Olympius’ righteousness as well.

Little else can be said for certain for Olympius’ revolt. Neither the beginning nor the end of his usurpation, or at least estrangement from Constantinople, can be precisely dated, with only the arrival of the next exarch, Theodore Calliopas, in Rome on 13 June 653 providing a final terminus ante quem for the joint Olympius-papal regime. The scholarly consensus has settled on 650/1 as the year of the usurpation, then 651/2 for Olympius’ death, but it is unlikely that we can be any more specific. The events attributed to this period are of little help. A proposed truce with the Lombards to secure Olympius’ northern flank, for instance, is not supported by any textual evidence. An association between frescoes featuring

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135 Compare the different interpretations in Kaegi, Byzantine Military Unrest, 163, and Haldon, The Empire That Would Not Die, 39. Booth, Crisis of Empire, 300–1.

136 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 293, Ekonomou, Byzantine Rome, 118, Record of the Trial, 457–60 (Allen and Neil, 47), and Dispute at Bizya, 234–5 (Allen and Neil, 95).

137 Pontal, Histoire des conciles mérovingiens, 217; G. Halfond, The Archaeology of Frankish Church Councils, AD 511–768 (Leiden, 2010), 216, also suggests that Frankish kings were not interested in intervening in matters of doctrine until the eighth century.

138 Theodore Spudaeus, Narrations, 6 (Neil, 174).


140 L. Hartmann, Geschichte Italiens im Mittelalter, 2 vols. (Gotha, 1897–1900), 2.244 and 275n5,
particular passages from the Church Fathers at Santa Maria Antiqua and the revolt has also proven to be troublesome. On the one hand, it has been read as a defiantly anti-monothelete statement, perhaps even as a public declaration of the regime’s ideological foundation. The same frescoes, however, have also been recently interpreted as later celebrations of earlier events, with both 663 and after 681 being offered as plausible datings.

Olympius’ final action, a failed campaign against Sicily, is likewise problematic. The only source available, the Liber Pontificalis, noted that ‘he [Olympius] proceeded to Sicily against the Saracen people who were living there’, followed by the army’s defeat and the rebel exarch’s death. This line has drawn much attention, as the presence of such an early Arab attack on Sicily is often deemed to be ahistorical fiction, leading some to suggest that Olympius instead fought forces still loyal to Constantinople. Given the fragmentary record available, we should perhaps be more open to the possibility of an early Arab incursion in the western Mediterranean, particularly given their evident naval capability, as demonstrated in the raid on Cyprus in 649 and the recent suggestion of an ingenious Arab naval assault on Egypt in 640. Given later accusations that Martin had sent both money and a ‘tome’ to the Arabs, it seems logical to connect the two events, since these ‘treasonous’ activities could also be interpreted as part of Martin’s attempt to contain the military fallout of the Olympius’ failed Sicilian campaign.

This is an entirely reasonable course of action for patriarchs of this period, for as

following by Stratos, Byzantium in the Seventh Century, 3.108. The cited evidence, Maurus of Ravenna’s claim that he could not attend the Lateran Synod because of the incursions of ‘gentiles’, referenced events before October 649 and so cannot be used to explain Olympius’ later actions. A truce would be a logical move, but the fact remains that there is no textual evidence for Olympius’ Lombard policy.


142 Price, Acts of the Lateran Synod, 81n55 (but cf. Cubitt’s comments on the same page); Maskarinec, City of Saints, 64.

143 Liber Pontificalis, 76.7 (Duchesne, 1.338): ‘profectus est Siciliam adversus gentem Saracenorum qui ibidem inhabitabant’.


146 Theodore Spudaeus, Narrations, 3 (Neil, 170).
noted in chapter one, Gregory the Great, Gregory of Antioch, and Cyrus of Alexandria had all resorted to the same during military crises. Regardless of which interpretation we follow, however, the results were the same, for Olympius was defeated and died of an unknown disease shortly afterwards.¹⁴⁷

Despite this blurry picture of the rebellion, we can nonetheless state that the death of Olympius at some point in 651/2 severely degraded the legitimacy and military capability of the anti-monothelete regime. This decline is amply visible in June 653, when the new exarch arrived in Rome to arrest Martin. Unlike Olympius’ botched attempt, Theodore and his men were able to arrest the pope without any resistance.¹⁴⁸ The fact that Theodore brought with him the army from Ravenna further suggests that northern imperial Italy had already been pacified over the previous months, or that the rebellion never had much support in the north.¹⁴⁹

Martin, the only remaining ringleader of the revolt, could evidently do little to resist without a military strongman in tow, particularly as the pope claimed that he had been seriously ill since October 652.¹⁵⁰

While the future prospects of the anti-monotheletes may have looked promising in 650, within a year or two the situation became very different, despite the difficulty in reconstructing the exact chronology of Olympius’ revolt. Even if we take the most optimistic view of pro-papal mobilisation outside of the empire, that Martin’s ecclesiastical initiatives bore fruit in October 650 with the anti-monothelete Council of Chalon-sur-Saône (one year after the Lateran Synod in October 649), the commensurate mobilisation of the needed political support to explicitly condemn Constantinople, as Martin had requested, would have surely become increasingly difficult as time went on. Not only was the Olympius-papal regime opposed to the legitimate emperor, it was a failing one.

This decline of the rebellion’s fortunes was matched by the revival of

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¹⁴⁷I cannot accept the suggestion in Stratos, Byzantium in the Seventh Century, 3.110, that Olympius died of the plague. He cites the fourteenth-century Chronicle of Andrea Dandolo and Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards, 5.31 (Bethmann and Waitz, 154), an account taken from Liber Pontificalis, 80.3 (Duchesne, 1.348) for the plague during the pontificate of Donus (676–8). There is no reason therefore to suggest that Olympius died of the plague, when the evidence used is of an outbreak twenty-five years later. There was a plague in the mid-660s in Rome, as recorded in Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 4.1 (Lapidge, 2.164), but it was likewise too late to have affected Olympius.

¹⁴⁸Theodore Spuadues, Narrations, 7 (Neil, 176–8); note also the imperial carrot-and-stick strategy suggested in Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 289–93.

¹⁴⁹Theodore Spuadues, Narrations, 5 (Neil, 174); see also Maurus of Ravenna’s absence during the Lateran Synod (Riedinger, 22–4).

¹⁵⁰Theodore Spuadues, Narrations, 6 (Neil, 174).
Constans’, for 650–3 was a time when the emperor stabilised the ship of state. The preceding decade had certainly been dire, for the fall of the Levant in the 630s, Egypt in 641, and continuous warfare since then had severely damaged the empire. As a result of imperial weakness, a truce was negotiated between the Romans and the Arabs, probably in late 650, one that lasted until the summer of 653. Accounts of the events leading up to the truce, however, have never taken into account the unrest in the imperial West. The Armenian historian Pseudo-Sebeos, the earliest source for this brief respite, only noted that despite a recent naval victory over the Arabs, ‘Constans was terrified, and he reckoned it better to give tribute and make peace through ambassadors’. There are records of other attacks, most notably into Isauria and Cyprus at the same time, but events in Italy were surely no less significant in the court’s calculations. After all, Constans’ actions during the truce, which included a purge of disloyal generals in Constantinople (c. 651), the reassertion of authority in the Caucasus (653), and the dispatch of Theodore Calliopas, an experienced ex-exarch, to restore the status quo in Italy (653), are surely indicators of which areas needed the emperor’s attention before and during the truce.

In all three cases, the hand of Constantinople was strengthened in the space provided by the truce. The purge at court is now interpreted as Constans reasserting his authority as he matured into a capable emperor, while the Caucasian initiative was part of a growing campaign to forge a Christian bulwark there against the caliphate. Italy was similarly crucial, for it was an increasingly important province in the empire, the security of which came under threat thanks to Martin and Maximus’ machinations. Based on the archaeological evidence, Vivien Prigent argues that Sicily served as the source of grain for the imperial capital after the loss of Egypt in 641 and sustained an active monetary economy, making it essential for

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152 Pseudo-Sebeos, History, 45 (Thomson, 112).

153 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 301.

154 Kaegi, Byzantine Military Unrest, 161, and Howard-Johnston, Historical Commentary, 264; Theodore Spudaeus, Narrationes 17 (Neil, 196) further implies that this purge was in response to a coup. Sarris, Empires of Faith, 284.
Constantinople to retain control of the island.\textsuperscript{155} The same conclusion, of growing economic importance and imperial spending in the province, was reached by Cecile Morrisson for North Africa.\textsuperscript{156} More generally, imperial islands, whether Sardinia, Sicily, or Cyprus, all became more economically sophisticated in this period, at least compared to the mainland.\textsuperscript{157} Finally, John Haldon has estimated that the western provinces together contributed c. 800,000 nomismata to the imperial fisc, which was perhaps equivalent to 40% of the revenue from Egypt. As Egypt was the richest region by far in the empire, contributing up to 40% of the total revenue from the eastern provinces, but also lost to the Arabs alongside Palestine and Syria, the significant resources available in the West cannot have been neglected by Constantinople during its seventh-century crisis.\textsuperscript{158}

The later, and highly polemical, accusation against Pope Martin, that he collaborated with Olympius and so ‘overturned the whole Roman world’, captured a sense of how contemporaries interpreted this treason.\textsuperscript{159} Though often interpreted as a sign of the paranoia and the tendentious shifting of responsibilities to traitors from policy errors made in Constantinople, these damaging accusations did have a basis in reality, as any political break between East and West was harmful to the overall health of the empire.\textsuperscript{160}


\textsuperscript{158} Haldon, The Empire That Would Not Die, 27 and 305n3; L. Bondioli, ‘Justinian’s Legacy. The Western Byzantine Landscape of Power (VI–VII Century)’, in M. Lau, C. Franchi, and M. Di Rodi (eds.), Landscapes of Power: Selected Papers from the XX Oxford University Byzantine Society International Graduate Conference (Bern, 2014), 93–110, at 103, estimates that Africa and Sardinia’s revenue alone to be one third that of Egypt.

\textsuperscript{159} Theodore Spudaeus, Narrations, 14 (Neil, 188): ‘subuertentem uniusersam terram Romanorum’.

\textsuperscript{160} Cf. D. Sahas, ‘The Demonizing Force of the Arab Conquests: The Case of Maximus (ca. 580–662)
therefore tangible threats to a crucial lifeline for the empire – a crisis that (partially) justified the high price of a truce with the caliphate.

The three-year truce with the Arabs had then given Constans the space needed to plug the gaps. Indeed, given the easy success of Calliopas in Italy and the 100,000 men the emperor allegedly led into the Caucasus, it is tempting to suggest that imperial forces had been strengthened greatly in the intervening three years, which contrasts markedly with Martin’s declining fortunes in Rome. More speculatively, a strong imperial interest in Italy might likewise have checked the ambitions of post-Roman kings and their bishops, for the consequences of the pope destabilising Italy were perhaps all too predictable.

The empire’s recovery was of course meaningless for western friends of the papacy if they did not know about it. It is unfortunate that there are no sources for imperial diplomacy in the early 650s, but by considering the seventh century as a whole, there are several indications that the troublesome events discussed here did not affect the overall relationship between the Franks and the empire. Traditional accounts note that there were no recorded embassies after Emperor Heraclius’s mission to Dagobert I (c. 634) until 756. But aside from the continuation of trade of exotic goods from the East, which only declined dramatically at the end of the seventh century, there are still other tell-tale signs of diplomatic exchanges. The unclear reference in the Life of Eligius of ‘Roman’ and ‘Italian’ envoys visiting Eligius before 641 is not a particularly helpful hint, but more substantively, an influx of imperial gold from Carthage, Italy, or Constantinople into Gaul, sometime before 640, has been identified by analysing the percentage of platinum in Merovingian coins from the 640s.
Similarly, although Fredegar’s *Chronicle* ended c. 642, the anonymous author, writing in Burgundy c. 660, knew rather more and included an intriguing comment on the reign of Constans II. Having first described the empire’s disastrous state at the beginning of his reign as well as the tribute paid to the Arabs, the chronicler then went on to say that Constans gradually restored his power and so refused to pay tribute — precisely the same recovery the empire made during the three-year truce with the Arabs discussed here.\(^\text{165}\) This positive view of the empire’s health is not only representative of how one Frankish chronicler perceived Constans, but it has also been understood in recent analyses to be indications of further contact between Neustria-Burgundy and Constantinople.\(^\text{166}\) More obliquely, we can also consider two undated journeys into Gaul of the abbot Hadrian before 668, which can likewise be interpreted to be imperial embassies on behalf of Constans.\(^\text{167}\) These missions, whether those alluded to by Fredegar or Bede, may even have had significant military consequences, for Paul the Deacon noted that a Frankish army attacked northern Italy in 660–3, a campaign that has been be attributed by some scholars to a combined Roman-Frankish alliance.\(^\text{168}\)

As a result, even if the situation in the early 650s remains unknowable, there are some hints that by the late 650s there was a rapprochement between the empire and the Neustro-Burgundian Franks. The Visigothic evidence provides an imprecise parallel for this conclusion, as beyond the still unclear record of Chindasuinth’s

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\(^\text{166}\) Fischer, ‘Rewriting History’, 69–72. See also the intriguing suggestion in W. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 1992), 213n26, that Fredegar had access to an eastern source with knowledge of the Arab general Khalid b. al-Walid. Coin finds may also indicate that some North Africans fled to Gaul: McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, 356. Greek sources provide an inexact mirror, for in two seventh-century texts Gaul was seen as a plausible destination for travellers from the empire: *Miracles of St Artemios*, 27 (Crisafulli and Nesbitt, 152), and *Teaching of Jacob the Recently Baptised*, 5.20, eds. Dagron and Déroche, ‘Juifs et Chrétiens dans l’Orient’, 217.


\(^\text{168}\) Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, 5.5 (Bethmann and Waitz, 146); Fischer, ‘Rewriting History’, 72, and Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 130. Note also the interconnectedness of Frankish, Lombard, and imperial politics at the time, as discussed in Esders, ‘Konstans II, die Sarazenen und die Reiche des Westens’, 211–5.
(anti-imperial?) missions to North Africa, the next record of any involvement with the empire comes from the reign of Wamba (672–680), who ‘sent a letter to the Roman emperor [Constantine IV]’, if a notice in the late Chronicle of Pseudo-Isidore has any historical basis.\textsuperscript{169}

Taken together, the available evidence suggests that western hostility to the empire was muted from c. 660 onwards, and, in the Franks’ case, from before 640 as well. This was then the backdrop for Pope Martin’s missives to Amandus and Eligius, as the requests for aid from Rome arrived c. 650, in between the two periods of friendly contact. While the silence from the sources prevents any firm conclusions, it is tempting to attribute the two bishops’ relative inaction, at least partly, to the Frankish kingdoms’ ongoing dealings with the empire. While the bishops themselves were undoubtedly pro-papal partisans eager to support Martin’s project, other sections of the Merovingian aristocracy may have been more reluctant to openly break with an empire that was not only friendly with the Franks, but also, judging by other events of the early 650s, recovering its strength. A similar logic applies to Chindasuinth’s situation, whose draconian legislation and his son’s concessions to nobles upon his accession in 653 suggest that he was not in the most stable situation internally.\textsuperscript{170} In this climate, an overly ambitious intervention into imperial affairs c. 650 and afterwards may well had to have been put on the backburner.

In short, the interpretation presented in this chapter synthesises two trends in the existing scholarship, that the West was either uninterested in the monothelete controversy or that a noticeable response was indeed mobilised there in support of Rome. These two viewpoints need not be contradictory, and indeed complement each other in describing the complex reality of the mid-seventh century. As pointed out previously for the controversy within the empire, there were monotheletes in Italy and North Africa, and likewise resistance from anti-monotheletes in the eastern provinces. There is no reason why the same, less than entirely ‘orthodox’ response did not also appear in the post-Roman West. While bishops like Amandus and Eligius were in all likelihood entirely genuine in their pro-papal stance, they also had to contend with the reality that enthusiasm was difficult to muster among their fellow


\textsuperscript{170} Collins, Visigothic Spain, 84–6.
 bishops and their rulers to explicitly condemn the imperial church.

This added complexity to understanding the monothelete controversy only brings home, once again, how a fresh look at both the Latin and Greek evidence can revise the scholarly consensus on cross-cultural links in late antiquity. By drawing together a wide range of evidence for both the political and religious history of this period, the problems caused by the poor (or indeed non-existent) sources can be partly rectified by appealing to texts composed elsewhere. The same methodology will be applied to the second half of the seventh century in the concluding chapter, primarily in charting the survival of the anti-monothelete network despite the imperial triumph narrated here. In the process, the Anglo-Saxons will be brought fully into the narrative. Just as networks of friendship and pro-papal ideals bound together individuals between the eastern Mediterranean and Gaul, the same connections can be extended to the ‘edge of the world’ during the age of Bede.
4. Maximus, Wilfrid, and the End of Late Antiquity

As shown in the previous chapter, the 650s was a decade of contradictions. Its beginnings were perhaps the darkest years of Constans II’s reign, but by 653 glimmers of a restored empire can be found in the sources, a restoration that continued into the following decade. In the process, the leaders of the anti-monotheletes were placed on trial and sentenced to exile, and there would never again be another revolt that paralleled the rebellions of Exarchs Gregory and Olympius. The political history of the monothelete controversy is then said to have entered a different phase, with a relatively quiescent Rome (at least over theological issues) co-operating with Constantinople all the way until the late 670s, when Emperor Constantine IV finally deemed the monothelete position to be unviable.\(^1\) Given the sweeping, yet convincing, changes to the history of this enigmatic period offered in recent scholarship, most prominently the redating of the First Arab Siege of Constantinople, this narrative needs to be revised. As the Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity project at the University of Sheffield has also recently demonstrated, exile was often not the end of the story for the condemned, for in the process of this forced movement new networks could be forged, connections that should also be taken into account when narrating the end of late antiquity.\(^2\)

At its heart, this chapter is a survey of events up to 668, beginning first with the trials and tribulations of Martin and Maximus in Constantinople, to tease out what connections they still possessed despite their arrest. As before, the western evidence will then be brought to the forefront. From distant England, Wilfrid of York, a frequent exile himself, began his tumultuous career in the same period, and throughout this chapter the case will be made that imperial history is of some importance to scholars of this early Anglo-Saxon saint. By surveying the eastern events in some detail, hitherto unnoticed connections will be emphasised, tying together the scattered trends identified in previous chapters. Indeed, I argue here that the eastern network’s experiences and an understanding of internal imperial politics provide yet another angle for the analysis of Wilfrid’s actions in England.

Finally, this far-ranging survey of the world of Wilfrid would not be

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complete without discussing his on-again, off-again ally and opponent, Theodore of Tarsus, who was appointed as the new metropolitan of Canterbury in 667/8. As a known anti-monothelete and a noted intellectual, Theodore’s importance has long been recognised, in particular thanks to the magisterial interpretation of his career offered by Michael Lapidge in 1994.³ In light of recent research, Theodore’s early career and his rise to prominence can nonetheless be revisited in order to bring together advances by both Byzantinists and Anglo-Saxonists. While accounts of political and religious fragmentation of this period provide a seemingly straightforward answer to the parting of ways between East and West, I argue here, and indeed throughout this thesis, that a different narrative of connectivity and exchange can still be reconstructed from the same sources, even in the war-torn years of the late 660s.

³ Bischoff and Lapidge, Biblical Commentaries, 1–189.
4.1 Saints on Trial

The apparent collapse of the anti-monothelete resistance is perhaps not the most obvious place to begin a study of Wilfrid of York’s wider context, but given Rome’s importance in his later life, it is vital to first set out exactly what is known for the papacy in the obscure 650s. Ignominiously, Pope Martin was exiled to Crimea in 654, in the process experiencing much privation. Maximus the Confessor, on the other hand, was not placed on trial until 655, although he was, in all probability, arrested along with Martin at the same time. As Booth suggests, the empire’s surprising victory against the Arab offensive towards Constantinople in 654 provides a plausible context for Maximus’ trial, as it gave imperial authorities the needed confidence to denounce their most vocal opponent.

The results of this trial were, of course, one-sided and driven by the political needs of a show-trial. In these circumstances, it is understandable that existing loyalties fractured. According to an anonymous account of Maximus’ tribulations, the papacy was apparently willing to return to communion with Constantinople in 655, and defections from Maximus’ own monastic circle are also probable. We should not, however, see this as the dispiriting end of over a decade of doctrinal resistance. The fact that the Record of the Trial was written at all speaks certainly of some enduring faith in the survival of the anti-monothelete movement. Theodore Spudaeus, the Palestinian who had met Martin in Rome, also encountered the pope in Constantinople and was allegedly commanded to care for the exiles by Martin, which Theodore indeed did based on the account found in his Commemoration of his

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5 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 306, and Brandes, “Juristische” Krisenbewältigung’, 179n236. According to Theodore Spudaeus, Commemoration, 269–70 (Allen and Neil, 215), the sufferings of Maximus and his disciples began in the eleventh indiction, which refers to September 652 to August 653 – the tight chronological fit with Pope Martin’s arrest in June 653 then suggests that Maximus was arrested at the same time or shortly afterwards. The account in George of Resh’aima, Life of Maximus, 25 (Brock, 319), that Maximus travelled to Constantinople of his own volition is a less convincing alternative, particularly as the narrative is chronologically incoherent, since Maximus’ arrival was placed at the time of the First Fitna in the Arab Caliphate (656–661) and before a monothelete council, which can placed in 662, as discussed in Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 351–3.
6 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 306.
anti-monothelete heroes.9

Nor was the pope without agency, for in a scholion commenting on the Dispute at Bizya, a record of Maximus’ experiences in exile written c. 656/7, it is noted that Martin, while he was in Crimea and before his death in September 655, had anathematised a certain John the consiliarius in a letter sent to Maximus.10 As other scholia in the same text appear to be written by a knowledgeable contemporary, elsewhere also commenting on the position of a general and the Egyptian origins of a monothelete monk, this note may too be reflective of the historical reality.11 We can then suppose that Maximus, while he was interned in Constantinople in 653–5, was still in contact within the exiled Martin and that both men kept abreast of recent developments, if only to determine who should be anathematised.12

Martin’s sufferings in exile were likewise remembered widely, for an anonymous ‘most Christian person’ compiled an account of Martin’s trial and exile and allegedly sent it to ‘orthodox fathers who are in the West, or in Rome and Africa’, all in order to request material aid for the beleaguered pope.13 It is impossible to determine who the western audience consisted of, but this appeal does corroborate with other clues to a still lingering fondness for the anti-monotheletes. Admittedly, there is no indication of any persistent dyothelete sympathies in North Africa, but much of this must be due to the lack of surviving sources, as the pool of texts from this important province dry up after 649.

In Rome, on the other hand, there are tangible signs of tension. Pope Eugenius’ initial appointment was obviously controversial, as his predecessor Martin was still alive and did not wish for a new pope to be chosen.14 Martin himself bitterly complained that a visitor from Italy did not bring any supplies to allay his suffering

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10 Dispute at Bizya, scholion 807 (Allen and Neil, 147).
12 On the possibilities of communication in exile, see also the two letters written by Martin during his exile preserved in Theodore Spudaeus, Narrations, 29–31 (Neil, 222–30).
13 This commemoration is preserved in Theodore Spudaeus, Narrations, 10–27 (Neil, 182–218). On this anonymous text’s agenda: Narrations, 10 (Neil, 182): ‘per epistolam cuiusdam Christianissimi directam his qui sunt in Occidente seu Romae et Africa orthodoxis patribus’, and Neil, Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs, 96–9. Jankowiak Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 306, attributes this source to Theodore and suggests that this text was written in autumn 654 and that it may have reached Rome at the beginning of 655.
14 Theodore Spudaeus, Narrations, 7 (Neil, 176–8).
in exile, which may suggest that the powers in control of Rome had thoroughly disowned the pope by spring 654. Yet we also learn from the Liber Pontificalis that a crowd had forced Pope Eugenius to reject the encyclical letter of Patriarch Peter of Constantinople (654–656), which presumably took place in late 654, as Peter acceded to the patriarchal seat in June and so had ample time to send the letter to Rome in the same year. Eugenius’ personal response to Peter’s letter is unknown, but there is perhaps a hint of reproach in the Liber Pontificalis, as the narrative suggests that it was the disruptive crowd who persuaded him to reject the patriarch’s letter – an ‘orthodox’ figure, of course, would have surely rejected such ‘heresy’ without prompting.

Curiously, in an account of Maximus’ trial in 655, we learn that papal apocrisiarii were on the cusp of sharing communion with Constantinople, but did not bring a letter to the patriarch (presumably in reply to Peter’s letter the previous year), an awkward state of affairs that no doubt reflected Eugenius’ delicate political situation in Rome. By 656/7, the volte-face recorded in the Liber Pontificalis apparently had greater impact, as the anonymous author of the Dispute of Bizya associated the ‘present pope’ with Maximus’ party, which may indicate that Eugenius did indeed follow through with his promise to break with Constantinople, though one should also consider the possibility that this pro-Maximus partisan exaggerated for effect Rome’s allegiance at this point. Given the divergent views from the sources, we must be cautious when determining Rome’s loyalty in the mid-650s, though we can be rather confident in stating that there was a wide range of views – both in support of the anti-monotheletes and against them.

A firmer union between Rome and Constantinople would instead only come about after Pope Vitalian’s accession in July 657, but the resulting furore also sheds some light on another obscure ally of Maximus’ circle in the West. It is, however,

15 Ibid., 29 (Neil, 222).
17 Jankowiak Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 305, makes the interesting but perhaps unnecessary suggestion that eastern monks in Rome were at the heart of this unrest.
18 Record of the Trial, 279–81 (Allen and Neil, 33).
19 Dispute at Bizya, 753 (Allen and Neil, 143); Booth, Crisis of Empire, 320.
20 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 320–2, Ekonomou, Byzantine Rome, 162, and Maximus the Confessor,
important to note first that Vitalian probably did not accept monotheletism, but instead had stayed silent on the numbers of Christ’s operations and wills altogether, as mandated by the imperial Typos, so Vitalian’s actions here should not be read as an explicit slide into ‘heresy’ by the pope.\textsuperscript{21} This was indeed a climb-down by the papacy, but we cannot be certain that Rome had already abandoned entirely its dyothelete sympathies. After all, Maximus and Sophronius had once accepted imperial doctrinal innovations in 630s, yet they evidently still harboured doubts; the same could be the case for Vitalian, who was presumably also wary of another imperial intervention against Rome. In any case, this switch in position should not be seen as a dramatic change. As Jankowiak astutely notes, the lack of participation by the Roman clergy in the proceedings of the Lateran Synod in 649 may in fact suggest that there was a significant pro-Typos faction already in the city, making a shift in its official stance eight years later an entirely understandable one.\textsuperscript{22}

This reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople quickly provoked a response from the anti-monotheletes. Maximus’ disciple, Anastasius the Monk, wrote to a group of Sardinian monks in 658 to urge them to intervene in Rome and bolster their friends in the city, probably in the hopes of shifting the papacy’s position.\textsuperscript{23} The target of this persuasive effort has been suggested to be a Theodore alluded to in the letter from Maximus to Anastasius and perhaps also a figure present the Lateran Synod in 649, which strongly implies that Maximus and Anastasius were attempting to counter the recent imperial success by mobilising their own network.\textsuperscript{24}

It is interesting then that the only evidence of a monothelete persecution of ‘orthodox’ Christians relates to Sardinia, as Euthalios, a bishop on the island, was forced by an underling of the dux of Sardinia to sign a condemnation of Maximus the

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\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 292.
Confessor’s writings, sometime between 662 and 680.\(^{25}\) If this persecution operated on a large scale, it appears to have worked, for from the *Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople* we learn that the monothelete patriarch of Antioch had sent a codex to Sardinia and that the archbishop of Sardinia was reluctant to commit to the dyothelete position, both with the implication that by 680 the island had become something of a monothelete stronghold.\(^{26}\)

Despite Sardinia’s obscurity in other imperial sources, we therefore have some indications that the loyalties on the island were split between monotheletism and dyotheletism, making Anastasius’ request in 658 all the more understandable. His efforts appear to have failed, since later accounts are suggestive of the (forced?) triumph of monotheletism in Sardinia, but that should not obscure the fact that in 658, Anastasius thought it plausible to contact Sardinian monks in order to influence papal policy. Jankowiak is of course justified to see this attempt to bolster dyothelete support as a last-ditch effort by Maximus and Anastasius at a time when their support was limited, but one must always keep in mind the minuscule number of surviving sources.\(^{27}\) As we will see, there are echoes in other sources of a persistent mobilisation of support by the anti-monotheletes, despite the exiles of the movement’s most prominent leaders, leaving open the possibility of a still active network of dissidents despite its many failures.\(^{28}\)

An excellent parallel is provided by the murder of Theodosius, Constans II’s brother, in 659. This event has been extensively discussed by Jankowiak and Booth, but in short, they suggest that Theodosius’ fall from favour was because he had been involved in a plot linked to anti-monotheletism.\(^{29}\) Although the death of Theodosius

\(^{25}\) The Greek is transcribed in H. von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt*, 1.1 (Berlin, 1911), 638–41. As Jankowiak notes in *Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme*, 284–9, imperial reprisal against anti-monotheletes was very limited, even in Rome. On Euthalios: Brandes, ‘Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Seventh Century’, 109–10, and Jankowiak, *Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme*, 337–8; cf. also Jankowiak’s comment on Euthalios’ reliability in n164. Another reference to ‘heresy’ in MS. Laud Gr. 35 (now in Oxford) has occasionally been linked to Sardinia, but a dating to the ‘monothelete’ period is uncertain, as seen in the extended historiographical discussion in A. Lai, ‘Flavio Pancrazio δοῦς Σαρδινίας: un contributo alla prosopografia altomedievale sarda dal codice Laudiano Greco 35’, *Sandalion* 31 (2008), 169–89. I am therefore unconvinced by the suggestion in R. Turtas, ‘The Sardinian Church’, in M. Hobart (ed.), *A Companion to Sardinian History*, 500–1500 (Leiden, 2017), 177–214, at 184n21, that this manuscript may have been read in Cagliari as well.

\(^{26}\) *Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople* (Riedinger, 502 and 829).


\(^{28}\) A conclusion independently reached also by Winterhager, ‘Rome in the Seventh-Century Byzantine Empire’, 202–6.

remains obscure, the number of figures in the imperial court who were described as sympathetic to Martin or Maximus remains striking and provides a circumstantial clue to why a plot may have been feasible. We know, for example, that Gregory the prefect, a ‘eunuch from the bedchamber’ (perhaps a reference to the position of praepositus sacri cubiculi, or grand chamberlain), sent refreshments and apparently encouragement to Martin when it was thought that the pope would soon be executed. Martin, of course, had been a papal apocrisiarius in Constantinople until 648, only five years before his trial, and it is logical that he was not entirely friendless upon his return to Constantinople, if the earlier experiences of Pope Gregory the Great are any indication.

Similar clues exist in the texts relating to Maximus’ exiles, for in the Dispute at Bizya soldiers officially under the ultimate command of Theodosius, the emperor’s brother, were described as sympathisers. A helpful scholion to the text further adds that the general who (temporarily?) took Theodosius’ place in commanding these soldiers at that point was Theodore of Kolonia, a significant figure who later became Constantine IV’s dyothelete enforcer in 680–1. It is tempting to then suggest that dyothelete sympathies were widespread in the imperial army in the 650s, making this yet another indirect indication of Theodosius’ treason. To add to this suggestion, we can also bring in Theophanes’ later record of Theodore of Kolonia, alongside Andreas the cubicularius, apparently hindering Constans II’s desire to bring his empress and children to Sicily from Constantinople when the emperor moved to the island in 662, making Theodore a serial opponent of imperial policy. In turn, Andreas has been recently identified by Prigent as Constans’ assailant in 668, therefore adding another, admittedly tentative, link between Theodore of Kolonia and the emperor’s enemies.

Further dissent among imperial officials can be identified for the 660s, but

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30 Theodore Spudaeus, Narrations, 22 (Neil, 206); Brandes, “‘Juristische’ Krisenbewältigung’, 174. Note that Gregory could instead have been the prefect of the city, another significant office, as Neil suggests in Seventh-Century Popes and Martyrs, 203n98.
34 Theophanes, Chronicle, A.M. 6160 (de Boor, 351).
35 Ibid (de Boor, 351–2); Prigent, ‘La Sicile de Constant II’, 175–7. As Booth, Crisis of Empire, 304n122 observes, this Andreas was allegedly the son of Troilus, one of Maximus’ accusers during his trial, making this potentially an even more impressive indication of divisions in Constantinople.
for the purposes of the current discussion it is enough to note that the imperial court was not united in the 650s either, despite their evident triumph in the arrest and exile of both Martin and Maximus. A plot by Theodosius to rally together some of this discontent, either by using anti-monotheletism as a front or through genuine belief, is therefore an eminently plausible one in this febrile environment. It is then rather appropriate that the earliest account of Theodosius’ death is from an anti-monothelete context, as it was noted in an edifying tale from the Georgian Appendix to the Spiritual Meadow, a text composed originally in Palestine before 668. The author was certainly well-travelled, for they, just like Moschus, had travelled to Italy and likewise displayed pro-Roman sympathies, demonstrating again the continuing vitality of this network after their masters’ downfall. In their telling, Theodosius’ death was accompanied by a wider purge, as a certain dux George was also executed, adding to the evidence already discussed of other dissidents at court. Given that the anonymous author of the Appendix was seemingly close to John Moschus and also an opponent of monotheletism, it should not be surprising that the tyrannical actions of their arch-enemy, Constans II, was recorded in Jerusalem, even though it was now a firm part of the Arab Caliphate.

Strikingly, another miracle tale in the same collection noted that the monastery of St Theodosius in Jerusalem, once the home of both Moschus and Sophronius, named Constans II in their prayers, which is probably an indication of their positive stance towards the emperor’s religious policy. Yet in 665, we learn from Anastasius the Apocrisiarius, another one of Maximus’ disciples, that he was told by a visitor from Jerusalem that the city was now entirely ‘orthodox’. The silence from other sources prevents us from making any firm conclusions about Jerusalem’s changing loyalties, but it is enough, I think, to justify the view that the anti-monotheletes had not abandoned their project, but instead continued to

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36 A point also made in Brandes, “Juristische” Krisenbewältigung’, 209–10, particularly in n444.
37 Georgian Appendix to the Spiritual Meadow, 17 (Garitte, 413). On dating the miracles generally: Garitte, “Histoires édifiantes”, 405–6; Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 343, further suggests that this particular tale was written shortly after 659.
38 Georgian Appendix to the Spiritual Meadow, 13 (Garitte, 408); Booth, Crisis of Empire, 329–32.
39 Georgian Appendix to the Spiritual Meadow, 17 (Garitte, 413).
40 Booth, Crisis of Empire, 329–30, and Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 345.
41 Georgian Appendix to the Spiritual Meadow, 16 (Garitte, 412); cf. Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 336, for another possible indication of a monothelete hierarchy in Jerusalem.
campaign for dyotheletism outside of the empire. Combined with a probable plot in Constantinople involving the emperor’s brother, the desperate plea of Anastasius to Sardinia in 658, as envisaged by Jankowiak, may instead therefore be interpreted as a stratagem intended to cement the base of a declining, but nonetheless still active, network of dissidents across the Mediterranean.

This is not to say that Maximus’ circle had the upper hand, for the evidence instead paints a more mixed picture. Loyalties were torn between monotheletism and dyotheletism, whether in Jerusalem, Sardinia, Rome, or even Constantinople, and a more prudent approach to this period would be to recognise this diversity of views. Certainly, we should qualify Constans’ success in containing anti-monotheletism, for it was contested at every turn. With this context in mind, the remainder of this chapter will consider the available western evidence, as the possible ecclesiastical connections of the 650s and 660s remain understudied. The early career of Wilfrid of York will be given particular attention, for it was in the tumultuous 650s that this Northumbrian pilgrim arrived in the Eternal City, plunging him into the divided imperial world chronicled here.

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43 See also the discussion in Jankowiak, *Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme*, 360, particularly the intriguing, but unprovable, suggestion of Caliph Mu’awiya’s involvement.

44 See also Theodore Spudaeus’ compilation of the *Narrations Concerning the Exile of the Holy Pope Martin*, c. 655–62, which he then sent to two exiled brothers in Cherson: *Narrations*, 1 (Neil, 166), which may likewise be an indicator of this network’s persistence.
4.2 Wilfrid in Rome

Wilfrid of York, on the surface, came from a very different world when compared to the eastern monks and Roman popes discussed so far. Christianity itself had yet to be fully embedded among the Anglo-Saxons, while Wilfrid’s turbulent dealings with kings and bishops alike would have surely left more ascetic-minded Church Fathers less than impressed. It is easy to see Wilfrid’s later career as reminiscent of the actions of princely bishops among the Franks, as existing scholarship generally does following Henry Mayr-Harting’s magisterial survey, but it is worth bearing the situation in Rome in mind as well.\textsuperscript{45} Given the connections between the two ‘worlds’ highlighted already in this thesis, primarily the ideological motivations behind the Gregorian mission, it would be appropriate to carry on the story, to situate the seventh-century Anglo-Saxon church in its late-antique and imperial context as well.

From this perspective, Wilfrid’s career provides the perfect bridge.\textsuperscript{46} Born a Northumbrian noble in 634, Wilfrid quickly developed an interest in the monastic life, culminating in a pilgrimage to Rome sometime in the early 650s.\textsuperscript{47} This pilgrimage has drawn much scholarly attention, often not over the journey itself, but rather on the friends Wilfrid made along the way. The young pilgrim first arrived in Kent, apparently with a royal recommendation from the queen of Northumbria, then waited for one year for a trustworthy travel companion to be found.\textsuperscript{48} Once the guide, the Northumbrian Benedict Biscop, had been found, the two set off, only for Wilfrid to be delayed in Lyons due to the patronage of the local bishop; this resulted in Biscop storming off to Rome, while Wilfrid remained in the city ‘for a certain time’ with his other companions.\textsuperscript{49} This acrimonious split is known only from Stephen’s partisan \textit{Life of Wilfrid}, written around 712–4, and is doubly tricky to

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interpret since Stephen imposed a particular biblical typology on Wilfrid’s career.\textsuperscript{50} By examining the murky politics of the papacy in the 650s, however, I suggest that there are still insights to be drawn from this carefully structured Life.

The story of Wilfrid’s initial pilgrimage intersects with the more Mediterranean narrative told here in several ways. Firstly, however, we must note that the dating is obscure. The only available dating information is that Wilfrid arrived in Kent when Honorius was the metropolitan of Canterbury, i.e. before his death in September 653. Wilfrid’s journey to Rome one year after this is generally dated to between 652–4, but there is no early textual evidence for when Wilfrid actually arrived in the city.\textsuperscript{51} Some support for 653 is found in John of Worcester’s twelfth-century Chronicle, but I am inclined to be cautious without evidence of how the much later John arrived at this dating.\textsuperscript{52} In any case, the purpose of this journey remains unknown, with several important questions already posed in the scholarship. Why did the two Northumbrians, both members of the nobility, not set out together from their homeland?\textsuperscript{53} And why did Wilfrid, a youth then with no papal connections, manage to secure a meeting with an important papal official and then an unnamed pope upon his arrival at the Eternal City?\textsuperscript{54}

A hitherto unconsidered possibility for dating this journey, however, can now be raised, thanks largely to Richard Shaw’s recent study of early communications between Canterbury and Rome. This hypothesis, in turn, may then offer a more secure context for Wilfrid’s arrival in Rome. Shaw astutely notes that the attested instances of travel to Rome and papal letters to England from the early seventh century can all be connected to requests from Canterbury for a pallium from Rome upon the accession of a new metropolitan.\textsuperscript{55} The last such visit took place in 633–4,

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\textsuperscript{50} On Stephen’s narrative strategy: W. T. Foley, Images of Sanctity in Eddius Stephanus’ Life of Bishop Wilfrid, An Early English Saint’s Life (Lewiston, 1992), particularly 21–70.


\textsuperscript{52} John of Worcester, Chronicle, 25n16. Cf. the reliance on John of Worcester to date this journey in Grocock and Wood, Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, 254n16.


\textsuperscript{54} On the issues affecting interpretations of this meeting: Ó Carragáin and Thacker, ‘Wilfrid in Rome’, 216–9.

\textsuperscript{55} Shaw, ‘When Did Augustine of Canterbury Die’, 484–7. The title ‘archbishop’ of Canterbury will be avoided in this discussion, as it only became the norm under Theodore of Tarsus: Thacker, ‘Archbishops in England from Theodore to Ecgberht’.
in order to request the pallium for Honorius.\textsuperscript{56} The metropolitan’s death in September 653 and the consecration of Deusdedit in March 655 then should have precipitated the next request for the pallium – around the same time that Wilfrid and Biscop began their journey to Rome.\textsuperscript{57}

This suggestion is of course entirely speculative, but circumstantial evidence can be raised to make this a more viable possibility. We can, for instance, note the rarity of travel between England and Rome, as aside from these missions to acquire the pallium, there is no surviving record of other journeys from England in the decades after the Gregorian mission. This would certainly explain Wilfrid’s alleged one-year wait in Kent, as it would have been difficult to prepare for a journey when there were presumably few experienced travellers available. The death of Honorius was therefore a stroke of good luck for Wilfrid, for now there was real impetus for a journey to Rome, if only to continue the unusual tradition at Canterbury of acquiring pallia from the papacy.\textsuperscript{58}

The problem then is Wilfrid’s one-year wait in Kent, particularly if he also arrived during the episcopate of Honorius as Bede suggests.\textsuperscript{59} The two dating indications together obviously do not match the minimal wait of eighteen months between the death of Honorius and the consecration of Deusdedit (from 30 September 653 to March 655) that the mooted hypothesis requires. But we should not expect a hagiographer to be so precise in his dating, particularly in a \textit{Life} written sixty years after these events. Bede’s placement of Wilfrid’s arrival in Kent during the episcopate of Honorius may also be an inaccurate one. As Shaw notes, Bede’s sources are particularly poor for the 650s and 660s, partly due to a political and ecclesiastical crisis in Kent and Canterbury.\textsuperscript{60} As the only other source for Wilfrid’s journey, Stephen’s \textit{Life of Wilfrid}, does not put a date on this event, we can make the case for this being one of Bede’s many inferences about this period or that it was based on faulty personal knowledge, which connected Wilfrid’s time in Kent with

\textsuperscript{56} Bede, \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, 2.18 (Lapidge, 1.260–4); Shaw, ‘When Did Augustine of Canterbury Die’, 484.

\textsuperscript{57} Bede, \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, 3.20 (Lapidge, 2.94–6); Shaw, \textit{Gregorian Mission to Kent}, 168, argues that Deusdedit was consecrated on 12 March rather than 26 March 655, the date provided by Bede. See also the suggested possibility that Bede may not have grasped the dating information correctly, perhaps reading the length of time since the reception of the pallium as the length of the episcopate, which could alter the narrative here significantly: 175n18. Unfortunately, if this is the case, then much of what Bede says about the early Anglo-Saxon church needs further revision.

\textsuperscript{58} On the uniqueness of this tradition: Shaw, ‘When Did Augustine of Canterbury Die’, 485.

\textsuperscript{59} Stephen, \textit{Life of Wilfrid}, 3 (Colgrave, 8), and Bede, \textit{Ecclesiastical History}, 5.19 (Lapidge, 2.412).

\textsuperscript{60} Shaw, \textit{Gregorian Mission to Kent}, 212–6.
Honorius – even if the connection originally was just that Wilfrid’s arrival had coincided with Honorius’ death.

True, the possibility also exists that Deusdedit never received a pallium or that he received a pallium later, but both seem unlikely. In the former case, Deusdedit would then be the only metropolitan of Canterbury in the seventh century who did not receive a pallium, making this option rather implausible. In the latter case, aside from Wilfrid and Biscop’s journey in the 650s, the next attested visit to Rome by any Anglo-Saxon is Biscop’s pilgrimage from around 664, but as Deusdedit died in July 664 and Biscop would not return to England until 669 with the next metropolitan of Canterbury in tow, it is improbable for this journey to have involved a request from Deusdedit at its onset.61 For Deusdedit to have had a pallium as his predecessors had, it is logical to associate his request with a known journey to Rome, that of Wilfrid and Biscop, at least based on the surviving evidence.

The involvement of the Northumbrian Biscop in this affair might seem unusual, as this could be seen as a purely Kentish matter. Oswiu of Northumbria, however, would later be involved in the selection of the next metropolitan bishop. In the conventional telling, following Bede’s narrative, Oswiu and Ecgbert of Kent had chosen Wighard as the next metropolitan of Canterbury after 664 and so sent him to Rome to be ordained; the candidate’s death then prompted Pope Vitalian to select another man to fill the post.62 Yet as Shaw points out, Vitalian noted in a letter to Oswiu that he had yet to find a candidate of a suitable calibre, as laid out in Oswiu’s letter to Rome, which suggests that Oswiu was both the prime mover of selecting a new bishop (as Ecgbert was left unmentioned) and that Wighard was only chosen as an envoy to the papacy, not the proposed metropolitan.63 Northumbrian involvement in the request for a new pallium in 655 should not therefore be dismissed so easily, if Oswiu was able to play such a prominent role in the selection process a decade later. In any case, earlier Northumbrian involvement would also fit with the traditional reading of Bede’s narrative, that Wighard was jointly chosen as the new metropolitan of Canterbury by Oswiu and Ecgbert.64

61 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 4.1 (Lapidge, 2.164), and Bede, History of the Abbots, 2 (Grocock and Wood, 26).
62 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 3.29 (Lapidge, 2.148), and Bede, History of the Abbots, 3 (Grocock and Wood, 26).
63 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 3.29 (Lapidge, 2.152); Shaw, Gregorian Mission to Kent, 170–2 and 176n22. The same proposition was also briefly raised in Plummer, Opera Historica, 201.
64 On royal involvement in Anglo-Saxon requests for pallia: Shaw, ‘When Did Augustine of
If this crucial errand was indeed the cause of Wilfrid and Biscop’s journey, then we have a convenient explanation for why Biscop arrived in Kent separately from Wilfrid, for the older Northumbrian’s journey had a different motivation. This mission may even provide a clue for Biscop’s early (and acrimonious) departure from Lyons, for Biscop was operating under royal orders to go to Rome, whereas Wilfrid was not. Furthermore, since Biscop later dawdled in Lérins for two years on the return leg of his second journey to Rome (c. 665–8), I am tempted to suggest that he had been as keen as Wilfrid to learn more about Frankish practices in Lyons and would have stayed for longer as well, had his mission to Rome not intervened.\(^{65}\) In later decades Biscop’s pilgrimages certainly had a political edge and the same might be the case here.\(^ {66}\) Stephen then may have been correct to describe Wilfrid as the first Anglo-Saxon pilgrim to travel to Rome, for other visitors were there on business rather than solely for the purposes of their souls.\(^ {67}\)

In short, the view that Wilfrid and Biscop had set off to retrieve the pallium for metropolitan Deusdedit after his consecration has some merit from the surviving sources, particularly if we want to present a more complex reason beyond their mutual desire to go on a pilgrimage to Rome. In this scenario, Wilfrid and Biscop probably set off from Kent shortly after Deusdedit’s consecration in March 655; depending on how long Stephen meant by ‘a certain time’ in his description of Wilfrid’s stay in Lyons, we can hypothesise that the young pilgrim probably reached his final destination either in late 655 or sometime in 656.\(^ {68}\) This reconstruction does not change the general timeline of Wilfrid’s career, for this period of his life is particularly vague, but it does perhaps allow us to more firmly place Wilfrid’s arrival during one particular pontificate: that of Eugenius (August 654–June 657).\(^ {69}\)

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66 On the politics of Biscop’s later journeys: Wood, ‘Continental Journeys’, 204 and particularly 208–9, which notes that Bede does not comment on Biscop’s continuing involvement in Northumbrian politics, compared to the hint provided by the anonymous *Life of Ceolfrith*, 12, eds. Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 77–121, at 90.

67 Stephen, *Life of Wilfrid*, 3 (Colgrave, 8). It is of course unlikely that no Anglo-Saxons were included in previous parties sent from Canterbury.


69 *Liber Pontificalis*, 77 (Duchesne, 1.341). Ó Carragáin and Thacker, ‘Wilfrid in Rome’, 218, and
As noted already, this was a time of discontent in Rome, with Eugenius forced by the crowd to reject Peter of Constantinople’s encyclical letter. It is then striking that Wilfrid managed to befriend Boniface, ‘one of the wisest of the consiliarii’ and an important papal official, in this febrile atmosphere. Part of this must be down to Wilfrid’s royal connections, but if an Anglo-Saxon delegation had arrived shortly beforehand and secured a pallium for Canterbury, then it too would have facilitated Wilfrid’s meeting with the archdeacon.

Boniface is a fascinating figure, not least because of the offices he held. Archdeacons in Rome wielded significant power, for as Pope Martin noted in a letter to Theodore Spudaeus, the archdeacon was one of a triumvirate of officials to take on the responsibilities of the pope in his absence. Wilfrid’s friend then was a very powerful man indeed, even if we cannot reconstruct Boniface’s earlier career nor establish when he was elevated to such a position. There is, however, some dispute over the later career of Boniface, as the name Boniface appeared in multiple sources for the late seventh century, so there is a need to disentangle the different Bonifaces and their relationship with Wilfrid. I concur with Katy Cubitt’s suggestion that there were two separate Bonifaces involved in Wilfrid’s life, but here I offer a slightly different reconstruction, one that I argue fits better with the available evidence.

Another Boniface, this time without any titles, featured again in the Life of Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid’, 326, already consider datings as late as 657 and 660–1 to be plausible. I disagree with the former’s agreement with Plummer, Opera Historica, 322, that Wilfrid had to wait for an audience with the pope due to a papal interregnum, as we must be open to other possibilities given the scanty evidence. The comment in Stephen, Life of Wilfrid, 5 (Colgrave, 12) that Wilfrid visited shrines in the city for ‘many months’ before meeting the pope also suggests that Wilfrid did not have stay in the city for too long, perhaps at most a year, before securing that audience.

Stephen, Life of Wilfrid, 5 (Colgrave, 12). See also the seal belonging to a Boniface the Archdeacon discovered in Whitby, which is perhaps another indication of the archdeacon’s close relationship with Wilfrid: Levison, England and the Continent, 17n2.

His origins are unknown. Cf. the unwarranted certainty in Ekonomou, Byzantine Rome, 244, that Boniface was Greek; Lapidge, Storia degli inglesi, 2.700, more tentatively suggests the same. There is also no evidence for Boniface before his meeting with Wilfrid, so the suggestion that he served also under Pope Martin is unprovable; cf. W. Berschin, ‘Bonifatius Consiliarius († nach 704). Ein römischer Übersetzer in der byzantinischen Epoche des Papsttums’, in W. Berschin, Mittelalterische Studien (Heidelberg, 2005), 65–78, at 74, and Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid’, 326.


Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid’, 327–8. Cf. Berschin, ‘Bonifatius Consiliarius’, which argues that all the sources refer to one particular figure. See also the cautious perspective of Maskarinec, ‘Saints for All Christendom’, 346.
Wilfrid, where he recalled in 704 Wilfrid’s stay in Rome in 679. In Bede’s telling of the same event, this Boniface was a consiliarius, suggesting therefore that this Boniface was the same figure Wilfrid had encountered in the 650s. Stephen’s words, however, should take precedence here. In his narrative, the Boniface in 704 did not mention his first meeting with Wilfrid in the 650s, nor was he described as a consiliarius, with the former being a particularly curious detail to omit if Stephen’s hero had such a long-standing connection with a high-ranking papal official. Given Stephen’s close association with Wilfrid and his immediate circle, his account must surely be given more credence. As Bede is unlikely to have had another source giving him this Boniface’s title, it is probable that this is one of Bede’s inferences, to associate a known Boniface consiliarius with the second Boniface he found in the Life of Wilfrid. As it is, the Boniface who appeared in 704 can perhaps be identified as Boniface the priest, who appeared in the subscription list of a Roman synod in 679 – the same one Wilfrid had attended, thus providing a neat explanation of how the two knew each other.

What happened then to Boniface the archdeacon and consiliarius after his meeting with Wilfrid? In the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (787), it was reported that a Boniface consiliarius was ordered by Pope Benedict II (684–685) to convert Makarios, the monothelete patriarch of Antioch exiled to Rome after 681, to ‘orthodoxy’. In 692, according to the Liber Pontificalis, a Boniface consiliarius was arrested and brought to Constantinople after Pope Sergius’ rejection of the imperial Quinisext Council, presumably because of Boniface’s high status in the papal hierarchy and his experience in doctrinal matters. Finally, a ninth-century letter written by Anastasius the Librarian informs us that a certain Boniface consiliarius had partially translated Sophronius of Jerusalem’s Miracles of Cyrus and John, which is yet another connection to the anti-monothelete circle highlighted previously.

Cubitt argues that the Boniface consiliarius noted in these later sources

74 Stephen, Life of Wilfrid, 53 (Colgrave, 114).
75 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 5.19 (Lapidge, 2.422).
77 Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea (Lamberz, 1.92); Liber Pontificalis, 81.14 and 82.2 (Duchesne, 1.354 and 359).
78 Liber Pontificalis, 86.7 (Duchesne, 1.373); H. Ohme, Das Concilium Quinisextum und seine Bischofsliste, Studien zum Konstantinopeler Konzil von 692 (Berlin, 1990), 57.
cannot be identified as the same Boniface encountered by the young Wilfrid, both for reasons of age (as Cubitt views this Boniface to be the same as the title-less Boniface in 704) and because being an archdeacon was more prestigious than a consiliarius, so the more important position would have surely been mentioned during Boniface’s later appearances, if they were all referring to the same individual. As noted also by Pollard, the first point is not convincing, as many major contemporary figures lived into their 70s and 80s – of the most relevant examples, Maximus the Confessor died when he was 82 (and presumably would have lived for longer if he had not been mutilated in 662), Wilfrid when he was 76, and Theodore of Tarsus when he was 88. It is therefore entirely plausible for a mature Boniface the archdeacon, perhaps in his forties c. 656, to still be alive by 704, all the more so in the reconstruction presented here, as I consider the last mention of Boniface consiliarius to be in 692 instead.

There is likewise no reason to think that Boniface consiliarius was continuously the archdeacon until 704. By 687, a certain Paschal held the title instead, so there can be no doubt that others also took on the office in the late seventh century, particularly given the political uncertainty in Rome and the general lack of sources. The Liber Pontificalis is thus absolutely correct to describe the Boniface arrested in 692 as only a consiliarius, as he most likely had not been the archdeacon for many years now. The common title of consiliarius given to a Boniface in four different sources, Stephen’s Life of Wilfrid, the Liber Pontificalis, the Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea, and Anastasius the Librarian’s letter, however, is a common thread running through these very different texts, making it reasonable to suppose that Wilfrid’s mentor in the 650s was indeed the Boniface mentioned elsewhere.

We can then conclude that Wilfrid was tutored by a learned papal official, who knew Greek and was a skilled proponent of dyotheletism (given his later mission to convert Makarios). At a moment when Rome was in turmoil, with the

80 Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid’, 327.  
81 Pollard, ‘Cooperative Correspondence’, 309. On Maximus’ age: Record of the Trial, 453 (Allen and Neill, 47), where he stated that he was seventy-five years old in 655. Wilfrid: Stephen, Life of Wilfrid, 66 (Colgrave, 142). Theodore of Tarsus: Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 5.8 (Lapidge, 2.354).  
82 Liber Pontificalis, 86.2 (Duchesne, 1.371).  
83 Cf. Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 293, which does not associate later mentions of Boniface with the archdeacon Boniface and so states that we cannot determine the archdeacon’s opinion of monotheletism.
urban crowd resisting compromise with Constantinople and a papal delegation in the capital doing the very opposite, Wilfrid’s meetings with such a figure and then the pope are surely significant. Of course, we are still blind about what exactly Wilfrid learned in the city, but some tantalising possibilities can still be offered, once the monothelete controversy and the ensuing instability in the empire are integrated into the narrative.

It is instructive to first note that the pope Boniface introduced Wilfrid to was left anonymous in the Life of Wilfrid, the only unnamed pope out of the five who appeared in the text. Popes Agatho and John VI understandably take centre stage, for they sided with Wilfrid during his later appeals to Rome. Wilfrid had also, apparently, acquired support from the pope-elect Benedict II, presumably between July 683 and June 684 (i.e. the interregnum before Benedict was officially appointed), and Pope Sergius (687–701), a fact that was repeatedly trumpeted by Stephen in multiple chapters of the Life. It is curious then that the first pope to be mentioned, being both ‘of blessed memory’ and someone who had supposedly blessed Wilfrid, is relatively side-lined in Stephen’s work.

Part of the answer could be because of the pope’s later reputation. As I argued here, this pope was most likely Eugenius, whom we know pitifully little about. What we do know, however, paints a picture of a rather problematic pontificate. In the discussion above, I have already highlighted his uncanonical election, his doctrinal volte-face forced by the Roman crowd, and the ambiguous relationship he then had with Constantinople. All these are indicators of a Rome divided by different loyalties, a view confirmed by a later source that so far been neglected.

Just as Eugenius was left nameless by Stephen, so too was the pope ignored in the Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople (680–1), which recorded how monotheletism was finally condemned. As Jankowiak notes, this council was far from straightforward and ought to be seen as a complex imperial manoeuvre to change the empire’s policy in the face of significant pushback. Martin was naturally ignored, being named only once in a quoted papal letter, presumably as part

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85 Benedict and Sergius: ibid., 43, 46, 51–53 (Colgrave, 90, 94, and 104–14).
86 Ibid., 5 (Colgrave, 12).
87 Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothélisme, 440–4 and 477–82.
of an attempt to gloss over the bad blood between the emperor and the papacy in recent history. Eugenius, however, was entirely ignored, when in principle his rejection of Peter of Constantinople’s letter would have provided an excellent indication of Roman ‘orthodoxy’. Eugenius’ successor, Vitalian, received far more attention by comparison, no doubt because although his reign began with compromise, by the late 660s he had once again broken with Constantinople and, as we will see, developed links with dyothelete sympathisers in the East. Vitalian’s reputation was also helped by Constantine IV, as the emperor noted that the pontiff had aided Constantinople in suppressing usurpers, who can now be identified as Mezezios (c. 668) and Mezezios’ son, John (c. 673). Despite all his compromises, there remained therefore good reasons for Vitalian to be remembered fondly. Eugenius, however, had no such luck and we can thus surmise from his absence that his actions overall were not particularly suitable to be publicly aired when advocating for the dyothelete position.

The same avoidance of Eugenius can be suggested for Stephen’s Life of Wilfrid, particularly as Boniface, surely a less important figure than the pope, was named in the same chapter. Eugenius most likely was far from a monothelete ‘heretic’, yet his apparently ambivalent stance on Peter of Constantinople’s letter suggests that the pope was inclined to accept the imperial Typos, which sought to silence discussions of operations and wills altogether. Wilfrid, or Stephen’s portrayal of Wilfrid, was a resolute defender of Roman ‘orthodoxy’, which makes such a vacillating stance an uncomfortable one in a narrative that otherwise lionised Rome’s stance on everything from Easter to jurisdiction, particularly after the clear repudiation of monotheletism after 681. More speculatively, there is perhaps also room to wonder if the brief revival of imperial monotheletism in 711–3 was known in England and had impacted upon Stephen’s work, which was written at some point

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88 Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople (Riedinger, 130–1).
89 Ibid. (Riedinger, 8, 108, 210, 586, 610, and 614).
90 Ibid. (Riedinger, 8). Only the revolt of Mezezios is recorded in Liber Pontificalis, 79.2 (Duchesne, 1.346), and is misplaced in the pontificate of Adeodatus, Vitalian’s successor, when it should have taken place after Constans II’s murder in 668. The revolt of John is attested in Michael the Syrian, Chronicle, 11.13 (Chabot, 455), and a seal published in Prigent, ‘La Sicile de Constant II’, 175–85. The timeline and existing scholarship are discussed extensively in Prigent, ‘Des pères et des fils’, 596–615. Cf. W. Kaegi, ‘The Islamic Conquest and the Defense of Byzantine Africa Reconsiderations on Campaigns, Conquests, and Contexts’, in Stevens and Conant, North Africa, 65–87, at 75–7.
91 The same sentiment may have also resulted in the reproachful account of Eugenius in the Liber Pontificalis, if we follow McKitterick’s thesis that this particular batch of papal biographies was completed in the lead-up to the ecumenical council of 680–1: ‘The Papacy and Byzantium’, 255–67.
between 712 and 714.92

Regardless, Boniface’s anti-monothelete credentials had made him a useful figure for Stephen to highlight in the Life, if only to balance out the potentially damaging presence of Eugenius. Stephen elsewhere certainly glossed over events that painted Wilfrid’s career in a less flattering light, for example the persistence of the Victorian reckoning for Easter in Northumbria, when the victory of Wilfrid and his allies at the Synod of Whitby was portrayed in the Life as a total victory for the Roman (read Dionysian) party.93 By keeping Eugenius anonymous, the pope’s more problematic aspects were erased, but Stephen’s account still gave Wilfrid the prestige of having a face-to-face meeting with the pope, with the added possibility that the same figure could be interpreted by the reader as the more ‘orthodox’ Martin or Vitalian. It is notable then Bede was likewise silent on Eugenius, even though for Deusdedit of Canterbury to have acquired his pallium he must have had a letter also from the pope, although in this instance we must also weigh up Shaw’s thesis that Bede simply did not have access to the required sources for the 650s.94

The fact that Boniface was apparently a firm anti-monothelete is also appropriate in this particular imperial context. As established already in this chapter, the 650s were a time of debate, with evidence of tension between the dyotheletes and monotheletes across the Roman Empire and in Jerusalem. One wonders then if the presence of an archdeacon, with known anti-monothelete sympathies over the following decades, is another indication of the divisions still present in the papal hierarchy. It would certainly be fitting, for Wilfrid’s tutelage under Boniface, dated here to c. 656, would have also coincided with the strange comment in the Dispute at Bizya that the ‘present pope’ was aligned with Maximus’ party, which may well reflect Eugenius’ (and the papal administration’s?) shift from his more pro-Constantinople position visible during Maximus’ trial in 655. Finally, the fact that Boniface mentored Wilfrid provides yet another parallel to the discussion in the previous chapter, that actors in the monothelete controversy were still talking to, or

94 Shaw, Gregorian Mission to Kent, 212–6.
even cultivating support among, individuals outside of the empire. Perhaps surprisingly, we can then conclude that the *Life of Wilfrid* is a neglected source for Eugenius’ Rome and the monothelete controversy.

Given the foregoing discussion of the imperial context, we can now therefore add an important nuance to William Trent Foley’s thesis concerning Wilfrid and Stephen’s episcopal inspirations. His account emphasises Pope Martin and Maximus the Confessor’s experiences in shaping Wilfrid’s and then, indirectly, his monastic *familia*’s conception of the relationship between the ecclesiastical and the secular worlds. Martin’s fierce opposition to Constantinopolitan ‘innovations’, in this telling, provided a strong model of a martyr-bishop for Wilfrid to emulate in both his life and Stephen’s interpretation of his life, particularly in enduring the envy and punishment of secular authorities.

Such a specific parallel, however, lacks the qualifications needed when describing the turbulent 650s. There was, for instance, no discussion by Foley of the state of Rome under Eugenius or Vitalian, creating the impression that Rome stood united behind their hero, Martin – even though there had evidently been enough defectors to elect a new pope while the incumbent was still alive. At a time when ‘orthodoxy’ remained a malleable concept even in Rome, particularly with the *Typos* muddying the waters, there is no reason to suppose that in Eugenius’ pontificate Martin was viewed entirely favourably. Other early seventh-century popes are also offered as potential models by Foley, but the cited evidence of their achievements is the *Liber Pontificalis*, which was in all likelihood a carefully curated account of these popes’ careers to bolster Rome’s case in the lead-up to 680–1, so its words do not reflect how these earlier popes were viewed in the divided city of the 650s. In this instance, Foley’s thesis would instead be more applicable for Wilfrid’s second visit c. 679. As I have suggested here, the Rome Wilfrid arrived in during his pilgrimage was not an entirely ‘orthodox’ Rome, but a city of divided loyalties. The struggle against monotheletism had not ended with Martin’s arrest, for signs of tension can still be detected from across the empire, with even the possibility that the pope and his archdeacon had held opposing views. This is indeed a relatively minor point, but it is nevertheless an important one, for when making the case for Rome’s

96 Ibid., 83–4. Eugenius is only mentioned off-hand on 100 and 104, while Vitalian was neglected altogether.
influence on Wilfrid, we must consider also the delicate situation in Rome and the views of contemporaries.

As a result, in a more cautious reading of the available evidence, we cannot conclude exactly what Wilfrid learned from his experiences in Rome, as the episcopal models and lessons he encountered, if any, would not have received universal approval by contemporary Romans. A more adventurous interpretation would be to see Boniface as the greater influence than the pope on the young Wilfrid, as Stephen had provided a (relatively) specific list of what the pilgrim had learned from the archdeacon: the four gospels, the Easter *computus*, and ‘many other rules of ecclesiastical discipline’. From the pope, Wilfrid only received a meeting and a blessing, which was made more ambiguous still by Stephen’s refusal to name Eugenius. Indeed, one can suggest that from the outset of this career, Wilfrid was mentored by an anti-monothelete figure, who taught the Northumbrian the importance of defending ‘orthodoxy’. The lesson for Wilfrid then is perhaps not only that God’s chosen would and did suffer in the face of persecution, as Foley suggests, but also that the struggle for ‘orthodoxy’ was an ongoing process and could extend to the use of political and military force, as Boniface would have known very well from recent events in Rome. Whether this was a one-off lesson, however, remains an open question.

4.3 The Franks and Whitby

Wilfrid’s turbulent history with the Franks allows us to nuance this interpretation further. As Paul Fouracre says, there is no Frankish evidence that Wilfrid had ventured into Gaul at all and we are entirely dependent on Stephen’s account. Nonetheless, the *Life of Wilfrid* remains an invaluable source for the Northumbrian’s adventures in Gaul, if it is used carefully. The Franks certainly loom large in the narrative, for they appear as early as Wilfrid’s first pilgrimage to Rome, as he delayed for ‘a certain time’ in Lyons along the way, in the process earning the trust of the city’s bishop, Aunemundus, to the extent that Wilfrid was apparently offered the bishop’s niece in marriage and the chance to govern a part of Gaul. Wilfrid declined the offer and finally continued onto Rome, arriving, as argued above, during the troubled pontificate of Eugenius. After Wilfrid’s fateful meetings with Boniface and Eugenius, the young Northumbrian returned to Lyons, this time staying for three years according to Stephen. There he was given the Petrine tonsure and apparently became the heir to Aunemundus – had the evil queen Balthild not intervened and murdered the bishop of Lyons. Wilfrid was spared and so returned to England, after c. 660.

Wilfrid’s two stays in Lyons are quite significant. As Cubitt has argued and I have similarly suggested in the previous chapter, Aunemundus can be closely associated with several important Frankish bishops, men who can be said to be part of a broad Columbanian network and who shared an admiration for Rome. True, the Frankish response to the Lateran Synod was ultimately feeble, but we can nonetheless find traces of sympathy among the sources. At the very least, eminent bishops, Eligius and Audoin being the most relevant for their fellow Neustro-Burgundian Aunemundus, and royal figures, certainly Sigibert of Austrasia and probably also Clovis of Neustria-Burgundy (or at least his mayor of the palace), had heard about the broad contours of the monothelete controversy. If the already-discussed Council of Chalon-sur-Saône was also held with the knowledge of the Lateran Synod, then there is another possible connection to Lyons, as Candericus of

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99 Fouracre, ‘Wilfrid and the Continent’, 186.
100 Stephen, *Life of Wilfrid*, 4 (Colgrave, 10).
101 Ibid., 6 (Colgrave, 12–4); Fouracre, ‘Wilfrid and the Continent’, 187–91. Note also the possibility that Aunemundus’ murder may have been tied to Frankish involvement with the Lombards or even the empire: Esders, ‘Konstans II, die Sarazenen und die Reiche des Westens’, 213–5.
102 Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid’, 324–5.
Lyons had subscribed to its canons.103

Candericus was Aunemundus’ predecessor but one, but the memory of the council must have still been a very recent one by the time Wilfrid arrived from England. For the Lateran Synod to have impacted upon Chalon-sur-Saône (regardless of how we interpret its ambiguous first canon), the Frankish council can only have happened between 650 and 653. When Wilfrid arrived in Lyons, in 655 in my telling, there would have been only a maximum of five years since Candericus subscribed to Chalon-sur-Saône. Stephen’s Life of Wilfrid of course does not allow us to reconstruct exactly what Wilfrid learned in Lyons, no more than what this text says about the politics of Boniface and Eugenius, but the Frankish context established previously does provide an interesting possibility, that Wilfrid had already gleaned some echoes of the monothelete controversy before his meetings with Boniface and Eugenius.

All this is not to say that Wilfrid was an ardent anti-monothelete. While the pilgrim was no doubt instructed by Boniface on the ‘orthodox’ faith, presumably with an anti-monothelete bent given the archdeacon’s sympathies, and we could make a speculative case for Wilfrid’s Frankish contact(s?) perhaps doing the same, it is not possible to go further given the available evidence. The tangible connections Wilfrid did make with other likely sympathisers, however, allow us to be more specific; even if a committed network did not exist, Wilfrid moved in circles where such attitudes would have been lauded. Moreover, Wilfrid’s, or at least Stephen’s, overriding concern for ‘orthodoxy’ throughout his career must owe its genesis to its formative period, once this more nuanced interpretation of the 650s is taken into account. Wilfrid was not awed by the doctrinal firmness of Rome, because that did not exist during his pilgrimage, nor was Wilfrid inspired by the actions of anti-monothelete bishops in Gaul, for they too had not proclaimed their public support for Martin at Chalon-sur-Saône. If we are to trace this period’s influence on Wilfrid’s later actions, as scholars are wont to do, then Wilfrid’s apparent zeal for correct doctrine was not due to the exemplars he encountered, but the conflicts he witnessed, for he had seen first-hand what appeasement looked like and learned of the need to challenge accommodation with ‘heretics’.

Wilfrid’s acquaintance with Eligius, Audoin, and Amandus, or even their

103 Canons of the Council of Chalon-sur-Saône (de Clercq, 308); Duchesne, Fastes épiscopaux, 2.169.
ideals, are indeed hypothetical and dependent on the Northumbrian’s known association with the bishop of Lyons. But the case is far clearer for Agilbert, a Frank who was successively a bishop in Ireland, Wessex, and Paris, and who played a prominent role in Wilfrid’s initial rise to power. Beyond being part of the same reform-minded social circle, Agilbert was also the relative of Audoin of Rouen, the preeminent Frankish bishop of his age, making it possible that he shared the same values as the bishops outlined already. In any case, Agilbert’s later actions make it clear that he was indeed a partisan of Rome’s positions in both England and Gaul.

Upon Wilfrid’s return to Northumbria, sometime after 660 (the last attestation of Aunemundus in a charter), he quickly found himself a new patron, Alhfrith, son of King Oswiu of Northumbria and a sub-king under his father, with apparently the support of King Cenwalh of Wessex. According to Stephen, Wilfrid promptly taught Alhfrith the ‘many disciplines of the Roman church’, implicitly building on what Wilfrid had allegedly learned from Boniface in Rome. As a result, Wilfrid was quickly appointed the abbot of Ripon and then ordained as a priest by Agilbert. Shortly afterwards, the Synod of Whitby was held in 664, which famously decided that the Roman method of calculating Easter would be followed in Northumbria.

In both Stephen and Bede’s narratives Whitby was an unqualified success for the Roman party against proponents of an Irish Easter, with Wilfrid given the starring role of responding to the Irish argument, as Agilbert lacked the Northumbrian’s fluency in the vernacular tongue. Historians have long found problems with this approach, not least because it neglected the role of Alhfrith, who had seemingly sponsored both Agilbert and Wilfrid and had wished to travel to Rome at around the same time. Given the sub-king’s disappearance from the historical record after Whitby, Henry Mayr-Harting and Erin Dailey, among others, have suggested plausible political motivations for the synod as well, with Dailey in particular arguing convincingly for Alhfrith’s use of Whitby to diminish his father Oswiu.

104 Stephen, Life of Wilfrid, 7 (Colgrave, 14–6).
105 Ibid., (Colgrave, 16).
107 Stephen, Life of Wilfrid, 10 (Colgrave, 20–2), and Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 3.25 (Lapidge, 2.120–34).
109 Mayr-Harting, Coming of Christianity, 105–13, and E. T. Dailey, ‘To Choose One Easter from
The doctrinal controversy at Whitby has similarly been revised. In Dailey’s telling, the synod was a contest between three groups: those who followed the Irish *computus*, those who favoured the ‘old’ Roman Victorian tables, and finally supporters of the new papal-approved Dionysian *computus* (adopted by Rome probably in the 640s or the 650s). These different calculations also raise doubt over whether Wilfrid and Agilbert could be on the same side, since Agilbert’s homeland, Gaul, followed Victorius, while Wilfrid had backed Dionysius according to Stephen’s *Life*.\(^\text{110}\) If we deem Agilbert to be part of a wider Columbanian circle, given his familial connections, then it is likelier still that he was a partisan of Victorius, as the Irish tables favoured by Columbanus had been abandoned by his successors for the Victorian *computus* after 626/7.\(^\text{111}\)

The alignment of Wilfrid with Agilbert is, however, clear given the latter’s consecration of the former in Gaul, allegedly because Wilfrid could not find any ‘orthodox’ bishops in England, making it likely that the difference between the two over the Easter *computus* was not enough to hinder their co-operation at Whitby.\(^\text{112}\) Less likely, it remains possible that they shared a preference for Dionysius, as it cannot be proven that Agilbert followed Victorius like his Frankish compatriots.\(^\text{113}\) Given the survival of the Victorian *computus* even in Northumbria until the end of the seventh century, it is, however, tempting to wonder whether its persistence (or co-existence with the Dionysian tables) had been deliberately suppressed in Bede and Stephen’s eighth-century narratives.\(^\text{114}\) I would therefore amend the revised Whitby narrative a little. Yes, Wilfrid and Agilbert’s pro-Roman agendas were excellent tools for Alhfrith to disrupt his father’s rule, but not because they were proponents of only the Dionysian *computus*, since Agilbert’s stance is ambiguous. Rather, they were disruptive because they opposed the status quo in Northumbria,

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\(^{112}\) Stephen, *Life of Wilfrid*, 12 (Colgrave, 26), and Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.28 (Lapidge, 2.144).

\(^{113}\) Dailey, ‘To Choose One Easter from Three’, 60, places Agilbert within the Dionysian faction, but did not explain his reasoning.

which had tolerated the diverging Easter tables of both the Irish and Roman factions. Wilfrid’s role in this debate over accepting diverging Easter dates was certainly fitting given recent papal history, as Wilfrid had real experience of resisting doctrinal accommodation from Rome and, less explicitly, Lyons to draw upon.

The crucial piece of the puzzle, Pope Vitalian’s comments to Oswiu of Northumbria on the celebration of Easter, are unfortunately not preserved by Bede in his précis of the letter, making it difficult to discern what contemporary Rome actually thought of this whole endeavour. As it is, I am inclined to suggest that even if Wilfrid and Agilbert differed in their choice of computus, the papacy had yet to commit to a position that all its followers should adhere to, which also explains why Bede chose not to quote this section of the letter, for the eighth-century historian was an enthusiastic proponent of only the Dionysian Easter. It is worth remembering too that the papacy itself was using the Victorian tables until the 640s or 650s, and that there are no surviving indications that Rome had wanted to correct the Franks’ Victorian tendencies, so we need not to follow too slavishly the eighth-century narratives of Stephen and Bede. After all, if Rome did not care to impose the Dionysian computus on the Franks, why would they have been so stringent for the Anglo-Saxons?

There is another, more speculative connection between Rome and Whitby, which so far has only received comment from Carl Hammer in a footnote. One of Agilbert’s allies at the Synod of Whitby was said to be a certain Agatho the priest, who did not otherwise play a role in the council. Could this be the same person as Pope Agatho (678–681), who had later helped Wilfrid during his appeal to Rome and played a key role in overturning monotheletism? As Hammer notes, an eleventh-century scribe who copied the Life of Wilfrid certainly made this connection and

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115 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 3.29 (Lapidge, 2.152).
118 Stephen, Life of Wilfrid, 10 (Colgrave, 20), and Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 3.25 (Lapidge, 2.122).
described this Agatho as the pope. In this list of the members of the Roman party, the scribe had used the *punctus* to break up to sentence, presumably to distinguish between the three people involved: ‘ab Aegelberchto episcopo transmarino, et Agathone papa, presbitero sancto Uilfrido et abbati’. At the very least, we can suggest that for this scribe from Canterbury, Agatho was not to be identified as a priest in the text, only as the future pope. The descriptor ‘papa’ is of course noted in the relevant critical apparatuses, but neither Levison nor Colgrave commented on this odd feature, with the editions themselves following the other surviving manuscript in reading ‘Agathone presbitero suo [Agilbert’s]’, with the implication that ‘papa’ was an obvious later interpolation.

Before going further, it must be said from the outset that it is improbable that ‘papa’ was originally Stephen’s description for Agatho, for throughout the text popes are given various honorifics, which makes it unlikely that a bland ‘Pope Agatho’ was his creation. We cannot be certain of course that this Agatho was not the later pope, as other now-lost traditions may have preserved this early encounter, but this surely remains only a very slim possibility when a contemporary follower of Wilfrid did not explicitly throw praise on the Agatho present at Whitby, with Bede following suit, when the historian surely also had his own well-informed sources for the Northumbrian synod.

All this, however, does not mean that this Agatho had no Roman connections. If Agatho was a priest serving Agilbert, the first place to look for him would be in Gaul, but the name Agatho is not found in Merovingian texts, with only the cognate Agatheus being the name of a bishop of Nantes and, less reliably, a bishop of Coutances, both from early eighth century. In other instances of the same name I have consulted, all come from an imperial, particularly Italian, context, with the *Prosopography of the Byzantine Empire* listing eleven Agathos active between 641 and 867. True, Anglo-Saxons in this period were liable to choose a

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119 British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian D VI, f.84r.
122 Only three Agathos are listed in the PmbZ, which is an odd oversight given the generally better
new name for themselves as a demonstration of their faith, particularly for bishops, but Bede had nonetheless attached their original names when discussing figures active in Northumbria, as can be seen in his descriptions of the singing-master Aeddi ‘Stephanus’, ‘Benedictus’ Biscop, and Willibrand ‘Clemens’. In any case, the Greek name Agatho would have been a curious choice for an Anglo-Saxon, for the name had yet to feature in papal history and the attested Anglo-Saxons who changed their names preferred either the names of popes or well-established saints. The fragmentary sources of the seventh century of course do not allow us to be certain, but the balance of probability does suggest that the Agatho present at Whitby was more likely to have originated from imperial Italy than Gaul or England.

As for why Agatho was associated with the Frankish bishop, we can consider the evidence for Frankish contact with Rome after Amandus and Eligius’ inaction in the early 650s. Firstly, although the papal letters involved are later forgeries, Ian Wood has argued that Aigulf of Lérins’s theft of relics from Montecassino can still plausibly have taken place c. 657, the first year of Vitalian’s pontificate. Then there is the example of Godo, nephew of the Wandregisel discussed in the previous chapter, and his request for relics from Vitalian. Finally, we can point once again to the Life of Eligius, for if we consider the first layer to have been completed in the 660s by Audoin of Rouen, then his statement during his digression on Pope Martin’s suffering is rather significant. The hagiographer reported that ‘we know a certain brother coming from the eastern parts’ who had witnessed all the deeds described in this digression, suggesting therefore that an easterner (from Rome?) who accompanied Martin to Constantinople and his exile to Crimea had somehow travelled to Gaul. As Agilbert and Audoin were relatives, it is not improbable then

for an Italian priest to be associated with a pro-Roman Frankish bishop, even if we wish to be more cautious and do not see Agatho as a papal envoy.  

For context, there was another traveller to Rome at the same time, as Alhfrith, sub-king under Oswiu and patron of Wilfrid and Agilbert, had apparently desired to visit Rome with Benedict Biscop, but was recalled by Oswiu, leaving Biscop to go by himself, arriving in 665 according Grocock and Wood. The dating is dependent on the twelfth-century John of Worcester, so it strikes me as rather problematic, but the sub-king’s desire to visit Rome seems reasonable in the circumstances, for it roughly coincided with the Synod of Whitby. Given the connections between the Roman party, as represented by Agilbert and Wilfrid at Whitby, as well as the pro-Roman sentiments of their patron, Alhfrith, the presence of a Roman, or at least a priest of Italian origin, at the synod is both plausible in 664 and helpful for Alhfrith’s schemes. A Roman agent, John the archcantor, was after all sent by Pope Agatho to England and attended the Council of Hatfield in 679, presumably to test the Anglo-Saxons’ ‘orthodoxy’, and a similar situation is surely not impossible twenty-five years earlier.

Finally, we can turn also to Oswiu’s mission to Rome and Pope Vitalian’s reply, which is partially preserved in Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, as they can help clarify the extent of the papacy’s interest. The timing of this letter is not found in Bede, as he noted only that ‘not a little time’ had passed since the death of Deusdedit in 664. A hint, however, is provided by his notice elsewhere that Wilfrid was sent to Gaul when a metropolitan of Canterbury was ‘being sought for, consecrated, and sent’, implying therefore that Wilfrid travelled to Gaul after Oswiu’s mission had already set off for Rome. This would then result in a date around 665 or 666 for Oswiu’s mission to Italy, but cannot be much later, for upon Wilfrid’s return from

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The Life to c. 675–80, and makes the intriguing suggestion that Audoin had access to a proto-Life of Martin, as well as that the composition was linked to the forthcoming Ecumenical Council in some way.

Fox, Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, 69 and 72–3.

Bede, History of the Abbots, 2 (Grocock and Wood, 26); on dating, n21.

Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 4.15–6 (Lapidge, 2.236–40).

Ibid., 4.1 (Lapidge, 2.164). Vitalian’s letter cannot have been sent in 668, as suggested in Thacker, ‘Memorializing Gregory the Great’, 73, for the pope noted that he had yet to find a candidate for Canterbury, when Bede reported that Theodore of Tarsus, Vitalian’s eventual choice, had to wait four months once he was chosen for his hair to grow before his consecration on 26 March 668, meaning that Vitalian’s words to Oswiu that no candidate had been selected must have been written before late November 667 (assuming that the pope did not mislead the king). I am also uncertain why Jaffé, Regesta Pontificum Romanorum, 235, firmly placed Vitalian’s letter in 665.

Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 4.2 (Lapidge, 2.172).
Gaul he allegedly stayed in Ripon for three years before his restoration to this bishopric after May 669. Oswiu had thus contacted Rome shortly after the Synod of Whitby, which may imply that Vitalian did indeed have a strong interest in Northumbria’s stance on the *computus*. It is unfortunate that Bede chose to remove the portion of the pope’s letter on this very topic, for there we would presumably find confirmation of Vitalian’s attitude towards the Irish Easter and his thoughts on Whitby’s importance.

In short, I argue here that the Roman victory at Whitby can be situated in a larger context, particularly Wilfrid and the Franks’ experiences in the previous decade. The desire to impose a properly ‘orthodox’ Easter is of course not a result of the monothelete controversy, but if we consider that elements within the papacy of the 650s were still defiant and concerned with doctrinal purity, at the very least during Wilfrid’s visit and based on what we can glean from the Frankish sources, then the attitudes of Wilfrid and Agilbert at Whitby against tolerating the Irish *computus* become partially explicable. The tentative suggestion that the papacy was interested in events in Northumbria is another possibility that should be considered further, especially the curious presence of Agatho the priest. As we know little about affairs in Rome at the same time, the actions of their partisans abroad are the only guide to what values the pope held most dear. True, we cannot go further based only on the evidence from Anglo-Saxon England, but surviving Greek sources provide a helpful parallel to the Synod of Whitby, for an eastern resurgence of anti-monothelete activism can also be detected in the early 660s.

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132 Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid’, 343.
4.4 The Tide Turns

Despite the end of overt anti-monothelete politicking after the exiles of Martin and Maximus, it is still possible to detect how their network continued to evolve over the following decade. There was an initial period of isolation from the outside world for those sentenced to the Crimean peninsula and the Caucasus, but around 664, the year of the Synod of Whitby, the atmosphere changed. Maximus had died two years before, but his surviving followers received a number of visitors, which is surely an indicator that the exiles were now once again in contact with their wider following. Intriguingly, the link was the strongest with Palestine, a region under Arab control. 

The first visitor, Stephen, the son of a priest who served in Jerusalem, travelled to Lazica to meet Anastasius the Apocrisiarius, allegedly preaching his doctrine throughout the regions he passed through. Stephen has been identified either as Stephen of Dora, an anti-monothelete bishop who had travelled frequently between Palestine and Rome in the 630s and 640s, or as an otherwise unknown anti-monothelete from the Holy Land. In either case, travel had evidently opened up between the caliphate and the imperial Caucasus. Crucially, Stephen also brought the good news that the church in Jerusalem had now turned against monotheletism, an indication that the anti-monothelete resistance had not been idle since their leaders’ exile, particularly given the appearance of a pro-Constans monastery in Jerusalem in the Georgian Appendix discussed already. Strikingly, Anastasius also complained that although he had heard of travellers going as far as Iberia, these visitors never travelled to neighbouring Lazica, which suggests that other dissidents were on the move as well, even if they did not visit Anastasius. Regardless, in light of the good news from Palestine, Anastasius composed two letters that have survived, one to Theodosius of Gangra in Jerusalem, the other to monks in Ascalon.

Other allies were more local, as Anastasius was also seemingly supported by

133 Anastasius the Apocrisiarius, Letter to Theodosius, 185–92 (Allen and Neil, 182).
135 Anastasius the Apocrisiarius, Letter to Theodosius, 120–5 (Allen and Neil, 189); Jankowiak, Essai d’histoire politique du monothéïsme, 360, also suggests the involvement of the caliph.
137 The Letter to Theodosius is the former, the latter is preserved in Vatitanus Gr. 662 and is partially edited in PG 89 (Paris, 1865), 1191–2; Winkelmann, Der monenergetisch-monotheletische Streit, 152–3.
a number of imperial officials, whom he promised would support future travellers to the region. Among them were the ‘leaders of the Abasgians’, Gregory the patrician and magistros, an anonymous patrician and general of Iberia, and Lebarnikios the patrician of Lazica. These officials were people who should have been enforcing imperial orders to isolate these exiles, but they were, surprisingly, acting to ease the lives of the exiled dissidents and facilitating their communication with supporters within the caliphate. There is also evidence that there was a concerted effort to win over new followers, for in Anastasius’ letter to Theodosius the former apocrisiarius explicitly requested a book of canons decreed at the Lateran Synod to be brought to the Caucasus, in order to make clear the ‘heretical’ stance of Constantinople to the locals. Finally, around 666, we learn that two brothers from Palestine, Theodore Spudaeus and Theodosius of Gangra, visited Crimea and then Lazica, all to pay their respects to their exiled heroes. By the time the two brothers arrived in Lazica before August 668, Anastasius was dead, but they nonetheless received his writings and relics thanks to Gregory of Betararous, an abbot from Albania on the coast of the Caspian Sea – presumably yet another new ally encountered by the dissidents during their exile. These isolated mentions of communication and their growing support in the region may appear insignificant at first glance, but taken together they do suggest that the exiles’ wider network had not been shattered, even after they had been forced to the fringes of the empire.

Moreover, the renewed contact between individuals in this circle of dissidents took place at an opportune time, for it occurred amidst renewed warfare between the empire and the caliphate after 662. With imperial control over the Caucasus presumably loosened by Arab offensives on all fronts, it is possible that the war provided an opportunity for the exiles’ disciples to once again visit their leaders and to persuade local officials to disobey Constantinople. This was certainly true elsewhere, as in 667 a general in Asia Minor went over to the Arabs and the next year Emperor Constans II himself was assassinated by a cabal of high-ranking officials. As acknowledged already, there were also already sympathisers within the imperial court, as both a Gregory the prefect and the general Theodore of

139 Anastasius the Apocrisiarius, Letter to Theodosius, 63–9 (Allen and Neil, 185).
141 Sarris, Empires of Faith, 290–1, and Hoyland, In God’s Path, 114–5.
142 Theophanes Confessor, Chronicle, A.M. 6159–60 (de Boor, 348–352).
Kolonia displayed disloyal behaviour in sources written in the 650s, and it is probable that the same continued in the 660s, particularly in the Caucasus where Constantinopolitan edicts had less force given the distance.143

The papacy too flexed its muscle. Although the dating remains uncertain, we know that by c. 670 Pope Vitalian had broken once again with Constantinople, resulting in the removal of his name from patriarchal diptychs.144 Jankowiak attributes this renewed schism to tensions with Ravenna, but by considering other indications of dissent from c. 668, I argue here that Vitalian had instead re-opened the dispute over a genuine desire to oust monotheletism, as part of a continuation of Pope Martin and Maximus’ project two decades earlier.145 This is perhaps an unexpected shift in position by the accommodating pope from the late 650s, but a consideration of the political context makes this possibility a rather compelling one.

The first clue, perhaps unexpectedly, comes from England. According to Bede, in late 667, around the time travellers from Palestine ventured to visit their exiled heroes in the East, Theodore of Tarsus was chosen by Vitalian to become the new head of the Anglo-Saxon church.146 As Theodore looms large in both studies of the Anglo-Saxons and the monothelete controversy, it is important to first establish his background. Born in Cilicia, Theodore probably took part in the Lateran Synod of 649 and so can be identified as another prominent anti-monothelete present in Rome, perhaps even staying in the monastery of the Cilicians mentioned in the Acts of the Lateran Synod.147 More intriguingly, he is often seen as a refugee who had fled his homeland due to the wars in the East.148 His appointment to Canterbury was

143 Note also the undated sympathies for the exiled Maximus from a protosecretary working for the praetorian prefect of Constantinople: Theodore Spudaeus, Commemoration, 78–91 (Allen and Neil, 201–3).
144 Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople (Riedinger, 8).
146 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 4.1 (Lapidge, 2.164–70).
147 Acts of the Lateran Synod (Riedinger, 57); Booth, Crisis of Empire, 114–5, and Bischoff and Lapidge, Biblical Commentaries, 77–80.
148 Bischoff and Lapidge, Biblical Commentaries, 20 (for Theodore as an eastern refugee in Rome), 47 (for Theodore as refugee earlier in Constantinople), and 92 (for Hadrian, Theodore’s companion, being a refugee from North Africa). These suggestions are not new, but have perhaps been popularised further by Lapidge’s study, see now the quite firm statements found recently in Ekonomou, Byzantine Rome, 163, Brown, Rise of Western Christendom, 367, K. Barker, ‘Aldhelm “Old Helmet,” First Bishop of Sherborne, and His Helmgils, “Helmet Hostage,”’ First Abbot of Glastonbury, on the Dorset/Devon Coast at Lyme: The Making of a West Saxon Bishopric’, in M. Bennett and K. Weikert (eds.), Medieval Hostageship, c. 700–c. 1500: Hostage, Captive, Prisoner of
then only made possible by the seventh-century ‘world crisis’, even though the Arab conquests are often said to have had the opposite effect, of breaking the ties that bound together the Mediterranean world.

It is worth spending some time revisiting this interpretation, for alternative views are now possible. Above all, it must be noted that we cannot be certain of Theodore’s life before 668, particularly how he arrived in Rome. There were certainly refugees in the imperial West, but we should be more wary in applying this label on any and all Greeks present in the city, the vast majority of whom we know very little about. Among other travellers to Rome in the seventh century, beyond the familiar circle of Maximus the Confessor frequently referenced here, we can find a certain Tychikos, a Greek ex-soldier who allegedly travelled to Rome to study c. 618. Similarly, Theocharistos, a participant in the Lateran Synod and a monk who is otherwise indistinguishable from Maximus and his fellow Greek monks in the West, is mentioned incidentally in the *Record of the Trial* as the brother of the exarch of Ravenna. Theodore of Tarsus of course does not appear to possess any link to the imperial aristocracy, but the example of Theocharistos does mean that we have to be more cautious about the future archbishop’s background. Without further evidence, it is perhaps more prudent to consider the uncertainty involved, all the while still recognising Theodore’s exceptional mobility.

Regardless of how Theodore joined the anti-monotheletes, whether as a refugee in Italy who shared Maximus and his companions’ experiences or a traveller who journeyed to Rome for other now-lost reasons, it seems clear that the learned Cilician played a major role in the movement. Aside from Theodore’s probable appearance in the subscription list of the Lateran Synod, in March 680 Pope Agatho also specifically named Theodore as a noted expert on this issue, which surely speaks volumes about his involvement in 649.

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150 *Acts of the Lateran Synod* (Riedinger, 57), and *Record of the Trial*, 108–9 (Allen and Neil, 21); Jankowiak and Booth, ‘New Date-List’, 27.
151 *Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople* (Riedinger, 132–3). Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 78, suggests that the prominent place of ‘Theodorus monachus’ in the subscription list of the Lateran Synod was a signal of his importance, but as there are two monks named Theodore in the list, we cannot determine which monk was Theodore of Tarsus. A monk’s position on the list is also not an indicator of the signatory’s importance, for Maximus the monk (presumably Maximus the
As we will see, the choice of Theodore as the new head of the Anglo-Saxon church by Vitalian only confirms this, but the process reported by Bede was rather convoluted. The pope first selected Hadrian, a North African abbot who had already been on multiple embassies to Francia on behalf of the emperor.\footnote{As before, Lapidge’s contention in \emph{Biblical Commentaries}, 92, that Hadrian was a refugee from Cyrenaica and a native Greek speaker, remains in doubt. M. A. Handley, ‘Disputing the End of African Christianity’, in A. H. Merrills (ed.), \emph{Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa} (Aldershot, 2004), 291–310, at 296n38, correctly notes that we cannot be so specific; likewise, Conant, \emph{Staying Roman}, 341n159.} Indeed, during his later journey to England in 668 he would even be detained by a Frankish mayor, Ebroin, who apparently suspected that the North African abbot was involved in an imperial plot with the Anglo-Saxons against the Franks.\footnote{Bede, \emph{Ecclesiastical History}, 4.1 (Lapidge, 2.168).} Although there is little else to say about this obscure event, Ebroin’s paranoia was certainly justified and is increasingly recognised as such: Constans was based in Italy and had conducted campaigns against the Lombards and the Slavs in the 660s, meaning that the neighbouring Franks were inevitably drawn into the calculations of the emperor.\footnote{Esders, ‘Konstans II, die Sarazenen und die Reiche des Westens’, 215, Bischoff and Lapidge, \emph{Biblical Commentaries}, 131, and Levison, \emph{England and the Continent}, 13–4. Cf. A. Gautier, ‘Pourquoi Ébroïn se méfiait-il de l’abbé Hadrien? Autour d’un épisode des années 660’, in L. Jégou et al. (eds.), \emph{Faire lien. Aristocratie, réseaux et échanges compétitifs. Mélanges en l’honneur de Régine Le Jan} (Paris, 2015), 55–62, which emphasises struggles within the Frankish aristocracy as Ebroin’s primary motive for detaining Hadrian.} Even before Theodore was selected by Vitalian, we can already see that imperial history cannot be examined separately from the ecclesiastical history of the post-Roman West.

Hadrian apparently refused the pope’s offer, first proposing an aged monk as an alternative before offering Theodore as a possibility, which in the context of his service to the emperor can be seen as a pro-imperial suggestion to remove a potential troublemaker, one with a history of dissent, from Rome. Significantly, Bede also recorded that Hadrian was to be sent along with Theodore to ensure that the Cilician did not introduce anything contrary to the true faith, ‘in the Greek manner’, to the Anglo-Saxon church, which is perhaps a veiled warning against monotheletism.\footnote{Bede, \emph{Ecclesiastical History}, 4.1 (Lapidge, 2.166–8). M. Lapidge, ‘The Career of Archbishop Theodore’, in M. Lapidge (ed.), \emph{Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on His Life and Influence} (Cambridge, 1995), 1–29, at 25–6, interprets ‘in the Greek manner’ to refer to the dyothelete doctrine held by Maximus the Confessor, but this seems to me to be an implausible reconstruction.} This is however unlikely to be correct, for it seems implausible that Theodore’s ‘orthodoxy’ could have been under question, least of all by Hadrian, his right-hand

Confessor) was placed near the end.
man upon their arrival in England. It is worth noting here then that in Bede’s earlier narrative of the same story, as found in his *History of the Abbots*, Theodore was chosen by Vitalian as the first and only candidate, with Hadrian tagging along as an advisor.\(^{156}\)

Although it is impossible to confirm or deny either account purely through Bede’s words, a look at the context for Theodore’s appointment certainly suggests that it was a deliberate choice, not one affected by worry for his potential ‘heretical’ leanings or, as Jankowiak argues, because Theodore was the candidate of last resort.\(^{157}\) From Vitalian’s biography in the *Liber Pontificalis*, there is a particularly virulent denunciation of Constans, whose stay in Sicily was allegedly accompanied by unacceptable tax rises for the inhabitants of Italy.\(^{158}\) This is of course a later retelling of earlier events, but there are other telltale signs of anti-monothelete discontent. By 667, the course of the ‘Mediterranean world war’ between the Romans and the Arabs had shifted considerably. This is because it is now certain that the First Arab Siege of Constantinople did not last for four years in the 670s, as historians had thought for centuries. If we follow Marek Jankowiak’s recent reconstruction, the siege instead took place in 668, with a blockade beginning in autumn 667.\(^{159}\) An alternative reading published in 2016 by Vivien Prigent meanwhile suggests that it occurred at some point between 669 and 671.\(^{160}\)

Regardless of whom we follow for the date of the Arab siege of Constantinople, the sense of crisis within the empire must have been profound, for the preceding Arab offensives had already led to the revolt of a Roman general in Asia Minor in 667 and the next year in July Constans was himself assassinated in Sicily, presumably a result of his seemingly illogical stay in the West while the eastern frontier, or even the capital, was in flames. Indeed, as a man with dyothelete sympathies, Theodore of Kolonia, appears to have held significant power in Constantinople while the emperor was absent, one is certainly tempted to agree with Prigent’s hypothesis that Constans’ murder was orchestrated from deep within the imperial court.\(^{161}\) The fact that Theodore of Tarsus was accompanied to England by

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\(^{156}\) Bede, *History of the Abbots*, 3 (Grocock and Wood, 28).
\(^{158}\) *Liber Pontificalis*, 78.4 (Duchesne, 1.344).
\(^{159}\) Jankowiak, ‘First Arab Siege of Constantinople’. This account is followed in Haldon, *The Empire That Would Not Die*, 42–3.
\(^{160}\) Prigent, ‘Des pères et des fils’.
\(^{161}\) Theophanes, *Chronicle*, A.M. 6160 (de Boor, 351); Prigent, ‘La Sicile de Constant II’, 175–7.
Hadrian could be yet another clue of the papacy’s dissension, for if Bede is correct in noting Hadrian’s role as an ex-imperial ambassador to Gaul and the abbot’s suggestion of the dissident Theodore to the pope, one might suppose that another servant of Constans II had now turned against him, setting the stage nicely for the emperor’s assassination. A rising wave of discontent in the late 660s would also provide a neat explanation for Vitalian’s delayed choice for Canterbury, for he had known of the Anglo-Saxons’ request since 655/6 – whereas before late 667 he could not act unchallenged, by then the empire was embroiled in a new crisis, a crisis that perhaps provided an opening for the pope to appoint a known dissident to an important see loyal to Rome.

As already noted, the anti-monotheletes’ networks were likewise renewed from 664 onwards, which coincided with the spectacular success of turning the patriarchate of Jerusalem against Constantinople. It is then similarly remarkable that other sympathisers also decided to honour their exiled heroes in Crimea and the Caucasus before August 668. In the West, if we follow Bayer’s dating for the first recension of the Merovingian Life of Eligius, then we can even say sometime in the 660s Audoin of Rouen was writing an account of Martin’s ordeal in the presence of an eyewitness of the pope’s exile. These clues are certainly scattered and unimpressive on their own, but taken together they do hint at a network of dissidents being reactivated during a renewed military crisis.

Theodore’s road to Canterbury reinforces this interpretation, for he and his companion Hadrian encountered on the way three Frankish bishops: Emmo of Sens, Faro of Meaux, and Agilbert of Paris – bishops who all possessed some degree of connection with the previously mentioned network that included Wilfrid. Faro was in particular a well-placed bishop who was a friend of Audoin and had granted a privilege to his monastery at Rebais, which provides a tangible material tie to the circle of Frankish sympathisers identified previously. Of course, political alignments are not so easily decided simply by someone’s friends or their family

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162 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 4.1 (Lapidge, 2.166–8).
164 Bede, Ecclesiastical History 4.1 (Lapidge, 2.168). Emmo was similarly interested in monastic reform, while Faro was Agilbert’s relative: Wood, ‘Continental Journeys’, 205. These individuals’ connections to Kent and Wilfrid are also highlighted in Gautier, ‘Pourquoi Ébroïn se méfiait-il de l’abbé Hadrien?’, 58–61.
165 Fox, Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul, 71–3, and Fouracre and Gerberding, Late Merovingian France, 149.
connections, but in this case we can be relatively confident, for Agilbert’s position is far clearer. Given Agilbert’s role at Whitby, in consecrating Wilfrid, and his association with a possible Roman priest, the bishop of Paris’s reception in 668 of a papal appointee is in all probability a move that reaffirmed their common support for the heir of St Peter.

The same pattern of co-operation with known advocates of Roman doctrinal positions continued into England, for it was surely not a coincidence that when Theodore finally arrived, Wilfrid’s fortunes were revived. Typically for this troublesome advocate of papal primacy, Wilfrid was then in internal exile. His elevation to the bishopric of Northumbria in 664 had seemingly displeased the king and another was appointed in Wilfrid’s place; after strategically staying in Gaul to avoid trouble, Wilfrid returned to Northumbria, but not as its bishop. Upon his arrival, Theodore apparently amicably moved the existing bishop to a seat elsewhere, in order to replace him with Wilfrid – a convenient story that presumably obscures the political dealings that lay behind such a transfer. At the very least, it would be safe to presume that Theodore was the crucial figure in the machinations leading up to Wilfrid’s restoration. We should not imagine that there was a grand plan by the papacy to manoeuvre its allies into positions of power, but the multiplicity of links between these two men can only have contributed to their alliance at that moment.

In these circumstances, and with the knowledge that Vitalian would later officially break with Constantinople c. 670, we are surely justified to state that there were anti-monothelete forces at work in 667. However, it was not directed at Theodore of Tarsus, as Bede implied, but instead at Constans. Moreover, although the appointment of a member of the anti-monothelete circle within the empire to England may at first seem immaterial to events in the East, it can also be seen as yet another indication of their network’s survival. This group of pro-papal partisans had evidently not been broken by the exiles of their leaders, but had instead continued the fight. Most extraordinarily, by the end of the decade in distant England, two figures acquainted with the monothelete controversy, whether directly or indirectly, stood at the head of the Anglo-Saxon church.

166 Stephen, Life of Wilfrid, 14 (Colgrave, 30).
167 Ibid., 15 (Colgrave, 32); Bede, Ecclesiastical History 4.2 (Lapidge, 2.170–4).
Epilogue: The Sixth Ecumenical Council

To bring this thesis full circle, we can turn to the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680–1, in many ways the culmination of the events discussed here. It was the final vindication of the anti-monotheletes and once again characters from across European Christendom were drawn into the story. Having again been deposed in 678, Wilfrid travelled to Rome to appeal to the pope. By then Theodore of Tarsus had also turned against the Northumbrian and sent his own envoy to Rome, presumably to oppose Wilfrid’s appeal.168 The precise manoeuvrings remain unclear in England and Rome, though Cubitt is probably correct to suggest that a bargain was eventually struck between the two pro-Roman figures.169 In any case, Wilfrid emerged triumphant (in papal eyes, at least). He stayed in the city for a while longer, for in March 680 Wilfrid took his place at a synod in Rome, a crucial part of Pope Agatho’s preparation for the upcoming ecumenical council in Constantinople.170 The Anglo-Saxon’s presence in Rome at this crucial juncture not only troubled a Greek scribe, as noted at the very beginning of this thesis, but succinctly sums up the argument made here, that events in England, and Western Europe more generally, remain helpful for reconstructing imperial history.

Agatho also drew on other resources at his disposal. He had, for instance, asked Theodore of Tarsus to return to the empire to help with the anti-monothelete cause.171 Evidently, the papacy had sought the intervention of one of its loyal partisans as the anti-monotheletes manoeuvred to gain an advantage in the ecumenical council. This is also the clearest demonstration that Theodore was not an isolated figure sent to Britain to be forgotten about, as his skills were clearly still remembered in Rome more than a decade after he left for Canterbury. This request is then a testament to the importance of the eastern network examined here, for it seems appropriate that someone once aligned with Maximus was now invited to return for the final repudiation of monotheletism.

169 Cubitt, ‘St Wilfrid’, 329; cf. the different interpretation offered in Jankowiak, *Essai d’histoire politique du monothélsme*, 404–11. Note also Jankowiak’s comments on 395–8, where he posits that Pope Donus, Agatho’s predecessor, had purged the most intransigent Greek monks in Rome before attempting to reconcile with Constantinople, which is perhaps an indication of a political shift after Donus’ death to Agatho’s actively dyothelete policy.
171 Ibid. (Riedinger, 132–3).
Theodore did not, in the end, return to the empire, but perhaps someone he knew, or at least someone in his circle of allies, did travel to the imperial capital, for in the *Acts of the Third Council of Constantinople* we encounter a certain Leontios, a deacon and monk from the Cellna Nova monastery in Rome who served as a papal envoy to the council. Cella Nova was where Maximus and, just possibly, Moschus had once dwelled, and it is certainly tempting to imagine that Leontios was one of their followers. This would be an entirely speculative suggestion, if the same Leontios has not been proposed to be the author of the Greek *Life of Gregory of Agrigento*, a novelistic retelling of a sixth-century saint’s career and in which Gregory the Great loomed large as an admired figure – a fondness shared, as noted previously, by other members of the Moschan circle. Although Maximus’ name was never mentioned in the council itself, we might therefore suppose that his network’s legacy continued to shape events.

On a grander scale, Rome’s cause had also been helped by Jerusalem’s defection to the dyotheletes, thanks to the now unrecoverable campaigns of anti-monothelete activists in Palestine, which left only the monothelete patriarch of Antioch, Makarios, to defend this ‘heresy’. It is likewise intriguing to read Michael the Syrian’s account of Agatho and Theodore of Kolonia colluding together in preparing for the council, for if this anecdote is historical, then the pope had reached out to a known dyothelete sympathiser active in Constantinople since the 650s to bolster Rome’s chances of overturning monotheletism. Viewed from this perspective, Rome was not yet a disgruntled city on the western fringes of the empire, but remained a city in contact with its allies in the East. Even the losers of this struggle remain tied to the story. George of Resh’aina, author of a polemical *Life* criticising Maximus the Confessor, was nonetheless one of Sophronius’ disciples and no doubt vociferously condemned the dyotheletes after 681 from a uniquely personal angle.

In the West, it should not be surprising to learn that besides Wilfrid, the

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172 Ibid. (Riedinger, 764–5).
175 George of Resh’aina, *Life of Maximus*, 5 (Brock, 315).
Roman synod of 680 was also attended by two Frankish bishops, Felix of Arles and Deodatus of Toul, a deacon named Taurinus from Toulon, as well as Bishop Mansuetus of Milan from the Lombards. Stephen’s Life of Wilfrid too had mentioned Deodatus’ journey to Rome, but implied that the bishop was only Wilfrid’s guide to Rome, which seems unlikely given the office held by Deodatus.

To see the bishop of Toul instead as the royal envoy of Dagobert II of Austrasia is surely more plausible, especially as Arles was situated in the kingdom of Neustria-Burgundy, making it rather appropriate to see Felix and Deodatus as envoys from their respective kingdoms. If Ian Wood is correct to suggest that a forged letter from Pope Agatho to the archbishop of Vienne was still based on a genuine document, then we even have evidence that Rome thought it important enough to inform the Franks of the deposition of Makarios of Antioch after the council.

Among the Lombards, from Paul the Deacon we learn that Mansuetus of Milan had commissioned a letter on ‘correct belief’ that played a role in the Constantinopolitan council, which is perhaps indicative of his importance in Rome as well. The Visigoths are not known to have been involved in the preparation for the repudiation of monotheletism, but they certainly knew about the ecumenical council’s aftermath, for Rome had asked in 683 for councils to be held in Spain to agree to its decisions. The Visigoths’ response to the pope’s request was not received well, but the point remains that Spain had figured in the minds of the bishops of Rome at this particular moment.

In short, the available evidence is suggestive of a significant mobilisation of western support from the ‘barbarian’ kingdoms beyond the empire, all of which surely built upon the papacy’s connections from the previous decades. The western presence at Constantinople was admittedly limited only to attendees from Italy, but as western bishops always had a minimal presence in ecumenical councils, this is perhaps to be expected and so is not a particularly strong indication of western disinterest. Indeed, when these clues are considered alongside other telltale signs
of papal machinations in the East, we can make the case that Rome and the empire’s horizons still encompassed both the Latin and Greek wings of the church. In ecclesiastical terms, little had changed since the age of Gregory the Great.

Contemporary disagreements, whether local or transregional, were of course legion, but they should not overshadow the connections examined here. As argued throughout, the course of papal history and the monothelete controversy ought to be seen in its full European context. Without the missionary impulse within the Roman Empire, particularly among Gregory the Great’s eastern allies, the Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England would have taken place very differently. Nor could we neglect the gathering of Greek monks during the empire’s darkest hour, for the road to the Lateran Synod was paved by the many individuals who criss-crossed the Mediterranean. Perhaps most importantly, the analysis of the last two chapters has made it clear just how much relevant material can be pulled from a disparate pool of sources often studied in isolation, making it possible to reconstruct more nuanced narratives of Roman, post-Roman, and papal histories. Far from distinct, isolated entities, as one might think when considering the narrative histories of either, the worlds of Wilfrid and the emperors of Constantinople were instead one, even at the end of late antiquity.

Constantinople had little impact in England, Gaul, and Italy.
Conclusions

Throughout this thesis, the argument has been made that papal history can be retold as the history of its networks. Rather than focusing on papal biographies or the papacy’s institutional developments, the emphasis instead has been on the connections between particular individuals, wider cultural trends, and how the debates Rome engaged in were experienced elsewhere. In places, the arguments presented here certainly would appear to have had very little to do with Rome, but given the horizons of late-antique popes, that is perhaps to be expected. After all, it is only through surveying events from Egypt to Northumbria and between Visigothic Spain and caliphal Palestine that we can recover a fuller sense of these bishops’ experiences. The popes of late antiquity were all things to all people, at once leaders, competitors, and models to be admired from afar, and they too had surveyed the full length of (Chalcedonian) Christendom and dealt with its many problems concurrently.

By investigating the sources for both Gregory the Great and his successors, it becomes possible to construct a more nuanced interpretation of changes and continuity between the sixth and seventh centuries. The world of Gregory was indeed a different one to the world encountered by Wilfrid, but we should not gloss over the similarities either. The dramatic changes of the seventh century, most notably the unprecedented success of the Arab conquests, had nonetheless allowed the continuity of previous trends, for crises were as good a motivator as any for moving across the empire and beyond. Moreover, just as in the sixth century, the papacy remained an institution bound to the empire, engaging consistently in dialogue and disputes with their friends and foes in the eastern Mediterranean. In the first chapter, for example, I considered Gregory’s similarities with his fellow patriarchs, an approach that remained relevant for later popes, whether the much-maligned Honorius or the honoured Martin. John Moschus, whose words illustrate so much of what we know about eastern Roman monasticism, provided another point of continuity, for his friends and disciples shared his devotion to the Eternal City, even as New and Old Rome drifted apart over the monothelete controversy.

In the West, a coherent narrative of interactions between the ‘barbarian’ kingdoms and the empire can likewise be told from the reign of Maurice to that of Constans II. The Gregorian mission was a crucial moment in Anglo-Saxon history,
but viewed from a Mediterranean perspective, it takes on greater significance, for the pope’s efforts aligned well with the wider missionary impulse of the 590s that had so expanded the reach of imperial Christianity. Tales of conversion under Heraclius, whether under Amandus in Ghent or Birinus in Wessex, can likewise be situated in a larger late-antique story. This is not to say that the West was always so receptive. As I noted in chapter three, the Franks and Visigoths’ responses to the Lateran Synod were complex. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that many bishops from these kingdoms found much to admire in Rome. On the other hand, events in Rome could not have inspired confidence among western observers for the rebellious pope’s chances. Much more can still be said for the dramatic events around 650, not least through a more comprehensive exploration of the internal politics of Spain and Gaul, but the reconstruction proposed here is a step towards integrating church histories of the East and West together.

The struggles of Pope Martin, Maximus the Confessor, and Wilfrid of York form the final component of the over-arching story presented here. Their experiences were certainly very different, but their evident enthusiasm for the causes they embraced and the many disputes they took part in nonetheless allows us to investigate the diverse range of views present in their world. Using these examples, the final two chapters repeatedly argued against placing emperors, popes, and their subjects into firm categories. In the process, a new interpretation of the monothelete controversy is offered, one that takes into account the persistent struggles of the anti-monotheletes after 653 and the resistance’s lasting impact on the life of Wilfrid. Ian Wood recently argues in his analysis of Wilfrid’s connections to Gaul and Rome that ‘it was a world of networks […] that lay behind the development of the Northumbrian Church in the late seventh century’. By considering also the eastern evidence, we can expand this interpretation further still to incorporate the faltering Roman Empire. While Maximus never knew Wilfrid, and Wilfrid cannot have heard anything more than anecdotes of the Palestinian monk, their stories were still intertwined thanks to the circles they moved in.

Networks, or more simply the lives of individuals, cannot of course be limited to a certain time and place. 681 was an important year in many ways, but the stories charted here did not end there. Future studies are still needed to examine

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1 Wood, ‘Continental Journeys’, 211.
these seventh-century developments over the longue durée, for the same questions raised here over the extent of cross-cultural exchange can be asked of the eighth century and beyond. Among the many possible examples, the most extraordinary is perhaps the mobility of the words written by Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Jerome. The former’s Apocalypse, first composed in Syriac in the late seventh century, quickly proliferated, with Greek, Latin, and Armenian translations all completed by 727. A study of the text’s transmission and its translators would surely provide an important contrast to the well-known decline in long-distance trade. Similarly, although little is known about the contemporaneous Pseudo-Jerome, their Cosmography presented a unique perspective on their world – all the more so if the tentative reconstruction of their biography posited by Michael Herren, of the author journeying from the imperial Balkans to Gaul, England, and finally Italy, stands the test of time.

Given the scope of this thesis, it must also be emphasised that the arguments made here are far from the last word on any of the topics considered. More, for example, can be made of the local context for these struggles. The patriarchate of Antioch emerges as a crucial institution throughout this period and a fuller study of its leaders and people, mirroring Ewa Wipszycka’s magisterial study of their Alexandrian equivalent, would strengthen further our understanding of late-antique Christendom. For Merovingian Gaul, the recent wave of studies on Frankish connections with the Mediterranean will only shed further light on the context for Amandus, Eligius, and Fredegar, for they were surely not alone in their interest in the empire and its church. Similarly at the edge of the world, Anglo-Saxon England’s place in a ‘Global Middle Ages’ remains a lively topic, whether in the age of Bede or beyond.

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4 Wipszycka, The Alexandrian Church.
5 Fischer and Wood, Western Perspectives on the Mediterranean, Esders et al., The Merovingian Kingdoms in Mediterranean Perspective, and P. Bockius et al. (eds.), The Merovingian Kingdoms and the Mediterranean World: Revisiting the Sources (London, Forthcoming).

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A significant lacuna in this thesis, the lack of engagement with Syriac, Coptic, and Arabic sources, must be noted as well. These texts remain an untapped resource for medievalists to examine, whether for comparative purposes or, more excitingly, for studying personal and ideological connections that crossed these linguistic barriers. Although the investigation here has focused almost exclusively on Latin and Greek sources, with texts in other languages approached only in translation, hints still emerge of a thoughtful dialogue between Chalcedonians, miaphysites in Egypt, and East Syrian Christians in Persia. An in-depth study of how these communities viewed each other and the West is then surely to be desired.

In more political terms, it is also only through these non-Greek sources that we can write a new comprehensive history of Constans II, whose reign increasingly appears to be the crucial turning point in the seventh century, but whose portrayal in the scholarship has remained thoroughly negative until very recently. The emperor’s afterlife in particular deserves consideration, for an intriguing Latin text, the Vaticinium of Constans, perhaps written in eleventh-century Italy, proclaimed a Constans to be the long-predicted Last World Emperor and which may be indicative of the emperor’s lasting legacy. In distant China, we learn from later dynastic histories of the Tang that two embassies from Constantinople during Constans’ reign had visited the imperial court. Combined with recent revisions of his interventions in the monothelete controversy, there is no better time than now to rehabilitate the reputation of this shadowy emperor.

The last suggestion is also a reminder that this study remains a very old-fashioned one, as it focused exclusively on the thoughts and careers of men (and unfortunately only men) at the top of the political and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Archaeology, another neglected discipline, provides an essential remedy and would have greatly strengthened the argument here if the full range of the available archaeological evidence is also considered. Above all, new advances in isotopic

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9 Most recently, Duggan, Links to Late Antiquity, provides an essential corrective to studies of trade links between Britain and the Mediterranean, revisions that will be particular useful to students of the
analysis have uncovered the surprising extent of mobility available to individuals across the social spectrum, particularly recent studies of Mediterranean-born individuals buried in Britain from the fifth to the ninth century; migrations that were, naturally, entirely unattested in the written evidence.10

More generally, by writing a history of the seventh century through individuals, how the argument here fits into grander narratives of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages remains an open question. Already, new possibilities have been raised during the writing of this thesis. To take just two examples, we can turn to the recent publications of John Haldon and Peter Brown. Having established a better sense of Maximus the Confessor’s social circle and influences, the next natural step is to tackle these larger questions.

Haldon detects in the words of Maximus a marked similarity with later developments in the West, for there the ‘ideas expressed in the works of Sophronius of Jerusalem and of Maximus the Confessor became the political and ecclesiastical reality – a thriving Christian community that did not require the existence of the Roman state’.11 Byzantine political theology has yet to be compared in detail with western, particularly Frankish, developments, and future investigations of this tantalising suggestion by Haldon will surely be productive for specialists of both the East and the West, for Maximus’ entanglements with the papacy provided a plausible route for eastern ideas to filter westwards.12

Peter Brown, whose work on late antiquity provided the foundation for much of what is argued here, has likewise raised an intriguing possibility: that North

Gregorian mission and its aftermath.


Africa, often the most neglected part of the western Mediterranean for medievalists, was ‘an up-to-date world of warriors and priests’ that ‘the last Merovingians and Charles Martel would have recognized with ease’ on the eve of its conquest by the Arabs.\textsuperscript{13} The availability of sources is far from ideal, but given the many revisions proposed recently, the time is ripe for a detailed comparison between Merovingian Gaul and North Africa, both to test Brown’s hypothesis and to reintegrate the region into histories of Latin Christendom.\textsuperscript{14}

At its heart, this thesis is an attempt to survey well-trodden ground through a transregional and transcultural perspective, and a final note must be made of how this study fits into recent developments in the field of global history. Situated in a global context, the arguments made here are not unusual. The focus on networks is certainly not out of place, for their role is well recognised.\textsuperscript{15} Nor is the scope particularly impressive next to the far-ranging examples explored by comparative historians or the fascinating connections detected by historians of a ‘Eurasian Late Antiquity’\textsuperscript{16}. England and Gaul are of course far from understudied, but this attempt to place them within a larger story, to revisit Latin sources with the help of Greek texts, has perhaps demonstrated the possibilities offered by such a perspective. By situating Greek monasticism in its Mediterranean context, the world of Moschus, Sophronius, and Maximus is similarly fleshed out further. Despite the limitations, it is then still tempting to speculate that this inclusive approach to the sources would not have surprised the bishops and monks studied here, for their own horizons had likewise extended far beyond their homes.


\textsuperscript{15} Belich, Darwin, and Wickham, ‘The Prospect of Global History’, 14–21.

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