

THE PAGAN HOLY MAN IN LATE ANTIQUE SOCIETY*

A Love and desire, to sequester a Mans Selfe, for a Higher Conversation . . . is found, to have been
 falsely and fainedly, in some of the Heathen; As *Epimenides* the Candian, *Numa* the Roman,
Empedocles the Sicilian, and *Apollonius* of Tyana; And truly and really, in divers of the Ancient
 Hermits, and Holy Fathers of the Church.

F. Bacon, *Of friendship*

THE holy men of Greco-Roman paganism will never inspire either the reverence or the
 fascinated horror that the ascetics and monks of early Christianity have commanded ever since
 they first impinged on the common mind in the time of Antony and Athanasios. Writing for a
 Christian audience, Francis Bacon could dismiss the semi-mythical *Epimenides* and *Numa*, and
 notorious exhibitionists like *Empedokles* and *Apollonios*, as self-evident imposters; while in our
 own less devout times the abundance of the hagiographical literature ensures that the Christian
 saint will preoccupy scholars for the indefinite future, if only as the unwitting patron of a mass of
 historical and sociological data that is only just beginning to be analysed. Yet this is poor excuse
 for neglecting the pagan holy man, who came in the later Roman empire to play a conspicuous
 part in his own religious tradition, and also affords instructive points of comparison with his
 Christian competitors. This paper offers a first orientation towards such wider perspectives, by
 investigating the social and historical consequences entailed by the distinctive pagan concept of
 personal holiness. It will be suggested that a tendency to associate holiness with philosophical
 learning (Section I) determined the essentially urban (II) and privileged (III) background of the
 pagan holy man, and also encouraged his gradual drift to the periphery of society (IV). This
 process of marginalization, together with the exclusivist and even (apparently) misanthropic
 attitudes of many holy men, became crucial factors in the leadership-crisis of late paganism (V).
 Although the problem of the holy man's involvement in high politics will not be addressed
 directly, the reasons why these involvements were so occasional and abortive will emerge in the
 course of the discussion. The importance of the study of the holy man for the broader history of
 late paganism will be illustrated by new approaches offered to such controversial or neglected
 issues as the rôle of Neoplatonism in the intellectual life of third- and fourth-century Athens, the
 alleged absence of religious Neoplatonism of the Iamblichan type from fifth-century
 Alexandria, and the function of eremiticism in late paganism.

I. PERSONAL HOLINESS IN THE PAGAN TRADITION

In the seventh and final book of his treatise *De providentia*, Hierokles of Alexandria discussed
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A similar passage may be found at the beginning of Proklos' *Theologia Platonica*, where the
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¹ Hierokles *ap.* Photios, *Bibl.* 214, esp. 172a, 173a.

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(ὕπὸ δὴ τινῶν ἱερέων ἀληθινῶν) who had adopted the manner of life appropriate to initiation into the mysteries'. These 'exegetes of the Platonic initiation' Proklos then lists as follows:

Plotinos the Egyptian and those who received from him his doctrine, (namely) Amelios and Porphyry; and in the third place, it seems to me, those who were their disciples, and are for us at the same level of perfection as statues, (namely) Iamblichos and Theodore, and such others as, following upon them in this divine choir, roused their intellect to the Dionysiac frenzy that is induced by the writings of Plato. It was from these men that he who, after the gods, was our guide in all that is beautiful and good [i.e. Syrianos] received undefiled in the very depths of his soul the truest and most pure light of truth. He too it was who imparted to us all the rest of the philosophy of Plato, and allowed us to share in the secrets which he had received from his elders; and who, above all, made us join in the choir of those who sing the mystic truth of the divine principles.²

These two passages constitute the fullest surviving definitions of the late antique διαδοχή ('succession') of major interpreters of the philosophy of Plato. The 'purified' Platonist succession—what modern scholars call Neoplatonism—was generally held to have been instituted by Plotinos, though it is clear from Porphyry's *Vita Plotini* that Plotinos himself would have traced it back to Ammonios, as did Hierokles. After Syrianos, the last name mentioned in the texts just quoted, Proklos himself became διάδοχος, and he was succeeded by Marinos of Neapolis, Isidore, Zenodotos and perhaps Damaskios. From the time of Syrianos' teacher Plutarch, the 'successors' all resided in Athens, constituting what is known as the fifth-century Athenian School of Neoplatonism; and Damaskios was one of the seven philosophers who are said to have fled to Persia when Justinian began to put pressure on the Athenian schools c. 529—the date that conventionally marks the end of the formal Greek philosophical tradition.³ Both Hierokles and Proklos assert that the Platonist succession was regarded by its representatives as holy (ἱερά). It was the gods themselves, according to Marinos, who sent Proklos to Athens, expressly 'so that the succession of Plato might be preserved untarnished and pure';⁴ and the later Neoplatonists often used the Homeric image of the 'golden chain' (χρυσή σειρά), a symbol of the affinity that exists between Man and the divine, when they wished to convey the true nature of the succession.⁵ The concept of the 'holy race' (ἱερά γενεά), implying a greater exclusiveness than the idea of the succession, also enjoyed some currency: apart from the passage from Hierokles quoted above, it also occurs in one of the fragments preserved by Photios from Damaskios' *Vita Isidori*:

The holy race lived apart, leading the blissful life which is pleasing to the gods, devoted to philosophy and worship of the divine beings.⁶

Isidore himself, as we learn from the same source, was so impressed by 'the greatness of the succession' (τῆς διαδοχῆς τὸ μέγεθος) that he felt himself unworthy to carry it on.⁷

The intrinsic sanctity of the Platonic succession was intensified by the holiness of its individual representatives. In fact the two prototypal 'divine men' (θεῖοι ἄνδρες) of late paganism were both philosophers, namely Plato himself and Pythagoras—'these winged souls', as Isidore put it, 'who dwell above the heavens, in the plain of truth and the meadow of divine

² Proklos, *Theol. Plat.* i 1, pp. 5–7 (Saffrey–Westerkink).

³ Philosophers may have continued to teach inconspicuously in Athens for some time after this date: see Alan Cameron, 'The last days of the Academy at Athens', *PCPS* cxv (1969) 7–29; H. Blumenthal, '529 and its sequel: What happened to the Academy?', *Byzantion* xlviii (1978) 369–85; J. Gucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen 1978) 322–9.

⁴ Marinos, *Procl.* 10 (ὅνα γὰρ ἀνόθευτος ἔτι καὶ εἰλικρινῆς σώζεται ἡ Πλάτωνος διαδοχή . . .). Cf. Augustine, *Acad.* iii 18.41: 'os illud Platonis quod in philosophia purgatissimum est et lucidissimum, dimotis

nubibus erroris emicuit, maxime in Plotino, qui platonius philosophus ita eius similis iudicatus est, ut simul eos vixisse, tantum autem interest temporis ut in hoc ille revixisse putandus sit.'

⁵ E.g. Damaskios, *Isid.* 151 (*Epitoma Photiana*). Cf. P. Lévêque, *Aurea catena Homeri: une étude sur l'allégorie grecque* (Paris 1959) esp. 41–3; and Gucker (n. 3) 306–22. The same image was adopted by Christian writers: see, e.g., Symeon the New Theologian, *Keph.* iii 4 (χρυσή ἄλυσις).

⁶ Damaskios, *Isid.* 95 (EP). *Ibid.* 96 (ἀνέκαιον ὁσίῳ πυρὶ τοὺς βωμοὺς) must refer to the cultic preoccupations of the ἱερά γενεά.

⁷ *Ibid.* 150 (EP).

forms'. Among more recent philosophers, according to Isidore, one must regard as divine Porphyry, Iamblichos, Syrianos, Proklos and certain others, un-named, who since the time of Proklos 'have accumulated a rich treasure of divine knowledge'.⁸ Likewise Hierokles described Ammonios as 'divinely possessed (ἐνθουσιάσας) with longing for the true goal of philosophy'.⁹ Reflection on theological and philosophical truths was indeed widely accepted as a prerequisite of divinisation. Proklos, in the passage already quoted, asserts that immersion in the mysteries of Platonic philosophy could result in divine possession, like a 'Dionysiac frenzy'; and Olympiodoros listed four Platonic dialogues (*Timaeus*, *Respublica*, *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*) which in his opinion illustrated these Πλατωνικοὶ ἐνθουσιασμοί.¹⁰ Nor was this assumption limited to Platonists—we find the Hermeticists of Egypt, for example, insisting that study of the writings of Hermes Trismegistos should be the first step on the road of spiritual ascent.¹¹

Yet if the holy man was a philosopher, it was not just any philosopher who could aspire to personal divinisation. In the first place one had to take as one's guide a spiritual teacher, not a mere *érudit*. As Isidore put it, in the passage immediately following his assertion of Pythagoras' and Plato's divinity:

Those who apply themselves to things perishable and human, or who seek too hastily to gain understanding, or who are too eager for knowledge (φιλομαθεῖς), obtain little of the wisdom that is great and divine. Among the ancients, Aristotle and Chrysippos were immensely gifted, but they were extremely avid for knowledge and hard-working, so they did not complete the whole ascent. Among the philosophers of more recent times, Hierokles and those like him, though they lacked nothing in terms of human culture, were for many reasons seriously lacking in the sphere of divine concepts.¹²

A similar point of view had been expressed by the emperor Julian, though with a slightly more liberal disposition towards the Peripatos and the Stoa:

Only philosophy is suitable for us (priests), and of philosophers only those who acknowledge the gods as the guides of their paideia, for example Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and those who follow Chrysippos and Zeno. For we should not occupy ourselves with all philosophers, or with all doctrines, but only with those philosophies and philosophers that imbue us with piety and teach us about the gods. . . .

—not, in other words, with such as Epikouros or the Sceptics, most of whose works had significantly enough been lost, as the emperor himself points out, by the mid-fourth century.¹³

Elsewhere, Julian observed that 'the theories of Aristotle are incomplete, unless they be brought into harmony with those of Plato; indeed, even Plato's doctrines must be harmonized with the oracles that have been granted us by the gods'.¹⁴ This last point is of supreme importance. Plato was indisputably the most authoritative expositor of the divine mysteries; but

⁸ *Ibid.* 36 (EP), and cf. fr. 77 (Zintzen). But the Neoplatonists were far from being the first to recognize Plato's divinity: see, e.g., Apuleius, *De Plat.* i 2, ii 7, and A. S. Riginos, *Platonica: the anecdotes concerning the life and writings of Plato* (Leiden 1976) 9–32.

⁹ Hierokles ap. Phot., *Bibl.* 251.461a. Cf. Julian, *or.* xi 136bc: 'Ὁμηρός τε καὶ Ἡσίοδος . . . ἐπιπνοία θεία καθάπερ οἱ μάντις ἐνθουσιῶντες πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

¹⁰ Olympiodoros, in *Alc.* 1–2 (*ad init.*).

¹¹ See, e.g., *Corp. Herm.* xiii 1; *Nag Hammadi Codex* vi 6.54, 62–3 (=D. M. Parrott, ed., *Nag Hammadi codices V.2–5 and VI, with Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 1 and 4* [Leiden 1979] 350–2, 370).

¹² Damaskios, *Isid.* 36, and cf. 35 (EP). For a similar view of Aristotle, see the alchemical treatise by Zosimos of Panopolis (early fourth century), preserved in Syriac in Cambridge University Library MS. Mm. 6.29 (trans. R. Duval, ap. M. Berthelot, *La chimie au moyen âge* ii

[Paris 1893] 264): 'Quoique philosophe pour les choses visibles, il n'a pas bien distingué l'existence des choses invisibles, c'est-à-dire celle des intelligences ou substances spirituelles. . . . Il n'était pas non plus l'Esprit-Saint; mais c'était un homme mortel, une intelligence mortelle et un corps mortel. C'était le plus brillant parmi les êtres non lumineux, mis en contraste avec les êtres incorporels. Il possédait un pouvoir d'appropriation ou de résistance sur les êtres corporels et non lumineux, autres que les intelligences supérieures et les grands corps célestes. Comme il était mortel, il ne put s'élever jusqu'à la sphère céleste; il ne sut pas non plus s'en rendre digne. C'est pourquoi sa science et ses actes demeurèrent dans la région inférieure à cette sphère.'

¹³ Julian, *ep.* 89b.300d–301a, 301c.

¹⁴ *Id.*, *or.* viii 162 cd. Cf. Marinós, *Procl.* 13, on the 'preliminary and minor mysteries' of Aristotle.

merely to read him was pointless, unless one knew *how* to read him. Damaskios remarked of Isidore: 'he was absorbed in the pure concepts of Plato, but he did not approach them in the manner usual among most philosophers'.¹⁵ Earlier in the same work, this distinction is expanded:

God wanted to show, so it seems, that he [Isidore] was a soul rather than a compound of soul and body, and that philosophy had not been deposited in this amalgam, but had been established in the soul alone. I have myself encountered people who were brilliant as far as the externals of philosophy were concerned, and who impressed me with memories laden with a multitude of theories, with the sudden forcefulness of endless syllogisms and with an unending faculty for superhuman perceptions, but who were inwardly barren of soul and lacking in true knowledge.¹⁶

Perhaps though it was the Pythian oracle that formulated this idea with greatest succinctness when it allegedly declared: *ἐνθους ὁ Σύρος, πολυμαθῆς ὁ Φοῖνιξ*.¹⁷ In this telegraphic comparison between the 'God-filled' Iamblichos, the first Neoplatonist whom posterity conventionally rather than exceptionally referred to as 'divine' (*θεῖος*),¹⁸ and the merely learned Porphyry, the oracle accurately pin-pointed the significance of Iamblichos' rejection of merely human wisdom in order to seek knowledge of, and ultimately possession by, the divine.¹⁹

Yet pagans did not conceive of personal holiness solely in terms of adherence to an intellectual tradition, however much spiritualised. Personal conduct was also of importance. Here again the paradigm was a philosopher, Pythagoras, though Pythagoreanism was less a philosophical system than a way of life, founded on reverence for the gods and for certain ascetic principles enshrined in apophthegms attributed to the philosopher of Samos himself.²⁰ Plato had been much influenced by Pythagoras, and in the Roman period admirers of Pythagoras were usually Platonists by doctrinal disposition—second-century philosophers like Noumenios and Kronios, for example, are called indifferently *Πυθαγόρειοι* or *Πλατωνικοί*.²¹ When, by the early third century, the Aristotelian, Epicurean and Stoic schools of philosophy had effectively been subsumed into the general syncretism of the age, Platonism, coloured by Pythagoreanism, became the dominant force in Greco-Roman intellectual life. The fortunes of the pagan holy man were closely allied to the growing popularity of Pythagoras' teachings. His rise may be dated from the aftermath of the Pythagorean revival that occurred in late Republican Rome, and his flourishing from the gradual emergence of the Platonist–Pythagorean synthesis in the time of Ammonios and Plotinos.²² Indeed, it was during the 220s, only a few years before Plotinos became Ammonios' pupil, that Philostratos published his famous *Vita Apollonii*, based on the life of the first century A.D. Pythagorean sage and wonder-worker, Apollonios of Tyana.²³ At this period Apollonios enjoyed considerable vogue even at court: Septimius Severus' wife Julia Domna commissioned Philostratos' biography, and her son Caracalla and great-nephew Severus Alexander were both devotees of Apollonios.²⁴ At other levels of society the sage of Tyana was

¹⁵ Damaskios, *Isid.* 33, and cf. 35 (EP).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 17 (EP).

¹⁷ David, *In Porph.* (proem.) 4, p. 92.2–7 (Busse). Cf. Aincias of Gaza, *Theoph.* 634 (PG lxxxv 896b); and Damaskios, *Isid.* 35 (EP) on Isidore's eschewal of *πολυμαθία*.

¹⁸ E.g. Julian, *ep.* 12, and cf. *orr.* vii 217b; xi 146a, 157c; Libanios, *or.* lii 21 and *ep.* 1466.4. Other references are assembled by E. Zeller and R. Mondolfo, *La filosofia dei Greci nel suo sviluppo storico* iii.6 (Florence 1961) 5 n. 6. On Julian as *ἐνθεος*, see Himerios, *or.* xli 8.

¹⁹ Cf. H. Dörrie, 'Die Religiosität des Platonismus im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert nach Christus', *Entr. Hardt* xxi (1975) 257–81.

²⁰ See F. Cumont, *Lux perpetua* (Paris 1949) 149–56; H. Dörrie, *RE* xxiv 270–6.

²¹ E.-A. Leemans, *Studie over den wijsgeer Numenius*

van Apamea met uitgave der fragmenten = *Acad. roy. de Belg., Mem. de la Cl. des Lett.* xxxvii. 2 (Brussels 1937) 85–6, 153. Cf. Longinos *ap.* Porphyry, *Plot.* 20.71–3 (and cf. 21.5–6); Porph., *VP* 53; Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* ii 13; Marinos, *Procl.* 28.

²² Lucian, *Vit. auct.* 2, has Hermes, who is trying to auction off a Pythagorean, demand: *τίς ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων εἶναι βούλεται*.

²³ See most recently E. L. Bowie, 'Apollonios of Tyana: tradition and reality', *ANRW* ii.16(2) (Berlin 1978) 1652–99. On Plotinos' chronology, see T. D. Barnes, 'The chronology of Plotinus' life', *GRBS* xvii (1976) 65–70; and H.-R. Schwyzer, *RE* Suppl. xv 313–15.

²⁴ Philostratos, *VA* i 3; Dion Kassios lxxvii 18.4; *HA, Sev. Alex.* 29.2.

revered throughout late antiquity.²⁵ Libanios thought Julian's way of life closely analogous to Apollonios',²⁶ and Eunapios refers to him in terms of exaggerated adulation.²⁷ Porphyry's and Iamblichos' obviously paradigmatic biographies of Pythagoras confirm the Neoplatonists' general attachment to the Pythagorean way of life.

The practical application of the model of the Pythagorean holy man delineated in these three biographies may be observed in Eunapios' *Vitae philosophorum*, which includes an account of the Neoplatonist succession from Plotinos down to Eunapios' own teacher Chrysanthios, with particular emphasis on the circle that Iamblichos' pupil Aidesios gathered around himself at Pergamon. Eunapios was fascinated by the figure of the *θεῖος ἀνὴρ*, and he rightly pointed to Iamblichos as the foremost influence on late antique paganism's understanding of personal holiness.²⁸ Eunapios presents Iamblichos, not as a bookish intellectual, nor even, primarily, as a teacher (a rôle that Porphyry had emphasized in his biography of Plotinos), but as a spiritual father and a man of supernatural powers, possessed of penetrating insight into the thoughts of others, and able to work miracles, summon spirits, and even soar aloft into the air and be transfigured with light when he prayed to the gods. That Iamblichos was also a serious philosopher in the more traditional sense is evident from his surviving writings, and especially from the fragments of his commentaries; but Eunapios' emphasis on his spiritual powers is perfectly justifiable. Proklos once observed that 'If I had the power, I would allow of all the ancient books only the (*Chaldaean*) *Oracles* and the *Timaeus* to circulate, but all the other books I would conceal from the present generation, because those who read them carelessly or without attention can only be harmed'.²⁹ These words are close in spirit to Iamblichos, whose distinctive contribution to the evolution of Neoplatonism was the attempt to mould together into a coherent whole the philosophy of Plotinos and Porphyry and the theurgical doctrines of the *Oracula Chaldaica*. Theurgy taught how, through sacramental actions and the use of 'the ineffable words by which a mortal charms the heart of the immortals', the initiate might purify his soul and be raised up to union with the gods.³⁰ The resulting state of divine possession (*ἐνθουσιασμός*), the culmination of the theurgic process, was among the most distinctive characteristics of the pagan holy man. Carried away by divine madness, and filled with supernatural power (*δύναμις*), he was able not merely to bring about the separation of his soul from his body (*ἔκστασις*), but to make a positive advance into the divine realm (*ἀναγωγή καὶ μετάστασις*).³¹ This state might, as we have seen, be brought about through abstract philosophical contemplation; but it was regarded, at least by post-Iamblichian Neoplatonists, as more typically the product of theurgic activity. Eunapios could describe the teaching even of a committed follower of Iamblichos like Aidesios of Pergamon as mere 'accurate learning' (*ἐν λόγοις ἀκρίβεια*) compared with the *ἐνθουσιασμός* of the theurgist Sosipatra.³²

As a result of Iamblichos' teaching and personal example, the religious understanding of the philosopher's vocation that had been taken for granted by Plotinos and Porphyry was pushed towards a more explicit hieraticism—hence the distinction made by a later commentator between the *φιλόσοφοι* Plotinos and Porphyry and the *ἱερατικοί* Iamblichos, Syrianos and Proklos.³³ Indeed, the accepted version of the Platonist succession itself shows every sign of

²⁵ W. Speyer, 'Zum Bild des Apollonios von Tyana bei Heiden und Christen', *JbAC* xvii (1974) 47–63; C. P. Jones, 'An epigram on Apollonius of Tyana', *JHS* c (1980) 190–4. The Neoplatonists make specific reference to Apollonios surprisingly rarely: Porph., *Chr. fr.* 4, *Abst.* ii 34.2 (cf. J. Bouffartigue–M. Patillon, *Porphyre, De l'abstinence* ii [Paris 1979] 30–4), iii 3.6; Iamblichos, *VP* 35.254; and below, n. 27.

²⁶ Libanios, *or.* xvi 56.

²⁷ Eunapios, *VP* ii 1.3–4, xxiii 1.8.

²⁸ *Ibid.* v, vi 11.11.

²⁹ Marinos, *Procl.* 38 (trans. L. J. Rosán).

³⁰ *Orac. Chald. fr.* 110, 219; Iamblichos, *Myst. passim*.

³¹ Iamblichos, *Myst.* iii 7.114–8.117 (esp. 114), 25.158–9.

³² Eunapios, *VP* vi 9.2; and cf. vii 2 on the contrasting approach of two of Aidesios' pupils, Eusebios of Myndos and Maximos of Ephesos.

³³ [Olympiodoros], in *Phd.* p. 123.3–6 (Norvin). (L. G. Westerink, *Damascius: Lectures on the Philebus Wrongly Attributed to Olympiodorus* [Amsterdam 1959] xv–xx argues that this part of the commentary originated with Damaskios.) Cf. Damaskios, *Isid.* 132 (*EP*), *fr.* 3, 213. On Iamblichos' doctrine of the philosopher-priest, see below.

having been constructed specifically in order to show that the only true heirs of Plato and Plotinos were the adherents of Iamblichan theurgy. This entailed the complete omission of the Alexandrian Neoplatonists from Hypatia and Synesios onwards, justified by Isidore, in a text already quoted, on the grounds that 'Hierokles of Alexandria and those like him, though they lacked nothing in terms of human culture, were for many reasons seriously lacking in the sphere of divine concepts'. Making due allowance for Isidore's prejudicial language, that is not an unreasonable description of the difference between Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonism. Although the religious and intellectual life of Alexandria was more diverse than Isidore implies,³⁴ the philosophical atmosphere there was undoubtedly more Aristotelian than in Athens,³⁵ and less aggressively pagan. One naturally concludes that the Platonist *διαδοχή*, in the form in which we know it, represents the propaganda of Athenian Iamblichans, and that if Hierokles thought he belonged to it—he had after all been a pupil of Plutarch of Athens—others were not so sure.

To summarize: the late antique pagan conception of personal holiness was founded on and conditioned by Platonic metaphysics and the ascetic piety of the Pythagorean tradition. With Iamblichos, theurgy too came to be regarded as part of the necessary expertise of the *θεῖος ἀνὴρ*; and the tradition of pagan holiness was thenceforth closely associated, if not necessarily coterminous, with the Neoplatonist succession as defined by the Athenian Iamblichans of the fifth century. The fact that the pagan holy man was almost by definition a philosopher does not of course mean that late paganism altogether lacked the concept of natural, inborn wisdom. Julian, for example, could describe the ancients as 'not possessed of a wisdom acquired and fabricated like ours, but philosophizing in a natural manner' (*οὐκ ἐπικτητον ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς ἔχοντες τὸ φρονεῖν, οὔτι πλαστῶς, ἀλλ' αὐτοφυῶς φιλοσοφούντες*), thus acknowledging that there does exist a natural philosophy superior to that sought by the conventional sage.³⁶ Yet in the very same breath Julian accepts the general inclination among late antique pagans to regard the great philosophers of the past as oracles of a definitive wisdom—even Plotinos explicitly stated his purpose to be the interpretation of the ancients, and the harmonization of their opinion with his own.³⁷ This pervasive spiritual and intellectual traditionalism, together with the association that the pagan mind instinctively made between holiness and *knowledge* of God, ensured that familiarity with the divine world was in effect limited to those capable of standing on the shoulders of the giants of the past—in other words, to the learned. This observation is bound to be the starting-point for any attempt to write the social history of the pagan holy man; for his sense of attachment to Greco-Roman cultural and religious traditions predetermined his human milieu and even his attitudes of mind.

II. THE GEOGRAPHY OF HOLINESS

(a) *The pursuit of the holy*

The pagan holy man's primary social function was that of a teacher of philosophy; and his primary social milieu was provided by his own disciples. This crucial relationship between the

³⁴ See below.

³⁵ See Marinos, *Procl.* 9–10 on Proklos' experiences in Alexandria.

³⁶ Julian, *or.* iii 82b. Cf. a decree of c. A.D. 200 honouring a citizen of Olbia, who *αὐτοφυῆ φι(λ)οσοφίαν ἀσύνκριτον ἐκτήσατο* (B. Latyshev, ed., *Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini graecae et latinae* i² [Petersburg 1916] no. 42); Synesios, *Dion* 9.48c–50a, esp. 49c: *μάτην ἂν οὐτοὶ πονοῖεν καὶ ἀποτρύχουντο, οἷς οὔτε αὐτοφυῆς ἐστὶ νοῦς οὔτε ἐπικτητός*; and the other references collected by A. D.

Nock, 'Orphism or popular philosophy?', *Harv TheolR* xxxiii (1940) 301–15 = *Essays on religion and the ancient world*, ed. Z. Stewart (Oxford 1972) 503–15. The idea of the natural philosopher should not, however, be confused with the widespread custom of using the epithet *φιλόσοφος*/philosophus as a mere synonym for 'good' or 'wise' (e.g. *IG* v.1 598–9, xii.5 292).

³⁷ Plotinos ii 9.10.12–14, 7.7.10–17; v 1.8.10–14. Cf. Longinos *ap.* Porph. *Plot.* 20.68–73, and Proklos (quoted above, p. 34) on the Neoplatonists as *οἱ τῆς Πλατωνικῆς ἐποπτείας ἐξηγηταί*.

philosopher and his circle I have discussed elsewhere.³⁸ Yet the holy man's activities were not necessarily confined to his circle—indeed, the structure of the circle itself helped to disperse the holy man's influence as widely as possible. As among the Pythagoreans, so among the followers of the Neoplatonic sages, there were to be distinguished intimate disciples, *ζηλωταί*, and less committed 'listeners', *ἀκροαταί*.³⁹ Depending on the proportion between these two groups, the Neoplatonist circles may be regarded as more or less extended. For example, Plotinos had an inner circle of about a dozen, but its meetings (*συνουσίαι*, *διατριβαί*) were open to anyone who wished to attend;⁴⁰ while Sosipatra's circle at Pergamon was a relatively closed coterie of Chaldaean adepts.⁴¹ Aidesios' circle, with which Eunapios contrasts Sosipatra's, was much more open, and so too was Iamblichos'—Eunapios emphasizes that the sage of Apamea 'had a multitude of disciples, and those who desired learning flocked to him from all parts'.⁴²

Eunapius' remark reminds us that the late antique pagan who desired to sit at the feet of a spiritual master had first to search him out. The search itself was, often enough, the beginning of wisdom, both spiritually and sociologically.

Spiritually, the search for the holy man quickly taught the aspiring adept the truth of Isidore's distinction between the *φιλομαθεῖς* and the *θεῖοι*. Plotinos, twenty-eight years old and eager for wisdom, 'had been recommended to the teachers in Alexandria who had at that time the best reputation (*τοῖς τότε . . . εὐδοκιμοῦσι*), but was coming away from their lectures dejected and full of sadness'. Suddenly, a friend introduced him to Ammonios Sakkas, and he was immediately captivated, exclaiming: 'this is the man I was searching for' (*τοῦτον ἐζήτουν*). Plotinos remained with Ammonios constantly for the next eleven years.⁴³ Julian's search for the ideal spiritual guide (*καθηγεμόν*) was even longer.⁴⁴ It was while he was receiving a conventional rhetorical education in Nikomedia that he first began to hear rumours about the circle of Iamblichan Neoplatonists then active in Pergamon under the guidance of Aidesios.⁴⁵ After studying for a while with Aidesios and his pupils Eusebios of Myndos and Chrysanthios (351), Julian's curiosity was aroused, according to Eunapios, by Eusebios' obsessive defence of his own rational and dialectical philosophy (*ἡ ἀκρίβεια ἡ ἐν τοῖς μέρεσι τοῦ λόγου καὶ αἱ διαλεκτικαὶ μηχαναὶ καὶ πλοκαὶ / ἡ διὰ τοῦ λόγου κάθαρσις*) against 'witchcraft and magic that deceive the senses'. When Eusebios explained that his polemic was aimed at another of Aidesios' pupils, Maximos of Ephesos, Julian realized instinctively that this was the master of the theurgic arts he had sought for so long. Bidding farewell to Eusebios with the words: 'May you devote yourself to your books. You have shown me the man I was searching for',⁴⁶ Julian immediately left Pergamon and went to stay with Maximos in Ephesos (351–2). A third example is Proklos, who began his philosophical studies in Alexandria, but, like Plotinos, was disillusioned by the type of instruction he received there. Yet he found no Ammonios to redeem the narrow Aristotelianism of his teachers, until he remembered a dream in which Athena had directed him to study in Athens—and there at last he met the two masters, Plutarch and Syrianos, who were to initiate him into theurgic Neoplatonism.⁴⁷

From the sociological point of view, the experiences of Plotinos, Julian and Proklos confirm that the holy man's milieu was largely determined by his vocation as a philosopher. In particular,

³⁸ G. Fowden, 'The Platonist philosopher and his circle in late antiquity', *Philosophia* vii (1977) 359–83. See also *id.*, 'Pagan philosophers in late antique society: with special reference to Iamblichos and his followers' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford 1979), in course of revision for publication.

³⁹ Pythagoreans: Porph. *VP* 37; Iamblichos, *VP* 6.29–30. Neoplatonists: Porph. *Plot.* 7.1–2; Marinus, *Procl.* 38. See also Philodemos, *Ind. Sto.* 41.4–5 (Tra-versa).

⁴⁰ Fowden (*art. cit.* n. 38) 371–2.

⁴¹ Eunapios, *VP* vi 9.1–14.

⁴² *Ibid.* v 1.4–5 (Iamblichos), vi 4.7 (Aidesios).

⁴³ Porph., *Plot.* 3.

⁴⁴ Julian calls Maximos his *καθηγεμόν* in *ep.* 89a.452a, 89b.298b, and *or.* vii 235bc.

⁴⁵ Libanios, *orr.* xiii 10–12; xviii 13–15, 18. On Julian's studies in Pergamon and Ephesos see Eunapios, *VP* vii 1.9–2.13; and on the chronology of this period of his life, E. v. Borries, *RE* x 30–2.

⁴⁶ *πρόσεχε τοῖς βιβλίοις, ἐμοὶ δὲ ἐμήνυσας ὃν ἐζήτουν*—the Plotinian reminiscence is doubtless Eunapios' (vii 2.12).

⁴⁷ Marinus, *Procl.* 9–10. For a first-century parallel to the difficulty experienced by Plotinos and Proklos in finding suitable teachers in Alexandria, cf. *POxy.* 2190.

it was taken for granted that, like the philosopher, he was a city-dweller; and a close examination of the holy man within his urban environment affords the best approach to an understanding of his general social context, and of the manner in which local circumstances both reflected and moulded his ideas and behaviour.

(b) *Rome*

The *histoire événementielle* of the late antique pagan holy man may be written, from the time of Iamblichos, largely in terms of the Greek or Hellenized cities of the eastern Mediterranean, in particular Apamea, Pergamon, Ephesos, Sardis, Athens, Alexandria and Aphrodisias. Iamblichos' predecessors, Plotinos and Porphyry, provide a significant exception to this rule, though they do not invalidate it. Plotinos, whatever his reasons for settling in Rome after he left Ammonios Sakkas in the early 240s, was a cosmopolitan in the philosophical sense of the word, a man to whom place was indifferent; and his decision to settle in the capital of the empire rather than anywhere else tells us nothing about either him or Rome. It is true that the Eternal City had long been an intellectual centre, and provided the ideal environment for an international circle such as Plotinos';⁴⁸ but Porphyry's biography offers no hint that that was Plotinos' motive in establishing himself there, or that his circle was connected with other intellectual or religious movements in Rome. The presence of Gnostics, for example, in Plotinos' circle⁴⁹ tells us nothing except that some Gnostics had an interest in Platonist philosophy.

Porphyry continued to teach in Rome from Plotinos' death until his own, during the first decade of the fourth century. Thereafter, the city ceased to be an important centre of Neoplatonism. In the fourth century its philosophical life was dominated by aristocrats like Virius Nicomachus Flavianus and Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. These were men of piety and learning, and we may be sure that it was not they whom Ammianus Marcellinus had in mind when he penned his notorious condemnation of the city's intellectual life—'in place of the philosopher the singer is called in'.⁵⁰ Yet the aristocrats of fourth-century Rome, and the circle of scholars they patronized, were not of an innovative cast of mind. We know of only one Neoplatonist sympathizer among them, namely Marius Victorinus, the African rhetor who translated various works by Plotinos and Porphyry into Latin, and then converted to Christianity;⁵¹ while the fashion for asceticism and holy men that accompanied the Christianization of the Roman aristocracy at the end of the century seems to have been the product of oriental influences alien to Rome's highly conservative paganism and its Christian tradition alike.

(c) *Apamea and Asia Minor*

On the death of Porphyry, Neoplatonism's centre of gravity shifted back to the eastern provinces.⁵² Porphyry's successor in the *διαδοχή*, Iamblichos, was born, probably in the 240s, at Chalkis (Qinnasrīn), a commercial centre astride both the main road that linked Damascus and Emesa to northern Syria, and the caravan route that connected Antioch with the east.⁵³ Although it was an inland city, situated towards the eastern edge of Greek Syria, Chalkis boasted

⁴⁸ Porph., *Plot.* 7.

⁴⁹ Plotinos ii 9.10.3–14; Porph., *Plot.* 16.

⁵⁰ Amm. Marc. xiv 6.18, xxviii 4.14–15.

⁵¹ Servius (the Vergilian commentator) and Macrobius, though familiar with Neoplatonist doctrines, are now assigned to the first half of the fifth century. On them, and on Marius Victorinus, see A. Cameron, 'Paganism and literature in late fourth century Rome', *Entr. Hardt* xxiii (1977) 19–26. The Neoplatonist doctrines expounded by Praetextatus in Macrobius, *Sat.*

i 17–24 (references to Plotinos and Porphyry at i 17.3, 70) were surely foisted on him by Macrobius himself.

⁵² Julian, *Gal.* 131c, pronounces the provincial west a virtual philosophical wilderness; cf. *epp.* 8 (ἐσμὲν ἐκβεβαρβαρωμένοι διὰ τὰ χωρία), 13 (ἡ τῶν Γαλατῶν ἀμουσία).

⁵³ Eunapios, *VP* v 1.1; J. Dillon, *Iamblichi Chalcedensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta* (Leiden 1973) 5–7.

a vigorous tradition of Hellenic culture,⁵⁴ from which Iamblichos doubtless benefited. After completing his studies, probably in Rome under Porphyry, Iamblichos took the momentous decision to return to Syria and settle, not in Chalkis nor even in Antioch, supposedly the cultural capital of Syria, but at Apamea.⁵⁵ 'Florentissima Apamea',⁵⁶ apart from being a wealthy city strategically placed in the Orontes valley at the focus of several important north-south routes, also had a peculiar attractiveness for a young Neoplatonist. Not only had Noumenios been born in the city, but his fervent admirer Amelios, one of Plotinos' principal disciples, had gone to live there shortly before his teacher's death, and had bequeathed his notes on Plotinos' lectures to his adopted son, Hostilianus Hesychius of Apamea.⁵⁷ This personal link with Rome doubtless recommended Apamea to Iamblichos, and later in all probability helped recommend Iamblichos himself as a legitimate exponent of the new Platonism that until now had been available at first hand mainly in the west. Another consideration that almost certainly influenced Iamblichos was Apamea's reputation as 'beloved of the gods' (*θεοῖς φίλη*). The city remained a vigorous centre of paganism well into the reign of Theodosius I, continuing to worship Zeus-Belos even when the cult was forbidden—indeed, bishop Markellos of Apamea, who destroyed the temple of Zeus, was murdered while attempting to demolish another temple as late as c. 389.⁵⁸ Epigraphical evidence shows the process of Christianization starting considerably later in the Apamea region than around Antioch.⁵⁹ In short, there could hardly have been a better home for the man who did more than any other to reinforce the bonds between Platonist philosophy and pagan cult. The existence of this firm base, in so important and prosperous a province of the empire, and near to many of the chief trade routes of the near east, must have contributed a good deal to the early dissemination of Iamblichan Neoplatonism.⁶⁰

Once established in Apamea, Iamblichos was able to gather around himself a circle of disciples almost as international as Plotinos'. If Iamblichos himself and his principal disciple, Sopatros, were Syrians, Aidesios and Eustathios were from Kappadokia, while Euphrasios and Theodore of Asine were of Greek origin.⁶¹ Here we have in embryo the subsequent history of Iamblichanism; for on the Master's death the main focus of his influence was transferred first to Asia Minor and thence to Greece. Sopatros' attempt, soon after the death of Iamblichos in the early 320s, to make a career at Constantinople was destined to end in disaster; but his ambitions were anyway concentrated on the court, and there is no evidence that he sought to foster a circle of Neoplatonist philosophers in the uncongenial environment of Constantine's new capital.⁶² It was instead Aidesios who, on Sopatros' departure from Apamea, stepped into Iamblichos' shoes. Why, after passing some time in his native Kappadokia, he eventually removed to Pergamon⁶³ is not explained by our sources, but his known pupils were less cosmopolitan in origin than Plotinos' and Iamblichos', deriving for the most part from the cities of western Asia Minor;⁶⁴ so

⁵⁴ *Vita Rabulae* p. 160 (ed. J. J. Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri Rabulae episcopi Edesseni Balaei aliorumque opera selecta* [Oxford 1865]; trans. G. Bickell, *Ausgewählte Schriften der syrischen Kirchenväter Aphraates, Rabulas und Isaak v. Ninive* [Kempten 1874] 168), referring to the mid- to late-fourth century. (I owe this reference to Professor G. W. Bowersock.)

⁵⁵ Dillon (n. 53) 7–13. I would assign less weight than Dillon (and T. D. Barnes, 'A correspondent of Iamblichos', *GRBS* xix [1978] 105) to John Malalas's assertion, *Chron.* xii 312 (Dindorf), that Iamblichos lived and taught at Daphne near Antioch. The passage is confused, and Libanios, the quintessential Antiochene patriot, firmly associates Iamblichos with Apamea.

⁵⁶ *Amm. Marc.* xiv 8.8.

⁵⁷ Noumenios: Amelios *ap. Porph.*, *Plot.* 17.18. Amelios: *Porph.*, *Plot.* 2.32–3, 3.44–8.

⁵⁸ Zeus-Belos: J. and J. C. Balty, 'Apamée de Syrie, archéologie et histoire. i. Des origines à la Tétrarchie',

ANRW ii.8 (Berlin 1977) 129 n. 184. Fourth-century paganism: Libanios, *epp.* 1351.3, 1391.1; *or.* xlviii 14. Markellos: G. Fowden, 'Bishops and temples in the eastern Roman empire A.D. 320–435', *JThS* xxix (1978) 64–7.

⁵⁹ W. Liebeschuetz, 'Epigraphic evidence on the Christianisation of Syria', in J. Fitz, ed., *Limes: Akten des XI. Internationalen Limeskongresses (Székesfehérvár, 30.8.–6.9.1976)* (Budapest 1977) 494–5.

⁶⁰ Eunapios, *VP* v 3.10: *καὶ ἐτελεύτα . . . Ἰάμβλιχος . . . πολλὰς ῥίζας τε καὶ πηγὰς φιλοσοφίας ἀφείς.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.* v 1.4–5.

⁶² *Ibid.* vi 2. On the date of Iamblichos' death, see Barnes (n. 55) 104–6.

⁶³ Eunapios, *VP* vi 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* vi 4.7, vii 1.10. That Maximos was a native of Ephesos is explicitly stated, not by Eunapios, but by *Amm. Marc.* xxix 1.42.

it may be that a circle of philosophers receptive to theurgic Neoplatonism already existed in Pergamon before the arrival of Aidesios, and was responsible for inviting Iamblichos' distinguished pupil to teach in the city. But there were other, more general, justifications for Aidesios' removal to Pergamon, analogous to Iamblichos' reasons for settling in Apamea. Although Aidesios clearly had a circle of pupils in Kappadokia,⁶⁵ the region's faintly Boiotian reputation⁶⁶ compared unflatteringly with the still famous city of the Attalids. It is true that we know almost nothing about philosophical life at Pergamon in the third century,⁶⁷ and even the famous shrine of Asklepios had been abandoned before Aidesios' day;⁶⁸ yet something of the city's old aura must still have persisted. Nor, as we have seen, was Aidesios the only Neoplatonist sage teaching at Pergamon in the first half of the fourth century, for Sosipatra too was active in the city during the same period.

Aidesios died c. 352–5,⁶⁹ by which time life was already dangerous for aggressively pagan intellectuals of the Pergamene sort. The mysterious and secretive habits of Aidesios' circle⁷⁰ reflect a fear of persecution that now becomes an increasingly influential factor in the pagan holy man's choice of abode. During the latter half of the fourth century, and especially in the aftermath of Julian's abortive pagan restoration, the followers of Iamblichos give the impression that they feel safe only on their home ground. The personal factor becomes dominant in determining the *foyers* of Neoplatonism, and continuity of teaching in any one spot can no longer be assured. Whereas Rome had sheltered the Neoplatonist succession for two whole generations, and even Apamea may have continued as a modest centre after Iamblichos' death, at least until the reign of Julian,⁷¹ Pergamon's brief philosophical preeminence was extinguished on (if not before) the death of Aidesios, and passed directly to Ephesos, where Maximos had already been teaching for some years, and whither Chrysanthios too had removed at the suggestion of Maximos and Julian.⁷² There both Maximos and Chrysanthios remained until Julian invited them to court in the winter of 361–2.⁷³ Maximos left immediately, despite adverse omens; and when he returned to teach in Ephesos for a brief period in the reign of Valens, it was under very different circumstances.⁷⁴ Unlike Maximos, Chrysanthios heeded the omens, and passed Julian's reign in his native Sardis. Indeed, he continued to teach in that city, with Eunapios among his pupils, until his death towards the end of the century.⁷⁵ Sardis clearly remained a centre of Iamblichian Neoplatonism throughout the reign of Theodosius, and into the fifth century, since Chrysanthios' *διάδοχοι*, Epigonos of Lakedaimon and Beronikianos of Sardis, are referred to by Eunapios, writing at the turn of the century, as still alive.⁷⁶

The attachment of Maximos and Chrysanthios to their native cities was justified by more than just the dangerous times they lived in. Both Ephesos and Sardis were ancient centres of Hellenism—Ephesos in particular had shone during the Second Sophistic. Nor were the pagan cults as yet wholly extinct in either city, despite the considerable progress that Christianity had made in this region.⁷⁷ Yet Eunapios leaves the impression that he regarded himself as one of the

⁶⁵ Eunapios, *VP* vi 4.5–6.

⁶⁶ Lucian, *Epigr.* 43; Philostratos, *VA* i 7, *VS* 594. Eusebios, *VC* iv 43.4, and Basil, *epp.* 74.3, 76, are more generous, the former with reference though to Christian learning, and the latter involved in special pleading.

⁶⁷ See though *IGRom.* iv 468; and C. Habicht, *Die Inschriften des Asklepieions (Altortümer von Pergamon* viii.3) (Berlin 1969) 76–9 (no. 34), with L. Robert's qualifications, *Bull. Epig.* (1973) 375 (= *REG* lxxxvi [1973] 141–2).

⁶⁸ Habicht (n. 67) 18–20; C. Foss, 'Archaeology and the "Twenty Cities" of Byzantine Asia', *AJA* lxxxi (1977) 479–80.

⁶⁹ I.e. between Julian's departure for Ephesos and his elevation to the rank of Caesar: Eunapios, *VP* vii 3.6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* vi 1.5–6, 10.10; viii 1.1–2.

⁷¹ In this respect, the careers of Iamblichos' pupils

Dexippos and the younger Sopatros (see *PLRE* i, s.vv. Dexippos 1, Sopater 2) are suggestive. Dexippos had a number of pupils (*in Cat.* 4.13–14 Busse), though it cannot be proved that he taught in Apamea.

⁷² Eunapios, *VP* vii 1.14, 2.12–13.

⁷³ On the invitation and its sequel: *ibid.* vii 3.9–4.9, xxiii 2.1–7; and, for confirmation that Maximos (at least) had remained in Ephesos during the 350s, cf. Libanios, *orr.* xv 50, xviii 155; Gregory of Nazianzos, *or.* v 20 (*αἱ κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν διατριβαί*); Amm. Marc. xxii 7.3.

⁷⁴ Eunapios, *VP* vii 4.13–6.1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* x 8.3; xxiii 1.1; 4.4; 6.3, 8. Note also the reference at xxiii 4.3 to learned circles in Sardis.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* xxiv 1–2.

⁷⁷ On the (at present uneven) evidence for intellectual life in the cities of western Asia Minor, see G. W.

last representatives of a dying tradition. With Julian and Maximos and his own teacher Chrysanthios all dead, he sees nobody among his contemporaries worthy of his enthusiasm. Clearly he knew nothing of the revival of Iamblichanism that was already taking place on the other side of the Aegaeon, in Athens.

(d) *Athens*

The appropriateness of Athens as a sanctuary for this last flowering of Greco-Roman philosophy and religion was never in doubt. As Libanios remarked at the end of his funeral oration for Julian:

A grave near Tarsos in Kilikia received his body, but it would have found a more appropriate resting-place in the Academy next to Plato's tomb, so that he too might receive the honours paid to Plato by successive generations of students and teachers.⁷⁸

This pious wish was never fulfilled; yet Julian's spirit undoubtedly did make its abode in Athens, and nourished there the flickering fires of the old religion, whose devotees even adopted an era calculated from the date of the pagan emperor's accession.⁷⁹ Although her political power was already ancient history, the city of Athena was a living temple of Hellenism, revered throughout the Greco-Roman world for the renown of her schools and the sanctity of her shrines. Julian, who gave eloquent expression to his grief on being forced to abandon his studies at Athens, was not alone in his appreciation of the city's atmosphere of calm learning and piety.⁸⁰ Students flocked there from all parts of the empire, and although Athens had long ceased to generate new intellectual currents, she continued to provide a widely respected education in both rhetoric and philosophy. Moreover, the city's marked social and intellectual traditionalism⁸¹ made it far less pervious to Christianity than other urban centres in the eastern Mediterranean. In all probability, church-building did not get properly under way until the sixth century; and the Christians tended initially to keep to the edge of the classical city, hesitating to challenge the entrenched position of the pagan cults in the central area around the Akropolis. The closure of the temples began only in the late fifth century, and some major shrines, such as the Parthenon, the Erechtheion and the Hephaisteion may not have been converted into churches until the seventh century, even though their actively pagan history probably ceased long before that.⁸²

In the circumstances, it may seem surprising that Neoplatonism failed to take root in Athens before the time of Plutarch (c. 350–c. 432), the teacher of Syrianos and Proklos and the first Neoplatonist successor to reside in the city. The explanation is to be sought, paradoxically enough, precisely in the traditionalism that so endeared Athens to Neoplatonists like Julian. New interpretations of the classical philosophers were automatically suspect to those who drew their livelihood from propagating the old, and many students were attracted to Athens more, as

Bowersock, *Greek sophists in the Roman empire* (Oxford 1969) 17–29; Habicht (n. 67) 150–1; and V. Nutton, 'L. Gellius Maximus, physician and procurator', *CQ* xxi (1971) 263–5. On paganism in Ephesos, see C. Foss, *Ephesus after Antiquity: a Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge 1979) 30–2; and in Sardis, *id.*, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass. 1976) 28–9.

⁷⁸ Libanios, *or.* xviii 306.

⁷⁹ Marinus, *Procl.* 36; cf. Damaskios, *Isid.* 290 (*EP*).

⁸⁰ Julian, *ad Ath.* 275a (cf. Libanios, *orr.* xii 38, xv 36)—and, on Greece in general, *or.* ii 118d–119a (cf. Libanios, *or.* xiv 27); Philostratos, *VS* 603 (Proklos of Naukratis τὴν Ἀθήνησιν ἡσυχίαν ἡσπάσατο); Himerios, *or.* lix; Gregory of Nazianzos, *or.* xliii 14 (Basil ἐπὶ τὸ τῶν λόγων ἔδαφος τὰς Ἀθήνας . . . πέμπεται . . . Ἀθήνας τὰς χρυσὰς ὄντως ἐμοί, καὶ

τῶν καλῶν προξένους); Synesios, *ep.* 56 (Garzya); *HA, Sev.* 3.7 ('[Severus] Athenas petiit studiorum sacrorumque causa et operum ac vetustatum').

⁸¹ Cf. F. Millar, 'P. Herennius Dexippus: the Greek world and the third-century invasions', *JRS* lix (1969) 12–29, esp. 16–21, 29; and below.

⁸² I. Travlos, *Πολεοδομικὴ ἐξέλιξις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν* (Athens 1960) 136–46; *id.*, 'Χριστιανικαὶ Ἀθήναι', *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ ἡθικὴ ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία* i (Athens 1962) 721–32, esp. 730–1; A. Frantz, 'From paganism to Christianity in the temples of Athens' in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* xix (1965) 185–205. Travlos's dating of the earliest Athenian basilicas to the fifth century is now regarded as optimistic. (I am indebted to Professor D. Pallas and Dr J. Binder for discussing the archaeology of early Christian Athens with me.)

Themistios contemptuously pointed out, for the sake of the *genius loci* than by the virtues of its teachers.⁸³ Longinos, who dominated Athenian intellectual life in the mid-third century, had been a pupil of Ammonios Sakkas, and was perfectly familiar with the teachings of Plotinos and his principal pupils, Amelios and Porphyry.⁸⁴ Yet this 'living library and walking *mousetion*'⁸⁵ was by nature a critic, not an original thinker, and although he enthusiastically admired Plotinos' philosophical style and approach, he found himself at variance on matters of substance. Plotinos, for his part, regarded Longinos as no philosopher at all, but a mere philologist, and showed a distinctly mild interest in other contemporary Athenian philosophers.⁸⁶ From Porphyry's *Vita Plotini*, to which we owe all this information, we also learn that it was in Greece that arose the accusation that Plotinos had plagiarized Noumenios.⁸⁷ This hostility towards new interpretations of Plato continued to prevail in Greece well into the fourth century. Of the three Greek pupils of Iamblichos known to us, two subsequently turned against their teacher. Theodore of Asine was several times attacked by Iamblichos himself, and we have it on Julian's authority that Theodore's followers denounced the sage of Apamea as 'vainglorious' (*φιλότιμος*).⁸⁸ Proklos may have assigned him a prominent position in the Platonic succession,⁸⁹ but he also criticized him, accusing him among other things of being an innovator (*καινοπρεπής*).⁹⁰ Theodore's 'innovation' (which was in fact just the opposite) took the form of a greater sympathy for Porphyry than for Iamblichos and his theurgical teachings.⁹¹ Another of Iamblichos' pupils apostatized even more radically—Themistios, no friend of theurgy, speaks highly of an anonymous pupil of 'the old man of Chalkis', whom he describes as living in Sikyon and 'cultivating not the new song [Iamblichian Neoplatonism], but the ancestral and ancient one of the Academy and the Lykeion'.⁹² The fact that Julian's warning about the anti-Iamblichanism of Theodore of Asine's followers was addressed to Priskos (d. c. 396), a pupil of Aidesios who had settled in Athens and whom Julian had met during his studies there, arouses the suspicion that he too may have undergone a change of heart in later life. This suspicion is strengthened by Eunapios' description of Priskos as one who, like Theodore, 'introduced innovations' (*νεωτερισμοὺς ἐνεγκών*),⁹³ and by the fact that Priskos was completely ignored by the fifth-century Athenian Neoplatonists, who were usually so fond of quoting the opinions of their predecessors.

Clearly the conventional assumption that Neoplatonism was next to unknown in third- and fourth-century Athens⁹⁴ must be rejected, even if the new doctrines were more criticized than admired. And by the time Neoplatonism began to play a more significant part in the intellectual and religious life of the city, in the early fifth century, pressure brought to bear on pagan philosophers by the Christian state had precipitated a retreat to certain centres where there was strength in numbers—and Athens was among the few places where the pagan holy man, the adherent of Iamblichian theurgy, could feel secure enough to practise his faith and propagate his teachings openly. Accordingly it is to Plutarch and his successors, especially Proklos, that we

⁸³ Themistios, *or.* xxvii 336c–337c. For negative comments on the intellectual atmosphere of fourth-century Athens, see Libanios, *or.* i 17, 23 (and Eunapios, *VP* xvi 1.6), *ep.* 742.1; Gregory of Nazianzos, *or.* xliii 18 (recording Basil's disillusion); Synesios, *epp.* 56, 136.

⁸⁴ Porph., *Plot.* 19–20.

⁸⁵ Eunapios, *VP* iv 1.3.

⁸⁶ Porph., *Plot.* 14.19–20, 15.18–21.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 17–18.

⁸⁸ Julian, *ep.* 12. On Iamblichos' criticism of Theodore, see W. Deuse, *Theodoros von Asine: Sammlung der Testimonien und Kommentar* (Wiesbaden 1973) 1; 62 n. 53.

⁸⁹ See the passage quoted at the beginning of this article.

⁹⁰ Proklos, in *Tim.* 225a; cf. Deuse (n. 88) 20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 12–20.

⁹² Themistios, *or.* xxiii 295b–296a: *θεραπεύων δὲ οὐ τὴν νέαν ὁδὴν, ἀλλὰ τὴν πατριὸν καὶ ἀρχαίαν τῆς Ἀκαδημίας καὶ τοῦ Λυκείου*. Cf. *or.* xxxiv 12: *οὐδὲ . . . τὴν ἐν ταῖς γωνίαις φιλοσοφίαν* (Neoplatonism: see below, p. 56) *εἰλόμην . . . ἀλλ' ἀρχαίαν μελέτην*. Iamblichos' third Greek pupil, Euphrasios (Eunapios, *VP* v 1.5), of whom nothing further is known, should perhaps be identified with the anonymous of Sikyon.

⁹³ *Ibid.* viii 1.10.

⁹⁴ The most elaborate version of this misconception is E. Evrard, 'Le maître de Plutarque d'Athènes et les origines du néoplatonisme Athénien', *AntClass* xxix (1960) 108–33, 391–406, who omits even to mention the presence in Athens of the younger Iamblichos (on whom see below).

owe the fullest statement of the late antique pagan world-view. We are fortunate to possess, in Marinos of Neapolis' *Πρόκλος ἡ περὶ εὐδαιμονίας* (*Vita Procli*), a work that, despite the protreptic intention implicit in its title, includes plentiful information about the worldly circumstances of the holy men of fifth-century Athens.

What Marinos tells us about Athens rings true. He presents us with a city in transition, still attached to paganism, but no longer immune to the assaults of Christianity. Walking up from Piraeus on the evening of his first arrival from Alexandria (in either 430 or 432), Proklos reached the city just as the gate-keeper was about to lock up. Marinos does not miss the symbolic undertone of the guard's words: 'Truly, if you had not come, I would have shut them.'⁹⁵ The Platonic succession was already threatened;⁹⁶ and naturally enough Syrianos showed a certain reserve on his first encounter with Proklos:

Now it was about the time of sunset, and the three [Proklos, Syrianos and another philosopher, Lachares] were conversing together, when, just as the sun was going down, the moon was seen for the first time since the conjunction (of the sun with the moon). Syrianos and Lachares wished to send the youth away, since he was a stranger, so that they could pay homage to the goddess by themselves; but Proklos himself, as he walked away, noticed from the same house the appearance of the moon; and, in full sight of both of them, he took off his shoes and worshipped the goddess. Lachares was struck by the independence of the youth and repeated to the philosopher Syrianos that divine statement of Plato's about remarkable characters: 'This person will either be a great blessing or just the opposite'.⁹⁷

Proklos' piety was so spontaneous, and his 'affinity' (*συμπάθεια, ἐπιτηδεύσεως*) with the gods so evident, that his teachers' qualms were soon overcome; and as 'successor' he became himself the focus of Athenian paganism.⁹⁸

Of Proklos' rôle in the religious life of the city, and particularly in the strife of pagans and Christians, more will be said below. Its interest in the present context is that it shows Proklos even more deeply touched by the spirit of place than earlier Iamblichians had been. In particular, he was acutely sensitive to Athens' special place in the history of pagan Hellenism. Thus he

would never allow to pass a single occasion on which he was accustomed to honour the dead, but every year on certain definite days he went around to the graves of the Attic heroes, the monuments of the philosophers, the graves of his friends and acquaintances, and performed the customary ceremonies by himself, and not by proxy. After each occasion he would go to the Academy and at a certain definite place he would invoke the souls of his predecessors and all kindred souls separately; and in another location he would again offer a libation to the souls of all philosophers in common. And finally this noble person, selecting a third area, would reverence the souls of all the dead.⁹⁹

Identifying himself in this way with the city's ancient customs, Proklos became a quintessentially Athenian figure; and for this the uniquely sympathetic character of Athens herself was to a great extent responsible. That Proklos' successors were well aware how integral a part of their tradition their Athenian home had become is proved by the abortive attempt made by some of them to flee the Roman empire and establish themselves in Persia after Justinian's decree of 529. With the cessation of formal philosophical life in Athens, the pagan holy man himself was bound to disappear.

(e) *Alexandria and Aphrodisias*

Yet Athens had no monopoly of pagan sanctity in the fifth century. Alexandria's paganism may have been more subdued, but that was not necessarily a weakness—it was after all

⁹⁵ Marinos, *Procl.* 10. Proklos was aged twenty when he arrived in Athens, and had been born either in 410 or 412 (see E. Evrard, 'La date de la naissance de Proclus le néoplatonicien', *AntClass* xxix [1960] 137–41).

⁹⁶ See Damaskios, *Isid.* 151 (*EP*): δεδιώς δ' ὁ Πρόκλος περὶ τῇ Πλάτωνος χρυσῇ τῷ ὄντι σειρῇ, μὴ

ἡμῶν ἀπολίπη τὴν πόλιν τῆς Ἀθηνῶν; and cf. 227–8, 230.

⁹⁷ Marinos, *Procl.* 11 (trans. Rosán).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 30–3, 36.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 36 (trans. Rosán, with modifications).

Alexandria, not Athens, that transmitted Greek thought to the Islamic world.¹⁰⁰ Alexandria had been a major centre of Greek intellectual life since the third century B.C., and it was an Alexandrian, Ammonios Sakkas, who in the first half of the third century A.D. catalysed the emergence of what we call Neoplatonism. In the fourth century the city was more eminent in the sciences and medicine than in philosophy,¹⁰¹ but by Synesios' day philosophy was flourishing again, notably in the circle around Hypatia. Unfortunately the sober exegesis of Aristotle to which most fifth-century Alexandrian philosophers were committed, and the growing influence of Christianity in their schools,¹⁰² has been allowed to obscure the diversity of the city's philosophical and religious life.¹⁰³ Scholars have not thought of asking, for example, why it was that, three-quarters of a century after the death of Julian, Cyril of Alexandria set about refuting the pagan emperor's *Contra Galilaeos* with such massive energy. In fact there were to be found in Alexandria, as in Athens, devotees of the old gods, of revealed wisdom and of theurgy; and although it would be idle to assert that the holy men of Alexandria were as influential as those of Athens (with whom the Alexandrians had close links), their almost total neglect by modern scholarship urgently needs to be compensated by an unprejudiced examination of the evidence.

Our best information about fifth-century Alexandrian paganism is contained in the biography of the Athenian 'successor' Isidore, written some time before the year 526¹⁰⁴ by his pupil Damaskios. Among the more interesting figures in the whole gallery of pious intellectuals to whom Damaskios introduces his reader are two native Egyptians, Heraiskos and Asklepiades, and the latter's son, Horapollon, who flourished under Zeno.¹⁰⁵ The father of Heraiskos and Asklepiades, Horapollon the elder, was a native of Phenebythis in the Panopolite nome and a contemporary of Theodosius II. Like many others from the Panopolis region,¹⁰⁶ he was a conventional, widely-travelled Egyptian literary man, entirely Hellenic in culture. His sons and grandson followed in his footsteps—Horapollon the younger was to speak with obvious pride of his family's long tradition of teaching literature and philosophy in the Alexandrian *mouseia*.¹⁰⁷ Yet this was no ordinary academic dynasty. The second and third generations immersed themselves enthusiastically in the lore of the Egyptians as well as the erudition of the Greeks, and not out of antiquarianism, but for the sake of the spiritual teachings preserved in this most ancient of traditions. Heraiskos, so Damaskios relates, 'made his soul to dwell always in sanctuaries and mystic places, and fostered not only the ancestral rites of Egypt, but also those of

¹⁰⁰ See M. Meyerhof, 'Von Alexandrien nach Bagdad. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des philosophischen und medizinischen Unterrichts bei den Arabern', *Sb. der preuss. Akad. der Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl.* (1930) 389–429; and, for a general account of the relationship between Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonism, H. I. Marrou, 'Synesios of Cyrene and Alexandrian Neoplatonism' in A. Momigliano, ed., *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 1963) 126–50.

¹⁰¹ Amm. Marc. xxii 16.17–18; *Expos. tot. mundi* 37; Julian, *ep.* 58. Cf. L. Robert, 'Hellenica', *RPh* xiii (1939) 173 n. 3.

¹⁰² See L. G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (Amsterdam 1962) ix–xxxii; also H.-D. Saffrey, 'Le chrétien Jean Philopon et la survivance de l'école d'Alexandrie au IV^e siècle', *REG* lxxvii (1954) 396–410.

¹⁰³ See, e.g., Cameron (n. 3) 9: 'While the odd pagan professors might continue to be tolerated in Alexandria, they were not overtly anti-Christian in the way the Athenians were. . . . The Alexandrians concerned themselves largely (if not exclusively) with Aristotle, thus to some extent steering clear of the sinister [!] religious and theosophical speculations of late neo-

platonism.' Although each statement is blurred by qualification, the impression left is that the Iamblichan holy man was virtually unknown in Alexandria. Even I. Hadot, *Le problème du néoplatonisme alexandrin: Hiéroclès et Simplicius* (Paris 1978), who specifically argues for the presence of a Iamblichan element in fifth- and sixth-century Alexandrian philosophy, wholly ignores the evidence discussed below. But see R. Rémondon, 'L'Égypte et la suprême résistance au Christianisme (V^e–VII^e siècles)', *BIFAO* li (1952) 63–7.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *PLRE* ii, s.v. Damascius 2.

¹⁰⁵ On Heraiskos and Asklepiades see especially Damaskios, *Isid.* 107 (EP), *fr.* 160–4, 174; *id.*, *De princ.* i 324 (Ruelle). We owe the reconstitution of this family to J. Maspero, 'Horapollon et la fin du paganisme égyptien', *BIFAO* xi (1914) 163–95. For the basic biographies of its members, and of other figures mentioned in the following paragraphs, see *PLRE* ii, s.vv.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Alan Cameron, 'Wandering poets: a literary movement in Byzantine Egypt', *Historia* xiv (1965) 470–509.

¹⁰⁷ *P. Cair. Masp.* 67295.I.13–17 = Maspero (n. 105) 165–6.

other lands, whenever he could find any remnants of them'. In this he closely resembled Proklos¹⁰⁸—indeed the Athenian scholar, to whom Heraiskos is known to have addressed one of his books, was said to have confessed that the Egyptian was wiser than himself. Heraiskos, 'who throughout his life had something divine about him', was also an accomplished theurgist, possessed not only of the holy man's instinctive sensitivity to the purity or otherwise of his fellow humans—for example, he suffered from headaches when he found himself in the presence of menstruating women—but able also to divine whether or not the images of the gods were 'living', that is, filled with divine power.

To round off his picture of this typical late antique holy man, Damaskios recounts the miracles that attended Heraiskos' birth and death; and his remark in this context, that Asklepiades prepared his brother's body for burial according to 'the rites customary for priests', is of interest in that it probably implies that both men were priests. Indeed, Asklepiades was said to be even more immersed in Egyptian wisdom than Heraiskos, because he spent less time travelling abroad. He was 'nourished in the Egyptian writings', much-versed in the native theology, and wrote hymns to the Egyptian gods, a 'harmony' of all theologies and a work on ancient Egyptian history. Yet, for all the similarity of their interests and environment, Asklepiades was not regarded as a holy man in the sense that Heraiskos was;¹⁰⁹ while his son Horapollon, to whom he passed on much of his erudition, and who was probably the author of a surviving treatise on hieroglyphs,¹¹⁰ departed even further from the ideal,¹¹¹ and eventually apostatized to Christianity.¹¹²

Among those who studied under Heraiskos and Asklepiades was Isidore—but this was just part of a life-long connection with Alexandria, of which he was a native. Although he spent much of his later career in Athens, and is best known as one of the Neoplatonist 'successors' in that city, Isidore never lost his sense of being an Alexandrian, and appears to have returned to the Egyptian metropolis on several occasions.¹¹³ Thanks, no doubt, to Heraiskos and Asklepiades, he was deeply familiar with the 'Egyptian philosophy'¹¹⁴ as well as with the Greek intellectual tradition. Damaskios presents him as a man of evident—though not unqualified—sanctity, a devoted admirer of the 'astonishing subtleties' of Iamblichos and a strict adherent to 'the good old ways'.¹¹⁵ His constant intimacy with the gods, through oracular dreams and dedication to their cult, is confirmed by the stock charge of dabbling in magic levelled against him by his Christian enemies in Alexandria.¹¹⁶

Among Isidore's Alexandrian contemporaries and friends, Sarapion and Asklepiodotos stand out as holy men committed to philosophy and the cult of the gods. Sarapion¹¹⁷ was an ascetic and a man of the spirit, who had little time for philosophical technicalities and possessed only two or three books, among them the poems of Orpheus. Like Proklos and Heraiskos, he arranged his life around the sacred calendar, though in old age he withdrew from society, and lived a confined life in his own small house, 'calling on certain of his neighbours only when in extreme need'. As for Asklepiodotos,¹¹⁸ he is depicted by the Christian writer Zacharias Scholastikos as one of the leaders of the pagan party in late-fifth-century Alexandria. Damaskios alludes to his 'divine power', that enabled him to save himself and Isidore from drowning in the river Maiandros; and Zacharias specifically connects Asklepiodotos' zealous devotion to the gods and 'magic' with his eminence as a philosopher.¹¹⁹ Neither of our sources leaves much room for doubt that Asklepiodotos' philosophical ability and dedication to the schools took second place

¹⁰⁸ See Marinos, *Procl.* 19, 36.

¹⁰⁹ Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 161: ὁ δ' ἑτέρος [Asklepiades] ὁμῶς τῆς τοῦ ἑτέρου [Heraiskos] κατὰ πολὺ ἐλείπετο φύσεως ἢ ἐπιστήμης.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 97–102 (EP) offers suggestive parallels with Horapollon's *Hieroglyphica*.

¹¹¹ See n. 193.

¹¹² Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 317.

¹¹³ See, e.g. *ibid. fr.* 138; Zacharias Scholastikos, *Vita*

Severi (ed. M.-A. Kugener, *PO* ii 7–115) pp. 16, 22.

¹¹⁴ Damaskios, *Isid.* 243 (EP) = *fr.* 80.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 8, 11–17, 28 (EP). Note the reserved tone of (e.g.) 13, 30 (EP).

¹¹⁶ Zach. Schol., *Sev.* p. 22.

¹¹⁷ Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 34, 41, 287.

¹¹⁸ References in *PLRE* ii, s.v. Asclepiodotus 3; and cf. below.

¹¹⁹ Zach. Schol., *Sev.* pp. 16–17.

to his enthusiasm for the temple rituals, which he attempted to revive wherever he could, imitating in this respect Proklos,^{119a} with whom he studied philosophy in Athens. Asklepiodotos is reported to have been particularly active in support of the old gods in Alexandria and in Carian Aphrodisias. Indeed, he married the daughter of his namesake Asklepiodotos of Aphrodisias, and subsequently lived there for substantial periods. Through our fragmentary sources for Asklepiodotos' career it is possible to perceive what has scarcely been recognized hitherto—that during the fifth century Aphrodisias, with its famous cult of the goddess of love, was a major centre of pagan religious and philosophical life, a worthy successor to Pergamon, Ephesos and Sardis, and a magnet that attracted followers of Iamblichan Neoplatonism from all over the eastern Mediterranean. Isidore was staying there at the time of his brush with death in the waters of the Maiandros; Damaskios likewise went there to see Asklepiodotos, and in the company of Isidore's pupil Doros visited the temple of Apollo and the famous Ploutonion at nearby Hierapolis; while Hilarios of Antioch, journeying to Athens to study under Proklos, was careful to call *en route* on the philosophers of Caria and Lydia.¹²⁰ The career of the holy man Asklepiodotos provides us, then, not just with an additional proof of the common ground shared by the Athenian 'succession' with certain circles in Alexandria, but also a link with the region that had in the fourth century been the most flourishing *foyer* of Iamblichanism outside Syria.

Judged in spiritual and intellectual terms, these resolutely backward-looking pagans of Alexandria and Aphrodisias seem unremarkable enough. Certainly one has no difficulty in understanding the occasional acerbity of Isidore and Damaskios when commenting on their predecessors and contemporaries. Yet from the historian's viewpoint the warning that Alexandria and Aphrodisias offer us against uncritical acceptance of the Athenian perspective is extremely valuable. The topographical fluidity of the third- and fourth-century Neoplatonist succession gives way, in the fifth century, to a greater localization, largely as the result of Christian pressures. But the fifth-century pagan who set forth in search of a spiritual teacher did still have a choice—and it was not, as Marinos implies in his account of Proklos' studies, Athens or nothing, even if Athens did enjoy a repute that nowhere else could seriously rival. The holy man's instinctive attraction towards cities that combined a strong cultural and intellectual tradition with devotion to the old gods continued to be a realistic aspiration at least until the beginning of the sixth century.

III. THE SOCIOLOGY OF HOLINESS

The holy man's place in the tradition of Greek literary and philosophical culture influenced not just his urban milieu but his social class as well. In the Greco-Roman educational system only a tiny minority passed beyond the conventional training in rhetoric to a serious investigation of philosophy: 'philosophiae virtus . . . ardua nimis atque paucorum'.¹²¹ And the majority even of those few who studied philosophy were destined for careers far from the groves of the Academy.¹²² To become one of the intimate disciples of a holy man, a *ζηλωτής* rather than a mere *ἀκροατής*, required not just dedication, but leisure and financial security. Porphyry pointedly distinguished the lover of wisdom from the athlete, the soldier, the sailor, the orator, and in general from all those whose calling involved them in manual labour or the world of

^{119a} See Marinos, *Procl.* 15.

¹²⁰ On paganism in fifth-century Aphrodisias see (apart from the references listed by *PLRE* ii, *loc. cit.*) Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 222 (on Hilarios); Zach. Schol., *Sev.* pp. 14, 36–7, 39–44; R. Cormack, 'The classical tradition in the Byzantine provincial city: the evidence of Thessalonike and Aphrodisias' in M. Mullett and R. Scott, eds, *Byzantium and the classical tradition*. Univ. of

Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byz. Stud. 1979 (Birmingham 1981) 108–10. With Damaskios' reference to paganism in nearby Lydia, cf. Proklos' visit to that region (Marinos, *loc. cit.*).

¹²¹ Augustine, *Civ. Dei* x 27. Cf. Diod. Sic. ii 29.5; Apuleius, *Flor.* 20; Philostratos, *VA* vi 36.

¹²² See P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche au IV^e siècle après J.-C.* (Paris 1955) 359–70.

affairs;¹²³ and Eunapios makes clear that he regards any intellectual from a genuinely poor background as an exceptional and noteworthy phenomenon. The sophist Proairesios, for example, although of good birth (γεγονώς . . . ἄνωθεν καλῶς), was so poor as a student at Athens that he and his friend Hephaistion had only one set of clothes between them, and would take it in turns to stay at home in bed while the other went out.¹²⁴ Eunapios makes much of this story—clearly he regarded it as something quite unusual.

Most holy men certainly do seem to have come from prosperous backgrounds. Admittedly our sources are fragmentary, and perhaps at times influenced by the assumption, common in late antiquity, that the man of humble birth is attracted, even despite himself, towards the ignoble and the too human.¹²⁵ Eunapios' stereotyped assertion that each one of his heroes was of notable ancestry strikes one as especially suspect. Yet there is some corroborating evidence, and Eunapios himself occasionally adds the odd circumstantial detail.¹²⁶ Iamblichos, for example, whom Eunapios describes as 'of illustrious ancestry, and from an opulent and prosperous family', is said by the same writer to have owned a number of suburban houses or estates (προάστεια), and to have been accused by the philosopher Alypius of enjoying wealth unbecoming one of his vocation.¹²⁷ A stray remark by Damaskios suggests that Iamblichos may even have been descended from the princely house of Emesa.¹²⁸ As for the Iamblichans of Asia Minor, Eunapios makes clear that they were drawn predominantly from the landed classes, and stresses the high social origins of Aidesios, Sosipatra and Maximos—though Aidesios' family seems to have been rather indigent.¹²⁹ Of his own teacher and compatriot, Chrysanthios of Sardis, Eunapios writes that he

was of curial rank, and among the most nobly born. His grandfather, Inokentios, a man of

¹²³ Porph., *Abst.* i 27.1; and cf. Origen, *Cels.* 6.1–2; Lactantius, *Inst.* iii 25; Symmachus, *Rel.* 5.1 ('Inter praecipua negotiorum saepe curatum est, ut erudiendis nobilibus praeceptores ex Attica poscerentur').

¹²⁴ Eunapios, *VP* x 3.3–7.

¹²⁵ See, e.g., Themistios, *or.* xxi 248a–250b. Eunapios pointedly describes one of his *bêtes noires*, Ablabios (who encompassed the downfall and death of Sopatros), as of γένος . . . ἀδοξότατον, καὶ τὰ ἐκ πατέρων τοῦ μετρίου καὶ φαύλου ταπεινότερα (vi 3.1); and cf. Amm. Marc. xxix 2.22 on Festus, 'ultimi sanguinis et ignoti', who killed Maximos of Ephesos. Julian found it necessary to warn against mistaking accidents of birth for true virtue: *or.* iii 81a, 82bc, 83a–84a.

¹²⁶ We know almost nothing about the social background of the third-century Neoplatonists. The idea that Ammonios was called Σακκάς because he used to carry sacks of wheat is unattested before the late and unsympathetic Christian writer Theodoretos of Kyrrhos, *Affect.* 6.60. R. Harder, 'Zur Biographie Plotins' in *Kl. Schriften* (Munich 1960) 280–2, argues that Plotinos' family may have been well-connected, perhaps through commercial dealings, with the Roman senatorial circles in which the philosopher later moved so freely. Eunapios, *VP* iv 1.1, observes that Πορφυρίω . . . πατέρες δὲ οὐκ ἄσημοι.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* v 1.1 (κατὰ γένος μὲν ἐπιφανὴς καὶ τῶν ἀβρῶν καὶ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων), 12 (προάστεια); v 3.4 (Alypius). It has been suggested that a building richly decorated with mosaics with philosophical themes and recently excavated at Apamea may have been connected with Iamblichos' school (though probably some decades after the death of the Master himself): J. and J. C. Balty, 'Julien et Apamée: aspects de la restauration de l'hellénisme et de la politique antichrétienne de

l'empereur', *DialHistAnc* i (1974) 267–304.

¹²⁸ Damaskios *ap.* Phot., *Bibl.* 181.126a, refers to Σαμφιγέραμος . . . καὶ Μόνιμος, εἰς οὓς ἀνάγεται καὶ Ἰάμβλιχος. Syrian epigraphy attests the names Sampsigeramos, Monimos and Iamblichos mainly, though not quite exclusively, in the Emesa region; and the names Sampsigeramos and Iamblichos, and perhaps Monimos too, all occur in the princely house of Emesa (see C. Chad, *Les dynastes d'Emèse* [Beirut 1972] 93–9, 133–45). That the philosopher Iamblichos, although a native of Chalkis, was related to this house, seems not unlikely. It is especially beguiling to speculate on the possibility of a connection between Damaskios' Sampsigeramos, ἀνὴρ τὰ πρῶτα τῆς εἰδωλολατρούσης ἀσεβείας ἀπενεγκάμενος (Photios' words), and Sampsigeramos of Emesa, priest of Aphrodite, who defended his city against Persian attack in 253 (John Malalas, *Chron.* xii 296–7). For the date, and the possibility that Sampsigeramos was identical with the usurping emperor Uranius Antoninus, see H. R. Baldus, *Uranius Antoninus. Münzprägung und Geschichte* (Bonn 1971) 229–69, and J.-P. Rey-Coquais, 'Syrie romaine, de Pompée à Dioclétien', *JRS* lxxviii (1978) 57–8. For other interpretations of the passage from Damaskios, see Dillon, *Iamblichos . . . fragments* 4–5, and *PLRE* ii, s.v. Theodora 6.

¹²⁹ Eunapios, *VP* vi 1.1 (Αἰδέσιος . . . ἦν δὲ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων εἰς ἄκρον), vi 6.6 (Sosipatra πατέρων δὲ ἦν καὶ γένους εὐδαιμόνος τε καὶ ὀλβίου), vii 1.4 (Maximos ἦν . . . τῶν εὐδαιμόνων). On their economic background, see *ibid.* vi 1.1, 4.6 (Aidesios), vi 6.7, 9.1 (Sosipatra), vii 1.4 (Maximos). Cf. also Lactantius' reference, *Inst.* v 2.3, to a rich and avaricious—but unfortunately anonymous—philosopher of Nicomedia.

considerable wealth, had acquired greater renown than most private citizens, and the then emperors had conferred on him the power of making laws.¹³⁰

Of the background of the Athenian Iamblichans we know less; but Plutarch was descended from a well-established Athenian family, and Proklos is said by Marinos to have been the son of patrician parents. Both men apparently possessed considerable wealth,¹³¹ as did certain of their pupils, such as Hilarios and Hegias.¹³² At Alexandria, Isidore possessed only a modest inheritance, but his friend Asklepiodotos, though of undistinguished family, acquired sufficient riches in his later career to beggar himself again through religious and civic benefactions.¹³³

The pagan holy man's origin in the social establishment endowed him with an inherited status that contrasted sharply with the 'achieved' status of Christian holy men of the period.¹³⁴ This is not to say that the pagan holy man never gained prestige and power by the exercise of his spiritual gifts, for example by working miracles. The hierophant Nestorios preserved Athens and the whole of Attica from desolation by an earthquake in 375 because he was forewarned in a dream that Achilles should be honoured with public rites.¹³⁵ Proklos in turn saved Athens from drought by summoning rains, and was interested in the prevention of earthquakes by theurgical methods.¹³⁶ Even the emperor Julian was credited with divine powers that enabled him to avert storms and earthquakes by prayer.¹³⁷ But it was as manifestations of his own divinity (*ἐπιδείξεις αὐτοῦ μεγάλοι τῆς θεϊότητος*)¹³⁸ that the holy man's miracles were usually understood in the pagan tradition, by contrast with the miracles of the Christian holy man, which were considered (ideally, at least) as proofs of the power of Christ.¹³⁹ In consequence, the pagan holy man's miracles were not as a rule public events, but tended to be performed for the benefit of his own immediate circle, or of the occasional individual outsider.¹⁴⁰ The holy man's public *persona* was articulated primarily through the exercising of the functions and duties imposed on him by his social background.

For example, rhetors and (to a lesser extent) philosophers had traditionally been regarded as ideal ambassadors when a city wanted to ask some favour or other from the emperor; and although the best late antique examples of philosophical ambassadors are, as one might expect, men of traditional mould like Themistios,¹⁴¹ even the otherworldly Neoplatonists were occasionally cast in this rôle. Thus we find Iamblichos' pupil Sopatros arriving as an ambassador at the court of Licinius, probably on behalf of the city of Apamea,¹⁴² and Maximos setting out for Julian's court, not, it is true, on a formal embassy, but carrying a long list of requests from private individuals.¹⁴³ We also have a letter from Julian himself to the philosopher-priest Theodore, congratulating him on defending his city, whose name is not known, from some outrage with which it had been threatened, apparently by the proconsul of Achaia;¹⁴⁴ and at the turn of the century (399–402) we find Synesios (intellectually a Neoplatonist, though hardly a holy man) undertaking an important embassy to Arcadius, in an attempt to secure a tax-reduction for his native Kyrene.¹⁴⁵ Nor were embassies the only means by which the

¹³⁰ Eunapios, *VP* xxiii 1.3. Another Iamblichan known to have been of curial rank was the younger Sopatros (*PLRE* i, Sopater 2).

¹³¹ Plutarch: *PLRE* i, s.v. Plutarchus 5. Proklos: Marinos, *Procl.* 6. On their wealth, see below.

¹³² Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 222, 351.

¹³³ *Ibid.* 119, 160 (*EP*); *fr.* 98, 189.

¹³⁴ P. Brown, 'The rise and function of the holy man in late antiquity', *JRS* lxi (1971) 94–5, esp. n. 182, quoting *Apophth. Patr.*, Arsenios 5 (*PG* lxxv 89a): ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων πόνων ἐκτήσαντο τὰς ἀρετάς.

¹³⁵ Zosimos iv 18 (with F. Paschoud's nn. *ad loc.*).

¹³⁶ Marinos, *Procl.* 28.

¹³⁷ Libanios, *orr.* xv 71, xviii 177.

¹³⁸ Eunapios, *VP* v 1.12. Cf. Philostratos, *VA* vii 38: when the imprisoned Apollonios breaks his fetters, τότε πρῶτον ὁ Δάμις φησὶν ἀκριβῶς ξυνεῖναι τῆς

Ἀπολλωνίου φύσεως, ὅτι θεία τε εἶη καὶ κρείττων ἀνθρώπου, μὴ γὰρ θύσαντα, . . . μηδ' ἐυξάμενόν τι, μηδὲ εἰπόντα καταγελάσαι τοῦ δεσμοῦ. . . .

¹³⁹ See, e.g., Athanasios, *V. Anton.* 38, 49, 56, 58.

¹⁴⁰ E.g. Philostratos, *loc. cit.*; Porph., *Plot.* 10 (manifestation of Plotinos' personal daimon); Eunapios, *VP* v 1.12–2.9, vi 11.11.

¹⁴¹ Themistios, *orr.* xvii 214b, xxxi 352cd, xxxiv 29.

¹⁴² Ps.-Julian, *ep.* 184.417d–418a. It is also possible that Sopatros undertook his journey in a private capacity, as Iamblichos' representative, to encourage Licinius to resist Constantine's pro-Christian policies: cf. Barnes (n. 55) 99–106.

¹⁴³ Eunapios, *VP* vii 3.14–15.

¹⁴⁴ Julian, *ep.* 30.

¹⁴⁵ C. Lacombrade, *Synésios de Cyrène, hellène et chrétien* (Paris 1951) 84–130. (For an example of a holy

philosopher, or the holy man, might benefit his local community. True to the traditions of the class from which he came, he took pleasure in contributing towards the embellishment of his city and the maintenance of its traditions. At some point during the later fourth century the younger Iamblichos (the grandson of Iamblichos of Apamea's pupil Sopatros, and a follower of his namesake's doctrines) made a generous contribution towards the cost of rebuilding the city walls of Athens.¹⁴⁶ The Plutarch who is epigraphically attested to have three times defrayed the cost of the Panathenaic festival is plausibly identified with the Neoplatonist successor of that name;¹⁴⁷ and Proklos, noted for his generosity to friend and stranger alike, is stated by Marinus to have divided his estate, on his death, between Plutarch's grandson Archiadas, his native city (Xanthos in Lykia), and Athens.¹⁴⁸ Plutarch's support of the Panathenaic festival is particularly interesting because it shows that pagan sages in a position to make such benefactions were not afraid to co-ordinate traditional habits of generosity with their commitment to the temple cults—just as in the later fifth century the philosopher Asklepiodotos was to become a personal benefactor of pagan cults, probably in Aphrodisias.¹⁴⁹

IV. THE DRIFT TOWARDS MARGINALITY

But any explanation of the pagan holy man's relations with society in terms of conformity to the behaviour-patterns of the intellectual and social élite must take account of the fact that that élite, along with the whole of the rest of society, was evolving. The holy man was in reality becoming a much more marginal figure than his background suggests, because his participation in the educational and cultic life of the urban community, which was what endowed him with his distinctive social *persona*, was being turned against him by the rapid pace of intellectual and social change during the third and fourth centuries.

In the first place the holy man was compromised *qua* philosopher by developments within the sphere of Greco-Roman culture. Philosophers had always been proverbially divided among themselves; but in late antiquity philosophy itself became a more isolated discipline than it had ever been before. In part, as will appear in the next section, that was the consequence of exclusivist social attitudes adopted, notably, by the Neoplatonists. But still more damaging was the immense prestige accumulated by rhetoricians at the expense of philosophers during the Second Sophistic. Since those who went on from their rhetorical education to study philosophy were a minority, there was a growing temptation to treat philosophy as a dispensable luxury; and in so far as men who regarded themselves as primarily philosophers played any rôle in public life in late antiquity, as for example in the conduct of embassies, this tended to be in virtue of the fact that they were accomplished rhetors as well. Philosophers themselves were not always viewed in a very favourable light. Lucian's cynicism about their way of life is widely reflected in second- and third-century literature; and the modern scholar can add, with the benefit of hindsight, that the second and early third centuries were anyway one of the relatively fallow periods of Greek thought, when even the most honest philosopher tended to live off accumulated intellectual capital. When at last the tradition was reinvigorated by the emergence of a 'purified' Platonism, it was under the influence of teachers whose understanding of the philosophical life was rooted in distrust of the whole material world. It was still possible to find men, like Themistios, who believed in philosophy's social mission in the way that Sokrates had; but most philosophers were so absorbed by the inner world that they cared little how they appeared in the eyes of society.

man involved in an imperial embassy, see Eunapios, *VP* vi 5, on Eustathios at the Persian court.)

¹⁴⁶ Alan Cameron, 'Iamblichus at Athens', *Athenaeum* xlv (1967) 143–53.

¹⁴⁷ *IG* ii/iii² 3818; Blumenthal, *Byzantion* xlviii

(1978) 373–5. On Neoplatonist support for the Panathenaia, cf. also Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 273.

¹⁴⁸ Marinus, *Procl.* 14.

¹⁴⁹ Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 189.

In practical terms this meant that, while the teaching of grammar and rhetoric continued to be publicly supported and subsidised in late antiquity,¹⁵⁰ neither the state nor the cities took much active interest in the teaching of philosophy after Marcus Aurelius' foundation of imperial chairs for the four major Schools at Athens in 176.¹⁵¹ We know almost nothing about the occupants of these chairs after the early third century, and there is very little evidence for the existence of publicly funded professorships of philosophy in other cities.¹⁵² No Neoplatonist is known to have held such a chair, except perhaps in Alexandria.¹⁵³ Moreover, the immunities from certain burdensome civic duties, that had customarily been granted to philosophers, sophists and other teachers from the early second century onwards,¹⁵⁴ were made increasingly difficult for philosophers to claim.¹⁵⁵ The hostility of officialdom to philosophers, evident in the ironical tone of many of the decrees on immunities, intensified with the Christianization of the empire, naturally enough in view of the involvement of pagan intellectuals in the resistance to Christianity. It is hardly surprising that many Neoplatonists preferred the privacy of their own home to the exposure of the agora and the gymnasia for the instruction of their pupils¹⁵⁶—the fate of Hypatia, who taught in the streets,¹⁵⁷ was a warning to all pagan philosophers. Even in Athens the circles that gathered round the fifth-century Neoplatonists were probably more domestic than public in character,¹⁵⁸ though only in that city could a well-known Iamblichan like Proklos have succeeded in extracting subsidies (*σιτηρέσια*) for his pupils from the public funds.¹⁵⁹

But it was the pagan holy man's direct involvement with pagan cult that most deeply compromised his social position. The centrality of this involvement to the holy man's self-image should not be underestimated. The Pythagorean tradition laid great emphasis on the sage's duty both to honour the gods himself, and to ensure that the public cults were conducted in a fit and becoming manner. Apollonios of Tyana never missed an opportunity to reform and purify the temple rites wherever he went,¹⁶⁰ and even in the fifth century it was possible for Proklos to spend a year travelling in Lydia, being initiated in the ancient rites still preserved there, and himself initiating their guardians into the deeper meaning of the ceremonies.¹⁶¹ Plotinos, it is true, could see no point in worshipping at the shrines of the gods;¹⁶² but this was a possibility that the pagan tradition had always allowed for—it is indeed implicit in the idea of the sage who

¹⁵⁰ H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité*⁷ (Paris 1971) 439–42; P. J. Parsons, 'The grammarian's complaint' in A. E. Hanson, ed., *Collectanea papyrologica: texts published in honor of H. C. Youtie* ii (Bonn 1976) 409–46.

¹⁵¹ Dion Kassios lxxi 31.3; Lucian, *Eun.* 3; Philostratos, *VS* 566–7. For the date, see H. v. Arnim, *RE* i 2301; J. H. Oliver, *Marcus Aurelius. Aspects of Civic and Cultural Policy in the East*, *Hesp.* suppl. xiii (Princeton 1970) 80–4; and cf. *id.*, 'Marcus Aurelius and the philosophical schools at Athens', *AJP* cii (1981) 213–25.

¹⁵² Alan Cameron, 'The end of the ancient universities', *Cah. d'hist. mon.* x (1967) 658. On the particularly controversial case of fifth-century Alexandria, see Hadot (n. 103) 11.

¹⁵³ I doubt now whether there is sufficient evidence to justify my own suggestion (*art. cit.* n. 38) 377, that Aidesios, and perhaps Sosipatra too, held official chairs at Pergamon.

¹⁵⁴ On the origin of these immunities, see Bowersock (n. 77) 30–42, qualified by M. Griffin's review, *JRS* lxi (1971) 279–80. Cf. also V. Nutton, *JRS* lxi (1971) 52–63.

¹⁵⁵ *Dig.* xxvii 1.6.7 (Antoninus Pius); Dion Kassios lxxviii 7.3 (Caracalla); *Dig.* l 5.8.4. (Papinian), 13.1.4 (Ulpian); *Fragmenta Iuris Romani Vaticana* (ed. E. Seckel and B. Kuebler, *Iurisprudentiae anteiustinianae reliquiae*⁶ ii. 2 [Leipzig 1927]) 149; *Cod. Just.* x 42.6 (Diocletian

and Maximian); *Cod. Theod.* xiii 3.7 (Valentinian and Valens). But Valentinian's edict allows for some exceptions; and the survival of philosophical immunities is confirmed by *PLips.* 47, Symmachus, *Rel.* 5.3, and *Cod. Theod.* xiii 3.16.

¹⁵⁶ Plotinos and Iamblichos probably taught in their own homes (Porph., *Plot.* 9; Eunapios, *VP* v 1.12); Sosipatra certainly did (*ibid.* vi 9.2). The Athenian sophists all taught in their private theatres, because of the hostility of the townspeople: *ibid.* ix 1.6.

¹⁵⁷ *Suda* Υ166: διὰ μέσου τοῦ ἀστεος ποιουμένη τὰς προόδους ἐξηγείτο δημοσίᾳ τοῖς ἀκροᾶσθαι βουλομένοις.

¹⁵⁸ Marinos, *Procl.* 29 *ad fin.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 16.

¹⁶⁰ Philostratos, *VA* i 16, iv 19.

¹⁶¹ Marinos, *Procl.* 15.

¹⁶² Porph., *Plot.* 10.33–8 (ἐκείνους δεῖ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἔρχεσθαι, οὐκ ἐμὲ πρὸς ἐκείνους). Implicit in this remark is the commonplace distinction between God and the daimons: cf. e.g. Zosimos of Panopolis, *Τελευταία ἀποχή* 8 (ed. A. J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*² i [Paris 1950] 367) (μὴ περιρρέμβου ζητοῦσα θεόν, ἀλλ' οἴκαδε κατέζου, καὶ θεὸς ἤξει πρὸς σέ ὁ πανταχοῦ ὢν καὶ οὐκ ἐν τόπῳ ἐλαχίστῳ ὡς τὰ δαιμόνια); also Damaskios, *Isid.* 38 (EP), on Isidore, οὔτε τὰ ἀγάλματα προσκυνεῖν ἐθέλων.

is himself 'divine'. Porphyry showed rather more interest in matters of cult; but it was Iamblichos who fully integrated pagan theology and religious practice into his vision of the ideal philosopher, and thus gave new impetus to the idea that the philosopher-priest was the highest type of sage.¹⁶³ Iamblichos himself was assiduous in the daily round of sacrifice and prayer,¹⁶⁴ and so too were his most notable imitators, men such as Maximos of Ephesos, Julian and Proklos, of whom Marinos says that 'he observed the Egyptian holy days more than the Egyptians themselves . . . (and) the important holidays of all peoples and of every nation in the way proper to each', for he believed the philosopher to be 'the hierophant of the whole world in common' (*κοινῇ . . . τοῦ ὅλου κόσμου ἱεροφάντης*).¹⁶⁵ Most remarkable of all was Antoninos, the son of Sosipatra and pupil of Aidesios, who settled in a temple by the mouth of the Nile at Kanobos and gathered around himself a group of young men, enthusiasts for philosophy and the worship of the gods, and dedicated enemies of Christianity, whose triumph over the Egyptian temples Antoninos prophesied in the gloomiest terms.¹⁶⁶

That the abrasive paganism of the Iamblichan Neoplatonists would eventually bring them into violent conflict with the Christians was predictable. The history of their persecution by the ecclesiastical and imperial authorities lies outside the scope of this article; but it is important to note that the pagan holy man's relations with the local Christian community became much tenser after the death of Julian. Eunapios draws a strong contrast between the different ways in which Aidesios' three pupils, Maximos of Ephesos, Chrysanthios and Priskos, were treated in the aftermath of the abortive pagan revival. Chrysanthios and Priskos were left in peace, because they had been moderate in their behaviour: Chrysanthios in particular, though Julian made him high priest of Lydia, had refrained from either building temples or oppressing Christians, 'so that throughout Lydia the restoration of the temples almost escaped notice'.¹⁶⁷ Maximos, on the other hand, was made to suffer for his involvement with Julian. He was heavily fined, and sent back to Ephesos to collect the money. After a period of extreme suffering he was able to resume his philosophical lectures and regain his property for a while, until he went to Constantinople, was implicated in a conspiracy, and put to death.¹⁶⁸

As the years went by it became less and less easy for Christians to tolerate actively hostile pagans. Even in Athens, by Proklos' day, the pagan holy man who interfered in public life was unlikely to have things all his own way. Proklos himself firmly believed that it was the philosopher's duty to encourage the political virtues, though the contemplative life precluded personal involvement in politics. Accordingly he encouraged Plutarch's grandson Archiadidas to take part in the government of the city, and sought to exercise influence by using him as an intermediary. But on occasion Proklos himself would approach officials or even address public meetings, fighting for what he felt to be right 'with philosophical freedom of speech' (*τῇ φιλοσόφῳ παρρησίᾳ*). His main concern was the defence of paganism, and, although Marinos' remarks are studiously vague (reflecting his own fear of retribution), it is clear that Proklos encountered stiff opposition. For a whole year he was obliged to absent himself from Athens and travel abroad, after an attempt was made to put him on trial; and thereafter, it seems, he led a less conspicuous life.¹⁶⁹ Marinos likewise was forced at one point to leave Athens for Epidauros, 'on account of the troubles' (*διὰ τὴν στάσιν*), though whether on the same occasion as Proklos we do not know;¹⁷⁰ and another of Proklos' pupils, Hegias, also fell foul of the Christians through his conspicuous cultivation of pagan rites.¹⁷¹

It was in Alexandria, though, where Christianity was so firmly entrenched compared to Athens, that pagan holy men suffered most for their beliefs. Damaskios mentions numerous

¹⁶³ Cf. Porph., *Abst.* ii 49.1 (*ὁ φιλόσοφος καὶ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἱερέυς*), Marc. 16 (*μόνος οὖν ἱερεὺς ὁ σοφός*).

¹⁶⁴ Eunapios, *VP* v 1.6–8, 12.

¹⁶⁵ Marinos, *Procl.* 19 (trans. Rosán).

¹⁶⁶ Eunapios, *VP* vi 9.1, 15–17; vi 10.6–11.12.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* vii 4.9, xxiii 2.7–9 (Chrysanthios); vii 4.7, 12

(Priskos).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* vii 4.13–6.7.

¹⁶⁹ Marinos, *Procl.* 14–15, 23, 29; H.-D. Saffrey, 'Allusions antichrétiennes chez Proclus: le diadoque platonicien', *RSPH* lix (1975) 553–63.

¹⁷⁰ Damaskios, *Isid.* 277 (EP)=fr. 266.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* fr. 351.

instances of such harassment. For example, Heraiskos and Horapollon were hung up by their hands and tortured by one Nikomedes, who was searching for other philosophers (including Isidore). Heraiskos was eventually in this way hounded to death, while Horapollon, who had no stomach for such treatment, apostatized to Christianity.¹⁷² The most interesting of these incidents, though, from the point of view of the close connection between certain intellectual circles in Alexandria and the cult of the old gods, is related at length by Zacharias Scholastikos, and concerns the attempts made by Asklepiodotos and his barren wife to acquire a child with the help of the priests of Isis at Menouthis near Alexandria. After various misadventures the couple succeeded in buying a baby from a priestess of Isis; but certain Christians uncovered the deception. As a result of this and other incidents Paralios, one of Horapollon's more aggressively pagan pupils, lost his faith and became a Christian. With all the convert's zeal he then set about abusing his former teachers and comrades, who did not for long resist the temptation to give him a sound thrashing. Thereafter the situation degenerated rapidly. Horapollon and his friends were chased out of town, and the Christians took their chance to put an end once and for all to the cult of Isis at Menouthis, confiscating and burning the cult-images and demolishing the building in which they were kept.¹⁷³

V. THE HOLY MAN BEYOND SOCIETY

Yet the reasons for the pagan holy man's drift towards social marginality ran much deeper than either his exclusion from full participation in the intellectual life of the cities, or his lack of sympathy with the religious currents that were transforming late Roman society. It is important to realize that the holy man's ideal view of his relationship with his fellow men was one of essential *non-involvement*. Plotinos, for example, while not entirely disdaining the political virtues, or the possibility that even 'the spoiled souls of the great mass' might be led a little way along the path of illumination by the philosopher's efforts,¹⁷⁴ none the less took it for granted that the true philosopher would be uninterested in worldly affairs, authority and possessions.

Murder, death in all its guises, the reduction and sacking of cities, all must be to us just such a spectacle as the changing scenes of a play; all is but the varied incident of a plot, costume on and off, acted grief and lament. For on earth, in all the succession of life, it is not the soul within but the shadow outside of the authentic man, that grieves and complains and acts out the plot on this world stage which men have dotted with stages of their own constructing. All this is the doing of man knowing no more than to live the lower and outer life, and never perceiving that, in his weeping and in his graver doings alike, he is but at play.¹⁷⁵

Attitudes such as these were common among Plotinos' successors.¹⁷⁶ They did not of course exclude a genuine sympathy with ordinary people. We need not doubt Eunapios when he describes Aidesios' manner as sociable (*κοινός*) and popular (*δημοτικός*), and continues:

After their literary competitions, (Aidesios) would go out for a walk in Pergamon together with the more distinguished of his disciples. The teacher used to implant in his pupils a sense of harmony and of responsibility towards mankind when he noticed that they were headstrong (*ἀσυνήλους*) and arrogant (*ὑπέρφρονες*) because of their pride in their own opinions. . . . While instructing them in this way he himself, if he met a woman selling vegetables, would be pleased to see her, and would stop in his way to speak to her and discuss the price she charged, and say that her shop was making a good profit; and at the same time he would talk to her about the cultivation of vegetables. He would behave in the same way to a weaver, or a smith, or a carpenter.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² *Ibid. fr.* 313–14, 317, 334.

¹⁷³ Zach. Schol., *Sev.* pp. 15–35.

¹⁷⁴ Plotinos i 2.1–3, i 4.15.21–5, iv 7.10.25.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* iii 2.15.43–53 (trans. S. MacKenna), and cf. ii

9.9.1–11, and Porph., *Plot.* 7.19–21, 31–46.

¹⁷⁶ See, e.g., Damaskios, *Isid.* 95 (EP).

¹⁷⁷ Eunapios, *VP* viii 1.5–7.

Aidesios' example was followed, so Eunapios informs us, by Chrysanthios and 'the more moderate of the disciples',¹⁷⁸ and we may perhaps detect traits of this school in the at times startlingly democratic behaviour of the emperor Julian.¹⁷⁹ Yet in the fourth century 'headstrongness' and 'arrogance' came more and more to be regarded as characteristic faults of the Neoplatonist sage.¹⁸⁰ One wonders whether the 'vainglorious' Iamblichos was not in part to blame, especially since as late as the early sixth century it was possible for one of his most enthusiastic admirers, Damaskios, to observe that

we see and hear many philosophers thinking, some of them that Iamblichos is inaccessible, and others that he puffs himself up more by boastful grandiloquence than through his grasp of the truth.¹⁸¹

Among Iamblichos' followers, inflated self-esteem and a lack of the common touch had already been a flaw in Sopatros' character;¹⁸² but in the passage from Eunapios quoted above it is Maximos of Ephesos and Priskos that Eunapios has in mind—indeed, the haughty Priskos denounced Aidesios to his face for 'betraying the dignity of philosophy' by behaving as he did.¹⁸³ In his *Historia* Eunapios, who was as sympathetic a witness as any Iamblichan Neoplatonist could have asked for, remarks of both Maximos and Priskos that they 'were learned, but had virtually no experience of ordinary public affairs'.¹⁸⁴ Priskos at least had the wit to avoid compromising himself unnecessarily during the pagan restoration; but generally speaking Julian's attempt to involve the representatives of the Iamblichan tradition in the formulation of imperial policy quickly showed up their defects of character. Maximos appears even in Eunapios' pages as monstrously conceited, a man who the moment he arrived at Julian's court started making enemies by his pomposity and his showy way of dressing.¹⁸⁵ Of the Persian campaign Eunapios observes that, besides Maximos and Priskos, 'a whole crowd of others joined the expedition, a mob of men who sang their own praises, and were inflated with pride because the emperor had told them to go with him'.¹⁸⁶ Another essentially sympathetic historian of the pagan restoration, Ammianus Marcellinus, ill conceals his exasperation with the arrogant manner in which Julian's philosophical retinue behaved during the march into Persia. The Etruscan soothsayers, he writes, 'were spurned by the opposition of the philosophers, whose authority was then highly valued, but who were sometimes in error, and very persistent in matters with which they had little acquaintance'.¹⁸⁷

The pagan holy man's gradual loss of touch with reality reflects, not just a certain spiritual narrowness, but a contraction of social horizons as well. Intellectual and social exclusiveness turn by degrees into incestuousness, and Eunapios' holy men live in a world where the relationships of masters and disciples move in intimate counterpoint with an extending catena of kin and marriage ties. The history of the Pergamene circle has something of the cosy atmosphere of a family chronicle. Aidesios was very close to his kinsman Eustathios—both had been pupils of Iamblichos. Eustathios, who was best known as a rhetor, married the theurgist Sosipatra, and the couple had three sons, all of whom were taught by Aidesios. Another of Aidesios' pupils, Chrysanthios of Sardis, married Melite, whose cousin Eunapios of Sardis became Chrysanthios' devoted disciple. The son of Chrysanthios and Melite was named, not surprisingly, Aidesios, as if he had been the Pergamene philosopher's grandson.¹⁸⁸ Something of the cloying intimacy and

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* viii 1.8, xxiii 3.12.

¹⁷⁹ Amm. Marc. xxii 7.3–4; Mamertinus, *Grat. act.* 28; Libanios, *or.* i 129.

¹⁸⁰ This point of view was expressed, not just by pagan critics (see below), but, as one might expect, by Christians too: cf. Arnobius' portrait of the *virī novi*, *Adv. nat.* ii 15–63; Augustine, *Conf.* vii 9.13; Makarios Magnes, *Apocr. passim*, esp. ii 12, iii proem., iv 25. The *topos* even reappears in the portrait of Iamblichos (Malīkhā) drawn by the Persian poet Nizāmī (d. 1202–1203), *Haft Paikar* 198 ff. (Düstgardī 1955²; trans. C. E. Wilson [London 1924] 157 ff.).

¹⁸¹ Damaskios, *Isid.* 34 (*EP*). On Iamblichos' 'vaingloriousness', see also Julian, *ep.* 12. But contrast Eunapios, *VP* v 1.6: τὴν μὲν δίαίταν ὦν εὐκολος καὶ ἀρχαῖος.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* vi 2.1.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* viii 1.9.

¹⁸⁴ Eunapios, *Hist. fr.* 19.

¹⁸⁵ Eunapios, *VP* vi 9.5, 8; vii 4.2.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* vii 4.9.

¹⁸⁷ Amm. Marc. xxiii 5.10–11, 14 (trans. J. C. Rolfe).

¹⁸⁸ *PLRE* i, s.vv., and the table in Fowden, 'Pagan

self-conscious asceticism of these adherents of a doomed religion is conveyed by this recently published item from the correspondence of a group of Oxyrhynchite holy men:

Akulas to Sarapion, greetings. I was overjoyed to receive your letter. Our friend Kallineikos was testifying to the utmost about the way of life you follow even under such conditions (*καὶ ἐν τοιούτοις ὧν πράγμασιν*)—especially in your not abandoning your austerities. Yes, we may deservedly congratulate ourselves, not because we do these things, but because we are not diverted from them by ourselves. Courage! carry through what remains like a man! Let not wealth distract you, nor beauty, nor anything else of the same kind: for there is no good in them, if virtue does not join her presence, no, they are vanishing and worthless. . . .¹⁸⁹

Men as different as Plotinos¹⁹⁰ and Themistios perceived and warned against the dangers of spiritual and intellectual pride. Themistios' criticisms, since they are aimed directly (albeit inexplicitly) at the Neoplatonist holy men of his own day, are particularly worthy of attention. The personal disposition of the Neoplatonists Themistios describes as

harsh, blunt and stubborn. They cannot bear to give freely of their words, but, boors that they are, grudge them more than gold, and investigate and study carefully ways of giving neither more nor less to anyone than he deserves. As a result of this pettiness, very few of them are agreeable or pleasant. But their stubbornness is so great that they themselves believe, and firmly maintain to others, that whoever they praise is deserving of praise, while the praise given by those elegant and extravagant men [the rhetors] is undeserved and unseemly.¹⁹¹

One is reminded of Eunapios' remarks on Aidesios' secretiveness, and his disciples' 'mysterious silence and hierophantic reserve'.¹⁹² Priskos in particular was *κρυψίνους* . . . *ἄγαν καὶ βαθυγνώμων*,

extremely secretive and deeply pensive . . . , and he might have been thought uneducated, because it was so hard to induce him to engage in disputation. He kept his own convictions hidden, as though he were guarding a treasure, and used to call profligates those who too lightly gave out their views on these matters.¹⁹³

That certain religious doctrines should be kept secret had of course for long been a common notion both in Greece, as among the Pythagoreans, and in the lands of the near east. In their comments on the Neoplatonists, Themistios and Eunapios merely echo what Strabo had said long before about the experiences of Plato and Eudoxos when studying with the Egyptian priests, who were equally reticent about imparting their learning to strangers.¹⁹⁴ We are dealing here with a perfectly traditional way of behaviour in religious circles—but one fatally easy to misrepresent.

Themistios also denounced the Neoplatonists for 'not deigning to emerge from their couches and secluded spots' (*οὐκ ἀνέχονται παρακύπτειν ἔξω τοῦ σκίμποδος καὶ τῆς γωνίας*).¹⁹⁵ The implication of this remark—that the Neoplatonists deliberately withdrew themselves from society—is to a striking extent confirmed by more sympathetic sources.

The notion that solitude (*ἐρημία*) was indispensable to the achievement of the inner peace

philosophers' (n. 38) 197. Cf. on similar circles O. Schissel, 'Die Familie des Minukianos. Ein Beitrag zur Personenkunde des neuplatonischen Athen', *Klio* xxi (1927) 361–73, and Maspero (n. 105) 163–95, on the Alexandrian family of Heraiskos and Asklepiades, discussed above.

¹⁸⁹ *POxy.* 3069 (trans. P. J. Parsons). Sarapion is described as a *φιλόσοφος* in the address on the *verso*. The phrase *καὶ ἐν τοιούτοις ὧν πράγμασιν* is perhaps a reference to Christian pressures. Parsons suggests a date in the third or fourth century.

¹⁹⁰ Plotinos ii 9.9.26–32, 52–60.

¹⁹¹ Themistios, *or.* xxviii 342bc.

¹⁹² Eunapios, *VP* vi 1.5–6.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* viii 1.1–2 (trans. W. C. Wright, with modifications). Cf. Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 60, on Isidore: *ἐχέμυθος ἐς τὰ μάλιστα καὶ κρυψίνους ἦν*; and 317, on Horapollon: *οὐκ ἦν τὸ ἥθος φιλόσοφος, ἀλλὰ τι καὶ ἐν βυθῷ τῆς περὶ θεοῦ δόξης ὧν ἦδει ἀποκρυπτόμενος*.

¹⁹⁴ Strabo xvii 1.29.

¹⁹⁵ Themistios, *or.* xxviii 341d; and cf. xxxiv 12: *οὐδὲ . . . τὴν ἐν ταῖς γωνίαις φιλοσοφίαν εἰλόμην*. . . . Some Neoplatonists agreed: Damaskios, *Isid.* 296 (*EP*) = *fr.* 324: *οἱ ἐν γωνία καθήμενοι λόγιοι καὶ πολλὰ φιλοσοφούντες εὖ μάλα σεμνῶς περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης, ἐκβαίνειν ἐπὶ τὰς πράξεις ἀναγκαζόμενοι δεινὰ ἀσχημονοῦσιν*.

(*ἡσυχία*) that all philosophers aspired to became widespread in the Hellenistic and Roman period, and owed something, no doubt, to the example of Pythagoras, who was thought to have withdrawn on occasion from his urban existence, either alone or accompanied by a few select disciples.¹⁹⁶ In late antiquity there were some who consciously resisted this inclination: Libanios, for example, remarked in a letter to Themistios that 'To be withdrawn from affairs and keep the laws of Plato is one thing; to remain unmoved when you are hard-pressed is quite another'.¹⁹⁷ Yet among the Neoplatonists there were many who, while continuing to esteem the attempt to lead the philosophical life within the tumult of the city, sought in addition, as a means to inner peace, longer periods of physical retirement from the world—*ἀναχώρησις*. Plotinos, for example, begged the emperor Gallienus to grant him a ruined city in Campania, which he wanted to revive as a community to be called Platonopolis and ruled by philosophers according to the laws laid down by Plato—but his scheme was thwarted by jealous courtiers.¹⁹⁸ Still, he himself retired at the end of his life to an estate in Campania, specifically, if we may believe Firmicus Maternus, 'so that he would be apart from all the bustle of human intercourse'.¹⁹⁹ His pupil Porphyry recognized at least in theory the dangers of city life and the value of *ἀναχώρησις*, pointing out in his treatise *De abstinentia* that there were those among 'the Pythagoreans and the Sages' who had inhabited the most deserted places (*τὰ ἐρημότατα χωρία*), and others who had dwelt in temples and sacred groves that were within the cities, but shut away from all disturbance. 'Plato, for his part, chose to live in the Academy', so Porphyry continues, 'a place not only deserted and far from the town, but also, or so they say, insalubrious'.²⁰⁰ Porphyry's successor in the Neoplatonic *διαδοχή*, Iamblichos, is said by Eunapios to have made a habit of leaving his disciples on occasion and going to pray alone, though his disciples found this behaviour odd, and asked him to stop, which he did.²⁰¹

Yet one of these disciples, Aidesios, when he returned to his native Kappadokia after the death of Iamblichos, was confronted with a similar dilemma. Our source is again Eunapios. Aidesios was granted an oracle offering him a choice between dwelling 'in the cities and towns of men' or becoming a shepherd of sheep and bulls. The one way would bring him eternal fame, the other the company of the gods. Aidesios chose what Eunapios calls 'the better way', and settled in the country among his flocks. But his admirers pursued him, threatening 'to tear him to pieces if he should devote wisdom so great and so rare to the mountains and precipices and trees, as if he were neither a man, nor even knew what it is to be human'. So Aidesios was turned 'to the worse of the two ways', and reconciled himself to the society of his fellow men.²⁰² Eunapios makes clear that both he and Aidesios regarded solitary contemplation as a desirable pursuit for a philosopher; and doubtless it was at Aidesios' suggestion that his pupil Antoninos went to settle at Kanobos. It is interesting also to find the younger Iamblichos receiving the following letter from Libanios:

Your love for the countryside (*περὶ τὸν ἀγρόν*) I deplore because I do not see you; but I also applaud it, because it gets you away from the tumult. For it is right that a devotee of the Muses should imitate them, since it was the custom of the Muses to cultivate their art in the solitude (*ἡσυχία*) of their mountain. . . . But though they were in the mountains, they were by no means alone (*ἐν ἐρημιά*), and

¹⁹⁶ On *ἡσυχία-ἐρημία-ἀναχώρησις* see F. Wilhelm, 'Plutarchos ΠΕΡΙ ΗΣΥΧΙΑΣ (Stob. IV 16, 18 p. 398 f. H.)', *RhM* lxxiii (1920-4) 466-82; A. J. Festugière, *Personal Religion Among the Greeks* (Berkeley 1954) 53-65. (An important text missed by both writers is Justin, *Dial.* 3.1-2.) On Pythagoras, see Porph., *VP* 9, 32; *Abst.* i 36.1; Iamblichos, *VP* 5.27; and on the Pythagorean inclination towards *ἡσυχία*, Lucian, *Vit. auct.* 3; Diog. Laert. viii 7, ix 21. Pythagoras' imitator, Apollonios of Tyana, sought out *ἡσυχία* . . . πρόσφορος τῷ φιλοσοφῆσθαι (Philostratos, *VA* i 7), but condemned *ἀναχώρησις* as betraying a superficial understanding of the spiritual life (*ibid.* ii 5).

¹⁹⁷ Libanios, *ep.* 793.3. But cf. Libanios' letter to the younger Iamblichos, quoted below; and n. 203.

¹⁹⁸ Porph., *Plot.* 12.3-12, esp. 8-9: ἐκεῖ τε αὐτὸς μετὰ τῶν ἐταίρων ἀναχωρήσειν ὑπὸ σκηνῇ.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 2.17-20, 7.22-3; Firmicus Maternus, *Math.* i 7.15.

²⁰⁰ Porph., *Abst.* i 36.1.

²⁰¹ Eunapios, *VP* v 1.6-10.

²⁰² *Ibid.* vi 4. Cf. Julian, *ad Ath.* 271d, on his brother Gallus: εἴ τι περὶ τὸν τρόπον ἄγριον καὶ τραχὺ τὸν ἐκείνου κατεφάνη, τοῦτο ἐκ τῆς ὀρείου τροφῆς (at Makellon in Kappadokia) συνηυξήθη.

nor are you. For just as they had each other, you have those whom they themselves touched: Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and your own divine namesake.²⁰³

The tendency towards withdrawal from the everyday world that we find in texts such as these never amounts to complete self-exile from human society. One did not even necessarily have to leave the city in order to isolate oneself physically—we have already seen Sarapion of Alexandria, for example, quite effectively cutting himself off from the world simply by refusing to leave his house.²⁰⁴ In fact, the late antique Hellene remained as hostile to the true wilderness as his classical forebear had been; and the same Julian, who praised the isolation and calm of the Bithynian estate where as a young man he passed so many months absorbed in literary pursuits,²⁰⁵ could also condemn in the bitterest terms the hatred of human society betrayed by the more extreme Christian ascetics.²⁰⁶ Julian's attitude, like that of Synesios, who was happiest when he found 'leisure to philosophize' in the Cyrenaican countryside, 'far from the city and the highways and commerce and all sorts of fashions',²⁰⁷ perhaps owed something to the traditional *otium* beloved of the Roman aristocrat, which was not usually associated with feelings of hostility towards the world.²⁰⁸ Yet the spiritual Platonism of the age, with its indifference to worldly affairs and possessions, and its dedication to the purification of the soul, undoubtedly fostered a greater esteem for the principle of topographical *ἀναχώρησις* than had been felt by earlier generations. In late antiquity it was no longer taken for granted that the sage would find rest within himself, in purely internal *ἀναχώρησις*.

This 'unsocial philosophy' (*φιλοσοφία ἀκοινωνήτος*)²⁰⁹ may be explained in part as a response to the social and political pressures brought to bear on paganism by the Christian Church. Eunapios specifically attributes Aidesios' reticence to fear engendered by Constantine's attacks on the pagan cults; and for similar reasons Antoninos refused to discuss theological matters (*τῶν θειοτέρων τι*) in public.²¹⁰ Maximos of Ephesos was in danger throughout the 350s;²¹¹ and Julian was obliged to behave with extreme circumspection, and pretend that he was a faithful Christian, while Constantius was still alive.²¹² The same argument applies *a fortiori* to the fifth century. But the behaviour of the holy man contributed to the decline of late paganism as well as reflecting it. Diffuse and unco-ordinated in the face of Christian assault, paganism needed leadership. In the west, the predominantly pagan senatorial aristocracy of Rome still possessed, in the fourth century, a pre-eminence of wealth and prestige that allowed it to speak authoritatively on behalf of the traditional cults; whereas in the east the Constantinopolitan senate was *arriviste* and Christian, and the provincial aristocracies hard-pressed economically. Consequently the task of articulating the pagan cause in the eastern provinces fell to the intellectuals, who as we have seen occupied a more prominent position in Greek society than they did in the Latin west. Yet the intellectuals were fatally divided. Themistios' attacks on the Neoplatonists' aloofness from society reveal fundamental differences within the pagan camp even as regards the elementary principles of political and social action. One of the fatal ironies of Julian's reign was that he should have felt compelled, at a time when he was calling on all philosophers to rally to his cause, to decline Themistios' offer of assistance even though he was

²⁰³ Libanios, *ep.* 1466.2–4; cf. *Comp.* x 5.22 (εἰ δὲ βελτίους αἱ πόλεις, οὐκ ἂν ἐν Ἑλικῶνι καὶ Πιερίᾳ τὰς Μούσας διατρίβειν ἡκούομεν, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς μεγίσταις τῶν πόλεων).

²⁰⁴ See above, p. 47.

²⁰⁵ Julian, *ep.* 4.

²⁰⁶ *Id.*, *ep.* 89b.288b.

²⁰⁷ Synesios, *ep.* 101, 148; and cf. *Hymni* 1.51–71. See also *PKöln* inv. 4533 verso (a petition from the *scholasticus* Ammon of Panopolis, A.D. 348) 9–10: ἡσυχίαν τοίνυν ἀπράγμονα τοῖς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ καὶ λόγοις ἀνηγγέμενος πρέπειν καὶ αὐτός ἐπιστάμενος (quoted G. M. Browne, 'Harpocration Panegyrista', *Ill. Class. Stud.* ii [1977] 193).

²⁰⁸ See J.-M. André, *L'otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine, des origines à l'époque augustéenne* (Paris 1966); R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A commentary on Horace: Odes, Book II* (Oxford 1978) 252–71 (I owe these references to Professor D. R. Shackleton Bailey.)

²⁰⁹ *Dem. Const.* 20a (=H. Schenkl, G. Downey, A. F. Norman, *Themistii orationes quae supersunt* iii [Leipzig 1974] 124).

²¹⁰ Eunapios, *VP* vi 1.5, 10.10; and cf. viii 1.2 on Priskos.

²¹¹ Julian, *ep.* 26.415ab; Libanios, *or.* xv 50.

²¹² Libanios, *or.* 18.19; Amm. Marc. xxii 5.1; and cf. Julian, *ep.* 33. See also above, n. 189.

among the few pagan intellectuals who had any substantial political experience behind him.²¹³ To Julian, Themistios was the very antithesis of the ideal Iamblichan sage, and dangerously indifferent to Iamblichos' vision of pagan Hellenism as a spiritual and intellectual unity. Without Iamblichos' vision, Julian would have conceived his pagan restoration quite differently; but, once the scheme entered the sphere of practical politics, the Iamblichan sages with whom Julian surrounded himself were its worst possible executants. Unlike their Christian counterparts, these holy men of late paganism never felt the *rapprochement* with the ordinary man that comes of a common background or common aspirations. The whole concept of personal holiness in the pagan tradition, and especially in the teachings of Iamblichos, excluded that possibility. And so the premature death of their leader sent Maximos and Priskos and all their associates hurrying home again, in total disarray. The initiative had passed irreversibly to the Christians.

Unlike Themistios, who tried with his usual practicality to moderate Valens' resentment against his fellow pagans in the aftermath of Prokopios' revolt of 365–6 (*or.* vii), or Libanios, who in his *Pro templis* (*or.* xxx) addressed an impassioned plea to Theodosius I for the preservation of the traditional cults, the hard-line Iamblichans found few outlets for their frustration. They rarely stirred themselves to active resistance to the increasingly frequent attacks being made on pagan temples and cults;²¹⁴ nor did they attempt to prevent the mass-conversions to Christianity that usually ensued. Probably they sensed that the old religion in its outward form was doomed. Yet the self-confidence which allowed the Neoplatonists to establish and perpetuate their *διαδοχή* in Athens when the battle almost everywhere else was lost, and the tenacity with which they preserved the spiritual tradition they had inherited, suggests that these were men who could see beyond the closure of their temples and the destruction of the other symbols of their faith, however tragic these events might seem at the time. Behind the stage-play of history and the symbolic language of cult, they looked to the abiding realities of a divine world in whose immutability they placed all their faith. Nor, even in this life, did they go unrewarded. When the Christians, 'those who move the things that should not be moved', took the cult-statue of Athena away from the Parthenon, the goddess appeared to Proklos in a dream, and commanded him to prepare his house quickly, so that she might come to dwell with him.²¹⁵ The holy man was important because he embodied, at a particular point in time and space, the fundamental unity of the divine and human worlds that endowed the whole of creation and history with meaning. And in his personal experience of such *θεῖοι ἄνδρες* the late antique pagan could feel that he had found at last the true meaning of those prophetic lines from the *Odyssey* quoted by Eunapios in the *Vitae philosophorum*:

καί τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν εἰκότες ἄλλοδαποῖσι,
παντοῖοι τελέθοντες, ἐπιστροφῶσι πόλιν.

And the gods, in the likeness of strangers from far countries,
put on all manner of shapes, and wander through the cities.²¹⁶

GARTH FOWDEN

Peterhouse, Cambridge

²¹³ Julian, *ad Them. passim*.

²¹⁴ Exceptions are the Riot of the Statues at Antioch in 387 (John Chrysostom, *Stat.* 17.2 = PG xlix 173–4), and the defence of the Alexandrian Sarapieion by Olympios c. 391 (Sozomen, *HE* vii 15.6, 9; *Suda*

O218 = Damaskios, *Isid. fr.* 91–2, 94, 97).

²¹⁵ Marinus, *Procl* 30. τὰ ἀκίνητα κινεῖν was proverbial: see Leutsch-Schneidewin, *Corp. Paroem. Gr.*, indices s.v.

²¹⁶ *Od.* xvii 485–6; cf. Eunapios, *VP* vi 7.7.