

institutional structures. He was well aware of the vastness of this task, and the inadequacy of the means at his disposal. He denounced the clergy under his command as lazy and venal. They charged extra fees for their services, over and above their stipends, and often failed to attend church. Many were guilty of the sin of concubinage – a grave fault in his eyes. The magistrates were no better: they were worldly, corrupt and inattentive to their duties. The soldiers quartered in the city were drunken, violent, and given to thieving. In terms typical of his age, Maximus denounced Turin's Jews, who were then active in public life and trade, as the enemies of Christ; for him, their mere presence constituted a "pollution" that threatened the purity of the Christians' tenuous faith. The Arian heretics in the city, who denied the divinity of Christ (in accordance with the teachings of the fourth-century Alexandrian heresiarch Arius), posed a special danger according to Maximus. He portrayed them as secretive and underhand, constantly plotting to seduce those who followed orthodox doctrine. The ordinary Christians – by whom Maximus probably meant the more substantial classes of society – were addicted to their pleasures, especially hunting. He complained that they treated their hounds better than their servants, whom they starved and abused. The peasantry he dismissed as drunken and idle.

Bishop Maximus seems to have been an energetic builder, eager to transform the Roman city and exorcise the pagan demons believed to lurk in its ruined temples, by erecting Christian churches and shrines. The earliest ecclesiastical building in Turin was apparently a church, dedicated it seems to St Salvatore, and constructed at some uncertain date by the local count, on the site now occupied by the cathedral. It was perhaps here that the synod, in which Maximus played a prominent part, was held in 398. To the south of this church there was a basilica, perhaps founded by Maximus himself. It was dedicated to St John the Baptist, and therefore also functioned as the baptistery. Nearby there was apparently a third church, dedicated to the Virgin. This cluster of churches formed the original architectural nucleus of Christian Turin, and probably owes its existence to Maximus's desire to build a Christian community on the ruins of the pagan city.

In sum, the picture painted by Bishop Maximus of the first Christian community at Turin appears far from edifying, if we are to believe his unsparing criticism of his flock, his calls for repentance, and his prophecies of doom. He saw the evil and injustice around him as undeniable proof that God's vengeance would soon be unleashed on sinful humanity, and that the world would shortly come to an end. He saw another clear sign of the imminent end of the sinful world and the pun-