

The divided cloak as redemptio militiae
Biblical stylization and hagiographical intertextuality in
Sulpicius Severus' Vita Martini

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Martin of Tours (c. 317–397) became one of the most popular saints of all times but in his own lifetime he was a controversial figure.¹ A veteran who had been baptized during his military service, his position as a cleric and a bishop was contested. His asceticism was seen as fanatical by some, the reality of his visions and miracles was questioned by others. Martin pleaded against the death penalty for Priscillian and suspicions were raised about his own orthodoxy.² The *Vita Martini* is the first text of a comprehensive hagiographical dossier, the *Martinellus*,³ published by Sulpicius Severus (363–c. 425), and it formed the lasting basis for Martin's fame. Paulinus of Périgueux (c. 470) and Venantius Fortunatus (c. 575)⁴ added metrical lives to the dossier. Gregory of Tours (c. 539–594)⁵ collected miracles associated with the saint. The remaining half of Martin's cloak became

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² Fontaine in his massive Sources Chrésiennes edition and commentary of the *Vita Martini* (1967–1969: 80–82) studies the apologetic goal in the *Vita Martini* and concludes, p. 171, that the discussion about Martin is as old as Martin himself, with a reference to the *Gallus* or *Dialogi* 2, 13, 7, about Martin's alleged conversations with martyrs, apostles and pagan gods or 'demons': *Haec plerisque etiam in eodem monasterio constitutis incredibilia videbantur*. 'I am aware that these things seemed incredible even to many who dwelt in the same monastery.' See also Stancliffe (1983: 150–151); and Van Uytvanghe (2001: col. 1269) for a list of what Sulpicius omitted.

³ Stancliffe (1983: 188–189; 278–296; 317).

⁴ The term *Martinellus* is medieval (see Berschin 1986: 210). When we refer to the *Vita*, we include the three *Letters* 'To Eusebius; to Aurelius; and to Bassula' which were clearly intended to supplement it (with an account of his death and burial) and are often included in editions (as e.g. by Fontaine) although, strictly speaking, they are not part of the *Life*. The *Gallus* or *Dialogues* are the third part of the *Martinellus*. For chronology, see Marc Van Uytvanghe in his book-length article (2001) on late antique spiritual biographies: cols. 1262–1274 on Sulpicius Severus; here col. 1262 with numerous further references: the *Life* was probably published in the spring of 397, Martin died in November 397, the *Letters* should be dated between 397 and 398 and the *Gallus* around 404.

⁵ See the study by Labarre (1998) on these interesting 'métamorphoses poétiques'.

⁶ See Berschin (1986), Labarre (1998) and Vielberg (2006) on the later writings on St Martin.

one of the most important relics of medieval France as his reputation grew over the centuries.⁶ But the writings of Sulpicius also prove that both the saint and his hagiographer were heavily disputed in their own times. Timothy Barnes, in his recent study *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, starts his discussion of the *Vita* thus: ‘Sulpicius Severus’ *Life of Martin of Tours* (BHL 5610) has engendered disquiet and unease among readers ever since he sent it forth into the world.’ In the course of his analysis, Barnes concludes that crucial parts of the work are ‘fraudulent’ and the product of ‘deliberate invention.’⁷

Truth claims and types of truth

This negative appraisal of the truthfulness of the *Vita Martini* seems to ignore the generic conventions of ancient biography, especially spiritual biographies, and its liberties with regard to historical truth and ‘useful’ invention. But, as we will see, Barnes’ criticism is not without parallels from Late Antiquity. There is a tension between the attitude towards historical truth in spiritual biographies, the explicit truth claims made by Sulpicius Severus and the numerous demonstrable deliberate inventions in his work, which perhaps justifies Barnes’ strong condemnation. But the problem is complex.

Biographies in general, and spiritual biographies in particular, are prescriptive rather than descriptive: they offer moral *exempla*. As highlighted in the introduction to this book (p. 00), there is a clear tension in this genre between factual truth and what we could perhaps call *ethical* truth, the former corresponding to historical events, the latter to the message the biographer or hagiographer wants to convey. In her book on spiritual biographies, Patricia Cox has made an interesting comparison with the rhetorical definition of ‘mythos’ as found in the *Progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon: ‘myth is a mendacious story expressing the truth through an image.’⁸

⁶ The tent or building in which the *capa* or *capella* was kept, gave rise to the word ‘chapel’ *vel sim.* in all modern languages, see Van den Bosch (1959). References for the medieval cult of St Martin in Van Uytenghe (2001: col. 1269).

⁷ Barnes (2010: 199). The fifth chapter (199–234) is entirely devoted to Sulpicius: ‘Saint Martin of Tours: History and Invention’. See also pp. 223 (‘both works [the *Life* and the *Gallus*] contain a large amount of deliberate invention’) and 233 (on at least some parts as ‘fraudulent’). On Barnes (2010) see Van Uytenghe (2011).

⁸ μῦθος ἐστὶ λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν. See Cox (1983: xi–xii) who refers to Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* 3, Spengel (1854, repr. 1966: 59; 21–22); see Duff (1999) on Plutarch; see Bowersock (1994a: 1–28) for truth games in Greek literature, and there is further discussion on spiritual

Sulpicius, far from admitting deliberate invention, makes numerous explicit truth claims in his writings about Martin.⁹ At the same time he uses other, less explicit, means to present his work as something more complex and more ambiguous than historiography.¹⁰ The *Vita Martini* will supplant the *fabulae* of the pagans. Sulpicius is not referring to mythological fables but to false *exempla* for false ways of life.¹¹ Martin is said to have surpassed both Hector and Socrates and, by implication, the hagiographer will, to a certain extent, surpass both Homer and Plato/Xenophon. Sulpicius does not question the historical reliability of these authors but criticizes certain ideas connected with their main characters and ideals they represent: glory in battle and philosophical wisdom. Martin, the converted soldier-saint who supposedly said (4, 3) *Christi ego miles sum: pugnare mihi non licet*: 'I am a soldier of Christ, I am not allowed to fight' (White 1998: 139), fought spiritual battles against idolatry; and his Christian lifestyle was more 'philosophical' than Platonism with its false teachings on the immortality of the soul. The pagan heroes and the works celebrating their lifestyles should be replaced by saints and by a Christian, prescriptive literature because only these will lead to the true eternal life. Sulpicius is self-conscious in his humility. He claims that he is not aspiring to eternal fame for himself as a writer and does so with a clear reference (1, 1) to the beginning of Sallust's *Catiline Conspiracy* (1, 3). Sulpicius only

biographies in Van Uytanghe (1993) and Praet (1999). See more recently Williams (2008), Hägg (2012a) and Turner (2012).

⁹ See e.g. 1, 9: *obsecro autem eos qui lecturi sunt, ut fidem dictis adhibeant, neque me quicquam nisi compertum et probatum scripsisse arbitrentur: alioquin tacere quam falsa dicere maluissim*: 'I therefore beg those who are to read this to believe what I say and not to think that I have written anything except what has been learned on good authority and proved to be true. If this were not the case I would have preferred silence to falsehood' (White 1998: 136); see also 19, 5: *nos et in excellentibus non subtrahere veritatem*: 'we have not removed the truth from the salient points' (White 1998: 151) and 27, 7: *manifesta exposuisse, vera dixisse: paratumque, ut spero, habebit a Deo praemium, non quicumque legerit, sed quicumque crediderit*: 'I have given a clear account of things and spoken of the truth; and the reward prepared by God, as I hope, will await not whoever reads this but whoever believes this' (White 1998: 159). See Huber-Rebenich (2010: 109) for further references. The truth claims are often shrouded in humility *topoi*, see also Praefatio 3: readers should pay attention to *res potius quam verba*: 'more weight to the subject matter than to the words' (White 1998: 134) and accept the content of the book *quia regnum Dei non in eloquentia, sed in fide constat*: 'because the kingdom of God is not founded on eloquence but on faith' (White 1998: 134). Sulpicius asks his friend Desiderius (Praef. 6) to delete the author's name *ut ... loquatur materiam, non loquatur auctorem*: 'announcing only its subject matter (and that is enough), not its author' (White 1998: 135).

¹⁰ See Fontaine (1967–1969: 185–191) for the specific relationship between subjective and objective truth in hagiography, and the triple metamorphosis from fact to stylized literary hagiographical work; and Van Uytanghe (1987a, 1993) on 'discours hagiographique' in spiritual biographies in general (including Greek, Roman, Jewish and Christian).

¹¹ On his choice of examples, see Mohrmann's introduction to Bastiaensen and Smit's edition (1975), with some corrections of Fontaine's views.

writes because the imitation of his hero, the Christian warrior-philosopher, will lead people to eternity. The first pages of the *Vita* are filled with humility *topoi* about the alleged poor literary quality of his writings, but his subject matter is clearly meant to be superior to what Homer, Plato or Sallust have to offer. The contrast between the highest possible content in the lowest possible style would bring the *Life of Martin* close to the Gospels, if only Sulpicius had written as an educated fisherman. In reality he was a highly sophisticated intellectual, and as a writer he made himself a 'fisher of (educated) men'.

The first pages of the *Vita Martini* have been called a literary programme, an *Ars Poetica* of Christian biography and of Christian artistic prose.¹² They contain numerous biblical echoes but also a very high number of rhetorical *topoi*¹³ and classical literary references to historical, rhetorical, philosophical and poetic writings,¹⁴ including comedy or *fabula* (namely the programmatic prologue of Terence's *Andria*, vv. 1–27).¹⁵ The hagiographer apologizes for his 'fishermen's language' (*sermo piscatorius*) and, paradoxically in phrases reminiscent of Sallust and Cicero, urges his readers to understand that his alleged lack of stylistic refinement poses no problem for someone who is merely reporting facts – exemplary facts beneficial to the reader and the pursuit of the true eternal life, and in this respect more beneficial than the *fabulae* about Hector or Socrates – but facts nonetheless.¹⁶

¹² Fontaine (1967–1969: 359); Berschin (1986: 198 n. 10).

¹³ See Fontaine (1967–1969: 97–134) 'la valeur littéraire de la *Vita Martini*' and note 10 above for some humility *topoi*.

¹⁴ The first three pages of the *Vita Martini* contain a very high number of quotes from and allusions to classical Greek and Latin literature:; Homer, Plato, Demosthenes, Cicero, Horace, Livy, Ovid, Sallust, Tacitus, etc. and also to Terence (see p. 000 below). It takes Fontaine more than eighty pages (359–427) to identify and discuss them all. The Bible is naturally also very present (Fontaine, *ibid.*) but in our introduction we want to point to the importance of the classical literary repertoire.

¹⁵ The quote is at *Vita Martini*, Praefatio 5: *ego enim, cum primum animum ad scribendum appuli, quia nefas putarem tanti viri latere virtutes*: 'and so, from the moment I set myself to write because I considered it wrong to keep the virtues of such a great man concealed' (White 1998: 134), which is a clear reference to vv. 1–3: *Poeta quom primum animum ad scribendum adpulit / id sibi negoti credidit solum dari / populo ut placerent quas fecisset fabulas*; 'When the playwright first steered his thoughts towards authorship, he supposed his sole business was to see that his plays pleased the people' and to the rest of the prologue of this pleasing *fabula*, where the poet dealt with criticism of his work and attacks against his reputation due to a lack of originality, with references to the literary practice of Menander, Naevius, Plautus and Ennius. I read the quote as defiant against possible critics; Fontaine (1967–1969: 387) simply sees it as a way to charm hesitant educated readers: 'une nouvelle plaisanterie de lettré est destinée à amener un sourire sur les lèvres des lecteurs réticents.'

¹⁶ See 1, 3: *aut quid posteritas emolumenti tulit legendo Hectorem pugnantem aut Socraten philosophantem? cum eos non solum imitari stultitia sit, sed non acerrime etiam impugnare dementia: quippe qui humanam vitam praesentibus tantum actibus aestimantes spes suas fabulis, animas sepulcris dederint*: 'or what benefit did posterity gain from reading about Hector's battles or about Socrates'

The prescriptive, exemplary aspects of biography and hagiography would allow for the invention of 'mythical' anecdotes, but Sulpicius emphatically states that what he is writing is true, not only to Martin's character and in the pragmatic sense of exemplary and helpful to obtain the eternal life, but also in the sense that his stories correspond to historical reality. These truth claims are enhanced by the way in which Sulpicius portrays Martin: as someone who is sceptical about what presents itself as the undisputed or undisputable truth. We should note that clothing, a central theme in Martin's narrative, as we will see presently, was often an important criterion in deciding whether appearances corresponded to reality or not.¹⁷ This is part of the apologetic programme of Sulpicius' Martinian writings: he records and responds to negative and sceptical reactions to Martin and to his own work. In the *Gallus*, the three books of dialogues on the life and the virtues of St Martin, published some seven years after the *Vita*, the hagiographer feels obliged to react against the many sceptical reader responses and against accusations of having written a mendacious account of the life of St Martin.¹⁸ Jacques Fontaine, the great Martinus and Sulpicius scholar, concludes that the *Life* presents us with a mix of truth and fiction. Fontaine also points to the etymology of 'fiction' to underline his view that Sulpicius models or remodels the material at hand (as all hagiographers do), but that he does not invent out of nothing.¹⁹ It would seem that some of Sulpicius' contemporaries would

philosophy? It would be foolish to imitate these men – indeed it would be madness not to combat them most energetically, seeing that as they have entrusted their hopes of immortality to fables and their souls to tombs' (White 1998: 135).

¹⁷ See below the discussion of the false prophet (23) and the apparition of the Antichrist (24, 4–8) where clothing functions as a criterion. Another good example is the episode on the false cult of the common criminal mistaken for a martyr (11) where Martin, *non temere adhibens incertis fidem*: 'not quick to believe things which were doubtful' (White 1998: 144), summons the spirit or *umbra* of the brigand through prayer (with obvious literary and biblical echoes) and forces the false martyr to tell the truth in front of witnesses who could hear the ghost but could not see him.

¹⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus* I, 26, 4 (Fontaine 2006: 208): *Horreo dicere quae nuper audiui: infelicem dixisse nescio quem te in illo libro tuo plura mentitum*: 'I shudder to state what I have lately heard, that a miserable man (I know him not), has said that you have told many lies in that book of yours.' Fontaine (*ibid.* n. 3) comments: '*Te ... plura mentitum* simplifie, en une accusation moralisante de mensonge délibéré, la gêne qu'a pu causer au lecteur le mélange indéniable de vérité et de fiction dans la *Vita Martini*.' Van Uytanghe (2001: col. 1271) states that the aim of the *Gallus* is clearly more than apologetic. We can also refer to the introduction of Fontaine's *Vie de Saint Martin*, pp. 171–191 for this debate, and to the first letter 'to Eusebius', usually added to the *Vita*, which is an apology against doubts uttered about Martin's thaumaturgical powers.

¹⁹ See the quote from his edition of the *Gallus* (note 19 above); Fontaine (1967–1969: 188–191); and Fontaine (1997: 29): '*Vérité et fiction, donc et non pas vérité ou fiction; à prendre ici en son sens premier en latin, la fiction modèle et remodèle, elle n'invente pas ex nihilo.*' See Praet (2011) on the use of the Bible to create out of nothing an account of a martyrdom long thought to be historical.

have disagreed, and among modern scholars too the reliability of the *Vita* has triggered different responses.

The divided cloak in previous research: hagiographical fiction or oral tradition?

This contribution does not try to reach conclusions about the historical reliability of the *Vita Martini*, nor does it pass moral judgement on its author. Rather, it attempts to show that Sulpicius uses the Bible to convey his message about Martin.²⁰ My analysis will focus on the famous scene in which Martin gives away half of the very cloak he was wearing to clothe a naked stranger. As we will see, this gesture was presented as pivotal to Martin's later career as an ascetic and as a bishop. Most scholars have had nothing but admiration for this dramatic gesture, and almost no one has doubted its authenticity. Even Ernest-Charles Babut (1912: 179–180), the most critical *Vita Martini* scholar, passed a nuanced judgement on the passage. He believed that Martin was not as famous or popular in the fourth and fifth centuries as Sulpicius Severus or medieval traditions would have us believe,²¹ and so he started his analysis by saying that the fame of the gesture results not so much from the way in which Sulpicius Severus describes it as from the way in which later visual artists develop the scene. In the visual arts Martin usually appears on horseback (although this is not in the text) and as a rich, well-dressed, young knight on his horse he is contrasted with the old, poor man laying almost nude on the ground.²² Babut was probably right in saying that the scene would not have become as popular without these contrasts and the horse. But despite the later adaptations in Christian art, Babut was willing to accept that the original scene had come down to Sulpicius as part of an oral tradition. He did, however, add that a possible parallel with the *Life of Saint Anthony* made the scene suspect (Babut 1912: 180). The second main

²⁰ On the biblical stylization of the *Vita Martini* and other hagiographical works see Van Uytanghe (1985: 582–593, 1987a: 80–81).

²¹ For the reception of this gesture in hagiography: see Devos (1975), and for possible echoes in literary works not related to St Martin, see the intriguing parallels in the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyrii* and other works discussed by Panayotakis (2009, 2011). It is very difficult to date the *Historia Apollonii* (in its many versions and stages) and to say whether it was influenced by the *Vita Martini* or the other way around, but Panayotakis seems right to choose a link with traditions about the philosopher's cloak.

²² Fontaine has included the oldest known representation of the scene, a miniature of the Fulda Sacramentary (around 975, now in Göttingen) in the beginning of his edition (1967–1969: 4–5). See also Van Dam (1988).

thesis of Babut's book on St Martin was that Sulpicius Severus relies heavily upon Latin translations of the *Life of Saint Anthony* for almost every scene,²³ in an attempt to attribute to Martin a position and a renown he most certainly had not earned during his lifetime. Unsurprisingly, Babut found a parallel between the turning point in Martin's life and the conversion of Saint Anthony to the ascetic life (*Vita Antonii* 2), who at the age of eighteen – the same as Martin's – gave away all his possessions, inspired by the Gospel of Matthew 19:21 ('Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me"'). Babut was tempted by this parallel but concluded that perhaps Sulpicius' reading of Athanasius simply prompted him to insert at this point a fact available in oral tradition.²⁴ The work of Babut has been discussed and refuted many times,²⁵ and I will not try to revive its thesis. Instead, I attempt to show that the most famous passage of the *Vita Martini*, the division of the cloak, is marked not just by one biblical or hagiographical echo but by a very high level of complex biblical stylization, and that it can be read as part of Sulpicius' apologetic agenda in connection with Martin's baptism as a military man.

Catholic scholars such as the Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye, who had no problem writing about hagiographical legends in the early Middle Ages, reacted very strongly to Babut and his historical criticism of the *Vita Martini*. Jacques Fontaine, for his part, takes a moderate position, criticizing Babut for being over-critical and Delehaye for admitting too little stylization: the saint himself, the witnesses present, the oral tradition and the hagiographer all add layers of stylization (biblical and other) to hagiographical documents. In his study of the impact of the Bible on the earliest Latin hagiography, Marc Van Uytenghe adopts a similar, moderate approach to the *Vita Martini*.²⁶

²³ See Tornau (2001) for a more nuanced analysis.

²⁴ See also Stancliffe (1983: 164): 'We may assume that Martin was Sulpicius' source (either directly or through some one else) for the events of his early life, including the charity at Amiens, with the vision of Christ which followed; his release from the army, etc.'

²⁵ See the reactions of Camille Jullian, Hippolyte Delehaye and others, conveniently discussed in Fontaine (1967–1969: 13–14), who adds his own views in the introduction and the massive commentary of his *Sources Chrétiennes* edition (1967–1969: 171–191). See also Barnes (2010: 200–205).

²⁶ See Delehaye (1920, 1973). Fontaine (see note 25 above for a general *status quaestionis*) on Delehaye: 'De telles phrases sentent regrettamment l'anti-thèse. Elles sont démenties par l'analyse de la création littéraire de Sulpice dans ces quatre premiers chapitres, que le P. H. Delehaye a le tort d'avoir voulu sauver en bloc et sans aucune concession' (Fontaine 1967–1969: 180, n. 1). Van Uytenghe (1985: 582) with further references; pp. 582–593 for a general analysis of the influence of the Bible on the *Vita Martini*.

At the most positive or least sceptical end of the spectrum is Clare Stancliffe, who is convinced that the *Life* offers

occasions when we can see reality breaking in through Sulpicius' picture. No conscientious hagiographer could have invented the story of Martin cutting his cloak in two so that he could give *half* [her italics] of it to a beggar, while keeping the other half for his own needs (i.e. to cover his nakedness).²⁷

Ancient criticism of cloak-and-sword

St Martin cutting his cloak is one of the most recognizable hagiographical scenes ever. It has also become an almost archetypal gesture of charity. Raymond van Dam writes about the reception of this gesture: 'According to Sulpicius's *Life*, Martin had once cut his military cloak to share it with a beggar; throughout the Middle Ages this story defined one of the most durable images of selfless generosity' (van Dam 1999: 567). Although the gesture was almost unanimously admired by all modern commentators, regardless of their personal religious convictions, in Late Antiquity the scene was not universally well received. Both St Jerome (347–420) and Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) appear to have criticized the gesture, the former for vanity, the latter for the unrealistic standards it seemed to set for Christian charity. In his commentary on Isaiah 58:7 ('if you see a naked man, clothe him') Jerome refers to Luke 3:11 ('he who has two tunics, let him give one to him who has none') and adds that the Gospel 'did not command that one tunic should be cut up and divided, as many do for the sake of popular favour [*popularis aurae causa*]; but that a second should not be kept'. Clare Stancliffe concludes that it is 'hard to believe that this is not a covert jibe at Martin's famous division of his cloak outside Amiens'.²⁸ Adalbert de Vogüé also interprets Jerome's remark as criticism of Martin and Sulpicius and adds another probable 'covert jibe': a critical passage from a homily on Luke by Pope Gregory the Great saying *si una dividatur, nemo vestitur* ('If one is to be divided, no one is dressed').²⁹ Although the Bible mentions tunics and not

²⁷ Stancliffe (1983: 321). She believed Martin was only wearing the *chlamys* and had nothing underneath, which hardly seems standard procedure for Roman soldiers in any season or historical period, see also Fontaine (1997: 33, note 23).

²⁸ Stancliffe (1983: 298) (her translations) with reference (note 6) to Antin (1951: 215) but not to Fontaine (who also quotes Antin on this topic, p. 485, note 2). Other possible covert attacks on Martin and Sulpicius are discussed in Rebenich (1992: 252–255) and a possible counterattack by Sulpicius in Goodrich (2007).

²⁹ De Vogüé (1997: 31, note 68) (without referring to Stancliffe or Antin) gives the same passage from Jerome (*In Is.* 16, 58, 7: *Non enim unam iussit scindi et dividi, quod multi popularis aurae*

cloaks,³⁰ I also believe that these passages show a certain ambivalence towards the message that Sulpicius wanted to convey. One might even say that this ambivalent attitude is anticipated by Sulpicius who, as we will see, writes that many bystanders admired St Martin's selfless gesture while others reacted with laughter (3, 2).

Militia armata and militia Christi

In the *Vita Martini*, the scene in which Martin divides his cloak at the gates of Amiens (3, 1–2) is followed by a nocturnal apparition of Christ dressed in the half that Martin gave to the naked man (3, 3–4) and, immediately after that (3, 5–6), Martin decides to get baptized. The fact that he was baptized during his military service was the source of much controversy and we should understand the two scenes leading up to this decision as central to the highly apologetic nature of the whole *Vita Martini*.

Martin's military service (*militia*) poses a number of problems. In fact, it presents so many problems that it seems unlikely that Sulpicius invented it. Many thought ill of his decision to continue to serve in the military after his baptism (Fontaine 1967–69: 209–217; Stancliffe 1983: 259; 323). In the *Gallus* or *Dialogues*, Sulpicius even has Briccio, one of his fellow monks, criticize Martin for his military career and, while he is at it, ascribe all the stories about angels and demons to Martin's senile dementia.³¹ Decretals by Popes Siricius (384–399) and Innocentius (401–417) had ruled against baptized military men as clerics during Martin's career and shortly after his death.³² From a moral point of view, Sulpicius argues that

causa faciunt; 'He did not command to cut and divide a single tunic, as many now do for the sake of popularity' and adds Gregory, *Hom. Ev.* 20, 11 on Luke 3:11 as quoted in the text above. This volume in the impressive series offers long discussions of the *Vita Martini* (§ 1: pp. 19–91) and the *Dialogues* (§ 2: pp. 93–156).

³⁰ The Greek of Luke 3:11 has Ὁ ἔχων δύο χιτῶνας μεταδότην τῷ μὴ ἔχοντι; the Vulgate *Qui habet duas tunicas, det non habenti*; the Itala versions sometimes offer the same translation, or slight variations as *Qui habet duas tunicas, communicet cum non habente*.

³¹ *Gallus-Dial.* 3, 15, 4: *se asserens sanctiorem, quippe qui a primis annis in monasterio inter sacras ecclesiae disciplinas, ipso Martino educante, crevisset; Martinum vero et a principio, quod ipse diffiteri non posset, militiae actibus sorduisse, et nunc, per inanes superstitiones et fantasmata visionum, ridicula prorsus inter deliramenta, senuisse*; 'asserting that he was a holier man than Martin who had brought him up, inasmuch as from his earliest years he had grown up in the monastery amid the sacred institutions of the Church, while Martin had at first, as he could not deny, been tarnished with the life of a soldier, and had now entirely sunk into dotage by means of his baseless superstitions, and ridiculous fancies about visions.'

³² Fontaine (1967–1969: 143–148) with many references to the secondary literature on real and spiritual *militia*; De Vogüé (1997: 31, n. 69) on Innocentius, Decr. 10 of 404 CE; Huber-Rebenich (2010: 113) for Siricius *Ep.* 5, 2.

Martin never shed any blood and that he was not given to any of the vices often exhibited by soldiers in the fourth century CE. We should not forget that Martin served under two emperors: the Arian Constantius II, and the crypto-pagan and later openly Apostate, Julian. I will not enter into the whole debate about the short or long duration of Martin's military career. Suffice it to say that he did serve under two emperors of questionable reputations but that the biographer stresses Martin's independence from them.³³ The saint is presented as a pupil of Hilary of Poitiers (although the date of the meeting mentioned by Sulpicius and that of Hilary's exile pose enormous chronological problems³⁴) and as an ardent preacher against Arianism. Martin's campaign against pagan cults is part of what made him famous. The hagiographer presents Martin the soldier as a conscientious objector and almost as a confessor–military martyr in a final confrontation with the emperor Julian when he put these famous words into Martin's mouth (4, 3): *Christi ego miles sum: pugnare mihi non licet* ('I am a soldier of Christ: I am not allowed to fight').

Sulpicius Severus tries very hard to minimize Martin's military service:³⁵ his motivation to become a soldier, the duration of his service and what Sulpicius tells us Martin did and did not do as a soldier are all part of an apology. We are told that he served in the elite imperial guard but also that he did not enter the military out of his own free will.³⁶ His father had risen to the rank of tribune (2, 2), and the law forced sons of veterans to enlist (2, 5). According to Sulpicius, Martin was literally put into chains and forced to take the military oath or *sacramenta militaria*.³⁷ The same chapter tells us that Martin, ever since he was a child, was only interested in receiving the Christian sacraments. Sulpicius continuously plays with

³³ See Stancliffe (1983: 111–148) and Barnes (2010: 205–208) on the chronology; Fontaine (1967–1969: 129–130, 1963: 31–58) for the martyr-typology.

³⁴ See Barnes (2010: 208): 'correct chronology poses a sharp and inescapable dilemma.'

³⁵ See Fontaine (1967–1969: 453 ff.). It seems Sulpicius Severus could not just leave the military career out of the *Vita* but was clearly struggling to fit this embarrassing fact about his 'hero' into the life of a saint.

³⁶ *Vita Martini* 2, 2: *ipse armatam militiam in adulescentia secutus inter scolares alas sub rege Constantio, deinde sub Iuliano Caesare militavit: non tamen sponte*: 'Martin himself, as a young man, followed him into the army and fought in the élite cavalry regiment under the emperor Constantius and then under the Caesar Julian. He did not so willingly, however' (White 1998: 136).

³⁷ *Vita Martini* 2, 5: *Sed cum edictum esset a regibus, ut veteranorum filii ad militiam scriberentur, prodeunte patre, qui felicibus eius actibus inuidebat, cum esset annorum quindecim, captus et catenatus sacramentis militaribus implicatus est*: 'But when the rulers gave out an edict to the effect that the sons of veterans were to be enrolled in the army, his father, who was hostile to his holy actions, betrayed him: at the age of fifteen Martin was arrested, put in chains and bound by military oaths' (White 1998: 137). The military origin of the Christian use of *sacramentum* is well known, but here it is an additional element in the intertwining of his life as a soldier and as a Christian.

the themes of the metaphorical *militia* (for Christ) and the real, secular *militia*. During his service Martin only had one servant and we are told that, in reality, Martin served his servant (2, 5): he reversed the roles and took off the shoes of his servant, cleaning them in an allusion to Christ washing the feet of his pupils in John 13:13–18, and to the precepts of Matthew 23:11 about masters and servants. In his *Life*, Martin is presented as a prophet, apostle, martyr and ascetic but *imitatio Christi* is also a very important part of Martin's characterization.³⁸

Imitation and emulation of Christ

Martin is presented as someone who imitated certain deeds of the Messiah and followed all of his precepts. Sulpicius tells us that Martin, at the age of ten, ran away from home and, against the will of his pagan parents (2, 3: *invitis parentibus*: 'against his parents' wishes' (White 1998: 136)), fled to a church where he demanded to be made a catechumen. Fontaine is not entirely convinced of the authenticity of this *puer senex*-motif although he lists a whole series of possible parallels of children being admitted to the catechumenate (but notes that these examples were all children of Christian parents).³⁹ He also refers to child-martyrs and to the fact that churches were offering refuge or asylum at that time, and he links the story to Old Testament characters taking refuge in the Temple or in the presence of God. Only at the very end of the last footnote of his commentary he refers to what we believe is the central point of the story: Jesus conversing with the doctors in the Temple.⁴⁰ Martin was not teaching, only asking to be taught in one of God's temples. But we could also argue that he surpassed Jesus on two or even three counts. Jesus was twelve when he stayed behind in the Temple and his parents did not know that he had not returned with them (Luke 2:43: *et non cognoverunt parentes eius*). Martin was only ten when he defied his parents by running away (2, 3). Joseph and Mary were pious Jews, whereas Martin's parents were both pagans.

In the next scene Martin is twelve and he wants to become an ascetic and go to the proverbial desert. Because he was only a child, Martin was unable to act upon his desire. Sulpicius presents this as an imitation of the desert ascetics, which is anachronistic in the Latin West to say the

³⁸ See the third chapter in the introduction of Fontaine (1967–1969), especially pp. 127–132: 'La quadruple "typologie" de la Vita: prophétique, christique, martyrologique, ascétique'.

³⁹ Fontaine (1967–1969: 444–446).

⁴⁰ Fontaine (1967–1969: 446, note 1). We should add that De Vogüé (1997: 27) did make the more obvious link with Jesus in the Temple.

least, for children of pagan or Christian parents alike, but historicity is not an issue here. Martin was a pioneer of monasticism in the West, but not at age twelve. In this passage, the age parallel leads Fontaine to detect a link with the story of Jesus in the Temple, but for Martin this is already the second independent act, and the only real parallel is the age.⁴¹ To me, the obvious parallel for the passage about the twelve-year-old Martin is the time Jesus spent in the desert, before the start of his public life, at the age of thirty. The implicit arrogance of Sulpicius' claim is only tempered by the fact that the twelve-year-old Martin never fulfilled his desert dreams, and by Sulpicius' strategy of not openly stressing the biblical parallels. On the contrary, he refers explicitly only to ecclesiastical parallels (2, 4): *Animus tamen, aut circa monasteria aut circa ecclesiam semper intentus, meditabatur adhuc in aetate puerili quod postea devotus implevit*. 'Yet his mind was always intent either on the monastic cells or on the church and already in childhood he was planning what he later carried out with devotion' (White 1998: 137). As a child, Martin was already intent on being a perfect Christian but his hagiographer suggests not only an imitation but even an *emulation* of Christ.

The passion of Christ as model for the suffering and death of Martin

The suggestions of very close parallels between Martin and Christ are not limited to childhood stories. We also find them in the scenes describing the final years and death of the saint. The first letter complementing the *Vita* responds to an unnamed sceptic, who, *malo spiritu suscitatum* 'under the influence of an evil spirit' (*Epistula* 1, 2), had raised doubts about the stories presenting Martin as a thaumaturge 'who had raised the dead and warded off fire from several houses'. Why then, the criticism goes, had Martin not been able to rescue his own monastery from the flames and protect his own clothes and flesh against multiple burns (*Ep.* 1, 12)? To express the ordeal to which Martin had been exposed during this fire, Sulpicius uses the word *passio*, which in his oeuvre almost always refers to either martyrs or the Passion of the Christ.⁴² In the following sections

⁴¹ Fontaine (1967–1969: 446–452), also with other parallels; Van Uytanghe (1985: 587) takes the two scenes of the *Vita Martini* (at age ten and twelve) together: 'Déjà la précocité spirituelle de Martin... transpose, dans un contexte nouveau, un thème à la fois antique et biblique (voir par exemple Tobie 1:4–6 et Luc 2:41–50).'

⁴² *Ep.* 1, 2: *Interea indicatur mihi dixisse quendam, malo spiritu suscitatum, cur Martinus, qui mortuos suscitasset, flammis domibus depulisset, ipse nuper adustus incendio periculosae fuisset obnoxius passioni;*

(*Ep.* 1, 3–4) he explicitly compares the sceptic's criticism of the saint with the scoffing remarks by the Jewish leaders at the crucified Christ: *Iudaeorum in verbis eius perfidiam et dicta cognoscimus, qui in cruce positum Dominum his verbis increpabant: 'alios salvos fecit, se ipsum salvum facere non potest'* (Matthew 27:42); 'We recognize his perfidious talk in the words of the Jews of old, who reviled the Lord, when hanging upon the cross, in the following terms: He saved others; himself he cannot save.' And he further elaborates the comparison between the Lord and the Lord's saint in the next sentence: *Vere iste, quicumque est, si illis temporibus natus esset, et in Dominum hac voce potuisset dicere, qui simili modo sanctum Domini blasphemat exemplo*; 'Truly it is clear that, whoever be the person referred to, if he had lived in those times, he would have been quite prepared to speak against the Lord in these terms, inasmuch as he blasphemes a saint of the Lord, after a like fashion.' In the following sections (*Ep.* 1, 5–6) Martin is explicitly compared with St Paul, and the criticism against him is paralleled with the negative reactions of the Maltese when Paul was bitten by a viper immediately after he had survived shipwreck.⁴³ Van Uytfanghe concludes that this association by contrast suggests the association of Martin himself to Christ and Paul.⁴⁴

In the third epistle, on the death of St Martin, the comparison with Christ is taken even further. When Martin announces his last hour, his followers despair and ask, with a clear military and a possible biblical allusion (*Ep.* 3, 10), 'Why, father, are you deserting us?' (*Cur nos, pater, deseris?*).⁴⁵ Moved to tears by the monks, Martin responds with a clear

'In the meantime, however, I was told that a certain person, under the influence of an evil spirit, had asked why Martin, who was said to have raised the dead and to have rescued houses from the flames, had himself recently become subject to the power of fire, and thus been exposed to suffering of a dangerous character.' Fontaine (1967–1969: 1126) refers to §§ 7–8 for the resurrection-stories and § 14 for warding off fire from houses adjacent to a burning pagan temple. About the use of the word *passio*, Fontaine notes that it must have evoked a comparison with the martyrs and with Christ. I would ascribe the intention of comparing Martin's suffering with that of the martyrs and of the Christ not to the unnamed sceptical character but rather to Sulpicius himself because, even if we believe Sulpicius is referring to a real critic in this indirect speech, the only thing we can be sure about is that the word *passio* here was chosen (or at least retained) by Sulpicius. It occurs only once in the *Vita Martini* proper, in the story (§ 11) about the brigand falsely venerated as a martyr-saint, 11, 2: *sed Martinus non temere adhibens incertis fidem, ab his, qui maiores natu erant, presbyteris vel clericis flagitabat nomen sibi martyris, tempus passionis ostendi*. 'But Martin was not quick to believe things which were doubtful and so he kept asking the older priests and clerics to reveal to him the martyr's name and the date of his passion' (White 1998: 144). Further references in Fontaine 1967–1969: 1126–1127, note 2.

⁴³ Acts 28:1–5 and *Ep.* 1, 5: *per omnia similem Apostolis ... hoc et de Paulo*; 'In all things like to the Apostles ... respecting Paul also.' In *Ep.* 1, 6 there is a further comparison with St Peter.

⁴⁴ Van Uytfanghe (1985: 585).

⁴⁵ There is an obvious pun on military desertion in this outcry, but there might be a variation on Psalm (21) 22, 2 and the words spoken by Jesus to the heavenly Father according to Matthew 27:46

allusion to Christ's agony in Gethsemane (*Ep.* 3, 11): *Domine, si adhuc populo tuo sum necessarius, non recuso laborem: fiat voluntas tua* ('O Lord, if your people still need me, I do not refuse the task: let your will be done'). He then continues his prayer (*Ep.* 3, 12–13) with an extended metaphor of eight lines in which his whole life is compared to military service and Christ to a military commander.⁴⁶ At the end of this speech we have, with a slight variation, a second reference to Christ accepting his suffering and death: *bonum mihi est, Domine, voluntas tua*, 'good, O Lord, is your will to me'. According to Fontaine, this is a reference to Christ's response when accepting the chalice (Matthew 26:42).⁴⁷ And even the phrasing of Martin's last breath (*Ep.* 3, 17: *Cum hac ergo voce spiritum caelo reddidit*, 'As he uttered these words, his spirit fled') is a slight variation on the words used in Matthew 27:50 (*emisit spiritum*) and John 19:30 (*tradidit spiritum*) (Fontaine 1967–69: 1332).

De crastino non cogitabat

It seems fair to conclude so far that Sulpicius suggests certain parallels between the life of Martin and that of the Lord, which we can call part of an *imitatio Christi*. Another aspect is that his hero consciously follows the Lord's commandments. According to Sulpicius, Martin served as a soldier for three years before he was baptized and then another two years after his baptism. Even during the triennium he showed none of the vices soldiers usually exhibit.⁴⁸ He lived a virtuous life, especially with regard to

and Mark 15:34: *Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?* Sulpicius chose *deseris* instead of *dereliquisti* but I think the passage could be taken as a biblical allusion, which then sets the tone for the other, more straightforward biblical parallels.

⁴⁶ *Ep.* 3, 13: *Gravis quidem est, Domine, corporeae pugnae militiae et iam satis est quod hucusque certavi; sed si adhuc in eodem labore pro castris tuis stare me praecipis, non recuso nec fatiscentem causabor aetatem. Munia tua devotus implebo, sub signis tuis, quoadusque ipse tu iusseris, militabo, et, quamvis optata sit seni remissio post laborem, est tamen animus victor annorum et cedere nescius senectuti. Quodsi etc.*, 'Terrible, indeed, Lord, is the struggle of bodily warfare, and surely it is now enough that I have continued the fight till now; but, if you command me still to persevere in the same toil for the defense of your flock, I do not refuse, nor do I plead against such an appointment my declining years. Wholly given to you, I will fulfill whatever duties you assign me, and I will serve under your standard as long as you shall prescribe. Yea, although release is sweet to an old man after lengthened toil, yet my mind is a conqueror over my years, and I have no desire to yield to old age. But if now ...'

⁴⁷ Fontaine (1967–1969: 1310, note 1) and Van Uytenghe (1985: 586–587), the latter of whom speaks of 'couleur christique'.

⁴⁸ *Vita Martini* 2, 6: *Triennium fere ante baptismum in armis fuit, integer tamen ab his vitiis quibus illud hominum genus implicari solet*. 'He was in the army for about three years before his baptism but he remained free from the vices in which men of this kind usually become entangled' (White 1998: 137).

charity. He gave away everything he did not need for his own daily sustenance (2, 7: *nam frugalitatem in eo laudari non est necesse, qua ita usus est, ut iam illo tempore non miles, sed monachus putaretur*. 'It is unnecessary to praise his frugality which he practiced in such a way that already at that time he might have been taken to be a monk rather than a soldier' (White 1998: 137)). And in the paragraph (2, 8) directly leading up to the division of the cloak and to his baptism, we see him perform most of the works of mercy mentioned in Matthew 25:31–46:

necdum tamen regeneratus in Christo agebat quendam bonis operibus baptismi candidatum assistere scilicet laborantibus, opem ferre miseris, alere egentes, vestire nudos, nihil sibi ex militiae stipendiis praeter cotidianum victum reservare: iam tum evangelii non surdus auditor⁴⁹ de crastino non cogitabat.

Although he had not yet been born again in Christ, in performing good works he behaved like a candidate for baptism: he supported those in trouble, he brought help to the wretched, he fed the poor, he clothed the naked and kept nothing of his military salary for himself apart from what he needed for food each day. Already at that time he was not deaf to the gospel for he took no thought for the tomorrow. (White 1998: 137)

Sulpicius changes the biblical order of the works of mercy and mentions 'to dress the naked' (*vestire nudos*) last as a proleptic reference to the Martinian charity towards the naked beggar at Amiens,⁵⁰ but the final phrase of this chapter contains an extra element: an interesting biblical allusion to clothing.

The last words of chapter 2 (*de crastino non cogitabat*, 'he did not think about tomorrow') refer to Matthew 6:34, which is the conclusion of a famous pericope about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, and entails a general allusion to clothing and a specific reference to the robes of King Solomon (Matthew 6:25–29). Martin, as someone who shares the very cloak he is wearing, is clearly someone who is not anxious about clothing. The allusions to clothes and to the magnificent robes of King Solomon also prepare the reader for the apparition scene after the division of the cloak, when the king of the Jews whose kingdom was not of this world, appears in the cloak of the beggar. If we accept that an allusion to King Solomon almost by definition triggers the mental image of his wise

⁴⁹ The phrase *non surdus auditor* is also a biblical reference: to Matthew 13:13 and the parable of the sower: Matthew 13:1–23, where Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9 ff., see Fontaine (1967–1969: 470–471).

⁵⁰ See Fontaine (1997: 30 n. 10).

judgment, we might even refer to the practical wisdom of Martin cutting his cloak in half.⁵¹

The cloak, *Christus Rex* and Martin baptized

Before we enter into a detailed analysis of chapter three, we should quote the entire chapter, which consists of three parts: the division of the cloak (3, 1–2), the vision of Christ wearing the half that Martin has given to the beggar (3, 3–4), and Martin's double and controversial decision to get baptized but to remain in military service for an additional two years, supposedly because his tribune had asked him to (3, 5–6).

3 (1) Quodam itaque tempore, cum iam nihil praeter arma et simplicem militiae vestem haberet, media hieme, quae solito asperior inhorruerat, adeo ut plerosque vis alioris exstingeret, obvium habet in porta Ambianensium civitatis pauperem nudum: qui cum praetereuntes ut sui misererentur oraret omnesque miserum praeterirent, intellegit vir Deo plenus sibi illum, aliis misericordiam non praestantibus, reservari. (2) quid tamen ageret? nihil praeter chlamydem, qua indutus erat, habebat: iam enim reliqua in opus simile consumpserat. arrepto itaque ferro, quo accinctus erat, mediam dividit partemque eius pauperi tribuit, reliqua rursus induitur. interea de circumstantibus ridere nonnulli, quia deformis esse truncatus habitu videretur: multi tamen, quibus erat mens sanior, altius gemere, quod nihil simile fecissent, cum utique plus habentes vestire pauperem sine sui nuditate potuissent. (3) nocte igitur insecuta, cum se sopori dedisset, vidit Christum chlamydis suae, qua pauperem texerat, parte vestitum. intueri diligentissime Dominum vestemque, quam dederat, iubetur agnoscere. mox ad angelorum circumstantium multitudinem audit Iesum clara voce dicentem: Martinus adhuc catechumenus hic me veste contextit. (4) vere memor Dominus dictorum suorum, qui ante praedixerat: quamdiu fecistis uni ex minimis istis, mihi fecistis, se in paupere professus est fuisse vestitum: et ad confirmandum tam boni operis testimonium in eodem se habitu, quem pauper acceperat, est dignatus ostendere. (5) quo viso vir beatissimus non in gloriam est elatus humanam, sed bonitatem Dei in suo opere cognoscens, cum esset annorum duodeviginti, ad baptismum convolvit. nec tamen statim militiae renuntiavit, tribuni sui precibus evictus, cui contubernium familiare praestabat: etenim transacto tribunatus sui tempore renunciaturum se saeculo pollicebatur. qua Martinus exspectatione

⁵¹ However, we might be taking the web of allusions one association too far by suggesting that the wise King Solomon always conjures up the image of cutting things in half. On the other hand, the judgment in 1 Kings 3:16–28 is the most famous episode in the life of King Solomon, see especially 3:24–25 (Vulgate): *dixit ergo rex adferte mihi gladium cumque adtulissent gladium coram rege, 25 dividite inquit infantem vivum in duas partes et date dimidiam partem uni et dimidiam partem alteri.*

suspensus per biennium fere posteaquam est baptismum consecutus, solo licet nomine, militavit.

Carolinne White (1998: 137–138) translates this as follows:

One day then, in the middle of a winter more bitterly cold than usual (so much so that many perished as a result of the severity of the icy weather) when Martin had nothing with him apart from his weapons and a simple military cloak, he came across a naked beggar at the gate of the city of Amiens. The man begged the people who were passing to have pity on him but they all walked past him. Then Martin, who was filled with God's grace, understood that this man had been reserved for him, since the others were not showing him any mercy. (2) But what was he to do? He had nothing apart from the cloak he was wearing, for he had already used up the rest of his things for a similar purpose. So he seized the sword which he wore at his side, divided the cloak in two, gave half to the beggar and then put the remaining piece on again. Some of the bystanders began to laugh because he looked odd with his chopped-up cloak, but many who were more sensible sighed deeply because they had not done the same despite the fact that, because they had more than Martin, they could have clothed the beggar without themselves being reduced to nakedness. (3) The following night, therefore, when Martin had fallen asleep, he saw Christ clothed in the part of his cloak which he had used to cover the beggar. He was told to look very carefully at the Lord and to recognize the clothing which he had given. Then he heard Jesus saying in a clear voice to the host of angels standing all around: 'Martin who is still a catechumen covered me with this cloak.' (4) Undoubtedly, when the Lord declared that He Himself was clothed in the person of this beggar, He was recalling His own words for he had once said: 'As often as you do this to one of the least, you have done it to me.' (Matthew 25:40) And he deigned to reveal himself in the clothing which the beggar had received in order to confirm His witness to such a good deed. (5) This most blessed man was not puffed up with human pride by this vision. Instead he acknowledged God's goodness in his deed and now that he was eighteen years old, he was impatient to be baptized. However, he did not immediately give up his military career for he was persuaded by the entreaties of his tribune with whom he had a close relationship. In fact the tribune promised that once the period of his tribuneship was over, he himself would withdraw from the World. (6) As Martin was kept waiting from this for about two years, after his baptism he continued as a soldier though only in name.

Apparition of the false Christ wearing a royal robe

It is fascinating to compare these scenes with their reception in the epic poems by Paulinus of Périgueux and Venantius Fortunatus, but that

would take us too far, and Sylvie Labarre has given full analyses.⁵² For the way the scene works in Sulpicius' *Vita Martini*, we should compare and contrast this apparition of the true saviour in half a cloak with the demonic temptation in 24, 4–8, which Sulpicius presents as something he personally heard from the mouth of Martin.⁵³ While Martin was praying in his cell, the devil appeared, preceded and surrounded by a bright – in fact literally by a purple – light, 24, 4 (*praemissa prae se et circumiectus ipse luce purpurea*: 'preceded by a bright light with which he also surrounded himself' (White 1998: 156)). The figure claimed to be Christ, having returned to earth, and he tempted Martin's vanity by saying that he had chosen the ascetic as the first person to manifest himself to. But, as Martin knew, the devil wears precious clothes, and gold and jewellery, so his royal attire gave him away: *veste etiam regia indutus, diademate ex gemmis auroque redimitus, calceis auro illitis*: 'He wore a royal robe and was crowned with a diadem made of gold and jewels, wore gilded sandals' (White 1998: 156). When the devil pressured Martin to acknowledge him as Christ – in words very similar to the ones in the apparition of the true Christ⁵⁴ – the saint explained the Lord would never return dressed as a king of this world:

The Lord Jesus did not foretell that He would come in splendid [literally: purple] clothes and with a shining crown [24, 7: *purpuratum nec diademate renidentem*]; I will not believe that Christ has come unless He wears the same garments and has the same appearance as at the time of His suffering [*nisi in eo habitu formaeque qua passus est*] and unless he wears the marks of the cross. (White 1998: 157)

The Antichrist had also appeared 'with a serene expression' and even 'a look of joy' (24, 4: *sereno ore, laeta facie*), not as the suffering servant foretold by Isaiah 52:14 whose appearance will be the opposite of what the

⁵² Although her title ('le manteau partagé') suggests otherwise, Labarre (1998) does not focus exclusively on the divided cloak; in fact only chapter 5, section III deals with this aspect of the literary reception of the *Martinellus*, pp. 147–159 with the three passages and their translation.

⁵³ *Vita Martini* 24, 4. The story ends with this authentication: *Hoc itaque gestum, ut supra rettuli, ex ipsius Martini ore cognovi, ne quis forte existimet fabulosum*: 'In case anyone should happen to think this incident mere fiction, I actually learned of it, as I mentioned earlier, from the mouth of Martin himself' (White 1998: 157).

⁵⁴ Compare 3, 3: *intueri diligentissime Dominum vestemque, quam dederat, iubetur agnoscere*: 'He was told to look very carefully at the Lord and to recognize the clothing which he had given' (White 1998: 138). And 24, 5: *tum prior diabolus: 'agnosce' inquit, 'Martine, quem cernis: Christus ego sum: descensus ad terram prius me manifestare tibi volui'*: 'Then the devil spoke first, "Martin, recognize who you are looking at. I am Christ. Intending to come down to earth I wished to reveal myself first to you"' (White 1998: 156).

Antichrist went for (*inglorius erit ... aspectus eius et forma eius*).⁵⁵ So the Christ of the Parousia will resemble the Christ of the Passion, wearing a crown of thorns instead of a gemmed diadem of gold, ordinary instead of gilded sandals. For our analysis, the colour of the robe is a highly relevant aspect of this false apparition: the light the devil projects is purple and his robe is first referred to as royal or imperial (24, 4: *veste etiam regia indutus*), which already implies what is later made explicit when the Antichrist is called 'purple' (24, 7). The devil, it would seem, appears in imperial dress: in a purple military cloak (*paludamentum* or *chlamys*). This connection between the Antichrist and the emperor, between worldly power, opulence and temptation can be connected with Martin's ambivalent relationship with imperial and worldly power in general, and his ideas about the dangers of a close relationship between Church and state, as they are illustrated, for example, in his contacts with the Emperor Maximus in Trier.⁵⁶ The thoughts of Martin or, at least, of Sulpicius, are quite clear about the ideology and iconography of *Christus Imperator*. In Martin's reply to the devil, Christ will rather return as the Man of Sorrows (*vir dolorum*, Isaiah 53), and in Martin's vision the true Christ had appeared in half a *chlamys*, in parallel with the beggar possibly also naked but for the loincloth and the divided cloak, but this is not made explicit. However, the most significant detail for our hypothesis is the colour of the cloak in Martin's vision and it seems safe to conclude that this *chlamys* was definitely not purple, possibly red but most probably white (*candida*). In later tradition, Venantius Fortunatus (*Vita Sancti Martini* I, 66) interpreted it as such, and opposed it to the imperial purple.

Vestem candidam Dominus de caelo dabit

There is another example of how the clothes make the holy man. In chapter 23, a man called Anatolius introduces himself to the ascetic pupils of Martin and makes increasingly strong claims about how he is in direct contact with angels and eventually even with the Lord Himself. He wants to be recognized as one of the prophets and promises that he will appear with a white tunic sent straight from heaven (23, 5: *ecce hac nocte vestem mihi candidam Dominus de caelo dabit*. 'Look! Tonight the Lord will give me a white tunic from heaven' (White 1998: 155)). That night,

⁵⁵ As was noted by Fontaine (1967–1969: 1034 n. 1); pp. 1032–1036 for the commentary of this whole passage.

⁵⁶ See *Vita Martini* 20 and Stancliffe (1983: 5).

Anatolius' cell is full of strange lights and noises and when he comes back out, he produces an extraordinarily bright tunic (23, 7: *tunicamque ei, qua erat indutus, ostendit*: 'and showed him the tunic he was wearing' (White 1998: 155)). This garment, *erat autem summa mollitie, candore eximio, micanti purpura, nec tamen, cuius esset generis aut velleris, poterat agnosci: curiosis tamen oculis aut digitis attrectata non aliud quam vestis videbatur* (23, 8): 'It was extremely soft, exceptionally white, dazzlingly bright and made of a material that could not be identified; but when inspected by curious eyes and fingers, it seemed to be an ordinary tunic' (White 1998: 155). But when the false prophet is taken, or rather, dragged against his will, to master Martin, the devil is no longer able to sustain the fiction (*phantasia*) and 'the tunic vanished' (*vestis evanuit*, White 1998: 156).

Biblical wording of the Amiens episode

Jacques Fontaine identifies echoes from Ovid and Virgil in the Amiens chapter, and indicates many biblical parallels, from the Old and the New Testament, both in the wording of the story and in some of its elements, but he is convinced that the core of the story is not a product of Sulpicius' creativity. The vague and vaguely biblical chronological opening *quodam itaque tempore* (3, 1): 'One day, then' (White 1998: 137) to Fontaine poses no problem for its historicity.⁵⁷ He lists the biblical parallels for *obvium habere* ('to come across') and for encounters at the gate of a city, but adds that the echoes of the Gospels do not diminish the likelihood of this detail.⁵⁸ That the poor man at the gate would have been actually naked (*nudum*) during the horribly cold winter (an Ovidian echo)⁵⁹ seems somewhat exaggerated but naturally calls to mind the teachings of the Old Testament prophets, possibly the parable of the Good Samaritan⁶⁰ and certainly the commandment of Christ to clothe the poor and especially

⁵⁷ Fontaine (1967–1969: 477): 'pose à la fois la réalité historique de la date (et donc du fait), mais aussi l'intention délibérée de ne pas préciser ce qu'on connaît.' This seems somewhat arbitrary to me.

⁵⁸ Fontaine (1967–1969: 479 n. 2).

⁵⁹ Fontaine (1967–1969: 478, and note 1) has remarked that the combination of *hiems* and *inhorruit* is actually Ovidian. He refers to *Ibis* 203, which should be verse 201: *Nec cum tristis hiems Aquilonis inhorruit alis*. We should add that the context of the *Ibis* is far from charitable. In his invective the exiled poet wished on his enemy torments more numerous than anything he could think of and more fierce than winter.

⁶⁰ See Ezekiel 18:7, 16; Isaiah 58:7; Tobit 1:20; in the parable of the Good Samaritan, both the Greek verb in Luke 10–30 (ἐκδύσαντες αὐτόν) and the Latin in *Vetus Latina* and the *Vulgate* (*despoliaverunt eum*) have as their original meaning 'to strip one of his clothes', but the nudity of the robbed man is not foregrounded in the parable, and the Good Samaritan gives money rather than his own clothes.

the naked. In my view, Fontaine's list of vague biblical echoes does not touch upon the core of what Sulpicius was doing in this passage and which went well beyond verbal echoes. But we must first analyse the link between Martin's cloak, his baptism and Easter.

Military *candidatus* and *candidatus baptismi*

The military cloak is first referred to as *simplex militiae vestis* (3, 1: *Quodam itaque tempore, cum iam nihil praeter arma et simplicem militiae vestem haberet, media hieme*: 'One day, then, in the middle of a winter ... when Martin had nothing with him apart from his weapons and a simple military cloak' (White 1998: 137)). But in fact the cloak worn by the *scolares alae*: 'elite cavalry regiment' (White 1998: 136) to which Martin belonged (2, 2) was not that simple: it was a bright white cloak or *chlamys*. As Fontaine noted, we should think of the big white uniform cloak of the so-called *candidati* (literally 'the ones clothed in white'), the elite imperial guard.⁶¹ This implies that Martin is both literally and metaphorically a *candidatus*: he is wearing the white cloak of the imperial guard and in 2, 8, the paragraph immediately preceding chapter 3, Sulpicius calls him a *baptismi candidatus* ('a candidate for baptism'), because of his good works, such as clothing the naked.⁶² In Late Antiquity catechumens would traditionally wear white clothes – tunics naturally, not *chlamydes* – for the ceremony of baptism, and they were called *candidati*. At this point in the story, Martin is not yet reborn in Christ (2, 8: *Necdum tamen regeneratus in Christo, agebat quendam bonis operibus baptismi candidatum*: 'Although he had not yet been born again in Christ, in performing good works he behaved like a candidate for baptism' (White 1998: 137)) but he will be baptized immediately after the division of the cloak and the vision of Christ in half of the cloak. Christ then says to the choir of angels: *Martinus adhuc catechumenus hac me veste contextit*: 'Martin who is still a catechumen covered me with this cloak' (White 1998: 138). The themes of being born again in Christ, baptism and wearing white clothes bring to mind the whole context of Easter. Between the second and the fourth centuries Easter was the proper time for baptism as a symbolic death and rebirth,⁶³ so it would make sense for Sulpicius to establish (and for his readers to

⁶¹ Fontaine (1967–1969: 477–478 n. 4); see also Pernoud (2006: 27): 'The white chlamys or cape was the uniform of that elite guard.'

⁶² The word-play on the military and the religious *candidati* was already noted by Jullian, Babut *et al.* (references in Fontaine, see n. 61).

⁶³ Or Pentecost but predominantly Easter, see e.g. Cross and Livingstone (1997: 150).

appreciate) a connection between Martin's baptism and the Passion of Christ. The image of Christ wearing half of the white cloak, saying that what Martin had done for the nude beggar, he had actually done for Him, will be the basis of the further development of this connection between Martin and Christ.

Chlamys of Martin, *chlamys* of Christ

The two occurrences of the word *chlamys* in the third chapter are the only ones in the whole *Vita*. The first instance is when Martin cuts the cloak into two pieces (3, 2: *quid tamen ageret? nihil praeter chlamydem, qua indutus erat, habebat*: 'But what was he to do? He had nothing apart from the cloak he was wearing' (White 1998: 137–138)). The second occurs when, the following night, Christ appears to Martin wearing the half he had given to the nude beggar (*vidit Christum chlamydis suae, qua pauperem texerat, parte vestitum*: 'he saw Christ clothed in the part of his cloak which he had used to cover the beggar' (White 1998: 138)). Fontaine and the other commentators have ignored the biblical reference of Christ appearing in a *chlamys*, but we would argue that this is at the centre of what Sulpicius wants this passage to mean.

In the story of the Passion, Christ is ridiculed by soldiers who put a robe around his shoulders. The four canonical Gospels give different versions, in which the allegiance of the soldiers, the colour of the robe and the name for the robe differ. According to Mark, Matthew and John, Christ was ridiculed by Roman soldiers; in the Gospel of Luke, by soldiers of Herod Agrippa.

Mark 15:17.20 mentions an unspecified purple robe (πορφύραν). The Vulgate also has *purpuram* (15:17 and 15:20), just like the Itala versions at Mark 15:20 (*purpura . . . purpuram*) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translated this as 'purple cloak' (15:20). Matthew 27:28.31, for his part, specifies that the soldiers first took his other clothes off and put a red *chlamys* (χλαμύδα κοκκίνην) around his shoulders. The Vulgate equally mentions a *clamydem coccineam* (28). We should add that several versions of the Itala at Matthew 27, 28 also show Christ in a purple *tunic* (*tunicam purpuream*), combined with a red *chlamys* (*clamydem coccineam*).⁶⁴ John 19:2 has a purple cloak (ἱμάτιον πορφυροῦν), which is repeated in the famous *ecce homo* scene (πορφυροῦν ἱμάτιον, 19:5). The Vulgate translates

⁶⁴ See also NRSV, which mentions a 'scarlet robe' (29).

accordingly (*veste purpurea*, 19:2; *purpureum vestimentum*, 19:5), as does the NRSV ('a purple robe', 4).

Luke differs from the other stories on two points. Firstly, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod Agrippa because he was from Galilee and so, the Lord is mocked by the soldiers of the king of Galilee. Secondly, the colour of the robe here, at least in the Latin versions, is white: Luke's ἐσθῆτα λαμπράν (23:11; in the NRSV 'an elegant robe') became, in Jerome's Latin, *veste alba*. Most of the Itala versions equally have *veste alba* or also *vestem splendidam/opertorium candidum*. Thus, readers of a Latin Luke in Late Antiquity were presented with Jesus in a white soldiers' robe.

The robe or cloak given by Roman soldiers to Christ is called a *chlamys* by Matthew, but it is red. Luke mentions a white garment, but not necessarily a *chlamys*. The tradition favours the Gospel versions with a purple (Mark and John) or red (Matthew) cloak, but Sulpicius never mentions the colour of Martin's cloak explicitly. He suggests it is white through the link between his *militia armata* in the *alae scolares*, which was presented as a preparation for baptism traditionally received in white garments. Martin was a white-clad guard during his military service and a *baptismi candidatus* when he cut his cloak in two to give half of it to a beggar, in accordance with the commandments of Christ to clothe the naked (Matthew 25:36). This gesture was interpreted as giving the cloak to Christ Himself through the Gospel principle that whatever one does to the least, one does to Christ (Matthew 25:40). Whereas the soldiers from the New Testament give Jesus a military cloak to mock him, Martin divides his cloak and is himself mocked by some of the bystanders. To be sure, some people realize they should have followed the commandments of the Lord and they are *exempla* of the people who will follow Christ and his exemplary saint, but the first reaction mentioned by Sulpicius is mockery.⁶⁵ This is an inversion of what happens in the Gospels and we would argue that this inversion is part of the *redemptio militia*, or Sulpicius' apologetic programme with

⁶⁵ Fontaine (1997: 34) cautiously links the laughter of some (3, 2: *ridere nonnulli*) and the loud sighs of many (*multi altius gemere, quod nihil simile fecissent*) with the duality of laughing and weeping in the Beatitudes: Luke 6:21.25: *Beati qui nunc fletis, quia ridebitis* and *Vae vobis, qui ridetis nunc, quia lugebitis et flebitis*! I would propose (equally carefully) to link it with biblical laughter as mockery. The double reaction of the bystanders at Amiens – mockery and grief fuelling a willingness to acknowledge his action and to follow his example – can be linked to the double reactions of the soldiers in the Gospel: mockery by most but also *post factum* acknowledgement by the centurion in Mark 15:39 and Matthew 27:54 ('Son of God'); and in Luke 23:47 ('a righteous man'). John does not mention a centurion. The two robbers crucified together with Jesus remain silent in Mark 15:27; both mock him in Matthew 27:38.44; John 19:18 simply mentions 'two others' who also remain silent; only in Luke 23:33.39–43 do we read a double reaction: one mocking Christ, the other acknowledging him.

regard to Martin's baptism during his military service. But first we need to discuss some further elements, such as the phrasing of the mockery of Martin.

Christ mocked and Martin mocked

During his last hours, Christ is mocked twice: first by the soldiers during the trial and, according to the Synoptic Gospels, a second time on the cross (again by the soldiers according to Luke 23:36 and by other people passing by or standing near according to Matthew 27:39 and Mark 15:29). As we have seen, Sulpicius refers to the mockery at the cross when he compares the sceptic who asks why Martin did not save himself from the fire in his own monastery with the Jewish leaders who mock Christ and ask why he did not save himself from the cross (Matthew 27:42). The mockery with which Martin is confronted is phrased like this (3, 2): *interea de circumstantibus ridere nonnulli, quia deformis esse truncatus habitu videretur*. 'Some bystanders began to laugh because he looked odd with his chopped-up cloak' (White 1998: 138). Fontaine has already noted the biblical echo of the phrase *de circumstantibus ridere nonnulli*, which is not typical for the oeuvre of Sulpicius, but is taken from the Passion story.⁶⁶ Fontaine, who is convinced that an actual event forms the basis of this story, does not draw many conclusions: in his view, there is a slight biblical colouring and an echo of the sufferings of Christ which in turn echo those of the suffering servant (Isaiah 52:14). Sylvie Labarre also comments that the mockery Martin suffered because of his mutilated clothes brings the story close to the Passion, but in particular to the part where the crucified Jesus faces mockery. Martin's humiliation brings him close to the figure of the suffering servant of Isaiah (Labarre 1998: 151.) Fabio Ruggiero adds that the dream apparition of Christ refers to the *chlamys* given to him by the soldiers in derision,⁶⁷ but no one has concluded that Martin is undoing what the soldiers had done to Christ.

I have already quoted Clare Stancliffe who believes that no conscientious hagiographer could have invented the story of Martin cutting his cloak in two and giving half of it to the beggar. It is impossible to prove or disprove that Martin really did cut his cloak in half: the question is what

⁶⁶ Mark 14:47: *Unus autem quidam de circumstantibus educens gladium percussit servum summi sacerdotis* and 15:35: *Et quidam de circumstantibus audientes dicebant: 'Ecce Eliam vocat.'* Fontaine (1967–1969: 486 n. 1).

⁶⁷ Ruggiero (2003: 176–177).

seems most likely. The story does seem too absurd to have been invented, but even if we accept the historicity of the act, it comes from an idea and, if Martin could come up with the idea at the gates of Amiens, so could Sulpicius in his study. In light of the use of several episodes of the Passion story (mockery during the trial and at the cross) and our hypothesis of the *redemptio militiae*, it is plausible that a specific Gospel tradition has inspired Sulpicius to invent this gesture: the soldiers dividing the clothes of Christ.⁶⁸ The soldiers do not cut up the cloak in which Christ was ridiculed but they do divide his clothes amongst them. The verb Sulpicius chooses, *dividere*, in [*vestem* or *chlamydem*] *mediam dividit*, is the same as in the Synoptic Gospels and *mediam* makes it clear that *dividere* in this passage of the *Vita* means both 'to distribute' and 'to cut up'.⁶⁹ Martin also reverses the chronology of what the soldiers did to Christ in the Passion narrative: he first divides clothes and is then mocked. If what Martin does for the beggar and for Christ is redemptive for all soldiers and for his own military service as a baptized Christian, he reverses what the soldiers in the Gospels do to the Lord, and he assumes the role of the suffering servant of God. Instead of giving a cloak to mock the Lord, he gives a cloak to follow the Lord's commandments. Instead of taking and dividing the Lord's clothes, he gives and divides his own cloak. Instead of mocking Christ, the soldier of Christ himself is mocked.

Biblical stylization and fictiveness

The *Life of Saint Martin* is a densely intertextual piece of hagiography. Sulpicius included numerous references to classical Greek and Latin literature, but Scripture and hagiography are central to the characterization of Saint Martin: he is presented as a prophet and as an apostle, as a martyr and as an ascetic. My contribution has focused on the double relation between Martin and Christ: Martin followed the Lord's commands to the fullest but he is also presented as a second Christ. In numerous passages,

⁶⁸ Mark 15:24; Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34; most elaborately John 19:23–24.

⁶⁹ Mark 15:24: *Et crucifigunt eum et dividunt vestimenta eius* (Psalm (21) 22:19), *mittentes sortem super eis quis quid tolleret*; Matthew 27:35: *postquam autem crucifixerunt eum diuiserunt uestimenta eius sortem mittentes*; Luke 23:34: *diuidentes uero uestimenta eius miserunt sortes*; John 19:23–24: *militi ergo cum crucifixissent eum acceperunt uestimenta eius et fecerunt quattuor partes unicuique militi partem et tunicam erat autem tunica inconsutilis desuper contexta per totum; dixerunt ergo ad inuicem non scindamus eam sed sortiamur de illa cuius sit ut scriptura impleatur dicens partiti sunt uestimenta mea sibi et in uestem meam miserunt sortem et milites quidem haec fecerunt*. For the relation between Martin's cloak and his other clothes, and the debate whether Martin was wearing a tunic at all, see note 27.

ranging from his youth (the Temple and the desert episodes) to his death, Martin is presented as someone who imitated and even emulated Christ. The most famous passage of the *Vita*, the division of the cloak, is set during his military career and is said to have led to his baptism. In the lines leading up to the charity at Amiens, Martin is characterized as the perfect soldier of Christ, even during his secular military service. After he had given away half of his cloak, the real suffering Christ, not the demonic purple-clad Antichrist, appears to Martin in the half of the cloak the soldier of Christ had given to the beggar, and he quotes his own words in Matthew 25:40.

These observations bring to the fore the complexities regarding intertextuality and fictionalization as discussed in the introduction to this book (pp. 000–000). Part of the question is, of course, on what level we ought to situate the alignment between Martin and Christ. According to the threefold system of Fontaine, we should ask ourselves whether Martin himself could have stylized a genuine act as self-consciously imitating Christ within the narrative universe, or whether it is Sulpicius who constructs Martin as a literary counterpart to Christ. And in the latter case, an additional question is whether the oral tradition used by Sulpicius added a level of meaning, or whether the author invented the whole story out of nothing. We believe, first, that it is Sulpicius, not Martin himself, who constructs the alignment and that this construction tunes in with his overall apologetic aim in this *Life*. In the surrounding passages, Sulpicius was explicitly apologetic about Martin's military service because it had been a reason to attack his hero's position as a cleric. We have interpreted the division of the cloak itself as the highest but implicit, intertextual apologetic strategy. In this scene Sulpicius has Martin do three things: he follows the explicit command of Christ to clothe the naked, he becomes the suffering Christ in that he is ridiculed in his divided military cloak, and he inverts what the soldiers had done unto Christ (he divided his cloak out of charity, not to mock and rob an already suffering man). In our view, the apologetic function of the passage and the unlikelihood of giving only half a cloak, also answer the question of the extent of its biblical stylization. Since the need of a defence of Martin's military service only arose after his fame as a cleric, we would conclude that the famous gesture is not only an instance of fictionalization inherent to the metaphorical, intertextual construction of Martin as a counterpart of Christ, but that it is a creation out of nothing rather than a reconstruction of earlier traditions.

Nevertheless, in the final sentence of the *Life of Saint Martin* Sulpicius calls upon his readers to believe that what he has told them is the

truth: 'Driven to write by faith in these things and by the love of Christ, I am confident that I have given a clear account of things and spoken the truth [*vera dixisse*]; and the reward prepared by God, as I hope, will await not whoever reads this but whoever believes it [*quicumque crediderit*] (27, 7)' (White 1998: 159). The Latin ending is more ambiguous than the translation because it can be taken to refer to a belief in what Sulpicius has written (credence), belief inspired by what he has written (conversion or confirmation), and/or belief in God as such (faith). But here, as in the rest of the *Vita*, it remains unclear on what basis we are to believe Sulpicius and what he means by *vera dixisse*. He was not a modern academic historian, he was not even an ancient historian. He was one of the founders of Western hagiography, and with the story of the division of the cloak, he created one of the most powerful icons of Christian faith. I hope to have shown that this iconic scene is constructed with biblical elements and written within the apologetic context of Martin's controversial life and character. The divided cloak has taken on a life of its own in later history and it has inspired both artists and charity workers. Many meaningful things have been said about its spirituality of self-sacrifice and of encountering the other. The context in which Sulpicius wrote, and the fictionality of his *Life of Saint Martin* are probably not relevant to the inspiration that people have drawn and perhaps will continue to draw from this scene. His *Vita Martini*, as he writes in his final chapter, is based upon faith and calls upon his readers to believe what they have read. What this implies for his truth claims can perhaps best be answered with the age-old philosophical response given to Jesus by the sceptic in John 18:38: 'What is truth?'

PROOF