CHAPTER 8

Communication Strategies
Provincial Governors and Christian Communities

Introduction

In August 314, Constantine assembled a group of western bishops at Arles.[1] This council met primarily to decide on the rightful possessor of the see of Carthage. A tribunal in Rome held the previous year had decided in favour of Caecilian against his rival, Donatus, but the supporters of the latter had appealed to the emperor once more. When they were not hearing this case and finding for Caecilian (again), the bishops present took the opportunity to agree on guidelines for how their churches should be governed, which were published as a series of canons and preserved in later collections.[2] The bishops show an obvious and understandable concern to ensure Christian institutions were properly regulated now that the disruption of the Great Persecution had ended and Constantine's support had created a more permissive political climate. Amongst the problematic social groups whose integration into Christian communities required legislation, the bishops at Arles considered the question of 'governors who are baptised Christians and involved in government business'.[3] The council went against the grain of their previous rulings, which denied communion to charioteers and actors currently engaged in those professions,[4] by seeking to include serving governors in Christian communities.

> It was decided that when they have been appointed, they should receive letters of reference from their churches, so that, wherever they govern, they can be taken care of by the bishop of the place, and if they begin to act against Christian discipline, they should only then be excluded from communion.[5]

[1] Context: Drake (2000), 219–21; Lenski (2016), 250–51; Zecchini (2017). [2] Arles (314).
[3] Arles (314), canon 7. [4] Arles (314), canons 4–5.
[5] Arles (314), canon 7; also 8 extending to public office in general. See Drake (2000), 230–31; Zecchini (2017), 88–91.

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The bishops at Arles were concerned to make sure that Christian governors were not automatically deprived of communion.[6] This ruling may have been a response to qualms around the governor's inevitable complicity in torture and execution.[7] It might also have been a simple matter of making sure this prominent newcomer did not fall through the cracks of pastoral provision in his temporary residence.[8] Whatever the reason, Christian governors were to be members of the public episcopal church of the provincial capital and under the jurisdiction of its bishop.

When the bishops met at Arles in 314, the appointment of Christian governors was an exceptional case that required conciliar deliberation.[9] By the end of the fourth century, it had become a normal part of imperial governance. Miniature versions of the dynamic between palace and church discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 played out across the Roman world as elite men were appointed to head up the civil administration of individual provinces. These individuals (at least theoretically) became members of the church in the city where they would now temporarily reside. Certainly, bishops and monks across the empire seem to have seen the officials who turned up in their cities and provinces as *their* problem and a potential target of their pastoral guidance. In fact, many of the most detailed and admonitory texts on the ethics of Christian political service discussed in Part II stem specifically from letters to serving governors. At the same time, the peculiar dynamics of appointment, the interests of governors, and, above all, the development of the bishop into a civic authority figure in his own right made this relationship significantly more complicated than the bishops at Arles envisaged.

This chapter explores how membership of the church affected the conduct and activities of provincial governors by influencing the character of their relationships with Christian institutions and authority figures in the provinces they governed. These interactions between Christian governors and their episcopal subjects have received considerable attention as part of attempts to chart 'the rise of the bishop' in late antiquity. Efforts to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction over provincial appointees have often been seen as a natural development of the new prominence of bishops as civic leaders. Yet recent revisionist work has rightly questioned the assumption that the moral authority projected by late fourth- and early fifth-

[6] Compare canon 56 of Elvira. [7] Wider qualms: see the Introduction, 24; Chapter 5, 171–74.
[8] Concerns for practicalities: Arles (314), canons 1–2, 10 (9), 16–17 (15–17), 19, 21.
[9] For numbers of Christians in the western senatorial aristocracy: see the Introduction, 15.

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century bishops would inevitably work on Christian governors. Acute studies of Augustine's letters to his imperial correspondents by Neil McLynn and Brent Shaw have neatly delineated the social dynamics that limited the bishop's influence.[10] They have shown how provincial bishops were subject to the same requirements and constraints as other petitioners hoping to gain the governor's ear. The tendency of regimes to appoint outsiders as governors (at least before a pivot to local appointments in the middle decades of the sixth century) meant that a bishop like Augustine could not rely on pre-existing ties of friendship or patronage.[11] The quick turnover of terms of office – rarely longer than two years, often just one – gave little time to build up a working relationship.[12] Even when a mutual understanding was developed, there remained a stark gulf between the interests of governors and bishops. Numerous studies of religious intolerance in late antiquity have noted the frustration of emperors and bishops alike at the tendency of governors to dodge issues of religious uniformity.[13] The need to maintain order, appease local interests, defer to their office staffs – and above all, to protect their future career prospects – led these office-holders to wash their hands of potentially controversial religious disputes. If bishops wanted to ensure the application of laws against heretical bishops or pagan temples, they normally had to go above the governor's head to secure special envoys from the imperial court.[14] This combination of social distance and diverging interests meant that governors could, in the words of Brent Shaw, '[give] rather short shrift to a person whom they thought had no standing to intervene in the running of the state affairs over which they had authority'.[15]

Recent work on the relations between bishops and governors has rightly brought the former down to size. The normal character of 'pastoral' interactions between Christian governors and provincial churches across late antiquity remains to be explored. The continued focus on episcopal self-aggrandisement and its limited practical impact has obscured the ways in which membership of the church and relationships with church communities and institutions could nevertheless affect the conduct of office-holders. Just because these governors did not automatically cave to the

[10] McLynn (1999); Shaw (2015); see also McLynn (2013) applying similar considerations to Gregory of Nazianzus.
[11] Appointments: e.g. Slootjes (2006), 25–26.
[12] Terms of office: A. H. M. Jones (1964), I 381; Slootjes (2006), 26.
[13] See the Introduction, 27, n. 123.
[14] Esp. Meyer-Zwiffelhoffer (2011), 119–21; Shaw (2015), a recurring theme, see esp. 57.
[15] Shaw (2015), 58.

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demands of the particular provincial bishops whose petitions have been preserved does not mean that they were immune to a Christian and even ecclesiastical presentation of their authority. Likewise, an unwillingness to inflame local tensions through the destruction of a famous temple or the prosecution of a 'heretical' bishop cannot be taken as a straightforward indicator of a lack of concern for piety. Indeed, these very letter exchanges and laws suggest that governors were aware of and sometimes sensitive to the distinct claims and expectations of the Christian institutions and authority figures who appealed to them for patronage and judgement.[16] This chapter proceeds from the premise that we should revisit these interactions from the perspective of Christian governors. It is my contention that we can see, on the part of some fifth- and sixth-century provincial governors, a concern and capacity to stage their governance in Christian terms and to live up to those expectations – and often in collaboration with their episcopal and ascetic subjects.

Section 8.1 revisits the evidence for the implantation of governors in provincial Christian communities. The bishops gathered at Arles in 314 had a straightforward solution to the problem of where Christian governors should go to church and who should keep an eye on them. Even the fleeting surviving references to governors in church suggest that these interlinked problems of church attendance and pastoral oversight played out in different ways in provincial capitals across the late fourth, fifth, and early sixth centuries. Governors can be seen attending the cathedral of the metropolitan bishop and making visits to the churches of prominent bishops and monastic leaders during tours of their provinces. These isolated snapshots do not indicate frequency of attendance, but it is noteworthy that most of these visits are framed by specific occasions and rationales. Governors likely had alternatives to public church attendance in the form of domestic religious observance; some had good reasons to keep the cathedral community at arm's length given the dangers of association with controversial bishops. When contemporary authors discuss their presence in church, it is presented as a departure from the norm: a representative of an external imperial authority amidst a Christian congregation. These special visits seem principally to have been understood, both by governors and their ecclesiastical counterparts, as opportunities for the cultivation of mutually beneficial relationships. Governors could receive public recognition of their just and divinely sanctioned rule; bishops and

[16] And it is important to stress that McLynn and Shaw do describe the development of productive working relationships (though depicted as exceptions to the rule).

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ascetics, an entrée into the praetorium. In this sense, even as they addressed the visiting imperial office-holders as members of the church, these preachers had their minds on the real location where they might exercise pastoral authority: the governor's palace. This premise is substantiated, paradoxically, by the most obvious case of a bishop wielding his ecclesiastical jurisdiction over a Christian governor (discussed in Section 8.2): the conflict between Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais and Andronicus, the governor of Libya Superior in 411/2. As the sole known example of a bishop excommunicating a provincial governor in late antiquity, this case has often been cited as paradigmatic for the rise of the bishop as a new moral authority. The exceptional nature of Synesius' ecclesiastical sentence and the uncertainties regarding its impact belie such suggestions of epochal aggrandisement. Most significantly, this was an excommunication without obvious pre-existing communion: barring (at most) two meetings at the bishop's church when this ban was about to be posted, Synesius' attempts to exercise his oversight took place on the governor's territory. Even this singular case of the imposition of ecclesiastical jurisdiction suggests that, if bishops and ascetics were to exercise pastoral authority over governors, it would be in the palace.

Bishops and ascetics could address governors as members of the church even if they were not members of *their* church. Section 8.3 explores the social and political context of these appeals to Christian identity. The late fourth- and early fifth-century bishops and ascetics who went to governor's palaces could not assume that their putative pastoral authority would have purchase on the decisions of the strangers appointed to govern their provinces. The missives to governors preserved in letter collections nevertheless suggest that petitioners developed relationships of patronage and *amicitia* with specific governors. The famous exchange between Augustine of Hippo and Macedonius, the vicar of Africa for 414–15, illustrates the dilemmas with which Christian governors could be confronted when petitioned by their 'fathers'. The vicar sought and gained reassurance that he could continue to practise judicial severity despite the intercessions of bishops like Augustine. Macedonius may have been unusual in his desire to begin a philosophical dialogue on the implications of the nature of human sin for his courtroom. Yet his Christian colleagues likely shared his need to balance the needs of the state and the maintenance of their own authority with respect for the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical authority figures: a jurisdiction in which, as those petitioners reminded them, they too were theoretically encompassed.

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If fifth-century bishops and ascetics exercised pastoral authority over their governors, it was mediated and structured by networks of power and patronage in provincial and imperial capitals. Section 8.4 considers how sixth-century regimes sought to translate these informal (if customary) practices into institutional expectations and bureaucratic procedures. The East Roman emperor Justinian, Ostrogothic praetorian prefect Cassiodorus, and Visigothic king Reccared each delegated to bishops the responsibility to oversee the conduct of governors (among other provincial officials). The procedures that they envisaged make sense alongside the central role accorded to the bishop in late fifth- and sixth-century civic governance, the increasingly local patterns of appointment of governors across the Mediterranean world, and, above all, the part played by bishops in the nomination of those appointees. These changes in the respective social profiles of bishops and governors radically shifted the power dynamics between them. In some cases, it may also have changed how notions of pastoral authority and Christian community shaped these relationships. Local appointees chosen, in part, by bishops may have been more likely to attend their churches; Reccared and the Council of Toledo in 589 identified ecclesiastical sanctions as a potential recourse for episcopal overseers against incorrigible official wrongdoers. At the same time, the impact of these changes should not be overrated given the difficulties that bishops had in disciplining even local aristocrats. In this regard, it is notable that when mid- and late sixth-century regimes recognised the pastoral authority of bishops over governors, it was with respect to their performance of their basic administrative duties. These episcopal reports of virtue and malfeasance continued to represent an adjunct to processes centred on the imperial or royal palace. In this sense, the pastoral authority of bishops over provincial officials was still understood by all parties as, in the first place, a matter for the jurisdiction of the state.

8.1 Governors in Church

The bishops at Arles were keen to make sure governors could attend the episcopal church. The evidence for governors' church attendance in the late fourth, fifth, and early sixth centuries does not suggest they regularly availed themselves of this opportunity. There is one (possible) indication of routine attendance: Gregory of Nazianzus refers to Olympius, the governor of Cappadocia in 382–83, as 'a nursling of the great shepherd' Theodore, the bishop of Tyana (both the metropolitan see and the provincial capital). This allusive reference does not give a sense of

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frequency or practicalities.[17] Otherwise, recorded episodes of public church attendance – whether in the provincial capital or on their assizes around the province – tend to stem from special occasions:[18] the governor's arrival in the province,[19] the appointment of a new bishop (and promulgation of a new doctrinal settlement),[20] the dedication of a church,[21] the day of a martyr's festival.[22] Even the occasion for Gregory's address to Olympius was a carefully stage managed act of reconciliation after a riot in the city of Nazianzus.[23] These particular rationales for attendance might (again) suggest a pattern of public churchgoing at major festivals and on special occasions. It is noteworthy that governors tend to be presented in descriptions of these episodes as special visitors: figures external to the congregation whose temporary presence was carefully glossed. What we can see suggests that even if governors did (sometimes) turn up, they were not perceived as members of the community in the way that, say, prominent office-holders in Constantinople were.[24]

Governors could have good reasons to keep the episcopal church at an arm's length. These transient office-holders were notorious for their unwillingness to get involved in religious conflicts and enforce laws on correct religion in case the resulting disorder and complaints of their (elite) subjects jeopardised their capacity to govern. Various local instances of wider Christological and ecclesiastical conflicts in the fifth- and sixth-century East suggest the same qualms could apply to church attendance. Such concerns likely shaped the conduct of the governor of Osrhoene, Chaereas, when confronted with open conflict in the church of his provincial capital, Edessa in 448.[25] Chaereas was forced to get involved in this dispute over the tenure of the controversial bishop Ibas by the repeated representations of a delegation made up of priests, monks, and civic grandees. His tentative (and rather Plinian) approach to the problem is clear from the covering notes with which he forwarded the complaints and acclamations of the Edessenes to his superiors in

[17] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 17.8, with McLynn (2013), 54 n. 26 and 59 (inc. this translation).
[18] One exception is *V. Hil.* 13 where the praetorian prefect of Gaul and his staff attend a mass led by Hilary at the Basilica Constantia in Arles. No specific festivity is indicated; their appearance is nevertheless presented as a surprising and unusual interruption (which leads Hilary to rebuke and expel them).
[19] Ps.-Zach. *HE* 5.7.d–e (arrival of the augustal prefect/*dux* Pergamius).
[20] Ps.-Zach. *HE* 5.7.d–e (appointment of Peter Mongus and promulgation of *Henotikon*).
[21] Theodoret, *Ep.* xxxvi (invitation to governor).
[22] Severus, *Ep. Sel.* 1.44 (Eutychianus at dedication of church, also on festival day).
[23] Greg. Naz. *Or.* 17 with McLynn (2013), 52–55. [24] See Chapter 6.
[25] *Syriac Acts of Ephesus*, ed. Flemming, 14–54; on this episode, see esp. Rammelt (2008), 181–212; Millar (2009); Fafinski (2024) (with previous literature).

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Constantinople.[26] It is notable that Chaereas was not present in 'the holy church' when a Sunday service was disrupted by the presentation of charges against Ibas. When the honorary *comes* and civic grandee Theodosius recalled the events as part of his introduction of the latest petition to Chaereas, he stressed that both he and the governor had had to travel specially to the church to re-establish order.[27] Chaereas' absence on an ordinary Sunday could simply follow the normal practice of elite Christians; controversy over Ibas' legitimacy (and perhaps even foreknowledge of this demonstration) could also have led the governor to stay at home.

If governors visited a particular church, they could be understood as taking sides in a local church conflict. Certainly, that was how Severus of Antioch interpreted the choice of Eutychianus, the *praeses* of Syria II, to attend the dedication of a new church in Apamea on a martyr's festival day in autumn 515.[28] The problem was that the presiding figure was not the (anti-Chalcedonian) incumbent Peter but a former bishop who had been ejected from office: almost certainly one of Peter's Chalcedonian opponents. Severus was surprised by this decision, not only because it went against imperial policy but also because previous conversations in Constantinople had led him to believe that the governor shared his theological position. The bishop rebuked Eutychianus in no uncertain terms: 'I will immediately quote to you the actual canon and law of the Spirit, and you will know clearly that for a man who is in servitude to the pious king and is the ruler of a people to do anything of the kind without consideration is not a thing free from danger.'[29] Of course, the governor may not have seen his presence at this festival as such a clear cut statement of his own ecclesiastical positioning. Eutychianus may have felt unable to reject an invitation or been swayed by the involvement of elite donors in the construction of the church. On the other hand, Peter's controversial activities in the see may have induced the governor to keep his options open. Under Justin I, Eutychianus would preside over a series of hearings in the winter of 518 and spring of 519 where the clergy and monks of

[26] *Syriac Acts of Ephesus*, ed. Flemming, 20, 32–34. For Book 10 of Pliny's *Letters* (and his query about Christians) as the *locus classicus* of the tentative provincial Roman administrator: Corke-Webster (2017).

[27] *Syriac Acts of Ephesus*, ed. Flemming, 34. For the problem of identifying this 'holy church': Fafinski (2024), 23. See also the famous incident in *V. Ambr.* 6 where the then governor of Aemilia and Liguria enters the church in Milan to quell violent clashes over the appointment of a new bishop and ends up being elected – Ambrose had similarly been absent from the church until called in.

[28] Sev. *Ep. Sel.* 1.44; *PLRE* II: 446 (Eutychianus 4); Alpi (2009), I 122, 217, 231, II 81, 133.

[29] Severus, *Ep. Sel.* 1.44, ed. Brooks, 1.1: 138; trans. Brooks, 2.1: 124.

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Apamea put forward various complaints about Peter's conduct.[30] Attending this dedication may have been a way to demonstrate his own piety without becoming embroiled directly in the politics of the cathedral church. It is notable that Severus did not tell Eutychianus to go to Peter's church instead. If the *praeses* had indeed shifted his ecclesiastical allegiances as the bishop of Antioch suspected, such an act might do more harm than good.[31] As powerful outsiders whose Christian formation had taken place elsewhere, governors could jeopardise the norms and customs of local churches and destabilise the fragile coexistence of rival ecclesiastical institutions and authority figures.[32] Both parties had good reasons to place governors at a remove from the community of the faithful even when they came to church.

The visits to church presented in surviving texts do not suggest that governors were integrated into local Christian communities. They nevertheless demonstrate the stakes of public churchgoing for these office-holders. Accounts of the presence of governors in church show their interests in staging their rule in Christian terms and forging beneficial relationships with provincial Christian authority figures. The most obvious examples of this collaboration in the presentation of governors as pious members of the church come from the discourses of the Egyptian monastic leader Shenoute of Atripe. On more than one occasion, Shenoute is recorded proudly listing the governors with whom he had conversed.[33] By the fourth decade of the fifth century, it seems to have been customary for the civil and military governors of the Thebaid to visit the White Monastery with their staffs.[34] Ariel Lopez has brilliantly captured the dynamics of these exchanges and the concrete benefits for Shenoute of his efforts to claim these governors as his 'friends'.[35] The abbot was able to pose as both an intercessor for his community and a figure of pastoral authority over his powerful visitors. In later *Discourses* that recalled these

[30] CS 5.33–36, ACO 3, 90–110; Millar (2015), 79–83.

[31] See Ps.-Zach HE 5.4 where presence of a (supposedly) 'Eutychian' governor in the Great Church of Alexandria in 475/6 calls the orthodoxy of the bishop Timothy Aelurus into question.

[32] Cf. Ferr. *Ad Reg.* 17 on the need for a foreign *dux* to tolerate local customs to avoid scandal.

[33] Shenoute D4.9 ('Blessed are they who observe justice'), ed. Chassinat, 128–30, trans. Foat, 119–20; D8.20 ('And after a few days'); A19, trans. Lopez (2013), 30.

[34] Shenoute D8.20 ('And after a few days') (visit of governor and count of Thebaid with staffs, with reference to previous visitors); D4.8 ('I have heard about your wisdom'), ed. Chassinat, 107–8, trans. Lopez (2013), 31 (discussion with Heraklammon when *scholasticus* of previous governor); ed. Chassinat, 84; Du Bourget, 87, trans. Alcock, 250 (Flavian present with his *taxis*); D4.9 ('Blessed are they who observe justice'), ed. Chassinat, 135; trans. Foat, 122 (presence of *cohortales* with now governor Heraklammon).

[35] For all the following: Hahn (1991); Foat (1993); Behlmer (1998), 346–51; Lopez (2013), 26–34.

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visits,[36] Shenoute presented himself as the recipient of their inquiries on correct doctrine and practice, offering (sometimes rather gnomic) guidance on ethical governance and theological difficulties. The abbot boasted of his privileged access to the governor's palace at Antinoë and the repeated support of imperial office-holders against the accusations of the citizens of Panopolis.[37] As Lopez puts it, 'By listing the authorities who, in striking contrast to his rivals, had respectfully asked for his spiritual guidance, Shenoute declared himself to be an "authorized" interlocutor with the powerful.'[38]

Although we might well suspect (with Lopez) that the abbot exaggerated his proximity to power, the potential benefits of this relationship are evident also for the governors themselves. From what survives of Shenoute's public discussions with them and sermons in their presence, he praised their conduct in the familiar terms of Christian panegyrics on ethical administrators. Now that the empire was Christian, the Thebaid was lucky to have governors who were the opposite of Herod or Pilate; Flavianus and Heraklammon would be incorruptible and fearsome to those who might oppress the poor, for which they would receive benefits in heaven as on earth.[39] Even as these addresses were clearly invested (to a rather undiplomatic extent) in Shenoute's own self-fashioning,[40] they also presented these governors as pious and effective Christian rulers. They did so, not only to the substantial provincial Christian audience that went to the White Monastery to hear Shenoute speak but also, crucially, to the governor's own staffs who accompanied them to the church (and who more than likely had come before). The support of these experienced subordinates, predominantly drawn from local and provincial elites, was critical to their capacity to administer the province.[41] In exchange for posing as the abbot's 'sons', these governors could also receive useful cover for their own navigation of the intricacies of local church politics. Most noteworthy here is the visit of the *comes Thebaidis* Caesarius and the

[36] See e.g. Foat (1993), 114 on the packaging of sermons preached before governors into composite texts.
[37] Shenoute D8.20 ('And after a few days'), ed. Leipoldt, 32, trans. Brakke and Crislip, 131; Shenoute, A19, trans. Lopez (2013), 30.
[38] Lopez (2013), 31.
[39] Shenoute D4.8 ('I have heard about your wisdom'); D4.9 ('Blessed are they who observe justice'), ed. Chassinat, 126–27, 133–34, trans. Foat, 118, 121.
[40] Foat (1993), 115–16; Lopez (2013), 31–32.
[41] On these staffs: see esp. Palme (1999); (2012). See also *V. Hil.* 13 (where the praetorian prefect of Gaul attends church with his staff) and *V. Germ.* 7 (where the head of the governor's office staff loses a bag of gold – the province's tax payments – while stopping in to visit Germanus of Auxerre).

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governor Taurinus recorded in the discourse 'And after a Few Days'. The governors brought up an (unspecified) contemporary dispute in the church of Alexandria and quickly realised that Shenoute would not be drawn on the specifics.

> When they saw that there was no profit in what they were thinking, and that they were leading us to say words ill-timed concerning the matters that we had previously spoken about – they were asking whether it was proper to be in communion with all people – I said to them, 'If I speak with you about that myself, your wisdom is sufficient to understand what you are asking about. So listen. If I am good, be in communion with me. If I am not good, then don't be in communion. If I am upright, the visit you have paid to us is good and entirely useful. If I am not upright, do not parch yourselves in vain.'[42]

The abbot did not give the governors the easy answer they wanted about whose churches they should or should not attend. His even-handed response – 'God will judge those who are outside'[43] – would nevertheless have given them permission to leave such theological or disciplinary quibbles to the professionals.

Given the unusual authority of Shenoute, it is doubtless unwise to extrapolate from the customary pilgrimage of governors and their staffs to the White Monastery. The seemingly routine nature of those visits to receive Shenoute's advice and admonition and his reciprocal access to the governor's palace in Antinoë are nevertheless suggestive of the sorts of strategies that appointees might have to adopt. Various saints' lives suggest that other governors felt a similar need to visit local ascetics and honour prominent provincial bishops. As discussed in Chapter 5, Palladius of Helenopolis' *Lausiac History* includes an anecdote on the visit of a governor of the Thebaid named Alypius to the celebrated hermit John of Lycopolis for which he was an eyewitness.[44] In his *Religious History*, Theodoret provides a similar account of the rather niche tour that he provided to a newly arrived governor of Euphratensis. The bishop of Cyrrhus arranged introductions with local ascetics including one Polychronius (the subject of the biography) who turned the tables on his visitor by asking for *his* intercessory prayers.[45] Praetorian prefects of Gaul

[42] Shenoute D8.20, ('And after a few days'), trans. Brakke and Crislip, 130.
[43] Shenoute D8.20, ('And after a few days'), trans. Brakke and Crislip, 131.
[44] Pall. *LH* 35.5–7; see Chapter 5, 160–62.
[45] Theodoret, *HR* 24.8. See also Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* 1.20 (unnamed ascetic visited by too many high officials and bishops).

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seek more urbane forms of sociability in the *Lives* of Martin of Tours and Germanus of Auxerre: requesting dinner at Martin's monastery and breaking ceremonial etiquette to greet the visiting Germanus and ply him with gifts.[46] These anecdotes undoubtedly stem from the forms of wishful thinking standard in saints' lives. By specially seeking out the protagonist and showing them reverence, governor and prefect characters helped to authorise the posthumous sanctity of these ascetics and bishops. The basic dynamic remains plausible as part of the wider political calculus of these appointees once installed in office. Critical to their success was the formation of relationships with provincial subjects whose collaboration was necessary to carry out even basic functions of the job.[47] Similar collaborations in the staging of gubernatorial and ecclesiastical authority can be seen in other provincial centres.[48] While some provincial governors felt able to reject the entreaties of provincial bishops and ascetics out of hand, others seem to have placed them amongst those local grandees whose blessing and co-operation it might be advantageous to secure.

Governors do not generally seem to have been treated as part of provincial Christian communities. They clearly did go to public churches; some may have attended regularly. But they are presented in texts as (in various ways) outside the ordinary congregation: as special visitors and (above all) representatives of imperial authority. It was in the interests of both ecclesiastical and gubernatorial authority figures to treat their communion as temporary and provisional, given the potential harm to both sides of too close an identification. Such a conclusion might seem to reinforce the sense of a gulf between the praetorium and the palace of the metropolitan bishop – never mind the churches of other provincial bishops and ascetics that would inevitably receive even less frequent visits. Reports of church attendance in the provinces nevertheless suggest possibilities of much closer collaboration. Such moments were not simply an opportunity for bishops and ascetics to 'capture' the governor as their friend and potential patron and bring his authority to bear within their institutions. They also held the potential to stage the governor's credentials as an ethical ruler before a provincial Christian audience.

[46] Sulp. Sev. *Dial.* 1.25 (praetorian prefect Vincentius; Martin says no); with Stancliffe (1983), 33; cf. *V. Ambr.* 30 where bishop of Milan does dine (cited by Vincentius as precedent); and Chapter 6, n. 65 on dining politics in the see of Constantinople; *V. Germ.* 24 for praetorian prefect Auxiliaris greeting Germanus (and seeking healing for his wife).

[47] Stressed by e.g. Meyer-Zwiffelhoffer (2011), 123–28.

[48] E.g. Sev. *Ep. Sel.* 7.4, where an anonymous count of the East joined the bishop of Antioch in his episcopal palace to lend authority to the latter's judgements regarding a dispute in a local monastery.

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8.2 (Ex-)Communication Strategies: Synesius and Andronicus in Ptolemais, 411/12

The unusual position of the governor in provincial Christian communities is best illustrated (paradoxically) by the one case where a metropolitan bishop sought to use the full potential of his ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Synesius of Cyrene's excommunication of the governor Andronicus has often been used as a key example of the late Roman bishop's new civic prominence. Recent work has instead stressed that this decision reflected the unusual position of both bishop and governor and an idiosyncratic series of events. Far from demonstrating the bishop's new role as a powerful civic functionary, Synesius' decision seems to have resulted from the failure of the former curial and provincial ambassador's authority where it really mattered: in navigating civic and court factionalism. In this context, it is notable how little of the conflict between Synesius and Andronicus took place within the cathedral church of Ptolemais. The bishop's complaints stem from Andronicus' judicial treatment of civic elites (and thus, proceedings in his courtroom and the public prison). In the bishop's letters on the subject, he recounts just one or, at most, two penitent visits from Andronicus to the church, undertaken specifically to pre-empt this verdict of excommunication. Otherwise, the closest the governor gets to the cathedral was when his agent nailed an edict preventing asylum to its door. The Andronicus case neatly captures the paradox of the governor: as a recipient of the pastoral authority of clerics without being a member of their communities. Synesius' letters on the conflict suggest where we should expect to find pastoral oversight in action: not the church but the governor's praetorium.

Soon after his appointment as bishop of Ptolemais in February 411, Synesius was embroiled in a crisis: a conflict with the new governor of Libya Superior, Andronicus.[49] The governor's supposed crimes against the citizens of the province and church of Ptolemais are catalogued by a series of letters from Synesius to his episcopal colleagues in the province and to his contacts at the imperial court.[50] To summarise briefly: he had bribed his way into a position he could not legally hold (as a Libyan himself), inflicted violence on members of the town council to exact taxation from

[49] For all of the following (though with varying emphases and chronologies): Liebeschuetz (1986), 188–91; Lizzi Testa (1987), 85–111; Harries (1999b), 170–71; Slootjes (2006), 167–73; Allen (2011); de Francisco Heredero (2017).

[50] Syn. *Ep.* 41, 42, 72, 73, 79, 90.

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them, siphoned off their money and property for himself, and imprisoned and tortured others for his own malign purposes. Synesius was particularly dismayed as the governor had previously been his client: he had apparently twice helped Andronicus out of prison in Alexandria.[51] None of these crimes were the cause of his excommunication, although Synesius lists them anyway in his announcement to his episcopal colleagues.[52] That sentence resulted from two acts that Synesius presented as 'blaspheming Christ'. Andronicus had posted an edict on the doors of the church preventing (or limiting?) asylum, which the bishop compared to the placard placed by Pilate's men above Christ on the cross. The governor had also apparently reacted to an attempt by Synesius to intercede for a prisoner by exclaiming that he would not release anyone whom the church sought from him, 'even if they grasped the foot of Christ himself'.[53] The governor forestalled the sentence by communicating his penitence amid promises of better behaviour.[54] Synesius' colleagues persuaded him to hold off, but the death a few months later of a decurion named Magnus – during a flogging ordered by Andronicus – led him to post the ban.[55] What exactly transpired from this sentence is unclear: the next we hear of him from Synesius is in a letter to Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, from early in 412.[56] The now former governor was down on his luck and (by the implication of the addressee) possibly in Alexandria; Synesius interceded for Andronicus with his superior. In the process, he both alluded to his reduction of the sentence of excommunication and trumpeted his own role in ensuring the ex-governor could no longer abuse his tribunal.[57]

It has often been assumed that Andronicus was removed from or resigned his office as a result of his excommunication, which was supposed to mean Christians did not do business or interact in any way with him or his associates.[58] But this is nowhere explicitly stated,[59] and it is far from clear that an edict against asylum would necessarily provoke imperial censure. A series of laws from the 390s preserved in the *Theodosian Code* ordered that various individuals should be removed from the sanctuary – by force if necessary – including public debtors and decurions involved in civic accounting.[60] It is precisely the latter groups who were targeted by Andronicus' decision to try to prohibit asylum (at least in Synesius'

[51] Syn. *Ep.* 79, lines 97–99. [52] Syn. *Ep.* 42, lines 1–15.
[53] Syn. *Ep.* 42, lines 15–60, quotations at line 16, 59–60. [54] Syn. *Ep.* 72, lines 1–30.
[55] Syn. *Ep.* 72, lines 34–52. [56] Syn. *Ep.* 90. [57] Syn. *Ep.* 90, lines 9–14.
[58] Dismissal: Liebeschuetz (1986), 191; de Francisco Heredero (2017), 640. Resignation: Allen (2011), 50, and implicit in Slootjes (2006), 172–73.
[59] Lee (2002), 191. [60] *CTh* 9.45.1–3.

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presentation of his priorities).[61] As Ana de Francisco Heredero has noted, these actions came against a context of military crisis in the province and imperial demands for taxation due: in these very years, the then-praetorian prefect of the East Anthemius received a series of laws against tax evasion.[62] It is by no means certain that prefect or emperor would have felt the need to act on an ecclesiastical sentence. Indeed, Francisco Heredero has persuasively suggested that Synesius published his judgement because of the failure of more traditional political strategies.[63] The bishop sent petitions to his contacts in Constantinople protesting Andronicus' actions: the influential rhetorician Troilus, an advisor to Anthemius, and Anastasius, who had tutored Arcadius' children.[64] In sending these letters, Synesius acted on frequent imperial demands that provincials make reports on the conduct of provincial governors: part of what Jill Harries has characterised as the 'culture of criticism' surrounding judges in late antiquity.[65] Two decades later, Isidore of Pelusium similarly wrote to the praetorian prefect Rufinus to seek the removal of Cyrenius, the governor of his province of Augustamnica, who had also sought to prevent asylum. He also wrote a host of letters to prominent officials in Constantinople to prevent the re-appointment of another governor, Gigantius.[66] The problem for Synesius was that his complaints seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Andronicus had the patronage of Anthemius and Anastasius: the bishop's letter to the latter shows his awareness of the favourable reception granted by the praetorian and urban prefects to one of the governor's agents.[67] The bishop's campaign may still have resulted in Andronicus' removal. It is also perfectly possible, given the timeline and the normal turnover of office-holders, that the governor served out his year in office before being replaced in the spring of 412. He could still have faced accusations from his subjects at the end of his term, whether from Synesius or other citizens of the Pentapolis.[68] In this context, Synesius' excommunication of Andronicus seems less an articulation of civic authority than an indication of his relative powerlessness within local and imperial networks of power.[69]

[61] Syn. *Ep.* 41–42, 79. [62] de Francisco Heredero (2017), 639–40; see also Rapp (2005), 257–58.
[63] de Francisco Heredero (2017), 640. [64] Syn. *Ep.* 73, 79; see also Millar (2006), 216.
[65] Harries (1999a); (1999b) 153–71, at 167–71 (with the same phrase at 5, 97, 119).
[66] Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 1.174–78, including 1.178 to praetorian prefect of the East Rufinus. See also 1.430, 1.483–87, 489–90 seeking to prevent re-appointment of Gigantius as governor by petitioning court officials.
[67] Syn. *Ep.* 79, lines 56–69.
[68] Note Andronicus' own attempts to funnel complaints against predecessor: Syn. *Ep.* 73, lines 61–68.
[69] Which the bishop himself (of course) stressed: Syn. *Ep.* 41.

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However this ecclesiastical sanction is interpreted, a striking feature of Synesius' conflict with Andronicus is how few of the reported events take place in the cathedral church of Ptolemais. The only specific event(s) attested there are Andronicus' indications of his resolve to change his ways when he heard that Synesius had drawn up a notice of excommunication. In his letter to his episcopal colleagues, Synesius described what appear to be one or more face-to-face conversations at his church.[70] Andronicus pretended to be penitent; Synesius was not convinced, but he was the only one not to buy the governor's act. Synesius consulted a group of episcopal or priestly colleagues who were present; the inexperienced bishop deferred to the counsel of his elders. Another exchange with Andronicus ensued, which saw the governor providing assurances that (by the time of writing a few months later) seemed bitterly ironic to the bishop. Synesius' letter suggests that the governor turned up in person; he may even have done so literally in the guise of a penitent.[71] But this sequence was the only part of this conflict that took place in the context of Synesius' church. There are no mentions of Andronicus turning up to attend services. This absence is particularly surprising, given that, unusually for fifth-century appointees,[72] the governor was a resident of the province with previous connections to Synesius.[73] His origins and eventual sentence might lead us to expect Andronicus to have been a more regular attendee at the cathedral (or indeed, that his presence or absence there would play a role in the case which the bishop made). Instead, the critical place where Synesius' pastoral authority and ecclesiastical jurisdiction was at stake was precisely the governor's palace. It was Andronicus' rebuttal of the bishop's attempts to present himself as an intercessor in the praetorium that led to an ecclesiastical sentence. In this narrow sense, Synesius' excommunication does represent a paradigmatic case in the relationships between bishops and governors. When looking for the articulation of pastoral authority in provincial capitals, it is to the governor's residence that we should turn.

8.3 Pastors in the Praetorium

It should come as no surprise that Andronicus' excommunication resulted from actions he undertook and things he supposedly said to Synesius in

[70] Syn. *Ep*. 72, lines 1–30, at 6–9 and 29–30 for concise summaries of what Andronicus said and did, at 23–28 for Synesius' direct speech. It is of course also possible that what Synesius presents as a meeting or meetings at the church (with a break for consultation) stemmed from a mediated exchange of written and oral communications through the governor's agent.

[71] On varying and ad hoc patterns of late Roman penance: Meens (2014), 15–25. [72] See n. 11.

[73] Previous connections: see n. 51. Libyan: see esp. Syn. *Ep*. 72, lines 46–47, 73, lines 1–18.

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the governor's palace. Given the irregular presence of governors at the cathedral, the praetorium was the likely context for most of their interactions with metropolitan and provincial bishops and ascetics. These Christian authority figures (and their agents) had many reasons to go to the governor's palace.[74] They might head there, as Synesius did, to intercede for those accused before the governor, especially if they had claimed asylum in church. They might seek judgements on their own behalf or that of their church as an institution. Bishops and ascetics might also address the governor for more mundane reasons, like recommendations and introductions for their clients. As the fifth century went on, the bishop of the provincial capital was also increasingly likely to be called upon to discuss civic business as one of the city's notables.[75] The praetorium was not just the site where bishops and ascetics (or their agents) were most likely to encounter the governor; it was also the site where they envisaged that they would exercise their putative moral oversight and ecclesiastical jurisdiction.[76] The application of a pastoral framework to the relationship between bishop and governor has been explored in greatest detail with reference to famous letters of Augustine to proconsuls and vicars of Africa. But it is the point of departure for the letters and sermons of bishops and ascetics across the empire. It could introduce general advice about ethical gubernatorial conduct (as with the sermons of Shenoute and many of the letters of Isidore of Pelusium). It could also support the author's intervention in a specific case (as with the letters and sermons of Gregory of Nazianzus to governors of Cappadocia). The portrayal of a bishop or ascetic as the governor's pastor was a useful rhetorical basis on which to introduce various sorts of petitions, from intercessions for prisoners and requests for mercy to demands for severe judgement and punishment of wrongdoers. In this sense, Synesius' confrontation with Andronicus fits a much broader pattern. When Christian authority figures claimed pastoral authority over governors, they did so with specific reference to the duties and conduct of these office-holders in their role and institutional context.

The careful rhetorical articulation of moral authority and ecclesiastical jurisdiction only got these potential pastors so far. Christian authority figures did not automatically gain special access to the praetorium (unlike

[74] For general summaries, see e.g. Rapp (2005), 265; Lizzi Testa (2009), 528–29; Gwynn (2012), 886.
[75] On which, see Introduction, 8, n. 35.
[76] Note esp. *V. Hil.* 13 and *V. Ambr.* 37 where exclusion from the church (on a surprise visit) is the consequence of failures of lobbying in the praetorium.

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other privileged persons).[77] If they wished to gain favourable judgements, defend their interests, and support their clients, bishops and ascetics had to court the governor's favour just like the rest of his provincial subjects. Particular dossiers within the letter collections of other bishops and ascetics suggest success stories. Augustine was able to develop these sympathies, above all, in the context of the intense negotiations during the Conference of Carthage of 411.[78] In the aftermath, Augustine wrote to the proconsul Apringius to tell him he should be merciful and avoid executing certain Donatists who had been arraigned before his tribunal. The bishop's plea for mercy was specifically and self-consciously shaped by his correspondent's membership of the church: 'As a Christian I beg a judge, and as a bishop I warn a Christian.'[79] Part of what made this approach possible was Augustine's burgeoning friendship with the proconsul's brother: the *tribunus et notarius* Flavius Marcellinus who had presided over the conference. Indeed, Augustine sent the letter to Apringius through Marcellinus.[80] The relationship that Gregory of Nazianzus built with Olympius, the governor of Cappadocia II for 383–84, is obvious, not only from the string of requests that the former felt able to forward but also from the extraordinarily effusive note that he sent at the end of his tenure ('You'll be our governor even after your term of office').[81] Isidore of Pelusium seems likewise to have found a sympathetic audience in the *corrector* Ausonius Dionysius during his term of office in Augustamnica. The later collection of Isidore's letters contains at least nineteen, and perhaps twenty-two letters to the governor.[82] Amongst Isidore's typically generic advice, these letters include three specific cases in which the abbot

[77] *Honorati* in governor's court: e.g. Liebeschuetz (1972), 189–90; Ellis (1985), 23–24; Kelly (2004), 188–89; Slootjes (2006), 52–53.

[78] The central insight of McLynn (1999).

[79] Aug. *Ep.* 134, quotation at 134.2; On this exchange: Moreau (1973), 28–40; Rebillard (1998), 148–49; McLynn (1999), 40; Shaw (2015), 36–39.

[80] Aug. *Ep.* 133.3. Pre-existing connections from the church of Carthage also helped to facilitate the bishop's correspondence on the ethics of intercession with Macedonius, the vicar of Africa (see 284–86, for further discussion).

[81] Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 104–6, 125–26, 131, 140–44, 146, quotation at 154.1 (trans. Storin, 180); McLynn (2013), 51–63. Note delegation of divorce case to him in *Ep.* 144–45.

[82] Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 1.116, 1.165, 1.395, 2.25 = 525, 2.120 = 620, 2.216 = 716, 3.9 = 809, 3.220 = 1020, 3.263–64 = 1063–64, 3.315 = 1115, 3.359 = 1159, 3.396 = 1196, 5.141 = 1411, 5.204 = 1490, 5.212 = 1498, 5.228 = 1519, 5.354 = 1698, 5.418–20 = 1799–1801, 5.428 = 1812 (combining letters to Ausonius, Dionysius, and Ausonius Dionysius). For this combination: Delmaire (1988), 234–35; Evieux (1995), 105–8; Whelan (2018b), 89. It is possible that the two Dionysius letters (2.216 = 716 and 5.141 = 1411) refer to a different individual; another letter seems to have been cut in half to make two *apophthegmata* (3.263–64 = 1063–64).

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sought to intercede.[83] The tone, content, and, above all, the chronological scope of these letters implies an understanding developed between Ausonius and Isidore. The abbot's missives may go back before the governor's appointment; they certainly span a period from soon after Ausonius' arrival in Pelusium, through his receipt of a golden statue from the emperor for his exemplary service, to his decision (in retirement) to exchange 'earthly' for 'heavenly' orders.[84]

These dossiers do not just substantiate the possibilities of working relationships between governors and the bishops and ascetics who sought their patronage and collaboration. They also suggest the potential receptivity of these governors to such a 'pastoral' relationship and a Christian framing of their power. It is worth stressing that the public face of the governor was at stake in these letters – if only for the time it took their bearers to present them and to discuss the details of any specific request or legal case and for the governor and his advisers to draft a response. As James O'Donnell has rightly stressed (regarding one of Augustine's more challenging gubernatorial missives), 'It is necessary to see this as a text to be read aloud ... in the quasi-public privacy of the magistrate's residence.'[85] The routine presence in the governor's residence, not only of his advisers and staffs but also of assorted civic grandees, made it all the more important to craft an appropriate response: one that neither gave away too much of the governor's autonomy and judicial authority nor offered contempt to the 'gray hair and priestly position' of his correspondent.[86] Such concerns are neatly illustrated by one of the few epistolary dossiers that preserves the governor's half of the exchange.

In 413/14, Augustine sent his agent Boniface to seek mercy for an individual convicted in the court of Macedonius, the vicar of Africa. The vicar granted this request but sent back a letter that questioned Augustine's presentation of its necessity.[87] Macedonius took issue with Augustine's

[83] Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 2.25 = 525, 5.212 = 1498, 5.428 = 1812.

[84] Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 2.25 = 525 (informing about previous governors); 1.395 (statue); 1.165 (retirement); 5.141 = 1411 (to Dionysus) is written before the recipient embarked on an imperial career.

[85] James O'Donnell, 'Augustine, *epistula* 151', December 1995 https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/151.html.

[86] Quotation from Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 140.4, trans. Storin, 178.

[87] Aug. *Ep.* 152, at 1 for mission of Boniface. On this exchange (with often impressively divergent interpretations): Moreau (1998); Rebillard (1998), 142–44; McLynn (1999), 43–44; Kaufman (2003); Dodaro (2012), 387–96; Hillner (2015), 83–85; Shaw (2015), 47–50; Gassman (2021), 10–11. I agree with Hermanowicz (2008), 43–44, esp. n. 114, that Macedonius' first letter shows no sign of hostility towards Augustine; indeed, it presents the judge as a conscientious Christian who is precisely concerned with the overlap of his 'Christian' and 'secular' roles and identities (*pace* Shaw (2015), 50).

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suggestion that it resulted from a priestly duty to intercede on behalf of anyone found guilty and that refusal was an insult to that office. 'Here I have strong doubts that this comes from our religion.'[88] The vicar was happy to commute sentences for those who seemed penitent but concerned about the ramifications of mercy for recalcitrant sinners. His anxieties went beyond the likelihood of reoffending to the implications both for his own salvation and for his judicial authority. To the former, the judge might be seen as an 'accomplice' to the sin of an individual whom he forgave. For the latter, this hiatus in the strict application of the law in his courtroom – traditionally seen as a place of terror for provincial communities – might set a bad precedent.[89]

> For I hope to relax for good men who intercede many things that I do not want to be thought as done on my own initiative, for fear that a reduction in severity may arm others for crime. And in that way the pardon I readily grant may be thought to be due to another person's merit, while severity in judgment is not lost.[90]

Augustine's (extensive) response makes obvious his delight at the opportunity granted him to pontificate on the nature of sin, penance, and mercy.[91] The bishop of Hippo stresses that neither he nor Macedonius are complicit in the sins of those who are granted mercy and disentangles the legitimacy of intercession and commutation from the moral status of the accused. Most importantly, the bishop of Hippo stresses the symbiotic relationship between (severe) governor and (religious) intercessor. The legitimacy of the former's application of imperial laws and power of life and death is defended (so long as it is not personally or financially motivated); Augustine also admits that the governor may know something the intercessor does not.[92] Macedonius picks up these concessions to judicial autonomy in his next missive, alongside praise for the first volume of *City of God* (which Augustine had forwarded).

> For you do not insist that you obtain whatever you desire out of some concern – something that very many men of this place do. But you advise me of what you think that you should ask for from a judge caught up in so

[88] Aug. *Ep.* 152.2, trans. Teske, II 388.
[89] Esp. Perkins (1995), 115–23; Shaw (1996); Harries (1999a), esp. 224–32; Castelli (2004), 39–49; Bryen (2014).
[90] Aug. *Ep.* 152.2–3 for doubts, at 3 for quotation, trans. Teske, II 389.
[91] Aug. *Ep.* 153.
[92] Aug. *Ep.* 153. 8, 16, 19, at 22 for admission. On Augustine's justifications of violence more broadly: see Chapter 5, 171–74.

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> many problems, and you use a respectfulness that among good men is most effective in difficult matters.[93]

Through his original discussion prompt, Macedonius had gained a clarification from Augustine that significantly narrowed what might have seemed like an extraordinarily far-reaching claim for the necessity of granting episcopal intercession. The vicar had received in his praetorium a pair of discourses praising him as an ethical administrator and a pious Christian, as penned by the *doyen* of the African 'Catholic' church (and, most likely, a familiar figure to many of the Christians in his entourage from his role at the conference and previous visits to preach at the church of Carthage).[94] More than that, Macedonius had received Augustine's endorsement of his capacity as a Christian to maintain traditional forms of judicial practice.

Macedonius may have been unusual as a provincial appointee keen to invite (and not simply tolerate) a detailed philosophical discussion of the ethics of his position. It is hard to tell if his concern to delineate and reconcile the competing demands of episcopal intercession and judicial severity was more widely shared.[95] Still, given the customary nature of such interventions, it is likely that his colleagues across the empire would have had to field many such requests. The success of such petitions depended greatly on the nature of the relationship between governor and petitioner, but their appeals to a pastoral rhetorical framework did not. Different petitioners took (and different cases required) varying approaches, but, at least on the unrepresentative sample provided by surviving letter collections, invocations of the priestly responsibility of the petitioner are remarkably consistent. Brent Shaw has rightly stressed the remarkable bravery of Augustine's challenges to his social and political superiors, however little he knew about their character or likely response.[96] Isidore's letter collection similarly presents him as uniformly brusque in the moral strictures that he expressed to a series of *correctores* in Pelusium.[97] But it was not just fearless confessors who approached their governors under this aegis. Even more cautious correspondents would be apt to use this rhetorical framework for Christian governors insofar as it established a pre-existing connection (however fictive) and did so in a

[93] Aug. *Ep.* 154.1 for quotation, trans. Teske, II 405; 154.2 for reader response.
[94] Though note recent hiatus: McLynn (1999), 43.
[95] See e.g. Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 1.47, 1.208, 3.384 = 1184, 5.168 = 1449, 5.228 = 1519, 5.418–20 = 1799–1801 on virtues of severity and mildness; Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 125.5–6; see Chapter 5, 173–74.
[96] Shaw (2015), 58–59. [97] Whelan (2018b), 87.

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manner that inverted the asymmetrical relationship between the two parties. As Andronicus discovered, it was unwise to reject this pastoral framework out of hand, not least because bishops and ascetic leaders were increasingly in a position to influence their future career prospects.[98] In this context, it is hard not to read a sharper edge into references to the potential that these governors might be judged by higher powers and that 'God' might provide them earthly benefits.[99] The manner in which governors responded to these approaches suggests that they could be concerned about how their actions could reflect on their reputation as Christian rulers. Governors like Andronicus may have found episcopal intercessions impertinent and potentially detrimental to the interests of state, province, and their own authority. But disrespecting bishops and ascetics in the praetorium and rejecting the vision of gubernatorial conduct that they presented could mean an equal loss of face before their staffs and subjects. As a result, provincial appointees likely needed to find a way to demonstrate their esteem for the piety and authority of their episcopal and ascetic pastors – and accept the theoretically subordinate role in which they were intermittently placed – whether or not they gave them what they wanted.

8.4 The Bishop as Administrative Overseer in the Sixth Century

Fifth-century bishops and ascetics claimed a pastoral authority that could (on selected occasions) influence the general conduct and specific decisions of their governors. These claims were often rooted in the now customary role of these Christian authority figures as intercessors; they also drew strength from their growing capacity to affect the careers of provincial appointees during and after their terms of office. In the case of bishops, these possibilities for the projection of oversight were recognised by sixth-century legislators across the Roman world. Particular attention has been paid to Justinian's systematic use of bishops as civic and provincial 'ombudsmen' (to borrow Wolf Liebeschuetz's analogy);[100] Ostrogothic and Visigothic regimes made similar recourse to their moral and civic authority for their own administrative purposes. The practical impact of

[98] Complaints and recommendations, see e.g. Synesius' complaints regarding Andronicus (278–81) and *Ep.* 62 on a *dux*; Aug. *Ep.* 112; Isidore on Gigantius and Cyrenius (n. 66); Theodoret, *Ep.* xxxvii, xxxix–xl; Meyer-Zwiffelhoffer (2011), 125–26.

[99] See Chapter 5, 182–85. See esp. Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 1746 = 5.383 to Peter stressing his subjection to higher powers on earth and in heaven.

[100] Liebeschuetz (2001), 152.

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such institutional frameworks has been the subject of considerable debate. These arrangements are plausible in the context of longer-term developments in civic governance and specific changes in the structure of provincial governance and character of gubernatorial appointees. The local – and in the West, predominantly civic – governors of the mid- to late sixth century would have been much more likely to possess pre-existing relationships with metropolitan bishops (for good and ill). Taken together, these developments suggest a closer integration of governors into provincial Christian communities from the middle decades of the sixth century. At the same time, it must be stressed that, from the perspective of these emperors, kings, and praetorian prefects, the principal contexts in which the bishop might exercise pastoral authority over governors remained the jurisdiction of the imperial or post-imperial state. The utility of the bishop was to provide an outside (and stereotypically righteous) perspective that could feed into their own political processes.

Sixth-century legislators could envisage a substantial role for metropolitan bishops (in particular) as overseers of governors. Best known in this regard are the various enactments from the late 520s and 530s in which the regime of Justinian co-opted bishops into its attempts to establish tighter central control over provincial office-holders.[101] The emperor and his advisers envisaged roles for the metropolitan throughout the governor's term. The bishop was to be present with the leading men of the city for the governor's oath of office (if he was not appointed in Constantinople) and receive the appointee's instructions (*mandata*) with them before they were more widely disseminated.[102] During the governor's tenure, he was to be the first port of call for complaints and channel them to the emperor;[103] once the term of office finished, he was (again) to investigate any outstanding grievances, especially if the appointee had left the province before the prescribed fifty days were up.[104] The bishop also had a responsibility to make sure that there were not heretics amongst the governor's staff and to report him to the emperor if he turned a blind eye to their presence.[105] Similar expectations were set out by Ostrogothic and Visigothic rulers in Italy and Spain. When Cassiodorus communicated his appointment as the praetorian prefect of Italy in 533 to various bishops in the provinces of the Ostrogothic kingdom, he laid out how he saw their jurisdiction dovetailing with the governors who were now his subordinates. These bishops were to 'be watchful amongst those whom we have sent' and report back on their

[101] Liebeschuetz (2001), 151–53; Rapp (2005), 277; Wuk (forthcoming). [102] *NJ* 8.14, 17.16. [103] *NJ* 8.8.1, 86. [104] *NJ* 8.9, 128.23–24. [105] *CJ* 1.4.15, 1.5.12.22, 1.5.18.12–13.

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conduct; this testimony could lead the prefect to punish wrongdoers.[106] The Spanish bishops assembled at the Council of Toledo (589) in the presence of the Visigothic king Reccared and his Gothic aristocracy were charged with a similar role in the oversight of royal appointees. Canon 18 of the council established that the bishops should come together for annual synods. The king decreed that judges and fiscal officials should also attend these meetings in November each year 'that they might learn how they might act piously and justly with their subjects (*cum populis*)'.[107] The unrighteous behaviour that these yearly seminars would avert was specifically related to their administrative duties: the placement of undue burdens on subordinates and private citizens. Reccared also admonished the bishops that they were to be 'watchmen' and see 'how the judges act with their subjects'. They should either correct them or report them to the king. If all else failed, they 'should suspend [the judge] from the church and from communion' and choose a replacement with the leading men of the province. Regimes across the sixth-century Mediterranean saw the moral and institutional authority of bishops as a potential recourse for the management of provincial governors.

There has been considerable debate as to how far these arrangements simply represented the 'wishful thinking' of a centralising regime.[108] As with most aspects of Justinian's provincial reform legislation, it is impossible to judge how far these procedures were carried out in practice in the Eastern provinces; the same goes for the territories under the control of Cassiodorus in 533 and Reccared in 589. The routine place of some form of episcopal oversight remains plausible in the context of wider developments in the role of the bishop in his city and the character of provincial government across the fifth and early sixth centuries. Prominent late fourth- and early fifth-century bishops had already used their networks to offer judgement on governors and support or tarnish their career prospects. The decline of the *curia* as the central institution of civic administration led to a more regular role for the bishop with a less formal group of urban 'notables' responsible for the city's management.[109] The elevation of the bishop from one of many 'concerned' elite citizens who might forward their complaints to the court to the principal individual responsible for the regulation of provincial governors and judges makes sense in terms of this transition in civic administration. Such a role also fits

[106] Cass. *Var.* 11.3; Whelan (2018a), 404–5. [107] Toledo (589), canon 18.
[108] Quotation at Liebeschuetz (2001), 154; see also Wuk (2022); (forthcoming).
[109] See esp. Liebeschuetz (2001), 105–67; Laniado (2002).

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with wider changes in the appointment and jurisdiction of governors, which came to a head in the second half of the sixth century. The *iudices* whom mid- to late sixth-century bishops were to correct and regulate had a decidedly different profile to the imperial governors petitioned and admonished by Synesius, Augustine, or Isidore. They were much more likely to be from the province that they governed and known to – even appointed by – the bishop of the city where they were based.[110] This shift can be seen across the mid- to late sixth-century Mediterranean. Eastern regimes granted legal permission for local notables to choose their governors, first to Italy (Justinian's Pragmatic Sanction of 554) and then to the empire as a whole (Justin II's Novels 149 and 161 of 569 and 574).[111] The prosopographical evidence (such as it is) suggests regional variation across the sixth century; a switch to the appointment of locals can already be seen in the reign of Justinian in Egypt.[112] Both the canon of the Council of Toledo cited above and the letter 'On the Fisc of Barcelona' from 592 envisage analogous mechanisms for leading Spanish provincials choosing their own.[113] Similar processes are visible in Merovingian Gaul, where bishops and civic grandees could be – though were not always – involved in royal appointments and, as Yaniv Fox has recently shown, Roman administrative titles tended to be offered to secure the loyalty of provincial magnates.[114] The roles of governors and judges in any case seem to have shrunk in later sixth-century Spain and Gaul as late Roman provincial structures were adapted to new needs, and the most significant level of royal administration seems to have shifted from the province to the city. For all these reasons, mid- and late sixth-century governors were likely to have more intensive and less hierarchical relationships with the bishops whose cities they shared.

These interlinked processes may have made it more likely that provincial governors would integrate themselves into public Christian communities in the cities where they resided. The increasing probability that the metropolitan not only knew the appointee but had been involved in his nomination would have made the presence of the latter in church less of a

[110] For this transition, see esp. Laniado (2002), 225–52, esp. 241–49.
[111] *Constitutio pragmatica* = *App.* 7 of Scholl edition; Justin II, *Nov.* 149 and 161.
[112] Laniado (2002), 241–49; see also Brown (1984) on Italy; Conant (2012), 196–251 on Africa (with comparison between, and prosopographical data from, all three).
[113] *De fisco Barcinonense*; Liebeschuetz (2001), 134–35, 160–61.
[114] Fox (2015). See too Liebeschuetz (2001), 129–33, 161–67; Halsall (2007), 353–57; A. Jones (2009), esp. 82–94.

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curiosity. Potential reporting of heretical staff members would have encouraged Eastern governors and their *apparitores* to go to the bishop's church.[115] Corresponding expectations of routine churchgoing can be more easily spotted in mid- to late sixth-century texts. In an advice letter to the East Roman *dux* Reginus, written soon after Justinian's conquest of Africa in 533–34, Ferrandus of Carthage suggested that military commanders should be regular attendees.[116] The Merovingian *patricii*, *rectores*, *iudices*, and *comites* of Gregory of Tours' *History* can often be seen in church (and not simply on special occasions).[117] The semi-regular presence of officials in public churches is likewise implied by Reccared and the Spanish bishops gathered at Toledo in 589. King and council assumed that excommunication would represent an ultimate sanction for judges and officers of the fisc who had failed to respond to episcopal admonition and royal censure.[118] The distance from Synesius' conflict with Andronicus is revealing. At Toledo, the use of an ecclesiastical sentence was envisaged not as a failure of political processes to deal with judicial wrongdoing but rather their culmination.

Both the social formation and the ideal conduct of sixth-century provincial appointees brought them closer to the urban churches that they governed. They nevertheless seem to have remained at one remove from these communities. It is noteworthy that the visions of collaboration set out in canonical and imperial legislation continued to stress the separate institutional context of the governor as part of a conception of the complementary jurisdictions and norms of the *imperium* and *sacerdotium*.[119] Opportunities for episcopal oversight had not supplanted the established hierarchical relationship between these two authority figures. Governors were still individuals to whom bishops had to appeal for patronage, judgement, and practical enforcement; in certain situations, they could judge them and exert overarching authority over the local church. Above all, given the frequent problems that bishops had in projecting their pastoral authority over elite members of their congregations,[120] it seems unwise to suggest that the appointment of local aristocrats allowed for a smoother deployment of their jurisdiction. Even with the lessening of the social gulf between the two parties, the basic calculus likely stayed largely the same: a powerful Christian external to the community. Certainly, Gregory's vivid depictions of royal agents behaving badly during church services and violating ecclesiastical judgements suggest that a local appointee was not necessarily more likely

[115] See n. 105. [116] Ferr. *Ad Reg.* 15.
[117] E.g. Greg. Tur. *DLH* 4.24, 4.43, 5.47–49, 8.21, cf. 5.36, 6.32. [118] See n. 107.
[119] For the wider context, see esp. Meier (2014). [120] See esp. Sessa (2012), 127–73.

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to submit to episcopal jurisdiction. In fact, the entanglement of both bishop and royal official in the factional politics of the region – and the competing interests that produced – could make collaboration more difficult to achieve.[121] The greater familiarity and symmetry between sixth-century governors and bishops may have brought some appointees more firmly into the orbit of the public church, but entrenched institutional and personal interests would still have kept them at a remove.

For sixth-century regimes, the state remained the primary institutional context in which the pastoral authority of bishops over governors was to be exercised. It is noteworthy that only Reccared and the Council of Toledo foresaw the possibility that these episcopal overseers might impose distinctly ecclesiastical sanctions. By contrast, Justinian and Cassiodorus did not think about the presence of their gubernatorial subordinates in church when outlining the regulatory responsibilities of bishops. What all these sixth-century legislators encouraged were reports up the chain of command: the forwarding of complaints to emperor, king, or praetorian prefect, who could act accordingly. The information that Justinian, Cassiodorus, and Reccared requested was, for the most part, also rooted in the basic administrative duties of these officials regarding law and taxation. From the perspective of these regimes, episcopal oversight was in support of, and subordinate to, administrative processes controlled by the political centre. This is not to suggest that these rulers treated bishops as just another form of imperial or royal official. As Wolf Liebeschuetz and Claudia Rapp have rightly stressed with respect to Justinian's laws, the privileges and duties granted to bishops were rooted in a reverence for and appreciation of their distinct institutional ethos and putative moral authority.[122] Rather, it is to argue that the pastoral authority of bishops over provincial appointees remained, to a substantial degree, a projection onto their role in provincial and imperial or royal networks of patronage and power. The civic leadership of bishops may have brought them greater potential influence in the praetorium, but it did not necessarily mean that governors became meaningfully part of their churches.

Conclusion

At some point in the first decades of the fifth century, Isidore of Pelusium welcomed a new *corrector* named Simplicius to the province of

[121] E.g. Greg. Tur. *DLH* 4.13, 4.18, 4.24, 4.39, 4.43, 5.47–49, 6.7–8, 6.11, 7.42.
[122] Liebeschuetz (2001), 137, 151–53; Rapp (2005), 278.

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Augustamnicum.[123] As with many of the episcopal and ascetic subjects discussed in this chapter, Isidore offered customary praise for the virtues of the new appointee, whom God would help to exercise appropriate discernment in his role as judge. But the abbot did not just write to Simplicius. He also took the liberty of introducing the new governor to the city council of Pelusium. Isidore's address to the civic grandees used the same providential framework to advertise the possibilities of a mutually beneficial relationship.

To the Bouleuterion

> God still takes care of Pelusium. The seed of piety still exists in it. The guardian martyrs of old still watch over it. The marvellous Simplicius has come to take up the reins of office. I bring good news to you of another life. Receive the man gladly, recount all your troubles to him in tragic voice. He has a discerning wisdom, and a pious will, and will give a change to troubles. For he is strengthened by God, from whom the capacity to do good is proffered to many.[124]

Isidore's letter to the *boulē* of Pelusium is a reminder that it was not just bishops and ascetics who brought distinctly Christian expectations to the conduct of provincial governors. Civic elites might also look for indications that their appointee understood his responsibilities as a divinely sanctioned representative of imperial authority. Throughout this chapter, I have sought to highlight how provincial aristocrats were significant audiences for, and collaborators in, moments where governors were staged as pious office-holders. Whether they were the ambitious young men who served in their staffs, the ex-officials who used their prerogative to access the governor's court, the councillors who still deliberated on civic issues in the *curia* or *boulē*, or the 'leading men' who increasingly took over such responsibilities, these men were crucial partners in provincial governance. They were present when the governor attended public churches and received praise for his piety, divinely inspired justice, and concern for the poor, and sometimes took the opportunity to pose their own dilemmas about doctrine, ethics, and governance.[125] They took their place in processions led by the governor to escort new bishops to the church and expatiate the sins of the urban populace in times of crisis.[126] Most notably, *honorati* and *boni*

[123] Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 1.225. [124] Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 1.226; and note Evieux (1995), 108, 130–31.
[125] Shenoute, D4.8 ('I have heard about your wisdom'), ed. Chassinat, 107–8; trans. Lopez (2013), 31, D8.20 ('And after a few days'); D4.7 ('As we began to preach'); D4.9 ('Blessed are they who observe justice'), ed. Chassinat, 135–36, trans. Foat, 122–23.
[126] Ps.-Zach. *HE* 5.7.d; Ps.-Joshua, *Chron.* 43.

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took leading roles in petitions demanding that the governor seek imperial intervention in the affairs of the metropolitan church of the city.[127] When bishops and ascetics sought to play pastor in the praetorium, they did so before elite audiences who were embedded in the Christian institutions and communal life of city and province. As a result, the need for governors to gain the trust and serve the interests of their most important provincial subjects did not necessarily clash with the claims of bishops and ascetics in the manner assumed by imperial legislation on correct religion. Nor was their degree of receptivity to assertions of moral authority and ecclesiastical jurisdiction a simple corollary of the clout that an individual bishop or abbot had accrued in civic and imperial political networks (although that capacity for wider influence was obviously crucial). As Macedonius' letters to Augustine illustrate, governors had to consider the potential responses of wider provincial audiences, both within and beyond the courtroom, when they responded to the overtures of ecclesiastical and monastic authority figures. Above all, they had to remember that their elite subjects and subordinates might also judge their legitimacy on their capacity to live up to – or, at least, willingness to tolerate – appeals to a 'son of the church' or a governor 'strengthened by God'.

In this sense, the Christian group membership of the governor and putative pastoral authority of the bishop or ascetic worked in service of the formation of a distinctive patronage relationship that would work to the benefit of both gubernatorial patron and ecclesiastical client. For some, this relationship may have been rooted in regular attendance at church, but most recorded visits are presented as special occasions. More broadly, the presence of governors in those spaces was clearly coded (at least in the sources that report it) as ceremonial visits from a representative of imperial or royal authority. In this sense, church attendance was itself part of the same basic political dynamic as the petitions and admonitions recorded in surviving letter collections. The opportunities (and needs) for collaboration between these authority figures only grew as bishops came to possess more significant roles as civic functionaries. The involvement of sixth-century bishops in the appointment and oversight of governors gave the

[127] CC274, ACO 1.4, 201: Libianius, governor of Euphratensis II, receives and passes on petitions of *boni* of Hierapolis to *comes Orientis* after expulsion of bishop Alexander c. 435; with Schor (2011), 99–101, 107; Bevan (2016), 248–49. Notables of Edessa petitioning Chaereas regarding bishop Ibas: see 272–73, with n. 25; with Fafinski (2024), stressing their role. *Gesta Mopsuestiae* = Constantinople (553), 'Actio quinta', 92.4–65, ACO 4.1, 118–29: local elites of Mopsuestia testify regarding liturgical practice in the city's church at synod on 17 June 550; with Liebeschuetz (2001), 114.

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pastoral authority of the former a more concrete social and institutional character. Governors seem nevertheless to have kept a theoretical and practical distance from these bishops and their communities. Even in the expansive framing of sixth-century lawmakers, the role of the bishop remained, for the most part, a matter of helping emperors and kings to ensure the fiscal and judicial probity of their subordinates. At the same time, the significance of this routine translation of ecclesiastical jurisdiction to the context of the state should not be underestimated. Membership of the church entangled governors in distinctive relationships of power with provincial subjects, even if it did not embed them within actual Christian communities.

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