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L'EMPEREUR JULIEN ET SON TEMPS



“HE FORCED WITH GENTLENESS” EMPEROR JULIAN’S ATTITUDE TO RELIGIOUS COERCION*

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« Il força avec douceur »

La conduite de l'empereur Julien face à la coercition religieuse

Controversée dès son époque, la politique religieuse de l'empereur Julien a continué à l'être par les générations suivantes. Nombre de païens ont jugé ses mesures « anti-chrétiennes » excessives, tandis que les Chrétiens les ont vécues comme des persécutions, une interprétation que l'historiographie moderne a suivi de manière générale. Cet article vise à examiner, à travers ses propres écrits, la conduite de Julien face à la coercition religieuse, en établissant une relation entre ses idées en matière de liberté religieuse, entre persuasion et contrainte, et les arguments en faveur d'une tolérance développée par les apologistes chrétiens à l'époque des persécutions. [Trad. Rédaction.]

Introduction

In the *First Invective against Julian*, Gregory of Nazianzus defines Julian's attitude towards the Christians as the reflection of his own character, contradictory, hypocritical and sibylline:

Not being able to persuade us openly, and being ashamed to use force like a tyrant, he disguised the foe in the lion's skin, or if you like it better, he disguised in the mask of Minos, a measure most unjust. What is the proper name for it? *He forced with gentleness* (ἐπιεικῶς ἐβιάζετο). The rest I shall leave to such as choose to inquire into or to write about him, as my discourse is hastening to its conclusion, since I think that many, to whom it will seem a pious deed to cast a word at a sinner, will be interested in what I know not whether to call the tragedy or the comedy of that season, in order that a fact of such importance, and by no means deserving of oblivion, may be handed down to those who come after us. But instead of telling all, I will mention one or two things as a specimen, for the benefit of those who so greatly admire his conduct, that they may be convinced they are endeavouring to praise a person for whom it is not even possible to find censure equal to his deserts¹.

Gregory of Nazianzus was in no doubt that Julian had been a persecutor, but was aware that the “gentle” style of the persecution, so different from that of previous persecutors, made an apology necessary. His long orations 4 and 5 are a direct attack on Julian, whom Gregory had known some years earlier when they both studied in Athens². Published soon after the emperor's death in the Persian campaign (25 June 363), they were aimed at providing an interpretation of Julian's reign to counteract the image he had offered of himself in his works, and the fascination that his personal and political charisma might affect future

2. Julian had moved to Athens in summer 355, where he studied rhetoric and philosophy for a short time. In Athens he met two young Cappadocians, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, who were to be two of the most outstanding Christian intellectuals of their time. Gregory began his ecclesiastical career at about the same time as Julian came to power – he was named presbyter by his father in 361/362. On the relationship between Gregory and Julian, see L. Lugaresi, *Gregorio di Nazianzo*, cit. (n. 1), pp. 7-11; J. Bernardi, *Un réquisitoire : les Invectives de Grégoire de Nazianze contre Julien*, in R. Brown, J. Richer (eds.), *L'empereur Julien, de l'histoire à la légende (331-1715)*, 1, Paris, 1978, pp. 89-98; U. Criscuolo, *Gregorio di Nazianzo e Giuliano*, in *Talariskos. Studia Graeca Antonio Garzya sexagenario a discipulis oblata*, Napoli, 1987, pp. 165-208; S. Elm, *Hellenism and Historiography: Gregory of Nazianzus and Julian in Dialogue*, in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 33, 2003, pp. 493-515.

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1. Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.79. L. Lugaresi (a cura di), *Gregorio di Nazianzo. Contro Giuliano l'Apostata. Oratio IV*, Firenze, 1993, pp. 146-147.

generations, including a public of Christian readers³. The two orations are very selective in their narrative material, which is carefully chosen to demolish the image of Julian, “the emperor-philosopher”, and build a portrait of Julian, “the apostate and persecutor”, obsessed with Christians⁴.

Gregory of Nazianzus attacked the most sensitive and controversial point in Julian’s government, his religious policy⁵. Converted from Christianity to philosophy, as soon as he came to power as the sole Augustus (November 361), Julian made his religious preferences explicit, and they were to determine some of his most polemical political decisions⁶. Religion was a priority for him – he often says so in his works and his contemporaries were aware of it⁷ – and among his objectives, an essential one was to restore the religious and cultural

forms of Hellenism, which he identified with paganism⁸. His reform programme, encouraged by the conviction that the deity had entrusted him with a providential mission, had the aim of recovering the space taken away from paganism during the Constantinian dynasty, by marginalising Christians socially and culturally.

For Julian, Christianity was an error that had to be combated and, although he never says so explicitly, eradicated. However, his war was not against the persons – Julian regarded the Christians as victims and not guilty of that mistake – but an ideological battle against ignorance and to convert whoever could be persuaded to the truth of philosophy. Julian’s offensive shows in his desire to take away from the Christians the privileges and power they had acquired since Constantine and above all under Constantius II⁹, and in his insistence on winning back the space that they had occupied by “re-paganising” it¹⁰. However, despite his determination

3. It is not possible to date *orations* 4 and 5 exactly, but they must have been published in the context of the ideological debate that took place following Julian’s death. L. Lugaresi, *Gregorio di Nazianzo*, cit. (n. 1), p. 45, claims that Gregory published them between late 364 and early 365, although he may have begun writing them earlier, when Julian passed through Nazianzus in summer 362, on the way to Antioch.

4. *Oratio* 5 is centred on Julian’s well-deserved death in the Persian campaign. L. Lugaresi (ed.), *Gregorio di Nazianzo. La morte di Giuliano l’Apostata. Oratio V*, Firenze, 1997.

5. Religious policy is invariably the object of attention of numerous studies on Julian, beginning with the biographies of J. Geffcken, *Kaiser Julianus*, Leipzig, 1914; W. Ensslin, *Kaiser Julians Gesetzgebungswerk und Reichsverwaltung*, in *Klio*, 18, 1923, pp. 104-199, and the most influential of all, the monumental work by J. Bidez, *La vie de l’Empereur Julien*, Paris, 1930. Many monographs on Julian, mostly biographies, have been published in recent decades. The most influential in the modern interpretation of his reign are those written in English, particularly R. Browning, *The Emperor Julian*, Berkeley, 1976; G. W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate*, Cambridge, 1978; P. Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism*, Oxford, 1981; R. Smith, *Julian’s Gods. Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate*, London-New York, 1995. An excellent review of research on Julian outside the Anglo-Saxon world can be seen in the contributions to the collective volumes: R. Klein (ed.), *Julian Apostata*, Darmstadt, 1978; R. Brown, J. Richer (eds.), *L’empereur Julien*, cit. (n. 2); B. Gentili (ed.), *Giuliano imperatore (Atti del Convegno de la SISAC, Messina 3 aprile 1984)*, Urbino, 1986; *Giuliano imperatore: le sue idee, i suoi amici, i suoi avversari (Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Lecce 10-12 dicembre 1998)* (Rudiae, 10), Lecce, 1998; *Culture classique et christianisme. Mélanges offerts à Jean Bouffartigue*, Paris, 2008; Ch. Schäfer (ed.), *Kaiser Julian “Apostata” und die philosophische Reaktion gegen das Christentum*, Berlin-New York, 2008.

6. In the *Ep.* 26.415c (Wright 8), written in November 361, Julian informs the philosopher Maximus of Ephesus of his political career since he was named Caesar until he became the sole Augustus, after Constantius’s death, and explained his political-religious programme. In this new situation, says Julian, “I worship the gods openly, and the whole mass of the troops who are returning with me worship the gods. I sacrifice oxen in public. I have offered to the gods many hecatombs as thank-offerings. The gods command me to restore their worship in its utmost purity, and I obey them, yes, and with a good will. For they promise me great rewards for my labours, if only I am not remiss.” For Julian’s works, I have followed the edition by J. Bidez, G. Rochefort, C. Lacombrade, *L’Empereur Julien. Œuvres complètes*, I-II, Paris (Les Belles Lettres), 1932-1964; J. Bidez, F. Cumont, *Imperatoris Caesaris Flavii Claudii Iuliani. Epistulae, Leges, Poematia, Fragmenta Varia*, Paris, 1922. Translations are from W. C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian* (The Loeb Classical Library), 3 vol., 1913-1923.

7. See, for example, Lib., *Or.* 12.69; *Or.* 18.121.

8. This identification irritated Gregory of Nazianzus, who reproached Julian for having inverted the meaning of the term *hellenos*, “as if this belonged to the religion and not the language”, *Or.* 4.4-5, 100-109. For Julian’s culture see in particular J. Bouffartigue, *L’empereur Julien et la culture de son temps*, Paris, 1992.

9. See *infra* n. 42.

10. The nature of Julian’s so-called “anti-Christian” policy, that was controversial in his time and still is in modern historiography, will be analysed later in this text. Among the literature which deals specifically with this question, see J. Bidez, *L’évolution de la politique de l’empereur Julien en matière religieuse*, in *Bulletin de l’Académie Royale de Belgique Cl. Lettres*, 7, 1914, pp. 406-461, and the corresponding chapters in *La vie de l’empereur Julien*, cit. (n. 5); J.-Ch. Balty, *Julien et Apamée: aspects de la politique antichrétienne de l’empereur*, in *Dialogues d’histoire ancienne*, 1, 1974, pp. 267-304; J. Arce, *Reconstrucciones de templos paganos en época del emperador Juliano (361-363 d.C.)*, in *Rivista Storica dell’Antichità*, 5, 1975, pp. 201-215; R. Braun, *Julien et le christianisme*, in R. Braun, J. Richer (eds.), *L’Empereur Julien*, cit. (n. 2), 1, Paris, 1978, pp. 159-187; S. Scicolone, *Aspetti della persecuzione giuliana*, in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 33, 2, 1979, pp. 420-434; C. Dupont, *La politique de Julien à l’égard du christianisme dans les sources littéraires des I^{er} et V^{es} siècles après Jésus Christ*, in *Atti III Convegno Internazionale della Accademia Romanistica Costantiniana (Perugia 28 sett-I ott. 1977)*, Perugia, 1979, pp. 325-381; M. Sargentini, *Aspetti e problemi dell’opera legislativa dell’imperatore Giuliano*, in *ibid.*, pp. 325-381; V. Neri, *Ammiano e il cristianesimo. Religione e politica nelle “Res gestae” di Ammiano Marcellino*, Bologna, 1985, pp. 117 ss.; R. J. Penella, *Julian the persecutor in fifth century Church Historians*, in *The Ancient World*, 24, 1993, pp. 31-43; J. Bouffartigue, *Du prétendu parti païen au prétendu fléau de Dieu: observations sur l’action antichrétienne de l’empereur Julien*, in *Giuliano imperatore, le sue idee*, cit. (n. 5), pp. 61-90; M. Mazza, *Giuliano o dell’utopia religiosa: il tentativo di fondare una chiesa pagana?*, in *ibid.*, pp. 19-42, esp. 20-29; J. Bouffartigue, *Philosophie et antichristianisme chez l’empereur Julien*, in M. Narcy, E. Rebillard (eds.), *Hellénisme et christianisme*, Paris, 2004, pp. 111-131; K. Rosen, *Julian, Kaiser, Gott und Christenhasser*, Stuttgart, 2006; J. Bouffartigue, *L’empereur Julien était-il intolérant?*, in *REAug*, 53, 2007, pp. 1-14; G. Coppola, *La politica religiosa di Giuliano l’Apostata*, Bari, 2007; G. Dorival, *Julien et le christianisme d’après les Lettres*, in D. Auger, E. Wolff (eds.), *Culture Classique et Christianisme*, cit. (n. 5), pp. 27-41; J. Torres, *Actitudes de intolerancia político-religiosa: el emperador Juliano y el obispo Juan Crisóstomo en conflicto*, in M. Marcos, R. Teja (eds.), *Tolerancia e intolerancia religiosa en el Mediterráneo antiguo: temas y problemas*, in *Bandue. Revista de la Sociedad Española de Ciencias de las Religiones*, 2, 2008, pp. 101-121.

to carry out this project, which was vital to his own ideal of salvation, and in spite of his declared dislike and contempt for the "Galileans"¹¹, the last thing that Julian – who aimed to emulate Marcus Aurelius¹² – wanted was to be seen by his subjects as a despot. A large part of his works are devoted to justifying his political decisions and expounding on his ideal statesman, the *civilis princeps*, whose qualities should include fairness (ἐπιείκεια), humanity (φιλανθρωπία), moderation (πραότης) and the use of persuasion (πειθώ), in contrast with violence (ὑβρις). Christianity was an illness, of which the Christians should be cured, but, although it was licit for the emperor to do this against their will, Julian believed that in no circumstances should the Christians be forced¹³.

With a deep resentment, Gregory, who made no pronouncements on Julian's policies while he was alive¹⁴, attempts to show, after his death, the true character of a man who, under the air of tolerance and with a civilised style of making politics, based on persuasion rather than force, had attacked the Church with the cruellest of actions: a persecution without edicts and nearly without victims, which robbed Christians of the glory of martyrdom¹⁵. The greatest political accusation he could make about Julian was to call him τύραννος and this is the insult that Gregory uses again and again, contrasting it with the φιλανθρωπία of Constantius's regime and the ἐλευθερία of the new times¹⁶. However, Gregory might deform reality polemically in order to convince his readers that Julian was a persecutor, but he had to admit that his "war"¹⁷ against the Church had not been undertaken with the usual methods of a tyrant. Oratio 4, which contains the greatest verbal violence, is an elaborate exercise of rhetoric with abundant oxymoron to explain this perverse way of "being violent without seeming to"¹⁸. Ἐπιεικῶς ἐβιάζετο is one of the most effective and contradictory. Ἐπιείκεια is a term close to the idea of justice – it is sometimes synonymous – and is usually translated by "fairness". But the sense is complex: if justice is defined by strict observance of the law, ἐπιείκεια "designates an

internal disposition, invites to concede a little more, to show signs of indulgence"¹⁹. Jacqueline de Romilly, to whom this definition belongs, devotes a chapter of her book, *La douceur dans la pensée grecque*, to "ἐπιεικός: un mot qui s'ouvre à la douceur", where she analyses how this word, which originally designated a form of behaviour ("appropriate", "opportune"), in the 5th century BC and above all in the 4th century began to acquire a sense near the vocabulary of gentleness and kindness (hence, in Plato, Aristotle and Isocrates). This new sense appears more or less at the same time as πρῶτος ("mild") and φιλόανθρωπος²⁰. All these express ideals that are the opposite of violence, in fact they originated to avoid it and to enable people to live together in a civilised society. They are, together with συγγνώμη (the equivalent of *patientia* in Latin), the closest terms to our idea of tolerance. This is a vocabulary of political morality, as Gregory knew, that Julian was very fond of and, although he was criticised even by his supporters for his excessive religious zeal and the inappropriateness of some of his anti-Christian measures, he was widely recognised as an educated, fair, indulgent and just prince²¹.

We owe to Gregory of Nazianzus the first and most articulated interpretation of Julian's reign, and it has exercised a decisive influence on Christian historiographical tradition²². This, in turn, has conditioned the interpretation of a large part of modern historiography, which regards Julian, if not as a persecutor, at least as an intolerant emperor, obsessed with Christians and determined to put an end to them through aggressive legislation, leaving popular excesses of violence committed against them go unpunished. I do not intend to make a new assessment of Julian's religious policy as a whole, but, in the light of some recent interpretations, study one of its most controversial aspects: Julian's attitude to religious coercion, while leaving Christian polemics on one side, as far as possible.

On many occasions, Julian expressed his defence of freedom of conscience, the voluntary nature of worship, the illegitimacy of coercion and the inhumanity of the use of violence. In the expression of those ideals, there was political intentionality and a large rhetorical component in the service of the image of *civilis princeps* that Julian wished to give of himself. However, I aim to show that, unlike the opinion of ancient Christian historiography and most modern studies, there was no cynicism in his discourse and that Julian, out of his own convictions and culture, firmly believed in those principles. They are ideas that he not only

11. Julian always referred to Christians as "Galileans" in order to disparage them and reduce them to an ethnic religion. According to Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.76, Julian had ordered them to be called in that way, but there is no evidence that he took any kind of legal measure in that respect.

12. Eutr., *Brev.* 10.16: *Marco Antonino non absimilis, quem etiam aemulari studebat*. See Ch. Lacombrade, *L'Empereur Julien émule de Marc-Aurèle*, in *Pallas*, 14, 1967, pp. 9-22.

13. Jul., *Ep.* 61c.424a-b.

14. As J. Bouffartigue, *Du prétendu parti païen*, *cit.* (n. 10), p. 82, has pointed out, when he remarks on the little impact Julian's religious policy has left on the writings of contemporary Christians.

15. *Or.* 4.58.

16. *Or.* 4.1 ; 4.2 ; 4.6; 4.61; 4.62. The φιλανθρωπία of Constantius: *Or.* 4.22 ss.; the ἐλευθερία, *Or.* 4.15-16.

17. *Or.* 4.57: στρατεία, ἀγώνισμα.

18. *Or.* 4.58. Gregory devotes the central chapters of the *oratio* to this, from 57 to 84. From 85 to 99 he narrates the "open persecution".

19. J. de Romilly, *La Grèce antique contre la violence*, Paris, 2000, p. 24. On the concept of ἐπιείκεια, near to the idea of tolerance, cf. J. Bouffartigue, *L'empereur Julien était-il intolérant ?*, *cit.* (n. 10), p. 2.

20. *La douceur dans la pensée grecque*, Paris, 1979, chap. 3, pp. 53-76.

21. Thus, among others, Amm., 25.4 and Eutr., *Brev.* 10.10.

22. An influence that can be clearly traced in Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, as well as in the Arian Philostorgius. See L. Lugaresi, *Gregorio di Nazianzo*, *cit.* (n. 1), p. 48.

defended during the stage in his government in which his anti-Christian policies were questioned, but which he had already expressed several years earlier, before reaching power, and which he had made explicit at the very start of his reign, when his policies had not produced any reactions. The fact that Julian tried to be coherent with these ideas and put them into practice is proven by many forms of evidence and, above all, by the way that ancient historiography, included that of Christians, admits unanimously that he always preferred persuasion to coercion, even if behind this some minds, such as Gregory of Nazianzus, thought they could only see a reflection of his evil character.

Julian had an exact notion of the concept of tolerance, which was not new in the language of political morality. His discourse on the value of persuasion and rejection of any form of violence depends on a long philosophical and rhetorical tradition which had made these opposite qualities into the defining traits of the ideal sovereign and the tyrant. However, Julian's discourse of tolerance is extraordinarily similar to that of Christian apologists, who developed the first articulated discourse on religious tolerance. In the second part of this paper I shall study these similarities, and attempt to show how much Julian, despite his frontal rejection of Christian culture, was in debt to a series of reasonings that were formulated and systematised for the first time by Christians in response to the persecutions. The fact that the apologists' arguments in favour of freedom and tolerance were not extracted mainly from Christianity, but from the Greco-Roman *paideia* and Roman political praxis, meant they were perfectly acceptable to Julian and pagan intelligentsia in the Christian empire.

Julian and religious coercion: ancient and modern perceptions

Gregory of Nazianzus, who interpreted Julian's political decisions in biographical terms, distinguishes in Oratio 4 two successive moments in the persecution: a hidden one, which corresponds with the start of his rule, in which Julian would have acted with (pretence) toleration; and an open one in which, as he could no longer hide his evilness, he had revealed his true character as a persecutor, whilst always maintaining the image of a persuasive prince. "A man clever in wickedness and without a rival in impiety" (ἀνδρὸς σοφοῦ τὴν κακίαν καὶ περιττοῦ τὴν ἀσέβειαν), Julian would not have dared to make war (τὸν πόλεμον) openly on Christians, aware that, as well as being reckless and uncivilised behaviour (θρασύ καὶ ἀπαίδευτον), it was also contrary to its end, i.e. to exterminate them. Because Christians, suffering violence (βιάζομένους), would have resisted with pride, "opposing to tyranny the zeal in the cause of religion" (ἀντιθήσειν τῇ τυραννίδι τὴν ὑπὲρ εὐσεβείας φιλοτιμίαν). A conclusion that Julian would have reached not only through reasoning but also from

the experience of previous persecutions, which instead of weakening Christianity strengthened it. Until the end of his reign, Julian would have tried to hide truth with sophisms, giving an air of persuasion (πείθειν) to force (βιάζεσθαι) and hiding tyranny under gentleness (τῇ τυραννίδι τὸ προσηνές)²³. "His humanity was very inhuman, and his persuasiveness compulsion" (καὶ ἡ λίαν ἀπάνθρωπον αὐτῷ τὸ φιλάνθρωπον καὶ τὸ πιθανὸν βίαιον)²⁴. In short, Julian would have tried to hold on to his image of a tolerant sovereign by allowing others to carry out the violence, without punishing the excesses of the mob: "Of the two aspects power is divided into, persuasion and coercion (τὸ πείθειν καὶ τὸ βιάζεσθαι), the most inhuman one, the aspect of tyranny, was left to the people and to the cities, whereas the most human and regal part, persuasion, he naturally left for himself²⁵." This was something that, like Gregory of Nazianzus, must have irritated many Christians.

Nevertheless, apart from the Christian polemics, the character of Julian's religious policy was not completely clear even to those who admired him. Ammianus Marcellinus, who grants little importance to religious aspects of Julian's reign, makes a very positive balance of his rule, saying that Julian, who should be counted amongst the heroic spirits, was a compendium of the four traditional virtues of a prince, *temperantia*, *prudentia*, *iustitia* and *fortitudo*. With a character leaning towards *civilitas*, wise, fair, generous and benevolent²⁶, for Ammianus Julian was an outstanding example of toleration and gentleness (*patientiae et lenitudinis*)²⁷. Some pagans who were committed to Julian's project, such as Libanius, agreed that Christianity should be marginalised and that proselytism, through reason, was a suitable way to save from their mistake those who could be recovered. Libanius, who rejects outright the idea of persecution, which he thought to be unjust and unproductive, speaks of Julian's *civilitas* (κοινότης) and admires the fact that he had avoided the use of coercion and violence²⁸. But the policy of re-paganisation did not produce a consensus. Even his supporters thought that Julian's religious zeal was excessive and that some of his measures, like the School Edict in June 362 which forbid Christians to teach grammar and rhetoric,

23. Or. 4.57.

24. Or. 4.62.

25. Or. 4.61.

26. See his portrait of Julian in 25.4. *Civilitati admodum studens* (25.4.7). J. Fontaine, *Le Julien d'Ammien Marcellin*, in R. Braun, J. Richer (eds.), *L'Empereur Julien*, cit. (n. 2), 1, Paris, 1978, pp. 31-65.

27. 22.9.16. Although Ammianus gives an idealised image of Julian, his opinion is balanced with the criticism of many aspects of his reign. See recently G. Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian*, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 296-317.

28. Especially in his *Funeral Oration on Julian*, Or. 18.121-125. His *civilitas* in Or. 18.189. See P. Petit, *L'empereur Julien vu par le sophiste Libanius*, in R. Braun, J. Richer (eds.), *L'Empereur Julien*, cit. (n. 2), 1, Paris, 1978, pp. 67-87.

were mistaken²⁹. Libanius himself was uncomfortable with the law that laid down that anyone who had taken objects from the temples should return them or pay for the restoration of the pillaged buildings³⁰. Pagans less close to Julian's regime, like Themistius, who did not want to get involved in the religious conflict, judged his policy as an example of fanaticism and intolerance³¹. Some of Julian's collaborators, even, shared the Christian feeling that he had been a persecutor. Eutropius, who took part in the Persian campaign and was a great admirer of Julian, thought his policy towards Christians had been a persecution but without using violence³².

Christian opinion was not unanimous either. Donatists, who had regained freedom of worship and their churches that Constantine had confiscated, held a very good opinion of Julian, of whom they thought that was the only one who had imparted justice (*apud eum sola iustitia haberet locum*)³³. Surely the Novatians would have welcomed the new emperor too; their church in Cyzicus, which had been destroyed by the Arians, had to be rebuilt by the bishop of these, Eleusius, in only two months³⁴. At least at first, the Nicean bishops who were exiled by Constantius must also have been grateful to Julian; a general amnesty was applied to them which involved, if not the immediate restoration of

their sees, at least the recovery of the property that had been confiscated from them³⁵. But the discordant voices have not reached us directly and the *communis opinio* transmitted by ecclesiastical historiography is that represented by Gregory of Nazianzus, to whom we owe the first and most articulated Christian interpretation of Julian's rule.

To cast a trail of infamy over Julian's memory: that was Gregory's declared intention³⁶, and to a large extent he was successful. His contribution to the ideological debate that followed the emperor's death, representing the Church's feelings, was determinant. Christian historiographical tradition depends greatly on his interpretation, which gave an enormous and deformed size to Julian's religious policy, and in turn it has conditioned the outlook of a large part of modern historiography. All the studies on Julian, in which those of the biographical genre predominate, concern themselves with his anti-Christian policy, posing the question in very similar terms to those of Gregory. Did Julian's policy towards Christians change during his reign, from an initial attitude of tolerance and desire for conciliation to an offensive? And if this is the case, can the measures taken in this second phase be regarded as persecutory? Did Julian leave the repressive action in the hands of others, allowing violence to be committed against Christians with impunity and even encouraging it? Had Julian been sincere in his initial policy of tolerance, or had he been guided by political opportunism? Did Julian really believe in the principles of tolerance he preached in his works or was it a pure work of self-aggrandisement in order to obtain that recognition that, according to his contemporaries, he wanted so much³⁷?

Few attempts have been made to answer these questions apart from the Christian polemics. It is generally accepted that there were two phases in Julian's religious policy. An initial one of tolerance, which had been solemnly inaugurated in the first days of his rule with edicts for the re-opening of pagan temples and an amnesty for the Christians exiled in the time of Constantius³⁸. Julian had wanted to show his

29. Thus Ammianus, who thought Julian's zeal for sacrifices was excessive, that he carried them out too often and with too many victims (22.12.6); Julian was too enthusiastic about prophecies: *superstitiosus magis quam sacrorum legitimus observator* (25.4.17). Ammianus thought the School Edict was "inhumane and deserves to be forgotten" (*inclemens, obruendum perenni silentio*, 22.10.7). On this edict see *infra* n. 44.

30. The edict has not been preserved, but Julian himself cites it, *Ep.* 80, and several Christian and pagan authors: Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.90; *Hist. Aceph.*, 3.1; Soz., *HE* 5.5; Theod., *HE* 3.7; Lib., *Or.* 18.26. It is true that Libanius' motives were selfish, as what worried him most was whether the law affected those of his own social class, amongst them some friends of his: *Epp.* 724; 763.4; 819; 1364.7.

31. Themistius's *Or.* 5, celebrating Jovian's consulate on 1 January 364, is to a great extent devoted to praising the new direction of his religious policy, favourable to Christians again but not offensive to pagans. Although it does not mention him by name, the *oratio* is a severe criticism of Julian's regime. On the relationship between Julian and Themistius, who differed greatly in their philosophies, L. J. Daly, *In a borderland. Themistius' ambivalence toward Julian*, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 73, 1980, pp. 1-11; Th. Brauch, *Themistius and the emperor Julian*, in *Byzantion*, 63, 1993, pp. 79-115; J. Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court; Oratory, Civic Duty and Paideia from Constantius to Theodosius*, Michigan, 1995, pp. 115-134; P. J. Heather, D. Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy and Empire in the Fourth Century: Select Orations*, Liverpool, 2001, pp. 137-173. For Themistius' position in the ideological debate produced after Julian's death, essential reading is still: G. Dagron, *L'Empire romain d'Orient au IV^e siècle et les traditions politiques de l'hellénisme : le témoignage de Themistius*, in *Travaux et Mémoires*, 3, 1968, pp. 1-242; L. Cracco Ruggini, *Simboli di battaglia ideologica nel tardo ellenismo* (Roma, Atene, Costantinopoli; Numa, Empedocle, Cristo), in *Studi Bertolini*, 1, Pisa, 1972, pp. 177-300.

32. Eutr., *Brev.* 10.16: *Christianae nimius insectator, perinde tamen, ut cuore abstineret*.

33. Aug., *C. litt. Pet.* 2.97; 2.224. Augustine repeats this expression in *C. litt. Pet.* 2.93; 2.203; 2.205; 2.224; *En. Ps.* 36.2; *Ep.* 93.4; *Ep.* 105.2.

34. Soc., *HE* 3.11; Soz., *HE* 5.5. Eleusius was later expelled from Cyzicus, Soz., *HE* 5.15.

35. The edict has not been preserved, but Julian refers to it in *Ep.* 114.435d, on 1 August 362, where he states that he had hoped the Galileans would have been pleased, more than with his predecessor Constantius, who had persecuted them (cf. *infra* n. 90). Numerous texts mention this edict, including: *Hist. Aceph.* 10; Ruf., *HE* 10.28; Soc., *HE* 3.1; Soz., *HE* 5.5; Theod., *HE* 3.4; Philost., *HE* 6.7. The return from exile did not imply the recovery of the see. When Athanasius tried to do that in Alexandria, Julian stopped him and sent him into exile: Jul., *Epp.* 110, 111, 112. Cf. *Hist. Aceph.* 3.5; Ruf., *HE* 11.2; Theod., *HE* 3.9.

36. *Or.* 4.20; 4.92.

37. Amm., 25.4.18: *Vulgi plausibus laetus, laudum etiam ex minimis rebus intemperans adpetitor, popularitatis cupiditate cum indignis loqui saepe adfectans*; Eutr., *Brev.* 10.16: *gloriae avidus ac per eam animi plerumque inmodici*.

38. The edicts have not been preserved. Julian is generally said to have issued a "tolerance edict" at the start of his reign, but it can be understood from Amm., 22.5.2 (*planis absolutisque decretis*), that there were more than one. Perhaps there were two: one ordering the re-opening of the temples, the renewal of sacrifices and the restoration of worship (it is

kindest and most impartial side, not only making clear that there would be no persecution, as some might have feared, but also calling Christians to court to persuade them to cease in their internal rivalries³⁹. In his attitude there was a good deal of opportunism and political wariness. As Julian had come to power in circumstances of dubious legality, he tried to win over as much popularity as possible, especially in administrative circles and in the army. The amnesty for persecuted Christians, on the other hand, would have had the sibiylle intention of causing internal dissension: leaving them to their free will, in contrast to the strict control to which Constantius had submitted them, the bishops would enter in fierce dispute amongst each other and would end up destroying themselves⁴⁰. Julian was confident that, if free competition was established between religions, the fortunes of paganism would change by themselves, with no need to resort to repressive measures. However, perhaps because he realised that this process was not progressing at the expected rate, his initial attitude of tolerance soon changed. In the first months of 362 he began a more active policy for the restoration of paganism⁴¹ and the repression of Christianity, starting by depriving the clergy of the privileges they had acquired since Constantine's time and which had been repeatedly confirmed in Constantius's reign⁴² – in March he revoked the exemption from curial taxes and charges for the clergy, as well as their juridical power⁴³. The clearest turning point was the education law on 17 June 362, forbidding Christians to teach grammar and rhetoric in schools⁴⁴, by which he hoped that, if they

were excluded from culture, they would end up losing their social influence and become totally marginalised. The unfortunate experience that Julian suffered with the Antiochians in summer 362, which culminated in the fire at Apollo's temple at Daphne⁴⁵, aggravated his anti-Christian feelings: churches were closed, he ordered the confiscation of properties, soldiers were forced to make sacrifices and some of them were executed, it was announced that pagans should be preferred over Christians for public offices, some cities lost their statute because they did not come up to Julian's expectations as regards the worship of the gods, and several episodes of anti-Christian violence occurred which the emperor left unpunished⁴⁶. There were rumours that, on his return from the Persian campaign, begun in spring 363, Julian intended to declare total war on the Christians⁴⁷, but he died on the battle-front, to the satisfaction of Christian and also some pagans, like Themistius. He was quick to offer congratulations for the new direction of the religious policy shown by his successor, Jovian, who had also opened his rule with a tolerance law which annulled Julian's pro-pagan policies and restored lost privileges to the Christians⁴⁸.

For much of modern historiography, beginning with Bidez, to whom this reconstruction is generally owed⁴⁹, Julian's anti-Christian policy in the last months of his reign was not far from being a persecution. Such influential studies as Bowersock's, whose biography of Julian is among the works that are always cited, openly accepts this idea⁵⁰ and most of the recent literature is agreed that, if not a persecutor, Julian was at least an intolerant prince who submitted the Christians to virulent aggression. His initial tolerance was due to political interest and wisdom, but the intention of marginalising Christianity socially and politically was always part of his governmental

referred to, amongst others, by Lib., *Or.* 18.126; Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.86; *Hist. Aceph.* 9; Soz., *HE* 5.3; Philos., *HE* 7.1b) and another decreeing freedom for all Christians, the return of exiles and the recovery of their properties, a law (νόμος) alluded to by Julian in *Ep.* 114.436a.

39. Amm., 22.5.3: *Utque dispositorum roboraret effectum, dissidentes Christianorum antistites cum plebe discissa in palatium intromissos monebat civilius, ut discordiis consopitis quisque nullo vetante religioni suae serviret intrepidus.*
40. Both pagans and Christians agree on this interpretation: Amm., 22.5.3-4; Soz., *HE* 5.5; Philost., *HE* 7.4.
41. Such as the law of 4 February 362, which ordered that the temples that had been used improperly should be dedicated anew, and that the individuals or the Church should rebuild those they had destroyed. The edict has not been preserved. A law of 29 June 362 (*CTh* 15.1.3), sent to provincial governors (*provinciarum iudices*), laid down that temples should be restored before any other building.
42. *CTh* 16.2.11 (26 February 342) established the exemption of curial expenses for the clergy, confirmed by *CTh* 16.2.9 (11 April 349). *CTh* 16.2.12 (23 September 355) established that bishops could only be judged by other bishops, and not by secular courts. *CTh* 16.2.13 (10 November 356) established that the privileges conferred on the Church of Rome should be kept carefully. For the exemption of liturgies and taxes, see also *CTh* 16.2.14; 2.16.
43. *CTh* 12.1.50 (13 March 362) established that the clergy should be re-inscribed in the curiae. They were also deprived of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction: Jul., *Ep.* 114. On the suppression of the clergy's privileges, Soz., *HE* 5.5; Theod., *HE* 3.6; Philost., *HE* 7.4. The *annonae* were also abolished, Soz., *HE* 5.5; Theod., *HE* 1.11; 4.4; Philost., *HE* 7.4.
44. *CTh* 13.3.5. Julian justifies and explains the edict in *Ep.* 61c. Amm., 22.10.7, criticises it (cf. supra n. 29), as well as Christian authors: Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.5; 4.96; Ruf., *HE*, 10.33; Soc., *HE* 3.12; Soz., *HE* 5.18;

Theod., *HE* 3.8. On this controversial edict, see now E. Germino, *Scuola e cultura nella legislazione di Giuliano l'Apostata*, Napoli, 2004.

45. The many accounts of the disagreement between Julian and the Antiochians include the *Misopogon* by Julian himself, written in early 363, and John Chrysostom's tough invective in the *Homily on Babylas* (M. A. Schatkin [ed.], *Jean Chrysostome sur Babylas* [SC 362], Paris, 1990), as well as the numerous references in Christian authors. See A. Marcone, *Il conflitto tra l'imperatore Giuliano e gli antiocheni*, in *Atene e Roma*, 26, 1981, pp. 142-152; J. Torres, *Actitudes de intolerancia político-religiosa*, cit. (n. 10).
46. An inventory of these episodes in J. Bouffartigue, *Du prétendu parti païen*, cit. (n. 10), pp. 88-90; C. Dupont, *La politique de Julien*, cit. (n. 10); R. J. Penella, *Julian the Persecutor*, cit. (n. 10).
47. Greg. Naz., *Or.* 5.25; Ruf., *HE* 10.37; Jer., *Chron.* a. 363, Ephrem, *Hym. c. Iul.* 2.10; Theod., *HE* 3.21; J. Chrys., *In Bab.* 121.
48. The existence of this law has been questioned, but there is no doubt that Jovian, a Christian, made the new direction of his religious policy quite clear from the very start of his rule. See supra n. 31.
49. *L'évolution de la politique de l'empereur Julien en matière religieuse*, in *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique Cl. Lettres*, 7, 1914, pp. 406-461, and the corresponding chapters of *La vie de l'empereur Julien*, cit. (n. 5).
50. G. W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate*, cit. (n. 5), p. 92. Julian is described as a persecutor, without any further qualifications, by S. Scicolone, *Aspetti della persecuzione giuliana*, cit. (n. 10), pp. 420-434.

programme⁵¹. Few authors claim that the idea of persecution, even if the concept is understood in its widest meaning, was totally foreign to Julian's mentality and character⁵² and that his behaviour, even despite his political motivations, originated in his profound convictions and most intimate nature⁵³. Even fewer have undertaken the task, like Jean Bouffartigue has, of reappraising critically and globally, the ideas that are accepted about the character of his anti-Christian policy⁵⁴. Bouffartigue doubts whether the choice of paganism was the axis of Julian's government programme and warns against the disproportionate emphasis that Christian texts put on the religious aspect of his policies, presenting unanimously the image of an emperor obsessed with the battle against Christianity⁵⁵. Above all, he re-assesses the concept of "anti-Christian measures" from which we should start by excluding positive actions taken for the restoration and re-organisation of pagan cults, the Christians and many pagans perceived them in that way. Properly speaking, neither should we consider "anti-Christian" some of the measures aimed specifically at Christians, such as the loss of the *annona*, the exemption of curial taxes or legal prerogatives, which intended to deprive the clergy of their privileges and place them on the same level, as regards social rights, as the rest of the citizens of the Empire⁵⁶. We can also question the veracity of some of the "persecutory" measures and humiliating actions against Christians that are attributed to Julian, such as the general obligation to make sacrifices under the penalty of a fine⁵⁷, or the law that made it compulsory to call Christians "Galileans"⁵⁸. On the other hand, it would be necessary to make an inventory of the episodes of violence and other acts that fatten the dossier of Julian's anti-Christian policy – which is not easy – and define the chains of responsibility and distinguish levels of decision⁵⁹. Most of the outbreaks of violence correspond to aggressions on pagan worship⁶⁰, or

popular mobs against the measures adopted by the emperor, in which case the anti-Christian repression should be assessed in the framework of the strict enforcement of the law⁶¹. In the case of repressive actions that exceeded the legal limits, the degree of the emperor's involvement should be evaluated, although he had the responsibility of all the acts committed by members of his administration. Julian cannot be accused of responsibility for the popular anti-Christian movements, in which the greatest atrocities were committed, which were sporadic and of which there is no proof that they were manipulated⁶². The pagans might have been encouraged in these actions by the expectation of impunity or even the desire to please the emperor⁶³, but there is evidence, including in Christian historiography, that many of these episodes were totally foreign and against Julian's will⁶⁴. Those excesses that Julian had not foreseen cannot be regarded as anti-Christian policy, and nor can the actions carried out by members of his administration that the emperor may not have criticised but neither did he sanction. Without denying that Julian adopted a policy of offence against the Christians and that some of these suffered violent and unfair treatment under his regime, Bouffartigue maintains that his attitude is one of tolerance in the precise meaning of the term because, while he considered Christianity as detestable – in reality Julian did not acknowledge Christianity as *religio* but as atheism – and wishing to combat it, he did not declare it *religio illicita*, did not make the Christians guilty for their mistake, nor deprived them of the freedom to express and carry out their rites⁶⁵. I agree with Bouffartigue on this interpretation of Julian's anti-Christian policy, which welcomes a reconsideration of his ideas on the freedom of worship and his attitude to religious coercion.

Julian on religious coercion

Julian had delineated his ideal of the good prince some years before reaching power, in the two panegyrics of Constantius, written in 356/357 (*Or.* 1) and in 358/359 (*Or.* 3), when he was Caesar in Gaul. At the very beginning of his reign, in an attempt to justify his actions when he was illegally named Augustus, he reflected again on the qualities

51. This is, for example, the opinion of R. Smith, *Julian's Gods*, cit. (n. 5), pp. 170 ss., who, without stating that Julian was a persecutor, shares Bowersock's interpretation that Julian held the intention of putting a stop to Christianity from the start of his rule. His initial tolerance was only political precaution and the wish to give an image of *civilitas* (p. 209-211).

52. P. Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism*, cit. (n. 5), p. 89.

53. M. Mazza, *Giuliano o dell'utopia religiosa*, cit. (n. 10), p. 21.

54. Especially in three recent papers: *Du prétendu parti païen*, cit. (n. 10); *Philosophie et antichristianisme*, cit. (n. 10); *L'empereur Julien était-il intolérant ?*, cit. (n. 10).

55. The same caution in P. Brown, *The Last Pagan Emperor*. Robert Browning's *The Emperor Julian*, in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1982, pp. 83-102.

56. Thus also R. Pack, *Städte und Steuern in der Politik Julians: Untersuchungen zu den Quellen eines Kaisersbildes*, Brussels, 1986, pp. 61 ss.

57. Soc., *HE* 3.13.

58. See *supra* n. 11.

59. See an inventory of these episodes documented in 4th and 5th century texts in Bouffartigue, *Du prétendu parti païen*, cit. (n. 10), pp. 88-90, who distinguishes between measures imputed to Julian himself, measures taken by Imperial staff, and popular movements.

60. Thus the murder of George of Cappadocia and other Christians in Alexandria, Socr., *HE* 3.2; Jul., *Ep.* 60; the attacks on Mark of Arethusa, who did not die, Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.86, 88; Soz., *HE* 5.10; Theod., *HE* 3.7, and the violence against the Christians at Gaza and Heliopolis, Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.86-87; Soz., *HE* 5.9; Theod., *HE* 3.7.

61. Julian warned about this in *Ep.* 115.425, addressed to the Arians at Edessa, where Church properties had been confiscated because they had attacked the Valentinians. Julian asked the Arians to abstain from any kind of sedition or complaint (στάσεως καὶ φιλονεικίας), because if they irritated his clemency, they would be sentenced to "iron, fire and exile".

62. Christian authors very rarely point to Julian as the instigator of these acts: Theod., *HE* 3.6; 3.20; Julian mobilised the Jews against the Christians, Greg. Naz., *Or.* 5.3; Theod., *HE* 3.20; Julian encourages the inhabitants of Bostra to expel their bishop Titus from the city, Soz., *HE* 5.15, cf. Jul., *Ep.* 114.

63. Ruf., *HE* 11.28; Soz., *HE* 5.7; Theod., *HE* 3.6; Philost., *HE* 7.8a.

64. Soz., *HE* 5.7 states that the *comes Orientis* Julian, the emperor's uncle, acted openly against his will by causing physical aggression.

65. See especially, *L'empereur Julien était-il intolérant ?*, cit. (n. 10).

of the prince-philosopher in the Letter to Themistius⁶⁶, a declaration of his programme of government which was made public by the consul Claudius Mamertinus in the panegyric in early 362⁶⁷. Justice (δίκη), fairness (ἐπιείκεια), freedom (ἐλευθερία), humanity (φιλανθρωπία), goodness (χρηστότης), moderation (πρότης), a civilised character (ἥμερος), persuasion (πειθώ) in contrast with violence (ὑβρις), in a word, tolerance should be the mark of the new regime. All authors, ancient and modern, agree that, whatever Julian's real motives were (political interest, pragmatism, true conviction), the first part of his reign was of genuine religious tolerance and a style of making politics very different from the autocracy of Constantius⁶⁸. Julian definitely did not want to be a new Diocletian and thus he made it known to his collaborators, who occasionally needed to remind him of the fact⁶⁹.

Among the first measures taken as Augustus, as soon as he arrived in Constantinople in December 361 or perhaps even earlier, are the edicts which established the re-opening of the temples and the restoration of pagan worship, as well as freedom for all Christian groups, whom "he kindly advised (*monebat civilius*) that they should put their differences on one side and that each one, with no fear of opposition, should abide by their own beliefs" (*quisque nullo vetante religioni suae serviret intrepidus*)⁷⁰. The fact that Claudius Mamertinus made no mention in his panegyric of religious matters is proof of this declared political intention of tolerance⁷¹, which is also reflected in the praxis of government. Christians like Basil of Caesarea, whom Julian had met in Athens⁷², were amicably called to participate in the new administration in the court at Constantinople. In the letter inviting Basil, Julian makes a declaration of which were his criteria for choosing who should share the hard task of government with him: fair (ἐπιεικής), intelligent (συνετός) and competent (ἱκανός) men, who did not necessarily agree with his own ideology but whom he could trust fully⁷³. One of Socrates' anecdotes is a good illustration of Julian's tolerant attitude: Maris, an old and blind bishop from Chalcedon, was taken before the emperor, whom he reproached

openly for his impiety and his atheism. Julian was angry and insulted him by alluding to his blindness as a metaphor for his religious blindness, but he let him go without punishing him. Socrates, who thinks his tolerance was a pretence, concludes that the persecution that Julian later undertook against the Christians had been his revenge against Maris⁷⁴.

The first significant outbreak of anti-Christian violence during Julian's rule, the murder of the Arian bishop George and of other Christians in Alexandria, allowed the emperor to declare publicly his total rejection of violence. Although George was a person hated by both pagans and Christians – in fact some sources insinuate that it was the latter who lynched him – Julian severely rebuked the Alexandrians for the crime. In *Ep.* 60 (24 December 361), he reminds them that they should have left the punishment to the judges, so that the matter would not have been a crime, or an illegality, but appropriate justice. George deserved it, says Julian, but "you have laws which ought by all means to be honoured and cherished by you all, individually. Sometimes, no doubt, it happens that certain persons break one or other of these laws; but nevertheless the state as a whole ought to be well governed and you ought to obey the laws and not transgress those that from the beginning were wisely established⁷⁵." Out of love for Serapis and his maternal grandfather Julius Iulianus, who had been governor of Egypt and Alexandria, Julian declared that, although the action deserved to be punished with the bitterest of medicines, like the most serious illness, he would not punish the city severely, but would apply

the very mildest remedy, namely admonition and arguments (*παράινεισιν καὶ λόγους*), by which I am very sure that you will be the more convinced (*πεισθήσεσθε*) if you really are, as I am told, originally Greek, and even to this day there remains in your dispositions and habits a notable and honourable impress of that illustrious descent⁷⁶.

Modern critique has seen in the absence of punishment for this serious incident an early proof of Julian's indifference to violence against Christians. Socrates, however, who cites the letter to the Alexandrians literally, acknowledges that this episode angered the emperor⁷⁷, and Ammianus says that Julian would have liked to repress the crime with greater severity, but his collaborators advised him against it⁷⁸. Without doubt, the political cost of inflicting a hard punishment on a city like Alexandria at the very start of his reign would have been considerable.

66. The date of this letter has been much discussed. J. Bidez, *L'empereur Julien. Tome II, 1^{re} partie, Discours de Julien l'empereur*, Paris, 1963, p. 10, dates it between mid-November and 11 December 361. See in general, J. Bouffartigue, *La lettre de Julien à Thémistios : histoire d'une fausse manœuvre et d'un désaccord essentiel*, in A. González Gálvez, P.-L. Malosse (eds), *Mélanges A. F. Norman, Topoi*, Suppl. 7, 2006, pp. 113-118.

67. *Paneg. Lat.* XI (3). S. N. C. Lieu, *The Emperor Julian. Panegyric and Polemic* (Translated Texts for Historians), Liverpool, 1986. See R. C. Blockley, *The panegyric of Claudius Mamertinus on the emperor Julian*, in *American Journal of Philology*, 93, 1972, pp. 437-450.

68. Whom, with such an attitude, Julian wished to malign: Ruf., *HE* 10.28.

69. According to the ecclesiastical historians, Salutius, the Eastern Praetorian Prefect, had to remind Julian about this during the events at Antioch, when the emperor had ordered severe measures against the Christian community: Ruf., *HE* 10.37; Soz., *HE* 5.20; Theod., *HE* 3.11.

70. Amm., 22.5.2. See *supra* n. 39.

71. Lieu, *The Emperor Julian*, cit. (n. 67), p. 12.

72. See *supra* n. 2.

73. Jul., *Ep.* 26. If we assume that the addressee is Basil of Caesarea.

74. Soc., *HE* 3.12.

75. *Ep.* 60.380a-b (Wright 21). The letter is quoted in its entirety by Soc., *HE* 3.3; cf. Soz., *HE* 5.12. See M. Caltabiano, *L'assassinio di Giorgio di Cappadocia (Alessandria, 361 d. C.)*, in *Quaderni Catanesi*, 7, 1985, pp. 17-59; J. R. Aja Sánchez, *El linchamiento del obispo Jorge y la violencia religiosa tardorromana*, in *Antigüedad Cristiana*, 8, 1991, pp. 111-136.

76. *Ep.* 60.380c-d.

77. *HE* 3.2.

78. Amm., 22.11.11.

Julian never changed that attitude. If his policy of persuasion did not give the expected results and he thought that more active measures were necessary both for the restoration of paganism and in detriment of Christianity, non-violence and even more, the illicitness of any form of coercion in religious matters were principles that were reiterated time and time again throughout his rule, particularly after his arrival at Antioch, when his policy was being perceived as openly offensive against Christians. Julian explains these ideas above all in his letters, as an immediate reply to the conflict. In letter 114 to the Christians of Bostra, in Arabia Petrea (written in Antioch on 1 August 362), Julian calls the bishop Titus to order. Titus had written to him complaining that the governor was exceeding his duties in his zeal of pagan restoration and said that it was only thanks to his containing the Christians that they had remained peaceful. Julian informed the Christians of Bostra about their bishop's opinion and invited them to expel him from the city. At the very start of the letter, Julian expresses the disappointment that the "chiefs of the Galileans" had caused him. They should be grateful, since whereas Constantius expelled, persecuted, jailed and even beheaded many heretics, he had recalled the exiled and had returned their properties. However, the bishops, who now under his regime were not allowed to exercise tyranny and continue practicing violence against them, had become exasperated, moved heaven and earth and incited the plebs to agitation and riot. A declaration of tolerance follows:

I do not allow a single one of them to be dragged against his will (ἄκοντα) to worship at the altars; nay, I proclaim in so many words that, if any man of his own free will (ἑκὼν) choose to take part in our lustral rites and libations, he ought first at all to offer sacrifices of purification and supplicate the gods that avert evil⁷⁹.

Later, he requests Christians to abstain from violent acts and to uphold harmony:

Neither let those of you who have strayed from the truth outrage those who worship the gods duly and justly, according to the beliefs that have been handed down to us from time immemorial; nor let those of you who worship the gods outrage or plunder the houses of those who have strayed rather from ignorance than of set purpose. It is by reason (λόγῳ) that we ought to persuade (πείθεσθαι) and instruct (διδάσκεσθαι) men, not by blows (πληγαίς), or insults (ὕβρεσιν), or bodily violence (αἰκισμῷ τοῦ σώματος). Wherefore, again and often I admonish those who are zealous for the true religion (ἀληθῆ θεοσέβειαν) not to injure the communities of the Galileans or attack or insult them. Nay, we ought to pity rather than hate men who in matters of the greatest importance are in such evil case. For in very truth the greatest of all blessings is reverence for the gods, as, on the other hand, irreverence is the greatest of all evils⁸⁰.

In letter 115, to the inhabitants of Edessa, Julian justifies the order of confiscating the Arian's properties because,

emboldened by their wealth, they had attacked the Valentinians and committed excesses that could not be tolerated in a well-governed city. Julian, who asks the population of Edessa to abstain from any sedition or complaint, contrasts the Christians' violent attitude with the one he shows them:

I have behaved to all the Galileans with such kindness and benevolence (πρῶς καὶ φιλανθρωπῶς) that none of them have suffered violence (βίαν ὑπομένειν) anywhere or been dragged (ἔλκησθαι) into a temple or threatened (ἐπηρεάζεσθαι) into anything else of the sort against his own will⁸¹.

At the end of epistle 61c, in which he justifies the most controversial of his anti-Christian measures, the ban on the teachers of grammar and rhetoric, Julian makes clear that the law does not in any way forbid young Christians who wish to from attending school, as it seemed the measure had been interpreted⁸². It would not be, he says, "fair or reasonable" (εἰκὸς οὐδὲ εὐλογον) to close the straight path to children who still do not know on which side to go, through the fear of making them follow ancestral traditions without a free choice (ἄκοντας). Despite this, they have the right of curing them, just as the insane are cured, without their permission (ἄκοντας ἰᾶσθαι), although it should be understood, without blaming them for their illness. Because, concludes Julian, "it is necessary to teach (διδάσκειν) but not punished (κολάζειν) the demented (ἀνοήτους)"⁸³.

The brief letter 83 to Atarbius, the governor of the Euphratensis, which is written in his own hand, summarises well Julian's attitude towards Christians:

I affirm by the gods that I do not wish the Galileans to be either put to death or unjustly beaten, or to suffer any other injury; but nevertheless I do assert absolutely that the god-fearing must be preferred to them. For through the folly (μωρίαν) of the Galileans almost everything has been overturned, whereas through the grace of the gods are we all preserved. Wherefore we ought to honour the gods and the god-fearing, both men and cities⁸⁴.

A policy that is not neutral, on the contrary, it is openly non-neutral. Therefore, so often Julian is said to be intolerant, confusing tolerance with neutrality.

That Julian liked to appear as a tolerant prince, and that he was remembered thus by tradition, is mentioned by Sozomen, who noted that Julian asked the people no to commit acts of injustice against Christians, nor insult them, or force anyone to make a sacrifice if it was not to their liking and of their own volition⁸⁵. It is also shown in an anecdote told by Theodoret of Cyrrhus⁸⁶. When Julian was

81. Ep. 115.424c (Wright 40).

82. Thus, Greg. Naz., Or. 4.4-5; Ruf., HE 10.33; Soc., HE 3.12; 3.16; Soz., HE 5.18; Theod., HE 3.8; Philost., HE 7.4b.

83. Ep. 61c.424a-b (Wright 36).

84. Ep. 83.376c-d (Wright 37).

85. HE 3.3.

86. HE 3.22.

79. Ep. 114.436c (Wright 41).

80. Ep. 114.438a-c.

setting off on his Persian campaign, he was met by the son of a noble from the city of Berea, who had been disinherited for being a pagan, and who asked him for help. During a banquet held by the emperor, he rebuked the father:

I don't think it is fair to do harm to someone who thinks differently to you and to make him change his opinion against his will. Don't torment your son if he doesn't wish to remain in the religion you profess. Not even I have forced you to follow mine, although I could force you quite easily.

Before the emperor, the father calls his son "a madman who hates God, and prefers lies to the truth". Then Julian, on seeing that he could not persuade him, leaves him alone and takes the son under his protection. Theodoret, however, does not tell this anecdote to illustrate Julian's tolerance but, on the contrary, to praise the *παρρησία* of the Christian citizen.

Julian was quite aware that an emperor should rule over different kinds of subjects, and know other nations and customs⁸⁷. In contrast with Constantius's despotism, Julian declared that his reign was a time of *ἐλευθερία*: freedom for those who venerate the gods⁸⁸, and freedom, guaranteed by law, for Christians too⁸⁹. What is more, the freedom the Christians then enjoyed was greater than in the past, when Constantius, a Christian emperor, had persecuted those who did not share his creed⁹⁰. Julian states his scrupulous respect for the freedom of conscience in ep. 61c:

I do not say that they (the Christians) ought to change their opinions and then instruct the young. But I give them this choice: either not to teach what they do not think admirable, or, if they wish to teach, let them first really persuade their pupils that neither Homer nor Hesiod nor any of these writers whom they expound and have declared to be guilty of impiety, folly and error in regard to the gods, is such as they declare⁹¹.

87. *Eulogy to the Emperor Constantius (or: 1)*, 12d-13a.

88. *Ep.* 61c.423c: "It is true that, until now, there were many excuses for not attending the temples, and the terror that threatened on all sides absolved men from concealing the truest beliefs about the gods. But since the gods have granted us liberty, it seems to me absurd that men should teach what they do not believe to be sound."

89. *Ep.* 114.437b: "Therefore I have decided to proclaim to all communities of citizens, by means of this edict (*διάταγμα*), and to make known to all, that they must not join in the feuds of the clerics or be induced by them to take stones in their hands or disobey those in authority; but they may hold meetings for as long as they please and may offer on their own behalf the prayers to which they are accustomed."

90. *Ep.* 114.435d-436a-b: "I thought that the leaders of the Galileans would be more grateful to me than to my predecessor in the administration of the Empire. For in his reign it happened to the majority of them to be sent into exile, prosecuted, and cast into prison, and moreover, many whole communities of those who are called "heretics" were actually butchered, as at Samosata and Cizycus, in Paphlagonia, Bithynia, and Galatia, and among many other tribes also villages were sacked and completely devastated; whereas, during my reign, the contrary has happened. For those who have been exiled have had their exile remitted, and those whose property was confiscated have, by a law (*νόμος*) of mine, received permission to recover all their possessions."

91. *Ep.* 61c.423b. See A. Saggioro, *Giuliano, imperatore e l'Edictum de professoribus. Integrazione e senso della storia*, in N. Spineto (ed.),

This is by reason of respect for human freedom, a concept of Cynic, and above all, Stoic philosophy, which Julian expressed in *Misopogon*, in an ironic tone on that occasion, a propos the Antiochians' *παρρησία*: "For if one were to rob human beings of the power to do and to say what they please, that would be to take away and curtail the first principle of independence (*ἐλευθερία*)"⁹². It was, in the last analysis, respect for the freedom of conscience which made Julian guarantee freedom of worship and to act in a genuinely tolerant way, even while despising the Christian religion, which he considered false. Although able, as he himself said, to eradicate it by force, just as a mental illness is cured, he chose not to do so.

But Julian did not renounce the idea of conversion and here is where the concept of "persuasion" comes into play. As he was convinced that the traditional religion was the true one, and that he had been given the providential task of restoring it and propagating it⁹³, Julian initiates an evangelising mission: he wishes to heal and save as far as possible those who are saveable – a very common idea amongst the Christians – through education and persuasion, and avoiding violence. The binomial *πείθειν καὶ βιάζεσθαι* is a classic of political moral thought, and appears in the eulogies of Constantius, veritable treatises on kingship. Persuasion, gentleness, humanity, kindness, moderation, prudence and, above all, justice, are what define the philosopher-king, whereas insolence, cruelty, anger and violence are traits of the tyrant. The monarch should be "the citizens' friend", and he should care for them "as the shepherd cares for his flock" – also a very familiar image for Christians – seeking peace and avoiding civil discord⁹⁴. This does not mean the king cannot use force legitimately. On the contrary, it is a sign of a good ruler to oppose his external and internal enemies energetically until they are submitted. Julian did that and was praised for it. However, inasmuch as persuasion and coercion are the two components of the function of government, the philosopher-king should prefer the former.

Christian apologetics on religious coercion

Julian's ideas about freedom, the voluntary nature of worship and the value of persuasion as the only licit resort in the religious sphere are extraordinarily similar to those expressed by Christian apologists during the persecu-

La religione come fattore di integrazione. Modelli di convivenza e di scambio religioso nel mondo antico, Alessandria, 2008, pp. 163-188.

92. *Misop.* 356b. It was the Cynics who first made known this appeal for human freedom, which was later developed in a more articulate form by the Stoics. See A. Momigliano, *Pace e libertà nel mondo antico*, Roma, 1996, pp. 131-144.

93. An idea that is well expressed in the parable near the end of *Against the Cynic Heraclitus*, 226d-234c, and at the end of the hymns *To the Mother of the Gods* 180a-c, and *To King Helios* 157d.

94. *Eulogy to the Emperor Constantius. On royalty (or: 3)*, 86a-d.

tions⁹⁵. It was above all Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 220) and a century later Lactantius (ca. 250-ca. 325) who produced the best-articulated expression of these principles⁹⁶. Tertullian was the first to use the term *libertas religionis*, which he considered a human right and a natural privilege:

Let one man worship God, another Jupiter; let this man raise suppliant hands to heaven, that man to the altar of Fides [...] Look to it, whether this may also form part of the accusation of irreligion (*inreligiositatis*) – to do away with freedom of religion (*libertatem religionis*), to forbid a man choice of deity (*optionem divinitatis*), so that I may not worship whom I would not. No one, not even a man, will wish to receive reluctant worship⁹⁷.

However, it is a fundamental human right and a privilege of nature (*humani iuris et naturalis potestatis*), that every man should worship according to his own convictions: one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion – to which free-will (*sponte*) and not force (*vi*) should lead us – the sacrificial victims even being required of a willing mind. You will render no real service to your gods by compelling us to sacrifice. For they can have no desire of offerings from the unwilling, unless they are animated by a spirit of contention, which is a thing altogether undivine⁹⁸.

The argument that it is necessary for an act of worship to be voluntary for it to be valid also originated in Tertullian. In Greco-Roman religious mentality the value of conscience was not questioned in those terms, because religion was a civic act, and nor was the value of religious freedom, because polytheism is inclusive by nature and the fact of making a religious choice did not imply rejecting or fighting against others. It was the spread of Christianity, with its monotheism, with the requirement of conversion and, above all with its exclusivity, which made these parameters change. The discourse of tolerance can only have meaning in a context of conflict. This is also the case of Julian, who would not have reiterated his ideas on freedom and coercion if his religious policy had not given rise to conflicts or had not been perceived as persecutory.

Christian apologists claimed freedom using several arguments: that of individual freedom and conscience, that of natural Roman tolerance – each ἔθνος had its own beliefs and religious rites, which Rome respected⁹⁹ –, that

of the traditional freedom of expression for philosophers¹⁰⁰, and a set of arguments of political-philosophical kind, which can be summed up with the idea that tolerance is reasonable and just, whereas persecution is irrational and tyrannical. When the apologists addressed the emperors in the second and third centuries, they appeal to their quality of philosopher-sovereigns. Athenagoras calls Marcus Aurelius and Commodus "great lovers of humankind" (φιλανθρωποτάτοι), of "wisdom" (φιλομαθεστάτοι) and "truth" (φιλάληθες)¹⁰¹. Justin asks Antoninus Pius not to be carried away by violence and tyranny (μὴ βίᾳ μηδὲ τυρραννίδι), but by piety and philosophy (ἀλλ' εὐσεβείᾳ καὶ φιλοσοφίᾳ)¹⁰². Finally, some apologists appeal to the strict criteria of tolerance in a sense very near to the modern one: Tertullian was to say that, even if Christianity were a false, vain and conceited religion, and therefore deserved to be mocked, it is not one worthy of "the sword, fire, the cross and the beasts"¹⁰³. The same argument is found in Arnobius of Sicca a century later, at the time of the Diocletian persecutions:

Are His words displeasing, and are you offended when you hear them? Count them as but a soothsayer's empty tales. Does He speak very stupidly, and promise foolish gifts? Laugh with scorn as wise men, and leave Him in His folly to be tossed about among His errors¹⁰⁴.

This is exactly Julian's attitude towards the Christians: abandon them to the misery of their error.

Together with their claims for freedom, based on the final argument that neither Christians nor their beliefs, however stupid they might seem, were of any danger to the State and therefore should be tolerated, the persecutions produced the first reflection on the illicitness of religious coercion and the

95. This is already noted by J. Bouffartigue, *L'empereur Julien était-il intolérant?*, cit. (n. 10), pp. 5 ss.

96. See P. Garnsey, *Religious Toleration in Classical Antiquity*, in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration*, London, 1984, pp. 1-27; G. Stroumsa, *Tertullian on idolatry and the limits of tolerance*, in G. N. Stanton, G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in early Judaism and Christianity*, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 173-184; M. Marcos, *La idea de libertad religiosa en el Imperio romano*, in J. Fernández Ubina, M. Marcos (eds.), *Libertad e intolerancia religiosa en el Imperio romano*, Madrid, 2007, pp. 61-81. M. Kahlos, *Forbearance and Compulsion. The Rhetoric of Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Late Antiquity*, London, 2009, pp. 28-55.

97. *Apol.* 24.5-6.

98. *Ad Scap.* 2.2.

99. On the basis of respect for the religious singularities of different peoples, some apologists, especially in the Latin realm, developed the theory

of the "third race": the Christian religion should be respected because it formed a *genus*, the *tertium genus*, different from Greeks and Jews. The apologists soon abandoned this argument, however, doubtlessly because by presenting themselves as foreign to Greco-Roman culture they provided their opponents arguments for accusation of misanthropy and political disloyalty. To counteract these arguments, they insisted on Christians' civism, their peaceful nature and the fulfillment of their duties as citizens. For Tertullian, it is the character of citizens loyal to the Empire and fully integrated in it that obliges the emperors to guarantee freedom of worship for the Christians in equality with other subjects. Religious freedom is thus implicit in the concept of citizenship. See M. Marcos, *La idea de libertad religiosa*, cit. (n. 96), pp. 61-66.

100. The apologists present Christianity as a philosophical school. Philosophical schools disagree among themselves about many things, such as the truth of the gods, and profess contrary doctrines about the deity. If philosophers possess the privilege of παρρησία, even more so should Christians, who are true philosophers. Tertullian claimed the same treatment for Christians as was given to philosophers "as regards freedom and immunity of doctrine", *Ad gent.* 1.4.

101. *Leg. ad Christ.* 2.

102. *I Apol.* 3.2.

103. *Apol.* 49. 3.

104. Arnob., *Adv. nat.*, 1.65.6. For the date of the work in the time of Diocletian, see the convincing arguments in M. B. Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca. Religious Conflict and Competition in the Age of Diocletian*, Oxford, 1995.

advantages of persuasion. Although the idea is implicit in many apologists, it was during the Diocletian persecution when it was formulated in an articulate way, in response to the attacks on Christianity coming from some pagan intellectuals, like Porphyry of Tyre, who wondered whether the Christians should be considered worthy of "tolerance" (συγγνώμη) or whether they should be justly (ἔνδικος) punished for their impiety¹⁰⁵. Lactantius, who was a direct witness of the persecution, answers in Book 5 of the *Divine Institutions* to this kind of attack from the pagan intelligentsia¹⁰⁶. In his arguments in favour of religious freedom, Lactantius depends on the previous apologetic tradition, above all on Tertullian, and does not put forward any new ideas. The original aspect of his thought is the insistence on the value of dialogue in contrast with coercion: nothing is more voluntary than religion, worship of the deity cannot be imposed, nor can anyone be stopped from worshipping who they like; the order of making sacrifices to the idols is tyrannical, dialogue or persuasion are not used to attract Christians, only violence and tortures. But nothing can be achieved through force, on the contrary, the more the Christians are persecuted, the more their numbers grow. It is clear that violence will not stop the spread of Christianity. Finally, Lactantius invites priests and whoever holds responsibility in the Roman religion to a public debate on the worship of the gods¹⁰⁷.

The apologists' arguments left their mark in the language of tolerance laws in the times after the persecutions¹⁰⁸. They are clearly seen in the so-called Edict of Milan, where the freedom of conscience and the voluntary nature of worship is acknowledged¹⁰⁹, and also in less well-known texts, such as Maximinus Daia's tolerance edicts of 312, previous to the Edict of Milan, in which after admitting the failure of persecution, he sets down that Christians should not be bothered or punished¹¹⁰. Although Maximinus Daia, who was a pagan, regarded Christianity as a superstition (δαιμονία) he ordered that each one can decide according to their personal preference and that Christians should acknowledge the worship of the gods if they wanted to (τὴν βούλησιν ἔχειν καὶ εἰ βούλονται)¹¹¹. It was better, he said, to attract them with "flatteries and encouragements" (ταῖς

κολακείαις καὶ ταῖς προτροπαῖς), and to behave towards them with "indulgence and moderation" (ἀνεξικακῶς καὶ συμμετρῶς), to welcome those who, of their free will, acknowledged the traditional religion¹¹².

Eusebius of Caesarea insists that Maximinus is a persecutor and a hypocrite. Yet, while we are speaking of hypocrisy, the Christians were not sincere either in their requests for tolerance. Their discourse is a product of the circumstances, which they never internalised, as they showed when, after Constantine, they had the opportunity to put religious freedom into practice and they did not do so. However, what interests us here is not the sincerity of one or the other, but the fact that the discourse of freedom, in the terms in which it was expressed by the Christians, was in the end shared by the pagans. The apologists' arguments were not intrinsically religious, but extracted from Greco-Roman political praxis, political morals and philosophy. They are the sum of ideals which were not the exclusive property of the Christians, but belonged to the common *paideia* of a cultivated elite.

Conclusions

What relation is there between Julian's discourse and that of the apologists? It is not possible to prove that any direct dependence existed. We know little of the Christian literature that Julian might have read, although he was patently interested in it. Some months after the death of bishop George in Alexandria, Julian, while declaring his passion for books, requests as a personal favour from Ecdicius, the Praetorian Prefect, that he retrieved George's library before it could be put on sale¹¹³. In a second letter he asks again that all the books, even the Christian ones, should be carefully sought out, under the threat of torture, and sent to him at Antioch¹¹⁴. Julian was quite familiar with George's splendid library, which contained many books on philosophy and history, because when he was in Cappadocia in his youth, he had lent him many of them to copy. Of the apologists, Julian only cites Eusebius of Caesarea, but this does not mean he did not read other authors. He would doubtlessly have been familiarised with many other apologetic works, such as the *Against Celsus* by Origen, which he must have used extensively to write *Against the Galileans*¹¹⁵. It is less likely that Julian, who possessed an eminently Greek culture, would have read Latin apologists and therefore his discourse on the illicitness of coercion must have been constructed from a direct reading of Tertullian, Arnobius or Lactantius. What

105. In a fragment from *Philosophy from Oracles* (ed. Harnack, frag. 1), quoted by Eus. *Praep. Evang.* 1.2.

106. Perhaps he was replying directly to Porphyry, although he does not mention him by name, and to Hierocles, who he considered the instigator of the persecution. See E. DePalma Digeser, *Lactantius, Porphyry, and the Debate over Religious Toleration*, in *JRS*, 88, 1998, pp. 129-146.

107. *Div. Instit.* 5.13-20.

108. See M. Marcos, *La idea de libertad religiosa*, cit. (n. 96), pp. 75-81.

109. Lact., *De mort. persec.* 48.2-8; Eus., *HE* 10.5.1-4.

110. *HE* 9.1.2-6; 9.4-9. For these and other documents by Maximinus Daia connected with the persecutions, S. Mitchell, *Maximinus and the Christians in A.D. 312: A New Latin Inscription*, in *JRS*, 78, 1988, pp. 105-124.

111. *HE* 9.9.5.

112. *HE* 9.9.7.

113. *Ep.* 106.

114. *Ep.* 107.

115. A. Meredith, *Porphyry and Julian Against the Christians*, in *ANRW* II, 23.2, p. 1147; J. Bouffartigue, *L'empereur Julian*, cit. (n. 8), pp. 379 ss.

we are sure of is that, despite rejecting it, Julian owed a great deal to Christianity, a debt which perhaps not even he was aware of. Although in his time few direct witnesses of the persecutions remained alive, the Christians held a constant memory of that violence; a memory that was kept alive and which had originated a rich literary legacy that any cultivated Christian – and Julian had been one – would have known.

Although the discourse of freedom disappeared with the end of the persecutions, religious confrontation continued to exist after Constantine and evolved towards a conflict that became violent in the time of Constantius II, with a repressive legislation against paganism and with a severe persecutory policy against heretics¹¹⁶. The theoretical discourse of the apologists was still fully valid in the post-Constantinian period and was perfectly acceptable to both pagans and Christians. Julian, like his contemporaries Libanius¹¹⁷ and Themistius¹¹⁸, subscribed to it, although notable differences in religious concept and attitude existed between them. The Christians in Julian's time also recuperated the old discourse. Athanasius of Alexandria, who had suffered many exiles under the regime of Constantius, whom he considered a persecutor, wrote (a. 358) that it is "not part of men who have confidence in what they believe, to force and compel the unwilling ... for the truth is not preached with swords or with darts, nor by means of soldiers, but by persuasion and counsel"¹¹⁹. John Chrysostom, in the *On Babylas* (a. 378-379), contrasts Julian's coercive policies with traditional Christian tolerance: "No-one has ever fought (paganism), since Christians are not allowed to use coercion and violence to change error; man's salvation has to be achieved by persuasion, reasoning and mildness"¹²⁰. However John Chrysostom was now discussing over Julian's memory. At the end of his agitated ecclesiastical

career, Gregory of Nazianzus wrote in an autobiographical poem: "I do not consider it good practice to coerce people instead of persuading them. Whatever is done against one's will, under threat of force, is like an arrow artificially tied back, or a river dammed in on every side of its channel. Given the opportunity it rejects the restraining force. What is done willingly, on the other hand, is steadfast for all time. It is made fast by the unbreakable bonds of love"¹²¹.

In addition to this substrate of ideas shared by pagans and Christians, applicable to the sphere of religion, Julian possessed other arguments against coercion in Greco-Roman *paideia*. Treatises on *basileia* and on philosophy included, among the catalogue of classical political virtues, the principles of fairness, the value of persuasion, and non-violence. Julian personified the ideal of the *civilis princeps*, which he himself took care of creating and diffusing¹²², and nothing could be more different from that ideal than violent behaviour. In practical terms too, a repressive policy would have brought him few advantages in search of the consensus and the recognition that Julian wanted so much for himself. Classicism and Christianity, political theory and praxis, come together in this aspect of Julian's thought and political action.

Finally, was Julian sincere in his declarations of tolerance and, in any case, did he act in coherence with the things he said? I do not think that tolerance was one of Julian's personal virtues. A profoundly religious man, verging on superstitious and excessive, as Ammianus Marcellinus noted¹²³ and Julian's own writings show, he regarded paganism as the only true religion and thought that Christianity was not *religio* but atheism. To be genuinely tolerant in religious matters, certain relativism is necessary and Julian, like the Christians, lacked this¹²⁴. But I think that he did have the political virtue of tolerance, something that very few Christian emperors put into practice. It is true that his religious policy was not neutral and by openly favouring pagans he could have discriminated against Christians. However, it is impossible to say how far this went, because of the short time of his reign, and the nature of the sources which, because of their scarcity, silences and tendentiousness, do not allow firm conclusions to be reached about the effects of Julian's pro-pagan policies.

Certainly, Julian firmly believed it was better to persuade than to coerce. I do not think that his discourse

116. For Constantius II's anti-pagan and Christian legislation, see P. O. Cuneo, *La legislazione di Costantino II, Costanzo II e Costante (337-361)*, Milano, 1997, and recently Ph. Tilden, *Religious Intolerance in the Later Roman Empire. The Evidence of the Theodosian Code*, PhD, Univ. Exeter, 2006, pp. 40-66. On Constantius' religious policy, T. D. Barnes, *Christians and pagans in the reign of Constantius*, in A. Dihle (ed.), *L'Église et l'empire au IV^e siècle. Sept exposés suivis de discussions* (Entretiens Hardt), 1989, pp. 301-337; Id., *Athanasius and Constantius, Theology and Politics*, Cambridge, 1993; S. Laconi, *Costanzo II: ritratto di un imperatore eretico*, Roma, 2004.

117. See I. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch*, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 154 ss.; A. Quiroga Puertas, *Yo que vivo por mis discursos: Paideia, retórica y tolerancia religiosa en Libanio de Antioquia*, in *Habis*, 39, 2008, pp. 317-333.

118. For the idea of religious toleration in Themistius, J. Daly, *Themistius' Plea for Religious Tolerance*, in *Greek, Roman & Byzantine Studies*, 12, 1971, pp. 65-79; P. Heather, D. Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy, and Empire*, cit. (n. 31), p. 142 ss.; J. Ritoré Ponce, *Tradición y originalidad en la tradición temistiana de la tolerancia religiosa*, in *Habis*, 32, 2001, pp. 521-540. In general, for the claims for toleration among the last pagans, A. H. Armstrong, *The Way and the Ways: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in the Fourth Century A.D.*, in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 38, 1984, pp. 1-17. C. Ando, *Pagan Apologetics and Christian Intolerance in the Ages of Themistius and Augustine*, in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 4, 1996, pp. 171-207; M. Kahlos, *Forbearance*, cit. (n. 96), pp. 75 s.

119. Athan., *Hist. Ar.* 33.

120. J. Chrys., *In Bab.* 13.

121. Greg. Naz., *De vita sua*, 1293-1302.

122. On this ideal, see V. Neri, *Costanzo, Giuliano e l'ideale del civilis princeps nelle "Storie" di Ammiano Marcelino*, Roma, 1984; A. Marcone, *Giuliano e lo stile dell'imperatore tardoantico*, in *Giuliano imperatore*, cit. (n. 10), pp. 43-58.

123. See *supra* n. 29.

124. On this "lack of relativism" among the Christians, that made them intrinsically intolerant, G. Stroumsa, *Le radicalisme religieux du premier christianisme : contexte et implications*, in E. Patlagean, A. Le Boulluec (eds.), *Les retours aux Écritures. Fondamentalismes présents et passés*, Louvain-Paris, 1993, pp. 357-391.

was simply rhetorical and that he acted out of pure political interest. Although we know that violent episodes occurred during his rule, almost all those we know of were provoked by the Christians and also nearly all were the responsibility of others and not directly of Julian, who tried to avoid them and to make justice prevail above all. Not even his strongest detractors were able to deny that evidence. Gregory of Nazianzus often resorted to oxymoron, as we have seen, which shows the difficulties Christian intellectuals had in making Julian into a true persecutor. In the same way, 4th and 5th century ecclesiastical historians, who in general terms agree with Gregory's reading of Julian's reign¹²⁵, encounter the same contradiction. For Jerome, he had carried out a *blanda persecutio* ("persuasive persecution")¹²⁶, and Rufinus of Aquileia defines Julian as *callidior ceteris persecutor* ("a more astute persecutor than the others"), as he "did not resort to violence and torment, but with rewards, honours, flattery and persuasive promises he succeeded in making a larger number of Christians fall than if he had resorted to cruel means"¹²⁷.

Although the Christians admit that Julian did not use physical violence, they try to explain his tolerance as a pretence, a mask to cover the evilness of his character¹²⁸. Julian's aim with his "gentle" persecution was to advance paganism¹²⁹ and take revenge on Christians by depriving them of the glory of martyrdom¹³⁰. Above all, Julian searched to earn a good reputation and in no circumstances to offer the image of a tyrant¹³¹. Socrates, who gives a more balanced view of Julian's rule, acknowledges that he had been an outstanding prince for his culture, for the austerity of his way of life and for his ability to attract Christians, especially at beginning of his reign, when he had behaved with gentleness and fairness towards all¹³². Even when he abandoned his initial policy of tolerance, he says, Julian abstained from exercising excessive cruelty. Socrates shows certain reserve when he speaks of persecution (*διώκειν*) and feels he needs to define the meaning of the word: "I consider persecution to be any measure that is intended to disturb and bother us"¹³³.

Christian authors say that Julian used tricks to avoid violence: he placed the images of the gods next to his portraits so that when they paid tribute to him, they also did so to the pagan gods, which the Christians could not refuse to do or they would have been accused of treason¹³⁴; he gave out donations to soldiers, accompanied with an act of sacrifice¹³⁵; public fountains and markets were contaminated with pagan sprinkling so that the Christians could not use them or they would be polluted¹³⁶; he openly favoured pagans, keeping posts in the administration for them¹³⁷, and also the cities with a pagan majority¹³⁸, which was clearly to the detriment of Christians; he had tried to exclude them from the *paideia* with his more than unfortunate School Edict¹³⁹. Although in some cases his "anti-Christian" measures were wrongly interpreted and in other occasions were false rumours, Julian did in fact use ways of coercion that did not enter in the category of repressive or violent. It was possible to persuade with the *logos*, as Julian "the philosopher" would have wanted to, but also with psychologically coercive measures. Julian "the emperor" knew this well, and alludes in his works to the so-called "Thessaly forced persuasion" (*τῇ Θεσσαλικῇ πειθανάγκῃ*)¹⁴⁰, whose meaning he explains in the *Panegyric on the deeds of the Empress Eusebia*: "For when those who have the power to exact by force what they wish condescend to entreat, naturally they put one out of countenance and there is nothing left but to obey"¹⁴¹. Although Julian always put justice above any other instrument in the exercise of power, the emperor was the "living law" (*ἔμψυχος νόμος*), whose will the subjects respected, even if it only were out of the wish to please him. This also was what Gregory of Nazianzus wanted to express with *ἐπιεικῶς ἐβιάζετο*, a subtle way of making coercion, which corresponded with the civilised style that Julian believed in. The Christians' urge to fight his memory and destroy his reputation reveals their fear in the face of the power of ideas and a philanthropic way of ruling that remained attractive generations after Julian's death.

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125. Most of them speak about a persecution: Ruf., *HE* 1.32; Aug., *De civ. Dei* 18.52; Soc., *HE* 3.2; Soz., *HE* 5.2; Philost., *HE* 7.6.

126. *Chron. an.* 362.

127. *HE*, 10.33: *non vi, neque tormentis, sed praemiis, honoribus, blanditiis, persuasionibus, maiorem pene populi partem, quamsi atrociter pulsasset, elisit.*

128. Ruf., *HE* 10.34; Soc., *HE* 3.21; Soz., *HE* 5.4; Theod., *HE* 3.15.

129. Soz., *HE* 5.4.

130. Soc., *HE* 3.12; Soz., *HE* 5.4.

131. Soz., *HE* 5.17; Theod., *HE* 3.4; Philost. *HE* 7.4.

132. Soc., *HE* 3.1; 3.11.

133. Soc. *HE* 3.12.

134. Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.81; Soz., *HE* 5.17.

135. Soc., *HE* 3.12; 3.13.

136. Theod. *HE* 3.15.

137. Greg. Naz., *Or.* 5.19; Ruf., *HE*, 10.32; Soc., *HE* 3.13; Theod., *HE* 3.6, confirmed by Julian, *ep.* 83.

138. Soz., *HE* 5.3. Julian withdrew Caesarea's city status: Greg. Naz., *Or.* 4.92; Soz., *HE* 5.4. And the same in the case of Constantia, which was returned to the jurisdiction of Gaza: Soz., *HE* 5.3.

139. Ruf., *HE* 10.32; Soc., *HE* 3.12; Soz., *HE* 5.18.

140. *Panegyric in honour to Constantius (Or. 1)*, 31d-32a; *Letter to the Athenians*, 274c.

141. *Or.* 2. 121c (Wright 3).