Branislav Vismek

MIRACULOUS HEALING NARRATIVES AND THEIR FUNCTION IN LATE ANTIQUE BIOHAGIOGRAPHIC TEXTS. A COMPARATIVE STUDY

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with the specialization
in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Central European University

Budapest

May 2013

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by

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(Slovakia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of my thesis is to examine healing narratives and their function in several late antique texts. The three texts I am going to analyze, discuss, and compare are the healing episodes in the *Life of Porphyry* by Mark the Deacon (*VPorph*), the *Life of Proclus* (*VProcli*) by Marinus, and the *Philotheos Historia* (*HPh*) by Theodoret of Cyrrhus. A significant amount of literature has been written to date about all the three biohagiographic compositions considered here. Scholars have concentrated on various aspects of these works. Overall, they examined the texts from the linguistic point of view, argued about their historic reliability, and used them as a rich source of information for the social history. Similarly, the existing literature on the late antique biohagiographic texts, holy men, and miracles is abundant. Focusing specifically on healing narratives, and drawing comparisons with other similar texts, I am going to analyze their structure, their place within biohagiographic texts, and the agenda behind them. My thesis will contribute to the research by closely examining the functions and meanings of the miraculous cures within the chosen biohagiographic texts, and outside of them.

All the three biohagiographic texts discussed in my thesis originate supposedly in the fifth century. The alleged authors were all in direct contact with the holy men they eulogize. Mark the Deacon, allegedly[1] the author of the *VPorph*, was a disciple and follower of the Christian holy man he portrayed, i.e., of Porphyry. Marinus, the author of the *VProcli*, was also a disciple and follower of philosopher Proclus, and later wrote an account of him. Theodoret, the author of *HPh*, was, as he claims, in direct contact with the hermit Macedonius; he visited him regularly as a child in Antioch to his obtaining blessing and spiritual advice.[2] Two literary *topoi* are intermingled here: the classical veneration of a

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[1] See the chapter *Mark the Deacon's Life of Porphyry*.
[2] *HPh* 13, 18.

teacher and the witnessing and subsequent depicting of the life of a holy man. Furthermore, the main characters of the accounts on Proclus and Porphyry experienced an episode a conversion to the life of asceticism/philosophy.[3] Moreover, both of them achieved high status within contemporary "pagan" and Christian hierarchy - while Porphyry eventually became the bishop of Gaza[4] and started to convert the locals, Proclus became the leader of the famous Athenian Neoplatonic school of philosophy, which he led until his death.[5]

The healing episodes I have chosen for analysis depict the saving of a girl's life from three different perspectives. The first case is situated in Athens, the second in Antioch, and the third in Gaza. These healing narratives display striking similarities in the structure of the narrative, the method of healing, and the vocabulary used. These similarities and polemical references suggest the mutual influence and conflict between different "pagan" and Christian religious ideologies. Yet, on closer look, the structure of the narrative, method of healing, as well as the vocabulary used, attest the different literary and ideological background behind all these three texts. In my thesis, I will try to look at these similarities and the differences, evaluate the extent of polemics present, and arrive at the conclusions about the function these healing narratives hold within the texts and within Christian and "pagan" rhetoric of the day.

Methodology and Research Questions

The three healing narratives analyzed in my thesis are just a small part of *VPorph*, *VProcli*, and *HPh*. Before proceeding to the analysis of the healing narratives, the genre classification of these three texts, and the question of which literary genres will be included in

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[3]Porphyry was of a noble origin, living in Thessalonica, when a divine desire (θεῖος ἔρως) came upon him to leave the riches and splendor of his family and adopt an ascetic lifestyle. Therefore, he set out on a journey to Egypt to lead a solitary life there. *VPorph* 4. Marinus introduces Proclus' parents as distinguished both in family and in virtues, yet, as he says, his nurse and a midwife was the tutelary godess of Byzantium (ὑποδέχεται δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ οἱονεὶ μαιεύεται ἡ τοῦ Βυζαντίου πολιοῦχος), where he was born (between 409 - 411). She is said to be the cause of his existence, because he was born in her city, and took care of him growing up. She also appeared in his dream and exhorted him to philosophical life (αὕτη γὰρ αὐτῷ ὄναρ φαινομένη ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν παρεκάλει). *VProcli* 6.
[4]That is what the author claims. See the chapter *Mark the Deacon's Life of Porphyry* for further discussion.
[5]*VProcli* 36.

further comparisons, need to be addressed. Describing these three texts, one can either define them as pieces of "hagiobiography,"[6] or otherwise treat them as belonging to the specific genres of biography, panegyric, or hagiography without drawing a very neat difference between these, which, as some have argued, are, in fact, very close to each other, if not identical.[7] In my thesis I chose to adjust the term used by Anna Wilson (hagiobiography), and call the texts I am working with "biohagiographic texts." There are two main reasons for this: first, although it may seem that these texts are more of a hagiography as we know it from the Middle Ages, than a classical biography; on closer inspection they resemble classical biography, or a novel, as much, if not more. That certainly is the case with at least two of the three texts that I am analyzing (*VProcli* and *VPorph*), and the same applies for some of the other texts I will bring in for comparison. Since the classical biography came first and (Christian) hagiography developed on the basis of ancient biographical texts, I will call my texts in this thesis "biohagiographic." Second, this will both prevent misunderstandings if I include texts which Anna Wilson might not have thought of as "hagiobiographic", as well as suggest the reader not to associate these texts with mainly Christian hagiographies, *vitae*, as we know them from later times.[8] In what follows I will be using the term biohagiographic texts as an umbrella term for all the texts of various genres, which contain biohagiographic elements, which means, for the purposes of my thesis, veneration of a holy character, and description of his or her deeds (not necessarily miraculous).[9]

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[6]Anna Wilson, "Biographical Models: The Constantinian Period and Beyond," in *Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend*, ed. N. C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (London: Routledge, 1998), 107. All in all, "hagiography" is also a neologism introduced into general use first in French in the seventeenth century. See Martin Hinterberger, "Autobiography and Hagiography in Byzantium," *Symbolae Osloenses* (2000): 139.

[7]See the chapter: "Biohagiography as a Cross-Genre Category."

[8]For further discussion of biohagiographic texts, and their contextualization, see below.

[9]Since the term biohagiographic text is not a generally accepted literary genre, rather a methodological tool in my thesis, something like an umbrella term for different texts, I will be referring to these texts, if their genre has been established by scholars, in the way as they are generally known. Thus, for instance, I consider the *Life of Anthony* as a biohagiographic text, yet it has been commonly referred to as a (first) Christian hagiography, *vita*, therefore I may use the term hagiography or *vita* as well, especially if quoting or paraphrasing a scholar who referred to this text in this way.

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These texts were, according to recent scholarship, rather in intense contact with each other, borrowing a lot in language and style, and entering/engaging in religious/cultural polemic.[10] Consequently, I need to ask some questions related to this mutual influence: Were the Christian authors, when it comes to the use of miracles in biohagiographic texts, drawing on and borrowing from the Classical biographic genre? Alternatively, were the "pagan" biohagiographic texts of the fifth century themselves influenced by the specific development of the Christian hagiography? Finally, were both of these traditions developing under a mutual influence? Furthermore, for better evaluating the rhetoric behind them, I will need to address the question whether the miracles were a defining, almost necessary feature of biohagiographic texts in the fifth century. The significance of the miraculous stories would be different if the authors using them were following a literary obligation of a genre, as opposed to using them more deliberately, to strengthen their rhetoric.

My analysis of the three healing miracles can be described as follows: First, while close reading the texts, I will concentrate on their linguistic and narrative structure, the tropes and figures, and the *topoi* being used. Second, I set out to contextualize the texts and to apply the research questions. The two of these texts were written in the highest linguistic register available in fifth-century Greek, while the third one, the *VPorph,* was written mostly in simple Greek.[11] Besides, all the three authors claim to have known the heroes of their text personally. Finally, all the three women being cured in the episodes I am going to analyze were of high social standing, they belonged to the urban aristocracy. There is a question whether these texts and the healing episodes particularly, could be a result of mutual influence.[12] Further, what can be concluded from the differences between these texts, and their depictions of the healing miracles? The main character of all the three texts is a holy

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[10]See below: "Biohagiography as a Cross-Genre Category."

[11]Except the proem copied almost verbatim from *HPh*. See the chapter *A Bishop's View: Theodoret of Cyrrhus and his Philotheos Historia.*

[12]See the chapter "Mark the Deacon's Life of Porphyry" for the problem of the dating of the *VPorph.*

man. However, one of them was a Neoplatonic philosopher exercising theurgic activities (Proclus), the next one was an illiterate hermit (Macedonius), and the last one was allegedly a Christian bishop and former hermit (Porphyry). As I will show, the healing these three holy men perform, are depicted with the use of a similar language and imagery, yet there are substantial differences.

These similarities and differences between the three biohagiographic texts, and specifically, between the three healing episodes need to be contextualized. I need to examine what is the function of the episodes in their particular context, how do they integrate in the individual narrative strategy of each text, and how is their relation to the author's agenda. On that basis I can proceed to closer examining of the structure of the healing narrative itself: Which kind of narrative technique the authors employ to build up the healing narrative? Where is the emphasis being laid? Who are the characters involved in the healing episodes and what is their role in the text? Although the three miraculous healings which I am analyzing, as well as many other miraculous healings which I will be referring to, seem very similar on the first sight, focusing on these seemingly insignificant details we can gather a lot of information about the authors' aims and agendas. Eventually, that can help to answer the question of the role and function of healing miracles in these biohagiographic texts.

1   BIOHAGIOGRAPHY AS A CROSS-GENRE CATEGORY

Calling the texts I am working with biohagiographic is just one option among many how to address the wide range of formally and contentually different texts, which incorporate, to a various degree, both the biographic and hagiographic elements. These texts drew their inspiration from many different sides: classical literature, the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels and the wide range of early Christian texts, including the "apocryphal" literature, various "pagan" sources, and also oral tradition.[13] Marc Van Uytfanghe, in his article on the development of types of Christian holy men in Latin Late Antiquity, uses the term "hagiographic discourse"[14], which he does not understand as something specifically Christian, but as a specific, although not clearly defined, rhetoric employed in different late antique texts of Jewish, "pagan", and Christian origins.[15] Arguably, hagiographic discourse was present in various literary and rhetorical genres, in secular panegyric and in Christian *passiones*, in "private letters" and homilies, in funerary speeches, travelogues, miracle collections or even novels and romances.[16]

The texts which I study in my thesis are perhaps the closest relatives to panegyrical and biographic texts. At the time when Christians started to use biohagiographic modes of expression in their texts, non-Christian biographic texts had gone through a long history. Tomas Hägg with Philip Rousseau trace the origins of both biographies and panegyrics to the fourth century BCE, and it is in these early stages already when the basis for the twofold

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[13]Wilson, "Biographical Models", 108. These texts shared the *topoi* taken from different kinds of texts, they often shared certain organizing devices, but the way how they were used, and for which purposes, varied widely. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau, "Introduction: Biography and Panegyric," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. T. Hägg and Ph. Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1.

[14]Marc van Uytfanghe, "L'Hagiographie: Un «genre» chrétien ou antique tardif?" *Analecta Bollandiana 111* (1993): 166-179.

[15]Marc van Uytfanghe, "La typologie de la sainteté en Occident vers la fin de l'Antiquité (avec une attention special aux modèles bibliques)", in *Scrivere di santi. Atti del II Convegno di studio dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio della santità, dei culti e dell'agiografia Napoli, 22-25 ottobre 1997*, ed. Gennaro Luongo (Rome: Viella, 1998.), 17.

[16]Van Uytfanghe mentions specifically "si la *Vita* est le principal, il y en d'autres tel que la *Passion*, le panégyrique, le roman, la nouvelle, l'*epitaphium*, le recueil de miracles, etc., même si l'on est tenté aujourd'hui d'en globaliser au moins quelques-uns sous le vocable de 'biographie spirituelle.' Van Uytfanghe, "La typologie", 17.

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approach to writing, which will later become known as *bios* (life) and *politeia* (way of life), were laid.[17] It may seem that the panegyric is something like a subgenre of biography, but in fact the two had distinct roots, panegyric being closer related to epideictic rhetorical speeches, usually performed, or at least meant to be/claimed to be performed "live", while biography was something more bookish, looser, and not easy to define formally as well as genetically.[18] The flexibility of "biographic" expression was also connected to the function and audience of these texts, for instance, various classical philosophical schools could use it to demonstrate a specific philosophical way of life and a specific philosophical tradition.[19] Yet, the boundaries between these two "genres" were fluid in Late Antiquity, they were often closely interlinked. Elena Giannarelli speaks about the *encomia* and *vitae*, existing in Late Antiquity close to each other, on the same rhetorical niveau, as being as close as almost kins.[20] As I will show, the biohagiographic texts are drawn on both panegyrical and biographical tradition, use the elements from both of them and further disguise perceived "boundaries" between them. One of the reasons for this development is the change of the audience – there has been a lot of time between the antecedents of the biohagiographic texts in their pure "forms" and our texts, and whole new strata of audience have emerged.

As Häggs and Rousseau note, in biographic texts, the author could easier smuggle in his own views of an ideal saint or an ideal Christian way of life. Those panegyrical texts, which were actually performed "live" (like, presumably, the *Life of Proclus*, for instance, shortly after the death of the hero), were easier to be kept in track. The author, who might have gone on himself to deliver the speech to the milieu who knew him and his hero, must have been careful to craft his text with this in mind, so that the speech would be believable,

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[17]Hägg and Rousseau, "Introduction", 4.
[18]Ibidem, 2.
[19]Elena Giannarelli, "La biografia cristiana antica: strutture, problemi," in *Scrivere di santi. Atti del II Convegno di studio dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio della santità, dei culti e dell'agiografia Napoli, 22-25 ottobre 1997*, ed. Gennaro Luongo (Rome: Viella, 1998.), 49- 50.
[20]Giannarelli, "La biografia cristiana", 49.

and accepted by the audience. Rhetorical panegyrics and *bioi* are both products of a society which casted certain standards and rules on their form and content, and at the same time both have their own agenda, yet they challenge historians in interpreting them in different ways: Panegyric openly admits distorting the reality by its laudative nature, in fact, provide for that very expectation. *Bioi,* on the other hand, might be understood, by the audience (including some historians of centuries after the composition), as mere records of heroes' deeds or their lives, while it was, invariably, a rhetorical interpretation of one kind or another, usually with a specific purpose.[21] More often than in panegyrics, the audience did not know the author neither the hero personally, and was scattered across the time and space on much wider range than the audience of a panegyrist. For the modern historians, this applies for panegyrical texts as well as biographical, but the author himself (who was not really writing for such distanced posterity) must have realized this difference, and would compose the text differently for a direct or indirect audience. Furthermore, biographies often portrayed a hero who, if not a mythical character, lived several centuries ago, and often incorporated the narratives about the hero's birth (or the omens preceding it) and childhood. Even if the hero would be a contemporary of the author, there were hardly any reliable sources for the author of the text to base such narratives on, either written or oral.[22]

Trying to understand the intentions of authors of biographies, the functions of their texts, and their relation to contemporary society, Patricia Cox goes as far back as the fifth century BCE, to note the difference between "historiography" and the "erudite research." "The predilections of Greek biographers," she writes, "were much the same as those of the antiquarians" (that is, the authors of the works labeled here as an "erudite research").[23] Studying and analyzing the texts, one can see that authors of the "historiography" mostly

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[21]Hägg and Rousseau, "Introduction," 13-14.
[22]Hägg and Rousseau, "Introduction", 4.
[23]Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity. A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 5-6.

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avoided religious and social phenomena, focused on political and military events, structured the narrative chronologically, and boasted their texts portraying the truth – which they based on personal or oral testimony, unlike the "antiquarians," who relied on different sorts of written sources, structured their texts rather systematically than chronologically, and focused more on the individual achievements, unlike the collective body of the state. Yet, the actual difference between these genres was mostly not so rigid – not in the earliest extant sources, and as I will show further, definitely not so in late antique texts.[24]

As Van Uytfanghe argues, the time between the famous *Life of Anthony* (written between 356 and 362)[25] has been composed (and, almost instantly, been translated into Latin and spread across the different strata of the Empire) up until the *Life of Ambrose* (completed between 412 and 413)[26] by Paulinus of Milan, was a very fruitful and creative period, which laid the grounds and set the standards for the later texts about Christian saints, especially, it should be said, for the hagiographies proper, that is *vitae* and *bioi*. These later texts were less creative, and instead of portraying – and creating – "sanctity sui generis", they were following the standards set up by these texts.[27] The texts I am analyzing in my thesis were written after this period (*HPh* most probably in 444, *VProcli* in 486, and the date of composition of *VPorph* has not been established, however, the Greek text I use was not finished before 440-444). As it seems, these three texts belong to a transitionary period between the creative bursts of first biohagiographic texts about holy men of the latter half of the fourth century, and the later multiplication and spread of scripted, and relatively precisely defined texts. Anna Wilson sees this creative period also as an unexpected situation, which the Christian authors found themselves in, after the "Constantinian change", and they tried to

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[24]Ibidem. See also Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985).

[25]Athanasius, *The Life of Anthony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, translation Robert Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), xi.

[26]Emilien Lamirande, *Pauline de Milan et la "Vita Ambrosii": Aspects de la religion sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris: Desclée, 1983).

[27]Van Uytfanghe, "La typologie", 18.

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respond to it, on the literary level, differently.[28] Apart from the textual and ideological formation of main contours which the future *lives* will be drawn on, this period was also important for the creation of the main features of the cult of saints as it was accepted and promoted later on, from the six century onwards. It was a complicated process which cannot be reduced to a simple explanation, sociological, ideological, cultural, or political.[29] As I will show in the fourth chapter of my thesis, the biohagiographic texts, and specifically the rhetorical use of healing miracles, were significant and formative part of this process.

The acts of martyrs were also an important source of inspiration for the Christian authors of these texts, and one can ask with Van Uytfanghe whether the cult of saints would ever came to being without the martyrs[30] and how would it looked like. Today, the *communis opinio* seems to be leaning towards seeing the accounts on martyrs and Christian hagiographies as two distinct literary sets of texts, not generically interlinked, yet the latter as taking a lot of inspiration from the former.[31] There were acts of martyrs - the official records, and there were literary accounts on martyrdom. Whether the respective literary accounts drew on the actual official records or not, they were basically Christian interpretations and demonstrations of the supreme power and truth of a true Christian life, overcoming the death. After the persecution waned, there came the challenge to depict the power of a true Christian life, overcoming the death again, this time without actually literally dying in the body, like Christ did. Yet both were to a great extent depictions of an ideal, how the author understood it or how he felt it should be seen and promoted, regardless the person depicted was a real person or not. While *martyria* drew mostly on the crucifiction narrative, later *lives* incorporated increasingly other narrative patterns from the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels,

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[28]Wilson, "Biographical Models", 108.

[29]Marc van Uytfanghe, "L'origine, l'essor et les fonctions du culte des saints. Quelques repères pour un dèbat rouvert," *Cassiodorus* 2 (1996): 143-198.

[30]Van Uytfanghe, "La typologie", 19, Van Uytfanghe, "L'origine," 154. The other two Abrahamic religions, for instance, have not developed the cult of saints on any comparable scale to Christianity. Ibidem, 144-145.

[31]Ibidem.

including the concept of the *life* of Jesus as whole, which might have been seen as a more "legitimate" inspiration for portraying an ideal Christian life than a philosophical *bios* or classical biography of Plutarchian style.

Concepts of an ideal Christian life, striving for perfection, had been elaborated before in the works of Origen (2nd – 3rd century) or Clement of Alexandria (1st – 2nd century), but the author of the *Life of Anthony* "translated" these ideals into the new, eremitic, setting. Many contentual and conceptual features of the *Life of Anthony*, a ἅγιος[32] striving for perfection (ascetic life in the desert, yet portraying contacts with the other ascetics, Christians, and even the Emperors, participating in the life of the church, fighting "heretics", disputing with "pagans", and especially fighting against the demons) became a standard stock for later hagiographies. The *Life of Anthony* represented a somewhat inflated version of its Biblical patterns[33], the text adopted extreme asceticism and constant battles with the demons, on the path to an ideal Christian life, and it has influenced later authors to a large extent. Yet it did not really define later hagiographies, it rather catalysed their literary development[34], many later authors based their biohagiographic approach on this text, others defined other "alternatives" in response to it, yet others, especially in later periods, merely picked, arbitrarily perhaps, few of its components to pepper and legitimize their own works.

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[32]In Paulinian terms, everyone in the early Christian community has been, theologically, understood as a ἅγιος. The change, which came about during the first four-five centuries, has been developing slowly on many levels, theological (eschatology, intercession, state of a person between their death and the resurrection, etc) , ritual (funerary habits, inscriptions, gatherings and celebrating martyrs), social ("privatization" of certain cults by the high class, patronization, veneration of relics), political (persecutions, legalization of and soon to be exclusivity status for the Christian cult), and - not the least, the emerging discourse of miracle working. Of course, miracles (as wonders) were present already in the Gospels, and in certain sense in *passiones*, but the fourth and fifth century saw the crucial battles "over miracles", theologians were reasoning how to establish the grounds for recognizing the "true" miracles and if there can be any in the post-apostolic period, biohagiographers were conquering with the "legitimate" miracles "illegitimate" wonderworkres, and magicians, either "heretical" or "pagan." Van Uytfanghe, "L'origine", 151-176.

[33]Van Uytfanghe, "La typologie", 21.

[34]Already the *Life of Cyprian* offered, though only as a pendant to martyrdom narrative, a textual interpretation of an ideal Christian life. It employed many *synkrisias* and mimetic analogies to biblical texts, which came later to be a stable part of many biohagiographic texts, but the *Life of Cyprian* remained an isolated text. Only the *Life of Anthony*, which appeared later and in a changed context, after the persecutions leading to "martyrdoms" were over, and Christianity was soon to become firmly established as the only state religion, sparked this new creative period. Van Uytfanghe, "La typologie", 19-20.

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These other texts were also trying to establish the "true" or ideal Christian ascetic life against Jewish, "pagan", and "heretical" lives, often doing so against the prominent type of sainthood as portrayed in the influential *Life of Anthony*. It was admitted as commendable and worthy to follow, yet other alternatives to equally praiseworthy Christian ideal were being offered. Jeromes's Paul, for instance, lived as a hermit but without constant battles with demons, without the gradation of his prophetic and miraculous powers. He embodied, as Van Uytfanghe puts it, an "intellectual monk" living bucolically. Jerome's Malchus, an ascetic, who fled to live a monastic life after he refused to marry, was portrayed in a text reminding classical novels, full of peripeties – fleeing the monastery, being sold into slavery, fleeing again together with another slave who was supposed to become his wife. In his *epitaphium* on Paula, Jerome elaborated an ideal saintly life in an entirely different type of text, following the standards set up by Menander Rhetor, who became a very important source for the formal organizing of many later lives. Jerome's Hilarion, wonderworker, nomadic monk, was closer to "Anthony's sainthood", yet the text portrayed much less struggles with demons and, what later came to be a very important part of Christian *vitae*, many miracles after his death.[35]

The doctrinal issues and the developing of the dogma were often discerningly present in (writing) biohagiographic texts. It may seem that the "higher" literature, like theological treatises, adopted the "shaping" role in relation to the doctrinal issues, while the "lower" genres functioned as the (indirect) "communicator" of the current, established positions of theological authorities. In fact, the boundaries between the "higher" and "lower" genres seem to be much more fluid, as well as the functions of such different categories of Christian texts as a theological treatise and a *life* of saint. Apart from the function of these texts, the actual effects they had on shaping the Christian discourse and society in their respective milieus, may differ significantly from the intended functions of these texts. Texts such as the *Life of*

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[35]Van Uytfanghe, "La typologie", 21-23.

Anthony might perhaps not have been intended as a contribution to theological issues of the day, yet in turn might have had more impact on some theological positions than actual treatises written for that very purpose. Also, the "political" was very often decidedly present in these texts.[36] The same goes for the relations of Christianity and its self-definition against Judaism and "paganism." In reality, for many Christian communities, the difference between Judaism and Christianity was rather blurred and stayed so for a very long time. However, in the Christian writing the firm and "emancipating" stance against Judaistic elements appeared very soon.[37]

1.1 The Function of Biohagiographic Elements in the Texts

The different texts were often, rhetorically, in an outspoken polemical clash, yet it seems that in fact it was rather closer to a competition – "both"[38] sides were attacking each other rhetorically, but practically they did not hesitate to "borrow" or "steal" ideas of the other party, if it suited their case. Such a competition should not be understood only as a pragmatic and opportunistic use of whatever means were available, it went rather deeper, into becoming something like a cross-fertilization[39] of different ideologies, which were not always in enmity, at the end of the day.

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[36]Wilson, "Biographical Models", 108.

[37]See for instance Robert Louis Wilken, *John Chrysosotom and the Jews, Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[38]It does not mean that there were only two sides engaged in these rhetorical clashes and ideological competition, but the dichotomy "we the right ones vs. the others" seemed to be always there, even if more "parties" were involved, even on the level of one single text. Also, "philosophers" and "Christians" were often preoccupied more with the competition among themselves than with each other, or attacked the "exotic pagan cults." For philosophers see Gillian Clark, "Philosophic Lives and the Philosophic Life. Porphyry and Iamblichus," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. T. Hägg and Ph. Rousseau, 29-51 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 31.

[39]For instance, Elizabeth A. Clark identifies the Ostia vision in Augustine's *Confessions* as his own "lightly-Christianized version of Plotinian notions of the soul's ascent." This is, however, not presented in polemical tones, nor does it seem to be an open, admitted paraphrase. Elizabeth A. Clark, "Rewriting Early Christian History", in *Portraits of Spiritual Authority. Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient,* ed. Jan Willem Drijvers and John W. Watt (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 19.

Yet, it was Christianity which came to define both the Latin and the Byzantine part of Empire from Late Antiquity onwards. However, the terms like *Untergang, Ausgang, la fin* used in reference to "paganism" are no longer generally accepted.[40] Certainly, "paganism", Hellenism, classical philosophy and even Judaistic culture seems to be hidden, or in minority, if we are to judge from the amount of the texts and their (superficial) reading. But if it did not survive "visibly" where did it go, or which forms did it took in those times of seeming wane? These questions are not to be even attempted to answer in this thesis, yet they should be taken into account, since "paganism", Judaism, and classical philosophy all had their say in creating the Christian Rhetoric of the Empire,[41] in shaping both biohagiographic texts and, consequently, the holy men (and women) themselves and those who looked up to them. The "Christianizing" rhetoric however, including (self)-defining polemics pointed both "outside" and "inside", seem to have been crucial tool in this.[42]

Perhaps one of the crucial new elements which Christianity had to offer was the shift away from the social exclusivity of Judaism, philosophy, and many of the "pagan" cults.[43] It is no longer accepted that Judaism was an exclusivist religion[44], yet Christianity gradually managed to bring the inclusiveness on a whole new level. Also, the emphasis on the notion of

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[40]I am referring mostly to Glen Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Most notable scholars, who still argue for the importance of looking upon the late antique history from the perspective of the decline are Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilzation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: a New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), and J.H.W.G Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[41]Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

[42]Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 21.

[43]Garth Fowden suggested that the tendency to associate the "holy man", as we know him from the sources, with philosophical learning determined his essentially urban and privileged background, "and also encouraged his gradual drift to the periphery of society. This process of marginalization, together with the exclusivist and even (apparently) misanthropic attitudes of many holy men, became crucial factors in the leadership-crisis of late paganism." Garth Fowden, "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* (1982): 33.

[44]See for instance Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles. Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

faith[45] was rather a novelty - neither a "pagan" holy man nor a "philosopher" were supposed to "have faith", rather, they paid often substantial amount of money either to learn from the best philosophers or to be initiated into the mysteries. Furthermore, Christianity managed to deepen the separation from specific place, which already happened to a large extent in Judaism, it did not exclude the worship connected to specific places, but with the absolute emphasis and concentration on specific "truly inspired" texts, it could get fair use of existing Roman and Hellenic culture, including infrastructure, to get to all parts of the Empire. The established Christian communities and substructures could then, receiving the crucial boost in the form of Imperial support, "literally" take hold of the society.

Biohagiographic texts had certainly their share in this process. As the Christian dogma had been shaped among the textual and rhetorical "wars" over the true meaning of the orthodox Christian message[46], the Christian authors of biohagiographic texts may have been playing, to some extent, a part in this by juxtaposing "the right" and "the wrong" of "the spiritual" and cementing the conclusions reached by those whom they considered to be their respective theological authorities. This seems to be one of many functions of the biohagiographic texts - the "translation" (according the specific needs of the audience) and the diffusion of the "orthodox" faith among the "flock." This is connected to the educative function and its repetitive, and textually performative aspects.[47]

Everything was a representation, everything had its purpose, if we look at Augustine's own spiritual "autobiography", it is nothing more, and nothing less, than a "literary – and

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[45]See for instance Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief. The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003).

[46]Perhaps one of the most important outcomes of the big Christological and Trinitarian controversies in the formative periods of Christian power structures was that the church "harnessed emperor to her rather than tied herself to an emperor." Wilson, "Biographical Models", 108. Thus, thanks to these "schisms" also, the early church managed to emancipate herself from the existing power structures, and create new alternatives.

[47]Stavroula Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances. Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2005).

retrospective – self representation,"[48] from which we can learn very little about many aspects of the "real Augustine", yet we can learn a lot about his "agenda", the political and ideological challenges he faced. These would be definitely present in the text; the text was very important part. Augustine wrote about himself and presumably still could remember a lot of what had been going on in his life, but the authors of the *Life of Anthony*, not to mention the authors of the *Life of Pythagoras* or the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, could have arguably much less access to any information about the early years of their heroes.[49]

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[48]Clark, "Rewriting Early Christian History," 9. At the same time, Augustine seems to provide an alternative model of piety to that of the educated noble men, in person of his mother, Monica. Ibidem, 17.
[49]Hägg and Rousseau, "Introduction", 6.

2 CONTEXTUALIZING BIOHAGIOGRAPHERS

> In reality, profound differences of world-view, summed up by ascetic gestures, coexisted within seemingly united religious communities such as the Christian church while, at the same time, the subtle constraints of class and of a shared moral culture brought together Christians and non-Christians in shared patterns of behavior and in common ascetic techniques, in a manner that blurred their evident religious differences.
>
> (Peter Brown, Asceticsim Pagan and Christian, 606)

> The ideas of asceticism traveled between religions, as well as between far distant places of the Graeco-Roman world, though they were often much changed on their journey; and regional cultures proved more or less hospitable to different ascetic ideals.
>
> (Richard Finn, Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World, 156)

The fourth century saw the increasing veneration of holy men, as well as increasing efforts of bishops and the imperial authority to promote them, and the elaboration of the functions and roles they were ascribed to play in the emerging Christian Empire.[50] Also, from the fourth century on, the concepts of Christian holiness were further elaborated, with the emphasis on their asceticism and miraculous powers. [51]

These miracles stories were often about the conflict - between the demonic and divine powers, or between the representation of the "true" spirituality and the other – termed heresy, "paganism", or (Christian) superstition – depending on the author's viewpoint. The conflict is inherent in most biohagiographic texts – conflict with the evil and with the competing representative of the "right way to holiness" – which is sometimes the same.[52] The holiness

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[50]The Christian Empire in the sense Averil Cameron writes about in her book *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, not just the Late Roman Empire as a state.

[51]Derek Krueger, "Writing as Devotion: Hagiographical Composition and the Cult of Saints in Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Cyril of Scythopolis," *Church History* 66 (1997): 707.

[52]This conflict should not be understood as an omnipresent intense hostile polemic between Christianity and "paganism." That is, at least if generalized as for Late Antiquity per se, or for its society as a whole, rather an outdated interpretation of late antique sources. The conflict existed though, in reality and especially in literature.

should be understood in the context of the rhetorical strive to get hold of the society – seen as the God's creation and dominion. These conflicts over "true" way to holiness seem to be a part of the ideological struggle to explain and define the world in accordance with the emerging Christian paradigm, and while the laws, both imperial rescripts as well as ecclesiastical canons were meant to govern this dominion on the practical level, "literary"[53] genres were supposed to penetrate the minds, individually and collectively.[54] It is important to keep in mind one important feature of these literary texts, and the Christian rhetoric they employed, and that is, what already Hippolyte Delehaye noted, the fact that the persecutors of Christians, depicted in the acts of martyrs as the enemies of Christ, are simply to be understood as "the enemies", notwithstanding the variations in the legislation against Christian cult, enforcement of these laws, or the individuality of the officials involved.[55] With reservations to the conclusions Delehaye made upon this, we can say that the same applies for Christian biohagiographic texts – that is, we cannot expect to see the "enemies" portrayed with their individual features. That is something commonly to be found in late antique literature, various genres were meant to contain specific features, contain certain

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As T.D.Barnes points out, in response to interpretations of smooth, non-problematic late antique transitions, such interpretations seem to "downplay the religious tensions and even hostility between Christians and pagans which surfaced not infrequently." T.D.Barnes, "Religion and Society in the Age of Theodosius," in T.D. Barnes, *From Eusebius to Augustine: Selected Papers 1982-1993* (London:Variorum, 1994), 168. See also Cristian Gaşpar, "In Praise of Unlikely Holy Men: Elite Hagiography, Monastic Panegyric, and Cultural Translation in the *Philotheos Historia* of Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus," Ph.D. dissertation (CEU: Budapest, 2006), 13nn, and Cristian Gaşpar, "The Emperor Who Conversed with the Angels: The Making of a "Pagan" Saint in the Fourth Century:, in *Memory, Humanity, and Meaning. Selected Essays in Honor of Andrei Pleşu's Sixtieth Anniversary*, ed Mihail Neamţu and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban (Zeta Books, 2009), 233-248. I understand this conflict, specifically in biohagiographic texts, and more generally, as a part of the Christian discourse (as outlined by Averil Cameron in *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*), as creating a binary opposition between the good and the bad, the true and the false, not in a nominal way (that would be counterproductive, and actually condemned, as Manichean ideas were), but "metaphorically" – in other words, if Christianity was to appropriate and inhabitate all the reality, it needed to create this binary opposition not as a goal, but as the means. The association of an opponent with the "bad" would create a "permanent" binary; what was desired, however, was a temporary "binary" – the bad or false was the devil, not the opponent itself, who was in the end meant to be included and incorporated into the all-encompassing Christian Empire.

[53]Biohagiographic texts are mostly understood as literary genres today, in the broad sense of the world literary, but the question of defining or labeling biohagiographic texts as a "literary" genre may be a simplification. As for the functions, they could have been simple and educative, or elaborately rhetorical and polemic.

[54]Of course, that is by no means the only function of the literary sources, not even the "primary" function: every literary text had its function and individual setting, audience, and specific purpose for being written.

[55]Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 18.

commonplaces, and use established frameworks of composition. On the other hand, late antique Christian texts, including biohagiographic texts, contain some individual features. In other words, they do have some relation to the contemporary reality. Christian authors, who in the end managed, effectively, to take hold of the society, at least on its intellectual level[56], succeeded perhaps also because they strove to do it as precisely as possible.[57]

2.1 Christian Holy Men and Their Biohagiographers – Theodoret and Mark the Deacon

As one scholar rightly pointed out, hagiography is a literary genre in which form is as important as content in understanding the text.[58] The *vitae* can be classified to certain extent according to different categories, from a territorial point of view, time, author, or the type of the holy man portrayed. That applies for the biohagiographic texts in general, but even within such categories, biohagiographic texts (as well as the hagiographies themselves) and their known or not known authors differ from each other substantially. While in the past the *vitae*[59] were studied as a source of information about the life of a holy man, dogmatic conflicts, and monastic institutions, in the past fifty years they became the source of information about

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[56] Aideen Hartney shows how a conflict between the Christianizing efforts and reality might have looked like, analyzing John Chrysostom and his efforts, first in Antioch, and then in Constantinople. Aideen Hartney, "Asceticism and Administration in the Life of St. John Chrysostom", in *The Philosopher and Society in Late Antiquity. Essays in Honour of Peter Brown,* ed Andrew Smith (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2005), 171-188.

[57] Christine Trevett brings in an interesting case when Firmilian is hesitant to directly accuse an unnamed woman (be her a "real" woman or simply an embodiment of the stereotypes employed by him to illustrate his points) of heresy, realizing that she does not really fit the "label" of a heretic, trying to portray her as nonetheless dangerous to Christ's church. Christine Trevett, "Spiritual authority and the "heretical" woman: Firmilian's word to the church in Carthage," in *Portraits of Spiritual Authority. Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium, and the Christian Orient,* ed. Jan Willem Drijvers, John W. Watt (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 51.

[58] Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), xiii.

[59] This applies not only to the Christian texts, but the Jewish and "pagan" ones as well. Van Uytfanghe, "L'origine", 143.

mentalité and the history of everyday life.[60] The details often mentioned aside of the canonized structure of the narration, usually not in connection with the life of a holy man itself, often convey interesting facts about contemporary society.

The holy men described in biohagiographic texts were understood by some scholars as anthropomorphic embodiments of an idea, of a Christian virtue, piety, asceticism, or charity.[61] Although this seems to be true on many levels, the holy men were not only embodied ideas. It is true, that many Christian *vitae* developed strong educative function. These were meant to serve as a pattern for Christian ascetic and a norm of an "ideal" Christian life. Yet, aside of what already Hippolyte Delehaye noted, that Christian hagiographies were often, in various degrees, an amalgam of the oral tradition and authorial work[62], many of the holy men portrayed in the biohagiographic texts had their own historical counterpart, and not necessarily on a "one to one" basis. The authors often tried to create their textual holy men in such a way, that they could boast to depict "faithfully" their historical model and the role they believed (or invented) that was given to them by God. In the context of contemporary scientific status of knowledge they depicted their birth, descent, travels, education, mission, and were not afraid to add up, in line with the Biblical discourse, some allegoric material, invented or embellished, yet, meant to represent the truth. To be able to discern the traces of a real personality behind the real person portrayed as a saint and a literary construction of an idealized hero for rhetorical or didactic purposes is often almost

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[60]Alice Mary Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints´ Lives in English Translation*, ed: Talbot, A. M. (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), viii. During Late Antiquity, "the élite and those writing the tale of their times became suddenly, overwhelmingly interested in the doings of those who previously would barely have merited an inch of expensive writing-space." Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God. Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age AD 350-450* (London: Routledge, 1995), 11.
[61]Růžena Dostálová, *Byzantská vzdělanost* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1990), s. 113.
[62]Although Delehaye emphasizes this difficulty as something inherent in most of the hagiographies at later times, even in Late Antiquity it is often very difficult to tell the legendary or the pure authorial invention from the historical core. Delehaye, *The Legends of Saints,* 39. This does not apply only for the holy men. Averil Cameron in her book on Procopius demonstrates in detail how even in a work which boasts to be a proper Thucydidean history (*Wars*), the depiction of Justinian is constructed of real traits and notions of a superhuman emperor chosen by God, while to separate the real from the ideal is far from easy. Yet, even such specifically "ahistorical" genres as the *Secret History* (ψόγος) and the *Buildings* (eulogy) can yield some results if studied carefully. Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

impossible, the more so in the later texts. Therefore, a historian has only limited possibilities to extract any factual information about the particulars from the *vitae*.

2.1.1 A Bishop's View: Theodoret of Cyrrhus and his *Philotheos Historia*

The author of the *Philotheos Historia* (*HPh*) is Theodoret of Cyrrhus who lived between 393 and 460. There has been a debate regarding the exact date of composition, which today seems to have been either in 440 or in 444.[63] The text has been referred to as a hagiography or, according to the terms of the author himself, as a "God-loving history" (on which the standard by which this text is usually quoted - *Religious History,* is based), "an ascetic life," or "lives of holy men."[64] The healing narrative I am going to analyze is located in Antioch, before 420, the death of Macedonius, who is performing the healing miracle in the analyzed narrative.[65]

The very fact that Theodoret was a bishop matters in evaluating the function and agenda in his works, written while in the office. As Gillian Clark points out: "The Church became an alternative career for people who could otherwise have entered imperial service, and the pastoral work of a bishop, as a leader of a church community, came to include the settlement of legal disputes and negotiation with civic and imperial authorities."[66] Bishops in the fourth and fifth centuries, during the Trinitarian and Christological controversies, found themselves often in a very delicate situation, which was all the more so in case of bishops administering important sees. Theodoret himself found himself among the central figures in the Antiochene episcopal network.[67]

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[63]For discussion, see: the introduction to Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, translated with an introduction and notes by Richard Price (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1985), xii-xiv.
[64]Theresa Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 33.
[65]Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, xvi.
[66]Gilian Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7.
[67]Adam Schor, *Theodoret's People. Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 43.

Theodoret's role in the Christological controversy of the fifth century CE is well known[68]. He was a prolific writer[69], having already an experience of writing in almost every genre of Classical literature. Therefore, there has been a suggestion that, writing the *Philotheos Historia*, he wanted simply to "try his hand at hagiography"[70] which he had not written so far. That is certainly an interesting suggestion, although that is most probably not the only reason for the composition. Theresa Urbainczyk, for instance, referred exactly to those theological controversies of the fifth century, specifically to the theological battles between Antioch and Alexandria in the tumultuous time preceding the Second council of Ephesus in 449, which Theodoret directly entered with this text, trying to advocate for the support of the Antiochenes.[71] However, there are others who disagree, and suggest it was not Theodoret "the theologian", but Theodoret "the Christian rhetor, a first-class practitioner of the art of panegyric," who wrote *HPh*.[72] As Cristian Gaşpar argues, writing *HPh*, Theodoret did not exercise his rhetoric skills to gain supporters against the Alexandrians, rather he attempted to pen a sophisticated literary masterpiece which would render the Christian ascetics, looked down upon by the educated elites, more appealing to their tastes.[73]

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[68]Paul B. Clayton, *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrrhus: Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451)* (Oxford: University Press, 2007), István Pásztori-Kupán, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), Adam M. Schor*, Theodoret's People. Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[69]For the list of his works and biographic entry about him see Y. Azéma, "Théodoret," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire* , vol. 15 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1991), coll. 418-35.

[70]Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon. A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 51.

[71]Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 33.

[72]Gaşpar, "In Praise of Unlikely Holy Men," 312. "He wrote the *Philotheos historia* from a well consolidated position, in order to express his pride of belonging to the newly emerged Christian elite of the later Roman Empire. He also intended his work as a weapon in the "biography war" in which 'pagan' and Christian members of late antique elite engaged with gusto during the fourth and fifth centuries CE. This conflict, if not the apocalyptic life and death struggle advertised in the mainstream Christian discourse, was nevertheless, I believe, an important cultural confrontation." Ibidem.

[73]I tend to agree with Cristian Gaşpar about Theodoret's motives for the composition of *HPh* and his literary achievements, although we will probably never know how "successful" Theodoret really was in 'tailoring the Syrian ascetics to the tastes of the urban elites': "At the end of the road, Theodoret's *Philotheos historia* appears as a successful encomiastic enterprise, well anchored in classical rhetorical tradition, yet, at the same time, distinctly Christian in tone and preoccupations. Theodoret's perfect blend of classical rhetoric, scriptural exegesis, and literary talent achieves a remarkable performance of cultural translation, by tailoring his Syrian ascetics, very unlikely subjects of a classical panegyric, to the tastes and expectations of the cultured, urban elite of the later Roman Empire." Gaşpar, "In Praise of Unlikely Holy Men," 316.

All those newly emerging Christian ascetics, whom Theodoret depicted, have been rather looked down upon from these elites. Apart from the fact that any innovation had a high probability to be suspected as something inappropriate[74], these ascetics represented rather a vulgarity and potential superstition rather than piety, in the eyes of both Christian and "pagan" elites. As Peter Brown wrote, "to put words and thoughts together in an orderly and old-fashioned manner implied that one could also put one's life together with orderly and old-fashioned decency…we find ourselves in a world whose central elites has been brilliantly characterized as the Civilization of the *Paideia*."[75] Theodoret in his later years appears to be less enthusiastic in his view of asceticism than in the time of writing his *Cure of Hellenic Maladies*, an earlier polemical text. However, he is still entering a cultural dialog with the "pagan" philosophy, and, using the best achievements of classical rhetoric, he is trying to portray Syrian Christian ascetics as "rationally" as possible, to make them acceptable to the eyes and minds of educated elites and acquit them of the potential accusations of superstition and vulgarity.[76] As Cristian Gaşpar writes: "Theodoret's *Philotheos historia* would represent a perfectly justified literary attempt to mend the endangered reputation of the monks with people whose opinion carried some weight in late Roman society."[77]

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[74]Averil Cameron in her book about Procopius emphasizes the importance of the imitiation (μίμησις) of the Classical authors in the Byzantine literature. She writes: "Such imitation was effectively dictated by the educational system of the Roman Empire, where stress was laid exclusively on a backward-looking study and reworking of a fixed canon of the classics, with low value being attached to originality." Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth century*, 32. Theodoret wrote a century before Procopius, and was a bishop, yet he was the member of the same educated élite of the empire, which granted him similar benefits, and subjected him to similar intellectual limits, as Procopius, as an imperial writer a century later. If Theodoret wanted to get through his points and not to lose his standing and respect among the members of this élite, he had to be, like Procopius, very careful, and inventive, in arguing his points.

[75]Peter Brown, "The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity," *Representations 2* (1983): 1.

[76]The *HPh* was written in a very sophisticated language that would have been inaccessible to most fifth-century readers without proper educational background. Presumably, it was intended to target the urban ruling elite, more precisely, a "fairly reduced group of individuals who had sufficient linguistic knowledge and literary education to enjoy and understand it", despite Theodoret himself claiming otherwise. Cristian Gaşpar, "An Oriental in Greek Dress: The Making of a Perfect Christian Philosopher in the *Philotheos Historia* of Theodoret of Cyrrhus," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 14 (2008): 200. For the discussion and detailed reasoning for this conclusion see Gaşpar, "In Praise of Unlikely Holy Men," 15nn.

[77]Ibidem, 25.

2.1.2 Mark the Deacon's Life of Porphyry

The hero of the *vita*, the holy man Porphyry (347 - 420), born in Thessalonica in the year 347, had lived for some time as a monk in Palestine and Egypt, then worked as a leather artisan in Jerusalem, until he became, around 392, a priest and the guardian of saint relics of the holy Cross. This was, according to the author of the text, a certain deacon named Mark, the fulfillment of a vision related to him by Porphyry himself, who saw crucified Christ and one of the thieves. Sometime later Porphyry became the bishop of the city of Gaza[78], which followed at that time mainly the "pagan" religious rites. Porphyry started to develop his efforts to convert the "pagans" to the "right" faith; and these efforts made him a hero – apostle in this biohagiographic text.

The authorship of the *Life of Porphyry* has provoked a long-drawn debate among scholars. The text is commonly referred to as a hagiography.[79] According to the text itself, the author is certain Mark the Deacon. One does not know much about his life, and what is known is based mainly on his own text. He was allegedly ordained deacon about 397. He was a calligrapher, follower of Porphyry.[80] The date of composition of the text has also been debated. Two extant versions exist, the Greek edited by H. Grégoire and M. A. Kugener and the Old Georgian by the Bollandist Paul Peeters. The differences between them and certain historical inconsistencies have provoked a heated debate regarding the time of composition of

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[78]Gaza, an old Philistine city had been Hellenized for centuries before. It was an important city, geographically, strategically, and as a trade junction. It was a key to Egypt, indispensable for any potential ruler of Syria. This is why it was doomed during the history to often fall prey to the intricate political situation of the region. In the fifth century, it still belonged to the centers of Greek civilization, persistently resisting the Christianizing efforts. The rhetorical school of Gaza reached its peak in the fifth century, the works of its pupils were to be studied and copied in the subsequent centuries. See Hagith Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Catherine Saliou, *Gaza dans l'Antiquité Tardive. Archéologie, Rhétorique et histoire*. Actes du colloque international du Poitiers (6-7 mai 2004) (Salerno: Helios Editrice, 2005), *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, ed. Ashkelony and Kofsky (Leiden: Brill, 2004), Ashkelony and Kofsky, *The Monastic School of Gaza* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), Carol A. M. Glucker, *The City of Gaza in Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1987).

[79]Claudia Rapp, introduction to the partial English translation Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry of Gaza*. In: *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas Head (New York: Garland Press, 2000), 56.

[80]Marc le Diacre, *Vie de Porphyre*, ed. and French. trans. by Henri Grégoire and M.A. Kugener (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1930), xi – xii.

the original text. Peeters, on the basis of the traces of Syriac influence, which he identified in the Old Georgian version, suggested that both extant versions were translations based on a Syriac original (no longer extant), though this presumed Syriac text still would not be the Ur-text which is presumably another Syriac version.[81] Others claim the authentic source of the extant Greek version to be another Greek proto-version.[82] The *terminus post quem* for the composition of the Greek text as it is preserved today is between 440 and 444, which are possible dates of the composition of Theodoret's *Philotheos Historia*.[83] It has been convincingly demonstrated that the preface of Theodoret's text was copied by the author of the Greek extant version of the *Life of Porphyry*.[84]

Good knowledge of the local territory, abundance of the circumstantial details, appropriate terminology for the imperial offices, and other peculiarities seem to indicate the authenticity of the text. It is full of details, in accordance with other sources, and draws a vivid picture of the urban society in Gaza at the time it purports to describe. On the other hand, particular problems of the text are connected to its date of composition and reliability, questioned based on several surprising inconsistencies that the text conveys.[85]. According to some scholars, neither Mark the Deacon nor Porphyry are historical persons.[86]

Possible solution of these textual problems would be that another author took the text written by Mark, edited it, and embellished with the impressive preface of Theodoret's *Philotheos Historia*. At the same time, he would have deliberately exchanged the names of those characters, who were later accused of Origenism and Pelagianism, which were mentioned in the text coming into a contact with Porphyry (playing such a significant role in

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[81]Paul Peeters, "La vie géorgienne de Saint Porphyre de Gaza," *Analecta Bollandiana* 59 (1941): 65-100.
[82]F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion & Christianization c. 370-529,* vol. I. (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1995), 246-282; Gerard Mussies, "Marnas God of Gaza," *ANRW* (1990): 2456.
[83]See the chapter *A Bishop's View: Theodoret of Cyrrhus and his Philotheos Historia.*
[84]Grégoire - Kugener, *Marc le Diacre*, ciii – cix.
[85]Zeev Rubin, "Porphyrius of Gaza and the Conflict Between Christianity and Paganism in Southern Palestine," in *Sharing the Sacred. Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land*, ed. Arieh Kofsky & Guy Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1998), 56.
[86]Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 87.

the narrative that he would not prefer to omit them entirely). This "editor" could have either invented other names for these characters or simply used the names of other characters of the same office. John, said to be in the text the bishop in Jerusalem, is one such example. John, being the one who has ordained Porphyry to the priesthood and bestowed the guardianship of the relic of the holy cross upon him, played a considerable role in the narrative. Sometime after these events took place, however, he was condemned as a partisan of Origenist and Pelagian ideas, therefore the editor, possibly, might have deliberately replaced persona non grata with the name of Praylios.[87]

2.2 Non-Christian Holy Men and Their Biohagiographers

Non-Christian heroes had been portrayed in various kinds of writings long before Late Antiquity. There have been many attempts at their classification, as for the form and content of the texts, as for the heroes depicted, and other criteria.[88] As Pierre Chuvin points out, the "pagan" decadence of the Late Antiquity, which seems to scream from the pages of contemporary literature, might have not necessarily be so apparent to contemporaries – the imperial power, even if hostile, was never efficient, absolute, and centralized enough, and the invasions of "barbarians" could be seen by some as unfortunate incidents rather than world-shaking catastrophes.[89] Yet, in many instances, by the end of the fourth century, the "pagan" intellectuals appear having lost the high social standing that they previously enjoyed in the society.[90] According to some, the philosophical ideal in this era has been changed, acquiring

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[87]Rapp, "Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry of Gaza*," 56.
[88]Charles H. Talbert, "Biographies of Philosophers and Rulers as Instruments of Religious Propaganda in Mediterranean Antiquity", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* (1978): 1619-1651. Ludwig Bieler, ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ: *Das Bild des göttlichen Menschen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesselschaft, 1967).
[89]Pierre Chuvin, *Chronique des derniers païens. La disparition du paganism dans l'Empire romain, du règne de Constantin à celui de Justinien* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1991), 11.
[90]Richard Goulet, *Études sur les Vies de philosophes de l'Antiquité tardive. Diogène Laërce, Porphyre de Tyr, Eunape de Sardes* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2001), 19.

much more religious tone.[91] Reaching the divine state became one of the main points of a philosopher's life, or at least that is how some of them are portrayed in biohagiographic texts. Goulet claims that this was a result of the influence of Pythagorean philosophy, and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (written in the third century CE) became a pattern depicting a philosopher as a divine being, a mediator between the gods and the humans, and a miracle-worker. The Neo-Platonist direction, according to Goulet, developed the same attitude – under the Pythagorean influence or without it.[92] In the Neo-Platonist philosophy, the man is defined by his soul, and therefore the idea of "purification" (intellectual and ritual) appeared, alongside with the asceticism and the search for the divine revelation.[93]

Proclus gave theoretical explanation for the activity of a philosopher as a theurgist in his Platonic theology. For him, all Greek theology was a descendant of Orphic mystagogy.[94] Orphic myths largely influenced the Neo-Platonist writings. This would be very much in line with the mainstream of the development of the late antique philosophy, which acquired more and more distinctive features of religion, in some of the most famous philosophers. Polymnia Athanassiadi described theurgy as understood by Iamblichus as "the often involuntary manifestation of an inner state of sanctity deriving from a combination of goodness and knowledge in which the former element prevails."[95] The Neo-Platonists recur to Orphism in an attempt to communicate their conception of the pedagogy of the soul or mystagogy

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[91]"To live without some form of worship had indeed been barely possible in the classical period, but the faiths of late antiquity were practised with much greater ostentation, sometimes governing the whole of a person's life and giving rise to new forms of literature that ranged from the solemn to the picaresque." Mark Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints. Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by Their Students* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), xii-xiii.

[92]Goulet, *Études sur les Vies de philosophes,* 32.

[93]Aside from the terms "religious" and "hagiographic," Goulet applies to the late antique philosophers a term μυστηρικός as even more relevant and underlining the fundamental perspective of their *vitae*. Philosophy itself was considered a true initiation into "the Great Mysteries," and if for Plato, Aristotle, and stoics it was rather a metaphor, here it becomes the structural principle of the philosophic activity. Goulet, *Études sur les Vies de philosophes*, 41 - 42.

[94]Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-Discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 168.

[95]Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy, and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993): 116.

leading to self-realization.[96] Proclus himself is portrayed by Marinus as a philosopher – thinker, but his text is structured according to the development of his virtues, he is performing miracles, engaging in all respectable cults, he is portrayed more as the happiest man in the world.[97]

Yet, the "religiosity" of some of the "pagan" holy men differed significantly from the "religiosity" of many Christian holy men. Although many of them came from wealthy families and were very well educated, they gradually created an entirely new religious category. "Pagan" holy men, meantime, found themselves, exercising their elitist approach to personal holiness, more and more on fringes of the social influence. It remains a question to which degree it was an internal development and what role played the imperial support of Christianity, but the outcomes seem to be pretty aptly summarized by Garth Fowden: the tendency to associate holiness with philosophical learning, the urban and privileged background of the "pagan" holy man, together with his exclusivist and often misanthropic attitudes, encouraged his gradual shift to the periphery of society, and further deepened the leadership-crisis of late "paganism."[98]

2.2.1 Marinus of Neapolis and his *Life of Proclus*

The author of the *Life of Proclus* is Marinus of Neapolis, who lived ca. 450-500. He was most probably a Samaritan, who later converted to "paganism" and became a Neoplatonist philosopher.[99] He composed the *Life of Proclus* at some point in 486, around one year after Proclus' death.[100] The text has been variously described as a biography, a

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[96]Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism*, 145.

[97]Indeed, the famous philosophers, including Socrates, were never portrayed merely as "men of reason", but certain distinctively religious traits were not common in older biographies (miracles for instance), while as for the philosophical disciplines, theurgy was rather a specifically late antique development.

[98]Fowden, "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society", 33.

[99]Henri Dominique Saffrey, Alain-Phillipe Segonds, "Introduction," in: Marinus, *Proclus ou Sur le bonheur*, texte établi, traduit et annoté par Henri Dominique Saffrey, Alain-Philippe Segonds (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001), ix-clxxvi.

[100]Ibidem, xlii.

panegyric,[101] or a funeral speech.[102] The narrative is located in Athens, most probably between 450s and 470s. The text does not state explicitly the dates throughout the narrative. Previous scholarship[103] has established more or less proper dates for certain events described in the text. However, the episode, which I am going to analyze, has not been an object of a closer examination so far.

Proclus was born at some point between 410 and 412 in Constantinople[104] and died in 485 in Athens, where he spent forty-five years as the head of the school of philosophy. His biography penned by Marinus was composed in a specific cultural and historical situation, when "paganism" was under attack from state authorities. Yet, Neoplatonic schools were still centers of advanced education and attracted both non-Christian and Christian elites, the school of Athens being one of the most prominent at the time of Proclus.[105] The school of Athens was presumably full with stories, *fabulae*, and anecdotes about the divine teachers, their theurgy and miracles. A question rises to what extent did the Christian graduates of this school, like Basil or Gregory could have borrowed anything to extoll the Christian holy men using these "pagan" patterns?[106]

Proclus belonged both to the sphere of Alexandrian Neo-Platonism as well as the Athenian. For Goulet, he was a religious philosopher *par excellence*. The gods guided him; Telesphoros, son of Asclepius, miraculously cured him in his infancy; the visions and the tokens of his predestination accompanied him, and a full solar eclipse happened right before his death. He was very much alike Apollonius of Tyana (1st – 2nd century CE), an ascetic, a vegetarian, a celibate; he practiced ritual "purification", and, according to Marinus, finally

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[101]Mark Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints. The Lives of Plotinus and Proclus by their Students*, l-lv.
[102]Saffrey and Segonds, "Introduction," xlii.
[103]See the introduction to the newest critical edition of the text, in Saffrey and Segonds, ix – clxiv.
[104]Mark Edwards, *Neoplatonic Saints,* 1.
[105]Fowden, "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society," 44-46.
[106]Such a question is very difficult to answer. Already Hippolyte Delehaye remarked how many *topoi* included in the *lives* of saints were like "leaves floating in the air," to be found already in the classics of antiquity. Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, 24.

reached the divine state. His objective was more than to conduct the life of a moral man – this was a pretension to live the life of the deity. Notably, he practised different cults, as cult of the Mother of Gods, of the Greek gods, of Asclepius of Ascalon, of Isis, worshiped the Sun, followed the Egyptian rites, and even more. Therefore, according to Marinus, Proclus as a worshipper of all cults of all nations became a universal hierophant.[107]

Marinus describes Proclus's career and his achievements arranged according to his virtues, built primarily on Platonic four-fold division: φρόνησις, ἀνδρεία, σωφροσύνη, and δικαιοσύνη.[108] His *VProcli* belongs to those texts whose authors knew their heroes personally, as it was with Porphyry's *Life* of *Plotinus* and Darnascius' *Life of Isidorus*. Proclus, and Iamblichus, swam on the more irrational, religious wave and, among these three texts, *VProcli* is closest to a Christian hagiography.[109] The aims for composing also differed, *VProcli* was written as a funerary speech after the death of Proclus.

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[107]Richard Goulet, *Études sur les Vies de philosophes,* 37 - 38.
[108]H. J. Blumenthal, "Marinus' Life of Proclus: Neoplatonist Biography," in *Soul and Intellect. Studies in Plotinus and Later Neoplatonism*, ed H.J.Blumenthal (Variorum, 1993), 469- 476.
[109]Blumenthal, "Marinus' Life of Proclus: Neoplatonist Biography," 470.

3 MIRACLE NARRATIVES IN BIOHAGIOGRAPHIC TEXTS – THE POWER OF THE "HEARD" AND THE "SEEN"

3.1 Claims for the supernatural – Christianity and "paganism", magic, miracles, and rituals

> Incantantions, magical rites and divination,
> Are more serious than all other sins.
> Cut off and reject, weak ones,
> The rites and consulting of magicians;
> For the anger that is guiding them,
> Also us, it carries us away with them.
> Let us run, let us take refuge with the chaste
> That we might be saved by their prayers.
> Ephrem, *Hymn X*[110]

Despite Christianity had made a rapid progress in defining many levels of contemporary society, the religious world of late antique man was still to a large extent based on the religious world described by Plutarch, as "a well-mixed bowl of myths."[111] Wendy Cotter argues that the "evidence supports the fact that magic was a force relied upon by many people from various strata of Greco-Roman society. And to use magical power successfully was no small accomplishment, even though the blueblood *literati* would mock such ideas."[112] The adherence to magic and trust in its efficiency can be induced from the numerous laws against it.[113]

Contemporary scholarship has proposed various definitions of magic and religion and tried to establish the borders between the two.[114] In Classical and Late Antiquity, however,

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[110]David Bundy, "Vision for the City. Nisibis in Ephrem's Hymns on Nicomedia", in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, ed Richard Valantasis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 201.
[111]Plutarch, *On the Failure of Oracles*, 421.
[112]Wendy Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), 176.
[113]*Codex Theodosianus* 9, 16; 9, 38, 3-4; 9, 38, 7-8; 9, 40, 1; 9, 42, 2; 9, 42, 4; 11, 36, 1; 11, 36, 7; 16, 5, 34.
[114]For the recent discussion of the topic see Cotter, *Miracles in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*. Especially part IV: "Magic and Miracles", and also Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983). Segal claims that this distinction sometimes depended only on the social context in the ancient world, Alan F. Segal, "Some Thoughts on Theurgy," in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity*, ed Peter Richardson (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 507. See also Silke Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-Century Syria* (London: Routledge, 2007), 5-23.

these borders were much less clear, although some contemporary authors sought for clear-cut division between them. As Henry Maguire points out, in principle there are two possible definitions of magic, the internal and the external, and the internal definition is almost illusory to reach and agree upon. The external definition leaves to discern what magic was and what not to contemporary authorities. There was no *opinio communis* however, and it differed in time and space. For example such clearly Christian symbol as the Christogram could be, depending on various factors, deemed to be a legitimate part of Christian rituals or it could be considered to be magical symbol, and therefore, be banned. This ban and decision what is magic and what is not could be made both by the Church and state authorities. Among the most common words denominating magic and superstition in the sources are *magia* and *superstitio* in Latin and μαγεία and γοητεία in Greek.[115]

It is important to note that Christianity developed in constant antagonism with what it considered magic[116]; it defined itself on many levels as being the "true" religion – magic was admitted to exist, but it was a sign of an inferior "supernatural."[117] The New Testament was full of miracles of all sorts, but they were not seen as magic. Any subsequent miracles had to be justified against the biblical miracles. This defining of the "miraculous" and its place in the world went on among Christians and non-Christians. In my opinion, the biogahiographic texts do not seem to be the single most important platform for this process of defining, although they influenced it significantly. Rather, they seem to work on the background and

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[115]Henry Maguire, "Magic and Money in the Early Middle Ages," *Speculum* 72 (1997): 1037- 1054.

[116]In the *HPh*, Thedoret narrates a story about a girl who became suddenly possessed by a demon. After her father contacts Macedonius, the holy man, he informs him that the demon, whom he cast out with prayer, told him that he did not enter the girl willingly, but was compelled to do so by magic spells. It turned out it was a man in love with the girl who was responsible for the spells. The case ended up before the court, and when the accused man denied using the spells, the very demon was, with Macedonius' help, brought before the court as a witness, where he admitted this and other crimes he was compelled to do by magic, before he was finally casted away. *HPh* 13, 10-11.

[117]It is interesting, that while "by the mid-fourth century prophecy had been definitively stamped out in both shrines, leaving only a vague memory of sanctity which was adroitly exploited by the Church; its polemicists, sticking to long-established rhetorical clichés, continued to fulminate against Delphi and Didyma in their anti-pagan attacks, while their real target was home-made oracles and oniromancy." Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *The Journal of Roman Studies* (1993): 115.

on the basis of what the authorities as bishops or church councils have to say, arming the holy men for their persuasive mission with "miracles proper" (or at least depicting them carefully, if not timidly, so as not to be suspected for magic or superstition).

Furthermore, apart from their own authorities, the biohagiographers needed to persuade the public that what their wonderworkers were doing was not temporary, illusory, or petty-like magic.[118] Of course, the audience of the different biohagiographic texts differed widely, yet I would suggest that most of them, on whole the spectrum from illiterate peasants to the educated elites, were more or less used to, or at least exposed to, miraculous stories, magic, and religious rituals. What a religious authority, or an author of a biohagiographic text, considered petty or ineffective, was not necessarily seen as such by their audience. Therefore, the author needed to demonstrate not only the efficacy of his hero, but the inefficacy of everything else.

John Chrysostom condemned many ritual practices performed by women as magic. Maids and nurses marking the foreheads of newborns with signs were one of such targets for him. His concern was that such a petty ritual as marking the forehead of a newborn with mud against spells entered into the conflict with official Church rituals, as was baptism, performed by male clerics in the Church. Henry Maguire concludes that the problem was who performed a ritual and where, not the ritual itself.[119] These maids and midwives were unlucky to enter into the conflict with official rituals. Performing their rituals, they questioned, though not intentionally, the effectiveness and supreme uniqueness of the official rituals.

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[118] Ayse Tuzlak, "The Magician and the Heretic: The Case of Simon Magus", in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed Paul Mirecki, Marvin Mayer (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 421. The interesting remark Tuzlak makes here is that the apostle Peter is, in Clementine Recognitions, made to distinguish between real Christian miracles and the "petty magic" on the basis of usefulness of these. Healings, raising of the dead, or expelling the demons are all deeds beneficial to men, while "showing statues walking, dogs or brass or stone barking, mountains leaping, flying through the air, and the like" lack this quality. However, the author of the text rather omits reference to Simon's claims to be able to make new shoots rise from the earth and produce fruits, as well as Jesus' walking on water or his cursing of the fig tree, see: Tuzlak, "The Magician and the Heretic", 421 – 422.
[119] Maguire, "Magic and Money", 1037**.**

3.2 Pagan and Christian holy men

"Pagan" and Christian holy men are often seen as being in direct conflict with each other. Yet, if we look at the agenda behind these texts, they often in fact fought among themselves, or, more precisely, the authors used them to attack their theological opponents.[120] That did not apply only to Christians, as Gillian Clark points out, the philosophers were also often more concerned with their own philosophical rivals.[121] Christian rhetoric formed itself on the background of the fierce theological battles, or rather, was directly nourished by these theological conflicts, and biohagiographic texts were often part of these internal struggles. Yet, the heroes portrayed in biohagiographic texts were often based on real individuals. We do not know, for instance, whether Porphyry ever lived, but we do know that at least some of Theodoret's holy men were not only textual inventions or embodiments of divine communication with this world, and that Proclus was also a real person. Their depiction in biohagiographic texts, however, always depends on the author's agenda and ideology behind it; they can be perhaps seen as the tools of the author's persuasion efforts.

The same applies for the miracles, as I will show in the fourth chapter: miracles are often used to legitimate the holy men the authors portray and to arm them with persuasive power. It could be said that they are rhetorical "tools" to make the authors' "tools" – the holy men, more potent. Christian holy men, specifically, needed to represent a victory - a binary opposition was needed. In case of miracles for instances, not just any miracle would do, but a miracle capable of claiming the power of Christ over the enemy of Christ, that is anything

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[120]"Deadly conflict between members of the clerical élites on theological issues caused the overlapping systems of explanation to explode. Sorcery alone could explain the miracles of theological opponents. In the stormy ecclesiastical history of the fifth and sixth century, we rarely find a holy man of an opposing party who is not dismissed at one time or another by his rivals as a mere sorcerer." Peter Brown, "Holy Men", *CAH XIV*, ed Averil Cameron, Cambridge 2008, 803-804. See also Jan-Eric Steppa, "Heresy and Orthodoxy: The Anti-Chalcedonian Hagiography of John Rufus, in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, eds. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, Aryeh Kofsky (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 89-106, and Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, "*Imitatio Mosis* and Pilgrimage in the *Life of Peter the Iberian*", in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, ed. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, Aryeh Kofsky (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 107-129.
[121]Clark, "Philosophic Lives", 29.

else ("pagans", superstition, or heresy). If we focus on their miracle performing ability, we must admit that in the antiquity there probably existed all sorts of wonderworkers capable to amaze people, performing all sorts of tricks.[122] Since we do not suppose that the holy men indeed cured people, it is all the more important to see how powerful this rhetoric was. We are told that the gathering of three hundred blind men around Alexander the Sleepless (fl 400-430) stayed with him and one cannot expect that it was so because he healed them.[123] Whatever reasons they may have had, this rhetoric certainly had played its role in creating the image, character, and the power of the holy man.

If there were any occasions when the crowds could have watched, either in the cities or at premises of sanctuaries, any kinds of miracles played out "live," the rhetorical construct of the use of miracles in different sources would need to be examined from a different perspective.[124] On the other hand, if the miracles, apparently taken for granted by many admirers and followers of holy men, were solely the construct of the authors, whether they believed in them or not, then the role of rhetoric would have to be seen as even much more powerful device in creating the late antique socio-religious culture. However, it is very difficult to assess how often any sorts of "miracles" or tricks had been on display. Although it would be useful, for better understanding of the texts we are dealing with, to know more about actual "miracles" and what was in reality perceived as a "miracle", the texts and rhetoric behind them is all we have. All in all, the miracle was an important rhetorical device of biohagiographic discourse. The Bible's rhetoric is of a special kind, it is *kerygma,* that is,

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[122]The "miraculous" and the "wondrous" could range from Simon Magus trying to buy "know-how" from Jesus (on how to bestow Holy Ghost on whomsoever he would lay his hands on) described in the *Acts of the Apostles* (8, 9 – 24), to the automata described in the *Book of Ceremonies* and in the memoirs of Liutprand of Cremona (10th century). In any case, one can assume that the tricks and wonders have been always present throughout the history. There is an interesting story about certain Apsethus, who, if we are to believe Hippolytus (2nd – 3rd century) and his *Against all Heresies*, paid the greatest price for this. He trained parrots to say outloud: "Apsethus is a God," and set them free after. However, a clever Greek disclosed his trick, caught the parrots and taught them to say: "Apsethus, having caged us, taught us to say, Apsethus is a God," see: Tuzlak, "The Magician and the Heretic", 422.
[123]The *Life of Alexander Sleepless* (Vita Alexandri acoemetae), *Patrologia Orientalis*, Vol 6, 5.
[124]Neo-Platonists like Iamblichus also referred to the "fraudulent practices" and warned against them. Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination", 122.

"proclamation." This is the core of what the Bible says: it answers the existential question of what one should do to be saved. And this proclamation exerts the unquestioned authority of a divine origin.[125]

Similarly, the Neoplatonic teacher of the four and fifth century was no longer a mere philosopher like Plotinus; he was *expected* to be a miracle-worker. In Neoplatonists sources by this time, there are discernible elements of religious idealization and heroization of some philosophers.[126] The tokens, visions, miracles, assistance of the gods, purification, rituals, asceticism, initiations, mysteries, theurgic components - all of these were the characteristic features of late antique philosophers' lives. The perception of a philosopher as a divine being or the one close to divinization logically led to the assumption that he was in possession of the divine force. There were internal dynamics of the development of the philosophy in this direction, but social conditions could have contributed as well, along with possible influence of Oriental cults and mysteries.[127]

The miracles in Christian biohagiographic texts were portrayed with much more emphasis on the holy man being solely a mediator, than the theurgic acts of Neoplatonists, like Proclus. Callinicus (fl 406-446) wrote that "they related that they have seen many miracles of God made visible through the man."[128] Another time, when relating the healing of a young man Stephen, he writes: "God healed him on the intercession of the holy one."[129] The fact, that the biohagiographers constantly repeat this information, could mean that it simply became a powerful *topos* firmly established as a part of biohagiographical canon. Such literary canon, however, never existed, and even for the Christian hagiographies was not

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[125]Northrop Frye and Jay Macpherson, *Biblical and Classical Myths: The Mythological Framework of Western Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004)*,* 213.
[126]That does not apply to all Neoplatonist philosophers of the times. However, it was a significant development within the Neoplatonist tradition. Goulet, *Études sur les Vies de philosophes,*15. "These legendary or romantic features that encroach progressively the *Lives* of philosophers should be understood within the religious context of their works." Goulet, *Études sur les Vies de philosophes,* 8 - 9.
[127]Richard Goulet, *Études sur les Vies de philosophes…,* 45 - 51.
[128]Callinicus, *Life of Hypatius* 38, 2.
[129]Callinicus, *Life of Hypatius* 40,11. See also 40, 16; 40, 21.

created before the fifth century. Therefore, if the authors felt the necessity to highlight it so repeatedly, this could mean that the actual situation was different, or even that the *topos* was established in the texts because the authors deemed the perception of the audience to be twisted, rustic, and outside the doctrinal orthodoxy.[130] Some scholars argue, that in the popular piety the saints were not so much perceived as the intercessors, but rather adopted the functions of "pagan" gods and heroes and gradually substituted them for the average people's mentality. Van Uytfanghe rightly asks if the believers think about the God when touching the relics of their new, now Christian, local patron.[131]

The comparison of a contemporary miracle-worker with some historical (or allegedly historical) figures like the biblical ones of the past was quite common in late antique panegyric. Thus, Gregory of Nyssa compared Gregory the Wonderworker (213-270) with Moses (since both performed water miracles), and the involvement of the biblical figures became for him a basis to discuss the respective virtues those saints symbolized.[132] The authors of the late antique biographies often made digressions just to speculate about the moral virtues of their heroes, or to compare them to the characters from the remote past.

3.3 The Power of the "Heard" and the "Seen"

It should be noted again that miracles, or their absence, constituted a very important part of seeing, or presenting, a text as biohagiographic. Some scholars argued that the miracles were present in biohagiographic texts simply because they are an integral part of the genre.[133] However, the question of genre is not that easy to tackle, as is demonstrated in the

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[130]Van Uytfanghe, "L'origine", 183-184.
[131]Ibidem.
[132]Raymond Van Dam, "Hagiography and history: The Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus", *Classical Antiquity* 1, No. 2 (1982): 278 - 279.
[133]André Adnès and Pierre Canivet, "Guerisons miraculeuses et exorcismes dans l' « Histoire Philothée » de Théodoret de Cyr," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 171 (1967): 53-82; 150-179; here p. 56.

first chapter. Therefore, the presence of miracle cannot really be used to define a text, or to make it a "real" biohagiographic text.[134] As Adele Monaci Castagno writes:

> the presence of miracles or their absence as well as their effect depended on the circumstances, on the audience he (an ancient author) targeted, on the models he meant to follow. From this perspective, the *bios* of Origen contained in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastic History* has the same claim to being counted as part of the late antique hagiographic discourse as the *Life of Antony*, which, unlike it, makes ample use of miracles. What is really interesting is to understand the reasons for such difference. And, while, from the fourth century onwards, it is possible to note an ever more conspicuous presence of miracles, which are considered an indispensable mark of sanctity, it is also true that exceptional individuals continued to be described and celebrated without any recourse to miracles.[135]

Yet, as Averil Cameron illustrates in a detailed analysis of Procopius' oeuvre, "resort to the miraculous" was commonly to be found in many late antique/early Byzantine texts, even among classicizing historians, as Procopius.[136] The social realities of many could stay relatively unaffected for a very long time, yet the situation the *élites* found themselves in, had changed. That was definitely the case during the reign of Justinian and later on, but even the fourth and fifth century saw increasing importance of imperial power, gain of influence of emerging new subset of the *élite* – Christian bishops, abbots, and the clergy, and a whole new ideology behind the workings of the Roman empire.[137] The "miraculous" was here, it was decidedly present in the writings and the new emerging ideology of the Empire.[138]

I will try to show that one of the functions of miracles in biogahiographic texts was to demonstrate the power of presented holiness (and the God or philosophy behind it) and to

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[134]See also Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity*, 4.

[135]Adele Monaci Castagno, *L'agiografia cristiana antica: Testi, contesti, pubblico* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2010), 6.

[136]Cameron, *Procopius*, 28. Eunapius, for instance, included oracles and prophecies in his history, "although he deprecated the inclusion of an excessive number of the former as 'unsuitable for inclusion in the serious type of history.' He also accepted the validity of thaumaturgy…" R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire. Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, and Malchus* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981), 17.

[137]Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 131 – 133.

[138]As for the biohagiographic texts, even those authors who omitted miracles in their writings tended to provide explanations why holiness does not need to be demonstrated with miracles. See for instance Eusebius' *Life of Origen* or Poprhyry's *Life of Plotinus*.

claim both the socio-economical (feeding miracles, miraculous cures, etc) as well as the spiritual (e.g., exorcisms) levels of society for them. There was a push for the spiritual appropriation, as well as for socio-economic appropriation. In the realities of the multifaceted late antique world, any attempts at appropriation had to go hand in hand with persuasion, if they were to be successful; the persuasion was at the very core of the business. As Laurent Pernot notes, God's athlete was an athlete of the "word."[139] The power of the written, spoken, and heard word in Christian persuasion was great. It created and fed the contents for the visual symbols penetrating all the aspects of society which then further reinforced the might of the "word." The word turned into a symbol and what was actually seen was not less important.[140] The author of the *VPorph* set out in the first sentence of the proem to justify the need for this text to be written by pointing out that as "the seen" becomes worthy to love, the same way "the heard" - the precisely described accounts of what the witnesses had "seen" are of no less benefit for those who listen. What is seen is indeed more trustworthy than what is heard, but the heard can also persuade if narrated by the trustworthy (πιστοτέρα μὲν ἀκοῆς ἡ θέα πείθει δὲ καὶ ἀκοὴν ἐαν ὑπὸ ἀξιοπίστων εἴη τὰ λεγόμενα).[141] This *topos* conveys how the contemporary authors took hold of the opportunity to turn this paradox into their advantage. What is a problem for historians, who can never know what these trustworthy authors actually saw and described so carefully, was an opportunity to the ancient authors which they managed to use successfully. The "seen" cannot be shaped so flexibly and used so skillfully for persuasion – the authors of the biohagiographic texts often managed to arrange their accounts so that they effectively turned the "heard" (what they claimed has been "seen" and precisely described) into powerful symbols, into the "seen."

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[139]Laurent Pernot, "Saint Pionios, martyr et orateur," in *Du héros païen au saint chrétien. Actes du colloque organize par le Centre d'Analyse des Rhétoriques Religieuses de l'Antiquité (C.A.R.R.A.). Strasbourg,1ᵉʳ – 2 décembre 1995*, ed. Gérard Freyburger, Laurent Pernot (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 115.
[140]Van Dam, "Hagiography", 275.
[141]*VPorph* 1.

As I will try to show, Christians biohagiographers managed to reconcile the tension between the "seen" and the "heard", the "written" easier than the "pagan" authors, like Neoplatonist Marinus. The Bible which was the main inspiration for them, and which furnished the stock of literary imagery used in their texts, used a poetic language and put the story into the forefront. As Northrop Frye emphasized, metaphor was not a mere ornament of the Biblical language, it was rather "the controlling mode of thought, metaphor was a statement which grammatically read, 'this is that.'"[142] The Bible did not use the language of logic or predication, the metaphor itself was something illogical, or rather, antilogical. Metaphors were a crucial component of the language of the Bible, and, subsequently, they played the major role in Christian rhetoric as it developed in the first centuries of Christian worship.[143] This Christian rhetoric, with its strong emphasis on the figurative language and the story mirrored also in the biohagiographic texts, which were also the fruits (and the roots) of the Christian discourse and its self-imposed control of this rhetoric which was establishing rules for true "holiness", and eventually, rules for a "proper Christian hagiography." That was, however, about to come later. In the fifth century, the grounds for the formal features of the biohagiographic texts have been laid, and the Christian persuasive discourse, though still in its development, was strong and stable enough to slowly shift its focus from self-justification to the appropriation. The miracles played a big part in this process, as it will be shown in the following chapter.

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[142]Frye and Macpherson, *Biblical and Classical Myths*, 31.
[143]Ibidem. See also Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, chapter "Showing and Telling", 47-88.

4 WOMEN IN DISTRESS: THREE PERSPECTIVES ON HEALING MIRACLES

4.1 The story, Christian discourse, and the healings

> Christianity was a religion with a story. Indeed, it possessed several different kinds of stories. But two were preeminent: *Lives*, biographies of divine or holy personages; and *Acts*, records of their doings, and often of their deaths. Narrative is at their very heart; for whatever view one takes of the evolution of the Gospels, the remembered events and sayings from the life of Jesus were in fact strung together in a narrative sequence and ever afterward provided both a literary and a moral pattern.
>
> A. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 89)

Biohagiographic texts are first and foremost stories, that narrate the deeds of the holy men. Nevertheless, their deeds were governed by the word – the literary rules and *topoi* transmitted through the classical and Christian (Christ himself was the *Logos*) traditions. The authors of biohagiographic texts in the fifth century were no longer really free in their expression. The literary patterns for such texts had been, to some extent, already established, regarding both the content and the form of the text, and they forced their way into the new texts. If the Greco-Roman religiosity in those times was more action-centered, the Christian religiosity became from the fourth century onwards more and more "word/text/doctrine focused."[144]

There were different kinds of miracles in biohagiographic texts. Rudolf Bultmann identified what is a "miracle story" *per se*, noted their common three-part sequence (a. the problem; b. the hero's miraculous act; c. the demonstration or acclamation of the miracle's effect), and derived the four classes: healings, exorcisms, raisings from the dead and nature

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[144]Willi Braun, "Rhetoric, Rhetoricality, and Discourse Performances," in *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianities*. ed. Willi Braun (Canada:Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 2.

miracles.[145] The ability to perform miracles was one of the most distinctive features of every holy man, and the healings, together with exorcisms, belonged to the most common types of miracles in Christian texts.[146] It seems that Christianity in its struggle to "appropriate" the history, the classical culture and traditions, the society and its structures met a challenge of integrating the old "pagan," or rather, traditional, curative practices into its own system of beliefs, for example, incubation (ενκοίμησις).[147]

The healing miracles stories are often sensational stories, yet they are constructed carefully to demonstrate the truth and the "authentic" behind the saint, they are also (indirectly) juxtaposed to "the old wives fables."[148] The authors often claim, as the *topos* requires from them, to have their stories "backed" by the eyewitnesses. They also demonstrate that the holiness of a saint is real, with real consequences in the real world. They make a case for a particular god, or a philosophical school, not by rational reasoning, but by claiming the direct indisputable eyewitness accounts, that this "way of life" really works.

That does not mean that the logical argument was absent in the Christian discourse. To the contrary, Christian discourse constantly used, reshaped, and implemented all the best achievements of the traditional rhetoric culture. That does apply to healing narratives as well, as in the *HPh*. The role of the "figural" and the "demonstrative", however, became a very important strategic tool of Christian discourse to reach the widest possible audience. One can find all through the early Christian writings the contrast between the surface meaning and the hidden meaning, demonstrations of seeing in visions, and strong revelatory tendencies; revelation is indeed central to Christian discourse and, in order to see the things revealed,

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[145]Cotter, *Miracles*, 2.
[146]As Howard Clark Kee notes, one fifth of the approximately 250 literary units into which the synoptic gospels are divided, either describe or allude to healing or exorcism Jesus and his disciples performed. In the *Gospel of John* and the *Pauline letters*, the references are also very frequent. Howard Clark Kee, *Medicine, Miracle, and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1.
[147]Ildikó Csepregi, "The Miracles of Saints Cosmas and Damian: Characteristics of Dream Healing." In *CEU Annual*, 90.
[148]*VPorph* 2.

there is a presupposition of faith. The novelty of this newly developing manifold Christian

discourse lies in combining the specifically Christian elements (signs, proofs, *kerygma*) with

the best traditions of classical rhetoric (cf. Eusebius in his *Vita Constantini*).[149] Christian

discourse demanded claims for originality but at the same time widely used familiar,

established, and understandable, appealing, notions. In my opinion, this combination of the

new, distinctively "Christian" (stemming from the Hebrew traditions) with the trusted and

established components of the "Classical", which can be ostensibly seen in many

biohagiographic texts, was often reached also with the help of the healing narratives.[150]

   In the Christian literature, the emphasis is laid on the mystery of the Christian

message and this message is very important; there is a strong kerygmatic aspect in the

Christian discourse, everything is pointing to some ultimate reality and is meant to proclaim

and announce. The statement of faith is a very important part of it, and the faith is meant to

be affirmed through certain specific signs – proofs. The Scripture was the foremost evidence,

not a thorough explanation and justification.[151] In my opinion, healing narratives often

embody these kerygmatic, possessive, and demonstrative qualities in biohagiographic texts,

and it is specifically Christian biohagiographic texts which often portrayed healing narratives

in this way. While there may be found substantial similarities between the "pagan" and

Christian healing narratives, as will be shown on the three examples below, Christian healing

narratives used them more emphatically, distinctively, almost to say obligatorily, while

"pagan" narratives used them, at that time, often rather as a polemic with the Christian texts.

Christian and "pagan" biohagiographic texts were often engaging each other, yet, the

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[149]Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, chapter "The Rhetoric of Paradox."

[150]What we have in Plato's *Seventh Letter* is Socrates being evocative, not explanatory. This is very similar to what Christianity brought into perfection. Gregory Shaw, "After Aporia: Theurgy in Later Platonism," in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts*, eds. John D. Turner and Ruth Majercik (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 59.

[151]Frye and Macpherson, *Biblical and Classical Myths*, 96-97.

Christian healing narratives developed gradually into a specific standard feature of lives of holy men and women.

At the same time, the emerging Christian discourse strove to include the society as a whole. One part of these efforts can be seen in the manifold kinds of Christian texts aimed at various audiences. Biohagiographic texts are just one part of the Christian literature, and different biogahiographic texts were aimed at different audiences. That is not to say that there was an élite and popular religion, however, as Cristian Gaşpar has shown on the case of Symeon, depicted in the *HPh*, Theodoret's portrayal of different reactions to Symeon's miracles "testifies to the survival in elite mentality of a traditional distinction between "rational" and "irrational" (religious) behavior that would have been familiar to the members of the late Roman educated elite."[152] This distinction existed, moreover, the question of the audience was not just educated versus uneducated (supposedly irrational) audience - the texts could be tailored very specifically to a specific audience. In my opinion, there was not always a strong dichotomy that one text is aimed at educated only and another one at uneducated, but that even within one single text the targeted audience could be both, or least the author would hope so. Surely, one can hardly imagine the text such as *HPh* being read or heard and understood by someone without proper education, and to think whether Theodoret could have at least acknowledged or kept in mind that his text, after adjustment, may be presented to the uneducated is pure speculation. On the other hand, a text such as *VPorph* does not seem to be written well enough to impress anyone of elite education, yet, it may be appealing to the illiterate and to the generally educated audience. The author, however, seems to be trying to reach and persuade, if we come back to the "rational" – "irrational" dichotomy, both of these. There are many details used in such a way, which seem to indicate that the author tried hard to paint the story as reliable and persuasive as it gets – he includes names, places, numbers,

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[152]Gaşpar, "The Emperor", 241.

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and many other details whenever possible. When he wrote about Porphyry's travels, he specified the exact number of days the sail was supposed to last, when he wrote about the conversions, he chose to write the exact numbers of those converted, even specifying how many men, women, and children were among them.[153] Last, but not the least, he included the preface from the *HPh* almost verbatim, although we do not know at which point this was done.[154]

4.2 Women in Distress

Τὸ γὰρ μνημονεῦσαι τῶν αὐτοῦ κατορθωμάτων
φάρμακον ἀλεξητήριον γίνεται τοῖς ἀκούουσιν.[155]

Earlier, I suggested to focus on the problem of the mutual influence and conflict between the different religious traditions and ideologies. As I will argue later, in the three examined narratives there appear at least three different religious traditions as a backbone of the miraculous healing. One of the first conflicts involving the Judaistic religious traditions, which are to be developed later into the new powerful Christian religion, is to be found in the *Acts of Apostles* 8, 9-24, *Acts of Peter*, and other early apocryphal texts. It is the contest between Simon Magus and Peter, where Simon, described as a magician, repeatedly fails in his wonder-working.[156]

The miracles in some texts can be perhaps understood as providing the audience with the alternative way to piety. As Elizabeth Clark shown on the example of Augustine, Augustine's depiction of his mother Monica was meant to provide his readers with the alternative way to piety for those who were not able to go the way Augustine himself treaded.[157] In this case women were the representation of the "lower" in men, while God

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[153]*VPorph* 27, 31, 34, 54, 57, 62, 74.
[154]See the chapter *Mark the Deacon's Life of Porphyry*.
[155]*VPorph* 1.
[156]Tuzlak, "The Magician and the Heretic", 420.
[157]Clark, "Rewriting Early Christian History", 17.

himself was portrayed by Augustine as appropriating the traditionally feminine qualities, the maternal.[158]

Literary traditions of Classical Antiquity, along with the traditions of the old Israel and the proto-Christian traditions influenced the biohagiographic texts and the minds of the authors. E. A. Clark quotes the "virtuous wives, learned mothers and brave heroines"[159] as stable components of the character stacks of Classical literature, but she juxtaposes these images with such Classical works as Juvenal´s *Sixth Satire,* which "in 661 lines catalogues the depravities, infidelities, cruelties, avarice, lies, extravagance, superstition, and murderous designs of wives."[160] Elegiac Simonides of Amorgos, writing more than six centuries before Juvenal, likened women typologically to a bristly sow, mischievous fox, a curious dog, or a stubborn monkey.[161] The only luck for a man is to get a wife typologically created according to a bee.[162] The strong misogynic understanding of women by the Christian Church fathers borrows a lot also from the Classical tradition.

As I will argue, the authors of healing miracles in biohagiographic texts often apply similar twists - those healed are representing the lower, be they women, uneducated, "pagans", or even the members of the élite - unless they are not properly following the Christian truth, they stand for the "lower." The bishops and other Christian clerics might have been seen as pious practitioners of their religion, the holy men however, were the ones who treaded even more "elitist" path - they renunciated their sexuality, their possessions, and even all their social life as they knew it, appropriated the "lower", the "simple", and, curing people and connecting them with God, they provided this "simple" way (of faith) to holiness to others. However, as we can see on the example of the *HPh,* whose author was a bishop

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[158]Ibidem, 13.
[159]Elizabeth A. Clark, "Devil´s Gateway and Bride of Christ: Women in the Early Christian World," in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith. Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. Elizabeth A. Clark (Ontario: Edwin Meller Press, 1986), 23 – 60.
[160]Ibidem, 29.
[161]Simonides of Amorgus. *Semonides: Types of Women and Hipponax fr. 68.*
[162]Ibidem.

himself – since it is the author of the text who really "acts", and not the hero of his text, it was the bishop who let "his" ascetics to appropriate the "simple". Then in turn, he, as the finest representative of the educated élite, could promptly appropriate them for himself.[163]

The common thread of the story of healing, such as is depicted in the three narratives analyzed in this chapter, looks roughly like this: a virtuous, saintly character practices asceticism, heals, while the heavenly signs confirm his sanctity. Suddenly, a woman of a noble origin falls ill and her family is trying to help her by all means. First, they are calling the doctors who try hard to save the patient but after many attempts, they have to admit that they are not able to cure her. In case of the *VPorph* even soothsayers and magicians are called in afterwards, in the desperate efforts of the Aelias' family to cure her. And as the author emphasizes, these are the best magicians and the best sorcerers available, since Aelias' family can afford them. After all these vain attempts to save the victim of the affliction, the saintly character enters the scene. He quickly and effectively heals the woman in distress, though he achieves this in different way in all the three cases. However, in all the three cases it is obvious both from the explicit words and from the context that it was a higher power who healed, the Christian God in the case of Porphyry and Macedonius, and Asclepius in the case of Proclus.

There are many common features in these three healings, which appear often in healing narratives. As Bernard Flusin writes, the actions and words of the heroes of hagiographic texts are not original. On the contrary, the touchstone of their authenticity is their conformity to the *Scripture* first, and then to the previous *Lives*.[164] While this is certainly the case later on, even in the fifth century we can see that the miraculous healings referred to other texts, older and contemporary, to claim the legitimacy of their heroes but

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[163]In the *HPh* there is a great deal of evidence on how Theodoret carefully makes his ascetics act subserveintly to the clergy, for the discussion see, for instance, Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus,* 115-129.

[164]Bernard Flusin, *Miracle et histoire dans l'ouevre de Cyrille de Scythopolis* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1983), 85.

also to compete with other representations of a holy man. However, I will show that these similarities go beyond the use of the same *topoi* or references; it is the very structure of the narrative and the combination of the *topoi* and other literary elements which make it similar. Some of the features of wonderworking in biohagiographic texts could be used as *topoi*, but they could also have been transmitted from other sources as complete units.[165] Surely, there are many variations in the healing narratives, and the three stories I present here stand for but one of these variations. Therefore, I will try to show that these stories are not to be understood as strictly "canonically" defined, it is rather the specific combination of different cues present in the text which may help to uncover new layers of the message.

4.3 Holy Men at Work

These are the healings included in *VProcli*, *VPorph,* and *HPh*[166]: Asclepigeneia, while being still a maid raised by parents in Athens, was gripped by severe illness. Her father Archiadas, after the doctors failed to cure her, visited Proclus and asked him for help. He went, together with Pericles from Lydia, a philosopher, to the shrine of Asclepius[167] to pray to the god on her behalf. While he was praying there, Asclepigeneia suddenly recovered from her illness. After that, he visited her personally and checked that she was in a healthy condition. The *Life of Proclus* was composed at some point in 486, around one year after Proclus' death.[168] The narrative is located in Athens, most probably between 450's and 470's.

A noble lady Aelias, who was about to give birth to a child in Gaza, fell into a great peril and suffered a lot because of childbirth complications. After the doctors and midwives could not help her, her husband Heros, together with her parents called enchanters and soothsayers to help her, but they failed to do so. Meanwhile, a nurse from that household,

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[165]Van Dam, "Hagiography and history", 284 - 285.

[166] For the full texts of the three healing narratives in English translation, see the apendix.

[167]On Christian borrowings from this cult in imagery and function see Vivian Nutton, "From Galen to Alexander, Aspects of Medicine and Medical Practice in Late Antiquity," Dumbarton Oaks Papers (1984): 7-8.

[168]Saffrey and Segonds, "Introduction," xlii.

prayed in a church where she met Porphyry. He told her to go back to the household, gather all its members, and asked them what reward they are willing to give to the physician who can cure her.[169] After they promised, and swore with their hands lifted unto heaven, that they would not deny the physician if he cures Aelias, the nurse exclaimed with Porphyry's words: "Jesus Christ has healed her, believe him and live!" At that moment Aelias shrieked, delivered her child healthy, all around her proclaimed their awe to Porphyry and his God. Then all of them went to him to make them catechumens, and eventually to baptize them all, sixty four people. The date of the composition of *VPorph* has not been established, the healing narrative which is being analyzed is located in Gaza between 398 and 401.[170]

Astrion, a wealthy woman from Antioch, lost her wits, could not eat nor drink and continued being delirious for a long time. After many skills that have been employed to cure her turned out to be ineffective, her husband Ovodianus approached the holy man – Macedonius. The holy man agreed to help, came to his house, prayed and let her drink cold water over which he made a sign of salvation. At that moment, she became sane and, recognizing the "man of God", took his hand, placed it on her eyes and moved it to her mouth. *HPh* was written most probably in 444.[171] The healing narrative is located in Antioch, before 420, the death of Macedonius.[172]

These three miraculous healings are similar, yet they show significant differences in their structure, and the literary elements used. Moreover, the actual act of healing seems to

[169]In the *Life of Anthony*, a girl from Busiris was suffering of a pitiable disease. Athanasius provides a naturalistic description of her pains, and Anthony is depicted as already aware of what was going to happen (as Porphyry was in our healing as well). Anthony refused to meet her and her parents, proclaimed himself unworthy of meeting, said it was Jesus Christ who grants healings, and that they will find the girl healed because of her own prayers - Anthony had just received foreknowledge of this cure from his own prayers, told the monks to go and find her healthy. Anthony was depicted as a mediator, whose power was in the access to God in his prayers. He did not even actively asked for the girl being healed, all he did was obtaining the foreknowledge of the following cure, which was granted by God, who helped her because of her own prayers, and her faith. Athanasius also wrote in this healing narrative that her parents had faith in her being cured because of the story from the gospels of the healing of the hemorrhage. Athanasius, *The Life of Anthony* 58. In the other healing miracles, Anthony again healed by prayer, the faith was again emphasized.
[170]Marc le Diacre, *Vie de Porphyre*, 25.
[171] See the chapter "A Bishop's View: Theodoret's *Philotheos Historia*."
[172]Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, xvi.

point out to different influences on the authors: the first one is stressing the importance of place,[173] tradition, ritual and theurgy[174] (Neoplatonist Proclus), the second is based on prayer to the only God, and liturgy (Christian bishop Porphyry), and the third one alluding to the Gospel tradition of active involvement of the holy man in the process of healing (Christian ascetic Macedonius).

The healing episode in *VPorph* begins with an allusion to the chain of miracles, which the saint had already performed. Similarly, Marinus introduces the episode of the healing with the remark that "if one wished to make a long story, one could say a great deal in relating the theurgic practices (θεουργικὰ ἐνεργήματα) of the happy man."[175] He mentions, however, only one of them as example (ἑνὸς δὲ ἄλλου ἐκ τῶν μυρίων ἐπιμνησθήσομαι).[176] This is a *topos* known as *ex pluribus pauca,*[177] present not only in biohagiographic texts. The Gospels, which, in the words of Averil Cameron, "provided both a literary and a moral pattern ever after,"[178] usually do not use this *topos* in the beginning of Jesus' healing accounts. However, although usually not stated directly, it is clear from the structure of healing narratives performed by Jesus, as described in the *Gospel of John*, that these miracles are *ex pluribus pauca.*[179] Theodoret does not specify in this case that this is yet another miracle among many. However, in the other healing narratives related in *HPh*, he says: "After freeing many from all kinds of disease, he [Julian of Saba] proceeded from there

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[173]On the importance of holy sites, see Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Persecution and Response in Late Paganism," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113 (1993): 7-10.

[174]A number of different means could be used in theurgy: prayer, talisman, revelation, myth, divine names, initiation, and even silence. Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism,* 193.

[175]*VProcli* 29. Translated by Edwards, Marinus of Neapolis: *Proclus, or On Happiness,* 102.

[176]*VProcli* 29.

[177]Thomas Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos: Griechische Heiligenviten im mittelbyzantinischer Zeit* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 31-32, see also: Laurent Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*, vol. 1 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1993), 256-7.

[178]Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of the Empire,* 89.

[179]There is one prominent place in the *Gospel of John*, at the end: "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" *John* 21:25.

to the assembly of the pious."[180] Similarly, when introducing a healing miracle performed by another ascetic whom he portrayed, Maesymas, he opens the narration with these words: "He received from the God of the universe much grace also to perform miracles. I shall recall one or two miracles, but omit the rest, in my haste to proceed to other ascetics."[181] This *topos* is not used exclusively in biohagiographic texts, and, at the same time, it is not unique for the Christian tradition. While this *topos* is more likely to be used in biohagiographic text than in a classical history, it alludes to multiple eyewitnesses confirming the truth and authenticity of the message.[182] In Christian miracle stories, however, their authors constantly refer to multiple eyewitnesses. This applies to the biohagiographic texts as well; Theodoret is one of the best examples here. Throughout the text of *HPh*, he repeats many times that he knew many of the ascetics personally, and even had a close relationship with some of them.[183] He claims to provide the evidence, which is, so to speak, first hand. Another reason for the use of the *ex pluribus pauca* commonplace seems to be to balance the efforts to legitimate the stories by amassing particular details. The places where the miracles were performed, the names of the healed, their relatives, or any other characters involved in the miracle stories, often the dates together with some other details needed to be balanced with the reference to their immense number. The biohagiographers had a certain freedom when using this *topos*. Therefore, from their use of it, one can see not only how they rhetorically built up their texts, but also to some extent reconstruct the polemical references to other texts of similar sort. Another famous "pagan" author, and Neoplatonist himself, Eunapius (4th – 5th century), approved of the use of oracles, divination, and thaumaturgy in history, and used them

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[180]*HPh* 2, 19.

[181]*HPh* 14, 3. Translated by Price, Theodoret of Cyrrhus. *A History of the Monks of Syria*, 111.

[182]Patricia Cox traces "the continuity of the biographic genre. There is the difference between so-called erudite research (antiquarians) and historians as early as the fifth century BCE and thereafter. While the former used various kinds of sources, especially written, and focused on social and cultural phenomena, the latter relied mainly on oral testimony and were less interested in individuals than in the broad collective political affairs. Greek biographers descended rather from the "antiquarians," and were actually *logopoioi* or *logographoi. Cox, Biography in Late Antiquity*, 4. The authors of Christian biohagiographic texts, however, always strove to refer to the eyewitnesses, or claimed to have known the hero(es) of their texts personally.

[183]Pierre Canivet, *Le monachisme syrien selon Théodoret de Cyr* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1977), 37-63.

himself, yet he was for moderate use of them because "they are not appropriate for inclusion in a serious formal history. For to include every detail is not the action of one who respects the truth, but of one who is carried away by idle curiosity and slips into empty prattle."[184] Marinus himself, even if not writing a history, states that he will mention only "one of a myriad" (ἑνὸς δὲ ἄλλου ἐκ τῶν μυρίων) of Proclus' theurgic practices, and indeed, Aclepigeniea's healing is the only healing narrative in *VProcli*.

Right after introducing the healing narrative as *ex pluribus pauca*, the author of *VPorph* does not fail to note that the miracles he talks about are not Porphyry's own miracles. He specifies that "God, being compassionate, turns the race of men through different occasions unto his light that enlightens the mind."[185] Christian holy men are presented in the biohagiographic texts as the mediators of God. Although the power to perform miracles can be bestowed on a holy man by God, yet they are not the ones who can perform miracles freely without the assistance of God.[186] This aspect is often quoted as one of the major distinctions between magic and miracle. In the "pagan" texts, those who perform magic often do not need the assistance of God. Second, there is usually no clear distance and sometimes even difference between God and the pagan holy man.[187] The concept of "God" is another crucial component to be taken into account when comparing the sources of different ideological traditions. The word ὁ θεὸς as used by Mark does not contain the same concept as the one behind Marinus' ὁ Σωτήρ, ὥστε θεός.

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[184]R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire. Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus, and Malchus II. Text, Translation, and Historiographical Notes* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983), 45.

[185]*VPorph 28*. Translated by Hill, Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, 28.

[186]This is another important *topos* - specific to Christian hagiography; see Van Uytfanghe, "L'Hagiographie," 170-71 for a discussion and literature; he identifies this as one of the main distinguishing features of Christian hagiography in contrast to non-Christian texts, where the boundary between (holy) human and the divine can often become fluid.

[187]Jas' Elsner, "Beyond Compare: Pagan Saint and Christian God in Late Antiquity," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 656-657.

In what follows, Macedonius, before ordering the doctors to bring cold water and making the "sign of salvation"[188] over it, addressed an earnest supplication to God (σπουδαίαν τῷ θεῷ τὴν ἱκετείαν προσήνεγκε).[189] It is interesting that the Neoplatonic *bios*, written by Marinus, contains similar vocabulary as the Christian one; the anti-Christian polemic character of these lines seems to be apparent. Marinus writes:

> ... Proclus visited the shrine of Asclepius to pray to the god on behalf of the invalid. For at that time the city still enjoyed the use of this and retained intact the temple of the Saviour (τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἱερόν). And while he was praying in the ancient manner (εὐχομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀρχαιότερον τρόπον), a sudden change was seen in the maiden and a sudden recovery occurred, for the Saviour, being a god, healed her easily (ῥεῖα γὰρ ὁ Σωτήρ, ὥστε θεός, ἰᾶτο).[190]

The prayer was a very important component of performing a miracle by a Christian holy man.[191] Some holy men appeared to be portrayed as healing "on themselves" or praying to God. If a holy man acts in the sources as an intercessor, than the concept of παρρησία (literally, freedom to speak) is implied. A saint is the one who has παρρησία towards the God. In biohagiographic texts, a holy man's intercession on behalf of sinners is "usually couched in colorful stories that culminate in a miracle. Typically, a sinner who had suffered divine punishment for a misdeed approached the holy man with the request to be "loosed" by him."[192]

The healing miracle in *VPorph* is said to call out many to come to the knowledge of the truth (συμβαίνει δὲ ἄλλο θαυμαστὸν γενέσθαι προσκαλούμενον πολλοὺς εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν).[193] Truth is an important notion in biohagiographic texts. Averil Cameron emphasizes the importance of the meaning of a text and its strong appeal to "the

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[188]*HPh* 13, 13. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria*,105. Théodoret de Cyr, *Histoire des moines de Syrie: Histoire Philothée* I-XIII. Translation and notes by Pierre Canivet and Alice Leroy-Molinghen. Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1977, 498.

[189]Ibidem.

[190]*VProcli* 29. Translated by Edwards, Marinus of Neapolis: *Proclus, or On Happiness,* 103.

[191]Péter Kovács, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain Miracle and the Marcomannic Wars* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 3.

[192]Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity (the Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 82.

[193]*VPorph 28.*

truth." Logical argument was often balanced by the use of signs and symbols. The stress is laid on the mystery of the Christian message and this message is important; there is a strong kerygmatic aspect in Christian discourse. The miracles signify what is true but what is hidden and not capable of being explained in terms of any dialectic and what cannot be captured or described with words.[194] The emphasis on the truth, and appeal to the faith of the audience, is what is new, and it seems to be a distinctively Christian cue in biohagiographic texts.

Archiadas, having come to the holy man, "earnestly begged him to come quickly and make his own prayers on behalf of the daughter."[195] Ovodianus also "hastened to this godly person, described his wife's affliction and begged to obtain a cure."[196] Both Macedonius and Proclus agreed to help and began their cure with a prayer. Macedonius "went to the house and addressed earnest supplication to God."[197] Unlike Proclus and Porphyry, he, after completing the prayer, ordered the doctors to bring cold water and traced the "sign of salvation" over it.[198] He bade Astrion to drink it and "as she drank, she came to herself and became sane."[199] Proclus "visited the shrine of Asclepius to pray to the god on behalf of the invalid."[200] He prayed "in the ancient manner,"[201] Marinus writes, "in the temple of the Saviour."[202] The recovery of Asclepigeneia occurred while he was praying there: "a sudden change was seen in the maiden and a sudden recovery occurred, for the Saviour, being a god, healed her easily."[203] The healing with prayer could often happen when women were those who needed the cure, since many Christian holy men were not fond of meeting a woman in

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[194]Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of the Empire*, 48-49.
[195]*VProcli* 29. Translated by Edwards, *Marinus of Neapolis: Proclus, or On Happiness*, 103.
[196]*HPh* 13, 13. Translated by Price, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus, A History of the Monks of Syria,*105˵.
[197]Ibidem.
[198]Another Christian holy man, Hypatius, whose life was written by Callinicus most probably few years after his death in 446, while healing a woman tormented by a demon, also made sign of the cross, and started to pray. The demon shouted at Hypatius to let it be, yet, as Callinicus writes, it was God who through the saint's hands healed the woman. *Vie d'Hypatios*, 40.
[199]Ibidem.
[200]*VProcli* 29. Translated by Edwards, *Marinus of Neapolis: Proclus, or On Happiness*, 103.
[201]Ibidem.
[202]Ibidem.
[203]Ibidem.

person. As the story goes in the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, a wife of a senator lost her sight and asked her husband to take her to the holy man, John of Lycopolis. Her husband refused though, on the grounds that John did not meet women (γυναικί αὐτον μμδέποτε συντετχηκέναι). Therefore she asked him at least to go to ask John to pray for her, which he did. The holy man prayed, blessed the oil, and after the husband had brought it home for her, and applying it to her eyes for three days, she recovered her sight.[204] Similarly, when Macrina was severely ill, she did not want to see doctors, despite her mother imploring her to do so, because she "judged it worse than the pain to uncover any part of the body to a stranger's eyes."[205] There is a story of a woman, who while ill in her convent, found it inappropriate to see even her own brother, who was also consecrated.[206] Macedonius, however, seemed not to be that uncertain in his virtues, he became friends with Theodoret's mother and it was she, who supplied him with food when old and ill.[207]

Apart of the prayer, timid John gave the man the blessed oil, and it was only after three days of applying it to the woman's eyes that she regained her sight, yet Rufinus (fourth-fifth century), Christian monk and the author of the text, seems not to be afraid that this would be seen as anything resembling magic. As we can see on the case of another famous Neoplatonist, Hierocles (fifth century), practitioner of theurgy, any accusation of magic was a very serious issue. After receiving flogging he was sent to exile, and although we do not know exactly what his offence was, it was most probably related to his theurgic activities. Hierocles himself dissociated himself actively from magicians and astrologers, and the theurgy he and most of the Neoplatonists practiced was rather a part of philosophical development - with some simplification it can be seen as the "practical" counterpart of the "contemplative" on philosopher's path to purify his soul and unite with the divine. Yet, it

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[204]*The History of the Monks of Egypt* 1, 12 - 13.
[205]Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, 992.
[206]*The Sayings of Pelagius the Deacon and John the Subdeacon* 4, 61.
[207]*HPh* 13, 3.

required practical rituals, which could be easily interpreted as magic by the authorities, and punished as in the case of Hierocles.[208] It is in this context, therefore, when the power of Christian holy men and their healings can be seen as really striking and powerful – it was in fact, for an untrained eye, very similar to magic, or theurgic rituals, and yet while the former was praised and extolled in Christian biohagiographic texts, the latter if discovered, could lead to severe punishments, such as exile, torture (even for the members of the élite), or even capital punishment.[209]

4.4 The Doctors

The woman being healed in this episode of the *VPorph*, Aelias, is one of the notable people of the city (γυνή τις τῶν ἐμφανῶν τῆς πόλεως ὀνόματι Αἰλιὰς).[210] Asclepigeneia, who is cured in Marinus' healing narrative, is also of noble origin.[211] Finally, Astrion, the woman cured by Macedonius, is "a woman of the very wealthiest of the nobility."[212] Aelias, "being about to give birth to a child, fell into great peril"[213] Astrion "lost her wits" so she "could recognize none of her household, and could not bear to take food or drink."[214] Asclepigeneia, "while she was still a maid and being reared by her parents, was gripped by a severe illness (νόσῳ χαλεπῇ κατείχετο) which the doctors were unable to cure."[215]

At this point the doctors enter the narrative: Aelias, Astrion, and Asclepigeneia were wealthy enough to afford the care of physicians. The doctors and physicians represent the high attainments of the classical "pagan" healing arts. Plato's references to, and attitude

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[208]Hermann S. Schibli, *Hierocles of Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 38-39.
[209]Ibidem.
[210]*VPorph 28.*
[211]*VProcli 29.*
[212]*HPh*, 13, 13. Translated by Price, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus, A History of the Monks of Syria,*105.
[213]*VPorph 28.*
[214]*HPh* 13, 13. Translated by Price, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus, A History of the Monks of Syria,*105.
[215]*VProcli 29.* Translated by Edwards, *Marinus of Neapolis: Proclus, or On Happiness*, 103.

towards, medicine points out to the social and intellectual prestige of the Greek medical profession of his times, and his writings in turn influenced the cultural elites for subsequent centuries.[216] Christianity was not, as such, opposed to these secular achievements. Yet, even those Church Fathers, who were inclined to the secular medical knowledge, reserved a room for these miraculous healings.[217] In Christian biohagiographic texts, however, their authors established an almost inevitable *topos* to be employed in healing narratives. The emphasis on the inability of the doctors was juxtaposed to the striking efficiency of, often simple, rugged ascetics, and their mediations. The doctors were the privilege of the noble and wealthy. Yet, they were defeated by simple, but "true" Christian ascetics.[218] Theodoret makes it plain: "When all skill had been expended and no help came from it, the woman's husband – he was Ovodianus, a curial of the highest rank – hastened to this godly person, described his wife's affliction and begged to obtain a cure."[219] Both Theodoret and the author of the *VPorph* intensify the inability of the doctors by referring to the long time which had passed before the miraculous intervention. Theodoret writes about Astrion that she "continued being delirious for a very long time,"[220] and the author of *VPorph* diligently paints an intensive image of misery:

> But the pain that was upon the woman was unspeakable, since in her throes of her travail she sought to bring forth the child; and her labours increased the more when the second day followed after the first; and the third day likewise was more painful than the second. And her labours endured unto seven days, the evil being ever increased.[221]

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[216]Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture. Volume 3. The Conflict of Cultural Ideas in the Age of Plato*. Translated from German by Gilbert Highet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 3-45.

[217]Nutton, "From Galen to Alexander," 5. In biohagiographic texts, the doctors were not necessarily to be discredited entirely, but even if their skills were admitted to be of use in this world, the holy man's intercession invariably overcame them.

[218]Gilbert Dagron, "Le saint, le savant, l'astrologue: Étude de thèmes hagiographiques à travers quelques recueils de Questions et Réponses des Ve-VIIe siècles," in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés (IVe-XIIe siècles)* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1981), 143-56.

[219]*HPh* 13, 13. Translated by Price, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus, A History of the Monks of Syria,* 105.

[220]Ibidem.

[221]*VPorph* 28. Translated by Hill, *Mark the Deacon, Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, 28.

The health care was an important component of women's everyday life.[222] Women took care of the food and drink supplies in the household, part of which was supplying the medical remedies. The word φάρμακον, however, meant "medicine" but "charm" as well. It was their task to keep healthiness in the household – ὑγεία – and it bore the physical and mental dimension alike. The sick were usually treated at home; the women provided the traditional means of cure. There were women called *medicae*, but they could not take part at the lectures in medical schools nor could they learn practical skills from the doctors. Midwives and nurses, on the other hand, could collaborate with the doctors. According to Soranus (1st-2nd century CE), a midwife was supposed to understand all the main medical branches: dietetics, pharmacy, and the handicraft – χειρουργία - including the use of medical tools.[223] Most of the information about contemporary medicine comes from medical or legal sources, and although the biohagiographic texts can be used under certain circumstances as a source of information regarding some details and curiosities of contemporary daily life and its practices, they are, in my opinion, first of all rhetorical texts with their own agenda. In Christian biohagiographic texts, doctors are usually here to demonstrate the inferiority of the achievements of traditional high culture to Christian God, (aristocratic) women are here to show that even their wealth and connections fail to save them. All they need to do is to have faith, and follow the right authorities on their path to salvation.

Gravidity[224] was a central point in the life of every adult woman; infertility, as well as too-vibrant fertility, was a grave adversity regarding her health and in most cases also the

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[222]Biohagiographic texts belong to the sources which often refer to the issues of health and healing, and it seems that they can, to a certain extent, bring the evidence about particular medical practices. However, these texts are nevertheless relevant mainly for the issues of beliefs and superstition, rather than for anything else. Consequently, the level of reliability of such sources for gathering information about women and health in these periods is questionable. Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 63 – 64.

[223]Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity,* 67.

[224]Diseases and health complications related to childbearing and delivery were of course commonly attributed to the evil powers. For example, there was a female demon, *Gylou,* with long shaggy hair and snaky lower part of

economic situation. Cures were recommended for both conditions. The Church Fathers regarded frequent pregnancies as dangerous as well. At the same time, there was a strong pressure against any birth-control or abortive measures.[225] The childbirth was a very difficult situation both for the mother and her child. The infant death rate was very high. After the childbirth, the mother was considered to be impure for forty days, the midwives were also considered to be impure for seven days. The seven days after the delivery were called λοχεία, lying in, and at the end of the week there was a banquet accompanied with prayers for the mother and her child.[226] I argue that in the biohagiographic texts, both infertility or problems with gravidity as depicted in *VPorph*, were used rhetorically, the seriousness of the issue and its connection to health, inheritance, and further survival of whole families, had the potential to touch both male and female audience. This seriousness is emphasized in *VProcli* as well: "Archiadas, whose hope of offspring rested entirely in her, was distraught and full of grief, as one would expect."[227] The author of *VPorph* implements this topic in the story later again, when Porphyry cleverly uses Eudoxia's pregnancy and the insecurities connected with it to sway her on his side, even against the will of the Emperor, as the author says.[228] Theodoret himself recounts the story how Macedonius prayed for his sterile mother to have a son, despite she, being "instructed in the things of God", was satisfied with such a state and did not want to rear children – what, greatly distressed her

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her body. There are many extant amulets and magic formulas which were supposed to protect against this dangerous creature causing miscarriages and killing the newborns. In Bawita in the Upper Egypt there is a monastic fresco of a holy man, Sissinios, killing Gylou, dated to the turn of the sixth century. Similarly, there is a bronze amulet, dated back to the turn of the fifth and sixth century, depicting the holy rider Sissinios and the enthroned Virgin. She is depicted as a counterpart of the evil *Gylou,* piked by Sissinios. These sorts of amulets were worn by women desiring the protection or, on the other hand, longing for conception. Molly Fulghum Heintz, "The Art and Craft of Earning a Living," in *Byzantine Women and Their World*, ed. Ioli Kalavrezou (Harvard University Art Museums, 2003), 288. Relics and saintly images of Mary soon became important for Byzantine women of all classes as a protection and supernatural aid in the issues relating to childbearing and delivery, see: Elizabeth A., Gittings, "Women as Embodiments of Civic Life", in *Byzantine Women and Their World*, ed. Ioli Kalavrezou (Harvard University Art Museums, 2003), 35 – 42.

[225]Although the contraceptive measures were common, for example, among prostitutes, see: Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity,* 82 – 83.

[226]Molly Fulghum Heintz, "The Art and Craft of Earning a Living," in *Byzantine Women and Their World*, 139 – 160.

[227]*VProcli* 29.

[228]*VPorph* 36.

husband, Theodoret's father.[229] Another famous holy man, Hilarion from Gaza, is said to perform a miracle on a woman from Eleutheropolis, who was despised by her husband because of her sterility, of which she was cured one year after meeting Hilarion. In another miracle, a woman named Aristanete, approached him, because she lost her three children. Desperate, she threw herself upon the ground before Hilarion, unwilling to leave his cell, and cried until he promised her to enter Gaza after sunset, which he did, and miraculously raised her three children from the dead.[230]

Marinus omits entirely any reference to how long the illness lasted before the intervention of the holy man. He only says that the doctors were unable to cure the illness, and when they gave up, Asclepigeneia's father sought, "as his custom was,"[231] for Proclus – his final anchor, or rather his benevolent Saviour."[232] This tempts me to see it as a deliberate emphasis used by the Christian biohagiographers on the inability of the best, well trained and educated doctors, paid by wealthy and noble citizens, to stand their ground where only the Christian holy men, through their connection to God, could.[233] Proclus, on the other hand, does not emphasize the inability of the doctors, but his designation of Proclus as the "final anchor" and the "benevolent savior" seems to be a polemic reference to Christian texts. Earlier in *VProcli* though, he is said:

> And if any of his associates was afflicted by illness, first he strenuously appealed to the gods on his behalf with words and hymns, then he attended the invalid solicitously, calling the doctors together and pressing them to exercise their skills without delay. And in these circumstances he himself did something extra, and thus rescued many from the greatest perils.[234]

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[229]*HPh* 16-17.

[230]Jerome, *Life of HIlarion* 13-14.

[231]*VProcli* 29. Translated by Edwards, *Marinus of Neapolis: Proclus, or On Happiness*, 103.

[232]ἐπὶ τὴν ἐσχάτην ἄγκυραν, μᾶλλον δὲ ὡς ἐπὶ σωτῆρα ἀγαθὸν τὸν φιλόσοφον. Ibidem.

[233]The author of the *VPorph* adds up to the scene also the enchanters and soothsayers, along with the sacrifices offered by the parents of Aelias, just to demonstrate clearly that they all "accomplished nothing." *VPorph 28.* Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, 28.

[234]*VProcli* 17. Translated by Edwards, *Marinus of Neapolis: Proclus, or On Happiness*, 83.

When he himself was in physical distress though, this is what Marinus writes: "As for ailments he shunned them, or if they fell on him he bore them meekly, and made them less because the best part of him did not share the suffering."[235]

The change that Christianity brought about did not consist of any revolutionary change of medical practices. To the contrary, the ancient medical authorities were used for many subsequent centuries in both education and practice. What Christianity did change, however, is to be found rather in the medical discourse and its place in the Christian world-view and rhetoric. As the Christian gospel was supposed to save everyone who was willing to accept the message, so the medical care in the first charitable institutions was supposed to be aimed at everyone.[236] All of the three women in our narratives were of noble origin, yet Proclus was helping to the wife of a benefactor of the academy where Proclus taught – socially, the help among peers is displayed. Macedonius, however, was helping a noble woman as an old rugged ascetic[237], and bishop Porphyry was helping a noble woman, but she was from an "idolatrous house, which hardly could be saved."[238] Taking into account the frequency and the prominent place of the healing narratives in the biohagiographic texts, it seems that human health and insecurities connected with it became eventually a powerful rhetorical tool for Christian biohagiographers. The noble women in the narratives seem to be appropriate in the texts aimed at educated, socially privileged audience (*HPh, VProcli*), yet their presence make the point effectively even in texts such as *VPorph* – Aelias' parents could afford the most expensive doctors, magicians, and soothsayers, yet all in vain, and they were prepared to give all their possessions to the physicians who would cure her, yet all

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[235]*VProcli*, 20. Translated by Edwards, *Marinus of Neapolis: Proclus, or On Happiness*, 88.
[236]While healing of the poor and the "simple" was not a novelty in itself, Christian authors made a fair use of the paradox of the noble and the simple. What might have existed before, was now put into the forefront, Christianity used and adjusted the message in different texts to the audience, so as to reach the poor and not alienate the rich as well. On a literary level, the social inclusivness of Christianity was a prominent feature of the message. The accumulation of all these cues, how often and persistently one can find them in the Late Antique Christian texts, was what constituted the change.
[237]On his way of life see *HPh* 13.
[238]*VPorph* 29.

Porphyry asks them to do is to believe their physician -- Christ."[239] Unlike Neoplatonic "pagan" lives of the fourth century, which focused on the efforts on perfection of human, and holy man's life, the Christian biohagiographic texts emphasized the imperfection of man, even the holy man, and need of faith to get the cure.[240]

4.5 The effects – healing, victory of the divine, conversion

After the doctors in our texts failed in their efforts, the holy man enters the scene. In the case of *HPh* it is Ovodianus, the husband of Astrion, who contacts the holy man and begs him for help. The text does not specify whether Astrion and Ovodianus, or at least one of them, are Christians or not.[241] However, Ovodianus is said to be a prominent member of the local *curia*, and this may imply that he is a Christian; if he were to be a "pagan" benefiting from such a miraculous healing, Theodoret would probably use this opportunity to elaborate on it in his text. The author of the *VPorph*, however, builds up the narrative so as to be able to use this opportunity to direct the healing narrative to the final conversion of the "pagans" from Gaza to Christianity. Not only that the household of Aelias, together with her husband and parents are said to be "pagans", their "paganism" is even directly identified as the reason for Aelias' suffering. The mediator who contacts the holy man is in this case a nurse of Aelias, a Christian, whose name the author does not mention. It is significant, however, that she does not seek Porphyry deliberately; they meet "by chance" during a prayer in a church. However, nothing happens "by chance" in *VPorph* and it is rather God himself, who "being compassionate, turns the race of men through different occasions unto his light that enlightens the mind."[242] In *VProcli,* it is the father of Asclepigeneia, Archiadas, "whose hope

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[239]*VPorph* 28.

[240] Again, the emphasis is being put on the faith. While this does not apply for the late antique Christinaity in all its forms, the "simple faith" appears to be, repeatedly, juxtaposed to the vain (and "sinful") efforts of the philosophers, "pagans", and heretic Christians, for "perfection."

[241]*HPh* 13.

[242]*VPorph* 28. Translation by Hill, *Mark the Deacon, Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, 28.

of offspring rested entirely in her," who sought Proclus. As Marinus writes, Archiadas knows

Proclus, who is his "final anchor;"[243] what is more, Archiadas' son-in-law is "our

benefactor,"[244] that is, the benefactor of the Academy.

Porphyry, praying in the church where he met Aelias' nurse, is at this point trying

(with a certain cunning) to get new converts to "the only true religion."[245] He persuades the

nurse to go back to the household, to gather all the kinsfolk of the unhappy Aelias to the

scene of the dreadful childbirth and to "cause them all to lift up their hands to heaven and

give their word that they will perform all the things that they have promised. And when they

have done this, say unto the woman that gave childbirth before them all: "Jesus Christ, the

Son of the living God, healed you, believe on him and live."[246] The nurse done what

Porphyry told her and told the parents and husband of Aelias that "an excellent physician sent

me unto you, that you may give me your word that if she be cured you will not deny him."[247]

They agreed, and the final part of the narrative, opening with the words of the nurse, is worth

to be quoted in full:

> Thus saith the great priest Porphyry: "Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, healeth thee; believe on him and live." 'And straightway the woman shrieked aloud, and brought forth the child alive. And all they that were there were astonied, and cried out: ' Great is the God of the Christians; great is the priest Porphyry.' And on the next day the parents of the woman and her husband and all her family and kinsfolk went unto the blessed Porphyry and fell at his feet, asking to be sealed in Christ. And the blessed man having sealed them and made them catechumens sent them away in peace, exhorting them to make attendance in holy church; and after a little time, when he had instructed them, he baptized them, together with the woman and the child. And they called his name Porphyry. And they that were enlightened through the occasion of this woman were in number sixty and four.[248]

While Porphyry makes sure that everyone may see his miracle so as to get as many

converts as possible, Proclus, living at the time when the "pagan" cults were forbidden by the

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[243]*VProcli* 29. Translation by Edwards, *Marinus of Neapolis: Proclus, or On Happiness*, 103.
[244]Ibidem.
[245]*VPorph 28.*
[246]Ibidem.
[247]*VPorph 28.* Translation by Hill, *Mark the Deacon, Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, 30.
[248]*VPorph 28.* Translation by Hill, *Mark the Deacon, Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza*, 30-31.

imperial law and, as such, liable to a persecution, had to be more careful: "Such was the act he performed, yet in this as in every other case he evaded the notice of the mob, and offered no pretext to those who wished to plot against him. The house in which he dwelt was in this respect of great assistance to him."[249]

It is not necessarily conversion to Christianity which is expected from those being cured. In another healing narrative in the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, John of Lycopolis was contacted by a military commander who left his pregnant wife at home. John told him that his wife had just given birth to his child, and that she fell dangerously ill after the childbirth (ἔμελλεν κινδυνεύειν λιποψυχήσασα), but that she will recover soon. He is not described as having any participation in the successful childbirth nor in the subsequent recovery of commander's wife, other than foreknowledge of these events. However, as Porphyry did, he asked the commander to "pay the physician" – he told him to name the child John, bring him up at home without any external influence until he reaches seven years of age, and then to hand him over to a monastery.[250] Macedonius himself did not give Theodoret's mother (or, more precisely, his father) the son despite her sterility for free – he asked the child being given into God's service in return, and, as if to secure that this will happen, Theodoret's mother fell into the danger of miscarriage in the fifth month of her pregnancy.[251] Similarly, Melania is said to have cured an archdeacon of Constantinople, who fell ill and out of political favour, but only did so after he promised that he will adopt the monastic life, which he abandoned.[252] The conversion in one form or another is often present in biohagiographic texts. It does not need to be a conversion from one religion to another, the society the elites moved in was after all, rather fluid. By the fifth century, the differences between what was "pagan", Christian, or Jewish must have been relatively much more

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[249]*VProcli* 29. Translation by Edwards, *Marinus of Neapolis: Proclus, or On Happiness*, 104.
[250]*The History of the Monks of Egypt*, 1, 10.
[251]*HPh* 17.
[252]Palladius, *Lausiac History*, 38.

pronounced and clear than in the fourth century, yet, the religious identities and practices must have varied significantly, certainly not matching the clear-cut depictions we find in biohagiographic texts. Furthermore, the conversion in these texts could be also depicted as a change of one's mind (μετάνοια) without changing the religion. Thus, Proclus is described as converting from his intended future as a rhetorician to devote himself to the philosophical life, while Porphyry decides to leave the riches and splendor of his noble family in Thessalonica behind and adapt the solitary life in Egypt.

Nevertheless, the conversion in whatever form was ostensibly present in Christian biohagiographic texts, and as it seems, the miracles were the tools *par excellance* for instigating conversion – those healed (and sometimes also those witnessing the miraculous healings) are depicted as going through μετάνοια, proclaim their faith in Christian God, and converting, adapting some sort of ascetic life, or simply turning away from their sins.[253] Arguably, the same is in turn expected from the audience of these texts. Often tightly connected with conversions, miracles were expected to be a part of such a text, but they were not a must. They were more prominent in some biohagiographic texts, and less in others. However, they gradually became a stable part of such texts and the extent and their quantity depended on the author's taste and aims. For instance, Saint Martin had turned a robber in the Alps to the Christian faith without performing any miracle.[254] Porphyry, on the other hand, concentrating all his efforts on conversion used all sorts of means to gain new converts - healing miracle as described above, rain miracle[255], prophecy[256], and eventually overturning

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[253]For instance, Theodoret's mother is said having been healed by yet another ascetic in *HPh*, Peter the Galatian. She, already a Christian, visited the ascetic because of an eye infection which, again, the doctors were unable to cure. The cure was granted, however, she was exhorted to the pious lifestyle, because before she "was wearing ear-rings, necklaces, and other golden jewelry, and an elaborate dress woven from silk thread, for she had not yet tasted the more perfect virtue; she was at the flower of age, and was conent with the adornment of youth." *HPh* 9, 6.
[254]Sulpitius Severus, *The Life of Saint Martin*, 5.
[255]Proclus is also said to perform a rain miracle: He actually caused rains by an apposite use of a iunx, releasing Attica from a baneful drought. *VProcli* 28.
[256]*VPorph* 62.

the pagan temple, Marneion.[257] On the other hand, Horapollo, the "Soul-destroyer," compelled many Christians to convert to Hellenism.[258]

In relation to the conversion, not only in its narrow sense of changing the religion, biohagiographic texts could be seen as "tools" used to imprint morals, rules, and patterns of behavior into minds of the audience. The stories and metaphors used generously in such texts might have seemed to the authors as the best vehicle to transmit effectively the new codes and morals and incorporate them into the minds of the audience. Yet, the intense imagery and the striking victories over illnesses, demons, and death depicted in the healing narratives, continuing the tradition of Jesus' miracles, crucifiction, and martyrdom stories[259], often seem to place the function and meaning of these narratives closer to presenting the showcase of the "true religion" rather than being "educational" stories promoting particular morals or behaviours – if there is a stable morale in the story apart from the "promotional" aspect, it is highlighting of the importance of faith in the power of the promoted divinity, and requirement for obeisance.

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[257]According to Theodoret, a hermit Thalelaleus destroyed a "pagan" temple near Gabala, and created a Christian one inhabited by the martyrs, gathering to this new church "opposing the false gods with the relics of their [martyrs'] divine bodies." Van Uytfanghe, "L'origine", 182. See also Raymond Van Dam, "From Paganism to Christianity at Late Antique Gaza." *Viator* (1985), 1 – 20; And Joseph Geiger, "Aspects of Palestinian Paganism in Late Antiquity," in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land First Fifteenth Century*, ed Aryeh Kofsky, Guy Stroumsa (Yerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1998), 3 – 17.
[258]Polymnia Athanassiadi, *The Philosophical History. Text with Translation and Notes* (Athens: Apamea Cultural Association, 1999). 22.
[259]See Susanna Elm, "Roman Pain and the Rise of Christianity", in *Quo Vadis Medical Healing*, ed Susanna Elm and Stefan N. Willich (New York: Springer, 2009), 41 – 54.

CONCLUSION

In my thesis I set out to explore the miraculous healing narratives in late antique biohagiographic texts, and try to find an answer to what function these narratives might have played in these texts – which may in turn help in better understanding of the function and agenda of these texts and the biohagiographic discourse employed in them. My analysis was based on three different sources from the fifth century, which contain miraculous healing narratives, very similar in their structure, yet with significant differences in the agenda behind them. These differences, despite the similar vocabulary, even similar process of healing displayed, stem from the differences in the very texts they are part of. These three biogahiographic texts were written on the basis of different literary and religious traditions, they were aimed at different audience, and they were primarily composed for different reasons. Therefore, to understand the miraculous healing narratives better, I needed to define what sort of late antique texts contain miraculous healings, and to explore them closer.

This general contextualization is laid out in the first chapter, "Biohagiography as a Cross-Genre Category." When one reads miraculous healing narratives in various texts where they appear, one notice how very different these texts are, yet the healing miracles often seem, at first, very similar in language, in structure, even in tone. That applies for the three healing narratives analyzed in my thesis, and that applies for many other healing narratives coming from various texts referred in my thesis as well. Therefore, I tried to look at the vast diversity of these texts and their audiences, religious and literary traditions that shaped them, and, if possible to assess, the agendas behind them. One common thread needed to be identified, which is the presence of biographical and praising element in these texts, therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I used an umbrella term for all of these texts - "biohagiographic" texts. If I was to arrive at any answers as for the function of the miraculous healing narratives in my texts, I needed to contextualize the diverse body of

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biohagiographic texts, to name the most common influences they drew upon, references to other texts, and their respective literary genres. Then I briefly put this into the broader historical perspective of Late Antiquity, and proceeded to the chapter, where I contextualized the three texts I was working with in more detail.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the influential bishop of Cyrrhus, and a prolific writer, wrote his *Philotheos Historia*, a collection of Syrian ascetics' lives, either in 440 or in 444. The agenda behind the text needed to be discussed, since different interpretations of his motives for writing the *Philotheos Historia* were proposed by scholars. I tend to agree with those, who argued that this work was an attempt to "translate" the image of a Christian ascetic - to dress and embellish his image with the finest achievements of classical literary forms, so as to be acceptable for the elites, and on par with any of his classical predecessors. As for Mark the Deacon, the alleged author of the *Life of Porphyry*, we do not know almost anything. He is said to be a calligrapher, a follower of Porphyry, said bishop of Gaza. What is more, we do not know almost anything about Porphyry himself, apart from this text. There have been suggestions that neither of them were in fact real persons. The text itself, written, in much simpler Greek than *HPh*, yet borrowing, almost verbatim, a part of the proem from *HPh*, poses a lot of problems for its interpretation. Porphyry is depicted as an ardent missionary, who in this colorful biohagiographic narrative, reminding of an ancient novel, tries tirelessly to convert a prominent "pagan" stronghold of Gaza to Christianity. Contrary to the Christian authors, the non-Christian authors and their heroes appear to be in a defensive position. While that was true to some extent - the official religion of the empire being Christianity, they had a different standing than Christian holy men – in fact, none of these authors, Christian and "pagan" alike, were in a "secure" position in the tumultuous times of the fourth and fifth century, and their interactions appear to display contest, suspicion, but also mutual inspiration. Marinus of Neapolis, the author of the *Life of Proclus*, composed the *Life of*

Proclus at some point in 486, around one year after, and at the occasion of, Proclus' death. He was most probably a Samaritan, who later converted to "paganism" and became a Neoplatonist philosopher. Proclus spent nearly forty-five years as the head of Neoplatonic school of philosophy in Athens, still an advanced centre of education at the time. He was one of the most striking representatives of the "religious" line of Neoplatonism, an ascetic, and, according to Marinus, worshipper of all cults of all nations, finally reaching the divine state himself.

After the contextualization of these three biohagiographic texts and interpreting the agendas behind them, I focused on the presence of miracles in biohagiographic texts. Few questions needed to be considered before my own analysis of the three miraculous healings in my texts. As scholars before have shown convincingly, miracles were not the defining feature of a biohagiographic text. There are texts which can be considered biohagiographic, yet their heroes do not perform miracles. On the other hand, miracles are not present solely in biogahiographic texts, they can be found for instance in classicizing histories or invectives. Furthermore, to evaluate what function they played in my texts, I needed to focus on what was considered to be a miracle, and how did it relate to rituals or magic. In biohagiographic texts, magic was almost invariably portrayed as something negative, and juxtaposed to the miracles as signifying the victory and manifesting the "real" supernatural powers. Therefore, I needed to take a look at the historical situation when these texts were written, this time from the perspective of conflict between miracles and magic, contest between different religious traditions, and mutual influence of different literary representations of the supernatural.

In the fourth chapter of my thesis, I began with the very fact that the miraculous healing narratives are stories. It has been shown convincingly in recent scholarship, how stories were a significant part of specifically Christian rhetoric and persuasion in Late Antiquity. I tried to show how metaphors and kerygmatic language was part of the persuasive

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discourse in these texts, whose authors otherwise may have had other agendas and reasons for the composition, the persuasive aspect might not necessarily be the main one. Yet, the Christian rhetoric came to be, in one form or another, present on different levels even in the texts which were not meant to convert to Christianity, exhortate to turn away from sins, or educate in virtues. This new Christian discourse developed into something powerful, pervasive, with a decisive push for appropriation, which "forced itself" into the texts even without a deliberate authors' agenda. Although I argued earlier, in line with the recent developments in scholarship, that what was used to be understood as a conflict, and described in rise and fall, win and lose dichotomies, is to be understood rather as a contest, mutual influence, or even cross - fertilization of different traditions. As I shown in the fourth chapter, the Christian miracles and holy men appear to be the leading force, while the "pagan" holy men appear to be in defensive. The majority of spectacular miraculous healings involve new, culturally prominent layer of Christian ascetics, who are portrayed superior to the expensive doctors, renowned magicians, and their "pagan" ascetic counterparts, and who lead all who they encounter to change. Especially the healing miracle stories tended to be really pragmatic, they might have been bombastic and amazing, yet they targeted the most vulnerable areas of human life, such as health and pregnancy (which were in fact connected with the material wellbeing and survival) and the "spiritual wellbeing" (the exorcisms, which I did not tackle in my thesis), which was a fruitful field for such rhetoric to reach its aims. The miracle stories were not in the texts only to amaze their audience, or to glorify either the authors or their heroes. They were the rhetorical tools intended to "make a change" - be it a conversion, penance, or support of Christian institutions (which was the practical outcome of aristocratic converts to monastic life or clerical career, required from many of those healed, or receiving a promise to be healed). Since the majority of the texts of the fifth century portray the Christian holy men, one can say that the Christian discourse (and the

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authors of biohagiographic texts as a part of it), were highly successful. Even if magic, superstition, and "pagan" asceticism might have gone on and on long after the fifth century triumphs (because that exactly is how it is described in these texts) of Christianity, we will hardly ever know more about them, since as Christ himself became the *logos* and Christianity became the textual "narrative" of the Empire, there is hardly a (kind) word about them afterwords.

APPENDIX

Historia Philotheos, XIII, 13:

> A woman of the very wealthiest of the nobility - she was called Astrion – lost her wits; she could recognize none of her household, and could not bear to take food or drink. She continued delirious for a very long time. The others called it the action of a demon, while the doctors named it a disease of the brain. When all skill had been expended and no help came from it, the woman's husband - he was Ovodianus, a curial of the highest rank – hastened to this godly person, described his wife's affliction and begged to obtain a cure. The inspired man consented, went to the house and addressed earnest supplication to God. On completing his prayer, he bade water be brought, traced the sign of salvation and bade her drink it. When the doctors objected, saying that drinking cold water would increase the disease, the husband dismissed the whole company of them and gave his wife the drink. As she drank, she came to herself and became sane: totally freed of her affliction, she recognized the man of God, and begging to take his hand placed it on her eyes and moved it to her mouth. From then on she continued to have a sound mind.

Translated by Richard Price, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus, A History of the Monks of Syria* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1985): 105.

Τῶν εὐπατριδῶν τις γυνὴ καὶ λίαν εὐπορωτάτων -- Ἄστριον δὲ αὐτὴν προσηγόρευον -- ἔξω μὲν τῶν φρενῶν ἐγεγόνει· ἐπεγίνωσκε δὲ τῶν οἰκείων οὐδένα, σιτίων δὲ ἢ ποτῶν μεταλαβεῖν οὐκ ἠνείχετο. Παραπαίουσα δὲ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον διετέλεσε χρόνον · καὶ τοῦτο οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι δαίμονος ἐκάλουν ἐνέργειαν, οἱ δὲ ἰατροὶ τοῦ ἐγκεφάλου προσηγόρευον νόσημα. Πάσης τοίνυν δαπανηθείσης τῆς τέχνης καὶ μηδεμιᾶς ἐκεῖθεν ἐπικουρίας προσγενομένης, ὁ ταύτης ἀνὴρ -- Ὀβοδιανὸς δὲ οὗτος ἦν, ἀνὴρ τῶν ἐν τέλει καὶ ἀξιωτάτων -- παρὰ τὴν θείαν ἐκείνην δραμὼν κεφαλὴν καὶ τῆς ὁμοζύγου διηγεῖτο τὸ πάθος καὶ τυχεῖν τῆς θεραπείας ἱκέτευεν. Εἶξε δὲ ὁ θεσπέσιος ἄνθρωπος καὶ τὴν οἰκίαν κατέλαβε καὶ σπουδαίαν τῷ θεῷ τὴν ἱκετείαν προσήνεγκε · τὴν δὲ προσευχὴν συμπεράνας καὶ ὕδωρ κομισθῆναι κελεύσας καὶ τὴν σωτήριον ἐντυπώσας σφραγῖδα πιεῖν αὐτῇ παρηγγύησε · τῶν δὲ ἰατρῶν ἀπαγορευόντων ὡς τῇ ψυχροποσίᾳ αὔξησιν δεχομένου τοῦ πάθους, πᾶσαν ἐκείνων τὴν συμμορίαν ὁ ἀνὴρ ἀπωσάμενος τῇ γυναικὶ τὸ πόμα προσέφερεν · ἡ δὲ ἔπινέ τε ἅμα καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἐπανῄει καὶ φρενήρης ἐγίνετο · καὶ πάμπαν ἀπαλλαττομένη τοῦ πάθους τὸν θεῖον ἐπεγίνωσκεν ἄνδρα καὶ τὴν δεξιὰν λαβεῖν ἱκέτευε καὶ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐπετίθει καὶ τῷ στόματι προσέφερε · καὶ εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα διέμεινε χρόνον φρεσὶν ἐρρωμέναις χρωμένη.

Théodoret de Cyr, *Histoire des moines de Syrie: Histoire Philothée* I-XIII. Translation and notes by Pierre Canivet and Alice Leroy-Molinghen (Paris: Les Editions de Cerf, 1977), 496-498.

Vita Procli, 29:

And if one wished to make a long story, one could say a great deal in relating the theurgic practices of the happy man. But I shall recall just one of a myriad, for it is marvellous even to hear. Once Asclepigeneia, the daughter of Archiadas and Plutarche, and the wife of Theagenes our benefactor, while she was still a maid and being reared by her parents, was gripped by a severe illness which the doctors were unable to cure. Archiadas, whose hope of offspring rested entirely in her, was distraught and full of grief, as one would expect. When the doctors gave up, he went as his custom was to the philosopher who was his final anchor, or rather his benevolent saviour, and earnestly begged him to come quickly and make his own prayers on behalf of the daughter. Taking with him the great Pericles from Lydia, a man who was himself no mean philosopher, Proclus visited the shrine of Asclepius to pray to the god on behalf of the invalid. For at that time the city still enjoyed the use of this and retained intact the temple of the Saviour. And while he was praying in the ancient manner, a sudden change was seen in the maiden and a sudden recovery occurred, for the Saviour, being a god, helaed her easily. And when the sacred acts were done, he went to Aclepigeneiea and found that she has just been released from the critical sufferings of her body and was in a healthy condition. Such was the act he performed, yet in this as in every other case he evaded the notice of the mob, and offered no pretext to those who wished to plot against him. The house in which he dwelt was in this respect of great assistance to him. For in addition to the rest of his good fortune, his dwelling too was extremely congenial to him, being also the one inhabited by his father Syrianus and by Plutarch, whom he himself styled his forefather. It was a neighbour to the shrine of Asclepius celebrated by Sophocles, and of that of Dionysus by the theatre, seen, or if not it became visible, from the acropolis of Athena.

Καὶ πολλὰ ἄν τις ἔχοι λέγειν μηκύνειν ἐθέλων καὶ τὰ τοῦ εὐδαίμονος ἐκείνου θεουργικὰ ἐνεργήατα ἀφηγούμενος. Ἑνὸς δὲ ἄλλου ἐκ τῶν μυρίων ἐπιμνησθήσομαι· θαῦμα γὰρ ὄντως καὶ ἀκοῦσαι. [Καὶ] Ἀσκληπιγένειά ποτε ἡ Ἀρχιάδου μὲν καὶ Πλουτάρχης θυγάτηρ, Θεαγένους δὲ τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς εὐεργέτου γαμετή, ἔτι κόρη οὖσα καὶ υπὸ τοῖς πατράσι τρεφομένη, νόσῳ χαλεπῇ κατείχετο καὶ τοῖς ἰατροῖς ἰάσασθαι ἀδυνάτῳ. Ὁ δὲ Ἀρχιάδας ἐπ' αὐτῇ μόνῃ τὰς ελπίδας ἔχων τοῦ γένους ἤσχαλλε καὶ ὀδυνηρῶς διέκειτο, ὥσπερ ἦν εἰκός. Ἀπογιγνωσκόντων δὲ τῶν ἰατρῶν ἦλθεν, ὥσπερ εἰώθει ἐν τοῖς μεγίστοις, ἐπὶ τὴν ἐσχάτην ἄγκυραν, μᾶλλον δὲ ὡς ἐπὶ σωτῆρα ἀγαθὸν τὸν φιλόσοφον, καὶ λιπαρήσας αὐτὸν ἠξίου σπεύδοντα καὶ αὐτὸν εὔχεσθαι ὑπὲρ τῆς θυγατρός. Ὁ δὲ παραλαβὼν τὸν μέγαν Περικλέα τὸν ἐκ τῆς Λυδίας, ἄνδρα μάλα καὶ αὐτὸν φιλόσοφον, ἀνῄει εἰς τὸ Ἀσκληπιεῖον προσευξόμενος τῷ θεῷ ὑπὲρ τῆς καμνούσης. Καὶ γὰρ ηὐτύχει τούτου ἡ πόλις τότε καὶ εἶχεν ἔτι ἀπόρθητον τὸ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἱερόν. Εὐχομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀρχαιότερον τρόπον, ἀθρόα μεταβολὴ περὶ τὴν κόρην ἐφαίνετο καὶ ῥαστώνη ἐξαίφνης ἐγίγνετο· ῥεῖα γὰρ ὁ Σωτήρ, ὥστε θεός, ἰᾶτο. Συμπληρωθέντων δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν, πρὸς τὴν Ἀσκληπιγένειαν ἐβάδιζε καὶ κατελάμβανεν αὐτὴν ἄρτι μὲν τῶν περιεστώτων τὸ σῶμα λελυμένην παθῶν, ἐν ὑγιεινῇ δὲ καταστάσει διάγουσαν. Καὶ τοιοῦτον ἔργον διεπράξατο οὐκ ἄλλως ἢ κἀνταῦθα τοὺς πολλοὺς λανθάνων καὶ οὐδεμίαν πρόθασιν τοῖς ἐπιβουλεύειν ἐθέλουσι παρασχών, συνεργησάσης αὐτῷ πρὸς τοῦτο καὶ τῆς οἰκίας, ἐν ᾗ αὐτὸς ᾤκει· καὶ γὰρ πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις εὐτυχήμασιν ἁρμοδιωτάτη αὐτῷ καὶ ἡ οἴκησις ὑπῆρξεν, ἣν καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ Συριανὸς καὶ ὁ προπάτωρ, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐκάλει, Πλούταρχος ᾤκησαν, γείτονα μὲν οὖσαν τοῦ ἀπὸ Σοφοκλέους ἐπιφανοῦς Ἀσκληπιείου καὶ τοῦ πρὸς τῷ θεάτρῳ Διονυσίου, ὁρωμένην δὲ ἢ καὶ ἄλλως αἰσθητὴν γιγνομένην τῇ ἀκροπόλει τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς.

Marinus, *Proclus ou Sur le bonheur*. Texte établi, traduit et annoté par Henri Dominique Saffrey, Alain-Phillipe Segonds (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001), 34-35.

Vita Porphyrii, 28-31:

Now it falleth out that another marvellous thing cometh to pass, calling many to come to the knowledge of the truth. For God, being compassionate, findeth occasions to turn the race of men unto his light that enlighteneth the mind. The thing that happened was on this wise. A certain lady of the notable people of the city, called Aelias, being about to give birth to a child, fell into great peril; and the cause of the peril was this. Her child came not forth after the natural manner, but was turned aside contrary to nature, and having put forth one hand the rest of his body could not be delivered; for it lay crosswise in the womb and the midwives availed not to move it into the natural place. But the pain that was upon the woman was unspeakable, since in the throes of her travail she sought to bring forth the child; and her labours increased the more when the second day followed after the first; and the third day likewise was more painful than the second. And her labours endured unto seven days, the evil being ever increased. But the physicians also desired to cut the child out of her, and when they beheld how her strength was fallen away, they despaired of her life. Her parents, therefore, and her husband Heros, being superstitious, offered up sacrifice each day for her, and they brought in also enchanters and soothsayers, thinking to profit her thereby, but accomplished naught.

Now she had a nurse that was a believer, who being exceeding grieved made petitions for her in the houses of prayer. So on a certain day when she was praying in the church with tears, there came in Saint Porphyry about the ninth hour, and I with him. And he seeth the old woman in great affliction, praying unto God with tears, and standing still he inquired after the reason. And she looking upon him fell at his feet, beseeching him to pray unto Christ for her. And when the saint knew the cause of the woman's grief, he himself wept; for he was exceeding compassionate. And he saith to the nurse: 'I hear concerning that house that it is idolatrous, and can hardly be saved; but, nevertheless, to God all things are possible; for he findeth occasion to save them which are about to perish. Depart, therefore, and gather together all her kinsfolk and her parents and her husband, and say unto them: "Seeing that there is here an excellent physician who can cure her, if he cause her to escape from this peril, what reward will ye give him?" And they will of a surety promise thee many things. Then say unto them this also: "If he cure her, give me your word withal that ye will not turn aside from him nor depart from him unto another." Cause them all to lift up their hands to heaven and give their word that they will perform all the things that they have promised. And when they have done this, say unto the woman that travaileth before them all: "Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, healeth thee; believe on him and live."

So when the old woman had heard the words of the blessed bishop, and he had commended her unto God, she ran to the house, and finding them all weeping and the woman in uttermost peril, she exhorted her parents and her husband to be of good courage, and said unto them that 'An excellent physician sent me unto you, that ye may give me your word that if she be cured ye will not deny him.' And when her parents and her husband heard it they said: 'If he wish to take all our possessions, we shall not withhold them, only let us see our daughter live.' And the nurse said: 'Lift up your hands unto heaven, and give

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me this promise that ye will not deny the physician.' And they eagerly and with tears lifted up their hands, saying that 'Nay, all that is ours shall be his all the days of our life; for what comfort shall we have if she die?' For she was their only child, and fair and pleasant in her ways above all others. But the nurse, when she heard their words, said with a loud voice before them all: 'Thus saith the great priest Porphyry: "Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, healeth thee; believe on him and live." ' And straightway the woman shrieked aloud, and brought forth the child alive.

And all they that were there were astonied, and cried out: 'Great is the God of the Christians; great is the priest Porphyry.' And on the next day the parents of the woman and her husband and all her family and kinsfolk went unto the blessed Porphyry and fell at his feet, asking to be sealed in Christ. And the blessed man having sealed them and made them catechumens sent them away in peace, exhorting them to make attendance in holy church; and after a little time, when he had instructed them, he baptized them, together with the woman and the child. And they called his name Porphyry. And they that were enlightened through the occasion of this woman were in number sixty and four.

Translated by G. F. Hill, *Mark the Deacon, Life of Porphyry, Bishop of Gaza* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913): 36-40.

Συμβαίνει δὲ ἄλλο θαυμαστὸν γενέσθαι προσκαλούμενον πολλοὺς εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν ὁ θεὸς γὰρ ὡς εὔσπλαγχνος διὰ προφάσεως ἐπιστρέφει τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἰς τὸ νοητὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς. Τὸ δὲ συμβὰν πρᾶγμα ἐν τούτοις ἦν. Γυνή τις τῶν ἐμφανῶν τῆς πόλεως ὀνόματι Αἰλιὰς μέλλουσα τίκτειν κινδύνῳ μεγάλῳ περιέπεσεν · ἡ δὲ αἰτία τοῦ κινδύνου αὐτὴ ὑπῆρχεν. Τὸ βρέφος αὐτῆς οὐκέτι κατὰ φύσιν ἐξήει, ἀλλ' ἐξετράπη εἰς τὸ παρὰ φύσιν, καὶ χαλάσαν τὴν μίαν χεῖρα οὐκ ἠδύνατο τὸ ὑπόλοιπον σῶμα κατενεχθῆναι· ἦν γὰρ πλάγιον ἐν τῇ γαστρὶ καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυον αἱ μαῖαι εἰς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν αὐτὸ μεταγαγεῖν. Ἦν δὲ ἡ ὀδύνη ἄφατος προσγινομένη τῇ γυναικί, τῶν κατὰ ὥραν ὀδυνῶν τὸ βρέφος ὠθουσῶν, πλέον δὲ ἡ ἐπίδοσις τῶν πόνων ἐγίνετο τῆς δευτέρας ἡμέρας διαδεξαμένης τὴν πρώτην, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τῆς τρίτης ὀδυνηροτέρας οὔσης τῆς δευτέρας · ἐπετάθησαν δὲ οἱ πόνοι ἕως ἡμερῶν ἑπτά, τοῦ κακοῦ προσθήκην ἀεὶ λαμβάνοντος. Ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ἰατροὶ ἠβουλήθησαν αὐτὴν ἐμβρυοτομῆσαι, καὶ θεασάμενοι τὰς δυνάμεις αὐτῆς διαπεσούσας, ἀπηγόρευσαν αὐτῆς. Οἱ ταύτης οὖν γονεῖς καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ ὡς ὄντες δεισιδαίμονες ἐποίουν καθ' ἑκάστην θυσίαν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς, ἔφερον δὲ καὶ ἐπαοιδοὺς καὶ μάντεις, νομίζοντες ἐκ τούτων αὐτὴν ὠφελῆσαι, καὶ οὐδὲν ἤνυον.

Ὑπῆρχεν δὲ αὐτῇ τροφὸς πιστή, ἥτις ὑπεραλγοῦσα, δεήσεις ἐποιεῖτο ἐν τοῖς εὐκτηρίοις οἴκοις ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς. Ἐν μιᾷ οὖν ἡμέρᾳ αὐτῆς εὐχομένης ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ μετὰ δακρύων, εἰσῆλθεν ὁ ἐν ἁγίοις Πορφύριος περὶ τὴν ἐνάτην ὥραν, κἀγὼ δὲ ἅμα αὐτῷ, καὶ ὁρᾷ τὴν γραῦν κατώδυνον δεομένην τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ δακρύων, καὶ στὰς ἐπηρώτα αὐτὴν τὴν αἰτίαν. Ἡ δὲ θεασαμένη αὐτὸν προσέπεσεν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτοῦ παρακαλοῦσα αὐτὸν δεηθῆναι τῷ Χριστῷ ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς. Ὡς δὲ ἔγνω ὁ ἅγιος τῆς γυναικὸς τὴν αἰτίαν, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐδάκρυσεν· ἦν γὰρ καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εὔσπλαγχνος. Λέγει δὲ τῇ τροφῷ· Ἀκούω περὶ τοῦ οἴκου ἐκείνου ὅτι κατείδωλος τυγχάνει καὶ δυσχερῶς δύνανται σωθῆναι, ἀλλ' ὅμως τῷ θεῷ πάντα δυνατά· καὶ γὰρ διὰ προφάσεως σῴζει τοὺς μέλλοντας ἀπόλλυσθαι. Ἄπελθε οὖν καὶ συνάγαγε πάντας τοὺς συγγενεῖς καὶ γονεῖς καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς· Ἐπειδὴ ἔστιν ἐνταῦθα ἰατρὸς ἄριστος δυνάμενος αὐτὴν θεραπεῦσαι, ἐὰν ποιήσῃ αὐτὴν διαφυγεῖν τὸν τοιοῦτον κίνδυνον, τί χαρίζεσθε αὐτῷ ; Πάντως δὲ ἔχουσι πολλά σοι συντάξασθαι. Εἰπὲ δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῦτο· Ἐὰν αὐτὴν θεραπεύσῃ, δότε μοι λόγον πρὸ τούτου ὅτι οὐ παραβαίνετε αὐτὸν οὔτε πρὸς ἄλλον ἀπέρχεσθε. Ποίησον πάντας αὐτοὺς ἀνατεῖναι τὰς χεῖρας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ δοῦναι λόγον ὅτι ποιοῦσιν πάντα ἃ ἐπηγγείλαντο. Καὶ ὅταν ταῦτα ποιήσωσιν, εἰπὲ τῇ λοχευομένῃ γυναικὶ ἐπὶ πάντων· Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος, ἰᾶταί σε· εἰς αὐτὸν πίστευσον καὶ ζήσῃ.

Ἀκούσασα δὲ ἡ γραῦς τὸν λόγον τοῦ μακαρίου ἐπισκόπου λαβοῦσα παρ' αὐτοῦ παράθεσιν ἔδραμεν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον, καὶ εὑροῦσα πάντας κλαίοντας καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα ἐν ἐσχάτῳ κινδύνῳ παρεκάλει τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα μὴ ἀθυμῆσαι· ἔλεγεν δὲ ὅτι Ἰατρὸς ἄριστος ἀπέστειλέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἵνα παράσχητέ μοι λόγον, ὅτι ταύτης θεραπευομένης οὐκ ἀρνεῖσθε αὐτόν. Ἀκούσαντες δὲ οἱ γονεῖς καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ εἶπον· Ἐὰν βουληθῇ πᾶσαν ἡμῶν τὴν οὐσίαν λαβεῖν, οὐκ ὀκνήσομεν, μόνον ἴδωμεν τὴν θυγατέρα ἡμῶν ζῶσαν. Ἡ δὲ τροφὸς εἶπεν· Ἀνατείνατε τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ δότε μοι λόγον ὅτι οὐκ ἀρνεῖσθε τὸν ἰατρόν. Οἱ δὲ προθύμως καὶ μετὰ δακρύων ἀνέτειναν τὰς χεῖρας λέγοντες ὅτι Καὶ πάντα τὰ ἡμῶν αὐτῷ πάντα τὸν χρόνον τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν· ποίαν γὰρ παραμυθίαν μέλλομεν ἔχειν ταύτης τελευτώσης; Ἐν γὰρ αὐτοῖς μονογενὴς καὶ ἀστεία τοὺς τρόπους εἴπερ ἄλλη γυνή. Ἀκούσασα δὲ ἡ τροφὸς μεγάλῃ τῇ φωνῇ ἐπὶ πάντων εἶπεν· Λέγει ὁ μέγας ἱερεὺς Πορφύριος· Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος, ἰᾶταί σε· εἰς αὐτὸν πίστευσον καὶ ζήσῃ. Εὐθέως δὲ ἡ γυνὴ ὀλολύξασα μέγα κατήγαγεν τὸ βρέφος ζῶν.

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Πάντες δὲ οἱ ἐκεῖ εὑρεθέντες ἐκπλαγέντες ἔκραξαν· Μέγας ὁ θεὸς τῶν Χριστιανῶν, μέγας ὁ ἱερεὺς Πορφύριος. Τῇ δὲ ἑξῆς οἱ γονεῖς τῆς γυναικὸς καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ καὶ πάντες οἱ συγγενεῖς καὶ οἱ γνήσιοι πορευθέντες πρὸς τὸν μακάριον Πορφύριον προσέπεσαν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτοῦ αἰτούμενοι τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σφραγῖδα. Ὁ δὲ μακάριος σφραγίσας αὐτοὺς καὶ ποιήσας κατηχουμένους ἀπέλυσεν ἐν εἰρήνῃ, παραγγείλας αὐτοῖς σχολάζειν τῇ ἁγίᾳ ἐκκλησίᾳ, καὶ μετ᾽ ὀλίγον χρόνον κατηχήσας αὐτοὺς ἐβάπτισεν σὺν τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ τῷ βρέφει· ἐκάλεσαν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Πορφύριον. Ἦσαν δὲ οἱ φωτισθέντες διὰ τὴν πρόφασιν τῆς γυναικὸς τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἐξήκοντα τέσσαρες.

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