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Doctoral Dissertation

Family Double Monasteries in the Fourth and the Fifth Centuries: An Inquiry into the Theological Roots, Social Context, and Early Evolution of an Old Practice

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To my father

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"Therefore it remains for us not to seem ungrateful or unworthy of such a kindness.[1]" With these words of Basil the Great I would like begin the joyful duty of expressing my gratitude towards all those who guided me and stood by me throughout the long and sinuous journey of my doctoral studies, which now reaches its destination.

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[1] Basile de Césarée, *Lettre 26. À Césaire, frère de Grégoire*, ed. and trans. Yves Courtonne (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1957), 63.
"Λείπεται δὴ οὖν μὴ ἀχαρίστους ἡμᾶς ὀφθῆναι μηδ᾽ ἀναξίους τῆς τοσαύτης εὐεργεσίας."

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Budapest,

15 May 2018 – Feast of Saint Pachomius

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Abbreviations

G1	*The First Greek Life of Saint Pachomius*, translated in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 297-424.
Inst.	*Praecepta et Instituta* of the Pachomian Rules in Jerome's translation, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 169-174.
Iud.	*Praecepta atque Iudicia* of the Pachomian Rules in Jerome's translation, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 175-179.
Jer. Pref.	Jerome's *Preface* to translation of the Pachomian Rules, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 141-144.
Leg	*Praecepta ac Leges* of the Pachomian Rules in Jerome's translation, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 181-183.
LR	The *Longer Responses* of Basil's *Asketikon*, translated in *The Asketikon of St. Basil the Great*, trans. Anna M. Silvas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 153-269.
Praec.	*Praecepta* of the Pachomian Rules in Jerome's translation, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 145-167.
RBas	*Regula Basilii*, Rufinus' Latin translation of Basil's *Small Asketikon*, in *The Rule of Saint Basil in Latin and English. A Revised Critical Edition*, trans. Anna M. Silvas (Collegeville, MN/US: Liturgical Press, 2013).
S1	*The First Sahidic Life of Saint Pachomius*, translated in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 425-443.
S10	*The Tenth Sahidic Life of Saint Pachomius*, translated in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 450-457.
SBo	*The Bohairic Life of Saint Pachomius*, translated in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 23-296.
SR	The *Shorter Responses* of Basil's *Asketikon*, translated in *The Asketikon of St. Basil the Great*, trans. Anna M. Silvas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 271-451.

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Introduction

On Saturday evening, the bells of the Holy Trinity monastic retreat at Panorama announce the beginning of the Vespers. The monks living there host the service. Crossing the road from their own monastic retreat, dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, a community of nuns joins.[1] After the Vespers, in the same church, the abbot holds a homily for the monks, the nuns, and the visitors. More than 2500 km away, in Essex, in the monastery dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, another group of nuns crosses the road which separates their quarter from the monks' residence, heading to the commonly held Vespers.[2]

These two monasteries, although situated in astonishingly different environments, have in common a particularity. Each of them hosts a brotherhood and a sisterhood who live in close proximity, on the opposite sides of a road. In addition, the two groups co-participate at least to part of the liturgical life and daily routine of their communities. In the first period of their existence, each of the two communities had a common confessor for the monks and for the nuns, in the person of its founder.

Back in Greece, the monastery of Sparmos, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, has been sheltering for a few decades four monks, all of them siblings. The place had been uninhabited for eighty years, when the four brothers decided to live the monastic life there. Lately, their mother has become resident of the community.[3]

[1] The community's founder was Elder Symeon Kragiopoulos (1926-2015). After more than twenty years of spiritual work in different churches of Thessaloniki, he decided to retreat in a remote place. Having found a parcel in the outskirts of Thessaloniki, he initially built there four cells, where he lived together with some of his co-workers. He also organized an external church dedicated to the Annunciation. In order to better serve the needs of the believers, he built a larger church dedicated to the Three Theologians (John the Theologian, Gregory the Theologian, and Saint Symeon the New Theologian). A significant date for the monastery itself is the Pentecost day of the year 1976, when the construction of the church of the Holy Trinity started. In the 1980s, an increasing number of young men and women started to visit regularly Elder Symeon. Some of the men lived with him and took part in the liturgical and working program of the small community which he guided. Since young women were also desiring to live according to the same monastic schedule, in 1987 Elder Symeon built, on the opposite side of the road, the retreat dedicated to the Nativity of the Theotokos. After Elder Symeon's passing in 2015, the new abbot, Elder Ioannis, became the confessor of the nuns.
http://www.agia-triada-panorama.gr/, accessed November 22, 2017.

[2] The Ecumenical Patriarchate has under its jurisdiction the oldest Orthodox monastic community in England, at Tolleshunt Knights, Essex, dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. Its history, though, started in Paris in the 1950s. After his departure from Mount Athos, Elder Sophrony Sakharov, the disciple of Saint Silouan the Athonite, moved to Paris to a Russian old-age home and assisted the priest there. Some nuns were living in the same house. Once, two men sought Elder Sophrony, desiring to live the monastic life. They were allowed to live in the house, eating the left-overs and practicing the Jesus prayer instead of the services mentioned in the liturgical books. Since by 1958 six men had already gathered around Elder Sophrony, he decided to create a separate monastic community. In spring 1959, the community emerged and was placed under the Metropolitan Anthony Bloom of Sourozh (belonging to the Patriarchate of Moscow). In 1965, Elder Sophrony moved the monastery under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Today the monastery groups around fifteen nuns and a few monks who participate together in many moments of the litugical life and who work together.
http://www.thyateira.org.uk/monastery-of-st-john-the-baptist/, accessed July, 1 2015.

[3] The history of the monastery begins in the Byzantine period, probably in the fourteenth century. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, it became an important liturgical school.

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A similar community, consisting of three monks and four nuns, is the main monastic center of the Syrian Christians in Holland. The eldest nun and the abbot in Mor Aphrem monastery are siblings and their cells are located in the same building, on the same corridor. The other monks and nuns live separately and divide their work.[4]

A monastic community comprising from the first years of its existence a group of monks and a group of nuns who live very close to each other might be surprising. It is surprising as well that a group of nuns has been incorporated into a male monastery. Equally interesting is a monastery whose members are kindred. First, canons that had been repeated in various synods, including the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (787), explicitly forbid a monastic arrangement in which monks and nuns intersect. However, the monasteries at Panorama and Essex were founded around an influential and charismatic spiritual leader in particular circumstances, which made impossible an initial thorough seclusion of monks and nuns. Probably in similar contexts, until the twentieth century, other such communities have been founded in places like Romania, Turkey (the Tur-Abdin region, among the Syrian communities), Lebanon, or Italy.

The aforementioned monasteries are neither singular examples of this sort, nor are they without precedent. Since the fourth century, communities of monks and nuns, members of the same families, have been founded constantly, in spite of several ecclesiastical laws which have banned them repeatedly. Scholars refer to the late antique and medieval communities with the generic term "double monasteries," which, however, acquired different connotations when used in different contexts and moments.[5]

My dissertation attempts to survey a particular instance in the emergence of this phenomenon. The beginning of the fourth century entailed profound transformations in the Christian world. After the status of Christianity changed from persecuted sect to recognized and favoured religion by the Roman State, an ascetic "revolution" spread through the Christian churches. During this century, Christian ascetics experimented with several spiritual lifestyles, in solitude or in common, influenced by biblical models and by different theological trends which they supported. Sometimes, several members of one family shared the ascetic enthusiasm. Within this framework, the present inquiry into the theological background, social context and early evolution of a practice which seems to be as old as monasticism itself begins.

http://greekorthodoxreligioustourism.blogspot.hu/2015/04/blog-post.html, accessed January, 16 2018.

[4] The monastery is also the siege of Archbishop Polycarpus Augin Aydin.
http://morephrem.com/en/geschiedenis-2/, accessed May, 1 2018.

[5] None of the aforementioned monasteries is referred to as a "double monastery," although, as the following chapters will show, much or each one's emergence, evolution, and liturgical life has similarities with the communities which this thesis is analyzing.

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A Historical, Theological, Ecclesiastical, and Social Problem

The fourth-century practice of male and female relatives living their ascetic vocation in proximity represents the core of my dissertation. More precisely, this work focuses on monastic communities sheltering both groups of ascetics, with the endorsement and under the supervision of their contemporary influential Church Fathers. The Church Fathers not only accepted, but also legitimized and supported them. Another common characteristic of them was that monks and nuns lived in seclusion, usually in different houses, sometimes separated by natural obstacles (such as rivers or mountains), and could reunite only in certain conditions. While Church Fathers wrote entire works which were meant to support their existence, at the same time other instances of ascetic man and women living more or less close to each other were strongly rejected and thoroughly criticized.

Thus, the "double monasteries" are not only seen as a factual reality in the history of monasticism. Instead, this thesis approaches them from a complex prism with a theological, a socio-economical, and an ecclesiastical side.

Previous Scholarship

When the first investigations of the early so-called "double monasteries" started, at the end of the nineteenth century, scholars were influenced in their approach by two realities. The first ones is related to the sources. Documents which attribute to certain communities the name "double monasteries" do not precede the sixth century and they use this terminology with a negatively charged meaning. Second, the religious appurtenance and nationality of the scholars who researched this topic impacted the way in which they approach this phenomenon. Strongly related to these coordinates, the methodologies used in their times in other fields of research (such as philology) made them apply certain schemes of investigation.

From the second half of the twentieth century, two scholarly fields reapproached the "double monasteries." Historical studies and Ecclesiastical Law regard "double monasteries" from slightly different angels. In this case also, even though not so obviously as in the previous phase of research, national lines and religious appurtenance had an influence on the methodology. Finally, in the last decades of the twentieth century, scholars have examined several aspects related to the daily life of the "double monasteries." They attempted to offer a narrower definition to this notion, at the same time introducing a typology of double-gender monasticism in which none of the notions besides the "double monastery" corresponds to a *terminus technicus* used in the sources. In general, "double monasteries" contrast with "mixed monasteries," "twin monasteries," or "neighbor monasteries," categories which receive slightly different definitions from scholar to scholar. As a general trend, the main criterion for differentiation among them is the proximity between monks and nuns. "Double

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monasticism" has also been regarded as a subtype of female monasticism in the Late Antique Egyptian environment, starting from the premise that there the landscape did not offer women enough security for living far from men's protection, and, thus, very few female monasteries existed in general. For Western medieval monasticism, some scholars have sought to contest the term "double monastery." For Late Antiquity in general and especially for the period preceding the sixth century, only one study has attempted to question the suitability of the term. Starting from an analysis of the first written attestation of "duplex monasterium" / "διπλοῦν μοναστήριον," in the *Novel* 123 of Justinian, this thesis shows that a category of the fourth-century "double monasteries" cannot be thoroughly defined, but it links this notion to certain communities which, according to their representations in the sources, displayed a set of common characteristics.

Besides these factors, for the Late Antique period, no study has investigated the emergence and dissemination of this phenomenon throughout the Christian world. Instead, scholars have preferred to research it diachronically and to focus their attention on certain regions. This thesis narrows down the chronological span of the previous studies, but goes beyond them by investigating in parallel the Christian West and the Christian East and by bridging them. Thus, it also follows the circulation of people, ideas, and norms and it can offer an image of the development and spread of "double monasteries."

Recent scholarship has increasingly devoted attention to the construction of gender in the written sources, revealing that the presence of female figures in ascetically oriented texts has more than pedagogical purposes. In addition to the attempt of offering examples worthy to be followed, the texts which paint the holy portraits of women have a broader agenda. Throughout the thesis, I rely on the recent conclusions regarding the functions of the texts and the way in which they impacted their audiences. In addition, all the analyses take into account a particularity: all the textual referrences to ascetic women were authored by men, who had a certain knowledge about them and, more importantly, were willing to convey a certain message through their projected images or discourses.

Methodology

An analysis of monasteries in which kindred monks and nuns chose the ascetic devotion triggers several methodological problems of various fields, including theology, philology, sociology, or gender studies. The notions of "family," "household," and "kinship," used in the context of Early Christianity, need to be explained. First, it must be stated that all of them are cultural constructions, which can receive meanings that make them overlap.[6] In this dissertation, "family" is used with a broad meaning, referring both to biologically kindred members and to a group established through

[6] Halvor Moxnes, "What is a Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families," in *Constructing Early Christian Families. Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 18

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marriage. In Late Antiquity, the household was the fundamental unit of society. It was concerned with the health and well-being of its members and its roles were to transmit its wealth from one generation to another and to care for its most exposed members, children, elderly, ill, or disabled. The interest for the household was, ideally, put above the personal interest. Thus, different generations co-worked for the survival of the household, trying to overcome threats which could have damaged its existence. Social networks between households also contributed to their continuity. Moreover, they "could balance needs and authority, while organizing housework, childcare, care for elderly, and financial assistance.[7]"

My dissertation has two main aims. All the monasteries that I will analyze emerged from family members, who had either blood relationships, or ties created through marriage. Moreover, all of them had a medium or a high social status and, sometimes, their members converted to asceticism in their own, rich households. Therefore, my first purpose is to follow the transformation of the family ties in parallel with the evolution of each community. The second aim of my investigation is to explain how this type of monastic *modus vivendi* was legitimized. The last half of the fourth century witnessed ardent theological debates on Christology, involving the legacy of Origen (ca. 185 - ca. 254), which impacted the ascetic movement. In these conditions, how did these "family double monasteries" win the 'ascetic competition' with other types of double-gender ascetic experiments, in which often supporters of Origenist ideas or of different trends of Arianism were involved?

Throughout this thesis, I will make a complete survey of the fourth-century "family double monasteries," which indicates not a small number of communities that need to be researched. Since the sources do not refer to them at equal length, I will analyze them according to the amount of information which has survived.

This inquiry starts, in chronological order, with the earliest family double monastery, the community in Tabennesi (Upper Egypt), founded in the first half of the fourth century by Pachomius (292-346).[8] It initially included a male monastery (joined, among others, for a while by his brother, John) and a female convent, built for his sister, Mary. Almost at the same time, a pious household in Annisa (Cappadocia) was transforming slowly into a monastery, catalyzed by Macrina the Younger (c. 327 – 19 July 379), "the fourth Cappadocian,[9]" the sister of famous Archbishop of Caesarea, Basil

[7] Sabine Huebner, *The Family in Roman Egypt. A Comparative Approach to Intergenerational Solidarity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2013), 3-4.

[8] Before 330. One cannot determine a precise chronology of the events in Pachomius' life, due to the complex context in which the sources from the Pachomian dossier were ellaborated and disseminated. See Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community*in Fourth-Century Egypt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 37-55. Armand Veilleux, "Pachomius," in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 6, ed. Aziz S. Atiya (New York: Macmillan, *1991)*.

[9] Together with her siblings, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, and with Gregory of Nazianzus. This characteristic is rightly given to her in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture. The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (London, 1993), 8.

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"the great," "the illuminator of the Cappadocians, or rather of the entire world[10]" (329 – September 378), of Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-394), "le fondateur de la théologie mystique,[11]" and of Peter of Sebasteia (c. 345-c. 391). According to Gregory of Nyssa,[12] thourgh her wisdom and personal example, Macrina determined her mother, Emmelia (?-371),[13] and her siblings to choose the monastic path. In the Holy Land, the Roman noblewomen Paula (5 May 347 - 26 January 404) and her daughter, Eustochium (c. 368-419/420),[14] together with their spiritual advisor, Jerome (c. 347-420),[15] and his brother, Paulinianus (c. 367-?),[16] founded in Bethlehem a monastery for monks and nuns.

According to the sources, spouses who severed their matrimonial relations after their weddings chronologically precede the community of Tabennesi. Some accounts mention that, about 313, Amon and his wife (whose name is unknown) decided not to consume their fresh marriage, but to live as siblings instead. They cohabitated for a number of years until Amon decided to move to Nitria.[17] In Cappadocia, not far from Annisa, Gorgonia (?-c. 370), the sister of Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-390),[18] is said to have persuaded her husband, Alypius, to stop their marriage bonds. Their decision entailed the conversion of all their household to monasticism. Basil of Caesarea might refer in some of his letters to other monastic spouses, who possibly had access to the community in Annisa.[19]

In Western Christianity, such couples are even better documented. About the 390s, Paulinus of Nola (c. 355-431) and his wife, Therasia (?-c.408),[20] started their own process of abandoning their

[10] "Βασίλειος, ὁ τῆς Καππαδοκῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ τῆς οἰκουμένης φωστήρ." Théodoret de Cyr, "*Lettre* 147," in *Correspondance*, vol. 3, ed. and trans. Yvan Azéma (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1965), 224.

[11] Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique. Doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, 2nd ed. (Aubier: Éditions Montaigne, 1944), 7.

[12] For a biography of Gregory see Anthony Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa* (London: Routledge, 1999): 1-15; Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, 2nded. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 52-54.

[13] Sources do not offer any consistent point of reference about Emmelia's birth date. One can place it in the first decade of the 300s, since she married Basil the Elder in the 320s. For a biography of Emmelia see Raymond van Dam, *Families and Friends* in Late Roman Cappadocia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 99-107.

[14] For a discussion about the relationship between Jerome, Paula, and her daughters see Andrew Cain (ed.), *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-36.

[15] For Jerome's biography see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975);Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013); Megan Hale *Williams, The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Andrew Cain and Josef Lössl (eds.), *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings, and Legacy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

[16] The only references about Paulinianus' life come from the pen of Jerome. Based on his testimonies, scholars were able to determine approximately his birth date, but it is impossible to determine his activities after Jerome's death. Moreover, no written account work has survived from Paulinianus. See Young Richard Kim, "Jerome and Paulinian, Brothers," *Vigiliae Christianae* 67 (2013): 517-530.

[17] Based on *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, Lucien Regnault places this event approximately in 320. See Lucien Regnault, "Amun," in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 1. However, this source and three other accounts which relate the story of Amon should be carefully considered, because of the chronological problems which they pose. See chapter 4.

[18] The last biography of Gregory of Nazianzus is included in Brian E. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1-60.

[19] Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 258, 292, 295, ed. and trans. Roy J. Deferrari (London: Heinemann, 1934).
Basile de Césarée, *Lettres*, ed. and trans. Yves Courtonne (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1961).

[20] For a brief account of Paulinus' life see Joseph T. Lienhard, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism: With a Study of the Chronology of His Works and Annotated Bibliography, 1879-1976* (Köln: Peter Hanstein, 1977), 24-32. See especially Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

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matrimonial relation in order to become a "monastic couple." Slowly they disposed of their possessions and established an influential community in Nola, from which their example spread and influenced other families to take a similar decision. Paulinus himself testifies for several other similar couples. Apronianus and Avita (who converted with their two children, Eunomia and Asterius), or Melania the Younger (c. 385-c. 439)[21] and her husband, Pinianus, are another well-known couple, whose trajectory towards becoming a monastic couple was, perhaps, the longest. The biographer of Melania informs us that, in 407, after having lost two children, Melania convinced Pinianus to renounce their matrimonial relations. After many years in which they struggled to sell their numerous possessions and dispose of their impressive wealth, they finally moved to the Holy Land, where they founded a monastic complex comprising a nunnery and a monastery for monks on the Mount of Olives.

The example of Paulinus might have also influenced Sulpicius Severus (c. 360-c. 420) and his wife, whose name remains unknown. About the community which they established little is known, but it is certain that one of its members was Sulpicius' mother-in-law, Bassula.[22]

Apart from the network created or inspired through the example of Paulinus and Therasia, the spouses Desiderius and Serenilla also became siblings in the Lord. Besides, by the years 420s, several monks from the island of Lerinum came to Nola and brought news about Honoratus (later bishop of Arles) and Eucherius, two senators who had renounced their functions. They reported that Honoratus had founded a monastery on the island and Eucherius (the future bishop of Lyons) was living there together with his wife and his two sons, Salonius and Veranius, in seclusion. [23]

Chapter 1 starts the investigation with Justinian's *Novels*, which records the earliest evidence for both terms "duplex monasterium" and "διπλοῦν μοναστήριον," used there in a negative context. Justinian forbids the foundation of new such communities and states that the existing ones should be separated and their wealth should be divided. Moreover, the text refers to family members, men and women, willing to become ascetics, who should live in separate monasteries. The chapter investigates the economic, social, political, and ecclesiastical context of this law and it shows that the meaning of the term "double monastery" remained ambiguous not only in the same era, but also for later legislators.

[21] Nicole Moine, "Melaniana,"*Recherches Augustiniennes* 15 (1980): 3-79.
[22] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 5.6, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (New York: Newman Press, 1966), 57.
Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 31.1, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (New York: Newman Press, 1967), 125-126.
Sulpice Sévère, "Troisième lettre, à Bassula, sur la mort et les funérailles de Saint Martin," in Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 3, 334-335.
[23] Sigrid H. Mratschek, "Multis enim notissima est sanctitas loci: Paulinus and the Gradual Rise of Nola as a Center of Christian Hospitality," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 4 (2001): 529-530.

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Thus, I argue that the term "double monastery," because of its later attestation and negative charge, is unsuitably used for describing fourth-century realities. Besides the chronological distance from Justinian's *Novels*, the fourth century was a formative period, in which the communities were in a continuous and slow transformation, generally from pious families to more organized and recognized ascetic settings. Besides, in different regions, monasticism emerged due to ascetics who followed different scriptural models. For example, in Egypt, the anchorites attempted to imitate the the prophets, while in Cappadocia, the community ruled by Macrina had as a model the example of the first community of Apostles in Jerusalem. Another regional difference consists in the organizational matrix of these communities (for example, as the following chapters will show, in Egypt it started rather from a single-gendered community, in competition with heremitism, while in Cappadocia it emerged rather from a pious family, including both men and women). This chapter also surveys the use of "double monastery" in the secondary literature, both in historical studies and in research pertaining to Church law. It also follows the integration of the concept of "family" in the fourth-century monasticism.

Chapter 2 discusses in details the methodological challenges posed by the primary sources. The archaeological evidence is thin and does not provide consistent new data to be compared with the written sources. By contrast, the latter proves to be most challenging. Their interpretation is complicated by their origin, process of elaboration, dissemination, and audience. The chapter discusses the main characteristics of each genre, taking into account that most of the sources are hybrid, having caracteristics belonging to more than one literary genre and that they are exclusively authored by male writers.

The aim of c**hapter 3** is best illustrated through an episode of the *Lausiac History*, whose protagonist is Evagrius of Pontus: "Three demons attacked him by day disguised as clerics, questioning him on the faith. And one said he was an Arian, the other an Eunomian, the third an Apollinarian; and he vanquished these in his wisdom by means of a few words.[24]" This story reveals the rich theological panorama of both Eastern and Western Christianity at the turn of the fifth century, but it is relevant even for the previous decades. Therefore, in this chapter I seek to investigate the context in which the family double monasteries emerged and evolved. The competitions held in the social arena, in the theological arena, and in the ecclesiastical arena are interrelated and impacted the evolution of these communities.

[24] Palladius, *The Lausiac History. A Critical Discussion Together with Notes on Early Egyptian Monasticism*, 38.11, 2nd ed., ed. Cuthbert Butler (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967).

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The Constantinian turn brought significant changes in the traditional social order. Church Fathers re-evaluated the Classical social values, negotiating between the expectations of the society and the Christian ethos to which they adhered. Their responses were expressed in certain views on marriage, celibacy, and gender division. The chapter also explores the household arrangements and the transformations of the villas into monastic dwellings. The social role of aristocratic households is yet another significant factor in the development of family double monasteries. Similar to the division between orthodox and heretic theological ideas, Church Fathers perceived the double-gender ascetic experiments as divided into the same two categories. Their acceptance or condemnation depended on the relations between the ascetic leaders and the episcopal authorities, which is the last topic that this chapter investigates.

Chapter 4 scrutinizes the evolution of family ties between members of the same ascetic household who either converted their own house to asceticism, or withdrew to other places. Kindred ascetics who became part of family double monasteries had initially two types of connections. Most of them were blood relatives, fact which implied a clear hierarchy between them, typical to the Roman household. Others, more rarely, were related through marriage. Therefore, I attempt to follow the evolution of these relationships in parallel with the development of the communities to which they belonged. I also attempt to follow the way in which an 'angelic family' could be enlarged, that is, how other ascetics were integrated in these groups of monks and nuns.

Chapter 5 analyses those elements which contributed to the closed seclusion and secluded closeness of the monks and the nuns in family double monasteries. Although comparative references are lacking, the sources offer relevant details for the way in which these communities managed to integrate in the monastic landscape of the second half of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century. The chapter discusses the rhetoric on landscape and building disposition in a monastic complex, the relations between siblings "in Christ," the construction of authority and spiritual power, the role of ascetic women as teachers of "philosophy," understood as the monastic life, and some liturgical practices influenced by the gender seclusion.

My work relies on and revises conclusions previously reached in my MA thesis, which explored the communitarian organization and the religious practices within the family double monasteries founded in Tabennesi, Annisa, and Bethlehem. It enlarges its scope by explaining the emergence of these communities in the context of interactive and sometimes clashing theological tenets, of a social competition, and of a challenging ecclesiastical environment. Another addition consists in analysing the transformation of the earthly family ties in parallel with the development of these communities.

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The survey on the earliest use of the term “double monastery” in the written evidence and of the previous scholarly contributions to this field are also new areas of investigations. Finally, one must ask why family double monasteries have continued to exist in spite of several ecclesiastical laws which banished them. On the other hand, it is obvious that, after a period of popularity, the interest in founding such communities decreased.

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I. Posing the Problem: "*Double*" and "*Family* Monasteries"? Terminology and Methodology

"the practice of placing [monks and nuns]
together under one head seems to be
as ancient as monasticism itself.[1]"

What is a fourth-century "double monastery"? How do the earliest sources describe such a community? What is the history of this term in scholarship? How was a family integrated into a fourth-century community of this type? By answering these questions, this chapter will achieve two main aims. First, it attempts to survey the scholarly use of a term whose meaning was ambiguous from the start. On the other hand, the attributes "family" and "double" added to the term "monastery" create a subcategory of ascetic institutions. Further, the chapter problematizes the assimilation of "double monastery" as a syntagm in modern scholarship, divided into two main areas of research and at times influenced by confessional or ethnic debates.

This chapter is one of the first attempts of reviewing a terminology which scholars apply to certain fourth-century monastic communities independently of their contemporary sources. As it seems, they have assigned to "double monasticism" a conventional meaning; to what extent is it consistent? This is the object of the first part of my survey.[2] For medieval monasticism in Latin Christianity, scholars have questioned the appropriateness of the category "double monasteries.[3]" On the other hand, the attribute "family" associated to the notion of "monastery" is equally problematic, since ascetics renounced family life. However, they organized their communities upon the family model, exploiting the semantic field of "family[4]" from the very beginning.

Prior to the sixth century, the term "double monastery" was not used in Greek, Latin or Coptic sources. For this reason, are we to drop this – apparently – anachronistic terminology when referring to fourth-century communities?

[1] Constance Stoney, *Early Double Monasteries* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell, 1915), 4.
[2] Alison Beach and myself have problematized the very use of the notion "double monastery," showing the shortcomings of a term which 'evens' the particularities of monasticism in different regions and historical periods. See Alison I. Beach, Andra Jugănaru, "The Double Monastery as an Historiographical Problem," in *Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, eds. Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2018). The article discusses religious communities from the fourth to the thirteenth century traditionally included in the scholarly category of "double monasteries," but which in reality show significant discrepancies.
[3] Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 70.
[4] The "ascetic families" will be scrutinized in Chapter 4.

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I. 1. The Status of the Question

Research on "double monasticism" began in the second half of the nineteenth century, following some brief considerations of Church historians about these institutions.[5] The start was given at a Congress organized by the Société Française pour la Conservation des Monuments Historiques in Lille, in 1845. The lectures attempted to answer the question "Quels étaient à nos contrées les monastères qui recevaient à la foi des personnes des deux sexes?" In spite of the promising topic, the Congress concluded that "la section n'a point recueilli d'éléments suffisants pour répondre à la question d'une manière précise, et en fixant les dates.[6]"

In an essay focused on the Breton Church, M. Varin discusses the origin of the Holy Cross Monastery, founded by Radegund (520-587), which he ascribes to the category of "double monasteries." He considers it and the other similar monasteries as bizarre and regards them as a consequence of the Church's anomalies:

> Ces anomalies se manifestent surtout dans l'organisation des doubles monastères, établissements où se trouvaient réunies sous un même toit, quoique séparées par un mur intérieur, deux congrégations, l'une de religieuses, l'autre de moines, dont les relations devaient se borner à celles qu'exige le saint ministère.[7]

Writing a general history of Western monasticism, the French historian Charles de Montalembert considered the "double monasteries" a peculiar institution. He defines a "double monastery" as "deux communautés distinctes de moines et de religieuses qui vivaient réunies dans un même lieu ou sous un même gouvernement" and finds the monastery in Tabennesi as the earliest example. He argues that these monasteries flourished rather in Western Christianity and does not give any assumption concerning their origin.[8] However, he considers them rather an experiment of the Church when it was still a young institution: "C'était un fruit propre à la jeunesse de l'Eglise, laquelle, comme toutes les jeunesses, a connu des hardiesses, des dangers, des orages, des désordres d'une nature propre à cet âge, mais qui disparaissent en temps utile.[9]"

[5] Prior to the nineteenth century, the term "monasteria duplicia" appeared in the monumental work of the Benedictine monk Jean Mabillon, *Annales ordinis S. Benedicti occidentalium monachorum patriarchae: in quibus non modo res monasticae, sed etiam ecclesiasticae historiae non minima pars continetur*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1703), 125. The monastery of the Holy Cross, founded by Radegund in the second half of the sixth century, was seen as the first example. However, Mabillon uses the term "monasteria duplicia" for designating communities of monks which group a cenobitic quarter and an anchoritic one.

[6] Reference recorded in Catherine Rosanna Peyroux, "Abbess and Cloister: Double Monasteries in the Early Medieval West" (PhD Diss., Princeton University, 1991), 1 and Stephan Hilpisch, *Die Doppelklöster: Entstehung und Organisation* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1928), 2.

[7] M. Varin, *Mémoire sur les causes de la dissidence entre l'Église Bretonne et l'Église Romaine* (Paris: 1858), 104-118.

[8] Charles Forbes René de Montalembert, *Les moines d'Occident depuis Saint Benoît jusqu'à Saint Bernard*, vol. 5, 6th ed. (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1893), 322.

[9] Ibid., 328-329.

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Mary Bateson, Jules Pargoire, and Stephan Hilpisch were the first scholars to question the origin of these monasteries, sometimes using a methodology similar to the one applied by philologists. Mary Bateson, who pioneered the study of "double monasteries," revised the idea of the allegedly Irish roots of Saint Radegund's monastery of the Holy Cross in Poitiers. She starts her *Origin and Early History of Double Monasteries* by arguing for the necessity of a proper definition of these establishments and refers to two main criteria. The first one is, in her understanding, the formal segregation of monks and nuns. As a second criterion, she identifies the formally regulated encounters of monks and nuns. Bateson's definition allows her to collect regional evidence about early monastic foundations, which prove that "double monasteries" had existed in Gaul before the arrival of Saint Columbanus (543-615), and, thus, that Saint Radegund's monastery does not have Irish origins. Moreover, Bateson suggests that the roots of such foundations are to be sought for every region separately, as they resulted from ascetic enthusiasm, doubled by the local broader contexts.[10]

At a smaller scale, Jules Pargoire follows the regional approach of Mary Bateson, with a different purpose. Focusing his study on the Byzantine world, he reviews Dom Besse's theory according to which in the sixth century the *Novels* of Justinian put an end to the foundation of new "double monasteries." This context gives him ground for introducing a definition of "double monasteries" which does not differ much from Bateson's. Pargoire contrasts "double monasteries" with "mixed monasteries:"

> Il faut distinguer le monastère double du monastère mixte. Le premier abritait simultanément une communauté d'homme et une communauté de femmes, communautés placées toutes deux sous le gouvernement de la même personne, mais séparées l'une de l'autre. Dans le second, hommes et femmes vivaient en commun.

With this set of criteria, Pargoire gives later examples of "double monasteries," for which he finds further written evidence.[11] Like Mary Bateson, he has a strictly regional focus on Eastern Christianity and surveys a large chronological span.

Constance Stoney makes a similar distinction between the "double" and the "mixed" monasteries. Starting from the Western examples of Wearmouth and Yarrow, she briefly mentions an inconvenience of the sources. Although these two communities are "not mixed," sources call each of them "monasterium virginum." She also acknowledges that the term "monasteria duplicia" is absent from sources prior to the sixth century and adds that sometimes it refers to "twin monasteries for men," without defining "twin monasteries." "Mixed" and "double monasteries" are set in opposition. A monastery was not "mixed" since "men and women did not live or work together, and in many cases did not use the same Church; and though the chief feature of the system was association,

[10] Mary Bateson, "Origin and Early History of Double Monasteries," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (New Series)* 13 (1899): 137-198.
[11] Jules Pargoire, "Les monastères doubles chez les byzantins," *Echos d'Orient*, 56 (1906): 21-25.

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there was in reality very little, when compared with the amount of separation." In addition, one of the abbot or the abbess used to rule over the entire community. On the question of the origins of these monasteries, she identifies the monastery of Pachomius in Tabennesi as the simplest form of a double monastery and considers the monastery in Annisa as belonging to the same category, but argues that in the fifth century no other "double monastery" was founded.[12] In addition, following the conclusions of Montalembert, she states that the "double monasteries" did not flourish in the Middle Ages, but were rather a result of early Christian enthusiasm. Despite some imprecisions concerning the daily life of these communities, her contribution is significant since it acknowledges the wide-spread practice of monks and nuns dwelling in proximity and it brings forth possible reasons for such an ascetic arrangement:

> Some have regarded it as a sort of moral experiment; others have seen in it only the natural outcome of the necessity for having priests close at hand to celebrate Mass, hear confessions and minister in general to the spiritual needs of the nuns. There is, too, the practical side of the plan, namely, that each side of the community was economically dependent on the other, as will be seen later. However this may be, the practice of placing the two together under one head seems to be as ancient as monasticism itself.[13]

Stephan Hilpisch brings another significant contribution to the question of the origins of "double monasteries." Hilpisch rejects Mary Bateson's idea of the spontaneous, independent, and purely spiritual regional roots of the phenomenon of "double monasticism," proposing instead a common, unique origin of it for the entire Christian world in the Pachomian *koinonia*. It was from Upper Egypt – he argues – that each region inherited and developed its own branch of "double monasteries." In so doing, he corrects and complements Bateson's definition of "double monasteries." He claims that the problem of her conclusions arose from the very definition which she gave to the term. Thus, he revises it, proposing that the concept refers to two convents brought together into the same organization based on economic terms: "Zu einem Doppelkloster im eingentlichen Sinne des Wortes gehört, daß eine Gemeinschaft von Mönchen und Nonnen in solcher Weise miteinander wohnt, daß ihre Klosteranlage räumlich und rechtlich eine Einheit darstellt.[14]"

Leclercq and Pargoire, in their entry of the *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de la liturgie*, distinguish "double monasteries" from "neighbor-monasteries" ("monastères voisins") and "distant monasteries" ("monastères distants"). According to them, neither Pachomius' foundation of Tabennesi, nor Shenoute's White Monastery belongs to the category of "double monasteries," even if each community was formed of monks and nuns. In addition, they interpret Basil of Caesarea's writings as encouraging what they call "neighbor-communities," especially in the desert, for the

[12] Constance Stoney, *Early Double Monasteries* (Cambridge: Deighton, 1915), 1-32.
[13] Ibid., 4.
[14] Stephan Hilpisch, *Die Doppelklöster*, 1.

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practical purpose of providing nunneries with the support and, sometimes with the defense, of the monks. They assume that, in time, proximity led to closer links between the two communities. However, ascetic women are perceived as being always subordinated to ascetic men, who assured leadership over both male and female communities. In terms of examples, they side with Mary Bateson as far as the origin of Western similar communities is concerned, arguing that the model of such foundations spread from Gaul to England. The real roots of "double monasteries" are, according to them, in the East, where such communities were different from the "mixed monasteries." While in "double monasteries" lived simultaneously two completely separated communities, one of monks, and one of nuns, under the supervision of the same person, in "mixed monasteries" nuns and monks lived together. However, the Church leaders have never approved such arrangements. Thus, the two authors suggest an evolution and an inter-regional transmission of "double monasticism" as a phenomenon.[15]

This brief survey shows that, in this first stage of research, fourth-century double-gendered monastic communities were described in various terms, as "double," "mixed," "neighbor," or "distant," according to the degree of segregation between the monks and the nuns. Historians of different national schools disagreed about the geographical origins and transmission of this type of monasticism.[16] French and English historians argue for an independent emergence of "double monasteries" in each of the regions where this model sprang. Protestant German historians applied the philological *Quellenforschung* in order to establish an evolutionary model of the "double monasteries," which, in their opinion, had a common unique root, from which various branches spread throughout the Christian world, causing the emergence of yet other similar communities.

The previously mentioned studies appeared in a period when scholars had a growing interest in the evolution of Christian dogma and while the number of source editions of saints' lives was increasing. In addition to the attempt of creating classifications of ascetic communities, most scholars attempted to compile lists of "double monasteries" which existed diachronically, both before and after a key-moment in their evolution: the acknowledgement of their existence by Emperor Justinian in the sixth century. While certain communities belong to different categories according to each scholar's criteria of classification, one common detail which differentiates the "double communities" from the rest is the seclusion of monks and nuns.

[15] H. Leclercq, J. Pargoire, "Monastère double," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. Fernand Cabrol, Henri Leclercq, vol. 1, no. 1 (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1934), s.v.
[16] Mary Bateson, "Origin and Early History of Double Monasteries."

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The interest for double monasteries rekindled in the second half of the twentieth century, when scholars of canon law became also interested in the phenomenon.[17] Vasiliki Leontaritou regards "double monasteries" as "monasteries where monks and nuns used to live together in separated dwellings and used to serve together under the same abbot." However, she argues that the monastery in which Macrina, Basil of Caesarea's sister, lived, could have possibly, but not certainly, gathered monks and nuns.[18] She also argues that the presence of a single abbot for two groups of ascetics was, sometimes, a necessity.[19]

Joannis Konidaris follows the evolutions of the legislation against "the so-called double monasteries" diachronically, from the first sources until the twelfth century. In various publications, he shows that the ambiguity which the definition of "double monastery" has is not surprising, given that the term acquires a different meaning in different sources. His conclusions are a result of a comparison between the sixth-century *Novels* of Justinian with later legislators. Thus, he shows that, even in the twelfth century, the three canonists Ioannes Zonaras, Theodoros Balsamon, and Alexios Aristenos had not agreed on the precise meaning of "double monasteries." Their understanding varied, from two "neighboring monasteries" spatially separated, to two monasteries built side by side, with monks and nuns cohabitating.[20]

The only certainty is that, starting with the sixth century, numerous canons concerned the interaction of men and women in an ascetic context. The first legislation is included in the laws of Justinian (529 and 546), later on compiled by Athanasios of Emesa in his *Syntagma* at the end of the sixth century and republished in a *Synopsis* in the ninth century. Few years before the republication of *Syntagma*, the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea (787) restated some of the interdictions and condemnations of Justinian.

Recent publications on early Eastern monasticism innovate in approaching the problem of "double monasteries" starting from Justinian's *Novels*. Thus, the scholarly consensus termed with "double monastery" / "double house" a community in which monks and nuns lived separately and where all ascetics used in common its properties. The segregation of monks and nuns was, even in this new phase of research, the criterion according to which one should distinguish between "double

[17] For the period discussed in this thesis, the term "ecclesiastical law" has to be used in the broader sense, as encompassing not only the canons of the ecumenical councils held before, but in general the norms which the local churches established either as referring to dogmas, or with regards to the life of the Church and its relation to the faithful. See Ioannis Konidaris, "The Ubiquity of Canon Law," in *Law and Society in Byzantium, Nine-Twelfth Centuries*, eds. Angeliki Laiou, Dieter Simon (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1994), 131-132.

[18] Vasiliki Leontaritou, "Πληροφορίες εκκλησιαστικού δικαίου στίς αγιολογικές πηγές τοϋ 4ου αίώνα," [Facts of ecclesiastical law in the hagiographic sources of the fourth century] *Analecta Atheniensia ad jus Byzantinum Spectantia* 1 (1989): 41.

[19] Ibid., 40-41.

[20] Joannis Konidaris, "Die Novelle 123 Justinians und das Problem der Doppelklöster," in *Novella Constitutio, Studies in Honor of Nicholas van der Wal* (Groningen, 1990), 109-110.

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monasteries" and "mixed monasteries" (a term that the sources never use), where monks and nuns cohabitated.

Narrowing down these criteria, Daniel Stramara tacitly acknowledges the variety of monastic life-styles involving ascetic men and women who lived in proximity.[21] Thus, in addition to the "double monasteries" and the "mixed monasteries," he distinguishes a third type of community, that of "twin monasteries" (although sources do not use this formula either), which reflects a different interaction between the monks and the nuns.[22]

Without questioning the suitability of the term, Ewa Wipszycka approaches early "double monasteries" in Egypt from a different angle. Regarding them as a sub-category of the female monasticism, Wipszycka focuses on the particular origins of the Egyptian communities, which emerged due to the the liturgical needs of each community of ascetics and from women's difficulty of leading an 'independent' ascetic lifestyle due to the local climate and landscape.[23]

Focusing on Late Antique female monasticism in papyrological sources, María Jesús Albarrán Martínez agrees with the previous definition of Jules Pargoire, seeing a "double monastery" as an establishment with separate buildings for monks and nuns and a unique leader. She distinguishes two subtypes originated from this model. One of them is the congregation (ϲⲟⲟⲩϩϲ) in which a female monastery depended economically on a male monastery. The second subtype corresponds to the monasteries in which "women lived alongside men." Although such communities are not easily traceable in the sources, she identifies them as the ones actually addressed in the later *Novels* of Justinian, which, as the following subchapter details, use the formula "double monasteries.[24]"

More recently, with regards to the monastery founded by Paula, Eustochium, Jerome, and Paulinianus in Bethlehem, Andrew Cain attempted to give a comprehensive definition of a "double monastery." Without discussing the suitability of the term, but in a way implying that it is a historiographical construct, he defines the Eastern pattern of "what might be termed the 'double monastery' (*duplex monasterium* / διπλοῦν μοναστήριον), i. e. a male and a female monastic community that had separate sleeping and living quarters and yet were located within close proximity to each other and were interdependent financially and liturgically.[25]" As the following chapters will show, such communities, which existed in both Eastern and Western Christianity, reached the

[21] Daniel F. Stramara, "Double Monasticism in the Greek East, Fourth through Eighth Centuries," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 2 (1998): 269-312.
[22] Ibid., 271-272.
[23] Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)* (Warsaw: JJP Supplements, 2009).
[24] María Jesús Albarrán Martínez, "Female Asceticism and Monasticism in Late Antique Egypt According to Papyrological Sources," *Journal of Coptic Studies* 17 (2015): 17-18. At least some of the examples which she provides might actually refer to female monasteries economically dependent on male monasteries, but which were located at a certain distance from them. Justinian's legislation, which addresses "double monasteries," does not refer to such situations.
[25] *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*, ed. and trans. Andrew Cain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 359.

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characteristics which Cain identified after a process of evolution from pious households (which had origins in both halves of the Christian world). Within this concise definition, Cain brings to the fore two crucial characteristics of these double-gender communities: the economic interdependence of monks and nuns and a common liturgical practice.

Ekaterini Mitsiou agrees with the main points in the previous definitions of the "double monasteries." Besides, she notices the significance of the "family" roots for each Eastern community, from the earliest ones until the mid-Byzantine ones:

> ...man muss die „Doppelklöster" (διπλᾶ μοναστήρια) verstehen; sie wurden oft von Mitgliedern derselben Familie gegründet, die zur selben Zeit in den Mönchsstand eintraten und im selben Kloster , welches möglicherweise ihr früheres Haus war, lebten. Diese Mönche und Nonnen brachen also nicht jegliche Beziehungen zur Welt ab, und ihr Koinobion war keine reine geistliche Verwandtschaft, sondern auch eine Blutsverwandtschaft, die zusätzlich einen geistlichen Charakter annahm.[26]

If for the Eastern examples of communities of monks and nuns the appropriateness of the term "double monasteries" is not addressed, the historiography of Western monasticism straightly questions, in some instances, the suitability of the term "double monastery" for later medieval communities. Catherine Peyroux, who surveys previous research on "double monasticism," outlines the evolution of the historiography, and underlines ideological motives in scholarly positions. She stresses that the increasing interest in the evolution of Christian dogma and editing primary sources about saints' lives, in line with concerns for the national culture, resulted in a debate on the Celtic roots of double communities.[27]

A significant number of studies which appeared after 1990 dealt with various aspects of "double monasteries." Some of them attempted to classify thoroughly the types of early ascetic communities and to put the category of "double monasteries" in focus. Recent contributions reexamine earlier results. In 1986, at the end of a workshop on this topic held in Berlin, scholars made a step forward in this research area, concluding that the simple denomination "double monastery" is not enough for describing the complexities of relations between ascetic men and women who lived in a single community. In addition, without reaching a definition of the phenomenon, scholars argued that the early "double monastery … was a spontaneous creation, which responded to practical needs and which proved to be of a delicate use.[28]"

[26] Ekaterini Mitsiou, "Frauen als Gründerinnen von Doppelklöstern im Byzantinischen Reich," in Lioba Theis, Margaret Mullett, Michael Grünbart (eds.), *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond* (Vienna: Weimar, 2014), 334.
[27] Catherine Peyroux, "Abbess and Cloister," 1-63.
[28] Michel Parisse, "Recherches sur les formes de symbiose des religieux et religieuses au Moyen Age," in Kaspar Elm, Michel Parisse (ed.), *Doppelklöster und andere Formen der Symbiose männlicher und weiblicher Religiosen im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Dunker & Humbolt, 1992), 9.

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Other studies also (re)address some new problems, such as the effectiveness of Justinian's *Novels* on the perpetuation of the "double monasteries,[29]" or the authority of women.[30] In these studies, the pattern of a model inherited through diverse transmitters is no longer accepted. New research relegates the evolutionist model of the beginning of the twentieth century to a secondary position and addresses the subject from a different angle. Kaspar Elm and Michel Parisse explore the forms of symbiosis in which ascetic men and women lived throughout Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages in scattered regions.[31] Obviously, such an approach has its disadvantages due to the selected chronological frame and geographical area. A methodological challenge is the comparison between communities founded in both pre- and post-Justinian eras. On the other hand, its advantages are drawn by the study cases taken from various regions, thus showing a rich panorama of the forms of symbiosis between men and women in different moments.

In this dissertation, I aim at following the signposts placed by Elm and Parisse. Rather than mapping a chronological dendritic evolution of the phenomenon, I will present case-studies, questioning, at the same time, the terminology used in scholarship, but discussing the extent to which one is able to find a more suitable one.

I. 2. The First Written References to "Double Monasteries"

The 36th canon of Justinian's *Novel 123*, issued on the 1st of January 546, stated:

> We do not permit monks and nuns to live in the same monastery anywhere in our empire and do not permit the *so-called double monasteries* to exist. If there is such monastery, the men shall be separated from the women; the women shall remain in the monastery in which they are, and the men shall found another monastery for themselves. If there are a number of such monasteries, so that there is no necessity of building a new one, the holy bishop of the place shall take care to congregate the monks with monks and women with women, separately, some in one monastery, some in another, and the property which they have in common shall be distributed among them in accordance with the rights which they (respectively) have. If the women chose a man, whether a presbyter or deacon, to manage their business or to administer the holy communion, the reverend bishop to whom they are subject, shall designate such person (for such purpose), if he knows him to be of the right faith and of upright life. If the person chosen by them is not a presbyter or deacon, but the bishop deems him to be worthy of such service, he shall, after appointing him to the position of business manager as stated, send him to the monastery, provided that not even he, thus chosen as business manager of the women, shall live in the monastery.[32]

[29] See I. M. Konidaris, "Die Novelle 123 Justinians," 105-116.
Friedrich Schipper, " 'Wir erlauben nicht, dass in einem Kloster Mönche und Nonnen wohnen' (Just. Nov. 123.36): Doppelklöster im spätantiken ostmediterranen Raum," *Kanon* 17 (2005): 56-77.

[30] See Alison Jeppesen, "A Reassessment of Monastic Organization," *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006): 385-392.
Thomas Cramer, "Defending the Double Monastery: Gender and Society in Early Medieval Europe" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2011).
Ekaterini Mitsiou, "Frauen als Gründerinnen von Doppelklöstern."

[31] Kaspar Elm, Michel Parisse, *Doppelklöster und andere Formen der Symbiose*.

[32] In nullo loco nostrae reipublicae <in uno monasterio monachos et monastrias habitare vel dicta *duplicia*> esse *monasteria* permittimus. Ubi autem tale monasterium invenitur, omnibus modis iubemus viros a feminis separari, et feminas quidem in quo sunt monasterio remanere, viros autem aliud monasterium sibimet facere. Si vero plura sunt

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The document includes the earliest written record of the formula "duplex monasterium / διπλοῦν μοναστήριον." This label for ascetic communities which hosted ascetic men and women acquires in this *Novel* a subtle negative connotation, since "double monasteries" are institutions which should split. Why is the *Novel* of Justinian forbidding such an ascetic organization? From the way the law is formulated, it seems that "double monasteries" were not considered isolated and rare monastic establishments.

The law contains a number of economic and social dispositions with regards to these ascetic establishments. What are the economic, social, and ecclesiastical factors that determined Justinian to issue such a detailed disposition? How effective was it? The answers to these questions give indications about the beginning and the development of "double monasticism" as a tendency.

In order to answer these questions, one must scrutinize the *Novel* itself and its place in the legislation of Justinian. First, one can observe that it follows roughly the usual structure generally applied to Justinian's *Novellae*. Dealing with "various ecclesiastical topics," it starts with indicating its origin, "from Augustus (Justinian)" and its addressee, "Peter, glorious Master of the Offices." The *Preface* explains the purpose of the law. According to it, the law deals with "the administration and privileges and other subjects" in connection to churches and monasteries. Besides, the *Preface* also mentions some older provisions referring to bishops, clergymen, and monks, which needed proper adjustment. After the *sanction*, the *Epilogue* addresses, most probably, the same Peter, urging him to issue edicts in the imperial city by which to put into practice the requirements of the law.

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monasteria, ut non necesse sit nova monasteria aedificare, locorum sanctissimus episcopus monachos cum monachis et feminas cum feminis separare et in aliis monasteriis congregare procuret, quaecumque vero habent communia, inter eos secundum competens eis ius dividere. Feminis autem quemcumque ipsae elegerint sive presbyterum sive diaconum ad faciendum eis responsum aut sanctam eis communionem portandam sanctissimus episcopus sub quo sunt deputet, quem rectae fidei et vitae bonae esse cognoverit. Si vero qui ab eis electus est, non sit presbyter aut diaconus, dignum tamen eum huiusmodi ministerio episcopus iudicaverit, ordinationem ei imponat qua dignus esse videbitur, et responsis, sicuti dictum est, monasterii distribuat, ita tamen ut neque sic electus ad responsa feminarum in monasterio maneat.
Κατ' οὐδένα δὲ τόπον τῆς ἡμετέρας πολιτείας ἐν ἑνὶ μοναστηρίῳ μοναχοὺς καὶ μοναστρίας οἰκεῖν ἢ τὰ λεγόμενα διπλᾶ εἶναι μοναστήρια συγχωροῦμεν. ὅπου δὲ τοιοῦτο μοναστήριον εὑρεθείη, πᾶσι τρόποις κελεύομεν τοὺς ἄνδρας ἀπὸ τῶν γυναικῶν χωρίζεσθαι, καὶ τὰς μὲν γυναῖκας ἐν ᾧπερ εἰσὶ μοναστηρίῳ ἀπομένειν, τοὺς δὲ ἄνδρας ἄλλο μοναστήριον ἑαυτοῖς ποιεῖν. εἰ δὲ πλείονα εἴη τὰ τοιαῦτα μοναστήρια, ἵνα μηδὲ ἀνάγκη γένηται νέα μοναστήρια οἰκοδομεῖσθαι, ὁ τῶν τόπων ὁσιώτατος ἐπίσκοπος τοὺς μοναχοὺς μετὰ τῶν μοναχῶν καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας μετὰ τῶν γυναικῶν κεχωρισμένως ἐν ἄλλοις καὶ ἄλλοις μοναστηρίοις συναγαγεῖν φροντισάτω, τὰ δὲ πράγματα ὅσα ἔχουσι κοινὰ μεταξὺ αὐτῶν κατὰ τὸ ἁρμόζον αὐτοῖς δίκαιον διαιρείσθω. ταῖς δὲ γυναιξὶν ὅν ἄν αὐταὶ ἐπιλέξωνται εἴτε πρεσβύτερον εἴτε διάκονον , εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν αὐταῖς τὰς ἀποκρίσεις ἤ τὴν ἁγίαν αὐταῖς κοινωνίαν φέρειν ὁ ὁσιώτατος ἐπίσκοπος ὑφ' ὅν εἰσιν ἀποκληρούτω, εἰ ὀρθῆς πίστεως καὶ βίου καλοῦ τοῦτον εἶναι γνοίη. εἰ δὲ ὁ παρ' αὐτῶν ἐπιλεγεὶς μὴ εἴη πρεσβύτερος ἤ διάκονος, ἄξιον δὲ αὐτὸν τῆς τοιαύτης ὑπηρεσίας ὁ ἐπίσκοπος κρίνῃ, χειροτονίαν αὐτῷ ἐπιτιθείς, ἧς ἄξιος εἶναι φανείη, ταῖς ἀποκρίσεσιν, ὡς εἴρηται, τοῦ μοναστηρίου ἀπονεμέτω, οὕτω μέντοι ἵνα μηδὲ ὁ οὕτως ἐπιλεγεὶς πρὸς τὰς ἀποκρίσεις τῶν γυναικῶν ἐν τῷ μοναστηρίῳ μείνῃ.
Corpus Iuris Civilis, vol. 3, *Novella*, 123, 36, ed. R Schoell; G Kroll (Berlin: Weidmann, 1954): 619.
Annotated Justinian Code, ed. and trans. Justice Fred Blume, Timothy Kearley, digitized by University of Wyoming Libraries, http://www.uwyo.edu/lawlib/blume-justinian/ajc-edition-2/, last accessed: November, 7, 2014. The translation has emendations.

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The essential information of the law concerns the prohibition of monks living in female monasteries and of nuns living in men's monasteries. This rule does not give room for any exception. Monks and nuns should not mingle even if they wish to visits relatives or to attend burials. The acknowledgment of relatives is a significant detail of the *Novel*, since it indicates that family members living their monastic life without isolation were not rare either at the moment of the endorsement of the *Novel*.

In order to prevent the foundation of new monastic institutions, the *Novel* also stipulates that, if more similar "double monasteries" exist in a certain area close to each other, all the monks should group together in their monastery and all the nuns should proceed likewise, while the belongings of the initial communities should be divided. Thus, the law acknowledges the possibility that such establishments existed in proximity. The local bishops were charged with putting into practice the requirements of the *Novel*, including the wealth distribution. They were to supervise closely the affairs of the nunneries and to approve the nomination of a priest or of a deacon who would provide for the needs of the nuns and would give them the Holy Communion, without dwelling in any nunnery.

This legislation is, in fact, not a novelty in Justinian's legal corpus. The emperor started to deal with ecclesiastical matters soon after his coronation, in 529, when he published *Codex Justinianus*, a collection of revised and updated laws which had been previously issued in the Roman Empire. It is in this new legislative corpus that Justinian first set the boundaries of the interactions between monks and nuns. A previous law issued on the 18th of January 529 prohibited the access of males to female communities, as well as of females to male communities. If the number of the monks was greater than the number of the nuns, the nuns were supposed to move to another monastery. Otherwise, if the nuns were equal or more numerous than the monks, they would remain in their dwelling and the monks were required to move:

> The same Augustus to Menas, Praetorian Prefect. Out of respect for the dignity of the most holy churches and the venerable monasteries, We forbid all inhabitants of monasteries to dwell together with nuns or to devise any pretext for having any association with them – for this arouses the just suspicion that they may be meeting with them continuously and whenever they wish– but they shall be separated so that they shall enjoy no contact with one another for any reason whatsoever, nor shall any pretext be invented, whether for these men or for those women, for conversing with one another.
> Rather, the men shall dwell alone in every monastery, separated from nuns who would be approaching them for any reason whatsoever; and women shall dwell alone, by themselves, not mingling with the men, so that every suspicion of indecent conversation may utterly be removed. In the event the men should form the majority, it falls to the foresight of the most reverend bishops of each city to see to it that the women are transferred to a different, suitable place and that a monastery is granted them in which they must thereafter dwell decently by themselves; in the event the women are found to be the majority or equal in number to the men, he shall see to it that the men are transferred and the women remain in the monastery, so that the movable, immovable, and self-moving property of the monastery should be divided proportionately between those who are leaving and those who are remaining. For the necessary [legal] representation of the

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> women living by themselves, one old man shall be designated by the most reverend bishop of the city; for the performance of the divine services and for administering to them the holy communion, one presbyter and one deacon of upright character shall be appointed, who should perform only the aforesaid services, not live and cohabit in those places.[33]

Just like the *Novel* 123, the bishop of every city was in charge with applying the requirements of the law. He was supposed to assign the monastery to the predominant group of monks or nuns and he was supposed to move the other group to another appropriate monastery. Besides, the properties of the reformed monasteries had to be divided proportionally. Bishops should have been informed and instructed about the rules by the metropolitans of their areas. The rule was to be implemented in one year and the bishops should personally check how the changes proceeded.

In the years following the law of 529, Justinian ordered the revision and collection of the existent regional legislation. The result of this endeavor was the *Digest* issued in 533, but this collection was also sent to revision. Finally, the last version of Justinian's *Codex* was issued in 534. Until his death in 565, Justinian has continuously issued at least one hundred and eighty imperial laws, called *Novellae*, which he appended to the *Codex*.[34]

[33] *Codex Iustinianus*, ed. Paul Krueger (Berlin: Apus Weidmannos, 1877), I.III.43: «ὁ αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς Μηνᾷ ἐπάρχῳ πραιτωρίων. Τῆς τῶν ἁγιωτάτων ἐκκλησιῶν καὶ τῶν εὐαγῶν μοναστηρίων προνοοῦντες σεμνότητος ἀπαγορεύομεν πᾶσι τοῖς οἰκοῦσι μοναστήρια συνδιαιτᾶσθαι γυναιξὶ μοναστρίαις ἢ πρόφασίν τινα ἐπινοεῖν τοῦ κοινωνίαν τινὰ πρὸς αὐτὰς ἔχειν (τοῦτο γὰρ δικαίαν ὑποψίαν εἰσάγει τοῦ συνεχῶς καὶ ἡνίκα ἂν βούλοιντο συντυγχάνειν αὐταῖς), ἀλλ'οὕτω κεχωρισμένους εἶναι, ὥστε μηδεμίαν μετουσίαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους καθ'οἱανοῦν αἰτίαν ἔχειν αὐτοὺς μηδὲ ἐξευρίσκεσθαί τινα πρόφασιν ἢ τούτοις ἢ ἐκείναις τῆς μετ'ἀλλήλων διαγωγῆς.
Ἀλλὰ μόνους μὲν καθ'ἑαυτοὺς ἄνδρας ἐν ἑκάστῳ μοναστηρίῳ διάγειν τῶν καθ'οἱανοῦν αἰτίαν πλησιαζουσῶν αὐτοῖς μοναστριῶν κεχωρισμένους, μόνας δὲ καθ'ἑαυτὰς γυναῖκας οὐκ ἀναμιγνυμένας ἀνδράσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ πᾶσαν ὑπόνοιαν ἀσέμνου συνδιαγωγῆς παντελῶς ἀναιρεθῆναι. Ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἄνδρες εἶεν οἱ πλείονες, προσήκει προνοίᾳ τῶν ἐν ἑκάστῃ πόλει θεοφιλεστάτων ἐπισκόπων τὰς γυναῖκας εἰς ἕτερον ἐπιτήδειον τόπον μεθίστασθαι καὶ δοθῆναι μοναστήριον αὐταῖς, ἐν ᾧ δεήσει καθ' ἑαυτὰς τοῦ λειποῦ σεμνῶς διαιτᾶσθαι. Εἰ δὲ πλείονες εὑρεθεῖεν αἱ γυναῖκες οὖσαι ἢ καὶ ἰσάριθμοι, τοὺς μὲν ἄνδρας μεθίστασθαι, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας ἐν τῷ μοναστηρίῳ μένειν. Ὥστε μέντοι τὰ πράγματα τοῦ αὐτοῦ μοναστηρίου κινητὰ καὶ ἀκίνητα καὶ αὐτοκίνητα τοὺς ἐξίοντας πρὸς τοὺς μένοντας κατ'ἀναλογίαν μερίζεσθαι. Ταῖς δὲ ἀναγκαίαις ἀποκρίσεσι τῶν καθ'ἑαυτὰς μοναζουσῶν γυναικῶν ἕνα γέροντα παρὰ τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου ἐπισκόπου τῆς πόλεως ἀφορίζεσθαι, εἰς δὲ τὸ τὰς θείας ἐκτελεῖσθαι λειτουργίας καὶ τῆς ἁγίας αὐταῖς μεταδίδοσθαι κοινωνίας ἕνα πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἕνα διάκονον σεμνοῦ βίου τυγχάνοντας δίδοσθαι τοὺς μόνα τὰ εἰρημένα πράττειν ὀφείλοντας, οὐ μὴν διαιτᾶσθαι καὶ συνοικεῖν αὐτοῖς.».
New edition in *The Codex of Justinian. A New Annotated Translation with Parallel Latin and Greek Text. Based on a Translation by Justice Fred H. Blume*, ed. Serena Connolly, Simon Corcoran, Michael Crawford, John Noël Dillon, Dennis P. Kehoe, Noel Lenski, Thomas A. J. McGinn, Charles F. Pazdernik, Benet Salway, vol. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
This law was issued few months before the first edition of the *Codex of Justinian* was promulgated, in April 529, with the indication that it should become effective from the Easter day, on April 16. Few years later, in 534, Justinian commissioned a second edition, which was supposed to replace the first one. It is the second edition, *Codex repetitae praelectiones*, which survives today. See Caroline Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 164-165.
One should add that Justinian claimed to have an absolute, God-given authority in any matter regarding law. See ibid., 168-171.

[34] Catherine Peyroux, "Abbess and Cloister," 68.

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In the same law one can encounter the first attestation of the formulas ἀνδρικὸν μοναστήριον and γυναικεῖον μοναστήριον in the literature of the ecclesiastical legislation.[35]

Novel 123 contains yet other novelties. Justinian seems more concerned with the communities of nuns. Unlike the earlier law, which ordered only the less numerous ascetic group to move from the double monastery, the *Novel* orders that the nuns remain on the site and redirects the monks to a different site. Possibly, the nuns were considered more vulnerable to such a dislocation, and thus, the law orders their stability.[36]

In addition, financial matters are also included in the law. By 529, monasticism had not yet been entirely "institutionalized," and, therefore, strict regulations about founding a monastery or entry into a monastery had not been systematized yet. Thus, relatives who wished to become monks or nuns may have considered as a natural option to seclude from society in their own houses. On the other hand, such a practice could have created grounds for tax evasion.[37] The *Novels* also contain a thorough collection of constitutions of marriage, most of the legal invocations empowering women to control their children and dowries.[38]

Why does *Novel* 123 reiterate an older regulation concerning gender seclusion? One reason could have been the fact that imperial laws were not always strong enough to be obeyed in all the regions of the Roman Empire. Instead, they would be put into practice mostly in Constantinople and its surroundings, while the territories farther from the capital of the empire would not follow the new regulations.[39] Another reason could have been the complexity of the entire legislative collection issued by Justinian, which made it difficult to be consulted and to be put into practice. Since even for the Byzantines its length and all-inclusiveness were challenging, for the clergy of Western Christianity it must have posed even more difficulties.[40]

Justinian's stress on the seclusion of men and women could have been directed by his perception of the increasing number of double monasteries as "an unauthorized response to the religious needs of female communities, making double houses a sort of dangerous subset of female monasticism. The imperial remedy for the ills of double monasticism was the bishop.[41]"

One can also assume that relatives living together in the same monastery were not ready yet to be separated. Ioannis Konidaris suggests another possible explanation. In his opinion, the aim of this

[35] Friedrich T. Schipper, "Wir erlauben nicht," 62-63.
[36] Catherine Peyroux, "Abbess and Cloister," 73.
[37] Joannis Konidaris, "Novelle 123," 111.
[38] Caroline Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice," 172.
Another change concerned divorce, which was achieved with much more difficulty. At the same time, the husband received more authority. For example, according to Justinian's legislation, if the woman committed adultery, the husband had the right to keep the dowry given by the woman's family at the wedding.
See Justinian, *Novel 22*.
[39] H. Leclercq, J. Pargoire, "Monastère double."
[40] Catherine Peyroux, "Abbess and Cloister," 79-80.
[41] Ibid., 74.

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attempt was to shortcut the legal framework for these cases. The question was not about an improper conduct of the monks and nuns, but about the fact that monks and nuns lived in two different wings of a monastery, one for men, called in the sources ἀνδρών, and one for women, called παρθενών. Such communities were labelled as "double monasteries" in *Novel* 123. Konidaris interprets the term "λεγόμενα" as an indication that, in Justinian's understanding, the "double monasteries" were "mixed monasteries" and they were not necessarily "family monasteries." He supports his interpretation with the following text of the law, which states that the nuns should remain in their monastery and, under the supervision of the bishops, the monks should build another monastery for themselves, unless more monasteries already exist. In this case, they would not have to build a new one, but they could simply move in one of the existing establishments.[42] I argue that, while this interpretation is plausible, it is not the only possible one. Justinian's prohibition of monasteries housing both monks and nuns does not mention explicitly a cohabitation of men and women similar to the "spiritual marriages" (arrangements in which clergymen cohabitated with consecrated women, called *syneisaktai* or *subintroductae*), which the Church Fathers had been criticizing for two centuries.[43] Konidaris goes further with his argumentation, finding an additional proof for his hypothesis in the *Syntagma* compiled by Athanasios of Emesa. He interprets the references to "double monasteries" as synonyms for "mixed" communities, although the text does not refer to the degree of seclusion between monks and nuns: "Monks and nuns should not live in common, but the double monasteries should be abolished and the men should be separated from these [monasteries] and placed in other ones.[44]" Similar to the text of Justinian, in my interpretation, this regulation does not refer necessarily to a situation in which monks were cohabitating with consecrated women. Just as in the literature of the desert Fathers, the text might attempt to prevent general proximity of monks and nuns.

If the law issued in 529 did not seem to have a practical effect, how was the *Novel* 123 applied? Although the instructions of the law are clear, practical, and set a time-limit for their applicability, in Eastern Christianity bishops were not recorded for organizing the dissolution of "double monasteries." In the Byzantine Empire, as well as in the West, double monasteries continued to be founded. Besides, in Italy, Africa, and Southern Spain, territories which he conquered around the 550s, Justinian himself had to reiterate the legislation. Signifficantly, no evidence records bishops willing to put into practice the requirements concerning "double monasteries" in these regions.[45]

[42] Joannis Konidaris, "Novelle 123," 112.
[43] See Chapter 3.
[44] "Μοναχοὶ καὶ μονάστριαι κοινῶς μὴ διαιτάσθωσαν, ἀλλ' ἀναιρείσθωσαν τὰ διπλὰ μοναστήρια, τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκ τούτων χωριζομένων καὶ ἐν ἑτέροις ἐμβαλλομένων." (My translation)
Simon Dieter, Spyros Troianos (ed.), *Das Novellensyntagma des Athanasios von Emesa*, 1.2.54, (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), 44-45.
[45] Catherine Peyroux, "Abbess and Cloister," 74-75.

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Only one attempt of not allowing the foundation of a community for ascetic men which was supposed to be united ("cohaeret") to a community of nuns appears in October 600. Gregory the Great congratulated Archbishop Ianuarius in Cagliari (Sardinia) for opposing the will of Epiphanius, a former lector, who was planning to establish a monastery for monks in his own house and to connected it to a nunnery. Without using the term "double monastery" and without making any reference to the legislation of Justinian, Gregory ensures that the seclusion of monks and nuns would be respected by giving a practical solution to the situation: either the nuns should move to another nunnery which was just expanding, case in which the monks could live in the new monastery that Epiphanius wanted to build, or the monks should move to an abandoned site outside Cagliari.[46]

The legislation proposed by Justinian and Gregory envisioned "a strategy of 'recombinant monasticism,' " in order to support local monasticism. Catherine Peyroux interprets the requirements of Justinian as a solution for compensating for the scission of the communities which had to be divided. She sees Gregory's measures as more practical, attempting to limit the economic empowerment of a community founded through a testamentary donation (the one of Epiphanius). [47]

From the same period of the *Novel* 123, the *Epitome of Julian*, a lecture course on 124 of Justinian's *Novels*, written in Latin, also refers to the double monasteries.[48] The *Epitome* kept from the previous law the requirement of a strict gender division. Why would this principle be the subject of an imperial law? What were the precedents?

This law is one of the first ones that makes a clear separation between ascetic men and women. In the previous centuries and decades, neither the state, nor the Church regulations issued any fundamental interdiction in the contacts between monks and nuns. The exceptions were set by some local councils in Western Christianity, where political boundaries were often changing,[49] but they had little impact. [50] Such was a Council in Toledo, gathered at the end of the fourth century, where the bishops decided that a "virgin dedicated to God" ("puella Dei") should not have a close connection to a confessor or a reader or to any layman who was not her relative: "A virgin dedicated to God shall hold no communication with men with whom she is not nearly related, especially not with a reader

[46] Reference quoted in ibid., 75-77.
[47] Ibid., 78.
[48] "In nullo loco monachos et monachas permittimus unum monasterium habere, sed nec ea, quae duplicia uocant, et si quid tale est, religiosus episcopus mulieres quidem in suo loco studeat manere, monachos autem aliud monasterium aedificare sibi cogat. Sin autem plura sint talia monasteria, separentur in aliis monasteriis monachae, et in aliis monachi, res autem, quas habent communes, secundum iura eis competentia distribuantur. Quem autem monachae presbyterum uel diaconum elegerint, ut eum apocrisiarium habeant, uel sanctam communionem eis afferat, religiosus episcopus, cui subiectae sunt, deputet, si tamen et fidei rectae et uitae bonae fuerit. Sin autem is, quem elegerunt, neque presbyter, neque diaconus sit, probatus tamen castitate et fide, consecret eum episcopus in illa consecratione, qua dignus sit, et fiat apocrisiarius, et sanctae communionis minister, sic tamen, ut nec ipse habeat licentiam, quamuis ita electus est, in monasterio mulierum permanere."
Iuliani Epitome, 483.57, ed. Gustavus Haenel, (Leipzig: 1873), https://www.ucl.ac.uk/volterra/texts/epitome#_Toc129937409.
[49] Catherine Peyroux, "Abbess and Cloister," 82.
[50] Ibid., 79.

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or confessor.[51]" Another occasion was the Council of Agde (506), where it was decided: "Women's convents must not be placed in the neighbourhood of men's convents, as well because of the cunning of Satan as because of the evil report of men.[52]"

Generally, in the Western Church the councils did not issue any canon with direct reference to the *Novels* of Justinian. However, through an independent ecclesiastical legislation, the same targets set up in *Novel* 123 were iterated.

Novel 5 of Justinian explicitly states that whatever rule applies to the monks is also available for the nuns who live in a monastery. Even the *Novel* 123 equalizes the obligations of nuns and hermits. In the context which strictly concerns the Church law, Canon 46 of the Council in Trullo (c. 692) states that the prohibitions on leaving a monastery should be known both by men and women and other canons distinguish them mainly as far as the age for entering a monastery is concerned.[53]

With regards to the proximity of monks and nuns, the interdiction for cohabitation has a number of precedents in the Church law. Canon 19 of the Council in Ancyra[54] forbids the cohabitation of virgins with men even if they claim that they live as siblings. Moreover, any violation of this rule was punished as bigamy.[55] Ioannis Konidaris observed that later on, the theologian John Zonaras emphasizes in his commentary on this particular canon that the legislator aimed to prevent suspicions. Zonaras also appealed to Canon 18 of Basil of Caesarea and stated that those virgins who have not respected the vow of virginity are to be punished as adulterers. This statement completes a secular law which threatens with the harshest corporal penalties and deprivation of property anyone who disgraces or rapes a virgin, a nun, or a deaconess. The same law also protected all these persons from insults, discrediting the actresses and the prostitutes and banning them from wearing the same clothes as the consecrated women were wearing. [56]

Novel 6 and *Novel* 123 are particularly concerned with the vow of chastity. *Novel* 6 threatens with death penalty both a deaconess who breaks her vow of chastity and the man with whom she had sinned. *Novel* 123 ascribes the death penalty to those who should ruin the life of a hermit, deaconess, nun, or any other woman who consecrated her life or who wears pious clothes. The woman affected should be closed in a monastery, which should receive both her fortune and the one belonging to the man.[57] One can observe, thus, regulations which link the ascetic profession of a woman with her legal

[51] "Synod at Toledo," Canon 6, in Karl Joseph von Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church: from the Original Documents*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1876), 420.
[52] "Synod at Agde (Agatha)," Canon 28, in Karl Joseph von Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church: from the Original Documents*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), 81.
[53] Ioannis Konidaris, "Die Rechtsstellung Monastisch Lebender Frauen Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung Der Unterschiede zwischen Nonnen und Mönchen," *Kanon* 16 (2000): 132-133.
[54] See Chapter 3 for a discussion about the date of the Council.
[55] See Chapter 3 for a discussion about *syneisaktism*.
[56] Ioannis Konidaris, "Die Rechtsstellung Monastisch Lebender Frauen," 134.
[57] Ibid., 134-135.

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possessions. The laws suggest that, once the woman enters a monastic community, the possessions with which she comes are transferred to the monastery. This fact triggers additional questions. First, what happens with the legal inheritors of a woman who chooses to become a nun? Several laws adopted during the reign of Constantine make easier the transmission of properties within families.[58] They also ensure that both the mother and the children receive a certain part of their inheritance. Thus, if several members of a family start living as ascetics in the same monastery, the values which they bring with them are estranged from the original family. The other result is that the wealth of the monastery increases, which fact might have been perceived as problematic as well.

Another problem concerns couples who decide to break their matrimonial relation and to become ascetics. Often the marriages between members of the aristocracy were strategically arranged by the families for an increase of their political, social, and economical status. Breaking a marriage meant, thus, breaking a precious alliance, which would be resisted by the families of the spouses.[59]

In time, the regulations forbidding encounters between monks and nuns evolved towards that which today is known as the principle of *abaton*. This interdiction of nuns to enter monks' monasteries and the similar prohibition of monks to enter nunneries was a consequence of worries arisen because of the interaction between monks and nuns. The rules of Antony, Pachomius, and Basil had already referred to a limitation of discussions between them. These three leaders had foreseen exceptions, but they mostly linked them to the inexperienced or beginner asceticism. As such, for example, Basil mentions that these meetings should occur in such a way as to avoid any scandal.[60] The regulations of Antony, Pachomius, and Basil referred to a greater extent to another set of rules belonging to the principle of *abaton*: the prohibition that a monk or a nun leaves the monastery without a good reason and without the knowledge of the abbot or the abbess, and the prohibition that the eunuchs and the young men enter men's monasteries.

The legislation of Justinian, repeatedly referred to the interdiction of men to enter nunneries and of women to enter monks' monasteries. However, he allowed for one exception. In the case of a nun's funeral, one man responsible for the help with the funerary ceremony was allowed to enter the convent. This person had to leave the monastery immediately after having finished the necessary works. The law also established that only the abbess and the doorkeeper of the monastery were allowed to attend the funeral.[61]

Up until the sixth century, there are numerous examples of families who decided to convert all their domains and possessions into monasteries. Among the reasons which determined relatives to

[58] Judith Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity. The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation*, 3rd ed, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 338-339.
[59] Ibid., 153-156.
[60] Ioannis Konidaris, "Die Rechtsstellung Monastisch Lebender Frauen," 137.
[61] Ibid., 138.

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proceed to such a decision stood even the avoidance of tax participation. The Church and the state equally tolerated such situations.[62] Thus, the previous regulations had not been as strict as the law adopted in 529.

Why did Justinian allow monks and nuns to sort out the problem of their closeness within a year? As the *Epilog* of *Novel* 123 shows, despite the problematic character of the cohabitation between monks and nuns, such situations were rather difficult to be changed. I would argue that Justinian gave such a large time interval for the compliance with his new regulations precisely because of such 'logistic' obstacles, which made difficult the separation of monks and nuns and the distribution of the goods commonly possessed.

The insistence on gender division suggests that in the sixth century a variety of ascetic life styles existed, some of them involving usual interactions between men and women The formulation of the law indicates that, in Justinian's time, a "double monastery" was currently understood as an establishment where no gender distinction occurred.[63] H. Leclercq and J. Pargoire suggest that Justinian's interdiction was motivated by the lack of legislation, which would leave to the superiors of the monks and of the nuns the freedom of supervising their ascetics' behavior. The two scholars identified in an anecdote attributed to John of Chora, the uncle of the Empress Theodora, a source for Justinian's legislation which targeted the strict separation of monks and nuns. The anecdote teaches that the proximity of nuns and monks has devastating consequences on the monks.[64]

It is significant to analyze the place of this prescription in *Novel* 123 and the place of this novel in the corpus of Justinian's legislation. *Novel* 123 deals entirely with the administration of the church, appointment of the bishops, donations, monks and their properties. The interdiction of "double monasteries" is preceded by the obligation for all the members of a monastery to sleep in one single building, "so that they may bear mutual testimony for each other of a chaste life." The rule exempts those ill or advanced in age, who wish to live a semi-hermitic life, after a considerable experience of communitarian life.

The following canons of the *Novel* contain, for various situations in which one becomes a monastic, detailed prescriptions about the distribution of the wealth. In most of the cases, the code stipulates that the monastery is one the beneficiaries. I would argue, thus, that the details about the separation of the wealth at the division of "double monasteries," and the administrative duties of which the bishop is in charge, are placed in the *Novel* so as to make the transition to more detailed economic dispositions.

[62] Ibid., 141.
[63] Friedrich T. Schipper, "Wir erlauben nicht,"63.
[64] H. Leclercq, J. Pargoire, "Monastère double."

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One of the reasons for the division of wealth and the empowering of the bishops, prescribed in canon 36, might have been that the "double monasteries" had gained a significant power and popularity, partly due to their possessions, which might have conflicted with the authority of the bishops. Previous legislation (as recorded in *Codex Theodosianus*) regulated what had already been an old practice, testified in hagiographies: the monasteries inherited the possessions of their ascetics and ascetics entering monasteries would donate their belongings either to it, or to a local church. Moreover, the same *Novel* 123 specifies that unmarried men or women willing to enter a monastery were entitled to take the inheritance from their parents. However, if they renounced the monastic life later, they would not be able to retake their family inheritance.[65]

Imperial legislation, as reformed by Emperor Constantine, contained a number of provisions related to the transmission of properties within families, most of them focusing on children's inheritance from their parents. Because of the lack of popularity which the classical laws had and acknowledging the actual practices of the citizens, Constantine simplified the legislation on succession, in general making the transfer of properties from parents to children easier and less dependent on legal prohibitions. Although the laws were mostly addressed to the Roman prefect or to the citizens of Rome, scholars have acknowledged the influence of old expectations and practices in the Eastern part of the Empire.[66] A significant new step which Constantine made with regards to the laws on inheritance was the abolition of the Augustan penalties for celibacy and childlessness. This decree had a significant impact on the following centuries, since it was divided into parts which were included, under different titles, by the compilers of both Codes of Theodosius and of Justinian. The law declared that both men and women unengaged in bonds of marriage are entitled to proceed to the inheritance resulted from their parents' wills or their legal status.[67]

The legislation concerning the transmission of paternal and maternal possessions to the children also evolved.[68] Children were able to enter in the possessions coming from their parents' patrimony relatively easily. As far as *Novel* 123 is concerned, the strict separation of genders could have reduced the influence of the families who dealt with the administration of the monasteries' possessions. Moreover, Justinian seems to have been widely concerned with the problem of the wealth. Monks and nuns were not allowed to receive taxes. They were also forbidden to get involved in transferring private or public properties.[69] Monasteries were allowed to have properties in common and their

[65] Rosa Maria Parrinello, "The Justinianian Legislation regarding the Wives of the Monks and Its Context: the Letters of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza," in Matthias Morgenstern, Christian Boudignon, Christiane Tietz (Ed.), *Männlich und weiblich schuf Er sie: Studien zur Genderkonstruktion und zum Eherecht in den Mittelmeerreligionen* (Auflage 2011), 195-197.
[66] Judith Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family*, 112-118.
[67] Ibid., 119.
[68] Ralph Backhaus, Dietrich V. Simon "*De paternis sive maternis bonis*. Zu CT 3.8.2, NT 14 und ihrer Reform durch Justinian," *The Legal History Review* 80 (2012): 1-38.
[69] Caroline Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice," 179.

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immovable goods should not be transferred, although communities could have been, in some instances, subject to civil law. Moreover, monasteries were supposed to cover by themselves the costs for lightning, the establishments' maintenance, and the needs of the ascetics. In this context, monastic communities attempted to acquire properties and immovable possessions.[70]

Neither Justinian's *Novels*, nor the subsequent legislations which republished them (the *Syntagma* compiled by Athanasios of Emesa and the *Synopsis* of the ninth century) do not express directly the perceived risk of the presence of relatives in the same monastic environment. However, one of the canons of the seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea (787) reconsiders the problem of gender division in monasteries:

> *On the issue that, from now on, there should not be created any double monastery and about the double monasteries*. We decide that, from now on, *double monasteries* should not be created (μὴ γίνεσθαι διπλοῦν μοναστήριον: *duplex fieri monasterium*), because this becomes a scandal and a stumbling block [σκάνδαλον και πρόσκομμα] for many. If some people, *together with their relatives* [μετὰ συγγενῶν], decide to seclude themselves from the world and to follow the monastic life, the men must depart to a male monastery, while the women should enter a female monastery, because this is well-pleasing to God. And those double [monasteries] which are still extant should keep the Canon (i. e. the *Asketikon*) of our Holy Father Basil and, according to his Rule, they should be organized as follows: monks and nuns should not live in one monastery, for cohabitation entices to adultery.[71]

This twentieth canon of the Council condemns the "double monasteries," forbids the creation of new ones, and, just like in the *Novel* 123 of Justinian, stresses that all those who chose the monastic life together with their relatives should proceed separately to male and female monasteries. Here the canons explicitly mention the adultery as a major danger occurring due to the closeness of genders. In order to avoid it, no monastery should ever serve as a shelter for men and women at the same time,

[70] Eric. Cooper, Michael J. Decker, *Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 111-112.

[71] "Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ παρόντος γίνεσθαι διπλοῦν μοναστήριον καὶ περὶ τῶν διπλῶν μοναστηρίων. Ἀπὸ τοῦ παρόντος ὁρίζομεν μὴ γίνεσθαι διπλοῦν μοναστήριον, ὅτι σκάνδαλον και πρόσκομμα τοῖς πολοῖς γίνεται τοῦτο. Εἰ δέ τινες μετὰ συγγενῶν προαιροῦνται ἀποτάξασθαι καὶ τῷ μονήρει βίῳ κατακολουθεῖν, τοῦς μὲν ἄνδρας δέον ἀπιέναι εἰς ανδρεῖον μοναστήριον καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας εἰσιέναι ἐν γυναικείῳ μοναστηρίῳ· ἐπὶ τούτῳ γὰρ εὐαρεστεῖται ὁ Θεός. Τὰ δὲ ὄντα ἕως τοῦ νῦν διπλᾶ κρατείτωσαν κατὰ τὸν κανόνα τοῦ ἁγίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Βασιλείου, καὶ κατὰ τὴν διαταγὴν αὐτοῦ οὕτω διαθυπούσθωσαν. Μὴ διαιτάσθωσαν ἐν ἑνὶ μοναστηρίῳ μοναχοὶ καὶ μονάστριαι, μοιχεία γὰρ μεσολαβεῖ τῇ συνδιαιτήσει."
"Quod non oporteat amodo duplex monasterium fieri: et de duplis monasteriis. Ex hoc definimus, minime duplex fieri monasterium; quia scandalum id et offendiculum multis efficitur. Si vero aliqui cum cognatis abrenuntiare, et monasticam vitam sectari voluerint, debent quidem viri virorum adire coenobium, feminae vero mulierum ingredi monasterium; in hoc enim placatur Deus. Quae autem hactenus sunt dupla teneant secundum regulam santi patris nostri Basilii, et secundum praeceptionem eius ita formentur. Non habitent in uno monasterio monachi et monachae; adulterium enim intercipit cohabitationem."
Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum, Series Secunda, *Concilium Universale Nicaenum Secundum*, vol. 3, part 3, *Concilii Actiones VI-VII*, ed. Erich Lamberz (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 920-923.
Discipline générale antique (2^{e}-9^{e} s.), ed. Périclès-Pierre Joannou (Rome: Tipografia Italo-Orientale "S. Nilo", 1962), 279-280

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since cohabitation has always the risk of adultery. The law goes further, prescribing no familiarity between a monk and a nun and no conversation exchange between a nun and a monk.

Another problem which the canon of Nicaea directly tackles, while the canons of Justinian just assume, is the separation of the family members of different genders. One of the roots of this prescription is Christ's commandment, expressed in Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple." To such an extent were the relations between ascetics and their direct relatives transformed that, according to several Church Fathers, the parents of one ascetic were regarded as the parents of the entire community. A narrower contact between an ascetic and the relatives occurred in one more situation: when the ascetic was free from any direct (i. e. financial) commitment towards them.[72]

I. 3. Writing about "Family Double Monasteries" in the Fourth Century

The "double monasteries," in the form which started to be subject of several repetitive interdictions from the sixth century onwards, originate in fourth-century similar communities. It is well-known that as early as this period, cenobitic monasticism used a specific language for the community rooted in the semantic field of "family." The members of a community are generally addressed with "brother" or "sister," while the superiors are called "father" or "mother," without being related in any way. Besides, in some situations monasteries emerged from relatives who decided to become ascetics.

On the other hand, family monasticism is coeval with cenobitic monasticism. As the Introduction shows, two types of relatives converted together to the monastic life: those linked through blood descendance and those related through marriage.

In the following chapters, I attempt to show that although there were instances in which certain communities became exemplary for other group of ascetics, the *Quellenforschung* method cannot be applied in this research in order to establish a pan-Christian "genealogical tree of double monasteries." In each region, the beginnings of "double monasteries" are to be sought in the aetiology of the local monastic movement. To this context, the social, economic, ecclesiastic, and theological local conditions should be analyzed.

Starting from the *Novels* of Justinian, at times ignoring the contribution of Athanasios of Emesa, and acknowledging part of the previous early secondary literature, later scholars defined a "double monastery" as a community in which monks and nuns lived, where all ascetics used in common its properties, and where at least one of the monks had to coordinate the nuns' religious practices. As for

[72] Friedrich T. Schipper, "Wir erlauben nicht," 67.

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the segregation of monks and nuns, scholars have not reached a consensus. While some of them consider "double monastery" to be an official name for "family monastery" or for "mixed monastery," others propose as models the "double," "mixed," and "twin" monasteries, sometimes without including the "family" aspect. Each of these attributes mirrors a different interaction between the two ascetic groups.[73]

Thus, this multi-type categorization needs to be questioned. Can one extend a definition which is based on a sixth-century legal source to all Late Antique and Early Medieval cenobitic establishments in which monks and nuns lived in a closed segregation? However, can one find a better denomination, which would encapsulate all the common characteristics of the fourth-century communities theorized as "double monasteries?"

The fourth century did not see the rise of a single monastic model. Instead, this was a formative period, when communities were in a continuous and slow transformation, at the same time competing with the eremitic monasticism. In different regions, emerging monasticism followed different scriptural models, either the prophets of the Old Testament or the community of Apostles in the New Testament. In addition, single-gendered communities existed in parallel with pious families who converted partially or even entirely to monasticism. The most obvious differences between communities concern their emergence. As far as monasteries which hosted monks and nuns are concerned, while some of them started from a single-gender community, which extended with a "wing" for nuns, others were developed within family estates and incorporated from the beginning male and female relatives.

Besides, men and women shared their ascetic vocation in proximity in arrangements which were condemned. In some instances, as it will be discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, Church Fathers firmly rejected other experiments of double-gender ascetic life. For example, John Chrysostom wrote an entire treatise against what he labelled as "suspect cohabitations.[74]" Ambrose of Milan, Epiphanius of Salamis, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nyssa were other Church Fathers with similar attitudes. John Chrysostom was a source for Ambrose, Epiphanius wrote his *Panarion* against the Arian Aerius, who gathered a group of ascetic men and women and challenged the authority of the bishop, whereas Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa disapproved

[73] Daniel F. Stramara, "Double Monasticism in the Greek East," 271-272. Daniel Stramara mentioned *Novel* 133 as one dealing with the interdiction of "double monasteries." However, this *Novel* does not refer exactly to these communities, but, as mentioned above, restricts the encounters of monks and nuns, with various methods.

[74] John Chrysostom, "Introduction and Refutation Directed Against Those Men Cohabiting with Virgins," in Elizabeth A. Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostome and Friends. Essays and Translations* (New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1979), 164-208; "On the Necessity of Guarding Virginity," in Ibid., 209-248.
See Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell. 2000), 52.

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the '*homoiousian* asceticism' supported by Eustathius of Sebasteia, which they considered unordered.[75]

After having revised the interventions of Justinian regarding the problem of the "so-called double monasteries," and having compared them to additional sources of Church law related to it (e. g. the *Syntagma,* the *Epitome*, and the later canons), Ioannis Konidaris concluded that "double monasteries" was a term coined by Justinian in order to label a phenomenon which had started to spread out in the Empire. However, from the wording of the *Novel* 123, it seems that the term "double monasteries" was well-known before the law was issued and it did not have a negative connotation. If "family monasteries" were tolerated before Justinian's *Novels,* the new legislation targeted them, but identified as "double monasteries" those communities which comprised a section for monks and a section for nuns, with common economic activities. For this reason, Konidaris does not differentiate the "mixed" from the "double" monasteries.

If one summarizes the variety of terminologies encountered in the sources and in the two phases of scholarly research addressing the question of double-gender asceticism in the fourth century, the list of denominations is rich. The meanings associated with these terminologies are also variegated. A "double monastery" can be another name for a "mixed monastery," it may designate a different topographical disposition for the shelters of monks and nuns in a community, or it may refer to a congregation which includes a community of monks and a community of nuns located at significant distance. The common characteristic of all these situations is the presence of a unique leader, ruling both 'wings' of the monastery. A "twin monastery" designates a community of nuns which neighbours a community of monks, each of them having its own leader and both of them interacting. The term "neighbour monasteries" is more ambiguous. It may refer to two communities which are situated in close proximity and whose members may interact in order to provide for each other's needs.

"Family monasteries" and "pious households" are sometimes synonyms. Both terms are used in the secondary literature as referring to communities which experienced an entire process of gradual evolution. A "pious household" may suggest an earlier phase of such a process. What can the reader choose from this variety of terms and meanings in order to examine the first steps of a phenomenon which was not only tolerated, but also encouraged until the sixth century? No better terminology in English is able to overcome the anachronistic and charged syntagms for the fourth-century

[75] Eustathius had long connection with the family of Basil and Gregory. A painful separation between them occurred in the mid-370s, mainly due to debates concerning Pneumatomachianism, a semi-Arian trend. Further, Basil attempted to reform what he considered to be an over-zealous and unordered form of asceticism, in which one of the ardent problems was proximity between men and women. Instead of their chaotic association, Basil demanded a clear segregation since the earlier version of his monastic *Rules*. See for more details Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 41-43. After the death of Basil, in mid-September 378, Gregory took over his work as theologian and even monastic reformer.

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communities in which family members, men and women ended up in conducting their ascetic vocation in proximity, without cohabitating. Therefore, throughout the thesis I will use the term "double monastery" complemented with the epithet "family."

The category "double monastery" applied to the fourth-century context, during which monasticism was just emerging, is a diachronical extension of a sixth-century negatively charged legal term which came to be associated with the earliest communities through its ambiguous use in the secondary literature. Although some scholars argue that the main criteria for differentiating them from the other double-gendered ascetic communities lies in the segregation of monks and nuns, the sources demonstrate that, not only in the sixth century, but also later, the term "duplex monasterium / διπλοῦν μοναστήριον" left space for interpretation. Although care was given to the avoidance of scandalous circumstances, such as free meetings between monks and nuns, another, subtler criterion seems to have made the difference: all these communities also benefited from the continuous support of influential Church Fathers and had among their ascetic offsprings of rich and influential families.

One cannot find a better denomination able to cover such great a variety of double-gender ascetic lifestyles as experienced in the communities which make the object of this thesis. However, there are two characteristics which differentiate these "double family monasteries." First, the presence of monks and nuns became, at least in a more developed stage of a community, prone to regulations aimed at avoiding the interaction of ascetic men and women. Second, these communities benefited from the support of dominant Church Fathers and ecclesiastical leaders.

The present survey of the earliest sources which actually used the term "double monastery" brings to light their strong connection with the contemporary ecclesiastical struggles and the social context. In the following chapter, a similar link between the fourth-century sources and the contemporary family double monasteries will be explored in depths.

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II. "A Galaxy of Sources"

> "It is true to say that new genres emerge in the third and the fourth centuries AD. Some of them, like the Christian hymn … are perennially successful. We as readers also observe, with Ausonius and Paulinus of Nola, a galaxy of different kinds of writing: panegyrics, paraphrases of psalms, prayer forms, *natalicia*, the propemptikon, the epithalamium and *centones*. We could also very reasonably ask, what genre is the most consistently enduring work in the period … ? What genre is the mass? *A distinction of later Roman writers was their willingness to mix genres* … A responsible reader at one level being confronted with different genres has to be constantly refiguring a strategy for reading, as different genres manifest themselves.[1]"

The variety of literary genres which flourished in the third, the fourth, and the fifth centuries within the monastic movement is astonishing. For each Church Father of the Greek and the Latin speaking *milieux*, scholars have been discovering a "galaxy" of compositions just as rich as the one laid out by Paulinus. As most Church Fathers were well trained in Classical culture, they appropriated in several ways the Greco-Roman cultural legacy. Their Christian formation and, sometimes, ascetic experience, further shaped their literary creations. To which genres could the sources related to the fourth-century family double monasteries be ascribed? Which strategies did their audience apply for approaching them? To what extent did the simultaneous presence of ascetic men and women in a community influence the authors' literary strategies and devices?

This chapter aims at answering these questions by scrutinizing a *dossier* of sources which provides consistent testimonies for the fourth-century family double monasteries. Most of the evidence related to these communities is written. Scholars have attempted to identify their locations and remains, but all of them left, at most, little room for archaeological investigation. The monastery of Tabennesi disappeared in the floods of the Nile River.[2] The site of the monastery in Annisa was researched three times,[3] but no excavation has been done so far on the site.[4] In the monastery of Bethlehem, according to a legend, the cell identified today as Jerome's study cell was in one of the caves beneath the Church of Nativity. Based on this assumption, some scholars supposed that the nuns dwelled in the neighbouring ones and, as such, the tombs discovered in one of the caves were attributed to Paula and Eustochium.[5] This identification relied as well on Jerome's own testimony

[1] Anthony Dykes, *Reading Sin in the World: The Hamartigenia of Prudentius and the Vocation of the Responsible Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 175.
[2] L. T. Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens. Exploration topographique," *Le Muséon* 52 (1939): 327.
[3] G. de Jerphanion, "Ibora-Gazioura? Étude de géographie pontique," in *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph, Beirouth*, 5 (1911), 333-354.
[4] Anna M. Silvas, "In Quest of Basil's Retreat: An Expedition to Ancient Pontus," *Antichthon* 41 (2007): 73-95.
[5] Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 137, 156-157.

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concerning Paula's burial: "[Paula] was set down in the middle of the church of the cave of the Saviour.[6]" The site of the women's monastery belonging to the complex of Melania the Younger was identified to the east and south of the church of Eleona.[7] However, some scholars contest this assumption, relying on the unclear written evidence regarding the exact site of the monastery.[8] The complex at Cimitile, near Nola, has been in the focus of archaeological investigations since the 1930s. Scholars have amended the first research methods and conclusions, eventually reaching a chronology of the community's development.[9] The site of Primuliacum has not been precisely determined. Based on the literary evidence, it was assumed that the place should have been situated between Narbonnaise and Aquitaine.[10] Although these discoveries can only provide the researcher with a limited image of the everyday life in such monastic complexes, they are not able to give in-depth answers to questions on the context in which the communities emerged.

Given this situation, the present investigation relies heavily on the written evidence. Thus, in the following paragraphs, this chapter presents particularities of the written sources as well as methodological challenges which they pose and it justifies my own approach to them. On the one hand, every text has its own characteristics belonging to one or more well-established genres.[11] Many of them had been elaborated gradually, in different stages, more or less identifiable. In addition, at every moment of its elaboration each text targeted a certain audience and, thus, had particular aims. The origin, process of elaboration, early dissemination, and later transmission of the texts are factors which increase the difficulty of their interpretation. In the following lines, I will make a brief inventory of the types of sources pertinent to the family double monasteries and reveal their methodological challenges.[12] The last part of this chapter assesses the scholarly contributions with regards to this variety of sources in which the problem of gender is dominant, and justifies the approach which will be used in the following chapters.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 222-223.

[6] See Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*, 29.1, ed. and trans. Andrew Cain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 92-93: "in media ecclesiae speluncae salvatoris est posita."

[7] Gerontius. *The Life of Melania the Younger*, trans. Elizabeth A. Clark (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 221.

[8] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine (Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 894.

[9] Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 44, n. 129.

[10] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine (Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 39.

[11] Although one might argue that the classification of genres seems artificial, my purpose is to follow the distinction perceived both by the authors and by their audience.

[12] No publication has presented a comprehensive theoretical discussion on the types of sources which pertain to early monasticism or to a particular type of it. Although some fields, such as hagiography, have been receiving increasing scholarly interest, some others, such as monastic rules, have not been explored yet.

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II. 1. *Genres*: Style, Purpose, and Methodological Challenges

" … genres mixed and mingled, and *the hybridity of form and genre* —
all within the framework of the Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian inheritance —
became one of the focal points for authors from the fourth century on.[13]"

Literary genres, influenced by the ideological and social contexts in which the texts were produced, served as means of communication. For the texts' authors, genres determined general rules which had to be followed, while for the audience, both direct addressees and a larger public, they determined the key for interpretation. For this reason, a scrutiny of the textual genres to which the sources of this thesis belong is essential.

One can note that not in few occasions a certain textual evidence can be ascribed to more than one literary genre. Due to the new needs or requirements of the audience, itself part of a changing social and religious environment, the authors had to innovate; thus, they created *hybrid* or *blended genres*.[14] Mixing literary genres was not a rare practice in Late Antiquity, as recent publications have shown.[15] Several scholars proposed a differentiation between literary genres and ecclesiastical or pastoral writings. Although to elaborate a taxonomy of written sources might seem to narrow the perspective of their analysis, there are reasons for such a consideration. The writers followed a certain set of rules, specific to each genre, by which they intended to transmit a certain message. Therefore, one must adapt the questions addressed to each source to the literary conventions of the genre(s) to which it belongs. Rather than limiting the discussion to the reliability of each source, one needs also to decipher its function(s) and message(s).

Due to its connection with the Hellenized Jewish theological tradition, with the Classical philosophical tradition, and to its creation within the Roman Empire, Christian literature naturally appropriated, in a critical way, non-Christian motifs. For instance, Christian authors used the non-Christian philosophical language in order to justify their positions within the philosophical-theological debates in which they were engaged, and thus they gave new meanings to certain technical terms.

[13] Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, "Travel, Cartography, and Cosmology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 579. My emphasis.

[14] In this context, by "hybrid genres" I do not mean the combination of Late Antique and Hellenistic genres, but texts which embedded characteristics of more than one literary type, already individualized by the fourth-century audience. Otherwise, all the texts illustrate, to a greater or a lesser extent, a degree of continuation, adaptation, and innovation of and from elements belonging to the Greco-Roman heritage or to the Jewish tradition. See Karla Pollmann, *The Baptized Muse: Early Christian Poetry as Cultural Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 19-36.

[15] See instances of combinations of genres in the volume *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*, ed. Geoffrey Greatrex, Hugh Elton (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), such as *De obitu Theodosii* of Ambrosius, *De viris illustribus* of Jerome, or *Panarion* of Epiphanius of Salamis. However, none of the articles belonging to this volume discusses the cases considered in this thesis.

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In addition, both the demands of the public and the acquaintance with the Classical literature determined the authors to use well-known older literary techniques. Their training in Ancient literature and the examples set by authoritative Christian predecessors legitimized the use of *contaminatio* and *retractatio*. Not rarely, a literary competition with 'reference works' is made visible, while *synkrisis* is another Classical technique used both in the fourth and in the fifth centuries.[16]

On the other hand, one can observe a change of styles and topics approached by several authors within the decades of the fourth century. These changes are related either to their own conversion to the Nicene dogma, or to their ascetic turn. For instances, for Gregory of Nazianzus, or for Paulinus of Nola and his friend, Sulpicius Severus, the choice of asceticism naturally trained a literary conversion. They used their training in Classical culture both as a proof for their literary skills and for the service of the Christian asceticism.

Another element that poses challenges of interpretation is the vocabulary itself. Especially in the Greek and the Latin texts, one can discern a plurality of meanings for certain terms. This (most probably) voluntary practice testifies for the joined influence of the Greek-Roman and Judeo-Christian order and values.[17]

Finally, one needs to take into account the precise chronology of the development of each writing. A significant number of texts emerged in several stages and received emendations from their own authors or editorial interventions from later copyists or disseminators. As it will be revealed, in some instances, the 'archaeology' of the texts is very difficult to establish.

II. 1. 1. Vitae Sanctorum as Vitae Philosophorum

Vitae raise significant methodological problems, as the very term *hagiography* has generated debates in scholarships. Some scholars conventionally employ the term with the meaning of discipline which studies the literature devoted to the lives of holy men and women. Since the modern term has no precedent in any Late Antique language, and due to the fact that in Modern Greek it refers to icon painting, some other scholars avoid to use it in connection with *vitae*.[18] Another reason for not appropriating this term in some recent publications is its origin in the German nineteenth-century intellectual *milieu*, which, according to some scholars, burdened it with a pejorative meaning.[19] Scholars whose mother tongue is one of the Neo-Latin languages used the term *agiologia*,[20] whose

[16] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, 78.
[17] Ibid., 109-10.
[18] *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1, *Periods and Places*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011). Timothy David Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).
[19] See Anna-Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 103.
[20] Briefly discussed in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1, 2.

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correspondent in English would be *hagiology*. However, the last term has not been in use in English since the beginning of the twentieth century.[21] As a consequence, in the following lines, I will employ the term "hagiography" in its broader meaning of a writing describing the remarkable life of a holy person.

Scholars have been providing with solid arguments for the idea that the texts describing one's person exemplary life (and even afterlife), with the purpose of promoting him or her to a Christian audience as a saint, are not a Christian innovation. Instead, they have ancient roots in the *lives of philosophers*. The extended *lives* of Apollonius of Tyana (ca. 15-100, written by Philostratus – ca. 170-245), of Pythagoras (written by both Porphyry – ca. 234-305 – and Iamblichus – ca. 245-325), or of Plotinus (204-270) (written by Porphyry) present ideal portraits of philosophers who acquired the full detachment from their careers and wealth and started to devote their lives to the contemplation of the Divine. None of the three works was independent, but all of them belonged to an endeavor with multiple purposes. Whether their authors tried to respond to other writings of their contemporary Christians, or they tried to enter a competition with the Christians, or they were debating between themselves problems related to the soul and its connection with the material world, its relation with the gods, or the way in which one is supposed to live, is still a subject of investigation for scholars.[22]

The Christian authors were able to appropriate easily these writings due to the meaning which they attributed to *philosophy*, seen as the accomplished, God-pleasing way of living. Moreover, during the fourth century, the term *philosophy* acquired the additional meaning of *monastic life*. Besides, Christian authors heavily relied on scriptural texts and used literary *topoi* from earlier martyrial accounts.

Being aware of their emergence from a mixture of the Classical biographies and panegyrics, to which a pedagogical *chreia* was added,[23] I use hagiographies both as historical sources and as instances of literary creations. As such, I integrate these writings in their social and ecclesiastical contexts, but I attempt to decipher their rhetorical discourse, since the style and language register contribute to their interpretations.[24]

[21] See Francis Bond, "A Study in Hagiology," *Nation* 101 (1915), Thursday, July 29th, 1915. http://unz.org/Pub/Nation-1915jul29-00151:21, accessed April 20, 2016.

[22] Gillian Clark, "*Philosophic Lives* and the *Philosophic Life*: Porphyry and Iamblichus," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 29-31.

[23] Claudia Rapp, "The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism. Purpose and Genre between Tradition and Innovation," in *Unclassical Traditions. Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. Flower, C. Kelly, M. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 119-130.

[24] When discussing about Byzantine hagiographies in general, Stephanos Efthymiadis suggests both backgrounds: hagiographical writings are both historical sources, products of their eras, but also their authors, heros, and literary styles had a purpose and envisioned a certain audience. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. 1, 5-7.

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Most of the Pachomian *dossier* consists of different versions and translations of the *vita* of Pachomius and a *vita* of Theodore (one of Pachomius' disciples and a successor of Pachomius, c. 314-368). Special attention must be given to the first Greek and the Sahidic[25] versions of Pachomius' *Life*, in particular since their chronology has been subject of many debates in scholarship for more than a century. Scholars have oscillated between giving chronological precedence to the Sahidic[26] or to the first Greek version.[27] Based not only on philological arguments, but also on the episodes that it presents, even if it is preserved only in fragments, I support the primacy of the Sahidic *life*, which describes a more 'primitive' *koinonia* of Pachomius, while the first Greek *life* seems to have filtered some of the events and practices of the first Pachomian ascetics, pointing rather to a later stage in the evolution of the community. In addition, although it was the most spread Coptic dialect in the area of the Nile Delta, the Bohairic version of the *life* was a translation made in the ninth century, probably from a text re-worked by several hands. For this reason, even though it is one of the most complete versions of the *vita*, because of its chronology, one should use it with care. In addition to the Coptic dialects[28] and to the Greek versions,[29] the *vita* of Pachomius received translations into Latin,[30] Arabic, and Syriac, several centuries later than the Sahidic version.

Shortly after Pachomius' death, his disciples put into writing his *vita* – as I argued, in Sahidic, the dialect of Pachomius –, relying on the accounts of Abbot Theodore and on older narrative sources. Afterwards, the text was copied, received several translations and rearrangements, became part of various compilations, in several recensions, and received an appendix. After long debates, scholars have concluded that neither was the first Greek *life* the source of the Sahidic one, nor the other way round. Each of the two versions is independent, but both relied on a common source, about which scholars have not decided whether it was written in Coptic or in Greek.[31]

Gregory of Nyssa, the "Plato Christianus" and the "father of mystical theology," wrote the *bios* of his sister, Macrina the Younger (ca. 327 – 19th July 379) in the winter of 381/382. Following the

[25] See Armand Veilleux, "Introduction," in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 2, *pace* Satoshi Toda, "Pachomian Monasticism and Poverty," in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 5, *Poverty and Riches*, ed. Geoffrey D. Dunn, David Luckensmeyer, and Lawrence Cross (Strathfield, Australia: St. Paul's Publications, 2009), 194.
[26] James E. Gohering, *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 3-23.
[27] Satoshi Toda, "Pachomian Monasticism and Poverty," 191–200.
[28] Among its many recensions, the Sahidic text S1, preserved only as a fragment, is the oldest text, and the Bohairic *Life* is the most complete version (though, from the ninth century). See "Introduction," in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 2.
[29] With six recensions, among which G1 is the oldest (written around 390) of all the texts. See Satoshi Toda, "Pachomian Monasticism and Poverty," 194.
[30] Translated in the sixth century from *The Second Greek Life* by Dionysius Exiguus. A new Latin translatin of the Bohairic *Life* was offered by Lefort in 1936. See *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 2-3.
[31] Scholars have pointed out some fragments in Sahidic and an Arabic translation which were sources of the SBo. There are, in addition, indirect testimonies of the Sahidic textual tradition. One of them is an Arabic translation preserved in a manuscript stored at the Vatican Library, dated 1345. However, some parts of the Sahidic life which is preserved are missing from this translation. See Fr. Awad Wadi, "The Arabic *Lives* of Saint Pachomius," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, vol. 2, *Nag Hammadi-Esna*, ed. Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 165-166.

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death of Macrina, Gregory left the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) and went on a pastoral mission to the churches of Arabia and Jerusalem. There he met a certain Olympius, who urged him to write about the life of his sister. Most scholars inscribed the *Life* in the genre of *hagiography*, since it presents Macrina as an exemplary ascetic, as a saint capable of miracles since her lifetime, and even as a martyr. However, Anna Silvas, who has dedicated many studies on the sources related to Macrina, does not read it in terms of a writing meant to emphasize Macrina's life:

> If the present author were to recommend one interpretive key to the reader of *VSM* it is that it be understood as *mystagogy* (my underlining). By this is meant an exposition of the 'mysteries' in the life in Christ as communicated in the liturgical rites, and realized above all by the virgin mystic in the liturgy of the heart.[32]

Her suggestion of the key interpretation of the text is, in my opinion, pertinent, but I would argue that it does not oppose Gregory's aim of presenting Macrina, ultimately, as a saint. Gregory explicitly stated that the intention of the *vita* is to present "she who had raised herself by philosophy to the highest summit of human virtues.[33]"

The Life of Melania he Younger (383/386 – 31st December 439) is another source which poses methodological problems, due to the state in which it survives. The text has two versions. Scholars have shown that the Greek one is the earliest text, while the Latin variant is a later translation, which sometimes mirrors word for word the Greek text, thus arriving to grammatical structures inexistent in Latin, such as the Genitive absolute.[34] The attribution of the authorship of the text is of utmost importance, since both the Greek and the Latin versions indicate that the author spent many years in Melania's company and even considered Melania his spiritual mother. One needs to compare the two versions of the text, since the representation of Melania's family relations, for example, differs significantly.

Cyril of Scythopolis (ca. 525-559)' *Life of Euthymius* (ca. 377-473)[35] and *Life of Saint Sabbas* (439-532)[36] are sources for both Gerontius' (the presumed author of Melania's *vita*) and the theological trends of Melania's community. According to them and to John Rufus' *Plerophoria*, Gerontius was an ardent supporter of the Miaphysite faction. Due to his theological views, he was sent out of Melania's monastery and forced to wander in the desert, where he died. The *Life of Peter*

[32] Anna Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 104-105.
[33] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina* 1.5, in *Macrina the Younger*, 110.
Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 2.
[34] Gerontius, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth A. Clark (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984): 1-13.
[35] Cyril of Scythopolis, "Life of Euthymius," in *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, trans. R. M. Price (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 1-91.
[36] Cyril of Scythopolis, "Life of Saint Sabbas," in *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, 93-219.

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the Iberian gives more details about Gerontius' role in the monastery.[37] Peter, a twelve-year old Georgian prince, hostage at the court of Theodosius II (401-450), and one of his friends decided to become monks. For this reason, they travelled to Melania's and Pinianus' community on the Mount of Olives, where they received the monastic habit from Gerontius. The text indicates that Gerontius was not only a priest, but also the abbot of the monastery, and gives more details about his life before reaching the community. Originally from Jerusalem, he came to Rome as a boy and was raised up by Melania and Pinianus for the holy life. There he learned the distinctive liturgical practices of the Roman Church, which he then transferred to the monastery on the Mount of Olives. In spite of these accounts and of his own insertion in the twelfth chapter of the *Vita*, it was suggested that Gerontius could not have spent time in the household of Melania and Pinianus during his childhood. Even if Gerontius mentions the visit of Melania and Pinianus to Serena (ca. 360-408), the wife of the general Flavius Stilicho and the cousin of Aelia Galla Placidia, he confuses the order of the events, which leads one to the conclusion that he could not have participated at them.[38]

The Life of Saint Martin of Tours (316/336-397) and the third letter that its author, Sulpicius Severus (364-425), sent to his mother-in-law, Bassula, create not only the portrait of Martin, but also illustrate the monastic life-style at Primuliacum, the domain where Sulpicius, his wife, his disciples, and Bassula retired in order to pursue their ascetic vocation. Like the previous *vitae*, the *Life of Martin* incorporates the tradition of the ancient lives of philosophers, with which it shares the conception about the functions of a biography. Scholars have denied any influence from Jerome (347-420)'s *De uiris illustribus*, written only five years before, or from Suetonius (70-126). However, they do not have the same reserves with regards to the biblical influence. Since Martin's life is organized around his missions, scholars have seen in the *vita* traces of the Old Testament's lives of prophets or mediators between men and God. Besides, the martyrs offered another set of examples which were known and assimilated by Sulpicius. *The Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*, *The Life of Cyprian*, *The Life of Antony*, and Jerome's *lives* of Paul, Malc, and Hilarion have both similarities and discrepancies with the *Vita Martini*.[39] In addition, the *vita* reproduced the classical trifold division of a biographical piece of writing, between the acts, the "virtues," and the life style.[40] Since Sulpicius wrote it in a

[37] John Rufus, "Life of Peter the Iberian," in John Rufus, *The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem, and the Monk Romanus*, ed. and trans. Cornelia B. Horn, Robert R. Phenix (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 1-301.
[38] Gerontius, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, 14-16. Elizabeth Clark suggests that the error could have occurred due to the translation into Latin of the discourse in which Melania speaks about the events in which she and Pinianus participated. In this passage, the translator omitted to switch from the direct, to the indirect discourse.
[39] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, 66-71.
[40] Ibid., 87.

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decisive moment of his life, when he converted to asceticism, inspired by Martin's own example, scholars have read the *vita* as an *autobiography* as well.[41]

In most of the examples quoted above, the red thread of the exemplary lives brought to light by their authors is a continuous search for the "true wisdom." As the Christian is the follower of the Ancient 'wise man,' the ascetic (men and women alike) protagonists of these *vitae* are the ones who lived "the true philosophy," represented by monastic life. I would argue that, in line with the continuation of Ancient *philosophers' lives* in the Christian context of the fourth century, the *vitae* which focus on women also attempt, as a novelty, to present them as accomplished *philosophers,* in the Christian sense of being fully integrated in the monastic life.

Besides the figure of the Ancient philosopher, hagiographers also used portraits of the first Christian martyrs as models. Behind many representations of the Late Antique holy women lays the key-portrait of Thecla. Her extraordinary life was used as an *exemplum* due to the large dissemination of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (ca. 160), an apocryphal Christian text which recounts the evangelizing work of Paul and his death. After listening Paul's preaching about living in perpetual virginity, Thecla, an aristocratic virgin from Icomium, refuses to marry the fiancé whom her family had chosen for her. This attitude determines her family to hand her to the authorities for not complying with the duties expected from a woman of her status. Thus, she is condemned to be burnt. However, she is miraculously saved and escapes her prosecutors, so that she follows Paul closely in his travel. After she is condemned again, this time to be eaten by the wild beasts, she is thrown in the arena, where she baptizes herself. More miracles save her and she follows Paul again in his missionary travels. After having lived in a cave for seventy-two years and having performed many healings in Seleucia Cilicia, the physician of the city attempts to rape her. Being miraculously saved again, she travels to the tomb of Paul in Rome. It is obvious that the author of the *Acts* aims to present not necessarily historical information, but to provide his public with an exemplary life. In addition, the author offers an illustration of the women's role in the Early Church. Disseminating the Gospel and following the Apostles in their struggle for evangelizing, women are a constant presence in the texts belonging not only to Thecla's lifetime, but also to later eras.[42]

Since the chronological difference between the date of the events which they present and their moment of composition is significant, when relying on these sources, I will take into account the possible anachronistic details which might occur. Besides, the hagiographies which create the women's portraits pose the additional problem of the status of women in Early Christianity. Since all

[41] Marianne Sághy, "Introduction. Saint Martin de Tours, sa vie, son culte. Le rayonnement européen d'un saint," in Sulpice Sévère, *Saint Martin de Tours*, trans. Jacques Fontaine, Paul Marceaux (Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 2016), 11-13.

[42] Ioannis Panagiotopoulos, *Συνείσακτοι. Τὸ ζήτημα τῶν Συνεισάκτων στὴν Ἀρχαία Ἐκκλησία* (Suneisaktoi. The discussion of Suneisaktoi in the Ancient Church) (Athens: Diegese, 2000), 54-55.

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the authors who composed these biographies were men, and often referred to the holy women whom they depict as capable of surpassing their own gender, the message which they conveyed to their audience could have had a double impact. Not only did they offer to women models of exemplary lives, but they also stressed men's inability of raising themselves to the same ideals.

II. 1. 2. Letters and Letter-Collections

> when the bearers delivered the letter [from Basil], after going through it all in silence I [Libanius] said, smiling the while and rejoicing: "We have been vanquished!" "And in what have you been vanquished?" they asked; "and why do you not grieve at having been vanquished?" I said: "I have been worsted in beauty of epistolary style. And it is Basil who has gained the upper hand. But the man is dear to me, and on this account I am delighted.[43]"

This is how the famous rhetorician Libanius (314-394) acknowledged the epistolary mastery of his former student, Basil of Caesarea. He does not hesitate to assume the merits of such a performance. After all, Basil acquired his skills due to the training in rhetoric for which Libanius had been responsible. Feeling the subtle irony, Basil's answer, in which he proved his mastery once more, by quoting Plato and the Ancient Myths, did not come late:

> What would a sophist not say, and especially a sophist the peculiar quality of whose art is, as all men agree, the ability both to make great things small, whenever he so wishes, and to invest small things with greatness; … But in truth there was also something indescribably delightful in the language you used in your game with us. It was as if a Polydamas or a Milo should beg to be excused from a contest in the pancration or in boxing with me! For after examining your letter many times I found no sign of any weakness in it; consequently, those who seek extravagances in speech admire you more for your ability in this, that you are so able to descend in your games to our level, than if you had led the barbarian when he sailed over Athos. But as for us, admirable sir, we associate with Moses and Elias and such blessed men, who communicate their thoughts to us in a barbarian tongue, and it is what we learn from them that we give utterance to—in substance true, though in style unlearned, as indeed these present words show. For even if we did learn something from you, time has caused us to forget it.[44]

Thus, Basil confessed that he, in fact, adapted his style, giving prominence to theological truths, which he consciously expressed in an imperfect language. Other Church Fathers adopted the same choice. Speaking to a larger audience, not necessarily trained, they preferred to introduce their ideas in a simpler, but convincing manner. Thus, the addressee and the purpose of each letter had direct influence on the style adopted by Church Fathers.[45]

[43] "Letter 338. Libanius to Basil," in Basil, *Letters*, vol. 4, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (London: Heinemann, 1934), 294-295.
[44] "Letter 339. Basil to Libanius," in ibid., 296-299.
[45] Wolfram Kinzig, "The Greek Christian Writers," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C -A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 635.

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Letters constitute a major source for the investigation of the current topic. In the epistolary corpus on which this thesis relies there are letters of excessive length which, while preserving several Classical norms of letter-writing, are primarily meant to model saints' lives. Two examples in this sense are the *Life of Saint Macrina* written by Gregory of Nyssa, and the *Life of Saint Martin*, of Sulpicius Severus. In addition, several letters of Pachomius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome, Paulinus of Nola, and Sulpicius Severus which refer to various aspects of the context or organization of family double monasteries will be used as well.

The Life of Macrina has as support an extensive letter addressed, in some manuscripts, to Olympius, a monk or, probably, a bishop, whom Gregory met in his travels, and who urged him to put into writing Macrina's life story. The manuscript evidence indicates that, in the following years, Gregory refined the *vita* and resent it to other addressees, who asked him for this document.[46] The *Life of Martin* was addressed to Desiderius, one of the ascetic friends of Sulpicius Severus.[47]

Scholars have proven that Late Antique epistles were one of the most used communication tools among elites. Besides their message, the exchange of letters testifies for the social connections and the religious developments of the period.[48] Late Antique letters had a prominent public character and a double impact: the direct addressees and a larger public, to which they were disseminated. Even the letters originally intended as confidential could have been disseminated, as the third letter of Sulpicius Severus to Bassula shows.[49]

The letters of the Pachomian *dossier* pose particular problems. As scholars have already shown, especially in Egypt, letters were preserved sporadically and randomly. Many obstacles have arisen in scholars' attempt to attribute them to the ascetic leaders of the fourth-century Egypt.[50] Mostly based on the attribution of Jerome, who translated to Latin the letters of "Pachomius, Theodore, and Horsiesius," together with the Rules of Pachomius, but also relying on other witnesses, scholars have reached the consensus that 11 letters belong to Pachomius (329-347), 2 – to Theodore (349-367), and 4 – to Horsiesius (first two – 349-368, last two – 369-387). Like the Rules, Jerome translated them from a Greek translation made after the Sahidic original. Since it is very plausible that part of the correspondence was lost, and it is obvious that the letters address specific situations and contexts which might not be traceable from other sources, one might ask to what extent the preserved letters can be testimonies for the networks between the Pachomian monks and the other ascetic communities,

[46] Anna Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 93-108.
[47] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, 1.1.
[48] Andrew Gillett, "Communication in Late Antiquity: Use and Reuse," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, 816-840.
Neil Bronwen, Pauline Allen (ed.), *Collecting Early Christian Letters: From the Apostle Paul to Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2015).
[49] Here Sulpicius blames Bassula for having disseminated his lines, which he had confidentially sent to her.
[50] Bernadette McNary-Zak, *Letters and Asceticism in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000), 5-8.

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or even laymen. Besides, another question would be to what extent they were addressed only to the monastery of Tabennesi, or they were meant to circulate to the entire *koinonia*. The letters of Pachomius pose an additional challenge to the scholars. Seven of them are encrypted, using Coptic letters,[51] alone or in combinations, in order to design certain characters or notions.[52] While these letters were only addressed to some specific abbots, two of the letters are not encrypted. Letters 5 and 7 are addressed to all the abbots (*principes*) and housemasters (*praepositi*), giving them instructions for the two annual gatherings which the members of the *koinonia* used to have in Pbow.

Several letters belonging to the letter-collections of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa are sources for ascetic norms and theological debates. The fact that these epistles belong to collections is of a significant importance. Due to the public character of Late Antique epistolography, the letter-collections had their own well-determined function. Another significant detail is the place of a certain letter in a collection, which could testify for a number of 'editorial' interventions from compilers. Scholars have been debating the order reproduced in the modern critical editions and the authenticity of some letters. More recently it has been argued for the need of new critical editions, which should reproduce the primary order of the letter-collection based on the batch-style method, according to which the letters with the same addressee should be grouped together. It is known that Basil not only kept for himself an archival copy of his letters, especially those dealing with theological and political matters, but was also a keen editor of his own writings (such as his *Asketikon*). Scholars argue that Basil preserved those letters in his chancery for pragmatic reasons. However, an intriguing fact is that letters between Basil and his siblings, Gregory of Nyssa, Peter of Sebasteia, and even Macrina, have not survived, which indicate that Basil did not keep for himself an archival copy of them. Two primary categories of Basil's letters have been distinguished: one aggregation of copies, which he made for himself, kept as an archive, and another category of copies kept by his addresses. It is important to note that these small collections were, at a later stage, included in larger collections.[53]

The letters exchanged by Jerome and the circle of ascetic women whom he guided, from which only Jerome's letters survive, display both the epistolographical rules of the Classical times and the Christian innovations.[54] As Jerome's addressees were members of the aristocracy, his display of humility might be regarded as an attempt of obtaining economic support. Besides, both directly and indirectly, Jerome portrays these women as high intellectuals, capable of thorough investigations of the scriptures and well-trained in philosophy. Which purpose do these portraits serve? Does Jerome

[51] Not the Greek one, since Pachomius did not know Greek.
[52] Christoph Joest made an attempt of decrypting some of the letters. See Christoph Joest, *Die Pachom-Briefe. Übersetzung und Deutung* (Louvain: Peeters, 2014).
[53] Anna Silvas, "The Letters of Basil of Caesarea and the Role of Letter-Collections in Their Transmission," in Neil Bronwen, Pauline Allen (ed.), *Collecting Early Christian Letters*, 113-129.
[54] Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome. Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

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argue for an exaltation of these ladies, capable of fine theological investigations? Or does he, rather, attempt to humiliate his (male) opponents, whom the ascetic women from his circle surpass in theological investigations and ascetic practices?

Paulinus of Nola developed an entire network of friends due to his correspondence, both before and after setting in Nola. Among his addressees one can find Sulpicius Severus, Jerome, or Augustine, but the letter carriers were equally important. The Origenist controversy made him weaken the relations with Jerome and develop his friendship with Rufinus of Aquilea (c. 345-411) and Melania the Elder (ca. 341-ca. 410). Being situated on well-known travel routes, by the beginning of the fifth century, Nola was by no means a "silent monastery." "By couriers and letters, through visitors and annual trips to Rome, Paulinus nourished a flag-flung network of friends and correspondents.[55]"

When using letters as evidence for the present work, besides assessing the significance of the sender and the addressee, I will also analyze their message and style as components of a complex channel of communication.[56]

II. 1. 3. *Erotapokriseis* and Dialogues

Late Antiquity witnessed a large number of debates and polemics around central theological notions. Since dialogue was a literary genre with a long tradition in the Greeco-Roman world, it was natural for some of the Christian writers to adopt it. However, it still remains a matter of debate whether, in the fourth century, Christianity brought enriching innovations or, on the contrary, narrowed down the exchange of ideas between main actors. Some scholars argue for an end of the dialogue as a literary genre in Late Antiquity, since the Christians rejected the authentic form of dialogue and adopted instead a sort of 'artificial' form of exchanging ideas, which necessarily had to lead to a fixed, normative conclusion.[57] Other scholars challenged this conclusion, arguing that one should analyze the written Christian dialogues in comparison to the other genres of Christian writings.[58] For family double monasteries, the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, in which Gregory of Nyssa recounts his last conversation with his sister, Macrina, on the eve of her death, and the dialogues of Sulpicius Severus are relevant both for the monastic life at Annisa and Primuliacum and for the theological context of their development.

In fact, the *Life of Saint Macrina* is strongly related to a dialog which Gregory of Nyssa composed several years later, in the winter of 383/384 or 384/385. In *On the Soul and the Resurrection* Gregory completes the portrait of Macrina as an accomplished philosopher by

[55] Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 198-199.
[56] Jaclyn Maxwell, "Paganism and Christianization," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, 826.
[57] Simon Goldhill, "Why Don't Christians Do Dialogue?," in *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 15.
[58] Averil Cameron, *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity* (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2014), http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5524, accessed April 14, 2016.

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developing an episode to which he only alludes in the *vita*. According to the dialogue, in Macrina's penultimate day of life, they had a profound discussion on the nature of souls and their afterlife.

This discussion imitates the form of what later grammarians called "*erotapokriseis*," a sequence of questions and answers in which one of the interlocutors has the role of the disciple, asking questions, and another one is attributed and assumes the position of a master, who is supposed to instruct. [59] In this particular case, the disciple who asks questions related to the nature of soul, its transition after the separation from the body, and its evolution after the Second Coming, is Gregory himself. By deliberately assuming the position of a pupil who asks questions and by providing his readers with Macrina's answers, he is projecting Macrina as a teacher. Due to her holiness, depicted in the *life* he had written previously, Gregory makes more authoritative the ideas which he presents as Macrina's own teachings.

The recount of this dialog, several years after it took place, naturally follows Gregory's refining. Besides adding to the already rich portrait of Macrina some new paintbrushes, it also gives Gregory the opportunity of inserting his own positions on sensible topics, such as the *apokatastasis*. This dialogue is unique in its genre. It reminds of Methodius (ca. 250-311)' *Symposium* (most likely well known to Macrina herself)[60] in which Thecla (whose name Macrina was bearing in secret), defends virginity as the supreme way of life. In addition, it also has similarities with Plato's *Symposium*, where Diotima, the only woman who takes part in a thorough discussion about love, turns away the direction of the dialogue.

The dialogues of Sulpicius Severus are a significant source for the ascetic life at Primuliacum. They were written seven years after the *Life of Saint Martin*, probably in 404,[61] and focus on the Egyptian monks and on the figure Martin. The "narrator" is interrupted by the audience from time to time. Two of the auditors are Postumianus, who returns from East, and Gallus, who comes from Loire (and whom Jerome quotes also in his writings). Similarly to the previous dialog, these discussions also contribute to a saintly portrait previously made in a *vita*. However, scholars argued that the *Dialogues* are not a synthesis of the Ciceronian Ancient dialogues and the *collationes*, but a genre rather characteristic to the Gallo-Roman aristocracy on a rural domain, who in particular adopted the "Rule of Martin" from Marmoutier or Ligugé, where the first ascetic communities were settled in the Gallo-Roman environment.[62]

[59] Yannis Papadogiannakis, "Erotapokriseis," in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall, Kai Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine, Sabine R. Huebner (Chichester: Blakwell, 2013), *s.v.*
Yannis Papadogiannakis, "Instruction by Question and Answer: The Case of Late Antique and Byzantine Erotapokriseis," in *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity. Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 91-106.
[60] Anna Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 20.
[61] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, 40-41.
[62] In fact, as it will be discussed in Chapter 4, at Primuliacum an entire villa converted to asceticism. The *familiares* were the monks, while the *dominus* became the abbot.

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II. 1. 4. Monastic 'Rules'

Fourth-century monastic 'Rules' emerged gradually. In general, after a period of oral circulation, they were put into writing and, afterwards, they were adjusted and disseminated continuously. Thus, in the following chapters I will use them as sources which reflect different stages in the development of the communities with which they are concerned. At the same time, the theological debates in which the Church Fathers were involved influenced their content. Later on, these rules were disseminated, either due to the involvement of their authors, or due to translations which were made several years after their final stage of elaboration. Some of these 'rules' survive mostly (or exclusively) in translations. Thus, a new methodological problem arises. To what extent does a translation reflect the form of the 'original', and to what extent is it possible to trace the 'editorial' interventions which were made by the translators? Two main collections of normative texts for monks and nuns had a significant influence not only on the family double monasteries in which they were elaborated, but also on other communities. The Rules of Saint Pachomius received a later translation by Jerome for his monastery in Bethlehem, while the Rules of Basil disseminated widely, both in Eastern and Western Christianity.

The Pachomian Rules represent an example of such "evolving source." The different *lives* of Pachomius, however, do not agree with respect to their emergence. The surviving fragments of the first Sahidic *Life* point to a gradual development of the first community of Pachomius. Pachomius and his brother, John, lived as anchorites in the deserted village of Tabennesi. Tensions appeared between them and the author of the *vita* mentions Pachomius' intention of building walls for a monastery. Later on, a group of ascetics willing to live the anchoritic life gathered in Pachomius' proximity. Thus, the first community of ascetics that emerged at Tabennesi around Pachomius had a life-style which belonged neither to the strictly cenobitic one, nor to the strictly anchoritic one. The emergence of the first group of disciples is the first occasion for Pachomius to establish a rule:

> When he saw the brothers gathering around him, he established the following rule: Each should be self-supporting and manage his own affairs, but they would provide their share of all their material needs either for food or to provide hospitality to the strangers who came to them, for they all ate together. They brought their share to him and he administered it.[63]

Pachomius had the hierarchical authority upon the group ("he was their father after God"[64]), since the ascetics were not yet able to become a cohesive community:

See Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, 46.

[63] "The First Sahidic Life of Pachomius," 11, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 430-431. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation S1.

[64] Ibid.

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> This regulation he established was adapted to their weakness … he proceeded this way because he could see that they were not yet ready to bind themselves together in a perfect *Koinonia* like that of the believers which the Acts describe: They were one heart and one soul and everything they owned was held in common; not one of them said that everything he possessed was his own. [65]

Seeing the irreverence of the monks, Pachomius established for them a new set of regulations, inspired from the Scriptures. However, this decision fueled the monks' disobedience and arrogance, forcing Pachomius to expel them from the monastery.[66]

The first Greek *Life* of Pachomius does not give many details about the slow beginning of the communitarian transformation in Tabennesi. Instead the Pachomian regulations have another origin. In an episode which is not preserved in the surviving Sahidic fragments, when Pachomius' sister, Mary, came to Tabennesi and wished to join his community,

> a monastery of women was built in the village, a short distance from the brothers. And as they grew in number little by little, she became their mother. [Pachomius] appointed a certain Peter, a man very religious and advanced in age, to visit them. His speech was seasoned with salt and his mind, as well as his eyes, were full of dignity. He would often stand to preach to them the words of salvation from the divine Scriptures. Pachomius wrote down for them the rules of the brothers and sent them by the old man Peter, that they might govern themselves by keeping them.[67]

Therefore, the early, but incomplete, Sahidic fragments suggest that the complete failure of several members of the Pachomian community in renouncing their un-ascetic customs determined Pachomius to wish to impose a norm in a more determined way. However, the later Greek and Bohairic *Lives* state that, because of the foundation of the women's monastery on the other side of the Nile River, the Rules had to be put into writing and, thus, they spread both within the group of monks and among the group of nuns. What is the reason of such a shift in the explanation of the emergence of the Rules? I would argue that the Greek and the Bohairic *Lives* attempted to transmit an additional message to their intended audience. While the existence of a community of monks in the desert was not unusual, the creation of a community of women ascetics was an innovation and thus needed to be regulated.

This set of rules became normative for all the further monasteries newly founded or included in the large *koinonia*. All the *vitae* reveal that they were continuously enlarged, not only under Pachomius, but also under his successors.[68]

[65] Ibid., 17, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 436-437. See also note, p. 442. This part of the first Sahidic *life*, which recounts the episode, is very fragmented and often hypothetically reconstructed.
[66] Ibid., 18, *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 437.
This episode is discussed in Chapter 5.
[67] "The First Greek Life of Pachomius," 32, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 49-50. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation G1.
[68] S1, 28, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 441.

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The Rules, which survived entirely only in Jerome's later Latin translation (completed in 404), comprise four sets of norms of unequal lengths. *Praecepta* (*Praec*), *Praecepta et Instituta* (*Inst*), *Praecepta atque Iudicia* (*Iud*), and *Praecepta ac Leges* (*Leg*). After intense debates about the authorship and the chronology of their elaboration, scholars have demonstrated by now their elaboration progressed gradually and attempted to establish a chronological order of them, based on internal evidence. They concluded that each of them has different addressees and different central topics. The four texts have been developed in parallel and at different times different versions of their development were used. Pachomius could not have been the author of all of them, even if the headings attribute them to him. In the earlier phases, the order of the four texts must have been different than the one preserved in Jerome's translation. The *Praec* evolved on a long time span, which surpasses the life of Pachomius. They have a clear structure and it has been proven that two of its fragments were later additions (*Praec* 108-119 and 129b-143). The authorship or the direct influence of Pachomius himself cannot be denied for the earlier pieces of text. A close analysis of the text of *Leges* opens the door for the possibility of a Coptic background of this particular text. A comparison of the rules themselves with norms concerning similar situations in the three parallel sets allowed scholars to conclude that the *Leges* might have been part of the first stage of the Pachomian legislation. At the same time, *Praec* must belong to a later stage, since in the references to the *order* of the entire Pachomian village, they show a fully developed state of the *Koinonia*. The *Inst* and the *Iud* refer only to the organization of one house. *Inst* seem to have preceded the *Praec* in the present form, since its titles are in accord with the correspondent ones of the Rules of Horsiesius. The *Iud* seem to have preceded the *Inst*, as a close analysis of the texts dealing with the penalties shows. Part of them are also in agreement with sources coming directly from Pachomius: his letters and some of his sermons. Besides, while being used in parallel, each of the four sets of norms received transformations and adaptations, without forming a genealogic tree of the Rules.[69] These remarks led to the conclusion that, in fact, the regulations came from the hand of Horsiesius, Pachomius' successor.[70] However, the dissemination of Pachomius' authorship has a significant importance for the receivers of the Rules. Pachomius had a stronger authority among the monastics, and, thus, regulations perceived as being issued by himself could have had a greater impact.

An interesting nuance to the origin of the Rules is given by the Latin translation which Jerome produced in 404, soon after the death of Paula, with whom he used to direct the monastery in Bethlehem. Jerome received the request of priest Silvanus, from the monastery of Metanoia, near

"The Tenth Sahidic Life of Pachomius," 2, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 452. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation S10.

[69] Christoph Joest, "Die Leges Pachoms und die Mönchsregeln der Pachomianer," *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012): 160-189.

[70] Christoph Joest, " Die sog. "Règlements" als Werk des Pachomianers Horsiese († nach 386)," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009): 480-492.

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Alexandria, to translate into Latin a set of regulations and a several letters of Pachomius, Theodore, and Horsiesios (11 *Letters* of Pachomius, a *Letter* of Theodore, and *Liber Orsiesii*). Silvanus obtained the Greek corpus of the rules and the letters from Alexandria and sent the codices to the monastery of Bethlehem through the priest Leontius and other brothers. The monastery of Metanoia replaced the temple of Serapis, which Bishop Theophilos of Alexandria had demolished. With this occasion, in 394, Theophilos changed the name of the place from Canopos to Metanoia and brought there Pachomian monks, soon joined by Latin monks who spoke neither Coptic, nor Greek. Jerome accepted Silvanus' request, but used this opportunity for entrusting the nuns of the community in Bethlehem, now ruled by Eustochium – Paula's daughter –, with the set of rules of Pachomius, "so that … [Eustochium] would have something to give the sisters as a rule of conduct and our brothers would be able to follow the example of the Egyptians, that is the Tabennesian monks.[71]"

Since its foundation, in 385, until Paula's death, sources do not mention explicitly any written set of rules which the community of Bethlehem followed. Scholars have pertinently explained the lack of economic organization of the monastic complex in Bethlehem due to the extensive use of Paula's consistent wealth.[72] However, as it was shown in the previous sections of this chapter, Jerome could have made a different choice when he decided to entrust the ascetics in Bethlehem with a set of normative monastic principles. Why did Jerome choose the Rules of Pachomius and not with the Rules of Basil, which would have been accessible to him for a long time? Sources testify for the immediate broad circulation of Basil's *Asketikon*, in Greek, which reached even the monastic communities on the Mount of Olives, not far from the monastery of Bethlehem. Besides, in Jerome's own work, *De uiris illustribus*, which he wrote in 392-393 (more than ten years after the translation of the Pachomian rules), he recorded Basil of Caesarea for having written his *Asketikon*.[73] Thus, Jerome was well aware of the existence of the Rules of Basil. Moreover, the language would not have been an obstacle, at least for some members of the community in Bethlehem, since Jerome had previously exchanged with them a consistent number letters concerning philological problems related to his biblical translations from Greek to Latin.

Therefore, the answer to the previous question should not be sought in the accessibility of Basil's *Asketikon* for Jerome. I argue that it is not related to the pragmatism of the Rules of Pachomius (especially concerning the monastic economic activities) either. Rather, one should consider the broader context of the theological debates at the end of the fourth century. At the end of the 390s, the atmosphere in Palestine was not calm anymore. Fueled by Theophilos of Alexandria, the Origenist

[71] Jerome, *Preface*, 1, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, 5.
[72] J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome. His Life, Writings and Controversies* (Peabody, Massachussets: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998): 281.
[73] Jerome, *"Lives of Illustrious Men*," ed. Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, trans. Ernest Cushing Richardson, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, series II, vol. 3 (London: T&T Clark, 1892).

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controversy brought a strong dispute between Rufinus (leader of a monastic community founded by Melania the Elder on the Mount of Olives), on the 'Origenist side,' and Jerome, on the 'anti-Origenist side,' expressed in several treatises and letters against each other and ended with Rufinus' final departure in 397.

Jerome might have taken the Rules of Pachomius as a witness, if not also as an instrument, of his strong anti-Origenist trend. An indication for the fact that Jerome perceived the Pachomian monastic milieu as anti-Origenist is given in his preface to the translation of the Pachomian Rules. There, he mentions that "[The Precepts of Pachomius, Theodore, and Horsiesios] were the first in the Thebaid in Egypt to lay the foundations of cenobitic life according to the precept of God and *of the angel* [my underlining] who was sent by God for this very purpose." The "rule of the angel" is a significant detail in Jerome's preface[74] and one must determine what the source of Jerome was for this reference.

As previously mentioned, Jerome accessed an intermediate Greek witness of the Pachomian corpus. The first set of the Rules was written in Sahidic, the dialect of Pachomius, but at an early stage, a Greek translation was made for the monks who did not understand Coptic. The only surviving testimony of the Greek basis of Jerome's Latin translation is a collection of Greek *Excerpta,* about which scholars concluded that they had been adapted to a community different from the Pachomian *koinonia*. It is possible that the monastic milieu at Metanoia influenced the Greek version of the Rules, on which Jerome based his Latin translation. Thus, it is difficult to indicate which of the regulations came from Pachomius' hand and which were later additions. One can assume that Pachomius wrote at least a core set of rules, which was later adjusted according to the new contexts of the *koinonia* or even to the monasteries around Alexandria.

Written later than 404, the *Lausiac History*, which develops the episode of the "rule of the angel," could not have been Jerome's source. Two other options for Jerome's source remain to be assessed. One possibility is that Jerome could have accessed one of the earliest Greek *life* of Pachomius, either directly (since it was written around 390), or through a witness, but there is no clear indication that Jerome was aware of any of Pachomius' biographies. Since Pachomius developed his regulations gradually, based on his own experiences, and his main source were the Scriptures, the legend according to which an angel gave him the rules written on a brazen tablet "is foreign to the tradition of pachomian origin.[75]" Instead, the legend originated somewhere in Upper Egypt, and its author had a scarce knowledge of the Pachomian community.

[74] The titles of the first two letters of Pachomius (not existant in Greek or in Coptic) also allude to the legend of the angel ("Letter of our Father Pachomius to the holy man Cornelios, who was father of the monastery in Thmoušons; in it he speaks a language given to both of them by an angel and the sound of which we have heard without being able to understand;" and "Letter of our Father Pachomius to the father of the monastery, Sourous, who also received the grace of the angelic language along with Pachomius and with Cornelius.")

[75] *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, 6.

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A single different path through which the "Rule of the angel" arrived to Jerome remains to be explored. The *Paralipomena* were a collection of anecdotes about Pachomius written in Greek, shortly after the first Greek *life*. Since they also use details incompatible with the Pachomian spirituality, one may postulate that some of the *lives* of Pachomius and the *Paralipomena* had a common source, coming from an author not entirely familiar with the Pachomian tradition (but neither this source, nor a later witness of it has survived). It is more plausible that the collection of *Paralipomena* was the means through which the legend arrived to Jerome. Thus, Jerome could have known also other episodes of the *Paralipomena*. One of them sheds light on Jerome's perception of the Rules of Pachomius in the context of the disputes around the Origenian legacy. During a visit of a group of anchorite monks, Pachomius notices a stench coming from them. After an elevate conversation with Pachomius about the Scriptures, the anchorites leave. Pachomius prays to find out the source of the stench and an angel reveals: "It was some doctrines of impiety from Origen that, in their souls, produced such a stench. But send quickly and call these men back and warn them not to be caught again by such harmful and destructive doctrines, for they lead to perdition." Pachomius calls back the anchorites and asks them:

> The writings of the man called Origen, do you read them? When they heard this, they denied it and said, 'No.' The Holy Man told them, 'Behold, I bear testimony to you before God (I Tim 5:21) that every man reading Origen and accepting his writings is going to reach the bottom of hell (Pr 14:12), and his inheritance shall be the outer darkness, where they shall be weeping and grinding of teeth (Matt 8:12). Now what I learned from God I have testified to you: I am innocent therefore before God on this account. It is your concern. (Matt 27:24) Behold, you have heard the truth. If you believe me, and if you wish truly to satisfy God (Dan 13:46), take all of Origen's books you have and cast them into the river, and never want to read them again, and especially the blasphemous ones.'[76]

Basil's association with Origen was well known. Besides the *Philokalia*, which he compiled together with his friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, Origenism has been part of his family tradition. Basil's grandmother, Macrina the Elder, had a strong connection (either directly, or indirectly) with Gregory Thaumaturgus, the founder of the Church in Neocaesarea. Gregory Thaumaturgus was one of Origen's followers, and thus the latter's teachings reached Basil's household.

Until the sixth century, Basil's Rules were used as a source for major texts which influenced Western monasticism, such as the *Institutions* of John Cassian, the *Life of Honoratus*, abbot of Lerinum, *The Rule of the Four Fathers*, *The Second Rule of the Fathers*, the *Rule of the Master*, and

[76] *Paralipomena* 4.7, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, 29.

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the *Rule of Saint Benedict*[77] (the only one which quotes Basil explicitly, and, moreover, the one where Basil is the only Church Father whose name is spelled out[78]).

The process of elaboration of Basil's Rules is different than the one witnessed by the Pachomian norms. At the end of the 350s, under the influence of his outstanding sister, Macrina who was heading the monastery of Annisa (as Gregory of Nyssa conveys in Macrina's *vita*), Basil decided to renounce his secular career for the sake of monasticism. In the early 360s, he began to organize the ascetic communities of Cappadocia through preaching, and, after his sermons, monks used to ask him questions concerning the practical aspects of ascetic life and dogmatic issues, which, together with his answers, were recorded by tachygraphers. Remembering the times passed with his former friend, Eustathius of Sebasteia (ca. 300-377/380, supporter of a moderate Arian faction and leader of an enthusiastic form of asceticism which grouped men and women in proximity), and with Gregory of Nyssa in the monastery of Annisa, Basil reveals the entire process:

> How often did you visit us in the monastery on the river Iris, when, moreover, our most divinely-favoured brother Gregory was present with me, achieving the same purpose in life as myself? … And how many days did we spend in the village opposite, at my mother's, living there as a friend with a friend, with conversation astir among us both night and day? … And when we set out at the same time to visit the blessed Silvanus, did not our journey include discussions on these matters? … was not our conversation about faith? And all the time were not your short-hand tachygraphers present as I dictated objections to the heresy?[79]

After the notes were taken, Basil used to revise them and thus, by 365, the first edition of the *Small Asketikon* emerged. In the following years, more questions and answers were added to it, so that by September 378, when Basil died, [80] the *Asketikon* had become almost twice larger than its first edition and had gained several recensions. One of Basil's disciples took a copy of the *Small Asketikon* to the monastery established few years earlier by Melania the Elder and Rufinus on the Mount of Olives. Another copy was taken to the Northern part of Egypt,[81] while Basil himself had a direct

[77] As Paul J. Fedwick explains, Benedict – if he indeed was the author of the Rule – did not regard his document as a "rule, that is to say a binding code of behavior." The word "regula" was a later gloss, added to his text in the time of Benedict of Aniane, after 817. See Paul Jonathan Fedwick, *Bibliotheca Basiliana Vniversalis*, vol. 3, *Ascetica*, 4. This aspect is common to the *Asketikon*: Basil did not conceive it as a rule either, but as a set of guideliness aimed to provide practical advice for those dedicated to asceticism.

[78] "Necnon et Collationes Patrum et Instituta et Vitas eorum, sed et Regula sancti Patris nostri Basilii, quid aliud sunt nisi bene uiuentium et obedientium monachorum instrumenta uirtutum?." *La règle de Saint Benoît* 73.5-6, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Adalbert de Vogüé, Jean Neufville (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1972), 672-674.
"The collations of the Fathers, their foundations and lives, and the *Rule* of our Holy Father, Basil – what are they but the monuments of the virtues of exemplary and obedient monks?"

[79] Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 223, trans. Roy Deferrary, 302-303 (slightly adjusted).

[80] See a thorough explanation for dating Basil's death in September 378 and not in January 379, as it had been widely assumed, in Anna Silvas, *Introduction*, in Gregory of Nyssa, *The Letters*, ed. and trans. Anna M. Silvas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 32-39.

[81] Paul Jonathan Fedwick, *Bibliotheca Basiliana Vniversalis*, vol. 3, *Ascetica* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 2.

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personal influence in Antioch and Edessa. [82] The community on the Mount of Olives started to use the *Small Asketikon*, since Palladius, a friend of Melania, witnesses that she was well acquainted with the writings of Basil.[83]

As previously explained, in 397 Rufinus was forced to leave for Rome for good due to the Origenist controversy. Since he considered the *Asketikon* a norm for the monastic life,[84] he took with him a codex of the *Small Asketikon*. Rufinus had access either to one of the copies kept in Melania's monastery, or he might have obtained it during his travels through Egypt, Palestine, and Syria.

The Eastern journey of the *Asketikon* (which is better documented than the Western one) continued as far as Armenia and Georgia. There the very text of Basil, in its several recensions, became normative for the monastic communities founded thereafter.

On his way to Rome, Rufinus stopped at the monastery of 'Pinetum,' an unidentifiable place on the Tyrrhenian coast. Ursacius, the abbot of the monastery, thrilled by the fame of Basil, urged Rufinus to produce a Latin translation of the *Rule* for his monastery:

> To your request I reply – but that what I expound for you may not be unworthy, I say, not of myself, but of the dignity of the subject – I bring forth from the holy Basil, bishop of Cappadocia, a man greatly renowned for faith and works and for every mark of holiness, his Institutes for Monks, which he handed down as a kind of sacred case-law to monks who questioned him. For when you were admiring his definitions and expressions, you begged me urgently to translate his work into Latin.[85]

As he writes in his Preface, Rufinus gives Ursacius the task of disseminating to other monasteries his Latin translation, which he entitled *Institutiones Basilii*: "Make it your task to provide copies also for other monasteries so that, after the likeness of Cappadocia, all the monasteries may live not by different but by the same institutes and observances.[86]" Although Basil's *Asketikon* has not become a standard normative text for the Western monks, as Rufinus had wished, its influence on the monastic life in the fourth and the fifth century was significant.

Unlike Pachomius, who seemed to have created his regulations in order to settle a reference for a newly emerged community (Tabennesi), Basil shaped his Rules the other way round, modelling

[82] Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon of Saint Basil the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 484-485. See also the detailed discussion about Rufinus' access to the *Small Asketikon* in Anna M. Silvas, "Edessa to Casino: the Passage of Basil's *Asketikon* to the West," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (2002): 247–259.

[83] Palladius, *Histoire Lausiaque* 55.3, ed. and trans. Nicolas Molinier (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1999), 346-349.

[84] Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon of Saint Basil the Great*, 485-486.

[85] *RBas Preface* 5-7: "Ad haec ego ne quid tibi minus digne, non dico quam geritur sed quam geri debet, exponerem, sancti Basilii Cappadociae episcope, viri fide et operibus et omne sanctitate satis clari, institute monachorum, quae interrogantibus se monachis velut sancti cuiusdam iuris response statuit, protuli. Cuius cum definitions ac sententias mirareris, magnopere poposcisti ut hoc opus verterem in Latinum", in *The Rule of Saint Basil in Latin and English*, ed and trans. Anna Silvas (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013), 46-47. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation *RBas*.

[86] *RBas Preface* 11: "Tui sane sit officii etiam aliis monasteries exemplaria praebere, ut secundum instar Cappadociae omnia monasteria eisdem et non diversis vel institutis vel observationibus vivant."

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them precisely from the organization and practices of the community in Annisa, as scholars suggested.[87] What was the role of the monastery in Annisa on the shaping of the *Rules*? On the one hand, Macrina's *vita* suggests that she, already committed to philosophy, determined Basil to renounce his secular career for the sake of asceticism, which he practiced in Annisa for about eight years. The community of Annisa might have been a model for the *Asketikon*, and the *Asketikon* might have served Basil in his polemic with Eustathius of Sebasteia.[88] The type of community which the *Asketikon* describes agrees with the ascetic life practice in Annisa, under Macrina's supervision, as testified by Gregory of Nyssa. The well-ordered *brotherhood* (ἀδελφότης) of ascetics which Basil conceives in his Rules might have reproduced the structure of Annisa, described in Macrina's *vita*: men, women, and children living in ordered separate houses. Basil emphasizes the idea of communion in opposition to the individualism characteristic to the Eustathian ascetics (SR 187, LR 7). He also counters their arrogance with the idea of obedience (SR 38). Segregation of men, women, and children in the brotherhood is Basil's disagreement with what he labels as chaotic lifestyle led by the followers of Eustathius (SR 220). Unlike the idea that enthusiast ascetics are beyond the necessity of work, Basil insists on the necessity of diligent work inside community, not for the sake of serving oneself, but in order to follow the apostolic commandment of serving those in need (SR 207).[89]

II. 1. 5. Discourses and Poetry

Two other forms of conveying a certain message in this period were orations and poetry. Poetry, as a literary form, could take over the context of other genres, such as encomiastic lives, being created for praising an exemplary life of for mourning someone's passing. Just like discourses, they were heavily influenced by the rhetorical prescripts of the Classical tradition. Orations, on the other hand, benefitted from later editorial interventions.

II. 1. 5. A. Homilies and Sermons

A narrower *skopos* of instructing an audience and of exhorting certain values was achieved by *homilies*. Homilies were discourses, sometimes prepared in advance, which were delivered at ceremonies either inside a church, or outside it, with a liturgical or non-liturgical content. In the fourth century, the discourse and the sermon were both artistic forms and means of propaganda.[90] Apart from its oral form, a homily could have had a written format also, intended for private reading or study. It is often difficult to distinguish between the two types of homilies. It is not clear either to

[87] See the publications of Anna Silvas.
[88] Which will be developed in the third chapter of this thesis.
[89] Anna Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God*, 41-43.
[90] Anthony Meredith, "The Three Cappadocians on Beneficence: A Key to Their Audiences," in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. Mary B. Cunningham and Pauline Allen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 102.

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what extent, in the fourth-fifth-century context, one can distinguish between *homilia* (ὁμιλία) and *sermones* (λόγος / ἐγκώμιον) using the same criteria which were made explicit from the seventh century onward. In the latter case, homilies were perceived as rather informal and unstructured exegetical discussions on scriptural passages.[91] In this thesis, I will use the homilies not only as informative for the theological trends of the preachers, but also as testimonies of the interaction between the preacher and his audience.

The transitional character of the fourth century trained also the form of the preaching. In the third century, Origen used in his homilies the skills which he had acquired as grammarian and rhetorician. As a consequence, his sermons followed the model used in schools: pupils had to listen to their master, to reflect on the lesson, to compare it with other lessons, to ask about the unclear points, and to become able to preach themselves.[92] In the sixth and the seventh centuries, John Damascene (676-749) built his homilies as theological treatises. The fourth century, is thus, a period of transition from the school-type of discourse, organized according to the rules of rhetoric, and the later, theological one. The influence of the techniques and rules of rhetoric are visible in the structure and the components of the homilies. The Cappadocian Fathers used anaphora, *antihesis*, repetitions, *synkrisis*, *prosopopoiia*, digressions, poems, the exaltation of the orator (i. e. the Logos), and often guided their listeners in the transition between the parts of the homilies, following the general model of discourses in the Greco-Roman world.[93] They also made use of diatribe, assonances, of direct personal addresses ("brethren," "sister," "we," etc.), of dialogues with possible interlocutors, in a refined, high-style, Atticizing Greek, filled with quotations and paraphrases of Classical authors. The other essential source of any preaching, used also as *exempla*, was the Scriptures.

For all the homilies, the context of their delivery is significant. Usually a homily was given during or at the end of a service (liturgical or non-liturgical), either in the church, or in a location with a strong connection to its subject (for example, a shrine, the imperial palace, or the assembly of the second Council of Constantinople etc). Many times, a preaching during the Liturgy followed the reading of the Gospel. While some of the homilies were prepared in advance, some others were delivered *ex tempore*. Some sources indicate tachygraphers, who took notes during the preaching, and later editorial interventions of the authors, aimed to remove the signs of orality.[94] In some other circumstances, the homilies had different redactors than the ones delivering them.[95]

[91] Mary Cunnigham, Pauline Allen, "Introduction," in *Preacher and Audience,*1-2.
[92] See Adele Monaci Castagno, "Origen, the Scholar and Pastor," trans. by Frances Cooper, in *Preacher and Audience*, 65-87.
[93] Marry B. Cunningham, Pauline Allen, "Introduction," in *Preacher and Audience*, 7-9.
[94] Anthony Meredith, "The Three Cappadocians on Beneficence," 103.
[95] For example, Pachomius' catechesis "To a Rumbling Monk" was editted by Horsiesius. See Christoph Joest, "Die Leges Pachoms und die Mönchsregeln der Pachomianer." *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012): 167.

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For this period, the sources give significant details about the audience of the preaching (as it is the case with the Cappadocians, Pachomius, etc), which influenced both the style of the homilies and the contents. In several cases treated in this thesis, the audience was composed of educated men and women, old and young, and restricted to members of a monastic *milieu*. If part of the audience was educated, it is very probable that its expectations were high. In some other cases, the public could be larger, including even catechumens. However, there were also situations in which the audience was heterogeneous. When the preaching was held in an urban church, in addition to the high-aristocracy, the audience could have included tradesmen, soldiers, or laborers. The slaves, since they were supposed to accompany their masters, could have been part of the listeners, too, even if they were supposed to stand on the back side of the church. The poor seemed not to be addressed in the preaching, either because they used to stay outside the churches, or because they were regarded both by preachers and by the audience only as objects of pity.[96] Interaction between the preacher and the audience was possible.[97] The preaching was perceived as an entertaining discourse, which the preacher would adapt in response to reactions from the audience.[98]

Besides, the homilies can be subdivided into different genres. Catechetical, exegetical, festal, and panegyrical homilies dominate the fourth century, all of them having a strong ethical component.[99] Their importance is increased by the fact that they contributed to the theological debates of the period. In this sense, Basil of Caesarea gives explicit details concerning the construction of his discourse according to the circumstances of its delivery. In his homily *On Faith*, he explains the different styles which he deliberately employs:

> The purpose at hand … is widely different from that of those disputes by which we were induced on other occasions to write or speak otherwise. Whereas the object of my zeal then was the refutation of heresy and the foiling of the Devil's wiles, now the task at hand is simple exposition and profession of a sound faith; wherefore the type of discourse which I formerly employed is not appropriate for me now… He who delivers an exhortation on sound doctrine would not say the same things as he who is engaged in putting his adversaries to rout. The speech which refutes and that which exhorts represent different genres. The simplicity of those making a tranquil profession of piety is one thing and the sweeting toil of those resisting the attacks of a so-called system of knowledge is something quite different. Consequently, I also, organizing my discourses in this judicious fashion, will employ in every instance methods which are pertinent to the safeguarding or the deepening of faith – now by vigorously opposing those who attempt

[96] The perception seems to have changed in the following centuries. In Codex Dionysiou 61, dating from the eleventh century and containing 16 homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, an illumination of the homily "On the Love of the Poor" depicts Gregory in priestly garments, outside of the church at the end of his preaching, giving the blessing to his listeners, all beggars and ill men. The image suggests that Gregory's sermon had been especially addressed to them. http://books.openedition.org/psorbonne/3902?lang=de, accessed December 20, 2017.
[97] Marry B. Cunningham, Pauline Allen, "Introduction," in *Preacher and Audience*, 12-15.
[98] Ibid., 18-19.
[99] Ibid., 6-7.

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> to destroy it by the craft of the Devil; again by expounding the faith in a more straightforward and informal manner to such as desire to be strengthen therein.[100]

II. 1. 5. B. The *Epitaph*

"I have erected a monument more everlasting than bronze which no lapse of time could destroy.[101]" With the first verses of Horace's *Ode* dedicated to Melpomene,[102] the muse of tragic and lyric poetry, Jerome honored the memory of Paula, his closest friend, patroness, disciple, and ascetic sister. Although in some manuscript traditions it is recorded as an epistle addressed to Paula's daughter, Eustochium, Jerome masterfully combined in this lengthy piece techniques of many other different ancient and contemporary genres.

The "epitaphium" mentioned in the title reminds of the Classical epideictic literature. Funerary discourses had a long tradition in the Greco-Roman world. Cicero testifies for the heritage of the Latin *orationes funebres*. Besides orations for men, funerary discourses for women were also well-known. The oration of Caesarea for Iulia, preserved by Suetonius, the *laudatio* of Octavian for his grandmother, as well as Catulus' eulogy of his mother and Varro's eulogy of Porcia, mentioned in Cicero's *De oratione*, were enjoyed by the Roman public.[103] The handbook of the third-century rhetorician Menander of Laodicea, with which Jerome might have become familiar in one of the circulating forms during his studies in Rome, under the guidance of famous Aelius Donatus, was also well-known. Menander referred to three types of funerary discourses. Jerome seems to follow closely the structure and order of the encomiastic headings which belong to ἐπιτάφιος λόγος (or *oratio funebris*), without hesitating to innovate in order to display his literary mastery. Such a discourse should begin with a preamble (προοίμιον) in which the author would admit his unworthiness of properly writing about such a subject, followed by an account about the family of the protagonist (γένος), should recount the birth (γένεσις), and should continue with the nature (φύσις), with the upbringing (ἀνατροφή), with the training (παιδεία), and with the life conduct (ἐπιτηδεύματα). In addition, according to Menander, it should have a consolatory ending, addressed to the ones closest to the deceased and with frequent remarks which result in pity.[104] Jerome masterfully opens the *Epitaph* with a phrase showing his impossibility of describing Paula's virtues: "If all the members of my body were transformed into tongues, and if each and every one of my limbs were to resound in a

[100] Basil of Caesarea, "Concerning Faith," in *Ascetical Works*, trans. Monica Wagner (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 59-60.
[101] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula*, 33.1, 94-95.
"exegi monumentum aere perennius, quod nulla destruere possit vetustas."
[102] Horace, *Ode* 3.30, ed. and trans. Niall Rudd (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 216: "Exegi monumentum aere perennius / ... / quod non imber edax, non aquilo impotens / possit diruere aut innumerabilis".
[103] Cristina Pepe, "Fragments of Epideictic Oratory: The Exemplary Case of the *Laudatio Funebris* for Women," in *Reading Republican Oratory: Reconstructions, Contexts, Receptions*, ed. Christa Gray, Andrea Balbo, Richard M. A. Marshall, Catherine E. W. Steel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 281-283.
[104] Andrew Cain, "Introduction," in *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula,* 7-8.

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human voice, I could say nothing worthy of the virtues of the holy and venerable Paula.[105]" Jerome continues with noting the noble ancestry of Paula not in order to present her family as the most prestigious,[106] but in order to stress the significance of Paula's later renunciation of her senatorial family. With the same purpose he also introduces the lineage of her husband, Toxotius.[107] Jerome does not mention anything about Paula's birth, although Menander recommends the report of any event foretelling it. As far as Paula's appearance is concerned, Jerome does not follow the Classical model of extoling the physical beauty. Instead, he "asceticizes" this *topos* by stressing Paula's lack of interest in her physical appearance and in her hygiene, as well as the disappearance of her beauty as a consequence of her asceticism.[108] He compensates the lack of physical beauty with the praise of her virtues in several occasions. Paula's upbringing is not mentioned at all, to the expense of an extensive praise of her scriptural knowledge and of her training in Hebrew.[109] This section is intentionally placed towards the end of the *Epitaph*, unlike Menander's schema, in which it should be at the beginning. Jerome implies his crucial role as language instructor and ascetic trainer, completed by Paula's spirituality. Paula's life conduct is dominated by her renunciation of wealth, humility, ascetic discipline, self-mortification, almsgiving, and monastic leadership. [110] As for the other elements expectable in an epitaph, Jerome uses the consolation only in the end.[111] He again "asceticizes" elements of Classical composition by transforming the θρῆνος (lamentation) required by Menander from the writer of the epitaph into joy for Paula's eternal dwelling with Christ. Instead, he describes Eustochium, the monks, the clergy, and the poor as lamenting.[112] I would argue that this last detail is again intentional: Jerome creates (once more) a contrast between himself and his disciples. While they are weeping Paula, he rejoices, showing his spiritual superiority.

The ἐπιτάφιος λόγος is not the only Classical genre which Jerome used as a model for the *Epitaph* of Paula. The *Epitaph* is, in fact, a "hybrid composition" which incorporates features of the *iter / itinerarium* genre, of the biblical commentaries, of *altercatio,* and of *regula*.[113]

It is not surprising that Jerome brings his own innovations to this patterned type of discourse. His own additions are meant to display his literary skills and to portray Paula as an exemplary saint, whose spiritual progress is a result of her assiduous training under his auspices. The final confession

[105] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula*, 1.1, 43-44.
[106] Ibid., 1.1, 3.1, 33.2.
[107] Ibid., 4.1.
[108] Ibid., 15.4, 21.1.
[109] Ibid., 26.1-3.
[110] Ibid., 1, 2, 3, 5, 15, 18, 19.
[111] Ibid., 31.
[112] Ibid., 21, 27, 29.
Andrew Cain, "Introduction," in *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula,* 8-9.
[113] Ibid., 12-13.

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that, overwhelmed by emotions, in only two nights he dictated the entire work, is meant to present him, once more, as an impeccable writer.

Jerome is not the only one who uses stylistic exaggerations and an overwhelming variety of literary devices, following Classical rhetoric, in order to praise a saint. The Cappadocian Fathers used, to some extent, a similar approach in their panegyrical writings. The most relevant examples for the family double monasteries are Gregory of Nazianzus' funeral orations on his sister, Gorgonia, and on his friend, Basil of Caesarea. Using the expected structure for such a discourse, Gregory of Nazianzus, "the most accomplished Greek orator after Demosthenes,[114]" also mixes Classical *topoi* with Christian motives. When delivering the oration on his sister, Gorgonia, at her funeral or at the first anniversary of her death, Gregory devotes much attention to the praise of their parents, Gregory the Elder and Nonna, who were present in the audience. He refers even to the ancestors of his father, members of the much criticized Hypsistarian group, emphasizing Gregory's conversion as a result of Nonna's efforts.[115] Without mentioning anything about her upbringing and education, Gregory stresses only Gorgonia's virtues. Without naming her husband, Gregory praises the couple for their decision to renounce their marriage bond, to convert to asceticism, and to dedicate their children to God. Gorgonia's physical beauty consisted precisely in the lack of adornments.[116] More important were her contribution to the life of the Church and her charity. Gregory adds to the expected structure of his discourse two extraordinary events which Gorgonia experienced personally: her miraculous rescue from a carriage accident and her wonderful recovery from a strange disease. [117] Gregory ends the oration with a hyperbolic description of Gorgonia's death,[118] an unexpected part in such a discourse.[119] Thus, Gregory transforms the Classical structure of a funeral oration into a Christian one, suppressing the unnecessary elements from the former and adding to the latter that which he thought would better paint the portrait of a married holy woman who eventually converted to asceticism.[120]

With the funeral oration on Basil of Caesarea,[121] Gregory displays the same hyperbolism. However, aware of the risk of being accused for exaggeration, Gregory admits the bond of friendship

[114] Thomas Hägg, "Playing with Expectations: Gregory's Funeral Orations on his Brother, Sister and Father," in *Gregory of Nazianzus. Images and Reflections*, ed. Jostein Børtnes and Tomas Hägg (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 134.
[115] Grégoire de Nazianze, "Discours 8," in Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours* 6-12, ed. and trans. Marie-Ange Calvet-Sebasti (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1995), 246-299.
Gregory of Nazianzus, "On His Sister, St. Gorgonia," 4, in *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose*, trans. Leo P. McCauley (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 103.
[116] Ibid., 10, 11, 107-18.
[117] Ibid., 15, 111-112.
[118] Ibid., 21-22, 115-117.
[119] Ibid., 17, 113.
[120] Thomas Hägg, "Playing with Expectations," 135-151.
[121] Grégoire de Nazianze, "Discours 43," in Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours* 42-43, ed. and trans. Jean Bernardi (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1992), 116-308.

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which linked him to Basil.[122] Moreover, he acknowledges a competition with the funeral oration that Gregory of Nyssa, Basil's younger brother, wrote on the same topic. In this oration, Gregory of Nyssa chooses not to present Basil's family (that is, his own family) at all. Unlike Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa presents Basil as belonging to a world of sanctity which was inaccessible to himself: the world of the biblical saints.[123] I would suggest that through this choice, Gregory of Nyssa attempted to prevent any suspicion of exaggeration from the side of his audience. Gregory of Nazianzus follows Menander's structure in the sections devoted to Basil's ancestors and education. He does not hesitate to refer to the beginning of their friendship, which developed in Athens, where they attended the same school. He continues to praise Basil for his virtues, among which celibacy, chastity, almsgiving, and modesty are the most impressive. He also acknowledges Basil's contribution to asceticism and his works as a bishop. The oration ends in a technique similar to the one which Gregory of Nyssa uses: that of placing Basil among the biblical exemplary characters.[124]

II. 1. 5. C. Poems

In the form of poetry two authors who are protagonists of the current investigation, Gregory of Nazianzus and Paulinus of Nola, excelled. Their poems contain direct references to their theological positions and ascetical practices. Both of them had direct connections with the double family monasteries in Anissa and Nola, about which they give factual information in their poems. When extracting these references, it is significant to take into account the place of the poems in the authors' entire poetic corpus and to decipher the significance of their motives. In addition, one has to note that Paulinus had close connections with Melania the Elder and Melania the Younger.

Scholars observed that in his epigrams Gregory of Nazianzus adopted the style and motives of the Classical Greek poetry. He wrote them between 383 and 389/390, in retirement on his family estate in Arianzus, after he had quitted the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople and administered the church in Nazianzus.[125] Generally, he adapted the *exempla* of his poetry to his characters and addressees, using Classical motives when referring to someone with a secular education (e. g. his brother, Caesarius, Naucratius) and biblical references when writing about women (e. g. his mother, Nonna, Emmelia).[126] His metrical poetry had a disciplinary potential, since it was a

Gregory of Nazianzus, "On St. Basil the Great," in *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose*, trans. Leo P. McCauley (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 27-100.

[122] David Konstan, "How to Praise a Friend: Gregory of Nazianzus's Funeral Oration for St. Basil the Great," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Thomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 163-165.

[123] Ibid., 165-166.

[124] Ibid., 167-169. David Konstan argues for the possible aim of Gregory of Nazianzus to place Basil not in a far world, as Gregory of Nyssa did, but in a world closer to his audience, using the biblical names as mythological exempla.

[125] Anna Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God*, 79.

[126] Christos Simelidis, "Gregory of Nazianzus and Christian Epigram in the East," in Chr. Henriksén, ed. *A Companion to Ancient Epigram* (Malden, MA: Wiley2Blackwell) (forthcoming), 5.

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formative spiritual practice.[127] It is significant to remark that his verses do not always display a metrical perfection. In fact, there are not rare the instances in which the metrical imperfection is displayed. This fact might be intriguing, considering Gregory's Classical formation at the school of Athens. However, scholars have shown that, in fact, the metrical imperfection of Gregory's verses display his achieved maturity as theologian. As a theologian, Gregory decided to release himself from the constraints of verses' form, focusing instead on the strength of his message.

One encounters difficulties when attempting to reconstruct historical facts from his verses charged with stylistical figures and Classical references. For example, whether Naucratius, the brother of Macrina and one of the first monks at Annisa, was a Christian at the moment of his death (even if he had been living an ascetic life with his servant in a remote shelter on the same family estate as Macrina) is still debatable.[128] The motif of the fisherman or hunter who becomes himself a victim started with Leonidas of Tarentum (3rd c. BC) and was assimilated by later authors of epigrams.[129] It is obvious that the audience of Gregory was familiar with both the Classical and the Christian sets of motives.

Gregory's epigrams are also the only sources which offer us factual information about the family of Macrina, completing the details which his fellow, Gregory of Nyssa, offers in his *Letter* 19, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, and the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. From the two epigrams dedicated to Macrina's mother we learn that her name was Emmelia, that she gave birth to ten children of whom three became bishops (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Peter of Sebasteia), one girl became a nun (Macrina) and the other children, including a daughter, Theosebeia, got married.[130] The last detail has intrigued some scholars. In one of the poems, Gregory mentions that Theosebeia was the wife of a well-known Gregory, whom he calls *Gregory the Great*.[131] Some scholars support the idea that Theosebeia, Emmelia's daughter, was not married, but she lived among the nuns in

[127] Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness. The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1.

[128] The debate starts from a line of Gregory of Nazianzus' epigram 156:" ὥσπερ ἐίσκω / καὶ χάριν ἐλθέμεναι καὶ μόρον ἐξ ὑδάτων" ("I suppose that both grace and doom came to him from the waters"). Anna Silvas sees the "grace" coming from the waters as a reference to Naucratius' baptism, in opposition to the "doom," which refers to his death while he was fishing. See *Macrina the Younger*, 80. Based on the currently used motif of the fishermen's death in the Classical poems, on the custom to receive baptism at an advanced age, and on Gregory of Nazianzus' own use of the same motif in another poem, Christos Simelidis interprets this line in a different key. The river which caught Naucratius acted as baptismal waters, which supply for the missing baptism before the accident. Such a suggestion would give hope to Gregory's primary audience, Basil's family, whose members (except for Macrina, as Gregory of Nyssa mentions in her *vita*) were impacted by this event. According to Simelidis, Gregory chose on purpose to use his poetical skills instead of his theological authority. Christos Simelidis, "Gregory of Nazianzus and Christian Epigram in the East," 7-8.

[129] Vasilios Vertoudakis, *Το όγδοο βιβλίο της Παλατινής Ανθολογίας. Μια μελέτη των επιγραμμάτων του Γρηγορίου του Ναζιανζηνού* [The eighth book of the *Palatine Anthology. A research of the epigrams of Gregory Nazianzenus*] (Athens: Ινστιτούτο του βιβλίου, 2011), 108.

[130] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epigram* 161, 162, in *The Greek Anthology*, vol. II, *Book 7: Sepulchral Epigrams. Book 8: The Epigrams of St. Gregory the Theologian*, trans. W. R. Paton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

[131] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epigram* 164, in ibid.

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Annisa and then became Gregory of Nyssa's companion ("σύζηγος").[132] By contrast, others argue that Theosebeia was, in fact, Gregory of Nyssa's wife, and, thus, that Gregory of Nazianzus *Letter* 197 aimed at consoling Nyssen on the passing of his young spouse.[133]

Paulinus' poems are strongly influenced by his personal devotion to Saint Felix, whose shrine was at the center of the complex in Nola. His verses are a means of displaying his literary skills, by imitating Virgil, Horace, or Ovid, but also an opportunity of innovation. He adapted several Classical genres (such as *genethliakon*, *epithalamion*, *epikedeion*, or *propemptikon*) to the purpose of glorifying Felix by using Scriptural motives and accounts from the martyrial acts. His audience included literate Christians and non-Christians, with literary expectations. Relying on an already existing tradition for the versification of the Scriptures, Paulinus uses Classical forms of poetry in which he replaces the heroic figures with biblical characters or exemplary Christians.[134]

II. 1. 6. The Lausiac History

Palladius testifies that he composed the *Lausiac History* in the "thirty-third year of [his] being in the company of the brethren and of [his] own solitary life, [his] twentieth year as a bishop, and the fifty-sixth year of [his] life as a whole.[135]" This evidence made scholars hypothesize that, if he was ordained as bishop after his departure from Egypt in 399, the composition was ready in 419–420.[136] The history was comission by Lausus, the rich grand-chamberlanne of Theodosius II (408-450), whom he ment during the consulate of Tatian in 391, either in Constantinople, or in Kellia.

Palladius had a long monastic experience in Palestine and Egypt. Besides, he was ordained by John Chrysostom and, as a Bishop of Helenopolis (Bithynia), he endeavored in his defense. His work impacted an ascetically oriented audience, who, moreover, was assuming a position in the Origenist debate. The composition played a role in the Origenist controversy, when Palladius was accused of displaying Origenist ideas in the context of clashes between bishops. When the supporters of Theophilos of Alexandria (385 – 15 October 412) launched their accusations against the supporters

[132] See the discussion in Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God*, 82 and Anna M. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa. The Letters* 15-16, 30, 98-100.

[133] To summarize, Gregory of Nazianzus mentions the name Theosebeia in two of his writings. In the *Epigram* 164, she is "child of noble Emmelia," "σύζηγος" of a priest, "the Great Gregory," and died in her youth. In the Letter 197, sent to Gregory of Nyssa, his "σύζηγος" is also called Theosebeia and died at a young age. Anna Silvas states that Gregory of Nazianzus refers to one and the same person, one of Macrina's siblings who started her ascetic training as a nun in Annisa and then was sent by Macrina to be Gregory of Nyssa's companion after his ordination as a bishop in 371. Other scholars understand the term "σύζηγος" as "spouse" and, thus, identify Theosebeia lamented in Gregory of Nazianzus Letter 197 as Gregory of Nyssa's wife, consequently implying that Theosebeia to whom Epigram 164 refers was a different person. I would not exclude the existence of two persons called Theosebeia in the proximity of Gregory of Nyssa (one of them being his wife and the other one being his sister), even if their biographies would have astonishing coincidences (i. e. both Theosebeias married a famous priest named Gregory, part of Gregory of Nazianzus' entourage, and both died at a young age).

[134] *The Poems of Paulinus of Nola*, trans. G. Walsh (New York, 1975), 4-28.

[135] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, Prologue, 9.12–10.2, ed. Cuthbert Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge. University Press, 1898).

[136] Demetrios S. Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis: The Origenist Advocate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 99.

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of John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople (398-404), Palladius took immediately the latter's side. In fact, together with the *Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom* (whose authenticity was doubted for a long time), the *Lausiac History* openly expressed support for John Chrysostom, condemned at the Synod of the Oak (403), and the other ascetics accused of Origenism. Palladius was associated with Melania the Elder, Rufinus of Aquilea, and the Tall Brothers, all of them labelled as Origenists, with whom he developed an ascetic network. After he turned his back to the Origenist writings and started a fight against Rufinus, Jerome became a fierce enemy of Palladius, following the advice of bishop Epiphanius (315-403).

In 151 chapters Palladius presents life episodes and maxims of individual monks and nuns, as well as stories of monastic communities. He used various sources, such as the writings of Origen, anonymous books, well-known texts, such as *The Life of Saint Antony*. In addition, besides inheriting the legacy of his mentor, Evagrius (345-399), he was familiar with *The Life of Pachomius* or *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* as well.[137] The author did not choose his subject randomly. On the contrary, he subsumed them to his agenda of providing Lausus with exemplary Origenist models of monastic life. In addition, he gave a harsh reply to Jerome, who criticized him and his allies, albeit on a diplomatic tone.[138]

In terms of genre, the *Lausiac History* "broke conventional literary rules and helped spawn a new Christian genre.[139]" Although the author himself calls his own composition a διήγησις (narrative), a term by which Christian writers understood hagiographical writings deprived of the secular stylistic figures in biographies or histories and in which they claimed to provide their audience with first-hand testimonies about their subjects, the composition is not a *history*.[140] One must read between the lines Palladius' apology for the accused ascetics and his will of promoting their theological views to the imperial court.[141]

II. 2. Approaching the Sources

Naturally, in all the communities which this thesis discusses, gender, as a social construct, played a crucial role. In particular, all the written evidence considered here comes from the pen of male authors, most of whom were highly skilled in rhetoric.[142] Since early Christianity, and especially

[137] *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, vol. 2, Introduction and Text, ed. Cuthbert Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 248-250.
[138] Demetrios S. Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis*, 4-5.
[139] Ibid., 3.
[140] Ibid., 106.
[141] He did not focus so much on Origens' subordinationist theory, on the origin of the world, or the pre-existence of the souls. Instead, his main tenets were the mind's *askesis* through the body's training and the reading of the Scriptures, the contemplation of God, the divine providence, and the freedom of man. See Demetrios S. Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis*, 3-4.
[142] Even though there is consistent evidence for women's high intellectual training, for their activity as spiritual instructors, and even for their involvement in writing, sources authored by women have not survived. A colophon on a

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early monasticism, witnessed different social expectations and attitudes towards men and women, and male asceticism and sanctity were conceived differently than the correspondent notions for women,[143] one needs to assess carefully the references to gender in the sources.

The last decades brought a significant interest of scholars for discussions around the notion of gender. Not only did the feminist theories express their voices with various approaches to textual sources, but, lately, even the construction of masculinity in the Christian sources was a subject of analysis. One has to remark that the abundant sources portraying women have been read from many different angles, such as social history or literary criticism. Especially in the last decades, women were not just rescued from the history's abyss of forgetfulness, but, as Elizabeth Clark explains, after the "linguistic turn,[144]" scholars have analyzed the construction of feminine figures in the sources using poststructuralist theories. Women's portraits have been seen as ideologically constructed texts, by authors who had a certain agenda. Besides thinking of women as agents and victims, scholars have studied the rhetoric on women in the Patristic texts.

Since in the sources most of the references about women are indicated by men, feminist scholars have questioned the objectivity of the male perspective, without completely denying the existence of women. Starting from this remark, in the thesis I will use a balanced approach to the sources, combining literary theories and inquiry into the social background of the authors and their audience. Thus, the very signals of the male authors who state that they had been eyewitness to the accounts that they describe or they had had a close connection to the women subject of their writings (as it is the case with the authors of *The Life of Saint Macrina*, *The Life of Saint Melania the Younger*, the letters of Jerome addressed to, or about Paula and Eustochium, the poems and letters of Paulinus of Nola about Therasia and the Younger Melania), are indications of a consciously assumed literary strategy.[145] With all these precautions assumed, I do not think that one can deny the very existence of women to whom sources like hagiographies or letters refer. In the words of Elizabeth Clark, "the exploration of gender …, while not eclipsing the study of 'real women,' seems particularly desirable.[146]"

fifteenth-century manuscript which renders the letters of Theano, Pythagoras' disciple, reveals that the copyist had been in the position of choosing between transcribing Theano's epistles, or the ones of the "famous Macrina." It is plausible that the copyist refers to Macrina the Younger, leader of the community in Annisa, as the author of the letters whom he chose not to copy, as Pierre Maraval and Anna Silvas have shown. In addition, Jerome's letters to Paula and Eustochium must have received answers from their part, now lost.

[143] As it will be discussed in details in Chapter 3.

[144] Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[145] Elizabeth Ann Clark, "Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History, and the 'Linguistic Turn'," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no, 3 (1998): 415-417.

[146] Elizabeth Ann Clark, "Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History," *Church History* 70, no. 3 (2001): 410-419.

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On the other hand, I argue that within the increasing development of gender analysis, sources describing women's ascetic experiences should be treated cautiously. The absence of women's authorship forced the scholars to make their conclusions about the women's experience and daily life, on the one hand, and about the functions of the texts pertaining to them, on the other hand, relying exclusively on male's writings. Some of them engaged with such texts in particular ways. For example, one such approach inscribed in the "feminist trend" reads the texts related to women as if they had been written through the 'erotic lens' of the men authors. In the *Introduction* to a volume which gathers studies of saints' biographies, Virginia Burrus theorizes the notion of "ascetic eros," arguing that, generally, the ascetics experienced a "transformation of desire," or rather a reorientation of desire, from the body to the divine. Throughout the book, she presents instances of "countererotics" in several hagiographies of the Roman Empire.

The same author attempts to apply a structuralist analysis of the early Christian accounts for the purpose of unveiling, besides social realities of the era, some psychological tenets of the sources' protagonists and their ways of being understood. In addition, in line with earlier scholars, she argues that a "woman" can be just a "fictive construction" made by another "fictive" agent, the "man." Similarly, diachronically, the discipline "women's history" establishes its "object" of study, that it, women, according to its subject, that is men. "Women" is a category excluded from a discourse's order and, thus, one would need to assume "a third-sexed position," which lies in between the male subject and the female object, but which is nothing else that the position of a "woman historian" reading about women. Thus, she places the construction of a character like Macrina, in the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, as an attempt of creating a character at the edge between feminity and masculinity.[147]

In my opinion, both notions "ascetic eros" and "countererotics" are inaccurate and depart from the spirit of Late Antique Christian asceticism, which is not that of *shifting* fleshly desire, but of completely *denying* and *severing* it. The ascetic struggle aimed at departing from the body in order to ascend to the divine. Thus, I do not agree with the opinion that "hagiography conveys a sublime art of eroticism" or that it is built "on eroticized deaths" of the author's feminine subjects. Nor do I agree with the idea that the male authors of hagiographies present their heroes as their own objects of passions, either while adopting themselves a feminine behavior and representing 'masculinized' women saints, or by producing 'homoerotic' images.[148] Thus, I do not read these sources as compilations of erotic allusions.

[147] Pace Virginia Burrus, "Is Macrina a Woman? Gregory of Nyssa's *Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection*," in *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Graham Ward, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers; 2005), 250-253.

[148] Pace Virginia Burrus, *The Sex-Life of Saints. An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1-2.

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On the other hand, I would not relativize to such an extreme the male and female categories to which, I argue, one can ascribe the characters present in the sources. In addition, I would follow the reading strategies of scholars like Gillian Clark and Elizabeth Clark, trying not just merely to find instances of ascetic women, but to trace the functions of the written evidence and their impact on the audience. What is the function of women in those writings where they are not only major points of references, but also main characters? What message do male authors attempt to convey to their audience? Do they simply seek to convey factual truths, or they have a broader agenda, setting the bases of a norm for women willing to embrace asceticism?

Another difficulty in interpreting the references to holy women in Late Antique texts arises from their position in the social context of their time. It is not questionable that women who are in focus in most of the sources belong to the social elite.[149] Moreover, it has been demonstrated that, in spite of the wide-spread opinion according to which their social role was secondary, actually these women were highly influential. In addition, several scholars have shown that their education combined the Classical *paideia* and a strong scriptural background. Thus, when the male authors ascribe to women various opinions, the greatest difficulties arise when one seeks to distinguish the women's real 'voices' from the (male) authors' rhetorical strategies.[150]

One last methodological problem needs to be discussed in the context of Late Antique women's history. Scholars have often differentiated among the private and the public space, assigning women to the private sphere and men to the public one. I argue that the understanding of private / public dichotomy influenced the gender roles and the social expectations, but not the other way round. A major tendency was to explain the absence of women from spaces considered "public" through the fact that women's sphere was confined to their own households. Recently, this assumption has been nuanced, since the household was not merely a private space.[151] As for women devoted to asceticism and in particular for ascetic women living in family double monasteries, I argue that the distinction private / public seems even more blurred. In a household transformed into a monastery the space was redefined. Since monasteries received visitors, the new establishment was less 'private' than a household used to be. The authority of women, thus, enlarged even outside the actual private space. Undoubtedly, cells always remained private spaces, in which ascetics enjoyed only the interaction

[149] As it will be further developed in Chapters 3 and 4.

[150] One of the examples which illustrates best the auctorial literary strategies adapted to the public's expectations is the the figure of Macrina. Any attempt to discover the "real Macrina" has obstacles, since it is difficult to distinguish, especially in the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Macrina's real philosophical and theological background about the doctrinal controversies of the fourth century from Gregory of Nyssa's filter. However, I would argue that this problem lends weight to her "authenticity," or even more, to Macrina's real implications as a *didaskalos,* as a teacher of philosophy.
Similarly, Paula, Eustochium, or Bassula, are, of course, the constructions of Jerome or Sulpicius Severus. The authors shape their images both through the filter of recollection and with propagandistic aims. I would argue that these images, however, are based on the 'real ascetic women' whom they place in the fore.

[151] Elizabeth Ann Clark, "Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History," 410-411.

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with the divinity. Thus, ultimately, family double monasteries were spaces on the threshold between public and private. Another element confined to privacy was the ascetic body. All its marvelous experiences were placed in the realm of the private space and were revealed later on only to the most intimate. In the context of female asceticism, it seems that the Classical differentiation between public and private was redefined. The power of a holy woman was no more influenced by the public outside the household.[152] Instead, it became entirely manifested within the new, angelic household, that is within the family double monastery.

This chapter did not aim at providing an exhaustive treatment of the sources related to the fourth-century family double monasteries. Nor did it aim at creating an exclusive taxonomy of them. Instead, its intentions were to draw attention to the variety and richness of the textual evidence pertaining to these communities, and, more than this, to the literary techniques that their authors used. These techniques, the motivations of the authors, the context of writing, and the audience of the texts are interdependent and will be considered throughout the rest of the thesis in order to avoid the pitfalls to which a superficial reading of the texts might lead. The second purpose of this chapter was to review some scholarly approaches particularly applicable to Early Christian texts centered around feminine figures and to justify my own methodological choices. After this scrutiny, the following chapter enters the complicated social, economic, political, theological, and ecclesiastical context in which the family double monasteries sprang.

[152] Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 202-212.

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III. The Setting of Family Double Monasteries: Socio-Economical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Competitions

Around 340, Basil the Elder, Macrina's father, had just arranged for the betrothal of his daughter, the elder child of the family, with one of his distant relatives.[1] However, as Gregory of Nyssa, Macrina's brother, informs us, "Envy cut short these most purposeful hopes" and the fiancé died before Macrina reached the legal age for marriage. Macrina's father pursued his plans for marrying his daughter and started looking for another potential spouse. Surprisingly, this time Macrina herself turned them away:

> Now the young girl was not ignorant of her father's plans. So when the decision which has been made for her was cut off by the young man's death, she designated her father's decision a marriage, as if what had been decided upon had already taken place, and she resolved from then on to remain by herself. And indeed her decision was more firmly fixed than might have been expected at her age. For when her parents brought her proposals of marriage – which often happened due to the many who aspired to her hand because of the fame of her beauty – she would say that it was out of order and unlawful not to be loyal to the marriage that had been authorized once and for all for her by her father and to be put under pressure to consider another, since by nature marriage is but once only, as there is one birth and one death. She insisted that he who had been joined to her by her parents' decision had not yet died, but that in her judgement he was "alive to God" (Luke 20:38, Romans 6:11[2]), through the "hope of the resurrection" (Acts 23:6), and was away on a journey, not dead, and that it was out of order not to keep faith with one's bridegroom who had gone abroad.[3]

In her brother's account, Macrina refuses to get married, following the model of Penelope, the prototype of the faithful wife who rejects all of her suitors during the long lasting absence of Odysseus.[4] She wisely anchors this decision in her own father's past action, and thus does not become disobedient towards her parent. However, for her family, her refusal became indeed a turning point, as it had astonishing consequences. By not engaging in a marriage with a spouse worthy of her high social position, Macrina left unsafe the expected continuation of her family. Moreover, as a side effect, such a decision affected the transmission of the family's properties.

Another story from the end of the fourth century narrates a similar situation. The biographer of Melania the Younger begins the account of her life as follows:

> This blessed Melania, then, was foremost among the Romans of senatorial rank. Wounded by the divine love, she had from her earliest youth yearned for Christ, had longed for bodily chastity. Her parents, because they were illustrious members of the Roman Senate

[1] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 5.1-5, in *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God*, trans. Anna Silvas (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 114-115.
[2] Unless otherwise indicated, all the quotations from the Bible are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).
[3] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 6.1-3, in *Macrina the Younger*, 115-116.
[4] Homer, *The Odyssey*, Bk 15, trans. Samuel Butler, https://www.owleyes.org/text/odyssey, accessed June 2, 2017.

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> and expected that through her they would have a succession of the family line, very forcibly united her in marriage with her blessed husband Pinian, who was from a consular family, when she was fourteen years old and her spouse was about seventeen. After she had had the experience of marriage and totally despised the world, she begged her husband with much piteous wailing, uttering these words: "If, my lord, you consent to practice chastity along with me and live with me according to the law of continence, I contract with you as the lord and master of my life." … At first, however, he neither accepted her proposal nor did he, on the other hand, completely rule out the plan. Rather, he replied to her in these words: "If and when by the ordinance of God we have two children to inherit our possessions, then both of us together shall renounce the world.[5]"

Melania's wish of leading a chaste life would impede one of the desirable outcomes of the Roman marriage: the transmission of family's possessions to descendants. The marriage arrangement in itself was meant to ensure that the high social status and prestige of the ancestors would continue.

Was asceticism a stumbling block for the traditional family? From these two accounts, it seems that it would rather disrupt its tradition, structure, and goal of continuity. Both Macrina and Melania became leaders of monastic establishments in which at least the structure of a villa survived. Macrina led her siblings and mother to the ascetic path on their own family estate in Annisa, while Melania and Pinianus finally managed to get rid of their possessions and to establish a double monastery on the Mount of Olives. But which were the social implications of these two foundations and of the establishment of family double monasteries in general? How was the institution of family affected? How were the possessions transmitted within a monastic family? How did such monasteries, inhabited by earthly relatives, men and women, integrate in the ascetic landscape of the fourth and the fifth century? How did the bishops, seeking to strengthen their authority over the clergy and the laymen, endorse them? How were such prominent, double gender communities were related to the theological debates on Christology of their era?

These questions are essential for investigating the context in which the family double monasteries emerged and evolved. In the following, I will bring together social, economic, legal, and theological realities, which are interrelated, by investigating the impact of the competitions held in the social arena, in the theological arena, and in the ecclesiastical arena on the family double monasteries.

I will start by discussing the traditional social order and the responses which the Church Fathers leaders and promoters of monasticism (such as Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, or Jerome), gave to it in their views on marriage, celibacy, and on gender division. I will also explore the household arrangements and the transformations of the villas into monastic dwellings. The social role of aristocratic households is yet another significant factor in the development of family double

[5] Gerontius, *The Life of Saint Melania the Younger* 1, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Ann Clark (New York: E. Mellon Press, 1984), 27-28.

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monasteries. Similar to the division between orthodox and heretic theological ideas, Church Fathers perceived the double-gender ascetic experiments as divided into the same two categories. Their acceptance or condemnation depended on the relations between the ascetic leaders and the episcopal authorities, which is the last topic that this chapter investigates.

Before entering a discussion on the social expectations in the fourth century, one remark needs to be stated. Self-promotion was a means for negotiatiing one's own position within a social group.[6] For men, the Classical society promoted the virtue of *sophrosyne*, understood as harmony and self-restraint,[7] in opposition to *gastrimargia*, *porneia*, and *philargyria*, passions of the body and unsatiety for wealth.[8] For women, *sophrosyne* was equally desirable. In their case, however, it was ascribed mostly to the sphere of the household, towards which they were supposed to remain faithful and supportive, and inside which they had certain types of activities that they could perform.[9] Women's disobedience could, in fact, jeopardize the socially perceived harmony of the household, and, thus, affect the men's social position.[10]

As Christianity started to gain strength, in all the regions where family double monasteries emerged, the social discourse changed. The rhetoric on self-control in marriage, viewed as a guarantor of social stability, and on the household, perceived as the concrete means of maintaining it, also shifted. In this new paradigm, just as in the old discourse, *sophrosyne* remained a desirable virtue. The new ideal was, however, one's commitment to a new type of transcendent marriage, which implied the assumed choice of celibacy.[11] The language of *sophrosyne* itself did not change the social order, but on the contrary, it preserved it. What challenged the social order was the discourse on asceticism.[12] This kind of discourse, as the following subchapters will show, focused on the

[6] Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride. Womanhood in Late Antique Christianity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 3.
[7] Plato, *The Republic* 4, 442c, ed. and trans. Paul Shorey (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1969). The virtue of self-restraint, benefitting both the individual and the community, is obtained by overcoming the threatenings of the body and of the soul (such as pleasures of the body and insatiety for wealth).
Plato, *Laws* 3, 697b, ed. and trans. R. G. Bury (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1984): an enduring State is one in which the goods of the soul are first esteemed and cannot exist in the absence of self-restraint. Self-restraint is, actually, the main concern of Book 1 of the same dialog. Temperance – or prudence – (φρόνησις), together with justice (δικαιοσύνη) and courage (ἀνδρεία) complete the soberness – or self-restraint – (σωφροσύνη) and together they form the virtue (ἀρετή).
[8] Évagre le Pontique, *Traité pratique ou le moine* 6-9, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Antoine Guillaumont, Claire Guillaumont (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 506-513.
[9] Helen F. North, "The Mare, the Vixen, and the Bee: 'Sophrosyne' as the Virtue of Women in Antiquity," *Illinois Classical Studies* 2 (1977): 35-48.
Kate Cooper, "Closely Watched Households: Visibility, Exposure and Private Power in the Roman *Domus*," *Past and Present* 197 (2007): 7.
[10] Ibid., 8.
[11] Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 19. The same author further refers to the Greek novels and Jewish writings, reminding the readers that the ideal of virginity, at least for females, is not an invention of the Christian authors.
[12] Ibid., 58-59.

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unrestricted and unlimited love for God. In addition, the psychological factors[13] which influenced the acceptance of this new discourse are equally significant.

III. 1. From Earthly to Spiritual Marriages

Before the beginning of the fourth century, Roman law had regulated thoroughly the secular marriage. One of its stipulations concerned the status of a woman and her rights with regards to her dowry. Legally, a married woman remained a member of her fathers' *familia*, even if her husband could make use of her dowry. Thus, if the marriage ended, the wife still had the protection of her father's household and the dowry had to be returned to her. These precepts had a significant impact, since they aimed at protecting women from abuse.

In parallel with the spread of Christianity, canon law also evolved, comprising regulations concerning matrimonial alliances and the transmission of properties within them.[14] The regulations also address situations in which slaves are concerned and the obligations of their owners in such issues as debt payments.[15] On the other hand, the members of the aristocracy used traditional Roman strategies of transmitting their heritage. How did the Church, as an institution, benefit from these strategies, given that the legal framework of the Roman law had opened the gate for shifting one's properties outside the household?[16]

III. 1. 1. The Secular Law

The Constantinian turn brought a new legal distinction between the inhabitants of the Empire. The older citizen/non-citizen dichotomy was slowly replaced with a social division between *honestiores* and *humiliores*, which weighed more, since almost all the free inhabitants enjoyed citizenship. Social mobility, although remained still rigid, became more feasible, both upwards and downwards, and marriage strategies seemed to influence this dynamic. The rise of Christianity brought even more changes.[17]

On the other hand, the canons of the Church councils tried to prevent apostasy, which had not been an isolated phenomenon during the persecutions. Part of the ecclesiastical legislation related to the same problem was directly concerned with marriages. For example, the Canons of the Council in

[13] Especially due to the custom of arranging marriages and because of the Christian ethos, which opposed old Roman habits, such as concubinage.
[14] Caroline Humfress, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 74-75.
[15] Ibid., 31.
[16] Caroline Humfress, "Gift-Giving and Inheritance Strategies in Late Roman Law and Legal Practice (Fourth to Sixth Centuries CE)," forthcoming in *Donations, Strategies and Relations in the Latin West and Nordic Countries: Late Roman to the Present*, ed. Ole-Albert Ronning, Helle M©ıller Sigh, Helle Vogt (Routledge, 2017).
[17] Judith Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity. The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5-7.

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Elvira (c. 309) condemned marriages between Christian girls and heretics or pagans.[18] The very existence of the canons indicate the fact that such mixed marriages were frequent. This legislation brought obstacles to Christian women willing to marry. The population had a surplus of Christian free women, for whom it was not possible to marry non-Christians.[19] On the other hand, the social obligations of the male citizens prevented them from proceeding to baptism, officially converting to Christianity, since these duties were incompatible with the Christian ethos. If it was easier for slave men to convert to Christianity, since they did not have the same social obligations as the male citizens, how easy was it for a Christian woman to marry a slave man?

The fourth century witnessed several transformations within the households. As the Christian discourse gained a stronger voice, the traditional view on one's duty towards the common good and on one's reputation was weakened.[20] However, some sets of rules referring to marriages between members of different social *milieux* were preserved. One of the laws condemned and punished marriages between an aristocratic girl and her male slave.[21] On the other hand, noble men who married their female slaves were not punished as harshly, but the relation itself was condemned and the man's social status decreased.[22] This legislation was not so much inspired by Constantine's turn to Christianity. Rather, it aimed to overcome the blur of social distinction through marriages between members of different social status, the loss of slaves and wealth, and, more importantly, the attempt of noblemen to escape their social obligations.[23] Its consequences need to be followed, since the number of Christian aristocratic women surpassed significantly the one of Christian aristocratic men and, thus, Christian women had more chances to get married to unbelievers.[24]

[18] Ibid., 15.
See the Latin text in Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des conciles: d'après les documents originaux*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Paris: Letouzey, 1907), 230-231.
"Can. 15. — De conjugio eorum qui ex gentilitate veniunt. Propter copiam puellarum gentilibus minime in matrimonium dandae sunt virgines Christianae, ne aetas in flore tumens in adulterium animae resolvatur. Can. 16. — De puellis fidelibus ne infidelibus conjungantor. Haeretici si se transferre noluerint ad Ecclesiam catholicam, nec ipsis catholicas dandas esse puellas; sed neque Judaeis neque haereticis dare (legari) placuit, eo quod nulla possit esse societas fideli cum infideli: si contra interdictum fecerint parentes, abstineri per quinquennium placet."
My translation: "Canon 15: On the marriage of those who come from the Pagans. No matter the amount of girls, Christian girls should not be given in marriage to pagans, so that youth, being excited in bloom, would not end up in adultery of the soul. Canon 16. On the fact that the faithful girls should not be given in marriage to unfaithful. If heretics do not want to convert to the Catholic Church, Catholic girls should not be given (in marriage) to them. They (the Catholic girls) should not be given in marriage to Jews or heretics either, because there cannot be any union of the faithful with the unfaithful. If parents act against the interdiction, they should abstain (from taking the Holy Communion) for five years."
[19] Margaret MacDonald, "Early Christian Women Married to Unbelievers," *Studies in Religion* 19, no. 2 (1990), 221-229.
[20] Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8-9.
[21] Judith Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family*, 26.
[22] Ibid., 277-294.
[23] Ibid., 261-276.
[24] Margaret MacDonald, "Early Christian Women Married to Unbelievers," 221-229.

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III. 1. 2. Marriage According to the Church Fathers

When tempted by the Pharisees with regards to divorce, Christ answers that marriage is as a union blessed by God, which, as a concession, may be broken only after a woman's adultery. As a compromise due to the fallen nature of the human kind, divorce and remarriage are permitted, although they do not reflect the original state of man:

> They [the Pharisees] said to him, 'Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.'[25] (Matthew 19:7-8)

Next, as His disciples argue that for man it is better not to get married at all, He enumerates three possible causes of celibacy. While two of them are involuntary, one of them is voluntary celibacy, assumed for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:9-12): "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."[26] This passage has triggered a variety of interpretations, from scholars dealing with New Testament Studies to historians of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages. Some of them identify the last category of eunuchs with an elite group of the Essenes, a Jewish sect whose members were inclined to a form of asceticism.[27] However, other causes, related to the social conditions of the first century, could have triggered a voluntary renunciation of marriage. The difficulty of such a choice acknowledged: "Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given.[28]"

On the other hand, the first and the following marriages are exclusively earthly states. Answering to the Sadducees, members of a Jewish sect who argued against the resurrection, Christ stated that in the afterlife marriage will not exist anymore, since men and women will live like angels: "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." (Matthew 22:30).

The Pauline epistles make an even more thorough hierarchy between marriage and celibacy. While the best lifestyle – and the author's expressed wish for mankind (1 Corinthians 7:7) – is permanent celibacy, Paul recommends marriage to those unable to follow such a lifestyle, as a remedy against potential immorality (1 Corinthians 7:1-2: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But

[25] "λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Τί οὖν Μωϋσῆς ἐνετείλατο δοῦναι βιβλίον ἀποστασίου καὶ ἀπολῦσαι [αὐτήν]; [8]λέγει αὐτοῖς ὅτι Μωϋσῆς πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν ἐπέτρεψεν ὑμῖν ἀπολῦσαι τὰς γυναῖκας ὑμῶν, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς δὲ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως"
[26] "εἰσὶν γὰρ εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς ἐγεννήθησαν οὕτως, καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνουχίσθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν."
[27] Dyan Elliot, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 17-18.
[28] "ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Οὐ πάντες χωροῦσιν τὸν λόγον [τοῦτον], ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται."

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because of the temptation to fornication, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.[29]"). He advices unmarried and widows not to marry, unless they are not able to exercise self-control (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). Further, he argues that celibacy is superior to marriage since an unmarried person is able to fully devote to God, while a married one divides his attention between the spouse and God (1 Corinthians 32-34). A following passage triggered various interpretations among scholars:

> If any one thinks that he behaves unbecomingly toward his virgin, if she is beyond the bloom of life, and it needs to become so, let him do as he wishes, he does not sin: let them get married. But whoever stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but if he has power over his own will, and has chosen in his own heart, to guard her as his virgin, will do well. So that he who gives in marriage his own virgin does well; and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.[30]

Some of the New Testament critics interpret this passage as referring to a father who hesitates in giving his daughter to marriage. Other scholars argued that Paul envisioned a tutor of an orphan girl dealing with the same question. Others, however, disregarded both hypotheses. In a following section of this chapter I will turn back to the interpretation of this passage.

How did the Church Fathers assess the idea of marriage? A survey of the sources shows that ecclesiastical writers had an ambivalent attitude towards it. While some of them saw it as a necessary concession made in order to avoid the greater evil of fornication, some others urged, especially young women, to replace a prospective earthly marriage with a mystical marriage with the Divine Bridegroom.

Through procreation, marriage is able to ensure the continuity of human life on earth, since, at the Fall, man became mortal. John Chrysostom refers to the punishment of Adam and Eve as a proof of God's supreme love for mankind. In spite of the pains which women endure,

> Nevertheless, however, the loving God offered comfort with the pain, so that the satisfaction of bearing the child equally matched those pangs that tortured the womb all those months. I mean, women who are subjected to such distress, are so tormented by the bouts of pain, and, so to say, even despair of life itself, enjoy after the birth satisfaction even in their distress: as though forgetting all that has happened, they give themselves again to the bearing of children, according to the loving God's providence for the maintenance of human beings' welfare.[31]

[29] 1 Corinthians 7:1-2: "καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι: διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἐχέτω, καὶ ἑκάστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἐχέτω."

[30] RSV with revisions.

1 Corinthians 7:36-38: "Εἰ δέ τις ἀσχημονεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν παρθένον αὐτοῦ νομίζει ἐὰν ᾖ ὑπέρακμος, καὶ οὕτως ὀφείλει γίνεσθαι, ὃ θέλει ποιείτω: οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει: γαμείτωσαν. ὃς δὲ ἕστηκεν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἑδραῖος, μὴ ἔχων ἀνάγκην, ἐξουσίαν δὲ ἔχει περὶ τοῦ ἰδίου θελήματος, καὶ τοῦτο κέκρικεν ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ καρδίᾳ, τηρεῖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον, καλῶς ποιήσει: ὥστε καὶ ὁ γαμίζων τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον καλῶς ποιεῖ, καὶ ὁ μὴ γαμίζων κρεῖσσον ποιήσει."

[31] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, 17, trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 239.

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Similarly, Augustine supports the idea that marriage has the function of regenerating the humanity on earth: "so far as the race of mortals is concerned, the intercourse of male and female represents, as it were, the seedbed of a city. But whereas the earthly city needs only generation, the heavenly city needs regeneration as well to escape the corruption of generation.[32]"

Other Church Fathers relied on Christ's description of the afterlife, when "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." (Matthew 22:30, Luke 20:35). Yet some others went as far as to condemn marriage as a sin.

In the following, I will present several examples of Church Fathers related to family double monasteries in East and West, who expressed their opinion on marriage. In the East, Gregory of Nyssa wrote a treatise on virginity after having a brief matrimonial experience, which ended with the death of his wife. In Western Christianity, Jerome expressed his strong opinion in favor of celibacy in several letters and treatises. Augustine, in turn, compared his life in an arranged marriage and with a concubine whom he was unable to marry, because of the social requirements.

In his treatise *Against Jovinian*, Jerome argued that, before the Fall, Adam and Eve were chaste. Marriage appeared because of the Fall, after the sinners were cast out of Paradise and commanded to replenish the earth. In His Incarnation, Christ lived in chastity, and so too has to be understood His bride, the Church. Thus, Jerome states that even those who chose marriage should live in chastity, since "virginity fills Paradise." "If Christ loves the Church holily, chastely, and without spot, let husbands also love their wives in chastity.[33]"

Replying to Jovinianus, who argued that virginity and marriage are of an equal status or at most, that there was little difference between them, Jerome argues that marriage is subordinated to virginity. He preaches a clear hierarchy of married – widowed – virgins:

> while we honour marriage we prefer virginity which is the offspring of marriage. Will silver cease to be silver, if gold is more precious than silver? Or is despite done to tree and grain, if we prefer the fruit to root and foliage, or the grain to stalk and ear? Virginity is to marriage what fruit is to the tree, or grain to the straw. Although the hundred-fold, the sixty-fold, and the thirty-fold spring from one earth and from one sowing, yet there is a great difference in respect of number. The thirty-fold has reference to marriage. The very way the fingers are combined — see how they seem to embrace, tenderly kiss, and pledge their troth either to other — is a picture of husband and wife. The sixty-fold applies to widows, because they are placed in a position of difficulty and distress. Hence the upper finger signifies their depression, and the greater the difficulty in resisting the allurements of pleasure once experienced, the greater the reward. Moreover (give good heed, my reader), to denote a hundred, the right hand is used instead of the left: a circle

[32] Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, 15.16, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. Philip Levine (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), 508: "Copulatio igitur maris et feminae, quantum adtinet ad genus mortalium, quoddam seminarium est civitatis. Sed terrena civitas generatione tantummodo, caelestis autem etiam regeneratione opus habet ut noxam generationis evadat."

[33] Jerome, "Against Jovinianus," 1, 16, trans. W.H. Fremantle, in NPNF, vol. 6 (New York, 1893), 349.

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> is made with the same fingers which on the left hand represented widowhood, and thus the crown of virginity is expressed.[34]

This passage is a direct reference to the parable of the sower exposed in Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8. Jerome compares the seed fallen on the good soil, which gives different amount of harvest, with the states in which a person can live appropriately. He implies not only the clear hierarchy marriage – widowhood – virginity, but also that other kinds of relations in which men and women can live are fruitless. Besides this allegoric interpretation, he associates the numbers with tendentious gestures, which illustrate the state of marriage or widowhood. Jerome writes his two-volume treatise *Against Jovinianus* in 393, following the condemnation of Jovinianus' own writings by Pope Siricius, in synods held in Rome and Milan, around 390. Through this plastic image, Jerome might suggest that Jovinianus, against whom he writes this treatise, is equally indecent.[35] Being accused of excessiveness, Jerome answered his accusers in an apologetic letter sent to Pammachius in 394. There he argues that, far from condemning marriage, he had only justified why it occupies the last position in the hierarchy of the states of a person, relying on the Scriptures. In the beginning of the letter, he refers back to the treatise *Against Jovinianus* and his allegorical interpretation of the parable of the sower. Thus, he quotes almost verbatim the passage, adding to it an annotation about the number that refer to the amount of the reward:

> The yield thirtyfold signifies wedlock, for the joining together of the fingers to express that number, suggestive as it is of a loving gentle kiss or embracing, aptly represents the relation of husband and wife. The yield sixtyfold refers to widows who are placed in a position of distress and tribulation. Accordingly, they are typified by that finger which is placed under the other to express the number sixty; for, as it is extremely trying when one has once tasted pleasure to abstain from its enticements, so the reward of doing this is proportionately great. Moreover, a hundred — I ask the reader to give me his best attention — necessitates a change from the left hand to the right; but while the hand is different the fingers are the same as those which on the left hand signify married women and widows; only in this instance the circle formed by them indicates the crown of virginity.[36]

In a further passage, Jerome explains: "If virgins are first-fruits, it follows that widows and the continent in marriage, come after the first-fruits, that is, are in the second and third rank.[37]" He also

[34] Ibid., 3.

[35] Otherwise, scholars have noted the "dirty mind" of Jerome – not due to similar images, which he repeats, though, but because of his style. See Neil Adkin, *Jerome on Vrginity: a Commentary on the Libellus de Virginitate Servanda (Letter 22)* (Cambridge: Francis Cairns 2003), 230. The "dirty mind" is an accusation with which, according to Jerome, Paula charges the nuns living in Bethlehem when they abuse bathing and wearing expensive clothes. See Jerome, *Epitaph of Paula*, 20.

[36] Jérôme, *Lettre 49 (48)*, 2, ed. and trans. Jérôme Labourt, in Jérôme, *Lettres*, vol. 2 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1951), 121.
In English Jerome, *Letter 48. To Pammachius*, trans, W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis, W.G. Martley, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893).

[37] Jerome, "Against Jovinianus," trans. W.H. Fremantle, in NPNF, vol. 6 (New York, 1893), 40.

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states that marriage was introduced for the sake of humans. Christ blessed the wedding in Cana "that He might not seem to give His enemies just cause for putting Him to death on the pretext that He destroyed the law and condemned nature. And even this was done for our sakes.[38]"

Jerome's idea that humans would rather not get married, unless they are unable to control their bodily passions, was not isolated. In Methodius' *Banquet*, a dialog between ten Christian virgins who discuss about virginity, imitating the *Banquet* of Plato, the third speaker, Thaleia, helds a discourse in praise of chastity:

> But for him who of his own free will and purpose decides to preserve his flesh in virgin purity, "having no necessity," (1 Corinthians 7:37) that is, passion calling forth his loins to intercourse, for there are, as it seems, differences in men's bodies; such a one contending and struggling, and zealously abiding by his profession. and admirably fulfilling it, he exhorts to abide and to preserve it, according the highest prize to virginity. For he that is able, he says, and ambitious to preserve his flesh pure, does better; but he that is unable, and enters into marriage lawfully, and does not indulge in secret corruption, does well. And now enough has been said on these subjects.[39]

The very idea that men and women alike would be able to replace an earthly marriage with a "spiritual" one was a challenge that the Church Father brought to the traditional social order, which required free citizens to enter marital unions so that they would beget new citizens for the city.

Jerome, like other Church Fathers, also suggested a disposal of the wealth, which might be an obstacle in one's ascetic turn. However, this last ideal was not an innovation. Previously, philosophical schools also promoted dedication to philosophy through an independence towards social obligations.[40] On the other hand, the Early Church witnessed the Encratites' tendency of denying marriage and renouncing meat, which was a result of the old opposition, in the Jewish *milieu*, between the Temple (the Sadducees) and the Desert (the Essenians).[41]

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Methodius of Olympos, *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, 3.14, trans. William R. Clark, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886).
See for the Greek text Méthode d'Olympe, *Le banquet*, ed. and trans. V.-H. Debidour and H. Musurillo, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1963): "Τῷ μέντοι αὐτοκρατορικῇ καὶ αὐθαιρέτῳ κρίνοντι προθέσει «τηρεῖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ» σάρκα «παρθένον» καὶ μὴ ἔχοντι «ἀνάγκην», ὅπερ ἐστὶ πάθος ἐκκαλούμενον τὴν ὀσφῦν εἰς συνουσίαν — εἶναι γὰρ δὴ καὶ διαφοράς, ὡς εἰκός, σωμάτων—τούτῳ διαμιλλωμένῳ καὶ διαθλοῦντι καὶ σπουδαίως ἐπιμένοντι τῇ ἐπαγγελίᾳ καὶ ταύτην ἄριστα διαπεραινομένῳ παρακελεύεται μένειν καὶ τηρεῖν, τῇ παρθενίᾳ τὰ πρωτεῖα νέμων. Ὁ γὰρ δυνάμενος καὶ φιλοτιμούμενος, φησί, «τηρεῖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ» σάρκα «παρθένον κρεῖσσον ποιεῖ», ὁ δὲ μὴ δυνάμενος, «γαμίζων» δὲ νομίμως καὶ μὴ λαθροφθορῶν, «καλῶς»."

[40] Scholars have discussed the similarities between the ideals which the philosophical schools promoted and those which the Church Fathers suggested. See, for example, the similarities between the *Life of Antony* and Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* in Samuel Rubenson, "Apologetics of Asceticism. The *Life of Antony* and its Political Context," in *Ascetic Culture. Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau*, ed. Blake Leyerle, Robin Darling Young (Notre Dame, In: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 75-96. For a discussion about some philosophical schools and common ideals at odds with the social requirements see Brent James Schmidt, *Utopian Communities of the Ancient World. Idealistic Experiments of Pythagoras, the Essenes, Pachomius, and Proclus* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2010), which revises both sources from the Greek and the Jewish milieu.

[41] Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: a Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East*, vol. 1 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1958), 31-44.

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The pre-condition for the ability to overcome earthly marriage was the resemblance of the ascetically-minded men and women to the angelic hosts, once renunciation to marriage and earthly possessions was accomplished. Another promoter of this idea, Gregory of Nyssa,[42] wrote in his treatise *On Virginity*:

> the eagerness for this kind of marriage [i.e. monastic life] is common to both men and women alike, for since, as the Apostle says, *There is neither male nor female* and Christ is *all in all*, the true lover of wisdom has as his goal the Divine One, Who is true Wisdom, and the soul, clinging to her incorruptible Bridegroom, has a love of true Wisdom, which is God.[43]

Deeply rooted in the Scriptures (Matthew 22:1-14, 25:1-13, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 16:6-9), the image of the Divine Bridegroom actually suggested the value of both celibacy and marriage. The literary metaphorical construction of virginity or celibacy in terms of marriage corresponds to the social expectations of the high aristocracy. Even though a virgin refused to get married, "she could nonetheless be imagined as *someone's* wife.[44]"

Another novelty that the Church Fathers brought was the universality of the mystical marriage with the Divine Bridegroom. Not only women, but also men were able to accede such a marriage,[45] provided that they kept their commitment to virginity on earth.[46] This paradoxical construction of marriage has another particularity. The Divine Bridegroom is *universal*, while the men and women, regardless of their previous condition, are urged to keep their bodily chastity from the moment of their commitment, waiting for their *unique* Groom.

However, Church Fathers did not endorse all the marriages promoted as "spiritual." In the view of those whose influence was not easily opposable, the ones in which the Divine Bridegroom was not involved were not desirable. Their condemnations were a response to a practice which was not uncommon in several ascetic circles. Some leaders presented the cohabitation of one ascetic woman and a clergyman as a "spiritual marriage," thus legitimizing such a form of symbiosis which would be perceived as scandalous. These living arrangements were not innovative either. In fact, they had been wide-spread in the Christian world since the second century, in spite of repeated criticism. Outside of the Christian communities, similar living arrangements were encountered in the communities of various Jewish sects, Pythagoreans, or Gnostics.[47]

[42] Who was, for a significant period, close to Eustathius of Sebasteia, as later in the thesis will be explained.
[43] Grégoire de Nysse. *Traité de la virginité* 63, ed. and trans. Michel Aubineau (Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1966).
[44] Elizabeth Clark, "The Celibate Bridegroom and His Virginal Brides: Metaphor and Marriage of Jesus in Early Christian Ascetic Exegesis," *Church History* 77, no. 1 (2008): 2.
[45] Ibid., 18.
[46] The "soul" (*anima*, ψυχή, *ruah*) is feminine.
[47] Ioannis Panagiotopoulos, *Συνείσακτοι. Τὸ ζήτημα τῶν Συνεισάκτων στὴν Ἀρχαία Ἐκκλησία* (Suneisaktoi. The discussion of Suneisaktoi in the Ancient Church) (Athens: Diegese, 2000), 61.

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Another similar situation is described by Philo (ca. 15 BC – ca. 50 AD). The Essenian community of Therapeuton in Egypt, around Alexandria, was practicing an asceticism which combined isolation and common living. This community included men and women who did not meet, but who were able to coparticipate at the teachings held in the common sanctuary:

> This common sanctuary in which they meet every seventh day is a double enclosure, one portion set apart for the use of the men, the other for the women. For women too regularly make part of the audience with the same ardour and the same sense of their calling. The wall between the two chambers rises up from the ground to three or four cubits built in the form of a breast work, while the space above up to the roof is left open. This arrangement serves two purposes; the modesty becoming to the female sex is preserved, while the women sitting within ear-shot can easily follow what is said since there is nothing to obstruct the voice of the speaker.[48]

Church Fathers, more concerned with the virgins than with the clergymen, refer to the ascetic women involved in such relationships as συνείσακται or *subintroductae* (literally "women who were slipped in").[49]

Where does this practice originate from? It is plausible that those who practiced it were inspired by or continued a phenomenon which was sporadically met in some of the Early Christian communities. Several scholars argue that, in fact, the practice was acknowledged in the first communities of Christians and endorsed by Paul himself. They give a peculiar interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:38 (which uses the polysemantic word "παρθένος" and the *hapax legomenon* "ὑπέρακμος"), arguing that Paul envisioned a situation in which a man was living with a virgin in a spiritual marriage.[50] I argue that this interpretation is problematic, since neither the Greek, nor the Latin version of this verse clearly refers to a situation of a couple living in a spiritual marriage, no other contemporary source describes such a case, and the first following source referring to this situation was written almost a century later.

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[48] Philo, *On the Contemplative Life of the Suppliants (De uita contemplativa)*, trans. and ed. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 130-132.
"τὸ δὲ κοινὸν τοῦτο σεμνεῖον, εἰς ὃ ταῖς ἑβδόμαις συνέρχονται, διπλοῦς ἐστι περίβολος, ὁ μὲν εἰς ἀνδρῶνα, ὁ δὲ εἰς γυναικωνῖτιν ἀποκριθείς· καὶ γὰρ καὶ γυναῖκες ἐξ ἔθους συνακροῶνται τὸν αὐτὸν ζῆλον καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν προαίρεσιν ἔχουσαι. ὁ δὲ μεταξὺ τῶν οἴκων τοῖχος τὸ μὲν ἐξ ἐδάφους ἐπὶ τρεῖς ἢ τέσσαρας πήχεις εἰς τὸ ἄνω συνῳκοδόμηται θωρακίου τρόπον, τὸ δὲ ἄχρι τέγους ἀνάγειον ἀχανὲς ἀνεῖται, δυοῖν ἕνεκα, τοῦ τε τὴν πρέπουσαν αἰδῶ τῇ γυναικείᾳ φύσει διατηρεῖσθαι καὶ τοῦ τὴν ἀντίληψιν ἔχειν εὐμαρῆ καθεζομένας ἐν ἐπηκόῳ, μηδενὸς τὴν τοῦ διαλεγομένου φωνὴν ἐμποδίζοντος.".
[49] The topic of the *subinroductae* in the first centuries is yet another field which needs to be explored more. Few scholars have approached the topic. The last monograph which concerned this problem was written by Ioannis Panagiotopoulou in 2000. Previously, the topic had been addressed in a monograph and an article at the turn of the twentieth century. Hans Achelis, *Virgines Subintroductae: Ein Beitrag zum VII. Kapitel des 1. Korintherbriefes* (Leipzig, 1902). Pierre de Labriolle, "Le marriage spirituel dans l'antiquité chrétienne," *Revue historique* 137 (1921): 204-225.
[50] Pace Hans Achelis, *Virgines Subintroductae,* 26.
For a brief review of the interpretations given to this passage by various scholars see Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Williamm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 36-37, note 133.

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Besides, sources report some couples who practiced virginity within marriage. Church Fathers referred to it in negative terms, since it not only deteriorated the mystery of marriage, but it also annulled the freedom of the fleshly relations between spouses.[51]

It is significant to notice that the Christian sources report such practices from the second century onwards.[52] "You will sleep with us as a brother, not as a spouse. You are our brother, we intend to live with you, for we love you dearly," heard Hermas from the women to whom he had been entrusted.[53] According to Irenaeus, "brothers" and "sisters" among the Valentinians used to live together, occasionally causing scandal when a woman became pregnant.[54] In the early-third century, pseudo-Clement advised against the practice of cohabitation between men and women.[55] Eusebius of Emesa, with whom John Chrysostom was familiar, wrote to young women advising them to remain at home, under the authority and protection of their *pater familias*, instead of cohabitating with unknown men.[56] All these situations refer to a practice not well received among Church Fathers with a significant influence among communities of Christians.

In his second *Letter to Virgin*s, Athanasius of Alexandria firmly condemned "spiritual marriages" between virgins and clergymen. By contrast, Hieracas of Leontopolis justified them for his ascetic community, which included celibate men and women who lived in cohabitation. He motivated the superiority of their lifestyle to marriage, which would prevent people from inheriting the Paradise. Athanasius' letter mentions that those who chose such living arrangements argued for both their practical and spiritual advantages. Motivating the obedience to the teaching of Christ in Matthew 10:42, women received shelter, food, and clothes, while men benefited from women cleaning and cooking for them. On the other hand, since ascetic practices, such as fasting and prayers, guaranteed the overcoming of temptations, "spiritual marriages" made possible an intimate relationship between men and women, fact which had been unconceivable otherwise. Instead, Athanasius insisted that an ascetic woman should submit only to her father, her priest, and to the bishop. In his view, the "spiritual marriages" would provide all the conditions for a hidden lust, since desire does not necessarily come through physical contact, but through mere sight. Consequently, such a practice would irremediably reverse the hierarchy of genders, rooted in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 11:3). Besides, Athanasius argued that "spiritual marriages" stood against the ascetic life itself. Since a virgin made her vow of willingly serving Christ, the Only Bridegroom, a "spiritual

[51] Ioannis Panagiotopoulos, *Συνείσακτοι*: 39-51.
[52] Elizabeth A. Clark, "John Chrysostom and the 'Subintroductae'," *Church History* 46, no. 2 (1977): 172-174.
[53] "Hermas," 9-10, in *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a New English Translation*, trans. Brian P. Copenhaver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[54] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1,6,3, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885).
[55] Clement, *Letter* 1.10; *Letter* 2.1, 10.15, trans. Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885).
[56] Elizabeth A. Clark, "John Chrysostom and the 'Subintroductae'," 174.

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marriage" would force her to direct part of her attention also to the ascetic man with whom she cohabitated. In general, instead of an exclusive concern for the spiritual realities, an ascetic woman living in a "spiritual marriage" would devote to earthly concerns. In order to overcome these dangers, Athanasius urged virgins to commit to asceticism in their homes or in communities, all being actually set under the authority of the bishop.[57]

This short scrutiny revealed a variety of opinions that Church Fathers and ascetically minded people held about marriage. While some clerics condemned it, some others saw it as a concession from God following the Fall. The mystical marriage with the Divine Bridegroom was accepted as the supreme ideal. Otherwise, the voices of those condemning other attempts of spiritualizing forms of cohabitations between ascetic men and women were stronger than the ones of those who practiced them. In any case, none of these forms of marriage would match the Classical idea of the household, as guarantor of social stability.

But how was the discourse on asceticism perceived among those who did not renounce their marriage or among non-Christians? How did it interact with social expectations, especially for aristocrats? One can perceive a gap between the discourses of the theologians who encouraged daughters to consecrate to virginity or couples to live in continence (such as Jerome in the West or Gregory of Nyssa in the East[58]), and social requirements.

Members of the aristocracy seemed readier to renounce an arranged earthly marriage and assume the ascetic path for one more possible reason, to which several sources are hinting. An engagement between a young girl and (sometimes) a much older man was decided upon by the heads of their households. In several cases, it had the exclusive purpose of creating a profitable social alliance, through which the possessions of the two households would be safely preserved and perpetuated to further generations. Asceticism could have served, thus, as a way of escaping such arrangements, which could turn into unfortunate experiences for the new spouses. Augustine painfully describes his own matrimonial path. His mother, Monica, who had also suffered from an arranged marriage to a pagan, abruptly separates Augustin from his concubine, of a lower social status, and their child, deciding in exchange for his marriage to a woman of the same social rank, but whom Augustine was not able to accept easily. Based on the experience of his relationship with his concubine, Augustine reflects:

> In those years I had a woman, to whom I was not joined in that which is acknowledged as a lawful marriage, but whom my wandering flame lacking wisdom had discovered. However, she was the only one, to whom I was indeed keeping the faith of union, and in whom I truly discovered, by my own experience, how much stand apart the way of an agreeable marriage, which is set in alliance for the sake of engendering, and the bond of

[57] Athanasius of Alexandria, "Second Letter to the Virgins," 20-29, in David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 298-302.
[58] From different perspectives and with different motivations, as it will be explained in a latter section.

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> a lustful love, where the offspring is born against will, although, once being born, it urges to be loved.[59]

In a further book, he describes how deeply the separation from the woman for whom he had deep feelings affected him. Her reaction to this decision must also be noted:

> When the one with whom I used to sleep was snatched away from my soul, as an obstacle for marriage, my heart, where it was adhering to her was cut and wounded and was bleeding. And she went back to Africa, vowing to You that she would not know any other man, my natural son from her being left with me. And I, the wretched one and not imitator even of the woman, impatient because of the delay, as I would have received after two years the one to whom I proposed, since I was not a lover of marriage, but a servant of lust, I got another one, certainly not a wife, so that the disease of my soul may be sustained and carried forward entirely or even more intensely into the reign of the spouse under the protection of an enduring habit. However, that wound of mine, which had been made by that previous mutilation, was not healing but, after the burning and most sharp pain passed, it was ulcerated and was aching so to say, more lukewarmly, but more desperately.[60]

In such conditions, women's eager uptake of the ascetic discourse initiated tensions among the members of this elite. Since married couples were expected to bring forth legitimate heirs for both the family line and the city, those who chose asceticism instead of having offspring did not receive the relatives' support.[61]

Sources praise aristocratic women for directing their wealth to the Church after they remained widows or for committing themselves to asceticism and refusing to get married. They also extol them for renouncing the privileges of their social rank and dedicating to (sometimes extreme) ascetic practices, such as severe fasting and long prayers. Another sign through which the authors suggest that aristocratic women broke with their social position is their choice of wearing an ἱμάτιον χονδρὸν ἐρεοῦν / *cilicium* under their garments. While the families required their daughters to bring forth and raise children to whom their possessions would pass on, the extollers of virginity saw marriages as obstacles on the path to the ascetic life. Moreover, the loss of children (as it will be explained about

[59] Augustine, *Confessions*, vol. 1, *Introduction and Text*, 4.2.2., ed. James J. O'Donnell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 33.
My translation: "in illis annis unam habebam non eo quod legitimum vocatur coniugio cognitam, sed quam indagaverat vagus ardor inops prudentiae, sed unam tamen, ei quoque servans tori fidem, in qua sane experirer exemplo meo quid distaret inter coniugalis placiti modum, quod foederatum esset generandi gratia, et pactum libidinosi amoris, ubi proles etiam contra votum nascitur, quamvis iam nata cogat se diligi."
[60] Ibid., 6.15.25.
My translation: "avulsa a latere meo tamquam impedimento coniugii cum qua cubare solitus eram, cor, ubi adhaerebat, concisum et vulneratum mihi erat et trahebat sanguinem. et illa in Africam redierat, vovens tibi alium se virum nesciturum, relicto apud me naturali ex illa filio meo. at ego infelix nec feminae imitator, dilationis impatiens, tamquam post biennium accepturus eam quam petebam, quia non amator coniugii sed libidinis servus eram, procuravi aliam, non utique coniugem, quo tamquam sustentaretur et perduceretur vel integer vel auctior morbus animae meae satellitio perdurantis consuetudinis in regnum uxorium. nec sanabatur vulnus illud meum quod prioris praecisione factum erat, sed post fervorem doloremque acerrimum putrescebat, et quasi frigidius sed desperatius dolebat."
[61] Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, 235.

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Melania the Younger and Pinian) is presented as a liberation from the burden which keeps a woman far from her ascetic vocation.[62]

Why would women choose to abandon their social position through renunciation to marriage for the sake of humility? Scholars have agreed that renunciation to a married status would in fact increase women's autonomy and even their social authority.[63] In the same way, once they accomplished their transition to asceticism, the women involved in the emergence of family double monasteries did not lose their social influence and status.

III. 2. Household Arrangements: from Villa to Monastery

As the previous section showed, the ascetic ideals were often internalized in the aristocratic circles. Where and how did ascetic-minded aristocrats live? How was the *villa,* a significant part of the traditional household – as the following lines will explain – transformed during the shift from earthly to spiritual marriage? How was the aristocratic drive of building directed towards ascetic settlements?

In Ancient Rome, the *domus* (household), understood in both its narrow and its broad meanings, as a space in which relatives lived and the properties associated to it, and as a social construct,[64] was the central social unit, tasked with preserving society's continuity. The *pater familias* had *patria potestas* over all the persons and possessions which belonged to his household. Since the main aim, especially for aristocrats, was to preserve the household, families would carefully arrange for marriages between citizens. Thus, new alliances appeared and the family possessions would be preserved through the new heirs. Since begetting had such a significant role, in Rome, the average age of citizens' marriage was, for both men and women, identical with the one of sexual maturity, between thirteen and seventeen. Ancient law regulated the acknowledgement of *plena pubertas* of male children at seventeen and the receiving of *toga uirilis* between fourteen and seventeen.[65]

Aristocratic men would compete for power on behalf of their entire households using an idealized self-portrait which appealed to marital concord.[66] "The *domus*, along with its aspects of family and dynasty, was the primary unit of cultural identity, political significance and economic

[62] As Kate Cooper rightly notices, the absence of grief at the loss of one's children is not only a proof of one's self-control, but also an attitude which ancient Romans necessarily had, given the high proportion of infant mortality. See Kate Cooper, "The Household and the Desert: Monastic and Biological Communities in the *Lives* of Melania the Younger," in *Household, Women, and Christianity in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 12-13.
[63] Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 73.
[64] Roberto Alciati, Mariachiara Giorda, "Famiglia Cristiana e pratica monastica (IV-VII secolo)," *ASE* 27, no. 1 (2010): 277.
[65] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf: 1962), trans. Denys Gorce, 130, n.
[66] Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 3.

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production." Far from being ignored, aristocratic women's role, even though mostly confined to the household, was a source of power an identity.[67]

At a young age, even if he was the *pater familias* of his own household, a man was still under the authority of his parents. The law would allow him to have a curator who could help him with the economic transactions. He could obtain full authority only with a dispensation from the emperor, but even then, if the family accused him of having a prodigal spirit, a curator could be imposed.[68]

The rise of Christianity led to a slow evolution towards the Christianization of the Roman household. Christianity and the end of the persecutions brought transformations, especially concerning the authority of the *pater familias*. The *pater familias* had, traditionally, the ultimate authority over the legitimate descendants and the possessions of the household. However, by the fourth century, an entire mechanism of social transformations gave room to a transfer of authority to widows and women. On the other hand, the lay aristocratic patrons influenced significantly the Christian ethics.[69]

Besides, there was a common opinion that women were more easily attracted to suspect religious activities. This social pressure was a result of accusations for spending the household's income on dubious religious practices and that they no longer respected the commonly agreed principle of separating the women's private part of the household from the men's public sphere.[70]

Christianity did not change all the legal duties related to the family possessions and to the local community. For example, a Christian clergyman was allowed to be replaced in the council of *decuriones* by a male relative only if they renounced their properties in his favour.[71]

However, the Church Fathers' discourses that targeted the Christian households suggested the aristocrats to change their system of values. The status of women seemed to be in the spotlight, but the advices of the Church Fathers varied. One type of discourse would often advise women to live in chastity, not only after remaining widows, but also within their marriages. One of the first steps towards a more pious lifestyle would be the reconsideration of the gatherings at the baths. In this sense, Jerome advises Laeta to let her younger daughter, Paula, go to the baths only when she is mature enough and only when it is necessary.[72] Melania the Younger's biographer praises her for washing only her eyes whenever her mother would send her to the baths.[73] For the same reasons related to decency, some spiritual fathers advised young women to practice their ascetic vocation within the walls of their households, or, whenever they were in churches, not to take too much

[67] Ibid., 14.
[68] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 138 note.
[69] Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 2.
[70] Margaret MacDonald, "Early Christian Women Married to Unbelievers," 229-230.
[71] Gillian Clark, "Women and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: The Refusal of Status and Gender," in *Asceticism*, Ed. Vincent L. Wimbush (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 36.
[72] Jerome, *Letter* 107.8, trans. W. H. Fremantle.
[73] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 1.2, 132-33.

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distance from their mothers.[74] Private prayer rooms were part of the houses and clergymen instructed the young women to spend there the nights in prayers and psalmody.[75]

Other Church Fathers were more permissive with the matrimonial relations. In a letter to a Christian wife and mother dating from the time of Honorius, the anonymous author gives advice concerning the management of households.[76] He criticizes those who attempt to give up their duty of protecting the household for the sake of asceticism.[77] He also refers to the ascetic practices, arguing for pious matrimonial relations instead of abstinence and for moderate ascetic practices, such as fasting. Moreover, to a fasting way over one's strength, the care for poor is preferable. Feeding the needy would shift one's self-care to the care for them.[78] Gregory of Nyssa makes a similar connection between fasting and the care for the poor in the two homilies which he addressed to this topic.[79] The anonymous author of the above-mentioned letter reminds his addressee of her responsibilities both for the slaves and for her children, which mirror men's traditional responsibility for his household. She should be a Christian *mater familias*, not a *domina*, for whom the care for both children and slaves is a means of acquiring virtue. She should prove *honestas*, a common virtue for both Christians and pagans.[80] Thus, she would transfer the virtues of honor and glory from the earthly family to the spiritual lineage with God.[81]

As the above-mentioned sources reveal, the Christianization of the households did not bring a uniform change in the conception of the family and its social role. While some Church Fathers argued for the families who could have offspring, other Christian writers, such as Jerome, urged that at least some members of a household could totally commit themselves to *partheneia*. According to the last view, the fleshly family should be replaced with a spiritual kindship in the frame of the Christian community. Such was a way of transition from the traditional aristocratic family to the monastic community.[82]

[74] Jerome, *Letter 45*.4, trans. W. H. Fremantle.
[75] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 1.5, 134-35. See also the note.
[76] Only one manuscript preserved the text. Half of it is kept in Milan, while the other half is in Vienna. This fact might indicate that similar texts existed, but were lost in time.
[77] Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, 117-119.
[78] Ibid., 119.
[79] Gregory of Nyssa, *De pauperibus amandi* 1, in GNO, vol. 9.
[80] Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, 120.
[81] Ibid., 120-121.
[82] For explaining it, the authors used a concept borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu's research. The "monastic camp," although a fluid and purely empirical concept, included the family, both in its spiritualized form and as a social structure whose charge was to administer its wealth. See Roberto Alciati, Mariachiara Giorda, "Famiglia Cristiana e pratica monastica (IV-VII secolo)" *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 27 (2010): 274-75.

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III. 2. 1. Wealth and Slaves

Another *topos* in the writings of the Church Fathers as a premise of asceticism was renunciation to one's wealth. Numerous treatises and sermons justified this gesture not only through the obedience to Christ's commandments, but also by the Biblical example of the poor who had more chances to be saved (Luke 18:25). Besides, pagan philosophers were also taken as models for renunciation to wealth and dedication to monasticism.

Before the spread of Christianity, wealth had always imposed legal obligations on its possessor. In Classical times, the wealthy were supposed to support the needs of the city or to provide for the poor.[83] On the other hand, philosophical schools argued for the renunciation to wealth as a precondition for freedom. Men willing to ascend to the divinity would, thus, be liberated. Such a discourse was addressed, though, to the free citizens.

On the other hand, the aristocrats would traditionally use their properties in the countryside for *secessum in villam*, an ideal retreat from the burden of the city life. For a long time, the presence of the *villa* and of the fields surrounding it had given the occasion for philosophical meditations, expressed in literary works. Fourth-century aristocratic Christians incorporated this tradition, thus pursuing their ascetic vocations in their own villas on their domains.[84]

Church Fathers also reminded their readers that God had created all humans equal and free and thus, renunciation to slaves became another topic which some of them approached. Renunciation to both one's fortune and slaves represented a first step in one's return to the original perfect state of humans at the creation.[85]

Besides these theological justifications, renunciation to wealth was also desirable from the legal perspective. Possession of wealth, including lands, buildings, and slaves, implied legal obligations. For the slaves, belonging to someone's household implied stability. Thus, when Melania the Younger and Pinianus wished to convert to asceticism, the slaves in the suburbs revolted and expressed their will of passing under the authority of Pinianus' brother.[86] In order to prevent other rebellions, Melania

[83] William James Booth, *Households: On the Moral Architecture of the Economy* (Cornell University Press, 1993), 63-66.

[84] Jacques Fontaine, "Valeurs antiques et valeurs chrétiennes dans la spiritualité des grands propriétaires terriens à la fin du IVème siècle occidental." *Epektasis. Mélanges offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*. Ed. J. Fontaine - C. Kannengiesser. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 571-595.
In the following lines, I intend to show that this situation characterized aristocrats who turned to asceticism in both East and West. The article of Jacques Fontaine deals mainly with Western Christianity and analyzes the examples of Ausonius, Paulinus of Nola, and Prudentius.

[85] Mary Sheather, "Pronouncements of the Cappadocians on Issues of Poverty and Wealth," in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 1, ed. Pauline Allen, Raymond Canning, Lawrence Cross (Queensland, Australia: Everton Park, 2000), 376-92.

[86] Gerontius, *The Life of Saint Melania the Elder*, 10, 33.

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and Pinianus had to approach Serena, the wife of Stilicho and the mother-in-law of Emperor Honorius, seeking to secure imperial intervention.[87]

Other legal matters related to the transmission of the family patrimony were addressed in the imperial legislation which directly concerned ascetics and bishops. Since the fame of the Egyptian Desert Fathers spread, the laws against celibacy, valid since Augustus, were suspended as early as 320. Besides, the bishops received increasing rights, including the authority of deciding in legal disputes. Since they were not requested yet to remain celibates, their positions and possessions could be easily transmitted to their offspring.[88]

Finally, another significant social transformation of the fourth century needs to be mentioned. Several families of curial rank attempted to reach the superior social status, the senatorial rank, through marriage alliances. Afterwards, once retired from the public life, their members withdrew from their urban households on their private suburban estates. This move marked the cease of their public obligations.[89]

In the following, I will collect examples of accounts about the changes in one's wealth, occurred in parallel with family double monasteries' emergence. In the *Life of Saint Macrina*, Gregory recounted the moment when the family's wealth was divided among the siblings, including Macrina:

> After their substance had been divided into nine parts according to the number of the children, the share of each was so increased by God's blessing, that the income of each of the children exceeded the prosperity of the parents. But when it came to Macrina herself she kept nothing of the things assigned to her in the equal division between brothers and sisters, but all her share was given into the priest's hands according to the divine command.[90]

Gregory did not mention when this division of wealth took place. I would not question the likeliness of the event itself, as it was a common practice for aristocratic families to divide the wealth at the death of the parents. One has to note that he did not mention anything concerning the attitude of Peter, his youngest sibling, who had committed to asceticism from the moment when he reached the legal age for doing so. Gregory suggested that Macrina had an autonomy over her share of inheritance and stressed the total disposal of her wealth in order to provide his audience with an example of an accomplished ascetic woman.

Slavery, as a constant reality, was a topic largely approached by theologians. Gregory of Nyssa was, perhaps, the Church Father who stood most firmly against this practice. His "theology of freedom" is rooted not only in the Stoic discourse, but also in Origen's thinking. Moreover, he conveys to his readers a concrete example of it in his own family. In the *Life of Saint Macrina,* he

[87] Ibid., 11-13, 33-37.
[88] Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride*, 74-75.
[89] Roberto Alciati, Mariachiara Giorda, "Famiglia Cristiana e pratica monastica (IV-VII secolo)," 282.
[90] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 22.3, 130

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states that his sister, Macrina, and their mother, Emmelia, leaders of the ascetic community in Annisa, released their slaves while the community was evolving from a pious household to an organized ascetic establishment.[91] Moreover, they used to live, eat, and worship together. Macrina herself started to bake bread, a task which formerly belonged to the slaves.[92] The sources do not indicate whether this change did not imply another type of servitude, since, ultimately, the table companions of Macrina and Emmelia remained subordinate.[93] Gregory also mentioned his brother Naucratius and his slave Chrysapius living in the same remote shelter on the family estate in Annisa and fishing for the sake of the poor.[94] Although Gregory did not use the same strong rhetoric as for Macrina and Emmelia concerning the renunciation to slave ownership, the passages referring to voluntary poverty might actually imply it, since that would be a natural consequence of their ascetic vocation. In the same way the references to Peter's asceticism can be interpreted as implying renunciation to slaves.[95]

In addition, throughout his writings, Gregory emphasized that slavery is the opposite of free will, with which God had endowed humankind at the Creation. Owing slaves would go against God, Who created all humans equal, in the image and likeness of the Trinity, in Whom all the Persons are equal. Moreover, God the Father is equally Father to all humans. The release of slaves anticipates the afterlife, where humans will be completely released from the slavery of sin. Consequently, asceticism cannot be compatible with slave ownership. Significantly, Gregory urges the masters to release their slaves, but does not encourage slaves to leave their masters.

In the dialog *On the Soul and the Resurrection* he assigns his theories against slavery to Macrina's thought.[96] To what extent Macrina's discourse and the practice accounted for in the monastery in Annisa reflect the historical reality is not possible to determine. However, I argue that these texts account for an ideal which Gregory intended to present to his audience and the example of his own relatives helped him reinforce his arguments.

Besides the image which Gregory projected about the community in Annisa, it is worth analyzing the writings of his brother, Basil of Caesarea, since the ascetic period which he spent in Annisa, from 358 until cca. 363, influenced him. Unlike his younger brother, Basil was not against

[91] Susanna Elm mentions an entire ceremonial which marked this event: a formal declaration of *manumissio inter amicos* followed by a dinner at the same table – *per mensam*. See Susanna Elm, '*Virgins of God': the Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 85.

[92] See Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 7, in Anna Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 116-117.

[93] Lillian Larsen, "Early Christian Meals and Slavery," in *Meals in the Early Christian World. Social Formation, Experimentation, and Conflict at the Table*, ed. Dennis E. Smith, Hal E. Taussig (New York, Palgrave Macmillan: 2012), 196-197. The author also remarked the similarity with the language used in Philo's *Therapeutae*.

[94] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 10-11, in Anna Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 118-120.

[95] Ilaria Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 191.
The author considers also that Theosebeia, whom she identifies with one of Gregory's sisters, and not with his wife – as it had long been stated in previous scholaship – renounced slave ownership. However, although no written account contradicts this hypothesis, I would suggest that the existing sources do not provide enough evidence for this position.

[96] Ibid., 172-182.

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slave possession and he himself was accompanied by slaves. He considered slavery a consequence of the Fall, but he rejected the Aristotelian idea of a natural slavery. Moreover, he stressed the equality of men and women both in virtue and in dignity.[97]

Although he did not openly oppose slavery, Basil was energetically involved in social care. In 368-369 due to harsh weather conditions, a famine broke out in Cappadocia. Basil, not yet a bishop, but still a clergyman, held a couple of sermons in which he urged the rich to open the storehouses for the poor.[98] During his first years of episcopacy, due to the funds which he collected after the famine, Basil opened outside Caesarea a monastic center, called Basileias, which treated the sick, provided goods for the poor, and gave shelter to the visitors.[99] The model for this institution might have been Eustathius of Sebasteia who opened a similar hospice for poor in the 350s.[100] Basil and his siblings had had close connections with Eustathius, before he decided to interrupt them around 373. Besides the influence of Eustathius, in my opinion, another hypothesis would not exclude the previous one: "the Cappadocian Fathers carried out their work as Christian bishops and preachers within the inherited norms of Graeco-Roman social patronage.[101]"

The "enthusiast ascetics" followers of Eustathius, who might have been addressed in the Council of Gangra, were accused for a phenomenon which involved the slaves: "Slaves are withdrawing from their masters and despising them, presuming on their strange dress.[102]" Thus, the third canon of the Council brings anathema to anyone who "teaches a slave, under pretext of piety, to despise his master, to withdraw from his service and not to serve him with goodwill and respect.[103]" I would suggest that this canon, which linked the practice of slaves' withdrawal to the enthusiast asceticism which the Cappadocians rejected, influenced Gregory's rhetoric against slavery. Gregory

[97] Ibid., 164.

[98] Anna Silvas, "The Emergence of Basil's Social Doctrine," 142.
Anna Silvas calls this kind of speech a "campaign for social revolution," even though this type of exhortation is not rare among the Christian preachers. Except for the Cappadocians, Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Augustine wrote at length on the idea that the rich should have mercy on the poor. See Clement of Alexandria, "Who is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?," trans. William Wilson, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885); John Chrysostom, *Four Discourses, Chiefly on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus*, trans. F. Allen (London: Longmans, 1869); Augustine, *Letters, Vol. 2 (83-130)*, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953); Augustine, *Letters, Vol. 3 (131-164)*, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953).

[99] See Basil, *Letter* 94; 150; 176, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (London: Heinemann, 1934),.
The establishment was preserved at least for one more century. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Sozomen writes: "[Prapidius,] a man of very advanced age, performed the episcopal functions in several villages. He also presided over the Basileias, the most celebrated hospice for the poor. It was established by Basil, bishop of Caesarea, from whom it received its name in the beginning, and retains it until today." See Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 6, 34, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, ed. Philip Schaff, Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890).

[100] Ilaria Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery*, 227.

[101] Anna Silvas, "Interpreting the Motives of Basil's Social Doctrine," *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* 5 (2009): 171. Silvas also commented on the leading role of women in the "domestic ascetic movement," which resulted in a shift of the family values from the *polis* to Christian ethos.

[102] "Prefatory Letter of the Council in Gangra," 6, in Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 488.

[103] "Canons of the Council in Gangra," 3, in Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 488.

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addresses the masters to release their slaves without discussing the situation in which a slave would abandon his master.

Renunciation of wealth is one of the topics for the correspondence between Jerome and Paulinus of Nola. Jerome praised Paulinus for having decided to sell his properties and retire to his villa, thus having followed not only the apostolic call, but also the examples of the pagan philosophers. Crates of Thebes, who sold all his wealth in order to become a philosopher in Athens, inspired Paulinus.[104]

Church Fathers extoled aristocratic women renouncing their wealth as exceptional. In the accounts dedicated to Paula and Melania the Younger, Jerome and the anonymous hagiographer of Melania give impressive examples of their heroines' philanthropic deeds, projects of monastic foundations, or patronage of cult of martyrs and saints. Their voluntary adoption of poverty reminded the readers of Christ's commandment to sell all the possessions in order to acquire a treasure in heaven (Luke 12:33). In addition, their close relation and support for the Church Fathers acting as their spiritual trainers made hem similar to the Old Testament widows who fed and provided shelter for Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-10; 2 Kings 4:34; 1 Kings 17:22). These women reassessed the traditional ethos of one's dedication to the state, to the emperor, and to the family, by turning their care towards their holy spiritual siblings, martyrs and saints, and towards their spiritual relatives, as the Church Fathers whom they patronized.[105]

As the discourse against accumulating wealth was expanding, it is not surprising that ascetics would transfer their own possessions to the monasteries which they founded. However, the presence of wealth triggered questions related to its inheritance. Who would inherit the patrimony of an ascetic? Who would be responsible for the wealth of a community?

An example of how this problem was dealt with comes from the monastery in Bethlehem. According to Jerome, the community was built from Paula's revenues. Although she is said to have renounced all her possessions and wealth, Jerome also suggests that she constantly contributed to his own scholarly expenses and provided the community with resources.[106] After her death in 404, her successor was Eustochium, her own daughter, with whom she has never severed the earthly kinship. After Eustochium's death in 420, Paula the Younger, the daughter of Toxotius and Laeta and Eustochium's niece, became the new abbess. Paula had been devoted by her parents to virginity before her birth, according to Jerome.[107] This example shows that in some communities the lineage of the rulers was set according to their earthly kinship. Although the sources do not mention it

[104] Jerome, *Letter* 58:2, trans. W. H. Fremantle.
[105] Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 95-97.
[106] Jerome, *Epitaph of Paula*.
[107] Jerome, *Letter* 107, trans. Jérôme Labourt (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1949).

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explicitly, this choice might have been considered in order to secure a proper transmission of the legal and social obligations of the communities.

Paulinus of Nola and his wife, Therasia, were one of the examples of monastic spouses in Western Christianity. Paulinus belonged to a senatorial family of Bordeaux and Therasia was born to a rich family in Spain. Paulinus was the governor of Campania, invested even with the power to scourge and execute.[108] A murder which Paulinus' brother committed during the new reign of Maximus brought accusations to Paulinus himself, and thus his properties started to be seized.[109] He then began to sell his possessions, until he and Therasia decided to live as siblings and to move on their estate in Nola, near the shrine of Saint Felix, where they established a monastic community. Paulinus became bishop of Nola and the initiator of a monastic network.[110] During his ascetic career, he renounced his position as a senator, attracting the criticism from his teacher, Ausonius. Paulinus' slow retirement in fact worried Ausonius, who warned his former pupil about imminent loss of his social prestige and wealth, as a consequence of his ascetic turn:

> We have the firm confidence that if the Begetter and if the Son of God grant the pious words of the good-willing ones, you may be returned to our prayer, and we should not lament the ruin and ravaging of Paulinus' house and the torn apart of [his] domains in the hands of a hundred landlords, and you wandering through all Spain, forgetful of your old [friends] for trusting foreign friends.[111]

Paulinus describes the couples who joined him and Therasia at Nola, converting their marriage to asceticism. Before referring to each of them, Paulinus introduces them as "Christ's slaves, who were earlier nobles in the world but are now destined dwellers of heaven.[112]" One of the two essential conditions for joining the monastic chorus, and thus for starting their journey to the kingdom of God, was voluntary renunciation to wealth: "Christ himself, who have made them rich, has impoverished them in this world so that He may transport them, now dislodged from the citadel of earthly distinction, to His kingdom.[113]" The entrance to monasticism was a rebirth, as the verses about Apronianus suggest: "the fame of his ancient and of his recent birth is intermingled.[114]" Tureius

[108] Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 21, ed. and trans. G. Walsh (New York: Ramsey, 1975), 185.
[109] Ibid.: 186. See also note 60: 389.
[110] From Nola he also composed fourteen poems dedicated to Saint Felix.
[111] My translation. Ausonius, "*Ep.* 23," in *The Works of Ausonius*, ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 226.
"Certa est fiducia nobis, / si genitor natusque dei pia verba volentum / accipiat, nostro reddi te posse precatu, / ne sparsam raptamque domum laceratque centum / per dominos veteris Paulini regna fleamus / teque vagum toto, quam longa Hispania, tractu / immemorem veterum peregrinis fidere amicis."
[112] Paulinus of Nola, "Poem 21," 198, in *The Poems of Paulinus of Nola*, trans. P. G. Walsh (New York: Newman Press, 1975), 179.
Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen 21*, ed. Guillaume de Hartel, 2nd ed. (London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), 165: "mancipia Christi, nobiles terrae prius, / nunc uero caelo destinatos incolas."
[113] Ibid: "Christus ipse, qui creat diuites, / hoc pauperauit saeculo, in regnum ut suum / terreni honoris arce deiectos uehat."
[114] Ibid: "mixta ueteris ei noui ortus Gloria."

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Apronianus belonged to a noble family with deep roots of Roman citizenship. Avita, Apronianus' wife, was Melania the Elder's sister. Their daughter, Eunomia, also joined the community in Nola.

Melania the Elder was another significantly influential figure of the fourth-century monasticism. According to the sources, she was a respected aristocratic *mater familias*. After she remained widow, she stayed in Rome until she secured the public career of her son, Publicola, whom she granted to the care of a curator until he reached the adult age, which made him entitled to dispose of his wealth. Although devoted to asceticism together with Rufinus on the Mount of Olives, she has never fully renounced her social status. In this way, she was able to return to Rome for good in 400, after Rufinus' departure.

Paulinus also refers to Sulpicius Severus and his ascetic path. In his letter 5, he indicates that Sulpicius belonged to a family of Gallo-Roman aristocracy. Moreover, they developed their friendship in Bordeaux, one of the most active intellectual circles of Gaul, where they pursued their education. He assigns Sulpicius' rupture with his father to his conversion to Christianity, which was perceived as a breaking of the ancient Roman ethos of the aristocracy. Since he chose not to follow his matrimonial vows for the sake of monasticism, Sulpicius broke two major duties of a Roman aristocrat: the transmission of the family's inheritance and the continuation of the family's line. Before 394, Sulpicius renounced the inheritance from his father and started to sell his goods. However, by 399 he did not accomplish the complete dispensation of his family's domains. One can assume that all these properties belonged to his wife and that both her and Bassula, his mother-in-law, were involved in their dispensations.[115] The property which Sulpicius did not sell was the domain at Primuliacum. In its villa, Sulpicius lived his ascetic life in the company of his wife, his mother-in-law, some friends, and *pueri*. The term *puer* might have referred to young ascetics whose social background was lower than the one the one of most and who might have had certain duties in the daily life of the community.[116]

The retirement of both Paulinus and Sulpicius resembles the traditional "secessum in uillam" of a distinguished aristocrat.[117] The familiarity with the visitors in Primuliacum makes it clear that the life-style of the Gallo-Roman villas did not completely disappear with the conversion of Sulpicius Severus, his wife, and his mother-in-law.

As it has been shown, transmission of inheritance was an essential duty of the Roman families. In addition to the material wealth, Christian families could transmit also spiritual goods. This mixture of the types of wealth which is handed over between generations is seen particularly in the monastic

[115] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin* 1, 31.
[116] Roberto Alciati, "And the Villa Became a Monastery. Sulpicius Severus' Community at Primuliacum," in *Western Monasticism Ante Litteram. The Spaces of Monastic Observance in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 89.
[117] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, 43.

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families. A relevant example is that of Melania the Elder, who bequeaths to her grand-daughter, Melania the Younger, both material and spiritual inheritances. Although the sources are not clear in this respect, one may assume that she could have transmitted her monastery on the Mount of Olives to her grand-daughter. Nevertheless, she certainly transmitted to her younger namesake the ascetic patrimony.[118]

These examples illustrate a transformation of the Classical family networks as a result of the relatives' simultaneous commitment to asceticism. In this paradigm, new monastic networks were created.

III. 2. 2. Setting New Ascetic Households

Two examples of double family monasteries in the Holy Land started from Roman pious households. Jerome's writings are the main testimonies for one of them. Not born to a highly ranked family, ordained as a priest in controversial circumstances, and forced to leave the Syrian ascetic environment where he was unable to adapt, Jerome came to Rome, attempting to obtain support. Thus, he ingressed in the circles of Roman aristocratic families as a spiritual leader of a group of pious women. In the 370s, Marcella, born to a family of consuls and praetorians, who became a widow soon after her marriage, initiated the gathering of a group of widows and virgins in her household on the Aventine Hill. Paula was part of this circle. Descendant from the Scipiones and Gracchi, not much time after she remained widow she was able to dispose of a significant number of land possessions and to start a pilgrimage to Egypt together with her daughter, Eustochium. Finally, they settled at Bethlehem, where they established the monastery, soon joined by Jerome and his brother, Paulinianus. Jerome was forced to leave Rome for good due to several accusations which targeted him after the death of Pope Damasus, his protector. Since he had developed a relation of *amicitia* with his noble patrons of the Aventine circle, he was accused of illicit relations with women. An intense correspondence between Jerome and the pious Roman ladies attest for a network of ascetically-oriented men and women which he created during his stay in Rome.[119]

In the letter 108, in fact an epitaph dedicated to Paula after her death in 404, which Jerome addresses to Eustochium, he describes the monastic setting in Bethlehem. Jerome does not omit to mention that the ascetic women lived in the buildings which belonged to the monastery according to their own social rank. Thus, three buildings differentiated between the noble women and those belonging to lower social classes. The nuns lived and ate apart, but they participated together in

[118] Christine Luckritz Marquis, "Namesake and Inheritance," in *Melania. Early Christianity through the Life of One Family*, ed. Catherine M. Chin, Catherine Schroeder (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 34-35.
[119] Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Saint Jerome*, 70-71.

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services.[120] Besides, Jerome also mentioned that Paula dispensed of literally all her wealth for the sake of the community, but he suggests that, in spite of Paula's lack of financial means, she still kept her social position.[121] One detail about the slave possessions is worth noting: "If a virgin was of noble birth, she was not allowed to have an attendant belonging to her own household lest her maid having her mind full of the doings of old days and of the license of childhood might by constant converse open old wounds and renew former errors.[122]" Therefore, Jerome suggests that even though the nuns kept being distinguished according to their social rank, they did not have servants living with them. I would suggest that the *topos* of wealth renunciation implies also the lack of social obligations from the side of the nuns coming from aristocratic *milieux*. On the other hand, the example of the monastery in Bethlehem shows that the stratification of society was maintained and replicated even in the monastic environment.

Besides his numerous connections with the pious Roman noblewomen, Jerome built another network after he settled in Bethlehem. The guesthouse of the monastic complex offered shelter to crowds of pilgrims going to and from the Holy Land. Besides, through his correspondence on exegetical topics, he attempted to establish himself as a "Biblical scholar" not only to his old acquaintances in Rome, but also in southern Gaul.[123]

The second Roman ascetic household transferred to the Holy Land was that of Melania the Younger and her husband, Valerius Pinianus. Pinianus was son of a *praefectus urbis* (either Valerius Severus, or Valerius Pinianus Severus) and owed estates in Campania. When he was seventeen, he was married to Melania, also born of an aristocratic family, who was fourteen.[124] Their possessions of lands, buildings, and slaves in Italy, Sicily Spain, Africa, and Britain positioned them among the richest families of the empire.[125] According to the *Lausiac History*, initially Melania donated her silk garments for the sanctuary and church decorations. To a certain monk from Dalmatia, Paul, she donated her silver and gold, while she entrusted to monasteries and churches in Egypt, Thebaid, Antioch, Palestine, and the West thousands of pieces of money.[126] These numbers might be Palladius' exaggeration, but it is significant to note that, for a long time, Melania was not able to dispense of a great amount of her wealth. After these details, Palladius mentions: "Her own faith led her to set free eight thousand salves who desired freedom. The rest of the salves did not want this, however,

[120] Roberto Alciati argues for a manumission of the slaves in Paula's and Jerome's monastery. However, I argue that the sources rather indicate the opposite. See Roberto Alciati, "And the Villa Became a Monastery," 90.
[121] Jerome, *Epitaph of Paula* 20.
[122] Ibid., 20.
[123] Andrew Cain investigated the epistolary corpus of Jerome and explained the role of his social contacts in the reception of his biblical commentaries. See Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Saint Jerome*, 170-197.
[124] Gerontius, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, 27-28.
[125] Ibid., 11.
Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 61.
[126] Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 61.4, 142-143.

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choosing rather to serve to her brother, to whom she sold them for three pieces of money.[127]" Although she sold many of her possessions in "Spain, Aquitania, Taraconia and Gaul," she still kept resources "for the endowment of the monasteries only her holdings in Sicily, Campania, and Africa.[128]" Two details are surprising in Palladius's account. First, the belongings of Melania, both human and material, seem to be a significant burden and to carry with them great social responsibilities. It is worth noticing the amount of money for which Melania sold the slaves, for more than 3000 times less than the amount of money she had previously sent as gifts to the monasteries and churches. Nevertheless, Melania, her mother, Albina, and Pinianus continued to live with slaves "in the country, sometimes in Sicily, again in Campania, with fifteen eunuchs and sixty maidens, both freewomen and slaves.[129]" The fact that Melania had to commute between her domains, even if she had chosen devotion to asceticism, might have been a consequence of the legal obligations of which she was not able to dispense.

The sources which account for the ascetic turn of Melania and Pinianus emphasize the way in which Christian aristocrats in the West protested against such values requested by their appurtenance to the social elite. Pinianus broke with the ancient aristocratic duties and values when trying to replace his obligations of maintaining his estates and slaves by selling them. Keeping the patrimony of the family was one of the obligations, and, thus, Pinianus was faced with a strong opposition from his relatives.[130] They also blame him for willingly denying his obligations of *pietas* towards his ancestors and not carrying for his obligations as a *dominus* for the sake of asceticism.[131]

The idea of a complete break of the aristocrats with the world seemed unfeasible (and for this reason, the very discourse on this topic seems "hypocritical") precisely because of their deep involvement in the social conditions of the era (as they were responsible for the dependents of the estates). The most fitting example is the one of Melania the Younger and Pinianus, often criticized both by their relatives and by their slaves for the attempts of estranging their vast estates from the family's possessions and for abandoning their duties as slaves' protectors.[132]

According to the sources, they did not put easily into practice Christ's instruction to a rich man for a perfect lifestyle, (Mattew 19:21 "Sell all you have and give to the poor and come, follow Me"). Like other aristocrats, they renounced their wealth for the sake of following Christ in stages. The first step was the change of vestments and lifestyle. High aristocrats, men and women alike, used to wear expensive clothes, made of silk or fine wools, colored and adorned with gold.[133] Women in particular

[127] Ibid. 61.5, 143.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., 61.6, 143.
[130] J. M. Blazquez, "Problemas economicos y sociales en la Vida de Melania, la Joven, y en la Historia Lausiaca de Palladio," *Memorias de historia antigua* 2 (1978): 110.
[131] Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household*, 113.
[132] Ibid., 116.
[133] Gillian Clark, "Women and Asceticism in Late Antiquity," 35.

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were not supposed to cover their head, especially in the presence of the empress. Thus, hagiographers used to insist on women's (and men's) radical change of attire, as the beginning of a chain of transformations in their slow transition to asceticism. Melania's hagiographer stressed that she replaced her silky and colorful clothes with dark garments, close in appearance to the colors worn by poor people. Later, although she had a sensitive skin, as he significantly inserts, she started to wear a sackcloth. In the presence of Serena, she covered her head, in spite of the customs. Since going to the baths was a privilege of the wealthy, conversion to asceticism necessarily meant not only not to attend this public space, but also to deprive the body from such a coddling. Among Melania the Younger's greatest virtues, her hagiographer includes her extreme decision of avoiding the baths, to such an extent that her sackcloth became filled with huge lice.[134]

The properties to which Melania and Pinianus did not renounce might have been kept in order to obtain an income large enough to enable the support of the poor or of other ascetics.[135] In any case, the wealth of the couple was precisely that which facilitated their autonomy.

The sources explored so far stress the fact that one's commitment to monasticism had a major obstacle: the wealth, including the slaves. They also emphasize two ways in which ascetics were able to get rid of their possessions. One of them was the engagement in a building project. This would secure to the ascetics, especially once they entered the monastery they built, a certain status. The second one, more difficult, was a thorough plan of getting rid of the possessions, by distributing them to diverse circles. The slaves, an exclusive privilege of the elite,[136] represented a different kind of possession and, thus, their release proved to be more difficult. Their presence in the narratives is a mark of the appurtenance to aristocracy.

III. 3. The Problem of Gender and the Family Double Monasteries

In his letter to Galatians, Paul wrote a surprising statement: "in Christ there is neither male, nor female, neither free, nor slave" (Galatians 3:28[137]). The Gospels confirm the egalitarian participation of men and women in worship, which was a novelty in itself, since in the Jewish environment men and women were not able to worship together. Although a text which passed as Pauline forbade women to prophesize or teach and set their activities in the sphere of their households (1 Corinthians

[134] Gerontius, *The Life of Melania the Younger*.
[135] Ilaria Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery*, 222.
[136] Lillien Larsen, "Early Christian Meals and Slavery," 198.
[137] "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ελλην, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ: πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

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14:34-35[138]), later texts reveal that women continued, in fact, to challenge the gender hierarchy, by assuming initiatives, practices, and roles outside privacy and without men's endorsement. In times of persecutions, the Acts of Martyrs bring to fore women in the new roles of athletes, while the role of men was not perceived as impressive.[139] In the post-Constantinian period, though, the hierarchy men-women in the ecclesiastical context became more solid in the sense that the leadership of the Church was clearly assigned to men.

The rise of asceticism, a phenomenon in which men and women alike took part, impacted this view on gender roles. In spite of the fact that aristocratic women gained a sort of autonomy and power, and that women in general were subject of praising writings, some Church Fathers still associated their presence, especially in the ascetic context, with temptations.

"Let us go to a place where there are no women,[140]" the famous order of Abba Sisoes, reveals a significant concern of ascetic men. In their view, encountering women would necessarily be risky, even to experimented ascetics.[141] Similarly, spiritual fathers often advised women ascetics to avoid meetings with men.

A significant number of ascetic discourses insisted on ascetic women's denial of their bodies, since the bodily attractiveness would be tempting for ascetic men and could even stimulate their own desires. The most common way was to make the female body repellent, through the avoiding of bathing and fasting. It was commonly held that, after the Fall, food has always triggered lustful desires. Thus, a natural way of avoiding such a danger was self-commitment to extreme fasting. On the other hand, some ascetics did not hold the body as hostile to the soul. Considering that bodily desires are the consequence of the Fall and their presence keeps the soul away from the Good, they attempted to annul it. Thus, for some ascetics, the cohabitation of men and women without the feeling of attraction was the sign that their bodies and souls overcame the consequences of the Fall.[142]

Accounts from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* record men and women leading the ascetic life in the desert in various ways. As far as women are concerned, according to the sources, their gender and the dangers of the Egyptian desert led them to the pursuit of a variety of ascetic life-style, sometimes in the proximity of ascetic men. Some scholars argue that, due to the harshness of the desert, ascetic

[138] "The women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church."
αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν, οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν: ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει. εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν, αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ.
[139] *Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. Virginia Burrus (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 10.
[140] Sisoes 3, in *Apophthegmata Patrum. The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. Benedicta Ward (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1975).
[141] Gillian Clark, *Women and Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, 37.
[142] Ibid., 38-39.
Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (Columbia University Press, 1988), 222-224.

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women were less able to lead an independent ascetic life.[143] However, the sources refer to ascetic women living in seclusion in their own cells, women who were part of ascetic communities, women who transformed their physical appearance in order to be perceived as men, wandering women in a perpetual *xeniteia*, or women cohabitating with clerics.[144] Indeed, "the variety of female ascetic practice seems if anything to have exceeded that of the men.[145]"

In the famous letter 22 sent to his spiritual disciple, Eustochium, when she was living in Rome as an ascetic woman in her household, Jerome elaborated on the types of ascetics who are known in the Christian world:

> There are in Egypt three classes of monks. First, there are the cœnobites, called in their Gentile language Sauses, or, as we should say, men living in a community. Secondly, there are the anchorites, who live in the desert, each man by himself, and are so called because they have withdrawn from human society. Thirdly, there is the class called Remoboth, a very inferior and little regarded type … Other [women in Rome] change their garb and assume the mien of men, being ashamed of being what they were born to be— women. They cut off their hair and are not ashamed to look like eunuchs. Some clothe themselves in goat's hair, and, putting on hoods, think to become children again by making themselves look like so many owls.[146]

Similarly to the ascetic women, against whom the canons of the council in Gangra were issued, the women mentioned by Jerome were also blamable because, by their practices, they renounced gender differentiation. Soon after the composition of this letter, Eustochium and her mother, Paula, founded the monastery in Bethlehem, which Jerome, and his brother, Paulinianus, joined. The seclusion of monks and nuns in this monastery might have been the alternative which the founders proposed in opposition to the ascetics who overcame the differences of gender.

After the foundation of the monastery, Jerome continued to express his views on the problems of body, gender differentiation, and women's asceticism. His positions were also influenced by the atmosphere in Palestine, which, at the end of the 390s, was not calm anymore. The Origenist controversy brought a strong dispute between him and Rufinus, expressed in several treatises and letters against each other and ended with Rufinus' definitive departure in 397. Although for a good part of his ascetic career Jerome was a devoted follower of Origen's works, after his dispute with Rufinus emerged, he drastically changed his position. Moreover, he did so for his own spiritual disciple, Paula, even though previously he had translated for her and Eustochium a large part of the

[143] See Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)* (Warsaw: Warsaw University, 2009).
Ewa Wipszycka, "L'ascétisme féminin dans l'Egypte de l'antiquité tardive: un sujet difficile. Sur un livre de María Jesús Albarrán Martínez," *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 42 (2012): 337-352, where the author refers to her previous studies in which she questions the historical existence of the three Ammas mentioned in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* and the so-called "transvestite nuns."
[144] Susanna Elm, *'Virgins of God.',* 253-82.
[145] Ibid., 311.
[146] Jérôme, *Lettre 22*.34, 27, trans. Jérôme Labourt.

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Origenian corpus.[147] In the epitaph of Paula, in which he aimed at presenting Paula as a saint, he narrates an episode in which himself, at Paula's initiative, had to refute several heresies, by answering provocative questions. In one of them, Jerome claims to have been inquired whether the anatomical distinction between men and women will be preserved after the resurrection. Further, the question moved to whether marriage, intercourse, and procreation can occur. In his answer, which he develops at length, Jerome argued against what he perceived as being the Origenist legacy,[148] which he labeled as a "heretical thought:"

> Will there be a distinction between sexes or not? If so, there also will be marriage, sexual intercourse, and procreation. If not, and if the distinction between the sexes is removed, then what will rise again are not [physical bodies] – for the earthy habitation weighs down the mind laden with thoughts – but intangible and spiritual bodies, as the Apostle says: "A physical body is sown, and it is raised a spiritual body" … If what rises again is neither female nor male, there will be no resurrection of the dead because sex implies members, and the whole body is composed of members. But if there will not be sex and members, how can there be a resurrection of bodies, which cannot exist without sex and members? Furthermore, if there will be no resurrection of bodies, then there by no means will be a resurrection of the dead. Not only that, but also your claim that marriage is implied by the presence of the same bodily members is refuted by the Saviour: "You are wrong because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For when the dead are resurrected they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be like the angels." (Matthew 22:29-30) The statement "they will neither marry nor be given in marriage proves that there will be a distinction between the sexes.[149]

Jerome makes a sensitive nuance about ascetics, which, at a first sight, might contradict his statement previously quoted. Even if the distinction between men and women is kept in the

[147] Demetrios S. Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis*, 114.

[148] What Jerome perceived as being the Origenist legacy and, thus, condemned, did not coincide entirely with what Origen himself had argued.

[149] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula*, 23, 82.

The verse to which Jerome refers appears in the Vulgate: "in resurrectione enim neque nubent neque nubentur sed sunt sicut angeli Dei in caelo." Unlike the Greek text, which gives room for other interpretation, including the intercourse, in the Latin text *nubo* means "to veil, to marry, to wed," or "to give one's relative in marriage." This is a subtle nuance which Jerome keeps in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, where he shows that the ability to marry or to be given in marriage exists due to the anatomical differentiation between men and women, which is undoubtedly kept after the Resurrection.

Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 3, trans. Thomas P. Halton (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 254-255: "22.30. "For in the resurrection they will neither marry nor be married." Latin usage does not correspond to the Greek idiom. For, properly speaking, women marry, and men lead wives in marriage. But we should understand the statement simply, that "to marry" is written with respect to men, and "to be married" concerns women. Thus in the resurrection they will neither marry nor be married; therefore, the bodies, which are able to marry and be married, will rise again. Now obviously, no one says of a stone and a tree and of these things that do not have genital organs that they neither marry nor are married, but of these who, though they can marry, nevertheless do not marry for another reason. in what is added:

22.30. "But they are like the angels of God in heaven"; there is the promise of a spiritual way of life."

See the Latin text in Hieronymus, *Commentarii in euangelium Matthaei*, ed. D. Hurst, M. Adriaen, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969): "in resurrectione enim neque nubent neque nubentur. latina consuetudo graeco idiomati non respondit. nubere enim proprie dicuntur mulieres et uiri uxores ducere. sed nos simpliciter dictum intellegamus quod nubere de uiris et nubi de uxoribus scriptum sit. sic in resurrectione non nubent neque nubentur, resurgent ergo corpora quae possunt nubere et nubi. nemo quippe dicit de lapide et arbore et his rebus quae non habent membra genitalia, quod non nubant neque nubantur, sed de his qui cum possint nubere tamen alia ratione non nubunt. quod autem infertur: sed sunt sicut angeli dei in caelo, spiritalis repromittitur conuersatio."

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resurrection, on earth, ascetic men and women share their way of life with the angelic hosts. Therefore, their presence in one ascetic community should not be problematic:

> But if you cavil at this and say, how shall we in that case be like the angels with whom there is neither male nor female, hear my answer in brief as follows. What the Lord promises to us is not the nature of angels but their mode of life and their bliss. And therefore John the Baptist is called an angel even before he is beheaded, and all God's holy men and virgins manifest in themselves even in this world the life of angels.[150]

His anti-Origenist polemic continued in his *Apology against Rufinus*. Suggesting that Rufinus supported heretical ideas inspired by Origen, Jerome lists them. The most serious concerns the resurrection. Not only the universal restauration would clean even the demons, who would become equal to the angels, but it would also blur the distinction between men and women and, finally, it would make the bodies aetherial.[151] In addition, he blamed Pelagius, Jovinian's disciple, for having lived freely with women, under the pretext of asceticism. Thus, Jerome used his anti-Origenist position, linked to debates around asceticism, in the Pelagian controversy.[152]

The examples quoted above show that in family double monasteries, unlike other forms of double-gender asceticism, the differentiation between men and women was a key-factor in the pursuit of the asceticism. The closeness of monks and nuns naturally alerted the Church leaders, so that, at least in their writings, each of them sought for solutions meant to overcome temptations.[153]

III. 4. *Orthodoxia* and *Orthopraxia* in Double-Gender Asceticism

"Three demons disguised as clerics attacked him in broad daylight and they examined him as regards the faith; one said he was an Arian, the other an Eunomian, the third an Apollinarian. He got around them with his knowledge and a few words.[154]" This episode of the *Lausiac History*, whose protagonist is Evagrius of Pontus, reveals not only a rich theological panorama of Eastern and Western Christianity at the turn of the fifth century, but also its relation to the monastic movement.

Similarly to the distinction between "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" in theological thought, Church Fathers endorsed the ascetic *modi vivendi* as acceptable or condemnable. The settings in

[150] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula*, 23, 82.
[151] Jérôme, *Apologie contre Rufin*, 2.5, 12, ed. and trans. P. Lardet (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1983).
[152] Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*: *The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 225-226.
[153] I do not agree with the view of the feminist scholarship which reads the accounts about ascetic women (not surprisingly preserved by the hand of male authors) as "[reimagining] the erotics of male receptivity, via performed reversal of genders." Pace Virginia Burrus, "Gender, Eros, and Pedagogy. Macrina's Pious Household," in *Ascetic Culture. Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau*, ed. Blake Leyerle, Robin Darling Young (Notre Dame, In: University of Notre Dame, Press, 2013), 168.
[154] Palladius, *The Lausiac History* 38, 11, trans. Robert T. Meyer (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1965), 113-14. See the Greek text in *Palladio. La storia Lausiaca*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink (Verona: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1974): "Τούτῳ τρεῖς ἐπέστησαν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ δαίμονες ἐν σχήματι κληρικῶν περὶ πίστεως συζητοῦντες· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἔλεγεν ἑαυτὸν Ἀρειανόν, ὁ δὲ Εὐνομιανόν, ὁ δὲ Ἀπολιναριανόν· καὶ τούτων περιεγένετο τῇ σοφίᾳ αὐτοῦ διὰ βραχέων λόγων."

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which ascetic men and women were involved proved to be most problematic. In the following lines, I will examine several examples which are related to the family double monasteries.

Some scholars remarked the agreement between requests in the canons of the Council of Gangra and the dispositions of Basil's *Asketikon* against exaggerated forms of asceticism. It is impossible to determine whether Basil used the canons of the Council in Gangra as a model for his *Asketikon*, since the sources do not give enough evidence for a precise date of the Council. Scholars have been debating its chronology. If the council dates as early as 340-341, then it is plausible that that part of Basil's regulations derive from its canons.[155] If it took place around 365,[156] it is difficult to prove that the *Asketikon* reused some of its canons. If the council was held in 379-380[157], so after the death of Basil, one may assume that the similarities are independent.

Reproaches addressed the ascetic followers of Eustathius of Sebasteia, both because of their theological stance and of their lifestyle.[158] According to the prefatory letter, they withdrew from the Church and formed their own assemblies. Considering themselves as holy, they mistakenly appropriated the first fruits, which should have been offered to the Church. The Eustathians also brought social disorder, since they encouraged slaves to abandon their masters. But the most significant charge was against the unrecognition of the gender division. Considering themselves above ordinary Christians, the Eustathian women were accused of having appropriated male attire and dress as a form of piety: "Contrary to custom, women assume men's dress instead of women's dress and think themselves thereby justified; moreover, on the pretext of piety, many of them cut short that form of hair which is proper to women.[159]" They were also blamed for fasting on Sundays,

[155] See Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon*, chapter 4, for the reasons to date the Council of Gangra in 340/1. If this hypothesis is true, one must remark that Basil could have never formally referred to the Council, since it was presided and attended by bishops with strong Arian views.
On the other hand, some scholars ascribe Basil's early monastic life precisely to a moderate proximity of the enthusiastic type of asceticism condemned at Gangra, which might be plausible especially if the Council was held at a later date – see the following note. See John Meyendorff, "St Basil, Messalianism and Byzantine Christianity," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1980): 219-234. Contrary to Anna Silvas, who sees the responses given by Basil in his various stages of the *Asketikon* as agreeing with the canons at Gangra, John Meyendorff argues for the opposite interpretation of the same answers, stressing, though, that Basil's proposed ascetic lifestyle did not imitate the exaggerations of the enthusiast ascetics.
[156] Kristi Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 141, n. 89.
[157] Timothy Barnes, "The Date of the Council of Gangra," *Journal of Theological Studies* 40, no. 1 (1989): 121-124.
[158] Socrates Scholasticus' account does not differ from the canons of the Council in Gangra. In his *Ecclesiastica History*, he explains the reasons of Eustathius' condemnation by his own father, Eulalius, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, followed by the condemnation at Gangra: "he had 'forbidden marriage,' and maintained that meats were to be abstained from: he even separated many from their wives, and persuaded those who disliked to assemble in the churches to commune at home. Under the pretext of piety, he also seduced servants from their masters. He himself wore the habit of a philosopher, and induced his followers to adopt a new and extraordinary garb, directing that the hair of women should be cropped. He permitted the prescribed fasts to be neglected, but recommended fasting on Sundays. In short, he forbade prayers to be offered in the houses of married persons: and declared that both the benediction and the communion of a presbyter who continued to live with a wife whom he might have lawfully married, while still a layman, ought to be shunned as an abomination. For doing and teaching these things and many others of a similar nature, a Synod convened, as we have said, at Gangra in Paphlagonia deposed him, and anathematized his opinions." Socrates Scholastiscus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.43, trans. A. C. Zenos, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890).
[159] "Prefatory Letter of the Council of Gangra," trans. Anna M. Silvas, in *The Asketikon*, 488.

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despising meat and marriage, and lacking of solidarity of thought. One of the condemnations pronounced by the Council concerns precisely the practices through which Eustathians abolished the gender differentiation, either by adopting male clothing ("If any woman, from supposed asceticism, exchanges her clothing and instead of the customary clothing for women, assumes that of men, let her be anathema" [160]) or male haircut ("If a woman, from supposed asceticism, cuts off the hair given to her by God as a reminder of subjection, as if to annul the commandment of subjection, let her be anathema[161]").

The correspondence between Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus brings to light another group who practiced an unordered ascetic lifestyle involving closeness of men and women under the pretext of asceticism. Glycerius, a deacon ordained by Basil, is reported to have gathered a group of virgins, to whom he added a group of ascetic men, assuming the title of patriarch for himself.[162]

Separating from Eustathius, who finally chose not to follow such an enthusiast ascetic movement, around the mid-360s, Aerius also gathered a group of ascetic men and women, whom he led, according to Epiphanius of Salamis, to an extreme form of piety, derived of Arianism and at odds with the establish liturgical practices of the Church in Cappadocia.[163]

Gregory of Nyssa referred to deviating trends of ascetic life involving cohabitation of men and women, instead of seclusion: "others … practicing celibacy in name, but do not refrain from social life, not only enjoying the pleasure of the stomach, but living openly with women, calling such a living together 'brotherhood' and thinking that they are avoiding suspicion by this pious term.[164]" This statement could refer to both the followers of Eustathius and to the Messalians (also known for their free lifestyle.[165])

[160] "Canons of the Council of Gangra," 13, in ibid., 491.
[161] "Canons of the Council of Gangra,", 17, in ibid., 492.
[162] Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 169, 170, 171, ed. and trans. Yves Courtonne (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1959). Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep*. 248, 249, 250. It is not clear who is the addressee and who is the receiver in these three particular letters.
[163] Epiphanius, *The Panarion*, 55, 2nd ed., trans. Frank Williams (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 504-511.
[164] Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la virginité*, 23.4 ed. and trans. Michel Aubineau (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1966): 538. Trans. in English in *Gregory of Nyssa, Ascetical Works*, trans. Virginia Wood Callahan (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 71.
[165] By the 370s sources started to refer with the pejorative term "Messalians" to several different groups of ascetics considered to deviate from the right faith and practices of the Church. The Messalian movement, whose name comes from the Syriac word meaning "those who pray," has uncertain origins, but the first associations are recorded in Mesopotamia. Little is known about their assumed identity, since none of their writings survives and the evidence about them comes from authors who condemn them. Epiphanius of Salamis in *Panarion* explains at length that they do not have a certain founder and are not necessarily Christian. Their free lifestyle, including a strong emphasis on prayer, free associations of men and women, disregard for work, resembles indeed with the one ascribed to the followers of Eustathius. However, in their case the origin is much clearer for the Fathers who used to accuse them. See Columba Stewart, *'Working the Earth of the Heart.' The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 12-24.

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Other ascetic men and women who lived in closed proximity were accused of having a lifestyle at the edge of the acceptable practices. Apart from the community of Thecla in Seleucia, the *vita* of the sisters Filonila and Zinais offers another example. Zinais committed to asceticism while simultaneously practicing medicine. Three young men, Pappas, Pateras and Philokyris, started to practice the ascetic life without leaving the Christian community. Slowly, the three monks chose Zinais as their spiritual leader and formed together an ascetic community. Why would three young men choose to practice asceticism in a community ruled by an aged woman? The major difference between this community and the others which practiced a similar life-style is that Zinais and the three ascetics did not cohabitate, but lived in proximity.[166] The *life* is modeled on the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*,[167] and, thus, one may interpret the story of Zinais and the three ascetic men as a motif of spiritual life lived in common, combined with a common apostolic work, illustrated in the story of Thecla. Another model for such a life-style and preoccupations may be found in the community of the Apostles in Jerusalem, described in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

An even more radical tendency emerged from these examples of closeness between ascetic men and women. Sozomen gives a testimony about Eustathius himself attempting to correct it. *Syneisaktism* involved cohabitation of an ascetic cleric and a consecrated virgin, practice which triggered suspicion.[168] Another opponent of such an ascetic lifestyle was Basil of Ancyra (? - 362), who preferred instead, just like Eustathius, a formula of asceticism which consisted of men and women living in communities – without separation, though. Basil of Ancyra was not a supporter of the *homoousios* theological formula, but was associated with the *Homoiousian* party. Although he accepted a certain closeness between *groups* of ascetic men and women, Basil of Ancyra strictly

[166] Ioannis Panagiotopoulos, *Συνείσακτοι*, 56-57.

[167] Anonymously written probably in the middle of the second century in Greek, this apocryphal story describes a young woman of Icomium (today's Konya - Turkey), Thecla, member of an aristocratic family, whose relatives have arranged for her marriage with an equally well positioned young man, Thamyris. After listening to Paul's preaching on permanent celibacy, Thecla scandalizes her family and the society in Icomium by refusing to get married. She follows Paul in prison and she is miraculously saved from the governor's condemnation of being burnt. Further, she lives Icomium, finds Paul, asks to be baptized and to be allowed to follow him disguised as a man, but she is refused. However, she manages to follow Paul to Antioch, where the governor condemns her to death once more, in spite of a significant protest by women. Before her scheduled execution, she is put under the protection of Tryphaena, in order to avoid rape. In the arena, the punishment is not fulfilled, since the beasts miraculously save her. Thecla baptizes herself by jumping in a ditch full of water, again breaking well established norms. The governor finally releases her, in the acclamation of the women. Further, Thecla converts Tryphaena and her household to Christianity. Then she breaks again the norms, dressing in men's clothes and going to Myra accompanied by a group of men and women servants, in the pursuit of Paul. After she finds Paul and recounts her miraculous survival from the last condemnation, Paul makes her an apostle. She then leaves Paul and starts spreading Christianity. Tryphaena, acting similarly to the fourth-century Christian women-patrons, sends Paul a significant amount of clothes and gold for his mission.
J. K. Eliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
See also Carolyn L. Connor, *Women of Byzantium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 1-12, for the impact of Thecla's story in Late Antiquity. See also pages 14-28 of the same volume for a discussion about Macrina's life in comparison with the life of Thecla.

[168] See Anna Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 85 *contra* Susanna Elm, who ascribes to the 'Homoiousian asceticism' even the *syneisaktism*.

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opposed physical closeness of *one* ascetic man and *one* ascetic woman.[169] At the end of his treatise *On Virginity*, he explains that ascetic life makes all men and women alike equal to the angels since their earthly existence.[170]

How did Church Fathers react to these life-styles in which men and women were not strictly secluded? Several rules of the *Asketikon* of Basil, especially those concerning the segregation of men and women in a community (RBas 174; SR 220), those concerning obedience and order, and those concerning fasting, are likely to aim at correcting everyday practices considered disordered and uncanonical, with or without having pondering the canons of Gangra. Without explicitly mentioning the name of Eustathius in his monastic rules, Basil elaborates several canons which could have been read as opposing his followers. After making an apology for the cenobitic lifestyle (LR 3), he retakes some of the arguments in rules meant to stress the leading value of the communion practiced inside a community (SR 187, LR 7). Basil retakes a commonly held idea of the obedience towards other members of the community (SR 38).[171] A clearer reference to the lifestyle of the Eusthatians is the canon requiring segregation of men and women within a community, seen as a brotherhood - *adelphotes* (SR 220). The necessity of diligent work inside the community, not for serving oneself, but for following the apostolic call to serve the ones in need (SR 207), is not a novelty, but, in this context, it might oppose the position according to which ascetics would not need to work.[172]

Gregory of Nazianzus also condemned the cohabitation of ascetic male and female, for whom he used the 'technical term' *agapetos*.[173] His reference can be directed against the extravagant asceticism led by Sisinnius, disciple of a monk from the monastery of Timotheos and one of Basil's *chorepiskopoi*, whom Basil punished for his deviant ascetic life. Sisinnius established in Cappadocia a "brotherhood of men and women" who used to live without assuming differentiation of gender.[174]

Susanna Elm gives as a further example of communities grouping monks and nuns the community of Thecla at Seleucia, where Gregory of Nazianzus retreated after Basil appointed him bishop of Sasima. She interprets Egeria's later description of Seleucia, "monasteria sine numero virorum ac mulierum … etiam sanctis monachis vel aputactitis, tam uiris, quam feminis" as a

[169] See the Latin text in the bilingual critical edition of Basil of Ancyra, *De Virginitate*, 37, 41-45, trans. Gabriel Mândrilă, Laura Mândrilă (Bucharest: Sophia, 2014).
[170] Ibid., 51.
Pace Susanna Elm, *'Virgins of God,'* 205. Susanna Elm interprets this passage as a justification for Basil of Ancyra's acceptance of the ascetic / monastic communities of cohabitating men and women. Although, as it has already been shown in the previous passages, the ascetic life was commonly held as an earthly angelic life, this particular passage is not a legitimation of the communities in which asceticism was practiced in common by men and women.
[171] Anna Silvas interprets it as a direct hint to the arrogance of the Euthatians.
[172] Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 41-43.
[173] Ibid., 185.
See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epigrams* 10-20, in *The Greek Anthology*, Volume II, *Book 7: Sepulchral Epigrams. Book 8: The Epigrams of St. Gregory the Theologian*, trans. W. R. Paton, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
[174] Susanna Elm, *'Virgins of God'*, 186.

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suggestion of an arrangement where ascetic men and women cohabitated.[175] She concludes that the reason for the legitimation of such forms of closeness between consecrated male and women, at the same time with the condemnation of *syneisaktism*, was precisely their *ascetic* lifestyle, since they were regarded as a different "tagma" from the one of the clerics (involved in such spiritual marriages). Since these communities were legitimized by the presence of prominent Church Fathers, I suggest that their members followed both the Nicene-Orthodox doctrine and kept a certain seclusion of ascetic men and women.

Previous scholars have divided double-gendered asceticism in fourth-century Asia Minor into three categories:

> three major trends of ascetic practice emerge: the peripathetic life of rigorously ascetic men and women who completely rejected society; men and women who together practiced an ascetic life in the context of their homes and families; and lastly, settled, organized ascetic communities of men and women. These communities again fall into two groups: the Homoiousian foundations, and those which followed the model of Basil of Caesarea.[176]

However, I would argue that this division does not mirror with precision the complexity of the ascetic spectrum involving men and women in the fourth century. Moreover, one cannot speak – yet – of well-established institutions since, as it has been shown above, this period was a highly formative one, when the doctrine about the Trinity was continuously debated, in parallel with the theory on asceticism.[177] On the other hand, Eustathius himself did not support the ascetic men and women living in *syneisaktism*.[178] Moreover, I would not use the term "Homoiousian asceticism" in opposition with the Basilian model. Throughout his life, Eustathius assumed diverse theological positions and the Homoiousian faction itself divided. Other ascetic experiments were also led by representatives of other theological factions, and Eustathius himself refrained from associating with some enthusiast ascetics, even though they used to be his disciples.

Rufinus, Jerome's opponent, dedicated a Latin translation of Basil's homilies to Apronianus, who, together with his wife, Avita, committed to celibacy in the community of Nola, established by Paulinus and Therasia.[179] The side which his community took in the Origenist controversy is confirmed not only by the fact that the monastery itself became a node from which the *Asketikon* of Basil disseminated, but also by Melania the Elder's departure to Rome. In the *Lausiac History*,

[175] Ibid., 187. This type of arrangement is not implausible, but, based on the account of Egeria, I would suggest that other configurations of the ascetic communities in Seleucia are equally possible (for instance, 'independent' convents and male monasteries).
[176] Ibid., 206.
[177] Another observation, which will be largely explained in the fourth and the fifth chapters, is that the sources – surviving from Gregory of Nyssa – present the community in Annisa as developing under the guidance of Macrina, with Basil having been instructed by her in his first period of ascetic commitment. See also Anna Silvas' publications.
[178] Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 85.
[179] See chapter 4 for the chronology.

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Palladius explains the reason for her decision, which followed the departure of Rufinus in the heat of the debates with Jerome. According to the story, hearing about the ascetic inclination of her namesake grand-daughter, Melania the Younger, and of her husband, Pinianus, she decided to personally instruct them, since "she feared that they might be utterly destroyed by bad teaching or heresy or bad living.[180]" The "heresy" which threatened Melania and Pinianus were the anti-Origenist tendencies, while the "bad living" which worried the Elder Melania can be understood as *syneisaktism*,[181] since Palladius used this term only in his *Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom*, where he designated by it the custom of clerics to cohabitate with virgins under the pretext of asceticism.[182]

The Church authorities condemned double-gender ascetic experiments which posed challenges to the recognized communities of ascetic men and women. For example, the asceticism of Martin was defended by Sulpicius Severus against those who identified it with Priscillianism.[183] The type of asceticism led by Priscillian of Avila (ca. 340-385) was strongly opposed, leading to a controversy which involved, over several decades, even Jerome. In a letter sent to Ctesiphon, Jerome compared the theological wandering and moral decline of Pelagius with the ones of Priscillian. Among the members of the ascetics led by Priscillian, Jerome directed most of the blames against women. Against the commandments of avoiding random spiritual teachings, given in the Pauline Epistles, the women accused by Jerome followed false teachings to such an extent that they attempted to deny the power of the Holy Spirit. These women were also guilty of leading astray men, incapable of a strong faith. Jerome compiled a list of male and female heretics, who transmitted their errors from one generation to the other. The list of heretical men starts with Simon Magus, the head of all heresies, and ends with Priscillian, who embodies all the intermediary heresies. Both Jerome and Sulpicius Severus accused Priscillian of having been intimate with the group of his women disciples and of having taught them heretical doctrines. His doctrinal deviations were, in Jerome's view, inherited from Simon, while his immorality, driven from his illegitimate relations with women, followed Nicolas, one of the first members of the first apostolic community in Jerusalem, rejected by Apostle

[180] Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 54.3.

[181] Christine Luckritz Marquis, "Namesake and Inheritance," in *Melania. Early Christianity through the Life of One Family*, ed. Catherine M. Chin, Catherine Schroeder (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 42.

[182] Palladios, *Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Anne-Marie Malingrey (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1988).

[183] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, 81.

One needs to consider the influence of Cicero in the account of Martin. As Jacques Fontaine remarked, the part of the *Chronicle* consecrated to the priscillianist affair is not void of the imitations of Catilina and even Iugurtha. See Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, 106.

However, Aquitania of the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century witnessed also a conflict between the supporters and the opponents of celibacy, asceticism, and cult of the saints, as the dedicatory letter of the *Vita Martini* suggests. See Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, 361-362.

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John. Sulpicius explicitly referred to Procula as being one of the women from Priscillian's heretic disciples who became pregnant and had an abortion.[184]

III. 5. Episcopal Legitimation of Family Double Monasteries

How did bishops support all these forms of double ascetic lifestyle? One of the first reactions comes from bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, who used the ascetic women in his endeavors of consolidating the Church of Alexandria against Arianism through a network of local bishops and priests. He advocated for ascetic women living either as consecrated virgins in their parents' household, or in communities of nuns.[185]

Why did Athanasius attempt to bring the ascetic women under the ultimate authority of the bishopric? I would suggest that the association of ascetic women with various factions of the Church in Egypt and their various degree of public involvement in the beginning of the fourth century was felt problematic. Thus, Athanasius granted the ascetic women with rules for living which, while making them active participants in worship, would restrict their participation in the public life and would set a clear seclusion between them and men. Unlike Hieracas, who condemned marriage and regarded chaste cohabitation of ascetic men and women as the only way of life which would bring salvation, Athanasius conceived the ascetic life of women as a "transcendent form of marriage.[186]" While Hieracas included in the Church only ascetics who despised marriage, Athanasius conceived the Church as being all-inclusive, both for married people and for ascetics.

As a bishop, Athanasius attempted to impose his authority over other monastic communities. Two of Pachomius' *Lives* account for his visit at the Pachomian *koinonia* shortly after he received his bishopric. One needs to consider the chronology of these events along with the development of the *koinonia*, according to the earliest *vitae* of Pachomius which testify for it. The *First Greek Life* places the arrival of Pachomius' sister, Mary, to the already established community of monks in Tabennesi and the subsequent foundation of the nuns' quarter under her leadership after the visit of

[184] Priscillian was also accused of having adopted the Adamite nude services and sexual rituals. Thus, the Council of Zaragoza (380) forbad such associations of men and women and disposed the seclusion of women from Priscillianist men. Alberto Ferreiro, "Jerome's Polemic Against Priscillian in His Letter to Ctesiphon (133, 4)," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 39 (1993): 310-319.

[185] David M. Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115.

[186] David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, 22.

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Athanasius.[187] The *Bohairic Life*, however, reverses the chronology of these events.[188] In both cases, during the visit, Apa Sarapion, the bishop of Nitentori, approached Athanasius and urged him to force Pachomius to accept being ordained as a priest and serve the bishopric of Nitentori. However, Pachomius hid and Athanasius approved of his refusal. If Athanasius' visit took place when the community on Tabennesi was already a double-gendered one, the bishop's presence and agreement with Pachomius' refusal to become a priest, albeit the insistence of Apa Sarapion, legitimizes also the form of double-gender ascetic lifestyle practiced in Tabennesi and acknowledges Athanasius' authority over the *koinonia*. The community in Tabennesi included from the beginning, according to both the first Greek and the Bohairic *lives*, a clear seclusion of monks and nuns, in contrast with Hieracas' community of cohabitating ascetic men and women. If, however, the events succeeded according to the narrative of the *First Greek Life*, its continuation is worth following. The episode of Athanasius' visit, together with Pachomius' escape from ordination, ignoring Apa Sarapion, is immediately followed by an account of Pachomius' hatred towards Origen's writings and legacy. The justification of this attitude might lie in the competition between the Origenist-type of monasticism, represented by anchoritism and embodied by Antony, and the coenobitic monasticism, whose model the Pachomian *koinonia* became.

Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* describes several episodes of the monastery of Tabennesi. Not all of them harmonize their details with the *lives* and *Rules* of Pachomius.[189] The segregation of monks and nuns, alluded to in Pachomius' *Vitae* and in the regulations, is overemphasized in Palladius' account, which gives an additional detail: the Nile River was the border between the monks' and the nuns' quarters.

After having examined all the aforementioned sources, I would suggest that the community of monks and nuns at Tabennesi received legitimation for its embodiment of a double-gendered monastic community on two levels, which, ultimately, were interrelated: the ecclesiastical and the theological one. First, Pachomius' adherence to the Nicene Christianity placed the community under the protection of Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria. Second, on the doctrinal level, Pachomius' clear opposition to the Arian and to the Origenian legacies was manifested also through the inclusion of

[187] "The First Greek Life of Pachomius," 30, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980). Further reference to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation G1. See G1, 30 (arrival of Athanasius at Tabennesi); G1, 31 (Origen); G1, 32 (arrival of Mary at Tabennesi). Pachomius not only throws a book of Origen in the river (Th. Lefort, *Les vies coptes de Saint Pachôme, et de ses premiers successeurs* (Louvain: Muséon, 1943): 353, n. 8), but, in the *Paralipomena*, a collection of stories which used to circulate together with the Greek life, he explains the stench coming from three monks-visitors to his *koinonia* by the fact that they were followers of Origen. See "Paralipomena" 4, 7, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 2, 29.

[188] "The Bohairic Life of Pachomius" 27, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 49-51. Further reference to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation SBo. See SBo, 27 (Mary's arrival and establishment of the women's quarter) and SBo, 28 (Athanasius arrival). The reference to Origen is missing.

[189] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 32-34, trans. Robert T. Meyer, 92-98.

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segregated quarters of monks and nuns at Tabennesi, unlike the other double-gender ascetic lifestyles, which were associated to diverse Arian factions.

This chapter showed that the problem of the family double monasteries has a theological, a social, and an ecclesiastical side. Anticipating the *Novels* of Justinian,[190] various authorities of the fourth century regarded with caution and concern the owner of a family double monastery's possessions. The cause of this attention was that most family double monasteries had wealthy founders, members of the high aristocracy. In spite of the Church Fathers' discourses urging the ascetics to lavish their fortune for the sake of the Church, so that they could later enjoy their "heavenly treasure," the presence of wealth triggered the concern for protecting it in case of danger and the competition for inheritance. Thus, the 'investment' in monastic buildings had as a consequence the preservation of certain privileges. Macrina, Paulinus of Nola, and Sulpicius converted to asceticism on their own family estates, choosing to release their slaves and rather to accommodate pilgrims and poor than to completely dispose of *all* the buildings which belonged to them legally. Through a thorough progressive organization of their buildings and through the new relations which their founders built with other ascetics,[191] these monastic centers became nodes of monastic networks. As the following chapter will show, these communities replicated the family networks traditionally built through marriage alliances. This transition from family to monastic networks also reveals the emergence of a new social model, in competition with the traditional one. In this new model, women show a striking transformation. They acquire stronger voices and openly oppose the social expectations which they had to obey.

After having scrutinized the complex context in which family double monasteries originated and developed, the following chapter will survey the emergence and the evolution of each community on two levels. First, the rhetoric of family ties between ascetic men and women underwent changes. Second, these transformations occurred while the monasteries themselves developed.

[190] See Chapter 1.
[191] See Chapter 5.

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IV. Transforming Earthly Families into Families of Angels

"What could be, then, more blessed
than to imitate on earth the chorus of angels? [1]"

"We had a sister who was for us a teacher of how to live, a mother in place of our mother.[2]" A few months after her death, Gregory of Nyssa begins to narrate the first story about his sister, Macrina the Younger, in a letter in which he acknowledges her as a spiritual mother for himself and for his siblings. He further justifies Macrina's position through her virtues, which he briefly exposes. In the *Life of Saint Macrina,* a later testimony about her,[3] he gives more details about Macrina's becoming a spiritual mother for their siblings and for Emmelia, their fleshly mother, on their own family estate in Annisa:

> When the responsibility of rearing the children and the anxiety of their education and of settling them in life had ceased for the mother [Emmelia] and most of what concerns the more material life had been portioned among the children, then ... the life of the virgin [Macrina] became for the mother a guide towards the philosophic and immaterial way of life. ... She [Macrina] became all things to the lad [Peter] – father, teacher, guardian, mother, counselor of every good. She so steered him that before he had passed the age of boyhood, when he was still in the first bloom of tender youth, he was raised to the lofty goal of philosophy.[4]

Almost simultaneously, in the proximity of Annisa, another extraordinary woman was leading her relatives on the path to philosophy. Gregory of Nazianzus recounts about his sister:

> performing those few ministrations due to the world and nature, according to the will of the law of the flesh, or rather of Him who gave to the flesh these laws, she consecrated herself entirely to God. But what is most excellent and honourable, she also won over her husband to her side, and made of him a good fellow-servant, instead of an unreasonable master. And not only so, but she further made the fruit of her body, her children and her children's children, to be the fruit of her spirit, dedicating to God not her single soul, but the whole family and household.[5]

[1] "Τί οὖν μακαριώτερον τοῦ τὴν ἀγγέλων χορείαν ἐν γῇ μιμεῖσθαι".
Basil, "Lettre 2. À son ami Grégoire," 2, in Saint Basile, *Lettres,* vol. 1, ed. and trans. Yves Courtonne (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1957), 7.

[2] Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter 19*.6, ed. and trans. Anna M. Silvas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 176.

[3] Gregory wrote the *Life* either in 381/382, or during the year 382. After he participated at the second Council in Constantinople in 381, he went on a mandate to the church of Arabia, where he had to solve internal problems. He visited Jerusalem and Antioch, where he met the addressee of the *Life*, a well-educated man who was either a monk, or interested in asceticism. See "The Life of Macrina, Introduction," in *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God*, trans. Anna Silvas (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 102.

[4] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Saint Macrina* 13-14, in *Macrina the Younger*, 121-122.

[5] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* 8.8, trans. Charles Gordon Browne, James Edward Swallow, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894).

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Unlike Macrina, who dedicated to asceticism without getting married, Gorgonia, the protagonist of the second account, made a step forward before turning her entire household into a monastic dwelling: she convinced her husband to stop their matrimonial relations.

In the fourth century, such testimonies are by no means singular. In many other instances, sources account for transformations of family relations in parallel to the emergence of new monastic communities which had a familial kernel.

How did a daughter become a parent of her mother and siblings? How did spouses become fellow-servants? The aim of this chapter is to investigate written accounts about the evolution of the family ties between relatives who either converted their own households to ascetic establishments, or withdrew to other places in order to create new communities.

Kindred ascetics had initially two types of family connections. Most of them were blood relatives, and thus respected a certain hierarchical model, characteristic to the traditional Greco-Roman families. Others, more rarely, were related through marriage, a fact which posed additional challenges. How were these relationships transformed, in parallel with the evolution of the monastic households? How were other ascetics (that is, non-relatives) integrated in these communities of monks and nuns?

Several studies have revealed that, in general, early monasteries appropriated the vocabulary used inside households (for example, "father," "mother," "brother," "sister" were used for addressing members of monastic communities).[6] On the other hand, while the terminology corresponding to the filial relationships was extensively used, the very term 'generation' has to be re-interpreted. As it will be further explained, in a monastic household, the "father" and / or "mother" of the community were not necessarily the eldest members, but the ones most spiritually advanced.

Another problem which needs to be (re)assessed is the interaction between the members of an evolving monastic household, as the sources, with all their literary conventions, construct it. How do the sources present the relations between the members of different 'generations'? How do they build the interaction between the 'sisters' and the 'brothers'?

The following subchapters analyze the evolution of the two main types of family relations mentioned above. In the communities of Tabennesi, Annisa, and Bethlehem, the sources emphasize certain transformations of the blood relationships while the monasteries gradually developed. In other instances, in both Eastern and Western Christianity, the Church Fathers testify for couples abandoning their marriages for the sake of asceticism. It is in such a context that the communities on the Mount

[6] Rebecca Krawiec, " 'From the Womb of the Church:' Monastic Families," in *JECS*,11 (2003): 283-307.
Philip Rousseau, "Blood-Relationships among Early Eastern Ascetics," *Journal of Theological Studies* 23, no. 1 (1972): 135-144.

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of Olives, Nola, and Primuliacum emerged. Thus, the last part of this chapter investigates the changes occurred in the relations between 'monastic spouses', as transmitted in the surviving written accounts.

IV. 1. The Greco-Roman and the Biblical Households

Before proceeding to answer the afore-mentioned questions, one must scrutinize the structure and the relations built inside a traditional Greco-Roman household.[7] In addition, the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, use examples of human interactions expressed by means of family terminology. What did Christianity bring new to the ideology of the Greco-Roman families? What did asceticism preserve and change?

In the Roman Empire the dominant social spheres were politics and kinship. These spheres regulated not only religion and economic relations, but also the structures and authorities pertaining to them. In the Greek world, an οἶκος comprised all the members of a household (wife, children, other blood relatives, servants, and slaves) who were under the authority of a head. The term could also refer to the actual house, the estate, or the inheritance. Οἰκία had a narrower meaning, initially referring strictly to the dwelling house or domestic establishment. Later on, it acquired the meaning of house or a family from which one descends. Οἰκονομία referred to the ensemble of activities which pertained to the management of households. In the Latin world, *familia* included all the possessions, sometimes even persons, put under the authority of a *pater familias* (wife, legitimate children, slaves, and *agnates* – those members related to the males, either from the same house, or through a common ancestor –, properties, and animals). It also designated the family estate, the family property, or the fortune. The *pater familias* was also the *dominus*. *Domus* designated the household (including husband, wife, children, slaves, and other persons living in the house). Its group was larger than

[7] A consistent amount of studies have been focusing on Ancient Greek, Roman, and Jewish families. In his article about constructing spiritual kinship in Late Antiquity, Michael Penn gave a selection of the most recent scholarly contributions: Keith R. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); S. J. D. Cohen, ed. *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*, Brown Judaic Studies 289 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Judith Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity*; Eva Marie Lassen, "The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 103–20; Dale Martin, "The Construction of the Ancient Family: Methodological Considerations," *Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996): 40–60; Beryl Rawson, ed. *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Richard P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). See Michael Penn, "Performing Family: Ritual Kissing and the Construction of Early Christian Kinship," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2002): 151-174.
One should add to this list the following contributions: Christophe Badel, Christian Settipani (ed.), *Les stratégies familiales dans l'Antiquité tardive: actes du colloque oranisé par le CNRS USR 710, L'année épigraphique, tenu à la Maison des sciences de l'homme les 5-7 février 2009* (Paris, 2012), the contribution of Kyle Harper, "Marriage and Family," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 667-714, and a workshop titled *La famille dans l'Antiquité tardive*, which aimed to study family patterns by comparing legislation with social practices (Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, Lyon, 2013-2014).

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familia, since it included also descendants through women.[8] Since the Classical period, *patria potestas* was an essential right of the eldest male member of a family. He used to exercise his power over all his legitimate offspring, no matter their age and status, even as far as their properties were concerned. The only situation in which this influence disappeared was at the death of the *pater familias* or in a situation of emancipation. Since mortality had a high rate, a significant number of adults, including women, were able to enjoy a sort of autonomy. Marriages *sine manu*, which allowed women to remain under the authority of their fathers, were frequent.[9] In these conditions, especially aristocratic women were able to own properties. Scholars have concluded that no less than 40% of the land in the Roman Empire belonged to women. Thus, such women exercised a visible influence in the public sphere, without taking part in the *cursus honorum* reserved to men. They could have the privilege of being donors of cities or even their representatives.[10]

In the Late Antique Roman Egypt, the testimonies about the aristocratic households assign them the charge for the health and welfare of its members. As a consequence, a household was also supposed to distribute its wealth to the descendant generations and to care for all its members, including children, elderly, ill, or disabled. The common interest of the household was put above personal interest. Thus, different generations worked together for the survival of the household, trying to overcome dangers which could have threatened its existence. Social networks between households also contributed to their continuity. Moreover, they "could balance needs and authority, while organizing housework, childcare, care for elderly, and financial assistance. [11]"

Significantly, in both Greek and Latin, the terms referring to family (οἶκος and *familia*) are related to the ones defining the residence. Moreover, they implied both an ensemble of relatives, properties, and possessions (including slaves) and a pattern for transmitting patrimony. In upper-class families, slaves were a normality.

A family' patrimony was an issue of concern when the marriage of a daughter came into question. The bride's dowry was mandatory for a marriage and the husband was allowed to use it during the marriage without taking it into his possession. Roman law protected women by disposing the return of their dowries at the death of their husbands or if they divorced. Testaments were another means of disposing of one's property. Besides, *agnates* were considered as potential inheritors in situations in which a property was disputed.[12]

[8] Halvor Moxnes, "What is a Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families," in *Constructing Early Christian Families. Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 19-21.
[9] Kyle Harper, "Marriage and Family," 672.
[10] Kate Cooper, "Closely Watched Households: Visibility, Exposure and Private Power in the Roman *Domus*," *Past and Present* 197 (2007): 6.
[11] Sabine Huebner, *The Family in Roman Egypt. A Comparative Approach to Intergenerational Solidarity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2013), 3-4.
[12] Kyle Harper, "Marriage and Family," 672.

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Marriage was the kernel of a Classical family, since the relations established between spouses and between parents and children were considered the most significant. Monogamy was normative, but the high level of mortality among children and women allowed for successive marriages. Roman law protected marriage and inheritance, including in its norms frequently met social practices.

Christianity preserved the idea of one marriage, adding to it the superiority of the unique marriage. The Christian teaching did not bring significant changes to the old strategies for marriage, which targeted the formation of family networks for ensuring an optimal transfer of properties between generations.[13] In this way, "the Church ultimately became the principal carrier of the Greco-Roman tradition of the family.[14]" Rather than deconstructing the Ancient values ascribed to marriage, the Church preserved the idea of harmony within marriage and emphasized a position against divorce or remarriage.[15]

In the fourth century, the Church responded not so much to Ancient social values, but rather to the new social tendencies of the high aristocracy. Preachers, including John Chrysostom, opposed tendencies of aristocratic men willing to ensure their own social ascension through ambitious marriage contracted exclusively for social alliances.[16]

Their positions are justified with scriptural references to family, family connections, and their meaning, which abound in the New Testament. "Family" used in a Christian context gained a new sense of a group of people joined by the same faith. Christ states that His purpose is to "set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law[17]" (Mathew 10:35), since earthly relations should be re-evaluated: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.[18]" (Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26). Just as Moses was entrusted with the "house" of Israel, Christ was entrusted with the new, Christian family ("οἶκος" – Hebrews 3:6; Hebrews 10:21, 1 Peter 4:17), whose head is God the Father (Hebrews 3:1-3). Its members enter the family of God through "adoption" ("υἱοθεσία" – Romans 8:15,23; 9:4, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5)[19] and their founders "travail" and "give birth" to them in spirit, through the Gospel ("I gave birth to you through the Gospel[20]"– 1 Corinthian 4:15, "My children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be

[13] Ibid., 667-668.
[14] Ibid., 668.
[15] Ibid., 671.
[16] Ibid.
[17] "ἦλθον γὰρ διχάσαι ἄνθρωπον κατὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ θυγατέρα κατὰ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτῆς καὶ νύμφην κατὰ τῆς πενθερᾶς αὐτῆς."
[18] "Ὁ φιλῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος."
[19] See Richard N. Longenecker, "The Metaphor of Adoption in Paul's Letters," *The Covenant Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2014): 71-78. As the author of the article observed, Paul used a term with strong connections to the social realities of the Greco-Roman world, without mirroring a Jewish practice.
[20] "διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα."

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formed in you[21]" – Galatians 4:19, "my child, to whom I gave birth in my imprisonment[22]" Philemon 1:10). Thus, they are all "siblings" (Hebrews 2:11-18) and the "brethren" (Matthew 12:48-49, Mark 3:34, Luke 8:21, John 20:17) of Christ, the First-Born ("in order that He might be the first-born among many brethren[23]" – Romans 8:29). Besides, the founders of new Christian communities are called "fathers" while the members of these communities are both "children" (1 Corinthians 4:14, 2 Corinthians 6:13, 1 John 2:1, 12-13, 18, Galatians 4:19) and "brethren" (Acts 1:14-16, Romans 7:1-4, 1 Corinthians 2:1, etc).

To what extent did monastic households imitate the traditional household's way of function and how did they appropriate its 'rules'? To what extent did they assume the Biblical family connections? In other words, did they continue the traditional pattern of the Greco-Roman household? Or was it rather the opposite, in the sense that monastic households had a different model?

IV. 2. The First "Family Double Monastery" in Egypt: Tabennesi

According to the first *vitae* of the Pachomian dossier, around 323, Pachomius settled the "deserted village" Tabennesi. Soon, the place was filled in not only with followers from the surrounding villages, but also with people living farther away. In 324, he already had a significant number of companions, whom he organized in one community (*koinonia*). Even though written rules concerning asceticism practiced in common did not exist, this group of ascetics used a certain set of norms which, according to Pachomius' anonymous biographers, were circulating orally. Pachomius had the leading role in both spiritual and practical aspects of the community. According to some of the *lives*, a critical moment for its evolution was the arrival to Tabennesi of Pachomius' elder brother, John. After becoming a monk, John lived for a while with his brother. He and Pachomius had moments of tension, which, as the Bohairic *vita* mentions, they were able to overcome only once they renounced their fleshly bonds: "The Lord knows, my brother, that every day I used to say that I am your elder by the flesh, that was why every day I would call you my brother. From this day forward I would call you my father, because of your firm faith in the Lord. [24]" The *vita* suggests that John's option of denying his status as elder brother and of elevating Pachomius to the one of father reversed the expected hierarchy among them. The dissensions between Pachomius and John were not singular.

[21] "τέκνα μου, οὓς πάλιν ὠδίνω μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῇ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν."
[22] "περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς."
[23] "εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς."
[24] "The Bohairic Life of Saint Pachomius," 20, in *Pachomian Koinonia,* vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 43. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation SBo.
"The First Sahidic Life," from which, however, only a few fragments survived, records that, soon after the brothers' reconciliation, John died. "The First Sahidic Life of Saint Pachomius," 9, in *Pachomian Koinonia,* vol. 1, 430. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation S1.

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Thus, even though similar ideas inspired relatives to turn to asceticism simultaneously, they were able to live in harmony after their conversion. Moreover,

> … as far as family relations were concerned, the ascetic had to be thought of (and had to think of himself) as a man now dead. … The same principle was supposed to govern relationships even with those members of one's family who had also embraced a life of asceticism. … The best that one could hope for was that family relations would be resumed in heaven …Relatives seem to have realized that they could hope for little from members of their family who had left them for the life in the monastery or cell, even though they did not always appreciate their motives.[25]

Another episode of Pachomius' life exemplifies more clearly the last idea of Rousseau's article. In 333, his sister, Mary, came to Tabennesi willing to visit him. Despite her insistence, Pachomius did not allow her to enter the gate of his retreat, but advised her, through the gate-keeper, to reflect and decide whether she also wanted to become an ascetic. Once Mary chose to renounce the world, Pachomius sent "brothers" to build her a monastery with a small oratory, not far away from his own. Shortly after the construction was started, other women who wanted to share the ascetic vocation joined Mary. Pachomius appointed an old man, *Apa* Peter, to supervise the women, attached the nunnery to his own community of ascetic men, and Mary became the abbess of the nuns. After more ascetic women joined Mary, Pachomius put into writing a set of rules which were already circulating among the monks and sent it to the nuns.[26]

Through the emphasis of Pachomius' refusal to meet his fleshly sister, the two *vitae* suggest to their audiences that, since his first ascetic retreat, Pachomius re-evaluated his own kin relationships. His renunciation of the world is built in several stages. The first step involved a disposal of his wealth and his seclusion. In a more advanced stage, as an experienced ascetic, he went beyond abandoning his physical belongings. By refusing to see Mary, Pachomius renounced his earthly kinships with her in order to build a new type of family, based on a new set of spiritual relations. Thus, *Apa* Peter became the father of the community of sisters, Mary became its mother, and, as the *vitae* suggest, since the nunnery was attached to the community of monks supervised by Pachomius himself, the monks and nuns became spiritually related. In this example, although the sources maintain the family terminology, they suggest that neither the former status of the ascetics, nor the initial relations between them were preserved.

Building a new kind of spiritual generation which replaces a fleshly family, following Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 4:10, was an idea supported even in the earliest sources of the Pachomian *dossier*. In one of the surviving fragments of the first Sahidic *Life* of Pachomius, the author stresses:

[25] Philip Rousseau, "Blood-Relationships," 136.
[26] SBo 27, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 49-50.
"The First Greek Life of Pachomius," 32, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 318-319. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation G1.

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"we might know with certainty that a man who begets another in the work of God is his father after God, in this age and in the age to come.[27]" Moreover, the *Life* calls Pachomius the "father" of the entire *koinonia* due to the spiritual instructions which he offers to ascetics.

> Our father Pachomius deserves to be called father <because our Father> who is in heaven dwells in him, as the Apostle confesses from his own mouth when he says *It is not I who live, it is Christ who lives in me*. This is why through the divine goodness which was in him he encourages whoever wishes to obey him saying *Be imitators of me and I am of Christ*. Therefore, all who imitate the Apostles through their way of life deserve to be called fathers because of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them.[28]

According to the *Bohairic Life*, Pachomius did not urge all the rest of the ascetics to deny their fleshly bonds completely. He allowed visits from the members of his ascetic settlement "who had not yet attained perfection" to the relatives in flesh from the women's community under the supervision of two brothers and two sisters (among whom were *Apa* Peter and the abbess Mary).[29] This detail suggests that, in the beginning of one's ascetic development, the concern for earthly relatives was still acceptable. However, once one progressed spiritually, this preoccupation had to be abandoned. The *First Greek Life of Pachomius* adds a detail about the spiritual disposition of the 'beginner ascetics:' "in the presence of another sister capable in the Lord he would visit his relative with great discretion, forgetting at the same time their kinship according to the flesh.[30]"

The *Bohairic Life* mentions that even non-ascetics were aware of this disposal. The mother of Theodore, one of Pachomius' disciples, obtained a letter from the Bishop of Sne which allowed her and her other son, Paphnouti, to visit Theodore.[31] In spite of the bishop's agreement, Theodore refused the visit. He justified his answer through the obedience to both commandments which Christ gave to those seeking to follow God: that of loving Him more than one's relatives ("He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me[32]" – Matthew 10:37), and that of denying even one's relatives for the sake of becoming Christ's disciple ("If any one comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.[33]" – Luke 14:26). "God forbid that I should sin against Him Who created me, because of love for parents

[27] S1, 2, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 426.
[28] S1, 3, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 426-427.
[29] Moreover, a fragment of the first Sahidic Life mentions that his sister's son (most probably, Mary's, since there is no evidence about another sister of Pachomius) lived in the *koinonia* as (semi-)anchorite, under Pachomius' supervision. Since his deeds were not in accord with the ascetic life-style, Pachomius decided to expel him. See S1, 24, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1: 438-439. The episode is only mentioned in this *vita*.
[30] G1, 32, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 319.
[31] The First Greek Life records this visit differently. According to it, Theodore's mother came alone to the monastery, while Paphnouti arrived later. However, it agrees with the Bohairic Life concerning the Theodore's austerity. "Theodore refused to treat him as a brother, for he had already put off the old man." G1, 65, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 342.
[32] "Ὁ φιλῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος: καὶ ὁ φιλῶν υἱὸν ἢ θυγατέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος."
[33] "Εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρός με καὶ οὐ μισεῖ τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ τέκνα καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τὰς ἀδελφάς, ἔτι τε καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἑαυτοῦ, οὐ δύναται εἶναί μου μαθητής."

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according to the flesh, [34]" confesses Theodore, adding, "I have no mother, not anything of the world, for it passes.[35]" The life stresses that Theodore refused even to talk to his brother, who wished to become a monk. Later, at Pachomius' order, Paphnouti was finally accepted in the monastery, but, following the example of Theodore, he abandoned his mother. [36] The author of the *Bohairic Life* adds that monks seeking to visit their parents were persuaded against this wish.[37] The hagiographers stress that a monk reached his perfect spirituality only when he acquired the ability to efface his earthly ties and to regard his relatives as simple members of the Church: "For *he who loves his father or his mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.* This is perfection … But if someone meets his relatives not as his relatives, but as *members of Christ* Whom he loves as He loves all the faithful, he does not sin. For *the flesh is of no avail*.[38]"

Between 329 and 340, Pachomius founded other monasteries and incorporated them in a "monastic federation." Soon, other monasteries joined the *koinonia*.[39] The *Lives* of Pachomius do not record any new interaction between Theodore and Paphnouti, but refer to their settlement in different monasteries – however, not far from each other, this detail allowing the audience of the *vitae* to interpret their lack of contacts as an assumed choice.[40]

The previous examples show that the "monastic family" of Pachomius took a distance from the traditional organization of a household. Although its kernel was the attempt of Pachomius' earthly sister to live her monastic life in her brother's proximity, as the community evolved, the memory of its family roots was loosened. Sources do not give further indications about contacts between Pachomius and his sister. Besides, it might be assumed that, once Pachomius included the monastery in Tabennesi into his *koinonia* and he subsequently moved to Phbew, appointing a successor for the two ascetic groups in Tabennesi, the contacts between him and his sisters were at most scarce. One of the reasons for not imitating the traditional household in his monastic arrangement was Pachomius' appurtenance to a middle social background.

[34] SBo 37, in *Pachomian Koinonia,* vol. 1, 61.
[35] G1, 36, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 323.
[36] SBo, 38, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 62.
[37] Ibid., 63, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 82-84.
G1, 68, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 343-344.
[38] Ibid., 36, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 323.
In this light, one should read the episode of the foundation of Thbêou. After leaving his parents' house, Petronius founded the monastery on their land and submitted it to Pachomius' authority. After this moment, he convinced his earthly siblings to become ascetics, together with their households.
See SBo, 57, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 77. G1, 80, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 352.
[39] Phbôou, Tsê, Scmin, Tsmîne, Phnoum, Schenesêt, Thmouschons, and Thbêou, see: SBo 49-58, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 71-79. The emergence of the *koinonia* was not always seen in scholarship as a 'successful attempt.' Brent James Schmidt considers that "it seems that Pachomius' first community ultimately failed." See Brent James Schmidt, *Utopian Communities of the Ancient World*, 119.
[40] G1, 78, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 351.
SBo, 70-71, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 92-93.

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Preserving the biblical terminology of family connections, relatives in flesh de-constructed their earthly kinship and built instead new, spiritual ties. In the New Testament, the spiritual guide of the believers is called "father," since he engenders offspring in Christ. The abbots of each house from Tabennesi (and the rest of the *koinonia*) were addressed with the terms "father" and "*hegoumen*," just as Pachomius himself. [41] The term "father" had a variety of senses according to the ascetic context in which it was used. "Most frequently, it expresses the profound respect, the humility and the obedience that a son must testify to his father … The filial respect is also expressed through the honorific titles of *apa* and *abba*. [42]"

One has to underline that in his *vitae*, all written after Pachomius' death, he is always remembered as "our holy Father" not only by his immediate successors, Theodore and Horsiesios, but also by the other ascetics. This formula is striking, since, according to the *Lives*, he refused to be ordained as a priest. Consequently, the formula refers to Pachomius' foundation of the *koinonia*, mirroring the titles which the New Testament assigns to the Apostles in relation to the communities which they used to "engender" or direct (for instance, Paul and John).

IV. 3. The "Monastic Household" of Annisa

In the 340s and the 350s, the pious household of widow Emmelia and her nine children in Annisa had already started a multistage evolution. Its catalyzer was the elder child, Macrina, whose portrait her brother, Gregory of Nyssa, gradually paints in three writings: his letter 19, in which he delicately sketches her essential traits, the *vita* which he dedicated to her, in which he adds vivid colors to the sketch, and the dialogue *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, in which he applies the last brushstrokes to the portrait.

The mirror image of Annisa's gradual transformation from a pious aristocratic household to a family double monastery is created in the monastic rules of Basil the Great, another sibling of Macrina. The successive recensions of the *Asketikon*, incorporating the *Long* and the *Short Responses*, offer a glimpse of the first changes that occurred in the community.

Before moving to Annisa, while she was still living with her family in Neocaesarea, Macrina, then aged twelve, was engaged to a promising young man. After her fiancé suddenly died around 344, she decided not to get married, but instead to dedicate her life to philosophy: "So when the decision which had been made for her was cut off by the young man's death, she designated her father's decision a marriage, as if what had been decided upon had already taken place, and she resolved from then on to remain by herself.[43]" According to Gregory, Macrina put herself under the guidance of her

[41] Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)* (Warsaw: Warsaw University, 2009), 336.
[42] Ibid., 327.
[43] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 6.1, in *Macrina the Younger*, 115.

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mother, humbled herself by taking over bread baking, a task generally reserved to slaves, and "when she had lent her hands to the mystic services (ταῖς μυστικαῖς ὑπερεσίας τὰς χεῖρας ἑαυτῆς ἔχρησε) – deeming that the zeal for this matter befitted the purpose of her life – from what was left over she furnished food for her mother by her own labours.[44]" This phrase of Gregory has been recorded differently in manuscripts. While most of the manuscript witnesses have the verbal form ἔχρησε, a significant number of others contain the form ἔχρισε, which suggests that Macrina "anointed her hands." In Macrina's period, "the mystic services" were the liturgical rites. Thus, this phrase can be interpreted in three possible ways. First, and least likely, it could imply that Macrina became a deaconess. Such an interpretation could be easily contradicted due to the laws which allowed this office to be assigned only to women older than sixty. Exceptions to this rule could have existed, but in such a case Gregory would have called Macrina straightly a deaconess, in the same way as he calls Lampadion in further passage of the *vita*. Second, Macrina could have "anointed" her hands when receiving the Holy Communion with them. This interpretation is plausible, since Basil's letters attest that this practice was allowed to ascetic men and women alike when no priest was present.[45] Third, the text could refer to Macrina's practice of baking the bread for the Liturgy and continuing to bake bread for her mother with the remaining dough. In any case, all the possible interpretations imply that Macrina had already become an ascetic.

Around 345, after Macrina's father, the Elder Basil, died, Emmelia transferred all her household from Neocaesarea to Annisa. This event marked a new transformation in Macrina's life. Not only did she deepen her ascetic practices, but she also helped her mother to raise her younger siblings.[46]

When one of her brothers, Naucratius, also decided to adopt an ascetic life-style, he and one of his servants settled on the other side of the hill on their family estate, in a remote shelter.[47] Macrina's *life* continues the account with a significant event: she persuades Emmelia to free all their slaves and live a common ascetic life together. Gregory of Nyssa suggests that, at this moment, the household

[44] Ibid., 7.3, in *Macrina the Younger,* 116-117.

[45] Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 93. To the Patrician Kaisaria*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (London: Heinemann, 1926), 144-147: "And also to take communion every day, that is to say, to partake of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, is good and beneficial … On the question of a person being compelled, in times of persecution when no priest or ministrant is present, to take communion with his own hand, it is superfluous to point out that this is in no wise sinful, since long custom has sanctioned this practice from the very force of circumstances. For all who live the monastic life in the solitudes, where there is no priest, keep the communion at home and partake of it from their own hands. At Alexandria also and in Egypt, each person, even those belonging to the laity, as a rule keeps the communion in his own home, and partakes of it with his own hands when he so wishes."
"Καὶ τὸ κοινωνεῖν δὲ καθ᾽ ἑκάστην ἡμέραν, καὶ μεταλαμβάνειν τοῦ ἁγίου σώματος καὶ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καλὸν καὶ ἐπωφελές … Τὸ δὲ ἐν τοῖς τοῦ διωγμοῦ καιροῖς ἀναγκάζεσθαί τινα, μὴ παρόντος ἱερέως ἢ λειτουργοῦ, τὴν κοινωνίαν λαμβάνειν τῇ ἰδίᾳ χειρί, μηδαμῶς εἶναι βαρὺ περιττόν ἐστιν ἀποδεικνύναι, διὰ τὸ καὶ1 τὴν μακρὰν συνήθειαν τοῦτο δι᾽ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων πιστώσασθαι. πάντες γὰρ οἱ κατὰ τὰς ἐρήμους μονάζοντες, ἔνθα μὴ ἔστιν ἱερεύς, κοινωνίαν οἴκοι κατέχοντες ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν μεταλαμβάνουσιν. ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ δὲ καὶ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἕκαστος καὶ τῶν ἐν λαῷ τελούντων ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον ἔχει κοινωνίαν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὅτε βούλεται μεταλαμβάνει δι᾽ ἑαυτοῦ."

[46] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 7.4, in *Macrina the Younger,* 117.

[47] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 10-11, in ibid., 118-120.

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in Annisa was already transformed into a convent, housing nuns secluded from monks.[48] Already now, Macrina and Emmelia regarded themselves as "sisters and equals.[49]"

At the end of 357, following Naucratius sudden death, Basil came to Annisa. The *life* mentions that Macrina used this opportunity in order to convince Basil to exchange his worldly career with the philosophical life, understood as monasticism. Thus, Basil decided to the remain and to dwell in Naucratius' retreat.[50] Macrina is thus, a teacher of philosophy not only for her mother, but also for Basil. At the same time, the community continued its evolution. After slavery was abolished and the personal material possessions were renounced, the ascetic women in Annisa, all "sisters," organized their lives for the "imitation of the angelic life" ("πρὸς μίμησιν τῆς τῶν ἀγγέλων διαγωγῆς ἐρρυθμίζετο.[51]")

When Peter, the youngest sibling of the family, who had been living together with Emmelia and Macrina, acknowledging them as "mother and sister,[52]" was "old enough"[53] to decide for pursuing Macrina's philosophical path (that is, around 362), the monastery had already reached another stage in its evolution: it was accommodating a choir of nuns ("ὁ δὲ ἐν γυναιξὶ τῆς παρθενίας χορός[54]"), another one of monks ("τό τε σύνταγμα τῶν ἀνδρῶν"), and children in a separate one. The ascetics redefined, once more, their relation: "She [Macrina] became all things to the lad [Peter] – father, teacher, guardian, mother, counselor of every good.[55]"

Scholars have debated whether, due to the good relations with Eustathius of Sebasteia, Macrina, Emmelia, Peter, and Basil imitated the type of ascetic settlement which he was inspiring in Cappadocia.[56] In the *Asketikon* of Basil, scholars identified subtle testimonies for the differences between the organization of the community in Annisa and the ones following Eusthatius.[57] Thus, the *Small Asketikon* might mirror the ascetic life practiced in Annisa under the supervision of Macrina, which Gregory of Nyssa describes in details in Macrina's *life*: a well-ordered *brotherhood* (ἀδελφότης) of ascetics, with men, women, and children living in *ordered* separate houses. Basil differentiated among the chaotic lifestyles which he ascribed to the Eusthatian ascetics and the segregation of men and women within the *adelphotes*, which he clearly advised for in his rules.[58]

[48] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 9.1, in ibid., 118.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 8, in ibid., 117-118.
[51] Grégoire de Nysse, *La vie de Sainte Macrine*, 11, ed. and trans. Pierre Maraval (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 176.
[52] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 14.5, in *Macrina the Younger*, 123.
[53] Anna Silvas states that this moment occurred when Peter was 17 years old. See Gregory of Nyssa, *The Letters*, ed. and trans. Anna M. Silvas (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 10.
[54] Grégoire de Nysse, *La vie de Sainte Macrine*, 16, trans. Pierre Maraval, 194.
[55] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 14.2, in *Macrina the Younger*, 122.
[56] *Pace* Susanna Elm, *'Virgins of God:' the Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 210. Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 32.
[57] Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 41-43.
[58] SR 220. All the references to the *Shorter* (SR) and the *Longer Responses* (LR) of Basil belong to *The Asketikon of St. Basil the Great*, trans. Anna M. Silvas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

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An earthquake and a famine had significant consequences in the evolution of Annisa. The monastery accommodated orphans, provided the poor with food, and Basil wrote four homilies associated to this calamity.[59] Around 370, Basil ordained Peter as a priest over the monks in Annisa and, according to Gregory's *vita*, Macrina was the leader (καθηγούμενη[60]) of the nuns.

The entire community in Annisa is described in its later years as the spiritual offspring of Macrina's virtues: "Gathered around her was a choir of virgins whom she had brought forth by her spiritual labour-pains and guided towards perfection through her consummate care, while she herself imitated the life of angels in a human body.[61]"

Gregory of Nyssa's testimonies describe a gradual passage of Annisa from a pious aristocratic household towards an ascetic community as determinant for changes of relationships among its members. Gregory suggests an evolution of Macrina's status. When she and her mother decided to become ascetics, Macrina was known as the eldest of Emmelia's ten children. Remaining a widow, Emmelia presided over the entire household and was in charge of the direct care for the education of all her children, including Macrina. As he narrates[62] the release of the family's slaves and the sudden death of Naucratius, Gregory portrays Macrina as Emmelia's teacher and guide. Besides, since when the slaves are released, she and Emmelia became "sisters." For Peter, Macrina became both a "father" and a "mother." The other ascetics from Annisa (either former slaves, orphans, or widows who joined the community later) regarded Macrina as their spiritual mother. Gregory testifies that, at Macrina's funerals, the choir of nuns mourned the departure of their "mother and nurse.[63]"

In Annisa, ascetics did not reject their biological ties. The transformation of Emmelia's and Macrina's household led to

> an enrichment through the spiritualization of the biological bonds as all family members work together towards salvation .... Gregory, ... places repeated positive emphasis on Macrina's sustained biological relationship with their mother, with their brother Basil, and with himself, and he does so in clearly physical terms.[64]

However, I would argue that Macrina's biography stresses a re-evaluation and restructure of the biological ties. Gregory recounts an abolishment of the generational gap between Macrina and Emmelia. Emmelia was no more the *mater familias*, but instead Macrina became perceived as the

[59] For their translations and an analysis, see: Anna M. Silvas, "The Emergence of Basil's Social Doctrine: A Chronological Enquiry," in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 5, *Poverty and Riches*, eds. Geoffrey D. Dunn, David Luckensmayer, Lawrence Cross (Brisbane: Australian Catholic University, 2009), 133-176.
[60] Grégoire de Nysse, *La vie de Sainte Macrine*, 16, trans. Pierre Maraval, 194.
[61] Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter* 19.7, in *Macrina the Younger*, 87-88.
[62] As it was mentioned in the second chapter, the *Life of Macrina* was written more than three years after Macrina's death, which means more than 25 years after Naucratius' death.
[63] "μητέρα καὶ τροφόν ἀνακαλοῦσαι." Grégoire de Nysse, *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, 26.26, 223.
[64] Rebecca Krawiec, "'From the Womb of the Church'," 296-297

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mother of her siblings, and, I would argue, also as the 'mother of her mother.' Moreover, she was also acknowledged as "teacher" and guide of her influential brothers, Basil, Gregory, and Peter.

IV. 4. Transferring the Roman "Monastic Household" to the Holy Land: Paula and Jerome

In the 370s, while the religious household in Annisa was making its last steps towards becoming an ordered ascetic community, on the Aventine Hill in Rome, a circle of pious noble women, most of them widows, started their ascetic training under the influence and leadership of Marcella. Marcella initiated in asceticism Paula, a well-known and influential noble-women, wife of Toxotius.[65] In 379, when her husband died, Paula firmly chose asceticism instead of a second marriage, in spite of the opposition from her family. From 380, she transformed her house into a "domestic church" (*domestica … ecclesia*),[66] and her daughters, Blesilla and Eustochium, also followed the ascetic path.

In 382, Jerome arrived in Rome, met Paula through the mediation of Marcella, and immediately became her spiritual father. Their relationship matured into a deep friendship, traced in their assiduous correspondence and in Jerome's dedications of biblical translations sent to her until her death. Paula's household became an ascetic community when "a choir of chastity" joined her dwelling.[67] Her relatives tried to convince her not to lavish her fortune on the Church in general and on Jerome in particular. Consequently, they put the death of Blesilla on Jerome's shoulders because of a too harsh self-mortification to which she subjected her body, on Jerome's advice. In 384, Pope Damasus, Jerome's protector, died, and the new pope, Siricius, opposed the monks present in Rome at that time. In these conditions and being accused of illicit relations with his female disciples, Jerome was forced to leave Rome in August 385. After travelling to Cyprus and Antioch, he went to Jerusalem. In the meanwhile, Paula and Eustochium went on a pilgrimage to Egypt and to the Holy Land, leaving in Rome the youngest son of Paula, Toxotius, a married daughter, Paulina, and an engaged daughter, Rufina. According to Jerome, at her departure Paula redefined her family ties. For her earthly family, left behind, "no [mother] has ever loved her children so.[68]" She started her trip to the Holy Land "disinheriting herself on earth so that she might find an inheritance in heaven.[69]" Although her earthly relatives, including Toxotius and Rufina, tried to prevent her from leaving, "she turned her tearless eyes to heaven, transcending the affection for her children with the affection for God. She knew herself no more as a mother, that she might prove herself a servant of Christ.[70]" Paula's renunciation

[65] Paula was called "discipula" and Marcella was called "magistra" in Letter 127.5; see Patrick Laurence, *Jérôme et le nouveau modèle féminin. La conversion à la « vie parfaite »* (Paris: Institut d'études Augustiniennes, 1997), 24.
[66] Jérôme, *Lettre 30. À Paula*, 4, ed. and trans. Jérôme Labourt (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961), 32-33.
[67] Jérôme, *Lettre 31. À Eustochium,* 14, 35-37.
[68] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula*, 6, 192: "nulla sic amauit filios."
[69] Ibid.: "exheredans se in terra, ut hereditatem inueniret in caelo."
[70] Ibid.: "siccos oculos tendebat ad caelum, pietatem in filios pietate in Deum superans. Nesciebat matrem, ut Christi probaret ancillam."

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of motherhood must have had a strong impact on Jerome's audience, familiar with the martyrial acts. In this particular episode, Paula, whom Jerome compares to a martyr, reminded of Perpetua, Felicity, and Agathonice, for whom total consecration to God, through martyrdom, was above maternity.[71]

After travelling through Palestine and Egypt Paula and Eustochium arrived to Bethlehem in 386. Here, Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem allowed them to found a monastery close to the Church of the Nativity. The monastery soon comprised three buildings for the women's cells and one for the men's cells. Jerome, with his brother, Paulinianus, and Paula met again there and looked for other people willing to share the ascetic vocation. They found disciples from diverse social conditions, some of them not even baptized. Families even entrusted their children to the monastery. In three years, Paula used all her fortune for the buildings of the monastery.[72] Toxotius, Paula's son left in Rome, married Laeta and had a daughter, the younger Paula, who was consecrated to asceticism in her childhood and eventually brought to Bethlehem later.

In 404 the elder Paula died and Jerome translated a Greek version of the *Rules of Pachomius* for Eustochium, in order to be used in the community of Bethlehem, whose abbess she became. It is significant to note that he kept the meanings of the words "abba" and "*hegoumen*," calling the superior of the monastery "*pater*" or "*princeps*.[73]"

The only sources testifying about both relations Paula-Eustochium and Jerome-Paulinianus come from the pen of Jerome. Unlike the example of Macrina and Emmelia, who reversed their secular kinship, Paula and Eustochium were always remembered in Jerome's writings with both their fleshly and spiritual ties. In the epitaph of Paula, Jerome starts with a detail which might seem contradictory to an ascetic's aim of abandoning any connection with a non-Christian past. Jerome stressed Paula's ancestral ties to the Cornelii Scipiones and the Gracchi,[74] making his audience remember that she belonged to one of the most prestigious families of Rome. However, this remembrance has a broader aim in Jerome's agenda. By stressing that his friend was initially a prominent Roman matron with illustrious ancestors, he actually highlighted her radical decision of breaking the fundamental Roman law of "family continuity.[75]" In addition, Jerome praised Paula for having left her son, Toxotius, in Rome, without ever returning to him, even during his illness. Through this fact, Jerome remarked Paula's decision of submitting her fleshly kinship to Christ.

[71] *The Passions of Perpetua and Felicity* 6.15, ed. and trans. Thomas J. Heffernan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 109, 117.
"The Martyrdom of Carpus, Papylus, and Agathonice," in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Herbert Musurillo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 28.
[72] Jerome, *Epitaph of Paula*, 18.
[73] For a discussion about Jerome's translations of the Pachomian writings see Adalbert de Vogüé, "Les appellations de la cellule dans les écrits Pachômiens traduits par Saint Jérôme," *Studia Monastica* 37, no. 2 (1995): 241.
[74] Jerome, *Epitaph of Paula*, 1.
[75] Jo Ann McNamara, "Cornelia's Daughters: Paula and Eustochium," *Women's Studies* 11 (1984), 9-27.

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At the same time, he praised Eustochium for being Paula's only child desiring to follow her when she departed from Rome.[76] Eustochium was, thus, Paula's daughter not only in flesh, but also in spirit. Why does Jerome keep suggesting the lineage of Eustochium from Paula? Jerome refers to Christ as Eustochium's "Husband.[77]" Therefore, I agree that, through Eustochium's choice of becoming an ascetic, and thus a 'bride of Christ,' Paula received her greatest honor as a mother: she became "the mother-in-law of God.[78]"

In a letter addressed to Pammachius, Paulina's husband, Jerome praised five members of Paula's and Eustochium's fleshly family, stressing that the two of them were superior in virtues.[79] In the other letters in which he referred to them, Jerome addressed Paula and Eustochium without differentiating them in rank. Moreover, he stressed a transformation of the relation between Pammachius and Paula. In the prologue to the commentary on the book of Hosea, Jerome wrote: "about twenty-two years ago at the request of Paula, your holy and venerable mother-in-law, or rather your mother — that name is of the flesh, this of the spirit — who always burned with love of monasteries and scriptures.[80]"

In the *Epitaph* of Paula, Jerome presented a gradual development of the monastery in Bethlehem. Like Emmelia, Paula released her slaves, converting her community to an 'ascetic family:' "She left all her family poor and herself poorer. It is no wonder that she did this with relatives and household, which she changed from servants and handmaids to brothers and sisters.[81]" Unlike Gregory of Nyssa's account, Jerome used a different rhetoric in his writings about Paula and Eustochium. Paula and Eustochium never seem to completely efface their relation. Paula remained Eustochium's earthly mother, but she added to this attribute the spiritual dimension. However, towards her children who did not engage in the monastic life, "She knew herself no more as a mother, that she might approve herself a handmaid of Christ.[82]"

[76] Jerome, *Epitaph of Paula*, 19, 72-74.
[77] Jérome, *Lettre 22*.
[78] Jo Ann McNamara, "Cornelia's Daughters," 9-27.
Besides, the glorifications of a mother who encourages her offspring to proceed towards perfection echoes a current motif present in the martyrial accounts (e. g. "The Letters of the Churches in Lyons and Vienne," 55, in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*: 62-85; "Martyrdom of Marian and James," 13.1l, in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*: 194-213; "Martyrdom of Montanus and Lucius," 16.4, in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 214-239). At its turn, this motif has biblical roots in the story of the mother of the seven Maccabees brothers (see 2 Maccabees 7:20-23).
[79] Jérome, *Lettre 66*.
[80] Hieronymus, *Commentarii in prophetas minores*, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL, 76, 1-158 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969).
"unde ante annos circiter uiginti duos, cum rogatu sanctae et uenerabilis socrus, immo matris tuae paulae (illud enim nomen carnis, hoc spiritus est, quae monasteriorum et scripturarum semper amore flagrauit)."
At Paulina's death in 395, Pammachius became a monk. Jerome, writing him almost two years later, praises him as the offspring of Paulina: "And among them all my Pammachius is the wisest, the mightiest, and the noblest; great among the great, a leader among leaders, he is the commander in chief of all monks. He and others like him are the offspring which Paulina desired to have in her life time and which she has given us in her death. Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child; Isaiah 54:1 for in a moment you have brought forth as many sons as there are poor men in Rome." See Jérome, *Lettre* 66.4.
[81] Jerome, *Epitaph of Paula*, 2, 44.
[82] Ibid., 6, 48.

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IV. 5. 'Monastic Spouses'

"Adopting the angelic and heavenly spirit"[83]

The ascetic families discussed above were not the only ones devoted to asceticism. By the fourth century, a significant number of sources from both pagan and Christian environments presented the stories of spouses who either renounced their matrimonial relations right on the marriage day, or later on. In the case of the Christian Apocrypha, the merits for this redemptive decision is ascribed to the wife. The *Acts of Thomas*, an early-third century account, present the only-daughter of the king of India and her husband renouncing their marriage on the night following the ceremony.[84]

In the pagan *milieux*, one can find accounts of philosophers who, in their quest for a life devoted to the contemplation of the One, could also find in marriage a burden. In the letter to his wife, Marcella, Porphyry, who left on a long journey, consoles her and urges her to live the philosophic life detached from the body and its passions. This implies commitment to an ascetic existence, return to her inner-self, and preserving a pure body, unconstrained by the bonds of marriage.[85]

After Constantine's Edict of Milan, the fourth-century Roman world witnessed a flourishing "domestic ascetic movement." Following their baptism, entire families converted their members to Christianity, thus reorienting the traditional Greco-Roman values directed towards the city. Philanthropy, part of the Hellenistic ethos, was given a new target. In the Christian understanding, the imitation of God's love for mankind should transcend the borders set by ethnicity and gender (according to Galatians 3:28).[86] This cultural shift was supported by the cultivation of Scriptures. Thus, in both East and West, Christianity became part of the identity of entire families. Moreover, aristocratic families, often under the leadership of women, took a step forward. In times of persecutions, they opposed the authorities and went even further, to martyrdom; after the persecutions ceased, some of them became devoted to charity, released their slaves, and retreated from cities; some other families proceeded to a following step: asceticism.[87]

Church writers at the end of the fourth century would pass to spouses a different view of the marriage. A new way of martyrdom was renunciation of the marriage bonds, although this would not

[83] *La vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 1.6, trans. Denys Gorce (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf: 1962), 136-37: "χρήσωνται τῷ ἀγγελικῷ καὶ οὐρανίῳ φρονήματι."
[84] *The Acts of Thomas*, 1.12-15, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. A.F.J. Klijn (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 51-61.
[85] Porphyre, *Vie de Pythagore. Lettre à Marcella*, ed. and trans. Edouard des Places (Paris: Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1982).
[86] Demetrios J. Constantelos, "The Hellenic Background and Nature of Patristic Philanthropy in the Early Byzantine Era," in Susan R. Holman (ed.), *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 199-200.
[87] Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon of Saint Basil the Great*, 75-78.

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result in their complete nullification.[88] Thus, the spouses' devotion to chastity, either immediately, after the wedding ceremony, or after begetting children, became popular in the fourth and in the fifth century.[89]

This subchapter deals with accounts about couples who, once converted to Christianity, adopted παρθενία. It is significant to underline that some of these couples continued to live together, thus triggering a series of consequences both for their 'natural' families and for the society. One of them was, according to the written testimonies, a gradual transformation of their households into monastic establishments, similar to the process which Gregory of Nyssa describes for the monastic family of Annisa.

One of the earliest examples of 'monastic spouses' is the couple formed by Ammon (ca. 240-347) and his wife, whose name is not known. The story is told by several sources, of which the anonymous *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (written in ca. 397) is the earliest. According to it, the two spouses agreed not to consummate their marriage, but instead to live in chastity. They continued to live in the same house until the death of Ammon's parents, when Ammon left to the desert, where he founded the monastic establishments of Nitria, while his wife remained in the house, where she formed a cenobitic dwelling for ascetic women:

> The first monastic dwellings in Nitria are attributed to a certain Ammon, whose soul the blessed Antony saw carried up out of the body to heaven, according to the book which describes Antony's life. This Ammon was born of wealthy and generous parents, who arranged a marriage for him even though he did not want it. He was unable to defy his parent's will and accepted a virgin bride, but when they were left together in the marriage bedroom, he took advantage of the secret silence of the bedchamber to speak to the girl on the subject of chastity, and began to urge her to preserve her virginity.
> "Corruption breeds corruption," he said, "but incorruption looks for incorruption. So therefore it would be much better for us to persevere in virginity, than for each of us to be corrupted by the other." The girl agreed, and they kept secret the treasure of their incorruption. Content with the witness of God alone, they lived for a long time joined together more in spirit than in flesh and blood, until when the parents of both were dead he went off to a nearby desert place. She stayed in the house, where after a short time she gathered about her a great number of virgins, just as he gathered a congregation of monks.[90]

[88] Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xiii.

[89] Ville Vuolanto, *Children and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: Continuity, Family Dynamics and the Rise of Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2016), 189.

[90] *The Lives of the Desert Fathers. The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 30, trans. Norman Russell (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981). The quoted text is Russell's translation with my adjustments.
See the Greek text in *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, 22, ed. and trans. A.-J. Festugière (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1971): "Ἦν δέ τις πρὸ τούτου ἐν ταῖς Νιτρίαις, Ἀμοῦν ὀνόματι, οὗ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀναλαμβανομένην εἶδεν ὁ Ἀντώνιος. οὗτος πρῶτος τῶν μοναχῶν τὰς Νιτρίας κατείληφεν, εὐγενὴς μὲν ὑπάρχων καὶ πλουσίους ἔχων γεννήτορας, οἳ καὶ ἠνάγκαζον αὐτὸν γῆμαι μὴ βουλόμενον. ὡς δὲ αὐτῷ τὴν ἀνάγκην ἐπέθεσαν, πείθει τὴν κόρην ἐν τῷ θαλάμῳ συμπαρθενεύειν αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ. μετ' οὐ πολλὰς δὲ ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνος μὲν ἐπὶ τὰς Νιτρίας ἐξῆει, ἐκείνη δὲ τὴν οἰκετίαν πᾶσαν πρὸς παρθενείαν προεκαλεῖτο καὶ δὴ τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς μοναστήριον κατεσκεύασεν."

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About 420, Palladius wrote in the *Lausiac History* a similar story, but with striking differences. According to this version, a rich young man, Ammon, remained orphan and under the tutelage of his uncle, was wedded against his will. On the night of the marriage he was the one convincing his wife to live in a lifelong chastity for the sake of the Lord. At the request of his wife, and against Ammon's will, they dwelled in the same house, but in different beds, for eighteen years, keeping intact their virginity. After this period, his wife, advanced in the ascetic life, urged Ammon to separate. As a consequence, Ammon left the house to his wife and went to Nitria, where he built two cells. Until his death, he used to see his "companion" (σύμβιος) twice a year:

> It was said that Ammon lived in this wise. When he was a young man of about twenty-two he was constrained by his uncle to marry a wife – he (himself) was an orphan. Being unable to resist the pressure of his uncle, he thought it best to be crowned and take his seat in the nuptial chamber and undergo all the marriage rites. When all (the guests) were gone out, after settling the pair to sleep on the couch in the bridal chamber, Ammon gets up and locks the door, then he sits down and calls his blessed companion to him and says to her:
> "Come here, lady, and then I will explain the matter to you. The marriage which we have contracted has no special virtue. Let us then do well by sleeping in future each of us separately, that we may please God by keeping our virginity intact." And drawing from his bosom a little book, he read to the girl, who could not read at all, in the words of the apostle and the Saviour, and to most of what he read he added all that was in his mind and explained the principles of virginity and chastity; so that convinced by the grace of God she said: "I too am convinced, my lord. And what further commands have you now?" "I command," he said, "that each of us lives alone in future." But she could not endure this, saying: "Let us dwell in the same house, but in different beds." So he lived in the same house with her eighteen years. During each day he occupied himself with his garden and balsam-grove----for he prepared balsam. Balsam grows like a vine, requiring cultivation and pruning and much hard work. Then in the evening he would enter the house and offer prayers and eat with his wife; and then having said the night prayers would go out. Such was their practice, and both having attained impassivity, the prayers of Ammon prevailed, and she says to him at last: "I have something to say to you, my lord; that, if you hearken to me, I may be convinced that you love me in a godly way." He says to her: "Say what you wish." She says to him: "It is just that we should live apart – you being a man and practising righteousness, and I also eagerly following the same way as you. For it is absurd that you should live with me in chastity and yet conceal such virtue as this of yours." But he, thanking God, says to her: "Then you keep this house; but I will make myself another house." And he went out and settled in the inner part of the mount of Nitria – for there were no monasteries there yet – and he made himself two round cells. And having lived twenty-two years more in the desert he died, or rather fell asleep. He used to see that blessed lady his wife twice each year.[91]

[91] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 8, ed. G. Butler, 26-28.
Ἔλεγε δὲ τὸν Ἀμοῦν βεβιωκέναι τοιούτῳ τρόπῳ·ὅτι ὀρφανὸς ὑπάρχων, νεανίσκος ὡς ἐτῶν εἴκοσι δύο βίᾳ παρὰ τοῦ ἰδίου θείου ἐζεύχθη γυναικί· καὶ μὴ δυνηθεὶς ἀντισχεῖν τῇ τοῦ θείου ἀνάγκῃ, ἔδοξε καὶ στεφανοῦσθαι καὶ καθέζεσθαι ἐν παστῷ, καὶ πάντα ὑπομεμενηκέναι τὰ κατὰ τὸν γάμον. Μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἐξελθεῖν πάντας κοιμήσαντες αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ παστῷ καὶ τῇ κλίνῃ, ἀναστὰς ὁ Ἀμοῦν ἀποκλείει τὴν θύραν, καὶ καθίσας προσκαλεῖται τὴν μακαρίαν αὐτοῦ σύμβιον καὶ λέγει αὐτῇ· «Δεῦρο, κυρία, λοιπὸν διηγήσομαί σοι τὸ πρᾶγμα· ὁ γάμος ὃν ἐγαμήσαμεν οὗτός ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἕκαστος ἡμῶν κατ' ἰδίαν καθευδήσῃ, ἵνα καὶ τῷ θεῷ ἀρέσωμεν φυλάξαντες ἄθικτον τὴν παρθενίαν». Καὶ ἐξενεγκὼν ἐκ τοῦ κόλπου αὐτοῦ βιβλιδάριον ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ ἀποστόλου καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἀνεγίνωσκε τῇ κόρῃ ἀπείρῳ οὔσῃ γραφῶν, καὶ τῷ πλείστῳ μέρει πάντα προστιθεὶς τῇ ἰδίᾳ διανοίᾳ τὸν περὶ παρθενίας καὶ ἁγνείας εἰσηγεῖτο λόγον· ὡς ἐκείνην τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ πληροφορηθεῖσαν εἰπεῖν·«Κἀγὼ πεπληροφόρημαι, κύριε· καὶ τί κελεύεις λοιπόν;» «Κελεύω, φησίν, ἵνα ἕκαστος ἡμῶν

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In 439, Socrates Scholasticus recounted the story of Ammon in his *Ecclesiastical History*. There he synthesises the two earlier verions of the account, narrating:

> Since I have referred to the monasteries of Egypt, it may be proper here to give a brief account of them. They were founded probably at a very early period, but were greatly enlarged and augmented by a devout man whose name was Ammon. In his youth this person had an aversion to matrimony; but when some of his relatives urged him not to contemn marriage, but to take a wife to himself, he was prevailed upon and was married. On leading the bride with the customary ceremonies from the banquet-room to the nuptial couch, after their mutual friends had withdrawn, he took a book containing the epistles of the apostles and read to his wife Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, explaining to her the apostle's admonitions to married persons. Adducing many external considerations besides, he descanted on the inconveniences and discomforts attending matrimonial intercourse, the pangs of child-bearing, and the trouble and anxiety connected with rearing a family. He contrasted with all this the advantages of chastity; described the liberty, and immaculate purity of a life of continence; and affirmed that virginity places persons in the nearest relation to the Deity. By these and other arguments of a similar kind, he persuaded his virgin bride to renounce with him a secular life, prior to their having any conjugal knowledge of each other. Having taken this resolution, they retired together to the mountain of Nitria, and in a hut there inhabited for a short time one common ascetic apartment, without regarding their difference of sex, being according to the apostles, 'one in Christ.' But not long after, the recent and unpolluted bride thus addressed Ammon: 'It is unsuitable,' said she, 'for you who practice chastity, to look upon a woman in so confined a dwelling; let us therefore, if it is agreeable to you, perform our exercise apart.' This agreement again was satisfactory to both, and so they separated, and spent the rest of their lives in abstinence from wine and oil, eating dry bread alone, sometimes passing over one day, at others fasting two, and sometimes more. Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, asserts in his *Life of Anthony*, that the subject of his memoir who was contemporary with this Ammon, saw his soul taken up by angels after his decease.[92]

ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν κατ᾽ ἰδίαν μείνῃ». Ἡ δὲ οὐκ ἠνέσχετο, εἰποῦσα·«Ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ οἴκῳ μείνωμεν, ἐν διαφόροις δὲ κλίναις». Ζήσας οὖν ἔτη δεκαοκτὼ μετ᾽ αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ οἴκῳ, διὰ πάσης ἡμέρας ἐσχόλαζε τῷ κήπῳ καὶ τῷ βαλσαμῶνι· βαλσαμουργὸς γὰρ ἦν. Ἥτις βάλσαμος ἀμπέλου δίκην φυτεύεται, γεωργουμένη καὶ κλαδευομένη, πολὺν ἔχουσα πόνον. Ἑσπέρας οὖν εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν οἶκον ἐποίει εὐχὰς καὶ ἤσθιε μετ᾽ αὐτῆς· καὶ νυκτερινὴν πάλιν ποιήσας εὐχὴν ἐξήρχετο. Τούτων οὕτως ἐπιτελουμένων, καὶ ἀμφοτέρων εἰς ἀπάθειαν ἐληλακότων, ἐνήργησαν αἱ εὐχαὶ τοῦ Ἀμοῦν, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ τελευταῖον ἐκείνη· «Ἔχω σοί τι εἰπεῖν, κύριέ μου· ἵνα, ἐάν μου ἀκούσῃς, πληροφορηθῶ ὅτι κατὰ θεόν με ἀγαπᾷς». Λέγει αὐτῇ· «Εἰπὲ ὃ βούλει». Ἡ δὲ λέγει αὐτῷ· «Δίκαιόν ἐστι πρᾶγμα ἄνδρα σε ὄντα καὶ δικαιοσύνην ἀσκοῦντα, ὁμοίως κἀμὲ ἐζηλωκυῖαν τὴν αὐτήν σοι ὁδόν, κατ᾽ ἰδίαν μένειν. Ἄτοπον γάρ ἐστι κρύπτεσθαί σου τὴν τοιαύτην ἀρετὴν συνοικοῦντά μοι ἐν ἀγνείᾳ». Ὁ δὲ εὐχαριστήσας τῷ θεῷ, λέγει αὐτῇ· «Οὐκοῦν ἔχε σὺ τοῦτον τὸν οἶκον· ἐγὼ δὲ ποιήσω ἐμαυτῷ ἕτερον οἶκον». Καὶ ἐξελθὼν κατέλαβε τὸ ἐνδότερον τοῦ τῆς Νιτρίας ὄρους· οὔπω γὰρ ἦν τότε μοναστήρια·καὶ ποιεῖ ἑαυτῷ δύο θόλους κελλίων. Καὶ βιώσας ἄλλα εἴκοσι δύο ἔτη ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐτελεύτησε, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐκοιμήθη, δὶς τοῦ ἔτους ὁρῶν τὴν μακαρίαν σύμβιον αὐτοῦ.

[92] Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.23, trans. A.C. Zenos, ed. Philip Schaff, Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890).

See the Greek text in Socrate de Constantinople, *Histoire ecclésiastique (Livres IV-VI)*, ed. and trans. P. Maraval and P. Périchon (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2006).

"Ἐπειδὴ δὲ τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ μοναστηρίων μνήμην ἐποιησάμην, οὐδὲν κωλύει περὶ αὐτῶν βραχέα διεξελθεῖν. Τὰ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἀσκητήρια ἴσως μὲν ἐκ μακρῶν τῶν χρόνων ἔλαβε τὴν ἀρχήν, ἐπλατύνθη μέντοι καὶ ἐπὶ μεῖζον προέκοψεν ἐξ ἀνδρὸς θεοφιλοῦς, ᾧ ὄνομα ἦν Ἀμοῦν. Οὗτος νέος ὢν παρῃτεῖτο τὸν γάμον· ὡς δέ τινες τῶν προσηκόντων παρῄνουν μὴ καθυβρίζειν τὸν γάμον, ἀλλὰ γυναῖκα ἄγεσθαι, πείθεται μὲν καὶ ἔρχεται ἐπὶ γάμον, εὐθὺς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς παστάδος παραλαβὼν τὴν παρθένον καὶ ἀγαγὼν ἐπὶ τὸν κοιτῶνα μετὰ τῆς εἰωθυίας πομπῆς, τέλος ἀναχωρησάντων τῶν ἐπιτηδείων αὐτὸς βιβλίον λαβὼν ἀποστολικὸν τὴν πρὸς Κορινθίους Παύ αὐτὸς βιβλίον λαβὼν ἀποστολικὸν τὴν πρὸς Κορινθίους Παύλου ἐπιστολὴν ἀνεγίνωσκεν καὶ πρὸς τὴν γαμετὴν τὰ τοῦ ἀποστόλου πρὸς τοὺς γεγαμηκότας παραγγέλματα διεξήρχετο. Πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἔξωθεν αὐτὸς προστιθεὶς ἐδίδασκεν, ὅσα ὁ γάμος ἔχει φορτικά, ὅπως τε ἐπώδυνος ἡ μεταξὺ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς συμβίωσις καὶ οἷαι ὠδῖνες τὴν κυοφοροῦσαν ἐκδέχονται, καὶ τὰ ἐκ τῆς παιδοτροφίας προσετίθει μοχθηρά.

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This new version of the story contains not only a detailed explanation of the reasons for which Ammon and his wife converted to chastity, but also a novelty. In this account, the wife does not remain in their old house, but, together with Ammon, she departs to Nitria, where they live together for a while in the same cell, effacing all differences of gender, and separated afterwards. It seems that the formation of this ascetic setting resembles the story of the Tall Brothers, the main representatives of the "Origenist" monks in Nitria. According to the *Lausiac History*, when Ammonius and his three brothers departed to the desert, their two sisters accompanied them. However, they never cohabitated, but "[the women] lived separately by themselves, and the men by themselves, so as to have a sufficient distance between them.[93]"

Few years after Socrates, in 443, Sozomen wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History* a brief account on Ammon and his wife. The resemblances with the *Lausiac History* are obvious:

> It was about this period that Ammon, the Egyptian, embraced philosophy. It is said that he was compelled to marry by his family, but that his wife never knew him carnally; for on the day of their marriage, when they were alone, and when he as the bridegroom was leading her as the bride to his bed, he said to her, Oh, woman! Our marriage has indeed taken place, but it is not consummated; and then he showed her from the Holy Scriptures that it was her chief good to remain a virgin, and entreated that they might live apart. She was convinced by his arguments concerning virginity, but was much distressed by the thought of being separated from him; and therefore, though occupying a separate bed, he lived with her for eighteen years, during which time he did not neglect the monastic exercises. At the end of this period, the woman whose emulation had been strongly excited by the virtue of her husband, became convinced that it was not just that such a man should, on her account, live in the domestic sphere; and she considered that it was necessary that each should, for the sake of philosophy, live apart from the other; and she entreated this of her husband. He therefore took his departure, after having thanked God for the counsel of his wife, and said to her, Do thou retain this house, and I will make another for myself. He retired to a desert place, south of the Mareotic lake between Scitis and the mountain called Nitria; and here, during two and twenty years, he devoted himself to philosophy and visited his wife twice every year. This divine man was the founder of the monasteries there, and gathered round him many disciples of note, as the registers of succession show. Many extraordinary events happened to him, which have been accurately fixed by the Egyptian monks, who did very much to commemorate carefully

Ἐπῆγε δὲ <καὶ> τὰ ἐκ τῆς ἀγνείας χρηστά, καὶ ὅπως ὁ καθαρὸς βίος ἐστὶν ἐλεύθερος καὶ ἀμόλυντος καὶ παντὸς ῥύπου ἐκτός, καὶ ὅτι ἡ παρθενία παρὰ Θεὸν εἶναι ποιεῖ. Ταῦτα καὶ <ἄλλα> πολλὰ τοιαῦτα πρὸς τὴν γαμετὴν παρθένον οὖσαν διεξελθὼν πείθει αὐτὴν σὺν αὐτῷ πρὸ τοῦ συνελθεῖν ἀποτάξασθαι τῷ βίῳ τῷ κοσμικῷ. Καὶ ταύτας ἄμφω τὰς συνθήκας θέμενοι ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τῆς καλουμένης Νιτρίας χωροῦσιν, ἐκεῖ τε βραχὺν χρόνον <ἐν> καλύβῃ διάγοντες ἀσκητήριον εἶχον κοινόν, οὐκ ἔχοντες διάκρισιν θηλείας τε καὶ ἄρρενος, ἀλλὰ ὄντες ἓν κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον ἐν Χριστῷ. Οὐ πολλοῦ δὲ παραδραμόντος καιροῦ ἡ νεόνυμφος καὶ ἀμόλυντος τοιάδε πρὸς τὸν Ἀμοῦν ἔλεξεν. «Οὐ πρέπον, ἔφη, ἀσκοῦντί σοι σωφροσύνην ὁρᾶν ἐν τῷ σῷ οἰκήματι θήλειαν· διό, εἰ δοκεῖ, ἕκαστος ἰδίᾳ τὴν ἄσκησιν ποιησώμεθα.» Αὖται πάλιν αἱ συνθῆκαι ἤρεσκον ἀμφοτέροις, καὶ χωρισθέντες ἀπ' ἀλλήλων οὕτως τὸ λοιπὸν τοῦ βίου διήνυσαν, ἀπεχόμενοι οἴνου τε καὶ ἐλαίου, μόνον τε ξηρὸν ἄρτον, καὶ αὐτὸν ποτὲ μὲν ὑπὲρ μίαν ἡμέραν, ποτὲ δὲ ὑπὲρ δύο, ἔστι δὲ <ὅτε> καὶ ὑπὲρ πλείους ἐσθίοντες. Τούτου τοῦ Ἀμοῦν τὴν ψυχὴν μετὰ θάνατον ἀναλαμβανομένην ὑπὸ ἀγγέλων ὁ κατ' αὐτὸν βιώσας Ἀντώνιος ἐθεάσατο, ὥς φησιν ἐν τῷ βίῳ αὐτοῦ ὁ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας ἐπίσκοπος Ἀθανάσιος."

[93] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 11, ed. G. Butler, 32.
"κἀκεῖναι κατ'ἰδίαν ποιήσασαι μονὴν καὶ οὗτος κατ' ἰδίαν, ὡς ἱκανὸν ἀπέχειν μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων."

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> the virtues of the more ancient ascetics, preserved in a succession of unwritten tradition. I will relate such of them as have come to our knowledge.[94]

These four literary accounts about Ammon and his wife share an unique detail. Ammon converts his wife to asceticism in a symbolic place: the nuptial chamber. Thus, the earthly wedding metamorphoses into a wedding with the Divine Bridegroom.

Moreover, this is the only episode in which the husband takes the initiative of converting to asceticism. In all the other accounts of monastic spouses coming from both Eastern and Western Christianity, the wife is the one who impels her husband to efface their marriage.

In Cappadocia, not far from the entourage of Macrina and her 'monastic family,' Gregory of Nazianzus' sister, Gorgonia, decided to commit herself to asceticism after the birth of her children. Gregory's funeral *Oration* further states that Gorgonia persuaded her husband to renounce their matrimonial alliance and that, finally, the entire household converted to monasticism:

> But, performing those few ministrations due to the world and nature, according to the will of the law of the flesh, or rather of Him who gave to the flesh these laws, she consecrated herself entirely to God. But what is most excellent and honourable, she also won over her husband to her side, and made of him a good fellow-servant, instead of an unreasonable master. And not only so, but she further made the fruit of her body, her children and her children's children, to be the fruit of her spirit, dedicating to God not her single soul, but the whole family and household, and making wedlock illustrious through her own acceptability in wedlock, and the fair harvest she had reaped thereby; presenting herself, as long as she lived, as an example to her offspring of all that was good, and when summoned hence, leaving her will behind her, as a silent exhortation to her house.[95]

The *Oration* alludes to the openness of the newly emerged monastic-like community. Gregory's description, beyond its rhetorical *topoi*, is similar to the one concerning the organization of the monastic household in Annisa:

> Who opened her house to those who live according to God with a more graceful and bountiful welcome? ... Her door was opened to all comers; the stranger did not lodge in

[94] See the Greek text in Sozomène, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, 1.14, ed. Bernard Grillet, Guy Sabbah, trans. André-Jean Festugière (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1983), 176-178.
"Περὶ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον καὶ Ἀμοῦν ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ἐφιλοσόφει. ὃν δὴ λόγος βιασαμένων τῶν οἰκείων γυναῖκα ἀγαγέσθαι, μὴ πειραθῆναι δὲ αὐτῆς ᾗ θέμις ἀνδράσιν. ὡς γὰρ ἀρχὴν εἶχεν αὐτοῖς ὁ γάμος καὶ νύμφην οὖσαν οἷα νυμφίος εἰς τὸν θάλαμον λαβὼν ἐμονώθη, «ὁ μὲν δὴ γάμος ἡμῖν οὗτος», ἔφη, «ὦ γύναι, μέχρι τούτων τετέλεσται»· ἡλίκον δὲ ἀγαθόν ἐστι δυνηθῆναι παρθένον διαμεῖναι, ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν γραφῶν ὑφηγεῖτο, καὶ ἐπειρᾶτο καθ' ἑαυτὸν οἰκεῖν. ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ τοὺς περὶ παρθενίας λόγους ἐπῆνει ἡ γυνή, χωρισθῆναι δὲ αὐτοῦ χαλεπῶς ἔφερεν, ἰδίᾳ καθεύδων ἐπὶ δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ ἔτεσι συνῆν αὐτῇ μηδὲ οὕτω μοναχικῆς ἀσκήσεως ἀμελῶν. ἐν τοσούτῳ δὲ χρόνῳ ζηλώσασα τὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀρετὴν ἡ γυνὴ ἐλογίσατο μὴ δίκαιον εἶναι τηλικοῦτον ὄντα οἴκοι κρύπτεσθαι δι' αὐτήν, καὶ χρῆναι ἑκάτερον κεχωρισμένως οἰκοῦντα φιλοσοφεῖν. καὶ περὶ τούτου ἐδεήθη τοῦ ἀνδρός. ὁ δὲ χάριν ὁμολογήσας τῷ θεῷ ὑπὲρ τῶν βεβουλευμένων τῇ γυναικί «σὺ μὲν δή», ἔφη, «τοῦτον τὸν οἶκον ἔχε· ἐγὼ δὲ ἕτερον ἐμαυτῷ ποιήσω.» καὶ πρὸς μεσημβρίαν τῆς Μαρίας λίμνης καταλαβὼν ἔρημον τόπον ἀμφὶ τὴν Σκῆτιν καὶ τὸ καλούμενον τῆς Νιτρίας ὄρος δύο καὶ εἴκοσι ἔτη ἐνθάδε ἐφιλοσόφησε, δὶς ἑκάστου ἔτους τὴν γυναῖκα θεώμενος. Τούτῳ δὲ τῷ θεσπεσίῳ ἀρχηγῷ γενομένῳ τῶν τῇδε μοναστηρίων πολλοὶ καὶ ἀξιόλογοι ἐγένοντο μαθηταί, ὡς αἱ διαδοχαὶ ἐπιδείξουσι. πολλὰ δὲ καὶ θεσπέσια ἐπ' αὐτῷ συμβέβηκεν, ἃ μάλιστα τοῖς κατ' Αἴγυπτον μοναχοῖς ἠκρίβωται, περὶ πολλοῦ ποιουμένοις διαδοχῇ παραδόσεως ἀγράφου ἐπιμελῶς ἀπομνημονεύειν τὰς τῶν παλαιοτέρων ἀσκητῶν ἀρετάς. ἐμοὶ δὲ τῶν εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐλθόντων ἐκεῖνα ῥητέον."
[95] Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours* 8.8, in Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours* 6-12, ed. and trans. Marie-Ange Calvet-Sebasti (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1995).

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> the street. She was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a mother to the orphan. Why should I say more of her compassion to widows, than that its fruit which she obtained was, never to be called a widow herself? Her house was a common abode to all the needy of her kin.[96]

Gregory composed this *Oration* between 369 and 374, a period after his travel between Nazianzus and Annisa, where he lived in the remote ascetic retreat of Basil the Great.[97] The period 362/363 was significant in Annisa, since, as previously shown, according to Gregory of Nyssa, it marked one of the steps in its transformation to a monastic household. Until Peter, the future bishop of Sebasteia, reached maturity,[98] he lived continuously in the same house with his mother and sister. As his age allowed him to choose his pursuit, he separated from the nuns' house and, thus, a house for monks was built as part of the community. During the time spent in Annisa, Gregory of Nazianzus must have become familiar with its organization, with its charity endeavors, with the ascetics led by Eustathius of Sebasteia (who used to visit Annisa), or with the ones of other aristocratic widows. Thus, Gorgonia could have become acquainted with the lifestyle in Annisa through Gregory and could have used it as a model for her own household. On the other hand, similarly to Macrina, due to the social status of her family, belonging to the educated aristocracy, she might have been accustomed to classical philosophical models also.

On the other hand, Gregory does not mention any detail concerning Gorgonia's further encounters with her husband, Alypius. According to the *Oration*, her alms were directed towards her "blood" ("ἀφ' αἵματος") relatives. This indication might aim to suggest that Gorgonia renounced only her family relations with her husband, while still accepting her "blood" kin.

Basil himself gives another example of ascetic couples. In some letters, he mentions a certain Palladius, who, persuaded by his wife, received baptism. After this event, he became a monk. Anna Silvas suggests that Basil might have referred to another case of monastic spouses.[99] However, several hypotheses are equally plausible. Palladius' wife might have either died, or she might have agreed with him to live in chastity. Moreover, Palladius could have lived in a monastery which Basil had founded in 358 in Pontus,[100] or he and his wife might have continued to live on their own estate, since

[96] Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours* 8.12.
"Τίς δὲ τὸν οἶκον ἑαυτῆς μᾶλλον προῦθηκε τοῖς ζῶσι κατὰ Θεὸν, τὴν καλὴν δεξίωσιν καὶ πλουτίζουσαν; … Θύρα δὲ αὐτῆς παντὶ ἐλθόντι ἠνέῳκτο· ἔξω δὲ οὐκ ηὐλίζετο ξένος. Ὀφθαλμὸς ἦν τυφλῶν, ποῦς δὲ χωλῶν, μήτηρ δὲ ὀρφανῶν. Τῆς δὲ εἰς χήρας εὐσπλαγχνίας τί χρὴ μεῖζον εἰπεῖν, ἢ ὅτι τὸ μὴ χήρα κληθῆναι καρπὸν ἠνέγκατο; Κοινὸν μὲν ἦν ἡ ἐκείνης ἑστία τοῖς πενομένοις ἀφ' αἵματος καταγώγιον."
[97] The year 362 is most significant. On the feast of the Epiphany, Gregory was ordained as a priest by his father, in spite of his disapproval. After this event, he returned to Annisa for a while. On Easter day, in the same year, he returned to Nazianzus.
[98] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Letters*, 10.
That is, as Anna Silvas explains, 17 years old.
[99] Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 79.
[100] Basil the Great, *Letters*, vol. 4, trans. Roy J. *Deferrari* (London: Heinemann, 1934), 206-207.

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one of Basil's letters suggests that he is not part of any well-known monastic community.[101] Since Basil does not give any further detail about the couple, all these scenarios are possible.

In his monastic Rules, however, Basil hints not only to the possibility that couples stop their marriage and devote to asceticism, but also to their further dwelling in a monastery where monks and nuns live according to the canons. In one of his responses, he sets the principles according to which the married ones should be received in the tagma of ascetics:

> How are the married to be received? Those under the yoke of marriage who approach such a life need to be questioned whether they are doing this *with mutual consent* (1 Corinthians 7:5) in accordance with the Apostle's command. *Since he does not have power*, he says, *over his own body* (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:4). If such is the case, let the applicant be received before a number of witnesses … But if the other party, caring little for pleasing God, holds aloof and puts up the fight, then let the Apostle's words be remembered: *God has called us in peace* (1 Corinthians 7:15) and let that precept of the Lord be fulfilled where he says *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children* and so on, *he cannot be my disciple* (Luke 14:26). However, we have known many cases in which through earnest prayer and assiduous fasting the goal of living a life of chastity has been attained, since as a result.[102]

Monastic spouses are also well documented in Latin Christianity. Extant sources, especially letters and poems, survived from the senator Meropius Pontius Paulinus. Around 390, he and his wife, Therasia, began their turn towards asceticism. The first step was to move from Aquitaine somewhere south to the Pyrenees. In late summer or autumn of 394, after the death of their own child, Paulinus withdrew from his old aristocratic lifestyle for the clear aim of becoming a monk. The news of his conversion rapidly spread so that, on Christmas Day, a group of Christians arranged his ordination. This event was a turning point in Paulinus' life and, apparently, a shock for his fellows. Apart from Ambrose, the future Bishop of Milan, no other senator became a clergyman. Besides, by moving out from his old villa and by renouncing his studies of Classical literature, Paulinus renounced his own family, ancestors, and abandoned his community.[103] Paulinus and Therasia moved to their estate in Nola in 395.[104] Their retirement was followed by a complete denial of their earthly links, as Paulinus testifies in the third *Natalicium* dedicated to Saint Felix, his "new father and land" and his friend: "You have broken for us the bonds of the flesh.[105]" "Our bodies assumed changed shape, for we cast off our earthly connection, wings sprout on us, and we are turned into birds by the begetting of God's

[101] Ibid., *Letters* 258, 292, 295.
[102] LR 12, in Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 197-198. Anna Silvas considers it plausible that the text was transmitted to us be a result of a "scribal diplography," due to the strange duplicate sentence. See note 232.
[103] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 209.
[104] Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1-2.
[105] Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen 21*, in Paulinus Nolanus, *Carmina*, ed. Guillaume de Hartel, 2nd ed. (London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), 187.
In English in Paulinus of Nola, *Poems*, ed. and trans. G. Walsh (New York: Ramsey, 1975).

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words.[106]" This decision did not remain without echo among Paulinus' early entourage. Ambrose of Milan, writing to Sabinus, recounts the reactions which Paulinus' retreat stirred up:

> I have learned that Paulinus, second to none of the Aquitanians in luster of birth, has sold his and his wife's possessions, and has taken up these practices of faith that he is giving his property to the poor by changing it into money, while he, poor now instead of rich, as if relieved of a heavy burden, has said farewell to home, country, and kindred in order to serve God with greater zeal. Word has it that he has chosen a retreat in the city of Nola where he will pass his days out of reach of the tumult of the world. His wife, too, closely followed the example of his zeal and virtue, not objecting to her husband's resolve. She has transferred her property to the jurisdiction of others and is following her husband, where, perfectly content with his little patch of ground, she will comfort herself with the riches of religion and charity. They have no children, but their desire is a posterity of good deeds. What will our leading citizens say when they hear this? It is unthinkable that a man of such family, such background, such genius, gifted with such eloquence, should retire from the Senate and that the succession of so noble a family should be broken. Although in performing the rites of Isis they shave their heads and eyebrows, they yet call it a shameful thing for a Christian out of devotion to his holy religion to change his apparel.[107]

Further, Paulinus transformed his dwelling into a *monasterium* and lived there for thirty-six years, until his death in 431. In the letters which he composed during this time, he presented himself as a *monachus*, and in the *Natalicia* dedicated to Saint Felix he gives indications about the later transformations which occurred in Nola.

Scholars debate the role that Therasia had in Paulinus' conversion to asceticism. While some of them ascribe to women a leading role in the conversion of households in general,[108] some others disagree with this opinion. In this particular case, some scholars argue that Martin of Tours or Vitricius of Rouen most likely influenced Paulinus to become an ascetic, and Therasia did not have any significant role.[109] Ausonius, Paulinus' old friend, blamed Therasia, whom he associated to Queen Tanaquil, because of Paulinus' refusal to answer his letters. Paulinus replied, comparing Therasia, still his "*coniux*," to the well-known figure of Lucretia.[110] Neither the letters, nor the poems contain references to Paulinus' relationship with Therasia after their conversion. However, since the visitors of the monastery were hosted in secluded places, one might assume that Paulinus and Therasia did not cohabitate, and, therefore, the use of the term "*coniux*" is related only to Therasia's legal status.

Following his retreat to Nola, Paulinus created an ascetic network around which his monastic community acquired fame through letters. Paulinus himself mentioned that other married couples joined him and Therasia at Nola. After his conversion to Christianity, Turcius / Tureius Apronianus

[106] Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen 15*, 82.
[107] Ambrose of Milan, *Letter* 58, trans. Mary Melchior Beyenka (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954), 144.
[108] Besides Anna Silvas, see also Michelle Salzman, "Aristocratic Women: Conductors of Christianity in the Fourth-Century," *Helios* 16 (1989), 207-220.
[109] Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 59-60.
[110] Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 10, 24-39.

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and his wife, Avita (the niece of Melania the Elder), together with their two children, Eunomia and Asterius, moved to Nola. Asterius was then consecrated to Christ by his parents. Paulinus made explicit that his earthly relationship with Apronianus was enriched with a spiritual brotherhood: "And now God is his father and he is reared for the kingdom of heaven … saintly grace made him both son and brother to his father for they have been born alike through the holy stream.[111]" In one of his *Natalicia*, Paulinus also mentioned among their companions the widow Albina (Melania the Younger's mother and daughter-in-law of the Elder Melania). Significantly, Paulinus called Avita "the sister" of Albina and Therasia.[112] These indications suggest an enrichment of the natural kinship ties with an already built new 'ascetic family,' and, sometimes, even an effacement of the earthly ties.

In 393, when Paulinus and Therasia decided to transform their marriage into a chaste one, Jerome was sending a letter to a certain Desiderius and his wife, Serenilla, to congratulate them for turning their marriage to Christ: "I offer my congratulations to you and to your holy and revered sister, Serenilla, who, true to her name, has trodden down the troubled waves of the world, and has passed to Christ's calm haven.[113]"

Paulinus also alluded to a similar decision of Sulpicius Severus and his wife, who broke the "deadly links of body and blood.[114]" It is possible that Sulpicius' wife influenced her husband to convert to asceticism in the same way as Therasia influenced Paulinus.[115] After the death of his wife, Sulpicius broke the relations with his father and continued his commitment to asceticism in the proximity of his mother-in-law, Bassula, on the family domain in Primuliacum. [116] Paulinus praises him:

> you nailed your body and the world to the cross and you avoided the pleasures of the youth and evil joys of the present life as poisonous and grievous. You refused the burdens of your inheritance as though it were excrement. You deservedly won as your mother forever the holy mother-in-law who is more noble than any parent; for you put your heavenly Father before your earthly one, and following the example of the apostles, you left your father on the tossing and uncertain ship of this life. Living him with the nets of his possessions, enmeshed in his ancestral inheritance, you followed Christ. You rejected men's praise of your talent, which was no smaller than your family wealth, and sublimely indifferent to empty glory, you preferred the preaching of fishermen to all the fine writings of Cicero and yourself.[117]

[111] Ibid., 183.
"iamque parente Deo regnis caelestibus ortus / … hunc puerum et fratrem fecit pia gratia patri / nam partier sancto flumine sunt geniti."
[112] Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 21, 173-201.
See for the Latin text Paulinus Nolanus, *Carmen* 21, 158-186.
[113] Jerome, *Letter* 47, trans. W. H. Fremantle: "Gratulor tibi et sanctae atque uenerabili sorori tuae Serenillae, quae φερωνύμως calcatis fluctibus saeculi ad Christi tranquilla peruenit."
[114] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 5, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (New York: Newman Press, 1966).
[115] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, 27.
[116] The monastic life-style at Primuliacum is difficult to trace. According to the *Dialogues* of Sulpicius Severus, the domain imitated the settlement at Marmoutier, where the asceticism was semi-cenobitic.
[117] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 5.6, 57.

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Just like Paulinus, who was in the first years of his monastic devotion when he sent this letter, Sulpicius also had become a monk not long before. In this letter, Paulinus praises him for the radical changes which he made in order to achieve this goal: not only did Sulpicius abandon his father and his inheritance, in spite of the protests, but he also left behind his literary skills and his previous intellectual enjoyments. Renunciation of wealth had visible consequences on his father, who had to preserve his family's patrimony. In addition to these details, Paulinus mentions the first change occurred in the relationship between Sulpicius and Bassula: from mother-in-law, Bassula became Sulpicius' mother.

This is not only Paulinus' rhetoric. In a familiar letter remembering the last moments in the life of Martin of Tours, Sulpicius called Bassula "venerable parent" ("parens uenerabilis[118]"). Paulinus also acknowledged that a change occurred in the relationship of Sulpicius and Bassula in two letters sent in 396 and in 403. The last one was sent to Bassula together with the relics of the Holy Cross, which he had previously received from Melania. In this letter, he calls Therasia "fellow-servant" and Bassula "venerable sister:"

> my fellow-servant Therasia has sent it [the relic of the Holy Cross] specially to our venerable sister Bassula. Though presented to one of you, it belongs to you both, for you are both animated by a single vocation, and the faith which brings you together *into a perfect man* empties you of your sex.[119]

Even though the community at Primuliacum was never called a "monasterium," Sulpicius and Bassula did retire from the world for the sake of the contemplative life and formed a community of ascetics around them. In his dialogues, Sulpicius mentions his "cell[120]" and the "crowd of monks[121]" who surround him.

Paulinus' usual visits to the martyrs' tombs in Rome might have determined the transformations that occurred for yet another couple: Melania the Younger (grand-daughter of Melania the Elder) and her husband, Valerius Pinianus.[122] In the beginning of 407, after their second child died, Melania and Pinianus decided to abandon their marriage. Melania's biographer[123] remembered the conditions in which Melania persuaded Pinianus:

[118] Sulpice Sévère, "Troisième lettre, à Bassula, sur la mort et les funérailles de Saint Martin," in *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 3, 334-335.

[119] Paulinus Nolanus, *Epistula* 31.1, ed. Wilhelm Hartel (Prague F. Tempsky, 1894): "Sed quod alteri uestrum datur utriusque uestrum est, quia in utroque uestrum una ratio manet et sexum euacuat fides, qua in uirum perfectum ambo concurritis."
The letter was written between 400 and 404, before the dedication of the church at Primuliacum and after the visit of Melania the Elder to Nola.

[120] Sulpice Sévère, "*Dialogue* 1," in *Gallus. Dialogues sur les « vertus » de Saint Martin*, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine, Nicole Dupré (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2006).

[121] Sulpice Sévère, "*Dialogue* 3," in ibid.

[122] Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 116.

[123] Scholars attributed Melania's biography to Gerontius, abbot of Melania's communities after her death. However, based on internal evidence and in absence of any undoubtful attribution to Gerontius, Kate Cooper cautiously places the author of the *life* under anonymity, suggesting, based on the prologue, that Gerontius might have been the commissioner, and

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> After this [the death of their new-born son], when her blessed husband saw that she was exceedingly troubled and was giving up on life, he lost courage and was himself endangered. Running to the altar, he cried aloud with tears to the Lord for her life. And while he was sitting next to the altar, the saint declared to him: 'If you want me to continue living, give your word before God that that we will spend the rest of our lives in chastity, and then you will see the power of Christ…' And since he was fearful that he would never see her alive in the flesh, he promised this joyfully… Then [after the death of their daughter, devoted to virginity], both Melania and Pinian hastened to fulfill their promise to God. They would not consent their parents' desires and were so unhappy that they refused to eat unless their parents would agree with them and consent to release them so that they could abandon their frivolous and worldly mode of life and experience an angelic, heavenly purpose.[124]

The author stressed that, once this decision was taken and consented by their parents, Melania and Pinianus became "siblings in the Lord.[125]" Moreover, the Greek *Life* identified their new life-style with the angelic one.[126] Further, Pinianus confessed: "From the time when we gave our word to God and entered the chaste life, I have looked on you in the same way as your holy mother Albina.[127] " In this account, this statement makes Melania and Pinianus switch their hierarchical positions. Melania urged Pinianus to become, from *pater familias,* her spiritual son and brother, and let himself be guided to a harsher ascetic discipline: "Then be persuaded by me as your spiritual mother and sister, and give up the Cilician clothes.[128] " Pinianus' agreement to disregard his matrimonial relations with Melania was a turn from the Roman tradition. By refusing to be the guarantor of his family,[129] he could further submit himself and become a disciple of an ascetic woman.

In addition, his abandonment of the luxurious clothes marked a further step on a long and sinuous journey to asceticism, which encountered two serious obstacles: the couple's social status and their burdening impressive wealth. Their numerous possessions (including a palace which not even Empress Serena was able to acquire) and the great number of slaves on their estates (who started a revolt) slowed down their conversion. At first, they left Rome, established a community of monks and a community of nuns in Thagaste, and attempted to give all their wealth through alms. As the nunnery evolved and Melania committed to harsher ascetic practices, her relation with her widow

the life might have been the work of one of the monks living in Melania's monastery on the Mount of Olives. See Kate Cooper, "The Household and the Desert: Monastic and Biological Communities in the Lives of Melania the Younger." *Household, Women, and Christianities* 14 (2005): 14.

[124] Gerontius, *The Life of Saint Melania the Younger*, 30, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Ann Clark (New York: E. Mellon Press, 1984).

[125] Ibid., 8, 31.

Vie de Sainte Mélanie, 1.8, trans. Denys Gorce (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf: 1962), 140-41: "ἀδελφὸς ἐν Κυρίῳ Πινιανός".

[126] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 1.6, 136-37.

My translation: "Adopting the angelic and heavenly spirit." ("χρήσωνται τῷ ἀγγελικῷ καὶ οὐρανίῳ φρονήματι.")

[127] Gerontius, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, 8, 32.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Roberto Alciati, Mariachiara Giorda, "Melania the Younger and her slow way to Jerusalem" *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 14 (2010), 429.

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mother, Albina, (who had also devoted to asceticism after her husband's death) changed. According to the Greek life, Melania decided to limit their conversations and meetings.[130]

Further, Albina commissioned the construction of a cell on the Mount of Olives. After Melania and Pinianus returned from a visit to the desert fathers in Egypt, the three ascetic dwelled there. The biographer underlined that Melania and "her spiritual brother" usually lived in seclusion and met only in rare moments.[131] After the death of Albina and a period of grief, Melania asked "her brother" to build for her "a monastery of ninety virgins.[132]" The *vita* does not make any other reference to Pinianus until the episode of his death.[133] Although the nunnery seems not to be associated with any monk, Pinianus might have dwelled in the same cell built by Albina, probably not far away from the nunnery, since he was able to have occasional contacts with the nuns, and, moreover, Melania was able to host Pinianus' relics in the *Aposteleion* that she added to the nunnery.[134] Shortly after this event, Melania took a surprising decision: she urged the author of her later *vita* to arrange the construction of a monastery for monks, closely associated to the old nunnery, "to see both the divine service being offered without interruption in the church and the bones of my mother and my master find rest through their chanting.[135]"

In some instances, Melania's biographer is hesitant when referring to the status of Pinianus. In the account of the visit to Empress Serena, Pinianus is still called Melania's "blessed husband,[136]" but in the episodes before the dispensation of their properties he is called a "blessed husband and brother.[137]" When he writes about their foundations in Thagaste, he does not use terms related to matrimonial alliances.[138] Finally, when referring to the foundation on the Mount of Olives and to their pilgrimage to Egypt, he calls Pinianus Melania's "brother in the Lord.[139]"

Besides the two versions of Melania's *vita*, the *Lausiac History*, written during Melania's lifetime, mentions Melania's foundation on the Mount of Olives as a continuation of a tradition established by her grand-mother, Melania the Elder. Significantly, the *vita* does not refer at all to the older community of Melania the Elder and Rufinus on the same Mount of Olives. Considering that the *vita* was written in Melania the Younger's community, scholars have offered three hypotheses for this obliteration: either because of the theological discontinuities between the two monasteries, or because the author respectfully avoided any mention about the dissolution of the Elder Melania's and

[130] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 1.33, 199-91.
[131] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 40, .54.
[132] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 41, 55.
[133] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 49, 61.
[134] Ibid.
[135] *Vie de Sainte Mélanie*, 50, 62.
[136] Gerontius, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, 11, 34.
[137] Ibid., 15, 38.
[138] Ibid., 23-26, 45-46.
[139] Ibid., 37, 52.

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Rufinus' foundation, or even because of a possible rivalry from the younger community towards the older one. The silence of the anonymous author is certainly significant.[140] I suggest that there might have been a different reason behind this decision. In line with the gradual effacement of the biological family ties, the Younger Melania's biographer would have consciously avoided the mention of any family connection of hers. Besides, Melania the Elder's well-known affiliation to the Origenist trend prevented him from remembering this familial connection.

Nola's monastic network increased in the years 420s, when several monks from the island of Lerinum came to Nola, and brought news about Honoratus (later bishop of Arles) and Eucherius, two senators who renounced their functions. They reported that Eucherius (the future bishop of Lyons) was living on the island together with his wife and his two sons, Salonius and Veranius, in seclusion, in the monastery founded by Honoratus.[141] The letter 51 of Paulinus addressed Eucherius, indicating the name of his wife, Galla, and that they imitated the model of Paulinus and Therasia.[142]

In conclusion, the written testimonies presented above emphasize two types of simultaneous and mutual transformations. While relatives pursued the ascetic path, they slowly converted their kinship to spiritual relationships. In addition, in some instances, they also depict a parallel remodeling of the ascetic communities.

As the accounts about Pachomius suggest, when conflicts between kindred monks arose, blood-relationships proved to be an obstacle in one's ascetic progress. Thus, the natural solution for disagreements was an ultimate separation, thus obeying the commandment of Christ in Matthew 10:37 and Luke 14:26, and with the opposition letter (understood as blood relationships) vs. spirit (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:6).

When the sources refer to ascetic relatives who did not live apart,[143] they emphasize several other types of transformation. In Tabennesi, blood relationships were completely denied, both between siblings and within the lineage. Elsewhere, such as in Annisa or Rome, ascetics did not deny their fleshly kinship, both between different generations and within the same generation, but the roles were significantly transformed. For instance, parents and children switched their roles, as it was suggested about Emmelia and Macrina in Annisa, or about Melania the Younger and Albina, once they settled in Jerusalem.

On the other hand, after being loosened, but not entirely effaced, the fleshly kinship, were submitted to the newly created spiritual family. The remembrance of lineage descendance from other prominent ascetics, the alternative to the traditional Roman genealogy which had to begin with

[140] Kate Cooper, "The Household and the Desert," 15.
[141] Sigrid H. Mratschek, "Multis enim notissima est sanctitas loci: Paulinus and the Gradual Rise of Nola as a Center of Christian Hospitality," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 4 (2001): 529-530.
[142] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 9.
[143] Philip Rousseau also observed this character. See Philip Rousseau, "Blood-Relationships," 143.

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ancestral figures of the pre-Christian Rome, was a pious genealogy, or an "eschatological lineage[144]" in which mothers elevated their condition of non-virgins to the ones of forbearers of ascetic offspring.

Most of the sources preserve the traditional pattern of the rapports between generations. Even though, in a monastic setting, generations were not defined according to the age, the 'elders' had the same responsibilities with regards to the 'younger' as in a traditional family. However, one needs to differentiate between the 'generations' and the 'hierarchical levels' within a community. The first one seems to be linked to the moment when an ascetic joined a monastic community. The last one did not necessarily correspond to a division according to the age. In part of the examples studied in this thesis, a younger ascetic could become the leader of the nuns or of the monks.

A distinct transformation occurred with the annulment of marriage relationships. This decision had a stronger social impact[145] and, therefore, implied a more laborious process. In some instances, the wife, extolled for her greater piety, could become the superior of her "sibling in the Lord," thus reversing the traditional pattern of the Roman families.

About most of the communities studied in this chapter sources reveal a replacement of the fleshly family with an ascetic household, relatives in spirit, who shared the same vocation of dedicating their lives to God. In spite of the detachment from the earthly family,[146] the monastic communities are depicted as actually imitating the structure of the traditional families. However, I would only partly agree with Susanna Elm,

> Here, as in the original family, the ascetics' sisters, mothers, wives, and daughters were provided and cared for, and supervised by brothers who replaced the original *pater familias*, while at the same time all natural family ties were effectively severed. The rules and regulations are a precise reflection of this process.[147]

The "natural family ties" are not all "effectively severed," but they were indeed loosened, reversed, or even cancelled. The traditional household was "reinvented … as an institution based on ascetic affinity rather than on blood ties.[148]" Biographers redefined the roles of *mater familias* or *pater familias* in ascetic terms, ascribing to them new roles, duties, and hierarchical positions, sometimes at odds with the tradition. However, one community has a distinct image in the sources which depict it. Since the monastery of Tabennesi did not have an aristocratic background, rather than imitating the structure of the highly positioned household, it seems to have the scriptural accounts as models.

The monastery in Tabenessi stands apart from the others for yet another reasons. Sources refer to the existence of all the rest of the family double monasteries only during the lifetime of their

[144] Jo Ann McNamara, "Cornelia's Daughters: Paula and Eustochium." *Women's Studies* 11 (1984): 9-27.
[145] See chapter 3.
[146] For example, Theodore refused to see his mother, who had come to visit him in his monastery; see: SBo 37, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 60-61.
[147] Susanna Elm, *'Virgins of God,'* 272.
[148] Kate Cooper, "The Household and the Desert," 13.

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founders and shortly after their deaths. The only source which refers to ascetics from the monastery in Annisa is Gaudentius of Brescia' *Tractatus*, which mentions the bishop's encounter with nuns who offered him relics of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia, whose ashes were buried in the martyrion which Emmelia had built on the domain in Annisa.[149] The nuns were, very probably, nieces of Basil.[150]

After the death of Paula in 404, Augustine mentions about the monastery in Bethlehem that it was attacked in 416.[151] This is its last trace in the written sources. About the monastery of Melania and Pinianus no written evidence posterior to the *Life of Saint Melania* survives.

Similarly, about the monastery in Nola, the textual evidence stops with the writings of Paulinus. In spite of this, the archaeological investigation has brought slightly more indications. Finally, about the monastery at Primuliacum, the only sources mentioning them are the ones of Sulpicius Severus.

For all the monasteries except for the community in Tabennesi, this scarcity of the written sources posterior to the period of their founders is telling. It reveals that, at some point not far away chronologically, they ceased to exist. After Pachomius' death, the monastery in Tabennesi survived for several new generations as part of the Pachomian *Koinonia*, which became a strong economic power, fact which contributed to its persistence. Its strengthening and the further acceptance of non-Coptic ascetics, speakers of Greek, entailed the necessity for a translation of the Pachomian monastic rules to Greek. It was this version of the regulations that Jerome used for the Latin translation which he prepared in 404, and which became a model for other communities of ascetics.

But how were family double monasteries organized? How did the ascetics live and how did the groups of monks and nuns interact? After having explored the evolution of religious households towards "choruses of angels," the following chapter will unveil aspects of the daily life in the newly emerged communities.

[149] Gaudentius of Brescia, "Tractatus 17, Die dedicationis basilicae Concilii Sanctorum. Tractatus exceptus," 15, in Gaudentius of Brescia, *Tractatus*, ed. Ambrose Glueck (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1936), 144-145.
[150] Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter* 4.
[151] Augustine, "A Work on the Proceedings of Pelagius," 66, trans. Peter Holmes, Robert Ernest Wallis, Benjamin B. Warfield, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series I, vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), 210-212.

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V. Organizing the "Angelic Family"

> She [Melania the Younger] had a monastery built for herself and decided to save other souls along with herself. She asked her brother[1] to gather some virgins for her. So there arose a monastery of ninety virgins, more or less, whom she trained as a group from the first not to associate with a man. She constructed for them a cistern inside the monastery and supplied all their bodily needs, saying to them, "I myself will properly attend to everything for you, as a servant would, and I will not let you lack any necessities. Only be warned about associating with men." … In her excess of humility, she would not accept the superiorship of the monastery, but chose another woman for this task who was spiritual and burning with emotion for God, while Melania spent her time only in prayer and in serving the saints. When the superior was a bit too unbending, Melania busied herself greatly to take care of the nuns' physical needs. Thus, she took heed for the weaker sisters, secretly took them the things they needed, and arranged to place them in each woman's cell under the bed. When the women entered, they would find every refreshment readied for them, without their mother superior learning of the situation. The sisters, however, knew from the manner in which it was done that the saint was the one who provided these things, and they were eager to cleave to her to a remarkable degree, to obey her in all things, for they knew her boundless compassion.[2]

This account about the development of the monastic complex founded by Melania the Younger brings to the fore a multitude of problems which the closeness of men and women raised in a family double monastery. The quarters for men had not yet been established, but Pinianus (along with other men, one may safely assume) was kept far from the nuns. In fact, Melania's first concern – so Gerontius informs his readers – was to prevent any encounter between the nuns and monks. For this reason, Melania decided to build a cistern inside the monastery. The Latin *vita* adds a further detail to this account. Lausus, who held the office of *praepositus sacri cubiculi* of Constantinople, financed the construction of a bath.[3] Another problem which this story raises is the authority inside the community. Was there a conflict between Melania (the former rich founder, recently assuming poverty) and the abbess? Later on, Melania decided to enlarge her monastic complex with an oratory, where she placed relics of martyrs, and with a men's quarter:

> Aroused by divine zeal, she wished to build a monastery for holy men that they might carry out their nightly and daily psalmody without interruption at the place of the Ascension of the Lord and in the grotto where the Saviour talked with his holy disciples about the end of time. … She lodged there holy men, lovers of God, who cheerfully performed the divine service in the Church of Christ's Ascension and in that of the Apostles, where the blessed ones were also buried. … Straightway letters arrived from her uncle Volusian, ex-prefect of greater Rome, stating that he was going to Constantinople on a mission to the most pious empress Eudoxia. … There arose in

[1] By this moment, the marital relation with Pinianus had been transformed, so he was regarded as Melania's brother. See the previous chapter for details.
[2] Gerontius, *The Life of Saint Melania the Younger*, 41, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Ann Clark (New York: E. Mellon Press, 1984), 54-55.
[3] Ibid., note 39, 191.

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> Melania a desire to see her uncle. She was spurred by grace from above to entertain this desire so that she might save his soul through her great effort, for he was still a pagan … From the beginning of her journey, the holy men of every city and country (I mean the bishops and clergy) gave her glory and indescribable honor. The God-loving monks and pious virgins, when they had seen her whose illustrious virtues they had heard about for a long time, were separated from her with many tears.[4]

Not only did Melania engage in an intensive building program, but she also assumed the spiritual leadership of the ascetics. As her hagiographer relates, she was not completely isolated either from her (pagan) relatives, or from other ascetics and bishops, who paid tribute to her fame. These episodes from the *Life of Melania* show significant aspects of the everyday monastic organization in the family double monasteries which this chapter approaches. After having explored the socio-economic and theological context in which the family double monasteries emerged and the transformations of the kinship relations among their members, now I would proceed to the analysis of those aspects of the monastic organization which differentiated these particular communities from the single-gendered ones.[5]

Inquiries into the everyday life of the family double monasteries can only be done by means of literary evidence, written by their main proponents. In most of the cases, comparative sources are lacking. However, the representations which they offer are relevant for the way in which these communities managed to integrate in the monastic landscape of the second half of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century.

V. 1. Ideal Venues and Layouts

Where were family double monasteries located and how were the buildings inside a monastic complex disposed? How did sources represent the monastic spot? The aim of this section is to explore both the actual locations and the rhetoric on landscape and building disposition in the monastic complexes.

Far from being merely descriptions of ideal places for ascetic devotion, the passages concerned with these details offer symbolic representations of diverse aspects related to the ascetic life practiced inside these communities. Rhetoric on desert and the projection of the ascetic spaces as deserts have a significant role. As it seems, family double monasteries were accessible enough for the outsiders, but at the same time sources present them as remoted places. In the following, I will focus on those elements related to the seclusion and closeness of genders in the family double monasteries.

[4] Ibid., 49-50, 62-63.
[5] Parts of this chapter use the results of my previous research, which I included in my MA thesis, "Daily Life in the Mixed and Double Monasteries on the Late Antique Near East," Central European University, Budapest, 2013.

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V. 1. 1. Ideal Venues

The ascetics' preference for a certain landscape where to seclude from society and engage in the search for the divine was a literary *topos* inherited from the Ancient writings. Rhetoric on the ideal spots of the family double monasteries underlines the isolation of the communities. However, sources reveal their accessibility to the laity. Indeed, the relatively short distance between communities and cities ensured the social impact of family double monasteries.

Classical literature tended to idealize two spots. The garden and the pasture had been ideal places for one's peaceful retreat from society. In spite of the antagonism of these places and the desert, sources tend to equalize them. In some instances, monastic founders identify their places of retreat with deserts, while, more rarely, other accounts mention the seclusion to their own gardens. Such descriptions are not always realistic, but they rather offer ideal representations.

In a letter to his friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil describes the remote ascetic dwelling on the estate of Annisa. His account is full of Classical motifs used in the description of an ideal place for dedication to philosophy:

> There indeed God showed me a place precisely correspondent to my character, so that we were beholding in reality that which we had often been fabricating in our thought while being at rest and playing. It is a high mountain, covered with a thick forest, watered towards north by cold and transparent waters. At its foot a flat plain is laying, cherished perpetually by the moistures from the mountain. A forest which goes around it by itself, of various and manifold trees, becomes for it almost as an enclosure, so that even Calypso's island, which Homer was admiring mostly for its beauty, seems as compared with it. For, in fact, it does not lack much for being an island, because it is surrounded from all sides by fences. For deep ravines break off on two sides; on its side, the river which glides gently from the bank, is a wall, itself an unbroken and inaccessible; and the mountain being stretched on two sides, and being joined to the ravines through crescent arms, fortifies it. However, there is one entrance from it, to which we are masters. It hosts on another neck our dwelling … The best quality of the place that I can mention is that, although it is suitable to carry fruits of every kind because of the appropriateness of its place, to me it nourishes the most agreeable fruit of all, tranquility (ἥδιστον ἐμοὶ πάντων καρπῶν τὴν ἡσυχίαν[6] τρέφει), not only because it is far removed from the noises of the city;[7]

For Basil, tranquility (ἡσυχία – correspondent to the Latin *otium*[8]) and isolation of this place are essential for his commitment to asceticism. Even though he hints to the remoteness of it, Basil immediately refers to the people from the nearby villages, who come to the lake, attracted by its

[6] In this context, ἡσυχία is only a literary term.
[7] Basile de Césarée, *Lettre* 14.2, ed. Yves Courtonne (Paris: Société d'édition « Les Belles Lettres », 1957), 44. My translation.
[8] Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 71.

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multitude of fish.[9] This detail seems to be accurate, since Gregory of Nazianzus also mentions it in his epigrams about the death of Naucratius.[10]

Basil's letter received three replies from his friend. In his fourth letter, Gregory of Nazianzus uses extensive rhetorical figures in admiration for Basil's ascetic retreat. Like Basil's previous epistle, this one is also quoting Classical motives:

> For my part I will admire your Pontus and your Pontic darkness, and your dwelling place so worthy of exile, and the hills over your head, and the wild beasts which test your faith, and your sequestered spot that lies under them ... and your thickets of wild bushes, and crown of precipitous mountains, by which may you be, not crowned but, cloistered.[11]

Gregory continues with the same tone in his fifth letter, in which he refers both to Emmelia and to the time which he and Basil had spent together on the spot.

> How shall I pass over that garden which was no garden and had no vegetables, and the Augean dunghill which we cleared out of the house, and with which we filled it up (sc. the garden), when we drew that mountainous wagon, I the vintager, and you the valiant, with our necks and hands, which still bear the traces of our labours.[12]

Sulpicius Severus refered to an equally ideal spot for his monastic retreat. He placed the dialog with his monastic *amici*, Gallus and Postumianus, in the garden of the monastic-villa founded at Primuliacum.[13] The setting of this dialog reminded the readers of the Classical, Ciceronian dialog in the gardens of his villa.

Using a similar motif, Jerome advises Paulinus of Nola to live far from cities, where most temptations might deter him from his vocation, to retire in the countryside, and to pray in solitude:

> Be assured that, whether you dwell here or elsewhere, a like recompense is in store for your good works with our Lord. Indeed, … as long as you live in the country one place is as good as another. Forsake cities and their crowds, live on a small patch of ground, seek Christ in solitude, pray on the mount alone with Jesus, keep near to holy places: keep out of cities, I say, and you will never lose your vocation. My advice concerns not bishops, presbyters, or the clergy, for these have a different duty. I am speaking only to a monk who having been a man of note in the world has laid the price of his possessions at the apostles' feet.[14]

The status of monk implies living in solitude. Since he has chosen the highest philosophy, Paulinus should follow the model of the ancient philosophers. Since he is also seeking Christ, he should imitate the prophets, the apostles, and the holy men of the desert:

[9] Basile de Césarée, *Lettre* 14.1, 42-43.
[10] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epigrams* 156, 157, 158, trans. E. R. Paton, iin B. Capps, T. E. Page, W. H. D. Rouse (ed.), *Greek Anthology* (London: William Heinemann, 1919).
[11] Grégroire de Nazianze, *Lettre* 4, ed. and trans. Paul Gallay (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964), 3-5.
[12] Grégroire de Nazianze, *Lettre* 5, 5-7.
[13] Sulpice Sévère, *Gallus. Dialogues sur les « vertus » de Saint Martin*, 1.1.2, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine, Nicole Dupré (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2006), 102.
[14] Jerome, *Letter* 58.4, trans. W. H. Fremantle.

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> if you desire to be in deed what you are in name—a monk, that is, one who lives alone, what have you to do with cities which are the homes not of solitaries but of crowds? Every mode of life has its own exponents. For instance, let Roman generals imitate men like Camillus, Fabricius, Regulus, and Scipio. Let philosophers take for models Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Let poets strive to rival Homer, Virgil, Menander, and Terence. Let writers of history follow Thucydides, Sallust, Herodotus and Livy. Let orators find masters in Lysias, the Gracchi, Demosthenes, and Tully. And, to come to our own case, let bishops and presbyters take for their examples the apostles or their companions; and as they hold the rank which these once held, let them endeavour to exhibit the same excellence. And last of all let us monks take as the patterns which we are to follow the lives of Paul, of Antony, of Julian, of Hilarion, of the Macarii. And to go back to the authority of scripture, we have our masters in Elijah and Elisha, and our leaders in the sons of the prophets; who lived in fields and solitary places and made themselves tents by the waters of Jordan. The sons of Rechab too are of the number who drank neither wine nor strong drink and who abode in tents.[15]

Through these examples, Jerome warns Paulinus not to combine his monastic calling with priesthood. In his opinion, these two endeavors are not compatible, precisely because one implies living in isolation, while the other leads to constant interaction with crowds. While monks should live in the desert – Jerome continues – priests should live in the cities.[16]

Paulinus seems to comply to Jerome's ideal living spot. In a letter describing his early ascetic retreat following the calumnious accusations against him for the death of his brother, he refers to the Classic commonplace of the country life which offers him leisure and withdrawal from the everyday public activities:

> Finally, when I seemed to obtain rest from lying scandal and from wanderings, unbusied by public affairs and far from the din of the marketplace, I enjoyed the leisure of country life and my religious duties, surrounded by pleasant peace in my withdrawn household.[17]

This account reflects the literary representation of the country villa and its function in Paulinus' conversion to asceticism. Known as a *topos* of leisure, the villa and the garden became the place where Paulinus was able to escape his legal and social duties and to contemplate God freely. It is to this place that Paulinus invites his friend, Sulpicius Severus: "I shall set you in the monastery not merely as a lodger of the martyr who lies close by [i. e. Felix], but also as a husbandman in his garden.[18]"

This dichotomy, which early monastic literature uses abundantly, contrasts the desert, as a place where the angelic life can be reproduced on earth, and the city. Rooted in earlier literary productions

[15] Jerome, *Letter* 58.5, trans. W. H. Fremantle.
[16] Jerome's rhetoric against monk-priests might have been influenced by his negative experience. Although ordained, he has never managed to use his clerical status.
[17] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 5.4, 56.
[18] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 5.15, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (New York: Newman Press, 1966), 64.
See for the Latin text Paulinus of Nola. *Epistula* 5, ed. Wilhelm Hartel (Prague: F. Tempsky, 1894).
"Tum ego te non in monasterio tantum uicini martyris inquilinum, sed etiam in horto eiusdem colonum locabo."

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which used the same opposition in order to express by means of visual images the ethical contrast between goodness/truth and evilness/falsehood, the opposition desert/city became a widespread literary tool. The desert was also the place where an ascetic could fight the devil directly. In terms of location, the desert mentioned in monastic writings was not necessarily an arid uninhabited place, but the term could symbolically designate a space located at a certain distance from the inhabited world. Nevertheless, in opposition to the earthly city, it became the symbol of the spiritual city.[19] The metaphor of the desert was not limited only to monastic literature about Egyptian monks. On the contrary, Western literary production took it over.[20]

As the previous chapters have already mentioned, for the foundation of Tabennesi Pachomius chose a "deserted village[21]" surrounded by very fertile land, easily accessible through the Nile River from the nearby cities and through well-known roads from the surrounding villages. The monastery in Anissa was on the old Via Pontica, which made it easily reachable. Bethlehem and Jerusalem too were on frequently circulated roads, especially for pilgrims. In the West, Nola and Primuliacum were situated at crossroads of circulated routes.[22]

The venues of these family double monasteries were represented as ideal spots, continuing the ancient tradition of the philosophers' retreat at villa or at the *otium*. At the same time, the monasteries themselves were perceived as enclaves, able to ensure the ascetics' withdrawal from society.[23] Sometimes, part of the monastic complexes (such as the gates) or natural spots (such as rivers or mountains) functioned as thresholds between the monastic space and the outside world. In addition, due to their accessibility, the locations of these monasteries contributed to their role in the monastic networks which their founders developed.[24]

[19] James Goehring, "The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Egyptian Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1, no. 3 (1993): 281-296.

[20] The volume *The Encroaching Desert. Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, ed. Jitse Dijkstra, Mathilde Van Dijk (Leiden: Brill, 2006) groups papers dealing with the literary construct of the desert in the Western hagiographies. This chapter focuses on the family double monasteries and the use of the same metaphor in the literary sources about them. Rhetorical praising of the ascetics for having chosen the harshness of the desert in order to pursue their vocation does not always indicate a factual true. Besides the metaphorical understanding of the "desert," in some cases the spot where the family double monasteries developed was not necessarily a choice of the ascetics, but represented the only available option for the pursuit of asceticism. In other words, it explores the frequent situations in which the desert metaphor was adapted to the pious aristocratic households.

[21] "The First Sahidic Life of Saint Pachomius," Fragment III, 6, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, trans. Armand Veilleux, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 427. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation S1.

"The First Greek Life of Saint Pachomius," 12, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 305. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation G1.

"The Bohairic Life of Saint Pachomius," 17, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 39. Further references to the same source will be indicated by the abbreviation SBo.

[22] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine (Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1967), 32-38.

[23] Hendrik Dey, "Building Worlds Apart. Walls and the Construction of Communal Monasticism from Augustine through Benedict," *Antiquité tardive* 12 (2004): 357-371.

[24] See Chapter 3.

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The sites of these monasteries have only been partially determined based on the descriptions provided by written sources, mostly without archeological surveys. For a long period Tabennesi was thought of being an island in the Nile River, although, in fact, the place is on solid ground on the North-East bank of the river, in the modern village Nag'-el-Sabrîyât, half way between Faw and Dechna, ten miles upstream from Šeneset.[25] The sources related to the monastery in Annisa, situated on the Via Pontica, at one-day distance from Neocaesarea, made the estate identifiable.[26] Part of the monastery's estate was placed north of the Pontic road, in today's Turkish village Uluköy, 8 kilometers west of the confluence of the Iris and Lycus Rivers. The men's retreat could have been located in two equally plausible places. The first hypothesis links it to the contemporary village Hacibey, but its distance from the Iris River does not correspond to the descriptions of the landscape. Another possibility is the northern part of the area lying behind Uluköy, but *The Life of Saint Macrina* describes a different landscape.[27] Investigations done more recently in a field trip led to the conclusion that the men's quarter (that is, the retreat where Naucratius, Chrysaphius, and Basil started their monastic training, and where Peter retreated afterwards) should have been located on the plain on the fold of Iris River, "in the gorge country north of the junction of the Rivers Yeşilırmak (Iris) and the Kelkit Çayı (Lycus).[28]"

The sites of Paula's monastery in Bethlehem and the place of Melania the Younger's foundation on the Mount of Olives are well known, and several archaeological discoveries have been made at the turn of the twentieth century. Scholars debated whether a small funerary room attached to a Byzantine church on the Mount of Olives could have been the "small martyrion" which belonged to the men's retreat in the monastic complex of Melania the Younger. To the south and east of the Eleona sanctuary, the women's retreat could have been placed. The excavations conducted at the site revealed a mosaic with inscriptions from the Psalms. A large cistern at the same site could have been the cistern which Melania built inside the nuns' quarter. Another debate concerned an apse discovered underneath the Church of the Ascension. Its identification with the wall from the "small martyrion" of Melania has been criticized.[29]

[25] The Coptic name of the site is a compound word. Its first part means either *palm grove* or *sanctuary*, while the second part derives from the name of goddess Isis. In Greek the name was recorded in several forms, one of them being Ταβεννῆσος. A copy of Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History* records mistakenly ἐν Ταβέννῃ νήσῳ instead of ἐν Ταβεννήσῳ, thus giving room for the assumption that Tabennesi was an island. See *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, note SBo 17.2, 269.

[26] See G. de Jerphanion, "Ibora-Gazioura? Étude de géographie pontique," in *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph, Beirouth*, 5 (1911), 333-354.

[27] *The Asketikon of Saint Basil the Great*, trans. Anna M. Silvas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 43-50. However, one may question whether this very detail is relevant, since the landscape could have suffered transformations during centuries, or it could originally have been described through *topoi*.

[28] Anna M. Silvas, "In Quest of Basil's Retreat: An Expedition to Ancient Pontus," *Antichthon* 41 (2007): 73-95.

[29] Elizabeth Ann Clark, "Commentary," in Gerontius, *The Life of Saint Melania the Younger*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Ann Clark (New York: E. Mellon Press, 1984), 118-199.
Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "Fiches et Notules," *Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale* 5 (1903): 181-182.

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The site of the community in Primuliacum has not yet been discovered. The written accounts about it reveal that it was not far from Toulouse and Narbonne.[30]

V. 1. 2. Layouts

In each community, the disposition of the buildings had a significant role in the monastic organization. The buildings' locations and functions actually determined the proximity and at the same time ensured segregation between brothers and sisters. This section scrutinizes the accounts of the written sources that reveal particularities of the building arrangements in connection to the gender seclusion.

Since most of the communities were founded on private estates, one must take into account the pattern of building arrangements in secular aristocratic houses. There is evidence for a seclusion of women's and men's quarters even in private foundations, which might have been a model for ascetic establishments.

While accounts about the building arrangements inside communities exist, their reliability should be questioned, since the descriptions are filled with stylistic figures and the archaeological evidence is not consistent enough. However, it is worthy to explore the written testimonies, since they shed light on the way in which their authors wanted the communities to be perceived by their audience.

In its later years, the Pachomian monastery at Tabennesi became a sort of ascetic village and its connection with the outside world was made through a gate.[31] I suggest that the gate had a symbolic meaning, marking the boundary of the monastic world. For the visitors and pilgrims, it designated the proper place for entering the community. However, the existence of the gate does not necessarily imply the existence of a wall surrounding the monastery. In fact, for Wadi Natrun and the White Monastery, contemporary communities for which archaeological surveys exist, scholars concluded that the walls were later additions. The main church, the kitchen, the refectory, and the infirmary were placed in the middle of the monastery. There was a separation between the men's and the women's quarters, but this was certainly not the Nile River, as the *Lausiac History* argues.[32] Each monk or nun lived in his or her own cell, where he or she was supposed to fulfill the canon regarding individual prayer.[33] The houses where the monks and nuns dwelled were built around the church. In 404, when Jerome translated the Pachomian Rules to Latin, both groups of monks and nuns had "fathers and stewards, weekly servers, ministers and a master of each house. A house has … forty brothers[34] who

[30] Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, vol. 1, 32-38.
[31] Pr. 52, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 154.
[32] Ibid.
Pallade, *Histoire lausiaque*, 32, ed. and trans. Nicolas Molinier (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1999).
[33] Pr. 19, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 148.
[34] Or sisters. Pachomius sent the nuns the same rules he had previously established for the monks.

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obey the master, and, according to the number of brothers, there are thirty or forty houses in one monastery, and three or four houses are federated into a tribe.[35] "

In the first years of the 380s, Gregory of Nyssa was describing the monastery in Annisa as a single monastic unit, whom he called ἡ ἀδελφότης (the brotherhood) of the men and women who consecrated their lives to Christ.[36] The monastery distinguished a residential section for nuns (ἡ γυναικωνῖτις, or ὁ παρθενών) and a similar one for monks (ὁ ἀνδρών). The estate had a single church (ἡ ἐκκλησία) and a guest-house (ξενοδοχεῖον), but certain guests were lodged in the monks' or nuns' quarters.[37] The sources rhetorically emphasize that monks and nuns were separated by a natural obstacle,[38] which could have been either the mountain on the family estate, or the Iris River. In spite of the sources' ambiguity, some scholars argue that the mountain is more likely to have functioned as the border between the two ascetic groups, since Basil states that the river was impassable. In addition, this interpretation was supported with observations made on the contemporary spot. However, I argue that those observations do not provide enough evidence for a compelling conclusion, for two reasons. Although remarkable, the landscape observations do not take into account that changes in the fields could have occurred in the sixteen centuries passed after the sources were written. Secondly, and even more significantly, one cannot be certain about the accuracy of the description because of the highly rhetorical style of letters. Their authors, familiar with the literary conventions used in Classical descriptions of ideal places, were addressing an exigent public, also familiar with the Classical motives. Thus, such common places might have been a response to the expectations of the public.

The monastery in Bethlehem borrowed some architectural features from the monastic buildings in Kellia. The men's section was placed near the tomb of King Archelaus[39] and designed by Jerome with the term *cellulae*, equivalent of the Greek *kellia*, since it had a prayer room and a tower, similar to the ascetics' dwellings in Kellia. The nuns dwelt near the Nativity Church, divided in three groups, according to their social background. Each group of sisters lived and worked in a distinct building (*monasterium*). The nuns' section probably had also either one common prayer room for all the three groups, or one separate prayer room for each of them, since all the sisters reunited to sing the Psalms

[35] Jer. Pref. 2, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 142.
[36] *The Asketikon*, 24.
[37] Ibid., 21.
[38] Ibid., 46-48.
[39] See for the Latin text Jerome, *Onomasticon* 43.18-45,5, ed. Klostermann, 45, http://www.christusrex.org/www1/ofm/mad/sources/sources072.html, accessed April, 19 2013: "Sed et propter eandem Bethleem regis quondam Iudaeae Archelai tumulus ostenditur, qui semitae ad cellulas nostras e via publica divertentis principium est."
See an English translation in *The Onomasticon of Eusebius of Caesarea and the Liber Locorum of Jerome*, trans. G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, ed. Joan E. Taylor (Jerusalem: Carta, 2003), 31: "Near the same Bethlehem is shown the tomb of [Herod] Archelaus, the former King of Judaea, which is at the beginning of the fork from the public highways to our cells."

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each day, but only on Sundays they joined the monks in the Nativity Church. In addition, a guesthouse for pilgrims and novices was built by the wayside. All these constructions have been built and organized in three years.[40]

The monastic complex of Melania the Younger was placed on a spot filled with other constructions which varied from small oratories to monasteries, all of them commemorating significant events thought of having originated there. The Mount of Olives was associated with essential biblical events and recent life of the saints. In Melania's time, apart from being known as the place where Christ was captured, crucified, and from where He ascended to heavens, it was also known as the spot of His Transfiguration, the place from where He proclaimed the Beatitudes, or where He talked with the Apostles about the second coming.[41] The crowd of ascetic men and women inhabiting or visiting the existent cells and monasteries and the abundance of other constructions did not prevent Melania from being one of the most fervent builders. Since her arrival on the spot, in about ten years, her monastery was enriched with the nuns' and the men's quarters, a chapel, and a *martyrion*. According to Gerontius, Melania insisted from the beginning of her building program on having her nuns secluded from monks. Before the construction of the men's complex, one might assume that even prayers were occurring separately.

Paulinus' monastery in Nola is the most documented family double monastery from the point of view of its architecture. His letters and poems are supplemented by the archaeological excavations, which unveiled the entire complex. The monastery was located in Cimitile, close to present-day Nola. In its center laid an *atrium*, in which a *cantharus*, covered with a baldachin was placed. Three basilicas surrounded the *atrium*. One of them was renovated by Paulinus. The old basilica was placed on the south side of the *atrium* facing east, and Paulinus broke its northern wall, opposite to the tomb of Felix.[42] The new basilica was placed north, its building axis was oriented north-south, and had the altar towards north. Thus, any pilgrim, when turning from the altar, was able to face the tomb of Felix from the old basilica, situated on the other side of the *atrium*. The third basilica, placed on the eastern side of the *atrium*, parallel to the old basilica, was supposed to be the cloister. This building had the most important function of the entire establishment at Nola. It comprised two floors, each floor having a central hall with two rows of rooms on each of its sides. On the ground floor, at least part of the rooms sheltered important guests. The middle hall on the same floor sheltered poor pilgrims and the ill. In his tenth *Natalicium*, written in 404, Paulinus gives significant details about the decoration, from which one can further deduce how men and women used to live:

[40] Pierre Nautin, "L'excommunication de Saint Jérôme," *École pratique des hautes études, 5e section, Sciences religieuses. Annuaire* 80-81, no. 2 (1971-1973): 10-11.
[41] Elizabeth A. Clark, "Commentary," in Gerontius, *The Life of Melania the Younger*, 115.
[42] Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 27, ed. and trans. G. Walsh (New York: Ramsey, 1975), 283.

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> These recesses are set in the side of the cloisters where one portico covers a narrow unbroken stretch, and three entrances close to each other provide admission to them, three gates in a continuous lattice. The middle one is adorned with the holy names and the portraits of martyrs who, although of different sexes, are crowned with equal glory. The two extending on the right and left are adorned each with a two-fold inscription and depiction of faith. One is covered by the holy achievements of saintly men – the trial of Job by ulcers and of Tobias through his eyes. The other gate is occupied by the lesser sex in the portrayal of the renowned Judith and also the powerful queen Esther.[43]

Scholars assumed that men lived in the *cellulae* corresponding to the portraits of Job and Tobit, while women dwelled in those on the opposite side.[44] The altars of the saints were visible from the *cenacula*. This basilica was close to the buildings of the churches, and the guests, regardless their social status, were sheltered together on both floors:

> We have a cottage here raised of the ground, which runs quite a distance along to the dining hall, and has a colonnade separating it from the guest rooms. God in his kindness seemed to make this bigger, and it afforded modest, but not too constructed accommodation not only for the numerous holy ladies who accompanied Melania [the Elder], but also for the bands of rich people as well.[45]

The tomb of Felix was the center of the entire monastic settlement. An aqueduct, starting from Abella, collected the waters from the mountain slopes and distributed it for both the monastery and the city of Nola.[46]

Paulinus' letters sent to his friend, Sulpicius Severus, are the richest source for the descriptions of the monastery in Primuliacum. In 404, Paulinus mentions that, together with his letter 32, he sent at Primuliacum *tituli* for the two basilicas and a baptistery which Sulpicius had built. These lines were supposed to be displayed on the doors and walls, showing to the monks and the pilgrims the *amicitia* of Paulinus and Sulpicius.[47]

With the monastery of Primuliacum this section closes a scrutiny of the monastic ideal spots and layouts. For all these family double monasteries, sources distinguish several levels of seclusion between men's and women's lodgings, either in separate buildings, or in different wings of the same building. Sources written at the end of the fourth century indicate an increasing insistence on

[43] Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 28, 294-295.
See for the Latin text Paulinus Nolanus, *Carmina*, ed. Guillaume de Hartel, 2nd ed. (London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972).
"quas in porticibus, qua longius una coactum / porticus in spatium tractu pertenditur uno, / adpositas lateri tria comminus ora recludunt / trina que cancellis currentibus ostia pandunt. // martyribus mediam pictis pia nomina signant, / quos par in uario redimiuit gloria sexu. // at geminas, quae sunt dextra laeua que patentes, / binis historiis ornat pictura fidelis. // unam sanctorum conplent sacra gesta uirorum, / Iob uulneribus temptatus, lumine Tobit; / ast aliam sexus minor obtinet, inclita Iudith, / qua simul et regina potens depingitur Esther."
[44] Joseph T. Lienhard, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism. With a Study of the Chronology of His Works and an Annotated Bibliography, 1879-1976* (Köln: Peter Hanstein, 1977), 70-72.
[45] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 29.13, 115-116.
[46] Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 21, 195-197.
[47] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 32, 124-159.

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seclusion. To what extent this is only a rhetorical device, or it mirrored some changes in the monastic topography, is impossible to determine, due to the lack of sources. Although the writings of Church Fathers idealized isolation, the actual settings of the monasteries show that they were in close connection with the lay society.

Whether or not the sources provide accurate descriptions of boundaries between monks and nuns, the simple reference to such an element embedded in a monastic complex shows that, for the readers of the texts, the segregation was perceived as a natural detail. It is significant to note that, while seclusion was expected, contacts between monks and nuns were not completely prohibited. In each community, sources also allude to means of passing from one side to the other.[48] The monastic regulations of Pachomius and Basil actually mention clear conditions under which monks and nuns were supposed to meet and interact. The most frequent occasions were the common prayers in the single church of the monastery, but even in the church, the separation between the monks and the nuns was strictly maintained. Sources about the other double family monasteries also allude to contacts between monks and nuns. The following section explores precisely the relationships between ascetic men and women, to which the nature of these contacts contributed.

V. 2. Relations between "Brothers and Sisters in Christ"

Naturally, due to the proximity in which monks and nuns lived, the monastic leaders had to regulate the relationships between them. According to the rules, ascetic men and women were supposed to avoid frequent meetings, which were possible due to the communities' natural setting, the ascetics' practical needs, and the social context. For some communities, sources suggest a relation of interdependence between monks and nuns. Other sources point to a development of an ascetic *amicitia*, in fact a transformation of the Classical *amicitia*, which Cicero describes as a relationship that can occur only between free men of similar social status.[49]

The borders between monks and nuns ensured not only their seclusion, but also limited means of contacts.[50] Sources describe the daily autonomy of the two monastic groups, but do not argue for their absolute independence. In each community, monks and nuns divided their work, thus ensuring the seclusion of the groups, but always shared its results.

In all the versions of Pachomius' *Lives*, meetings between monks and nuns always occur in the presence of the abbess. In addition, on every occasion when physical work was necessary in the nuns'

[48] Grégoire de Nazianze, *Lettre* 5, 6, 5-8.
[49] Cicero, *On Friendship*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. William Armistead Falconer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1923).
[50] Ewa Wipszycka, "Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)," *Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, Supplement 11 (2009), 578.

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dwellings, trustworthy old brothers had to supervise the monks. When a sister died, a small group of monks organized the funeral and during the entire ceremony monks and nuns would not mix:

> When one of the sisters died, they brought her to the oratory and first their mother covered her with a shroud. Then the old man Apa Peter sent word to our father Pachomius who chose experienced brothers and sent them to the monastery with Apa Peter. They proceeded to the assembly room and stood in the entryway chanting psalms with gravity until the deceased was prepared for burial. Then she was placed on a bier and carried to the mountain. The virgin sisters followed behind the bier while their father walked after them and their mother before them. While the deceased was buried, they prayed for her and returned with great sorrow to their dwelling.[51]

In Tabennesi and Annisa, the leaders appointed certain monks for a large range of activities. They were responsible for transactions, work in the shops,[52] weaving linen or mats, tailoring, making carriage or shoes,[53] working the fields,[54] building dwellings, hunting or fishing.[55] Nuns, however, had less tasks. In general, their work was reduced to baking bread and weaving wool cloth. The writers might have chosen on purpose to provide their audience with these particular details about the nuns' activities. Baking bread, a task generally ascribed to slaves, was on purpose taken over by nuns as a sign of humility. Gregory of Nyssa reports: "[Macrina] looked after her mother's body, fulfilling in all other respects the required service, even to frequently preparing the bread for her mother with her own hands.[56]" I would argue that, besides this *topos*, through the image of Macrina doing this work out of her own choice, Gregory of Nyssa brings a first concrete proof of the 'slavery abolition' in the monastic family of Anissa. In addition, another significant common place is the hagiographic image of women weaving clothes.[57] One cannot assess how accurate sources concerning men's and women's activities are. However, the scarcity of details concerning women's activities can be explained through the fact that the male authors of these writings were neither fully aware of, nor very interested in the women's work.[58] I would argue that the interdependence of monks and nuns in family double monasteries, given by their specific works, was a reason for justifying their closeness. However, in order to prevent temptations that their proximity could have raised, sources insist that

[51] SBo 27, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 50-51.
[52] SBo 26, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 48.
[53] Jer. Pref. 6, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 143.
[54] Pr 24, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 149.
[55] Grégoire de Nysse, *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, 8-9, ed. and trans. Pierre Maraval (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 168-171.
Anthologie grecque. Première partie. Anthologie palatine, vol. 6 (Book 8. [*Épigrammes de Saint Grégoire le Théologien (Grégoire de Nazianze)*]), 156, 2nd ed, trans. and ed. Pierre Waltz, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960), 179.
[56] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 7.1, in *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 116.
See also Susanna Elm, *'Virgins of God': the Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 45-46, for the assignment of this task to the slaves.
[57] Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 41-44.
[58] Ibid., 571.

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encounters between the two groups happen only on rare occasions. These were, most often, common prayers and meals.

Annisa was situated on a vast domain, which included several buildings for dwelling, a church for common gathering, and a guesthouse. Gregory of Nyssa mentions in passing some instance when monks and nuns actually met.[59] He also hints to a division of work among monks and nuns. In the *Life of Macrina* he assigns to the nuns the baking of the bread and to the monks the fishing and hunting. These activities would fit the building arrangement of the domain in Annisa and, thus, suggest to the audience of the *vita* a division of the tasks according to the gender and rare meetings between monks and nuns. A reading of Basil's *Letter 3* gives a slightly different perspective on the relations between slave male and female. From his retreat in Annisa, Basil asks Candidianus to intervene in a legal affair. He recounts:

> after one of my servants died, a boorish man who was living with us in Annisa, without saying that he had had a contract with him, without approaching me, without bringing a charge, without claiming to receive something, although I was willing [to give], without threatening to be violent if he would not receive, together with a crowd of people of the same madness, attacked our house, bit the women who were guarding it, striking and breaking down the doors, and carried out everything.[60]

Basil asks his friend to condemn the revolting servant to a short period of detention, in order to secure the protection of the entire monastic domain. The episode suggests women servants in charge with works in the male ascetic dwelling at least at the moment of this letter's composition.[61] This detail corresponds to Gregory's suggestion of a division of tasks according to the gender. However, according to some scholars, "This is difficult to picture in terms of Basil's ascetic retreat" and Basil's request is only an intercession on behalf of Emmelia.[62] I would argue that the sources do not provide enough evidence concerning the presence or absence of female servants in the retreat of Basil. However, one has to note the division of tasks to which they allude. Apart from the presence of the servants, Basil's Rules suggest to the possibility that a monastery where monks and nuns dwelled also hosted children, male and female. Regarding the age from which they were allowed to take the monastic vow, Basil argued that it should have been the same as the legal age for marriage. Children whose parents were alive should have been entrusted to a monastery by their parents, while orphans should have been received in the presence of several witnesses. As for the boys and girls,

> they ought to be received in accordance with this principle [i. e. they should be taken care of by someone who has acquired the 'greatest diligence' and whose patience has been proven], but it is not fitted that be immediately numbered and enrolled with the body of

[59] For instance, at Macrina's passing, when both choirs participate in the psalmody.
[60] Basile de Césarée, *Lettre* 3.2, ed. and trans. Yves Courtonne (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1957), 14. My translation.
[61] Scholars have not agreed on it. Philip Rousseau states that it probably dates from Basil's second retreat in Annisa, in 363 or after this year. See Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 71-72.
[62] *The Asketikon of Saint Basil the Great*, trans. Anna M. Silvas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 46, n. 24.

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> the brothers – so that if they fail, no reproaches are brought against the life of piety. They should be brought up in all love as the common children of the community. Nevertheless, the houses and regimen of both the male children and the female should be kept separate so that no familiarity or unfettered freedom towards their elders is encouraged while reverence for their guides is maintained due to the scarceness of their meeting. Neither will the encouragement to sin arise that comes from seeing the penalties applied to the more perfect for neglect of duties … nor the inflation that often creeps in when they see their seniors frequently stumbling in matters where their own conduct is correct.[63]

According to Jerome, in the monastery of Bethlehem nuns were the object of seclusion not only from men, but also according to their social status. However, Jerome seems to be the exception to this rule, since from his correspondence one can deduce that he was in permanent contact with the nuns. As for the men's monastery, Jerome suggests that Paula did not get involved in its organization.[64] He even describes an idealized set of monastic rules ("ordo monasterii[65]") which Paula attributed to the monastery (but for which there is no written testimony).

> After establishing a monastery for men, the governance of which she had left to men, she took the many virgins from the upper, middle, and lower classes whom she had gathered together from different provinces and divided them into three troops and monasteries, such that, although they worked and ate separately, they came together for psalmody and prayer. … Only on Sunday would they go to the church beside which they lived, and each band followed its own mother ... Segregation from men was a policy so strictly enforced that she kept the women even away from eunuchs so as not to give any ground to slanderers.[66]

Women continued to practice handiwork,[67] as it happened in the ascetic households of Rome. In spite of the social division in the monastery at Bethlehem, Paula and Eustochium took the task of preparing vegetables.

In the monastery of Melania the Younger, constant separation of monks and nuns has always been a matter of concern, as Melania's hagiographer, Gerontius, reports. At the end of Melania's building program, the community had separate dwelling for men and women and secluded places for prayer.

In Paulinus' monastery at Nola, occasions for common gatherings of men and women existed more often. Perhaps the building arrangement of the complex facilitated these encounters. Unlike other communities, at Nola monks and nuns were only separated by a hall. Similar to Annisa, sources hint to common prayers and services in which choirs of monks and nuns participated together in

[63] LR 15, in *The Asketikon*, 200-201.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula. A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*, ed. Andrew Cain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20:74-75.
[66] Ibid.,74-77.
[67] Ibid., 76-77.

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psalmody in a sort of antiphonal chanting. When he wrote to his friend, Sulpicius Severus, about Melania the Elder's visit to Nola, Paulinus describes an evening service:

> The ringing choirs of boys and maidens in the cottage made the near-by roof of our patron Saint Felix resound. Nor did the other type of guests, however different their manner of life, protest, though they were dwelling in the same lodging. Even in them there was a pious sobriety emulating our disciplined silence, so that if they declined to watch and sing with us because they were overcome with sleep and mental indolence, they did not dare to register dissent from the voices at worship.[68]

In spite of the reserved attitude that the fourth-century Church had towards women, some clerks developed friendships with their female disciples.[69] The most revealing example comes from Paula, her daughter, Eustochium, and Jerome. During Jerome's stay in Rome, between 382 and 385, Paula became Jerome's patron, while Jerome acted as her spiritual instructor. After they settled in Bethlehem, Paula, who was able to dispose of her wealth, kept playing her role as a patron, sponsoring Jerome's endeavors. Jerome's rhetoric insists on the ideal of poverty, but at the same time also suggests to his audience a relation of *amicitia* with Paula. According to Cicero, *amicitia* was a relationship established between free men of equal status[70] and exchanges of letters and gifts were means to maintain it.

Jerome and Paula's *amicitia* is an innovation.[71] Jerome argues that Paula transgressed her gender, due to her asceticism. He also praises her for having renounced her wealth and, thus, her social position. As such, with Paula willingly lowering her status and transgressing her gender, a spiritual *amicitia* between her and Jerome was possible.[72] The conditions mentioned in Cicero's treatise on friendship were met, since social differences had been severed. From the correspondence of Jerome and Paula and Eustochium, 22 letters and prefaces to biblical books survived, all from Jerome's hand. While some are addressed only to Paula, others were written both to Paula and Eustochium. Evidently meant for instruction, most of them focus on explaining biblical verses. Because of Paula's eagerness for being instructed in the Scriptures and in Hebrew, for Jerome "no other matron in Rome could dominate my mind but one who mourned and fasted, who was squalid

[68] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 29.13, 197.
[69] Elizabeth Ann Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends. Essays and Traslations* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1979).
[70] Cicero, *Laelius: On Friendship*.
[71] Caroline White discussed Jerome's network of friends in one of her monograph's chapters. However, she does not problematize his *amicitia* with ascetic women. See Caroline White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 129-145
[72] I argue that the ascetical practices allowed both men and women to overcome the gender differentiation and, thus, to develop spiritual *amicitia*. As there is no evidence in the sources for an erotic reading and reception of such a relation, I disagree with the opinion according to which ascetic practices rendered women "virtually masculine, a transformation in status that opened up possibilities for friendships with men as well as with other women – erotically charged to varying degrees." I would suggest that this view is an overreading of the sources which, in fact, had a firm negative position towards eroticism. Pace Virginia Burrus, "Gender, Eros, and Pedagogy. Macrina's Pious Household," in *Ascetic Culture. Essays in Honor of Philip Rousseau*," ed. Blake Leyerle, Robin Darling Young (Notre Dame, In: University of Notre Dame, Press, 2013), 171.

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with dirt, almost blinded by weeping,[73]" as he confessed to Asella, another ascetic woman to whom he was spiritual father. He constantly used an admiring tone ("Therefore, O Paula and Eustochium, unique model of nobility and humility, accept these spiritual and enduring things as a gift[74]") and often expressed his pious feelings towards aristocratic ascetic women. For example, after the death of Blesilla, Eustochium's sister, he sent a letter to Paula meant to console her, in which he uses the rhetorical *topos* of expressing his sadness: "I confess my affections, this whole book is written with tears.[75]" In 404, when Paula died, he wrote her *Epitaph* in a form of a long and moving letter addressed to Eustochium, which ended with a moving farewell: "Farewell Paula. By your prayers assist your devotee in his extreme old age.[76]"

Of course, the rhetoric of seclusion between monks and nuns was meant to be a guarantee of the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the ascetic lifestyle in which they were engaged. In addition, it could have been also a response to criticism. Anti-Christian apologetic writings accused Christians of having been too daring in breaking the social norms, while the competitors of Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, or Jerome regarded their monasteries with skepticism. Thus, for the legitimation of the family double monasteries which they ruled, authority played a crucial role. This is the topic which the following section scrutinizes.

V. 3. Authority and Spiritual Power

As the previous chapters revealed, in a classical household, the ultimate authority over all its members and possessions belonged to the *pater familias*. The Christianization of households brought changes, allowing women, in certain conditions, to have an autonomy over their possessions. The aim of this section is to investigate the transformations of the *pater familias*' or *mater familias'* authority in those family double monasteries which emerged from aristocratic households. In addition, it also explores the construction of authority in Pachomius' foundation at Tabennesi, which, as the previous chapter showed, did not have as a starting-point an aristocratic household.

For conceiving, legitimizing, and manifesting authority, the leaders of family double monasteries used their privileges given by legitimacy. The emergence of monastic regulations is tightly connected to this problem. When the monastic leaders decided to put into writing the monastic

[73] Jérôme, *Lettre* 45.3, 182-183. "nulla fuit alia Romae matronarum quae meam posset edomare mentem, nisi lugens atque ieiunans, squalens sordibus, fletibus pene caecata."
[74] Jerome, *Praefatio in Librum Job*, *apud Medieval Women's Latin Letters*: "Quapropter, o Paula et Eustochium, unicum nobilitatis et humilitatis exemplar, ... spiritualia haec et mansura dona suscipite," http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/262.html, September 23, 2012.
[75] Jérôme, *Lettre* 39.2, 73. My translation: "Confiteor affectus meos, totus hic liber fletibus scribitur."
[76] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula*, 33.2: "Vale, o Paula, et cultoris tui ultimam senectutem, orationibus iuva."

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rules which had previously circulated orally, they emphasized and strengthened their authority.[77] The social and economic status of some ascetics enhanced their authority in the communities which they founded.[78]

Scholars have scarcely addressed the problems of power, authority, and the legitimized forms of exercising it in Late Antique monastic communities.[79] Authority has been defined as "a modality of social influence … fundamentally of moral and psychological order."[80] Calling it "legitimate domination," Max Weber distinguished three types of authority*: legal*, expressed in laws and competences; *traditional*, founded on the "sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them;" *charismatic*, which derives from the "exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.[81]" Narrowing down the concept to cases of religious communities, Weber introduced the notion of the "corporate authority":

> When fully developed, religious associations and communities belong to a type of corporate authority. They represent 'hierocratic' association, that is, their power to rule is supported by their monopoly in the bestowal or denial of sacred values.[82]

Claudia Rapp narrowed the Weberian model of authority, applying, for the case-study of the Late Antique bishops, a three-fold model of authority: *pragmatic*, *spiritual*, and *ascetic authority*.[83] Other scholars defined *authority* in the Late Antique Christian context as "the institutionalized and legitimized form" of *power*[84] in Late Antique society, and it inherited the meaning of the ancient *auctoritas.*[85] I argue that sources related to family double monasteries reveal a complex construction of authority, which combined the models proposed by Max Weber and Claudia Rapp.

The *legitimation* of authority had a double source. One of them is tradition, through an authoritative (most often, charismatic) 'ancestor' (understood in the broader sense of predecessor), from whom the monastic leaders 'inherited' their authority, being directly empowered to exercise it because of their unique connection. The other source is a newly built exclusive connection with an

[77] Pachomius was the first to take this initiative, approximately in 333, when his sister entered the monastery. Basil wrote the first edition of his *Asketikon* between 358 and 365, and expanded it continuously until the 370s. Finally, in 404, after the death of Paula, Jerome translated the *Pachomian Rules* for the community in Bethlehem.

[78] Alberto Camplani, Giovanni Filoramo, ed., *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority in Late-Antique Monasticism: Proceedings of the International Seminar Turin, December 2-4, 2004* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2007), 12.

[79] Alberto Camplani, Giovanni Filoramo, ed., *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority*.

[80] Mohamed Kerrou, *L'autorité des saints. Perspectives historiques et socio-anthropologiques en Méditerranée occidentale* (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1998), 14.

[81] Max Weber, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth, Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 215.

[82] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of World Religions," ed. Hans Gerth, C. Wright Mills, in Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 294.

[83] Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity. The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[84] Alberto Camplani, Giovanni Filoramo, ed., *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority*, XI.

[85] Ibid., 5-6.

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authoritative character. Monks and nuns, leaders of the family double monasteries, are described as charismatic figures even in their lifetime, but tradition plays a significant role.

After being instructed by "the great monk Palamon" in his first period of ascetic devotion, Pachomius inherited authority from his spiritual trainer. [86] In Cappadocia, Macrina achieved her authority from two sources and due to her own ascetic virtues. One source was her kinship with Saint Macrina the Elder, who had suffered persecutions during the reigns of Galerius and Diocletian, and who had received, in turn, spiritual training from Gregory Thaumaturgus. Another source was her newly built kinship with Saint Thecla, whose name Macrina was secretly bearing, which was a basis for Gregory of Nyssa for legitimizing her sanctity after her death. Moreover, since she was buried in the family *martyrion* which her mother had built on their own estate, the physical closeness of her and her relatives – Emmelia, Basil the Elder, Naucratius – with the relics of the forty martyrs of Sebasteia was another source of legitimation through sanctity. All these examples reveal that ascetics combined the authority given by tradition with their charisma.

Jerome alluded to the fame which he had acquired due to his outstanding knowledge and attempted to build himself a charismatic authority.[87] Paulinus of Nola and Sulpicius Severus used both their episcopal prerogatives for their pragmatic authority. Due to their social background, Paula and Melania the Younger also exercised a pragmatic authority, while sources written in praise of them attribute them a traditional authority.

Besides charismatic authority, the sources attribute to the founders of the monasteries an *institutional authority*, through the terms which describe their roles. The superiors of the Tabennesi monastery were most often addressed with the terms "father" and "*hegoumen*. [88]" In his translation of the Pachomian Rules, Jerome kept the meanings of the terms.[89] The term "father" had a variety of senses according to the ascetic context in which it was used. "Most frequently, it expresses the profound respect, the humility and the obedience that a son must testify to his father … The filial respect is also expressed through the honorific titles of *apa* and *abba*."[90] Sources also use formulas such as "the prince of the monastery," "the father of the monastery," "the man of the monastery," and, rarely, "head.[91]" The Pachomian congregation had a tripartite structure with three echelons of authority. The highest one was the *koinonia* (the congregation itself), ruled by "the head" (or

[86] G1, 6, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 301-302.
SBo 10, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 29-33.
The two texts record differently Pachomius' novitiate. Only the *Bohairic Life* states that before meeting Palamon, Pachomius spent three years in Chenoboskion (Šeneset), serving the villagers. This difference might be due to the fact that the *Bohairic Life* was written much later than the *First Greek Life*.
[87] J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome. His Life, Writings and Controversies* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998).
[88] Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)*, 336.
[89] He referred to the superior of the monastery with the words "pater" and "princeps." See Adalbert de Vogüé, "Les appellations de la cellule dans les écrits Pachômiens traduits par Saint Jérôme," *Studia Monastica* 37, no. 2 (1995): 241.
[90] Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)*, 327.
[91] Ibid., 335-336.

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archimandrite). It was followed by the monasteries (including Tabennesi) ruled by a superior, seconded by the abbot of the monks and the abbess of the nuns, and the houses, governed by housemasters, followed by their seconds.[92] The term *proestos* probably designated an elderly monk whom the superior of the community consulted for several decisions.[93]

Ascetic women were empowered with spiritual authority. Gregory of Nyssa calls Macrina "the great one," ("ἡ μεγάλη[94]") "the holy one," ("ἡ ἁγία[95]") "the blessed one," ("ἡ μακαρία[96]") or "the teacher" ("η διδάσκαλος [97]"). He expresses the influence that his sister had on his life in a deeply sensitive letter sent to a member of the Church administration:

> We had a sister who was for us a teacher of how to live, a mother in place of our mother. Such was her freedom towards God that she was for us a strong tower and a shield of favour as the Scripture says, and a fortified city and a name of utter assurance, through her freedom towards God that came of her way of life.[98]

The function of charismatic authority was to maintain the continuity and the stability of the community, especially in critical moments such as the death of a leader.[99] For this purpose, Pachomius named a successor, Petronius, whom he legitimized to rule the monastery after his death, thus transferring his own authority to him.[100]

Another source of legitimation for the monastic regulations endorsed by the monastic authorities were holy writings. Pachomius' and Basil's regulations used the Scriptures as sources.[101] The Rules were correlated with other ecclesiastic texts, such as the *Apostolic Constitutions* and different conciliar canons.[102] All these sources gave the necessary legitimacy for the enforcement of the rules and for explaining punishments as a consequence of disobedience: "Those who spurn the precepts of the superiors and the rules of the monastery, which have been established by God's precept, and who make light of the counsels of the elders, shall be punished according to the

[92] Ibid., 335-336.
[93] Ibid., 328.
[94] Grégoire de Nysse, *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, 10.1, 15.28, 18.7, 19.39, 28.6, 31.3, ed. and trans. Pierre Maraval (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 172, 192, 200, 204, 234, 242.
[95] Ibid., 28.14, 29.6, 30.8, 31.6, 37.13, 234, 236, 240, 242, 258.
[96] Ibid., 37.4, 37.19, 258, 260.
[97] Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione*, ed. †Andreas Spira, Ekkehard Mühlenberg (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
See the most recent English translation, Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Soul and the Resurrection," trans. Anna M. Silvas, in *Macrina the Younger*, 171-246.
[98] Gregory of Nyssa, Letter 19.6, in Gregory of Nyssa, *The Letters*, ed. and trans. Anna M. Silvas, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 176-177.
[99] James E. Goehring, "New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Studies in Antquity and Christianity 1), ed. Birger A. Pearson, James E. Goehring (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 241.
[100] SBo 121, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 176.
[101] SBo 23, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 45-46.
Anna M Silvas, *The Asketikon*.
[102] Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)*, 325.

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established order until they amend.[103]" In addition, failure to obey the rules, even due to the weakness of the body, was sufficient reason for giving a guilty monk penance:

> If someone has promised to observe the rules of the monastery and has begun to do so, but abandoned them, and later on returned and did penance, while putting forward the weakness of his body as the reason for his incapacity to fulfill what he had promised, he shall be made to stay with the sick and shall be fed among the idle until, having done penance, he fulfills his promise.[104]

However, one can remark that between the Rules of Pachomius and the Rules of Basil there is a striking difference especially concerning the strict hierarchy and the system of punishments, which clearly predominate the regulations of Pachomius. I argue that the strictness of the Pachomian norms is due to several factors. One of them is the failure of Pachomius to organize a first community of monks. The story is narrated only in the *First Sahidic Life*,[105] which has survived only in fragments. After having surpassed some conflicts with his brother, while they were building a monastery for the explicit purpose of gathering ascetics around them, a group of men came to settle around. Pachomius issued a first set of rules which attempted to organize the disciples into a *koinonia* resembling the community of Apostles described in the Acts. The rules had no hierarchical system and did not mention any punishment for disobedience. Pachomius intentionally humbled himself and became their servant, but the disciples proved to be irreverent and disobedient. After having endured their mockeries for four or five years, Pachomius attempted to reinforce the initial rules, adding to them attempts of punishment. The effect, however, was contrary to the expected one; instead of changing their behaviour, the monks persevered in their rudeness. [106] Thus, Pachomius expelled them in a way which surprised the disobedient monks:

> When he [i. e. Pachomius] saw that in their obduracy and pride they did not have the fear of God and they had decided not to listen to His voice, he was emboldened through the grace of the Holy Spirit within him. … He rose without stick or weapons, holding a door bolt in his hand at that moment; he pursued them one by one in the name of God and chased them all out of the monastery. They went as if pursued by a troop or by a fire. … Not only were the enemies scattered but they gave themselves up as slaves to be beaten.[107]

The author of the *Life* remarks a change in Pachomius' approach towards the new community of brothers who gathered around him. The second attempt of forming a *koinonia* does not fail since Pachomius, although continuing to provide and serve them, does not hesitate to admonish and punish the brothers who disobey the established rules.[108]

[103] Jud. 8, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 177.
[104] Jud. 12, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 178.
[105] This fact is an additional argument for the chronological primacy of the *First Sahidic Life* over the *First Greek Life*.
[106] S1 7-18, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 430-437.
[107] S1 18, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 437.
[108] S1 24-25, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1,438-440.

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On the other hand, one has to take into account the dissemination process of the norms. After failing to organize a first community, and after competing with his brother on the form of monasticism which they ought to adopt[109] when he eventually gathered a group of ascetics, Pachomius had an initial set of regulations which circulated orally. The decision of writing them and circulating them was taken after the community enlarged (whether because of the addition of the nuns' quarter in Tabenessi, or simply because the number of ascetics increased). Thus, in order not to fail (once more) in the attempt of organizing the community, Pachomius issued a first set of strict rules. His successors edited them to such an extent that, by 404 (when Jerome translated them from an intermediate text), when the *koinonia* had already become a large congregation grouping thousands of monks and nuns, and had acquired a significant economic power due to the economic activities of the monasteries, they had already received several emendations. The striking strictness was, thus, a means of maintaining control. Some scholars suggested that Pachomius was inspired by the organization of the military camp where he had been enrolled during his youth.[110] In addition, I would argue that another source for the difference between the regulations of Pachomius and those of Basil is their different contexts of emergence. The Rules of Pachomius might have been a response to the tension between anchoritism and cenobitism, which is felt in his first *Lives*. The superiority of cenobitism is expressed clearly in the *First Sahidic Life*.[111]

The *forms* and *means* of authority governed the spiritual and practical life alike. An overview of the sources indicates that the person and the actions of the founder of the monastery's *abba* (the Father of the entire community) had the greatest authority not only over the members, but also over 'outsiders.' His personal example of living an ideal ascetic life and the miracles that he performed guaranteed that God Himself legitimized[112] and continuously confirmed his position. The authority of the Bible and of the Apostles was added to his legal authority, which consequently enforced the reception of the monastic rules.

I would suggest that another feature that contributed to the shaping of authority was the way in which monks and nuns were grouped. According to the rules, those who were charged with the same duty had to live close to each other. For example, all the tailors lived in the same house:

> Brothers of the same craft are gathered together into one house under one master. For example, those who weave linen are together, and those who weave mats are considered one family. Likewise, tailors, carriage makers, fullers and shoemakers are governed

[109] See the previous chapter for details.
[110] SBo 7, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 26-27.
Johannes Grossmann interprets the story of Pachomius' conscription preserved in four of his *vitae* as a hagiographic cliché which, in fact, hides a story about him being imprisoned for a crime or at least a theft. See Johannes Grossmann, "Die Legende von Pachomios dem Rekruten," in *Junge Römer – Neue Griechen. Eine byzantinische Melange aus Wien*, ed. Mihailo Popović, Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (Vienna: Phoibos Verlag, 2008), 55-71.
[111] S1 7, in *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1, 428-429.
[112] Alberto Camplani, Giovanni Filoramo, ed., *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority*, 9-10.

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> separately by their own masters, and every week they render an account on their works t the father of the monastery.[113]

The *abba* presided over the entire community.[114] Since the monks and the nuns followed the same written rule, one may assume that they were similarly organized even in terms of the hierarchy among members. The Rule assign a supervisor to each group of ascetics with the task of caring for their integrity. The nuns were, in addition, supervised by a group of elder ascetic men.[115] Each house of monks had a housemaster, assisted by a vice-housemaster,[116] who had to assign tasks to the monks. The vice-housemaster had the same competences as his superior, but acted mainly in the case of the latter's absence,[117] so that the group of brothers would never remain without supervision.[118] Housemasters exercised their own legitimate authority, subsidiary to that of the entire community. In this respect, Pr. 99 states: "all the hoods shall bear the sign of the community and the sign of their house.[119] " The gate keeper of the monastery also had authority in both the spiritual and the practical issues.[120] Firstly, he was supposed to instruct newcomers on their arrival to the monastery and afterwards to introduce them to the community.[121] Further, at least the brothers' community had a steward (*oikonomos*) responsible for the economic activities of the establishment.[122] No monk or nun could exercise his or her own will without the approval of their superiors and the rank of each member of the monastery had to be respected. The eighth point of the *Precepts* stresses the importance of the rank:

> When someone uninstructed comes to the assembly of the saints, the porter shall introduce him according to [his] rank from the door of the monastery and give him a seat in the gathering of the brothers. He shall not be allowed to change his place or rank of sitting until the oikiakos, that is, his own housemaster, transfers him to the place he should have.[123]

Because of the complexity of the organization, authority had to be distributed so that it could cover all aspects of material and spiritual life. Pachomius used Apa Peter as an intermediary through whom he founded the women's community at Tabennesi.[124] Other monastics were in charge with the

[113] Pr. 6, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 143.
[114] SR 104, in *The Asketikon*, 330.
[115] "The elders appointed to the virgins' ministry". Pr. 143, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 167.
[116] Leg. 5, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 181.
[117] Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)*, 337.
[118] Pr. 65, 70, 101, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 157, 158, 162.
[119] Pr. 99, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 162.
[120] Pr. 59, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 159.
[121] Pr. 1.49, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 145, 152-153.
[122] Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)*, 331.
[123] Pr. 1, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 145. The other rules which refer to the rank are Pr. 13, 20, 63, 65, 131, 136, 137, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 147, 148, 157, 165.
[124] SBo 27, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 49-50.

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daily routines of the community. For example, the abbot of Tabennesi distributed garments through the housemaster and the other members were forbidden to possess more without approval.[125]

One significant aspect concerning the strictness of the Pachomian's regulations should be noted. Although he is credited for elaborating the common rule through a divine inspiration, Pachomius is not mentioned as the absolute superior of the entire *koinonia*. As the *First Sahidic Life*, which seems to be the oldest *life*,[126] puts in,

> Just as the brothers were established in separate houses and had in each house someone responsible for them as a father, [Pachomius] also belonged to a house. He was not any different from the brothers. He did not have the authority to go on his own to take a garment from the leader of the community. It was the housemaster of the house to which he belonged who took it for him, according to the regulations of the brothers he had established from God.[127]

In Annisa, the group of monks had superior, called πρεσβύτερος or προεστώς, while the nuns were directed by a πρεσβυτέρα or προεστῶσα. The abbess was subordinated to the abbot, but the abbot could not decide anything that concerned the sisters without consulting the abbess. In Anna Silvas' words, "the *presbytera* acted largely as a *co-ordinate* superior."[128] The two superiors also decided what work every monk or nun must do for the monastery.[129]

The *Life* of Macrina gives details about the distribution of tasks in the monastery and its guides. In the beginning, Emmelia had the utmost authority over the inhabitants of Annisa. Slowly, as the community evolved and diversified its ascetic practices, Macrina shared with her mother its coordination. At the same time, in the monks' section, Naucratius and Basil were coordinating. In the last stage of its evolution, the monastery had Macrina as the greatest authority over the nuns, while Peter was the monks' superior, after a period in which he benefitted from Macrina's instructions. However, the nuns were also presided by deaconess Lampadion.[130] Gregory of Nyssa assigned to Macrina the traditional and ascetic authority, suggesting as well that she and Emmelia exercised their pragmatic authority while their household was transforming to an ascetic institution. Although the sources do not suggest it clearly, some scholars argue that Basil modeled the precepts of his *Asketikon* on the model of the monastery in Annisa, until his death in September 378.[131] It has to be stressed

[125] Pr. 81, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 2, 159-160.
[126] See chapter 2 for the chronology of the *Lives of Pachomius*.
[127] S1, Fragment II, 5, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 1, 427.
[128] Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 24.
[129] Ibid.,. 23.
[130] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 31, in *Macrina the Younger*, 138.
[131] The date of Basil's death, assumed until recently to have been 1 January 379, has been re-discussed. Anna M. Silvas has made an overview of all the recent attempts to establish an accurate chronology of "the four Cappadocians" in her introductory study to the edition of the Gregory of Nyssa's *Letters*. See Anna M. Silvas, "Biography," in Gregory of Nyssa, *The Letters*, 32-39.
The same author suggested that Basil modeled his *Asketikon* on the example of the monastery in Annisa. See Anna Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 23-24. Anna M. Silvas, *The Rules of Saint Basil in Latin and English*, 6-7. Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 37-38.

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that the information provided by Gregory in *the Life of Saint Macrina* were disseminated at least two years after Macrina's death, after a period which Gregory spent in exile in a place, probably known only by Basil, who might have been his only contact with the community.

In the letters about or addressed to Paula and Eustochium, Jerome constructs a complex authority for Paula. In her *Epitaph,* she is portrayed as a pragmatic and charismatic leader of the monastery, whose authority Jerome legitimizes as a result of her long experience as an ascetic devotee under his own guidance. Thus, in Jerome's account, she was able to enforce a set of monastic regulations[132] which created a hierarchical structure of the monastery similar to the one in the Pachomian *koinonia*. I would argue that, since in the composition in which he accounts for this rule Jerome used his best stylistical tools, it is likely that the description of the monastic organization in Bethlehem was highly idealized. However, it is significant that Jerome's intentions were to depict Paula as a highly authoritative figure, in a way continuing her authority of *mater familias* in the monastic setting. His audience, especially Eustochium, to whom the *Epitaph* is formally addressed, would thus have both the model and the legitimization for her own authority, which she could 'inherit' from her mother "in flesh and in spirit."

Paulinus of Nola also portrays Therasia in admirative strokes, but assigns her merely a charismatic authority. Finally, Sulpicius Severus[133] and Paulinus of Nola[134] attribute to Bassula Sulpicius' conversion to asceticism, thus suggesting her charisma.

In family double monasteries the members were subordinated to a branched internal authority. All the forms through which the authority was exercised over the monks and nuns were strongly legitimized by the means discussed by Max Weber and narrowed down by Claudia Rapp. Concerning the legal and institutionalized forms of authority, the scriptural and apostolic origins which were perceived behind the monastic rules ensured the idea of God's intercession for their elaboration among the members of the monastery.

What sources do not fully reveal is how monks and nuns could influence authority inside a community. A remark made for a later period may also be valid for the examples discussed in this thesis. In these communities, men "functioned as figures of power and control. But on the other hand, the men – often the very same men – also typically cast themselves as the women's admiring followers, pupils or friends. [135]" The sources do not indicate this tendency from Pachomius. However, they reveal it in all the other cases discussed. As previously shown, Gregory of Nyssa extols his sister

[132] Andrew Cain does not exclude a possible written format of these rules, which has not survived. See Andrew Cain, "Comentary," in Jerome, *The Epitaph on Paula*, 359.
[133] Sulpice Sévère, *Lettre* 3, trans. Jacques Fontaine, in *Saint Martin de Tours* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2016), 100-108.
[134] Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 5, 53-69.
[135] John W. Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power. Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 2.

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as "the teacher," "the great one," "the mother," "the philosopher," and even as a martyr. He also describes Macrina and their mother as accomplished ascetics, who surpassed their gender.

As the third chapter discussed, possessions of wealth and slaves in an aristocratic household implied assuming legal obligations. These obligations included not just the preservation of the buildings, but also paying taxes, which in turn, gave to the owner the privilege of using all the possessions as economic tools. Thus, legal authority is another type of authority which ascetics coming from an aristocratic *milieu* could have benefited from. All in all, in family double monasteries, a particularity was the women's ability of having this kind of authority. While coming from an aristocratic background which allowed them to have a certain economic autonomy, certain ascetic women made a step forward towards philosophy: in their hagiographic portraits, they became not only sponsors of learned ascetic men, but also vessels and transmitters of knowledge. This is the main topic of the following section.

V. 4. Ascetic Women as Teachers and 'Monastic Pedagogy'

> [Macrina] took him [i. e. Peter] straight from his nurse and reared him herself. She led him to all the loftier culture, practicing him from infancy in sacred studies, in this way not allowing his soul leisure to incline to any vanity. In this way she became all things to the lad – father, teacher, guardian, mother, counsellor of every good. She so steered him that before he had passed the age of boyhood, when he was still in the first bloom of tender youth, he was raised to the lofty goal of philosophy.[136]

In this way Gregory of Nyssa completes the portrait of his sister, Macrina, as teacher of philosophy. Ascetic women as teachers, on the one hand, and ascetic women as learners, on the other hand, were topics which scholars have scarcely analyzed, even less with regards to the family double monasteries, where contacts with learned ascetic men had particularities.

In a recent article, Samuel Rubenson proposed to rethink the concept of "school" in Late Antiquity and how early monasticism was related to it. He identifies the basic characteristics of education in the same period as "withdrawal from production for a considerable period of time, the transmission of ideals and skills from teacher to student, a system of step-by-step progress through training and a supportive framework of economy, authority and physical setting.[137]" Leisure (σχολή, *otium*) follows the Classical ideal of an activity focused entirely on that which is useful for the soul, implying lack of social obligations and of concerns for bodily needs. For the early monks, physical work was essential for a good leisure and for overcoming laziness.[138] The tradition, which had to be

[136] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 14.2-3, in *Macrina the Younger*, 122-123.
[137] Samuel Rubenson, "Early Monasticism and the Concept of a "School"," forthcoming, 3.
[138] Ibid., 5-6.

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transmitted from a generation of experienced ascetics to the one of disciples, also played a crucial role.[139]

As the previous chapters reminded, a common epithet, which the male writers use about the women with whom they interacted, is "teacher." But how was this epithet reconciled with the Pauline commandment "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet[140]" (1 Timothy 2:12)? The first part of this section will explore the way in which the sources construct women's literacy, their appropriation of the Classical and the Christian literature, and their authority to "teach" ascetic men.

According to the sources, once the ascetic community was formed, the monks and the nuns had a continuous strong intellectual and spiritual upbringing, often parallel to the one given in Classical "schools.[141]" The literary skills were considered significant, since monks and, arguably, nuns, had to receive basic instruction inside the monastery. The *Praecepts* of Pachomius state that, if an illiterate ascetic comes to the monastery, at first, third and sixth hour he or she should "go to someone who can teach and has been appointed for him … [He shall learn] the fundamental of a syllable, the verbs, and nouns shall be written for him, and even if he does not want to, he shall be compelled to read.[142]" The *Asketikon* of Basil urged the ascetics that children, boys and girls alike, receive instructions from elders of appropriate age in separate houses:

> their teachers will use the names in the Scriptures. Instead of myths, they will tell them the histories of wonderful deeds and educate them by maxims from Proverbs and offer rewards for remembering both names and events so that they attain the goal with delight and recreation, finding neither grief nor vexation.[143]

Hagiographical writings, such as *The Life of Saint Anthony*, or the *Apophthegmata*, acted as 'textbooks' for ascetics.[144] It is worth exploring the entire set of 'didactic materials' which the ascetic men and women used not only in family double monasteries, but also in households, and to what extent the monks and the nuns appropriated their examples. In the previous chapter, I argued that motifs of such sources were used in the writings which emphasized changes in projection of the kinship relations between monks and nuns. For example, Gregory of Nyssa compared Macrina to Thecla in order to create the image of a spiritual descendance from Paul's disciple to his sister. The second part of this section will explore the other allusions to similar writings, chosen precisely because they could relate to the problem of men's and women's presence in a single community.

[139] Ibid., 6-8.
[140] "διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω, οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ."
[141] Lillien Larsen, "On Learning a New Alphabet: The Sayings of the Desert Fathers and the Monostichs of Menander," *Studia Patristica* 55 (2013): 63-67.
[142] Praec. 140.
[143] *LR* 15.3, 203.
[144] Samuel Rubenson, "Early Monasticism and the Concept of a "School"," 4.

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V. 4. 1. Holy Women as Learners and Teachers of Holy Men

Apparently, the very idea of women teaching would be incompatible with any monastic environment, deeply fond of the scriptural tradition. Two of the perceived Pauline letters explicitly forbid women to teach (I Timothy 2:12) and even to talk in gatherings (1 Corinthians 14:34). Unlike these commandments, some pagan philosophical circles had not only educated women, but also teachers. According to Porphyry, Plotinus, who lived in the household of Gemina, used to teach both men and women.[145] The previous chapter mentioned Porphyry discussing philosophy with his wife, Marcella, and even offering to instruct her sons and daughters.[146] In his *Lives of the Sophists*, Eunapius of Sardis (c. 348-414) includes the portrait of Sosipatra, a philosopher and theurgist woman, married to Eustathius, whom she obviously surpasses in her philosophical quest. After the death of her husband, according to the biography, Sosipatra retired to her own house in Pergamon and her son's education became the responsibility of Aedesius, who also "loved and cared for her." Interestingly, from her own house, Sosipatra held lessons of philosophy which surpassed Aedesius', whose students used to attend them.[147] In the following, I will present the main aristocratic feminine figures of the family double monasteries in a similar role. According to their male biographers, in their own households or monastic establishments, they could act as teachers of philosophy – sc. monastic life – being able to instruct even the disciples of the Church leaders. This investigation will begin with the background of women's instructions.

The monastics who belonged to the social elite had a background in classical *paideia*. The family of Macrina is one of the most relevant examples of this fact, since Basil the Elder was a teacher of rhetoric and both Basil and Gregory of Nyssa benefitted from the best education then available. According to her hagiography, Macrina spent the first years of her life in Neocaesarea. Until the death of her father, it is plausible that she had access to the library of the family, even if, as the next section will show, Gregory praises Emmelia for having kept her first-born far from the immoral stories of the Classical poems. After the Elder Basil's death and Emmelia's household's subsequent relocation in Annisa, it is possible that Macrina kept having access to the same codices.

Gregory presents Macrina as responsible for the conversion to "philosophy" of three of her siblings and of her mother. Naucratius, the second-born of the family, renounced his career as a rhetorician immediately after the end of his studies and, together with his servant, Chrysapius, retired in a remote shelter on the family estate in Annisa.[148] Gregory suggests that Macrina's second pupil

[145] Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus* 9, ed. and trans. A. H. Armstrong, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966).
[146] Idem, *Letter to Marcella* 1.3.
[147] Eunapius of Sardis, *Lives of the Sophists*, Sosipatra, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. Wilmer Cave Wright (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921).
[148] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 10.1, in *Macrina the Younger*, 118.

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was Basil. After the sudden death of Naucratius and Chrysapius, Basil visited Annisa, where, Gregory states, convinced by Macrina's arguments, he renounced his even more promising career for philosophy.[149] He spent around eight years in the same shelter of Naucratius, until he decided to get involved more seriously in the problems challenging the Church. Finally, the last-born of the family, Peter, chose to retire in the same dwelling due to Macrina's persuasive education since his early years. The one who received an education in several stages, according to Gregory's account, is Emmelia. First, at Macrina's advice, she released her slaves. Following the death of Naucratius, it is Macrina who teaches Emmelia not to be carried off by grief. [150] Thus, in Gregory's account, Emmelia becomes, from Macrina's teacher, Macrina's disciple.

Eight months after the death of Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa visited Annisa, where he found Macrina on her deathbed. In the *vita* about Macrina, he alludes to a deeply spiritual dialogue which they presumably had on that occasion. In *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Gregory claims that he wishes to reproduce this dialogue. The dialog opens with Gregory asking Macrina to answer his inquires, distressed for the loss of their brother, Basil, and for the imminent passing of her. Macrina's answers urge Gregory to abandon all the teachings foreign to the Scriptural tradition. She specifically refutes the Stoics and the Epicureans, blaming them for not believing in the resurrection.[151] Whether this profound and long discussion really took place in the way in which Gregory presents it, given the circumstances in which Macrina was, is not the object of this section. As I argued elsewhere, the dialog introduces to its readers 'Gregory's Macrina,' seen as the teacher of philosophy, aware of the ideas of the main philosophical schools, which she is able to refute. In this way, she clarifies for Gregory essential interior inquiries about the nature of the soul and the final resurrection:

> As our sister and teacher still remained in this life, I went in haste to share with her the sad news … My heart was very sorrowful for grief at so great a loss, and I sought to share my tears with someone who would bear an equal burden of anguish. But as we came in sight of each other, the appearance of my teacher stirred up new suffering for me. … She, however, like an expert equestrian, allowed me to be carried away briefly by the momentum of my grief, then tried to rein me in with her words, using her own reasoning like a bit to correct the indiscipline of my soul.[152]

[149] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 8.3, in ibid, 117.
Philip Rousseau considers that such an influence from Macrina's part seems unlikely and, moreover, that, during his stay in Annisa, Basil was rather not closed to either Macrina or Emmelia. See Philip Rousseau, " 'Learned Women' and the Development of a Christian Culture in Late Antiquity," *Symbolae Osloenses* 70 (1995): 126-27. However, it is not the object of this chapter to assess the reliability of this account.
[150] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 14, 5, in *Macrina the Younger*, 123.
[151] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 8, in *Macrina the Younger*, 174-175.
Samuel Rubenson discussed this episode from another perspective. He remarked that this is the only instance in which the Cappadocian Fathers referred to the subject of the debate between the "Stoics and Epicureans," on the one hand, and Apostle Paul on the other hand. See Samuel Rubenson, "The Cappadocians on the Areopagus," in *Gregory of Nazianzus. Images and Reflections*, ed. Jostein Børtnes, Thomas Hägg (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 128-129.
[152] Ibid., 1, 27.

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Gregory assigns to Macrina the literary role of a teacher who selects from the broad philosophical tradition, with which she is well acquainted, exactly those teachings worthy to be followed. I would argue that the attribution of such a crucial role to a woman is a novelty of Gregory. Macrina exposes the "teachings of the wise," such as Plato's *Phaedrus* and Aristotle's *On the Soul*, but suggests to Gregory that these should be dismissed. Instead, the corpus of worthy teachings which one should follow include, in the first place, the Scriptures. Secondly, she refers to the ideas of a Church writer whose legacy had already started to generate controversies. Macrina carefully and respectfully classifies the teachings of Origen, illustrating those which have to be rejected or accepted and revising those which needed corrections, without directly mentioning his name.[153] Thus, Macrina as an experienced teacher transmits to the following generations of ascetics, her pupils, a new, revised tradition, a set of knowledge about God carefully selected from the amalgam of teachings inherited from the past. Her 'methods of instruction' should also be noted. Gregory seems to differentiate between the situations in which she is a "teacher of philosophy" and the contexts in which she is educating in eschatology. While in the first cases she is the one who takes the initiative of leading her siblings and mother on a continuous instructive track, in the second situation she educated by giving answers to the inquiries of his pupil.

Ascetic women in Rome were also receivers of a spiritual education. Jerome does not hesitate to present and promote himself as a competent instructor of women devoted to the true form of asceticism. After he finished his training in Rome under the instruction of Aelius Donatus (a famous grammarian and author of commentaries on Virgil and Terrence), he lived in Aquilea, Antioch, and Constantinople, where he developed connections with influential figures (such as Epiphanius of Salamis and Paulinus of Antioch). After his return to Rome in the late summer 382, as member of the delegations of bishops Epiphanius and Paulinus, he struggled to be acknowledged as a biblical scholar and to obtain literary patronage. In Rome he found the perfect environment for displaying his monastic authority: the aristocratic ladies, inclined to convert to asceticism. Soon after being introduced in their circles through Epiphanius, who was hosted in Paula's house, Jerome impressed his targeted audience to such an extent that he became the spiritual director and biblical instructor of Paula and her daughters, Blessila and Eustochium.

Writing to Asella after being forced to leave Rome, due to the accusations of his opponents, he complains:

> It often happened that I found myself surrounded with virgins, and to some of these I expounded the divine books as best I could. Our studies brought about constant intercourse, this soon ripened into intimacy, and this, in turn, produced mutual confidence. If they have ever seen anything in my conduct unbecoming a Christian let

[153] Andra Jugănaru, "Macrina and Melania: Painting the Portraits of the Holy Learned Women in the Fourth-Century Roman Empire," forthcoming. For example, under Macrina's voice, Gregory rejects the pre-existence of the soul, accepts that evil does not exist by itself, but restructures Origen's *apokatastasis*.

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> them say so. Have I taken any one's money? Have I not disdained all gifts, whether small or great? Has the chink of any one's coin been heard in my hand? (1 Samuel 12:3) Has my language been equivocal, or my eye wanton? No; my sex is my one crime, and even on this score I am not assailed, save when there is a talk of Paula going to Jerusalem.[154]

Referring to Paula in his *Epitaph*, Jerome shifts his discourse. Paula becomes, from one of Jerome's disciples in scriptural learning, a teacher of asceticism. His technique differs, though, from the one of Gregory portraying Macrina. Rather than theoretical, Paula's teachings were concerned with the moral upbringing of the nuns, for which she seemed to use her own example and her knowledge of the Scriptures. As far as the scriptural exegesis is concerned, Jerome does not conceal his own exclusive expertise. Significant in this sense is the episode in which a pretended philosopher asks Paula questions about faith and resurrection. In Jerome's account, she does not proceed to answer, but asks Jerome himself, as the supreme authority, to give the proper teaching and refutation of erroneous ideas.[155] The silence of Paula in this particular episode is not surprising, given Jerome's self-esteem in his other writings. However, it is remarkable that, in her monastic *milieu*, Paula seems to have a room for transmitting her own instruction to the "younger" (understood here as less experienced) nuns. But what did the instruction in a family double monastery consist of?

V. 4. 2. Monastic *Paideia* in Family Double Monasteries

When one thinks of the instructions given in any ascetic context, unavoidably he concludes that the most common "didactic material" was the Bible. Monks and nuns were supposed to read particular parts of it and sometimes they even had to follow a particular order of the books. None of the monastic regulations mentioned particular moments when lectures should be practiced. In Pachomian monasteries, the superior of each house was in charge with a catechesis on the readings from the Scriptures. Monks were encouraged to talk to each other about the meanings explained by the superior.[156] Brothers and sisters were supposed to recite texts from Scriptures while working, which indicates that they were supposed to learn to read and to learn at least the New Testament and the Psalter.[157] These prescriptions can be read as innovative, considering the cultural context of Upper Egypt, a Coptic environment where the Classical *paideia* was less accessible than in other places.[158]

Gregory of Nyssa related that Macrina was reading the Psalter after she woke up, at the beginning and at the end of her work, during the meal, after the meal, before sleeping and after she

[154] Jerome, *Letter* 45.3, trans. W. H. Fremantle.
[155] Jerome, *The Epitaph on Paula*, 20.
[156] Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 81.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Samuel Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity. The Problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Thomas Hägg, Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 129.

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woke up during the night prayer.[159] During Macrina's childhood, her mother Emmelia took care of her daughter's education in the Scriptures.[160] To what extent this motif is an ideal which Gregory wanted to promote, or whether it reflected Macrina's upbringing is not possible to determine. However, the presence of the *topos* of ascetic women keen on learning the Scriptures is significant. Macrina benefits from the Classical ethos of philosophy[161] in an innovative way. Exclusively through the Scriptures, without having to face the immoral stories of the Classical poems, she achieves a higher philosophy than anyone instructed through the Classical curriculum.

Gregory of Nyssa starts the *Life of Macrina* in the familiar way, speaking first about her upbringing. He stresses that, although she had her own nurse (an expectable fact, since Macrina's family belonged to the aristocracy), her mother, Emmelia, was in fact taking care of her formation. She chose for Macrina's curriculum "the parts of the God-inspired scriptures that seem more easily learned at a young age…especially the Wisdom of Solomon, and … whatever bears on the moral life,[162]" unlike the tragedies and comedies which normally would have been part of the instruction of an adolescent. Gregory added that, further, little Macrina knew the Psalter by heart, since she used to recite each of its parts daily, at the proper time.[163] It is not to conclude that the facts occurred as Gregory describes them, and neither to generalize that such was the education which young aristocratic girls received in Christian families. However, it is important to remark the presence of this motif in a writing aimed at disseminating an ideal portrait.

Regardless of Gregory's literary techniques, I would suggest that it is possible to determine which writings could have been accessible at Annisa. Although sources do not indicate details, it is plausible that the monastics in Annisa had access to certain codices. Together with a letter to a certain Theodore, Gregory of Nazianzus offers him a copy of the "*Philocalia* of Origen," which bears the "souvenir of Saint Basil.[164]" From this detail, numerous scholars have taken it for granted that this anthology was the joint work of Basil and Gregory during the period which they spent together as ascetics in Annisa (from ca. 358 to 363).[165] If this hypothesis is true, one can assume the possibility that the work was accessible at Annisa, although Gregory of Nyssa does not explicitly mention this. Other scholars doubt either the composition of the *Philocaly* at Annisa, or the authorship of Basil and Gregory.[166]

[159] Grégoire de Nysse, *La vie de Sainte Macrine*, 69-70.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Samuel Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity:" 125-27.
[162] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 4.3, in *Macrina the Younger*, 113.
[163] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina* 4.3-4, in *Macrina the Younger*, 113-114.
[164] Grégoire de Nazianze, *Lettre* 115, in Grégoire de Nazianze, *Lettres*, vol. 2, 8-9.
[165] Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 17. See also Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*.
[166] Neil McLynn, "What was the '*Philocalia* of Origen'?," *Meddelanden fran Collegium Patristicum Lundense* 19 (2004): 32-43. The author does not state as an unequivocal conclusion that the *Philocalia was not* the work of Basil and Gregory, but rather underlines the lack of clear evidence from the surviving sources and suggests an equally possible dating and setting for its composition.

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The life of Saint Thecla had a wide influence on the women coming from rich families. Gregory of Nyssa compared Macrina to Thecla, and Macrina could have had access to her *vita*, given its popularity.[167]

The idea of instructing young girls of Christian families by means of the Scriptures is present in the writings of the Latin-speaking Church Fathers, who addressed a Latin-speaking public. In his *Letter* 107, which he sent in 403 from the monastery of Bethlehem to Laeta, the daughter-in-law of Paula, Jerome advices her on the education of young Paula, consecrated to asceticism. Jerome does not write a systematic curriculum for Paula, but gives a number of instructions. He starts with learning the Psalms, as a mandatory first step in Paula's education. Then, he continues with a surprising advice:

> Get for her a set of letters made of boxwood or of ivory and called each by its proper name. Let her play with these, so that even her play may teach her something. And not only make her grasp the right order of the letters and see that she forms their names into a rhyme, but constantly disarrange their order and put the last letters in the middle and the middle ones at the beginning that she may know them all by sight as well as by sound. Moreover, so soon as she begins to use the style upon the wax, and her hand is still faltering, either guide her soft fingers by laying your hand upon hers, or else have simple copies cut upon a tablet; so that her efforts confined within these limits may keep to the lines traced out for her and not stray outside of these. Offer prizes for good spelling and draw her onwards with little gifts such as children of her age delight in.[168]

This letter shows that, in Jerome's opinion, the education of young girls should include alphabetization. One may safely assume that the audience of his letter (not only Paula's parents, Toxotius and Laeta, but also their Christian entourage), would not see this practice as scandalous. Jerome continues, stating that a wise man should carry the instruction, teaching Paula first to pronounce the names of the prophets, Apostles, and Patriarchs from Abraham downwards. There is no evidence for confirming that this request was actually put into practice. Jerome also urges "that the child is not led away by the silly coaxing of women to form a habit of shortening long words or of decking herself with gold and purple.[169]" After other precepts concerning the social activities which, not surprisingly, Paula should avoid, Jerome comes back to her literary instruction. The following statement would not be easily put into practice by non-aristocrats:

> And let it be her task daily to bring to you the flowers which she has culled from scripture. Let her learn by heart so many verses in the Greek, but let her be instructed in the Latin also. For, if the tender lips are not from the first shaped to this, the tongue is spoiled by a foreign accent and its native speech debased by alien elements.[170]

[167] Anna M, Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 18.
[168] Jérôme, *Lettre* 107.4, trans. W. H. Fremantle.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Jérôme, *Lettre* 107.9, trans. W. H. Fremantle.

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The bilingual instruction of Paula would distinguish her from the non-elites and, I would suggest, would increase Jerome's fame, as the instructor who managed to form not only a simple choir of ascetic women, but a thoroughly educated one. Actually, not long time after this letter was sent, Paula joined the monastery of Bethlehem, where she became the third abbess, after Eustochium's death. In the same letter, Jerome advices her parents to provide for little Paula an older nun, as an instructor with whom she could get up at night and recite the psalms and the prayers. She was also supposed to learn to spin and sew, so that she could prepare her own clothes. In all her journeys outside home (mostly reduced to churches and shrines), Paula had to be accompanied by her mother. Besides, the good examples of the Elder Paula and Eustochium were supposed to make her desire to join the community in Bethlehem.[171]

Paula's training would eventually fit the practice of the monastery. According to the same Jerome, there "no sister was allowed to be ignorant of the psalms, and all had every day to learn a certain portion of the holy scriptures.[172]"

As for Paula's social behavior, Jerome urges her parents not to involve her in public meals. However, he does not forbid Toxotius and Laeta from participating in these,[173] which might be a compromise to their social responsibilities.

The Scriptures, particularly the Psalms, formed the core of the suggested readings for ascetics. Psalms recitations appear in Pachomius' rules and Jerome frequently advised his spiritual daughters to learn the Psalter by heart. The will to learn the Scriptures and the traditions of the Church in one's own household / family wes a part of the cultural changes that appeared when more and more devoted Christians chose to become baptized and transform their lives.[174] The result of this transformation is easily observed especially when comparing the language used by the Fathers of the Church before and after they embraced the monastic life. As it happened with Basil,[175] after spending their "hinge-years" in their monasteries, the spiritual growth of Pachomius and Jerome manifested in all the aspects of their lives, but especially in their completely new discourses, which became "consciously de-Hellenized" and full of Biblical quotations.[176] Moreover, the sources stress, not only for Basil and Jerome, but also for Macrina, Peter, Paula, Eustochium, and Melania the Younger that the "passion

[171] Ibid.
[172] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula*, 20.2, 77.
[173] Jérôme, *Lettre* 107.9, trans. W. H. Fremantle.
[174] Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*, 3.
[175] Anna M. Silvas, "The Emergence of Basil's Social Doctrine: A Chronological Enquiry," in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*. Vol. 5, *Poverty and Riches*, eds. Geoffrey D. Dunn, David Luckensmayer, Lawrence Cross (Brisbane: Australian Catholic University, 2009), 135.
Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon*, 86-89.
[176] Anna M. Silvas, "Saint Basil: Passages of Spiritual Growth," in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church* vol. 2, 354-355.

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for Scriptures" developed during the period of the ascetic retreat.[177] Thus, the sources emphasize the spiritually and intellectually formative character of the ascetic setting for both men and women.

One may assume that the education of a new member of the monastery was done according to his personal previous experience. The brothers and the sisters in Annisa and in Bethlehem had already had a religious formation based on Christian principles, but also a classical education, before they entered the monastic life. Macrina learnt "what the children were usually taught," although her mother tried to prevent her from encounters with fragments belonging to Classical authors that could have disturbed her soul. [178] However, in *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Macrina permanently referred to Epicureans and Stoic philosophers and used Platonic terminology.[179] Thus, Gregory suggests that she had known well their writings, but at the same time she had progressed both intellectually and spiritually so that she was able to integrate their ideas into the Christian perceptions about the soul and the resurrection. Moreover, she perceived the monastic life as "a direct continuation of that noble tradition of the *vita contemplativa* begun by the philosophers of Ancient Greece.[180]" In Gregory's narrative, Macrina also became able to teach her brother, Basil, and to convince them to adopt the philosophical life.[181]

Paula and Eustochium used to receive constantly theological education in their own house in Rome, since the moment of Jerome's arrival there. After they settled in Bethlehem, they were instructed in Hebrew and therefore were able to comment on Jerome's translations of the diverse books of the Bible. The correspondence with Jerome did not concern only philological aspects of the translations, but also theological problems. Perhaps even the order of the translation of the books was intentionally chosen by Jerome in order to contribute to their personal instruction. Jerome makes it clear that Paula and Eustochium became versed in the Scriptures (thanks to his skills, as he lets the reader understand between his lines) before they started to exchange ideas about Jerome's translations and, equally important, before Paula starts teaching herself. I would argue that the emphasis on female teacher mastering the Scriptures prior to assuming their own roles as teachers is meant to contrast with other female ascetics who, without having benefited from a proper instruction in the Scriptures, started teaching other ascetics. Even more scandalously, they started teaching men:

> The art of interpreting the scriptures is the only one of which all men everywhere claim to be masters. To quote Horace again: *Taught or untaught we all write poetry*. The chatty old woman, the doting old man, and the wordy sophist, one and all take in hand the Scriptures, rend them in pieces and teach them before they have learned them. Some with brows knit and bombastic words, balanced one against the other philosophize concerning the sacred writings among weak women. Others— I blush to say it— learn of women

[177] Anna M. Silvas, "The Emergence of Basil's Social Doctrine," 136-137.
[178] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 4, in *Macrina the Younger*, 113-114.
[179] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, 8, in *Macrina the Younger*, 218-224.
[180] Werner Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 20.
[181] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, 8, in *Macrina the Younger*, 111-112.

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> what they are to teach men; and as if even this were not enough, they boldly explain to others what they themselves by no means understand.[182]

Jerome advises Eustochium in particular (and, implicitly, the other ascetic women from her circle) to read the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian, Damasus – Jerome's protector –, and Ambrose in praise of one's dedication to virginity. She should also know Jerome's writings on sensible theological topics, such as the perpetual virginity of Mary (*Against Helvidius*).[183] Yet, Eustochium's studies are not able to make her accomplish her main purpose: the preservation of virginity. For this aim, Jerome does not suggest any reading. Instead, he urges her to have a certain behavior, suitable to consecrated virgins, which would withdraw her from the public sphere.[184]

Melania the Younger is yet another nun whom sources present as extremely learned. Her biographer recounts that she was married when she was fourteen-years old, a detail which makes scholars assume that she received personal instruction even after her marriage.[185]

Sources indicate that family double monasteries were places which offered constant instruction as well. Besides, the fact that monks and the nuns were all supposed to learn the Psalms, there are indications that these monasteries were using and preserving manuscripts. The establishment in Tabennesi added, at least in its later stage, a *scriptorium*,[186] each house had a *praepositus* in which books were guarded, and the ascetics were allowed to borrow them for one week. Besides, during the day, Pachomian monks had to listen in silence to one monk who was reading from Scriptures standing up in the church's ambo.[187] Both households of Macrina's family, in Neocaesarea and Annisa, had manuscripts to which Macrina had access.[188] In addition, children were sheltered in the monastery and certain ascetics were appointed to teach them. Some other ascetics were in charge of writing. As it was previously discussed, Jerome frequently exchanged with Paula and Eustochium discussions about his translations of the Hebrew Scriptures. In this case, his greater aim was to promote himself as biblical scholar. The monastery on the Mount of Olives had a scriptorium and became one of the points of departure for manuscript transmission. Last, but not least, economical transactions of the monasteries required secular training.

It has to be stressed that the examples which I had previously mentioned belong to the Late Antique social elite. Macrina and her siblings, Paula and Eustochium, Melania the Younger, Paulinus and Therasia, belonged to the richest families of their native lands, and therefore, according to the

[182] Jerome, *Letter* 53.7, trans. W. H. Fremantle.
[183] Idem, *Ep.* 22, 22.
[184] Ibid., 23-25.
[185] Joan M. Peterson, "The Education of Girls in Fourth-Century Rome," in *The Church and Childhood*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994): 30.
[186] Palladius, *Historia lausiaca* 32.
[187] Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism. From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages*, 31.
[188] Anna M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger*.

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customs, they received a good classical *paideia*. Moreover, they had slaves who might have been educated also, and who joined them in their monastic communities. However, for the 'ordinary' members of the monasteries who were not part of rich and well-educated families, sources do not reveal details about their alphabetization. One must assume that some of the brothers and sisters from these monasteries knew at least how to read,[189] since Pachomius and Basil put their monastic rules in a written format with the expressed purpose of sending them to their communities.

All these examples show that literacy for both men and women was felt important in the family double monasteries. In the instances where the local tradition had less connections to the Classical *paideia*, there is no reference to an instructions similar to the Classical times. In the other places, where the Classical education had a greater impact, the sources idealize the conversion of *paideia* to an exclusively Christian education, rooted in the Scriptures, far from the writings considered immoral, and in a different environment. This situation must have been influenced by Emperor Julian's decree on June 17, 362, which prohibited Christians to be teachers of rhetoric, grammar, and philosophy.

The most significant innovation occurred for women. Following Classical examples, women could be both disciples and Christian teachers of their instructors in philosophy. Even knowledge of more languages was encouraged and appreciated as a quality. All these accounts inaugurated what Samuel Rubenson called "a purely Christian *paideia*.[190]" The sources project the monastic *milieux* as schools which are capable to accommodate the Greek tradition and the Christian faith and where, more importantly, women played a decisive role.

A final daily life aspect of the family double monasteries needs to be scrutinized. The monastic setting, the relations built between monks and nuns, the ascetic authority, and the monastic *paideia* led to particularities concerning liturgical practices.

V. 5. Liturgical Practices in Family Double Monasteries

In most communities for which the sources mention their liturgical practices, it seems that the choirs of monks and nuns used to pray both together and in seclusion. The texts also indicate the existence of individual prayer rooms or chapels and churches where the entire community had to assemble.

The Pachomian dossier refers to two occasions in an ecclesiastical year when the entire *koinonia* gathered. One was at the end of the Lent, while another one seems to have been scheduled between end of July and end of August. Later on, one of them might have moved and shifted its purpose to the

[189] As Henri- Irénée Marrou points out, in Antiquity reading and writing were part of different processes in one's education. Reading was taught first, but a person who assimilated it did not necessarily continue with writing. See Henri Irénée Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956).

[190] Samuel Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity," 135-36.

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reciprocal remission of sins.[191] None of the texts which mention these gatherings refers to nuns also. Therefore, whether the women were supposed to participate, or they had their own reunions separately, remains an open question.

In his *Lausiac History*, Palladius accounts for a thorough prayer schedule which is not mentioned in the Pachomian Rules or lives: "he laid down that in the course of the day they should make twelve prayers and at the lamp-lighting time twelve, and in the nightly vigils twelve, and at the ninth hour three. When the multitude goes to eat, he laid down that a psalm should be sung before each prayer.[192]"

In the epitaph of Paula, Jerome described practices at the monastery in Bethlehem. As previously discussed, the choir of virgins preserved the social distinctions between its members at works, meals, and in dwellings. However, they

> met together for psalm-singing and prayer. After the chanting of the Alleluia— the signal by which they were summoned to the Gathering — no one was permitted to remain behind. ... At dawn, at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, at evening, and at midnight they recited the psalter each in turn.[193]

It is significant to note that Jerome suggests the annulment of the social distinctions only for the daily prayers. Like in Annisa, it is difficult to assess whether the described prayer times corresponded to the real practice. However, one can note the similarity between this account and the Rules of Pachomius, which Jerome translated for the community of Bethlehem not much later.

According to Jerome's description, "on the Lord's Day only" the three choirs of nuns celebrated the liturgies separately: "they proceeded to the church beside which they lived, each company following its own mother-superior. Returning home in the same order, they then devoted themselves to their allotted tasks, and made garments either for themselves or else for others.[194]" In the monastery of Nola, Paulinus reports services in which the choirs of monks and nuns participated together and chanted in a sort of antiphonal singing.

Little is known about the actual participation of monks and nuns in all the moments of the monasteries' liturgical life. However, these small differences from the single-gendered monasteries derive from all the implications which the simultaneous presence of monks and nuns in the same monastic unit had. These implications consisted in preserving a certain distance between the two choirs, while at the same time allowing for their regulated interdependence.

[191] Pref, 7; SBo 70; 144;
Pachomius, Letter 7, in *Pachomian koinonia*, vol. 3, 69-71.
[192] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 32.4.
[193] Jerome, *Epitaph on Paula*, 20.
[194] Ibid.

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With the present section, this thesis puts an end to the scrutiny of the family double monasteries in the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century. Nevertheless, it reveals that family double monasteries had not only a dazzling background, but also a captivating and remarkable daily life.

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Conclusions

"a spontaneous creation, which responded to practical needs
and which proved to be of a delicate use.[1]"

The present research aimed at scrutinizing the emergence and early evolution of an ascetic practice which appeared simultaneously with cenobitic monasticism in different regions of the Christian world. This dissertation is the first systematic survey of the so-called "double monasteries" which developed in the fourth century and in the beginning of the fifth century within the borders of the Roman Empire, due to family members who decided to pursue the ascetic path in proximity. It involved an interdisciplinary approach, combining history, theology, philosophy, and philology.

Family double monasteries are rooted in the pious Late Antique households, generally belonging to the high aristocracy, with one notable exception – precisely the one which gave the tone of this practice. Men and women relatives shared their inclination towards asceticism in proximity to each other either on their own family estates, or in new places. They formed quarters of monks and nuns who belonged to the same monastic unit, sometimes having a unique guidance (often a woman), they were economically and liturgically interdependent, but they lived separately and their encounters were thoroughly regulated.

Thus, the flourishing communities which sprang from a familial background and received the recognition of the Church Fathers are, in chronological order, the monastery of Tabennesi (Upper Egypt), founded by Pachomius and his sister, Mary; the monastery in Annisa (Cappadocia), which grew on the family estate of Macrina the Younger, her mother, and her brothers; the community founded in Bethlehem by Jerome, his brother, Paulinianus, and his spiritual daughter, Paula, together with the latter's daughter, Eustochium; the monastery of Nola, founded by Paulinus and his wife, Therasia, which became a magnet for other 'monastic spouses' and formed a true monastic network; and the monastery which emerged at Primuliacum due to Sulpicius Severus, his wife, and his mother-in-law, Bassula; the monastery founded on the Mount of Olives by Melania the Younger, her husband, Pinianus, and her mother, Albina. At the same time, other spouses renounced their matrimonial relations and continued to live as spiritual siblings in their own pious households, which they slowly transformed into ascetic estates, or, rarely, fled elsewhere. Such was the case of Amon and his wife or Gorgonia and Alypius. Not all the monastic spouses founded new independent communities, but some of them either joined already existent monasteries, or, after years of living in proximity, they

[1] Michel Parisse, "Recherches sur les formes de symbiose des religieux et religieuses au Moyen Age," in Kaspar Elm, Michel Parisse (ed.), *Doppelklöster und andere Formen der Symbiose männlicher und weiblicher Religiosen im Mittelalter* (Berlin: Dunker & Humbolt, 1992), 9.

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separated. Nevertheless, they were analyzed as part of the double gender family asceticism which was recognized and legitimized.

In secondary literature the *terminus technicus* "double monastery" has been used almost indiscriminately for all eras and for all the regions. Researchers have included into this category the coenobitic establishments which hosted ascetic men and women who used to live separately. Generally, they used it in opposition to other types of double gender communities, which they called "mixed monasteries," "neighbor monasteries," or "distant monasteries." None of these is, however, a proper denomination for any of the ascetic settings of the fourth and the fifth centuries. The contemporary sources have never used any of them and "double monastery," as a distinct category, was coined in the legislation of Justinian, where it was burdened with a negative connotation, carried on over centuries in the following legislations.

This thesis attempted to re-evaluate the family double monasteries, first by finding several common conditions which led to the gradual development of this old model of monasticism. First, a charismatic monastic leader attached to his male monastery a community of pious women who followed him and established a set of rules which concerned both groups of ascetics and their interactions. In other instances, male and female relatives transformed their "pious households" into ascetic establishments. In this case, they did not cease to live in the same environment, but at a later stage in their evolution, the groups of men and women were secluded. Again, rules established the allowed contacts between the sisters and the brothers. Yet in other situations, relatives founded a community for both monks and nuns in a different place than their household. Such a place attracted other ascetically oriented family members, creating monastic networks which imitated the traditional aristocratic family networks. In some situations, spouses decided to renounce their matrimonial relations and to become ascetics. Sources describe several stages in the accomplishment of this decision, which had noticeable consequences at the social level.

Such a re-assessment of family double monasteries would not have been possible without a careful scrutiny of the various and complex sources pertaining, directly or indirectly, to them. The scarce archaeological evidence which survived and has been explored at least to a small extent does not provide with substantial data. Thus, the thesis relied on the plethora of surviving written evidence, which indeed presents an astonishing richness of forms and numerous methodological challenges. The hagiographies, letters, monastic regulations, dialogues, homilies, sermons, and poems have their specific sets of rules which concern their production, audience, and way of dissemination, but most of the sources are, in fact, hybrid.

Far from raising exclusively theological questions, family double monasteries stood, in fact, at the crossroad of an economical, a social, and a theological competition. Their theological roots were the scriptural accounts of the Creation, when man and woman were engendered with the purpose of

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living together and were created equal. After the Fall, however, they lost their natural setting. Found in between the earthly and the heavenly realms, due to the angelic life which ascetics were trying to imitate, family double monasteries could represent, thus, an attempt of returning to the paradisiac state before the Fall, when men and women lived close to each other. The Origenist controversy and the Arian disputes strengthened this problem and the family double monasteries, through the legitimation which they received from influential spiritual leaders, both supported the dogmas and *praxeis* deemed as orthodox, or were supported by them.

The social context is an equally significant factor in the evolution of pious aristocratic households towards family double monasteries The secular and ecclesiastical legislation on marriage brought changes to the traditional social order after the Constantinian turn. The choice of virginity instead of a marriage was a novelty which challenged the social expectations of the era. On the other hand, the Church Fathers have always praised virginity, while their opinions on marriage varied, from a union allowed by God after the Fall, to a choice leading to a small reward in the afterlife. Ideally, men and women alike would replace the earthly marriage with the mystical union with Christ. Moreover, the union with the Divine Bridegroom was the only relation accepted as "spiritual." Authoritative Church Fathers firmly and strongly rejected other forms of "spiritual marriages" between ascetically oriented men and women, although such forms of symbiosis had been present both in Christian and non-Christian communities. Renunciation to marriage and dedication to asceticism were followed by a set of practices which affected the social requirements. Women used to renounce their marriage, to transfer their possessions to the Church, instead of transmitting them within the borders of their families, aristocrats used to renounce the social benefits of their positions, and renunciation to a married status conferred women autonomy and social authority.

In most of the communities which emerged from an aristocratic background, turning one's family to asceticism involved transforming the family's household (whose essential part was the *villa*) into an ascetic residence. Thus, the border public-private shifted, allowing for a larger private space, dedicated to personal prayer. Aristocratic families directed their "building program" to ascetic settlements. Responsibility for one's household, including all its members, remained an essential duty, which, in an ascetic context, could lead to socially burdensome practices, such as the release of slaves. Although not innovative in itself (as both the Stoics and Origen referred to it), the liberation of slaves could have been an occasion of acquiring new virtues. Renunciation of one's wealth, a *topos* in the discourses of the Church Fathers and a practice with a long tradition, was a means of "building oneself a treasure in heaven." Church Fathers went as far as to describe a theology of freedom, finding scriptural roots and deep theological justifications for the necessity of renunciation to slavery. In this sense, they gave as examples the monasteries which they supported. Such was the case of Gregory of Nyssa, who elaborated extensive justifications for this practice and praised the monastery of Annisa

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for its concretization. The practice itself had, in addition, another side: besides its moral values, it was also a way of escaping the burdens of one's social obligations. Thus, in the case of the aristocrats, renunciation of slaves and wealth impacted the social mobility (for example, for families who aimed to pass to a superior rank in the social hierarchy), and at the same time could create social insecurity for the slaves remained without master. As far as the wealth, including money and properties, was concerned, its transfer from the use of an ascetic to a monastery raised additional questions of inheritance. When the wealth was exceeding the average, its disposal became a long-lasting process, as the monastic spouses Melania the Younger – Pinianus and Therasia – Paulinus of Nola exemplified it.

Men and women took equal part in asceticism, but the views on women varied. Church Fathers both praised then for their holiness and were concerned that their presence would bring temptations. Among the variety of ascetic practices which women assumed, some of them aimed at annulling the gender differentiation or at confirming that the ascetics were able to overcome bodily temptations. Such were women wearing masculine clothes and cutting short their hair or ascetic women and men who cohabitated. Disputes arose around the differentiation between genders and whether it would be preserved after the resurrection. The Church Fathers who persisted in recognizing the manifested ontological differentiation of men and women, such as Jerome, opposed both the theological speculations regarding the absence of gender in the afterlife and the ascetic practices which mixed men and women. They endorsed, instead, ascetic practices as acceptable or unacceptable in a similar way in which they distinguished "orthodox" and "heterodox" theologies. Ascetic experiments, such as *syneisaktism*, or communities in which men and women cohabitated, such as those following the teachings of Eustathius of Sebasteia, were perceived as threatening. The involvement of the bishops in the existence of the family double monasteries was not only a means of legitimation for the ascetics, but also a means of limiting their participation in the public affairs. Thus, family double monasteries solved the tension between the family and monastic life. They were also a solution at hand for the tension between different *praxeis* and different theological trends.

As such, it was natural for family members who pursued together in proximity the monastic path to change their view on their relations. Family ties were indeed redefined or annulled, while the communities to which ascetics belonged were developing.

Although each pious household presents its particularities, several common characteristics can be observed. First, all but one family double monasteries emerged from the highest echelons of the society. The notable exception is the monastery of Tabennesi. Pachomius and his sister had rather a middle-social background and perhaps this was one of the reasons for which the family nature of the monastery in Tabennesi was loosened as time passed, the monastery expanded, and it was incorporated in the large *koinonia*. In spite of its trajectory in its later years, this community remains

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representative for the family double monasteries since it offered the first model of an acceptable ascetic life style for family members living in close proximity. In addition, the rules which Pachomius and his successors elaborated became a standardized normative canon for other family double monasteries long after Pachomius' death.

Another significant aspect which the family double monasteries emerged from a high social background brought was the dissemination of exemplary portraits of holy women. Their presence in the written accounts has a prominent rhetorical function, besides its pedagogical role. Reassessing and reusing Classical motifs, such as Plato's Diotima, the male authors presented holy women as their omnipresent companions and leaders on the way to the philosophical-theological quest, which ended once the 'true philosophy,' that is the monastic life, was reached.

Besides, in each community which emerged from a pious household, its members replaced their fleshly family with an ascetic brotherhood, relatives in spirit, who shared the same vocation of dedicating their lives to God. They continued to use the same vocabulary pertaining to the semantic field of "family," but the ascetic men and women entirely redefined their familial relations. Consequently, the expectable hierarchy of a traditional family was also reshaped. In these new monastic arrangements, parents and children in flesh became spiritual siblings or, even more, parents became spiritual offspring of their earthly children. Marriage relations were severed and spouses became spiritual siblings. The earthly generations were also redefined. In a family double monastery, the "first generation" did not comprise anymore the eldest members, but those most advanced in asceticism. As a consequence of all these transformations, unlike the traditional households, the members of these family double monasteries were ascribed new roles, duties, and, sometimes, hierarchical positions at odds with the tradition.

The simultaneous secluded closeness and closed seclusion of monks and nuns in family double monasteries influenced aspects of their daily life. Sources refer to ascetics using the landscape for the natural borders, such as rivers or mountains, which were able to seclude ascetic men from ascetic women. For the same purpose, the ascetics could use a certain arrangement of the buildings either on their own family estates, or in the monasteries built elsewhere. The physical proximity of monks and nuns and their appurtenance to a spiritual family created complex relations between them. *Amicitia* stands apart, since the ascetics added a "monastic seal" to the classical notion. Another innovation which family double monasteries brought was the authority of women, who were often described in sources as "teachers of philosophy." At the same time, monastic *paideia* heavily relied on the Scriptures and on the lives of the martyrs, but ascetics were acquainted with the classical type of education as well. Liturgical practices were also adapted to the gender seclusion.

This research does not aim to propose a new terminology for the communities which are part of its study, but it argues that it is essential to be aware of the origin, history, and evolution of meaning

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which the term "double monastery" had. It does not aim to write a piece of pure social history either. Instead, it scrutinized the evolution of individual figures, positioning them in their social context. All the examples that it brought together succeeded in winning the competitions in which they had to engage. Thus, they showed that *it was possible* for kindred monks and nuns to lead their monastic vocation in close proximity, respecting a certain set of norms and being formally recognized by the authorities of their time. It is not surprising, though, that similar monastic arrangements continued to exist up to our days, in spite of repeated interdictions, without being labelled as "double monasteries."

Thus, the importance of these communities lies also in the model which they were able to transmit. Overcoming the fears arisen by the proximity of the two genders, their closeness being supported by the account of the mankind's Creation as man and woman and by the idea of a non-distinction between them in Christ, the fourth- and early-fifth-century family double monasteries were not burdened with the heavily negative connotation which they acquired in the legislation issued later on.

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