

General Introduction

In the early third century, the Romans executed the catechumens Perpetua and Felicitas in North Africa in ceremonies to honor Geta's birthday, the younger son of Emperor Septimius Severus. The story of their martyrdoms is told in the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. In addition to these female martyrs, the *Passio* names Revocatus, Saturninus, and Secundulus as having been arrested with the women. Another Christian, Saturus—perhaps their catechist—turned himself over to the authorities after his fellow Christians were arrested. We learn nothing about the backgrounds of Saturninus or Secundulus, but Revocatus and Felicitas were slaves (*conserva*), and Felicitas was eight months pregnant. The author gives more information about Perpetua: she was around twenty-two years old, educated, well-born, properly married, had a father, a mother, and two brothers—one of whom was also a catechumen—and she was nursing a young son. If the narrator correctly identifies her as “Vibia” Perpetua, then she came from a prominent family in North Africa.¹ As the narrative progresses, we also learn that Perpetua had another brother, Dinocrates, who died of cancer.

Despite the text's scant details about these Christians, the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* is among the best known and most beloved early Christian martyr texts. It is often found in the syllabuses of Great Books courses and Western

1. Jan N. Bremmer, “Perpetua and Her Diary: Authenticity, Family, and Visions,” in *Märtyrer und Märtyrerakten*, ed. W. Ameling (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 77–120 at 87. Kate Cooper suggests that Perpetua was from a lower class and that the editor of the *Passio* obscured this in order to obviate some of the problems of the text; Cooper, “A Father, A Daughter, and A Procurator: Authority and Resistance in the Prison Memoir of Perpetua of Carthage,” *Gender and History* 23 (2011): 685–702.

civilization courses, as well as in specialized courses on women in early Christianity, or martyrdom and persecution. It is also a favorite of scholars of early Christianity, who examine, for example, its gendered language, its claim to be a firsthand account by a female Christian, its possible ties to the New Prophecy movement, its ecclesiology and soteriology, and its reflections on life in Roman North Africa.

The editor of the *Passio* purports to transmit, unchanged, the writings of two of the martyrs. Perpetua's first-person account of her arrest and imprisonment includes four visions she received while awaiting execution; in addition, she tells about her experiences in prison, her difficult encounters with her father, and her worries about her young son (chs. 3–10). Saturus's first-person account is of a vision he received in which he and Perpetua are taken to paradise (chs. 11–13). The framing chapters (1–2 and 14–21) are the work of an anonymous editor who provides a liturgical preface to the *Passio*, narrates the martyrs' deaths, and closes with a doxology.

The editor of the *Passio* does not relate the reason for the catechumens' arrests. Scholars have traditionally attributed it to an edict issued by Emperor Septimius Severus that made conversion to Judaism or Christianity illegal.² This theory has the benefit of explaining why the catechumens were arrested, while other members of the church had no fears about visiting them in prison. Unfortunately, though, there is no corroborating evidence of this edict by Severus, which many scholars now see as yet one more piece of unreliable information provided by the *Historia Augusta*.³ Thus, as with other early Christian martyr accounts, we do not know what led to the Christians' arrests or on what charges they were condemned to death.

HISTORY AND DATING OF THE *PASSIO*

The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* is the standard modern title for the text, but the manuscript history reveals that the text circulated under a variety of titles.⁴

2. See, for example, Joyce Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 81; Justo Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1984), 98; Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 101; W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Cambridge: James Clark, 2008), 321; Paul Keresztes, "The Emperor Septimius Severus: A Precursor of Decius," *Historia* 19 (1970): 564–78 at 573.

3. See Timothy D. Barnes, "Legislation against the Christians," *JRS* 58 (1968): 32–50 (esp. 49–41); William Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reactions to Montanism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 182–88.

4. See Thomas J. Heffernan, *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 104.

After having been lost to history, the *Passio* came to light again in the early modern period when Lucas Holstenius discovered a manuscript containing the Latin text in the Benedictine Monte Cassino monastery. This text was published posthumously in 1663 under the title *Passio sanctarum martyrum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. In 1664 another edition of the Monte Cassino manuscript was published, this time accompanied by an abridged version of the *Passio* in Latin. This shorter version is now known, following C. J. M. J. van Beek's title, as the *Acta brevia sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. Despite being rediscovered at almost the same time, by 1689 the *Acta* had been passed over by scholars in favor of the *Passio*. From late antiquity to the early modern period, however, the tradition about the martyrs may have been best known through the shorter *Acta*.⁵ Indeed, it was the *Acta* that Jacobus de Voragine utilized in writing his account of Perpetua and Felicitas in the *Legenda aurea*.⁶ Manuscript witnesses for the *Acta* are considerably more numerous than for the *Passio*: Van Beek lists eighty-nine manuscripts of the *Acta* (seventy-six of A and thirteen of B), dating from the eighth to seventeenth century.⁷ There are ten extant manuscripts of the *Passio*. The oldest, most numerous, and most widespread sources of the Perpetua tradition, then, are found in the manuscripts of the *Acta*.

In 1889 Rendel Harris discovered the Greek text of the *Passio* in the library of the Convent of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. At that time, Harris argued for the priority of the Greek version.⁸ Although the relationships among the Latin *Passio*, the Greek recension, and the *Acta* have been disputed, scholars are now in general agreement that the original account was written in Latin, with the Greek

5. Based on the extant manuscript witnesses, Margaret Cotter-Lynch suggests that while the *Acta* were the more popular form of the narrative on the Continent, it was the *Passio* that was used in England; Cotter-Lynch, *Saint Perpetua across the Middle Ages: Mother, Gladiator, Saint* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 116.

6. See Julia Weitbrecht, "Maternity and Sainthood in the Medieval Perpetua Legend," in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the "Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis"*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Marco Formisano (London: Oxford University Press, 2012), 150–66. Jacob did not include Perpetua's and Felicitas's stories on their feast day but, rather, as a secondary note to the feast of Saturninus, bishop of Toulouse, on 27 November. On this, see Barbara K. Gold, *Perpetua: Athlete of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 161.

7. Jacqueline Amat states that C. J. M. J. van Beek's list is incomplete, but she does not offer a new accounting of the manuscripts of the *Acta*; Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité suivi des Actes* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1996), 272–73. As with the *Passio*, Amat and Van Beek label the *Acta* differently. Here I follow Van Beek, using A and B = Amat I and II.

8. J. Rendel Harris and Seth K. Gifford, *The Acts of the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas: The Original Greek Text* (London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1890). Brent Shaw has documented that Harris changed his mind and ultimately agreed that the Latin was original; Shaw, "Postscript 2003," in *Studies in Ancient Greek and Roman Society*, ed. Robin Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 322–25. For a thorough examination of the Greek version of the *Passio*, see Brent D. Shaw, "Doing It in Greek: Translating Perpetua," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 4 (2020): 309–45.

translation dating as early as ca. 260 CE, and the *Acta* being produced in the fourth or fifth century.⁹ The Greek text does not appear to have been translated directly from any of our extant Latin texts. Instead, the Latin and Greek texts of the martyr account, along with the *Acta*, appear to derive from earlier Latin exemplars. The original text of the *Passio* has not been preserved. All of our manuscripts—nine Latin and one Greek—date to the medieval period (ninth–twelfth century). Most scholars consider MS 1 (Monte Cassino) to be the most reliable witness to the *Passio*, and, thus, it forms the basis of all modern critical editions.¹⁰

Although often conflated, the date of the events narrated (i.e., the deaths of the Christians) should be differentiated from the date of the written account (i.e., the *Passio*). The Latin *Passio* does not explicitly date the persecution that led to the martyrs' deaths. Nevertheless, scholars use internal evidence to situate the martyrdoms in a specific historical context. According to the *Passio*, Hilarianus was procurator when the proconsul, Minucius Timinianus, died (6.3; "Timinianus" appears to be a misspelling of "Opimianus").¹¹ At that time, Hilarianus assumed the position of acting proconsul. Minucius Opimianus was proconsul in 202/203.¹² Since the *Passio* dates the arrest, trial, and deaths of the martyrs in the time immediately following Opimianus's death in 203 CE, this would explain why the editor mentions his death and why Hilarianus had been given "capital authority" (6.3). By piecing together corroborating information from later martyrologies and calendars, scholars generally agree that the Christians died between 202 and 204 CE. The year 203 CE is most commonly given for their deaths.¹³

Scholars have also reached general agreement on the day of the martyrs' deaths, although the Latin *Passio* does not specify it, either. According to the Codex-Calendar of 354, Prosper's *Chronicon*, and other material evidence, the martyrs died on 7 March. It is this date that is most widely cited in modern and ancient references to the martyrdoms. The Greek translation of the *Passio*, however, speci-

9. Dates for these are discussed in the relevant chapters below.

10. Unless a specific manuscript tradition is identified, all discussions of the *Passio* in this volume refer to the modern critical edition as found in C. J. M. J. van Beek, *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (Nijmegen: Dekker and Van de Veegt, 1936), vol. 1. Subsequent critical editions—viz. those of Amat and Heffernan—do not differ in substantive ways from Van Beek's text. Joseph Farrell and Craig Williams emend the Monte Cassino text by adding material from the Greek text relating to the location of the Christians' arrest: Thurburbo Minus. This location is also specified in two Latin texts, Einsidlensis and Sangallensis (Bremmer and Formisano, *Perpetua's Passions*, 25). According to Heffernan, however, these two texts represent an independent line of transmission. Manuscript sigils vary according to editor. I employ those of Van Beek.

11. On Hilarianus, see James Rives, "The Piety of a Persecutor," *J ECS* 4 (1996): 1–25.

12. The Greek translation of the *Passio* specifies Minucius Opimianus. See discussion in Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 50–52.

13. Timothy D. Barnes argues for 204 CE; Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 66.

fies a different date: the Christians died “four days before the nones of February” (i.e., 1 February). Unsurprisingly, the different textual traditions—Latin and Greek—influenced the liturgical calendars of the Eastern and Western parts of the empire: the martyrs’ *dies natalis* is commemorated in the West on 7 March and in the East on 1 February.

If the martyrs died around 203 CE, the *Passio* itself still needs to be dated; that is, the date of the martyrdoms is not necessarily the same as the date of the written account. There is both external and internal evidence to consider when dating the *Passio*. The earliest reference to the martyrs is Tertullian’s *De anima*, which is typically dated before 210/211 CE. If Tertullian utilized a written account of the martyrdoms, then the *Passio* should be dated sometime before 210 CE in order for it to have become an established authority to which Tertullian could appeal. It is not clear, however, that Tertullian references a text *per se*; he may merely allude to an oral tradition about the martyrs. Thus, *De anima* cannot be used as evidence for dating the *Passio*. The earliest undisputed reference to the *Passio* is in Pontius’s *Life of Cyprian*. While Pontius does not mention the martyrs themselves, he does provide a clear allusion to the text’s prologue. Pontius composed his *Life* around 259/260 CE. The *Passio*, therefore, must have been written and circulated prior to this date.

Internal evidence in the *Passio* may move the date of writing even closer to the time of the martyrdoms themselves. The Monte Cassino manuscript includes a reference to Geta’s birthday (7.9).¹⁴ If this reference is original to the text, then the *Passio* should be dated before 212 CE, when Caracalla issued the *damnatio memoriae* of Geta.¹⁵ In this case, 211/212 CE would be the latest date of composition. Moreover, the text refers to Geta as “Geta Caesar,” a title he assumed in 198 CE and kept until 209 CE, when he took the title “Augustus.” On this basis, we may date the composition of the text to roughly 203–209 CE. Thomas Heffernan suggests that the reference to Geta’s birthday gives weight to the earlier date—namely, 203 CE—since records indicate that Septimius Severus and his sons spent the fall of 202 through the early summer of 203 in North Africa.¹⁶ If Geta’s fourteenth birthday was celebrated in North Africa, it would explain Perpetua’s comment in the *Passio*. In the end, however—since this dating is largely reliant on one manuscript—we

14. Other Latin manuscripts reference the birthday of the emperor but do not include the name “Geta.”

15. Jan N. Bremmer, “The Motivation of Martyrs: Perpetua and the Palestinians,” in *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs: Festschrift für Hans G. Kippenberg zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Brigitte Luchesi and Kocku von Stuckrad (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 535–54 at 540.

16. Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 70, citing R. M. Haywood, “African Policy of Septimius Severus,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 71 (1940): 175–85 at 177.

may be somewhat more certain of the date of the narrative setting than we can be of the final text.¹⁷

More specific overviews of the texts and material remains will be provided in the introductions that precede each. Four overarching issues, however, deserve attention here, since they have historically sparked the most disagreement among scholars.

AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHORIAL AUTHENTICITY

The central portion of the *Passio* is typically described as Perpetua's prison "diary." It is written in the first person and purports to contain her emotional, physical, and visionary experiences in prison. Saturus's vision is also written in the first person. The editor underscores the reliability of these accounts by claiming they are the *ipsissima verba* of the martyrs. He records Perpetua's own account "as she left behind written in her own hand and from her own experience" (2.3); similarly, he asserts that "Saturus made public this vision of his own, which he himself wrote down" (11.1).

Heffernan, among others, argues that the rhythms and syntax of the portions attributed to Perpetua and Saturus differ from each other and from the editorial frame; thus, he concludes, it is reasonable to accept the authorial attributions as reliable.¹⁸ Absent any conflicting information, that is, the text's claims concerning authorship should be believed. Since the editor explains that Perpetua was well educated, the literary skills reflected in these chapters are attributable to her education.¹⁹ Some scholars, such as Peter Dronke, moreover, have argued for the reliability of Perpetua's diary by claiming that it contains particular "feminine" topics (e.g., breastfeeding) and ways of writing.²⁰

Not all scholars, however, accept the authorial claims of the *Passio*. Those who are skeptical of the authorial attributions of the text argue that it would be difficult to pen such lengthy and moving literary accounts in prison.²¹ They also point out

17. Ellen Muehlberger has challenged the traditional third-century date of the *Passio*, suggesting instead that it best fits into the Christian context of the late fourth or early fifth century. Muehlberger, "Perpetual Adjustment: The *Passion* and the Entailments of Authenticity," *J ECS* (forthcoming).

18. See discussion in Heffernan, *Passion of Perpetua*, 82–83; Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 193–200; Bremmer and Formisano, *Perpetua's Passions*, 5–6.

19. Walter Ameling, "Femina Liberaliter Instituta—Some Thoughts on a Martyr's Liberal Education," in Bremmer and Formisano, *Perpetua's Passions*, 78–102; Gold, *Perpetua*, 115–20.

20. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua († 203) to Marguerite Porete († 1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1–17; Brent Shaw, "The Passion of Perpetua," *Past and Present* 139.1 (1993): 19.

21. See Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 84. There is a rich history of prison writing in early Christian literature—from Paul to Ignatius.

that the descriptions in Perpetua's account do not cohere with expectations of Roman women in the third century.²² Most skeptics, moreover, are unconvinced that the style of writing found in Perpetua's portion of the text is identifiably "feminine."²³

The acceptance of the authorship claims has often led to unnecessary psychological interpretations of the text; such readings focus more on the interiority of Perpetua's emotional life than historians can reasonably access.²⁴ Even if Perpetua were the author of the visions that have been transmitted in her name, they cannot reveal to us her inner psychological life. It seems, furthermore, that it is this perceived closeness to the martyr herself that has led scholars to privilege the "original text" and to ignore its later—and perhaps more influential—iterations. It is this problem that I hope to remedy in this volume by placing the Latin text alongside—without undue privilege—all other late ancient memories that have been preserved. Together these texts and traditions tell a larger and more important story of cultural appreciation, transmission, and appropriation than the Latin *Passio* could ever tell on its own, even if it were written by Perpetua and Saturus themselves.

Arguments surrounding the authorship of the *Passio* will continue to rage because there is, in the end, no definitive resolution to them. We may never know whether Perpetua and Saturus wrote these accounts or if the *Passio* preserves a forgery. Indeed, even if the visionary cycles were penned by someone other than the editor, we cannot know *who* penned them. Attributions of authorship are difficult to make for ancient texts in the best of circumstances—that is, when multiple texts are ascribed to the same person, such as in the Pauline corpus of the New Testament. But when there are no other texts to which to compare a document, we should not make unequivocal claims about its origins and hand.

Even if it is not possible to make a compelling argument for (or against) the authorship of the first-person narratives attributed to Perpetua and Saturus, we can safely discuss the editorial interests of this text. The compiler of the *Passio* was manifestly interested in setting this account of martyrdom alongside other authoritative Christian texts. He asserts that recent accounts of God's action in the world are no less important or revealing than those that occurred in the past; they illustrate the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within the Christian community. He reminds his readers that these recent events will also someday be ancient, just as

22. Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 84–85.

23. Ross S. Kraemer and Shira L. Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 2:1048–68. In addition, Kraemer and Lander point out Augustine's question about the authenticity of the visions of Dinocrates (*De natura et origine animae* 4.10.12). They also claim that the *Passio* appears to be an extended commentary on Joel 2:28–29/Acts 2:17–18 and, thus, is a literary and theological production more than it is a historical one.

24. Heffernan warns about this (*Passion of Perpetua*, 7–8), but his commentary is heavily informed by psychological interpretations.

the authoritative traditions are now. The final chapter of the *Passio* suggests that the editor intended it to be used in liturgical contexts.

Scholars have occasionally attributed the final text to Tertullian. Indeed, J. Armitage Robinson did so in 1891, citing similarities of language between Tertullian's authentic writings and the *Passio*.²⁵ There is no reason to assume Tertullian was the editor, though, and the case is seldom made today.²⁶ Arguments in favor of Tertullian's authorship often rely on circumstantial evidence: he was in North Africa, he also wrote about the continued work of the Holy Spirit—citing the obvious scriptural passages—and he knew traditions about the martyrs. But this description must be true of many Christians in the North African church. Simply because we believe Tertullian lived in Carthage at the time the text was written and that he demonstrates knowledge of the martyrs is not evidence for his hand in editing the text. To borrow Maureen Tilley's words, "Proximity does not guarantee authorship."²⁷ In fact, one argument often made against Tertullian as author of the *Passio* is that in *De anima* he may misattribute Saturus's vision to Perpetua.

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

Although scholars are now in general agreement that the *Passio* was originally written in Latin, there has been considerable debate on this issue since Harris first argued for the priority of the Greek in his 1890 publication of the Greek text. Harris himself later changed his mind and conceded that Latin was the language of composition. But some scholars—for example, Robin Lane Fox and Glen Bowersock—continue to suggest that the Greek was original.²⁸

Arguments for the priority of the Latin *Passio* are typically mounted on the basis of language and syntax. Robinson argued in 1891 that the Latin text preserved three distinct voices, while the Greek text was homogeneous; thus, the Greek text appears to be the work of one person whose translation has obscured the differences in the

25. J. Armitage Robinson, *The Passion of S. Perpetua* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891).

26. See René Braun, *Approches de Tertullien: Vingt-six études sur l'auteur et sur l'oeuvre (1955-1990)* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1992), 287–99 = VC 33 (1979): 105–17. Recently, Jeronimo Leal and Giulio Maspero have argued for Tertullian's authorship of the incipit based on a quantitative analysis of Tertullian's writings, though their results have not been widely accepted; Leal and Maspero, "Revisiting Tertullian's Authorship of the *Passio Perpetuae* through Quantitative Analysis," in *Text and Language: Structures, Functions, Interrelations; Quantitative Perspectives*, ed. Peter Grzybek, Emmerich Kelih, and Ján Mačutek (Vienna: Prasens, 2010), 99–108.

27. Maureen Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 2:829–58 at 832.

28. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine* (London: Penguin, 1986), 401. See also Louis Robert, "Une vision de Perpétue martyre à Carthage en 203," *CRAI*, 1982, 256; Glen Bowersock, *Martyrdom & Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34.

Latin prose styles.²⁹ For example, in Latin, the editor's prose is complex with a tendency toward subordinating clauses, while "Perpetua's" prose is characterized by short, simple sentences. The uniformity of the Greek version suggests that its author flattened out the differences in voice and syntax in the process of translation. The Greek text also appears to be more indebted to doctrinal terminology than is the Latin, and it is more likely to quote passages from scripture, suggesting, perhaps, a later, more theologically oriented author.

Though acknowledging that Latin was the original language of the *Passio*, Jan Bremmer has argued that the Greek text, in some places, represents an older tradition than the Latin and can be used to supplement and interpret difficult passages in the Latin text. For instance, he argues that the Greek text correctly preserves the location of the catechumens' arrest, Thuburbo Minus, and the identity of the proconsul, Minicius Opimianus, who preceded Hilarianus.³⁰

In addition to questions regarding the language of composition of the entire *Passio*, debates have raged concerning the original language of discrete parts. Some, for instance, have argued that Perpetua wrote in Greek, and, thus, a large part of the *Passio* was originally in Greek, only subsequently translated into Latin by the editor. Bowersock—and E. R. Dodds before him—makes this claim because, in his view, certain passages of the Greek are more precise and culturally appropriate than the Latin.³¹ In addition, Perpetua's brother, Dinocrates, has a Greek name, perhaps suggesting a Greek background for her family. On the other side of the argument, however, Walter Ameling has argued that the Greek aspects of Perpetua's text amount to nothing more than loanwords. Similarly, there have been claims that Saturus's vision was originally composed in Greek.³² In his vision, however, Saturus specifies that Perpetua spoke Greek to the feuding clerics (13.4). If the vision were written in Greek, such a notice would be hard to explain: Why would Saturus specify the Greek language if the vision were already in Greek? These arguments concerning the language of the visions have not been adopted by the

29. See detailed discussion of the relationship between the Latin and Greek texts in Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography*, 68–71. Heffernan makes a similar argument in *Passion of Perpetua*, 82.

30. Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 82. Shaw also finds the Greek text to be, in places, "technically superior." Shaw, "Doing It in Greek," 316–17.

31. See Bowersock, *Martyrdom & Rome*, 535–36; E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 50. But see Ameling's counterarguments in "Femina Liberaliter Instituta," 88.

32. See Åke Fridh, *Le problème de la Passion des saintes Perpétue et Félicité* (Göteborg: Elanders boktryckeri aktiebolag, 1968), 82; Renzo Petraglio, *Lingua Latina e mentalità biblica nella Passio sanctae Perpetuae: Analisi di caro, caralis e corpus* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1976), 86; Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography*, 71; Tilley, "Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas," 832. But see Jan N. Bremmer, "The Vision of Saturus in the *Passio Perpetuae*," in *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst*, ed. Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 55–74 at 57 for a counterargument.

majority of scholars. Whether or not the original text was composed by a single author or was pieced together from multiple sources by an editor, there is almost universal agreement among scholars today that the *Passio* as a whole was originally composed in Latin.

ASSOCIATION WITH THE NEW PROPHECY

As with the question about authorship, whether or not the *Passio* reflects the New Prophecy movement continues to divide scholars. Arguments in favor of the *Passio*'s Montanist leanings go back to the text's modern rediscovery: Henri de Valesius introduced this thesis in the preface to his 1664 edition of the Monte Cassino manuscript.³³ According to some scholars, the *Passio* in its entirety has been influenced by the New Prophecy; recently, this position has been argued most strenuously by Rex Butler. For others, the editor—but not the martyrs—is responsible for the Montanist aspects of the text. There is an interesting confessional divide among scholars on this issue, as Butler and Christoph Markschies note: Protestant scholars tend to argue in favor of the text's Montanist associations, while Catholic scholars tend to argue against them.³⁴

The New Prophecy was attractive to some in Carthage, as Tertullian shows us. Indeed, if Tertullian were the editor of the *Passio*, that might provide some evidence of its heterodoxy.³⁵ Scholars who posit the *Passio* as a Montanist text often do so by citing its interests in supposedly Montanist beliefs: the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, the leadership of women, visionary experiences, and an elevated eschatology. The problem with this approach, however, is twofold. First, it imports the New Prophecy of Phrygia—that of Montanus, Priscilla, Maximilla, and Quintilla—to North Africa.³⁶ But the evidence demonstrates that Montanism was practiced differently in areas across the empire. Indeed, it is difficult to establish peculiarly Montanist positions at all, since New Prophecy teachings differed by

33. Valesius wrote: "quamvis haec Acta collecta sint ab homine haeretico, non idcirco tamen minor apud nos esse debet eorum auctoritas." (Although these Acta were collected by a heretical person, nevertheless, we must not, on that account, give it less authority.)

34. Rex D. Butler, *The New Prophecy and "New Visions": Evidence of Montanism in the Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006); Christoph Markschies, "The *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* and Montanism?," in Bremmer and Formisano, *Perpetua's Passions*, 277–90 at 280–81.

35. This position is held by Butler, *New Prophecy*, 44–57. Ultimately, however, this is problematic, since Tertullian does not advocate the same kind of Montanism that is found in Asia Minor—and that is typically identified in the *Passio*.

36. A critique that is clearly laid out in Markschies, "*Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* and Montanism?"

geographical location. We cannot assume that what obtained in Asia Minor was identical to that which obtained in North Africa or Rome. The second problem with this approach is that many of the so-called defining elements of Montanism were not unique to the schismatic group but, rather, held true for the Catholic Church at large in third-century North Africa (viz. the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and elevated eschatology).³⁷ Other aspects are well attested in early Christian literature (viz. visions), and others still were quite clearly not practiced in North Africa (viz. women's leadership).³⁸

In the end, the question "Is the *Passio* a Montanist text?" is anachronistic. As recent scholarship has demonstrated, lines between "orthodox" and "heretical" were fluid in the early centuries of Christian history. In third-century North Africa, in fact, there is no evidence of a split in the church between Catholics and Montanists; the Catholic Church of Carthage accommodated all of these Christians.³⁹ Although parts of the *Passio*'s prologue may contain sentiments similar to those advanced by the New Prophecy, it is more accurate to assign these to the North African Christian context generally than to a schismatic—much less, heretical—position.⁴⁰ At the very least, one should note that the *Passio* was accepted by the Catholic Church and incorporated into its liturgy without a hint that it originated from or was reflective of a schismatic movement.⁴¹

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Just as the Latin *Passio* does not specify the date of the martyrdoms, neither does it give a precise geographical location for the events it narrates. Later traditions place the martyrs' trial and execution in Carthage. Internal evidence in the *Passio* also suggests Carthage as the location of the narrated events. According to the text,

37. Tabbernee writes: "In my view, the *most* that can be said about Perpetua and her comartyrs is that they *may* have had sympathies with the main tenets of the New Prophecy which *may* have been in its earliest stages of being promoted in and around Carthage *at about* the time of the martyrdoms"; Tabbernee, "Perpetua, Montanism, and Christian Ministry in Carthage c. 203 C.E.," *PRSt* 32 (2005): 421–41 at 430. See also Tilley, "Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas," 834; Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion*, 158f.

38. Another difference is that prophecy within the movement in Asia Minor was ecstatic, but that was apparently not the case in North Africa. For an extended and thorough argument against this approach to the "Montanist question," see Markschiefs, "*Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* and Montanism?"

39. See Tabbernee, "Perpetua, Montanism, and Christian Ministry," 430; Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography*, 74.

40. See Tabbernee, "Perpetua, Montanism, and Christian Ministry," 430; Tilley, "Passion of Perpetua," 834.

41. On the ways the prologue might reflect Catholic interests, see Tabbernee, "Perpetua, Montanism, and Christian Ministry," 431.

Hilarius was a procurator and assumed the role of proconsul upon the death of Minucius Opimianus. While there were up to six procurators in Africa Proconsularis, there were only two in Carthage, the consular seat. It is likely, then, that Hilarius was one of the procurators in Carthage who then assumed the role of proconsul there.⁴² Since the proconsul oversaw capital offenses, we can safely locate the trial in Carthage.

While the location of the trial and execution is uniformly agreed upon, where the Christians lived and where they were arrested remain the subject of some debate. The arguments in favor of Thuburbo Minus as the home of the martyrs are drawn largely from the Greek text, which reads, “In the city of Thuburbo Minus, the young catechumens were arrested” (2.1). In addition, MSS G and E and both *Acta* preserve Thuburbo as the location of arrest.⁴³ Other available data—for example, the Monte Cassino manuscript of the *Passio*, the Codex-Calendar of 354, and Prosper’s *Chronicon*—remain silent on the matter.

William Tabbernee suggests that the original *Passio* did not specify a location because it did not need to: it was written for the community from which the martyrs came. As time passed and the tradition spread farther, a city was added for historical reference. Such a scenario does not require, of course, that the addition was correct. According to Tabbernee, all internal evidence points to Carthage rather than Thuburbo Minus.⁴⁴ Likewise, Heffernan finds it unlikely that the Greek would retain this historically reliable detail when our best Latin text does not.⁴⁵ In addition, he argues that there is no evidence of Christians in the village at the beginning of the third century.⁴⁶ But, if the martyrs were from Thuburbo Minus, he continues, they would likely have been tried and executed there, since the village had an amphitheater.⁴⁷ Heffernan asserts that the *Passio* assumes a larger cosmopolitan area, like Carthage, and that Thuburbo Minus was added into the

42. See Rives, “Piety of a Persecutor.”

43. Heffernan strenuously argues that these manuscripts identify Thuburbo Minus as the city of arrest but not their home city; Thomas J. Heffernan, “The Legacy of Misidentification: Why the Martyrs in the *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* Were Not from Thuburbo Minus,” *JRH* 6 (2016): 126–51 at 132.

44. Tabbernee, “Perpetua, Montanism, and Christian Ministry,” 426. Tabbernee also argues that the manuscript tradition does not clearly place the martyrs in Thuburbo Minus. Rather, the manuscripts offer various names that are emended by scholars to Thuburbo Minus (427). Following Robinson, Tabbernee understands the place-name to be the result of confusion between the *Martyrdom of Maxima, Donatilla, and Secunda* and Perpetua and her companions; Tabbernee, 427; James Armitage Robinson, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, *The Passion of S. Perpetua* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 24–26; Heffernan, “Legacy of Misidentification,” 145.

45. Heffernan, “Legacy of Misidentification,” 138.

46. Heffernan, “Legacy of Misidentification,” 131.

47. Heffernan, “Legacy of Misidentification,” 131.