

# **“Thinking with Satan: diabolical inspiration and human agency in late antiquity”**

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## Select Publications

### *Monograph*

- *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2007), x + 211 pp.

### *Articles and chapters*

- ‘Prologue topics and translation problems in Latin commentaries on Paul’, in Josef Lössl and John Watt (eds), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle: The Alexandrian Commentary Tradition from Rome to Baghdad* (Ashgate, f/c 2011)
- ‘Grammatical authority and the rewards of political and philosophical virtue in Macrobius’ *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*’, *Revue des Études Philosophiques* (f/c 2011)

- ‘Bishops on the chair of pestilence: Ambrosiaster’s polemical exegesis of psalm 1:1’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19.1 (f/c 2011)
- ‘Early Christian political philosophy’, in George Klosko (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, f/c 2011)

### Introduction to the Paper

The Devil and his demons were menacingly ubiquitous for Christians in late antiquity. These evil spiritual creatures were widely believed to be capable of entering, possessing, and influencing animals, objects, and humans. This was, as Peter Brown memorably put it, a world ‘humming with demons’.

However diabolical themes have not been as thoroughly explored as themes of the sacred in the last century of scholarship on late antiquity, even though this field has witnessed a rapid growth of interest in early Christian thought and literature. To ignore the diabolical imagination of this period in preference for the study of the holy and the mundane (iconic martyrs, wily bishops, and ambitious heretics) is to fundamentally unbalance our understanding of the dynamic and character of early Christian beliefs. As Le Goff wrote in his book *The Medieval Imagination (L’imaginaire médiéval)*, 15, ‘At this point I must confess that there is a gap in my discussion of the medieval imagination, for I have become more and more convinced that its centre, its pivot, was Satan, medieval Christianity’s most important creation.’

This paper forms part of a more ambitious project to explore the multiplicity of ways in which early Christians imagined the Devil and demons, rooting the creative production of multiple Satans much earlier than Le Goff’s middle ages – namely, in late antiquity. Crucially, by ‘imagination’ Dr Lunn-Rockliffe does not mean a mendacious tendency to ‘make it up’, but rather something closer to Le Goff’s ‘mental equipment’ or ‘outlook’. To this end, her paper focuses on how Christians of the post-apostolic era encountered and explained the workings of evil in contemporary and recent history in the particular context of the drama of persecution.

### Further reading

- Introductory section of article ‘Ambrosiaster revising Ambrosiaster’, co-authored by T. De Bruyn, M.-P. Bussi eres, S. Cooper, D. Hunter, and S. Lunn-Rockliffe, *Recherches Augustiniennes* 56 (2010)
- ‘Commemorating the usurper Maximus: ekphrasis, poetry, and history in Pacatus’ *Panegyric of Theodosius*, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 3.2 (2010), 316-36
- ‘Ambrose’s imperial funeral orations’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 59.2 (2008), 191-207
- ‘A pragmatic approach to poverty and riches: Ambrosiaster’s *quaestio* CXXIV’, chapter in Robin Osborne and Margaret Atkins (eds), *The Poor and Ideas of Poverty from the Gracchi to Justinian* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 115-29
- ‘Ambrosiaster’s political diabology’, *Studia Patristica* 43 (2006), 423-8
- ‘Visualizing the Demonic: The Gadarene Exorcism in Early Christian Art and Literature’, in Richard Raiswell and Peter Dendle (eds), *The Devil in Society in the Pre-Modern World* (Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, Victoria College University of Toronto, f/c 2010)