

Bernadette Filotas

PAGAN SURVIVALS, SUPERSTITIONS AND POPULAR CULTURES
IN EARLY MEDIEVAL PASTORAL LITERATURE

Is medieval pastoral literature an accurate reflection of actual beliefs and practices in the early medieval West or simply of literary conventions inherited by clerical writers? How and to what extent did Christianity and traditional pre-Christian beliefs and practices come into conflict, influence each other, and merge in popular culture?

This comprehensive study examines early medieval popular culture as it appears in ecclesiastical and secular law, sermons, penitentials and other pastoral works – a selective, skewed, but still illuminating record of the beliefs and practices of ordinary Christians. Concentrating on the five centuries from c. 500 to c. 1000, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures in Early Medieval Pastoral Literature* presents the evidence for folk religious beliefs and piety, attitudes to nature and death, festivals, magic, drinking and alimentary customs. As such it provides a precious glimpse of the mutual adaptation of Christianity and traditional cultures at an important period of cultural and religious transition.

Studies and Texts 151

**Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and
Popular Cultures in Early Medieval
Pastoral Literature**

by

Bernadette Filotas



Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Filotas, Bernadette, 1941-

Pagan survivals, superstitions and popular cultures in early medieval pastoral literature / by Bernadette Filotas.

(Studies and texts ; 151)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-88844-151-7

1. Pastoral literature, Latin--History and criticism. 2. Christian literature, Latin (Medieval and modern)--History and criticism. 3. Popular culture--Europe--Religious aspects--Christianity. 4. Popular culture--Europe--History--To 1500. 5. Popular culture in literature. 6. Paganism in literature. 7. Paganism--Europe--History--To 1500. 8. Superstition in literature. 9. Superstition--Europe--Religious aspects--Christianity. I. Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. II. Title. III. Series: Studies and texts (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies) ; 151.

BL690.F54 2005

274'.03

C2005-900801-6

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Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies
59 Queen's Park Crescent East
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2C4

www.pims.ca

Printed in Canada

For Thomas, Sophie, Joseph and Pascale

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Acknowledgements

I am happy to have this opportunity to acknowledge my great debt to M. Pierre Boglioni, for his generous help and advice, and for his untiring encouragement and kindness. My grateful thanks also to Mr. William D. McCready and M. Joseph-Claude Poulin for their helpful comments and proposed corrections.

I should also like to express my appreciation to the Département d'histoire of the Université de Montréal for its financial support, and to the staff of the Bibliothèque des lettres et sciences humaines for the friendliness and good-humoured efficiency which made the many hours I spent in the library so rewarding and pleasant an experience. I also thank Mr. Larry Eshelman for making the library of St. Paul's University, Ottawa, available to me.

My special gratitude for their help and encouragement goes to Mary Ann Kim, Margaret Moore, Barbara and Rae Brown, Andrea Blonar, Ava Couch and, most particularly, to Charles Giguère, to whom I owe more than I can ever repay.

Abbreviations

AASS	J. Bolland, <i>Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur, vel a catholicis scriptoribus celebrantur</i> . Ed. G. Henschenius et al. Paris, 1863-.
Bächtold- Stäubli	Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli, <i>Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens</i> . Ed. Hoffman Krayer. 10 vols. Berlin, 1987.
Barlow	C. W. Barlow, ed., <i>Martini Episcopi Bracarenensis opera omnia</i> . New Haven, 1950.
Bieler	<i>The Irish Penitentials</i> . Trans. and ed. Ludwig Bieler. Dublin, 1963.
Blaise	Albert Blaise, <i>Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens</i> . Rev. Henri Chirat. Reprint, 1993.
Caspari	C. P. Caspari, ed., <i>Eine Augustin fälschlich beilegte Homilia de sacrilegiis</i> . Christiania, 1886.
CCCM	<i>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
Concilia Germaniae	C. F. Schannat and J. Hartzheim, <i>Concilia Germaniae</i> . 1759. Reprint, Aalen, 1970 -.
CSEL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
DA	<i>Deutsches Archiv</i>
DACL	<i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i>
Daremberg and Saglio	C. Daremberg and E. Saglio, eds. <i>Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines d'après les textes et les documents</i> . 5 vols. Paris, 1877-1919.
DHGE	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques</i>
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
Dict. étymologique	A. Ernout and A. Meillet, <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots</i> . 4th ed., Paris, 1967.
ERE	J. Hastings, ed., <i>Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics</i> . 13 vols. 4th imp., Edinburgh, 1959-1961.
Etymologiae	Isidore of Seville, <i>Etymologiae librorum XX</i> . In <i>Etimologias. Edición Bilingüe</i> , ed. José Oroz Reta and Manuel-A. Marcos Casquero. Madrid, 1985.
Haddan and Stubbs	A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, <i>Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland</i> , 3 vols. 1869-1873. Rep., Oxford, 1964.

HE	Bede, <i>Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</i> . Ed. Bernard Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors. Oxford, 1969.
HF	<i>Historia Francorum libri X</i> . Ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison. <i>MGH SRM</i> 1. Editio Altera.
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
Mansi	J. D. Mansi, <i>Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio</i>
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
CapEp	Capitula Episcoporum
CapRegFr	<i>Capitularia Regum Francorum</i>
Ep	Epistolae
EpSel	<i>Epistolae Selectae</i>
SRM	<i>Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</i>
SS	<i>Scriptores</i>
Mordek	H. Mordek, ed., <i>Kirchenrecht und Reform im Frankenreich: Die Collectio Vetus Gallica, die älteste systematische Kanonensammlung des fränkischen Gallien</i> . Berlin, 1975.
PG	J. P. Migne, <i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
PL	J. P. Migne, <i>Patrologia Latina</i>
Quicherat and Daveluy	L. Quicherat and A. Daveluy, <i>Dictionnaire latin-français</i> . Rev. Émile Chatelain. 54th ed., Paris.
RB	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
REAng	<i>Revue des études augustiniennes</i>
RHE	Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique
RHÉF	<i>Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France</i>
SC	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i>
Schmitz	H. J. Schmitz, <i>Die Bußbücher</i> . 2 vols. 1898. Reprint, Graz, 1958.
SSAM	Settimana di studio sull'alto medioevo, Spoleto.
VSH	Charles Plummer, <i>Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae</i> . 1910. 2 vols. Reprint, 1968.
Vives	<i>Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos</i> . Ed José Vives with Tomás Marín Martínez and Gonzalo Martínez Díez. Barcelona and Madrid, 1963.
Wasserschleben	F. W. H. Wasserschleben, <i>Die Bußordnung der abendländischen Kirche</i> . 1851. Reprint, Graz, 1958.

Introduction

The purpose of this work is to analyse early medieval Latin pastoral literature for evidence of the aspects of popular religion and culture that the ecclesiastical hierarchy perceived as survivals of paganism and superstitions and to provide a systematic inventory of the data found.¹

It is limited geographically to Latin Christendom, specifically to the parts of western Europe which had formed the northwestern half of the Roman Empire, together with Ireland and the region beyond the Rhine. This area was inhabited by peoples of Latin, Celtic and Germanic stock. With the exception of the Irish, all had shared directly or indirectly in the experience of Roman rule and had benefited or suffered from the effects of the disintegration of the Empire; all had been converted to Christianity in the Latin rite. As a result, they shared certain common experiences and traditions, and give at least the appearance of forming a cultural entity. The impression is strengthened by the nature and bias of our most important sources for their history and culture, namely, writings produced by men whose preoccupations, perceptions and language were determined by their position in the Latin Church.

Proposing chronological limits for a process such as Christianisation or any phase of it is always problematic and historians choose dates according to their special interests.² Although it draws on both earlier and later material, the present study concentrates on the five centuries stretching from c. 500 to c. 1000 which achieved the formal conversion of the Celts and the continental Germans. This period is bracketed by the episcopacy of Caesarius of Arles (c. 502-542) and the compilation of Burchard of Worms' *Decretum* (1008-1012). Caesarius set the tone for the Christian polemic against pagan survivals; generations of medieval missionaries and pastors repeated his themes and echoed his very words. It would be difficult to overstate his importance for the history of the relations between the early medieval Church and popular culture in Western Europe. The penitential

¹ For the detailed discussion of the basic concepts, see chapter 1.

² E.g. Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to the Eighth Centuries* (New Haven and London, 1997); Jean Chélini, *L'Aube du moyen âge. Naissance de la Chrétienté occidentale. La vie religieuse des laïcs dans l'Europe carolingienne (750-900)* (Paris, 1991); Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom. Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996); André Vauchez, "The birth of Christian Europe. 950-1100," in Robert Fossier, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Middle Ages, 2, 960-1250* (trans. Stuart Airlie and Robyn Marsach; Cambridge, 1997), 80-119.

contained in the *Decretum*, the *Corrector sive medicus* is not only the last great reiteration of that polemic but also the most complete collection of contemporary popular customs.

These dates, moreover, mark a separate phase in western European history. The fairly amorphous groupings of tribes that had moved into Western Europe and settled there were forming themselves into more or less stable states. Politically, the period spans the Merovingian and Carolingian eras, roughly from Clovis' conversion to Catholicism and baptism in 496 to the death in 987 of the last Carolingian king, Louis V. It includes the rise and fall of Visigothic Spain and the heyday of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. From the perspective of culture, it was the period of the emergence of vernacular cultures. From the perspective of the history of Christianity, this was the period which saw the appearance of the distinctive characteristics of the medieval Church, acquired as a result of adjustments to new political realities and of the interaction between different pre-Christian traditions and religious ideas and structures imported from the Mediterranean world.³

Until the last few decades, historians have paid little attention to early medieval popular culture. Traditional history has tended to treat popular culture as marginal to the true business of history, the grand lines of social, economic, political and intellectual movements. This is true of works on religion also, even of those dealing with the more or less long periods of transition during which the work of conversion was completed.⁴ The study of the abolition of paganism and establishment of Christianity has concentrated on institutional developments, political struggles and controversies over doctrine.⁵ The Church's rise first to influence,

³ Brown's *The Rise of Western Christendom* shows that the distinctive characteristics of Christianity in the West developed from the varied responses of Christians in Gaul, Ireland, Anglo-Saxon England and Francia to their separate social and political environments, and that similar developments were occurring simultaneously among Eastern Christians. The revived and increasing interest in the development of ethnic identities in the Middle Ages is signalled by *After Empire. Towards an Ethnology of Europe's Barbarians*, ed. Giorgio Ausenda (San Marino, 1995) and *Strategies of Distinction. The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 1998). See also Jean Dhondt, *Le haut moyen âge (VIIIe-XIe siècles)* (1968; revised by Michel Rouche, Paris, 1976) and Michael Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West. Studies in the Oral Culture of the Barbarians* (Dublin and New York, 1994).

⁴ See, for example, J. Gaudemet, *L'Église dans l'empire romain* (Paris, 1958); Ferdinand Lot, *The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages*, trans. P. and M. Leon (reprint with new material, New York, 1961); J. Delumeau and H.-I. Marrou, *Nouvelle histoire de l'Église*. V. 1. *Des origines à Saint Grégoire le Grand* (Paris, 1963); K. Baus et al., *The Imperial Church from Constantine to the Early Middle Ages* and Friedrich Kemp et al., *The Church in the Age of Feudalism*, vols. 2 and 3 of *History of the Church*, ed. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, London, 1980-).

⁵ Let the first volume, covering the period 350-814, of Gustav Schnürer's valuable handbook, *Church and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. George J. Undreiner (Paterson, N. J., 1956) serve as example: out of 540 pages, ten are dedicated to what may be termed popular culture, including popular Christianity. This book first appeared in 1923, predating the modern preoccupation

then to power, the introduction of monasticism, the conversion of different groups, the struggles against heresies have been traced often. The transition from paganism to Christianity in the beliefs and practices of ordinary persons has not received the same attention. A few general remarks about sacred trees and springs, amulets and charms, soothsayers and enchanters, weather magic and love magic, were often thought to be sufficient to describe what was a long, difficult and not always successful process.⁶

The lack of attention to popular religion and culture is not surprising. The material for the history of public institutions, leading figures, and dominant ideas, although incomplete, is presented directly in the documents, while the material for the history of the ideas and customs of anonymous men and women is usually missing. Where it exists, it does so almost by accident, scattered through and hidden in documents with quite a different focus. To some extent, folklorists filled the vacuum left by historians. In the 19th century, the romantic movement and the new discipline of anthropology fuelled an interest in the beliefs and customs found in traditional, pre-industrial culture. The great collections of folklore are rich in data, rarely set into historical context, about popular medieval beliefs.⁷ Among historians, German scholars were the first to work intensively in the field of popular religion. R. Boese identified a number of superstitions prevalent in 6th-century Gaul from the writings of Caesarius of Arles. Hans Vordemfelde analysed the barbarian codes to form a picture of Germanic folk religion. Wilhelm Boudriot and Dieter Harmening examined the official literature of the Church to test its

with the subordinate classes but from this point of view it compares favourably with more recent works. In *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours*, ed. Jean-Marie Mayeur *et al.* (Paris, 1980?-), a major enterprise of historiography still in the process of completion, this subject occupies barely two pages of the approximately 250 given to “Le christianisme en Occident” in vol. 4, which covers most of our period and is fittingly titled *Évêques, moines et empereurs (610-1054)* (ed. G. Dagron, Pierre Riché *et al.*, Paris, 1993). In Jedin and Dolan’s *History of the Church* (see n. above), the two volumes dealing with the early Middle Ages and the feudal period mention popular practices only incidentally and in passing. The masses of Christians have found virtually no place in these works. Even Chélini’s study of the religious life of the laity is concerned almost exclusively with ecclesiastically sanctioned forms of piety, and allocates one short chapter to resistance, within Christian territory, to the Church’s monopoly of religious expression (*L’aube du moyen âge*, 101-110).

⁶ It is instructive to look at a modern missionary’s account of the problems of conversion. See, for example, J.-É. Monast, *On les croyait chrétiens: Les Aymaras* (Paris, 1969).

⁷ E.g., Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* (1835), translated from the 4th ed. (1887) by J. S. Stallybrass (4 vols., New York, 1966); W. G. Wood-Martin, *Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland* (2 vols., London, 1902); Paul Sébillot, *Le folk-lore de France* (4 vols., Paris, 1904-07); Hanns Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* (ed. E. Hoffman Kraye, 1927-1942; reprint, 10 vols., Berlin, 1987); *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 13 vols., ed. J. Hastings (4th imp., Edinburgh, 1959-1961); Wilhelm Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte* (Berlin 1875-77); *idem*, *Baumkultus der Germanen*; A. Dieterich, *Mutter Erde. Ein Versuch über Volksreligion* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1925; reprint, Stuttgart, 1967).

reliability as evidence of actual superstitions.⁸

Since the 1960's, historians of mentalities have increasingly turned their attention to popular religion and culture, and have recognised the role of the laity in the formation of medieval Christianity. Raoul Manselli's *La religion populaire au moyen âge. Problèmes de méthode et d'histoire* was one of the first to consider popular religion in detail.⁹ Oronzo Giordano's *Religiosità popolare nell'alto medioevo*, Jean-Claude Schmitt's monumental chapter on superstition in the *Histoire de la France religieuse* and Aron Gurevich's work on popular culture are works of synthesis.¹⁰ Lines of interpretation of the documents, based on the split between the clergy and laity or on distinctions between town/country and men/women, have been proposed by Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Boglioni respectively.¹¹

Regional and thematic studies also testify to current interest in these subjects. Joyce Salisbury's *Iberian Popular Religion, 600 B.C. to 700 A.D.: Celts, Romans and Visigoths*, Yitzhak Hen's *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751*, and Felice Lifshitz's *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria* are regional studies of Christianisation and popular culture and religion (in the case of Neustria, of the historiographic presentation of these phenomena).¹² Michel Meslin wrote on the pre-Christian roots of medieval New Year's customs, and Karen Louise Jolly on Anglo-Saxon popular culture as a middle ground between elite and folk culture.¹³ Early medieval magic has attracted particular attention. In addition to monographs by Valerie Flint and Eugene D. Dukes,¹⁴ there are briefer analyses of its different aspects, such as women's participation, healing magic, the multiple uses of magical

⁸ R. Boese, *Superstitiones Arelatenses e Caesario Collectae* (Marburg, 1909); Hans Vordemfelde, *Die germanische Religion in den deutschen Volksrechten* (Giessen, 1923); Wilhelm Boudriot, *Die altgermanische Religion in der amtlichen kirchlichen Literatur des Abendlandes vom 5. bis 11. Jahrhundert* (1928; reprint, Darmstadt, 1964); Dieter Harmening, *Superstitio: Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologischen Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters*. (Berlin, 1979). See also Holger Homann, *Der Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum und verwandte Denkmäler* (Göttingen, 1965).

⁹ Paris and Montreal, 1975. But see review by R. C. Trexler in *Speculum* 52 (1977) 1019-1022.

¹⁰ Giordano, *Religiosità popolare nell'alto medioevo*. Bari, 1979; Schmitt, "Les 'superstitions'," in J. Le Goff and R. Rémond, eds., *Histoire de la France religieuse*, v. 1, (Paris, 1988), 416-551; Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. J. M. Bak and P. A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1990).

¹¹ Le Goff, "Culture cléricale et traditions folkloriques dans la civilisation mérovingienne," in *Pour un autre moyen âge* (Paris, 1977), 223-235; Boglioni, "La religion populaire dans les collections canoniques occidentales de Burchard de Worms à Gratien," in N. Oikonomides, ed., *Byzantium in the 12th Century. Canon Law, State and Society* (Athens, 1991), 335-356.

¹² New York and Toronto, 1985; Leiden, New York, Cologne, 1995; Toronto, 1985.

¹³ Meslin, *La fête des kalendes de janvier dans l'empire romain*, Latomus 115 (Brussels, 1970); Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Anglo-Saxon England. Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London, 1996).

¹⁴ Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 1990); Dukes, *Magic and Witchcraft in the Dark Ages* (Lanham, Md., and London, 1992). Flint's work is discussed below.

herbs.¹⁵ Penitentials provide the raw material for studies of the development of norms of sexual conduct and of alimentary regulations.¹⁶ Richard E. Sullivan's account of the correspondence between Pope Nicholas I and Boris I of Bulgaria gives a rare and highly instructive insight into the conceptual difficulties faced by new converts.¹⁷

Recent studies, in addition to two separate *Settimane di studio sull'alto medioevo*, emphasise the cultural dynamics of the development of Christianity.¹⁸ Michael Richter noted that "the necessity to formulate the Christian message in language and concepts familiar to the recipients results almost inevitably in an enculturation."¹⁹ But more than that, the evangelising bishops and missionaries of the early middle ages themselves did not stand outside the societies in which they worked. They shared in general beliefs and attitudes. Ramsay MacMullen made this point forcefully in his description of the cultural shift during Late Antiquity and the early middle ages that resulted in Christianity's adopting forms acceptable to the majority of the population, both urban and rural.²⁰ William E. Klingshirn's study of late antique Gaul suggests that the masses of newly baptised Christians also played an active role in shaping the religious life that became the norm in a given society. The critical element in the successful implantation of Christianity was the response of "local culture," the laity especially in the countryside, to the teachings of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Acceptance or rejection of these teachings depended on the extent to which they filled the needs of the community.²¹

The problem of the mutual adaptation and acculturation of traditional socie-

¹⁵ H. R. Dienst, "Zur Rolle von Frauen in magischen Vorstellungen und Praktiken—nach ausgewählten Quellen," in *Frauen in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter: Lebensbedingungen—Lebensnormen—Lebensformen. Beiträge zu einer internationalen Tagung am Fachbereich Geschichtswissenschaften der Freien Universität Berlin 18. bis 21. Februar 1987*, ed. W. Affeldt (Sigmaringen, 1990), 173-194; Daniela Gatti, "Curatrici e streghe nell'Europa dell'alto Medioevo," in *Donne e lavoro nell'Italia medievale*, ed. Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli *et al* (Turin, 1991), 127-140; Karen Louise Jolly, "Magic, miracle and popular practice in the early medieval West. Anglo-Saxon England," in *Religion, Science and Magic in Concert and in Conflict*, ed. J. Neusner, E. S. Frerichs and P. V. McC. Flesher (New York and Oxford, 1989), 166-182; Franco Cardini, "Le piante magiche," in *L'ambiente vegetale nell'alto medioevo* (SSAM 37, Spoleto, 1990) 623-658.

¹⁶ Pierre Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials. The Development of a Sexual Code, 550-1150* (Toronto, 1984); Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, "Norme di comportamento alimentare nei libri penitenziali," *Quaderni medievali* 13 (1982) 45-80.

¹⁷ "Khan Boris and the conversion of Bulgaria: A case study of the impact of Christianity on a barbarian society" (1966; reprinted in *Christian Missionary Activity in the Early Middle Ages*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 431, Aldershot, 1994).

¹⁸ *La conversione al cristianesimo nell'Europa dell'alto medioevo* (SSAM 14, Spoleto, 1967) and *Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell'alto medioevo: espansione e resistenze* (SSAM 28, Spoleto, 1982).

¹⁹ "Models of conversion in the early Middle Ages," in *Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration. Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Doris Edel (Dublin, 1995), 116-128; here, 123.

²⁰ *Christianity and Paganism*, 74-102.

²¹ *Caesarius of Arles; The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994).

ties and an alien religion has been the subject of important works by Valerie Flint and James C. Russell. Flint presented clerics as offering the newly converted peoples of Western Europe acceptable Christian forms of their now-forbidden traditional institutions and practices (shrines, “witch-doctors,” divination, incantations, amulets, *etc.*) in order to ease the transition from paganism to Christianity.²² Russell posited that in their attempts to modify the “beliefs, attitudes, values and behavior” of the Germans, missionaries followed a policy of what they had expected to be a temporary accommodation with Germanic culture (in his words, a “deliberate misrepresentation of Christianity in Germanic terms”).²³ In the end, he claims, it was the Germanic world-view that prevailed, and the official religion of the middle ages in Western Europe became in essence a Christianised version of Germanism.

In fact, a pristine, culturally uncontaminated form of Christianity had hardly existed previously. Christianity had never been impervious to the influence of the cultural experiences and assumptions of those who preached its message and of those who received it. Despite considerable theological rigidity, it early showed itself able to adapt to its surroundings in matters of discipline, organisation and ideas. Thomas D. Hill pointed out that “Christian Latin culture itself [involved] the assimilation of an ancient and originally pagan culture by Christianity which was originally the cult of Aramaic and Greek Jews in the eastern Mediterranean.”²⁴ The apostolic Church abandoned circumcision and Jewish dietary rules in concession to the gentiles, Ireland developed a monastic system better suited to local conditions than the diocesan system prevailing in the Mediterranean world, and the distrust of sexuality even within the context of marriage can be traced, James A. Brundage has shown, to the influence of pagan philosophy on the early Fathers, especially St. Jerome and St. Augustine.²⁵ The integration within medieval Christi-

²² Flint’s book has evoked both admiration and criticism; see the extensive discussions in Alexander Murray, “Missionaries and magic in dark-age Europe,” *Past and Present* 136 (1992), 186-205; Richard Kieckhefer, “The specific rationality of medieval magic,” *The American Historical Review* 99 (1994), 813-834. See also Giselle de Nie, “Caesarius of Arles and Gregory of Tours. Two sixth-century Gallic bishops and ‘Christian magic,’” in *Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration*, 170-196; and Rob Meens, “Magic and the early medieval world view,” in *The Community, the Family and the Saint. Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, Joyce Hill and Mary Swan (Turnhout, 1998), 285-295. Dukes, unlike Flint, maintains that the Church steadfastly refused to give its sanction to magic (*Magic and Witteberaft*).

²³ *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity. A Sociohistoric Approach to Religious Transformation* (New York and Oxford, 1994); here, 211. For conflicting evaluations of this work, see Thomas F. X. Noble’s critique in the *American Historical Review* 11 (1995), 888-889, and Robin Chapman Stacey’s review in *The Medieval Review* (1994) on-line.

²⁴ “The *æcerbot* charm and its Christian users,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (1977), 213-221; here, 221.

²⁵ “The married man’s dilemma: Sexual mores, canon law and marital restraint,” in *Life, Law and Letters. Historical Studies in Honour of Antonio García y García*, ed. Peter Lihehan (Rome, 1998), 149-169.

anity of elements of ethnic cultures and of magic continued a trend that had been present since the beginning.

The sources for the study of the popular religion of the early middle ages are not extensive. Onomastics and toponymy provide hints as to the popularity of cults and the location of cultic centres.²⁶ Despite the difficulty of deducing ritual and beliefs from objects unaccompanied by explanatory texts, archaeology is an indispensable tool for verifying, correcting and adding to information found in written documents.²⁷ The spread of monastic foundations and the building of churches corroborate the evidence of saints' lives on missionary activity. Roadside crosses testify to the Christianisation of the countryside. The orientation of graves, cremation or the presence of grave goods in Christian cemeteries are no longer considered necessarily to reflect pagan survivals, but burial grounds are still a generous source for the history of the process of Christianisation and of resistance to it.²⁸ The burial of pre-Christian dead in Christian tombs, the location of cemeteries in churchyards, erection of chapels in cemeteries and internment of bodies within the

²⁶ For example, see Paul Lefrancq, "Les données hagiographiques de la toponymie cadastrale de l'ancien diocèse d'Angoulême et du département de la Charente," and Sylvianne Lazard, "Tradition ancienne et influence chrétienne dans l'anthroponymie ravennate du Xe siècle," in *La piété populaire au moyen âge. Actes du 99e Congrès National des Sociétés savantes, Besançon, 1974* (Paris, 1977), 401-409 and 445-454. A brief discussion of current research in prosopography is to be found in Jörg Jarnut, "Nomen et gens. Political and linguistic aspects of personal names between the third and the eighth century. Presenting an interdisciplinary project from a historical perspective," in *Strategies of Distinction*, 113-116.

²⁷ See Bryony Orme, *Anthropology for Archaeologists. An Introduction* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1981), 218-254, Ralph Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (New York, 1987) 1-21, and Patrick Geary, "The uses of archaeological sources for religious and cultural history," in *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N. Y., and London, 1994), 30-45; Alain Dierkens, "Quelques aspects de la christianisation du pays mosan à l'époque mérovingienne," in *La civilisation mérovingienne dans le bassin mosan*, ed. M. Otte and J. Willems (Liège, 1986), 29-83, and "The evidence of archaeology," in *The Pagan Middle Ages*, ed. Ludo J. R. Milis, trans. Tanis Guest (1991; Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1998) 39-64. See also H. Roosens, "Reflets de christianisation dans les cimetières mérovingiens," *Études Classiques* 53 (1985), 111-135; Günter P. Fehring, "Missions- und Kirchenwesen in archäologischer Sicht," in *Geschichtswissenschaft und Archäologie: Untersuchungen zur Siedlungs-, Wirtschafts- und Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Herbert Jankuhn and Reinhard Wenskus (Sigmaringen, 1979), 547-591; Helen Geake, "Burial practice in seventh- and eighth-century England," in *The Age of Sutton Hoo. The Seventh Century in North-Western England*, ed. M. O. H. Carver (Woodbridge, 1992), 83-94; Sabine Racinet, "Recherches archéologiques et textuelles sur les traces de la christianisation de la Picardie," *Mélanges de Science Religieuse* 53 (1996), 43-60; Édouard Salin, *La civilisation mérovingienne d'après les sépultures, les textes et le laboratoire*, esp. vol. 4 (Paris, 1959).

²⁸ See Tania M. Dickenson and George Speake's suggestion that the cremation of a pagan Anglian prince may perhaps be understood best "as an act of 'transculturation', the incorporation of elite Anglian burial fashions in order to resist external domination" by neighbouring Christian princes ("The seventh-century cremation buried in Asthall Barrow, Oxfordshire: A reassessment," in *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, 94-140; here, 123).

church itself signal the integration of ethnic and Christian concepts about the relationship between the dead and the living. Although the archaeological record is undoubtedly richer for the social elite than for the subordinate classes, one may extrapolate their values and concepts to some extent from those of more privileged groups. The ornamentation of churches, the marginalia of liturgical works, and even textiles reflect popular culture.²⁹ Folklore, which incorporates the oral culture of the past, may serve as a clue to all but forgotten myths and rituals.³⁰

But the essential source remains the written documents produced by clerics for ecclesiastical and secular purposes: pastoral literature, hagiography, the liturgy, theological works, histories and chronicles, scientific treatises, poetry and legends.³¹ The data found here is dispersed, incomplete, repetitive, sometimes difficult to identify and often difficult to evaluate, always hard to manage. However, except for Boudriot's and Harmening's analyses of the value of normative pastoral literature, there has been no large-scale attempt to assess the reliability of the written documents.

The need for such a study is pressing especially from the point of view of practices opposed by the Church. Grimm's great work on German mythology, beliefs and rituals, which relied on written documents for its medieval component, is still an essential tool for historians and ethnologists, but the scholarship of the last century and half has made his collection, valuable as it is, out-of-date. Moreover, Grimm paid considerably less attention to chronology than to the geographic diffusion of the beliefs and practices he described, and tended to accept at face value the evidence presented in his documents.³² In effect, Boudriot and Harmening have cast doubt on the reliability of the documentation for Germanic religion and superstition. They maintained that the pagan survivals and superstitions mentioned in pastoral literature composed on Germanic territory were largely based not on Germanic customs and beliefs but on the customs and beliefs prevalent centuries before in the Mediterranean region, which had been described by Caesarius of Arles and, before him, by St. Augustine. This criticism, a serious attack on one of the principal bases of the historiography of early medieval popular culture, has not been met on its own terms except by Rudi Künzel in a

²⁹ See C. Gaignebet and J. D. Lajoux, *Art profane et religion populaire au moyen âge* (Paris, 1985); Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge. The Margins of Medieval Art* (London, 1992); C. R. Dodwell, "The Bayeux Tapestry and the French secular epic," in *The Study of the Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. Richard Gameson (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1997) 47-62, esp. 60-61

³⁰ See Jacques Le Goff, "Culture ecclésiastique et culture folklorique au moyen âge: saint Marcel de Paris et le dragon," in *Pour un autre moyen âge*, 236-279.

³¹ See Boglioni, "Pour l'étude de la religion populaire au moyen âge. Le problème des sources," in *Foi populaire, foi savante. Actes du V^e Colloque du Centre d'études d'histoire des religions populaires tenu au Collège dominicain de théologie (Ottawa)* (Paris, 1976), 93-148.

³² These weaknesses are not always avoided by contemporary historians. Flint, for example, generally gives her documents equal value and ignores the influence of literary tradition on her authors. Both she and Hen treat the period they are studying as a whole, without giving enough consideration to the effect of changes over time.

brief essay outlining a critical method for the assessment of medieval testimony as to paganism and superstition.³³

It can be argued plausibly that the continual reuse in pastoral literature of the earlier texts is proof of the persistence of the cultural phenomena described, as well as of the Church's attitude toward them.³⁴ This, however, applies only to generalities. It does not respond to the problem of identifying regional particularities or changes in behaviour over time for it is evident that the hierarchy used the same vocabulary and formulations to condemn a wide variety of practices. Pastoral literature may convey significant information about such changes and particularities, but the information becomes accessible only if the documents are examined systematically for continuities, variations, abandonment of certain themes and introduction of others.³⁵ It is, therefore, essential to organise the available material on pagan survivals and superstitions. The present study is intended to do so for pastoral literature.

I have privileged this type of document (that is, the Latin texts), specifically those written for normative purposes, because it seems to me to be the most important source for the popular culture of the early middle ages. It is the only form of literature concerned directly, if seldom, with the beliefs and rituals of ordinary men and women. As such, pastoral literature presents the policies, and reveals the attitudes, of the hierarchy with respect to the traditions of the local communities during and immediately following the period of conversion. Pastors saw a continuation of the old cults or a perversion of the new in various popular customs, and incorporated their strictures against them in legislation, penitentials, sermons, letters and tracts written to combat specific practices.

Each of the different types of documents has a particular focus and value. Church councils, one may assume, dealt with customs that were both fairly widespread and public, but their references to them were usually cursory and vague. Penitentials, on the other hand, went into considerable detail but since they were concerned with private behaviour, it is difficult to judge how common a given belief or practice was. Most of the relevant sermons (they are few in number) give the impression of being written in response to actual, local pastoral problems, as do tracts and letters. The information from these sources can at times be supple-

³³ "Paganisme, syncrétisme et culture religieuse populaire au haut moyen âge," *Annales ESC* 4-5 (1992) 1055-1069.

³⁴ Cf. Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, 37. In his review of Harmening's book, Schmitt pointed out that the repetition of the texts is in itself a document of the evolution of the Church's attitude toward superstition, and, moreover, that the information contained in these texts is borne out by other types of contemporary written documents, for example, saints' lives, *exempla*, vernacular literature (*Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 53[1982], 297-299).

³⁵ See Michel Lauwers, "'Religion populaire', culture folklorique, mentalités. Notes pour une anthropologie culturelle du moyen âge," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 82 (1987), 221-258; here 223.

mented from other roughly contemporary documents (barbarian codes, histories, hagiography and archaeology).

But pastoral literature has major drawbacks for the study of popular culture. It is inherently hostile toward the practices that it describes. Laws forbid or impose behaviour; penitentials deal with sins not good deeds; preachers usually try to correct, not congratulate, their flocks. This means that the authors of the documents describe objectionable behaviour and beliefs almost exclusively. Almost as important, the texts represent mainly the perspectives of the clerical elite, whose literary training (in the Bible, the writings of the Church Fathers and, to a certain extent, the classics) and professional preoccupations tended to make them value literary tradition as highly as practical observation and inclined them to focus on certain groups in society (notably clerics, peasants and, in some cases, women) and on certain types of behaviour at the expense of others. The experience and outlook of the lower ranks, especially of the parish clergy in remote rural areas, must have been different but was reflected only rarely in the documents. How accurate the descriptions of the practices and beliefs or how prevalent they were is therefore doubtful, and it is certain that many actual practices and beliefs never found a place in the documents.

An exhaustive survey of the data on pagan survivals and superstition in this source, with identification of the date and geographic origin of the evidence, seems all the more important in light of the interest in the middle ages shown by anthropologists and ethnohistorians, since the material is difficult of access to all but specialists in the field of early medieval culture. It is not completely familiar even to medievalists whose field is a later period. The material is scattered through masses of works of all sorts, in specialised collections and in isolated works, some of which are out of print and difficult to obtain, and the Latin in which it is couched is often obscure, sometimes to the point of incomprehensibility.

Moreover, it has become evident to me that it is the assemblage in its entirety of the relevant pronouncements of churchmen which reveals the value of pastoral literature as a source for the history of popular culture, its strengths and limits. It is only through the systematisation of such an assemblage according to chronology and geography that one may perceive continuities, shifts in emphasis over time, new problems or problems newly confronted, and local variations.

The approach taken is thematic and descriptive. The basic concepts, historical context and the sources are presented in chapter 1. The beliefs and practices identified as survivals of paganism or superstition are classified under the following headings: idolatry (chapter 2), nature cults (chapter 3), the cult of time (chapter 4), sacred space (chapter 5), beneficent magic (chapter 6), ambivalent and destructive magic (chapter 7), death and dying (chapter 8) and, finally, alimentary restrictions (chapter 9). Since it is often difficult to determine under which heading a belief or practice belongs, the same passage may appear in several different contexts.

This focus is on terminology, chronology, and the origin and diffusion of

descriptions of practices and beliefs. Texts have been presented generally in translation, but pains have been taken to inventory the terms used, together with variations in spelling that might betray that a new nuance or wholly new meaning had been added to a familiar word. The material is arranged chronologically, to establish the date of the first appearance of a belief or practice and to trace continuities, significant variations and innovations, shifts of emphasis, and abandonment of topics. To the extent possible, the geographical origin of each text is identified, as well as the regions where the text was repeated. Again when possible, the general context in which a document was produced is taken into consideration. Unfortunately, in many cases only the most general indications can be given (*e.g.*, early 7th century or late 8th, continental or insular).

Interpretation has been a secondary consideration in view of the dangers of embarking on it with often compromised data drawn from over five centuries and half a continent. Nevertheless, I have suggested explanations or partial explanations when the material allowed, for example, in the matter of lunar beliefs, weaving magic, drinking customs and alimentary restrictions. In some cases, an abundant bibliography is available. This is true particularly of pagan cults that have been the object of numerous studies. Certain practices have also been covered thoroughly in monographs and articles. But some of the themes found in pastoral literature have aspects which are ignored wholly or in part by histories of medieval culture and religion and I have had to look elsewhere for guidance, especially to anthropology. In some cases, however, I have not been able to find any useful reference.

This study was prompted by certain questions. The most fundamental is the extent to which pastoral literature may be taken to reflect actual beliefs and practices rather than a literary tradition. But there are others also. What kind of image of popular religion emerges from these texts? Do they differentiate between clerical and lay, townspeople and countryfolk, men and women? What beliefs and practices can be identified as belonging to specific groups? What groups and types of practices are missing from the texts? Finally, to what extent did Christianity influence and merge with traditional, pre-Christian beliefs and practices in popular religion?

Concepts, Contexts, Sources

1.1 CONCEPTS

Paganism, superstitions, pagan survivals and popular culture are controversial, nebulous concepts suspect in the eyes of many modern historians. The ethnocentrism and value judgments implicit in such pejorative expressions as paganism and superstition make it preferable to think instead in terms of alternative belief systems. The notion of cultural survivals is under attack from those who point out that all cultural phenomena in a given society perform a current function in that society. The definition of popular culture turns on the complex question of who constitute “the people” whose culture is being discussed. Nevertheless, understood within the context of the historical situation and of the sources, these concepts provide legitimate, even inescapable, categories for the examination of the religious and cultural life of the early Middle Ages.³⁶

1.1.1 *Paganism and superstition*

In modern usage, paganism and superstition are generally two distinct concepts. The *Shorter OED* defines paganism in part as “pagan belief and practices; the condition of being a pagan” and as “pagan character or quality; the moral condition of pagans,” with a pagan being “one of a nation or community which does not worship the true God” or “a person of heathenish character or habits.” It defines superstition, again in part, as the “unreasoning awe or fear of something unknown, mysterious or imaginary, especially in connection with religion; religious belief or practice founded upon fear or ignorance.” Here, paganism is the opposite of the true, revealed religion, while superstition can form part of any religion. But the dictionary also gives another meaning to superstition which blurs this distinction: it is an “irrational religious system; a false, pagan or idolatrous religion.” This meaning of the word applies best to “superstition” as it appears in pastoral literature, with added secondary meanings of “obsolete” and “superfluous.”³⁷

³⁶ See Ian Wood, “Pagan religions and superstitions east of the Rhine from the fifth to the ninth century” and the following discussion, in *After Empire*, 253-302.

³⁷ *S.v.v.*, “Paganism,” “Pagan,” “Superstition.” “Obsolete” and “superfluous” practices were also superstitious: medieval authors treated Jewish practices and feasts as *superstitio*, e.g., Whoever has recourse to auguries our enchainments is to be separated from the assembly of the church, likewise those adhering to Jewish superstitions and feasts (*Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* [c. 475] 83 [LXXXIX], *CCSL* 148, 179). References to Jewish practices have not been included in this

Denise Grodzynski suggested that the two terms represent a shift in point of view: paganism was religion in the 1st century A.D., superstition in the 5th, and magic later in the Middle Ages.³⁸ Our literature, however, gives only slight signs of this altered viewpoint. “Paganism” and “superstition” (together with “idolatry” and “sacrilege”) were applied indiscriminately to the same types of behaviour. There was more stress on paganism and pagan survivals in the early phases of Christianisation or re-Christianisation—in southern Gaul and Galicia in the 6th century, in the Rhineland from the mid 8th century on—than later,³⁹ but pastors continued to connect the behaviour of their charges to pagan customs and beliefs to the very end of our period.

I make no attempt to establish a distinction not made by the authors of the texts, nor to formulate a uniformly acceptable definition of these terms. For the sake of convenience, I have accepted as pagan and superstitious any beliefs or practices condemned in pastoral literature which explicitly or implicitly entailed a reliance on powers not coming from God and not mediated by the Church—according to the Council of Tours of 567, “that which did not belong to the Church’s way.” Included with the cults of deities, nature and the dead, and with magic, therefore, are the cults of dubious saints and angels, the unauthorised use of sacramentals and other syncretic practices.

This pragmatic approach offers important advantages. It acknowledges that the evidence is taken from an institutional perspective and is biased by institutional interests, that it deals with what clerics thought existed, not necessarily with what did exist and, therefore, that it has to be treated with scepticism. It enables us to discriminate between behaviour perceived to have theological content (such as divination or idolatry) and behaviour that was not so considered (such as contumely, fornication or murder). It avoids the problem of assessing devotional practices acceptable to contemporary churchmen but questionable to the modern mind (for instance, aspects of the cult of saints and relics, and the use of the Creed and Lord’s Prayer as *incantationes*) or institutions such as the judicial ordeal. It saves us, therefore, from the danger of imposing, in the guise of detachment and historical distance, modern categories of thought and modern judgments on situations far removed from our own.

study. St. Boniface used the word *superstitio* in the sense of “superfluous” when he urged the Archbishop of Canterbury to forbid “the superstition in unnecessary vestments hateful to God.” He feared that the introduction of overrich garments into the cloister had a bad effect on morals, not that wearing them entailed wrong belief (Boniface to Cuthbert, [747], Haddan and Stubbs 3, 382).

³⁸ “Superstitio,” *Revue des études anciennes* 76 (1974), 36-60; here, 54. But Michele R. Salzman showed that *superstitio* had a triple meaning (paganism, divination, magic) even in the 4th century. The resulting ambiguity was exploited by Constantine and his still pagan administrators to tolerate the continuation of pagan cults while attempting to suppress divination and magic (“‘Superstitio’ in the Codex Theodosianus and the persecution of the pagans,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 [1987], 172-188).

³⁹ Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), 209-210.

Above all, this approach enables us to chart the changes in clerics' perceptions and preoccupations from time to time and region to region, through the abandonment of certain themes, reprise of older ones abandoned for a while, and introduction of new ones. Christianity, not as an abstract set of dogmas and moral principles without a human, historical and geopolitical context, but as a living religion in the form that was handed down to Western Europe, came into being during the period stretching between roughly 500 and 1000 A.D. It defined itself through a dual process of inclusion and exclusion of a host of traditional customs, rites and beliefs. Certain ones among them were interpreted and adapted in such a way that they could be integrated into acceptable practice; others were seen as being "not Christian" or incompatible with Christianity as it was understood at the moment, and were rejected. Focus on these rejected elements of traditional culture allows us to perceive an important aspect of the formation of medieval Christianity and, at the same time, to catch glimpses of rites and myths that have otherwise left few traces on the historical record.

Paganism is a notoriously amorphous notion. It has no content in itself, and does not describe a coherent set of beliefs and practices. The history of the Christian usage of the word illustrates its lack of precision. It was applied to the polytheism of classical Greek and Roman religion, then to that of the barbarian tribes with whom Christian missionaries came into contact. "Pagan" came to include all those, except Jews and, later, Muslims (but sometimes even them), who did not subscribe to Christianity. It has been used to describe primitive religions such as shamanism and animism as well as highly sophisticated systems, including a religion as far removed from polytheism as Buddhism and philosophies such as Confucianism and Marxism. During the Reformation, Protestants condemned Catholic practices as pagan. In common modern usage, paganism is often synonymous with materialism, hedonism, irreligion and even atheism. It has been, above all, a Christian concept, with entirely negative significance until very recently, when various New Age groups have seen in paganism a respect for nature and (oddly enough) for women missing from Christianity, and have been proud to call themselves pagan.

From the beginning, the notion of "paganism" had connotations in which the religious and the cultural were mixed. Various theories have been put forward to explain the origins of the Christian sense of the word pagan. According to one, it came into the Christian vocabulary by way of its meaning as countryman, the inhabitant of the *pagus* (country district). Paganism was the religion of the *pagani*, the rural population being identified with the peasantry who were slower in accepting Christianity than urban populations. Another theory holds that the Christian usage derived from the secondary meaning of *paganus* as civilian in contrast to soldier, because the pagan was not a "soldier of Christ." Christine Mohrmann advanced still another explanation, that the Christian meaning was based on the argot of gladiators, for whom the *paganus* was an outsider, a non-

gladiator.⁴⁰ In all of these, the *paganus* was the “other,” divided from the in-group by ways of life, culture, perceptions and values, not merely by adhesion to a different religion.⁴¹ The element of peculiarly religious exclusiveness was drawn from the distinction made in the Bible between Israel, God’s Chosen People, whose heirs Christians claimed to be, and other nations, worshippers of strange gods.⁴²

The paganism presented in pastoral literature is a broadly cultural rather than strictly religious manifestation—in effect, the ethnic traditions and folklore of newly Christianised peoples.⁴³ Although the formal aspects of pre-Christian religion (idolatry, the worship of more or less clearly conceptualised divinities, sacrifices to them and rituals in their honour) did not disappear completely, they dwindled over generations of Christianity. What remained important were practices and techniques based on an inarticulate sense of the interconnection of the supernatural and the natural. This interconnection could be manipulated by individuals and the community to serve their own needs as they had been by previous generations, without reference to the institutional Church, although individual priests and clerics were often implicated in the process.

The word pagan and related terms were applied to beliefs and practices which did not in fact entail a rejection of Christianity, let alone an organised cult. It is

⁴⁰ See J. Zeiller, *Paganus* (Fribourg, Paris, 1917), and Christine Mohrmann, “Encore une fois: Paganus” (in *Études sur le latin des chrétiens* [Rome, 1965] 3, 279-289). See also M. Roblin, “Paganisme et rusticité,” *Annales ESC* 8 (1953), 173-183; Henri Maurier, *Le paganisme* (Paris, Ottawa, 1988) 11-24; J. Toutain, “Pagani, pagus” in Daremberg and Saglio 4, 273-276; Henri Leclercq, “Paganus, pagana, paganicum,” *DACL* 13, 275-280; P. Siniscalco, “Païen, paganisme,” *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du christianisme ancien* (Fr. adapt. by François Vial) 2, 1852-1853; *A Catholic Dictionary of Theology* (London, 1971), *s.v.* “Paganism.”

⁴¹ The English equivalent, “heathen,” is derived from a word which first appeared in Ulphilas’ translation into Gothic of the line “There was a gentile woman, of Syro-Phoenician race” (Mark 7, 26) as *haithno*. It seems likely that Ulphilas (c. 311-383), who evangelised the Goths and translated the bible in a somewhat bowdlerised version for their benefit, did not use a native Gothic word, but instead transliterated an Armenian word *het’anos*, itself probably from the Greek *ethnos*. If so, “heath” is a reverse derivation of “heathen.” See Zeiller, *Paganus*, 59-64, and the unabridged *OED*, *s.v.v.* “Heath” and “Heathen.”

⁴² For the biblical concepts of the difference between Israel and others, see *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. J. Hastings (New York, 1914), *s.v.* “Nations”; Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance of the Holy Bible* (8th ed., rev., London, 1939); *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. A. van der Born, adapted and trans. Louis F. Hartmann (New York, Toronto, London, 1963) *s. v. v.* “Gentiles” and “Hellenes;” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York, 1971), *s. v.* “Gentile;” Duane L. Christensen, “Nations” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freeman (New York, 1992) 1037-49. For a discussion of idolatry in the Old Testament, see Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry*, (Cambridge and London, 1992), 9-30.

⁴³ Folklore in the sense of Theodor Gaster’s definition as “that part of a people’s culture which is preserved consciously or unconsciously, in beliefs and practices, customs or observations of general currency, in myths, legends and tales of common acceptance, and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of a group rather than of an individual” (*Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* [New York, 1949], *s.v.*, “Folklore”).

true that an anti-Christian reaction often followed the initial phase of conversion, but pastoral literature was not concerned with it.⁴⁴ Rather, it dealt with the behaviour of people who thought of themselves as Christian. We are given no reason to doubt the sincerity of their belief in the teachings of the Church or of their willingness to participate in her rites. On the contrary: the literature suggests that, in general, they embraced both dogmas and rites wholeheartedly—as they understood them. They interpreted and made use of the sacramentals and rituals of their new religion in the light of tradition: they armed themselves with amulets containing relics, celebrated Christian feasts as they had seasonal feasts of the past, got drunk in honour of the sainted dead, used holy chrism as a healing charm, read the future in communion vessels. At the same time, they clung to many of their old customs with equal sincerity.⁴⁵ In effect, a genuine Christian piety flourished side by side and intertwined with the traditional beliefs and practices labelled pagan by the clerical authors.⁴⁶

While paganism was essentially a Christian concept, the notion of superstition was inherited from judgments made in pre-Christian religions about practices seen as irrational, stupid, fear-driven or excessive.⁴⁷ In the classical world, although a distinction might be made between *religio* (reverence of the gods) and *superstitio*

⁴⁴ The death of the prince under whom Christianity was first accepted sometimes gave the signal for a return to traditional religions, for example in Kent after Ethelbert's death, Northumbria after Edwin's and Hungary after St. Stephen's. Often the reaction was led by the ruler's yet unbaptised heirs; see Arnold Angenendt, "The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons considered against the background of the early medieval mission," in *Angli e Sassoni al di qua ed al di là del mare* (SSAM 28, Spoleto, 1982) 747-781, here 747-754.

⁴⁵ This is the stage which A. D. Nock called "adhesion" rather than conversion which he defined as "the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right." At this stage, there had not yet been "any definite crossing of religious frontiers, in which an old spiritual home was left for a new once and for all;" the individual still had "one foot on each side of fence which was cultural and not creedal." The new religion was seen as a useful supplement but not a substitute, and "did not involve the taking of a new way life in place of the old" (*Conversion. The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* [Oxford, 1933], 6-7).

⁴⁶ Felice Lifshitz argues that in the early Middle Ages, accusations of paganism were in fact frequently over different interpretations over what it meant to be Christian, over "disagreement over definitions of Christianity rather than 'survivals' of paganism" (*The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria* [Toronto, 1995], 29, n. 35).

⁴⁷ For an analysis of this word and its use in the Middle Ages, see Grodzynski, "Superstitio;" Dieter Harmening, *Superstitio*, 14-48; Schmitt, "Les 'superstitutions'," 421-453; Marina Montesano, "*Supra aqua et supra ad vento.*" "*Superstizioni,*" *Maleficia e incantamenta nei predicatori francescani osservanti (Italia, sec. XV)* (Rome, 1999) 5-44; Micheline Laliberté, "Religion populaire et superstition au moyen âge," *Théologique* 8 (2000), 19-36. Even Germanic pagans, asserted Ian Wood, "recognised a distinction between a proper and an improper relationship with the supernatural" ("Pagan religions and superstitions," 261).

(fear of them), and foreign religions be dismissed as superstitious,⁴⁸ superstition was not so much a negation but a distortion of right religion. As Grodzynski pointed out, being religious was the necessary condition for being superstitious.⁴⁹ Christian polemicists used the word “superstition” indiscriminately for a variety of condemned practices. Some may be viewed as a negation of Christianity (for example, the worship of pagan deities), others lacked a clear-cut theological content (mourning and burial customs), and still others had a distinctly Christian cast (the use of relics and Scripture as talismans). The behaviour described as superstitious in our texts ranges from idolatry or “false religion” to foolish and unnecessary religious or semi-religious customs.⁵⁰ The concept of superstition, therefore, was one of the essential elements in medieval churchmen’s negative judgment of the behaviour of their charges.

Despite the tendency of some modern scholars to avoid it in favour of more neutral expressions,⁵¹ superstition is a useful concept allowing distinctions not made in pastoral literature. In discussing the practices of Christianised Germans east of the Rhine, Ian Wood visualises non-Christian rites and actions “along a spectrum ranging from a community to an individual religion, effectively from public to private ... Essentially the distinction between public and private is that between formal pagan practice and individual superstition,” with some “grey areas” especially in the realm of family religion.⁵² The grey areas may be rather extensive, if they take in wakes and funeral processions, the noisy celebration of vigils, and communal meals in the woods and by streams. Nevertheless, the distinction between public and private is implicit in numerous studies of medieval religion, from E. Vacandard’s classic essay on idolatry in Merovingian Gaul, in which paganism consists of public manifestations of forbidden rituals,⁵³ to hist-

⁴⁸ L. F. Janssen, however, suggests that *superstitio* had a sinister meaning for Romans, as being not only alien but actively hostile to Rome. *Religio*, moreover, was communal religion, meant to ensure the welfare of society as a whole, while *superstitio* was intended only for private security, at the expense of the rest (“‘Superstitio’ and the persecution of the Christians,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 [1979], 131-159).

⁴⁹ “‘Superstitio,’” 41.

⁵⁰ For Harmening, “Götzendienst” (*Superstitio*, 41) and “Aberglaube,” for Montesano, “cattiva religione” and *vana observatio* (“*Supra Aqua et supra ad vento*,” 14). Harmening listed the varied meanings of *superstitio* in Christian usage as heathenry, idolatry, demon-worship, false and inadequate knowledge, false religion, outdated and unnecessary systems and customs, excess, and excessive, quasi-religious esteem for the goods of this world (*op. cit.*, 40).

⁵¹ For example, Lifshitz rejects it and words like it as being “ideological and exclusionary concepts” (*Pious Neustria*, 18 n. 1); John D. Niles prefers to consider the pagan Anglo-Saxons as “possessed of animistic beliefs” rather than as superstitious (“Pagan survivals and popular beliefs,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge [Cambridge, 1991], 126-141; here, 132).

⁵² “Pagan religions and superstitions east of the Rhine,” 261-262.

⁵³ “L’idolâtrie en Gaule au VIe et au VIIe siècle,” *Revue des Questions Historiques* 65 (1899), 424-454.

ories which set aside the opinion of contemporary churchmen and refer to local Christianities, such as “Neustrian Christianity,” “community Christianities” or “parochial Catholicism,”⁵⁴ that came into being after the formal conversion of the population in a given area. It is clear that many religious customs condemned by medieval churchmen should not be considered to be paganism or pagan survivals; these may, for the sake of convenience, be termed “superstitions.”

1.1.2 *Pagan survivals*

The concept of cultural survivals was introduced by E. B. Tylor in *Primitive Cultures*.⁵⁵ Survivals are “processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved.”⁵⁶ Some of these survivals have no relevance to the present, while the social function of others has shifted from the “serious business” of society to the folkloric: superstitions, legends, games, riddles, proverbs, rituals of courtesy.⁵⁷ People cling to outmoded beliefs and practices because they fail to understand clearly the new context in which they live.

But do survivals in Tylor’s view as the debris of the past really exist? Anthropologists of the following generation denied that folk practices and beliefs remained unchanged by historical experience. The important questions were why some survived and others did not, why in one place but not elsewhere.⁵⁸ Modern scholars argue that all actual practices are relevant to the community in which they are found. The American anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn insisted that cultural forms survive only if “they constitute responses that are adjustive or adaptive in some sense, for the members of the society or for the society.” For Jean-Claude Schmitt, the very notion is invalid when applied to popular culture. A belief or rite is coherent and relevant, not a combination of heterogeneous relicts and innovations—“rien n’est ‘survécu’ dans une culture, tout est vécu ou n’est pas.”⁵⁹ A practice that appears meaningless and obsolete to an observer standing outside a given culture has meaning and relevance within the context of that culture for its members.

⁵⁴ Respectively, Lifshitz, *Pious Neustria*, 18 n. 1; William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 2; Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, 100.

⁵⁵ 2 vols., London, 1871, reissued with an introduction by Paul Radin as *The Origins of Culture and Religion in Primitive Culture* (New York, 1957). References are to the latter edition. For the response to Tylor’s theory of survivals and the subsequent development of the idea, see Margaret Hodgen, *The Doctrine of Survivals* (1936; Folcroft, Pa., 1977).

⁵⁶ Tylor, *Origins of Culture*, 16.

⁵⁷ Tylor, *Origins of Culture*, 70-159.

⁵⁸ See Hodgen, *The Doctrine of Survivals*, 140-174.

⁵⁹ Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft* (Boston, 1944), 79; Schmitt, “‘Religion populaire’ et culture folklorique,” *Annales ECS* 31 (1976), 946.

Moreover, the term “survival” implies misleadingly that practices were carried over unaltered from a previous cultural context. In fact, customs were adapted to fit new ideas so thoroughly that their very nature was changed, as Burchard of Worms illustrated in descriptions of infant burial customs in 11th-century Hesse. Hermann Bausinger and Rudy Künzel maintained that it is more accurate to think in terms of “continuities” and adaptation than of the survival of pagan beliefs and practices.⁶⁰

In a practical sense also, the word “survivals” is misleading when applied to reprobated practices in the early Middle Ages. Except for Roman religion, there is little information available about those pagan rituals and beliefs that left no traces in archaeology and for which the only source is the writings of Christian clerics. It is often impossible to prove that a given practice was not of a later origin.⁶¹ Caesarius of Arles (d. 542) and Atto of Vercelli (d. 961) give rare glimpse of the development of new practices in their dioceses, but there must have been many others. It is unknown to what extent pastoral literature itself and the efforts of missionaries resulted inadvertently in spreading into new areas the very practices that they wished to eradicate.

Historians have found the term “survivals” a useful shorthand to describe these traditional elements which, while having religious aspects, were not a part of the system approved by the Church. This is true not only of older works,⁶² but of more recent studies as well.⁶³ A modern author speaks of the “twilight world of pagan survivals and syncretism” prevailing in Saxony a generation after it had supposedly become Christian.⁶⁴ It is implicit in other terms referring to aspects of some of the same phenomena, such as the “Germanisation” of Christianity, or

⁶⁰ Bausinger, “Zur Algebra der Kontinuität,” in *Kontinuität? Geschichtlichkeit und Dauer als volkskundliches Problem*, ed. H. Bausinger and W. Brückner (Berlin, 1969), 9-30; Künzel, “Paganisme, syncretisme et culture religieuse populaire au haut moyen âge,” 1056-1057.

⁶¹ Cf. Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Oxford and Cambridge, 1991), 284-341.

⁶² E.g., Stephen McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain up to the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom* (Washington, 1938); Francis P. Magoun, “On some survivals of pagan belief in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Harvard Theological Review* 40 (1947), 33-46. Wilfrid Bonser dedicated a chapter to “Survivals of paganism” in *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England. A Study in History, Psychology and Folklore* (London, 1963), 117-157.

⁶³ E.g., Michel Meslin, “Persistances païennes en Galice, vers la fin du VIe siècle,” in *Hommages à Marcel Renard* (Brussels, 1969) 2: 512-524; Ruth Karras, “Pagan survivals and syncretism in the conversion of Saxony,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 72 (1986): 553-572. See also Hans Kuhn, “Das Fortleben des Germanischen Heidentums nach der Christianisierung,” in *La conversione al Cristianesimo, 743-757*; Timothy Gregory, “The survival of paganism in Christian Greece,” *Journal of American Philology* 107 (1986): 229-242; Odette Pontal, “Survivances païennes, superstitions et sorcellerie au moyen âge d’après les décrets des conciles et synodes,” *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* 27/28 (1995/96): 129-136; Niles, “Pagan survivals and popular beliefs.”

⁶⁴ David F. Appleby, “Spiritual progress in Carolingian Saxony. A case from ninth-century Corvey,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 82 (1996): 599-613; here 603-604.

“traditional culture” and “pagan resistance.”⁶⁵ There can be little doubt that after the initial, often traumatic, phases of conversion, the overwhelming majority of the populations of western Europe identified themselves as Christian. They brought their children to be baptised, received the sacraments, attended the vigils of the saints and trusted in their relics, buried their dead as close to the church as possible. At the same time, however, some (there is no knowing what percentage) continued to practice religious or quasi-religious rituals, both communal and private, that had their roots in the pre-Christian past. In that sense, they can be seen as relics of paganism, even if the participants themselves saw no conflict between them and their new religion.

Finally, the notion of pagan survivals imposes itself because it is a point of view reflected and often explicitly stated in pastoral literature. Again and again the authors condemned practices as being left over from paganism or coming from pagan customs. Whether the customs in question were pagan in any religious sense may be debated. Robert Markus emphasised the large secular component of daily life in pre-Christian society. He protested against the use of the term “pagan survivals” to mean whatever resisted “the efforts of the Christian clergy to abolish, to transform or control” and insisted on the “sheer vitality of non-religious, secular institutions and traditions and their power to resist change.”⁶⁶ Earlier Hans Kuhn had dismissed as “inessentials” all the customs associated with pagan religion except for belief in the gods, their worship and acts of cult.⁶⁷ There is, however, no question about the attitude of the early medieval Church. Given her understanding of her own role, as the one, divinely-instituted intermediary on earth between God and man, the expression of the New Covenant, with the authority and duty to set standards, sanction techniques, determine symbols and articulate myth, it is not surprising that churchmen saw practices or beliefs that challenged this as survivals from the religions of darkness and ignorance.

1.1.3. Terminology

From Caesarius of Arles to Burchard of Worms, the most common terms for

⁶⁵ Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity*. See also Stefano Gasparri, *La cultura tradizionale dei Longobardi; Struttura tribale e resistenze pagane* (Spoleto, 1963); Raoul Manselli, “Resistenze dei culti antichi nella pratica religiosa dei laici delle campagne,” in *Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione*, 57-108; *Pagans and Christians. The Interplay between Christian Latin and Traditional Germanic Cultures in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. T. Hofstra, L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (Groningen, 1995).

⁶⁶ *The End of Ancient Christianity*, 9.

⁶⁷ “Das Fortleben des Germanischen Heidentums,” 744. Cf. Hutton’s equation of “pagan survivals” with the “memory of, and reverence for, the old deities” (*The Pagan Religions*, 289). But Gregory also included the “traditional practices related to healing, death and the family” in his definition of paganism (“The survival of paganism,” 230 and 241). For McKenna also, paganism entailed “not only the worship of the pagan gods, but also the practices associated with pagan worship, such as astrology and magic” (*Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain*, vii).

the condemnation of certain types of behaviour used involved some variation of the words meaning pagan—*paganus*, *gentilis* or, rarely, *ethnicus*.⁶⁸ The faithful were told in so many words that they followed pagan traditions, that they behaved like pagans, that a custom was a survival of pagan observances, a part of pagan traditions or “the filth of paganism” or outright pagan observances; that they wasted their time in pagan idleness or performed rites invented by pagans or acts similar to the crime of pagans. Feasts were held at the “loathsome sites of pagans” while some people participated in pagans’ diabolical games, songs and dances.

The term *superstitio* was applied to the same type of activity, though more seldom, and often together with a word signifying paganism. The pagan custom of displaying and swearing on the heads of beasts was *superstitio*, according to a mid 6th-century Council of Orleans. Somewhat later, Martin of Braga assured Galician peasants that divination was *vana superstitio*. Boniface V warned the King of Northumbria against the “most pernicious superstition of idolatry.” Christians around Reims ate “superstitious food in the company of pagans” in the first decades of the 7th century. The mid 8th-century *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum* contains thirty articles taking in the cults of deities, the dead, nature and saints, inappropriate rituals involving the church, divination, protective and healing magic, races, effigies, and beliefs concerning the relationship of women to the moon. In the 9th century, Carolingian rulers took measures against *superstitiones* practiced in different parts of the empire during funerals and Christian feasts, while a contemporary penitential declared that the observances of the Calends of January were a superstition to be avoided by Christians.

From the authors’ point of view, superstition was not necessarily belief in non-existent entities or irrational and ineffective rituals.⁶⁹ It was sinful to offer worship to false gods (idols) because they were the forms adopted by demons, not because they did not exist. Similarly with magic: it was often efficacious, but it was efficacious because of the intervention of demons.⁷⁰

Sometimes terms for idolatry (*idololatria*, *daemonia*, *cultus* or *cultura idolorum* or

⁶⁸ *Ethnicus* appears three times in relevant documents: in a 7th-century Spanish penitential, Christians fast and *ethnici* feast at the New Year (*Homiliare Toletanum*, *Hom.* 9, *PL* Suppl. 4, 1942); according to Burchard of Worms’ *Decretum* (1008-1012), a person who refuses to mend his ways after mutilating others or burning down houses should be treated *tanquam ethnicus et publicanus* (11.30, *PL* 140: 88); the Latin translation of a 10th-century English penitential forbids Christians to perform divination as do the *ethnici* (*Confessionale Ps.-Egberti* 2.23, *PL* 89, 419).

⁶⁹ Harmening, *Superstitio*, 43.

⁷⁰ This does not mean that all authors invariably shared the beliefs that they described. Some turned a skeptical eye. Maximus of Turin and Caesarius of Arles, for example, tried to convince their flocks that the attempt to save the eclipsed moon by magic was silly since the eclipse was a natural phenomenon. Agobard of Lyons ridiculed those who believed in weather-magicians. Several of the questions in Burchard of Worms’ penitential begin with “did you believe?” In these, the sin lay not in being a weather-magician or werewolf, addling people’s minds, stealing magically, flying through the air, or making zombies, but in believing in the existence of such things or in trying to perform such feats.

daemonorum, idolorum servitus) and idolaters (*cultores idolorum/daemonum, veneratores, immolantes*) were used to describe the same kind of behaviour. These words appeared in three contexts. One was literally the cult of deities or demons, effigies or natural objects, expressed in acts of worship, that is, rituals and offerings (*sacrificia, oblationes, immolationes*). Here there can be no doubt that the authors thought that they were describing clearly defined actions that were being performed by their often Christian contemporaries.

Terms for idolatry also appear in rosters of capital sins and works of the devil. In these the relevance of the terms to actual practice is difficult to determine.⁷¹ Idolatry is generally not given a special emphasis; it appears as one sin among many, as it had in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians (5, 19), copied faithfully into Charlemagne's *Admonitio generalis* of 789. It lists the cult of idols and sorcery among a variety of sins such as fornication, brawling "and the like."⁷² In an 8th-century tract, the works of the devil are "cults and idols, lots and omens, processions and theatrical shows, theft and fraud, murder and fornication, pride and boasting, banqueting and drunkenness, dances and lies."⁷³ Idolatry here is neither more nor less serious a sin than any other, and the authors do not seem to make a causal connection between it and the rest. The word may even have been used in a figurative sense, as it was by Pope Gregory I when, echoing *Eph* 5,5, he equated avarice with idolatry.⁷⁴

On the other hand, idolatry was explicitly linked at times with acts of cult or magic. Having catalogued it among other capital sins, an 8th-century English penitential added a separate item concerning "the use of things pertaining to idols, that is, omens and the rest of it."⁷⁵ Rabanus Maurus (d. 856) compiled a long roll of vices and sins ending with "the entire cult of idols and demons, namely, omens and those who sacrifice to (or in the vicinity of—*ad*) stones, trees and springs, and who perform enchantments or divinations and so on, are all sacrilege."⁷⁶ Two anonymous continental sermons of roughly the same period treated idolatry as the first of the capital sins, a sacrilege of which all manifestations were also sacrilegious:

⁷¹ Such lists go back to the first Christian centuries, see Cyrille Vogel, *Le pécheur et la pénitence dans l'Église ancienne* (Paris, 1966), especially 13-14 and 22-24. See also Aimé Solignac, "Péchés capitaux," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 12: 853-862.

⁷² 82, *MGH CapRegFr* 1: 61.

⁷³ *Ordo de catechizandis rudibus* (796) 60, Bouhot, 223. Similar lists are to be found in Ps.-Eligius, *De rectitudine catholicae conversationis*, 2, *PL* 40: 1170; *Conc. Cabilonense* (c. 650?) Mansi 10: 1197; *Dicta Pirmini* (724-753) 29: 188; Ps. Boniface (8th/9th century?) S. 15.1, *PL* 89: 870; Burchard of Worms, *Decretum* (1008-1012) 2.165, *PL* 140: 637.

⁷⁴ Gregory I (601), *MGH Ep* 2: 320. This is the only figurative use of idolatry in the texts; the related sins of usury and the falsified weights and measures were put under the heading *De sacrificiis* in the *Poen. Sangallense Simplex* (8th century, 1st half) 13, *CCCM* 156: 120.

⁷⁵ *Poen. Egberti* (before 766) 1.1, Schmitz 1: 575.

⁷⁶ *Hom.* 67, *PL* 110: 127.

These are capital sins. The sacrilege that is called the worship of idols. However, all the sacrifices and soothsayings of the pagan are sacrileges, as are the sacrifices of the dead around [?] corpses or over tombs, or omens, or amulets, or the offerings made on stones, or to springs, trees, Jupiter, Mercury or the other pagan gods, because they are all diabolic; and many other things which would take too long to list are all, according the judgment of the holy fathers, sacrileges to be avoided and detested by Christians, and they are recognised to be capital sins.⁷⁷

Penitential texts dealing with forbidden foods are the third context in which idolatry is mentioned. A ban on eating certain kinds of flesh, first appearing in the *Penitential of Theodore* (668-756) and then copied in essence some dozen times down to the 11th century, was justified by a reference to the New Testament: “It is certain that if birds and other animals were strangled in a snare or if they were killed by a hawk and were found dead, they are not to be eaten by men, because four laws of the *Acts of the Apostles* give these commands: abstain from fornication, blood, what is strangled, and idolatry.”⁷⁸ But *idolatria*, the word used in this passage, normally carries a wider significance than the *idolis immolatum* (“what was sacrificed to idols”) of the Vulgate. Since Theodore did not refer either to idolatry or idols elsewhere in the penitential, his meaning is impossible to judge. It is not clear, therefore, if he meant to equate eating forbidden flesh with idolatry, or simply to present it along with idolatry and fornication as distinct, equally reprehensible practices. Burchard of Worms, on the other hand, included a passage in his *Decretum* that made a distinction between the easily forgiven sin of eating immolated food in the company of pagans and outright idolatry, which he put on a par with murder and fornication as a sin requiring formal, public penance.⁷⁹

Sacrilegium (in its technical sense, the profanation or misuse of sacred objects, persons or places⁸⁰) also sometimes meant practices elsewhere labelled pagan or superstitious, notably in the late 8th-century *Homilia de sacrilegiis*. The cults of idols, of the dead and of nature, praying and making offerings anywhere except in church, astrology, singing and dancing through the countryside on Sunday, eating and drinking near shrines, animal sacrifices and other offerings, divination and the consultation of soothsayers and enchanters, attempts to protect the moon during an eclipse, lighting torches and “needfires,” the use of amulets against sickness and other dangers—these and related practices and beliefs were all sacrilege because they violated the vows made at baptism. Let he who does such things, warns the

⁷⁷ Ps. Boniface (9th century?) S. 6.1, *PL* 89: 855. There is no preposition linking “sacrifices of the dead” and “corpses” in this text. The Anonymous sermon (late 8th/9th century), Scherer, 439, probably gives the correct version: “sacrifices of the dead around [*circa*] dead bodies.” In both sermons, this passage is followed by an enumeration of other sins.

⁷⁸ *Poen. Theodori* (668-756) II, 11.2, Schmitz 1: 544.

⁷⁹ Burchard of Worms, *Decretum* (1008-1012) 10.37, *PL* 140: 839.

⁸⁰ E.g., [S]acrilege, that is, the theft of sacred objects (*Poen. Egberti* [before 766] 1.1, Schmitz 1: 575).

Homilia be aware that he has forfeited his faith, and is a pagan, not a Christian: “sciat, se fidem perdere, non esse christianus, sed paganus.”

Sometimes these terms were used not because the author suspected a lapse into paganism or superstition, but to drive home the heinousness, or merely unseemliness, of other offences. This is evidently the case in St. Boniface’s remarkable claim that drunkenness was a vice peculiar to the English and pagans, and his unfavourable comparison of English to pagan sexual mores.⁸¹ That point is made even more strongly in a 9th-century penitential: “If anyone has committed adultery with his mother, he should acknowledge that he is a pagan, because such a crime is sacrilege.”⁸² These terms were used even in criticisms of hair and clothing style. The 7th-century Welsh canons demanded the exclusion of any Catholic who let his hair grow or hang down in the barbarian fashion. In 787, two papal legates upbraided the English for wearing clothes in the pagan style, of the kind that their forefathers had cast away, thus imitating “the life of those whom you have ever hated.”⁸³ A few years later, Alcuin scolded Ethelred King of Northumbria and his subjects for copying the pagan Northmen in haircut, beard and clothing.⁸⁴ Such statements were not motivated by fears of paganism, but by the resolve to have Christians differentiated from pagans in both internal and external disposition.⁸⁵

There were, however, other types of behaviour which the authors did not identify explicitly as being pagan or superstitious or sacrilegious but which contained magical or ritual elements. This is particularly true with respect to attempts to gain illicit access to the graces controlled by the Church—chrism, the sacred species, altar vessels, sacraments, the precincts of the church for the burial of one’s dead. Another case is certain forms of compulsory drunkenness, toasting and drinking contests that had their origin in sacrificial feasts for the gods and the dead. The point where the uncertain boundary between religion and culture is obliterated altogether is reached with medieval alimentary restrictions. These

⁸¹ Boniface to Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury (747), Haddan and Stubbs 3: 382; Boniface to Aethelbald of Mercia (746-747) *MGH EpSel* 1: 150; Boniface to the priest Herefrid (746-747) Ep. 74, *ibid.*, 156. In his letter to Aethelbald, Boniface lauded pagan Saxon women’s ferocious chastity and the marital love and fidelity, extending even to suttee, customary among “the most loathsome and degenerate race of men,” the pagan Wends, to emphasise the disgrace of the king’s promiscuity—one of the very few cases where pagan customs were held up for praise.

⁸² *Poen Merseburgense* c (9th century or earlier) 10, Wasserschleben, 436.

⁸³ *Canones Wallici* (7th century) 61, Bieler, 148; *Legatine Synods—Report of the Legates George and Theophylact of their proceedings in England* (787) 19, Haddan and Stubbs 3: 458. But George and Theophylact also criticised the English for the “pagan superstition” of facial scarring, mutilating their horses and eating horseflesh (as well as settling conflicts by lots “in the pagan fashion”)—practices that may indeed have been based on ideas not easily reconciled with Christianity.

⁸⁴ *MGH Ep* 4: 43.

⁸⁵ On the other hand, the leader of the pagan reaction in Hungary after St. Stephen’s death was said to have promptly proclaimed his return to the ancestral religion by shaving his skull so as to leave three pigtails (*Chronicon Pictum*, ed. L. Mezey, [Budapest, 1964], 110).

occupy a puzzlingly important place in the penitentials.⁸⁶ The influence of the Old Testament, desire to draw a distinction between human and animal behaviour and fear of inadvertent cannibalism have been plausibly advanced in explanation, but these do not account fully either for the large number of texts (between three and four hundred separate although highly repetitive clauses) nor for their precision. It may be postulated that other considerations, such as fear of non-Christian cultic practices and magic, had played a role as well.

Pastoral literature, then, presents a notable variety of practices and beliefs of baptised Christians as idolatrous, pagan, superstitious or sacrilegious: the cult of deities and nature, celebrations of the natural cycle of the year and unauthorised rituals to celebrate the liturgical cycle, reverence shown to certain places, recourse to cunning men and women, divination and other forms of magic, mortuary rituals and even alimentary customs.

1.1.4. *Popular culture*⁸⁷

But this literature reveals only limited aspects of the cultures of various communities – limited, because their permitted manifestations are generally ignored. References to sanctioned forms of religious devotion are incidental. The use of prayers in approved circumstances, the legitimate cults of saints, relics and miracles are almost entirely absent. The popularity, seemingly immense, of saints' festivals appears only in condemnations of improper behaviour during the vigils, the pious custom of making pilgrimages to Rome only in St. Boniface's plea to the archbishop of Canterbury to keep Englishwomen home. Marriage customs and the obligations of kinship and friendship, however deeply they were rooted in tradition, are not treated as part of *observatio gentilium*. Purely secular matters are mentioned only if they are an occasion for a moral problem such as accidental death or injury occurring during sports or work, or dishonesty in commercial transactions. Only those aspects of culture in which the hierarchy sensed an infringement on the Church's monopoly over religious matters were so categorised.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ E.g., in the late 7th-century *Canons of Adomnan* (Bieler, 176-181). See chapter 9.

⁸⁷ See John Story, *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (Athens, Ga., 1993), especially 1-19; David Hall's "Introduction" to Stephen L. Kaplan, *Understanding Popular Culture. Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Berlin, New York, Amsterdam, 1984), 5-18; Michel Lauwers, "Religion populaire," in *Catholicisme* 12: 835-849; *idem*, "'Religion populaire', culture folklorique, mentalités;" Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, 6-34. For discussion of the pertinent historiography see Peter Biller, "Popular religion in the central and later Middle Ages," in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London and New York, 1997), 221-246, and, with emphasis on Italian and French works, Montesano's introduction to her "*Supra aqua et supra ad vento*," vii-xviii. See also Michel Meslin, "Du paganisme aux traditions populaires," in *Mythes et croyances du monde entier, 1, Le monde indo-européen*, ed. A. Akoun (Paris, 1985), 153-200.

⁸⁸ On the Church's monopolisation of the realm of the sacred, with the consequent denigration of popular culture and its effect on churchmen's attitudes, see Caterina Lavarra, "Il

Can these aspects of culture be considered “popular” in the sociological sense of belonging to certain disadvantaged groups: peasants, the poor, the unfree, the illiterate who formed “the people” as opposed to the privileged classes, the clerics and the lay nobility? At first sight, pastoral literature justifies this view. Sermons exhorted masters to correct their servants, and ecclesiastical and lay authorities called upon landowners to compel their dependents to abandon their customary observances. We are told that it was the common horde who worshipped trees and raised a clamour at wakes. Rustic, ignoble, ignorant, uncouth, stupid—these are words freely applied to those who indulged in such customs.

But closer examination shows that many forbidden practices were not restricted to the lower classes but were shared by their superiors. Jean-Claude Schmitt insisted that during the Middle Ages, folklore was limited neither to a rural environment nor to any particular social class. This is seldom articulated in our sources, in part perhaps because of close social and familial connections between clerical and secular elites, in part also because of the leading role often taken by princes and the aristocracy in furthering the work of missionaries.⁸⁹ Agobard of Lyons was exceptional in stating outright that all men, nobles and commoners, townsmen and countryfolk, old and young, believed utterly in the existence of weather magicians—an exaggeration no doubt, but nonetheless evidence of a belief that transcended class. There are other, unmistakable indications as well. The reluctance of landowners to enforce decrees to destroy shrines and effigies suggests that they might still have adhered to the old cults. Penalties imposed for the same offence varied to fit the social standing of the transgressor—whippings for the unfree, fines for their masters. The distinction drawn by Jacques Le Goff between “culture clérical” and “culture folklorique”⁹⁰ disappears altogether when it comes to magic, practised by clerics and laity alike. Churchmen in the highest positions, such as Gregory of Tours and Hincmar of Reims, believed wholeheartedly in sorcery. Penitentials in particular repeatedly identified priests and other clerics as soothsayers and enchanters, so much so that Dieter Harmening maintains that the magic described is not popular and peasant in origin at all, but learned clerical magic adopted by the folk.⁹¹

sacro cristiano nella Gallia merovingia tra folklore e medicina professionale,” *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* (Bari) 31 (1988): 149-204.

⁸⁹ Schmitt, “Les traditions folkloriques dans la culture médiévale; quelques réflexions de méthode,” *Archives de sciences sociales et des religions* 52 (1981): 5-20; here, 7; Karl Ferdinand Werner, “Le rôle de l’aristocratie dans la christianisation du nord-est de la Gaule,” *RHÉF* 62 (1976): 45-73, and Richter, “Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons,” in *Irland und die Christenheit*, ed. Proinséas Ni Chathain and Michael Richter (Stuttgart, 1987), 362-376; here 363-368.

⁹⁰ “Culture clérical et traditions folkloriques dans la civilisation mérovingienne,” 223-235. Carlo Ginzburg’s analysis of the interaction between women accused of witchcraft and their judges or inquisitors demonstrates the ground common to both (“Witchcraft and popular piety: Notes on a Modenese Trial of 1519,” and “The inquisitor as anthropologist,” in *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, trans. John and Anne C. Tedeschi; [Baltimore, 1992], 1-16 and 156-164).

⁹¹ “‘Contra Paganos’—‘Gegen die vom Dorfe’? Zum theologischen Hintergrund ethnologischer

Many of the practices and beliefs condemned as superstitious and pagan, then, were parts of the common heritage which bound all classes together, as much as did the oral traditions of secular culture⁹² and the forms of popular piety encouraged by the Church: the cult of the saints (which Peter Brown argued had been developed among the highest intellectual and social levels of Christian society⁹³), the cult of relics of the sort so warmly recommended by Gregory of Tours, and the belief in and expectation of miracles (such as those recounted by Gregory the Great in his *Dialogues*). Where the elements of this shared culture originated is less important than the fact that they were accepted, consciously or otherwise, by the majority of all groups in society. They formed the popular culture which, Karen Jolly observed, should be seen “as a meeting ground between elite and folk cultures and not as the antithesis of ‘high’ culture.”⁹⁴ Here, the notion of popular culture loses much of its sociological significance and becomes the culture shared by most of the members of society, chiefly by the laity but, to varying degrees, by many of the clergy as well, particularly by those serving in rural parishes. For this reason, Michel Lauwers prefers to think in terms of folkloric rather than popular culture, that is, culture conceived as an ethnological rather than sociological phenomenon.⁹⁵

If popular culture was the possession of the community as a whole, why talk of “popular cultures” in the plural? The answer lies partly in the reality of the situation of the clergy and in their perception of their role in society. Through their

Begriffe,” *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 19 (1996): 487-508. This interpretation seems extreme even when applied to the early penitentials, and is altogether untenable for Burchard of Worms’ penitential. By contrast, Eugene Duker asserts the primacy of peasant magic, stating that the penitentials in essence merely “re-echo what was learned firsthand by an ordinary cleric in his role of confessor” (*Magic and Witchcraft*, 211-212). The truth probably lies somewhere between these positions, with a considerable amount of cross-fertilisation between learned and folkloric sources. For insights on learned, clerical magic, although of a considerably later period, see Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites. A Necromancer’s Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, Pa., 1997).

⁹² “[T]here was, largely, one culture, shared by clerics and lay people, but this was the traditional cultural which apparently held infinite enticement ... [there are] indications that this type of culture was not bound to a particular social class; its attraction went beyond the aristocracy and would thus have functioned as a formidable social cohesive” (Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West*, 144. See also 255-256 and *passim*). The use of popular motifs and folkloric themes in the decorative arts commissioned and paid for by the rich, both secular and clerical, shows that popular culture was a common possession. See Gaignebet and Lajoux, *Art profane et religion populaire au moyen âge*, Camille, *Image on the Edge* and Dodwell, “The Bayeux Tapestry and the French secular epic,” especially 60-61. Gurevich concluded rather ambiguously that medieval “learned and popular culture represented different traditions within the context of one culture” (*Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages*, ed. Jana Howlett [Chicago and Cambridge, 1992], 39-40).

⁹³ *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981).

⁹⁴ *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*, 12. See also her “Magic, miracle and popular practice.”

⁹⁵ “‘Religion populaire’, culture folklorique, mentalités,” 228 and *passim*.

literacy, professional preoccupations, privileged status and the discipline to which they were subjected, they (especially the members of the higher clergy) participated in another, elite, clerical culture as well as the common one. They identified themselves primarily with this culture which they saw as standing apart from and above the rest of society. This might have been, as Michael Richter claimed in a slightly different context, “wishful thinking ... rather than a reflection of how things were in life.”⁹⁶ Nevertheless, such an attitude enabled them to “folklorise” the elements of popular culture that they condemned by ascribing them to subordinate groups labelled contemptuously “rustics”, “the rabble”, “the ignorant or stupid”, or “worthless women” (*mulierculae*).

But this popular culture was not monolithic. The texts allow us to distinguish beliefs and customs associated principally with certain social groups: spinning- and weaving-women’s cults, herdsmen’s and farmers’ magic, military cults, even monks’ and clerics’ drinking customs and commemorative rituals. A host of details about cults, rites and magic centring on fertility and reproduction, protection, love and black magic indicate the existence, at least in the minds of churchmen, of a subculture belonging specifically to women. Traces of distinct ethnic cultures also emerge in the use of a vernacular term or name, more often in nonstereotyped injunctions directed at individual ethnic groups. Descriptions of Galicians’ unusual divinatory rituals, the alimentary habits of Irish outcasts, Frankish and Lombard Yuletide rituals, Anglo-Saxons’ mutilations of themselves and their horses, Saxon funerary practices and healing practices unique to Spaniards reinforce evidence found in legal codes, oral tradition and, to a certain extent, archaeology of the diversity of ethnic cultures.⁹⁷ Even purely local cultures appear, although very rarely, in our texts, as in Agobard of Lyons’ account of the cult of an otherwise unknown saint.⁹⁸ It is more accurate, therefore, to think in terms of a plurality of popular cultures rather than of a single, all-embracing culture.⁹⁹

1.2. CONTEXT

1.2.1 *Western European paganisms*

The use of the single, general word “pagan” to describe non-Christian reli-

⁹⁶ *The Formation of the Medieval West*, 254. Richter was talking of the distinction between literate and oral cultures.

⁹⁷ It should be noted that at this period ethnic identities were highly flexible, allowing for the inclusion of different groups in the *gens*. The studies collected in *Strategies of Distinction* emphasise the difficulty of using the usual signifiers (language, weapons, hair, names, burial customs, *etc.*) to determine ethnicity. For the emergence of ethnic communities in the Roman world, see Patrick Geary, “Barbarians and ethnicity,” in *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G. W. Bowersock, Peter Brown and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1999), 107-129.

⁹⁸ *De quorum inlusione signorum* (828-834) 1, *CCCM* 52: 237.

⁹⁹ This is recognised in studies such as Gasparri’s *La cultura tradizionale dei Longobardi*, Lifshitz’s *Pious Neustria*, and Jolly’s *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England*.

gions and customs should not obscure the differences in belief and practice among various social and ethnic groups—differences almost universally ignored by the authors of medieval pastoral literature. Classical, especially Roman, paganism provided their terms of reference, although the knowledge of Roman paganism came to most at second hand, through the writings of St. Augustine and Isidore of Seville. The same formulas were used almost everywhere in Western Europe throughout our period: cults of Roman deities, descriptions of idols, recourse to soothsayers, love magic, spells, alimentary taboos. However, it was a heterogeneous reality that underlay these terms. A deity might have had a Latin name but was not identical with the Roman god; Germanic idols did not resemble the statues of Roman deities; soothsayers used different techniques; love magic was determined by the institutional form that marriage took in different cultures; spells differed in form and purpose; the meaning of alimentary practices varied from place to place. Ian Wood insists on the existence of a plurality of Germanic paganisms “determined by geographical factors and by contrasting social and political structures.”¹⁰⁰ The same may be said of other traditional religions as well. Moreover, layers of paganism were superimposed one upon another wherever the movement of populations, settlers, armies, merchants and refugees brought different peoples into contact. The form that paganism took was highly dependent on locality and time.

Medieval missionaries and pastors, therefore, found themselves faced with indigenous religious concepts and attitudes that had many common features, but which also showed marked particularities. Understanding their critique of their flocks requires that we look to the pre-Christian religions for the origins of beliefs and practices that remained pertinent in the early centuries of Christianisation.¹⁰¹

*Prehistoric religions:*¹⁰² Relatively little is known about prehistoric European religions, and much of what is surmised is based on preconceived notions and imaginative recreations of states of mind, cultic practices and social organisation.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ “Pagan religions and superstitions east of the Rhine,” 264.

¹⁰¹ See Ken Dowden, *European Paganism; The Realities of Cult from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (London and New York, 1990). For pre-Christian religions in the Roman Empire, with special emphasis on archaeology, see Jules Toutain, *Les cultes païens dans l'empire romain*, 3 vols. (1905-1907; Rome, 1967). This work, despite its drawbacks (it is almost a century old, it has a minimum of interpretation, it touches Great Britain only marginally and Ireland, of course, not at all, and the lack of an index makes access to the vast amounts of information it contains difficult) is still an invaluable survey of the subject. For a chronological analysis of pre-Christian religions in Great Britain, see Hutton, *The Pagan Religions*.

¹⁰² See Karl J. Narr, “Approaches to the religion of early paleolithic man,” *History of Religions* 4 (1964): 1-22; E. O. James, “Prehistoric religion,” in *Historia religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions*, 1, *Religions of the Past*, ed. Claas Juoco Bleeker and Geo Widengren (Leiden, 1969), 442-94; Marija Gimbutas, “Prehistoric religions,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, 1987) 11: 505-515; Dragoslav Srejovic, “Neolithic religion,” trans. V. Kostic, *ibid.*, 10: 352-360.

¹⁰³ See, for example, the different views of the existence of and evidence for a generalised

What evidence exists has survived mostly in caves, where wall-paintings, deposits of bones and footmarks point to magical and/or religious rituals, and in burial-sites implying a belief in an afterlife and a cult of the dead. Excavations of dwellings in the Balkans suggest that domestic religion centred around the hearth, with storage areas also being considered sacred; rituals focused on activities such as weaving and grinding grain. Women undoubtedly played an important role in these, and perhaps in communal rituals also. Their nature must be extrapolated from written descriptions of religious practices from a later period, such as offerings of wine and grain on the family hearth in Roman domestic religion, the magical protection of the bounds of houses and settlements, the spells used well into the Middle Ages to ensure the success of weaving, or the sacrificial rituals of Romans, Celts and Germans.

Roman religion: Of these, Roman religion is the best documented.¹⁰⁴ This also was composed of different layers—primitive Roman religion (which Herbert Rose characterised as “polydaimonism” rather than polytheism¹⁰⁵) and the religions of the family, the city and the state, culminating in the imperial cult. Added to these were components drawn from Etruscan divinatory techniques and Oriental mystery religions. Roman administrators, soldiers, colonists and merchants, together with their womenfolk and servants, carried these with them to all parts of the

neolithic cult of “mother-goddesses” in the region stretching from the Indus Valley to north-western Europe, e.g., James, “Prehistoric religion;” *idem*, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess* (New York, 1994); Gimbutas, “Prehistoric religions;” A. Fleming, “The myth of the Mother Goddess,” *World Archaeology* 1 (1969): 247-261; P. Ucko, “The interpretation of prehistoric anthropomorphic figurines,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 92 (1962): 38-54.

¹⁰⁴ The sources for Roman religion are archaeological and literary, the writings of poets (e.g., Ovid, Horace), historians, (Varro, Polybius) and statesmen (Cato, Cicero). Standard works are: W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People from the Earliest Times to the Age of Augustus* (1911; New York, 1971); Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* (trans. Philip Krapp; Chicago and London, 1966); Herbert Jennings Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion* (1948) reissued in *Religion in Greece and Rome* (New York, 1959), 157-312; Jean Bayet, *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine* (Paris, 1969); R. M. Ogilvy, *The Romans and their Gods* (New York, 1969); R. Schilling, “The Roman religion,” in *Historia religionum* 1: 442-494. Despite re-evaluation of his approach and some of his findings, Franz Cumont’s work, e.g., *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (1911; trans. from the French; New York, 1956) is still a major influence on the study of religious syncretism in the late Empire, see Walter Burkert in *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1987) and the papers presented in *Les Syncretismes religieux dans le monde méditerranéen. Actes du Colloque International en l’honneur de Franz Cumont à l’occasion du cinquantième anniversaire de sa mort. Rome Academia Belgica, 25-27 septembre 1997*, ed. Corinne Bonnet and André Motte (Brussels, 1999). For mystery cults, see also M. J. Vermaseren, “Hellenistic religions,” in *Historia religionum* 1: 495-532. Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven and London, 1981). For the imperial cult, see D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1991) and Robert Turcan, “Le culte impérial au IIIe siècle,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, 36 vols., ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase, (Berlin and New York, 1972-), 16.2: 996-1084.

¹⁰⁵ *Ancient Roman Religion*, 172. See also Fowler, *Roman Religious Experience*, 116-123.

Empire, to merge with local cults.

The main function of Roman religion was the protection of the state and the family through the establishment of the right relationship with the gods or *numina*. Although state and private religion were quite separate, they exercised a degree of mutual influence. Some aspects of state religion were simply extensions of domestic religion: the public rites of Vesta, Janus and the state *penates* and *lares* may have originated as cults of the king's household, while the official calendar set aside dates for such private rites as the *Parentalia* and *Compitalia*. The essence of religion was the accurate performance of ritual; its principal ethical component was *pietas*, the scrupulous fulfillment of duty toward the gods, the state and the family. Precision was extremely important: the deity had to be addressed with exactly the right titles, prayers formulated in exactly the right words, and the terms of the agreements between man and god spelled out in the smallest detail.

In addition to the high gods and goddesses, with their own priests or priestesses and a public cult, and the *Di Manes*, the deified dead, there were dozens of gods and goddesses of varying importance, some known only by name and function, without priests of their own. Other deities could be added as convenient.

The Roman liturgical calendar, reformed during the early 7th century B.C. by Numa and then by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C., was based on a solar year of twelve months. Days were identified according to their sanctity, and most forms of secular activity were banned for at least part of days sacred to the gods (*dies nefasti*). The greatest feast of the year was celebrated on the Calends of January, which combined official, public and private celebrations. Feasts of the dead occurred in February and May. Numerous festivals celebrated the cycles of the warfaring and growing seasons. Principal features of most were a public procession to the shrine of the appropriate deity to offer sacrifices, the slaughter of ritual beasts of which the entrails were burned on the altar and the flesh either eaten in a communion banquet or sold on the market,¹⁰⁶ and in some cases games, which simultaneously provided honour to the god, self-advertisement for the rich and entertainment for the poor.¹⁰⁷

Originally, the Romans appear to have worshipped not in temples, but in or by a holy place such as a wood, clearing or fountain, where an altar made of turf or stone was surrounded by a roofless enclosure, the *fanum*. The altar and enclosure remained characteristic of Roman shrines even when the Romans began to erect roofed temples, probably in imitation of the Greeks.

Private religion, concentrated on the family and the home, was intended to protect the *familia*, the household composed of blood relatives living together, with

¹⁰⁶ This was the main source of meat available in the markets, and created a problem of conscience for Christians who did not wish to eat idol-food.

¹⁰⁷ On games, see R. Auguet, *Cruauté et civilisation. Les jeux romains* (Paris, 1970); Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, trans. B. Pearce (abridged; London, 1990); Georges Ville, "Les jeux des gladiateurs dans l'empire chrétien," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 72 (1960): 273-335.

their dependents, servants and belongings, all under the authority of the *paterfamilias*. Like the heart of the city itself, homesteads were circumscribed by a sacred boundary. This, the cemetery, the spring and the house were the points of “special anxiety” around which domestic religion revolved.¹⁰⁸

The Roman attitude toward the dead was ambivalent, compounded of loving reverence and superstitious dread. On the one hand, dead ancestors joined the *penates*, the deities honoured daily in the household. On the other, the very sight of a dead man and of anything to do with death was polluting. The concept of life after death was not comforting: unless disposed of properly the dead would, as *larvae* and *lemures*, walk and make mischief for the living. Originally, the body was buried within the house, but in historical times the corpse was interred in a cemetery or burned. The body, having been borne out of the house (feet first, to keep it from finding its way back), was carried in procession to its final destination. In the case of the rich, this could be a macabre affair, with trumpets and horns, dancers, mimes, clowns, keeners, masks of dead ancestors and effigies of the dead man. A funeral banquet was eaten at the graveside then and nine days later, after which the dead man was considered assimilated to the *Di Manes*.

Roman citizens may have continued to practice their family cults privately but by the late Empire, Oriental mystery religions had largely superseded the public cults of the Republic and early Empire. These had first entered Rome by way of Greece, where they had been introduced by Alexander the Great. Despite early resistance in Rome (at first only Cybele was allowed a place within the heart of the city) and continued caution and suspicion on the part of the religious elite, they established themselves increasingly in the city and the empire, until their popularity eventually overwhelmed the old cults. The most important were the cults of Isis and Serapis from Egypt, Cybele from Phrygia, Mithra from Persia and *Sol Invictus* from Syria. Their main appeal seems to have lain in the intense personal rapport that believers could achieve with the deity through conversion and participation in spectacular and emotionally satisfying ritual, in the discipline that they imposed, and in the hope that they offered of salvation and a personal afterlife. The feeling of belonging to a select group of initiates into sacred mysteries and the comradeship that comes from belonging to such a group must have exercised great appeal especially for those who were traditionally excluded from positions of power and prestige: women, foreigners and slaves.

Of the Oriental religions, the only one to achieve empire-wide official status was the cult of *Sol Invictus*, brought into Rome from Syria. The initial attempt of the emperor Heliogabalus (218-222) to replace Jupiter by this foreign deity failed, but in 274, the emperor Aurelian proclaimed *Sol Invictus* to be the official god of the empire. Other gods, although still tolerated, were made subordinate to him.

¹⁰⁸ Fowler, *Roman Religious Experience*, 68-73

Celtic paganism.¹⁰⁹ On the European continent, the largest group with whom the Romans came into contact were the tribes known as the Celts. “Celt” was a general term used by classical authors for the barbarians of northwestern and central Europe, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural traditions. Insofar as it is indicated by burial customs, sacrifices and ornamental motifs, Celtic religion was not static but evolved with changes in material culture and with contact with other peoples: Greeks, Romans, Germans, indigenous populations, even the Scythians. The exact nature of Celtic paganism is vague since archaeological materials are difficult to interpret without the aid of written documents, and contemporary Celts left no written accounts of their own.¹¹⁰ Surviving contemporaneous accounts were written by outsiders to Celtic culture (e.g., Julius Caesar, Pliny, Strabo, Dio Cassio), while Welsh and Irish literature was compiled well after the events described, by monks whose knowledge was at best partial and whose conscious or unconscious bias and misunderstandings coloured the narratives. Nevertheless, the testimony of classical writers concerning the role of the druids, wood- and water-cults and head-hunting is borne out by archaeology and Celtic literature, and it has been claimed that some of the Irish epics copied by monkish scribes show “ways of thinking and behaviour more archaic than anything Homer sung of.”¹¹¹ Hagiography is one of the richest, if most difficult to evaluate, sources for Celtic paganism.¹¹²

Given the wide dispersion of the Celts (from Galatia in Asia Minor and the sources of the Danube to the Atlantic Ocean and the British Isles), one may expect significant variations from region to region, but certain features appear to have been generally present: nature cults, the cult of mother-goddesses, triplism, a belief in some kind of after-life, use of solar and sky motifs in art. Topography provided the Celts with their holiest spaces. Favoured locations were mountains,

¹⁰⁹ For Celtic religion, see J. A. MacCulloch, *The Religion of the Ancient Celts* (1911; London, 1992); Toutain, *Les cultes païens* 3: 121-470; Françoise Le Roux, *Les druides* (Paris, 1961); A. Maartje Draak, “The religion of the Celts,” in *Historia religionum* 1: 629-646; J. de Vries, *La religion des Celtes*, trans. L. Jospin (Paris, 1963); Nora K. Chadwick, *The Druids* (Cardiff, 1966); Hilda R. E. Davidson, *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe* (London and New York, 1993). See also Miranda Green, *The Gods of the Celts* (1986; reprint, Dover, N. H., 1993), *Symbol and Image in Celtic Religious Art* (London and New York, 1989, 1992) and *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend* (London, 1992); Enrico Campanile, “Aspects du sacré dans la vie personnelle et sociale des Celtes,” in *L’homme indo-européen et le sacré*, ed. R. Boyer et al., (Aix-en-Provence, 1995), 155-182.

¹¹⁰ For the sources for Celtic and Germanic religions, see Davidson, *Lost Beliefs*, 11-86. The Gundestrup Cauldron presents a good example of the kind of problems encountered in archaeology. Neither its date nor its origins are known (estimates vary from the 4th century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D., from northern Gaul to the Danube valley) and, while it is generally accepted that the scenes depicted have religious and mythological significance, it is impossible to interpret them for lack of explanatory texts.

¹¹¹ Draak, “The religion of the Celts,” 630.

¹¹² Charles Plummer found numerous pagan elements in the Lives of Irish saints; see the introduction to *VHS*, lxxxiv-clxxxviii.

hilltops and other rock formations (particularly among the Iberocelts), trees and groves and, above all, water in all its forms.

Relatively little is known about Celtic religious rites, except for what is suggested by remnants of offerings and ex-votos. Altar furnishings indicate that they offered libations, though rarely. More common were other kinds of offerings such as first fruits, figurines, lamps, vessels of all description, axes, keys, torques, wheels, coins, weapons, antlers, all of which have been found in man-made and natural sanctuaries. Statuettes of swaddled infants, children and adults or carvings of different parts of the body were left at healing shrines. Representations of animals, domesticated or wild, some with mythological attributes (three-horned bulls, crowned serpents) are also common. Animals were offered in sacrifice either to be burned in a holocaust or, less frequently than among the Greeks, Romans and Germans, eaten as part of a communal feast. There is written and archaeological evidence for the practice of human as well as animal sacrifices, although the former were probably an exceptional part of public religion. The officiants may have been Druids, reputedly a highly trained professional class, whose members combined the functions of priest, seer, royal adviser and sorcerer. In addition, there is reason to believe that there were Celtic priestesses who performed sacrifices and acted as seers and healers.¹¹³

According to Pliny, the Celts followed the lunar calendar. Even in the supposedly Druidic Coligny calendar (first century A.D.?), which attempted to fit the lunar months into the solar year, the first half of the month, when the moon waxed, was considered lucky, and the second, when it waned, unlucky.¹¹⁴ Seasonal celebrations were held in November, May and August (known in Ireland as *Samhain*, *Beltene* and *Lughnasadh* respectively), and also at midsummer, a few days after the solstice.

Divination was widely practiced. Druids or *vates* were said to find portents in entrails, the flow of blood and the death throes of victims. Omens could be read in the flight and song of birds as well. Dreams were prophetic, especially if dreamt while sleeping on a grave, or wrapped in cowhide, or after eating the flesh of sacred animals. Other methods involved shaman-like trances, pieces of wood, chewing acorns or hazelnuts, or the adoption of special postures—the antlered figure engraved on the Gundestrup Cauldron is shown sitting in a typically shamanlike pose, and it has been suggested that it represents a shaman, not the god Cernunnos. Curses were a Druidic specialty, but were also much practiced pri-

¹¹³ Strabo reported that the priestesses of a small island in the mouth of the Loire destroyed the roof of their temple every year and rebuilt it that same day to the accompaniment of the sacrifice of one of their number—a rite, de Vries suggested, meant to open a new period of time (*La religion des Celtes*, 225-227). There is no mention of Druidesses in the classical period, and the *dryades* gifted with prophetic powers who are mentioned in the 3rd century A. D. appear to have been merely fortune-tellers or sorceresses (Chadwick, *The Druids*, 78-80 and 99; Toutain, *Les cultes païens* 3: 407).

¹¹⁴ See J. A. MacCulloch, "Calendar (Celtic)," *ERE* 3: 79-82.

vately, as in the case of theft. Some were inscribed on lead tablets (*defixiones*), usually asking for the restoration of stolen goods and for punishment of enemies.¹¹⁵

The Celts who came under the influence of the Roman Empire adopted many of the forms of Roman religion, though with characteristic features, *e.g.*, temples composed of two concentric structures, monuments such as Jupiter columns and the merging of the names and attributes of Roman and Celtic divinities. The upper classes enthusiastically embraced the imperial cult, which gave them access to rank and power in the administration of the empire. This and other cults of Roman divinities largely obscure the older Celtic religions, but the extent to which they affected the actual beliefs and practices of ordinary persons cannot be gauged.

Germanic paganism:¹¹⁶ Archaeology, toponymy, etymology, the writings of more or less contemporary authors, both classical (especially Julius Caesar and Tacitus¹¹⁷) and medieval (sermons, letters, the *Vitae* of missionary saints, legal texts, and Histories such as those written by Bede, Saxo Grammaticus and Adam of Bremen), mythology (much of it by way of sagas originating in Christianised Iceland) and folklore provide the sources for Germanic religion.¹¹⁸ The possible ignorance, bias and misunderstandings on the part of the authors make the reliability of these sources questionable. However, unlike Celtic religion, which was already falling under Roman influence when classical authors took note of it and which showed little resistance to Christianity, Germanic paganism continued

¹¹⁵ *E.g.* on a cursing tablet found in London: "I curse Tretia Maria and her life and memory and liver and lungs mixed up together, and her words, thoughts and memory, thus may she be unable to speak what things are concealed" (Green, *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*, *s.v.* "Curse").

¹¹⁶ For Germanic paganism, see Julien Ries, *Pensée religieuse indo-européenne et religion des Germains et des Scandinaves* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1980); Georges Dumézil, *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*, ed. and trans. Einar Haugen *et al.*; Berkeley, 1973); R. L. M. Derolez, *Les dieux et la religion des Germains*, trans. F. A. L. Cumen (Paris, 1962); *idem*, "Les Germains" in *Religions du monde* (Paris, 1965) 11: 61-137; Régis Boyer and Eveline Lot-Falck, *Les religions de l'Europe du Nord* (Paris, c. 1974); Herbert Schutz, *The Prehistory of Germanic Europe* (New Haven and London, 1983); David Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (London and New York, 1992); Régis Boyer, "Le sacré chez les Germains et les Scandinaves," in *L'homme indo-européen*, 185-213. See also Davidson, *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe* and *idem*, "Germanic religion," in *Historia religionum* 1: 611-27.

¹¹⁷ What little Caesar had to say about German religion seems very much off the mark but, although he did not claim personal knowledge of all that he described, much of what Tacitus wrote about religion is supported by other sources (*Germania*, 27). For a discussion of Tacitus' sources and credibility, see Clarence W. Mendell, *Tacitus. The Man and his Work* (1957; reprint, New Haven, 1970), 199-222.

¹¹⁸ For a discussion of the sources, see Ries, *Pensée religieuse*, 52-60, and Davidson, *The Lost Beliefs*, 11-86. Dumézil based himself almost entirely on mythology and language for his analysis of German religion; by contrast, Ries relies heavily on written documents, and Schutz on archaeology.

to flourish and evolve well into the Christian era. It knew a period of exceptional vigour during the Viking period centuries after the continental Germans were converted. But what the pagan Germans themselves thought is unknown for they, like the Celts, left no written account of their own to throw light on their beliefs. The written evidence comes from two different areas, periods of time, and points of view. On the one hand, material dealing with the continental Germans dates as far back as the beginning of the Roman Empire; it is presented from the Roman and then the Christian point of view. It gives a good deal of information about practices and ritual, but little about mythology. The Scandinavian material, dating from a much later period, is rich in mythology, less so in descriptions of cult. Nevertheless, archaeology suggests strongly that the religion of the continental Germans and the Scandinavians had many features in common.¹¹⁹

Disentangling the religion of the Celts from that of the Germans, especially those of the western part of the European continent (for example, the Frisians, Franks and Saxons), is difficult.¹²⁰ The mythologies are distinctly different, but religious practice appears very similar. Both worshipped their gods in nature, paid cult to trees and placed sacrificial offerings in bogs and lakes, had mother-goddesses (it is not clear, for example, whether Nehelannia was a Celtic or Germanic goddess of abundance), practiced a cult of the dead. Often the difference seems to be one of degree—for example, the cult of the head is generally accepted as being part of Celtic religion, but there is also evidence for it, though on a much lesser scale, among the Germans. Celtic, continental Germanic and Scandinavian art also have much in common in content, motif and style.

To Caesar and Tacitus, the Germans had astonishingly few gods. According to the former, they knew of only three: the Sun, Vulcan and the Moon; according to the latter, Mercury, Hercules and Mars. In addition, claimed Tacitus, Isis was worshipped by some of the Suebi, Nerthus by several minor tribes in Jutland and the Alci (“Castor and Pollux”) by the Nahonarvali.¹²¹ In fact, the Germans had a whole host of more or less important deities divided into two categories: the “high

¹¹⁹ Ries, following J. De Vries (*Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 3rd ed., 1970), insists that the study of the religions of the south and north Germans cannot be separated as they are the expressions of a single Germanic religious thought-system (*Pensée religieuse*, 62). For the sagas, see Régis Boyer, *Sagas islandaises* (Paris, 1992).

¹²⁰ Ries pointed out that the term Germanic refers to a linguistic not a racial concept (*Pensée religieuse*, 35). The identification of German ethnicity was due to the Romans who applied the name *Germani* to certain groups living to their north. Caesar defined the Rhine as the boundary between the Celts and the Germans on the basis of strategic and political, not ethnic, considerations. According to Schutz, this was a self-fulfilling prophecy: “Had Caesar not identified certain tribes as Germanic, no one would have concluded that they were anything but Celts.” After Caesar, those living west of the Rhine became increasingly Celticised, those east, Germanised: “The undeniable effect of Caesar’s conquests was the splitting-up of the old world of the La Tène, contributing to the compacting of western Europe into two distinct cultural areas” (*The Prehistory of Germanic Europe*, 337-347).

¹²¹ Caesar, *De bello gallico* 6, 21; Tacitus, *Germania* 40, 43.

gods” of mythology, very few of whom enjoyed any discernible cult, and a large number of other divinities of whom neither myth nor sometimes even name is known, but to whom cult was evidently paid. The principal deities whose cult survived well into the Christian era were Thor and Woden, roughly identified with Jupiter and Mercury. Numerous other beings (giants, dwarves, kobolds, nixes) also figure in myth and folklore. The gods were not supreme; like men, they were subject to Destiny (*nyrd*), sometimes represented as a goddess with weaving implements, sometimes as three sisters, the Norns.

Tacitus claimed that the Germans refused to imprison their gods in man-made temples, or even to represent them in human guise; instead they worshipped them, as abstractions, in sacred woods and groves.¹²² Trees were the link between men and gods. Jean-Louis Brunaux noted that, unlike the Celts for whom a post or column could satisfactorily symbolise a sacred tree, the Germans venerated the tree in its natural form only.¹²³ Mountains and bodies of water also were sacred. Tombs, burial mounds and other places haunted by the dead, such as crossroads, were also holy as being the threshold between this world and the next.

The most widely celebrated festival was held at Yuletide. It was a feast of the dead, the dangerous time when the Furious Host, the army of the dead, rode out in search of new recruits. It was the custom in all Teutonic countries to plough around the field at this time, perhaps as a form of protective magic. The meaning of other seasonal festivals varied according to region: the spring festival opened the agricultural year for the continental Germans and the seafaring and warfaring season for the Scandinavians; in Saxony, the autumn festival celebrated the dead, but in Scandinavia it was a harvest feast, a time particularly propitious for marriages.

The principal components of German religious practice were sacrifice, feasting and divination. The favoured sacrificial beasts were stallions, bulls and boars, “fighting animals, appropriate offerings for warrior peoples.”¹²⁴ Their flesh was shared between gods and men in communal feasts. Human sacrifices are mentioned in the literature and substantiated by archaeology but, as with the Celts, they must have been quite uncommon and restricted to times of crisis.¹²⁵ Many

¹²² *Germania*, 9.

¹²³ “Les bois sacrés des Celtes et des Germains,” in *Les bois sacrés. Actes du Colloque International organisé par le Centre Jean Bérard de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études (Ve section), Naples, 23-25 Novembre 1989* (Naples, 1993), 57-65; here, 64. The symbolic importance of trees is one of the best-attested elements of Germanic religion both in mythology and in Christian literature. In the *Eddas*, man and woman were created from an elm and an ash; the cosmic tree Yggdrasil was the very centre of Asgard, the meeting-place of the gods; the oak was sacred to Thor; Odin had to hang on a tree for nine days. Christian missionaries and churchmen fought relentlessly against the cult of trees: Caesarius of Arles preached against it, St. Boniface felled the sacred oak of the Hessians, Charlemagne had the world-pillar Irmensul chopped down.

¹²⁴ Davidson, *Lost Beliefs*, 90.

¹²⁵ See Hilda R. E. Davidson in “Human sacrifice in the late pagan period in north western Europe,” in *The Age of Sutton Hoo*, 331-340.

cases of apparent sacrifice admit of other explanations: punishment for crime, murder, unknown burial-rituals, mutilation after death. Blood was not always shed, for the sacrifice could be hanged, strangled or drowned. Festivals, tribal assemblies and funerals were celebrated with banqueting, sports and games, racing and, sometimes, animal combats. The most important element of the feast was drinking. Beer was specially brewed, toasts were offered to the gods and to the dead, and drunkenness was a sacred obligation, particularly at funeral feasts.

The Germans had both priests and priestesses, although apparently these did not constitute a priestly caste similar to the Druids. German women enjoyed a higher status than did their contemporaries elsewhere, so much so that a shocked Tacitus recounted that the Sitones had “degenerated” to the level of submitting to feminine rule.¹²⁶ Although there are indications that priestesses were involved in human sacrifices, Derolez believed women’s prestige came from their personal charisma rather than from official status, and that their principal role was in family rituals and in the cult of fertility deities.¹²⁷

Divination was important in both public and domestic religion. Here again women had a major role, which gave some of them considerable influence in political matters. Specialised knowledge was passed from mother to daughter. Divinatory techniques included casting lots, observing currents of water and the behaviour of animals, and interpreting dreams.

1.2.2. *Christianisation and conversion*¹²⁸

The great achievement of the Church during the early Middle Ages was the conversion or re-conversion of most of Western Europe.¹²⁹ Christianity had been

¹²⁶ *Germania*, 45.

¹²⁷ *Dieux et religion*, 186, 195.

¹²⁸ The studies of conversion collected in *Conversion to Christianity. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1993) provide useful insights as to the problems faced by medieval Christians. Of particular interest are Charles F. Keyes’ description of the missionary activity of a Buddhist abbot in Thailand (“Why the Thais are not Christians: Buddhist and Christian conversion in Thailand,” 259-283) and David K. Jordan on the mechanisms of conversion and “faith maintenance” in China (“The glyptomancy factor: Observations on Chinese conversions,” 285-303).

¹²⁹ For surveys of the history of the Christianisation of Western Europe, see Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe; From Paganism to Christianity (371-1386 AD)* (London, 1997); Eugen Ewig, “The missionary work of the Latin Church,” in *History of the Church 2*: 517-601; *Évêques, moines et empereurs*, 607-670 and 718-725. For the personnel and methods of the missions, see J. T. Addison, *The Medieval Missionary: A study of the Conversion of Northern Europe, A. D. 500-1300* (1936; Philadelphia, 1976). For different approaches to the problems of conversion, see Agnès Boulouis, “Références pour la conversion du monde païen aux VIIe et VIIIe siècles; Augustine d’Hippone, Césaire d’Arles, Grégoire le Grand,” *REAug* 33 (1987): 90-112; Alain Dierkens, “Pour une typologie des missions carolingiennes,” in *Propagande et contre-propagande religieuse*, ed. J. Marx (Brussels, 1987), 77-93; J. M. Hillgarth, “Modes of evangelisation of Western Europe in the 7th century,” in *Irland und die Christenheit*, 311-331; Ian Wood, “Pagans and holy men, 600-

well-established in Roman Spain, Gaul and Britain, but the Church had lost ground during the Germanic invasions of the 5th and 6th centuries. Only Ireland, which had never formed a part of the Roman Empire and was just in the process of being converted, was spared the experience of invasion. Elsewhere a kind of folk-paganism re-emerged, especially among the rural populations who had little access to the services of priests during the time of troubles. Even among some of the educated, there were signs of a pagan revival: in Rome itself during the pontificate of Gelasius I (492-296), a senator attempted to celebrate the *Lupercalia* (15 February) against the plague.¹³⁰

In the relative peace under the rule of the new barbarian kingdoms, the Church had to win over the Arian Germans to Catholicism, convert the other Germanic tribes to Christianity, and strengthen the faith and discipline the morals of the faithful. These tasks were achieved at varying rates.¹³¹ With the rulers' support, the conversion of the Visigothic and Suevan Arian Christians went rapidly after the first setbacks. Where the Church had to convert a people as yet relatively untouched by Christianity, success was sometimes slower in coming.¹³²

800," *ibid.*, 347-361; Michael Richter, "Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons;" Robert A. Markus, "Gregory the Great and a papal missionary strategy," in *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith* ed. G. J. Cuming, (Cambridge, 1970), 29-38. Richard E. Sullivan's studies of various aspects of missionary work, reprinted in *Christian Missionary Activity*, are indispensable for the history of this period. See also Élisabeth Magnou-Nortier, "La christianisation de la Gaule (VIe-VIIe siècles). Esquisse d'un bilan et orientation bibliographique," *Mélanges de science religieuse* 53 (1996): 5-12; Martine De Reu, "The missionaries: The first contacts between paganism and Christianity," in *The Pagan Middle Ages*, 13-38.

¹³⁰ *Lettre contre les luperciales*, ed. G. Pomarès, *SC* 65 (Paris, 1959). See also A. W. J. Holleman, *Pope Gelasius I and the Lupercalia* (Amsterdam, 1974).

¹³¹ *La conversione al cristianesimo* presents regional studies of different aspects of conversion in Western Europe. Only a few of many other studies are mentioned here: For Ireland, Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (London, 1966); Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200* (London and New York, 1995), 14-40. For England, Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd. ed., London, 1991); James Campbell, "Observations on the conversion of England," in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), 69-84; Ian Wood, "The mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English," *Traditio* 69 (1994): 1-17. For Iberia, E. A. Thompson, "The conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism," *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 4 (1960): 4-35; *idem*, "The conversion of the Spanish Suevi to Catholicism," in *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James (Oxford, 1980), 61-76. For Gaul, Lucien Musset, "De St. Victrice à St. Ouen: La christianisation de la province de Rouen d'après l'hagiographie," *RHÉF* 62 (1976): 141-15; C. E. Stancliffe, "From town to country: the christianisation of the Touraine, 370-600," in *The Church in Town and Countryside. Papers Read at the Seventeenth Summer Meeting and the Eighteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1979), 43-59; Werner, "Le rôle de l'aristocratie"; Nancy Gauthier, *L'évangélisation des pays de la Moselle. La province romaine de Première Belgique entre Antiquité et Moyen-Âge, IIIe-VIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1980). See also Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity*; Manselli, "Resistenze dei culti antichi."

¹³² Personal (notably marital), political and commercial contacts were the usual preliminaries to conversion. Moreover, old-established Christian enclaves probably existed in the midst of

The conversion of the Franks was inaugurated by the baptism of Clovis (c. 496) but as late as the mid 7th century public signs of pagan cults were being openly displayed in the countryside.¹³³ The Angles and Saxons of England were converted during the 7th century, thanks to separate initiatives on the part of Gregory I and Irish monks from Lindisfarne.¹³⁴ During the same period, under the influence of Luxeuil and the monks who had followed St. Columban to the continent, the first, mostly unsuccessful efforts were made to convert the Frisians and the tribes beyond the Rhine, a task taken up systematically at the end of that century by English missionaries encouraged and protected by Frankish rulers. By St. Boniface's death (754), the Alamanni, Hessians and Thuringians had been converted to Christianity, but it was only near the end of the century that the Saxons reluctantly accepted Christianity. In the territory beyond, among the Scandinavians, Slavs and Hungarians, paganism continued to thrive despite missionary inroads.

This first phase of conversion affected chiefly the exterior forms of religious life. The populace was baptised, the shrines, temples and public cults of the old deities were suppressed and the structures and rituals of the Christian Church were set in their place. But among many, the attitudes and beliefs that had informed private cults and domestic religion persisted. This was at least in part a result of the method of conversion generally adopted, which emphasised group loyalty rather than personal conviction. Undoubtedly there were numerous individual conversions, the work of hermits and itinerant preachers.¹³⁵ But, given the numbers of people to be converted, and the conceptual and linguistic gulf separating them from the Christian missionaries, the more highly organised missionary campaigns were directed at tribal kings and leaders, not at the masses. The means varied. They ranged from preaching, as in Kent and Northumbria, to preaching backed by political pressure, as in Frisia and Hesse, to outright force in which missionaries played a role secondary to the military, as among the Saxons and Wends. Once the rulers had been prevailed upon to accept the new faith, the conversion, or, at least, the Christianisation, of their subjects usually followed

largely pagan territory, as they did in England before St. Augustine's arrival in Kent, see Campbell, "Observations on the conversion of England," 14-16. The missionary activity of St. Columban was among lapsed Christians, not pagans.

¹³³ See Vacandard, "L'idolâtrie en Gaule au VIe et au VIIe siècle."

¹³⁴ But see Rob Meens on British missionary activity among the Anglo-Saxons before St. Augustine arrived in Kent, in "A background to Augustine's mission to Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994): 5-17.

¹³⁵ Many of such conversions were the work of the Irish *peregrini*, for whom "activity in conversion was really a by-product of their lives as monastic exiles and pilgrims" (Addison, *The Christian Missionary*, 13). Their achievements depended on their personal charisma, their piety, ascetism, miracles and preaching ability, but often they failed to follow up their initial successes with the establishment of the permanent structures necessary to safeguard the faith.

upon a very rudimentary catechesis.¹³⁶

The case of the Franks may serve as an example. In Gregory of Tours' account, Clothilde and St. Remigius had been attempting to persuade Clovis of the truth of Christianity with scant success until he was finally convinced by his victory over the Alamannians at Tolbiac in 496.¹³⁷ Thereupon "all the people" announced that they, too, rejected their old gods. Over three thousand of Clovis' warriors followed him to the baptismal font. Not the smallest suggestion is made that St. Remigius had tried to proselytise among them previously, or had provided them with any form of religious instruction before administering the sacrament.

That people converted thus have a profound understanding of the implications and requirements of their new religion was not to be expected.¹³⁸ Public paganism was eliminated relatively easily because, suggests Ian Wood, it was tied to social and political structures that changed with the acceptance of the new religion.¹³⁹ Private customs and beliefs were another matter. Oronzo Giordano maintained that the old religion was not replaced; rather, a new layer had been added to a pre-existing religiosity.¹⁴⁰ One historian went so far as to doubt whether most supposed Christians in the early Middle Ages could be considered as Christian in anything but name.¹⁴¹ Real education in the meaning of Christian life

¹³⁶ Richter distinguishes between conversion and Christianisation and points out "that the latter can take place without the former in the narrow religious sense," that is, conversion as defined by Nock ("Models of conversion in the early Middle Ages," 122).

¹³⁷ On the state of Clovis' actual beliefs, see William M. Daly, "Clovis: How barbaric, how pagan?" *Speculum* 69 (1994): 619-664.

¹³⁸ For an analysis of the problem of the change from paganism to Christianity, see Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest*, especially 1-36; Robert A. Markus, "From Caesarius to Boniface: Christianity and paganism in Gaul," in *Le septième siècle. Changements et continuités / The Seventh Century: Changes and Continuity. Actes du Colloque bilatéral franco-britannique tenu au Warburg Institut les 8-9 juillet 1988*, ed. Jacques Fontaine and Jocelyn N. Hillgarth (London, 1992), 154-172; Karras, "Pagan survivals and syncretism in the conversion of Saxony;" Appleby, "Spiritual progress in Carolingian Saxony." For the recognition by contemporary churchmen of conversion as a gradual process, see Olivier Guillot, "La conversion des Normands peu après 911. Des reflets contemporains à l'historiographie ultérieure (Xe-XIe s.)," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 24 (1981): 101-116 and 181-219. Paolo Golinelli maintained that the methods of conversion adopted, from above or with force, resulted in the bipolarisation of Christianity between the educated class and the masses ("La religiosità popolare tra antropologia e storia," in *La terra e il sacro. Segni e tempi di religiosità nelle campagne bolognesi*, ed. Lorenzo Paolini [Bologna, 1995], 1-9).

¹³⁹ "Pagan religions and superstitions east of the Rhine," 264.

¹⁴⁰ *Religiosità popolare*, 13. This is a point also made by Richter: conversion was not the "substitution of one set of beliefs by another" but "the acceptance and importation of new ideas and ways of life into previously existing modes" (*The Formation of the Medieval West*, 40).

¹⁴¹ L. G. D. Baker, "The shadow of the Christian symbol," in *The Mission of the Church*, 17-28; here, 25. Baker dismissed medieval forms of rural piety as "Christian paganism" (*ibid.*, 27). Cf. a modern missionary's opinion of the spiritual condition of the Aymaras of South America, who had been formally converted to Christianity in the 15th century, and who considered themselves to be *muy catolicos*, that the main contribution of Christianity had been to furnish the indigenous

often came after baptism as the missionary phase of conversion gave way to the pastoral, with the establishment of a network of monasteries and of parishes subject to periodic visits of inspection by the bishop. Force was still sometimes advocated; particularly when a territory was officially Christian, it was an attractive option.¹⁴² In time, other methods became more important: the elaboration of the liturgy, preaching, and the use of confession to educate the faithful. The focus, however, remained on external conformity to ritual.

1.3 SOURCES—PASTORAL LITERATURE

Pastoral care may be defined broadly as all the measures taken under the aegis of the Church for the spiritual, moral and even physical welfare and doctrinal orthodoxy of the faithful.¹⁴³ For the early Middle Ages, the essence of pastoral care, as explained by Gregory the Great in his enormously influential *Regulae pastoralis liber*, was teaching the faithful in the terms best adapted to the particular character and circumstances of each individual.¹⁴⁴ In practice, this meant that those charged with the cure of souls were obliged to observe the behaviour of the members of their flock closely, and to develop means to combat the failings that they found. Pastoral literature is the written form in which this care and these observations are recorded.

1.3.1. *Value and limitations*

On its face, this type of literature is of questionable value as a source for popular religion and culture since the clerical authors were, by virtue of their position, hostile witnesses to any form of belief and practice that did not conform to the norms set by the Church. It is, however, the principal source of information about popular mentality and behaviour during the early Middle Ages. Archaeology and art provide data valuable for material culture but are difficult to interpret with respect to beliefs and rituals. Most forms of written documents have little or nothing to say about the lives of ordinary persons, who left no written records of

population with a new vocabulary that allowed them to express their traditional beliefs in Catholic terms (Monast, *On les croyait chrétiens*, 17). Many of the magical or religious practices deplored by medieval missionaries have exact parallels in the Aymara rituals described by Monast.

¹⁴² Caesarius of Arles exhorted landowners to destroy shrines and sacred trees on their estates, and heads of families to beat their children and slaves if they persisted in pagan practices. Gregory I instructed the bishop of Sardinia in the methods to be used against idolaters and the clients of soothsayers: beatings for slaves and close confinement for the free. King Erwig threatened Visigothic landlords with the loss of property rights if they failed to punish their slaves for participating in pagan cults. Martin of Braga, on the other hand, appears to have relied solely on the effects of instruction and argument, while St. Aidan and St. Cuthbert, according to Bede, preached assiduously to the inhabitants in remote areas.

¹⁴³ See J.-P. Bagot, "Pastorale," in *Catholicisme* 10: 765-774 and William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaeckel, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective. An Essay with Exhibits* (1964; New York, 1967).

¹⁴⁴ *PL* 77: 13-128.

their own and to whom others paid scant attention. Histories and chronicles concentrated on the unfolding of God's design through the doings of great men, while the best minds of the age devoted themselves to theological controversy, exposition of the Bible, the means of achieving perfection and the development of the liturgy. The humble appear in hagiography and the Germanic legal codes, but merely as objects of the miraculous powers of the saint and of the demands or punitive force of the law. Folk songs and folk tales, such as those that Charlemagne is said to have collected, have virtually disappeared, at least in their vernacular form.¹⁴⁵

An immense body of contemporary works contains scraps of relevant material, often of a kind and precision missing from normative texts. St. Patrick's Confession bears a trace of an Irish fosterage ritual in the account of the saint's refusal "to suck the breasts" of the Irish sailors who carried him to freedom.¹⁴⁶ The *Medicina antiqua* describes the virtues of specific kinds of herbs together with the proper rituals for their use.¹⁴⁷ The witches' cauldron is found in the Salic Law.¹⁴⁸ A soothsayer known as an *umbrarius* appears in another Germanic Law, and a *librarius* in the *Life of St. Samson of Dol*.¹⁴⁹ Even theological works and exegeses may contain folkloric elements. In an exposition of Scripture, Caesarius of Arles warned his hearers against believing that the prophet Elisha used his staff for magic (*augurium*). It was meant as an aid to walking, he assured them, not for other, suspect purposes—a caveat which makes sense only if 6th-century Provençal magicians used their staffs as magic wands.¹⁵⁰ But in all of these, popular culture occupies a small, almost incidental, place. It was only in pastoral literature that, from time to time, the focus was turned on ordinary men and women in themselves.¹⁵¹

None even of these sources give direct access to the religious culture of the illiterate masses—all are filtered through the minds and words of the clerical

¹⁴⁵ Einhard recorded Charlemagne's attempt to collect and have written down "the barbaric and very ancient songs which celebrated the deeds and wars of the kings of old" (*Vita Caroli Magni* 29, *MGH Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum* 25: 33). For an example of heroic Carolingian poetry, see *MGH Poetae Latini Aevi Karolini* 1: 109-110, and a translation by Paul Edward Dutton in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader* (Reprint; Peterborough, 1999), 48. For oral vernacular literature, see also Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West*, 231-254.

¹⁴⁶ *Confessio*, 18 in *Confession et Lettre à Coroticus*, ed. and trans. Richard P. C. Hanson *SC* 249 (Paris, 1978), 88. See John Ryan, "A difficult phrase in the 'Confession' of St. Patrick: *Reppuli suggere mammellas eorum*," *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (1938): 293-299.

¹⁴⁷ *Medicina antiqua: Libri quattuor medicinae. Fac-similé du Codex Vindobonensis 93, conservé à Vienne à la Bibliothèque nationale d'Autriche*. French trans., Marthe Dulong; studies by Charles H. Talbot and Franz Unterkirchen 2 vols. (Paris, 1978).

¹⁴⁸ *Pactus Legis Salicae* 64.1, *MGH Leg* 1.4.1: 230.

¹⁴⁹ *Edict of Theodoric* 108, *MGH Leg* 5: 164; *Vita Samsonis* 2-5, *AASS* Iul 6: 574-575. I am obliged to J.-C. Poulin for this reference.

¹⁵⁰ *S.* 128.7, *CCSL* 103: 529-530.

¹⁵¹ See Boglioni, "Pour l'étude de la religion populaire au moyen âge."

authors. But pastoral literature, normative literature in particular, offers the best avenue of approach. By their nature, laws (including secular laws affecting religion), penitentials, to some extent sermons, and other documents concerning pastoral problems were intended to deal with practices and beliefs which their authors were convinced to be prevalent among their contemporaries.

But to argue for the authors' good faith is not necessarily to argue for their accuracy. One may well ask how right they were in this conviction. Their interpretations of the behaviour they castigated as pagan or superstitious is, as has been seen, open to question. In an age when political and religious considerations were closely intertwined, it is certain that political motivations were mixed with the purely pastoral, and the exact weight to give one or the other is debatable.¹⁵² The authors may have erred in attributing pagan meanings to customs and used tendentious definitions of Christianity. What they wrote, however, presents less of a problem than what they did not write. The limited number of themes which our texts touch upon and the absence of reference to numerous areas of life raise the question as to how well even the most conscientious member of the hierarchy knew his charges. The parish clergy might have known them very well, but the amount of feedback between them and their superiors during parish visitations and regular diocesan assemblies is doubtful: only one of the ninety-six questions that Regino of Prüm recommended bishops to ask parish clergy concerns the laity's conduct—a striking contrast to the numerous detailed questions found in penitentials.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, among the authors of pastoral literature were some of the ablest men of their generation, surely most of whom took their spiritual responsibilities seriously. Their conceptual world was conditioned not only by training, professional biases and political pressures, but also by the society within which they lived and carried out their duties. A close reading of their writings opens a window not only on their mentality but on that society as well.

The question of bias aside, this literature has other serious drawbacks as a

¹⁵² For example, it is generally agreed that legislation aimed at uprooting traditional Saxon practices was motivated by the determination to integrate Saxony forcibly into the Carolingian empire and destroy local particularities; see Bonnie Effros, "De *partibus Saxoniae* and the regulation of mortuary custom. A Carolingian Campaign of Christianization or the suppression of Saxon identity," *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire* 75 (1997): 267-286. On the other hand, while both Lifshitz and Markus agree that the *paganiae* attacked by St. Boniface and the early Carolingians were practices tolerated as Christian by the Merovingian Church, they differ in their interpretation of the dynamics of the campaign against these practices. The former considers Boniface, "prelate sidekick" of ambitious princes, largely as a tool manipulated by the Carolingians to justify their having seized power (*Pious Neustria*, 58-62); the latter sees Boniface as struggling to eliminate genuine abuses in the Merovingian Church and, at the same time, to introduce his own ascetic ideal "of what being a Christian involved" (*The End of Ancient Christianity*, 211).

¹⁵³ *De synodalibus causis* (c. 906) 73: 24. For parish visitations as a method to raise the standards of Carolingian parish clergy, see E. Vykounal, "Les examens du clergé paroissial à l'époque carolingienne," *RHE* 14 (1913): 81-96.

source specifically for paganism, pagan survival and superstition, and for popular culture as a whole. In the first place, even it has relatively little to say on such subjects. Its focus was primarily on theological questions and matters of institutional concern, such as clerical discipline, the responsibilities of bishops, priestly celibacy, and church property. The laity was a lesser consideration, and references to popular beliefs are sporadic at best. Of the over five hundred and fifty canons enacted by Gallican Councils between 511 and 695, barely over thirty, about six percent, concern what might be called paganism and superstition. Less than ten percent of the three hundred and thirteen clauses of the influential *Penitential* of Theodore deal with this topic. The overwhelming majority of medieval sermons never touched it at all. This is true even of the sermons of Caesarius of Arles, one of the principal sources for the early medieval attitude to and interpretation of popular paganism and superstition. Only forty-four (about eighteen percent) of the almost two hundred and fifty sermons or fragments of sermons that have been identified as his contain even a passing reference to them. At best, this literature provides only isolated glimpses of popular culture and religion.

Moreover, although many modern historians accept without hesitation that this data, scanty as it is, is authentic evidence for actual beliefs and practices,¹⁵⁴ their validity is debatable. They are found in texts written over five centuries, under varied political and social circumstances, in areas far removed from each other, with varied climatic and topographical characteristics; they were intended ostensibly for peoples of different backgrounds, customs and languages. It cannot be doubted that throughout the period and area being considered, Christians indulged in practices that struck their pastors as pagan survivals and/or superstitions, but one might expect them to have varied from place to place and time to time. Yet, when it comes to these subjects, the same themes appear again and again. The very words in which they are expressed are often the same. Often we must ask whether these stereotyped words and phrases were a convenient form of shorthand used by clerics (whose precarious grasp of Latin might not have allowed them to depart from the usual patterns) to draw the attention of diocesan and parish clergy and civil authorities to well-known local practices, or merely formulas emptied of their original meaning, with no relevance to actual conditions.

Incongruous juxtapositions of material and the complex relationships between the sources add to doubts about the reliability of the information they contain. Canons from 4th-century Asia Minor, Africa and Spain were reproduced in Carolingian decrees. An 8th-century English council included among its decisions those of a Frankish council reported to it by St. Boniface. Practices first described in 6th-century sermons intended for the inhabitants of southern Gaul and north-western Iberia were assembled, scissors-and-paste fashion, in sermons presumably delivered to the Alamannians and northern Franks of the 8th century, and ele-

¹⁵⁴ E.g., Dukes, *Magic and Witchcraft* and Giordano, *Religiosità popolare*. See also Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity*, 109-110 (especially n. 9) and 201-202.

ments drawn from Caesarius of Arles turned up in 10th-century Anglo-Saxon texts.¹⁵⁵ Penitentials in particular are notoriously derivative. The *Penitential* of Theodore of Canterbury took some of its dietary prohibitions from the Irish *Penitential of Cummean*, and the *Old Irish Penitential* returned the compliment by citing Theodore's authority. The compilers of continental penitentials copied with abandon from their insular predecessors and from each other, sometimes combining several different works into one. Copying crossed genres as well, so that practices that first appeared in conciliar decrees found their way into sermons, or vice versa, and material from both into penitentials. Such a welter of borrowings and cross-borrowings compromises the credibility of the texts. Under these circumstances can they be used at all as sources for popular religion?

In effect, Wilhelm Boudriot and Dieter Harmening have said no. They argued that the authors copied one from another (especially from Caesarius of Arles) to such an extent that the texts often prove nothing more than the persistence of literary tradition and give little credible information about the customs of the people living at the time and in the places where they were written.¹⁵⁶ For Boudriot, the documentation was unsatisfactory as evidence specifically for pre-Christian Germanic religion; he accepted its validity for the superstitions ("Aberglauben") of southern Gaul in the 6th century.¹⁵⁷ For Harmening, it was of doubtful value for medieval European superstitions altogether, since it was based on concepts drawn from the Mediterranean world of late Antiquity and largely borrowed by Caesarius himself, from St. Augustine.¹⁵⁸

These assessments are surely too pessimistic. Jean Gaudemet considered the frequent repetition of the same prescriptions in general as proof of noncompliance with the canons.¹⁵⁹ Aron Gurevich, Jean-Claude Schmitt and William E. Kling-

¹⁵⁵ See Joseph B. Trahern, "Caesarius of Arles and Old English literature: Some contributions and recapitulations," *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976): 105-119.

¹⁵⁶ Boudriot, *Die altgermanische Religion*; Harmening, *Superstitio*. Others (e.g., Boese, *Superstiones Arelatenses*, 20-56) had noted Caesarius' influence on subsequent pastoral literature without perceiving the implications.

¹⁵⁷ Boudriot accepted only a handful of texts without reservation: some of Gregory the Great's letters, St. Boniface's correspondence with the papacy and his English friends, Charlemagne's legislation for the Saxons, two Old German baptismal formulas, resolutions issuing from the Council of Neuching, and many of the questions in Burchard of Worms' penitential. The legislation associated with the Carolingian reforms and empire which contained material going back to an earlier period of the Frankish Church he found of more questionable value. The sermons of Pirmin of Reichenau, Burchard of Würzburg and Rabanus Maurus and the *Homilia de sacrilegiis* he rejected as utterly worthless as evidence of German paganism (*Die altgermanische Religion*; 7-8). This, with some modifications, is also Dowden's position, *European Paganism*, 149-166.

¹⁵⁸ For the relationships between medieval texts and their literary sources, both Late Antique and medieval, see *Superstitio*, 320-337. For a summary of the sources used by Caesarius in his sermons, see G. Morin, *Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis Sermones*, CCL 103, xix.

¹⁵⁹ *Les sources du droit de l'Église en Occident du IIe au VIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1985), 110.

shirn saw them as proof (in Gurevich's words) of "the stability of the vital phenomena" described in the literature.¹⁶⁰ Even the highly repetitive penitentials were, according to Gurevich, "practical guides and not exercises of abstract learning devoid of any connection with the time when they were composed."¹⁶¹ Cyrille Vogel went farther. Since these booklets were intended to help confessors in their pastoral tasks, they were "the reflection, incomplete perhaps, but faithful, of the moral and spiritual atmosphere" which surrounded Christians at the place where and time when each penitential was written. Their chaotic organisation and crudeness, he claimed, vouched for their value as historical documents, more than would have tidy lists compiled by scribes without personal knowledge of pastoral problems.¹⁶² As for councils and synods, it is unlikely that the participants spent much time debating matters of no immediate concern to them. The practical nature of most of their other decisions testifies to the relevance of our texts. The testimony of busy administrators and conscientious pastors must be taken seriously, if with reservations, especially since they did not copy previous material wholesale, but selectively.

Occasionally, we are given direct evidence that a stereotyped description or text was in fact relevant to the actual situation. In a letter written c. 847 to settle a debate about the permissibility of a certain type of divination (*sortes*), Leo IV referred the bishops of Brittany to a frequently cited canon issued by the Council of Ancyra (314), concerning divination and the lustration of houses by soothsayers. He pointed out that the *sortes* were similar to the practices described by Ancyra, and the same judgment applied to them.¹⁶³ Here a formulation adopted in Asia Minor in the 4th century was being applied to a ritual (similar, therefore not identical) practiced in 9th-century Brittany. In the mid 8th century, St. Boniface wrote to the pope complaining of eye-witness reports of scandalous celebrations in Rome using much the same terms in which Caesarius of Arles had castigated the revellers in the Narbonnaise some two centuries earlier; the pope was not able to refute the accusation in his reply.¹⁶⁴ Archbishop Hervé of Reims' early 10th-century account of the consumption of sacrificial foods by the recently

¹⁶⁰ Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, 37; Schmitt, "Les 'superstitions'," 450-451; Klinghshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 283-284.

¹⁶¹ Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, 37. Yitzhak Hen, however, thought that these documents expressed a "mental reality rather than a practical one," that is, the mind-set of the authors rather than the lay culture surrounding them (*Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul*, 171). See also *idem*, "Paganism and superstition in the time of Gregory of Tours: 'une question mal posée,'" in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Ian Wood et Kathleen Mitchell (Leiden, 2002), 229-240. For Harmening's response to Gurevich, see "Anthropologie historique ou herméneutique littéraire: Une critique ethnographique des sources médiévales," *Ethnologie française* 27 (1997): 445-456.

¹⁶² *Le pécheur et la pénitence* (Paris, 1969), 40.

¹⁶³ Leo IV to the bishops of Brittany (847-848) *Ep.* 7, *MGH Ep* 5: 594.

¹⁶⁴ Boniface to Zacharias (742) *Ep.* 50, *MGH EpSel* 1: 84; Zacharias to Boniface (743) *Ep.* 51, *ibid.*, 90.

converted Normans, echoed in John IX's letter to him, is an almost word-for-word reiteration of phraseology standard in the literature from the earliest period on, that they ate of the food which they had sacrificed to idols.¹⁶⁵

Boudriot's and Harmening's criticisms have hardly received the attention that they merit,¹⁶⁶ yet the arguments and counter-examples above only prove that customary formulations may have corresponded in some general way to actual behaviour. It remains true that the testimony for individual practices can be accepted only if they can be authenticated independently. Rudy Künzel proposed nine criteria for identifying descriptions based on actual observation: (1) the existence of a description of a similar practice in texts of a different genre (for example, hagiography and the Germanic legal codes); (2) the presence of a new, nonstereotypic term in the midst of a series of standard terms; (3) the description of the same practice, in the same area, in two independent texts written at two periods long removed from each other; (4) different interpretations in the texts of the same practice; (5) a new element added, plausibly given the historical context, to a description of an old rite; (6) the use of a vernacular term in the Latin text; (7) the purpose of the text (for example, baptismal vows designed for a specific group); (8) the degree of conformity to a stereotype—the less stereotypic a document is, the more likely it is to present authentic information; (9) the existence of an element given an incongruously Christian interpretation (for example, the characterisation of a poltergeist as a demon).¹⁶⁷ To these may be added as tenth criterion the omission of an important element from an otherwise stereotyped list of terms (such as the disappearance of the *caragius* from lists of cunning men after the mid 9th century); this implies, although it does not prove, that the text was written under the influence of actual conditions. By applying these criteria through a systematic study of the documents we arrive at a limited number of texts which, Carlo Ginzburg has shown, are "more rewarding than the massive accumulation of repetitive evidence" which makes up the bulk of the documentation.¹⁶⁸

But even when the information given is not stereotypical, it cannot be accepted automatically as representing real beliefs or customs in the place or time to which it supposedly applies. We seldom know the source on which the authors themselves relied. The descriptions of Anglo-Saxon and Saxon idols drawn by Gregory I and Gregory II respectively may well have been based more on memories of Mediterranean cults than on precise knowledge of Germanic practices. The most detailed source for 6th-century Iberian popular culture and

¹⁶⁵ John IX, *Ep.* 1, *PL* 131: 29.

¹⁶⁶ Flint, for instance, in her important study of the Church's response to popular culture, acknowledges the influence of Caesarius of Arles' sermons on subsequent literature, but minimises its importance: "Caesarius's long shadow reached into many corners, and perhaps on occasion convenience, rather than true contemporary feeling, prompted the repetition of his vehement words" (*The Rise of Magic*, 43).

¹⁶⁷ "Paganisme, syncrétisme et culture religieuse au haut moyen âge."

¹⁶⁸ "The inquisitor as anthropologist," in *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, 164.

paganism is Martin of Braga's model sermon *De correctione rusticorum*. But Martin of Braga (520-580) was a Pannonian by birth; he had travelled extensively in the East before arriving c. 550 in Galicia where he became abbot, then, in 556, bishop, of Dumio and later Archbishop of Braga. He was involved in the conversion of the Suevi to Catholicism, in theological controversies and in the redaction of an important set of canons (the *Canones ex orientalium patrum synodis*, also known as the *Canones Martini*) and of various other works. How was he able to familiarise himself with the private practices of Galician "rustics"—offerings of wine and grain on the hearth, invocation of Minerva by spinning- and weaving-women, secreting of rags and crumbs in boxes? If he relied on his own observations, did he make them in Galicia or elsewhere in his youth or while on his travels, and then put them into his sermon on the assumption that such were the universal practices of countryfolk?

This brings us to the two-fold problem of language. On the one hand, we may question how well the clergy understood the speech and customs of their flock, an issue of which Carolingian reformers were quite aware.¹⁶⁹ In general, practices are usually only mentioned in the texts, not described.¹⁷⁰ No doubt, this was due in part to the authors' disdain for anything that they considered pagan, and their unwillingness to examine it closely or describe it accurately. In part, also, they may have expected their readers to be familiar with the matter at hand and to be able to apply the lesson without having the details spelled out. But this must have been due at least sometimes to an inadequate knowledge of the language spoken by their charges. Could Martin of Braga really converse with the Iberic and Suevan laity of his diocese? Was Caesarius of Arles, who may have been Burgundian rather than Gallo-Roman by birth, able to understand the speech of all the different groups that made up the multi-ethnic population of his diocese—Gallo-Romans, Syrians, Greeks, Egyptians, Jews, Burgundians, Goths, Franks? The Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionaries may have learned the native languages well enough to preach intelligibly to Frisians, Franks and other Germans, but did they comprehend fully the daily, homely vocabulary in which their flock spoke to them? The early 9th-century Poen. Valicellanum I exceptionally glosses six terms dealing with reprobated practices: *mathematicus, fana, veneficium, sacrilegium, cervulus aut vetula*

¹⁶⁹ On the difficulty of translating unfamiliar concepts into the language of a different cultural milieu, and resulting misunderstandings, see Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (reprinted with corrections, Oxford, 1989), 11-14. For the early medieval period, see Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms 789-895* (London, 1977), 80-114, and Francesco Delbono, "La letteratura catechetica di lingua tedesca. Il problema della lingua nell'evangelizzazione," in *La conversione al cristianesimo*, 697-741. For missionaries' problems of communicating with the Anglo-Saxons, see Richter, "Practical aspects of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons," 370-371, 375. See also Pierre Boglioni, "Les problèmes de langue dans les missions du haut moyen âge d'après les sources hagiographiques," (work in progress).

¹⁷⁰ The poverty of early medieval documents in this respect is strikingly evident when contrasted with the wealth of detail found in later texts, such as the Franciscan sermons examined by Montesano in "Supra Acqua et supra ad vento'."

and *sortes sanctorum* (astrologer, shrines, sorcery, sacrilege, masquerades, the lottery of the saints). Every one of these is standard, found regularly in penitentials, yet a conscientious scribe could fear that they were unfamiliar to the very men for whose guidance they were intended. At the beginning of the 11th century, Burchard of Worms found it necessary to explain vernacular terms for the benefit of confessors: *XL dies continui quod vulgus carinam vocat, homo in lupum transformari quod teutonice Werewulff vocatur, agrestes feminae quas sylvaticas vocant, herba jusquiamus quae Teutonice belisa vocatur* (forty days of fasting, werewolf, woodwives, henbane)—this in an area converted, or reconverted, by St. Boniface two hundred and fifty years earlier.¹⁷¹

On the other hand, the largely uniform Latin vocabulary of the texts does not do justice to the diversity of the cultures and periods described.¹⁷² A word that had one meaning in the Romanised world of the Mediterranean had quite a different meaning when applied to the culture of the northern Celts and Germans. The *magus* of a 7th-century Irish canon had little in common with the Persian magicians of late Antiquity, nor the *pitonissa* of an 8th-century Frankish sermon with the Witch of Endor or the priestess of Delphi. The “wicked songs” (*cantica turpia*) of 9th-century Mainz were not likely to be the same even in spirit as the “wicked songs” of 6th-century Arles. Documents from every century and every region of the period and area covered in this work forbade the faithful in almost identical terms to offer vows to trees (*vota ad arboreis*), without indicating the differences that must have existed from place to place and time to time as to the kinds of tree, vows and ritual involved. The monotonous reiteration of words and phrases creates a deceptively homogeneous appearance of an undifferentiated folk paganism stretching from the Mediterranean to the Irish Sea and the Rhine, from late Antiquity to the end of the Carolingian Empire.

Other kinds of vocabulary problem are rarer. Some words are used once only, without explanation. What was the nature of the sorcery known as *canterma* in the Sicilian dialect at the end of the 6th century? or of *dadsisas*, a ritual practiced over graves at the middle of the 8th around Hainaut? or of the *maida* under which candles were burned in northern Italy during the winter festival at the end of that century? The difficulty may come from the use of a familiar term in an unfamiliar context. How to interpret an Iberian canon forbidding clerics and pious laymen from participating in feasts with *conferti*? Does this really mean sausages, or is it a mistake for confraternities, *confratritiae*? Or, when another Spanish text consistently gives the spelling *monstruosa* in passages where it must mean “menstruous,” can we be wholly sure that it does not mean “menstruous” again in a passage where “monstrous” is normally expected? In other cases, the entire text is phrased so

¹⁷¹ See Burchard of Worms, *Decretum* (1008-1012) 19, 5.1, 5.151, 5.152 and 5.194, Schmitz 2: 409, 442 and 452.

¹⁷² Cf. Richter’s observation that “the Latin language is a most inadequate tool for grasping aspects of early medieval cultures outside the sphere of Latin” (*The Formation of the Medieval West*, x).

confusingly as virtually to defy understanding.¹⁷³

Slight differences in standard passages also pose a difficulty for interpretation. Do they represent a spelling variation only, or did the author or scribe intend a difference in meaning? Is an *emissor tempestatum*, for example, identical to an *immissor tempestatum*, or is one a malign sorcerer who summons a devastating hailstorm, the other, a benign wizard who chases it away? Do all the passages condemning the notorious New Year's practice of going as or with a *vetula*, *vecula*, *vecola*, *vegula*, *vebicula*, *uicula*, *vetulus*, *feculus*, refer to the same thing? How much was due to the authors' observation of local practices, and how much to scribal errors repeated by the parish priest during confession or while preaching at the altar, to be taken up and put into practice or adapted by the faithful?

Under these circumstances, it is often difficult to make a categorical statement about the exact meaning of a text or the prevalence, even the existence, of a practice or belief at any given period or in any given place. If I have relied heavily on equivocations ("they might have," "it may be assumed," "conceivably," "possibly," "presumably," *etc.*), it is in recognition of the ambiguousness of the material.

1.3.2 Typology

Legislation: The term legislation is taken to include both ecclesiastical and secular laws. The laws of the Church are expressed in decisions of church councils and synods, diocesan regulations, and canonic collections (penitentials are considered separately).¹⁷⁴ The secular laws considered here are the regulations

¹⁷³ An extreme example is this passage from a Spanish penitential: Si quis mulier qui uiros ad benedicentes barbas succenderint, sibe qui capillos in sola fronte benedictos tonserint, et postea, quod absit, ad deformitate(m) peruenerint, agenda sit eis penitentia annos VII (*Poen. Cordubense* [10th century] 129, *CCSL* 156A: 64). *Deformitas* here means fornication, according to the editor, Francis Bezler (private communication), but even with this help, the exact meaning of the text is impossible to decipher. On the subject of the psychoanalytical and anthropological significance of hair, see Edmund Leach, "Magical Hair," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 88 (1958): 147-164.

¹⁷⁴ The bibliography for ecclesiastical legislation is immense. Only a small selection is given here. For an inventory of sources, see Augustus Potthast, *Repertorium fontium historiae Medii Aevii primum ab Augusto Potthast digestum, nunc cura Collegii historicorum e pluribus nationibus emendatum et auctum*, 7 vols. (Rome, 1962; 1997). Jean Gaudemet presents a systematic organisation of the different forms of law in *Les sources du droit de l'Église en Occident* and *Les sources du droit canonique* (Paris, 1993), 17-41. For general histories of councils, see Hefele-Leclercq, vols. 3 and 4, and Piero Palazzini, *Dizionario dei concili*, 6 vols. (Rome, 1963-1968). A. G. Cicognani, *Canon Law*, trans. J. M. O'Hara and F. Brennan (2nd revised ed., Philadelphia, 1935) is still useful as a model of clarity despite its outdated vocabulary. For summaries, see James. A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London and New York, 1995), 18-43; Constant van de Wiel, *History of Canon Law* (Louvain, 1991) 11-75; David Knowles with Dimitri Obolensky, *The Christian Churches, 2, The Middle Ages* (London 1969), 138-145. For the value of such sources for social history, see Walter Ullmann, "Public welfare and social legislation in the early medieval councils," in *The Church and the Law in the Earlier Middle Ages V*, Variorum reprints (London, 1975); Franz J. Felten, "Konzilakten als Quellen für die Gesellschaftsgeschichte des 9. Jahrhunderts," in *Herrschaft, Kirche, Kultur. Beiträge*

affecting religion, chiefly embodied in Carolingian capitularies. Capitularies, strictly speaking, are the collections of the edicts of Carolingian rulers, from 779 to the beginning of the 10th century, but the term is also applied to the edicts of Merovingian rulers. Unlike the Germanic laws which were personal and ethnic, that is, the particular customary laws, prerogatives and obligations of each national group (for example, the Alamanni), Carolingian edicts emanated from the will of the sovereign, were territorial in scope and limited to the lifetime of the sovereign. However, after Charlemagne was crowned emperor in 800, his legislation began to infringe on the rights enshrined in customary law.

The decisions of councils and synods, bishops' *capitula* and capitularies form the most authoritative part of pastoral literature from the point of view of popular culture. The date and the location of councils and synods, often even the names of the participants, are known. The date and the purpose for which capitularies were issued are also well defined. Bishops' regulations or *capitula* (usually quite short) are likewise clearly identified. It is fair to assume that most of these were in response to specific problems experienced at the particular time and in the particular place where it was issued.¹⁷⁵

The value of collections as records of actual practices and beliefs is more doubtful. Nevertheless, since the majority of them (such as the *False Decretals*) allowed such subjects only a very small place while others (such as the *Collectio Anselmo dedicata*) ignored them altogether, the very fact that the compiler chose to include them may be significant. In some—maybe most—cases, the inclusion of such canons may be the result of the desire to be as complete as possible. How else is one to understand the repetition in the *Epítome hispánico* and the *Hispana* of clauses concerning Christians who lapsed during the persecutions before the Peace of the Church? But when a clearly spurious canon is attributed to the distant past, it is evident that the compiler had in mind some current problem. The most striking example of this is the well-known *Canon Episcopí* concerning Diana's cavalcade, which was attributed by Regino of Prüm (c. 906) and Burchard of Worms (1008-1012) to the fourth-century Council of Ancyra. The intention was evidently to add weight to a contemporary canon, by invoking the authority of a prestigious council of the remote past.

*Penitentials and penitential texts:*¹⁷⁶ Penitentials were manuals meant to provide

zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, ed. Georg Jenal and Stephanie Haarländer (Stuttgart, 1993), 177-201.

¹⁷⁵ For synods and bishops capitularies, see Guy Devailly, "La pastorale en Gaule au IXe siècle," *RHÉF* 59 (1973): 23-54. For evidence for a considerable amount of familiarity with such legislation among the parish clergy, see Yitzhak Hen, "Knowledge of canon law among rural priests. The evidence of two Carolingian manuscripts from around 800." *Journal of Theological Studies* 50 (1999): 117-134.

¹⁷⁶ Penitentials assign a specific penance for each sin; penitential texts lay down rules for discipline, but do not prescribe a specific penance. For the history and development of penitentials, Gabriel Le Bras, "Pénitentiels," *DTC* 12.1: 1160-1179, is still valuable; see also Allen J. Frantzen, "Bussbücher," *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 2: 1118-1123. Frantzen's *The Literature of Pen-*

guidelines to priests in the administration of private penance. In essence, they were more or less detailed catalogues of sins, with an appropriate penance suggested for each, depending on the sin and the status of the sinner.¹⁷⁷ This system of penance according to a price list (“la pénitence tarifée”) had its origins in 6th-century British and Irish Celtic monastic communities that practiced private confession rather than the public penance customary in the early Church and on the continent.¹⁷⁸ Since private penance implied that some of the sins to be confessed were not generally known to the community, questions touched on the most intimate thoughts and deeds.

On the continent, where they were first introduced by Irish, then Anglo-Saxon, missionaries in the 7th and 8th centuries, the penitentials enjoyed a widespread popularity.¹⁷⁹ Since many parish priests did not have the skill and knowledge necessary to administer the sacrament effectively and to mete out appropriate penance, the authors or compilers of penitentials provided them with a minimal tool to help them in their pastoral duties when once a year, before the beginning of Lent, they were required to summon their flocks to the sacrament of penance.¹⁸⁰ In addition, traditional Germanic law, based on the principle of compensation or *weregeld*, provided a favourable environment, despite the opposition of bishops who feared that these often ill-organised and anonymous booklets of foreign provenance allowed too much autonomy to priests at the expense of episcopal authority.¹⁸¹ The use of penitentials reached its peak between approx-

ance in Anglo-Saxon England (New Brunswick, N. J., 1983) outlines the history of penitentials and provides an excellent analysis of Irish, English and Frankish penitentials. A discussion of penitentials and translations of some of the most important ones are found in John T. McNeill and Helena Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal ‘Libri Poenitentiales’ and Selections from Related Documents* (1938; reprint, New York, 1990), 3-71. Martine Azoulai, *Les péchés du Nouveau Monde. Les manuels pour la confession des Indiens (XVIe-XVIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1993) throws a light on missionaries’ perception of native culture, and is useful for purposes of comparison.

¹⁷⁷ All penance, according to one of the earliest of the penitentials, that of Cummean (before 662), was to be adapted to take into account how long the sinner continued in the sin, his education, the temptation to which he was subject, his moral fibre, his degree of repentance, and the compulsion under which he sinned, for “Almighty God who knows the hearts of all and has bestowed diverse natures will not weigh the weights of sins in an equal scale of penance” (Bieler, 132-3; Bieler’s translation).

¹⁷⁸ For the history of penance, see Cyrille Vogel, *Le pécheur et la pénitence dans l’Église ancienne et Le pécheur et la pénitence au moyen âge*. See also O. D. Watkins, *The History of Penance*, 2 vols. (reprint, New York, 1961), especially vol. 2. The origins of private penance are discussed in Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, 22-26.

¹⁷⁹ See Raymund Kottje, “Überlieferung und Rezeption der irischen Bußbücher auf dem Kontinent,” in *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. H. Löwe (Stuttgart, 1982), 511-524.

¹⁸⁰ Rosamond Pierce (McKitterick), “The ‘Frankish’ Penitentials,” *Studies in Church History* 11 (1975): 31-39; here, 38.

¹⁸¹ See, for example, the *Lex Saxonum* (MGH Legum 5: 47-84). For the opposition of the Frankish hierarchy to the penitentials, see Pierce, “The ‘Frankish’ Penitentials,” and the critique of this article by Allen J. Frantzen, “The significance of the Frankish Penitentials,” *Journal of*

imately 700 and 950, then gradually declined. From the 12th century onward, the new theology of penance put the emphasis increasingly on interior contrition rather than external disciplinary practices; accordingly, the penitentials lost their function and came to be replaced by *Handbooks for Confessors* better adapted to the new approach.

Focusing as they do on each individual's actions and thoughts, penitentials cover the widest range of reprobated practices and beliefs: public actions such as masquerades and processions, semi-public ones such as mourning rites and the consultation of cunning folk, and the most private ones, such as dream adventures and the concoction of love potions. Almost every penitential contains material that may be considered to deal with pagan survivals and superstitions in some form. Nevertheless, such documents were accepted only slowly as a source for early medieval and cultural history since, despite the wealth of information that they contain, the claim of most penitentials to represent reality accurately stands on shakier ground than does the claim of either legislation or sermons.¹⁸²

Some scholars found the subject matter of the penitentials distasteful or implausible. Charles Plummer, displaying a concern which does not greatly afflict modern historians, could not see how "anyone could busy himself with such literature and not be the worse for it."¹⁸³ Nora Chadwick questioned their credibility when it came to the more extreme articles, and ascribed them to the excessive conscientiousness and over-active imagination of the monastic authors.¹⁸⁴ However, Pierre Payer argued forcefully that if there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the penitentials when they dealt with such a workaday sin as murder, it is unreasonable to doubt it when they came to other, more exotic sins.¹⁸⁵ This applies to idolatrous and magical practices as well as the type of practices treated by Payer. There is, of course, a difference between more or less public acts, or those of which the effects are publicly visible, and secret acts and beliefs. The testimony of the penitentials on the former must be accepted—it is as sure that people participated in drunken wakes as that they stole each other's livestock. It may not be equally sure that they concocted and administered love philtres. A measure of uncertainty about such secret practices is unavoidable. But there is no need to assume that the clergy frequently resorted to invention, since there cannot be many beliefs and practices listed in the penitentials which anthropologists have not encountered in other cultures.¹⁸⁶

Ecclesiastical History 30 (1979): 409-421.

¹⁸² Thomas P. Oakley was one of the first to recognise the value of this once despised form of document for historical research; see "The penitentials as sources for medieval history," *Speculum* 15 (1949): 210-223. For penitentials as a "mirror" of popular culture, see Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, 78-103.

¹⁸³ Introduction to *Venerabilis Baedae opera historica* (Oxford, 1896), clviii.

¹⁸⁴ *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church* (London, 1961), 149.

¹⁸⁵ See also Pierre Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials* (Toronto, 1984), 13.

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, the range of typical magical beliefs listed in Raymond Firth, "Reason and

Whether these beliefs and practices were current at a given time and place is another question altogether. Yitzhak Hen dismissed the penitentials of the Merovingian period as having little basis in contemporary practice. They were influenced not by conditions around them but by “literary conventions together with [the] real fears and anxieties” of the clergy, “encouraged by external influences on the Frankish Church.” These were the example of the Anglo-Saxons and the Irish, and the paganism of the border areas of Merovingian territory which were at the moment undergoing St. Boniface’s missionary efforts: “[T]he forbidden practices must not be taken as an accurate reflector of reality, but as a reflector of the mental preoccupation of the Christian authorities.”¹⁸⁷

Hen possibly overestimates the extent to which the process of Christianisation was complete in Merovingian Gaul at least in the 6th and early 7th centuries.¹⁸⁸ But it is indubitable that in no other source is the literary tradition so overwhelmingly evident as it is in the penitentials. Large sections were copied word for word from other, sometimes from several other, penitentials, so that the same sin may have received different penances in different parts of the booklet. The types of sin described were virtually unchanged throughout the period—the same cultic acts and magic are described in penitential after penitential, with significant additions being rare until the end of our period. For example, a clause concerning the introduction of cunning men into houses to discover and get rid of hexes, originally from the Council of Ancyra (314) and quoted by Martin of Braga (572), persisted in penitentials up to the time of Burchard of Worms.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, the illicit use of chrism, a source of great concern to Frankish councils and synods throughout the 9th century, is found in only three penitentials, none of which were Frankish.

Nevertheless, there were independent elements even in Merovingian penitentials. The frequently-repeated clause of the *Penitential of St. Columban* concerning the practice of holding feasts in the vicinity of shrines because of ignorance, greed or idolatry has no parallel in any other Irish nor in any English penitential. There is, however, a parallel to be found in Caesarius of Arles’ sermons, which blamed such sacrilegious feasts on naiveté, ignorance or (more plausibly, according to Cae-

unreason in human beliefs,” in *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, ed. Max Marwick (Middlesex, 1970), 38-40. Examples of almost every kind of magical cure mentioned in the penitentials can be found in the account of 19th and 20th-century folkloric medicine by Wayland D. Hand, *Magical Medicine; The Folkloric Component of Medicine in the Folk Belief, Custom and Ritual of the Peoples of Europe and America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1980).

¹⁸⁷ *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul*, 188-189.

¹⁸⁸ E. Vacandard’s “L’idolâtrie en Gaule au VIe et au VIIe siècle” has not yet been refuted concerning the extent of open idolatry existing in Merovingian Gaul well into the 7th century. See also J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford, 1983) 17-36.

¹⁸⁹ Martin of Braga, *Canones ex Orientalium Patrum Synodis* 71, Barlow, 140; Burchard of Worms, *Decretum* [1008-1012] 19, 5.60, Schmitz 2: 422.

sarius) greed.¹⁹⁰ In this case at least, it is evident that either Columban's penitential was based on a Merovingian text or it took into account rituals observed in Merovingian territory. Other customs cited in penitentials of the period also have a continental origin. The critique of the cult of trees and springs, singing and dancing around churches, and the rituals of the Calends was not drawn from Irish or English sources but was based on practices for which independent continental evidence is available, not only Caesarius' sermons, but also in civil law, letters and hagiography.

Penitentials are most credible when they introduce new material: the *Poen. Vinniani* on clerical and love magic, the *Poen. Columbani* on ritual meals at shrines, the *Poen. Cummeani* on dietary practices, the *Canones Hibernenses* on mourning rituals, and the *Poen. Theodori* on magic, especially of the domestic variety. The Spanish penitentials, while they reiterate many of the old articles, contain striking proof that Mozarabic mentality and practice differed widely from what prevailed east of the Pyrenees. Several other penitentials introduce more or less significant variations on the originals, which suggests that some independent thought and observation went into their compilation.

As a source, Burchard of Worms' *Corrector sive medicus* stands alone. The one hundred and ninety-four questions that make up the *interrogationes* were not copied wholesale from earlier penitentials or from the canon law recorded so voluminously in the other nineteen volumes of the *Decretum*. They almost certainly reflect practices prevalent in the Rhineland of the 11th century.¹⁹¹ This penitential leaves out some of the practices found in its sources, presumably those that did not apply, elaborates on standard articles and adds new material. It modifies the penances traditionally assigned to certain sins, sometimes drastically, and thus bears witness both to the persistence of practices and to a shift in the interpretation of those practices. In some cases where his predecessors had seen real danger

¹⁹⁰ *Poenitentialia Columbani* (c. 573) 20, Bieler, 104; Caesarius of Arles (502-542) *S.* 54.6, *CCSL* 103: 239-240.

¹⁹¹ There is nothing known about the nonliterary sources of Burchard's penitential. Burchard belonged to an aristocratic Hessian family, he was educated in his youth at the monastery of Lobbes, and his early career was in ecclesiastical and civil administration. He was ordained priest only after his nomination to the bishopric. Under the circumstances, it is doubtful that he or his two assistants, one a bishop, the other to become an abbot, had much personal experience on the parish level. For Burchard's biography, see Albert M. Koeniger, *Burchard I. von Worms und die deutsche Kirche seiner Zeit* (Munich, 1905); Wolfgang Metz, "Zur Herkunft und Verwandtschaft Bischof Burchards I. von Worms," *Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 26 (1967): 27-42; G. Allemang, "Burchard I de Worms," *DHGE* 10: 1245-1247. For popular paganism in the *Corrector*, see François Alary, "La religion populaire au XIe siècle: Le prescrit et le vécu d'après le *Corrector sive medicus* de Burchard de Worms," *Cahiers d'Histoire* (Université de Montréal): 13 (1993) 48-64, and Cyrille Vogel, "Pratiques superstitieuses au début du XIe siècle d'après le *Corrector sive medicus* de Burchard, évêque de Worms (965-1025)," in *Mélanges E.-R. Labande. Études de Civilisation Médiévale (IXe-XIIe siècles). Mélanges offerts à Edmond-René Labande* (Poitiers, 1974), 751-761.

of idolatry or truck with demons, Burchard saw only trivial misbehaviour, ignorance and folly. Some practices are described in minute detail, down to the very direction in which magic corn is ground or the very toe to which a magical herb is tied. Burchard's unusual emphasis on belief as well as practice, expressed in the questions to be asked (*credidisti?* not merely *fecisti?*), reveals a sensitivity to the mentality of his charges as well as to their external behaviour. Finally, the inclusion of vernacular terms clearly indicates familiarity with local beliefs and practices and vocabulary.

*Sermons.*¹⁹² As a source for popular religion, sermons fall between conciliar legislation and penitentials. While councils and synods presumably dealt principally with behaviour general to the ecclesiastical region, and penitentials concentrated on the most private thoughts and actions of individuals, sermons ideally focused on the needs of the parish. This is where one might expect to find the beliefs and practices prevailing in the community to which the preacher addressed himself. Sermons, therefore, should be an invaluable source for the customs peculiar to each parish as a social unit.¹⁹³ However, this is not the case for the early Middle Ages.

In general, this period was a low point in the history of preaching, especially from the mid 6th century to the Carolingian reforms at the end of the 8th. Even after the reforms, sermons, as opposed to readings from the Gospels, appear to have been rare. The right to preach was reserved to bishops except in the Narbonne where the Council of Vaison (529), under Caesarius of Arles' leadership, authorised parish priests to preach and, in their absence, gave permission to deacons to "recite" the homilies of the Fathers of the Church.¹⁹⁴ Many were reluctant to exercise this right, at least partly from feelings of inadequacy and the pres-

¹⁹² For early medieval sermons, see Jean Longère, *La prédication médiévale* (Paris, 1983), 35-54; for the content of sermons in Germanic territory, F. R. Albert, *Die Geschichte der Predigt in Deutschland bis Luther*, 2. vols. (Gütersloh, 1892-1893); for missionary preaching, Wilhelm Konen, *Die Heidenpredigt in der Germanenbekehrung* (Düsseldorf, 1909). For preachers' techniques, see Thomas L. Amos, "Early medieval sermons and their audience," in *De l'homélie au sermon: Histoire de la prédication médiévale*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hernand (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1993), 1-14. R. Emmet McLaughlin examined the evolution of the medieval sermon and the reasons for the decline of preaching after Caesarius of Arles in "The word eclipsed? Preaching in the early Middle Ages," *Traditio* 46 (1991): 77-122. For the Carolingian period, see McKitterick, *The Frankish Church*, 80-114, and Milton McGatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Aelfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1977), 29-39; for popular sermons at this period, see T. L. Amos, "Preaching and the sermon in the Carolingian World," in *De Ore Domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages*, ed. Amos et al. (Kalamazoo, 1989), 41-60.

¹⁹³ Cf. Gregory I's *Regula pastoralis* (*Pastoral Care*, trans. Henry Davis [Westminster, Md., 1950]), of which Bk. 3, comprising well over half of the work (134 out of 217 pages), is dedicated to preaching. In fact, most of the admonitions prescribed by the pope are such that they would appear to be given more appropriately privately in confession, rather than publicly in a sermon.

¹⁹⁴ 2, *CCSL* 148A: 78-79. Significantly, of the reforming councils of 813, only that of Arles upheld the right of priests to preach (10, *MGH Concilia* 2.1, 251).

sure of other responsibilities. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the pleas advanced by Caesarius' fellow-bishops when he exhorted them to preach. Some thought they lacked the eloquence to preach their own sermons, some were unable to commit their great predecessors' sermons to memory, some found that their other pastoral duties absorbed all their energies.¹⁹⁵ If this was the case at a time when and in a region where the traditions of literacy and rhetoric were still strong, it must have been all the more so later during the Merovingian period, when educational standards had declined further and the pressure of ecclesiastical and secular responsibilities on bishops remained high.¹⁹⁶ It is not to be expected that parish clergy would have been more competent or more willing to preach than their superiors even had they had the right to do so.

Most of the sermons preserved in homiliaries appear to have been preached to a clerical audience, or used for private devotions, rather than preached to a lay congregation. Even those of Caesarius of Arles, which had been prepared with a mixed audience in mind, were "soon reabsorbed by the monastic tradition."¹⁹⁷ In the form that has survived, such sermons were rarely applicable to the laity. They are in Latin, which may have been incomprehensible to rustic audiences even in Caesarius' Provence, and which was certainly incomprehensible to the laity and no doubt even to some of the clergy later on.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the sermons did not usually concentrate on the behaviour of the faithful but on that of the clergy and on expositions of dogma and biblical exegesis, subjects of meditation for monks and other clerics, but probably of scant interest to the ordinary church-goer.¹⁹⁹ The

¹⁹⁵ *S.1*, 12, *CCSL* 103: 3; *S.1.20*, *ibid.*, 16; *S.1.9*, *ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹⁶ Pierre Riché, *Éducation et culture dans l'Occident barbare (VIe–VIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1962), 311-320.

¹⁹⁷ McLaughlin, "Preaching in the early Middle Ages," 105. As for the intended audiences for Caesarius' sermons, sermons 1 and 2 were directed to the diocesan clergy (*S. 2* being meant to be read, not preached), sermons 233-238 to monks, sermons 16, 17, 19, 22 and 151 to the outlying parishes. The audience intended for the others cannot be so precisely identified but since many deal explicitly with the manners and morals of the laity (*e.g.*, drinking, concubinage, alms-giving, social justice and business morality, as well as pagan survivals), most must have been delivered before a congregation containing a substantial number of lay people.

¹⁹⁸ Gauthier found it significant that a cultured and aristocratic youth such as Gregory of Utrecht was able to read the Latin Scriptures, but did not understand them well enough to translate them; this reflects poorly on the general level of comprehension of Latin texts (*L'évangélisation des pays de la Moselle*, 437). For the low level of clerical literacy in the Carolingian period, see Michel Banniard, *Viva Voce. Communication écrite et communication orale du IVe au IXe siècle en Occident latin* (Paris, 1992), 395-397.

¹⁹⁹ This appears to have been the case even when the sermon was preached in the vernacular, a practice that A. Lecoy de la Marche believed was quite widespread in the early Middle Ages. He described a sermon, composed in Celtic by an Irish monk and predating the Carolingian reforms, of which the contents were theological in tone, and which must have gone over the heads of a rural congregation (*La chaire française* [2nd ed., Paris, 1886], 235-238).

majority of sermons, therefore, contain little material, or none, about popular culture.²⁰⁰

The lack of sermons suitable for the laity does not necessarily imply an indifference to the moral and spiritual education of the laity. Other means at hand were better adapted to their needs and perhaps to the aptitudes of many of their pastors. J. Goering observed the principal characteristic of early medieval pastoral care was “the safeguarding of God’s presence among the faithful ... through rites and rituals.” It took the forms of rituals of healing (prayers, relics, exorcisms) and sustaining (prayers of monastics, seasonal liturgies), education and guidance “through recurrent ritual actions, through art and especially through the oral traditions of poetry and story-telling), and reconciliation.”²⁰¹ R. Emmet McLaughlin tied the decline of preaching at this period to liturgical changes.²⁰² The expanded and elaborated liturgy of the mass reduced the time available for preaching, but at the same time took over much of its educational function through scriptural readings, prayers and the singing of hymns in which the congregation was expected to join. The vigils of saints, celebrations of the dedication of churches, and liturgical processions during Rogation days served to inculcate ideas of the majesty of God and the virtues of the saints. Participating in such rituals was more satisfying and more stirring emotionally than listening to sermons, and the lessons learned thus were more easily retained.²⁰³ The essentials of dogma were taught in the baptismal responses, and in the Lord’s Prayer and Creed, which each person was required to memorise. Prayers were composed in alliterative form to make them easy to remember.²⁰⁴ Private confession provided the parish priest, armed with his penitential, with the opportunity to give moral instruction tailored to the requirements

²⁰⁰ For example, see the sermons in *XIV Homélies du IXe siècle d’un auteur de l’Italie du Nord*, ed. Paul Mercier, *SC* 161 (Paris, 1970), and *Abbo von Saint-Germain-des-Prés. 22 Predigten, Kritische Ausgabe und Kommentar*, ed. Ute Önnersfors (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1985). See also a missionary sermon mistakenly attributed to St. Gall, which deals exclusively with the history of salvation and disregards completely the lives of the putative audience (*Der konstanzer Predigt des Heiligen Gallus. Ein Werk des Notker Balbulus*, ed. Wilhelm Emil Willwoll [Freiburg, 1942], 5-17).

²⁰¹ “Medieval Church, pastoral care in,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter *et al.* (Nashville, 1990), 698-700; here, 699. For practical illustrations of this, see H. G. J. Beck, *The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France during the Sixth Century* (Rome, 1950) and Guy Devailly, “La pastorale en Gaule au IXe siècle,” *RHÉF* 59 (1973): 23-54.

²⁰² “Preaching in the early Middle Ages,” 102. See also McKitterick, *The Frankish Church*, 115-154, for the changes in the liturgy and their effect during the Carolingian era, and Pierre Riché, *Éducation et culture*, 542-547, for alternate methods of instructing the faithful.

²⁰³ People found sermons dull. Even Caesarius of Arles, who had taken pains to adapt his sermons in length, vocabulary and subject matter to the capacities of his audience, had been obliged to run after his flock to keep them from leaving before the sermon, and eventually to lock the church doors to prevent them from escaping while he preached (*Vita Caesarii* 1, 27, *MGH SRM* 3: 466-466). One may also relate the tendency of Carolingian landowners to establish private masses to their desire to escape the sermons imposed by the reform movement.

²⁰⁴ Cyril Edwards, “German vernacular literature. A survey.” In *Carolingian culture. Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1994), 141-170; here, 146.

of each individual. The paintings that decorated churches also played a didactic role, as Gregory I noted.²⁰⁵ Benedict Biscop decorated the church of St. Peter with pictures of the Virgin Mary, the apostles, and the visions of the *Apocalypse* for the benefit of the illiterate.²⁰⁶ The example of Caedmon shows that Bible stories were turned into vernacular song for the delight and edification of all.²⁰⁷

In fact, there can be no doubt that the faithful were exposed at least sometimes to sermons intended for their use. St. Caesarius of Arles preached tirelessly in town and country.²⁰⁸ St. Augustine of Canterbury and St. Paulinus of York preached to the Kentish and Northumbrian courts, St. Cuthbert to countrymen in remote hamlets.²⁰⁹ The *Lives* of missionary saints on the continent, such as St. Gall, St. Vulfram, St. Boniface and St. Anskar, describe them as preaching,²¹⁰ as well as using other, perhaps more effective, methods: miracles, violence and political pressure from powerful lay patrons. A few sermons give signs of having been written in immediate response to behaviour just observed, for example, on the eve of the feast of St. John Baptist or during a lunar eclipse. Sometimes the very awkwardness of the phraseology and highly practical admonitions combined with a fairly primitive theology testify that the author was a parish priest of limited learning, struggling to find words in which to instruct his flock.

Accounts of popular outbursts present added though indirect evidence for sermons. The Council of Rome of 745 had to deal with Aldebert and Clement, two *pseudoprophetae* active in the northern parts of the Frankish state, clerics who, by means of their teachings and (in the case of Aldebert) miracles, were able to win over a large number of supporters, not only “feeble women” and the uncouth (*rustici*), but even bishops. The outbreaks of hysterical mass movements recorded by Gregory of Tours, Agobard of Lyons and Atto of Vercelli, which seem to have had some kind of a Christian core, also must have been fuelled by inspirational addresses, probably from clerics practiced in popular preaching.²¹¹ This suggests that large numbers of people, many of them quite simple, were accustomed and receptive to sermons.

²⁰⁵ MGH Ep 2: 270.

²⁰⁶ Bede, *Vita sanctorum abbatum monasterii*, 6, in *Opera Historica*, ed. Loeb, 2: 404. See Paul Meyvaert, “Bede and the church paintings at Wearmouth-Jarrow,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979): 63-77.

²⁰⁷ Bede, *HE* 4, 24: 414-420.

²⁰⁸ He preached every Sunday, every feast day and daily throughout Lent and the octave of Easter, as well as several times a week at Lauds and Vespers, especially during Advent and Lent (A. Malnory, *Saint Césaire Évêque d’Arles* [Paris, 1894], 32).

²⁰⁹ Bede, *HE*, 1.25: 72; 2. 9: 164; 4.27: 432.

²¹⁰ McGatch points out, however, that *praedicatio* and *praedico* are ambiguous terms, “which seem as often to mean enunciation of doctrine, or teaching, or even reading from the Fathers ... as preaching” (*Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England*, 35).

²¹¹ *Conc. Romanum* (745) 6, MGH *Concilia* 2.1: 37-44; Gregory of Tours, *HF* 10. 25, MGH *SRM* 1: 517-519; Agobard of Lyons, *De quorundam inlusionem signorum* (828-834) 1, *CCCM* 52: 237; Atto of Vercelli (d. 961) *Ep.* 3 (*ad Plebem Vercellensem*), PL 134: 104-105.

The number of surviving sermons relevant to our subject is small: excluding those of Caesarius of Arles, not much more than forty, from a period of almost six hundred years. I have gone beyond the chronological period of this study to include 5th-century sermons from northern Italy. They were preached to mixed populations similar in culture and tradition to that of 6th-century Gaul, and their wealth of descriptive detail casts light on medieval descriptions of popular practices. I have also included works which, like Martin of Braga's *De correctione rusticorum*, were probably never preached in the form that they were written. As confessors were meant to use penitentials as a guide only, and to put only those questions that bore a relation to the individual penitent's life, so preachers were meant to use only the sections applicable to their audience.

To what extent may these sermons, few as they are, be taken at face value as evidence? There is little doubt that the sermons of Maximus of Turin, Peter Chrysologus and even Caesarius of Arles can be accepted as truthful descriptions of the customs prevailing in their dioceses during their lifetime. With Martin of Braga's sermon *De correctione rusticorum*, which also appears to be based generally on direct observation, there may be some questions as to its applicability to 6th-century Galicia. Can as much be said for other medieval sermons?

Although the influence of the sermons of Caesarius of Arles and, to a much lesser degree, of Martin of Braga is clearly evident in the references to pagan survivals and superstitions, almost every sermon which refers to such customs contains some material which is independent not only of these models, but of legislation and penitentials as well. The homilies of Burchard of Würzburg, cobbled together entirely from passages taken from Caesarius' sermons, are the outstanding exception; it is their merit that they highlight the originality of the rest. The other sermons then must be accepted as providing authentic evidence for popular culture; their independent elements support their claims to a measure of trust in material copied from earlier sources.

1.3.4 *Incidental literature*

A number of documents are particularly valuable because they were written explicitly in response to immediate, pastoral concerns. The author, date, place and circumstances, therefore, are clearly defined, and it may usually be assumed that the texts were based on at least second-hand eyewitness accounts of actual practices. Most important among these are letters written by popes to missionaries and others engaged in work among pagans or Christians of questionable orthodoxy.

1.3.5 *Complementary works*

Documents with a non-pastoral focus provide occasional glimpses of daily life and popular beliefs and practices, and throw important light on passages in pastoral literature. No attempt was made to sift such works systematically but, where

possible, additional material was drawn from different types of texts.²¹² A few of these predate the Middle Ages (notably, Tacitus' *Germania*) but most are early medieval. Among these are Germanic legal codes, histories (such as Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*), scientific works (e.g., Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* and the anonymous *Medicina antiqua*), treatises (Ratherius of Verona's *Praeloquium* and Gilbert of Nogent's *De sanctis et eorum pignoribus*), autobiography (Gilbert of Nogent's *Monodiae*) and travellers' tales (an Arab diplomat's description of Rus idolatry and burial rites).

Hagiography²¹³ is particularly valuable as a source for popular culture, since the saints' virtues and prowess are often demonstrated in their dealings with pagans and ordinary Christians. It is a source difficult to use by virtue of the number of hagiographic accounts extant and of the riches of individual *Lives* in terms of evidence varying from the ostensibly historical to the miraculous to the out-and-out fabulous.²¹⁴

The hagiographer is not a historian, declared Jean-Pierre Laporte, but a partisan,²¹⁵ and the uses of hagiography for propaganda has been amply discussed by Felice Lifshitz in her *Pious Neustria*. However, the value of hagiography for a student of popular culture does not lie necessarily in factual depictions of customs and beliefs. The author of a *Life* may describe accurately, misrepresent, misinterpret or even make up an episode, but he does so in terms of his own cultural experiences and expectations. His work may or may not be a true account of the past, but in some fashion it mirrors the time and the circumstances in which it was written—as a painting of the Crucifixion may depict the armour, clothing and hairstyle of its own age, not that of Christ.²¹⁶ St. Eligius's sermon, for example, might not tell us much about the practices prevailing around Merovingian Noyon

²¹² But, for a criticism of the value of such works as a source for paganism, see R. I. Page, "Anglo-Saxon paganism: The evidence of Bede," in *Pagans and Christians: The Interplay between Christian Latin and Traditional Germanic Cultures in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Tette Hofstra, L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald, (Groningen, 1995), 99-129. I am indebted to Karen Jolly for bringing this article to my attention.

²¹³ For the historical value of hagiography, see Baudouin de Gaiffier, "Hagiographie et historiographie," in *La storiografia altomedievale*, SSAM 17 (Spoleto, 1970), 139-166 and discussion, 179-196. See also Réginald Grégoire, *Manuale di agiologia* (Fabriano, 1987); R. Aigrain, *L'hagiographie, ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire* (Paris, c. 1953); R. Aubert, "Hagiographie," *DHGE* 23: 40-56.

²¹⁴ By miraculous, I mean standard miracles of curing the sick, immobilising enemies, destroying pagan shrines, etc.; by fabulous, stories and miracles with especially strong mythic and folkloric elements, of a kind found in many *Lives* but in particular abundance in those of Irish saints—an extreme example is the *Life of St. Brendan of Clonfert* (*Bethada Náem nÉirenn. Lives of Irish Saints*, ed. and trans. Charles Plummer [Oxford, 1922], 44-92).

²¹⁵ "La reine Bathilde, ou l'ascension sociale d'une esclave," in *La femme au moyen âge*, ed. Michel Rouche, (Maubeuge, c. 1990), 147-167; here, 167.

²¹⁶ Therefore the importance given by Thomas Head to "the institutional and intellectual contexts" of the composition of hagiography and the cults of saints and their relics (*Hagiography and the Cult of Saints. The Diocese of Orleans* [Cambridge, 1990] here, 19).

in the first half of the 7th century, but it tells us a good deal about what concerned Carolingian clerics in the 8th. In the same way, the insertion into the 13th-century version of the *Life of St. Germanus of Auxerre* (d. 448) of an episode which did not appear in the first *Life*, written c. 480 by Constantius of Lyons, is a notable indication of issues thought important in the 13th century, not in the 5th.²¹⁷

By contrast, a *Life* written close to the period of the saint's own life has a greater chance of reflecting his own concerns and experiences as well as that of his biographer's. The *Vita Martini* and the *Vita Vulframmi* are good examples of these. They were composed reasonably soon after the death of the saints, and may be accepted to some degree as realistic depictions of the era. They also have the advantage of containing data that can be verified from pastoral texts and, on occasion, from other sources as well. Sulpicius Severus' *Life of St. Martin of Tours* describes Martin as suspecting a ritual circumambulation with a deity when he met a procession of peasants. In fact, it was a funeral procession; the fluttering veil with which the body was covered had deceived him. This tends to authenticate and to be authenticated by the evidence of pastoral literature on both funeral customs and the circumambulation of fields at later periods.²¹⁸ Descriptions of human sacrifices in the *Life of St. Vulframmi* are borne out to some extent by the discovery of strangled corpses buried in bogs not far from his area of activity. This lends credibility to the account in the same *Vita* of the rejection of the Christian heaven by a Frisian *dux* on the grounds that it would separate him from his pagan ancestors. That in turn may explain the appeal of a heretic who declared that pagans would go to heaven as well as Christians.²¹⁹

Most of the *Lives* cited here were chosen not only for their relevance to pagan survivals and superstitions during the early Middle Ages (there are many such), but also because their subjects were contemporary missionaries, bishops and abbots who encountered the kinds of situations suggested in pastoral literature, and because they were written during the period under consideration. Others were used, but rarely, to illustrate or cast further light on particular points, such as the persistence of certain themes, the anachronistic introduction of a new theme in the *Life* of an early saint, or different interpretations of practices.²²⁰ The difficulty

²¹⁷ Jacob of Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. G. P. Maggioni (Florence, 1998), 689-694; *Vita Germani Autissiodorensis (Vie de saint Germain d'Auxerre)* ed. René Borius, SC 112 [Paris, 1965].

²¹⁸ *Vita Martini* 12.1, *Vie de saint Martin*, ed. Jacques Fontaine, SC 133 (Paris, 1967), 279; *Conc. Claremontanum seu Arvernense* (535), 7, CCSL 148A: 107; *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum* (743?) 28, MGH CapRegFr 1: 223.

²¹⁹ *Vita Vulframmi* 6-9, MGH SRM 5: 665-668; *Conc. Romanum*, MGH Concilia 2.1: 40. For this *Life* as historical document, see Stéphane Lebecq, "Vulfran, Willibrord et la mission de Frise: Pour une relecture de la 'Vita Vulframmi'," in *L'évangélisation des régions entre Meuse et Moselle et la fondation de l'abbaye d'Echternach (Ve-IXe siècles)*, ed. Michel Polfer (Luxembourg, 2000), 429-451.

²²⁰ I have gone outside the chronological limits of this work for the *Life of St. Malachy* by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and the *Lives* of saints Germanus of Auxerre, Bernard and Dominic (in the *Golden Legend*). Saints Enda of Aranmore and Ciaran of Saigir were early medieval saints, but their *Vitae* were written down in the high Middle Ages, that of the former from varied sources,

was not to find *Lives* that could have provided useful information of this sort, but to limit the number used so that the hagiographic evidence would not assume disproportionate importance. Their purpose here is to indicate the background against which the authors of our documents worked, and I have made no attempt either to study all the possibly relevant *Lives*, or to sift even the ones used for all pertinent material.

that of the latter from sources of considerable antiquity (Kenney, *The Sources of the Early History of Ireland*, 374, 316).