

Constructing the Sacred in Late Antiquity: Jerome as a Guide to Christian Identity

Naoki KAMIMURA
(Tokyo)

Jerome's conflict with church leaders and the Christian communities in Rome and Jerusalem affected his interest in the sacred geography and the significance of visiting holy places. Since both cities had functioned as centres of liturgical, spiritual and pastoral life in the Mediterranean world, he was not reluctant to voice his criticism of local ecclesiastical leaders.¹ His enthusiasm for shaping a new Christian landscape was not only indicative of his concern for the pilgrimage to the holy places, but also of his demand for a new religious identity that promoted the creation of Christian utopia (Ferguson 1975; Dawson 1992: 276–90; Neil, Chapter 1 in this volume). In this chapter, I explore the basis for the development of Jerome's discourse of sacred geography and his interest in a new religious identity. I restrict myself to an examination of Jerome's argument in *Letters* 46 and 58, along with an explanation of the reasons behind his change of heart. I aim to show how both his enthusiasm for shaping a new landscape of sacred sites and his interest in a model of Christian identity provided a comprehensive view of religious behaviour of the fourth-century Christians in the Middle East.

Jerome's enthusiasm for pilgrimage and its religious significance is repeatedly mentioned in his letters,² for example, in *Letter* 108, a rich source of information about Jerome's pilgrimage with Paula, his long-time patron and very dear friend. The letter was written in 404 as his *epitaphium* on Paula (Cain 2013: 5 n. 32). Jerome refers briefly to his purpose in composing the work, which was to console Eustochium on her mother Paula's death (Jerome, *Ep.* 108.2.2: CSEL 55.308), and to express his own grief, as profound as that of Eustochium (*Ep.* 108.32: CSEL 55.350). However, the consolatory motive could be considered marginal. In so far as he intends to circulate the letter among a wider audience (Lamprecht 2017), the letter should be interpreted as a commemoration of his devoted disciple and monastic collaborator, with essentially hagiographic features (Cain 2010). As a result, the epitaph turns out to be a source of

¹ For Jerome's relationship with the church in Rome, see Kelly 1975: 104–15; Rebenich 2002: 31–40; Cain 2009: 99–128. For the circumstances in which he became involved in the Origenist controversy, see Kelly 1975: 200–3; Kim 2013. The most comprehensive review is Clark 1992.

² For fourth-century attitudes towards pilgrimage, in particular in Jerome's letters, see Hunt 1982: 192–4; Cardman 1982; Maraval 1988; Leyerle 1996: 130–2; Newman 1998; Perrone 1999; Limor 2001; Maraval 2002: 71–73; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 65–105; Pullan 2005; Cain 2010; Cain 2013; Limor 2014: 39–45; Falcasantos 2017: 99–113; Krewson 2017: 99–137; Lamprecht 2017.

information for a biography of Paula with a comprehensive catalogue of the holy sites Jerome claims they visited and a description of their experiences in those places. Although he says that he will ‘only name such places as are mentioned in the sacred books’ (Jerome, *Ep.* 108.8.1: CSEL 55.313),³ he understands the importance of these experiences in portraying Paula as an exemplar of his ascetic ideal (Cain 2010: 124). The letter emphasises the craving of a devout pilgrim to see and touch sacred sites, as I will discuss below.

A second letter reflects the intellectual attraction of holy places. *Letter* 53 was written in c. 394 (Cain 2009: 215 n. 47) in reply to Paulinus’s initial request for advice on the study of the scriptures. Jerome responded with an exhortation to a radical renunciation of all possessions, a life detached from clerical duties and concentrated scriptural study (Trout 1999: 90–93). He also encouraged Paulinus to travel to Bethlehem and to study with him, where they would be partners in the scriptural study (Jerome, *Ep.* 53.10.2: CSEL 54.464). He claimed that travelling to Palestine, together with the aim of learning, was crucial to his hope of following the monastic way of life.

Further evidence of Jerome’s invitations to pilgrimage is found in other letters he wrote. For example, in *Letter* 76 written in 399 to Abigaus, a blind presbyter in Spain, Jerome asked him to take special care of Theodora, who had lost her husband Lucinius recently (Jerome, *Epp.* 71 and 75). He encouraged her to persevere in her pilgrimage (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 68–69, 96) and visit the ‘sacred place’ (Jerome, *Ep.* 76.3.2: CSEL 55.36; see *Letters* 47, 68, and 71; Krewson 2007: 120–1). This letter sets out the reward for the hardships of her journey: Theodora will receive a ‘second circumcision’ immediately after her entrance to the holy land (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 69 n. 25; Cain 2013: 276).

Despite his mutually contradictory stances in the two well-known letters, *Letter* 46 and *Letter* 58, Jerome makes his approach to pilgrimage and the value of visiting biblical sites quite explicit. His attitude changed from firm support for pilgrimage to biblical sites to a later denunciation of pilgrimage for over a decade. Some scholars have suggested that Jerome’s change in attitude towards pilgrimage and the earthly Jerusalem can be explained by the tensions between popular religious phenomena and established Church practices in late antiquity (Prawer 1996; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 2–5, 86–87). Other scholars have drawn attention to the historical context in which his views were given (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 87–88). In fact, when he wrote *Letter* 58 to Paulinus whose hope was to travel to Palestine and settle in Jerusalem, Jerome conflicted with the church in Jerusalem. He was extremely reluctant to encourage Paulinus to visit Palestine. He had no alternative but to minimise the importance of visiting the holy places.

³ The translations of Jerome’s writings are taken from Jerome 1983.

In this chapter, I will explore the basis for the development of Jerome's discourse of sacred geography and his interest in a new religious identity. I will restrict myself to an examination of Jerome's argument in *Letters* 46 and 58, along with the explanation of the reasons behind his change of heart. I shall point out how both his enthusiasm for shaping a new landscape of sacred sites and his interest in a model of Christian identity provided a comprehensive view of religious behaviour of the fourth-century Christians in the Middle East.

'Exhortatory letter regarding the holy places': Letter 46 and the Uniqueness of Jerusalem

In the early spring of 386, following his journey with Paula and establishing a settlement in Bethlehem, Jerome wrote *Letter 46* to Marcella, his influential patroness who had stayed behind in Rome.⁵ Although the letter was sent to her in the names of Paula and her daughter Eustochium, most scholars have assumed that Jerome himself wrote the letter.⁶ A close relationship between these women might explain the reason why he hid behind the voice of Paula and Eustochium. They had joined Jerome's circle of aristocratic female disciples at Rome, in which they might share the same model of ascetic piety. Although Jerome served as their spiritual mentor in the circle, he assumed that Paula and Eustochium were fitted for inviting Marcella to join them and follow their way of life (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 71 n. 35).

Jerome quotes a passage from Genesis 12:1, taking it as a starting point for his discussion of pilgrimage, a discussion in which he indicates to Marcella that it was God's first command to Abraham: 'Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred unto a land that I will show thee' (Jerome, *Ep.* 46.2.1: CSEL 54.330).⁷ Jerome also quotes passages from the Old Testament in support of this view (Ezekiel, Psalms and Deuteronomy), thereby providing a biblical basis for the act of pilgrimage. He then switches from the spatial to the temporal aspect: 'Well, then, to bring forward something still more out of place, we must go back to yet remoter times' (*Ep.* 46.3.2: CSEL 54.331-2). The emphasis on the unique history of Jerusalem leads him to confirm that this city has had a privileged position in human history: 'Tradition has it that in this city, nay, more, on this very spot, Adam lived and died. The place where our Lord was crucified is

⁴ Several manuscripts have transmitted *Ep.* 46 under this title: CSEL 54.329.

⁵ For general treatments of *Ep.* 46, see Maraval 1988: 346-51; Newman 1998: 218-21; Perrone 1999; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 70-85; Limor 2014: 40-45; Krewson 2017: 116-30. For the dating of *Ep.* 46, see Nautin 1973: 213-39; Cain 2010: 114 n. 47.

⁶ For the problem of Jerome's authorship of this letter, see Limor 2014: 40 n. 41; Falcasantos 2017: 108 n. 77.

⁷ For his reference to Gen. 12:1 as the justification of pilgrimage, see Wilken 1992: 332 n. 46; Perrone 1999: 231 n. 47; Cain 2010: 120 n. 73.

called Calvary [*scil.* Golgotha], because the skull of the primitive man was buried there' (*Ep.* 46.3.2: CSEL 54.332). He maintains that this tradition affords proof of the special status of Jerusalem: there have been 'prophets and holy men who have been sent forth from this place' (*Ep.* 46.3.3: CSEL 54.332). He adds the etymological explanations of its names: these names—Jebus, Salem, and Jerusalem—correspond to the teaching of the Trinity (*Ep.* 46.3.3). However, although such a triad reveals itself to be a vision of our faith, it is also relevant to the successive steps of the Christian way of life, in particular, the realisation of the monastic ideal: 'from the fight against the passions (Jebus as *calcata*), through the impassibility gained from it (Salem as *pax*), up to the beatitude of perfection (Jerusalem as *uisio pacis*)' (Perrone 1999: 232).⁸ Jerome emphasises the unique status of Jerusalem by introducing both biblical and non-biblical elements: this differs from other Christian writers and, for example, Origen who stripped Jerusalem of its historical and political significance, and instead made it significant only as a symbol of the heavenly city (Wilken 1992: 66–78). While Eusebius of Caesarea was influenced by Origen's spiritual interpretation of Jerusalem as the 'land of promise' (Wilken 1992: 78–81, 127–8), Jerome's stance was consistent with that of Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem.

In contrast to the claim that his adversaries offered on the prophesied destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Matth. 23:37–38), Jerome directs his attention to the words from both Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum* (6.5.3), which gave details of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem,⁹ and to the command of Jesus to the apostles (Matth. 28:19 and Acts 13:46): 'All the spiritual importance of Judaea and its old intimacy with God were transferred by the apostles to the nations' (Jerome, *Ep.* 46.4.3: CSEL 54.334; Perrone 1999: 232). Although it seemed likely that Jerusalem's privileged status was limited only to the past, he provided a clear answer to this problem as follows:

The difficulty is strongly stated, and may well puzzle even those proficient in Scripture; but for all that, it admits of an easy solution. The Lord wept for the fall of Jerusalem [Luke 19:41–42], and He would not have done so if He did not love it. He wept for Lazarus because He loved him [John 11:35–36]. (*Ep.* 46.5.1: CSEL 54.334)

In this way, Jerome takes the scriptural texts to establish the validity of his claim.¹⁰ Further development of his argument is to be found in the connection between the divine abandonment of Jerusalem and the sins of its inhabitants. In other words, the loftiness of the city was to be differentiated from the people who had offended against God.

⁸ For these names of Jerusalem, see *Ep.* 108.9.1; 129.5.3. See also Perrone 1999: 238 n. 51.

⁹ For the dependence of Jerome and other Christian writers on Josephus, see Weingarten 2005: 208–9.

¹⁰ For similar arguments, see *Ep.* 120.8.9: CSEL 55.492; *Ep.* 122.1.13: CSEL 56.60. See also Wilken 1992: 137; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 74.

The truth is that it was the people who sinned and not the place. The capture of a city is involved in the slaying of its inhabitants. If Jerusalem was destroyed, it was that its people might be punished; [...] As regards its site, lapse of time has but invested it with fresh grandeur. (*Ep.* 46.5.1–2: CSEL 54.334)

After making the point that its abandoned state was linked with Jerusalem's inhabitants, he uncouples its Jewish past from its site as a Christian city.¹¹ Thus, he discounted the view that this city was no longer worthy of honour. Jerome intends to free the city as a whole as far as possible from its Jewish past, thereby showing that the destruction of Jerusalem did not represent its abandonment by God.

In the letter, Jerome went on to consider the holiness of this city. By recounting his experience of seeing the tomb of Jesus, he illustrated the significance of physical contact. Here Jerome provides Marcella with a vivid description not only of his experience but also of the power of his experience, thus urging her to contemplate Christian history. Although Jerome realised that most Christians were not familiar with Jerusalem's sacred sites (Wilken 1992: 217–8), he assured Marcella that they were not new places but places that Christians had inherited: 'Long before this sepulchre was hewn out by Joseph, its glory was foretold in Isaiah's prediction, "his rest shall be glorious" [Isaiah 11:10]' (Jerome, *Ep.* 46.5.3: CSEL 54.334). Therefore, he asked Marcella to concentrate on the feelings people experienced in holy places: 'As often as we enter it we see the Saviour in His grave clothes, and if we linger we see again the angel sitting at His feet, and the napkin folded at His head' (*Ep.* 46.5.3: CSEL 54.334). He thought it was crucial that believers saw and touched holy places to remind them of the events of the past in Jerusalem. Furthermore, by drawing on the prophetic words in Isaiah, he turned Marcella's attention from divine judgement of its Jewish past to the veneration of Christian holy places in the city. He shifted the focus to a perpetual honour in the presence of Jesus. The sanctity of Jerusalem is, thus, confirmed by reference to Isaiah 11:10 'his rest shall be glorious' and 'the place of the Lord's burial should be held in universal honor' (*ibid.*).¹² Jerome here wanted to impose a new duty on Christians, to visit the tomb of Jesus, a duty for which there was no scriptural basis. How did he support his claim?

His position was hard to justify when it came to proving that Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem, interpreted as 'Sodom and Egypt': he quoted Revelation 11:8: 'the great city [*scil.*

¹¹ For Jerome's discussion on the ruins of Jerusalem, see *Comm. in Es.* 1.18: CCSL 73.740–1. See also Wilken 1992: 132–7. For the similarities between Jerome and Eusebius regarding its Jewish past, see Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 75 n. 54.

¹² On the importance of touch and sight to pilgrims, see Wilken 1992: 115–20; Frank 2000: 118–33; Falcasantos 2017: 99–109. For the interpretation of Isa. 11:10, see Limor 2014: 40–41; Krewson 2017: 117.

Jerusalem] which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified' (Jerome, *Ep.* 46.6.1: CSEL 54.335). The problem was how Sodom could be a holy place. Jerome resolved the difficulty by extending the phrase's literal meaning and making a new interpretation of Revelation.¹³ His task was both to eliminate any possible confusion between Sodom and the earthly Jerusalem and to argue against associating it with the heavenly Jerusalem. He refers to the passage from Revelation 11:1–2 in which 'he [*scil.* John] speaks of Jerusalem as the holy city' (*Ep.* 46.6.2: CSEL 54.335). Thus, Jerome is certain that he can define the term 'holy city' as the heavenly Jerusalem and show 'that which is called Sodom is the earthly one tottering to its downfall' (*Ep.* 46.6.3: CSEL 54.335). Because it is difficult to give a coherent interpretation of the text, he resorts to another passage from the book of Revelation, in which the new Jerusalem, that is, the holy city within John's vision of 'a new heaven and a new earth' (21:1), is depicted as the 'great city' in its spiritual dimension (21:16–18). However, his interpretation is not straightforward.¹⁴ He interprets it mystically: this 'great city' is the one 'Cain first built [Gen. 4:17]' (*Ep.* 46.7.1: CSEL 54.336), which 'must be taken to represent this world' (*ibid.*). It is called Sodom and Egypt (*ibid.*). He rejects the connection between Egypt and the earthly city: 'We never read of Egypt as put for Jerusalem: it always stands for this world' (*Ep.* 46.7.2: CSEL 54.337). In so far as it is fixed as the city that sinned and was rebuilt, it becomes clear that the 'great city' rather stands for the present world: the future Jerusalem of Revelation is neither celestial nor terrestrial. Jerusalem is, therefore, the city in which 'the psalmist commands us to worship the Lord at his footstool [Ps. 132:7]' (*Ep.* 46.7.6: CSEL 54.338).

The Status of the Earthly Jerusalem

Jerome goes on to consider the high status of the earthly Jerusalem. He cites Matthew 27:52–53 to provide proof for the status and holiness of the earthly city (Wilken 1992: 124).¹⁵ In fact, it is the site of the Lord's resurrection and other saints with him: '[A]nd the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many' (Jerome, *Ep.* 46.7.5: CSEL 54.337–8). He interprets this passage to mean that the 'holy city' is not the heavenly Jerusalem: '[T]he

¹³ For the difficulties in which he was involved, see Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 77 n. 62. See also Perrone 1999: 233, 238 n. 56; Pullan 2005: 403–4.

¹⁴ For the traditional reading of Revelation, see Wilken 1992: 55–56, 96–97, 291 n. 27.

¹⁵ For Jerome's interpretation of the Matthaean passage in his commentaries and its difference from other Christian writers, see Wilken 1992: 91, 292 n. 37; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 79–81; Krewson 2007: 126–7.

apparition there of the bodies of the saints could be no sign to men of the Lord's rising' (*Ep.* 46.7.6: CSEL 54.338). Although he knows well that there are different interpretations of the 'holy city' as the heavenly Jerusalem, his reading serves his purpose. Indeed, he is aware that Christian faith needs to relate the tangible evidence back to the past in order to express itself. He adds further support to his argument.

Since, therefore, the evangelists and all the Scriptures speak of Jerusalem as the holy city, and since the psalmist commands us to 'worship the Lord at his footstool;' [Ps. 131:7 LXX] allow no one to call it Sodom and Egypt, for by it the Lord forbids men to swear because 'it is the city of the great king' [Matt. 5:35] (*Ep.* 46.7.6: CSEL 54.338).

It is noteworthy that he quotes a part of the passage from Psalm 131:7: 'Let us go into his tabernacle: let us worship at his footstool.'¹⁶ Jerome suggests this means that we should worship Jesus' burial place. His concern to construct sacred geography is prominent in his interpretation of this Psalm as a reference to the obligation of Christians to visit and worship at Jesus' tomb.¹⁷ He explains the religious and intellectual rewards of the act of pilgrimage: '[T]he bishops, the martyrs, the divines [...] have come to Jerusalem from a feeling that their *devotion* and *knowledge* would be incomplete and their *virtue* without the finishing touch, unless they adored Christ in the very spot where the gospel first flashed from the gibbet' (*Ep.* 46.9.1: CSEL 54.339; italics mine). When he describes what it is that he appreciates in this mode of religious practice, he enumerates the desirable characteristics—devotion, knowledge and virtue—to be found in those who have completed 'a Christian's education' (*Ep.* 46.9.2: CSEL 54.339) by their worship at a particular holy site. This is the innovative aspect of Jerome's argument. Here the connection between the rewards of pilgrimage and an effective way of forging Christian identity form the basis of religious practice: for Christians of his day, he believes, visiting a unique earthly site is an obligation and, in fulfilling this obligation, they should also share his perception of pilgrimage and the earthly Jerusalem.

Jerome's Gentle Persuasion of Paulinus of Nola: Letter 58

¹⁶ For the reading of the Hebrew text, see Wilken 1992: 97–98.

¹⁷ For his emphasis on such worship considered to be indispensable to the Christian faith, see *Ep.* 47. See also Newman 1998: 219; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 81; Krewson 2017: 120.

In 395, a year after he wrote *Letter 53* to Paulinus of Nola to encourage him to renounce property and travel to Bethlehem, Jerome wrote *Letter 58*.¹⁸ While Jerome was still involved in a conflict with the Jerusalem church, Paulinus was thinking about the possibility of his visit to Palestine and hoping to become a monk.¹⁹ Many friends of Paulinus were living in the vicinity. For example, Melania the Elder, probably kin to Paulinus (Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 29.5: CSEL 29.251), had founded a double monastery on the Mount of Olives. She was soon joined by her friend and companion, Rufinus of Aquileia. Paulinus referred to her residence in Jerusalem and praised her for having firmly committed to the monastic way of life (*Ep.* 29.10–13: CSEL 29.257–61). He also mentioned Rufinus in terms of affection and expressed high esteem for his intellectual attainments (*Ep.* 28.5: CSEL 29.246). Despite the former promised hospitality to Paulinus, however, Jerome was now disinclined to encourage Paulinus's plan to visit and settle in Jerusalem. Indeed, he could ill afford to offer Paulinus a warm reception. Not only had Jerome's relations with the monks on the Mount of Olives been difficult and strained, he was also embroiled in a controversy with John, bishop of Jerusalem, over the evaluation of Origen's teachings. That controversy had resulted in his excommunication (Nautin 1971–73). He and all who belonged to his community had been barred from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as well as other churches in the diocese of Jerusalem. Accordingly, Jerome was obliged now to take a different view of visiting holy places.

The Traditional View of Pilgrimage and the Value of Proximity to Jerusalem

Jerome's crucial concern in *Letter 58* was to dissuade Paulinus from travelling to holy places, and to give him a compelling rationale for being devoted to the monastic life in Italy, without compromising his faith. The way he presented his argument is noteworthy for the tone of his words. In comparison with Gregory of Nyssa's considerable reservations about pilgrimage in his *Letter 2* (written in the 380s), Jerome did not press his claim. While Gregory stated explicitly that pilgrimage to Jerusalem was potentially harmful, in particular for monks and nuns,²⁰ Jerome took a cautious approach. He would have been fully conscious of the difficulty of defending his changed position on pilgrimage and the status of the earthly Jerusalem, which had been based both on his own experience as a pilgrim and on the arguments he had previously

¹⁸ For general treatments of *Ep.* 58, see Rebenich 1992: 224–39; Newman 1998; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 90–97; Pullan 2005: 404–5; Chin 2007; Krewson 2017: 127–30. For the dating of *Ep.* 58, see Nautin 1973.

¹⁹ For a survey of historical circumstances in which Jerome was involved, see Kelly 1975: 195–209; Trout 1999: 90–101; Rebenich 2002: 41–51. For Jerome's relationship with Paulinus, see Rebenich 1992: 220–39.

²⁰ E.g. *Ep.* 2.18, Silvas 2007: 121. See also Wilken 1992: 117–8; Newman 1998; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 51–57.

formulated in *Letter 46* (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 90–91). Although his attempt to prove the insignificance of pilgrimage is explicit within this letter, his reservations indicate the ambivalence expressed by his contemporary theologians against the practice of pilgrimage.²¹

From the beginning of *Letter 58*, Jerome directed Paulinus's attention to traditional Christian ideas in the New Testament: the refusal to endorse the religious significance of Christian holy places as a component of Christian faith (Wilken 1992: 46–64; Pullan 2005). He approached the issue from a moral viewpoint, in pursuit of his aim to reject the spiritual status of Jerusalem.

What is praiseworthy is not to have been at Jerusalem but to have lived a good life while there. The city which we are to praise and to seek is not that which has slain the prophets and shed the blood of Christ, but that which is made glad by the streams of the river, which is set upon a mountain and so cannot be hid, which *the apostle declares to be a mother of the saints* [Gal. 4.26], and in which *he rejoices to have his citizenship with the righteous* [Phil. 3:20]. (Jerome, *Ep.* 58.2.3: CSEL 54.529–30; italics mine)

He admits that his interest lies in the moral fabric of the city. He begins his appeal for the proper moral conduct to be expected of inhabitants of the city with an interpretation of scriptural texts: Paul's epistles to Galatians 4:26 and Philippians 3:20. These passages were the basis for the 'spiritualistic detachment from historical Jerusalem in the name of the heavenly one' (Perrone 1999: 234), designed to erase the special status of any particular space and to belittle the value of pilgrimage. Here Jerome highlighted the impossibility of the divine presence being coupled with any specific geographical site: 'Each believer is judged not by his residence in this place or in that [...] The true worshippers worship the Father neither at Jerusalem nor on mount Gerizim' (Jerome, *Ep.* 58.3.1: CSEL 54.530).²² In this way, he argued against the special status of the earthly Jerusalem and the act of pilgrimage, and anchored his arguments in scriptural texts.

However, while Jerome rejected the traditional view he had advanced in *Letter 46*, he did not accept the classic dichotomy made between the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 15–17). Nor did he draw on Paul's words to the Hebrews 12:22 on the 'heavenly Jerusalem' and to the Galatians 4:26 on the 'Jerusalem above'. Instead, he linked the importance of making pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the sanctity of the city. With this, he stripped Jerusalem, the city, of its earlier sinful history and shifted the blame for those sins onto the

²¹ For Jerome's ambivalent attitude, see Markus 1990; Cardman 1982; Praver 1996; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005.

²² For the question of the locus of God's presence, see Wilken 1992: 91, 292 n. 36; Perrone 1999.

inhabitants of the city. Thus, unlike his innovative attitude in *Letter 46*, Jerome's approach in *Letter 58* was typical of fourth-century Christian theologians (Cardman 1982; Praver 1996). While he reminded Paulinus of the Pauline view of Jerusalem and holy places, Jerome also referred to his own experience: 'I, like Abraham, have left my home and people' (Jerome, *Ep.* 58.3.1: CSEL 54.530). This allusion to Genesis 12:1 also appears at the beginning of *Letter 46* to justify his own pilgrimage (*Ep.* 46.2.1: CSEL 54.330). It is interesting to note that Jerome juxtaposed the legitimation of his own travelling to holy places with arguments against pilgrimage in *Letter 58*.²³ He might have defended his choice by pointing out that the divine presence was located in a particular place, that is, the destination of his pilgrimage, but he did not reconcile the contradiction. It was never properly resolved.

His emphasis is, therefore, on the discrepancy between a moral way of life and proximity to holy places. Citing the Johannine texts, such as Jesus's dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Jerome focussed on the behaviour of believers: 'Each believer is judged [...] according to the deserts of his faith. The true worshippers worship the Father neither at Jerusalem nor on mount Gerizim; for "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." [John 4:24] "Now the spirit bloweth where it listeth" [John 3:8]' (*Ep.* 58.3.1: CSEL 54.530). Here he appealed again to the Pauline view of a holy place and cast doubt on associating God with places connected with the earthly life of Jesus. He pointed out that the gospel message was given to the whole world: 'God ceased to be known in Judah only and His name to be great in Israel alone' (*Ep.* 58.3.2: CSEL 54.530).²⁴ Thus, he articulated the limits of holy places: 'If heaven and earth must pass away, obviously all things that are earthly must pass away also' (*Ep.* 58.3.2: CSEL 54.531). It followed that the sites of the crucifixion and resurrection profited only those who made themselves worthy of the holiness of these sites (*Ep.* 58.3.3: CSEL 54.531),²⁵ excluding those who were only proud of their place of residence. Jerome shifted the focus from the merely physical to a spiritual closeness with God. Admittedly, his argument was directed against his opponents in Jerusalem. Recalling the passages from Pauline epistles, he wrote: "Those who say "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," [Jer. 7:4] should give ear to the words of the apostle: "ye are the temple of the Lord, and the Holy Ghost dwelleth in

²³ For his continuing advocacy of the Pauline view, see also Jerome, *Comm. in Es.*, written between 408 and 410; Bitton-Ashkelony 93 n. 127.

²⁴ For the same contrast described in his works, see *Ep.* 60.4.1: CSEL 54.552; *Tract. in Ps.* 75.2: CCSL 78.49.

²⁵ For the same claim he had made around 390, see *Tract. in Ps.* 95: CCSL 78.154–5. See also Newman 1998: 221–2.

you” [1 Cor. 3:16]’ (*Ep.* 58.3.3: CSEL 54.531).²⁶ Since ‘the kingdom of God is within you [Luke 17:21]’, it can be found in Britain as well as in Jerusalem (*Ep.* 58.3.3: CSEL 54.531).²⁷ Here Jerome emphasised the inner meaning of pilgrimage and proposed that a serious obstacle to the hope of seeking the ‘kingdom of God’ in Jerusalem be the temptations of that crowded city. Thus, having stressed the importance of the righteousness of faith, he observed that many monks had never visited Jerusalem, and the hermit Hilarion only went to Jerusalem and never hoped ‘to appear to confine God within local limits’ (*Ep.* 58.3.4: CSEL 54.531; see Wilken 1992: 151).

The Enhanced Function of the Sacred Sites

It is noteworthy that in Jerome’s letter to Paulinus he did not dismiss the value of sacred space entirely. While he concentrated on the holy places in Jerusalem, he seems to have avoided any mention of the place of Christ’s nativity in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was the centre of the network of Christian sacred sites in Palestine (Markus 1990: 139–55; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 93–94). Indeed, in the very moment he was refuting the religious value of holy places, he described Bethlehem as ‘that most venerable spot in the whole world’ (*Ep.* 53.3.5: CSEL 54.532).²⁸ His attitude towards holy places was once again ambivalent. Jerome asked himself why his lengthy letter has to be sent to Paulinus: he did not want to impose his views on Paulinus, and his tone is apologetic, assuring Paulinus that ‘nothing is lacking to your faith although you have not seen Jerusalem [...] whether you dwell here or elsewhere, a like recompense is in store for your good works with our Lord’ (*Ep.* 58.4.1: CSEL 54.532). While praising Paulinus’s eloquence and his classical learning,²⁹ Jerome appears to offer another approach to sacred sites, and once again invites Paulinus to a journey, a different journey. The proposed itinerary was as follows: not ‘through the Aonian mountains and the peaks of Helicon’ revered by classical poets, but ‘through Zion and Tabor and Sinai, the high places of scripture’ (*Ep.* 58.8.3: CSEL 54.538). It is unreasonable to suppose that Jerome offered to escort Paulinus in person to ‘the high places’. But, even if Jerome was not receptive to Paulinus visiting holy places, he might have considered ‘Zion and Tabor and Sinai’ to be of particular importance. He made clear his intention to chart

²⁶ For the same argument but a reference to 2 Cor. 6:16, see Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 2.16–17: Sources Chrétiennes 363.120–3. See also Maraval 2002: 73–74.

²⁷ For a similar argument, see *Comm. in Hiez.* 13.43.8: CCSL 75.625. Concerning the same argument to be found in late antiquity, see also Hunt 1982: 91–92; Maraval 1988: 353; Pullan 2005.

²⁸ For the priority for Bethlehem in his writings, see Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 94 n. 136; Krewson 2017: 135–7.

²⁹ For the interpretation of his metaphorical message in *Ep.* 58.8–9, see Pullan 2005: 404–5; Chin 2007: 103–7; O’Reilly 2017: 219.

a specific course: 'If I might teach you what I have learned myself and might pass on to you *the mystic rolls of the prophets*, then might we give birth to something' (*Ep.* 58.8.3: CSEL 54.538; italics mine), something that could be more brilliant than the secular learning in which Paulinus has already excelled. His message was thus as an invitation to a joint task of scriptural exegesis. He passionately hoped to be able to share his biblical expertise with Paulinus: '[G]ive ear for a moment that I may tell you how you are to walk in the holy scriptures' (*Ep.* 58.9.1: CSEL 54.538).

He had extended the same invitation in the preceding letter, that is, *Letter* 53, where Jerome had urged Paulinus to join him in scriptural study (see above in this chapter). A notable characteristic of these letters is that they refer to physical localities. In *Letter* 53 Jerome enumerated biblical sites—Egypt, Judah, Israel, Assyria, Ephraim, Canaan, Edom, and Nineveh (*Ep.* 53.8.1–14: CSEL 54.454–60)—when he summarised the contents of scriptures. Then, in *Letter* 58 'Zion and Tabor and Sinai' are mentioned in the itinerary which Paulinus is expected to take in order to 'walk in the holy scriptures'. What then is the importance of 'Zion and Tabor and Sinai'? The listed places in *Letter* 53 are not meant to refer to actual places and actual past events; rather, the names are spatial metaphors. Jerome considers these names 'an entirety of scriptural space' (Chin 2017: 105), that is, the texts of scriptures to be interpreted and explained. Particular places such as 'Zion and Tabor and Sinai' are very likely meant to be read as a holy space, to be entered through scriptural exegesis.³⁰ Jerome's invitation is for Paulinus to enter the textual space of scriptures, not to visit different locations in Palestine. This suggests that 'Zion and Tabor and Sinai' are the symbolic entrance through which the reader enters and explores the scriptures. Jerome is setting a course for Paulinus and planning to be a guide to show him the path: 'Oh! that it were mine to conduct a genius like you [...] through Zion and Tabor and Sinai, the high places of scripture' (*Ep.* 58.8.3: CSEL 54.538).

Conclusion

Initially, Jerome argued for the importance of visiting sacred sites. In his letter to Marcella (*Ep.* 46), he wanted to convince her to travel to holy places, defending the privileged position of the earthly Jerusalem with biblical and extra-biblical motifs. He claimed that the sanctity of the city should not encompass the failings of its inhabitants, or its Jewish past pollutes its holiness as a Christian city. When advocating the necessity of pilgrimage to Jesus' tomb, Jerome wrote approvingly of associating divine presence with a defined locus. However, to avoid criticism, he emphasised the virtues of the monks and virgins in Jerusalem: '[T]here is no arrogance, no disdain of self-restraint; all strive after humility, that greatest of Christian virtues' (*Ep.* 46.10.3:

³⁰ For the relation of a sacred site to the scriptures, see Chin 2017; Limor 2014: 39–45. Limor examines some of Jerome's writings, but with no reference to *Letters* 53 and 58.

CSEL 54.340). Ten years later, writing to Paulinus of Nola (*Ep.* 58), Jerome revised his view of the sanctity of Jerusalem and proposed a rather more traditional view, based on Pauline passages that reject any spiritual significance for the earthly city. In now trying to dissuade Paulinus from travelling to holy places, he is critical of the earthly Jerusalem, criticism directed at his opponents in Jerusalem who did not support the importance of holy places. Jerome had to reconsider whether Jerusalem was an appropriate location for those who were most intent on pursuing a monastic way of life. In his conflict with the church in Jerusalem, the city had lost its appeal.

It is clear that, after his three-year period of excommunication ended, Jerome did not hesitate to once again express a positive attitude towards pilgrimage and to stop attacks on the people of Jerusalem. He encouraged his friends to visit holy places. He might have feared that his friends would be hostile after meeting with his opponents, but the danger passed (Krewson 2017: 130). Despite the profound impact of his past conflict with the bishops and church of Jerusalem, he could renew his commitment to pilgrimage. It is evident, therefore, that Jerome regarded his appeal to the traditional Pauline view as a tentative reservation. His message to Paulinus in *Letter* 58 was a consequence of his unfavourable situation. Since he was acutely conscious of the discrepancy of his attitude towards pilgrimage between two letters, he came quickly to his former standpoint when the situation returned to normal. However, it is not true to say that *Letter* 58 never contained an exhortation to Paulinus to a journey. Jerome invited him to a 'spatial' journey. It was through a course of scriptural study that Jerome encouraged Paulinus to enter into the textual space of scriptures. Scriptural texts were the destination to which Jerome had in mind, with hope to accompany Paulinus and serve as a trustworthy guide to scriptural exegesis. He warns Paulinus against wandering: 'I may tell you how you are to walk in the holy scriptures' (*Ep.* 58.9.1: CSEL 54.538). Scriptural space is a challenging territory to negotiate without a guide who can show travellers the appropriate route to the goal.

We can but conjecture why *Letters* 46 and 58 so reacted differently to sacred geography. We could surmise that, after the excommunication of Jerome and his community, he had to revise his previous emphasis on the historical contrast between the Jewish past of Jerusalem and its status as a Christian city (*Ep.* 46) to focus directly on the behaviours of contemporary people who vaunted their proximity to the holy places (*Ep.* 58). Jerome was so intent on the monastic ideal as positive towards pilgrimage, which implied the alienation from the world and related to the construction of a Christian way of life, that he had to stress the gap between the uniqueness of the earthly Jerusalem and the reality of the city. Because of his disappointments and frustrations with the city, and the conflict with his opponents, he was obliged to belittle the importance of sacred geography. The change of attitude, therefore, did not result from a

theoretical investigation of the status of the earthly Jerusalem but instead from his disillusionment with the Christian utopia he had hoped for and from 'his relations to others' (Leyerle 1996: 132).

Despite his dissatisfaction with contemporary Jerusalem, he did not dismiss the significance of sacred sites entirely. Although the realities of the city did not drastically change after his reconciliation with the church in Jerusalem, in some letters he retained and expressed a deep affection for holy places (Bitton-Ashkelony 2005: 96–97). In his letters both to Marcella and to Paulinus, which evidence contradictory attitudes to sacred geography, Jerome endows the earthly Jerusalem with unique moral values: three names of the city—Jebus, Salem, and Jerusalem—represent the progressive stages of the monastic ideal (*Ep.* 46.3). These desirable characteristics—devotion, knowledge and virtue—associated with the worship at Jesus' tomb, are an obligation for the Christians to acquire (*Ep.* 46.9). In *Letter* 58 Jerome encouraged his addressee to travel a new, different utopia, not to contemporary Jerusalem, where he would not be able to realise the monastic ideal. Abandoning the Pauline view of a heavenly Jerusalem, but drawing on the language of sacred geography and scriptural exegesis, Jerome creates a kind of Christian utopia where the textual space could open to guide his friends to their destined goal (*Ep.* 58.8). As a result, he could define the city as a unique physical location, appropriate for a Christian way of life, but also ensure that the scriptures were a credible and utopian space for a journey into scriptural exegesis. Both letters thus served Jerome as a means to construct a visual and imaginative geography for fourth-century Christians, in which Jerome himself and the letters he sent to his friends were intended to be a guide for them to cultivate a new Christian way of life. His goal was to invite them to a new religious identity, laying the foundation for the perception of sacred geography and promoting the creation of a Christian utopia.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this chapter was read at the 39th Annual Conference of Australasian Society of Classical Studies, held in Brisbane from 30 January–2 February 2018. I would like to thank the session participants for their generous criticism. I would also like to thank Wendy Mayer, Bronwen Neil, Ryan Strickler, whose comments and suggestions did much to improve this chapter; Sandra Sewell for her invaluable help with the English text throughout this chapter.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Gregory of Nyssa (1990) *Lettres*. Edited by P. Maraval, Sources Chrétiennes, 363. Paris: Cerf.
- Gregory of Nyssa (2007) *Gregory of Nyssa, The Letters*. Translated by A. M. Silvas. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Jerome (1910–18) *Hieronimi Epistulae*. Edited by I. Hilberg, CSEL, 54–56. Vienna: F. Tempsky.
- Jerome (1983) *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Translated by W. H. Fremantle, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2.6. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Jerome (1958) *Tractatus sive homiliae in psalmos: In Marci evangelium: Alia varia argumenta*. Edited by G. Morin, B. Capelle, and F. Fraipont, CCSL, 78. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Jerome (1963) *Commentariorum in Esaiam libri I-XI*. Edited by M. Adriaen, CCSL, 73. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Jerome (1964) *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem libri XIV*. Edited by F. Glorie, CCSL, 75. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Paulinus of Nola (1894) *Epistulae*. Edited by G. Hartel, CSEL, 29. Vienna: F. Tempsky.

Secondary Sources

- Bitton-Ashkelony, B. (2005) *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 38. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Cain, A. (2009) *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cain, A. (2010) 'Jerome's *Epitaphium Paulae*: Hagiography, Pilgrimage, and the Cult of Saint Paula', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 18(1), 105–39.
- Cain, A. (2013) *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula: A Commentary on the Epitaphium Sanctae Paulae*. Oxford Early Christian Texts, 17. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cardman, F. (1982) 'The Rhetoric of Holy Places: Palestine in the Fourth Century'. *Studia Patristica*, 17. Leuven: Peeters, 18–25.
- Chin, C. M. (2007) 'Through the Looking Glass Darkly: Jerome Inside the Book', in Klingshirn, W. E. and Safran, L. (eds), *The Early Christian Book*. CUA Studies in Early Christianity. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 101–16.
- Clark, E. A. (1992) *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Dawson, D. (1992) *Cities of the Gods: Communist Utopias in Greek Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Falcasantos, R. S. (2017) 'Wandering Wombs, Inspired Intellectuals: Christian Religious Travel in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 25(1), 89–117.
- Ferguson, J. (1975) *Utopias of the Classical World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Frank, G. (2000) *The Memory of Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*. The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 30. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hunt, E. D. (1982) *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, AD 312–460*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kelly, J. N. D. (1975) *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies*. London: Duckworth.
- Kim, Y. R. (2013) 'Jerome and Paulinian, Brothers', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 67(5), 517–30.
- Krewson, W. L. (2017) *Jerome and the Jews: Innovative Supersessionism*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.
- Lamprecht, J. C. (2017) 'Jerome's Letter 108 to Eustochium: Contemporary Biography in Service of Ascetic Ideology?', *HTS Theologiese Studies/ Theological Studies*, 73(3), a4503.
- Leyerle, B. (1996) 'Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 64(1), 119–43.
- Limor, O. (2001) 'Reading Sacred Space: Egeria, Paula and the Christian Holy land', in Hen, Y. (ed.), *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*. Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 1. Turnhout: Brepols, 1–15.
- Limor, O. (2014) 'Conversion of Space', in Katznelson, I. and Rubin, M. (eds), *Religious Conversion: History, Experience and Meaning*, Farnham: Ashgate, 31–59.
- Maraval, P. (1988) 'Saint Jérôme et le pèlerinage aux lieux saints de Palestine', in Duval, Y.-M. (ed.), *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient: XVIe centenaire du départ de saint Jérôme de Rome et de son installation à Bethléem: actes du colloque de Chantilly, septembre 1986*. Paris: Études augustiniennes, 345–53.
- Maraval, P. (2002) 'The Earliest Phase of Christian Pilgrimage in the Near East (before the 7th Century)', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 56, 63–74.
- Markus, R. A. (1990) *The End of Ancient Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nautin, P. (1971–73) 'L'excommunication de saint Jérôme'. *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*, 80–81, 7–37.
- Nautin, P. (1973) 'Etudes de chronologie hiéronymienne (393–397) (suite)', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 19, 69–86 and 213–39.

- Newman, H. I. (1998) 'Between Jerusalem and Bethlehem: Jerome and the Holy Places of Palestine', in Houtman, A., Poorthuis, M. J. H. M., and Schwartz, J. (eds), *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 215–27.
- O'Reilly, J. (2017) 'The Bible as Map, On Seeing God and Finding the Way: Pilgrimage and Exegesis in Adomnán and Bede', in Boulton, M., Hawkes, J., and Stoner, H. (eds), *Place and Space in the Medieval World*. Milton: Routledge, 210–26.
- Perrone, L. (1999) "'The Mystery of Judaea" (Jerome, *Ep.* 46): The Holy City of Jerusalem between History and Symbol in Early Christian Thought', in Levine, L. I. (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. New York: Continuum, 221–39.
- Prawer, J. (1996) 'Christian Attitudes towards Jerusalem in the Early Middle Ages', in Prawer, J. and Ben-Shammai, J. (eds), *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period, 638–1099*. Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi; New York: New York University Press, 311–47.
- Pullan, W. (2005) "'Intermingled Until the End of Time": Ambiguity as a Central Condition of Early Christian Pilgrimage', in Elsner, J. and Rutherford, I. (eds), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 387–409.
- Rebenich, S. (1992) *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und Sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Rebenich, S. (2002) *Jerome. The Early Church Fathers*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Trout, D. (1999) *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems*. Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 27. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Weingarten, S. (2005) *The Saint's Saints: Hagiography and Geography in Jerome*. Ancient Judaism & Early Christianity, 58. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Wilken, R. L. (1992) *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought*. New Haven: Yale University Press.