

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE END OF PAGAN TEMPLES IN ROMAN PALESTINE

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I am investigating fate of polytheist temples in Late Antique Roman Palestine, with a primary focus on the archaeological remains of the temples themselves. This focus is a deliberate effort to steer the conversation about “Christianization” and the “end of paganism” into the domain of empirical evidence. The inner religious states of individuals, and hence populations, confound efforts at quantification. Thus, this dissertation is instead an accounting of the fate of the public venues that were used by pagans, for specific ritual behavior that enhanced status, in what was the most significant part of the Empire in terms of the history of Christianity.

Ancient Palestine in the third and early fourth centuries was part of the normal Mediterranean pagan milieu. Cities such as Bet Shean, Aelia Capitolina, and Caesarea Maritima provide us with evidence for dozens of pagan temples. This study finds evidence for forty-four temples. There were certainly many more than those for which we have evidence. All of these pagan temples eventually went out of commission.

Only three temples in Palestine had endings that were remarkable enough to be preserved in the literary record. The ending of the rest was far less dramatic, if we even know about it. A combination of neglect, natural disaster, extended quarrying through time, and encroachment of ritual space by other buildings was significantly more common than more dramatic scenarios that involved overt social conflict.

What we hear from impassioned literary sources does not seem to be typical when compared with the archaeology. It might be hypothesized that an urban culture of enlightened indifference preferred to allow temples to linger and slip away, in an unremarkable fashion, rather than forcibly eliminate them.

THE END OF PAGAN TEMPLES IN ROMAN PALESTINE

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is for Kenneth Holum, to whom I owe tremendous debts that I will never be able to repay in full. It was an honor to work with him and he will be missed.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation gestated for an extended period of time, which might be reasonably common for grad students, but in this case it is also very sad. This is because my advisor, Kenneth Holum, passed away in the fall of 2017. Only a few chapters existed in draft form at that time. Dr. Holum had an incalculable formative influence on this project and on me. This dissertation has its origin in a long-running conversation between the two of us, ultimately contingent upon numbers that we did not have at our disposal at the time.

Completing my dissertation was difficult. I feel the utmost gratitude to my committee, Professors Hayim Lapin, Arthur Eckstein, Zeev Weiss, Johnathan Weisweiler, and Maxine Grossman, for seeing this project through with me. I cannot imagine having a better mentor, in terms of using quantitative methods for researching the history of Roman Palestine, than Dr. Lapin. My entire committee's help was vital, but his especially.

My family and loved ones allowed me to keep my human credentials through the entire process. Xavier Blair did this by permitting me to make up bedtime stories for him.

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Chapter I **Delimiting the Study**

My dissertation is an investigation of the fate of polytheist temples in Late Antique Roman Palestine. I aim to emphasize the material evidence and quantifiable data, thus laying the groundwork for statistical analysis of the topic. Underlying this focus is the question of the social forces that regulate the change of deep-seated ideology. This chapter will outline the parameters of my research, theoretical and practical. The theoretical parameters concern the problematic nature of measuring religious belief. The parameters that I have established grant an empirical perspective and suggest some of the social forces that permitted or inhibited the destruction of pagan temples. The goal has been to create a data-set by collecting together what we know about the temples found in third century Palestine, evaluating how and when these temples were destroyed, and literally counting and comparing the results. Out of the forty-four temples accounted for by this study, the majority appear to have passed away in a fashion that is best characterized as unremarkable.

For the purposes of my dissertation I will freely use both “paganism” and “polytheism” to refer to traditional ancient religious practices. “Polytheism,” a term imported from anthropology, might be marginally preferable. Conventional usage, however, often still employs “paganism.” “Hellene” was how urban pagans in the East were known in Late Antiquity. All three terms are problematic in modern usage for a variety of reasons. The common difficulty is the implication that the traditional religions of the Mediterranean were unified in a formal sense.¹ The reader needs to be alert to the fact that the historical forces that molded our language failed to give us the accurate and

¹ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15-32.

succinct terminology that we need, and that there is no good alternative option possessing recognizable currency.

Paganism was most certainly a deep-seated ideology even in Palestine, renowned as the place of origin for remarkable monotheistic faiths. The ideology of paganism mandated a set of religious practices, (sacrifice) for which temples served as specialized, large-scale, and public venues. Going into the fourth century, the religious landscape of the Empire, including Palestine, was full of pagan temples. To virtually the same degree as elsewhere, the social hierarchy of Palestine was dominated by an elite group that used temples to justify and enhance their position. The many religions of the ancient world were entrenched through millennia of committed practice by the population-at-large. Yet, the collection of various pagan systems of public practice that had held ancient society together was replaced within a century, in the most visible places, by the public practices of a single religion, Christianity. This was remarkable.

I have adopted a tight geographical focus on Palestine, placing the birthplace of both Christ and the Christian religion into the spotlight. Palestine was exceptional in terms of how Christians defined their own identity. Further, it was the place of execution for many Christians under Diocletian. For these reasons, a unique set of circumstances surely regulated the treatment of pagan temples in Palestine. Focusing on the place of origin of the religion isolates a potential special case, one that is presumably the “most” special case, in terms of this treatment. Given the special relationship between Christians and Palestine, one might expect the political ascendancy of Christianity in the fourth century to have resulted in a ferocious backlash against temples, in an effort to cleanse the Holy Land. Or perhaps we would expect street-level violence, as protestors and

counter-protestors clashed over the fate of monuments dedicated to a discredited and hated central institution and ideology.

There is a well-known literary record from antiquity that paints the end of paganism in such colors. Sozomen, Mark the Deacon, and Eusebius give a glimpse of the end of paganism that involves, or implies, social conflict. Gaza, Alexandria, parts of Syria, and probably Jerusalem were among the most prominent places where violence, or the potential for such violence, was manifested in the literary record. The result was the ritualistic destruction of temples. These authors recorded a very specific means of destroying a pagan temple. Both the temple of Zeus Marnas in Gaza, and the so-called temple of Aphrodite in Jerusalem, were eliminated by razing them to their foundations, disposing of the building materials in a way meant to render them harmless (as if they had been contaminated by a physical substance), and building a church on the spot. Arguably, there is some evidence for this way of dealing with temples to be seen in the archaeological record of other sites in Palestine, especially at Caesarea Maritima. Similar evidence suggests commonalities in the social environment.

The point of this dissertation is to use quantifiable evidence to place these occurrences into the context of what was normal in the region. It will contrast tension-filled scenarios with what constituted typical practice for local cities in the midst of a fundamental change. After we count the number of temples that have been found in Palestine, evaluating the best estimate of when and how they met their fate, it will be seen that the “Gaza treatment” was in fact rare. The implication is that forces, such as political pragmatism, caused delay and softened the implementation of policies. Most of the temples in my study region succumbed in the second half of the fourth century, with a

distinct increase in evidence for destruction dating to around 400 CE. Most temples, however, typically disappeared in unspectacular fashion, unlike the temples in the stories that we get from Eusebius and Mark the Deacon. In fact, those stories, from the 330s and early 400s respectively, bracket the process chronologically.

This dissertation will consider the archaeological remains of the temples themselves, and the context for these remains that is provided from other sources (often literary), when available. This dissertation is not precisely about “Christianization,” “the end of paganism,” or “the end of sacrifice.” It is instead an accounting, primarily derived from archaeology, of the fate of public venues that were used by pagans, in what was the most significant part of the Empire in terms of the theology, psychology, and history of Christianity. My perspective is constrained by the available evidence and concentrates on the material remains for public practices and should not be construed as commenting directly on intangible aspects of religiosity.

Social Capital and Public Piety

The social function of temples provides strict parameters which circumscribe my study’s contribution to understanding these other processes. One function of temples had been to transform money into social capital through visible display of religiosity. When the public venues for this process cease to exist, we can say that their particular function in ancient society was no longer being met in the customary way.

Following ideas implicit in the thought of Holum, Saradi, and MacMullen, I assert that temples provided a venue for the acquisition of social capital through public display

of religious sentiment.² It was a reciprocal exchange system. It seems to be inherent to the way paganism functioned in the Greco-Roman world. It also had a clear Christian analog. Helen Saradi describes the Christian version, as if it were a form of resume-building for saints and bishops. Nick Hopkins applies the concept of social capital in a similar way, when discussing modern religious groups, in his study of twenty-first century Muslim identity and social cohesiveness.³ People want to be seen “being religious” and they expect to receive the social benefits that accrue. *Pietas* is the Latin word that best describes this particular form of social capital. In Greek one might use εὐσέβεια.

Further, individuals could be caught in a dilemma resulting from a conflict between their chosen religion and the available means of earning social capital. A pagan in a Christian city, or a Christian in a pagan city, would find that a potentially troublesome boundary limited their social advancement. The Elvira Canons and Jerome’s *Life of Hilarion* (see below) both indicate that such conflicts existed, and their resolution via compromise points to an explanation for how cities were able to become Christian without causing undo social stress. I would conjecture that most temples in Palestine were ignored, rather than demolished, and that this has to do with the bouleutic class of fourth century cities avoiding their own potential internal disputes by ignoring the topic of temples.

² Kenneth Holum, *personal communication*, University of Maryland, 2010; Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 38-42; Helen Saradi-Mendelovici, “Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy in Later Byzantine Centuries,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44 (1990): 47-61

³ Nick Hopkins, “Religion and Social Capital: Identity matters,” *Community and Applied Social Psychology* 21 (2011): 528-40.

Pierre Bourdieu, of course, is famous for popularizing the concept of social capital as an intangible value that is produced through social interaction.⁴ Bronislaw Malinowski created one of anthropology's seminal analyses of a currency-free reciprocal gift exchange system.⁵ Seneca, in fact, clearly described the function of reciprocity in Rome as an aspect of patronage.⁶ He is certainly not our only ancient source for this type of behavior. Jon Lendon suggests that the best way to understand Roman politics, and (in his opinion) Mediterranean culture as a whole is by considering the role of concepts like *dignitas* and τιμή in the context of reciprocal social exchange systems.⁷ Moses Finley famously argued that these systems were of more importance in the ancient Mediterranean than were strictly financial transactions, on account of the fact that they increased the social status of the participants.⁸

Social capital in Roman reciprocal exchange systems was an intangible form of credit. It was granted by one party to another as acknowledgment of specific behavior,

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1-32.

⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: Routledge, 1922).

⁶ Seneca *De Beneficiis* 6.35.3. This is the tip of the iceberg. Cicero wrote much on these types of exchanges, too. See *Epistulae ad Familiares* 7.17.1. for evidence that that blatantly visible profit was an inappropriate perversion of a favor.

⁷ Jon Lendon, *Empire of Honor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Schwartz has recently questioned whether Jews understood the concept of honor in the same way as Romans and Greeks. Although Harris claims that Lendon is inexact in his application of the concept of "honor" as social capital, Schwartz maintains the viability of Lendon's analysis of the system. Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?: Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); W.V. Harris, "The Mediterranean and Ancient History," in W.V. Harris (ed.), *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27-29.

⁸ Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). The issue of quantifying how dependent the Mediterranean world was on reciprocal exchange, relative to any other type of economic activity (such as long-distance trade, rent collection, or agricultural production, etc.) is well-known as an open question.

favors, or gifts. It could be “cashed in” later, in ways that defied the mathematical proportionality of modern economic exchanges. Thus, Seneca describes a *beneficium* as a “*thesaurus* to be dug up later” because the value was intended to both escalate and be concealed.⁹ Cicero points out that these transactions served to strengthen social ties: “ex beneficiis ultro et citro datis acceptis, quae et mutual et gratia dum sunt... firma devinciuntur societate.”¹⁰ Phoebe Bowditch points out that such transactions commonly formed part of legitimating discourse, as in the case of Horace’s “Augustan propaganda” written out of apparent gratitude for the gift of an estate.¹¹

These are all aspects of Karl Polanyi’s substantivist theory of an “embedded” economy, a premodern economy that prioritizes cultural values other than calculable financial gain.¹² Many, if not most, premodern societies relied upon some form of such exchanges as a means of generating social cohesiveness.¹³

Visible religiosity, and the benefits that could accrue from it, followed principles similar to these other reciprocal exchange systems. The process involved the expenditure of money. This was a well-known aspect of pagan religion, a part of public liturgies and euergetism. Public sacrifices occurring at (primarily) urban temples permitted those who funded and controlled them the chance to demonstrate their legitimacy and beneficence as leaders by spending lavishly and supporting the community. Paul Veyne showed the

⁹ Seneca *Dialogi* 7.24.2.

¹⁰ Cicero *De Officiis* 1.56.

¹¹ Phoebe Bowditch, *Horace and the Gift Economy of Patronage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹² Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

¹³ Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Aldine, 1972).

relevance of euergetism throughout a long span of time in much of the ancient Mediterranean world.¹⁴

Public sacrifice was an important form of wealth redistribution, likewise contributing to the stability of society. Ramsay MacMullen observes the semi-parasitic quality of pagan attendees, who probably received much of their dietary animal protein from temple sacrifices funded by others.¹⁵ F.S. Naiden has investigated the limits of meat distribution, and its role in ingratiating the recipients, in Athens.¹⁶ Presumably, some type of strategy was employed by the elites of similar large cities, so as to maximize the effect of finite budgets. Cattle, for the purpose of sacrifice, were often raised on the land-holdings of individual Greek sanctuaries and were available for purchase.¹⁷ The reputation of an individual was also enhanced by funding the construction of temples, thus providing places where this activity could occur. The public sacrifices that were performed in those places reinforced the vertical ties between social strata as well as horizontal connections. These traits undoubtedly followed Greco-Roman cult to the Near East, if they were not already typical of indigenous pagan traditions.

Several ancient Christian writers commented on this aspect of paganism, in the provinces of the Late Empire. Of course, they found sacrifice to be revolting.

Nevertheless, Tertullian, writing in late second or early third century North Africa, tells

¹⁴ Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses* (London: Penguin Press, 1990).

¹⁵ R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (1981), 38-42.

¹⁶ F.S. Naiden, "Blessed are the Parasites," in C. Faraone and F.S. Naiden (ed.), *Greek and Roman Animal Sacrifice: Ancient Victims, Modern Observers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 55-83.

¹⁷ Jeremy McInerney, *The Cattle of the Sun* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 146-95.

us of the lavish feasts held in honor of Serapis.¹⁸ Lactantius, writing in the early fourth century, tells us about Galerius' mother, Romula. A committed, generous pagan, she offered daily sacrifices, and daily sacrificial feasts, to members of her community in Dacia.¹⁹

Pagan temples allowed elites to translate wealth into visible religiosity, and visible religiosity into social capital, on a large scale. Cultural elites funded the system, and they wanted to be seen making that system work. This was a clear divergence from the more typical pattern of “cloaking” financial transactions within the embedded economy.²⁰ Visibility and performance were key to the benefits that would accrue from piety. If religious behavior was not seen, there could be no credit given. The granting of social capital via religiosity was meant to be a public exchange.

There is an oft-referenced inscription from Pompeii that illustrates the mechanism by which the system worked. Shortly after the earthquake of 62 CE damaged the temple of Isis, a wealthy freedman paid for its reconstruction on behalf of his six-year-old child:

N(umerius) Popidius N(umeri) f(ilius) Celsinus / aedem Isidis terrae motu
conlapsam / a fundamento p(ecunia) s(ua) restituit hunc decuriones ob
liberalitatem / cum esset annorum sex(s) ordini suo gratis adlegerunt²¹

Presumably Celsinus' father, Numerius Ampliatus, actually controlled the family purse-strings. As a freedman, Ampliatus had a glass-ceiling that restricted his social advancement. He could not lawfully become a *decurion*. It thus seems likely that

¹⁸ Tertullian *Apologeticus* 39.15.

¹⁹ Lactantius *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 11.1.

²⁰ Cicero *Epistulae ad Familiares* 7.17.1; Seneca *Dialogi* 7.24.2. Seneca describes gifts as a form of hidden treasure. Cicero chastises a friend for unashamedly profiting from a favor.

²¹ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X 846.

Ampliatius wanted his progeny to receive the credit for the money that had been spent for the goddess, credit which Ampliatius could not receive himself. The result was the increased social standing of the son, and elevation to the decurion order. This would not have worked if the donation was not known to other people, or if the inscription were not seen by other people.

Public pagan ritual was an integral component of the governmental operation of ancient cities. The enlightenment notion of “separation of church and state” would have sounded dangerous and ridiculous to ancient ears. Thus, euergetism could be a route to advancement in the state. An anecdote from Livy demonstrates this aspect of the system in pagan Rome, by conversely depicting its dissolution during a time of political upheaval in the early days of the Republic, in the early fifth century BCE. A competition between consuls to officiate over a dedication to Mercury, including the important aspect of grain distribution to the populace, ended poorly for both. A dual vote of no-confidence, and the election of a no-name centurion as the officiant in their place, was the result of the consuls’ extreme lack of popularity.²²

The consuls in this case were denied the utilization of a traditional public display of polytheist religiosity, an expression of their illegitimacy as politicians in the view of the voting public. The voting public refused to grant the consuls the ability to earn the expected credit. A similar situation pertained in most ancient cities, with public cult as a means for elites to establish legitimacy. This dimension of polytheism was explicitly public, consisted of the performance of special behavior in typically urban settings, and

²² Livy *Ad Urbe Condita* 2.27.5-7.

was funded by communities and community notables, such as the *curiales*. Their reputation was enhanced by their actions.

Further, the anecdote from Livy demonstrates the ability of the general public to exercise power within such a system, and defy the leadership of authority figures. In order for this type of euergetism to work there needed to be both a performer and a cooperative audience. The scenario points to the importance of the public-at-large in the process. Social capital, at least as Livy and his audience thought about it, had to be granted in a reciprocal transaction. It could not simply be taken.

This particular social dynamic of pagan religion, its function in the generation of social capital, its role in the creation of political authority, as well as the responsibilities associated with it, were in fact picked up by Christianity. Livy's insight into the role of public pressure in the process was just as relevant in the system as it was understood by Christians. Paul Veyne and Peter Brown have both made the common-sense assertion that there was such a thing as Christian euergetism, and that it followed principles similar to those of its pagan counterpart.²³ This makes sense, because Christians had in fact been semi-willing participants in many aspects of pagan society, and the nature of ancient social relations required these types of exchanges. The system was a social habit, Christians knew how it worked, and it had advantages for them as well. Christian ideology, changing pagan ideology, and the interposition of the bishops were some of the factors that changed this system in Late Antiquity.

Jerome's account of the life of Hilarion, and Mark the Deacon's account of the life of Porphyry, show Christians competing with pagans in shared forms of euergetism.

²³ P. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses* (1990); Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 26-31.

Jerome tells us that financing the festival of Zeus Marnas was a *functio publica* for a *municeps* of Gaza, presumably regardless of their personal religious beliefs.²⁴ This is a detail woven into an anecdote that Jerome relates about a Christian chariot owner that Hilarion encountered. Italicus, the chariot owner, was incapable of withdrawing from the horse races in Gaza, despite the saint's disapproval of the triviality of the racetrack.²⁵ Italicus claimed that he was compelled by his social position and political authority to race, and Hilarion apparently accepted the man's argument! Hilarion then worked a miracle to help the charioteer beat his pagan opponents.

Italicus' dilemma was certainly a typical problem for upper-class Christians who were competing for social capital in the same social and political realm as pagan colleagues. Hal Drake identifies several sections of the Elvira Canons that prescribe proper procedure for readmitting Christians to communion, individuals who back-slid into pagan practices on account of their government positions.²⁶ The date for the Synod that produced these canons is unclear, scholarly consensus places it either before or immediately after Diocletian's persecution. The bishop Hosius, a key advisor of Constantine on Christian matters, was from the part of Spain that hosted the Synod of Elvira, and he may very well have been involved with the proceedings. This has certain implications in terms of understanding Constantinian religious policy, because his key advisor was someone who probably had experience negotiating the issue of "Italicus'

²⁴ Jerome *Vita Hilarionis* 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ H. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops* (2000), 224.

dilemma.” A policy of consensus building, rather than ideological purity, might be expected to result from their association.

Raymond Van Dam notes that the Bishop Porphyry was a rival to, and eventually replaced, a number of the local pagan elites who fled Gaza.²⁷ Porphyry came to finance civic festivals just as the missing pagan elites would have. We are told that he paid for and orchestrated city-wide Easter gatherings that also attracted people from outside of Gaza.²⁸ Although sacrifices were outlawed and temples closed, components such as the celebrations that these elites funded could be reproduced in Christian form, continuing to provide some measure of social cohesiveness. Christianity selectively dismembered parts of the system, and the physical corollary of this was the treatment of temples.

Monumental buildings in central urban areas (churches) were also highly significant venues for reputation-enhancing religious behavior on the part of Christians. Bishops, who controlled the re-distribution of charitable donations to the church, earned for themselves much of the social prestige that accrued to the generous. Liebeschuetz considers the bishops to have insinuated themselves into the ranks of the notable men of cities, a group of individuals often known as *decuriones*, *curiales* or *proteuontes*.²⁹ This was also the class of men who would have formed the *boule*, and normally held the ability to earn credit through euergetism.

²⁷ Raymond Van Dam, “From Paganism to Christianity at Late Antique Gaza,” *Viator* 16 (1985): 12.

²⁸ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 92. Mark does not specify whether church funds were used, or if Porphyry used his private wealth (supposedly he gave all of that away), or if there was some other source.

²⁹ J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137-68.

Libanius made an oft-quoted assertion that this class had been avoiding their responsibilities.³⁰ A piece of legislation from the Theodosian Code also suggests that this was a problem. The law of 353 CE was presumably issued by Constantius II, Gallus, or Julian. It addresses the problem of civilians achieving honorary military rank, and thus avoiding their financial obligations as *decurions*.³¹

Perhaps the bishops were filling a vacuum. Nevertheless, other powerful people, most notably the Imperial family, could still claim large amounts of credit for public piety. Kenneth Holum called attention to the notable role of empresses who wielded the type of Christian authority necessary to do this. Eudocia, for instance, was known for financing churches in Palestine.³² Holum noted that Helena, Constantine's mother, was the prototype for this sort of figure.

Eusebius tells us that Helena was granted an imperial burial, and the title *Augusta Basilida*, on account of her observable religious actions. Her eligibility for imperial honors was a direct result of her acts of visible religiosity: "She allowed herself to be seen continually making personal visits to the Church of God."³³ Eusebius' evaluation of her was largely a response to her visits to holy sites in Palestine, where the Imperial lady and Constantine mandated the construction of famous churches. The construction of churches that followed her was a Christian form of euergetism on an Imperial scale. Kenneth Holum saw continuity between Helena's visits, and building mandates, and the

³⁰ Libanius *Orationes* 49.8-11.

³¹ *Codex Theodosianus* 7.21.2.

³² Kenneth Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 217-28.

³³ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.45-47.

pre-existing precedent for empire-scale euergetism.³⁴ The construction activities undertaken as part of an imperial *adventus*, such as those often made by Hadrian, were a pattern followed by Helena.

The emperor Justinian clearly expected his church-building program to result in an increase in his own personal prestige.³⁵ He was manipulating a modified version of the same *quid pro quo* system that we saw Numerius employ, over 500 years earlier in Pompeii. Religion-based euergetism was part of the standard functioning of Mediterranean society for a very long time, even if the specific mode of behavior changed.

Peter Brown demonstrates that Christianity developed ways to divert the influence of the middle-ranks of the powerful. Small, regular, and anonymous donations from groups became more prevalent.³⁶ Eusebius' testimony in the *Vita Constantini*, which will be considered in Chapter Four, claims that Constantine was responsible for increasing the involvement of bishops in the system of accruing social capital.

I would also argue that the demolition of the temples in Gaza, Jerusalem, and other places are best interpreted in terms of a transaction of social capital. Although euergetism would be an awkward term to use for this, both Constantine and Porphyry gained credit for their public displays of destructive activity. The churches that these individuals built, on the other hand, more comfortably conform to the normal sense of euergetism. Both Constantine and Porphyry hoped for the same intangible, reputation-

³⁴ Kenneth Holum, "Hadrian and St. Helena: Imperial Travel and the Origins of Christian Holy Land Pilgrimage," in Robert Ousterhout (ed.), *The Blessings of Pilgrimage* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 66-81.

³⁵ Procopius *De Aedificiis* 5.6.

³⁶ Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 365.

enhancing credit that Numerius had wanted his son to receive. Following ideas implicit in the thoughts of Holum on this topic, I would suggest that Porphyry exchanged his credit for the influence needed to convert people in Gaza. I do not think anyone really knows what Constantine hoped to gain, but I will argue that part of the answer had to do with his official rhetoric concerning his conflict with Licinius.

Although this dissertation speaks to the process of Christianization, and despite the preceding discussion, my focus is on the role of pagan temples in the Late Antique dynamic of euergetism, and in particular on the extinction of temples and public pagan cult. This approach was presaged by Ramsey MacMullen, who noted that the Christianization of the Empire could conversely be thought of as the extended extinction of polytheism.³⁷ A change in the mode of earning social capital is the thing which this dissertation has the capacity to measure.

A Working Definition of “Temple”

The scale of the process of earning social capital constitutes the main yardstick that I have used for defining what were (and were not) temples. In keeping with the focus on social capital in the previous section, my determination is an evaluation of the scale and public visibility of religious behavior. Temples were the primary venues for the accumulation of social capital through the process of large-scale public sacrifice. In terms of this study, temples are taken to be monumental stone buildings, purpose-built for religious purposes, of Greco-Roman and local Semitic architectural design.

³⁷ Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 1-5.

Locations such as sacred caves and shrines, *kalybae*, *nymphaeae*, or even baths were certainly full of pagan imagery and could have a sacred significance not easily separated from whatever other functions they served. There might even have been a set of sacrificial practices associated with such places. Leaving a biscuit for the *lares* at a household shrine, for instance, and purchasing a hecatomb of cattle for a festival of Mercury are really two separate things, however. The primary difference between the two types of religious behavior is a matter of public visibility. There is no significant audience to see, or be impressed, by the former personal and private act.

The difficulty of clearly distinguishing between sacred and secular spaces within an ancient city is also resolved, from the point of view of my study, with standards established by architectural historians, and the commonly-used result of analysis of language used for various types of structures in the ancient sources.³⁸ A doorframe with a special inscription might be the site of small personal sacrifices, for instance, but it will never be described as a *templum*.

Presumably the community-oriented nature of a religious acts undertaken in a temple increased the efficiency of accumulating social capital. Without always knowing the specifics of how sacrifices were performed (or even, especially at a late date, if they were performed at all), we at least know that a public temple was supposed to benefit the community as a whole, rather than an exclusive sector of the population. With this collection of factors in mind, a *temenos* without a temple should in fact be considered as a temple. A shrine for competitors at a hippodrome or arena should not.

³⁸John Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), 213-31.

Geographical Limits

The boundaries of my study conform more-or-less to what had been the Roman province of Syria Palaestina, established around 136 CE in the aftermath of the second Jewish revolt, extending roughly from Ascalon in the south to Kedesh in the north. I will also include the portions of the later provinces of Palaestina Prima and Secunda, established around 390 CE, that stretched further to the north and the east.³⁹ This area includes several Decapolis cities, such as Scythopolis and Hippos, although I leave out cities in Arabia with Nabataean roots, such as Petra, which became part of Third Palestine. Iturea forms the northern limit of my study, Gaza and the Negev the southern.

I have tried to confine my study to regions with a similar cultural substrate, partly as an aid for interpretation. Thus I exclude the Hauran, and do not look a significant distance into Trans-Jordan. The nearby cult sites on Mount Hermon, for instance, are also left out. Our best evidence suggests that Iturean religious traditions in that region maintained a distinctive character for a long time.⁴⁰ “Paganism,” anywhere in the Mediterranean, typically had a notable local and idiosyncratic aspect. A convention of consistency was supplied by Hellenism and Roman imperialism, causing many local traditions to take on aspects of Greco-Roman cult. Nevertheless, the intention of my study is to stay close to the place of origin for Christianity.

My limits are defined by administrative boundaries, and to a certain extent this is an expedience for me, because such boundaries have no necessary relationship to the patterning of human behavior on the ground. On the other hand, when this behavior is

³⁹ Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land* (New York: Holt: Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 95-150.

⁴⁰ Shimon Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites on Mount Hermon, Israel: Iturean Culture in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1993), 25-27.

modified by administrative policies from the Imperial bureaucracy, the boundaries take on added significance. A particular government official for instance, hypothetically inclined for or against Christians, would have increased influence within their circumscribed region.

The tight focus of this dissertation is also an acknowledgment of the complexity of the process by which these temples were eliminated. Different historical events propelled the process in various places. Thus, a regional study has some hope of capturing this complexity and making a meaningful contribution to an understanding of the whole.

In terms of important examples, I reserve the right to be less than absolutely rigid about geography. First and Second Palestine provide a convenient, appropriate, and significant unit for the purpose of drawing examples. When useful information can be obtained from sites that are slightly outside of those limits, I see no reason not to make use of it. Boundaries, even if they are loose, also provide some potential for approximate quantification.

Belief and Conversion

There was clearly a relationship between the end of pagan temples and the process of Christianization. As Roman society embraced Christianity, pagan religious buildings came to be perceived as irrelevant or dangerous, and we would reasonably conclude (from the plentiful evidence) that society, as a result, abandoned or eliminated them. Nevertheless, this dissertation is about quantifying that evidence, rather than tracking the process of conversion. Conversely, I am documenting “the end of

paganism” in Palestine, but only in terms of a set of practices that had widespread and visible social relevance, when performed in specific buildings, the fate of which can be evaluated using quantifiable evidence. The conclusions that might be drawn from my research properly inhabits this tight set of parameters.

Recognizing these constraints is an acknowledgment of the various well-known epistemological caveats associated with the topic of ancient belief systems. These caveats come to a head in one issue: Historians cannot accurately gauge the inner religiosity of a single individual, let alone that of a population, because we rely upon evidence which is inherently an outward manifestation. This is true of any evidence, not just the archaeological remains of temples. The focus of my dissertation is a purposeful response to this situation.

Clifford Geertz once significantly described religion as a set of “moods and motivations” brought about by “symbols.”⁴¹ It is easier to document changing symbols. In this case, the symbols are temples. Changing moods must be inferred. A model for conversion that focuses on the interior states of individuals is unhelpful when considering archaeology. It is also of debatable merit when considering the literary record and other forms of evidence, given that written sources can never be a clear, unfiltered look into the human psyche.

Geertz’s model has utility as a starting point for the purposes of this discussion, but it is evident that his model was based upon less-complicated societies with minimal social stratification. Talal Asad points to the effect of power in structuring the set of Geertzian symbols.⁴² This a useful reminder when applying Geertz’ model to antiquity,

⁴¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87-125.

because of the highly significant effect of vertical ties in the ancient social hierarchy. Geertz's model does not take into account either the amount of influence that could be exerted along these vertical ties, or the ways that religion could serve as a device for creating and justifying the boundaries within the social hierarchy. Following Asad, both of these principles are inherent to how I have understood the social function of temples. Further, Geertz's model is a static snapshot of society, frozen in the anthropological present. My study is clearly about how one such set of symbols went out of use, often upon application of the power of authority figures. Peter Brown has propelled Geertz's analysis in this direction, although Brown focuses on the process of change in terms of Geertzian moods.⁴³ I affirm that symbols are more helpful when dealing with material evidence and quantifiable data.

Many and various intellectual attempts to understand belief, and changing belief, are unfortunately confounded by evidence-based inquiry. "Belief" might in fact be an irrelevant category of analysis for ancient religion. It is certainly a difficult category for analysis, particularly at the level of large populations. Further, if we were to take the conventional approach to "conversion," as an exchange of one belief system for another, we only compound the problem. The troublesome aspects of the conventional approaches reaffirm my choice to focus on temples as the venues for specific, observable practices.

The idea of conversion as an inner individual experience is a concept that goes back to William James, who considered it to be the resolution of an inner crisis, and that

⁴² Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz," *Man* 18 (1983), 237-59.

⁴³ Peter Brown, *Authority and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

“belief” was something supplied automatically by the human subconscious mind to protect someone from the hopelessness of faithlessness.⁴⁴ E.R. Dodds and Michael Rostovtzeff both proposed that something like James’ crisis of faithlessness had been brought about, on a mass scale, by the political and economic turmoil of the third century.⁴⁵

Such once popular arguments have been convincingly rejected, most notably by Peter Brown.⁴⁶ Polytheism was a religious system that had functioned perfectly well for millennia. The depressed economy, frequent political coups, and barbarian invasions of the third century are simply not enough to explain why such an entrenched tradition would fail.

It is an apparent common-sense assertion to say that some, and probably many, ancient Christian converts did in fact undergo an inwardly meaningful conversion. The personal testimony of individuals such as Augustine, as portrayed in the *Confessions*, is a perennial favorite example in this regard. Arthur Darby Nock had the experience of someone like Augustine in mind when he influentially pronounced conversion to be a “reorientation” of an individual, a “deliberate turning away from indifference” with a sense that “the old was wrong and the new is right.”⁴⁷ Even in the case of an individual such as Augustine, however, we are dealing with a written self-presentation that has been crafted for rhetorical purposes, by a person whose experiences are unlikely to be typical.

⁴⁴ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Collins, 1901), 194-218.

⁴⁵ E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 100; M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Cheshire: Biblio-Moser, 1926), 427.

⁴⁶ Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 5.

⁴⁷ Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 7.

Henri Marrou also finds the solitary experiences of such intellectuals who convert to be unrepresentative.⁴⁸ We have to acknowledge that real belief, even for someone like Augustine, remains an incommensurable interior state.

Massimo Leone suggests that Nock's "reorientation of belief" is a psychological defense mechanism, a response to perceived theological conundrums.⁴⁹ This may have been a factor in the conversions of intellectual people who were paying attention to the interchange of theological ideas between, say, Neoplatonists and Christian apologists. That was probably not most people, although attentive congregations might very well have had a vested interest in such issues.

Daniel Schwartz points to the comfort of belonging to a group as a powerful force encouraging conversion among catechumens.⁵⁰ This was a form of social conformity along horizontal lines within the social hierarchy. Van Dam observes that new religions are embraced when they are seen as "more useful, more appealing, more persuasive" in a particular social context.⁵¹

Frank Trombley argues that the perceived failure of traditional polytheist magical practices to cure people was one factor that drove them to Christianity. Trombley thinks that a meaningful reorientation of individuals did occur on the occasions when Christian miraculous healing worked (presumably by coincidence).⁵² Although Trombley does not

⁴⁸ Henri Irénée Marrou, "Synesius of Cyrene and Alexandrian Neoplatonism," in Arnaldo Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 128.

⁴⁹ Massimo Leone, *Religious Conversion and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), 171-73.

⁵⁰ Daniel L. Schwartz, *Paideia and Cult* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 71-92.

⁵¹ R. Van Dam, "From Paganism to Christianity," 4.

⁵² F. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion* (1993), 2:167.

suggest this, we might postulate that converts who accepted Christian healing found their new Christian social group to be advantageous, and that forces like peer-pressure caused the Christian miracles to be perceived as superior.

Tepper and Di Segni note an unusual mosaic inscription from a third century *domus ecclesiae* near Legio which speaks to the importance of social context. The inscription conspicuously neglected to ask God to remember the donors. Instead, the women who made the donation make an appeal directed to the reader, and thus by extension the Christian community using the building:

Μνημονεύσατε
Πριμίλλης καὶ Κυρι -
ακῆς καὶ Δωροθέας,
ἔτι δὲ καὶ Χρήστην.⁵³

Whatever other attraction Christianity held for converts, group membership and conformity had a highly significant role.

Hal Drake suggests that religious ideas should be thought of as existing within a marketplace.⁵⁴ Perhaps people were drawn to Christianity not because they had lost faith in the traditional practices, but because Christianity offered a similar deal with added benefits. Peter Brown points to the role of Christian charity towards a previously overlooked part of society, the rock-bottom indigent poor, as a new form of Christian euergetism that drew people to the religion.⁵⁵ Both Nock and Robin Lane Fox point to a

⁵³ Yotam Tepper and Leah Di Segni, *A Christian Prayer Hall of the Third Century CE at Kefar 'Othnay, Legio* (Jerusalem, Israel Antiquities Authority, 2006), 41-42. The authors note the unusual status of this building as state property and a home for army officers. It is also an example of Christianity taking root in suburban areas before moving into cities and taking over the highly visible public realm of competition between social elites.

⁵⁴ H. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops* (2000), 93-98.

⁵⁵ P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership* (1992), 26-31.

number of features of Christian theology that may have persuaded converts on an emotional level.⁵⁶ People were undoubtedly attracted to things that they were taught about Christian belief, such as the Easter message. I am not sure how we can gauge the appeal of such a thing relative to any other factor that made Christianity popular.

One might speculate about what would bring new religions into the marketplace, broaden the marketplace, or make a new religion especially attractive. I suspect that there was nothing new in Late Antiquity about any of these hypothetical factors that was not true of the pre-existing religious world. It is useful to point out that Cicero already perceived the religious world to be a saturated marketplace.⁵⁷

Drake observes that stories about miracles, particularly the battlefield miracles of Constantine and Theodosius I, were deployed by Christians to prove that “God wanted the religion of the Empire to be Christianity.”⁵⁸ These are examples of good salesmanship. One factor to consider is that Christians may have been better at this than the competition.

Hal Drake and Rodney Stark are among several proponents of a sociological model for conversion. They suggest that converts come to pinpoint a singular “moment” of conversion in retrospect. According to this model, converts revise their own memories of what had in fact been a gradual process. The end-point of conversion is solidified by a new and reassuring social context, provided by a group of peers. Rodney Stark suggests, based upon analogy with historically new religions such as Mormonism, that new

⁵⁶ Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 330.

⁵⁷ Cicero *De Natura Deorum* 1.50, 2.63, 3.53-61.

⁵⁸ Hal Drake, *A Century of Miracles: Christians, Pagans, Jews, and the Supernatural, 312-410* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 19.

religions primarily spread horizontally through social networks of peers.⁵⁹ This last point may be of questionable applicability to my study, because of the differences between modern social networks and ancient social networks. Ancient networks were notable for the strength of vertical social relationships. Powerful individuals in Antiquity could utilize highly significant means of compulsion, not available to the groups that Stark considers. A neighborhood proselytizer cannot bring in the Imperial army, for instance. Stark also suggests that the children of ancient Christian converts made up a large percentage of the demographic growth of the religion. Hopkins affirms Stark's demographic assessment and analogy with modern proselytization, with the understanding that the impression of Christianity spreading among slaves and women was exaggerated by anti-Christian rhetoric.⁶⁰

Allegiance to authority figures was a significant factor in conversion, and Drake's religious marketplace was heavily influenced by powerful individuals like the Emperor. Further, "belief" is not necessarily the relevant concept when considering the attraction of Christianity. My advisor Kenneth Holum called attention to significant triple-concurrences of demolished religious architecture, vertically stratified social structure, and conversion to Christianity in "The Blinking of an Eye."⁶¹ He insisted on the importance of social conformity along vertical lines in the social hierarchy, rather than horizontal connections, or belief, in the process of conversion. The conversions that he

⁵⁹ H. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops* (2000), 188; Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁶⁰ Keith Hopkins, "Christian Number and Its Implications," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 185-226.

⁶¹ Kenneth Holum, "In the Blinking of an Eye: The Christianizing of Classical Cities in the Levant," in *Religion and Politics*, ed. Adele Berlin (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1996), 131-50.

documented were a response to particular local historical events, such as the relocation of a saint's relics, or the intervention of authoritative figures. The result of such events was the extremely rapid simultaneous conversion of fairly large groups of people, imitating the behavior of their social leaders. No time seems to have elapsed for the sort of inner reflection required by the Nock model.

Ramsey Macmullen also de-emphasizes the importance of belief. He suggests that many converts to Christianity simply exchanged one source of divine aid and worldly influence for another without any sort of meaningful reorientation of their inner state. He uses the examples of large groups instantly converted to suggest that significant inner change was unnecessary.⁶² Kenelm Burridge suggested that "religious activities will change when the assumptions about the nature of power, and hence the rules which govern its use and control, can no longer guarantee the truth of things."⁶³ Holum, Macmullen, and Burridge's ideas focus on the persuasive influence of power, and a perceived detachment between interior states and religious conversion. Their ideas are significantly different from both Nock's intellectual model and Stark's gradual sociological model. Keith Hopkins observes that conversion was a complicated enough process that no single episode, or individual's experiences, suffice as a basis for a model. People became Christian for a wide variety of reasons and in a wide variety of ways.⁶⁴

Barton and Boyarin, in fact, have argued that "religion" is a mistranslation of the Latin *religio* and Greek *θρόσκεια*. These terms actually had more to do with specific

⁶² R. MacMullen, *Christianizing*, 1-3.

⁶³ Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 7.

⁶⁴ Keith Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 131-32.

ritual behaviors and the emotional compulsion to do them, rather than “belief” as an interior state. As such, *religio* and θρόσκεια were intimately bound into all aspects of ancient life, including things like government and personal hygiene.⁶⁵ Keith Hopkins points out that Christians were unusual, in terms of ancient religions, because of their emphasis on shared, correct belief as the defining characteristic of their community.⁶⁶ The pagan gods seemed to have cared more about the things that people did, rather than things that they considered to be true in their hearts and heads.

Given that temples primarily functioned as public locations for the performance of specific ritual behavior, the perspective of Barton and Boyarin provides the best way to interpret the results of my study. This is not to overstate my case by absurdly denying pagans their interior states and beliefs. The idea that pagan rituals would be effective in currying divine favor qualifies as “belief,” in some sense of the word. Pagan ritual behavior is best interpreted as a tacit acknowledgment of the reality of the supernatural forces capable of lending or withdrawing assistance, or of punishing offending mortals.

Pagans certainly thought their gods were real. Plutarch, for instance, diverges from the narrative of Coriolanus to explain an understanding of how gods affect the mortal world. His discussion presumes the gods to be real, but misinterpreted by many people. It should be acknowledged that Plutarch explicitly makes reference to the interior states of individuals affected by the gods. He suggests that manipulation of these interior states is exactly how the gods choose to interact with us.⁶⁷ Plutarch’s understanding of

⁶⁵ Carlin Barton and Daniel Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (Fordham University Press, 2016).

⁶⁶ Keith Hopkins, “Christian Number and Its Implications,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 185-226.

the pagan gods, however, was probably not the average person's understanding of the pagan gods. The authors of the Homeric hymns also give every indication that they consider the divine beings in their poems to be a real presence.⁶⁸ The poems portray strongly held commitment to real entities that had the power to help or harm humanity.

The upshot of this discussion, however, is to clarify the fact that I am not directly "measuring belief." That would be impossible, because belief is fundamentally an interior state. Instead, the end of temples speaks to the cessation of large-scale public performances of ritual behavior. It is only in this sense that my study speaks to the end of paganism.

A Patchwork Model

Given the variability in historical circumstances and individual motivations for conversion, I would suggest that a "patchwork" model best helps us understand how the Roman Empire became Christian. A patch-work approach takes into account the variability of the Mediterranean world, the idiosyncrasy of human behavior, and the importance of local context. Kenneth Holum and Raymond Van Dam (among many others) have also both emphasized unique local circumstances in the process of Christianization.⁶⁹ Perhaps this is a sociological corollary to the environmental isolation of the many micro-regions identified by Horden and Purcell.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Plutarch *Coriolanus* 32.

⁶⁸ John Edgar (trans.), *Homeric Hymns Translated into English Prose* (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1891).

⁶⁹ Kenneth Holum, "Christianizing Caesarea: A Narrative from Archaeology Alone" (Paper presented at American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, November 26 2016), 1; Van Dam, "From Paganism to Christianity," (1985): 1.

It might be extrapolated, following Pierre Chuvin and Hal Drake, that the political possibilities available to pragmatic authority figures (who in fact had limited influence) were the ultimate source for many of the irregular and idiosyncratic aspects of Christianization.⁷¹ This brings Constantine (most notably) into the spotlight. Chapter Four of this dissertation deals with his temple demolishing and Church building activities in the Holy Land.

Although this patchwork approach emphasizes the importance of local circumstances and the limits of influence, powerful individuals like the praetorian prefects, emperors, and bishops (among others) were obviously and deliberately steering society in particular directions. This dissertation can help evaluate the efficacy of those efforts.

This dissertation examines a singular patch in the patchwork. As such, it is my intention that it will work along with other similar regional studies, with a focus on archaeology and architecture, such as Richard Bayliss' study of temples converted into churches in Cilicia.⁷² Relative to his discussion of the temple at Hippos, Mariusz Burdajewicz presents a detailed, technical, and archaeological discussion of the remains of the temples in Palestine that were converted into churches.⁷³ There are many temples

⁷⁰ Pergrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000).

⁷¹ Pierre Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 23-56; Hal Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3-34.

⁷² Richard Bayliss, *Provincial Cilicia and the Archaeology of Temple Conversion* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004).

⁷³ Mariusz Burdajewicz, "From Pagan Temple to Church in Late Antiquity Palestine: A View from Hippos-Sussita," *Études et Travaux* 30 (2017), 181-209.

in Palestine to which this never occurred. The present study will account for these more typical cases, raising the possibility that their lack of a spectacle is significant in terms of understanding society in Late Antiquity.

Ultimately, we have a limited ability to assess the inner state of people, particularly on a mass scale. A focus on the tangible aspects of religious transition, the destruction of temples for instance, allows us to work back around to such issues via an understanding of what temples were designed to do.

As an example, let us consider a securely-dated temple destruction. We might wonder if sacrifices were still well-attended in the years preceding that event. Many times it is impossible to determine such things. Nevertheless, the destruction gives us a *terminus ante quem* for the cessation of the temple's normal functionality. We can assume that customary religious behavior, on a large public scale, became difficult, if not impossible, following the elimination of the facility that was meant to support it.

An obvious relationship existed between the venues, the beliefs, and the practices of paganism. This is because architecture provides an environment for the fulfillment of human needs. The built environment is thus symptomatic, it is an observable record of social conditions and social change. It is an expression of community values. The Christianization of the Empire left a record, consisting of quantifiable archaeological evidence from pagan temple sites, of their abandonment, destruction, or conversion into churches. It is, however, a limited record. It is limited by the nature of the social function that temples fulfilled.

The Local Tipping Point

Kenneth Holum had the (unpublished) view that Christianization was largely a matter of peripheral areas metaphorically and literally invading central areas. There was, apparently, a lack of accountability for actions undertaken in marginal areas, relative to the heightened observation of behavior that occurred in the hearts of cities. Some critical threshold, or alignment of social circumstances, needed to be reached before one could act against temples in cities. That threshold was a tipping point. The “invasion” presumably involved the exertion of some sort of force from outside the city, originating from its peripheral zone.

For example, there was a long history of Christian activity in the hinterlands of Gaza prior to the actions that Porphyry took against the Marneion. Van Dam describes the Christianization of Gaza in terms of the countryside having an independent character from the city, and exerting force on the city. Van Dam notes the rural location of martyrs’ shrines and churches prior to the arrival of Porphyry.⁷⁴ Saint Hilarion’s monastery, the village of the church historian Sozomen, and the Christians of Maioumas were also representative of the strong Christian presence outside the city. Perhaps “public opinion” is the force that Holum and Van Dam detect. The imperial troops sent to support Porphyry were the critical component that brought about the end of the Marneion, thereby allowing the periphery to reconfigure the center. Perhaps this type of scenario was typical, and should be included in a patchwork model of Christianization. On the other hand, Mark also tells us about pagan villages outside of Gaza, the inhabitants of which try to intimidate Porphyry when he first approaches the city.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ R. Van Dam, “From Paganism to Christianity,” (1985): 12.

I have separated out rural from urban data in order to permit examination of the issue. The data from my dissertation lacks the ability to comment significantly on this topic, however, which is a function of how few rural pagan temples are known. We simply do not have enough examples to form a significant data set of archaeologically-known rural temples. There is some supporting scholarly opinion and literary evidence related to the topic, however, and Holum and Van Dam are not alone in their observations.

Doron Bar, for instance, suggests that rural and suburban monasteries were crucial to the conversion of the Palestinian religious landscape.⁷⁶ Hugh Kennedy points to the role of Scythopolis as the administrative center of Palaestina Secunda as a force that kept Christianity in the outskirts for an extended duration. Churches were built in the city center substantially prior to the coming of Islam, but Kennedy perceives a delayed tipping-point in that city.⁷⁷

Theoretically, some weight needed to be added to the scale to push it past its tipping point and force the centers to change. This did not always require imminent force. In fact, the use of force is probably part of the reason why events in Gaza became famous. The tipping point was the moment when it became socially possible to do things like ignore community sacrifices, cut off the funding for local priesthoods, or neglect rebuilding a temple after an earthquake. At that moment one might also walk into a

⁷⁵ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 17.

⁷⁶ Doron Bar, "Rural Monasticism as a Key Element in the Christianization of Byzantine Palestine," *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005): 49-65.

⁷⁷ Hugh Kennedy, "Gerasa and Scythopolis: Power and Patronage in the Byzantine Cities of Bilad Al-Sham," in *La ville en Syrie et ses territoires: Héritages et mutations, Bulletin d'études orientales* 52 (2000): 199-204.

temple and throw a torch or deface a statue, send a work crew to quarry building stones for use elsewhere, or remodel a temple as a church. Kenneth Holum thought that 400 CE represented an average tipping-point for the process of Christianization in Palestine.⁷⁸ I would suggest that it happened a few decades earlier, although again, the data is equivocal.

The central districts of cities subjected behavior to the scrutiny of more people. Actions in the countryside, or on the edges of the city, were subject to less social control. This was the extra-urban zone in which Marcellus, bishop of Apamea, waged much of his campaign against temples in Second Syria. In addition to his famous demolition of the temple of Zeus in his city, a cooperative venture with the weight of the praetorian prefect Maternus Cynegius behind it, Marcellus also destroyed countless temples in the countryside, where he was eventually killed.⁷⁹ Sozomen also makes the claim that pagans in the upper Galilee organized themselves to resist Marcellus. It is unclear how seriously we are to take that assertion. Libanius indicates the typically rural location of temples targeted for destruction by Syrian monks in the 380s.⁸⁰ The eccentric Bar Sauma was known in the 430s for violently abusing pagans, and burning both temples and synagogues. He also operated in the Syrian countryside, and often people would convert immediately upon his arrival in their area.⁸¹ People did such things in the countryside because there was resistance to doing them in the city.

⁷⁸ Kenneth Holum, "Christianizing Caesarea: A Narrative from Archaeology Alone," (Paper presented at American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, November 26 2016), 1.

⁷⁹ Sozomen *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.15.

⁸⁰ Libanius, *Orationes* 30.8-9.

The conventional understanding of the term “pagan” reflects the city versus countryside dynamic. It brings to the foreground a paradoxical fact related to the lack of social control in peripheral areas. Although Christian margins invaded pagan centers, remote areas were also where one could maintain traditional beliefs for the longest. Shimon Dar is of the opinion that many of the sites in Ituraea were holdouts for polytheism well into Late Antiquity.⁸² Ituraea, just north of my study region, was famous for being a remote back-water.

Late Antique Survival of Paganism

But in what form did traditional beliefs continue to exist? For how long is the persistence of paganism relevant? Many scholars have already observed the persistence of polytheist practices well into Late Antiquity, and long after the chronological frame of my study. Frank Trombley, for instance, calls attention to Damascius’ documentation of the travels of Asclepiades (a Neoplatonic Hellenist) as evidence for the continuation of visits and sacrifices at polytheist temples even into the sixth century. Asclepiades made a tour of sacred polytheist sites in the Eastern Mediterranean. He performed sacrifices and ate meals at temples, such as those at Baalbek, with his traveling companions.⁸³

The personal paganism of Asclepiades was just that, personal. It was also nostalgic. Damascius portrays Asclepiades as a noble throw-back.⁸⁴ This may be

⁸¹ E. Honigmann, *Le couvent de Barsauma et le patriarcat jacobite d’Antioche et de Syrie*, (Louvain: Peeters, 1954).

⁸² Shimon Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites on Mount Hermon, Israel: Ituraean Culture in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1993).

⁸³ Frank R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 1:38; Damascius *Epit. Phot.* 93.

evidence of the persistence of belief in the power of the traditional gods, but it was also a private devotion and a statement of non-conformity, largely effective among Damascius' audience of intellectual elites. Asclepius' behavior had a distinctly different function than that of socially integrative public religiosity. The visit to Baalbek set him apart.

There is no evidence that temples in the region of Palesine served as the loci for large group activities after the beginning of the fifth century. Perhaps there were individual or small groups who visited them, similar to the party of Asclepiades. Such private religiosity, however, shows the importance of the performance of specific ritual tasks. The travels of Asclepiades underline the idea that belief, while certainly a relevant aspect of the problem that I am investigating, is potentially less relevant than social behavior and ritual.

The End of Temples and a New Christian Landscape

I am clearly not the first person to deal with the eventual physical fate of pagan temples. Friedrich Deichmann is often credited with first making a scholarly study of the phenomenon. In 1939 he published the first in a long bibliography of important articles on the topic of temples converted into churches.⁸⁵ The examples that he uses are churches that included much of the original pagan temple in an intact state. He took

⁸⁴ Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Persecution and Response in Late Paganism: The Evidence of Damascius," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113 (1993): 1-29.

⁸⁵ F.W. Deichmann, "Die Basilika im Parthenon," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 63-64 (1938-9): 127-39; "Frühchristliche Kirchen in antiken Heiligtümern," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 54 (1939): 105-36; "Die Entstehungszeit von Salvatorkirche und Clitumnustempel bei Spoleto," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung* 58 (1943): 106-48; "Christianisierung II (der Monumente)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 2 (1954): 1228-41; "Von temple zur kirche," in *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser* (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1964), 52-59; *Die Spolien in der spätantiken Architektur* (München: Beck, 1975).

these cases to be paradigmatic of the process of Christianization, visible examples to society of the dominance of Christianity over paganism. There are not many such instances in Palestine. I could not find any examples of temples that were converted, in a virtually intact physical state, directly into churches. Aside from the minority that were ritually demolished, most temples in Palestine suffered catastrophic damage from natural disaster, or long-term quarrying of stones, before being converted.

Deichman's analysis, however, also points to the fact that circumstances could exist in which the complete ritual demolition of temples, such as that accomplished at Gaza and Jerusalem, was not necessary. His work reflects the fact that pagan sacred spots often translated directly into Christian sacred spots. Saradi, Caseau, and others have likewise observed that the polytheist topography of sacred places continued to influence the Christianization of the landscape. The reputations of holy individuals were built upon their relationships to the pre-existing topography.⁸⁶ A visit to a temple occupied by demons, and dispatching these demons, allowed the holy individual to demonstrate their special connection to God. These sorts of stories frequently went hand-in-hand with the conversion of temples, as at the monastery church of Saint Thecla.

Aude Busine, in fact, sees the outline of these types of stories in the written accounts of the destruction of many temples, including the temple of Zeus Marnas at Gaza.⁸⁷ She considers them to be largely fictional accounts, built to enhance the reputation of the holy individuals involved, rather than a literal narration of events.

⁸⁶ H. Saradi-Mendelovici, "Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments," (1990): 47-61; Beatrice Caseau, "Sacred Landscapes," in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Post-Classical World*, ed. G.W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), 21-57.

⁸⁷ Aude Busine, "From Stones to Myth: Temple Destruction and Civic Identity in the Late Antique Roman East," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 6 (2013), 325-46.

Despite her assertion, the archaeological evidence from other sites suggests that the treatment of the temple in Gaza was not simply a literary invention. We might not have access to the remains of the temple at Gaza, but we can see elsewhere the echoes of Porphyry's actions against it.

Wharton joins these other authors, noting that churches built on the ruins of temples not only commemorated the same spots as those temples, but also often included similar types of veneration.⁸⁸ The temple of Dionysus in Jerash, for instance, was succeeded by a church that commemorated Christ's transformation of water into wine. David Frankfurter documents the persistence of pagan loci as significant spots in the local landscape of Christian Egypt.⁸⁹ The Christian sacred topography retained some of its pre-Christian character.

Thus, the same, precise sites occupied by pagan temples often continued to function as places for social elites to express their legitimacy. If a temple, for instance, were demolished to build a church on the same spot, that spot continued to be sacred, and the individual who funded its construction gained credibility. By-and-large the social and cultural landscape would remain intact, even if the means of expression had changed to fit the new venues and ideology.

The Empty Podium Problem

A shift in the means of accumulating social capital is the most direct thing that can be measured by considering the fate of pagan temples. Archaeology provides a good

⁸⁸ Annabel Wharton, *Refiguring the Post-Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem, and Ravenna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 64-104.

⁸⁹ David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 233-56.

tool-set for doing this. A significant epistemological problem is inherent to relying solely upon archaeology in this context, however. Human beings tend to destroy the evidence of their own activities.

Thanks to this human proclivity, two potentially very different things can be rendered indistinguishable in the archaeological record: 1) A temple destroyed by an earthquake. 2) A temple destroyed by people. In both cases the only remains might consist of a few courses of the foundation below the ancient ground level.

In the first case, archaeologists have to reckon with the fact that any secure evidence for the earthquake's effects on the temple would have been liable to make the building site unsafe. One of the first things that we might expect the population of a city to do after an earthquake would be to deal with this very issue. They would cart away any rubble or damaged architectural elements. This denies the archaeologist the normally tell-tale physical evidence needed to demonstrate that an earthquake happened. The best evidence for earthquakes is typically in instances where the site, or a portion of the site, is actually abandoned afterwards. The literary record can also strengthen an earthquake hypothesis.

There is an inverse relationship between the extant archaeological evidence for a natural disaster and the resources (in terms of finances, labor, and political will) available to reconstruct urban infrastructure after such a disaster. This is a general principle that has been observed by other scholars. Beverly Tchernov, for instance, notes that the archaeological evidence for some powerful tsunamis is notably absent from Caesarea

Maritima, despite the historic and oceanographic evidence that such events occurred.⁹⁰

The population of the city eliminated the archaeological evidence when they rebuilt. The same principle was certainly at work in the aftermath of earthquakes at land-bound sites.

The most serious issue with ascribing the end of a temple to an earthquake is that doing so ignores the fact that the damaged temple was never repaired or rebuilt afterwards. Temples were in fact excessively durable, and they existed as an embellishment of persistent sacred spots. Hypothetically, if the funding and political will were present in a community, few natural disasters could prevent a complete, ground-up rebuilding of a temple. The archaeological evidence for earthquake damage is related to the strength of sociological forces rather than seismic ones. In terms of my study, this means that I only consider earthquakes as the prime destructive force in cases when I can find no other explanation.

When confronted with a temple that has been leveled down to its foundations by people for some unknown reason, an archaeologist gets very little information in terms of process. Point “A” was presumably a standing building. Point “Z” is obviously a destroyed building. But points “B” through “Y” are often missing with no evidence for what happened between these stages and at what pace. Was the temple demolished over the course of a few weeks? Or was it quarried away in a piecemeal fashion over the course of many years? Was it hit by an earthquake, and then quarried away? These are very different scenarios from the point of view of any who might wish to make inferences about the social context of the temple’s destruction.

⁹⁰ Beverly Tchernov, “Caesarea Tsunamis: New Islamic-Era Evidence from Abandoned Warehouses” (Paper presented at American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Conference, Boston, MA, Nov. 2017).

Synopsis of Subsequent Chapters

The remainder of this dissertation will move towards an assertion that the end of pagan temples in Palestine should be thought of as a quotidian process. By this I mean that delay and neglect were more prevalent than civil disruption and/or ritual demolition. The equanimity of cities was probably maintained in most cases.

Chapter Two will investigate the pagan landscape of Palestine at the end of the third century CE. It will provide a sense of the demographics of Palestine relative to religious affiliation. It will reinforce the impression that, for much of its history, Palestine was indeed an unremarkably pagan Roman province. This chapter will give a sense of the (metaphorical) weight that needed to be moved in order to act against temples. It will also evaluate how paganism and Christianity were changing in terms of their public presence in the region.

Chapter Three will look at the evidence from archaeological sites in Palestine, to account for the number of temples that have been found, and the various ways in which they were physically treated. Chapter Three is my understanding of the “data set” that we have to work with, and I have described it with an eye towards generating numbers that can be compared.

Bet Shean and Omrit are two important sites that will be discussed in Chapter Three. The temples that have been found at Bet Shean are significant in terms of solving the “empty podium problem.” This is because there are examples of temples from Bet Shean that fit several of the previously mentioned troublesome scenarios. The evidence from Bet Shean is particularly relevant when considering the fate of the Roman temple at Omrit, on account of the attenuated and ambiguous nature of the destruction of the Omrit

temple. Many of the sites described in Chapter Three have a “model” for their destruction that has been found at Bet Shean. Omrit was an out-of-the-way place and there is no evidence that significant social disturbance was caused by the elimination of the temple. The temple at Omrit suffered death by earthquake, neglect, and the encroachment of non-religious buildings into sacred space. Temples, including Omrit, often served as a source of quarrying materials over an extended time, and were allowed to stand in a partial state. The vast majority of temples in Palestine lingered in this fashion. This suggests a lack of overt conflict. Chapter Three will highlight the contrast between temple destruction at places included in the historical record with the destruction of temples at places not included in the historical record, like Omrit.

Bayliss refers to the historical record of temple destruction as a series of “tabloid cases.”⁹¹ The flamboyant descriptions polarize our impression of the fault lines in ancient society. The accounts are misleading in terms of the normal situation, and the small number of temples so destroyed reflects this. Eusebius, for instance, gave us a version of history that makes Constantine a hero in terms of confronting paganism, in this way, at a small number of highly significant sites. Chapter Four will look at Eusebius, the activities of Constantine in the Holy Land, and the nature of the narrative that involved the two men. Chapter Four will also evaluate Eusebius’ claims about Imperial policy.

Chapter Five will examine Gaza, the prototypical tabloid case in Palestine. It is appropriate to deal with Gaza last because the destruction of the Marneion is among the latest examples, chronologically. It is awkward to do Gaza last, however, because Mark

⁹¹ Richard Bayliss, *Provincial Cilicia and the Archaeology of Temple Conversion* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 8.

the Deacon's account presents us with a baseline for evaluating sociological phenomena that must have been present, in some degree, at every other site in my study. As such I will need to refer to Gaza from time-to-time elsewhere, in a regrettably piecemeal fashion.

Mark the Deacon describes literal street-violence and heated arguments among the residents of Gaza during the demolition of the Marneion. His account clearly shows the fault-lines in the society of any ancient city, where tension might have been felt even if violence never broke out. I suspect this tension existed in the community served by the temple at Omrit, and probably many other places besides, but it was mitigated in some way at most of these other places.

Chapter Six is my final tally of the evidence. It will present the findings of the preceding chapters in the form of a number of charts and tables. This will permit the reader to evaluate the ideas presented above. I will compare the numbers of temples that went out of commission in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. This will show us that the bulk of such activity actually occurred around or after 400 CE. This gives credence to the idea of a fifth century tipping point suggest by Kenneth Holum. I will compare what is known about the destruction of temples in cities, relative to the margins of cities, and relative to the rural backcountry. This will show us that we simply do not have enough information to evaluate the idea that city centers resisted some hypothetical force for change that originated in their peripheral regions. This facet of Holum's tipping point hypothesis cannot be adequately explored by the theoretical and methodological framework of this dissertation, for a variety of reasons that will be discussed later.

I will also compare the small quantity of data that is known about temple destructions, relative to the large quantity that is simply unknown. This comparison suggests that the destruction of temples, in most places, was less than an extraordinary event. Finally, I will evaluate the frequency of occurrence of the various way in which temples could be done away with. Again, this will suggest the mundane aspect of the process as it occurred in most communities, failing to suggest the atmosphere of fear and confrontation that are pervasive features of the literary accounts. In terms of numbers, however, if we have a clear idea about what rendered a temple inoperable, it is typically because it was in fact given the “Gaza treatment.” There are a few exceptions to be discussed, but this fact requires some explanation.

J. Geiger once opined that the history “of the end of paganism cannot perhaps ever be written.”⁹² This might very well be true if we think in terms of faith and faithlessness, the inward states of individuals, or semi-clandestine acts of religiosity performed by small groups of people. The fate of temples, however, can be gleaned from archaeology, and it gives us insight into the end of the large-scale social function of pagan religions. Although the evidence is far from unambiguous, a few temples were indeed probably eliminated, intentionally demolished in a thorough, ritualistic manner. Relative to the total number of pagan temples that must have existed in Palestine, however, only a handful seem to have suffered the sort of physical treatment that Mark the Deacon and Eusebius describe. What we hear from impassioned literary sources does not seem to be typical. The question then becomes “why was it not?”

⁹² J. Geiger, “Aspects of Palestinian Paganism in Late Antiquity,” in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land*, ed. Arieh Kofsky and Guy Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1998), 3.

Chapter II

The Religious Landscape of Pre-Constantinian Palestine

The goal of this chapter is to describe a fourth century starting-state for discussing the religious landscape of Palestine. At the beginning of that century, the region was more-or-less a normal part of the Eastern Mediterranean pagan milieu. Public paganism, private mystery cults, Christianity, and Judaism were developing in new directions. The Mediterranean had always been a collage of religions, consisting of various public and mystery cults, often with a very tight local geographic range, or limited demographic membership but wide geographic range. It was an inherently varied collection of beliefs, and as such, the now famous monotheistic religions of Palestine fit into that mix, despite the exceptional character that has been attributed to the region in hindsight. Nicole Belayche demonstrates that in terms of public religion, most of Palestine in the third and early fourth centuries was unexceptionally pagan.¹ Hypothetically reconstructed demographics of the region reflect this. With the exception of the relatively small geographic areas inhabited by concentrated populations of Jews, Christians, and Samaritans, third and fourth century Palestine was equally as diverse as any other part of the Mediterranean pagan religious landscape. Further, a pagan elite dominated the process of gaining social capital via visible religiosity.

In general, any big Palestinian city, and especially the coastal cities, had a greater degree of religious diversity relative to smaller inland communities. Coastal cities were better tied into the world-system, which was pagan. In addition to Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian populations there were numerous foreign influences along the coast.² There

¹ Nicole Belayche, *The Pagan Cults in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

² *Ibid.*, 220-55.

were local pagan beliefs that had Hellenized to some degree, as well as foreign cults that were imported whole-sale, from primarily Greece, Rome, and Egypt.

Places where Roman soldiers were garrisoned, or were set up in retirement colonies, give us plenty of evidence for the typical Mediterranean diversity of pagan belief. Aelia Capitolina and Legio were foremost of the cities in this group because of the soldiers from X Fretensis and VI Ferrata, respectively, who were stationed in the province in order to keep it under the Roman thumb. The ways that Roman culture followed the army, everywhere around the Empire, are well documented.³ This included religion.

Late Third Century Paganism

Paganism permitted religious experimenting and non-exclusive worship. Hypothetically, an individual might attend an underground meeting of Mithraists on one day and then attend a parade for Dionysus on the next. Specific cults, however, attracted more attention than others, in specific places. Mystery cults and Neoplatonic philosophical religiosity focused an individual's attention on a smaller number of deities, or a singular deity. The "combined pagan pantheon" was anything but a free-for-all, and actual pagan religiosity was changing in Late Antiquity to more closely resemble Christianity.

The local public cult dedicated to a particular city's main god, often represented as an aspect of Zeus, typically had primacy. Empire-wide, and through time, Zeus' or Jupiter's name appears on dedicatory inscriptions more than twice as often as any other

³ *Ibid.*, 53-62.

god or goddess. The sheer number of individual devotees represented by such a figure, which includes many instances from domestic worship, points to the exceptional popularity of the god.⁴ Dionysus and Heracles are also mentioned frequently, particularly in the East.

Also in the East, many localized female deities, typically amalgamated with Venus or Tyche, enjoyed considerable exposure in their particular cities of origin. This may be seen in the coin record.⁵ The actual popularity of these female deities seems likely given the quantity of such issues through time. Coins gave wide-spread exposure to the exceptionally renowned features of a local community, even though coins were minted by city authorities who sometimes may have had a vested interest in manipulating perception. It is improbable, however, that the numismatic evidence for the popularity of female goddesses would be manipulated in that way on such a large scale, through time, if it did not reflect some reality on the ground.

Neoplatonic philosophy, a new articulation of pagan religiosity among the intelligentsia of Late Antiquity, focused attention on a singular creator god. This new trend in paganism is attributed to Plotinus and his pupil Porphyry, who were active in the second half of the third century. Like Christians, these intellectuals rejected blood sacrifice, and were inclined to an ascetic pattern of behavior. Neoplatonists, seeking to reinforce a set of beliefs that they insisted were in fact traditional, were third and fourth century Christianity's prime intellectual competition.

⁴ R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (1981), 5-8.

⁵ Mary Comstock, "Greek Imperial Coins," *Boston Museum Bulletin* 65 (1967): 160-74.

The Emperor Julian's reception by, and response to, pagan communities in Antioch and Alexandria show us that blood sacrifice was becoming significantly less popular, even among non-intellectuals, in the big cultural centers of the East. Julian was shocked at the lack of blood sacrifice in Antioch.⁶ Both Ammianus Marcellinus and Libanius, pagan and otherwise inclined towards Julian, considered his attempt to restart large-scale sacrificing in Antioch to be a tasteless over-step.⁷ Scott Bradbury observes that not only had Constantine previously looted the Antiochene temples to fund his own projects, but that public funding was being cut to blood sacrifice in Alexandria and Antioch, and that these factors had at least as much effect, if not more, than outright legislative bans.⁸ Julian's disappointed expectation suggests that declining sacrifice was a relatively new trend in the early 360s, by virtue of the fact that he had an expectation that could be disappointed. Paganism in some cities of the East, in the 360s, was already being sanitized. We can reasonably suspect that this might have been the case in Palestine, as well.

Hal Drake, observing that semi-monotheistic paganism (henotheism) was in fact becoming more popular in the third century, suggested that growing similarity and competition was fueling conflict with Christianity.⁹ Elizabeth Digeser suggests that conflict between Neo-Platonist and Christian intellectuals, who frequently came from the

⁶ Julian *Misopogon* 361d-362b.

⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus *Res Gestae* 22.12.6-7; Libanius *Orationes* 12.80, 18.170.

⁸ Scott Bradbury, "Julian's Pagan Revival and the Decline of Blood Sacrifice" *Phoenix* 49 (1995); 331-56.

⁹ Hal Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 132-53.

same educational background, fueled Diocletian's persecution.¹⁰ Freud would have called this "the narcissism of small differences," the idea being that inter-group conflict is often intense between those with little to differentiate them.¹¹

A personally meaningful mystery cult, such as that of Isis or Serapis, might attract most of a particular pagan's attention.¹² Apuleius, writing around the middle of the second century, is a commonly referenced individual in this regard. He seems to have built an image of his own real world into *Golden Ass*.¹³ The charge of witchcraft with which Apuleius contended shows us that the character Lucius was a literary proxy for the author.¹⁴ Lucius acknowledged gods other than Isis but was called to devote himself primarily to her.¹⁵

Late Third Century Christianity

Christianity competed for attention alongside the mystery cults. The sociological and theological parallels between Christianity and the mystery cults are numerous and well-known.¹⁶ These included semi-clandestine meetings in private places, semi-

¹⁰ Elizabeth Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 1-22.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1930), 305.

¹² Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.1-30; P. Athanassiadi and M Frede (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

¹³ Fergus Millar, "The World of the Golden Ass" *Journal of Roman Studies* 71 (1981), 63-75.

¹⁴ Apuleius *Apologia*.

¹⁵ Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.1-30.

¹⁶ Samuel Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity* (London: John Murray, 1925), 7.

henotheistic or monotheistic focus, secretive initiation rituals, an important sense of group-membership, and an apparent sense of “finding the truth.” The followers of mystery religions gravitated particularly towards salvific themes, the cleansing of sin, and dying-and-resurrecting gods like Adonis. The barely fictionalized conversion of Lucius points to the same social and spiritual desires that likely made Christianity attractive.¹⁷ A sense of belonging was clearly just as important to Lucius as it was to new Christian catechumens.¹⁸ Christianity, and mystery cults in general, grew because they offered something to outsiders. The Christianization of the Empire represented the ascendance of a specific mystery cult to the status of an official state religion.

The first century CE Tyrian residents of Puteoli, in contrast, composed a private professional association in their new city, at the home of one of their members. They brought their traditional form of Poseidon worship along with them from Tyre, but this could not be considered a mystery cult.¹⁹ Any sense of “belonging” felt by the members of this association was likely a matter of shared nostalgia for a geographical place of origin and its customary and inherited religious tradition. Perhaps they never intended to attract outsiders. They never renovated their meeting-hall, which we would have expected if they were bringing in money and people.

Christianity, like these other types of organizations, was often practiced in the peripheral areas of cities.²⁰ Also like these other types of organizations, Christians often

¹⁷ “Desire” proceeds L.’s conversion in this account, followed by “fulfillment.” We see this in the narrative as he navigates the world troubled and alone, prior to becoming associated with the cult of Isis, which grants him a sense of satisfaction and well-being.

¹⁸ Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.16.

¹⁹ L. Michael White, *Building God’s House* (1990), 31-32.

met in converted homes rather than in centrally-located and purpose-built monumental architecture.²¹ The homes where Christians met at this time were typically intimate, private settings known as *domus ecclesiae*. Archaeologists have found three or fewer *domus ecclesiae* in Palestine, at Legio, Aila, and possibly Capernaum.²² Given that early churches were simply modified homes, and that domestic neighborhoods in general are not favored for excavation by archaeologists, it makes sense that we would have a disproportionately small sample size.

Domus ecclesiae must also have existed in the cities mentioned in the list of bishops who attended the council of Nicaea, as well as the places named by Eusebius as the origins of martyrs executed in the early fourth century.²³ It is difficult to imagine a community of Christians, prominent enough to get in trouble with the local authorities, and large enough to have a bishop, that did not also have an established meeting place. It may even have been the bishop's home. Gaza, oddly enough given that it was a famous pagan stronghold going into the fifth century, also has a prominent place in the list of martyrs.²⁴ It may be that Eusebius was conflating nearby Maiuma with Gaza, or that the

²⁰ Although this might very well have been a function of real-estate prices or social class, those things themselves are related to a community's status as elite or non-elite. This is an investigation that merits further work.

²¹ L. Michael White, *Building God's House* (1990), 102-39.

²² Yotam Tepper and Leah Di Segni, *A Christian Prayer Hall of the Third Century CE at Kefar 'Othnay, Legio*, (Jerusalem, Israel Antiquities Authority, 2006); Thomas Parker, "An Early Church, Perhaps the Oldest in the World, Found at Aqaba," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 61 (1998): 254; S. Loffreda, *Recovering Capernaum*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Guides 1 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1985).

²³ Joan Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 56-69. Taylor has tabulated the cities of origin for individuals mentioned by Eusebius in this context.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

martyrs that he mentions actually came from the Christianized rural areas surrounding the city.

Small groups bonded in the *domus ecclesiae*. This was a contrast to the large-scale mechanism by which a social capital accrued in an officially endorsed, highly visible, and fully public religion. Due to limited membership, social capital in a Christian community could not be distributed very widely (horizontally) or very high (vertically) within the social hierarchy. Social capital that was earned in the *domus ecclesiae*, circa 290 CE, had limited currency outside of the *domus ecclesiae*. Constantine changed this radically simply by embracing the religion. He pushed the ceiling on Christian social capital all the way to the top of the social hierarchy.

The accumulation of financial resources, reputation, membership, and high-level patronage (all related factors) might in some cases grant a mystery cult a more visible presence. Isis and Serapis, for instance, had famous public temples in many cities long before the fourth century. This breakthrough did not happen for Christianity until later.

Towards the end of the third century, Christianity did break through into the public realm. It was no longer a dangerous *superstitio* so much as a mystery cult with a public face, at least in the opinions of local citizens and civic authorities. Diocletian of course thought otherwise. Michael White points to the matter-of-fact nature of public knowledge concerning the whereabouts of Christian places of worship around the turn of the century.²⁵ People knew of churches and were accustomed to them.

²⁵ L. Michael White, *Building God's House in the Roman World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 102-26.

Eusebius, in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, tells us about burgeoning crowd sizes and some type of large-scale, purpose-built churches constructed in cities during the early years of the fourth century:

Πῶς δ' ἂν τις διαγράψειεν τὰς μυριάνδρους ἐκείνας ἐπισυναγωγὰς καὶ τὰ πλήθη τῶν κατὰ πᾶσαν πόλιν ἄθροισμάτων τὰς τε ἐπισήμους ἐν τοῖς προσευκτηρίοις συνδρομάς; ὧν δὴ ἔνεκα μηδαμῶς ἔτι τοῖς πάλαι οἰκοδομήμασιν ἀρκούμενοι, εὐρείας εἰς πλάτος ἀνὰ πάσας τὰς πόλεις ἐκ θεμελίων ἀνίστων ἐκκλησίας.²⁶

Michael White refers to these churches as *aula ecclesiae*, to distinguish them from basilicas, which he believes to be a Constantinian period invention.²⁷ It is likely, given the range of places with which Eusebius was familiar (and not familiar), that *πάσας τὰς πόλεις* is an exaggeration. Further, Eusebius was given to hyperbole, especially when describing the exuberance of the years just prior to Diocletian.²⁸ Eusebius is, however, probably referring to “some” cities in Italy, North Africa, the Eastern Empire. This certainly includes Palestine. Eusebius is also almost certainly correct about this being a time of rapid growth for the church.

A commonly used estimate is that about ten percent of the empire’s population was Christian going into the fourth century.²⁹ Raymond Stark used this number as a starting point for population growth curves that he took to suggest that Constantine’s religious policy should be thought of as an acknowledgment of political reality, rather

²⁶ Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.1.5.

²⁷ L.M. White, *Building God’s House* (1990), 127-39.

²⁸ I will revisit this topic in Chapter Four, when I examine Eusebius’ value as a source in more depth.

²⁹ R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 10-13; A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1906), 387; K. Hopkins, “Christian Number and Its Implications,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 184-226.

than an innovation. I disagree with Stark's assessment of Constantine (which is somewhat beside the point).

Ramsay MacMullen, on the other hand, thinks that an estimate of five percent Christian population at the beginning of the fourth century is more accurate.³⁰ He bases this on the floor space of churches that have been found archaeologically. MacMullen insists that more people may have been Christian than were regularly attending church, and that private homes, and cemeteries especially, were also used for Christian religious purposes.³¹ His estimates for church capacity fail to take into account the fact that the first monumental churches might actually have been built for a larger congregation than necessary. This was apparently the case in Gaza, when Porphyry and others considered what sort of building should replace the Temple of Marnas.³²

This would imply that Ramsay Macmullen also overestimated the percentage of Christians in the population, but I do not think so because of factors that skew the estimate back in the other direction. Archaeologists cannot pretend to have found all of the churches that we know must have existed. More churches included in his math would have pushed Macmullen's number higher. Similarly, it does not seem unreasonable to assume that people packed into churches more densely than one per square meter, which is the density MacMullen allows. Further, MacMullen points out that many who came to church were likely perceived as pagan back-sliders by the clergy, an assertion that firm identity categories are problematic.³³ He believes that his five percent estimate applies to

³⁰ Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400* (Williston: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 101.

³¹ *Ibid*, 108.

³² Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 93-94.

the so-called “first church,” consisting of establishment members who are prominent in the literature. MacMullen’s “second church,” the focus of his study, refers to the nebulous group of Christianizing outsiders. These were religious dabblers who make our attempt at quantification more problematic.

However it is calculated, a population estimate going into the fourth century of five to ten percent Christian is probably pretty low, all other things being equal, from the hypothetical point-of-view of an elite person looking to earn social capital via displays of religiosity. It is difficult to believe that an individual who funded a new church (for instance) would impress very many people in such circumstances. A population estimate of five to ten percent would, however, seem to indicate that Christianity was a successful upstart religion going into the fourth century.

These numbers must have changed rapidly, as Stark points out. Stark, however, ignores the persuasive effect of powerful people in antiquity, an important social force not often present in the proselytizing of the modern religions that he uses for comparison, such as Mormonism.

Samaritan Regions

The Samaritan homeland occupied a region between Neapolis and Sebaste, both of which had several pagan temples, to be described in Chapter Three. Caesarea Maritima had a substantial Samaritan population. It might be fair to describe Samaritans as a diaspora population within Palestine itself. There are Samaritan synagogues in various other places, notably including the region of Bet Shean.

³³ R. MacMullen, *The Second Church* (2009), 29, 58, 61, 93, 109.

Procopius was given to understand that Samaritans of his time, in the area of Caesarea Maritima, readily converted to Christianity for the purpose of socio-political and economic advantage.³⁴ There were apparently enough Samaritans around Caesarea Maritima at the end of the fifth century to mount one (if not two) uprisings.³⁵ Procopius and Malalas describe continuing Samaritan unrest going into the time of Justinian. Samaritans apparently burned Constantine's church in Bethlehem, and temporarily seized Bet Shean. Ringleaders are mentioned on several occasions, and Cyril of Scythopolis uses the term *basileus* to mention one of them.³⁶ Seizure of the chariot races in Caesarea and Neapolis occurred on several occasions. The Samaritan ringleaders would run these races themselves, usurping an explicitly Imperial prerogative. Their severed heads are often described as having been crowned by diadems.

Holum suggests that these repetitive details are not evidence of historical confusion in the sources, but instead constitute evidence of organized rebellion and a more significant threat to Imperial authority than simple ethnic riots.³⁷ The details of the events imply a bid for Samaritan independence, which is itself intimately tied into the history of temples and churches, both built and destroyed, on and around Mount Gerezim. It thus makes sense to postpone some of this discussion to Chapter Three. Holum thought there might be as many as 15,000 Samaritans in and around Caesarea during the city's peak in Late Antiquity.

³⁴ Procopius *Secret History* 11.25; 27.26-31.

³⁵ John Malalas *Chronographia* 15.382.10-383.4.

³⁶ Cyril of Scythopolis *Vita Sabae* 70.1-20.

³⁷ Kenneth Holum, "Identity and the Late Antique City," in Hayim Lapin (ed.), *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine* (Bethesda: University of Maryland Press, 1998), 157-77.

It seems entirely likely that Samaritans made up a significant part of the agricultural workforce around Caesarea Maritima going back significantly earlier than the fifth century. Lee Levine speculated that Samaritans may have been brought to Caesarea by Herod at the time of its foundation.³⁸ The *Avodah Zara* indicates that Samaritans were the largest ethnic religious minority in Caesarea.³⁹

Samaritans are a difficult group to locate archaeologically, epigraphically, and historically because of their extremely small population size and close similitude with Jews. Shimon Dar describes some of this difficulty in reference to inscriptions and material culture, such as lamps, from Caesarea.⁴⁰ Samaritans produced their own lamps. They could be decorated in distinctive ways, or inscribed with biblical phrases drawn from the Pentateuch, which Samaritans consider to be the only legitimate part of the Bible.⁴¹ It is often the use of the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet, sometimes referred to as the Samaritan alphabet, that serve to differentiate Samaritan material culture from Jewish material culture. Samaritan mausolea can also be distinctive.⁴²

Reinhard Pummer describes a Samaritan synagogue near Bet Shean.⁴³ There is epigraphic evidence for the claim, although Pummer is cautious about the fact that the

³⁸ Lee Levine, *Caesarea under Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 48-56.

³⁹ *Avodah Zara* 1:2, 39c.

⁴⁰ Shimon Dar, "The Samaritans in Caesarea Maritima," in József Zsengellér (ed.), *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter: 2011), 225-36.

⁴¹ V. Sussman, "Samaritan Lamps of the Third-Fourth Centuries A.D.," *Israel Exploration Journal* 28 (1978): 238-50.

⁴² Rachel Barkai, "A Roman Period Samaritan Burial from Taluze," *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 7 (1987): 8-20.

⁴³ Reinhard Pummer, "Samaritan Material Remains and Archaeology," in Alan D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 143-44.

inscription was found in a room that was added to the synagogue sometime after the construction of the main building. Pummer dates the main building to the fourth century.

Jewish Regions

Josephus tells us that Galilee belonged to the Jews.⁴⁴ Refugees from Judaea came to Galilee after their two failed revolts. Eusebius describes a quantity of Jewish Galilean villages in the *Onomastikon*.⁴⁵ Galilee was dominated by villages and village life.⁴⁶ Epiphanius, relating the story of the *comes* Joseph, claims that Jews deliberately kept Christians out of the Galilee until the first half of the fourth century.⁴⁷ Fergus Millar regards this claim with some measure of skepticism.⁴⁸ There is, in fact, plenty of rabbinic literature that indicates the necessity of social and commercial contact with gentiles in and around Galilee.⁴⁹ Two significant cities in the region, Tiberias and Sepphoris, had a reputation as Jewish cultural centers. It is unclear how true this was at the start of the fourth century.

Both cities were characterized by ancient authors of an earlier period, such as Josephus, as being overwhelming Jewish. Josephus makes an ethnic distinction between the people of Sepphoris and the Roman troops brought in to protect them from his own

⁴⁴ Josephus *Wars of the Jews* 3.41.

⁴⁵ Eusebius *Onomastikon* 16.1, 78.5, 92.19, 138.24.

⁴⁶ F. Millar, *The Roman Near East* (1993), 350.

⁴⁷ Epiphanius *Panarion* 30.4-12.

⁴⁸ Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East: 31 BC – AD 337* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 370.

⁴⁹ Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee A.D. 132-212* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1983), 41-53.

assaults.⁵⁰ Sepphoris did not join the first rebellion against Rome on account of the influence of Herod Agrippa and, according to Josephus, a desire for safety.⁵¹ Tiberias occupied much of Josephus' attention as he organized the Galilee to resist Rome during the first revolt. His efforts regarding Tiberias were largely a matter of outmaneuvering other Jewish authority figures.⁵²

Josephus tells us that the city of Tiberias was founded by Herod Antipas, in honor of the Emperor, by importing villagers from the surrounding territory in an act of *synoichismos*.⁵³ It served as the capital of his Tetrarchy, for which he depended upon the friendship of the Romans. Herod's *synoichismos* probably included a mix of citizens, both from the Jewish villages of the Galilee as well as the hinterland of pagan Bet Shean.⁵⁴ The population center of Tiberias stretched along the western bank of Kinneret, growing and contracting through the centuries, sometimes include the neighboring community of Hammath-Tiberias, just to the south.

According to the traditional narrative, these cities were major centers of the Rabbinic movement in the Late Empire. The rabbis claimed that the Sanhedrin moved from Sepphoris to Tiberias sometime around 220 CE, and that the Talmud was compiled in Tiberias, in what was said to be at the time the most prestigious Yeshiva.

Lapin finds no solid evidence for these institutions, suggesting instead that later generations of rabbis exaggerated the historical depth and prestige of their own

⁵⁰ Josephus *Wars* 3.4.1.

⁵¹ Josephus *Wars* 3.2.4.

⁵² Josephus *Wars* 2.21.

⁵³ Josephus *Antiquities* 18.2.37-8.

⁵⁴ N. Belayche, *Pagan Cults* (2001), 91.

movement.⁵⁵ Kray rejects Meshorer's numismatic interpretation that validates the idea of Sepphoris as the seat of the Jewish Sannhedrin in the third century. It seems possible, however, that these coins indicate the presence of at least some Jews in the bouletic class of the city at that time.⁵⁶ This is a very important issue in relation to the temples in these cities, because the people who held authority were the ones who determined what the built environment would look like.

These cities may very well have been Jewish, but they had pagan faces. This makes sense in the case of Tiberias, given the Herodian family penchants for political pragmatism and engagement with the wider Greco-Roman world. Herod Antipas wanted to build a cosmopolitan, engaged city. Both he and the subsequent city leaders wanted to show the Romans that Tiberias was an asset to Roman imperialist goals. Livy was clearly aware of a special relationship between Sepphoris and the city of Rome, going back to the time of a treaty with Herod Agrippa.⁵⁷ A similar policy of conforming to Roman expectations probably applied in Sepphoris, as well.

Coins minted in these cities are consistent with their policies of conformity. Acceptable elements of Hellenistic iconography, such as wreaths and ears of grain, are common.⁵⁸ They are typical of coins issued in Jewish communities. Coins which depict many of the pagan gods and goddesses, such as the Capitoline Triad or Tyche, often

⁵⁵ Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 79.

⁵⁶ C.M. Kraay, "Jewish Friends and Allies of Rome," *Museum Notes of the American Numismatic Society* 25 (1980): 53-57; Y. Meshorer, "Sepphoris and Rome," in Otto Mørkholm and Nancy Waggoner (ed.), *Greek Numismatics and Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson* (Wetteren: Editions NR, 1979), 159-71; Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 94, 95.

⁵⁷ Livy *Ad Urbe Condita* 38.8.10.

⁵⁸ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 77-90.

show them standing within temples. Coins with such pagan iconography become prominent after the Bar Kochba revolt.⁵⁹ Coins of Antoninus Pius show that Sepphoris' name (with its Hebrew linguistic root) was eliminated and the city was known as Diocaesarea, a reference to Zeus.⁶⁰ Pagan iconography on these coins should be taken as an expression of loyalty to the Empire rather than evidence for the typical religious affiliation of the inhabitants.

These cities had theaters, which like those at Bet Shean and Caesarea, were the trademark architectural form of a cosmopolitan Greco-Roman eastern city. Colonnaded streets, baths, and other typical pieces of Greco-Roman urban architecture were also present. Their creation, upkeep, and repair tells us that the *boulai* wanted to live in cities that fit the standards of the dominant culture.

Sacha Stern suggests that the theater in Sepphoris must have been attended by Jews, despite (or indicated by?) Rabbinic prohibition. Stern suggests that in third century Palestine “maintenance of a Jewish identity was not considered contradictory to public participation, in a certain form, in pagan religious life.” The likely possibility that at least some Jews sat on the *boule* of Sepphoris might implicate them, to some degree, in the pagan qualities of their city.⁶¹

Sepphoris was the location of at least one pagan temple.⁶² Epiphanius claims that there was also a temple in Tiberias, but his account is problematic and is yet to be

⁵⁹ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 91-93.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, n° 91-93.

⁶¹ Sacha Stern, “Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 16a – Jews and Pagan Cults in Third Century Sepphoris,” in Steven Fine and Aaron Koller (ed.), *Talmuda de-Eretz Israel: Archaeology and the Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2014), 205-24.

verified. These temples will be described in Chapter Three.⁶³ Shulamit Miller has argued, on the basis of small-finds from Tiberias, that the culture of that city could have plausibly integrated such a pagan monument.⁶⁴

Some part of the upper stratum of society in Sepphoris and Tiberias had an interest in professing loyalty to Rome. They utilized the normal visual language that any pagan city would use. Individuals who were sitting on the *boule* made the choices that resulted in the numismatic and architectural evidence that we see from these cities. One may reasonably speculate that pagan residents were influential in these cities.

Presumably, there was also some part of the general population that would have actually used the temples. Because of the paucity of these monuments, it was probably a small part. There is also reason to expect that Jews in these cities would have continued a tradition of conformity with the aims of Roman imperialism that stretched back to the first century, building a temple that they might have guessed few would actually use.

Pervasive pagan visual references, including things like statuary in baths or *nymphaea*, in addition to coins that utilized the gods as standardized symbols, made the pagan gods inescapable to the residents of Palestine. We know that the art in a significant number of so-called “Galilean” synagogues from Late Antiquity would also utilize the visual language of paganism, making use of Zodiac imagery, sometimes even including the figure of Helios on large floor mosaics.⁶⁵ Those at Hammath-Tiberias and

⁶² Zeev Weiss, “From Roman Temple to Byzantine Church,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 23(2010), 196-218.

⁶³ Epiphanius *Panarion* 30.4-12.

⁶⁴ Shulamit Miller, “Markers of Pagan Cults in a Jewish City: Rethinking the Hadrianeum of Tiberias,” in Oren Tal and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 95-107.

Sepphoris are two commonly mentioned examples, the figure of Helios omitted (but chariot and horses included) in the later example. These synagogue mosaics suggest that the concessions made to the dominant pagan culture could be internalized. Zeev Weiss suggests that an urge to participate in the dominant culture made Jews in Sepphoris more comfortable with the many examples of pagan iconography found in that city, including statuary and mosaics.⁶⁶ Many times these have been found in homes or public spaces, likely to have been frequented, if not owned or regulated, by Jews.

Crossing Social Barriers

Some, such as Seth Schwartz, will make the argument that Judaism collapsed as a result of the failed revolts, only to begin rebuilding itself in the third and fourth centuries.⁶⁷ Seth Schwartz and Hayim Lapin have recently argued that the Rabbinic movement was largely shaped by the experience of Jewish semi-participatory, partial alienation in the Roman urban environment.⁶⁸ Jews had to deal with the issue of a mainstream culture that was pagan. The famous (if apocryphal) account of Gamaliel at the Acco bath speaks to this issue. Gamaliel considered the pagan iconography in the bath to

⁶⁵ M. Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias: Early Synagogues and the Hellenistic and Roman Remains* (Haifa: Israel Exploration Society, 1983), 46; Jodi Magness, "Heaven on Earth: Helios and the Zodiac Cycle in Ancient Palestinian Synagogues," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 59 (2006): 7-58.

⁶⁶ Zeev Weiss, "Sculptures and Sculptural Images in the Urban Galilean Context," in Yaron Eliav, Elise Friedland, and Sharon Herbert (ed.), *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 559-74.

⁶⁷ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 1-16.

⁶⁸ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100-400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

be an insignificant intrusion into a building that he could legitimately visit.⁶⁹ The story illustrates the self-imposed (yet permeable) boundaries that Jews established between themselves and the wider culture within which they were embedded.

A similar situation pertained for Christians. This was illustrated by the plight of Italicus, the Christian chariot racer from Gaza, who received help from Hilarion so as to beat pagan competitors.⁷⁰ Jews and Christians alike had a need to both create, and cross, social boundaries. Mark the Deacon gives us an idea of the difficulty involved in substantially moving those boundaries. The difficulty arose because of the embedded class of pagans who sat at the top of the social hierarchy of cities.

The urban elites in Palestine were accustomed to using pagan modes of acquiring social capital. Mark the Deacon's account of events in Gaza show this group of individuals actively resisting the Christianization of their city, and thereby also protecting the physical monuments that facilitated the accumulation of prestige.⁷¹ Although Gaza is chronologically late, it provides us insight into the pre-existing political dynamic that must have existed in most cities in the region. Gaza is the topic of Chapter Five.

I am content to accept the opinion of several authorities that put the percentage of Christians in the empire, circa 300 CE, at about ten percent. The hypothetical inverse figure would be ninety percent not Christian. This is the figure that is helpful when considering the reasons why more temples were not forcibly eliminated.

⁶⁹ *Avodah Zara* 3.4.

⁷⁰ Jerome *Vita Hilarionis* 20.

⁷¹ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry*.

This is a lot of people, a lot of public opinion, and a lot of elites with a vested interest in keeping the Empire pagan. Pagan temples like the Marneion of Gaza were the dominant established locations for using visible acts of religiosity to accumulate social capital, prestige, and legitimacy. Since we have little information to the contrary, we should assume that the *curiales* or *proteuontes* of most Palestinian cities had a similar vested interest in keeping this thoroughly pagan route to social capital intact and functioning as it always had. As previously argued in Chapter One, the demise of temples is indicative of the collapse of this system. How or why this happened are questions that might be inferred on a case by case basis.

Any pagan household in Palestine would have contained objects of worship, any road would have been dotted with pagan shrines commemorating one numinous location or another. Sacred groves, caves, and hill-tops were a ubiquitous part of the ancestral Canaanite landscape. John Wilkinson suggests that the common Muslim *awliā*, which are small domed chapels supposed to contain a Muslim saint's remains, may in fact commemorate such longstanding spots on the landscape.⁷² Although Jewish and Christian communities were prominent in some places, the religious and social environment in Palestine at the end of the third century was overwhelmingly pagan by default.

⁷² John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 2002), 33.

Chapter III

An Accounting of the Temples

Physical remains discovered archaeologically, or other forms of strong evidence, indicate the presence of forty-four pagan temples in the region of Palestine. This chapter will describe these temples within the context of the communities where they were located. I have considered “strong” evidence to consist of archaeological remains (including inscriptions), reliable literary references, and occasionally coins. Often there have been multiple sources of evidence for an individual temple, which is unproblematic. In other cases, particularly those for which only coins or literary evidence exists, I have exercised due caution and taken the possibility of error seriously in my analysis. There are only four temples in my study that are known from coins alone. I feel confident in this group for reasons that I will explain shortly. There are nine temples that are known from literary sources alone. Seven of these are particularly problematic. They are from Gaza, and mentioned in Mark the Deacon’s account. I have isolated them from my analysis for statistical reasons, which I will explain in Chapter Six.

I have constructed a spreadsheet database for recording how I assess the end-fate of the actual, physical buildings in my study. It is included, in complete form, in the appendix. The reader is invited to consult this as they proceed.

Many of these forty-four temples may very well have been operating normally through the end of the third century. This is certainly the tip of the iceberg in terms of the total quantity of such monuments at that date. Actual architectural remains, literary and epigraphic references, and numismatic imagery, some of which is suggestive of specific, real buildings, indicates a thoroughly pagan urban landscape dominated by temples. This

chapter will investigate the sites where these temples have been found, and discuss the known, or at least very probable, ways in which they met their end.

The following descriptions of Palestinian sites with pagan temples is divided into two parts. The first part is about urban sites and the second is about rural sites. To some extent the distinction between the two is artificial, because cities were closely tied to their hinterlands, and rural temples were utilized by nearby urban populations.

We might also suppose that finer grained distinctions existed in antiquity, although these sub-categories are often impossible to discern with accuracy today. We might hypothetically distinguish sites located within cities (but outside of the dense urban core), from sites outside but within proximity of a city, from those at such a distance that visitation from the city was likely to be minimal. In the latter case these temples were so remote that we might presume that they were used primarily by villagers in the surrounding areas, rather than incorporated into distant urban cult practices. Our sample size for rural temples is very small because archaeologists do not focus their efforts on rural areas and the outskirts of cities.

Strong evidence for temples has been found at fourteen urban sites and eight rural sites in Palestine. Some of these sites have more than one example. The events surrounding the destruction of the temples at these sites will be described, if known. This is a distinct minority of the total number of examples that we have. The sites where Constantine was supposed to have suppressed paganism form another special group. Some will be described here briefly, but further discussion of the group as a whole is reserved for the next chapter.

Coins as Evidence

Numismatics has been one of the main guides that I used when locating the sites in my study, and I have also used them frequently in my analysis. I have only accepted four temples in my study that are evidenced only by coins, however. I will explain my reasons here. These examples are marked appropriately in my appendix. I feel confident that they are real buildings.

Many have wondered how helpful coins are when trying to understand the religious landscape of Palestine. With the exception of the temple of Zeus in Neapolis, it is notoriously difficult to unambiguously identify specific pagan temples on coins.¹ Schematic, symbolic, and fantastic numismatic depictions suggest the importance of factors other than architectural reality on these images. The space available on a die, wishful thinking, and artistic short-hand make many temples, seen on coins, unidentifiable on the ground. A coin depicting the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, minted by the leadership of the Bar Kochba revolt long after the destruction of that building, indicates the difficulty involved in positing that extant temples necessarily stand behind those depicted on coins.²

The point of the images on the coins was to show how the leaders of a community wanted their city to be represented. Famous landmarks were seen as important in this regard. They could thus be represented in caricature form, or resurrected from the past. They could also be represented with a high degree of architectural verisimilitude, and

¹ Ya'akov Meshorer, *City Coins of Eretz-Israel and the Decapolis in the Roman Period* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1985), n° 126, 135-7, 140-8.

² Leo Mildenberg, *The Coinage of the Bar Kokhba War* (Aarau: Verlag Sauerländer, 1984), 31-48.

show the pride that a community felt in a monument that had just recently been built, or that was a long-time fixture of the city.

Scholarly opinion on this issue is diverse and the published literature vast, particularly on the scale of the Empire as a whole.³ Marvin Tameanko has demonstrated that a 1:1 relationship with architectural and chronological reality existed for many famous buildings from Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor.⁴ Achim Lichtenberger points to the importance of a smaller-scale, regional, and case-by-case analysis for examples from Palestine.⁵ He reinforces the idea that, at the very least, coins show us how the people who ran the mints wanted their city to be perceived. He also suggests that the details of topography, and prominent architectural peculiarity, reinforce an identification of a real temple on a coin. I would further suggest that a three-quarter view of a building be taken as evidence that a temple was real, because someone could, in fact, walk around it and view it from different sides. Nicole Belayche has expressed a significant concern with coins that appear to depict temples of Tyche.⁶ These types in particular, in Palestine, show us abstracted architecture more frequently than good evidence for actual cultic buildings dedicated to the goddess.

³ Thomas L. Donaldson, *Architectural Medals of Classical Antiquity* (London: Day and Son, 1859); Thomas Drew-Bear, "Representations of Temples on the Greek Imperial Coinage," *Museum Notes of the American Numismatic Society* 19 (1974): 27-63; Martin J. Price and Bluma L. Trell, *Coins and their Cities: Architecture on the Ancient Coins of Greece, Rome, and Palestine* (London: Vecchi, 1977).

⁴ Marvin Tameanko, *Monumental Coins: Buildings and Structures on Ancient Coinage* (Iola: Krause Publications, 1999).

⁵ Achim Lichtenberger, "Coin Iconography and Archaeology: Methodological Considerations of Architectural Depictions on City Coins of Palestine," in Oren Tal and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2017), 197-220.

⁶ Nicole Belayche, "Tychè et la Tychè dans les cités de la Palestine romaine," *Syria* 80 (2003), 111-38.

It is sometimes impossible to determine if coins represent duplicates of temples otherwise evidenced archaeologically or in the literature. I do not count these examples separately in my study. I also do not count abstract depictions of temples without corroboration from other sources of evidence.

Although frequently symbolic, and not always representative of real buildings, coins with pagan iconography can nevertheless often indicate the widespread pagan aspect of ancient cities. Numismatic depictions of temples can, in fact, help us to understand architectural and sociological realities on the ground, because they show us how the people who ran the cities wanted their communities to be represented. In most Palestinian cities of the early fourth century, this group of people was surely overwhelmingly pagan. Further, we might postulate a limit in the social hierarchies of Palestinian cities that Christians and Jews could not pass through without making concessions to the majority culture.

Urban Temples

Caesarea Philippi

Caesarea Philippi was founded as a city by Herod Philip at a preexisting sacred site known as Paneas, or Baniyas. A famous battle episode in Polybius links the site with the god Pan as early as 200 BCE.⁷ It was likely that Herod Philip created the city by bringing in a population from the surrounding villages, much as his brother had done in Tiberias.⁸ By the second century C.E. Paneas had been administratively subordinated to

⁷ Polybius *Histories* 16.18-20.

⁸ Josephus *Antiquities* 18.2.27-8; *War* 2.168.

some unidentified city on the Phoenician coast, where it appears to have remained for centuries.⁹ By Late Antiquity Paneas had declined in status and fortunes, although it was still a reasonable-sized urban settlement going into the time of the Arab conquest.¹⁰

The ritual courtyard complex near the cave held to be sacred to Pan is famous and well-known. It included a Temple of Zeus Heliopolitanus as well as smaller shrines, cut into the cliff face and dedicated to other deities, such as Nemesis. The sacred dancing-goats of Pan were kept there. Much scholarly opinion, taking Josephus literally, considers the ruins of either one of two unidentifiable buildings adjacent to the cave as the Augusteum mentioned by Josephus.¹¹ A temple of Tyche also appears on coins, and seems to represent a real building.¹²

Although the earthquake of 363 CE likely had a detrimental effect on the site, Andrea Berlin finds evidence for continued ritual practices at the courtyard extending into the fifth century.¹³ There are several literary references to Christian miracles at the site, intended to disprove the power of the pagan gods, and the list of participants at the Nicaea council mentions the city's bishop, indicating a Christian community of

⁹ Claudius Ptolemy *Geography* 5.14.

¹⁰ Shoshana Israeli "The Baniyas Population in Light of the Historical and Archaeological Evidence," in V. Tzaferis and S. Israeli (ed.) *Paneas 2* (Jerusalem: Publications of the Israeli Antiquities Authority, 2008), 233-46.

¹¹ Josephus *Antiquities* 15.363-4; Ehud Netzer, *The Architecture of Herod, the Great Builder* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 218-222; Zvi Maoz, "The Sanctuary of Pan at Baniyas," *Qadmoniot* 115 (1998): 18-25.

¹² Ya'akov Meshorer, *City Coins of Eretz-Israel and the Decapolis in the Roman Period* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1985) n° 193.

¹³ S.P. Brock, "A Letter Attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem on the Rebuilding of the Temple," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 40 (1977): 267-86; Andrea Berlin, "The Archaeology of Ritual: The Sanctuary of Pan at Baniyas/Caesarea Philippi," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 315 (1999): 27-45.

reasonable size at that time.¹⁴ Nevertheless there is no evidence for civil disturbances, violent confrontation, or the ritualized demolition of the sacred buildings.

Most scholars presume that pagan practices quietly tapered off after the fifth century, and that the Arab occupation was later responsible for quarrying the buildings.¹⁵ Quarrying activities are problematic from the point of view of dating them, because removing stones eliminates evidence rather than adding evidence. They are also a ubiquitous factor in the destruction of most temples. Alone, they cannot explain why a temple became vulnerable in the first place.

I would also suggest that the evidence from Baniyas suggests the persistence of cult practices, but does not speak to the actual survival of the buildings themselves. There is no reason to believe that the temples at Baniyas needed to be standing for people to continue visiting the site for ritual dining purposes. In fact, visiting a potentially ruined temple complex sounds like something that Asclepiades, the Neoplatonist mentioned as visiting Baalbeck in Chapter One, might do.¹⁶

Bet Shean

Bet Shean was a city of the Decapolis with a foundation legend that linked it closely to the mythology of Dionysus. A temple of Zeus Akraios was located on the hill overlooking the center of the city. This identification has been made on the basis of an

¹⁴ Shoshana Israeli "The Baniyas Population in Light of the Historical and Archaeological Evidence," in V. Tzaferis and S. Israeli (ed.) *Paneas 2* (Jerusalem: Publications of the Israeli Antiquities Authority, 2008), 233-46.

¹⁵ Zvi Maoz, "The Sanctuary of Pan at Baniyas," *Qadmoniot* 115 (1998): 18-25.

¹⁶ Frank R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 1:38; *Damascius Epit. Phot.* 93.

inscribed sacrificial altar.¹⁷ A temple located at the base of the hill, in a large rectangular complex, was probably dedicated to Dionysus. The complex strongly resembles the sacred enclosure surrounding the temple of Artemis in Gerasa. Three other unidentified temples have been found, near the agora and the theater.¹⁸

The city was damaged by the earthquake of 363 CE. It is probable that the temples suffered adverse effects from the event. Later quarrying and construction activity, however, probably eliminated the earthquake rubble, as part of an apparent urban renewal project at Bet Shean in the years after 363 CE. That activity problematizes the distinction between earthquake damage, and the intentional demolition of potentially offensive buildings.

Any remains of the temple of Zeus left after 363 CE were dismantled, and a round church was built on the spot, partially utilizing the foundations of the temple.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the excavators of the buildings did not keep detailed records of their work. Based on architectural details the church seems likely to have been constructed sometime in the fifth or sixth centuries. None of the above-ground architecture of the original temple was left standing in the church, similar to the case of the octagonal church built on the site of the Augusteum at Caesarea Maritima.

Although any number of scenarios might be hypothesized regarding the date and character of the destruction of the temple of Zeus, its end-state suggests that it was

¹⁷ Y. Tsafirir, "Further Evidence for the Cult of Zeus Akraios," *Israel Exploration Journal* 39 (1989), 76-8.

¹⁸ Y. Tsafirir, "Urbanism at Scythopolis-Bet Shean in the Fourth through Seventh Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 85-146.

¹⁹ A. Rowe, *The Four Canaanite Temples* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), pl. II.

systematically eliminated, sometime between the fourth and sixth centuries. The state of the temple prior to this event is uncertain, as is the length of time that might have elapsed between its near-complete destruction and the building of the church. The vague chronology and lack of details recorded by the excavators is unfortunate, because it is unclear if this scenario should be interpreted as one of extended use of the temple, or extended disuse of a standing building, or an extended time with only ruins sitting on the top of the hill. The ambiguous gap in the building phases, however, is again paralleled by the similar stagnation of the site of the Augusteum in Caesarea.

The location of the temple of Zeus on top of the hill presents a commanding aspect that dominates the view from the lower city. Whatever the hypothetical destructive event may have been, the hilltop made an attractive site for the construction of an important Christian building. Demolition of the temple might have simply been a matter of urban renewal, or public safety, following an earthquake. The ruins of the temple may have been a simple physical impediment to the construction of the church. Or, the temple might have been perceived as dangerous. Its prominent location in the city may have made its demolition an effective demonstration of Christian dominance. The church's circular shape, and prominent elevated site, is again reminiscent of the octagonal church in Caesarea.

A rectangular temple in the vicinity of the Bet Shean theater was completely demolished sometime prior to the construction of the Byzantine agora, perhaps in the mid-fifth century. Inscriptions on altars lead Mazor to conclude that this temple was

dedicated to Demeter and Kore.²⁰ A second unidentified temple near that location was leveled, and although the terraces, altars, and pools remained, they were concealed by earth and presumably new construction.²¹ Just as in the case of the temple of Zeus, a similar set of questions regarding process pertain. Although eventual elimination is obvious, the character of the demolition work and the state of the buildings prior to that demolition is unclear. Unlike the temple of Zeus, there is no evidence for the replacement of these temples by Christian holy buildings.

The archaeological evidence from the temples at the base of the hill, however, provides insight into the process of their destruction. Their ruins were allowed to stand, in a dilapidated state, for over a century after the date of the 363 CE earthquake.

The pronaos of a round, unidentified temple was allowed to stand well into the eighth century, while its *cella* was demolished to the level of the podium (still above ground) at the end of the fourth century.²² The eventual collapse of the pronaos occurred as a result of the earthquake of 749 CE, which also destroyed the nymphaeum directly adjacent to the temple.²³ Inscriptions found in the tumble from the eighth century collapse of this second building mention reconstruction work undertaken by the governor,

²⁰ G. Mazor, "Imperial Cult in the Decapolis: Nysa Scythopolis as a Test Case," in A. Killebrew and G. Fassbeck (ed.), *Viewing Ancient Art and Archaeology: VeHinnei Rachel – Essays in Honor of Rachel Hachlili* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 355-83.

²¹ Y. Tsafir, "The Fate of Cult Places in Palestine: The Archaeological Evidence with Emphasis on Bet Shean," in Hayim Lapin (ed.), *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine* (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1998), 213-14.

²² *Ibid.*, 215-16.

²³ Gideon Foerster and Yoram Tsafir, "The Bet Shean Excavation Project: B. Center of Bet Shean-North; C. The Amphitheater and Its Surroundings," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 6 (1987-88), 26-7; Gideon Foerster, and Yoram Tsafir, "The Bet Shean Project - 1988: Hebrew University Expedition," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 7-8 (1988-89), 18-9; Gideon Foerster and Yoram Tsafir. "The Bet Shean Excavation Project (1989-1991): City Center (North); Excavations of the Hebrew University Expedition." *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 11 (1992), 3-32.

Artemiodorus, completed in the early years of the fifth century.²⁴ Pipes from the reconstruction of the *nymphaeum* actually pass through the area of the round temple in a way that would have been incompatible with a standing building. A monument, identified as a kalybe by Mazor, also stood next to the *nymphaeum* and was demolished by the 363 CE earthquake.²⁵

The implication is that Artemiodorus initiated some repair work in Bet Shean that was in fact completed several decades after the 363 CE earthquake. He fixed the *nymphaeum*, allowed the pronaos of the round temple to stand, and probably also completed the job that the earthquake began on that temple's *cella*. He may have done this simply for reasons of convenience when undertaking the *nymphaeum* repair work. The fact that this work occurred at the expense of the round temple's *cella* speaks to the priorities of the governor and his understanding of public opinion in Bet Shean in the second half of the fourth century.

Roman civic administrators are not known for purposefully inciting civil disturbances in their cities. We might thus reasonably speculate that Artemiodorus believed his actions to be politically viable, relative to whatever pagan or Christian public opinion in Bet Shean may have been at the time. There is no evidence that he miscalculated. Artemiodorus' repair work implies a late fourth century populace in Bet Shean that had no apparent need for the social function provided by the round temple, yet did not want to see it completely obliterated as a visible presence. Even if Artemiodorus'

²⁴ Y. Tsafrir, "The Fate of Cult Places," in Hayim Lapin (ed.), *Religious and Ethnic Communities* (1998), 215.

²⁵ G. Mazor, "Imperial Cult in the Decapolis" (2016), 355-83.

precise solution is unique, it points to the forces of diverse public opinion that equivalent individuals in other communities surely reckoned with.

The temple that stood in the rectangular enclosure at the base of the Bet Shean hill, perhaps dedicated to Dionysus, was completely destroyed and replaced with some sort of civic building. The dating of the new civic building is unclear, but its construction likely occurred in the fifth or sixth centuries.²⁶ Mazor believes the temple to have been dedicated to the Imperial cult.²⁷ The central location near the agora would support either interpretation.

Many of this temple's components were quarried away for reuse in elsewhere in the city. Nevertheless, many items such as column bases, drums, and capitals were actually left on site and buried under the new building.²⁸ The *temenos* and its peristyle, despite having also been pagan sacred space, the location of blood sacrifices, and the functional part in the public operation of the temple, were left intact.

Yoram Tsafrir suggests that the *cellae* of the Bet Shean temples were the truly dangerous parts, in the eyes of local Christians, given that they were considered the residences of demons. Other parts, including the pronaos, peristyle, or *temenos*, might have been seen as safe in a ritual sense. They might also have been perceived as an essential part of the city's aesthetic character. Tsafrir observes the obvious contrast between the examples of partial demolition at Bet Shean and the complete purification of the sites of former temples in Jerusalem and Gaza.²⁹

²⁶ Y. Tsafrir, "The Fate of Cult Places" (1998), 215.

²⁷ G. Mazor, "Imperial Cult in the Decapolis" (2016), 355-83.

²⁸ Y. Tsafrir, "The Fate of Cult Places" (1998), 215.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 205-8.

Any original temple parts left on site, including items that were buried, must have been perceived as safe for Christians. Conversely, the destruction of the *cellae*, the literal homes of the pagan gods, must not have been accompanied by exceptional levels of pagan political resistance.

Tel Dor

Tel Dor was a coastal port given independence by Pompey and used as a staging area for Roman armies during the Jewish revolts.³⁰ It was the site of several temples likely dedicated to local Phoenician gods, or their Hellenized variants.³¹ These monuments included a large *temenos* near the seaside. One Semitic-style temple, entered from the long-axis like the Temple of Bel in Palmyra, was in fact the largest temple in Palestine.³² The remains of a Hellenistic temple have been found under an exceptionally large fourth century Byzantine church.³³ Doros, the son of Poseidon, was the main god of the city. It seems likely that the city was not, in fact, named after him. Instead, he was probably imported from Greece on account of his similar name.³⁴ We might speculate that one of the temples in Dor was dedicated to him, on account of the fact that cities named after a god typically had prominent temples dedicated to their namesake.

³⁰ Josephus *Antiquities* 14.4.4

³¹ N. Belayche, *Pagan Cults* (2001), 178-79.

³² Ephraim Stern and Ilan Sharon, "Tel Dor: 1992/93," *Hadashot Archiologiot* 14 (1995), 61-71.

³³ Claudine Dauphin, "From Apollo and Asclepius to Christ: Pilgrimage and Healing at the Temple and Episcopal Basilica," *Liber Annuus* 49 (1999), 397-429.

³⁴ Ya'akov Meshorer, *City Coins of Eretz-Israel and the Decapolis in the Roman Period* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1985), 16.

It is unclear how long the pagan monuments of Dor remained functional, although the city in general declined markedly after the founding of nearby Caesarea Maritima, less than twenty kilometers away to the south. Pliny describes Dor as if it had been destroyed.³⁵ The city was prosperous and saw construction under Hadrian and into the beginning of the third century.³⁶ Eusebius, however, says in the *Onomastikon* (written before 325 CE) that the city was deserted.³⁷ The Christian pilgrim Paula visited Dor at the end of the fourth century, and she described a city in ruins. Jerome, who travelled with her for some distance on her travels, contrasts what she saw at Dor with the concurrent prosperity of Caesarea.³⁸

These descriptions of Dor imply that parts of the city were intermittently abandoned, even if the degree of the problem was exaggerated. The church at Dor, for instance, was built in the fourth century, and is evidence of prosperity in the city. A coin of Constantius, found directly upon a mosaic floor in the church, tells us that it was built and in-use before coins from his reign (337-361 CE) went out of circulation.³⁹ The church was large, well-appointed, and was used as a port-of-entry for pilgrims to the holy land. It was a healing sanctuary, with a set-up for sanctifying oil by running it through two tombs, certainly occupied by the remains of saints.⁴⁰ The city also had its own

³⁵ Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 5.17.

³⁶ G. Dahl, "The Materials for the History of Dor," *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 20 (1915), 1-131; Ephraim Stern, *Excavations at Dor, Final Report: Volume 1A, Areas A and C, Introduction and Stratigraphy* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1995), 279-82.

³⁷ Eusebius *Onomastikon* 78.8.

³⁸ Jerome *Epistle* 108.8.

³⁹ C. Dauphin, "From Apollo and Asclepius to Christ," (1999), 397-429.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

bishop, which implies a substantial Christian community. The city could not have been doing quite as poorly as Pliny, Eusebius, Jerome, and Paula say.⁴¹

The temple had two phases, both dated to before the coming of Rome. The church, in fact, sat directly upon the foundations of the second phase, which was part of a complex reminiscent of that at Delphi. Structurally, the church negotiated features of the temple reminiscent of oracular shrines (features which were thereby destroyed in the process). For instance, it looks like the church's cisterns were installed into pre-existing bedrock cuts, likely created for the subterranean adyton of a pythia.⁴² The healing function of the church may have been a replication of the function of the temple. Perhaps the Hellenistic temple was dedicated to Apollo or Asclepius.⁴³ The temple was burnt in a fire, and spolia from it was used as construction material in the walls and paved surfaces of the church. The treatment of the temple and its spolia is reminiscent of the fate of materials from the Marneion in Gaza, although any type of ritual mockery is impossible to determine.⁴⁴ It is also unclear how much time elapsed between the destruction of the temple and the construction of the church.

Nevertheless, the temple under the church may very well have been defunct long before it was destroyed. The city's hard-times and abandoned neighborhoods had several witnesses over the course of three centuries. Clearly Dor struggled economically. Perhaps the pagan temples were intermittently funded. We might hypothesize that they went out of commission sometime in the third century. It may be that the physical

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

destruction of the temple under the church was accompanied only by the citizen's hope for pilgrim's money, rather than any sort of public pagan outrage.

Caesarea Maritima

According to Josephus, Caesarea Maritima was founded by Herod with the intention that it would be cosmopolitan and international in character, the local administrative center for the region, a commercial hub, and the main port of entry.⁴⁵ These are traits that the city maintained for centuries after his time. Roman administrators and military officers established their headquarters in the city, two of which have been found and excavated.⁴⁶ With these things in mind it should be no surprise, despite the existence of significant Christian, Samaritan, and Jewish groups in the city, that Caesarea was overwhelmingly pagan in character going into the fourth century.

Plentiful coins and statuary from the city, for instance, depict a plethora of gods. It is oft argued that this sort of iconography speaks to how city leaders wished to represent their community, rather than any type of social or architectural realities on the ground. Meshorer notes that coins from Caesarea are among the most common in Palestine.⁴⁷ The sheer quantity of the material is difficult to explain without postulating some real reflection of the pagan population of the city.

⁴⁵ Josephus *Antiquities* 15.331-41.

⁴⁶ Joseph Patrich, "A Government Compound in Roman-Byzantine Caesarea", in Ron Margolin (ed.), *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division B, History of the Jewish People* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2000), 33-44.

⁴⁷ Ya'akov Meshorer, *City Coins of Eretz-Israel and the Decapolis in the Roman Period* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1985), 20.

An inscription, found in secondary use, indicates the presence of a building dedicated to the imperial cult of Tiberius.⁴⁸ The original building itself has never been found, however, and it could very well have been some other type of monument related to the emperor. Alföldi interprets the inscription to mean a lighthouse.⁴⁹

A massive porphyry statue of Hadrian is almost certainly to be associated with a Hadrianum mentioned in an inscription dating to the fifth century.⁵⁰ The building was apparently still standing at that time because Flavius Euelpidius, *clarissimus*, repaired the steps. It seems likely that the building still filled some social function in the city because otherwise the expenditure for repair work would have been a waste. Scholarly opinion is divided, however, as to whether the Imperial cult would have still been practiced there. Belayche suggests that the fifth century is a rather late date for a pagan monument to still be the site of public sacrifices in this particular city.⁵¹ She also suggests that the building may have been repurposed, intact, for some neutral civic function. Speculation like this, however, may cause us to eliminate possibilities out of hand and without much evidence. In either case, this building was evidently still standing and recognizable as a pagan monument at a late date. It was apparently tolerated and not destroyed.

The statue of Hadrian was not found in its original location, yet it was still publicly visible in Late Antiquity. It was moved to one corner of a public square. The

⁴⁸ *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* 2:1277; E. Weber, "Zur Inschrift des Pontius Pilatus," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 171 (1971), 194-200.

⁴⁹ G. Alföldi, "Pontius Pilatus und das Tiberieum von Caesarea Maritima," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 18 (1999), 85-108; G. Alföldi, "Nochmals: Pontius Pilatus und das Tiberieum von Caesarea Maritima," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 21 (2002), 133-48.

⁵⁰ L. Di Segni, *Dated Greek Inscriptions from Palestine from the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Ph.D., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 458-60.

⁵¹ N. Belayche, *Pagan Cults* (2001), 180.

head is missing, perhaps an act of later vandalism, or perhaps an attempt to make the statue safe for public display. Another headless male figure, perhaps Zeus, and a statue of Tyche, cut in half, were found on two other corners of the square.⁵²

This treatment of pagan statues was not unheard of elsewhere around the Empire in Late Antiquity. They could be mutilated and mounted in visible locations in churches, perhaps like trophies. Constantinople was full of repurposed pagan statuary. Sometimes crosses could be inscribed on the foreheads of statues that remained on public display.⁵³ Saradi suggests that this may have been an effort to reclaim admired pagans from antiquity, a sort of post-mortem, retroactive, and symbolic baptism.

It may seem unlikely that purposefully mutilated statues would have stood on public display in Caesarea as any sort of official civic ornament. Nevertheless, the Byzantine stylistic aesthetic embraced such things. Further, statues were frequently believed in antiquity to literally hold entities that were capable of prophecy. Plutarch, for instance, considered this to be an unreasonable but common part of pagan religiosity. He digresses significantly in his biography of Coriolanus to rationalize the speaking statue from the story, and supposed prophesying statues in general, in terms of non-supernatural phenomena.⁵⁴ In Late Antiquity the entities in statues were seen as hostile, and either special purification rites, or symbolic displays of Christian domination, could take the form of official, sanctioned vandalism.⁵⁵ However we interpret their treatment, the

⁵² Michael Avi-Yonah, "The Caesarea Porphyry Statue," *Israel Exploration Journal* 20 (1970), 203-8.

⁵³ Helen Saradi, "The Use of Ancient Spolia in Byzantine Monuments: The Archaeological and Literary Evidence," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 3 (1997), 395-423.

⁵⁴ Plutarch *Coriolanus* 37-38.

⁵⁵ H. Saradi, "Ancient Spolia," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 3 (1997), 395-423.

statues of Hadrian and Tyche were pagan remnants, purposefully curated by a Christian city. Public attitude towards the statues may have been like that towards the partially demolished temples of Bet Shean.

Tyche probably had an actual, physical temple dedicated to her at Caesarea, rather than the symbolic, imaginary temple that she had in most cities.⁵⁶ This is indicated by statuary, coins with an unusual level of architectural detail, and a famous artifact known as the Caesarea Cup.

The cup dates to the fourth century. It is an ornate metal bowl with sophisticated decorative inlays. It depicts the foundation legend of Straton's Tower, which was the original name of the Phoenician city that Herod the Great renovated and renamed when he created Caesarea. The names of the figures depicted on the item are inscribed above their heads, a typical practice on such works of art, and in this case they allow little doubt in terms of who was depicted.⁵⁷ Asclepius, Apollo, and Tyche are all featured prominently.

The coins suggest a monument dedicated to Tyche that had a triple arch, probably the *adyton* or tripartite *cella* at the rear of a temple, or perhaps a large shrine located in a commercial area. In fact, one quarter of the total quantity of coins from Caesarea feature her image.⁵⁸ The current find-spot of the mutilated statue, on the so-called "statues street," is probably close to the location of the goddess's temple, as

⁵⁶ Nicole Belayche, "Tychè et la Tychè dans le cités de la Palestine romaine," *Syria* 80 (2003), 111-38.

⁵⁷ G. Finkielsztejn, "Asklepios Leontoukhos et le mythe de la coupe de Césarée maritime," *Revue Biblique*, 93 (1986), 419-28.

⁵⁸ Leo Kadman, *Corpus Nummorum Palaestiniensium, vol. 2, The Coins of Caesarea Maritima* (Jerusalem: Numismatic Society, 1957), 50.

suggested by a figured Corinthian capital, featuring Tyche's image on one side, that was also found nearby.⁵⁹

A Mithraeum has been excavated within one room in a warehouse complex near the seaside.⁶⁰ A shrine dedicated to Kore/Isis, located in the western hippodrome, was converted to a reliquarium in Late Antiquity.⁶¹ Although these structures did not fill the same social function that monumental public temples did, they attest to the diversity and quantity of pagan practices in Caesarea, as well as the way that even the smaller monuments of paganism could be incorporated and transformed in a Christian city.

An Augusteum, built by Herod and described by Josephus, overlooked the Caesarea harbor on a small hill.⁶² It was either intentionally demolished, or quarried rapidly and thoroughly down to the bottom courses of its foundations, sometime near the end of the fourth century. The scant remains were subsequently obscured by fill dumps. Unidentified, *ad hoc* structures occupied the hill for about eighty years. Sometime around 480 CE the foundations of the temple were re-excavated and used as part of the substructure for an octagonal church.⁶³

⁵⁹ Moshe Fischer, "Figured Capitals in Roman Palestine: Marble Imports and Local Stone. Some Aspects of 'Imperial' and 'Provincial' Art," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (1989): 121, 112-32.

⁶⁰ R.J. Bull, "A Mithraic Medallion from Caesarea," *Israel Exploration Journal* 24 (1974), 187-90; R.J. Bull, *The Mithraeum at Caesarea Maritima* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2017).

⁶¹ Joseph Patrich, "Urban Space in Caesarea Maritima, Israel," in T.S. Burns and J.W. Eadie (ed.), *Urban Centers and Rural Context in Late Antiquity* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 77-110.

⁶² Josephus *Antiquities* 16.136-37.

⁶³ Jennifer Stabler and Kenneth G. Holum, "The Warehouse Quarter (area LL) and the Temple Platform (area TP), 1996-2000 and 2002 Seasons," in *Caesarea Reports and Studies: Excavations 1995-2007 Within the Old City and the Ancient Harbor*, ed. Kenneth Holum, Jennifer Stabler, and Eduard Reinhardt (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2008), 1-39.

The destruction of the temple was thorough. Any partial stages in the process have been obliterated, if they ever existed. It is entirely possible that there was never a ruined, half temple standing on the hill, and that it was instead done away with in a single destructive episode. This was certainly the opinion of the temple's excavator, Kenneth Holum. Holum noted the single filling operation, dated from coins to around 400 CE, that filled the hole left by the substructure of the temple. Holum also noted that spolia from the temple remained in the vicinity, perhaps intended as a stockpile of construction material for future projects.⁶⁴ Plaster sheathing from the temple columns was left on the ancient ground surface after the columns themselves were removed for use elsewhere. Holum's evidence suggests that a vast majority of the temple's substructure was done away with in one effort.

The fact that spolia remained on the site suggests that the temple remains were not perceived to be dangerous at the time of the building's disassembly, because they were not ritually disposed of. The re-excavation and reuse of the remnants of the foundation and other pieces of temple spolia, by the builders of the church, admits the possibility that they had knowledge of what originally occupied the site. It is possible that the Byzantine architects knew where to dig to find solid foundations, instead of simply finding them coincidentally. They may have recognized the original source of the spolia that they were recycling. The phenomenon also admits the possibility of some forethought and planning in terms of future projects, at the time of the original dismantling of the temple.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Holum, "Christianizing Caesarea: A Narrative from Archaeology Alone" (Paper presented at American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, Nov. 26 2016), 3-4.

Two generations is a long time, but not so long as to assume that the original temple had been forgotten.

We might speculate that concern about political feasibility, if not some more serious conflict, caused the long delay in construction activity at the site. Presumably someone believed the site of the temple to be safe, in a ritual sense, because of the unidentified building that occupied the space in the intermediate eighty-year period. If not, it was certainly made safe through the construction of the octagonal church, a generation or more after the time of the original destruction of the temple.

With the exception of the Augusteum it is unclear when the other pagan monuments in Caesarea might have gone out of use, or how they might have been treated. There is no reason to assume that their fate was in any way linked to that of the Augusteum, or that attitudes towards the safety of the various structures was in any way similar. As the examples from Bet Shean show, it was entirely possible for different pagan monuments within a single city to attract different levels of attention or inattention.

Samaria

Samaria had been the ninth century BCE capital of the northern kingdom. It was later notably developed by Hellenistic and Roman occupying presences, as well as Herod the Great, who renamed it Sebaste. The city was situated on a steep hill, enclosed by strong walls, and had a significant strategic military importance in the region. It was where Herod stationed his Samaritan cavalry auxiliary as well as his veterans.⁶⁵ It was also the site of several temples, one of which he built.⁶⁶ Several unidentified shrines,

⁶⁵ Josephus *Antiquities* 15.296-97.

perhaps *kalybae*, have been located near the city gates and the stadium.⁶⁷ Numismatic evidence with pagan iconography includes coins representing the Capitoline Triad. Despite the local Samaritan presence, it was a very pagan city.

The coins are suggestive of a real temple dedicated to the Triad, as yet undiscovered somewhere in the city. Architectural details are specific enough to depict a tetrastyle temple façade.⁶⁸ These coins were issued under Caracalla, to memorialize his father's elevation of Sebaste to a colony. Septimius Severus can be seen on these coins, being crowned by victory as he drives the plow around the city to establish its ritual boundary. The promotion in status was a recognition of the city siding with Septimius Severus instead of his rival, Pescinnius Niger, in the late second century civil war. It seems likely that a Roman garrison was brought to Sebaste at this time, a population which would have typically been pagan.

A third century temple dedicated to Kore/Isis was excavated by Crowfoot, Kenyon, and Sukenik. It has been discussed in reference to the assortment of Hellenistic religion, local beliefs, and imported cults that were part of the variety of Mediterranean paganism.⁶⁹ Kore seems to have been the most important god in the city, based upon numismatic evidence and other shrines found around the city.⁷⁰ The temple was

⁶⁶ Josephus *Wars* 1.403.

⁶⁷ John Winter Crowfoot, Kathleen Kenyon, and E. L. Sukenik, *The Buildings at Samaria* (London: Dawson's of Pall Mall, 1942).

⁶⁸ J. Crowfoot, G. Crowfoot, and K. Kenyon, *The Objects at Samaria* (London: Dawson's of Pall Mall, 1954), n° 17, 20.

⁶⁹ J.W. Crowfoot, *et al.*, *The Buildings at Samaria* (1942); Jodi Magness, "The Cults of Isis and Kore at Samaria-Sebaste in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," *Harvard Theological Review* 94 (2001), 157-77.

⁷⁰ N. Belayche, *Pagan Cults* (2001), 209.

eventually quarried down to its foundations. Various building materials from the temple were incorporated into nearby Byzantine structures, and some were left laying on the ground-surface nearby. This suggests that the temple was an active quarrying site for some time. To my knowledge we do not have dates for the Byzantine buildings, which would give us some idea about when the quarrying process was underway. The materials obtained, and the site itself, were evidentially not viewed as permanently contaminated by pagan activities, or else they would have been disposed of in a more methodical way.

The Augusteum, mentioned by Josephus and built by Herod, was also excavated by Crowfoot and Kenyon.⁷¹ The temple was located within a compound on the acropolis. The building history of the compound is moderately complicated, and differences of opinion exist in terms of determining and dating the construction phases.⁷² It was most likely built by Herod, perhaps in stages, and later replaced by fortifications under Septimius Severus.⁷³ Subsidiary and *ad hoc* structures were built into the cryptoporticus beneath the Augusteum sometime in the fourth century.⁷⁴ These included industrial facilities connected to the homes that were built against the walls of the temple. A lime kiln was built within one of these corridors, for reducing parts of the temple. The roof of the cryptoporticus had collapsed, evidenced by the reuse of stones in later structures built on the floor level. Columns from the temple above were rolled out of the way and stashed in this area, too. These structures and activities indicate that the temple itself was

⁷¹ J.W. Crowfoot, *et al.*, *The Buildings at Samaria* (1942).

⁷² G.A. Reisner, C.S. Fisher, and D.G. Lyon, *Harvard Excavation at Samaria 1908-1910* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), 177-79.

⁷³ Ehud Netzer, *The Architecture of Herod, the Great Builder* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 82-85.

⁷⁴ J.W. Crowfoot, *et al.*, *The Buildings at Samaria* (1942), 135-39.

no longer actively functioning. A society with vested interests in cult practices at the site would be unlikely to permit such encroachment of sacred space.

Aelia Capitolina

Jerusalem became a thoroughly pagan place after the second Jewish revolt. Hadrian re-founded Jerusalem as a colony, renaming it Aelia Capitolina.⁷⁵ Numismatic evidence indicates that the re-founding of the city predated the second revolt.⁷⁶ Ceramic evidence from sealed contexts along the eastern cardo suggest that Hadrian mandated reconstruction of the city even earlier, prior to his visit in 129/130 CE.⁷⁷ The city was likely in poor condition since the time of the first revolt, about sixty years before.

Hadrian banned Jews from Aelia Capitolina, as well as from the province of Judea. Eusebius, probably quoting Hegesippus, tells us that Christians of Jewish ancestry were likewise excluded, leaving a Gentile church and a Gentile bishop.⁷⁸ It became reasonably common for later Christian writers, such as Tertullian, to use the post-war ban to argue that Christianity had superseded its parent religion.⁷⁹ The religious distinction was certainly lost on the post-war Roman Imperial administration, who understood the ban in ethnic terms. Many Jews (and probably Christians) headed north to Galilee, or to

⁷⁵ Cassius Dio *History* 69.12-3.

⁷⁶ H. Eshel, "The Date of the Founding of Aelia Capitolina," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after their Discovery: Proceeding of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20-25, 1997*, ed. L.H. Schiffman, E. Tov, and J.C. VanderKam (Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 637-43; H. Eshel, "The Bar Kochba Revolt," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. S.T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)105-27.

⁷⁷ Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah, "The Foundation of Aelia Capitolina in Light of New Excavations along the Eastern Cardo," *Israel Exploration Journal* 64 (2014): 38-62.

⁷⁸ Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.6.3-4.

⁷⁹ Tertullian *Adversus Judaeos* 13.

the coastal cities. There is evidence that some minor Jewish presence continued in the region going into the third century, that there were special exceptions made occasionally, and that the prohibition became a bit lax with time.⁸⁰

Most of the information that we have about the prohibition of Jews comes from Christian sources, who sought to recast events in terms of a narrative of their own ascendancy and rightful appropriation.⁸¹ Despite Christian polemics, third century Aelia was not a Christian city, although there may have been some type of Christian community that remained, or that insinuated itself back into the city. Epiphanius claims that Christians in fact returned to the city almost immediately after the Bar Kochba revolt.⁸² Epiphanius testimony, however, implies that all Christians were categorized as Jews and initially expelled from Aelia. Epiphanius is also a very late source, writing over two centuries after the fact. Joan Taylor suggests that Epiphanius was simply passing along a tradition that was current in his own day.⁸³

The Tenth Legion Fretensis had been barracked in Jerusalem since the end of the first revolt in 70 CE. They continued to be barracked there until Diocletian relocated them to Aqaba, most likely during his reforms of the provinces around 290 CE.⁸⁴ The original legionary camp in Aelia would have had shrines for the use of its soldiers, as was typical. The veterans who did not convert to Christianity (presumably most of them),

⁸⁰ Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1976), 15-81.

⁸¹ Oded Irshai, "Christian Appropriation of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century: The Case of the Bordeaux Pilgrim," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99 (2009), 465-86.

⁸² Epiphanius *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* 14.

⁸³ J. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places* (1993), 211-12.

⁸⁴ *Notitia Dignitatum* 73.18; Eusebius *Onomastikon* 6.17.

settled in the city that grew around the camp, and continued to require the pagan religious institutions to which they were accustomed. The coins of Aelia Capitolina are representative of their needs. These coins portray an extremely large number of pagan gods, and the special iconographic items associated with those gods. These include depictions, or the representative symbols, of Dionysus, the Dioscuri, Hygeia, Aphrodite, Zeus, and Roma, among others.⁸⁵

Serapis, conflated with Asclepius, had a sanctuary at Bethesda by the two Probatic pools. These pools, mentioned in the Gospel of John, were reputed to have curative effects. Christ was said to have utilized the spot to perform a healing miracle.⁸⁶ Shimon Gibson accepts the identification with the place mentioned in the Gospel of John.⁸⁷

Coins of Serapis dating from 138-251 CE were commonly minted in Jerusalem. Coins depicting Hygeia, who was Asclepius' daughter, are also common, starting in the mid-third century.⁸⁸ The pools were likely co-opted by the Roman soldiers who were garrisoned in the city for over two centuries. The soldiers would have followed the pagan protocols of Asclepius in order to enjoy the healing effects.

This is indicated by small-finds and other features discovered during excavation at the site. Incubation niches, or individual baths, were cut into the bedrock. Pig bones

⁸⁵ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 162-78.

⁸⁶ John 5:1-9.

⁸⁷ Shimon Gibson, "The Excavations at the Bethesda Pool in Jerusalem," in Frans Bouwen (ed.), *Sainte-Anne de Jésus À Saladin* (Jerusalem: Saint Anne, 2011), 17-44.

⁸⁸ Y. Meshorer, "Hygeia in Aelia Capitolina," *The Israel Museum Journal* 1 (1982): 17-18.

likely represent the remnants of sacrificial victims. Inscribed clay miniatures of various body parts, a typical votive item, also point to the cult practices of Asclepius.⁸⁹

A depiction on a relief sculpture of Serapis with the body of a snake, coiled under the pediment of a temple, suggests both the presence of a syncretic cult and the appearance of pagan architecture at the spot.⁹⁰ The temple on the relief is a tetrastyle building with a Syrian gable and spiral-fluted columns. Scattered Corinthian column capitals and column drums that have been found at the site, which may have belonged to the temple. The temple in the relief sculpture is Doric, but that does not really raise any serious issues. There are plenty of potential explanations. Perhaps the artist was imprecise, or the temple was renovated at some point. A renovation under Hadrian seems a likely possibility.

The Probatic pools, during their time in operation as a pagan sanctuary, were likely to have been located immediately outside of the city. Today they are located between the Lion's Gate and the Ecce Homo arch, within the currently standing Ottoman walls of the Old City. The arch, however, may be a remnant of a Hadrianic city gate, thus placing the pools outside.⁹¹ Perhaps the arch was one of the side arches in a triple-gated monument. Stylistically it is a match for the Hadrianic period Damascus Gate.⁹² A forum, the so-called "lithostroton," is also frequently reconstructed as having been

⁸⁹ Antoine Duprèz, *Jésus et les dieux guérisseurs. À propos de Jean, V*, Revue Biblique 12 (Leuven, Peeters, 1970), 28-54.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Hugues Vincent and Félix-Marie Abel, *Jérusalem nouvelle* (Paris: Gabalda, 1922), 24.

⁹² Caroline Arnould, *Les arcs romains de Jérusalem: Architecture, décor et urbanisme* (Göttingen: Vanenhock and Ruprecht, 1997), 84-93; Yaron Eliav, *God's Mountain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2005), 95-99.

located in the stretch between the arch and the Lion's Gate. The shrine of Asclepius would have thus been just outside the limits of Hadrian's city. Nicole Belayche notes that an Asclepion in such a location would have been a fairly recognizable landmark at the gates of a Roman city, as observed by Plutarch.⁹³

The cult of Asclepius was known to be favored by soldiers. Thus the sanctuary may have declined in popularity after Diocletian relocated the Tenth Legion to Aqaba, because soldiers and veterans had made up a large percentage of the original Aelia population. For the same reason, the relocation of this population (or at least its active-duty members) might also mark a more generalized decline in paganism in the city.

Byzantine churches were eventually built on the site of the Asclepion, the earliest constructed in the fifth century. Saint Anne eventually came to be associated with the spot. The pools continued to have a reputation for healing. There is no literary record of the temple or its destruction. This would be odd if the temple managed to survive into the time of Eusebius, because of the evident relish he had for mentioning the destruction of such places. It may be that this temple was out of commission significantly before the writing of the *Vita Constantini*.

Coins depicting Aphrodite, Tyche standing at altars and/or temples, and the Capitoline Triad are also strongly suggestive of real temples in Aelia Capitolina.⁹⁴ The literary evidence for two of these temples is famous, and typically taken at face-value by scholars. Dio Cassius located the Capitolium on the Temple Mount, and Eusebius located the temple of Aphrodite in the expanded northwest quadrant of Hadrian's new

⁹³ N. Belayche, *Pagan Cults* (2001), 164; Plutarch *Quaestiones Romanae* 94.

⁹⁴ Leo Kadman, *The Coins of Aelia Capitolina* (Jerusalem: Universitas, 1956), 36-43; Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 170, 175.

city.⁹⁵ Eusebius recounts the famous ritual demolition, at the hands of Constantine, of the temple that he identified as belonging to Aphrodite. There is some possibility, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, that this understanding is wrong. It may be that the text of Dio Cassius was corrupted, and that Eusebius had erroneously attributed to Aphrodite the temple that was the actual Capitolium of Jerusalem.

Acco

Acco, known as Ptolemais at the time of its Hellenistic occupation, was one of the main ports in the region. This is where the Roman legions would make landfall, and set up base, on several occasions. It became a Roman colony, which involved the settlement of legionary veterans.

Many deities, and many depictions of temple architecture, appear on coins from Acco. Most of the temple architecture, however, seems to be of the schematic, symbolic type rather than representative of real buildings. The gods depicted include Tyche, Heracles, Serapis, Artemis, and Zeus.⁹⁶

It seems likely, given the history of the city as a Hellenistic foundation, bustling port, and legionary encampment, that at least some of these gods had actual temples dedicated to them. Construction of a post office in modern Acco exposed architectural remains that have been identified as a Hellenistic temple. It was dedicated to Zeus Soter by Antiochus VII Sidetes, based upon an inscription found at the site.⁹⁷ The temple

⁹⁵ Cassius Dio *History* 69.12; Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.26.

⁹⁶ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 3-5, 11, 13-17.

⁹⁷ S. Applebaum, "The Roman Colony of Ptolemais-Akko," in A. Kasher, U. Rappaport and G. Fuks (ed.), *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1990), 135-40.

probably served soldiers that Antiochus garrisoned in the city. An elephant bone has been found in a neighboring building that may have been some type of military facility like a barracks or stable. The temple was destroyed sometime after the first century BCE, in unknown circumstances. It was subsumed by later urban development.⁹⁸ Water pipes and a Byzantine building with a plastered floor were built over the spot. These features may have been part of some type of industrial installation.

This is the city where Rabban Gamaliel was reputed to have had a famous conversation with a Greek philosopher about visiting the baths, despite the statue of Aphrodite that could be found there.⁹⁹ The conversation is likely apocryphal. The Greek philosopher might very well be an invented strawman. Nevertheless, this conversation bears witness to various Jewish strategies for dealing with the pervasive paganism of Roman occupied Palestine.

Much of the *Avodah Zara* tractate of the Talmud, from which the conversation comes, has utility when dealing with issues such as those presented in this dissertation. Ya'akov Meshorer, for instance, uses it in his discussion of pagan temples in Palestine.¹⁰⁰ As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, it is also helpful when reconstructing the sociological dynamic of being a religious minority in a pagan-dominated cultural landscape, as Lapin and Schwartz both do.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Avodah Zara* 3.4.

¹⁰⁰ Ya'akov Meshorer, *City Coins* (1986).

¹⁰¹ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100-400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Gamaliel's response was to declare the Acco baths "safe," because of the symbolic rather than religious significance of the statue. The response is symptomatic of a cosmopolitan culture of tolerant ambivalence. A general attitude such as Gamaliel's was likely common among residents of Palestinian cities in Late Antiquity. This is the best way to explain the continued existence, even in a partially ruined state, of a significant quantity of pagan temples. It could also explain the relative rarity of violent outbreaks, during a time when we might expect them because the dominant society was radically changing. It is also probably why we have so few written sources that describe the end of temples.

Gaza

Gaza had a reputation as a pagan stronghold going into the last years of the fourth century.¹⁰² Porphyry was selected as bishop in response to the Gaza Christian community's request for someone who could resist the pagans.¹⁰³ The destruction of the temple of Zeus Marnas in 402 CE, by his instigation, was recorded by Mark the Deacon. It is one of four or five prototypical stories of pagan temples destroyed at the hands of Christians, and will be dealt with in detail in Chapter Five.

Seven other temples are mentioned in Mark's account, and he lists the deities to which they were dedicated. These were Helios, Aphrodite, Apollo, Persephone, Hecate, Tyche, and an unnamed hero who was worshipped at a Heroön. Mark refers to them as *ναὶ εἰδώλων δημόσιοι ὀκτώ*, including the Marneion in his count.¹⁰⁴ He equates these

¹⁰² Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 12.

other temples with the Marneion, saying that these were public temples. Belayche finds numismatic, literary, and artistic confirmation for the importance of the other seven cults in Gaza.¹⁰⁵

It is difficult to determine the fate of these seven monuments, because Mark lumps them together as a group. He mentions that they had been previously closed by Imperial order, and that a variety of forms of vandalism was inflicted upon them, including burning and looting, all of which the Marneion was initially spared.¹⁰⁶ Mark seems to be content with that treatment of the other seven, and presumably these temples ceased to operate even if they were still structurally intact. We do not know what eventually became of them, although it is difficult to believe that they remained standing after the Marneion was eventually done away with in 402 CE.

Mark indicates that Maiouma, the nearby port of Gaza, was home to a strong Christian community in his time. They are mentioned in several places of his narrative, notably in an episode where the cross is used by a Christian mob to expel a demon from a roadside statue of Aphrodite, which is then demolished.¹⁰⁷ There is no evidence that the unique water-related rites of Maiouma, known from Antioch and a few other places, were ever practiced at the port. Mark says nothing on the topic. There is, on the other hand, a precedent for simply referring to the ports of various cities by this name, without any ritual connotation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 64-67.

¹⁰⁵ N. Belayche, 247-49.

¹⁰⁶ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 27, 64-67.

¹⁰⁷ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 58-61.

¹⁰⁸ N. Belayche, 249-55.

Ashkelon

Ashkelon, situated along the stretch of coastline near Gaza, was likewise known for being a long-time pagan holdout. *B Aboda Zara* mentions a temple of Tserifa located on the outskirts of the city, describing it as a perpetual site of pagan activity.¹⁰⁹ Meshorer suggests that Tserifa may have been the local name for Serapis.¹¹⁰ It is entirely possible that Apollo and Serapis were thought of as one and the same by Ashkelonians. Other gods were also important here too.

The gods of Ashkelon were a heterogeneous mix, and pagan cult was active going into Late Antiquity. The gods of the city were subject to a variety of interpretations by both outsiders and the local population. This would be expected, given that Ashkelon was a cosmopolitan port. Ashkelon, like the neighboring cities Gaza, Apollonia, Raphia, and Ashdod, had Canaanite and Philistine roots as well as close connections to the outside world. Maiouma, the nearby Gaza port, seems to have had significant number of Egyptian traders in temporary residence at any given time.¹¹¹ Although the Egyptians in Mark's account take up the local Christian cause, we might reasonably hypothesize that there were other, pagan Egyptians operating in this stretch of coastline, too.

Ashkelon was either home to a great number of pagan cults, or a small number of cults with many adopted associations. Coins indicate that Herakles, the Dioscuri, Isis, and Poseidon were important in Ashkelon.¹¹² A *temenos* dedicated to Derketo, a goddess with the lower body of a fish, was located beside a nearby lake. Pausanias and Herodotus

¹⁰⁹ *Aboda Zara* 11b.

¹¹⁰ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), 27-28.

¹¹¹ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 58.

¹¹² Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 46, 51, 52.

mention a temple to Aphrodite, by whom they mean Derketo, that was plundered by Scythians in the seventh century BCE.¹¹³ Pausanias considered it to be the oldest temple dedicated to Aphrodite. The importance of the cult gives us every reason to suspect that the temple was rebuilt following the Scythian attack, although we know nothing more about it.

Several coins from Ashkelon, issued at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century, indicate the cult of a unique local god named Phanebal.¹¹⁴ The temple shown on some of the coins is unusual, complex, and almost certainly representative of a real building. It had a flat roof, which was typical of the indigenous Semitic building traditions in the region. Four separate but nested entrances to the temple are shown. The columns had some unusual contouring and were perhaps caryatids. The entablature depicted on the coins does not conform with the Hellenistic tradition. The upper beams and cornices were instead decorated with Egyptianizing *uraei* and repeated geometric motifs such as herringbone patterns.¹¹⁵

Coins from Ashkelon also sometimes depict the physical figure of the god Phanebal, sometimes alone and sometimes as a cult statue in the temple. Phanebal was apparently conceived of as an androgynous fusion of Baal and Tanit, and is seen holding palm branches, harpoons, lightning bolts, and other items associated with many and various other deities.¹¹⁶ Shaick suggests that coins depicting an unidentified Egyptian deity should be interpreted as showing a Roman-Egyptian version of Horus-Harpocrates.

¹¹³ Herodotus *History* 1.105.1-4; Pausanias *Description of Greece* 1.14.7.

¹¹⁴ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 47-50.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, n° 47-50.

This synthetic god had solar associations and was a protector of mariners.¹¹⁷ Phanebal is sometimes shown with a harp, a common attribute of solar gods in Syria and the Levant.¹¹⁸ If it were not for the distinctive temple, and the fact that the coins are often conveniently labeled with the name of the god shown, these coins from Ashkelon would be highly confusing.

A figurine of Heracles gives further insight into how Askelonians associated Phanebal with the mythologies of other cultures.¹¹⁹ The figurine was dedicated in 228 CE by a citizen of Ashkelon while visiting the Egyptian port city of Canopus. The inscription on the figurine makes a wide-ranging connection between various gods that were probably agglomerated within the identity of Phanebal. The intended recipient of the figurine of Heracles, if we accept the reading of de Ricci, was a god named “Zeus Helios Sarapis.” His reading of the inscription is as follows: Διὶ Ἡ[λίω] Μεγά[λω] Σαράπιδι ἐν Κα[νώβω] Θεὸν πατρι[όν] μου Ἡρ[ακ]λῆ Βήλον ἀνείκηταν...¹²⁰ The name of the god, if reconstructed properly, is really a list of various names that would have the right associations.

Josephus attempted to disentangle a rumor that Jews had allowed a statue of Apollo to be brought into their own temple in Jerusalem. This would have made Jews appear to be receptive to the idea that Apollo and Yahweh might be identical. The supposed source of the statue, according to Josephus’ rhetorical opponent Apion, was the

¹¹⁷ Ronit Shaick, “Who is Standing Above the Lions of Ascalon?” *Israel Numismatic Research* 7 (2012), 127-46.

¹¹⁸ René Dussaud, *Notes de mythologie syrienne* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), 76-77.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹²⁰ Seymour de Ricci, “Bulletin épigraphique de l’Egypte romaine,” *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 87 (1903), 450.

city Dor. Apion describes Dor as being near Gaza and Idumea, which is only accurate in a very general sense. Josephus took Apion to task for his geographical vagary and discounted his story.¹²¹ It seems entirely possible that the purveyors of this particular rumor had conflated cities, or transposed place-names, somewhere along the chain of transmission. Perhaps they meant Ashkelon or one of the other cities in the region of Gaza that had a similar reputation for a strong pagan presence. Their mistake indicates the common vitality of pagan cult in the coastal port cities of ancient Palestine, particularly those around Gaza.

Eusebius also mentions that Herod the Great's grandfather had been a priest of Apollo in Ashkelon.¹²² Non-Ashkalonians likely often considered Apollo to be the closest Hellenistic equivalent for Phanebal, who was evidently an important god who freely took on a multitude of characteristics. Ya'akov Meshorer suggests that the god Tserifa, mentioned in *b Aboda Zara*, might also be a reference to Phanebal.¹²³ The figurine from Egypt and the coins from Ashkelon suggest that the Ashkelonians themselves made use of a range of Hellenistic gods to convey Phanebal's identity.

Astarte, who also appears on coins from Ashkelon, is sometimes portrayed with nautical associations.¹²⁴ Coins with her image were commonly minted by the city in later centuries. There is an overlap in attributes between Aphrodite, Astarte, Tyche, and Derketo. In Ashkelon, all of these goddesses could appear with the dove.¹²⁵ This bird

¹²¹ Josephus *Contra Apionem* 2.10.

¹²² Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.7

¹²³ *Aboda Zara* 11b; Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), 28.

¹²⁴ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 44, 45.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, n° 44, 45.

was known to be sacred in the region, as mentioned by Tibullus: *Quid referam, ut volitet crebras intacta per urbes Alba Palaestino sancta columba Syro...*¹²⁶ On coins from Raphia the dove appears on an Egyptian-type crown worn by Apollo.¹²⁷

Precise distinctions, between the attributes and Hellenistic equivalents of individual gods and goddesses, were evidently relaxed to some degree at Ashkelon and the neighboring cities. It makes sense that this busy coastal region would have absorbed wide-ranging influences. Clarity about the end of pagan cult in Ashkelon is not to be found. Given the pagan reputation of this stretch of coastline, however, it may be that Ashkelon was one of the places where the pagan refugees from Gaza fled in 402 CE after the Imperial military arrived in the city. Mark the Deacon, does not mention exactly where these refugees went, only that they found new homes in nearby (presumably friendly) cities.¹²⁸ This implies that paganism persisted in the region after 402 CE. Nevertheless, we have no explicit information about how any temples in the city may have gone out of commission, or when.

Hippos

Hippos was a Decapolis city located on both the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and the eastern edge of the region of Galilee. It was a fortress-like settlement in a location of strategic importance in the Hellenistic world, situated in the border-zone between Ptolemaic and Seleucid spheres of influence. It was re-founded, likely as a

¹²⁶ Tibullus *Elegies* 1.7.17-18.

¹²⁷ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 70, 74, 75.

¹²⁸ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 63.

garrison for Antiochus' troops, after he conquered the region in the early second century BCE.¹²⁹ Hippos received a bishop in the mid-fourth century, decades after the council of Nicaea. Eusebius lists no martyrs from Hippos.¹³⁰ Hippos was slow to Christianize. The earthquake of 749 CE ended occupation at the site.

A *kalybe*, a type of outdoor shrine possibly dedicated to the Imperial cult, has been found at Hippos.¹³¹ It was constructed during the post-Hadrianic period when the city was exceptionally prosperous. It was situated at the western end of the city's forum. About ten courses of robust masonry construction still exist today. Although the exact date of its destruction is unknown, even in ruins it would have been a visible presence in the city throughout Late Antiquity. It may have even been intact until the earthquake of 749 CE, after which the city was abandoned.

Kalybae are a reasonably common presence in many ancient cities, particularly in the Hauran region of Syria. They are diverse group of related large outdoor monuments. They typically have a large "band-shell" type niche, as well as numerous smaller statue niches. Some resemble a *nymphaeum* without water, an open-air half-temple, or the *scenae frons* of a theater. They could be colonnaded, sometimes elaborately.¹³²

It could be that *kalybae* such as the one in Hippos were preserved by Christian populations on account of their status as aesthetically important landmarks. It is entirely

¹²⁹ Arthur Segal, "Hellenistic Sanctuary," in A. Segal (ed.), *Hippos-Sussita of the Decapolis. The First Twelve Seasons of Excavation* (Haifa: Zinman Institute of Archaeology, 2013), 128-47.

¹³⁰ J. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places* (1993), 60-61. Taylor has tabulated the cities of origin for individuals mentioned by Eusebius in this context.

¹³¹ Arthur Segal, "The Kalybe Structures, Temples for the Imperial Cult in Hauran and Trachon: An Historical-Architectural Analysis," *Assaph* 6 (2001), 91-118.

¹³² *Ibid.*

possible that pagan public sacrifices never occurred in their vicinity, rendering them less offensive to Christian sensibilities. The specifics of any cult ritual that might have occurred at these structures is unknown, as is the longevity of such rituals. Identifying *kalybae* as temples, in the sense understood by this analysis, is impossible.

A small fifth century basilica has been excavated that sits upon the leveled podium of a Roman temple. The church sits across the *cella* of the temple, making use of its foundation walls as foundations for its own nave and transept.¹³³ A winery was built into the front steps of the temple. The remains of the temple, from the level of the podium down to the foundations, appear to be largely intact, which is a pattern observed at several other sites, including Bet Shean and Omrit. It may be that the temple belonged to Zeus-Arotesios. He figures prominently on coins from the city that depict actual temple architecture consistent with this building, a prostyle temple *in antis*.¹³⁴ The temple was originally built in the Hellenistic period and later rebuilt during the time of Augustus.¹³⁵

The site of Hippos is apparently vulnerable to earthquakes that begin along the nearby Dead-Sea Transform fault.¹³⁶ A Christian basilica, likely the bishop's chapel, clearly suffered characteristic physical damage from the famous event of 749 CE. The vulnerability of Hippos is probably a function of its high elevation, a factor known to

¹³³ Mariusz Burdajewicz, "From Pagan Temple to Church in Late Antiquity Palestine A View from Hippos-Sussita," *Études et Travaux* 30 (2017): 181-209.

¹³⁴ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 205.

¹³⁵ Arthur Segal and Michael Eisenberg, "Sussita-Hippos of the Decapolis: Town Planning and Architecture of a Roman-Byzantine City," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 70 (2007), 86-107.

¹³⁶ Kenneth W. Russell, "The Earthquake Chronology of Palestine and Northwest Arabia from the 2nd through the Mid-8th Century A.D.," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 260 (1982), 37-53.

increase the damage inflicted by quakes. The temple at Ain Hersha, located in the Hermon region just twenty-five kilometers north, also shows evidence of the so-called skyscraper effect. Multiple large vertical cracks caused by earthquake forces (at an uncertain date) split the temple superstructure and entered the podium.¹³⁷ These cracks are distinctly wider at the top due to the magnification of forces at higher elevations. This temple sits along the same fault system as Hippos. I would hypothesize that the skyscraper effect is directly related to the state of the remains at other sites including Bet Shean, Omrit, and others.

As previously noted however, there are virtually no situations in which destruction by earthquake is a sufficient explanation for the end of a temple. There are always social reasons for not reconstructing the building. In this case, we have another temple that was apparently in ruins for over a century before being replaced by a church.

The wine press located upon the temple steps is reminiscent of Tsafirir's observations about Scythopolis and Gerasa: The *cella* of temples represented the truly dangerous architectural component in the eyes of Christians.¹³⁸ Other peripheral components could continue to be a visible presence, and utilized space, in cities that had likely largely converted to Christianity. The Hippos wine press has a close parallel with the pottery kilns built into the portico of the temple of Artemis in Gerasa. The semi-enclosed space at the front of a temple, but not in the *cella*, seems to have been an appropriate place for such industrial installations.

¹³⁷ D. Krencker and W. Zschietzschmann, *Römische Tempel in Syrien* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter and Co., 1938), 245-55.

¹³⁸ Y. Tsafirir, "The Fate of Cult Places," in Hayim Lapin (ed.), *Religious and Ethnic Communities* (1998), 205-08.

Tiberias

There is not much evidence for pagan temples in Tiberias. The average number of temples for urban sites in my study group is 2.5 per city, with some outliers and sources of bias that will be described in my concluding chapter. For a city that appeared to be Roman, as described in Chapter Two, the lack of evidence from Tiberias for pagan religious monuments is notable. Epiphanius describes one temple in Tiberias, and there may have been some smaller shrines in various places about the city. There are significant questions about Epiphanius' account, however. Asclepius and Hygeia appear on coins from Tiberias, sometimes together.¹³⁹ The presence of local hot-springs with a famous reputation allow for the possibility that shrines to Asclepius and Hygeia were nearby.

Epiphanius, originally a native of Judea, tells us about one pagan temple in Tiberias, the Hadrianeum. Epiphanius was writing around 375 CE, while he was Bishop of Salamis on Cyprus. He tells us about this monument based upon the testimony of a resident of Tiberias, Joseph the Apostate.

Joseph was an orthodox Jew who had converted to orthodox Christianity. Epiphanius was attempting to distinguish orthodox religion, both Jewish and Christian, from various hybrid heresies such as that of the Ebionites, a group of Judaizing Christians. Because of his supposed personal history, Joseph was able to provide Epiphanius with a series of anecdotes that were convenient for making the clear distinctions that the Bishop sought.¹⁴⁰ Joseph made some claims that, when compared

¹³⁹ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 86.

¹⁴⁰ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2006), 211-14.

with the archaeology of Tiberias, suggest him to be an unreliable narrator. One might suggest that Joseph was embroidering his personal history and achievements, including his own role in Christianizing the pagan temple in Tiberias, so as to cooperate with the intent of Epiphanius.

Apparently, while visiting Constantinople, Joseph received a mandate from the Emperor to build churches in the Galilee. This mission was largely unsuccessful, except for the church that Joseph says that he built on the ruins of the Hadrianeum in Tiberias. This temple, according to Joseph, was never completed, having been converted to a bath at some undefined time.¹⁴¹ Several scholars conjecture that the Hadrianeum was a real building, done away with by the middle of the third century.¹⁴² This is not proven chronology, simply an educated inference.

Hadrian, of course, was equated with Olympian Zeus. A temple dedicated to Zeus/Hadrian appears on coins issued in 119/120 CE, just before Hadrian's visit to Tiberias.¹⁴³ Perhaps they were minted in anticipation. Further, assuming that Joseph told at least partial truths, perhaps this was when construction on the temple began.

One can imagine the priesthood of a pagan temple in Tiberias struggling to find people to attend sacrifices, and repurposing such a building as a bath. But it does not look like that happened, at least not in the way that Joseph describes. Instead, as

¹⁴¹ Epiphanius *Panarion* 30.12.1-2.

¹⁴² Shimon Applebaum, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Second Jewish Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 6; Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee* (1983), 46; Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Jews Under Roman and Byzantine Rule* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 46.

¹⁴³ Y. Meshorer, *City Coins* (1985), n° 81.

Shulamit Miller observes, the archaeology points to the real existence of some of these buildings, but not Joseph's narrative of architectural replacement.¹⁴⁴

A number of excavations, many of them salvage digs on account of development in the modern city of Tiberias, have exposed a sizable portion of the center of the ancient city. A complex of buildings, consisting of various religious, mercantile, recreational, and governmental facilities, fronted on the *cardo* where it passed through the city-center. A string of shops and a large bath were originally excavated by Bezalel Rabani, as well as a structure that he interpreted as a market.¹⁴⁵ The bath was built in the Roman period but was rebuilt later in the fourth or fifth century. It may be that this is the bath mentioned by Joseph.

Cytryn-Silverman has reinterpreted part of Ravani's market as an Umayyad-period Friday mosque, because of architectural parallels with mosques in places like Jerusalem and Damascus.¹⁴⁶ In both Jerusalem and Damascus, Islamic builders constructed mosques that were essentially sideways basilicas, installed within the sacred courtyards of pre-existing temples.¹⁴⁷ This might have been the case in Tiberias, as well. If so, the Hadrianeum might be found beneath or nearby.

¹⁴⁴ Shulamit Miller, "Markers of Pagan Cults in a Jewish City: Rethinking the Hadrianeum of Tiberias," in Oren Tal and Zeev Weiss (eds.), *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 95-107.

¹⁴⁵ Bezalel Rabani, "Notes and News." *Israel Exploration Journal* 3 (1953): 265; *Ibid.*, "Anciens bains a Tiberiade." *Revue Biblique* 62 (1953): 88; *Ibid.*, "Anciens bains a Tiberiade." *Revue Biblique* 63 (1953): 97-98.

¹⁴⁶ Katia Cytryn-Silverman, *The Umayyad Mosque of Tiberias*, in Gülru Necipoğlu (ed.), *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Cultures of the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 37-61.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 15-29.

Underneath the later development in the city-center is also a large, rectangular, Roman-period wall. It is consistent with the type of foundations that would be built to support a *temenos* for a temple.¹⁴⁸ Only part of the wall has been exposed, but as a whole it must have been over thirty meters wide, built over an even earlier first century CE structure. The large structure is quite possibly the foundation of the *temenos* of the Hadrianeum mentioned by Epiphanius. The attached cross-walls, however, as well as a plastered interior face pointing to the north, demonstrate that the structure is situated differently than the arrangement that Joseph described. Miller observes that the *temenos*, if that is really what this is, was unattached to the bathhouse, located about thirty meters to the south.¹⁴⁹

There was also a Byzantine church to the north of these structures. Like the bath, it appears completely disconnected from the older monumental architecture. Spolia from a well-appointed second or third century building has been found in secondary use in the bath and church. In the case of the church, the elements were inscribed with crosses. These may be remains from the temple. The church is also of fourth or fifth century date. Shulamit Miller has summarized what is known about this clearly important phenomenon, including information from personal communications with some of the excavators.¹⁵⁰

It seems as though Joseph stitched together a tale that was plausible to Christian ears because it followed an expected pattern. This has significant implications when we

¹⁴⁸ Yizhar Hirschfeld and Katerina Galor, "New Excavations in Roman, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Tiberias," in Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 207-30.

¹⁴⁹ S. Miller, "Markers of Pagan Cults," (2017), 95-107.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

look at other narratives from places like Gaza and Jerusalem, which I do take to be legitimate in terms of information related to the present study.

Sepphoris

Despite the ubiquity of pagan iconography on the coins from Sepphoris, and the depiction of detailed temple architecture on these coins, only one pagan temple has been found by archaeologists. The temple at Sepphoris appears to have been built during a program of large-scale civic renovations carried out in the late first and early second centuries CE. It was a tetrastyle and prostyle temple, located within an enclosed *temenos* in the civic center of Sepphoris near the intersection of the *cardo* and *decumanus*, at the heart of the city.¹⁵¹ It is unknown what deity or deities it may have been dedicated to, although Zeus is a possibility given the prominent location of the temple and the new name for the city that was contemporary with it, Dioceasarea.

There is no reason to believe that the temple did not continue to stand even as nearby construction filled up the *temenos* around it. The encroachment of workshops and vendors, beginning at least as early as the late third century, did not seem to significantly impact the temple structure itself.¹⁵² Although Zev Weiss suggests that the temple may have remained a functioning religious building, it seems likely that the normal ritual activities such as sacrifices, occurring in the surrounding space, had been interrupted by this new construction, especially the row of shops that blocked access to the temple from the main street.

¹⁵¹ Zev Weiss, "From Roman Temple to Byzantine Church," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 23(2010), 196-218.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

The temple was eventually disassembled down to the lower courses of the podium, which had even their facing stones robbed for use elsewhere. A church was built on the site, sometime in the late fifth or early sixth century. Many architectural elements, clearly from the temple, were used in the construction of the church.¹⁵³ There is every reason to suppose that much of the church was made from recycled material from the temple. The church was built offset and perpendicular to the temple foundations, resting partly upon walls that had previously been under the front steps and pronaos.

It seems likely that the church was part of a larger renovation program that included another nearby church, and redecorated porticoes along the adjacent streets, carried out while Eutropius was bishop of Sepphoris.¹⁵⁴ Relative to the destruction of the temples in Gaza and Jerusalem, the treatment of the temple in Sepphoris seems casual and everyday. Its continued existence into the fifth century was apparently not offensive enough to motivate action against it. Its eventual destruction was, likewise, probably not troublesome to many people.

Antipatris

Antipatris was a preexisting city, known as Aphek, that was developed by Herod the Great and re-named after his father. Its identification is based on a reference to the site as a Jewish stronghold, in the early days of the first revolt, by Josephus.¹⁵⁵ It was located to the southwest of Samaria and south of Caesarea.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Coins from Antipatris, in addition to including many stock images of Tyche, also suggest the presence of three temples. One coin shows a double temple located near a spring feeding into the Yarkon River. These temples may have been dedicated to Athena and Serapis.

Another coin shows a hill-top temple that may have belonged to Zeus Hypsistos.¹⁵⁶ Kindler, however, points out that this attribution is simply due to the iconographic resemblance with the temple of Zeus on Mount Gerezim.¹⁵⁷ No names are mentioned on the coin from Antipatris.

The geographical details on the coins from Antipatris imply real buildings. The temples have never been found by archaeologists. Their eventual fate is likewise unknown.

Eleusa

Eleusa was a sizable community in the Negev within the Nabatean cultural orbit. It appears, but is not named, on the Madaba map. It was successful in the Roman period, serving as a way-station on the routes between Petra, Gaza, Judea, and the Red Sea. At various times it was part of provinces like Arabia and Third Palestine that have otherwise been left out of this study. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to include Eleusa on account of its close connection with Gaza and the other cities on the southeastern Mediterranean coast. A temple dedicated to Aphrodite was evidently located in Eleusa, according to

¹⁵⁵ Josephus *Wars* 2.19.1.

¹⁵⁶ Arie Kindler, "The Coins of Antipatris," *Israel Numismatic Journal* 11 (1991), n° 5.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-71.

Jerome's *Life of Hilarion*. The episode in question is embedded within a hagiography. Nevertheless, it resonates with details that dovetail quite closely to the theories about conversion, and the fate of pagan monuments, that many scholars have developed. This points to an embedded historical basis for the episode.

Hilarion was a native of the region, having been born in the village of Thabatha, located just outside Gaza. He migrated around the hinterlands of Gaza for about twenty years, sometime around the middle of the fourth century. During this period he was compelled to work miracles, making it impossible for him to avoid attention.

Jerome tells us that Hilarion would frequent Eleusa and that he had a reputation as a powerful healer among the Arab population of the town. On one visit he promised that he would patronize the town more often if the locals would completely renounce Aphrodite.¹⁵⁸ The priest of Aphrodite converted on the spot, upon pressure applied by Hilarion and the people of Eleusa. Saint Jerome depicted pressure flowing up from the base of the social hierarchy. Plans were immediately made, in cooperation with the saint, to build a church. It is probable that this was done at the expense of the temple of Aphrodite, either in terms of building materials or attendees to religious ceremonies. It may be that the temple itself was to be physically converted, although no details about the actual engineering process are known.

The story includes many details that have either attracted modern scholarly attention, or significantly dovetail with the course of conversation, on the topic of conversion to Christianity. These details include the strength of Hilarion's reputation as a healer, the role of the pagan priest, and the seeming rapidity of the people's decision to

¹⁵⁸ Jerome *Vita Hilarionis* 25.

change their ways. The story speaks to the influence of authority figures, community affiliation, and the perception of power upon the conversion process.

Ramsey MacMullen, for instance, notes that many Christian converts, like those in Eleusa, really just exchanged one source of power for another.¹⁵⁹ Kenneth Holum observed that the people of Eleusa, and their local authority figures, seem to have made a virtually instantaneous choice to convert, doing so in virtual lock-step with one another.¹⁶⁰ Jerome, in fact, makes it sound as though the pagan priest were following the model of the people, rather than the other way around.

Conversion in Eleusa was apparently a choice made at the community level, and not the individual level. Daniel Schwartz would note that peer-support reoriented the people of Eleusa, rather than any type of logically evaluated theological argument.¹⁶¹ Frank Trombly would call attention to the fact that it was explicitly the miraculous healing power of the saint that influenced people.¹⁶² The episode in Eleusa also makes it clear that the conversion process inscribed itself on the built environment of Eleusa in a matter-of-course manner.

The sizable quantity of above-cited sociological analyses are based on the evidence from many places other than Eleusa, and many types of information. For instance, Schwartz's evidence primarily come from the lectures given to catechumens in Syria. I would hypothesize that this type of far-ranging theoretical correspondence lends

¹⁵⁹ R. MacMullen, *Christianizing* (1984), 1-3.

¹⁶⁰ Kenneth Holum, "In the Blinking of an Eye: The Christianizing of Classical Cities in the Levant," in *Religion and Politics*, ed. Adele Berlin (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1996), 131-50.

¹⁶¹ Daniel L. Schwartz, *Paideia and Cult* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 71-92.

¹⁶² F. Trombly, *Hellenic Religion* (1993), 2:167.

some weight to Jerome's account. It is important to note that Jerome does not tell us if the people of Eleusa actually followed through on their plans to build their new church, nor does he make it explicit if this was to occur at the expense of the temple

Rural Temples

Kedesh

The temple at Kedesh was located on the margin of Upper Galilee in the hills west of the Hula Valley. Kedesh was within the territory of Tyre, forty kilometers away on the coast. Josephus says that Kedesh belonged to Tyre, and that it was a temporary camp for Titus during the First Revolt.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, Tyre was far away. Thus, it seems likely the temple served a local population of pagans living in the surrounding communities, in addition to the residents of Kedesh and any visitors who might have travelled from the Phoenician coast. The temple was most likely dedicated to Baalshamin, Zeus, Helios, or some locally-inflected version of Apollo.¹⁶⁴ These are all gods that were conflated with one another at many sites in the region. Given the strong possibility that the temple had an oracular function, it is probable that people were willing to travel some distance to receive a prophecy. The temple might very well have been built with money from Tyre.

Although modern excavations have focused on the Persian administrative compound on the hill about two hundred meters to the southwest of the temple, there also

¹⁶³ Josephus *Wars* 4.2.3.

¹⁶⁴ Jodi Magness, "Some Observations on the Roman Temple at Kedesh," *Israel Exploration Journal* 40 (1990): 173-81; Mordechai Aviam, "The Roman Temple at Kedesh in the Light of Certain Northern Syrian City Coins," *Tel Aviv* 12 (1985): 212-14.

seems to have been a larger community in the vicinity. Eusebius was aware of it, and he mentions Kedesh in the *Onomastikon* as if it were still occupied in his time.¹⁶⁵ Surface finds and epigraphic evidence suggest that the town was enjoying a period of success in the second through third centuries.¹⁶⁶ The temple has never been excavated, but much of it is exposed, and rich surface finds are visible on the ground.

The temple was hexastyle and prostyle. It was situated within a *temenos*. The temple was constructed at the beginning of the second century and shows evidence of having been remodeled several times going into the third century. It had a triple doorway and other stylistic evidence linking it to pagan temples in southern Lebanon, such as those at Baalbek.¹⁶⁷

The temple was greatly damaged by the earthquake of 363 CE. A short section of wall that stands above the modern ground surface shows clear evidence of having been bent by tectonic forces. It is partially offset, and numerous gaps between blocks were opened up by the quake. Several exceptionally large stone architectural elements were broken clean through, such as the lintel above one of the doors. These are the types of physical damage that are diagnostic of earthquakes.¹⁶⁸ The impact of earthquakes on other sites in the region of the Hula Valley is known to seismologists.¹⁶⁹ Other than the

¹⁶⁵ Eusebius *Onomastikon* 116.8.

¹⁶⁶ Moshe Fischer, Asher Ovadiah, and Israel Roll, "The Roman Temple at Kedesh, Upper Galilee: A Preliminary Study," *Tel Aviv* 11 (1984): 146-72.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Gregor Schweppe, Klaus-G. Hinzen, Sharon K. Reamer, Moshe Fischer, Shmuel Marco, "The Ruin of the Roman Temple of Kedesh, Israel: Example of a Precariously Balanced Archaeological Structure used as a Seismoscope," *Annals of Geophysics* 60 (2017): 1-17.

earthquake, there does not seem to be any other way to explain the destruction of this temple. It went out of use after the quake, and does not appear to have been rebuilt or transformed into another type of structure.

Most of the fallen building materials from the temple were robbed from the site for reuse elsewhere. Much has been made of the fact that roof tiles have only been found in the region of the portico, leading Jodi Magness to suggest that the temple had no roof (hypaethral), like the temple of Apollo in Didyma.¹⁷⁰ Ovadiah *et al.* observed a lack of visible means of support for a roof, but suggest a precedent for wooden trusses in other temples in the area.¹⁷¹ It would not be an unusual construction technique. Timber roof trusses, however, would have been unlikely to preserve archaeologically. Wood was valuable, and if the pieces were not broken by the quake they were almost certainly removed for use elsewhere. It should also be noted that roof tiles were some of the most valuable items from an ancient building that could be reused. There is no reason to assume that the tiles found by the portico were not simply missed by scavengers who claimed all the others.

Given that Eusebius knew of Kedesh, and given that the temple was refurbished in the third century, there is reason to believe that it continued to be used into the fourth century. There were probably still locals and visitors from the coast who made use of the temple up until close to the time of the quake. These people may have stayed after 363

¹⁶⁹ Ronnie Ellenblum, Shmuel Marco, Robert Kool, Uri Davidovich, Roi Parat, Amotz Agnon, "Archaeological Record of Earthquake Ruptures in Tell Ateret, the Dead Sea Fault," *Tectonics* 34 (2015), 2105-17.

¹⁷⁰ Jodi Magness, "Some Observations on the Roman Temple at Kedesh," *Israel Exploration Journal* 40 (1990): 173-81.

¹⁷¹ Asher Ovadiah, Israel Roll, and Moshe Fischer, "The Roman Temple at Kedesh in Upper Galilee: A Response," *Israel Exploration Journal* 43 (1999): 60-63.

CE. The fact that the temple was not rebuilt after the quake, however, is the relevant fact. Although the temple was almost certainly in a ruinous state, it could have been rebuilt if the money, labor, and political will had been present. The cost of repairing a pagan building in Kedesh was evidently too high after 363 CE.

Hebron

Herod built a sacred enclosure and altar at Elonei Mamre for the purpose of commemorating the Abrahamic tradition, about ten kilometers south of Jerusalem. Hadrian was also active at the site in the aftermath of the second Jewish revolt. Sozomen and many other ancient sources depict the unique religious tradition of the site. It was apparently simultaneously held sacred by Jews, pagans, and Christians, who all seem to have participated in local festivals. Eusebius tells us that Constantine built a church within the enclosure, and the evidence from Sozomen is that this church had little impact on the pagan aspect of the festivals going into the late fourth century. This is an important site for the purpose of this study, and will be discussed again in a later chapter.

Maiumas-Shuni

A theater and water-pool were located at Maiumas-Shuni, about five kilometers north of Caesarea Maritima. Although a physical temple has never been found, it is often suspected that an Asclepion was present at the site. Maioumas-Shuni was host to an agriculture and fertility festival that is known to have been practiced, at various places in the Levant, well into Late Antiquity. The festival occurred on the outskirts of major urban centers, near watery places such as coastlines, springs and rivers. Known

correspondence between similar religious activities and agricultural commerce suggest that Maioumas-Shuni was a major extra-urban market for nearby Caesarea.¹⁷² The important relationship between the health of a city and the success of such markets gives good reason for the longevity of the associated religious festivals.

The similarity between the name of Maioumas-Shuni and the Hebrew and Arabic words for water is obvious, and point to a Hellenized Aramaic, or Syriac, linguistic root for the first part of the name of this site.¹⁷³ The two individual parts of the name come from nearby nineteenth and twentieth century villages. The names of various sites in the Levant, identically known as Maioumas in antiquity, are frequently hyphenated in modern usage. This is a way to keep the places distinct. There was also an ancient Greek neologism that referred to the practice of holding the Maioumas festival: Μαίουμίζω. The word was used by commentators in Late Antiquity who were almost invariably hostile.

Architectural complexes similar to that at Maioumas-Shuni were located at Birketein, located just outside Gerasa along the Chrysorhoas River, and Daphne, located just outside Antioch along the Orontes river.¹⁷⁴ These places hosted similar festival activities. Maiouma was also the name of the port-city that served Gaza, as well as another site near Ashkelon. In these cases there is no evidence for ritual activity, the name seems to have been used simply to refer to the ports.

¹⁷² Estée Dvorjetski, “Maioumas Festivities in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin: Maioumas-Shuni as a Case Study,” *Strata* 30 (2012), 89-125.

¹⁷³ Joseph Perles, “Miscellen zur rabbinischen sprach und alterthumskunde,” *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 21 (1872), 251-54.

¹⁷⁴ Arthur Segal, *Theatres in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 69-71.

The baths at Hammet Gader, located just outside Gadara on the Yarmouk river, also attracted similar festivals that associated water, agricultural produce, and human reproduction in a way that was apparently both popular and controversial in Late Antiquity. The Madaba Map suggests the location of several additional water-affiliated places with potentially similar cultic associations and commercial activities.¹⁷⁵ In several places, such as Neapolis, pre-existing theaters could be retrofitted for aquatic performances. At Shuni, the pool seems to have been added behind theater some time after the theater's construction. These types of modifications often seem to have been accomplished in Late Antiquity.¹⁷⁶

Obviously, water makes crops grow and crops make human populations grow. Growing human populations implies the act of sex, which was clearly the concern for Christian commentators. They provide the bulk of our evidence about activities at the Maioumas festivals. Bishop John Chrysostom of Antioch, for instance, railed against men and women swimming naked together. In homily seven, delivered around 390 CE, he references the Daphne festival. He considered it to be a sin to even attend as a spectator.¹⁷⁷

Libanius, who was John Chrysostom's teacher as well as a citizen of Antioch, also disapproved.¹⁷⁸ Libanius was a famous defender of pagan temples, so perhaps his

¹⁷⁵ E. Dvorjetski, "Maioumas Festivities," (2012), 89-125.

¹⁷⁶ Zeev Weiss, *Public Spectacles in Roman and Late Antique Palestine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 241-42; Itzhak Magen, *Flavia Neapolis: Shechem in the Roman Period*, Judea and Samaria Publications 11 (Jerusalem: Staff Officer of Archaeology/Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, 2009), 131-137; Alexandra Retzleff, "Near Eastern Theaters in Late Antiquity," *Phoenix* 57 (2003): 115-38.

¹⁷⁷ John Chrysostom *Homily* 7.7.

¹⁷⁸ Libanius *Orationes* 16.1.

comments should be taken in the context of new forms of pagan belief among the intelligentsia. His criticism is framed relative to the Emperor Julian's unpopular visit to Antioch. Apparently, the Emperor was fickle in his own support for the festival. Libanius' goal was to present paganism as something that could be tolerated, and he likely thought that activities at Maioumas went too far for his audience.

Christian references to Maioumas festivities are expectedly and uniformly negative. These include John Malalas, another citizen of Antioch who wrote about the festival as it existed at Daphne in the sixth century. He describes a month-long event, held every three years, with night-time theatrical performances held in honor of Dionysus and Aphrodite, lit by torches and fireworks.¹⁷⁹

The Bordeaux pilgrim, who traveled the Holy Land around 333 CE, describes a spring north of Caesarea that could cause a bathing woman to become pregnant. He also describes the region as marshy.¹⁸⁰ This is almost certainly a reference to Maioumas-Shuni or one of the several water-sources in the area that also served Caesarea Maritima. Maioumas-Shuni was located along the river ez-Zarqa, known as the *Crocodilon Flumen* in antiquity, and within close proximity of an intersection of aqueducts that fed the city to the south. The spring at Ein Tzur was part of this network. In addition to having its own bathing facilities that were operational from the fourth through seventh centuries, an aqueduct led to Maioumas-Shuni.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ John Malalas *Chronographia* 18.232.

¹⁸⁰ *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 586.1.

¹⁸¹ Yigal Hirschfeld, "The Early Bath and Fortress at Ramat Hanadiv near Caesarea," in John H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research* (Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series, 1995), 28-55; Y. Hirschfeld and Adrian Boas, *Ramat Hanadiv Excavations: Final Report of the 1984-1998 Seasons* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000).

Conder and Kitchener, who visited Maioumas-Shuni in the nineteenth century, were among the first to have recognized it as the site of a Roman theater.¹⁸² Shenhav found evidence that the theater was built in the second century and rebuilt in the fifth century.¹⁸³ The reconstruction of the theater shows the continued vitality of the site. The *proscenium* and *scaenae frons* divided the audience, to the west, from whatever activities were occurring in the pool on the other side, to the east. The arrangement would seem to obscure the audience's view of the pool. The orchestra had a drain, however, which would have permitted watery performances on either side of the wall. A celebrity actor from Daphne, another known location of Maioumas festivals, visited Caesarea in the third century. They likely came specifically to perform at Maioumas-Shuni.¹⁸⁴

A statue, that has been variously identified as either Asclepius or Poseidon, suggests some of the gods which may have been honored during the festivals. The statue was found by Shenhav and Ne'eman near the coastal high aqueduct to Caesarea. Shenhav favors an identification as Asclepius.¹⁸⁵ Rivka Gersht, on the other hand, prefers Poseidon.¹⁸⁶ The statue is of a nude bearded man with some type of small animal companion, perhaps a snake or dolphin.

¹⁸² Claude Reignier Conder and Horatio Herbert Kitchener, *Survey of Western Palestine: Memoirs of the Topography, Orography, Hydrography, and Archaeology* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1882), 66-67.

¹⁸³ Eli Shenhav, "Le théâtre romain de Shuni rival de celui de Césarée," *Le Monde de la Bible* 67 (1990), 58-60.

¹⁸⁴ Clayton Miles Lehmann and Kenneth G. Holum, *The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima Excavation Reports: The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima* (Boston: American School of Oriental Research, 2000), 127.

¹⁸⁵ Eli Shenhav, "Shuni," in Ephraim Stern *et al.* (ed.), *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* 4 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 1382-84.

¹⁸⁶ Rivka Gersht, "Roman Copies Discovered in the Land of Israel," in Ranon Katzoff (ed.), *Classical Studies in Honor of David Sohlberg* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1996), 435.

Pagans who sought Asclepius for healing were known to bathe in sacred pools. Poseidon was known to have created springs with his trident. They are both very good candidates for potential worship at Maioumas-Shuni. Dionysus (on account of the theater) or Aphrodite (on account of the fertility rites) could also have been involved.

A temple building has not been found at the site, although excavators from the University of Witwatersrand feel certain that they will find one.¹⁸⁷ Perhaps Maioumas-Shuni was an open-air cultic site without a temple. Alternatively, the temple may have been incorporated into the upper level of the theater seating arrangement, which has since been obliterated. This was the arrangement in Hellenistic theater/temples such as those at Pergamon, Praeneste, and the Theater of Pompey in Rome.

Agricultural installations, like an olive press, were installed into the orchestra in the sixth century.¹⁸⁸ They attest to the continuing vitality of agriculture in the neighborhood of Maioumas-Shuni, although this development certainly marked the end of the traditional festivities at the spot. Much like at Elonei Mamre, however, some altered practice probably persisted.

There never seems to have been any sort of written, literary commemoration of the end of Maioumas-related pagan activity. Instead, one is struck by the mass of written condemnation of the vitality and longevity of cult. It seems entirely possible that pagan practices persisted even after the industrial operations were installed in the theater, perhaps even until the Arab invasion. An actual physical temple, however, has never

¹⁸⁷ William J. Henderson, "Excavations at Shuni, Israel," *Akroterion* 37 (1992), 23-30.

¹⁸⁸ E. Shenhav, "Shuni," (1993), 1382-84.

been found at the site. It is impossible to determine the facts of any potential destruction or disuse.

Galilean Miscellany

Paganism in general is not well-known in Galilee, which makes sense given the reputation of the place as a Jewish heartland. An inscription from Keren Naphtali (Khirbet Harrawi) indicates the presence of a temple dedicated to Athena, and also mentions Zeus-Heliopolites.¹⁸⁹ Clearly Christians could be very comfortable with the remnants of paganism, if they were handled properly. A sixth-century church at Horvath Hesheq in the Upper Galilee made use of a broken pagan altar. It was broken and a receptacle was cut into it to hold incense or a lamp. An inscription on the altar remains, showing the original dedication of the item to Jupiter Heliopolitanus.¹⁹⁰ Perhaps a temple had been nearby. It is difficult to imagine a heavy object like this altar being moved too far. Decorated architectural fragments and the remains of a large rectangular building, oriented along an east-west axis, hint at the presence of a pagan temple in Beset.¹⁹¹ A building exhibiting architectural similarity with both pagan temples and Jewish synagogues has been located at Qazion. Survey has demonstrated the presence of a village around what is best described as a “multi-room religious complex.” Inscriptions suggest the practice of Severan Imperial cult parallel with Jewish activity. Killebrew

¹⁸⁹ E.W.G. Masterman, “The Greek Inscriptions from Khurbet Harrawi,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 41/42 (1908).

¹⁹⁰ Leah DiSegni, “Horvath Hesheq: The Inscriptions,” in *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land, New Essays in Honour of Virgilis C. Corbo*, ed. Giovanni Claudio Bottini, Eugenio Alliata, and Leah DiSegni (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1990), 385-87.

¹⁹¹ Asher Ovadiah and Yehudit Turnheim, *Roman Temples, Shrines, and Temene in Israel* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, 2011), 93.

points to the affinity between this site and other rural pagan cult centers, such as Kedesh.¹⁹² Because of its unusual character, Qazion is not included in the final count of temples for this dissertation.

Omrit

Omrit (a modern name for the site), was a village located about three kilometers south of Caesarea Philippi. It was the site of three consecutive pagan temples. They were built to occupy the same piece of ground, and the later buildings were constructed over and around the remains of the earlier buildings. I worked at this site as part of the Macalester College and Carthage College excavation projects, begun in 1999.

The frescoed remains of the earliest temple suggest construction in or before the time of Herod.¹⁹³ The podium and part of the *temenos* wall of this temple were preserved within the second temple. In the past, the excavators have suggested that the second temple was in fact built by Herod and dedicated to the Imperial cult. The clear architectural similarity to such monuments at Samaria, Caesarea Maritima, and in fact across the Empire suggest that it is the building mentioned by Josephus.¹⁹⁴ It is an excellent example of a tetrastyle, prostyle Roman temple, unlike the candidates for the

¹⁹² Anne Killebrew, "Qazion: A Late Second-Early Third Century Rural Cultic Complex in the Upper Galilee Dedicated to Septimius Severus and His Family," *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 1 (2013): 113-60.

¹⁹³ Silvia Rozenberg, "Wall Painting Fragments from Omrit," in *The Roman Temple Complex at Horvat Omrit: An Interim Report*, ed. J. Andrew Overman and Daniel N. Schowalter (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2011), 55-72.

¹⁹⁴ J. Andrew Overman, Jack Olive, and Michael C. Nelson, "Discovering Herod's Shrine to Augustus," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 29 (2003): 40-49, 67-68.

building suggested at the nearby cave of Pan. Nevertheless, no clear identification of the Omrit temple has been made.

The third temple was built to encase and mimic the second temple, which itself duplicated many of the features of the first temple, but on a larger scale.¹⁹⁵ The decorative style of the capitals, and pottery found sealed between the podia of the two later phases, suggest construction of the third phase sometime around the end of the first century.

At some point near the end of the fourth century the third temple was severely damaged, likely the result of the large earthquake of 363 CE.¹⁹⁶ This event was recorded in Harvard Syriac MS 88 as having a devastating effect on nearby Caesarea Philippi.¹⁹⁷ The Omrit temple was not repaired, presumably because the social environment had changed, and instead a small Christian chapel was later constructed in the *temenos*, and much of the material from the temple quarried away. This chapel, about 25 feet long, had an apse on one end. It was built to incorporate the remains of the temple's large altar as the foundation of its north wall. It is of uncertain date.

Another new structure, probably also a church, was under construction but likely never completed. It utilized most of the remaining temple podium. It appears to have incorporated some still-standing remnants of the original *cella* and colonnade, but replaced the floor which had most likely been damaged beyond repair by the earthquake

¹⁹⁵ Michael C. Nelson, *The Temple Complex at Horvat Omrit: The Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 71-83.

¹⁹⁶ Greg Stoehr, "The Potential for Earthquake Damage to Temple Two Architecture at Roman Omrit," in *The Roman Temple Complex at Horvat Omrit: An Interim Report*, ed. J. Andrew Overman and Daniel N. Schowalter (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2011), 85-100.

¹⁹⁷ S.P. Brock, "A Letter Attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem on the Rebuilding of the Temple," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 40 (1977): 267-86.

of 363 CE.¹⁹⁸ The floor was primarily rebuilt with items in secondary use, including spolia that probably came from the original temple such as an interior column base and pieces of marble revetment.¹⁹⁹ In fact, ceramic and numismatic evidence indicates that the Byzantine builders actually excavated the fill out of some parts of the temple's substructure, before replacing it with their own fill that largely consisted of basalt boulders. This may have been because they wanted to assess the structural integrity of the foundations prior to starting new construction. A range of coins found in this later fill suggest a date of sometime around the second half of the fourth century.²⁰⁰ The reuse of the marble wall revetments as floor tiles is reminiscent of the treatment of similar items from the Marneion in Gaza.

An architrave block which had evidently fallen was used to block the original temple door. The date for this modification is unclear, but perhaps a new entrance and orientation for the building was planned. Alternatively, this may have been an attempt to block access to a dangerous building, the original temple. If the later building was never completed, because of a lack of funding, it might suggest depressed local economic circumstances that should be taken into account when thinking about why the original temple itself was never rebuilt.

Industrial facilities such as wine or olive presses, as well as other unidentified buildings, were constructed within the *temenos*. Some of these later facilities were built up against the side of the temple podium. A row of small rooms were attached to the rear

¹⁹⁸ G. Stoechr, "The Potential for Earthquake Damage at Roman Omrit," (2011), 85-100.

¹⁹⁹ Michael C. Nelson, *The Temple Complex at Horvat Omrit: The Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 8.

²⁰⁰ Danny Syon, "Omrit - The Coins," in *The Roman Temple Complex at Horvat Omrit: An Interim Report*, ed. J. Andrew Overman and Daniel N. Schowalter (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2011), 105-117.

exterior walls of the original temple, occupying the *temenos* of the temple in a way reminiscent of the situation at the Sepphoris temple. The use of temple spolia in these later rooms points to their construction sometime after 363 CE.

Some temple blocks, such as corner pilaster capitals, fell onto the remains of these later buildings, after these later buildings had themselves already been largely quarried away. The find-spots for such fallen blocks are virtually the same as the original placements for the blocks in the Roman temple.²⁰¹ They seem to have simply fallen from the higher courses of walls. Whatever the large new building on the podium might have been (or might have been intended to be) it likely incorporated recognizable temple components in their original positions, implying that a large section of the original building was intact and had been used in more-or-less its original state.²⁰² The hybrid building was still standing, almost certainly in a partial state, into medieval times.

Quarrying over a long period of time is evident. Temple blocks, and columns from the *propylaea* of the temple, were found by the excavators in isolated small piles at other locations within the *temenos*. They give the appearance of having been loosely sorted by type, suggesting ongoing quarrying activity.²⁰³ The quarrying of materials at Omrit seems to have been a perpetual activity going into the thirteenth century. It thus seems best to characterize the final fate of the Roman temple at Omrit as “conversion to an active spoliation site.”

²⁰¹ G. Stoehr, “The Potential for Earthquake Damage at Roman Omrit,” (2011), 85-100.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

Because the original intention seemed to be to Christianize the site, and because the work to this end (on the foundation and stylobate of the temple) began shortly after the earthquake, this also seems to be an example of a temple converted to a church. In fact, the evidence suggests that the *cella* was incorporated into the new building, a relatively unusual occurrence in Palestine.

The condition of Omrit in Late Antiquity has a clear similarity with the contemporary conditions of temples in Sepphoris, Hippos, Bet Shean, and Gerasa. The standing remains of temples at these sites did not seem to pose a significant threat to anyone. Nor did the obvious disruption of the normal pagan functionality of the buildings seem to be problematic.

Neapolis

Vespasian founded Neapolis (modern Nablus) at the foot of Mount Gerizim after the first Jewish revolt, in a region historically occupied by Samaritans. The main civic cult for this city was located some distance outside the city on Mount Gerezim.²⁰⁴ For this reason I have categorized this temple along with the rural temples, although the existence of the major civic cult building in semi-isolation from the city is one of several reasons (to be described below) for considering this temple to be a special case. Mount Gerezim was, and continues to be, held sacred by Samaritans. Samaritan culture

²⁰⁴ This is worthy of further study, which may cause me to revise my assessment of the Neapolis temple as “rural.” Given the normal location of such cults in the dense, urban cores of cities, Neapolis is unusual. The temple located on Mount Gerezim was peripheral in a geographic sense, but presumably central in a cultural sense. This may have an effect on the theoretical considerations that underpin this dissertation.

preserved (or developed) an alternate “pocket” of tradition regarding the proper worship of Yahweh, the main point of contention being the sacred nature of Mount Gerezim itself.

Josephus relates that a Samaritan leader named Sambalat built the Biblical temple of the Samaritans (dedicated to Yahweh) in the fourth century BCE, upon negotiation with Alexander the Great who had recently seized Tyre from the Persians. The temple was said to be an architectural duplicate of the temple in Jerusalem.²⁰⁵ The negotiation involved a promise of loyalty in exchange for permission to build the temple.

The “Samaritan Chronicle,” an agglomeration of indigenous Samaritan historical sources assembled during the middle-ages, asserts that this was, in fact, the type of agreement struck, but that the Persians were the other external party, rather than the Macedonians and Greeks.²⁰⁶ The existence of such alternate traditions is confusing, but both versions illustrate simultaneous tension and accommodation.

In the second century BCE, the Samaritans provisionally embraced the idea that Zeus and Yahweh were the same.²⁰⁷ This temple was re-dedicated to the worship of Zeus on account of pressure exerted upon the Samaritans by the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanies IV. Zeus, of course, was the Greco-Roman god that most closely resembled Yahweh. Both Romans and Greeks had a long-standing history of attempting to draw parallels between their pantheons and those of others for purposes of socio/political accommodation (or domination). Likewise, the Seleucids were yet another external power with which the Samaritans negotiated religion in exchange for survival.

²⁰⁵ Josephus *Antiquities* 11.324; 12.7-10; 13.74-9.

²⁰⁶ Abu ‘1-Fath *Samaritan Chronicle* (ed. and trans. By M. Levy Rubin) in *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, Vol. 10 (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002).

²⁰⁷ 2 Maccabees 6:1-5.

The Book of Maccabees, in fact, tells us that both Samaritans and Jews rededicated their respective temples of Yahweh over to Zeus at around the same time, and we might speculate as to why Jews revolted against the Seleucids, but not the Samaritans. Josephus tells us that this temple, also mentioned in 2 Maccabees, was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 110/111 BCE as part of the Hasmonean local expansion in the late second century.²⁰⁸

Coins minted in Neapolis, beginning in the time of Antoninus Pius, show us a Roman temple dedicated to Zeus Hypsistos. It was built sometime in close chronological proximity to the second Jewish rebellion.²⁰⁹ The coins show us the long staircase that led up the mountain from the city below to the temple at the top.²¹⁰ This staircase was excavated by Magen.²¹¹ Additional altars, or other religious monuments, can be seen on these coins dotting the slope of Mount Gerizim. They include a highly prominent additional monument (probably an altar) on the second peak in the background. The peak in the background is likely the future site of the church of Mary Theotokos.

This temple (like many of the other monuments on the mountain) was built at a time when the region was once again becoming turbulent and problematic for outside imperial powers. The Samaritans' long-term history of such religious and political negotiation left their built environment as a physical record. These coins demonstrate this by depicting the agglomeration of religious structures visible on the mountain.

²⁰⁸ Josephus *Antiquities* 13.256; 2 Maccabees 6.1-2.

²⁰⁹ Ya'akov Meshorer, *City Coins of Eretz-Israel and the Decapolis in the Roman Period* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1985), n° 126, 135-7, 140-8.

²¹¹ Itzhak Magen, *Flavia Neapolis: Shechem in the Roman Period*, Judea and Samaria Publications 11 (Jerusalem: Staff Officer of Archaeology/Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, 2009).

Robert Bull, in fact, excavated the foundations of two super-imposed, sequential Roman temples on Gerizim's summit. He also located the *temenos* wall of the compound.²¹² The earlier temple is almost certainly also Roman, and not the Biblical temple that Bull believed it to be.²¹³ Despite the Hellenistic fill (likely imported from elsewhere at this very old site) the first temple is architecturally Roman. It is unclear which of the two temples are depicted on which coins.

It is also unclear which Roman emperor built which temple. One possibility is that Trajan built one of the temples. Hypothetically, that construction work might have been part of a negotiation that secured the loyalty of the Samaritans during the buildup in regional tension in the time prior to the Bar Kochba rebellion. It may also represent appropriation by force on the part of the Romans.

Hadrian is the emperor that we often hear about in such contexts, and of course he is well known for the rededication of Jerusalem and the construction of a similar temple to Jupiter in his new city of Aelia Capitolina. Marinus of Neapolis claims Hadrian installed the bronze doors from the original Herodian Jewish temple in Jerusalem into the temple on Mount Gerizim.²¹⁴ Whether or not these doors were still in existence seems questionable. This act of favoritism fits the retributive character of many of Hadrian's actions in the region. Further, the passage also makes it sound as though Hadrian was simply embellishing a temple that already existed.

²¹² R.J. Bull and G. Ernest Wright, "Newly Discovered Temples on Mt. Gerizim in Jordan," *The Harvard Theological Review* 58 (Apr. 1965): 234-7; R.J. Bull, "The Excavations of Tel-erRas on Mount Gerizim," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 31 (1968):58-72; R.J. Bull, "An Archaeological Context for Understanding John 4:20," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 38 (1975): 54-9.

²¹³ Itzhak Magen *et al* (E. Levin trans.), *Mount Gerizim Excavations Volume 2: A Temple City* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority Press, 2008), 98 f.

²¹⁴ Marinus (quoted by Hargazius) in J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca* 103: 1283.

The Samaritan Chronicle describes a temple built by Hadrian to the god Saphis, and claims that the Samaritans themselves destroyed the building at some point.²¹⁵ The distinction between “building” and “modifying” seems to have been lost with time, but Hadrian was certainly involved in one phase or the other of the temple. The similarity between “Saphis” and “Serapis” is likely symptomatic of the overall confusion in the record rather than indicative of another temple located at the site. This medieval account is probably muddled, and the assertion about the destruction of the temple uncertain.

It is possible that Antoninus Pius (or his agents) handled the Roman side of negotiations in the aftermath of the second Jewish rebellion. Perhaps he was responsible for the second temple. The second Roman temple might also have been built by (or by permission of) Caracalla, who restored the previously-lost colonial status of Neapolis. Coins from his period are the first to depict the temple again, after a long chronological gap.²¹⁶

Neapolis had previously had its colonial status revoked by Septimius Severus on account of the city’s support of Pescinius Niger. Picking the “correct” or “incorrect” party to pledge allegiance to had consequences, as the Samaritans had known for centuries.

Coins that depict this temple, or Zeus, or a syncretic eastern Zeus amalgam, continued to be produced at Neapolis until the middle of the third century. The second temple was almost certainly active through that time. Coins in general stop being issued by cities in the region after about 250 CE, so the disappearance of the Zeus related issues

²¹⁵ Abu ‘l-Fath *Samaritan Chronicle* (Milka Rubin trans.).

²¹⁶ Ya’akov Meshorer, *City Coins* (1986), n° 134, 135.

is in no way an indication that the temple stopped functioning. It is thus possible that Neapolis had a functioning pagan temple going into the fourth century, although we hear nothing more about it.

The coins that depict the Roman temple often position it at the top of a tall staircase leading up one peak of the mountain. Wilson found a portion of this staircase, several of the subsidiary monuments located along its course, and the so-called “twelve stones” on the other peak.²¹⁷ Additionally, the fortified, octagonal church of Saint Mary Theotokos was built on this other peak in the late fifth century.

The twelve stones are supposedly the remains of the second century BCE Samaritan temple. Although these remains are minimal, ambiguous dedicatory inscriptions found nearby might corroborate the identification.²¹⁸ The Samaritan Chronicle places the Samaritan temple at this location, claiming that the church was built on top of it.²¹⁹ On the other hand, Procopius insisted that there was no Samaritan monument of any sort on the site, and that the mountain itself was the object of veneration (at least in his own day).²²⁰ It is unclear how long that situation had pertained.

Procopius mentions that the Church of Mary Theotokos replaced a Samaritan synagogue. Perhaps he meant this in terms of usage, and not physicality, as no evidence for a synagogue has been found on Mount Gerezim. Given that the mountain itself was

²¹⁷ C. Wilson, *Palestinian Exploration Memoirs Volume 2* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1873).

²¹⁸ Leah Di Segni, “The Church of Mary Theotokos on Mount Gerizim: The Inscriptions,” in G.C. Bottini, L. Di Segni, and E. Alliata (eds.), *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land: New Discoveries in Honor of Virgilio C. Corbo* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1990), 343-50.

²¹⁹ E.N. Adler and M. Seligshon (ed. and trans.), “New Samaritan Chronicle,” in *Revue de études Juives* 44 (1902): 236-7.

²²⁰ Procopius *Buildings* 5.7.7.

sacred, and that there were Samaritan synagogues elsewhere in the vicinity, reconciling Procopius' statements with the lack of evidence for a physical building is not problematic.

The church is worthy of note. It was a fortified, repressive presence. It is difficult to believe there were many Samaritan converts in the congregation. The church was built by Zeno in response to a Samaritan uprising in Neapolis that left the local bishop maimed. Procopius tells us that the Samaritans attacked the bishop at some other church in town. They cut off his hand at the altar. The bishop then visited Constantinople to personally petition the Emperor for help.²²¹ The construction of the church was the Emperor's response. The church was fortified with a substantial wall and garrisoned by soldiers.

The traditional date for these events is 484 CE. John Malalas tells us that around that same time a Samaritan attack on Caesarea Maritima occurred.²²² There was a disturbance at the hippodrome and the Samaritans seized control of the races. The church of Saint Procopius was also burnt, somewhere in that city. It seems that there were continuing Samaritan uprisings going into the sixth century.²²³

The church in Neapolis was often targeted by Samaritans during these occasions, and Justinian was said to have strengthened the walls. Exactly what he did is archaeologically unclear.²²⁴ He may have also enclosed the nearby spring to the north

²²¹ Procopius *Buildings* 5.7.1-16.

²²² John Malalas *Chronographia* 15.382.10-383.4.

²²³ Kenneth Holum, "Identity and the Late Antique City," in Hayim Lapin (ed.), *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine* (Bethesda: University of Maryland Press, 1998), 157-77.

²²⁴ Procopius *Buildings* 5.7.16.

with a connecting wall. The masonry of the walls surrounding the spring is of a different style than the other fortifications.

Vered-Shalev describes the church as “a Christian stronghold in the midst of a hostile community.” She notes that the octagonal shape of the building was designed to showcase a relic, in this case the stone from Golgotha mentioned in an inscription.²²⁵

This indicates that the church was intended to be a pilgrimage site for Christians coming in from outside the local community. Further, these relics were magical talismans.

Placing one at this location may have been some type of protective ward.

Preliminary Conclusions

All of these pagan temples eventually went out of commission. Out of the subset of approximately forty temples for which we have good evidence in this chapter, we really only know details about the end-life of yet another distinctive minority subset. I will reserve, until Chapter Six, a final tabulation of all temples covered by this study, after I have discussed the temple-demolishing efforts of Constantine and Porphyry of Gaza.

Some of the temples in this chapter seem to have suffered intentional demolition, although there is only an archaeological record, without literary accompaniment. Without the literary accounts there is little indication of the impetus for these acts, either grass-roots or authoritative, and no indication of whether the city elites were cooperative or coerced.

²²⁵ Vered Shalev-Hurvitz, *Holy Sites Encircled* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 216-34.

The ending of many temples was undramatic, if we even know about it. A combination of neglect, natural disaster, extended quarrying through time, and encroachment of ritual space by other buildings was just as common as the more dramatic scenarios. The temples at Omrit, Sepphoris, and in the lower city of Bet Shean, for instance, lingered and slipped away in an unremarkable fashion. Quarrying was almost always a factor in the ending of pagan temples, and it can often be redundant with more significant phenomena. It tells us that the buildings were obsolete, and potentially unremarkable. It is also troublesome to date these activities specifically. Removing an item, for instance say a stone block, eliminates evidence instead of adding evidence.

What we hear from impassioned literary sources does not seem to be typical. “Ambivalent,” or at most “moderately nostalgic,” might really be the best word choices for generalizing public opinion regarding the end of the temples covered in this chapter. In most cases it is unclear if the temples were even still functioning at the end of the third century, although there is a similar lack of evidence that they had stopped functioning.

Chapter IV

Constantine's Churches in the Holy Land, the Encounter with Entrenched Paganism, and Eusebius

This chapter will investigate Constantine's church building program, both in Jerusalem and nearby. Three out of four of these building projects allegedly involved the displacement of pagan cult, most notably the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This chapter will evaluate the claims of such displacement and extrapolate the social environment in the places where building occurred. Also to be considered is the relationship between events in Palestine and the broader Empire-wide context.

This discussion is by necessity highly reliant upon Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*. This, and Eusebius' other works, are virtually our only sources for understanding the process of state-sponsored church building during these years. Most other late antique sources are in fact based on his work. The author and his work need to be read with care and with some caveats in mind. When he tells us things, do we believe him? In the next section I will argue that we have good reason to do so, at least in terms of the questions posed by this dissertation.

The Reliability of Eusebius

Eusebius would hold onto his writing for extended periods of time, going back to rework it as events in the present unfolded.¹ This means that he gave us a carefully massaged account. The main theme of much of his work is the triumph of the Church, because of its correctness, against its opposition. Irregularities in the successive

¹ T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 149-50; Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (trans.), *Eusebius Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8-9.

iterations of this main narrative partly reflect Eusebius' own reconsideration of the meaning of the past. This proclivity would be a significant problem if we took the *Vita Constantini* to be a work of history.

It is not. The *Vita Constantini* is a panegyric. It is specifically designed to cast the Emperor in the best light possible. Thus, there is no reason for us to expect it to include information that would be harmful to Constantine's reputation. We might observe the notable absences of Fausta and Crispus in the *Vita Constantini*. In a context like this, Eusebius would have every reason not to bring up the fact that the Emperor had his first wife and their son killed.

Eusebius was part of the generation of Christians who had lived through the persecutions of the Tetrarchy, a subject about which he wrote extensively in the *Martyrs of Palestine* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Prior to the time of the tetrarchy, Eusebius thought that Christians were already through the worst of things and that their time had come. The correctness of the Christian religion had a corollary in its own earthly success, as the church increased its public presence, wealth, and membership in the later years of the third century. Barnes, Cameron, and Hall note that Eusebius, after writing extensively with this in mind, rethought the schema and revised several sections of his texts after the great persecution.² In the later revisions, Eusebius takes the persecution to be punishment for the development of schism within the church, he takes the eventual downfall of the tetrarchs as a reassertion of divine justice, and he takes Constantine to be the earthly agent of God who brought about the ascendancy of the Church.

² *Ibid.*

Eusebius had a myopic geographical perspective. He disproportionately emphasizes Palestine. This makes sense given his local residence in Caesarea Maritima. While this does give substantial credibility to Eusebius' reporting of local events, it also has several distorting effects. It detaches Palestine from the historical context of the larger Empire, causing us to wonder how Eusebius' tight focus on specific local events correspond to his sweeping claims about Imperial policy. Eusebius portrays an Empire-wide conflict between Christianity, the Emperor's religion of choice, and the pre-existing pagan milieu. Eusebius' local tunnel vision, however, means that he actually gives us information about only a half-dozen or so specific examples of this conflict. They are all in Palestine and its neighborhood. This is less of a problem within the context of a dissertation that specifically focuses on Palestine.

Eusebius developed intense rivalries with many other bishops. One reason for this had to do with the fact that he was perpetually vulnerable to charges of Arianism. This was on account of the intellectual debt that Eusebius owed to his intellectual predecessor in Caesarea, the theologian Origen, who had independently invented many of the controversial principles of Arianism. Eusebius distorts himself to appear to conform with orthodoxy.³ One of Eusebius' rivals in the church was Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem. Caesarea was the official see of Palestine although Jerusalem was obviously a special place on account of the history of the religion. The status of Jerusalem as a sacred spot was recognized at the Council of Nicaea. It may be that Eusebius resented this, jealousy creating a potential motive for prejudice in his accounts of events. Nevertheless, this animosity is not liable to be an insurmountable problem within the circumscribed

³ Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (1981), 82-105.

context of this dissertation, because I am not investigating these issues of theology and church politics.

Despite these manifold caveats, there is in fact one very good reason to take Eusebius at his word in many instances. The type of evidence that he most commonly uses in the *Vita* seems virtually unimpeachable. Eusebius repeatedly depends upon official Imperial correspondence, letters which he claims to have in his possession that he reproduces frequently, apparently verbatim, and at length.

Manufacturing these letters whole-cloth would have been a seemingly perverse exercise. Nevertheless, scholars have pointed to such potential Eusebian inventions. Ken Olson for instance, sees reason to be suspicious of material that seems too good to be true, in terms of putting words that prove the superiority of Christianity into the mouths of characters who would otherwise not be expected to say such things.⁴ The speech of Licinius on the occasion of his defeat by Constantine is particularly dubious.⁵ Olson also suggests that the *Testimonium Flavianum* might have been inserted into the text of Josephus' *Antiquities* while Eusebius was working with it in Caesarea.⁶

Although scholars like Gibbon and Burckhardt once pointed out the possibility of the forgery of Constantine's letters, the majority opinion now regards them as genuine. The letters are stylistically appropriate in terms of their status as Imperial correspondence.⁷ Most of them are exactly the type of correspondence that we would

⁴ Ken Olson, "A Eusebian Reading of the Testimonium Flavianum," in Aaron Johnson and Jeremy Schott (ed.), *Caesarea: Traditions and Innovations* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2013), 97-114.

⁵ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 2.5.3-4.

⁶ Josephus *Antiquities* 18.63-64.

expect Eusebius to have received in his role as bishop of Caesarea, or that any bishop anywhere in the Empire might have received, if that bishop were coordinating with Constantine on an empire-wide policy. Further, we have an independent fragment from one of these letters (one that the earlier generation of scholars held to be fake) that cannot be later than the writing of the *Vita Constantini*.⁸

These letters were most likely not altered by Eusebius, because identical copies were typically sent to multiple recipients. Had Eusebius significantly twisted the sense of these letters, there were plenty of bishops and Imperial officials, many of whom we understand to have been hostile to Eusebius, who would have responded vocally. It is not hard to imagine Macarius, for instance, seizing an opportunity to correct his rival's mistakes. We have no evidence for such a response. The worst-case-scenario (from our point of view as historians) is that this is because any distortion that Eusebius introduced was broadly in line with the prejudices of his audience.

For this reason, Eusebius is a far from reliable source for information about early fourth century paganism. He had no reason to describe the local pagan cults of his time accurately. Nor did many of his potential fact-checkers have incentive to correct inaccuracies, because pagans were their opposition too.

⁷ Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (trans.), Eusebius *Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18.

⁸ A.H.M. Jones and T.C. Skeat, "Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*," *JEH* 5 (1954): 196-200.

Eusebius on Constantinian Churches in Palestine

The four churches in Palestine that Constantine built were the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the Eleona in an eastern suburb of Jerusalem, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Basilica at the Oak and Spring in Elonei-Mamre. With the exception of the Eleona on the Mount of Olives, all were built at locations said by Eusebius or others to have been held sacred by pre-existing polytheist cults. With the exception of Mamre, all were located at sites that were key locations in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. These two sets of coincidences, and their overlap, can best be explained in terms of the fact that targeting these sites was the most expedient way for Constantine to present himself as the champion of Christianity.

Aelia Capitolina/Jerusalem

We have plenty of reason to accept the broad outlines of Eusebius' account of events in Jerusalem concerning the construction of the Holy Sepulcher church.⁹ As noted previously, Eusebius was contemporary, lived nearby in Caesarea, and would have been read by people in a position to refute him. What we know from archaeology is also consonant with the broad outlines of his account. Eusebius describes the construction of the church, a public state-sanctioned ritual cleansing of the site, the destruction of a pre-existing pagan temple, and a few details about the construction history of Aelia Capitolina.

Further, Eusebius' narrative implies an active community of pagans living in Jerusalem in his own time. Constantine's undertaking in Jerusalem was an extraordinary

⁹ S. Gibson and J. Taylor, *Beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1994), 68-69.

application of Imperial muscle, so much so that we have to wonder why there were no riots reported.

The church that we see today is largely a result of repairs to the building that was set on fire by Al-Hakim, prior to the first crusade. John Wilkinson provides a reconstruction of the original Constantinian church based upon his close reading of the testimony of Book Three of the *Vita Constantini*.¹⁰

Eusebius' description of the church in Book Three was probably written later than 325 CE, after the chronological present of his narrative. The description is probably from the time of an encomium of the Emperor that Eusebius delivered in Jerusalem in 335 CE, for the dedication of the church, and brought back anachronistically into the earlier section of the text.¹¹ Eusebius repeated the same speech in 336 CE for Constantine's *tricennalia* celebration in Constantinople.¹²

Eusebius tells us that pagans (in general), at some undefined time in the past, had undertaken a massive earthmoving and paving operation to level the future site of the church:

και δὴ πολλὸν εἰσενεγκάμενοι μόχθον, γῆν ἔξωθέν ποθεν
εἰσφορήσαντες τὸν πάντα καλύπτουσι τόπον, κᾶπειτ' εἰς ὕψος
αἰωρήσαντες λίθῳ τε καταστρώσαντες κάτω που τὸ θεῖον ἄντρον
ὑπὸ πολλῶ τῷ χώματι κατακρύπτουσιν.¹³

This earthmoving operation was most likely to create a forum space, although Eusebius explains it as a deliberate effort to obscure Christ's grave. A temple to Aphrodite was

¹⁰ John Wilkenson, *Egeria's Travels* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips LTD, 1999), 16-22.

¹¹ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 4.43-48.

¹² A. Cameron and S. Hall, *Life* (1999), 40.

¹³ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.26.2.

then apparently built on the spot, although Eusebius describes it as a μόνον (a little nook) thereby belittling the building. This was likely meant to be insulting rhetoric.

Eusebius also mentions the existence of statues and altars polluted by sacrifice:

εἶθ' ὡς οὐδενὸς αὐτοῖς λειπομένον, τῆς γῆς ὑπερθε δεινὸν ὡς
ἀληθῶς ταφεῶνα ψυχῶν ἐπισκευάζουσι νεκρῶν εἰδώλων,
σκότιον Ἄφροδίτης ἀκολάστῳ δαίμονι μυχὸν οἰκοδομησάμενοι,
κάπειτα μυσσὰς ἐνταυθοῖ θυσίας ἐπὶ βεβήλων καὶ ἐναγῶν
βωμῶν ἐπισπένδοντες.¹⁴

Ἐἶδωλα is a substantive commonly taken to refer to statues. All of this indicates sacrifices carried out in an open space, such as a forum, in front of the temple. Eusebius is vague about chronology and specific responsible individuals. He is, however, clearly talking about Hadrian and construction work involved in the creation of Aelia Capitolina.

Presumably, one of these statues that he mentions was of a female deity, giving Eusebius grounds to attribute the temple to Aphrodite. Eusebius mentions multiple statues, and one might very well have been of a female goddess. The exact source of evidence for this attribution, however, is unclear. Eusebius mentions νεκρὰ εἶδωλα in the same sentence along with the attribution. The presence of statues and the dedication of the temple to Aphrodite, however, are not explicitly related by language meant to establish such a connection.

Eusebius clearly did not put a high priority on an accurate description of the specifics of pagan cult at the temple. Instead he provides a sketch meant to elicit the maximum amount of horror from his audience. Eusebius makes the site of the temple sound haunted. This is reinforced by the ghostly double-meaning of νεκρὰ εἶδωλα. Aphrodite had a reputation for licentiousness that makes the site seem more

¹⁴ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.26.3.

reprehensible, a potential misattribution that assists the rhetoric of the passage. Biddle in fact suggests that Eusebius conflated Aphrodite with Tyche, who may have been the actual subject of a female statue potentially located at the site.¹⁵

Jerome's account (in a letter to be dealt with later in connection with Bethlehem) also discusses the pagan statuary located on the site of Christ's death and resurrection in Jerusalem. Jerome places a statue of Venus by Golgotha and a statue of Jupiter by the Anastasis:

*Ab Adriani temporibus usque ad imperium Constantini per annos circiter centum octoginta in loco resurrectionis simulacrum Iovis, in crucis rupe statua ex marmore Veneris a gentilibus posita colebatur aestimantibus persecutorum auctoribus, quod tollerent nobis fidem resurrectionis et crucis, si loca sancta per idola polluisent.*¹⁶

This has led some, Corbo being the first, to suggest that the temple described by Eusebius was actually dedicated to the Capitoline Triad.¹⁷ The gods that made up the archetypal Capitoline Triad were Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, and Minerva Augusta. Minerva Augusta could sometimes be conflated with Roma, or any city's local Tyche (particularly in the Greek East). The gods that made up the Capitoline Triad changed through time, the Archaic triad at one point including Mars and Quirinus instead of the two female deities, and earlier Etruscan and Vedic groupings suggest old Indo-European roots for the cult.¹⁸ Perhaps the temple that Eusebius described was in fact dedicated to Jupiter, Tyche, and Juno?

¹⁵ M. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 56-57.

¹⁶ Jerome *Epistle* 58.3.5

¹⁷ Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro* (1982).

¹⁸ Ian M. Barton, "Capitoline Temples in Italy and the Provinces," in Hildegard Temporini (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.12.1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), 259-342.

In its archetypal form, however, the Capitoline cult was the official state cult of Rome, and there are not an overly large number of such temples outside of Italy and North Africa. The earliest Capitolium outside of Italy was in Spain, and wherever they are located they are a strong indicator of Roman civic identity and affinity.¹⁹ The fact that the legio X Fretensis was stationed in the city for two centuries makes it a strong possibility that such a temple would be present.

Vitruvius gives a description of his ideal Capitolium, which (like many Roman temples) was meant to be frontal and seated on a high podium, with an imposing staircase. A tripartite *cella* or *adyton*, or even a set of three niches in the rear of the *cella*, provided space for statues of the triad of divinities.²⁰ Capitolia could be proportionally wider than average Roman temples, an Etruscan stylistic trait which makes sense given that the original Capitolium, on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, was built by Etruscan architects.

Vitruvius tells us that these temples should be an imposing presence located at the end of a colonnaded way, or at the end of a forum, like the two most famous examples (outside of Rome) in Ostia and Pompeii. This accords well with the location of the temple that Constantine demolished in Aelia Capitolina. It was at one end of the central forum, just off the primary colonnaded street. It makes sense for a city that was in fact dedicated to the Capitoline gods to have such a sanctuary located in such a place.

Cassius Dio, however, places a Capitolium on the Temple Mount and frequently modern scholars will see fit to accept this.²¹ Yaron Eliav, on the other hand, observes

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Vitruvius *De Architectura* 1.7.1.

that this part of Dio is known from a medieval edition of a Byzantine epitome, and he suggests that a later editor may have erroneously put the Capitolium in this location.²² The potential error would have dovetailed nicely with biblical prophecy construed to demonstrate the obsolescence of Judaism.

It is worth noting that other accounts which we might expect to mention massive temple ruins, and thus speak to this hypothetical part of the history of the Temple Mount, fail to do so. Ammianus Marcellinus, for instance, described Julian's attempt to rebuild the Jewish temple but does not mention anything about a Hadrianic temple.²³ Although arguments from silence are notoriously weak, this omission at least admits the possibility that the Capitolium was elsewhere.

There is some possibility that the camp for Legio X Fretensis, instead of Hadrian's Capitolium, was located on the Temple Mount. The camp itself has yet to be found, and the hypothetical locations suggested by scholars are plentiful, most commonly including Mount Zion to the southwest or somewhere in the northwestern expansion to the city that Hadrian made. In fact, several of the ancillary buildings that are normally immediately adjacent to a camp have been found in the region of the Temple Mount. These include a legionary bakery and a legionary bathhouse described by Stiebel, Mazar, and others.²⁴ Jodi Magness makes the observation that this evidence has extra strength

²¹ Cassius Dio *Historia Romana* 69.12.1.

²² Yaron Eliav, *God's Mountain* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 85-87.

²³ Ammianus Marcellinus *Res Gestae* 23.1.2-3.

²⁴ E. Mazar, *The Temple Mount Excavations in Jerusalem 1968-1978: Final Report, Vol. 4* (Jerusalem: Qedem, 2011); G.D. Stiebel, "The Whereabouts of the Xth Legion and the Boundaries of Aelia Capitolina," in A. Faust and E. Baruch (eds.), *Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies: New Studies on Jerusalem, Proceedings of the Fifth Conference* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, Dec. 23 1999), 68-103; E. Mazar, "The Roman-Byzantine Bathhouse at the Foot of the Western Wall of the Temple Mount,"

given the lack of evidence for the camp elsewhere.²⁵ Yaron Eliav, on the other hand, argued that the Temple Mount was deliberately excluded from Aelia Capitolina and left intentionally empty.²⁶ The possibility that the Temple Mount was empty logically requires that the Capitolium was elsewhere in the city, if we accept that such a building really existed. A legionary camp may have had its own Capitolium.

A central public spot, such as a forum, was of course just as suitable for the location of a Capitolium as a prominent hill. Hadrian would have certainly built a Capitolium in a high-visibility location, given that Jupiter was his personal god and the namesake of the city of Aelia Capitolina. Ancient cities almost always had temples dedicated to their namesake deities.

It is highly significant that the *dies encaeniarius*, the liturgical celebration in Jerusalem that commemorated the construction of the Holy Sepulcher, fell on the Ides of September. This date was the same as that of the festival of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.²⁷ This coincidence makes the most sense if the temple that Constantine demolished was the city's Capitolium. It is likely that Eusebius subsequently misidentified it, perhaps making a lazy mistake that happened to further his rhetorical goals. Further, Eusebius would not have wanted to portray the Emperor committing treason by acting against the central cult of the Roman state.

in A. Faust and E. Baruch (eds.), *Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies: New Studies on Jerusalem, Proceedings of the Sixth Conference* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, Dec. 7 2000), 87-102.

²⁵ Jodi Magness, "Aelia Capitolina: A Review of Some Current Debates about Hadrianic Jerusalem," in Katerina Galor and Gideon Avni (eds.) *Unearthing Jerusalem* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 313-321.

²⁶ Y. Eliav, *God's Mountain* (2005), 85-87.

²⁷ A. Baumstark, *Liturgie comparée* (Chevetogne: Editions de Chevetogne, 1953), 203.

Further, the significance of the coincidental dates would only have been appreciated by a population in Aelia that was aware of the pagan festival. They were probably celebrating it, prior to conversion to Christianity.

Although this is an attractive possibility, Jupiter may not have been the most important god in Aelia. The Capitoline Triad was depicted on fewer than 6 coins from Aelia Capitolina, while those of Venus account for 40%.²⁸ This suggests that Venus might very well have been an important enough god to require her own temple. There is no immediate way to resolve this discrepancy.

Whoever the god or gods worshiped in the forum, Eusebius tells us that Constantine completely obliterated the temple and statuary at the site:

ἀμα δὲ προστάγματι τὰ τῆς ἀπάτης μηχανήματα εἰς ἔδαφος ἄνωθεν ἀφ' ὑψηλοῦ κατερρίπτετο, ἐλύετό τε καὶ καθηρεῖτο αὐτοῖς ζοάνοις καὶ δαίμοσι τὰ τῆς πλάνης οἰκοδομήματα. οὐ μὴν δ' ἐν τούτοις τὰ τῆς σπουδῆς ἴστατο, ἀλλὰ πάλιν βασιλεὺς αἴρεσθαι καὶ πορρωτάτω τῆς χώρας ἀπορρίπτεσθαι τῶν καθαιρουμένων τὴν ἐν λίθοις καὶ ζύλοις ὕλην προσταττει.²⁹

He had the temple razed to bedrock, the ground level brought down to expose the tomb, and the rubble and building materials discarded. It does not sound like any building materials were recycled in the construction of the church.

This was a deliberately uneconomical procedure in an engineering budget sense. A demonstration like this implies an audience. This was a public cleansing ritual, meant to be seen by the people of Jerusalem. It was also a pointed political statement. The extreme and unprecedented nature of the act implies conflict with the pagan population of the city, which was quite possibly considerable.

²⁸ Leo Kadman, *The Coins of Aelia Capitolina* (Jerusalem: Universitas, 1956), 36-43.

²⁹ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.26.7-3.27.1.

Eusebius places repeated emphasis on the fact that building materials, and specifically the pavement of the forum and the fill between it and bedrock, needed to be disposed of at a distance from the site. This was because of contamination with bloody gore:

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐπὶ τοῦτο μόνον προελθεῖν ἀπήρκει, πάλιν δ' ἐπιθειάσας βασιλευς τοῦδαφος αὐτό, πολὺ τοῦ χώρου βάθος ἀνορύξαντας, αὐτῷ χοῖ πόρρω που καὶ ἐξωτάτω λύθροις ἅτε δαιμονικοῖς ἐρρυπωμένον ἐκφορεῖσθαι παρακελεύεται.³⁰

Perhaps we should take Eusebius literally on this point. If the Hadrianic forum had been in active use as a site for sacrifices at the time of the narrative, the pavement really would have been deeply covered in the remnants of sacrificial victims. This is a detail that Eusebius supplies that implies active pagan use of the site at the time of the demolition.

On the other hand, excavating to bedrock was often done when building the foundation of a new structure that was intended to be permanent, for which the foundations of pre-existing buildings were deemed insufficient for whatever reason. There could be perfectly normal engineering reasons for some of the activities described by Eusebius. We might take Eusebius' descriptions of blood and gore as simply a metaphorical act of imagination, a perceived permanent contamination of the site resulting from sacrificial practices that had already ceased.

The scenario that Eusebius describes is largely borne out by what is known of the archaeology of the site (or the lack thereof). The construction history of the Holy Sepulcher and the archaeology of the buildings lying beneath it are scarce, complicated, and poorly known. This largely has to do with the imprecise nature of early written accounts (primarily Eusebius), the sanctity of the building, its multiple construction and

³⁰ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.27.1.

destruction phases, and the fact that Constantine really does seem to have done away with the majority of the Hadrianic construction.

The modern, divided, multi-denominational control of the church inhibited a unified approach to understanding the archaeology. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, a cooperative restoration effort provided an opportunity for most of the excavation and architectural analysis that today informs our knowledge of the site's building history.³¹ The studies of Corbo and Coüasnon resulted from the coordinated restoration effort, although their interpretations of the physical evidence and how it should be understood in light of textual evidence frequently differ.³²

Further investigations of both the Roman and Byzantine periods of Jerusalem have also informed our knowledge of the church, particularly excavations in the Muristan, the medieval market district in the neighborhood of the Holy Sepulcher. Studies undertaken and volumes edited by Shimon Gibson and Gideon Avni deal with these regions, also embracing a cooperative effort to understanding the church.³³ Nevertheless absolute consensus on all issues is still difficult to find.

All of these scholars, however, and most other modern authorities, consider the Holy Sepulcher to have been built, by order of Constantine, as a complex of buildings along the northern edge of one of two main fora in Aelia Capitolina. Reconstructions of

³¹ J. Patrich, "An Overview on the Archaeological Work in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre," in Dieter Vieweger and Shimon Gibson (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Church of the Redeemer and the Muristan in Jerusalem* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 139-61.

³² V.C. Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro de Gerusalamme, Aspetti arceologici dale origini al period crociato* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1982); C. Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1974).

³³ Katharina Galor and Gideon Avni (eds.), *Unearthing Jerusalem* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011); Dieter Vieweger and Shimon Gibson (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Church of the Redeemer and the Muristan in Jerusalem* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016).

the city plan from this period are various and contradictory, although it is largely held that Hadrian built a temple (either to Aphrodite or Jupiter) in a northwestern expansion of the city that he built, thus yielding an approximately orthogonal layout (Fig. 4.1).

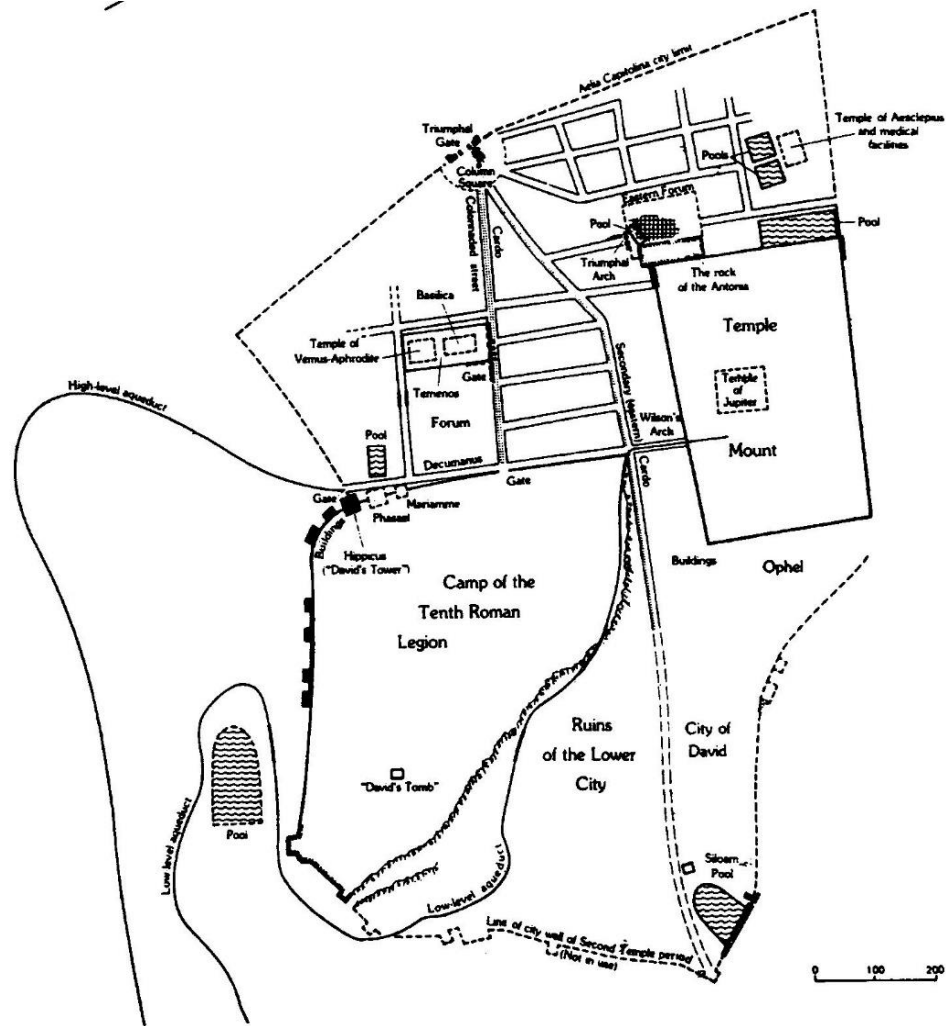


Figure 4.1: Plan of Aelia Capitolina (from Magness 2011).

Excavations in the area of the Church of the Redeemer demonstrate that Golgotha was in fact outside of the city walls prior to the time of Hadrian. Kathleen Kenyon's excavation explored the very filling operation described by Eusebius as part of Hadrian's

reconfiguration of that part of the city.³⁴ The continuing civic character of the eastern cardo suggests that the south wall of the Hadrianic city is to be found further south than Magness reconstructs it.³⁵ Weksler-Bdolah's excavation, which establishes this fact, is located too far away from the temple mount to determine if the side-streets heading east lead to the top. Despite this shift in our understanding of the area, it still seems to be possible to potentially locate the legionary camp in the southeast quarter of the city.

Corbo considered some of the remains that he found to be part of the Hadrianic temple, and thought that he had found evidence for a tripartite *cella* such as one might expect in a Capitolium (Fig. 4.2). The specific wall he identified, however, is too fragmentary and difficult to date to make out such detail. Coüasnon reasonably suggested that some of the remains that he found belonged to a Hadrianic civic basilica, as one would expect to find in such a location in most Roman cities.³⁶ There are certainly substantial earlier retaining walls beneath the Holy Sepulcher church, consonant with the sort of large leveling and paving operation involved in the construction of an open public space such as a forum. Many of these walls are Hadrianic, and built from a mix of fresh-cut stones and spolia in secondary use from Herodian structures (Fig. 4.3).

³⁴ Kay Prag, "Dame Kathleen Kenyon's Excavations in the Muristan, South of the Church of the Redeemer," in Dieter Vieweger and Shimon Gibson (eds.), *The Archaeology and History of the Church of the Redeemer and the Muristan in Jerusalem* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 95-107.

³⁵ Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah, "The Foundation of Aelia Capitolina in Light of New Excavations along the Eastern Cardo," *Israel Exploration Journal* 64 (2014), 38-62; J. Magness, "Aelia Capitolina," in K. Galor and G. Avni (eds.) *Unearthing Jerusalem* (2011), 313-21.

³⁶ C. Coüasnon, *Holy Sepulchre* (1974), 45.

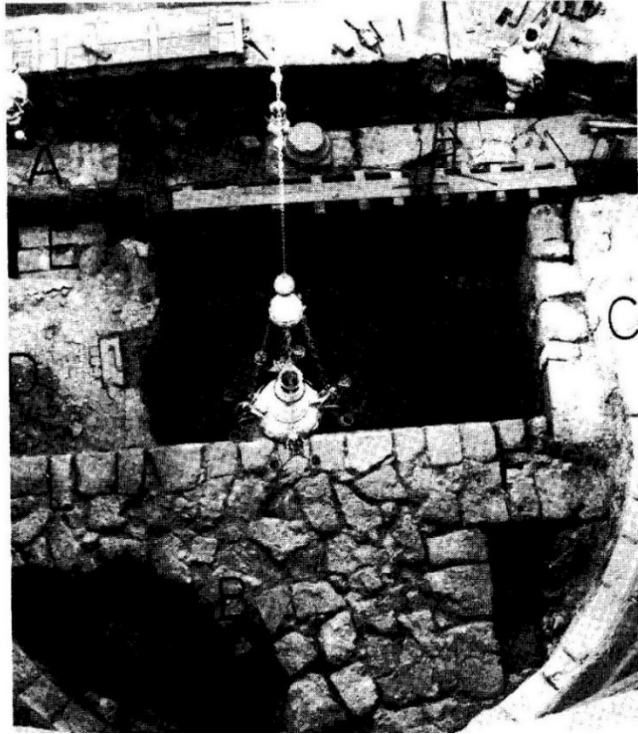


Figure 4.2: Excavations in the Katholikon. E” indicates the wall identified as part of the Hadrianic temple (from Corbo 1982).



Figure 4.3: Hadrianic retaining wall (from Corbo 1982).

The mix of recycled and new material was apparently acceptable in walls that were never meant to be seen, such as the subsurface foundations for retaining walls. Eusebius' impression of complete and utter destruction of the pagan site, while in fact largely supported by its extremely minimal archaeological remains, overlooked a few features that were subsumed by the construction of the church. The existence of these Hadrianic remnants suggest that the Constantinian work crews were actually economizing in some places. It might also be that that these foundation walls were essential to the stability of the site. A third possibility is that the Hadrianic foundation walls remaining today were clean in a literal sense when the Constantinian work crews found them, and thus allowed to stand.

Demolishing a temple was extraordinary. There are many instances from antiquity where it is described as one of the more terrible things that could be done to a city, an act capable of inspiring hysteria and depression, and a fit pretext for revenge. Episodes from fourth century Rome, fifth century Athens, and the Jewish Rebellion show the people from these places choosing temples as locales from which to stage their last stand.³⁷ This was not only on account of their defensibility but also the centrality, in terms of ethnic sentiment linked to religious belief, of the Temple of Yahweh, the Parthenon, and the Capitolium in Rome. The destruction of a (theoretical) Capitolium in Jerusalem, by the Emperor himself, would have been a very powerful symbolic act because of the centrality of that type of monument in the identity of Rome.

We have to consider the possibility that to some extent Eusebius himself is configuring the act of demolishing the pagan temple on the site of Christ's grave as a

³⁷ Josephus *Wars* 4.5; Livy 5.49-52; Herodotus 5.102, 8.52-56.

confrontation with paganism in Jerusalem. Attributing the Hadrianic temple to the sexually reprehensible Aphrodite (probably erroneously), belittling the temple, repeatedly emphasizing contamination by blood and gore (either real or imagined), and conveying the pagan presence at the site as a ghostly graveyard all heighten the sense of tension.

Nevertheless, I think that the public nature and Imperial sanction for an unusual act like the demolition implies that perception of conflict was shared by the local community. The Emperor, his biographer, and the population at large probably all understood the event similarly. There really was likely to have been a significant number of pagan witnesses among the local population in Jerusalem. Constantine must also have been fully aware of the showmanship involved in demolishing a temple. Showmanship implies an audience that the Emperor sought to impress, which in this case may have just as easily been a Christian one. Eusebius was either accurate, or was complicit in reinforcing a shared perception through use of colorful language and exaggeration.

Bethlehem

The Church of the Nativity, dedicated in 339 CE, was built over the cave in which Christ was thought to have been born on the outskirts of Bethlehem. Jerome tells us that the Church displaced a cult of Adonis. There is no supporting evidence for his claim, either archaeologically or in Eusebius, which we would expect if this cult were significant. The location would have been attractive to pagan cult, and we typically think of the ancient sacred landscape as pagan by default. Nevertheless, any pagan cult at Bethlehem was evidently ephemeral. It may be that local pagans were flexible in terms of what god they would claim inhabited the cave.

Eusebius tells us little about the construction of the church in Bethlehem. His narrative is largely concerned with Helena's visit as a show of her piety: ἐπειδὴ γὰρ αὕτη τῷ παμβασιλεῖ θεῷ τὸ τῆς εὐσεβοῦς διαθέσεως ἀποδοῦναι χρέος ἔργον ἐποιήσατο...³⁸ Eusebius does not mention anything specific about the architecture of the church, other than to tell us that one was built. The passage also does double-duty and informs the reader about the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives: αὐτίκα δ' οὖν τῷ προσκυνηθένι θεῷ δύα νεῶς ἀφιέρου, τὸν μὲν πρὸς τῷ τῆς γεννήσεως ἄντρῳ, τὸν δ' ἐπὶ τοῦ τῆς ἀναλήψεως ὄρους.³⁹

Nor does Eusebius mention anything about pagan contamination, which we would expect given his attention to this in his descriptions of Mamre and Jerusalem. There is no reason to think that he would omit such a thing if he knew about it, given that it would only help his rhetorical aim of demonstrating the victory of the Church over its opponents. Eusebius was eager to impugn paganism at every opportunity. Given Bethlehem's theological importance, fame, and proximity to Eusebius' home, we can expect that he would have learned about, seized upon, and horrified his readers with the slimmest rumors of paganism. He does not do this. Eusebius had an axe to grind when it came to pagans, and here his grinding wheel is silent.

The cave first appears in the record as the traditional birth-place of Christ starting in the second or third century.⁴⁰ The conflation of a cave with a manger is not unusual. Caves are well-known in the region as places to keep livestock.

³⁸ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.42.1.

³⁹ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.43.

⁴⁰ Joan Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 99-102.

Caves are also well-known (more generally in the ancient world), as sacred loci, with a tendency to attract cult of various types. Caves are part of a group of such natural features, including mountain tops, groves of trees, and rivers. In fact, a conjunction of multiple such features, for instance a cave on a mountain top, or a cave with a river-spring in it, were even more likely to have had a sacred character. Thus, the cave on Mount Ida was the birthplace of Zeus in the Hesiodic tradition, and the cave at the headwaters of the Jordan River, Paneas, was a favored location inhabited by Pan. Mithras was exclusively worshiped in artificial chthonic settings, caves replicated by semi-subterranean architecture. The participants in his cult were meant to have the perception of entering an underground space. This space would also simulate exposure to the night sky, Mithras' astrological aspect reflected by paintings of constellations or lightwells cut into the ceiling.

According to Jerome, ancient Bethlehem was known for both a grove of trees and a cave that was thought to be sacred to Adonis. Despite the conjunction of favored natural features, his testimony is the only explicit evidence that Constantine's church displaced a pagan holy spot. Jerome indicates the pagan past of the cave in a letter to his friend Paulinus written around 400:

Ab Adriani temporibus usque ad imperium Constantini per annos circiter centum octoginta in loco resurrectionis simulacrum Iovis, in crucis rupe statua ex marmore Veneris a gentilibus posita colebatur aestimantibus persecutorum auctoribus, quod tollerent nobis fidem resurrectionis et crucis, si loca sancta per idola polluissent. Bethleem nunc nostrum et augustissimum orbis locum, de quo psalmista canit: veritas de terra orta est, lucus inumbrabat Thamuz, id est Adonidis, et in specu, ubi quodam Christus parvulus vagiit, Veneris amasius plangebatur.⁴¹

⁴¹ Jerome *Epistle* 58.3.5

According to Jerome, sometime in the intervening centuries between the birth of Christ and the construction of the church, the Cave of the Nativity had been co-opted by the cult of Tammuz-Adonis. Jerome mentions a sacred grove of trees at the supposed cult site, and tells his reader that the pagans were trying to obfuscate the “true” Christian significance of the place (much as they had supposedly done to Christ’s grave in Jerusalem).

The assertion that a Christian site had been reclaimed from pagans, however, could easily be an expected commonplace assumption without basis in fact. Jerome lived in Bethlehem for several years, and we might expect him to be knowledgeable about the area. Nevertheless, he seems to have picked up a rumor about pagan activity, passing it along in his letter because it helped his argument. The evidence for Jerome’s claim might not have been any more substantial than useful hearsay.

It is a distinct possibility that Jerome (or his sources) drew upon the model of Eusebius’ rhetoric regarding the Holy Sepulcher. Jerome makes that precise connection, in fact, and is the only author to do so. The pagan contamination of Bethlehem only rates a brief mention in Jerome’s letter, and he provides few details. He is utilizing the reference to convince his correspondent that visitation of the holy sites is not essential to being a good Christian. This was itself also part of a stock Christian argument. In his brief mention, Jerome was clearly using the supposed pagan past of the site to make his correspondent feel better about not having visited the holy sites in Palestine. His intention was not to document anything specific about cult practices.

The crypt under the church was an expansion of the cave that Jerome claimed to be a pagan sacred spot. The crypt is fairly substantial, although most of it is later

embellishment that occurred during the Crusades. There is no sign of pagan architecture or decoration in or around the cave. In fact, Peter Welten observes that there is no specific literary, numismatic, or archaeological evidence for pagan cult practices of any kind in Bethlehem.⁴²

Joan Taylor, however, suggests that Jerome was correct in saying that the cult of Adonis had priority at the spot. She suggests that self-promotion and false-advertisement by local pagans, seeking to ingratiate themselves with Christian visitors by conflating one resurrecting god into another, had backfired.⁴³ Tammuz-Adonis was likewise known for returning from the dead, which may have made this seem like a logical connection. Nevertheless, the presence of trees near the spot (not necessarily even sacred) is all that Joan Taylor can extrapolate from her sources. Cyril of Jerusalem, for instance, described Bethlehem as once having been forested.⁴⁴ This does not constitute evidence for significant pagan architecture or activity.

The church as it stands today is mostly from the time of Justinian, rebuilt because of fire that damaged the original building.⁴⁵ It might be postulated that the fire and new construction obscured any remaining traces of pagan cult. Nevertheless, the original Constantinian construction itself was unlikely to have dealt with any significant pre-existing pagan architecture or social group. Presumably whatever might have existed in

⁴² Peter Welten "Bethlehem und die Klage um Adonis" *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 99 (1983): 189-203.

⁴³ J. Taylor, *Holy Places* (1993), 96-112.

⁴⁴ Cyril *Catechetical Lectures* 12.20.

⁴⁵ W. Harvey, *Structural Survey of the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935).

Bethlehem, in terms of local pagan cult practices or architecture related to such, was simply eliminated without much fuss.

Mount of Olives

Eusebius gives us limited information about the Church of the Ascension that Constantine built on the Mount of Olives after his mother's visit to the spot. Again, Eusebius primarily tells us of this church because of the piety that was displayed by Helena and the Emperor, again linking this site to Bethlehem:

καὶ δὴ δύο ταῦτα μνήμης ἐπάξια αἰωνίον σεμνὰ καὶ περικαλλῆ
καθιερώματα ἐπὶ δύο μυστικῶν ἀντρῶν Ἑλένη ἀγούστα θεῶ τῶ
αὐτῆς σωτήρι, θεοφιλοῦς βασιλέως θεσφιλῆς μήτηρ, εὐσεβοῦς
τεκμήρια διαθέσεως ἴδρυτο, δεξιμὴν αὐτῆ βασιλικῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ
παιδὸς παρασχομένου.⁴⁶

Although “pagan” is the usual default character that should be ascribed to the ancient landscape, there is no archaeological reason to think that there was anything especially pagan about this location. Given Eusebius' personal stance there is also no reason to expect him to be silent if there were in fact significant cult activity at this nearby, famous, and important spot.

Mamre

An annual summer festival occurred at Mamre, its fame attracting many visitors. This was clearly a syncretic, inter-religious cult, with deep historical roots, that honored the occasion of God and two of his angels visiting Abraham at his home.⁴⁷ Apparently there was a grove of terebinths or oaks at the spot when Abraham and the angels met,

⁴⁶ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.43.4.

⁴⁷ A. Kofsky, “Mamre: A Case of Regional Cult?” in *Sharing the Sacred*, ed. Areih Kofsky and Guy Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi Press, 1998), 19-30.

although only one tree was present in the sacred enclosure that was eventually built to commemorate the event. Abraham fed his divine visitors, as a good host would, before the group moved on to Sodom and Gomorrah, discussing the planned punishment of those places with Abraham along the way.⁴⁸ This meeting was celebrated by both Jews and Christians. The divine beings were also held by local polytheists to have been important *daemones*.

Ancient references to the site are plentiful. Eusebius mentions it in the *Vita Constantini*, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Onomastikon*, and *Demonstratio Evangelica*.⁴⁹ Several of Jerome's letters, Josephus, various pieces of Rabbinic commentary, and the *Chronicon Paschale* also mention the site and give a few scattered details.⁵⁰ DeLigt notes that references to the site as host to a rural trade fair begin to appear in the second century.⁵¹

Eusebius gives us every reason to suspect that the local pagan population at Mamre was actively utilizing the site when Constantine decided to build a church there. In a letter, which Eusebius tells us that Constantine wrote to the bishops of Palestine, the Emperor describes his understanding of the divine occurrence at Mamre, worthy of celebration, as well as its contamination by pagans:

τὸ χωριον, ὅπερ παρα τὴν δρυὴν τὴν Μαμβρῆ προσαγοπεύεται, ἐν ᾧ τὸν Ἀβραάμ τὴν ἐσίαν ἐσχηκέναι μανθάνομεν, παντοίως ὑπὸ τινῶν δεισιδαιμόνων μιαινέσθαι φησιν. εἶδωλά τε γὰρ πάσης ἐξωλείας

⁴⁸ Genesis 18:1-33.

⁴⁹ A few of Eusebius' references include *DE* 5.9.8; *HE* 1.4.4-6; *VC* 3.51-53.

⁵⁰ For a more full accounting of these sources see A. Kofsky, "Mamre" (1998), 19-30. There is a repetitive sense to rabbinic prohibitions against Jews visiting the site. It implies that Jews, in fact, frequently came, just as Sozomen describes.

⁵¹ L. DeLigt, *Fairs and Markets in the Roman Empire* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1993), 71.

ἄξια παρ' αὐτὴν ἰδρῦσθαι καὶ βωμὸν ἐδήλωσεν πλησίον ἐστάναι καὶ
θυσίας ἀκαθάρτους συνεχῶς ἐπιτελεῖσθαι.⁵²

The Emperor's mother-in-law, Eutropia, visited the site and was horrified by pagan statues, an altar, and active sacrificial practice in the home of Abraham. The church built by Constantine at Elonei-Mamre was a response to this complaint from Eutropia.

Joan Taylor suggests a degree of deliberate orchestration on the part of Constantine and the clergy, so as to have the Imperial lady's revulsion as a pretext for a politically difficult plan, framed in the sense of "reclaiming" the site for Christianity. According to Taylor, Eutropia may have been brought to the site by Jerusalem-based clergy with a vested interest in repressing polytheist activity in their vicinity. Taylor believes that this fit a narrative of reclamation, which Christians used when appropriating pagan sites, and which could be used without any real evidence for the chronological priority of Christian significance at those sites.⁵³ Mamre certainly seems to have represented an opportunity for Constantine and local bishops to capitalize on momentum from the similar projects in the region.

The small church was built within the *temenos* of the pre-existing sacred enclosure in such a way as to leave the *temenos* structurally intact (Fig. 4.4). Magen identified a section of the interior paving along the south wall that was built at the same time.⁵⁴ Taylor suggests that this arrangement might have been intended as an act of political accommodation on the part of Constantine.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, one would think that

⁵² Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.53.1.

⁵³ Joan Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places* (1993), 86-95.

⁵⁴ Y. Magen, "Mamre: A Cultic Site from the Reign of Herod," in Giovanni Bottini, Leah Di Segni, and L. Daniel Chrupcala (ed.), *One Land – Many Cultures: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanislao Loffreda* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2003), 245-57.

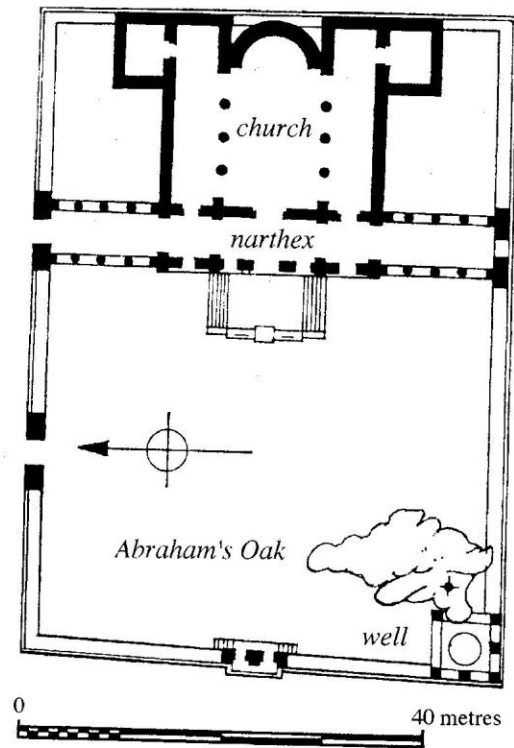


Figure 4.4: Mamre Temenos and Church (from Mader 1957).

a church in such a space would have disrupted any pagan ritual that occurred in the sacred courtyard. The *temenos* of shrines was the locus for public displays of religiosity. This was where sacrifices were made, funded by local elites, and shared by the public. It was the space for these elites to thereby demonstrate their legitimacy. The *naos* of a temple, on the other hand, was the gods' private home, and access was restricted. We have no evidence for such a structure at the site, the *temenos* itself, with its sacrificial altar, was the apparent extent of pagan architecture at the site.

Constantine inserted an explicitly Christian building into sacred space. Doing so likely made the social function of the *temenos* explicitly Christian. Eusebius in fact

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

reproduces, in the same above-mentioned letter from Constantine, the Imperial call for the destruction of pagan altars and statues in the vicinity of the church at Mamre. It prescribes a legal penalty (albeit vague) for continued pagan worship there:

ἔστι γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡμῖν ἀφόρητον καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς τολμῶσι
τιμωρίας ἄξιον μετὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν κέλευσιν ἀσεβές τι ἐν τῷ
τοιούτῳ τόπῳ πραχθῆναι, ὃν καθαρῶ βασιλικῆς οἰκοδομήματι
κοσμεῖσθαι διετάξαμεν, ὅπως ἀγίων ἀνθρώπων ἄξιον συνέδριον
ἀποδειχθῆ.⁵⁶

If this had been a *temenos* like any other in the Empire, if the cult at Mamre had not been so tenaciously and ostentatiously syncretic, and if Constantine's law had been rigorously enforced, we might expect this to have marked the end of paganism at Mamre.

Yet a *temenos* dedicated to a biblical figure, or (as in this case) a *temenos* without an accompanying temple, was in fact unusual. The walled enclosure at Mamre, and Constantine's church, were excavated by Mader in the 1920s. The pagan sanctuary was apparently an enclosed *temenos* without a temple. The *temenos* wall surrounded the sacred well and tree of Abraham, the place where he had his conversation with God and the angels. The wall was built of large ashlars with bossed margins, a Herodian trademark, and the complex's original design is attributed to Herod. Portions of it were, according to Mader, destroyed in the Bar Kochba rebellion and subsequently rebuilt by Hadrian. A stele dedicated to Hermes and the head of a statue, possibly of Dionysus, were also found by Mader.⁵⁷ These suggest two of the identities attributed to the group of divine beings by the pagan portion of the local population. The statue head might very

⁵⁶ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.53.2.

⁵⁷ A.E. Mader, *Mambre, Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen im heiligen Bezirk, Ramat el-Halil in Süd-Palästina* (Frieburg im Breisgau: Erich Wewel Verlag, 1957), pl. lxxiv and pl. lxxiii.

well have come from an item deliberately destroyed in accordance with Constantine's law.

Mamre also had a long, persistent tradition for hosting these unique festivals. Sozomen tells us that they actually continued down into his own time in the fifth century. This church historian lived nearby in Gaza, which gives his testimony credibility. Sozomen may have personally visited Mamre, or spoken with people who did. He provides the most valuable account of the site, stitching together elements of Eusebius with what notably seem to be first-person and present-tense observations:

ἐνταῦθα δὲ λαμπρὰν εἰσέτι νῦν ἐτήσιον πανήγυριν ἄγουσιν ὥρα θέρουσ οἱ ἐπιχώριοι καὶ οἱ προσωτέρω Παλαιστῖνοι καὶ Φοίνικες καὶ Ἀράβιοι. συνίασι δὲ πλείστοι καὶ ἐμπορείας ἔνεκα πωλήσοντες καὶ ἀγοράσοντες. Πᾶσι δὲ περισπούδαστος ἡ ἑορτή, Ἰουδαίους μὲν καθότι πατριάρχην ἀνχοῦσι τὸν Ἀβραάμ, Ἑλλησι δὲ διὰ τὴν ἐπιδημίαν τῶν ἀγγέλων, τοῖς δ' αὖ Χριστιανοῖς ὅτι καὶ τότε ἐπεφάνη τῷ εὐσεβεῖ ἀνδρὶ ὁ χρόνος ὕστερον ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους διὰ τῆς παρθένου φανερώς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιδείξας. προσφόρως δὲ ταῖς θρησκείαις τιμῶσι τοῦτον τὸν χῶρον, οἱ μὲν εὐξόμενοι τῷ πάντων θεῷ, οἱ δὲ τοὺς ἀγγέλους ἐπικαλούμενοι καὶ οἷον σπένδοντες καὶ λίβανον θύοντες ἢ βοῦν ἢ τράγον ἢ πρόβατον ἢ ἀλεκτρούνα. ὁ γὰρ ἕκαστος ἐσπουδασμένον καὶ καλὸν εἶχε, διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ἔτους ἐπιμελῶς τρέφων, καθ' ὑπόσχεσιν εἰς εὐωχίαν τῆς ἐνθάδε ἑορτῆς ἐφύλαττεν ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς οἰκείοις.⁵⁸

Sozomen refers to the pagans as Ἑλλησι, or Hellenes. This was often done in the eastern part of the Empire in Late Antiquity, stressing the connection between Greek philosophical thought and Greek religion. It refers to ideological and intellectual affiliation, not ethnicity. Of special note is the continuing religious activity at the site, described using the present participle θύοντες, apparently well into the fifth century, including animal sacrifices! A significant number of visitors evidently came from

⁵⁸ Sozomen *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.4.2-4.

Phoenicia and the Arab regions to the south, indicating a broadly international aspect to the festival. Sozomen makes special mention of the feasts provided by notable persons for their dependents. The site was functioning as a significant location at which these notables earned social capital.

Sozomen neither confirms nor contradicts the idea that public sacrifice ceased in the *temenos* specifically. I suspect that Sozomen was describing activity that occurred off-site nearby, because it seems difficult to imagine pagan sacrifices occurring in front of the doors of a church. Amelia Brown, on the other hand, identifies several temples in fourth century Greece and Asia Minor, where pagan practices persisted despite the occupation of parts of the temple complexes by Christian shrines.⁵⁹ It could be that pagan practices returned sometime during the two generations that passed between Eusebius and Sozomen.

The churches at Mamre and the Holy Sepulchre, unlike those at Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives, were actually built on the sites of significant pre-existing polytheist architecture. In these places, Constantine and his builders had something substantial that they needed to reckon with, both in a physical sense in terms of the architecture, and in an ideological sense in terms of the local culture of the people who were apparently still using these buildings. The specific treatment of the pagan buildings, as determined archaeologically, dovetails with the accounts in Eusebius.

In Jerusalem, a significant transformation of the site occurred. At Mamre, pagan business-as-usual continued despite a potentially half-hearted attempt to curtail it.

⁵⁹ Amelia Brown, "Hellenic Heritage and Christian Challenge: Conflict over Panhellenic Sanctuaries in Late Antiquity," in Hal Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 309-20.

But was the conflict in these places typical of Constantine's and the bishops' activity elsewhere in the Empire? Or is this a matter of Eusebius inflating the importance of his own local region (Jerusalem specifically), and exaggerating the political will of the Emperor?

Outside of Palestine

Eusebius asserts Empire-wide policy that encouraged Christianity and restricted paganism, including the establishment of a relationship with the bishops meant to facilitate the construction of churches. Eusebius, however, does not discuss many of Constantine's specific church building activities in places far from Jerusalem. He becomes less detail-oriented as he looks further afield. He tells the reader about the finances allocated for new, Empire-wide church construction.⁶⁰ He describes the looting of pagan shrines but only mentions a few specific (eastern) examples.⁶¹ Most of this was to establish the general ideological climate that Eusebius insisted the Emperor created.

Constantine seems to have been unwilling to destroy temples except for a handful in the east. Eusebius records only four examples in his *Vita Constantini*; we could potentially take this small number as representative of a real disinterest on the emperor's part because it would have suited Eusebius' agenda (the presentation of a complete Christian victory) to mention as many examples as possible. On the other hand, Eusebius has a track record of Palestine-specific myopia. This is not only the case in the *Vita*, but Barnes also observes it in his other works.⁶² Nevertheless, the destruction of temples

⁶⁰ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 2.45-46.

⁶¹ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.54-58.

undertaken by Constantine was a novel act in the history of the Empire. We should expect that it would have been deemed note-worthy wherever it occurred. We do not hear anything about similar activities elsewhere. Thus, Constantine probably did not actually destroy many temples.⁶³

Further, the temples mentioned in Eusebius' account had specific, exceptionally offensive aspects, allowing us to see why they may have been targeted. For instance, the Asklepieion at Aegae (in Cilicia) may have been closed because of its significance in the early career of the neo-Pythagorean priest Apollonius of Tyana, who lived during the first century CE. Apollonius was said to have performed miracles and raised the dead. During the time of Diocletian's Great Persecution he was used for rhetorical purposes by those attacking Christians.⁶⁴ Hierocles, proconsul of Bithynia and Alexandria and key instigator of the persecution, wrote a no longer extant piece of anti-Christian rhetoric in which Apollonius was explicitly compared to Christ and claimed to have been a better miracle worker.

Eusebius had a vested interest in this particular temple's fate because he had earlier written a counter-argument to Hierocles' claims.⁶⁵ Constantine, as represented by Eusebius, would not allow a temple to function that had such an anti-Christian association. Constantine apparently had the columns of the Aegae temple removed and made it impossible for ailing pilgrims to follow the ancient tradition, which was to spend

⁶² T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (1981), 148-163.

⁶³ S. Bradbury, "Anti-Pagan Legislation" (1994), 123.

⁶⁴ R. Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (1987), 671-72; B. Caseau "Sacred Landscapes" (1999), 31.

⁶⁵ Eusebius *Ad Hierocles*.

the night there and be healed while dreaming.⁶⁶ Constantine's actions at Aegae were evidently unable to shut this temple for good. Libanius visited and practiced the traditional rituals in 371, apparently after Julian had refurbished the site.⁶⁷ Constantine's actions at this site were not as detrimental as Eusebius portrayed them to be.

The other three examples mentioned by Eusebius were described by him as temples dedicated to Aphrodite; ritual prostitution, contrary to the new moral climate of the empire, was claimed by Eusebius to have been practiced at Heliopolis and Aphaca. The third temple (supposedly) to Aphrodite stood in the holy city of Jerusalem.⁶⁸ According to Eusebius' account, this particular temple was simply too much of an outrage to be allowed to stand. The fact that it stood over the most significant site in Christianity was, according to him, only discovered after the temple had been demolished. The inference seems to be that the Emperor was simply trying to shut down paganism in the city, and that the church was only a response after the tomb came to light. It is unclear if this inference is to be believed.

Outside of Palestine, Eusebius tells us about specific churches built in Antioch, Nicomedia, and Heliopolis.⁶⁹ He mentions Constantinople's new churches, but only in a general manner.⁷⁰ Eusebius gives no information about Rome or the West, which also saw their share of church construction under Constantine.

⁶⁶ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.54-58.

⁶⁷ Libanius *Orationes* 1.143.

⁶⁸ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.26-27; 3.55-3.56.

⁶⁹ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.50, 58.

⁷⁰ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.48.

Part of the myopia on the part of Eusebius likely reflects the information that he had at his disposal. He was probably unfamiliar with churches that Constantine had commissioned elsewhere. Twenty-five or so churches should be considered part of a larger-scale Constantinian program. Of this group, eight were in Rome and Italy (including the Lateran and Saint Peter's). Six were built in Constantinople or nearby. Four were built in Palestine, in Jerusalem or in relatively close proximity to Jerusalem. The remaining few were located in significant cities such as Trier, Circa, Heliopolis, and Antioch.⁷¹ Thus about one sixth of his known church construction activity, including several of his most famous churches, occurred in or around Jerusalem. The emphasis on Jerusalem reflects Eusebius' claim that Constantine had special intentions in mind regarding the city.

Church Building and Political Necessity

Constantine placed Jerusalem among this set of most important cities for the obvious reason of it being the point of origin for Constantine's religion of choice. It was a statement about the importance of Christianity in the imperial centers of power. He broke the pagan monopoly on central, highly-visible, urban locations for religious monuments. It created a new way to earn social capital on a large-scale through public displays of religiosity.

Constantine intentionally turned Jerusalem into a focal point for this process. Eusebius states that the Emperor wanted to turn the site of the resurrection in Jerusalem into "a center of attraction and venerable to all."⁷² Langton Telfer suggests that the

⁷¹ Gregory T. Armstrong, "Constantine's Churches," *Gesta* 6 (1967), 1-9.

⁷² Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.25.

Emperor saw Christian pilgrimage to the region as an “antidote to the provincialization” which threatened the unity of both the Empire and the Church.⁷³ In addition to his political and military concerns, a memorialization of important loci in Christ’s life served the Emperor’s ideological agenda by encouraging a sense of commonality within distant parts of the Empire.

Eusebius maintained that Jerusalem was part of an explicit imperial policy, and whether this was instigated at the suggestion of others or of Constantine’s own devising is not necessarily relevant. Many casual details of his account are consonant with the idea that Constantine’s activities were deliberate and strategic. E.D. Hunt observes that church building under Constantine fulfilled a promise that Constantine had allegedly made at Chrysopolis immediately following the defeat of Licinius, to renew “God’s most holy dwelling, which profane and wicked men have defiled with destruction.”⁷⁴ Hunt points out the fact that any church building plans that the bishops presented to the Emperor would have given him the opportunity to advertise the legitimacy of his actions against Licinius, who had been portrayed in official Constantinian rhetoric as anti-Christian.⁷⁵ Constantine had political incentive for opposing paganism in the Holy Land. It seems likely that Macarius presented Constantine with a political opportunity that corresponded closely with the Emperor’s own goals. Constantine needed to show that he was deserving of his victory over Licinius. Macarius and the bishops gave him the ideological tools to do this.

⁷³ Langton Telfer, “Constantine’s Holy Land Plan,” *Studia Patristica* 1 (1957), 696-700.

⁷⁴ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 2.55.2.

⁷⁵ E.D. Hunt, “Constantine and Jerusalem,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 48 (1997), 405-24.

Eusebius also tells us that Constantine seemed to have a pre-existing interest in, and knowledge about, the future site of the Holy Sepulcher. According to Eusebius, he behaved as if he had prior knowledge about the site of Christ's burial.⁷⁶ It may or may not have been known to the Emperor that the temple previously located at the site was problematic, contaminating the site and preventing proper Christian custodianship. Eusebius' statement, however, may reflect planning for the project accomplished at Nicaea.

There does not seem to be any solid evidence for a local tradition linking the site of the temple with the site of Christ's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. The discovery of second temple period Jewish graves at the spot, however, seems to be a coincidence that was too good to be true. Hunt, in fact, considers it "inconceivable" that political necessity would have failed to have caused the Tomb of Christ to come to light.⁷⁷

Anti-Pagan Laws

The anti-pagan legislation that Eusebius claims Constantine promulgated has proven difficult to verify in terms of its real effects, on the ground and on an Empire-wide scale. In addition to the laws mentioned regarding Mamre, Eusebius tells us about a generalized prohibition of various pagan practices, the implication being that these were Empire-wide policies. This included bans on the erection of cult statues, gladiatorial combat, divination, and blood sacrifice.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.29.1.

⁷⁷ E.D. Hunt, "Constantine and Jerusalem" (1997), 412.

⁷⁸ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 2.45.

This is not how Roman laws worked. During Late Antiquity, laws were not typically issued in terms of blanket policies, dictated by the Imperial administration in Constantinople. Instead, as many scholars have noted, Imperial laws were issued in response to petitions, either in person or in writing, that came up from the local level as a complaint about specific situations. Thus, Imperial rescripts could in fact be contradictory, and without specific application outside of a specific context. Fergus Millar, Jill Harries, and A.H.M. Jones have all documented the fact that the Imperial court tended to deal with problems in an individual case-by-case manner.⁷⁹ It is almost certain that Eusebius generalized from a quantity of such rescripts.

Eusebius mentions other supposed activities too, such as the closure of temples and the confiscation of cult statues, undertaken by the Emperor. Most are presented in a non-specific sense, although of course many items of spolia have been found in Constantinople. Books Two and Four of the *Vita* includes various passing references to such things, or brief, generic descriptions of supposed enforcement. Dates and places are seldom indicated, although based on context these are all presumably measures that occurred after the war with Licinius.

It cannot be true, despite what Eusebius asserts, that Constantine closed temples everywhere. We have a record of the imperial correspondence that permitted Hispellum to build a temple dedicated to the Flavian gens, Constantine's claimed ancestors.⁸⁰

Apparently sacrifice was not to be permitted at this temple.

⁷⁹ Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London: 1977), 266, 271; Jill Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 26-31; A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602* (Oxford 1964), 348.

⁸⁰ Raymond Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23-34. Includes a Latin text and translation.

Libanius of Antioch, writing in 386, tells us that Constantine “made absolutely no changes in the traditional forms of worship, but, though poverty reigned in the temples, one could see that all the rest of the ritual was fulfilled.”⁸¹ Libanius’ remark suggests that the funding for pagan cult, at least in his part of the world, had been much reduced for some time. Libanius was inaccurate in attempting to portray Constantine as completely tolerant. Libanius probably did this rhetorically in order to present Constantine, as an example of an enlightened ruler, to the especially Christian Theodosius I.⁸² Libanius’ statement, however, would have been completely unconvincing if there were not some truth to it. Libanius (and presumably his audience and sources) may have had an understanding of the facts that differed from Eusebius. This suggests that widespread violent campaigns against temples in the East never occurred in the way that Eusebius describes them.

Polytheism was still entrenched in Roman society for decades after the conversion of Constantine to Christianity. This is evidenced by the repeated laws against blood sacrifice that were passed during the fourth century. The law of Constans and Constantius that prohibited sacrifice, although claimed by Libanius as the first such law, actually refers to their father’s similar earlier legislation.⁸³ Anti-pagan laws were also passed by Theodosius I. These redundant laws would not have been necessary if they had been initially effective, and the enforcement of these laws was evidently lax.⁸⁴ The

⁸¹ Libanius *Pro Templis* 30.6.

⁸² S. Bradbury, “Anti-Pagan Legislation” (1994), 128.

⁸³ *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.2.

⁸⁴ References to various anti-pagan laws throughout the 4th century include: Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.44, 2.45, 3.52-53, 4.25; *Codex Theodosianus* 15.21.1, 16.10.2; Also see S. Bradbury, “Anti-Pagan Legislation,” (1994), 134.

senate in Rome, and a large portion of both the army and the population in general remained polytheistic for some time. References to Constantinian anti-pagan policies in the later legislation and debate, however, suggests the reality of the Emperor's anti-pagan policy, if only in terms of an official ideological stance rather than a harshly enforced policy.

Nicaea and “Holy Land Plan”

Macarius probably suggested that Constantine build the Holy Sepulcher, likely at the Council of Nicaea. Eusebius, in fact, describes the council immediately prior to the construction of this church.⁸⁵ His account, along with doctrinal documents produced at the occasion, is virtually our only source for the council proceedings. He does not give us many specific details and instead uses the opportunity to eulogize Constantine. It is entirely possible that this is when Constantine's empire-wide church building agenda was formulated, in cooperation with other local bishops like Macarius. The stated aim of the conference was to resolve factionalism within the church. What better way to do that than to turn the focus to group-efforts like church building and the eradication of paganism? When Eusebius discusses Constantine's apparent supernatural foreknowledge of the site of Christ's grave, it might reflect some substantial planning and information gathering accomplished at Nicaea.⁸⁶

With the exception of Mamre, all of Constantine's churches in Palestine were built at locations important in terms of the life of Christ and the Christian liturgy. Jesus' incarnation in Bethlehem, death at Golgotha and resurrection nearby, and his ascension

⁸⁵ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.4-22.

⁸⁶ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.29.1.

into heaven a short distance up-slope on the Mount of Olives were in fact the central points of theology that were codified in the Nicæan Creed. The built environment of the Holy Land was made to match precise theological issues. The overall church building strategy that mirrors it was likely promulgated at the same time.⁸⁷ Unlike most of the other sites around the Empire where the Emperor had churches built, these three churches in Palestine commemorated Christian sacred loci, and should be accorded special status in terms of the overall plan that he seems to have worked out with the bishops.

This may be part of the reason why the pre-existing polytheist temple at Mamre was dealt with in a way that was so different from the temple at the site of the Holy Sepulcher. The site was not a significant locus in Christ's life, reinforcing the idea that the church built there was an opportunistic afterthought rather than a part of the original plan.

There is much that we can actually extrapolate about activities occurring in Palestine under the Emperor's auspices. Constantine encouraged the practice of pilgrimage by sending Helena to the Holy Land and building churches that commemorated the theologically important places in Christ's life. Constantine sanctioned the bishops as authority figures in cities across the Empire, thereby establishing a patronage network between himself and local religious figures on the ground (who presumably had their own local agendas that the Emperor willingly furthered). The resulting collaboration facilitated the movement of Christianity into the centers of cities.

The process of temple destruction and church building was a physical corollary of the confrontation between local bishops and the existing socio-economic order, which

⁸⁷ V. Shalev-Hurvitz, *Holy Sites* (2015), 92.

was pagan. Constantine took the bishops side in this conflict because it suited his own political needs. The church building program that resulted from the collaboration between Constantine and the bishops created a prototype for what would eventually become normal in terms of the public, urban aspect of religion in the Empire. The new churches directly affected the ways that social elites earned social capital through visible displays of religious behavior, causing them to conform to the Emperor's religion of choice, because the route to social credibility had been physically modified.

Jerusalem set the precedent for a system designed to put Christianity physically into high-visibility zones in the center of cities, at the expense of pagan monuments and pagan social practices. The construction of the Holy Sepulcher pointedly included the destruction of a pre-existing pagan temple at the chosen site. It was an attempt to displace paganism, both physically and as a social institution. Public pagan sacrifice funded by local elites was shown to no longer be the best route to social credibility.

We should take Constantine's actions against temples and construction of churches in Palestine to be part of a *quid pro quo* deal. The war with Licinius had been justified in terms of Constantine's superiority as a Christian. When the bishops, and likely more specifically Macarius, met Constantine at Nicaea they surely suggested the "holy land plan." It was an offer that the Emperor made to Christians, in exchange for legitimacy in their eyes. It was also a "blinking of the eye" moment for pagans, who were forced to confront the fact the route to legitimacy had changed. Constantine's deal involved the expenditure of money, and a performance of visible religious behavior. The

exchange was the same type of exchange that the consuls of Rome had attempted (and failed) in the anecdote from Livy described in Chapter One.⁸⁸

The sites that were selected in Palestine maximized Constantine's profit from this deal. In fact, there was no better place for this exchange to happen than in Jerusalem, on Golgotha. Reclaiming Golgotha from pagans, and building a fabulous church in its place, was the single best way for Constantine to earn credibility as a Christian. This is because the death and resurrection of Christ, with an understanding of his full equivalence with God the Father, is the single most important part of Christian theology. It should be obvious why Eusebius was fixated on Palestine when he described Constantine as a hero of Christianity. These were the sites that mattered.

⁸⁸ Livy *Ad Urbe Condita* 2.27.5-7.

Chapter V
The Exceptional Case of Gaza:
Urban Violence and the Round Church that was not Built

Mark the Deacon's Life of Porphyry, detailing events in late fourth century Gaza, is one of a handful of archetypal stories of pagan temples destroyed at the hands of Christians. The destruction of the temple of Zeus Marnas at Gaza, instigated by the bishop Porphyry, is linked in the mind of scholarship with the roughly contemporaneous destruction of the Serapeum in Alexandria and the temple of Zeus Belos in Apamea. All three buildings were demolished between 380 CE and 405 CE, in similar socially tense, if not outright violent, circumstances. Starting with Gibbon, these events have been taken to represent final milestones in the life of public paganism in the Empire.

Holum was of the opinion that the destruction of the Marneion represented a tipping-point for the region of Palestine, a time at which it became possible to decapitate paganism in other cities by eliminating prominent temples in highly visible locations. This was central to his ideas about the chronology and process of destruction for the Augusteum at Caesarea, as covered in Chapter Three.¹

On the other hand, it may be that the earthquake of 363 CE, declining budgets, and diminished political will had already caused paganism to recede. These factors may have permitted the *boulai* of many Palestinian cities to effectively postpone a touchy political issue for some time. If so, then places like Gaza and Caesarea may instead represent outlying survivals going into the fifth century. Presumably enough critical mass had finally built up in these places to overcome a tipping-point. I would theorize

¹ Kenneth Holum, "Christianizing Caesarea: A Narrative from Archaeology Alone" (Paper presented at American Schools of Oriental Research Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, November 26 2016), 1.

that there was a “double” tipping point, reflecting the fact that Constantine’s legacy in the Holy Land served as a model that others were finally able to follow significantly later.

Holum also took Van Dam’s remarks about the Christian countryside of Gaza invading the pagan city of Gaza quite seriously, considering it to be a paradigm that might be tested at other places.² This paradigm has ramifications for a patchwork model of Christianization, as described in Chapter One. If correct, then each individual city was its own “patch,” and had an individual tipping-point set by local circumstances.

Mark the Deacon, a follower of Porphyry, is the chronicler of the bishop’s efforts to aggressively promote Christianity in Gaza, culminating with the demolition of the Marneion, in 402 CE, and the construction of a church in its place. The church was known as the Eudoxiana, named after the empress who was instrumental in supporting Porphyry’s efforts. Many find the text to be problematic, if not downright fraudulent. Others, including myself, find it to be useful on account of the genuine insight that it seems to contain concerning the life of a city during the twilight of public paganism. The accuracy of Mark’s account is not necessarily a binary option between “legitimate” and “fake,” especially given its complicated textual history.

Tim Barnes considers the text to be a forgery, from the time of Justinian at the earliest.³ Alan Cameron and Ramsay MacMullen also believe it to be fake.⁴ Mark confuses chronological sequence and many details, including the name of the bishop of

² R. Van Dam, “From Paganism to Christianity,” (1985): 12; Kenneth Holum, personal communication.

³ Timothy Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 260-83.

⁴ Alan Cameron, *Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 798-99; R. MacMullen, *Christianizing* (1984), 86-88.

Jerusalem. This is odd because both Mark and Porphyry supposedly lived in that city before relocating to Gaza.

There is no independent confirmation to be found of Porphyry's existence outside of Mark's account. Saint Jerome, however, alludes to Porphyry's activities several times, although he never mentions the bishop by name. For instance, Jerome makes a passing reference to destruction of the Marneion, and the fear that Marnas himself felt when faced by Christianity.⁵ The replacement of the temple with a church, by an unnamed bishop, was considered by Jerome to be proof of Old Testament prophecies.⁶

We have both a Greek and a Georgian version of Mark's manuscript. Frank Trombley observed that many of the errors in the text may have resulted from translation in the course of its moderately muddled textual history. There was likely also an Aramaic version at some point, and it is unclear whether the original was the Greek or the Aramaic.⁷

Aude Busine suggests that the text is best understood as an instance of fictional hagiography. She categorizes it within a genre of literature designed to promote the reputations of holy men, with the additional effect of creating new Christian foundation legends for previously pagan cities.⁸ Perhaps the real author (not Mark according to her interpretation) worked from Porphyry's funerary inscription, a version of which seems to be preserved in the text.⁹ Further, Busine notes the high degree of similarity involved in

⁵ Jerome *Epistle* 107.2.

⁶ Jerome *Commentarius in Esaiam* 7.17.

⁷ Frank R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 1:207-43.

⁸ Aude Busine, "From Stones to Myth: Temple Destruction and Civic Identity in the Late Antique Roman East," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 6 (2013), 325-46.

the miraculous circumstances of the events in both Gaza and Apamea. Expected details were certainly peppered into the text.

Claudia Rapp, following Grégoire, points out that the introduction to the texts that we have was plagiarized from Theodoret's *History of the Monks in Syria*, written around 440.¹⁰ Rapp favors a date of composition for the *Life* sometime within a few decades of Porphyry's death in 420 CE, described in the narrative. Rapp and Grégoire suggest that Mark (or someone close to him) wrote the account from memory or notes. This would help to explain some of Mark's factual inaccuracies.

If Mark's account is a complete forgery, it is a forgery that pays a great deal of attention to the details of sociological and political process. I am especially impressed by the portrayal of the court in Constantinople, and the mechanism by which Mark and Porphyry secured funding and permission for their project. Would a counterfeited account walk us through the process by which Mark and Porphyry networked with strategically placed people, to get a hearing with Eudoxia? Would it have mentioned those people (like John Chrysostom) by name, letting us know who of them had access to whom, further along the chain of access to the Imperial court?¹¹

There are a few points in Mark's text that are striking, not often commented upon, and worthy of increased attention. The first is the depiction of street-level violence and the efforts required to suppress it. The second is Mark's interpretation of the role of the city council. The third is the actual, physical treatment of the Marneion. The fourth is

⁹ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 107.

¹⁰ Claudia Rapp (tran.), "Mark the Deacon: *Life of St. Porphyry of Gaza*," in Thomas Head (ed.), *Medieval Hagiography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 53-75.

¹¹ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 37-50.

the decision-making process that informed the construction of the church that replaced the temple.

Mark depicts a city that was torn apart by the social conflict associated with its Christianization. Deacon Barochas is involved in heated verbal disputes with people in public.¹² He is involved in fights, and beaten nearly to death, on several occasions. Barochas miraculously recovered from one fight and then proceeded to beat a crowd of pagans with a wooden board, after which Mark refers to him as “Samson.”¹³ Barochas was a brawler, and it sounds like Porphyry utilized him as a bodyguard or enforcer, because Gaza was violent.

Imperial troops occupied Gaza to keep order during the actual demolition of the Marneion.¹⁴ There was also an anti-Christian riot on the streets of Gaza that occurred five years after the temple’s demolition, forcing Porphyry and Mark to go into temporary hiding.¹⁵ The Eudoxiana may have symbolized victory, but the fault-lines in the social fabric remained for some time. Mob-violence certainly had a role in the process of Christianizing other places, such as Alexandria. But why do we not hear even more stories like this? Should we not assume that such social friction occurred Empire-wide? Why does it not seem to have manifested in the same way?

Mark gives an inconsistent depiction of the composition of the city council of Gaza. He initially describes the idol-maniacs of the city as needing to bribe someone to

¹² Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 95.

¹³ *Ibid.* 22-25, 99.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 63.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 96-98.

represent their interests.¹⁶ Later, he mentions several city officers, by name, who took a public stand against Porphyry. Most notable of these was Sampsychnus.¹⁷ Then, Mark explains that it was impossible for Christians to achieve public office.¹⁸ These things cannot all have been true. We have reason to suspect, from Jerome's *Life of Hilarion*, that Christians were in fact among the public officials of Gaza prior to the time of Porphyry. Italicus, the Christian *municeps* who asks Hilarion for help in the chariot races, seems to be under strain on account of needing to compete in the public realm with pagans, on their own terms.¹⁹ His social role and his religion were in conflict with each other. It seems clear that Mark was distorting things for rhetorical purposes. It also seems clear that the *boule* of Gaza was divided in terms of religious affiliation, and that this was a source of difficulty for those involved. There must have been some heated arguments among these people that Mark does not share with us. Would this not have been normal in every city of Late Antiquity? We know that the Senate of Rome was upset when Gratian removed the statue of victory, and that it was subsequently replaced. But why do we not hear about such issues, at the level of civic administration, on an Empire-wide scale?

The temple of Marnas was burnt and looted by Christians who were assisted by Imperial troops, Mark making a special point of telling us that valuables were turned over to Porphyry.²⁰ Rapid conversions, on account of fear, resulted. Mark again makes a

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 25, 95.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 40.

¹⁹ Jerome *Vita Hilarionis* 20.

²⁰ Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 65-69.

special point of telling us that Porphyry was happy to admit people to the church despite the circumstance of compulsion that might cause them to be insincere in their belief.²¹ Mark then tells us that Porphyry organized a work group of civilian Christians, who do not sound like engineers or construction workers, which quite possibly included some of these recently converts. This group dug out the foundations of the temple, much as Constantine's engineers did in Jerusalem.

The work gang in Gaza acclaimed the victory of Christ in unison while digging, and Mark makes yet another point to tell us that there were men, women, children, and the elderly all working together on this project.²² Finally, Mark tells us that some of the marble revetments of the temple were used to pave the street outside the new church. This was done, according to Mark, for the express purpose of humiliating the pagans, who would avoid walking on the tiles for years afterwards.²³ These details help us to understand the demolition of the temple as a public purification and community-building ritual undertaken at the expense of public paganism in Gaza. The ritual had the effect of making the site of the Marneion safe for Christian use.

This type of event, in fact, is very well documented. The defacement of pagan temples in Egypt, for instance, was an attempt to nullify harmful spiritual presences. The precise chiseling away of hieroglyphs and the faces of deities, and the carving of graffiti crosses into the stones, were apotropaic measures. David Frankfurter observes that such

²¹ *Ibid.* 72-74.

²² *Ibid.* 76-79.

²³ *Ibid.* 76.

practices were often the efforts of the very same communities that had once used the pagan temples.²⁴

Frankfurter also sees a relationship between ancient Egyptian iconoclastic efforts and the destruction of religious paraphernalia in the Pacific Islands of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The cargo cults of New Guinea, and other parts of the world, destroyed their own traditional religious articles upon perceiving the power represented by the misplaced material goods of the industrialized world, such as shipped or airlifted consumer items and war supplies.²⁵ Similarly, the formerly pagan priests of Hawaii led their own followers, upon the royalty's conversion to Christianity, in the destruction of their own temples, shrines, images, and artifacts.²⁶

In these examples, the destruction was described by eye-witnesses as a function of abnormal group psychology. One of the first anthropologists to describe such events, F.E. Williams, justified referring to one cargo cult conversion episode as the so-called "Vailala Madness," on account of what he judged to be "collective nervous symptoms of sometimes grotesque and idiotic nature."²⁷ The colonialist aspect of such a description should not obscure the emotionally charged atmosphere that Williams observed, causing participants to spasmodically shake and speak in tongues.

²⁴ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 280-81.

²⁵ Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 37.

²⁶ William Davenport, "The 'Hawaiian Cultural Revolution': Some Political and Economic Considerations," *American Anthropologist* 71 (1969): 1-20.

²⁷ Francis Edgar Williams, "The Vailala Madness and the Destruction of Native Ceremonies in the Gulf Division" in Eric Schwimmer (ed.), *The Vailala Madness and Other Essays* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), 385-95.

The destruction of obsolete religious items induces an altered state of group consciousness. Frankfurter affirms that such destructive activities should be understood in terms of group rituals that severed communities from their past social connections.²⁸ The rituals established new relationships between society and both divine and earthly power. In the case of Gaza, the new divine power was the Christian God. The new earthly powers were the Bishop and (presumably soon to convert) *boule* of Gaza.

Alexandria and Constantinople were also places where mobs spontaneously joined together to denigrate religious items, in purposeful displays organized by Christian authority figures. Upon Constantine's destruction of the old pagan temples in his city, and after the mocking parade of religious artifacts following the destruction of the Serapeum in Alexandria, we are told that bystanders would jeer at objects and buildings that they themselves held in reverence only a short time before.²⁹ Eusebius claims that people mocked pagan statues, and often converted, when they were dismantled by the agents of Constantine.³⁰ The marble tiles of the Marneion were supposedly repurposed by Porphyry in order to elicit just such a response.

Finally, it should be observed that the original proposal for the plan for the Eudoxiana church was circular.³¹ This was rejected, in favor of a cruciform shape, on the

²⁸ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 280-81.

²⁹ Sozomen *H.E.* 2.5.6; Eunapius *Vita Philosophorum* 6.10-11.

³⁰ Eusebius *Vita Constantini* 3.57. This is only one of many examples. Eusebius makes a practice of describing pagan statues in terms of both mockery and horror. Comparing his accounts with these later sources would be a fascinating study.

³¹ If the detail about the original round plan were added to the account later, perhaps for the sake of elevating the status of Gaza, it still demonstrates that Gaza was seen as an appropriate place for such a church, even if that was perceived retroactively.

grounds that the Marneion had also been circular.³² This meant an added expense, and effort, because the pre-existing foundations could not be used. The Christians of Gaza felt that these drawbacks were justified so as to symbolize a clean break with the past.

Nevertheless, the original idea shows us that the Christians of Gaza saw the circular plan as otherwise appropriate for the context. It should be noted that there were exactly three other radially symmetrical churches in Palestine, circular or octagonal with prominent domes, built on the sites of demolished pagan temples. These were the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the church on the tell at Bet Shean, and the harbor church at Caesarea Maritima.

The octagonal church on Mount Gerizim should also be added to this group on account of the outsider status of Samaritan religion. It was a fortress-like church because of the recent violence of the Samaritan community, and it was built as a punitive measure and visible display of power. There was a pagan temple on the other peak of Mount Gerezim, but it is never mentioned in reference to the late fifth century Samaritan uprisings.³³ It is probably a non-factor in this discussion. The Samaritan synagogue mentioned by Procopius, however, was apparently replaced by the church. Although this is clearly a unique situation, and worthy of further study, the social dynamic seems to be consistent. If we include Gaza, on account of the original plan of the church, this is a notable group of five sites.

With the exception of Caesarea, all of these sites had an association with Zeus. Richard Bayliss, who is in the process of compiling such statistics for a digital database,

³² Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 75.

³³ Procopius *Secret History* 11.25; 27.26-31; John Malalas *Chronographia* 15.382.10-383.4.

believes that temples dedicated to Zeus, empire-wide, were disproportionately targeted for destruction and conversion into churches.³⁴ Zeus was especially emblematic of civic identity in many places, and his temples typically held desirable position in cities. Perhaps these factors led to increased attention. On the other hand, Ramsay MacMullen has noted the exceptional empire-wide frequency of inscriptions dedicated to Zeus.³⁵ There may have simply been more of these types of temples to begin with, thus distorting Bayliss' impression. One might think that Zeus' popularity would have the effect of protecting his temples. Given the delay in demolishing a significant number of these structures in Palestine, perhaps for some time it did.

Temples dedicated to the Imperial Cult held similar importance to the Roman state as those dedicated to the Capitoline Triad, which of course included Zeus. According to the preliminary statistics reported by Bayliss, temples of the Imperial Cult were among the least targeted of pagan temples.³⁶ It seems significant in this context to reiterate that Constantine permitted Hispellum to build a new temple of the Imperial Cult.³⁷ The obvious hypothesis might be that ideology protected such temples. An attack on any temple would have qualified as treason, but eliminating a temple to the Imperial Cult would have been especially troublesome. It would have qualified as a direct attack on the institution of the Emperor.

³⁴Richard Bayliss, *Provincial Cilicia and the Archaeology of Temple Conversion* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 17-18.

³⁵ R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (1981), 5-8.

³⁶ Richard Bayliss, *Provincial Cilicia and the Archaeology of Temple Conversion* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 17-18. MacMullen has not recorded inscriptions related to the Imperial cult.

³⁷ Raymond Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23-34. Includes a Latin text and translation.

This idea is difficult to reconcile, however, with the opposite treatment of temples dedicated to Zeus, given the similar centrality of Zeus in ancient ideas about legitimate authority. Further, Constantine was obviously willing to do away with a likely Capitulum in Jerusalem. This is also a problem with a similar dimension to it, given the importance of the Capitoline Triad in Roman conceptions of their state, as described in Chapter Four.

Vered Shalev-Hurwitz notes the precise proportional similarity of most of the radially symmetrical churches in Palestine.³⁸ Further, Shalev-Hurwitz notes the same use of proportions in the radially symmetrical Constantinian churches at Bethlehem and on the Mount of Olives, over the sites of Christ's birth and ascension to heaven, respectively.

We know that at least two of the concentric churches built atop temples in Palestine contained saints' relics, the octagonal churches at Neapolis and Caesarea. If we include the tomb of Christ as a relic that makes three. Although we do not know if the churches at Gaza and Bet Shean housed relics, it is not improbable.

André Grabar, noting the architectural affinity between concentric churches and Imperial mausoleums (also meant to contain the remains of the powerful dead), defined such churches as a type, the "martyrium," with the presumption that the design was originally adapted by Constantine's architects for the express purpose of housing relics and commemorating sacred places.³⁹ The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was the first of this type, anywhere in the Empire.

³⁸ V. Shalev-Hurwitz, *Holy Sites* (2015).

³⁹ André Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique* (Paris: Collège de France, 1946).

I suspect that this type of church in Palestine was built at the expense of pagan temples to Zeus, or likely temples to Zeus, at an improbably large number of sites.⁴⁰ Perhaps this group of churches should be understood as an assertion of Christ as legitimate authority, and not the earthly governments sanctioned by Zeus. I also hypothesize that this architectural style had extra utility in terms of the displacement of paganism via the purifying properties of relics. According to Eusebius and Mark, purification of a pagan contaminated site was an overriding concern determining the engineering efforts that were undertaken.

Theodoret, writing in the first half of the fifth century, did not seem to think that such radical action was needed to purify spolia from a pagan temple. Nevertheless, some sort of action was necessary. He thought that the proximity of saints' relics would have a cleansing effect on their own, presumably even on a completely intact temple: αἱ δὲ τούτων ὕλαι καθωσιώθησαν τοῖς τῶν μαρτύρων σηκοῖς.⁴¹

Concentric churches were perhaps the superior way to do this, at particularly problematic pagan sites. These churches were special-purpose architecture meant to house powerful things, make a highly visible statement about dominance, and purify the landscape. Gaza did not receive such a church. Nevertheless, Mark the Deacon indicates that it would have been the perfect place to build one, because the events in Gaza were (literally) a bare-knuckle confrontation between Christianity and Paganism.

⁴⁰ Despite the low total number of buildings involved, this might be a statistically significant correlation.

⁴¹ Theodoret *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 8.68.

Chapter VI

Results and Conclusions

It seems fair at this point to share the heuristic lens that I have been using in this study: In May of 2017, the city of New Orleans removed monuments that celebrated Confederate actions in the Civil War and later Southern resistance to Reconstruction. This process began at night under cover of police snipers to avoid unwanted attention until the public could be presented with a *fait accompli*. Also at night, Maryland removed statues like that of Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney, author of the infamous Dred Scott decision that declared it impossible for blacks to be citizens.

This was evidently not Constantine's strategy when he had the Capitolium in Jerusalem demolished. This act, as reported by Eusebius, was almost certainly meant to be witnessed by an audience. That was the nature of the sort of deal that Constantine was making with Christians. It was a visible action meant to help the Emperor build credibility and legitimacy.

The strategies employed by New Orleans and Baltimore were attempts to avoid a disturbance like that which occurred in Charlottesville. The fracturing of contemporary American society, along ideological lines, was evidenced by neo-Nazis demonstrating in that city, ostensibly to protect monuments representative of discredited and obsolete ideology. That demonstration was about the fear of losing power. One ought to hear an echo of the street-violence and power-struggles of fifth century Gaza upon Charlottesville, as if sound were bounced off an uneven, distorting surface. The pagan elites of Gaza had the same fear.

In this chapter, I will present the tabulated results of my work, and draw together the arguments that I have made in the preceding chapters. This is an argument about how

little we really know about what happened to pagan temples, and what that is likely to mean. This chapter will also argue that my mathematically derived estimate is still not conservative enough. The excel spreadsheet that I used while conducting research is included in the appendix.¹

The main argument of this paper has been that the literary accounts of temple destruction, although based on real events, are misleading in terms of understanding how most temples went out of commission. There were social forces, seen in those accounts, that were almost certainly at work in every community. These forces were manifested differently in most communities, from which we get little or no information. Presumably, these social forces were sublimated in a way that failed to yield the tension that made places like Gaza and Jerusalem noteworthy enough to make it into the record in the first place.

Altogether, there are twenty-two sites in my study area with evidence for a total of forty-four temples. The following table (Table 6.1) shows the temples that I have identified in both cities and rural areas. There are thirty-six urban temples and eight rural temples represented by this group.

These figures are highly biased towards urban sites. We should take this as obvious given the criteria that determine which archaeological sites get excavated, and how we find archaeological sites in the first place. It is a significant problem from the point of view of understanding the ancient religious landscape in an accurate way.

Big population centers are easy to locate and do not require intensive survey to find them. Many times, modern development drives the process of state-sponsored

¹ This appendix seems to have some additional potential as a GIS or Access database.

Table 6.1: Urban and Rural Sites and Temples

Location	Site	Temples	Site	Temples
Urban	Caesarea P.	Zeus Heliopolitanus putative Augusteum Tyche (from coin)	Aelia Cap.	*Capitolium* Asclepeion
	Bet Shean	Zeus Akraios Dionysus (hypothetical) Unk. Deity (round) Unk. Deity (by theater) Unk. Deity (near agora)	Gaza	*Marneion* Helios Aphrodite Apollo Persephone Hecate
	Tel Dor	Apollo/Asclepius Unk. Deity (seaside temenos) Unk. Deity (side entry)		Tyche Heroon
	Caesarea M.	Tyche Augusteum Hadrianeum	Ashkelon	Phanebal Derketo
			Hippos	Zeus Arotesios
			Tiberias	*Capitolium*
	Samaria	Augusteum Kore/Isis Capitolium	Sepphoris	Unk. Deity Antipatris Double Temple Unk. Deity
	Acco	Zeus Soter	Eleusa	*Aphrodite*
Rural	Kedesh	Zeus/Apollo	H. Hesheq	Jupiter Heliopolitanus
	Mamre	*multi-use temenos*	Beset	Unk. Deity
	Shuni	Asclepeion	Omrit	Unk. Deity
	K. Naphtali	Athena	Neapolis	Zeus Hypsistos
* Literary Record of Destruction* (5 total)				

salvage excavation in cities that have been consistently occupied for millennia. Big population centers also frequently command the most attention because of the wealth of fascinating information that they contain. Bet Shean is the perfect example of these forces at work. We may have exposed more of this site than any other, with the possible exception of Caesarea Maritima. This is reflected by the number of temples found at Bet Shean, a direct function of the massive Israeli public-works project that took place for many years. Bet Shean has more temples represented in this study than any other city

except Gaza. This is not because there were necessarily more temples there to begin with, but because of the intensity of excavation.

Literary sources are similarly biased towards cities. We would not have known about the putative Capitolium in Aelia Capitolina if not for Eusebius and Dio Cassius. A few short passages from Mark the Deacon adds seven temples, in addition to the Marneion, to the total count of eight for the city of Gaza.² Gaza, in fact, is represented by more temples than any other in my study.

We cannot reject the possibility that this is a function of Mark's narrative giving us a broader perspective than our sources of information from other sites. On the other hand, we cannot completely discount the idea that Gaza was a "pagan outlier" circa 400 CE. The seven other temples that Mark describes in Gaza were subjected to abuse, and we can reasonably hypothesize that actual physical destruction occurred around the same time as that of the Marneion. Mark, however, does not tell us that explicitly. There is unfortunately a danger of circular reasoning implicit in all three of these assumptions.

In fact, the lack of precision in the narrative seems odd given that Mark is so keen to demonstrate the complete victory of Christianity. If these building really were destroyed, why would Mark not tell us that, exactly? Given the strong possibility that Gaza is a significant source of non-representative mathematical bias, it may be best simply not to count these seven examples in the course of some of the following analysis. I have isolated "the Gaza bonus" as a separate category in my tabulation of data so that we can control for (and evaluate) its effect.

² Mark the Deacon *Life of Porphyry* 27, 64-67.

We do not have enough information, literary or archaeological, to pretend that we have a clear understanding of how many temples were really located in the countryside, or what activities were occurring there. Among the group of eight rural sites discussed in Chapter Three, archaeological evidence from two, Horvat Hesheq and Beset, is quite slim. This points to the need for more work in rural areas, both survey and excavation. The evidence that I have from peripheral zones is unfortunately inadequate for testing the “countryside invading the city” component of a patchwork model.

These facts, far from hurting my original hypothesis about an unremarkable death for most temples in Palestine, actually enhance it. We might take these sources of bias to mean that the total number of temples in Palestine significantly exceeded the numbers obtained by my study, and that we have absolutely no record of the existence or eventual fate of these other temples. This is almost certainly the case in rural areas for which we have little-to-no information.

The counter-argument, that there were no other temples whatsoever, other than the ones that have already been documented, would be highly improbable. There were too many pagans living in Palestine to presume that so many did without religious buildings. In fact, the results from this study might be an aid to postulating how many more temples really were in existence, at least in the cities. There should have been temples in any Palestinian city that issued coins.

We have five literary accounts of destruction out of the total group of forty-four sites. These are the Capitolium in Jerusalem, the multi-use *temenos* in Mamre, the temple of Aphrodite in Eleusa, the Marneion in Gaza, and the putative Capitolium in Tiberias. Jerome’s account of Hillarion at Eleusa, and Epiphanius’ interview with Joseph

the apostate, represent information from uncertain sources. Some kernel of truth might be extracted from each, but they should be eliminated from the conversation about how temples were destroyed. These two accounts either give us no information (Jerome), or inaccurate information (Epiphanius), about the actual physical process of eliminating the buildings in question. Epiphanius' source, Joseph the Apostate, does not seem to have known the topography and architectural history of the temple and *temenos* in Tiberias. His account speaks to how people thought temples would be destroyed, and the willingness of people to pass along a story that conformed to expectations.³

Further, the archaeology at Mamre, and the later account of Sozomen concerning sacrificial practices, give us reason to doubt Eusebius' assertion that Constantine eradicated pagan practices there. The church was fit into the pre-existing semi-pagan *temenos*, not built at its expense. Sacrifices either continued unabated, or experienced a resurgence sometime after Constantine demanded that it be shut down. We have no way of knowing if the *temenos* itself was the location for pagan activities at the time of Sozomen, but the case of Mamre points to the fact that sacrifice might very well have continued in places, even after the temples were eliminated.

Thus, there is no reason to assume that continued ritual activity at Paneas indicate the continued existence of temples. In fact, this observation might cause us to reject some of the original premises of this study, relating to the necessary link between cult practice and a physical building. I suspect, however, that this connection was still

³ Aude Busine, "From Stones to Myth: Temple Destruction and Civic Identity in the Late Antique Roman East," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 6 (2013), 325-46.

relevant in dense urban areas. In a city, there was a larger population that would observe practices, hold people accountable for those practices, and enforce social standards.

If we eliminate Jerome, Epiphanius, and part of Eusebius (Mamre) from our set of literary accounts detailing the end of temples in Palestine, we are left with only two examples that were reported in a factual way. These are the Capitolium in Jerusalem and the Marneion in Gaza. So, out of a total set of temples in Palestine that almost assuredly exceeded forty-four, there are only two for which we have a good literary record detailing the demolition of the temple and the cessation of cult practices. When temples died, people did not normally see fit to write about it. I would expect to get more accounts like Mark's if substantial levels of violence, or heavy handed use of force, had been common.

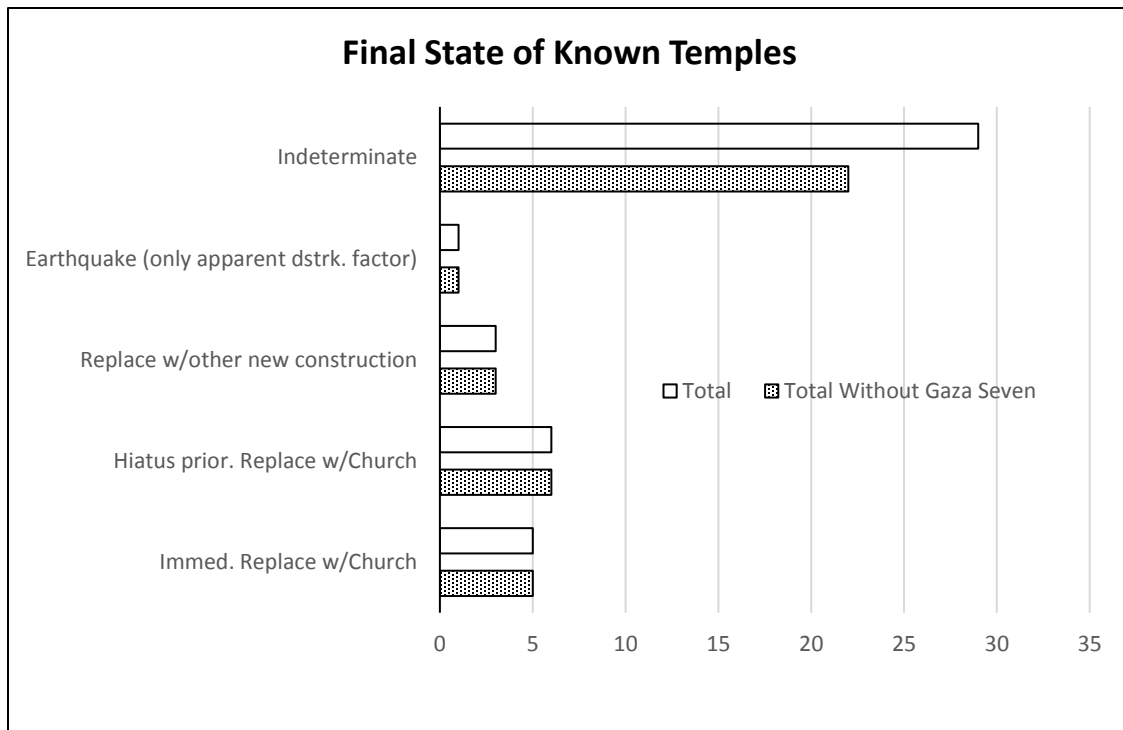
The next table presents the results of my research, cross-tabulated to indicate the quantity of temples eliminated, at what approximate date, and by what means (Table 6.2). The numbers in parentheses indicate what the results would look like if we were to ignore the seven temples from Gaza that I have previously mentioned as being a potential source of bias.

In an overwhelming number of cases we have no information about the final fate of temples in Palestine, other than that they were eventually quarried away (Table 6.3). Kedesh is the only site which yields no other way, except the earthquake of 363 CE, to explain the final physical state of the temple. Although earthquakes are almost certain to have ruined a larger number of buildings in my study group, human activity has since obscured virtually all of the diagnostic evidence. This situation indicates that the final state of these buildings needs to be explained in terms of human society and human

Table 6.2

Means of Destruction	Before 300	4th c	After 400	Indtrm.
Urban Temples				
Immed. Replace w/Church	-	2	1	-
Hiatus prior. Replace w/Church	-	-	6	-
Replace w/other new construction	-	1	1	1
Earthqke. (only apparent dstrk. factor)	-	-	-	-
Indeterminate	2	2	3 (10)	10
Subtotal	2	5	11 (18)	11
Rural Temples				
Immed. Replace w/Church	-	2	-	-
Hiatus prior. Replace w/Church	-	-	-	-
Replace w/other new construction	-	-	-	-
Earthqke. (only apparent dstrk. factor)	-	1	-	-
Indeterminate	-	-	1	4
Subtotal	-	3	1	4
Total	2	8	12 (19)	15
Total number of temples 37 (44)				
Parentheses indicates 7 examples from Gaza added.				

Table 6.3



activity. In fact, even Kedesh needs to be understood in those terms, because there were surely human reasons for why such a building would not be repaired.

The earthquake of 363 CE., specifically, might hypothetically be culpable for damage at sites all along the Dead Sea Transform. The DST is a major strike-slip fault with known, powerful seismic activity.⁴ Hippos, Omrit, Caesarea Philippi, and Bet Shean are some of the places that may have suffered greatly from this event, but the archaeological evidence fails to give us many specific details. Only at Kedesh do we have archaeological remains, still intact, that show us the deleterious effect of seismic forces on a partially standing building. It may be conjectured that several of the temples that were leveled down to their podium, or foundations, include an uncertain number that suffered from earthquakes.⁵

My results appear to contradict one of my suppositions in Chapter One. Specifically, that the tipping-point identified by Holum should be moved significantly earlier than 400 CE, or that we should entertain the idea of a “double-tipping point,” one around 400 CE and one around the time of Constantine. I am yet to be convinced, however, that these ideas are to be rejected.

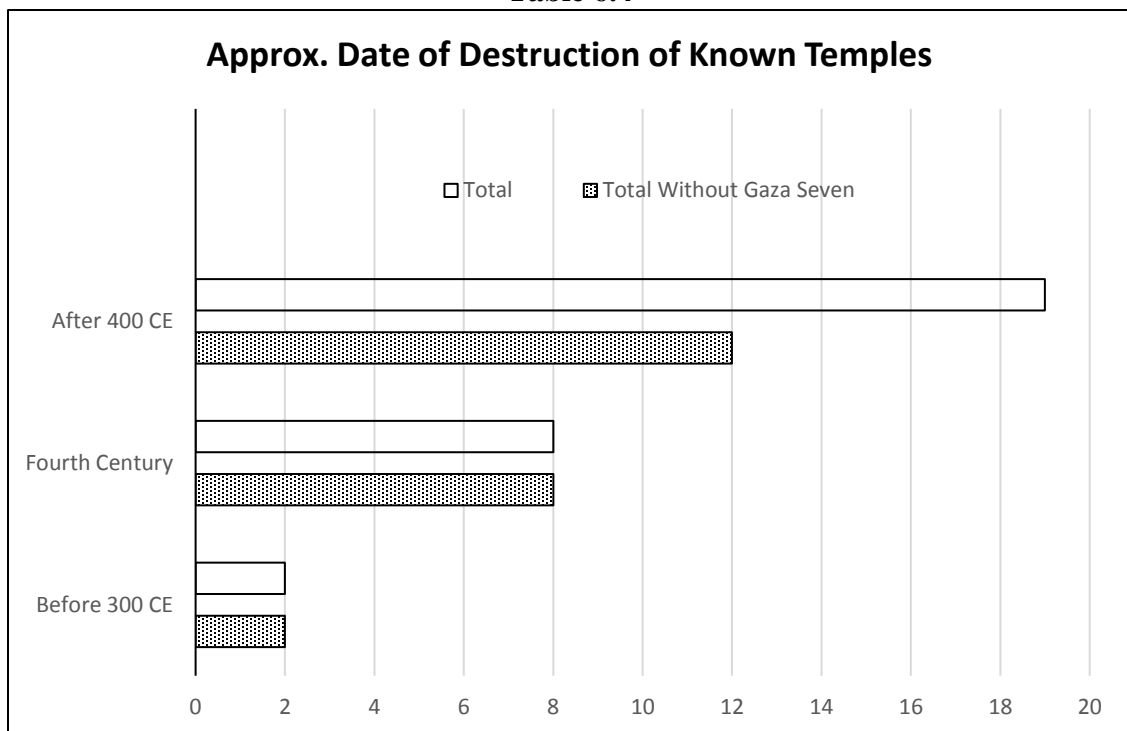
In terms of our impression of when most of the destruction of temples occurred, it should be reiterated that seven examples mentioned by Mark make up a disproportionate

⁴ M. Vered, “The Probable Maximum Earthquake Magnitude Associated with the Jordan Rift,” *Israel Journal of Earth-Sciences* 27 (1978), 82-84.

⁵ Some of the criteria that geologists and archaeoseismologists apply to study the effect of earthquakes in antiquity: S. Stiros and R. E. Jones (eds.), *Archaeoseismology* (Athens: The British School at Athens, 1996), 152; E. Guidoboni, A. Muggia, and G. Valensise, “Aims and Methods in Territorial Archaeology: Possible Clues to a Strong Fourth-Century A.D. Earthquake in the Straits of Messina (Southern Italy),” in W.J. McGuire, D.R. Griffiths, P.L. Hancock, and I.S. Stewart (eds.), *The Archaeology of Geological Catastrophies* (Bath: The Geological Society Publishing House, 2000), 45-70.

amount of our information, all likely falling at the beginning of the fifth century. These seven temples likely represent a “bonus” to our base of information, and a bonus with ambiguous significance too, given that we do not really know what became of the buildings. These seven temples make up over half of the data that I have categorized as “indeterminate means of destruction/after 400.” If we eliminate them from the total data, as proposed earlier, the numbers change quite a bit. Both tabulations appear in the following bar graph (Table 6.4). It seems clear that the beginning of the fifth century was hard on temples, but maybe not as hard as it might seem. When the “Gaza bonus” is

Table 6.4



eliminated from consideration, we are left with eight temples lost in the fourth century and twelve temples lost in the fifth. There is clearly some statistical analysis that could be done here. It would be interesting to determine whether the difference of four

examples is really that significant (in a mathematical sense) relative to how little data we have.

Although most of the temple destructions that we can date fall around 400 CE, Constantine is still an obviously important figure in this discussion. I originally hypothesized that Constantine represented the first in a series of two tipping-points. Constantine demonstrated how these demolitions could be accomplished, and that they should be accomplished. But I do not think the political will was present in many of the communities in fourth century Palestine to permit them to follow the Emperor's model.

We should take Constantine's actions against temples and construction of churches in Palestine to be part of a new type of *quid pro quo* deal. It was an offer that he made to Christians, and a "blinking of the eye" moment for pagans. The deal involved the expenditure of money, and a performance of visible behavior, in exchange for credibility and legitimacy. Constantine demonstrated how this could be accomplished, and that it should be accomplished.

The war with Licinius had been justified in terms of Constantine's superiority as a Christian. When the bishops, and likely more specifically Macarius, met Constantine at Nicaea they surely suggested the "holy land plan." It seems improbable that the Emperor failed to see the merit of their idea. The sites that were selected, and the type of architecture developed in Palestine, maximized his profit. In fact, there was no better place for this exchange to happen than in Jerusalem, on Golgotha.

Reclaiming Golgotha from pagans, and building a fabulous church in its place, was the single most important part of the deal. This is because the death and resurrection of Christ, with an understanding of his full equivalence with God the Father, is the single

most important part of Christian theology. It should be obvious why Eusebius was fixated on Palestine when he described Constantine as a hero of Christianity. These were the sites that mattered. Constantine, and a few others both named and unnamed, made the really important statements. The rest of Palestine was small-potatoes, and presumably not worth the political price that would have been paid for forcing the issue with dramatic intervention in such a way.

Six temples were replaced by churches after a hiatus of some time. Several of these were previously discussed in Chapter Five as part of a special group of temples replaced by concentric churches. The complete list (including ones not previously mentioned) includes the Asclepia in Tel Dor and Aelia Capitolina, the temple of Zeus at Bet Shean, the Caesarea Maritima Augusteum, Sepphoris, and Hippos. It is my opinion that at least some of these represent sites where the social tension, manifested in violent outbreaks at Gaza, may have instead caused construction delay. The tension in Gaza was a direct response to the threat that Porphyry posed to the established means of earning social capital. Other cities may have handled the issue in a more politic way, likely by deferring action.

The tension at these other sites may have simply been a matter of some angry debates in the *boule*, fear of unrest, or some other type of unrecorded turmoil. At Caesarea especially, one might suspect that there was a plan on the books, ready and waiting for eighty years, to build the octagonal church. The temple at Caesarea was eliminated all at once, which may suggest a small window of political opportunity for demolition brought about when a local tipping-point had been reached. It seems likely that this was a deliberate statement, like Constantine's actions seventy years before in

Jerusalem. At Sepphoris on the other hand, the temple looks like it was perpetually quarried over a long period of time. It seems entirely possible that this temple's partially ruined state was accepted by an unperturbed local population.

At Gaza, Mount Gerezim, Jerusalem, and elsewhere, a socially tense (if not explicitly violent) atmosphere prevailed. Ramsey MacMullen has often argued that armed force and coercion were the primary instruments by which much of the Empire was converted to Christianity.⁶ Michele Salzman and David Riggs, however, hold that religious violence in the Western Empire, or the threat of such violence, was in fact very rarely used to induce conversion.⁷ The archaeological evidence from Palestine is largely silent on this matter. If anything, the end of pagan temples in the region seem to speak to a small set of specifically targeted buildings. They were probably meant as object examples.

The existence of a population with a critical percentage of Christian converts is only one of several social circumstances that would permit the abandonment, destruction, and conversion of polytheist temples. Imperial involvement, the presence of an armed force, and the inclination of local notables are all examples of the type of things that could act in conjunction to create the material record left by the demise of polytheism. Which of these factors were present at which sites in my sample set is unclear without an accompanying literary record.

⁶ R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (1984), 86-101; R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism* (1997), 1-31; R. MacMullen, "Cultural and Political Changes in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," *Historia* 52 (2003): 465-95.

⁷ Michele Renee Salzman, "Rethinking Pagan-Christian Violence," in Hal Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 265-86; David Riggs, "Christianizing the Rural Communities of Late Roman Africa: A process of Coercion or Persuasion?" in Hal Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 297-308.

My data speaks to the end of most temples as a quotidian process. Jerusalem and Gaza were deemed noteworthy because the former was precedent-setting and the latter was an attempted coup-de-grace. Peter Brown once remarked that “enlightened ambivalence” seemed to be the glue that held Late Antique society together. Raban Gamaliel was also reputed to be ambivalent, in just this way. Similarly, the anecdote about Italicus and Hilarion speaks to a process involving both distress and accommodation. A cosmopolitan culture of enlightened ambivalence was likely widespread in Palestine, if not the Empire as a whole. It permitted some permeability of the barriers between dominant cultures and outsiders. Gamaliel, Italicus, and Hilarion worked out solutions that permitted participation. So did the authors of the Elvira Canons. Gamliel continued to visit the public baths of Acco. Hilarion gave Italicus the competitive advantage that he needed to race his chariots against pagans in the hippodrome of Gaza, and win in front of large crowds of citizens. The *decurions* of southern Spain were able to be Christian and also participate in politics, where pagan sacrifice was unavoidable.

I think accommodation and ambivalence are best way to explain the results of my research, and to explain why violent outbreaks like those at Gaza did not happen more frequently. Perhaps, in the unique set of circumstances of ancient Palestine, the elapsed time between Constantine and Porphyry mitigated some of the damage that would have occurred if people had been forced to conform more rapidly.

Appendix

Location	Site	Temples	Immed. Replc. w/Church	Hiatus prior to Replc. w/Church	Replc. w/other construction	363 quake (only distrk. factor)	Indeterminate (before 300)	Indeterminate (4th c.)	Indeterminate (after 400)	No Info (date or mode)
Urban	Caesarea P.	Zeus Heliopolitanus								X
		Augusteum								X
		Tyche (coin)								X
	Bet Shean	Zeus Akraios		X						
		Dionysus (?)			X					
		Unk. Deity (round)			X					
		Unk. Deity (by theater)							X	
		Unk. Deity (by agora)							X	
	Tel Dor	Apollo/Asclep.		X						
		Unk. Deity (temenos)					X			
		Unk. Deity (side entry)					X			
	Caesarea M.	Tyche								X
		Augusteum		X						
		Hadrianeum							X	
	Samaria	Augusteum						X		
		Kore/Isis								X
		Capitolium (coin)								X
	Aelia Cap.	*Capitolium*	X							
		Asclepeion		X						
	Acco	Zeus Soter			X					
	Gaza	*Marneion*	X							
		Helios							X	
	Aphrodite							X		
	Apollo							X		
	Persephone							X		
	Hecate							X		
	Tyche							X		
	Heroon							X		
Ashkelon	Phanebal								X	
	Derketo								X	
Hippos	Zeus Arotosios		X							
Tiberias	*Capitolium*						X			
Sepphoris	Unk. Deity		X							
Antipatris	Double Temple (coin)								X	
	Unk. Deity (coin)								X	
Eleusa	*Aphrodite*	X								
Rural	Kedesh	Zeus/Apollo				X				
	Mamre	*multi-use temenos*	X							
	Shuni	Asclepeion						X		
	K. Naphtali	Athena								X
	H. Hesheq	Jupiter Heliopolitanus								X
	Beset	Unk. Deity								X
	Omrit	Unk. Deity	X							
	Neapolis	Zeus Hysistos								X
	22 sites	44 temples	5	6	3	1	2	2	11	14
* Literary Record of Destruction (5)*										

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