

AN ORACLE OF APOLLO AT DAPHNE AND THE GREAT PERSECUTION

ELIZABETH DEPALMA DIGESER

ACCORDING TO THE EMPEROR Constantine (306–37 C.E.), the immediate cause for Rome’s “Great Persecution” was a Pythian oracle’s complaint that Christians were preventing accurate prophecies. Constantine’s claim, articulated in a 324 edict “To the Eastern Provincials” (*apud* Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.48–60), has usually been conflated with an episode from Lactantius’ *De mortibus persecutorum* (10.1–6). According to the latter account, early in 303 the emperor Diocletian (284–305 C.E.) was pressured by his junior colleague Galerius to launch a general persecution. To resolve the issue, Diocletian sent a haruspex, or soothsayer, from his palace in Nicomedia to consult with Apollo at Didyma. Lactantius says that the oracle answered as an “enemy” of God, and as a result Diocletian issued the edicts that increasingly targeted Christians in the general population (*De mort. pers.* 11–15). Despite the long history of linking these two accounts, however, clues in the emperor’s letter and several other fourth-century texts—both Christian and pagan—suggest that Constantine was describing a separate and earlier prophecy from an oracle of Apollo at Daphne near Antioch in 299. This prophecy, in turn, triggered a purge of Christian soldiers from the army,¹ an event that both Lactantius and Eusebius of Caesarea mark as the true beginning of Diocletian’s persecution.²

Although it seems a minor adjustment to the historical record, locating Constantine’s oracle at Daphne in 299 has significant implications for the history of the early fourth century. For example, pagan and Christian texts from this period, from Porphyry’s *Philosophy from Oracles* to Lactantius’

1. Although A. H. M. Jones dated the army purge to 297 (*PLRE* 1.955), 299 is now more generally accepted. See T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 18–19; P. Davies, “The Origin and Purpose of the Persecution of A.D. 303,” *JThS* 40 (1989): 66–94 at 91–93; and R. W. Burgess, “The Date of the Persecution of Christians in the Army,” *JThS* 48 (1997): 471–504.

2. Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.1.7: ἐκ τῶν ἐν στρατείᾳ ἀδελφῶν καταρχομένου τοῦ διωγμοῦ (Greek text of Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* throughout is that of E. Schwartz’s GCS edition as reprinted in K. Lake’s 1959 Loeb trans.). In Lactantius’ case, he says that Diocletian’s failure to read the auspices at the palace (*De mort. pers.* 10.1–4) led to his decision to purge Christians from the army and punish those in the court. Subsequently (10.6), he says that, in doing so, Diocletian had begun to persecute ([*Galerius*] . . . *ad persequendos Christianos instigare* [*Diocletianum*], *qui iam principium fecerat*). Moreover, in *Div. inst.* 4.27.4–5, Lactantius says that these aborted auspices drove the emperors to “storm the temple of God” (*expugnarent dei templum*), an expression he uses throughout his works to refer to the persecution (e.g., *De mort. pers.* 33.11). Latin text of Lactant. *De mort. pers.* throughout is from the edition of J. L. Creed (Oxford, 1984); that of Lactant. *Div. inst.* is from S. Brandt’s edition, CSEL 19 (Vienna, 1890). Translations throughout are my own, except for those from Lactant. *De mort. pers.*, for which I use Creed’s translation.

Divine Institutes and Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospels*, demonstrate an extraordinary preoccupation with oracles that has never been addressed, much less explained. Porphyry's concern for oracles is more easily understood, however, if the emperors had begun to fear that Christians were disrupting the sources of divination upon which the regime relied for guidance. In this view, the Daphnic Apollo's complaint would have provided the stimulus and context for the pagan literary effort to defend traditional theology and return Christians to the traditional cults that W. H. C. Frend once called a "Propaganda War"³—a campaign in which Porphyry took part.⁴ Likewise the reason for the Christian authors' fixation with oracles becomes clear if Apollo's prophecies had not merely triggered the general persecution of 303, but had also initiated the series of steps leading toward that end, from the purge of the army through the "propaganda war."⁵ The account of Constantine's oracle and the other sources that corroborate it also help to answer perennial questions about the persecution: Why did Diocletian, who had appointed Christians to key positions in his court, turn against them toward the end of his reign? What role did Galerius, Diocletian's Caesar, play in bringing persecution to the general population? And to what extent were long-standing anti-Christian factions—especially in Antioch and Didyma—instrumental in fanning the flames of persecution?

The link between these anti-Christian factions and the oracles raises an important issue regarding the functioning of these sites in general and their role in the persecution in particular. Whether they employed the enthused priestesses of Delphi and Didyma or an attendant (or theurgist) whose rites (τελεστική) gave voice to the prophetic statue at Daphne,⁶ those who consulted and staffed these oracles considered them to be the means by which a god communicated to the world.⁷ Some Christians, during and after the Great Persecution, accused not only the oracular personnel at Didyma and Antioch but also the Caesar Galerius of having deliberately fabricated anti-Christian prophecies.⁸ The oracle workers confessed under torture to having done so (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.2; *Hist. eccl.* 9.11.6), but this does not mean that the Christian claim should be accepted at face value. For even the sceptical E. R. Dodds acknowledged that "to ascribe such manipulations in general to conscious and cynical fraud is . . . to oversimplify the picture."⁹ Priests

3. W. H. C. Frend, "Prelude to the Great Persecution: The Propaganda War," *JEH* 38 (1987): 1–18.

4. For the date of Porphyry's text, see R. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, Conn., 1984), 65–69; M. B. Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca* (Oxford, 1994); E. Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire: Lactantius and Rome* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2000), 1–17, 91–114; and T. D. Barnes, "Monotheists All?" *Phoenix* 55 (2001): 142–62, at 159.

5. For the date of Lactant. *Div. inst.*, see n. 71 below. Eusebius' concern with the Great Persecution is evident throughout the *Praep. evang.* (e.g., at 1.2) although he must have written some of it after the events of 313 that he describes (see *Praep. evang.* 4.2).

6. Although Proclus would call such wonder-workers "theurgists" and their rites τελεστική, such terminology may not have been current in the late third century (Procl. *In R.* 1.39.9–10 and 14–20 [Kroll], *In Ti.* 1.51.25–27 [Diehl]); see C. van Lieffring, *La théurgie des "Oracles chaldaïques" à Proclus* (Liège, 1999), 12–13, 87–97, 268–74. For the priestesses at Didyma and Delphi, see n. 39 below.

7. For just two examples, see Plutarch's *De def. or.* and his *De Pyth. or.*

8. Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.2; Lactant. *Div. inst.* 7.17.5.

9. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), 74.

and priestesses with particular prejudices, say against Christians, were probably predisposed to interpret ambiguous cues in a certain way whenever they believed that they were communicating with and for the god.¹⁰ That people with known prejudices could be later accused of fraud by Christian conspiracy theorists does not necessarily mean that the oracle's staff acted cynically, but that they simply saw and heard what they were primed to perceive. In the case of the hapless functionaries of Didyma and Antioch, their prophecies were prosecuted as "frauds" in 313, when Licinius, imperial ally of the newly Christian emperor Constantine, defeated Maximin Daia, the last persecuting emperor (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.2; *Hist. eccl.* 9.11.6). Clearly what had seemed genuine to Diocletian and Galerius appeared differently to many Christians and to Licinius' agents.

More than ten years after his defeat of Maximin Daia, Licinius himself fell to Constantine, who then gained sole control of the Roman Empire. In the immediate aftermath of this 324 victory, Constantine issued several edicts.¹¹ One of these, his letter "To the Eastern Provincials" (ἐπαρχιώταις ἀνατολικοῖς), describes a Pythian oracle's role in the Great Persecution. The edict, preserved in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, begins by asserting that those emperors who persecuted Christians all came to a bad end (2.48); it then tells the story of the oracle. According to Constantine, Diocletian and two of his co-rulers "rekindled" persecution,¹² or "civil wars" (ἐμφυλίους πολέμους), when "all human and divine matters" (πάντων ὁμοῦ τῶν θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων) were "at peace" (εἰρηνευομένων) (2.49).¹³ "Under these circumstances" (τὸ τηνικαῦτα), he claimed, "they" (presumably the

10. In accounting for the role that "human intelligence" played in the oracular "process," Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational* (n. 9 above), argued that "an amazing amount of virtual cheating [could] be done in perfectly good faith by convinced believers."

11. For the date, see Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, trans. A. Cameron and S. G. Hall (Oxford, 1999), 233–44.

12. Constantine excluded his father from this list (*apud* Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.48).

13. 2.49: ὅσοι δὲ λοιποὶ οὐχ ὑγιαίνοντες τὰς φρένας ἀγριότητος μάλλον ἢ πρώτης ἐπεμέλοντο, καὶ ταύτην ἔτρεφον ἀφθόνας, ἐπὶ τῶν ἰδίων καιρῶν τὸν ἀληθὴ λόγον διαστρέφοντες, τῆς δὲ πονηρίας αὐτοῖς ἡ δεινότης εἰς τοσοῦτον ἐξήπτετο, ὥς πάντων ὁμοῦ τῶν θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων εἰρηνευομένων ἐμφυλίου ὑπ' ἐκείνων πολέμους ἀναρριπίζεσθαι. 50 τὸν Ἀπόλλω τὸ τηνικαῦτα ἔφασαν ἐξ ἄντρου τινὸς καὶ σκοτίου μυχοῦ οὐχὶ δ' ἐξ ἀνθρώπου χρῆσαι, ὥς ἄρα οἱ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς δίκαιοι ἐμπόδιον εἶεν τοῦ ἀληθεύειν αὐτόν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ψευδεῖς τῶν τριπόδων τὰς μαντείας ποιεῖσθαι. τοῦτο γάρ τοι ἡ ἱερεία αὐτοῦ, κατηφεῖς τοὺς πλοκάμους ἀνείσα ὑπὸ μανίας τ' ἐλαυνομένη, τὸ ἐν ἀνθρώποις κακὸν ἀποδύρετο, ἀλλ' ἴδωμεν ταῦτα εἰς ὅποιον τέλος ἐξώκειλε. 51 Σὲ νῦν τὸν ὕψιστον θεὸν καλῶ· ἡκροσάμην τότε κοιμῇ παῖς ἔτι ὑπάρχων, πῶς ὁ κατ' ἐκείνο καιρὸν παρὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίων αυτοκράτορσιν ἔχων τὰ πρωτεῖα, δειλῆος, ἀληθῶς δειλῆος, πλάνην τὴν ψυχὴν ἠπατημένος, παρὰ τῶν δορυφορούντων αὐτόν, τίνες ἄρα εἶεν οἱ πρὸς τῇ γῇ δίκαιοι, πολυπραγμόνων ἐπυνθάνετο, καὶ τίς τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν θυηπόλων ἀποκριθεὶς, Χριστιανοὶ δῆπουθεν, ἔφη. ὁ δὲ τὴν ἀποκρίσιν ὥσπερ τι βροχθῆσας μέλι τὰ κατὰ τῶν ἀδικημάτων εὐρεθέντα ἔφη κατὰ τῆς ἀνεπιλήπτου δυνάμιν ἐσχέκει. αὐτίκα δὲ οὐκ ἀπατάματα λύθρον μαιφόνους ὥς εἶπεν ἄκωκαῖς συνέταττε, τοῖς τε δικασταῖς τὴν κατὰ φύσιν ἀγγίζονα εἰς εὐρίστην κολαστηρίων καινοτέρων ἐκτείνειν παρεκελεύετο. . . . 54δ δὲ οὐκ ἂν αὐτοῖς συμβεβῇκει, εἰ μὴ ἡ ἀσεβὴς ἐκείνη τῶν τοῦ Πυθίου χρηστηρίων μαντεία κίβδηλον δύναντα ἐσχέκει. Greek text of Constantine's edict is from I. A. Heikel's edition (Leipzig, 1902) of Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*. Where Heikel's edition says that the prophecy came "not out of a human being" (οὐχὶ δ' ἐξ ἀνθρώπου, 2.50), that of F. Winkelmann (Berlin, 1975) has "not out of heaven" (οὐχὶ δ' ἐξ οὐρανοῦ). Only one exemplar of the nine key copies that Winkelmann consulted—*Cod. Vatic. gr.* 149—gives this reading (as οὐνοῦ). Although Heikel consulted this text (p. ix), he did not report this variant. My sense is that Winkelmann (together with the Vatican scribe), unfamiliar with Lucian's *De dea Syria* 36 (see p. 65 below), was perplexed about what prophesying "not out of a human being" could mean and so chose the alternate reading. I have chosen Heikel's edition since it seems to follow more closely the weight of the manuscript tradition here.

forementioned emperors) “were saying that” Apollo spoke from “a certain inner chamber and dark alcove” (ἐξ ἄντρου τινὸς καὶ σκοτίου μυχοῦ), but “not out of a human being” (οὐχὶ δ’ ἐξ ἀνθρώπου). Apollo said that he was “composing false oracles from the tripods” (τῶν τριπόδων), because, as Constantine put it, “the ‘righteous’ on earth (οἱ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς δίκαιοι) were an impediment to his” telling the truth.¹⁴ “*This*,” Constantine claimed, by which he seems to be indicating the so-called righteous people, was what Apollo’s priesthood (ἡ ἱερεία) “were lamenting as the evil within human society” (τὸ ἐν ἀνθρώποις κακὸν ἀπωδύρετο) (2.50).¹⁵ According to the emperor, this incident “drove headlong” (ἐξώκειλε) toward the use of force against Christians. Suggesting that he was an eyewitness, or at the very least a court insider, Constantine claims that he “heard then how” (ἤκροώμην τότε . . . πῶς) Diocletian “kept closely questioning his bodyguards” (δορυφορούντων), wanting to know who the so-called righteous were. Finally, one of his diviners (θυηπόλων)—probably a haruspex—said that they were, of course, the Christians (Χριστιανοὶ δῆπουθεν). According to Constantine, “on the very spot” (αὐτίκα), Diocletian “was drawing up edicts of blood and venom” (διατάγματα λύθρων . . . συνέταττε) (2.51). Finally, after briefly describing the sad end to which each of the persecuting emperors came, Constantine claims, “this would not have happened to them, if that impious prophetic power (ἄσεβῆς . . . μαντεία) of the Pythian oracles (τῶν τοῦ Πυθίου χρηστηρίων) had not achieved a spurious force” (2.54).¹⁶

Compared to Constantine’s description of Diocletian and the oracle, the account with which it is usually identified is significantly less detailed. Like Constantine, Lactantius also writes as an insider: for he was a court-appointed professor of rhetoric, called to Nicomedia probably in 299.¹⁷ According to Lactantius’ *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, Diocletian and Galerius, his Caesar, held private discussions in Nicomedia’s palace all through the win-

14. Although it is technically possible to read the ὥς clause at 2.50 as dependent on ἔφασαν from the main clause (especially given the use of αὐτόν and not ἐαυτόν in the ὥς clause), such a reading is impossible, given what follows. For if the emperors (and not Apollo) were claiming that “the righteous” were an impediment to the gods’ truthfulness, then Diocletian’s wanting to know the identity of “the righteous” makes no sense. In translating the ὥς passage as dependent on χρῆσαι, I have followed the example of Cameron and Hall (n. 11 above) as well as the translators of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1890).

15. Note that Constantine refers not to Apollo’s priestess, ἡ ἱερεία, but to the god’s priesthood, ἡ ἱερεία. See LSJ and Cameron and Hall, “*Life of Constantine*” (n. 11 above), at Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.50.

16. Throughout this analysis the use of the term “oracle” can denote both the site at which people believed that a god communicated to humanity and the message itself. In the sources discussed here this notion is conveyed in a variety of ways. For example, Constantine says that Apollo prophesied that “the righteous” were affecting his truthfulness (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.50 τὸν Ἀπόλλω . . . ἔφασαν . . . χρῆσαι . . .). The site is the object of study here; the message is Apollo’s claim. Lactantius, conversely, says that Diocletian’s haruspex consulted Apollo at Miletus—who answered (*De mort. pers.* 7: *imperator . . . misitque aruspem ad Apollinem Milesium. Respondit ille . . .*). Oracles need not occur at a site specifically devoted to this purpose, but in order for an oracle to be attributed to a particular god (in this case Apollo), I am assuming that something either in the prophecy itself or the site at which it was delivered (i.e., the temple, or perhaps a statue) links the communication to the god.

17. For his position, see Hier. *De vir. ill.* 80. Lactantius says that he journeyed to Bithynia as the temple of God was being overturned, an expression that links his arrival with the emperors’ purge of Christians from the army and court in 299. For his arrival’s coinciding with the army purge, see Lactant. *Div. inst.* 5.2.2 (“ego cum in Bithynia oratorias litteras accitus docerem cotigissetque ut eodem tempore dei templum everteretur”), and see n. 2 above.

ter of 302/3 (*De mort. pers.* 10.6–11.3).¹⁸ In this account, written soon after Constantine's conversion of 312,¹⁹ Lactantius claims that Galerius hoped these discussions would bring to the general population the persecution that had already targeted the army and court in 299 when imperial priests in Antioch had been unable to read the auspices (10.6).²⁰ After many intense sessions with Galerius in the Nicomedian palace, Diocletian was unable to "restrain the madness of his headstrong colleague," according to Lactantius. Consequently the senior emperor then sought advice from some civil magistrates and military officers (*De mort. pers.* 11.4–5). These men, at least in Lactantius' report, responded to pressure from Galerius and supported the Caesar's argument (11.6). Still unwilling to proceed, Diocletian then "decided it would be best to consult the gods." So he "sent a haruspex to the Apollo" of Didyma, near Miletus, where, Lactantius says, the oracle answered as "one would expect of an enemy of God's religion" (11.7). And thus, Lactantius concludes, "Diocletian was drawn over from his purpose," and on 23 February 303 began to issue the edicts that levelled churches, burned Scripture, arrested clergy, and ultimately called for sacrifice from the whole population (11.8–15.7).²¹

Perhaps because oracles were once thought to be nearly defunct by 300,²² most scholars dealing with the history of the Great Persecution simply

18. *De mort. pers.* 10.1: Cum ageret in partibus orientis, ut erat pro timore scrutator rerum futurarum, immolabat pecudes et in iecoribus earum ventura quaerebat. 2 Tum quidem ministrorum scientes dominum cum adsisterent immolanti, imposuerunt frontibus suis immortale signum; quo facto fugatis daemonibus sacra turbata sunt. Trepidabant aruspices nec solitas in extis notas videbant et, quasi non litassent, saepius immolabant. 3 Verum identidem mactatae hostiae nihil ostendebant, donec magister ille haruspicum Tagis seu suspitione seu visu ait idcirco non respondere sacra, quod rebus divinis profani homines interessent. 4 Tunc ira furens sacrificare non eos tantum qui sacris ministrabant, sed universos qui erant in palatio iussit et in eos, si detrectasset, verberibus animadverti, datisque ad praepositos litteris, etiam milites cogi ad nefanda sacrificia praecipit, ut qui non paruisent, militia solverentur. . . . 6 Deinde interiecto aliquanto tempore in Bithyniam venit hiematum eodemque tum Maximianus quoque Caesar inflammatus scelere advenit, ut ad persequendos Christianos instigare senem vanum, qui iam principium fecerat. . . . 11.3 Ergo habito inter se per totam hiemem consilio, cum nemo admitteretur. . . . 4 Nec tamen deflectere potuit praecipitis hominis insaniam. 5 Placuit ergo amicorum sententiam experiri. . . . 6 Admissi ergo iudices pauci et pauci militares, ut dignitate antecederent. Quidam proprio adversus Christianos odio inimicus deorum et hostes religionum publicarum tollendos esse censuerunt, et qui aliter sentiebant, intellecta hominis voluntate vel timentes vel gratificari volentes in eandem sententiam congruerunt. 7 Nec sic quidem flexus est imperator, ut accommodaret assensum, sed deos potissimum consulere statuit misitque aruspice ad Apollinem Milesium. Respondit ille ut divinae religionis inimicus. 8 Traductus est itaque a proposito et quoniam nec amicis nec Caesari nec Apollini poterat reluctari, hanc moderationem tenere conatus est, ut eam rem sine sanguine transigi iuberet, cum Caesar vivos cremari vellet qui sacrificio repugnassent.

The date of the Didymaean oracle derives from the fact that the result immediately prompted the general edicts, which Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.2.4 dates to 303.

19. For the date, see T. D. Barnes, "Lactantius and Constantine," *JRS* 63 (1973): 29–46.

20. I discuss this portion of Lactantius' testimony more fully below.

21. See also Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.2.4.

22. E.g., E. Krebs, "Die Religionen im Römerreich zu Beginn des vierten Jahrhunderts," in *Konstantin der Grosse und seine Zeit*, ed. F. J. Dölger (Freiburg, 1913), 6, drawing on the testimony of Plutarch and Clement of Alexandria. It is now generally accepted that the oracles continued to be consulted, at least into the reign of Constantine. A good example of such a consultation in the late third century is the oracle with which Porphyry in 300 begins his *Life of Plotinus*; cf. L. Brisson, "L'oracle d'Apollon dans la *Vie de Plotin* par Porphyre," *Kernos* 3 (1990): 77–88 (contra R. Goulet, "L'oracle d'Apollon dans la *Vie de Plotin*," in *Porphyre: La "Vie de Plotin"*, ed. L. Brisson, M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, R. Goulet, and D. O'Brien [Paris, 1982], 1.369–412). For analysis of the continued popularity of Late Antique oracles, cf. D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1983), 24; P.-F. Beatrice, "Un oracle antichrétien chez Arnobe," in *Mémorial Dom Jean Gribomont*, ed. Y. de Andia et al. (Rome, 1988),

assumed that Constantine and Lactantius were describing the same event from two different perspectives.²³ Henri Grégoire, in fact, used Constantine's quotation of Apollo's oracle to restore a very fragmentary inscription from Didyma that referred to Christians.²⁴ Nevertheless, some have been troubled by differences in the two accounts. Joseph Fontenrose, for example, observed that Constantine's oracle did not follow the conventions at Didyma, where a priestess communicated the prophecy.²⁵ And a few scholars have gone so far as to suggest that Lactantius and Constantine were referring to distinct events: Johannes Geffcken, for one, simply assumed that the accounts were different, although he thought that Constantine's oracle had also come from Didyma.²⁶ The rest of those who differentiate the two, however, do so because they assume that in referring to a "Pythian" oracle, Constantine must be talking about Delphi,²⁷ the quintessentially Pythian Apollo.²⁸ For Late Antiquity, however, Constantine's allusion to the "Pythian" god is not enough to distinguish his oracle from Didyma's,²⁹ for fourth-century texts routinely apply the epithet to a number of sites, from Delphi to Didyma to Daphne.³⁰

107–29; Cameron and Hall, *Life of Constantine*, 245; J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations, with a Catalogue of Responses* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), 5; P. de Labriolle, *La Réaction païenne: Etude sur la polémique antichrétienne du I^{er} au VI^e siècle* (Paris, 1934), 132; T. E. Gregory, "Julian and the Last Oracle at Delphi," *GRBS* 24 (1983): 355–66, at 363; and P. Athanassiadi, "The Fate of Oracles in Late Antiquity," *Deltion Christianikès Archaïologikès Etairias* 115 (1989–90): 271–78.

23. H. Grégoire, "Les chrétiens et l'oracle de Didymes," in *Mélanges Holleaux: Recueil de Mémoires concernant l'antiquité grecque offert à Maurice Holleaux* (Paris, 1913), 84; N. H. Baynes, "The Great Persecution," in *The Cambridge Ancient History* 12, ed. S. A. Cook et al. (1929–39; reprint Cambridge, 1981), 665; de Labriolle, *Réaction païenne* (n. 22 above), 319; A. Rehm, "Kaiser Diokletian und das Heiligtum von Didyma," *Philologus* 93 (1938): 74–84, at 74; W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (New York, 1965), 363; S. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery* (London, 1985), 175; J. Fontenrose, *Didyma: Apollo's Oracle, Cult and Companions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), 206–7; idem, *Delphic Oracle* (n. 22 above), 425; Davies, "Persecution of A.D. 303" (n. 1 above), 77; R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York, 1989), 595; S. Levin, "The Old Greek Oracles in Decline," *ANRW* 2.18.2 (1989): 1626–27; W. Portmann, "Zu den Motiven der diokletianischen Christenverfolgung," *Historia* 39 (1990): 212–48, at 217; Simmons, *Arnobius* (n. 4 above), 41.

24. The inscription is D 1 306 in Fontenrose's collection (*Delphic Oracle*, 425); Grégoire, "Chrétiens et l'oracle" (n. 23 above), 81–91. Most scholars have since rejected Grégoire's creative restoration (e.g., Baynes, "Great Persecution" [n. 23 above], p. 665, n. 3; Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle*, 425), Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (n. 23 above), 595, being a notable exception; for an alternative interpretation of the inscription, see Athanassiadi, "Fate of Oracles" (n. 22 above), 274.

25. Fontenrose, *Didyma* (n. 23 above), 297; Davies, "Persecution of A.D. 303," 78. Grégoire ("Chrétiens et l'oracle"), 86–87, thought that Constantine's reference to the oracle that "ne répondit pas par l'intermédiaire accoutumé d'une bouche humaine" necessarily meant that Eusebius—whom he thought had invented Constantine's edict—had confused Constantine's oracle with a later one, namely the talking statue of Zeus Philios erected by Theotecnus in Antioch during the reign of Maximin Daia (311–13); on this incident, see p. 72 below.

26. J. Geffcken, *The Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism*, trans. S. MacCormack (Amsterdam, 1978), 32.

27. This was the first assumption of Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle*, 425. He subsequently changed his mind in *Didyma*, 206–7, but still maintained that Constantine, "rely[ing] on an oral tradition that had already distorted the content and circumstances," thought that the oracle of 303 was Delphic; Cameron and Hall, "*Life of Constantine*," 245; Barnes, "Monotheists" (n. 4 above), 158–59 (a reversal of his position in *Constantine and Eusebius* [n. 1 above], 21).

28. Cf. H. V. Geisau, "Pythios," *RE* 24 (1963): 566f.

29. Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle*, 89, 151, 191.

30. Cf. Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.4, for the sense that the term "Pythian" was used by his opponents to refer to oracles that were "true" and "divinely inspired." For references to the Daphnic Apollo as "Pythian," see Libanius *Or.* 11.228 and Theodoret *Hist. eccl.* 3.7; Fontenrose (*Didyma*, 24) discusses a similar reference to Didyma (D 1 159 = Bericht 8:23).

EVIDENCE FOR AN ORACLE FROM APOLLO AT DAPHNE IN 299

Although the term “Pythian” is not proof enough that the emperor and Lactantius recorded two different oracular events, evidence in their accounts and other ancient sources does indicate that Constantine’s oracle was not delivered in Didyma in 303 but at Daphne in 299. First, the context for Constantine’s oracle does not fit the situation in 303 when Diocletian consulted Apollo at Didyma. Before narrating Apollo’s complaint, Constantine claims that persecution was “rekindled” by Diocletian, Galerius, and Maximian when “all human and divine matters” were “at peace” (*apud* Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.49).³¹ “Under these circumstances” (τὸ τηνικαῦτα), he continues in the next sentence, “they were saying that Apollo” complained about the so-called “righteous on earth” (2.50). Once Diocletian understood to whom the prophecy referred, “on the very spot” (αὐτίκα) he began “drawing up edicts of blood and venom” (2.51). Human affairs, however, were not as much “at peace” in the East in 303 as they had been a few years prior. For in 298, the eastern emperors had just put down usurpers in Egypt and defeated the Persians;³² but in 302–3, Galerius and Constantine himself were busy fighting Sarmatians and Carpi.³³ Moreover, at least from a Christian perspective, which Constantine certainly shared by the time he issued his edict in 324, “divine affairs” had been disrupted since Diocletian purged Christians from the army and court in 299. Both Lactantius and Eusebius believed that this was when the persecution began.³⁴ As a member of the eastern imperial entourage in 299, Constantine would not only have known about this order, but was probably with Diocletian and Galerius at the palace in Antioch whence the order was issued;³⁵ he thus would have witnessed the whipping of those who confessed to be Christian. Thus, from his point of view, the order to whip Christian courtiers would certainly have been the first bloody edict that Diocletian “began to draw up.”³⁶ The letters that Diocletian sent to his army officers requiring sacrifice within the ranks would have contained the second edict (Lact. *De mort. pers.* 10.4), and more would follow in 303.³⁷ Constantine, writing from the vantage point of 324, has compressed

31. See n. 13 above for the text of Constantine’s account.

32. T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 54–55, 63, drawing upon Hier. *Chron.* 226e; Eutr. *Brev.* 9.22–23, 25; Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 9.6; Vict. *Caes.* 39.34; Festus *Brev.* 25; and Amm. Marc. 24.1.10.

33. See Barnes, *New Empire* (n. 32 above), 64, which draws on Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 13.2; Mattingly-Sydenham, *RIC* 6.510; and Anonymus Valesianus 1.2–3. See also T. D. Barnes, “Sossianus Hierocles and the Antecedents of the ‘Great Persecution,’” *HSCP* 80 (1976): 239–52, at 250–51; and W. Ensslin, “Maximianus (Galerius),” *RE* 11 (1930): 2516f.

34. See n. 1 above for the date, n. 2 above for Lactantius’ and Eusebius’ treatment of this event, and n. 18 above for the text of Lactantius’ account.

35. For the Antiochene venue and the presence of Diocletian and Galerius at the time the purges were ordered, see Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 10 and *Div. inst.* 4.27.4–5 (printed here in n. 88 below); for Constantine’s presence, see Barnes, “Sossianus” (n. 33 above), 250–51, drawing on Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.19; Anon. Val. 1.2–3; Constantine *Oration to the Saints* 16; Pan. Lat. 9(4).21; and *The “Chronicle” of Joshua the Stylite*, trans. W. Wright (Cambridge, 1882), p. 6.

36. συνέταττε (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.51); note the imperfect; see n. 13 above for the text of Constantine’s account.

37. *Datis ad praepositos litteris*: see n. 18 above for text, n. 13 above for the text of Constantine’s account, and n. 21 above for the edicts of 303–4.

his chronology, to be sure.³⁸ Nevertheless, the peaceful context he claims for his oracle is ill suited to the Didymaeon prophecy of 303. In saying that the oracle interrupted peace in divine affairs and brought about legalized bloodshed, Constantine more likely describes an event just prior to the purge in 299 of the army and Antiochene court.

Next, as Fontenrose had observed, the way in which Constantine's oracle was conveyed also does not conform to the traditions followed at Didyma or Delphi, but rather with those at Daphne. The key point is Constantine's claim that Apollo spoke from a dark alcove and an inner chamber (or *antron*) and not through a human being (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.50). Delphi, Didyma, and the other oracles of Apollo in Greece or Asia Minor were, conversely, famous for the human priestesses through whom Apollo was believed to communicate his messages.³⁹ And while Delphi, at least, offered other types of divination, it is hard to reconcile its haruspices or lot oracles with the lengthy statement that Constantine reports from Apollo (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.50).⁴⁰

In Syria, however, were Pythian (i.e., "Apolline") oracles that fit Constantine's description more closely. Here, the prophecy was not conveyed through a human priestess; rather, Apollo's oracle was associated with the god's statue. Both Fontenrose and Grégoire, in fact, had assumed that Con-

38. See H. A. Drake, "Suggestions of Date in Constantine's *Oration to the Saints*," *AJP* 106 (1985): 335–49, at 344, for examples of similarly compressed chronology in the *Oration to the Saints*. Constantine would have been likely to review events quickly in the 324 edict because his main point was not the events of the Great Persecution; rather, as the western emperor who had just invaded the East—ostensibly to defend Christians from the emperor Licinius—Constantine's purpose in alluding to the demise of the earlier persecutors was to legitimize his recent conquest.

39. For late third- and early fourth-century accounts of Didyma's priestess see Porph. *Aneb.* frag. 142 (according to the system of Porphyry, *Lettera ad Anebo sulla teurgia*, ed. and trans. G. Faggin [Genoa, 1982]) and Iamb. *Myst.* 3.11; and for late third- and early fourth-century accounts of Delphi's priestess, see the same, in addition to the earlier accounts of Luc. 5.97–101; Plut. *De def. or.* 414b, 435b–d, 437c–38d, *De Pyth. or.* 397b–d, 404e, 405c–e, 408c–d, f; and Paus. 10.5.4. The most reliable modern studies of Didyma and its priestess are Fontenrose, *Didyma*; H. W. Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London, 1985); idem, "Apollo and the Muses, or Prophecy in Greek Verse," *Hermathena* 130–31 (1981): 99–112; and D. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), especially at 41–42. Although Fontenrose was uncertain of the Didymaeon prophet's gender when he wrote *Delphic Oracle* (p. 228), by the time *Didyma* was published he had decided that Iamblichus' account could be trusted (pp. 78–85). For modern accounts of the priestess at Delphi, see Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 70–71; Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle*, 196–97, 218; Gregory, "Julian and the Lost Oracle" (n. 23 above), 355–66; H. Lloyd-Jones, "The Delphic Oracle," *G&R* 23 (1976): 60–73; Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*, 40–41; G. Rougemont, "Techniques divinatoires à Delphes: État présent des connaissances sur le fonctionnement de l'oracle," in *Recherches sur les artes à Rome*, ed. J. M. André (Paris, 1978), 152–54. For general studies of the oracles of Apollo, see Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*; Parke, *Oracles of Asia Minor*; and Y. Hajjar, "Divinités oraculaires et rites divinatoires en Syrie et en Phénicie à l'époque gréco-romaine," *ANRW* 2.18.4 (1990): 2458–508. Not long ago, a team of geologists determined that ethylene vapors could have helped the Pythia achieve her trance-like state in antiquity. This gas, which until recently was used for general anesthesia, "produces disembodied euphoria, an altered mental status and a pleasant sensation" (toxicologist Henry Spiller quoted by W. J. Broad, "The Delphic Oracle—A Real Gas," *The Montreal Gazette* [23 March 2002]: H14; see also G. Gugliotta, "A High Calling for Priestesses at Delphi," *The Los Angeles Times* [7 February 2002]: E9).

40. For the presence of haruspices at Delphi, see Paus. 10.6.1; Plin. *HN* 7.56.203; P. Amandry, *La mantique apollinienne à Delphes* (Paris, 1950), 59–60; and F. W. H. M. Myers, "Greek Oracles," in *Hellenica: A Collection of Essays on Greek Poetry, Philosophy, History, and Religion* (London, 1880), 388–449, at 407; for lot oracles at Delphi, see Amandry, *Mantique apollinienne*, 183; and Lloyd-Jones, "Delphic Oracle" (n. 39 above), 66; Fontenrose (*Delphic Oracle*, 223) doubts, however, whether lots were used there. Gregory ("Julian and the Lost Oracle," 360–61) argues for prophetic springs at Delphi.

stantine was describing this type of prophecy.⁴¹ There are several examples of such Syrian oracles. For instance, according to Lucian, priests would ask questions of the statue of Apollo from Hierapolis. They believed that the god communicated by moving his statue as well as by speaking through it. In fact, Lucian's language echoes Constantine's in saying that the god "speaks without priests or prophets. This god takes the initiative himself and completes the oracle of his own accord."⁴² While Lucian provides evidence for prophetic Apolline statues in Syria, the prophecies at Hierapolis lack the dark recesses of Constantine's account.⁴³ At Daphne near Antioch, however, was an oracle of Apollo that functioned as Constantine described. The evidence for how the statue of Apollo at Daphne prophesied comes from a well-documented incident during the reign of Julian (361–63). Despite the strong similarities linking Julian's experience at Daphne with Constantine's description of his oracle, the connection between the two has never been drawn—probably because all modern studies of prophecy at Daphne have concentrated on the Castalia, the prophetic springs.⁴⁴ The emperor Hadrian had closed this source of divination, however, after it had foretold his accession.⁴⁵ According to Ammianus, the Castalia remained closed until after Julian's accession (Amm. Marc. 22.12.8). Since Libanius records a prophecy at Daphne foretelling Julian's rise to power (*Or.* 60.5), however, sources of divination other than the springs must have been available at the site.⁴⁶

41. Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 207; Grégoire, "Chrétiens et l'oracle," 86–87. Egypt was also home to talking oracular statues, a phenomenon that continued into the fourth century. Nevertheless, none of these sites (i.e., the oracle of Re-Harmaclus, the bull of Kom el-Wist, and the temples of Sobek in the Fayyum) could have been described as "Pythian"; see D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, 1998), 150–51, 174–75; see also G. Loukianoff, "Une statue parlante ou oracle du dieu Ré-Harmaklos," *ASAE* 36 (1936): 187–93; L. Habachi, "Finds at Kôm el-Wist," *ASAE* 47 (1947): 285–87; and G. Brunton, "The Oracle of Kôm el-Wist," *ASAE* 47 (1947): 293–95.

42. 36: μαντήια πολλὰ μὲν παρ' Ἑλλήσι, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοισι, τὰ δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ Λιβύῃ, καὶ ἐν τῇ δὲ Ἀσίῃ πολλὰ ἔστιν. ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν οὔτε ἱρέων ἀνευ οὔτε προφητέων φθέγγονται, ὅδε δὲ αὐτός τε κινεῖται καὶ τὴν μαντήϊν ἐς τέλος αὐτοῦργεῖ. Greek text and translation is from Lucian "De dea Syria," ed. H. W. Attridge and R. A. Oden (Missoula, Mont., 1976). Note that Lucian indicates the distinctiveness of Apollo at Hierapolis as compared to Greek, Egyptian, Libyan, and Asian (i.e., Western Turkish) oracles; he does not compare this oracle to others in Syria.

43. See Hajjar, "Divinités oraculaires" (n. 39 above), 2290, 2268, n. 239. Lucian's account (*De dea Syria* 34–35) makes it clear that the statue of Apollo is prominently displayed in the temple at Hierapolis just behind Helios' throne (ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ νηῷ ἐσιόντων ἐν ἀριστερῇ κέεταί πρώτα μὲν θρόνος Ἑλείου. . . . μετὰ δὲ τὸν θρόνον τοῦτον κέεταί ἑξάων Ἀπολλωνος . . .). Given the antics of this statue that he describes here, it could not be described as prophesying from a dark alcove and inner chamber. Other reports of prophetic statues include Numenius (*apud* Origen *Cels.* 5.38), *Asclep.* 23, 24, and 38; and Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.23.13 (Van Liefferinge, "Oracles chaldaïques" [n. 6 above], 90, 94–96); see also Eusebius' account of the statue to Zeus Philios, erected in Antioch probably during the summer of 311 (*Hist. eccl.* 9.3 and p. 72 below).

44. Amandry, *Mantique apollinienne* (n. 40 above), pp. 132–33, p. 137, n. 2, p. 183; A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1880), 267; G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria* (Princeton, 1961), 222; Gregory, "Julian and the Last Oracle," 357–58, 360; Hajjar, "Divinités oraculaires," 2283–84; Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*, 13–15.

45. Amm. Marc. 22.12; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 5.19; Downey, *Antioch* (n. 44 above), p. 222, with n. 103, p. 387; idem, "The Water Supply of Antioch on-the-Orontes in Antiquity," *Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 1 (1951): 171–87 at 182; Hajjar, "Divinités oraculaires," 2284; F. W. Norris, "Antioch on-the-Orontes as a Religious Center. I: Paganism before Constantine," *ANRW* 2.18.4 (1990): 2338–39.

46. Downey (*Antioch*, p. 222, n. 103, p. 387) explains the pre-Julianic oracles by positing that Ammianus invented the story of Hadrian's prophecy and closure, since they are not mentioned by John Malalas in his discussion of Hadrian's re-engineering of the waterworks there (11.14). But it is not clear what Ammianus

A close examination of the accounts describing Julian's advent to Daphne makes clear that Apollo's prophecies were associated with the statue itself.

Preparing in Antioch for his upcoming campaign against the Persians, Julian had gone to the suburb of Daphne to visit the famous temple of Apollo (Amm. Marc. 22.13.1).⁴⁷ According to Ammianus, Julian wanted to reopen the nearby Castalian springs (22.12.8).⁴⁸ Julian probably did so, since later accounts describe how the Daphnic Apollo prophesied through these springs. Indeed, the only extant accounts of the Castalia's prophecies come from the period after Julian.⁴⁹ But the emperor's efforts must not have been immediately successful:⁵⁰ For Ammianus says that Julian then spoke to the god (*deum adfatus*).⁵¹ And Julian himself says that the god's statue (τὸ ἄγαλμα) gave him signs (ἐπεσήμηνε), a description consistent with how Proclus says theurgists received divine messages as they practiced "telestic" rituals before a god's statue.⁵² According to Ammianus, after this encounter in the temple, Julian decided to purify the temple grounds, in part by moving some bodies buried nearby (22.12.8). Christian accounts claim that one of these corpses belonged to Babylas, an Antiochene bishop martyred under Decius and interred in the sacred precinct when Julian's brother Gallus was Caesar in Antioch under Constantius II (337–61).⁵³ These later sources vary, however, regarding what had transpired in the temple: Socrates, for example, says that "the daemon dwelling in the temple did not reply," muteness that he attributes to Apollo's fear of Babylas (*Hist. eccl.* 3.18).⁵⁴ In Sozomen's account, conversely, as soon as the emperor entered the temple Apollo

would gain by this deception. On the contrary, Daphne was near Ammianus' home turf, and he would have been familiar with local lore. Moreover, Philostratus' account of Apollonius' visit (V A 16) may anachronistically reflect the silence of these springs after Hadrian (Norris, "Antioch on-the-Orontes" [n. 45 above], 2338–39).

47. The best description of Antioch's suburb of Daphne, a site sacred to Apollo since the Seleucids (Lib. Or. 11.86–93), is to be found in Lib. Or. 11.86–98, 228; see also Philostr. V A 16; Amm. Marc. 22.12.8; 22.13.1; John Malalas 11.8, 14, 30; 12.38, 47; 13.19; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 5.19–20; and *Suda*, s.v. "Kastalia."

48. 22.12.8: "Haecque dum more pacis ita procedunt, multorum curiosior Iulianus, novam consilii viam ingressus est, venas fatidicas Castalii recludere cogitans fontis, quem obstruxisse Caesar dicitur Hadrianus mole saxorum ingenti, veritus ne (ut ipse praecincentibus aquis capessendam rempublicam comperit), etiam alii similia docerentur: deumque adfatus circumhumata corpora statuit exinde transferri, eo ritu quo Athenienses insulam purgavit Delon" (Latin text is from J. C. Rolfe's 1950 Loeb edition).

49. *Suda*, s.v. "Kastalia"; Eudocia *Violarium* 520; Evagoras *Hist. eccl.* 1.16; Gregory of Nazianzus *Disc.* 5.32; Nonnus Abbas *Hist. Juln.* 21; Procopius of Gaza *Ep.* 66.11; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 5.19.

50. Evagrius Scholasticus *Hist. eccl.* 1.16: 'Ιουλιανὸς μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἀλιτήριος, ἡ θεοστυγῆς τυραννίς, ἄκων καὶ μαστιζόμενος, ἐπειδὴ μὴ ὁ Δαφναῖος Ἀπόλλων, ὁ φωνὴν καὶ προφητείαν τὴν Κασταλίαν ἔχων, ἀνελεῖν τι ἡδύνατο τῷ βασιλεῖ χρηστηριαζόμενῳ, Βαβύλα τοῦ ἁγίου παντοῖος ἐκ γειτόνων ἐπιστομίζοντος, τιμῇ μεταθέσει τὸν ἄγιον. . . . (Greek text is from the edition of J. Bidez and L. Parmentier [Amsterdam, 1964]); see also Rufinus *Hist. eccl.* 10.36.

51. See n. 48 above for the text of Ammianus' account.

52. *Misopogon* 361c: ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν ἐδόκει καὶ πρὸ τοῦ πυρὸς ἀπολελοιπέναι τὸν νεῶν ὁ θεός, ἐπεσήμηνε γὰρ εἰσελθόντι μοι πρῶτον τὸ ἄγαλμα, καὶ τούτου μάρτυρα καλῶ τὸν μέγαν "Ἥλιον πρὸς τοὺς ἀπιστοῦντας. . . . (Greek text is from Kroll's 1969 Loeb edition); Proclus *In R.* 1.39.9–10 and 14–20; Van Lief-feringe, "Divinités oraculaires," 273–74.

53. Rufinus *Hist. eccl.* 10.36; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 5.19; Socrates *Hist. eccl.* 3.18; Theodoret *Hist. eccl.* 3.6; Evag. *Hist. eccl.* 1.16; Philostorgius *Hist. eccl.* 7.8.

54. Τὰ γὰρ κατὰ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν ἱερὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀνοιγῆναι κελεύσας, χρησμόν λαβεῖν παρὰ τοῦ ἐν Δάφνῃ Ἀπόλλωνος ἔσπευδεν. Ὡς δὲ ὁ ἐνοικῶν τῷ ἱερῷ δαίμων τὸν γείτονα δεδοικώς, λέγω δὴ Βαβυλᾶν τὸν μάρτυρα, οὐκ ἀπεκρίνατο (Greek text of Socrates is from Migne, PG 67).

complained that “‘the place is quite full of the dead’ and that because of this the oracular responses were prevented from going forward.” Sozomen, who knew of the Castalia’s closure by Hadrian, adds that “the daemon had ceased to utter oracles” (Ἐξ ἐκείνου δὲ λόγος μὴ χρησιμωδῆσαι συνήθως τὸ δαιμόνιον) after Gallus translated Babylas’ relics there (5.19)—further evidence that the statue was prophesying between Hadrian’s closure and Julian’s reopening of the springs.⁵⁵ Despite the ancient accounts’ uncertainty about whether Julian received his oracle, then, they all still indicate that, before the Castalia reopened, people could—and did—consult Apollo at Daphne through his statue in the temple. Gregory Nazianzen completes the argument, observing in his second discourse against Julian (*Disc.* 5.32) that, after the emperor’s death, “Apollo is again a mute statue” (πάλιν ἀνδριάς ἄφωνος ὁ Ἀπόλλων).⁵⁶ Thus, Constantine’s description of how Apollo prophesied fits the fourth-century tradition at Daphne; but it is inappropriate for Didyma, the site that Diocletian consulted in February 303.⁵⁷

Constantine’s *Oration to the Saints* provides the fourth hint that Daphne was implicated in the persecution. Not far into the speech, delivered after his conversion, Constantine declares his intention to testify to the divine nature of Christ by using pagan sources, one of whom was the Erythraean Sibyl. Constantine’s aim is to introduce a Sibylline oracle that he considers a divinely inspired prophecy (*Oration to the Saints* 18), but before he does so, he complains about Apolline prophecy in general. “Her parents,” Constantine claims, “devoted” the Sibyl “to this ridiculous service, through which shameful furies and nothing very worthy of respect comes into being—and

55. Καὶ γὰρ Ἰουλιανοῦ μόνου κρατοῦντος τῆς Ῥωμαίων οἰκουμένης, σπονδῶν καὶ κνίσσης καὶ ἀφθονίας θυμάτων μετέχον, οὐδὲν ἦττον ἡρέμει· καὶ τὸ τελευταῖον χρήσας, ἤλεγξε καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς προτέρας σιωπῆς τὴν αἰτίαν. Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐβεβούλευτο ὁ βασιλεὺς περὶ ὧν οἱ ἐδόκει πειραθῆναι τοῦ ἐνθάδε μαντείου, παραγενόμενος εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, ἀναθήμασι καὶ θυσίαις φιλοτίμως ἐτίμα τὸ δαιμόνιον, καὶ ἐδεῖτο περὶ ὧν ἐσπούδαζε μὴ ἁμελεῖν (Greek text of Sozomen throughout is from Migne, *PG* 67). Although Sozomen depended heavily on Socrates, here he has clearly supplemented the earlier author’s work with his own research; see G. F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius* (Paris, 1977), 197–98; for similar accounts of Julian and the oracle see also Evag. *Hist. eccl.* 1.16; John Chrysostom *Hom. St. Babylas* 2; Philostorgius *Hist. eccl.* 7.8; Theodoret *Hist. eccl.* 3.6; and Rufinus *Hist. eccl.* 10.36.

56. Οὐκέτι φθέγγεται δρῦς, οὐκέτι λέβης μαντεύεται, οὐκέτι Πυθία πληροῦται οὐκ οἶδ’ ὧντινων πλὴν μύθων καὶ ληρημάτων. Πάλιν ἡ Κασταλία σεσίγηται καὶ σιγᾷ καὶ ὕδωρ ἐστὶν οὐ μαντεῖον, ἀλλὰ γελῶμενον· πάλιν ἀνδριάς ἄφωνος ὁ Ἀπόλλων, πάλιν ἡ Δάφνη φυτόν ἐστιν μῦθος θρηνοῦμενον (Greek text is from Gregory of Nazianzen, *Discours 4–5: Contre Julien*, ed. and trans., J. Bernardi, SC, 309 [Paris, 1983]). Nonnus Abbas in his sixth-century commentary on Gregory’s discourse (*Hist. Juln.* 22; *PG* 36) admits that he knows nothing about “the statue, where it was erected and how it spoke” (Περὶ τοῦτου τοίνυν τοῦ ἀνδριάντος ποῦ τε ἵστατο καὶ πῶς ἐφθέγγετο, ἡμεῖς οὐχ ἱστορήσαμεν). Nevertheless, he speculates that Gregory is referring to Delphi. Nonnus is, however, mistaken. Although Gregory nowhere says that the talking statue was at Daphne, his reference to the Castalian fount’s silence *again* (closed before Julian, reopened by him, now ignored) and to Daphne herself clearly indicates that he is talking about the Apollo at Daphne; cf. Bernardi, p. 358, n. 1. Gregory is speaking metaphorically, however, since the temple and statue burned to the ground before Julian left Antioch: Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 5.20; Theodoret *Hist. eccl.* 3.17; Amm. Marc. 22.13.1.

57. I am not claiming here that Daphne was an oracular site whose reputation rivalled Delphi or Didyma. Indeed it is possible that the statue developed a reputation for oracles only with the prophecy that Constantine reports. The key point, however, is that—as Sozomen indicates—Apollo’s statue did have this reputation before Gallus’ arrival in Antioch.

the same things are recorded about Daphne.”⁵⁸ Robin Lane Fox took this passage to mean that Apollo “had lusted after his priestesses and inspired them by sexual contact.” He assumed that Constantine was discussing, not “Daphne the place,” but “Daphne the person,” namely, the maiden who escaped Apollo’s advances by turning into a laurel tree.⁵⁹ But Lane Fox’s analysis conflicts with what Constantine says, since Daphne’s story described her refusing Apollo’s attentions, not serving him.⁶⁰ Constantine is more likely referring to something that he—and his audience—knew took place at Daphne,⁶¹ namely the consultation of Apollo before Diocletian’s persecution.⁶²

Finally, a fragment of the late fourth-century historian Gelasios of Caesarea preserved in Theodoros Anagnostes’ sixth-century *Church History* confirms both the date and venue proposed here for Constantine’s oracle.⁶³ T. D. Barnes has long thought that bishop Gelasios described a Daphnic oracle before the army purge (hinted at in Constantine’s oration),⁶⁴ but the cleric’s account has never been linked to the emperor’s 324 report of the Pythian oracle. Nevertheless, the two sources are clearly describing the same event. Gelasios reports that Galerius was one day “sacrificing to the daemons” in an *antron* or inner chamber, the same type of place in which Constantine’s prophecy occurred.⁶⁵ During these rituals, a certain Theotecnus,

58. ἡ τοίνυν Ἐρυθραία Σίβυλλα, φάσκουσα ἑαυτὴν ἕκτη γενεᾷ μετὰ τὸν κατακλυσμὸν γενέσθαι, ἰέρεια ἦν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, διάδημα ἐπ’ ἰσῆς τῇ θρησκευομένῳ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς θεᾷ φοροῦσα, καὶ τὸν τρίποδα περὶ ὃν ὁ ὄφις εἵλετο περιέπουσα, ἀποφοιβάουσα τε τοῖς χρωμένοις αὐτῇ, ἡλιθιότητι τῶν γονέων ἐπιδεδωκότων αὐτὴν τοιαύτῃ λατρείᾳ, δι’ ἣν ἀσχήμονες θυμοὶ καὶ οὐδὲν σεμνὸν ἐπιγίνεται, κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ τοῖς ἱστορουμένοις περὶ τῆς Δάφνης (Greek text of the *Oration* is from Eusebius *Werke*, ed. I. A. Heikel, GCS I [Leipzig, 1902]).

59. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (n. 23 above), 634.

60. Lib. Or. 11.94. Coming across this passage, R. P. C. Hanson—who thought that Constantine’s speech was apocryphal—declared it to be “inconceivable that Constantine the Great could really have referred to [Daphne] in a discourse,” since “[t]he oracle was at no time famous and could not have ranked with Delphi or Dodona.” He thus takes the speech’s reference to Daphne’s fury to refer to the incident with Julian and dates the speech after 361 (“The *Oratio ad Sanctos* Attributed to the Emperor Constantine and the Oracle at Daphne,” *JThS* 24 [1973]: 505–11, at 507–8). While the date and venue of this speech are still hotly contested, most scholars now treat it as genuine; see, for example, Drake, “Suggestions of Date” (n. 38 above), 336–49; idem, “Policy and Belief in Constantine’s *Oration to the Saints*,” *Studia Patristica* 19 (1989): 43–51; T. D. Barnes, “Constantine’s Good Friday Sermon,” *JThS* 27 (1976): 414–23; and idem, “Constantine’s Speech to the Assembly of the Saints: Place and Date of Delivery,” *JThS* 52 (2001): 26–36.

61. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 634, has argued that Antioch was the venue for this speech.

62. Already suspected by Barnes, “Sossianus,” 252.

63. See Barnes, “Lactantius” (n. 19 above), 34, for date.

64. Barnes, “Sossianus,” 252. In this article Barnes dated Gelasios’ oracle to 302, the date he then supported for the persecution in the army. Barnes has since adopted 299 as the date for the army purge (see n. 1 above). Via Theodoros Anagnostes, Gelasios’ account also found its way into the early ninth-century *Chronicle* of Theophanes at AM 5794. See the comments of C. Mango and R. Scott, translators, in *The “Chronicle” of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford, 1997), lxxv–lxxvi and at AM 5794, as well as F. Winkelmann, “Untersuchungen zur Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisareia,” *SBerT* 3 (1965), 4–123.

65. Θεότεκνος ὁ ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ Χριστιανῶν ἐπιβουλος ὑποδὺς ἐν τῷ ἄντρῳ ἐν ᾧ Μαξιμιανὸς τοῖς δαίμονιν ἔθεν, χρησμοὺς δὴθεν ἐλάμβανεν· ὃς ἀπὸ χρησμοῦ δαιμονικοῦ τὸν κατὰ Χριστιανὸν αὐτῷ διαγμὸν ἐνετείλατο, καὶ τοῦτο μάλιστα πεισθεὶς Μαξιμιανὸς τὸν καθ’ ἡμῶν διαγμὸν ἀνερρίπσεν· πρὸς τοῦτο δὲ καὶ τοὺς συντυράννους παρόρμησε τὸν χρησμὸν τοῦ δαίμονος ὡς δὴ τι μέγα παράγγελμα προβαλλόμενος (Gel. Caes. 3 [from Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae gr. 142] in Theodoros Anagnostes, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. C. Hansen [Berlin, 1995], xli, 158). See also Gel. Caes. frag. 4 in C. de Boor, “Neue Fragmente des Papias, Hegesippus und Pierius, in bisher unbekannten Excerpten aus der Kirchengeschichte des Philippus Sidetes,” *Texte und Untersuchungen* 5 (1889): 165–84. It is Maximianus Galerius and not Maximianus Herculius because the venue is Antioch (see n. 68 below for Theophanes’ reference to Galerius at AM 5794). The aorist par-

“who preyed on Christians in Antioch,” Gelasios says, slipped into the *antron* with the emperor. “‘Receiv[ing]’ the prophecies,” Theotecnus, “via the daemonic oracle,” enjoined Galerius “to persecute Christians,” Gelasios continues. Galerius, “persuaded by” the oracle “most of all,” not only “stirred up the persecution,” but the emperor also, by “presenting the oracle of the daemon as some great directive,” incited the other emperors to persecute as well, Gelasios concludes. Theotecnus’ Antiochene venue combined with Galerius’ presence suggests 299 as the most plausible date for this event since the Caesar is attested in Antioch only in the spring of 299.⁶⁶ In the immediate environs of Antioch only one site—near the statue in Apollo’s temple at Daphne—is at all associated with oracles in this period.⁶⁷ Moreover, the way in which the prophecy occurred, with Theotecnus hidden, “receiving” the prophecies, and conveying them via the oracle (*ἀπὸ χρησμοῦ δαιμονικοῦ*), harmonizes with the way in which the Daphnic Apollo prophesied for Julian. From a Christian perspective, Gelasios, I suggest, is identifying Theotecnus as the theurgist at Daphne and Apollo’s statue as the “daemonic” oracle.⁶⁸ Gelasios’ report, thus, supports the argument that in 299 an oracle from the prophetic statue of Daphnic Apollo preceded and led to persecution, first in the army and court and then more generally.⁶⁹

EVIDENCE SUBSTANTIATING GELASIOS

Despite Gelasios’ access as bishop of Caesarea to whatever library his fore-runner Eusebius had assembled, his surviving fragments show that he was sometimes confused about events in the early part of the fourth century.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, in the case of Galerius, Theotecnus, and the oracular statue at

ticipie ὑποῦς above would seem to indicate that even if the god gave several oracles, it was at one event—when Theotecnus slipped into the *antron*.

66. Lactant. *Div. inst.* 4.27.4; Barnes, *New Empire* (n. 32 above), 61–64. Although Barnes suggests that Antioch may have been Galerius’ principal residence from 293–96, the Caesar was primarily on campaign in Egypt and against Persia in those years.

67. Theotecnus was affiliated with the prophetic statue of Zeus Philios in Antioch only after 311; see p. 72 and n. 84 below.

68. For the term “theurgist,” see n. 6 above; for their association with oracular statues in general, see p. 65 and n. 52 above. At *AM* 5794, Theophanes’ account calls Theotecnus a γόης (Τούτῳ τῷ ἔτει Θεοτέκνῳ γόητι παρθόμενος ὁ Γαλλέριος Μαξιμιανὸς ἐν τῷ θύειν τοῖς δαίμοσι καὶ λαμβάνειν χρησμούς, ὑποῦς τῷ ἄνθρωπῳ ὁ Θεότεκνος χρησμών, κατὰ Χριστιανῶν ἐγείραι διωγμὸν, τούτῳ δέδωκεν), a pejorative characterization against which Iamblichus is at some pains to defend theurgists throughout *De Mysteriis* (*AM* 5794) (an observation that I owe to Olivier Dufault). Greek text of Theophanes is from *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883).

69. Although Theophanes’ account gives this incident a date of 301/2 (cf. Mango and Scott [n. 64 above] at *AM* 5794), his indication should not be credited. Since Theophanes gives two dates for the general edicts of persecution (διωγμὸν μέγαν in *AM* 5787 [294/5] and that in which churches were levelled and Scripture burnt in 5795 [302/3]), in addition to a date of *AM* 5789 (296/7) for the army purge, it is clear that he is trying to integrate several accounts for this period. See Mango and Scott for Theophanes’ other doublets and examples of incorrect dating, many of which resulted, no doubt, from his efforts to reconcile many different systems with the Alexandrian *annus mundi* he used as his chronological basis (pp. lxii–lxiv).

70. For example, he claims in frag. 3 (de Boor) that after retirement Diocletian attempted to regain power with Maximian Herculijs; cf. Barnes, “Lactantius,” 34; for the contents of Eusebius’ library see A. J. Carriker, “The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1999).

Daphne, both Lactantius and Eusebius corroborate Gelasios' account. Lactantius' *Divinae institutiones*, written in Nicomedia between 305 and 310,⁷¹ like Gelasios' report, also associates Galerius with an oracle, specifically a prophetic statue. In fact, Lactantius accuses Galerius of fraud, of issuing orders that would command "a statue to speak" (*imaginem loqui*).⁷² By this feat (among others), Lactantius claims, many would be "influenced by him" (*plurimi adlicientur ab eo*) as he set out to persecute Christians (*Div. inst.* 7.17.5). This accusation occurs at the end of a monumental work, distinguished by its claim that many pagan prophets had foretold Jesus' advent.⁷³ Ostensibly discussing the end times,⁷⁴ Lactantius describes the activities of Diocletian and Galerius, cloaked in the language of Daniel and Revelation.⁷⁵ According to Lactantius, an evil "king" will "rise out of Syria" (*Div. inst.* 7.17.2). This ruler will influence many "wise" people by commanding "fire to descend from heaven" and "an image to speak" (*imaginem loqui*), things "done under his order" (*sub verbo eius*, 7.17.5). Then, Lactantius continues, "he will try to raze the temple of God and persecute a righteous people" (7.17.6); in the process of doing so, the king "will cover" them "with the books of the prophets and thus will burn them." Precisely "forty-two months will be given to him to desolate the earth" (7.17.8). But finally the righteous will "call out to God," who will "send a great king from heaven" to "liberate them" and "destroy all the impious" (7.17.11).

71. For the date, see E. Heck, *Die dualistischen Zusätze und die Kaiseranreden bei Lactantius* (Heidelberg, 1972), 37–46.

72. According to Lactantius, Galerius also commanded the "Sun to stand apart from its tracks" (*solem a suis cursibus stare*, *Div. inst.* 7.17.5), which may suggest that a statue of Apollo moved just like the one in Hierapolis described by Lucian.

73. See, e.g., *Div. inst.* 1.6 for Lactantius' intention to use Hermes Trismegistus and the Sibyl and 1.7 to use Apollo as prophets heralding Christ's advent and deeds.

74. See Digeser, *Making of a Christian Empire* (n. 4 above), 149–50.

75. *Div. inst.* 7.17.2–9, 11: "Alter rex orietur e Syria malo spiritu genitus, evorsor ac perditor generis humani, qui reliquias illius prioris [i.e., Diocletian] mali cum ipso simul dealeat. 3 Hic pugnabit adversus prophetam dei [Jesus] et vincet et interficiet eum et insepultum iacere patietur, sed post diem tertium reviviscet atque inspectantibus et mirantibus cunctis rapietur in caelum [probably metaphorical language for the persecution's inability to crush the Christian community; see Rev. 11:7–12]. 4 Rex vero ille taeterrimus erit quidem et ipse, sed mendaciorum propheta, et se ipsum constituat ac vocabit deum, se coli iubebit ut dei filium [references to the Jovian and Herculian emperors' claims to descend from divinity, *Chron. min.* 948]. Et dabitur ei potestas, ut faciat signa et prodigia, quibus visis inretiat homines, ut adorent eum. 5 Iubebit ignem descendere a caelo et solem a suis cursibus stare [see n. 72 above] et imaginem loqui, et fient haec sub verbo eius: quibus miraculis etiam sapientium plurimi adlicentur ab eo. 6 Tunc erueri templum dei conabitur et iustum populum persequetur. . . . 7 quicumque crediderint atque accesserint ei, signabuntur ab eo tanquam pecudes, qui autem recusaverint notam eius, aut in montes fugient aut comprehensi exquisitis cruciatibus necabuntur [cf. Rev. 13:16]. 8 Idem iustos homines obvolvunt libris prophetarum atque ita cremabit. Et dabitur ei desolare orbem terrae mensibus quadraginta duobus. 9 Id erit tempus quo iustitia proicietur et innocentia odio erit. . . . 11 illi . . . exclamabunt ad deum voce magna et auxilium caeleste inplorabunt, et exaudiet eos deus et mittet regem magnum de caelo, qui eos eripiat ac liberet omnes que inpiis ferro ignique perdat."

Using an ostensibly apocalyptic and prophetic narrative to comment on contemporary events would not have been as foreign to Lactantius' readers as it is to us. Indeed, Porphyry's *Against the Christians* illustrated how the Book of Daniel—another ostensibly apocalyptic and prophetic narrative—was a veiled Jewish commentary on the reign of Antiochus IV. Since Porphyry's work aroused early fourth-century Christians vigorously to defend their Scriptures, it is not unlikely that Lactantius here has engaged in some *ex eventu* "prophecy" of his own. For those refuting Porphyry, see A. von Harnack, "Porphyrius, Gegen die Christen: 15 Bücher, Zeugnisse, Fragmente, und Referate," *Abhandlungen der königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-historische Klasse* (1916): 29–31, 33–41.

Despite the thick Scriptural imagery, Lactantius' references to this "king" point his readers to Galerius, Diocletian's imperial colleague:⁷⁶ He has not only "come from Syria," the site of Galerius' famous victories against the Persians.⁷⁷ But also precisely forty-two months elapsed between the onset of the general persecution (23 Feb 303; Lact. *De mort. pers.* 12.1), for which Lactantius consistently blamed Galerius (*De mort. pers.* 11.3–8, 14), and the rise in the west of Constantine (25 July 306),⁷⁸ cast here as the heavenly king rescuing the persecuted. (Diocletian had retired in 305, leaving Galerius as Augustus in the East.⁷⁹) The *Divinae institutiones* also accuses Galerius of commanding "fire to descend from heaven": this charge refers to a palace conflagration that Lactantius elsewhere charged the Caesar with setting and blaming on Christian arsonists as he tried to intensify the general persecution (*De mort. pers.* 14).⁸⁰ Regarding Galerius, Lactantius is clearly a hostile source, bent on claiming that this emperor engineered the persecution. Nevertheless, his allusive account harmonizes with that of Gelasios: the talking "image" once again suggests Daphne.⁸¹ Moreover, since the force of the oracle allows the emperor—as in Gelasios' account—to influence others and initiate the persecution, the date is probably 299—the onset of the persecution from Lactantius' point of view.⁸²

Where Lactantius supports Gelasios' story of Galerius and the oracle, Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica*, written in 306 and revised in the 320s,⁸³ corroborates the bishop's characterization of Theotecnus as a man with a long history of anti-Christian activism. This portrayal of Theotecnus occurs as Eusebius begins to describe the steps Maximin Daia (311–13) took toward renewing the persecution after Galerius' deathbed edict of tolerance (311): first, six months after Galerius died, Daia prohibited Christians from meeting in cemeteries (*Hist. eccl.* 9.2); "next," Eusebius charges, "through some

76. For his similarly apocalyptic treatment of Diocletian, see *Div. inst.* 7.16 and Digeser, *Making of a Christian Empire*, 149–50.

77. Anon. Val. 2.2; Eutr. 25; *Pan. Lat.* 9.21.1; Sextus Aurelianus Victor 39.34–37.

78. Barnes, *New Empire*, 69. This is a date that Lactantius would certainly have known, whether he was still in Nicomedia in 306 or had joined Constantine shortly thereafter; see E. D. Digeser, "Lactantius and the 'Edict of Milan': Does It Determine His Venue?" *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997): 287–95.

79. Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 17–19.

80. Although his argument—to my knowledge—has yet to be published, Oliver Nicholson was the first to suggest that Lactantius' apocalypse might be veiled commentary on events of his own day. Nicholson, however, thought the prophetic statue necessarily meant that the emperor in question was Maximin Daia, referring to the famous incident with Zeus Philios, described on p. 72 below. Nevertheless, Lactantius' reference to forty-two months of power effectively excludes Maximin Daia from consideration: Daia did not achieve the power to persecute until Galerius' death in early May 311 (*De mort. pers.* 35). Forty-two months after that brings us to November 314—well after Daia's 313 defeat at Licinius' hands. Likewise, forty-two months after Daia's accession to Caesar on 1 May 305 (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 19.1) brings us to 1 Nov 306—a date with which nothing relevant is associated (Barnes, *New Empire*, 63–66). Moreover, Lactantius complains that Galerius set fire to Scripture (7.17.8), which was a feature of the first tetrarchy's edicts (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* E 8.2.4), not Daia's (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 9.2–3).

81. If, when Lactantius says that Galerius "iubebit . . . solem a suis cursibus stare et imaginem loqui," he is describing two aspects of the same event, then the talking image belongs to a solar deity; see nn. 72 and 75 above.

82. See n. 2 above.

83. For the date, see R. W. Burgess, "The Dates and Editions of Eusebius' *Chronici canones* and *Historia ecclesiastica*," *JThS* 48 (1997): 471–504.

mischievous men, he sends ambassadors to himself against us, having incited the citizens of Antioch to ask him to command that no Christian inhabit their town . . . and to contrive that others suggest the same thing" (9.2).⁸⁴ Eusebius claims that "the originator of all these things" was Theotecnus, "a creature of Antioch" who not only "administered the affairs of the city," but was also a bit of a rascal and a miracle worker. After this summary of the events leading to the Christians' exile from Antioch and other cities and after introducing Theotecnus, Eusebius then explains how the anti-Christian activist came to be involved in the exiles (9.3). "This man," Eusebius resumes, "having served in the army many times against us (and in various ways having zealously caused our being hunted out . . . as if we were some unholy thieves), having contrived everything in order to slander us and make accusations against us, and having become the cause of death for countless people, at last sets up a certain statue of Zeus Philios with some magical tricks and sorceries," after devising the requisite rites, initiations, and purifications for the cult. According to Eusebius, Theotecnus "also used to show off his knowledge of portents even to the emperor, through things which he supposed were oracles," an activity that the bishop does not directly connect with the statue of Zeus and its cult. Having done all this, Theotecnus then "arouses the daemon against the Christians," saying that the "god ordered the Christians (as being inimical to him) to depart." These events, accordingly, encouraged "all the other officials in the cities under the same government" to "do the same" (9.4). "And," Eusebius concludes, "as the tyrant by a rescript declared himself well pleased with their measures, persecution was kindled anew against us."

Reading Eusebius carefully indicates that Theotecnus' anti-Christian activities predated his involvement in the Antiochene exiles. Indeed, Eusebius accuses Theotecnus, not only of having "served in the army many times against us," but also of having caused scores (μυρίοις) of Christians to be hunted out and killed (9.2–3). Since these activities preceded his erection of Zeus Philios and it is only through the statue's oracle that persecution resumed in Oriens (9.3), these deaths cannot be associated with Daia's per-

84. Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 9.2: εἴτα διὰ τινων πονηρῶν ἀνδρῶν αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ καθ' ἡμῶν πρεσβεύεται, τοὺς Ἀντιοχείων πολίτας παρορμήσας ἐπὶ τὸ μηδ' αὐτῷ τινα Χριστιανῶν τὴν αὐτῶν οἰκεῖν ἐπιτρέπεσθαι πατρίδα ὡς ἐν μεγίστῃ δωρεᾷ παρ' αὐτοῦ τυχεῖν ἀξιώσας, καὶ ἐτέρους δὲ ταῦτ' ὑποβαλεῖν διαπράξασθαι· ὧν πάντων ἀρχηγὸς ἐπ' αὐτῆς Ἀντιοχείας ἐπιφύεται Θεότεκνος, δεινὸς καὶ γόης καὶ πονηρὸς ἄνθρωπος καὶ τῆς προσωνυμίας ἀλλότριος· ἐδόκει δὲ λογιστεῖν τὰ κατὰ τὴν πόλιν. 3: πλείστα δ' οὖν οὗτος καθ' ἡμῶν στρατευσάμενος καὶ πάντα τρόπον τοῦς ἡμετέρους ὥσπερ τινὰς φῶρας ἀνοσίους ἐκ μυθῶν θηρεῦσαι διὰ σπουδῆς πεποιημένους πάντα τε ἐπὶ διαβολῇ καὶ κατηγορίᾳ τῇ καθ' ἡμῶν μεμηχανημένους, καὶ θανάτου δὲ αἰτίους μυρίοις ὄσους γεγενοῦς, τελευτῶν εἰδὼλόν τι Διὸς Φιλίου μαγγανείας παῖν καὶ γοητείας ἰδρύεται [note the string of aorist and perfect participles followed by the present passive], τελετὰς τε ἀνάγνους αὐτῷ καὶ μυήσεις ἀκαλλιεργήτους ἐξαγίστους τε καθαρμῶν ἐπινοήσας, μέχρι καὶ βασιλέως τὴν τερατείαν δι' ὧν ἐδόκει χρησῶν ἐπεδείκνυτο. καὶ δὴ καὶ οὗτος κολακεῖα τῇ καθ' ἡδονῇ τοῦ κρατοῦντος ἐπεγείρει κατὰ Χριστιανῶν τὸν δαίμονα καὶ τὸν θεὸν διὰ κελεύσαι φησὶν ὑπερῶν τῆς πόλεως καὶ τῶν ἀμφὶ τὴν πόλιν ἀγρῶν ὡς ἂν ἐχθρῶν αὐτῷ Χριστιανῶν ἀπελάσαι. 4: Τοῦτ' οὖν δὲ πρῶτ' οὖν κατὰ γνώμην πράξαντι πάντες οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἐν τέλει τὰς ὑπὸ τὴν αὐτὴν ἀρχὴν πόλεις οἰκοῦντες τὴν ὁμοίαν ὁρμῶνται ψῆφον ποιήσασθαι προσφιλέως εἶναι τοῦτο βασιλεῖ τῶν κατ' ἐπαρχίαν ἡγεμόνων συνεωρακότων καὶ τοῦτ' αὐτὸ διαπράξασθαι τοῖς ὑψηλοῖς ὑποβεληκότων· ὧν δὴ καὶ αὐτῶν τοῖς ψηφίσμασιν δι' ἀντιγραφῆς ἀσμενέστατα ἐπινεύσαντος τοῦ τυράννου αὐτὸς ἐξ ὑπαρχῆς ὁ καθ' ἡμῶν ἀνεφλέγετο διαγμός.

secution. As a γόης (probably Eusebius' characterization of a theurgist) Theotecnus had long been associated with oracles in Antioch;⁸⁵ before he erected the statue of Zeus, this activity must have found him at Daphne. Consequently, Eusebius supports Gelasios' account of Theotecnus' theurgic role at Daphne prior to the purge of Christians from the army.

Gelasios, Lactantius, and Eusebius thus add important details to Constantine's account. Not only do they indicate that Galerius was the first to learn about the Daphnic oracle, but they have also linked the prophecy to Antiochenes like Theotecnus who were hostile to Christians and involved with divination.⁸⁶ Over time, Christians tended to suspect that people like these—including the emperor Galerius—had even engineered the persecution. Corroborated by Lactantius and Eusebius, Gelasios thus confirms and supplements the argument, based on Constantine's report, that a prophecy of the Daphnic Apollo in 299 motivated the emperors to persecute Christians, first within the army and court and then in the population at large.

HARMONIZING TWO ACCOUNTS OF 299

An oracle of Apollo is not, however, the prophetic crisis customarily associated with the purge of the army and court in 299. Rather, according to Lactantius' *Divinae institutiones* and *De mortibus persecutorum*, Diocletian's measures in 299 were triggered when Christians interfered with his ability to take the auspices. The incident, according to the latter text, occurred "while Diocletian was busy" in the regions of Oriens (*in partibus orientis*), or more precisely Antioch (*De mort. pers.* 10.1, 4).⁸⁷ He and Galerius were "sacrificing cattle and looking in their entrails for what was going to happen" (*De mort. pers.* 10.1),⁸⁸ when some imperial attendants, who "knew the Lord and were present at the sacrifice," put what Lactantius calls "the immortal sign" on their foreheads. "At this," Lactantius claims, "the daemons were put to flight and the rites thrown into confusion." The haruspices were so "agitated" at the lack of the "usual marks," he says, that they "repeated the sacrifice several times" to no avail (*De mort. pers.* 10.2). "Finally," Lactantius reports, the "master of the haruspices" claimed—either "through suspicion" or "on the evidence of his own eyes"—that the sacrifices were "not yielding an answer" because "profane persons were present"

85. See n. 68 above for Theophanes' use of the same term for Theotecnus.

86. Another was probably the *vicarius*, Sossianus Hierocles; cf. Barnes, "Sossianus," 246. Even though when he wrote this article, Barnes dated the army purge to 302, not 299, Hierocles was just as likely to have been an anti-Christian agitator in Antioch at this earlier date; Barnes, "Sossianus," 243–45; E. D. Digeiser, "Porphyry, Julian, or Hierokles? The Anonymous Hellene in Makarios Magnês' *Apokritikos*," *JThS* 53 (2002): 466–502, at 486, 499–500.

87. Barnes, *New Empire*, 63, 55, for the Antioch setting.

88. Galerius' presence is indicated by the reference to the *domini* sacrificing in the parallel account of *Div. inst.* 4.27.4–5: "4 Cum enim quidam ministrorum nostri sacrificantibus dominis adsisterent, inposito frontibus signo deos illorum fugaverint, ne possent in visceribus hostiarum futura depingere. 5 Quod cum intellegerent haruspices, instigantibus isdem daemonibus quibus prosecant conquerentes profanos homines sacris interesse egerunt principes suos in furorem, ut expugnarent dei templum seque vero sacrilegio contaminarent, quod gravissimis persequendum poenis expiaretur."

(*profani homines interessent*) at the ceremonies (*De mort. pers.* 10.3). In the *Divinae institutiones*, Lactantius describes the same incident, saying that “when some of our people who were ministers were standing by the emperors as they sacrificed, the emperors’ gods were driven off; this happened because these ministers placed the sign on their forehead so that [the gods] could not inscribe the things to come in the viscera of the victims.” But in the next sentence Lactantius adds an important detail: “And when the haruspices understood (*intellegerent*) this, with the same daemons to whom they sacrifice inciting them (*instigantibus isdem daemonibus quibus proscant*), complaining that profane people were taking part in sacred things, they drove their emperors into a rage” (*Div. inst.* 4.27.5). Accordingly, Diocletian immediately ordered his courtiers to sacrifice or to be flogged. At the same time, Lactantius continues, he “sent letters to commanders” (*datisque ad praepositos litteris*) ordering their soldiers to sacrifice or face discharge (*De mort. pers.* 10.4).

Lactantius’ account of the events in 299 seems quite different from what I have reconstructed from Constantine and Gelasios. If the prophecy of Apollo that the latter two record occurred in 299, as seems likely, and led to Diocletian’s purge of the army and court, can the two accounts be reconciled? The key to understanding what happened at Daphne in 299 is to realize that all of our sources emphasize different details. For example, in his *De mortibus persecutorum*, Lactantius has preferred to focus on the power of the Christian sign to drive away “daemons,” foreshadowing Constantine’s effective use of this sign in his 312 battle against Maxentius (*De mort. pers.* 44). Constantine, conversely, is intent on linking Diocletian’s decision to persecute with his ultimate demise. Articulated in 324, Constantine’s account helps to justify his recent defeat of Licinius whom he had accused of betraying the Christians in his domain (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.27–29). The second point to realize is that, despite being the shorter description, Lactantius’ account in the *Divinae institutiones* actually follows Constantine’s quite closely.

What is likely to have happened in and near the Antioch palace in 299? From Lactantius’ *De mortibus persecutorum* it is clear that one day, when a mixed group of his courtiers (Christian and pagan) and his Caesar Galerius were in attendance, Diocletian slaughtered some cattle.⁸⁹ Lactantius also says here that the Christian courtiers crossed themselves—perhaps surreptitiously—during the sacrifice and that the haruspices could not see any prophetic marks on the entrails (*De mort. pers.* 10.2–3). If some haruspices had seen the Christian courtiers make this sign, could their observation have affected their ability to read the auspices—even after repeated efforts (*De mort. pers.* 10.3)? In the *Divinae institutiones* Lactantius calls these Christians “ministers” (*Div. inst.* 4.27.4). Given the status of these men, the diviners might have been reluctant initially to identify them as the source of their anxiety, especially if the Christian ministers were Diocletian’s appointees—as is likely. What to do? In the *Divinae institutiones*, Lactantius says that

89. Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 10.1–2; *Div. inst.* 4.27.4. For text see nn. 18 and 88 above.

“when the haruspices understood” that the ministers’ making the sign of the cross had “driven off” the emperors’ gods, they complained about the “profane people” at the sacrifice and drove the emperors to persecute. I would suggest that the haruspices came to “understand” the failed auspices after the oracle of Apollo had complained about Christians interfering with his prophecies. Indeed Lactantius in this text says that the “same daemons to whom they sacrifice” incited them to drive the emperors toward persecution by complaining about the “profane” people. From Gelasios’ account we know that Galerius was sacrificing when he received an oracle that “stirred up the persecution.” And from Constantine we know that an oracle of Apollo preceded the first efforts at persecution. Accordingly, I would argue that soon after the auspices had failed, Galerius and others went to Apollo’s temple at Daphne—a site perhaps more famous for its statue’s size and beauty than its oracles, but one long associated with Pythian prophecies. With Theotecnus, the anti-Christian attendant or theurgist, in the inner chamber (*antron*), Galerius either was simply sacrificing when the statue appeared to speak, or he specifically asked the god in the guise of his statue why the auspices had been mute. Constantine preserves the resulting oracle, at least in part. Perhaps instead of blaming problems in divination on “the righteous” as the Christian Constantine put it in 324 (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.50),⁹⁰ the oracle targeted “profane” people (*profanos homines*), Lactantius’ term for those tied to the failed auspices (*De mort. pers.* 10.3; *Div. inst.* 4.27.4). News of the oracle at the palace had two results, I suggest: Diocletian—and others—would certainly have wanted to identify the profane or “righteous” people hampering divination (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.51); and the chief haruspex, who may already have seen or at least suspected that the Christian ministers had crossed themselves, now “understood” that Christians could be associated with problems in divination. In other words, emboldened by Apollo, Lactantius’ “instigating daemon” (*Div. inst.* 4.27.5), the haruspices now blamed the Christians for the failed auspices (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 10.3, *Div. inst.* 4.27.4). It is easy to see how Diocletian, always a keen “investigator of future events” (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 10.1), would want to act quickly and forcefully. The prophecy, after all, in referring to divinations from the tripods in the plural (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.50), called into question not only the recent auspices but all the oracles, including Delphi and Didyma, where priestesses conveyed Apollo’s messages from this perch.⁹¹

And so, Diocletian wrote the first edicts “of blood and venom” (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.51), calling for his Christian courtiers to sacrifice or be whipped and for Christian soldiers to do likewise or face discharge (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 10.4). As a man who trusted Christians enough to make them his courtiers (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 10.2, *Div. inst.* 4.27.4), Diocletian may have felt that these measures were enough. According to Lactantius, however, Galerius clearly thought otherwise. We do not have to accuse the Caesar of having manipulated the oracles to his own advantage. But clearly,

90. For text see n. 13 above.

91. See n. 39 above.

he was deeply affected by what had happened to him at Daphne: for he continued to seek more repressive anti-Christian measures, and his zeal led Christians ultimately to believe he had manipulated the system to produce the outcome he desired (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 10.6–11.6). Finally, in February of 303, Diocletian, caught between his own inclinations and the pressure of his junior colleague, turned to Didyma to resolve the issue (*De mort. pers.* 11.7). Constantine had claimed that Apollo's priesthood was bemoaning the Christianisation of Roman society (*Vit. Const.* 2.50), and at Didyma their resentment was probably exacerbated by the Christian squatters that Polymnia Athanassiadi has identified in the temple precinct.⁹² Thus it is not surprising that the oracle from Didyma gave the answer that the Caesar, at least, wanted to hear. Consequently, Diocletian immediately issued the edicts that targeted the Christian population at large.⁹³

As Constantine put it, "the power of the Pythian oracles" (*Vit. Const.* 2.54), both Daphne and Didyma, held sway throughout the reigns of Diocletian and his eastern successors, abating only with the death of Maximin Daia in 313. Nevertheless, both sites would pay for their involvement in the persecution. Not only did the emperor Licinius see to it that their priests and attendants—including Theotecnus—admitted under torture to having "invented" prophecies calling for persecution (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 9.11.5–6, *Praep. evang.* 4.2). But during the reign of Constantius II (337–61), Christians brought martyrs' relics into the temple precincts at both sites, in an apparent effort to silence the oracles. Constantius' successor, Julian, had, of course, blamed his mantic difficulties at Daphne on Babylas' nearby relics. When Julian subsequently learned that relics had also been moved to churches under construction near Apollo at Didyma, the emperor "wrote to the governor of Caria, commanding him" to burn the finished structures and to raze "the houses of prayer which were incomplete" (Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* 5.20).⁹⁴ According to Glanville Downey, Babylas' burial at Daphne during Gallus' administration was the "first translation of a martyr's relics recorded in our extant sources."⁹⁵ If so, the burials at Didyma cannot have lagged far behind. It is no coincidence that the first two pagan sites that Christians attempted to cleanse with their relics were those whose prophecies spurred on Diocletian's persecution.⁹⁶

92. Athanassiadi, "Fate of Oracles," 272–74.

93. Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 12.1–15.7; Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.2.4.

94. Καὶ τὰ μὲν ὅδε ἔσχεν· ὥς οἶμαι δέ, ἐκ τῶν συμβάντων ἐν τῇ Δάφνῃ διὰ τὸν μάρτυρα Βαβύλαν πυθόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς, ἐπὶ τιμῇ μαρτύρων εὐκτεπίρους οἴκους εἶναι πλησίον τοῦ ναοῦ Διδυμαιοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, ὃς πρὸ τῆς Μιλήτου ἐστίν, ἔγραψε τῷ ἡγεμόνι Καρίας, εἰ μὲν ὁροφόν τε καὶ τράπεζαν ἱερὰν ἔχουσι, πυρὶ καταφλέσαι· εἰ δὲ ἡμίεργά ἐστι τὰ οἰκοδομήματα, ἐκ βάθρων ἀνασκάψαι.

95. Downey, *Antioch*, 364.

96. From what we know, Constantine left the site unmolested. According to Lane Fox (*Pagans and Christians*, 671) only six temples "are known to have suffered in his reign." These are: Mambre ("a site of great holiness in the Old Testament"); a shrine of Aphrodite ("on the site of the Crucifixion and the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem"); a temple at Aphaca ("an offensive Phoenician centre of sacred prostitution"); and "[a]t Aigai, in Cilicia, [Christians] are said to have razed the shrine of Asclepius." At Didyma, Lane Fox observed, "Christians seized a prophet of Apollo and had him tortured, as also at Antioch." It should be noted, however, that these last two examples do not involve the destruction of temples, but the punishment of temple personnel. Moreover, according to Eusebius, those punished in Antioch were those associated with Theotecnus' Zeus Philios. Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 3.25–26, 55–56, *Praep. evang.* 4.135C–36A.

Setting Constantine's oracle in its proper context, then, clarifies a number of issues related to the so-called Great Persecution. First, it helps explain why the attitudes and behavior of Diocletian and Galerius were so different between 299 and 303. Given Diocletian's heavy dependence on divination, the Daphnic oracle may have convinced the emperor in 299 that Christians, whom he generally trusted, should be quickly punished for somehow compromising his relationship with the gods. Galerius, however, witnessed the Daphnic oracle firsthand and was much more profoundly affected by it than was his senior colleague. One does not have to accept Christian allegations that the Caesar engineered the whole affair to see that Galerius, who is not known for having Christian courtiers, derived from this experience a strong conviction that Christianity must be repressed if the proper relationship with the gods was to be preserved. Accordingly, although he was Diocletian's subordinate, first alone, then through advisors, and even after the first general edicts of 303, he lobbied his colleague to suppress Christians ever more intensely. Next, the account of the Daphnic oracle, together with the responses of Galerius and Christian authors to the events of 299, suggests that the period between the purge of the army and the general edicts should be considered part of what is now called the Great Persecution. Authors such as Eusebius and Lactantius not only saw the expulsion of Christians from the army as the true beginning of their ordeal, but it is also clear that the oracle triggering this incident motivated Galerius' sustained effort to push repressive measures ever further. Finally, the story of the oracle affords a rare view into the social and religious tensions of the early fourth century. Clearly the Christians attending Diocletian's auspices are dramatic evidence for the extent to which Rome's eastern elite had become Christianized by 299, a development that explains Christian efforts to blame the persecution on a wide-ranging pagan conspiracy. At the same time, it is easy to see how more traditional people, Apollo's priests and attendants in particular, could have feared the presence of Christians at their hallowed rites. Without stooping to accuse these traditionalists of conspiracy, it is not hard to imagine that such anxieties might affect how they interpreted the ambiguous signs by which they believed the gods communicated their intentions. This is the context in which the pagan and Christian texts of this era must now be read and interpreted. The Christians, of course, ultimately won this contest and so the surviving accounts are theirs. That fact, however, should not blind us to the presence of competing voices and claims before the outcome was clear.⁹⁷

McGill University

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