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Exemplary Ascetics: Ethical Instruction in Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Religious History*

ANNE P. ALWIS

This article reappraises Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Religious History* to show that the Syrian bishop engages his audience in a process of reflective emulation by rhetorically presenting the ascetics he describes as exemplars. In so doing, Theodoret's sketches act as ethical stories. I highlight their cultural value and also underline their didactic function by demonstrating how the bishop invites his readers to meditate on the complex life choices the ascetics make. This prompts his audience to reassess their ideas of holiness and selfhood. Theodoret's emphasis on critical judgement could be read as part of his practice of writing compilations with a didactic aim. It could also be viewed as a plea for thoughtful consideration during a time of significant doctrinal controversies in which he played a key role in his Antiochene network. "Antiochene" was coined by Adam Schor when describing the social networks forged between Syrian bishops and lay civil leaders. Finally, the article shows that by promoting the language of exemplarity in his text, which partially focuses on commemoration, Theodoret fulfils the desire he expresses in his Prologue: for the *Religious History* to become part of cultural memory.

In the fifth century, a Syrian bishop called Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393–ca. 460 C.E.)¹ regularly visited local ascetics who took their practice to extreme levels for years on end. Some dwelt immured within tiny huts or deep pits in the desert, electing never to be seen or heard. Open-air ascetics inhabited perilous mountain ridges with no protection, at the mercy of unpitied weather conditions. They could be entombed in snow or scorched by the blazing Syrian sun. Yet others shackled excruciatingly weighty iron harnesses onto their protesting bodies, which forced them to walk in a perpetual stoop. Many more chose simply

to stand, continually. The memories and encounters of this bishop with these extraordinary beings are the substance of his *Religious History*, composed around 440.²

For years, scholarship chiefly viewed Theodoret's vignettes as merely startling cameos, albeit ones that later became invaluable for re-evaluating the concept of the holy man.³ However, his narratives were viewed as repetitive, with no particular rationale: "it is magnificent as a set of stories but feeble as a series of portraits . . . it is the same level of saintliness that is reiterated again and again."⁴ This judgement of the text's apparent monotony was later revised by Rebecca Krawiec, who explored the idea that in Theodoret's small variations between his ascetics, readers could find "a model to 'emulate,' a model based on matching temperament and character."⁵ Emulation by readers was also very briefly considered by Derek Krueger when he analysed Theodoret's use of biblical typology.⁶ Because Theodoret links ascetics to biblical figures, Krueger argued that "the effect [on readers] of hearing the lives of the saints should be the desire to bring one's own life into conformity with the lives of the saints."⁷ For Theresa Urbainczyk, these readers were the intellectual elite populating the eastern Mediterranean,⁸ as well as educated Christians, both monastic and lay. According to Theodoret's later *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Religious History* was "easily accessible to those who wish[ed] to become acquainted with them [the miracles of the monk Julianus]."⁹

My intention is to reconsider how the *Religious History* employs role models from an entirely different perspective, and to reveal the multivalent functions it thereby performs. Theodoret himself hints at this flexibility in his varying descriptions of his work. In its Prologue, he declares, "let one call the composition as one chooses—this Religious History or Ascetic Life" (τῆ φιλοθέῳ ἱστορία ἢ ἀσκητικῆ πολιτεία—ὡς γὰρ βούλεται τις καλεῖτω τὸ σύγγραμμα).¹⁰ Further on, he refers to it as "a history of monks" (ἐν τῆ τῶν μοναχῶν αὐτὸν ἱστορία).¹¹ In a letter, he describes the text as the "lives of the saints" (τῶν ἀγίων οἱ βίοι)¹²

while in his *Ecclesiastical History*, he refers to it as a “religious history” (τῆ φιλοθέω ἱστορία).¹³ This generic fusion is also apparent within the Prologue. Pierre Canivet has already clearly explained how Theodoret not only emulates contemporary hagiographers such as Palladius, and the authors of the *life* of Antony and the *Historia Monachorum* in this Prologue, but that, in addition, he explicitly situates his opus within the classical literary tradition.

Echoing the ancient line defined by Plutarch, Thucydides, and Livy, Theodoret proposes his intention to compose a work where “the objects of our praise appear enviable and become desirable and impel the beholder to attain them.”¹⁴ Accordingly, he believes that his composition is a counterpart to the works of poets and historians who celebrate “bravery in war,” or those of tragedians, who praise men who fight their destiny.¹⁵ Theodoret thus plainly chose to locate his *Religious History* within the classical tradition, claiming its status as equal to the oeuvres of poets, historians/ prose-authors (συγγραφέας), and tragedians.¹⁶ All deal with a common object, bravery in combat, just like his ascetics. This emphasis and knowledge of the Classics is not unusual for the bishop. Canivet noted Theodoret’s extensive rhetorical education and illustrated how often he cites classical authors in his apology, the *Cure for Pagan Maladies*.¹⁷ Given the bishop’s background in rhetoric, steeped in classical learning, and the didactic nature of much of Theodoret’s corpus, it is unsurprising that exemplarity, a common aspect of classical rhetoric, features in the *Religious History*.

SCHOLARLY THEORIES OF EXEMPLARITY AND THEIR USE IN CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Citing examples was essential to the art of persuasion but although παράδειγμα (‘example’) or its Latin equivalent, exemplum, was a mainstay of rhetoric, ancient rhetoricians could not agree on a universal meaning because it had so many functions.¹⁸ This elasticity made

exemplarity a highly useful pedagogical tool and its wider implications for classical Roman literature have been principally explored by Jane Chaplin,¹⁹ Rebecca Langlands,²⁰ and Matthew Roller.²¹ Focussing on Livy's *History of Rome*, Chaplin defined an exemplum as "any specific citation of an event or an individual that is intended to serve as a guide to conduct [and] an opportunity to learn from the past."²² Exempla served different purposes in different contexts.²³ In a wider evaluation of Roman literature, Langlands demonstrated how they stimulated their learner by arousing wonder and inspiring comparison.²⁴ She also expanded on what she termed "situation ethics" by contextualising the moral categories into which the exempla fall against a variety of ethnicities, protagonists, and situations.²⁵ Meanwhile, Roller focused on the rhetorical, historiographical, and ethical aspects of exempla. For him, they are "a cultural phenomenon encompassing a particular set of social practices, beliefs, values and symbols."²⁶

Exempla's predominance throughout Roman literature meant that, unsurprisingly, it was adopted by Christian literati such as Tertullian, Arnobius, Lactantius, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory of Nazianzus.²⁷ In many of these instances, simple emulation is the focus. In *To The Martyrs*, Tertullian reels off a familiar, venerable list of characters who "calmly endure" severe physical pain, including Lucretia, Mucius Scaevola, Dido, and the wife of Hasdrubal.²⁸ However, in *Apology*, he exploits exemplarity's suppleness to develop a slightly different angle. Why, he argues, are Christians perceived as "desperate, reckless men" when "the desperation and recklessness in your midst exalts the standard of virtue in the cause of glory and renown?"²⁹ He then reiterates these positive exempla, and adds Leaena, an Athenian courtesan, and Zeno of Elea. Gregory Nazianzus uses both biblical and pagan exempla to influence behaviour positively and negatively, making full use of their rhetorical potential. Kristoffel Demoen found that the majority are in texts where "didactic usefulness, liveliness, intelligibility or elegance seem to prevail"³⁰ such as Gregory's epigrams, the

epistolary poems, and the *moralia*, emphasising exempla's instructive quality. Augustine, meanwhile, subverted exemplarity to question the heroism of a character.³¹

In scholarship, James Petitfil's exploration of the Jewish and Christian language of leadership is the only extended work that applies the Classicists' theoretical frameworks to Christian texts even though as Roller put it, "early Christian literature is awash in exemplarity, which closely resembles the exemplarity discussed in <my> book."³² Petitfil found that authors as varied as Philo and Josephus, and those of *I Clement* and the *Martyrs of Vienne and Lyons* all "adopt, adapt, or eschew both the *form* and *content* of the Roman discourse of exemplarity as they deal with intracommunal issues of leadership and authority."³³ For example, when applied to the *Martyrs of Lyons*, he found that Roller's ideas revealed that the text sought to "inculcate or re-inscribe ancestral *mores* of honorable leadership." "Exemplarity," he concluded, ". . . provided a useful set of cultural tools by which ethnically or politically distinctive communities operating in its moral and rhetorical ambiance could articulate or re-inscribe native traditions."³⁴

Since exemplarity covers a plethora of ideas, a useful way to focus and think about it is through Roller's "cycle of four operations,"³⁵ which demonstrates how exempla lead to "the establishment, reproduction, and modification of social values."³⁶ This is the structure that will be used for the ensuing discussion of Theodoret's *Religious History*. I centre on one definition of exemplarity: stories of exceptional people whose actions provide moral inspiration; positively, in terms of emulation, or negatively, teaching the audience what to avoid. In Roller's paradigm, the first step is "Action." Here, the exemplum is a deed that needs to be witnessed by people with shared values. Next comes "Evaluation" when eyewitnesses judge this action either positively or negatively. "Commemoration" follows, whereby the Action is memorialised in a manner of ways. Finally, "Norm-Setting" completes the set. This is when the Action becomes a model for others in the future.³⁷ A key point here

is the early Christian belief that ascetics' actions have instructive value. Although it could be argued that ascetics act primarily for themselves—as a form of repentance, for example³⁸—asceticism varies a great deal, from context to context,³⁹ and many of Theodoret's ascetics clearly support others when they perform as intercessors,⁴⁰ healers,⁴¹ and exorcists.⁴² Moreover, many ascetics, in the past and in the present, help and guide others far and wide as a result of their training: their union with God through prayer and practice upholds their fellow humans when they become spiritual guides. They even ward off the common enemy of humanity when they fight demons.⁴³ In Theodoret's words to the ascetic, James of Cyrrhestica: “not only are you set before us as a model (ἀρχέτυπον) that is of benefit, but you also help us by your prayers and procure us God's favour.”⁴⁴ In other words, among other things, ascetics served as exemplars and applying Roller's taxonomy advances this concept a few steps further. In the discussion that follows, I show how ascetics first serve as exemplars to each other and then to lay Christians. I will also argue that exemplarity was one of the many rhetorical tools Theodoret used to maintain his social network.

EXEMPLARITY IN THE *RELIGIOUS HISTORY*

To show how exemplarity works in the *Religious History*, Theodoret's account of Eusebius of Teleda serves as our first case study. He has two Actions: to immure himself within a windowless “tiny dwelling”⁴⁵ and to don an iron contraption that forces him to crouch permanently: he bound “his waist with an iron belt and attach(ed) a very heavy collar to his neck and then use(d) a further chain to connect the belt to the collar, so that bent down in this way he would be forced uninterruptedly to stoop to the ground.”⁴⁶

Eusebius undertakes these Actions because he is riddled with guilt. While listening to a fellow ascetic reading from the gospels, Eusebius's attention wavers; he catches sight of some distant ploughmen. To prevent this transgression from ever happening again, he decides

to remain inside his dwelling for the rest of his life and adds heavy irons. Forcibly, and horribly, bowed, never again will his attention be swayed by his surroundings, including, poignantly, “the beauty of the heavens or the choir of the stars.”⁴⁷

The next step to exemplarity is a positive or negative Evaluation by witnesses. Another ascetic, Acacius, judges Eusebius’s deeds “as admirable and memorable (ὡς ἀξιάγαστόν τε καὶ ἀξιομνημόνευτον) to those who wish to learn (μανθάνειν ἐφιεμένοις) such things.”⁴⁸ Commemoration, step three, occurs when we read that Eusebius’s “renown spread everywhere and drew lovers of virtue to him.”⁴⁹ Finally, Norm-Setting is embodied in Eusebius’s disciples, who spread throughout Syria: “offshoots of his philosophy are to be seen in the west and the south, like stars in a choir around the moon.”⁵⁰ These disciples and followers replicate his conduct and, in turn, influence others.⁵¹ Eusebius is succeeded by one Agrippa; then he by a David, and so the cycle continues.⁵²

Zebinas the ascetic is a less spectacular exemplum although his feats are similarly arduous. His Action is refusing to allow advanced old age to obstruct his ascetic endurance. He chooses to pray day and night without ceasing, while constantly standing.⁵³ He never sits. Others’ rather amusing reaction to his achievement emphasise his exemplary Action. When he urges those who visit to “stay till evening,” they suddenly invent excuses to leave because they are unable to face continuing to stand with him.⁵⁴

Zebinas is evaluated by those who evade him, unable to do what he does, and we then learn that he is commemorated since yet others “visited him to hasten and reap the old man’s blessing, naming him father and teacher and calling him the model of every virtue.”⁵⁵ After his death, Zebinas is further celebrated threefold: by a physical monument (a shrine); by healing miracles at the shrine; and with annual festivals.⁵⁶

Zebinas’s Norm-Setting, like Eusebius’s, once again resides in his followers, such as Polychronius. As Theodoret puts it, “I . . . see in this famous Polychronius the philosophy of

the divine Zebinas; for wax does not receive the impress of signet-rings as much as Polychronius bears the distinctive marks of Zebinas.”⁵⁷ Among Polychronius’s achievements, such as bearing a mighty oak trunk on his shoulders all night while he prays, we read that he too leads “all-night vigils in standing posture” despite “struggling . . . with both old age and weakness.”⁵⁸ He then passes his philosophy on to Moses and Damian, who, according to Theodoret, are alive today.⁵⁹

The exemplary framework thus initially provides a means of establishing a structure and purpose for the bishop’s narrative. It supports Theodoret’s declared aim in his Prologue, to compose a work where “the objects of our praise appear enviable and become desirable and impel the beholder to attain them.”⁶⁰ In this, he recalls Plutarch, Thucydides, and Livy, placing the *Religious History* within an important literary tradition, and signalling its significance to his audience.

Moreover, Theodoret’s call to emulation rings clear within the lexis of the *Religious History*. In his first account, concerning James of Nisibis, Theodoret relates that he is attempting to “write down the life of the glorious saints of our own time and the recent past, and seek to set out a rule (νομοθεσίαν), as it were, for those who wish to emulate (τοῖς ζηλοῦν) them.” Ζηλόω, to emulate or to vie with, is comparable to *aemulatio*, an important element of exemplary learning.⁶¹ Langlands discusses this ethical form of *aemulatio* at length, showing how it manifests as the practical enactment of Aristotle’s ideal moral education. Emulation, or imitation, permits the learner to understand virtue in the abstract and allows them to explore ethical ideas and assumptions.⁶²

Ζηλόω recurs in the account of another James, of Cyrrestica, who “emulated (ἐζήλωκεν) James of Nisibis’s virtue.” Subsequently, he himself “became a model of philosophy for others” (παράδειγμα φιλοσοφίας αὐτὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐγένετο).⁶³ Publius too was “a model of virtue for those who wished to emulate him” (τοῖς ζηλοῦν βουλομένοις)

while Domnina “emulates (ζηλώσασα) the life of the inspired Maron.”⁶⁴ We learn how she then motivates others when Theodoret laments that he cannot spend more time on her story as he “ought to bring into the open the life of the other women who have imitated (ἐμιμήσαντο) both her and those we recalled above.”⁶⁵

Such a vocabulary of exemplarity infuses the *Religious History*. We learn that Theodosius offered “himself as an example (παράδειγμα) to those under his direction”⁶⁶ as did James of Cyrrhestica, while Abba, Publius, Marana, Cyra and Zebinas are all defined as “models” (ἀρχέτυπον).⁶⁷ To accentuate their impact, Theodoret even describes how some models have a tangible presence: Theotecnus and Aphthonius are described as “living statues” (στήλαι τινες ἔμψυχοι) who “impress” (ἐκμαγεῖα) their own model’s (Publius’s) mode of life onto others.⁶⁸

While some of the terminology of exemplarity appears in seemingly similar texts of desert literature such as the *Historia Monachorum* and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, it is informative that the key words appear to a far lesser extent.⁶⁹ In the *Historia Monachorum*, ζηλώω and its cognates appear only four times.⁷⁰ They are more common in the *Apophthegmata*, featuring seven times.⁷¹ However, παράδειγμα and ἀρχέτυπον never feature in either narrative. Theodoret therefore elected to use such vocabulary, which we can interpret as his decision to create an exemplary framework for the *Religious History*.

EXEMPLARITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Markers of how not to behave also appear in the *Religious History* and most feature in the account of James of Nisibis. Here, for instance, we learn the story of the impudent women who scandalise the ascetic with their immodesty. As they are washing clothes, James passes by, but instead of diffidently lowering their eyes, the women “stared at the man of God with brazen looks and eyes dead to shame.”⁷² Even worse, they leave parts of their bodies

exposed: “they did not cover their heads, nor even let down their clothes, which they had tucked up.”⁷³ James’s response is immediate and twofold: he “curses the spring,”⁷⁴ causing it to vanish and he transforms the girls’ hair from black to grey. The premature aging causes particular consternation among the townsfolk, and they beg James to relent. Their pleading works and, once more, the spring gushes forth. Initially, he also aims to restore the girls’ hair colour. However, when they do not appear before him, the punishment remains for three stated reasons: a lesson (δίδαγμα) in self-control, a reason (ὑπόθεσιν) for good behaviour, and a perpetual reminder (διηνεκέζ ὑπόμνημα) of God’s power. These rationales neatly fall into Roller’s four categories: Action (the two curses); Evaluation (the townsfolk are the secondary eyewitnesses); Commemoration (the girls’ permanent grey hair is the visual consequence of the Action); and Norm-Setting: Theodoret categorically states that the ascetic’s actions will remain an enduring memory of God’s power.

More significantly, here we witness the social and moral force of the exemplary ascetic. Whether beholding or hearing this story, any woman thinking of behaving thus in the future will think twice. The recipients of the ascetic’s individual brand of justice are socially affected, and it is probable that their lives are subsequently irrevocably altered. By the standards of antiquity, the shameless girls may no longer be attractive to others with their grey hair, which is, moreover, a visible sign of their misdemeanour, and thus their corrupt natures. They may remain childless, viewed as no longer marriageable. They, and their parents’ lives at least, will be changed. Theodoret comments that what James has done is to perform a “correction,” in Price’s formulation (τινι παιδεία),⁷⁵ and this ‘correction’/ ‘training’/ ‘education’ leads to “piety and good behaviour” (εὐκοσμίαν).⁷⁶ Future positive behavioural changes occur because of the exemplary ascetic.

James is by no means the only ascetic to effect social or cultural change. In fact, Christine Shepardson has shown how Theodoret presents these characters as transforming the

geography of Antioch's environs by causing them to become new sites of pilgrimage and communities, with sites such as Symeon Stylites's pillar attracting international visitors.⁷⁷ Thalelaeus's performances lead local pagans to convert to Christianity, which would have huge implications for their community.⁷⁸ Macedonius performs healings,⁷⁹ exorcisms,⁸⁰ and prophecies,⁸¹ surely causing the lives of his beneficiaries to inevitably change. Moreover, his actions mean that he has a huge geographical reach; he is "known by all, Phoenicians, Syrians, and Cilicians, and known too by the neighbours bordering on them."⁸² Additionally, these actions are ensured for posterity: "his fame has remained inextinguishable, and no length of time will be able to obliterate it."⁸³ Hypothetically, thousands may be affected. The fame of Theodosius is such that foreign marauders leave him and, by implication, his community, alone.⁸⁴ By this claim, ascetics protect territories from devastation and, in turn, the long-reaching consequences of poverty, death, violation, disease, and the generational impacts of which are avoided. The actions of Theodoret's exemplary ascetics have extensive societal outcomes.

EXEMPLARITY AND THEODORET'S AUDIENCE

We can take these considerations further. Reading the ascetics as sites of exemplarity also permits us to consider what more their extraordinary deeds could offer a reader. It is a form of learning that fits neatly within, and expands, Philip Rousseau's elaboration of *paideia* in the *Religious History* and his ideas on Theodoret's subjectivity.⁸⁵ Theodoret is clearly interested in human nature and his exemplary vignettes sanction his audiences to explore and test complex ethical ideas; in this case, about their assumptions of sanctity and selfhood.⁸⁶ As they follow the ascetics' acts, readers can think about ideas that concurrently feature in many of Theodoret's letters. These include the limits of self-control,⁸⁷ the boundaries of social conduct,⁸⁸ the parameters of faith,⁸⁹ the idea of virtue,⁹⁰ the ties between an individual and

their community,⁹¹ the dynamics of discipline,⁹² the processes of imitation, awareness of the self,⁹³ and really, what God actually wants from you.⁹⁴

For Langlands, the standard figures of Classical exempla “push human capacity to its limits . . . therefore (they) tell us something about its limits.”⁹⁵ When a Christian reads Theodoret’s stories, they too can contemplate the potentialities of their existence because the struggles of the ascetics can be aspirational. Taken literally, someone may well be motivated to imitate the female ascetic, Cyra, by donning an iron harness and never speaking.⁹⁶ Like Baradatus, one could choose to stand continually and wear a tunic of skins concealing the entire body with only a small opening around the nose and mouth (at some point, Baradatus also went to the other extreme and dwelt for years suspended in a structure shaped like a lattice, open to the elements, and permanently bent doubled).⁹⁷ Or indeed, like John, one might opt to live entirely unprotected, on a jagged mountain ridge. When someone well-meaning planted an almond tree to give him shade and something beautiful to look at, he ordered it to be cut down, to prevent himself enjoying any relief.⁹⁸

This may all seem deeply unlikely to some modern sensibilities, but this is partly because the positive aspects of ascetic practice tend to be elided in scholarly discussion.⁹⁹ According to Theodoret, men and women were indeed persuaded to do such things; these were the people who became the ascetics’ disciples. We also know of the enormous numbers involved in asceticism throughout Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, for example.¹⁰⁰

Alternatively, the aspirational lessons that could be acquired from exemplary ascetics could be representational. In terms of likely responses in a reader, these stories of extremity can translate into moderation or many other traits, as I have argued in the cases of many saints’ *vitae* and *passiones*,¹⁰¹ where the multivalency of edifying stories and their ability to be *lieux de mémoires* are key to their continued potency.¹⁰² Controlling emotions and inculcating simplicity, gentleness, mildness or modesty into one’s life, as some ascetics do,¹⁰³

or quelling greed, laziness or anger as others demonstrate, might be an option.¹⁰⁴ Therefore readers of Theodoret's *Religious History* participate in ethical practice,¹⁰⁵ as the text encourages them to consider their lives and to try to be better Christians.

EXEMPLARITY AND DEBATING ASCETICISM

Theodoret's didactic intent is further illustrated when he shows his readers the full range of ascetic acts and reveals his understanding of their potential impact. While he offers his readers exempla who make the impossible possible and bestows his support and faith upon his exemplary ascetics, nevertheless, he simultaneously acknowledges the existence of doubt and human frailty. First, he chooses to describe the full range of ethical complexities involved in the ascetics' excessive behaviour. Theodoret is well aware that the full ascetic experience is extreme and not for all, and this is from a man who himself practised a form of asceticism.¹⁰⁶ When he states, "I (have offered) sufficient benefit from <the ascetics> for those who wish to profit",¹⁰⁷ this implies that some readers may not wish to profit. Indeed, many might view the ascetics' actions as sensational, unrelated to holiness, and, quite simply, unbelievable.¹⁰⁸

Theodoret is evidently troubled by sceptics because he addresses them directly in the *Religious History*, beginning in the Prologue: "I ask those who read this . . . not to disbelieve what is said if they hear something beyond their own power . . . I have expended rather many words on this point in my wish to carry conviction that I shall be narrating the truth."¹⁰⁹ He defensively carries the war into the enemy's camp by forcefully claiming that doubters cannot be true Christians: "he who will disbelieve what we are about to tell does not believe either in the truth of what took place through Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha."¹¹⁰ Remarkably, he further justifies his work against critics who would argue that he was not an eyewitness and was therefore conveying falsehood by arguing that Luke himself was not

one.¹¹¹ By equating himself to an evangelist, Theodoret displays noteworthy confidence. But most intriguing is his need to cover all his bases in the face of evident critique. This is also a rhetorical strategy: to anticipate counter arguments and forestall them. In yet another technique to counter scepticism, Theodoret often interrupts his own words to emphasise to the reader that he, himself, believes that the ascetic is worthy of holiness, accentuating the ascetic's credibility. For Peter the Galatian, for instance, he proclaims, "who could adequately express admiration for one who strove for ninety-two years and through every day and night pursued his victorious path?"¹¹² With these interventions, Theodoret regularly enters the text as a tour guide, instructing the reader on how to profit from the exempla he provides.

We can further perceive Theodoret's intention to shape the nature of his ascetic exemplarity when he encourages, and even enforces, moderation on those whom he feels go too far. There are limits. For instance, after "repeated entreaty," he persuades Polychronius, who stands continuously, to take "two healthy and middle-aged companions" because he sees him "struggling with both old age and weakness and not being looked after."¹¹³ When James of Cyrrhestica, an open-air ascetic, struggles with an illness that causes severe diarrhoea,¹¹⁴ Theodoret pities his dilemma in the face of the ascetic's persistent admirers: "<James> sat there torn by contrary impulses: while nature pressed him to go and evacuate, shame before the attendant crowd compelled him to stay in the same position."¹¹⁵ The bishop eventually manages to send everyone away but upon his return the following day, he sees that James still has not moved, showing his endurance, but now, fever has set in, not helped by the fact that it is the height of summer. The bishop therefore feigns a headache and asks James to "improvise some slight shade"¹¹⁶ for him. He argues that it would be disgraceful for one as young as he, Theodoret, to have shade while James does not. The ascetic relents. Theodoret's next ploy is to persuade James to lie down and remove "the great load of iron that bound his

waist and his neck; and other chains . . . ”¹¹⁷ This he manages to do, “outwitting his endurance,” as Theodoret puts it.¹¹⁸ The bishop also tries to relieve Marana and Cyra of their iron harnesses after “long entreaty.”¹¹⁹ Here, he is less successful for after he leaves, they “again put it on their limbs – round the neck the collar, round the waist the belt, and on hands and feet the chains assigned to them.”¹²⁰ As a result of providing his readers with both the positives and negatives of various ascetic acts, Theodoret invites discussion and meditation of his accounts.

EXEMPLARITY, CRITICAL JUDGEMENT, AND ETHICAL LEARNING

Theodoret expects his readers to examine the text critically. In Domnina’s sketch, for example, he stresses that “it is fitting that each of the readers of this work choose to imitate (μιμεῖσθαι) a particular life and order (ῥυθμίζειν) their own life in accordance with the one they choose (προαίρεῖται).”¹²¹ ῥυθμίζειν also indicates self-regulation.¹²² In *A Cure for Pagan Maladies*, written before the *Religious History*, Theodoret describes “practical virtue” (πρακτικῆς ἀρετῆς) in the following way: “It is not enough just to know; you have to do.” He compares this to someone learning how to make shoes or to paint: “You can learn the theory but you have to put it into practice . . . thus, by observing (the laws of practical virtue) to the best of their ability, (you should then) try to fashion and model the type of their soul in accordance with these laws” (καὶ πρὸς τούτους πειρᾶσθαι τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκτυποῦν καὶ διασκευάζειν τὸ εἶδος).¹²³ Readers are encouraged to learn to choose which portrait suits their needs best. “We have recalled different lives,” he affirms, “and added accounts of women to those of men for this reason: that men old and young, and women too, may have models (ἀρχέτυπα) of philosophy, and that each person, as he receives the impress (ἐκμαπτόμενος) of his favourite life, may have as a rule and regulator (κανόνα τινὰ καὶ γνώμονα) of his own life the one presented in our account.”¹²⁴ Ὁ γνώμων means ‘one who knows/ examines’; ‘an

interpreter'. Thus, the exemplary ascetic has the potential to bring someone into this educational scenario.

This language of discernment and appraisal begins in the first section of his Prologue. Although, he states, that some may argue that “sight is more trustworthy than hearing,” one can also derive benefit from hearing as long as one “judges (κρίνουσα) what is said from the truthfulness of the speakers.”¹²⁵ Reasoning is compared to a tongue and palate detecting sweet or sour flavours and “delivering their verdict (τὴν ψῆφον) accordingly.”¹²⁶ He concludes that “hearing has been empowered to discriminate (διάγνωσιν) between utterances and knows how to distinguish (ἀποκρίνειν) those that bring some profit from harmful ones.”¹²⁷ Similarly, his readers are capable of exercising critical judgement. Indeed, Theodoret almost forces his readership to exercise this judgement by presenting them with an exemplary compilation; they will inevitably compare and assess each model available to them.¹²⁸ Everyone can learn from these models of Christianity if they really want to. As Theodoret states in the Prologue, all one needs is determination since God bestows “greater gifts to those with more perfect resolve.”¹²⁹ Price has translated γνώμῃς as ‘resolve’ but, as we have seen, it can also refer to ‘judgement’ or ‘will’; ‘inclination’. Thus, what is learned and how this is put into practice will vary from reader to reader, according to their disposition.¹³⁰

There is also something to be said about the mnemonic and performative function of these extreme acts. Theodoret’s vignettes combine stimulating reflection with images that are hard to forget. Even if a reader forgets most details, they would probably remember the character who lived inside the small wooden chest or the one who was unable to cope with the sight of an almond tree. For this reason, Theodoret’s reader might keep the reflective process going. More specifically, seeing or hearing about these types of actions might evoke reactions such as surprise, horror, or amazement. These responses have an epistemological

function, forming part of the process to engage a learner and initiate moral learning.¹³¹

Internal audiences model such effects when, for example, local inhabitants are “filled with awe” at Symeon the Elder’s actions, causing all Antioch to hasten to him.¹³² Others are “awe-struck” at his later encounter with an affable lion.¹³³ Meanwhile, Palladius’s conduct causes his associates to be “astounded”¹³⁴ while the emperor Valens too is “astonished” at Aphrahat.¹³⁵ Generals “shuddered” at the implications of Macedonius’s words.¹³⁶

In antiquity, interest in the marvellous was allied to paradox and, as Philip Hardie has pointed out, “*paradoxa* (παράδοξα), *thaumata* (θαύματα), *apista* (ἀπίστα) have specific applications that relate to knowledge and philosophical insight,” with a lineage that stretches back to Herodotus and Homer.¹³⁷ We are told that those who emulate James of Cyrrhestica perform “wondrous and extraordinary things” (τὰ θαυμαστά καὶ παράδοξα)¹³⁸ and Thalelaeus too creates “a spectacle...full of wonder” (τὸ θέαμα θαύματος . . . τοῦ παραδόξου θεάματος).¹³⁹ The term παράδοξος appears most in the account of Symeon Stylites.¹⁴⁰ For Aristotle, “it is through wonder that men now begin, and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression, raising questions about the greater matters too.”¹⁴¹ Admiration and wonder are also very common in the *Religious History*. We find that Romanus “induced all to admire and honour him”¹⁴² and a general is “struck with admiration” at Macedonius’s speeches.¹⁴³ Fellow ascetics are also astounded by each other, thus elevating the deed; Eusebius is “filled with dread and became full of awe”¹⁴⁴ at the sight of a divine light flashing over Marcianus’s head and Acacius “marvels” at Eusebius of Teleda.¹⁴⁵

Theodoret carefully directs his audience by making explicit comment on most of his charges. “Who would not wonder . . . ?” he declares, when describing Marcianus¹⁴⁶ and then praises Eusebius of Teleda’s actions by adding, “I myself do not know which to admire the more.”¹⁴⁷ He also asserts that he is “filled with admiration” (θαυμάζω) for both James of

Nisibis and Marcianus,¹⁴⁸ and Agapetus is “admired”/ “celebrated.”¹⁴⁹ Eusebius, Ammianus, Helladius, Zeno, Abraham, Asclepius, Baradatus, and Domnina are all described as “wonderful.”¹⁵⁰ Theodoret’s many rhetorical questions further emphasise the astonishing deeds of these ascetics, helping to imprint them onto his readers’ minds.¹⁵¹

The *Religious History* narrates how ascetics effect change for other ascetics, and I have speculated how it affected the laity. But how much influence did this text really accomplish? We first need to bear in mind that Theodoret always wrote with an audience in mind; he was not someone who lived in a void.¹⁵² Not only was he a very hands-on bishop, as his letters tell us, but his varied corpus of apologetics, biblical commentaries, Christological treatises, letters, an ecclesiastical history, and sermons all aimed at instructing and guiding in a multiplicity of genres.

Further evidence of Theodoret’s extensive impact on heterogeneous audiences comes from the transmission history of the sixty-eight extant Greek manuscripts of the *Religious History*. It offers concrete information on Theodoret’s impact by providing the contexts in which the text was disseminated and absorbed. The work’s tremendous chronological reach and its ability to appeal to varied audiences is demonstrated by the fact that these manuscripts range in date from the ninth century to the nineteenth, and the evidence that the *Religious History* was copied with an assortment of authors and texts. Dissemination of the work can be grouped into five broad categories: first, where the *Religious History* is transmitted solely by itself (fourteen manuscripts), which in itself indicates its importance;¹⁵³ second, where it is transmitted with authors of ascetic treatises such as Evagrius Ponticus, Didachos of Photiki, and Nilus of Ancrya (6 manuscripts); third, when it appears with works of desert literature such as that of Palladius and/ or the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* (twelve manuscripts); fourthly, when it features with collections of *vitae* (nine manuscripts); and lastly, by far the largest category, when it is copied with texts that performed a didactic function such as

homilies, commentaries, or treatises (twenty-seven manuscripts). In two of these manuscripts, it was copied with canonical law.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, because of Theodoret's erudition and status, his work was also distributed with authors such as Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian, John of Damascus as well as various Patriarchs of Constantinople. These mixed contexts indicate how the *Religious History* was perceived in different ways and the different types of impact it would have had.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THEODORET'S EXEMPLARITY

Theodoret's use of exemplarity served multiple purposes, freed by the supple nature of exemplarity itself, and in this final section, I argue that it was just one of the many rhetorical strategies the bishop employed to aid and maintain his expansive social network. The bishop's set of connections, as outlined by Adam Schor, was formed by the sharing of a range of cultural ties.¹⁵⁵ This system of friendship, patronage, and alliances not only helped Theodoret and his allies during the heated theological controversies concerning Christ's nature, but also served a pragmatic function: to allow the bishop to gain favours for his city and its inhabitants.¹⁵⁶

Mining Theodoret's letters, Schor identifies a series of "performance tactics"¹⁵⁷ that Theodoret adopts to enable his needs to be met. For example, to create a shared experience with his recipients, he "offered symbolic phrases and references . . . religious, cultural, economic, or . . . political."¹⁵⁸ When advocating for others, he employed certain rhetorical techniques such as emphasising the enormous inequalities between those afflicted (for instance, labourers or Carthaginian refugees) and those to whom he was appealing.¹⁵⁹ To perform his role as mediator, he needed to underscore disparities in order for action to be taken. Within this patronage system, Theodoret also realised that to gain an even better positive response, he needed to let potential patrons know the benefits of their support and so

he emphasised what the afflicted could offer. Thus refugees were, as Schor puts it, “moral exemplars”: “Some people [God] punishes, others he teaches by the punishments of [those who have suffered].”¹⁶⁰

The bishop thus carefully customised each letter for maximum appeal. His variety of approaches engendered within his addressees a series of, as Schor relates, “moral tensions that the audience was empowered to resolve . . . Theodoret pressed people to take steps that would deepen the sense of commonality. He created tension when he described the sufferings of refugees. He added to it when he shamed clerics . . . but then he offered his audience a way to relieve the tension. By helping, they could share in the mercy of God.”¹⁶¹ Schor notes that such techniques make Theodoret’s letters distinct.¹⁶²

The emphasis on critical judgement in the *Religious History* was thus yet another method that Theodoret used to persuade his audience. As we have seen, the bishop urged his networks towards careful deliberation in their daily lives in order to help him with both the secular and the profane. Perhaps too such an exhibition of mediation illustrates Theodoret showcasing his negotiating skills, something at which he was clearly adept. In the 430s, the bishop painstakingly consolidated the fragments of the Antiochene network in the aftermath of the Council of Ephesus.¹⁶³ Moreover, by treading a fine line in advocating moderation to some of his ascetics while never condemning their extreme behaviour, Theodoret was able to show his wide, eclectic circle, comprising senators, soldiers, sophists, imperial officials and notable locals, who may have mistrusted these characters, that he was trustworthy. This helped him gain assistance for others.¹⁶⁴

Finally, as Schor deduced, the *Religious History* itself “served as a rhetorical means to reinforce the Antiochene network.”¹⁶⁵ Theodoret created an “idealized community” and emphasised its “bonds across linguistic, geographic, and gender lines.”¹⁶⁶ Schor believes that Theodoret justifies the ascetics’ extreme practices “with a common explanatory language”; a

mixture of “philosophic argument and biblical typology,” with “the goal of creating new social cues.”¹⁶⁷ I would add that exemplarity was part of that common language, working at both at a micro and macro level as yet another technique in Theodoret’s extensive arsenal.

CONCLUSIONS

Reading Theodoret’s *Religious History* in terms of exemplarity gives us new ways to look at this complex text. Applying Roller’s four-phase taxonomy of action, evaluation, commemoration, and norm-setting to a much later work allows us to see exemplarity in action. The bishop’s portrayals of his exemplary ascetics function as ethical stories:

Theodoret wished to change his readers’ behaviour. The communal values that he emphasises in the ascetics’ travails become a *mos maiorum* for his Christian communities, real and imagined. His readers who hear or read about even some aspects of these shared cultural practices learn what constitutes an ideal community. These changed behaviours will lead to social changes over time.

As sites of exemplarity, these stories further ask their readers to exercise their critical faculties and make up their own minds about these extraordinary humans. These faculties are varied: they can be simultaneously religious (Do I believe that these people represent how God wants me to live? Does it matter if I do not believe it?); philosophical (What *does* God want from me?); political (Who wants me to believe this, and why?); social (What happens if I believe this or not?); critical (Is this behaviour justified?); and rhetorical (Has a convincing case been made?). Theodoret’s exempla are ethical guides who provide an ethos of perfectibility. But by presenting all the complexities of these extra-ordinary humans who are pushing the boundaries of their existence to its very limits, Theodoret brings into play complex moral issues.

Theodoret also saw the writing of the *Religious History* as a form of “preventative medicine”,¹⁶⁸ which I believe is connected to cultural memory. Krawiec discusses it in relation to the ascetics healing animals by faith. She argues that “the written monk becomes a new medicine, replacing human-based with divine healing.”¹⁶⁹ It is worth noting, however, that when Theodoret uses this phrase, he is referring to the act of writing the *Religious History*, which he wishes to become a lasting memorial of his ascetics. It is his “labour” that is “preventative medicine”: “just as those who have been entrusted with treating bodies prepare medicines in order to fight the disease and aid the patients, so the welcome labour of such composition becomes like some preventative medicine, a device against oblivion and an aid to memory.”¹⁷⁰

Theodoret did not want his ascetics to be cast into oblivion, vanishing over time like a fading painting.¹⁷¹ To fulfil this desire, Theodoret sought to place them within cultural memory, and an exemplary framework enabled this wish.¹⁷² By casting his ascetics as models, he was able to tap into the qualities of timelessness that exemplarity possesses. Part of the monumentalisation of exempla is their ability to provide new meanings in different contexts.¹⁷³ Finally, exemplarity could help Theodoret personally. It is possible that the bishop’s positive interactions with his exemplary ascetics served to advertise and reinforce his ‘Antiochene’ community and thus promote his diplomatic skills.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus was a highly literate and prolific author. As he wrote in his Prologue, the battles his ascetics fight against their physical nature and against demons—their “unseen wars and secret struggles”—are equivalent to those described in epic, history, and drama.¹⁷⁴ Within his canon, the *Religious History* is a curious artefact—a mélange of eulogy, biography, historiography, and hagiography—but it is bound and given meaning by a framework of exemplarity. Just as the Classical tradition served to educate, so too do Theodoret’s accounts of ascetics instruct others,¹⁷⁵ both during his lifetime and in the future,

creating and sustaining the visceral memories of their astounding contests in the name of God, just as Theodoret hoped they would.

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¹ Yvan Azéma, “Sur la date de la mort de Théodoret de Cyr,” *Pallas* 31 (1984): 137–55. For an overview of Theodoret’s early life and works, see the excellent monograph by Paul B. Clayton Jr: *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus: Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451)* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–14. Urbainczyk dates Theodoret’s life from 393–466, based on his letters although she points out that there is no direct evidence for his birth date: Theresa Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (University of Michigan Press, 2002), 10. See also Pierre Canivet, *Le monachisme Syrien selon Théodore de Cyr* (Beauchesne, 1977), 39n13.

² For this date, see Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 32–33 and Richard Price, trans., *A History of the Monks of Syria by Theodoret of Cyrrhus* (Cistercian Publications, 1985), xiii–xv. Leppin prefers 444: H. Leppin, “Zum kirchenpolitische Kontext von Theodorets Mönchsgeschichte,” *Klio* 78 (1996): 212–30.

³ Partially leaning on Theodoret's opus, Brown's conceptions of the holy man famously emerged: rural patron, possessor of supernatural might, mediator, and conqueror in the violence of exorcism (Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 [1971]: 80–101, at 87–90). More recently, scholarship has viewed the text as political and self-serving in nature. It demonstrated Syria's superiority or, at least, equality, to Egypt in terms of producing holy men and women, and thereby both emphasised the importance of the Church and elevated Theodoret by accentuating his privileged position as a local bishop who engaged in positive relations with these devout characters (Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 33, 36, 47, 125–29, 138–42).

⁴ Price, *History*, xv. Brown too noted "a certain monotony in the account" (Brown, "Rise and Function," 87). Patricia Cox Miller briefly considers the question in a wider discussion of the *Historia Monachorum* and Eunapius's *vitae philosophorum et sophistarum*. She concludes that "Theodoret's method aims at displaying the single human identity that underlies his selections" (231). See "Strategies of Representation in Collective Biography: Constructing the Subject as Holy," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (University of California Press, 2000), 209–54. In an earlier article, she discusses how the format of the *Religious History*—with "its 'extended 'middle' that subverts conventional biographical narrativity"—could be perceived as inviting the reader to view the ascetic body from an alternative perspective "in order to induce another form of awareness" ("Desert Asceticism and the 'Body from Nowhere,'" *J ECS* 2.2 [1994], 137–52; citations at 144). Arthur Urbano read the text as "a hermeneutic of Platonist practical philosophy so as to identify the growing institutions of Syrian monasticism as the true home of philosophy" (*The Philosophical Life: Biography and the Crafting of Intellectual Identity in Late Antiquity* [Catholic University Press, 2013], 274).

⁵ Rebecca Krawiec, “A Question of Character: The ‘Labor of Composition’ as ‘Preventative Medicine’ in Theodoret of Cyrrhus’s Religious History,” in *The Garb of Being: Embodiment and the Pursuit of Holiness in Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. Georgia Frank, Susan Holman, and Andrew Jacobs (Fordham: Fordham University Press, 2019), 138.

⁶ For Krueger, “Theodoret calls his reader to have a life-story like those of his marvelous ascetics” (Derek Krueger, “Typological Figuration in Theodoret of Cyrrhus’s Religious History and the Art of Postbiblical Narrative,” *JECS* 5.3 [1997]: 393–419, at 419; *idem*, “Writing as Devotion: Hagiographical Composition and the Cult of Saints in Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Cyril of Scythopolis,” *CH* 66.4 [1997]: 707–19). See also Krawiec, “Question of Character,” 125.

⁷ Krueger, “Typological Figuration”, 417–19.

⁸ “Constantinople or at least Antioch and Alexandria”: Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 54.

⁹ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.24 (Theodoret, *Church History, Dialogues, and Letters*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, NPNFA, vol 3: Theodoret, Jerome, Gennadius, Rufinus [Eerdmans, 1979], 128).

¹⁰ Prologue 10 (SC 234: 140 [Éditions du Cerf, vol 1 [1977], trans. Price, *History*, 8)

¹¹ Abraham 11 (SC 257: 50 [Éditions du Cerf, vol 2 [1979], trans. Price, *History*, 124)

¹² Letter 82: Théodoret de Cyr, *Correspondance*, ed. Yvan Azéma, SC 98 (Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 2:202.

¹³ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7.4, 2.30.3 (Theodoret, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. Léon Parmentier and Gunther Christian Hansen, SC 501 [Éditions du Cerf, vol 1, 2006], 202 and 482). See also 3.24.1, 4.25.5 (Theodoret, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, ed. Léon Parmentier and Gunther Christian Hansen, SC 530 [Éditions du Cerf, vol 2, 2009], 168 and 300).

Religious History was the title retained in the manuscript tradition (Canivet, *Le monachisme syrien*, 82).

¹⁴ Prologue 1 (SC 234: 124, trans. Price, *History*, 3). See also Canivet, *Le monachisme syrien*, 65 and Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 53. Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius Paulus* 1: “I began the writing of my ‘Lives’ for the sake of others, but I find that I am continuing the work and delighting in it now for my own sake also, using history as a mirror and endeavouring in a manner to fashion and adorn my life in conformity with the virtues therein depicted” (Plutarch, *Lives*, vol 6: *Dion and Brutus, Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 98 [Harvard University Press, 1918], 260); Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22.4: “but whoever shall wish to have a clear view both of the events which have happened and of those which will some day, in all human probability, happen again in the same or a similar way—for these to adjudge my history profitable will be enough for me. And, indeed, it has been composed, not as a prize essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time.” (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Charles Forster Smith, LCL Classical Library 108 [Harvard University Press, 1928], 40); Livy, *The Early History of Rome* 1. 10: “The study of history is the best medicine for a sick mind; for in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see; and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings; fine things to take as models, base things . . . to avoid.” (Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt [Penguin, 2002], 6).

¹⁵ Prologue 2 (SC 234: 126, trans. Price, *History*, 4)

¹⁶ Historians, to him, are those who “record acts of bravery in war”: Prologue 2 (SC 234: 126, trans. Price, *History*, 4). Here, I disagree with Krueger, who argues that the text resembles the Bible more than classical genres (Krueger, “Typological Figuration,” 414). Although Theodoret does compare himself to an evangelist, I believe this is part of his rhetorical strategy.

¹⁷ *Théodoret de Cyr: Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques*, ed. Pierre Canivet, 2 vols., SC 57 (Éditions du Cerf, 1958), 1:60–67. This is especially shown in the *Apology*, translated as *Cure of Pagan Maladies*, although Canivet also illustrates how Theodoret borrowed some of his material from Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria (*Thérapeutique*, 1:55–59). See also Papadogiannakis, *Christianity and Hellenism*, 2 (for Theodoret’s education) and 131 (for evidence of his classical education in the *Cure*, with bibliography).

¹⁸ Kristoffel Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla in Gregory Nazianzen: A Study of Rhetoric and Hermeneutics* (Brepols, 1996), 37–44 for its many rhetorical functions and 44–51 for varying understandings of its subject matter. See also Mary Louise Carlson, “Pagan Examples of Fortitude in the Latin Christian Apologists,” *CP* 43 (1948): 93.

¹⁹ Jane D. Chaplin, *Livy’s Exemplary History* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁰ Rebecca Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

²¹ Matthew Roller, *Models from the Past in Roman Culture: A World of Exempla* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

²² Chaplin, *Livy’s Exemplary History*, 3.

²³ Chaplin, *Livy’s Exemplary History*, Chapters 1 and 5. See also Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 141–65; Roller, *Models from the Past*, 7; Annette Yoshiko Reed, “The Construction and Subversion of Patriarchal Perfection: Abraham and Exemplarity in Philo, Josephus, and the *Testament of Abraham*,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40 (2009): 195; and James Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum: The Roman Discourse of Exemplarity and the Jewish and Christian Language of Leadership* (Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 7.

²⁴ Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 86–111

²⁵ Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 112–27

²⁶ Roller, *Models from the Past*, 4. For Raffaella Cribiore, exempla “governed family life and intellectual pursuits” (Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind. Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 42.

²⁷ Carlson, “Pagan Examples,” 93–104.

²⁸ *To the Martyrs*, ch. 4 (*Tertullianus: Opera Catholica. Adversus Marcionem*, ed. Jan-Eligius Dekkers, CCSL 1 [Brepols, 1954], 6). All texts are translated in Tertullian, *Three Parts: Apologetic, Anti-Marcion, Ethical*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ANFA, American Edition, vol 3: *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian* (Eerdmans, 1980). See also Carlson, “Pagan Examples,” 96–98, 101–103.

²⁹ *Apology 50* (*Tertullianus: Opera Catholica. Adversus Marcionem*, ed. Jan-Eligius Dekkers, CCSL 1 [Brepols, 1954], 142).

³⁰ Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla*, 206: “[exemplarity] is one of the ways in which he [Gregory] claims cultural Hellenism as a right for the Christians.”

³¹ Augustine, see *City of God*, 4.20 and 5.14 (Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, vol 2: books 4–7, trans. William M. Green, LCL Classical Library 412 [Harvard University Press, 1963], 72 and 214). See also Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 143 and 150 and Carlson, “Pagan Examples,” 100–101 and 103.

³² Roller, *Models from the Past*, 26 and Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*. Other studies on exempla in the later tradition include Carson Bay, *Biblical Heroes and Classical Culture in Christian Late Antiquity: The Historiography, Exemplarity, and Anti-Judaism of Pseudo-Hegesippus* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) and Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla*. Shorter works or those focusing more on exempla within the context of the progymnasmata include Reed, “The Construction and Subversion of Patriarchal Perfection”; Michael Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11* (Mercer University, 1988); Hélène Pétré, ‘L’exemplum chez Tertullian,’ PhD Dissertation (Dijon, 1940); Elizabeth Goldfarb,

“Transformation through Imitation: Biblical Figures as Moral Exempla in the Post-Classical World,” PhD Dissertation (University of California, 2005); and Henry Nguyen, *Christian Identity in Corinth: A Comparative Study of 2 Corinthians, Epictetus and Valerius Maximus* (Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Peter Brown examined this idea through a different lens in “The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity,” *Representations* 2 (1983): 1–25.

³³ Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 3; his italics

³⁴ Petitfils, *Mos Christianorum*, 15–16

³⁵ Roller, *Models from the Past*, 4.

³⁶ Roller, *Models from the Past*, 10–11.

³⁷ Roller, *Models from the Past*, 5–6.

³⁸ *Life of Symeon Stylites* by Antonios, chs. 7–8 in *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*, trans. Robert Doran (Cistercian Publications, 1992), 87–100.

³⁹ Patrik Hagman, *The Asceticism of Isaac of Nineveh* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 1–17, 20–21. See also Richard Valantasis, “A Theory of the Social Function of Asceticism,” in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford University Press, 1998), 544–52, esp. 550–51.

⁴⁰ James of Cyrrhestica 35 (SC 257: 122, trans. Price, *History*, 147); Maris 4 (SC 257: 68, trans. Price, *History*, 132); Eusebius of Asikha 4 (SC 257: 56, trans. Price, *History*, 127); Zeno 7 (SC 234: 472, trans. Price, *History*, 99); and Aphrahat 15 (SC 234: 404, trans. Price, *History*, 79).

⁴¹ Thalelaeus 5 (SC 257: 230, trans. Price, *History*, 181–82); Limnaeus 3 (SC 257: 128, trans. Price, *History*, 151); James of Cyrrhestica 14 (SC 257: 90–92, trans. Price, *History*, 138); Abraham 5 (SC 257: 40–42, trans. Price, *History*, 122); Maron 2 (SC 257: 28–30, trans. Price, *History*, 117); Maësymas 3 (SC 257: 40–42, trans. Price, *History*, 122); Macedonius 13 (SC 257: 40–42, trans. Price, *History*, 105); Romanus 4 (SC 234: 458, trans. Price, *History*,

95); and Peter the Galatian 5–7, 13–15 (SC 234: 414–20, 430–34, trans. Price, *History*, 83–84, 86–87).

⁴² Limnaeus 3 (SC 257: 128, trans. Price, *History*, 151); James of Cyrrhestica 14 (SC 257: 90, trans. Price, *History*, 138); Maron 2 (SC 257: 30, trans. Price, *History*, 117); Macedonius 10–11 (SC 234: 492–96, trans. Price, *History*, 104); Peter the Galatian 4, 9, 10 (SC 234: 412–14, 422–26, trans. Price, *History*, 82–83, 85–86); and Marcianus 9 (SC 234: 258–64, trans. Price, *History*, 40–41).

⁴³ “His *anchôrêsis* is in itself a way of serving others, because the motive behind his withdrawal is to seek union with God; and this prayerful union supports and strengthens his fellow humans, even though he knows nothing about them; and they, on their part, are unaware of his very existence”: Kallistos Ware, “The Way of the Ascetics: Negative or Affirmative?” in *Asceticism*, ed. Wimbush and Valantasis, 6–7. See also 5–8, 12.

⁴⁴ James of Cyrrhestica 11 (SC 257: 84, trans. Price, *History*, 137).

⁴⁵ Eusebius 3 (SC 234: 294, trans. Price, *History*, 50).

⁴⁶ Eusebius 6 (SC 234: 302, trans. Price, *History*, 52).

⁴⁷ Eusebius 6 (SC 234: 302, trans. Price, *History*, 52).

⁴⁸ Eusebius 7 (SC 234: 308, trans. Price, *History*, 53).

⁴⁹ Eusebius 8 (SC 234: 308, trans. Price, *History*, 53).

⁵⁰ Eusebius 13 (SC 234: 324, trans. Price, *History*, 56).

⁵¹ “There are very many others who he formed like this and sent to be teachers in other wrestling-schools, who have filled all that holy mountain with these divine and fragrant pastures”: Eusebius 13 (SC 234: 324, trans. Price, *History*, 56). Price notes that from “350–600 there was an enormous monastic expansion in the hinterland of Antioch. Some extant texts of the 560s list thirty monasteries in the plan of Dana alone” (Price, *History*, 57n11).

⁵² Eusebius 8–9 (SC 234: 308–12, trans. Price, *History*, 53). For the central role of teaching in asceticism, see Philip Rousseau, “The Identity of the Ascetic Master in the ‘Historia Religiosa’ of Theodoret of Cyrrhus: A New ‘Paideia’?” *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998): 229–44, esp. 232, 235–39, 242–44. See also Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 85–87.

⁵³ Zebinas, Polychronius, Asclepius 1 (SC 257: 138, trans. Price, *History*, 154).

⁵⁴ Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 2: “they, in dread of his all-night standing, would allege lack of leisure and so release themselves from these labours.” (SC 257: 140, trans. Price, *History*, 154–55).

⁵⁵ Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 2 (SC 257: 140, trans. Price, *History*, 155).

⁵⁶ Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 2: From there “he pours forth every kind of healing for those who draw near with faith. He is [...] honoured by us with annual festivals” (SC 257: 140, trans. Price, *History*, 155).

⁵⁷ Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 3 (SC 257: 142, trans. Price, *History*, 155).

⁵⁸ Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 4 (SC 257: 142, trans. Price, *History*, 155).

⁵⁹ Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 5 (SC 257: 144, trans. Price, *History*, 156). Other “spiritual genealogies,” as Rousseau describes it, include the many who followed Eusebius of Teleda: Eusebius of Teleda 12 (SC 234: 318–22, trans. Price, *History*, 42–43) and Publius passing on his duties to Theotecnus and Aphthonios: Publius 6 (SC 234: 336–38, trans. Price, *History*, 60). Theodosius is succeeded by Helladius and Romulus: Theodosius 9 (SC 234: 450–52, trans. Price, *History*, 92) while James of Nimouza follows Asclepius: Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 25.2 (SC 257: 153–56, trans. Price, *History*, 158). See also Rousseau, “Ascetic Master”, 236 and Urbano, *The Philosophical Life*, 287–92.

⁶⁰ Prologue 1 (SC 234: 124, trans. Price, *History*, 3).

⁶¹ Barbara Bauer, “*aemulatio*” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, ed. Gert Ueding, vol 1 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1992), 141–87; cf. Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 93. Langlands

emphasises the competitive aspect, which highlights motivation, but which simultaneously engenders a sense of discomfort with the actor's current status. This is not the sense we gain from Theodoret.

⁶² In her analysis, Langlands subsequently reveals how much *aemulatio/ imitatio* has in common with the literary *imitatio*, which highlighted the creativity of ancient authors in adapting the works of their predecessors: Rebecca Langlands, "Roman exemplarity: Mediating between general and particular," in *Exemplarity and Singularity: Thinking Through Particulars in Literature, Philosophy, and Law*, ed. Michèle Lowrie and Susanne Lüdemann (London, 2015), 68–80 and Donald A Russell, "De Imitatione," in *Creative Imitation in Latin Literature*, ed. David West and Anthony Woodman (Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1–16.

⁶³ James of Cyrrhestica 2 (SC 257: 72, trans. Price, *History*, 134).

⁶⁴ Publius 3 (SC 234: 330, trans. Price, *History*, 134) and Domnina 1 (SC 257: 240, trans. Price, *History*, 186).

⁶⁵ Domnina 4 (SC 257: 244, trans. Price, *History*, 187).

⁶⁶ Theodosius 2 (SC 257: 438, trans. Price, *History*, 89).

⁶⁷ James of Cyrrhestica 2 (SC 257: 72, trans. Price, *History*, 134). Abba, for philosophy, in Eusebius of Teleda 12 (SC 234: 322, trans. Price, *History*, 56); Publius and Zebinas for virtue in Publius 3 (SC 234: 330, trans. Price, *History*, 59); Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 2 (SC 257: 140, trans. Price, *History*, 155); and Marana and Cyra for other women: Marana and Cyra 7 (SC 257: 238, trans. Price, *History*, 185).

⁶⁸ Publius 6 (SC 234: 338, trans. Price, *History*, 60).

⁶⁹ The Alphabetic Collection of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* shares a great deal with the *Historia Monachorum*. As Andy Cain has pointed out, they "use identical narrative modes to achieve the same encomiastic and pedagogical objectives . . ." (Andy Cain, *The Greek*

(Oxford University Press, 2016), 71.

⁷⁰ (1) Prologue 12: πρὸς ζῆλον μὲν καὶ ὑπόμνησιν τῶν τελείω; (2) John of Lycopolis: ὅστε πολλοῖς καὶ θαῦμα καὶ ζῆλον καλῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων παρέσχευ; (3 and 4) Apollo: ἄχρις ἂν τῆς πολιτείας αὐτοῦ πολλοὶ ζηλωταὶ ἔσονται and πορεύου εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην· γεννήσεις γάρ μοι λαὸν περιούσιον, ζηλωτὴν καλῶν ἔργων (*Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, ed. André-Jean Festugière [Société des Bollandistes, 1971], 8, 26, 53, 47).

⁷¹ *The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers. A Select Edition and Complete English Translation*, ed. and trans. John Wortley (Cambridge University Press, 2013): 14, 334, 427, 441, 628, N. 641, 758.

⁷² James of Nisibis 4 (SC 234: 166, trans. Price, *History*, 13).

⁷³ James of Nisibis 4 (SC 234: 166, trans. Price, *History*, 13–14).

⁷⁴ James of Nisibis 4 (SC 234: 166, trans. Price, *History*, 14).

⁷⁵ James of Nisibis 5 (SC 234: 170, trans. Price, *History*, 14).

⁷⁶ James of Nisibis 5 (SC 234: 170, trans. Price, *History*, 14).

⁷⁷ Christine Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places: Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy* (University of California Press, 2014), 187–90, 196–98.

⁷⁸ Thalelaeus 5 (SC 257: 230, trans. Price, *History*, 181–82).

⁷⁹ Macedonius 9, 13 (SC 234: 490–92, 496–97, trans. Price, *History*, 103, 105).

⁸⁰ Macedonius 10 (SC 234: 492, trans. Price, *History*, 104).

⁸¹ Macedonius 15 (SC 234: 500, trans. Price, *History*, 105).

⁸² Macedonius 1 (SC 234: 474, trans. Price, *History*, 100).

⁸³ Macedonius 19 (SC 234: 508, trans. Price, *History*, 107).

⁸⁴ Theodosius 5: “He was respected even by the audacious and savage enemies who plundered and enslaved most of the East” (SC 234: 444, trans. Price, *History*, 90).

⁸⁵ Rousseau describes the *Religious History* as having a “vocabulary of reflection and formation [. . .] that was shared by ascetics and churchmen [and] characterised [. . .] by its appeal to ‘philosophy’ but also by detailed persistence at the levels of method and responsibility”: Rousseau, “Ascetic Master,” 243, 232–33, 235–40. For his conceptions of Theodoret’s subjectivity, see Rousseau, “Knowing Theodoret: Text and Self” in *The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography*, ed. Dale B. Martin and Patricia Cox Miller (Duke University Press, 2005), 278–97.

⁸⁶ Cf. Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 128.

⁸⁷ In the letters, this is usually in relation to controlling grief: e.g. letter 12, where Theodoret urges Irenaeus of Tyre to “bear bravely the death of your son-in-law” who is also Theodoret’s “own dear friend” (PG 83.4, col. 1185); letter 17: “I do implore you to remember those words that charge us to master our feelings . . . ” (PG 83.4, col. 1196). See also letter 18.

⁸⁸ E.g. letter 45 to the patrician, Anatolius: “Why have you . . . put your own advantage before the service of others?” (PG 83.4, col. 1221).

⁸⁹ See letter 14 where Theodoret urges Alexandra to assuage her grief at her husband’s death by “vanquishing the pain of your sorrow by the power of reason, and to bring your soul in this hour of need under the spell of God’s word” (PG 83.4, col. 1188).

⁹⁰ E.g. letters 28, 50, and 71. In letter 51, Theodoret declares virtue is more effective if it is spoken about: “the works of virtue are admirable in themselves, but yet more admirable do they appear if they find an eloquence able to report them well” (PG 83.4, col. 1228).

⁹¹ See letter 10, where Theodoret asks Elias, a lawyer, to “put your art in practice” (PG 83.4, col. 1184) and prosecute one Abraham who wronged various parties, or letter 23 to the patrician Areobindas: “. . . the Creator . . . gives the poverty of the poor to the rich as a means of usefulness. So he brings chastisement . . . to provide the wealthy with opportunities

for showing kindness to mankind” (PG 83.4, col. 1204). Letters 29–36 are dedicated to asking various people to help Celestinianus and his family, who are Carthaginian refugees.

⁹² E.g. letter 78 where Theodoret reminds Eusebius, bishop of Persian Armenia “to accept the responsibilities of helmsman, of captain, of shepherd, gladly to run all risk for the sake of the sheep of Christ, and not to leave His creatures abandoned and alone” (PG 83.4, col. 1252).

⁹³ E.g. letter 14: “I know how sad, how very grievous it is, when someone has experienced the worth of some loved object, suddenly to be deprived of it, and to fall in a moment from happiness to misery . . . I am aware, my excellent friend, that you know all this, and I beg you to reflect on human nature” (PG 83.4, col. 1188). Or letter 52: “. . . I recall the memory of past errors, and tremble lest I fall into like sufferings” (PG 83.4, col. 1228). See also letter 103: “In that I am human, there is nothing that I must not expect” (PG 83.4, col. 1296).

⁹⁴ E.g. letter 40: “Who is so stony-hearted as not to be shocked and affrighted at the anger and grief of the Lord? . . . Who does not look for the righteous sentence? . . . but the Lord is full of loving-kindness, and we trust He will not actually fulfil his threats” (PG 83.4, col. 1216). Or letter 52: “It is, I think, of His providential care for our common salvation that the God of all brings on some men certain calamities, that chastisement may prove to be to them that have erred a healing remedy . . . ” (PG 83.4, col. 1228).

⁹⁵ Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 46.

⁹⁶ Marana and Cyra 3–4 (SC 257: 234–36, trans. Price, *History*, 184).

⁹⁷ Baradatus 2 (SC 257: 218, trans. Price, *History*, 178).

⁹⁸ Thalassius, Limenius, John 1 (SC 257: 134, trans. Price, *History*, 152).

⁹⁹ For the positive, for example, gaining “freedom, beauty, joy,” see Ware, “The Way of the Ascetics,” 3–15, esp. 3–4. An excellent discussion is given by Hagman, *Isaac of Nineveh*, particularly in his Introduction, 1–24. For his critique of Ware, see 5–7.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, vol 2: *Early Monasticism in Mesopotamia and Syria* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1960), 14–18, 117–18, 120–23. Theodoret speaks of “innumerable . . . ascetic dwellings” stemming from Marcianus’s disciples: Marcianus 4 (SC 252: 218, trans. Price, *History*, 39). Ephrem refers to “an army on the mountain” (cited in Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, vol 2, 121n47).

¹⁰¹ Anne P. Alwis, *Celibate Marriages in Late-Antique and Byzantine Hagiography* (Bloomsbury, 2011), 65–67; *eadem*, “The Shape of Water: Rewriting Iconoclasm, Islam, and Deleuze in Byzantine Hagiography,” in *Metaphrasis: A Byzantine Concept of Rewriting and Its Hagiographical Products*, ed. Stavroula Constantinou and Christian Høgel (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 176–201. Rousseau also briefly notes this in “Ascetic Master,” 239: “Romanos, ready to teach all comers, delivered *παραινήσεις* that were typically concerned with social bonds, with harmony and peace; Maësymas harangued an unjust *δεσπότης*, again about social forbearance and understanding pity; Marôn was even more circumstantial, speaking of desire, anger, temperance, justice, disorder, and laziness.”

¹⁰² Langlands devotes a chapter to this in *Exemplary Ethics*, 47–66.

¹⁰³ As Damian does, led by Polychronius’s example: Zebinas, Polychronius, and Asclepius 5 (SC 257: 144–46, trans. Price, *History*, 156).

¹⁰⁴ Maron 3 (SC 257: 30, trans. Price, *History*, 117–18).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 65.

¹⁰⁶ When his parents died, he sold all his inheritance and embraced poverty (letter 113). He mentions wearing “rags” (letter 81: PG 83.4, col. 1262)

¹⁰⁷ Thalassius, Limnaeus, John 23. 2 (SC 257: 136, trans. Price, *History*, 153).

¹⁰⁸ Cf Theodosius 7: “I have omitted to relate a miracle performed by this inspired man, which, although to the many it will seem perhaps incredible, yet continues even now to

confirm the account” (SC 234: 448, trans. Price, *History*, 91). See also Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* 2, 35–36 and Papadogiannakis, *Christianity and Hellenism*, 16–21; 94–97.

¹⁰⁹ Prologue 10 and 11 (SC 234: 140–44, trans. Price, *History*, 8–9). See also Symeon the Elder 3. Urbainczyk sees the issue of credibility as a commonplace in history writing (Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 53–54).

¹¹⁰ Prologue 10 (SC 234: 140, trans. Price, *History*, 8).

¹¹¹ Prologue 11 (SC 234: 142, trans. Price, *History*, 8).

¹¹² Peter the Galatian 1 (SC 234: 406, trans. Price, *History*, 81).

¹¹³ For Urbainczyk, these accounts portray ascetics “as deferring to the church, thus providing a model for how ascetics should behave” (Urbainczyk, *Theodoret*, 68).

¹¹⁴ James of Cyrrhestica 5: “The disease was a flux of bile moving downwards, hurting the guts, causing pressure and forcing one to run outside” (SC 257: 76, trans. Price, *History*, 135).

¹¹⁵ James of Cyrrhestica 5 (SC 257: 76, trans. Price, *History*, 135).

¹¹⁶ James of Cyrrhestica 6 (SC 257: 78, trans. Price, *History*, 135).

¹¹⁷ James of Cyrrhestica 8 (SC 257: 80, trans. Price, *History*, 136).

¹¹⁸ James of Cyrrhestica 7 (SC 257: 80, trans. Price, *History*, 136).

¹¹⁹ Marana and Cyra 5 (SC 257: 236, trans. Price, *History*, 184).

¹²⁰ Marana and Cyra 5 (SC 257: 236, trans. Price, *History*, 184). Niketas Siniossoglou briefly discusses Theodoret’s paradoxical position in *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance*. Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 135–38. He concludes that Theodoret’s “interventions and his own moderation were the perfect rhetorical means to enhance *per contrapositionem* the glory of his heroes.” (137)

¹²¹ Domnina 7 (SC 257: 248, trans. Price, *History*, 188).

¹²² Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 253b: μιμούμενοι αὐτοί τε καὶ τὰ παιδικὰ πείθοντες καὶ ῥυθμίζοντες εἰς τὸ ἐκείνου ἐπιτήδευμα καὶ ἰδέαν ἄγουσιν (“by imitating [the god] themselves and by persuasion and education/ self-regulation/ training they lead [the beloved] to the conduct and nature [of the god]”): Plato, *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet, Oxford Classical Texts, vol 3 (Oxford University Press, 1903).

¹²³ *A Cure for Pagan Maladies* 12.6 (*Théodoret de Cyr: Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques*, ed. Pierre Canivet, vol 2, SC 57 [Éditions du Cerf, 1958], 420).

¹²⁴ *Domnina* 7 (SC 257: 248, trans. Price, *History*, 188).

¹²⁵ Prologue 1 (SC 234: 126, trans. Price, *History*, 3).

¹²⁶ Prologue 1 (SC 234: 126, trans. Price, *History*, 3).

¹²⁷ Prologue 1 (SC 234: 126, trans. Price, *History*, 3).

¹²⁸ See also Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 113–14 and Krawiec, “Question of Character,” 130, 138. Papadogiannakis notes the compilatory nature of much of Theodoret’s output, which is typical of the fifth century (Yannis Papadogiannakis, *Christianity and Hellenism in the Fifth-century Greek East: Theodoret's Apologetics against the Greeks in Context* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 136–40, at 138).

¹²⁹ Prologue 10 (SC 234: 140, trans. Price, *History*, 8).

¹³⁰ See also Krawiec, “Question of Character,” 129.

¹³¹ Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 88–91. The analogy is to the genre of paradoxography, which has a disruptive role.

¹³² Symeon the Elder 6 (SC 234: 354, trans. Price, *History*, 65): τοῦτο οὐ μόνον τοὺς περιοίκους ἐνέπλησε δείματος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἅπασαν—τὴν Ἀντιόχου λέγω

¹³³ Symeon the Elder 10 (SC 234: 360, trans. Price, *History*, 66): τεθηπότας. He has an encounter with a friendly lion.

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- ¹³⁴ Palladius 3 (SC 234: 370, trans. Price, *History*, 70): ἐκπληττομένων, and also, “A cry went up from everyone.”
- ¹³⁵ Aphrahat 12 (SC 234: 398, trans. Price, *History*, 78): ἐκπλήττεται.
- ¹³⁶ Macedonius 7 (SC 234: 490, trans. Price, *History*, 103): ἔφριπτον.
- ¹³⁷ Philip Hardie, *Paradox and the Marvellous in Augustan Literature and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 14–15; citation at 14. He adds, “paradox has a strong epistemological function, surprise leading into a new understanding of some aspect of the world.”
- ¹³⁸ James of Cyrrhastica 2 (SC 257: 70, trans. Price, *History*, 133).
- ¹³⁹ Thalelaeus 1 (SC 257: 224, trans. Price, *History*, 180).
- ¹⁴⁰ Symeon Stylites 12, 18, 22 (SC 257: 188, 198, 204, trans. Price, *History*, 166, 168, 170).
- ¹⁴¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b 12–15 (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, volume 1: Books 1–9, trans. Hugh Tredennick, LCL Classical Library 271 [Harvard University Press, 1933], 12). See also Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d: “This feeling of wonder (τὸ θαυμάζειν) shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the only beginning of philosophy” (Plato, *Theaetetus – Sophist*, trans. Harold N. Fowler, LCL Classical Library 123 [Harvard University Press, 1921], 155).
- ¹⁴² Romanus 4 (SC 234: 458, trans. Price, *History*, 95).
- ¹⁴³ Macedonius 6 (SC 234: 486, trans. Price, *History*, 102): θαυμάσας.
- ¹⁴⁴ Marcianus 6 (SC 234: 256, trans. Price, *History*, 39): δέους τε ἐνεπίπλατο καὶ φρίκης μεστὸς ἐγίνετο.
- ¹⁴⁵ Eusebius of Teleda 7 (SC 234: 306, trans. Price, *History*, 53): θαυμάσαι.
- ¹⁴⁶ Marcianus 13 (SC 234: 274, trans. Price, *History*, 43): τίς τοίνυν οὐκ ἂν θαυμάσειε.
- ¹⁴⁷ Eusebius of Teleda 5 (SC 234: 298, trans. Price, *History*, 51): ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ οἶδα πότερον πλέον θαυμάσω.

¹⁴⁸ James of Nisibis 5 (SC 234: 170, trans. Price, *History*, 14); Marcianus 1 (SC 234: 246, trans. Price, *History*, 37).

¹⁴⁹ Agapetus in Marcianus 5 (SC 234: 256, trans. Price, *History*, 39): περίβλεπτος.

¹⁵⁰ Eusebius in Marcianus 6 (SC 234: 256, trans. Price, *History*, 39): ὁ θαυμάσιος; Ammianus in Eusebius of Teleda 6 (SC 234: 302, trans. Price, *History*, 52); Helladius in Theodosius 9 (SC 234: 450, trans. Price, *History*, 92); Zeno 1 (SC 234: 460, trans. Price, *History*, 96); Abraham 6 (SC 257: 42, trans. Price, *History*, 122); Asclepius 25.1 in Zebinas, Polychronius, Asclepius (SC 257: 154, trans. Price, *History*, 158); Baradatus 2 (SC 257: 218, trans. Price, *History*, 178); and Domnina 1 (SC 257: 238, trans. Price, *History*, 186).

¹⁵¹ “How could one give a better proof of gentleness of soul?”: Eusebius of Teleda 11 (SC 234: 316, trans. Price, *History*, 54); the account of Peter the Galatian includes six rhetorical questions in a row. Theodoret is probably emphasising his deeds because of their personal relationship (SC 234: 406–408, trans. Price, *History*, 81); Romanus 3 (SC 234: 458, trans. Price, *History*, 95): “who would not have been overwhelmed with admiration . . .” Zeno 5 (SC 234: 466–68, trans. Price, *History*, 97): “who could adequately express admiration . . . what eulogy could one make consonant with such greatness?”; Domnina 2 (SC 242: 466–68, trans. Price, *History*, 187): “What discourse could give due praise to a woman who with such wealth of philosophy weeps and wails and sighs like those living in extreme poverty? For it is fervent love for God that begets these tears.”

¹⁵² Papadogiannakis, *Christianity and Hellenism*, 119–139; Urbano, *The Philosophical Life*, 278–79, 283, 285, 293.

¹⁵³ Using the Pinakes database. Among these 15, Sinod. gr. 350 (Vlad. 181; twelfth century) includes the beginning and end of the gospel of Luke, further illustrating the importance in which the *Religious History* was held.

¹⁵⁴ In Hagion Oros, Μονή Φιλοθέου 042 (Lambros 1805) (thirteenth century), these include the general *canones conciliorum* as well as Gregory Thaumaturgus's and Peter, Patriarch of Alexandria's, *Epistula Canonica*, among others. In Lesbos, Μονή του Λειμώνος 007 (fifteenth century), we find Matthew Blastares's alphabetical treatises where he reconciled canon law with civil law, Patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople's canons, a compendium of *ius canonicum*, and the collected works of Theodore Balsamon, the chief Byzantine legal scholar of this period, and patriarch of Antioch, to select just a few.

¹⁵⁵ Adam Schor, *Theodoret's People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria* (University of California Press, 2011). Although some critics have observed that Theodoret's importance is mainly due to the volume of his extant material, nevertheless, he clearly played a vital role in terms of influence and reach across all sectors of society.

¹⁵⁶ Paul B. Clayton Jr. *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus: Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451)*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford University Press) and Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*, revised edition (SCM Press, 2010).

¹⁵⁷ Adam Schor, "Patronage Performance and Social Strategy in the Letters of Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 2.2 (2009): 274–99, at 277.

¹⁵⁸ Schor, "Patronage Performance," 277. See also 279, 283.

¹⁵⁹ Schor, "Patronage Performance," 284 with references to the respective letters.

¹⁶⁰ Schor, "Patronage Performance," 284.

¹⁶¹ Schor, "Patronage Performance," 287.

¹⁶² Schor, "Patronage Performance," 278.

¹⁶³ Schor, *Theodoret's People*, 104–107.

¹⁶⁴ Schor, *Theodoret's People*, 146ff; Schor, "Patronage Performance."

¹⁶⁵ Schor, *Theodoret's People*, 118.

¹⁶⁶ Schor, *Theodoret's People*, 119.

¹⁶⁷ Schor, *Theodoret's People*, 119.

¹⁶⁸ Prologue 2 (SC 234: 126, trans. Price, *History*, 4): φάρμακον ἀλεξίκακον.

¹⁶⁹ Krawiec, "Question of Character," 137.

¹⁷⁰ Prologue 2 (SC 234: 126, trans. Price, *History*, 4).

¹⁷¹ Prologue 3

¹⁷² Cf. Gavin Flood, *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9: "The important point is that ascetic traditions are forms of collective memory enacted in the body through praxis and enacted in language through discourse. Ascetic traditions are set within the wider framework of collective memory, the wider tradition that presents asceticism as central to discourse, and a valued practice." However, for Flood, "tradition" appears to equate to "institutional power," which is not the case for Theodoret's ascetics (Flood, *Ascetic Self*, 4). Flood is also writing from the perspective of comparative religion.

¹⁷³ Cf. Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics*, 174: "an exemplum is both the content of the memory and a kind of medium in itself . . . It is a particular mode for remembering and sharing meaningful memories and narratives across culture." See also Roller, *Models from the Past*, 17–23. Langlands also shows how this aspect of exempla takes the concept of *lieux de mémoires* further because, in her formulation, the "site" of exemplarity "is not a physical location or even a particular commemorative medium, but a more abstract realm of memory and imagination; it is part of the field of reference to which a reader or listener has recourse when they encounter an allusion to a particular exemplary story or figure." (173). See also 112–27, 173–86.

¹⁷⁴ Prologue 3 (SC 234: 130, trans. Price, *History*, 4) cf. Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus*, 55.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Canivet, *Le monachisme syrien*, 67