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ANTHONY R. BIRLEY

ATTITUDES TO THE STATE
IN THE LATIN APOLOGISTS¹*Introduction*

The five writers here considered, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Arnobius and Lactantius, were all from Africa. Customarily the earliest firm evidence for Christianity there is taken to be the year 180, when the Scillitan martyrs were condemned by the proconsul Vigellius Saturninus: he was the "first to turn the sword against us", as Tertullian wrote (*Scap.* 3.4). Of course, the very existence of martyrs at that time must mean that the Christians had been established in Africa somewhat earlier. It is quite probable that Vespronius Candidus, also mentioned by Tertullian (*Scap.* 4.3) as a governor who had dealings with Christians, did so as legate of Numidia, in which office he is attested ca. 174-176, rather than as proconsul of Africa, a post he is not known to have held. This would bring the date back a little, into the 170s.² Besides this, in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* there is a clear, hostile allusion to Christianity (9.4), which, although the context is in Greece, may reasonably be interpreted

¹ This paper cannot make any pretence at including a systematic bibliographical survey.

² This was suggested by A.R. BIRLEY, "Persecutors and martyrs in Tertullian's Africa", in *Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of London* 29 (1992) [1993], 37-68, at 44.

as reflecting circumstances in Africa.³ Better still, there are passages in the same writer's *Apology*, datable to the late 150s,⁴ which were surely intended to imply that one of his opponents, Sicinius Aemilianus of Oea, was a Christian: he is compared to Thyestes, 16.7, cf. Min.Fel. 8.3ff., 30.2ff., and is called *lucifugus*, 16.13, cf. Min.Fel. 8.4, 10.1ff.⁵ Fronto's attack on the Christians, discussed further below, need not, to be sure, imply that he had any awareness of the religion in his native Numidia or elsewhere in Africa. As for the means by which Christianity reached Africa,⁶ there is much to be said for the idea that it arrived with members of the imperial household, *Caesariani*, a great many of whom served in Africa.⁷

³ T.D. BARNES, *Tertullian. A literary and historical study* (Oxford 1971), 60, 272f.

⁴ For the date, see B.E. THOMASSON, *Fasti Africani* (Stockholm 1996), 63: Apuleius delivered his *apologia* before the proconsul Claudius Maximus, in office probably 158-159.

⁵ This was argued by E. GRISSET, "Un cristiano di Sabrata [sic]", in *Rivista di Studi Classici* 5 (1957), 35-9, also citing *apol.* 10, 66, Sicinius' austere way of life, and 56, his neglect of the gods and his nickname Mezentius. The idea is discussed by BARNES, *Tertullian* (n.3), 271ff., who rejects it: "If Apuleius had really wanted to suggest that Aemilianus was a Christian, ambiguity was easy to avoid: Aemilianus could be accused of having his own private (and depraved) religion". Neither GRISSET nor BARNES pick up the comparison with Thyestes at 16.7.

⁶ W.H.C. FREND, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford 1965), 361ff., favours the view that it emerged from the Jewish community at Carthage ca. 150; this is rejected by BARNES, *Tertullian* (n.3), 64, 273ff.; cf. the postscript to the reprint of 1985, 329ff., where he slightly modifies his position. But see more recently the important study, with valuable observations on Tertullian and African Christianity, by K. VÖSSING, *Schule und Bildung im Nordafrika der Römischen Kaiserzeit* (Bruxelles 1997), 260 n.975, citing further literature in favour of Jewish origins, which he himself favours: "[w]ahrscheinlich war es eine Folge der jüdischen Diaspora des ausgehenden 1.Jh., was für eine griechische Beeinflussung spricht". Cf. ibid. 474 n.1595, where he notes that "[d]ie afrikanische Kirche wurde zwar sicher auch vom Osten geprägt", but adds: "offenbar hat man sich aber zumindest sprachlich schnell emanzipiert".

⁷ Attested by the very numerous second-century tombstones at Carthage. See e.g. I.M. BARTON, "Caesar's Household at Carthage", in *Museum Africum* 1 (1972), 18-27; G. SCHÖLLGEN, *Ecclesia Sordida? Zur Frage der sozialen Schichtung frühchristlicher Gemeinden am Beispiel Karthagos zur Zeit Tertullians* (Münster 1984), 104ff. See also the valuable discussion by VÖSSING (n.6), 413ff. Of course, these funerary inscriptions all appear to be pagan; but at this period overt assertion of Christianity on a

The relative chronology of these apologists seems to be clear. Tertullian, Minucius Felix and Cyprian unquestionably wrote in that order: attempts to date Minucius before Tertullian or after Cyprian are unconvincing. Arnobius and Lactantius are the latest. The circumstances in which each wrote, and the genre and audience, differed greatly. For this reason alone, their varying approaches are hardly surprising. One may note in advance that there is very little citation of scripture in Tertullian, Minucius and Arnobius, whereas it is copious in Cyprian. Cf. Lactantius' comments, *inst.* 5.1.22-28, 4.3-7, etc.

Tertullian

Tertullian's principal apologetic works are the *Ad nationes*, *Apologeticum* and *Ad Scapulam*; the *De testimonio animae* has nothing relevant to the present subject, and the strange *De pallio* is in a rather different category to the other works.⁸ He takes a markedly different position to that expressed by Speratus, one of the Scillitan Christians: *ego imperium huius seculi non cognosco* (*Pass.Scill.* 6). In *apol.* and *Scap.* there are clear statements of loyalty to Rome. In *nat.* this is less pronounced: there is only, at 1.17.4, a sarcastic reply to the charge *hostes populi nuncupamur* (1.17.3), referring to the recently ended civil wars, *adhuc Syriae cadaverum odoribus spirant, adhuc Galliae Rhodano suo non lavant*: in these civil wars, he implies, Christians were not involved. The explicit statement that Christians did not support Pescennius Niger, Clodius Albinus — or, earlier, Avidius Cassius — comes at *apol.* 35.9 and *Scap.* 2.5.

tombstone would have been highly unusual. BARTON, 22f., tries hard to detect a few possible Christians from the formula *p(lus) m(inus)* after the age.

⁸ It is impossible here to cite more than a very few items from the vast literature on Tertullian. Of particular value for the present subject is J.-C. FREDOUILLE, "Tertullien et l'empire", in *RecAug* 19 (1984), 111-131, which, as the author notes, reproduces, without notable changes, a paper read at a conference in 1971, and originally destined for a collective work, in a volume which had (and has still) not appeared.

Addressing the ‘governors’, he stresses, *apol.* 2.14: *hoc imperium cuius ministri estis, civilis, non tyrannica dominatio est.* At 28.3 he begins the defence *ad secundum titulum laesae maiestatis*. It is too long to cite more than a few salient passages here: 30.1: *nos enim pro salute imperatorum deum invocamus aeternum, deum verum, deum vivum, quem et ipsi imperatores proprium sibi praeter ceteros malunt. sciunt quis illis dederit imperium; sciunt, qua homines, quis et animam; sentiunt eum esse deum solum, in cuius solius potestate sunt, a quo sunt secundi, post quem primi, ante omnes et super omnes deos.* 30.4: *illuc sursum suspicientes Christiani manibus expansis, quia innocuis, capite nudato, quia non erubescimus, denique sine monitore, quia de pectore oramus, precantes sumus semper pro omnibus imperatoribus, vitam illis prolixam, imperium securum, domum tutam, exercitus fortis, senatum fidelem, populum probum, orbem quietum, quaecumque hominis et Caesaris vota sunt.* 31.1: ... *qui ergo putaveris nihil nos de salute Caesarum curare, inspice dei voces, litteras nostras, quas neque ipsi suppressimus et plerique casus ad extraneos transferunt.* 2: *scitote ex illis praeceptum esse nobis ad redundantiam benignitatis etiam pro inimicis deum orare et persecutoribus nostris bona precari.* 3: *sed etiam nominatim atque manifeste, “Orate”, inquit, “pro regibus et pro principibus et potestatibus, ut omnia tranquilla sint vobis [1 Tim. 2.2].”* 32.1: *est et alia maior necessitas nobis orandi pro imperatoribus, etiam pro omni statu imperii rebusque Romanis, qui vim maximam universo orbi imminentem ipsamque clausulam saeculi acerbitates horrendas comminantem Romani imperii commeatu scimus retardari. itaque nolumus experiri, et dum precamur differri, Romanae diuturnitati favemus.* 2: *sed et iuramus, sicut non per genios Caesarum, ita per salutem eorum, quae est augustior omnibus geniis... nos iudicium dei suspicimus in imperatoribus, qui gentibus illos praefecit.* 3: *id in eis scimus esse quod deus voluit, ideoque et salvum volumus esse quod deus voluit et pro magno id iuramento habemus.* 33.1: *sed quid ego amplius de religione atque pietate Christiana in imperatore? quem necesse est suspiciamus ut eum quem dominus noster elegit, ut merito dixerim: Noster est magis Caesar, a nostro deo constitutus.* 33.3: *non*

enim deum imperatorem dicam, vel quia mentiri nescio, vel quia illum deridere non audeo, vel quia nec ipse se deum volet dici. 37.4: *hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum; sola vobis relinquimus templis.* (It may be noted in passing that by *insulas* Tertullian means ‘blocks of buildings in a city’, not ‘islands’, and by *castella* ‘small settlements’, not ‘forts’.)

After pointing out that it is not Christians but others who have displayed disloyalty, he insists that Christians should not be classed as an illegal *factio*, 38.3: *at enim nobis ab omni gloriae et dignitatis ardore frigentibus nulla est necessitas coetus, nec ulla magis res aliena quam publica. unam omnium rempublicam agnoscimus mundum.* He goes on, 39.1ff., to describe the *negotia Christianae factionis*, to show that they are *bona*. This includes the reiterated statement of loyalty to the emperors and the state, 39.2: *oramus etiam pro imperatoribus, pro ministeriis eorum ac potestatibus, pro statu saeculi, pro rerum quiete, pro mora finis.* At 42.1ff. he asserts that Christians participate fully in the life of the Empire, and are not *infructuosi in negotiis*. 42.2: *itaque non sine foro, non sine macello, non sine balneis, tabernis, officinis, stabulis, nundinis vestris ceterisque commerciis cohabitamus in hoc saeculo.* 42.3: *navigamus et nos vobiscum et militamus et rusticamur et mercamur; proinde miscemus artes, operas nostras publicamus usui vestro.*

The claims, *vestra omnia implevimus..., castra ipsa* and *vobiscum et militamus*, seem, of course, to be at odds with *De idolatria* 19 and with the *De corona*. But the latter was certainly written much later than the *Apologeticum*, in response to an incident in 211;⁹ and there is no good reason to assume that

⁹ This date is well argued e.g. by R. FREUDENBERGER, “Der Anlass zu Tertullians Schrift *De corona militis*”, in *Historia* 19 (1970), 579-592. Y. LE BOHEC, “Tertullien, *De corona*, I: Carthage ou Lambèse?”, in *REAug* 38 (1992), 6-18, makes a strong case for the episode having taken place at Rome rather than in Africa.

De idololatria was an early work, let alone that it preceded the *Apologeticum*, as has been argued; a late date for this too seems much likelier.¹⁰ This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of Tertullian's attitude to military service, but it is surely legitimate to say that, while in 197 he evidently did not reject the idea of Christians serving in the army, ten or more years later his attitude had changed, no doubt as a result of his adherence to 'Montanism'.¹¹

In his latest datable work, written in 212,¹² the claim that Christians are loyal subjects of Rome is expressed more concisely than at *apol.* 30ff., but is basically unchanged, *Scap.* 2.6: *Christianus nullius est hostis, nedum imperatoris, quem sciens a deo suo constitui necesse est, ut et ipsum diligat et revereatur et honoret et salvum velit cum toto Romano imperio, quoisque saeculum stabit; tamdiu enim stabit.* 2.7: *colimus ergo et imperatorem sic, [...] et, quicquid est, a deo consecutum, solo tamen deo minorem. hoc et ipse volet; sic enim omnibus maior est, dum solo vero deo minor est, sic et ipsis diis maior est, dum et ipsi in potestate sunt*

¹⁰ An early date for *idol.* was claimed by R. HEINZE, "Tertullians Apologeticum", *Bericht über die Verhandlungen der königl. sächs. Ges. der Wiss. zu Leipzig*, Phil.-hist. Kl. 62 (1910), 441; followed e.g. by P.G. VAN DER NAT, *Q. Septimi Florentis Tertulliani De Idololatria* (Leiden 1960), 14, arguing that *apol.* 35.4 was taken over from *idol.* 15.11; and by BARNES, *Tertullian* (n.3), 53f., who, however, withdrew this argument in the 'Postscript' to the reprinted edition (1985), at 325. J.-C. FREDOUILLE, in *RecAug* 19 (1984), 125 n.61, gives good reasons for *idol.* having been written at about the same date as *cor.*, or at most a few years earlier.

¹¹ See e.g. J.-C. FREDOUILLE, in *RecAug* 19 (1984), 125ff., with further references. J. HELGELAND, "Christians and the Roman army from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine", in *ANRWII* 23.1 (1979), 724-834, who treats Tertullian at 735-744, simply assumes the date of *idol.* to be 211, without discussion.

¹² B.E. THOMASSON, *Fasti Africani* (n.4), 83f., shows that Scapula was proconsul from 212-213. It is often supposed that there is no trace of Montanism in *Scap.* Note, however, the reference at 5.1 to the voluntary martyrs in Asia under the proconsul Arrius Antoninus, in office probably 188-189: they were surely Montanists, as assumed by W.H.C. FREND, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford 1965), 293, supported by A.R. BIRLEY, "Die 'freiwilligen Märtyrer'. Zum Problem der Selbst-Auslieferer", in *Rom und das himmlische Jerusalem. Die frühen Christen zwischen Anpassung und Ablehnung*, hrsg. von R. VON HAEHLING (Darmstadt 2000), 97-123, at 109f.

eius. 2.8: itaque et sacrificamus pro salute imperatoris, sed deo nostro et ipsius, sed quomodo praecepit deus, pura prece; — non enim eget deus, conditor universitatis, odoris aut sanguinis alicuius; haec enim daemoniorum pabula sunt.

There are also important statements in his other writings. Note for example *pall. 2.7: sed vanum iam antiquitas, quando curricula nostra coram. quantum reformavit orbis saeculum istud. quantum urbium aut produxit aut auxit aut reddidit praesentis imperii triplex virtus. deo tot Augustis in unum favente quot census transcripti, quot populi repurgati, quot ordines illustrati, quot barbari exclusi. revera orbis cultissimum huius imperii rus est, eradicato omni acon[d]ito hostilitatis et cacto et rubo subdolae familiaritatis, concultus et amoenus <su>per Alcinoi pometum et Midae rosetum. laudans igitur orbem mutantem quid denotas hominem?* It is difficult not to regard this as a thoroughly positive attitude to the Empire, even if the *De pallio* was written as some kind of parody.¹³ The *imperii triplex virtus* must surely refer to the rule of Severus and his sons, not necessarily only in the short period from autumn 209 to February 211 when Geta was the third Augustus.¹⁴ Although Geta's name was systematically deleted from inscriptions after his murder, there are plenty of surviving or still legible examples in which he was prematurely called Augustus, not least in Africa, between 198 and 209.¹⁵ The eradication of *omni aconito hostilitatis* no doubt refers to the ending of the civil wars of 193-7, that of the *rubro subdolae familiaritatis* probably to the suppression of Plautianus in January 205.¹⁶ There is no need to insist that *pall. 4.5, impuriorem*

¹³ This is suggested plausibly by VÖSSING (n. 6), 315 n.1141, 317 n.1143.

¹⁴ *IG II/III* 1077, Athens, datable to late 210 or early 211, shows that Geta became Augustus in the second half of 209, before 10 December, as confirmed by the diploma of 7 January 210, M.M. ROXAN, *Roman Military Diplomas 1985-1993* (London 1994), no. 191, on which he is Augustus and *trib. pot. II*.

¹⁵ See the lists in A. MASTINO, *Le titolature de Caracalla e Geta attraverso le iscrizioni (indici)* (Bologna 1981), 157f., 171ff.

¹⁶ Hence BARNES (n.3), 35ff., argues for a date soon after January 205, against e.g. G. SÄFLUND, *De Pallio und die stilistische Entwicklung Tertullians* (Roma 1955), 31ff., who favoured 222-3, and has been supported by R. BRAUN, *Deus*

Physcone et molliorem Sardanapallo Caesarem designare et quidem Subneronem, can only apply to Elagabalus. There is ample evidence for Commodus being so regarded.¹⁷ Besides, as pointed out by Tränkle, Tertullian cannot have written “über das vielleicht kaum ein Jahr währende Zusammenwirken eines 14-Jährigen mit Mutter und Großmutter..., wie er es in 1,1 [gaudeo vos tam prosperos temporum... pacis hoc et annona<e> et oti: ab imperio et a caelo bene est] und 2,7 getan hat”.¹⁸

One may also cite another work, intended for fellow-Christsians, *De anima* 30.3: *certe quidem ipse orbis in promptu est cultior de die et instructior pristino. omnia iam pervia, omnia nota, omnia negotiosa, solitudines famosas retro fundi amoenissimi obliteraverunt, silvas arva domuerunt, feras pecora fugaverunt, harenae seruntur, saxa panguntur, paludes eliquantur, tantae urbes quantae non casae quondam. iam nec insulae horrent nec scopuli terrent; ubique domus, ubique populus, ubique respublica, ubique vita.* For other affirmations of Christian loyalty to the emperor(s), in works addressed to Christians, see *idol.* 15.8: *igitur quod attineat ad honores regum vel imperatorum, satis*

Christianorum. Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien (Paris 1977), 577; J.-C. FREDOUILLE, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique* (Paris 1972), 444f., 470f.; ID., in *RecAug* 19 (1984), 127ff.; VÖSSING (n.6), 315f.

¹⁷ BARNES (n.3), 36, cites HIST.AUG. *Comm.* 19.2, *saevior Domitiano, imprior Nerone*, from the senate's denunciation of the dead Commodus, taken from Marius Maximus, and refers to DIO CASS. 73[72].17.1ff. and HIST.AUG. *Comm.* 3.4ff. Dio mentions only the long-sleeved, gold-embroidered silk tunic and other luxurious garments; these might evoke a Physcon or a Sardanapallus, 72.17.3. But there is much more in the HIST.AUG. that recalls Physcon, Sardanapallus and Nero: 1.7, *a prima statim pueritia turpis, improbus, crudelis, libidinosus, ore quoque pollutus et constupratus fuit*; 2.7, *neque umquam pepercit vel pudori vel sumptui*; 3.6, *subactore suo Saotero*; 5.4, his 300 concubines and 300 *puberes exoleti*; 5.8, *sororibus dein suis ceteris, ut dicitur, constupratis*; 5.11, *nec inruentum in se iuvenum carebat infamia, omni parte corporis atque ore in sexum utrumque pollutus*; 9.6, *in veste muliebri*; 9.8-9, his male lovers; 13.4, *cum muliebri veste*; 17.3, *capillo semper fucato et auri ramentis inluminato*. Cf. also HIST.AUG. *Pert.* 8.1ff., the auction of Commodus' luxury goods, including his gold-embroidered silk robes (8.1), *vasa Samnitica* for heating pitch and resin to depilate the skin (8.5), and carriages, *vitia eius convenientia* (8.7).

¹⁸ H. TRÄNKLE, in *HLL* IV §474, p.456.

praescriptum habemus, in omni obsequio esse nos opportere secundum apostoli praeceptum [Rom. 13.7] subditos magistratibus et principibus et potestatibus, sed intra limites disciplinae, quousque ab idololatria separamur; scorp. 14.1ff.: plane monet Romanos omnibus potestatibus subici, quia non sit potestas nisi a deo, et quia non sine causa gladium gestet, et quid ministerium sit dei, sed et ultrix, inquit, in iram ei qui malum fecerit etc. (quoting Rom. 13.1ff., Mt. 22.21 and 1 Petr. 2.13); and perhaps *resurr. 24.17-18: et nunc quid teneat scitis, ad revelandum eum in suo tempore. 18: iam enim arcanum iniquitatis agitatur; tantum qui nunc teneat, donec de medio fiat [2 Thess. 2.6f.], quis, nisi Romanus status, cuius abscessio in decem reges dispersa antichristum superducet?*¹⁹

Tertullian was aware that persecution was a matter for the provincial governors, who could decide for themselves whether or not to hear charges against Christians. These were to a large extent brought by hostile pagan neighbours and could arise, not least, when Christians refused to submit to blackmail, by such neighbours, or by soldiers and junior officials. This seems clear from *Scap. 5.3: parce provinciae, quae visa intentione tua obnoxia facta est concussionibus et militum et inimicorum suorum cuiusque.* Scapula had presumably made it clear (*visa intentione tua*), on arrival in his province, that he would hear cases against Christians. Tertullian reminds Scapula, 4.3-4, that several of his predecessors had refused to do so. It must be reiterated here that there is no good evidence for Severus decreeing empire-wide persecution: the ‘edict’ known only from the *Historia Augusta*, *Severus* 17.1, Severus’ alleged ban on conversion to Judaism and Christianity, *sub gravi poena*, in a context that should be in the period ca. 199-202, is surely an invention by the author of the *Historia Augusta*, although it is often taken to be genuine.²⁰

¹⁹ See the comments of J.-C. FREDOUILLE, in *RecAug* 19 (1984), 113f. n.6.

²⁰ The spurious nature of this statement in the *Historia Augusta* was demonstrated by K.H. SCHWARTE, “Das angebliche Christengesetz des Septimius Severus”, in *Historia* 12 (1963), 185-208.

Persecution was clearly taking place at intervals, on a local basis, throughout the years when Tertullian wrote; and there is no sign of any change in the position that had existed since the time of Trajan, if not before. But the number of martyrs was probably limited. It is striking that of those named in the *Passio Perpetuae*, the deacons Tertius and Pomponius, who ministered to the imprisoned Christians (3.7), the bishop Optatus and the priest and teacher Aspasia, who appeared in one of Perpetua's visions (13.1), were not themselves arrested or martyred. The authorities evidently deemed it sufficient to make an example of a limited number.²¹

Tertullian evidently had a positive attitude to Severus: note especially *apol.* 4.8, *Severus, constantissimus principum*, and the lengthy passage written after the emperor's death, *Scap.* 4.6-7: *ipse etiam Severus, pater Antonini, Christianorum memor fuit. nam et Proculum Christianum, qui Torpacion cognominabatur, Euhodi procuratorem, qui eum per oleum aliquando curaverat, requisiit et in palatio suo habuit usque ad mortem eius — quem et Antoninus noverat lacte Christiano educatum.*²² 4.7: *sed et clarissimas feminas et clarissimos viros Severus sciens huius sectae esse non modo non laesit, verum et testimonio exornavit et populo furenti in nos palam restitit.*

The question has been admirably summed up by Fredouille: “Le témoignage de Tertullien est donc sans ambiguïté aucune: il ne saurait exister de conflit entre les chrétiens et l'Empereur ou l'Empire, mais seulement entre les chrétiens et *des* empereurs ou *des* gouverneurs de province. Ceci est beaucoup plus qu'une

²¹ For clergy ministering to Christians in prison, without themselves being arrested, see also *Pass. Montani et Lucii* 9.2. On the limited number of martyrs see E. WIPSZYCKA, “Considérations sur les persécutions contre les Chrétiens. Qui frappaient-elles?”, in *Poikilia. Études... J.-P. Vernant* (Paris 1987), 397-405.

²² The MSS reading *lacte Christiano educatum*, referring to Proculus, is clearly preferable to *educatus*, which would mean that as an infant Caracalla had had a Christian wetnurse: see H.U. INSTINSKY, *Die alte Kirche und das Heil des Staates* (München 1963), 75f. n.73: “Der Relativsatz besagt nur, daß auch Caracalla sehr gut wußte, Proculus sei ‘mit christlicher Milch aufgezogen’, d.h. in der christlichen Lehre unterwiesen”.

nuance, car le principe de la légitimité du pouvoir impérial comme celui du loyalisme des chrétiens demeure intact — et ce, en dépit des persécutions".²³

No doubt *nat.*, *apol.* and *Scap.* were all composed as a reaction to outbreaks of persecution, in 197 and 212 respectively. But it is worth asking whether a further initial impetus in 197 may have been that Tertullian had been reading three well-known works. It has been observed regularly that *nat.* in particular is an impassioned attack on the *ignorantia* and *odium* of the Christians' opponents and persecutors. Of course, this viewpoint is already present in the earlier, Greek apologists. But, as Lortz commented long ago, "Tertullian geht weiter... Besondere Bedeutung gewinnt auch bei ihm der Begriff 'odium', vor allem in Ap." Further, Lortz stressed that the complete *ignorantia* of the opponents was Tertullian's first proof: "Dieser Vorwurf der ignorantia ist T. so wichtig, daß er ihn in allen apologetischen Schriften und zwar stets an erster Stelle verwendet".²⁴

Now Pliny's letter to Trajan, 10.96, begins by asking the emperor *ignorantium instruere*. Tertullian knew the letter, and Trajan's reply, for he cites the correspondence directly, *apol.* 2.6-7, 5.7, cf. 27.2, 38.1. He cited Tacitus too, but from the *Histories*, at *nat.* 1.11.1ff. and *apol.* 16.1ff. Yet he had surely also read the famous passage in *ann.* 15.44, for he must be referring to it at *apol.* 5.3: *consultite commentarios vestros, illic reperietis primum Neronem in hanc sectam cum maxime Romae orientem Caesariano gladio ferocisse, and scorp.* 15.3: *vitas Caesarum legimus: orientem fidem Romae primus Nero cruentavit.* The term *vitas Caesarum* is not a problem: this is just what Jerome said that Tacitus wrote, in *Zach.* 3.14.1f.: *Cornelius Tacitus, qui post Augustum usque ad mortem Domitiani vitas Caesarum triginta voluminibus exaravit.*²⁵

²³ J.-C. FREDOUILLE, in *RecAug* 19 (1984), 121.

²⁴ J. LORTZ, *Tertullian als Apologet* I (Münster 1927), 32: "Wenn die Griechen die Gesamthaltung der Heiden zum Christentum bzw. zu den Christen kennzeichnen wollen, kehrt außerordentlich oft der Begriff 'ungerechter Haß' wieder". The quotations in the text are from *ibid.*, 34 and 37.

²⁵ BARNES (n.3), 200, 202.

In Tacitus' famous account of Nero's persecution at Rome the word *odium* is prominent. To be sure, Tacitus is assumed to have meant by *odio humani generis* the Christians' 'hatred of mankind', although it could in fact mean 'mankind's hatred' of the Christians.²⁶ But whatever Tacitus intended, which was almost certainly, as almost all commentators and translators have supposed, 'the Christians' misanthropy', any reader could take it in the other sense, not least in view of *per flagitia invisos* a few lines earlier.

In an appendix the texts of Plin. *epist.* 10.96-97, and Tac. *ann.* 15.44.2-5, are set out, with annotation pointing out verbal echoes in *nat.*, *apol.* and *Scap.*, not merely of *ignorantia* and *odium*, but of a variety of other words as well; more could be added. The suggestion is that Tertullian set out to refute Pliny and Tacitus.

A third text may also have played a part in prompting Tertullian's passionate defence, although it has not survived: Fronto's attack on the Christians. Tertullian does not cite Fronto by name, as does Minucius Felix, 9.6 and 31.2, but he surely had him in mind when he defended the Christians against the charges of incest and cannibalism, in other words, the *flagitia* referred to by Tacitus (15.44.2) and Pliny (10.96.2), of which Pliny failed to find evidence (10.96.8).²⁷ Bammel has shown convincingly that in *nat.* 1.2.8ff., 1.7.10, 1.7.20, 1.7.23-4, 1.7.31-2 Tertullian very probably had the same source as Minucius.²⁸ She might have added that the same points recur, recast,

²⁶ The latter sense was in fact argued by F.R.M. HITCHCOCK, "A note on Tacitus, Annals XV, 44", in *Hermathena* 49 (1935), 184-8. His claim that Tacitus actually meant this was answered by H. FUCHS, "Tacitus über die Christen", in *VChr* 4 (1950), 65-93, at 83ff., with n.33, and the idea does not seem to have been revived. But it remains possible to understand *odio humani generis* as "the human race's hatred [for the Christians]", i.e. *odio* with a subjective genitive, cf. e.g. *ann.* 6.29.3, *haud minus validum ad exitia Macronis odium*.

²⁷ H. NESSELHAUF, *Der Ursprung des Problems 'Staat und Kirche'* (Konstanz 1975), 18ff., argues that the supposed *flagitia* were the real original grounds for the Christians being criminalised.

²⁸ C. BAMMEL, "Die erste lateinische Rede gegen die Christen", in *ZKG* 42 = 104 (1993), 295-311.

in *apol.* 2.5, 4.11, 7.1 and 5, 8.1-9, 9.1ff. She noted further that Tertullian's version recalls Livy's account of the suppression of the Bacchus-worshippers in 186 BC, referred to by Livy 39.13.14 as *paene alterum genus*, to which she compares *nat.* 1.8.1 and 9ff. and 1.20.4, the Christians labelled *tertium genus*. One may add *apol.* 6.7: *Liberum Patrem cum mysteriis suis consules senatus auctoritate non modo urbe, sed universa Italia eliminaverunt.*

Fronto was no doubt not the first to produce these charges — the *flagitia*, known to Pliny and Tacitus — but he may have been the first to give to the alleged Christian practices the learned label “Thyestean feasts and Oedipodean intercourse”, and this no doubt gave the supposed *flagitia* wider currency. The same description is mentioned in Athenagoras' *Legatio* (3.1) and in the letter of the churches of Lugdunum and Vienna (Eus. *hist.eccl.* 5.1.14), both from the late 170s. If the conjecture mentioned above is correct, that Apuleius compared his opponent to Thyestes in order to portray him as a Christian (*apol.* 16), it might be inferred that he was influenced by Fronto, whose speech might well have been delivered before the late 150s. At any rate, Tertullian is likely to have known Fronto's speeches, including the one in which he made these charges. It must be noted, further, that the speech in question was not necessarily an anti-Christian diatribe. It is surely more probable that the great orator took the chance to discredit or smear a man he was prosecuting by accusing him, among other things, of involvement in “Christian orgies”. A plausible context has been identified. The date is open, but it could easily have been in the 140s or 150s.²⁹

²⁹ The context of Fronto's attack is a matter for speculation. BARNES (n.3), 149, 161 n.2, makes the attractive suggestion, taken further by E. CHAMPLIN, *Fronto and Antonine Rome* (Cambridge, Mass. 1980), 64-66, that it was not (as often assumed) from a speech directed solely against the Christians but rather a passage in a forensic speech, the prosecution of a man called Pelops. CHAMPLIN cites Sidonius Apollinaris, *epist.* 8.10.3: *Marcus Fronto cum reliquis orationibus emineret, in Pelopem se sibi praetulit.* If this particular speech was so outstanding, it is all the likelier that Tertullian knew it. (S. BENKO, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* [London 1985], 54, writes that “[a]lthough few of his writings survive,

Minucius Felix

There seems no doubt that Minucius wrote the *Octavius* after Tertullian's *Apologeticum* and before Cyprian's *Ad Donatum*.³⁰ Hence the date must be between 197 and ca. 246. It has been suggested that he wrote at a time when there was no persecution, between Severus Alexander and Decius.³¹ At first sight this seems to be contradicted by Caecilius' statement, 12.4: *ecce vobis minae, supplicia, tormenta, et iam non adoranda sed subeundae cruces, ignes etiam quos et praedicitis et timetis: ubi deus ille, qui subvenire revivescentibus potest, viventibus non potest?* Trials of Christians are referred to at 28.1-4, and imprisonment for the faith is cheerfully admitted by Octavius, 35.6: *denique de vestro numero carcer exaestuat, Christianus ibi nullus nisi aut reus suae religionis aut profugus;* and at 36.9-37.6 he directly answers Caecilius by praising the steadfastness of the martyrs. However, given that localised persecution could break out anywhere and at any time, this takes us no further. Besides, one has to distinguish between the time of writing and the dramatic date of the dialogue. As to the latter, it is certainly tempting to take the reference to the perils of joint rule at 18.6 to refer to that of Caracalla and Geta: *quando umquam regni societas aut cum fide coepit aut sine cruento discessit?* This could simply be a version of the line in the *Iliad* (2.104) that had become proverbial.³² Still, it would hardly have applied to Rome before the brief joint rule

we know, through the references of other authors [sic], of Fronto's intense hatred of the Christians". But no extant author except Minucius actually names Fronto in connection with Christians.)

³⁰ C. BECKER, *Der 'Octavius' des Minucius Felix*, SBAW 1967,2 (München 1967), 93-97; E. HECK, "Minucius Felix und der römische Staat. Ein Hinweis zum 25. Kapitel des 'Octavius'", in *VChr* 38 (1984), 154-164, at 159 n.1, pointing out that Cyprian, *Ad Donatum*, is dependent on Minucius. C. TIBILETTI, "Il problema della priorità Tertulliano-Minucio Felice", in *Hommages à R. Braun. II: Autour de Tertullien*, ed. by J. GRANAROLO (Nice 1990), 23-34, also argues that Minucius was later than Tertullian.

³¹ E. HECK, in *HLL* IV §475, p.513.

³² H. v. GEISAU, in *RE* Suppl.-Bd. 11 (1968), col.996.

of Caracalla and Geta, culminating after less than a year in Geta's murder.³³

A very negative attitude to the Empire is expressed by Octavius at 25.1ff.: *at tamen ista ipsa superstitionis Romanis dedit, auxit, fundavit imperium, cum non tam virtute quam religione et pietate pollerent. nimirum insignis et nobilis iustitia Romana ab ipsis imperii nascentis incunabulis auspicata est.* 2: *nonne in ortu suo et scelere collecti et muniti immanitatis suae terrore creverunt?* 5: *ita quicquid Romani tenent colunt possident audaciae praeda est: templa omnia de manubiis, id est de ruinis urbium, de spoliis deorum, de caedibus sacerdotum.* 7: *igitur Romani non ideo tanti, quod religiosi, sed quod inpune sacrilegi...* Strobel claims that this is "keine grundsätzliche Ablehnung des Imperium Romanum als Unrechtsstaat", merely a consistent, point by point reply to the case put forward by the pagan Caecilius at 6.2. Octavius' attack, Strobel supposes, is not against the Roman empire as an institution, just against the Roman 'Credo', that they had gained their position of power through *religio* and *pietas*.³⁴ It is hardly convincing to separate the two. A similar view is taken by von Haehling (not citing Strobel), who argues, further, that the reference to Mucius Scaevola's heroic sacrifice of his right hand (37.3-6) shows that Minucius, i.e. here Octavius, "nicht schlechthin die römische Frühzeit verteufelt".³⁵ Yet Octavius promptly makes the comparison with Christian martyrs, boys and tender women as well

³³ The joint rule of M. Aurelius and L. Verus or of Severus and Caracalla can hardly be meant: neither ended in *cruor*. Caracalla and Geta became joint rulers following their father's death on 4 February 211, DIO CASS. 77[76].17.4. They were at odds from the start, *ibid.* 78[77].1.1ff., Herodian 4.3.1ff., etc., and Geta was murdered in late December 211 — this date was demonstrated by T.D. BARNES, "Pre-Decian *acta martyrum*", in *JThS* 19 (1968), 509-531, at 522ff.

³⁴ K. STROBEL, *Das Imperium Romanum im '3. Jahrhundert'* (Stuttgart 1993), 128f.

³⁵ R. v. HAEHLING, "Die römische Frühzeit in der Sicht frühchristlicher Autoren", in *Rom und das himmlische Jerusalem. Die frühen Christen zwischen Anpassung und Ablehnung*, hrsg. von R. v. HAEHLING (Darmstadt 2000), 184-204, at 193f.

as men, who have allowed not merely a hand but their whole body to be burned. It is more plausible to take Min.Fel. 25, with Heck, as “das... uneingeschränkt ablehnende Verhältnis zum römischen Staat”.³⁶ At most one might detect qualified respect for the Roman head of state in remarks by Octavius, 29.5, conceding that it is *fas* to honour *principes* and *reges* as great men, but not as gods: *etiam principibus et regibus, non ut magnis et electis viris, sicut fas est, sed ut deis turpiter adulatio falsa blanditur, cum et praeclaro viro honor verius et optimo amor dulcior praebatur.*

Cyprian

In *Ad Donatum* 11-13, Cyprian's rejection of *illa quae ignorantia saecularis bona opinatur* is manifest: the *fasces*, riches, the army, magistracies, the principate. He offers remarkably few comments on the state as such anywhere. The only full statement seems to be in his one directly apologetic work, *Ad Demetrianum*, at 20.3: *et tamen pro arcendis hostibus et imbribus impertrandis et vel auferendis vel temperandis adversis rogamus semper et preces fundimus et pro pace ac salute vestra propitiantes et placantes deum diebus ac noctibus iugiter adque instanter oramus.* To this one may compare his statement at his trial, *Acta Procons.* (= *Pass.Cypr.*) 1.2: *huic deo nos Christiani deservimus, hunc deprecamur diebus ac noctibus pro vobis et pro omnibus hominibus et pro incolumentate ipsorum imperatorum.* Otherwise, acceptance of the secular power is briefly recommended in *testim.* 3.37-8, citing *1 Petr.* 4.15f. and *Rom.* 13.3. It is striking that Cyprian, in contrast to Tertullian, Minucius, Arnobius and Lactantius, relies exclusively on citations from the bible, hardly likely to have convinced the pagan Demetrianus. It is understandable that he was

³⁶ E. HECK, in *VChr* 38 (1984), 154-164. Thus also H. v. GEISAU, in *RE Suppl.-Bd.* 11 (1968), col.990: “Allerdings ist die unpatriotische Haltung des M.F. nicht zu übersehen”.

criticised for this by Lactantius, *inst.* 5.4.3ff. One must conclude that Cyprian's circumstances, as bishop at a time of persecution, meant that his concerns were exclusively focused on internal questions.

Arnobius, Adversus nationes

Jerome's account, *chron.* 231 Helm, of the circumstances which prompted Arnobius to write seems entirely plausible: he was required, as a former opponent of the faith, to justify his conversion. Whatever the explanation for this notice being placed by Jerome under the year 327, it can hardly be doubted that Arnobius was writing much earlier, not long after the persecution of Diocletian had begun. This is clear from 4.36: *nam nostra quidem scripta cur ignibus meruerunt dari? cur immaniter conventicula dirui?*³⁷ It has been argued by Simmons that Arnobius' whole work (not just books 1-2) was intended as a refutation of Porphyry, and a retraction of his previous views rather than an apology: "How can books 1-2 be called an apology when Arnobius betrays very little knowledge of that which modern historians impose upon him to defend?"³⁸ This definition of apology seems unnecessarily restrictive. At all events, the attack on pagan religion, which occupies most of the work, is very much in the tradition of the second book of Tertullian, *nat.* It must be noted that discussion about Porphyry's lost work

³⁷ M.B. SIMMONS, *Arnobius of Sicca. Religious Conflict and Competition in the Age of Diocletian* (Oxford 1995), 47ff. M. EDWARDS, "The flowering of Latin Apologetic: Lactantius and Arnobius", in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. by M. EDWARDS, M. GOODMAN, S. PRICE (Oxford 1999), 197-221, at 198f., takes Lactantius' silence about Arnobius at *inst.* 5.1 to be evidence to support the late date of composition of *Ad nationes* implied by Jerome. This is hardly convincing. Lactantius had left Africa well before the persecution and while writing the *inst.* probably did not know about his former teacher's conversion or his *Adversus Nationes*.

³⁸ SIMMONS (n.37), 126. EDWARDS (n.37), 202, properly calls "criticism of this kind... irrelevant".

is bedevilled by the uncertainty about its content and its time of writing.³⁹

Arnobius' attitude to the state must be described as entirely negative, especially at the very end of his work, 7.51: *si deorum est proprium, si modo sunt veri et quod deceat nuncupari vi vocis istius et potentia nominis, nihil facere malitiose, nihil iniuste hominibusque se cunctis una et parili gratia sine ulla inclinatione preebere, credet generis eam fuisse divini quisquamne hominum aut habuisse aequitatem diis dignam, quae humanis sese discordiis inserens aliorum opes fregit, aliis se preebuit exhibuitque fautricem, libertatem his abstulit, alias ad columen dominationis evexit, quae ut una civitas emineret in humani generis perniciem nata, orbem subiugavit innoxium?* The denunciation, *in humani generis perniciem nata*, could hardly have been put in stronger terms.

There is not much else in the remainder of the work to set against this. 1.14, *atquin videmus mediis his annis mediisque temporibus ex victis hostibus innumerabiles victorias reportatas, prolatos imperii fines et in potestatem redactas inauditi nominis nationes*, is taken by von Haehling to be “eine dezidiert staatsbejahende Einstellung”. But it is no more than part of Arnobius’ answer to the pagan charge that after the Christian religion came into the world, and as a direct result of this, a series of dire misfortunes have taken place. He lists numerous disasters that occurred before Christianity began, including among them, significantly enough, Rome’s expansion, 1.5: *ut modo Romani velut aliquod flumen torrens cunctas summergerent atque obruerent nationes, vos videlicet numina praecipitavimus in furorem?* At 1.13 he stresses that “it is a mere three hundred years [if this is the correct reading], more or less, since we Christians began to exist”, yet, 1.14, Rome’s expansion has gone ahead. Further, von Haehling argues that the transfer of the head of state’s titulature to the Christian

³⁹ See T.D. Barnes, “Scholarship or propaganda? Porphyry *Against the Christians* and its historical setting”, in *BICS* 39 (1994), 53-65 for some important new considerations. This contribution is overlooked by several recent writers.

deity (1.27, *nihil sumus aliud Christiani nisi magistro Christo summi regis ac principis veneratores*; cf. 2.36, *principem rerum*; 2.55; 2.74; 3.3; 3.6(?); 1.26, *summus imperator*; 2.3, *imperator*; 2.65, *omnipotens imperator*; 2.36) is a sign of “Annäherung”.⁴⁰ This is highly implausible. For one thing, the Christian god was already called *imperator noster* and *domnus meus, imperator regum et omnium gentium* in *Pass.Scill.* 2 and 6, as was Christ by Tertullian (*orat.* 29.3; *castit.* 12.1; *fug.* 10.1). There is another thoroughly hostile passage near the end of Arnobius’ first book, 1.64: *tyrannos ac reges vestros, qui postposito deorum metu donaria spoliant populanturque templorum, qui proscriptiōibus exiliis caedibus nudant nobilitatibus civitates, qui matronarum pudorem ac virginum vi subruunt atque eripiunt licentiosa, appellatis indigites atque divos, et quos odiis acrioribus conveniebat a vobis carpi, pulvinaribus aris templis atque alio mactatis cultu, ludorum et celebritate natalium.*

A similar attitude is found at the beginning of the second book, 2.1: *numquid [Christus] regiam sibi vindicans potestatem terrarum orbem cunctum legionibus infestissimis occupavit et pacatas ab exordio nationes alias delevit ac sustulit, alias sibi parere cervicibus compulit subiugatis?* Surely this is a further indictment of Roman imperialism. It is possible at most to find another version of Cyprian’s declaration that Christians pray for all men and for the welfare of the emperors, at 4.36, after the angry reference, mentioned above, to Christian scriptures being burned and the destruction of their *conventicula, in quibus summus oratur deus, pax cunctis et venia postulatur magistratibus exercitibus regibus familiaribus inimicis, adhuc vitam degentibus et resolutis corporum vincione, in quibus aliud auditur nihil nisi quod humanos faciat, nisi quod mites verecundos pudicos castos, familiaris communicatores rei et cum omnibus vobis solidae germanitatis necessitudine copulatos.* But this is hardly a positive attitude to the state.

⁴⁰ R. v. HAEHLING (n.35), 200, 201.

Lactantius, De mortibus persecutorum

On Lactantius, this contributor's remit is confined to the *De mortibus persecutorum*. It must be commented that the work is more of a triumphalist history than an apology. Apart from the exultant account of Constantine's rise, the most significant passage is surely that in which he summarises the period between the fall of Domitian and the persecution under Decius, 3.4: *rescissis igitur actis tyranni non modo in statum pristinum ecclesia restituta est, sed etiam multo clarius ac floridius enituit, secutisque temporibus, quibus multi ac boni principes Romani imperii clavum regimenque tenuerunt, nullos inimicorum impetus passa manus suas in orientem occidentemque porrexit*, 3.5: *ut iam nullus esset terrarum angulus tam remotus quo non religio dei penetrasset, nulla denique natio tam feris moribus vivens, ut non suscepto dei cultu ad iustitiae opera mitisceret. sed enim postea longa pax rupta est.* The restoration of the *status pristinus* refers to what was established in the first twenty-five years after the Ascension, during which the disciples had laid the foundations of the church (2.4). By claiming that from Domitian to Decius *longa pax* prevailed, he thus passed over persecutions under Trajan, the Antonines and Severi, all clearly classified as *boni principes*, and thus, as he understood it, incapable of attacking the church. Indeed, one might comment, this view was closer to the modern interpretation of 'the persecutions' than that of e.g. Eusebius: it needs modifying only insofar as Domitian cannot be said to have initiated general persecution, while Decius did not actually launch a direct attack on the Christians, even if his order for universal sacrifice led to widespread trials (and Christian failure to sacrifice may have played a part in prompting it).

The rest of the work covers the years 303-313, *ab eversa ecclesia usque ad restitutam... anni decem, menses plus minus quat tuor* (48.13). It ends with the call to celebrate the triumph of God, the victory of the Lord, and to pray for the continuance of the peace He has given to His people after ten years; and Lactantius' friend Donatus, in particular, is to pray that God

protect the people from the assaults of the devil and ensure the perpetual tranquillity of the flourishing church (52.4-5). Apart from the favourable portrayal of Constantius (8.7, 15.7, 20.1), Constantine (18.10, 19.4, 24.3-25.5, etc.) and to a lesser extent of Licinius (neutral until 45.1ff.), there is nothing that one could call ‘attitude to the state’. The outcome of the ten years showed that, as Moreau put it, for Lactantius “les intérêts de l’Église et ceux de l’Empire coïncident parfaitement, et l’on peut être à la fois bon Chrétien et bon citoyen”.⁴¹

Epilogue

Professor Włosok invited the present writer to include remarks on Eusebius and Constantine’s *Oratio ad sanctorum coetus*. In the event, he has not felt capable of offering more than a few brief comments. First, one work should, for the time being, be eliminated from discussion of Eusebius’ copious *oeuvre*. Hägg has argued convincingly that the essay *Contra Hieroclem* attributed to the bishop of Caesarea was probably not by him at all, but by a homonym. He does not claim absolute proof, but his conclusion is that “[n]ot until the question of authorship is settled, one way or other, will it be time to return to the problem of date and historical context. It may have to be resumed on quite a different basis”.⁴² Discussion of Eusebius’ lost *Chronici canones* and his *Historia Ecclesiastica* is complicated by the fact that both works were revised several times by the author. Barnes has argued, following R. Helm, that the *Canones* were originally composed in the 290s, with a terminal date of

⁴¹ Lactance. *De la mort des persécuteurs*. Introd., texte critique et trad. de J. MOREAU, SChr 39 (Paris 1954), I 57.

⁴² T. HÄGG, “Hierocles the lover of truth and Eusebius the sophist”, in *SO* 67 (1992), 138-150. HÄGG’s paper is cited with approval by BARNES (n.39), at 60; but not referred to e.g. by M. FREDE, “Eusebius’ apologetic writings”, in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (n.37), in his treatment of the *Contra Hieroclem*, at 231-235.

277, and that the *hist. eccl.* was originally written soon after this, before the start of the Diocletianic persecution, indeed before ca. 293.⁴³ However, his arguments seem to have been controverted by Burgess, who makes a strong case for the *Canones* being written in 311, with the first edition of the *hist. eccl.*, on which Eusebius probably began research in 310 if not before, following shortly afterwards.⁴⁴ If Eusebius of Caesarea's authorship of *Contra Hieroclem* is questionable and his two historical works are dated as by Burgess, most, if not all his surviving works belong to the years when the Great Persecution was nearing its end or was over.

However this may be, "a remarkably large part of Eusebius' work is devoted to apologetics" (in the wider sense), as pointed out by Frede.⁴⁵ To risk a simplified summary, his attitude to the Roman Empire was positive: the Empire was part of the divine plan, providing the proper conditions for the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Church; Christianity was not new, as its opponents alleged, but based on the religion of the Jewish patriarchs; persecution had only been carried out by bad emperors.

Some new work on the *Oratio ad sanctorum coetus* has produced valuable progress. Bleckmann has shown that the speech was delivered at Nicomedia. He argues that the occasion and date were the Church Council held there in 328.⁴⁶ Barnes accepts Bleckmann's identification of the place as Nicomedia, but gives convincing grounds for the date being Easter Saturday 325, an address to the bishop of Nicomedia (the other well-known Eusebius), his clergy and candidates for baptism. He

⁴³ T.D. BARNES, "The editions of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*", in *GRBS* 21 (1980), 191-201; he repeated this view in his *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981), *passim*.

⁴⁴ R.W. BURGESS, "The dates and editions of Eusebius' *Chronici canones* and *Historia ecclesiatica*", in *JThS* 48 (1997), 471-504.

⁴⁵ M. FREDE (n.42), 230.

⁴⁶ B. BLECKMANN, "Ein Kaiser als Prediger. Zur Datierung der konstantinischen 'Rede an die Versammlung der Heiligen'", in *Hermes* 125 (1997), 183-202.

emphasises that the Christology of the speech has a distinctly 'Arian' colouring, which would have been impossible after the Council of Nicaea.⁴⁷

For Constantine's interpretation of Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue* (*Or. 19.3ff.*, p. 181.20ff.) as a piece of crypto-Christian prophecy, a remarkable novelty (or *Usurpation*, as Włosok terms it),⁴⁸ one may compare a contemporary (non-Christian) use of this work for political purposes. De la Bedoyère has shown that Carausius' so-called 'mint-mark' RSR on many of his coins, formerly interpreted as *r(ationalis) s(ummae) r(ei)*, is, rather, an abbreviation of *R(ed)eunt S(aturnia) R(egna)*, from *ecl. 4.6*. His proof lies in the enigmatic and never previously explained legend I.N.P.C.D.A., found only on a single medallion of Carausius. He shows convincingly that this must stand for *Iam Nova Progenies Caelo Demittur Alto* — the next line of the same poem.⁴⁹ Constantine had spent some time in Britain not many years after these coins were issued there, and could well have seen specimens of them. A more important influence which made the emperor early on think of Vergil was no doubt the evocation of the *Fourth Eclogue* by the panegyrist of 310 in connection with Constantine's vision, *Paneg. 6[7].21.4-5: Apollinem*

⁴⁷ T.D. Barnes, "Constantine's *Speech to the Assembly of the Saints*: place and date of delivery", in *JThS* 52 (2001), 26-36. For the day being Easter Saturday rather than Good Friday, he cites S.G. Hall, "Some Constantinian documents in the *Vita Constantini*", in *Constantine: History, historiography and legend*, ed. by S.N.C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (London and New York 1998), 86-103, at 96. Barnes, 29 n.12, notes that "[f]ew are likely to entertain the notion that Constantine delivered the speech in Rome 'during Eastertide', recently argued by M. Edwards, "The Constantinian circle and the *Oration to the Saints*", in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1999), 251-275, esp. p.268."

⁴⁸ See the classic study by P. Courcelle, "Les exégèses chrétiennes de la quatrième Églogue", in *REA* 59 (1957), 294-319; and for a more recent discussion A. WŁOSOK, "Zwei Beispiele frühchristlicher 'Vergilrezeption': Polemik (Lact., div. inst. 5,10) und Usurpation (Or. Const. 19-21)", in *2000 Jahre Vergil. Ein Symposium*, hrsg. von V. Pöschl (Wiesbaden 1983), 63-86, at 68-76, repr. in A. WŁOSOK, *Res humanae — res divinae. Kleine Schriften*, hrsg. von E. Heck und E.A. Schmidt (Heidelberg 1990), 437-459, at 444-459.

⁴⁹ G. DE LA BEDOYÈRE, "Carausius and the marks RSR and I.N.P.C.D.A.", in *NC* 158 (1998), 79-88.

tuum comitante Victoria coronas tibi laureas offerentem [...] vidisti teque in illius specie recognovisti, cui totius mundi regna deberi vatum carmina divina cecinerunt. To this one may compare especially *ecl. 4.8-10: tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum/ desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundus/ casta, fave, Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo.*⁵⁰ As Weiß has brilliantly argued, that vision, seen not only by Constantine but by all his army, before the campaign against Maxentius, i.e. in Gaul (as we know from Eus. *V. Const.* 1.28-32, esp. 1.28.2), was of a halo-phenomenon, with ‘mock suns’ or ‘sun-dogs’. It was at first taken by Constantine to have been of Apollo. Before long he was led to understand it to have been of Christ; and it was that single, re-interpreted vision of 310 which led to his conversion.⁵¹

Appendix: Possible verbal echoes of Pliny and Tacitus in Tertullian

The thesis is that Tertullian was provoked by reading Pliny, *epist.* 10.96-97 and Tacitus, *ann.* 15.44.2-5, in particular by the terms *ignorantia* and *odium*, and that, at least to some degree, the *Ad nationes*, followed shortly after by the *Apologeticum*, were written in angry reaction. Pliny’s second sentence, after all, announced his *ignorantia* — yet he then revealed that he had nonetheless executed a good many Christians, after which, on investigation, he discovered that they were in effect harmless, if crazy. Surely that would have been enough to launch Tertullian’s *Ad nationes*, with its opening salvo: *testimonium ignorantiae vestrae*. In places, notably at *apol.* 2.6ff., he is explicitly reacting to Pliny and Trajan; and e.g. *nat.* 1.1.2, *omnem sexum, omnem aetatem, omnem denique dignitatem*, and *apol.* 1.7, *omnem sexum,*

⁵⁰ P. COURCELLE (n.48), 296 n.1.

⁵¹ P. WEISS, “Die Vision Constantins”, in *Colloquium aus Anlaß des 80. Geburtstages von Alfred Heuß*, hrsg. von J. BLEICKEN, Frankfurter Althistorische Studien 13 (Kallmünz 1993), 143-169; see now his revised version, “The vision of Constantine”, in *JRA* 16 (2003), 237-259.

aetatem, condicōnem, must come from Pliny's *omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus* (96.9); again in *Scap.* 5.2, *omnis sexus, omnis aetatis, omnis dignitatis*. The traces of Tacitus are perhaps less obvious, although *odium* is very prominent. Further, *nat.* 1.3.9, *etiam cum corrupte a vobis Chrestiani pronuntiamur*, and *apol.* 3.5, *sed et cum perperam Chrestianus pronuntiatur a vobis*, do recall *ann.* 15.44.2, *quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Chrestianos appellabat* (on the text see below). It is not argued here that Tertullian was consciously repeating the language of Pliny (and Trajan) and Tacitus *every time* that he used words that occur in these works. In a good many places the 'echoes' may have been unconscious: for example, where he uses *erumpere, eruptio* (see n.68), Tacitus' *repressaque in praesens extiabilis superstitione rursum erumpebat* (*ann.* 15.44.3) may have been, at most, 'at the back of his mind'.

In the notes below, X 2, X 3, X 4 means that the word in question occurs two, three or four times in the passage cited.

1) Pliny, *epist.* 10.96-97

The text is that of the Teubner *Plinius Minor*, ed. by M. Schuster, 3rd ed., rev. by R. Hanslik (Leipzig 1958 and reprints), with slight adjustments in punctuation and adopting Bickermann's conjecture at 96.10, n. * below.

10.96.1. *sollempne est mihi, domine, omnia de quibus dubito ad te referre. quis enim potest melius vel cunctationem meam regere vel ignorantiam⁵² instruere? cognitionibus de Christianis interfui numquam: ideo nescio⁵³ quid et quatenus aut puniri soleat aut*

⁵² *ignorantia/ignorare/ignarus/ignotus: nat.* 1.1.1 (X 3); 1.1.4; 1.3.3; 1.4.3 (X 2); 1.6.1 (*tacitae ignorantiae*); 1.6.6; 1.7.14; 1.7.25; 1.12.5; 1.15.8; 1.16.3; 1.20.11; 2.1.2; 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 2.2.4 (X 2); 2.2.10; 2.12.31; *apol.* 1.3; 1.4 (X 2); 1.5 (X 3); 1.6 (X 3); 1.8; 1.13; 3.1 (X 2); 3.6; 4.12; 8.6; 8.9; 16.11; 17.3 (X 2); 18.3; 19.2; 23.2; 23.11; 23.18; 25.10; 28.4; 39.9; *Scap.* 1.1; 1.4.

⁵³ *nescire: nat.* 1.1.4; 1.3.3; 1.4.9 (X 2); 1.7.26; 1.10.49; 2.1.3; *apol.* 1.9; 2.18; 4.1; 32.2; 33.3.

quaeri. 2: nec mediocriter haesitavi, sitne aliquod discrimin aetatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustoribus differant; detur paenitentiae venia, an ei, qui omnino Christianus fuit, desisse non prosit; *nomen*⁵⁴ ipsum, si flagitiis careat, an flagitia cohaerentia nomini puniantur. interim *<in>* iis qui ad me tamquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum secutus modum. 3: interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani. confitentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi supplicium minatus: perseverantes⁵⁵ duci iussi. neque enim dubitabam, qualecumque esset quod faterentur, pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem⁵⁶ debere puniri. 4: fuerunt alii similis amentiae,⁵⁷ quos, quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos. mox ipso tractatu, ut fieri solet, diffundente se crimine plures species inciderunt. 5: propositus est libellus sine auctore multorum nomina continens. qui negabant esse se Christianos aut fuisse, cum praeeunte me deos adpellarent et imagini tuae, quam propter hoc iusseram cum simulacris numinum adferri, ture ac vino supplicarent, praeterea male dicerent Christo, quorum nihil cogi posse dicuntur qui sunt re vera Christiani, dimittendos putavi. 6: alii ab indice nominati esse se Christianos dixerunt et mox negaverunt; fuisse quidam sed desisse, quidam ante triennium, quidem ante plures annos, non nemo etiam viginti. *<hi>* quoque omnes et imaginem tuam deorumque simulacra venerati sunt et Christo male dixerunt. 7: adfirmabant autem hanc fuisse summam vel culpae suaे vel

⁵⁴ *nomen*: *nat.* 1.2.3; 1.3.1; 1.3.2 (X 2); 1.3.3; 1.3.4 (X 2); 1.3.5 (X 3); 1.3.7 (X 2); 1.3.8; 1.3.9; 1.3.10; 1.4.1; 1.4..2; 1.4.3; 1.4.4; 1.4.6; 1.4.11 (X 2); 1.5.1; 1.5.6; 1.5.8 (X 4); 1.7.8; 1.10.1; 1.10.19; 2.4.6; 2.13.2; *apol.* 1.4; 1.7; 2.3; 2.18 (X 2); 2.19 (X 2); 2.20 (X 2); 3.1; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5 (X 4); 3.6; 3.7 (X 3); 3.8 (X 2); 4.11 (X 3); 5.2; 16.2; 17.5; 21.1; 21.2; 21.3; 21.7; 21.27; 22.1; 23.15 (*nominatio*); 34.2; 34.4; 39.8; 40.1.

⁵⁵ *perseverare/perseverantia*: *nat.* 1.7.3; 1.8.6; *apol.* 1.9; 2.12 (X 2); 2.19; 7.9; 8.9; 9.3; 9.4; 27.7; 41.6; 46.17.

⁵⁶ *obstinatio/obstinatus*: *nat.* 1.4.11; 1.17.1; 1.17.2; 1.18.1; 1.19.1; 1.19.2; 1.20.2; *apol.* 2.6; 27.2; 27.7; 50.15.

⁵⁷ Cf. *nat.* 1.1.13: *non potes dementiam dicere, qui revinceris ignorare*; 1.8.10: *ridicula dementia novissimos dicitis et tertios nominatis*; *apol.* 22.6: *amentiis foedis*; 27.2: *sed quidam dementiam existimant, quod, cum possimus et sacrificare...et inlaesi abire...obstinationem saluti praeferamus*.

erroris,⁵⁸ quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi deo⁵⁹ dicere secum invicem seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furtar ne latrocinia ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum adpellati abnegarent. quibus peractis morem sibi discedendi fuisse rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium; quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo secundum mandata tua hetaerias esse vetueram. 8: *quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministrae dicebantur, quid esset veri, et per tormenta quaerere. nihil aliud inveni quam superstitionem pravam, immodicam.* 9: *ideo dilata cognitione ad consulendum te decurri. visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maxime propter periclitantium⁶⁰ numerum. multi enim omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus⁶¹ etiam vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur. neque civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est; quae videtur sisti et corrigi posse.* 10: *certe satis constat prope iam desolata templo coepisse celebrari, et sacra sollemnia diu intermissa repeti passimque venire <vectigal⁶²> * victimarum, cuius adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur. ex quo facile est opinari,⁶³ quae turba hominum emendari⁶⁴ possit, si sit paenitentiae locus.*

*For this plausible conjecture see E.J. Bickermann, "Trajan, Hadrian and the Christians", in *RFIC* 96 (1968), 290-315, at 295f.

⁵⁸ *error/errare: nat.* 1.7.32; 1.9.1; 1.9.9; 1.15.8; 1.15.9 (X 2); 1.20.11 (X 3); 2.1.2 (X 2); *apol.* 6.10; 9.13; 9.17 (X 2); 9.19; 15.8 (X 2); 21.22; 22.6; 25.1; 37.8; 37.9; *Scap.* 1.4; 3.5.

⁵⁹ *de Christo ut deo: apol.* 21.3.

⁶⁰ *periclitandi: apol.* 8.2; 38.1; *periclitamur*, 46.3; *periclitari*, 50.1.

⁶¹ *nat.* 1.1.2: *omnem sexum, omnem aetatem, omnem denique dignitatem; apol.* 1.7: *omnem sexum, aetatem, condicionem, etiam dignitatem; Scap.* 5.2: *omnis sexus, omnis aetatis, omnis dignitatis.*

⁶² *apol.* 42.8; 42.9; cf. *nat.* 1.10.24-5: *exigitis mercedem pro solo templi, pro aditu sacri, pro stipitibus, pro hostiis... non sufficerat vectigalium deorum contumelia; apol.* 13.6.

⁶³ *opinor: nat.* 1.2.3; 1.6.7; 1.7.13; 1.7.24; 1.7.33; 1.10.38; 1.11.3; 1.12.16; 1.16.20; 1.17.6; 1.19.1; 2.1.5.1; *apol.* 2.12; 8.5; 8.6; 8.8; 9.5; 9.9; 11.10; 16.3; 18.5; 20.3; 23.3; 24.8; 25.10; 29.2; 39.8; 46.1; 47.2.

⁶⁴ *emendare/lemendatio: nat.* 1.1.5; 1.2.9; 1.4.11; 1.20.11 (X 3); *apol.* 3.3; 3.4; 4.6; 46.11; *Scap.* 2.10.

10.97.1: *actum quem debuisti, mi Secunde, in excutiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant, secutus es. neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest. conquirendi non sunt; si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt, ita tamen ut, qui negaverit se Christianum esse idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est supplicando dis nostris,⁶⁵ quamvis suspectus in praeteritum, veniam ex paenitentia impetret.* 2: *sine auctore vero propositi libelli <in> nullo crimine locum habere debent. nam et pessimii exempli nec nostri saeculi est.*

2) Tacitus, *ann.* 15.44.2-5

The text is that of the Teubner *Cornelius Tacitus. I. Annales*, ed. E. Koestermann (Leipzig 1965), except that *Chrestianos* rather than *Christianos* is given at 2; see on this n.* below. There are also problems at 4, where *convicti* is the reading of L, whereas M has *conluncti*; and with the manifestly corrupt passage from *aut crucibus* to *nocturni luminis urerentur*. See the impressive discussions by H. Fuchs, “Tacitus über die Christen”, in *VChr* 4 (1950), 65-93, and “Tacitus in der Editio Helvetica”, in *MH* 20 (1963), 221-229, defending *convicti*, and improving the longer passage. But as Koestermann also prefers *convicti* and the other item is not important in the present context, his text is retained.

15.44.2: *sed non ope humana, non largitionibus principis aut deum placamentis decedebat infamia, quin iussum incendium crederebat. ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis affecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus *Chrestianos⁶⁶ appellabat.* 3: *auctor⁶⁷ nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante*

⁶⁵ *dei vestri: nat.* 1.4.6; 1.9.4; 1.9.8; 1.9.9; 1.10.13; 1.10.33; 1.10.36; 1.10.37; 1.10.44; 1.10.46; 1.10.49; 1.12.5; 1.13.4; 1.17.6; 2.1.1; 12.5; *apol.* 6.7; 10.2; 10.3; 11.12; 11.14; 11.16; 12.1; 12.3; 12.4; 12.5; 12.6; 13.1; 13.8; 15.1; 15.3; 15.4 (X 2); 15.7; 16.7; 19.1; 19.2; 19.10*; 23.2; 23.11; 23.18; 25.10; 28.4; 40.5 (X 2); 40.9; 42.8; 46.4; *Scap.* 2.2.

⁶⁶ *Chrestiani: nat.* 1.3.9; *Chrestianus, apol.* 3.5.

⁶⁷ *auctor: nat.* 1.4.1 (X 3); 1.4.2 (X 3); 1.4.3 (X 3); 1.4.4; 2.5.13 (X 2); *apol.* 3.6; 3.7 (X 4); 3.8; 4.6; 21.27.

*per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat; repres-
saque in praesens exitiabilis supersticio rursum erumpet68, non
modo per Iudeam, originem69 eius mali, sed per urbem etiam,
quo cuncta undique atrocias70 aut pudenda confluunt71 celebra-
turque. 4: igitur primum correpti qui fatebantur, deinde indicio
eorum multitudo ingens72 haud proinde in crimine incendii quam
odio73 humani generis74 convicti sunt. et pereuntibus addita ludi-
bria, ut ferarum tergis connecti laniatu canum interirent aut crucibus
adfixi atque flammati, ubi defecisset dies, in usu< m > nocturni
luminis urerentur. 5: hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat et
circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigae permixtus plebi vel cur-
riculo insistens. unde quamquam adversus sontes et novissima exem-
pla meritos miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publica, sed
in saevitiam75 unius absumerentur.*

*E. Koestermann's apparatus (Teubner ed., 1965) has the following: *christianos* L; corr. ex *chrestianos* M m. post., ut videtur (*chrestianos* al., lectio sine dubio melior). (His own article on the word, "Ein folgenschwerer Irrtum des Tacitus (Ann. 15,44,2ff.)?", in *Historia* 16 [1967], 456-469, is totally unconvincing. For the proper explanation of why Tacitus wrote *Chres- tianos*, see H. Fuchs, in *VChr* 4 [1950], 69f., cited above).

⁶⁸ *erumpere, eruptio*: *nat.* 1.7.27; 1.15.13; 1.16.20; 1.17.4; *apol.* 27.7; 35.10; 39.19 (emended); *Scap.* 1.2; 1.4; 5.1.

⁶⁹ *origo*: *nat.* 1.11.2 (X 2); 1.12.5; 1.12.12 (X 3); 1.12.13; 2.12.4; 2.12.5; 2.12.6; 2.12.29; *apol.* 5.1; 10.6; 16.2 (X 2).

⁷⁰ *nat.* 1.2.7; 1.7.11; 2.7.9; *atrocitas*, 1.7.15; 1.7.28; *apol.* 38.4; 46.16; 50.10; 50.12.

⁷¹ *quod ingens ad eum multitudo conflueret*, *apol.* 21.18.

⁷² *apol.* 21.18 (see previous note); *proficiente multitudine reorum ... multitudo
nantiatorum*, *nat.* 1.7.18; *prae multitudine Christianorum*, *apol.* 37.8; *tanta
hominum multitudo*, *Scap.* 2.10.

⁷³ *odium/odisse/odiosus*: *nat.* 1.1.1 (X 4); 1.1.4 (X 2); 1.1.5 (X 2); 1.2.8 (X 2); 1.2.10; 1.3.3; 1.4.4; 1.7.18 (X 2); 1.9.9; 1.18.7; 1.20.2; 1.20.11 (X 2); *apol.* 1.4 (X 3); 1.5 (X 6); 1.6 (X 4); 1.9 (X 5); 2.1; 3.1; 3.2; 3.4 (X 3); 3.5 (X 2); 3.6; 3.7 (X 2); 4.1; 6.3; 7.3; 11.7; 27.5; 37.1; 39.7; 40.1 (X 2); 46.6; 49.6.

⁷⁴ *genus humanum*: *nat.* 1.2.10; 2.15.7; *apol.* 19.1*; 21.7; 37.8; 37.10; *Scap.* 3.2.

⁷⁵ *per Neronis saevitiam*, *apol.* 21.25; *saevitia*, *nat.* 1.5.9; 1.15.7; *apol.* 49.4; *saevit*, 2.8; *Scap.* 1.2; *saeviendi*, 27.3; 27.4; *desaevitis*, 37.2.

DISCUSSION

A. van den Hoek: You spoke about the Christianisation of Roman Africa through members of the imperial household. Can you expand a little further about other hypotheses on the development of Christianity from a Jewish background? The question of the Greek terminology in the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* is a very interesting one. Dutch scholars have commented on the possible liturgical overtones of the Greek words in Perpetua's vision and other passages of the story; see *Atti e passioni dei martiri*. Introduzione di A.A.R. Bastiaensen; testo critico e commento a cura di A.A.R. Bastiaensen *et alii*; traduzioni di G. Chiarini *et alii*, Fondazione Lorenzo Valla (Milano, A. Mondadori, 1990).

A. Włosok: Ich möchte darauf hinweisen, dass — wie u.a. A. Schindler (*TRE* 1 [1977], 641-644, *s.v.* Afrika 1) dargelegt hat —, unter missionarischem und theologischem Aspekt viel für ursprüngliche Verbindungen zu östlichen Traditionen (Syrien, Kleinasien) spricht, während “ein Herauswachsen des afrikanischen Christentums aus dem Judentum” [vertreten, z. Teil unter falschen Voraussetzungen, vor allem von Frend, Quispel, Daniélou] “unwahrscheinlich” sei (S.643). Daneben sei römischer Einfluß bei den ersten Gemeindegründungen nicht auszuschließen. Unter gebildeten Christen, insbesondere gegenüber dem Klerus, ist zur Zeit Tertullians neben der lateinischen auch die griechische Sprache in Gebrauch, vgl. *Pass. Perp.* 13,2: *et coepit Perpetua graece cum illis loqui* (*sc.* mit ihrem Bischof Optatus und dem Presbyter Aspasius in der Vision des Saturus). Für bzw. gegen eine Herkunftsbestimmung lässt sich dieser Umstand jedoch nicht auswerten, da die christliche Missionssprache auch im Westen des Imperium Romanum zunächst

das Griechische war. (Beispiele: Rom, Lugdunum). Vgl. A. Wlosok, in *HLL* 4 (München 1997), 343-346 (französische Ausgabe: Turnhout 2000, 387-391). Welche Sprache(n) ware(n) zu welcher Zeit im *imperial household* üblich?

A.R. Birley: Greek was no doubt used initially by the early Christians in the West; and, if I am not mistaken, there is no good evidence for the Rome community turning to Latin before the mid-third century. Africa, particularly Carthage, might have been rather different. The group of Christians to which Perpetua belonged, who were, I believe, Montanists, presumably did understand Greek. But note the discussion by K. Vössing (n.6, 469ff.), with good arguments for doubting that Greek was so widespread at Carthage as often claimed or that Perpetua's account of her vision was composed in Greek.

It must be assumed that the *Caesariani* spoke Greek as well as Latin if they were based at Rome; many would be native-speakers of Greek in any case. But they served at all levels in every province of the Empire: those assigned e.g. to Britain, the Rhineland, or Spain may not have needed to use Greek. That the *Caesariani* played a major part in bringing Christianity to Africa is only a hypothesis, for which direct evidence is lacking. One can point to early converts in the *familia Caesaris* at Rome: *Phil.* 4.22, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household"; cf. *Rom.* 16.11, "Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord", which may refer to the powerful Claudian freedman, whose own slaves were no doubt taken over, after his death, by Nero. The next step is purely *a priori*, that the large numbers of *Caesariani* stationed in Africa probably came predominantly from Rome; and that some may well have been Christians. The numerous tombstones from 'the burial-ground of the *officiales*' at Carthage, evidently all from the second century, were mostly of very low-grade clerks, messengers, attendants and so on, and their epitaphs offer few clues. For a high-grade freedman, buried at Rome, who had served in Africa as procurator of the *tractus Carthaginiensis*, and

must have known Greek, for he had also been *prox(imus) ab epistulis Graecis*, see ILS 1485. Firm evidence for Christians in the *familia Caesaris* at Rome in the post-Pauline period is of course quite late: Carpophorus and others, and their influential patron Marcia, Commodus' concubine, are known from Christian literature, cf. also Irenaeus, *haer.* 4.30.1f., also Commodan in date, mentioning the "faithful at the imperial court"; and for inscriptions, none definitely pre-Commodan, see especially H.U. Instinsky, "Marcus Aurelius Prosenes — Freigelassener und Christ am Kaiserhof", Abh. Akad. Mainz, Geistes- und Sozialwiss. Kl., Jhrg. 1964, Nr. 3.

As for possible Jewish origins of African Christianity, I can only refer back to n.6 above, particularly Vössing, 260 n.975, with further bibliography. One certainly cannot rule this out.

M. Alexandre: Les protestations de loyalisme, *Nat.* 1,17, *Apol.* 28-35 surtout, semblent souvent liées à la réfutation du grief de lèse-majesté provoqué par le refus du culte impérial chez les chrétiens. Il y a un argumentaire scripturaire assez constant évoquant les prières pour l'empereur et l'acceptation du pouvoir politique: *1 Tim.* 2,2, cf. Tert. *Apol.* 31,2; *1 Petr.* 4,15, cf. Cyprien, *Testim.* 3,37-8; *Rom.* 13,3. Même dossier scripturaire chez les Apologistes grecs de Justin à Théophile.

A.R. Birley: Thank you for these parallels. It is true that Tertullian writes of Christians being treated as *hostes populi*, *nat.* 1.17, or facing impeachment on the *crimen maiestatis*, *apol.* 28-35, for refusing to worship the emperor. But it does seem questionable to over-emphasise the *grief de lèse-majesté provoqué par le refus du culte impérial chez les chrétiens*. In the authentic *Martyr Acts* the demand to worship the emperor is either not mentioned at all or is subordinate to that to "worship the gods". See F. Millar, "The Imperial Cult and the Persecutions", in *Le culte des souverains dans l'Empire romain*, Entretiens Hardt 19 (Vandoeuvres 1973), 145-175; also my paper in *Rom und das himmlische Jerusalem* (n.12 above), at 121-123.

M. Alexandre: *Odio humani generis* peut-il signifier “mankind’s hatred”? Cf. aussi le parallèle des *Histoires*, où le même grief vise les Juifs.

A.R. Birley: To be sure, Tacitus, as noted above (p.260), no doubt meant “the Christians’ misanthropy”, just as in the *Histories* (5.1) he had singled out the Jews’ *adversus omnes alios hostile odium*. Still, it is possible to take *odium humani generis* to mean “mankind’s hatred [of the Christians]”, as long ago pointed out by Hitchcock (n.26 above); but he surely went too far in claiming that Tacitus himself meant it that way. Tertullian, however, was quite capable of taking it in the latter sense, not least because of *per flagitia invisos* a few lines earlier.

Chr. Riedweg: Zu *ignorantia* sei auf die Verwendung dieses Begriffs bereits in der Areopagrede hingewiesen (*Acta* 17.30: τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τὴν ἀγνοίας ὑπεριδῶν ὁ Θεὸς τανῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν; cf. auch *Sap.* 14.22, etc.). Tertullian schliesst klar an diese biblische Tradition an, während der Begriff bei Plinius ganz andere Assoziationen weckt. Es scheint mir daher problematisch, in dieser Hinsicht eine Beziehung zwischen den beiden Texten herzustellen.

A.R. Birley: Paul at Athens was not referring to ignorance as a cause of persecution, but as the reason why in the past men worshipped idols: God had “condoned the times of ignorance, but now calls on all mankind everywhere to repent”. So it must be doubtful whether Tertullian’s repeated hammering home of *ignorantia* — and *odium* — as the root causes of persecution reflected this particular *biblische Tradition*. To be sure, as commentators have noted, there were plenty of Jewish and Christian sources on which he could have drawn; and J.-C. Fredouille, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique* (Paris 1972), 70ff., has convincingly detected the influence of non-Christian classical writers on *ignorantia*, notably Cicero. The point about

“echoes of Pliny and Tacitus” is simply that Tertullian was, not least, replying to Pliny — of this there can be no doubt, for he says so himself at *apol.* 2.6ff. (cf. also e.g. 1.7, 5.7, 27.2; *nat.* 1.1.2; *Scap.* 5.2, all manifestly from knowledge of *epist.* 10.96). The case that he was also reacting to Tacitus, *ann.* 15.44 — which he had surely read, cf. *apol.* 5.3 and *Scorp.* 15.3, cited above, with n.25 — does not just depend on *odium*: other expressions, including *Chrestianos*, thus spelt, support this.

M. Alexandre: Les *flagitia* évoqués par Pline et Tacite ne sont pas précisés. Sont-ils forcément crimes d’anthropophagie et d’inceste? Seuls, Athénagore (3,1) et Eusèbe (*Hist.eccl.* 5,1,14) parlent des “festins de Thyeste” et d’“unions oedipéennes” (cf. Apulée, *Apol.* 16, Thyeste; Justin, Tatien évoquent ces deux griefs sans ces termes). Mais si Tertullien décrit plus précisément ces deux griefs (*sacramentum infanticidii, incestum*), comme fera Minucius Felix (cf. Fronton), il n’emploie pas, je crois, ces caractérisations mythologiques qu’on trouve chez Athénagore et Eusèbe. Il serait donc difficile de penser qu’elles avaient été formulées par Fronton. D’ailleurs Athénagore a-t-il pu lire Fronton? D’où viennent les caractérisations mythologiques? On ne peut affirmer à coup sûr qu’elles viennent de Fronton.

A.R. Birley: Tacitus does not specify the *flagitia*; but Pliny’s statement, *cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium* (10.96.7), suggests that he had looked for evidence of cannibalism and had not found any; and indeed perhaps he had suspected incest too, given that he also reports that they foreswore adultery among other sins — and had verified the statement by torturing two *ancillae*. Most commentators certainly assume that both Pliny and Tacitus meant cannibalism and incest by *flagitia*. That Tertullian, as well as Minucius, had Fronto in mind is not a new idea: Bammel (n.28), 306 nn.76ff., properly cites previous scholars who had favoured this derivation. Proof is no doubt lacking. You are right to stress that Tertullian does not use these *caractérisations mythologiques*. All the same, he does refer to

Oedipus (or rather, the Macedonians' reaction — laughter — to a drama with this title, author not stated) at *apol.* 9.16, just after his lengthy refutation of the two charges. If Fronto had coined the labels 'Thyestean' and 'Oedipodean' in the 150s (or earlier), there was plenty of time for them to catch on and become familiar even to those who had not read the speech or did not know Latin.

L. Perrone: Se non ci sono state persecuzioni generalizzate sotto Settimio Severo — cosa su cui oggi si concorda generalmente —, che cosa pensare della tesi, sostenuta ad esempio da Marcel Simon, di un decreto contro il proselitismo e le conversioni, che avrebbe avuto grande risonanza anche per la sorte del giudaismo?

A.R. Birley: This is unfortunately still a debated question, in spite of Schwarte's article (n.20), which has been strongly supported by, among others, Barnes (n.3), 31, citing four articles of his own; cf. *ibid.*, 151. As well as Simon, W.H.C. Frend, for example, has sought to reinstate *Hist.Aug. Sept.Sev.* 17.1 as evidence for a ban, with heavy penalties, on Jews making proselytes and Christians converts: "Open questions concerning the Christians and the Roman empire in the age of the Severi", in *JThS* 25 (1974), 333-351, and "A Severan persecution? Evidence of the *Historia Augusta*", in *Forma futuri. Studi in onore di Michele Pellegrino* (Torino 1975), 470-480. Barnes, in the 'Postscript' (1985) to the reprint of his *Tertullian* (n.3), 331f., comments that Frend (in the first article) "relies on the false premiss that the *Vita Severi* was not written c. 395, but may be 'the work of a court writer between 293 and 303'". One can only urge believers in the Severan edict to study the copious modern literature on the *Hist.Aug.*: all statements about Christianity in that work can be shown to be bogus.

J.-Cl. Fredouille: Je suis en plein accord avec votre communication. Je voudrais seulement faire quelques observations:

1) En ce qui concerne *apol.* 42,3, j'ai mis en relation autrefois *rusticamur* et *mercamur* avec la politique agraire contemporaine: "Actualité et culture dans deux *sententiae* de Tertullien", in *Mélanges de littérature et d'épigraphie latines, d'histoire ancienne et d'archéologie. Hommage à la mémoire de Pierre Wuilleumier* (Paris 1980), 129-132.

2) Tertullien trouve un appui certain dans la lettre de Pline le Jeune à Trajan.

3) La date de l'*Octavius* ne peut être précisée. Mais sans doute conviendrait-il de distinguer entre la date de la rédaction de l'ouvrage et la date à laquelle le dialogue est censé avoir lieu. Le climat relativement paisible du dialogue peut être celui de la conversation sur la plage d'Ostie; il peut être également celui de l'époque de la rédaction (une vingtaine d'années plus tard) et que Minucius aurait alors rétrojeté.

4) À la suite d'une question de Mme van den Hoek: il ne faut pas perdre de vue que Tertullien était bilingue et que les premières versions latines de la Bible ont été faites en Afrique au milieu du 2^{ème} siècle.

A.R. Birley: The inclusion of *rusticamur* at *apol.* 42.3 is certainly interesting, given that it is generally held that Christianity was still largely an urban phenomenon in Tertullian's day. Imperial efforts to encourage extra cultivation in Africa are certainly worth recalling in this context. *Rusticamur* is matched by *castella* at 37.4: Scilli(um) was probably a small rural settlement, classed as a *castellum* (on the term see e.g. Isidore, *orig.* 15.2.11). One recalls the eighty-three *castella* attached to Carthage in the Augustan period (*CIL X 6104 = ILS 1945, Formiae*). So the Scillitani could well have been *rustici*. Some of their names certainly suggest this. And, to take up your reminder that Tertullian was bilingual and that the first Latin versions of the Bible were produced in Africa in the mid-second century, Christian *rustici* must have relied on a Latin translation, even if Tertullian and some other educated urban Christians were fluent in Greek.

As to the dating of the *Octavius*, if one is honest, it simply cannot be established precisely. It is tempting, though, to suggest for the conversation at Ostia a moment soon after Geta's death — when persecution was in progress in Africa, as we know from Tert. *Scap.*; and surely the atmosphere is not really 'peaceful' at the dramatic date if one considers *Oct.* 12.4, 28.1-4, 35.6, 36.9-37.6 (cited above, p.262). Composition of the literary version, no doubt largely the work of Minucius rather than a real report of what was actually said, would then be about twenty years later, in the early 230s. This naturally remains speculative.

L. Perrone: Vorrei riprendere il tema accennato in parte da Monique Alexandre: l'importanza della preghiera nelle professioni di lealismo dei cristiani verso lo stato romano. Essa caratterizza abbondantemente i testi di Tertulliano (in particolare *apol.* 30,4), ma è un aspetto presente anche negli apologeti successivi fino ad Arnobio. Del resto, Origene risponde alla richiesta di aiuto di Celso, assicurando il sostegno della preghiera ma non quello delle armi. Credo che si dovrebbe riflettere sull'importanza politica della preghiera dei cristiani per le autorità e sulla difficoltà che il loro modello religioso presentava a questo riguardo (nonostante il precedente giudaico).

Le affermazioni di Ottavio in 25,1 ss. sembrano l'esatto opposto delle tesi sostenute da Melitone nel passo dello scritto apologetico riportato da Eusebio di Cesarea (*hist. eccl.* 4,26). La posizione 'sinfonica' tra Chiesa e Impero, respinta da Melitone e sviluppata successivamente da Eusebio, sembra essere stata ignorata in ambito latino precostantiniano. Ma potremmo pensare che linee così antitetiche traducano anche un dibattito all'interno delle comunità cristiane, circa il giudizio sullo stato romano, più vivo e contrastante di quello che riusciamo cogliere dalle nostre fonti apologetiche?

E. Heck: Das Kaisergebet Tert. *apol.* 30,4 muß in seinem Kontext gesehen werden; es ist etwas anderes als Arnobius, *nat.*

4,36, wo die Kaiser gar nicht vorkommen. Tertullian beschreibt die Gebetshaltung, in der die mit erhobenen Armen stehenden Christen dem Zugriff von Löwen und Henkern besonders ausgesetzt sind. Er sagt also: Ihr, *præsides*, hindert uns Christen daran, für euren und unseren Kaiser zu beten!

Min.Fel. 25,1ff. erwidert nicht auf Meliton, sondern auf das Min.Fel. 6,1 von Caecilius reproduzierte ‘Rom-Credo’, Cic. *nat.deor.* 3,5-6,11-15. Meliton versuchte — soweit wir wissen, — als erster das Credo, Rom verdanke seine Größe den Göttern, zu christianisieren, indem er zwischen Wachsen des Christentums und Konsoliderung des römischen Principats einen Kausalzusammenhang sah.

F. Paschoud: 1) À propos des nombreuses citations de Tertullien (p.251 ff.): Je suis frappé par les allusions au célèbre passage de la *Deuxième lettre aux Thessaloniciens* 2,6-7 relatif au mystérieux “retenant” qui empêche le venue de l’Antéchrist; la péricope n’est expressément citée qu’en *resurr.* 24,17-18 (reproduit p.257). Ce “retenant”, identifié par Tertullien à l’Empire romain, peut être perçu par les fidèles de deux manières diamétralement opposées: négativement pour ceux qui sont animés d’une très vive espérance eschatologique, puisque ce retenant retarde le Jugement dernier et le triomphe des justes; positivement par ceux qui se sont tant bien que mal accommodés à vivre *in hac lacrimarum valle*, et redoutent les terribles épreuves qui doivent précéder la fin du monde. Il est remarquable que Tertullien non seulement adopte apparemment sans la moindre hésitation l’identification du “retenant” avec l’Empire romain, mais encore qu’il partage sans l’ombre d’une hésitation l’opinion de ceux qui voient dans ce “retenant” une force positive. Tertullien prend ainsi place résolument parmi les chrétiens qui récupèrent en quelque sorte le mythe païen de *Roma aeterna*, non pas qu’ils croient à une éternité absolue de Rome; ils croient cependant à son éternité relative, Rome étant destinée à durer jusqu’à la fin du temps, et même, par sa simple existence, empêcher cette fin du temps. Pour plus de détails sur ce

point, cf. mon ouvrage *Roma aeterna. Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'Occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions*, Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana 7 (Rome 1967), 171-172, et, plus en détail, mon étude "La doctrine chrétienne et l'idéologie impériale romaine", in *L'Apocalypse de Jean. Traditions exégétiques et iconographiques. III^e-XIII^e siècles* (Genève 1979), 39-40 et 49-51.

A.R. Birley: Thank you for these observations: I had not considered sufficiently the importance of Tertullian's interpretation of the "retenant". This reminds me that you have recently reminded us of a parody of *2 Thess. 2.6-7* in a quite different work, the *Historia Augusta*, at *Alexander Severus* 14.4 (F. Paschoud, "L'auteur de l'*Histoire Auguste* est-il un apostat?", in *Consuetudinis amor. Fragments d'histoire romaine (IIe-VIe siècles) offerts à J.-P. Callu*, ed. by F. Chausson and E. Wolff [Rome 2003], 357-369, at 364-365).

F. Paschoud: À propos de Lact. *mort.pers.*: "It must be commented that the work is more a triumphalist history than an apology". Il est difficile de considérer *mort.pers.* comme un ouvrage historique. Ce bref pamphlet, en fait littérairement inclassable, vise à fournir une démonstration; or, selon Quintilien (*inst. 10,1,31*), *historia... scribitur ad narrandum, non ad probandum*. Je le qualifierais d'ouvrage relevant du genre épидictique, de *vituperatio* instrumentalisant l'histoire sans le moindre scrupule de recourir à la fiction. Il constitue le premier ouvrage qu'on peut classer dans les 'apologies historiques', la tête de la série où prennent ensuite place les ouvrages historiques d'Eunape et de Zosime en grec, en latin, partiellement du moins la *Cité de Dieu* d'Augustin et l'œuvre historique d'Orose, significativement intitulée *Historiae adversus paganos*.

E. Heck: *Mort. pers.* ist ein literarisches Unicum, eine Spätfrucht der Apologetik. 1,1-7 meldet die Rachedrohung *inst. 5,23,1-5* als vollzogen. Lactanz selber deklariert das Werk als 'Zeugnis' (1,7: *testificari*).

A.R. Birley: As a non-philologist I am content to not to put literary works into a particular genre, and like the idea that *mort.pers.* was *littérairement inclassable* or a *Unicum*. All the same: why must one accept Quintilian's strict definition? One can cite several historical works (earlier than the examples of *apologies historiques* mentioned) which were manifestly written *ad probandum* as well as *ad narrandum*; or to prove a case by means of a narrative. Tacitus' *Agricola* (perhaps another *Unicum*) is a good Roman example: it was intended not least to prove that *posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse* (42.4). Nor is the inclusion of 'fiction' by Lactantius, e.g. the dialogue between Diocletian and Galerius in AD 305, at *mort.pers.* 18.7ff., an obstacle to calling this an *ouvrage historique*. Tacitus' account of the exchange between Seneca and Nero, at *ann.* 14.53-56, is equally 'fictional', indeed even more so: he 'reported' a private audience that took place over half a century before he wrote, whereas Lactantius composed *mort.pers.* only a few years after 305; and indeed, could he not have had information about the exchange from palace attendants?

L. Perrone: Quali sono le ragioni sostanziali per negare l'attribuzione del *Contro Ierocl*e a Eusebio di Cesarea, al di là del motivo un po' aleatorio della diversità di stile? Mi sembra che Eusebio, quando vuole, sa adottare anche registri stilistici piuttosto variati.

A.R. Birley: I can only try to summarise Hägg's arguments (n.42 above). He starts by discussing the date, on which there are widely differing positions, reflecting the debate on the chronology of Eusebius' other works, e.g. the refutation of Porphyry, *De martyribus Palestinae* and the *hist.eccl.* Further work, subsequent to Hägg's paper of 1992, on the dating of both Eusebius' and Porphyry's writings, may mean that he would wish to adjust his case in this respect. Apart from discussing the style, "perhaps the most intriguing aspect" of the *Hierocl.*, in some detail, Hägg notes that in *mart.Pal.*, where (at 5.3, Long Recension) Eusebius mentions Hierocles as personally responsible for

the martyrdom of Aedesius, he is silent about Hierocles' anti-Christian pamphlet. Further: at *Hierocl.* 1.22-25 Hierocles is said to have been the only one to have set up Apollonius as a rival to Christ, yet Eusebius surely knew that Porphyry had done so as well; Eusebius nowhere refers to *Hierocl.* in his other writings, nor, "contrary to his usual practice [does he reuse] material from [it] in any other context"; the Bible is never quoted in *Hierocl.*, also a striking contrast to Eusebius' practice; and "the general attitude of the author and the generic peculiarities of the opuscum are untypical of Eusebius". All in all, the case for doubt, if not yet outright denial, seems rather strong. The name Eusebius was pretty common: as Hägg asks, was the *Hierocl.* — not listed among Eusebius' works by Jerome, *vir. ill.* 81 — later mistakenly added to the Eusebian corpus; should it be attributed to a homonym?

