

Legendae Martyrum Urbis Romae. Märtyrerlegenden der Stadt Rom. 2 vols. Eingeleitet, übersetzt, herausgegeben und kommentiert von Hans Reinhard Seeliger und Wolfgang Wischmeyer. Freiburg im Breisgau/Basel/Wien: Herder 2022 (Fontes Christiani 96/1–2). 616 p. € 45.00 and € 50.00. ISBN: 978-3-451-32930-2 and 978-3-451-32931-9.

These two attractively-produced volumes contain the Latin texts, with facing-page German translations and detailed annotation, of ten *acta* and *passiones* of Roman martyrs, composed during the fifth and sixth centuries A. D. The contents of the volumes are as follows (with the abbreviations used by the editors to refer to these texts):

1. *Martyrium beati Petri apostoli a Lino episcopo conscriptum* [BHL 6655]: I, pp. 23–71 (MPet)
2. *Passio sancti Clementis* [BHL 1848]: I, pp. 73–109 (PClem)
3. *Sanctarum virginum Pudencianae et Praxedis acta, auctore S. Pastore oculato teste* [BHL 6988–6989]: I, pp. 111–131 (APud)
4. *Acta martyrii Calixti episcopi* [BHL 1523]: I, pp. 133–161 (ACal)
5. *Acta et passio beatissimae martyris Caeciliae, Valeriani et Tiburti* [BHL 1495]: I, pp. 163–239 (ACaec)
6. *Passio sanctorum Syxti episcopi, Laurentii diaconi et Yppoliti ducis* [BHL 7811]: I, pp. 241–269 (PLaur)
7. *Passio Polochronii, Parmenii, Abdon et Sennes, Xysti, Felicissimi et Agapiti, et Laurentii et aliorum sanctorum mense Augusto die X* [BHL 6884, 6, 7804, 4753, 3961]: II, pp. 271–343 (PPolo)
8. *Acta sancti Sebastiani martyris* [BHL 7543]: II, pp. 345–471 (ASeb)
9. *Epistula de passione Agnetis* [BHL 156]: II, pp. 473–511 (PAgn)
10. *Passio sanctorum Gallicani, Hilarini, item sanctorum Iohannis et Pauli martyrum* [BHL 3236, 3238]: II, pp. 513–555 (PGal)

Each text is preceded by a brief introduction, arranged under the following headings: Inhalt (containing a brief summary of the contents of each text); Würdigung (including treatment of such topics as Verfasser, Datierung, Lokalisierung); and Textgrundlagen. On the whole, the Latin texts are based on

earlier editions, typically those published by the Bollandists in *Acta Sanctorum* or in the *Sanctuarium* of Boninus Mombritius, rather than on fresh collation of manuscript witnesses. This is an entirely understandable procedure,¹ given that some of the texts – e.g. ASeb and PAgn – are preserved in hundreds of manuscript copies (c. 450 for PAgn, c. 500 for ASeb, etc.). The Latin texts are accompanied by facing-page German translations, which are typically accurate and helpful, even when the syntax and punctuation of the Latin text is problematic or doubtful (see below). The texts are accompanied by valuable annotation which reveals the editors' formidable expertise in the scholarly literature of late antique Christianity; indeed, the scholarly annotation is one of the most valuable aspects of these volumes.

The ten Latin texts in the two volumes are based on previous editions, sometimes supplemented by collation of further witnesses (both printed and manuscript). In cases where the previous editions are sound, the texts printed by Hans Reinhard Seeliger and Wolfgang Wischmeyer are likewise sound, notably the MPet (based on an edition by Richard A. Lipsius), ACaec and PPolo (based on editions by the great Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye), and ASeb (based on the edition by Jean Bolland in the first volume of *Acta Sanctorum*). But in cases where the previous edition in question is defective, the text printed by Seeliger and Wischmeyer is likewise unsound, and the two editors have made little if any attempt to remove the defects of the printed edition which they reproduce: this is particularly the case when they rely overmuch on editions printed by Mombritius, Ángel Fábrega Grau, or Giovanni N. Verrando. I give some examples to illustrate these allegations (it is obviously not possible within the confines of a book review to treat every text in de-

1 Because of the importance of martyrs to the worship of the Church, the *acta* and *passiones* of Roman martyrs are typically preserved in large numbers of manuscripts. And because the texts were composed, for the most part, in plain and unembellished Latin prose, scribes invariably took great liberties with these texts while copying them. For this reason, there is very little point, from a text-critical point of view, in collating large numbers of manuscripts, most of which date, in any case, from many centuries later than the composition of the original text: the result of such collation is hugely inflated *apparatus critici*, recording scribal intervention of all sorts, but very rarely throwing any light on the original wording of the archetype. See M. Lapidge: Problems in Editing the *passiones martyrum* of Late Antique Rome. In: P. F. Alberto/P. Chiesa/M. Goulet (eds.): Understanding Hagiography. Studies in the Textual Transmission of Early Medieval Saints' Lives. Florence 2020 (Quaderni di "Hagiographica" 17), pp. 27–48.

tail); my examples are principally drawn from APud, ACal, PLaur, PAgn and PGal.

(i) APud c. 5 (I, p. 124): *Ad quam cum multi nobiles Christiani consolandi gratia venirent una cum sancto Pio episcopo. Venerat etiam ad eam germanus vester Novatus, qui est frater noster in domino, consolans eam et multos Christianos pauperes suis facultatibus reficiebat et ministrabat omnibus de facultatibus suis in honorem eiusdem virginis Praxedis [...]*

The first sentence (*Ad quam [...] Pio episcopo*) is not a simple sentence with finite verb; rather it is a subordinate clause with circumstantial *cum* construed with imperfect subjunctive (*venirent*), which precedes the main clause (*venerat [...] germanus vester*), to which is added a further subordinate clause introduced by the relative pronoun *qui* (*qui est frater noster*), to which is attached the present participle *consolans eam [...] suis facultatibus*.² The words *reficiebat et ministrabat* are finite verbs which begin a new simple sentence, which should be punctuated with a capital letter (*Reficiebat et ministrabat omnibus de facultatibus suis [...] etc.*).

(ii) APud c. 7 (I, p. 126): [...] *hoc est, ut in arbitrio tuo sit et sanctae virginis, quidquid dereliquit, et secundum, quod vobis placuerit, dispensare ea, potestatem habeatis.*

The punctuation here, with comma after *secundum*, is erroneous: the prepositional phrase *secundum quod* means “according to”, so that *secundum quod vobis placuerit* means “in accordance with what pleases you”.³

(iii) ACal c. 1 (I, p. 142): *venerunt trans Tiberim in Urbem ad templum Ravennatium et audierunt in quoddam coenaculo multitudinem christianorum psallentem [...]*

The indefinite pronoun *quoddam* is apparently an error for *quodam* (agreeing with *coenaculo*, abl.); but cf. p. 142, where the same phrase is construed correctly, this time in the accusative: *Et venientes in quoddam coenaculum, ingressi sunt [...]* (ACal c. 2).

(iv) ACal c. 7 (I, p. 156): *Misitque [scil. Alexander imperator] occulte trans Tiberim et tenuit eum. Praeciens ut in eodem loco fame cruciaretur.*

- 2 The translation (I, p. 125) treats the passage as two independent sentences, each with finite verb: “Und es kamen zu ihr viele vornehme Christen, zusammen mit dem heiligen Bischof Pius, um sie zu trösten. Es kam zu ihr auch euer leiblicher Bruder Novatus, der unser Bruder im Herrn ist, tröstete sie [...]” etc.
- 3 In spite of their misleading punctuation, the phrase is correctly translated by the editors: “wie es euch gefällt” (I, p. 127).

The phrase *Praecipiens [...] cruciaretur* is not a simple sentence with finite verb; rather it is a participial phrase dependent on the subject (understood) of the main clause.⁴ It would correctly have been punctuated [...] *tenuit eum, praecipiens ut in eodem loco fame cruciaretur*.

(v) PLaur c. 4 (I, p. 254): *Ingressus igitur urbem Romam Decius impiissimus Caesar cum Abdo et Senes cives Persarum viros christianissimos, quos pro Christi nomine victos et diversis suppliciis maceratos ex oriente abduxerat [...]*

Decius brought with him to Rome the two Persians Abdon and Sennes: the prepositional phrase with *cum* would correctly have been construed with ablative, not accusative: *Ingressus [...] cum Abdo et Senne, civibus Persarum, viris christianissimis [...]*. As is clear from the *apparatus criticus*, the grammatical error here results from the fact that Seeliger and Wischmeyer are reproducing the faulty text of PLaur from the edition of Verrando,⁵ a text crawling with grammatical error of every kind.

(vi) PAg्न c. 2 (II, p. 484): *Quae [scil. Agnes] dum a scholis reverteretur, a praefecti Urbis filio adamatur. Cuius parentes cum requisissent et invenissent, coeperunt pulchra offerre et pulchriora promittere*.

The editors have apparently understood *Cuius* at the beginning of the second sentence to refer to the son of the urban prefect; they then misinterpret the following verbs as referring to the parents of the son, hence the plural verbs *requisissent, invenissent* and *coeperunt* (“When his parents investigated and discovered [that she was nobly born], they began to offer beautiful gifts”, etc.). But *Cuius* refers to Agnes, not the prefect’s son, and the verbs which follow should be in the singular: it is the prefect’s son, not his parents, who investigates, discovers that she is nobly born, and then begins to offer beautiful gifts. Witnesses reported in the *apparatus criticus* at this point (Mombritius) offer the correct version of this sentence: *dum requisisset et invenisset, coepit offerre plurima* etc. (This is a rare case where the text of Mombritius is more accurate than that printed by Seeliger and Wischmeyer.)

4 Once again the translation (I, p. 157) treats the passage as two independent sentences, each with finite verb: “Heimlich schickte er nach Trastevere und nahm ihn gefangen. Er befahl, dass er an diesem Ort durch Hunger zu Tode gequält werden solle”.

5 G. N. Verrando: “Passio SS. Xysti Laurentii et Yppoliti”. La trasmissione manoscritta delle varie recensioni della cosiddetta Passio vetus. In: *RecAug* 25, 1991, pp. 181–221.

(vii) PAgn c. 9 (II, p. 496): *Sed ingressus ut misit ante se pueros ferventes et turpiter saevientes, cum nimia autem veneratione et ingenti admiratione egressos coepit impotentes arguere atque vanos et molles ac miseros iudicare.*

St Agnes has been placed in a brothel, where she is protected by a guardian angel; the son of the prefect visits the brothel with a group of lascivious companions, whom he sends on ahead of him to experience the virgin saint; but, after encountering the angel, they come back out full of admiration for the saint. The sentence as printed by Seeliger and Wischmeyer apparently has the prefect's son as its subject (*ingressus*), whereas we know from the following sentence – *Et irridens eos locum, in quo virgo adorabat, audacter ingressus est* – that the prefect's son did not enter the place until after his companions had entered and returned in wonderment. In the first quoted sentence, therefore, *ingressus* cannot refer to the prefect's son, but must be an error for *ingressos*, referring to the companions: the prefect's son began to ridicule “those lads (*pueros*) who had entered (*ingressos*), whom he sent in before himself (*ut* – perhaps read *quos?* – *misit ante se*), coming back out (*egressos*) in wonderment [...]”. The point of the sentence is the contrast between *ingressos* and *egressos*; the reading *ingressus* reduces the sentence to nonsense.

(viii) PAgn c. 10 (II, p. 498): *Quare autem omnes, qui ad me ingressi sunt, sani egressi sunt, quia omnes dederunt honorem deo [...] etc.*

The punctuation obscures the point of the rhetorical question: Agnes is replying to the prefect (who has come to the brothel on hearing of his son's collapse) by asking a rhetorical question: “Why did all the others [the companions of the prefect's son], who came in to visit me, come back out in sound health? Because they all paid reverence to God [...]”. The Latin text should be punctuated with a question mark following *sani egressi sunt*; the following phrase begins a new sentence (*Quia omnes dederunt honorem Deo [...]*).

(ix) PAgn c. 11 (II, pp. 498–500): *Cumque universi foras fuissent egressi, prosternens se in faciem pavimenti rogare coepit dominum, ut iuvenem suscitaret.*

The phrase *prosternens se in faciem pavimenti* is nonsense (“prostrating herself on the face of the pavement”?),⁶ and the editors have mistakenly reproduced the text of an unreliable witness here (MS. N), in which the word *plorans* has

6 Translated as: “Als nun alle nach draußen gegangen waren, warf sie sich mit dem Gesicht auf den Boden [...]” (II, p. 501).

been corrupted to *pavimenti*. Read: *Cumque universi foras fuissent egressi, prosternens se in faciem, plorans rogare coepit dominum, ut iuvenem suscitarret.*

(x) PGal c. 1 (II, p. 526): *Quo cum triumphalibus infulis sublimatus acceptus esset Augusto et carus. Filiam eius sacratissimam virginem Constantiam constanter sibi poscebat uxorem.*

As above, in nos. (i) and (iv), the first sentence is not a simple sentence with finite verb; rather it is a subordinate clause with circumstantial *cum* construed with imperfect subjunctive (*acceptus esset*). The subject of the sentence, Gallicanus, had conquered the Persians who had invaded Syria; when, as a result of this triumph, he had become acceptable and dear to the emperor, he sought the emperor's daughter (Constantia) in marriage.⁷ The text should be punctuated with a comma after *carus* at the end of the subordinate clause, with *filiam [...] poscebat uxorem* following as the main clause. Furthermore, *Quo* at the beginning of the subordinate clause, as the subject of *acceptus esset*, should be emended to *Qui*.

(xi) PGal c. 2 (II, p. 528): *Nisi certissimum haberem mea deo nequaquam derelinqui, recte formidini meae et sollicitudini tuae locus quispiam esset.*

The pronoun *mea* is meaningless here; for *mea* read *me a*: “if I weren't certain that I would never be abandoned by God [*a Deo*] [...]”.

(xii) PGal c. 2 (II, pp. 528–530): *Sicut Christi virgo disposuit et velut sub arrationis locum dantur duo fratres eunuchi ex latere Augustae duaeque sorores Gallicani filiae ipsi Augusto traduntur.*

The phrase *et velut sub arrationis locum* is nonsense: *sub* is not a preposition here, and there is no such word as *arratio*; rather, *sub* and *arrationis* constitute the single word *subarrationis*. The word *subarr(h)atio* is first attested in Late Latin sources, and means a “pledge” or “surety” – as the editors elsewhere recognized.⁸ To make sense of the present phrase, the preposition *in* needs to be supplied: *et velut <in> subarrationis locum*, “and, as if in lieu of a surety”.

7 The single Latin sentence is misrepresented as two simple sentences, each with a finite verb, and translated as follows (II, p. 527): “Als dieser, mit den triumphalen Kopfbinden ausgestattet, vom Augustus empfangen wurde, war er ihm teuer. Er wünschte sich mit Nachdruck dessen Tochter, die verehrungswürdige Jungfrau Constantia, zur Frau”.

8 II, p. 486, n. 2: “Das seltene *subarr(h)o* begegnet zuerst in der Spätantike”, with reference to PAgn c. 3.

(xiii) PGal c. 3 (II, p. 532): *Te deprecor credens ut ipse iussisti, te quaeso agens, quod ipse promissisti, cum diceres: “Amen dico vobis: quod quaecumque petieritis a patre in nomine meo, dabit vobis”.*

Constantia prays on behalf of the two daughters of Gallicanus, quoting John 15:26; but the text as quoted here is erroneous, and should have been corrected: *quaecumque petieritis a patre in nomine meo, dabitur vobis*, “whatsoever you seek from my Father in my name shall be given to you”. What is the point of printing the erroneous phrase *dabit vobis*? Do the editors intend readers to understand that the author of PGal wrote *dabit vobis* (“He [God] will give it to you”) in spite of the fact that he is here quoting the Bible?

(xiv) PGal c. 4 (II, p. 532): *Hanc vero orationem fecisse Constantia ipsa narrante didicimus, quam etiam ab ea legimus scriptam, qualiter autem ad deum Atticam Artemiamque converterit. Studio praetereo celeriter narrandi martyrium Gallicani.*

Once again the editors’ punctuation fails to recognize that the words *qualiter* [...] *converterit* constitute a subordinate clause with an imperfect subjunctive (*converterit*), followed by the main clause with indicative (*praetereo*). The preceding sentence (*Hanc vero orationem* [...] *legimus scriptam*) terminates with the word *scriptam*, and should be punctuated with a period. The following sentence should read as follows: *Qualiter autem ad Deum Atticam Artemiamque converterit, studio praetereo celeriter narrandi martyrium Gallicani.*

(xv) PGal c. 5 (II, p. 534): *Cum Scytharum me gens in Thraciarum Philopolim urbem conclusisset* [...] etc.

Gallicanus relates that, when he was besieged by the Scyths in the city of *Philopolis* in Thrace. The spelling *Philopolis* is an error for *Philippopolis* (modern Plovdiv in Bulgaria), as the editors perfectly well realize: see their note 22 on p. 534: “Philippopolis, heute Plovdiv in Bulgarien”. The word *Philopolis* is an obvious scribal error: but why have the editors not corrected it? (Their *apparatus criticus* records no variant for this lemma.) Are we, as readers, meant to assume that it was the original author of PGal himself, rather than a subsequent scribe, who committed this error?

(xvi) PGal c. 5 (II, p. 534): *Cum Scytharum me gens in Thraciarum Philopolim urbem conclusisset et strages plurimas nostrorum fecisset, metuenti mihi confligere cum eis, quod exigua mihi manus, hostium vero militum esset innumerabilis multitudo. Insistebam sacrificiis dei et Marti vanas victimas offerebam.*

Here again the editors’ punctuation fails to recognize that the clause *Cum* [...] *conclusisset et* [...] *fecisset* is a subordinate clause with circumstantial *cum* con-

strued with imperfect subjunctives (*conclusisset, fecisset*), which precedes the main clause with its indicative verb (*insistebam*).⁹

These various examples of erroneous punctuation illustrate the two editors' unsuspecting reliance on defective earlier editions. The reliance is particularly unfortunate, because the faulty punctuation tends to obscure various linguistic features which characterize late Latin language, notably the syntax of subordinate clauses.¹⁰ Although they have brought a vast range of knowledge to the understanding of these texts, the editors have not made any attempt to impose overall editorial control on them, with the result (for example) that there is variation in treatment of the capitalisation of *Deus* and *Dominus*, which vary from page to page with *deus* and *dominus*.¹¹ Very little attempt has been made to remove or correct irregular spellings, so that one finds (e.g.) *annulo* (II, p. 486), *semitam* (II, p. 530), etc. A final point. The two volumes include texts which are entitled variously *acta* or *passio* (and in one case, *martyrium*). The title of the volumes – *Legendae Martyrum Urbis Romae* – was evidently chosen so as to embrace these various individual titles. But the choice of *legendae* as an all-encompassing description is an unfortunate one, for the word *legendae* used as a substantive (rather than adjectivally as a gerundive), in collocations such as *legendae sanctorum*, is not attested earlier than Jean Gerson (d. 1429), according to the electronic databases, and is disturbingly anachronistic when applied to texts composed in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

In spite of lapses in grammar and syntax – and note that these mostly occur in texts where the editors have relied on faulty earlier editions – these two volumes will prove exceptionally valuable to students of the early Church

- 9 The single Latin sentence is misrepresented as two simple sentences, each with a finite verb, and translated as follows (II, p. 535): “Als mich das Volk der Skythen in Philipolis [*sic*], der Stadt der Thrakier, eingeschlossen hatte und wir große Verluste hatten, fürchtete ich mich, mit ihnen eine Schlacht zu schlagen, denn meine Schar war klein, die Menge der feindlichen Soldaten aber unzählig. Ich drängte zu einem Opfer für einen Gott und brachte Mars törichte Tieropfer dar”.
- 10 On the syntax of main and subordinate clauses in Roman *passiones martyrum* (including all those which are included in the edition of Seeliger and Wischmeyer), see M. Lapidge: The Latin of the *passiones martyrum* of Late Antique Rome. In: PCPhS 66, 2020, pp. 96–143, esp. pp. 101–103 with Table 2.
- 11 Note, for example, I, p. 90, where *Domini nostri Iesu Christi* (line 2) is followed four lines later by *a domino postulant* (line 6). Such variation persists throughout the two volumes.

and late antique theology. They will also prove useful to students of related subjects, such as art historians interested in the depiction of the principal Roman martyrs in later art. For students of the Latin language of Late Antiquity, however, the texts printed in these two volumes will be a less useful resource.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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