

# Women Leaders in Early Christianity

Morwenna Ludlow



University  
of Exeter



Exeter  
Cathedral



EST. 1597

**GRESHAM**  
COLLEGE

# Thecla

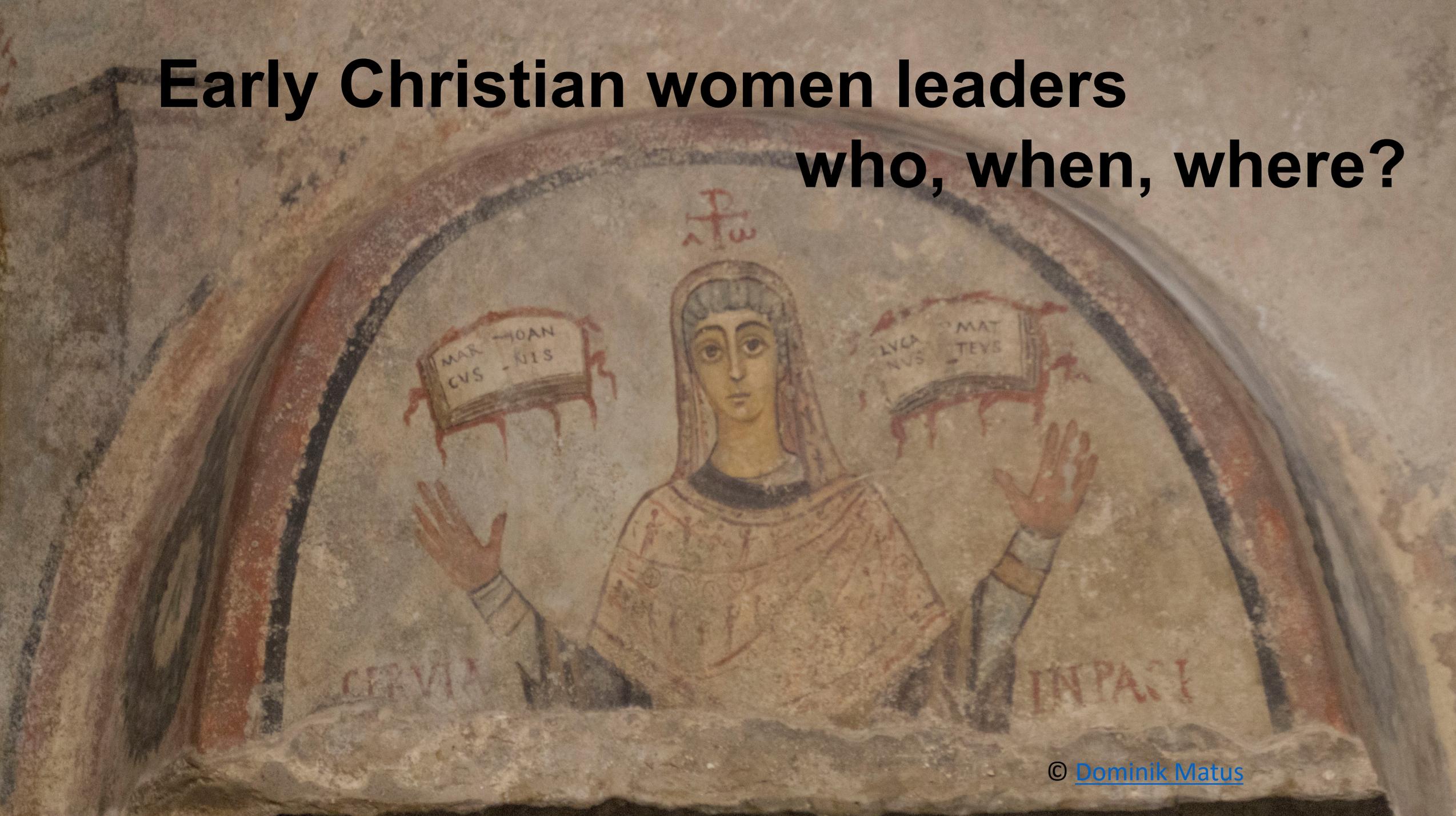




# Macrina

<https://www.metmuseum.org>

# Early Christian women leaders who, when, where?



CERVIA

IN PACE

# Space in the ancient world

Private – household  
(the *oikos*)

female  
indoor  
stationary  
natural  
inferior



Public – state  
(the *polis*)

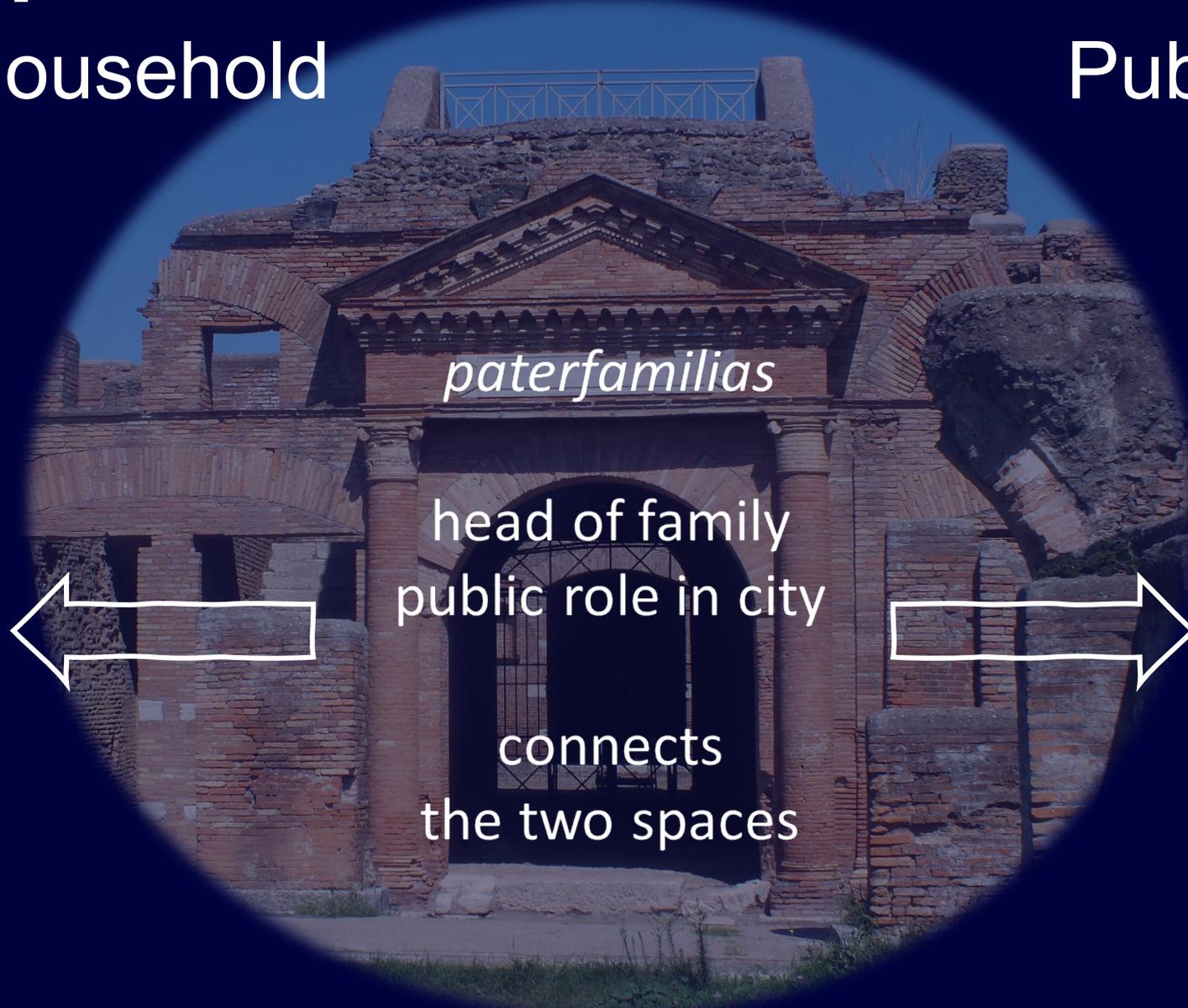
male  
outdoor  
mobile  
civilised  
superior

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*paterfamilias*  
head of family  
public role in city  
connects  
the two spaces

male  
outdoor  
mobile  
civilised  
superior



**Philosophy**

**and**

**Rhetoric**

more private

more public

← <https://www.metmuseum.org>

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# Themistius

(317 – c. 388 AD)

I take philosophy—  
cooped up in her house,  
ill-humoured, and  
avoiding gathering  
places—and persuade  
her to come out into the  
open and not to deprive  
the multitude grudgingly  
of her beauty’



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*PHILOSOPHY*

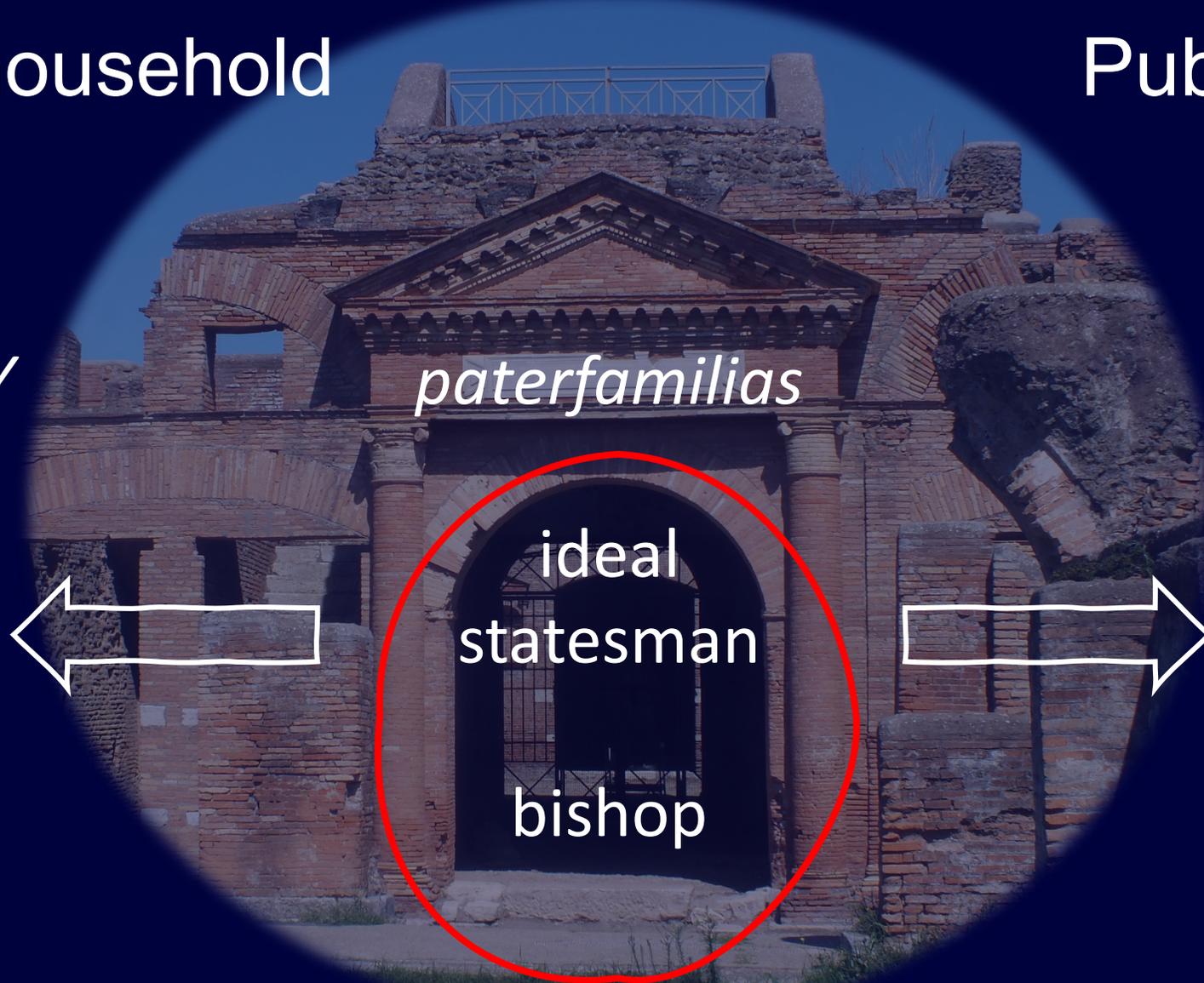
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*paterfamilias*

ideal  
statesman

bishop

*RHETORIC*

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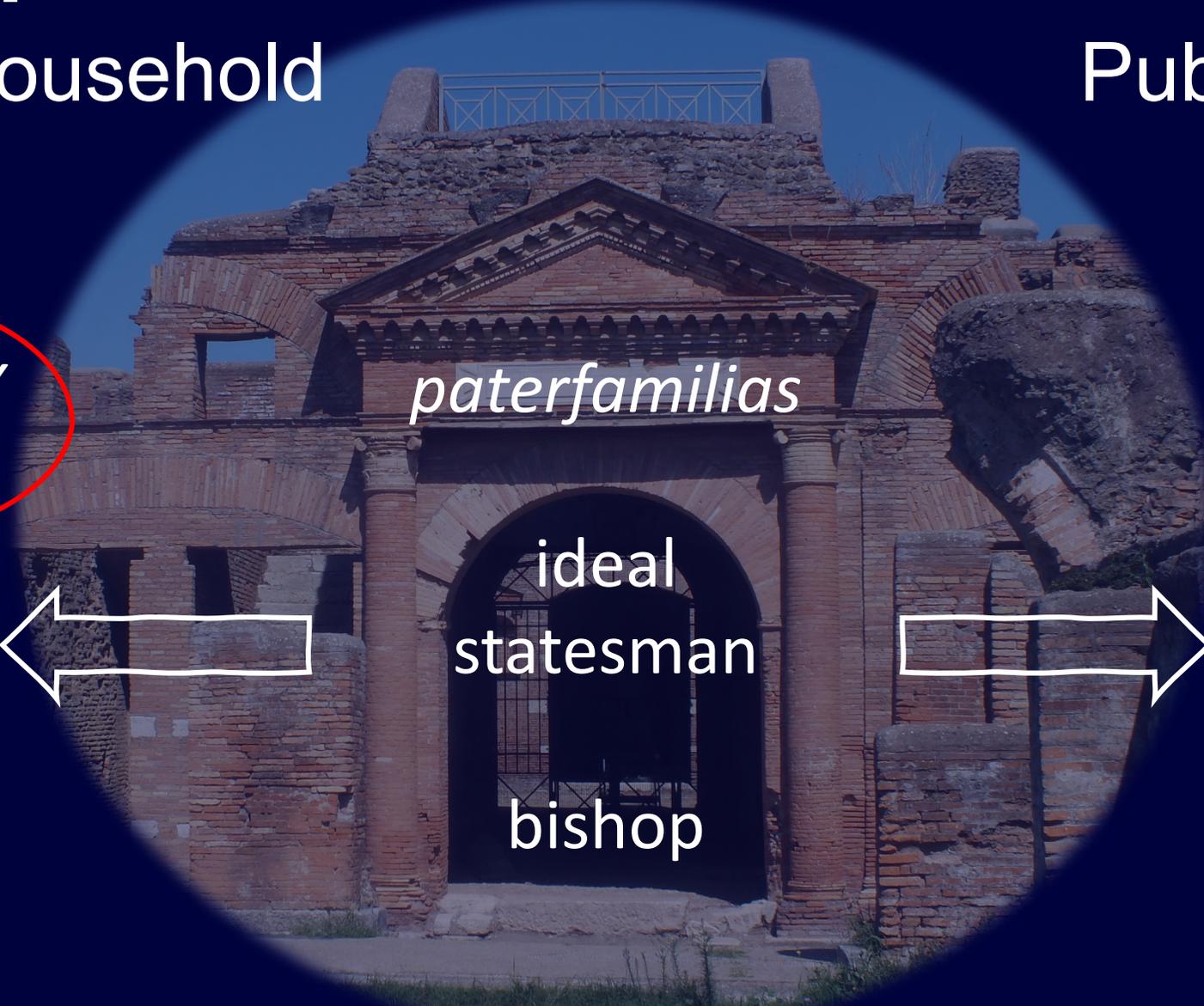
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***The Acts  
of Paul  
and Thecla***



Domestic  
and silent





A visual spectacle.... but also vocal

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# Increasing confidence: Thecla on the road





**Gregory of Nyssa,**  
***The Life of Macrina***

# Macrina's education to holiness



Praying by  
singing  
psalms:

ordered  
speech





# Philosophical topics / modes of speech:

- **anthropology**
- **eschatology**
- **dialectic**
- **ethics**
- **protreptic**
- **consolation**

<https://www.metmuseum.org>



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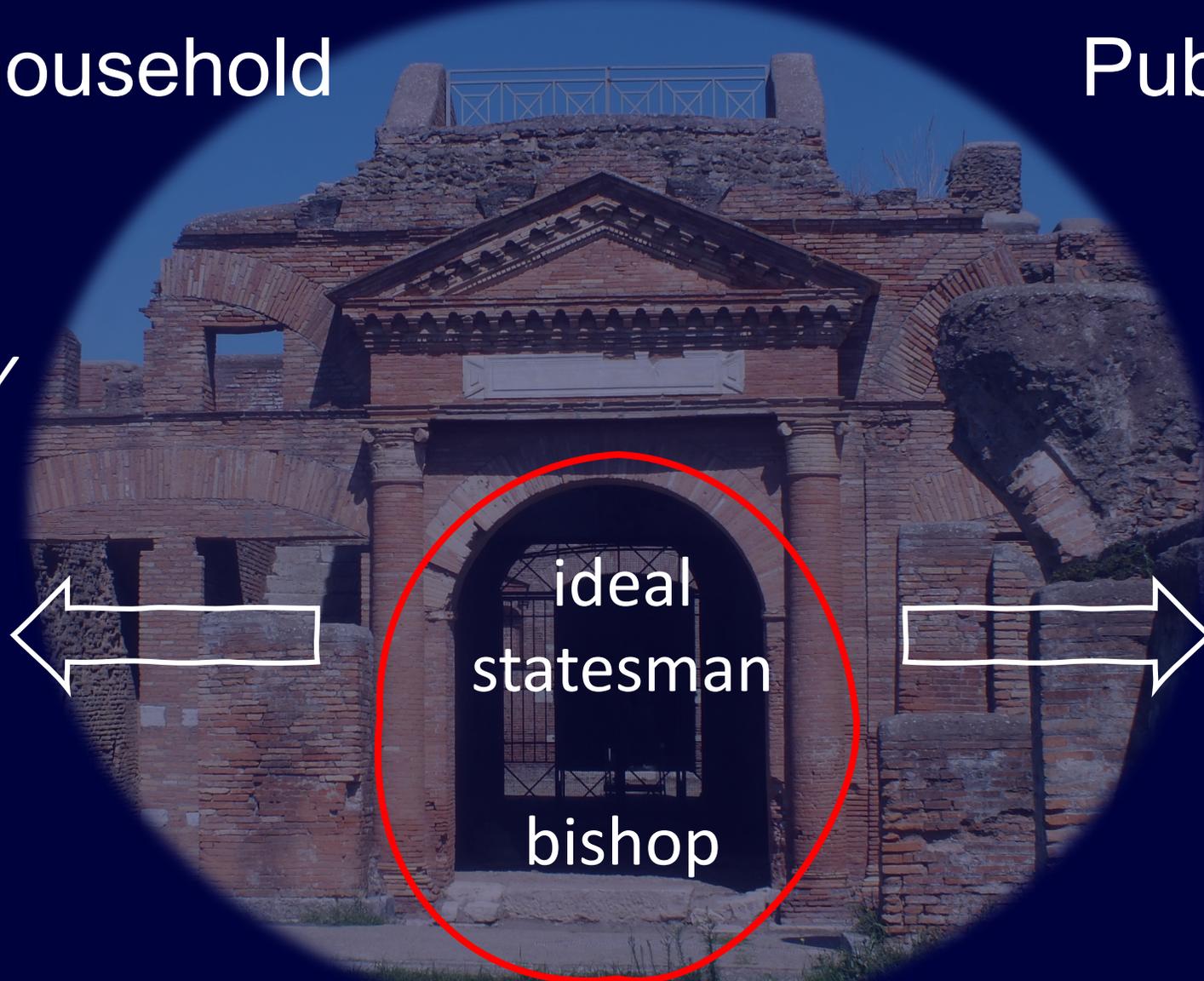
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