

Caecilius Capella: Persecutor of Christians, Defender of Byzantium

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Caecilius Capella in illo exitu Byzantino: "Christiani, gaudete!" exclamavit.

Thus Tertullian, in late 212 or early 213, on the fate of a previous persecutor, as a warning to the incumbent proconsul of Africa.¹

¹ *Ad Scapulam* 3.4 (5). The date is supplied by the earlier reference at 3.3 to the almost complete eclipse of the sun (clearly recent) visible in *conventu Uticensi* and assignable to 14 August 212: see e.g. B. E. Thomasson, *Die Statthalter der römischen Provinzen Nordafrikas* (Lund 1960) II 112; T. D. BARNES, *Tertullian* (Oxford 1971: hereafter 'Barnes') 38. Scapula is generally identified with P. Julius Scapula Tertullus Priscus, *cos. ord.* 195 (thus *PIR*² J 557, Thomasson, Barnes). P. M. M. LEUNISSEN, *Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander* (Amsterdam 1989: hereafter 'Leunissen') 217, following similar suggestions by H. Halfmann, "Zwei syrische Verwandte des severisches Kaiserhauses," *Chiron* 12 (1982) 235 n.69, and T. D. Barnes, "Proconsuls of Asia under Caracalla," *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 202 n.8, notes that he could have been, rather, the cousin of the *cos. ord.* 195: C. Julius (Scapula) Lepidus Tertullus (*cos. suff.* between 195 and 197). The latter, legate of III Augusta (Numidia) in 194 (and probably *ca* 193–197: Leunissen 274), is not recorded with the name 'Scapula' borne by other members of his family, but is generally assumed to have had it. New information on Lepidus Tertullus is now to hand: as *tribunus laticlavius* of II Adiutrix he dedicated an altar to Sol Invictus, found with other tribunes' altars in the Mithræum of their quarters in the legionary fortress at Aquincum. Texts are published by L. Kocsis, "Inschriften aus dem Mithras-Heiligtum des Hauses des tribunus laticlavius im Legionslager von Aquincum aus dem 2–3 Jahrhundert," *ActaArchHung* 41 (1989) 81–92; 87f no. 4 is that of C. Iul. C. f. Arn. Lepidus Tertullus; he and the other Mithraic tribunes are also discussed in the same volume by J. Fitz, "Prosopographische Bemerkungen zu den Inschriften aus dem Mithras-Heiligtum im Legionslager von Aquincum" (93–98, esp. 94f on Lepidus Tertullus). Neither scholar comments on the new information that he was in the tribe Arnensis, which points to an *origo* at Carthage: cf. J. W. Kubitschek, *Imperium Romanum tributim descriptum* (Vienna 1889) 68, 74–75, 137, etc., although Italy cannot be excluded. Puzzlingly, however, Lepidus Tertullus' presumed uncle, consul suffect in the 160s, was in the Sergia: *AE* 1971, 534 (*IAM* II 94, Banasa). The stemma in *PIR*² IV.3 p.272 may need adjusting. Identification of Tertullian's Scapula with Lepidus Tertullus

Caecilius Capella comes third in a list after Vigellius Saturninus, *qui primus hic gladium in nos egit*—proconsul in July 180, as the *Acta Scillitanorum* usefully attest,² and “Claudius Lucius Hieronymianus,” or emended, L. Claudius Hieronymianus, governor of Cappadocia.³ Vigellius went blind, Hieronymianus caught the plague and like Antiochus Epiphanes was eaten by worms.⁴ Capella, it is assumed, came to grief at Byzantium when the city fell to the Severan besiegers, evidently late in 195, after holding out for more than two years.⁵ He is thought to have been Pescennius Niger’s commandant of the Byzantium garrison; and, because the text of the following passage of Tertullian has been emended to remove further mention of him, it is assumed (e.g. Barnes 156) that he had persecuted Christians in Byzantium during the siege. Standard works do not accord him senatorial rank.⁶

rather than with one of his presumed cousins would make the interval between consulship and proconsulship more like the ‘norm’ of fifteen years, for which see Thomasson I 14ff. However this may be, the possibility that the man addressed by Tertullian was a fellow Carthaginian gives added flavour to some of the remarks in *Ad Scap.*, esp. 5.2: *et tui ordinis viros et matronas et principales quasque personas et amicorum tuorum vel propinquos et amicos*. If the proconsul were a Mithraist into the bargain, yet more might be said (but in another place). The latest commentary on *Ad Scap.* is supplied by P. A. Gramaglia, *Tertulliano, A Scapula. Introduzione, traduzione e note* (Rome 1980), superseded, however, as far as 3.4f is concerned, by the monograph of E. Heck (n.18 *infra*).

² Text conveniently accessible in H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford 1972) 86.

³ A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (Oxford 1981) 263ff, identifying him with Cl. Hieronymianus, legate of VI Victrix, who built a temple to Serapis at York (*RIB* 658); Leunissen 234, assigning his governorship of Cappadocia to the period after *ca* 202 and before 212 (*Dig.* 23.7.12.40)

⁴ *Ad Scap.* 3.4: *Vigellius Saturninus, qui primus hic gladium in nos egit, lumina amisit*; 3.5: *Claudius Lucius Hieronymianus in Cappadocia, cum ... Christianos crudeliter tractasset solusque in praetorio suo vastatus peste convivis vermibus ebullisset, “Nemo sciat,” aiebat, “ne gaudeant Christiani...”*; *postea, cognito errore suo ... paene Christianus decessit*.

⁵ Dio 74.10.1–14.6, a very full account of the siege, of which the duration is given in 74.12.1. See further below and n.55 for the chronology.

⁶ Thus in *PIR*² C 27, where his name is not in capitals. In *PIR*¹ C 20, however, he is labelled “praeses (provinciae nescio cuius), qui Christianos vexaverat.” E. Birley, “The Governors of Numidia A.D. 193–268,” *JRS* 40 (1950) 60–68 at 64 no. 15 (= *The Roman Army. Papers 1929–1986* [Amsterdam 1988] 119), suggested, to be sure, that the legate of Numidia in 238, Capelli-

Over twenty years ago Bean and Mitford published an inscription from Rough Cilicia that names Capella, but its proper significance seems to have been overlooked. The stone was read as follows:⁷

ἔδοξε κόμη Ὀλο-
σαδῶν Κλαβηνῆς Πό-
πλιον Τίτιον Ῥηγεί-
νον, στρατόρα Καικιλί-
ου Καπελλᾶ τοῦ κυρίου
στρατηγοῦ, ἀναστήσαι
στήλην ἐπὶ τῆς ἀγορᾶς εὐ-
χαριστίας χάριν.

The editors write: "the status of Caecilius Capella is not so easily defined: as (ὁ κύριος) στρατηγός—and not ἀντιστράτηγος or ἡγεμών—he can hardly have been *legatus Augusti* of the joint province of Cilicia, Lycaonia and Isauria." They go on to identify him with the persecutor at Byzantium, commenting further that as "a partisan of Pescennius Niger, he may well have held a military command in the period between the death of Commodus and the crossing of Severus into Asia; and as such could properly be styled *dux* (στρατηγός)—with the addition of κύριος to his title to indicate that he served an emperor."⁸ This interpretation was duly repeated in *AE* 1972, 658 and not questioned by J. and L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.* 1972, 515, except that they commented on κύριος: "n'est ce point un simple titre de politesse comme il est ordinaire?" Capella's title στρατηγός was, by mishap, omitted from the "Tables analytiques. VII. Pouvoirs

anus, might have been "the son or grandson of Caecilius Capella, apparently a senator." G. Barbieri, *L'Albo senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino* (Rome 1952) 617 (Agg. to no. 983), noted this proposal with scepticism; on Capellianus cf. also n.43 *infra*.

⁷ G. E. BEAN and T. B. MITFORD, *Journeys in Rough Cilicia 1964-1968* (= *DenkschrWien* 102 [Vienna 1970]: hereafter 'Bean and Mitford') 137f no. 135 (Afsar Kalesi=Olasada).

⁸ Bean and Mitford were presumably thinking of equestrian *duces* such as *ILS* 2770, 2773; *AE* 1956, 10. For *dux*, however, in the case of an equestrian, one would expect στρατηλάτης, as in *P.Oxy.* XLII 3077.4.

publics. 3. Fonctions supérieures” in *AE*, which perhaps helps to explain his absence from sundry recent works of reference on senators and governors.⁹

The fact is that στρατηγός can simply mean ‘governor’, as an equivalent for ἡγεμών or πρεσβευτής ἀντιστράτηγος. Precisely from the province Cilicia come two examples of Severan date: M. Antonius Balbus, legate *ca* 198–200, is called λαμπροτάτου στρατηγοῦ (*IGR* III 838, Charadrus); Flavius Julianus, in office *ca* 215/6–217/8, is just τοῦ στρ. (*AE* 1954, 8, Anazarbus). As for κύριος applied to a governor rather than—as more usual—to emperors, a clear case of the year 181 comes from Arabia, where the legate Flavius Julius Fronto is called τοῦ κυρίου ἡγεμόνος (*IGR* III 1325 [*IGLS* XIII.1 9104], Bostra). But for that matter there is an example in Cilicia, *IGR* III 822 (Claudiopolis): [... τοῦ] κυρίου ἡγεμόνος. As it happens, Bean and Mitford (235f) restore this to refer to Antonius Balbus, but do not comment on his label κύριος.¹⁰ Capella’s *strator*, it may be added, is a further indicator of his status.¹¹

Caecilius Capella thus emerges as a senator, governor of Cilicia at latest in 193. Perhaps, it could be guessed, he was there at the time of Niger’s proclamation as emperor, to be despatched posthaste, recruiting cavalry as he went,¹² to seize the European side of the Bosphorus and if possible more (*cf.* nn.48f *infra*), before Severus’ forces arrived. As it turned out, he would be penned up inside Byzantium by the *exercitus Moesiacus*, the army corps commanded by the legate of the I

⁹ He does not appear in the following: G. Alföldy, *Konsulat und Senatoren unter den Antoninen* (Bonn 1977); B. E. THOMASSON, *Laterculi Praesidum* I–III (Gothenburg 1984–1990: hereafter ‘Thomasson’); B. RÉMY, *Les fastes sénatoriaux des provinces romaines d’Anatolie au Haut-Empire (31 avant J.-C.–284 après J.-C.). Pont-Bithynie, Galatie, Cappadoce, Lycie-Pamphylie et Cilicie* (Paris 1988: hereafter ‘Rémy’); Leunissen.

¹⁰ Bean and Mitford 235f plausibly enough identify “Antonius ...lius” of *IGR* III 848 (Olba), dated “198/209,” with Balbus, as well as with the *Ignotus* of *IGR* III 822; not mentioned by Rémy; Thomasson I 292 no. 22 notes that the two Antonii may both be Balbus. Under no. 23 he suggests that -ειος is the end of a governor’s name in *IGR* III 822.

¹¹ A. von Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*², ed. B. Dobson (Bonn 1967) 73: “Ein Kennzeichen des Generalsranges sind die *stratores* des Statthalters.” It is true that lower-ranking officers also had *stratores*, but those of the governor are far commoner.

¹² Bean and Mitford 138 note the rôle of *stratores* as remount officers and the importance for horse supply over many centuries of the region where Capella’s *strator* was honoured.

Italica, L. Marius Maximus.¹³ Capella's persecution of Christians might then have taken place in Cilicia: why not? At all events, a new legate of Cilicia emerges.

I

Wider vistas open if sense can be extracted from the next few lines in the *Ad Scapulam* 3.5 (6). As it stands, the text requires some emendation; and even then one or two expressions can receive widely discrepant interpretation. The two modern editions by E. Dekkers (CCL 2 [1954] 1129f) and V. Bulhart (CSEL 76 [1957] 12f) print the fullest possible version of the troublesome second sentence in *Scap.* 3.5 (6); but Dekkers is more conservative, offering no additions to improve the sense, also omitting *et* before *nunc* in the last clause. Bulhart's text is as follows:

sed <et> qui sibi videntur impune tulisse, venient in diem divini iudicii. tibi quoque optamus admonitionem solam fuisse, quod, cum Adrumeticum Mauilum idem Caecilius ad bestias damnasset, <nec> statim haec vexatio subsecuta est, et nunc ex eadem causa interpellatio sanguinis.

Bulhart notes in his apparatus *inter al.* that *quoque* is to be understood with the sense of *autem*. For *solam* he notes Kroymann's conjecture *solidam*, adding *malim solam <satis>*. He also gives interpretations of the difficult *vexatio* and *interpellatio sanguinis*. Dekkers and Bulhart both report that *idem Caecilius*—in fact *ide cecilius*—had been deleted as a gloss, and *damnasset* emended to *damnasses* by earlier editors. *ide cecilius* is indeed found only in N.¹⁴ Migne (*PL* 1 [1878] 702) printed *cum Adrumeticum Mauilum ad bestias damnasses*; and his text caused the omission of Caecilius Capella from the register of proconsuls of Africa.¹⁵

¹³ Full data on Maximus in *PIR*² M 308; his rôle as the commander of the Severan besiegers in *ILS* 2936; further, section III below.

¹⁴ N=Codex Florentinus Magliabechianus I, VI, 9 (s. XV), which editors seem to regard as important.

¹⁵ Barnes 268 dismisses curtly the assumption by W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford 1965) 320, 333, that Capella had been proconsul of Africa when persecuting.

Translations of the passage read as follows:

Yes, and the persecutors who seem to themselves to have acted with impunity shall not escape the day of judgement. For you we sincerely wish it may prove to have been a warning only, that, immediately after you had condemned Mavilus of Adrumetum to the wild beasts, you were overtaken by these troubles, and that even now for the same reason you are called to a blood-reckoning.¹⁶

Diejenigen aber, welche sich schmeicheln, daß es ihnen ungestraft hingegangen sei, werden am Tage des göttlichen Gerichtes erscheinen müssen. Auch im Betreff deiner wünschen wir, daß es eine bloße Vermahnung für dich gewesen sei, daß diese deine Plage, das Blutbrechen, auf dem Fuße folgte, als du den Mauilus von Adrumetum zu den wilden Tieren verurteiltest, wie auch jetzt aus gleicher Ursache.¹⁷

The question has now received thorough investigation, a whole chapter in the monograph by Eberhard Heck, who defends a text not substantially different from that of Migne:¹⁸ *cum Adrumeticum Mauilum ad bestias damnass<es>, et statim [et] haec vexatio subsecuta est et nunc ex eadem causa interpellatio sanguinis*. He interprets *haec vexatio* as “ein seinerzeit eingetretenes, jetzt andauerndes Leiden ... eine chronische Erkrankung,” leading to the *interpellatio sanguinis*, “eine plötzliche Blutung.” Despite the author’s great learning, it seems less than compelling to take the Latin in this sense.¹⁹ Furthermore, removing *idem Caecilius* and emending *damnasset* to *damnasses* means that no details are supplied of what the third of the punished persecutors had actually done, whereas Vigellius’

¹⁶ *Ante-Nicene Fathers* III (repr. Grand Rapids 1980) 106.

¹⁷ *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter* XXIV (Kempten/Munich 1915) 268f.

¹⁸ MH ΘEOMAXEIN oder: *Die Bestrafung des Gottesverächters. Untersuchungen zu Bekämpfung and Aneignung römischer Religio bei Tertullian, Cyprian und Lactanz* (Frankfurt a. M. 1987) 103–47.

¹⁹ Migne, *PL* 2, 1321 had already suggested for *interpellatio sanguinis* more or less exactly what Heck proposes: “Haemorrhagia fortasse, ex qua Scapulum laborabat.” Bulhart, *CSEL* LXXVI 13, takes *vexatio* as “dimicatio cum bestiis” and *interpellatio sanguinis* as “accusatio vel licentia accusandi eius, qui (spretis sc. Severi mandatis) sanguinem Christianum effuderit” (citing for both “Kr.,” i.e. the note by E. Kroymann). This interpretation does not seem particularly convincing.

the punished persecutors had actually done, whereas Vigellius' and Hieronymianus' actions are both specified. *vexatio*, which is extremely common, and often used by Tertullian,²⁰ can have a variety of meanings, including 'persecution', but it can also be translated (more vaguely) as 'trouble'. *interpellatio* is less common, and used besides here only in Tert. *Adv. Marcionem* 4.36, where it has a legal sense, something like *appellatio*. The sense of *interruptio* is also well attested.²¹

On this basis a literal translation of *Ad Scapulam* 3.5 (6) may be offered, using the text of Bulhart and incorporating Kroymann's *solidam* for *solam*:²²

But even those who seem to themselves to have acted with impunity will come to the day of divine judgement. To you, moreover, do we wish that it has been a solid warning, that, when the same Caecilius had condemned Mavilus of Hadrumetum to the beasts, this trouble did not follow immediately, and now, for the same reason, there is an interruption in the bloodshed.

Caecilius Capella, as proconsul of Africa at latest in 191–192, perhaps as early as 184–185 (see below), is thus referred to in the first sentence as the one who thought he had acted with impunity, not meeting his fate until at least three and a half—perhaps as much as eleven years—after condemning Mavilus. As for Vigellius, it must remain unknown how soon after the execution of the Scillitani he lost his sight. But Hieronymianus was punished almost at once, while still in his *praetorium* in Cappadocia, so the sentence cannot apply to him. "This trouble" must then refer to *ille exitus Byzantinus* and "interruption in the bloodshed" can be taken to mean "a delay before your [*sc.* Scapula's] blood is shed."²³ In the last analysis, it must be con-

²⁰ G. Claesson, *Index Tertullianus* (Paris 1975) 1725, lists sixteen instances of *vexatio* in Tertullian with a variety of meanings.

²¹ *TLL* VII 2239f, duly cited by Heck (*supra* n.18) 121f, who selects, instead, the (not widely attested) medical sense (*de accessu morbi*). As he notes, the passage in *Ad Scap.* 3.6 is labelled "interpr. dub." in *TLL*.

²² *sobriam* would be a palaeographically acceptable alternative emendation (B and L in Latin cursive are often exceedingly alike).

²³ It is clear from several remarks in the *Ad Scap.* that Scapula had been torturing Christians in an attempt to make them recant: 2.2 (*etsi compuleritis nos ad sacrificandum*), 4.2 (*videtis ergo, quomodo ipsi vos contra mandata*

fessed, Tertullian may have originally written something slightly different. But, given what the manuscripts read, the above interpretation can be claimed to make historical sense.

Caecilius Capella was thus, it may be claimed, proconsul of Africa under Commodus.²⁴ The question then arises: can he be detected epigraphically? An inscription from Thuburbo Maius in honour of Commodus registered the name of a proconsul, subsequently erased at the same time as Commodus' names, previously deleted, were recut. Of the proconsul's names only the first two letters can still be read: [C. C[]]. Enough space exists in the remainder of the erasure to restore [C. C[ae-cilio Capella]]. As restored by L. Poinssot and accepted by *IL Afr.* 265, Commodus' titlature included "Brit(annici)," which would date the inscription to the period 184–192.²⁵ It goes without saying that Caecilius Capella would have suffered *damnatio memoriae* after his capture at Byzantium. It is true that several other men with a *gentilicium* beginning with C are listed as victims of Severus in *HA Sev.* 13.²⁶ One of these, Cingius Severus, had been proconsul of Africa, as we happen to know precisely from Tert. *Ad Scapulam* 4.3 (he was not a persecutor). Hence the restoration [C. C[ingio Severo]] has been proposed for *IL Afr.* 265 (*PIR*² C 735). But it will not convince. He was *curator aedium sacrarum* in 183. Hence—at least in the light of

faciatis, ut confessos negare cogatis)—in these passages, it is true, using the second person plural, seemingly widening his audience from Scapula to *praesides* in general. But 5.3 (*parce ergo tibi, etc.*), clearly addressed to Scapula alone, ought to imply that he has *not yet* actually sent a Christian to his death, hence he has a chance of escaping the fate of Saturninus, Hieronymianus, and Capella.

²⁴ No earlier than 181, given that Saturninus, in office 180–181, was the first persecutor *hic, i.e.*, in Africa (*Ad Scap.* 3.4 and *supra* n.2), and before 193, when he can be assumed to have been in the East.

²⁵ *PIR*² A 1482; *BMC* IV 797 nos. 550f.

²⁶ In fact, no fewer than eleven of the forty-two senators named as executed by Severus in *HA Sev.* 13 have *gentilicia* beginning with C. Some must be eliminated as fictitious or, e.g. Clodius Rufinus (13.5), legate of III Augusta in 192, could not have been proconsul of Africa. On the list cf. G. Alföldy, "Eine Proskriptionsliste in der Historia Augusta," *Historia-Augusta-Colloquium* 1968/69 (Bonn 1970) 1ff (with "Nachträge" in *Die Krise des römischen Reiches* [Wiesbaden 1989] 164ff); Leunissen 400ff; A. R. Birley, *Gnomon* 62 (1990) 615, and "Further Notes on HA Severus," *Historia-Augusta-Colloquium, Geneva 1991* (forthcoming).

known practice—he cannot have been consul earlier than *ca* 180 nor proconsul before the death of Commodus.²⁷

If Caecilius Capella was proconsul of Africa for a term that fell between 184 and 192 (at least four other proconsuls have to be accommodated, but several years are vacant),²⁸ that would make him a very senior general in the civil war. But this is not a difficulty. On either side in the war between Severus and Niger was an ex-consular proconsul: P. Cornelius Anullinus for Severus, proconsul of Africa in 193 (perhaps from April–June only);²⁹ and Asellius Aemilianus for Niger, proconsul of Asia

²⁷ See e.g. F. Grosso, *La lotta politica al tempo di Commodus* (Turin 1964) 595ff; Leunissen 215, proposing 196–197 for Cingius' year in Africa.

²⁸ Leunissen 213ff lists the following proconsuls under Commodus: P. Vigellius Saturninus, 180–181 (*supra* nn.2, 24); M. Antonius Zeno, 183–184 or 184–185; C.C---, whom he places somewhere between 181/182 and 187/188 (apparently overlooking the restoration of *Brit.* in Commodus' titulature: above and n.25); the future emperors Pertinax and Didius Julianus, assigned to 188–189 and 189–190 respectively; Pollienus Auspex the elder, somewhere between 185 and 190; C. Vettius Sabinianus, 190–191 (?); L. Vespronium Candidus, 191–192 (?); P. Cornelius Anullinus, 192–193 (?). Pollienus Auspex is notoriously difficult to deal with: cf. Birley (*supra* n.3) 151ff, discussing *inter al.* A. Stein's radical solution that the elder Auspex (*i.e.*, this one), was also legate of Moesia Inferior, *sc.* in the 190s, hence proconsul of Africa much later. Further, Vespronium Candidus is in the list only on the strength of Tertullian's reference to him (*Ad Scap.* 4.3) as a non-persecuting *praeses* in Africa. This could perfectly well refer to his term as legate of III Augusta (Numidia: attested by *AE* 1955, 136; 1967, 575; *CIL* VIII 2752) under Marcus. Tertullian refers in 4.9 to the *praeses legionis*. Finally, Anullinus may not have arrived until 193 (see n.29). Hence the number of known proconsuls between 181 and 193 may be as few as four (Zeno, Pertinax, Didius, Sabinianus), five plus C.C---. The years 183–184 or 184–185 (Zeno) and 188–191 are occupied, hence, accepting that Commodus was *Brit.* in *IL Afr.* 265, Capella could be accommodated between 184 and 188 or between 191 and 193.

²⁹ Anullinus is attested by *CIL* VIII 1170, cf. p.931 (*ILS* 413: Ucres), honouring Severus, *trib. [pot]est., cos. des. II, i.e.*, hardly earlier than June, certainly not later than December 193. There is no good reason to date the change of proconsuls to a month later than April (Claudius insisted on their departure from Rome in this month: Dio 60.11.6, 17.3; G. W. Clarke, "Prosopographical Notes on the Epistles of Cyprian, II," *Latomus* 31 [1972] 1053f) and Anullinus commanded Severus' army at Issus, *i.e.*, probably in April 194: A. R. Birley, *Septimius Severus*² (London 1988) 112f. So he was probably in Africa only for a few months e.g. April–early July 193. This is perhaps why the town of Ucres had to dedicate the statue *anno Corneli Anullini procos.* instead of having the ceremony performed by the proconsul. On Anullinus one should now consult G. Alföldy, "Die Inschriften des P. Cornelius Anullinus und seine Tätigkeit im römischen Deutschland," *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 12 (1988) 303ff.

192–193.³⁰ As to why Capella was assigned to Byzantium, the answer could be that he happened to be close by when ‘the balloon went up’ in 193; in other words, his home was in Thrace or Bithynia. This presents no problem.³¹ On the other hand, he could have gone rapidly to join Niger in spring 193 from Rome or Italy.³²

II

A proconsul under Commodus must have been consul under Marcus³³ and, for Caecilius Capella, this puts his governorship of Cilicia in that reign as well, followed by a consulship between the years *ca* 169 and 177. The temptation arises to venture another hypothesis. An acephalous inscription at Ankara (*CIL* III 254) honoured a governor:

[---trib.mil.] leg. III Aug. quaestori aedili plebei praetori
 procos. Ponti et Bithyniae praefecto frum. dandi leg. leg. VI
 Ferratae leg. Augustorum pr. pr. provinc. Galat. item provinc.
 Ciliciae raro et sanctissimo [praesidi? ---].

Augustorum, written out in full, points to the first joint reign 161–169. Successive Augusti cannot be ruled out, it is true, but against an earlier dating may be registered the tenure of two praetorian imperial provinces, hardly found before the second half of the second century.³⁴ The inscription ought to have been set up—one of a category “indicative of recent or pending movements”³⁵—on the news of his translation from Galatia to

³⁰ Aemilianus is attested as proconsul of Asia for 192–193: Dio 74.6.2; Hdn. 3.2.2. Pertinax appointed Aemilius Iuncus as his successor: *Epig. Anat.* 12 (1988) 47ff (Tabala, Lydia)—incidentally evidence for an April change.

³¹ Ample evidence for eastern senators in this period is furnished by H. Halfmann, *Die Senatoren aus dem östlichen Teil des Imperium Romanum bis zum Ende des 2. Jh. n. Chr.* (Göttingen 1979).

³² One must register the rapid deployment to Thrace of L. Fabius Cilo: in Rome in January 193 as consul designate (*HA Comm.* 20.1), at Perinthus in the summer (*PIR*² F 27).

³³ Cf. *supra* n.1 on the interval between consulship and consular proconsulship.

³⁴ G. Alföldy, *Fasti Hispanienses* (Wiesbaden 1969) 99f; Birley (*supra* n.3) 22.

³⁵ E. Birley, “Inscriptions Indicative of Recent or Impending Movements,” *Chiron* 9 (1979) 495ff (= *The Roman Army* [*supra* n.6] 130ff), not discussing this case.

Cilicia. It might be, of course, that he was governing the two provinces simultaneously, for example at a moment of crisis (there are several to choose from).³⁶ A further factor may be registered that militates against putting the *Ignotus* much later: Pontus-Bithynia ceased to be governed by proconsuls, for good, at latest early in the reign of Marcus.³⁷ And against the notion that he could be put in Galatia and Cilicia in the joint reign of Marcus and Commodus are three other legates of Cilicia to be fitted into the years 174/175–180/181. So the *Ignotus* is best located in Cilicia *ca* 167/168–168/169, as in a recent study of Anatolian provincial governors.³⁸ Why not identify him with Caecilius Capella? For one thing, as the inscription is acephalous, it might well mean that it was abruptly taken down and reused, a sensible way of dealing with a stone honouring a *damnatus* (not possible if an emperor was also mentioned, as with *IL Afr.* 265). Secondly, the career of the *Ignotus* suits a man who, it has just been postulated, was a native of Asia Minor (or Thrace): apart from the legionary tribunate and

³⁶ E.g. the Parthian war of L. Verus or the period following the usurpation and death of Avidius Cassius.

³⁷ The imperial legate Lollianus Avitus received a rescript from the *divi fratres*, i.e., between 161 and 169, and is surely the same as the Avitus, governor of Bithynia when Mummius Sisenna Rutilianus was proconsul of Asia (*Lucian Alex.* 57). Sisenna can be dated to the year 160–161: R. Syme, "The Proconsuls of Asia under Antoninus Pius," *ZPE* 51 (1983) esp. 280ff (= *Roman Papers* IV [Oxford 1988] 334ff). Further, *IGR* III 84 (Amastris) seems to show him still in office at least from 161–165. Hence, it seems, Avitus, generally identified with the *cos. ord.* 144, L. Hedi Rufus Lollianus Avitus (*PIR*² H 40), was in office at least from 161–165. C. Marek, "Katalog der Inschriften im Museum von Amasra," *Epig. Anat.* 6 (1985) 144ff, argues that τῶν τέκνων αὐτῶν cannot refer to Marcus and Verus, on the grounds that the latter had no children, citing A. R. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius* (London 1966) stemmata D–E. There, it is true, no children are shown for L. Verus and Lucilla, but p.192 of the same work mentions Lucilla's pregnancy, and in the second edition (1987) 247 and *passim* there is reference to the three children, two of whom died young, of this marriage. In the present connection the matter is less crucial. At all events, the *Ignotus* was presumably one of the last proconsuls of Pontus-Bithynia; and his command of VI Ferrata was probably completed before serious fighting started in the Parthian War—he had no *dona militaria*.

³⁸ Thomasson I 291 shows only two, L. Saevinius Proculus and Cassius Apronianus, but Rémy 217 can add Plautius Haterianus. Rémy prefers the period of the late 160s for the *Ignotus*.

posts at Rome, the career is eastern—Pontus-Bithynia, a Syrian legion, Galatia and Cilicia.³⁹

However this may be—the *Ignotus* of Ankara will have to remain unknown for the time being at least⁴⁰—Caecilius Capella probably found consular employment in the years between *ca* 170 and 180. A few consular provinces—there were by now twelve—can be ruled out. Syria seems to have no gaps, and there is hardly room in Cappadocia. It seems implausible that the *Ignotus* would have returned as consular legate to Pontus-Bithynia where he had served as proconsul; but no legates are attested between Lollianus Avitus, early in the 160s, and Didius Julianus in the early 180s. Syria Palaestina has no known governor between the early 170s and 186. As for the eight European provinces in question, only Dalmatia looks too congested to accommodate another governor.⁴¹ At all events, it is highly plausible that Caecilius Capella did govern at least one consular province in the 170s: there was a serious shortage of qualified persons following the plague and losses in action.⁴²

Little more can be said about Caecilius Capella. The gentilicium was exceedingly common, and not a few Caecilii are found as senators in this period (*cf.* *PIR*² C 16, 22, 47, 58, 76, 77, 82). ‘Capella’ is rare, it is true, but nothing much can be deduced from the fact that six of the seventeen epigraphic examples derive from southern Gaul.⁴³ Still, it is something to redeem his

³⁹ The weakness or circularity of this point hardly needs admitting. By the second century easterners often enough served in the west *e.g.* A. Claudius Charax of Pergamum, legate of II Augusta in Britain (*AE* 1961, 320), to cite but one example. Halfmann (*supra* n.31) 88ff reviews the evidence for “Geographische Schwerpunkte” in the employment of eastern senators and is somewhat sceptical regarding eastern specialisation of these people.

⁴⁰ For completeness it should be noted that the identification with Julius Saturninus, floated in *PIR*² J 547, will not do: see W. Eck, *Chiron* 13 (1983) 195 n.532, for a concise refutation. Thomasson I 286 no. 71 adds a helpful explanation of a puzzling item in Saturninus’ career.

⁴¹ Details in Thomasson I with addenda in III.

⁴² Note esp. *HA Marcus* 13.5: *et multa quidem milia pestilentia consumpsit multosque ex proceribus*; and *e.g.* *ILS* 1097, the monument of M. Claudius Fronto, who *ad postremum pro r.p. fortiter pugnans ceciderit*.

⁴³ I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (Helsinki 1965) 326, registers 24 epigraphic cases, 17 male and 7 female, with 13 of the 24 in *CIL* XII. By mishap, however, eight inscriptions of Q. Gellius L.f. Volt. Capella, *IIIIVir* at Vienne (*CIL* XII 1882ff) seem to have been counted as separate persons, so the figures must be reduced to 6 and 17 respectively. Why the peculiar name, meaning ‘little she-goat’, was ever given to males must remain a mystery (*cf.* Kajanto 24,

governorship of Cilicia, and thus his senatorial status, from oblivion, which permits an attempt to rescue the text of Tertullian and identify him as a persecuting proconsul of Africa.⁴⁴ This, incidentally, is a further item to be registered against the notion that the reign of Commodus marked a period of peace for the churches.⁴⁵

III

Whatever way one reads and interprets this passage in the *Ad Scapulam*, it remains, surely, the earliest non-legendary evidence for Christianity at Byzantium.⁴⁶ Capella's outburst would have had little point in the absence of Christians there—and who but Christians, on the scene when Marius Maximus captured Capella, would have registered "*Christiani gaudete!*"? This also underlines the links between Christians in different parts of the empire: sooner or later the Christians in Africa received word of Capella's fate and his comment. One may speculate, indeed, that when Capella arrived at Byzantium in 193 the Christians there soon identified him as a former persecutor, specifically, it has been here argued, as the man who sent Mavilus of Hadrumetum to the beasts.

85). Further examples in literary sources: e.g. the former lover of Vespasian's wife, Statilius Capella, a Roman knight from Sabratha (Suet. *Vesp.* 3) and Commodus' *litterator*, Antistius Capella (*HA Comm.* 1.6). There was also a governor of Numidia called L. Ovinius Pudens Capella (names erased, not datable), identified tentatively by E. Birley (*JRS* 52 [1962] 224) with the Capellianus of A.D. 238, but doubted in *PIR*² O 189. Heck (*supra* n.18) retains the *Capilla* (unmatched) of the Mss.

⁴⁴ Barnes 267ff discusses the martyr Mavilus of Hadrumetum, sent to the beasts by Scapula—as he believes—or, rather, as here argued, by Caecilius Capella. He notes the martyr Maiolus, commemorated on 11 May in the *Kal. Carth.* (*PL* 13, 1219) and *Mart. Hieron.* (*Acta Sanctorum* Novembr. II 2, 247), and some chronological difficulties if he is identified with Tertullian's Mavilus. These disappear if the persecutor was Capella, but are perhaps imaginary anyway if the proconsuls arrived in April (*supra* n.29), which Barnes seems to concede in *Addenda*² (1985) 333, citing Clarke (*supra* n.29) 1053f.

⁴⁵ Cf. the firm statement by Barnes 155f against standard works that reproduce the Eusebian notion that persecution was initiated entirely by particular emperors.

⁴⁶ On the legendary activity of Ss Andrew, Luke, and Timothy, cf. the concise account by J. W. Kubitschek, *RE* 3.1 (1897) 1148, who by mishap has Caecilius Lapella.

A great deal more might be said about Byzantium at the end of the second century. Here some remarks about its rôle in the civil war that began in 193 must suffice. That war began on 9 April, with the proclamation of Septimius Severus at Carnuntum, followed by his lightning march on Rome, the ignominious collapse of Didius Julianus shortly after 1 June, and Severus' seizure of the city. Not long after the murder of Pertinax on 28 March, the Roman plebs had shown support for the governor of Syria, Pescennius Niger.⁴⁷ Soon supported all over the east and in Egypt, Niger hastened to cross to Europe. He "proceeded to Byzantium and from there advanced against Perinthus" (Dio 74.6.3). Severus had already taken steps, despatching a force drawn from his Pannonian army under L. Fabius Cilo.⁴⁸ Niger had an initial success, but was forced to withdraw to Byzantium.⁴⁹ No doubt Severus' strike-force, drawn from the Lower Danubian legions, the *exercitus Moesiacus*, had already arrived before the city. Commanded by the legate of I Italica, L. Marius Maximus,⁵⁰ this army corps had presumably marched from Novae, base of the I Italica, on the high road that led south, through Nicopolis ad Istrum, over Mount Haemus to Beroe-Augusta Traiana, swinging round via Arzus to Hadrianopolis and on to Byzantium, some three hundred miles. Who knows? They might indeed have been shipped down the Danube a hundred and twenty miles or so, moved across to Tomis and then sailed to Byzantium. Severus certainly had a fleet operating during the siege.

In autumn 193 Severus' general Claudius Candidus took the Pannonian army across the Sea of Marmara, where he defeated Niger's forces under Asellius Aemilianus, who fled to Cyzicus, was captured, and killed. His army retreated into Bithynia. Nicomedia had already come out in support of Severus, but

⁴⁷ Birley (*supra* n.29) 97ff; Hdn. 2.7.3ff; *HA Did.Jul.* 4.7, *Pesc.Nig.* 3.1.

⁴⁸ *ILS* 1141; *AE* 1926, 79; cf. *PIR*² F 27.

⁴⁹ *HA Sev.* 8.12f records not only Severus' despatch of troops but Niger's capture of Byzantium and his attempt on Perinthus that resulted in heavy Severan casualties—this last point not in Dio 74.6.3. Z. Rubin, *Civil-War Propaganda and Historiography* (= *CollLatomus* 173 [Brussels 1980]) 60ff, argues that Dio was influenced by Severan propaganda.

⁵⁰ *ILS* 2936 (Rome), dedicated by a Greek from the III Cyrenaica, supplies this vital information: *duci exerciti Mysiaci* [sic] *apud Byzantium et apud Lugudunum, leg. leg. I Italic.* More on Maximus will appear eventually in A. R. Birley, "Marius Maximus the Consular Biographer," *ANRW* II.34.3 (forthcoming).

Nicaea opened its gates to Niger's men⁵¹ and Niger himself now turns up in the account of the battle along the lake. He had clearly escaped from Byzantium by ship;⁵² and it may be supposed that he left Caecilius Capella in command of the garrison. Defeated at Nicaea-Cius, he retreated to Syria, where the final clash came near Issus on the border of Cilicia and Syria.⁵³ Niger was caught and killed in a suburb of Antioch and his head sent to intimidate the Byzantines and induce their surrender (Dio 74.8.3).

It was (so it seems) spring or early summer 194.⁵⁴ The Byzantines, not impressed by the gruesome sight, held out "for a whole three years," Dio says, a phrase that can be taken to mean "over two years."⁵⁵ Dio offered a full and graphic account of the siege and the resourcefulness and sufferings of the people inside the city. Understandably, the monk John Xiphilinus preserves what Dio wrote much more fully than in other parts of his *Epitome of the Roman History*.⁵⁶ Not a word, however, about the victorious commander of the *exercitus Moesiacus*, L. Marius Maximus. Perhaps no coincidence, as Maximus in the reign of Severus Alexander was to compose a continuation of Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars*.⁵⁷ There was probably no love lost between the Latin biographer and the Greek annalist, not least because Maximus probably took a critical line towards Dio's earlier publications, the effusive monographs on the *omina imperii* of Severus and on his wars, both presented to the

⁵¹ Birley (*supra* n.29) 110ff; instructive background to the old rivalry between these cities in L. Robert, "La titulature de Nicée et de Nicomédie: la gloire et la haine," *HSCP* 81 (1977) 1-39.

⁵² Dio 74.6.4ff; Hdn. 3.2.9f (without mention of Niger's personal participation); *HA Sev.* 8.17 (not naming Nicaea).

⁵³ Dio 74.7.1-8; Herodian's version is incompetent, based on a misunderstanding of Dio's account, as shown by F. Kolb, *Literarische Beziehungen zwischen Cassius Dio, Herodian und der Historia Augusta* (Bonn 1972) 70ff.

⁵⁴ Rubin (*supra* n.49) 202; Birley (*supra* n.29) 112ff, 246 n.13.

⁵⁵ Dio 74.12.1: ἐπὶ ὅλον τριετῆ χρόνον; T. D. Barnes, "The Chronology of Plotinus' Life," *GRBS* 17 (1976) 65-70, esp. 68f, shows that an expression of this kind in Greek may be understood as anything between two and three years.

⁵⁶ Dio 74.10.1-14.6, on which see F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford 1964) 139f.

⁵⁷ A. R. Birley, *Septimius Severus the African Emperor* (London 1972) 308-26, and (*supra* n.50).

emperor.⁵⁸ Yet it is a paradox that the *Historia Augusta*, dependent in considerable part on Maximus' *vitae principum*, has not a word on the siege of Byzantium.⁵⁹ Even stranger, the *HA* reports that Niger's final defeat was at Cyzicus and that his head was despatched, not to Byzantium, but to Rome.⁶⁰ Marius Maximus, closely involved in the war, could not have made these mistakes. Hence it has been argued that the *HA*'s source must have been another biographical writer ("*Ignotus*").⁶¹ The answer is, however, probably a combination of textual corruption (over Cyzicus) and deliberate falsification: the author of the *HA* hated the 'new Rome' and could well have substituted *Romam* for *Byzantium* out of sheer cussedness.⁶²

At a late stage in the operation, when supplies in the city were exhausted, a large proportion of the population escaped in makeshift boats. Those left behind were reduced to cannibalism. But the escapees, who had restocked by plundering the countryside, were now trapped. The Severan naval force destroyed most of their boats. "The people in Byzantium as they watched this for a while kept calling on the gods and shouted out.... But when they saw them (*i.e.*, their fellow Byzantines) perishing with all speed, then the whole mass

⁵⁸ Dio's earlier works are referred to in 72.23.1–5. On the date when they and the *Roman History* were composed, the arguments of T. D. Barnes, "The Composition of Cassius Dio's Roman History," *Phoenix* 38 (1984) 240–55, seem convincing: the *magnum opus* was not begun, at earliest, until the year 220. The earlier works could have been both complete by 202.

⁵⁹ Byzantium's punishment by Severus is, however, mentioned in *HA Caracalla* 1.7: *Byzantiis interventu suo iura vetusta restituit, quibus iratus fuit Severus, quod Nigrum iuverant*.

⁶⁰ *HA Sev.* 9.1, *Pesc.Nig.* 5.8–6.1.

⁶¹ Thus *e.g.* T. D. Barnes, "The Lost Kaisergeschichte and the Latin Historical Tradition," *Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1968/69* (Bonn 1970) 40; Rubin (*supra* n.49) 63f; for *Ignotus*, R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography* (Oxford 1971) 30ff and *passim*; T. D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta* (= *CollLatomus* 155 [Brussels 1978]) 98f. Since the lapse, Cyzicus instead of near Issus, is also in the chroniclers, Victor, Eutropius, Jerome, Orosius, an error in the *KG*, taken over by the *HA* at this point, was the only alternative; but see next note.

⁶² As argued by Birley (*supra* n.26), Marius Maximus probably wrote "*apud Cilicium sinum*" *vel sim.* (*cf.* Amm. Marc. 26.8.15 on this battle, which he locates *in sino Issico, qui est in Cilicia*), corrupted to *apud Cizicum* (*cf.* *HA Ant.Pius* 3.4, where the reverse corruption, *Cilici* for *Cyzici*, occurs in the Mss). For the *HA*'s hostility to Byzantium, W. Hartke, *Römische Kaiser kinder* (Berlin 1951) 293f.

groaned and lamented and thereafter mourned for the rest of the day and the entire night." On the following day when the extent of the loss was visible—corpses and wrecked vessels—"the Byzantines were constrained to surrender at once. The Romans put to death all the soldiers and those in authority" (Dio 74.12.3–14.1). This phrase may be taken to include the execution of Caecilius Capella. His cry of rage, "*Christiani gaudete!*" wins additional poignancy in the light of Dio's account of the desperate appeals to the gods, followed by groans and lamentations and many hours of mourning.

Severus heard of Byzantium's capture in Mesopotamia; he was engaged in the First Parthian War. He "was so pleased that he announced to the soldiers: 'And we have taken Byzantium as well!'" (Dio 74.12.2). In early winter 195, it seems, he assumed an eighth imperial acclamation for this victory.⁶³ Byzantium was harshly treated, losing its independence and becoming an appanage of Perinthus. Further, its glorious walls were demolished, according to Dio (74.14.4): "thus he destroyed a Roman strongpost and base against the barbarians from Pontus and Asia." Indeed, at this time 'Scythians', Goths surely, were minded to attack—the first time they showed signs of troubling the empire from their new home on the Black Sea coast. Only a 'miracle' turned them back.⁶⁴ As for the city, it regained its rights, at the plea of the young Caracalla, so the *HA* claims (*Caracalla* 1.7). The city's title "Antoninia" on its coins supports the story; and other sources speak of reconstruction by Severus.⁶⁵

The Byzantine affair was something of an embarrassment. Even while the siege was going on, there had been the awkward case of the brilliant Byzantine actor Clemens, whose victories went unrewarded because his city was in arms against Rome—until Hippodromus of Larissa swung the Amphictyons round to honour their oath to judge justly. Another actor

⁶³ *Imp. VIII* with *trib.pot.* III (Γ) is found only in *IGR* IV 566 (*ILS* 8805), Severus' letter to Aezani, but there is now further evidence for Caracalla as M. Aurelius Antoninus Caesar in 195: S. Soproni, "Die Cäsarwürde Caracallas und die syrische Kohorte von Szentendere," *Alba Regia* 18 (1980) 39–51; cf. Birley (*supra* n.29) 119f.

⁶⁴ Dio 75.3.1, as interpreted by M. P. Speidel, "The Roman Army in Arabia," *ANRW* II.8 (1977) 712f. Dio does not say where the "Scythians" were headed, but his remarks about Byzantium's importance as a stronghold against "barbarians from Pontus" are a strong hint.

⁶⁵ Thus Kubitschek (*supra* n.46) 1140; Robert (*supra* n.51) 28 n.134.

actually appealed to the emperor, but the award was confirmed (Philostr. *VS* 2.27 [616]). As for Marius Maximus, who marched his men west to participate in the battle of Lugdunum, it would be another twenty-five years before he had his chance to write about the siege in his voluminous *vita Severi*. It may be that he preferred to be reticent about details.⁶⁶ As for Dio, he certainly revised his account, even if much of it was taken over from the monograph on Severus' wars. That monograph had, not least, been designed to ingratiate the emperor: Dio's own city, Nicaea, had been, but only briefly, all for Niger, and was lucky to have escaped the treatment accorded to Byzantium.⁶⁷ Probably neither Dio nor Maximus, if for different reasons, bothered to mention Caecilius Capella. That was left to the impassioned Christian from Carthage, who exulted in the fate of the persecutor.

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⁶⁶ Maximus' *vita* of Severus was in more than one book: *HA Geta* 2.1.

⁶⁷ Millar (*supra* n.56) 140; Robert (*supra* n.51) 30ff.