Johanna Zsófia Rákos-Zichy

Bishops and Burials between Public and Private in Late Antiquity:

The Episcopal Construction of the Care for the Dead (366-430 A. D.)

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

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Johanna Zsófia Rákos-Zichy

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Johanna Zsófia Rákos-Zichy**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary thesis explores the striking fusion of "private" and "public" at the burial of family members and in the cult of the martyrs as evidenced by the work of three Late Antique bishops, Damasus of Rome, Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo. Their homilies, letters, *Confessions*, catacomb inscriptions and theological treatises make manifest the transformation of attitudes and audiences from the traditional "private" to the "congregational" Christian. In the Classical Mediterranean, taking care of the dead traditionally belonged to the family. Bishops, however, appropriated for the Church not only the cult of the martyrs, but also the commemoration of ordinary Christians. For the first time in scholarship, the thesis presents Late Antique bishops at the family grave, arguing that the commemoration of family and friends transformed private funerals into public events and universal exemplars for the Church. I approach the cult of the martyrs from the point of view of the "private" and examine the ways the commemoration of the saints was made public and universal. Bishops discovered, construed and reformed the cult of the saints and prescribed proper behavior to the Christian congregation. The comparison of Damasus, Ambrose and Augustine reveals the different methods that bishops employed and the different contexts in which they worked to extend their authority over the private and the public life of their flock in the late Roman city, even if in the private sphere their intervention remained indirect. In signposting this process, the thesis untangles the ways in which bishops connected with their communities and used their authority to construct the Christian commemoration of the dead.

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I take the opportunity to express my gratitude towards my supervisor, Marianne Sághy for her advice and constant support. She was an inspiration and a guide during this work. I thank her for everlasting stimulation, encouragement and help through the years. Last but not least, I thank her for having introduced me to the fascinating world of Late Antiquity.

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Introduction

Late Antiquity saw the spectacular transformation of burial practice and funerary commemoration. The Classical city "changed address"[1]: its inhabitants flooded the suburban cemeteries to venerate the martyr shrines, while the dead, traditionally excluded from the Classical city, moved downtown. This thesis explores a little-studied aspect of this eventful process: the role of the bishops in the transformation of the Christian burial and commemoration of the dead. How did Christianity contribute to the increasing dichotomy between private and public in the late Roman period? The duty of burying the dead in the Classical world belonged to the private sphere of the family. This responsibility included not only the funeral service, but also the annual commemoration of the deceased. Christians, while formulating a different view of the afterlife as opposed to polytheists, did conform to the traditional forms of burying and remembering the deceased. The rise of the bishop and the rise of the cult of the saints, however, slowly but surely transformed the immemorial customs in the Mediterranean basin. This process was not centrally organized: each bishop implemented locally the form of commemoration that he thought fit for his flock.

The rise of the cult of the martyrs has been extensively treated in recent scholarship; however, much less has been written about the bishops' attitude to private funerals. Yet commemoration of dead mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers suddenly emerges in fourth-

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[1] Jerome, Epistula 107, 1, in CCSL55,[in the following abbreviated as CSEL] ed. Isidor Hilberg, (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1912), 291.See also Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 42.

century bishops agenda and works. How did bishops bury their own family members? Was this a private or a public affair? I argue that by publicly preaching about defunct family members, bishops merged private and public in Christian commemoration. The examination of the burial and commemoration of the bishop's family sheds light on the various ways bishops approached the question of the duties towards the departed and the ways they interpreted it to their congregations. The present work strives to reveal how bishops and their community interacted in the context of burial and taking care of the dead. I focus on the attitudes of three bishops --Damasus of Rome, Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo – concerning death in family as well as their promotion or prohibition of the cult of the martyrs.

The Western Roman Empire in the late fourth and early fifth century forms the geographical and chronological framework of the thesis. I confined my research to Damasus, Ambrose and Augustine who lived close to each other in time and place and who actually knew each other. Above all, they played a crucial role in changing Christian attitudes to the dead, in promoting the cult of the saints and they also wrote extensively about burials of their family members. Comparing their views offers a good opportunity to measure change as well as the impact and pace of this change concerning family funerals and the Christian *communio sanctorum*.

Since the focus of the thesis is the relationship between the bishop and his flock, I primarily concentrated on written sources -- homilies, treatises and letters -- that the bishops addressed to their communities, to Christian believers or to their fellow-bishops. Some are exclusively dedicated to the topic of burial and commemoration; others deal with the question in various contexts, from the duties of the clergy to the consequences of consuming alcohol. The analysis of these contexts reveals of how bishops saw the importance of burial, and how they tried to fit this problem to the Christian life. Analyzing the sources, I concentrated on the addressees of the text and I contextualized the dialog between bishop and addressee in the

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private-public dichotomy. I extensively used archaeological sources as well: burial inscriptions, basilica constructions and shrines that shed light on the practical implementation of new Christian theories. Archaeological data concerning burial and commemoration offer an interesting "contrast group," an actual environment in which the written sources were produced and a support for the analysis of concrete events.

Recent scholarship has emphasized the distinction between the public and the private in Christian context. Kim Bowes[2] and Christina Sessa[3] convincingly have demonstrated that Christian worship continue to operate within the household, and documented the attitude of the clergy to private religious practice and devotion. Much less has been written, however, on the question of burial and commemoration, and next to nothing on bishops burying and/or commemorating their family members. This is the first comparative and interdisciplinary work devoted to the examination of a public officer, the Christian bishops' actions at family funerals. Eric Rebillard's controversial *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* argues that there was no institutional Christian care for the dead, since the funeral and the rituals of commemoration remained a family affair, affecting the sphere of the private. However, bishops were not excluded from the care of the dead.

Even if the organization of a burial was a family affair, the funeral of prominent citizens, for example, was a public event. Similarly, the private character of the funeral in Christian households did not mean that the clergy was completely excluded. The lack of the established practice in the institutional Church created a possibility for bishops to be creative, invent new rules and implement new practices each according to their personal conviction. Bishops, as the leaders of the Christian flock, conveyed a model of proper Christian behavior

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[2] Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[3] Kristina Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy: Roman Bishops and the Domestic Sphere* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

as to the duty of burying the dead, both as teachers and as personal exemplars. The bishops I examine sought to eliminate elements "rooted in the pagan past" from public Christian commemoration that were beyond their reach, notably the traditional funerary banquets in the cemeteries honoring the departed. While the influence of bishops concerning family commemoration must have been only indirect, their contribution in shaping the communal commemoration is undeniable. Peter Brown pointed out the importance of the resting place of the martyr, of which the bishop could dispose. In the cult of the martyrs, private and public veneration overlapped. This was an area where bishops could control the forms of commemoration and establish a Christianized form of the cult of the dead.

The thesis examines both the private and public face of death. The first chapter deals with the funeral and commemoration in Late Antiquity, presenting the framework and the problem of private and public sphere in the context of burial. While the organization and the financial part belonged usually to the family or to the heirs, the funeral procession and the legal protection of the tombs involved the public. How did Christian individuals, communities and community leaders regard the problem of burial? How did Christian views on the afterlife alter the pattern of taking care of the dead? This chapter examines briefly the problem of Christian burials in general.

The second chapter presents the sphere of the family: the traditional Roman forms of commemoration, and the duties of the family towards the dead. Bishops presented the ideal burial of Christian laymen: Damasus of Rome, as if, involved his family members into his program to renovate the memories of martyrs; Ambrose of Milan's funeral oration on the death of his brother described the ideal behavior of the Christian mourner, and created a strong bond between bishop and his congregation; Augustine represents an alternative viewpoint when stating – as against Damasus and Ambrose -- that the place of burial is irrelevant to salvation, therefore burials *ad sanctos* are not to be encouraged, while his

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description of the burial of his mother, Monica sheds light to the funeral customs of ordinary Christian laypeople.

The third chapter concentrates on the problem of the public sphere, namely the shrines of the martyrs. While the annual celebrations and funerary meals held at the shrine of the individual dead remained a quiet family meeting when the Christian Church, the "family" of the martyr, assembled in cemeteries on the feast of the martyr, the celebrations grew into joyful and noisy banquets. Our three bishops condemned this custom. The examination of each context will show how the environment and the personality of bishops affected the attitude towards the care of the dead. Damasus brought the catacombs into the Christian and Classical topography of Rome by making the private tombs public shrines. Ambrose brought the local martyrs into the city thus linking them to the Catholic party in Milan. Augustine did not bring anybody to Hippo, but prohibited banqueting at the shrines of the martyrs. By separating the cult of the martyrs from the cult of the ordinary dead, he sought to cleanse Christian devotion from the remains of pagan past. Despite the differences, all three bishops ultimately extended their authority over the dead and controlled martyr cults. Their texts reveal that the main concern of the bishops was to regulate the behavior of the flock, and to prescribe a proper Christian form of commemoration. Their attempts were not all successful, but they help us better understand the ambitions and the limits of episcopal leadership in Late Antiquity.

Chapter 1. Taking Care of the Dead in the Late Roman World

To understand the attitudes of bishops towards funerary customs, it is necessary to distinguish between the public and private aspects of the Roman burials, and to take a look at the burial customs and commemoration patterns in late Roman Christianity. This chapter discusses the issue of 'public' and 'private' in the traditional forms of Roman commemoration. It also introduces the challenge that Christian burial and taking care of the dead represented. Despite the fact that Christianity professed a very different view of the afterlife and of the connection between the soul and the body, Christian patterns of commemoration did not radically differ from polytheist traditions in the Mediterranean world. So much so that Christians did not bury their dead in separate graves, but often shared tombs with their polytheistic neighbors. [4] Written accounts on the burials of Christian individuals and council decisions do mention some regulations concerning burial and commemoration, but overall that the Church had no intention to get involved in private burials. Christian families, who believed in the resurrection of the dead, displayed their grief in the traditional Roman way at the loss of their loved ones and they commemorated them according to age-old rituals.[5] Bishops dealing with the question of how to take care of the dead had to operate within a solid framework of ancient rituals and revered practices.

1. 1. The Problem of Private or Public at the Late Antique Tomb

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[4] Mark Joseph Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared Tombs?," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997): 37–59.

[5] Michele Renée Salzman, "Religious *Koine* and Religious Dissent," in Jorg Rupke, *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 114-16.

The terms 'public' and 'private' are hard to define at Roman burials. How can we divide between public and private; what are the criteria to make such divisions? To decide whether the performance of a rite belonged to the former or the latter sphere, we must consider the persons and the audience involved at the burial, the location where it took place, and the departed, the actual beneficiary of the burial and the funerary commemoration. As a synonym of 'private,' the term 'domestic' is also applicable, but in the following I will use the term 'private' to point out the dichotomy in the nature of burial and commemoration and to underline the difference between the persons involved.

Burial was essentially a private matter in the Roman world, but to relegate the care of the dead entirely to the private sphere would be oversimplified. 'Family' in Roman society referred not only to members of the kin, but included the entire household, thus family burials were also a much larger affair than today.[6] Although the duty of commemoration belonged to the family and to the heirs, at certain phases of the funerary rite a larger public and even the public sphere was affected. The funerals of wealthy citizens reached a wide audience. In the Late Republic, for example, the process of burial and mourning was financed by the state,[7] and also the origins of the gladiator fights are rooted in honoring the spirit of the departed.[8]

The care of the dead as a private affair has its roots in legal definitions. In the Roman religion, public worship meant that it was performed for the benefit of the state, with the participation of the official clergy, paid by the citizens of the city.[9] Worship performed at home was called *sacra privata*, without the assistance of the representative of the state cult. This legal definition narrowed the circle of public religious activities. Public worship was regulated by the law as well as public and private burials. Tombs were under the protection of law. The use

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[6] For the specific meanings of the *familia* and *domus* see Richard P. Saller, "*Familia, Domus*, and the Roman Conception of the Family", *Phoenix* 38, no. 4 (1984): 336.
[7] See for example Cicero, *Philippic* 9.7.17., in Valerie Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2007), 120-22.
[8] ibid. 125.
[9] Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values,* 20-24.

of legal division seems useful, since it was preserved in the Christian Empire. According to this division, every act that did not require the assistance of clergy, whether pagan or Christian was a private occasion. These occasions, however, had elements designed for a wider audience.

Christianity washed away the boundaries between public and private. As Kim Bowes noted with regard to domestic worship, Christianity and polytheism shared many basic social qualities, such as the importance of domestic space and private patronage, yet the value of these social structures was different.[10] Christianity extolled the community at the expense of the family. The commemorative practices of Christians concerning martyrs extended the meaning of the *familia*: it no longer meant blood relatives or the members of a household, but a spiritual family. The Christian Church changed the distinction between domestic and public. Rituals held by the Christian community looked like private gatherings: the participants were the members of the extended family. However, due to the number and status of the participants, the Christian liturgy was public. When regulating the liturgy of burials and offering a specifically Christian type of celebration, Christian bishops had to cleanse the rites from earlier pagan, that is, private, associations.

1. 2. Traditional forms of Commemoration in the Roman world[11]

Funerary inscriptions from all around the Roman world testify a strong connection between the living and the dead. Epitaphs first mention the closest family responsible for the

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[10] *ibid.* 20.
[11] In the following, the word "traditional" refers to the forms of commemoration rooted in Graeco-Roman religion, practiced all over the Roman Empire. At private burials, Christians and pagans alike practiced them, therefore the term "pagan" would be misleading.

burial of the departed who kept the memory of their loved one.[12] The duties of the living concerning the dead did not end at the funeral: the family of the deceased gathered at the tomb several times every year to remember their loved one and to share a meal together with the dead, thus offering some comfort and refreshment for them. Patterns of commemoration varied in time and space: on the basis of the extant textual and archaeological sources it is impossible to reconstruct a single specific Roman type of taking care of the dead. Cemeteries, burial customs and commemorative inscriptions differ from one region to another. Just to mention an example of regional differences: in North Africa, epitaphs were shorter, funeral banquets longer and more frequent than elsewhere in the Empire.[13] How did Christian bishops react to, and regulate such diverse burial customs?

The arrangement of burial and the annual commemoration was the responsibility of the family. For all the activities from the moment of death until the post-burial ceremonies Romans used the word *funus*. Members of the family and close friends gathered around the deathbed; they closed the eyes, called the dead by name, laid the corpse onto the ground, washed and dressed the corpse and exposed it before the burial.[14] This process rarely appears in written or archaeological evidence.[15] Death was seen as polluting and unclean in polytheistic Roman religion and there were no religious acts performed by priests during the *funus*. The organization of funeral and the post-burial commemorations were entirely private matter, carried out by the legal heirs.[16] Often the "family" of the dead was not a blood relative. A notable group of those not buried and commemorated only by their family are the soldiers who died far from their homes. In their case, fellow soldiers took on the duty of

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[12] Brent D. Shaw, "Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 33, no. 4 (1984): 457–97.

[13] Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome, 129*; also Shaw, "Latin Funerary Epigraphy," 463.

[14] For the detailed account of the funus see J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*: *Aspects of Greek and Roman Life* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 43-61.

[15] Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome*, 86.

[16] Richard P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 95-98.

proper sacrifices and burial.[17] Burial was a concern for everybody and this explains the popularity of the *collegia.* Most of these were burial collegia ensuring that the members have proper burials at the cost of the collegium, and are remembered at regular feasts by the members of the *collegium.* The presence of the family members at the burial sites of the collegia suggests that these associations were not replaced by the family; becoming a member of a collegium ensured proper commemoration not necessarily by the family alone. In both cases the duty of piety was shared with the members of a wider familia.

While the obligation of piety toward the departed belonged to the domestic sphere, burials also had a public face. The funeral procession, the last journey of the dead on earth, was held publicly: it was part of the cityscape. Originally funerals were held at night, under torchlight.[18] The members of the family, friends, clients and slaves followed the body. For high-ranking, distinguished citizens, the processions were spectacular: musicians announced the arrival of the cortege with trumpets, crying women with uncovered heads and undone hair lamented loudly on the loss, and the deceased was accompanied with the images of his or her noble ancestors. The burials of senators were public interest, since these high ranked men were well known for the people, and their funerals were treated as public affair.[19] The *pompa funebris* was a great occasion to affirm the social status of the deceased and their family. These processions were so grandiose that at certain points the state had to limit the amount of money that could be paid for the funerals and the services of professional mourners.[20] The popularity of burial *collegia* suggests that the cost of burial was high: those who could not

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[17] Richard P. Saller and Brent D. Shaw, "Tombstones and Roman Family Relations in the Principate: Civilians, Soldiers and Slaves,"*The Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984): 139-145.

[18] It is debated whether all funerals were held at night, or just the funerals of children. Modern scholars doubt that all funerals happened nighttime, see H. J. Rose, "Nocturnal Funerals in Rome," *The Classical Quarterly,* 17, No. 3/4 (1923): 191-194 and Hugh Lindsay, „Death-Pollution and the Funerals in the City of Rome," in *Death and Disease in the Ancient City* ed. Valerie Hope and Eireann Marshall (London: Routledge, 2000), 154-56.

[19] John Matthews, "Four Funeral and a Wedding: This World and the Next in Fourth-Century Rome," in *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown*, ed. Philip Rousseau and Manolis Papostakis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 129-147.

[20] Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 54-55.

afford a proper burial joined the collegia for this reason. After the procession, a funerary oration, held by a male member of the family, was delivered to make the deceased alive for the last time. The *oratio funebris* affirmed the role of the deceased in society, drew attention to the family and to its loss. The public part of the burial also represented the ideal behavior of Roman citizens: only women were allowed to cry, male relatives remained calm and quiet.[21] The funeral process ended outside the city where the body was placed in its tomb. After the funeral, the family returned regularly to the grave to have a meal in the company of the dead.

Funeral banquets were held on the day of the burial, on the ninth day after the burial, and each year on the deceased's birthday. The public calendar was scattered by official, public holidays of family commemoration: *Parentalia* in February, when families gathered at tombs to share a meal with the departed; *Rosalia* in May and June, when roses were thrown on the tomb, *Lemuria,* also in May, when not the individual family members, but the kinsfolk was commemorated.[22] These Roman holidays continued well into the fourth century and beyond. The Codex Calendar of 354 mentions three festivals in February honoring the spirits of the ancestors (*Manes*), but associates the *Parentalia* with the Vestal virgins.[23]

Tombs were considered as sacred, therefore they fell under the protection of the *pontifices*[24] and were defended by law way after the Constantinian turn. The *Theodosian Code* repeatedly insists on the punishment of the violators of the tombs.[25] In the Late Roman Empire, ancient

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[21] Keith Hopkins, *Death and Renewal: Sociological Studies in Roman History*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 218-26.

[22] Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 63-64; Hopkins, *Death and Renewal. Sociological Studies in Roman History*, 233.

[23] Michele Renee Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 129. The Calendar notes that on the 13th of February the Vestal Virgins sacrifice for the Manes, which is the first indication in a calendar that they participated in the rites of Manes. For the importance of the Vestal virgins in the fourth century, see ibid. 158-60.

[24] Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century," 39.

[25] Codex Theodosianus 9. 17.1-5. contains the various edicts of emperors against the tomb violation. The edicts punished those who removed anything from tombs or purchase stolen material. Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian*

tombs were regarded as a quarry for building material, but imperial edicts prohibited the removal and trade of materials robbed from tombs. Marble removed from a grave was not just impious act, violation against the rest of the dead, but also polluting: it would take death into the house, thus polluting the home. The edicts issued by the Christian emperors still carry the ancient belief of the contamination of death. This aspect of death made the translation of the relics of martyrs problematic, as the edicts of 381 and 386 demonstrate.[26] The legal consequences of the cult of martyrs raise the problem of how Christians dealt with Roman traditions of taking care of the dead.

1. 3. Christian Death and Burial

Did Christians alter or abandon Roman religious burial rituals? Christians firmly believed in the resurrection of the body and they regarded dead bodies as abandoned vessels waiting for the return of the soul. Did Christian belief influence the choice of burial type? During the fourth century, inhumation became more popular than cremation, which suggests that the belief in resurrection encouraged Christians to adapt a burial custom that helps preserving the integrity of the body. However, in the Late Roman period the inhumation was widely spread among Christians and pagans alike. Resurrection might have been a factor why Christians preferred inhumation, even though Christian writers denied that the method of burial influences the future status of the body.[27]

Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952; reprint, Union, N.J.: The Lawbook Exchange, 2001). In the following referred as Cod. Theod.

[26] Cod. Theod. 9.17. 6. prohibits human remains to be taken into cities, and 9.17.7. Clearly refers to the body of martyrs. However, as will be shown in chapter 3, the legal objections had little effect.

[27] .Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 39-42 suggests that inhumation was a widely spread mode of burial, but she does not draw a direct correlation between inhumation and Christianity. On the adaptation of inhumation among Christians, see Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2009). The problem of the unburied bodies and the resurrection is a recurring theme of Christian writings concerning the resurrection of the bodies. See for example Ambrose, *On the Decease*

The lack of sources about the regulation of Christian burials suggests that Christians followed similar patterns in private commemoration as pagans. Despite different beliefs, in the first two centuries Christians shared the same practices as the rest of society.[28] Even the extremely strict Tertullian exhorted Christian wives to offer sacrifices on the anniversary of their husband's death.[29] Only from the third century do we have accounts of separate Christian burial places controlled by the Church. However, the existence of burial sites in Christian maintenance does not prove that Christians wanted to separate themselves in death from pagans. The earliest surviving objection concerning the mixed burial places was raised by Cyprian of Carthage in the third century. He accused his fellow-bishop Martialis having been joined a pagan collegium and buried his sons according to their customs, that is pagan customs including sacrifice.[30] A single letter, however, cannot be taken to express a general Christian condemnation of mixed burials. The context of the letter shows that these accusations were part of the debate between Cyprian and Stephen of Rome over the *lapsi*, those Christians who failed to prove their faith in face of the pagan authorities. After persecutions ended, their re-integration to the community was questionable.[31]

The *Apostolic Tradition*, a compilation preserving the earliest Church regulations does not mention the necessity of separating of tombs. It only notes that the price for the cemeteries

of his Brother Satyrus II.56., in *Ambrose: Selected Works and Letters*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2-10, ed. Philip Schaff accessed May 9, 2015, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf210.pdf

[28] Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century," 41.

[29] Tertullian, *On Monogamy* 10. In *Fathers of the Third Century*, Ante-Nicene Fathers 4, ed. Philip Schaff (Edinburgh:T &T Clark, 1885,) accessed May 9 2015 http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04.pdf. For a detailed analysis of the annual celebrations of the dead in the works of Tertullian, see Robin M. Jensen, "Dining with the Dead: From the Mensa to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity", in Laurie Brink and Deborah Green, *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 120-23.

[30] Cyprian, *Epistle.* 67.6. *Fathers of the Third Century*, Anti-Nicene Fathers 5, ed. Alexander Rogers and James Donaldson Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1886 Accessed on 10 May 2015, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.pdf

[31] On the background of the letter and the political motivation, see Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century," 46; also Éric Rebillard, "Église et sépulture dans l'Antiquité tardive (Occident latin, IIIe-VIe siècles)," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 54, no. 5 (1999): 1027–46.

should not be too high, because these are for the poor.[32] Cemeteries owned by the Church, such as the catacomb of Callixtus in Rome, were not reserved for Christians. Burial was, apart from a religious duty, a matter of business.[33] No trace of instructions survives stipulating that Christians should be buried in cemeteries maintained by the Church alone.[34] Cemeteries owned by the Church were a source of revenue and offered an opportunity for the Church to decide who could be buried there. But in case of private burials, there is ample evidence that during the fourth century Christians and pagans shared burial places. In the case of shared tombs, it is impossible to say whether they belonged to a Christian or pagan individual. Neither do tomb decorations provide a clue, even the displaying the abbreviation DM (*dis manibus*) on the tombstone is far from decisive. The Manes were not venerated by Christians, but this abbreviation was so commonly used that its presence does not inevitably indicate pagan religious beliefs. It was probably carved as a ready-made inscription and it was widely used by Christians as well.[35] Do shared burial sites, shared inscriptions and shared imagery suggest that old traditions lived on among Christians?[36]

The *Apostolic Constitution* mentions the prayer for the dead and the celebrations on the third and ninth day[37] as a Christian custom of commemoration. The rites were Christian, but they were also polytheistic, so much so that the Christian funerary banquets also included the feeding of the departed. Despite the refutation of Tertullian, who denied that Christians made

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[32] *The Apostolic Tradition, A Commentary,* ed. Harold W. Attridge (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), chap. 40. Éric Rebillard, "*Koimetérion* et *Coemeterium*: Tombe, tombe sainte, nécropole", *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome: Antiquité* 105, no. 2 (1993): 975–1001.

[33] Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century," 42-43.

[34] ibid. 40.

[35] Charles Pietri, "Inscriptions funéraires latines," in Charles Pietri, *Christiana respublica: Éléments d'une enquête sur le christianisme antique*, vol. 3 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1997), 1448.

[36] Salzman, "Religious *Koine* and Religious Dissent," 114-17.

[37] "Let the third day of the departed be celebrated with psalms, and lessons, and prayers, on account of Him who arose within the space of three days; and let the ninth day be celebrated in remembrance of the living, and of the departed; and the fortieth day according to the ancient pattern: for so did the people lament Moses, and the anniversary day in memory of him. And let alms be given to the poor out of his goods for a memorial of him." "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers 7 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), chap. 8.42, accessed April 23, 2015, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07.ix.ix.iv.html.

sacrifices for the dead,[38] archaeological finds in the cemeteries of North Africa attest to the fact that the custom of feeding the dead existed at least until the beginning of the fifth century.[39] The Christian sanctification of the burial places started only in the sixth century by Gregory of Tours; until then, Christians not only shared their tombs with pagans, but it seems that they were attached to the traditional way of celebrating their dead.[40] In a discussion of private and public in Christian context, martyrs form a specific and distinguished group. Originally, martyrs were buried by their families, but in the fourth century, bishops made considerable efforts to expand the cult of martyrs to the whole community, to make their veneration public. Bishops sought to control the cult of martyrs and to establish a new, Christianized type of public commemoration.

As will be shown in the following chapter, Christian bishops had no intention to regulate the traditional commemorations for private burials; they rather tried to emphasize Christian elements in the rites and the importance of proper Christian behavior.

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[38] Tertullian *On the Shows* 12*., in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, Ante-Nicene Fathers 3, ed. Allan Menzies, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1885), accessed May 9, 2015 http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.pdf
[39] Henri-Irénée Marrou, "Survivances païennes dans les rites funéraires des Donatistes," in *Christiana tempora: Mélanges d'histoire, d'archéologie, d'épigraphie et de patristique,* ed. Henri-Irénée Marrou, Publications de l'École française de Rome, 35 (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1978), 225-37.
[40] Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century," 49.

Chapter 2. Private matters? Late Antique Bishops and the Burial of Family Members

The aim of this chapter is to discuss of how Christian bishops in the West dealt with the funeral and commemoration of Christian individuals. Since we know little about the burials of Christian laymen, I chose the examples of the family members of bishops, as the way they took care of deceased relatives reflects their opinion about how Christians should deal with their dead. The bishop's family members were not ordinary layman, because of their strong attachment to the bishop. This made them perfect exemplars for the community. As Christina Sessa pointed out, the matters of the family and the domestic sphere was an area where the authority of the bishop was limited, but in certain cases they could act as mediators or advisors.[41] Although there is no trace of official liturgy of the dead, the burial of the family members of the bishops shows that bishops influenced their communities informally, through the personal examples of mothers, sisters and brothers.

The writings of Damasus of Rome, Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo provide insights into how they imagined a proper Christian burial, and how they constructed ideal types of Christian mourning and commemoration for their respective congregations. Augustine gives not only an account on the burial of his mother, Monica, but an entire treatise concerning the resting place of Christian individuals, the *De cura gerenda pro mortuis*, which

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[41] Kristina Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority*, 263-73. Also Kristina Sessa, „Christianity and the Cubiculum : Spiritual Politics and Domestic Space in Late Antique Rome", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15, no. 2 (2007): 171–204.

is the only detailed discussion of the issue.[42] The dealing of Damasus, Ambrose and Augustine with the dead reveals that there was no established method of funeral and commemoration at the end of the fourth century. This provided an opportunity to bishops to act as creatively as their position and community allowed them. [43]

2.1. Family, Friends, Intercessio: Damasus of Rome

Damasus inscribed himself into history as the caretaker of the memory of the martyrs. His epigrams celebrate the confessors and martyrs of the Eternal City, involving them into the topography of Rome.[44] Damasus composed epigrams not only for the martyrs of Rome, but he also commemorated his family and the young lady Proiecta in the same epigraphic way. Were these epigrams part of the bishop's ideological program, or simply the manifestation of family affection?

According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Damasus built a basilica on the Via Ardeatina, where he buried his mother Laurentia and his sister Irene.[45] On his own epitaph,[46] Damasus affirmed that he would have liked to be buried in the Crypt of the Popes of the San Callisto catacomb on the Via Appia, but he decided "not to disturb the holy ashes" and joined the family mausoleum, [47] where his father, Antonius might have been buried too. Neither of these tombs has been localized by archaeologists.[48] Damasus' family mausoleum is an interesting

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[42] Éric Rebillard, "Église et sepulture dans l'Antiquité tardive,"1039.
[43] Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 130-34.
[44] Dennis Trout, "Damasus and the Invention of Early Christian Rome," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 3 (2003): 521.
[45] Epigrams 10 and 11, *Epigrammata Damasiana*, ed. Antonio Ferrua, Sussidi allo studio delle antichita cristiane 2 (Rome: Pontificio Instituto di Acheologia Sacra, 1942). In the following the numbers of the epigrams refer to the numbering of this edition.
[46] Epigram 16. in Ferrua, op. cit,
[47] No 57, *Epigrammata Damasiana*.
[48] The Basilica on the Via Ardeatina

case for church historians and archaeologists who distinguish between trends for "communal burials" and individual or family burials of the bishops of Rome.[49]

Damasus' epigrams on his mother and his sister praise their service of the Lord. Laurentia's inscription mentions that she lived for almost a hundred years, of which sixty was spent as a widow of the Church. The fragment mentions her descendants. The epigram on Irene tells more about the deceased:

> So that holy chastity itself might prove the virgin's merit.
> Her youth had not yet complained twenty winters;
> But that span of life had ushered in outstanding virtues.
> The heart's resolve and admirable piety of the girl
> Had borne splendid fruit in her youthful prime.
> Then, when the man who had witnessed our love, dear sister
> Was fleeing the world, as an honourable pledge of it he gave me you;
> And when the better Court of Heaven snatched him to itself,
> I did not then fear death, for he went to Heaven freely.[50]

Irene was a consecrated virgin and the bishop praises her merits and wisdom. Both epigrams mention Damasus by name and present his work at extolling the merits of the departed. With regard to family members, the epigrams reflect on the dignity of the departed, indicate their relationship to the bishop. These family epigrams seem to inscribe the family members of the bishop into the circle that Damasus commemorated, namely the martyrs of Rome. There is, however, a distinguishing element: the script. While the martyr inscriptions are written with the beautiful fonts of Filocalus, the family inscriptions are not, they are of a less attractive design.

The status of Irene as a consecrated virgin might have supported her brother's program, just like Marcellina, the sister and confidante of the bishop of Milan, who also lived

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[49] Jean Charles Picard, "Étude sur l'emplacement des tombes des papes du IIIe au Xe siècle", in *Évêques, saints et cités en Italie et en Gaule. Études d'archéologie et d'histoire.* (Rome: École Française de Rome,1998), 212-17.

[50] Epigram 11, English translation by William Lee Watson, *The Epigrams of St. Damasus: a Translation and Commentary.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958, 32.

in Rome as a consecrated virgin.[51] Virginity had a great attraction for the aristocratic ladies of Rome. Irene's epitaph shows that Damasus promoted and praised this type of life.[52] Irene is represented as a mediator whom Damasus asks to intervene for him at God:

> Now when God shall come, remember us, virgin;
> So that your torch, by the Lord, may give me light.[53]

This plea conveys the idea that the bishop of Rome treated virginity as a road to sanctity. He supplicated his sister to intervene for him, just like he supplicated the martyrs. Irene's self-dedication granted the desired protection that a saint was supposed to grant for the soul of the departed. Irene was not simply the beloved sibling of the bishop of Rome, but the exemplar of a new type of saint: the consecrated virgin.

If Damasus prayed for the protection of Irene before the throne of God, he seems not to have approved the deposition *ad sanctorum*.[54] According to his epigram written for his predecessors, he preferred not to disturb the holy ashes of the bishops, but rather chose another location for his final resting place:

> Here are the companions of Xystus, who carry off the trophy from their foes.
> Here is the throng of prelates that keeps the altars of Christ.
> Here is laid the priest who lived during the long time of peace.
> Here are the holy confessors whom Greece has sent.
> Here are young men and boys, old men and their chaste grandsons, whose preference it was to keep a virginal purity.
> Here I, Damasus- I admit it—wished to bury my own body,
> but I was afraid of disturbing the holy ashes of the saints.

The burial next to a saint was part of the rising cult of the martyrs: this element is completely missing from Damasus' inscriptions. On the contrary: he seems to give the

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[51] For Marcellina, see Neil McLynn, *Ambose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 60-61.

[52] Marianne Sághy, "Martyr Bishops and the Bishop's Martyrs in Fourth-Century Rome." In: *Saintly Bishops and Bishops' Saints.* Eds. Trpimir Vedris- John Ott. (Zagreb: Hagiotheca, 2012), 31-45. idem, *Versek és vértanúk* [Poems and Martyrs] (Budapest: Kairosz, 2003), 227-28. Damasus wrote a now lost tractate on virginity.

[53] Epigram 11, English translation by William Lee Watson

[54] No 16, *Epigrammata Damasiana*: "Hic fateor Damasus volui mea condere membra/ sed cineres timui sanctos vexare piorum."

opposite example in his own epitaph. Instead of being buried next to the saints, he founded a family mausoleum. How to interpret this choice? Is it because Damasus wanted to halt the "privatization" of martyrs by senatorial families? Or because he sought to make the holy presence of the martyrs available for everyone? Damasus seems to have disproved the tradition that made the access to the saints' protection possible for wealthy Christians by burying their family in the same shrine. Asking for Irene's support perhaps also suggests that Damasus made his sister's heavenly intercession available for the public: she became one of the venerated dead of Roman society.

Damasus's single "social" epigram commemorates the young wife Proiecta.[55]

> What words should I use, or whether I should speak at all,
> Grief itself keeps me from saying.
> This tomb holds the tears – you should know – of Projecta's parents.
> She was married to Primus, beautiful in appearance but delighting
> In her virtue alone – alas, so cherished by her poor mother's love.
> Why do I waste words? Know that after her first marriage vows
> She was taken from the eyes of Florus, her father,
> And went away eagerly to mount to the Light above.

She lived for 16 years 9 months and 25 days, she was buried on the 30th December

Fl. Merobaudes' and Fl. Saturninus' consul year[56]

Proiecta lived a brief marriage with a man whose identity is hotly debated.[57] The epigram bombastically dwells on the tears of the parents, the grief of the husband and the sorrow of

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[55] No. 51, *Epigrammata Damasiana*. "Quid loquar aut silenam? Prohibet dolor ipse fateri./Hic tumulus lacrimas retinet, cognosce, parentum/ Proiectae, fuerat Primo quae iuncta marito, /pulcra decore suo, solo contenta pudore,/heu dilecta satis miserae genetricis amore. /Accipe – quid multis? - thalami post foedera prima/erepta ex oculis Flori genitoris abiit/aetheriam cupiens caeli conscendere lucem./ Haec Damasus prestat cunctis solacia fletus./Vixit ann. XVI m IX dies XXV dep. III Kal. Ian. Fl. Merobaude et Fl. Saturnim conss."

[56] No. 51, *Epigrammata Damasiana*. "Quid loquar aut silenam? Prohibet dolor ipse fateri./Hic tumulus lacrimas retinet, cognosce, parentum/ Proiectae, fuerat Primo quae iuncta marito, /pulcra decore suo, solo contenta pudore,/heu dilecta satis miserae genetricis amore. /Accipe – quid multis? - thalami post foedera prima/erepta ex oculis Flori genitoris abiit/aetheriam cupiens caeli conscendere lucem./ Haec Damasus prestat cunctis solacia fletus./Vixit ann. XVI m IX dies XXV dep. III Kal. Ian. Fl. Merobaude et Fl. Saturnim conss." tranl. William Lee Watson

[57] Was he called Primus, or "primo" means "first" husband as Alan Cameron argues: "Proiectae fuerat primo quae iuncta marito" refers to the fact that she had only one husband. He suggests that the name of the husband is a wordplay and identifies him with Secundus, represented along with Proiecta on the casket of the Esquiline

Damasus.[58] The content and style of this epigram resembles to Classical epitaphs, where a husband commemorates a deceased wife, with the exception that the figure of the bishop appears next to close family members. [59] Why did Damasus write this poem? How did this epigram fit into his martyrial program and into the traditional frames of commemoration? Proiecta was neither a family member nor a martyr, nor a consecrated virgin.[60] She was the daughter of a successful imperial servant and married probably a senatorial aristocrat. If so, the Esquiline silver treasure from the end of the fourth century should be associated with the couple. Among the objects of the treasure, there is a silver casket with the inscription *Secunde et Proiecta vivati in Christo.*

For Alan Cameron, this is the couple referred to in the Damasian poem,[61] although this identification is debated.[62] If Cameron is correct, then both Proiecta and her husband were members of old and powerful Christian Roman families. Damasus, who cultivated connections with the elite, would have been honored to do such a favor for them as composing the young wife's epitaph. In contrast to Cameron, Kathleen Shelton suggests that Proiecta's father, Florus built a basilica to the martyr Liberalis, and Damasus provided a privileged *ad sanctos* resting place for his daughter.[63] Proiecta received distinction in death. The place of burial and the epitaph show that the bishop of Rome not only allowed her family to bury Proiecta next to a martyr, but even composed her epitaph and, presumably, participated at the burial. Damasus' presence at a private burial and in funeral commemoration indicates the growing influence of the bishops of Rome in the households.

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treasure. Alan Cameron, "The Date and the Owners of the Esquiline Treasure," *American Journal of Archaeology* 89, no.1 (1985): 136-39.

[58] Cameron finds the style "rigid and lame": "The Date and the Owners of the Esquiline Treasure," 136.

[59] Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost World of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 198.

[60] Proiecta could have been a virgin, who died before the marriage: Kathleen J. Shelton, "The Esquiline Treasure: The Nature of the Evidence," *American Journal of Archaeology* 89 (1985): 149.

[61] Cameron, "The Date and the Owners," 135-145.

[62] For the debate, see Alan Cameron, "The Date and the Owners" and Kathleen Shelton, "The Esquiline Treasure."

[63] Shelton, "The Esquiline Treasure," 150.

This relationship was advantageous for both: bishops were received as respected counselors in powerful Roman families, while the noble families received extra distinction by their episcopal connection and privileged burial places after their deaths. Proiecta's family belonged to a newly rich and newly influential Christian aristocracy, and the bishop discreetly introduced himself and his clergy to this circle. The renovated shrines of the martyrs expressed the saint and solid community of the Christians of Rome, and the epitaph of Proiecta shows that the representatives of this holy circle in this world were the Christian aristocrats of Rome, and also Damasus and his clergy. [64]

Damasus' great achievement was the construction of the cult of the martyrs of Rome, providing new holy places for the increasing number of pilgrims. But the bishop's epigraphic program was not reserved for martyrs alone. He wrote epigrams for his family, praising the merits of his father, mother and sister. In these epigrams the bishop presents his family as models of the Christian, ascetic lifestyle. This also means that these epigrams can no longer be seen as part of private, family commemoration. They became part of Damasus' program as examples of holiness in everyday life. Damasus' mother and sister promote ascetic models of the ideal Christian life. By asking for his sister's heavenly protection, Damasus proclaimed that ascetic life and chastity equal the sacrifice of the martyrs. Proiecta's case is perhaps the most intriguing. Damasus is mentioned alongside with the family members of the deceased in the epitaph, which describes her ascent to the stars in a Classical manner. If Proiecta had been buried next to the martyr Liberalis, she then "outdid" the saint, not mentioned on the epitaph. The inscription attests not only that Damasus become increasingly "sought after" in senatorial circles, but also that the bishop entered the private sphere, allowing the family to bury their dead in a territory now under the authority of the bishop: in the proximity of saints.

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[64] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome and the Making of Christianity in the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 250-252.

2.2. Private grief to public mourning: Ambrose of Milan

This takes us immediately to Ambrose of Milan, who offered his brother, Satyrus a privileged burial place next to the martyr Saint Victor. Ambrose's eloquent farewell oration illustrates the extent to which public and private overlapped at the funeral. Ambrose mourns his brother, but as bishop of Milan, teaches his congregation, giving the most personal example of proper Christian grief and care for the departed. Newcomer in the city, Ambrose had no supporting network of family and acquaintances in the imperial capital ruled by an Arianizing court. Nevertheless, he was able to form a loyal community of Nicene Catholic believers, which strenghtened despite imperial pressure to give up their basilica in 385 and 386.[65] This remarkable performance shows the ability of Ambrose to convince and govern his people. The Satyrus' death was a milestone in the process of forging Catholic unity in Milan.

Satyrus' life is known only from Ambrose's farewell homily. Just like his famous brother, governor of Aemilia Liguria before he was "snached from the judgement seat"[66] to become the bishop of Milan, Satyrus too built a career in the government of the empire. Their sister Marcellina lived as a consecrated virgin in Rome. Ambrose praised her choice by pointing to her inspiration, the noble Soteris, a martyr ancestor, and their mother, buried next to Soteris. Ambrose"s family belonged to the Roman aristocracy,[67] with influential connections, patrons, relatives and friends, such as the praetorian prefect Petronius Probus, or the *praefectus urbi* of Rome Symmachus.[68] Satyrus served as a provincial governor around 370, but after Ambrose's consecration left the civic government and devoted his life to

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[65] McLynn, *Ambrose,* 170-93.

[66] For the election and consecration of Ambrose see McLynn, *Ambrose*, 1-13, 44-51.

[67] McLynn, *Ambrose,* 31-37

[68] T. D. Barnes, "Augustine, Symmachus and Ambrose," in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. Joanne McWilliam (Waterloo: Wilfrid Lauriel University Press, 1992), 7-15.

assisting his brother. [69] On his way home from the family's African estates, he suffered shipwreck,[70] but survived and arrived to Rome, where he was informed of the barbarian invasion in northern Italy by Symmachus.[71] Despite his illness and the imminent danger, Satyrus hurried to Milan to help his brother and died after his arrival in 378.

This modest helper of the bishop of Milan lived his life in the shadow of his brother. Ambrose praised his tireless assistance, but it is clear from his eloquent laudation that the most important merit of Satyrus was the quiet support. Satyrus never took a wife,[72] because he did not want to be separated from his brother. This remark may imply that Satyrus remained unmarried to keep together family wealth. Satyrus remained single, Marcellina virgin, and Ambrose lived in celibacy: their estate was intact, without possible heirs and division of the patrimony. Satyrus, as McLynn noted, socially annihilated himself, living a life what was considered unmanly.[73] He administered Ambrose's household, a duty that required financial talent and ethical responsibility.[74] The ambitious church building program in Milan shows that Ambrose had solid financial background.[75]

Satyrus died unbaptized. At the time of his voyage he was only a catechumen and his illness impeded him to take baptism.[76] Despite this, he was buried next to the shrine of Saint Victor. He was given this honor as the bishop's brother even though we know from a later

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[69] *De excessu fratri Satyri*, in *Sancti Ambrosii: Opera Omnia* Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Latina 16. ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Migne, 1845). I. 25. Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus*, English translation by H. De Romestin, in *Ambrose: Select works and Letters*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2-10 Last accessed 10 May 2015, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf210.pdf. In the following I will quote from this translation.

[70] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus* I. 27.

[71] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus* I. 32. He mentions Symmachus as a *parens*, which does not necessary refers to a blood relation, rather that Satyrus treated him as a patron.

[72] Ambrose of Milan, *On the decease of His Brother Satyrus* I. 53.

[73] McLynn, *Ambrose*, 69-70.

[74] For the household of the bishop, see Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy*, 88-98. Assisting the bishop might have been another reason for Satyrus' celibacy: as the guardian of the material properties of the bishop and the Church of Milan he had to be a moral exemplar.

[75] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle,* 120-37.

[76] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus,* I. 52.

example by Augustine, that the burials of catechumens in churches was problematic.[77] For Satyrus, however, the lack of baptism did not present a difficulty. Closer examination reveals that the honored place of Satyrus served the honor of Ambrose: originally it was his own resting place where he buried his beloved brother. Satyrus, so similar to Ambrose that they were often mistaken, was laid to rest at the burial place of the bishop. [78]

At the funeral, Ambrose mixed his private duties as a brother and his public duties as the leader of the church. The appreciation of the merits of the deceased and the confirmation of his place within the community were traditional elements of the funerals.[79] Ambrose, the bishop acted as the customs of civic life required: he chose the burial place, delivered the eulogy at the funeral, and revisited the grave on the seventh day after the funeral.[80] He conformed to tradition, but the structure of his eulogy shows a new feature in that it was incorporated into the liturgy.[81] Ambrose acted both as the closest relative and as the officiating priest. Expressing his personal grief, he reminded himself of his public duties and his duties as a Christian:

> "But whither am I going, in my immoderate grief, forgetful of my duty, mindful of kindness received? The Apostle calls me back, and as it were puts a bit upon my sorrow, saying, as you heard just now: 'We would not that ye should be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that sleep, that ye be not sorrowful, as the rest which have no hope.' Pardon me, dearest brethren. For we are not all able to say: "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ."But if you seek one to imitate, you have One Whom you may imitate. All are not fitted to teach, would that all were apt to learn."[82]

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[77] The unbaptized could be denied the privilege of church burial because the sacrament of the Eucharist was offered at the liturgy, see Francis Dolbeau, "Noveaux sermons de Saint Augustin pour le conversion des païens et des donatistes II," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 37 (1991), 289-95.

[78] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus,* I. 38.

[79] McLynn, *Ambrose*, 72. and J. Warren Smith, *Christian Grace and Pagan Virtue: The Theological Foundation of Ambrose's Ethic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 129-30.

[80] On this occasion he delivered another speech, concerning the topic of the resurrection of the body. Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus* II. 2.

[81] McLynn*, Ambrose*, 73.

[82] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus,* I. 9.

The *contrapposto* of public and private grief is a recurring theme in the first part of the homily Ambrose preached *On the Decease of his Brother*, in which he underlines that public matters come before private. He contextualizes the loss of his brother in the threat of the barbarian invasion, and offers his grief and sorrow as a sacrifice for the whole community. With this, he offers his personal grief to the grief of all.[83] Ambrose understood the fear and sorrow of the Milanese people, and promised to do what he can to protect them.[84] At the beginning, he speaks as a leader: putting aside his private pain, he takes part in the shared sorrow of his flock. Then he goes on to offer his loss as a sacrifice, making a strong connection between himself and his audience. From this point on, Ambrose ceases to be an outsider, but becomes one of the Milanese Christians. This stance turned the funeral of a private person into public mourning. As McLynn noted, Satyrus' burial was part of Ambrose's consolidation of power and established the bishop's position in the city. The second part of the speech, performed seven days after the burial, supports this suggestion. Here Ambrose mentions neither the personality of Satyrus, nor his personal grief, but gives instead an eloquent teaching about the resurrection of the body and the world to come, the hope of Christian believers. The two different parts of the speech shows Ambrose's transformation from private mourner to Christian teacher.

Ambrose's personality deserves a closer glance. According to Brown, his dazzling episcopate gave an example of behaving *satis episcopaliter*.[85] Ambrose had an enormous impact in Northern Italy and it was largely a result of his personality, rather than his office. [86] McLynn views Ambrose's performance at the funeral of his brother a theatrical act, not as

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[83] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus,* I. 5-6.
[84] Protection against the barbarians was not just a rhetorical turn for Ambrose. He offered assistance to prisoners, and sold the church vessels to ransom prisoners: Ambrose of Milan, *De officiis*, 2. 142. in *Ambrose: De Officiis: Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, ed. Ivor John Davison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
[85] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 39.
[86] Rita Lizzi, "Ambrose's Contemporaries and the Christianization of Northern Italy," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 156-73. For the bishops' connections with the local elite, see Kimberly Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values*, 170-73.

evidence of Ambrose's emotional nature.[87] The construction of the funeral speech for Satyrus truly served as a tool for Ambrose to make him a moral example for the community, and marked the end of his "freshmen" years in the episcopacy. The symbolic climax of the oration is the moment when the bishop says farewell to his brother and embraces his new family, the Christian community of Milan. Ambrose's performance might have well been much less manipulative than McLynn surmises. The expression of grief need not have been theatrical, but an emphasis of the dichotomy between the private person and the minister of the church. The first was swallowed up by the second. Seven days after the funeral, Ambrose showed how Christians were supposed to mourn by speaking about the beauty and happiness of the resurrection. A letter of Ambrose reminds a grieving person to his duties, and asks him to comfort those who need it more than him.[88] Ambrose knew his responsibilities: despite his bereavement he had to be the leader of his flock and show this. Rather than simply giving an example of Christian consolation, Ambrose transformed himself an exemplar for his community.

Satyrus' final resting place fitted Ambrose's remarkable organization of the burial. The *martyrium* of Saint Victor was located next to the newly built *Basilica Ambrosiana*. By placing his beloved brother next to Saint Victor, Ambrose linked his family and himself to the saint. Since Milan was short in local martyrs, Ambrose chose the shrine of Victor, a martyr "imported" from Mauretania by Ambrose's predecessor.[89] In so doing, Ambrose adjoined his family not only to the saint, but also to the line of the bishops of Milan. Ambrose buried his

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[87] McLynn, *Ambrose*, 75.

[88] Epistle 39. To Faustus . There are two system of numbering concerning the letters of Ambrose; the oldest and more widespread that of the Benedictine edition (Ambrosius Mediolensis, *Epistolae prima classis,* Patrologia Latina 16, ed. j. p. Migne), and the recent is the numbering of the CSEL edition by O. Faller (*CSEL* 82). In the following I use the more popular Benedictine numbering, since the English translations also ordered according to the numbers of the Benedictine editions. English translation of the letters by H. de Romestin, in *Ambrose: Selected Works and Letters*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 2-10, ed. Philip Schaff (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1896).

[89] Gillian Mackie, "Symbolism and Purpose in an Early Christian Martyr Chapel: The Case of San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro, Milan," *Gesta* 34 (1995): 91. also Jean Charles Picard, *Le Souvenir des évêques: sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie du Nord des origines au Xe siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1988), 39-40.

brother next to the saint, asking for his protection of the deceased, and at the same time he "legalized" *ad sanctos* burials in Milan.[90] As there was no strict separation between pagan and Christian graves, this was a new phase in the evolution of Christian burial customs. Ambrose expressed his hope that the physical proximity of the martyr will help his brother's salvation.[91] On Satyrus' epitaph, he says: "This is the reward of his merits that the holy blood seeps through to wash clean the remains which lie at side".[92] Indeed, recent archaeological excavations ascertained that Satyrus' grave was literally attached to the saint's.[93] Victor actually shared his sanctity with Satyrus, who came to be venerated as a saint.[94]

2.3. Augustine and the Care for the Dead

Augustine buried at least two family members, his mother, Monica and his son, Adeodatus, but he wrote only about the former. Monica died before Augustine was elected bishop, but it is Augustine the bishop who remembers her burial. Monica's funerals offers a glimpse into lay Christian burials.[95] Monica died in Ostia in 387 on her way back to Africa.[96] Ten years later, Augustine the bishop describes vividly the deathbed scene: little Adeodatus crying, the brothers Navigius and Augustine falling silent, Evodius singing a psalm. This heard, Christians pour into the room. Those responsible for the funeral left, while Augustine talked to the Christian brethren in the other part of the house: ready to console him they did

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[90] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity (London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 65.

[91] Jean-Charles Picard, "L'Évolution des lieux de sépulture au haut Moyen Âge," in *Êveques, saints et cités en Italie et en Gaule* (Rome: École Francaise de Rome, 1998), 312-13.

[92] The epitaph reads as follows: "Uranio Satyro supremem fratrem honorem /martyris ad laevam derulit Ambrosius /haec meriti merces ut sacri sanguinis humor/finitimas penetrans adluat exuvias." *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres* ed. E. Diehl (Berlin, 1925-31), no. 2165. Translation is mine.

[93] Mackie, "Symbolism and Purpose," 99.

[94] Jean Charles Picard, *Le Souvenir des évêques*, 38.

[95] Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 128.

[96] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 9.8. Latin edition: CSEL 33, Ed. Philip Khöll. Vienna:Tempsky, 1896. ,English translation by Alber C. Outler.

not want to leave him alone, .Augustine plaintively recalls his lack of tears during his mother's funeral.[97] The lack of tears gives a solemn character to the events. Would the tearless Augustine stand for a Christian ideal of mourning? Like Ambrose, Augustine prescribes a modest display of grief: no tears shed in public. Jerome also advised solemn behavior for mourners. In the letter to Paula, written after the death of her daughter, Blesilla in 389, Jerome extended the solemn grief even to women, who traditionally let their pain be exposed publicly. Admitting that tears were inevitable in bereavement, Jerome did exhort Paula to hide her tears to cut short rumors.[98] Augustine cried only after he was left alone. As a rhetor Augustine, was aware of the importance of public rites. The visit of the Christians at the death of Monica seems to suggest that this African family had good friends and a good reputation in the Church of Ostia. Augustine incorporated the death of Monica into his *Confessions,* whose ninth book lists the losses of Augustine. Four deaths scatter the narrative not in chronological, but in subjective importance. At the death of his friend Nebridius, for example, Augustine mentions his deep sorrow. Monica's death, however, is meant to be a turning point in the narrative: Augustine overcomes loss and praises the Lord.[99]

"I closed her eyes; and there flowed in a great sadness on my heart and it was passing into tears, when at the strong behest of my mind my eyes sucked back the fountain dry, and sorrow was in me like a convulsion. As soon as she breathed her last, the boy Adeodatus burst out wailing; but he was checked by us all, and became quiet. Likewise, my own childish feeling which was, through the youthful voice of my heart, seeking escape in tears, was held back and silenced. For we did not consider it fitting to celebrate that death with tearful wails and groanings. This is the way those who die unhappy or are altogether dead are usually mourned. But she neither died unhappy nor did she altogether die. For of this we were assured by the witness of her good life, her "faith unfeigned,"and other manifest evidence.

What was it, then, that hurt me so grievously in my heart except the newly made wound, caused from having the sweet and dear habit of living together with her suddenly broken? I was full of joy because of her testimony in her last illness, when she praised my dutiful attention and called me kind, and recalled with great affection of love that she had never heard

[97] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 9.12.30.
[98] Jerome, *Epistula* 39. 6. in *CSEL* 54, ed. Isidor Hilberg (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1910), 307. The "rumors" concerned Jerome: he was accused that his ascetic regime caused Blesilla's death.
[99] Marjorie Suchocki, "The Symbolic Structure of Augustine's *Confessions*," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, No. 3 (1982): 365-78.

any harsh or reproachful sound from my mouth against her. But yet, O my God who made us, how can that honor I paid her be compared with her service to me? I was then left destitute of a great comfort in her, and my soul was stricken; and that life was torn apart, as it were, which had been made but one out of hers and mine together."[100]

Monica's burial place acquires a real significance in the ascetic program of the *Confesssion*s. She hoped to be buried next to his husband, but at the end of her earthly pilgrimage, she forsook her longing for her homeland and her husband and her only wish was to be commemorated at the altar. , "Lay this body anywhere, let not the care for it trouble you at all. This only I ask, that you will remember me at the Lord's altar, wherever you be."[101] She let go of her desire to be buried together with Patricius and unite with him in death and did not care about the fate of her dead body. In calling attention to Monica's change of heart, Augustine made his mother the spokeswoman of his views on Christian burial. However, later Monica's final resting place in Ostia was honored by an eloquent epitaph, praising her and her son's merit.[102]

The only element of Monica's funerary ritual held in the cemetery itself that Augustine mentions is the placing of the body on the side of the grave during the funeral.[103] To the Eucharist at the funerary liturgy: did the "sacrifice of our redemption"[104] take place at the funerary mass or later?[105] Christian tradition included prayers and the Eucharist at the funeral or after, but Augustine does not mention the presence of clergymen.

Monica's death and burial yet again reflects the transition between private and public. Christians of Ostia gathered when they heard the news; and it is not Augustine who arranged

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[100] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 9. 11. 29-30. translated by Albert C. Outler
http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/confessions.xii.html accessed May 2015.
[101] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions,* 9.11.27-28.
[102] Douglas Ryan Boin, "Late Antique Ostia and a Campaign for Pious Tourism: Epitaphs for Bishop Cyriacus and Monica, Mother of Augustine," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 100 (2010), 195-209 argues that the epitaph of Monica was made around the sixth century to increase the number of pious pilgrims in Ostia.
[103] Augustine of Hippo*, Confessions*, 9.12.32. "The dead body being now placed by the side of the grave, as the custom there is, prior to its being laid therein" translated by Alber C. Oulter.
[104] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions,* 9.12.31: in Latin "cum offeretur pro ea sacrificium pretii nostril."
[105] Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead,* 130.

the funeral, but somebody else. Was the singing of the psalms part of the common Christian ritual, or did Evodius begin to sing the psalter spontaneously? How was the commemoration of the dead associated with the Eucharist and with the prayers?

Augustine's other writings give insight into the funeral practice. The communion of the Eucharist at burials figures in the ordinations of the council of Hippo in 393.[106] The council forbids to give the Eucharist to the corpse and to include it into the funeral service after midday, because partakers are supposed to fast before taking it.[107] This conciliar decision is a step in the reform that Augustine sought to put into practice to regulate the cult of martyrs. The prohibition reveals, however, that the Eucharistic communion was an integral part of private funerals in Africa. It cannot be inferred that in Italy the situation was the same six years earlier, at the death of Monica.

A piece of evidence for the role of Eucharist and prayer is to be found in Augustine's treatise *On the Care of the Dead* written around 422 as a letter to Paulinus of Nola on the burial of a young Christian, Cynegius near the shrine of Saint Felix in Nola.[108] Paulinus asked Augustine to explain if the proximity of saints was useful for the soul of the departed. Augustine refuted the idea that the burial of the body next to a saint guaranteed salvation, unless the departed lived a life which allows any kind of intercession; namely, prayer, almsgiving, and the Eucharistic communion.[109] It was Cynegius' mother, Flora who asked the bishop of Nola to bury his son near Saint Felix. Augustine emphasizes the difference of the ecclesiastical and privates spheres and delimits the participation of the clergy in the care of

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[106] Breviarium Hipponense, in *Concilia Africae 345-525,* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina [int he following abbreviated as CCSL]149, 30-46.

[107] ibid. 40.

[108] For the correspondence between Paulinus of Nola and Augustine, see Pierre Courcelle, *Les Confessions de saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes,1963), 570-75.

[109] Augustine of Hippo, *On the Care of the Dead*, 20. CSEL 41 ed. Joseph Zycha (Vienna: Tempsky,1900) ; English translation by H. Browne, In *Augustine On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers1-3 last accessed May 10, 2015, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103.v.ix.html

the dead. Augustine's program might have not been as all-encompassing as Rebillard suggests, but it targeted a custom at affirming that the choice of the burial place was definitely not an ecclesiastical matter.

Paulinus' example shows, however, that some bishops were eager to participate in such burials also in order to promote their local saints. Cynegius' burial was irregular on more than one counts: he did not belong to the community of Nola, yet he was buried at a privileged place in the basilica. Flora was influential enough to ask the bishop to take care of his son's body.[110] Augustine's warning that burial *ad sanctos* is useless in itself addressed the practice of powerful members of the elite who requested privileged burial places for their family.

"If this be true, doubtless also the providing for the interment of bodies a place at the Memorials of Saints, is a mark of a good human affection towards the remains of one's friends: since if there be religion in the burying, there cannot but be religion in taking thought where the burying shall be. But while it is desirable there should be such like solaces of survivors, for the showing forth of their pious mind towards their beloved, I do not see what helps they be to the dead save in this way."[111]

The key problem for Augustine is the body. He rejects the tradition that the remains of the body are attached to the soul. For him, the care for the dead means that the living help the soul of the departed, but the forms of this help do not to concern the body. He insists that the living can only assist the dead with prayers and the Eucharistic communion in the Church. The funeral, the processions and the grave belong to the private, they do not require clerical participation. These elements of the funeral have nothing to do with the soul. The responsibility of Christians is to help the souls of the departed through prayer, communion and almsgiving -- means that Augustine approved.

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[110] Flora was an African lady, member of Augustine's community, so Paulinus had to inform him about the resting place of Cynegus. See Yvette Duval, "Flora était-elle africaine?," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 34, vol. 1 (1988): 70-77. Trout adds that Flora and his son were the descendants of Maternus Cynegius, the supporter of Theodosius, and Amelius Florus Paternus. Thus Flora was a relative of Florus, the father of Proiecta. Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, Poems* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 42.
[111] *On the Care of the Dead* 6. Translated by H. Browne.

Augustine's objections to the traditional forms of commemoration were more visible concerning the cult of martyrs. He did not involve into such private issues like the choice of the place of burial or to the funeral itself, he rather promoted a Christian form of commemoration, and the role of the Church in it. The Monica's burial and his opinion on the burial of Cynegius mirrors that although Augustine directly did not interfered in private commemoration, he encouraged Christians to concentrate on the benefits that the Church could provide for the souls of the departed.

Chapter 3. Episcopal Commemoration of the Martyrs:

Creating the Christian Public for the Cult of the Saints

Any discussion of making the cult of the dead public in Late Antique Christianity inevitably involves the cult of the martyrs.[112] While the burials of individual family members remained private in Christian families, the cult of the martyrs from the fourth century onwards became public. Martyrs were "special dead", whose intercession was requested by the Christian congregations. However, the "privatization" of martyr cult represented a danger. The power of martyrs as heavenly patrons inspired wealthy Christian families to attach the martyrs as protectors to their family. Private forms of the veneration of martyrs and relics flourished in the fourth century. [113] Roman families like the parents of Agnes of Rome, had martyrs of their own: Ambrose boasted with a martyr ancestor Soteris. Others, like the enterprising Lucilla, buried the martyrs on her own initiative and thus "privatized" their grave.[114]

In the formation of the Christian public for the cult of the martyrs, the bishop had a leading role. Even if not every martyr and not every aspect of martyr cult was under the strict surveillance of the bishop, he had an important influence and power to decide which martyr, when, and how could be part of the commemoration of a given Christian community. Damasus, Ambrose and Augustine all had a definite say in this process. The public face of the martyr cult includes the various activities that the Christian community did together at the

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[112] Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 142.

[113] For private worship of the martyrs in aristocratic families see Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values,* 84-96.

[114] Kate Cooper, "The Martyr, the Matrona and the Bishop", Early Medieval Europe 8 (1999): 297-317.

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liturgy and at the tomb. Bishops were eager to participate in and regulate these occasions depending on their attitudes toward local forms of martyr cult. [115]

Since the veneration of martyrs was closely attached to the traditional commemoration of the dead, elements of the latter appeared in the former. Funeral banquets, originally the duty of the family became part of the celebration of the martyrs. Gathering at the tomb of the martyr offered participants feelings of cohesion and solidarity.[116] In the case of public funerals, there is no sign that the later annual commemorations were of a public nature.[117] Christian communities turned the private event of the funerary banquet into public celebrations. Since these occasions involved a large number of Christians, bishops had to deal with the situation. The following chapter presents their different attitudes toward the banquets and communal feasts honoring martyrs. Damasus, Ambrose and Augustine introduced significant changes into the funerary banquets related to the cult of the martyrs, each in a different way.

3.1. Revamping Suburban Shrines: Damasus of Rome

Emperor Constantine was the first to honor the martyrs of Rome with large funerary basilicas built over their hallowed tombs. The most famous among these imperial foundations is the basilica towering over the resting place of the Apostle Peter in the Vatican. Constantine initiated the public cult of the martyrs in Rome; as a result, pilgrims flocked to the holy tombs, and the cult of the martyrs became visible in Rome. But beside the imperially patronized tombs, other martyr graves stayed in the care of families, and the veneration of these saints remained private.

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[115] Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, 8-9.
[116] Anne Marie Yasin, "Funerary Monuments and Collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community," *The Art Bulletin* 87, no. 3. (2005): 448-50.
[117] Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 55-6.

Damasus was the first bishop of Rome to start an extensive program to bring to light martyrs fallen into oblivion. According to Damasus, neither the name, nor the number of the martyrs was known:

> Whoever you are that read this, pay homage to the Saints' tomb.
> Aged Time could not retain their names or their number.
> Know that Damasus the Pope adorned their grave.[118]

Damasus' intervention concerning the martyrs raises the question whether these saints were really unknown for three centuries in Rome, or Damasus made public an existing cult, kept private during the persecutions? [119] The Codex Calendar of 354 lists the anniversaries of the saints, showing that Christians sought to embed their holidays into the rhythm of the Roman year. But compared with the large numbers of African martyrs, the list of Roman martyrs is relatively brief.[120] Damasus' first achievement in martyr cult was the (re)discovery of the forgotten heroes of Christian history. The invention of new, "unknown" martyrs meant that these saints were the saints of the bishop, without any previous, thus rival, private patronage.

The integration of the cult of martyrs to the Roman Church rearranged the religious topography of the city as well as the circle of venerated martyrs. Catacombs became places of communal commemorations instead of private banquets. Traces of earlier, private care are mirrored in the poems of Damasus. For example, the martyr Marcellinus was buried by a certain Lucilla, and she took care of his grave. The story of Marcellinus was known by Damasus, who heard it in his childhood:

> Marcellinus, your burial and Peter's
> Was told to me, Damasus, when I was a child by your headsman himself.
> He said that the man who savagely condemned you
> Ordered him to sever your necks out in the middle of the brush,

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[118] No. 42, *Epigrammata Damasiana*. Translated by William Lee Watson.
[119] Marianne Sághy, "Martyr Cult and Collective Identity in Fourth Century Rome," in *Identity and Alterity in Hagiography and the Cult of Saints*, ed. Ana Marinkovic and Trpimir Vedris (Zagreb: Hagiotheca, 2010), 20-22.
[120] Salzman, *On Roman Time*, 42-47. The section XII of the Calendar mentions the date of the feast of the martyr, the name, and the place where they were buried. Each month had at least one occasion, except April; the martyrs mentioned in the section were mostly attached to the city of Rome, but it also contains'international' martyrs, like Perpetua and Felicitas.

So that no man could know where you were buried.[121]

This shows that elements of private martyr cult were well known by the bishop.[122] The figure of the pious lady, who collects the remains of the martyrs and gives them a decent burial will be a recurrent theme in the sixth-century acts of the martyrs. [123] While the shrines were under domestic care, pious Roman ladies played an important role in tending the memory of the martyrs. How private cults integrated into the new, communal program of Damasus is hard to say. Were there martyrs with a flourishing private cult the ones that the bishop omitted from his commemorative inscriptions? Nicola Denzey Lewis pointed out that Damasus' rediscovered saints were mostly male martyrs.[124] While the bishop commemorated female family members and a high status woman, Proiecta, in a distinguished way, during the formation of the new, public cult the female martyrs somehow disappeared. For example, Basilla, commemorated in the Codex Calendar and well attested by inscriptions, was replaced by Protus and Hyacint in Damasus' verse.[125] In the Damasian corpus of epigrams, the only exception to this rule is Saint Agnes -- whose cult enjoyed imperial support as well.[126] Why did Damasus omit mentioning female martyrs? Why did he let their cult to be forgotten? Female martyrs were the "losers" in the Damasian revamping of martyr veneration that made private cults public. The exclusion of women martyrs shows the extent to which bishops could influence the shift from private veneration to public cult.

Damasus searched for the martyrs in the abandoned cemeteries of Rome. Instead of carrying the remains of the discovered saints toward the center of the city, he decorated and renovated their catacomb shrines, thereby creating a ring of holy tombs around the city.

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[121] No. 28. *Epigrammata Damasiana.*

[122] About Lucilla/ Lucina, possibly a Novatianist "'icon", see Cooper, "The Martyr, the Matrona and the Bishop", Early Medieval Europe 8 (1999): 312-13.

[123] In the *Acts of Maximilian* the body of the martyr is collected and buried by a certain Pompeiana. H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 249.

[124] Denzey Lewis, *The Bone Gatherers*, 194.

[125] *ibid.* 195-96, for more examples of the omitted female saints.

[126] Constantine's daughter Constantina was buried in the mausoleum Santa Constanza constructed next to the tomb of Saint Agnes on the Via Nomentana: W. Eugene Kleinbauer, "Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome: The Patronage of Emperor Constantius II and Architectural Invention," *Gesta* 45 (2006): 131-38.

Damasus made the original tomb the pole of attraction for pilgrims, signposting them for the pious pilgrims to show where they could meet the saints.[127] Damasus was not interested in bringing the martyrs into the city, as was Ambrose, but rather in commemorating the "holy place" on the spot, in the cemeteries surrounding Rome. The catacombs were not exclusively Christian resting places, but during the fourth century, the Damasian propaganda made them look like one.[128] Catacombs became conceptualized as "the" places of the holy martyrs, whose tombs were decorated by the inscriptions of the bishop of Rome. From private places of commemoration, the catacombs were transformed into a venue of public cult.[129]

Unlike Ambrose and Augustine, who promoted a communal cult, Damasus relied on private commemoration, but opened it up for the entire Christian community, and integrated the gatherings at the tomb of the martyrs not only into the calendar, but also into the pilgrimages of the Roman Church. The translation of the relics, as we will see in Ambrose's Milan, was an episcopal endeavor to propagate martyr cults under their authority. The transfer meant the refutation of traditional forms of "domestic" commemoration, as it created a new venue for the martyr relics. Damasus, whose program was built on private veneration, left the martyrs at their original resting place, but widened the circle of participants who could approach the saints. He did not want to disturb the sleep of the holy dead, and shunned to move their relics.[130] The importance of the protection of the holy ashes is represented in the Damasian

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[127] On the purpose of regulating and facilitating the access to the shrines, see Lucrezia Spera, "Interventi di papa Damaso nei santuari delle catacomb romane: il ruolo della committenza privata", in *Quaderno* 11 (1994): 111-27. The article also sheds light on the financial aspect of the renovations, and emphasizes the rule of the wealthy senatorial families of Rome in the building program of Damasus.

[128] Lucrezia Spera, "Christianization of Space along the Via Appia: Changing Landscape in the Suburbs of Rome," *American Journal of Archaeology* 107, no. 1 (2003): 36-38.

[129] Marianne Sághy, "Renovatio Memoriae: Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome", in *Rom in der Spätantike Historische Erinnerung im städtischen Raum*, ed. Ralf Behrwald, Christian Witschel (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012), 248-50.

[130] No. 16, *Epigrammata Damasiana*. "Hic, fateor, Damasus volui mea condere membra, sed cineres timui sanctos vexare piorum."

epigrams that also attest the work of the bishop as renovator of the tombs.[131] Marking the name of the bishop in the company of the martyrs in the inscriptions associated his person with the saints of the city. Whoever visited the catacombs to honor the holy martyrs, also saw the name of bishop Damasus in their company as he or she was reading the elaborate epitaphs Damasus composed on the martyr.

One of the possible motives of Damasus was to build the unity of the Christian community. Damasus' program built on the imperial foundations above the tombs of the martyrs. Constantine and his successors' burial policy attached the martyrs the imperial family, and highlighting the heavenly protection of the imperial dynasty. Damasus sought to emphasize the importance of the Christian community. The martyrs he promoted were never alone: several epigrams celebrate pairs or groups of martyrs.[132] The peaceful unity of the holy martyrs obliterates the memories of violent clashes at the beginning of Damasus' episcopate. The Christian community of Rome was divided by religious conflicts. Damasus emphasized peace and unity, assuring his congregation that his aim was tranquility, and at the same time promoted the Nicene Catholic faction in the city. Distinguished places of martyr veneration renovated by Damasus were political headquarters as well, such as the cemetery of Saint Agnes was a meeting place of the antipope Ursinus and his party. By claiming to himself the patronage of Agnes, Damasus declared his primacy over Ursinus.[133]

Another striking feature of the Damasian martyr cult that it Romanizes the martyrs even if they originated from abroad. The saints who sacrificed their life for Christ, became powerful protectors of Rome, because as Damasus underlined, they died in Rome. Their tombs are the

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[131] See for example No. 45, *Epigrammata Damasiana*: the violated tomb of Chrysantius and Daria was renovated by Damasus. No. 3. records that water leaks attacked the bodies, but Damasus could not bear that those who suffered should suffer again even in their death: "Cingebat lattices montem teneroque meatu/ Corpora multorum cineres adque ossa rigabant;/Non tulit hoc Damasus Communi lege sepulchros/ Post requiem tristes interim persolvere poenas."
[132] E. g. No. 6, Faustinus and Viatrix, No.7, Felix and Adauctus, *Epigrammata Damasiana*
[133] Sághy, *Versek és vértanúk* [Poems and Martyrs], 206-9.

common treasure of the Romans.[134] "Nationalizing" the martyrs served the glorification of the Vrbs. "Unica in his gaudet Romanae gloria plebis";[135] making the cult of the martyrs public, he offered new heroes for the community of the city, and the Christian martyrs added further glory to *Vrbs Roma*.

Another aspect of Damasus' popularizing of the saints was the propagation of peace in the Church. The epigram commemorating bishop Eusebius mentions his rival, Heraclius and the *discordia* that ruled the city while their factions fought; but when exiled by the emperor, they restored communion.[136] Damasus, who experienced factionalism at the beginning of his pontificate, tried to remove the stamp of violence from his party by promoting peace and concord with his program, making the martyrs the protectors of the unity of the Church.

3.2. Reburying the Martyrs in the City: Ambrose of Milan

Ambrose's innovative take on the martyrs shows the importance of local martyrs and their role in private commemoration. Ambrose, who unified and controlled his congregation with brio, made significant changes in martyr veneration. Instead of accepting the existing forms of veneration, he gave a new focus to the cult of the martyrs.

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[134] The most striking example of this point is the No. 20, *Epigrammata Damasiana*, which emphasizes that Peter and Paul, although came from the East, belong to Rome. The two apostles appear as the new stars of the city, the twin protectors like Castor and Pollux. See Dennis Trout, "Damasus and the Invention of Early Christian Rome", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33 (2003): 519-22, and Charles Pietri, "Concordia Apostolorum et renovatio urbis: Culte des martyrs et propagande pontificale," in *Christiana Respublica: Éléments d'une enquête sur le christianisme antique*, vol. 3 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1997) 1127-28.

[135] No. 25, *Epigrammata Damasiana* for Felicissus and Agapetus.

[136] No. 18. *Epigrammata Damasiana*. "Heraclius vetuit lapsos peccata dolere, /Eusebius miseros docuit sua crimina flere./Scinditur in partes vulgus gliscente furore:/seditio, caedes, bellum, discordia, lites./Extemplo pariter pulsi feritate tyranni,/integra cum rector servaret foedera pacis./Pertulit exsilium omnino sub iudice laetus,/litore Trinacrio mundum vitamque reliquit."

While his colleague Damasus of Rome advertized an impressive collection of holy martyrs in his city, Ambrose had no local martyrs to exploit in Milan. In 378, when Ambrose buried his brother Satyrus, the most prominent martyrs of Milan were Victor, Nabor and Felix, three "imported" saints, whose cult was founded by Ambrose's predecessor, Maternus.[137] By 397, the end of his episcopate, Ambrose not only affirmed the cult of new local saints, Protasius and Gervasius, but also introduced new forms of martyr celebration. His reform required a loyal community of brethren who accepted the authority of bishop and followed him even if his acts challenged imperial edicts. Ambrose used his private grief to form a Christian public attentive to his orders, and by inventing new martyrs, taught his flock to join in a new, Christian form of public veneration.

In June 386, when his basilica was besieged by the imperial army, Ambrose excavated two forgotten martyrs of Milan, Protasius and Gervasius. By then, Ambrose was bishop for more than a decade, leader of the Catholic party in Milan, in conflict with the Arian imperial court over the ownership of the basilica of the city. Ambrose refused to give over his basilica. The crisis reached its peak at Easter, when the flock of Ambrose in the church was surrounded by armed soldiers.[138] The conflict revealed that the community of Ambrose identified themselves as the "true" church of Milan. The imperial capital was a "faceless" town, without old traditions and without a well-rooted local aristocracy.[139] In this urban context, Ambrose worked efficiently. His victory over the emperor in the conflict over the basilica showed not only his talent to mobilize his flock, but also that this community was linked to the church buildings of Milan.

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[137] Jean Charles Picard, *Le Souvenir des évêques: Sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie du Nord des origines au Xe siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1988), 39-41.

[138] For the problem of chronology of the conflict see Andrew Lenox-Conyngham, „The Topography of the Basilica Conflict of AD 385/6 in Milan," *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte* 31, no. 3 (1982): 353–63., McLynn, *Ambrose,* 181-96.

[139] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 120-35.

Around 379, Ambrose started to construct two new basilicas: the *Basilica Apostolorum* and the *Basilica Ambrosiana*. The first, with its cross-shaped plan imitating the Apostoleion in Constantinople, was situated near the Via Romana, the main road to the city, in the area of the cemetery. Unlike cemetery basilicas, the Apostolorum was not founded on the shrine of a martyr, but its scale and situation was probably inspired by the recent renewal of the shrines of martyrs in Rome by Bishop Damasus.[140] The Basilica Apostolorum was consecrated by the relics of the apostles Peter and Paul sent by Damasus. It is not known whether these were real relics of body parts, sent there in spite of the imperial ban on transferring them, or contact relics.[141] Ambrose was keen on body relics, which is also indicated by the fact that he buried his brother *ad sanctos*. However, his building program promoted a new type of veneration. The cult was no longer attached to an ancient tomb, where people gathered to offer their little gifts in remembrance and prayer. Ambrose created splendid and solemn basilicas, where the community remembered the holy martyrs under the supervision of the bishop. Unlike the martyr basilicas of Damasus in Rome, Ambrose's basilicas functioned not as the focus of commemoration, but rather as the meeting point of the congregation. The place was sacred by relics, but the real importance of the church was the services performed there. The Eucharist became the central element in the celebrations of Ambrose. However, the commemorative element was not lacking: the members of the Milanese elite were buried in the Basilica Apostolorum.[142] Christians gathering here regularly no longer performed family commemoration, but celebrated the Eucharist together. From private forms of martyr worship, Ambrose created a new type of Christian publicity.

The reform did not mean that Ambrose separated the cult of the martyrs from Christian liturgy. He rather unified the various aspects of the cult of the martyrs by

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[140] Lewis, „Iconography," 91-92; Picard, *Le Souvenir des évêques,* 49-52
[141] Lewis, „Iconography," 93.
[142] McLynn, *Ambrose,* 233-34.

positioning the community in focus. Instead of shrines in the outer cemeteries, where smaller or larger groups could commemorate in the same way as they did for their deceased family members, Ambrose brought the martyrs into his newly built large basilicas, where the clergy officiated the liturgy.

The best example of this process is the finding (*inventio*) and transfer (*translatio*) of the relics of Protasius and Gervasius. We have different accounts on this event: the "on-the-spot" testimony of Augustine, a later letter of Ambrose, and the *Vita Ambrosii* by Paulinus of Milan.[143] In Ambrose's version, the congregation challenged him to consecrate the newly built Basilica Ambrosiana with relics, on the model of the Basilica Apostolorum. The bishop replied: "I will, if I find any relics of martyrs*"*[144] The next day, he found the bodies of the martyrs near the shrine of Nabor and Felix, in the presence of the flock:

"Why should I use many words? God favoured us, for even the clergy were afraid who were bidden to clear away the earth from the spot before the chancel screen of SS. Felix and Nabor. I found the fitting signs, and on bringing in some on whom hands were to be laid, the power of the holy martyrs became so manifest, that even while I was still silent, one was seized and thrown prostrate at the holy burial-place. We found two men of marvellous stature, such as those of ancient days. All the bones were perfect, and there was much blood. During the whole of those two days there was an enormous concourse of people. Briefly we arranged the whole in order, and as evening was now coming on transferred them to the basilica of Fausta, where watch was kept during the night, and some received the laying on of hands. On the following day we translated the relics to the basilica called Ambrosian. "[145]

The authenticity of the relics was proven by miracles: the blind Severus recovered his vision.[146] The relics were transported to the new basilica and placed under the altar. The relics that the community requested remained in communal ownership under the altar of the new basilica, and under the supervision of the bishop.

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[143] Ambrose, *Epistle* 22, Augustine: *Confessions* 9.7, Augustine of Hippo, *Sermo* 286.5, *Patrologia Latina*38 coll.1299-1300. Paulinus of Milan,"The Life of Saint Ambrose," 14. in *Ambrose,* ed. Boniface Ramsay (London: Routledge, 1997) All three sources mention the context of the Arian struggle.
[144] Ambrose of Milan, *Epistle* 22.1.
[145] Ambrose of Milan, *Epistle*. 22. 2 translated by H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth
[146] Ambrose of Milan, *Epistle*. 22. 2, cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 9.7 and *City of God* 22.8, where Augustine stated that he also witnessed the events.

In legal terms, the transfer of the relics to the city was a crime. The relevant edict was issued just a few months prior the miracle of Milan, and it clearly prohibited the removal of the bodies of martyrs from their original resting place.[147] Nevertheless, the Catholic bishop of the imperial capital disregarded this prohibition. The martyrs were no ordinary dead: they were the lost and found protectors of the city, and the miracles they performed proved that they intervened effectively for the community.[148] All accounts on the miraculous intervention mentions hostile Arians, as if the martyrs protected against heresies. "Thanks to the martyrs' good works the faith of the Catholic Church increased to the same extent that the perfidy of the Arians decreased," as the biographer of Ambrose noted.[149]The relics under the altar sanctified Ambrose's church, and in a wider sense the Catholic community of Milan.[150]

Gervasius and Protasius had no previous cult: only the oldest remembered their names.[151] Ambrose removed the martyrs from their tombs near the shrine of Nabor and Felix, and transferred them into his new basilica, linking their veneration strongly to the liturgy. Instead of following in Damasus' footsteps, turning the family cult of the dead into public by involving the Christian community, Ambrose created a new cult for his Church, strongly associated with the liturgy, and placed it under his control. Ambrose was a great community-builder, but his real strength lay in controlling his flock. Moving the relics to his basilica meant that that the cult of martyrs became inseparably attached to the episcopal Eucharistic liturgy.[152] From this point of view, it was important that the martyrs were newly discovered by the bishop, demonstrating their power to protect by miracles and their power to defeat the

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[147] Cod. Theod. 9.17.7, issued 26 Febr 386. Gillian Clark, "Translating Relics: Victricius of Rouen and Fourth-Century Debate," *Early Medieval Europe* 10, no. 2 (2001): 168–71.
[148] On the martyrs as the patrons of Milan, see Jean Doignon, "Perspectives ambrosiennes: S. S Gervais et Protais, génies de Milan," *Revue d' Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 56 (1965): 325-27, where the author links their role as protectors to the Roman tradition of *gens*.
[149] Paulinus, *The Life of Ambrose*, 14. Translation by Boniface Ramsay.
[150] Claire Sotinel, "Les lieux de culte chrétiens et le sacré dans l'Antiquité Tardive" *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 4 (2005): 413-14.
[151] Ambrose of Milan, *Epistle,* 22.
[152] Brown, *The Cult of Saints,* 36-37.

Arian party. Basilica-building and translation of relics founded a new type of Christian commemoration of the martyrs, and made it a public occasion embedded in the liturgy.

Ambrose renewed the cult of the martyrs in yet another way: by regulating the cult. Christians honored their martyrs by celebrating their heavenly birthday in the cemeteries with funerary banquets.[153] The assemblies at the shrines of martyrs included drinking wine, and these occasions sometimes ended up in noisy parties. Mourning his brother Satyrus, Ambrose cast Christian grief in a solemn way, offered himself as the example, and used that occasion to strengthen his relationship with the community. The new type of martyr veneration also affirmed the binds between the bishop and the Christian flock: the basilicas were under the authority of the clergy, and the liturgy honoring the martyrs was linked with the celebration of the Eucharist. Cemetery commemorations with wine irritated Ambrose. In his treatise *De Helia et ieiunio* he mentions among the perils of wine those who get drunk at the shrine of martyrs, thinking that this is a sacrifice.[154]Ambrose squarely prohibited his flock to gather in cemeteries for funerary banquets. When Monica wanted to bring some meal to the cemetery according to the customs, she was told that Ambrose forbade such celebrations at the shrines of martyrs:

> So also my mother brought to certain oratories, erected in the memory of the saints, offerings of porridge, bread, and wine--as had been her custom in Africa--and she was forbidden to do so by the doorkeeper [*ostiarius*]. And as soon as she learned that it was the bishop who had forbidden it, she acquiesced so devoutly and obediently that I myself marveled how readily she could bring herself to turn critic of her own customs, rather than question his prohibition. For winebibbing had not taken possession of her spirit, nor did the love of wine stimulate her to hate the truth, as it does too many, both male and female, who turn as sick at a hymn to sobriety as drunkards do at a draught of water. (…)And, if there were many oratories of departed saints that ought to be honored in the same way, she still carried around with her the same little cup, to be used everywhere. This became not only very

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[153] Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2014). 46-48.

[154] Ambrose of Milan*, De Helia et ieiunio* 17.62-63. *CSEL* 32.2 ed. Karl Schenkl (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1897) 448-49. "Et haec vota ad deum pervenire iudicat sicut illi qui calices ad sepulchral martyrum deferent atque illic in vesperam bibunt; aliter se exaudiri posse non credunt. O stultitia hominum, qui ebrietatem sacrificium putant, qui existimant illis ebrietatem placere qui ieiunio passionem sustinere didicerunt!"

much watered but also quite tepid with carrying it about. She would distribute it by small sips to those around, for she sought to stimulate their devotion, not pleasure.

But as soon as she found that this custom was forbidden by that famous preacher and most pious prelate, even to those who would use it in moderation, lest thereby it might be an occasion of gluttony for those who were already drunken (and also because these funereal memorials were very much like some of the superstitious practices of the pagans), she most willingly abstained from it. And, in place of a basket filled with fruits of the earth, she had learned to bring to the oratories of the martyrs a heart full of purer petitions, and to give all that she could to the poor.[155]

Augustine explains the prohibition with two reasons: drunkenness and paganism. Ambrose does not mention either in his writings: these issues intrigued Augustine.[156] Other bishops, like Zeno of Verona also used these arguments against the celebrations at the martyrs' shrines: Zeno lived in a community tainted by pagan traditions in everyday life.[157] The ban of Ambrose did not affect traditional family commemorations, but for his Catholic community he had the authority to forbid banquets held at the tomb of the martyrs.

Ambrose's aim to reform shows that the cult of martyrs entered into the public sphere. While the bishop of Milan did not attempt to regulate private burials, as the leader of the Catholic community, he had the authority to alter forms of commemoration. Instead of the family-based or private banquets, Ambrose promoted cults under the guidance of the clergy. While he forbade banquets in the cemetery basilicas, he strengthened the identity of the Christian public of Milan by the intervention of the relics of local martyrs, and giving them the patrons who helped their salvation.

3.3. Reforming the Martyr Cult: Augustine of Hippo

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[155] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions,* 6.2. Translated by Albert C. Outler

[156] Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead,* 146-47. Ambrose might have omitted the ban from his writings either because it was successful, or because it was not an issue for him.

[157] Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus*, ed. B. Löfstedt, CCSL 22 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), I. 25: "Non hi solum, qui tales sunt, displicent deo, sed et illi, qui per sepulcra discurrunt, qui foetorosis prandia cadaueribus sacrificant mortuorum, qui amore luxuriandi atque bibendi in infamibus locis lagenis et calicibus subito sibi martyres pepererunt." Concerning the relationship between Ambrose and Zeno of Verona see Rita Lizzi "Ambrose's Contemporaries and the Christianisation of Nortern Italy."

Augustine sought to transform the cult of martyrs in North Africa even before he became a bishop. He wrote about the issue of martyrdom, the cult of relics and the funeral *ad sanctos* abundantly. Concentrating on the relationship between Augustine and his audience, I examine two aspects of Augustine's teaching: the problem of the funeral *ad sanctos* and the funerary banquets,

To be buried next to a saint was not a private concern by the time when the tomb of the martyr belonged to the community. Some bishops supported the burial *ad sanctos*, but Augustine expressed doubts about the beneficial effects of the physical proximity of the saint. In *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* written to Paulinus of Nola, Augustine says that the physical proximity to the saint is useless without spiritual offerings: prayer, Eucharist, almsgiving.[158] The privileged burial place is not to be condemned, since it is the sign of human affection and it might help to keep the memory of the departed in mind, but otherwise, for Augustine, it is completely useless.[159] All other tasks concerning private burials were excluded from the domain of Christian public, and from the interest of the clergy. He felt strongly about separating private worship from the cult of martyrs. Although Augustine did not condemn this custom, he held that it was useless for the salvation of the souls.

Augustine was hostile to the banquets held in the cemeteries. Unlike Ambrose, he did not have an obedient and easily controllable flock. In Africa, there was no shortage of local martyrs. Funeral banquets were part of the cult of dead, and Christians celebrated their martyrs in the same manner as they did their pagan relatives. In 392, before his election, Augustine wrote to Aurelius, bishop of Carthage, [160] that this scandalous habit was practiced not only on the anniversaries of the martyrs, but every day the cemeteries were full of

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[158] For the circumstances of the composition of the work see previous chapter.

[159] Augustine of Hippo, *De cura pro mortuis*, 8.

[160] On Augustine as a presbyter, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, reprinted 2000,) 131-39.

drunken Christians, who regarded these occasions as pious acts.[161] Augustine noted that it

would be almost impossible to forbid them completely to engage in these occasions; instead

he targeted the cult of martyrs, and as a compromise, allowed funeral banquets in family.[162]

He noticed that it was the duty of the family and friends to offer luxurious feasts, because

more sumptuous the banquet, better is the memory of the deceased preserved.

> "Since, however, these drunken revels and luxurious feasts in the cemeteries are
> wont to be regarded by the ignorant and carnal multitude as not only an honor to
> the martyrs, but also a solace to the dead, it appears to me that they might be more
> easily dissuaded from such scandalous and unworthy practices in these places, if,
> […] we take care, in regard to the offerings for the spirits of those who sleep,
> which indeed we are bound to believe to be of some use, that they be not
> sumptuous beyond what is becoming respect for the memory of the departed, and
> that they be distributed without ostentation, and cheerfully to all who ask a share
> of them; […]. Thus the appearance of neglecting the memory of their deceased
> friends, which might cause them no small sorrow of heart, shall be avoided, and
> that which is a pious and honorable act of religious service shall be celebrated as
> it should be in the Church." [163]

Prohibiting these feasts would cause worries for the "ignorant and carnal multitude".

Christians treated these banquets as pious events, but they behaved disgracefully. Augustine

urged the brethren that instead of scandalous drunkenness in the cemeteries, they should

concentrate on the benefits ensuing from participation at the mass and of Christian behaviour.

It was the duty of the bishop to promote more solemn forms commemoration. Augustine

exhorted the bishop of Carthage to support his reform, which targeted not just the local

episcopate, but the entire Church of Africa.

Not every Christian was keen to follow new orders, especially if it was about the

elimination of a popular custom. The tension grew between Augustine and his flock. The only

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[161] Augustine of Hippo, "*Letter* 22. 3" References to Augustine's letters will be made to *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine,* trans. J. G. Cunningham, ed. Philip Schaff Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, bk1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1887) accessed May 10, 2015 http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.vii.1.XXII.html Augustine may have depicted the situation more dramatically as it was; in the following part of the letter he wrote that this custom was either unknown outsideAfrica, or abandoned, which is a rhetorical exaggeration. Augustine probably referred to the success of Ambrose.

[162] Augustine of Hippo, *Letter.* 22. 3. "For who may venture to forbid in private life excesses which, when they are practised by crowds in holy places, are called an honour the martyrs?" Translated by J. G. Cunningham.

[163] Augustine of Hippo, *Letter* 22. 6.

surviving record of Ambrose's ban of the banquets is in Augustine, emphasizing the obedience of Monica. A letter of Augustine to Alypius, bishop of Thagaste shows that the congregation of Hippo was not delighted by the new prohibition.[164] Augustine preached an elaborate homily about the perils of drunkenness, and his flock was deeply moved. Nevertheless, next morning even those who were present at Augustine's tearful preaching questioned the prohibition and protested against it.[165]

A major part of the flock, however, was not present. This may suggest that the banquets interested more people than the preaching of the bishop. However, it does not necessarily mean that Augustine was considered so boring that people preferred to go to the banquets instead. Participants at funerary banquets were not Christians alone; Augustine remembered that in his youth he went to church, but not for the sake of holy services.[166] The distinction between the various groups of Christian believers appears in the *City of God*: the first group is the 'better Christians', who do not offer food for martyrs, while the other group does.[167] This clearly shows that Augustine's audience was not homogeneous. Offering meals for the dead was an ancient family tradition, and the bishop could not intervene in that sphere. However, through the regulation of the cult of martyrs, the bishops attempted to indirectly influence devoted Christians to shake off "pagan" elements in private life. In the *City of God,* Augustine raises another problematic point of the banquets: their pagan origins. Christians who honor the martyrs seem as if they were offering "sacrifices" for them. This was the false belief of the newly converted, who could not abandon their pagan customs. Augustine expounds that the better part of the Christian community should prove that the martyrs are no

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[164] Augustine of Hippo, *Letter* 29. 8. Written about 395. Augustine was elected bishop in that year.

[165] The prohibition Augustine may refers to is a canon of the council of Hippo in 393. According to Jensen, "Dining with the Dead," 141; and MacMullen, *The Second Church*, 61. n35., this decision could be the reason for the riots that Augustine mentions in the same letter. "Breviarium Hipponense," in *Concilia Africae 345-525*, 41. This canon prohibited clerics and laypeople to organize banquets at churches.

[166] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* 3. 3. „I dared even while Your solemn rites were being celebrated within the walls of Your church, to desire, and to plan a business sufficient to procure me the fruits of death".

[167] Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* 8. 27.

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pagan gods, therefore honoring them should not include pagan elements. [168] Augustine condemned profane elements in celebrations: singing and dancing were to be avoided. On the feast of Cyprian of Carthage, Augustine complained that ungraceful songs were sung by the Christians who gathered at the tomb of the saint, even during the homily.[169]

Augustine's initiative that all profane elements be excluded from martyr celebrations was not without precedent. However, other bishops did not see these forms as polluting as the bishop of Hippo did. Paulinus of Nola, for example, acted the opposite way. To promote the cult of Felix of Nola, he embraced forms of veneration that clearly had pagan origins, including animal sacrifice.[170] The congregation of Victricius of Rouen, when received the relics of Gervasius and Protasius from Ambrose, greeted the holy relics with dance.[171] These bishops, just as Augustine, were well aware about the spiritual needs of their congregation, and they allowed those forms filter through the profane world. As *Letter 22* demonstrates, Augustine understood the needs of his people, therefore he did not forbid the traditional forms of veneration in case of private burials, nor speak against them. All he did was to speak about the perils of consuming too much wine, and insisted that such occasions did not help the salvation of the souls. However, as opposed to Paulinus and Victricius, Augustine acted with full episcopal authority in the case of martyrs. The debate with his congregation concerning the funeral banquets on the feasts of martyrs shows that this authority was not unquestionable, and the power of Augustine over the Christian public had its limits. As a further problem, he had to protect his teaching on martyrs against the Donatists. Augustine's repeated warnings

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[168] For other example, see *Sermo* 273. 3, PL 38 coll. 1249-50; on the feast of Fructuosus.

[169] *Sermo* 311.5. PL 38 coll. 1415-16, "Istum tam sanctum locum, ubi iacet tam sancti Martyris corpus, sicut meminerunt multi qui habent aetatem; locum, inquam, tam sanctum invaserat pestilentia et petulantia saltatorum. Per totam noctem cantabantur hic nefaria, et cantantibus saltabatur. Quando voluit Dominus per sanctum fratrem nostrum episcopum vestrum, ex quo hic coeperunt sanctae vigiliae celebrari, illa pestis aliquantulum reluctata, postea cessit diligentiae, erubuit sapientiae."

[170] Dennis Trout, "Christianizing the Nolan Countryside: Animal Sacrifice at the Tomb of St. Felix," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, no. 3 (1995): 281–98. The situation of Paulinus was different from Augustine: living in the rural countryside, Paulinus realized that Christianization there requires the acknowledgement of ancient traditions.

[171] MacMullen, *The Second Church*, 91.

against Donatist and their false martyrs imply that the members of his congregation participated in the veneration of Donatist martyrs.[172]

The cult that Augustine promoted was essentially ecclesiastical-communal, without a trace of pagan banquets or private access to holy relics. [173] The cult of martyrs promoted by the Church sought to severe traditions originating in private forms of commemoration. The new form of the cult of the martyrs was attached to the liturgy. While Augustine did not interfere with private cults, he sought to "cut off" the cult of the martyrs from the commemoration of the ordinary dead.

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[172] Victor Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques en Afrique chrétienne aux premiers siècles* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980), 235-38.
[173] Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques*, 197.

Conclusion

The distinction between private and public spheres in Christian burials and commemoration was gradually transformed by the bishops in Late Antiquity. This thesis concentrated on three bishops form the Latin West, who were powerful and well known even outside their territories, and compared their attitudes concerning the care of the dead. In studying the works and programs of Damasus of Rome, Augustine of Hippo and Ambrose of Milan, I found that while they did not involve directly into the private sphere, each had a different view of the proper Christian care for the dead.

In the private sphere, I studied the burial of the bishops' family members. Damasus promoted models of pious Christian life in the epitaphs of his mother and her sister. His epigram on Proiecta shows that his influence extended over the life of a family. Ambrose of Milan burying his brother invited the community to be his family and partake in the commemoration with him, incorporating the funeral speech into the liturgy. Damasus and Ambrose exploited personal grief in the framework of their program, promoting a new, Christian type of piety toward dead family members. Augustine was slightly different. His mother died in Ostia, a city that was a station on their way home, and way before Augustine became bishop. However, he embedded Monica's burial in his *Confessions,* as the dramatic climax after his conversion and this greatly contributed to the veneration of Monica as a saint in the centuries to come.

Personal examples meant to offer exemplary models of Christian burials. They also contribute to our understanding of the role of the bishops' family in the formation of episcopal authority. To promote their views, our bishops praised family members as role models for Christians. The descriptions of their pious lives supported the bishops' program to promote their ideas about proper Christian behavior. In this way, the personal family of the bishops became "accessible" to the entire Christian community. Involving their congregation into their private sphere, bishops found a new connection with their flock. Although the authority of bishops was limited in family affairs, they extended the meaning of family, when they exposed their personal loss to their community. This personal connection offered a further opportunity to form and promote the liturgical commemoration. However, the personal examples also reveal that they did not intend to enter directly into the matters of family.

While these three bishops offered an example of involving Christian community to their private sphere, and to be involved into the domestic affairs, they also attempted to set the boundaries of the private and the public in Christian context. The development of the cult of the martyrs required the special attention of the bishops, who took active role in the formation of the Christian public sphere. The debated issues, such as the funerary banquets also reveals that Christian communities were strongly attached to the ancient, pagan traditions. The cult of martyrs was a field where they could directly intervene. This intervention, however, served not the Christianization of the caretaking of the dead in general, rather the separation of the Christian public, and the affirmation of the authority of the bishop in it.

The importance of the local martyrs is well demonstrated in the program of Damasus and Ambrose. The shrines of local martyrs were under the care of the bishops, who involved the community into the veneration of the martyrs to promote them and to form unity and community. The shift from private commemoration to communal celebrations under the bishop's staff might have been problematic. While Damasus accepted traditional forms of

commemoration, but regulated which shrines are available for public, Ambrose excluded profane forms of the cult of the dead, prohibited noisy banquets and promoted solemn celebrations in the basilicas. In this process Augustine was the most radical. He followed in Ambrose's footsteps, in a less cooperative Church. The tension between reform and tradition made Augustine favor the complete separation of private cult of the dead and public martyr cult.

Although this thesis focused only to a limited area, the examination of other Latin bishops from the period would add further points to considerate. The dichotomy of public and private was well demonstrated in the three bishops whose commemorations of family members remained. However, involving other bishops, such as Paulinus of Nola or Victricius of Rouen would give an interesting insight into the various ways how bishops connected to their communities. A comparison with the Cappadocian Fathers would be worth pursuing, but it falls outside the limits of this thesis.

The attitudes of bishops to traditional Roman boundaries of private and public shows what they thought fit to transform in Christian practice. While the private sphere remained intact, the exemplary burials of their family members and the regulation of the communal veneration of the martyrs demonstrate how bishops extended their authority, and how they dealt with the needs of their community.

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