

RELIGIO IN STAGNO:

NATURE, DIVINITY, AND THE CHRISTIANISATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IN LATE ANTIQUE ITALY

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Concluding his seminal study *The Cult of the Saints*, Peter Brown remarked, with nostalgic regret, that Christianisation had created a "hominized" natural world, "shorn of the power of the gods."¹ In the example he cited from Gregory of Tours, cult at a holy lake was transferred to a nearby chapel of Saint Hilary: *nulla religio in stagno* ("no piety in a pond"), the Gallic peasants were told by their scornful bishop.² Yet, such

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a view of nature was far from universal; indeed, Brown, in *The Rise of Western Christendom*, has recently modified his generalisation.³ Despite the total rejection of pagan sites and cults by such figures as Caesarius of Arles or Martin of Braga, the practice of Christian *religio* at sanctified *stagna* was far from infrequent in the late and post-Roman world; there are examples from Britain to Asia Minor.⁴ This article explores Christian views of nature through one such case near Padula (ancient Consilinum), sited in the Lucanian Val di Diano close to southern Campania and on the inland road from Naples to Reggio: the conversion of a sacred pagan spring to a Christian baptistery. It first examines the context and implications of this conversion, and then the significance of the subtle and allusive description of the site by Cassiodorus in his letter *Variae* 8.33.⁵ The immediate purpose of that document (written in 527 for the Ostrogothic king Athalaric) was to order the suppression of violent robberies at Leucothea, a great fair which took place, on Saint Cyprian's day, around a spring which *prisca superstitio* had formerly named after the goddess Leucothea. The rural suburb of Consilinum in which the fair was held was called *Marcellianum* "from the founder of the sacred springs." After ordering the provincial governor and local landowners to take measures

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against the disorders, Cassiodorus describes the fair with its merchandise, booths made out of branches, and cheerful crowds; then the spring, its pool of sacrosanct fish, and the miracle which took place each year, when its waters rose mysteriously at the baptismal prayer.

The cult of Ino or Leucothea was widely spread around the Mediterranean world, associated with a number of springs, cliffs and islands. As Ino, Leucothea (the White Goddess) had once been a mortal, the nurse of her nephew, the young Dionysus; she and her son Melicertes (or Dionysus himself in another version) were driven over a cliff by the angry Hera, and transformed into deities

of the sea. She was often identified with the shadowy Roman goddess Mater Matuta, and with the Syrian Atargatis, who, like the Leucothea of Marcellianum, owned pools of sacred fish. (Fish had saved Atargatis from drowning.) Ino-Leucothea sometimes had a special cultic function: she was occasionally a kourtophros, presiding over young men's initiations at the New Year. In the time of Trajan, she may have had a mystery cult associated with a cauldron of rebirth or rejuvenation; and, Libanius tells us, her mysteries were practised in his own day by his friend Aristophanes of Corinth.⁶ As Mater Matuta, the women of Rome commended to her their sisters' children.⁷

We do not know whether the Marcellianum shrine had, in fact, ever been a place of pagan initiation. However, this background of syncretistic myth and religious function in rites of passage harmonises very suggestively with the transformation of Leucothea's spring to a Christian baptistery.⁸ Like the goddess, catechumens were submerged in water to attain

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immortality; as she was saved by a fish, so they were by Christ, of whom the fish is a familiar type;⁹ like the children in the cult of Matuta, one of whose functions was as a goddess of childbirth,¹⁰ they were drawn into a wider family. Their baptism on the feast of Saint Cyprian of Carthage (Sept. 14th or 16th) was irregular in date; but, as is shown by repeated condemnations, such irregularity was common in the fifth to sixth century west.¹¹ The selection of this feast, in preference to the Invention of the Cross (Sept. 14th), may recall the false tradition that Cyprian himself was a converted pagan sorcerer;¹² some version of his life is likely to have been liturgically read at his festival.¹³ It may also reflect the association of martyrdom and baptism, and the African contacts of southern Italy.¹⁴ The date, furthermore, has its pagan and south Italian significance: it falls

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within the period of the Vindemiae (Aug. 23rd to Oct. 15th),¹⁵ which celebrated the triumph of Bacchus, the goddess's nurseling, over the dark forces that threatened the grape-harvest, and, by extension, over the forces of evil.¹⁶ Neighbouring Campania was Italy's traditional home of Bacchic cult; and Paulinus of Nola's description of the demoniacs at the shrine of Saint Felix, with their Bacchic cries and gestures, suggests that it was still a powerful force in the minds of Campanian peasants at the end of the fourth century.¹⁷ To judge by the retention of her name in a Christian context, memories of Leucothea, too, must have long been potent in the Val di Diano. Moreover, rites connected with water dominate a pagan calendar from Capua, dating as late as 387; these include a vintage festival at the Acerusian lake.¹⁸

In view of all this, I conjecture - and it can be only a conjecture - that some bishop or landowner¹⁹ had deliberately replaced a pagan rite of passage by a Christian, with a tact alien to Caesarius but reminiscent of the methods of Paulinus of Nola, our best known landowning devotee.²⁰

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The fair must have been affected in consequence, following a pattern that was arguably common in the eastern Mediterranean world. The pan[^]gyreis of pagan deities, with their joint religious, social, and commercial functions, gave way to those of the saints: "gradually they were absorbed

into the Christian cycle of martyr celebrations which were themselves transformed by the form of the pagan pan[^]gyris."²¹ Cassiodorus tells us that the goods and livestock on sale at Marcellianum came from much of southern Italy: Campania, Bruttium, Calabria and Apulia. Like pilgrims returning from the feast of Saint Felix at Nola, the traders and drovers (some, perhaps, baptised in the spring) will have spread knowledge of Christian devotions widely in the countryside: commerce could circulate ideas, as well as goods.²²

In thus adopting and adapting the festival of a sacred spring, the founder was not so much "hominizing" nature (to use Peter Brown's expression) as maintaining its sanctity by associating it intimately with the one God.²³ For one fifth century Italian bishop, Maximus of Turin,

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the element of water had been sanctified by its role in baptism: "For, from the moment when the Saviour plunged into the water, he consecrated the courses of all floods and the veins of all springs to [or by] the mystery of baptism." Water, "together with Christ, is the mother of the peoples."²⁴ For another, Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna, water was a type of the womb of Mary, from which God's people were reborn²⁵ - an association of the element with rebirth and a divinised woman. The feminine character of baptismal water is also expressed in the sermons of Zeno of Verona, and in Paulinus of Nola's inscription for Sulpicius Severus' baptistery at Primuliacum; such imagery may have originated in Syriac Christianity, in whose liturgies it still survives.²⁶ The mysterious swelling of Leucothea's spring will have lent itself to a range of baptismal interpretations.²⁷ There was a standard Biblical typology of changing water-levels: Noah's flood, the partings of the Red Sea and of the Jordan when God's people crossed on their way to the Promised Land, and of the Jordan for Elijah, are all familiar examples.²⁸ Springs that rose and fell at appropriate times were repeatedly selected for baptism in the Mediterranean world, and revered by the locals: Gregory of Tours describes one such at Embrun, and another at Osset near Seville; bishop Paschasius of Lilybaeum sent to Pope Leo I a description of another in the wilds of Sicily; John Moschus tells of

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two more in Lycian villages.²⁹ Where most churches had to make do with fish in mosaic, to represent Christ and the redeemed,³⁰ Marcellianum had live fish, at play in the miraculous water of the baptismal pool. Nature retains its holiness, but, like the miracles of saints, it is now a holiness derived from God.

What did the spring and festival mean to Cassiodorus? Firstly, he does no more than allude to their Christianisation: it is not a theme of the letter. Either he was unaware of the subtlety of this conversion, or he was rather shy of it. In the *Institutiones*, the tenants of his monastery of Vivarium were to be weaned from their cults of sacred groves merely by attendance at the monastic church.³¹ It is possible that 8.33 came to influence the Gregory the Great's famous letter to Mellitus on the method of converting Anglo-Saxon pagans.³² Nonetheless, it should be read primarily as an interpretation of the festival that expresses a social and religious ideal to Cassiodorus' fellow landowners in his home province of Lucania-and-Bruttium, and to aristocrats in general. It should also be read as the culmination of a tripartite sequence, the last of a group of three long ecphrastic letters which terminate book 8 of the *Variae*, and do honour to that province. In their selection and placing, as 8.31-33, there may well be a numerological significance. Three is a holy number;

thirtythree was the age of Christ when "he offered eternal life to a world laid low by sin," and therefore used by Cassiodorus as the number for structuring book 1 (on divine letters) of his *Institutiones*.³³ Furthermore, the ogdoad (as we shall see) also has a sacred meaning, repeatedly alluded to by Cassiodorus

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in the *Expositio Psalmorum*;³⁴ indeed he draws attention to it here by giving the detail that the floor of the baptistery and the seven steps to the pool add up to eight (8.33.7).³⁵

The first of the group recalls Bruttian gentry from residence in the countryside to their native cities, and is one of the last expressions of the classical ideal of civic life. Its argument is a secular one, of natural moral law, although the language may have its biblical echoes.³⁶ Not only the amenities of urban life, but social order, the *civilitas* that is a well-known theme of the *Variae*, is at stake. In contrast with much imperial legislation, the administrative inconvenience which the retreat of *decurions* from the cities caused to the government is barely hinted at;³⁷ the problem on which Cassiodorus declaims is more profound: the peril of upper-class cultural and moral values. The natural exemplum of solitary birds of prey (8.31.3), which he uses to condemn the drop-outs, may suggest landowners who turn to brigandage based on their isolated estates, a development against which he directs another of his *Lucania-and-Bruttium* letters (12.5).

The letter 8.32, again concerned with social order, moves from town to countryside, from the mores of the upper class to those of the *rustici* with whom, as claimed in 8.31.4, the Bruttian landowners were tending to identify themselves. The crime of horse-stealing has defiled a *locus amoenus*, "a truly pleasant place, marvellous both for its reedy shades and the virtues of its waters." By a literary conceit, the fount of *Arethusa*, which is the centre of this rural paradise, and which mysteriously boils up and resounds in response to any human noise, provides the model for detection and confession.³⁸ The wonder of this spring (an example of the

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fontium miracula about which Theoderic used to question Cassiodorus)³⁹ implies a sympathy between men and the natural world: both are part of a cosmic harmony, divinely ordained, and not wholly accessible to human reason (8.32.3); of this harmony, the *disciplina* (8.32.5) of the Ostrogothic realm, which the letter enforces, is another manifestation. Similarly, in another of Cassiodorus' aquatic letters (2.39), the hot springs of *Aponum* and their baths not only cure illness, but mysteriously preserve the *continentiae disciplina* by preventing mixed-sex bathing,⁴⁰ and detect by ordeal the perjury of sheep-stealers. In the first two of these tasks, human architects, engineers, and beneficent rulers aid and share in the providential operations of the cosmic harmony;⁴¹ they moderate and adapt *natura furens* (2.39.3), and assist *provida natura* (2.39.8).⁴²

In *Variae* 8.31-2 and 2.39, Cassiodorus' discourse lacks specifically Christian reference. Like Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, it seems to move on a philosophical plane common to Christians and non-Christians, with some inheritance from the cosmic pantheism of the Stoics.⁴³ Behind it, however, may well lie an approach to Natural Theology reminiscent of (though probably not directly owed to) the Cappadocian Fathers, for whom natural law and cosmic harmony displayed nature as not in itself divine, but sanctified by and imaging its transcendent creator.⁴⁴ For

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Boethius, in passages probably well known to Cassiodorus, the parts of the cosmos are governed in freedom by love of each other and of God.⁴⁵ The springs of Aponum and Arethusa (like that of Leucothea) show spontaneity, a personal quasi-divinity.⁴⁶ (Gregory of Tours' view of nature has resemblances.)⁴⁷ And behind such sophisticated concepts lies an understanding of the unity of the cosmos and the interpenetration of the natural and divine which was common to "the Christian, the educated pagan, and the illiterate peasant."⁴⁸

The letter 8.33 is linked to 31 by the theme of civic life, to 32 by the theme of the miraculous spring that swells at the sound of human speech, and to both by the theme of social order. Now, however, the discourse is Christian: the spring (like that of Osset) swells only for the baptismal prayer, and (as noted) the letter's number may symbolise redemption.⁴⁹

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Where the spring ordinarily covers the five steps of the material and animal creation, it now rises over those of the human creation and the sabbath of God, while the priest stands above on the level of the resurrection and new creation.⁵⁰ When Cassiodorus commented on Psalms 119/120 - 133/134, the so-called Canticles of Steps, he understood the Psalm of the eighth step to signify Christ's resurrection, the New Testament, prophecy and preaching, and the gate of Jerusalem.⁵¹ The letter also foreshadows the *Expositio Psalmorum* on water. There, in a verbal echo, the "irrational element," the *brutum elementum*, of water symbolises the peoples ripe for conversion: "for they themselves are waters which could know and fear the Lord by rational feeling."⁵² By another interpretation in the *Expositio*, the waters represent "the truth of the prophets, who from their saintly mouths poured forth fountains of eternal life"⁵³ - again a verbal echo of the letter. The baptismal pool has its tame and sacrosanct fish; in the *Expositio*, fish, roaming the sea, represent philosophers, persistently curious, but now converted and redeemed.⁵⁴ Nature is given a living role in God's work of redemption which consummates its living role in the enforcement of natural law. The contrast between 8.33 and its two predecessors echoes the relation of the *Variae* as a whole to their thirteenth book, the *De Anima*, where many of their themes are summed up and developed in a treatise of natural, but also Christian, theology.⁵⁵

However, not just the baptismal spring, but the whole plain around *Consilinum* at the time of festival is treated as a *locus amoenus*. Paradoxically, Cassiodorus has adapted the commercial to the religious element of the fair, in a curious subtext of religious ideals underlying his depiction of

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a flawed secular reality.⁵⁶ The temporary booths of the traders and pilgrims, *de amoenis frondibus intextas* (8.33.3), suggest the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles which itself recalled the Exodus; while the phrase "a coming and going of people who sing and rejoice" (*populorum cantantium laetantiumque discursum*) verbally echoes biblical accounts of the installation of Jewish kings (at least in the Vulgate's Latin).⁵⁷ In this light, the display of wealth at the fair, wealth which adorns the *faciem civilitatis* (8.33.1), may be read as a sign of a land flowing with milk and honey: king Athalaric's southern Italy, with its own Jordan, has become an image of the Promised Land, the suburban fair-ground a New Jerusalem.⁵⁸ Not public monuments, but its rejoicing inhabitants, give it "the splendour of a famous city (8.33.4)." Even the sale of peasant children into temporary slavery in the cities is for their benefit (*ibid.*); baptism, in Christian imagery, frees the slave, but

makes the free man like a slave.⁵⁹ It may be that some, at least, of these children would be baptised at the fair, redeemed from the original sin of their parents, and admitted to the heavenly city. Like Monte Cassino, in Gregory's account of Saint Benedict,⁶⁰ a pagan locus amoenus has been purged of its ancient superstition, a Palestine conquered by the migration of the Chosen People.

In all this, there may be a double message to the audience - not the peasants and traders at the fair, to whom the letter was to be read out,

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but Cassiodorus' narrower public of Christian and educated aristocrats. First, that Italy under Athalaric could resemble the kingdom of God - if only they observed the *civilitas* and *disciplina* enjoined on them by natural law, and by their perception, through the *reverentia loci* (8.33.8), of that law displayed in places sanctified by the creating and redeeming Deity.⁶¹ The second message should be set in the context of the growing spread of Christianity into the countryside, attested both in the literary evidence for monastic rural preaching and aristocratic founding of monasteries and estate churches and chapels, and in such recently excavated fifth to sixth century villa churches as San Vincenzo al Volturno in Samnium, or San Giusto in Apulia with its splendid baptistery.⁶² The foci of devotion were shifting somewhat from the urban settings of the early Church.⁶³ Cassiodorus, perhaps, is encouraging this process. As knowledge of God gives profound religious meaning to the natural landscape of Italy, so the despised *rusticitas* of the countryside, violent and dishonest, may be transformed by admission to the City of God.⁶⁴ The values

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recall Augustine: from the worldly cities of 8.31, with their public monuments and code of public honour, the scene has shifted to the booths, *momentaneas domos*, the glorious and happy, but temporary city without *operam moenium* (8.33.3-4), of pilgrims to the true city of which Italy, however well-governed, is only an earthly image.⁶⁵ Praise of the natural wealth and beauties of Italy, a frequent theme of the *Variae* in the tradition of Varro, Vergil and the two Plinys, has been given a Christian gloss, one which looks forward to the didactic celebration of sixth century Christian Italy in Gregory's *Dialogues*.⁶⁶ The triad of letters mirrors the metamorphosis of Cassiodorus the senator to Cassiodorus the member of a rural monastery: to use his own words, the *civis religiosus* of his *urbs propria*.⁶⁷

For Cassiodorus, for the baptistery's founder, and for the south Italian peasants and traders moving towards Christianity, the holy place of Leucothea probably meant rather different things. The peasants and traders, at least, must have been intellectually far removed from Cassiodorus' subtle and allusive interpretations, and from his spin-doctoral idealising. For all, though, the Christianised Italian countryside remained full of meaning and holiness, a landscape "charged with the grandeur of God."⁶⁸ However, the range of facts, symbols, and religious and secular values involved in this seem fluid, Protean: they cannot easily be pinned down

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into a coherent theology of nature, even in the presentation of Cassiodorus. In this, though, they match well with the natural motifs of much Christian art of the period, inconstant mirrors of the

political and theological thought of the age, and also formed by the traditions of the pre-Christian past.⁶⁹

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1. 124-6 (London, 1981); cf. E.R. Dodds, *Pagan & Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 37, "the progressive withdrawal of divinity from the material world." For one reply to this view, see D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Greek Patristic View of Nature* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1968).

2. *Glor. conf.* 2 (MGH SRM 1). Against V. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 267, this is hardly "a good example of the sort of new uses to which a reverence for water might be put"; rather, a contemptuous rejection of such reverence.

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3. 101f., 110 (Cambridge, Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell's, 1996).

4. Britain: see for Cornwall (esp.), J. Rattue, *The Living Stream: Holy Wells in Historical Context* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995), 66ff.; for Chedworth, see C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain* (London: Batsford, 1981), 219f.; for Wessex, B. Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London & New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 156f.; for Wales, H. Pryce in *Pastoral Care before the Parish*, ed. J. Blair & R. Sharpe (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992): 60f. In Gaul, the cult of St. Julian at Brioude strongly suggests the adaptation of Celtic worship of spring and severed head; cf. Greg. Tur., *vita Juliani*, 2-3. (The cult of St. Libaire at Grand may be similar.) For the Limousin, see Flint, *Rise of Magic*, 262f. Aachen: see Notker, *De Carolo Magno* II.15. For various views on the sacred springs of St. Michael and others in Asia Minor, see F. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c.370-529* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), I, 149-55, II, 115-18, 130f.; S. Mitchell, *Anatolia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), II, 20ff., n.70; F.W. Hasluck, *Letters on Religion and Folklore* [London: Luzac, 1926], 84ff. Note that, according to legend, Michael's cult reached Italy in 493, and was associated with a cave and spring, and perhaps a former oracle, on Monte Gargano; see F. Lenormant, *Travers l'Apulie et la Lucanie: Notes de Voyage* (Paris: A. Levy, 1883), I, 53ff; he also noted a cave-chapel of Michael at Consilinum (II, 119). See also Gelasius I, ep.35 (ed. A. Thiel, *Epp. Rom. Pont. Gen. I* (Brunsberg: E. Peter, 1868).

5. Ed. Th. Mommsen, MGH AA 12; Å. Fridh, CCSL 96; translation (also of 8.31, discussed below), in S. Barnish, *Cassiodorus' Variarum* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992). For the site (now S.Giovanni alla Fonte), see Lenormant, *Travers l'Apulie*, I, 110-20, V. Bracco, "Marcellianum e il suo Battistero," *RAC* 34 (1958): 193-207.

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6. Or.14.65 (R448), associating them with those of Demeter and the Cabeiri; see *ibid.* 5, for Aristophanes as also an initiate of Hecate and Poseidon.

7. Leucothea: see Eitrem, s.v. Leucothea, P-W XII (1925): c. 2293-3306; L. Farnell, "Ino-Leucothea," *JHS* 36 (1916): 36-44; W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: the Anthropology of Ancient Greek*

Sacrificial Ritual and Myth (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 132, 178f., 197, ch.3.8, Greek Religion (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 172; F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome: Inst. Suisse de Rome, 1985), 405-7; R.S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 62f., 67ff. On Mater Matuta, see G. Dum, zil, *Archaic Roman Religion* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), I, 50-5, 256, 237ff.; Kraemer, *Her Share*, 61-9. Identification is noted in late antiquity by Servius on Aen. 5.241, Hyginus, Fab. 2.5, 125.17, Augustine, civ. 18.14 (CSEL 40). On Atargatis, see F. D'Iger, *ICHTHYS* (Munster in Westfalia, 1922, 1923), I, 175-96, 190, n.2, 247, 253-9, II, 436-43; note that Atargatis was sometimes assimilated to Mary.

8. Cf. J. Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene, Philosopher-Bishop* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 166ff., on Synesius' hom.2, presenting baptism like a pagan mystery of purifying initiation.

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9. Note Farnell's conjectural interpretation of the cauldron in her mysteries: "the `lebes' serving as a baptismal, recreative font" ("Ino-Leukothea:" 42). Fish-symbol: see esp. J. Dani, lou, *Primitive Christian Symbols* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), ch.3. Fish could also represent baptised Christians in the water of life; cf. below, n.31.

10. Dum, zil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, 237ff., explains this function (questioned by Kraemer, *Her Share*, 63) by interpreting Matuta as originally a dawn-goddess welcoming the new-born sun; this may be significant in a baptismal context.

11. The Roman Calendar of 354 gives the 14th; the date of transfer to the 16th is unknown. Baptism at seasons (including martyrs' festivals) other than Easter and Pentecost was condemned by Pope Siricius (ep. 1.2.3, PL 13.1134f., to Bishop Himerius of Tarraco), and by Leo I (ep. 168.1, PL 54.1209f., to bishops in Campania, Samnium, and Picenum). The practice was also prohibited by Gallic councils: Mfcon II (585), 3, Auxerre (561/605), 18. C. Smith, "Pope Damasus' Baptistery in St.Peter's Reconsidered," *RAC* 64 (1988): 257-86, argues for baptisms during the feast of SS. Peter & Paul at the Damasan shrine of St.Peter's miraculous spring on the Janiculum. Cassiodorus does not explicitly state that the Leukothea baptisms were held on Cyprian's day, but this is both the natural way to read the letter, and the clear implication of "who dares to violate the joys of such a time" (8); contrast L. Traube, *index to variae*, MGH AA 12, s.v. dies festi.

12. See M. Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: the Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 118ff., on pe. 13.21-4: a confusion with St. Cyprian of Antioch. Roberts remarks the stress on Cyprian as teaching bishop; note that one reason for the papal condemnation of baptism at irregular times was the lack of opportunity to instruct catechumens.

13. Cf. A.-M. Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 229-34.

14. D'Iger, *ICHTHYS*, II, 436-43, notes the identification of Atargatis with the Punic Tanit, including evidence from the Carthage region and Sicily. The baptistery resembles one at Naples with a mosaic of Cyprian; see Bracco, "Marcellianum:" 196, with H. Leclercq, *DACL* II, 2066ff., s.v. Capoue. On 4th c. links between Italy and Africa, see J.F. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies & Imperial Court, A.D.364-425* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 23-41; for the 5th to 6th cs., S. Barnish, "Pigs, Plebeians and Potentes," *PBSR* 55 (1987): 157-85, esp. 168ff., 180ff.

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15. See C.Th. 2.8.19, *interpretatio*, for this empire-wide period. The Roman *vindemiae* fell on Sept.5th, but Campania, in C.E.387, was celebrating a *vindemia* on Oct.15th at the Acerusian lake (Dessau, ILS, no.4918).

16. See M. Salzman, *On Roman Time: the Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 105f. Cf. Ennodius, 14.11 and 81.10 (MGH AA 7), and Venantius Fortunatus, *carm.* 8.7 (MGH AA 4), for the explicit association of Easter and vernal renewal; contrast Brown, *Cult*, 125, "a purely human time". Paulinus of Nola, *carm.* 27.1-63, 107ff., 148-68 (CSEL 30), gives some support to Brown, though he naturally sees the Christian calendar as divinely ordered time; but contrast D. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 184f. Hasluck, *Letters*, 102, suggested that St.Benedict replaced a solstice festival of Apollo-Helios at Monte Cassino by one of St.John.

17. Paulinus, *carm.* 19. 164-282. Caesarius of Arles (*sermo* 33.4, CCSL 103) noted - and, of course, condemned - the synchronisation of Christian and pagan calendars in his diocese, when his flock transferred their midsummer ablutions in holy waters to St. John the Baptist's day; cf. W. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 224f.; contrast citations above, n.17.

18. ILS 4918, above, n.16. The eight festivals recorded include a *lustratio ad flumen Casilino*, another *ad flumen ad iter Dianae*, and a *profectio ad iter Averni*.

19. Despite Cassiodorus' assumption, the Christianiser was probably not Marcellus, since the place is already attested as *In Marcelliana* in the 3rd c. Antonine Itinerary. Was Marcellus patron of the *Leucothea* cult? (He cannot have been Pope Marcellus I [306-8], as claimed by Bracco, "Marcellianum:" 199f.) Note Matthews, *Aristocracies*, 352f., on the possible sponsorship by a local landowner of a festival of Osiris at Falerii in 417.

20. See D. Trout, "Christianizing the Nolan Countryside: Animal Sacrifice at the Tomb of St.Felix," *J ECS* 3 (1995): 281-98, "Town, Countryside and Christianization at Paulinus' Nola," in *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. Mathisen and

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H. Sivan (*Aldershot: Variorum*, 1996): ch.14, and in his *Paulinus*, 179ff., 184f.: he argues that the animals killed in honour of St.Felix and cooked for the poor both affirmed the new value of Christian charity, and echoed pagan rural sacrifices for health and fertility. Cf., in general, Paulinus, 173-85, on Paulinus' sympathy for the life and values of the countryside.

Compare, also, the encoded farewell to Isis by the regretfully converted owner of Lullingstone villa; see C. Thomas, *Christian Celts: Messages and Images* (Stroud: Tempus, 1998), 47-54.

21. S. Vryonis Jr., "The Pan[^]gyris of the Byzantine Saint," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London: Sobornost, 1981): 196-227 (214 quoted). Note also Trout, "Christianizing:" 295f., and in "Town, Countryside:" 180f., who conjectures some resemblance between *Marcellianum* and Nola; and A.M. Orselli, in *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. G. Brogiolo & B. Ward-Perkins (Leiden: Brill, 1999): 186f. For such events in Roman Italy, see J. Frayn, *Markets and Fairs in Roman Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), ch.8, esp. 142f., L. de Ligt, *Fairs and Markets in the Roman Empire* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben,

1993), esp. 59-62, 250, and E. Gabba, "Mercati e Fiere nell'Italia Romana," *SCO* 24 (1975): 141-66, esp. 159-63. The Marcellianum fair is also discussed by G. Volpe, *Contadini, Pastori e Mercanti nell'Apulia Tardoantica* (Bari: Edipuglia, 1996), 337ff.

22. Cf. M. Humphries, "Trading gods in northern Italy," in *Trade, Traders and the Ancient City*, ed. H. Parkins & C. Smith (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), ch.10. Note de Ligt, *Fairs*, 79, 148f., on the importance of fairs in supplying the peasantry in surrounding regions.

23. Cf. Flint, *Rise of Magic*, 263: "Baptism, again, hardly needs the world of early European outlawed magical beliefs to account for its importance, but, in its concentration on the element of water, it was an attractive method of invoking the supernatural within this context."

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24. *Sermo* 13A, 3 and 2 (CCSL 23); cf. also 13B, 13, 64-5. Paulinus, *carm.* 27.49, *sacramentum cunctas recreandis gentibus undas*, expresses the same sentiment more briefly. Cf. H. Maguire, *Earth and Ocean: the Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park & London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), 46: "Many of the commentaries on the created world referred to the saving [baptismal] power of the waters."

25. *Sermo* 146.7 (CCSL 24B).

26. Zeno, tr. 1.32, 1.55, and 2.28 (CCSL 22); Paulinus, *ep.* 32.5 (CSEL 29): "The Holy Spirit descends on it from heaven, and mates its sacred liquid with a heavenly stream. The water becomes pregnant with God, and begets from seed eternal a holy offspring in its fostering fount" (tr. P.G. Walsh). Cf. Basil of Caesarea on the spring that flowed from the tomb of St. Julitta: "So the martyr has become, as it were, our mother, suckling with a sort of communal milk those who live in the city" (*hom.* 334.22, PG 31.241B, tr. P. Rousseau). For the Syriac tradition, see S.A. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 111.

27. The miracle also had a very practical advantage: it reduced the stooping of officiants to take up the baptismal water; cf. S. Corbett on a late 6th c. baptistery, in M. Ballance et al., *Byzantine Emporio* (Oxford: British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1985): 24f.

28. Paulinus of Nola's account of the last of these (*carm.* 27. 518-25) may be verbally echoed by Cassiodorus, for whom the spring of Leucothea is Lucania's Jordan: with Paulinus' *adstrictas alte cumulaverat undas*, cf. Cassiodorus' *in altum unda prosiliens aquas suas... in altitudinem cumulumque transmittit* (8.33.7).

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29. *Greg. Tur.*, *glor.conf.* 68, *glor.mart.* 23-5; Paschasius in Leo, PL 54.606ff; Moschus, *pratum spirituale* 214-15. (*Glor.mart.* 23 may echo var. 8.33.7.) Flint, *Rise of Magic*, 268, notes that the water of Osset "retained its power over fertility."

30. Cf. above, n.10; Maguire, *Earth & Ocean*, 29f., 40; R. Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 117, 164.

31. 1.32. Note that he shows no awareness of the significance of Leucothea's myth and cult: the spring was named after her "from the clarity and great brightness of the water."

32. *Reg.ep.* 11.56 (MGH Epp. 2), which urges that, at martyrs' festivals, the congregation "should construct tabernacles for themselves from tree branches, around those same churches which have been converted from temples, and celebrate the solemnity by religious feasting." There are, though,

no verbal echoes of var. 8.33. Alexander Murray has remarked "The entire history of medieval religion is a commentary on Gregory's letter." ("Missionaries and Magic in Dark-Age Europe," reprinted from P & P 139 [1992], in *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, ed. L.K. Little & B. Rosenwein [Oxford: Blackwell's, 1998], ch.6, p.96.

33. Three: Christ's baptism revealed the Trinity. Note R. Hillier, *Arator on the Acts of the Apostles: a Baptismal Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993),

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42ff., on the baptismal significance which Arator gives to three and its multiples. Thirtythree: see inst. 2, praef.1 (ed. Mynors, OCT; L.W. Jones' tr. quoted).

34. E.ps. 6.1, 8.concl., prae. to 70-150, 89.10 and concl., 118.prae., 119.prae., 126.prae. (CCSL 97-8); cf. Aug., en.in ps., 6.1, 89.10 (CCSL 38-9).

35. The usual octagonal design of baptisteries represents the ogdoad, symbolising the days of the old and new Creation; see Milburn, *Early Christian Art*, 206. Eight could also symbolise the Beatitudes, the eight in the Ark, David (eighth son of Jesse), the day of Jewish circumcision, and the day of Christ's resurrection (e.ps. 6.1, 8.concl.). For the Christ-symbolism of the 7th step in a baptistery, see Isidore, et. 15.4.10 (ed. Lindsay, OCT). See also R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: a Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 134. The Leucothea baptistery is not octagonal; see Bracco, "Marcellianum:" 196ff.

36. With the praise of mountain streams (5), cf. ps. 103/4.10, 13.

37. Cf., esp., the preambles to Valentinian III's 3rd, and Majorian's 7th novels (a.439 and 458).

38. The conceit is probably a deliberate reversal of Claudian, de VI cons. Hon. 514 (MGH AA 10), on the similar quality of the spring of Clitumnus: *humanos properant imitari flumina mores*. (Lines 508ff. are verbally echoed in var. 8.32.2-3.)

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39. Var. 9.24.8. It is tempting to see the spring as another pagan, or formerly pagan, site; but, although a number of springs were called Arethusa, cult of that nymph seems to have been infrequent, certainly not comparable to Leucothea's; cf. Wagner, P-W II (1896), 679ff. But it may be relevant, if only to Cassiodorus' treatment, that Fulgentius etymologised and allegorised Alpheus and Arethusa to represent truth and justice (*mitologiae*, 3.12).

40. For the erotic associations of water and bathing in earlier classical literature, see J. Griffin, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (London: Duckworth, 1985), ch.5.

41. Cf. Maguire, *Earth & Ocean*, 48ff., on theological and iconographic "comparisons between human and divine creativity."

42. Cassiodorus' letters to Boethius on music and arithmetic carry a similar message; see var. 1.10, 2.40; with 1.10, cf. e.ps. 89.concl.

43. Cf. M. Beagon, *Roman Nature: the Thought of Pliny the Elder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), ch.1; J. Leopold, "Consolando per Edicta: Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 4, 50 and Imperial Consolations for Natural Catastrophes," *Latomus* 45 (1986): 816-36, esp. 830ff. For Boethius, see G. O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius* (London: Duckworth's, 1991), 8ff., 24f., 144, 180.

2.39 owes much to Claudian (probably a pagan) on Aponum (*carm.min.* 26), in which the poet leaves it unclear whether the wonders of the springs are to be ascribed to the intelligence of nature (33), or to God the *pater rerum* (83).

44. See J. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: the Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), esp. 30f., 90-3, 96f., 106, 141-51, 255-62; cf. Maguire, *Earth & Ocean*, 18f., 54.

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45. C.ph. 2, m.8, 4, m.6 (CCSL 94); cf. O'Daly, *Poetry of Boethius*, 146-53, 169, 171. In var. 11.40.2, *pietas est quae regit et caelos*, Cassiodorus probably echoes 2, m.8, 29f., *amor quo caelum regitur*. In general, though, views of nature and natural law in the *variae* are somewhat ambivalent; cf. M. Reydellet, *La Royaut, dans la Literature Latine de Sidoine Apollinaire ... Isidore de S,ville* (Rome: \square cole Française de Rome, 1981), 193f., Leopold, "Consolando per Edicta": 828-32. Note W.S. Thurman, "A Juridical and Theological Concept of Nature in the Sixth Century A.D.," *Byzantinoslavica* 32 (1971): 77-85, on Justinian's view of nature as a dangerous source of confusion and innovation.

46. 2.39.11: *corda illa... montium in vicem secretarii negotia contentiosa discingunt... loquitur illic tacita natura, dum iudicat, et sententiam quodam modo dicit...* 8.33.7: *erigitur brutum elementum sponte sua... eis credas audiendi studium minime defuisse*. Arethusa, too, responds to human noises like an awakened animal (8.32.3.). This seems more than purely literary personification; cf. below, and n.49. Note the continued depiction in Christian art of river gods or nymphs (the Jordan in the Ravenna baptisteries, in 5th c. Hosios David at Salonica, and in 11th c. Hosios Loukas; also the spring of Nahor in the 5th-6th c. Vienna Genesis MS).

47. See Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, 108ff.; G. de Nie, "The spring, the seed and the tree: Gregory of Tours on the wonders of nature," *JMH* 11 (1985): 89-135. For Gregory, though, such wonders, unlike those in Cassiodorus, respond without life of their own to the virtues of the saints.

48. See C. Stancliffe, *St.Martin and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), ch.16 (p.219 quoted), R.A. Markus, *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 1996), ch.5, esp.125-30. Against Flint, *Rise of Magic*, 268, such springs as Osset should not be seen as behaving "in a manner wholly unnatural and clearly magical;" rather as interpreted by this understanding of what is natural. "Magic is in effect a branch of physics." (Markus, *Signs*, 128).

49. In both 8.32 and 8.33, Cassiodorus may have had in mind Aug., *conf.* 10.6.9, where the created order responds loudly to human interrogation, proclaiming its maker. On this passage and concept in Augustine, see Markus, *Signs*, 26ff., 68ff.

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50. Five may also represent the five books of Mosaic law, and the five ages before the coming of Christ; cf. Cassiod., *e.ps.* 5.concl., *inst.* 2.4.8; Aug., *de catech. rudibus*, 6, 39 (CCSL 46).

51. *E.ps.* 126; cf. also 119.prae., and above, nn.33-4. Chromatius of Aquileia, *sermo* 41 (CCSL 9A), depicts the Beatitudes as eight *gradus* to Heaven; cf. Leo I, *sermo* 95.2 (CCSL 138A).

52. *E.ps.* 76.17. There is, however, some difference: Cassiodorus argues that water is being used simply *per figuram parabolam*, "since it could not happen that an irrational element should acknowledge and fear so great a display of wonders." The water of 8.33.7, though irrational, gives a spontaneous show of religious devotion.

53. *E.ps.* 17.16.

54. E.ps. 8.9; Cassiodorus takes a more positive view of them than does Augustine in his en.in ps. Fish-ponds are something of a topos in the variae; cf. 9.6.4, 12.15.4; also inst. 1.29.1.

55. See S.J.B. Barnish, introduction to Cassiodorus' *Variae*, xxivf.

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56. Similarly, Chromatius of Aquileia, preaching [c.400] during an "assembly of the people and a market," used it as an exemplum for his sermo 41.1: Solent enim saecularia esse spiritalibus exempla, et terrestria imaginem praebere caelestibus... Magis autem necesse est lucrum caeleste captari, ubi terrestre commodum non neglegitur. Cf. sermo 4.3.

57. I/III kings, 1.40: et populus canentium tibiis et laetantium gaudio magno; II/IV kings, 11.14: omnemque populum terrae laetantem et canentem tubis. Tabernacles: cf. Greg.Mag., reg.ep. 11.50, cited above, n.33.

58. There is a marked contrast with the hostility shown by eastern churchmen to the worldly commerce of the pan[^]gyreis; cf. Vryonis, in *The Byzantine Saint*: 210ff.

59. See J. Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man* (Oxford: Blackwell's, 1974), 165; he quotes Ephraem Syrus, but the sentiment reflects a Christian commonplace; cf. T. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1981), 244ff., P. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 183ff., 200-4, 233ff. On temporary servitude, cf. C.Th. 3.3, const. Sirm. 16, Valentinian III, novel 33, edictum Theoderici 94, H. Chadwick, "New Letters of St. Augustine," *JThS* 34 (1983): 425-52, 432, n.8, C. Whittaker, "Circe's Pigs: from Slavery to Serfdom in the Later Roman World," *Slavery & Abolition* 8.1 (1987): 88-122, 98f. Note also ed.Theod. 142, permitting the transfer of rustic mancipia and originarii to urban service.

60. See A. de Vog[□]., *The Life of Saint Benedict* (Petersham, Mass.: St.Bede's Publications), 65 and n.3, commenting on Greg.Mag., dial. 2.8-11.

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61. Cf. Maguire, *Earth & Ocean*, 54f., ch.7, on the layered political and theological meanings in the Christian iconography of the time.

62. San Vincenzo: see R. Hodges (ed.), *San Vincenzo al Volturno 2* (London: British School at Rome, 1995); S. Barnish, *ibid.*: ch.10, gives literary and archaeological references and parallels; see also Volpe, Contadini, 37-49. San Giusto: see G. Volpe (ed.), *San Giusto: la villa, le ecclesiae* (Bari: Edipuglia, 1998); he is inclined (326-38) to interpret the 5th c. ecclesiastical development of the complex as the seat of an estate bishopric. Note, also, J. Reynolds, in N. Christie (ed.), *Three South Etrurian Churches* (London: British School at Rome, 1991): 306f. (Santa Rufina), and A. Ruga, "La Chiesa di S.Maria di Zaropotamo (Catanzaro) tra VI e XII secolo," *Mélanges de l'École française de Roma (Moyen Âge)* 110.1 (1998): 378-96. Note the function of Paulinus' development of Nola, to draw in peasant-pilgrims from far afield.

63. Note that the diocese of Consilinum adopted the name of the fair-ground of Marcellianum; see L. Duchesne, "Les évêchés d'Italie et l'Invasion Lombarde," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 23 (1903): 83-116, 108. However, I cannot agree with L. Cracco Ruggini, *Economia e Società nell'Italia Annonaria* (Milan: Guiffre, 1961), 305ff., Gabba, "Mercati," 159-63, and C. Foss, *Ephesus after Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 110f., that such fairs necessarily imply urban stagnation and ruralisation; cf. de Ligt, *Fairs*, 61f., 86f., 95.

64. On the ambivalent classical view of rustic versus urban mores, see A. Wallace-Hadrill in *City and Country in the Ancient World*, ed. J. Rich & A. Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1991): 244-9; S. Braund in *Satire and Society in Ancient Rome*, ed. S. Braund (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1989): 23-48; Trout, "Town, Countryside:" 175f.; O'Daly, *Poetry of Boethius*, 179-88. Note Ennodius 240.15 (v. Antonii) on the worldly greed of farmers in the *locus amoenus* of the Valtellina, repugnant to a wandering ascetic; also Cassiod., inst. 1.32, on the thefts and rustic paganism of Vivarium's tenants; cf., also, var. 2.13.1, 6.9.2, 8.31.4, 32.4, 12.5.4. In 12.11.2, an idealising passage, Cassiodorus ascribes to Rome's citizens the virtues conventionally attributed to rustics.

Compare Pliny's attitude to the simplicity of the inscriptions at the *locus amoenus* shrine of the Clitumnus spring: *plura laudabis, non nulla ridebis; quamquam tu vero, quae tua humanitas, nulla ridebis.* (ep. 8.8.7)

65. Cf. e.ps. 30.21: "We have often remarked that by tabernacle is signified the Catholic Church, which endures struggles in this world and is often signified by the title of a 'dwelling on the march'" (tr. P.G. Walsh). For a highly Augustinian view (cf., esp., civ. 19.17) of the earthly and heavenly cities, see him on ps.121: he there supplements Augustine's own interpretation in the en.in ps. with ideas from the civ. Cf., also, e.ps. 64.1ff., 86.concl., 124.1-2, 126.1, 133.concl.

P. Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages*, c.200-c.1150 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 267-90, argues that the baptisteries which became focal points of many north Italian and Provençal cities did so as images of ideal harmony and civilt....

66. On these, see R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64-7.

67. Inst. 1.32.

68. Cf. Stancliffe, *St. Martin*, 212, 219; note D. Wallace-Hadrill, *Greek Patristic View of Nature*, 94, and, in general, ch.5: "Nature... has an importance beyond itself... Nature, as God's handiwork, is sacramental." And cf. Markus, *Signs*, 132, 141ff., on the relation between the magical and sacramental in Augustine's thought.

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69. Cf. Maguire, *Earth & Ocean*, esp. ch.3, 8ff., 53ff., 81ff.

Note that, in Gaul, the vicarius Gemellus was replaced by the warlike Praetoria

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