



## MARTYR ACCOUNTS FROM CARTHAGE

SCILLITAN MARTYRS (180 AD)

PERPETUA AND FELICITY (203 AD)

CYPRIAN (258 AD)

In his work *City of God* (De civitate Dei), the North African church father Augustine mentions that some count ten persecutions of Christians from Nero to Diocletian (late first to early fourth centuries AD), with regard to the ten plagues of Egypt (De ciu. XVIII:52). However, he finds this argument unconvincing because there were many more persecutions that began even during the time of Jesus. The first three centuries of church history are indeed full of persecutions of Christians. Most of these persecutions were limited in scope and duration, though a few covered larger areas and lasted longer. Since Christianity primarily spread within the Roman Empire, Christian church and Roman Empire clashed early on. The Romans were religiously tolerant but demanded political loyalty through participation in the state cult. While followers of other cults made sacrifices to the emperors, who were considered divine, Christians refused to do so. Therefore, their Christian beliefs made them enemies of the empire. Although Christianity was considered politically disloyal, persecution of Christians was the exception until the middle of the third century. Most of the time and in most places, Christians were able to live in peace. Occasionally, individual Christians or groups came to the attention of the authorities. Following the rules established under Emperor Trajan, the authorities demanded that they sacrifice to the gods. Those who refused were punished with death. But there were also three empire-wide persecutions of Christians between 249 and 251 (Emperor Decius), 257 and 259 (Emperor Valerius), and 303 and 311 (Emperor Diocletian). These persecutions claimed numerous victims but could not stop the growth of the Church.

North Africa was particularly affected by the persecution of Christians. The province was densely populated, economically important, and close to Rome. This is why the authorities were particularly concerned with loyalty and repeatedly took action against Christians. It is no surprise that in his book *City of God*, Augustine lists the persecutions of Christians in detail and mentions more than ten. Due to the pressure of persecution, the North African Church developed a special interest in martyrs, circulating accounts of their martyrdom and venerating their graves. Since the provincial administration was based in Carthage, many trials against Christians took place there. Three trial reports from 180, 203, and 258 have survived, introducing North Africa's most famous martyrs: the twelve men and women from Scillium (180), Perpetua and Felicitas (203), and Bishop Cyprian (258). The Latin texts are printed below with short introductions and English translations.

THE SCILLITAN MARTYRS  
PASSIO SANCTORUM SCILLITANORUM

The Scillitan Martyrs were a group of Christians who were executed in Carthage on July 17, 180 for their faith. The *Passio Sanctorum Scillitanorum*, the surviving account of their martyrdom, is one of the oldest testimonies of the Church in Roman Africa and the oldest Christian document in Latin. The text is written like a court record. The mention of Paul's writings is an early testimony to the Latin translation of his letters.

The location Scillium, which cannot be clearly identified today, was probably in present-day Tunisia. The account lists the names of twelve Christians from this place. Two of them, Nartzalus and Cittinus, had local names — that is, Punic or Berber — while the others had Roman names. Speratus was the spokesman for the group. There is no indication that a clergyman was among them. The Roman proconsul Publius Vigellius Saturninus conducted the interrogation. All of the events described in the account took place in Carthage, where the martyrs were buried. The martyrdom of the Scillitan martyrs is mentioned by Tertullian and by the Church Father Augustine several times, who also attests to their veneration in Carthage. The Basilica Fausti (Damous El Karita) may have been the church dedicated to the Scillitan martyrs.

The text is taken from:

- HERBERT MUSURILLO, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Oxford 1972, 86–89

1. Praesente bis et Claudiano consulibus, xvi kalendas augustas, Kartagine in secretario inpositis Sperato, Nartzalo et Cittino, Donata, Secunda, Vestia, Saturninus proconsul dixit: Potestis indulgentiam domni nostri imperatoris promereri, si ad bonam mentem redeatis

2. Speratus dixit: Numquam malefecimus, iniquitati nullam operam praebuimus: numquam malediximus, sed male accepti gratias egimus propter quod imperatorem nostrum observamus.

3. Saturninus proconsul dixit: Et nos religiosi sumus et simplex est religio nostra, et iuramus per genium domni nostri imperatoris et pro salute eius supplicamus, quod et uos quoque facere debetis.

4. Speratus dixit: Si tranquillas praebueris aures tuas, dico mysterium simplicitatis.

5. Saturninus dixit: Initianti tibi mala de sacris nostris aures non praebibo; sed potius iura per genium domni nostri imperatoris.

6. Speratus dixit: Ego imperium huius seculi non cognosco; sed magis illi Deo seruo quem nemo hominum uidit nec uidere his oculis potest. furtum non feci, sed si quid emero teloneum reddo quia cognosco domnum meum, imperatorem regum et omnium gentium.

7. Saturninus proconsul dixit ceteris: Desinite huius esse persuasionis.

Speratus dixit: Mala est persuasio homicidium facere, falsum testimonium dicere.

8. Saturninus proconsul dixit: Nolite huius demoniae esse participes.

Cittinus dixit: Nos non habemus alium quem timeamus nisi domnum Deum nostrum qui est in caelis.

9. Donata dixit: Honorem Caesari quasi Caesari; timorem autem Deo.

Vestia dixit: Christiana sum.

Secunda dixit: Quod sum, ipsud uolo esse.

10. Saturninus proconsul Sperato dixit: Perseueras Christianus?

Speratus dixit: Christianus sum, et cum eo

In the consulship of Praesens (for the second time) and Claudian, on the seventeenth day of July there were arraigned at Carthage in the governor's chambers Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Secunda, and Vestia. The proconsul Saturninus said: 'If you return to your senses, you can obtain the pardon of our lord the emperor.'

Speratus said: 'We have never done wrong; we have never lent ourselves to wickedness. Never have we uttered a curse; but when abused, we have given thanks, for we hold our own emperor in honour.'

Saturninus the proconsul said: 'We too are a religious people, and our religion is a simple one: we swear by the genius of our lord the emperor and we offer prayers for this health – as you also ought to do.'

Speratus said: 'If you will give me a calm hearing, I shall tell you the mystery of simplicity.'

Saturninus said: 'If you begin to malign our sacred rites, I shall not listen to you. But swear rather by the Genius of our lord the emperor.'

Speratus said: 'I do not recognize the empire of this world. Rather, I serve that God whom no man has seen, nor can see, with these eyes. I have not stolen; and on any purchase I pay the tax, for I acknowledge my lord who is the emperor of kings and of all nations.'

The proconsul Saturninus said to the others: 'Cease to be of this persuasion.'

Speratus said: 'It is an evil persuasion to commit murder, to bear false witness.'

Saturninus the proconsul said: 'Have no part in this folly of his!'

Cittinus said: 'We have no one else to fear but our Lord God who is in heaven.'

Donata said: 'Pay honour to Caesar as Caesar; but it is God we fear.'

Vestia said: 'I am a Christian.'

Secunda said: 'I wish to be what I am.'

The proconsul Saturninus said to Speratus: 'Do you persist in remaining a Christian?'

Speratus said: 'I am a Christian.' And all agreed

omnes consenserunt.

11. Saturninus proconsul dixit: Numquid ad deliberandum spatium uultis?

Speratus dixit: In re tam iusta nulla est deliberatio.

12. Saturninus proconsul dixit: Quae sunt res in capsula uestra?

Speratus dixit: Libri et epistolae Pauli uiri iusti.

13. Saturninus proconsul dixit: Moram xxx dierum habete et recordemini.

Speratus iterum dixit: Christianus sum, et cum eo omnes consenserunt.

14. Saturninus proconsul decretum ex tabella recitavit: Speratum, Nartzalum, Cittinum, Donatam, Vestiam, Secundam, et ceteros ritu Christiano se uiuere confessos, quoniam oblata sibi facultate ad Romanorum morem redeundi obstinanter perseuerauerunt, gladio animaduerti placet.

15. Speratus dixit: Deo gratias agimus.

Nartzalus dixit: Hodie martyres in caelis sumus. Deo gratias.

16. Saturninus proconsul per praeconem dici iussit: Speratum, Nartzalum, Cittinum, Veturium, Felicem, Aquilinum, Laetantium, Ianuariam, Generosam, Vestiam, Donatam, Secundam duci iussi.

17. Universi dixerunt: Deo gratias. Et statim decollati sunt pro nomine Christi. Amen.

with him.

Saturninus the proconsul said: 'You wish no time for consideration?'

Speratus said: 'In so just a matter there is no need for consideration.'

The proconsul Saturninus said: 'What have you in your case?'

Speratus said: 'Books and letters of a just man named Paul.'

The proconsul Saturninus said: 'You are granted a reprieve of thirty days: think it over.'

Once again Speratus said: 'I am a Christian. And with him all the others agreed.'

Saturninus the proconsul read his decision from a tablet: 'Whereas Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda, and the others have confessed that they have been living in accordance with the rites of the Christians, and whereas though given the opportunity to return to the usage of the Romans they have persevered in their obstinacy, they are hereby condemned to be executed by the sword.'

Speratus said: 'We thank God!'

Nartzalus said: 'Today we are martyrs in heaven. Thanks be God!'

The proconsul Saturninus had the following proclaimed by a herald: 'Sperata, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Aquilinus, Laetantius, Ianuaria, Generosa, Vestia, Donata, Secunda, are to be led forth to execution.'

The all said: 'Thanks be to God!' And straightway they were beheaded for the name of Christ.

PASSIO SANCTARUM PERPETUAE ET FELICITATIS  
THE PASSION OF PERPETUA AND FELICITY

Perpetua and Felicity, two women born around 180 in Carthage, were among the first martyrs for whom reliable documentation exists. According to surviving eyewitness accounts, Perpetua – who came from a noble family – and her slave, Felicity, were arrested in Carthage in 203. They were sentenced to death for preparing for baptism and refusing to renounce their faith. Perpetua was married and had a baby son, while Felicity, her slave and companion, was pregnant. The group also included Revocatus, Saturninus, Secundulus, and Saturus, who had turned themselves in to the magistrate and professed their Christian faith. Their execution in the amphitheater occurred during the birthday celebrations of Geta, the younger son of Emperor Septimius Severus.

The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* was originally written in Latin. The work primarily consists of Perpetua's account of her time in prison. Her companion Saturus also contributed during his imprisonment. Concluding the text is an unknown editor's account of the final days and death of this group of Christians. Researchers consider the text to be authentic.

The text is divided into four parts:

- I–II: preface by the unknown editor
- III–X: Perpetua's account from prison
- XI–XIII: Saturus' vision
- XIV–XXI: editor's report on Perpetua's martyrdom
- afterword

Further reading:

- DAVID WILHITE, *Ancient African Christianity*, Oxford/New York 2017, 87–89
- BARBARA K. GOLD, *Perpetua. Athlete of God*, Oxford 2022

The Latin text and the translation are taken from:

- THOMAS J. HEFFERNAN, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, Oxford 2012

Preface of the editor

I. Si vetera fidei exempla, et Dei gratiam testificantia et aedificationem hominis operantia, propterea in litteris sunt digesta, ut lectione eorum quasi repensatione rerum et Deus honoretur et homo confortetur, cur non et nova documenta aequae utrique causae convenientia et digerantur? Vel quia proinde et haec vetera futura quandoque sunt et necessaria posteris, si in praesenti suo tempore minori deputantur auctoritati, propter praesumptam venerationem antiquitatis. Sed viderint qui unam virtutem Spiritus unius

I. If the old examples of the faith, which testify to the grace of God and lead to the edification of men, were written down so that by reading them God should be honored and man comforted – as if through a reexamination of those deeds – should we not set down new acts that serve each purpose equally? For these too will some day also be venerable and compelling for future generations, even if at the present time they are judged to be of lesser importance, due to the respect naturally afforded the past. But let those who would restrict the singular power of the one spirit to certain

Sancti pro aetatibus iudicent temporum, cum maiora reputanda sunt novitiora quaeque, ut novissimiora, secundum exuperationem gratiae in ultima saeculi spatia decretam. In novissimis enim diebus, dicit Dominus, effundam de Spiritu meo super omnem carnem, et prophetabunt filii filiaeque eorum; et super servos et ancillas meas de meo Spiritu effundam; et iuvenes visiones videbunt, et senes somnia somniabunt. Itaque et nos, qui sicut prophetias ita et visiones novas pariter repromissas et agnoscimus et honoramus, ceterasque virtutes Spiritus Sancti ad instrumentum Ecclesiae deputamus (cui et missus est idem omnia donativa administrans in omnibus, prout unicuique distribuit Dominus) necessario et digerimus [ea] et ad gloriam Dei lectione celebramus, ut ne qua aut imbecillitas aut desperatio fidei apud veteres tantum aestimet gratiam divinitatis conversatam, sive [in] martyrum sive in revelationum dignatione, cum semper Deus operetur quae repromisit, non credentibus in testimonium, credentibus in beneficium. Et nos itaque quod audivimus et vidimus et contractavimus, annuntiamus et vobis, fratres et filioli uti et vos qui interfuistis rememoremini gloriae Domini, et qui nunc cognoscitis per auditum communionem habeatis cum sanctis mart[y]ribus, et per illos cum Domino nostro Iesu Christo, cui est claritas et honor in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

II. Apprehensi sunt adolescentes catechumeni: Revocatus et Felicitas, conserva eius, Saturninus et Secundulus; inter hos et Vibia Perpetua, honeste nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta. Habens patrem et matrem et fratres duos, alterum aequae catechumenum, et filium infantem ad ubera. Erat autem ipsa circiter annorum viginti duorum. Haec ordinem totum martyrii sui iam hinc ipsa narravit, sicut conscriptum manu sua et suo sensu reliquit.

times understand this: that newer events are necessarily greater because they are more recent, because of the overflow of grace promised for the end of time. In the last days, says the Lord, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; and their sons and daughters shall prophesy; and I will pour out my Spirit on my servants and handmaidens; and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams." And we, who also acknowledge and honor the new prophecies and new visions as well, according to the promise, and regard the other virtues of the Holy Spirit as intended for the instruction of the church (to which church the same spirit was sent distributing all gifts to all, just as the Lord grants to each one); therefore, out of necessity we both proclaim and celebrate them in reading for the glory of God, lest any person who is weak or despairing in their faith should think that only the ancients received divine grace (either in the favor of martyrdom or of revelations), since God always grants what he has promised, as a proof to the unbelievers and as a kindness to believers. And so we also announce to you, our brothers and little sons, that which we have heard and touched, so that you who were present may be reminded of the glory of the Lord, and that you who know it now through hearing may have a sharing with the holy martyrs, and through them with our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honor for ever and ever. Amen.

II. Some young catechumens were arrested: Revocatus and Felicity, his fellow slave; Saturninus; and Secundulus. And among these was also Vibia Perpetua – a woman well born, liberally educated, and honorably married, who had a father, mother, and two brothers, one of whom was also a catechumen. She had an infant son still at the breast and was about twenty-two years of age. From this point there follows a complete account of her martyrdom, as she left it, written in her own hand and in accordance with her own understanding.

### Perpetua's report

III. Cum adhuc, inquit, cum prosecutoribus essemus et me pater verbis evertere cupiret et deicere pro sua affectione perseveraret: "Pater," inquam "vides verbi gratia vas hoc iacens, urceolum sive aliud?" Et dixit "video." Et ego dixi ei: "Numquid alio nomine vocari potest quam quod est?" Et ait "non." "Sic et ego aliud me dicere non possum nisi quod sum, Christiana." Tunc pater motus hoc verbo mittit se in me, ut oculos mihi erueret, sed vexavit tantum, et profectus est victus cum argumentis diaboli. Tunc paucis diebus quod caruissem patrem Domino gratias egi et refrigeravi absentia illius. In ipso spatio paucorum dierum baptizati sumus; et mihi Spiritus dictavit nihil aliud petendum ab aqua nisi sufferentiam carnis. Post paucos dies recipimur in carcerem: et expavi, quia numquam experta eram tales tenebras. O diem asperum! [A]estus validus turbarum beneficio, concussur[a] militum. Novissime macerabar sollicitudine infantis ibi. Tunc Tertius et Pomponius, benedicti diaconi qui nobis ministrabant, constituerunt praemio, uti paucis horis emissi in meliorem locum carceris refrigeraremus. Tunc exeuntes de carcere universi sibi vacabant: ego infantem lactabam iam inedia defectum; sollicita pro eo adloquebar matrem et confortabam fratrem, commendabam filium; tabescebam ideo quod illos tabescere videram mei beneficio. Tales sollicitudines multis diebus passa sum; et usurpavi ut mecum infans in carcere maneret; et statim convalui et relevata sum a labore et sollicitudine infantis, et factus est mihi carcer subito praetorium, ut ibi mallem esse quam alicubi.

IV. Tunc dixit mihi frater meus: "Domina soror, iam in magna dignatione es; tanta es ut postules visionem et ostendatur tibi an passio sit an commeatus." Et ego quae me scieb-

III. "While," she said, "we were still with the prosecutors, my father, because of his love for me, wanted to change my mind and shake my resolve. 'Father,' I said, 'do you see this vase lying here, for example, this small water pitcher or whatever?' 'I see it,' he said. And I said to him: 'Can it be called by another name other than what it is?' And he said: 'No.' 'In the same way, I am unable to call myself other than what I am, a Christian.' Then my father, angered by this name, threw himself at me, in order to gouge out my eyes. But he only alarmed me and he left defeated, along with the arguments of the devil. Then for a few days, freed from my father, I gave thanks to the Lord and was refreshed by my father's absence. In the space of a few days we were baptized. The Spirit told me that nothing else should be sought from the water other than the endurance of the body. After a few days we were taken into the prison. I was terrified because I had never before known such darkness. Oh cruel day! The crowding of the mob made the heat stifling; and there was the extortion of the soldiers. Last of all, I was consumed with worry for my infant in that dungeon. Then Tertius and Pomponius, the blessed deacons who ministered to us, arranged by a bribe that we should be released for a few hours to revive ourselves in a better part of the prison. Then all left the prison and sought some time for themselves. I nursed my baby, who was now weak from hunger. In my worry for him, I spoke to my mother concerning the baby and comforted my brother. I entrusted my son to them. I suffered grievously when I saw how they suffered for me. I endured such worry for many days, and I arranged for my baby to stay in prison with me. Immediately I grew stronger, and I was relieved of the anxiety and worry I had for my baby. Suddenly the prison became my palace, so that I wanted to be there rather than anywhere else.

IV. "Then my brother said to me: 'Lady my sister, you are now greatly esteemed, so much so that you might ask for a vision, and it may be shown to you whether there will be suffering or freedom.'

am fabulari cum Domino, cuius beneficia tanta experta eram, fidenter repromisi ei dicens: “crastina die tibi renuntiabo.” Et postulavi, et ostensum est mihi hoc: Video scalam aeream mirae longitudinis, pertingentem usque ad caelum, et angustam, per quam non nisi singuli ascendere possent, et in lateribus scalae omne genus ferramentorum infixum. Erant ibi gladii, lanceae, [h]ami, macherae, verruta, ut si quis neglegenter aut non sursum adtendens ascenderet, laniaretur et carnes eius inhaerent ferramentis. Et erat sub ipsa scala draco cubans mirae magnitudinis, qui ascendentibus insidias praestabat et exterrebat ne ascenderent. Ascendit autem Saturus prior, qui postea se propter nos ultro tradiderat (quia ipse nos aedificaverat), et tunc cum adducti sumus, praesens non fuerat. Et pervenit in caput scalae, et convertit se et dixit mihi: “Perpetua, sustineo te; sed vide ne te mordeat draco ille.” Et dixi ego: “Non me nocebit, in nomine Iesu Christi.” Et desub ipsa scala, quasi timens me, lente eiecit caput; et quasi primum gradum calcarem, calcavi illi caput, et ascendi. Et vidi spatium immensum horti et in medio sedentem hominem canum, in habitu pastoris, grandem, oves mulgentem; et circumstantes candidati milia multa. Et levavit caput et aspexit me et dixit mihi: “Bene venisti, tignon.” Et clamavit me et de caseo quod mulgebat dedit mihi quasi buccellam; et ego accepi iunctis manibus et manducavi; et universi circumstantes dixerunt: “Amen.” Et ad sonum vocis experta sum, commanducans adhuc dulce nescio quid. Et retuli statim fratri meo; et intelleximus passionem esse futuram, et coepimus nullam iam spem in saeculo habere.

V. Post paucos dies rumor cucurrit ut audiremur. Supervenit autem de civitate pater meus, consumptus taedio, et ascendit ad me, ut me deiceret, dicens: “Miserere, filia, canis

And I, who knew that I was able to speak with the Lord, whose great benefits I had known, confidently promised him, saying: ‘Tomorrow, I will tell you.’ And I asked, and this was shown to me. I see a bronze ladder of great length, reaching up to heaven, but so narrow that people could only climb up one at a time. And on the sides of the ladder, iron implements of every kind were attached. There were swords, lances, hooks, knives, and daggers, so that if anyone climbed up carelessly, or not looking upwards, he was torn to pieces and his flesh clung to the iron weapons. And there was a serpent of great size lying at the foot of the ladder, which would lie in wait for those who climbed and deterred them from climbing. And the first to go up was Saturus. (Because he had been our teacher and because he had not been present when we were seized, he later voluntarily handed himself over for our sake.) And he reached the top of the ladder and he turned back to me and said: ‘Perpetua, I am waiting for you, but be careful that the serpent does not bite you.’ And I said: ‘In the name of Jesus Christ, he will not hurt me.’ And from beneath the ladder itself, the serpent slowly stuck out its head, as if it feared me, and I stepped on its head and climbed up, as if it were the first step. And I saw an enormous garden and a white-haired man sitting in the middle of it dressed in shepherd’s clothes, a big man, milking sheep. And standing around were many thousands dressed in white. And he raised his head, looked at me, and said: ‘You are welcome here, child.’ And he called me, and from the cheese that he had milked he gave me as it were a mouthful. And I received it in my cupped hands and ate it. And all those standing around said: ‘Amen.’ And I woke up at the sound of their voice, still eating some unknown sweet. And at once I told this to my brother. And we knew we would suffer, and we ceased to have any hope in this world.

V. “A few days later, a rumor circulated that we were to be given a hearing. My father arrived from the city, worn with worry; he climbed up to me, in order to change my mind, saying: ‘My daughter,

meis; miserere patri, si dignus sum a te pater vocari; si his te manibus ad hunc florem aetatis provexi, si te praeposui omnibus fratribus tuis: ne me dederis in dedecus hominum. Aspice fratres tuos, aspice matrem tuam et materteram, aspice filium tuum, qui post te vivere non poterit. Depone animos; ne universos nos extermines: nemo enim nostrum libere loquetur, si tu aliquid passa fueris." Haec dicebat quasi pater pro sua pietate, bilians mihi manus, et se ad pedes meos iactans et lacrimans me iam non filiam nominabat, sed dominam. Et ego dolebam casum patris mei, quod solus de passione mea gavisurus non esset de toto genere meo, et confortavi eum dicens: "Hoc fiet in illa catasta quod Deus voluerit; scito enim nos non in nostra esse potestate futuros, sed in Dei." Et recessit a me contristatus.

VI. Alio die cum pranderemus, subito rapti sumus ut audiremur. Et pervenimus ad forum. Rumor statim per vicinas fori partes cucurrit, et factus est populus immensus. Ascendimus in catastam. Interrogati ceteri confessi sunt. Ventum est ad me. Et apparuit pater ilico cum filio meo, et extraxit me de gradu, dicens: "Supplica; misere infanti." Et Hilarianus procurator, qui tunc loco proconsulis Minuci Timiniani defuncti ius gladii acceperat: "Parce," inquit, "canis patris tui, parce infantiae pueri. Fac sacrum pro salute imperatorum. Et ego respondi: "Non faciam." Et Hilarianus: "Christianus es?" inquit. Et ego respondi: "Christiana sum." Et cum staret pater ad me deiciendam, iussus est ab Hilariano proici, et virga percussus est. Et doluit mihi casus patris mei, quasi ego fuisset percussa: sic dolui pro senecta eius misera. Tunc nos universos pronuntiat et damnat ad bestias; et hilares descendimus ad carcerem. Tunc quia consueverat a me infans mammas accipere et mecum in carcere manere, statim mitto ad patrem Pomponium

have pity on my gray hair, have pity on your father, if I am worthy to be called father by you, if with these hands I have raised you to this flower of youth, if I have preferred you to all your brothers, do not shame me among men. Think about your brothers, think about your mother and your mother's sister, think about your son who will not be able to live without you. Give up your pride; do not destroy us all. For, if you are punished, none of us will be able to speak freely again.' My father said these things to me, as a father would, out of his love for me, kissing my hands and throwing himself at my feet. Weeping, he no longer called me daughter, but lady. And I grieved for my father's anguish, because he alone of all my family would not rejoice in my suffering. And I tried to comfort him saying: 'What God has willed shall be done in the prisoner's platform. Know that we are no longer in our own power but in God's.' And in great sadness he left me.

VI. "On another day, while we were eating lunch, we were suddenly rushed off for a hearing. We arrived at the forum and immediately a rumor circulated throughout the neighborhood surrounding the forum, and a huge crowd had gathered. We climbed the platform. The others, having been questioned, confessed. Then they came to me. And my father appeared in that very place with my son and dragged me from the step saying: 'Offer the sacrifice. Have pity on your baby.' And Hilarianus, the procurator, who at that time had received the right of the sword on the death of proconsul Minucius Timinianus, said: 'Spare the gray hair of your father, spare your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the health of the emperors.' 'I will not,' I answered. Hilarianus then said: 'Are you a Christian?' 'I am a Christian,' I replied. And when my father persisted in his efforts to change my mind, Hilarianus ordered him to be thrown to the ground and beaten with a rod. My father's suffering made me sad, almost as if I had been beaten. I grieved for his pitiable old age. Then Hilarianus pronounced sentence on us all and condemned us to the beasts. And we descended the platform and

diaconum, postulans infantem. Sed pater dare noluit. Et quomodo Deus voluit, neque ille amplius mammas desideravit, neque mihi fervorem fecerunt, ne sollicitudine infantis et dolore mamarum macerarer.

VII. Post dies paucos, dum universi oramus, subito media oratione profecta est mihi vox et nominavi Dinocraten. Et obstipui quod numquam mihi in mentem venisset nisi tunc, et dolui commemorata casus eius. Et cognovi me statim dignam esse et pro eo petere debere. Et coepi de ipso orationem facere multum et ingemescere ad Dominum. Continuo ipsa nocte ostensum est mihi hoc Video Dinocratem exeuntem de loco tenebroso, ubi et conplures erant, aestuantem valde et sitientem, sordido vultu et colore pallido; et vulnus in facie eius, quod cum moreretur habuit. Hic Dinocrates fuerat frater meus carnalis, annorum septem, qui per infirmitatem facie cancerata male obiit, ita ut mors eius odio fuerit omnibus hominibus. Pro hoc ergo orationem feceram; et inter me et illum grande erat diastema, ita ut uterque ad invicem accedere non possemus. Erat deinde in illo loco, ubi Dinocrates erat, piscina plena aqua, altiore marginem habens quam erat statura pueri; et extendebat se Dinocrates quasi bibiturus. Ego dolebam, quod et piscina illa aquam habebat, et tamen propter altitudinem marginis bibiturus non esset. Et experta sum, et cognovi fratrem meum laborare; sed fidebam me profuturam labori eius. Et orabam pro eo omnibus diebus quousque transivimus in carcerem castrensem; munere enim castrensi eramus pugnaturi: natale tunc Getae Caesaris. Et feci pro illo orationem die et nocte gemens et lacrimans, ut mihi donaretur.

VIII. Die autem quo in nervo mansimus, os-

returned cheerfully to prison. But because my baby had become accustomed to nurse at my breasts and to stay with me in prison, I immediately sent Pomponius, the deacon, to ask my father for the child. But my father would not give him back. And as God willed, the baby no longer desired my breasts, nor did they ache and become inflamed, so that I might not be tormented by worry for my child or by the pain in my breasts.

VII. "A few days later while we were all praying, suddenly, in the midst of our prayer a voice came to me, and I cried out the name of Dinocrates. I was shocked because never before then had his name entered my mind, and I grieved as I remembered his fate. And I knew at once that I was worthy and that I ought to pray for him. And I began to pray intensely for him and groan before the Lord. Immediately, on that very night this vision was shown to me. I saw Dinocrates coming out of a dark place where there were many others; he was very hot, thirsting, and his face was covered with dirt and his skin was pale. And he had that wound on his face which was there when he died. This Dinocrates was my brother in the flesh, who died horribly at the age of seven from a cancer of the face. All men who saw it loathed the manner of his death. Therefore I prayed for him. But between him and me there was a great gulf so that we were not able to get close to each other. Moreover, in that place where Dinocrates was, there was a pool full of water with a rim that was higher than the height of the boy. And Dinocrates stretched himself up as if to drink. I was saddened because, although the pool had water in it, he was not able to drink because of the height of the rim. And I awakened, and I knew that my brother was suffering. But I trusted that I could help him in his suffering. And I prayed for him every day until we were transferred to the military prison, for we were to fight in the military games; it was on the birthday of Geta Caesar. And I prayed day and night for my brother with groans and tears so that this gift might be given to me.

VIII. "On the day on which we were kept in the

tensum est mihi hoc: video locum illum quem retro videram, et Dinocraten mundo corpore, bene vestitum, refrigerantem; et ubi erat vulnus, video cicatricem; et piscinam illam, quam retro videram, summisso margine usque ad umbilicum pueri; et aquam de ea trahebat sine cessatione. Et super margine fiala aurea plena aqua. Et accessit Dinocrates et de ea bibere coepit; quae fiala non deficiebat. Et satiatus, accessit de aqua ludere more infantium gaudens. Et experta sum. Tunc intellexi translatum eum esse de poena.

IX. Deinde post dies paucos Pudens miles optio, praepositus carceris, qui nos magnificare coepit intellegens magnam virtutem esse in nobis; qui multos ad nos admittebat ut et nos et illi invicem refrigeraremus. Ut autem proximavit dies muneris, intravit ad me pater meus Consumptus taedio, et coepit barbam suam evellere et in terram mittere et prosternere se in faciem, et inproperare anis suis et dicere tanta verba quae moverent universam creaturam. Ego dolebam pro infelici senecta eius.

X. Pridie quam pugnaremus, video in horomate hoc: venisse Pomponium diaconum ad ostium carceris et pulsare vehementer. Et exivi ad eum et aperui ei; qui erat vestitus discincta candida, habens multiplices galliculas. Et dixit mihi: "Perpetua, te expectamus: veni." Et tenuit mihi manum, et coepimus ire per aspera loca et flexuosa. Et vix tandem pervenimus anhelantes ad amphitheatrum, et induxit me in media arena, et dixit mihi: "Noli expavescere: hic sum tecum et conlaboro tecum. Et abiit. Et aspicio populum ingentem adtonitum; et quia sciebam me ad bestias damnatum esse, mirabar quod non mitterentur mihi bestiae. Et exivit quidam contra me Egyptius foedus specie cum adiutoribus suis, pugnaturus mecum. Veniunt et ad me adolescentes decori, adiutores et fautores mei. Et expoliata sum, et facta sum

stocks, this vision was shown to me. I saw that place which I had seen before, but now there was Dinocrates, his body clean, well dressed and refreshed, and where the wound was, I saw a scar. And that pool which I had seen earlier, I now saw with its rim lowered to the boy's navel, and he drew water from it without ceasing. And above the rim there was a golden cup full of water. And Dinocrates began to drink from it, but the cup never emptied. And when his thirst was quenched, he began to play in the water, rejoicing in the manner of children. And I woke up. I knew then that he was freed from his suffering.

IX. "Then after a few days, Pudens, the military adjutant, who was in charge of the prison, began to show us considerable respect, recognizing that there was some great power in us. He allowed many to visit us so that we were able to comfort one another. Now when the day of the games drew near, my father, devastated with worry, came to visit me, and he began to tear out his beard and to throw it on the ground. He then threw himself on his face and, cursing his years, spoke such words to me as might move creation itself. I grieved for his unhappy old age.

X. "On the day before we were to fight, I saw this in a vision: Pomponius, the deacon, had come to the door of the prison, and was knocking loudly. And I went out and opened the door for him. He was wearing a white unbelted robe, and multi-laced sandals. And he said to me: 'Perpetua, we are awaiting you: come.' And he took me by the hand and we began to walk through places that were rugged and winding. And finally, after great difficulty, we arrived at the amphitheatre, all out of breath, and he led me into the middle of the arena, and he said to me 'Don't be afraid: I am here with you, and I will struggle with you.' And he went away. And I saw many people who were astonished; and, because I knew that I had been condemned to the beasts, I was puzzled that the beasts were not being turned loose on me. And a certain Egyptian, foul in appearance and intending to fight with me, came out against me, surrounded by

masculus, et coeperunt me favisores mei oleo defricare, quomodo solent in agone; et illum contra Egyptium video in afa volutantum. Et exivit vir quidam mirae magnitudinis, ut etiam excederet fastigium amphit[h]eatri, discinctatus, purpuram inter duos clavos per medium pectus habens, et galliculas multiformes ex auro et argento factas, et ferens virgam quasi lanista, et ramum viridem in quo erant mala aurea. Et petiit silentium et dixit: ‘Hic Aegyptius, si hanc vicerit, occidet illam gladio; haec, si hunc vicerit, accipiet ramum istum.’ Et recessit. Et accessimus ad invicem et coepimus mittere pugnos; ille mihi pedes apprehendere volebat, ego autem illi calcibus faciem caedebam. Et sublata sum in aere, et coepi eum sic cadere quasi terram non calcans. At ubi vidi moram fieri, iunxi manus, ut digitos in digitos mitterem, et apprehendi illi caput, et cecidit in faciem, et calcavi illi caput. Et coepit populus clamare et fautores mei psallere. Et accessi ad lanistam et accepi. Et osculatus est me et dixit mihi: ‘Filia, pax tecum.’ Et coepi ire cum gloria ad portam Sanavivariam. Et experta sum. Et intellexi me non ad bestias sed contra diabolum esse pugnaturam; sed sciebam mihi esse victoria[m]. Ho[c] usque in pridie muneris egi; ipsius autem muneris actum, si quis voluerit, scribat.”

his helpers. Handsome young men came to me as my helpers and supporters. And I was stripped naked, and I became a man. And my supporters began to rub me with oil, as they are accustomed to do for a match. And I saw that Egyptian on the other side rolling in the dust. Next there came out a man of such great size that he exceeded the height of the amphitheatre. He was wearing an unbelted robe, a purple garment with two stripes running down the middle of his chest, and decorated shoes made of gold and silver, and carrying a rod or wand as if a gladiator trainer, and a green branch on which there were golden apples. And he asked for silence and said: ‘This Egyptian, if he defeats this woman, will kill her with the sword, but if she defeats him, she shall receive this branch.’ And he departed. And we drew near to each other and began to throw punches at each other. He kept trying to grab hold of my feet while I kept kicking him in his face with my heels. And I was raised up into the air, and I began to strike him stepping on his face, as though I were unable to step on the ground. But when I saw that there was a hesitation, I joined my hands so that my fingers were knit together and I grabbed hold of his head. And he fell on his face and I stepped on his head. And the crowd began to shout and my supporters began to sing hymns. And I went to the gladiator trainer, and I took the branch. And he kissed me and he said to me: ‘Daughter, peace be with you.’ And I began to walk in triumph to the Gate of Life. And then I woke up. And I knew that I was going to fight with the devil and not with the beasts; but I knew that victory was to be mine. This is the story of what I did the day before the final conflict. But concerning the outcome of that contest, let whoever wishes to write about it, do so.”

#### The vision of Saturus

XI. Visio Saturi: Sed et Saturus benedictus hanc visionem suam edidit, quam ipse conscripsit. “Passi” inquit “eramus, et exivimus de carne, et coepimus ferri a quattuor angelis in orientem, quorum manus nos non tange-

XI. But blessed Saturus made known his own vision, which he himself wrote. “We had suffered,” he said, “and we departed from the flesh and we began to be carried towards the east by four angels, whose hands were not touching us. But we

bant. Ibamus autem non supini sursum versi, sed quasi mollem clivum ascendentes. Et liberat[i] primo mundo vidimus lucem immensam, et dixi Perpetuae (erat enim haec in latere meo): "Hoc est quod nobis Dominus promittebat: percepimus promissionem." Et dum gestamur ab ipsis quattuor angelis, factum est nobis spatium grande, quod tale fuit quasi viridarium, arbores habens rosae et omne genus flores. Altitudo arborum erat in modum cipressi, quarum folia cadebant sine cessatione. Ibi autem in viridario alii quattuor angeli fuerunt clariores ceteris: qui, ubi viderunt nos, honorem nobis dederunt, et dixerunt ceteris angelis: "Ecce sunt, ecce sunt," cum admiratione. Et expavescentes quattuor illi angeli, qui gestabant nos, deposuerunt nos. Et pedibus nostris transivimus stadium via lata. Ibi invenimus Iocundum et Saturninum et Artaxium, qui eadem persecutione vivi arserunt, et Quintum, qui et ipse martyr in carcere exierat. Et quaerebamus de illis, ubi essent ceteri. Angeli dixerunt nobis: "Venite prius, introite, et salutate Dominum."

XII. Et venimus prope locum, cuius loci parietes tales erant quasi de luce aedificati; et ante ostium loci illius angeli quattuor stabant, qui introeuntes vestierunt stolas candidas. Et introivimus, et audivimus vocem unitam dicentem: "Agius, agios, agios," sine cessatione. Et vidimus in eodem loco sedentem quasi hominem canum, niveos habentem capillos et vultu iuvenili, cuius pedes non vidimus. Et in dextera et in sinistra seniores quattuor, et post illos ceteri seniores conplures stabant. Et introeuntes cum admiratione stetimus ante thronum, et quattuor angeli sublevaverunt nos, et osculati sumus illum, et de manu sua traiecit nobis in faciem. Et ceteri seniores dixerunt nobis: "Stemus"; et stetimus et pacem fecimus. Et dixerunt nobis seniores: "Ite et ludite." Et dixi Perpetuae: "Habes quod vis." Et dixit mihi: "Deo gratias, ut, quomodo in carne hilaris fui,

were moving, not on our backs facing upwards, but as if we were climbing a gentle hill. And when we were freed from this world, we saw a great light, and I said to Perpetua (for she was at my side): 'This is what the Lord promised us: we have received the promise.' And while we were being carried by the four angels, a great space appeared before us, which was like a formal garden, having rose trees and flowers of all sorts. The height of the trees was like that of cypress trees, and their leaves were falling without ceasing. There in the garden were four other angels more radiant than the others. When they saw us, they gave us honor, and they said with admiration to the other angels: 'Look, they are here, they are here.' And those four angels who were carrying us became fearful and put us down. And on foot we crossed the park by a broad path. There we found Jocundus and Saturninus and Artaxius, who were burned alive in the same persecution, and Quintus, who had died as a martyr in prison. And we asked of them where the rest were. And the angels said to us: 'First come, enter and greet the Lord.'

XII. "And we came near a place whose walls seemed to be made of light; and in front of the door of that place stood four angels, who clothed those who entered in white robes. And we entered in, and we heard a choir of voices chanting continually: 'Holy, Holy, Holy.' And we saw sitting in the same place what appeared to be an aged man. He had white hair and a youthful face, but we could not see his feet. And on his right and on his left were four elders, and behind them were standing many other elders. And entering in a spirit of wonder we stood before the throne, and four angels lifted us up, and we kissed him. And he stroked our faces with his hand. And the other elders said to us: 'Let us stand'; and we stood and offered each other the sign of peace. And the elders said to us: 'Go and play.' And I said to Perpetua: 'You have what you want.' And she said to me: 'Thanks be to God, because just as I was happy in the flesh, I am even happier here now.'

hilarior sim et hic modo.”

XIII. Et exivimus et vidimus ante fores Optatum episcopum ad dexteram et Aspasium presbyterum doctorem ad sinistram, separatos et tristes. Et miserunt se ad pedes nobis, et dixerunt: “Componite inter nos, quia existis, et sic nos reliquistis.” Et diximus illis: “Non tu es papa noster, et tu presbyter? Ut vos ad pedes nobis mittatis?” Et moti sumus et complexi illos sumus. Et coepit Perpetua Graece cum illis loqui, et segregavimus eos in viridarium sub arbore rosae. Et dum loquimur cum eis, dixerunt illis angeli: “Sinite illos refrigerent; et si quas habetis inter vos dissensiones, dimittite vobis invicem.” Et conturbaverunt eos, et dixerunt Optato: “Corrige plebem tuam, quia sic ad te conveniunt quasi de circo redeuntes et de factionibus certantes.” Et sic nobis visum est quasi vellent claudere portas. Et coepimus illic multos fratres cognoscere, sed et martiras. Universi odore inerrabili alebamus, qui nos satiabat. Tunc gaudens expertus sum.

XIII. “And we went out and we saw in front of the gates Optatus the bishop on the right-hand side and Aspasius the priest and teacher on the left, separated and sorrowful. And they threw themselves at our feet and said: ‘Make peace between us, for you have gone away and left us in this state.’ And we said to them: ‘Are you not our father and our priest? How can you throw yourselves at our feet?’ And we were greatly moved and embraced them. And Perpetua began to speak to them in Greek, and we led them into a park under a rose tree. And while we were speaking with them, the angels said to them: ‘Let them rest; and if you have any disagreements among yourselves, forgive one another.’ And the angels admonished them and said to Optatus: ‘Rebuke your people, because they are gathering around you, just as if they were returning from the chariot races, arguing about the different teams.’ And it seemed to us as if they wanted to shut the gates. And we began to recognize there many of our brothers, and martyrs also. We were all nourished by an indescribable fragrance that satisfied us. Then, rejoicing, I awoke.”

#### Report of the editor

XIV. Hae visiones insigniores ipsorum martirum beatissimorum Saturi et Perpetuae, quas ipsi conscripserunt. Secundulum vero Deus maturiore exitu de saeculo adhuc in carcere evocavit, non sine gratia, ut bestias lucraretur. Gladium tamen etsi non anima, certe caro eius agnovit.

XV. Circa Felicitatem vero, et illi gratia Domini eiusmodi contigit: Cum octo iam mensium ventrem haberet (nam pregnans fuerat adprehensa), instante spectacula die in magno erat luctu, ne propter ventrem differretur (quia non licet pregnantibus poenae praesentari) et ne inter alios postea sceleratos sanctum et innocentem sanguinem funderet. Sed et conmartires graviter contristabantur, ne tam bonam sociam quasi comi-

XIV. These were the extraordinary visions of the most blessed martyrs Saturus and Perpetua, which they themselves wrote. As for Secundulus, God called him from this world while still in prison, and by his earlier death, one not without favor, so that he might escape the fight with the beasts. Yet his flesh, if not his soul, knew the sword.

XV. As for Felicity, the Lord’s favor touched her in this way. She was now in her eighth month (for she was pregnant when she was arrested). As the day of the games drew near, she was in agony, fearing that her pregnancy would spare her (since it was not permitted to punish pregnant women in public), and that she would pour forth her holy and innocent blood afterwards, along with common criminals. But also her fellow martyrs were deeply saddened that they might leave behind so

tem solam in via eiusdem spei relinquerent. Coniuncto itaque unito gemitu ad Dominum orationem fuderunt ante tertium diem muneris. Statim post orationem dolores eam invaserunt. Et cum pro naturali difficultate octavi mensis in partu laborans doleret, ait illi quidam ex ministris cataractariorum: “Quae sic modo doles, quid facies obiecta bestiis, quas contempsisti cum sacrificare noluisti?” Et illa respondit: “Modo ego patior quod patior; illic autem alius erit in me qui patietur pro me, quia et ego pro illo passura sum.” Ita enixa est puellam, quam sibi quaedam soror in filiam educavit.

XVI. Quoniam ergo permisit et permittendo voluit Spiritus Sanctus ordinem ipsius muneris conscribi, etsi indigni ad supplementum tantae gloriae describendae, tamen quasi mandatum sanctissimae Perpetuae, immo fideicommissum eius exequimur, unum adicientes documentum de ipsius constantia et animi sublimitate. Cum tribunus castigatus eos castigaret, quia ex admonitionibus hominum vanissimorum verebatur ne subtraherentur de carcere incantationibus aliquibus magicis, in faciem ei Perpetua respondit: “Quid utique non permittis nobis refrigerare noxiis nobilissimis, Caesaris scilicet, et natali eiusdem pugnaturis? Aut non tua gloria est, si pinguiore illo producamur?” Horruit et erubuit tribunus; et ita iussit illos humanius haberi, ut fratribus eius et ceteris facultas fieret introeundi et refrigerandi cum eis, iam et ipso optione carceris credente.

XVII. Pridie quoque cum illam cenam ultimam, quam liberam vocant – quantum in ipsis erat, non cenam liberam sed agapem –, cenarent, eadem constantia ad populum verba iactabant, comminantes iudicium Dei,

good a friend, their companion, to travel alone on the road to their shared hope. And so, two days before the games, they joined together in one united supplication, groaning, and poured forth their prayer to the Lord. Immediately after their prayer her labor pains came upon her. And when – because of the natural difficulty associated with an eighthmonth delivery – she suffered in her labor, one of the assistant jailers said to her: “If you are suffering so much now, what will you do when you are thrown to the beasts which you scorned when you refused to sacrifice?” And she replied: “Now I alone suffer what I am suffering, but then there will be another inside me, who will suffer for me, because I am going to suffer for him.” And she gave birth to a baby girl, whom a certain sister brought up as her own daughter.

XVI. Therefore, since the Holy Spirit has given permission that the narrative of this contest be written down, and by such permission has willed it, although we are unworthy to add to the description of such great glory, nevertheless we shall carry out the command of the most holy Perpetua, or rather her sacred trust, adding one further example of her resolve and sublimity of spirit. The tribune treated them with great cruelty because of the warnings of the most devious of men. He feared that they would be carried off from prison through magical incantations. Perpetua said directly to his face: “Why do you not permit us to refresh ourselves – we, the most noble of the condemned belonging to Caesar, who are to fight on his birthday? Would it not be to your credit, if we were brought forth well fed?” The Tribune was horrified and flushed; and he ordered them to be treated more humanely, so that her brothers, and the others, might be granted the chance to visit and be refreshed with the prisoners, for now even the adjutant in charge of the prison was a believer. XVII. And then on the day before the games, when at that last meal which they call “free,” they partook, as far as it was possible, not of a “free meal” but a “love-feast.” They boldly flung their words at the mob, threatening them with the judg-

contestantes passionis suae felicitatem, inridentes concurrentium curiositatem, dicente Saturo: “Crastinus dies satis vobis non est? Quid libenter videtis quod odistis? Hodie amici, cras inimici. Notate tamen vobis facies nostras diligenter, ut recognoscatis nos in illo die. Ita omnes inde adtoniti discedebant, ex quibus multi crediderunt.

XVIII. Illuxit dies victoriae illorum, et processerunt de carcere in amphitheatrum, quasi in caelum, hilares, vultu decori, si forte gaudio paventes non timore. Sequebatur Perpetua lucido vultu et placido incessu, ut matrona Christi, ut Dei delicata, vigore oculorum deiciens omnium conspectum. Item Felicitas, salvam se peperisse gaudens ut ad bestias pugnaret, a sanguine ad sanguinem, ab obstetrice ad retiarium, lotura post partum baptismo secundo. Et cum ducti essent in portam et cogerentur habitum induere, viri quidem sacerdotum Saturni, feminae vero sacratarum Cereri, generosa illa in finem usque constantia repugnavit. Dicebat enim: “Ideo ad hoc sponte pervenimus, ne libertas nostra obduceretur; ideo animam nostram addiximus, ne tale aliquid faceremus; hoc vobiscum pacti sumus.” Agnovit iniustitia iustitiam: concessit tribunus, quomodo erant, simpliciter inducerentur. Perpetua psallebat, caput iam Aegyptii calcans; Revocatus et Saturninus et Satorus populo spectanti comminabantur. Dehinc ut sub conspectu Hilariani pervenerunt, gestu et nutu coeperunt Hilariano dicere: “tu nos,” inquit, “te autem Deus.” Ad hoc populus exasperatus flagellis eos vexari per ordinem venatorum postulavit; et utique gratulati sunt quod aliquid et de dominicis passionibus essent consecuti.

ment of God, bearing witness to the happiness they found in their suffering and mocking the curiosity of those who jostled to see them. Satorus said: “Will not tomorrow be enough for you? Why do you long to see that which you hate? Today our friends, tomorrow our enemies. But take a good look at our faces, so that you will be able to recognize us on that day.” And so the crowd left the prison stunned, and many of them became believers.

XVIII. The day of their victory dawned, and they marched from the prison to the amphitheatre, joyously, as if going to heaven, their faces radiant; and if by chance they trembled, it was from joy and not from fear. Perpetua followed, with a shining face and a calm step, as a wife of Christ and darling of God, and the intensity of her stare caused the spectators to look away. Likewise Felicity rejoiced that she had given birth safely, so that she might fight with the beasts – advancing from blood to blood, from the midwife to a net-bearing gladiator – now to be washed after childbirth in a second baptism. And when they were led to the gate, they were forced to put on costumes; the men, those of the priests of Saturn, and the women, those of the priestesses of Ceres. But that noble-minded woman fiercely resisted this to the end. She said: “We came here freely, so that our freedom might not be violated, and we handed over our lives so that we would not be forced to do anything like this. We had this agreement with you.” Injustice recognized justice. The tribune agreed that they should be brought in dressed simply as they were. Perpetua was singing a hymn, already trampling on the head of the Egyptian. Revocatus, Saturninus, and Satorus were threatening the spectators. Then, when they passed under the gaze of Hilarius, they began to say to him through gestures and nods: “You [judge] us but God will [judge] you.” The crowd, angered by this, demanded that they be whipped along a line of beast-hunting gladiators. And they gave thanks that they had obtained some share in the Lord’s sufferings.

XIX. Sed qui dixerat: “Petite et accipietis,” petentibus dederat eum exitum quem quis desideraverat. Nam si quando inter se de martyrii sui voto sermocinabantur, Saturninus quidem omnibus bestiis velle se obici profitebatur, ut scilicet glorioiorem gestaret coronam. Itaque in commissione spectaculi ipse et Revocatus leopardum experti etiam super pulpitem ab urso vexati sunt. Satorus autem nihil magis quam ursum abominabatur; sed uno morsu leopardi confici se iam praesumebat. Itaque cum apro subministraretur, venator potius qui illum apro subligaverat, subfossus ab eadem bestia post dies muneris obiit; Satorus solummodo tractus est. Et cum ad ursum substrictus esset in ponte, ursus de cavea prodire noluit. Itaque secundo Satorus inlaesus revocatur.

XX. Puellis autem ferocissimam vaccam, ideoque praeter consuetudinem comparatam, diabolus praeparavit, sexui earum etiam de bestia [a]emulatus. Itaque dispoliata[e] et reticulis indutae producebantur. Horruit populus alteram respiciens puellam delicatam, alteram a partu recentem stillantibus mammis. Ita revocatae et discinctis indutae. Prior Perpetua iactata est, et concidit in lumbos. Et ubi sedit, tunicam a latere discissam ad velamentum femoris reduxit, pudoris potius memor quam doloris. Dehinc, [acu] requisita, et dispersos capillos infibulavit; non enim decebat martyram sparsis capillis pati, ne in sua gloria plangere videretur. Ita surrexit, et elisam Felicitatem cum vidisset, accessit et manum ei tradidit et suscitavit illam. Et ambae pariter steterunt. Et populi duritia devicta, revocatae sunt in portam Sanavivariam. Illic Perpetua a quodam tunc cathecum[e]no, Rustico nomine, qui ei adh[a]erebat, suscepta et quasi a somno expergita (adeo in spiritu et in extasi fuerat) circumspicere coepit, et stupentibus omnibus ait: “Quando,” inquit, “producimur ad vaccam illam nescio [quam]?” Et

XIX. But he who said: “Ask and you shall receive” gave to those who asked the death that each desired. For whenever they spoke among themselves concerning their desire for martyrdom, Saturninus declared that he wished to be thrown to all the different kinds of beasts so that he might wear a more glorious crown. And so at the beginning of the spectacle, he and Revocatus were attacked by a leopard, and then while on the platform, they were charged by a bear. Satorus hated nothing more than a bear, and now he was confident that he would die from one bite of a leopard. However, he was offered to a wild boar. Yet it was the hunter who had tied him to the wild boar who was gored by the same beast, and died a few days after the games. Satorus himself was only dragged. And when he was tied on the bridge awaiting the bear, the bear refused to leave its cage. And so Satorus, unhurt, was called back for the second time.

XX. For the young women, however, the devil prepared a wild cow – not a traditional practice – matching their sex with that of the beast. And so stripped naked and covered only with nets, they were brought out again. The crowd shuddered, seeing that one was a delicate young girl and that the other had recently given birth, as her breasts still dripping with milk. So they were called back and dressed in unbelted robes. Perpetua was thrown down first and fell on her loins. Then sitting up, she noticed that her tunic was ripped on the side, and so she drew it up to cover her thigh, more mindful of her modesty than her suffering. Then she requested a pin and she tied up her tousled hair; for it was not right for a martyr to suffer with disheveled hair, since it might appear that she was grieving in her moment of glory. Then she got up; and when she saw Felicity crushed to the ground, she went over to her, gave her her hand and helped her up. And the two stood side by side. The cruelty of the crowd now being sated, they were called back to the Gate of Life. There Perpetua was received by a certain Rusticus, also a catechumen, who clung to her side. She awakened, as if from a sleep – she was so deep in the spirit

cum audisset quod iam evenerat, non prius credidit nisi quasdam notas vexationis in corpore et habitu suo recognovisset. Exinde accersitum fratrem suum, et illum catechumen[um], adlocuta est dicens: "In fide state et invicem omnes diligite, et passionibus nostris ne scandalizemini."

XXI. Item Saturus in alia porta [Pudentem] militem exhortabatur dicens: "Ad summam," inquit, "certe, sicut presumpsi et predixi, nullam usque adhuc bestiam sensi. Et nunc de toto corde credas; ecce prodeo illo, et ab uno morsu leopardi consumor." Et statim in fine spectaculi leopardo obiectus de uno morsu tanto perfusus est sanguine, ut populus revertenti illi secundi baptismatis testimonium reclamaverit: "Salvum lotum, salvum lotum." Plane utique salvus erat qui hoc modo laverat. Tunc Pudenti militi inquit: "Vale," inquit, "et memento fidei et mei; et haec te non conturbent, sed confirment." Simulque anulum de digito eius petiit, et vulnere suo mersam reddidit ei hereditatem, pignus relinquens illi et memoriam sanguinis. Exinde iam exanimis prosternitur cum ceteris ad iugulationem solito loco. Et cum populus illos in medio postularet, ut gladio penetranti in eorum corpore oculos suos comites homicidii adiungerent, ultro surrexerunt et se quo volebat populus transtulerunt, ante iam osculati invicem ut martyrium per sollemnia pacis consummarent. Ceteri quidem immobiles et cum silentio ferrum receperunt: multo magis Saturus, qui et prior scalam ascenderat, prior reddidit spiritum; nam et Perpetuam sustinebat. Perpetua autem, ut aliquid doloris gustaret, inter ossa conpuncta exululavit, et errantem dexteram tirunculi gladiatoris ipsa in iugulum suum transtulit. Fortasse tanta femina aliter non potuisset occidi, quae ab immundo spiritu timebatur, nisi ipsa voluisset.

and in ecstasy – and looked about her, and said, to the amazement of all: "When are we to be thrown to the mad cow, or whatever it is?" And when she heard that it had already happened, she refused at first to believe it until she noticed certain marks of physical violence on her body and her clothing. Then after calling her brother and the catechumen, she spoke to them, saying: "Stand fast in faith and love one another, and do not lose heart because of our sufferings."

XXI. At another gate, Saturus was exhorting the soldier Pudens, saying: "It is exactly," he said, "as I imagined and predicted. Until now no beast has touched me. And now you must believe this with all your heart: See, I will go in there and be killed by one bite from a leopard." And immediately at the end of the game, a leopard rushed out and bit Saturus. He was so covered with blood from one bite that as he was returning, the crowd roared in witness to his second baptism: "A saving bath, a saving bath." For truly one was saved who had bathed in such manner. Then he said to the soldier Pudens: "Farewell, remember the faith and me; and do not let these things trouble you but strengthen you." At the same time he asked Pudens for the small ring from his finger, and dipping it into his wound, he returned it to him as a legacy, leaving it to him as a pledge and a memorial of his blood. Then, being now unconscious, he was thrown with the others in the accustomed place to have his throat cut. But the crowd demanded that they be brought back to the middle of the arena, so that as the sword penetrated the bodies of the martyrs their eyes might be accomplices to the murder. The martyrs got up unaided and moved to where the crowd wished them to be. First they kissed each other so that the ritual of peace would seal their martyrdom. The others, in silence and without moving, received the sword's thrust, and particularly Saturus, who had first climbed up the ladder, was the first to give up his spirit. For once again he was waiting for Perpetua. Perpetua, however – so that she might taste something of the pain – screamed out in agony as she

was pierced between the bones. And when the right hand of the novice gladiator wavered, she herself guided it to her throat. Perhaps such a woman, feared as she was by the unclean spirit, could not have been killed unless she herself had willed it.

O fortissimi ac beatissimi martyres! O vere vocati, et electi in gloriam Domini nostri Iesu Christi! Quam qui magnificat et honorificat et adorat, utique et haec non minora veteribus exempla in aedificationem Ecclesiae legere debet, ut novae quoque virtutes unum et eundem semper Spiritum Sanctum usque adhuc operari testificentur, [et] omnipotentem Deum patrem et filium eius Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum, cui est claritas et immensa potestas in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

O bravest and most blessed martyrs! O truly called and chosen for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ! Anyone who praises, honors, and adores his glory surely should read these deeds, which are no less worthy than the old ones for building up the church. For these new deeds of courage too may witness that one and the same Holy Spirit is always working among us even now, along with God, the Father almighty, and his Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, to whom is glory and endless power for ever and ever. Amen.

THE RECORDS OF SAINT CYPRIAN'S TRIAL BEFORE THE PROCONSUL  
ACTA PROCONSULARIA SANCTI CYPRIANI

Cyprian of Carthage was born around 200 CE into an upper-class Carthaginian family and received an education in rhetoric that qualified him for public office. In the 240s, he converted to Christianity and was baptized. Around 248/49, the local church made him bishop. Cyprian experienced the two empire-wide persecutions of Christians in the 250s. He escaped the first persecution, which lasted from January 250 to April 251. When persecution broke out again in 256/257, Cyprian remained with his congregation and was captured by the Roman authorities. Two sources report on Cyprian's trial and execution: the records of the trial before the proconsul (*Acta proconsularia Sancti Cypriani*) and the biography written later (*Vita Cypriani*). The trial records are considered authentic and credible.

The Latin text is taken from

- CSEL 3/3, Appendix, CX–CXIV

Further reading:

- J. PATOUT BURNS, *Cyprian the Bishop*, London/New York 2002
- DAVID WILHITE, *Ancient African Christianity*, Oxford/New York 2017, 136–169

The first interrogation of Cyprian (August 30, 257)

1. Imperatore Valeriano quartum et Gallieno tertium consulibus, tertio Kalendarum Septembrium, Carthagine in secretario Paternus proconsul Cypriano episcopo dixit: sacratissimi imperatores Valerianus et Gallienus litteras ad me dare dignati sunt, quibus praeceperunt eos, qui Romanam religionem non colunt, debere Romanas caeremonias recognoscere. exquisiui ergo de nomine tuo, quid mihi respondes?

Cyprianus episcopus dixit: Christianus sum et episcopus. nullos alios deos noui, nisi unum et uerum deum, qui fecit caelum et terram, mare et quae sunt in eis omnia. huic deo nos Christiani deseruimus: hunc deprecamur diebus ac noctibus pro nobis et pro omnibus hominibus et pro incolumitate ipsorum imperatorum.

Paternus proconsul dixit: in hac ergo uoluntate perseueras? Cyprianus episcopus respondit: bona uoluntas, quae Deum nouit, immutari non potest.

1. When Emperor Valerian was consul for the fourth time and Gallienus for the third time [257 AD], on the third day before the Kalends of September [August 30], Proconsul Paternus said to Bishop Cyprian in Carthage: “The most holy emperors Valerian and Gallienus have deigned to send me a letter commanding us that those who do not practice the Roman religion must resume the Roman cult. I have therefore made inquiries about you. What is your answer?”

Bishop Cyprian said: “I am a Christian and a bishop. I know no other gods except the one true God who made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them. We Christians serve this God, and we pray to him day and night for ourselves and for all people, and for the safety of the emperors themselves.”

Proconsul Paternus said, “You remain steadfast in this resolve?” Bishop Cyprianus replied, “The good resolve that knows God cannot be changed.”

Paternus proconsul dixit: poteris ergo secundum praeceptum Valeriani et Gallieni exul ad urbem Curubitanam proficisci? Cyprianus episcopus dixit: proficiscor.

Paternus proconsul dixit: non solum de episcopis, uerum etiam de presbyteris mihi scribere dignati sunt. uolo ergo scire ex te, qui sint presbyteri qui in hac ciuitate consistunt. Cyprianus episcopus respondit: legibus uestris bene atque utiliter censuistis delatores non esse. itaque detegi et deferri a me non possunt. in ciuitatibus autem suis inueniuntur.

Paternus proconsul dixit: ego hodie in hoc loco exquiro. Cyprianus dixit: cum disciplina prohibeat, ut quis se ultro offerat et tuae quoque censurae hoc displiceat, nec offerre se ipsi possunt, sed a te exquisiti inueniuntur.

Paternus proconsul dixit: a me inueniuntur. et adiecit: praeceperunt etiam, ne in aliquibus locis conciliabula fiant nec coemeteria ingrediantur. si quis itaque hoc tam salubre praeceptum non obseruauerit, capite plectetur. Cyprianus episcopus respondit: fac, quod tibi praeceptum est.

Proconsul Paternus said, "So, in accordance with the decree of Valerian and Gallienus, is it possible for you to go into exile to Kurubis?" Bishop Cyprianus said, "I am leaving."

Proconsul Paternus said, "They have deigned to write to me not only about the bishops but also about the presbyters. I therefore want to know from you who are the presbyters residing in this city." Cyprian replied: "According to your laws, you have decreed well and wisely that there should be no informers. Therefore, I cannot betray them or report them. But they will be found in their own cities."

Proconsul Paternus said, "I am conducting an investigation in this place today." Cyprianus said, "If our teaching prevents anyone from reporting themselves voluntarily, and if you also disapprove of this, they cannot report themselves, but will only be found once you have conducted your investigation."

Proconsul Paternus said, "They will be found by me," and added, "They have also commanded that no meetings be held in any place and that no one enter the cemeteries. Therefore, if anyone disobeys this salutary command, he shall be punished with death." Bishop Cyprian replied, "Do what you are commanded!"

#### The preparations for the second interrogation (September 13, 258)

2. Tunc Paternus proconsul iussit beatum Cyprianum episcopum in exilium deportari. cumque diu ibidem moraretur, successit Aspasio Paterno proconsuli Galerius Maximus proconsul, qui sanctum Cyprianum episcopum ab exilio reuocatum sibi iussit praesentari.

Cumque Cyprianus sanctus martyr electus a Deo de ciuitate Curubitana, in qua exilio ex praecepto Aspasio Paterni tunc proconsulis datus fuerat, regressus esset, ex sacro praecepto in suis hortis manebat et inde quotidie sperabat ueniri ad se, sicut illi ostensum fuerat.

2. Then Proconsul Paternus ordered the blessed Bishop Cyprian to be deported into exile. And while he remained there for a long time, Proconsul Aspasio Paternus was succeeded by Proconsul Galerius Maximus, who ordered that the holy Bishop Cyprian, after being recalled from exile, should be brought before him.

And when Cyprian, holy martyr chosen by God, returned from the city of Curubis, to which he had been sent into exile by order of the then proconsul Aspasio Paternus, he remained in his country estate in accordance with the holy commandment, and from there he hoped daily that they would come to him, as had been promised.

Et cum illic demoraretur, repente idibus Sepembris Tusco et Basso consulibus uenerunt ad eum principes duo, unus strator officii Galeri Maximi proconsulis, qui Aspasio Paterno successerat et alius eustrator a custodibus eiusdem officii.

qui et in curriculum eum leuauerunt in medioque posuerunt et in Sexti perduxerunt, ubi idem Galerius Maximus proconsul bonae uoletudinis recuperandae gratia secesserat.

et ita idem Galerius Maximus proconsul in aliam diem Cyprianum sibi reseruari praecepit. et eo tempore beatus Cyprianus ductus ad principem et stratorem eiusdem officii Galeri Maximi proconsulis clarissimi uiri secessit et in hospitio eius cum eo in uico qui dicitur Saturni inter Veneream et Salutariam mansit.

illuc uniuersus populus fratrum conuenit. et cum hoc sanctus Cyprianus comperisset, custodiri puellas praecepit, quoniam omnes in uico ante ianuam hospitii principis manserant.

And while he was there, suddenly, on the Ides of September of the year when Tuscus and Bassus were consuls [September 13, 258], two high-ranking officials came to him. One was an adjutant from the staff of the proconsul Galerius Maximus, who had succeeded Aspasius Paternus in office, and the other was a cavalry captain from the same staff.

They lifted him onto a cart, placed him in the middle, and took him to [a place called Ager] Sexti [estate of Sextus], where the aforementioned proconsul Galerius Maximus had retired to recover his health.

And so the aforementioned proconsul Galerius Maximus ordered that Cyprianus should be spared for the next day. And at that time, the blessed Cyprianus went to the higher-ranking official, the cavalry captain from the staff of the proconsul Galerius Maximus, and stayed with him in his lodgings in the village called [the village of] Saturnus, between Venerea and Salutaria.

All the congregation of the brothers went there, and when Saint Cyprian heard of this, he ordered that the girls be guarded, because they had all been waiting in front of the door of the place of the official.

### The second interrogation (September 14, 258)

3. et ita altera die octaua Kalendarum Octobrium mane multa turba conuenit ad Sexti secundum praeceptum Galeri Maximi proconsulis. et ita idem Galerius Maximus proconsul eadem die Cyprianum sibi offerri praecepit in atrio Sauciolo sedenti.

cumque oblatus fuisset, Galerius Maximus proconsul Cypriano episcopo dixit: tu es Thascius Cyprianus? Cyprianus episcopus respondit: ego sum.

Galerius Maximus proconsul dixit: tu papam

3. And so it came to pass that on the following day, the eighth day before the Kalends of October [September 14], early in the morning, a large crowd gathered at [Ager] Sexti, in accordance with the command of the proconsul Galerius Maximus. And so the aforementioned proconsul Galerius Maximus ordered that Cyprian be delivered to him on the same day, while he was sitting in the Atrium Sauciolum.

And when he had been delivered to him, Proconsul Galerius Maximus said to Bishop Cyprianus, "Are you Thascius Cyprianus?" Bishop Cyprianus replied, "I am."

Proconsul Galerius Maximus said, "Have you

te sacrilegae mentis hominibus praeuisti?  
Cyprianus episcopus respondit: ego.

Galerius Maximus proconsul dixit: iusserunt  
te sacratissimi imperatores caeremoniari.  
Cyprianus episcopus dixit: non facio.

Galerius Maximus ait: consule tibi. Cyprianus  
episcopus respondit: fac, quod tibi praecep-  
tum est. in re tam iusta nulla est consultatio.

presented yourself to the people as pope with a  
sacrilegious spirit?" Bishop Cyprian replied, "I  
have."

Proconsul Galerius Maximus said, "The most  
holy emperors have commanded that you offer  
sacrifice." Bishop Cyprian said, "I will not do  
that."

Galerius Maximus said, "The consul commands  
you!" Bishop Cyprian replied, "Do what you are  
commanded. In such a just matter, no further  
consultation is necessary."

#### Cyprian sentenced to death

4. Galerius Maximus collocutus cum concilio  
sententiam vix et aegre dixit verbis huius-  
modi: diu sacrilega mente vixisti et plurimos  
nefariae tibi conspiracy homines aggre-  
gasti et inimicum te diis Romanis et religion-  
ibus sacris constituisti, nec te pii et sacratis-  
simi principes Valerianus et Gallienus Au-  
gusti et Valerianus nobilissimus Caesar ad  
sectam caeremoniarum suarum reuocare  
potuerunt. et ideo, cum sis nequissimorum  
criminum auctor et signifer deprehensus, eris  
ipse documento his quos scelere tuo tecum  
aggregasti: sanguine tuo sancietur disciplina.

4. After Galerius Maximus had consulted with  
the council, he announced the verdict with diffi-  
culty and reluctance, saying: "You have lived a  
long time in a sacrilegious spirit and have gath-  
ered many people around you in your wicked  
conspiracy, making yourself an enemy of the Ro-  
man gods and of the most holy religions, and  
even the pious and most holy princes Valerian  
and Gallienus Augustus and Valerian, the most  
noble Caesar, could not bring you back to the  
principles of their ceremonies. And therefore,  
because you are the perpetrator of the most  
wicked crime and have been arrested as its stan-  
dard-bearer, you yourself will become proof to  
those whom you have gathered around you in  
your crime. Through your blood, obedience to  
the law will be redeemed.

et his dictis decretum ex tabella recitavit:  
Thascium Cyprianum gladio animaduerti  
placet. Cyprianus episcopus dixit: deo gra-  
tias.

And after this was said, he read from the tablet:  
"It is pleasing that Tascius Cyprianus be exe-  
cuted with the sword." Bishop Cyprianus said,  
"Thank God."

#### Cyprian's execution (September 14, 258)

5. post hanc uero sententiam turba fratrum  
dicebat: et nos cum ipso decollemur. propter  
hoc tumultus fratrum exortus est et multa  
turba eum prosecuta est.

5. After this verdict, however, the crowd of  
brothers said, "We too shall be beheaded with  
him!" So there was a commotion among the  
brothers, and a large crowd followed him.

et ita idem Cyprianus in agrum Sexti produc-  
tus est et ibi se lacerna byrro expoliavit et  
genu in terra flexit et in orationem se

And so Cyprianus himself was led out to the  
Ager Sexti, where he took off his red hooded  
cloak, knelt down on the ground, and prostrated

Domino prostrauit. et cum se dalmatica exspoliasset et diaconibus tradidisset, in linea stetit et coepit spiculatorem sustinere.

cum uenisset autem spiculator, iussit suis ut eidem spiculatori uiginti quinque aureos darent. lintheamina uero et manualia a fratribus ante eum mittebantur.

postea uero beatus Cyprianus manu sua oculos sibi textit. qui cum lacinias manuales ligare sibi non potuisset, Iulianus presbyter et Iulianus subdiaconus ei ligauerunt.

ita beatus Cyprianus passus est, eiusque corpus propter gentilium curiositatem in proximo positum est. inde per noctem sublatum cum cereis et scolacibus ad areas Macrobiani Candidiani procuratoris, quae sunt in uia Mappaliensi iuxta piscinas, cum uoto et triumpho magno deductum est.

post paucos autem dies Galerius Maximus proconsul decessit.

6. passus est autem beatissimus Cyprianus martyr die octaua decima Kalendarum Octobrium sub Valeriano et Gallieno imperatoribus, regnante uero Domino nostro Iesu Christo, cui est honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum. amen.

himself in prayer before the Lord. And when he had taken off his dalmatic [wide-sleeved tunic] and handed it to the deacons, he stood there in only a linen tunic and began to wait for the executioner.

But when the executioner came, he ordered his men to give him 25 goldcoins. The brothers laid the burial cloths and bandages before him.

Later, however, the blessed Cyprian covered his eyes with his hand. Because he could not tie the bandages himself, the presbyter Julianus and the subdeacon Julianus tied them for him.

Thus died the blessed Cyprian, and his body was buried nearby due to the curiosity of the pagans. From there, it was removed during the night and carried with candles and wax torches to the estate of the procurator Macrobius Candidianus, located on the Via Mappaliensis near the water basin, accompanied by prayers and great triumph.

However, Proconsul Galerius Maximus died a few days later.

6. But the most blessed martyr Cyprian died on the eighteenth day before the Kalends of October [September 14] under the emperors Valerian and Gallienus, but under the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honor forever. Amen.