

## *Notes and Documents*

### NOTES ON SOME CHRONOLOGICAL QUESTIONS CONNECTED WITH THE PERSECUTION OF DIOCLETIAN.

#### I.

THE edict of Diocletian against the Manichees<sup>1</sup> is commonly dated in 296 or 297, or, as Mommsen prefers, 302. It is far more savage in character than the first edict against the Christians issued in 303; but it contains the provision for burning 'their abominable books,' and is therefore the first trace of such a policy.

Canon Mason<sup>2</sup> once attempted to clear Diocletian by shifting the date to 308, and assuming that Galerius had restored him against his will at Carnuntum in 307 as a purely nominal partner in the empire. As that theory is in some ways tempting, it may be as well to place on record the reasons why it is untenable, though I understand that its author has now abandoned it. It rests on Haenel's text, which runs *Impp. Maximianus, Diocletianus et Maximinus nobilissimi A.A.A. Juliano proconsuli Africae . . . Dat. pridie Kal. April. Alexandriae*. Given this text and looking no further, there is a fair case for explaining the preference of Maximian to Diocletian (in this law alone out of some 1200) by referring it to the younger Maximian (commonly called Galerius), and dating it after Maximin Daza made himself Augustus in 308. But (1) the reading is corrupt (Huschke). The manuscript evidence is confused, but decidedly against it; and Mommsen boldly reads the usual *Impp. Diocletianus et Maximianus A.A. et Constantius et Maximianus nob. C.C.*, giving 293-305 as the limits of date. However that may be, (2) the reading is impossible. Diocletian might give orders to a proconsul of Africa, but neither Galerius nor Maximin, for Africa was under Alexander and Maxentius, and therefore subject to neither of them. So Dr. Mason proposes an imaginary proconsul of Armenia. A proconsul of Asia or of Achaia would at least have had a real existence: but the dilemma is hopeless. Galerius ruled both Asia and Achaia; but he was certainly not at Alexandria after 308. Maximin could date from Alexandria; but he never ruled Achaia at all, and Asia only after the death of Galerius.

<sup>1</sup> *Mos. et Rom. Legum Collatio*, xv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Persec. of Diocl.* 279.

Thus we are thrown back on Diocletian, and have to choose between his visits of 296-7 and 302. Mommsen prefers the latter, but the former much better suits the hostile allusions to Persia. Maximian was also busy in Africa with the Quinquegentiani. It may be added that though it might be too bold to find Julianus in the M. IVLLIO T . . . . NO (five letters lost) of C. I. L. t. viii. no. 1550, one of the years 295-6 and 296-7 is open for his proconsulship. For that matter, 302 is open too, for we have no certain dates between Dionysius in March 298, and Anullinus in June 303, though Tertullus may fall in the interval. Upon the whole, the allusions to Persia may decide us for 31 March 297, after the suppression of Achillaeus.

## II.

There is an interesting difficulty about certain dates in Eusebius *de martyribus Palaestinae*. Most writers overlook it, or vaguely surmise that something is wrong; and even Bruno Violet, the last laborious German,<sup>3</sup> tosses it aside with something like impatience. It is easily stated. On four occasions Eusebius adds the days of the week to the year and the day of the month, which he gives for all his martyrs. The difficulty is that we get an impossible date every time. Let us first notice that Eusebius treats Macedonian and Roman months as identical. Thus, when he says that Dystrus 24 is *a. d. ix. Kal. Apr.*, he means that Dystrus corresponds day for day with March. He begins, then, by telling us that Diocletian's first edict, which was issued 24 Feb. 303, and was received at Caesarea<sup>4</sup> 19 March, was published throughout Palestine in Xanthicus or April. I cannot follow Bruno Violet in seeing a contradiction in these two last facts. From this point, then, he seems to reckon the years of the persecution. Here again Bruno Violet has failed to prove that he begins these years in January. Then come the four dates, thus—

1. (c. 1.) Procopius, the first martyr, Δισίου μηνὸς ἐβδόμη, πρὸ ἑπτα Εἰδῶν Ἰουνίων λέγοιτ' ἂν παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις, ἡμέρα τετράδι σαββάτου in the first year. No various reading to notice. Thursday, 7 June, 303. That day was Monday.

2. (c. 4.) Apphianus Ξανθικοῦ μηνὸς δευτέρα, ἥτις ἂν εἴη τεσσαρῶν Νώνων Ἀπριλλίων, in the third year. No various reading to notice. This must be 306, not 305, for Maximin Daza figures in the story, and he only became Caesar 1 May 305. The date will be Friday, 2 April 306. That day was Tuesday.

3. (c. 6.) Agapius πρὸ δώδεκα Καλανδῶν Δεκεμβρίων, ἥ γένοιτ' ἂν μηνὸς Δίου εἰκάδι, προσαββάτου ἡμέρα, in the fourth year, viz. 20 Nov. 306: but what day of the week? Προσάββατον is a rare word, but its associations point to Friday, which is the reading of

<sup>3</sup> *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, xvi. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *H. E.* viii. 1.

the Syriac. But Friday 20 Nov. is an impossible date throughout the persecution, not occurring between 302 and 313. It seems, therefore, better either to follow the Venetian *Menaeum* and the *Synaxarium Sirmondi*, which seems well informed on these November martyrs, in reading 19 Nov. ; or else, if it be not too bold a conjecture, it may be that *προσάβατον* was sometimes used by Christians for Saturday, or is put down by mistake for Saturday. However, 20 Nov. 306 was Wednesday.

4. (c. 1.) Theodosia of Tyre, *μηνὸς δευτέρᾳ Ξανθικοῦ, ἥτις ἐστὶ πρὸ τεσσάρων Νόωνων Ἀπριλλίων, ἐν αὐτῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ἀναστάσεως* in the fifth year : viz. Easter day (or at any rate, Sunday) 2 April 308. That day was Friday. One Greek manuscript has 4 April, which in 308 was Sunday : but it keeps the inconsistent *a. d. iv. Non. Apr.* The Syriac says Sunday without defining it. The *Synaxarium Sirmondi* and some *Menaea* give 29 May. They do not mention the day of the week ; but this was Sunday in 309.

Now comes the question. All four dates being wrong, where is the mistake? Is it in the Roman dating? Hardly. At one time, indeed, the calendar was a chaos in the East. The months began on different days, varied in length, and even held different places in the calendars of different cities. Thus Dios was the first month at Gaza, the second at Ascalon ; and in both cities the calendar was really Egyptian. So, too, it was the second month at Tyre, but began 18 Oct. instead of 27 Oct. ; while at Sidon it stood fourth, and answered to January. But long before the time of Eusebius the Macedonian months exactly corresponded to the Roman. Doubtless it is conceivable that he may have overlooked some survival of, say, the old Tyrian calendar, and set down Xanthicus 2 for 2 April when it really meant 22 March or 19 April. But Eusebius was not likely to make such a mistake, and there is no evidence that he did. What then? Is it a mere blunder, as Bruno Violet thinks?

Possibly the error lurks in the year. Suppose we assume the other data to be correct, and adjust the year to them. Thus :

1. Procopius the first martyr, Thursday, 7 June, in the first year of the persecution. This is right for 305.

2. Apphianus on Friday, 2 April, in the third year. This is right for 308.

3. Agapius on Friday, 19 Nov., in the fourth year. This is right for 308.

4. Theodosia on Sunday (perhaps Easter), 2 April, in the fifth year. This is right for 310, when Easter day was 2 April.

Thus most of the difficulty vanishes if we may take it that Eusebius is not counting from the first edict in 303, but from the accession of Maximin Daza, 1 May, 305. But this is precisely what

we cannot do. He does seem indeed to reckon from 305, when he tells us (c. 13) first that the persecution raged for seven years and abated in the eighth, then that it lasted eight full years. The Syriac also puts the execution of Silvanus in the eighth year. The seventh year from May 305 carries us past the last execution at Caesarea, 7 March which will be in 312, and the eighth brings us nearly to Maximin's final edict in May or June 313. Against this, however, must be set his statement (*H.E.* viii. 15) that it lasted ten years in all, abating at the beginning of the eighth.

But the decisive argument is the structure of the *De martyribus Palaestinae*. It would be wrong to lay stress on the apparent connexion of Procopius with the first edict, for we know that the book is imperfect at this point. Procopius may have suffered in 305, and still have been the first martyr. The first three edicts required no bloodshed. However a Christian might suffer under them, his life was in no direct danger. The savage fourth edict seems to have been issued at the *ludi saeculares* of April 304. So far the *Passio S. Savini* seems historical, though Eugenius Hermogenianus was not then *Praef. Urbi*. But the edict may conceivably have been kept back, perhaps by Diocletian, till Maximin was able to enforce it. So far the difficulties are not insuperable; but as we go on we are forced back on the date 303. After Procopius in June come the efforts to make the clergy (no mention of others) sacrifice according to the third edict. Then the Syriac connects Alphaeus and Zacchaeus, and the Greek Romanus, with the amnesty of the *Vicennalia*, and the Syriac and the Venetian *Menaem* tell us how Diocletian changed his punishment. Then in the second year Timotheus of Gaza is connected with what looks very like the fourth edict. After this the abdication of Diocletian and the accession of Maximin.

This settles the question that Eusebius did count from 303; but it does not touch the fact that the four dates are given as if he counted from 305. The conclusion is that the days of the week must be rejected. We plainly cannot remove Procopius from 303, nor Apphianus from 306; nor does there seem any very strong reason for shifting Agapius. Theodosia's case is far stronger; and the mention of Easter day might clinch the case for 310, if it were not directly contradicted by the fact that the last of the Palestinian martyrs was given to the beasts three weeks before—Eubulus, 7 March in the seventh year.

It would seem that the days of the month give the real dates, and that when Eusebius added the days of the week, he gave them as if from the calendar of the next year but one. Given 2 April for Theodosia, this would bring him to the statement that it was Easter day; but in the more careful Syriac he softens this into Sunday, 4 April, which being Sunday in 308, may possibly be right; but 29 May is evidently a later story.

H. M. GWATKIN.