



Urban Distances: Christians' Guidelines to Secrecy and Discretion

Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli

<https://doi.org/10.1515/urbrel.16992982>

Cite this

Entry Type	Research Article
Entry Language	English
Keyword	To Diognetus ; Georg Simmel ; Erving Goffman ; Management of information
Period	Ancient Cities and Religion (800 BCE – 600 CE)
Place	Mediterranean ; Rome

[Table of Contents](#) ▾

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has been familiarising all of us with the formal measures and the informal techniques of social distancing.^[1] Yet, historically, city dwellers did not need plagues and sanitary crises to learn how to manage the intensity and intrusiveness of contacts of all types. In ancient Mediterranean urban societies functioning without privacy policies and PIN numbers, surveillance cameras and copyright lawyers, the capacity to allow, restrict, or deny informational access to other urbanites depended on the activation of a variety of distance-enhancing mechanisms and filtering devices of a physical, sensorial, semiotic, and institutional type, most of which are still in use today (Milgram 1970: 1472). Drawing on classics of sociological literature, the paper deals with a salient trait of past and present urbanities: the competence to refuse interactions involving reciprocal knowledge in personal matters as well as the ability to establish 'secondary' contacts and craft impersonal types of social relations that prevent and discourage people from 'coming too close.' More specifically, on the one hand, it focuses on the ways in which the urban – whether as physical layout, media infrastructures, or styles of social relations – enables, invites, and even compels the urbanites to employ specific sociological techniques and rely on aesthetical-moral attitudes for managing, monitoring, and limiting the access to personal information. On the other, it assumes that such processes of boundary formation prompts the fabrication of, and the exposure to, disparaging gossips, rumours, slanders, and other forms of unconfirmed reports. Re-interpreting an anonymous early Christian text (*To Diognetus*) as a document providing guidelines to these specific facets of urbanity, the article will show how social life in cities supposes and enhances attitudes and capacities to navigate the blurry line between mutual knowledge and ignorance, discretion and intrusion, secrecy and publicity, suspicion and trust.

Focus, applied concepts and methods

How often, in the overflowing Streets,

Have I gone forwards with the Crowd, and said

Unto myself, The face of every one

That passes by me is a mystery (W. Wordsworth)

Secrets are to religion what lingerie is to the body: they enhance what is imagined to be present (P.C. Johnson).

La ville, c'est la condition de la discrétion (P. Zaoui)

Theorising and Unpacking Secrecy in the Ancient Mediterranean City

With his long essay on 'Das Geheimnis und die geheime Gesellschaft,' published in 1908 as fifth chapter of his *Soziologie*, Georg Simmel inaugurates a fruitful line of sociological research interested in the manifold means whereby humans create social relations through 'the restriction of knowledge of the one about the other.' His extended analysis of the secret follows the much shorter examination of the alternative technique of the lie as 'positive and aggressive' art of deception (Simmel 1950a: 316). Concerned with the protective functions of human behaviours aimed at boundary formation through restricting and controlling the flow of information, Simmel does not explicitly link the secret to the city. Differently from his analysis of other defensive behaviours such as the 'blasé attitude' (Simmel 1950b: 413–415), his investigation of psychic phenomena and types of social interaction determined by the deliberate production of a varying quantum of secrecy (Simmel 1950a: 334) neither has a clearly expressed urban focus nor systematically demands an urban setting.

However, Simmel-scholars did not fail to point out that the connection between *urbanism* as a physical structure and system of social organisation, *urbanity* as a way of life, i.e. set of attitude and ideas, and *secrecy* as basic feature of human intercourse is such as to suggest that the sociological significance of secrecy increases with the size of the city. In her extensive notes on the Secret essay, Brigitta Nedelmann touches on the modern metropolis as the 'focal point for the development of secrecy as a form of interaction' (Nedelmann 1994: 216). Focusing on the urban intensification of the social division of labour, she argues that the 'exactness of the rhythm of urban life' facilitates the activation and refinement of the two main techniques of performing secrecy: 'segmentation' and 'demarcation'. The former notion refers to the capacity to handle the separation of membership circles, the latter designates the ability to set boundaries against unwanted intrusions. Both are said to favour the social competence to hide knowledge (Nedelmann 1994: 213–214).

In Thomas Kemple's monograph on Simmel, instead, the discussion of the Secret essay sits squarely in the section dedicated to the 'Sociology of Metropolises' and is thoroughly treated as an urban theme (Kemple 2018: 86–95). He notes that

life in large cities entails not only the heightening of nervous and emotional life but also the need to gather a repertoire of techniques for managing the intensity [of contacts] with civility and circumspection, or with skepticism and suspicion. [...]. Generally speaking, city life is sustained not just through social and spatial remoteness but also by cultivating psychological relationships of participation and withdrawal and by maintaining a tactful balance between ignorance and knowledge of other people (Kemple 2018: 86–87).

The scale of the urban agglomerate matters in that it entails the multiplication of spaces where information can be retrained and people can seal themselves off (88). From a Simmelian perspective, modern metropolises are therefore the places where the secret most glaringly shows its capacity to immensely expand human life by producing parallel life worlds, thereby revealing itself as 'one of man's greatest achievements (*eine der größten Errungenschaften der Menschheit*; Simmel 1950a: 330). This line of argument reaches beyond the field of Simmelian studies. French philosopher Pierre Zaoui builds on the genealogy of the flâneur to argue that it is only with the rise of modern metropolises, populated by crowds, marked by social atomisation and personal anonymity, and cut across by legions of idle and drifting strollers, that discretion has become the 'almost daily experience of millions of individuals' (Zaoui 2013: 124).

Ever since the emergence of secularisation theories, it is the obstinate task of historians to amend the presentist assumptions of the social scientists and rectify the unrestrained generalisations of the philosophers. Nevertheless, the nexus between the expansion of secrecy and the growth of the city form as instantiated in the experience of modern metropolitan life prompts to raise a caution flag about the applicability of Simmel's sociology of secrecy beyond its original and optimal environment (see Johnson 2002: 29–30). The following analysis of a single piece of ancient Christian literature as a text showing concern for the cultivation of relationships of participation and withdrawal is carefully designed to avoid potential anachronisms.^[2] While assuming the cross-temporal and -cultural significance of 'the employment of secrecy as a sociological technique' (Simmel 1950a: 332), I will work out the connections between information control and the city in a manner that is not contingent upon the space-time of modern metropolises. My historically-tuned, contextualised version of the Simmelian question reads as follows: how did the urban space and form of life enable, invite, and even compel ancient Mediterranean urbanites to employ modes of communications, develop strategies of interactions, and form types of social organisations that are characterised by an unequal distribution or mutual inhibition of knowledge?

Alongside Simmel's seminal intuitions, Erving Goffman's works on the 'social organization of gathering' (*Behavior in Public Places*) and 'the management of spoiled identities' (*Stigma*) will help navigate the field of ancient Mediterranean urban secretcies by providing concepts of theoretical relevance and testable cross-temporal validity such as 'civil inattention,' 'passing,' and 'covering' (Goffman 1963a: 83–88; 1963b: 73–104). More specifically, Goffman's interactionist categories will help differentiate between the two sides of the secrecy coin as form of information control and identity management: namely, a) the secret as deliberate attempt to conceal information from others and b) discretion as the competence to refuse knowledge of others that is not expressively revealed to us. This difference between the secret and the 'respect for the secret of the other' (Simmel 1950a: 330) is of prime importance since the text examined in this paper deals with both behavioural patterns.

Finally, speaking of 'Christians guidelines to secrecy and discretion,' this paper employs at once a broad

and a narrow definition of what we might call a *religious guide to urbanity*. On the one hand, looking for guidelines allows us to focus on an early Christian script whose pragmatic purpose in relation to religiously demarcated sections of urban populations can be held as normative, although the text neither consists of a collection of regulatory measures nor presents itself as a systematic manual for urban conducts. On the other, restricting my analysis to secrecy and discretion implies to streamline the notion of urbanity by focusing on a limited set of interactional and behavioural patterns: namely, the strategies whereby urbanites handle social distances, juggle close contacts, and negotiate access to personal knowledge as necessary conditions of urban living.

State of the art

To Diognetus: An Urban Reading

An Elusive Script

At the centre of this paper is an early Christian text known as *Letter to Diognetus* or simply *To Diognetus*. It is a small apologetic-protreptic tract that aims to advertise Christ religion by providing targeted sketchy instructions on selected aspects of the Christian doctrine and conduct of life. The only known copy of the text was transmitted by a 13th- or 14th-century manuscript (*Codex Argentoratensis Graecus* 9), which is now lost after the destruction of its last abode, the building of the municipal library of Strasbourg, bombed in the summer 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War. Transcriptions and editions of this single exemplar made before the dramatic event 'saved' the script and served as basis for contemporary considerations.

Including twenty-two Christian works spanning ca. a thousand years, the 260-page codex was accidentally found in 1436 by a young Latin priest, Tommaso D'Arezzo, in a pile of packing paper in a fish market of Constantinople (see Marrou 1951: 6–10, based on Mercati 1947: 13–16). When, in May 1453, the 'second Rome' was conquered by the Ottoman army of Mohammed II after a long siege, the manuscript containing *To Diognetus* had already found its way to the West. The Christian population of Constantinople, instead, fell into the hands of a Muslim sultan who, already on the third day after the fall, seemed to have urged the citizens of all ages 'to leave their hiding places in the city and come out into the open. [...] If they returned home, they would be treated according to their rank and religion, as if nothing had changed' (Makarios Melissenos, *The Chronicle of the Siege of Constantinople* 3.13; transl. Philippides 1980). Interestingly, one of the central issues of the text serendipitously found in Constantinople only seventeen years earlier is precisely whether and how to 'come out,' or better, how to navigate the publicity/secrecy line when one's own religion is not that of the rulers of the city.

At the time when *To Diognetus* was written, one possible solution to this quandary was martyrdom. The story of this script, indeed, has a twofold connection with martyrdom. First, before embarking on a death-seeking mission in Muslim territories, Tommaso D'Arezzo himself narrated the story of his discovery and handing over of the codex in an anonymous incunabulum called *Tractatus de martyrio sanctorum* (Marrou 1951: 4–5). Second, the *Codex Argentoratensis*, or better, the tradition behind this now-lost manuscript erroneously attributed *To Diognetus* to the early Christian writer Justin. A Palestinian-born philosopher migrated to Rome somewhere in the mid-2nd century CE (e.g. recently, Rivas Rebaque 2020; van der Lans 2019), Justin had promoted an intellectualised version of Christ religion, argued against the Jews, and battled Christian doctrinal deviance before dying as a martyr. *To Diognetus*, however, is only moderately concerned with martyrdom. Whereas it eulogises the practice as

ultimate commitment to God (*Diogn.* 10.7; 6.10) and explains its advertising success as a sign of God's power (6.10; 7.7–9), the text describes and promotes an urban Christian lifestyle that generates martyrs only as unjustified casualties of non-Christians' ignorance (5.12; cf. 10.7). *To Diognetus* departs from other Christian texts of the time by showing that the true 'imitator of God' is less the martyr (see Bettenworth, Boschung and Formisano 2020; Moss 2010) than the performer of neighbourly love (10.4–6). Its Christian style of going public does not correspond to the Christian art of martyrdom.

To Diognetus is a quintessentially elusive writing. To start with, this script was never in the limelight. It is neither quoted nor mentioned by any ancient or medieval writer. Second, whereas the author is anonymous and still unidentified, the intended recipient is apparently called by his name and praised as 'most excellent' (κράτιστε Διόγνητε) but his theophoric appellation – which literally means 'heir of Zeus' – cannot be infallibly referred to any known historical figure and might be fictive (Menestrina 1977). Nor does the appellation κράτιστος clearly index a specific socio-juridical status (e.g. lower rank of the equestrian order), let alone a political office (e.g. procurator). It might well be a courtesy title with no legal significance (see *Luke* 1:3; Jefford 2013: 15–29).

Moreover, the text that, at a certain point of its codicological history, has received the secondary title of *Letter to Diognetus* is at best a borderline case of the letter-writing category. At worst, it is anything but a letter. Among the missing elements constituting the genre (see Trapp 2003: 1), *To Diognetus* lacks the main feature that, according to Simmel, makes the letter 'a very peculiar constellation under the category of secrecy' (Simmel 1950a: 352). Not only is the identity of the sender unknown to us and unexpressed in the text, but the author provides no information about himself, no insights into his personality. In other words, to borrow from Simmel's excursus on 'Written Communication' ('Exkurs über den schriftlichen Verkehr'), which is part of the Secrecy essay, there is no 'objectivation of the subjective' and therefore no instance of the ambiguity that, for the German sociologist, constitutes the letter as a 'specific sociological phenomenon:' namely, on the one hand, the mixture of 'the objective elimination of all warranty of secrecy' as characteristic of a written-down form of communication, and, on the other, 'the subjective intensification of this warranty' as produced by 'the personal and subjective character in which the letter writer present himself' (352–353). No doubt ancient epistolography is known for defying any clear-cut distinction between the confidential character of a personal missive, which is intended to be read by the recipient alone, and the public nature of the literary letter, which is meant to be read out in front of other people and possibly expected to circulate and be published (Neil 2015: 11–14). Yet, contrary to prototypical examples of early Christian letters, which, like *To Diognetus*, aim at instructing doctrinally and morally and are equally interested in constructing authority via authoring (like Paul's or Ignatius' letters), *To Diognetus* denies access to any information whatsoever about the subjectivity of the writer – whether real, exaggerated, tendentious, disingenuous, or merely fictional.

A last aspect of *To Diognetus'* elusiveness, which is particularly interesting from the perspective of a sociology of secrecy (and discretion), is that the author dispenses with explicit references to other texts. Quoted by nobody, he alludes to Paul, echoes the Johannine tradition, and draws on a variety of biblical materials, but *cites* nobody. He 'moves openly between scriptural sources' and leverages their influence without caring for authorship or showing concern for hermeneutics (Jefford 2013: 92). Actually, he sidesteps issues of authority completely by also taking no stand on questions of institutional control (98). Moreover, the analysis of the script's intertextuality offers very few clues for precise dating

hypotheses, which traditionally fall between the middle of the 2nd and the first decade of the 3rd century CE. The specific urban provenance of the text is irretrievable in that none of the three main hypotheses (Alexandria, Smyrna, Rome) is actually conclusive.

Eventually, everything in *To Diognetus* eludes the eye and hides, like a passer-by hugging the walls before taking an alley and sneaking in. The style perfectly chimes with the message. I suggest, in fact, that in its central chapter this text addresses and describes people already familiar with and/or interested in the 'art of hugging the walls' (Zaoui 2013: 18) in order to provide them with a theologically warranted manual for urban appearances.

Historical and spatial exposition, agents

An Evasive Author

Since I see, most excellent Diognetus, that you are extremely eager to learn about the religion of the Christians and are making such an exacting and careful inquiry about them, wishing to discover which God they obey and how they worship him, so that they all despise the world and disdain death, neither giving credence to those thought to be gods by the Greeks nor keeping the superstition of the Jews, and what deep affection they have for one another, and just why this new race or way of life came into being now and not before, I welcome this eagerness of yours and ask God – who enables us both to speak and to hear – that I may be allowed to speak in such a way that you derive special benefit by hearing, and that you hear in such a way that the speaker not be put to grief.

And so come, purge yourself of all the notions that previously constrained your understanding, leave behind your misguided habit of thought, and become as it were a person made new at the beginning, one who is about to hear a new teaching, just as you yourself have admitted (*Diogn.* 1.2.1; transl. Ehrman 2003).

The author starts by addressing a recipient, or a simple dedicatee, who is said to be 'eager to learn about the religion (θεοσεβεία) of the Christians.' The term θεοσεβεία, which some scholars would prefer to leave untranslated or literally take for 'what is says – reverence for the deity' (Barton and Boyarin 2016: 205), is here used to designate the right and distinct way in which Christians relate (representationally and ritually) to their god. Yet the knowledge of Christ religion comes with a price. In order to access information about, respectively, the Christians' discrete view and cult of the divinity, cosmology and soteriology, in-group ethics, and timing of their historical appearance, Diognetus is requested to make a clean sweep of discredited old orders and start afresh. Ethnic, ethic, and epistemological breakthroughs go hand in hand: ethno-racially, Diognetus is urged to reinvent and relocate himself beside and beyond paradigmatic Mediterranean categories of worshippers like the Greeks and the Jews (Buell 2005); ethically, he must change his life; epistemologically, he needs to be born again. The novel teaching of 'this new race or way of life (καινὸν τοῦτο γένος ἢ ἐπιτήδευμα)' demands a blank slate upon which new bodies of knowledge, new dispositions to act, and new diagrams of affections are to be engraved: the unencumbered mind of a baby, or better, of Adam before the fall and the resulting division of the human race.

Despite these suspenseful premises, the anonymous does not completely keep the promise (Lieu 2004:

85–86). His catechetical efforts through the theological development of the text are rather modest (Jefford 2013: 57, 71); the Christian ‘fundamentos’ – to borrow from the Candomblé word for any serious knowledge of an initiatory nature (Johnson 2002: 31) – remain undisclosed. Then, quite abruptly, the last two chapters (*Diogn.* 11–12) indicate a much higher theological sophistication, belong to another literary genre (a homily?) and, content-wise, look rather off topic – in fact, they are probably spurious (see Ruggiero 2020: 18–22). Until chapter 5, the exposition runs also particularly fast as if the author were anxious to move on (Marrou 1951: 116; see 2.10 and 4.1). In fact, he limits himself to rapidly surveying and dismissing a few conceptual shortcomings of both the Greek polytheists’ and the Jews’ ways of worship (*Diogn.* 2–4) by declaring superfluous to expand on them further as well as to delve into other absurdities. He then informs Diognetus that the same people who taught him about the reasons why the Christians abstain from practicing like the Jews would never be able to instruct him on the Christians’ own θεοσέβεια. Nor could he, a Christ-believing human being engaged in a verbal mode of training, properly illuminate him. For this is a ‘mystery (μυστήριον)’ that human language cannot articulate:

I suppose you have learned enough about how the Christians are right to abstain from the vulgar silliness, deceit, and meddling ways of the Jews, along with their arrogance. But do not expect to be able to learn from any human the mystery of the Christians’ own way of worship (*Diogn.* 4.6).

The French patrologist and text editor Henri-Irenée Marrou takes side with the author’s reticence. While noticing that several Christian writers had already circulated accounts of the propositional contents and the ritual ceremonies of Christ religion without bothering to verbally fail, he suggests that the writer’s unexplained reasons for being mysterious are no mystery: the ‘spiritual realities’ that animate the ‘exterior forms of the Christian cult’ are parts of a ‘sacramental initiation’ which ‘cannot be grasped from the outside, but only by those who possess it and live it inwardly’ (Marrou 1951: 120). In other words, they are to be ‘known through’ rather than ‘known about.’ Unsatisfied with this emic rationale, Simmel would probably supplement the argument about insider knowledge by a sociological explanation based on the hermeneutical allure and the social force of secrecy:

Among children, pride and bragging are often based on a child’s being able to say to the other: ‘I know something that you don’t know’ and to such a degree, that this sentence is uttered as a formal means of boasting and of subordinating the others, even where it is made up and actually refers to no secret. [...]. The secret gives one a position of exception (*eine Ausnahmestellung*); it operates as a purely socially determined attraction (*ein rein sozial bestimmter Reiz*). It is basically independent of the content it guards but, of course, is increasingly effective in the measure in which the exclusive possession is vast and significant (Simmel 1950a: 332–333).

Presenting himself as an initiated person, who, nevertheless, cannot reveal the ‘vast’ and ‘significant’ content of the secret knowledge he guards, our author reinforces his authority and accumulates prestige before his formal addressee and model readers. By the same token, he ‘fosters a deferential attitude’ toward the concealed message (Luhmann 1989: 142; also Urban 1998). Anthropologist Paul C. Johnson would argue that he toys with ‘secretism’ as ‘the active milling, polishing, and promotion of the reputation of secrets’ (Johnson 2002: 3). Indeed, the ineffable nature of this insider knowledge, which is

unattainable for the outsiders as long as they do not formally join the Christ assemblies and thus fully access their technologies of wisdom, prevents him from giving in to the other empowering feeling related to the secret: the temptation to tell it by surrendering to the fascination of disclosure (Simmel 1950a: 334–335). After all, the secret is a double-edged (s)word: the verb 'secrete,' which can denote either 'to hide' or 'to release,' gives a sort of systolic–diastolic rhythm to the communication pressure: hide and unveil, contain and release (Johnson 2002: 3–4).

Aware of the double bind inherent to the very rhythm of secrets, the author finds an intermediate solution between renouncing the instruction and breaking the silence: he makes an alliance with the non-initiate, i.e. Diognetus, that allows for a limited revelation. In chapter 5, before providing a smattering of Christian teaching on the remaining issues raised in the incipit (*Diogn.* 7–10), the anonymous offers a glimpse of the mystery. He neither details the doctrine nor touches on the liturgy (Ruggiero 2020: 30; *pace* Marrou 1951: 98), but rather expounds what he presents as the distinct Christian πολιτεία (*Diogn* 5.4).

A Paradoxical Citizenship

At first sight, the anonymous seems to simply follow the trail of Paul and other early Christian writers (*Galatians* 4:21–26; *Philippians* 3:17–20; *Ephesians* 2:11–22; *1 Peter* 2:11–12; *Hebrews* 11:8–16, 12:18–24, 13:9–16, etc.). He taps into the traditional topological–political trope of the resident alien that both Jewish and Christian authors had already turned into a religious marker for various purposes such as: identity formation, ethical role–modelling and construction of the soteriological virtuoso, accretion of prestige (Feldmeier 1992; Dunning 2009; Urciuoli 2013: 174–222; see Strathern 2019: 56–59). Nevertheless, he departs from his predecessors in that what he offers is an upgrade of the original paradox of the Christians as earthly foreigners–*cum*–heavenly citizens, or better, a relocation of its implications onto the microsociological level of everyday urban social relations.

For Christians are no different from other people in terms of their country, language, or customs. 2. Nowhere do they inhabit cities of their own, use a strange dialect, or live life out of the ordinary. 3. They have not discovered this teaching of theirs through reflection or through the thought of meddling people, nor do they set forth any human doctrine, as do some. 4. They inhabit both Greek and barbarian cities, according to the lot assigned to each. And they show forth the character of their own citizenship in a marvellous and admittedly paradoxical way (θαυμαστήν και ὁμολογουμένως Παράδοξον ἐνδείκνυνται τὴν κατάστασιν τῆς ἑαυτῶν Πολιτείας) by following local customs in what they wear and what they eat and in the rest of their lives. 5. They live in their respective countries, but only as resident aliens; they participate in all things as citizens, and they endure all things as foreigners. Every foreign territory is a homeland for them, every homeland foreign territory. 6. They marry like everyone else and have children, but they do not expose them once they are born. 7. They share their meals but not their sexual partners. 8. They are found in the flesh but do not live according to the flesh. 9. They live on earth but participate in the life of heaven. 10. They are obedient to the laws that have been made, and by their own lives they supersede the laws. 11. They love everyone and are persecuted by all. 12. They are not understood and they are condemned. They are put to death and made alive. 13. They are impoverished and make many rich. They lack all things and abound in everything. 14. They are dishonoured and they are exalted in their dishonours. They are slandered and they are acquitted. 15. They are reviled and they bless, mistreated and they bestow honour. 16. They do good and are punished as evil; when they are punished they rejoice as those who have been made alive. 17. They are attacked by Jews as foreigners and persecuted by Greeks. And those who hate them cannot explain the cause of their enmity (*Diogn.* 5).

In the following chapter, the author seeks to work out the riddle ('To put the matter simply...;' *Diogn.* 6.1) by drawing a ramified analogy between the worldly embeddedness of the Christians and the bodily imprisonment of the soul. Just as the immaterial, immortal, and invisible soul, incarcerated in the material, perishable, and perceptible body, sustains and keeps the body alive, the heaven-belonging Christians, imprisoned in the world and suffering oppressions all over the Roman empire, uphold the world-system and keep it functioning (*Diogn.* 6; see Rizzi 1996; Norelli 1991: 97–100). Eventually, the reader understands that the distinct urban lifestyle described in chapter 5 correlates with the exclusive cosmic role God assigned to them as explained in chapter 6. He or she might also pause to think through the connection between the series of antitheses characterising the paradoxical πολιτεία of the Christians and the cryptic statement about the invisibility of their religion: 'The soul, which is invisible, is put under guard in the visible body; Christians are known to be in the world, but their worship of God remains invisible' (*Diogn.* 6.4). Yet, beyond the inter-textual echoes and the intra-textual symmetries, what is the *practical* point the reader needs to drive home from all these sophisticated puns?

In a previous essay, I have drawn on Hohmi K. Bhabha's notion of mimicry (Bhabha 1994: 85–92) to explain the semiotic strategy of both chapters as a Christian mimicry that was intelligible by contemporary Christian readers as a 'between-the-lines pedagogy of everyday camouflage' (Urciuoli 2020: 559). This postcolonial reading of the author's portrait of the Christian lifestyle and its cosmic rationale served to escape the too rigid alternatives between assimilationism and resistance, legitimation and subversion, as genuine cultural-identitarian frame and theological-political agenda of

the script. The Christian way of being ‘almost the same but not quite’ is neither a mimetic reinforcement of the socio-political order nor a parodic sabotage thereof. It can be better explained as a continuous slippage between sameness and otherness, insidership and outsidership, that takes place in the ‘area between mimicry and mockery’ (Bhabha 1994: 86; also Lieu 2004: 234–235). Interested in how the author might have leveraged the ambivalence of mimicry to encode practical directives for the everyday life of his readers, I have assumed that this manoeuvre area overlaps with the city. Yet by focusing exclusively on the *civic*, i.e. on the political facet of the Christian πολιτεία, and following up on Marrou’s understanding of *Diogn.* 5.5 as an invitation ‘not to shirk public-political responsibilities, yet to accomplish them with aloofness (*détachement*)’ (Marrou 1951: 63), I have interpreted the text as recommending educated and well-off readers interested in Christ religion to take on an ‘attitude towards local politics that consists in avoiding both careerist behaviour and nonpolitical escapism’ (Urciuoli 2020: 562–563). Now I would like to re-centre my analysis of *To Diognetus* 5 to zoom in on the *urban*. In other words, I intend to read πολιτεία as referring more to the urban style of an innerworldly dwelling (urbanity) than to the political implications (in the sense of political theology) or the political commitment (that is, in local politics) of an otherworldly self.

A Distinct (and Usable) Urbanity

Modern translations of *To Diognetus*’ πολιτεία normally fall between two options: ‘citizenship’ and ‘manner of life.’ Both are semantically correct but, in my view, unsatisfactory. I argue that opting for ‘citizenship,’ as virtually all translators do, is too restrictive in that most of the materials contained in chapter 5, while describing the paradoxical earthly correlates of the heavenly citizenship, are mainly unconcerned with legal citizenship and the related rights. Indeed, most of the described situations of life, activities, and attitudes neither demand nor suggest the enjoyment of the right to local citizenships. The exclusive Christian entitlement to the heavenly membership is mapped onto the amazing-*cum*-unusual character of the daily experience of generic Christian townspeople – whatever their legal status. Whereas there is no reason to think that Christ-believing immigrants and foreign residents are to be excluded from ‘the life of heaven’ due to their legal inferiority, the intentional topological ambiguity (Ruggiero 2020: 48) of the anonymous’ use of πολιτεία *qua* citizenship would hardly apply to non-citizens.

On the other hand, the few translations drawing on the extended meaning of πολιτεία as ‘way of living’ or ‘lifestyle’ (Quacquarelli 1976: 356: ‘metodo di vita,’ Marrou 1951: 62 n. 3: ‘manière de vivre’) fail to include the reference to the urban as more or less explicit setting and most plausible socio-spatial condition of possibility for the aforementioned conditions and behaviours (cf. *Diogn.* 5.2, 4, 5). The anonymous underscores twice that the Christians, people who neither dwell in a specific ‘land’ (γῆ) nor claim a distinct ‘homeland’ (πατρίς), ‘inhabit’ the same πόλεις as others (5.1–2). In *Diogn.* 6.1–2 we read that ‘what the soul is in the body, this is what Christians are in the world. The soul is spread throughout all the limbs of the body; Christians are spread *throughout the cities* of the world’ (emphasis mine). Commentators who assume that the use of the Greek word πόλεις is meant to encompass both the core town (ἄστυ) and cultivated rural territory (χώρα) argue that the simile with the ‘limbs of the body’ allows for an analogous reading of the world as made of both towns and countryside (Naerebout 2021: 35). Yet the option for a diffusion throughout πόλεις, instead of across other geographical portions like countries (πατριδεις) or nations (ἔθνη), makes clear that the Christian salvific dissemination pivots on urban centres.

Given the limits of both types of translations, I propose to shift the emphasis from the civic to the urban and eventually interpret *To Diognetus*’ πολιτεία as referring to a transcendently informed ‘urban way of

life.' The chapter thereby becomes a snapshot of a distinct and *usable* Christian urbanity as mapped onto the heavenly citizenship. The notion of a usable urbanity builds upon that of 'usable social identity' and refers to how the rhetorical construction of otherness not only works to articulate a common religious identity and reinforce the in-group solidarity but might also be used to turn 'demeaning stereotypes into successful outsider roles' in the surrounding society (Moore 1986: 47; see Dunning 2009: 5). Cities, as Claude Fischer argued (Fischer 1975), nurture unconventional subcultures of all sorts by fostering diversity and even rewarding eccentricity. The flip side is that they can fail to protect them from the misadventure of oddity: stigma.

Let us start from the second part of the chapter, which is characterised by thematic redundancy (*Diogn.* 5.11–17). The author formulates a 'rapid-fire succession' (Dunning 2009: 73) of antitheses on the topic of the widespread and unreasonable aversion towards the Christians that, altogether, conveys the idea of a systematic and large-scaled unjustified oppression. The image is neither realistic nor purely fictional. At the time of the script, i.e. in the mid- to late 2nd century CE, there are neither episodes of state-led persecutions nor evidence of a sustained alert or preoccupation on the part of the ruling authorities resulting in the establishment of a legal-criminal framework about how to deal with Christ believers. Moreover, attempts to relate this sense of generalised threat and hostility with the 'shock' arising 'in the Christian world' with local cases of oppression (see Grant 1988: 178) are far from conclusive. Such a context, however, did not exclude the outbreak of 'pedestrian forms of opposition' (Engberg 2007: 276) that might have occasionally interlocked with other potential levels of hostility (central, regional, local-municipal) and thus generated a diffuse feeling of exposure and insecurity.^[3] Psychologically – or better: psychotropically – we can think of a 'pattern of random abuse' (Smail 2007: 168–169; see Urciuoli 2020: 41): threats and offences were irregular, infrequent, unpredictable and *therefore* produced a sense of free-floating anxiety on potential targets. Evoked by the pounding sequence of antitheses, this anxiety-ridden scenario coheres with the claustrophobic image of the imprisoned soul that dominates the following chapter (Norelli 1991: 94).

Given the precarious and distressing situation he decides to highlight, our author might consider two alternative responses. The first would be to sponsor martyrdom as public confrontational display of belonging and commitment to a socially discredited group. Yet eventually, as said, the anonymous praises the martyrs and their radical method of self-disclosure without going as far as to recommend imitation to those who still lack insider knowledge of God's mysteries (*Diogn.* 10.7–8). The author also carefully avoids the argument that the hatred towards the Christians and the resulting list of mistreatments suffered by them are rooted in the antagonistic character of their worldview and, in turn, call for a confrontational response. Contrary to Paul's understanding of Christ believers' sufferings (*1 Corinthians* 4:10–13; *2 Corinthians* 4:7–12; 6:4–10), there is no Christological rationale for the abuses. References to Jesus' passion are strikingly absent (Norelli 1991: 93 n. 15).

The second option would consist in producing a 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990), that is, an offstage script to be circulated only among insiders where not only esoteric doctrinal and ritual knowledge are revealed but tactics and techniques of protection are exposed (e.g. how to construct protective relations of reciprocal confidence? How to keep silent and with whom? How to strengthen internal bonds based on exclusive knowledge?). This solution would emphasise the nature of Christ assemblies as 'secret societies' (Simmel 1950a: 345–376) – a character that Simmel himself, in a specific section of the Secret essay, recognises as a typical and 'suitable social form' for a 'young religion' in its initial stages

and immediately associates with the early Christ groups (347; see also Johnson 2002: 27–28). The idea that the latter are underground treacherous *factiones* or *εταίρια* is an allegation levelled by anti-Christian polemicists and non-Christian officers but vehemently denied by the Christian counterparts (e.g. Tertullian, *Apology* 39.20–21; Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.1, 8.17; see also Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 10.96.7). It is equally dismissed by the anonymous, if only because he conceives his text as a protreptic tract not overtly directed at Christian insiders (Dunning 2009: 64–65). His purpose is to bring more and more respectable people in the Christ groups rather than simply preaching to the choir, closing ranks, and coaching an embattled audience.

In-between the two extremes of total disclosure and complete secrecy there exists a halfway type of urban Christianness that keeps a careful balance between accessibility and concealment. The anonymous takes precisely this approach. We can talk of a *Christian urbanity* in that this strategy is modelled after the shifting combinations of secrecy and publicity as structural characteristic of urban social relations. Cities, indeed, are the places where these kinds of performances are more likely to be felt necessary, agreed upon, perceived as meaningful, and engaged successfully.

In a place of any size, it is impossible to know everyone well or indeed at all. Going about our business in our home town we encounter strangers. All we know about them is what we can see – how they appear, dress, and behave – and the same goes in return. Sociologists call these ‘secondary’ contacts, contrasting with the primary relationships we have with kin and friends, who know our strengths and weaknesses, quirks, interests, and aversions. In between – and there is a continuum – are ‘quasi-primary’ connections with neighbors, say, or some co-workers. They see parts of us, but not all. Secondary relations are distinctive to cities (and the experience of travel). In a small community, everyone knows everyone – and everyone’s business – via the gossip mill. As villages become towns, and towns cities, the relative importance of secondary relations grows (Harris 2021: 29).

Cities, past and presents, bolster strategies of segmentation and demarcation, thus favouring at once their residents’ capacity to keep membership circles separated as well as their ability to set boundaries against unwanted intrusions (Nedelmann 1994: 213–214). On the one hand, they provide their inhabitants with a role-set, a stock of memberships they can – more often: *must* – situationally take on and negotiate; on the other, they furnish a wide array of places in which they can alternately withdraw, stand in full view, or select their company – note that a single urban place, like a spacious *domus*, can well serve all three purposes. Yet cities are also densely populated places characterised by an ‘incessant occurrence of encounters,’ where chances for deliberately or accidentally intruding, meddling, and perforating difficult-to-define boundaries are a structural fact, a chronic problem, and even a cultivated art. Therefore, cooperation among inhabitants interested in regulating their mutual knowledge is necessary. In this regard, cities also multiply the number of ‘uneventful social situations’ where vitally needed superficial relations or even non-relations of non-involvement can be formalised and the problem of co-presence in different settings can be worked out by a reciprocal ‘display of disinterestedness’ (Hirschauer 2005: 42, 41). Simmel examines this type of relation in his analysis of ‘discretion’ (Simmel 1950 [1908]: 320–324) but it is Erving Goffman who more explicitly links this visual and interactional pattern to the city by coining the formula of ‘civil inattention’ (Goffman 1963a: 83–88). He refers to the microsocially critical competence to accept relations without constituting the

other as 'a target of special curiosity or design' (84) and refuse relations without showing disregard, creating distrust, or nurturing hatred (see also Milgram 1970). My final argument is that the strategy pursued by *To Diognetus* aims at capitalising on the benefits and reacting to the failures of this critical side of urbanity: namely, to be a somebody for a few significant others and to be a nobody in the eyes of many.

When reading chapter 5 from this perspective, what first strikes the eye is that the author implies that the Christians follow the local way of doing things when it comes to onstage, ostensible, or better: 'non-secretable' practices and behaviours. Language, diet, clothing, marital and reproduction strategies are all aspects that make them indistinguishable from non-Christian fellow citizens (*Diogn.* 5.1.4.6). Without betraying the *intentio auctoris*, we can probably add to the list other external markers like names and occupations (see Rebillard 2012: 13). While suggesting that Christ-believing people work their way through the everyday public space without complication and without catching the eye, the anonymous neither describes nor recommends deception. He does not mean that Christians manage to 'pass for' non-Christians, that is, to conceal or obliterate their Christianness as secret discreditable differentness (Goffman 1963b: 73–102). For him there is no distinct Christian way of talking, eating, dressing up, marrying, and procreating that must be concealed from the non-Christians – whether these are strangers or acquaintances (secondary relations), neighbours or co-workers (quasi-primary relations), friends or partners (primary relations). In fact, all the above-mentioned social interactions that are carried out outdoors or whose effects are visible from the outside can be grouped under the following categories: a) situations where the potential incompleteness of knowledge about the religious preference and affiliation of the counterpart is irrelevant for the course of action – e.g. exchange greetings, commenting on a horse ride, running a business; b) situations in which the awareness of such religious persuasion does not harm the pursuit of the purpose – e.g. arranging a dinner party, establishing a consensual marriage, mothering/fathering. In the case of acquaintances and business partners of Christians, these people possess all the knowledge they need from their Christian correspondents in order to pursue and accomplish their action: they 'know only exactly that and no more about their partner which they have to know for the sake of the relationship they wish to enter' (Simmel 1950a: 319). In the case of spouses or friends of Christians, the deeper psychological intimacy that qualify relations like friendship or marriage is not such as to endanger the bond and/or put the Christ-believing partner in jeopardy. Difficulties of cohabitation with a non-Christian partner (see Justin, *Second Apology* 2) are not mentioned; the author seems also to reject the reductionist view of marital love that sees matrimonies as mere means of reproduction (Justin, *First Apology* 29.1; see Norelli 1991: 92 n. 10). Equally absent is the topic of the consumption of sacrificial meat and the participation to banquets where such food is most likely to be served (e.g. *1 Corinthians* 8; *Acts* 15:29).

Yet our author is adamant in saying that, no matter their inconspicuousness, or presumably precisely because of that, Christians are targeted, mistreated, and executed. Herein lies the tipping point at which ignorance steps in and turns inconspicuous differentness into secret deviance. 'Persecutions' happen because non-Christians do not really know the Christians (*Diogn.* 5.12) and, most importantly, ignore the indispensable cosmic function they serve (*Diogn.* 6). What they *correctly know* of them is no more worth persecuting than is harassing people because they speak comprehensibly, dress normally, eat, marry, and procreate customarily. What they *essentially ignore* of them – i.e. the 'inside secret' (Goffman 1959: 142) of their role of 'guarantors of the world order' (Norelli 1991: 99 n. 11) – is

something they should rather appreciate and thank them for. What they *wrongly believe* to know of them depends on outsiders' distortion and misinformation about everything Christians do offstage, away from the public eye. All people, urban and no, fabricate, circulate, and give credence to whispers, rumours, and slanders without being interested in or capable of confirming the gossips by accessing and verifying the information being chatted about. In cities, however, both the number of humans communicating within a web of gossips and the speed of their diffusion due to the density of contacts are disproportionately higher. Increased by lack of divulgence, the reputation of secret knowledge is threatened by the unruly circulation of disparaging reports of its content.

It is not by chance that the author picks up two themes related to the most infamous allegations apparently levelled against Christ believers as members of a perverse secret society: sexual immorality and ritual cannibalism of infants (Marrou 1951: 13). The two accusations of so-called 'Oedipal unions and Thyestean banquets' are frequently associated in early Christian writers' apologetic-polemical treatises (Justin, *First Apology* 26.7; Athenagoras, *Embassy* 3.1; *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons*, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1.14; Tertullian, *Apology* 8.2–3; *To the Heathen* 1.7.23; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.5–7). Instead of reporting and countering these slanders, he formulates two antitheses that allude to them and turn them into ethically superior positions and points of honour: 'They [Christians] marry like everyone else and have children, but they do not expose them once they are born. They share their meals but not their sexual partners' (*Diogn.* 5.6–7). The underlying message is: a) we Christians not only do not kill and eat our children but we care about them to the point that we do not expose them – as non-Christians do (see Dunning 2009: 69–70); b) we Christians not only do not make incestuous orgies but we are strictly monogamist.

What is generally overlooked is that both stigmatised behaviours, promiscuity and exposure of children, are offstage practices: 'alternative' sexual practices are performed indoors, not *en plein air*; infants are usually abandoned in secondary alleys (*angiporta*), not in public squares or primary streets (Kaiser 2011: 27). The same holds true for what the author praises as the Christians' behavioural-ethical points of honour: monogamist intercourses and the rearing of babies, too, are 'backstage conducts' (Goffman 1959: 128). It is not only tragic that ill-informed or simply spiteful people fabricate fake news on Christians' chimerical *deviance*, but it is unfortunate that almost no one can see their actual *differentness* and possibly appreciate it because the related behaviours are inconspicuous, confined to bounded back regions of the houses. Therefore, when our author states that Christ religion is 'invisible' (*Diogn.* 6.4) he presumably refers to a twofold general inconspicuousness: what makes Christians undistinguishable from the others is unremarkable and even uninteresting; what set them apart is undetectable.

Finally, how to interpret from this perspective the most sibylline statement in *To Diognetus* 5, 'they participate in all things as citizens, and they endure all things as foreigners' (*Diogn.* 5.5)? Enrico Norelli is right in noting that, in this context, the use of the verb ὑπομένω, which primarily means 'to endure, to suffer,' is more likely to indicate the opposite of a complete and active participation, that is, a sort of 'internal detachment' (Norelli 1991: 91 n. 8) about all things *civic*. This dispositional reservation, however, cannot but have different implications according to the social station of the addressees: for those who have the right rank and means it affects all forms of honourable political engagement; for all the others it concerns more occasional patterned displays of civic commitment. All in all, as resident aliens, urban Christians are not supposed to tolerate harassment or suffer exclusion. Rather, whether

elite members or commoners, they are expected to struggle to focus their energy on patience, in the sense of self-discipline, restraint, and withdrawal from the centre-stage. Again, this is not about deception but management and diversion of attention. As Goffman puts it, 'many of those who rarely try to pass, routinely try to cover' (Goffman 1963b: 102).

The anonymous suggests that many Christians who do not want or need to pass (as non-Christians) might want to 'cover' (Boin 2015: 46–47), that is, when sitting in a local council or attending a religious city festival, they might opt for structuring their interaction in a way that restricts the display of the characteristics associated with Christianness and makes it easier for both themselves and the others to withdraw attention from it (Goffman 1963b: 102–104). For it is one thing to make Christ religion visible when it matters, but quite another to make it obtrusive. 'Caution, and initial mistrust, is the basic survival kit in a big city' (Harris 2021: 35) and yet, in order to succeed in this strategy, Christ believers need cooperation from their Christian and non-Christian counterparts and therefore rely on their ability and willingness to accord discretion or simple disinterestedness. Certainly, these chances, competences, and even rules of civility are contingent upon the size of the urban agglomerate: in 3rd-century 'metropolises' like Rome or Alexandria anonymity operates better than in smaller centres like Smyrna. Urban scale always matters. Eventually, however, Christians' admirable-*cum*-paradoxical *πολιτεία* intersects with two different and yet equally critical elements of urbanity: the expectation to be properly known and correctly perceived by others as well as the 'right to be civilly disattended' (Goffman 1963a: 86) and go unnoticed.

Explanatory hypotheses, potential generalisations, possible relations to other factors

Conclusion

Men proclaim aloud (*vociferantur*) that the state is beset with us; in countryside, in villages, in islands, Christians; every sex, age, condition, yes! and rank going over to this name. They lament it as an injury (*quasi detrimento maerent*); and yet even so they do not bestir their minds to reflect whether there may not be in it something good that escapes them (Tertullian, *Apology* 1.7–8; transl. Glover 1931).

Around the same time as the anonymous pens his small guide to a Christian urbanity, other more confrontational pamphleteers like Tertullian are leveraging the trope of Christians' ubiquitous invisibility to address issues of loyalty and public utility by, at the same time, challenging allegations of deviance and advertising aspects of differentness (see Tertullian, *Apology* 37–42). Tertullian has a stick-and-carrot approach with his putative Roman audience and alternates threat and reassurance with swift sleights of hands (Urciuoli 2017). The anonymous' tricks, too, combine polemic with apology. Moreover, although Tertullian refers explicitly to non-urban Christians populating the countryside, the villages, and the islands, both writers use urban settings as primary sets and stages of the inconspicuous ubiquity of the Christians (Tertullian, *Apology* 37.4; 42.2–3). Yet this paper has argued that no other ancient writer like the unknown author of *To Diognetus* maps so finely the Christian way of life onto the urban mode of co-existence in variable and defective conditions of mutual personal knowledge. In no other script of the time did Christ-believers happen to reveal themselves in such a quintessentially urban manner: we see parts of them but not all, and what we do not see of them we either get along without or

make it up.

Footnotes

1

Funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG, German Research Foundation) – FOR 2779.

2

Along with the two macrosociological variables that at once inform Simmel's analysis of the metropolis and work as structural preconditions of secrecy in modern societies – i.e. individualisation and the money economy (Simmel 1950a: 334–338) –, scholars of ancient Mediterranean urban societies are confronted with a subset of modernity-related factors favouring secrecy as rationally intended action. Nedelmann for instance, points to the more calculable quality of everyday life following the introduction of a regular workday and the separation of the household from the workplace (Nedelmann 1994: 212–213). Kemple mentions the 'disconnect between secret and publicity' as clearly demarcated domains of life designated by institutionalised notions of privacy and the public sphere, respectively (Kemple 2018: 88, following Simmel 1950a: 337).

3

The lack of evidence makes it difficult to assess the situation in the countryside, where more Christians lived than is usually assumed (see Robinson 2017). Yet Gudrun Mader, a specialist of so-called Montanism, has recently argued that the confidence with which Christian faith was publicly (i.e. epigraphically) displayed in the early 3rd-century rural Phrygia might be related to the fact that the rural hinterland protected the Phrygian Christians 'from strict imperial observation' and the related social pressures – like the duty to sacrifice (Mader 2021: 322). The specificity of urban secrecy can thus find an archaeological confirmation from the earliest rural area (Phrygia) that produced Christian theological literature.

Bibliography

Barton, Carlin A., and Daniel Boyarin. 2016. *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities*. New York: Fordham University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Bettenworth, Anja, Dietrich Boschung, and Marco Formisano, eds. 2020. *For Example: Martyrdom and Imitation in Early Christian Texts and Art*. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Boin, Douglas. 2015. *Coming Out Christian in the Roman World: How the Followers of Jesus Made a Place in Caesar's Empire*. London: Bloomsbury.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Buell, Denise K. 2005. *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Dunning, Benjamin H. 2009. *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Ehrman, Bart D., ed. 2003. *The Apostolic Fathers: Volume II*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Engberg, Jakob. 2007. *Impulsore Chresto: Opposition to Christianity in the Roman Empire c. 50–250 AD*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Feldmeier, Reinhard. 1992. *Die Christen als Fremde. Die Metapher der Fremde in der antiken Welt, im Urchristentum und im 1. Petrusbrief*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Fischer, Claude. 1975. 'Toward a Subcultural Theory of Urbanism.' *American Journal of Sociology* 80 (6): 1319–1341.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Glover, Terrot. R. 1931. *Tertullian. Apology, De Spectaculis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City: Anchor Books.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Goffman, Erving. 1963a. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: The Free Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Goffman, Erving. 1963b. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Grant, Robert M. 1988. *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*. London: S.C.M. Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Harris, Richard. 2021. *How Cities Matter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Hirschauer, Stefan. 2005. 'On Doing Being a Stranger: The Practical Constitution of Civil Inattention.' *Journal for the Study of Social Behaviour* 35 (1): 41–67.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Jefford, Clayton N. 2013. *The Epistle to Diognetus (with the Fragment of Quadratus): Introduction, Text, and Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Johnson, Paul C. 2002. *Secrets, Gossips, and Gods. The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Kaiser, Alan. 2011. *Roman Urban Street Networks*. New York: Routledge.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Kemple, Thomas. 2018. *Simmel*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Lans, Birgit van der. 2019. 'The Written Media of Imperial Government and a Martyr's Career: Justin Martyr's 1 Apology.' In *Marginality, Media, and Mutations of Religious Authority in the History of Christianity*, edited by Laura Feldt and Jan N. Bremmer. Peeters: Leuven. 117–134.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Lieu, Judith M. 2004. *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Luhrmann, Tanya M. 1989. 'The Magic of Secrecy.' *Ethos* 17 (2): 131–165.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Mader, Heidrun E. 2021. "'Bigger Than a Little One". Rural Christianity in Asia Minor, Second Century CE.' In *Early Christian Encounters with Town and Countryside. Essays on the Urban and Rural Worlds of Early Christianity*, edited by Markus Tiwald and Jürgen Zangenberg. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 321–334.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Marrou, Henri-Irenée. 1951. *À Diognète*. Paris: Cerf.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Menestrina Giovanni. 1977. 'L'incipit dell'Epistola Ad Diognetum, Luca 1,1–4 e Atti 1,1–2.' *Bibbia e Oriente* 19: 215–218.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Mercati, Giovanni. 1947. 'Da incunaboli a codici, 1. Di due o tre rari codici greci del cardinal Giovanni da Ragusa.' In *Miscellanea bibliografica in memoria di don Tommaso Accurti*, edited by Lamberto Donati. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura. 3–36.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Milgram, Stanley. 1970. 'The Experience of Living in Cities.' *Science* 167 (3924): 1461–1468.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Moore, R. Laurence. 1986. *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Moss, Candida. 2010. *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Naerebout, Frits Gerard. 2021. "'Urban" and "Rural" in Early Christianity: Opposition or Complement?' In *Early Christian Encounters with Town and Countryside. Essays on the Urban and Rural Worlds of Early Christianity*, edited by Markus Tiwald and Jürgen Zangenberg. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

21–41.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Nedelmann, Birgitta. 1994. 'Secrecy as a Macrosociological Phenomenon: A Neglected Aspect of Simmel's Analysis of Secrecy.' In *Georg Simmel: Critical Assessments*, vol. 3, edited by David Frisby. London: Routledge. 202–221.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Neil, Bronwen. 2015. 'Continuities and Changes in the Practice of Letter-Collecting from Cicero to Late Antiquity.' In *Collecting Early Christian Letters: From the Apostle Paul to Late Antiquity*, edited by Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 3–17.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Norelli, Enrico. 1991. *A Diogneto*. Milano: Edizioni Paoline.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Philippides, Marios. 1980. *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes 1401–1477*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Quacquarelli, Antonio. 1976. *I padri apostolici*. Roma: Città Nuova.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Rebillard, Eric. 2012. *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Rivas Rebaque, Fernando. 2020. 'Justin Martyr as an Organic Christian Intellectual in Rome.' In *Christian Teachers in Second-Century Rome: Schools and Students in the Ancient City*, edited by Harlow Gregory Snyder. Leiden: Brill. 134–157.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Rizzi, Marco. 1996. 'La cittadinanza paradossale dei cristiani (Ad Diognetum 5–6). Le trasformazioni cristiane di un τόπος retorico.' *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 1: 221–260.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Robinson, Thomas A. 2017. *Who Were the First Christians: Dismantling the Urban Thesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Ruggiero, Fabio. 2020. *A Diogneto*. Roma: Città Nuova.

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

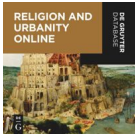
[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Simmel, Georg. 1950a [1908]. 'The Secret and the Secret Society.' In *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited by K.H. Wolff. New York: Macmillan. 307–376

[Search in Google Scholar](#)

Simmel, Georg. 1950b [1903]. 'The Metropolis and the Mental Life.' In *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff. New York: Macmillan. 409–424.

From the database



Religion and Urbanity Online

Subjects

Architecture and Design	Geosciences	Materials Sciences
Arts	History	Mathematics
Asian and Pacific Studies	Industrial Chemistry	Medicine
Business and Economics	Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies	Music
Chemistry	Jewish Studies	Pharmacy
Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies	Law	Philosophy
Computer Sciences	Library and Information Science, Book Studies	Physics
Cultural Studies	Life Sciences	Social Sciences
Engineering	Linguistics and Semiotics	Sports and Recreation
General Interest	Literary Studies	Theology and Religion

Services

[For journal authors](#)

[For book authors](#)

[For librarians](#)

[Rights & Permissions](#)

Publications

[Publication types](#)

[Open Access](#)

About

[Contact](#)

[Career](#)

[About De Gruyter](#)

[Partnerships](#)

[Press](#)

[New website FAQs](#)

[Help/FAQ](#) [Privacy policy](#) [Cookie Policy](#) [Accessibility](#) [Terms & Conditions](#) [Legal Notice](#)

© Walter de Gruyter GmbH 2022