

THE PAGAN ACTS OF THE MARTYRS

In recent years many additions have been made to the literature which scholars have called the "Pagan Acts of the Martyrs" or the *Acta Alexandrinorum*.¹ These *Acta* consist of a number of semi-literary pieces written primarily for the interest of Alexandrian Greeks throughout the first two centuries of the Christian era. They give a tendentious account in dramatic or "protocol" form of various encounters between prominent Alexandrian patriots and the Roman emperors, ending often but not always in torture or execution. Extant only in papyrus fragments, some only scraps of a few lines and others of considerable length, they have been constantly turning up at various times, either from excavations in Egypt or in sales of Greek papyri, since 1839 at least, although their importance was not fully realized till later.

The dramatic dates of the events portrayed in the *Acta* extend roughly from the reign of Augustus down to the reign of Commodus (180-92); they therefore precede and extend somewhat beyond the date of composition of the first Christian martyr-acts. Most of the actual papyri, however, on which the *Acta Alexandrinorum* were transcribed (often on the backs of discarded records and accounts) date from the end of the second or the beginning of the third century. Counting merely the pieces that have been published, some thirteen or fourteen distinct *Acta* have been identified with good probability.² For one reason or another—sometimes because Egyptian *fellahin* will deliberately tear up a manuscript and sell the pieces separately in order to fetch a higher price—fragments of this literature lie in libraries or museums

¹ See A. Bauer, "Heidnische Märtyrerakten," in *Archiv für Papyrusforschung*, I (1901), 29-47.

² The *Acta* already published are: (1) The "Boule-papyrus," ed. Norsa and Vitelli in *Papiri d. Società italiana*, X (1932), n. 1160, now in Florence. So-called because it recounts the demand of the Alexandrians for a *Boule*, probably of the emperor Augustus; (2) *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (*P. Oxy.* n. 1089), now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; it narrates (most probably) the bribing of the Roman prefect Flaccus in the Alexandrian temple of Serapis some time before the year A.D. 38; (3) the "Gerousia Papyrus," ed. by A. von Premerstein as *P. bibl. univ. Giss.* 46, Giessen, 1939; now in the Giessen Universitätsbibliothek. So-called because of its mention of an Alexandrian *gerousia*. The dramatic date is sometime at the beginning of the reign of Gaius; (4) *Acta Isidori*, existing in three recensions: *A*, ed. by U. Wilcken in his *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde*, I, 2 (1912) n. 14; *B*, ed. by Sir Harold Bell as *P. Lond. Inv.* 2785 in *Archiv*, X (1932), 5-16; and *C*, ed. by W. Graf Uxkull-Gyllenband as *P. Berol.* 8877 in *Sitzungsber. preuss. Ak. d. Wiss.* (1930), pp. 604-679. Most scholars today agree that the dramatic date is A.D. 52/3; (5) *Acta Hermais* (*P. Oxy.* 1242) ed. by Grenfell and Hunt, now in the British Museum. The dramatic date is sometime during the reign of Trajan before 114 A.D.; (6) *Acta Pauli et Antonini*, existing in two recensions, *A* and *B*. *B*, the later is *BGU* 341 (i.e.,

in Berlin (at least before the war), Giessen, Erlangen, London and Oxford, Florence and Milan, Cairo, Paris, Brussels, and at our own Yale University.

They have been originally styled "Pagan Martyr-Acts" because of their similarity in form with the Christian martyr-acts. I say similarity of form, because from the point of view of content it must be admitted, even by the most biased scholar, that to find actual parallels between the pagan and the Christian acts is difficult, if not impossible. Early researches in this field by Bauer, Holl, Geffcken,³ Reitzenstein,⁴ and others, gave the impression that much more could be discovered than actual research eventually achieved.⁵

Externally, of course, in both types of martyr-acts there is the use of the "protocol" style (an imitation of the official *protokolloi* or *commentarii*, the authentic minutes of the trial), the emphasis on sharp verbal exchanges, the display of a heroic contempt for death, and at times (though this is rarer in the authentic Christian acts) a caricature of the Roman officials involved.

Griech. Urkunden aus den kön. Museen zu Berlin) and was in Berlin before the war. A, the earlier, exists in two fragments: one in the British Museum, the other in the Louvre; best edition in Wilcken, *Zum alexandrinischen Antisemitismus*, Leipzig, 1909. These Acta concern the hearing of Greek and Jewish embassies before Hadrian and sometime after the Jewish revolt of 115-117; (7) *Acta Athenodori* (*P. Oxy.* 2177), ed. by Mr. C. H. Roberts, gives account of another embassy before Hadrian (most probably); (8) *Acta Appiani*, in two fragments from the same roll: one in the Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut, edited as *P. Yale Inv.* 1536 by Professor C. B. Welles in *Trans. Amer. Phil. Assoc.*, LXVII (1936), 7-23. The other fragment, now in the British Museum was edited by Grenfell and Hunt as *P. Oxy.* 33.

The following fragments have been identified as *Acta* with varying degrees of probability: (9) *P. Oxy.* 471, the "Trial of the Prefect Maximus" probably under the emperor Trajan, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; (10) *BGU* 588, an unidentified scrap first edited by F. Krebs in 1898; (11) *P. Fayum* 217, first edited in 1900 by Grenfell, Hunt and Hogarth; now in the Musée du Cinquantenaire, Brussels.

Others less probably are: (12) *P. Erlangen* 16, edited by W. Schubart in 1942; (13) *P. Bouriant* 7, from the Bouriant private collection edited by the late P. Collart, Paris, 1926; (14) *P. Aberdeen* 136, edited by Mr. E. G. Turner in 1939, acquired by the University of Aberdeen in 1896. This scrap merely mentions an "army" and then "the Jews."

³ See J. Geffcken, "Die christliche Martyrien," *Hermes*, XLV (1910), 481-505, and a few years later, K. Holl, "Die Vorstellung vom Märtyrer und den Märtyrerakte in ihrer gesch. Entwicklung," in *Neue Jahrb. für d. klass. Altertum*, XXXIII (1914), 521-56.

⁴ R. Reitzenstein, "Die Nachrichten über den Tod Cyprians," *SB. Akad. Heidelb.*, IV (1913), Abh. 14.

⁵ In this respect there is very little to be modified of what was said by H. Delehaye, *Les Passions des martyres et les genres littéraires*, Brussels 1921, esp. pp. 150 ff., even though many new pieces have been discovered since then. For a more recent treatment of pagan "martyr-literature" in general, see A. Ronconi, "Exitus illustrium virorum," in *Stud. ital. di fil. class.*, XVII (1940), 1-32.

The similarities, such as they are, may be accounted for in large measure by what I may call the "two milieus theory," often used by scholars to explain cases of apparent literary dependence. Two different milieus, here the Alexandrian Greek, on the one side, and the persecuted Christians on the other, even though absolutely isolated and without any interdependence, may actually produce similar works because of similar stimuli operating in each case in highly similar circumstances. In both cases here we have persecuted groups, Christians and Alexandrians, and in both a desire to preserve the account of their heroes' sufferings. Both fell under the legal machine of Rome: the Christians, charged with various capital crimes ranging from *maiestas* to the simple violation of the *senatusconsultum*, "ne sint Christiani";⁶ the Alexandrians, also tried and executed (usually) for *maiestas* in their stubborn struggle to overthrow the Roman yoke or at least to secure equitable conditions of government and taxation. But here the similarities cease; for the issue, at least in the more intelligible fragments of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, is clearly political. More often than not these Greeks seem to have been scoundrels; and the accounts of their trials stand today as perhaps the most violent extant criticism of Roman domination (a valuable check perhaps on the theme of most of the orthodox, traditional histories of Rome's great civilizing influence),⁷ as well as the earliest examples of fanatical anti-Semitism.⁸

The *Acta Alexandrinorum*, like the Christian acts, were probably not a single work, despite the efforts of some recent scholars to establish this.⁹ More likely they were the result of a simple reworking, from time to time, of the various accounts of the trials, preserved both orally and in documents. From various Christian acts, we know that a strict record was taken down by *exceptores* or *notarii* of all that was said or done during the trial; and once the account was read back and checked by the presiding official it was a grave offence to add anything irrelevant or change any detail. The approved

⁶ For a summary of the various charges on which the martyrs were allegedly convicted, see the article by H. Leclercq, "Martyrs," *DACL* 10 (1931), esp. 2425 ff., with the literature there cited.

⁷ See in this connection H. Fuchs, *Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom*, Berlin, 1938, esp. pp. 57 f.

⁸ See Wilcken, *Antisemitismus*, *sup. cit.*; Sir H. I. Bell, "Antisemitism in Alexandria," in *Journ. Roman Studies*, XXXI (1941), 1-19, who traces antisemitism down to Christian times.

⁹ V. g., A. von Premerstein, *sup. cit.*, and in his "Zu den sogenannten Märtyrerakten," *Philologus*, Suppl. 16, Heft 2, Leipzig 1923, who is followed in this by E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, Berlin, III (1923), p. 540 n.

commentarii or *acta* were then kept in official Roman archives. Access could be had to these archives for the purposes of reference, but so far as we know they could not be removed. However, there must have been the usual leakage due to bribery or corruption; many officials tried to recover *Acta* that had been "loaned out," while others in consequence forbade any commentaries to be written during the trials.¹⁰

The precise steps, of course, are obscure; but we do know that the Pagan Acts, like the Christian, did finally get into circulation. Professional writers were perhaps paid by interested parties to write up a more literary account, emphasizing the heroism of the Alexandrian Greek "martyrs" and the unscrupulousness of their Roman judges. From these archetypes resulted various copies and different recensions, each with its own peculiarities.

Various elements offer an interesting comparison with the Christian acts. In some cases, the penalties are similar; in others there appear the same emperors whom the Christians had to face—Claudius, Trajan, Hadrian, Commodus. In the *Acta Isidori*, the accused calls the Emperor Claudius "a cast-off son of the Jewess Salome";¹¹ and many other references occur in the *Acta* to the Romans' ill-breeding and lack of culture. In the so-called "Gerosia-Acta," the Emperor Gaius (Caligula) settles the case by having one of the parties burnt alive—a form of death usually reserved for the lower classes (the *humiliores*) and used especially, as we know, in the case of the Christian martyrs.¹²

In the *Acta Appiani* (a scrap of which is in Yale University Library), Appian, a gymnasiarch of Alexandria, is portrayed as boldly resisting the Emperor Commodus to his face. He contrasts Commodus' avarice and dishonesty with the philosophic kindness of his father Marcus Aurelius.¹³ Appian is urged by his fellow-prisoner Heliodorus to go forth calmly to his death: it will be his glory to lay down his life for his native city, Alexandria.¹⁴

Some of the *Acta* (v.g., *Isidori*, *Pauli et Antonini*, *Hermasisci*) are violently anti-Semitic. They become more interesting, too, when we realize how often in this early period Christians were mistaken for Jews, and the efforts they

¹⁰ For the specific references, see H. Leclercq, *loc. cit.* 2477 ff. and also *DACL* I (1907) 384 f.

¹¹ *Chrestomathie*, *loc. cit.*, n. 14, iii, 11 f.

¹² First recorded as used by Nero in his fantastic execution of the Christians (*Tac. Ann.* 15, 44); also, for the execution of St. Polycarp in A.D. 155 (*Mart. S. Polyc.*, XII, 3 ff.), of St. Pionius (*Acta S. Pionii*, 21), and many others. See Leclercq, *loc. cit.*

¹³ *P. Oxy.*, 33, ii, 7 ff.

¹⁴ κλέος σοί ἔστω ὑπὲρ γλυκυτάτης σου πατρίδος τελευτῆσαι, *ibid.* I, 12 ff. Later Appian goes out to die, clad in his gymnasiarch's fillet and white shoes, dramatically shouting to the Romans to witness his execution. Here we might well apply the censure of Marcus Aurelius (*Meditations* XI, 3), who accused the Christians of dying out of sheer obstinacy and a love of theatrics.

made to make the distinction clear to the pagan world. In the *Acta Isidori* which took place under Claudius, most probably about A.D. 52-53, Claudius and the various ladies of his court are portrayed as witnessing a legal action between Isidorus, Alexandrian gymnasiarch, and M. Julius Agrippa II—that Agrippa, before whom St. Paul was later to plead his cause, whose sister Berenice nearly became Rome's first Jewish empress.

Isidorus was a notorious leader of the anti-Jewish faction at Alexandria that had organized the Jewish pogrom of August, A.D. 38;¹⁵ and in the same year, to ridicule Agrippa I, they staged a mock mime, dragging through the streets a fool named Karabas dressed as a king with a crown of papyrus and a stalk for scepter, while they shouted in mockery "Marein, Marein!"¹⁶ At any rate, in one of the recensions of the *Acta Isidori* (*P. Berol.* 8877), Isidorus accuses Agrippa II and the Jewish nation of trying "to stir up the whole world." This (supposedly said in A.D. 53) is a striking parallel to the warning issued to the Jews by Claudius in the first year of his reign in the famous *Letter to the Alexandrians*,¹⁷ which has been interpreted by a few scholars, though probably without sufficient foundation, as referring to the early spread of Christianity.¹⁸

Probably the most interesting of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* is the so-called *Acta Hermaisci* (*P. Oxy.* 1242, now in the British Museum). It concerns a hearing (or a *cognitio extraordinaria*) before the Emperor Trajan sometime before the year 114. Two embassies visit the emperor at Rome—the precise grounds of complaint are unknown—one composed of eleven or twelve Greeks, accompanied by a certain Paul of Tyre, who is their advocate; the other of seven Jews (the number would appear to be significant). Most of the popular romantic literature of the period, no matter how fantastic, usually had some religious theme. Possibly for this reason—or perhaps the detail is not authentic—the Alexandrians and Jews are pictured as "carrying their own gods." The Alexandrians were carrying, we are subsequently told, a bust of the god Serapis; but the papyrus breaks off at this spot and we do not know what the Jews carried. It is difficult to believe that the anonymous pamphleteer, Greek though he was, would have attempted to portray the Jews as carrying an image of their God; more probably, as most scholars admit today, they brought along with them a parchment roll of the Torah, which the pagan felt they treated as something divine.

¹⁵ Philo *In Flaccum* 9, 67 ff.; Cohn-Reiter, VI, pp. 132 f.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 6, 36-9; Cohn-Reiter, p. 127.

¹⁷ Promulgated in November A.D. 41; see the edition by Sir H. I. Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt*, London, 1924, n. 1912.

¹⁸ For the literature on the controversy, see for example S. Lösch, *Epistula Claudiana*, Rottenberg, Bader, 1930, *passim*.

In the *Acta Hermaisci*, Trajan is caricatured as thoroughly dominated by his wife Pompeia Plotina; it is through her influence that both he and his senatorial council are biased in favor of the Jews. The papyrus is much mutilated, but in the last column (lines 40 ff.), the hearing has narrowed down to a verbal dispute between Hermaiscus and the emperor himself. It is Trajan who is speaking:

Trajan: . . . in your contempt for death you must be eager to die, answering me so insolently.

Hermaiscus: Why, it grieves me to see your council filled with impious Jews.

Trajan: Hermaiscus, this is the second time I am telling you: you are answering me insolently, taking advantage of your noble birth.

Hermaiscus: What do you mean, I am answering you insolently, *maxime imperator*? Explain this to me.

Trajan: Asserting that my council is composed of Jews.

Hermaiscus: So then, you do not like the name Jew? Then you ought to help your own people, and not take sides with the impious Jews.

As Hermaiscus was saying this, the bust of Serapis which they were carrying suddenly began to sweat, and Trajan was astounded when he saw it. And in a while riots broke out in Rome and numerous shouts were raised, and everyone began to flee to the hill-tops. . . .

And the papyrus breaks off before we can learn the consequences.

The word "impious" (*ἀνόσιος*) is probably not so much a term of abuse as a reference to the fact that the Jews, like the Christians, were thought to be atheists because they used no images and refused to worship the recognized gods of the State. At any rate, some scholars have characterized this last scene of the *Acta Hermaisci* as a conflict between Jahweh and Serapis. With the Jews on one side appealing to their sacred books and the Greeks on the other holding the bust of Serapis, it is the latter (according to our anonymous author) who manifests to the Romans the righteousness of the Alexandrians' cause. But the incident may, of course, have been apocryphal;¹⁹ in any case, it is questionable whether this precise religious conflict was consciously before the author's mind.

Of particular interest, however, is the reference to Trajan's privy council as "filled with Jews." This taunt of Hermaiscus can hardly have been true in its obvious sense. From the time of Claudius' expulsion of the Jews from

¹⁹ The phenomenon was familiar to Plutarch, who attempts to explain it naturally in his *Coriolanus* 38, 1 f. (ed. Ziegler-Lindskog, Teubner 1914, I, 2, p. 253). Without offering an explanation, the Byzantine writer Joannes Lydus (s. VI) in his *De ostentis* proem. 8 (ed. C. Wachsmuth, Teubner 1897, p. 16) asserts that sweating or weeping statues signify internal strife (*στάσεις ἐμφυλίου*).

Rome about the year 49/50,²⁰ and Nero's burning of the Christians in 64 (whatever his reasons may have been),²¹ it was undoubtedly dangerous to be suspected of the *vita Iudaica*. Then Vespasian was the first to levy a special tax upon the Jews of the empire, the odious *fiscus Iudaicus*. There were, of course, individual exceptions to this rule, whenever it suited the Romans' convenience; for example, in the case of the Herod family and Flavius Josephus. One of Vespasian's trusted lieutenants, Ti. Julius Alexander, procurator of Judaea,²² prefect of Egypt and later engaged in the siege of Jerusalem, was himself the nephew of Philo Judaeus and a renegade Jew.²³ As a matter of fact, it is possible that one of his descendants, who became a senator under Trajan, one Ti. Julius Alexander Julianus,²⁴ may well have been on the privy council at this time. However, such instances stand out by their very rarity.

Under Domitian, the Jewish tax was rigorously enforced and a system of denunciation developed by which anyone suspected of conversion to "the Jewish life" could be prosecuted.²⁵ The first clear evidence of a Roman of senatorial rank convicted of the crime of *vita Iudaica* is Flavius Clemens, *consul ordinarius* for the year 95, Domitian's own cousin and husband of Flavia Domitilla, the grand-daughter of Vespasian, Domitian's niece.²⁶

²⁰ Suetonius *Claud.* 25, 3: "Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes expulit." The decree here referred to is supported by Acts 18:1 ff. and Orosius VII, 6, 15, but strangely missing from Josephus, Eusebius and Tacitus. Dio Cassius (LX, 6, 6), writing over a century later, says that Claudius did not expel the Jews but merely forbade them to congregate. Whether or not, as some suggest, there was a revision made of a contemplated decree of expulsion, it became more and more difficult for Jews to remain at Rome. Suetonius' testimony is clear evidence of the fact that even at this period the Romans confused Christianity and Judaism. On the Claudian decree, see W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, London, 1927 (ed. 16), p. 254, and K. Lake in Jackson-Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, part I, v, London, 1933, pp. 459 ff.

²¹ Tac. *Ann.* 15, 44 and Suet. *Nero* 16. On the reasons for the execution see the note of A. Momigliano in the *Camb. Anc. Hist.*, X (1934), pp. 887 f.

²² For the pertinent references see A. Stein in Pauly-Wissowa *R.E.* X (1917), 153-7, n. 59.

²³ Cf. Josephus *Bellum Judaicum* II, 220, 309.

²⁴ See Groag in Pauly-Wissowa, *loc. cit.*, 158 f., n. 61.

²⁵ Cf. Suet. *Dom.* 12, "qui vel improfessi iudaicam viverent vitam."

²⁶ I say the first *clear* evidence, for a discussion of all the prominent Roman personages to whom Christianity has been attributed would go far beyond the scope of this paper. Much of the essential evidence, both literary and archeological, is treated by Leclercq in "Aristocratiques," *DACL* I (1907), 2846-86, as well as under the various names. For Flavia Domitilla's inscriptions, see Dessau, *Insc. Lat. Sel.* 8306, and *Corp. Insc. Lat.* IV, 948, 8942. As for the others, there is some probability in suspecting that Christianity was the reason for the charges against Pomponia Graecina, wife of the consul Aulus Plautius, *superstitionis externae rea* in A.D. 57 (Tac. *Ann.* 13, 32), and the consul M'. Acilius Glabrio

Cassius Dio tells us that both were condemned "on a charge of atheism, a charge on which a number of others were convicted who had been slipping into Jewish ways of life."²⁷ That Flavia Domitilla was a Christian, especially because of the discovery of her name and relationship on an inscription in the Catacomb of Domitilla, hardly anyone would deny, although the case is not so clear for Flavius Clemens himself. Whether he was actually a Christian or a catechumen, or perhaps merely sympathetic with his wife's religion, is immaterial to our present argument. The incident is at least a proof of how deeply the *vita Iudaica*, in its Christian form, had penetrated into the ranks of Roman nobility by the year A.D. 95, even before the presumed date of the *Acta Hermaisci* under Trajan.

Further it was the kindly Nerva, succeeding Domitian in 96, who abolished, along with the *fiscus Iudaicus*, the charge of *vita Iudaica*;²⁸ and hence it would not be rash to presume that during his reign as well as that of his successor Trajan, it became somewhat easier for a Jew or a Christian to hold the highest offices of the State, although admittedly there is no positive evidence of the fact until much later.

With these few indications then, fragmentary though they admittedly be, there would seem to be some historical foundation for Hermaiscus' exaggerated charge that Trajan's council "was full of Jews." It seems not unlikely that the remark, whether authentic or not, was a reflection of rumors that circulated in Alexandria with the encouragement of the anti-Semitic party. Such rumors would tend to group together the family of Herod, renegade Jews like Ti. Julius Alexander, liberal Jews like Josephus, and lastly perhaps those strange Roman proselytes who had "taken up Jewish ways of life." To the well-born Greeks of the provinces who were still ignorant of Christianity, the distinction would be insignificant.

There is one last point of contact we should indicate between the Pagan

condemned along with Flavius Clemens (Cassius Dio, in the summary by Xiphilinus, LXVII, 14, 1 ff. It is possible that H. Janne is right, in *L'Antiquité classique*, II (1933), 331 ff., in his suggestion that Christianity was the cause of the trial of the senator Cornelius Marcellus and Junia Lepida in the crime of "incestum . . . et diros sacrorum ritus" in A.D. 65 (*Tac. Ann.* 16, 8), and that Marcellus may have served as the foundation for the legend of the senator Pudens, supposed to have welcomed St. Peter at Rome.

²⁷ See Cassius Dio, LXVII, 14, 1-2, and Suet. *Dom.* 15. Oddly enough, Eusebius, in referring to the incident (*H.E.* III, 13) mentions only the penalty of Flavia Domitilla, making her the niece of the consul Flavius Clemens, instead of his wife. If Clemens himself had actually been a Christian, it is strange that Eusebius should have omitted the fact. Besides the article in *DACL*, see also Pauly-Wissowa, VI (1909), 2536-9, n. 62, with the literature there cited.

²⁸ Cassius Dio LXVIII, 1, 2.

Martyr-Acts and Christianity. The various scraps that we have recovered of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, together with certain scattered references in contemporary literature, all indicate that this pagan *Erbauungsliteratur* was quite extensive.²⁹ St. John Chrysostom may refer to it in one of his sermons.³⁰ And even earlier, Clement of Alexandria (who flourished about the very time when the *Acta Alexandrinorum* were being written) in speaking of martyrdom, warns the faithful against those pseudo-martyrs who deliberately immolated themselves: "these do not save the true note of martyrdom . . . but deliver themselves to a futile death."³¹ Again in another place he urges them to take profit from the tales of pagan "martyrs": men like Zenon who refused to reveal secrets under torture; another, who bit off his tongue and spat it in the tyrant's face; and still others, whose stories were told by Timotheus of Pergamum in his work *περι τῆς τῶν φιλοσόφων ἀνδρείας*.³²

There is no positive evidence, however, that Clement or any other Christian was familiar with the various Pagan Acts that have actually been recovered from the sands of Egypt. It is sufficient that they were acquainted with the "martyr" literature in general, with the tales of the deaths of Socrates, of Cynics, Stoics, and other philosophers whose example could well inspire them in the unique conflict that was to be theirs with established Roman authority; and "these for a corruptible crown."³³ Further, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the fact that the *commentarii* of the trials of the Greeks had been in circulation may well have stimulated the Christians to set about securing the *Acta* of their own martyrs.

How far the Christians, once the great tide of persecution had receded,

²⁹ For the references, see the article of Ronconi, *sup. cit.* n. 5, and the monograph of Von Premerstein *sup. cit.* n. 9. Cf., v.g., Pliny *Ep.* V, 5, 3; III, 16, 6; VII, 19, 5; VIII, 12, 4 f.

³⁰ *In. S. Babylam* 7 (PG LII, 543).

³¹ *Stromata*, IV, 17, 1-3 (ed. Stählin, II, p. 256, 1 ff.).

³² *Ibid.*, IV, 56, 1-2 (Stählin, II, p. 274, 1 ff.).

³³ If some scholars are right, it may have been the ideal of Christian martyrdom that actually inspired the Cynic Peregrinus Proteus of Parium in his dramatic act of self-immolation on a pyre at the Olympic games of A.D. 165, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (Lucian, *De morte Peregrini* 36 [ed. Jacobitz, Teubner, III, p. 294]). See the article by H. M. Hornsby, "The Cynicism of Peregrinus Proteus," *Hermathena*, XLVII (1933), 65-84, esp. pp. 81 f. The evidence of Lucian's essay on Peregrinus has not been fully exploited as an indication of the life of Asiatic Christian communities in the middle of the second century. If Lucian is to be believed, Peregrinus, after his conversion to Christianity, had held a prominent position in a Christian community as a writer and (probably) also as a presbyter, until for one reason or another he was excommunicated. Lucian suggests that he violated food-laws; but judging from the earlier career of Peregrinus, it was undoubtedly something more serious. See Lucian, *loc. cit.*, 11-16 (Jacobitz, 274-6). For a recent discussion, see Kurt von Fritz in *R.E.* XIX (1938), 656-63, n. 16.

changed and reworked the primitive commentaries for purposes of catechesis or edification, is beyond our present purpose to treat; the subject has been adequately dealt with by such scholars as Leclercq, Delehaye, and many others. What we do wish to indicate is the possibility of what we might term a *praeparatio evangelica*, even in the production of that literature we call the Christian martyr-acts, the literary monument to the countless "living and immortal beings, abiding forever in the keeping of that Church whose foundations are laid in their blood."³⁴

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³⁴ P. Allard, *Ten Lectures on the Martyrs*, London, 1907, p. 340.