

Chapter 25

Hellenic Heritage and Christian Challenge: Conflict over Panhellenic Sanctuaries in Late Antiquity

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Late Antique competition between pagans and Christians for control of the Panhellenic sanctuaries has been neglected or denied in most modern scholarship. Survey works on the Christianization of pagan sites rarely describe any sites in Greece outside Athens, while more detailed examinations of specific sites in Greece postulate little conflict, competition, or even continuity in the transition between sites of pagan festivals and ordinary Christian villages.¹ While the violence of the struggle over public religious sites is becoming increasingly clear for a few Late Antique cities like Rome and Alexandria, the Roman province of Achaëa, where the Panhellenic sanctuaries were located, still suffers from a lack of evidence and detailed study.² At the end of the third century CE, most Panhellenic sanctuaries were still sites of pagan celebration for Greeks and Philhellenes from all over the Mediterranean, as well as a keystone of their cultural identity. Yet by the end of the fifth century CE, every major sanctuary in Achaëa contained at least one Christian basilica.³

¹ Surveys: F.W. Deichmann, "Frühchristliche Kirchen in antiken Heiligtümern," *JDAI* 54 (1939) 105-36; F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529* (Leiden, 1993). Detailed studies: J.-M. Spieser, "La christianisation des sanctuaires païens en Grèce," in U. Jantzen ed., *Neue Forschungen in griechischen Heiligtümern* (Tübingen, 1976) 309-20; L. Foschia, "La réutilisation des sanctuaires païens par les chrétiens en Grèce continentale (IVe-VIIe s.)," *REG* 113 (2000) 413-34. Some continuity is proposed by T.E. Gregory, "The Survival of Paganism in Christian Greece," *AJPh* 107 (1986) 229-49. All subsequent dates CE.

² Rome: J.R. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital* (Oxford, 2000) 116-60; J. Vaes, "Nova construere sed amplius vetusta servare," *Actes du XIe Congrès International d'Archéologie Chrétienne* (Rome, 1989) 1.299-321. Alexandria: C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity* (Baltimore, 1997).

³ Third century at the sanctuaries: S. Alcock, *Graecia Capta* (Cambridge, 1993) 172-212.

Both the sharp decline in relevant ancient literary sources during the third century and the incomplete nature of the archaeological record continue to impede our understanding of the process by which the Panhellenic sanctuaries made the transition from pagan use to sites for Christian worship. The last centuries of activity at even the two most famous Panhellenic sanctuaries, the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi and the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, remain almost entirely unknown. Did Christians grapple violently with pagans for possession of these ancient sanctuaries, coexist and compete for a time, or simply move into the ruins after the pagans and their cults had completely disappeared?

An examination of the available archaeological and historical data from Delphi and Olympia reveals a very complicated and incomplete picture. When considered alongside other sources for religious conflict in Late Antiquity, though, the confrontation of Christians and pagans at the Panhellenic sanctuaries is quite demonstrable. Far from experiencing a quiet twilight, the Greek sanctuaries were actively contested by both local and imperial players throughout the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, sometimes violently. The competition over ancient sacred space not only characterized the last centuries of traditional Hellenic religion, but it also molded the first centuries of Christianity in Roman Achaëa.

In the late second century the traveler Pausanias approached the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi from the east by the overland road from Levidia and proceeded up the hill past a few ruined or empty treasuries to the functioning temple of Athena *Pronoia*, the gymnasium, and the Castalia spring, where the small village of Delphi was located below the sanctuary proper.⁴ Had he arrived in the sixth century, he would have been standing in front of a monumental Christian basilica, which has almost entirely disappeared today. What had happened in the intervening years? Pausanias is, by necessity, our starting point for the Panhellenic sanctuaries in Late Antiquity and he especially emphasized the status of Delphi and Olympia. In his time, these sites were fully built up, home to hundreds of years of sculptural and architectural dedications, the shrines of Greek and foreign gods from all over the Mediterranean world, and large venues for athletic and artistic competitions and performances. The core buildings of the sanctuary required constant upkeep and maintenance, while others were allowed to fall into disrepair. New construction, which especially blossomed in the early fourth century CE, was mainly on the outskirts of the extensive complexes.⁵

Our only evidence for Delphi in Late Antiquity consists of honorific inscriptions, architectural fragments, and brief references by poets or polemicists.⁶ De-

⁴ Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio* 10.8.4-5.

⁵ S. Alcock, "Minding the Gap in Hellenistic and Roman Greece," in S. Alcock, R. Osborne eds, *Placing the Gods* (Oxford, 1994) 247-62.

⁶ J. Laurent, "Delphes Chrétien," *BCH* 23 (1899) 206-79; E. Dyggve, "Les traditions culturelles de Delphes et l'église chrétienne," *Arch* 3 (1948) 9-28; Spieser, "La christianisation des sanctuaires," 316-7; P. Amandry, "La ruine du temple d'Apollon à

spite his removal of many important dedications from the sanctuary, particularly the monumental tripod commemorating the Battle of Plataea, Constantine was honored twice at Delphi, probably posthumously, and by a still *hiera polis*, a sacred city.⁷ Some fifty years after Constantine's conversion, the emperor Julian recorded his regret at Delphi's decline in his writings and exempted the people of Delphi from imperial taxation.⁸ He had little involvement with the traditional Panhellenic sanctuaries and rituals, however, especially outside of Athens. He was the recipient of a foreboding oracle long-attributed to Delphi, the last recorded from that site, but more likely spurious and referring to the oracle of Apollo at Daphne.⁹

The last emperors known to have been honored formally at Delphi are Valens and Valentinian, graced with bronze statues on a large and well-made base between 364 and 371.¹⁰ While the Delphians sought to renew their tax exemption under Theodosius II in 424, the tombstone of a Deaconess Athanasia records the existence of Christians and a Bishop Pantamianos in Delphi around the same time.¹¹ Besides this tombstone, the two centuries of activity at the site after Valens and Valentinian are accessible only through the archaeological remains. This tombstone is also the only Christian inscription discovered at Delphi, apart from the cross graffiti covering the Altar of the Chians just in front of the Temple of Apollo. Poetic references to the oracle, which continued into the fifth century and

Delphes," *BAB* 75 (1989) 26-47; S. Levin, "The Old Greek Oracles in Decline," *ANRW* II.18.2 (1989) 1599-649; V. Déroche, "Delphes," *Actes du XIe Congrès International d'Archéologie Chrétienne* (Rome, 1989) III.2713-26.

⁷ Inscriptions to Constantine and his son Constans, probably dated ca. 337-340: C. Vatin, "Les empereurs du IVe siècle à Delphes," *BCH* 86 (1962) 229-41; Constantine's plundering of the sanctuary: Dyggve, "Les traditions cultuelles de Delphes," 18-20; the Delphic origin of Pausanias' tripod dedicated after Plataea was still known to fifth century writers: Sozomen, *HE* 56.23-57.9; A. Alexakis "The *Dialogue of the Monk and Recluse Moschos concerning the Holy Icons*, An Early Iconophile Text," *DOP* 52 (1998) 187-224, 198-9, n. 25-7.

⁸ Julian, *Or.* 6.188a; Julian, *Contra galilaeos* 198c; Julian, *Ep.* 35. For Julian's interest in Delphi: Amm. 22.12.8.

⁹ The oracle read, "Tell the king to earth is fallen the deft-wrought dwelling, no longer hath Phoebus shelter, or prophetic laurel, or speaking fountain; yea the speaking water is quenched": T. Dempsey tr., *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford, 1918) 180. The composition of this oracle is attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus based on his *Invectives against the Emperor Julian* 2.32 by Amandry, "La ruine du temple," 45. See also E.A. Thompson, "The Last Delphic Oracle," *CQ* 40 (1946) 35-6; H.W. Parke, D.E.W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford, 1956) I.290, II.194 n.476.

¹⁰ Vatin, "Les empereurs du IVe siècle," 238-41.

¹¹ *CTh* 15.5.4; Laurent, "Delphes Chrétien," 272-9. The inscription is dated by paleography and formulae to the mid-fifth century.

beyond, provide no concrete information about the site itself nor do the criticisms of Christian authors.¹²

Archaeology, however, proves that there was continuity of activity at the site of Delphi in the third through sixth centuries. The Temple of Apollo at the center of the site was neither converted into a church nor even torn down by the Christians. Rather, it suffered from a fire after the third century but appears to have been repaired, perhaps by Julian.¹³ The altars in and outside of the temple disappeared but inside the building itself only the inner chamber bears signs of what may be deliberate defacement. The temple continued to stand at the top of the Sacred Way into the sixth century, even as surrounding buildings were converted to new uses, and new baths, cisterns, fountains, and monumental buildings were constructed at the site. Typical of these large-scale buildings constructed in Late Antiquity is the so-called Roman Agora which runs across the south side of the sanctuary and consists of a long, narrow terrace with colonnades on three sides and shops on the north side.¹⁴ While the desecration of pagan altars reveals the probability of a growing Christian population at the site, these other buildings demonstrate continuity of both prosperity and a population of traditional cult worshippers.

At least three churches were built in Delphi in Late Antiquity as well, all of which are utterly ruined today. Two probably belong to the sixth century, on the basis of their mosaics and architectural stonework, and were situated along the eastern and western approaches to the sanctuary and town of Delphi. The first was an extra-mural basilica in the west necropolis of the modern village, west of the sanctuary of Delphi.¹⁵ The second, on the route from the east used by Pausanias, was built above the palestra of the gymnasium, between the sanctuaries of Apollo and Athena *Pronoia*, and later became the medieval village's *Agios Giorgos*.¹⁶ Extensive but fragmentary remains of a third basilica were also found scattered

¹² E.g. Prudentius, *Apotheosis* 438-43; Claudian, *Panegyricus de quarto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 143-4; Claudian, *Panegyricus de sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti* 25-38; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 4.309-10, 12.131-34.

¹³ Déroche, "Delphes," 2720-6, n. 20.

¹⁴ The Agora is used for displaying Christian stonework found at Delphi: G. Roux, "Une table chrétienne de Delphes," *BCH* 97 (1973) 137-44; P. Amandry, "Chronique Delphique (1970-1981)," *BCH* 105 (1981) 673-769.

¹⁵ P. Lazaridis, *AD* 16 (1960) 167; G. Daux, "Chronique des Fouilles 1959," *BCH* 84 (1960) 752-6; J.-P. Sodini "Un chapiteau 'mixte' d'époque paléochrétienne à Delphes," in L. Hadermann-Misguich et al. eds, *Rayonnement grec* (Brussels, 1983) 325-40; M. Spiro, *A Critical Corpus of the Mosaic Pavements on the Greek Mainland* (New York, 1978) 229-51; Déroche, "Delphes," 2713-5.

¹⁶ P. Foucart, *Mémoire sur les ruines et l'histoire de Delphes* (Paris, 1867) 18; H. Pomtow, *Beiträge zur Topographie von Delphi* (Berlin, 1889) 83; T. Homolle, "Le gymnase de Delphes," *BCH* 23 (1899) 560-83, 580; J. Jannoray, "Le gymnase," *Fouilles de Delphes* 2 (1953) 15-6; E. Goffinet, "L'église Saint-Georges à Delphes," *BCH* 86 (1962) 242-60; Déroche, "Delphes," 2715-7.

throughout the sanctuary of Apollo during nineteenth century excavations. This basilica was built between 450 and 500 and, from the evidence of its elaborate stonework, with much greater care, monumentality, and expense than the later two, perhaps on the terrace above the temple. Unfortunately, its materials have been dispersed and shattered, both by tenth century pillaging to build the neighboring monastery of *Hosios Loukas* and by modern excavations, to the extent that its exact location remains uncertain.¹⁷

Thus physical Christianization of the Panhellenic sanctuary of Delphi involved the progressive conversion of sanctuary buildings to secular uses and the construction of three monumental churches, probably located at the two main entrances to the town with one, perhaps, constructed in the sanctuary itself. After the sixth century, any visitors to the sanctuary would be confronted by a church at every entrance. At the same time, however, much of the original pagan statuary on the pagan buildings was left in place and, when the Temple of Apollo burned and collapsed for the last time after the sixth century, it also covered and obstructed the Sacred Way, indicating that the entire upper village was probably also abandoned around that time.¹⁸

This archaeological evidence for competition is reinforced by some relevant comparative material from other sites, which suggests that Christian and pagan worship could coexist at pagan sanctuaries with and without physical violence. In the course of his short reign, Julian disrupted the worship of pagans and Christians side by side in at least two other sanctuaries of Apollo, at Didyma and Daphne.¹⁹ At Daphne, a local martyr named Babylas had been transported to that site by Julian's brother Gallus, yet pagan worship continued on a small scale. Julian then removed Babylas from the sanctuary, supposedly upon the request of Apollo himself, and attempted to hold a large-scale festival and sacrifice there. His efforts to reinstitute the grand pagan festival were a failure, though, and a fire destroyed the temple of Apollo shortly afterwards.²⁰ When John Chrysostom at Antioch offered the Christian perspective concerning religious affairs at Daphne some years later, he interpreted the fire as the triumph of Babylas not only over Julian but also over Apollo himself. Rather than deny the existence of Apollo, he argued to Christians and pagans alike that the martyr Babylas and hence Christ was simply more pow-

¹⁷ Dated 425-75 by the stonework: Déroche, "Delphes," 2717-8; Laurent, "Delphes Chrétien," 213. This is, perhaps, the church at Delphi attributed to Constantine in the fifth century: Alexakis, "The *Dialogue of the Monk and Recluse Moschos*," 198-9.

¹⁸ Amandry, "La ruine du temple," 42-7; Déroche, "Delphes," 2720-22; Amandry, "Chronique Delphique (1970-1981)," 736-40.

¹⁹ H. Grégoire, "Les chrétiens et l'oracle de Didymes," *Mélanges Holleaux* (Paris, 1913) 81-91.

²⁰ Libanius, *Or.* 60.3-5.

erful.²¹ In light of events at the shrine, this might have been a very persuasive argument and it suggests how a series of small events both peaceful and violent could redefine sacred space as Christian without denying the existence of the gods.

If the Christian God was perceived as more powerful than the pagan gods, did the Christians see their buildings as competing with temples in the same way? In her dedicatory inscription on the basilica of St. Agnes near Rome, Constantine's daughter Constantina illustrated such competition when she declared that:

I, Constantina, venerating God and dedicated to Christ,
having provided all the expenses with devoted mind
at divine bidding and with the great help of Christ,
consecrated this *templum* of Agnes, victorious virgin,
because she has prevailed over the temples and all earthly works,
[Here] where the loftiest roof gleams with gold.²²

Clearly Constantina viewed her building as competing with pagan temples, in both its expensive decoration and the power of its patron saints.

However, is it possible to find the same evidence for rhetorical and architectural competition at Olympia? In the late second century, Olympia was the site of the most famous games in the Roman Empire and the main sanctuary for the worship of Zeus.²³ Until recently the effects of an earthquake around 290 were interpreted as evidence of the Heruli penetrating Greece all the way to the sanctuary in 267, causing the end of the games and the construction of a fortress around the Temple of Zeus.²⁴ However, recent excavations have discovered inscriptions and construction testifying to repairs on the old buildings of the sanctuary in the late third century, new baths and guesthouses west and southwest of the Temple of Zeus, as well as riverbank erosion, in the fourth century, and the continued celebration of the games into the late fourth century at least.²⁵ The southwest building, a possible clubhouse for an Athlete's Guild, yielded a bronze tablet listing Olympic victors down to Zopyrus of Athens at the 291st Olympiad in 385.²⁶

²¹ John Chrysostom, *De sancto babyla contra iulianum et gentiles* 75-109, translation and commentary: S.N.C. Lieu ed., *The Emperor Julian: Panegyric and Polemic* (Liverpool, 1986) 44-89.

²² ILCV 1768.1-6, Curran tr., *Pagan City and Christian Capital*, 128.

²³ D.P. Harmon, "The Religious Significance of Games in the Roman Age," in W.J. Raschke ed., *The Archaeology of the Olympics* (Madison, WI, 1988) 236-55.

²⁴ A. Mallwitz, "Olympia und Rom," *AW* 19 (1988) 21-45, 42-44.

²⁵ A. Pariente, "Chronique des Fouilles en 1993," *BCH* 118 (1994) 719-20; U. Sinn, "Pilgrims, Athletes and Christians," in R.F. Docter and E.M. Moorman eds, *Classical Archaeology towards the Third Millenium* (Amsterdam, 1999) 377-80; U. Sinn, *Olympia* T. Thornton tr. (Princeton, 2000) 119-29; U. Sinn, *Das antike Olympia* (Munich, 2004) 227-32.

²⁶ *SEG* 48 (1998) 553.

After this last recorded Olympiad, there is disagreement about the last year the games were held. Medieval historians recorded dates ranging from the late fourth to the mid-fifth century.²⁷ Furthermore, while Themistius saw the chryselephantine statue of Zeus in the Temple in 384, it was later recorded displayed with other famous statues in the Palace of Lausus in Constantinople before a fire destroyed the palace in 462.²⁸ No traces of this statue have been found at Olympia but evidence for pagan cult continues into the early fifth century and the temple and sanctuary buildings stood relatively complete into the late fifth century at least.²⁹

There are many earlier precedents for statue removal, particularly in the era of Roman expansion into Greece when cult statues and dedications were taken in the hundreds, first simply as trophies and then later as art objects and status signifiers.³⁰ While these removals were a clear indication of the loss of Greek political power, they did not necessarily affect religious sentiment at the local level.³¹ The acquisition of famous statues, especially for display, enhanced Roman prestige and Constantine followed in this tradition. In Constantinople, the new Rome, monuments like the Delphian tripod, dedicated after the battle of Plataea but set up anew in the hippodrome, were potent status symbols, which signified imperial control over and ownership of the Hellenic religious and historical heritage.³²

Beyond the older imperial associations, however, some also saw the relocation of pagan statues as an implicit statement on the triumph of Christianity. Eusebius preserved his own perspective on the meaning of the pagan statues set up in the public places of Constantinople:

...in short, the city which bore his [Constantine's] name was everywhere filled with brazen statues of the most exquisite workmanship, which had been dedicated in every province and which the deluded victims of superstition had long vainly honored as gods with numberless victims and burnt sacrifices, though now at length they learned to think

²⁷ Cedrenus, *HC* 327A, records that the Olympic games ended around 393/4, when Theodosius I destroyed the temples which Constantine had closed. However, scholia to Lucian note, rather, that the last games were held under his grandson Theodosius II and the celebration of the games ended due to a fire that destroyed the Temple of Zeus: Schol. in Luc. *Rhetorum praeceptor* 41.9 in H. Rabe ed., *Scholia in Lucianum* (Stuttgart, 1971).

²⁸ Themistius, *Or.* 27; Cedrenus, *HC* 322B-C, records the presence of Phidias' statue of Olympian Zeus in the palace of Lausus and Cedrenus, *HC* 348A-B, the burning of that palace. See J.B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge, 1940) 3.969-70.

²⁹ Sinn, *Olympia*, 118-22.

³⁰ M. Pape, *Griechische Kunstwerke aus Kriegsbeute und ihre öffentliche Aufstellung in Rom* (Hamburg, 1975).

³¹ Alcock, *Graecia Capta*, 178-80.

³² Eusebius *VC* 3.54.2. See n. 7 above.

rightly, when the emperors held up these very playthings to be the ridicule and sport of all beholders.³³

Eusebius here emphasized the didactic purpose of these images in Constantinople, as instructive of the superiority of Christianity. He certainly also wished for them to be considered only as objects of instruction and ridicule, but there is no evidence that his opinion was widely held. These statues were not transplanted merely for ridicule and sport, but also as a show of power and a source of historical, artistic, and religious legitimacy for the new city.³⁴

But while many monuments from Delphi and elsewhere were taken by Constantine or his associates for public places in his new city in the 330s, monumental cult statues like Phidias' chryselephantine Olympian Zeus or Athena *Parthenos* were relocated only in the mid-fifth century.³⁵ This sort of removal was of a fundamentally different character, as the cult statues involved were among the most famous and oldest in Greece and, even more important, the archetypal images of the gods. For in the popular imagination the Olympian Zeus and Athena *Parthenos* were those gods, an identification which was reinforced by the repetition of their images on coinage and their celebration in *encomia*.³⁶ Removing these statues must have involved taking them apart and surely symbolized not only Christian power over pagan cult but also power over the very gods themselves. Significantly, while Christian polemics against pagan statuary had been present already for hundreds of years, it was not until the mid-fifth century that someone dared to act upon such recommendations in the case of Zeus and Athena.

In the fifth century, secular buildings began to appear in the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia as well, followed first by Christian tombs and lamps and then a basilica, constructed in a large hall known to excavators as Building A.³⁷ This structure bore a very close resemblance to the Temple of Zeus and lay just to the west of it on the same east-west axis. It also consisted of a central nave with side aisles to north and south separated off by colonnades and it had the same basic measure-

³³ Eusebius *VC* 2.54-8, tr. C. Mango.

³⁴ J.R. Curran, "Moving Statues in Late Antique Rome," *Art History* 17 (1994) 46-58; C. Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," *DOP* 17 (1963) 55-75.

³⁵ Where the Athena *Parthenos* was taken is uncertain but Constantinople is most likely. Some time prior to his death in 485, the Neoplatonist Proclus dreamt that Athena *Parthenos* asked for a place in his house, after "her statue seated hitherto in the Parthenon was transferred by those who move unmovable things": Marinus, *VProcli* 30.

³⁶ E.g. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.

³⁷ Sinn, *Olympia*, 118-29; J.-P. Sodini, "L'habitat urbain en Grèce à la veille des invasions," *Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin* (Rome, 1984) 341-96, 366-67; N. Ghialouris, *AD* 20 (1965) 209; C. Schauer, "Mitres Lychnon Protochristianikis Epochis apo tin Olympia," in A.D. Rizakis ed., *Achaia und Elis in der Antike* (Athens, 1991) 373-8.

ments, about 30m by 15m.³⁸ The excavators identified it as the workshop of Phidias, where the statue of Zeus was constructed, but according to Pausanias, in the second century it was a Pantheon and stood across from the main guesthouse, just outside the main southwest gate to the inner sanctuary, “where the Processional road goes in, which is the only road for processions.”³⁹

About three hundred years after Pausanias’ visit, this was the building which the Christians of Olympia chose to modify for worship, lining the inside with marble slabs from surrounding buildings, constructing an eastern apse, and opening a larger entrance in the south side. The Christians, who converted a Pantheon of temple-proportions at the main processional entrance to the most famous ancient sanctuary of Zeus, did not do so only for reasons of convenience.⁴⁰ Pagans considered even the areas outside the Altis itself sacred and the choice of this building argues strongly for religious competition with the nearby Temple of Zeus on the part of Christian architects and patrons.⁴¹

For even if pagan worship had ended long before in the converted Pantheon, in the fifth century the Temple of Zeus was still standing. In fact, at about this time it was enclosed within a fortification wall, which also surrounded the Bouleuterion, South Hall, and several Roman dedications. Though this fort was most likely built for the protection of townspeople from invading barbarians, it is significant that the Temple of Zeus was inside of it and that the northeast and southwest gates were not only adorned, but also clearly still in use both before and after the fort was built.⁴² The inhabitants of Olympia in the fifth century evidently thought that there was something worth preserving about the Temple and neither converted it into a church nor tore it down. Earthquakes or anti-pagan violence of the mid-sixth century probably destroyed the Temple, and then river flooding, the plague, and the Slavic invasions drove the remaining inhabitants of Olympia away from their

³⁸ F. Adler, “Die byzantinische Kirche,” *Die Baudenkmäler von Olympia (Olympia 2)* (Berlin, 1892) 93-105; A. Mallwitz, W. Schiering, *Die Werkstatt des Pheidias in Olympia I (Olympische Forschungen 5)* (Berlin, 1964).

³⁹ Pausanias, *Descriptio graeciae* 5.15.1-3; R. Heberdey, “Die olympische altarperiegese des Pausanias,” *Eranos Vindobonensis* (Vienna, 1893) 34-47.

⁴⁰ Competition is more likely than the reasons of convenience and economy proposed by Spieser, “La christianisation des sanctuaires,” 314-5 and A. Mallwitz, *Olympia und seine Bauten* (Munich, 1972) 107-119.

⁴¹ U. Sinn, “Greek Sanctuaries as Places of Refuge,” in N. Marinatos, R. Hägg eds, *Greek Sanctuaries* (London, 1993) 88-109, 95-6.

⁴² U. Sinn, “‘O Neronas’ kai ‘Oi Erouloi,’” in Rizakis, *Achaia und Elis in der Antike*, 365-71, 368; Sinn, *Olympia*, 126-8.

converted basilica too.⁴³ By the ninth century the whole site was covered with about 5m of river sand and sediment.⁴⁴

As the dating of all these basilicas is broad and Christians worshipped in other places too, their construction cannot indicate the first Christian worship at a site, only the time when they chose to erect a monumental building specifically for worship. Even after the basilicas were built, however, the temples may have remained in use. To be a place of worship, a temple just needed to exist. It did not even need to house a cult statue or to receive offerings. The god was still there as long as people believed it. What, then, can the basilicas tell us about pagans and Christians at the Panhellenic shrines?

First, if spolia from the temple were not used in the construction of the basilicas, it suggests that the temple was still standing and hence functioning as a holy site. For many Christians the use of pagan spolia symbolized the triumph of Christianity, as well as the defeat and disgrace of pagan buildings and hence pagans themselves. After the destruction of the Sanctuary of Zeus Marnas at Gaza in 402, Bishop Porphyry deliberately used blocks from the old temple to pave the atrium in front of the new church, “so that they would be trodden on not only by men, but also by women and dogs and pigs and other animals. This pained the idolaters more than the burning of the temple.”⁴⁵

However, the basilicas at Delphi were all new constructions, while that at Olympia was placed inside a renovated building near the Temple. Moreover their placement was consistent with established use patterns of the sanctuaries. While the location of the fifth-century basilica at Delphi remains uncertain, the sixth century ones were near the eastern and western entrances of the sanctuary. The basilica at Olympia was just outside the main southwest gate. Similarly, basilicas built at Epidaurus and Dodona in the fifth century were right inside the main gates of each sanctuary, on the main approach from the town.⁴⁶ The situation of all these basilicas near gates

⁴³ Sinn, *Olympia*, 128-9; T. Völling, “The last Christian Greeks and the first pagan Slavs in Olympia,” *Oi Skoteinoi Aiones tou Byzantiou* (Athens, 2001) 303-23; T. Vida, T. Völling, *Das slawische Brandgräberfeld von Olympia* (Berlin, 2000).

⁴⁴ J.-J. Dufaure, “La terrasse holocène d’Olympie et ses équivalents méditerranéens,” *Bulletin de l’Association des Géographes Français* 433 (1976) 85-94.

⁴⁵ Mark the Deacon, *VPorphyry* 76.

⁴⁶ Epidaurus: P. Kavvadias, “Anaskaphai en Epidauro,” *AE* (1918) 172-95; G. Sotiriou, “Ai Palaiochristianikai Basilikai tis Ellados,” *AE* (1929) 161-254, 198-201; P. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Syntagma ton Palaiochristianikon Psiphidoton Dapedon tis Ellados II* (Thessaloniki, 1987) 61-3. Dodona: Sotiriou, “Ai Palaiochristianikai Basilikai tis Ellados,” 203-4; S. Dakaris, “To Ieron tis Dodonis,” *AD* 16 (1960) 4-40; D. Pallas, *Les monuments paléochrétiens de Grèce découverts de 1959 à 1973* (Rome, 1977) 142, #69.

suggests that at the time of their construction, at least, the gates and patterns of movement through the sites were still in active use and, moreover, that the temple was still seen as the central feature in the landscape. The contemporary literary evidence strongly suggests that the Christians who built those basilicas perceived them as architectural and spiritual challengers to the temples. Thus, in conclusion, while the evidence of the fourth through sixth centuries from Delphi and Olympia surely reflects the end of organized pagan religion there, the placement and nature of the Late Antique basilicas at these sites definitively reveals that the Panhellenic sanctuaries were still sites of active religious competition in Late Antiquity, even after the athletic games had ended.