Researches into the Divine Institutes of Lactantius.

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RESEARCHES INTO THE DIVINE INSTITUTES OF LACTANTIUS.

A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Durham.

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ABSTRACT.

"Researches into the Divine Institutes of Lactantius." PhD Thesis in the Faculty of Divinity. Rev Fr.J.A.McGuckin.CP.

Critical scholarship over this century has been almost exclusively concerned with Lactantius as a literary or historical 'persona',yet recent studies have successfully demonstrated the potential his work has to allow us insight into the theological motivation of the pre - Nicene Church. The thesis attempts to analyse the major work of the apologist as an essay in theological communication addressed primarily to pagan 'literati' but showing signs that its author also envisaged a Christian readership. It is suggested that the work, with all its archaisms and obscurities, may still be taken as a valid indication of the state of western tradition on the eve of Nicaea.

The study exposes the patristic authorities of Lactantius and demonstrates that his scriptural inspiration is significantly greater than was previously imagined. The theological analysis of his apology embraces the doctrine of God, the anthropology, and the christology. In the first, Lactantius illustrates the divine transcendence by using theological attributes common to both Classical and Christian tradition in an attempt to convey the scriptural notion of supreme providence to his pagan audience. His vision of God is essentially that of the Pantokrator of pre-Nicene tradition.The anthropology is determined by apologetic concerns and frequently applies the Stoic 'topos' of the status rectus , although he transforms his sources by setting the figure within the context of Christian worship and ethics.The christology presents Christ's salvific work in terms of a magisterium that uniquely fulfils the aspirations of religion and philosophy.

Lactantius shows an overall dependence on a Logos - theology, as well as preserving several archaisms, not least a spirit-christology that results in his binitarianism. In general,Lactantius emerges as a theologian who looks back to ancient traditions of ecclesiastical theology, and is much more remote from Nicaea than the mere twenty years that distance him from the Council would at first suggest. He is a Father who is not only a primary source for our historical knowledge of the period, but one who deserves to be studied more sensitively as a theological witness.

Durham. December. 1980.

'Volui sapientiam cum religione coniungere, ne quid studiosis inanis illa doctrina possit officere, ut iam scientia litterarum non modo nihil noceat religioni atque iustitiae, sed etiam prosit quam plurimum, si is qui eas didicerit, sit in virtutibus instructior, in veritate sapientior.'

Divinae Institutiones. 5.1.11.

'Christianorum omnium facundissimus est Lactantius.'

(Ludovicus Vives) (1)

'Purissimus scriptor, facundissimus et sanctissimus vir.'

(Ianus Brovkhusius) (2)

(1) cf. Lactantii opera omnia. Ed. I.L. Bünemann. Leipzig 1739. Testimonia facing p.1.

(2) Ianus Brovkhusius. Ad Propertium 3.15.8. cf. Bünemann. op.cit. p.1.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AALS Atti dell' academia Ligure di scienze e lettere. Ligure.

AAST Atti dell' academia dell scienze di Torino. Turin,

AFLC Annali della facolta di lettere filosofia e magistero della universita' di cagliari . Cagliari .

AG Analecta Gregoriana . Rome .

Ag Augustinianum . Rome .

AHAW Abhandlungen der Heidelberger akademie der wissenschaften. Phil-Hist. Klasse. Heidelberg.

AJP American journal of philology. Baltimore

ALLG Archiv für lateinische lexicographie und gramm. Leipzig.

ANCL Ante Nicene Christian library. Edinburgh.

AOAW Anzeiger der Osterrische akademia der wissenschaft. Phil-Hist. Klasse. Vienna.

APA American philological association. Washington

ARIVSL Atti del reale istituto Veneto di scienze lettere ed arti. Venice.

BFC Bolletino di filologia classica. Turin.

BLE Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique. Toulouse

CIL Corpus inscriptionum latinarum. Berlin

CM Classica et mediaevalia. Copenhagen

CSCA Californian Studies in Christian antiquity. University of California .

CSEL Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum. Vienna
Opera Lactantii Vol 19. 1890, and Vol 27. 1893.

CUA Catholic university of America. Washington .
(PS) Patristic Studies Series
(SCA) Studies in Christian antiquity.

CW	Classical Weekly. Lancaster Pennsylvania
DAC	Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et liturgie. Paris
DAI	Dissertation abstracts international. Michigan
De Ira	On the anger of God. (De Ira Dei) Lactantius ·
DI	The Divine Institutes. Lactantius
DM	On the death of the persecutors (De Mortibus persecutorum) Lactantius.
Did	Didaskaleion. Turin
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie catholique. Paris
EA	Estudios Agustinos. Madrid.
ED	Euntes docete. Rome.
EL	Études Latines. Paris.
Epit.	The Epitome of the Divine Institutes. Lactantius.
ER	Eranos. Gothenberg
GIF	Giornale Italiano di filologia. Naples.
Gn.	Gnomon. Berlin
HJ.	Heythrop Journal. London.
JAC	Jahrbuch für antike und christentum. Munster.
JRS.	Journal of Roman Studies. London.
JTS	Journal of theological studies. London.
LCP	Latinitas christianorum primaeva. Nijmeegen.
Mansi	Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio. Florence,1759f.
MH.	Mediaevalia et Humanistica Denton. Texas.
Mn.	Mnemosyne. Bibliotheca philologica. Leyde.
Mph.	Museum Maanblad voor philologie en geschiedensis. Utrecht.
OD	On the Workmanship of God (De Opificio Dei) Lactantius.
Ph	Philologus. Zeitschrift für das Klassiche altertum. Leipzig.

PI	La Parole et l'idée. Rivista internazionale di varia cultura. Naples
PL	Patrologia Latina. J.P. Migne. Paris.
PS	Philologischen Studien. Berlin
RAL	Rendiconti della reale academia nazionale dei Lincei. classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche. Rome.
RBP	Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire. Brussells.
REA	Revue des études anciennes. Bordeaux.
REAg.	Revue des études Augustiniennes. Paris
R(ec)SR	Recherches de science religieuse. Paris.
REG	Revue des études Grecques. Paris
REL	Revue des études Latines Paris
RFIC	Rivista internazionale di filologia e d'istruzione classica. Turin
RHE	Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique. Louvain
RHEF	Revue d'histoire de l' église de France. Paris
RHL	Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses. Paris
RHPR	Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses. Strasbourg.
RHT.	Revue d'histoire des textes. Paris
RIFD	Rivista internazionale di filosofia del diretto. Milan.
RKA	Realencyclopaide der Klassischen altertumswissenschaft Ed. Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll. Stuttgart
RQ	Roemische quartalschrift für christliche altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte. Freiburg.
RQH	Revue des questions historiques. Paris
RR	Ricerche religiose. Rome.
RSC	Rivista di studi classici. Turin
RSLCA	Raccolti di studi e lettere christiani antici. Catania.

RSLR Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa. Florence.

SBE Studia biblica et ecclesiastica. Oxford.

SC Sources Chrétiennes. Paris

SDHI Studia et documenta historiae et iuris. Rome.

SP Studia Patristica. Berlin

SPL Studia Platonica. Amsterdam.

SPCK Society for the promotion of Christian Knowledge. London.

SS Studi storici. Pisa.

TH Théologie Historique (Series) Beauchêsne. Paris

ThLL Thesaurus Linguae Latinae. Leipzig. 1900 f.

TQ Theologische quartalschrift. Stuttgart.

TV Texte und untersuchungen. Berlin

VC Vigiliae Christianae. Amsterdam

ZNTW Zeitschrift fur neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der aelteren Kirche. Giessen-Berlin.

List of Classical and Patristic works cited in Thesis.

Apuleius.	De Dogmate Platonis
	De Mundo.
	Metamorphoses.
Ps.Apuleius.	Asclepius.
Aristides.	Apologia.
Aristotle.	Ethica Nicomachaea.
Arnobius.	Adversus Nationes.
Athenagoras.	Supplicatio pro Christianis.
Caesar.	Bellum Civile.
	Bellum Gallicum.
Cassiodorus.	Institutio Divinarum Litterarum.
Cicero.	Academicae Quaestiones.
	Actio In Verrem.
	De Deorum Natura.
	De Divinatione ad M Brutum.
	De Finibus.
	De Legibus.
	De Officiis.
	De Oratore.
	De Republica.
	Divinatio in Caecilium.
	Oratio pro A.L. Archia.
	Oratio pro R.Postumo.
	Timaeus (De Universo).
	Tusculanae Disputationes.
Clement (of Alexandria)	Protreptikos.
	Paidagogos.
	Stromateis.
Cyprian.	Ad Demetrianum.
	Ad Fortunatum.

cont..

Cyprian.	Ad Quirinum (Testimonia).
	De Opere et Eleemosynis.
	De Unitate Ecclesiae.
Diomedes.	De Grammaticis.
Eusebius.	Chronicon.
	Demonstratio Evangelica.
	Historia Ecclesiastica.
	Preparatio Evangelica.
Epictetus.	Sententiae.
Epiphanius.	Haereses.
Eumenius.	Oratio pro Scholis Instaurandis.
Hieronymus.	Chronicon.
	De Viris Illustribus.
	Epistulae.
	In Isaiam Commentarii.
	In Epistulam ad Galatas Commentarium.
Hippolytus.	Contra Noetum.
Ps.Hippolytus.	In Sancta Pascha.
Horace.	Carmina.
	Epodi.
Ignatius.	Epistula ad Ephesios.
	Epistula ad Philadelphenos.
	Epistula ad Smyrnaeos.
	Epistula ad Trallianos.
Irenaeus.	Adversus Haereses.
	Demonstratio.
Justin.	Apologia.1.
	Dialogus cum Tryphone.
Ps. Justin.	Ad Graecos.
	De Resurrectione.
Lucretius.	De Natura.

Minucius Felix.	Octavius.
Maro.	Aeneis.
	Georgica.
Novatian.	De Trinitate.
Origen.	Contra Celsum.
Ovid.	Heroides.
	Metamorphoses.
Philo.	De Somniis.
Plato.	De Republica
	Timaeus.
Plautus.	Mostellaria.
Quintilian.	Institutiones Oratoriae.
Sallust.	Catilina.
Seneca.	Consolatio ad Helviam.
	De Beneficiis.
	Quaestiones Naturales.
Suetonius.	Caius Caligula.
Tacitus.	Annales.
	Historia.
Tatian.	Adversus Graecos.
Tertullian.	Apologeticum.
	Adversus Hermogenes.
	Adv.Judaeos.
	Adv.Marcionem.
	Adv.Nationes.
	Adv.Praxean.
	Adv.Valentinos.
	De Anima.
	De Baptisma.
	De Castitate.
	De Corona Militis.
	De Jejuniis.
	De Praescriptione Haereticorum.
	De Resurrectione.
	Idolotria.
	Scorpiace.
Theophilus.	Ad Autolycum.
Victorinus.	De Grammaticis.

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Chapter One.

Chapter 1 Lactantius' life and writings

A. Biographical Details

The primary sources for our knowledge of Lactantius are, of course, his own writings. The accounts of him and his work left to us by the ancient commentators are by no means comprehensive and herein lies the major historical problem in attempting to construct a Lactantian biography. Although his work is one of the major sources we have for the general history of the Church from Diocletian to Constantine, the author is extremely averse to offering us any personal biographical detail in his text. The collection of his Epistolae, which could have provided us with much more information in this respect, was lost in antiquity. This problem in the source materials explains the wide and frequent differences in the modern biographies of the apologist.(1)

(1) There are many brief biographies available:-

E. Amann. Lactance. In. DTC. 8. pt 2. 1925. cols 2425-2444.

S. Brandt. Ueber das leben des Lactantius. Sitzsungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen klasse der kaiserlichen akademie der wissenschaften. 120. Abh.5. Vienna 1890.

F.L. Cross Lactantius. Dictionary of the Christian Church. Oxford 1974 pp. 791-792.

E. Ffoulkes. Lactantius. Dictionary of Christian biography. (Ed. Smith-Wace) Oxford. 1882. pp. 613-617.

M. Gehrardt. Das leben und die schriften des Lactantius. Diss. phil. Erlangen. Hamburg. 1924.

H. Leclerq. Lactance. DAC vol 8. pt.1. 1928 pp 1018-1041.

H. Lietzmann. Laktanz. RKA vol 12 pt 1. 1924 Cols. 351-356.

M. Pellegrino Lattanzio. Enciclopedia Cattolica (Ed. Paschini) Rome 1949f. Vol 7 cols. 951-954.

S. Prete Der geschichtliche hintergrund zu den werten des Laktanz Gymnasium. 63. 1956. pp. 365-82, 486-509.

J. Steinhausen Hieronymus und Laktanz in Trier. Trierer Zeitschrift. 20. 1951 pp 126-154.

J. Stevenson. The Life and literary activity of Lactantius SP.1. (T.U) vol. 63) 1957 pp. 661-667.

The most comprehensive work is possibly that of:

P. Monceaux. Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne. vol 3. Paris 1905 (Brussells 1966) pp 287-359.

The list of Secondary sources is at first impressive, consisting of; Jerome, Eusebius, Pope Damasus, Augustine, Cassiodorus, Apollinaris Sidonius, and Gennadius.(1) But as can be expected the later commentators of this series rely in an increasing degree on the prior knowledge of Jerome and Eusebius. Jerome gives his name as: Firmianus qui et Lactantius (2). The formula is a common one in latin epigraphy (3). Cyprian was known before him as Caecilius Cyprianus qui et Thascius. The form announces the familial name of 'Firmianus' and then the personal sobriquet 'Lactantius'. It was formerly maintained that he won the title because of the 'milky elegance" of his style (4) but the

(1) The references will be cited in the body of the text:

Jerome: De viris illustribus. 80. chron. ad ann abr. 2333. Ep.70.5

Eusebius: Chron. ad ann. 2330

Damasus: Ad Hieronymum. Ep. 35. (numbered in the letters of Jerome)

Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana 2.61

Cassiodorus: Inst. div. litt. 28

Apollinaris Sidonius: Ep. 4, 3, 7.

Gennadius. De Viris illustribus. 15

For a complete list of ancient testimonia c.f. S.Brandt. CSEL 27 pp 269-278, and Ibid. pp 155-167.

(2) De vir. ill. 80

(3) P. Cagnat. Cours d'epigraphie Latine. 3rd Edn. Paris 1890. p.57f.

(4) Cf. S. Guillon. Selectio Patrum . vol 16. Paris 1830 p.193.

interpretation seems entirely arbitrary. The same formula qui et Lactantius appears on the tombstone of an otherwise unknown pagan, Seius Clebonianus, which was discovered at Ain Mtirschu (in the ancient province of Numidia) in the early years of this century.(1) This would indicate that it is evidently not a unique personal attachment, and not a christian, post-baptismal name as others have suggested(2). Firmianus denotes his familial name. Towards the end of the last century two separate books were written in an attempt to trace the etymological roots of the name to the town of Fermo, the ancient Firmium in Italy.(3) Geographical loyalties and enthusiasms, however, had outrun the available evidence and the case is universally rejected today. Not only were there several small towns called Firmum in Numidia, but if this had been the real etymological foundation, the name would probably have assumed the form "Firmanus". More to the point, all the known facts of the apologist's early life point unmistakably to Africa. Jerome tells us that Lactantius was a pupil of Arnobius(4) who presided over the School at Sicca Veneria(5) and he also mentions how the earliest literary work of Lactantius originated in Africa(6). Moreover Lactantius is aware of, and in some degree dependent on, all the African Fathers who preceded him; Minucius, Tertullian, and Cyprian(7) though he shows no trace of literary dependence or even close familiarity with the tradition of Roman theology as may be represented in the works of Novatian or even Hippolytus.

(1) CIL. Suppl. pt 2. Berlin 1894. (Eds. R Cagnat/J. Schmidt) p.1688 No. 17767:
"Ain Mtourchon sur la route d'Ain Beida à' Krenchela, à'gauche.
DMS. SEIVS CLEBONIANVS QVI ET LACTANTIVS V. AN VICSIT ANIS XXXV."

(2) H. Von Campenhausen. The Fathers of the Latin Church. London 1964 p.62

(3) P. Mecchi Lattanzio e la sua patria. Fermo. 1875. cf. P. Colvanni. (Bibliog.)

(4) De Vir. Ill. 80: 'Firmianus qui et Lactantius Arnobii discipulus
Ibid. Ep. 70.5. Septem libros Adversus Gentes Arnobius edidit
Totidemque discipulus eius Lactantius...'

(5) Present day Le Kef.

(6) De Vir. ill.80. 'habemus eius Symposium quod adulescentulus scripsit Africae, et Hodoeporicum Africa usque ad Nicomediam.'

(7) cf. ch 2

The tribal name he bears, that of the Caecilii, probably had little significance in Lactantius' time. Yet in earlier generations the Caecilii Metelli had been among the most important patrons of the North African province(1). In his origin, formation, and rhetorical temperament, then, Lactantius is decidedly Latin African, and many traces of this origin remain in his extant works. One of the few purely ecclesiastical matters to which he alludes in the DI is the heresy that arose from proud men seeking the "highest priestly power"(2) and he also defines the mark of the true church as the confession and forgiveness of sins(3), both of which allusions suggest he is refering to the Novatianist Schism. Paul Monceaux also points out how often Lactantius speaks of themes that were proper to Africa(4), especially the cult of the ancient Kings of Mauretania(5). He is also the first of all the Fathers to mention the Legends of Apuleius the Neo-platonist, who was born in Madaura on the borders of the African province(6). And finally, traces of Lactantius' familial name have been discovered in the excavations of Constantine, North Africa.

(1) CIL vol 8. suppl. pt 2. no. 7241

(2) DI 4.30.5

(3) DI 4.30.13

(4) Monceaux. Histoire Littéraire.. 3. p.289.

(5) cp. DI. 1.15.6-8.

(6) DI. 5.3. 7,21

The immense coincidence of the name [1], along with all the other indications, is a probable indication that the apologist originated in the Cirta- Mascula region of the Numidian province. The area's major settlement today is Constantine, situated between Algiers and Tunis, about fifty miles from the Mediterranean coast[2].

The precise form of the middle name has been the subject of much controversy, since the manuscripts vary between two versions: Caelius and Caecilius. The editor of the critical text of the works decided on the authenticity of Caelius on the grounds that the codex Bononiensis[3] carried this form in the titles of Books 1-4 and 7 of the Divine Institutes, and he argued that Caecilius became the more popular version since it was more familiar in the Church as a saint's name.[5] The authority of the epitaphion, however, which was discovered after Brandt had written, as well as the use of Caecilius as a Roman patronym, show

(1) ClL vol 8. pt 1. Berlin. 1881. Ed. G. Wilmans. (p.649) No.7241.
"Ara alta m. 0.78, lata m. 0.41 Constantinae, près du palais du bey, dans le mur d'une maison.
D.M. L. CAECILIVS FIRMIANVS V. A. XXV HSE."

(2) Many inscriptions arise from this area bearing the name of the Caecilii. The last we know, being the interlocutor in the Octavius of Minucius Felix, This Caecilius was a magistrate at Cirta in 210 AD.

(3) S. Brandt. CSEL. vol.19. Prologue pp 7, 94.
ibid. vol.27. pp. 64, 132.

(.4) Brandt classed this as the most ancient of the MSS., (6-7th Century), though R. Pichon later argued for the priority of Codex Parisinus.

(5) However, it is only the masculine version of a Saint's name, and the monastic copyists must have been equally aware that caelius derived from caeles. It is also much easier to see how Caecilius could corrupt into Caelius in a Ms. tradition than vice versa.

that this latter form is definitive. In addition, the sole manuscript of the DM [1] attributes the work in its title page to one Lucius Caecilius. Harnack and Monceaux independently reached the same conclusions about the name in 1904 and successfully refuted the arguments of Brandt.[2] Our apologist was then, Lucius Caecilius Firmianus, also known as Lactantius.

It is impossible to fix the date of his birth precisely. Jerome[3] tells us that in 'extreme old age' he was appointed as tutor to the Caesar Crispus. Constantine's son was born in 300 AD, and since Rhetoric was usually begun in the Seventeenth year, this would harmonise with the date of his proclamation as Caesar on March 1st 317. Monceaux and Harnack date the beginning of his studies at this point[4]. Alternatively Crispus may have begun his rhetorical training as early as the age of fourteen being proclaimed as soon as he had completed his education. The only fixed point of reference we have to determine the date of Lactantius' birth is one's interpretation of extreme old age in 314-317 AD. Jerome's superlative extrema suggests a man in late sixties or seventies so the date of Lactantius' birth can only be approximately set around 245 AD.

(1) Codex Colbertinus cp. CSEL vol 27. p. 171.

(2) cp. P. Monceaux Histoire Littéraire... 3. p.289
A. Von Harnack. Chronologie der altchrist. litt. vol 2. Leipzig 1904 p.415.

(3) De Vir. Ill. 80. 'hic extrema senectute magister Caesaris Crispi filii Constantini in Gallia fuit, qui postea a patre interfectus est.'

ibid. Chronic. ad a. Abr. 2333 :'quorum Crispum Lactantius Latinis Litteris erudivit vir omnium suo tempore eloquentissimus...'
The date of Crispus' birth may be placed as late as 307 see J. Stevenson. Life and literary activity p.665

(4) P. Monceaux. Histoire Littéraire... 3. p.295
A Von Harnack. Chronologie... p.417

Jerome is enthusiastic about the literary genius of Lactantius, suggesting that he was a youthful prodigy (1) and there is no reason to doubt his twice repeated testimony that he studied rhetoric under the celebrated Arnobius, then a pagan professor. This period of Lactantius' higher studies would have been from about 263 onwards. Nonetheless, there seems to be neither literary nor theological parallel between the two in their later careers.(2) Arnobius did not become a christian until about 295 AD(3) and by then Lactantius was far away in Bithynia,unaware of his professor's conversion and unaware of his apologetic work(4).

(1) Jerome. De vir. ill.80. 'habemus eius symposium, quod adulescentulus scripsit Africae..'

(2) cf Thesis. ch 2. Arnobius.

(3) Jerome dates his conversion just before the Adv. Nationes or at least the first of these books; this is dated by Arnobius himself at 297 AD
cp. Adv. Nat. 1.13. and 2.7.1.

(4) Lactantius omits him from his list of latin apologists.
Dl. 5.1.22.

Along with his rhetorical studies, Lactantius became conversant with Law at this time. This was a traditional part of the contemporary syllabus of higher studies for the ancient Rhetor was one and the same as the lawyer and Lactantius' legal knowledge is reflected throughout the Dl and his other works. The very title "Divinae Institutiones" is borrowed from the contemporary Law Manuals and his theology abounds with juridical imagery. His legal advice is judged to have been behind some of the early policies of Constantine(1), in particular his attempts to regulate child-selling, and his unsuccessful edicts suppressing the spectacles(2). The political importance of Lactantius' theological ideas, and his personal influence over Constantine at this critical time, is a compelling though enigmatic study. Before the transfer of the Imperial chancery to Byzantium and the subsequent emergence of Eusebius, Lactantius was undoubtedly the main christian influence on Constantine and there is considerable parallelism, even literary,(3) between the political theologies of both men.

(1) cf. Backhouse-Tylor. Early Church History. London 1899. p.219
C Ferrini. Die juristischen Kentnisse des Arnobius und Laktanz Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftlung 15. 1894. p.343 f.
J. Gaudiemit. La législation religieuse de Constantin. RHEF 33. 1947. pp 25-61
A. Wlosok. Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis AHAW 2. 1960 pp. 199f, 211f.

(2) cp. Codex Theodosianus 5.7.1 and Dl 2.20.1.f. and 6.20.2.

(3) This is particularly seen in Constantine's Oratio ad Sanctos Orat 3. Dl. 1. 2-3 ; Orat 16-20 Dl. 4.15 ; Orat 24. DM 4-6; The question will be treated in greater detail at the end of this present section. cp. F. Heim 'Influence de Constantin sur Lactance'. in Lactance et son Temps. Ed. J. Fontaine/M. Perrin. Paris. 1978. pp. 55-74.

When Lactantius completed his studies he began a highly successful career in rhetoric, somewhere in Numidia, perhaps even with Arnobius at Sicca. His literary efforts, begun earlier with the Symposium, were continued here, which evidently argues that writing was not a choice forced upon him by "penury of students" in Nicomedia(1). In the Dl Lactantius speaks of a type of 'conversion' he experienced when he changed from the profession of oratory to that of proclaiming the Gospel(2), and many have interpreted this as his indication that he was converted from paganism to Christianity. Yet neither in this passage, nor in comparable texts (3) does the interpretation seem valid(4). The "conversion" is a reference to the political climate in Nicomedia which had forced him out of his rhetorical position and he is expressing his satisfaction that he can now adopt a better way of applying his talents. From the work of R. Pichon onwards(5) it has been customary to date such a conversion at the time of the beginning of Diocletian's persecution.

(1) Jerome. De vir Ill. 80. 'Nicomediae rhetoricam docuit ac penuria discipulorum ob Graecam videlicet civitatem ad scribendum se contulit.'
"This is mere assumption on Jerome's part". cf. J. Stevenson Life and literary activity. p.662.

(2) Dl 1.1.8 :'quae professio multo melior utilior gloriosior putanda est quam illa oratoria, in qua diu versati non ad virtutem, sed plane ad argutam malitiam iuvenes erudiebamus, multoque nunc rectius de praeceptis caelestibus disseremus...'

(3) Epit 43.3 De Ira. 2.2

(4) The "communis opinio" of a religious conversion was first refuted over 50 years ago: E. Della Vecchia. Conversione di Lattanzio ARIVSL 86. 1926-27. pp.653-662.

(5) R. Pichon. Lactance: étude sur le mouvement philosophique et religieux sous le règne de Constantin. Paris 1901.

Yet no neophyte could have witnessed the scriptural background Lactantius displays in the Dl, not just the application of Cyprian's Ad Quirinum, but subtle allusions to New Testament formulae underlying the text of his argument(1). In addition, the firm tradition of Lactanius' poverty(2) shows that it must be dated at least from his earliest years in Nicomedia. The only reason Jerome can suggest for this poverty is a lack of students(3). But it is hard to see how Lactantius could be personally summoned(4) to a teaching post, by the Emperor, from across the other side of the world, and then be left destitute.(5)

(1) See Thesis. ch.3. Lactantius castigates Hierocles for attempting to expound Scripture without proper study and prior initiation. Dl.5.2.15-16.

(2) Jerome. Chron. ad a. Abr. 2333. 'vir omnium suo tempore eloquentissimus, sed adeo in hac vita pauper, ut plerumque etiam necessariis indiguerit.'

(3) Jerome De Vir. Ill.80.

(4) Ibid. :'Lactantius....sub Diocletiano principe accitus cum Flavio grammatico...'

(5) It is quite possible that Lactantius was induced to travel by the offer of the Imperial Stipend. This would make his income independent of his students' fees. Diocletian was attempting to found new schools of learning in Nicomedia and we may draw a parallel here with Constantine's father who when he wished to revive the schools of Autun gave the rhetor Eumenius the magnificent stipend of 600,000 Sesterces. cf. Eumenius. Oratio pro scholis instaurandis. c.11.

Eusebius and Gennadius are closer to the truth when they explain this poverty on the basis of his ascetic decision to live simply, for the sake of God's Kingdom(1) and this principle of an ascetic life for the sake of justice recurs throughout the D1(2). The fact that he chose such a life when he could have lived according to his high social position is a sign of an exceptionally mature and committed christian and another indication that a sudden conversion in Nicomedia must be disallowed. Lactantius shows no sign of any first hand experience of pagan religion whatsoever,for all his apologetic material is taken from old myths and the well-known historians. Even his knowledge of pagan cults which one could expect to be popular in Numidia,appears to derive from Minucius Felix(3), and his use of Sibylline and Hermetic material wholly subordinates it to christian conceptions. It seems logical then to suppose that Lactantius had a longstanding committment to Christianity that has to be located in Numidia, a province where the Church had long been established and was particularly successful in attracting the intelligentsia(4).

(1) Gennadius. De vir. ill. 15: 'Tertullianum et Lactantium et Papiam auctores secutus (sc. Commodianus) moralem sane doctrinam et maxime voluntariae paupertatis amorem prosecutus studentibus inculcavit.'
(cf Eusebuis. Chron. ad a. 2330)

(2) cp D1.6.12.33-41. OD.1. 1-2.

(3) Eg. Lactantius repeats Minucius' mistaken reference to Osiris as the little son of Isis. D1. 1.21. 20-22. Octavius 21. cp.ch 2.ii.c.

(4) cp. Arnobius. Adv. Nat. 2.5.
The evidence of Augustine (De Doctr. Christiana 2.60-61) which lists Lactantius as one of those "de societate gentilium exiens" is speaking indiscriminately about either religious or philosophic attachment to paganism, eg: 2.61.1.'nonne aspicimus' quanto auro et argento et veste suffarcinatus exierit de Aegypto Cyprianus doctor suavissimus et martyr beatissimus? quanto Lactantius? quanto Victorinus, Optatus, Hilarius, ut de vivis taceam?'

In many ways the Emperor Diocletian was a natural opposite to his colleague Maximian, not least in the manner in which he cast himself in the role of a liberal patron of culture. It is this redeeming grace of an attachment to 'Romanitas' that slightly tempers Lactantius' criticism of his character in the DM in comparison to the other members of the tetrarchy(1). From the year 285 onwards Diocletian was pre-occupied with the construction of his new capital at Nicomedia. He wished to make it a centre of excellence surpassing Rome(2) and to this end engaged in an extensive building programme and summoned the best academics to staff his schools and direct the programme of administrative training. Lactantius' summons can be dated at around 290 AD. Monceaux argues that the choice of a christian for such an exalted position in the capital would have been most unlikely(3) and yet his colleague, the grammarian Flavius also appears to have been a christian(4) and it was evident that several members of the Imperial household were members of the church(5).

(1) cf. R. Paribeni. Da Diocleziano alla caduta dell' Impero d'occidente. Storia di Roma. vol.8. Bologna 1941. p.19.

V. Loi. I valori etici e politici della romanita negli scritti di Lattanzio. Salesianum 27. 1965. p.67.

(2) DM 7.10.

(3) P. Monceaux. Histoire litteraire... 3. p.292. CP. J. Stevenson Life and lit.activity. p.667.

(4) cf. A. Von. Harnack, Geschichte der altchristlichen literatur bis Eusebius. Leipzig 1893. p.736.

(5) Lactantius mentions the believers present at the Imperial auspices in 296. DM 10. Dl. 4.27.4.
It was even suggested that Diocletian's wife, Prisca, was a catechumen and remained so at least until 303 AD. cf. JWC.Wand History of the Early Church. London 1961. p.124.

Demetrianus, to whom Lactantius addresses the OD,equally appears to be a christian who held an official position even during the persecution. cf. OD. 1.4-5. J. Stevenson. Life and lit. activity p.663.

Together with Flavius,Lactantius travelled to his new post in Asia Minor, passing the time in the composition of a lengthy poem in hexameters about the events of his journey(1). Poetic form appears to have been an easy accomplishment for him. Both Victorinus and Rufinus testify to his mastery of the genre of poetic commentary and exposition(2), and the text of the latter demonstrates Lactantius' competence as a bi-lingual litterateur. Jerome also tells us of a Grammaticus that Lactantius composed, probably during the course of his Nicomedian professorship,and the letter of Pope Damasus (4) shows that he also used the epistolary genre to write on a wide range of literary and scientific subjects.

(1) Jerome De Vir. ill.80: 'hodoeporicum Africa usque Nicomediam hexametris scriptum versibus.'
The only extant poem of Lactantius is De Ave Phoenice. CSEL.27 pp135-147

(2) Marius Victorinus. Ars Grammatica. 2.3. : 'nostra quoque memoria, Lactantius de metris pentameter inquit et tetrameter. CSEL.27.p.158
Rufinus. Commentarium in metra Terentii.' Brandt CSEL 27. p.156:-

'Firmianus ad Probum de metris comoediarum sic dicit: nam quod de metris comoediarum requisisti, et ego scio plurimos existimare Terentianas uel maxime fabulas metrum non habere comoediae Graecae, id est Menandri Philemonos Diphili et ceterorum, quae trimetris uersibus constat. nostri enim ueteris comoediae scriptores in modulandis fabulis sequi maluerunt, Eupolin Cratinum Aristophanem. prologos igitur et primarum scaenarum actiones trimetris conprehenderunt, deinde longissimos id est tetrametros subdiderunt, qui appellantur quadrati. in consequentibus deinceps uariauerunt: modo enim trimetros, modo addito quadrante uel semisse posuerunt id est uel semipede adiecto uel integro pede iambo uel sesquipede. haec per medios actus uarie, rursus in exitu fabularum quadratos, quales diximus in secunda scaena. sed idem quadrati cum sedecim syllabis constare debeant, tamen plerumque fiunt uiginti aut amplius syllabarum. hinc putantur metro carere nec lege ulla contineri. - Mensuram esse in fabulis Terentii et Plauti et ceterorum comicorum et tragicorum dicunt Cicero Scaurus Firmianus.'

(3) De Vir. ill. 80

(4) Jerome. Ep. 35. Brandt preserves a fragment of a Lactantian gloss on Vergil. CSEL 27 frg.7 p.158.

Lactantius' official post lasted for about thirteen years until the outbreak of the persecution. Galerius had long been directing an anti-christian movement but the first signs of Diocletian's agreement came only in 297 AD. Lactantius records the incident twice(1) as an ominous sign of what was to come. The Emperor had ordered the Augurs to report on the result of Galerius' expedition against the Persians and they had blamed their failure to do so on the presence of some christians at the ceremony who had made the sign of the cross. Diocletian responded to this by ordering all those involved to sacrifice to the gods and ordered the test of sacrifice to be administered to the army. After this no more was heard until six years later when Galerius visited him in Nicomedia and finally persuaded him(2) to take organised measures against the growing power of the church. The first edict was published on February 23rd 303 AD "ordering that the churches be razed to the ground, that the scriptures be destroyed by fire, that those holding office be deposed and they of the imperial household be deprived of freedom, if they persisted in the profession of christianity"(3). More severe measures were to follow. A second edict ordered that all known christian clergy should be imprisoned, and a third offered those already in prison the opportunity of gaining their freedom by sacrifice. A fourth and final rescript attempted to bring matters to a head by offering all christians the alternatives of sacrifice, or death with confiscation of inheritance. Lactantius continued to live in Nicomedia during the early years of the troubles though he probably lost his position after the first edict. Monceaux characterises him rather unjustly during this period: "pendant la persécution son attitude paraît avoir été celle d'un chrétien timide".(4)

(1) DM 10. Dl 4.27.4.

(2) So Lactantius accounts for the change of policy which repealed the edict of Gallienus and re-enacted the laws of Valerian cp DM 11

(3) Eusebius. HE. 7.2.4.

(4) P. Monceaux. Histoire littéraire... 3. p 293.

Lactantius' own words are not redolent of timidity (1) and though the preface to the OD counsels extreme caution to his disciple Demetrianus, the spirit of resistance is quite evident. Lactantius, then,is merely following the policy laid out by Cyprian in the DeFuga and long since adopted by the Church. The continued respect afforded to him by the confessors of the church, who supplied much of his information, is a sufficient refutation of Monceaux's view.

The State organised public propaganda lectures during the early months of the persecution and Lactantius tells us that he used to attend these meetings in the company of other believers(2). The lecturer appears to have been a former colleague of Lactantius for the apologist makes a disparaging remark on the contrast between his public appearance and his private mode of life within his house(3). It was his job to reproduce the popular arguments against the church(4) and Lactantius finds his character more alarming than his apologetic doctrines(5). The Institutes also make specific reference to a second figure who engaged in literary polemic against the christians(6). The figure in question is undoubtedly Sossianus Hierocles, the provincial governor(7), who used every weapon at his disposal, intellectual as well as physical, to crush the church's resistance and endear himself to Galerius. It was the public lectures of the one and the public readings of the second which moved Lactantius to compose a suitable reply,(8) a resolve which materialised in the seven books of the DI.

(1) Dl 5.13.18 'quis enim tam insolens, tam elatus est qui me uetet oculos in caelum tollere, qui inponat mihi necessitatem vel colendi quod nolim vel quod velim non colendi?'

(2) Dl 5.2.9.

(3) Dl 5.2.3.

(4) cp Dl. 5.2.8.

(5) Dl. 5.2.9-11.

(6) Dl. 5.2.12f.

(7) Praeses of Bithynia, 303 AD. Lactantius regards Hierocles as a much weightier opponent. His intimate knowledge makes Lactantius wonder if he is an apostate. Dl. 5.2.14.f.

(8) Dl. 5.4.1.

This would mean that the Institutes were begun in the year 304 AD and written as separate though obviously related treatises. It may have taken as long as six or seven years for Lactantius to have completed the whole set of seven books. Stevenson describes the development of his work as follows: "Thus we may conclude that Lactantius, prompted by a pagan literary offensive against christianity, began to write "Tracts for the Times". As his work progressed, he developed the idea of writing a complete apology, covering the same ground as earlier apologists, but embodying his own contributions. The bulk of his work was done after he left Bthynia. We find him at work on the dedication of Book 1 before 312 and at Book 4 which may be one of the last books to be written about 311 or 312".(1)

(1) J. Stevenson. Life and lit. activity p. 673

After a few years enduring the unfavourable times in Nicomedia, Lactantius appears to have left the capital. A suitable time for this departure might be provided by the abdication of Diocletian in May 305 and Galerius' elevation to supreme power in the East. Lactantius is definitely in Nicomedia during the first half of 305AD for he relates how he witnessed the abjuration of a believer who had been imprisoned two years previously at the start of the persecution(1), but he no longer was there by the time he wrote the fifth book of the Institutes,as can be gathered from the passages of reminiscence.(2) The rise of Galerius marked a period of new brutality in the persecution of christians but,in addition,intellectuals now began to fall under a systematic proscription(3). Lactantius describes the condition eloquently but it now appeared to him that he was in danger not only because of his religious convictions, but even because of his social and academic prominence.

(1) Dl. 5.11.15

(2) cp. Dl. 5.2.2. See J. Stevenson. Life and lit. activity p.664.

(3) DM. 22.4.5.: 'eloquentia extincta, caussidici sublati, iure consulti aut relegati aut necati.Litterae autem inter malas artes habitae, et qui eas noverant, pro inimicis hostibusque protriti et exsecrati. Licentia rerum omnium, solutis legibus, adsumta, et iudicibus data. Iudices militares, humanitatis litterarum rudes, sine adsessoribus in provincias immissi.'

There is no evidence to suggest where he went although the hypothesis that he left for the schools of rhetoric that were still flourishing freely in Gaul seems the most satisfactory, for here was not only an opportunity to continue his professional career but even to enjoy the religious liberty afforded to the church within the jurisdiction of Constantine(1). The future Augustus had himself escaped but recently from Nicomedia where he had been sent in 290AD, at the age of 16, as a hostage for Constantius Chlorus in the court of Diocletian.(2) This was the same period that Lactantius was chief Latin rhetor in the city. In 296 Constantine went with Diocletian in the expedition against Achillaeus. It was on this progress to Egypt through Palestine that Eusebuis saw him for the first time. In 297 he went with Galerius on the Persian expedition and shortly after 305 made his escape from the capital and assumed the purple(3). This period between 290 and 295 was therefore the only opportunity Constantine had for any form of higher education. Between 291 and 294 he would also have been the traditional age for undergoing the study of rhetoric and in this case his teacher would undoubtedly have been Lactantius himself. This would also provide sufficient reason for appointing the same as tutor to his own son Crispus, even though by then Firmianus was in 'extreme old age'.

(1) DM. 24.9

(2) DM. 18. 10-11. DM. 19. 1-4. DM. 24 3-9.

(3) DM 24. "It is tempting to suggest that (Lactantius) accompanied Constantine on his journey to the west when the latter escaped from the tutelage of Galerius but this idea is quite unproved" J. Stevenson. Life and lit. activity p 664.

Such a close acquaintance with Constantine, in the days before he came to power, is a further explanation why Lactantius should himself retire to Gaul. The text of the DM supports the view that he moved West in so far as it "shows close knowledge of events in Nicomedia down to 305, but not of the situation in the West, (Lawlor. Eusebiana pp 238-242). Things are reversed, however, for events between 305 and 310.."(1) It has been suggested on the basis of chs. 35 and 48 of the DM(2) that Lactantius returned to Bithynia sometime between 311 and 313 but there is nothing in the accounts that suggests he was an eye-witness of the events he describes. Stevenson notes(3) that "in his account of these years he is subject to certain misconceptions as to the events in the dominions of Maximinus", and he assesses Lactantius' claim that the emperor had forbidden the execution of christians(4) as a clear indication that he was not acting as a first hand witness(5). The details of the Bithynian situation could easily have come from the confessor Donatus to whom he dedicates the DM, or from any one of his friends among the other confessors of the Nicomedian church(6) Indeed the text itself suggests that he is not personally present but relating the facts on the authority of informed witnesses.(7)

(1) J. Stevenson. Life and lit. activity p.664

(2) Which show a preoccupation with the activity of Licinius, the death of Galerius and the campaign, against Maximinus Daia. cp. P. Monceaux. Histoire littéraire 3. p.294.

(3) J. Stevenson Life and lit activity p.665 cp. J. Lawlor. Hermathena 16. 1903. pp 467 f.

(4) DM. 36.6.

(5) J. Stevenson Life and lit activity p. 665: "No person in close contact with Nicomedia could have written thus after the martyrdom there of Lucian of Antioch in January 313".

(6) DM. 35.2.

(7) DM. 52.1.: 'Quae omnia secundem fidem scientium loquor...' Brandt prefers the variant : 'quae omnia secundem finem, scienti enim loquor.' Bunemann refers the second variant to Donatus. (opera Lactantii. Leipzig 1739. p.1478 fn.a.) citing DM 16.3 as a parallel.

The last definite appearance of Lactantius is located in Gaul when he is Palatinus in the Imperial Court teaching rhetoric to Crispus. This is to be dated about 317 AD and as Jerome tells us, by now he was 'in extrema senectute'. By 320AD Crispus had finished all studies and was in the field of battle against the Franks, and by 326 he was dead in one of his father's prisons. Lactantius makes no reference to the fate of his pupil, and is unquestioning in his praises of Constantine even though the Imperial dedications in the text of the Dl[1] would have been subject to amendment in successive editions of his text. The silence over the fate of Crispus is not in itself, however, sufficient indication that Lactantius' death occurred before 326. Crispus' death was not only in obscure circumstances, but a comparison with Eusebius shows that the lapses of the Isapostolus were viewed with a certain amount of equivocation by a church grateful for the Imperial benefactions. The exact date of his death and the place of his burial are unrecorded, but it is somewhat symbolic that he died almost on the eve of Nicaea, when the church's theological tradition was to move decisively away from so many of the old doctrinal forms he preserves in his work.

(1) Dl. 1. 1. 13-16, 7.26. 10f.

Viewed from the perspectives of Post-Nicene theology, concerned with the defence of Christological and Trinitarian orthodoxy, his work was judged to be obsolete. His memory was certainly venerated within the ancient church but primarily as a litterateur and a man of great purity of character. This explains the very restricted influence his work appears to have enjoyed among his immediate successors. Jerome always mentions him honourably(1) and Augustine lists him among the christian heroes(2) but he is not theologically important for any writer that comes after him, with the possible exception of Constantine. It is a phenomenon Pichon emphasises in the conclusion of his study: " À vrai dire, l'auteur des Institutions n'a pas fait, école. Les auteurs du quatrième siècle, tout entiers absorbés par les luttes politiques ou les controverses exactement théologiques, ont laissé de côté son oeuvre de démonstration rationelle du christianisme: ils l'ont connu, ils l'ont salué d'un respecteux hommage; tout en faisant les réserves nécessaires sur la pureté de son orthodoxie, ils n'ont pas été peu fiers de pouvoir l'opposer comme écrivain élégant et disert aux grands auteurs profanes; mais ils ne semblent pas s'en être directement inspirés." (3)

(1) Jerome. De Vir. ill. 18, 58, 80, 111.
Chronic. ad a. Abr. 2333.
Ep. 48.13, 58.10, 60.10, 70. 3-5, 84.7.
Comm. In Isaiam. Praef. 8, 18.
Comm. in Ezechium. 11.36.1.
Comm. in Ep. ad Galat 2.4.

(2) De Doctrina Christiana 2.61. "multi boni fideles nostri" cp. J. Doignon. Nos bonnes hommes de foi. Latomus 22. 1963 pp 795-805.

(3) R. Pichon Lactance. pp 450-451. (cp pp. 447-465) And for a list of patristic authors who use Lactantius work see Brandt CSEL 27 pp 269-278.

Constantine was mentioned as the only possible exception because the Oratio ad Sanctos quite clearly reproduces the main outlines of Lactantius' apologetic structure in the Dl and the DM(1). Even here, however, all the depth and subtlety of the master's theological vision is lost in the disciple,in a pastiche text that is little more than a political pamphlet.

(1) R. Pichon. op cit p.449 _"la mise en oeuvre en un mot, est si bien la même chez le philosophe et chez l'empereur, qu'en songeant aux rapports que tous deux ont eus ensemble on ne peut guère douter que le second n'ait imité le premier". For the text of the Oratio cp. Works of Eusebius.. ed. I.A. Heikel. GCS.7. pp 151-192.
The latest studies on the Oratio confirm the lactantian inspiration of the sermon. cf:

R.P.C. Hanson. The "Oratio ad Sanctos" attributed to Constantine and the oracle to Daphne JTS new series 24. 1973. pp. 505-511.

Daniel De Decker. Le "Discours a l'assemblée des saints" attribué a Constantin et l'oeuvre de Lactance. in. Lactance et Son Temps. Ed. Fontaine/Perrin. Paris. 1978. pp. 75-89.

The most enthusiastic disciple that Lactantius ever had in antiquity was Lucifer of Cagliari. The irascible bishop of Cagliari shared Jerome's admiration for the apologist's literary style, and with a lesser talent than that of Jerome, plagiarised the text of Lactantius quite openly.

The way in which he uses the works, however, is typical of the type of influence the Divine Institutes came to command: "Et ceux la même qui s'en souviennent, utilisent leur réminiscences Lactantiennes dans un ésprit tout autre que celui de leur modèle; rien n'est pas plus curieux par exemple que de voir Lucifer de Cagliari(1) lancer contre Constance et les Ariens, les mêmes tirades, les mêmes phrases que Lactance avait jetées a la tête des païens et de Galère. Cet exemple prouve que Lactance continue à être lu, mais non pas qu'on persiste dans la voie qu'il avait tracée ni que l'on poursuive sa grande oeuvre de constitution d'une philosophie chrétienne(2)."

Lactantius perhaps experienced his greatest revival in the Renaissance period which witnessed a veritable explosion of new editions of his works(3). But this new interest was yet again founded on an appreciation of his literary style rather than his theology. The same trend of critical interest has continued to the present day, for the list of works on Lactantius this century shows that the theological analyses are grossly outnumbered by literary and historiographical studies.

(1) Moriendum esse pro dei filio. Lucifer Calaritanus. text. Ed. G. Cerretti Pisa. 1940. also PL. 13. 1007.

(2) R. Pichon. Lactance pp 447-448.

(3) Up to the middle of the 16th Century there are no less than 35 editions of the dogmatic works. Brandt lists no less than 220 codices (cp. CSEL 19. Prologue ix-x.) The D1 is also the first printed book in Italy. (Subiaco 1465).

B. The Literary output

Lactantius produced an extensive literary corpus within his lifetime, though a great deal of the literature has not survived. Almost all his major Christian works have been preserved, but those written before his conversion, those not directly concerned with theology, and all his letters, have been fragmented and mainly lost.

The Lost Works

(1) SYMPOSIUM (Jerome. De Vir. ill.80)

This was written in Africa at a very early date. Jerome describes it as the work of an 'adulescentulus'. It was probably in Dialogue form, like the 'Banquet of the Seven Sages' wrongly ascribed to Plutarch. No trace of the work exists. (Circa 260 AD?)

(2) HODOEPORICUM (Jerome. ibid)

This was a poem, seemingly lengthy, about his journey across the world from Africa to Nicomedia. He wrote it in the company of the Grammarian Flavius who accompanied him to the new Schools. Jerome remarks that it was in hexameters. This too has been completely lost. (Circa 290 AD.)

(3) GRAMMATICUS (Jerome. ibid)

A book on Grammar and Literary Metre. It was probably published in Nicomedia, in his maturity as Professor of Rhetoric. It probably dates, then, from the last decade of the third century, if it was published in Nicomedia, or after the Edict of Milan if it was published in Gaul. The work was lost in antiquity, though Brandt may preserve fragments of it in what is left of Lactantius' essays in literary criticism, [if these are not to be seen as fragments of the lost collection of epistles.](1)

(1) (cp. Thesis pp 38-39, following)

(4) AD ASCLEPIADEM. (Jerome ibid. (DI. 7.4.17.))

This is a book of which we know next to nothing save that it was dedicated to a christian colleague who had also dedicated a work of his own (De Providentia) to Lactantius. Depending on whether Lactantius or Asclepiades wrote the original dedication first, we can arrive at a date for this work of Firmianus as either the last decade of the third century, in his early days as Professor in Nicomedia, or after the Edict of Milan. Jerome says there were "ad Asclepiadem libros duos". Nothing of it seems to be extant.

(5) FOUR BOOKS OF LETTERS: TO PROBUS. (Jerome. De Vir. Ill. 80)

The Mss, Vaticanus and SS.Crucis of the text of Jerome have a variant reading here that renders 'two books'. Though in a later work,(1) Jerome makes another reference to the "third book of letters to Probus".

(6) TWO BOOKS OF LETTERS. TO SEVERUS. (Jerome. De Vir. Ill.80, 111)

(7) TWO BOOKS OF LETTERS. TO DEMETRIANUS. (Jerome. Ep.35. Ep.84.7. De Vir Ill.80)

It is within this collection that Jerome accuses Lactantius of 'imperitia scripturarum' for maintaining that the name of the Spirit could be applied indiscriminately to either the Father or the Son as a "sanctificatio utriusque".(2) Jerome's criticism is an indication of Lactantius' continuing interest in matters theological and exegetical. In his commentary on Galatians (2.4) Jerome locates this faulty pneumatology "in octavo ad Demetrianum epistularum libro" This does

(1) Jerome. Comm. in Ep. ad Galat. Bk 2. praefat.

(2) cp. Chapter 6(iv)b. Christus, spiritus dei.

not imply that the letters to Demetrian independently formed a corpus of eight books, but that all the letters together had been assembled into a single collection. This would amount to an extensive corpus of eight books, of which the letters addressed to Demetrianus would form numbers seven and eight. It was probably this larger collection that Jerome sent to Pope Damasus, and which prompted Damasus to complain that it was 'too long'.(1) The Pope laments that when Lactantius engages in theological questions, the letters are usually too long for him, and when he finds a short specimen they are on secular subjects(2) not at all to his taste. This catholicity of subject matter is typical of the epistolary form, although it is interesting to note that the theological essays were always the longer ones. Damasus has unwittingly given us another indication of the theological interests of the lost epistolary collection.

Only fragments remain that may possibly represent this collection:

(a) A discussion on the relative merits of the metres employed by the Greek and Latin comoedian writers, from which it may be understood that he was capably bi-lingual.(3)

(1) Jerome, Ep. 35. "usque ad mille spatia versuum".

(2) Ibid. "scholasticis magis sint apta quam nobis; de metris et regionum situ et philosophis disputantia."

(3) Brandt. CSEL. 27 fragment 2. p156. (cited previously p.26.)

(b) A fragment of a commentary on the text of Virgil, where he describes the etymology of 'Galata'. It is employed by Jerome in his commentary on the Epistle, (2) and he identifies it as an excerpt from the '3rd volume to Probus'.

(c) A second fragment of a Virgilian commentary preserved in the codex Floriacensis(3).

(8) AGAINST THE JEWS: AGAINST THE HERETICS. (4)

Lactantius announces an intention to write two works on the above subjects, but there is no trace of them. Jerome does not mention them, and it is not known whether they were ever written.

(9) DE MOTIBUS ANIMI.

Brandt and Laubmann attribute fragments of such a work to Lactantius, from a notice in the codex Boboniensis(5).

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(1) Brandt CSEL 27 fragment 1. p.155. (see below)

(2) Jerome. Comm. in ep ad Galat 2.4. '...Lactantii nostri quae in tertio ad Probum volumine de hac gente opinatus sit uerba ponemus. Galli inquit antiquitus a candore corporis Galatae nuncupabantur et Sibylla sic eos appellat. quod significare uoluit poeta, cum ait: 'tum lactea colla Auro innectuntur', cum posset dicere 'candida'. hinc utique Galatia prouincia, in quam Galli aliquando uenientes cum Graecis se miscuerunt. unde primum ea regio Gallograecia, post Galatia nominata est.'

(3) Brandt CSEL 27. fragment 7. p.158 :"(Codex Floriacensis plenioris 'Seruii' ad Verg. Aen. VII.543 (II p.166, 4 Thilo): et caeli conuexa (sc. Allecto) per auras)...dicit etiam Firmianus commentator (cod.-tur) non 'conuexa', sed 'conuecta' legendum, ut sit ipsa conuecta: quod difficile in exemplaribus inuenitur."

(4) cp. Dl. 4.30.14., 7.1.26. and De Ira. 2.6.

(5) Brandt CSEL 27. fragment 5. p.157." Fragmentum codicis excerptorum ecclesiasticorum Ambrosiani (olim Bobiensis) F.60 Sup. (saec.VIII-IX), fol.26. in marg. lactantius de motibus animi inscriptum:⟨Spes⟩ timor, amor odium, laetitia tristitia, libido cupiditas, ira miseratio, zelus admiratio, hi motus ⟨animi⟩ uel adfectus a deo ab initio hominis existunt conditi et naturae humanae utiliter et salubriter sunt insiti, ut per eos ordinate et rationabiliter regendos homo uirtutes bonas uiriliter agendo exercere posset per quas a deo perpetuam accipere uitam iuste meruisset hi namque animi motus intra fines proprios coartati, hoc est in bona parte positi, in praesenti uirtutes bonas et in futuro aeterna praemia parant, extra metas uero suas afluentes, hoc est in malam partem declinantes, uitia et iniquitates existunt et aeternas poenas pariunt."

WORKS CONTROVERSIALLY ATTRIBUTED TO LACTANTIUS

(1) AENIGMATA: This has sometimes been looked upon as part of his lost 'Symposium', through a misreading of the inscription. It is the work of one Symphosius.(1)

(2) DE RESURRECTIONE. This has frequently been misattributed to Lactantius in the past. It is the work of Fortunatus.(2)

(3) DE PASSIONE DOMINI (3) This work appears to be a devotional poem of a date no earlier than the Middle Ages, and probably Renaissance. It was either 'fathered' upon Lactantius or innocently bound up together with his works in the early editions (4).

(4) DE AVE PHOENICE. (5) Several manuscripts attribute this work to Lactantius and patristic testimony expressly cites it as a Lactantian poem.(6) Modern scholarship has settled the controversy over the attribution by generally accepting it as one of his genuine works.(7) It is extant intact. There is even a curious Anglo-Saxon paraphrase of the poem(8).

(1) Cp. P. Monceaux. Histoire littéraire... 3. p.299.

(2) Carmina. 3.9. English transl. W. Fletcher. Works of Lactantius Vol.2. ANCL. 22. Edinburgh 1871. pp. 223-227.

(3) For the latin text see Brandt CSEL 27. pp.148-151. English transl. W. Fletcher. ANCL vol 22. pp.220-222.

(4) cp. P. Monceaux. Histoire littéraire. p.148

(5) cp. Brandt CSEL 27 pp. 135-147.

(6) Gregory of Tours. De Cursu stellarum. 12.

(7) cp. B. Bianco. Il Carme De Ave Phoenice di Lattanzio Firmiano Chieri Bori,1931.
B. Stock. Cosmology and rhetoric in the Phoenix of Lactantius. cm. 26. 1965. pp.246-257.
M. Walla. Der vogel phoenix in der antiken literatur und die dichtung des Laktanz. Diss. Wien. 1969.
I. Gualandri. Lattanzio, Claudiano, e il mito del fenice. RAL.29.1974 pp. 293-311. M.C. Fitzpatrick. De Ave Phoenice English tr. and commentary. Philadelphia 1933.

(8) Preserved in the Exeter Ms. cp. J.J. Conybeare. Account of an Anglo-Saxon paraphrase of the Phoenix attributed to Lactantius Archaeologia. Vol.17. 1814. pp. 193-197.

THE MAJOR WRITINGS OF LACTANTIUS

The major works of Lactantius consist of the following, listed in the chronological order of their production:

(a) De Opificio dei (OD)

(b) Divinae Institutiones (Dl)

(c) De Ira dei (De Ira)

(d) De Mortibus Persecutorum (Dm)

(e) Epitome Divinarum Institutionum (Epit)

PROBLEMS OF DATING:

The chronological order of the major writings is established fairly certainly in so far as Lactantius himself gives numerous indications within his text of the way in which he composed the works, and there are several cross references of subject-matter between them. So, for example, the OD was written a short while before the Dl was commenced[1] and the later book refers back to it directly.[2] Lactantius tells us that the Epitome was written a considerable time after the original[3]. And again, the De Ira is later than the Dl but written before the Epitome. Lactantius announces his intention to compose the work while he is still involved with the Institutes,[4] and the text of the De Ira looks back frequently to both the text and the arguments of the Dl.[5]

(1) OD. 15.6.'sed erit nobis contra philosophos integra disputatio.' OD. 20.1.'haec ad te, Demetriane, interim paucis, et obscurius fortasse, quam decuit, pro rerum ac temporis necessitate peroravi; quibus contentus esse debebis; plura et meliora lecturus, si nobis indulgentia caelitus venerit. tunc ego te ad verae philosophiae doctrinam et planius et verius cohortabor.'

(2). Dl. 2.10.15..'sed tamen materiam tam copiosam et uberem strictim (Tullius) contingit. quam ego nunc idcirco praetereo, quia nuper proprium de ea re librum ad Demetrianum auditorem meum scripsi.'

(3) Epit. 1.1.'Quamquam divinarum Institutionum libri, quos iam pridem ad illustrandam veritatem religionemque conscripsimus...'

(4) Dl. 2.17.5. 'sed seponatur interim nobis hic locus de ira dei disserendi, quod et uberior est materia et opere proprio latius exequenda.'

(5) cf. De Ira. 2.4.-6, 11.2, 17.2.

Like the Epitome, the De Mortibus Persecutorum is a late work.(1) It ends with a reference to the fall of Prisca and Valeria, which ocurred in the summer of 314 AD. The most probable date for the composition then is sometime between 315 and 320 AD when the persecution of Licinius began in earnest. The date of the Dl is indicated to an extent by the frequent allusions to an existing state of persecution especially in Book five. This persecution cannot be referred to that of Licinius(2), but describes that of Diocletian and Galerius between 303 and 311(3).

(1) The precise date of the DM has been the subject of an extensive critical investigation and commands a wide range of literature.q.v.

T.D. Barnes. Lactantius and Constantine. JRS 73. 1963. pp.29-46.
A. Crescenti Rilievi al DM, di Firmiano Lattanzio Messina 1964
D. De Decker Le DM attribué à Lactance RBP.48. 1970.pp 941 f.
A. Mueller. Laktanz und die DM: öder die beurteilung der christenverfolgungen im lichte des Mailänder Toleranzreskripts vom jahre 313. RQ. suppl.19. 1913 pp 66-88.

cf the introductory prologues to the following editions:-

F. Corsaro L.C. Firmiani Lactantii, Liber de Mortibus Persecutorum Catania 1970.
J. Moreau De Mortibus Persecutorum sc. 39-40. 1954.

(2) 320-323 _ By this date Lactantius would have been in his extreme old age and it is inconceivable that he could have written and published the seven books of the Dl and then followed them with the De Ira and the Epit.

(3) Lactantius, for example, specifically mentions the destruction of the christian basilica at Nicomedia which took place, while he was there, in 303 AD. Dl. 5.2.2. DM. 12.

The final chapter of Book 5 looks forward to God's vindication of the church and the punishment of the wicked persecutors(1). So this book at least is to be dated before the death of Galerius in 311. If the two dedications to Constantine are genuine(2) we are given an indication that the 7 books were written over a protracted period, for the first address(3) promises Constantine his victory and identifies his enemies with the enemies of God's Church, whereas the second(4) speaks of God having cast the enemies down and delivered them into the emperor's hands. The former passage shows that although Constantine had ended the persecution in his own dominions it was still going on elsewhere. "This must refer to the period between the death of Constantius and the toleration edict of Galerius, i.e. between 305 and 311".(5)

(1) Dl. 5.23.

(2) cp. J. Stevenson - life and lit. activity pp. 670-673.
E.Heck. Die dualistischen zusätze und die Kaiseranreden bei Laktanz. AHAW. Heidelberg. 1972.
R. Pichon. Lactance pp. 9f.
H.J. Lawlor. Notes on Lactantius Hermathena 12. 1903 pp 458f.
All of whom regard the dedications as probably genuine, and :
S. Brandt.- CSEL. 19 Prolegomena p xxx ff.
ibid. Ueber die dualistische zusätze und die Kaiseranreden bei Laktanz. Sitzungsberichte der phil-hist-klasse der kaiserlichen akademie der wissenschaften 118 abh.8. Wien. 1889. -
who regards them as interpolations.

(3) Dl. 1.1. 13-16.

(4) Following 7.26.10. cp. Brandt CSEL 19. n.(11). p. 668

(5) J. Stevenson. Life and lit activity p.672.

The latter's reference to evil rulers "summa potestate deiectos" seems to designate Maximian and Maxentius. E. Heck (1) thinks it was added to a new edition of the Dl in the triumphant atmosphere following the execution of Licinius but Stevenson had already noticed "that when Lactantius wrote the dedication he had not yet begun to teach Crispus. He regards his teaching career as quite definitely ended"(2) and together with a possible allusion to the Edict of Milan(3) this suggests the earlier date is more likely, that is about 313AD. If Lactantius has made these slight alterations of detail in successive editions of his work, rather than in the publication process of the successive books, then the whole of the Dl can be somewhat compressed in time towards the earlier date of the terminus ā quo of 305 AD. Otherwise, whatever the order of composition of the seven books(4), it would seem that they can only be dated as a progressive work between 305 and 313 AD.

(1) E. Heck. Die dualistischen zusätze... p20

(2) J. Stevenson. Life and lit activity p. 673

(3) Brandt. CSEL. 19. para. 12. p 668 'aliorum male consulta rescindere'.

(4) Cp. H.J. Lawlor. Notes on Lactantius p. 458f. who regards Bk. 5 as a separate treatise De Iustitia, the first of the books to be written, dated 306 AD.
P. Monceaux. (Histoire littéraire...3. p.304. fn.1.) makes an ingenious exegesis of Lactantius' date of the fall of Troy and arrives at a date for Bk.1. of 307AD.

The chronological scheme for all the works, then, is quite definite as regards its order, but very approximate in the overall dating:-

SYMPOSIUM	circa.	262 AD
HODOEPORICUM	c.	290
GRAMMATICUS	c.	300 ?
DE OPIFICIO DEI	c.	300
DIVINAE INSTITUTIONES.		305-313
DE MORTIBUS PERSECUTORUM.	c.	315-320
EPITOME	c.	317.

The letters cannot be dated and were presumably issued throughout Lactantius' life. The Book to Asclepiades, the Phoenix and the De Motibus Animi[1] are also unable to be dated.

The cohesion of his literary output

From his earliest days, then, Lactantius exercised his genius in writing. This was both a passion[2] and the chief goal of his christian ministry[3]. It has already been noted that all seven books of the DI were probably published separately, as they were completed, and thus designed to be a self-contained argument. At the same time, however, they are quite evidently inter-related, and much more extensively so than merely by the device of connecting prefaces and postscripts.

(1) If this is an independent work and not simply part of the corpus of Epistolae.

(2) OD. 20.2 'statui enim quam multa potero litteris tradere quae ad beatae vitae statum spectent...'

(3) OD 20.8-9.'quod si vita est optanda sapienti, profecto nullam aliam ob causam vivere optaverim quam ut aliquid efficiam quod vita dignum sit et quod utilitatem legentibus etsi non ad eloquentiam, quia tenuis in nobis facundiae rivus est, ad vivendum tamen adferat: quod est maxime necessarium. quo perfecto satis me vixisse arbitrabor et officium hominis inplesse, si labor meus aliquos homines ab erroribus liberatos ad iter caeleste direxerit.'

The complete volumes of the Dl form one precise, and closely knit theological system and in a sense this is analogous to all the other extant writings of Lactantius, from his earliest days in Nicomedia to his retirement in Trier. With the exception of the Epitome, all the works are separate and distinct compositions. Nonetheless when taken together in their order of composition, they represent the growth and development of a remarkably consistent theological vision. This reaches its most mature and articulate form in the body of the Institutes, his great work, but all the writings before and after, apply the master-theme of his theology in slightly different contexts. This governing conception, that gives a cohesive unity to his work, is the vision of God as the supreme providence that judges human history as the Lord and Father of man. This theological consistency in Lactantius has long been recognised. At the turn of the century Monceaux remarked :-

"Les quàtres traités apologétiques ou philosophiques de Lactance doivent être étudiés ensemble; car ils se rattachent à une même conception, et ils exposent les mêmes idées avec les mêmes moyens. Le De Opificio Dei est comme la preface des Divinae Institutiones dont l'Epitome est un simple abrégé, et dont le De Ira Dei est comme un appendice."(1)

(1) P. Monceaux. Histoire Littéraire. 3. p. 307

The De Opificio Dei is a teleological argument defending the concept of a caring plan of divine providence. It takes its departure from the notion of the usefulness of all the different parts of the human body. Each single aspect is treated to demonstrate a divinely skilful work combining beauty and efficiency in a way that can only proclaim the wisdom of the provident creator:-

'Quid est tandem cur nobis invidiosum quisquam putet, si rationem corporis nostri dispicere et contemplari velimus? quae plane obscura non est, quia ex ipsis membrorum officiis et usibus partium singularum quanta vi providentiae quidque factum sit, intellegere nobis licet.'(1)

In Chapter four Lactantius epitomises the whole argument himself:-

'sed ego de uno corpore hominis tantum institui dicere, ut in eo divinae providentiae potestatem quanta fuerit ostendam, his dumtaxat in rebus, quae sunt comprehensibiles et apertae:'(2)

Lactantius' doctrine of a caring provident God is not merely a theoretical exercise, for it provides the substance of his anthropology. The high point of God's provident creation is for Lactantius, that He communicates the divine life to Man in an especial way and so makes him "hominem caelestem".(3) The revelation and this promise of spiritual participation in the divine life flow from the very simplicity of the nature of God since his creativity is a "fatherhood" as well as a "dominion" (Deus pater et dominus). The argument of the OD climaxes in his teaching on the soul of man, in the final chapters where he demonstrates that the fatherly care of the "life-giving parent" is most perfectly fulfilled in the gift of immortality he bestows on those who wish to receive it(4).

(1) OD 1.16

(2) OD 4.24

(3) OD 8.1.

(4) cp OD 19.8. 'hoc igitur dei munere caelesti atque praeclaro an utamur in nostra esse voluit potestate: hoc enim concesso ipsum hominem virtutis sacramento religavit, quo vitam posset adipsci.'

This conceptual movement from the establishment of a caring providence in the person of the One Supreme Father-God, to the effect of this revelation in man, and on to its final resolution in the gift of immortality, is of course to be reproduced later as the basic structure of the Dl. The opening book insists on the oneness of the caring, provident, God.(1) The second and third establish a firm basis for a theandric anthropology(2) based on the status rectus theme through which he teaches the immortality of man gained through ethical practice. And in books six and seven Lactantius again returns to the final end of this covenant of God and man - the spiritual immortality of the soul, or the life of the blessed(3) - that is won by ethical fidelity. Apart from the general similarity of structure there are a host of detailed conceptions that are carried over from the OD into the text of the Dl.(4), and the two works have evident similarities in apologetic method. The earlier treatise, for example, takes its inspiration from previous philosophical manuals on the nature of man. Lactantius freely acknowledges his dependence on the similar work of Cicero and Varro(5) and Brandt demonstrated its hermetic foundation.(6)

(1) Dl. 1.2 - 1.7.

(2) eg. Dl. 2.18.1.

(3) The Ms title of Bk 7 is De Vita Beata. The systematic role of this doctrine on the immortal life is elucidated in the preface. cp. Dl. 7.1.1f.

(4) OD. 2.1-9. parallels: Dl. 3.8.4.

OD 8.1f	"	Dl. 2.1.15f.
OD 15.5	"	Dl. 3.6.2-4
OD 19.10	"	Dl. 2.3.22-24
OD 19.8	"	Dl. 2.18.1f.
OD 19.9	"	Dl. 2.3.8.

(5) (Cicero) viz De Republica and De Natura Deorum. cp. OD. 1.12-13
(Varro) cp. OD. 5.6, 8.6, 10.1, 12.6, 17.5. cp R.M. Ogilvie The Library of Lactantius. Oxford 1978. pp. 50-55.

(6) S Brandt. Ueber die quellen von Laktanz' schrift OD. Wiener Studien 13. 1891. pp. 255-292.

The work is an apologetic communication by a christian philosopher, to philosophers, on philosophical terms,(7) and in its intent to convey a christian message about provident creation in "common" philosophical forms it is clearly analogous to the Dl. All Lactantius' writings avoid christian neologisms and strenuously attempt to avoid relying on purely 'christian' arguments or proofs. For the most part this means that they avoid scriptural testimonies(8) and yet just as the Dl may be shown to have a profoundly scriptural inspiration operating throughout,so too the argument of the OD transcends its pagan sources. In the end its vision of the provident creator is not one he has learned from Cicero or Varro, but from the christian tradition and scriptures.

In the case of the De Ira, the scriptural basis is even more clearly seen as the fundamental motivation of his work, and this applies even though he still refrains from the use of explicit scriptural testimonies. The point of the whole essay is to oppose the scriptural view of the God who acts in history to the pagan conception of the philosophers who maintained the divine impassibility or Apatheia. His general aim is to clarify theological concepts(3) if not terminology, so that Christians will not think they are attributing a perfection to God if they dispense with the notion of his 'anger'. He is arguing primarily against the Stoic and Epicurean conceptions in order to defend the primary concepts of revelation, and caring providence. But he also addresses the work to fellow Christians whom he knows have been led to the denial of God's 'anger' on the grounds that it was an unworthy and anthropomorphical attribute of God(5).

(1) cp. OD 1.2.

(2) Lactantius explains this procedure at Dl 5.4. 4-7.

(3) De Ira. 5.8.

(4) P. Monceaux. Histoire littéraire.. 3.p.323
De Ira. 4.1f. 5.1, 8.1, 9.4, 13.20, 15.6, 17.1.

(5) Such a teaching is presented in Arnobius. Adv. Nat. 7.5.

He argues that God's anger is not the weakness of a passion, but the exercise of divine justice and judgement.(1) To contradict this view, as Lactantius sees it, is to destroy the living relationship between man and God and thereby to suppress Religion(2). The main preconceptions of the work are revealed in its opening chapter, and show close affinity with the ideas expressed in the Institutes. So we have it that man cannot attain to Truth except by the gift of divine paideia(3), and here again, as with all his apologetic writings, his methodology is to use all the finest pagan testimonies to support his thesis(4). Here, Cicero, Seneca, the Sibyls, even Epicurus and Lucretius are pressed into service to argue for the wisdom of relying on revelatory paideia over and above conjecture,and knowledge of purely physical realities. His governing concern is to lead the reader to acknowledge the scriptures as the supreme vessel of this revelatory paideia(5).

(1) De Ira 2-6.

(2) Ibid. 7-12.

(3) cp De Ira 1. and Dl. 1.1.5-7., 7.7.4.

(4) cp Brandt Index Auctorum, right hand column.CSEL.vol.27.

(5) cp De Ira 22-23.

The apologetic theory of the degrees of man's advancing spiritual knowledge(1) closely follows the structure of the argument between books 1-4 of the D1. He quickly passes over the first and third stages since he has already expounded them at length in the D1(2) but he wishes the De Ira to make a special development of the second(3). The single main idea of the work revolves around the ideas of providence and revelation; thus to deny 'divine anger' is to deny by implication God's providential care for men, and his concern for Justice(4). Such a position thereby denies to man the hope of an immortal life and this in turn ruptures the bond of theandric communion(5). It is a "pernicious belief"(6) that refutes the notion of divine revelation and he censures the Epicureans as the epitome of the atheism to which it leads.

The text of the Epitome of the Divine Institutes differs linguistically from the D1 at certain points in a way that is more than can be simply explained by the necessary differences an abridgment must introduce to an extensive original. But the conceptual plan, the theological aim, and the apologetic method are one and the same(7).

(1) De Ira. 2.2. The three stages of the approach to truth are:
(i) To realise the falseness of the polytheist system.
(ii) to comprehend the necessary unity of God,
(iii) to approach the divine law-giver, Christ, for initiation into complete truth.

(2) cf. De Ira. 2.4-6.

(3) De Ira. 2-7.

(4) De Ira. 8-9.

(5) cp. De Ira 13-14.

(6) cf. J. Stevenson life and lit. activity. p.674.

(7) See. J. Stevenson The Epitome of Lactantius SP.7. Tu.92. 1966. pp. 291-298.
J. Dammig. Die D1 des Laktanz und ihre Epitome : ein beitrag zur geschichte und technik der epitomierung. Diss. photodruck. Munchen. 1957.

In no sense is the Epitome a new, or different, or independent work of Lactantius; it is a second, much abbreviated edition of the Institutes. Lactantius took the opportunity to clarify certain points he had made in the Dl, and in general redactive terms he shows the same freedom with his own original text as he has with all the other external sources he has previously employed; that is he does not feel bound to reproduce the syntax of the first edition. He epitomises with some degree of literary freedom, re-expressing the same ideas in sometimes slightly different language. The late date of the publication of this abridgement and the great change of circumstances he and the Church in general enjoyed (from persecution to comparative security under Constantine) also account for some of the divergences. In short, the Epitome is a faithful reproduction of the theological argument of the Institutes. The minor differences in theological or literary expression which often arise between parallel passages can in each and every instance be explained by one of the three following considerations:

(1) The persecutions had ceased and though the Institutes as an Apology to pagans had nonetheless been written from the outset with one eye on his Christian readership, now, in Trier, under the benign protection of the new dynasty, it seemed a fitting time to "christianise" certain passages more overtly, without prejudicing the work's intended role as an apologia for a pagan readership. So, he adds reminiscences of the Gospels more frequently than in the original, and introduces more christian synonyms into the text.(1)

(1) eg. technical terms like sacramentum are given in their more overtly scriptural form of mysterium. see. v.Loi. Il Termine "mysterium" nella letteratura latina cristiana pre-nicena. Vc. 19 1965 pp210-232. VC 20. 1966. pp 25-44. Also V.Loi. Per la storia del vocabolo sacramentum in Lattanzio VC. 18 1964 pp 85-107.
The account of the magisterium Christ gives the Church in his post resurrection appearances is, in the Epit, re-expressed as the breathing out of divine spirit. cp. Dl. 4.20. 4.21.1-2 and Epit.47
The account of the atonement is elaborated more in the Epit. than the Institutes. cp. Dl. 4.13.4. and Epit. 43.8-9.

(2) As he cuts out most of the citations on which he has largely based his argument in the 1st Edition, he often takes the opportunity to re-express the same idea in a different form. He is a flexible redactor(1).

(3) Sometimes he clarifies a difficult or obscure passage in the original.(2)

The De Mortibus Persecutorum.

The Lactantian authorship of the DM has been quite definitely established by critical research of this century. One of the doubts about its literary provenance came from the apparent contrast in style between the moderate rhetor of the earlier works and the fiery historian of the DM. Yet even in this passionate philosophy of history, written with the full backing if not on the direct commission of the imperial chancery, one can see the same familiar theological concern emerging - the 'grundvorstellung'-that God is a caring providence who acts in history for an end that transcends history, and who reveals himself, vindicating his own majesty and power, in order to establish a relationship with man. It is precisely this theology of revelation and providence which predetermines Lactantius' need to proclaim the wretched fates of the wicked, and the vindication of the just, even within this earthly spectrum. The DM has frequently been analysed as a "lapse from good taste", a gleeful and disedifying celebration of revenge on hated enemies, but such an interpretation fails to appreciate the real motivation of Lactantius.

(1) See the different descriptions of true worship. Dl.6.24.26-6.25.12 and Epit. 58.

(2) Eg. the mode of union between Father and Son. Dl. 4.29. Epit.49.

He uses these examples of <u>divine vengeance</u> in the DM, as theological symbols proving the vindication of God's majesty in a way immediately analogous to his previous excursus on the nature of divine majesty in the Second book of the Dl, and his teaching on the judgement of God in Book 5.(1) The key to the interpretation of his highly coloured theology of history is the realisation that it flows directly from an Old Testament conception of God's providential vindication of the faithful, just, man within his life-time, one that is especially enshrined in the Wisdom literature(2) or the Maccabean history(3). To this end Lactantius holds up the disasters that overtook the persecuting princes as the sign and symbol of the irresistible accomplishment of the divine economy.

(1) Dl 2.4.7f. Lactantius demonstrates that the pagan gods are unable to assert their own majesty in the face of mockery and sacrilege, whereas the true divine majesty will assert its power in the form of judgement Dl. 5.23.

(2) cp Dl. 5.23.3. 'sed idem quamvis populi sui vexationes et hic in praesenti soleat vindicare, tamen iubet nos expectare patienter illum caelestis iudicii diem..'
cp Eg. Prov 10. 25, 27-30

(3) J. Rougé <u>Le DM et le cinquième livre des Maccabées</u>. SP. 12 TU. 115 1975. pp. 135-143.

The nineteenth century critics drew special attention to this cohesion of all Lactantius' thought and literary method but they were not the first to recognise it. As early as the fourth century the manuscript tradition had grouped all his writings(1) together as ten consecutive volumes of a single system. This present review of the consistency of that output can finish with Monceaux's comment on the issue:

" En tout cas le De Ira Dei est bien une sorte de supplement aux Institutions comme le De Opificio Dei en est la préface. On s'en est aperçu il y a bien longtemps, dès le 4e, ou le 5e, siècle. Aux sept livres des Institutions, dont chacun avait un titre speciale, on joignit comme livre 8 le De Ira Dei; comme livre 9 le De Opificio; comme livre 10 l'Epitome. Ainsi se forma dans les manuscrits un Corpus apologétique en dix livres, où l'ordre adopté n'était pas très rationnel, mais où l'on trouvait tout le système de Lactance."(2)

(1) Excepting the DM.

(2) P. Monceaux. Histoire littéraire.. 3. p.324.

Chapter Two.

CHAPTER 2.

LACTANTIUS AND THE FATHERS.

(i) The significance of his sources

The contemporary reviews of the Christian,patristic,sources of Lactantius[1] owe much to the research work of the great nineteenth century scholars, particularly S. Brandt who formed the critical text of the Dl in the Vienna Corpus,[2] and R. Pichon who composed the first extensive survey of Lactantian literature.[3] The study of literary parallels is always made difficult in the case of apologetic literature because of the great stock of literary and theological commonplaces that appear in almost all the Latin literature of this type. It is often impossible to tell whether Lactantius is relying on Minucius or Tertullian or going directly to a mythological source. In addition the methods of the citation of texts in the ancient world were far from scrupulous and even in the case of the most venerable authorities the general sense of the quotation was regarded as more important than literal fidelity.[4]

(1) The main source studies regarding the Christian tradition are:-
L. Alfonsi. Lattanzio e Giustino.Instituto di Lombardi Scienze e lettere. vol 82. 1949. pp. 19-27.
H. Koch. Zu Arnobius und Laktanz ph.80. 1924. pp. 467f.
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Ibid. Tertullien et les premièrs moralistes Africains. Gembloux-Paris 1969
R.M. Ogilvie The library of Lactantius. Oxford 1978. pp.88-108
A. Wlosok. Laktanz und die philosophische gnosis.AHAW 2 1960 Heidelberg pp 180f.
Ibid. Zur bedeutung der nichtcyprianischen Bibelzitate bei Laktanz. SP 4. TU.79. 1961 pp 234-250.

(2) CSEL vols 19 & 27. particularly the Index Auctorum vol.27. pp 241-269

(3) R. Pichon Lactance. esp. pp. 175-217

(4) cp. Scribes and Scholars. ed Reynolds/Wilson OUP 1968 p2f.

The ancient methods of citation also make it inadmissible to presume that if a text from one author reappears in another, then the second has some acquaintance with the context of the argument of his source. Often one is unable to make a connection between the argument and meaning of the original text and the way it is applied by a later author.(1)

Such is the case with many of Lactantius' cited authorities. His use of the pagan poets is free and flexible, his methods of citation typical of the period. His treatment of scriptural texts is analogous and even when he gives a scriptural citation, in preference to his habit of making a scriptural allusion suffice, the text is often of less value than it might otherwise have been in providing information on the Old Latin text of the Bible. It is usually impossible to tell when Lactantius is preserving an independent textual tradition to that of Cyprian and when he is either making his own version from the Greek, or simply giving a careless reference. In the case of his patristic sources the same principles operate, and it becomes apparent that the wider theological context that surrounds the texts he chooses to reproduce is often of no significance to him whatsoever. Many of his citations are simply used as a "bon mot" or a proof text and he feels no hesitation in improving on his original material by making stylistic alterations.

(1) cp. H. Hagendahl. Methods of citation in post-classical latin prose. Er. 45. 1947. p. 123f.

The text of the Dl bears direct witness to: Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Minucius Felix,(1) Tertullian and Cyprian. In addition there are brief allusions to the Odes of Solomon, the Preaching of Peter and Paul, and a lost work of Asclepiades On Providence. The latin sources are by far the most significant, as one would initially expect in a work of apologia designed as a model of good latin style and meant to convince the Roman man of letters of the suitability of the Christian religion. Lactantius uses Theophilus as a historical authority as well as a source for some Sibylline material, and Justin is employed in some of Lactantius' exegetical material. But in general terms the direct influence of Greek speculative thought on him seems minimal. To what extent this avoidance of the Greek theological tradition and its terminology is a question of deliberate policy, or not, remains a mystery. Though his silence in this regard is a very strong argument that his main theological inspiration derives from his reading of the latin apologists; and in spite of being resident in the centre of Asia Minor Lactantius is a thoroughly 'western' theologian. Even if one were to presume a wider reading of Greek theology than he indicates, the aplogetical motives of his work [motives that censure Cyprian for being too ecclesiastical and Tertullian for being too obscure(2)] would hardly extend to preferring the works of theologians even more alien to the Roman mind.

(1) The thesis does not approach the question of whether Minucius or Tertullian wrote first. The critical editor of the Octavius M. Beaujeu has argued its dependence on the Apologeticum and therefore dated it mid third century, (M. Beaujeu Octavius. trans & Comm. Paris. 1964) but since Lactantius has read both apologists the issue of their priority is not at stake here. cp. R.M. Ogilvie. The Library of Lactantius pp. 92-95.

(2) cp. Dl. 5.1. 23-26.

Living and worshipping in the heart of Nicomedia for about thirteen years, Lactantius' opportunities for acquiring and studying the Greek tradition were ideal. But even though Arnobius in Sicca Veneria turns naturally to Clement's great trilogy for source materials, and even though one could presume many possible points of contact(1) might attract Lactantius to these works,there is no sign whatsoever that he has read any of the Alexandrian works. Nor does he show any knowledge of Origen even though his avowed adversary and contemporary, Sossianus Hierocles,had based his Ad Christianos(2) on the Contra Celsum of Origen.

It seems that the intended audience and the task in hand are the determinant factors in his use of source material. Lactantius wishes to address a Christian message to Roman literati and tries to do this as much as possible through the medium of classical themes and concepts that could be pressed into service as parallels of Christian authorities. This is the brilliance of his work judged as an apologetic communication,for in this he succeeded so well that the first critical analysis of his work failed to recognise in it any theological substance.(3) The Dl is perhaps best understood as a pro-paideusis of the Christian faith for intellectual pagans. Lactantius wishes there to be next-to-nothing in his text that would offend the sensibilities of open-minded, truth-seeking men, those he described in his opening preface: "magno et excellenti ingenio viri"..(4) who stand in absolute need of a divine revelation in order to reach the truth they have searched for so long in vain.(5)

(1) Not least their similar conceptions of the Christ as the new pedagogue for man.

(2) cp Dl. 5.2. 12-17

(3) R. Pichon Lactance. p. 217 "il reste classique et païen".

(4) Dl. 1.1.1.

(5) Dl. 1.1. 5-6.

He appears,in a sense,to begin the apologetic process all over again just at the time when it was destined to end, and while the theological tradition of the second and third century apologists continues to flow through him, often in his unspoken pre-suppositions about the nature of God, or revelation, Christ, or the Church, nonetheless he actively re-submits all the literary sources he handles to the governing process of his apologetic intent, much more so than any apologist had ever done before him. The result is a strange quality of uniqueness that is attached to his work,and the theological isolation he suffered in the later history of the post-Nicene church. Pichon, from the start, had already demonstrated that something of this isolation operated even between his work and its immediate predecessors: " il nous reste à examiner ce qu'il doit aux apologistes antérieurs. Il ne leur doit que fort peu de chose: à peu près rien aux pères grecs, et quelques détails insignifiants aux pères latins."(1)

(ii) The Major Influences.

(a) Justin Martyr.(2)

Lactantius never mentions Justin by name or even quotes his work directly but a strong case for some form of dependence on his work can be made in the light of certain parallelisms that go beyond similarities that might be explained on the basis of Tertullian's mediation or independent reliance on common sources.

(1) R. Pichon. Lactance. p.213.

(2) d. 165 AD. works. Migne PG. 6. cols. 9-800 Dialogue W. Trypho PG.6. cols. 471-800.

All the parallels occur in the fourth book of the Dl where Lactantius is locating the Christ-figure in a wider context of salvation history in order to refute any pagan prejudice that Jesus is too historically immediate to be an authoritative religious founder. As Lactantius locates the historical Jesus in the ancient scheme of Jewish expectation and scriptural promise,the general context is favourable for some form of borrowing from Justin's work on the same theme, the Dialogue with Trypho.

In the first place, Lactantius seems to think that the text of the royal psalm(1) was the actual formula addressed to Christ at his baptism in the Jordan: ' tum vox audita de caelo est: filius meus es tu ego hodie genui te(2)'. Lactantius interpolates the text of the psalm into the baptismal account of Lk 3.21-22. Several of the early Latin versions witness this same process of replacing Luke's text with that of the psalm,"in order to stress the spiritual rebirth attendant on baptism and to explain the Holy Spirit in terms of sanctification rather than as the third person of the trinity "(3)- theological concerns that are consistent with the views of Lactantius.Justin makes the same exegetical interpolation twice in the Dialogue with Trypho:

τὸ πνεῦμα οὖν τὸ ἅγιον,καὶ διὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους,ὡς προέφην,ἐν εἴδει περιστερᾶς ἐπέπτη αὐτῷ,καὶ φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν ἅμα ἐληλύθει ἥ τις καὶ διὰ Δαβὶδ λεγομένη, ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ὅπερ αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἔμελλε λέγεσθαι "Υἱός μου εἶ σύ,ἐγώ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε." τότε γένεσιν αὐτοῦ λέγων γίνεσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐξ ὅτου ἡ γνῶσις αὐτοῦ ἔμελλε γίνεσθαι "Υἱός μου εἶ σύ·ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε." (4)

(1) Ps. 2.7.

(2) Dl. 4.15.3.

(3) R.M. Ogilvie. The library of Lactantius p.104. cp text of codices a-d, ff l & r of the Vetus Latina and also in the Gk.Codex Bezae. The critical apparatus of Luke 3.21 (Gk.NT. Ed.A. Souter Oxford. 1966) cites authorities for the variant including Clement of Alexandria, Methodius and Juvencus. But the only patristic writings Lactantius may be presumed to have any knowledge of that witness the variant are: Justin Trypho 88 & 103. and some Valentinian passages in Irenaeus. Adv.H. 3.10.4 & 3.11.2.

(4) Trypho 88. PG 6.688B, see also:- Trypho 103. PG6. 717B.

Justin introduces his baptismal exegesis in ch.88 by a scriptural catena consisting of Isaiah 11. 1-3 about the spirit which will rest on Jesus,(1) Ps. 67.19(2) an ascension text, and Joel 2.28(3) on the signs of the spirit's presence among men. After this catena he cites the text of Luke 3.22 with the psalm variant. Jean Doignon finds grounds in this for a catena-tradition that may be witnessed in Irenaeus(4) "Un régroupement, de ces mêmes versets est attesté encore chez Irenée, sans que cependant il cite la seconde partie de Luc 3.22 ou du verset corréspondant des autres synoptiques qui contient la parôle du père au fils.(5) He also argues on the authority of A. Houssiau(6) that Irenaeus handed on the same catena to Novatian.(7) Irenaeus, however, and Tertullian(8) after him,who both follow the same catena of scripture as Justin,nonetheless omit the latter's interpolation of Ps 2.7, whereas Lactantius, who is evidently independent of Cyprian's Ad Quirinum here, keeps the interpolation but slightly alters the catena. He dispenses with the Joel pericope altogether and re-sites the Isaian text two chapters earlier, paralleling it with an independent Sibylline proof.(9)

(1) PG.6. 683 Af,

(2) PG6. 684D

(3) Ibid. 684D-685A

(4) Irenaeus. Adv.H. 3.17.1. cp SC.34. p.302.

(5) J. Doignon. La scene évangélique du baptême de Jésus commentée par Lactance, (Dl 4.15) et Hilaire (Comm. in Mtt.2.5.6.) Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal J. Danielou. vol.1. Paris 1972. p.66.

(6) Ibid. p.66 fn 27. A. Houssiau. La Christologie de S.Irenée Louvain 1955. p.179.

(7) Novat. De Trin. 29. 163-168. ed.Weyer. p.186

(8) Tertullian. Adv. Marc. 5.8.4-6.

(9) Dl. 4.13.20.

Lactantius certainly has a nearer authority at hand in the form of Tertullian,which will be investigated shortly, but none of the previous Latin apologists supply him with the most distinctive aspect of this exegesis which is the Old Testament interpolation. In addition it can be noted that there is general harmony between the wider theological context of both Lactantius and Justin. Between chs 87 and 88 the latter is arguing that Christ possessed the powers of the spirit not as one who stood in need of an external visitation of divine power but rather as one who had enjoyed them from birth.(1) Lactantius speaks of the baptismal voice as one of those opera illa miranda which were caelestis indicia virtutis,(2) but were misinterpreted by the Jews as evidence that he was a sorcerer. This element of the magus controversy, as well as his technical vocabulary explaining the function of the baptismal water,(3) is something that originates from Tertullian, as we shall see, but the general context of the discussion on spiritual power manifested in the incarnate Christ has close affinities with the argument of Justin ch.88. Lactantius is clearly drawing from a variety of different sources for the baptismal account and not restricting himself solely to scriptural material. At Dl 4.15.3 he describes the descending dove as pure white which Jean Doignon(4), following Pichon(5), ascribes to Sibylline influence(6) but which R. M. Ogilvie suggests might be intended as an allusion (for pagan readers) to Cicero's opinion that white is the distinguishing colour of deities(7).

(1) cp. Justin Trypho. 88 PG.6. 686Bf.

(2) Dl. 4.15.1.

(3) Dl. 4.15.2.'sic etiam gentes baptismo id est purificatoris perfusione salvaret.'

(4) J. Doignon. La scene évangélique: pp 65-66

(5) R. Pichon. Lactance p 211

(6) cf J. Daniélou. Théologie du Judéo-christianisme. Paris 1958 p.251. Oracula Sibyllina 6.3-7. GCS. vol 8 p.130 ἐπεὶ κατὰ σάρκα τὸ θνητὸν ἠγέρθη, προχοαῖς ἀπολουσάμενος ποταμῶ Ἰορδάνου, ὃς φέρεται γλαυκῷ ποδί, κύματα σύρων. ὃς πυρὸς ἐκ εὐξας πρῶτος θεὸν ὄψεται ἠδὺν πνεύματι γινόμενον, λευκαῖς πτερύγεσι τελείης.

(7) R.M. Ogilvie. The library of Lactantius. p.104.fn.6. cf.Cicero, Rep.2.45.

Pichon rather intransigeantly presents this as a demonstration of how Lactantius is capable of contaminating his Christian sources: "on saisit là, dans un détail, le procédé de fusion, de contamination entre le texte évangélique et le texte profane."(1) If Lactantius has in mind either Cicero or the Sibyl then he is evidently working on an apologetical motive, but Pichon's analysis goes too far, for the interpolation is hardly a serious addendum to the evangelical scene since doves are generally white and have been depicted as such from the earliest days of Christian art, particularly in this baptismal setting. And if Lactantius is not averse to introducing apocryphal material into his scriptural narrative he has an authority to justify his procedure in Justin himself, who in the same ch.88 of the Dialogue probably relies on the same Sibylline text or even one of the apocryphal Gospels that retain the same tradition (2) in order to speak about the fire that descended on the waters around Christ. In Lactantius' account there is something of a very abrupt break after the baptismal narrative, at Dl 4.15.4B and he says that he will treat the remaining "miracles" in a rapid and summary manner. He wishes to pass over them generically so that he can come to his next major idea and exposition, which is the passion and the cross of Jesus: 'quae opera tam multa sunt, ut unus liber ad conplectenda omnia satis non sit. enumerabo igitur illa breuiter atque generatim sine ulla personarum ac locorum designatione, ut ad exponendam passionis eius crucisque rationem possim peruenire, quo iam dudum festinat oratio.'(3)

(1) Pichon. Lactance p.211

(2) E. Hennecke. N.T. Apocrypha London 1975 Vol.1. pp 146f no 2.- The Gospel of the Nazarenes. Also Gospel of the Ebionites. ibid vol. 1. p.157 n.4. cp ibid vol.2. p.92. The tradition of 'fire on the water' entered the baptismal canons of the Ebionites.

(3) Dl. 4.15.5.

The device of this transition is a rather forced one, and sufficiently rare in the Dl to be notable since Lactantius usually structures his argument much more neatly. It is also a device which is problematical, for Lactantius in fact does not rapidly dismiss the miracles at all but spends a substantial chapter on them(1), and there seems no immediate connection between his narrative on the baptism and his subsequent description of the passion when he presents this at 4.16.1, even though he has specifically and rather awkwardly pre-announced this passiology in the course of the baptismal unit. Whereas the theological movement from baptism to passion is,therefore,a stilted one in the Dl, it is central to the argument of the text of Justin, for immediately after his baptismal narrative he devotes chs. 89-91 of the Dialogue to an exposition of passion typology and a defence of the validity of the messiah's suffering in terms of its prediction in the prophetic literature. These two treatments substantially represent Lactantius' approach to the same theme after Dl 4.16, and it may explain the awkwardness of Lactantius' thematic transition at this point if we see here a reminiscence of the argument of his source that has not been wholly assimilated. The question of his baptismal exegesis will be resumed in the subsequent section,on Tertullian's influence, for important elements of the approach undoubtedly derive from this area.

One may suppose another link with Justin, and once more it is concerned with what one might call a "scriptural oddity", at Dl.4.18.22. Here Lactantius offers a proof text taken from the "Book of Esdra". It is a text which he has certainly not got from Cyprian, but which he clearly regards to have full scriptural status and authority: ' aput Hesdram ita scriptum est: et dixit Hesdras ad populum: hoc pascha saluator noster est et refugium nostrum. Cogitate et ascendat in cor uestrum, quoniam habemus humiliare eum in signo: et post haec spera-bimus in eum, ne deseratur hic locus in aeternum tempus, dicit dominus

(1) Dl. 4.15 6-31.

deus uirtutum. si non credideritis ei neque exaudieritis adnuntiationem eius, eritis derisio in gentibus.'(1) The text in question is not only absent from the African canon, it is a very rare piece of apocrypha indeed, and the only other place it appears in extant Christian literature before him is chapter 72 of the same Dialogue with Trypho. Here Justin presents the proof text in the same context as we witness in Lactantius, with the complaint that the Jews had acted dishonestly by suppressing those scriptures which had been too clearly fulfilled by Christ: καὶ ὁ τρύφων εἶπε· Πρῶτον ἀξιοῦμεν εἰπεῖν ὅς ἡμῖν καὶ τινὰς ὧν λέγεις τέλεον παραγεγράφθαι Γραφῶν.καγὼ εἶπον·Ὡς ὑμῖν φίλον , πράξω.Ἀπὸ μέν οὖν τῶν ἐξηγήσεων ὧν ἐξηγήσατο Ἔσδρας εἰς τὸν νόμον τὸν περὶ τοῦ Πάσχα τὴν ἐξήγησιν ταύτην ἀφείλοντο·Καὶ εἶπεν Ἔσδρας τῷ λαῷ· τοῦτο τὸ πάσχα ὁ Σωτὴρ ἡμῶν,καὶ ἡ καταφυγὴ ἡμῶν.Καὶ ἐὰν διανοηθῆτε, καὶ ἀναβῇ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν , ὅτι μέλλομεν αὐτὸν ταπεινοῦν ἐν σημείῳ, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐλπίσωμεν ἐπ'αὐτὸν,οὐ μὴ ἐρημώ ᾗ ὁ τόπος οὗτος εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον λέγει ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων.Εαν δὲ μὴ πιστεύσητε αὐτῷ, μηδὲ εἰσακούσητε τοῦ κηρύγματος αὐτοῦ,ἔσεσθε ἐπίχαρμα τοῖς ἔθνεσι.

(2)

Brandt recognises the link with Justin in his notes to the text(3) but strangely omits all reference to Justin in his Index Auctorum(4) though he includes supposed parallels with Irenaeus or Ps. Hippolytus(5) with far less authority for a textual dependence. The general context in Lactantius echoes the anti-jewish controversy of Justin. It can be noted that Lactantius is discussing the etymology of χριστός and objecting to the use of ἠλειμμένος . This latter term is that used consistently in Aquila, the Jewish anti-Christian translation of the Hebrew canon.(6)

(1) Dl. 4.18.22.

(2) Justin Trypho. 72 PG 644 B-C

(3) (Dl. 4.18.22) fn 6 CSEL 19 p. 355:'patet ista verba ab aliquo christiano (cf 1 Cor. 5.7: καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη χριστός .) conficta esse...minime ab Iudaeis deleta.'

(4) CSEL 27. p 256

(5) Brandt. CSEL 27. pp 255, 256 (79.'61.p.240)

(6) A.Wlosok. Zur bedeutung der nichtcyprianischen bibelzitate bei Laktanz.SP4.↑

Apart from these observed instances of Lactantius' probable reliance on Justin[1] there seem to be other allusions, minor details that have previously escaped notice, but which have value in supporting a case for Lactantius' knowledge of the Greek apologist.

Lactantius uses the exegesis of Zechariah 3. 1-8 as a central pillar of his christological argument on Christ's priesthood[2]. He knows the scripture from Tertullian and follows, by and large, the latter's exegetical method[3], but again it is something of an 'oddity' an unassimilated detail in the text that suggests a different additional source, and sends us back to the text of Justin's Trypho. The oddity consists in the way Lactantius refers to how the Jews had been misled[4] into attributing this prophecy about the great priest Jesus[5] to "Jesus, Son of Nun," or to "Jesus the Son of Josedec". The very appearance of the mosaic Joshua stops the flow of his argument and has no relevance to his subsequent exposition. The figure is anachronistic in so far as Lactantius introduces the concept simply in order to dismiss it, without it having been at issue in the first place.

(1) A. Wlosok. op cit. p. 238

(2) Dl. 4.14.6f.

(3) cf. Thesis ch 6 (iii) a. Tertullian Ap.3. Adv. Marc. 3.7.

(4) Dl. 4.14. 10,12.

(5) Dl. 4.14.9.

At Dl. 4.14. 12-13 Lactantius says that nothing in this prophecy is suited to the Son of Nun because he was never clothed in filthy garments since he was "potentissimus princeps." The introduction of the figure of Joshua, son of Josedec, is far more relevant however and a much more normal Jewish interpretation of the prophecy, as Justin shows.(1) Lactantius admits that this figure was indeed a high-priest(2) but argues that it is this very dignity that debars him from fulfilling the part of the prophecy relating to the "filthy garments". Whereas in the text of the DI the whole appearance of the Son of Nun seems artificially introduced into the context on grounds that are not readily explicable, in the text of Justin the figure is decidedly not out of context. Here, the Son of Nun is of equal theological importance for the argument as the figure of the son of Josedec. Justin discusses the older figure as a prophetic type of Christ for a whole chapter(3) shortly before he discusses the position of the post-exilic Joshua.(4) In the Dl Lactantius, from the outset of his Exegesis, treats the two Joshuas as if they had an equal claim on the prophecy.(5)

(1) Dial. Trypho c.115-116. esp 115 PG 6 741B Μέλλοντί τε τῷ Τρύφωνι ἀποκρίνεσθαι καὶ ἀντιλέγειν μοι, ἔφην· Πρῶτον ἀνάμεινον καὶ ἄκουσον ἃ λέγω. Οὐ γὰρ ἣν ὑπολαμβάνεις ἐξήγησιν ποιεῖσθαι μέλλω, ὡς μὴ γεγενημένου ἱερέως τινὸς Ἰησοῦ ὀνόματι ἐν τῇ Βαβυλωνίᾳ γῇ, ὅπου αἰχμάλωτος ὁ λαὸς ὑμῶν.

(2) Dl. 4.14.13.

(3) Trypho c. 113

(4) Trypho c. 115-116. [Lact. also introduces the Son of Josedec (115, PG.6. 742c) by reference to the Son of Nun.]

(5) 4.14. 12-13 'sed illi rursus eodem modo falsi deceptique sunt putantes haec de Iesu esse dicta filio Naue, qui successor Moysi fuit, aut de sacerdote Iesu filio Iosedech: in quos nihil congruit eorum quae propheta narrauit. non enim sorditati umquam illi fuerunt, cum alter eorum potentissimus princeps fuisset, alter sacerdos, aut perpessi sunt aliquid aduersi, ut tamquam titio eiectus ex igni putarentur, aut aliquando in conspectu dei et angelorum steterunt aut propheta de praeteritis loquebatur potius quam futuris.'

It may well be that this elevated significance given to the older Joshua, which is a unique aspect of Lactantius' exegesis in the text tradition, is carried over from the text of Justin who alone among the sources of the DI, introduces the figure into his interpretation of the text;[1] naturally so, since he has spent the previous chapter discussing this Joshua as a type of Christ. Where the Son of Nun is used by Justin simply to introduce the idea of a new prophecy and does not figure at all in the exegesis of priesthood that follows, Lactantius however, gives him a place in the argument itself.

Both versions may be compared in vain for any dramatic signs of close textual dependence and the available evidence can hardly be called an incontrovertible case for dependence but is interesting to note that all these instances of possible dependence on Justin have a common denominator in the form of an anti-jewish polemic, a polemic moreover that in Lactantius does not witness a first-hand acquaintance with Jewish theology.[2] Lactantius may, therefore, depend for some of this type of apologetical material on the text of the Dialogue which is intimately involved in the Jewish-Christian controversy.

(1) Trypho. 115. PG 6 741C. Νῦν δὲ λέγω ὅτι ὅνπερ τρόπον διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ὀνόματος τῷ Ναυῆ υἱῷ καὶ δυνάμεις καὶ πράξεις τινὰς προκηρυσσούσας τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡμετέρου κυρίου μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι πεποιηκέναι ἔφη.

(2) Otherwise he would hardly introduce Joshua Son of Nun into his priesthood-exegesis as if it were a common interpretation.

Lactantius' quotation of the Zechariah text evidently does not derive from Cyprian's Ad Quirinum which does not present the second verse of the passage. Lactantius version of the text differs from that of Justin in one detail. Where Justin omits the phrase 'of the Lord' governing the reference to the heavenly angel(1) Lactantius restores the text to its original LXX form.(2) However, the theological conclusions of the argument are generally the same between the two authors although those of Justin(3) may be elaborated in greater detail. Lactantius changes the significance Justin attaches to the "filthy garments of sin" and makes the garments into a symbol of Christ's incarnation in the flesh and his acceptance of humble status.(4)

(1) Trypho 115 PG6 741A: καὶ ἔδειξέ μοι Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἱερέα τὸν μέγαν ἑστῶτα πρὸ προσώπου ἀγγέλου.

(2) Dl. 4.14.6:'et ostendit mihi dominus Iesum sacerdotem magnum stantem ante faciem angeli domini.'

(3) ie between Trypho 115-117. J. Lecuyer sums them up as follows:
*1. Jésus, fils de Josédec, est l'image du sacerdoce futur du Christ et des chrétiens.
2 Ce sont tous les chrétiens libérés par la grâce de Jésus-Christ, et formant avec lui un seul homme nouveau, qui participent au nouveau sacerdoce:
3 Ils ont donc été dépouillés de leur vêtement de péché pour revêtir un vêtement nouveau (allusion à Rom., 13. 12-14; Gal.3. 27; Eph., 4, 24, etc)
4 Leur sacrifice est un sacrifice de prière et d'action de grâces et le sacrifice du pain et du vin qu'ils offrent en mémoire de la Passion rentre dans cette définition générale.
5.Cependant une dernière et définitive glorification du sacerdoce des chrétiens aura lieu, lorsque, à la résurrection générale, Dieu les libérera de l'état de persécution et d'humiliation dans lequel ils sont encore sur terre."
cf. Jesus fils de Josédec et le Sacerdoce du Christ. RSR. 43 1955. p.87.

(4) Dl. 4.14.14: ' in humilitate et carne venturum.'

He also passes over many of the detailed observations of Justin in order to emphasise that the sufferings of Jesus as a priest were intimately linked with his restorative work: 'locutus est igitur de Iesu filio dei, ut ostenderet eum primo in humilitate et carne uenturum. haec est enim uestis sordida, ut pararet templum deo et sicut titio igni ambureretur id est ab hominibus cruciamenta perferret et ad ultimum extingueretur,'(1) and that they lead directly to his reception of judgement and dominion: 'titionem enim uulgus appellat extractum foco torrem semiustum et extinctum. quomodo autem et cum quibus mandatis a deo mitteretur in terram, declarauit spiritus dei per prophetam docens futurum ut cum uoluntatem summi patris fideliter et constanter inplesset, acciperet iudicium atque imperium sempiternum. si in uiis meis inquit ambulaueris et praecepta mea seruaueris, tu iudicabis domum meam.'(2) Lactantius follows Justin in also relating the concept of the transcendent priesthood to the condition of being 'son of God'(3). Tertullian treats the same passage of Zechariah in Adv. Marc. 3.7, without citing the passage at all, but he redirects his exegesis to portray the scheme of the double advent of Christ. This latter concept is to have great influence on Lactantius' christology(4) but not primarily in reference to the priesthood of Jesus. Tertullian never mentions the Mosaic Joshua at all, and in his exegetical application Lactantius appears to bear a much closer relation to Justin here than he does to his more immediate compatriot.

(1) Dl. 4.14.14.

(2) Dl. 4.14. 15-16.

(3) Trypho. 115 PG6. 741C-744A. οὕτω καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι Ἰησοῦ ἱερέως γενομένου ἐν τῷ λαῷ ὑμῶν ἀποκάλυψιν ἔρχομαι νῦν ἀποδεῖξαι ἀποκήρυξιν εἶναι τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡμετέρου ἱερέως, καὶ θεοῦ, καὶ χριστοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων, γίνεσθαι μελλόντων.
cf Dl. 4.14.14.

(4) See Thesis ch. 6. (ii)c.

Four chapters later in the DI Lactantius presents us with another scriptural oddity in his mystical interpretation of the Jeremian LXX passage: "the wood in the bread."(1) He is reproducing a lengthy series of scriptural testimonies to the inevitability of Christ's passion(2) and to this end adduces the text of Jeremiah which foretells how evil men will plot against the just-one: 'item Hieremias: domine, significa mihi, et cognoscam. tunc uidi meditationes eorum: ego sicut agnus sine malitia perductus sum ad uictimam: in me cogitauerunt cogitationem dicentes: uenite, mittamus lignum in panem eius et eradamus a terra uitam eius et nomen eius non erit in memoria amplius. lignum autem crucem significat et panem corpus eius, quia ipse est cibus ac uita omnium qui credunt in carnem quam portauit et in crucem qua pependit.'(3) The editor of the first English text of the Dl added a personal footnote to this exegesis protesting that "this explanation appears altogether fanciful and unwarranted".(4) In fact the manner of Lactantius' procedure here is quite sensible, on allegorical grounds, and the section of verse 28 where he presents a theology of eucharist in sacrificial terms (q.v. above) appears to be a subtle evocation of John's eucharistic theology(5). The only similar exegetic treatment of the passage in the possible sources of Lactantius comes once more in the Dialogue with Trypho, and notably in the self-same chapter (72) from which came the apocryphal reference to Esdras: ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἐλογίζοντο λογισμὸν λέγοντες · Δεῦτε, ἐμβάλωμεν ξύλον εἰς τὸν ἄρτον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐκτρίψωμεν αὐτὸν ἐκ γῆς ζώντων, καὶ το ὄνομα αὐτοῦ οὐ μὴ μνησθῆ οὐκέτι. (6)

(1) Jer. 11.19 LXX.

(2) Dl. 4.18.13 - 4.19.6.

(3) Dl. 4.18. 27-28

(4) W. Fletcher Dl ANCL. 21 Edinburgh 1871 p. 259 n.9.

(5) cp Jn. 6.26f: esp. v.35, "I am the bread of life," and v.33 - "that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

(6) Trypho 72. PG6. 645.A.

Justin cites this as an example, alongside the Esdras text, of a scripture that has been recently "excised" by the Jews. Lactantius accepts it without comment as a genuine canonical version just as he accepted the Esdras passage.(1) The text of Lactantius shows some variations from the version of Jeremiah given by Justin and more closely parallels that given by Cyprian, a nearer and more likely textual source(2), but whereas Cyprian only adduces the scripture to demonstrate the sufferings of Christ, both Justin and Lactantius go on to draw out the theological message of the text. Justin gives his overall reason for discussing the controverted renderings as:

ἐξ ὧν διαρρήδην οὗτος αὐτὸς ὁ σταυρωθεὶς, ὅτι θεὸς, καὶ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ σταυρούμενος, καὶ ἀποθνήσκων κεκηρυγμένος ἀποδείκνυται, εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς βούλομαι...
(3)

And it is precisely this reason which governs Lactantius' passion exegesis. Like Justin he wishes to apply the texts to demonstrate the deity of Christ from them, not merely to narrate his human sufferings: ' cum igitur ea quae deus fieri uoluit quaeque per prophetas suos multis saeculis ante praedixit, Christus inpleret, ob ea incitati et diuinas litteras nescientes coierunt, ut deum suum condemnarent'(4). Justin's above principle may even be echoed in the way Lactantius introduces the Esdras text: ' fore autem ut Iudaei manus inferrent deo suo eumque interficerent, testimonia prophetarum haec antecesserunt.'(5)

(1) six verses previously at Dl. 4.18.22.
(2) Ad Quir. 2.15.
(3) Trypho. 71 PG 6. 644A.
(4) Dl. 4.18.1.
(5) Dl. 4.18.21.

Apart from these four examples of exegetical usage,each of which have been texts in one way or another out of the ordinary (either apocryphal or disputed versions and all set in a context of Jewish-Christian controversy),there are also the usual stock of apologetic parallels between the two authors. In a few instances the parallelism is capable of suggesting that it could be a sign of direct dependence, but the exegetical evidence is much stronger in this regard and even this can not be taken as an absolute proof of literary dependence, rather a firm suggestion, and so this stock of apologetic parallels gives even less reliable evidence.

Nonetheless,many of Justin's apologetical principles are identical with those adopted by Lactantius and the common principles lead to frequent resemblances in details. Lactantius,for example, shares Justin's view of the honourable place human culture will supply in the paideia of God, and he particularly shares Justin's belief in the religious validity of the Sibylline witness.(1) Lactantius also repeats Justin's argument demonstrating the difference between Christ's miracles and the prodigies of magical charlatans such as Apollonius of Tyana(2). But the Ad Christianos of Hierocles is evidently his immediate source here,(3) and the parallelism with Justin's refutation of the charge can be explained by Lactantius' reliance on Tertullian(4).

If this is so, then the DI witnesses only a second-hand awareness of Justin's Apology. As could be expected there are a host of similarities of detail between the Apology of Justin and the DI(5) but no case is sufficiently striking to demonstrate a literary dependence.

(1) Ad Graecos 16, 37. 1 Apol. 24.

(2) a particularly Jewish apologia against Christianity recorded,perhaps, in Mk.3.22 and eventually canonised in the Talmud. cp Justin.1.Apol 30 and Dl. 5.3. 7-20.

(3) cp Dl. 5.3.7. (referring back to Dl. 5.2. 12-13)

(4) Apol 21

(5) eg.how antiquitas must be subservient to reason:(1Apol.2. and Dl.2.6.7f) or again the doctrine of the sexual fall of the angels (2 Apol.5, DI. 2.14.1) but neither of these arguments, nor any of the other similarities represent material that is 'proper' to the two apologists in question.

The parallelisms of exegetical materials and method are more substantial evidence but again there is no incontrovertible evidence of direct textual reliance and one can only conclude that there are certain indications of some form of link between Justin's Dialogue and the Dl when Lactantius engages in an anti-Jewish scriptural polemic.(1)

(ii) (b) Theophilus of Antioch

Eusebius tells us that Theophilus was,in 168AD(2), the sixth bishop of the Antiochene church. He was born near the Euphrates, and educated in hellenistic culture before entering the Church in adult life through the influence of the scriptures.(3) Eusebius and Jerome relate that he composed several works against the heresies of Hermogenes and Marcion.(4) But these, together with extensive works of scriptural commentary which he seems to have written,(5) have all perished. All that remains extant of his work is the Apology addressed to Autolycus. The Apology was a popular standard Christian work as R.M. Ogilvie relates: "This work (Ad Aut) quickly established itself as a popular tract. It was used almost at once by Tertullian and by Irenaeus.In the 3rd Century both Novatian (De Trinitate) and Methodius referred to it, so it had a settled place in the theological armoury of the Latin west".(6)

(1) The only scholar to write on the Justin parallels is L.Alfonsi. Lattanzio e Giustino , Instituto di Lombardi, scienze e lettere. vol. 82. 1949 pp 19-27. Alfonsi argues for a direct literary dependence.

(2) the earliest date for the Ad Autolycum is after 180 AD for he refers to the death of Marcus Aurelius. (Ad Aut.3.28) see also Eusebius Chron. ad a.Abraham. 2185.

(3) Ad Aut. 1.14, 2.24.

(4) cp Euseb. Hist. Eccl.4.20. Jerome De viris Ill. 25; Ep 121.6.

(5) See Harnack. Gesch. der altchristl. Literatur. (i) 496-502.(ii) 208-213.

(6) Ogilvie. The lib. of Lactantius. p.92.

Lactantius knew Theophilus' work well. He refers to it explicitly as a historical authority, discussing the worship of Belus, a contemporary of Saturn, in order to prove that Saturn can be historically dated at no more than 1800 years old:' Theophilus in libro de temporibus ad Autolycum scripto ait in historia sua Thallum dicere quod Belus, quem Babylonii et Assyrii colunt, antiquior Troiano bello fuisse inueniatur annis trecentis uiginti duobus, Belum autem Saturni aequalem fuisse et utrumque uno tempore adoleuisse. quod adeo uerum est, ut ratione ipsa colligi possit.'(1) Ogilvie adds to the one instance of direct citation, a paraphrastic reference in the 4th book of the Dl:" (Lactantius)names it explicitly once (1.23.2) and paraphrases it unmistakeably elsewhere (4.5. 6-8)."(2) The text in question is a lengthy historical interlude designed to show how much more ancient is the tradition of the Hebrew prophets in comparison with the Greek writers (4.5. 8-9), and in his introduction to this Lactantius makes the reference to "libros de Temporibus" (4.5.6.) which is how he referred to the Ad Aut. at 1.23.2 previously.

Ogilvie draws attention to Lactantius' use of Theophilus as a minor Sibylline source: "it is also clear that some of his quotations of the Sibylline oracles come directly from Theophilus, even if Theophilus may not, himself either, have quoted from the text of the oracles at first-hand. The crucial text is Dl. 4.6.5 - Sibylla Erythraea in carminis sui principio, quod a summo deo exorsa est, filium dei ducem et imperatorem omnium-praedicat....."(3)

(1) Dl. 1.23.2.

(2) Ogilvie. op cit p.92.

(3) R.M. Ogilvie. The lib. of Lactantius. pp 28-29 "it is certain that Lactantius owes the opening lines to Theophilus" (2.36) (ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς προφητείας..)

The Sibylline reference is Orac. Sib.3. frag.1-5[1] which Brandt notes in his text of the DI[2] to be related to the Ad Autol.2.36. Lactantius has taken the opening lines of his reference from Theophilus but adds "rursus in fine - ἄλλον ἔδωκε θεὸς πιστοῖς ἄνδρεσσι γεραίρειν ,[3] which is Orac.Sib.3.1.774 and not found in Theophilus, but supplied from Lactantius' own copy of the oracles.

In his detailed study of this particular text tradition, R.M. Ogilvie concludes that in relation to the Sibylline divergences of Lactantius and Theophilus - "wherever there is a difference, it can be asserted that Lactantius preserves an older, purer tradition".[4] Theophilus preserves another long fragment of the oracles which is not now contained in the manuscripts[5] and which appears as an immediate source for Lactantius. Here, R.M. Ogilivie's study in the manuscript tradition presents a concise view of Lactantius' editorial policy, and although it is apparent that his Sibylline usage is far more extensive than can be explained by sole reliance on Theophilus, even when he does refer to the Ad Autolycum, Lactantius is not slavishly bound to his source. In this, the following passage is a summary comment on the way Lactantius uses all his source material: "Theophilus has a second long fragment which is not found in the manuscripts of the Oracula Sibyllina (Ad Aut.2.36, fr.3.Geffcken). Lactantius quotes some lines from this fragment also, but again with some divergences from Theophilus' text ... (Dl.1.6.15) and (Dl.2.12.19)...It is to be noted that this last passage comes after a clear paraphrase of Theophilus, Ad Autol.103A...

(1) cp. J. Geffcken. Die oracula sibyllina. Leipzig. 1902
(2) CSEL. 19. p.289
(3) Dl. 4.6.5b.
(4) Ogilvie. op. cit. p.29.
(5) Ad Aut. 2.36. Geffcken. fragm. 3. Dl. 1.6.15, 2.12.19.

It can be shown that Lactantius knew the Sibylline Oracles quite independently of the lines which he borrowed from Theophilus, so that it should be no surprise if he elaborates on a text which he is using. He does the same thing elsewhere at 4.6.5 and 1.6.16 he quotes passages from the Eighth Sibylline Oracle (8.329, 8.377). On both occasions he has just quoted from Theophilus but the passages from Book 8 do not appear in Theophilus and, moreover, they are each introduced by the significant word alia (1.6.16. 'item alia Sibylla quaecumque est...sic ait'; 4.6.5. 'et alia Sibylla praecipit'), which implies that Lactantius is consciously adding something of his own."(1) Theophilus' theological approach to the Sibylline texts is probably one that inspired Lactantius, and provided him with a Christian authority for his own apologia. Theophilus speaks of the Sibyls as the true prophets of God, mentioning them alongside Solomon and David. He notes particularly how they all argue for the oneness of God, and his providential care.(2) This is not only how Lactantius regards their position but, apart from Book 7 where he paraphrases their eschatological message, this "proclamation of the divine unity" is his chief employment of the texts;[cp. Dl. 1.6.1, 1.6.6., 2.11.18.] Lactantius' expressed aim, to demonstrate the idea of providence from the writings of the pagans themselves: [sed omittamus sane testimonia prophetarum, ne minus idonea probatio uideatur esse de his quibus omnino non creditur. ueniamus ad auctores et eos ipsos ad veri probationem testes citemus, quibus contra nos uti solent, poetas dico ac philosophos. ex his unum deum probemus necesse est(3)] is a clear echo of Theophilus' strategy at Ad Aut.2.8.

(1) R.M. Ogilvie The lib of Lactantius.pp 30-31 passim

(2) Ad Aut 2.9 and Ad Aut 2.38 PG6 1117C-1119A. - Σιβύλλα, καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ προφῆται...

(3) Dl. 1.5. 1-2.

It is quite likely that Theophilus is an immediate source for this kind of apologetic material. Theophilus refers to the pagan writers as the main witnesses against themselves in the religious debate[1] and this is an apologetic theme that recurs throughout the opening books of the D.I.[2]

Of course, it is always an indeterminate task to attempt to locate the source of "apologetic" material. There is a wealth of common material, not only among the Christian writers, but even in the pagan apologists themselves, such as Euhemerus or Lucretius,and none of these former instances can be laid directly at the door of Theophilus. R.M. Ogilvie considers that Lactantius uses the Ad.Aut. only for a few Sibylline quotations and the two cited instances of historical schematisation. Brandt refers to ten parallels in the D.I. (of the Ad Aut.)[3] and likewise reduces Lactantius' dependence mainly to these two areas. It seems more than probable, however, that if Lactantius has read Theophilus as a historical authority, he will also tend to be influenced by apologetical passages that particularly strike him. And there are three textual instances where such parallels demand special consideration.

(1) Ad Aut 1.9. on the ridiculous immoralities of the gods: ταῦτα γὰρ οὐχ ἡμεῖς φαμὲν,ἀλλὰ οἱ καθ' ὑμᾶς συγγραφεῖς καὶ ποιηταὶ κηρύσσουσιν. PG6 1040A.

(2) see eg. Dl. 1.9.8.

(3) CSEL. 27. p.265.

From Theophilus' 3rd Book, which he has previously used as a source at DI 1.23.1, Lactantius appears to value Theophilus' judgement on the marital theories in Plato's Republic. When Plato argues that wives and children should be held in common[1] Theophilus counters that any children born of such community liasons would be unable to honour their real fathers, and because of their ignorance might unwittingly dishonour them in later life.[2] The conciseness of this refutation has clearly appealed to Lactantius for he takes up the same argument when speaking of Plato's marital theory: ' item si omnes omnium liberi sint, quis amare filios tamquam suos poterit, cum suos esse aut ignoret aut dubitet? quis honorem tamquam patri deferet, cum unde natus sit nesciat? ex quo fit ut non tantum alienum pro patre habeat, sed etiam patrem pro alieno;'[3] But he offers an even more concise and memorable phrase - while it is physically possible for a wife to be 'common', it is physically impossible for a child to be so: ' quid quod uxor potest esse communis, filius non potest? quem concipi non nisi ex uno necesse est.'[4] The second interesting parallel in apologetic argument appears in two ironical questions, both of which Lactantius uses in his first book.

(1) De Rep. 416D

(2) Ad Aut 3.6. PG6. 1128B - 1129A. Theophilus rejects Plato's view on Solon's authority with the explanation: ἵνα μὴ τὸν οὐχ ὄντα πατέρα τιμήσῃ τις ὡς πατέρα, ἢ τὸν ὄντως πατέρα ἀτιμάσῃ τις, ἀγνοῶν ὡς μὴ πατέρα . 1129A.

(3) Dl. 3.21. 9-10a

(4) Dl. 3.21. 10b.

In Ad Aut.2.3[1] Theophilus asks why the number of the Gods has not escalated to an impossible number, since they are supposedly immortal but still have sexual differentiation:

> εἰ γὰρ ἐγεννῶντο θεοὶ,ἐχρῆν καὶ ἕως τοῦ δεῦρο γεννᾶσθαι· καθάπερ γὰρ καὶ ἄνθρωποι γεννῶνται·μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ πλείονες θεοὶ ὤφειλον εἶναι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ...

Lactantius expands the argument into a whole chapter (1.16) saying for example: 'nascuntur ergo et cotidie quidem dii noui: nec enim uincuntur ab hominibus fecunditate. igitur deorum innumerabilium plena sunt omnia, nullo scilicet moriente. nam cum hominum uis incredibilis, numerus sit inaestimabilis, quos tamen sicuti nascuntur mori necesse est, quid deorum esse tandem putemus, qui tot saeculis nati sunt inmortalesque manserunt?'[2] Later in the same passage Theophilus asks, ironically, why Zeus removed himself from Mount Ida - was the place no longer pleasing to him? -

> πρὸς τί δὲ καὶ καταλέλοιπεν ὁ Ζεὺς τὴν Ἴδην; πότερον τελευτήσας,ἢ οὐχ ἔτι ἤρεσεν αὐτῷ ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὄρος ;
> (3)

Lactantius clearly echoes the argument, even adopting the same tone, though he introduces it to a section devoted to Apollo and thus replaces Zeus for him, and Mt.Ida becomes Delphi: ' Apollo enim, quem praeter ceteros diuinum maximeque fatidicum existimant, Colophone residens, quo Delphis credo migrauerat amoenitate Asiae ductus...'[4]

(1) PG6. 1049.A.
(2) Dl. 1.16. 6-7
(3) Ad Aut. 2.3. PG6. 1049D
(4) Dl 1.7.1.

(ii) c. Minucius Felix

The editor of the most recent text of Minucius' Octavius[1] has most persuasively argued for the dependence of the work on the Apologeticum of Tertullian. If this is so, his Apology is to be dated in the middle of the third century and he is therefore historically the closest of all patristic writers to Lactantius himself.[2] It is a closeness that is not to be measured solely in terms of chronology for with due consideration for the great differences between the aim and scope of the two apologists, Minucius reflects more of Lactantius' literary ideal than any other Christian writer. He shares many experiences with Lactantius, for he too was African by birth, was converted to Christianity and exercised the profession of advocate in Rome. Rénan called the Octavius "la perle de la littérature apologétique". The literary excellence of the short treatise has long been recognised, most recently by R.M. Ogilvie;["what any dispassionate reader can only regard as the gem of Latin apologetic writing - Minucius Felix's Octavius",[3]] but not least by Lactantius himself. Though he later is to mention only Tertullian and Cyprian as apologists[4] he has previously referred to Minucius in the following terms: 'ex iis qui mihi noti sunt Minucius Felix non ignobilis inter causidicos loci fuit. huius liber, cui Octauio titulus est, declarat quam idoneus ueritatis adsertor esse potuisset, si se totum ad id studium contulisset.'[5]

(1) M. Beaujeu. Octavius. tr. and commentary. Paris 1964.

(2) The relative date of Tertullian and Minucius is not important in regard to the manner in which Lactantius uses material from both of them. One may note that at Dl. 5.1.22-4 Lactantius lists the Latin apologists in the order: Minucius, Tertullian and Cyprian.

(3) Ogilvie. The Lib of Lactantius. p. 92.

(4) Dl. 5.4. 3-7

(5) Dl. 5.1.22.

Lactantius, then,acknowledges his literary style, approving of his apologetic method (the closest to his own in the whole of Latin patristics) but lamenting the limited scope of the work. The Octavius purports to be simply a pro-paideusis of Christian faith, a "clearing of the ground", and the final verse of the treatise shows us the Christian speaker arranging to give fuller and more complete instruction to his pagan friend "on the morrow".(1)

The D.I. is designed to present a more systematic and complete exposition of Christian doctrine than the Octavius could manage. And it is interesting to note that the one and only time Lactantius refers to the Octavius directly, quoting his source specifically, he presents the argument of Minucius and then deliberately improves upon it:(2)

'quæramus ergo quid ueritatis sub hac figura lateat. Minucius Felix in eo libro qui Octauius inscribitur sic argumentatus est: Saturnum, cum fugatus esset a filio in Italiamque uenisset, Caeli filium dictum quod soleamus eos quorum uirtutem miremur aut eos qui repentino aduenerint, de caelo cecidisse dicere, Terrae autem, quod ignotis parentibus natos terrae filios nominemus. sunt haec quidem similia ueri, non tamen uera, quia constat etiam tum cum regnaret ita esse habitum. potuit sic argumentari, Saturnum, cum potentissimus rex esset, ad retinendam parentum suorum memoriam nomina eorum caelo terraeque indidisse, cum haec prius aliis uocabulis appellarentur: qua ratione et montibus et fluminibus nomina scimus inposita.'(3)

(1) 'sed perfectae institutioni necessaria, de quibus crastino, quod iam sol occasui declivis est, ut de toto congruentius, promptius requiremus.' Lactantius may have taken the titleof his work from this reference.

(2) eg. Lactantius begins: 'Minucius...sic argumentatus est,' and ends: 'potuit sic argumentari' - which thus begins his own exposition.

(3) Dl. 1.11. 55-57

Although this citation is the only direct quotation of the Octavius throughout the Institutes, it is not the only point of Lactantius' dpendence on the treatise. Indeed, he used Minucius quantitatively more than any other Father: "celui dont il s'est le plus servi est Minucius Felix, comme on peut s'y attendre, puisque tous deux ont le même dessein, celui de conquérir les païens lettrés par le double ascendant d'une méthode philosophique et d'une forme classique. Cette identité dans l'intention générale amène d'assez fréquentes ressemblances dans le détail."(1)

A great deal of the parallel material,then,will be in the area of apologetic argument against mythological religion or crude philosophical rationalism. In this area Lactantius also depends on Tertullian's Apologeticum, so although it is reasonable to suppose Lactantius will use the more recent author with the better Latin style,(2) it is impossible to locate precisely which Apology Lactantius is using in certain sections of the Institutes. Brandt's index offers eighteen parallels of the Octavius.(3) But Beaujeu lists four parallels and 23 allusions.(4) Unfortunately between these two lists only six references coincide! and then there are usually clear linguistic signs to support them; such as in Oct 22.1 and Dl. 1.17.6. where Lactantius makes Minucius' mistake in thinking that Osiris is the son of Isis, or the parallel between Oct.3.1, and Dl. 2.3.3, where the phrase "in lapides..inpingere" is in common, or that between Oct.30.2 and Dl.5.9.15 where the form "pueros aut strangulent aut..exponant" is shared.

(1) R. Pichon Lactance P.213.

(2) He looks on Tertullian as inelegant, unpolished and very obscure cp. Dl. 5.1.23.

(3) CSEL 27. pp 257-258

(4) M. Beaujeu. Octavius Paris 1964 p (cxii)

The reference to the Socratic dictum[1] "quod supra nos, nihil ad nos" is elsewhere only found in Tertullian's Adv.Nat. 2.15, but here it is wrongly attributed to Epicurus. Pichon follows Brandt in listing the dependencies except that he reduces the number to 15, those omitted are the references to God as nameless[2], which could easily come from a Hermetic source, and the two references to Socrates[3] which were common philosophical stories.

Ogilvie lists 15 apologetical themes the two authors have in common, and argues against too great a reliance being put on them as direct parallels - "So, although he used the Octavius, many of the similarities are due to his use of a handbook of apologetic themes - a natural corollary of his use of an anthology of scriptural quotations (Ad Quirinum)."[4]

All the material in the D.I. concerned with the persecutions can be traced back to Tertullian, apart from two instances in the 5th book. Minucius offers the courage of the confessors as a sign of the power and the simplicity of truth: ' vos ipsi calamitosos viros fertis ad caelum, Mucium Scaeovolam, qui cum errasset in regem, perisset in hostibus, nisi dexteram perdidisset. Et quot ex nostris non dextram solum, sed totum corpus uri, cremari sine ullis eiulatibus pertulerunt, cum dimitti praesertim haberent in sua potestate? viros cum Mucio vel cum Aquilio aut Regulo comparo; pueri et mulierculae nostrae cruces et tormenta, feras et omnes suppliciorum terriculas inspirata patientia doloris inludunt. nec intellegitis, o miseri, neminem esse, qui aut sine ratione velit poenam subire, aut tormenta sine deo possit sustinere?'[5]

(1) Oct. 13.1., Dl. 3.20.10
(2) Dl. 1.6.5., Oct. 18.9.
(3) Dl. 2.14.9, Oct. 26.9; Dl. 3.20-15, Oct. 38.5.
(4) Ogilvie. The lib. of Lactantius p.95.
(5) Octavius. 37.3-5.

Lactantius applies the same theme theologically: 'latrones et robusti corporis uiri eiusmodi lacerationes perferre non queunt, exclamant et gemitus edunt, uincuntur enim dolore, quia deest illis inspirata patientia: nostri autem, ut de uiris taceam, pueri et mulierculae tortores suos taciti uincunt et exprimere illis gemitum nec ignis potest. eant Romani et Mucio gdorientur aut Regulo, quorum alter necandum se hostibus tradidit, quod captiuum puduit uiuere, alter ab hostibus deprehensus cum uideret mortem se uitare non posse, manum foco iniecit, ut pro facinore suo satisfaceret hosti quem uoluit occidere, eaque poena ueniam quam non meruerat accepit: ecce sexus infirmus et fragilis aetas dilacerari se toto corpore urique perpetitur non necessitate, quia licet uitare si uelint, sed uoluntate, quia confidunt deo. haec est uera uirtus.'(1) Lactantius may also be aware of Minucuis when he reproduces the complaint that Christians are charged without being heard, and condemned without defence,(2) but Lactantius' passage with its flow of oratory on the subject of the persecution is perhaps more redolent of Tertullian here.(3) Whatever Lactantius takes from Minucius, he re-adapts to his own ends, and the great majority of his borrowed material is peripheral. He has no compunction, for example, in taking a theological analogy from Minucius, such as the world as a dwelling place, and redirecting it to a totally different end. In the D.I, the analogy demonstrates the unity of the Father and the Son. In the Octavius it demonstrated the brotherhood of men: 'nec nobis de nostra frequentia blandiamur; multi nobis videmur, sed deo admodum pauci sumus. nos gentes nationesque distinguimus: deo una domus est mundus hic totus...non solum in oculis eius, sed et in sinu vivimus.'(4) Compare this with Lactantius:

(1) Dl. 5.13. 12-14
(2) cp Oct. 27.8. and Dl. 5.1. 2-6.
(3) Apol.2.
(4) Oct. 33.1.

'sic hic mundus una dei domus est et filius ac pater, qui unanimes incolunt mundum, deus unus, quia et unus est tamquam duo et duo tamquam unus. neque id mirum, cum et filius sit in patre, quia pater diligit filium, et pater in filio.'(1) Though, as Ogilvie has pointed out,(2) the verbal similarities of the analogy could conceivably be explained by reliance on a common third source, since it was also a Stoic aphorism repeated by Cicero.(3) In two areas, however, where Lactantius assumes important themes from Minucius, the demonology and the anthropology of the status rectus, he still enlarges on his source, and the theme in both cases is systematically elevated into a much more significant theological symbol than it was in the original text.(4) Pichon remarks on the demonology: "la théorie des démons est aussi empruntée à Minucius: seulement Lactance énumère plus longuement leurs prodiges, explique plus complètement leur origine, et cite des autorités païennes ou prétendues telles, comme Hermès et Asclepius, ce que ne fait pas Minucius."(5)

(1) Dl. 4.29 8-9

(2) The lib of Lactantius p.95.

(3) De Rep. 3.14.

(4) With regard to the Lactantian demonology Von Campenhausen observes: "he endeavours, more than do his predecessors, to understand the power of evil as a unity, as a single great principle of perversion...(Dl. 2.1.13)" The Fathers of the Latin Church p.69.

(5) R. Pichon. Lactance. p.214, (with reference to Oct.26.7, and 27, Dl. 2.14-2.15)

In his own study, R.M. Ogilvie reproduces Dl. 2.14 9-14 and Octavius 26.8 - 27.3 (1) and describes these two lengthy passages as "obvious examples of parallelism.(2) But Pichon's observation is very pertinent. The Demonology in Lactantius is far more systematic than it is in the Octavius.(3) Lactantius reconciles, to a degree anyway, different traditions on the operation of the demons,in order to emphasise their cultic role. He combines the political explanation of pagan worship first suggested by Euhemerus which represented the religious rites arising from the hero-worship of early Kings and warlords(4) with the Christian identification of the gods as demons who use that cult to their own advantage.(5)

His purpose in identifying the pagan religious cult as demonolatry is to suggest a coherent explanation of the force of evil in the world. The climax of this developing presentation comes in the 5th book where he cites the savagery of the persecutors as the summit of injustice, directly inspired by the demons. The persecutors are evil because they are bestial in behaviour,(6) they are bestial because they have forgotten the office and transcendent dignity of men and involved themselves in materialism,"becoming mere bodies"(7), and they have done this solely because they are implicated in a sensual cult presided over by malicious demons.(8)

(1) The Library of Lactantius pp 93-94
(2) Ibid. p.95.
(3) This editorial process reverses his treatment of demonic material taken from Tertullian's Apol.23 which he abridges to make it less esoteric and more palatable to his literati audience.
(4) see, for example, Dl. 1.11.63-65, or 1.22.
(5) cp. Dl. 2.16.3.
(6) Dl. 5.11. 1a,1b.
(7) Dl. 2.3.9.
(8) Dl. 2.2.19-24, 5.12.18.

Even apparently good pagans are fundamentally unjust because of such a demonolatry: 'merito igitur huiusmodi pietatem consequitur et offensa diuinitas scelere hominum praue religiosorum graui eos infortunio mactat; qui licet sanctis moribus uiuant in summa fide atque innocentia, tamen quia deos colunt, quorum ritus inpios ac profanos deus uerus odio habet, a iustitia et a nomine uerae pietatis alieni sunt.'(1) His theme of evil as a perverting force, powered by false worship, and fighting against the true force of justice (that of the Christian confessors) which is powered by the true worship established by Christ,(2) continues throughout his entire system to its final climax in the eschatology of the 7th Book. Here, evil is finally destroyed and justice vindicated. One can note how the essential criteria for both ideas is a cultic one. The just are those who "make offerings to their Lord" while the evil are "those who have worshipped the works of their own hands".(3) Cardinal Daniélou rightly noted that Minucius had already presented the substance of this demonological treatment within the context of the theology of true worship,(4) but his observation is not strictly true that: "Tertullian, Cyprian and Lactantius, were content to take it over for the most part as it stood, making additions only in detail,"(5) - for Lactantius, more than any other apologist before him, tries to present the demonic perversion of cult as part of a single, tangible, force of evil that operates throughout history.

(1) Dl. 5.10.14.

(2) Lactantius describes the saving role of Christ, when he appears in Book5 as the restorer of Justice on earth, in terms of his priestly office re-establishing monotheistic cult. cp Dl. 5.7.1-2

(3) viz: 'domino suo sacrificabunt et servient in aeternum '(Dl.7.26.5); 'iniusti...hi sunt qui manu facta coluerunt...'(Dl.7.26.6)

(4) Minucius describes idolatry as "fontem ipsum erroris et pravitatis" Oct. 26.7.

(5) J. Daniélou. The origins of Latin Christianity London 1977 p. 406.

In addition he attempts to synthesise two different apologetic traditions that had long been operating in regard to false worship - the demonic and the historic explanations of the rise of idolatry that have previously been noted. This systematic consistency that the theme has within the DI gives his demonology a theological importance and significance that the Octavius cannot match. The appearance of the 'status rectus' symbolism in Minucius (man characterised by his unique ability to stand upright and raise his countenance to the heavens as a sign of his transcendent destiny-) is no indication that Lactantius has taken his use of the conception from the Octavius. This anthropological symbolism was a popular Stoic motif(1) that became a favourite device of many of the Christian apologists, not least Theophilus,(2) and Tertullian. Lactantius,then,could have gone just as easily to the classical writers for his scurce here, such as Ovid whom he mentions in regard to this theme(3) or Cicero(4) who is also a source for Minucius. The symbol is pre-eminently used by Cicero as a demonstration of man's rational capacity for God. Pellegrino's study of the symbol demonstrates how Cicero constantly associates with it the terms mens et ratio, in which Minucius follows him.

(1) see A.D. Nock. JTS. 29. 1927. p.40f., M. Pellegrino. Il topos dello status rectus nel contesto filosofico e biblico. JAC 1. 1964. pp 273-281

(2) see, eg. Ad Aut. 2.17. PG 6 1080B

(3) Dl. 2.1.15, Ovid Met. 1.84.

(4) cp. Nat Deor. 2.56.140

Tertullian alters them on theological grounds to sermo et ratio, and Lactantius, again on theological grounds, (1) changes them to ratio et sapientia. Pellegrino thus notes: "D'altra parte non abbiamo presente alcuno dei testi relativi allo 'status rectus' in cui si faccia menzione della 'parola'. Attenderemmo qui piuttosto i termini 'mens et ratio' frequentemente associati nelle opere filosofiche di Cicerone al quale Minucio attinge abbondantemente. Si potrebbe pensare a 'sermo', quale calco di 'Logos', in senso puramente intelletuale, come avviene in Tertulliano. Ma presso questo scrittore 'sermo' e 'ratio' hanno un significato teologico, indicando il logos divino (2) ciò che è escluso dal contesto di Minucio Felice...Il significato puramente spirituale che dovrebbe avere qui 'sermo' è confermato dall' interpretazione che ne dà Lattanzio, in un passo (Dl. 2.1.14) in cui è evidente la dipendenza da Minucio..(3) Venendo ora nuovamente a Lattanzio, nel passo che se ne citava affiora indirettamente ma chiaramente il nostro tema in un enunciato negativo, con la solita contrapposizione dell' uomo agli animali (nam cum ceterae animantes pronis corporibus in humum spectent, quia rationem ac sapientiam non acceperunt). 'Sapientia' suona come l'equivalente di 'sermo'."(4)

(1) For Lactantius distinguishes 'ratio' as the speculative faculty of man's mind - that which uncovers the false but cannot command the true (Dl. 1.1.5) - and 'sapientia' which is God's gift of revealed truth to man (Dl. 1.1.6, 2.3. 23-5)

(2) see also C. Mohrmann in VC.3. 1949 pp 166-168 and ibid 4, 1950 pp 205f; R. Braun. Deus Christianorum. Paris 1962. pp 260-265.

(3) Dl. 2.1.14, Octavius 17.2. cf. M. Pellegrino. Studi sul' antica apologetica Rome 1947. p.158.

(4) M. Pellegrino. Il topos dello status rectus. pp 277-278.

Minucius' version of the status rectus is as follows: 'quod ipsum explorare et aruere sine universitatis inquisitione non possumus, cum ita cohaerentia, connexa, concatenata sint, ut nisi divinitatis rationem diligenter excusseris, nescias humanitatis, nec possis pulchre gerere rem civilem, nisi cognoveris hanc communem omnium mundi civitatem, praecipue cum a feris beluis hoc differamus, quod illa prona in terramque vergentia nihil nata sint prospicere nisi pabulum: nos quibus vultus erectus, quibus suspectus in caelum datus est, sermo et ratio, per quae deum adgnoscimus, sentimus, imitamur, ignorare nec fas nec licet ingerentem sese oculis et sensibus nostris caelestem claritatem. sacrilegii enim vel maximi instar est humi quaerere quod in sublimi debeas invenire.'(1) Lactantius' readiness to change the terminology of mens et ratio is only a sign of his deeper theological principles of redaction. Even in adopting this pericope of Minucius, he does not ultimately depend on the latter's authority for the theme, but extends its theological weight in his own system by transforming it into a fundamentally cultic concern.(2)

Here, just as in the case of the demonology, it is clear that whatever material Lactantius takes from the Octavius (apart from apologetic aphorisms) he expands, in order to extend its theological significance in the system of the D.I.

(1) Octavius. 17.2.f.

(2) see Thesis ch.5(ii) cp. Also Dl. 2.1. 17b-19, 2.2. 19-21, 2.5. 3-4.

(d) Tertullian

Lactantius' use of Tertullian's work falls into three categories; apologetic material in the mythological and philosophical context, material concerned with the persecution, and finally elements for his life of Christ in the fourth Book of the D.I. The problems with apologetic material (that is, where exactly it has come from) as discussed in relation to Theophilus and Minucius, apply with equal force to Tertullian. Unless the verbal parallels are evident, it is often impossible to use such instances as evidence for literary dependence. Nonetheless, whenever Lactantius bases himself on Tertullian, he rarely leaves the material unchanged, but remodels it to accord with his own apologetic and theological concerns. This is hardly surprising, for in Book 5 he expressly dissociates himself from Tertullian's methodology no less than twice: 'eo fit ut sapientia et ueritas idoneis praeconibus indigeat, et si qui forte litteratorum se ad eam contulerunt, defensioni eius non suffecerunt... Septimius quoque Tertullianus fuit omni genere litterarum peritus, sed in eloquendo parum facilis et minus comptus et multum obscurus fuit. ergo ne hic quidem satis celebritatis inuenit.'(1) Speaking of his intention to present the DI as a final and definitive Apologia for Christianity, Lactantius explains why Tertullian's work in the Apologeticum cannot be given that accolade: 'quamquam Tertullianus eandem causam plene perorauerit in eo libro cui Apologeticum nomen est, tamen quoniam aliut est accusantibus respondere, quod in defensione aut negatione sola positum est, aliut instituere, quod nos facimus; in quo necesse est doctrinae totius substantiam contineri, non defugi hunc laborem, ut inplerem materiam....'(2)

(1) Dl. 5.1.21, 23.

(2) Dl. 5.4.3.

Tertullian, as a theological inspiration, hardly appears in the D.I. at all. Pichon remarks, for example - "(Lactance) ne semble guère avoir mis à profit que ses ouvrages d'apologétique, et encore par occasion."(1) There are indications, however, that he had read the Adv. Praxean. If this is so, one immediately wonders why so little trace of Latin dogmatic development in the areas of christology and trinitarian theology have passed over into Lactantius. The theological question will be raised in Chaper 6 of the thesis,concerned with the pneumatological doctrine and his general christology. R.M.Ogilvie regards the evidence for Lactantius' use of Tertullian as enigmatic in character: "But oddly enough, although there are nearly ten close points of contact with the D.I. none of them compels us to believe that Lactantius was actually recalling the Apologeticum or had a copy of it under his eye."(2)

Lactantius does, of course, expressly place the works of Tertullian (omni genere litterarum peritus. 5.1.23) in the category of those that were known to him (ex iis qui mihi noti sunt. 5.1.22) So it is with some justification that a close parallel between the works can be ascribed to the immediate influence of Tertullian. Certain epigrams have evidently stuck in Lactantius' mind, though he does not hesitate to transform them into more classically elegant Latin. So, the phrase: "ut non liceat mihi colere quem velim sed cogar colere quem nolim"(3) becomes in Lactantius' hands: "qui inponat mihi necessitatem vel colendi quod nolim vel quod velim non colendi?"(4) Again, in the context of persecution - material, Lactantius performs a different editorial role on a phrase of Tertullian's in Ad Scap 2. which suggests he might well be quoting from memory, for he abridges and makes it much more abrupt. So, Tertullian's: "non est religionis cogere religionem", becomes in Lactantius "religio cogi non potest."(5)

(1) R. Pichon. Lactance. p. 214
(2) R.M. Ogilvie The lib. of Lactantius p 90
(3) Apol. 24.6.
(4) Dl. 5.13.18.
(5) Dl. 5.19.11.

From this same passage of Tertullian,Pichon suggests that: "Il retrouve quelques-unes de ses idées favorites; que l'intolérance est contraire à la vraie notion de Dieu (5.19.1, Ad Scap 2.) qu'elle est punie par la colère de Dieu (5.23.1, Ad Scap 3) et qu'elle ne sert qu'à faire d'avantage connaître et aimer la réligion qu'elle prétend combattre (5.22.20, Ad Scap.5.)."(1) One may recognise in this the seeds of Lactantius' later pamphlet the DM. Indeed the Ad Scapulam, Tertullian's final work, in 212 AD, foreshadows Lactantius' DM in both its subject and approach. But even though one might expect a wealth of allusions between the two works, it is not so. There are no specific references in Lactantius at all, or any literary echo that there might be is of the most vague and coincidental type. There is other material in the apologetic context which preserves echoes of Tertullian, for example the chapter relating to Hercules. Lactantius uses the mythological details that Tertullian supplies but expands the narrative with reflective commentary that is wholly his own. He interweaves a discussion on the nature of divine excellence throughout the Hercules narrative.(2) From the Apologeticum, Lactantius takes up the appeal for a free discussion of religious matters, and in what amounts to his own preface to the treatise on the persecution (his 5th Book of the DI) he echoes the famous preface of Tertullian's apology: cp Apol.1. and Dl. 5.1. 2-6.(3) From the same apology he also reproduces Tertullian's protest against anti-Christian prejudices.(4) and his condemnations of the pagan myths.(5)

(1) R. Pichon, Lactance p. 215

(2) Dl. 1.9-1.10, Ad Nat. 2.14.

(3) (Apol.1, Dl.5.1.2-6) the parallelism may however, be from Minucius Oct 27.8 in relation to which text this passage of the Dl has already been cited.

(4) Apol.24, Dl. 5.13.18, 5.20.9.

(5) Apol.46, Dl. 3.20. 15-16.

Though his general view of the philosophers is a favourable one, "magno et excellenti ingenio viri" is how he describes them in the opening words of the D.I, nonetheless there are times when he refutes their rationalist reductionism in no mean terms. There is a particularly harsh description of Socrates as a "fool" (o hominem scurram,...ineptum perditum, desperatum..dementem(1)) which may reflect the very tone and character of Tertullian: who criticises him for the same reason as Lactantius.(2) Lactantius' use of demonological material from Tertullian, in his long exposition of the life and miracles of Christ, in Bk IV,has already been noted in the previous section. The elements of the demonology, taken from Apol. 23, are severely abridged in the DI(3) and made more acceptable to the intellectual taste and sensibility of his literati audience. But if he abridges here, he most certainly does not in the material he borrows from Tertullian on the life of Christ. This is expanded immensely and set in an entirely new context of scriptural prophecy, which is by no means as significant in Tertullian's version. Pichon comments: "Tout ce qu'il dit du verbe, de sa Passion, de sa Résurrection, de son Ascension, de son union avec le Père, etc., est le developpement d'un chapitre de l'Apologétique(4) - le developpement , car Lactance ajoute au très simple et très bref récit de Tertullien un assez abondant commentaire, ou bien encore rapporte tout au long les prophéties aux-quelles Tertullien se contente de faire une allusion rapide."(5)

(1) Dl. 3.20.15.

(2) Apol.14..'Socrate contentus, qui in contumeliam deorum quercum et hircum et canem deierabat.' Both apologists find this "religiosity" an inconsistent levity of character.

(3) see 4.27.

(4) viz Apol. 21. This chapter is used throughout Bk 4. clear recollections of it can be seen eg at Dl.4.8.6, 4.9.1, 4.18.2-4, 4.19.2-6, 4.20.1, 4.21.1, 4.29.4.

(5) R. Pichon Lactance. p.215.

The chapter on Lactantius' christology will support the inference that already emerges from such redactional method, that Lactantius more or less abandons Tertullian's theology of the Word in favour of his own christology, one altogether constructed from a scriptural basis. But throughout his presentation of the life of Christ, Lactantius enlarges on the bare narrative of Tertullian by providing authorities and proof texts for almost everything he has to say about Jesus. This great amount of proof material drawn from the Hermetica and the Sibylline Oracles as well as the scriptural prophecies[1], is clearly designed by Lactantius to counter the pagan difficulties with the historical "proximity" of Christ, by locating the incarnation (the second birth) in an ancient scheme of prediction - the very mystery of its antiquity[2] being an indication that this historically recent "second" birth[3] of Jesus can only be truly understood in parallel with the first birth of the Son of God before the very world was made.[4] It is in itself a systematic approach which he will later balance by introducing the concept of the two advents. The first advent culminated in his rejection by the Jews. This is the judgement on their messianic hopes.[5] But the same Passion and rejection is a scandal for the pagans, too, and for this reason Lactantius knows that the earthly life of Christ must be set in its historically transcending context by means of the scriptures if he is to convince his audience.

(1) cp 4.6. 3-4.
(2) cp Dl. 4.5. 9-10
(3) 4.8. 1-2.
(4) 4.6.1.
(5) Dl. 4.12.14.

His argument is that the suffering messiah appears as a contradictory paradox though in reality it is "a great and divine plan": 'Venio nunc ad ipsam passionem, quae uelut obprobrium nobis obiectari solet, quod et hominem et ab hominibus insigni supplicio adfectum et cruciatum colamus, ut doceam eam ipsam passionem adeo cum magna et diuina ratione susceptam et in ea sola et uirtutem et ueritatem et sapientiam contineri.'(1) It is this subtle theological systematic - advancing an exegetical christology through the twin poles of two nativities and two advents - that enables Lactantius to rivet his christological work in Bk 4 to an eschatological climax in Bk 7. Compare: 'tunc sublato de rebus humanis omni malo aureum saeculum ut poetae uocant, id est iustum ac pacificum tempus orietur. sed haec uberius in ultimo libro disseremus, cum de secundo aduentu loquemur:'(2) and:- 'itaque ut in quarto libro de primo aduentu eius diximus, sic in hoc secundum referemus aduentum, quem Iudaei quoque et confitentur et sperant, sed frustra, quoniam necesse est ad eos consolandos reuertatur ad quos conuocandos prius uenerat nam qui uiolarunt impie humilem, sentient in potestate uictorem.'(3) The whole of this theological superstructure is <u>added</u> by Lactantius to his source, Tertullian, in what is effectively the only <u>theological</u> point of contact between the two.

Lactantius, then, has chosen to follow a different theological path and method to that of Tertullian, and hence the <u>Adv.Praxean</u> is simply not significant to him.(4) Where he does find specific Christian material in Tertullian that fits his apologetic method, he significantly alters it, totally submitting it to his own theological ends.

(1) Dl. 4.16.1.

(2) Dl. 4.12.22.

(3) Dl. 7.1.24.

(4) Elements of <u>Adv.Prax</u> 5,7, which seem to bear relation to the Dl (on the word, the angels, and the spirit) are re-statements of <u>Apol</u> 21 which is probably where Lactantius finds his source more immediately.

Other points at which Lactantius can be said to be influenced by Tertullian's theological material bear out this view that Tertullians' theological system is not greatly significant for him. When Lactantius, for example, discusses the meaning of the word "Christ"(1) he echoes a passage from Apol.3 but Lactantius' own addition of the Aquila Greek variant shows that he evidently has other sources and interests here, more immediately scriptural. Lactantius' treatment of Christ as the Word of God, which is cursory to say the least, may also be referred to Ch.21 of the Apol.(2) Lactantius freely epitomises his source. The Logos-Theology of Tertullian undoubtedly remains in Lactantius and can be observed in several aspects of what is really an independent christological argument,but the whole theme is much more diluted in the Dl.(3)

The whole scheme of Christ as Word appears in the DI as a rapid introduction to the concept of the two births of Christ, which is to be followed in the rest of his 4th book by the real heart of his christological treatment - the use of scriptural and oracular testimonies to demonstrate the antiquity of the "expectation" of Jesus. Nowhere in the DI does the Logos scheme assume the importance it had in the Greek apologists, or from them in Tertullian himself.

(1) Dl. 4.7.5.

(2) Tertullian Apol 21. Dl. 4.8.6 - 4.9.4.

(3) The Logos-background to the christology of Lactantius will be discussed in ch.6.

Perhaps Lactantius' greatest debt to Tertullian, in spite of his criticisms of the latter's 'obscure style' is his own adoption of a Christian literary tradition which furnished him with a technical theological vocabulary in the DI. It is true that the entire presentation of Christian doctrine in the DI is a specific apologetical attempt to reexpress the Gospel without neologisms and with a vocabulary and symbolism the pagan world would recognise, and in this the DI is as diametrically opposed to the apologetic method of Tertullian as Lactantius claims.(1) Yet it would be misinformed if one were to presume that Lactantius' presentation therefore: "reste classique et païen"(2) in the way Pichon concluded. Christine Mohrmann has successfully illustrated the range of technical Christian vocabulary in the DI: "L'eloquentia Tulliana est son idéal, mais ce serait une erreur de vouloir conclure de tout ce qui a été dit sur le caractère cicéronien du style de Lactance que celui-ci a évité tout ce qui caractérise idiome chrétien. Rien n'est moins vrai. Malgré ses tendances classicistes, malgré tout l'apparat de la littérature classique, sa langue et son style ont été influencés foncièrement par le christianisme."(3)

Lactantius owes a debt to Tertullian in this, for it was he who, to a great extent, founded that technical vocabulary in Latin.

(1) Dl. 5.4.3.

(2) R. Pichon Lactance p.217

(3) C. Mohrmann. Les éléments vulgaires du latin des chrétiens. vc 2. 1948, p.166.

An example of such dependence can be observed in Lactantius' discussion of the baptism of Christ[1]. The passage has already been observed in so far as Justin Martyr provided an exegetical basis for Lactantius' treatment while Tertullian's Apol. offered him certain contextual aspects (-eg the 'Magus' controversy). Jean Doignon's commentary on the exegesis illustrates how much of Tertullian's technical vocabulary has passed over into Lactantius' treatment: En effet, si le baptême inauguré par Jésus a pouvoir d'effacer les péchés de la chair et de procurer le salut, c'est parce qu'il est de nature spirituelle. Pour expliquer cette "oeuvre admirable", l'auteur des Institutions divines s'appuie sur des formules de Tertullien: "l'effacement" des péchés de la chair, le mode "spirituel" de cet effacement, l'expression de "chair portée" par le Christ qui est Dieu. Ces formules concourent à exprimer un mode de 'purgatio' qui correspond à un "lieu" classique de la "défense" judiciaire, à savoir le "transfert" sur la chair de l'homme de la faute, qui, de cette façon, est livrée à l'action purificatrice de l'eau".[2] But where Doignon tends to suggest a direct dependence on Tertullian's treatises De Bapt. and Carn. it is well to recall that some of these relevant phrases (lavacrum spiritale, carnem gestare and abolitio delictorum) would have passed into general Christian use long before the time of Lactantius, and his employment of the idioms is not sufficient evidence to suggest a first hand knowledge of the other treatises.

(1) Dl. 4.15 1-5.

(2) J. Doignon. La scène évangélique du baptême de Jésus. Epektasis. Mélanges Daniélou. vol.1. Paris 1972. pp 64-65. cp. authors footnotes 12-15. p.65 for textual parallels.

ii (e) Cyprian

Lactantius holds Cyprian in great respect in the DI: 'unus igitur praecipuus et clarus extitit Cyprianus, quoniam et magnam sibi gloriam ex artis oratoriae professione quaesierat et admodum multa conscripsit in suo genere miranda. erat enim ingenio facili copioso suaui et, quae sermonis maxima est uirtus, aperto, ut discernere non queas, utrum re ornatior in eloquendo an felicior in explicando an potentior in persuadendo fuerit;'(1) and greatly depends upon his Ad Quirinum for the majority of his scriptural texts in the DI. However, he relates his apologetic works to those of Tertullian and laments Cyprian's inability to communicate with the pagan mind in terms that are familiar to it. Lactantius' main criticism of Cyprians' apologetic (eg Ad Demet.) is its great reliance on proof material drawn from the scriptures. Yet it is a source, he notes, which has no validity or authority for the pagans and so ipso facto represents a futile apologetic....quam Cyprianus non est exsecutus in ea oratione, qua Demetrianum sicut ipse ait oblatrantem atque obstrepentem ueritati redarguere conatur. qua materia non est usus ut debuit: non enim scripturae testimoniis, quam ille utique uanam fictam commenticiam putabat, sed argumentis et ratione fuerat refellendus.'(2)

(1) Dl. 5.1. 24-25.

(2) Dl. 5.4. 3 -4.

Lactantius wants him to use arguments and reason in preference to scriptural testimony. He quotes Cyprian's opening words here which described the pagan Demetrianus "oblatrantem et obstepentem"(1). Yet his own fourth book of the DI will introduce a considerable amount of scriptural testimony. Lactantius remains true to his apologetic principles,however, in the way he attempts to interweave his scriptural testimonies in Bk 4 with Hermetic and Sibylline authorities. He offers a further reason for departing from Cyprian's method immediately after this at DI 5.4.5. It is interesting to note that he offers a theory of pre-evangelisation here, a scheme of degrees of introduction to the Gospel, which even at the same time as it expressly announces an intention to depart from Cyprian's scriptural method, recalls the words of St. Paul in a way that would have been immediately recognised by his Christian audience: `nam cum ageret contra hominem ueritatis ignarum, dilatis paulisper diuinis lectionibus formare hunc a principio tamquam rudem debuit eique paulatim lucis principia monstrare, ne toto lumine obiecto caligaret. nam sicut infans solidi ac fortis cibi capere uim non potest ob stomachi teneritudinem, sed liquore lactis ac mollitudine alitur, donec firmatis uiribus uesci fortioribus possit, ita et huic oportebat, quia nondum poterat capere diuina, prius humana testimonia offerri id est philosophorum et historicorum, ut suis potissimum refutaretur auctoribus.'(2)

(1) Ad Dem. 1.1.

(2) Dl. 5.4.5-6, cp. 1 Cor 3. 2-24 passim.

This is only one of the indications for us to carefully re-examine the role of scriptural theology in the DI and question any view that attempts to consider it insignificant for Lactantius.

He offers a third reason (again for his Christian readers) why Cyprian's apologetic method needs to be changed at 5.1.26 where he suggests that Cyprian has acted somewhat improperly in handing over the Christian "sacramentum" to incomprehending pagans: `hic tamen placere ultra uerba sacramentum ignorantibus non potest, quoniam mystica sunt quae locutus est et ad id praeparata, ut a solis fidelibus audiantur: denique a doctis huius saeculi, quibus forte scripta eius innotuerunt, derideri solet.'(1) The analogy is one set in a context of persecution where the church must preserve the "arcana mystica" within the body of the baptised faithful. It seems most likely that Lactantius has the scriptures in mind again at this point.(2) for he uses the same analogy at only one other place in the DI when he describes Hierocles' sacrilegious use of the holy scriptures as a betrayal of a sacrament:- "sacramenti quod acceperat proditor factus est".(3)

(1) Dl. 5.1.26.

(2) Since it was forbidden to deliver the sacred books up to the persecuting authorities, these were classed among the 'arcana sacra' and Cyprian himself spends much time in his writings dealing with the problem of those who had offended in this way (traditores). Lactantius' apologia for departing from Cyprian's method is thus an ironical allusion to Cyprian which his Christian readers will appreciate.

(3) Dl. 5.2.15.

Lactantius seems to be defensive of his own apologetic methodology, aware that his departure into new territory, using pagan testimonies as much as Christian scripture, might subject him to the disapproval of some Christians. It is this defensive attitude which perhaps explains the slightly ironic tone of the Cyprianic references culminating in yet another demonstration that the pagan world would not accept the Cyprianic-type apology. Lactantius recalls a disparaging remark he has heard about Cyprian in a lecture he once attended: 'audiui ego quendam hominem sane disertum, qui eum inmutata una littera Coprianum uocaret, quasi quod elegans ingenium et melioribus rebus aptum ad aniles fabulas contulisset.'(1) The identification of Cyprianus - Coprianus would have been an immense joke in the circumstances, derived as it is, from Kopriá - a dunghill (with subsidiary meanings as W. Fletcher recounts: "applied to sycophants and low buffoons and jesters, who, for the sake of exciting laughter, made boastful and extravagant promises."(2)). And this is his final statement on Cyprian's approach to apology, though Lactantius leaves him at v.28 attempting somewhat to restore due honour without weakening his own apologetic position: ' quodsi accidit hoc ei cuius eloquentia non insuauis est, quid tandem putemus accidere eis quorum sermo ieiunus est et ingratus? qui neque uim persuadendi neque subtilitatem argumentandi neque ullam prorsus acerbitatem ad reuincendum habere potuerunt.'(3)

(1) Dl. 5.1.27.

(2) ANCL vol 21. Edinburgh 1871. p. 294 fn 1 see H. Meltzer. Cyprianus-Coprianus ALLG. 13 1904 p. 406f. J. Stevenson tentatively suggests the author of the remark may have been Arnobius. see Life and lit. activity. of Lactantius TU 63 1957. p.666.

(3) Dl. 5.1.28.

Hugo Koch[1] claimed to find a wealth of Cyprianic allusions in Lactantius but the overwhelming majority of his instances are typified by the following three examples of dependency, which Koch lists solely in terms of common word groups, without reference to real catechetical significance eg: [(p.124) Dl.1.1.20 copia exuberet, Ad Fort.11 exuberante copia (p.125) Dl. 1.19.4. simplicatas...confitetur, De Laps.28. simplicter confitentes. (p.131) Dl.5.7.6. devota deo suo fides, De Mortal.23. deo suo anima devota.] However, such verbal similarities are not enough to stand as evidence for a direct literary dependence. Of the mass of allusions Koch presents, there only seems to be one important reference that had not been recognised by the previous commentators. And though it is a significant allusion, it tells us nothing new about Lactantius' use of Cyprian, it simply reaffirms that the Ad Quirinum was a major scriptural source for the DI:

"Lattanzio (1.1.22, 1.5.17) indica anzitutto come fine, che si propone nel suo scritto, quello di distogliere gli uomini da fedi erronee, ed afferma che quando tale scopo sia raggiunto, 'mittemus eos ad ipsum doctrinae uberrimum ac plenissimum fontem; cuius haustu atque potu conceptam visceribus sitim sedent...eruntque illis omnia facilia, prona, manifesta; modo ne pigeat, ad percipiendam sapientiae disciplinam legendi vel audiendi patientiam commodare.' Espressione, la quale ricorda la introduzione dei Testimonia ad Quirinum, in cui Cipriano (p.36.16.es.) dice che essa serve anzitutto come prima instruzione in materia di fede, ma che Quirino debba in seguito accedere alla fonte stessa, ossia alle sacre scritture: 'bibere uberius et saturari copiosius poteris, si tu quoque ad eosdem divinae plenitudinis fontes nobiscum pariter potaturus accesseris,' e inoltre Ad Don.5(& 10):'maneat iugiter, exuberat affluenter; nostrum tantum sitiat pectus et pateat', e confr. anche Ep.63.8. (707,12)."[2]

(1) La sopravvivenza di Cipriano RR 7.1931 pp 122-32

(2) Ibid. pp. 124-125

Brandt[1] lists twenty-nine references to Cyprian's work in the DI, though he omits the references in Bk 4 to the Ad Quirinum which would have greatly inflated that figure.[2] Yet if one omits reference to the Ad Quirinum altogether one is left with only four parallels in all:

(i) Ad Donat 8., Dl. 6.20.27-31 (the immorality of the theatre)

(ii) De op.et Eleem.9, Dl.6.12.32 (on giving alms)

(iii)De op et eleem. 25, Dl. 5.14. 16 (God is a benefactor to all)

(iv) Ep. 69. 16, Dl. 3.8.10 (a reference to "clinici" philosophers)

Not one of the parallels is really significant to Lactantius, and it is difficult in any of the cases to find convincing evidence for direct quotation on Lactantius' part.

R.M. Ogilvie finds such literary evidence in two cases only - the quotation of the opening words of the Ad Dem.1. at Dl.5.4.3., and the apologetic argument that pagan idols do not protect their worshippers but have to be protected by them: "at quid praestare se colentibus possunt, qui se de non colentibus vindicare non possunt? Nam si eo, qui vindicatur, pluris est ille, qui vindicat, tu diis tuis maior est...Pudeat te eos colere, quos ipse defendis, pudeat tutelam de iis sperare, quos tu ipse tueris."[3] cp. Dl.2.4.6: "quae vanitas ab iis aliquam sperare tutelam...quae ipsa cum violantur inulta sunt, nisi a colentibus vindicentur". The context is more or less the same in both Cyprian and Lactantius and one can also note a certain coincidence of language here, in the "tutelam - sperare", and the phrase "a colentibus vindicentur".

(1) CSEL. 27. p. 252.

(2) cp. cyprianic references in Appendix 1.

(3) Cyprian Ad Dem. 14.

But the four parallels Brandt had adduced are dismissed persuasively by R.M. Ogilvie: "No weight can be put on Cyprian's allusions in a letter to "clinici" philosophers",(1) nor on two possible reminiscences of the De Opere et Eleemosynis: (c.9. Dl. 6.12.32 the reductio ad absurdum that if I give all my money to the poor, I shall have no money to give to the poor (2); c.25, Dl. 5.14.16 God gives all alike light, water, food, sleep). The latter commonplace occurs with variations also in De Bono Patientiae.4. and Ad. Dem.8. but none of the Cyprianic passages has all four constituents.(3)"

As far as the remaining instance of the parallel between DI 6.20 27-31 and Ad. Donat.8, which laments the immorality of the theatre, again there are no grounds to suppose that Cyprian was the immediate source. The treatment is an apologetical commonplace, the same tirade occurs in Minucius(4) and Ogilvie sets the citation into the wider context of Lactantius' use of source materials between chs. 20-24 of the 6th Book: "As Mai saw, they form a unity and are very close to what we can reconstruct of the argument of the missing fourth book of Cicero's De. Republica. That might be a more likely source for both Cyprian and Lactantius - and also Minucius Felix."(5)

(1) Cyp. Ep. 69.16, cp Dl.3.8.10. The notion was a commonplace referring to 'quacks' or charlatans. cp. A. Goulon. REAg.19 1973 pp. 39-55 Lactantius can find an authority for the idea in Cicero (Tusc. Disp. 3.47, De Fin. 2.28) or Plutarch (Epic.Beat) 1091B.

(2) It is also notable that where Cyprian here basis his argument for almsgiving on the authority of scripture, Lactantius appeals to "humanitas".

(3) ie. the four "gifts of God" that Lactantius mentions at 5.14.17 R.M. Ogilvie - The lib. of Lactantius. p.89

(4) Oct. 37. 11-12.

(5) R.M. Ogilvie The lib. of Lactantius. p.89

Cyprian describes the exorcism of demons as though they were being tortured under the spiritual lash (spiritalibus flagris).(1) It is a vivid scene which may have impressed itself on Lactantius' memory. But if he does reproduce it, he is careful to tone it down for his pagan audience. The demons are tortured now "as though by lashes": 'quorum verbis tamquam flagris verberati non modo daemonas esse se confitentur, sed etiam nomina sua edunt, illa quae in templis adorantur.'(2) This is the same approach he adopts towards the demonology in Tertullian, and it is undoubtedly Tertullian who is his real theological inspiration here, just as he was for Cyprian himself H. Bolkenstein(3) and V. Loi(4) demonstrated that Lactantius owed his authority to Cyprian in the way he employed certain Christian phrases (-most notably opera iustitiae and opera misericordiae) and Pièrre Monat used this evidence as the main part of his demonstration that Cyprian is a major thematic influence on the 5th book of the DI;

"L'admiration que Lactance professe pour Cyprien n'est donc pas feinte. Il ne lui a pas seulement emprunté des Testimonia, il s'est prefondément imprégné de son œuvre; il a cherché à imiter les qualités qu'il lui avait reconnues: clarté de l'enseignement, verve oratoire, et déjà souci de la seduction."(5)

(1) Ad. Dem. 16. cf. R. Pichon. Lactance. p.216

(2) Dl. 2.15.3.

(3) Humanitas bei Laktanz. Piscisculi. Festschrift. F.J. Dölger vol. 1.Munster. 1939. pp. 62-65

(4) (i) I valori etici e politici dell romanita negli scritti di Lattanzio Salesianum 27 no.3. 1965 pp.65-133

(ii) Il concetto di iustitia e i fattori culturali dell' etica di Lattanzio Salesianum 28 no.4. 1966 pp 583-625.

(5) P. Monat. Divinae Institutiones Bk.5. sc. 204.

But it must be remembered that the phrase opera justitiae occurs only twice in DI[1] and opera misericordiae only once.[2]

Moreover Monat offers no substantiation of his views in the study, and it is simply difficult to see the evidence for this "major influence" on Lactantius that he thus attributes to Cyprian. Monat's final examples,in the last phrase of the above citation, are all chosen from the field of literary style and rhetorical excellence, and while Lactantius certainly regards Cyprian as a fine orator, his own inspiration in this field indubitably comes more from Cicero. He does not regard Cyprian as the finest Christian orator - Lactantius aimed at claiming that honour for himself: 'quod quia ille (Cyprianus) non fecit raptus eximia eruditione divinarum litterarum, ut iis solis contentus esset quibus fides constat, accessi deo inspirante, ut ego facerem et simul ut viam ceteris ad imitandum pararem. ac si hortatu nostro docti homines ac diserti huc se conferre coeperint...evanituras brevi religiones falsas et occasuram esse omnem philosophiam nemo dubitaverit[3]. He is supreme in his self-confidence,trusting that although Cyprian failed in his task he himself might succeed in winning over the intellectuals, thus inaugurating nothing else than the collapse of all false religions and the demise of all philosophy.

(1) Dl. 5.8.9, and 5.15.4. The concept is also found independently of Cyprian in the LXX version of Ps.15.2.

(2) Dl. 5.14.18

(3) Dl. 5.4. 7b-8

Brandt lists several parallels between the Quod Idola attributed to Cyprian and the DI[1] the chief of which R.M. Ogilvie supports: "The Quod Idola(13) does bear a very close resemblance to the DI 4.15.23. The power of Christ to rule the elements is spelled out in specific examples: In Lactantius he could compel "ventos obsequi, maria servire, morbos cedere, inferos oboedire," in Cyprian "servire ventos, maria oboedire inferos cedere." This looks like a typical case of Lactantius extemporising from memory."[2] In fact, it is more a case of tortuous argument for the Cyprianic authorship of the treatise has long been suspect.[3] And more recently B. Axelson[4] has convincingly demonstrated that the Quod Idola is a late pastiche work assembled out of texts from all the Latin apologists including Cyprian and Lactantius themselves. The passages in the Quod Idola, then,that are specifically reminiscent of Lactantius, have probably been taken from Lactantius in the first place.

To sum up then, Lactantius uses the Ad Quirinum substantially in his own work. It is his chief source for scriptural references. In this he follows what by his time had become normal practice in western patristic exegesis. But even here his dependence on Cyprian is a qualified one, for his non-Cyprianic material is equally significant as A. Wlosok has demonstrated,[5] and more recently Pierre Monat has determined that 41% of the Lactantian exegesis (that is, 61 instances) are independent of the Ad Quirinum.[6]

(1) Quod idola 13, Dl. 4.15.23, 4.18.2,4f, 4.21.1.

(2) R.M. Ogilvie. The lib. of Lactantius. p.89

(3) cp Quod idola dii non sint. Haussleiter. Theol. Literaturblatt 15. 1894. pp. 481-487

(4) Quod idola dii non sint. Er. 39 1941. pp.67-74

(5) A. Wlosok. Zur bedeutung der nichtcyprianischen bibelzitate bei Laktanz. SP.4. TU. 79. 1961. pp. 234-250. See Thesis ch. 3 (iv)

(6) P. Monat. Divinae Institutiones SC 204. p.44. fn.11.

But apart from this use,then, as a scriptural handbook, Cyprian is probably the least important of his Latin sources. Lactantius has probably read parts of the works of Cyprian, and certainly admired him personally, but he has an entirely different theological vision, and a different apologetic method to that of Cyprian and consequently reproduces next to nothing at all.

(iii) Attributed influences

(a) Irenaeus

Brandt proposes a parallel between Lactantius DI 7.14.8 and Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 5.28.3, and posits a dependence on the part of Lactantius on the whole section of chs. 28-36 of Irenaeus' 5th book. The texts in question speak about the state of things when the apocalyptic judgement is inaugurated. It is just as difficult, however, to argue from similarities in apocalyptic material [that there is a direct dependence of one author on another] as it has proved to be in the case of apologetic similarities. In Brandt's cited allusions, the only point of contact between Adv. H. 5.28.3 and Lactantius, is the interpretation of the seven days of creation as an eschatological type of the seven ages of the world, and the employment as the scriptural proof for this of Ps. 90.4. The exegesis is not proper to Irenaeus of course for the use of the psalm to indicate the inevitable coming of the end of the ages is found in 2 Pet.3.8. And this same Scriptural text witnesses already a tendancy to associate the pattern of the end of things (the 'Day of the Lord' (2.P.3.9)) with the pattern of the Act of Creation in the beginning.(1)

(1) eg. there is a clear parallelism between the first word of creation, and the subsequent word of Judgement; between the first destruction by water, and the second by fire. cp.2.Pet.3.5-7

The use of Ps.90 in an eschatological context, then, even when it appears in association with the millenarist tradition of creation - apocalypse parallelism, is hardly something proper to Irenaeus, which would give us clear evidence for a literary dependence between the two in the relevant eschatological sections. Just as much as the apologetic contest with mythology and philosophy, the millenarist writings had their share of stock ideas. Since the only relation between Lactantius and Irenaeus is postulated within this context, it is most difficult to say whether there was any direct reliance whatsoever, but it seems most unlikely for this typology of the eschatological "week" is not proper to Irenaeus. Daniélou notes its Jewish roots in Enoch, Jubilees and 4th Esdras, and its appearance in Barnabas, Justin, Papias, Tertullian and Hilary to name but the most significant authors.(1)

So if the millenarist doctrine in Irenaeus sends us back to scriptural roots,and is rooted in the context of Jewish apocalyptic(2) we can presume the sources of the Lactantian millenarism will be similar. It is certain that the eschatological doctrine in Book 7 does not rely on the wider context of the Irenaen parallels in any discernible way at all. The Lactantian treatment is clearly drawn from a wide variety of sources as he explicitly states: Cicero's Chaldaean chronology(3), the scriptures themselves(4), the Sibylline Oracles(5) and Hystaspes.(6)

(1) J. Daniélou. La typologie millénariste de la semaine. vc 2. 1948 pp.1-16.

(2) See Daniélou. From shadows to reality London 1960. p.86.

(3) Dl. 7.14.4.

(4) Dl. 7.14.7,15.

(5) eg. 7.15.18, 7.16.11.

(6) Dl. 7.15.19.

So it is more than possible that the similarities in the millenarist doctrine between Lactantius and Irenaeus can be explained by a mutual dependence on a common apocalyptic source, or sources.

Indeed the second Irenæan parallel claimed by Brandt shows so many signs of alteration by Lactantius that it strongly argues, against Brandt, that here there is no ground at all for suggesting a direct literary dependence. This latter text, Adv. Haer 5.33.2, mentions the 'seven' symbolism and calls it a "sabbath of the righteous". But the entire meaning of the Septeniarist context of Irenaeus (ie the messianic banquet for the poor seen as the new "Sabbath-rest") disappears in Lactantius and is replaced with his own theme of the final abolition of evil on the earth (Dl.7.14.11). Again, the "true sabbath of the righteous" falls away and in Lactantius we have a different reference to how "righteousness shall reign for a 1000 years", a millenium of which there is no mention in Irenaeus. In addition, the 'rest' of God's faithful in Irenaeus, consists in that they "shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation". In Lactantius it quite clearly symbolises relief from the "labours" of wicked oppressions: ' et rursus quoniam perfectis operibus requieuit die septimo eumque benedixit, necesse est ut in fine sexti millesimi anni malitia omnis aboleatur e terra et regnet per annos mille iustitia sitque tranquillitas et requies a laboribus quos mundus iam diu perfert.'(1)

(1) Dl. 7.14.11.

In short,then, the evidence suggested by Brandt amounts only to insignificant resemblance, and is not sufficient to establish any direct dependence on Irenaeus. One can only conclude that certain aspects of Lactantius' eschatology are in line with the millenarist tradition to which Irenaeus also subscribed. Lactantius will have probably composed the last book after his flight to Gaul, and this Gallic eschatology represented by Irenaeus can confidently be described as a ecclesiastical influence on Lactantius; but more likely from general church practice than from the immediate text of Irenaeus. It is interesting in this context to note that the paschal liturgy of the Church is clearly in Lactantius' mind as one of the significant sources of his eschatology. Not only does he introduce his doctrine of the last ages with a paschal narrative about Israel's Exodus (7.15.1-6) suggesting that the end of time will witness a repetition of the Exodus "prodigies", but he also significantly alludes to the Christian Easter vigil as an eschatological symbol and reality (7.19.2-3).

R.M. Grant claimed to have discovered a direct reference to Irenaeus in the works of Lactantius, when he cited the parallel reference to the epistemological puzzle on the source of the Nile. He says: "in an article on Irenaeus and Hellenic culture in the Harvard Theological Review, I have discussed his use of the doxography for the purpose of denying the possibility of scientific knowledge (Adv. Haer.2.28.1-2), Here I wish to observe that Irenaeus' admirer Lactantius makes use of the same method. He starts with the very example Irenaeus had employed:-' Quae beatitudo mihi erit proposita si sciero unde Nilus oriatur vel quidquid de caelo physici dèlirant? quid quod earum rerum non est scientia, sed opinatio, quae pro ingeniis varia est?'

This remark (Dl.2.8.29)(1) is based on Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. 2.28.2.). But the examples Lactantius uses in DI 3.3.4. are not derived from Irenaeus. Instead they apparently come from the doxographical collection, perhaps through Varro, since Lactantius' use of Greek authors is not extensive." (2)

It has to be noticed, however, that Lactantius never wishes to "deny the possibility of scientific knowledge," as Grant suggests. It is part of his theology of revelation that he expressly allows that man has a divided epistemology - knowledge of some things and ignorance of others(3) which reflects his composite nature of spirit and flesh. Lactantius attributes absolute knowledge of Truth to God alone(4) but he does not deny that some scientific knowledge is possible, he only insists that man stands in needs of God's revelation to arrive at the truth of many things in his life which transcend his natural abilities of enquiry.(5) So,Lactantius, in the passage Grant cites,is not denying the possibility of human knowledge, but merely affirming his theology of revelation, insisting that the natural philosophers must give way to a revealed source of truth, without which their human inquiries became deranged "deliratio". This can be clearly seen in Lactantius' literary balance of de caelo on one hand, and the physici on the other in the passage cited.(6)

(1) The reference is mistaken in Grant's text and should read: 3.8.29
(2) R.M. Grant. Patristica VC 3. 1949. p.227-228.
(3) cp Dl. 3.6. 3-4.
(4) Dl. 3.1.12, 3.3.2.
(5) cp. Dl. 1.1.5, 3.1.4.
(6) Dl. 3.8.29b. viz heavenly reality opposed to material research. For classical use of "physici" in this way cp Cicero. Nat Deor 2.21.54, 1.30.83, De Rep. 5.3.2., De Orat. 1,10.42, Ac.Quaes.2.4.14.

R.M. Grant also appears mistaken in positing Lactantius' source for the passage as Irenaeus, for although the same question about the Nile appears in Irenaeus the context is quite different. Irenaeus presents the Nile as one in a series of man's unanswerable questions, and none of the other examples in the series appear in the DI. In fact this question about the source of the Nile was a stock puzzle of the schools. It was a commonplace example of a mystery man could not penetrate. The citation appears in a lengthy passage of the Dl which is a synoptical review of all the different schools in their approaches to moral philosophy.(1) Within this section Lactantius uses several such "puzzles".(2) The idea was therefore a commonplace among classical writers,(3) not least Cicero and Seneca who represent a much more immediate source for Lactantius, than does Irenaeus. The puzzle, as Lactantius applies it to mark the difference between 'opinatio' and 'scientia', is still going strong in the early Middle-Ages and turns up in what is probably its original syllogistic form, a relic of the rhetorical schoolroom: ' opinari ignorantis est: ignorantia vero contraria est scientiae; nescit ergo quisquis opinatur.'(4)

(1) cp. Dl. 3.7 - 3.12.

(2) eg. his illustration of asystaton at 3.6. 13-14.

(3) Lucretius 6. 712-738, Cicero Nat. Deor. 1.52, 2.52.130, De Rep. 6,18,19. Seneca Quaest. Nat. 4.1.1. for the theme appearing in the Greek philosophers (Anaxagoras, Thales, Euthymenes, Callisthenes, Oenopides of Chios and Diogenes of Appollonia) see the edition of Seneca: Questions Naturelles by P. Oltramare. Paris 1929. vol.2. pp. 169-171.

(4) Claudianus Mamertus. De Statu Animae. 3.2. PL 53. 762A.

In Short, R.M. Grant has no real evidence at all for attributing a direct parallel between Irenaeus and Lactantius at this point, and since the eschatological material common to both is just as easily explained by mutual reference to a third source (or several such apocalyptic sources) we have no real grounds for asserting that Lactantius knew or used Irenaeus' work in any way at all.

(b) Ps. Hippolytus

Brandt(1) suggests a parallel between ch.7 of Ps. Hippolytus': Περὶ τῆς συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου , which reads: Διὸ πάντες τῷ ἰδίῳ θελήματι ἐμπεριπατήσουσι.....πρεσβυτέρου πολιὰν οὐδεὶς οἰκτρειρήσεται..

and:

Dl. 7.17.9:'id erit tempus quo iustitia proicietur et innocentia odio erit, quo mali bonos hostiliter praedabunter. non lex aut ordo aut militiae disciplina seruabitur, non canos quisquam reuerebitur, non officium pietatis adgnoscet, non sexus aut infantiae miserebitur: confundentur omnia et miscebuntur contra fas, contra iura naturae. ita quasi uno communique latrocinio terra uniuersa uastabitur.' The similarities of the passages lie yet again in the apocalyptic area. This concept of the unrighteousness that will prevail at the end of the days is a major theme of almost all apocalyptic writing. None of the other five parallels Brandt lists, witness any close literary affinity that cannot be explained on the basis of a common theme. The references are a typical example of too great a readiness to suggest literary dependence merely on the basis of slight verbal or thematic similarities, for the pseudepigraphical work was later identified as a conflation of genuine Hippolytan elements with elements taken from Ephraem Syrus!

(1) CSEL 19. p.639. Ibid. 27. p.255.

Thus it is a chronological impossibility that Lactantius could have paralleled the text. Bardenhewer dates the work as "not earlier than the ninth century"[1] Brandt's treatment in this case is a cautionary reminder of the dangers of this type of literary ascription.

(c) Nemesius of Emesa

The same observations apply to the eleven instances Brandt lists suggesting that Lactantius drew on Nemesius' De Natura Hominis,[2] especially for anthropological illustrations in the OD, and the Dl. All the examples Brandt cites are merely commonplaces in a long classical treatment of this theme (the wonderful intricacy of the human body as an argument for providence). Lactantius specifies his own sources for this type of material and they are Cicero's De Rep. and Nat. Deor.[3] and the works of Varro.[4] It was Brandt himself who also recognised in the OD the basis of some Hermetic treatise[5] so it might have been expected that he should have recognised in these 'Nemesian parallels' only the signs of adherence to a common philosophical tradition. In any case W. Telfer[6] has successfully dated the work of Nemesius between 390-400 AD which again makes a Lactantian dependence impossible.

(1) O. Bardenhewer. Patrology St. Louis. 1908. p.219

(2) CSEL 27. p.258.

(3) cp OD. 1.12-14

(4) OD 5.6, 8.6, 10.1,16, 12.6,17, 14.3, 17.5.

(5) G. Brandt: Ueber die quellen Von Laktanz Schrift OD. Wiener Studien. 13. 1891 pp 255-292.

(6) cp. Library of Christian Classics. vol.4. London 1955. (Ed.W. Telfer) p.206.

(d) Arnobius the elder.

Jerome tells us twice[1] that Lactantius was a pupil of Arnobius but the discipleship must be dated to Lactantius' early years in Africa, where Arnobius held the Rhetorical Chair at Sicca Veneria, and restricted solely to the sphere of rhetorical training. There are no direct allusions to Arnobius' work in any of the writings of Lactantius, nor is he listed in the ranks of the Latin Christian apologists he knows.[2] If the allusion to the "hominem sane disertem" is, as has been suggested earlier, an allusion to Arnobius,[3] it confirms that Lactantius knew him only as a pagan professor, before the former's conversion to Christianity and subsequent publication of the Adv. Nationes .

By the time Lactantius came to write his own apology he would be far away in Nicomedia, unaware of his teacher's dramatic transformation from one of the most notable opponents of the Church to one of its apologists. Although this theory of chronological difference is the most commonly used to explain the Arnobian question in Lactantius, other commentators have followed Brandt in discerning a few allusions to the Adv. Nat. If this is the case, and Lactantius does use some of his professor's material, of course the whole context of the argument changes, and the most immediate need is then to address the question - why did he use these instances only and leave the rest of the work untouched?

(1) De Viris illust. 80.1, Ep.70.5. cp Brandt CSEL 27 pp 161-162.

(2) Dl. 5.1.22f.

(3) Dl. 5.1.27.

It is, perhaps not remarkably, the commentators who have tended to exaggerate the extent of Lactantius' sources who emerge as those who see Arnobian reminiscences - Brandt[1], Pichon,[2] Hugo Koch[3] and Pierre Monat,[4] especially. Among these commentators, who have argued a direct literary dependence on Arnobius, three theories have been suggested to explain the remarkable paucity of allusions: (a) that of R. Pichon who attributes it to the "philosophical differences" the two men had: "Quant à Arnobe, on a déjà vu qu'il est peu versé dans les questions religieuses, et que d'autre part, en philosophie, il n'a pas du tout les mêmes opinions que Lactance.On ne peut donc guére compter que celui-ci lui fasse beaucoup d'emprunts; et de fait les analogies sont assez rares".[5] Thereafter Pichon follows Brandt's analysis of the parallells. (b) The second theory is that inspired by the work of F.G. Sirna[6] who exposed the Marcionite tendencies in Arnobius. The heterodox nature of the Adv. Nat. had long been noticed, and this ecclesiastical disapproval is sometimes suggested as the reason Lactantius avoids the work. (c) The third theory is that of H. Koch. As with his study of Cyprian,Mr. Koch is indefatigable in the manner he discovers allusions to the Adv.Nat. in the work of Lactantius, but somewhat uncritical in his methodology.

(1) G. Brandt. CSEL.27. p.245.

(2) R. Pichon. Lactance. pp.216-217

(3) H. Koch. Zu Arnobius und Laktanz. Philologus. 80. 1924. pp. 467-472.

(4) Divinae Institutiones. SC.204. pp.49-50.

(5) R. Pichon. Lactance. p.216.

(6) F.G. Sirna. Arnobio e l'eresia Marcionita di Patrizio VC 18. 1964. pp.37-50.

The result of his study was to suggest that Lactantius does use Arnobius, though simply does not make reference to his source!

Of all the explanations of the Arnobian problem, that of the different chronologies is the most substantial. The Adv.Nat. was published late in Arnobius' life, perhaps in 305 AD, by then Lactantius was far away in Asia Minor, unaware of both his professor's conversion and his apology. Though even if he had heard of it the Arnobian opinions on the "anger of God" would have incensed Lactantius.(1) Of all the supposed allusions between Lactantius and Arnobius, none stands up to critical examination.(2) Brandt presents three main examples with reference to the DI:

Adv. Nat. 2.51,	Dl. 3.3.2, 3.6.8.
Adv. Nat. 2.35,	Dl. 2.14.4.
Adv.N at. 5.18,	Dl. 1.22. 9-11.

The first of these examples is concerned with the nature and interpretation of sense - data, and revolves around the epistemological theme of scientia versus opinatio. It occurs in the same general context as R.M. Grant's supposed reference to Irenaeus, which was discussed previously, and the same conclusions apply here. Both Arnobius and Lactantius are doing no more than demonstrating school-room knowledge. They are independently discussing a common Epicurean puzzle. It is the same one that, before them, was discussed by Lucretius(3) and Cicero(4), either of whom could have supplied a source for both apologists independently.

(1) see J. Stevenson. Life and lit. activity of Lactanius. TU.63. 1957. p.674. "Lactantius may have found his teacher's views, as a Christian, as pernicious as his views as a heathen had been".

(2) CSEL 27. p.245. Pichon's argument for dependence on the basis of philological patters (Pichon p.217, Monat pp.49-50) is hardly apposite since Arnobius is known to have taught him rhetorical skill in Africa.

(3) 5.564f.

(4) De Fin. 1.20, Ac. Post. 2.82.

The second instance represents Arnobius' treatment of angels and devils; the angelic intercourse with earthly women produced a third genus of earthly demons. Again, there is nothing particularly Arnobian about this theme. The passage in Lactantius relies for its sources, as we have seen, on Tertullian, Minucius and, perhaps, Justin Martyr. The third and last allusion is the most compelling: (the discussion of Faunus, how he killed his wife and,in regret, instituted divine honours for her) but is similarly explained as coming to both apologists from their reading of Varro, or an anthology including Varro. R.M. Ogilvie's excellent treatment of the text tradition operating in this passage, concludes: "the other quotations (of Varro) fall into two distinct categories (1) the long section on the Sibyls (1.6.7-12; cf 4.15.27, De.Ira. 22-5) which is expressly said to come from M. Varro's Libri Rerum Divinarum quos ad C.Caesarem pontificem maximum scripsit; (2) 4 fragments on antiquarian matters where the author is simply called Varro and the work from which the quotation comes is not named. The clearest example in the second category is 1.22.10 on Faunus, where Varro is quoted between Gavius Bassus and Sextus Clodius.(1) The fact that Arnobius also deals with the myths of Faunus and quotes Sextus Clodius suggests that both he and Lactantius are drawing on a commonplace of apologetic writing. One stage in the accumulation of these different versions about Faunus may have been Cornelius Labeo who is used as an authority on the subject [Macrobius. 1.12.21.]. Interestingly, Macrobius cites the same passage of Varro (1.12.27) but with greater specific detail and as a direct quotation, whereas Lactantius only gives a paraphrase in indirect speech. This confirms the impression that Lactantius is not retailing Varro at first hand.(2)

(1) cp. R.M. Ogilvie. The lib. of Lactantius p.39.

(2) Ibid. pp.50-51.

Our general conclusion, then, is that Lactantius had no immediate knowledge of Arnobius' Christian work, and never cites him at all in his own apologetic.

(iv) Isolated citations

(a) Praedicatio Petri et Pauli.

In Book 4 Lactantius refers to a writing containing the substance of the prophecies Peter and Paul preached at Rome.(1) The text to which he alludes is concerned with the ruination of Jerusalem and should be located in its overall context - for it is among that group of scriptural or apocryphal texts which Lactantius employs in Bk 4 which are not found in Cyprian's Testimonia. All of these non-Cyprianic texts, which will be investigated subsequently, are directed to one of two ends; either to prove that Jesus is the Messiah despite the Jewish denials, or to illustrate the divine anger which has fallen on the Jewish nation because of their rejection of Jesus. The allusion to the Praedicatio fits into this context exactly, as it interprets the destruction of Jerusalem as the direct result of Jewish infidelity (verse 4b).

(1) Dl. 4.21. 2-4. 'discipuli uero per prouincias dispersi fundamenta ecclesiae ubique posuerunt facientes et ipsi in nomine magistri dei magna et paene incredibilia miracula, quia discedens instruxerat eos uirtute ac potestate, quo posset nouae adnuntiationis ratio fundari et confirmari. sed et futura illis aperuit omnia: quae Petrus et Paulus Romae praedicauerunt et ea praedicatio in memoriam scripta permansit. in qua cum multa alia mira tum etiam hoc futurum esse dixerunt, ut post breve tempus inmitteret deus regem, qui expugnaret Iudaeos et ciuitates eorum solo adaequaret, ipsos, autem fame sitique confectos obsideret. tum fore ut corporibus suorum uescerentur et consumerent inuicem, postremo ut capti uenirent in manus hostium et in conspectu suo uexari acerbissime coniuges suas cernerent, uiolari ac prostitui uirgines, diripi pueros, allidi paruulos, omnia denique igni ferroque uastari, captiuos in perpetuum terris suis exterminari, eo quod exultauerint super amantissimum et probatissimum dei filium.'

The common conclusion from this evidence has been that Lactantius probably finds his non-Cyprianic materials in some kind of treatise Adversus Judaeos. Pichon was the first to notice this: "ils sont donc probablement empruntés a quelque ouvrage de polémique contre les Juifs, dans le genre de celui de Tertullien, et là encore Lactance, sans chercher par lui-même, n'a dû avoir qu'à prendre chez un prédécesseur les documents qui lui étaient nécessaires."(1) Exactly what this anti-Jewish source was, however, remains a problem. It will be further discussed in the following chapter.(2) Wherever Lactantius drew his anti-Jewish material, it certainly seems to have fired his imagination with the polemical possibilities, and he must have had an abundant supply of references that could not be fitted into the Dl, for he there announces his intention to publish a whole treatise on the subject.(3)

The allusion of Lactantius to some such Jewish-Christian source at Dl. 4.21. 2-4 has been identified by some as a reference to the pseudepigraphical work the Kerygma Petrou. This latter text arises from a religious culture fostered by Jewish-Christian groups of the era that were somewhat under the influence of Gnosticism.(4)

(1) R. Pichon. Lactance p.203

(2) ch. 3(iv)

(3) Dl. 7.1.26.

(4) cp. E. Hennecke. N.T. Apocrypha vol. 2. London 1965 pp.102-111 (esp. 109)

Such groups can be identified in the Ebionites mentioned by Irenaeus(1), the Cerinthians by Epiphanius,(2) the Elkesaites mentioned by Eusebius,(3) or the Encratites that Origen described.(4) Several scholars have thought to recognise traces of this Jewish-Gnostic ethos in the Dl. In the 19th century, for example, F.W. Bussel(5) connected the system of subordinate dualism represented in the text of the Dl with the similar theological concerns of the Pseudo-Clementines, texts which are directly related to such a Judaeo-Gnostic environment. Nonetheless, no signs of literary parallelism whatsoever have been discovered between the two sets of writings. More recently A. Wlosok has devoted an extensive study to the influence of this tradition on Lactantius.(6) Wlosok has highlighted what she calls Lactantius' "gnosticising" tendencies(7) and has suggested they arise from a pre-Christian phase of attachment to a neo-Platonic or Hermetic religion. This background, and not the Church, she argues, has taught him his conception of religion and revelation. She also suggests that his period in Asia Minor was a time of renewed reading of gnosticising works contained within the Christian tradition, for they circulated more freely in the East at this time than in Africa or Gaul.

(1) Adv. Haer. 1.26.2.
(2) Haer. 28.5.3.
(3) Hist. Eccl. 6.38.
(4) Contr. Cels. 5.65.
(5) The purpose of the world-process and the problem of evil as explained in the Clementine and Lactantian writings in a system of subordinate dualism. S.B.E. 4. Oxford 1896. pp. 132-188
(6) Laktanz und der philosophische gnosis. esp. pp.180ff.
(7) also in her article: Zur bedeutung der nicht-cyprianischen bibelzitate bei Laktanz. pp.234-250 as eg, on pp.242-247 where the use of the Odes of Solomon are used as evidence for the Asiatic theological tradition operating in Lactantius.

Wlosok's views have come to dominate all subsequent studies of the source tradition of the Dl,(1) but her 'Gnostic' theory is highly questionable and has been criticised to date by both A.D. Nock,(2) and J. Stevenson of Cambridge.(3) The first half of her study on the tradition of philosophic-gnosis is given over to the appearance of the theme in classical antiquity, so it is only the latter part(4) that becomes controversial when she reads this tradition as the single most important theological influence on the mind of Lactantius. In the first place she instances the tradition of religiosa sapientia in the Dl as evidence for her views but this tradition is so employed by Lactantius as to suggest he is deliberately concerned with changing the signification it has in the pagan world and giving it a new Christian significance.

(1) particularly the works of Loi, Grillmeier and Ogilvie. cp bibliography.

(2) A.D. Nock. The exegesis of Timaeus 28C. (Dl. 1.8.1) VC 16 1962 pp 79-86.

(3) Lactantius and the Hermetica CR. 13. 1963 pp 80-81: "While not invalidating the conclusion that the Hermetica were a real influence on Lactantius, it is quite possible to imagine that Lactantius was not conscious of any philosophical attachment in his use of Hermes. He was looking for a religious authority of great antiquity to confirm for the heathen ideas that reached him, as a Christian, from the bible."

(4) pp. 180 onwards.

Thus instead of being an intellectual appreciation of the deity, the concept of religiosa sapientia in Lactantius becomes a liturgical and moral reality.(1) There is undoubtedly a noticeable flavour in the Dl of the platonic-hermetic type of religiosity common to the educated classes of his day but this is hardly surprising since it is precisely this class of society to which his apologia is addressed. The great amount of Sibylline and Hermetic citations that appear in his work are similarly to be interpreted on apologetic grounds rather than being elevated into the myth of a pre-conversion, neo-Platonic religiosity, for which there is not a shred of evidence. Lactantius frequently explains his use of this material on such apologetic grounds.(2) and the introduction to the following chapter will illustrate that in every case Sibylline and Hermetic proofs are intentionally subordinated to the Christian scriptures. In addition Lactantius' treatment of the Sapientia revelata theme radically differentiates him from these gnostic-type approaches:

(a) he teaches the universal availability of this wisdom. It is not elitist in any way at all, but all men and women have the duty (and capacity) to achieve it.(3)

(b) it is not an esoteric or difficult mystery(4) for men only have to submit to their divine father in worship and righteousness to achieve it.(5)

(c) it is the universal possession of the faithful. In Lactantius' treatment no degrees of initiation within the church can be discerned.(6)

(1) see Thesis ch.4. (iii) c.

(2) cp. Dl. 1.5.2, or 1.6.6.

(3) cp. 1.1.19, 4.1.10 "no-one can justly be called a man unless he is wise."

(4) cp. Dl. 3.28.14.

(5) cp. 3.30. 7-8

(6) cp. eg. 1.1.19.

This approach is decidedly un-Gnostic, and this conception of revelation is the major evidence against the viability of Wlosok's thesis. It will be further discussed under its proper doctrinal heading.(1) Her second observation, that Lactantius widened his reading in these gnostic-type books during his sojourn in Asia Minor (as evidence for which she adduces the reference to the Kerygma Petrou) is also open to question. From the review of Lactantius' Christian reading, one fact emerges most clearly and that is its restricted nature. If his reading is so restricted even in the case of the orthodox Latin apologists whom he expressly mentions, then it is surely unwise to suggest any deeper acquaintance with heterodox Judaeo-Gnostic writings of which there is only the evidence of one or two vague allusions which could otherwise be explained (in the manner of Pichon) by Lactantius' reliance for non-Cyprianic exegesis on some treatise of anti-Jewish polemic. R.M. Ogilvie(2) has put it beyond doubt that Lactantius' reading range in the ancient classics (to which he was professionally committed) is just as circumscript. In accordance with the custom of his day, Lactantius quotes widely and impressively but more often than not his references are second-hand. As the introduction to this present chapter has also argued, the surrounding context of citations he borrows is rarely significant for him.(3) It is thus doubly unwise to use his citations from Jewish-Gnostic type sources (such as the Odes of Solomon, or perhaps the Kerygma Petrou) as evidence for his deeper theological dependence on the theological tradition those sources represent. The present study, therefore, discusses the possible instances of this type of source material in Lactantius without implying that it had any significant influence on his thought whatsoever.

(1) Thesis ch.4.(i)
(2) The lib. of Lactantius Oxford. 1978
(3) see also H. Hagendahl. Methods of citation in post-classical Latin prose. Er. 45. 1947. p.123f.

At. Dl. 4.21.2. he introduces the text in question simply as a "proof":'sed et futura illis aperuit omnia: quae Petrus et Paulus Romae praedicaverunt et ea praedicatio in memoriam scripta permansit.' On this authority Hilgenfeld listed this reference as a citation of a lost extra-canonical text which he called the "Preaching of Peter and Paul".(1) But Bardenhewer criticises this as an unwarranted inference.(2) The difficulty involved in deciphering just what it is to which Lactantius refers is perhaps illustrated by W. Fletcher's interpretation that he must be quoting from some lost apocryphal work entitled: "In Memoriam Scripta".(3) Other critics have also confused a number of distinct apocrypha and at various times supposed Lactantius was referring to all of them. There is, for example, the Acta Petri and the Acta Pauli which are both extant, the Praedicatio Pauli now lost, and also the Kerygma Petrou, the Kerygmata Petrou and possibly a Didaskalia Petrou.(4) A. Wlosok and V. Loi think that Lactantius is referring to the Kerygma Petrou(5). E. Hennecke believes that Lactantius is not citing any independent work at all.(6)

(1) A. Hilgenfeld. Novum Testamentum extra canonem receptum. Leipzig. 1884. Edn.II. fasc. IV p.58f. cp. Brandt. CSEL 19 p.367

(2) Patrology. St. Louis 1908 p.98

(3) ANCL. vol.21. Edinburgh. 1871. p.265. fn.4.

(4) see Bardenhewer op cit p.98 and Hennecke. NT Apocrypha vol.2. p.98.

(5) Loi's evidence for the identification is that the titles Incomprehensibilis, Lex, appear in the Kerygma (according to Clement, see Hennecke. NT Apoc.2. p.99) as well as in the text of the Dl. But the idea of "Lex" is not proper to the Kerygma. It can be found in Justin Trypho 11.1. 24.1. and Cyprian. Ad Quir. 1.10. among other fathers. cp. Loi Lattanzio. p.17. fn.66, p.259 fn.119.

(6) NT. Apocrypha. vol.2. pp.92-93.

This latter opinion is rather severe, and does not explain where Lactantius found his details about the siege of Jerusalem. Nor does it account for the way in which he specifically refers to a written source which is still extant in his day (ea praedicatio in memoriam scripta permansit), or for the way he presents it in the convention of indirect speech (in qua...dixerunt..). Hennecke seems correct, however, in his general conclusions that in the first place this reference at Dl. 4.21.2f. cannot be identified with the Kerygma Petrou in any way at all,(1) and secondly that our knowledge of whatever text it is, begins and ends with Lactantius himself.

The reference, then, is not an allusion to the Kerygma but a text he has most probably discovered in his non-Cyprianic bible-source.(2)

(iv) b. Asclepiades. De Providentia

Lactantius mentions the work of Asclepiades specifically at Dl. 7.4.17f and presents a fairly lengthy quotation on the theme of man's pre-eminence in the created order: "Providence gave the place nearest itself to him who was able to understand its arrangement". The elemental philosophy that is witnessed in the citation fits in well with what can be observed in Lactantius' own treatment of anthropological doctrine (3): 'optime igitur Asclepiades noster de prouidentia summi dei disserens in eo libro quem scripsit ad me, atque ideo inquit merito quis arbitretur proximum sibi locum diuinam prouidentiam dedisse ei qui potuerit intellegere ordinationem suam. nam sol iste est: quis eum uidet ita, ut intellegat quia sol est et quantum gratiae adferat ceteris institutis? hoc caelum est:

(1) Ibid. p.93.

(2) cp. Thesis ch. 3(iv)

(3) The use of elemental images in his anthropology can be observed at Dl. 2.12.7. or throughout 2.9. reaching a climax at 2.9.25 where man alone uses the symbolic element of fire since he alone is immortal.

quis id suspicit? terra haec: quis eam colit? hoc pelagus: quis id nauigat? hic ignis est: quis eo utitur? Instituit ergo (cuncta) summus deus non propter se, quia nihilo eget, sed propter hominem, qui iis congruenter uteretur.'(1) It is quite possible that Æclepiades' work inspired Lactantius more than the single text above would indicate. He mentions him with evident respect here, and the passage survives as a citation, with certain changes, even into his Epitome. In the later redaction the general tenor of the text is the same (God made the world for the sake of man which is demonstrated by man's lordship over the elements and the beasts) and it reaches the same conclusion. The list of elemental illustrations is different, however, and the Epitome introduces several that are not found in the Dl (fruits of the earth, sea, stars, fishes and so on). The original text of Asclepiades was thus in all probability a series of such observations and examples from which Lactantius takes his major point at 7.4.17f and loosely refers to more in the Epit. The text of the Dl, then, represents a greater fidelity to the text of Asclepiades although the Epit. gives us more information about the surrounding context and the development of Asclepiades' argument: `fecit deus mundum propter hominem. hoc qui non peruidet, non multum distat a pecude. quis caelum suspicit nisi homo? quis solem, quis astra, quis omnia dei opera miratur nisi homo? quis colit terram? quis ex ea fructum capit? quis nauigat mare? quis pisces, quis uolatilia, quis quadrupedes habet in potestate nisi homo? cuncta igitur propter hominem deus fecit, quia usui hominus cuncta cesserunt.'(2)

(1) Dl. 7.4. 17-19.

(2) Epit. 64.3.

Jerome recounts that Lactantius dedicated: "ad Asclepiadem libri duo", which appear in his list of the Lactantian 'opera' between the Epit. and the DM. (1) This, however, gives us no real information about the date of their composition since Jerome's list is not a chronological one, and thus allows us to draw no inference whether the "two books" were a response by Lactantius to a previous dedication, or whether they themselves prompted Asclepiades to dedicate his work to Lactantius. If the latter case was true it might suggest that Asclepiades had been a disciple of Lactantius at some stage. His name suggests, but does not demand, a Greek origin. Apart from the evidence preserved by Lactantius and Jerome nothing else is known of him and none of his works have apparently survived.(2)

(1) Jerome Vir.Ill.80 Brandt CSEL. 19. p.161

(2) There may be a second fragment from Asclepiades preserved at Dl 6.9. 12-15: 'et erit quidem animal uitiosum ac debile, sed tamen uiuet, sicut is qui et deum nouit et in aliqua re peccat; dat enim ueniam peccatis deus. itaque sine membris aliquibus uiui potest, sine capite nullo modo. haec res efficit ut philosophi etiamsi natura sint boni, tamen nihil sciant, nihil sapiant. omnis doctrina et uirtus eorum sine capite est, quia deum nesciunt, qui est uirtutis ac doctrinae caput. quem qui non adgnoscit, licet uideat, caecus est, licet audiat, surdus, licet loquatur, elinguis est. cum uero conditorem rerum parentemque cognouerit, tunc et uidebit et audiet et loquetur. habere enim caput coepit, in quo sunt sensus omnes conlocati hoc est oculi et aures et lingua. nam profecto is uidet qui ueritatem, in qua deus est, uel deum, in quo ueritas est, oculis cordis aspexerit, is audit qui diuinas uoces ac praecepta uitalia pectori suo adfigit, is loquitur qui caelestia disserens uirtutem ac maiestatem dei singularis enarrat.' The general context is comparable; man's recognition of God's provident fatherhood, and the same stylistic procedure can be observed (he sees who..., he hears who...).

(iv) (c) The Odes of Solomon

Lactantius' reference to the Odes of Solomon must be seen in the same context as his reference to the Praedicatio discussed previously. Until 1909 when J. Rendel-Harris discovered the complete collection of the Odes[1] in a 16th Century Syrian Ms. our only real knowledge about them came from Lactantius[2] and a Gnostic treatise,[3] both of which sources preserved independent fragments.

Lactantius introduces his citation in the following manner: "thus speaks Solomon (v.3)", a figure whom he clearly identifies with the historical Solomon as can be seen from the way in which his next verse presents a parallel, supportive testimony from Isaiah: "likewise the prophet Isaiah whose words are these.." Lactantius' own source for the Odes has evidently presented them to him as canonical scripture: 'Solomon in ode undeuicesima ita dicit: infirmatus est uterus uirginis et accepit fetum, et grauata est et facta est in multa miseratione mater uirgo. item propheta Esaias, cuius uerba sunt haec:...'[4]

(1) see Harris-Mingana. The odes and pss. of Solomon. vol.2. London 1920. esp pp 7-13; In 1912 F.C. Burkitt had discovered fragments in a 10th C. Ms. see Hennecke NT Apoc. 2. p.808f.

(2) Dl. 4.12.3. citing Ode 19.6.

(3) Pistis Sophia (preserved in Coptic. German tr. GCS 13. 1905. C. Schmidt) citing Odes 1, 5, 6, 22, and 25. See Wlosok (Zur bedeutung...) p.243. Eusebius may perhaps allude to Ode 19.9. in the Dem. Evang. 10. 499 cd. with his analogy of the divine midwife.

(4) Dl. 4.12.3.

The commentators have laid great emphasis on the opinion that the Odes were Gnostic hymns of the Second Century,(1) and apart from the Dl appear only in the Gnostic text Pistis Sophia. As with the 'Praedicatio',however, to use this as evidence of supposedly Gnostic theological elements in Lactantius is a little far-fetched. Whatever the original context of Ode 19 in the source Lactantius was using, the way it appears at Dl. 4.12.2, shows quite clearly that he has simply excised it as a "proof" of the virginal conception. He applies it, then, alongside Isaiah(2) to defend an orthodox tradition, and illustrates both 'proofs' with the classical observation from Virgil(3) about the possibility of impregnation by wind.(4)

(1) cp. H. Gunkel. ZNW. 11 1910 pp. 291-328. Though many have dissented from this. J.H. Bernard ('The Odes of Solomon' JTS. 1910-1911 pp 1-31, and texts and studies 8.3. Cambridge 1912) thought they were a Baptismal catechesis. For a full review see Hennecke. NT. Apoc. 2 pp 809-810

(2) Is. 7.14. at Dl. 4.12.4.

(3) Georgics. 3.274: "et saepe sine ullis conjugiis vento gravidae, mirabile dictu".

(4) He has in mind the word-play ventus = spiritus, to ascribe the conception to God's "holy spirit" ; cp Thesis ch.6. (iv) b.

A. Wlosok, having accepted the text as proof of Lactantius' Gnostic tendencies is concerned to demonstrate a wider and deeper reliance on the Odes that extends to the context and argument of the original source. To this end she argues[1] a parallel between ode 15. 1-6. and Dl. 6.9.13. Ode 15:[2]

(1) As the sun is the joy to them that seek for its daybreak so is my joy to the Lord:

(2) Because he is my Sun, and his rays have lifted me up; and his light has dispelled all darkness from my face.

(3) In him I have acquired eyes, and have seen his holy day:

(4) Ears I have acquired and I have heard his truth.

(5) The thought of knowledge I have acquired, and I have been delighted by him.

(6) The way of error I have left and I went towards him, and I have received salvation from him abundantly.

Compare. Dl. 6.9. 13-15:-

(1) A. Wlosok. Zur bedeutung der nicht-cyprianischen bibelzitate bei Laktanz. p.244-247.

(2) Cited from the Harris-Mingana translation. op. cit. London. 1920.

'haec res efficit ut philosophi etiamsi natura sint boni, tamen nihil sciant, nihil sapiant. omnis doctrina et uirtus eorum sine capite est quia deum nesciunt, qui est uirtutis ac doctrinae caput. quem qui non adgnoscit, licet uideat, caecus est, licet audiat, surdus, licet loquatur, elinguis est. cum uero conditorem rerum parentemque cognouerit, tunc et uidebit et audiet et loquetur. habere enim caput coepit, in quo sunt sensus omnes conlocati hoc est oculi et aures et lingua. nam profecto is uidet qui ueritatem, in qua deus est, uel deum, in quo ueritas est, oculis cordis aspexerit, is audit qui diuinas uoces ac praecepta uitalia pectori suo adfigit, is loquitur qui caelestia disserens uirtutem ac maiestatem dei singularis enarrat.'

The parallelism amounts to the verbal similarities about 'seeing' and 'hearing'. But on this basis, together with the citation of Ode 19 at 4.12.2. Wlosok attributes a major influence on Lactantius of the christological doctrine enshrined by the Odes. It is doubtful whether the parallelism could amount to grounds for a direct literary dependence, however, and in any case the passage is more reminiscent of the text he cites from the De Providentia of Asclepiades at 7.4. 17-19 which has already been noticed. The surrounding context of the text in question (viz. 6.9. 12-15) bears a close relation both to Asclepiades' overall argument about God's providence, and his stylistic method of expression. The texts have been cited in theprevious section.

Finally, J. Rendel-Harris, in his edition of the Odes, listed Ode 7.4. and Dl. 4.26.30 as something of a parallel.(1) Wlosok adduced his authority to support her thesis that a parallel did exist here and thus "proved" Lactantius to have a direct knowledge of the texts. She cited Harris as saying the pericope showed "the most striking parallel", and thus distorted the whole argument of Harris by putting it out of context.

(1) The texts are cited below.

Harris, in fact, had independently come to the same conclusion as Pichon: "on reading over the fourth book of Lactantius' Dl we came to the conclusion that it was based throughout upon a volume of "Testimonia adversus Judaeos", agreeing closely with the treatment of Cyprian of the same theme, and that, in particular, the quotation about the virgin birth is one of the anti-Judaic extracts in the collection. We thus arrived in this examination at the same result as Pichon, in his study of Lactantius, who is followed pretty closely by Bernard in his introduction to the Odes of Solomon."(1) And on the basis of this analysis he proceeds to the "parallel" at Dl 4.26 which he expressly denies to represent a direct textual dependence: "Having shown the origin of Lactantius' quotation, the force is taken out of attempts to find parallels to the Odes of Solomon elsewhere in Lactantius. The most striking parallel is in Dl. 4.26 "is, qui humilis advenerat ut humilibus et infirmis opem ferret et omnibus spem salutis ostenderet, eo genere afficiendus fuit, quo humiles et infirmi solent, ne quis esset omnino, qui eum non posset imitari." This makes a very good commentary on Ode 7.4,"Like my nature he became that I might put him on," but is not to be taken as derived from it".(2)

Wlosok's evidence for the Odes greatly influencing Lactantian christology, which has already begun to be taken up by the new genre of patrologies,(3) thus collapses. The two parallels she cites are far from convincing and the Lactantian christology quite clearly proceeds under its own motivation, governed by quite definite apologetic ends that are proper to Lactantius and have been operating from the opening page of the Dl.

(1) Harris-Mingana. The Odes and psalms of Solomon. vol.2. p.8.
(2) Ibid. p.11. fn.1.
(3) cp. A. Grillmeier. Christ in Christian tradition vol.1.p.193

This review of Lactantius' patristic sources, then, emphasises the isolation of his theological mind rather than giving us any clear indication of the theological tradition to which he belongs. It is quite evident that even when he uses sources freely and openly as with Minucius, Tertullian or Cyprian he is looking for a "bon mot" more than a theological education, and as for the rest he appears merely to lift out scriptural or historical "proofs" that appeal to him. The parallels with Justin Martyr, Praedicatio Petri et Pauli and the Odes of Solomon can all be explained on the basis of his use of some such kind of scriptural Thesaurus circulating in the Eastern Church.

Chapter Three.

CHAPTER 3

LACTANTIUS AND THE SCRIPTURES

(i) The significance of Patristic Exegesis.

Introduction

Today, patristic exegesis has little significance in scriptural analysis and serves only to exemplify the typological, or allegorical methods of interpretation, or possibly to establish disputed points in the textual tradition. Modern theology has moved considerably from the principles that guided the fathers in their exegesis. Paradoxically, the late Cardinal Daniélou insisted that the re-examination of the pre-nicene exegetical procedures was the supreme way forward for the resurgence of patristic studies in the 20th century,(1) whereby they could significantly contribute to the Church's present understanding of herself and her role in Society. Daniélou laments the fact that such exegetical studies have so far been missing in patristic research.(2) It is an imbalance in the studies which tends to perpetuate the somewhat derisory views of the earlier commentators with regard to patristic exegesis.

(1) cf. J. Daniélou. From Shadows to reality. London 1960 pp. vii-viii.

(2) Among excellent works in this genre of patristics which began to be produced in the post-war period one may recall the pioneering writings:
C. Mondésert. Essai sur Clément d'Alexandrie. Paris. 1945.
H.De Lubac. Histoire et esprit. (on Origen) Paris. 1952
R. Devreesse. Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste. Rome. 1949
M. Pontet. L'exégèse de S. Augustin prédicateur. Paris 1947

W. Fletcher, translating the Dl for its first English redaction in 1871,(1) summed up Lactantius' exegesis of the "wood in the bread" typology(2) (a reference to the Cross and the Eucharist), in the following terms: "This explanation appears altogether fanciful and unwarranted". In this, Fletcher is typical of his generation for in the first youth of higher-criticism of the Bible, the allegorical method was rejected out of hand and it was forgotten that this midrashic procedure was the standard context of Jewish interpretation, how Christ himself would have approached the message of the Old Testament, and the symbolic exegesis on which the christian Kerygma was founded. Lactantius' procedure at 4.18.28 not only had a respectable patristic tradition, and a more immediate source in Justin's Trypho c.72 but,it appears,a deliberate reminiscence of the eucharistic figure at Jn. 6.26-71 and without an examination of these themes, Fletcher's comment would appear to be illegitimate. Such a dimissory attitude unfortunately did not end with the 19th century interpreters and perhaps this kind of exegetical prejudice has made the whole area a blind spot in the contemporary use of patristic theology.

(1) ANCL. Vol. 21 Edinburgh. 1871. p.259. fn.9.

(2) Based on the LXX version of Jeremiah. 11.19. cf. Dl.4.18.28.

Daniélou describes it in the following terms: "Few things are more disconcerting for the modern man than the scriptural commentaries of the fathers of the Church. On the one hand there is a fullness, both theological and spiritual, which gives them a richness unequalled elsewhere. But at the same time modern man feels a stranger to their outlook and they cut clean through his modes of thought. Hence the depreciation, so common, of patristic exegesis, which in varying degrees is felt among so many of our contemporaries".(1)

It is the understanding of the exegetical procedure, however, which is the supreme key to the inner sanctum of a Father's Christian vision and the exegesis of the pre-nicene Church must therefore be accepted and studied sympathetically and on its own terms. It is a view that has been eloquently argued by the Spanish Jesuit theologian, Antonio Orbe: "the surest route to a grasp of the minds of the pre-nicene theologians...is not the study of 'themes';(2) what is needed most of all are detailed studies of the early fathers' exegeses of individual biblical texts, pericopes, and even books. The warp and woof of their theology is their understanding of the Scriptures, which for comprehensiveness and theological depth far outstrips that of modern Bible scholarship with all its technical apparatus.

(1) From Shadows to reality. p.vii.

(2) Orbe is responding to Daniélou's appeal for thematic studies of exegeses embracing a spectrum of Fathers in one monograph. cp. From shadows... p.viii

To understand the mind of the pre-nicene fathers is above all to enter the vast and subtle world of their theological exegesis. Comparative study of the various writers of this period has revealed that they were working within a broad and complex tradition of ecclesiastical exegesis, frequently in close contact and conflict with the brilliantly speculative exegesis of the Gnostics."(1)

The processes of Lactantius' exegesis have hardly been studied so far. The commentators have generally been pleased to follow the opinion set out by René Pichon in 1906, that the scriptural instances of the DI are theologically insignificant: "puisque les ouvrages de Lactance sont des oeuvres d'apologétique chrétienne, il est naturel de chercher d'abord quelle place y occupent les textes sacrés. Or, ce qui frappe le plus, c'est de voir combien cette place est restreinte. Cela suffirait à le distinguer radicalement de ses prédécesseurs: il a bien moins puisé dans le Livres Saints et surtout se les est biens moins assimilés."(2)

Pichon, unfortunately, bases this final analysis more on his unwarranted identification of apologetical procedure with scriptural ignorance in Lactantius, than on any detailed study of the patterns of exegesis. The above citation demonstrates how he tends to equate the apologetic decision not to use scriptural texts (which the pagans despise and are too gross to appreciate see DI 5.4.3-5) with a procedure based on scriptural ignorance.

(1) Antonio Orbe. La patristica y el progreso de la teología Gregorianum. 50. 1969. pp. 543-569. English paraphrase: Theol. Digest. 18. no.3. 1970. pp. 257-259.

(2) R. Pichon. Lactance. p.199

This follows from the ground-bass of his whole study, that major presupposition of Pichon's from which his whole work suffers that is his refusal to treat Lactantius as a theologian : "Rhéteur de métier et non controversiste, il n'a pas été habitué aux études théologiques; il n'a pas eu par conséquent à acquérir l'érudition biblique qui en est la base".(1)

Such an analysis should only follow a detailed exegetical inquiry but in Pichon's case it replaces it, with the result that he seems altogether to miss the significance of the Scriptures in the structure of the DI. At this point his study is particularly unfair to Lactantius in so far as it neglects the quite detailed introduction the apologist himself gives in the DI about his own views of the role and value of the Scriptures.(2) Modern Lactantian studies have been especially aware of this misrepresentation and recent monographs have tended to reverse these judgements. Antonie Wlosok successfully refuted Pichon's claim, based on Brandt, that almost all Scriptural knowledge in the DI came to Lactantius from a slavish reliance on Cyprian(3) and re-opened the question of his own theological and editorial skill in an important article, "Zur bedeutung der nicht-cyprianischen bibelzitate bei Laktanz." (4)

(1) R. Pichon. Lactance. p.201.

(2) (As follows.) P. Monceaux's study: Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne vol.3. Paris 1905 came close after that of Pichon and followed his theological findings almost to the letter, thus re-inforcing a presupposition of Lactantius' biblical ignorance for almost a half-century afterwards.

(3) cp. Pichon. Lactance. pp. 201-203

(4) A. Wlosok. Studia Patristica. 4. 1961. pp.234-250. (TU.79)

Pierre Monat, who edited the SC. version of the Institutes[1], with its commentary, confirmed this new direction of scriptural research in Lactantius with his own conclusions: Il nous semble toutefois possible d'affirmer dès maintenant que Lactance était beaucoup plus imprégné de l'écriture qu'on ne l'a longetemps cru - (il connaissait en tout cas l'écriture beaucoup mieux que s'il n'avait eu en mains qu'un simple receuil à usage apologétique, comme le pense R. Pichon) même quand il écrivait sur un thème cicéronien.[2] And the most recent studies in Lactantian theology have shown signs of developing deeper research into the methods of his scriptural exegesis. This is especially so in the case of Monat himself who followed up his earlier study with one of the first exegetical analyses of Lactantius, in 1978.[3]

Lactantius' knowledge of the Scriptures, then, can neither be ignored nor trivialised. They are arguably, the single most important influence on all Lactantius' theological thinking in the DI and given his avowed intention to offer this book to the ancient world specifically as a Christian treatise that does not rely too much on scriptural evidence to make its point[4], then the substantial and abundant role that his exegetical material still plays in the work is an added testimony to the depth and extent of his scriptural awareness.

(1) Dl. Bk.5. SC. vols. 204-205.

(2) P. Monat. Dl. SC. Vol 204. p.44.

(3) P. Monat. La présentation d'un dossier biblique par Lactance. in:Lactance et son temps. Paris 1978. pp. 273-291.

(4) The relative paucity of scriptural material apart from Dl books 4 and 7 must be seen in terms of a deliberate apologetical strategy: cf. Dl.1.5.1. and cf. R. Laurin. Les orientations maîtresses des apologistes chrétiens. Ag. 61. series B.10 Rome. 1954. pp.267, 270.

The present study will embrace two main aspects of that awareness -

(a) the precise views Lactantius expressed on the role and validity of the Sacred Scripture, that is, his own approach to the Biblical tradition and its apologetic function.

(b) the extent of Scriptural allusions in the DI which underly the text and appear to be meant for the eye of his Christian readers without necessarily being recognised by his pagan audience. It is a study based on the premiss that such indirect allusions are often a more reliable guide to an author's scriptural awareness, than a host of cited texts.

(ii) <u>The principles of Lactantius' scriptural theology</u>.

Lactantius states his apologetical motives quite clearly in regard to the use of the Scriptures.(1) He cites the prophets as the first and most important witness to that first and most important principle of his theology - the unity of God.(2) It is quite clear that he refrains from producing an exegetically based theology solely because of the pagan audience he has in mind. Although chapter 4 defends the utter reliability of the prophets - "unius dei spiritu pleni"(3), he states his reasons for turning away from their testimony: "sed omittamus sane testimonia prophetarum, ne minus idonea probatio videatur esse de his quibus omnino non creditur. veniamus ad auctores et eos ipsos ad veri probationem testes citemus, quibus contra nos uti solent, poetas dico ac philosophos".(4)

(1) eg. Dl. 1.4. 1-2, 1.5.1, and 5.4.4.

(2) Dl. 1.4.1.f.

(3) Dl. 1.4.1.

(4) Dl. 1.5.1.

The first thing that should be noticed about the apologetic method is not his decision to depart from scriptural testimony, but his deliberate manner of prefacing the whole of his subsequent treatment of pagan authorities with a chapter devoted to the pre-eminent place of the prophets.

This passage at (1.4) is meant as a character establishment in the style of a Ciceronic speech. His first point is to establish their objective legal status, thus they are "very many" in number,(1) and speak with agreement and harmony.(2) Since they fulfil these two most important legal requirements Lactantius implies that his Roman literati audience should accord them both auctoritas et veritas. He will return to the same legal criteria in the fourth book and further develop this phenomenon of their 'unanimity'(3) throughout his exegetical christology, relating it to the way in which their predictions had been historically verified.

(1) 'qui fuerant admodum multi.' Dl. 1.4.1.

(2) 'pari et consona voce praedixerint.' Dl. 1.4.1.

(3) Dl. 4.6.3. 'esse autem summi dei filium, qui sit potestate maxima præditus, non tantum congruentes in unum voces prophetarum...'

(4) cp. Dl. 1.4.3., 4.15. 30-31.

But here he presents a closely structured defence of their status, in three syllogistic stages with a climactic illustration. Hence: the true pedagogue(1) does not live in opposition to the principles of his own doctrine;(2) the prophets were true pedagogues for they were holy men;(3) this holiness is established by their endurance, faithful to their office of teaching even to a violent death.(4) And finally their reliability is established by the royal prophets who had no motives for deceit,(5) but who nonetheless agreed with all the others.(6)

This prefatory chapter, then, sets out several important teachings in regard to the prophets, and all of them are clearly designed to appeal to the audience of the educated Roman classes Lactantius hopes to reach. In the first place the prophets are an objectively reliable witness, "many and harmonious". Secondly they are not to be equated with the ecstatic type of prophecy so despised by the Roman litterati classes: ' atquin inpleta esse inplerique cottidie illorum vaticinia videmus et in unam sententiam congruens divinatio docet non fuisse furiosus. quis enim mentis emotae non modo futura praecinere, sed etiam cohaerentia loqui possit?'(7)

(1) cp. Dl. 1.4.4.:'idcirco enim a deo mittebantur, ut et praecones essent maiestatis eius et correctores pravitatis humanae.' Thus they were theological and moral teachers. Their "office" (1.4.6) was to deliver praecepta iustitiae (1.4.7.) This description of their teaching role forms a parallel with the description of Christ's magisterium at Dl. 4.25.1f.

(2) Dl. 1.4.4.

(3) Dl. 1.4.5-6

(4) Dl. 1.4.7.

(5) Meant as a contrast to the Roman parallel of Numa. (Dl.1.22f.)

(6) Dl. 1.4.8.

(7) Dl. 1.4.3.

Thirdly,this insistence on the rationality of the prophets is meant to promote them in the capacity of "moral philosophers" rather than religious fanatics, and so allow the pagan literati to identify them as this type of ethical pedagogue: [illi (philosophi) enim recte vivendi doctores existimati...(1)]. Fourthly, the whole chapter presents so many themes that are to be taken up developed in Bk 4 that it cannot be coincidental that Lactantius describes them in exactly the same terms he will later use to form the basis for his doctrine of the incarnation. Hence these men have the office of proclaiming the Oneness of God and this proclamation is the proof of their inspiration: ' prophetae, qui fuerunt admodum multi, unum deum praedicant, unum locuntur, quippe qui unius dei spiritu pleni quae futura essent pari et consona voce praedixerint.'(2) So it is with Christ. His too is the "praeconium" of proclaiming the oneness of God, and it is his faithfulness to that office even to death which is the root of his exaltation: ' ille vero exhibuit deo fidem; docuit enim quod unus deus sit eumque solum coli oportere, nec umquam se ipse deum dixit, quia non servasset fidem, si missus ut deos tolleret et unum adseret, induceret alium praeter unum. hoc erat non de uno deo facere Praeconium nec eius qui miserat, sed suum proprium negotium gerere ac se ab eo quem inlustratum venerat separare. propterea quia tam fidelis extitit, quia sibi nihil prorsus adsumpsit, ut mandata mittentis inpleret, et sacerdotis perpetui dignitatem et regis summi honorem et iudicis potestatem et dei nomen accepit '(3). The prophets are sent by God as heralds and correctors of men's wickedness (praecones): 'idcirco enim a deo mittebantur, ut et praecones essent maiestatis eius et correctores pravitatis humanae.'(4)

(1) Dl. 1.1.96. A deliberate evocation of Seneca's definition of philosophy.
(2) Dl. 1.4.1.
(3) Dl. 4.14. 18-20
(4) Dl. 1.4.4b.

Christ too is sent as "ambassador",(1) and his task is to correct the malitiam accompanying false worship (v.17a) and lead men from their wickedness to righteousness: 'deus enim cum videret malitiam et falsorum deorum cultus per orbem terrae ita inualuisse (17a)..... filium suum principem angelorum legavit ad homines, ut eos convert-eret ab inpiis et vanis cultibus ad cognoscendum et colendum deum verum, item ut eorum mentes a stultitia ad sapientiam, ab iniquitate ad iustitiae opera traduceret.'(2) Both the prophets (hi non modo quaestum nullum habuerunt, sed etiam cruciatus atque mortem. amara sunt enim vitiosis ac male viventibus praecepta iustitiae)(3) and Christ have the office of delivering the "precepts of righteousness": 'discant igitur homines et intellegant quare deus summus cum legatum ac nuntium suum mitteret ad erudiendam praeceptis iustitiae mortal-itatem, voluerit eum carne indui et cruciatu adfici et morte.'(4)

(1) Legatus ac nuntius (Dl.4.25.1) (4.29.15). Note use of verbal form 'legavit', following.

(2) Dl. 4.14.17.

(3) Dl. 1.4. 6-7

(4) Dl. 4.25.1. or cp Dl. 4.14.18. or 4.13.1 where Christ is a "teacher of righteousness".

Because of their fidelity in delivering these precepts, not only by word, but by living example, both the prophets and Christ were destined to suffer greviously. Compare, for example, the "cruciatus atque mortem" applied to the prophets, above,(1) and the "et cruciatu adfici et morte" applied to Christ at 4.25.1; or as in the wider context of the following passage: 'ergo cum magnus populus ad eum uel ob iustitiam quam docebat uel ob miracula quae faciebat subinde conflueret et praecepta eius audiret et a deo missum deique filium crederet, tum primores Iudaeorum ac sacerdotes et ira stimulati, quod ab eo tamquam peccatores increpabantur, et inuidia deprauati, quod confluente ad eum multitudine contemni se ac deseri uidebant, et, quod caput sceleris illorum fuit, stultitia et errore caecati et inmemores praeceptorum caelestium ac prophetarum coierunt aduersus eum inpiumque consilium de eo tollendo cruciandoque ceperunt: quod prophetae multo ante descripserant.'(2).

There are significant distinguishing elements added by Lactantius to this basic prophetic christology, for example, the supreme priestly role of Christ,(3) his unique role in the fulfilment and explanation of all prophecy,(4) and his role as the transferrer of religion;(5) all of which elevate Lactantian christology beyond the prophetic model and which shall be treated in the christological section, but nevertheless there is a clear parallelism intended here between the first statement of prophetic revelation at (1.4) and his later presentation of the incarnation of Christ himself.(6)

(1) Dl. 1.4.6.

(2) 4.16.5.

(3) Dl. 4.10.1.

(4) Dl. 4.15.31.

(5) Dl. 4.11.7.

(6) In a similar way Lactantius deliberately parallels the witness of the OT prophets with that of Peter and Paul. cp. Dl. 1.4.1f and 5.3.1-4.

It has been often assumed that Lactantius' apologetic motive explains his restrained use of the scriptural evidence, a restraint that is only broken in Bk.4. when he elaborates on the mystery of the person of Christ. Lactantius, however, shows the signs of another consideration which was before his mind, one that may have influenced his apologetical procedure considerably, for he speaks of the scriptures in terms of holy mysteries; the sacramenta or mysteria arcana of the Church, that cannot be delivered into the hands of unbelievers. When he refers to the scriptural arguments adduced in the Ad Christianos of Hierocles it is in terms which describe the latter as a betrayer of the mystery "Sacramenti proditor".(1) Hierocles' greatest crime is his narration of the intima the scriptures contain, which are reserved to the faithful: ' conposuit enim libellos duos, non contra christianos, ne inimice insectari uideretur, sed ad Christianos, ut humane ac benigne consulere putaretur: in quibus ita falsitatem scripturae sacrae arguere conatus est, tamquam sibi esset tota contraria. nam quaedam capita quae repugnare sibi uidebantur exposuit adeo multa, adeo intima enumerans, ut aliquando ex eadem disciplina fuisse uideatur. quod si fuit, quis eum Demosthenes poterit ab inpietate defendere, qui religionis cui fuerat accensus et fidei cuius nomen induerat et sacramenti quod acceperat proditor factus est? '(2)

(1) Dl. 5.2.15.

(2) Dl. 5.2.13-15a.

It is this sacred character of the scriptures which is Lactantius' primary reason for not using them in an apologetic work. And the second reason - that the pagans will not be able either to accept them, or understand them anyway - follows directly from this. If the scriptures are arcana or sacramenta , they presuppose an initiation before they become comprehensible, and if that initiation is not given, the human mind will be too gross to accept them as truth. Lactantius explains Hierocles' ignorant exegesis in these terms. The contradictions he discovered were those of his own uninformed mind: 'quae igitur temeritas erat id audere dissoluere quod illi nemo interpretatus est? bene, quod aut nihil didicit aut nihil intellexit. tantum enim abest a diuinis litteris repugnantia, quantum ille afuit a fide et ueritate.'(1) Thus Lactantius' apology neatly presents another defence of the value of scriptural witness by paradoxically reversing the very claims of the pagan literati. These tended to reject the scriptures on account of their literary crudeness. The fathers universally testify to this apologetic problem.(2) But Lactantius reverses the argument and replies that it is the literati who are too gross and crude to appreciate the message of the scriptures, since their intellects are baffled by the arcana they contain.

(1) Dl. 5.2.16.

(2) cp. Origen Contr. Cels. 1.62, Hom. 8.1., Clement of Alexandria Protrept. 8.77, Arnobius Adv. Nat. 1.45, 1.58, Jerome Ep.53.10 , Basil. Ep. 339 Ad Libanium, Chrysostom Hom. in Joannem.2.2. cp. Lactantius Dl. 5. 1. 15-20.

The same argument is repeated later in the context of vindicating Christian eschatological doctrine in BK.7. In the Hierocles passage he spoke in terms of intimum, sacramentum, sacra scriptura, divinae litterae,(1) a mystagogic approach which culminates in his insistence that man needs this mystery of scripture interpreted for him before he is allowed to discourse about it.(2)

(1) Dl. 5.2. 14-16. Brandt's text, lines 9,12,6, 13/16 respectively.

(2) His argument here is on two levels, a rhetorical one, i.e. a man should not teach a subject which he has not properly studied (viz the scriptures "falling by chance" into Hierocles' hands) and a theological one. The use of the term "interpretatus" recalls his Emmaus narrative in DM. 2.2. (Brandt. CSEL 27. p.174) but the theological argument is substantially found at Dl. 4.20. 1-3 and consists in his insistence that only Christ himself can open the scriptures (patefacit arcana)

In the 7th Book he presents the 'doctrine of the holy prophets' as nostra sapientia, as the arcanum of God which is to be preserved in the inner conscience of the believer(1) and reserved from those who are not ready to receive the truth (istos profanos) for it is a mysterium which the faithful (qui nomen fidei gerimus) must hide (abscondi) : `haec est doctrina sanctorum prophetarum, quam Christiani sequimur, haec nostra sapientia, quam isti qui uel fragilia colunt uel inanem philosophiam tuentur, tamquam stultitiam uanitatemque derident, quia nos defendere hanc publice atque adserere non solemus, deo iubente ut quieti ac silentes arcanum eius in abdito atque intra nostram conscientiam teneamus nec aduersus istos ueri profanos, qui non discendi, sed arguendi atque inludendi gratia inclementer deum ac religionem eius inpugnant, pertinaci contentione certemus. abscondi enim tegique mysterium quam fidelissime oportet, maxime a nobis, qui nomen fidei gerimus.'(2)

(1) here the "intra nostram conscientiam" is possibly another allusion to the Emmaus narrative (Lk. 24.32 (Vulg)"nonne cor nostrum ardens erat in nobis, dum loqueretur in via et aperiret nobis scripturas?")

(2) Dl. 7.26. 8-9.

This view of Lactantius' approach to the scriptures, in terms of christian mystery to be guarded from pagan sight, is substantiated in the habitual way he describes them as arcanum. In both Classical and Christian Latin this combined the sense of a concealed secret with the peculiar dimension of religious mystery. Lactantius, then, has an ideal tool for apologetic communication. Cicero lists arcana alongside occulta: '.. at quicum joca, seria, ut dicitur, quicum arcana, quicum occulta omnia..'(1) While Ovid and Horace frequently use arcana sacra to refer to the rites of religious mysteries.(2)

Lactantius tends to combine both connotations(3) of "secret", and "religious mysteries" but in this his pagan readers will understand the usage and both for them and his christian audience(4) it serves to emphasise a theological treatment of the scriptural texts as mysteries that cannot be handed over to the uninitiated.(5).

(1) Cicero. De Fin. 2. 26. 85.

(2) eg. Hor: Epod. 5.52..'.arcana cum fiunt sacra' (Ovid. Met. 10.436) in Hor. Carmina. 3.2.27 'arcanum' becomes a designation of the deity.

(3) cp. eg: Dl. 7.14.7, 'mundum deus et hoc rerum naturae admirabile opus, sicut arcanis sacrae scripturae continetur,... consummavit.'

(4) To whom Lactantius was addressing a different kind of apologia, Viz: - why he uses the scriptures so little in his work.

(5) Here his use of "arcanum" would remind his christian readers of that view of scriptural theology enshrined for example in 2 Cor. 12.4: 'audivit arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui.'

His usual treatment of the scriptures presents us with two main avenues of approach; that is when he classifies them as (arcana, sacra) and when he refers to them as (sanctae, caelestes, or divinae litterae).

It is not that he has two distinct views on the Christian scripture, rather that he presents two slightly different emphases within the same approach. In a few instances where he refers to the scriptures in a general way and does not have to make an apologetic defence, he uses both descriptions interchangeably. Thus, for example, the "holy letters" are one and the same as the "secrets of the prophets" and Christ unravels them: 'Profectus ergo in Galilaeam - noluit enim se Iudaeis ostendere, ne adduceret eos in paenitentiam atque inpios resanaret -, discipulis iterum congregatis scripturae sanctae litteras id est prophetarum arcana patefecit, quae antequam pateretur perspici nullo modo poterant, quia ipsum passionemque eius adnuntiabant.'(1) And he can also speak of the narrative of Israel's sojourn in Egypt as the arcana sanctarum litterarum (2) However, his normal method of referring to the scriptures as sanctae litterae makes a precise point. It is a verbal formula for Lactantius that serves to introduce scriptural testimony as true doctrine. His phrase "so the holy letters teach us" becomes a constantly repeated theme throughout the 7 books of the Dl.(3)

(1) Dl. 4.20.1.

(2) Dl. 7.15.1.f. or again at Dl. 4.15.12 where the scriptures are "arcanae litterae" which mysteriously predict the coming of Christ.

(3) The consistency of the formula is quite notable. cf. Dl.2.8.63, 2.11.18, 2.13,4, 4.7.2, 4.8.6, 4.15.23, 7.20.5, 7.21.3. There are only two departures from the "docentes"formula: at 4.7.2. where "traditum" is used with reference to Christ, and 7.20.5. where the verb becomes "witness" (contestantibus) as the scriptures and the Sibyl are used jointly.

For example: ' denique sanctae litterae docent hominem fuisse ultimum dei opus et sic inductum esse in hunc mundum quasi in domum iam paratam et instructam;'(1)

or again: 'primum nec sciri a quoquam possunt nec enarrari opera diuina, sed tamen sanctae litterae docent, in quibus cautum est illum dei filium dei esse sermonem itemque ceteros angelos dei spiritus esse.'(2)

or: 'sed tamen docent nos sanctae litterae quemadmodum poenas impii sint daturi.'(3)

The litterae caelestes formula represents the same presentation of scripture as true doctrine but, as one could expect, does so with more emphasis on the transcendent revelatory side of the teaching. Thus Lactantius thinks it remarkable that even without the benefit of this heavenly doctrine, Cicero can "hand down the same thing as the prophets" on the creation of man by God: ' deus igitur omnium machinator fecit hominem. quod Cicero quamuis expers caelestium litterarum uidit tamen, qui libro de legibus primo hoc idem tradidit (quod) prophetae. cuius uerba subieci.'(4)

(1) Dl. 2.8.63

(2) Dl. 4.8.6.

(3) Dl. 7.21.3.

(4) Dl. 2.11.15.

Cicero taught correctly in this case, but Lactantius normally uses this formula to represent how easy it is for men to pervert true doctrine when they reject the teaching of the heavenly letters. In both the following pericopes where he uses the formula he is referring to the philosophers and repeating his thesis that man's knowledge of truth stands in absolute dependence on divine revelation.(1)

Since the philosophers will not accept that there can be a valid epistemology based on revealed teaching, he says,they must inevitably pervert their understanding of the truth. This is especially so in their rejection of Christ, the true teacher; and the rejection arises from their ignorance of scriptural doctrine: ' Confirmata sunt ut opinor quae falsa et incredibilia putantur ab iis quos uera caelestium litterarum doctrina non inbuit.(2)

(1) cp. Dl. 1.1.5-6, or. 2.3.23-24.

(2) Dl. 4.22.1.

When he speaks of the heretics later in Bk 4[1] he applies the same criticism of their rationalist, reductionist, philosophy. They were not sufficiently instructed in the "heavenly letters," he says, and so have perverted their teaching, composing a "new doctrine without root or foundation": ' quidam uero non satis caelestibus litteris eruditi cum ueritatis accusatoribus respondere non possent, obicientibus uel inpossibile uel incongruens esse ut deus in uterum se mulieris includeret nec caelestem illam maiestatem ad tantam infirmitatem potuisse deduci, ut hominibus contemtui derisui contumeliae ludibrio esset, postremo etiam cruciamenta perferret atque exsecrabili patibulo figeretur, quae omnia cum neque ingenio neque doctrina defendere ac refutare possent - nec enim uim rationemque penitus peruidebant -, deprauati sunt ab itinere recto et caelestes litteras corruperunt, ut nouam sibi doctrinam sine ulla radice ac stabilitate conponerent.'[2]

(1) Dl.4.30, he appears to refer to gnostic-type heresies (vv.6-7) Montanists (v.8), then explicitly lists Phrygians, Novatianists, Valentinians, Marcionites, Anthropians and (Arians) (verse 10) the last is probably a later scribal addendum.

(2) Dl. 4.30. 6-7.

The third formula in this category of divinae litterae, repeats the same approach. Scripture is essentially a depository of true doctrine - it teaches men: ' possum diuinis docere litteris uinum atque fruges ante progeniem Caeli atque Saturni fuisse in usu hominum, sed ab his sane inuenta esse fingamus.'(1) It gives the doctrine about the soul: 'atquin utrumque hoc falsum est.docent enim diuinae litterae non extingui animas, sed aut pro iustitia praemio adfici aut poena pro sceleribus sempiterna;'(2) or about the life of man: ' sic facta est uita hominis temporaria, sed tamen longa, quae in mille annos prorogaretur. quod diuinis litteris proditum.'(3)

The use of the adjective divinae in association with litterae is the closest term Lactantius has, linking the scriptures with his pagan audience's understanding of their own oracles as "divine testimonies".(4) However, it is not a parallelism that Lactantius wishes to elaborate. He rarely describes the pagan oracles as divine voices or testimonies, and only then when they agree with scriptural doctrine.

(1) Dl. 1.18.18. On the teaching role of scripture cp Dl.3.1.10 Lactantius explains Jewish errors on ignorance of scripture (4.18.1), and all men without these divine letters "fail in knowledge": (5.18.4.)

(2) Dl. 3.19.3.

(3) Dl. 2.12.21.

(4) cp. Dl. 1.6.1, in reference to the Sibylline oracles.

He is careful about his use of the term "divine testimony" to describe the oracles of Trismegistus(1) and refers to them merely as "resembling a divine testimony". Yet even Cicero can be classed as "almost a divine voice" whenever he teaches what the scriptures verify as truth.(2) The real "divine voices" are specified in the following chapter as the scriptural doctrine which God has revealed.(3) The real "divine hymns" are not the Sibylline oracles, or Hermetic literature, but the Old Testament psalms:[huius pater (David) divinorum scriptor hymnorum in psalmo XXXII Sic ait....(4)].

So Lactantius is very careful to distinguish the different types of his proof texts. Although he will use pagan oracles if they fit his case, as for example with his use of the Delphic Pythia to show the unity of God,(5) he consigns the whole root of pagan oracles to demonism in BK 2.(6) The only exceptions he makes to the theory of demonic inspiration are the Sibylline hymns and the Hermetic literature, though neither are ever called "divinae litterae",which is reserved solely for the scriptures, and both are excepted from the demonic theory precisely because they afford him parallels (not replacements) of the Christian Scriptures throughout the DI. We have already noticed how Lactantius does not class the Hermetic literature as 'divinum' but as having the "resemblance of a divine testimony"(7) and at several instances he later qualifies his Hermetic material by speaking directly of its value.

(1) Dl. 1.6. 1-5.

(2) Dl. 6.8.6.

(3) Dl. 6.9.15. Thus within the Dl the prophets alone are called 'sacras voces' in an unqualified way: Dl.2.12.19, 4.8.12.

(4) Dl. 4.8.14.

(5) Dl. 1.7.1. Lactantius never speaks of the Orphic oracles as "divine" for he is to class them as demonic.

(6) cp. Dl. 2.16.13f.

(7) Dl. 1.6.1.

In each case it is afforded value precisely because it echoes the scriptural doctrine.

Thus the Hermetic teachings on the Father and Son are repetitions of things contained in the divine secrets (that is the scripture): 'ego uero non dubito quin ad ueritatem Trismegistus hac aliqua ratione peruenerit, qui de deo patre omnia, de filio locutus est multa quae diuinis continentur arcanis'.(1) Or again Hermes' suitability (idoneus) as a witness consists precisely in his congruity with the prophetic doctrine:- 'hoc autem duplex sacrificii genus quam sit uerissimum, Trismegistus Hermes idoneus testis est, qui nobiscum id est cum prophetis quos sequimur, tam re quam uerbis congruit'.(2) So it is the prophetic teaching(3) which is 'divine' but men reject it out of hand because it is not sophisticated enough for them: 'nam haec in primis causa est cur aput sapientes et doctos et principes huius saeculi scriptura sancta fide careat, quod prophetae communi ac simplici sermone ut ad populum sunt locuti. contemnuntur itaque ab iis qui nihil audire uel legere nisi expolitum ac disertum uolunt nec quicquam haerere animis eorum potest nisi quod aures blandiore sono mulcet, illa uero quae sordida uidentur, anilia inepta uulgaria existimantur. adeo nihil uerum putant nisi quod auditu suaue est, nihil credibile nisi quod potest incutere uoluptatem: nemo rem ueritate ponderat, sed ornatu. non credunt ergo diuinis, quia fuco carent, sed ne illis quidem qui ea interpretantur, quia sunt et ipsi aut omnino rudes aut certe parum docti. nam ut plane sint eloquentes, perraro contingit: cuius rei causa in aperto est. eloquentia enim saeculo seruit'.(4)

(1) Dl. 4.27.20.

(2) Dl. 6.25.10.

(3) to them belongs true <u>divinatio</u> (1.4.8, 7.13.2) unlike the <u>divinatio</u> known to the ancient world which was demonic (2.16.1f)

(4) Dl. 5.1. 15-18.

It is not accurate then to accuse Lactantius of conflating scriptural testimony with Hermetic or Sibylline texts, he is quite precise on the relative value he affords each.(1) The pagan oracles are useful since they command pagan allegiance but the real value of the authorities (Sibylline and Hermetic) lies in the way they are used as subsidiary parallels to the true doctrine of scripture. A striking example of this clear distinction between pagan oracles and scripture is his different terminology - the prophetae are solely those judaeo-christian prophets, the pagan representatives are referred to as vates.(2) Scripture is always the ultimate authority as far as Lactantius is concerned.(3) In relation to poetic testimony on the soul he sums up his attitude as follows:' et tamen idem testati sunt non auctorem se certum, sed opinionem sequi, ut Maro qui ait: sit mihi fas audita loqui. quamvis igitur veritatis arcana in parte corruperint, tamen ipsa res eo verior invenitur, quod cum prophetis in parte consentiunt: quod nobis ad probationem rei satis est.(4)

(1) eg the introduction of the value of the Sibyls as witnesses (Dl.1.6.6f) parallels and stands as a subsidiary to the same type of introduction previously afforded to the prophets (Dl.1.4.1.f) (cp esp. 1.6.14)

(2) cp. Dl. 7.23.5. and C. Mohrmann. Les éléments vulgaires du latin des chrétiens vc 2. 1948. p.170.

(3) He often notes that the scripture is often the only source of the most secret doctrines (eg the soul's nature 3.19.2-3, the last things 7.14. 15-16, or the judgement of souls 7.20.5)

(4) Dl. 7.22. 3-4.

Lactantius' other method of referring to scripture is by the epithets - sacra or arcana. Such instances reiterate his apologetic concerns in dealing with scriptural evidence. When he describes that evidence as sacra it is usually to insist, against pagan criticism, that the scriptures are a true and valid witness. The appeal to the "sacred" character of the source is meant to offset negative criticism. So, for example, he defends "sacred scripture" against pagan charges that it lacks the authority of antiquity: 'quare cum omnis temporum series et ex Iudaicis et ex Graecis Romanisque historiis colligatur, etiam singulorum prophetarum tempora colligi possunt; quorum sane ultimus Zacharias fuit, quem constat sub Dario rege, secundo anno regni eius octauo mense cecinisse. adeo antiquiores etiam Graecis scriptoribus prophetae reperiuntur. quae omnia eo profero, ut errorem suum sentiant qui scripturam sacram coarguere nituntur tamquam nouam et recens fictam, ignorantes ex quo fonte religionis sanctae origo manaverit.'(1)

(1) Dl. 4.5. 8-9. The description of scripture as the "fount of religion" recalls the similar phrase of Cyprian's Ad Quirinum I. (praef). In book 2. 12-13 he has already set out the scriptural account of the early ages of man and he criticises the pagan histories for being ignorant of the "fontem atque originem veritatis" (Dl.2.13.13). The latter phrase can only refer to the scriptures themselves. As the fount of all truth so they stand as the "fundamentum doctrinae" in his treatment here (4.5.10).

And he again defends "sacred scripture" against the charge of internal contradiction (5.2.13). The epithet sacra insists on the truth of this source. It is true because it is a divine testimony. Lactantius' use of arcana fits into the same category. The sacred origin (viz. arcanum as a secret religious mystery) is the guarantee of scriptural reliability. So, the scriptures are the divina arcana, introduced as ultimate evidence. In the following passage, for example, Lactantius is speaking of "a sure proof" of doctrine in regard to the witness of Trismegistus, but his final argument is to present the certainty of Hermetic teaching in a subordinate context to the "divine secrets of scripture": 'ego uero non dubito quin ad ueritatem Trismegistus hac aliqua ratione peruenerit, qui de deo patre omnia, de filio locutus est multa quae diuinis continentur arcanis.'(1) In the 7th book he describes the scriptures simply as arcana veritatis but the context expands our understanding of the significance the term has for him by discussing the sacramental character of the source. The poetic narratives of the soul's ascent from Hades is presented as a corrupt version of the Resurrection Kerygma, because, as uninitiated men, they were unable to be taught by a sacramental doctrine.(2)

(1) Dl. 4.27.20.

(2) Dl. 7.22.2,4.

The scriptural narrative once more appears as the final authority on doctrinal matters, the sufficient proof and ultimate standard of truth (cp 7.22.4 cited previously). So Lactantius is using this designation of scripture as Arcana (religious mystery, or sacrament) in two distinct ways. We have earlier seen his apologia that he will not use scriptural evidence extensively because it is a Christian sacrament that must not be handed over to the pagans. Even if it were handed over to them they would be unable, on account of their profanity, to understand or profit from the scriptures.(1) This is the first use to which he applies the concept. It is an apologia addressed primarily to his Christian readership. He is presumably aware that his method of using scriptural evidence in such restricted ways, and even then paralleled by pagan oracles, might arouse criticism within the Church and he offers this "sacramental apology", then,as some form of method-justification. And yet the fact is he does use scriptural testimony in the DI,and in the fourth book he uses it extensively. So are his sacramental reservations inconsistent? Not in his eyes, for he will not use the sacramental texts in the context of apologetic argument he will only use them after sufficient introduction and in the context of Christian catechesis. The distinction is very precise, but it is only in the area of positive doctrinal catechesis that he ever presents the scriptural evidence to his pagan audience. This is why the vast majority of his scriptural texts appear in Bk.4, on the life of Jesus.

(1) He says that scripture is too bright a light to give to the uninitiated without blinding them. Dl.5.4.5. If men are "profani a sacramentis" then they can only misinterpret the nature of prophecy. cp. Dl. 7.24. 9-10.

It is not enough to explain this abundance of exegesis on the grounds that he had no other proofs to use, for it is quite clear he has deliberately embarked on an extensive exegetical christology as the very structure of his argument. He has used scripture here precisely because it is a sacrament and he is attempting to initiate his audience by a catechesis on the life of Christ.(1)

If this has been his sacramental argument for his Christian readers, he applies it in a positive way but with a significantly different emphasis, for his pagan readers. As often as he stresses the sacramentality of the scriptures he means them to appreciate the difficulty of correct interpretation in this area. The first problem is the way the educated mind scorns the "unpolished simplicity" of the scriptural texts. Lactantius offers this as a demonstration of how the sacramental character of the texts baffles and repels the superficial man and calls for a deep spiritual insight.(2) His major area of development, however, is to use the concept of arcana sacramenta to insist on the ancient character of the texts, and through this to insist that the incarnate Christ can only be correctly interpreted in the light of God's ancient plan of salvation,- that is, the first nativity of Christ before time is the only way the second nativity in recent time can be understood.(3)

(1) The conclusion to Bk 3 demonstrates that he designed the 4th book to be more of a catechesis than the apologia of the previous three. cf. Dl. 3-30.10. and the main theological presentation of Bk.4.(ch.5 onwards) notably begins with a second preface on the prophets and the nature of scriptural authority.

(2) Cp. Dl. 5.1.15f. 6.21.5.

(3) The scriptural texts are especially employed to present this idea of God's plan of salvation spanning the ages of man cp. eg Dl. 4.8.1. or again on the parallelism of the two nativities : 4.13. 2-5. cp. Thesis. ch.6.(ii) a-c.

This scheme of salvation history - Christ's birth before time,(1) his birth in time(2) and his coming at the end of time(3) - is one mystery of Christ that Lactantius knows can only be grasped by the man with a scriptural vision. So it is he prefaces his treatment of the birth before time with an extended scriptural prelude on the nature of prophecy (especially its antiquity)(4), does the same with his treatment of the birth in time, prefacing this with a synopsis of the whole scheme of salvation history,(5) and finally completes the trilogy with a final scriptural discourse(6) recounting the biblical events of salvation history before Christ's coming at the end of time. The first preface at 4.5, therefore, places sacra scriptura in the right context of its immense antiquity.(7)

The second preface presents scripture as holy secrets containing the whole order (ordo) of God's plan which in so far as it prepares the ground for the coming of Christ, also prepares for the manifestation of the whole system of religion (fundamentum divinae religionis et ratio). The scriptures are almost equated with the providential plan of God: 'hic rerum textus, his ordo in arcanis sanctarum litterarum continetur. sed prius ostendam qua de causa in terram uenerit Christus, ut fundamentum diuinae religionis et ratio clarescat.'(8)

(1) Dl. 4.6 - 4.9.
(2) Dl. 4.10.1-4, 4.11f.
(3) Dl. 4.12.15, Dl. 7.19.f.
(4) Dl. 4.5.1.f.
(5) Dl. 4.10.5-49
(6) Dl. 7.14.5 - 7.15.6.
(7) cp. Dl. 4.5. 9-10.
(8) Dl. 4.10.19.

The third biblical preface again relates the sacramentality of the source, to its role as the supplier of a time-transcending context for God's activity in Christ. Here the "holy scriptures" are the source of instruction in truth for the Christian initiates, which allows them to be able to explain God's salvific plan embracing the beginning and the very end of the world: nos autem, quos diuinae litterae ad scientiam ueritatis erudiunt, principium mundi finemque cognouimus: de quo nunc in fine operis disseremus, quoniam de principio in secundo libro explicauimus.(1) So it is then that wherever the scriptures are offered as arcana or sacramenta, it is usually Lactantius' concern to stress their role in elucidating the vast and mysterious plan of God's provident salvation(2) - a time-transcending vision that only the scriptural testimony can rightly convey. It is a vision that is essential for the correct understanding of Jesus, and this explains why Lactantius adopts the method of an exegetical christology in Bk 4.

(1) Dl. 7.14.5.

(2) This "hidden" aspect of the Truth comes directly from the will of God. The Hebrews, for example, possessed truth in so far as they held on to true cult and holy scripture, but God himself stopped the philosophers from recognising this truth: 'deus, ne arcanum sui divini operis in propatulo esset, thensaurum sapientiae ac veritatis abscondit.' (Dl. 4.2.3.) The providential plan, in the DI, hinges on Christ's own person whose role it is to open those scriptures and give the plan its revealed meaning cp. Dl. 4.20.

(iii) The scriptural allusions in the DI

The purpose of looking at passages in the DI which seem to make allusions or recall biblical instances is valuable in that it gives us some idea about the wider scriptural culture of an author. If Lactantius has severely restricted his scriptural material for purely apologetic reasons one might still expect a biblical awareness to emerge in other areas; perhaps not specified but still meant to suggest a scriptural foundation for an argument that would be recognisable for his Christian readership. The two ways in which Lactantius uses the concept of the sacramental nature of the scriptures:

(a) to offer this idea apologetically, probably to his Christian readers, as the reason he will not use exclusive scriptural arguments, and

(b) to emphasise the mysterious nature of the salvific plan the scriptures represent, so that his pagans readers will learn to locate the 'new' Christian religion in its ancient prophetic context,

- both suggest that Lactantius is capable of offering arguments in the DI at more than one level. Pierre Monat has recognized that this applies fairly frequently in the DI:- "et pourtant, dans certains passages, nous avons cru discerner des souvenirs scripturaires, ou des reprises de formules chrétiennes, pas trop voyantes certes, pour ne pas effaroucher le lecteur païen, mais suffisamment explicites pour que le lecteur chrétien puisse les ressentir comme siennes. On entre ainsi plus ou moins profondément dans l'oeuvre selon que l'on a plus ou moins de lumières, que l'on est plus ou moins précisément initié à la doctrine chrétienne."(1)

(1) P. Monat. Dl. Bk.5. SC. Vol. 204. p.42.

This kind of scriptural allusion meant for a Christian reader which would probably pass unnoticed by a pagan(1) is quite common in the DI(2) and argues that it is apologetic intent rather than the limitations of his knowledge which restricts the role of scriptural exegesis in Lactantius.

There are a few reminiscences of notable phrases from the Old Testament, as when he speaks of the universality of divine law: `cum uero ab ortu solis usque ad occasum lex diuina suscepta sit et omnis sexus, omnis actas et gens et regio unis ac paribus animis deo seruiat.'(3) 'From the rising to the setting of the sun", recalls Malachi 1. 10-11. It is a text he knows from Cyprian and uses in his own exposition of true worship at (DI. 4.11.8):"quoniam a solis ortu usque in occasum clarificabitur nomen meum apud gentes". It is the same book of Malachi which furnishes him with hisscriptural authority for the conception of God as "Father and Lord."(4) His description of the righteous as "workers of good and just deeds": 'qui laniant et occidunt eos quos et ipsi fatentur imitatores esse iustorum, quia bona operentur et iusta,'(5) also recalls the psalmist's description of the righteous man, in ps. 15.2: πορευόμενος ἄμωμος καὶ ἐργαζόμενος δικαιοσύνην.(LXX).

(1) though it is rare for Lactantius to adopt a common pagan term to connote a specifically Christian idea (eg Dl. 5.3.9 and Lactantius' description of the miracles of Jesus as "mirabilia") this term is only used in the context of specifically refuting the pagan claim that Christ was a magician. Elsewhere he describes the miracles in a more Christian form as 'virtutes' (Dl. 4.13.17, 4.15.4,16, 7.17.2) cp C. Mohrmann. Les éléments vulgaires du latin des chrétiensp.173

(2) In spite of Laurin's claim to discover no such material in his reading of the DI: Orientations maîtresses..p.270.

(3) Dl. 5.13.5. cp Cyprian, Ad Quir. 1.16.

(4) Mal. 1.6. If I am indeed father, where is my honour? If I am indeed master, where is my respect?

(5) Dl. 5.9.2.

His account of the creation of man as the image of God, and his explanation of the etymology of homo as from humus deliberately recall the two creation accounts in Genesis where God stoops down to the earth to make man from the dust: ' tum fecit sibi ipse simulacrum sensibile atque intellegens id est ad imaginis suae formam, qua nihil potest esse perfectius: hominem figurauit ex limo terrae; unde homo nuncupatus est, quod sit fictus ex humo.'(1) His later allusion to man's creation: ' nesciunt enim quantum sit nefas adorare aliud praeterquam deum, qui condidit caelum atque terram, qui humanum genus finxit inspirauit luce donauit,'(2) is another clear allusion to the same Genesis text (2.7) And his description of the heretics at 4.30.1 as "broken cisterns" who have abandoned the "abundant fountain of God" is a direct reminiscence of the passage in Jeremiah where the "people of God" have abandoned their Lord after their divine election: 'Sed quoniam multae haereses extiterunt et instinctibus daemonum populus dei scissus est, determinanda est nobis ueritas breuiter et in suo proprio domicilio conlocanda, ut si quis aquam uitae cupiet haurire, non ad detritos lacus deferatur qui non habent uenam, sed uberrimum dei nouerit fontem quo inrigatus perenni luce potiatur.'(3)

(1) Dl. 2.10.3. cp Gen. 1.27, and 2.6-7.

(2) Dl. 5.18.13.

(3) Dl. 4.30.1. cp. Jeremiah 2.13 (Cyprian. Ad Quir.3.59):'haec maligna fecit plebs mea derelinquerunt me fontem aquae vivae, et foderunt sibi lacus contritos qui non poterant aquam continere.'

This is the only Old Testament allusion in Lactantius[1] that has a Cyprianic parallel in the Ad Quirinum.[2] But while Lactantius' (uberrimum dei.....fontem) may recall the preface to the Ad Quirinum: (Bibere uberius et saturari copiosius poteris, situ quoque ad eosdem divinae plenitudinis fontes nobiscum pariter poturus accesseris), the scriptural allusion evidently departs from Cyprian's version in several details.[3] This variation of text is a common phenomenon even in his direct employment of the Ad Quirinum and will be discussed in the subsequent section of the present chapter. Apart from these few references to the Old Testament, however, all of Lactantius' implicit allusions to scriptural imagery or scriptural instances are drawn from the New Testament. Excepting certain biblicisms of style[4] which by now were common in all Christian writers, even the most stylistically conscious such as Lactantius, one can recognise at least 34 clear allusions to the Gospels,[5] thirty four allusions to the Pauline letters (especially 1 Corinthians) and no fewer than sixteen allusions to the Letter to the Hebrews. It is evident,then, that the New Testament texts have formed a significant part of his scriptural study.

(1) as distinct from a direct citation of a text.

(2) Dl. 4.30.1b.

(3)

Cyprian:		Lactantius:
lacus contritos	...	detritos lacus
plebs mea.	...	populus dei
aquae vivae	...	aquam vitae
non poterant aquam continere...		non habent venam

(4) eg. 'it is written', 4.17.6, 4.18.13 et al. cf. C. Mohrmann. Les éléments vulgaires du latin des chrétiens. p.174.

(5) cf. Appendix 1.

Pauline Allusions:

The allusions to Paul demonstrate that (as with all his patristic sources) he is indebted more in the realm of stylistic vocabulary than theological argument. So it is he describes faith as something "to put on" (induerat) in the manner of Paul,(1) though he keeps only the general image, not the apostle's extended analogy, and omits all reference to faith as "breastplate" or salvation as a "helmet".

There is an equally free allusion to Paul's doxology: "All that exists comes from him, all is by him and for him", in Lactantius' demonstration that God created Ex nihilo(2); And there are signs of other such allusions, meant for recognition by his Christian readers but sufficiently distant from their scriptural context to be capable of a universal apologetic application, in his extended demonstration how the ethical impotence of paganism is revolutionised by the new life in Christ.(3) The Lactantian text betrays its original inspiration with its Pauline conclusion - itaque sapientia illorum, ut plurimum efficiat, non excindit uitia, sed abscondit. pauca uero dei praecepta sic totum hominem inmutant et exposito uetere nouum reddunt, ut non cognoscas eundem esse.(4)

(1) Dl. 5.2.15.'..qui religionis cui fuerat accensus et fidei cuius nomen induerat et sacramenti quod acceperat proditor factus est.' cf. Ephesians 6.14. (Vulg).'. induti Ioricam iustitiae.' and 1 Thess 5.8 (Vulg).'..induti loricam fidei et caritatis et galeam, spem salutis.'

(2) Rom. 11.36. (vulg.)' quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia: ipsi gloria in saecula.' cp. Dl.2.8.29.'cum ex ipso vel in ipso sint omnia.'

(3) cp Dl. 3.26.1-13 and Eph. 4.17-24. It is a text Lactantius evidently knows since he directly alludes to Eph.4.26 in De Ira 21.5:'prohibet in ira permanere.'

(4) Dl. 3.26.13. cf. Eph. 4.22-24 (vulg):' deponere vos secundum pristinam conversationem veterem hominem, qui corrumpitur secundum desideria erroris. renovamini autem spiritu mentis vestrae, et induite novum hominem, qui secundum deum creatus est in iustitia et sanctitate veritatis.'

The great majority of his Pauline allusions, however, spring from Corinthians.I. It is from this letter that Lactantius draws an authority for his apologetic method of reserving the scriptures from uninitiated pagans. Even while dissenting from Cyprian's exegetical method, Lactantius justifies his procedure on scriptural grounds: 'nam cum ageret contra hominem ueritatis ignarum, dilatis paulisper diuinis lectionibus formare hunc a principio tamquam rudem debuit eique paulatim lucis principia monstrare, ne toto lumine obiecto caligaret. nam sicut infans solidi ac fortis cibi capere uim non potest ob stomachi teneritudinem, sed liquore lactis ac mollitudine alitur, donec firmatis uiribus uesci fortioribus possit, ita et huic oportebat, quia nondum poterat capere diuina, prius humana testimonia offerri id est philosophorum et historicorum, ut suis potissimum refutaretur auctoribus.'(1)

(1) Dl. 5.4.5-6 cf. 1 Cor. 3.2. (Cyprian. Ad Quir. 3.3.1)'et ego quidem, fratres, non potui vobis loqui quasi spiritalibus sed quasi carnalibus, quasi infantibus in Christo. Lacte vos potavi, non cibo. nondum enim poteratis, sed neque nunc potestis: adhuc enim estis carnales.' cp also Heb. 5.11-14.

From the same letter comes Lactantius' description of man as the 'temple of God'(1), his allusion to how the "ambassadors of God" foretold the necessity of schism(2), the reference to baptism producing the man who has "laid aside his infancy" to become complete and perfect,(3) and his recollection of "God's teaching" how two bodies become one.(4)

(1) Dl. 5.8.4.`cuius templum...homo ipse...quod templum,...aeternis virtutum muneribus ornatur.' and Dl. 6.25.15. cp 1 Cor 3.16-17 (vulg):`nescitis quia templum dei estis....si quis autem templum dei violaverit, disperdet illum deus.'

(2) Dl. 4.30.2 `ante omnia scire nos convenit et ipsum et legatos eius praedixisse quod plurimae sectae haberent exsistere quae concordiam sancti corporis rumperent..' cp. 1 Cor.11.19:`nam oportet et haereses esse..' (The Pauline influence has led Lactantius to his only reference to Church as the 'holy body' (of Christ) ; see also Mtt. 18.7, Lk. 17.1. 2 Pet.2.1. caps

(3) Dl. 7.5.22b.-'cum homo caelesti lavacro purificatus exponit infantiam cum omni labe vitae prioris et incremento divini vigoris accepto fit homo perfectus ac plenus'. cp 1 Cor.13. 10-11. (Vulg)

(4) Dl. 6.23.15:`verum etiam publicis vulgatisque corporibus abstinendum deus praecepit docetque nos, cum duo inter se corpora fuerint copulata, unum corpus efficere.' cf. 1 Cor.6.16. (vulg):`an nescitis, quoniam qui adhaeret meretrici unum corpus efficitur? erunt enim (inquit) duo in carne una.' Lactantius may be making a direct Gospel allusion here (mk.10.6) as he does with other aspects of sexual ethic (cp 6.23.24 and Lk.16.18) also (6.23.38b and Lk.18.28f)

But the major theme he draws from 1 Cor. is undoubtedly the apostle's distinction between the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God. He employs this theme consistently in the Dl to differentiate, on the one hand, the philosophic quest for truth which is never fully achieved, and on the other, God's free gift of truth to those who worship him, which alone is true wisdom. Paul's distinction, then, between immanent human rationalism and transcendent divine wisdom (the one being foolishness with the appearance of wisdom, the other being wisdom with the appearance of foolishness) is frequently employed by Lactantius in his contest with the philosophers. He alludes to this theme when he argues that the wisdom of God bears an essentially hidden or sacramental nature: ' sed idcirco uirtutem ipsam deus sub persona stultitiae uoluit esse celatam, ut mysterium ueritatis ac religionis suae esset arcanum, ut has religiones sapientiamque terrenam extollentem se altius sibique multum placentem uanitatis errorisque damnaret, ut proposita denique difficultate angustissimus trames ad immortalitatis praemium sublime perduceret.'(1) And he does so again when he isists that the natural man stands in absolute dependence on the teaching of God, without which he can know nothing about religion: 'uidere enim nullo modo poterant quare aut a quo et quemadmodum religio uera opprimeretur, quod est divini sacramenti et caelestis arcani: id uero nisi doceatur, aliquis scire nullo pacto potest. summa rei haec est.'(2)

(1) Dl. 5.18.11 cp.Cor.2.7.

(2) Dl. 2.3.21. cp. 1 Cor. 2.14 (vulg)' animalis autem homo non percipit ea quae sunt spiritus dei; stultitia enim est illi, et non potest intelligere, quia spiritualiter examinatur.'

Paul's Kerygmatic proclamation in this context(1) is substantially repeated by Lactantius when he alludes to the sacramental mystery of the cross (17b) which is the wisdom of God (17a) that both pagan and jew found incomprehensible but which is in reality the centre of the believer's faith in Christ's divinity: 'non est mirum si tu, qui a dei sapientia longe remotus es, nihil prorsus intellegis eorum quae legisti, cum Iudaei, qui a principio prophetas lectitauerant quibusque sacramentum dei fuerat adsignatum, tamen quid legerent ignorauerint.....itaque deum credimus non magis ex factis operibusque mirandis quam ex illa ipsa cruce, quam uos sicut canes lambitis, quoniam simul et illa praedicta est.'(2) And Lactantius alludes even more directly to Paul's theme of God reckoning man's wisdom as foolishness in no less than seven separate instances throughout the Dl.(3), as for example: ' sicut enim sapientia hominum summa stultitia est aput deum, stultitia, ut docui, summa sapientia est, sic deo humilis et abiectus est qui fuerit conspicuus et sublimis in terra.'(4)

(1) cp. 1. Cor.1.23-4:-'nos autem praedicamus Christum crucifixum, Judaeis quidem scandalum, gentibus autem stultitiam, ipsis autem vocatis, Judaeis atque Graecis, Christum dei virtutem et dei sapientiam.'

(2) Dl. 4.3.17, 20.

(3) Dl. 5.15.8, 3.3.16, cp 1 Cor. 1. 20-24; Dl. 5.12.11, 3.3.16, 4.2.3. cp. 1 Cor. 3.19; Dl. 2.3.18 and Rom. 1.22; Dl. 2.3.19 and Rom. 1.19f. In addition the Pauline phrase:"principes saeculi" (1 Cor 2.6.8) appears at Dl. 5.1.15.

(4) Dl. 5.15.8. The apparent allusion in verse 8b to the evangelical dictum 'he that exalts himself shall be humbled' (Lk 14.11) is confirmed at verse 9b when he cites the Logion directly.

These allusions to the Pauline letters in the Dl amount to 34 instances in all.(1) Brandt listed only eight in his own index(2), seven of which R. Pichon commented upon(3). But it was only with the work of M. Pellegrino(4) later followed by P. Monat's analysis of the Pauline references in Book 5 of the Dl (5) that the full extent of his Pauline allusions, especially his use of 1 Cor, began to emerge. Pichon had earlier suggested that this employment of Paul could be explained on apologetic grounds since he was the NT. author most amenable to the pagan mind: "c'est que S.Paul est de tous les auteurs sacrés le moins exclusivement hébraïque, celui avec lequel l'esprit gréco-latin a naturellement le plus de contact".(6) But this estimate of Paul is questionable, and in any case Lactantius usually reproduces Pauline material which is attacking the "graeco-latin mentality". In addition the allusions are designed only to be recognised by a Christian reader; he has not put them there for the edification of the pagan literati but because he is relecting on the scriptural basis of true doctrine and supplying references for his Christian readership. Pichon's explanation,restricting Lactantius' use of the scriptures within exclusively apologetic bounds, must also fall before the evidence of the text when it becomes apparent that Lactantius parallels Hebrews quite freely, and of all the NT writings this is certainly set in hebraic idiom.

(1) See appendix 1.
(2) CSEL 27. p.244.
(3) R. Pichon. Lactance. p.200
(4) Studi sull' antica apologetica Rome. 1947. pp. 191-192
(5) SC. vol. 204. Paris 1973. p.43.
(6) Pichon. Lactance. p.200

Brandt listed two allusions to Hebrews,[1] though Pichon recorded none at all, and none of the subsequent commentators seem to have noticed the frequent appearance of Judaeo-Christian themes from the Letter in the scheme of the Dl. The first indication that Hebrews might have been a formative element in Lactantius' reading comes with the observation of the way in which "the majesty" is his favourite, titular description of God. The frequency of this usage is particularly notable.[2] Of all scriptural literature, of both Old and New Testaments, the Epistle to the Hebrews is the sole writing which uses 'majesty' in the same titular way.[3] This may be purely coincidental of course, but when this usage in Hebrews appears in the context of Christ's exaltation, and when the instances are also set within an extensive context of angelic christology, both of which areas are of lively interest to Lactantius, then the coincidence factor is reduced. Lactantius,then,appears to make use of Hebrews to illustrate his christological doctrine, especially in the areas of; angelology, certain christological formulae, the concepts of covenant and sacrifice, the priestly conception and the idea of the new cult established by Christ.

(1) CSEL. 27. p.244. viz: Heb. 9.16, Dl. 4.20.2, and Heb.11.38 Dl. 7.17.10

(2) Dl. 1.1.5 (the eternal majesty), 1.1.8, 2.16.9 (that true majesty), 2.19.1 (the heavenly majesty), Epit. 62.4.(the highest Majesty), OD. 3.4 (that most provident majesty), De Ira 3.2 (the venerable majesty)

(3) Heb. 1.3 (Christ) has sat at the right hand of the majesty: τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς ... cp. Epit.62.4: summa maiestas. and Heb. 8.1: who has sat at the right hand of the throne of the majesty: τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. cp. Dl. 2.19.1: maiestate caelesti.

One of the most memorable aspects of the Lactantian christology is the twofold angelic introduction at Dl. 4.7. 1-4(1) and 4.8.6-12(2) The first version finds an authority for the idea of the name of Christ unknown even to the angels in the verse of Hebrews immediately preceding that which contains the reference to "the majesty".(3) Here the Epistle uses the distinction of the "name Christ has inherited" as the measure of his essential superiority over the angels.(4) In both Hebrews and the Dl this distinguishing title is one of Sonship.(5)

(1) teaching a name of Jesus known only to the Father, one known to the angels, and the name (Christ Jesus) known to men.

(2) teaching the superiority of Christ as God's spoken word, sent on a ministry of salvific revelation, and the angels of God who are his silent breath.

(3) viz. Heb. 1.3. (Epit. 62.4, Dl. 2.19.1)

(4) Heb. 1.4:τοσούτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος τῶν ἀγγέλων ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ' αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα.
cf. Dl. 4.7.2. and Dl. 4.8.7.(magna inter hunc dei filium ceterosque angelos differentia est)

(5) cp. Dl. 4.8.7 (above) and Heb. 1.2: ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ .
Heb. 1.5.: τίνι γὰρ εἶπέ ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων,υἱός μου εἶ σύ,ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε·καὶ πάλιν,ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν.

When the author of Hebrews wishes to expand on this distinction between Christ as the revelatory word of God (who because of his mission is now revealed as the exalted Lord)(1) and the angels of God who are not permanently exalted in the same way,(2) he contrasts the exaltation of the Son and the role of the angels as pneumata and leitourgous.

Lactantius, who openly states that here he is repeating the doctrine of the "sanctae litterae"(3), follows the same theme, contrasting the filium dei as God's spoken word (sermo) with the angels who are his breath (spiritus).

(1) Heb. 1.2: (In our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, the Son he has appointed to inherit everything) cp. Dl. 4.8.8b: 'ipsum primo locutus est, ut per eum ad nos loqueretur et ille vocem dei ac voluntatem nobis revelaret.'

(2) The description recalls the LXX version of the Sinai theophany, suggesting that Christ's nature as Son is firm and established (the light of God and the perfect copy of his nature. Heb. 1.3) whereas the nature of the angels is subtle and changeable, Heb. 1.7: ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα.

(3) Dl. 4.8.6.

His climax to the argument at 4.8.7a, that there is a "great difference" between the Son of God and the angels, echoes Hebrews 1.4, and his summation of the difference at 4.8.7b (as of that between teacher and servant, similarly parallels Hebrews 1.8 and 1.14.[1] :-

(6) "primum nec sciri a quoquam possunt nec enarrari opera diuina,
sed tamen sanctae litterae docent, in quibus cautura est illum
dei filium dei esse sermonem itemque ceteros angelos dei
(7) spiritus esse. nam sermo est spiritus cum uoce aliquid
significante prolatus. sed tamen quoniam spiritus et sermo
diuersis partibus proferuntur, siquidem spiritus naribus,
ore sermo procedit, magna inter hunc dei filium ceterosque
angelos differentia est. illi enim ex deo taciti spiritus
(8) exierunt, quia non ad doctrinam dei tradendam, sed ad minist-
erium creabantur. ille uero cum sit et ipse spiritus, tamen
cum uoce ac sono ex dei ore processit sicut uerbum, ea scilicet
ratione, quia uoce eius ad populum fuerat usurus, id est quod
ille magister futurus esset doctrinae dei et caelestis arcani
ad homines perferendi. ipsum primo locutus est, ut per eum
ad nos loqueretur et ille uocem dei ac uoluntatem nobis
revelaret."[2]

(1) Note the ministering role in Heb. 1.8. cited above (λειτουργοὺς) And 1.14:οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶ λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν.

(2) Dl. 4.8. 6-8.

This entire christological passage is then clearly dependent on Hebrews Chapter I. The central theme of the Lactantian christology is its emphasis on the priesthood of Christ. Christ, in the DI, is priest and teacher, but even the essence of his teaching is concerned with re-establishing the cult of the true God, and is thus a priestly function. The exposition of the christology in ch.6 of the thesis will expand on this point, but here it is apposite to note the great importance the doctrine of Christ's priesthood bears in the Letter to the Hebrews.(1)

(1) eg. Christ's priesthood as superior to Moses', Heb. 3.1-6; the supreme high-priest sympathetic with human weakness, Heb. 4.14-16; the high-priest who suffered to mediate salvation Heb. 5. 1-10; and, most frequently, the priest who represents the human race, Heb. 2.17, 4.14, 5.5,10, 6.20, 7.26, 8.1, 9.11, 10.21.

When Lactantius describes Christ the true high priest who suffered for men now standing in the presence of God and the angels,(1) he seems to be recalling themes from Hebrews Chapter 2(2) which is the scriptural author's doctrinal transition from his angelic christology to a sacerdotal christology. Many of the themes of this christology are found echoed in the Institutes,as for example when Lactantius describes the reason for Christ's assumption of human flesh as God's desire "most closely resemble man" in order that his moral teaching might be effective and meaningful for man's weakness: 'oportet magistrum doctoremque uirtutis homini (12)
simillimum fieri, ut vincendo peccatum doceat hominem uinci ab eo
posse peccatum. sin uero sit inmortalis, exemplum proponere (13)
homini nullo modo potest.....ergo ut perfectus esse possit, (16)
nihil ei debet opponi ab eo qui docendus est, ut si forte dixerit
'inpossibilia praecipis', respondeat 'ecce ipse facio.' 'at ego carne
indutus sum, cuius est peccare proprium'. 'et ego eandem carnem
gero et tamen peccatum in me non dominatur'.....sublata omnis hoc (17)
modo excusatio est et fateri hominem necesse est sua culpa iniustum
esse qui doctorem uirtutis et eundem ducem non sequatur. uides ergo
quanto perfectior sit mortalis doctor, quia dux esse mortali potest,
quam inmortalis, quia patientiam docere non potest qui subiectus
passionibus non est.'(3)

(1) Dl. 4.14.13b. 'non enim...aliquando in conspectu dei et angelorum steterunt.' see context.

(2) cf. Heb. 2.5-18, the exaltation of the suffering priest...

(3) Dl. 4.24,12, 16, 17 passim.

In this he is recalling the doctrine of the"compassionate high-priest" in Hebrews, who assumes descent from Abraham for this mediatory role of moral leader and atoner for sin. Christ is here incarnate to be "completely like his brothers" and his own temptations allow him to be an effective helper for man's weakness: οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, ἀλλὰ σπέρματος Ἀβραὰμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται. ὅθεν ὤφειλε κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι, ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.
(1)

The christological title of "leader"(2) is one that appears in Hebrews. As the "last days"(3) approach, God sends his Son to be perfected through suffering and so "lead many sons to their salvation".(4) Again, through his cross and subsequent exaltation, Christ becomes the "leader and perfecter of man's faith".(5) Lactantius, though making an apologia against the Jews, describes the incarnation of Christ, "as the last times approached", in terms of the "great leader": ' statuerat enim deus adpropinquante ultimo tempore ducem magnum caelitus mittere, qui eam perfido ingratoque populo ablatam exteris nationibus reuelaret.'(6) Again, Christ is "doctorem sapientiae ducemque virtutis."(7) And, most closely echoing the: τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν of Hebrews 2.10, Lactantius presents Christ in the following terms:- 'legatus et nuntius et sacerdos summi patris est filius. hic templi maximi ianua est, hic lucis via, hic dux salutis, hic ostium vitae.'(8)

(1) Heb. 2.16-17

(2) ἀρχηγὸν Viz from: (ἀρχή /initium, principium) and ἄγω = duco) in Lactantius → Dux.

(3) Heb. 1.2. ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων..

(4) cf. Heb. 2.10. πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα, τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι.

(5) Heb. 12.2. τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτήν.

(6) Dl. 4.2.5.

(7) Dl. 1.1.19.

(8) Dl. 4.29.15.

Not only is Christ described as dux salutis, but the other christological titles - filius, nuntius and sacerdos - echo the themes from Hebrews already observed in D.I 4.8.f. The list of titles includes that of: hic templi maximi ianua est(1), which adds further weight to the hypothesis of dependence on Hebrews, where the self-same concept of entering the true sanctuary of God through the person of Jesus is expounded as part of the doctrine of Christ's priesthood.Christ's body is thus the door of the temple:

> Ἔχοντες οὖν,ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ,ἣν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν, διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος,τοῦτ'ἔστι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ,καὶ ἱερέα μέγαν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ.

Lactantius describes Christ's ministry of revelation as fundamentally a priestly task of establishing a new temple for God: 'nam cum iustitia nulla esset in terra, doctorem misit quasi uiuam legem, ut nomen ac templum nouum conderet, ut uerum ac pium cultum per omnem terram et uerbis et exemplo seminaret.'(3) This priestly role necessitates an incarnate nature, which in turn symbolises his position as priestly mediator: 'fuit igitur et deus et homo, inter deum atque hominem medius constitutus, unde illum Graeci μεσίτην uocant, ut hominem perducere ad deum posset id est ad inmortalitatem:'(4)

(1) the terms (ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν) are echoed by Lactantius' (lucis via, and ostium vitae)

(2) Heb. 10. 20-21.

(3) Dl. 4.23.2 cp. Heb 8.2 where Christ is minister of the sanctuary. (λειτουργός)

(4) Dl. 4.25.5a. cp. Heb. 8.6.: καὶ κρείττονός ἐστιν διαθήκης μεσίτης.

And yet a very personal part of Lactantius' doctrine on the nature of this new cult which Christ establishes is his definition of worship as "gift and sacrifice". In the way the two epithets are conjoined as a definition of Christian cult, the treatment is proper to Lactantius in Latin patristic literature: 'duo sunt quae offerri debeant, donum et sacrificium, donum in perpetuum, sacrificium (10) ad tempus....uerbo enim sacrificari oportet deo, siquidem deus uerbum est, ut ipse confessus est. summus igitur colendi dei ritus est ex ore iusti hominis ad deum directa laudatio, quae tamen ipsa ut deo sit accepta, et humilitate et timore et deuotione maxima opus est.'(1) In his insistence on a verbal sacrifice of praise, Lactantius has appealed to the Hermetic text: ' nos uero gratias agentes adoremus: huius enim sacrificium sola benedictio est et recte. uerbo enim sacrificari oportet deo, siquidem deus uerbum est, ut ipse confessus est. summus igitur colendi dei ritus est ex ore iusti hominis ad deum directa laudatio.'(2) But Hebrews is a closer source for unlike the Hermetic citation, which only mentions the single aspect of "sacrifice", it fully represents both aspects of Lactantius' claim about the "gift and sacrifice"(3); that is, that to his duty of divine praise which is a "sacrifice", man must add the "gift" of "just actions" in his life.(4)

(1) cp. Dl. 6.25. 5-12. vv.5, 12 cited.

(2) Dl. 6.25.11b.-12 } The liturgical reminiscences (gratias agentes...colendi dei ritus..) suggest another source for his thought.

(3) Dl. 6.25.5-12.

(4) Dl. 6.25.7.

The twofold connotation adds a profoundly moral element and,in so doing, significantly alters the Hermetic religious experience. It seems,then,that Lactantius has taken his two-fold conception from Hebrews where the moral aspect of this 'sacrifice of praise' is equally notable[1]:(δι' αὐτοῦ οὖν ἀναφέρωμεν θυσίαν αἰνέσεως διαπαντὸς τῷ θεῷ,τοῦτ'ἔστι καρπὸν χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ. τῆς δὲ εὐποϊίας καὶ κοινωνίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε.τοιαύταις γὰρ θυσίαις εὐαρεστεῖται ὁ θεός,)

but prefers, for apologetic reasons, to cite a Greek authority as much more preferable to a Judaeo-Christian source, and so chooses one that most closely resembles Christian experience from all that paganism has to offer. Finally, Lactantius' treatment of the new covenant theme appears to be indebted to Hebrews. Lactantius introduces the concept of two testaments of scripture, with the post-resurrection teaching of Christ "opening the secrets of the prophets".[2] He argues that only after the passion of Christ did the messianic prophecies become meaningful, and illustrates the scriptural idea with an analogy drawn from law which would have been comprehensible to his pagan audience: 'idcirco Moyses et idem ipsi prophetae legem quae Iudaeis data est testamentum uocant, quia nisi testator mortuus fuerit, nec confirmari testamentum potest nec sciri quid in eo scriptum sit, quia clausum et obsignatum est. itaque nisi Christus mortem suscepisset, aperiri testamentum id est reuelari et intellegi mysterium dei non potuisset.'[3]

(1) Heb.13. 15-16 cp also Heb. 8.3 where the high-priest's office is described: εἰς τὸ προσφέρειν δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας.. or Heb. 9.9: καθ'ἣν δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίαι προσφέρονται... see Dl. 6.25.5b: 'duo sunt quae offeri debeant, donum et sacrificum.'

(2) Dl. 4.20.1.

(3) Dl. 4.20.2-3

In Hebrews, the same analogy is used to establish the necessity of Christ's atoning death:

καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης ἐστίν, ὅπως, θανάτου γενομένου εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῇ πρώτῃ διαθήκῃ παραβάσεων, τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν λάβωσιν οἱ κεκλημένοι τῆς αἰωνίου κληρονομίας.ὅπου γὰρ διαθήκη,θάνατον ἀνάγκη φέρεσθαι τοῦ διαθεμένου.διαθήκη γὰρ ἐπὶ νεκροῖς βεβαία,ἐπεὶ μή ποτε ἰσχύει ὅτε ζῇ ὁ διαθέμενος;

(1)

But again it is Lactantius' concern to remove the Jewish context of Hebrews as he has done earlier(2) and replace it with a different apologetic frame. He now uses the doctrine of the two covenants to show God's rejection of the Jews and election of the gentile nations.(3) To this end he cites Jeremiah 31.31f and 12.7-8,(4) and uses the first Jeremian passage to demonstrate the fact that God would make a new covenant; yet as he continues in his tenth verse he expands the argument further with a demonstration that this very fact of having a new covenant proves that the old one was "imperfect":

'nam quod superius ait consummaturum se domui Iuda testamentum nouum, ostendit uetus illut testamentum quod per Moysen datum est non fuisse perfectum, id autem quod per Christum dari haberet consummatum fore.'(5)

This latter argument,on the inherent imperfection of the old, is not found in either of the Jeremian texts he uses, but is very reminiscent of the text of Hebrews at more than one point.(6)

(1) Heb. 9.15-17. note the recurrence of μεσίτης as a Greek interpolation at Dl. 4.25. 5,8.

(2) Dl. 4.2.5.

(3) Dl. 4.20.5.

(4) at Dl. 4.20. 6-7.

(5) Dl. 4.20.10.

(6) cp. Heb. 8.6-13. or again, Heb 7.18.

There are several other points in the DI that might well represent a deliberate allusion to Hebrews[1] and the final parts of the letter could represent one of the several apocalyptic sources for Lactantius' seventh book.[2] All the parallel material in Hebrews and DI is in harmony with the way Lactantius has treated his other Christian sources, in that it seems to represent a borrowing of random ideas and themes which are independently reworked into his own theological schema rather than any immediate and close discipleship. That Lactantius should treat this source circumspectly is by no means surprising as it is too "Jewish" to fit his apologetic aim in addressing the Roman literati, and its theology of Jewish election too predominant to agree with Lactantius' thesis of a Jewish rejection and universal election of gentile nations. Nonetheless, the amount of the material that seems to be paralleled suggests most strongly that he has certainly read the letter and is using it, especially for his angelic and christological material, in much the same way as he has used the Pauline letters - as disguised allusions that would be recognised by the Christian initiates who read his work though not by the gentile pagan readers he is immediately addressing.

(1) eg. (a) the concept of purification by blood, Heb. 9.14 τὸ αἷμα τοῦ χριστοῦ,ὃς.....καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ὑμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι.
cf. Dl. 4.18.23:'unde apparet Iudaeos nullam aliam spem habere nisi se abluerint sanguine..'(following Ms. Parisinus..)
(b) the analogy of Christ as the ray of the Father's light. Heb. 1.3, Dl. 4.29.4.
(c) the use of the title 'pater et dominus' to imply the christological corollary of son and servant: Heb 3.5, 12.8, 29 and Dl. 4.4. 1-11.

(2) eg. the detail of the righteous retiring to the mountain. Heb. 11.38, Dl. 7.17.10.

(iv) The non-Cyprianic bible-source

The state of the textual tradition regarding the Lactantian citations of scripture is in need of radical revision. When S. Brandt prepared his critical text in the CSEL series in 1897, Hartel's previous edition of Cyprian's Ad Quirinum, in the same series, was used as his major authority in establishing which Lactantian manuscripts to follow in deciding the scriptural text Lactantius presented. The result was to emphasise congruity between the Cyprianic and Lactantian versions of scriptural pericopes. Brandt's editorial premiss was that Lactantius' scriptural knowledge came directly and substantially from Cyprian, and consequently he edited the text of the DI usually in accordance with the Cyprianic text established by Hartel. The critical edition of Cyprian's Ad Quirinum prepared most recently by R. Weber,(1) however, has radically revised the text of Hartel and reversed the latter's overriding belief in the accuracy of the single most ancient manuscript of Cyprian. Consequently Brandt's establishment of the Lactantian versions of scripture in the DI stands in need of its own revision. Yet even though Brandt's edition of the DI tends to overemphasise the congruities between Lactantius' biblical text and that of Cyprian it is still patently clear that the Lactantian versions, more often than not, represent significant differences in detail. So even where there is a clear parallel of the scriptural usage of the Ad Quirinum, the extent of the divergences give rise to questions over Lactantius' real source for the citation. It is perhaps impossible ever to establish which biblical version Lactantius was using, and most of the difficulties lie in the area of deciding whether the variants of citation represent an entirely

(1) Corpus Christianorum. III pars. 1. 1972. pp. 1-179

different source, or whether they can be attributed to the free manner in which Lactantius treats all his textual authorities. The problem is further complicated in the fact that there appears to have been no consistent archetype of Cyprian's Ad Quirinum, and no uniform text of the pre-Vulgate Latin Bible;(1) and the Lactantian manuscripts themselves propose successive modifications of what Lactantius wrote.

It is clear enough that Lactantius certainly did use the Ad Quirinum as a scripture manual, but perhaps not in so dependent a manner as previous commentators have presumed. Cyprian presents his selected quotations under theological headings which Lactantius, in his book of christology, uses as a guide in his presentation of the life of Jesus.(2).

(1) for a fuller discussion of this problem and that of the Greek and possibly Latin collections of testimonia that seem to have pre-dated Cyprian's own work see R. Weber. cc III. pars 1. intro pp. LIV-LX.

(2) eg. Ad Quir. 2.3(:Quod christus idem sit sermo dei) from Cyprian's catena of 6 testimonies, Lactantius selects the three most succinct (D1.4.8. 14-16) to demonstrate the same point as Cyprian's title. or Ad Quir. 2.6.(quod deus Christus) where Lactantius uses three of the 18 testimonies in the same argument (D1. 4.13. 7-9).

R.M. Ogilvie comments on the great majority of scriptural citations in Lactantius that have a ready parallel in Cyprian's Ad Quirinum,[1] and continues "there are detailed textual similarities in a number of the quotations which point to some mutual interdependence."[2] While Ogilvie's analysis is the only study of the problem available in English, and has the added advantage of being aware of Wlosok's study[3], it unfortunately relies wholly on the scriptural index of Brandt's text in the CSEL series. This is not only incomplete as it stands, but it omits the important evidence of scriptural allusions in the Dl and thus falsifies the whole picture of Lactantius' scriptural knowledge. The result is that an otherwise excellent work is marred by its sources. Ogilvie concludes, for example, that there are a total of 73 scripture passages in Book 4 of the Dl, 19 of which have no parallel in Cyprian.[4] Of these 73 passages three are Gospel references,[5] and if we except these we thus have, on Ogilvie's reckoning, 70 OT passages, 17 of which have no Cyprianic authority.

(1) R.M. Ogilvie. The library of Lactantius. p.97

(2) ibid. p. 98

(3) viz. zur bedeutung der nichtcyprianischen bibelzitate bei Laktanz (cited hereafter as 'nichtcyprianischen bibelzitate) Sp. 4. Tu. 79. 1961. pp 234-250. cf. Ogilvie op cit pp97-107

(4) cf. tabulated list, Ogilvie, op. cit. pp. 99-100

(5) viz. Jn. 1.1-3, Dl. 4.8.16, Lk 3.22, Dl. 4.15.3, and Jn 2.19, Dl. 4.18.4 (Ogilvies list nos: 7, 39, and 50) the last two of this set are non-Cyprianic.

The present study has completely revised Brandt's scriptural index, however, to re-assess the biblical awareness of Lactantius and to include not only his direct citations but also the many textual allusions he makes to biblical logia.(1) The revised index(2) now shows a total of 99 OT references in the Dl,44 of which(3) have not come from Cyprian(4). In regard to Bk 4, one may detect 85 OT passages, 32 of which are independent of Cyprian.

This changes the picture somewhat and shows, among other things which shall be discussed subsequently, that when Lactantius is alluding to the OT rather than offering a direct quotation, his source of knowledge is wholly idependent of the Ad Quirinum. In addition to the 99 OT allusions and citations,(5) the revised index shows no less than 81 references to the Gospels and NT Epistles; all except two of these(6) being paraphrastic allusions rather than quotations. This NT. material falls into one of two categories; the references are either aimed at his Christian audience without being meant to be recognised by the pagan literati, or else they appear in the section on the life of Jesus in Bk.4, and paraphrastically supply the narrative of the events of the ministry.

(1) Lactantius' NT material, with but one exception, is allusive not cited, therefore to enumerate only 3 NT references in Dl.Bk.4. grossly distorts the picture. In fact at least 33 can be traced only 4 of which have any parallel in the Ad Quirinum. cp the revised Index. Appendix I.

(2) Appendices 1-2. Appendix 3 shows all the non-cyprianic material illustrating the manner in which it has been grouped in catena-form by Lactantius.

(3) Though there are 2 reduplicated citations: (Dan.7.13 which appears at Dl. 4.12.12f and 4.21.1), and (Hos.13.13. which appears at Dl 4.19.9 and 4.29.11) together with one set of parallel references (Num.11.31 and Ps.72.24) at Dl.4.10.10. This leaves a truer number of 41 instances not found in Cyprian.

(4) cp. p. 207.

(5) This figure includes reference to three apocryphal books(Esdras, Praedicatio Petri et Pauli, and the Odes of Solomon) Allusive material is distinguished from direct citation by the respective letters A, or C in the final column of Appendix 1.

(6) viz: Jn.1.3. at Dl 4.8.16, and Jn 2.19 at Dl.4.18.4. The former has a possible source in Ad Quir 2.3. the latter no parallel in Cyprian.

Of these 79 passages, the vast majority have no parallel in either Cyprian or the known patristic sources of the DI.(1) All Lactantius' references to Hebrews, for example,(2) are clearly independent of the Ad Quirinum which does not reproduce a single text from that source. So whereas Lactantius appears to have used Cyprian as the single most complete source for his collection of OT proof texts, he still manifests a notable independence from Cyprian inmany aspects of his OT scholarship, and even more so in his awareness of the NT. Even in those passages from the OT which parallel Cyprian, Lactantius' version of the text frequently departs from that of the Ad Quirinum, as the following examples of a few of the verb forms will illustrate:

	DI.	Ad Quir.	SS.	Lactantius.	Cyprian.
1)	4.11.8.	1.16.	Mal.1.10	clarificabitur.	Clarificatum est.
2)	4.11.12	1.3	Is.1.2-3.	genui. cognovit. spreverunt. percipe auribus	generavi. agnovit. reprobaverunt. praebe aures.
3)	4.12.18.	1.21.	Is.45.1-3.	obaudire.	ut exaudiant.
4)	4.13.10.	2.10.	Jer.17.9.	cognovit.	cognoscet.
5)	4.13.19.	1.21.	Is.11.10	principari.	imperare.
6)	4.13.20.	2.11.	Is.11.1-3.	exiet.	exibit. (3)

(1) Out of 75 separate and distinct NT passages in the DI, only 21 can have a possible Cyprianic parallel, but in regard to each of these NT sources Lactantius presents other material from all the different scriptural books which is completely independent of Cyprian. This argues that the Ad Quir. is not a significant source for any of his NT. knowledge: eg of the 15 references to Mtt's Gospel in the DI, only 2 are cited by Cyprian's Ad Quir; of the 16 allusions to 1 Cor, 5 are without Cyprianic parallel and the remaining 11 are as randomly scattered in Cyprian as they are in Lactantius. If the DI had depended on its knowledge of Paul via Cyprian, text-groupings would have emerged.

(2) 14 instances. See appendix 1.

(3) cp. R.M. Ogilvie. The Library of Lactantius. p.101f.

Nor can these textual changes be simply ascribed to Lactantius' desire to improve on the quality of the latin version he is reading, for example Nos.5-6 above show that the Lactantian forms are less classical than those of his rhetorical colleague Cyprian. Here we have a strong suggestion that an entirely different textual tradition was influencing Lactantius' thought. Where the LXX itself represents two distinct text-traditions for the same Old Testament passage Lactantius presents an entirely different version to that followed by Cyprian.(1) All of which demonstrates that Brandt's thesis,that Lactantius gains all his scriptural expertise second-hand from Cyprian,is not tenable, and his independent knowledge of scripture far more extensive than previously thought. It also clearly demonstrates, in R.M. Ogilvie's words, "that Lactantius cannot have drawn his material from the Ad Quirinum in its present state."(2)

(1) Dl. 4.12.12-16. Ad Quir. 2.26. (Dan. 7.13-14). Cyprian follows the main LXX tradition: (et data est ei potestas regia) Lactantius follows the Theodotion tradition: (et datum est ei regnum et honor et imperium)

(2) R.M. Ogilvie. The Library of Lactantius. p.100. The author suggests that Lactantius used a basic scriptural framework from a "revised or careless edition of Cyprian's Testimonia". (ibid pp. 106-107) and remodelled it with scriptural material of his own selection.

The origin of these Old Testament passages in the DI which have no parallel in Cyprian have long been the source of much speculation, beginning with R. Pichon [1] and continuing up to the most recent study by A. Wlosok[2] which has been widely accepted in other recent Lactantian studies[3] as showing that Lactantius used some form of Gnostic-influenced scripture manual to provide his extra references; though this latter argument has tended to be over-inflated by the author to infer that Lactantius' theology (especially his view of revelation as sapientia religiosa) owes more to the pagan religious currents of his time than to orthodox Christianity.[4]

(1) Lactance pp. 202-207

(2) -Nichtcyprianischen bibelzitate. SP.4. Tu.79. 1961. pp.234-50

(3) eg. A. Grillmeier. Christ in Christian tradition VOL 1. pp 190-206, V. Loi Lattanzio, E. Heck. Die dualistischen zusatze und die Kaiseranreden bei Laktanz AHAW Heidelberg. 1972.

(4) Wlosok's theory of Lactantian "Gnosticism", based mainly on his use of Hermetic and Platonic texts, has been successfully rebutted by A. Nock. The Exegesis of Timaeus 28C. VC.16.1962 pp 79-86 See also J. Stevenson. Lactantius and the Hermetica. C.R. 13. 1963. p.81 but Harnack had written long before: Teachers like Commodian, Arnobius and Lactantius, however, wrote as if there had been no Gnostic movement at all, and as if no Antignostic Church theology existed". History of Dogma London. 1896. (Theol. transl. Lib.) vol 2. p. 244. Ch.4(iii) of the thesis argues against Wlosok's conception by showing that "religiosa sapientia" in Lactantius is not an intellectual notion, but a liturgical and ethical one.

Commentators have claimed to recognise signs of this supposedly Gnostic source-book in his use of the Praedicatio Petri et Pauli, his use of the Theodotion tradition of the LXX, for example, or his employment of the Odes of Solomon.(1) Lactantius citation of the Praedicatio, however, can in no way be identified with the apocryphal Kerygma Petrou.(2) Even if it could, the quotation in Lactantius has not the slightest "Gnostic" element about it. On top of this, the Kerygma Petrou itself is only transformed into a Gnostic-type source by the flimsiest of evidence. Wlosok does so by seeing Lactantius' non-Cyprianic source as a Gnostic, anti-Judaic type of treatise (hence the Kerygma Petrou can be included in so far as it was an anti-Jewish polemic) and R.M. Ogilvie, following Wlosok, seems to wish to drag Gnosticism in at all costs, and overstates the argument: "Origen and Clement of Alexandria were among the Fathers who used its material most extensively, but its tendency is clear from the fact that Heracleon, a Gnostic at Rome in the mid-third century, availed himself of it (Origen.Com.In Ioann.)"(3)

(1) Dl. 4.21. 2-4, 4.12. 12-16, and 4.12.3 respectively.

(2) cp. E. Hennecke NT. Apocrypha vol.2. London 1975. pp, 94-102 but especially p. 93.

(3) Ogilvie The Library of Lactantius p. 107. Hennecke denies that the work Heracleon cites can be identified with the Kerygma; Hennecke op. cit. pp. 100-101, so the whole argument of Wlosok and Ogilvie falls down.

The Gnostics used John's Gospel, but that is not sufficient argument to conclude John was Gnostic. On the basis of such evidence a supposedly "Gnostic treatise" theory is compromised. Lactantius' use of the Theodotion LXX tradition for his citation of Daniel 7.13[1] is taken as another sign of his "Gnostic" source. All it shows is that Lactantius is aware of the LXX tradition that was circulating in the East and had been used by Origen. To link Lactantius in any way with the Gnostic movement through this citation[2] (again one which has nothing at all theologically 'Gnostic" about it, per se) is specious reasoning. A. Wlosok[3] elevates the citation of the Odes of Solomon. 19,[4] and a possible allusion to Ode 15. 1-6,[5] into a significant theological influence on Lactantius' doctrine of redemption, and this too appears an alarming inference to make from the available evidence.[6]

(1) Dl. 4.12.12.f.

(2) As R.M. Ogilvie, who states: the fact that he (Theodotion) was a Gnostic who lapsed into Judaism may be more relevant for appreciating the general tendency of the anthology of scriptural quotations which Lactantius used. op cit. p.102 fn.5.

(3) Nichtcyprianischen bibelzitate. pp. 242-247, esp p.244 fn.2.- an analysis Grillmeier adopts enthusiastically, Christ in Christian tradition Vol.1. pp 192-193.

(4) Dl 4.12.3.

(5) Dl. 6.9.13.

(6) Lactantius cites Ode 19 (Dl.4.12.3) to give a proof text in addition to that of Is.7.14, on the virgin birth. It should be noted that he does not have a wide choice of proof-texts on this theme. The ode is also presented without elaboration, simply as one proof among others. Nothing suggests a particularly significant source. The supposed allusion to Ode 15 at Dl. 6.9.13, has been suggested already in this thesis to have a more probable origin in the lost work of Asclepiades. De Providentia. See Thesis ch.2.(iv)b.

If the Odes are theologically significant for Lactantius in any real way then they stand out markedly as the only source he ever employs, even including canonical pericopes, that is individually important for him in this way. So too the inference that the use of a supposedly "Gnostic-Judaic" scripture source in the DI gives evidence of his own theological bias is equally unfounded. First of all, in his use of source material Lactantius shows himself singularly uninterested in the surrounding context of the citation he employs.(1) Secondly all the evidence for the very existence of this Gnostic-type source is highly controvertible, and thirdly, the use of a source whatever its theological bias, has no relevance whatsoever per se; what is important is how the citation is used and to what end in the user's theological argument. As the exposition of his doctrine of revelation will maintain, Lactantius is certainly not a 'Gnostic' in his theology of revelation or salvation.

These examples indicate why the issue of his non-Cyprianic scriptural sources needs to be raised again and re-assessed. The first question that should arise in this regard is whether any of Lactantius' patristic sources could supply the exegetical passages which Lactantius does not owe to Cyprian. The 4th column of the Scriptural index lists citations of the same scriptural texts in all the works included within Lactantius' patristic reading.

(1) Except for Cicero's theological works whose argumentation he evidently knows intimately, and can allude to more explicitly with some confidence that his literati audience will recognise the allusions.

Most of the parallel instances are already provided with a suitable Cyprianic source. There are four of the non-Cyprianic Old Testament passages, however, which may be found in an alternative apologetic source:(1)

(1)	Esdras	DI 4.18.22	Justin Trypho 72, 188	(2)
(2)	Jeremiah 11.19	4.18.28	Justin Trypho 72	
(3)	Jeremiah 31.31	4.20.6.10	Justin Trypho 11	
(4)	Ps. 89.4.	7.14.9.	Justin Trypho 81.	

These parallelisms with the Dialogue with Trypho have already been discussed(3) and Justin's work does emerge as a possible source for these Lactantian exegeses.

The first is an apocryphal quotation which Justin cites with the complaint that the Jews have suppressed it. The text is only found in patristic literature in these two places, in Justin and Lactantius. Lactantius quotes it without comment, as if it were a canonical authority. In the second passage Justin simply offers the Jeremian text,"let us send wood into his bread", without any exegesis, immediately after his presentation of the 'Esdras' text, as another example of Jewish interference in scriptural tradition. He applies both texts to demonstrate "that the Jews deliberated about Christ, to put him to death". Lactantius presents the Jeremian text, however, with a typological commentary on the cross and the eucharist implicity relating it to Jn. 6.26f.

(1) It is interesting to note that even where Lactantius parallels the theological argument of Tertullian most intimately (adv. Prax 18, Dl. 4.29) he presents an utterly different catena of scriptural proofs. Tertullian gives; Is 45.5, 45.5, and 45.18. Lactantius cites; Is. 45.14, 44.6, Hos.13.14.

(2) an apocryphal text found only in Justin and Lactantius.

(3) cp. Thesis ch.2.(ii) a.

It appears in a very long catena of texts, none of the others appearing in Justin, which demonstrate the necessity of the crucifixion of Jesus. In the third passage Lactantius reproduces the Jeremian text (found in Justin) again as one of a long catena of texts(none of the others appearing in Justin) to demonstrate the point that a new covenant has been established in Christ. There is a slight indication that he has a direct knowledge of Justin's text here in that the paragraph of Justin immediately following the Jeremian citation (where Christ himself is called the new law) is possibly echoed at Dl. 4.17.7(1). And in the fourth passage Lactantius reproduces the same psalm text as Justin (with the Lord one day is a thousand years) to argue for the same theological conception - that there will be a millenial apocalyptic reign. The citation is the same, the theological context is very similar but the Lactantian treatment of the seven millenia of creation is extended independently of Justin's eschatology and it is clear from Book 7 that Lactantius has many varied sources for his own scheme.

(1) Dl. 4.17.7 -'denuntiavit...quod filium suum id est vivam praesentemque legem missurus esset....ut denuo per eum qui esset aeternus, legem sanciret aeternam.' cp. Justin. Trypho. 11 PG 6.497B: αἰώνιός τε ἡμῖν νόμος καὶ τελευταῖος,ὁ χριστὸς ἐδόθη....
V. Loi suggests this titular usage in Lactantius has a basis in the Kerygma Petrou (Lattanzio p.259. fn. 119, cp p.17.fn.66) for Clement of Alexandria witnesses its use in the Kerygma But the concept is not a rare one, nor is there any firm evidence to suggest Lactantius even knows the Kerygma, and a closer source can be found in Cyprian's Ad Quirinum 1.10 (-quod lex nova dari haberet) where the titles Lex and Verbum domini are associated in Is.11.3. and Cyprian applies Mtt 17.5 to suggest its fulfilment in Christ.

In short then the non-Cyprianic texts which also appear in Justin, might well represent Lactantius' apologetic source, the Dialogue with Trypho; a source on which Lactantius has elaborated. On the otherhand Lactantius could have used an otherwise unknown apology which in turn had employed material from Justin Martyr.(1) Whatever the case, Justin is not sufficient to explain the source of the forty other passages which would still have to be accounted for. If all the forty-four non-Cyprianic passages (both quotations and scriptural allusions(2)) are listed, certain groupings(3) of texts appear to emerge. One may thus note that;

a) The scriptural Index which lists the parallel passages on the basis of canonical order(4) shows that the non-Cyprianic material amounts to about half of Lactantius' psalm texts,(5) a third of his Isaian usage(6), and completely represents the apocryphal material he uses(7) as well as all his references to Ezekiel(8) and Daniel(9).

(1) or some form of manual which Justin himself had used independently.

(2) The allusions are differentiated from the citations, as in Appendix 1, by the respective letter A, or C, in the final column.

(3) These catenae are illustrated in the subsequent table by being bracketed together in column 1.

(4) See Appendix 1

(5) 12 out of 25 instances.

(6) 7 out of 21 instances

(7) 3 instances

(8) 5 instances

(9) 5 instances. The version of Dan. 7.13 used by Cyprian in Ad Quir. 2.26 is not the Theodotion text used by Lactantius at 4.12.12f.

b) The following index lists the forty three[1] non-Cyprianic passages on the basis of their order in Lactantius, and thus allows us to see how they relate to his theological argument:

	Catenae.	Lactantius.	Scripture.	Allusion/Citation.
	1.	.2.10.3.	Gen.1.27.	A.
	2.	3.19.3.	Dan.12.2.	A.
	3.	4.4.2.	Mal.1.6.	A.
	4.	4.8.6-9.	Ps. 104.4.	A.
	5.	4.10.10	Num.11.31.	A.
	6.	4.10.10	Ps.78.24.f.	A.
	7.	4.11.5.	Neh.9.26.	C.
	8.	4.11.11f.	Ezek.40f.	A.
	9.	4.12.3.	Ode.Sol.19.	C.
	10.	4.12.7.	Ps.85.12.	C.
A	11.	4.12.8.	Is.63.10.	C.
	12.	4.12.9.	Is.45.8.	C.
	13.	4.12.12-16,19	Dan.7.13.	C.
	14.	4.12.18.	Is.45.1-3.	C.
	15.	4.13.10	Is. 19.20.	C.
	16.	4.13.27.	Ps.127.1.	C.
	17.	4.16.6.	Ps. 1.1.	C.
B	18.	4.16.7-10.	Wisd.2.12-27.	C.
	19.	4.16.14.	Ps.72.6-7	C.
	20.	4.17.12.	Num.13.9.	A.
	21.	4.18.14.	Ps.35.15.	C.
	22.	4.18.18.	Ps.69.22.	C.
	23.	4.18.22.	'Esdras'	C.
C	24.	4.18.26.	Ps.94.21.	C.
	25.	4.18.28.	Jer.11.19.	C.
	26.	4.18.32.	1 K.9.6-9.	C.
	27.	4.18.32.	1 Chron.7.19-22.	C.
	28.	4.19.9.	Hos.13.13.	C.
D	29.	4.20.6.10.	Jer.31.31.	C.
	30.	4.20.7-9	Jer.12.7.	C.
	31.	4.21.1.	Dan.7.13.	C.
E	32.	4.21.2-4.	"Praedicatio"	C.
F	33.	4.29.10.	Is.44.6.	C.
	34.	4.29.11.	Hos.13.13.	C.
	35.	5.18.13.	Gen.2.6-7.	A.
	36.	5.9.2.	Ps.15.2.	A.
	37.	5.11.1.	Ezek.34.25,28.	A.
	38.	5.23.3.	Ezek.34.25.	A.
	39.	7.14.9.	Ps.90.4.	C.
	40.	7.16 .1-5.	Dan.7.2.	A.
	41.	7.24.3.	Is.6.12.	A.
	42.	7.24.7.	Is.30.26	A.
	43.	7.26.2.	Ezek.38.20-22.	A.
	44.	7.26.4.	Ezek.39.9-11.	A.

(1) Although the list enumerates 44 instances nos 4 and 5 are a parallel (one or the other text is alluded to) In addition nos. (13 and 31) and (28 and 34) consist of reduplications, so the true figure of separate texts is 41.

The table shows that the material is only significant in Books 4, 5, and 7. The three opening books of the DI have been concerned with his negative apology against the mythologists and rationalists which explains why Lactantius has not wished to employ scriptural testimony in any significant way at all. The two references listed before Book 4 consist only of the most general allusions to the scriptures.(1) When Lactantius arrives at Book 4, however, he changes his apologetic method(2) and begins a positive Christian catechesis in which the scriptural testimony is to play a considerable role in structuring the christology.(3)

This comparative explosion of scriptural usage in Bk 4 also explains why the non-Cyprianic material is grouped here. The non-Cyprianic table tends to suggest that Lactantius is indeed dealing with some other kind of scriptural handbook which supplements the scope and interest of Cyprian. The proportion of cited texts as distinct from general allusions, is much higher in this list than it is in the general scriptural index. In addition, when the allusions are isolated from the non-Cyprianic list (allusions that can be taken as indicative of a general or personal knowledge of scripture in Lactantius' case) they clearly fall into distinct categories:

a) Nos, 1,2,3,4,5/6, 20, all of which are the vaguest kind of scriptural allusion and represent universal biblicisms or common facts of the history of the Jewish people: (eg.2.10.3/ Gen.1.27; that God made man in his image or 4.10.10/Ps 78.24 : part of his narrative of Hebraic history tu supply the detail of the quail falling in the camp) and :-

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(1) Dl. 2.10.3.- that God created Man in his image
Dl. 3.19.3.- that the scriptures teach that souls will be judged

(2) cf. Dl. 3.30. 9-10.

(3) cp. Dl.4.5.3.

This passage introduces a chapter wholly devoted to introducing the role of scriptural testimony in Bk.4.

b) Nos 8, 36, 37,38,40,41,42,43, and 44 which are noticeably grouped together in Books 5 and 7 and equally represent commonplaces,(1) this time in the context of the persecution of the just or details of the apocalyptic scene. None of the allusive material, then, demands any kind of reference to a written source to explain its appearance in the DI. This is not so, however, with the remaining twenty seven passages, all of which are direct scriptural quotations. The problem of the non-Cyprianic scriptural source relates immediately to these twenty-seven instances which in turn resolve to twenty-five texts.(2)

Of the twenty-five, four have a relationship with Justin's Dialogue with Trypho(3), but the remaining twenty-one have no parallels anywhere else in Lactantius' patristic reading.

The non-Cyprianic list shows quite clearly that there are text groupings among the twenty five non-Cyprianic texts, which argues most strongly that here in the DI Lactantius has taken over scriptural catenae to support his argument.

(1) eg. nos. 37-38 where Lactantius applies Ezekiel's epithet of "the beasts" to describe the persecutors, or no.40 where he uses elements from Daniel to describe the apocalyptic unrest among the kingdoms of the earth.

(2) allowing for the reduplications, nos. (13 + 31), (28 + 34)

(3) Nos. 23,24,29 and 39, as discussed in ch.2(ii)a. Lactantius has either first-hand or second-hand knowledge of these biblicisms of the Dialogue. The first three references relate to an anti-Jewish polemic, the last is the millenial application of Ps. 90.4.

Six of these groups of catenae are quite visible in the table, three major and three minor:

a) Nos (9-14) representing a catena of six Old Testament proof texts between DI 4 12.3 and 4.12.18.

b) Nos. 17-19 representing a catena of three texts between DI 4.16.6 and 4.16.14.

c) Nos 21-27 representing a catena of seven proofs between DI 4.18.14. and 4.18.32.

d) Nos 29 and 30 representing a catena of two proofs between DI 4.20.6 and 4.20.10.

e) Nos 31 and 32 representing a catena of two at DI.4.20. 6-10.

f) and lastly nos 33-34 representing another catena of two texts between DI 4.29.10 and 4.29.11.

Thus a clear majority of the non-Cyprianic citations[1] appear within this form of scriptural catenae. Lactantius therefore seems to be reproducing sequences of scriptural material to disrupt and revise the catena-sequences arranged by Cyprian in the Ad Quirinum. From reference to scripture index II,[2] where the biblical passages are grouped according to their appearance in the text of the DI, it is possible to see how Lactantius reconstructs scriptural catenae of proof texts by intermingling the Cyprianic and non-Cyprianic testimonia.[3]

(1) a total of 23 instances

(2) Appendix 2

(3) cp Appendix 2 nos. 23-31 where material from each source is evenly distributed; or nos. 59-73 where material from catena C of the non-Cyprianic index (Appendix 3) has been used to supplement the original catena of Cyprian.

The table shows that Lactantius is using the Cyprianic testimonia as his more extensive source and therefore, in all likelihood, as his basic source of scriptural proofs into which he has inserted extra material in order to present expanded scriptural demonstrations; but it also demonstrates that Lactantius has not slavishly followed the theological structure which determined Cyprian's scriptural groupings. Column I, for example, gives relatively few cases of Lactantius' textual progression following that of Cyprian,(1) and in the majority of these cases the scriptural catenae rarely exceed two adjacent texts.

This suggests that both in regard to Cyprian's Ad Quirinum and the source which provided the non-Cyprianic testimonia, Lactantius applies a considerable amount of editorial re-arrangement to make the final scheme of the catenae of proofs very much his own. If one also brought into count the extent to which Lactantius introduces frequent allusions to the Gospels and New Testament Epistles to Book 4 then the scope and extent of his personal redaction of sources is greatly increased.(2)

(1) See appendix 2 column 1. The order of Cyprianic texts in Lactantius is generally random, excepting those short catenae he has directly copied viz; 8-9, 18-19, 21-22, 32,34, 35-36, 43-44, 54-56, 68-71, 74-75, 76-77.

(2) cp. the abundant amount of NT allusions introduced in Bk 4. (cf appendix 1 part B) Of these 33 allusions only 4 have a corresponding parallel in the Ad Quirinum. Each of these 4 instances is set within a chain of other allusions to the same NT source which Lactantius has collated independently. One may thus draw the inference that this NT parallelism with the Ad Quir is purely coincidental and that all Lactantius' NT knowledge is personal.

The three major catenae of scriptural texts (A,B and C)[1] which Lactantius has gained from this non-Cyprianic source are grouped respectively in chapters 12,16 and 18 of the fourth book of the DI.

Chapter 12 is concerned with the virginal birth of Christ[2] and his ascension and exaltation[3], all interpreted as Christ's mission to reveal "the sacred mystery of the only true God".[4] He has a potential source of proof texts on these subjects in Cyprian, but prefers to use an extraneous source here. And so, of the nine proof texts he offers, only three are taken from the Ad Quirinum[5] and these appear to be randomly selected units rather than Cyprianic catenae. There is a strong theme of anti-Jewish argument in the chapter.[6] Chapter 16 interprets the suffering and rejection of Christ as a logical result of his ministry of teaching.[7] Of the four Old Testament proofs he adduces, the first three are a catena, drawn from the non-Cyprianic source,[8] and which are concluded by a reference to the suffering-servant song in Isaiah.[9]

(1) see the preceding table, or Appendix 3, viz:p.207, orpp 538-9.

(2) verses 1-10

(3) ibid. verses 12-22.

(4) Dl. 4.12.11.

(5) (Dl. 4.12.4, Ad. Quir.2.9), (Dl.4.12.10, Ad Quir. 2.21) and (Dl.4.12.17, Ad Quir. 2.26)

(6) See eg. Dl. 4.12.11,13.

(7) cp. Dl. 4.16.4, 14B.

(8) See Appendix 2, the citation of Wisdom. 2.12f. at Dl.4.16.7-10 is not drawn from Ad Quir 2.14. since it includes elements Cyprian has excised.

(9) Is. 53.1-6. Dl.4.16.15. Ad Quir. 2.13.

This has a possible parallel in Cyprian. The final three-quarters of the chapter (vv 5-17) are given over to a bitter condemnation of the Jewish sin of the rejection of Christ,(1) and DI Chapter 18 is concerned once more with the passion and rejection of Christ in a discernibly anti-Jewish context. So it is that the chapter is introduced with the Jews "conspiring to condemn their God through ignorance of the scriptures"(2). It is the Jews who seize the Son of God and bring him to Pilate.(3) The Roman governor's role is greatly diminished however; Lactantius notes only that he recorded Christ was undeserving of condemnation,(4) and because of hostile pressure from Herod and the Jews(5) that he gave Christ into their hands. The trial of Christ, the mockery, the clothing in the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, the salutation as King, and the giving of gall and vinegar - all are attributed to the Jews, not the Romans.(6) And Lactantius then adduces scriptural and Sibylline proofs to show that it was foretold that the Jews would reject God in this way.(7) He finishes the chapter with two proof-texts showing that the Jewish nation would pay for this crime by the destruction of their holy city.(8)

(1) for the terms of this anti-Jewish argument cp Dl.4.16.5,6,11 and 17.

(2) Dl. 4.18.1.

(3) Dl. 4.18. 3-4.

(4) Dl. 4.18.5.

(5) Dl. 4.18.6.

(6) Dl. 4.18.6b-7

(7) particularly the Sibylline proof at 4.18.20 which he says "rebukes the land of Judaea". He appears to attribute the crowning with thorns to the Jews, and the Isaian text at 4.18.24 lays the whole blame for the passion at their door.

(8) Both from a non-Cyprianic source.

This theme of anti-Jewish polemic runs consistently throughout most of the non-Cyprianic proof texts Lactantius uses and suggests that he is reflecting here his dependence on some other collection of canonical and non-canonical Testimonia, probably some kind of "Adversus Judaeos" that was circulating in the Eastern church.(1) The use of this Eastern source in the composition of Book 4 is used as evidence by R.M. Ogilvie(2) to support the thesis that Lactantius wrote this part of the DI in Nicomedia, and to counter the argument of V. Loi(3) that it was assembled when Lactantius had reached the safety of Gaul. The use of this source cannot,however, be used as reliable evidence in this debate since it is not feasible to presume any professional rhetor would ever move house, whether from Cirta to Nicomedia, or more to the point, from Nicomedia to Trier, without taking his books along with him in the ubiquitous ox-cart.

(1) It must have been in the eastern church:
   a) because the text of Dan.7.13 at Dl.4.12.12 follows the Theodotion tradition not the main LXX version usually followed in the West (cp. Ad Quir.2.26)
   b) because the African Canon classed the Odes of Solomon as apocryphal whereas at Dl.4.12.3 Lactantius evidently regards them as scriptural "words of Solomon" (cp.A. Wlosok Nichtcyprianischen bibelzitate pp 242-244.)
   c) because Eusebius of Caesarea twice independently repeats Lactantius' exegesis (cp Zech.3.1-8, Dl.4.14.6-9 and Eusebius. Ecl. Proph. 123.23f) eg: lactantius (-in quos nihil congruit) denies the application of the prophecy to the two earlier Joshuas, Eusebius denies its application to the priestly Joshua(- μηδαμῶς ἐκεῖνα τῷ λεγομένῳ ἁρμόνει.) and again (cp Dl.4.20.13 and Eusebius. Ecl.Proph.202.2f) See/ Wlosok/ op.cit.p.241.n.2. and R.M. Ogilvie. The library of Lactantius. p.106. This suggests that Eusebius is privy to the same compilation of texts as Lactantius used earlier. Eusebius also refers to Odes of Solomon 19, and once more an anti-Jewish context is in evidence (Dem Evang.10.499 c-d, Dl. 412.3)

(2) Library of Lactantius p.106.

(3) V. Loi Il libro quattro delle Dl fu da Lattanzio composto in Gallia? (Mélanges Mohrmann. pp. 61-79). Loi argues from the eschatological elements in the paschal liturgy at Dl.7.19.3f, and from the date of the crucifixion at 4.10.18 (March 23rd, 15th year of Tiberius, consulship of C. Rubellius Geminus and C.Fusius Geminus.A.U.C.782) that Lactantius was reflecting the practice of the Gallic Church, and therefore writing at Trier. The argument is somewhat tenuous.

One can legitimately conclude that Lactantius used such a handbook of testimonies devoted to anti-Jewish propaganda,even that he had assimilated far more material of this nature than he was prepared to insert into the text of his apology - (after all Lactantius was addressing the Roman mind, not the Jewish) because he even announces his intention to compose his own treatise Adversus Judaeos at a later date(1). But the evidence that is adduced by Wlosok (and R.M. Ogilvie following her) to describe this source as "Gnostic-anti-Jewish" seems to go beyond its scope and is ultimately reducible to A. Wlosok's initial pre-supposition that Lactantius' conception of God, and revelation, came to him from his Hermetic religious background "before his conversion". The biographical introduction has already suggested the mythical nature of Lactantius' "conversion" as well as arguing along with J. Stevenson (2) that his Christian activity must have begun in Africa long before his journey to Asia Minor. In addition the following analysis of the doctrine of Revelation(3) will argue that it is perfectly orthodox and none of the defining themes of Gnosticism-proper can be traced in it(4). The treatment of Lactantius' use of Hermetic literature has suggested that although Lactantius uses it quite pervasively,it is by no means as extensive as his scriptural material, is introduced on apologetic motives not theological, and is quite definitely subordinated as a testimony to the scriptures themselves. The evidence of "Gnosticism" in the non-Cyprianic source is far from convincing(5), but even if it were allowed, the conclusion that Wlosok suggests (that this is thereby a sign of Gnostic elements in Lactantius' thought) is an invalid inference given the available evidence from the sources.

The manner in which Lactantius has interrupted the scriptural catenae of both Cyprian, and his anti-Jewish source,(6) introducing

elements from one and the other, suggests that (as was the case with all his patristic sources) the theological direction and argument are rarely taken over from the texts he employs, but that he regards them as mines from which he can quarry material that will re-inforce his own argument, on his own terms.

(1) cp. Dl. 7.1.26. The materials must have already been at hand, therefore, to prompt such a work.

(2) Life and literary activity of Lactantius pp. 666, 674.

(3) Thesis ch. 4 i

(4) Lactantius' central christological argument [that God-in-flesh is the perfect teacher of truth for man] is a direct contradiction of all that is normally meant by "Gnostic theory".

(5) eg. (a) that the non-Cyprianic source has Gnostic tendencies since it embraces the Odes of Solomon

(b) that it has given Lactantius an extra-canonical logion at 4.8.1 (beatus qui erat, antequam nasceretur) found elsewhere only in Gospel of Thomas Logion 19, Irenaeus Epid.43. - in fact Lactantius cites this as a Jeremian text and it can be read as his own paraphrastic version of Jer. 1.5B. following on from 5A which is cited immediately before.

(c) that Lactantius prefers the text tradition at 4.16.10 which replaces malitia with stultitia

cp. A. Wlosok. Nichtcyprianischen bibelzitate pp. 238, 242-7.
R.M. Ogilvie Library of Lactantius. p. 106

(6) cp. Appendix 2.

Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

(i) Divine revelation

Lactantius insists that the knowledge of God (agnitio Dei, contemplatio Dei) is the whole sum of man, and symbolises this in the centrality which he gives the doctrine of worship (both terms are cultic themes in the DI) in his system. This concept will be investigated in its own cultic setting,(1) and here it is enough to note Lactantius' recurrent statement that the whole plan and condition of human life depends on the knowledge of God: ' Quapropter nihil est aliut in uita quo ratio, quo condicio nostra nitatur, nisi dei qui nos genuit agnitio et religiosus ac pius cultus:'(2) Man, in short, is born for no other purpose than this knowledge of God which will result in worship: ` atquin remotis omnibus officiis corporis in sola mente ponenda est hominis ratio. non ergo ideo nascimur, ut ea quae sunt facta videamus, sed ut ipsum factorem rerum omnium contemplemur id est mente cernamus. quare si quis hominem qui vere sapiat interroget, cuius rei causa natus sit, respondebit intrepidus ac paratus colendi se dei gratia natum.'(3) If the knowledge of God is the crux of his anthropology then it is only logical to presume that Lactantius will affirm this divine knowledge as the heart of his epistemology. This leads us into the realm of his doctrine of revelation, and the investigation of his solution to the problem of how a limited, created, consciousness can approach and acknowledge the unlimited divine mind.

(1) ch. 4 (iii) b.

(2) Dl. 3.28.1.

(3) Dl. 3.9. 13-14.

Lactantius' first major statement in this regard, is to deny the possibility of any direct line of inference connecting the Creator and creature that operates from the inferior to the superior. This statement will be qualified, as it is more fully expounded shortly, but it accurately expresses the general terms of his approach to revelation. The qualification to the statement will consist in the way Lactantius attributes to man a natural quest for Truth.(1) His theological motivation for such an approach, however, is mainly apologetic and this natural quest is doomed to constant frustration, as the following epitomising passage illustrates. Here, the philosophers represent the natural quest for truth that is "uninformed" by the religious dimension. The impotence of their search is illustrated by the conflicting paths of the philosophic schools (v.6). And the final appeal of Lactantius (vv.7-8) is unquestionably to a divine paideia from heaven. This revelation, compared with the "blindness" of the philosophers, is like a "light brighter than the very sun": 'una igitur spes homini, una salus in hac doctrina quam defendimus posita est, omnis sapientia hominis in hoc uno est, ut deum cognoscat et colat: hoc nostrum dogma, haec sententia est. quanta itaque uoce possum, testificor proclamo denuntio: hic, hic est illut, quod philosophi omnes in tota sua uita quaesierunt nec umquam tamen inuestigare conprehendere tenere ualuerunt, quia religionem aut prauam retinuerunt aut totam penitus sustulerunt. facessant igitur illi omnes, qui humanam uitam non instruunt, sed turbant. quid enim docent aut quem instruunt qui se ipsos nondum instruxerunt? quem sanare aegroti, quem regere caeci possunt? huc ergo nos omnes, quibus est cura sapientiae, conferamus. an expectabimus, donec Socrates aliquid sciat aut Anaxagoras in tenebris lumen inueniat aut Democritus ueritatem de puteo extrahat aut Empedocles dilatet animi sui semitas aut Arcesilas et Carneades uideant sentiant percipiant? uox ecce de caelo ueritatem docens et

(1) inspired by the same treatment in Minucius.(Oct.18.11) & Tertullian. Apol. 17. 3-6.

nobis sole ipso clarius lumen ostendens. quid nobis iniqui sumus et sapientiam suscipere cunctamur, quam docti homines contritis in quaerendo aetatibus suis numquam reperire potuerunt? qui uult sapiens ac beatus esse, audiat dei uocem, discat iustitiam, sacramentum natiuitatis suae norit, humana contemnat, diuina suscipiat, ut summum illut bonum ad quod natus est possit adipisci.(1)

Man therefore fails to achieve truth, even though he naturally searches for it, and God alone can supply the deficiency. Man fails to hold truth within his own power because of the limitations of his nature, the fact of his creaturehood. The very composition of the body symbolises this innate limitation of man's knowledge. Knowledge is symbolically attributed to heaven, and it is therefore restricted in man since his nature is only heavenly in part: ' ubi ergo sapientia est? ut neque omnia scire te putes, quod est dei, neque omnia nescire, quod pecudis. est enim aliquid medium quod sit hominis, id est scientia cum ignoratione coniuncta et temperata. scientia in nobis ab animo est, qui oritur e caelo, ignoratio a corpore, quod ex terra; unde nobis et cum deo et cum animalibus est aliqua communitas. ita quoniam ex his duobus constamus elementis, quorum alterum luce praeditum est, alterum tenebris, pars nobis data est scientiae, pars ignorantiae. per hunc quasi pontem transire sine cadendi periculo licet.(2) God's nature is unlimited in its power, however, and its majesty is consequently beyond man's comprehension.(3)

(1) Dl. 3.30.3-8

(2) Dl. 3.6. 2-4.

(3) cp. eg. Dl. 1.7.12, 1.8.2.

Mankind once enjoyed Truth universally on earth in the primal age of innocence when all men worshiped one God. This was the Golden Age, but within one generation that religious dependence on the one God had been compromised and the truth was taken from men's eyes:

'Cogitanti mihi et cum animo meo saepe reputanti priorem illum generis humani statum et mirum pariter et indignum uideri solet, quod unius saeculi stultitia religiones uarias suscipientis deosque multos esse credentis in tantam subito ignorationem sui uentum est, ut ablata ex oculis ueritate neque religio dei ueri neque humanitatis ratio teneretur, hominibus non in caelo summum bonum quaerentibus, sed in terra.'(1) After this "fall(2)" of mankind from the truth, the human mind was only capable of catching glimpses of what it had lost. It was restricted to men of "highest genius" who would apply themselves unsparingly to the quest;(3) but few though they were, even these could only touch upon truth before it slipped from their grasp as they were carried back to their former ignorance:

'nunc satis est demonstrare summo ingenio uiros attigisse ueritatem ac paene tenuisse, nisi eos retrorsus infuœta prauis opinionibus consuetudo rapuisset, qua et deos esse alios opinabantur et ea quae in usum hominis deus fecit, tamquam sensu praedita essent, pro diis habenda et colenda credebant.'(4)

(1) Dl. 4.1.1, see also 4.1.6, 5.5.13, 5.6.6.

(2) Lactantius uses the classical symbol of the Golden Age as an apologetically viable account of the fall of man from grace. Here the loss of truth is directly ascribed to the corruption of monotheistic cult. The conception is transformed into a soteriological factor when Christ's mission is presented as primarily a revelation of truth, and a restoration of true worship. Lactantius also presents the ss. account of the fall (Dl. 2.12-2.13) but although textually extensive, the notion is not so consistently elaborated as the former concept.

(3) Dl. 1.1.1.

(4) Dl. 1.5.28.

The situation is further complicated, and worsened, by the role of Satan to whom Lactantius attributes the constant attempt to confuse the mind of man, intricate him further in his ignorance,and thus increase his separation from the knowledge of God.(1) This is why Lactantius lays such great stress on the difference between the philosophic quest for truth, representing the scope of natural reason, and the Christian's possession of truth, symbolising God's gift of revelation. Whereas philosophy is a tortuous matter, revelation is a "safe harbour", a wisdom easily understood and proclaimed as an honourable guide for living: `nam si quidam maximi oratores professionis suae quasi ueterani decursis operibus actionum suarum postremo se philosophiae tradiderunt eamque sibi requiem laborum iustissimam putauerunt, si animos suos in earum rerum quae inueniri non poterant inquisitione torquerent, ut non tam otium sibi quam negotium quaesisse uideantur et quidem multo molestius quam in quo fuerant ante uersati , quanto iustius ego me ad illam piam ueram diuinam sapientiam quasi ad portum aliquem tutissimum conferam, in qua omnia dictu prona sunt, auditu suavia, facilia intellectu, honesta susceptu?'(2) Whereas philosophy is a human invention, wisdom is a divine tradition: `nos ab hac calumnia inmunes ac liberi sumus qui philosophiam tollimus, quia humanae cogitationis inuentio est, sophiam defendimus, quia diuina traditio est, eamque ab omnibus suscipi oportere testamur.'(3)

(1) cp. Dl. 3.29. 14-15, 6.24. 23-24. V. Lai emphasises this diabolical role (Lattanzio pp 8-9) as evidence of Lactantius' "dualism" But in Lactantius it is basically an orthodox conception repeating a long-standing tradition.

(2) Dl. 1.1.11.

(3) Dl. 3.16.10.

It is a major theme in the D.I, then,that man's knowledge of truth is impotent, and that all truth depends on God's free revelation. The importance this conception has for Lactantius and its significance in his apologetic debate with the literati of the ancient world, can be guaged from the fact that Lactantius devotes the entirety of his Preface to the DI to this single idea.(1) This prologue consistently reaffirms that all human knowledge is impotent, for even after the philosophers have devoted all their lives to the search for truth, they are utterly frustrated: ' erant illi quidem ueritatis cognitione dignissimi, quoniam scire tanto opere cupiuerunt atque ita, ut eam rebus omnibus anteponerent ...sed neque adepti sunt id quod uolebant et operam simul atque industriam perdiderunt, quia ueritas id est arcanum summi dei, qui fecit omnia, ingenio ac propriis sensibus non potest conprehendi: alioquin nihil inter deum hominemque distaret, si consilia et dispositiones illius maiestatis aeternae cogitatio adsequeretur humana. quod quia fieri non potuit ut homini per se ipsum ratio diuina notesceret, non est passus hominem deus lumen sapientiae requirentem diutius errare ac sine ullo laboris effectu uagari per tenebras inextricabiles: aperuit oculos eius aliquando et notionem ueritatis munus suum fecit, ut et humanam sapientiam nullam esse monstraret et erranti ac uago uiam consequendae inmortalitatis ostenderet.'(2)

(1) cp. Dl. 1.1.1-25. The preface was traditionally meant as a synopsis of the main argument of the Book.

(2) Dl. 1.1.3, 5-6.

This fundamental doctrine, that man seeks truth but cannot grasp it,[1] asserts God's primacy over truth and man's total dependence on the divinity in every aspect of his life, including the epistemological[2]. Lactantius divides his apologetic against the philosophers, in Book 3, into two major avenues of approach - the epistemological and the moral,[3] attaching greater importance to the latter in so far as it concerns the life and activity of man.[4] In this area too he insists on the powerlessness of man's natural abilities. Man is not only unable to grasp the truth with his mind, he is unable to effect it in his life; a practical realisation of truth that is the proprium of divine instruction: 'quod ergo illi poscente natura faciendum esse senserunt, sed tamen neque ipsi facere potuerunt neque a philosophis fieri posse uiderunt, sola haec efficit doctrina caelestis, quia sola sapientia est.'[5]

(1) Dl. 2.19.6, 3.1.7-8.

(2) This the philosophers resisted in their attempt to rate religious knowledge as "opinatio" inferior to secular "scientia", in so far as it could not be subjected to physical analysis. Lactantius reverses the argument so that Truth as an essentially religious phenomenon does not fall within the scope of purely intellectual criteria - it cannot be won simply by philosophical talent (3.6. 8-10)

(3) The epistemological debate = Dl. 3.1. - 3.6, the moral = 3.7 - 3.8. (the 'logical' division is dismissed at 3.13.4-5)

(4) cp. Dl. 3.7. 1-4.

(5) Dl. 3.26.1.

Philosophy, as can be seen from the confused variety of its schools, cannot provide a clear direction for life and cannot supply ethical motivation. For Lactantius, only revealed truth can give man a valid system of right-living: 'nulla itaque ratio uei scientia vel lex bene uiuendi nisi in hac unica et uera et caelesti sapientia constituta est, quae philosophis fuerat ignota. nam illa terrena quoniam falsa est, uaria et multiplex sibique tota contraria est. et sicut unus est huius mundi constitutor et rector deus, una ueritas, ita unam esse ac simplicem sapientiam necesse est, quia quidquid est Verum ac bonum, id perfectum esse non potest, nisi fuerit singulare.'(1) For, as he insists, the teaching of God alone constitutes justice and wisdom for man: 'si ergo et philosophis ipsorum confessione adempta sapientia est et iis qui iusti habiti sunt adempta iustitia est, omnes igitur illae uirtutis descriptiones falsae sint necesse est, quia quae sit uera uirtus scire non potest nisi iustus ac sapiens, iustus autem ac sapiens nemo est nisi quem deus praeceptis caelestibus erudiuit.'(2)

(1) Dl. 3.15. 4-5. (revelation provides the ethical motivating power for such a system see 5.17.5.)

(2) Dl. 6.6.28.

Lactantius' argument is, therefore, that man has a total dependence on God; morally, in so far as only God's instruction can make him just, epistemologically, in so far as only the revelation of God can illuminate man's mind, and ontologically, since the whole meaning of man's nature is summed up in knowledge of God. This total dependence on God is what he means by truth. He has reversed the philosophic demand for an objective, rational and secular definition of truth by arguing that it is a subjective reality, a dependence on the person of God,(1) therefore a "Truth" whose religious dimension trancends the severe limitations of the rational enquiry. Mans intellectual dependence on God is therefore a reflection of the major characteristic of truth. Lactantius develops the idea by demonstrating the innate limitations of human knowledge and contrasting them with the absolute nature of that of God. It is thus beyond the capabilites of man's nature to conceive the energy and majesty of God: ' His igitur tot ac tantis testibus conprobatur unius dei potestate ac prouidentia mundum gubernari, cuius uim maiestatemque tantam esse dicit in Timaeo Plato, ut eam neque mente concipere neque uerbis enarrare quisquam possit ob nimiam et inaestimabilem potestatem. dubitet uero aliquis an quicquam difficile aut inpossibile sit deo, qui tanta tamque mirifica opera prouidentia excogitauit, uirtute constituit, ratione perfecit, nunc autem spiritu sustentet, potestate moderetur, inexcogitabilis ineffabilis et nulli alii satis notus quam sibi?'(2)

(1) For Lactantius it is the person of God who is ultimately the Truth. cf. Dl. 3.1.12a.

(2) Dl. 1.8. 1-2.

And it is precisely man's composite, created nature that sets a gulf here and allows for no direct knowledge from below to above.(1) Only God possesses knowledge absolutely: ' Duabus rebus uidetur philosophia constare, scientia et opinatione, nec ulla re alia. scientia uenire ab ingenio non potest nec cogitatione conprehendi quia in se ipso habere propriam scientiam non hominis,sed dei est. mortalis autem natura non capit scientiam nisi quae ueniat extrinsecus.'(2) And man must, therefore, stand in total dependence on the revelation of God. Nonetheless Lactantius does present this natural quest(3) for truth that man has in a more positive manner, although he is careful to restrict its implications(4) so as not to compromise his overall view that man depends absolutely on heavenly revelation. He suggests,then,that man's natural(5) perception of truth is more promising as a theoretical potential than as an actual reality. So, for example, the primary truth of the existence of God as creator lies within the scope of this natural ability. Orpheus, an ancient poet,(6) is thus able to write about the self-origin of deity and the making of the heavens: ' hunc ait esse omnium deorum parentem, quorum causa caelum condiderit liberisque prospexerit, ut haberent habitaculum sedemque communem:...natura igitur et ratione ducente intellexit esse praestantissimam potestatem, caeli ac terrae conditricem.'(7)

(1) eg. the 'mixed-nature' of the body sets a limit on man's heavenly capabilities. cf. Dl. 3.6.3-4, 2.12. 2-3.

(2) Dl. 3.3. 2-3.

(3) see Dl. 2.7.4.

(4) so,for example,he makes ironical allusions that the ancient world's witness to Truth was often an accidental affair (3.181) They might speak as prophets unawares, but only Christians who possess revealed Truth are truly prophets, who can teach truth with authority and understanding (6.8.11)

(5) eg. -that all men understand the existence of Providence(1.2.5) or that in danger men instinctively cry out to the One God (2.1.10)

(6) a man, not a demi-god (Dl.1.5.4, 1.22-15-17, 1.13.11)

(7) Dl. 1.5.6.

But, though this basic, natural, confession[1] could have been built upon to develop man's conception of truth even to the extent, in theory, that the pagans could have comprehended the truth and "gained the same doctrine" as the Christians, Lactantius clearly implies that this in fact was never the case: 'quodsi vel Orpheus vel hi nostri quae natura ducente senserunt in perpetuum defendissent, eandem quam nos sequimur doctrinam conprehensa ueritate tenuissent.'[2]

If the whole extent of this natural knowledge of God could be assembled Lactantius admits how impressive it would be. There is clearly an apologetic motivation in using this approach for it gives value to the pagan religious insights (in so far as they are compatible with the Christian truth) but at the same time sub-ordinates them to the Christian system.[3] But he ironically adds that such a "collection" of this truth would be completely impossible without God's prior revelation:[4] 'quodsi extitisset aliquis qui ueritatem sparsam per singulos per sectasque diffusam colligeret in unum ac redigeret in corpus, is profecto non dissentiret a nobis. sed hoc nemo facere nisi ueri peritus ac sciens potest, uerum autem scire non nisi eius est qui sit doctus a deo.'[5]

(1) Though it is significant that Lactantius represents the natural testimony of the poets as intrinsically inferior to the religious testimony of the Sibyls, for Example, (1.6.6)

(2) Dl. 1.5.14.

(3) Lactantius explains his use of pagan authorities on apologetic grounds cp. Dl. 1.5.2, 1.6.17.

(4) Since man's "natural wisdom" cannot lead him to a systematisation of the truth: Dl. 2.15.1,16.

(5) Dl. 7.7.4.

In practice, then, there is no conflict in the DI between the capabilities of man's natural vision of God and the doctrine of man's total dependence on revealed truth, for Lactantius severely restricts the scope of human wisdom to the recognition (by logical inference) of the existence of a creator, from the works of creation.(1) But even then, he argues, not all men fulfil even this basic requirement as the widespread cult of the gods can demonstrate.

Lactantius' apologetic motivation in retaining this theme of man's "natural" and "rational" witness to God lies partly in the manner he can apply the argument to demonstrate that Christian revelation is not irrational(2) but the fulfilment of reason. And so Lactantius stresses the superior assurance of revealed knowledge over deductive insight: 'quod quoniam nobis deus reuelauit nec coniecturis id adsequimur sed traditione caelesti, docebimus sedulc, ut tandem studiosis ueritatis appareat non uidisse neque conprehendisse philosophos ueritatem, sed ita leuiter odoratos, ut tamen unde eos odor ille sapientiae tam suauis, tam iucundus adflauerit, nullo modo senserint.'(3)

(1) The "rational witness" theme cp: Dl. 1.3.1., 1.8.2, 7.5.4, and Tertullian Apol. 17.1, Minucius, Oct. 18.7. Romans 1·19f presents the Christian proto-type of this approach and at 2.8 gives Lactantius an authority for describing Revelation as submission or dependence on God, (apeithousi). cf. V. Loi Lattanzio p.11.

(2) ie. against the philosophers who regarded such religious wisdom as irrational, or superstitious.

(3) Dl. 7.1.11.

Conjecture gives way to such assurance that the believer can teach with authority, and whereas the deduction of man always amounts to wrangling disagreements, the divine revelation communicates the calm simplicity of wisdom, which has effective power over the life of man: 'quid ergo superest nisi ut omissis litigatoribus furiosis ac pertinacibus ueniamus ad iudicem, illum scilicet datorem simplicis et quietae sapientiae, quae non tantum formare nos et inducere in uiam possit, uerum etiam de controuersiis istorum ferre sententiam?'(1) So it is, too, that the Christian believers are elevated far above the philosophers, for their grasp of truth is incomparably superior: 'quare non inuideant nobis, quibus aperuit ueritatem deus.'(2) And while the lives of the philosphers are in chaos and ignorance, those of the Christians, informed by God's revelation of truth, have direction and power. Only they are able to 'practise' the truth God has revealed to them: 'Sed omittamus philosophos, qui aut nihil omnino sciunt idque ipsum pro summa scientia praeferunt aut qui non perspiciunt etiam quae sciunt aut qui quoniam se putant scire quae nesciunt, inepte adroganterque desipiunt. nos ergo, ut ad propositum reuertamur, quibus solis a deo ueritas reuelata et caelitus missa sapientia est, faciamus quae iubet inluminator noster deus. sustineamus inuicem et labores huius uitae mutuis adiumentis perferamus nec tamen, si quid boni operis fecerimus, gloriam captemus ex eo.'(3)

(1) Dl. 3.8.1.

(2) Dl. 3.29.13.

(3) Dl. 6.18.1-2. Christians alone possess the secret of justice (4.15.2). They alone know the full truth of the immortality of man (7.8.10.

This is why Lactantius presents the Christian believers as supreme masters of the truth, whose duty (officiun) is no less than to expound the mystery of the world and the mystery of man: 'illi enim nullam rationem adferebant cur humanum genus uel creatum uel constitutum esset a deo: nostrum hoc officium est, sacramentum mundi et hominis exponere, cuius illi expertes sacrarium ueritatis nec attingere nec uidere potuerunt.'(1) Not only does Lactantius argue that revealed knowledge is incomparably superior to the confused speculations of the secular rationalists, but he completely redefines the aim and scope of rational inquiry. God made human nature (innately) to desire truth, but unable to discover it unaided,(2) and whereas the pagan philosophers attempt to replace revelation with reason, Lactantius makes reason adopt the role of pre-evangelisation; it is a preparation for the truth and can set the scene for true, divine illumination by clearing prejudice and error from man's life.

Lactantius, therefore, attributes to man's natural faculty, not the discovery of truth, but the elimination of falsehoods. The former office belongs to those who have been divinely instructed: 'falsum uero intellegere est quidem sapientiae, sed humanae, ultra hunc gradum procedi ab homine non potest, itaque multi philosophorum religiones ut docui sustulerunt: uerum autem scire diuinae sapientiae est; homo autem per se ipsum peruenire ad hanc scientiam non potest, nisi doceatur a deo. ita philosophi quod summum fuit humanae sapientiae adsecuti sunt, ut intellegerent quid non sit: illud adsequi nequiuerunt, ut dicerent quid sit. nota Ciceronis uox est: utinam tam facile uera inuenire possem quam falsa conuincere. quod quia uires humanae condicionis excedit, eius officii facultas nobis adtributa est, quibus tradidit deus scientiam ueritatis.'(3)

(1) Dl. 7.3.14. see also 6.2.16.
(2) Dl. 3.1.6-7, 7.2. 8-9.
(3) Dl. 2.3. 23-25, cp. also 1.17.4.

Reason is an important guide for man,(1) and God requires men to weigh the truth, and particularly to subject religious institutions to the light of their judgement and wisdom. If the ancient world had been faithful in this they would not have repeated the errors of their ancestors: ' Quare oportet in ea re maxime in qua uitae ratio uersatur, sibi quemque confidere suoque iudicio ac propriis sensibus niti ad inuestigandam et perpendendam ueritatem, quam credentem alienis erroribus decipi tamquam ipsum rationis expertem. dedit omnibus deus pro uirili portione sapientiam, ut et inaudita inuestigare possent et audita perpendere. nec quia nos illi temporibus antecesserunt, sapientia quoque antecesserunt, quae si omnibus aequaliter datur, occupari ab antecedentibus non potest. inlibabilis est tamquam lux et claritas solis, quia ut sol oculorum sic sapientia lumen est cordis humani. quare cum sapere id est ueritatem quaerere omnibus sit innatum, sapientiam sibi adimunt qui sine ullo iudicio inuenta maiorum probant et ab aliis pecudum more ducuntur.'(2) In short, even though man's natural wisdom is too restricted to arrive unaided at the truth, it nonetheless gives men the capability, and therefore the duty, of reflecting on truth, thereby opening themselves to religious insight: ' non sum equidem tam iniquus, ut eos putem diuinare debuisse ut ueritatem per se ipsos inuenirent, quod ego fieri non posse confitear, sed hoc ab iis exigo quod ratione ipsa praestare potuerunt, facerent enim prudentius, si et intellegerent esse aliquam ueram (religionem) et falsis inpugnatis aperte pronuntiarent eam quae uera esset ab hominibus non teneri.'(3)

(1) It must inform his religious behaviour since Truth cannot conflict with reason cp 2.6.9-11.

(2) Dl. 2.7.1-4.

(3) Dl. 2.3. 19-20

Lactantius describes the truth in the old apologetic terms of an energy and a power that is its own vindication without help from man.(1)

This approach reaffirms the complete subjection of man to divine knowledge and man's utter dependence on God for truth. Because, if the truth is a divine power(2) that makes itself known of its own accord, the speculative role of inquiring reason is thereby reduced. So it is for Lactantius. Truth is presented as a power and a light(3) so great that it impresses itself on all men's minds: 'ueniamus ad auctores et eos ipsos ad ueri probationem testes citemus, quibus contra nos uti solent, poetas dico ac philosophos. ex his unum deum probemus necesse est, non quod illi habuerint cognitam ueritatem, sed quod ueritatis ipsius tanta uis est, ut nemo possit esse tam caecus, quin uideat ingerentem se oculis diuinam claritatem.' It has the power in itself to break out even from "unwilling breasts": 'nam et cum iurant et cum optant et cum gratias agunt, non Iouem aut deos multos, sed deum nominant: adeo ueritas ipsa cogente natura etiam ab inuitis pectoribus erumpit.'(4)

(1) cp. Justin. On the Resurrection. 1.1. (preserved. Damascene Sacra Parall. P.G. 91.280) and St.Justin. Discourse to Greeks.5. ANCL Vol.2. Edinburgh. 1867 pp 341, 283 respectively cp Dl. 1.1.4.

(2) Truth can be described by divine epithets since ultimately it is not a body of facts but the person of God himself (Dl.3.1.12a)

(3) Dl. 1.5.2. (cited in text subsequently) 1.1.23f, 3.30.7.

(4) Dl. 2.1.7. Truth has a power which prevails of itself hence even sacrificati return to the Church (5.13.1); it alone detains Christians (5.19.14); it cries out to men (5.1.4).

The philosophers, attempting to elevate the role of human reason over their conception of revelation, described the truth as something hard and difficult to discover. Reason had therefore to be trained and refined, and its deductive power alone was capable of resurrecting the hidden truth. Lactantius exposes this whole approach. Truth, he says, is not hidden in a well to be sought for, as the philosophers think, it is openly revealed as if on a mountain top:

'non enim tamquam in puteo demersa ueritas est, quo uel descendere uel etiam cadere illi licebat, sed tamquam in summo montis excelsi uertice uel potius in caelo, quod est uerissimum.'(1) And so, far from being a difficult quest of the rational faculty reserved to a few intelligent men, truth is a universal gift to man, a light brighter than the sun itself, which God himself teaches: ' vox ecce de caelo ueritatem docens et nobis sole ipso clarius lumen ostendens. quid nobis iniqui sumus et sapientiam suscipere cunctamur, quam docti homines contritis in quaerendo aetatibus suis numquam reperire potuerunt?'(2)

(1) Dl. 3.28.14

(2) Dl. 3.30.7.

The truth is of its nature(1) simple, and easy for man to discover and follow. As the philosophers exaggerate the role of rational inquiry, so they emphasise the obscurity of truth, but for Lactantius this is to leave the level path for tortuous ways and to choose darkness instead of light. When man will not submit to the divine revelation, then, it is a perversity of his own making:

'multi enim superstitionibus uanis pertinaciter inhaerentes obdurant contra manifestam ueritatem, non tam de suis religionibus quas praue adserunt bene meriti quam de se male. qui cum habeant iter rectum deuios secuntur anfractus, planum deserunt, ut per praecipitium labantur, lucem relinquunt, ut in tenebris caeci ac debiles iaceant. his consulendum est, ne contra se pugnent uelintque se tandem ab inueteratis erroribus liberari: quod utique facient, si quare sint nati aliquando peruiderint. haec enim prauitatis est causa, ignoratio sui: quam si quis cognita ueritate discusserit, sciet quo referenda et quemadmodum sibi uita degenda sit. cuius scientiae summam breuiter circumscribo, ut neque religio ulla sine sapientia suscipienda sit nec ulla sine religione probanda sapientia.'(2)

This free and universal revelation of truth (so much so that even pagans can instinctively call out to the true God(3)) completely restricts the claims of "natural reason", in so far as this attempts to make the inquiry after truth independent of divine revelation, and it is another device by which Lactantius sets out truth as an essential dependence on God.

(1) Truth is essentially simple, in which it mirrors the simplicity of God's nature. cf. Dl. 3.1. 10-14.

(2) Dl. 1.1. 23-25.

(3) Dl. 2.1.7. Lactantius echoes the same idea from Tertullian Apol.17. which the latter uses to illustrate his famous dictum: o testimonium animae naturaliter christianae.

Those who try to have a knowledge independent of God's teaching are thus doomed to failure: 'in primis causa errorum omnium philosophis haec fuit, quod rationem mundi, quae totam sapientiam continet, non conprehenderunt. ea uero sensu proprio et interna intellegentia non potest conprehendi: quod illi sine doctore per se ipsos facere uoluerunt. itaque in uarias sibique saepe contrarias sententias inciderunt ex quibus exitum non haberent, et in eodem luto, sicut comicus ait, haesitauerunt, scilicet adsumtionibus eorum non respondente ratione, cum adsumpsissent quidem uera, sed quae adfirmari probarique non possent sine scientia ueritatis rerumque caelestium: quae, ut saepe iam dixi, non potest esse in homine nisi deo docente percepta.'(1) If this truth is so clearly and universally revealed, however, why is it that all men have not found it? Lactantius is aware of the problem and so is led into his doctrine of the soteriology of revelation. This will be more fully exposed in the christological section following, but a brief context may be supplied in its relevant place here, for he explains the problem in part by characterising truth as a sacrament of God's economy.

As he explains in his christological preface, truth was once universally recognised on earth. It was bright and clear to all men but was soon lost to them because of their false worship and material obsessions.(2) Men were left in the obscure darkness of their corruption: 'sic humanam uitam prioribus saeculis in clarissima luce uersatam caligo ac tenebrae conprehenderunt.'(3)

(1) Dl. 7.2. 2-3.

(2) cp. Dl. 4.1. 1-5

(3) Dl. 4.1.6a.

Having once been corrupted,man was held captive by the twin forces of a demonic cult and a sensuality, and so the ancient world departed further and further from truth along these two rails. Religion and wisdom became regarded as independent and conflicting spheres. The ordinary people engaged in a sensual and superstitious cult, while the learned attempted to rediscover truth by means of their unaided rational skills. Both types of men excluded the insight of the other and were consequently unable to arrive at either true wisdom or true religion, since truth is an essential harmony of both: 'idcirco nec philosophia potuit ueritatem conprehendere nec religio deorum rationem sui, qua caret, reddere. ubi autem sapientia cum religione inseparabili nexu cohaeret, utrumque esse uerum necesse est.'(1) Their continuing alienation from truth, however, led them to be held captive by their relative prejudices. So, the learned began to think that truth had to prove acceptable to them on the terms of their own "reasoning abilities", and the mythologists wanted it to concur with the sensuality of their previous religious expressions. Such longstanding prejudices explained why the men of the ancient world were unable to recognise truth when it was offered to them.(2)

(1) Dl. 4.3.5.

(2) Dl. 1.1. 6-7.

Truth, then, has a sacramental character. It demands ascesis and spiritual discernment before it can be seen. The long process of man's corruption and error had to be reversed, and so it was that in preparing for the restoration of truth on earth,(1) God kept the truth a secret. He turned the Gentile philosophers away from truth until the time was fulfilled for the revealing economy of Christ and,meanwhile, hid it(2) under the veil of folly so that no one could grasp truth who was prevented by his rationalist or sensual prejudices from penetrating its sacrament: 'quid autem putemus fuisse causae cur tot ingeniis totque temporibus summo studio ac labore quaesita non reperiretur, nisi quod eam philosophi extra fines suos quaesierunt? qui quoniam peregratis et exploratis omnibus nusquam ullam sapientiam conprehenderunt et alicubi esse illam necesse est, apparet ibi potissimum esse quaerendam ubi stultitiae titulus apparet: cuius uelamento deus, ne arcanum sui diuini operis in propatulo esset, thensaurum sapientiae ac ueritatis abscondit. unde equidem soleo mirari, quod cum Pythagoras et postea Plato amore indagandae ueritatis incensi ad Aegyptios et Magos et Persas usque penetrassent, ut earum gentium ritus et sacra cognoscerent - suspicabantur enim sapientiam in religione uersari -, ad Iudaeos tantum non accesserint, penes quos tunc solos erat et quo facilius ire potuissent. sed auersos esse arbitror diuina prouidentia, ne scire possent ueritatem, quia nondum fas erat alienigenis hominibus religionem dei ueri iustitiamque notescere.'(3)

(1) which is effected by Christ, and realised in his Church cf. DI 5.7.

(2) f. verse 3: 'a secret treasury of truth and wisdom' cp. 1 Cor. 1.20-22.

(3) Dl. 4.2. 2-5.

So for Lactantius it is only after the revelatory mission of Christ has taken place that it is true to say that truth has once again been made easy for man and universally bestowed. So, for example, Lactantius emphasises that the Christian believers are 'masters' and 'teachers' of truth, as we have already seen, and now even simple Christians are capable of refuting the philosophers.(1) The conception of truth as a divine sacrament will be further elucidated in the exposition of Chapter 6, devoted to the Lactantian christology, but the broad outlines of the soteriological structure here serve to show his constant concern to present truth as wholly the work of God, and revelation as the story of man's utter dependence on God.

The conception of man's absolute dependence on God for life and knowledge is so strong in Lactantius, that even when he discusses the free gift of God's revelation he emphasises its restrictions in order to stress man's continuing subordination. So, for example, God does not confer the full truth on man. The nature of man's creaturehood prevents this.

(1) cp. Dl. 5.19.16.

God only reveals what he wants man to know,(1) that is what man "needs to know" "for the attainment of life". This is set out in the final verse of the following passage as "perfect wisdom", the acknowledgement of the one Creator:(2) 'opera ipsius uidentur oculis, quomodo autem illa fecerit, ne mente quidem uidetur, quia, ut Hermes ait, mortale inmortali, temporale perpetuo, corruptibile incorrupto propinquare non potest id est propius accedere et intellegentia subsequi.et ideo terrenum adhuc animal rerum caelestium perspectionem non capit, quia corpore quasi custodia saeptum tenetur, quominus soluto ac libero sensu cernat omnia sciat igitur quam inepte faciat qui res inenarrabiles quaerat hoc est enim modum condicionis suae transgredi nec intellegere quousque homini liceat accedere. denique cum aperiret homini ueritatem deus, ea sola scire nos uoluit quae interfuit hominem scire ad uitam consequendam, quae uero ad curiosam et profanam cupiditatem pertinebant, reticuit, ut arcana essent. quid ergo quaeris quae nec potes scire nec si scias, beatior fies? perfecta est in homine sapientia, si et deum esse unum et ab ipso facta esse uniuersa cognoscat.'(3) It is impiety for man probe beyond this divinely-set limitation: `adeo nefas existimandum est ea scrutari quae deus uoluit esse celata'.(4)

(1) cp. eg. Dl. 2.11.20

(2) Both these terms cognitio dei, and sapientia perfecta, are to be subsumed in his doctrine of worship (see ch 4. (iii) b-c) See citation of 2.5.3. over.

(3) Dl. 2.8. 68-71.

(4) 2.8.64.

This "perfect wisdom"[1], to which end God has designed his revelation of truth, is that man should worship his parent and maker: `satis est homini ad plenam perfectamque prudentiam, si deum esse intellegat. cuius intellegentiae uis et summa haec est, ut suspiciat et honorificet communem parentem generis humani et rerum mirabilium fabricatorem.'[2] This means that man should live a just life and so earn God's reward of immortality. So when Lactantius states that revelation is meant for man's "attainment of life", he has in mind a wide-ranging scheme of salvation-history, embracing the preparatory stage of man's acknowledgement of the creative power by the light of his reason, through to his immortalisation in union with God.

The following section on 'worship and the immortalisation of man'[3], will expand this latter point. But the exposition of the soteriological function that revelation fulfils is to be set out later in its place in Lactantius' Christology.[4]

(1) Prudentia/intellegentia, as distinct from sapientia

(2) 2.5.3.

(3) cp. ch. 4.(iii)e.

(4) cp. ch. 6.(iii)b.

(ii) Divine transcendence.

(a) Via Negativa:

The major part of the Lactantian doctrine of God occurs in the opening books of the DI and is set within the context of an aplogetic theology, designed to differentiate, as markedly as possible, the gods of the ancient world from the God of the Christians. Lactantius argues in the main from the evidence presented to him (a) from the mythological histories of the heroes and (b) from the details of their cults. And he attempts to distinguish the pagan system as materialist and relative.(1) while demonstrating that the Christian system can only recognise a God who is spiritual and absolute. Lactantius takes the example of all the major gods in turn and demonstrates their relativity and material origins. He comes to the most ancient of the gods, Saturn, and finds here, in the very source,(2) that same relativity. From this point, he defines the nature of true divinity as unoriginate power: ' sed cum eadem ratione natum esse cogito, non possum putare deum summum quo uideam esse aliquid antiquius, caelum scilicet atque terram. at ego deum quaero ultra quem nihil sit omnino, qui fons et origo sit rerum: hic sit necesse est qui caelum ipsum condidit terramque fundauit.'(3)

(1) eg. his distinction between God and Minerva, one divine the other human, one who 'wove' all creation, the other who wove tapestry. (Dl. 1.18.23-24.)

(2) for he denies the validity of paganism finding a more basic source in the elements that gave birth to Saturn:(1.11.54).

(3) Dl. 1.11.52.

This apologetic argument provides the context for his doctrine of God's transcendence. His first major statement is the absolute immateriality of God. Unlike the pagan gods, whom he constantly historicises by means of Euhemerus, the true God has no physical origin. As creator of all matter ex nihilo,(1) he is beyond all physical limitation. Lactantius expresses this self-determination and material transcendence by a series of attributes, for example: 'ex se ipso est, ut in primo diximus libro, et ideo talis est qualem esse se uoluit, inpassibilis inmutabilis incorruptus beatus aeternus.'(2) These and others, add up to a clear demonstration that God absolutely transcends physical limitations because he is the spiritual creator of all matter.

Incorporalis. (Ἀσώματος.)

Lactantius spends a great deal of time in the first two books of the DI developing the apologetic argument that the materiality of the pagan cult argues for the material nature of the gods, thereby historicising them and making them relative, so destroying any belief in their divinity. It is man's committment to this materiality or sensuality of the false cult that externalises him, according to Lactantius. When a man has in this way "given himself over to corporeal things", he has limited himself to physical insight, even though the soul's duty is to perceive the 'incorporeal', that is "those things the eye of the body cannot behold": 'qui ergo colunt simulacra, corpora sunt hominibus carentia, quia se corporalibus dediderunt nec uident plus aliquid mente quam corpore, cum sit animi officium ea subtilius cernere quae acies corporalis non potest intueri.'(3)

(1) Dl. 2.8.28.
(2) Dl. 2.8.44b.
(3) Dl. 2.3.9.

When Lactantius presents a positive thesis on the nature of true worship, in Book6, he develops this concept of the distinction between man's physical and spiritual insight as a necessary concomitant to the incorporeality of God. He criticises Plato's conception of worship and demonstrates that God's incorporeality demands a similar cult,that is,a worship which consists of moral behaviour:(1), immo uero non castum donum deo quidquid corrumpi, quidquid subripi potest. sed sicut hoc uidit, non oportere uiuenti offerri aliquid quod sit ex mortuo corpore, cur illud non uidit, non debere incorporali corporale munus offerri?'(2) In Book 7 he draws an analogy between the incorporeal, invisible nature of God, and the soul of man; arguing that if such a God is eternal so can the soul be: 'quodsi est deus et incorporalis et inuisibilis et aeternus, ergo non idcirco interire animam credibile est, quia non uidetur, postquam recessit a corpore, quoniam constat esse aliquid sentiens ac uigens quod non veniat sub aspectum.'(3) The term symbolises God's spiritual power at 7.21.1. This power is so great that it encompasses "even incorporeal things": 'Primum ergo dicimus tantam esse dei potestatem, ut etiam incorporalia conprehendat et quemadmodum uoluerit adficiat. nam et angeli deum metuunt, quia castigari ab eo possunt inenarrabili quodam modo et daemones reformidant, quia torquentur ab eo ac puniuntur.'(4)

(1) cp. Dl. 6.25.7.

(2) Dl. 6.25.2.

(3) Dl. 7.9.7.

(4) Dl. 7.21.1.

Here again Lactantius' argument goes on to draw an analogy between the incorporeality of God and the nature of the soul . At verse 2, for example, the soul too is one of those incorporeal things that fall under God's dominion: ` quid ergo mirum, si cum sint inmortales animae, tamen patibiles sint deo? nam cum in se nihil habeant solidum et contrectabile, a solidis et corporalibus nullam uim pati possunt: sed quia in solis spiritibus uiuunt, a solo deo tractabiles sunt, cui uirtus ac substantia spiritalis est.'(1) Lactantius uses the term 'incorporalis' then to designate the being of God as spirit, a power that trancends matter, and in so doing is in perfect accord with the previous apologetic usage,(2) which also extends the term to embrace other spiritual entities, particularly the soul and the angelic order. Lactantius is the first to use the adjective substantivally in the citation from 6.25.2, where he describes God as "the incorporeal (one)."(3)

(1) Dl. 7.21.2.

(2) cp. Tertullian. Apol. 47.6 on God's incorporeality. And on that of the soul cp. Anim.6: (unde haec vis incorporalis animae?) see. Carn. 11.21. As applied to angels - Ps. Hier. Ep. 37.9. Hier. In Isaiam. 49.24. Augustine concisely sums up the term:`incorporalis autem vel incorporeus ideo dicitur deus, ut spiritus credatur vel intelligatur esse, non corpus.' (De Trin. 15.V.7) cp. Th. L.L. 7.1. col. 1024. 20f.

(3) cp. Epit. 53.1. As does Augustine : Civ.9.17. cp.Th. L.L.7.1. col. 1024. 25.

Lactantius' roots for this doctrine of the incorporeality of God are easily found in the Christian apologetic tradition. The concept of θεὸς ἀσώματος had, of course, a long pagan tradition, Pythagorean and Platonic,(1), but the authorities for Lactantius are far more likely to be Tertullian, whom he has studied, or Seneca,(2) whom he quotes appraisingly at 6.25.3, rather than Plato, whom he criticises in the preceding verse.(3) Although the vestiges of the Stoic difficulties about the possibility of "incorporeal being" remained in Tertullian,(4) so that his use of the adjective incorporalis is guarded and careful, by the time of Lactantius such problems had all but evaporated and the Stoic influence over theological terminology was much less direct.

(1) cp. A.J. Festugière. La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste. vol. 4. Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose. Paris 1954. pp.59-61, 72, 100-102, 108-9, 125-26, 136. see also E. Bréhier La théorie des incorporels dans L'ancien Stoïcisme. Paris 1928.pp.1-4.

(2) Seneca is the first Latin author to apply 'incorporalis' to the 'ratio divina':'id actum est, mihi crede, ab illo, quisquis formator universi fuit, sive ille deus est potens omnium, sive incorporalis ratio, sive divinus spiritus per omnia maxima minima, aequali intentione diffusus, sive fatum et immutabilis causarum inter se cohaerentium series'--(Cons. Ad. Helv. Dial.11.) Th. LL.7.1. col 1024. 45.

(3) viz. 6.25.2. V. Loi attributes a major Platonic influence on Lactantius' doctrine here (Lattanzio. p.35f) mainly on the grounds that he departs from Stoic tradition and refers several times to Plato's name. However, cp. Dl. 1.5.23-28. In fact Lactantius takes only commonplaces from Plato and even then only second-hand material derived from Cicero and Seneca. (cp Ogilvie. Lib of Lactantius pp. 78-83, and M. Perrin in Lactance et Son temps Paris '77 pp. 203-231) the only theologically -significant derivation from Plato (Tim. 28-29. Dl. 1.8.1) comes to him from Minucius...Oct. 19.14. cf. A.D. Nock. VC.16.'62. pp. 79-86 + (Van Rooijen-Dijkman. De Vita Beata. Assen '67.p.24) who demonstrates that all the Stoic material (Dl.7.3.-7.4., Cicero. Acad. 1.6.24, 1.7.29) equally derives from Cicero.

(4) Carn. 11.4:'omne, quod est, corpus est sui generis, nihil est incorporale nisi quod non est.' Also Adv.Prax. 7.8:'quis enim negabit deum corpus esse, etsi deus spiritus est? spiritus enim corpus sui generis in sua effigie; cp Cicero Nat. Deor.1.12.30 who argues that the asōmatos concept negates sensation, fore-thought and pleasure in the deity. It is the philosophical paradox which makes Tertullian's use of the idea a diffident one.cp. Adv.Hermog.35.2:'nisi fallor enim, omnis res aut corporalis sit necesse est aut incorporalis ut concedam interim esse aliquid incorporale, de substantiis dumtaxat, cum substantia corpus sit rei cuiusque.' (cf. G. Verbeke. L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma Paris 1945.pp.440-451)

It was Lactantius' express aim to refute the Stoic notion of divine corpreality and to differentiate, as strongly as he could, spiritual and corporeal nature. This he does, for example, in his critique of the Stoic teaching on the divinity of 'heavenly bodies[1] or in his discussion whether matter came from God, or God from matter. This God can create matter precisely because he himself is incorporeal:

'non ergo deus ex materia, quia sensu praeditum ex insensibili, sapiens ex bruto, inpatibile de patibili, expers corporis de corporali numquam potest oriri, sed materia potius ex deo est. quidquid est enim solido et contrectabili corpore, accipit externam uim; quod accipit uim, dissolubile est; quod dissoluitur, interibit; quod interit, ortum sit necesse est; quod ortum est, habuit fontem unde oreretur id est factorem aliquem sentientem prouidum peritumque faciendi. is est profecto nec ullus alius quam deus. qui quoniam sensu ratione prouidentia potestate uirtute praeditus est, et animantia et inanima creare et efficere potest, quia tenet quomodo sit quidque faciendum.'[2] The vestiges of the Stoic doctrine on the materiality of all beings, even spiritual beings, can be found only in a minor part of Lactantius' teaching on the soul's nature (Dl. 7.20 - 7.21) and this is a direct result of his reliance on Tertullian's teaching.

(1) Dl. 2. 5.10.

(2) Dl. 2.8.38-40

Even here, although he describes the Stoic notion of varying degrees of spiritualisation and corporeality in souls,(1) and concludes that "these things are near to the truth",(2) he nonetheless gives his own version of the nature and punishment of souls,(3) and makes a clear enough distinction between two orders of creation: corporeal beings and spirits, both of which are totally subject to the spiritual energy and substance of God.(4) The Lactantian usage, then, is a clear departure from the Stoic tradition. Incorporalis, for him, refers to God's immaterial, spiritual nature. It is a symbol of God's spiritual power, and it is this creative power that puts God beyond the limitations of a nature.(5) The use of the word in the DI does not require either a Platonic or Hermetic inspiration; indeed the evidence suggests rather that the apologetic and classical tradition (Tertullian, Cicero and Seneca) is his more likely source. The theological employment of the theme is both simple and consistent - to assert the transcendence of God over creation and to posit his transcendence as the root of his all-pervasive power.

(1) Dl. 7.20. 8-10.

(2) 7.20.11.

(3) see 7.21.1f.

(4) G. Verbeke (op cit. p.470) equates Lactantius' doctrine of the divine nature with that of Tertullian, but the evidence does not support this, as Loi notes (Lattanzio p.35) who concludes that incorporalis in the Dl = immateriality, (ibid p.38).

(5) To this end Lactantius adduces Cicero, Dl. 1.5.24b.

Incorruptus

Lactantius uses two adjectives synonymously to convey the notion of divine incorruptibility; incorruptibilis,(1) and the more usual incorruptus.(2)

Incorruptibilis is the Vulgate translation for the scriptural ἄφθαρτος, where the Itala sometimes prefers incorruptus.(3) The two adjectives can be regarded as synonymous in their theological use, however, as Lactantius' usage in the OD (1.2) (beatum atque incorruptum sapientiae nomen) is similar to the Vulgates' translation of ἄφθαρτος as incorruptum at Wisdom 18.4: (incorruptum legis lumen)(4); or again its similar translation at 1 Cor. 9.25.(5) The linguistic difference between incorruptus (not corrupt) and incorruptibilis (that which cannot be corrupted) is not conceptually significant in the DI. Lactantius' preference of the incorruptus comes, no doubt, from the long classical pedigree this theological term enjoyed.(6)

Lactantius employs the idea of divine incorruptibility to assert God's transcendence over material limitation. This he does, firstly, by relating the notion to the concept of the divine eternity or immortality and, secondly, by using it to connote the self-determinate power of God, especially as witnessed in his creative action.

(1) eg. Dl. 1.3.9,23, and 4.6.1.

(2) eg. Dl 2.6.5, 2.8.44,68, 3.12.15, 6.25.7, 7.2.6 and 7.3.11.

(3) Vulg. Rom. 1.23.'gloriam incorruptibilis dei.' Itala (incorrupti dei) cp. Aug. Civ. 8.23. cf. W. Matzkow. De vocabulis quibusdam Italae et Vulgatæ christianis. Berlin 1933. pp.42-45; V.Loi Lattanzio.pp. 40-42.

(4) also Aug. De Trin. 4.18.24:'veritas incorrupta permanet.'

(5) Vulgate:'incorruptam coronam.' (ἀφθάρτον στέφανον)

(6) cp. V. Loi Lattanzio p.42: "conforme alla tradizione classica, Lattanzio preferisce di gran lungo la forma 'incorruptus' anche quando il parallelismo dei termini avrebbe suggerito la forma 'incorruptibilis' come dimostra chiaramente la contrapposizione incorruptus/corruptibilis nelle Dl.2.8.68 e 6.25.7" The classical authorities are extensive including; Cicero, Livy, Ulpius, Seneca, Tacitus, Suetonius. cf. Th.L.L. 7.1. cols. 1033-1034.

He expressly relates incorruptibility to a demonstration that immortality is the summum bonum for man,and claims the authority of Epicurus(1) to support his thesis:' Epicurus deum beatum et incorruptum uocat, quia sempiternus est. beatitudo enim perfecta esse debet, ut nihil sit quod eam uexare aut minuere aut inmutare possit, nec aliter quicquam existimari beatum potest nisi fuerit incorruptum. incorruptum autem nihil est nisi quod est inmortale. sola ergo inmortalitas beata est, quia corrumpi ac dissolui non potest.'(2) Incorruption is one of a series of attributes, then, which describe God's perfection as unassailable sovereignty. As God cannot be reduced or altered from without, he is perfectly self-determinate and thus is summed up in his eternity. This argument allows Lactantius to demonstrate that only immortality can thus amount to happiness.(3) The same argument is repeated several times not only in the DI but in his other writings too, and the immortality conception is clearly shown in all the reduplications to be a significant idea for him.(4)

The argument is more concisely expressed in Book 7. Lactantius moves from the evidence of the works of creation to a statement on the supreme sovereignty of the creator:' ita quantum inter opera diuina et humana interest, tantum distare inter dei hominisque sapientiam necesse est. nam quia deus incorruptus atque inmortalis est et ideo perfectus, quia sempiternus est, sapientia quoque eius perinde ut ipse perfecta est nec obstare illi quicquam potest, quia nulli rei deus ipse subiectus est.'(5)

(1) via Cicero. cp. Nat. Deor. 1.17.45, Lactantius cites the text at Dl 3.12.15-16, and paraphrases it twice in De Ira 4.2 and 17.2.

(2) Dl. 3.12. 15-16

(3) Ibid. verse 16b.

(4) see fn 2 above. also Epit. 30.2:'nam si cadit in hominem vita beata, ut philosophi volunt, in eo solo non dissidentes, cadit ergo et inmortalitas. id enim solum beatum est quod incorruptum.' cp. Loi Lattanzio. p.41. fn 52.

(5) Dl. 7.2. 5-6.

Divine incorruptibility is contrasted with human passibility.(1) God transcends the limitations of the material and in his consequent transcendence is not subject to the corruptions which beset nature. This, taken to its logical conclusion, demonstrates that God can be subject to no external power (nulli rei deus ipse subiectus est). Because he is spiritually incorrupt, he is eternal, and supremely powerful.

Lactantius uses the same conjunction of divine incorruptibility(2) and eternity to prove his thesis that God is One, and that this ontological simplicity is a necessary corrollary to the immense and absolute nature of his power: ' quid quod summa illa rerum potestas ac diuina uis ne semel quidem diuidi potest? quidquid enim capit diuisionem, et interitum capiat necesse est. si autem interitus procul est a deo, quia incorruptibilis est et aeternus, consequens est ut diuidi potestas diuina non possit. deus ergo unus est, si nihil esse aliut potest quod tantundem capiat potestatis.'(3)

Again, therefore, as the incorruptible being, God is necessarily the self-determinate creator.

(1) as at (7.2.7a)

(2) This time using <u>incorruptibilis</u> synonymously with <u>incorruptus</u>

(3) Dl. 1.3. 9-10.

God's incorruptibility is, for Lactantius, synonymous with his impassibility(1) and both terms demonstrate his complete transcendence over matter because he is the spiritual power who created it, subject to none: ` nam si deus nomen est summae potestatis, incorruptibilis esse debet, perfectus inpassibilis nulli rei subiectus.'(2)

The notion of incorruptibility in Lactantius, then, is mainly used to support the idea of God's eternity as untrammelled, creative power. This power differentiates him, as spirit, from all matter. The latter is subject to the corruption inherent its composite being, but God is spiritually simple in his power, therefore eternal, for he cannot be corrupted.

God's creative power is absolute and self-determinate. It is this concept which leads Lactantius to list all the divine attributes, including that of incorruptibility, as demonstrations of that self-determination: ` solus igitur deus est qui factus non est, et idcirco destruere alia potest ipse destrui non potest. permanebit semper in eo quod fuit,quia non est aliunde generatus, nec ortus ac natiuitas eius ex aliqua re altera pendet, quae illum mutata dissoluat. ex se ipso est, ut in primo diximus libro, et ideo talis est qualem esse se uoluit, inpassibilis inmutabilis incorruptus beatus aeternus.(3)

(1) see following section devoted to the latter term

(2) Dl. 1.3.23.

(3) Dl. 2.8.44.

In addition to this theological approach Lactantius also uses the term to argue against the Stoic notion of divine corporality, or immanent pantheism. Lactantius wishes to make the strongest differentiation between spirit and materiality, God and world, which he thinks the Stoics have compromised in their "trifling and absurd" notion: ' quodsi hoc uanum et absurdum est, tam igitur ipsi eguerunt quam haec indigent sensu, qui non perspexerunt diuinum quidem spiritum esse ubique diffusum eoque omnia contineri, non tamen ita, ut deus ipse, qui est incorruptus, grauibus et corruptibilibus elementis misceatur.'(1)

The following verse corrects the Stoic mistakes by a Platonic testimony to God's incorruptibility; and again one can see the argument reducing itself to the question of God's creative power: 'illut ergo rectius quod a Platone sumpserunt, a deo factum esse mundum et eiusdem prouidentia gubernari. oportebat igitur et Platonem et eos qui idem senserunt, docere atque explicare quae causa, quae ratio fuerit tanti operis fabricandi, quare hoc aut cuius gratia fecerit.'(2)

(1) Dl. 7.3.11,

(2) Dl. 7.3.12.

For Lactantius, then, the material transcendence of God and his absolute creative dominion must be one and the same mystery. He criticises the Stoics for compromising the former.(1) just as he has already criticised the Platonists (and continues to do so in the following chapters of Book 7) for compromising the latter.(2)

The notion has a moral connotation in so far as it represents transcedence over materiality. So we can see the theological argument reversed in Book 2. Thus, false gods are shown to be far removed from <u>incorruptibility</u> because their cults involve them in material, or sensual evils:' consecrant ergo diis manubias et rapinas suas, quos certe necesse est inbecillos esse ac summae uirtutis expertes, si subiecti sunt cupiditatibus. cur enim caelestes eos putemus, si desiderant aliquid de terra, uel beatos, si aliqua re indigent, uel incorruptos, si uoluptati habent ea in quibus adpetendis cupiditas hominum non inmerito damnatur?'(3)

The sensuality of the cults is therefore the clearest argument against the attribution of incorruptibility to such gods, and therefore a clear denial of their divinity.

(1) As he has already done at Dl. 2.5. 7-10, 27-30.

(2) Lactantius accepts Plato's notion of incorruptibility, then, in preference to that of the Stoics (7.3.11f) but rejects the Platonic idea of the eternity of matter (2.8. 8-44), the origin of the creation (7.14.4), and even Plato's views on the immortality of the soul which one might expect him to have favoured. Lactantius quite clearly uses Plato as a subsidiary authority to supplement a doctrine that comes to him ecclesiastically (cp Dl. 4.8. 1-3). This must stand against the belief of A. Wlosok and V. Loi that the "negative attributes" of the divine nature come to him from a pre-conversion phase of neo-Platonism. Even though he cites from the Hermetica at 2.8.68 to speak of God's incorruptibility, this is not sufficent evidence to infer the Hermetic theological tradition, <u>per se</u>, is important to him.

(3) Dl. 2.6. 4-5.

The true cult, on the otherhand, can only offer spiritual gifts to a deity who is by nature incorrupt: ' verum apud istos, qui nullo modo rationem diuinitatis intellegunt, donum est quidquid auro argentoque fabricatur, item quid quid purpura et serico texitur, sacrificiumque uictima et quaecumque in ara cremantur. sed utroque non utitur deus, quia et ipse incorruptus est et illud totum corruptibile. itaque deo utrumque incorporale offerendum est, quo utitur. donum est integritas animi, sacrificium laus et hymnus; si enim deus non uidetur, ergo his rebus coli debet quae non uidentur. nulla igitur alia religio uera est nisi quae uirtute et iustitia constat.'(1) The only offering possible to the incorrupt God, is therefore, an incorrupt one; that is, man's ethical practice. This is a mimesis of God's nature, for virtue is man's attempt to transcend his material limitation and so become like God as a free spiritual power. This is why the end of man's ethical life is the same as the result of God's own incorruptibility - immortality.(2)

The only instance of the adjective <u>incorruptus</u> being used comparatively supports this moral emphasis. Again it appears in a cultic context, and Lactantius argues that man's spiritual and ethical subjectivity is the true arena for the encounter with God. So, the human breast is the <u>more incorrupt</u> temple:' firmius et incorruptius templum est pectus humanum: hoc potius ornetur, hoc ueris illis numinibus inpleatur.'(3)

(1) Dl. 6.25. 6-7

(2) cp. <u>Thesis</u> ch 4. (iii) e.

(3) Dl. 1.20.23.

Lactantius' doctrine on the divine incorruptibility, then, has related it to the notion of the eternity or immortality of God, using it to stress the self-determination of God's nature and his absolute creative power, as a spiritual subject who transcends material corruption. In addition he has partly suggested the notion's theological relationship with the need for man to imitate God in a life of moral incorruptibility.

Lactantius has expressly cited Epicurus as an authority at 3.12.15, but the fact that he has taken this citation from Cicero(1) as well as the uncompromising way he condemns Epicurus throughout the rest of the Institutes, shows that the real source of his doctrine is elsewhere.

The neo-Platonic tradition makes hardly an appearance within this context of the divine incorruptibility. There is one Hermetic citation, but the notion of incorruptibility appears only as one of a series of divine attributes and is subjected to the demonstration of God's transcendence of the human intellect,(2) all of which suggests, again, one has to look elsewhere for Lactantius' theological inspiration. Such an inspiration can be most readily found in the Pauline writings. In Romans 1.23, for example, Paul radically distinguishes man as φθαρτός from the ἄφθαρτος θεὸς :-

καὶ ἤλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ
ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου.. (3)

(1) Epic. Sent.1. (Diog. Laert. 10.139) Cicero Nat. Deor. 1.17.45.

(2) Dl. 2.8.68: 'corruptibile incorrupto propinquare non potest id est propius accedere et intellegentia subsequi.' This is the only substantival use of incorruptus in the Dl.

(3) Rom. 1.23.

Τὸ φθαρτὸν is man's existence in the world as a materially limited being (σάρξ) whereas God communicates to him a new, eternal mode of being (ἀφθαρσία) : ὅταν δὲ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσηται ἀφθαρσίαν , καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσηται ἀθανασίαν. (1)

The Pauline passage clearly sets the context for the distinction between (ζωή - πνεῦμα) and (σάρξ - φθορά) . Lactantius' treatment of divine incorruptibility, emphasising the spiritual transcendence of God, his immortality, and the immortality that can be acquired by man through moral incorruptibility(2), are all in full harmony with the scriptural tradition, especially the Pauline doctrine that equates man's corruptibility with his subjection to death.(3)

In reproducing the scriptural doctrine, Lactantius also stands in the mainstream of apologetic theology in its later employment of the concept,(4) for he cannot fail to be aware of Tertullian's previous commentary on the Pauline doctrine of incorruptibility/ immortality throughout Ch.10 of the Adv. Marcionem 5, which draws the same distinctions as Lactantius between the corruption of matter and the incorruption of spirit, witnessed especially in the gift of immortality.(5)

(1) 1 Cor. 15.54.

(2) Paul uses ἄφθαρτος as a moral attribute, e.g, describing Titus' disposition (Tit. 2.7) Justin uses ἄφθορος as 'chaste' in 1 Apol. 15.6 and at Trypho. 100.5 to describe Eve before the Fall. See too Cyprian Ep. 43.2: (incorrupta et immaculata conversatione) ibid Ep. 10.2.

(3) 2 Cor. 4.16; at 1 Cor. 15.52 Paul says the dead will rise again as ἄφθαρτοι .. (Vulg = incorrupti)

(4) cp analysis of post-Apostolic use of concept: Kittel. Theol. Dictionary of NT vol.9. 105-106.

(5) cp. Adv. Marc. 5.10, De Res. 32, Th. L.L. 7.1. cols. 1033-35.

Throughout the chapter Tertullian expressly cites the Pauline texts. His argument,however, is one of scriptural interpretation, so one can expect that Lactantius, in a different apologetic situation, will replace the scriptural authority of Paul with random classical authorities. Nonetheless, it is the orthodox Christian tradition, with its Pauline root, that appears to be the main inspiration of his argument and provides its consistency.

Impassibilis

The Latin term impassibilis renders the Greek ἀπαθής .(1) The abstraction impassibilitas is never used by the Latin apologists and only appears in Christian literature a generation after Lactantius.(2) The reason for this is the possibility of confusion between the Christian conception of divine impassibility and the popular conception which originated from the Stoics. The attribute is rarely used in the DI because of this possibility of confusion, since Lactantius vehemently opposes the Stoic notion of apatheia either as a moral perfection(3) or as a spiritual attribute. He presents the concept of the soul's impassibility as positively harmful: ' qui euulsis adfectibus quibus omnis constat humanitas, ad immobilem stuporem mentis perducere uolunt, dum student animum perturbationibus liberare et, ut ipsi dicunt, quietum tranquillumque reddere. quod fieri non tantum non potest, quia uis et ratio eius in motu est, sed ne oportet quidem, quia sicut aqua semper iacens et quieta insalubris et magis turbida est, sic animus inmotus ac torpens inutilis est etiam sibi, nec uitam ipsam tueri poterit, quia nec faciet quicquam nec cogitabit, cum cogitatio ipsa nihil aliut sit quam mentis agitatio;'(4)

(1) cp the study of J. Schrijnen on the frequency of the term in 2nd Century apology. R.E.L. 12. 1934. p. 108f.

(2) Th. L.L. 7.1. col. 523. 35f.

(3) Dl. 6.15.5.

(4) Dl. 6.17. 21-22.

and censures those who advocate "hanc immobilitatem animi".(1) This conception of apatheia, Lactantius equates with stagnation and death. After completing the DI he wrote the De Ira Dei with the express aim of demonstrating that this static notion was incompatible with the scriptural doctrine of Providence.(2)

The adjective impassibilis is used by both Tertullian(3) and Novatian(4) in the same sense Lactantius advocates, not to suggest God is immobile, actionless or without force, but to argue that he is morally impassible, that is, free from the limitation of corrupt passions but free in his power to judge and chastise. Lactantius, in harmony with the Latin apologetic tradition then, offers purely this scriptural(5) concept. Impassibility in the Institutes emphasises God's transcendence over material limitation and signifies the inability of any external force to injure or hold sway over the divine power. In this he is less concerned with the concerns of the Greek apologists(6) to define a philosophic impassibility (ἀπαθής) which is distinct from the Stoic concept or the impassivity envisaged by the Epicureans. His own argument, especially as it is more voluminously expressed in the De Ira, advances on that of Tertullian and points to the classical patristic solution of Augustine;(7)" Ira dei non perturbatio animi sed judicium quo irrogatur poena peccato ."

(1) Dl. 6.17.23. see the similar argument at 2.8.35.

(2) cp. De Ira. 5. 1-8.

(3) Adv. Marc. 2.16.7, 2.27.6, Praescr. 7.3.

(4) De Trin. 5.28, and 25.4: 'quis enim non intellegat quod impassibilis sit divinitas, passibilis vero sit humana fragilitas?' (on Christ's twofold nature)

(5) cp. Tertullian Adv.Marc. 2.16: 'deum nos a prophetis et a Christo, non a philosophis nec ab Epicuro, erudimur.'

(6) cf. G.L. Prestige. God in patristic thought London 1975.pp.6-9

(7) Civ. Dei. 15.25.

In the DI Lactantius consistently presents impassibility as that aspect of God's transcendence that allows him to suffer no harm. His power is absolute: 'nam si deus nomen est summae potestatis, incorruptibilis esse debet, perfectus inpassibilis nulli rei subiectus. ergo dii non sunt quos parere uni maximo deo necessitas cogit.'(1) The same argument is repeated in Book 2. As the supreme creative power God can destroy but not be destroyed, and this self-determination (ex se ipso est) constitutes his impassibility, along with his other perfections: 'solus igitur deus est qui factus non est, et idcirco destruere alia potest, ipse destrui non potest. permanebit semper in eo quod fuit, quia non est aliunde generatus, nec ortus ac natiuitas eius ex aliqua re altera pendet, quae illum mutata dissoluat. ex se ipso est, ut in primo diximus libro, et ideo talis est qualem esse se uoluit, inpassibilis inmutabilis incorruptus beatus aeternus.'(2) The argument Lactantius adduces to demonstrate the creation ex nihilo clearly shows that this impassibility(3) is not a denial of sensibility in God, an objection which he expressly notices (sensu praeditum), but an inability to suffer in the sense of being harmed (accipit externam vim.) (2.8.39): 'non ergo deus ex materia, quia sensu praeditum ex insensibili, sapiens ex bruto, inpatibile de patibili, expers corporis de corporali numquam potest oriri, sed materia potius ex deo est. quidquid est enim solido et contrectabili corpore,

(1) Dl. 1.3.23.

(2) Dl. 2.8.44.

(3) here 'inpatibilis' is used synonymously with 'impassibilis' cf. Cicero. Nat. Deor. 3.29:'cumque omne animal patibilem naturam habeat, nullum est eorum quod effugiat accipiendi aliquid extrinsecus, id est quasi ferendi et patiendi, necessitatem.'

accipit externam uim; quod accipit uim, dissolubile est; quod dissoluitur, interibit; quod interit, ortum sit necesse est; quod ortum est, habuit fontem unde oreretur id est factorem aliquem sentientem prouidum peritumque faciendi. is est profecto nec ullus alius quam deus.'(1) This interpretation of impassibils/ inpatibilis is further supported by Lactantius' synonym,in the De Ira,of Inlaesibilis :'Haec (ira iniusta) in deo esse non potest, quia inlaesibilis est, in homine autem, quia fragilis est, invenitur. Inurit enim laesio dolorem, et dolor facit ultionis cupiditatem.'(2)

The whole conception is clearly designed to differentiate a limited physical nature from the supreme power of the spiritual creator, without having to allow the classical concept of apatheia which, for Lactantius, is contrary to the scriptural tradition and produces a deum immobilem.(3)

(1) Dl. 2.8. 38-39)

(2) De Ira 17.14., or De Ira 5.2. Tertullian makes 'impassibilis' synonymous with 'in-laesibilis' - Adv. Val. 27. cp. Th.L.L.7.1. col. 522.60.

(3) De Ira. 17.8.

Immutabilis

Closely related to the concept of impassibility is the perfection of immutability which Lactantius attributes to God. The attribute appears as one of the series "impassible, immutable, incorruptible, blessed and eternal", and together with all the other perfections is presented as a direct result of God's self-determinate power.(1) The divine immutability, then, is a commentary on God's aseity in just the same manner as his use of incorporalis, incorruptus and impassibilis. Like the other attributes, Lactantius makes it especially noticeable in his doctrine of immortality; for it is here in God's transcendence of time and space that aseity is most clearly demonstrated. The concept of immutability in the DI is not presented as a static limitation, something fixed for better or worse, but as God's enjoyment of absolute perfection, which makes any idea of progress or development out of the question. So, for example, immortality is defined as the summum bonum since it alone cannot be changed:(2)

'intellexit profecto quae sit natura summi boni, licet id non explicauerit, quid sit: id est autem inmortalitas nec aliut omnino quicquam, quia sola nec inminui nec augeri nec immutari potest.'(3)

(1) cp. Dl. 2.8.44b.

(2) Here as in Dl.3.12.15 Lactantius applies the concept by use of verbal formulae.

(3) Dl. 3.12.10.

And he then agrees with Epicurus that God's beatitude is a state of perfection which is necessarily immutable: ' Epicurus deum beatum et incorruptum uocat, quia sempiternus est. beatitudo enim perfecta esse debet, ut nihil sit quod eam uexare aut minuere aut inmutare possit, nec aliter quicquam existimari beatum potest nisi fuerit incorruptum. incorruptum autem nihil est nisi quod est inmortale. sola ergo inmortalitas beata est quia corrumpi ac dissolui non potest.'(1) Lactantius' employment of the theme is clearly along the same lines as the incorruptus(2) and impassibilis formulae, to insist on the transcendence of God by denying the possibility that any extrinsic force could affect his power of self-determination.(3)

Lactantius extends the epithet and twice applies it, in a moral context, as a perfection that can be enjoyed by the Christian. In so far as he has already suggested the synonymity of incorruptibility and immutability, Lactantius has prefigured this moral significance of the term. By applying this doctrine of perfection to the Christian he is further suggesting that it is the moral life (pre-eminently taught by the true cult of God) that divinises man - that is, makes man like God.

(1) Dl. 3.12.15.

(2) The following verse (3.12.16) characterises this "immutable perfection" of God's happiness as an aspect of his argument that immortality = incorruptibility. The two terms immutabilis and incorruptus thus appear as almost synonymous moral perfections.

(3) 'immutabilis' is applied once in an apologetic context (1.11.8) to argue similarly that the power of divine government is unchangeable, that is absolute, not relative, as in the case of Jupiter's succession after Saturn.

This divine assimilation allows him to ascribe immutability to the just Christian. So, for example, while the sensual, corruptible cults of the false gods fail to make man immutably good: `inde est quod eiusmodi religiones neque bonos facere possunt neque firmae atque inmutabiles esse;'(1) the true religion, on the other hand, can do so by teaching justice: `nostra uero religio eo firma est et inmutabilis, quia iustitiam docet, quia nobiscum semper est, quia tota in animo colentis est, quia mentem ipsam pro sacrificio habet.'(2) The literary structure of the above unit (the false cult cannot make man immutable; the true religion is immutable) suggests most strongly that Lactantius is attributing to <u>man</u> this concept of moral immutability, or at least a growth towards it, even though it is the 'true religion' he expressly describes as immutable. Bk.6 supports this inference, for here he applies the concept directly to the Christian at prayer: `si quid aliut desiderauerit, non est opus dicto scienti quid uelimus: si quid ei boni euenerit, gratias agat, si quid mali, satisfaciat et id sibi ob peccata sua euenisse fateatur. et nihilo minus etiam in malis gratias agat et in bonis satisfaciat, ut idem sit semper et stabilis et immutabilis et inconcussus. nec tantum hoc in templo putet sibi esse faciendum, sed et domi et in ipso etiam cubili suo. secum denique habeat deum semper in corde suo consecratum, quoniam ipse est dei templum.'(3)

(1) Dl. 5.19.28.

(2) Dl. 5.19.30

(3) Dl. 6.25. 14-15.

A similar catena of epithets appears both in Book 5 and Book 6 where immutabilis is attributed to man. Here, it is "stabilis et immutabilis et inconcussus". Then it was "firmae atque immutabiles esse,"(1) and "firma est et solida et immutabilis."(2)

From the association of terms in both contexts it is clear that the type of moral immutability which Lactantius has in mind, is not directly equated with the perfection he has previously attributed to God. In the moral context he is talking about making men immutable, that is, a moral process of transformation. Even the just Christian who "has no sins", as he says,(3) must still move towards moral immutability, rather than enjoy it as a natural state. What Lactantius has in mind, therefore, is not to attribute natural immutability to humanity (which would be a contradiction since he has already defined that nature as corruptible) but to suggest that this stability (stabilis, firmus, inconcussus) in the Christian is a moral assimilation to that essential immutability of the Creator.

For this moral use of the term, Lactantius has a ready authority in Cicero. We even find the same association of terms (firmus, immutabilis): " concordi populo...nihil esse immutabilius, nihil firmius."(4)

(1) Dl. 5.19.28a,

(2) Dl. 4.19.30a

(3) Dl. 6.25.13

(4) Cicero. Rep. 1.49 cp also Tim. 8, Ac. 2.118; Lucretius 1.790. cp. Th. LL 7.1. col. 510.60

In the theological use of the term, however, Lactantius radically departs from the classical conception, and especially from the neo-Platonic use witnessed in Apuleius.(1) Here the term universally means the fixity and unalterability of nature or fate, and is not directly applied to the deity. Instead he continues the tradition of the apologists,(2) more particularly that of Tertullian, who demonstrates that the divine immutability is a necessary corollary of His simple eternity, and self identity: ' et hic a lineis tuis excidisti, quibus circa personam dei usus es, praescribens deum illam non ex semet-ipso fecisse, qvia in partes venire non posset, qui sit aeternus et manens in aevum ac per hoc immutabilis et indivisibilis'(3); which, in turn, represents the scriptural tradition of the supreme power of the creator God: διότι ἐγὼ Κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν,καὶ οὐκ ἠλλοίωμαι. (4)

(1) Apul. Mund.35 (mundum immutabilem), Ps Apul.Ac.1.29 (fatalem et immutabilem continuationem ordinis sempiterni) cp Seneca. Dial. 11.8.3:'fatum et immutabilis causarum...series.' cp Th.L.L.7.1. col. 510 5-35. The only time Lactantius employs the word in this way is an ironical reference to Roman traditions. Dl.2.6.15.

(2) cp G.L. Prestige. God in patristic thought pp 12-13. The Greek Christian use of the adjectives- ἄτρεπτος (Clem. Strom.1.24.163.6. Theoph. Ad Aut.2.4, Euseb.Prep Evang.11.10.526B) and ἀναλλοίωτος (Aristid. Apol.4.1. Athenag.Sup.22.5, Theoph.Ad Aut 1-4,2.4.)- is a tradition that is aware of the Platonic doctrine of aseity (Rep. 380 D) For the Hermetic use of the idea cp.Festugière. Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose. p.72.

(3) Adv. Hermog. 39.9, cp. Adv. Prax. 27.27.

(4) Mal. 3.6. LXX

and that it is his personal will, rather than the abstraction of fate, which fixes immutable decrees.(1)

Invisibilis

The last of this series of materially-transcendent attributes is the invisibility of God. This is a natural extension of the divine incorporeality which Lactantius has frequently maintained. The adjective, invisibilis, renders the Greek ἀόρατος and has its basis in both the New Testament and apologetic tradition.(2) While not being used by the Platonic writings specifically as a divine attribute,(3) it is nonetheless, useful to Lactantius' apologetic intent in that it was a commonplace of late hellenistic theology, appearing in the Hermetic literature(4) as well as the Sibylline Oracles.(5)

(1) cp (Is. 40.8)

(2) Cd.1.15, 1 Tim. 1.17; Clement. Strom. 6.5.39.3. attesting its appearance in the Kerygma Petrou); Diognetus. 7.2; Hermas 1.3.4, 3.3.5; Ignatius Mg.3.2., Pol. 3.2. see Kittel. Theol dict of NT Vol.5. p.370; E. Norden. Agnostos Theos Leipzig 1956. p.85f, and J. Festugière Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose pp 14, 17, 59-61; for Latin apology cp Tertullian Apol. 17.2. Novat. De Trin. 18.106, 28.157 and 31.182.

(3) cp. E. Fascher. Deus Invisibilis Marburger. Theologische Studien 1. (R. Otto. Festgruss) Marburg. 1931. p.63. J. Festugière. Le Dieu inconnu... p.106 n.1. V. Loi Lattanzio p.18.

(4) J. Festugière.op cit pp.59-61

(5) cp. Orac. Sib. 1.8.

The concept is not employed in a serious theological treatment, however, as his argument on divine incorporeality has already covered this ground. Lactantius uses the invisibility of the soul to demonstrate its spiritual concerns in ethical practice: `corpus quia solidum est et conprehensibile, cum solidis et conprehensibilibus confligat necesse est, animus autem quia tenuis est et inuisibilis, cum iis congreditur hostibus qui uideri tangique non possunt. qui sunt autem hostes animi nisi cupiditates uitia peccata?'(1) and so uses the concept to distinguish soul as spirit from the materiality of the body. When he returns to a fuller exposition of the doctrine of soul in Book 7, he uses the divine incorporality/invisibility as a demonstration of the spiritual nature of the soul: `et quia uidebant aut bonis accidere aduersa aut malis prospera, fortuito geri omnia crediderunt et natura mundum, non prouidentia constitutum. hinc iam prolapsi sunt ad deliramenta, quae talem sententiam necessario sequebantur. quodsi est deus et incorporalis et inuisibilis et aeternus, ergo non idcirco interire animam credibile est, quia non uidetur, postquam recessit a corpore, quoniam constat esse aliquid sentiens ac uigens quod non ueniat sub aspectum.'(2) As a theological idea, therefore, invisibility can be regarded as synonymous with his concept of incorporeality and signifies God's spiritual transcendence of material limitation.(3)

(1) Dl. 3.12. 2B-3.

(2) Dl. 7.9. 6-7.

(3) Cp. eg. the Hermetic citation in Epit. 4.5 (invisibile a visibili non potest comprehendi) In the paraphrastic parallel of this at Dl. 2.8.68 "invisibilis"has been replaced by "incorruptus".

The only distinctive significance which Lactantius attaches to the term itself is a play on the idea that God, being invisible to the eye of the body, should be discerned by the eye of the mind. Thus, while the philosophers are sensually limited to what bodily eyes can see, man's real duty is to gaze upon (contemplare) the creator by discerning him intellectually: ' adeo philosophi ad corpus referunt omnia, nihil prorsus ad mentem nec uident amplius quam quod sub oculos uenit. atquin remotis omnibus officiis corporis in sola mente ponenda est hominis ratio. non ergo ideo nascimur, ut ea quae sunt facta uideamus, sed ut ipsum factorem rerum omnium contemplemur id est mente cernamus.'(1) The same idea is more concisely expressed in the De Ira: 'Ille mundi parens et conditor rerum qui oculis non videtur, mens vix cernitur.'(2)

The term introduces us to the manner in which Lactantius envisages the possibility of man's vision of God. Clearly some direct awareness of God is not only possible, but even stated to be a natural duty for man (nascimur....ut ipsum factorem rerum omnium contemplemur).(3)

Nonetheless, the vix cernitur already suggests that Lactantius will strictly limit the terms of that mental vision of God.(4) The series of negative attributes that have been discussed so far(5) have been used by Lactantius; (a) to insist on the divine transcendence of matter and differentiate spiritual freedom from physical limitation, and (b) to demonstrate the absolute nature of the creative power, in terms of its eternity/immortality, and aseity.

(1) Dl. 3.9. 12-13
(2) De Ira. 1.9.
(3) Dl. 3.9.13.
(4) cp. Thesis ch.4. (iii) b-c
(5) viz: incorporalis, incorruptus, impassibilis, inlaesibilis, immutabilis, invisibilis.

This doctrine of the divine transcendence of matter is further extended by Lactantius to cover his transcendence of man's limited intellectual and spiritual capacities. To this end the D.I. employs another series of negative attributes devoted to the unknowability of the divine essence; inaestimabilis, incomprehensibilis, inexcogitabilis, and ineffabilis.

Inaestimabilis.

Lactantius collates several of these negative attributes, expressing God's transcendence of man's intellect, in his opening Books. He has been discussing the unity of God and his provident power, and cites a Platonic authority to show that this "vim maiestatemque" transcends comprehension: ' His igitur tot ac tantis testibus conprobatur unius dei potestate ac prouidentia mundum gubernari, cuius uim maiestatemque tantam esse dicit in Timaeo Plato, ut eam neque mente concipere neque uerbis enarrare quisquam possit ob nimiam et inaestimabilem potestatem.'(1) Lactantius' specific mention of the Timaeus encouraged A. Wlosok,(2) and V. Loi(3) who followed her, in their thesis that he was greatly influenced by neo-Platonic religious thought, particularly in his doctrine of God.

(1) Dl. 1.8.1.

(2) Laktanz und der philosophische gnosis. pp 201-203, 252-256.

(3) Lattanzio. p.11.

A. Nock has successfully argued against this notion,(1) and the general conclusion, that Lactantius' knowledge of Plato is that of the rhetor rather than the devotee, has been most recently demonstrated by both M. Perrin(2) and R.M. Ogilvie(3). It has been assumed that Lactantius knows Plato through the intermediary of Hermetic religious inspiration because, although the original Platonic text of the Timaeus concludes that it is difficult to know God, Lactantius makes it appear to say it is impossible to know God.(4) The loosely paraphrastic manner of quotation is quite typical of Lactantius, however, and, rather than suggesting some unknown Hermetic intermediary, tends to demonstrate that Lactantius is only using the reference to Plato for the apologetic value it will give him as a respectable authority. More important, however, it must be noticed that Lactantius is decidedly not saying that man can have no knowledge of God. He is specifically denying the possibility of comprehending the creative power (vim maiestatemque... Nimiam inaestimabilem potestatem). There is an important distinction to be made and preserved here, for Lactantius teaches that God is immediately, innately and intimately known to all men as their Father, but remote and inaccessible in the immensity of his power as Lord.

(1) A.D. Nock. The Exegesis of Timaeus. 28C. VC.16. 1962 p.79

(2) M. Perrin expressly agrees with J. Fontaine: "la pensée Romaine de Lactance semble entre restée etrangère au neo-platonisme proprement dit." Fontaine - La littérature latine chrétienne. Paris. 1970. p.45. Perrin. Le Platon de Lactance in Lactance et son Temps Paris 78. p. 204.

(3) The lib. of Lactantius. p.79

(4) Tim 28C:'To discover the Father and author of this universe is a great feat and when one has discovered him it is impossible to divulge him to all.' cf. Epit 64.5, Dl. 6.9.14, De Ira. 1.9 (conditorem rerum parentemque). Lactantius, in these texts, borrows the titular usage, but wholly departs from the theological point of Plato at Dl.1.8.1, and De Ira 11.11. He is making a wholly different point that there is no knowledge of God whatsoever from below to above that is independent of divine revelation.

Lactantius' doctrine of God is most precisely balanced (in full harmony with the scriptural tradition) between a God who reveals himself but one who does not thereby lie with the scope of human comprehension. This aspect of Lactantius' treatment will be more fully analysed in the following sections on God as Pater et Dominus(1) and man's innate agnitio dei expressed in worship(2).

To return more immediately then to the negative attributes of God in the Timaeus allusion, it seems that the inspiration of Lactantius' thought really lies elsewhere than Plato.(3) This text of the Timaeus was fairly popular in apologetic literature(4) and comes to Lactantius either from Cicero(5) or more probably from Minucius Felix,(6) both of whom correctly represent the sense of the original.

(1) cp Thesis ch 4.(ii)b

(2) cp Thesis ch 4. (iii) b

(3) R.M. Ogilvie, The lib.of Lactantius pp 78-81 demonstrates that none of the Platonic citations in the Dl go back to a direct reading of Plato but come to him through the mediation of Cicero, Seneca and Minucius felix. The allusions to Plato in the Epit. which are not found in any of his sources are ascribed by Ogilvie to an extension of his philosophical reading in later life. (Epit 63. 1-5 paraphrases Tim. 29E) (Epit. 63.9. paraphrases Tim.42b,90E).

(4) cp Tertull. Apol. 46.9.

(5) Tim.6, Nat. Deor. 1.12.30: 'atque illum quidem quasi parentem huius universitatis invenire difficile est, cum iam invenerit indicare in vulgum nefas.'

(6) Octav. 19.4. cp. Ogilvie. p.79. (Plato,Symposium 202E at Dl.2.14-15 = Octav. 26.8.f)

For Lactantius the human mind fails to conceive the "force and majesty" of God because of his "immense and inestimable power". This unknowability of God applies to his creative and provident dominion, that power which is inexcogitabilis and ineffabilis, known only to Himself: ' dubitet uero aliquis an quicquam difficile aut inpossibile sit deo, qui tanta tamque mirifica opera prouidentia excogitauit, uirtute constituit, ratione perfecit, nunc autem spiritu sustentet, potestate moderetur, inexcogitabilis ineffabilis et nulli alii satis notus quam sibi?'(1) God's power is inestimable because it transcends the limited scope of human ability. Just as physical immensity often exceeds the mind's limit (as in the case of numbers(2)) so the immense power of God wholly transcends the limitations of man's mind imposed by a corporeal and corruptible nature:' nam si
(4) potest homo intellegere diuina, poterit et facere: nam intellegere est quasi e uestigio subsequi. non potest autem facere quae deus, quia mortali corpore indutus est, ergo ne intellegere quidem potest quae facit deus: quod an fieri possit, ex inmensitate rerum atque
(5) operum diuinorum facile est uni cuique metiri. nam si mundum cum omnibus quae sunt in eo contemplari uelis, intellegas profecto quantum dei opus humanis operibus antistet. ita quantum inter opera diuina et humana interest, tantum distare inter dei hominisque
(6) sapientiam necesse est. nam quia deus incorruptus atque inmortalis est et ideo perfectus, quia sempiternus est, sapientia quoque eius perinde ut ipse perfecta est nec obstare illi quicquam potest, quia
(7) nulli rei deus ipse subiectus est. homo autem quia subiectus est passioni, subiecta est et sapientia eius errori, et sicut hominis uitam multae res inpediunt, quominus possit esse perpetua, ita

(1) Dl. 1.8.2.

(2) Dl. 1.16.7.'cum hominum vis incredibilis, numerus sit in-aestimabilis.' Th. LL. 7.1. 814.75.

sapientiam quoque eius multis rebus inpediri necesse est, quominus
(8) in perspicienda penitus ueritate perfecta sit. ergo nulla est humana sapientia, si per se ad notionem ueri scientiamque nitatur, quoniam mens hominis cum fragili corpore inligata et in tenebroso domicilio inclusa neque liberius euagari neque clarius perspicere ueritatem potest, cuius notitia diuinae condicionis est. deo enim soli opera sua nota sunt.'(1)

The phrase of the First Book describing how the creative power is nulli alii satis notus quam sibi,(2) is clearly echoed in the final verse of the above citation which represents Lactantius' most expansive explanation of God's intellectual transcendence. It can be noted once more that when he is talking about such a transcendence of unknowability he is specifically referring to the works, or actions (that is the creative power) of God(3) and is primarily concerned to distinguish limited corporeal existence from incorrupt eternal being,(4) in order to teach the absolute aseity of God (nulli rei subiectus).(5)

(1) Dl. 7.2. 4-8

(2) Dl. 1.8.2.

(3) Dl. 7.2. 4b-5

(4) Dl. 7.2.6.

(5) (Dl. 7.2.6b) cited above.

The inaestimabilis of Lactantius makes particular reference then to God's transcendence over sensible or physical limitation(1). In harmony with Christian apologetic tradition, Lactantius' theological use of the term is not designed to teach the Hermetic doctrine of God's unknowability,rather the transcendence of the creator who, nonetheless, reveals himself to man. His usage looks back to the thought of Tertullian rather than the Hermetica. The following passage from Tertullian not only presents Lactantius with all the terms of his argument, it even provides him with formulae to reproduce (2): ' Invisibilis est, etsi videatur; incomprehensibilis, etiam per gratiam repraesentetur; inaestimabilis, etsi humanis sensibus aestimetur; ideo verus et tantus est.ceterum quod videri communiter, quod comprehendi, quod aestimari potest, minus est et oculis quibus occupatur, et manibus quibus contaminatur, et sensibus quibus invenitur. quod vero immensum est, soli sibi notum est.'(3)

(1) As eg. Epit 3.1. where he uses the verbal form:'quem nec aestimare sensu valeat humana mens, nec eloqui lingua mortalis' or De Ira 11.6:'non possit sensibus aestimari.'

(2) the theological argument of Lactantius follows Tertullian: God is both incomprehensible, yet known to man in so far as he wishes to make himself known. The formula twice repeated (nulli alii satis notus quam sibi), Dl. 1.8.2, 7.2.8, clearly derives from Tertullian's(soli sibi notum est.)

(3) Tertull. Apol. 17.2; cp Minucius. Oct. 18.8; R. Braun. Deus Christianorum. Paris 1962. pp. 55-56.

Incomprehensibilis.

The concept of incomprehensibility[1] is also used by Lactantius, not so much to convey man's inability to conceive God, as the inability of the physical senses to limit God.

The pre-Nicene Latin usage of incomprehensibilis represents this meaning consistently, and although V. Loi in his study of the term,[2] begins by finding neo-Platonic roots in the ἀκατάληπτος of Philo[3], the Hermetic variant of ἄληπτος and even the Valentinian Gnostic doctrine of the divine incognoscibility,[4] it seems that Lactantius finds his authorities in much less esoteric sources.

(1) Lactantius prefers the verbal formula(non comprehendipotest) as do the Greek apologists; cp Justin Trypho 3.7, Athenag. Leg. 10.1, Clem. Strom. 5.11.71.5.

(2) Lattanzio. pp. 16-17.

(3) Philo Somm. 1.67, Mut. 10 Post. 169
V. Loi Lattanzio p.16. J. Festugière. Le Dieu inconnu. pp 3-4.

(4) Loi p.17; cp Irenaeus. Adv. Haer. 1.2.1. 1.2.2, 1.2.5. 2.17.1; Tertull. Adv. Val. 7.6, 9.1, 11.3.

The Latin version of Irenaeus uses the adjective to render ἀκράτητον [1] to demonstrate that God cannot suffer: 'Non... possibile erat pati deum, cum esset incomprehensibilis;'[2] and applies it to the spiritual state of the dead: '..ut mortui incomprehensibiles (ἀκράτητου) et invisibiles (superioribus) principibus et potestatibus fiant.'[3]

It is this sense of the term Lactantius uses when he describes the spiritual nature of the demons: '(daemones) spiritus sunt tenues et inconprehensibiles.'[4] Lactantius uses the attribute in this way almost as a synonym for incorporalis.[5]

(1) The Vulgate uses it to render the "unsearchable judgements of God" at Rom. 11.33 (ἀνεξερεύνητα).

(2) Adv. Haer. 1.2.2.

(3) Adv. Haer. 1.21.5.

(4) Dl. 2.14.14. The same connotation continues in orthodox Latin theology eg. Hilary. De Trin. 2.25: 'qui invisibilis et incomprehensibilis est, non visu, sensu tactuque moderandus, cunis est oblovutus.' Aug. In Ps. 17.11: 'deus se incomprehensibilem esse demonstravit, ne illum coporeis imaginationibus comprehendi arbitrarentur.'

(5) He has his authority in a passage from Tertullian (Apol.48.11) which discusses the mixed nature of the body. Here the terms 'incomprehensibilis - comprehensibilis' appear as synonyms for 'spiritual-physical': 'quae ratio universitatem ex diversitate composuit, ut omnia ex aemulis substantiis sub unitate constarent ex vacuo et solido, ex animali et inanimali, ex comprehensibili et incomprehensibili, ex luce et tenebris, ex ipsa vita et morte.' Cp. Dl.2.9.6.

The term is also used synonymously with <u>inaestimabilis</u> to convey the sense of a magnitude that exceeds man's ability to compute. In classical literature it is a designation of immensity;(1)

(a) distinguishing physical and spiritual nature and

(b) conveying inestimable size.

As such it is primarily used by the pre-Nicene apologists, to argue against the Stoic conception of divine corporeality(2) and Lactantius' usage is therefore in harmony with this tradition.

(1) Seneca <u>Dial.</u> 11.10.11: 'divitias non ad rationem revocantibus, cuius certi fines sunt, sed ad vitiosam consuetudinem, cuius immensum et incomprehensibile arbitrium est.' Ibid.<u>Nat.</u> 6.32.11, <u>Ep.</u> 94.14; Mar. Victorinus. <u>Gramm.</u> 6.143.19: 'innumerabilis incomprehensibilisque...copia (metrorum).' See Tertullian <u>Adv. Val.</u> 7: ' -immensam illam et incomprehansibilem magnitudinem patris.'

(2) G.L. Prestige. <u>God in patristic thought</u>. pp. 26-29.

Inexcogitabilis

The term which most precisely conveys "incomprehensible to the mind" is, inexcogitabilis, a comparatively rare epithet which Lactantius finds in Tertullian's ironical account of Valentinian Gnosticism: 'Est inquit, ante omnia Proarche, inexcogitabile, et inennarrabile et innominabile quod ego nomino Monoteta;'(1) and which is the Latin version of ἀνεννόήτος in Irenaeus' Adv. Haereses: 'inexcogitabilis et inenarrabilis gratia'(2); or, 'Pater...qui est inexcogitabilis.'(3)

Lactantius, then, is the first orthodox Christian writer to adopt this as a divine attribute although, by his day, it cannot be doubted that the Gnostic connotations of the past had long since faded from the term. Nonetheless, the epithet is extremely rare, even in Lactantius, and is designed to connote an area of divine activity or power that is outside human comprehension. So, for example, he applies it to the unknown and mysterious system of human conception: (ad propagandam successionem inexcogitabili ratione provisum et effectum)(4) and uses it in the D.I. to treat, very briefly, the unknown manner of the birth of Logos before time: 'merito igitur sermo ac uerbum dei dicitur, quia deus procedentem de ore suo uocalem spiritum, quem non utero, sed mente conceperat, inexcogitabili quadam maiestatis suae uirtute ac potentia in effigiem, quae proprio sensu et sapientia uigeat, conprehendit.'(5)

(1) Adv. Val.37.1."inexcogitabilis" renders ἀνεννόήτος and appears in conjunction here with: ἄρρητὸς καὶ ἀνονόμαστος.... (cp Irenaeus. Adv.H.1.1.) making a catena of: ineffabilis/inenarrabilis/ ἀνώνυμος. The following citation from Irenaeus shows this to be a standard association. Lactantius never uses the latin incogitabilis as a divine epithet, but applies it to show that men who do not know God are "senseless" (D1.1.8.3); see V. Loi. Lattanzio p.16.

(2) Adv. Haer. 1.13.2.

(3) Adv. Haer. 1.14.1., 2.2.4. cp. F. Sagnard. La gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de S. Irenée. Paris 1947. p.332.

(4) OD. 13.2.

(5) D1. 4.8.9.

Both matters, one a human the other a divine reality, he classed as beyond the limits of the knowledge man possessed, and in both cases this unknowability is located in the context of <u>divine power</u>. The only time Lactantius appears to attribute this epithet to God (indeed the only other time it is ever used) we can see yet again that he locates the unknowability of God in the region of the creative/provident <u>power</u> that orders the world. He thus carefully avoids any statement that unqualifiedly describes God as unknowable in his <u>person</u>: ' dubitet uero aliquis an quicquam difficile aut inpossibile sit deo qui tanta tamque mirifica opera prouidentia excogitauit, uirtute constituit, ratione perfecit, nunc autem spiritu sustentet, potestate moderetur, inexcogitabilis ineffabilis et nulli alii satis notus quam sibi?'(1) The reappearance of the Catena found in both Irenaeus and Tertullian (inexcogitabilis, ineffabilis) shows that Lactantius' source for this is probably the writings of the latter apologist, for the conclusion in the Dl as to what all the epithets mean: (nulli alii satis notus quam sibi) directly echoes the (soli sibi notum est) of Tertullian,(2) who quite clearly demonstrates, as does Lactantius himself, that God is both known and unknown, clearly revealed yet ultimately transcendent. The theological roots of Lactantius' doctrine of God, therefore, are to be found in orthodox theology rather than any form of late Gnostic or neo-Platonic speculations.

(1) Dl. 1.8.2.

(2) <u>Apol.</u> 17.2. Minucius. <u>Oct.</u> 18.8. Dl. 1.8.2, 7.2.8.

Ineffabilis/Inenarrabilis

Ineffabilis appears in the catena of transcendent epithets, already investigated at 1.8.2 and from the witness of both the Latin text of Irenaeus and Tertullian, it seems to be naturally paired with inexcogitabilis (ἀνεννόητος καὶ ἄρρητος καὶ ἀνονόμαστος).(1)

The word is not particularly significant in orthodox Latin theology until after the time of Ambrose(2) and although the Itala uses it to render the mystical things Paul heard in his vision,(3) Lactantius is the first orthodox Latin to apply it as a divine epithet. In fact he does so in only three instances in the D.I. and two of these (including the catena of 1.8.2) show quite clearly an external influence.(4) Of these three occasions,Lactantius twice describes the majestic power of creation as ineffable,(5) and once applies the Hermetic description to the Word of God: ' quo fatetur esse ineffabilem quendam sanctumque sermonem, cuius enarratio modum hominis excedat.'(6)

(1) Iren. Adv. Haer. 1.1., 1.13.2, Tertull. Adv. Val. 37.1. cp V. Loi Lattanzio. p.15.

(2) cp. Th. L.L. 7.1. col. 1286 15f

(3) Itala 2 Cor. 12.4. (ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι.)

(4) eg. the list of epithets at 1.8.2 looks to Tertullian Adv.Val. 37.1, and the use of ineffabilis at 4.9.3 is a Hermetic citation.

(5) cp. Dl. 1.8.2, 7.5.11, OD. 8.16.

(6) Dl. 4.9.3.

The final phrase elucidates the meaning Lactantius attaches to the concept:- modum hominis excedat, and from the use of enarratio demonstrates that his companion concept, inenarrabilis, is to be regarded as synonymous. Ineffabilis is the Latin equivalent of the platonic ἄρρητος .(1) The Greek apologists adapt the concept quite freely(2), but the Latin equivalent is first applied, in a theological sense, only by Apuleius. In a passage based on Plato's Tim. 28C, he describes the majesty of God(3) as ineffable: 'qui omnium rerum dominator atque auctor est....cum Plato...frequentissime praedicet hunc solum maiestatis incredibili quadam nimietate et ineffabili non posse penuria sermonis humani quavis oratione vel modice comprehendi.'(4)

The term had not fully acquired a technical religious sense, however, as Pliny's first use of the word as something "horrific"(5) survives in Apuleius when he uses it as a description of terrible crimes.(6) Even when Apuleius is most specifically paraphrasing Plato's doctrine of the unknowability of God, he translates the ἄρρητος as indictus.(7)

(1) cp. J. Festugiere. Le Dieu inconnu.. pp.76, 80-88, 94-132

(2) Justin. 1 Apol. 61.11, 2 Apol. 10.8, 12.4, 13.4, Trypho, 126.2, 127.2, Clement. Strom 5.10.65.2, 5.12.78.3, 5.12.81.3, Theophilus Ad.Aut1.3.

(3) by which he clearly means God's creative power (rerum dominator atque auctor) as does Lactantius.

(4) Apul. Deo Socr. 3.124. cf. ibid. Met. 11.11. Th.L.L. 7.1, col. 1286.10.

(5) where he mocks the unpronounceable names of Africa: 'populorum euis oppidorumque nomina vel maxime sunt ineffabilia praeterquam ipsorum linguis.' (nat. 5.1)

(6) Apul. Met. 8.8: 'pectoris sui secreta fraudesque ineffabiles detegere.' Lactantius applies inenarrabilis in this sense at Dl 5.9.4. Ineffabilis could therefore connote the same double sense as our "unspeakable" cp. Th. L.L. 7.1. col. 1287.5.

(7) Apul. De Dogm. Plat. 1.3.30: 'deum caelestium, indictum, innominabilem.'

Latin theology prefers the alternative form inenarrabilis. The Vulgate thus translates the prayers of the saints "which cannot be put into words",(1) and Tertullian uses it to render the Valentinian statements about God, in the text already discussed as one of Lactantius sources.(2) This form had a longer classical tradition, either representing qualities that were wonderful(3) or things that were beyond the limitations of human science.(4)

Lactantius uses this term far more frequently(5) than ineffabilis and universally applies it in the classical sense of something which is beyond the limitation of human science, be it a human or divine phenomena. So,for example, he follows Seneca in demonstrating that the natural world provides many examples of "inenarrabilia":' potest aliquis negare illis inesse rationem, cum hominem ipsum saepe deludant? nam quibus generandi mellis officium est, cum adsignatas incolunt sedes, castra muniunt, domicilia inenarrabili arte componunt, regi suo seruiunt, nescio an in his sit perfecta prudentia.'(6)

(1) Rom. 8.26. (ἀλαλήτοις) inenarrabilibus.

(2) Adv. Val. 37.1. (inexcogitabile et inenarrabile et innominabile)

(3) P. Velleius Paterculus (A.D.30):mira quadam et incredibili atque inenarrabili pietate.' (2.99.2)

(4) cp. Seneca. Quaes Nat. 3.22.

(5) Dl. 2.8.69, 3.10.4, 4.26.14, 5.9.4, 7.5.9, 7.23.5, 7.21.1.

(6) Dl. 3.10.4.

And the power of God transcends human limitations[1] in just the same way. He applies the term to the amazing power of Christ in his miracles: ' sed haec inenarrabilis potestas imago uirtutis maioris fuit, quae demonstrabat tantam uim habituram esse doctrinam suam, ut gentes in orbe toto, quae alienae a deo subiectae morti fuerunt, cognitione ueri luminis animatae ad inmortalitatis praemia peruenirent;'[2] and again to the power involved in the work of creation:'cum posset semper spiritibus suis immortalibus innumerabiles animas procreare, sicut angelos genuit, quibus inmortalitas sine ullo malorum periculo ac metu constat, excogitavit tamen inenarrabile opus, quemadmodum infinitam multitudinem crearet animarum.....'[3] In Lactantius, then, the term consistently refers to the work, or the creative power of God, rather than reformulating the neo-Platonic notion of the unknown Deity. The manner in which all the negative attributes have so far been associated with this aspect of the provident power of deity, his role as Dominus, will become of great significance in the light of the following section on worship, where Lactantius infers man's ultimate knowledge of God (agnitio/cognitio dei) from his role as Pater. By this titular approach, Pater et Dominus, Lactantius is able to put across the orthodox doctrine of revelation, while emphasising the transcendent sovereignty of God implied in the orthodox doctrine of creation. His theological skill is seen in the way in which he has formulated this doctrine of God to fulfil two precise apologetic concerns: to lead his neo-Stoic readers away from the idea of divine corporality to spiritual transcendence, and to lead his neo-Platonic readers away from the doctrine of the unknowable transcendence of God, to prepare them for the concept of an historically realised revelation.

(1) the term is used to describe events such as man's creation (7.23.5.) or the punishment of angels (7.21.1) which are simply beyond the knowledge of man.

(2) Dl. 4.26.14.

(3) Dl. 7.5.9.

This explains his pedestrian use of the concept of the unknowability of God. Lactantius is content to repeat this basic concept of revelation stated in the opening preface,(1) and therefore uses such negative attributes as inennarrabilis, not only to insist on the divine transcendence, but also to remind man that the scope of his perception is limited by his physical condition. Man is thus foolish if he tries to exceed his bounds: 'sciat igitur quam inepte faciat qui res inenarrabiles quaerat.hoc est enim modum condicionis suae transgredi nec intellegere quousque homini liceat accedere.'(2)

Innominabilis

Attributing ineffability logically involves some treatment of the namelessness of God. A certain catena of attributes had already been established long before Lactantius, and one can see the proximity of the two terms demonstrated.(3)

(1) Dl. 1.1. 5-6.

(2) Dl. 2.8.69.

(3) Apul. De Dogm. Plat. 1.3.30. 'deum caelestium, indictum. innominabilem.' Tert. Adv. Val. 37.1: 'inexcogitabile et inenarrabile, et innominabile.' Irenaeus. Adv. Haer. 1.1. ἄῤῥητός τε καὶ ἀνονόμαστος.
Novat. De Trin. 4.26.

Lactantius uses this teaching on the namelessness of God because it is a meeting point for both Hermetic and scriptural tradition. He cites the Hermetic teaching that God is nameless, and demonstrates it as a logical corollary of the divine Oneness:(1)

'hic scripsit libros et quidem multos ad cognitionem diuinarum rerum pertinentes, in quibus maiestatem summi ac singularis dei asserit isdemque nominibus appellat quibus nos dominum et patrem. ac ne quis nomen eius requireret, ἀνώνυμον esse dixit, eo quod nominis proprietate non egeat ob ipsam scilicet unitatem. ipsius haec uerba sunt: ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς, ὁ δὲ εἷς ὀνόματος οὐ προσδέεται· ἔστι γὰρ ὁ ὢν ἀνώνυμος . deo igitur nomen (non) est, quia solus est, nec opus est proprio uocabulo, nisi cum discrimen exigit multitudo, ut unam quamque personam sua nota et appellatione designes. deo autem quia semper unus est, proprium nomen est deus.'(2)

Yet he introduces this teaching on the namelessness by noting how Hermes uses the "same names as we use -Lord and Father".

(1) which he later repeats at 1.11.38: 'in illo autem naturali Iove....erraverunt, quod in deum nomen hominis transtulerunt, qui ut supra diximus quia solus est, non indiget nomine.' also Dl. 2.16.6, and Epit. 4.4.

(2) Dl. 1.6. 4-5.

The full explanation that Lactantius gives in the previous citation shows that he is not being contradictory in that he allows for names of God while teaching the namelessness, but is rather denying the necessity of any nomen proprium.(1) Since God does not stand in any series or class, he has no need of a name to be distinguished. Lactantius' doctrine of namelessness, therefore, is another aspect of his doctrine of the divine aseity. It is a tradition which is highly developed in the apologists who precede him. Tertullian, for example, had already established that God's name is not susceptible to etymological analysis, in his rejection of the interpretation: '...aiunt quidam propterea deos fuisse appellatos, quod θέειν et σείεσθαι procurrere ac motari interpretatio est.'(2) And he stresses the unity of God and the simplicity of the divine name, over against this pagan approach he criticises.(3)

(1) Diomedes. Gramm. 1. (375 AD) clarified the definitions as follows: 'qualitas nominum bipartita est. aut enim propria sunt aut apellativa... propria sunt quae propriam et circumscriptam qualitatem specialiter significant.' (See Loi. Lattanzio pp 12-14). Lactantius denies that the divine name indicates such a 'quality' and uses the argument to show that the Jovis - juvando etymology demonstrates the relative nature of paganism since God does not 'help' but 'create' Dl. 1.11.40.

(2) Tert. Ad Nat. 2.4.1.

(3) Ibid. vv. 1-6. esp. (ille unus deus quem colimus - quodi nomen istud proprium divinitatis et simplex) cp also Adv. Hermog. 3.2-3. that 'God' is eternally applicable to the divine nature whereas 'Lord' and 'Father' are relative apellations.

Tertullian regards deus as the divine nomen proprium.(1) In Lactantius there is only an echo of this treatment, because he wishes to clarify the terms of the argument.(2)

Minucius Felix also treats the issue: `illic vocabulis opus est, cum per singulos propriis adpellationum insignibus multitudo dirimenda est: deo qui solus est, dei vocabulum totum est.'(3)

M. Pellegrino has already demonstrated the dependence of Lactantius' text at (DI 1.6.4-5) on the above passage in the Octavius.(4) So it seems most probable that, even though he is aware of the Hermetic doctrine of divine namelessness, and uses it apologetically, it is orthodox theology which provides his main inspiration and he wholly follows that orthodox tradition in using the divine name as a demonstration of God's aseity, by means of the epithets of unity; (solus, unus, singularis).

(1) Adv. Marc. 1.10.2. (even when idolatry overshadowed the world men still knew God's true name): seorsum tamen illum quasi proprio nomine deum perhibent...cp Adv. Marc. 5.11.1.

(2) At 1.6.5b (deo autem, quia semper unus est, proprium nomen est deus) Lactantius echoes Tertullian's approach but he also has other concerns cp 1.6.5a (deo igitur nomen non est, quia solus est, nec opus est proprio vocabulo) cp R. Braun. Deus Christianorum p.35.

(3) Octav. 18. 10-11.

(4) cf. M. Pellegrino. Studi sull' antica apologeta. ,Rome '47 p.163.

(b) Via Positiva.

Deus summus:

The normal Greek term to express the transcendence of the creator[1] was ὑπεροχή . The concept had begun as a spatial adjective connoting the ridge, or the top of something,[2] and was extended as an analogy of excellence of any type.[3] In Polybius it becomes synonymous with power or authority.[4] For the Gnostic apologists, then, the term was thus ideally suited to connote the absolute transcendence of God, while at the same time connoting the outflow of his creative power. Yet it retained the scriptural vision of a divine transcendence which did not compromise relationship with the world he created. The prophetic teaching on divine transcendence itself began with the conception of God's elevation above the heavens as supreme creator: σὺ μόνος ὕψιστος ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν : (5) with the LXX thus translating the Hebrew 'El Elyon', Most High God, by ὕψιστος .

(1) cp Prestige. God in patr. thought. pp.25-27.(Iren. Adv.Haer 5.2.3.),(Hom. Clem. 10.19,)(Clement. Strom. 7.5.28.2.)(Origen, In Joann. 2.17.123.) V. Loi. Lattanzio pp. 19-22, 27-28

(2) Ephippus- Geryon. 2.3. ῥινὸς ὑπεροχαί . Polybius. 10.10.10. cp. Liddell-Scott Lexicon. Oxford. 1848. p. 1482A.

(3) Plato renders it as superabundance (Legg. 711D) ὑπερβολή, πλούτων ὑπεροχαί.

(4) Polyb. 1.2.7. ἡ ὑπεροχή τῆς δυναστείας.

(5) LXX Ps. 83.19, cf. Ps. 97.9: ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ Κύριος ὁ ὕψιστος ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν,σφόδρα ὑπερυψώθης ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς θεούς.

By the time of the Diaspora this had become established as the most common, personal name for God among the hellenic Jews.(1) The Christian apologists, however, found that the title was commonly attributed to the classical pagan pantheon, and the danger of confusion led them to adopt the epithet ὑπεροχή as their common designation. The Latin equivalent of ὕψιστος - (summus) was fraught with the same danger, as it too was a common designation of pagan theology.(2) The Christian Latin apologists, therefore, prefer to use the alternative designation of Altissimus deus,(3) to convey the biblical notion. It is just the opposite with Lactantius, however, and he consistently expresses the biblical notion of divine transcendence, with the classical concept, summus.(4) In the departure from the apologetic tradition he is motivated no doubt, by apologetic considerations. The fact that Deus Summus was a pagan designation of God prevented Tertullian from developing the adjective.

(1) cf. J. Bonsirven. Le Judaisme Palestinien. au temps de Jésus Christ. vol.1. Paris 1935. pp.134-136.

(2) cp. F. Cumont. Jupiter Summus exsuperantissimus. Archiv. für religionswissenschaft. 9. 1906. pp. 331-333

(3) V. Loi. Lattanzio p.20, R. Braun, Deus Christianorum p.85. Tertullian uses 'summus deus' very rarely: Ad. Nat. 2.7.6., 2.13.2. Adv. Jud. 2.7. (Braun. p.87)

(4) Lactantius also uses, 'summus' to render the Sibylline terms - ὑπερμεγέθης and παννυπέρτατος at D1.1.6.15

The same reason, however, is a positive reason for its employment in Lactantius' eyes. Lactantius takes the opportunity to demonstrate that the conception paganism had that God was necessarily summus was quite correct, but that they misapplied the term when they attributed it to the Olympean gods.(1) Lactantius uses the word in two distinct ways. When he offers the term summus deus in the context of the debate with pagan theology, he uses it as a divine attribute. In such cases the summus could be rendered supreme or absolute deity. All these instances(2) occur in the first book of apologia against pagan religion, and his argument is always to demonstrate the difference between the theological idea of God's absolute nature and the relativism implicit in the pagan gods. The formula is used between 1.5 and 1.6 in a series of demonstrations on the opinions of pagan authorities regarding the divine nature. Maro,(3) the Greek philosophers,(4) Seneca(5) and Trismegistus(6) are all adduced in turn to argue for the absolute nature of true deity. The last application of this philosophical use of summus (as an attribute designed to argue for the absolute nature of God arising from his oneness)(7) occurs at 1.11.

(1) the term is thus an apologetic cipher with connotations for both Christian and pagan reader.

(2) with the exception of 1.1.5. where Deus Summus is used in a specifically biblical sense (veritas id est arcanum summi dei) and thus used titularly.

(3) Dl. 1.5.11.

(4) Dl. 1.5.19

(5) Dl. 1.5.26a.

(6) Dl. 1.6.4.

(7) the term is closely paired with the concept of divine oneness. cp. Dl. 1.6.4. (summi ac singularis), 1.6.15, or 1.5.26b.

Here Lactantius demonstrates that the pagan claim to the Deus Summus is false, for Jupiter is a relative god, not an absolute one, since he is born and therefore not unoriginate (ἀγένητος):'Iove autem illum esse qui sit ex Ope Saturnoque natus, negari non potest. vana igitur persuasio est eorum qui nomen Iovis summo deo tribuunt.'(1) After this the title is not used throughout Books 2 and 3(2). This considerable gap provides a transition between his apologetic use, which is concerned with specifying what he means by Deus Summus (over and against the loose way it is applied within pagan theology) and between his use of the term as a personal title of God, the biblical notion of the 'Most High'.

All the titular instances(3) occur in the most specifically Christian and biblical part of the DI, his christological argument at Book 4.(4)

(1) Dl. 1.11.39.

(2) excepting Dl. 2.1.6. but this preface in a sense looks back to Bk.1, before inaugurating Bk.2, and the term is here used in the biblical titular sense of Altissimus.

(3) viz. Dl. 4.4.6, 4.6.3, 4.12.16, 4.13.17, 4.29.12, 4.29.14

(4) the use at 7.4.17 is again a titular application in a Christian context but probably recalls the title-page of Asclepiades' work: On the providence of God the Most High.

In the fourth book Lactantius uses the concept of Deus Summus to represent the biblical title of God the Most High. This can be seen, for example, when he associates the two titles, 'Most High' and 'Ancient of Days', in a passage based on Dan. 7.13:(1) 'adiecit enim propheta et ait: et usque ad anticum dierum peruenit et oblatus est ei. anticum dierum appellauit deum summum, cuius aetas et origo non potest conprehendi, quia solus a saeculis fuit, ut erit semper in saecula.'(2) Here he is applying the Christian conception of the title to support the notion that God, to be supreme, must be without origin (cuius...origo non potest comprehendi, quia solus a saeculis fuit).

This is a positive treatment of the apologia presented in the opening book, which demonstrated the inapplicability of summus to Jupiter, since his origin could be recalled.(3)

Lactantius use of the Deus Summus title, therefore, is concerned with the proclamation of God's Self-origin (ἀγένητος), carens origine.(4)

The catena of divine titles at DI 4.29 all maintain thisaseity of God: (Unus est enim, solus, liber, deus summus, carens origine, quia ipse est origo rerum....(5)) and clearly demonstrates that the concept of Deus Summus is most intimately linked with that of Deus Solus.

(1) cf. also Christ as "son of the Most High" Dl.4.6.3, recalling the confession of the demoniac at Mk.5.7. Lactantius also alludes to Jewish titular usage at 4.13.17, when he calls Israel "worshippers of the Most High God".

(2) Dl. 4.12.16.

(3) Dl: 1.11.39:'qui sit ex Ope Saturnoque natus.'

(4) He quotes the Sibylline terms θεὸς ἀγένητος at 1.6.15.

(5) Dl. 4.29.11.

This doctrine of God's unoriginateness was already suggested in the opening book when he chose Deus Summus to render the four Sibylline terms: ὑπερμεγέθης , ὃς μόνος ἄρχει , ἀγένητος , and πανυπέρτατος.(1)

The conjunction of his two adjectives, solus/summus, can therefore be taken as a Latin synonym for the Greek apologetic tradition of θεὸς ἀγένητος , the God who transcends all limitation as the Creator who is Self-determinate.(2) He can thereby equate a more philosophical concept of divine aseity without implying the idea of "birth" or "self-birth"(3) involved in the Greek concept. In doing so he removes himself from the pagan idea of the generations of the gods. Having stressed the inapplicability of such physical analogies to the true deity in his opening work,(4) he has thereby managed to distance his christology (the "son" of God) from the pagan conception of divinised heroes, (the "sons" of the gods). When he addresses the problem of Christ's deity (unoriginateness) and how it is witnessed if he is begotten (γενητός - γεννητὸς) from the Father, Lactantius still avoids the term for its inherent confusion of the ideas of 'Generation' and 'Origination'(5) and turns to the Apollinine concepts of ἀμήτωρα and ἀπάτωρα ,(6) which he can theologically develop along the lines of a christology of two births (eternal and temporal) and two comings. This christological use of the concepts of aseity and unoriginateness will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

(1) cp. Dl. 1.6. 15-16.

(2) Prestige. God in pat. thought pp 44-54. Tertullian uses "innatus et infectus" - R. Braun. Deus Christianorum pp. 48-51; Novatian - "innatus" De Trin. 31. 184, 188-90.

(3) For Lactantius summarises the three Sibylline terms: αὐτογενής, ἀγένητος , καὶ ἀποίητος , as: ex se ipso sit procreatus, clearly regarding them as synonyms. He cites Seneca as an authority at 1.7.13:'deus ipse se fecit.'

(4) eg. Dl. 1.16.5f.

(5) He thus avoids the christological problems that would have arisen about Christs' deity if he had defined divine unoriginateness as "innatus".

(6) Dl. 1.7.2-3, 4.13. 2-4.

Deus unus ac singularis

Lactantius' treatment on the necessary unity of God is an essential part of his doctrine of provident creation. It fits immediately into the pre-Nicene theological tradition of the Pantokrator - Creator. After the opening preface on Truth and Revelation, the Institutes define Providence as the "first" and most important issue.(1) It is left to one side, however, as Lactantius first wishes to address the problem of the unity of God. It is understandable that in his apology against the polytheistic cults, the concept of God's unity will be a constantly recurring theme. And so it is throughout the first Book. The concept, therefore, is primarily used to refute the validity of polytheism. From the second Book onwards, however, the context of the argument changes slightly, and the theme of divine unity becomes more and more of a positive theological treatment on God's creative power and man's natural relation with him as a provident Father. The two most important terms in his terminology here are unus and singularis. The first he uses both adjectivally and substantivally, the latter is reserved as an adjective.

The Latin use of unus is the common apologetic method of presenting the essential unity of God,(2) and frequently occurs in Tertullian. The previous apologists, however, rarely use the term singularis in this context(3) and the comparative abundance of the two terms in the Dl(4) is a notable departure from apologetic tradition.

(1) Dl. 1.2.1.f.

(2) R. Braun. Deus Christianorum. pp. 67-71

(3) R. Braun. op cit. p.71. fn.1.

(4) cp. Dl. 1.1.13, 1.3.12, 1.4.8, 1.6.4, 2.1.2, 2.16.20, 4.12.11, 5.1.1, 6.1.4, 7.26.13, Epit. 3.2., 4.4., De Ira. 20.12. Dm.5.7.

The two words are not used with any independent theological meanings however. Lactantius regards them as synonyms with perhaps the concept of unus being preferred for its dogmatic weight over its alternative, just as it is used with greater frequency than singularis.(1)

Apart from the two major terms, Lactantius also uses two minor adjectives: unicus,(2) which is used as a general presentation of the concept of Oneness, rather than as an effectively dogmatic term, and solus, which usually appears as a subsidiary reinforcement of unus.(3) All his terms, however, amount to the same theological doctrine.

Lactantius' first statement of the divine unity presents God's oneness as an intimate adjunct of his providential power, and something that all men have a duty to recognise by their natural wisdom: 'sit ergo nostri operis exordium quaestio illa consequens ac secunda, utrum potestate unius dei mundus regatur anne multorum. nemo, qui quidem sapiat rationemque secum putet, non unum esse intellegat, qui et condiderit omnia et eadem qua condidit uirtute moderetur.'(4)

(1) According to V. Loi's analysis (Lattanzio p.49. fn.95,97) unus appears over 30 times, singularis about 20.

(2) His use seems to be governed by metrical preference:'iustitia.. dei unici pia et religiosa cultura'(5.7.2)'unica illa maiestate' (De Ira. 2.5) Tertullian employs the term (Adv. Prax.3.2) to demonstrate the oneness of God's power:'monarchiam nihil aliud significare scio quam singulare et unicum imperium.'

(3) Deus unus ac solus. cp. Dl. 2.1.15, 2.16, 5f, 4.4.10.

(4) Dl. 1.3.1.

For Lactantius it is the evidence of creation that logically demands the admission of One-Creator.(1) The entire chapter is given over to proving this oneness of God, and the argument from Chapter Four onwards is concerned with adducing Sibylline and poetic "proofs" of the same. This theme of the oneness of the Creator forcing itself onto the mind of man, so that the acknowledgement (and therefore the worship) of God is a "natural duty" for man, continues throughout the Institutes: 'quid ergo quaeris quae nec potes scire nec si scias, beatior fies? perfecta est in homine sapientia, si et deum esse unum et ab ipso facta esse uniuersa cognoscat.'(2) The divine unity is depicted as a necessary confession of man's sapientia.(3)

Lactantius advances the argument as he progresses through DI 1.3, and this aspect of the necessary confession in man is given an ontological basis. He states, firstly, that God's nature can be no other than One since to admit a plural divinity necessarily divides the divine power, and it is then no longer absolute but relative:

'eodem modo etiam dii, si plures sint, minus ualebunt, aliis tantundem in se habentibus.uirtutis autem perfecta natura in eo potest esse in quo totum est quam in eo in quo pars exigua de toto est. deus uero si perfectus est, ut esse debet, non potest esse nisi unus, ut in eo sint omnia.'(4)

(1) Echoing the apologia of Rom. 1. 18-25, 28.

(2) Dl. 2.8.71.

(3) cp. ch.4. (iii) b-c

(4) Dl. 1.3.7.

The following verse demonstrates that God is naturally one because he would otherwise be a complex/composite being, and therefore subject to corruption. Divine incorruptibility and simplicity, therefore, necessitate his Oneness: 'quid quod summa illa rerum potestas ac diuina uis ne semel quidem diuidi potest? quidquid enim capit diuisionem, et interitum capiat necesse est. si autem interitus procul est a deo, quia incorruptibilis est et aeternus, consequens est ut diuidi potestas diuina non possit. deus ergo unus est, si nihil esse aliut potest quod tantundem capiat potestatis!'(1) In this apologetic argument of Book 1,he is, then, talking about the unity of God in terms of a Oneness of the divine power of creation, or approaching the nature of the true deity from the logical witness of created works. In this sense he summarises all his argumentation at 1.3.23. The divine unity is primarily a <u>unitatem divinae potestatis</u>(2). It is logically required by the divine simplicity, which makes God incorruptible and impassible; but Lactantius' argument clearly begins and ends with the concept of the impossibility of dividing an <u>absolute</u> power,(3) and the Divine oneness is therefore a statement of that supreme creative power; that he is <u>nulli rei subiectus</u>:'nam si deus nomen est summae potestatis, incorruptibilis esse debet, perfectus inpassibilis nulli rei subiectus, ergo dii non sunt quos parere uni maximo deo necessitas cogit.'(4)

(1) Dl. 1.3. 9-10.

(2) Dl. 1.3.24.

(3) "Summae potestatis", see text following.

(4) Dl. 1.3.23.

A distinct development of Lactantius' doctrine on the unity can be seen in the second Book, in the way he intimately associates the concept with the notion of God as Dominus and Parens. Both these latter terms are creative epithets and always refer to God's creative role. The latter, Pater/Parens, being especially reserved for God's creation of man, and his continuing intimate relationship with man as the ground of his being:(1). parens enim noster ille unus et solus cum fingeret hominem id est animal intellegens et rationis capax, eum uero ex humo subleuatum ad contemplationem sui artificis erexit.'(2) The same association of terms is found in several places in Book Two: 'ipsi enim caelestes multos esse finxerunt unumque omnium regem Iouem eo, quod multi sint in caelo spiritus angelorum et unus dominus ac parens omnium deus: sed ueritatem mentitis nominibus inuolutam ex oculis abstulerunt. nam deus, ut in principio docui, neque nomine, cum solus sit, eget neque angeli, cum sint inmortales, dici se deos aut patiuntur aut uolunt: quorum unum solumque officium est seruire nutibus dei nec omnino quicquam nisi iussu facere.'(3) By associating the concepts of God's unity, and his creative role as parent, Lactantius has laid the basis for a divinely centred anthropology and, indeed, when he expands his anthropological thought between Books 2 and 6, the concept of man discovering the wholeness of his being only in the ethical worship of the One God is to become an important theme.(4)

(1) cp. V. Loi. Lattanzio pp. 81-82

(2) DI. 2.1.15.

(3) DI.2.16. 5-6(cp 2.1.4-5)

(4) cp. Thesis ch.4.(iii)d.

In short, the doctrine of the divine unity is typical of the Christian apologetic tradition of the supreme Creator-God, a God who is transcendent and self-fulfilled in the oneness of his aseity and yet is not thereby isolated from his creation, with which he continues to stand in intimate relationship. Lactantius is replacing the many gods of the mythologists, as well as the distant god of the philosophers, with the God of the scriptures.

Deus Pater et Dominus

Lactantius uses the title of "father" to demonstrate the unity of God by a popular argument. The title can only be given to one person, yet polytheism inconsistently applies it to several gods: 'multorum autem deorum cultum non esse secundum naturam etiam hoc argumento colligi et conprehendi potest: omnem deum qui ab homine colitur necesse est inter sollemnes ritus et precationes patrem nuncupari, non tantum honoris gratia, uerum etiam rationis, quod et antiquior est homine et quod uitam salutem uictum praestat ut pater. itaque et Iuppiter a precantibus pater uocatur et Saturnus et Ianus et Liber et ceteri deinceps: quod Lucilius in deorum concilio inridet: ut nemo sit nostrum, quin aut pater optimus diuum aut Neptunus pater, Liber, Saturnus pater, Mars, Ianus, Quirinus pater siet ac dicatur ad unum. quodsi natura non patitur ut sint unius hominis multi patres - ex uno enim procreatur -, ergo etiam deos multos colere contra naturam est contraque pietatem. unus igitur colendus est, qui potest uere pater nominari: idem etiam dominus sit necesse est, quia sicut potest indulgere, ita etiam cohercere.'(1)

(1) Dl. 4.3. 11-14.

Lactantius explains the theological significance of the title of "father" at verse 11b. above. It is designed to honour God and to confess that he is more ancient than man, the source of man's life, safety and subsistence."

He has earlier demonstrated the absolute nature of this title, in so far as it connotes God as the source of man's life, in an apologetic argument showing how the terms use in pagan cult was falsified by being relativised. If Jupiter is iuvans pater, then he is not the true God, since the office of a true father is not to 'help' but to 'confer life': ' Iouem enim Iunonemque a iuuando esse dictos Cicero interpretatur et Iuppiter quasi iuuans pater dicitur: quod nomen in deum minime congruit, quia iuuare hominis est opis aliquid conferentis in eum qui sit alienus, et exigui beneficii. nemo sic deum precatur, ut se adiuuet, sed ut seruet, ut uitam salutemque tribuat: quod multo plus ac maius est quam iuuare. et quoniam de patre loquimur, nullus pater dicitur filios iuuare, cum eos generat aut educat. illud enim leuius est quam ut eo uerbo magnitudo paterni beneficii exprimatur. quanto id magis inconueniens est deo, qui uerus pater est, per quem sumus et cuius toti sumus, a quo fingimur animamur inluminamur, qui nobis uitam inpertit, salutem tribuit, uictum multiplicem sumministrat. non intellegit beneficia diuina qui se tantummodo iuuari a deo putat. ergo non inperitus modo, sed etiam inpius est qui nomine Iouis uirtutem summae potestatis imminuit.'(1)

(1) Dl. 1.11. 40-42.

The catena of vita, salus and victus, in the last verse of this citation, shows Lactantius is referring back to this passage in his more extended argument at 4.3.(1)

Lactantius' treatment of God's fatherhood consistently presents it alongside his provident dominion, and expresses both by one of the most characteristic features of Lactantius' theology:Deus Pater et Dominus. Lactantius intimately associates the two titles in order to demonstrate that God's initial act of creation is continued in his provident dominion. But the terms are greatly developed in the DI to relate his anthropology to his doctrine of God. R. Pichon was the first to notice how the association of the two titles was designed as a commentary on the two types of man(2) envisaged by Lactantius' apologia. His whole apologia in the first three books is designed to maintain that the ancient world has divorced religion and wisdom, leaving an absolute gulf between the cultic man and the rationalist. It is the thesis of Book 4, that, in Christ the Priest-Pedagogue, the harmony of religion and wisdom is at last restored. This doctrine of God as Pater et Dominus therefore has extensive implications, not only for the anthropology, but for his Christology(3) and Soteriology.(4)

(1) cp. 4.3. 11b.

(2) homo religiosus - the cultic man who holds to a religion devoid of wisdom, and homo philosophicus - who holds to a system of wisdom devoid of religion. Both pagan systems are rendered futile according to Lactantius because of their mutual exclusion making the one foolish and superstitious,+the other atheistic rationalism.

(3) viz;if God is Father and Lord to what extent is he implying Christ's scriptural titles of Son and Servant. (or Παῖς θεοῦ)

(4) Christ's healing of this fundamental rift in the ancient world can only be seen as a work of salvific reconciliation.

Pichon demonstrates the intimate association of the title to his anthropological system of religion and wisdom, as he comments on Dl.4.3:" Ce Dieu, quel sera-t-il? On peut le pressentir, puisque la doctrine qui le révèle doit être à la fois une religion et une philosophie. La philosophie, en nous le faisant comprendre, nous rapproche de lui; la religion, en nous enseignant à l'honorer, nous subordonne a lui. La première nous apprend que c'est lui qui nous donne la vie et tous les biens: il est donc notre père. La seconde nous avertit qu'il peut nous châtier: il est donc aussi notre maître.(1)"

He concluded that the association of the two titles was Lactantius' method of insisting on the biblical concept of divine judgement, over and against the philosophical notion of Providentia, which did not necessarily see this connection.(2) It is a theme which constantly engaged Lactantius and led to his composition of a treatise, devoted solely to the issue.(3)

After Pichon, several commentators have remarked on this unique development of the doctrine of God in Lactantius, most particularly A. Wlosok,(4) then V. Loi,(5) and A. Grillmeier,(6) who tend to follow her main conclusions.

(1) R. Pichon. Lactance. p. 115.
(2) cp. Pichon. Lactance. p. 116.
(3) viz, De Ira Dei.
(4) (Laktanz und der phil. gnosis) Excursus IV. Die Gottesprädikation Pater et Dominus bei Laktanz. Gott in analogie zum Römischen Paterfamilias. op cit. pp.232-246.
(5) V. Loi Lattanzio pp. 81-86. The analysis of Deus-Dominus in relation to the scriptural Kyrios (85-86) is especially valuable
(6) Christ in Christian Tradition. vol.1. p.194.

The association of Pater et Dominus presents a creator God who acts decisively in history as Lord and Judge.(1) Lactantius has found an ideal apologetic term here, for the Roman mind can find similarities between this biblical view of God and its own definition of the Paterfamilias, the kind father who also has complete powers of judgement over his children.

Von Campenhausen summarises this as:"an interpretation of the biblical idea of God which precisely corresponded to Roman feeling. Indeed, it might be expressed even more strongly:'here we come across an extensive, true commensurability of biblical and Roman thought' (Kraft).(2) The Roman understanding of legal lordship and governorship, also characteristic of the paterfamilias, is completely thought through to the end when it is applied to the sovereign God of Christianity."(3) Perhaps this idea of "precise correspondence to Roman feeling" needs to be somewhat qualified, for Lactantius is, after all presenting a biblical doctrine of God's judgement that did not correspond at all to Roman religious or philosophical categories,(4) although, as a consummate apologist he chooses, as a vehicle to do this, an extremely familiar domestic and legal concept of the classical tradition.(5)

(1) cp. Dl. 4.4.11a.

(2) Von Campenhausen's reference is to the editorial introduction of De Ira Dei. Darmstadt. 1957.

(3) H. Von Campenhausen. The Fathers of the Latin Church. London '64 p.78.

(4) or so Lactantius believed. cp. Dl. 4.4.6. Cicero's concept of God as 'Conditor ac parens' (Nat. Deor. 2.64. Rep. 1.56) cp Plato Tim. 28C., Dl. 6.9.14, still lacks the connotations of God's active force of judgement continuing his creative power.

(5) For the classical instances cp. Wlosok. Laktanz und der phil. gnosis. p. 236f., and V. Loi. I Valori etici e politici della Romanità negli scritti di Lattanzio Salesianum. 28.1. 1965 pp 124-131.

Although Tertullian is aware of the possibilities of such a divine title as Pater et Dominus,(1) he does not develop the concept theologically, as Lactantius, to transform it into an important theme.

It is Lactantius' extension of the theme that marks him off from all his predecessors.(2) The scriptural foundation for the association of the two titles, in Mal. 1.6, is interesting for its cultic setting:(3) καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ὑμῶν ὄψονται, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐρεῖτε Ἐμεγαλύνθη κύριος ὑπεράνω τῶν ὁρίων τοῦ Ἰσραήλ. υἱὸς δοξάζει πατέρα, καὶ δοῦλος τὸν Κύριον ἑαυτοῦ.καὶ εἰ πατήρ εἰμι ἐγώ,ποῦ ἐστιν ἡ δόξα μου; καὶ εἰ κύριός εἰμι ἐγώ,ποῦ ἐστιν ὁ φόβος μου; λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ. (4)

This context of worship is clearly preserved in Lactantius. The knowledge of our father is immediately followed by our worship of him as Lord: ' deus autem, qui unus est, quoniam utramque personam sustinet et patris et domini, et amare eum debemus, quia filii sumus et timere, quia serui. non potest igitur nec religio a sapientia separari nec sapientia a religione secerni, quia idem deus est qui et intellegi debet, quod est sapientiae, et honorari, quod est religionis. sed sapientia praecedit, religio sequitur, quia prius est deum scire, consequens colere. ita in duobus nominibus una uis est, quamuis diuersa esse uideantur: alterum enim positum est in sensu, alterum in actu; sed tamen similia sunt duobus riuis ex uno fonte manantibus.'(5)

(1) Tertullian. Orat. 2.4, Adv. Marc. 1.27.3, 2.13.5, Apol.34.2.

(2) A. Wlosok op.cit. p.241.

(3) The only other time Lactantius uses Malachy (Dl. 4.11.8, Mal 1.10) is in a cultic setting also.

(4) LXX. Mal.1.6.

(5) Dl. 4.4. 2-3.

Lactantius, then,equates man's religious veneration of God with the scriptural notion of the fear of the Lord.(1) It is man's duty to worship God, because he is the father who made us, and man must therefore exhibit the Pietas of a son to his father. This notion of pietas as filial submission underlines Lactantius transition from the implications of the 'father' title to the duty of worship: ' ei debitum cultum tamquam summo patri'.(2) But at the same time he insists that this type of Pietas is also fear of the Lord because God is not only a caring father, he is also our Lord and master who will punish all those who rebel and will not worship him. The punishment of God will frustrate the philosophers' desire for immortality and will repay the sensually-obsessed cultic men with the logical end of their physical quest,bodily death: ' sic fit ut et philosophi et qui deos colunt similes sint aut filiis abdicatis aut seruis fugitiuis, quia neque illi patrem quaerunt neque hi dominum. et sicut abdicati hereditatem patris non adsecuntur et fugitiui inpunitatem, ita neque philosophi inmortalitatem accipient, quae est regni caelestis hereditas, id est summum bonum, quod illi maxime quaerunt, neque cultores deorum poenam sempiternae mortis effugient, quae est animaduersio ueri domini aduersus fugitiuos suae maiestatis ac nominis.'(3) Moreover, Lactantius' two titles allow him to present a harmony of the Old Testament view of God as Dominus (the absolutely powerful Kyrios-Adonai) and the New Testament doctrine of Christ on God's fatherhood.

(1) as in Mal 1.6, cp. Dl. 4.4.3a and the LXX text of Proverbs 2.5. which fully accords with Lactantius' revelation theology: τότε συνήσεις φόβον κυρίου, καὶ ἐπίγνωσιν θεοῦ εὑρήσεις.

(2) cp. Dl. 4.4.6.

(3) Dl. 4.4.5.

The frequent association of Pater et Dominus in Lactantius is therefore designed to combine the notions of God's act of creation with his continuing power of provident direction, especially as witnessed in his ability to judge the acts of men.(1) It performs a highly developed systematic role in the Institutes, not only because it is an ideal apologetic communication, being a biblical theology based on a classical analogy, but also because it provides Lactantius with cultic, anthropological and christological avenues of development.

The christological connotations (to what extent Lactantius' doctrine of God as Father and Lord implies the scriptural notion of Christ as Son and Servant, and how significant is his attribution of the title 'dominus' to Christ) will be discussed later in Chapter 6.(2)

Maiestas dei

Apart from the Pater et Dominus title, perhaps the other most individually characteristic element of Lactantius' doctrine of God, is the manner in which he refers to the deity as, "the Majesty". While the other Latin apologists use the concept of the majesty of God as an attribute, his use of the term presents it as a personal title.(3)

(1) The De Ira, and D.M. continue the same theme at greater length.

(2) For the scriptural background of this theme in Lactantius cp Loi. Lattanzio pp. 85-86.

(3) Dl. 1.1.5.'consilia et dispositiones illius maiestatis aeternae;' 1.1.8.'cultum verae maiestatis; 2.19.1'maiestate caelesti suggerente nobis; 2.16.9'notitia verae maiestatis.'

Even in the attributive sense of maiestas, Lactantius' usage is far more extensive than any of his Christian predecessors. The term is evidently a favourite title of his and possibly derives from his reading of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the sole scriptural text in which the term[1] is used in the same titular manner.[2] The Vulgate translates Μεγαλωσύνη by Magnitudo,[3] and it is a term which features in the previous Latin apologists as a divine epithet.[4] It is primarily a designation of immensity, however, and this spatial sense is exactly how Lactantius applies magnitudo in the very few times he uses the term.[5] The idea of transcendent greatness conveyed by magnitudo, seems nonetheless to be too limited a concept to cover the nuances of Kingly power and dominion suggested in the text of Hebrews which specifically refers to the throne of God's judgement. Lactantius has, therefore, found a better rendering of the concept in his choice of maiestas. This not only conveys the sense of Lordly dominion, (Lactantius' conception of God's provident power), but is also suited to his apologetic ends in so far as it has a more significant classical pedigree.[6]

(1) — Ἡ Μεγαλωσύνη

(2) Heb. 8.1. Ὃς ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θρόνου τῆς μεγαλωσύνης. cp. Heb. 1.3.

(3) cp. Vulg. Sirach. 18.5., Heb. 1.3, 8.1.

(4) Tertull. Apol. 17.3, Adv. Marc. 1.18.3, 2.2.3, Minucius. Oct. 18.9, Novat. De Trin. 2.10, Arnob. Adv. Nat. 2.52. R. Braun. Deus Christianorum pp. 40-42, V. Loi Lattanzio pp.22-27.

(5) Dl. 1.3.14: 'quamlibet multos, quamlibet magnos faciat, quidquid in multis magnitudinis potestatis virtutis maiestatisque posuerit, id totum in unum confero et in uno esse dico, ut tantum in eo sit istarum rerum, quantum nec cogitari nec dici potest'. cp Dl. 1.7.12. This compression of all the attributes "in unum" perhaps suggests that the titular use of the sole attribute here which survives in Lactantius' hands as a personal description of God, is given a meaning that subsumes all the others.

(6) Cicero, De Div. 1.38.82: 'dii non censent esse suae maiestatis, praesignificare hominibus, quae sunt futura'. Seneca, Ep.95.50: 'primus est deorum cultus deos credere, deinde reddere illis maiestatem suam.' Suetonius, Cal.22: 'divinam maiestatem assere sibi coepit.' (cp Dl.2.1.2-gestio enim..singularis dei adserere maiestatem.) This classical background is more significant to the Dl than that of the apologists, such as Tertullian(Adv.Prax 14.3) who applies it to the fullness of God's majesty revealed in Christ, or Minucius (Oct.32.1) who applies it to the uncontainable immensity of God.cp.H. Drexler. Maiestas, in Aevum. 30. 1956. pp.196f.

The classical use of the term maiestas applied it both to the philosophic idea of a supreme being(1) and to the popular gods of the pantheon. Lactantius is concerned precisely with this classical conception of maiestas in his doctrine on images, in Book Two, where he wishes to demonstrate that the majesty or power of the true God, neither stands in need of worshippers to bring it anything it lacks nor needs its worshippers to avenge sacrilegious insults since it is all-powerful itself, in contrast to the false gods: 'quae peruersitas ad eorum praesidia decurrere, quae ipsa cum uiolantur inulta sunt, nisi a colentibus uindicentur? ubi ergo ueritas est? ubi nulla uis adhiberi potest religioni, ubi nihil quod uiolari possit apparet, ubi sacrilegium fieri non potest. quidquid autem oculis manibusque autem oculis manibusque subiectum est, id uero quia fragile est, ab omni ratione immortalitatis alienum est.'(2) This concept of religious sacrilege is intimately associated with the definition of divine majesty as Lactantius wishes it to emerge, and it is clearly concerned with divine power (or lack of it): 'Quid igitur maiestatis possunt habere simulacra, quae fuerunt in homunculi postestate uel ut aliud fierent uel ut omnino ne fierent? idcirco aput Horatium Priapus ita loquitur: olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum cum faber incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum, maluit esse deum. deus inde ego, furum auiumque maxima formido.'(3)

(1) Cicero, Ac.2.120; Seneca, Benef. 4.19.4 and Nat. Quaes.1.praef.3.

(2) Dl. 2.4.6-7

(3) Dl. 2.4.1.

He refuses to admit the applicability of the concept to the pagan gods, then, because their powerlessness to avenge insults themselves is a clear sign that their cult represents a concept of 'majesty' that is impotent. Lactantius uses the case of Caius Verres to demonstrate the emptiness of this pagan conception of majesty: ' unde apparet istos deos nihil habere in se amplius quam materiam de qua sint fabricati. nec inmerito ad te, Marce Tulli, hoc est ad hominem Siculi confugerunt, quoniam triennio sunt experti deos illos nihil ualere: essent enim stultissimi, si ad eos ob defendendas iniurias hominum confugissent, qui Gaio Verri nec pro se ipsis irati esse potuerunt. at enim Verres ob haec facinora damnatus est. non ergo dii uindicauerunt, sed Ciceronis industria, qua uel defensores eius oppressit uel gratiae restitit. quid quod aput ipsum Verrem non fuit illa damnatio, sed uacatio.'(1) The climax of this treatment begins from 2.8.1 onwards, where he sets out to give a comprehensive account of God's providence: (exponam igitur istorum omnium rationem...), which ranges from the origin of all things with the divine production of the Son(2) and the creation of the spirit who fell into evil,(3) to the latter-days when God will clearly demonstrate the power of his majesty by avenging all the insults men have offered against him in the course of time: 'ultimis enim temporibus statuit de uiuis ac mortuis iudicare; de quo iudicio mihi erit in ultimo libro disputatio. differt igitur, donec ueniat temporum finis, quo effundat iram suam in potestate ac uirtute caelesti, sicut uatum praedicta piorum terribili monitu horrificant. nunc autem patitur homines errare et aduersum se quoque inpios esse, ipse iustus et mitis et patiens. nec enim fieri potest ut non is in quo perfecta sit uirtus, sit etiam perfecta patientia.'(4)

(1) Dl. 2.4. 32-35. cp Dl. 2.4.37
(2) Dl. 2.8.3.
(3) Dl. 2.8.4:'ex bono ad malum transcendit suoque arbitrio.'
(4) Dl. 2.17. 1-3.

Lactantius intimately connects the concept of true majesty with divine judgement, therefore, significantly changing the passive classical concept of divine majesty for the scriptural notion of majesty as God's power of judgement.(1)

This theological application also emerges in the way in which Lactantius pairs 'maiestas' and 'virtus': 'nam qui rationem diuinitatis ignorat, is uere elinguis et mutus est, licet sit omnium disertissimus. lingua enim cum uerum loqui coeperit id est uirtutem maiestatemque dei singularis interpretari, tum demum officio naturae suae fungitur, quamdiu autem falsa loquitur, in usu suo non est: et ideo infans sit necesse est qui diuina proloqui non potest;(2) — and its parallel passage: 'nam profecto is uidet qui ueritatem, in qua deus est, uel deum, in quo ueritas est, oculis cordis aspexerit, is audit qui diuinas uoces ac praecepta uitalia pectori suo adfigit, is loquitur qui caelestia disserens uirtutem ac maiestatem dei singularis enarrat(3).

Vincent Loi finds in this,(4) evidence that Lactantius used the concept of maiestas in the scriptural sense of Δόξα θεοῦ (5) and cites the similar association of maiestas-virtus (Δόξα - Δύναμις) in the Itala version of 1 Pet. 4.14.

(1) The scriptural symbol of the royal throne always connotes the divine power of judgement cp. Heb. 1.3, 8.1. Rev. 4.2-10, 5.6-11

(2) Dl. 4.26.8.

(3) Dl. 6.9.15. cf. also 2.1.5 where the majesty is clearly envisaged as God's providential dominion, also DM. 5.7.

(4) together with his association of maiestas with claritudo (Dl. 4.24.6, 2.9.12) Lattanzio pp. 63-66.

(5) V. Loi. Lattanzio pp. 24-25.

(6) cp. Loi. Lattanzio p.25. esp. fns. 113,114

Lactantius ultimately states that God's majesty is to be conceived of as a power, because all such attributes are an expression of the ultimate perfection of the divine nature:' nam sicut sol, qui oritur in diem, licet sit unus, unde solem esse appellatum Cicero uult uideri, quod obscuratis sideribus solus appareat, tamen quia uerum ac perfectae plenitudinis lumen est et calore potentissimo et fulgore clarissimo inlustrat omnia, ita in deo, licet sit unus, et maiestas et uirtus et claritudo perfecta est.'(1)

The doctrine of God in Lactantius, both by means of negative attributes,(2) as well as by positive epithets,(3) has consistently maintained the scriptural doctrine of the utterly transcendent God, who still remains in relationship with his creation as its provident Lord and Judge. This essential orthodoxy of Lactantius' theology places him in full harmony with the scriptural and apologetic tradition. The minor variations in terminological usage, in most cases, can be directly explained by an apologetic motive. This suggests that the roots of Lactantius' theological inspiration should be sought within the orthodox Christian tradition rather than postulating, as certain recent studies have done,(4) a doctrine of God brought over from a supposed involvement in a form of neo-Platonic Hermeticism.

(1) Dl. 2.9.12.

(2) incorporalis, incarruptus etc.

(3) unus, summus, dominus etc.

(4) esp. A. Wlosok, Laktanz und der phil. gnosis; V. Loi Lattanzio ; A.Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition vol.1. London 1975 pp. 190-206.

None of the theological vocabulary shows evidence of any form of Hermeticism that cannot be explained either by the religious commonplaces of his day or by his constant apologetical desire to communicate seriously in terms that would be familiar to his literati audience.(1)

Such a supposedly neo-Platonic religiosity does not fit well with a man who ultimately describes Plato's theological worth in the following terms: ' Plato quidem multa de uno deo locutus est, a quo ait constitutum esse mundum, sed nihil de religione: somniauerat enim deum, non cognouerat.'(2) Both the orthodoxy and the biblicism of his doctrine of God suggest the need to re-examine Lactantius' place within Christian tradition, appreciating the self-limitation imposed by the genre of true apologetic engagement. And, rather than needing to posit an explanation of the Institutes which interprets it either as classical paganism(3) or this form of neo-Platonism, it will be enough to illustrate Lactantius' essential fidelity to the main forms of pre-Nicene theology, though a theology now expressed through the unique medium of the most thorough-going apologetic the Church had yet witnessed.

(1) cp. R.M. Ogilvie The lib. of Lactantius. pp.78-80; A.D. Nock. VC. 16.1962 p 79.

(2) Dl. 5.14.13.

(3) R. Pichon Lactance. p.217: "il reste classique et païen."

(iii) Divine worship

(a) As a systematic factor

Lactantius appears to use the theme and concept of the true cult of God as a catalyst in the systematic structure of his theology. The theme appears in his exposition throughout the seven books of the D.I in almost every theological area that concerns him. Worship can be seen as a major element of his refutation of mythological religion in Books 1-2.(1) It is set out as the "one thing lacking" in the epistemological and anthropological schemes of the rationalists, in Book Three.(2) The concept is at the root of his christology(3) in Book Four. It is used to explain the almost demonic hatred that the persecuting authorities bear towards the "Temple of God",(4) in Book Five. Worship is fully exposed as the heart of all ethical life and the root of all justice, in Book 6.(5) And, finally, in the Seventh Book it announces and prepares his eschatological doctrine in its role as the effective condition of the praemium immortalitatis.

(1 eg. Dl. 1.19. 1-2, that God requires exclusive worship, or 1.20.26. on the moral nature of true cult.

(2) cp. Dl. 3.30. 3-5.

(3) For Christ is Teacher and Priest (Thesis. ch.6. (iii) a-b). The ethical precepts he delivers amount to true cult, and as High Priest of that cult he himself re-establishes the worship of the One True God. (cp. 4.10.3)

(4) eg. the loss of worship first brought evil and violence into the world (Dl. 5.5. 13-14). The demons inspire the state persecution of the Church, Dl. 5.21.6.

(5) cp. Dl. 6.1.2f.

At times when Lactantius reviews the progress of his systematic thought and epitomises it for the reader, this concept of God's worship clearly emerges as a progressively unifying theme. There is such an epitome in DI 7.6, where Lactantius not only sums up the doctrine of the previous five chapters of the book, but in a real sense represents in succession, the themes of all six books as a preface to this last:'nunc totam rationem breui circumscriptione signemus. idcirco mundus factus est,ut nascamur: ideo nascimur, ut adgnoscamus factorem mundi ac nostri deum: ideo adgnoscimus, ut colamus: ideo colimus, ut immortalitatem pro laborum mercede capiamus, quoniam maximis laboribus cultus dei constat: ideo praemio immortalitatis adficimur, ut similes angelis effecti summo patri ac domino in perpetuum seruiamus et simus aeternum deo regnum. haec summa rerum est, hoc arcanum dei, hoc mysterium mundi.'(1) In this passage, although we see a systematic progression that culminates (haec summa rerum est) in man's reception of the reward of immortality, nonetheless, for Lactantius the single most important theological element of that system is the concept of worship, for that very immortality itself is presented as a celestial, angelic "liturgy", an eternal "service" of God: (ut similes angelis effecti..etc.).(2)

(1) Dl. 7.6.1.

(2) Dl. 7.6.1: Lactantius describes the worshipping Church as the heavenly court of God (cp Lk 22.19, Lk. 12.8, Ps. 89.6f) which may reflect his dependence on Paul's doctrine at 1 Cor 11.10 that the angels are present at earthly liturgies, which he then uses as a basis for his description of the Church's final exaltation. His concept of Ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, is a static one representing that of late NT. apocalyptic. His reference to the transformation of saints into the likeness of angels, their divine illumination, and the celestial liturgy (Dl. 7.26.5) suggest the heavily apocalyptic nature of his source, (cp. Mtt. 13.43).

When Lactantius devotes the sixth Book to demonstrating that the ethical life is essentially a question of worship, he again prefaces his treatment by defining the cult as 'the sum of all his work', the 'sum of all things', and the 'whole system of a happy life': 'uenio nunc ad id quod est summum operis huius et maximum, ut doceam quo ritu quoue sacrificio deum coli oporteat. id enim est hominis officium in eoque solo summa rerum et omnis beatae uitae ratio consistit, quandoquidem propterea ficti et inspirati ab eo sumus, non ut caelum uideremus et solem, quod Anaxagoras putauit, sed ut artificem solis et caeli deum pura et integra mente coleremus.(1)' In his earlier apologia against the false cults of the gods, Lactantius had already expressed the central importance of the concept, thoughrepeating his argument in Book Six he insists in a negative argument that a false cult is nothing less than the greatest crime a man can commit: (quod est summum nefas)(2), or: 'nesciunt enim quantum sit nefas adorare aliud praeterquam deum, qui condidit caelum atque terram, qui humanum genus finxit inspirauit luce donauit,'(3) and he summarises his treatment with yet another definition of cult as summa rerum. Here it is the entire hope and safety of man: 'ergo in dei agnitione et cultu rerum summa uersatur: in hoc est spes omnis ac salus hominis, hic est sapientiae gradus primus, ut sciamus qui sit nobis uerus pater eumque solum pietate debita prosequamur, huic pareamus, huic deuotissime seruiamus, in eo promerendo actus omnis et cura et opera collecetur.'(4)

(1) Dl. 6.1.2. Vita Beata is elsewhere his synonym for immortality suggesting the systematic relationship between ethic as earthly worship, and immortality as ethic's reward which is heavenly worship.

(2) Dl. 6.9.1.

(3) Dl. 5.18.13.

(4) Dl. 6.9.24.

The use of salus points towards an eschatological dimension in his thought. It is more than man's safety on earth that is envisaged, but his eternal salvation.

This concept of the way in which the worship of God reaches across man's earthly life as well as his eternal life has already appeared in Book 4. Lactantius sets out true cult as the "sole hope of life for man". Both aspects of man's life are covered in the terms of this passage, for worship embraces the "renunciation of the temporal life" (ethic) and leads through this ethical training to the perfection of worship,(1) that is, immortality (the implied antithesis to the "temporal life" of the preceding phrase): Quae cum ita se habeant ut ostendimus, apparet nullam aliam spem uitae homini esse propositam, nisi abiectis uanitatibus et errore miserabili deum cognoscat et deo seruiat, nisi huic temporali renuntiet uitae ac se rudimentis iustitiae ad cultum uerae religionis instituat.(2)

(1) cultum verae religionis - not, as usually translated, "the cultivation of true religion" but rather "true religious worship" as in Valerius Maximus: exquisitus religionis cultus, (5.2.1, 4.4.4.) Such a reading is supported by the text of Dl. 4.28.11 which is to be taken as a parallel to Dl.4.28.1. since it prefaces the same Ciceronic etymology (cp.4.28.3, and 4.28.12). At Dl. 4.28.11 the subsequent context shows that "religio veri cultus est" does not mean "religion is the cultivation of truth" but rather "Religion is the worship of the True (God)." Throughout 4.28 'cultus' is used consistently and frequently to connote the act of worship.

(2) Dl. 4.28.1.

Worship is the "head"of the divine Law and the sum of the whole system of man's life (ratio hominis): `Huius legis caput primum est ipsum deum nosse, soli obtemperare, solum colere. non potest rationem hominis obtinere qui parentem animae suae deum nescit.'(1) In the following book it is even more clearly presented as the defining reason for the creation and existence of man: `quae utilitas deo in homine, inquit Epicurus ut eum propter se faceret? scilicet ut esset qui opera eius intellegeret, qui prouidentiam disponendi, rationem faciendi, uirtutem consummandi et sensu admirari et uoce proloqui posset: quorum omnium summa haec est, ut deum colat.'(2) Lactantius uses the <u>status rectus</u> theme as the mainstay of his anthropology, and it is not at all coincidental that he also uses the theme as a primary symbol of man's worship:`nihil igitur prodest ita fictum esse hominem, ut recto corpore spectet in caelum, nisi erecta mente deum cernat et cogitatio eius in spe uitae perpetuae tota uersetur. Quapropter nihil est aliut in uita quo ratio, quo condicio nostra nitatur, nisi dei qui nos genuit agnitio et religiosus ac pius cultus: unde quoniam philosophi aberrauerunt, sapientes utique non fuerunt.'(3)

(1) Dl. 6.9.1.

(2) Dl. 7.5.4.

(3) Dl. 3.27.16 - 3.28.1, cp. also 2.1. 13-15 where it is a symbol of man's contemplation of his maker, and 2.2.19f when a symbol of man's "spectaculum caeli". Both these demonstrations are set within a cultic context and culminate in the memorable phrase: <u>vivum colite ut vivatis</u> (Dl. 2.2.24).At 2.17.9 it is a direct symbol of worship: "sed oculos eo dirigamus quo illos naturae suae condicio direxit nihilque aliut adoremus, nihil colamus nisi solius artificis parentisque nostri unicum nomen," cp. also Dl. 7.9.10.

The concept of worship, however, not only performs a summatic role in directing the devebpment of his major theological themes such as the anthropology, christology and eschatology,(1) but it is also used extensively to inter-define the key concepts which themselves comprise these major areas. So, for example, he approaches the concept of worship through the idea of the "Chief Good".(2) It appears as the "Chief Duty"(3) of man, the "principle of social harmony"(4) and not least the final perfection of all he means by "Justice":(5)

'secum denique habeat deum semper in corde suo consecratum, quoniam ipse est dei templum quodsi deo, patri ac domino, hac adsiduitate, hoc obsequio, hac deuotione seruierit, consummata et perfecta iustitia est.'(6) The concept of worship, then, has an extensive role as a summatic factor in Lactantius' theology. It frequently appears in epitomising passages, and is used to relate key concepts throughout the D.I., all of which manifests the great significance which Lactantius attaches to the idea, and already suggests to us that the concept will emerge as one of the principal themes of his work.

(1) viz Man defined as the worshipping being, Christ as the High Priest of true cult, and the Blessed Life as the heavenly liturgy.

(2) Dl. 3.10.1f, or 3.12.18 where immortality is defined as the summum bonum.

(3) Dl. 2.3.14.

(4) eg. Dl. 6.10. 1-2.

(5) cp. Dl. 6.9.8. where good works not inspired as a result of the 'agnitio dei' are compared to a headless body.

(6) Dl. 6.25. 15-16.

Lactantius' theology of worship revolves around three central themes:

(i) that the cult is an interior, spiritual phenomenon that occurs firstly in the mind and heart of man, when man submits to God and

(ii) that it expresses itself in ethical life, an external righteousness that reflects the inner, spiritual purity it has discovered in the encounter with God, and

(iii) that this ethical purification of man's life removes him more and more from the earthly, material side of his nature, spiritualises him in the likeness of God, and results in his gaining the praemium immortalitatis, or perfect spiritual union with God.

The entire theology of worship is a dynamic movement expressing man's ascent to God, his progressive spiritualisation until its climax in the "Vita Beata." Lactantius expresses this development by making the cult a fundamentally ethical factor in the D.I.

(b) Agnitio dei: worship as the knowledge of God

While he will emphasise (i) above, and describe worship as man's mental acknowledgement of the one God, it is not the major thrust of his thought. Although A. Wlosok and V. Loi have in turn interpreted Lactantius' use of Contemplatio dei in the D.I, as a sign of his Platonic religious background,(1) this term is displaced(2) by his more usual approach which is Worship as agnitio dei.

The agnitio dei connotes at one and the same time man's knowledge of God, and man's acknowledgement of God. This double sense transforms it from a passive reception or enjoyment of the vision of God into an active response on the part of man, and explains Lactantius' departure from the term contemplatio in favour of this.

(1) A. Wlosok. Laktanz und der phil. gnosis. p.134 fn.55, and pp 205-210. V.Loi (Lattanzio pp 5-6) relates the use of notitia dei to the Hermetic concept of θεοπτια . But Lactantius only uses notitia twice in the Dl always in an apologetic argument (Dl. 2.13.12, 2.16.20) and always connoting the restricted sense of knowledge of God's existence from his works, not the intimate knowledge of his person in religious contemplation.

(2) contemplatio appears only 3 times in the Dl. (3.9.13, 3.20.11, 7.5.6) and each time it is used as a commentary on the status rectus theme, which suggests it is an "apologetic" term used for the benefit of his literati audience, not his Christian readers. At Dl. 3.9.13 he defines the word:'id est mente cernamus.' Elsewhere in the Dl 'cernere' is used only in the philosophical context (like notitia) of discerning God's existence from the creation (cp 7.9.2). V. Loi's analysis, therefore (la conoscenza di Dio quale fine dell' uomo: Lattanzio pp 3-7) is peculiar in the manner it elevates two comparatively rare formulae (notitia dei, contemplatio dei) and on this basis, posits a strong neo-Platonic current in Lactantius' theology, while giving little notice to his preference for the 'agnitio dei' formula.

Even the word agnitio, however, is not "active" enough to convey his full understanding of worship as an ethical force and distinguish it from his description of the powerlessness of false worship in the second Book, and so, worship as the agnitio dei has a very restricted role in the D.I. Each time it appears it is used only as a general term to sum up the overall significance of man's worship of God for his immediate argument. It never totally replaces the word cultus as a synonym, but stands beside it to signify one aspect of worship. So,it is the sum of the ratio hominis to have pietas, which he elucidates as the dei parentis agnitio: 'expedita est igitur hominis ratio, si sapiat: cuius propria est humanitas. (sed) ipsa humanitas quid est nisi iustitia? quid iustitia nisi pietas? pietas autem nihil aliut quam dei parentis agnitio.'(1) And again it appears as the sum of man, (nostra ratio, condicio). The acknowledgement of God (again described as 'parent') is closely followed by his worship: ' Quapropter nihil est aliut in uita quo ratio, quo condicio nostra nitatur, nisi dei qui nos genuit agnitio et religiosus ac pius cultus.'(2)

(1) Dl. 3.9.19.

(2) Dl. 3.28.1.

This acknowledgement of God as our Father,(1) and our consequent worship, is given yet again as the "sum of all things" in life: 'ergo in dei agnitione et cultu rerum summa uersatur:'(2) By the time Lactantius has arrived at Book 6 he is concerned with fully elucidating worship as an ethical force, and so he uses agnitio dei to sum up the whole scope of human life once more; but in reference to the case of Cimon of Athens the point of his summation is to relate the agnitio dei to moral practice. Cimon is taken as a rare example of the pagan who without the benefit of true worship still performed just actions. However, Lactantius concludes that as these good works have not originated from the agnitio dei they are completely useless, like a body without a head: ' sed putemus fieri posse ut aliquis naturali et igenito bono ueras uirtutes capiat, qualem fuisse Cimonem Athenis accepimus, qui et egentibus stipem dedit et pauperes inuitauit et nudos induit, tamen cum illud unum quod est maximum deest, agnitio dei, iam bona illa omnia superuacua sunt et inania, ut frustra in iis adsequendis laborauerit. omnis enim iustitia eius similis erit humano corpori caput non habenti: in quo tametsi membra omnia et locis suis constent et figura et habitudine, tamen quoniam deest id quod est omnium principale, et uita et omni sensu caret. itaque membra illa formam tantummodo membrorum habent, usum non habent, tam scilicet quam caput sine corpore. cui similis est qui cum deum non ignoret uiuit iniuste: id enim solum habet quod est summum, sed frustra, quoniam uirtutibus tamquam membris eget. itaque ut sit uiuum ac sensibile corpus, et agnitio dei necessaria est quasi caput et uirtutes omnes quasi corpus. ita fiet homo perfectus ac uiuus, sed tamen summa omnis in capite est.'(3)

(1) Dl. 6.9.24b:'ut sciamus qui sit nobis verus pater.'

(2) Dl. 6.9.24.

(3) Dl. 6.9. 8-11. The "agnitio dei" amounts to seeing "conditorem rerum parentemque" (6.9.14) with the "eyes of the heart" (6.9.15). Without it, man is in darkness (6.9.16) and loses the hope of immortal life (6.9.18). Lactantius repeats his insistence that the hope of immortality flows directly from the agnitio dei at Dl.7.20.5.

This treatment prefaces his identification of virtue with the agnitio dei. The life of virtue is quintessentially man's acknowledgement of God, and this explains why there cannot be a good pagan, for without its source and principle, virtue is too difficult for man.(1)

One can note in Lactantius' use of this term, first of all how he never makes the interior acknowledgement of God exactly synonymous with the act of worship. It is always rather its first principle or chief aspect: 'nam quia uirtus in dei agnitione consistit, omnia grauia sunt, dum ignores, ubi cognoris, facilia: per ipsas difficultates nobis exeundum est, qui ad summum bonum tendimus.'(2) Secondly, one notes the intimate association of God's "fatherhood" with the term. When man recognises God innately, in his mind,(3) or with the eyes of his heart,(4) it is his true father,(5) his parent,(6) or his begetter(7) that he can see. As Lactantius describes God as both Father and Lord, this suggests that man's knowledge of God derives from the fact that he stands to us as a creative parent. Man can have some knowledge of God as a Father, while as Lord he remains inestimably transcendent.

(1) Dl. 6.23.40

(2) Dl. 5.14.12. For the synonymous nature of Agnitio dei/cognitio dei (the latter rarely used) cp. Dl. 6.9.13-14, 6.23.40b. and once, Lactantius equates cognitio with sapientia (2.8.71)

(3) eg. Dl. 3.9.13.

(4) Dl. 6.9.15.

(5) Dl. 6.9.24.

(6) Dl. 6.9.14.

(7) Dl. 3.28.1.

One can also see how Lactantius' overriding desire, even when describing the interior source of worship in the mind of the man who recognises God as his father, is to establish that true worship is a moral phenomenon. For in his exposition of the agnitio dei he has laid the basis of man's just actions in their first principle, the interior acknowledgement of God.

(c) Sapientia: worship as ethical understanding.

The term which Lactantius uses much more than agnitio, to establish this ethical basis of true cult, is quite surpisingly sapientia. Lactantius uses the version in three ways:

(i) to discuss God's revelation of Truth to man,

(ii) to define the moral essence of religion, and

(iii) to elucidate the intimate connection between cult and ethical practice.

In comparison with its use in the last two of these areas the term's employment in the context of Lactantius' revelation theology is quite subordinate. It is this highly pragmatic use of the word sapientia, above all else, that suggests that the hypothesis of a strong Asian-Eastern influence on his theology(1) should be treated with critical scepticism.

(1) esp. A. Grillmeier. Christ in Christian tradition.1. pp 190-192., following Wlosok and Loi, and taking this tradition as gnostically orientated.

Lactantius' use of sapientia shows quite clearly that he wishes to change the common understanding of sapientia-religiosa that his pagan audience will have from their Platonic or Hermetic background. He wishes to reduce its significance as interior religious mystery and transform it into primarily a moral concept.(1)

(Sapientia as revelation:)

In the context of his revelation theology Lactantius uses the term to emphasise the distinction between what is commonly regarded as human wisdom (but what he regards as philosophic reductionism) and the wisdom of God. Lactantius follows St. Paul in describing human wisdom as mere foolishness, while divine wisdom is covered with a sacramental veil of foolishness that deceives the superficial, but is in reality the Truth.(2)

It is especially the ethical character of sapientia, its expression in iustitia, which gives it the superficial appearance of folly: ' iustitia suapte natura speciem quandam stultitiae habet, quod ego et diuinis et humanis testimoniis confirmare possum.'(3)

(1) This radically distinguishes it from theoretical Gnosticism.

(2) Dl. 4.2.3f, 4.5.2.

(3) Dl. 5.14. 1-2. see also 5.12.3, 5.7.2.

And so,distinguishing the two types of wisdom, the superficial and the real, Lactantius posits the whole basis of truth in God's free gift. While man's wisdom is incapable of arriving at truth,(1) God supplies the revelation of truth as his free gift. This revelation at once emphasises the chasm between human thought and God's counsels,(2) and yet unites man with God in the hope of immortality:(3) ' quod quia fieri non potuit ut homini per se ipsum ratio diuina notesceret, non est passus hominem deus lumen sapientiae requirentem diutius errare ac sine ullo laboris effectu uagari per tenebras inextricabiles: aperuit oculos eius aliquando et notionem ueritatis munus suum fecit, ut et humanam sapientiam nullam esse monstraret et erranti ac uago uiam consequendae inmortalitatis ostenderet.'(4) Lactantius will also point to the inherent limitations of human wisdom, such that it can discover what is false but not what is true,(5) or that it is incomplete and therefore in absolute dependence on God's revelation (6):' ergo nulla est humana sapientia, si per se ad notionem ueri scientiamque nitatur, quoniam mens hominis cum fragili corpore inligata et in tenebroso domicilio inclusa neque liberius euagari neque clarius perspicere ueritatem potest, cuius notitia diuinae condicionis est. deo enim soli opera sua nota sunt. homo autem non cogitando aut disputando adsequi eam potest, sed discendo et audiendo ab eo qui scire solus potest et docere.'(7)

(1) sq. (ut ratio divina notesceret) - (Notionem veritatis) - (lumen sapientiae)

(2) cp. Dl. 1.1.5.

(3) This "via consequendae inmortalitatis" is ethical practice, at once the "cultum verae maiestatis" (1.1.8) and the act of "pie atque innocenter...vivere.". (1.1.9)

(4) Dl. 1.1.6.

(5) eg. Dl. 2.3.23, 1.23.8.

(6) cp. Dl. 7.2. 5-9, 6.6.28.

(7) Dl. 7.2. 8-9.

He will conclude that only heavenly doctrine can be called true wisdom: 'quod ergo illi poscente natura faciendum esse senserunt, sed tamen neque ipsi facere potuerunt neque a philosophis fieri posse uiderunt, sola haec efficit doctrina caelestis, quia sola sapientia est'.(1) Yet one notices that the context of his argument defining true wisdom, is wholly concerned with the ethical effects of the praecepta dei.(2) And it appears that whenever he moves towards a positive definition of sapientia it appears inextricably connected with virtus or justitia.

(Sapientia as Moral life):

At 3.8.31 he defines sapientia as a conjunction of virtue and knowledge:' nam scientia parum est ad bonum suscipiendum malumque fugiendum, nisi accedat et uirtus. . multi enim philosophorum cum de bonis malisque dissererent aliter tamen quam loquebantur natura cogente uixerunt, quia uirtute caruerunt. uirtus autem cum scientia coniuncta sapientia est.'(3) He defines it again in the same book as man's ability to comprehend divine things: 'et quia in homine ratio ipsa perfecta est, sapientia nominatur, quae in hoc eximium facit hominem, quod soli datum est intellegere diuina.'(4)

(1) Dl. 3.26.1.

(2) cp. Dl. 3.26.2-3, 8-10, 13.

(3) Dl. 3.8.31

(4) Dl. 3.10.6.

But this "intellectum" is reducible to the ethical life, as he twice insists when the argument of 3.10 reappears in his later Books. Wisdom is then defined as understanding how to do good and avoid evil: 'calliditas autem et astutia in mutis quoque animalibus sunt, uel cum insidiantur aliis et dolo capiunt, ut deuorent, uel cum insidias aliorum uario genere deludunt, sapientia vero in hominem solum cadit. Sapientia est enim intellegentia vel ad bonum rectumque faciendum vel ad abstinentiam dictorum factorumque inproborum.'(1)

(Sapientia as Moral Cult):

Lactantius continues the same ethical theme when he identifies wisdom and true worship.(2) Religion and worship are in essential harmony, he says, since to be wise is to worship or honour God in an ethically just life: ' illa enim religio muta est, non tantum quia mutorum est, sed quia ritus eius in manu et in digitis est, non in corde aut in lingua, sicut nostra, quae uera est. id-circo et in sapientia religio et in religione sapientia est. ergo non potest segregari, quia sapere nihil aliut est nisi deum uerum iustis ac piis cultibus honorare.'(3) Here he describes such a religion as being ethical in that it arises "from the heart". And he is to lay great stress on this idea that worship is a "service of the mind", and synonymous with moral behaviour.(4)

(1) Dl. 5.17. 33-34. See also (Dl. 7.4.13) Here, the previous verse shows clearly that the "cognita bonorum malorumque" which Lactantius envisages is a specifically ethical concern.

(2) cp. Dl. 2.5.3., 2.8.71 - worship as: plena perfectaque prudentia.

(3) Dl. 4.3. 9-10.

(4) eg. Dl. 6.9. 2: 'ut artificem solis et caeli deum pura et integra mente coleremus.' or 3.9. 14-15: 'servire autem deo nihil aliut est quam bonis operibus tueri et conservare iustitiam.'

Because the worship of the pagan gods does not morally elevate man (quid proficiat ad mores excolendos vitamque formandam) it cannot be called wisdom. It is evident to Lactantius that it fails in that it is a "service of the body", unlike true worship, which is the "office of the mind": ' Deorum cultus, ut in primo libro docui, non habet sapientiam, non modo quia diuinum animal, hominem, terrenis fragilibusque substernit, sed quia nihil ibi disseritur quod proficiat ad mores excolendos uitamque formandam: nec habet inquisitionem aliquam ueritatis, sed tantummodo ritum colendi, qui non officio mentis, sed ministerio corporis constat.'(1) When Lactantius equates wisdom with the Chief Good at D.I. 3.9 [Venio nunc ad uerae sapientiae summum bonum](2), he goes on to define this sapientia as a question of giving praise and thanks to God the Creator: ' caeli ac solis uidendi causa natus es: quis te in hoc spectaculum induxit aut quid caelo rerumque naturae uisio tua confert? nimirum ut hoc inmensum et admirabile opus laudes. confitere igitur esse rerum omnium constitutorem deum, qui te in hunc mundum quasi testem laudatoremque tanti sui operis induxit. magnum esse credis uidere caelum atque solem: cur ergo non gratias agis ei qui huius beneficii auctor est?'(3)

(1) Dl. 4.3.1.

(2) Dl. 3.9.1. Here the last sentence repeats his definition of sapientia at 3.8.32 (virtus autem cum scientia coniuncta sapientia est)

(3) Dl. 3.9. 9-11.

And he concludes that the "truly wise man" will readily confess both that man was born for the sake of worship, and that this worship amounts to the "preservation of justice" by good works: 'quare si quis hominem qui uere sapiat interroget, cuius rei causa natus sit, respondebit intrepidus ac paratus colendi se dei gratia natum, qui nos ideo generauit, ut ei seruiamus. seruire autem deo nihil aliut est quam bonis operibus tueri et conseruare iustitiam.'(1) For Lactantius, Worship may therefore be equated with wisdom. As worship "sums up" all his theology, so it represents the sapientiae gradus primus, those two aspects on which Lactantius constantly insists; the acknowledgement of God by man's mind, and the service of God in the ethical life(2) which this acknowledgement automatically instigates: 'ergo in dei agnitione et cultu rerum summa uersatur: in hoc est spes omnis ac salus hominis, hic est sapientiae gradus primus, ut sciamus qui sit nobis uerus pater eumque solum pietate debita prosequamur, huic pareamus, huic deuotissime seruiamus, in eo promerendo actus omnis et cura et opera collocetur.'(3)

(1) Dl. 3.9.14.

(2) verse 24b following: 'ut sciamus qui sit nobis verus pater and : huic devotissime serviamus.'

(3) Dl. 6.9.24.

(d) Iustitia: worship as a just and virtuous life

The conceptions of worship as (a) acknowledgement of God, and (b) ethical fidelity, are so closely bound in Lactantius that he can equate the first with the second. So it is that the wisdom words (agnitio, cognitio, sapientia) used in his doctrine of cult are each given a moral significance. Lactantius, however, develops the ethical side of the doctrine of cult much beyond the scope of these wisdom terms. His overall view of worship is that it consists in an innocent life, with man's heart as the altar of sacrifice.(1) So it is that we can define cult, simply as virtue and justice on his terms: 'itaque ut breuius et significantius utriusque rei summa officia determinem, scientia est deum nosse, uirtus colere: in illo sapientia, in hoc iustitia continetur.'(2)

A large part of Lactantius' exposition of worship as a moral factor, occurs in the two opening books of the D.I., where he is concerned with a critique of pagan cult. One can deduce his Christian doctrine of cult by the antithesis of his apologetic argument. His constant complaint is that the cult of the pagans is false because it celebrates many gods, because it is a totally physical affair, external and material, and because it celebrates man's moral corruption and binds him further in that corruption.

(1) cp. Dl. 6.24. 26-29.

(2) Dl. 6.5.19.

These three factors are clearly the reverse of the three positive conceptions of worship that have so far emerged:

(a) that true cult celebrates the One God as Father, or parent of man,

(b) that it is a 'service of the mind', interior and spiritual,

(c) that is is a morally formative power for man, effecting his growth in justice and thereby assuring his spiritual immortality.

In his negative exposition, the false cult of many gods leads man to enshrine his own worst qualities. It is external to him, and the crude materialism of its rites symbolises the inner greed of the worshippers: 'horum pulchritudo ac nitor praestringit oculos nec ullam religionem putant ubicumque illa non fulserint. itaque sub obtentu deorum auaritia et cupiditas colitur. credunt enim deos amare quid quid ipsi concupiscunt, quidquid est propter quod furta et homicidia et latrocinia cottidie saeuiunt, propter quod bella per totum orbem populos urbesque subuertunt.'(1) False cult is so far from being a 'service of the mind' that it represents the highest form of blind irrationality, for man worships demons who are in reality his most dangerous enemies: ' Isti autem quia nesciunt uel quid uel quomodo sit colendum, caeci et inprudentes in contrarium cadunt. adorant itaque hostes suos, latrones et interfectores suos uictimis placant et animas suas cum ture ipso cremandas aris detestabilibus inponunt.'(2)

(1) Dl. 2.6.3.

(2) Dl. 5.20.1.

Rather than being a morally formative power in man's life, false cult deforms the human soul to the point of bestiality: `unde mihi de tanta maiestate saepius cogitanti qui deos colunt interdum uideri solent tam caeci, tam incogitabiles, tam excordes, tam non multum a mutis animalibus differentes.'(1) His doctrine of true worship, then, insists that unlike the pagan rites(2) it is a subjective, personal reality(3) that forms man in justice (4): `isti autem cum ad sacrificandum ueniunt, nihil intimum, nihil proprium diis suis offerunt, non integritatem mentis, non reuerentiam, non timorem. peractis itaque sacrificiis inanibus omnem religionem in templo et cum templo sicut inuenerant relincunt nihilque secum ex ea neque adferunt neque referunt. inde est quod eiusmodi religiones neque bonos facere possunt neque firmae atque inmutabiles esse. traducuntur itaque ab his homines facile, quia nihil ibi ad uitam, nihil ad sapientiam, nihil ad fidem discitur. quae est enim superstitio illorum deorum? quae uis? quae disciplina? quae origo? quae ratio? quod fundamentum? quae substantia? quo tendit aut quid pollicetur, ut ab homine possit fideliter seruari fortiterque defendi? in qua nihil aliut uideo quam ritum ad solos digitos pertinentem. nostra uero religio eo firma est et solida et inmutabilis, quia iustitiam docet, quia nobiscum semper est, quia tota in animo colentis est, quia mentem ipsam pro sacrificio habet. illic nihil exigitur aliut quam sanguis pecudum et fumus et inepta libatio, hic bona mens, purum pectus, innocens uita.'(5)

(1) Dl. 1.8.3.

(2) which have "nihil intimum", no "integritas mentis", and so "neque bonos facere possunt". (cited below)

(3) "tota in animo colentis est." (verse 30f). True cult is characterised by its subjectivity (Dl. 4. 3.9).

(4) "nostra religio...iustitiam docet." (verse 30. cited below)

(5) Dl. 5.19. 27-30.

This conception of worship as a formative power, operating in the interior life of man, represents the closest that Lactantius comes to a doctrine of grace. Just as false cult was a destructive power for man in the way it bound him in an obsession with earthly concerns, so true cult[1] is presented as a divine energy enabling man to be "spontaneously" good,and which leads him safely to the harbour of wisdom and virtue: ' itaque si oculos in caelum semper intendas et solem qua oritur observes eumque habeas uitae quasi navigii ducem, sua sponte in viam pedes dirigentur et illut caeleste lumen, quod sanis mentibus multo clarior sol est quam hic quem carne mortali videmus, sic reget, sic gubernabit, ut ad summum sapientiae virtutisque portum sine ullo errore perducat.'[2] Such a divine power inherent in worship is again visualised when Lactantius speaks of the supernatural constancy of the Christian confessors, who are "fearless" in the face of apalling sufferings.[3] This grace of witness is attributed to their worship: ' qui autem deum colit, haec patitur nec timet: ergo iustus est.his rebus efficitur ut neque uirtutes neque uirtutum exactissimos limites nosse aut tenere possit omnino quisquis est a religione dei singularis alienus.'[4]

(1) signified here by the status rectus theme (si oculos in caelum semper intendas).

(2) Dl. 6.8.5.

(3) cp. Dl. 6.17. 24-29.

(4) Dl. 6.17.29.

Worship, then, is that formative power which directs man in the path of truth. It makes him just by elevating him from material obsession,(1) and this justice makes him like God and therefore fulfils his humanity, just as the false cults destroyed the humanity of their devotees. The concept of worship as this kind of power that fulfills the being of man, is a restatement of his identification of the agnitio dei as the realisation of the meaning of man.(2) It is found in its negative form at 5.10.18. Here the demonic gods are given their destructive power over human life by means of false worship. The argument, however, is presented in general terms that allow us to infer its antithesis: that God directly confers divine power on the life of man through his cult, and that power makes man like God by Justice.(3) This is so because worship is a mimesis of the one we worship: 'sic fit ut uitam colentium deus pro qualitate numinis sui formet, quoniam religiosissimus est cultus imitari.'(4) Worship is a power that raises man to be like God, and it spiritually refines man by teaching him Justice; that is, the earthly side of man's nature is laid in subjection to his spiritual side. So while all false rites subject the spirit of man to inferior realities,(5) the true cult teaches man to worship transcendent reality: ' Quicumque igitur sacramentum hominis tueri

(1) such as that found in false cult. True cult has no relation to corrupt external realities such as these but bears an inner, heavenly character. Dl. 6.2.13.

(2) cp. Dl. 3.8.21.

(3) cp. Dl. 1.9.4, 1.11.51, Justice is described as "a divine characteristic". The path of justice makes men ascend until they attain "the likeness of God", Dl. 6.13. 6-7.

(4) Dl. 5.10.18.

(5) Dl. 2.2. 17-24.

rationemque naturae suae nititur obtinere, ipse se ab humo suscitet et erecta mente oculos suos tendat in caelum. non sub pedibus deum quaerat nec a uestigiis suis eruat quod adoret, quia quidquid homini subiacet, infra hominem sit necesse est: sed quaerat in sublimi, quærat in summo, quia nihil potest esse homine maius nisi quod fuerit supra hominem.'(1) Worship is that divine power which effects justice. It would return the world to its Golden Age of Justice, if men would only venerate the true God: 'estote aequi ac boni, et sequetur uos sua sponte iustitia quam quaeritis. deponite omnem malam cogitationem de cordibus uestris, et statim nobis tempus illut aureum reuertetur: quod aliter consequi non potestis, quam si deum uerum colere coeperitis. uos autem manente cultu deorum iustitiam desideratis in terra, quod fieri nullo pacto potest.'(2) In delineating this intimate relationship between worship and justice understood as moral behaviour,(3) Lactantius is clearly following the scriptural tradition which interpreted, justitia as righteousness,(4) but he is evidently aware of the classical tradition which recalled a Golden Age of social harmony before the goddess Justitia left the earth. Lactantius attempts to synthesise both conceptions in his doctrine of worship, extending the scope and significance of the pagan conception with an exposition of the Christian ethical system.(5)

(1) Dl. 2.18.1.
(2) Dl. 5.8.3-4.
(3) virtus = iustitia (6.9.18 , Epit 29.6)'Summa virtus est cultum dei tenere'(7.1.3)
(4) sedaqah - Dikaiosune - iustitia
(5) The whole concern of Bk.6 is to demonstrate the failure of pagan philosophy to achieve a satisfactory conception of Justice, (6.6. 24-25), and the intrinsic superiority (6.11.13) of Christian Justice whose root is the worship of God, (6.7.9).

And so, the "doer of justice" is first and foremost the "worshipper of God", Lactantius uses the two descriptions interchangeably: ' monet enim deus operatorem iustitiae non oportere esse iactantem....cetera quae obseruare cultor dei debet facilia sunt illis uirtutibus conprehensis.'(1) Worship's sacrifice is an opus iustum: ' in quo autem magis iustitiae ratio consistit quam in eo, ut quod praestamus nostris per adfectum, praestemus alienis per humanitatem? quae est multo certior iustiorque, cum iam non homini praestatur, qui nihil sentit, sed deo soli, cui carissimum sacrificium est opus iustum.'(2) Worship is the consummation and perfection of justice: ' quodsi deo, patri ac domino, hac adsiduitate, hoc obsequio hac deuotione seruierit, consummata et perfecta iustitia est: quam qui tenuerit, hic, ut ante testati sumus, deo paruit, hic religioni atque officio suo satisfecit.'(3) And it contains within itself the whole scope of a just life, (ex deo vivere): 'quae ratio docet mortalem nasci hominem, postea uero inmortalem fieri, cum coeperit ex deo uiuere id est iustitiam sequi, quae continetur in dei cultu, cum excitauerit hominem deus ad aspectum caeli ac sui.'(4)

(1) Dl. 6.18. 3-4 passim

(2) Dl. 6.12. 31.

(3) Dl. 6.25.16.

(4) Dl. 7.5.22.

This is why he makes the re-establishment of true worship the only key for the return of the Golden Age.(1)

Worship is presented in this context as the immediately effective power, which establishes social harmony. The bond of social community was first broken when the worship of God was compromised, for with the dissappearance of religion went man's ethical sense: 'sublata enim dei religione boni quoque ac mali scientiam perdiderunt. sic hominibus intercidit communitas uitae et diremptum est foedus societatis humanae.'(2) So it is fitting that Christ's priestly restoration of that worship will be the force that begins the re-establishment of those bonds among men: 'sed deus ut parens indulgentissimus adpropinquante ultimo tempore nuntium misit, qui uetus illut saeculum fugatamque iustitiam reduceret, ne humanum genus maximis et perpetuis agitaretur erroribus. rediit ergo species illius aurei temporis et reddita quidem terrae, sed paucis adsignata iustitia est, quae nihil aliut est quam dei unici pia et religiosa cultura.'(3)

(1) Here Lactantius is not only alluding to the classical idea of the Golden Age, but directly alluding to Constantine himself, who was hailed as the "Father of the Gdden Age" (cp. W. Durant. Caesar and Christ. NY 1944. p. 645.). Lactantius explains the success of his "just rule" as a direct consequence of acknowledgement and veneration of the majesty of God (maiestatem dei singularis ac veri et cognovisti et honorasti.Dl. 1.1. 13-16) In the second dedication (7.26.11f) Constantine's restoration of the "house of Justice" is wholly explained on the grounds of his defence of Christian worship.

(2) Dl. 5.5.13.

(3) Dl. 5.7. 1-2, cp. 5.8. 3-4, and 5.8.6-11. (quodsi solus deus coleretur non essent dissensiones) The Golden Age is not fully restored (Dl. 5.7.3f) because the worshipping society has not yet been vindicated in the face of evil. This will only happen at the parousia (Bk.7) when the praemium inmortalitatis is conferred on true worshippers.

Indeed, the whole economy of Christ's incarnation is depicted in terms of "teaching justice" .(1) This paideia of justice is basically his restoration of the true worship of God. This is the priestly function of Christ, and it is in this priestly, cultic role that he re-introduces the Golden Age of justice, for justice is nothing else than the worship of the One God. : 'sed illum filium suum primogenitum, illum opificem rerum et consiliatorem suum, delabi iussit e caelo, ut religionem sanctam dei transferret ad gentes, id est ad eos qui deum ignorabant, doceretque iustitiam, quam perfidus populus abiecerat.'(2) The treatment of justice in the Institutes, then, is an extension of his doctrine of worship. The definition of the term subordinates it quite clearly to the concept of cult: 'pietas uero et aequitas quasi uenae sunt eius, his enim duobus fontibus constat tota iustitia: sed caput eius et origo in illo primo est, in secundo uis omnis ac ratio. pietas autem nihil aliut est quam dei notio, sicut Trismegistus uerissime definiuit, ut alio loco diximus. si ergo pietas est cognoscere deum, cuius cognitionis haec summa est ut colas, ignorat utique iustitiam qui religionem dei non tenet;'(3) and by subsuming it in this way, Lactantius not only reaffirms his basic theme that worship amounts to ethical behaviour but he can also create a new apologetic argument. So he synthesises the classical and scriptural approaches to justitia, explaining the classical idea of social harmony in terms of the scriptural concept of righteousness, and arguing that both flow directly from the power that the worship of the true God has in effecting a change in the heart of man.

(1) DI. 4.11.7.

(2) DI. 5.7. 1-2. True cult re-establishes the social bond in so far as man only values his brother as a divine image within the context of true worship. (cp. DI. 6.13.13, 6.12.31, 6.18.3.)

(3) DI. 5.14. 11-12.

The doctrine of worship is structured, then, as a purely apologetic argument establishing true worship as an inner, moral grace, as opposed to false worship which is external to man and brutalises him.

Lactantius is not concerned with delineating the precise nature of Christian worship, as he wishes to make as radical a distinction as he can between Christian cult and pagan "rites". Paul Monceaux(1) remarks on the little attention Lactantius gives to the details of Christian cult: " Sur le culte proprement dit, Lactance n'est pas plus explicite. Il fait allusion au baptême, à la pénitence, au signe de croix, peut-être à la Pâques. Mais il ne parle ni de l'Eucharistie, ni des autres sacrements, ni de toutes les pratiques. Il semble même proscrire tout culte extérieur. Il reproche aux païens de consacrer à la divinité des temples et des autels. Il laisse entendre que les chrétiens n'avaient point de cérémonies; il ne mentionne ni évêque ni prêtres, et paraît rejeter tout intermédiaire entre l'homme et Dieu. Il n'admet d'autre manifestation de la piété, avec le signe de la croix, que les actions de grâces et les hymnes: "Il y a deux choses, dit-il, dont on doit faire hommage à Dieu, l'offrande et le sacrifice ..." But the conclusion of his analysis tends to misinterpret Lactantius by losing sight of the apologetic aim of the latter's argument: C'était vraiment se moquer de son lecteur ou se payer de mots. Depuis plusieurs générations, les communautés chrétiennes avaient un culte organisé, des réunions liturgiques et régulières, des sacrements, des fêtes, une hiérarchie complexe; au temps de Dioclétien, beaucoup d'entre elles possédaient de véritables temples, avec des autels où l'on célébrait la messe, et Lactance lui-même raconte la déstruction de l'église de Nicomédie en 303 . Présenter alors le christianisme comme une religion tout intérieure, c'était le dénaturer.(2)

(1) P. Monceaux. Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique Chrétienne.3.p.332

(2) Ibid. p.332.

In the first place, Lactantius wishes to put as much ground as he can between the cultic ideas which the pagans might have before their conversion, and what they must understand as worship after their conversion. Lactantius knows that many of the pagan rites of worship may appear to have immediate parallels in the Christian Church,(1) so his whole concern is to set out the new principles of this cult, and emphasise its total distinctness from the demonic cult, rather than describing anything that might suggest a compatibility of the new worship and the old. This is why all the cultic details he chooses to mention(2) are put in a context which most clearly differentiates them from all pagan rites. This can be seen quite evidently in his description of the Sign of the Cross, for example, and how it had the power to ruin the Emperor's auspices by putting the demon-gods to flight.(3) Lactantius' whole concern is to offer the principles of worship, the details do not concern him at this stage of pre-evangelisation. He states as much:

'nimirum religio ueri cultus est, superstitio falsi, et omnino quid colas interest, non quem-admodum colas aut quid precere.'(4)

(1) The earlier apologists explain this on a demonic basis - the demons"copy"Christian rites in order to discredit them. cp Justin. 1 Apol 62.

(2) Baptism: Dl. 3.26. 9-11, 4.15.2, 5.19.34, 7.5.22. Penance: 4.30.13, 5.13.6, 6.13.1-3, 6.24.1f. Sign of Cross: 4.26.39f, 4.27.1f. Easter Vigil: 4.26.40, 7.19.3f.

(3) cp. Dl. 4.27.4.

(4) Dl. 4.28.11.

The closest he ever comes to offering a specific description of Christian worship is the conception he takes from Hebrews,(1) of worship as 'Gift and Sacrifice'; but even this rite is completely spiritual since God must be worshipped only in a spiritual manner: 'quid ergo castum, quid deo dignum nisi quod ipse in illa diuina lege sua poposcit? duo sunt quae offerri debeant, donum et sacrificium, donum in perpetuum, sacrificium ad tempus. uerum apud istos, qui nullo modo rationem diuinitatis intellegunt, donum est quidquid auro argentoque fabricatur, item quidquid purpura et serico texitur, sacrificiumque uictima et quaecumque in ara cremantur. sed utroque non utitur deus, quia et ipse incorruptus est et illud totum corruptibile. itaque deo utrumque incorporale offerendum est, quo utitur. donum est integritas animi, sacrificium laus et hymnus; si enim deus non uidetur, ergo his rebus coli debet quae non uidentur. nulla igitur alia religio uera est nisi quae uirtute et iustitia constat.'(2) He is so concerned that his doctrine of worship will never degenerate into the ritualism of the pagans, that he concludes the passage with the memorable observation that the essence of religious rite is the praise of God in the life of a just man: 'uerbo enim sacrificari oportet deo, siquidem deus uerbum est, ut ipse confessus est. summus igitur colendi dei ritus est ex ore iusti hominis ad deum directa laudatio.'(3)

(1) eg. Heb. 8.3.

(2) Dl. 6.25. 5-7.

(3) Dl. 6.25.12.

This, of course, is his conception of prayer, even though the term precatio is consistently used disparagingly in the D.I. and only refers to the pagan litanies.(1) The citation also reaffirms our need to appreciate Lactantius' apologetic reasons for withholding the details of Christian celebration from those who are not yet initiates,(2) for it is quite clearly meant as an allusion only his Christian readers will recognise. It should remind them of their practice of reciting the Psalms with hands extended, for it is nothing else than a paraphrastic quotation of Ps.63(3):

> ὅτι κρεῖσσον τὸ ἐλεός σου ὑπερ ζωάς· τὰ χείλη μου ἐπαινέσουσί σε.οὕτως εὐλογήσω σε ἐν τῇ ζωῇ μου, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἀρῶ τὰς χεῖράς μου.

(e) Inmortalitas: worship and the immortalisation of man.

In this doctrine of cult so far, the clear lines of a systematic process can be discerned. Lactantius posits worship as the sum of man's meaning. This sum of man can be interpreted as the agnitio dei, and this in turn can only be expressed by moral behaviour. Both Lactantius' wisdom terms (agnitio dei, cognitio dei, and sapientia) and his moral terms (virtus; iustitia), have been subsumed as aspects of his conception of the true cult of God.

(1) Dl. 1.1.10, 1.11.5, 1.11.41, 1.20.20, 4.3.11.

(2) Dl. 7.26. 8-9.

(3) Ps. 63. 4-5. (LXX) just as the next line in his text, on the "humble sacrifice" appears to be an allusion to Ps. 51.17- 19.

Nonetheless, the systematic process of this worship theology is not exhausted here, for Lactantius knows that the psychology of man demands a motivation for all his behaviour. So it is the concept of the reward of moral behaviour (immortality) that supplies a motive and a reason for man to engage in the worship of God.(1) The whole system leading up to worship, and through it to its reward, is set out in the preface to his final book: 'nam quid prodest aut falsis religionibus liberari aut intellegere ueram? quid aut uanitatem falsae sapientiae peruidere aut quae sit uera cognoscere? quid, inquam, prodest caelestem illam iustitiam defendere? quid cum magnis difficultatibus cultum dei tenere, quae est summa uirtus, nisi eam diuinum praemium beatitudinis perpetuae subsequatur?'(2) For Lactantius, worship is not only the force that makes man moral, it is the supreme factor that makes man immortal. In so far as it forms man in justice, it immortalises him: ' quae ratio docet mortalem nasci hominem, postea uero inmortalem fieri, cum coeperit ex deo uiuere id est iustitiam sequi, quae continetur in dei cultu, cum excitauerit hominem deus ad aspectum caeli ac sui.'(3) Lactantius posits immortality as the reward(4) of justice, and justice as the preparation of man for immortality: 'et nunc docebimus, ut appareat solam esse iustitiam quae uitam homini pariat aeternam, et solum deum qui aeternae uitae praemium largiatur.'(5)

(1) cp. Dl. 7.5.27

(2) Dl. 7.1.3.

(3) Dl. 7.5.22.

(4) cp. Dl. 7.10.6, 3.8.32, 3.11.9f, ie. virtue is not of itself the 'chief good' for this is that 'reward of virtue' - immortality.

(5) Dl. 7.14.2.

His whole teaching on the nature of virtue has been concerned to demonstrate that it is a preparation for the immortalisation of man,(1) and cannot be practised by those who do not understand this mystery of immortal life with God.(2) Lactantius' anthropology, as the later section will further illustrate,(3) divides man's life into realms of influence, either heavenly or earthly. The soul (spiritus, anima) is the symbol of his heavenly polarity. The body, (corpus, terra) is the symbol of his earthly origin. His thought on the nature of man is not set out in crudely Platonic terms, however. For the soul and body in man are not seen as fixed entities in Lactantius' system (one intrinsically good, the other bad), but as parts of the same moral process. They are not ontological categories but ethical ones.

Man's nature is a mixed phenomenon.(4) His personality stands poised between two possible destinies, either union with God in the spirit, or separation from God through material obsession.(5) Man achieves union with God by developing the spiritual aspect of his being, exercising virtue and subjecting his physical desires and behaviour to the dominion of his spiritual desires. When man's soul has dominion over his body he is just, and spiritualised, and fit to receive the logical reward of such a spiritual life, which is immortal union with God. On the other hand, if man allows his physical impulses to dominate his soul, then he inevitably becomes unjust. He is obsessed with physical realities and receives the logical reward of his self limitation in physical dissolution.(6)

(1) Dl. 3.12. 7-8

(2) Dl. 5.17. 15-17.

(3) ch. 5. (i)-(ii)

(4) ch. 5 (i)

(5) His analogy of man's life as a passing over a bridge Dl.3.6.3-4

(6) The soul searches for eternal life, the body for temporal Dl.2.12.7. 3.12.6.

So Lactantius insists frequently in Book 7 on the immortality of the soul[1] and draws most of his arguments from the status rectus[2] image or other analogies that describe the process of man's life; either upward to God by spiritualisation through virtue, sealed by the gift of immortality, or downwards into earthly obsessions and physical death.[3] Therefore it is altogether man's free ethical choice to direct his nature heavenward, by justice, this is the essence of his immortalisation. This gift of immortal life is a divine reward for man's striving:' nam quia homo ex duabus rebus constat, corpore atque anima, quorum alterum terrenum est, alterum caeleste, duae vitae homini adtributae sunt una temporalis, quae corpori adsignatur, altera sempiterna, quae animae subiacet. illam nascendo accipimus, hanc adsequimur laborando, ne immortalitas homini, ut ante diximus, sine ulla difficultate constaret; illa terrena est sicut corpus et ideo finitur, haec vero caelestis sicut anima et ideo terminum non habet; illam primam nescientes accipimus, hanc secundam scientes: virtuti enim, non naturae datur, quia voluit nos deus vitam nobis in vita conparare.'[4]

(1) cp. Dl. 7.6. - 7.14. Lactantius' doctrine of the soul is also creationist not traducianist cp. OD. 19.1f, Dl. 2.12.3.

(2) The status rectus theme is always associated with Man's necessary life-choice between two possible destinies cp. Dl. 3.10. 10-14.

(3) God allows the whole "ratio" of the conflict of Good and Evil only because it serves to prepare man for immortality (Dl.6.6.4, 7.5. 23-26). Devotion to virtue leads man to the "firm, constant, and lasting" good of the soul, whereas devotion to the body is futile since it is "liable to decay" (5.21. 9-11). The spiritualisation of man is seen as a return to his divine origin (3.12.25f).

(4) Dl. 7.5. 16-17.

It has already been noticed how this process of man's spiritualisation has been described by Lactantius as both justice and worship, and that virtue is not a sufficient end in itself for man, but a progression towards happiness: ' non est igitur ut aiunt propter se ipsam uirtus expetenda, sed propter vitam beatam, quae uirtutem necessario sequitur.'(1) So it is by only a slight extension of the argument that Lactantius can present this progressive spiritualisation of man, and his movement away from his earthly limitations, as an immortalisation that leads directly to the divine gift of spiritual life: 'si ergo virtus per se ipsam beata non est, quoniam in perferendis ut dixi malis tota uis eius est, si omnia quae pro bonis concupiscuntur neclegit, si summus eius gradus ad mortem patet, quandoquidem uitam quae optatur a ceteris saepe respuit mortemque quam ceteri timent fortiter suscipit, si necesse est ut aliquid ex se magni boni pariat, quia suscepti et superati usque ad mortem labores sine praemio esse non possunt, si nullum praemium quod ea dignum sit reperitur in terra, quandoquidem cuncta quae fragilia et caduca sunt spernit, quid aliud restat nisi ut caeleste aliquid efficiat, quia terrena uniuersa contemnit, et ad altiora nitatur, quia humilia despicit? id uero nihil potest esse aliut quam inmortalitas.'(2)

(1) Dl. 3.12.13 (Vita Beata = Immortality) cp. Dl. 3.12.16 also P.J. Couvée Vita Beata en vita aeterna. Diss. Utrecht 1947

(2) Dl. 3.12. 7-8.

The epilogue of the D.I. expresses the point most succinctly: ' quisquis enim corruptelas terrae uirtute calcauerit, hunc arbiter ille summus et uerax ad uitam lucemque perpetuam suscitabit. nemo diuitiis, nemo fascibus, nemo etiam regia potestate confidat: inmortalem ista non faciunt'.(1) This immortalisation of man(2) which culminates in the divine gift of an eternal life with God is, therefore, the whole end and meaning of the ratio hominis.

Lactantius has consistently presented the concept of worship as a "summation of things",(3) and so, in so far as immortalisation is the final result of this spiritualising effect worship has on man, immortality is logically presented as the final summa. It is the summum bonum(4) of man's life, and thus stands at the centre of his anthropology: ' Unum est igitur summum bonum inmortalitas, ad quam capiendam et formati a principio et nati sumus. ad hanc tendimus, hanc spectat humana natura, ad hanc nos prouehit uirtus.'(5) The doctrine is a deliberate echo of scriptural themes. It is that "inheritance of the heavenly kingdom"(6) which can only be won by the "true worshippers of God", not the philosophers or the mythologists:(7) ' ita neque philosophi inmortalitatem accipient, quae est regni caelestis hereditas, id est summum bonum...'(8)

(1) Dl. 7.27.14.
(2) cp. Dl. 3.19.10: the "vita in dei religione transacta" is called a "translatio ad immortalitatem".
(3) Dl. 6.1.2, 6.9.24.
(4) Dl. 3.12.8f, 3.13.1.
(5) Dl. 7.8.1.
(6) cp. Heb. 6.12.
(7) cp. 1. Cor. 6.9.
(8) Dl. 4.4.5a.

Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

ANTHROPOLOGY

(i) Homo: The Composite nature of Man.

The etymologies of 'Man' which Lactantius presents, two from the Greek and one from the Latin, illustrate the two poles between which his anthropology is to move; man's physical creaturehood which is earthly and limited, and his spiritual nature with a capacity for eternity. The second and third of the etymologies describe these two distinct aspects of the human nature, but the first suggests the manner in which they are to be synthesised:

Hinc utique ἄνθρωπον Graeci apellaverunt, quod sursum spectet.(1)

By thus defining man from his 'looking up', an aspect of the status rectus theme which develops the idea as both a cultic as well as a moral symbol(2), Lactantius suggests that it is an essential part of human nature to move between the two poles of our being, to pass, that is, from earthly limitation to heavenly fulfilment by "looking upwards" or directing one's life to God.

(1) Dl.2.1.16. the etymologies are rhetorical commonplaces. This interpretation of ἄνθρώπος , makes it derive from ἄνω τρέπω ὤψ (viz: I raise up my face.) Lactantius uses etymological definitions more than once in order to advance his argument as; for example, in the controversy over the 'chief good' where he rejects Cicero's interpretation of Religion as a 'gathering' (a religendo) at Dl.4.28.3. (cf. Cic. Nat.Deor. 2.28.71) and prefers Lucretius' concept of 'binding', even though he applies it in a wholly different sense to that intended by the poet, (Dl.4.28.13.Lucr. 1.931)

(2) cf. Thesis. ch.5.(ii) following

He follows the first etymology with the popular Latin conception of Homo being derived from humus, and so demonstrates the immanent, earthly aspect of man's creaturehood, the fact that God fashioned him from clay: tum fecit sibi ipse simulacrum sensibile atque intellegens id est ad imaginis suae formam, qua nihil potest esse perfectius: hominem figurauit ex limo terrae; unde homo nuncupatus est, quod sit fictus ex humo.(1) Even while asserting Man's earthly and limited creaturehood Lactantius takes care to insist on the directness of the divine creation, depicting it as a personal figuratio. This is because the overall end of his anthropology is to make it utterly dependent on the notion of God. In this Lactantius is following well-worn paths. Cicero provides him with the basis for this philosophic definition,especially as it turned on the divine creation: 'Animal hoc providum, sagax, multiplex, acutum, memor, plenum rationis et consilii, quem vocamus hominem, praeclara quadam conditione generatum esse a summo deo.'(2)

(1) Dl. 2.10.3. Lactantius clearly alludes to the Genesis account of creation from the dust of earth (Gen.1.26f) but passes over a scriptural demonstration in favour of a classical etymological one.

(2) Cic. Leg. 1.7.22.

Lactantius' third etymology, which occurs in the sixth Book(1), is taken from the Greek and presents an alternative derivation. This is more theologically developed for while the poets are said to characterise Man's nature by his possession of the light of the mind, or reason, Lactantius goes on to restrict his definition of what constitutes this "light of Man's mind", and presents it as something more than reason - the Agnitio dei: `aliut uero ille a nobis exigit lumen et quidem non fumidum, sed, ut ait poeta, liquidum atque clarum, mentis scilicet, propter quod a poetis photes nuncupamur: quod exhibere non potest nisi qui deum agnouerit.'(2) This divine orientation therefore, the consciousness of God expressed in worship(3), is for Lactantius the defining characteristic of man's nature. He has set out the two poles of his anthropological system in these etymologies: the dull clay of man's earthly origin on the one hand, and the relationship with God to which he is called on the other. As in the case of his thought on the nature of true worship, the rest of his anthropology is intimately concerned with the subsequent manner of man's life process, that is whether the individual will orientate his life toward a spiritual or a material end, since he has an intrinsic capacity for both physical death as well as spiritual immortality.

(1) based on the word-play of φῶς -light, and φῶς - man.

(2) Dl. 6.2.6.

(3) Cp Thesis ch 4. (iii)b.

Lactantius develops greatly on the theme of this polarity in man, the mixed nature part earth, part heaven. He envisages the two poles almost like forces pulling against each other and, as the doctrine of cult has already demonstrated, this ontological tension is the root of his conception of morality. He frequently uses the symbolism of elemental opposites to draw out the spiritual implications of the "mixed nature" of man: ' in ipsius autem hominis fictione illarum duarum materiarum quas inter se diximus esse contrarias, ignis et aquae, conclusit perfecitque rationem. ficto enim corpore, inspirauit ei animam de uitali fonte spiritus sui qui est perennis, ut ipsius mundi ex contrariisconstantis elementis similitudinem gereret. constat enim ex anima et corpore id est quasi ex caelo et terra, quando quidem anima qua uiuimus uelut e caelo oritur a deo, corpus e terra, cuius e limo diximus esse formatum.'(1). The spiritual side of man is therefore directly from God's own eternal spirit. It is this direct creation according to God's image (2) which is the basis of man's hope for immortal life, and which Lactantius is most concerned to posit as the root of man's relationship with God as a son to his father.(3) .

(1) Dl. 2. 12.2-3

(2) Dl. 2.10.3. 'tum fecit sibi ipse simulacrum.'

(3) The concept of God's paternal creation is a recurring notion of the Dl. cf (3.9.19) (7.5.5,27); as man's creator he is pre-eminently a father: Dl. 1.11.42: 'quanto id magis inconveniens est deo, qui verus pater est, per quem sumus et cuius toti sumus, a quo fingimur, animamur, inluminamur, qui nobis vitam inpertit...' cf. Thesis ch.4.(ii)b.

But the spiritual capacity for God set in an earthly and corruptible body means that the entire nature of man is designed as a moral process. It is not a simple but a composite reality and man must therefore strive to earn his immortality by subjugating the soul to the body. In this way, by elevating the spiritual faculty over the corporal, man simplifies his nature and, becoming more like God in his incorruptibility, is worthy of eternal life: ' ex rebus ergo diuersis ac repugnantibus homo factus est sicut ipse mundus ex luce ac tenebris, ex uita et morte: quae duo inter se pugnare in homine praecepit, ut si anima superauerit quae oritur ex deo, sit inmortalis et in perpetua luce uersetur, si autem corpus uicerit animam dicionique subiecerit, sit in tenebris sempiterni, et in morte.'(1) This hegemony of the soul(2) is quite clearly Lactantius' conception of the moral life conceived in terms of a progressive spiritualisation of man; like fire consuming all around it: ' quodsi anima ignis est ut ostendimus, in caelum debet eniti sicut ignis, ne exstinguatur, hoc est ad inmortalitatem, quae in caelo est: et sicut ardere ac uinere non potest ignis, nisi aliqua pingui materia teneatur in qua habeat alimentum, sic animae materia et cibus est sola iustitia, qua tenetur ad uitam.'(3)

(1) Dl. 2.12.7.

(2) which he has previously argued at Dl.2.10.12-14 using the testimony of "dissolute sallust" to support his argument: 'sed nostra omnis vis in animo et corpore sita est: animi imperio, corporis servitio magis utimur.' (Catil. 1.2).

(3) Dl. 2.12.14.

The twofold polarity of man's being is consistently developed from this point onwards as a moral theme. This device ultimately presents the doctrine of man as a moral process in which man is either brought back to his divine source, spiritualised and immortalised by ethical behaviour, or else degenerates through sensual depravity to the end of all corrupt creaturehood which is death(1).

The same polarity is represented in Lactantius' account of man's epistemology,(2) and his version of the "two ways of life" (3), both of which are given a profound moral connotation,(4) and often qualified by symbols of elemental dualism.

(1) This does not imply any ontological dualism in his doctrine of man, but follows the ethical model presented by Paul, of the spiritual man being opposed to the fleshly. (1 Cor. 2-14 and 3.1-3)

(2) Cp. Dl. 3.6. 2-4 esp v.4: 'ita quoniam ex his duobus constamus elementis, quorum alterum luce praeditum est, alterum tenebris, pars nobis data est scientiae, pars ignorantiae. per hunc quasi pontem transire sine cadendi periculo licet: nam illi omnes qui se in alteram partem inclinauerunt, aut dextro aut sinistro uersus ceciderunt.' see also, Dl. 7.4.12 - 'quoniam homo ex rebus diuersis ac repugnantibus configuratus est, anima et corpore, id est caelo atque terra, tenui et conprehensibili, aeterno ac temporali, sensibili atque bruto, luce praedito atque tenebroso, ipsa ratio ac necessitas exigebat et bona homini proponi et mala, bona, quibus utatur, mala, quae uitet et caueat.'

(3) originally a Pythagorean concept, but by Lactantius' day clearly a philosophical commonplace; cf. Dl. 6.3.1, 6f. (which renders Aeneid. 6.540) The appearance of this idea in the Dl, therefore, does not demand any acquaintance either with the Didache (1-5) or Ep. of Barnabas (c.18) contrary to Brandt's supposition. (CSEL. 19.p.485).

(4) cf. Dl. 3.6.4. cited above.

Lactantius defines the whole purpose of his anthropology[1] in terms of this moral process set in motion by the very constitution of the human nature: ' Si quaeritur quid sit propter quod nascimur, quid efficiat uirtus, possumus sic inuestigare. duo sunt ex quibus homo constat, animus et corpus. multa sunt propria animi, multa propria corporis, multa utrique communia, sicut est ipsa uirtus: quae quotiens ad corpus refertur, discernendi gratia fortitudo nominatur. quoniam igitur utrique subiacet fortitudo, utrique proposita dimicatio est et utrique ex dimicatione uictoria: corpus quia solidum est et conprehensibile, cum solidis et conprehensibilibus confligat necesse est, animus autem quia tenuis est et inuisibilis, cum iis congreditur hostibus qui uideri tangique non possunt. qui sunt autem hostes animi nisi cupiditates uitia peccata? quae si uicerit uirtus ac fugauerit, inmaculatus erit animus ac purus'.[2]
The end of this process is immortality (quod corpus temporalem vitam expetit, animus sempiternam)[3] And this in turn is seen as the perfect spiritualisation of man, through virtue, and the soul's return to its divine origin: 'illi tamen qui de inmortalitate animae disputant intellegere debuerunt ideo propositam nobis esse uirtutem, ut perdomitis libidinibus rerumque terrestrium cupiditate superata purae ac uictrices animae ad deum id est ad originem suam reuertantur'.[4]

(1) viz: 'quid sit propter quod nascimur' (Dl. 3.12.1.)

(2) Dl. 3.12.1-3.

(3) cf. Dl. 3.12.16-18, (3.12.8 id (praemium) vero nihil potest esse aliut quam inmortalitas)

(4) Dl. 3.12.25.

The process of Lactantius' anthropology, therefore, makes man wholly derive from God in the beginning, both body and soul:[' deus ergo ueri patris officio functus est, ipse corpus effinxit, ipse animam qua spiramus infudit, illius est totum quidquid sumus'(1),] and capable of returning to his parent, incorruptible and immortal(2), if he faithfully preserves the correct values of his nature by transcending the earthly limitations of his bodily form through his ethical practice(3).

(1) Dl. 2.11.19.

(2) The logical end of this vision of the transformation of man from a mixed composition into an incorruptible spiritual entity, is presented by Lactantius in the apocalyptic teaching in Bk.7 where he posits an entirely new creation of man's nature (Dl.7. 26.5.) 'cum uero conpleti fuerint mille anni, renouabitur mundus a deo et caelum conplicabitur et terra mutabitur. et transformabit deus homines in similitudinem angelorum et erunt candidi sicut nix et uersabuntur semper in conspectu omnipotentis et domino suo sacrificabunt et seruient in aeternum.'

(3) This is why he insists that man is "not a part of this world" (Dl. 2.5.31-32), and that he cannot be reduced to physical terms since the body:"non homo, sed hominis receptaculum est." (Dl. 2.3.8.)

(ii) Caeleste-animal/status rectus

Lactantius' use of the term animal as a description of human nature supports the notion that his anthropology is teleologically orientated to God. Only twice does Lactantius class man as one of the animal species without specifying his argument and even then both cases still tend to differentiate human nature by the very structure of the phrase: 'homines ceteraque animalia'(1) (Man, and the other animals). When Lactantius classifies man's nature biologically, then, he wishes to emphasise man's superiority over the other created beings(2) rather than obscure the distinction. The sole time in the Dl that Lactantius develops a theological argument based on the animal aspect of human nature as a limiting factor, is when he qualifies the concept with the adjective terrenum and uses it to expand on the Hermetic citation which precedes it: ' et ideo terrenum adhuc animal rerum caelestium perspectionem non capit, quia corpore quasi custodia saeptum tenetur, quominus soluto ac libero sensu cernat omnia. sciat igitur quam inepte faciat qui res inennarrabiles quaerat. hoc est enim modum condicionis suae transgredi.'(3)

(1) Dl. 2.10.16. cf. Dl. 2.9.2.-'deinde terram fundavit ac subdidit caelo, quam homo cum ceteris animalium generibus incoleret.' The distinction implied by the phrase was a classical commonplace: eg.'homines....ceteris animalibus.' Sallust. Cat.1.1. ibid. Ovid. Met. 10.324. Quintilian Inst. 2.6.12. cf. Th.LL. Vol.2. 79.25.

(2) Thus the 'chief good' (inmortalitas) of man radically distinguishes him from all other animal species: 'cum de officio hominis agatur, oportet summum summi animalis bonum in eo constitui, quod commune cum ceteris animalibus esse non possit.' Dl. 3.8.3.

(3) Dl. 2.8.68.

Man's knowledge of the incorruptible, heavenly, God is then limited by man's earthly, animal, nature. It is a common argument specifying the difference between God's incorruptibility and physical limitation(1). But Lactantius only uses the concept of animal once in this context and with this meaning.

So it is a rare approach in the Dl, when he employs the term animal to signify man's limitation and immanence. This biological aspect of the idea is barely developed and the usual alternative approaches of the classical tradition are equally neglected. In his attack on the Stoic doctrine of impassibility, for example, Lactantius transmutes Aristotle's definition of man as the "political animal"(2) from a description of who man is, into an argument why he has a duty to exercise compassion, directed against Stoic apatheia;

'quare nihil aliut dixerim quam insanos qui hominem, mite ac sociale animal, orbant suo nomine, qui euulsis adfectibus quibus omnis constat humanitas, ad immobilem stuporem mentis perducere uolunt.'(3)

And he finds a more basic human 'proprium' than the societal sense in the fact that this social feeling itself flows directly from God,(4) and thereby gives human nature its element of divine kinship: ...

'siquidem socialis est hominis ac benefica natura, quo solo cognationem cum deo habet.'(5)

(1) cf. Thesis ch. 4. (ii) a. Deus incorruptus.

(2) Nicom. Eth. 6.8.2.

(3) Dl. 6.17.21.

(4) 'Deus enim quoniam pius est, animal nos voluit esse sociale.' Dl.6.10.10.

(5) Dl. 5.17.34.

The same reservation is witnessed in Lactantius' treatment of the classical epistemological approach to the meaning of animal, for neither does the concept of homo sapiens provide him with a sufficiently extensive anthropological definition(1). And so it is that he only once describes man as a rational animal: 'parens enim noster ille unus et solus cum fingeret hominem id est animal intellegens et rationis capax, eum uero ex humo subleuatum ad contemplationem sui artificis erexit(2); and even then it is in the most subtly ironical way: (rationis capax).

The most frequent use of the animal epithet is in conjunction with a transcendent adjective that is designed to highlight the polarity of man's nature: caeleste animal, caeleste/ac divinum animal and caeleste ac inmortale animal. The juxtaposition of the terms heightens the paradox of man's nature as at once animal and divine. This association of terms occurs five times within the Dl,(3) all of which instances are directly concerned with the doctrine of worship.

(1) The summum bonum, which must be proper to mankind, is not reason; Dl. 3.8.27B: 'quodsi ea quae parit scientia communia sunt cum aliis animalibus, non est ergo summum bonum scientia.'

(2) Dl. 2.1.15.

(3) (Dl. 2.1.14, 2.2.20, 2.9.25, 4.3.1., 7.9.11) Cicero once calls man "hoc divinum animal", (De Fin. 2.40), but normally relates the idea of animal nature to man's rational faculty cp. Leg. 1.22. "animal hoc.....quem vocamus hominem.... solum est....ex tot animantium generibus atque naturis particeps rationis et cogitationis". cf also De Fin. 4.18. Ps. Apuleius. Ascl.7. (Th. LL. 2.78.75.)

Lactantius uses the association to support the topos of the status rectus. As it is man's very nature to stand, so it signifies that his natural fulfilment is discovered only in the worship of the true God. So it follows that false cult will pervert man's true nature by only allowing for his physical or animal aspects, thus bending down all his heavenly capacity: ' nam cum ceterae animantes pronis corporibus in humum spectent, quia rationem ac sapientiam non acceperunt, nobis autem status rectus,sublimis uultus ab artifice deo datus sit, apparet istas religiones deorum non esse rationis humanae, quia curuant caeleste animal ad ueneranda terrena(1)'; and prostrating his divine potential: ' Deorum cultus, ut in primo libro docui, non habet sapientiam, non modo quia diuinum animal,hominem, terrenis fragilibusque substernit, sed quia nihil ibi disseritur quod proficiat ad mores excolendos uitamque formandam; nec habet inquisitionem aliquam ueritatis, sed tantummodo ritum colendi, qui non officio mentis, sed ministerio corporis constat(2)'.

(1) Dl. 2.1.14.

(2) Dl. 4.3.1.

The true cult of God is the sole factor which allows man to express his true nature, which is a process back to God, for this true cult is a question of man raising himself from the ground in order to seek the vision of God: 'an aliquis cum ceterarum animantium naturam considerauerit, quas pronis corporibus abiectas in terramque prostratas summi dei prouidentia efficit, ut ex hoc intellegi possit nihil eas rationis habere cum caelo, potest non intellegere solum ex omnibus caeleste ac diuinum animal esse hominem, cuius corpus ab humo excitatum, uultus sublimis, status rectus originem suam quaerit et quasi contempta humilitate terrae ad altum nititur, quia sentit summum bonum in summo sibi esse quaerendum memorque condicionis suae, qua deus illum fecit eximium, ad artificem suum spectat?'(1). This too is the point of the cultic symbolism of man's use of fire, which Lactantius notes is reserved solely to man as a sign that he is the heavenly and immortal animal who came from God and is destined to rise again to God, just as fire came from heaven and rises upward: 'nos enim quoniam caeleste atque inmortale animal sumus, igni utimur, qui nobis in argumentum inmortalitatis est datus, quoniam ignis e caelo est; cuius natura quia mobilis est et sursum nititur, uitae continet rationem.'(2)

(1) Dl. 7.9.11.

(2) Dl. 2.9.25.

Lactantius' association of transcendent adjectives with the immanent notion of man as animal is therefore a precisely used device supporting his general conception of the nature of man as a process either toward God in the spirit, or away from God in materialism. The whole treatment is an aspect of the status rectus theme, and exposes the process as a moral concern which is one and the same with the worship of God; but it is a distinct advancement on that same theme, for by Lactantius' day the concept of status rectus (man's upright position) had already become a philosophical common-place. Lactantius knows it most nearly from the writings of Minucius,(1) but his first acquaintance with the concept is most probably from Cicero who adopts it from Stoicism and applies it as an extension of his definition of Homo: 'Qui (Deus) primum eos humo excitatos celsos et erectos constituit, ut deorum cognitionem caelum intuentes capere possent. Sunt enim ex terra homines non ut incolae atque habitatores sed quasi spectatores superarum rerum atque caelestium, quarum spectaculum ad nullum aliud genus animantium pertinet'(2), and who further explains the biological phenomenon in terms of man's transcending intellect, capable of divine knowledge-(...homines... quasi spectatores superarum rerum.)

(1) Minucius Felix. Octavius 17.2. 'praecipue cum a feris beluis hoc differamus, quod illa prona in terramque vergentia nihil nata sint prospicere nisi pabulum: nos quibus vultus erectus, quibus suspectus in caelum datus est, sermo et ratio, per quae deum adgnoscimus, sentimus, imitamur, ignorare nec fas nec licet ingerentem sese oculis et sensibus nostris caelestem claritatem.' cf. Dl. 1.5.2.

(2) Cicero. Nat. Deor. 2.140. Also. Leg. 1.26:-'(Natura) solum hominem erexit.' cf. Ovid. Met. 1.85, Seneca. Nat. 5.15.3. Th. L.L. 6.3. 2872. 45.

Lactantius uses the idea of the status rectus so frequently that A. Wlosok's study can call it a "grundvorstellung"[1], and J. Stevenson can remark, "its repetition really becomes rather a bore".[2] Nonetheless, apart from this frequency of his use of the anthropological symbol, Lactantius notably changes it from being primarily a demonstration that man's intellect/ ratio is the distinguishing proprium of human nature, to making it a sign of man's worship of the one God.[3] Since that worship consists in ethical behaviour, in Lactantius' hands the status rectus becomes essentially a moral symbol illustrating man's ascent from earthly limitation to a spiritual fulfilment by ethical practice.[4]

(1) A. Wlosok. Laktanz und die philosophische gnosis. p.182.n.1. cf. op cit. ch.1. "Rectus status und contemplatio caeli in der philosophischen anthropologie". Also M. Pellegrino. Il topos dello "status rectus" nel contesto filosofico e biblico JAC. 1. 1964. pp. 273-281.

(2) Lactantius and the Hermetica, Classical Review. 13. March 1963 p.80.

(3) cf. DI. 2.17.9. '- quis autem non intellegat nefas esse rectum animal curuari, ut adoret terram? quae idcirco pedibus nostris subiecta est ut calcanda nobis, non adoranda sit, qui simus ideo excitati ex ea statumque sublimem praeter ceteras animantes acceperimus, ut non reuoluamur deorsum nec hunc caelestem uultum proiciamus ad terram, sed oculos eo dirigamus quo illos naturae suae condicio direxit nihilque aliut adoremus, nihil colamus nisi solius artificis parentisque nostri unicum nomen qui propterea hominem rigidum figuravit, ut sciamus nos ad superna et caelestia provocari.'
cf. also Dl. 3.10.11-13, 2.18.1f (contrasting false images with true worship) For Cicero the 'topos' shows that the knowledge of the gods is man's highest activity (Nat Deor. 2.140); for Lactantius it is the worship of God which flows from heavenly knowledge (Dl. 3.9. 13-14)

(4) So it is used at the end of the Dl as a symbol of that immortality which has been achieved by the just. cf. Dl. 7.5.20.

Lactantius therefore departs from the classical anthropological tradition which took man's upright stance as a sign of his inquiring intellect that ranged even up to heavenly objects and, expressly denying the possibility of such an unaided inquiry into divine things, renders the symbol a mark of man's devotion to religion: ' in caelum igitur spectandum est, quo natura corporis prouocat. quod si constat esse faciendum, aut ideo faciendum est, ut religioni seruiamus, aut ideo, ut rationem rerum caelestium cognoscamus. sed rationem rerum caelestium cognoscere nullo modo possumus, quia nihil eiusmodi potest cogitando inueniri, sicut supra docui. religioni ergo seruiendum est, quam qui non suscipit, ipse se prosternit in terram et uitam pecudum secutus humanitate se abdicat.'(1) So when Lactantius associates such transcendent adjectives as caeleste, divinum, or inmortale with the concept of homo animalis, he is positing an entirely different anthropological definition to that of the classical tradition, represented by Cicero. For the latter the concept of man's animal nature connotes his essential and inevitable mortality (homo-animal, mortale, rationis particeps..)(2) It is a clear statement that human nature is an immanent corruptible reality: "Cumque omne animal patibilem naturam habeat, nullum est eorum quod effugiat accipiendi aliquid extrinsecus id est quasi ferendi et patiendi necessitatem, et si omne animal tale est inmortale nullum est...nullum est eorum individuum, nullum aeternum(3)."

(1) Dl. 3.10. 12-14

(2) Cic. Leg. 2.21 cf. Quintilian. Inst. 7.3.3:'animal genus, mortale species.'

(3) Cic. Nat. Deor. 3.29.

In the classical tradition this basic fact of mortality is not altered even though man may have knowledge of the gods.(1) The anthropological 'proprium' is the fact that he can look upward to a transcending knowledge of divine matters - (Superarum rerum atque caelestium, quarum spectaculum ad nullum aliud genus animantium pertinet.)(2)

For Lactantius, however, man's nature is not mortal and corruptible by necessity since it is composed of spiritual as well as physical elements. Human nature therefore has a capacity either for corruption or incorruptibility consequent on the direction man's life-process is given, and immortality is held out to him as the possible end of his being just as much as the corruption of death which would follow from his corruptibility.

(1) Cic. Nat Deor. 2. 140 'ut deorum cognitionem caelum intuentes capere possent.'

(2) Cic. Nat. deor. 2.140.

The whole argument is epitomised in Lactantius' search for what is the unique 'proprium' of human nature - that summum bonum which applies to man and no other animal creature.(1) It is defined not as Ratio,(2) but as Inmortalitas: summum igitur bonum sola inmortalitas inuenitur, quia nec aliut animal nec corpus adtingit nec potest cuiquam sine scientia et uirtute id est sine dei cognitione ac iustitia prouenire.(3)

The status rectus symbol itself is used to demonstrate this. Immortality is not a "consequence of nature" (sequela) but a natural capacity related to man's spiritual creation by God, and a capacity that is realised by ethical practice. Man looks up to heaven in order to worship God which in turn confers on him, virtue and wisdom, which finally win his immortality: propterea igitur coli se deus expetit et honorari ab homine tamquam pater, ut uirtutem ac sapientiam teneat, quae sola inmortalitatem parit.(4) Although humanity then is not "by nature immortal" for Lactantius, he wishes to correct the classical anthropologies which could only see that mortality consequent upon a composite physical being. Lactantius offers the reward of immortality as the summum bonum, the 'proprium' of his anthropological definition, in order to teach that far from being a static reality, the nature of man must be conceived as a process. It is a composite of spiritual and material parts and has corresponding capacities and destinies which depend upon man's ethical practice. Immortality is the only true fulfilment of man's nature in so far as it is a return to its divine source(5). In this sense immortality must be admitted to be as natural a possibility for man as that corruptibility the classical world had defined as the inevitable sequela naturae hominis.

(1) Dl. 3.9.1. (2) cf. Dl. 3.8.27B.

(3) Dl. 3. 12.18. (4) Dl. 7.5.27.

(5) cf. Dl. 3.12.25B.

The whole anthropological argument in the Dl is remarkable therefore for the manner in which it employs the familiar ideas and analogies of the ancient world while reformulating them to express a distinctly christian message. It is yet another indication of Lactantius' skills as an apologist.

(iii) Ratio hominis.

Lactantius employs the term ratio as a central aspect of his anthropological doctrine. In part, the Latin term signifies man's rational capacity and can be rendered as a synonym for Nous. This rational faculty was the supreme anthropological proprium in the classical tradition, that element in man which distinguished him from all other creaturehood.(1) Lactantius, however, has already argued that it is the divine consciousness (agnitio dei) leading to worship that is the truly distinctive mark of human nature and has defined his anthropology culticly, in the prophetic tradition(2), rather than epistemologically, in the philosophical tradition.(3) This explains why the use of ratio hominis to connote man's rational abilities is noticeably restricted in the Dl, and Lactantius spends more time defining the limitations of speculative reason and emphasising the need to receive divine illumination.(4)

(1) Cic. Leg. 1.22. cited previously. Ibid. De Fin 4.18. Ps. Apul. Ascl. 7.

(2) cf. Dl. 7.13.2: 'quorum (prophetarum) ratio et diuinatio in hoc solo posita est, ut ad cultum dei et ad inmortalitatem ab eo accipiendam creari hominem doceant.'

(3) Lactantius epitomises this argument in ch 10 of Bk. III.

(4) Eg. Dl. 1.1.5, 1.7.12, 3.1. 14-15, 3.2.7, 3.5.5. Nowhere is Lactantius' departure from classical tradition so marked as in Dl. 3.10.13: '- sed rationem rerum caelestium cognoscere nullo modo possumus, quia nihil eiusmodi potest cogitando inveniri, sicut supra docui.'

The concept of ratio hominis is therefore used comparatively rarely to denote man's intellectual abilities and then only in the Pauline manner[1] to argue that it is a function of reason to admit the basic truth of the existence of a creator from the order of the creation: nemo, qui quidem sapiat rationemque secum putet, non unum esse intellegat, qui et condiderit omnia et eadem qua condidit uirtute moderetur.[2] He accepts the Orphic testimony on divine unity[3]- as the result of nature and reason: natura igitur et ratione ducente intellexit esse praestantissimam potestatem, caeli ac terrae conditricem[4]. Like Paul, however, Lactantius devotes the whole force of his apologetic argument in the first three books to proving that the ancient world never really remained faithful to this light of "natural revelation". Even while lauding the truth he finds within the classical tradition, he implies most strongly that it was not consistently maintained: ' quodsi uel Orpheus uel hi nostri quae natura ducente senserunt in perpetuum defendissent, eandem quam nos sequimur doctrinam conprehensa veritate tenuissent;'[5] and his final word is always on the inability of unaided reason to arrive at divine knowledge, and on the nature of revelation as man's utter dependence on his supreme creator[6].

(1) eg. : Romans. 1. 18-22.

(2) Dl. 1.3.1.

(3) Dl. 1.5.4. Orphica fragm. 57, 75. cf. Brandt. CSEL 19 p.13.

(4) Dl. 1.5.6.

(5) Dl. 1.5.14.

(6) cf. Thesis. ch 4.(i)

Even the most acute mind is at a loss before such a God: 'cum ad illum mentis humanae intentio et acumen et memoria peruenerit, quasi subductis et consumptis omnibus uiis subsistit haeret deficit nec est aliquid ulterius quo progredi possit.'(1) The ratio hominis understood in the epistemological sense is therefore not a central aspect of his anthropological doctrine. The word ratio, however, has several extensions of meaning beyond the epistemological. It can connote a computation of facts or dates,(2) or the rational explanation of a phenomenon(3). Ratio is the reason, or reasoning process that stands as the cause of a thing,(4) or it even signifies a relationship.(5)

(1) Dl. 1.7.12.

(2) Dl. 1.23.5: 'ex hac temporum ratione manifestum est ante annos non amplius quam mille octingentos natum esse Saturnum.' cf. Plautus. Mostellaria 1.3.141. (ad calculos uocare amicitiam, ut par sit ratio acceptorum et datorum.)

(3) Dl. 1.21.25: 'aput Lampsacum Priapo litabilis victima est asellus, cuius sacrificii ratio in Fastis haec redditur...' cf Dl. 1.15.27.

(4) Dl. 3.21.7: (quam tamen intulit rationem turpissimi huius consilii?)
Dl. 1.19.4: (sed homines ingeniosi hanc secum habebant fortasse rationem:)
As in Cicero II Verr. 2.47.115. 'Nostra confirmare argumentis ac rationibus.'

(5) Dl. 3.10.10: 'si religio tollitur, nulla nobis ratio cum caelo est.'

And it is also used by Lactantius as the overall significance or meaning of a concept(1). But although the term has so many variations of meaning, by far the most common use in the Dl is its designation of a 'system' or 'doctrine' that is systematic and all-embracing in scope.(2) The term was used classically, for example, to designate the systems of the different philosophical shools,(3) and so when Lactantius speaks about the ratio hominis he is specifically alluding to his system of anthropology - that which comprehensively defines human nature, its purpose and essence. Such frequent allusions to the ratio hominis in this sense present us with the very heart of his doctrine of man.

(1) Dl. 4.7.5: 'sed exponenda huius nominis ratio est propter ignorantium errorem.'
Dl. 3.8.4:'sic homini aliquid suum debet adscribi sine quo rationem suae condicionis amittat.' (this meaning of the human condition is given as religion at 3.10.1)

(2) As when ratio represents his whole doctrine of immortality (Dl 2.4.7): 'id vero quia fragile est, ab omni ratione inmortalitatis alienum est', or again, representing the system of providential order in the world (DI. 2.11.13): 'qui enim dicit omnia sua sponte esse nata nihilque divinae providentiae tribuit, hic profecto rationem non adserit, sed evertit;' or again, representing the providential plan of the incarnate economy: 'illa enim magna et mirabili ratione sunt facta' (Dl.4.22.6)

(3) Cicero: Fin. 1.5.13: 'Epicuri ratio, quae plerisque notissima est.' Ibid. De Off. 3.4.20: 'Stoicorum ratio disciplinaque' and op. cit 1.41.148: 'Cynicorum ratio...' cf. Lactantius. Dl. 1.17.1: 'ratio rerum naturalium.'

Lactantius first demonstrates that the classical anthropologies of the philosophers have all failed because they have not had the correct perspective on man. The schools, he says, have either rejected the idea of Providence, or the possibility of life after death and both in theory and in practice this has bound them up with material obsessions, and defeated their moral paideia by physical passions:

'nam dum existimant nulli deo esse nos curae aut post mortem nihil futuros, totos se libidinibus addicunt et dum licere sibi putant, hauriendis uoluptatibus sitienter incumbunt, per quas inprudentes in laqueos mortis incurrant.'(1) From this prelude Lactantius makes his overall conclusions about classical anthropology. He presents the outlines of his own anthropological doctrine and the familiar systematic development is quite clearly marked:- the true ratio hominis consists first of all in acknowledging the Lord(2) (agnosceret) then in moving away from earthly "fictions" by ethical purification and, finally, in spending ones life in the worship of the true parent:' ignorant enim quae sit hominis ratio: quam si tenere uellent, in primis dominum suum agnoscerent, uirtutem iustitiamque sequerentur, terrenis figmentis animas suas non substernerent, mortiferas libidinum suauitates non adpeterent, denique se ipsos magni aestimarent atque intellegerent plus esse in homine quam uidetur: cuius uim condicionemque non aliter posse retineri, nisi cultum ueri parentis sui deposita prauitate susceperint.'(3)

(1) Dl. 2.1.3.

(2) This agnitio domini - witnessing God from his provident power over creation - is seen as the first stage, while the more intimate relationship thus established with God is presented at the end of verse 4 as : cultum veri parentis. This process is based on his titular theology Deus pater et dominus wherein the former title signifies God's intimate fatherly relationship with his creatures, the latter, his absolute power as Lord of creation, and it witnesses something of Lactantius' subtle handling of this theological motif.

(3) Dl. 2. 1.4.

The key to the system of man lies therefore within his interior life; this is why he argues that the false worship of the gods perverted the understanding of man in the ancient world, since it taught man to value physical externals(1), and why true worship restores the meaning of man since it teaches him to become an ethical subject. The ratio hominis, then, is found in the mind of man rather than in any of his physical characters.(2) Yet it is not synonymous with the rational capacity for Lactantius immediately goes on to explain what he means by this ratio hominis, in terms of divine contemplation: '...ergo ideo nascimur.... ut ipsum factorem rerum omnium contemplemur id est mente cernamus.'(3)

(1) Dl. 2.3. 7B, 8, 9A: 'oblectatur frivolis et specie simulacrorum capitur... nec mirandum est si deum non videat, cum ipsi ne hominem quidem videant.... cuius qualitas et figura.....ex factis ac moribus pervidetur. qui ergo colunt simulacra, corpora sunt hominibus carentia, quia se corporalibus dediderunt nec vident plus aliquid mente quam corpore,...'

(2) eg. Dl. 3.9.13A (remotis omnibus officiis corporis..) cited subsequently in context.

(3) Dl. 3.9.13.

The argument so far, while orthodox in Christian terms, has not greatly departed from the terms of the more religious anthropologies of the ancient world founded on the proprium of man's unique epistemology.(1) The verse which follows, however, serves to specify his meaning yet more closely. The contemplation of God, for Lactantius, is not a passive conception but amounts to cultus dei or iustitia(2); so he finally equates the whole meaning of man (cuius rei causa natus sit) as the worship of God (colendi se dei gratia natum) performed in ethical behaviour (conservare iustitiam):-

'atquin remotis omnibus officiis corporis in sola mente ponenda est hominis ratio. non ergo ideo nascimur, ut ea quae sunt facta uideamus, sed ut ipsum factorem rerum omnium contemplemur id est mente cernamus. quare si quis hominem qui uere sapiat interroget, cuius rei causa natus sit, respondebit intrepidus ac paratus colendi se dei gratia natum, qui nos ideo generauit, ut ei seruiamus. seruire autem deo nihil aliut est quam bonis operibus tueri et conseruare iustitiam.'(5)

(1) Cicero. Nat Deor. 2.140: 'Sunt enim Ex terra homines... quasi spectatores superarum rerum atque caelestium.'

(2) In Lactantius agnitio dei = cultus dei = iustitia = inmortalitas; for this systematic development see Thesis ch.4. (iii) a-e . This moral emphasis replaces the contemplatio intellectualis of the classical-hermetic traditions and clearly differentiates Lactantius' anthropology even though he uses common terms and analogies.

(3) Dl 3.9. 13-15.

It is Lactantius' concern in his anthropology, therefore, to redirect the definition of man; not to classify his uniqueness by reference to his intellectual powers, but by reference to his relationship with God expressed in ethical worship. Even while he partly agrees with the ancient anthropologies which define man by his need to seek the heavens (rectus status), he always finds it necessary to specify that this heavenly knowledge of man's is not an epistemological but a cultic factor:(1) ' huius legis caput primum est ipsum deum nosse, soli obtemperare, solum colere. non potest enim rationem hominis obtinere qui parentem animae suae deum nescit; quod est summum nefas. quae ignoratio facit ut diis aliis serviat, quo nihil sceleratius committi potest.'(2). The Lactantian anthropology, then, defines man on the basis of his relationship with God who made him (deus parens) to such an extent that the ratio hominis can almost be read as synonymous with the cultus dei. This doctrine of worship he sees as id quod est summum operis huius et maximum, it not only epitomises all his theology (in eoque solo summa rerum....consistit) but it particularly represents the office of man and the whole system of a happy life: ' uenio nunc ad id quod est summum operis huius et maximum, ut doceam quo ritu quoue sacrificio deum coli oporteat. id enim est hominis officium in eoque solo summa rerum et omnis beatae uitae ratio consistit, quandoquidem propterea ficti et inspirati ab eo sumus, non ut caelum uideremus et solem, quod Anaxagoras putauit, sed ut artificem solis et caeli deum pura et integra mente coleremus.'(3)

(1) The conclusion of his argument at 3.9 states this quite clearly: the ratio hominis is humanity, which is justice, which is piety, which is ultimately the recognition of God as parent: Dl.3.9.19: 'expedita est igitur hominis ratio, si sapiat: cuius propria est humanitas. sed ipsa humanitas quid est nisi iustitia? quid iustitia nisi pietas? pietas autem nihil aliut quam dei parentis agnitio.'

(2) Dl. 6.9.1.

(3) Dl. 6.1.2.

(iv) Sacramentum hominis

The term sacramentum, is more precise than ratio in the meanings it bears in the classical tradition, but far more problematical in the extent of its variant connotations in ecclesiastical literature.

In the ancient world the term signified the military oath of allegiance(1) and, as this was a religious rite, the term developed its significance from the Augustan age onwards, connoting a religious oath in general, a sacred engagement, involvement, or possibly a mutual compact.(2)

Latin Christian literature used the term to render the Greek musterion especially with the scriptural implications of the latter term.(3) The African text of the Latin bible uses sacramentum as the regular translation of musterion(4) while the Itala(5) shows that sacramentum and mysterium can be regarded as synonymous renderings.

(1) Caesar. Bell. Civ. 1.23. 'Milites Domitianos sacramentum apud se dicere iubet.' cf. Tacitus. Ann. 1-28, Livy. 2.24.

(2) Eg. Petronius. Satyricon 80. 'amicitiae sacramentum dekvi.' cf. Pour l'histoire du mot sacramentum Ed. J.de Ghellinck, E.De Backer, J. Poukens, G. Lebacqz. Vol.1. Louvain-Paris 1924.

(3) Viz. as the scheme of God's salvific economy, a revealed wisdom transcending human rationalism...cf. G. Kittel. Theological Dictionary of the N.T. Michigan. 1967. Vol.4. pp.817-821, 822-824 passim.

(4) cf. H. Von Soden. Musterion und Sacramentum in den ersten zwei jahrunderten der kirche ZNW. 12. 1911. pp. 118-227. esp. p.225f.

(5) O. Casel. zum worte sacramentum. Jahrbuche fur Liturgiewissenschaft. 8. 1928 pp 225-232. esp. p. 230f. G. Kittel. Theological Dictionary of the NT. vol.4. p.827.

The use of mysterium has become predominant in the Vulgate[1] text, but even here the indiscriminate use of both versions to translate the occurences of musterion in Colossians, demonstrates that no technical theological distinction can yet be discovered between the two terms[2]. V. Loi concludes that in patristic literature up to the 4th century the two terms synonymously refer either to "hidden truth revealed by God", or "prophetic type".[3] Nonetheless one can begin to suspect there might be an apologetic motive for Lactantius to distinguish the two terms, given that mysteria would more readily connote the pagan religious mystery-rites for his literati audience than the concept of sacramentum, whose religious development lay mainly in the hands of the Christian writers. And so it appears that while Lactantius uses the term mysterium at several instances with reference to God,[4] or Christ[5] or the wider scriptural sense of the economy of God's scheme of revelation[6] his common use of the term is to denote the mysteries and rites of the pagan Gods[7] or the secrets recorded by the poets and philosophers.[8]

(1) V. Loi. Il termine mysterium nella letteratura latina cristiana pre-nicena. Vc 19. 1965. pp. 213-220.

(2) G. Kittel. Theol. dict. of NT. Vol 4. p 827 "where the renderings (mysterium-sacramentum) are mixed, no material motivation can be discerned. The meaning of Sacramentum is wholly co-extensive with that of the Greek word.

(3) V. Loi. Il termine mysterium. VC.19.1965. p 220 cf also Th.L.L.6 734.81. f. (figura)

4. Dl. 4·20.3, Epit. 44.2, Dl. 4.12.11.

(5) On the incarnation he says:'cuius rei praeclarum et grande mysterium est...' Epit. 38.2.

(6) Eg. as the mystery of truth and religion Dl. 5.18.11, as the prophetic doctrine of the creation of the world Dl. 7.1.6, as the system of the reward of immortality Dl. 7.8.2, and Epit. 63.8, as the sacrum arcanum,or faith, Dl. 7.26.9. Never once does Lactantius use the concept to denote a scriptural 'figure' or 'type'.

(7) Dl. 1.9.9, 1-21.29, 1.21.40, 1.21.1., Epit. 18.7.10. Ibid. 19.1.

(8) Dl. 1.12.1, 3.16.6, 3.25.6.

It appears that he presupposes the common meaning attached to the word in the pagan religious world of his day rather than invoking the technical christian senses, witnessed in the scriptures or the apologists.(1) And yet his main use of the term sacramentum is in reference to the Christian system of truth. So while his use of mysterium is common to both the pagan and the Christian systems, and often overlaps in significance with his use of sacramentum, he nonetheless reserves the latter term for use in a more predominantly christian context.(2)

The ante-nicene use of sacramentum/mysterium has been frequently studied(3) and Lactantius' method in using both terms has been the subject of two comprehensive works by V. Loi.(4)

(1) cf. G. Kittel. Theol, dict of NT Vol.4. pp. 824-826. The sole exception to this procedure occurs in the Epitome, in which he reverses his custom and tends to replace sacramentum with mysterium . V. Loi explains this on the basis that since the Epit. is meant for a wider christian audience, and the danger of confusion with pagan mysteria somewhat allayed, Lactantius offers a term more familiar to hellenic christians. cf. V. Loi. Per la storia del vocabolo 'sacramentum': sacramentum in Lattanzio VC. 18. 1964. pp.106-107. See also Ibid. Il termine mysterium. VC 20 1966. p.26.

(2) ie in reference to a true system of revealed wisdom; D1.5.7.10, 2.15.2, 5.18.11. or as a synonym for christian faith; D1. 5.1.26, 5.2.15, 7-26.9.

(3) eg the works of Von Soden, Ghellinck, Casel, Loi and Kittel already cited, see also: C. Mohrmann: Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes chrétiens Harvard Theol. Review. 47.1954 pp 141-152, and A. Kölping. Sacramentum Tertullianeum. Münster.1948.

(4) (a) Il termine mysterium nella letteratura latina cristiana pre-nicena. Pt.1. VC 19. 1965 pp. 210-232, pt 2. VC 20.1966 pp 25-44.

(b) Per la storia del vocabolo sacramentum: sacramentum in Lattanzio. VC 18. 1964. pp 85-107.

For the terms of the present study it is enough to note that the free-ranging use of the term sacramentum, as witnessed for example in Tertullian(1); is somewhat restricted in Lactantius, who uses it consistently in only three senses; a religious rite,(2) a system of revealed truth or religion,(3) and allied to this (and most frequently) the revealed plan of God's providential economy.(4)

(1) Who uses the word in a variety of different contexts to signify:-

(a) sacred or holy thing, De Bapt. 4.4, 5.4, 12.3, 13.2, Adv. Iud 9.22 Adv. Marc. 3.16.5.

(b) Vow or baptismal formula, Cor.11.1, Idol.6.1, 19.2, Jejun.10.7, Scorp. 4.5.

(c) initiation to a mystery, Apol. 2.6, 7.1, Cor.15.4, Nat.1.16.20.

(d) rite or sacrifice, An, 50.4, Bapt 1.11,3.6, 8.2, 9.1, Cast 7.6. et al.

(e) religion or revealed doctrine, An. 9.4, Ap.15.8, 19.2, Adv. Marc 1-21.5. et al. (Tertullian's most frequent use)

(f) as sign, An 1.4, Adv. Marc. 1-28.2.

(g) as prophetic figure, An 11.4, Adv.Marc. 1.13.5, 3.7.6, 3.16.5, 3.19.4, 4.40.1, 5.1.6, et al.

(h) as the divine economy, Adv. Marc 2.27.7, 4.1.11, 4.16.12, 5.14.9, 5.17.1, 5.18. 1-4.

(2) viz the Roman marriage - a sacrament of fire and water. Dl.2.9.21, or in a more christian sense, but not exclusively so, referring to sexual ethics as: inviolati cubilis sacramenta.

(3) Sacramentum divinae religionis. Dl. 5.7.10, sacramentum verae religionis. Dl. 1.1.19, 4.8.2, 4.13.12. As a synonym for christian faith; Dl. 5.1.26, 5.2.15.

(4) As divine disposition/economy, Dl. 2.3.21, 6.8.10, 7.24.10 - even equated with the narrative of Salvation History which it introduces at Dl. 4.10.5.

The conception of sacramentum hominis,[1] therefore, witnesses that this anthropology is set out in terms of a specifically Christian teaching, a doctrine of man to correct the classical views. The overlap in meaning between ratio and sacramentum, both of which are systematic words which can connote the sense of dispositio, ordo and oeconomia, results in both formulae (sacramentum hominis and ratio hominis) bearing a generally common significance[2] viz: "the system of the meaning of man". Ratio hominis however, is used more in the philosophic debate, while sacramentum, bearing a more precisely religious and cultic connotation, is used more frequently in those instances where Lactantius is presenting his anthropology as a certain truth based on revelation, and positively teaching it over and against the anthropological alternatives of the philosophers whom he claims have lost the religious sense in man and thereby lost a true anthropology.

(1) Lactantius never uses mysterium hominis

(2) The two terms have other overlaps in their systematic usage eg. ratio veritatis is synonymous with sacramentum veritatis at Dl. 2.15.1-2, and the ratio crucis of Dl. 4.15.5. becomes sacramentum crucis in the Epitome. 46,1. Though both words can be regarded as generally synonymous as "system of truth", sacramentum gives the argument more of a christian edge.

As with ratio hominis the concept of the sacramentum is intimately associated with the status rectus theme.

Lactantius quite clearly treats sacramentum hominis and ratio naturae suae as synonymous here: ' Quicumque igitur sacramentum hominis tueri rationemque naturae suae nititur obtinere, ipse se ab humo suscitet et erecta mente oculos suos tendat in caelum. non sub pedibus deum quaerat nec a uestigiis suis eruat quod adoret, quia quid quid homini subiacet, infra hominem sit necesse est: sed quaerat in sublimi, quærat in summo, quia nihil potest esse homine maius nisi quod fuerit supra hominem. deus autem maior est homine: supra ergo, non infra est nec in ima potius, sed in summa regione quaerendus est(1).' and so defines man in terms of his capacity for the agnitio dei(2) in typically cultic terms.

He identifies the sacramentum even more specifically with the worship of God in the seventh book. Here he begins a lengthy argument on why God made the world (Dl. 7.2) a section in which he offers Christian revelation as a positive teaching to silence all the philosophic alternatives(3). His conclusion, that the world was made for the sake of man, is introduced in the following terms: 'illi enim nullam rationem adferebant cur humanum genus uel creatum uel constitutum esset a deo: nostrum hoc officium est, sacramentum mundi et hominis exponere, cuius illi expertes sacrarium ueritatis nec attingere nec uidere potuerunt.'(4)

(1) Dl. 2.18.1.

(2) cf. Dl. 2.18.6B.

(3) Dl. 7.2.1: (nunc ignaros veritatis instruamus. dispositione summi dei sic ordinatum ut....)

(4) Dl. 7.3.14.

And, continuing the theme by looking for the reason man himself was made (sacramentum hominis),[1] he reaches his conclusion at Dl.7.5. where he defines the sacrament (again with reference to the status rectus theme) in terms of divine worship[2] and contemplation: 'quae utilitas deo in homine, inquit Epicurus ut eum propter se faceret? scilicet ut esset qui opera eius intellegeret, qui prouidentiam disponendi, rationem faciendi, uirtutem consummandi et sensu admirari et uoce proloqui posset: quorum omnium summa haec est, ut deum colat. is enim colit qui haec intellegit, is artificem rerum omnium, is uerum patrem suum debita ueneratione prosequitur qui uirtutem maiestatis eius de suorum operum inuentione inceptione perfectione metitur. quod planius argumentum proferri potest et mundum hominis et hominem sua causa deum fecisse, quam quod ex omnibus animantibus solus ita formatus est, ut oculi eius ad caelum directi, facies ad deum spectans, uultus cum suo parente communis sit uideaturque hominem deus quasi porrecta manu adleuatum ex humo ad contemplationem sui excitasse?'[3]

(1) carried over from the introduction at Dl. 7.3.14 and restated at 7.5.2. (si sacramentum hominis omne cognossent) with great emphasis on its systematic importance:'haec enim summa, hic cardo rerum est, quem qui non tenuerit, veritas illi omnis elabitur.' In this passage ratio and sacramentum again appear interchangeably.

(2) Dl. 7.5.4B: 'quorum omnium summa haec est, ut deum colat.'

(3) Dl. 7.5. 4-6.

Lactantius uses the formula sacramentum hominis in one other sense closely allied to the cultic. As the section on his theology of worship has argued, the concept of true cult is equated in the Dl. with man's ethical process - his rising over material concerns and physical obsessions to a life that ultimately spiritualises him and leads him to the summum bonum of an immortal union with God. There are 3 instances where Lactantius signifies this ethical process by sacramentum: (a) such a process teaches man the mystery of his birth: ' qui uult sapiens ac beatus esse, audiat dei uocem, discat iustitiam, sacramentum natiuitatis suae norit, humana contemnat, diuina suscipiat, ut summum illut bonum ad quod natus est possit adipisci[1]; (b) those who cannot understand the mysterious nature of this ethical process to immortality because they "refer all things to this present life" and lack the transcendent perspective of God's plan, are described as ignorant of the sacrament of man: ' sed videlicet qui sacramentum hominis ignorant ideoque ad hanc temporalem vitam referunt omnia, quanta sit vis iustitiae scire non possunt;'[2] and (c) In all cases the concept of sacramentum hominis implicitly connotes that providential dominion of God. Unless man is defined by his relationship with the God who made him, his life is brought to nothing: ' cur enim formatus sit homo, divini sacramenti est, quod quia ille scire non poterat, humanam vitam deduxit (Democritus) ad nihilum.'[3]

(1) Dl. 7.5. 4-6.

(2) Dl. 5.17.15.

(3) Dl. 7.7.10.

This relationship of dependence that so defines man is epitomised in the religious worship of God that is at once an intellectual acknowledgement (agnitio) and an obedience to an ethical process leading man back to his spiritual source. Both ratio hominis and sacramentum hominis are therefore defined in terms of this type of worship.

(v) Simulacrum dei.

The apologetic context of the Lactantian anthropology, and the fact that the concept of worship is so central to his doctrine, make it inevitable that he should analyse the notion of man as the image of God. The idea of images, especially as used in the pagan cult, is central to the whole argument of Book Two, where he denies their validity in a system of true religion. He argues that as the pagan cults celebrate the dead and are not concerned with the (moral) life of man so do they make use of dead,inanimate images. This argument provides him with a basis for developing the antithesis, the conception of man himself as a living image to be used in God's living worship. It is both consistent with the terms of his cultic anthropology, and provides an ideal medium of apologia since the conception of man as image is familiar to the scriptural as well as the classical tradition.

In the classical tradition the idea of an image could be conveyed either by imago or simulacrum. Imago referred especially to an imitation or copy of something such as a picture or statue.(1) Cicero ironically refers to the old, smoky, wax castings of familial ancestors that were honoured in the Atrium: 'Obrepsisti ad honores errore hominum, commendatione fumosarum imaginum quarum simile habes nihil praeter colorem.'(2)

(1) Cicero. De Orat. 31.110: 'Demosthenes, cuius nuper inter imagines tuas ac tuorum imaginem ex aere vidi...'

(2) Cic. In Pisonem. 1.1.

This is probably the most frequent context in which imago appears, and possibly from this association it is commonly used to connote the "mere shadow" of something, a copy of a reality which is thereby somewhat unreal in itself. In Cicero the term is frequently associated with umbra in this latter sense(1) and so conveys the unreality of the copy, a connotation which is further emphasised by the philosophical use of the term to describe mental ideations or imaginative fantasy,(2) and its poetic use as a synonym for "phantom" or "ghost".(3)

All these variations of meaning similarly apply to simulacrum This too can refer to shades and phantoms since they are insubstantial images(4), or mental ideations and dreams.(5) It also bears the same negative sense as imago, of something that by virtue of being a copy is thereby a counterfeit of reality, a mere shadow of the real.(6)

(1) Cic. De off. 3.17.69, Tusc. 3.2.3:- 'consectatur nullam eminentem effigiem virtutis, sed adumbratam imaginem gloriae.' or ibid. Orat. Pro Rabirio Postumo. 15.41: 'umbram equitis Romani et imaginem videtis.' Also Ibid. Rep. 2.30.

(2) 'Scipionis memoriam atque imaginem sibi proponere.' (Cic. De Amicitia). Ibid Fin. 1.6.21:-'Imagines, quae eidola nominant quorum incursione non solum videmus, sed etiam cogitamus.' cp. Ibid. Ac.2.40.125, and Pliny. Ep.75.1. In Lactantius' own philosophical work, both Imago and simulacrum connote dreams cp. OD 18.5-6.

(3) Virg. Aen..2.773.'infelix simulacrum atque ipsius umbra Creusae visa mihi ante oculos et nota maior imago.' Ibid. 4.654:'et nunc magna mei sub terras ibit imago.' cf. Horace. Odes.1.24.15, 3.27.40. Tacitus. Hist. 3.28, Ibid. Ann.1.62.

(4) Ovid. Met.14.112: 'simulacraque cara parentum.'

(5) Ovid. Heroides. 9.39. 'simulacra inania somni.'

(6) Tacitus. Ann.1.77.'simulacra libertatis-' which is in reality oppression. or Cic. De Off.1.15.46. 'simulacra virtutis'- repeated at De Off 3.17.69 which Lactantius employs himself at Dl. 6.11.14f. to stress the difference between the real substance of Christian justice, and the mere semblance of justice held by the pagans.

There is only a minimal distinction between the two terms in the manner in which simulacrum was used as the more common description of the religious images of the gods which were used in the temple cults. In this religious context it is given a slightly more positive sense. So, for example, Cicero can criticise all external religious imagery because it represents physical rather than spiritual reality, but in so doing he distinguishes simulacra from statuas et imagines in a way that suggests it has greater positive validity: "Statuas et imagines, non animorum simulacra sed corporum....relinquere".(1)

Simulacra then, is the term the classical authors most usually employ to connote the temple images of the gods,(2) and this use gives it slightly more theological weight than imago.

The distinction between imago and simulacrum, in the pagan context, is barely retained by Lactantius. In their reference to the temple idols, the two terms are clearly synonymous for him.(3) Nonetheless, in the context of presenting a positive teaching on the nature of a true and valid image of the divine, Lactantius does show a preference for simulacrum.

(1) Cic. Orat Pro. Archiā. 12.30.

(2) Cic. Div. in Caec. 1.3: 'deorum simulacra sanctissima' (ibid 2.Verr 5.72.185). Tacitus. Hist.2.3: ' simulacrum deae non effigie humana.' Lucret. 5.76: 'fana, lacus, lucos, aras simulacraque divôm.' (ib.6.419) cf also. Caes. BG. 6.16.17. Ibid B.Civ.2.5, 3.105. Tacitus Ann. 12.22, Virg. Aen. 2.172, Ovid. Met.10.694.

(3) Dl. 2.13.12. ' ceteri autem qui per terram dispersi fuerant admirantes elementa mundi, caelum solem terram mare, sine ullis imaginibus ac templis uenerabantur et his sacrificia in aperto celebrabant, donec processu temporum potentissimis regibus templa et simulacra fecerunt eaque uictimis et odoribus colere instituerunt.'

cf. also Dl. 1.18.6, 1.11. 26-9, 2.16.3, Epit. 23.7.

From nine separate instances where he discusses man as God's image he never uses imago independently as his major term,(1) and his use of the word can usually be explained as an allusion to the phrase of Genesis 1.26. (in his image and likeness) for he pairs imago with similitudo(2). On the other hand simulacrum dei is used as a central term five times(3) and figura dei twice(4). So, although Lactantius is well aware of the Genesis tradition of man's creation in God's image, and clearly alludes to it more than once, he prefers to use classical terminology and so demonstrates that the inanimate simulacra of the temples are false images of a living reality(5) which can only be properly represented by a living man. So, while the pagan images are vana et insensibilia(6) the true image of God is alive - (sensibile atque intellegens): 'ita rebus omnibus mirabili discriptione compositis regnum sibi aeternum parare constituit et innumerabiles animas procreare, quibus inmortalitatem daret. tum fecit sibi ipse simulacrum sensibile atque intellegens id est ad imaginis suae formam, qua nihil potest esse perfectius: hominem figurauit ex limo terrae; unde homo nuncupatus est, quod sit fictus ex humo.'(7)

(1) at Dl.2.10.3. imago is paired with simulacrum. At 2.10.4. it once appears alone but its use is governed by a Hermetic source from which all the Hermetic theology has been stripped (cf.G.Kittel Theol dict. of NT Vol 2.p.389), and when this text is paralleled in the Epit. imago is replaced by similitudo as an allusion to Gen. 1.26. Similar christianisations can be observed when the whole passage - Dl.2.10.3-13 is restated at Epit. 22.2f.

(2) As above: Dl.2.10.4, 7.4.3 Epit.22.2.

(3) Dl. 2.10.3, 2.10.10f, 6.10.1., De Ira. 13.13., Epit. 36.3.

(4) Dl. 5.8.4, 6.12.30.

(5) Dl. 2.2.10. 'dei autem in aeternum uiuentis uiuum et sensibile debet esse simulacrum. quod si a similitudine id nomen accepit, qui possunt ista simulacra deo similia iudicari quae nec sentiunt nec mouentur? itaque simulacrum dei non illut est quod, digitis hominis ex lapide aut aere aliaue materia fabricatur, sed ipse homo, quoniam et sentit et mouetur et multas magnasque actiones habet cp. Dl. 2.10.13: fictio veri ac vivi hominis e limo dei est.'

(6) Dl. 1-20.22.

(7) Dl. 2.10. 2-4.

Man was made, then, to receive immortality from God. Although Lactantius here cites the Sibyl, who defines the essence of the image in terms of "right reason", his own exposition of what the conception of image involves is more clearly expressed in the Epitome. This text propounds the doctrine of man in terms of his familiar anthropological process: reason leads to acknowledgement of God, which leads to worship, which culminates in immortality:-

'ille enim summus et conditor rerum deus, qui hominem uelut simulacrum suum fecit, idcirco utique soli ex omnibus animalibus rationem dedit, ut honorem sibi tamquam patri et (timorem) tamquam domino referret et hac pietate atque obsequio immortalitatis praemium mereretur. hoc est uerum diuinumque mysterium.'(1) Lactantius calls the whole system a 'mystery'. The meaning of the image-theme in the Dl, therefore, is not solely reducible to the rational(2) character of man, but connotes the whole range of man's dependent relationship on his creator-parent. It is this ontological dependence which Lactantius argues when he develops on the distinction between the true image of God which is a living being, and the false images which are inanimate. Apart from this, the whole concept of man as the image of God, in the Dl is aware of the scriptural theme from Genesis but is not primarily based upon it. The context of the argument is concerned with the difference between the temple-images, and the living image, which is man. The formula, therefore, is yet another device which Lactantius uses to present his doctrine of man in essentially cultic terms wholly subordinated to the general principles of his apologetic structure.

(1) Epit. 36.3.

(2) The comparable passage in the De Ira, speaks of the image in terms of man's sapientia. Yet this too has a range of significance beyond the purely epistemological. cf. Epit.36.2. where Sapientia is defined as worship; cp. Thesis ch4.(iii)c.

(vi) Templum dei

The same observation can be applied to his description of man as the "temple of God".(1) Just as the true image of God had to be a subjective, personal, reality in order properly to symbolise the Living God, so God's Temple cannot be thought of as a mere building, for it is the living heart of man in which God is consecrated and worshipped by means of ethical purity.(2): (a) 'quid tantos sumptus uel fingendis uel colendis imaginibus inpendere? firmius et incorruptius templum est pectus humanum: hoc potius ornetur, hoc ueris illis numinibus inpleatur.'(3) (b) 'uos autem manente cultu deorum iustitiam desideratis in terra, quod fieri nullo pacto potest. sed ne tum quidem potuit, cum putatis, quia nondum natis diis istis quos inpie colitis necesse est unius dei cultum fuisse per terram, eius scilicet qui execratur malitiam exigitque bonitatem, cuius templum est non lapides aut lutum, sed homo ipse, qui figuram dei gestat: quod templum non auri et gemmarum donis corruptibilibus, sed aeternis uirtutum muneribus ornatur.'(4) (c) 'secum denique habeat deum semper in corde suo consecratum, quoniam ipse est dei templum. quodsi deo, patri ac domino, hac adsiduitate, hoc obsequio, hac deuotione seruierit, consummata et perfecta iustitia est:'(5) (d) 'emaculetur omni labe pectus, ut templum dei esse possit, quod non auri nec eboris nitor, sed fidei et castitatis fulgor inlustrat.'(6)

(1) Lactantius applies the theme of God's temple not only in the anthropological context but also in reference to the christian church, the association of true worshippers: Dl. 4.13.26, 4.14.1, 4,27.5, 5.2.2, DM. 1.5, 2.5f. The two treatments are commonly founded on the use of the idea as a moral symbol.

(2) cf. H. Koch. Der Tempel Gottes bei Laktantius. Philologus.76. 1920. pp. 235-238.

(3) Dl. 1.20.23

(4) Dl. 5.8.4.

(5) Dl. 6.25.15-16.

(6) Epit. 61.10.

The argument is quite consistent and clearly represents the scriptural theme of the body of the believer being the temple of the Holy Spirit.(1) It systematically harmonises at one and the same time, his doctrine of worship, his ethic, and his anthropology. In Lactantius' hands, however, the terms of reference are wholly changed. The temple analogy no longer bears any relation to the Jewish temple that inspired the imagery of both Jesus and Paul, but now takes its force from the Roman temples of the pagan cult. This change of context provides Lactantius with a vehicle of apologetic communication. It allows him yet again to offer an essentially scriptural doctrine in wholly classical terms.(2), and systematically harmonises, at one and the same time, these same three aspects of his theology: the doctrine of worship, his ethic, and his anthropology.

(1) 1 Cor. 3.16., 6.19, 2 Cor. 6.16.

(2) for further analysis of the Temple-theme cf. Thesis ch.6. (iii) a.

Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 6

CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY

(i) The apologetic context

The course of theology's progress and development is intimately related to the dialectical environment in which the Church is placed in any given age. From apostolic times onwards the faith of the Church has been articulated according to the need of the believers rather than from any desire to engage in dogmatic speculation for its own sake, and almost all the great patristic writings were written as specific answers to pressing problems and controversies. Thus, for example, it was the formulae of Arius that compelled the Church to move away from a christology based exclusively on scriptural figures to the more philosophical definitions of Nicaea, and it was the work of Eunomius that led to the Cappadocian treatises on the person of the Holy Spirit and thence to the Constantinopolitan definitions of 381 A.D, and no less the dialectic operating between Alexandria and the Northern Patriarchates that led to the Chalcedonian settlement. In the world of the pre-Nicene Apologists, especially in the case of Lactantius, the dialectical situation was supplied more by the conflict with forces external to the Church, than by the heterodox forces within. Then, the supreme point at issue was the nature of the deity and therefore the theological formulations of the pre-Nicenes, in general terms, are dominated by the Christian interpretation of God's unity and creative providence rather than the trinitarian extrapolations and more detailed christological solutions of the post-Nicene Church.(1)

(1) Even the avowedly trinitarian works of the pre-Nicene Latin Church, of Tertullian, and Novatian, are essentially vindications of the divine monarchy. The trinitarianism they represent is Economic rather than essentialist.

It follows from this that the apologetical context of the Institutes has to be kept in mind, especially with regard to the Lactantian christology, and care has to be taken to avoid "reading into" his work, the theological debates of a later age. This has frequently happened in the case of former commentators who have criticised Lactantius' christology and trinitarianism because it does not follow on after the direction-markers left by Novatian or Tertullian.(1) It is most questionable, however, to picture the christology or trinitarianism of the Church, before and after Nicaea, as one coherent development of a single orthodox tradition. The binitarianism that is so marked in Lactantius, is but a reflection and an evocation of a longstanding tradition(2) that evidently survived right up to the eve of Nicaea, and can be witnessed in the Church's unwillingness to depart from scriptural formulations of doctrine. It would be anachronistic then to import the theological language of a later age into the text of Lactantius and analyse his christology by reference to theological criteria that were alien to him. It is fruitless, for example, to ask how Lactantius envisaged the union of the two natures in the person of Christ. This was not an issue that either he,

(1) Eg. Bp. Bull (Defensio fidei Nicaenae) who rushed to demonstrate that all pre-Nicene trinitarianism was in essential agreement with post Nicene orthodoxy and discussed Lactantius' deviations on the grounds (Rhetor erat ille non theologus) cp.G.Bull. Opera. ed E. Burton. Oxford 1827 cp Vol.2. 14.4. and Vol. 3.3. 10.20.
or again Von Campenhausen, who offers the somewhat reductionist analysis: "everything Tertullian and Novatian had achieved for a systematic teaching on the Trinity is forgotten by Lactantius". cp. The Fathers of the Latin Church. p.75.

(2) cf. M. Simonetti. Note di cristologia pneumatica Aug.12.1972 pp. 201-232. A. Grillmeier. Cht. in christian tradition Vol.1.p.198. fn.130. also Thesis ch.6(iv).b. (Christus-spiritus dei) B.Studer remarks: "Le binitarisme, avant les discussions sur la divinité de l'Esprit Saint (avant 360), est un phénomène beaucoup plus étendu qu'on ne le pense, surtout dans la théologie latine. Ainsi constatons-nous que la théologie d'Hilaire, à la différence de la théologie d'Athanase après 360, est pratiquement binitariste. De même Novatien, dans son ouvrage, intitulé plus tard De Trinitate, parle très peu de l'Esprit (ch.29)" cp. Lactance et Son Temps. Ed. Fontaine/ Perrin. Paris 1978. pp.270-271.

or his intended pagan audience were required to face, and it was not to become an issue for the Church in general until the Apollinarian disputes. All such discussions about the terms of the union are generations later than Lactantius, and it is consequently a mistake in methodology to analyse his language in this way, as some have recently attempted, speaking of his adoption of a Logos-Sarx model.(1) The apologetic context of the argument must also be kept in mind here for in so far as Lactantius is addressing those who saw Christ as a man and nothing more, there is really no need to give an extended treatment of human nature within the D.I. The same context also explains why Lactantius approaches the christological presentation through the two avenues of Priesthood and Paideia - terms specially chosen to have significance for the ancient world he is addressing, the world he has previously described as that of priests and pedagogues.(2) He therefore presents this idiosyncratic christology of the Priest-Pedagogue as an idea that will have a common authority over both classes of men- the pious and the intellectual.

(1) cf. A. Grillmeier. Cht. in christian tradition. Vol.1. pp.204-5. the classification in the analysis, however, is somewhat anachromistically fitted into the Logos-sarx, Logos-anthropos schemes of the later christological debates: "Lactantius does not seem to indicate either explicitly or implicitly that the incarnate Christ could also assume a human soul" (p.204) "Man consists of body and spirit (and the body involves the spirit in death) so redemption has to come through Christ, composed of a divine spirit and earthly body. (D1.4.25.6-8) This soteriology is thus based on an implicit Logos-sarx framework. Had Lactantius reflected here on the problem of a human soul, his picture of Christ and his soteriology would have broken down" (p.205) For the refs in D1 on God "assuming flesh" or taking a body" cp D1. 4.15.2, 4.18.28, 4.25.8, 4.26.26. See also V.Loi Lattanzio pp. 220-226. Ibid. Cristologia e soteriologia nella dottrina di Lattanzio. pp. 251-256.

(2) This constant theme of religion and wisdom is systematically developed in the D1 and is often his shorthand for their respective representatives - the pagan priests of the temples, and the philosophers from the schools of paideia.

The first character of Lactantius' christology is therefore its profoundly apologetic bias. In so far as he has already analysed the divorce of religion and wisdom in the ancient world as an effective cause of men's loss of truth(1) then his presentation of Christ as Priest and Pedagogue(2) can be read as a soteriological scheme. As Christ is the only figure who can truly claim authority over both classes of men, because his message is at once a true philosophy of life as well as valid worship, then this harmonisation of the ancient world's major division in its search for truth can be taken as a demonstration that Christ himself is a salvific, atoning force. The soteriological aspect of the christology is even more clearly presented, however, in the manner in which Lactantius sets it within an eschatological framework. The doctrine of Christ appears in a vast scheme of Salvation History that is inaugurated before the making of the world,(3) and concluded in the final consummation of all things when evil is finally eradicated(4) - this is the constant insistence of Lactantius on the sacrament of the person of Christ, as a mystery of <u>two births</u> and <u>two advents</u>.

(1) cp Dl. 3.11.2.

(2) The priest who commands the allegiance of the religious man and at the same time the pedagogue who is an authoritative figure for the philosophic man. Christ is the one person who can synthesise both ways of life for he offers a teaching that is truly wise because it is pure religion; it is a religion and a philosophy at once.

(3) Dl. 4.7.1.

(4) Dl. Bk 7. in Christ's return in glorious power. 7.24f.

The present chapter concerned with christology will therefore analyse these major areas of his thought - the eschatological framework and the concepts of priesthood and paideia, as well as looking at some of the archaic elements preserved in his theology (the angelic remains, the spirit christology or binitarianism), reviewing Lactantius' understanding of the atoning work of Christ's life and passion, and finally assessing the charge of "clear subordinationism" that has been applied by the most recent commentaries on his work.

One final aspect of Lactantius' christology that needs to be observed here is its essentially scriptural nature. Lactantius evidently uses the scriptural texts expressly in Book Iv, a marked contrast to his procedure in the previous three books, but this is not to be read solely as a desperate seeking after "authorities" in the Bible, because there are no other alternative sources for him to use.(1). The whole substance of his christological thought is presented by means of exegesis. The texts are not simply used as historical demonstrations of Christ's foretold coming(2), they are

(1) cp. J.R. Laurin. Orientations maîtresses des apologistes chrétiens. Analecta Gregoriana 61. Rome. 1954. p.271:- "Quand au quatrième livre il en vient à exposer le dogme chrétien centré sur le Christ, il est constraint de citer les prophètes". or Von. Campenhausen, The Fathers of the Latin Church. p.73. "only where it was wholly indispensable, in the christological passages of the fourth book, does he quote to any considerable extent the Old Testament. This approach is an overemphasis of Lactantius' explanation at DI.4.5.3.

(2) although this "historische" approach is very important to him (cp J.R. Laurin. Orientations maîtresses. p.272), it is developed not only to show Christ had a long preparation on earth for his eventual arrival, but also to point up the fact that his antiquity extends beyond human history, ancient though it may be, to his pre-existence with God.

clearly the source and essence of Lactantius' doctrine here.(1) His use of scriptural testimony is still of course governed by apologetical concerns.(2) He does not forget the lesson he learned from Cyprian(3) not to offer purely exegetical proofs to an uninitiated audience. But the very presence of the scriptural material witnesses that his work has already passed from apologia into catechesis, according to his stated intention, and this in turn gives us another dimension to his christology that needs to be kept in mind. It is not by accident that the christology in Book 4 stands as the mid-point of his seven books of the Dl: it has been carefully announced by the treatment of false religion (Bks 1-2) and false wisdom (Bk.3.) Christ's harmonisation of religion and wisdom then, stands as the conceptual as well as the physical centre of his work, marking the systematic transition from the pro-paideusis of the first three books to the ever deepening catechetical implications of the last three.

(1) Dl. 2.13.4. 'sicuti sanctae litterae docent.'
4.7.2. 'ut est sanctis litteris traditum.'
4.10.19. 'hic rerum textus, hic ordo in arcanis sanctarum litterarum continetur.'
4.14.1. 'quibus ex rebus apparet prophetas omnes denuntiasse de christo.'
This christological dependence on the scriptures is analogous to his scriptural presentation of the doctrine of immortality in Bk.7. eg. Dl. 7.14.5. 'nos autem, quos divinae litterae ad scientiam veritatis erudiunt.'
7.25.2. 'si quis autem diligentius haec voluerit scire, ex ipso fonte hauriat et plura quam nos in his libris conplexi sumus admirabilia reperiet.'
cf. J.R. Laurin. Orientations maîtresses. pp 267-274.

(2) cf. R. Pichon Lactance p.205. J.R. Laurin op cit p.274.

(3) cf. Dl. 5.4. 4-5.

(4) Dl. 3.30.10., 5.4.1-2, cp. Laurin. op cit. pp 242-53.

(ii) The Eschatological Structure

(a) Dispositio Dei

Lactantius sets all his christological doctrine into a comprehensive scheme of salvation that is all-embracing in scope, manifesting Christ's transcendence of history - from His birth from God before the world was made, even to his final vindication in the eschatological judgement. This vast scheme of Meta-history between Bks 4 and 7 is at once a development of scriptural themes and an apologetic presentation. Indeed by using the texts of the scriptures themselves as testimonies of antiquity he is able to demonstrate that although Jesus of Nazareth has appeared only recently in time, the true perspective on his authority is only gained when it is realised that the antiquity of these prophecies supports, in turn, the truth of his eternal pre-existence.(1) It is in order to give authority to Christ's second birth in time, therefore, that Lactantius constantly parallels it with the first birth before time began, just as he prepares his audience to accept the eschatological scheme in Bk. 7 by paralleling the second coming at the end of time, with Christs first coming within time.(2)

(1) Thus he lays great emphasis on the antiquity of the prophetic predictions of Christ cp. Dl. 4.5. 4-10. or 4.10. 2-3. `hanc ergo dispositionem ne quis ignoret, docebimus praedicta esse omnia quae in Christo uidemus esse conpleta. nemo adseuerationi nostrae fidem commodet, nisi ostendero prophetas ante multam temporum seriem praedicasse, fore aliquando ut filius dei nasceretur sicut homo et mirabilia faceret et cultum dei per totam terram seminaret et postremo patibulo figeretur et tertio die resurgeret. quae omnia cum probauero eorum ipsorum litteris qui deum suum mortali corpore utentem uiolauerunt...'

(2) eg. Dl. 4.16.13:- `nam cum legerent cum quanta virtute et claritate filius dei venturus esset e caelo, Iesum autem cernerent humilem sordidum informem, non credebant filium dei esse ignorantes duos eius adventus a prophetis esse praedictos, primum in humilitate carnis obscurum, secundum in fortitudine maiestatis manifestum.'

This expansive scheme clearly demonstrates the soteriological emphasis of Lactantius' christology, for the whole plan is the dispositio dei which reaches a climax in history with the coming of Christ: In primis igitur scire homines oportet sic a principio processisse dispositionem summi dei, ut esset necesse adpropinquante saeculi termino dei filium descendere in terram.(1) The dispositio dei represents the Greek conception of the oikonomia, and had already become established in the Latin tradition.(2) Lactantius most probably derives his reading from Tertullian here, for as we shall see later, he follows the same christological parallelism of two births - two advents that Tertullian had proposed before him. For Tertullian the dispositio dei meant the plan of salvation established by God(3) whereas Cyprian applies dispositio in a more directly scriptural manner, to connote the voluntas dei as law or authority. The term can thus be used in Cyprian to describe God's right order of authority in the Church(4), or his fixed order in nature(5). Lactantius' employment of the term follows Cyprian only when he is speaking generically. Then, the dispositio rerum in the Dl connotes the fixed order of things within creation and is usually applied as an argument for the Providence of God.(6)

(1) Dl. 4.10.1.

(2) Tertullian Adv. Marc. 2.9.9. 'Quod si ita se habent, omnis jam Dei dispositio de mali exprobratione purgatur.' (ibid. De Praescr 7.2. Adv. Prax. 16.7.) cp Novatian. De Trin. 6.32. 'Rationem enim diuinae scripturae de temperamento dispositionis cognoscimus.' Ibid: 18.104:(Christus) paternae dispositionis annuntiator est.'

(3) V. Loi. Cristologia e soteriologia. p.237. Ibid. Lattanzio pp 235-236.

(4) Dispositio ecclesiastica = lex evangelica: Cyp. Ep. 46.1.: 'gravat enim me atque contristat et intolerabilis perculsi et paene prostrati pectoris moestitia perstringit, cum vos illic comperissem contra ecclesiasticam dispositionem, contra evangelicam legem, contra institutionis catholicae unitatem alium episcopum fieri consensisse.' cp. also. Ep. 43.5. Ibid. De unitate. 10.'Hi sunt, qui se ultro apud temerarios convenas sine divina dispositione praeficiunt.'

(5) Ad Fort. Praef.5.'sed nec elementa colenda esse, quae homini secundum dispositionem et praeceptum dei serviunt.'

(6) cp.Dl.7.3.25..'quis tam caecus est ut existimet sine causa esse facta in quibus mira dispositio providentissimae rationis elucet?' for dispositio as the arcanum dei cp.V.Loi Lattanzio p.235 fn 4. Ibid Cristologia e soteriologia p.238.

More usually, however, Lactantius speaks of a more specific dispositio or dispositiones dei.

In the plural form these are the provident acts of God in history. They are the things God has already achieved or is in the course of achieving (quaecumque a deo vel facta sunt vel fiunt) which the demons try to abrograte to themselves in the cause of man's deception: ' nam cum dispositiones dei praesentiant, quippe qui ministri eius fuerunt, interponunt se in his rebus, ut quaecumque a deo uel facta sunt uel fiunt, ipsi potissimum facere aut fecisse uideantur.'(1) They are the 'counsels and arrangements of the eternal majesty' that transcend man's intellectual grasp. Lactantius makes the dispositiones dei almost synonymous here with Veritas(2) as the hidden secret of God: ' ueritas id est arcanum summi dei, qui fecit omnia, ingenio ac propriis sensibus non potest conprehendi: alioquin nihil inter deum hominemque distaret, si consilia et dispositiones illius maiestatis aeternae cogitatio adsequeretur humana.'(3) They are also the arrangements of God as they relate to man and the good of man,(4) and so are a soteriological phenomena.

(1) Dl. 2.16.14.

(2) The following verse replaces consilia et dispositiones with the synonym ratio divina Dl. 1.1.6a. `quod quia fieri non potuit ut homini per se ipsum ratio diuina notesceret...'

(3) Dl. 1.1.5.

(4) Dl. 1.1.6. sums up God's revelation of this truth (ratio divina) in these terms: `aperuit oculos eius aliquando et notionem veritatis munus suum fecit, ut et humanam sapientiam nullam esse monstraret et erranti ac vago viam consequendae inmortalitatis ostenderet.'

The soteriological emphasis is more clearly seen in the singular use of the phrase dispositio dei. This may be interpreted as Lactantius' concept of the divine economy of salvation, in the same sense in which Tertullian uses the idea.(1) In Lactantius the scheme is given eschatological dimensions that form the whole structure of the christology, with the dispositio connoting God's governance of salvation history from the origins of all life(2) to the annihilation of all evil at the very end of time, and the ultimate vindication of life for the just.(3) But the climactic point of the salvific plan is undoubtedly the appearance of Christ: 'In primis igitur scire homines oportet sic a principio processisse dispositionem summi dei, ut esset necesse adpropinquante saeculi termino dei filium descendere in terram, ut constitueret deo templum doceretque iustitiam, uerum tamen non in uirtute angeli aut potestate caelesti, sed in figura hominis et condicione mortali, et cum magisterio functus fuisset, traderetur in manus inpiorum mortemque susciperet, ut ea quoque per uirtutem domita resurgeret et homini, quem induerat, quem gerebat, et spem uincendae mortis offerret et ad praemia inmortalitatis admitteret.'(4)

(1) especially as that plan of salvation is realised in christ and foretold by the prophets. Dl. 4.10.2. ' hanc ergo dispositionem ne quis ignoret, docebimus praedicta esse omnia quae in Christo uidemus esse conpleta.'

(2) Dl. 7.5. 8-9 (..explicanda sunt ista diligentius et plenius, ut dispositio dei et opus voluntasque noscatur. cum posset semper spiritibus suis immortalibus innumerabiles animas procreare, sicut angelos genuit,...excogitavit tamen inennarrabile opus, quemadmodum infinitam multitudinem crearet animum...) Lactantius goes on to narrate the story of the world's creation (vv 10-12), man's creation (vv 13-14) and man's purpose within the dispositio which is to achieve immortality (vv 15-17)

(3) Dl. 7.2.1 '- dispositione summi dei sic ordinatum, ut iniustum hoc saeculum decurso temporum spatio terminum sumat extinctaque protinus omni malitia et piorum animis ad beatam uitam reuocatis quietum tranquillum pacificum, aureum denique ut poetae uocant saeculum deo ipso regnante florescat.'

(4) This dispositio dei is not fulfilled until the end of time, when the secret name of God will be proclaimed. cp Dl. 4.7.2 see. Rev. 22.4.

The pre-existent Son of God therefore descends to earth and is historically manifested at the beginning of the last age of human history. Lactantius is here referring to the eschatological order he will more specifically develop in the septeniarism of Book 7, As the world was created in six days with God resting on the seventh, so the world's history will consist of 6000 years after which all things will be consummated and the condition of human affairs will be remodelled in a better way.(1) The 7000th year will be the reign of the just on earth(2) before a final re-creation of the whole order by God results in the ultimate transformation of the just into the "likeness of angels" after which they enjoy the eternal liturgy of God.(3)

(1) Dl. 7.14-6.'sciant igitur philosophi qui ab exordio mundi saeculorum milia enumerant, nondum sextum millesimum annum esse conclusum. quo numero expleto consummationem fieri necesse est et humanarum rerum statum in melius reformari:'

(2) Dl.7. 14. 10-11. `et sicut deus sex illos dies in tantis rebus fabricandis laborauit, ita et religio eius et ueritas in his sex milibus annorum laboret necesse est, malitia praeualente atque dominante. et rursus quoniam perfectis operibus requieuit die septimo eumque benedixit, necesse est ut in fine sexti millesimi anni malitia omnis aboleatur e terra et regnet per annos mille justitia sitque tranquillitas et requies a laboribus quos mundus iam diu perfert.'

(3) Dl. 7.26.5. `cum uero conpleti fuerint mille anni, renouabitur mundus a deo et caelum conplicabitur et terra mutabitur. et transformabit deus homines in similitudinem angelorum et erunt candidi sicut nix et uersabuntur semper in conspectu omnipotentis et domino suo sacrificabunt et seruient in aeternum.'

This eschatological scheme operates with increasing emphasis from Book 4 onwards.(1) The Son of God's descent to earth at the beginning of the 6th millenium sets in motion the final age when men are either decisively restored to God or alienated from him. Christ is thus a pivotal figure of judgement in an age when evil and righteousness are to engage in their last struggle.(2)

In Bk. 7 we find a scheme of history at once philosophical and scriptually based, and it seems to be offered to both pagan and Christian readers at once. For the first, he offers frequent philosophical arguments in Bk 7, prefacing his septeniarism with a review of the philosophic theories of the ages(3) and greatly relying on the Sibylline writings and apocalypse of Hystaspes throughout.(4) For the second, he bases the entire millenarist scheme on direct scriptural authority and clear scriptural inspiration.(5)

(1) This, even to its millenarist character, is within the mainstream of pre-nicene tradition. cp. Justin. Trypho. 80.5, Irenaeus. Adv. H. 5.33. 1-5, 5.35. 1-12, 5.36.5, Hippolytus. Refutatio.10.34.3. Tertullian. Adv. Marc. 3.24. The chiliastic tradition continues on into Victorinus. cp. De Fab. mundi. 6., Comm. In Apoc. 20.2. For analyses of Lactantian eschatology cf. A. Luneau. L'histoire du salut chez les pères de l'église. Paris 1964. pp.229-234. F. Cumont. Lafin du monde selon les mages occidentaux. RHR. 103 1931 pp 68-93. J. Danielou. La typologie millénariste de la Semaine dans le Christianisme primitif. VC. 2.1948. pp.1-16. R. Pichon. Lactance pp 127f. V. Loi Lattanzio pp 247-252 ibid Cristologia e. soteriologia pp 238-247. and V. Fabrega. Die Chiliaste lehre des Laktanz. JAC 17.1974. pp.126-146.

(2) cp. Dl. 7.15. 7-8.

(3) Dl. 7.14.4.

(4) The Sibylline citations in Bk 7 alone amount to 35 instances whereas for all the other 6 books together the number is only 36. cf. Brandt CSEL 27. pp 258-61. For Hystaspes cf. Dl.7.15.19 7.18.2. Epit. 68.1. see F. Cumont. La fin du monde. p64f.

(5) Eg. the symbolic interpretation of the biblical hexaemeron cf also his avowals of a scriptural foundation at Dl 7.9.10, 7.14.5, 7, 15.

It also seems that the coming of the Son of God is a clear allusion for his Christian readers to the scriptual confession of Christ's incarnation "in the fullness of time":

(Dl. 4.2.5.) 'statuerat enim deus adpropinquante ultimo tempore ducem magnum caelitus mittere.'

(Dl. 4.10.1.) 'ut esset necesse adpropinquante saeculi termino dei filium descendere in terram.'

(Dl. 5.7.1.) 'deus ut parens indulgentissimus adpropinquante ultimo tempore nuntium misit.'

This conception of the fulfilment of time, together with Lactantius' comparable formulae on the completion of the appointed times of God[1] preserves an ancient strand of scriptural apocalyptic christology.

(1) Dl. 7.11.1. 'Inpletis igitur temporibus quae deus morti statuit terminabitur ipsa mors.' Dl.7.14.6:'sciant igitur philosophi.... nondum sextum millesimum annum esse conclusum. quo numero expleto consummationem fieri necesse est et humanarum rerum statum in melius reformari:' Dl. 7.2.1. (dispositione summi dei sic ordinatum, ut inustum hoc saeculum decurso temporum spatio terminum sumat....)

For Lactantius, Christ's appearance in "ultimo tempore" is interpreted as the decree of God the Father ordering the incarnate economy to operate.(1)

The scheme has close affinities to Paul's incarnational formulae in Galations and Ephesians.(2) The incarnate ministry begins with this cry of the fulfilment of the appointed times(3) and the whole mystery of Christ's suffering is similarly seen as a fulfilment of God's plan fore-announced by the prophets:

> ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἃ προκατήγγειλεν διὰ στόματος πάντων τῶν προφητῶν παθεῖν τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπλήρωσεν οὕτως. (4)

This, one of the earliest Kerygmatic formulae of Apostolic times, is substantially the christological structure that is used by Lactantius.(5)

(1) Dl. 4.2.5.- statuerat enim deus...ducem magnum mittere 4.10.1. 'ut esset necesse...dei filium descendere' 5.7.1. 'deus ut parens indulgentissimus...nuntium misit.'

(2) Gal. 4.4. ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον.
Eph. 1.10. εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

(3) Mk. 1.15. ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ λέγων ὅτι Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

(4) Acts. 3.18.

(5) Dl. 4.14.1. 'quibus ex rebus apparet prophetas omnes denuntiasse de Christo...'

Lactantius therefore uses the concept of in ultimo tempore to present an apocalyptic christology in basic agreement with the earliest christological formulae of the New Testament.(1)

The nearest parallels to Lactantius' usage, apart from the explicit apocalyptic details of Revelation are the parallel instances from the Pauline letters - Gal.4.2. and Ephesians 1.10. The Galatian version of the Incarnate mission of the Son of God sent by the Father in the fullness of time, is set in the context of the abolition of the Law, an argument Lactantius retains: ' denuntiauit scilicet deus per ipsum legiferum quod filium suum id est uiuam praesentemque legem missurus esset et illam ueterem per mortalem datam soluturus, ut denuo per eum qui esset aeternus, legem sanciret aeternam.'(2)

(1) The appointed end is an apocalyptic theme (cf. Dan.8.19) describing the growth of evil that will occur in the final age. So, Lactantius narrates the growth of evil in the 6th millenium inaugurated by Christs advent. (Dl. 7.15.7) The persecutions are the fruit of this. cf. figure of "appointed times", Dan.11.27. The same sense of appointed times and their necessary fulfilment is contained in the primary source of Lactantius' eschatology viz Rev.20.3 ('sicut docet Iohannes in Revelatione'.Epit.37.8) see also Justin II Apol. 6. 1-5. Lactantius relies on this Chapter 20 of Revelation for several features of his eschatology not least his explicit millenarism, (cp. Rev.20.4b,6. and Dl.7. 24.2-3) (See V. Loi. Lattanzio pp 247-252) and his teaching on the binding of Satan. (Rev. 20.2, Dl. 7.24.5)

(2) Dl. 4.17.7.

Paul in Galatians is addressing a church composed of disparate elements, Jew and Gentile, which he is attempting to reconcile.(1) Lactantius is not addressing any Jewish readership and consequently sets the "adoption as sons" over and against the Jewish election. The Galation formula 'born of a woman' is developed into two separate treatments - the putting on of a human body, and the birth from a virgin as a symbol of his holy flesh (2) which becomes a redemptive factor - `iussit igitur eum summus pater descendere in terram et humanum corpus induere, ut subiectus passionibus carnis uirtutem ac patientiam non solum uerbis sed etiam factis doceret. renatus est ergo ex uirgine sine patre tamquam homo, ut quemadmodum in prima natiuitate spiritali creatus[est] ex solo deo sanctus spiritus factus est, sic in secunda carnali ex sola matre genitus caro sancta fieret, ut per eum caro, quae subiecta peccato fuerat, ab interitu liberaretur.'(3)

(1) cf Gal. 3.28.

(2) The virgin birth is also used as a symbol of Christ's 'father-lessness' (apator), which reflects in the Son, the unoriginateness (agennetos) of God the Father. cp. Dl. 4.13.1-4.

(3) Epit. 38. 8-9. The passage is an epitomisation of Dl 4.11.7, 14-15, 4.12.1, 4.13.1.

From the hymnal account of the divine Economy in Ephesians[1] Lactantius similarly preserves the concept of adoption as sons through Christ.[2] He retains the concept of the providential plan of God as a hidden mystery (or sacrament) [3] that goes back to the beginning of ages in Christ especially in the way he emphasises the necessity to appreciate the first birth of God's Son as the only key to correctly understanding the second.[4] And he also preserves the account of the incarnate dispositio or economy being inaugurated when the time had been fulfilled.[1]

(1) The Ephesian hymn on the oikonomia (esp.1.9-11) where Christ sums up all things, has itself a probable source in the apocalyptic messianism of 2 Esdra. 12.25.

(2) Eph. 1.5. D1.4.20 passim cp vv 5,11, the notion of the freedom represented in the inheritance (Eph.1.14) is preserved in the equally hymnological pericope at D1.4.20.13.

(3) cp. Eph (1.8-11) (v.9) τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. In Lactantius the Dispositio dei is similarly a truth which is arcanum. (cp D1.1.1.5) and the prophetic proclamation of it is called "the secrets of the prophets" (D1.4.20.1) or "secret writings" (D1.4.15.12) For this sacramental approach to the dispositio cf V. Loi Lattanzio p.235 fn 4. and Ibid. Cristologia e. Soteriologia. p.238.

(4) hence Lactantius prefaces the account of the ministry of Christ (D1.4.10f.) with his pre-existence with God in his first birth.(4.6-9)

(5) Eph. 1.10. εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν,ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ χριστῷ,τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

D1.7.11.1. 'inpletis igitur temporibus quae deus (morti) statuit.' also. D1. 7.2.1. and 7.14.6.

All of these indications illustrate that even if the Pauline conception of the incarnate economy as taught in Galatians and Ephesians is not a primary source for Lactantius' doctrine here, he nonetheless presents a conception of Christ's incarnate mission as the dispositio dei which faithfully records the scriptural outlines of the divine oikonomia. The apocalyptic elements of Lactantius' christology, that is the way in which he locates the appearance of Christ in the millenial scheme of the "fullness of time", suggests that his thought is structured according to the most ancient formulae, and consequently looks back archaically to scriptural confessions rather than pre-figuring the terms of the christological debates of the Nicene Age.(1)

(1) This scriptural emphasis on the economic appearance of Christ (his being sent by the Father's command to fulfil a salvific operation) is the typical background for much of the pre-nicene christological subordinationism. This economic structure provides the correct context for an approach to Lactantius' doctrine of Christ.

(b) Duplex Nativitas

Lactantius approaches the person of Christ as the incarnate Son of God in terms of a distinction between spirit and flesh. The distinction is the key to the correct understanding of Jesus for his pagan audience. Lactantius' argument is that they only see the limited, physical aspect of Christ's being (caro) but they must appreciate the power of deity enshrined within him (spiritus) in order to grasp his true mystery.(1) Consequently Lactantius gives separate teachings on the respective qualities of these aspects of his being. It is clearly his approach to the two-natures(2) of Christ.

(1) Lactantius follows Tertullian in using spiritus when he wishes to connote the divine nature of Christ. see A. Grillmeier. Cht. in christian tradition. vol.1.p.122. and A. D'Ales La théologie de Tertullien. Paris 1905, pp 96-8.
For Lactantius, the union of these two aspects in Christ, of divine spirit and human flesh, is so intimate in the incarnation that men fail to recognise it: 'quae duplex nativitas eius magnum intulit humanis pectoribus errorem' (Dl.4.8.2); it is an offence to their sense of divine propriety (Dl.4.22.3.) He teaches that the only way to appreciate the truth of this great mystery of christ's human birth is to understand that it is only a historical reflection of his divine birth in the pre-existent state, and that the only way to possess such a sacramental knowledge is to adhere to scriptural teaching (Dl.4.30.6). This twofold birth is therefore a "great and illustrious mystery" which "contains the salvation of men". (Epit.38.2).

(2) Lactantius approaches nature on the etymological basis of 'that which follows from a nativity' (Dl. 2.8.21.) and is therefore originate. He chooses to express the divinity of Christ then by the term spiritus rather than divina natura which on his general terms would represent an inconsistency since nature is originate but deity cannot be so (Dl.1.5.24) cp. Cicero. Nat. Deorum. 2.30.77.

Both aspects of spirit and flesh are naturally attributable to Christ since they each follow from a respective nativity. Christ is therefore as unique in having this association of natures as he is in having a "duplex nativitas"(1) - the first "in spiritu" as the Son of God, the second "in carne" as the Son of Mary:(2) 'In primis enim testificamur illum bis esse natum, primum in spiritu, postea in carne, unde aput Hieremiam ita dicitur: priusquam te formarem in utero, novi te. item: beatus qui erat, antequam nasceretur; quod nulli alii contigit praeter Christum. qui cum esset a principio filius dei, regeneratus est denuo secundum carnem. quae duplex natiuitas eius magnum intulit humanis pectoribus errorem circumfuditque tenebras etiam iis qui uerae religionis sacramenta retinebant.'(3)

(1) 'beatus qui erat, antequam nasceretur; quod nulli alii contigit praeter christum.' Dl.4.8.1b. Lactantius cites the first half of this passage as a Jeremian text. It loosely renders the Vetus Latina of Jeremiah.1.5.' et priusquam exires de vulva, sanctificavi te.' And probably gained its present form in Lactantius by being conflated with elements of Ps. 45.2. LXX. διὰ τοῦτο εὐλόγησέν σε ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, just as he will later conflate Luke.3.20f. and Ps.2.7. at Dl.4.15.3. See also Cyprian. Ad Quir.2.29.: 'propterea benedixit te deus in saecula.' (ps. 45.2) Lactantius uses this Psalm twice (Dl.4.8.14 (where his exegesis is independent of Cyprian cf. Ad Quir.2..3) and Dl..4.13.9. which follows the Ad Quir. (2.6,) Lactantius' application of the 'beatus qui erat..' renders it as a demonstration of the eternal birth of Christ, which follows the similar concern of Cyprian (Ad Quir.2.29) to prove the eternity of Christ's reign from similar scriptural proofs.

(2) cf. V. Loi. Lattanzio. pp. 207-210.

(3) Dl. 4.8. 1-2.

Although Lactantius greatly develops on the symmetry of the concept of two births - two advents, more so than any other Father (which consequently emphasises the eschatological structure of his christology)his treatment is nonetheless a basic continuation of a strong apologetic tradition.(1)

The terms of the christology spiritus-caro are derived from Tertullian, as for example in his Adv. Prax. where he teaches the distinction of both, preserved in the una persona of the incarnate Christ.(2)

(1) cp. Justin Trypho. c.32. cp. J.Liebaert. L'incarnation. Vol.1. Des origines au concile de Chalcédoine. Paris 1966. A. Grillmeier. Christ in christian tradition. Vol.1. London 1975. (2nd edn) Such christological antitheses, together with Lactantius' great stress on the economy of salvation history, recall the process of second century christology rather than fourth century thought- the traditions of Irenaeus, Tertullian or Hippolytus, not that of the Nicene age. cf. Grillmeier op. cit. p.113f. A. D'Alès, La Théologie de Tertullien.pp.198-200.

(2) Tertullian Adv. Prax. 27: as when he denies any confused mixture of spiritus-caro in the incarnation as if it were to be envisaged as a substantial transfiguration:-' una iam erit substantia Jesus ex duabus, ex carne et spiritu, mixtura quaedam, ut electrum ex auro et argento, et incipit nec aurum esse, id est spiritus, neque argentum, id est caro'- or again ibid. 'disce igitur cum Nicodemo: quia quod in carne natum est,caro est et quod de spiritu, spiritus est. neque caro spiritus fic, neque spiritus caro, in uno plane esse possunt. ex his Iesus constitit, ex carne homo, ex spiritu deus...' Lactantius has first hand knowledge of this text of Tertullian for he reproduces the immediately following section (Adv. Prax. 28,1.f.) in his own explanation of the name Christus Dl.4.7.

The two terms were exegetical developments of the Apologists, from their source in Romans 1. 3-4[1] and came to be designations of the difference of natures - divine and human.[2]. This Pauline formula: κατὰ σάρκα - κατὰ πνεῦμα is reproduced by Lactantius in his comment on an oracle of Apollo describing Christ: ' θνητὸς ἔην κατὰ σάρκα : sed cum fatetur secundum carnem fuisse mortalem, quod etiam nos praedicamus, consequens est ut secundum spiritum deus fuerit, quod nos adfirmamus.'[3]

And the concept of the two-fold birth can be traced in Irenaeus,[4] Hippolytus[5] and Novatian.[6]

(1) Rom. 1.3-4 - περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα ,τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.
cf. R. Cantalamessa. La primitiva esegesi cristologica di Romani 1.3-4. e Luca 1.35. RSLR 2. 1966. pp.69-80. Also A.Wlosok Laktanz und die philosophische gnosis p.157f.

(2) cf. V. Loi. Lattanzio. p.209

(3) cp. Dl. 4.13.12.

(4) Irenaeus. Apost. Preaching. 30. SC.62. p.80. Ed. Froidevaux. Paris 1959. cp. also Adv.H. 3.16.3 which expounds Paul's pneuma-sarx formula.

(5) Hippolytus of Rome. cf. R. Cantalamessa La primitiva esegesi cristologica. p.79. Benedictio Jacobi. (T.U. 38.1. Leipzig 1911. p.32.) "By saying a 'lion's cub' (Gen. 49.9) it shows his birth according to the spirit (τὴν κατὰ πνεῦμα γέννησιν) as King from King, but it also does not fail to mention his birth according to the flesh (τὴν κατὰ σάρκα γέννησιν)" Ben. Jacobi. 27. (T.U. 38.1. p.110) "The word was born both according to the spirit and according to the flesh, in so far as he was both God and man, and the prophets have rightly spoken of the bosom of the Father, and the bosom of a mother."

(6) Novatian. De Trin. 22.131. 'Dum in forma dei esse christus dicitur et dum in nativitatem secundum carne sese exinanisse monstratur.' cf. Ibid. 24.135-8. Novatian's exegesis of Lk. 1.35. (quod ex te nascetur sanctum, vocabitur filius dei) cf. Loi. Lattanzio. p.196. Lactantius recalls the same exegetical tradition at Epit. 38.9. (paralleling Dl. 4.13.2-5):'ut quemadmodum in prima nativitate spiritali creatus (est) ex solo deo sanctus spiritus factus est, sic in secunda carnali ex sola matre genitus caro sancta fieret, ut per eum caro, quae subiecta peccato fuerat, ab interitu liberaretur.'

Tertullian affords Lactantius a more immediate source for the spiritus-caro formula and also provides him with the basic structure of a spirit-christology which the formula encourages (as will be demonstrated in the later pneumatological section). Tertullian's argument on the nature of Christ is especially suited to Lactantius' needs in that it is itself expressed in an apologetic context.(1) Lactantius' christological doctrine shows several signs of being indebted to this twenty-first chapter of the Apologeticum (2) and most importantly, it provides him with the systematic parallelism of the two advents of Christ.

(1) Tertullian. Apol. 21. 'Ita et de spiritu spiritus, et de deo deus modulo alterum, non numero, gradu, non statu fecit, et a matrice non recessit, sed excessit, iste igitur dei radius, ut retro semper praedicabatur, delapsus in virginem quandam, et in utero eius caro figuratus, nascitur homo deo mistus. caro spiritu instructa nutritur, adolescit, affatur, docet, operatur, et christus est.'

(2) eg. Lactantius repeats Tertullian's formulae and titles: 'nascitur homo deo mistus.' cp. Dl.4.13.6.'ex utroque genere permixtum;' (he has specifically altered Cyprian's version Ad quir. 2.10.1."ex utroque genere concretus",to bring it in line with Tertullian's expression.) Cp. also Tertullian's:'christus ille filius dei... arbiter et magister, illuminator atque deductor generis humani,' and Dl.4.10.1., 4.26.25 (for Christ as the magister hominum,) and (Dl.6.18.2 for Christ as the illuminator..see. Loi. Cristologia e soteriologia p.267.) The 'root' and 'ray' analogies of Tertullian are also reproduced by Lactantius. (et cum radius ex sole porrigitur, portio ex summa; sed sol erit in radio, quia solis est radius, nec separatur substantia, sed extenditur)..cp. Dl.4.29.5.

Lactantius reproduces Tertullian's thought here, even to its apologetic details (the anti-Jewish context)[1], but having found all the basic materials for his christology in the previous apologists (the flesh-spirit christology, the two-fold birth, and two-fold advent), Lactantius goes further than any of the previous Latin apologists in synthesising all these materials to form a cohesive and balanced structure: an eschatological christology based on the antithesis of two births and two comings.

(1) Tertullian. Apol.21.15. 'duobus enim adventibus eius significatis, primo qui iam expunctus est in humilitate conditioni humanae; secundo, qui concludendo seculo imminet in sublimitate divinitatis exsertae: primum non intelligendo, secundum, quem manifestius praedicatum sperant, unum existimaverunt.' cp also Adv. Judaeos. 14. 1f and Adv. Marc. 3.7.1f...Compare with Dl. 4.12.13-14: 'quomodo igitur Iudaei et confitentur et sperant Christum dei,qui hunc idcirco reprobauerant, quia ex homine natus est? nam cum ita sit a deo constitutum, ut idem Christus bis adueniat in terram, semel ut unum deum gentibus nuntiet, deinde rursus ut regnet, quomodo in secundum eius aduentum credunt qui in primum non crediderunt? and Dl.4.16.12-13; non credebant filium dei esse ignorantes duos eius adventus a prophetis esse praedictos, primum in humilitate carnis obscurum, secundum in fortitudine majestatis manifestum! Also Dl.7.1.24. 'sic in hoc secundum referemus adventum, quem Iudaei quoque et confitentur et sperant, sed frustra...'

THE FIRST BIRTH

The first birth of the Son of God is expounded at Dl.2.8. and in a more developed form between Dl.4.6 and 4.9.In Bk.two Lactantius wishes to introduce the concept of Satan in order to develop his treatment on the evils suffered by mankind after they had departed from God's worship. He particularly wishes to explain the miraculous prodigies that the pagan worshippers use as an apologetic defence of their religion.(1) He reduces all such prodigies to a Satanic origin and defines them "simulati numinis praestrigias".(2) The close association in Lactantius' text of the Son of God and Satan, who both seem to have been with God before the world was made,(3) proved from antiquity to be a stumbling-block in the Church's appreciation of Lactantius' theology. Later orthodoxy looked askance at the very suggestion of such a proximity.(4) In recent studies(5) the passage has caused even greater misunderstandings.

(1) Dl. 2.7. 1-23. cp. Dl. 28.1.f.

(2) Dl. 2.8.1. 'praestrigias':- the deceiving, insubstantial illusions of the magician or juggler cf. Cicero. Nat.D.3.29.73. Aulus Gellius 14.1.2. (Epit 28.6: praestrigias ad circumscribendos oculos..)

(3) Dl. 2.8. 3-4.'cum esset deus ad excogitandum prouidentissimus, ad faciendum sollertissimus, antequam ordiretur hoc opus mundi, quoniam pleni et consummati boni fons in ipso erat, sicut est semper, ut ab eo bonum tamquam riuus oreretur longeque proflueret, produxit similem sui spiritum, qui esset uirtutibus patris dei praeditus. quomodo autem id uoluerit, in quarto libro docere conabimur. deinde fecit alterum, in quo indoles diuinae stirpis non permansit. itaque suapte inuidia tamquam ueneno infectus est et ex bono ad malum transcendit suoque arbitrio, quod illi a deo liberum fuerat datum, contrarium sibi nomen adsciuit.'

(4) In what is clearly a theologically motivated alteration Codex S (cf Brandt CSEL 19. Proleg. XLVIIIf) changes "deinde (deus) fecit alterum, in quo indoles divinae stirpis non permansit"(Dl.2.8.4) into:-"fecit per ipsum quem genuit alterum corruptibilis naturae". cf. Brandt CSEL.19.p.129. The later scribe thus emphasises the distinction between the generation of Christ and the creation (fecit) of Satan, and subordinates Satan as an angelic creature made through the operation of the Word.

(5) cf. B. Altaner. Patrology. London 1960. p.210. H.Von Campenhausen. The fathers of the Latin Church. pp. 75-76. V.Loi. Lattanzio p.203., A. Grillmeier Christ in Christian Tradition. Vol.1.p.201.f.

Vincenzo Loi finds Lactantius' doctrine of the divine generations of the two spirits (at 2.8.3)'hardly differentiated'(1). Altaner too finds no distinction in the "generation" of the spirits: "It is true, in the beginning God generated a third being beside the Son, but the latter grew envious of the Son, fell into sin and is henceforth called the devil (Inst. 2.8)"(2). But Von Campenhausen's analysis of the text in question goes even further: "Everything Tertullian and Novatian had achieved for a systematic teaching on the trinity is forgotten by Lactantius. What he has to offer instead is a massive mythological genealogy of divinities. We hear that God - even before He created the multiplicity of angels - had brought forth as the "second", a dearly beloved Son. That means that Christians worship "two Gods", but this need not disturb anybody, because a "Father" and a "Son" always belong together in their nature, and a complete harmony exists always between these two.....God created, however, yet a third spirit, in whom the "nature of his divine genus" failed continuously to prevail (Inst. 2.8.4). Followed by a part of the angels, he rebelled out of jealousy against the second and therefore became a wicked anti-god, the antitheus (Inst.2.9.13) This quarrel within the divine family is interpreted by Lactantius in terms of the philosophy of religion with the help of the stoic teaching on the elements."(3)

(1) V.Loi Lattanzio p.203."i due spiriti antagonisti non si differenziano nel processo generativo da parte del padre"

(2) B. Altaner. Patrology. p.210 Altaner's entire theological analysis of the Dl amounts to three notes (a) the pneumatological oddity and the generation of Satan, (b) the chiliasm and (c) his animistic creatianism. (O.D.19).

(3) H. Von Campenhausen. The fathers of the Latin Church. p.76. cf Ibid. p.77 - "in his writings Lactantius fails to mention the Holy Spirit as such. The "third" was indeed the devil!".

Von Campenhausen's method of putting inverted commas round phrases he wishes to emphasise in the above passage makes it appear that he is citing the text of Lactantius in a straightforward narrative, when he is not. The interpretation is more his own creation than an exegesis of Lactantius(1) and the emphases are his own, not citations from the text. The complaint of Vincenzo Loi and B. Altaner was the failure of the Dl to differentiate the generations of Christ and Satan and yet it seems that Lactantius is quite careful on this point. It is important to remember the context of the argument at 2.8.3.f, for this is not to give a theological teaching on the nature of the Christian deity, but summarily to introduce the scriptural notion of the devil in order to preface and explain his subsequent account of the growth of evil amongst mankind. Lactantius himself twice announces that more complete treatmentsin Bk.4(2) will replace his brief account of the Son's generation here in Bk.2.(3). In the account in Bk.4. 6-9, Satan does not appear at all, which suggests that the role of Satan in Bk.2. is given greater predominance not as an aspect of his doctrine of God, but as a scripturally based principle of his doctrine of evil.

(1) Conclusions are fathered onto Lactantius without justification such as "This means that christians worship two gods" - which the text of the Dl expressly refutes. The whole of Bk.4, Chapter 29 is a demonstration of the unity of God, Father and Son. Where Lactantius states the pagan objection at 4.29.1, Von Campenhausen takes this as his own final solution. The invalidity of such an interpretation can be readily guaged from 4.29.12-13:"unus est enim, solus, liber, deus summus, carens origine, cuia ipse est origo rerum et in eo simul et filius et omnia continentur. quapropter cum mens et uoluntas alterius in altero sit uel potius una in utroque, merito unus deus uterque appellatur, quia quidquid est in patre, ad filium transfluit et quidquid est in filio, a patre descendit." cp. Epit.44.4. "nec tamen sic habendum est, tamquam duo sint dii. Pater enim ac filius unum sunt."

(2) viz. 4.6-9.

(3) cp. Dl.2.8.36.'quomodo autem id voluerit, in quarto libro docere conabimur' and 2.8.7b'de quo nunc parcius, quod alio loco et virtus eius et nomen et ratio enarranda nobis erit.'

In addition the terms which Lactantius uses to relate the manner of the two spirits' 'generations' also resist the interpretation placed upon them by the commentators because a distinction between Christ and Satan is perfectly apparent.

In Bk.2. Lactantius uses the patristic analogy of the stream from the spring of goodness to preface and introduce the concept of the Son's generation from the Father,(1) an image which is consistently used by Tertullian to argue for the essential unity of Father and Son.

Moreover the generation of the Son is a productio from a 'father',(2) whereas God is never called 'father' in regard to Satan, either in Bk 2 or anywhere else in the Dl.

(1) Dl.2.8.3.'...quoniam pleni et consummati boni fons in ipso erat, sicut est semper, ut ab eo bonum tamquam riuus oreretur longeque proflueret, produxit similem sui spiritum, qui esset uirtutibus patris dei praeditus.' cp Tertullian's analogy of the spring:- Adv. Prax. 8, his series of similar analogies are concerned to demonstrate that the divine monarchy is not prejudiced by Christ: 'Nec dubitaverim et filum dicere et radicis fruticem, et fontis fluvium, et solis radium, quia omnis origo parens est, et omne, quod ex origine profertur, progenies est, multo magis sermo dei, qui etiam proprie nomen filii accepit; nec frutex tamen a radice, nec fluvius a fonte nec radius a sole discernitur, sicut nec a deo sermo.' Lactantius uses both Tertullian's analogies of fountain-stream, and sun-ray in Dl. 4.29.4-5

(2) Dl. 2.8.3.' produxit similem sui spiritum, qui esset virtutibus patris dei praeditus.'

The concept of productio signifies "begetting"(1) as quite distinct from "creating". Only the first spirit therefore can be said to be "generated" from God. Satan is quite clearly made/created by God not begotten:- (2.8.4. (deinde (deus) fecit alterum in quo indoles divinae stirpis non permansit.) Lactantius therefore makes a perfectly clear distinction between the divine begetting of a Son who remains within a natural divine ambit(2) and the making of another spirit who does not remain within this divine relationship, and the arguments of both Loi and Altaner must be discounted.(3)

(1) In classical usage productio denotes a father's begetting of a Son: 'ego is sum, qui te produxi, pater.' Plautus. Rudens. 4.4.129. cp Lucilius. Ap, Non. 373.2. The "produxit similem..." of Dl.2.8.3. recalls Cicero's description of a father begetting a son in II Verr. 1.12.32. "quem sui simillimum produxit". This reading of productio as equivalent to a technical term for begetting in Lactantius is supported by reference to Dl.4.6.1. where he gives the clarification he promised at 2.8.3. Here the text reads: (deus... genuit sanctum et incorruptibilem spiritum.) The two adjectives he attaches to spiritum specify its divine character. The codex Parisinus (R) offers a text reading of genuit for the produxit of 2.8.3. but this is probably a later post-nicene redaction when the Arian crisis had demanded greater precision in the technical vocabulary of the Son's origination. cp. Brandt. CSEL. 19.p.129 ibid. intro. xxxi ff.

(2) By implication, then, and in contra-distinction to Satan, Christ does possess "indoles divinae stirpis". Indoles is the natural quality or inborn nature of a thing. Stirps is equally a generative concept viz 'stock' or 'family lineage'. Literally it connotes a root and one can perhaps see the recurrence here of Tertullian's 'frutex a radice' image. In short, Lactantius attributes to Christ a divine nature, and to Satan a created nature.

(3) The former has used this argument of non-differentiation to conclude that Lactantius' christology is essentially Arian in character:"una concezione ....la quale non si discosta molto dalle interpretazioni teologiche che furono patrocinate anche dagli Ariani". Loi Lattanzio p.203.

The distinction is in scripturally inspired forms, and the explanation of the corruption of Satan in terms of his envy of the Son of God suggests that rather than the "massive mythological genealogy of divinities" which Von Campenhausen sees, Lactantius is reproducing an orthodox doctrine of the divine generation of the Son from the Father, and separately teaching the Old Testament tradition of the fall of Satan.(1)

(1) Wisdom. 2.24. LXX, φθόνῳ δὲ διαβόλου θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον. Lactantius' awareness of the greek tradition of this scripture may account for his otherwise inexplicable introduction of the greek term Diabolos at Dl.2.8.6. The first 3 chapters of Wisdom are used several times by Lactantius in the course of the Dl. The verses immediately preceding the above citation (viz Wisdom 2.12-22) are directly quoted at Dl.4.16.7 The latin translation Lactantius uses here has several divergences from the LXX, and his source is independent of Cyprian (Ad Quir 2.14) who only reproduces parts of the whole passage. Other scriptural authorities can be found in Jude. v.6. and Jn.8.44. The NT. also provides the notion of Satan as an antitheus, though not in the ontological manner in which Von Campenhausen reads it, but in the ethical sphere which Lactantius also represents. Hence Satan is "the god of this age." — Itala, 2 Cor. 4.4. Tertull. Adv. Marc. 5.11, 2.29.

Von Campenhausen's analysis of Lactantius' doctrine, cited previously, claims that Satan is a member of a divine Triad, and interprets Lactantius as teaching that the devil lapsed from being a good divinity into being a bad one - an '<u>antitheus</u>'. The <u>antitheus</u> of 2.9.13, however, is not an ontological concept but a moral one and refers to Satan's pretended usurpation of divine rights especially in so far as the doctrine of evil is extended from 2.9 to 2.18 to account for man's fall from grace in terms of the corruption of true worship by demonic deceits.(1) This is why Lactantius explains the prodigies of the false cult as <u>simulati numinis praestrigias</u>(2). Satan is therefore falsely usurping the role of God and Lactantius is offering the concept of <u>antitheus</u> as a parallel to the <u>antichrist</u> of Dl. 7.17.4 who similarly usurps the role of God and Christ. This second spirit is clearly, then, not a divine figure.(3)

(1) The fall of man is expounded in cultic terms Dl.2.13.9 -2.14.14 and 2.16.1.-2.17.12. The demonic theory of the pagan cults is epitomised at Dl 2.17. 10-12.

(2) Dl. 2.8.1.

(3) <u>Antitheus</u> cannot therefore be interpreted as an anti-god of a manichean type, but as the envious adversary of God (aemulum dei).

Von Campenhausen's analysis of a 'third God' who became corrupted is supported by his own translation of D1.2.8.4 which he renders: "a third spirit in whom the nature of his divine genus failed continuously to prevail".(1) The important adjective "continuously", however, is either introduced into the text without warrant or the verb permansit is over-freely translated. He also reads the minor manuscripts in preference here to the critical text and so introduces the personal pronoun (suaque) to govern indoles, which he then attributes to Satan: (in quo indoles suaque divinae stirpis non permansit)in whom (viz. Satan) the nature of his (Satan's) divine genus failed continuously to prevail).

Yet even if one were to accept the evidence of the minor codices, there is no grammatical reason to suggest that the personal pronoun should do anything other than refer to the governing subject of the sentence which is (Deus fecit,)or that of the whole clause which at 2.8.3 is the following: (cum esset deus ad excogitandum providentissimus...) For to this subject of Deus providentissimus the questioned text is linked by a lengthy and consistent series of personal pronouns.(2)

(1) Brandt's text (2.8.4) reads: ' deinde fecit alterum, in quo indoles diuinae stirpis non permansit. itaque suapte inuidia tamquam ueneno infectus est et ex bono ad malum transcendit suoque arbitrio, quod illi a deo liberum fuerat datum, contrarium sibi nomen adsciuit.' and the Mss variants are as follows: indolis (s) Parisinus 1664s. permaneret (R) Parisinus. 1663r. Itaque) suaque (B) Bononiensis 701S Su(aqu)e (G) Sangallensis 213G. For the relative weight of the codices cf Brandt. CSEL.19.pp xiii- LXXIV. Bononiensis and Sangallensis belong to the same family (Brandt ψ) The four other Ms. families do not include the suaque variant. For the corruption of the text cf. Brandt CSEL.19.pp. XLVIII -LIII,+p.130

(2) viz :...quoniam boni fons in ipso (Deo) erat."
:...ut ab eo (Deo) tamquam rivus..." D1. 2.8.3.
:...similem sui (Dei) spiritum.."

The text should read then: "Then God made another (being/spirit) in whom the nature of the divine lineage did not (remain/continue)." It is impossible therefore to interpret Lactantius as teaching the divine nature of Satan, or including him within some form of a mythological Triad. The text Von Campenhausen uses to do this is mistranslated and overemphasised, and in the parallel passages where Lactantius later elucidates his thought he clearly resists any such interpretation.

In the account of the Son's 1st birth Lactantius does not address the question of co-eternity as such but is content to reproduce such scriptural confessions of pre-existence as: "before the ages"(1), "before the world was made",(2) or "from the beginning".(3) Lactantius' conception of the pre-existence of the Son is expressed in the typical formulae:- (D1.2.8.3.)

(a) 'antequam ordiretur hoc opus mundi....(Deus) produxit similem sui spiritum'

(b) (4.6.1) '- antequam praeclarum hoc opus mundi adoriretur (Deus) spiritum genuit.'

(c) (Ep.37.1) '- in principio antequam mundum institueret...filium sibi ipse progenuit.'

(d) (Ep. 38.2) 'primum de deo in spiritu (natus est) ante ortum mundi.'

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(1) Eg. Wisdom predestined for Christians before the ages began. cf. 1. Cor.2.7.

(2) Jn. 17.5.

(3) Pre-existent Wisdom. Jn.2.13. and Prov.8.23. which Lactantius cites at D1.4.6.6.' dominus condidit me initium viarum suarum in opera sua, ante saeculum fundavit me: in principio antequam terram faceret...ante omnes colles genuit me.'

The use of these formulae locates Lactantius in the typical tradition of pre-nicene economic christology. Here, the role of the pre-existent Son of God is pre-eminently a creative one - that creative Wisdom of God foretold in the Old Testament. Lactantius continues the New Testament tradition of Christ's role as the creative agent of the world(1) and finds apologetical parallels for the scriptural tradition in the Demiourgos of the Hermetic, Sibylline, and philosophic literature.(2)

This Son of God, then, is identified in the Institutes with creative wisdom(3); an aspect of his doctrine of the first birth which is to become increasingly important as an explanation of the second birth (in the incarnation), where Christ fulfils the role of a teacher of wisdom on earth.

(1) Heb. 1.2. ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας.

Heb. 11.3. Πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι.
cp Jn. 1.10. Lactantius' teaching on the Son's creative role is wholly composed of scriptural testimonies, occuring: Dl. 4.8 14-16 (viz Ps. 33.6, Ps. 45.1, Eccles. 24. 5-7, and Jn. 1. 1-3) An exception to this is Dl. 2.8.7 which presents a brief synopsis without the use of testimonies but evidently synthesising OT and philosophic imagery.

(2) Dl. 4.6. 8-9 (citing Prov. 8.31) 'ego eram cui adgaudebat. cottidie autem iucundabar ante faciem eius, cum laetaretur orbe perfecto. idcirco illum Trismegistus δημιουργὸν τοῦ θεοῦ et Sibylla σύμβουλον appellat, quod tanta sapientia et uirtute sit instructus a deo patre, ut consilio eius et manibus uteretur in fabricatione mundi.'

(3) cp. Dl. 4.6.6.f. also Dl. 4.7.1.' cuius prima nativitas non modo antecesserit mundum, verum etiam prudentia disposuerit, virtute construxerit.'

The economic principles behind Lactantius' mind can be clearly discerned. In the summary introduction to his Christology in Bk.2. the "productio" of the Son is explained in terms of God spreading his goodness out like a stream. The productio of the Son is therefore a revelatory movement of God's own being:-' cum esset deus ad excogitandum prouidentissimus, ad faciendum sollertissimus, antequam ordiretur hoc opus mundi, quoniam pleni et consummati boni fons in ipso erat, sicut est semper, ut ab eo bonum tamquam riuus oreretur longeque proflueret, produxit similem sui spiritum, qui esset uirtutibus patris dei praeditus.'(1) In the fourth book the economic basis of the Son's generation is specified even more clearly. Lactantius not only finds a basis for Christ's historical ministry of teaching in his pre-historical role as divine wisdom, he also makes use of the title "word" in order to demonstrate that Christs revelatory function is an economic manifestation of his essential relationship with the Father.

(1) This revelatory role essentially distinguishes the Word from the angels who are "silent spirits". The angels experience an exitio, the son a processio from God:- D1.4.8.6-7. ' sed tamen sanctae litterae docent, in quibus cautum est illum dei filium dei esse sermonem itemque ceteros angelos dei spiritus esse. nam sermo est spiritus cum voce aliquid significante prolatus. sed tamen quoniam spiritus et sermo diuersis partibus proferuntur, siquidem spiritus naribus, ore sermo procedit, magna inter hunc dei filium ceterosque angelos differentia est. illi enim ex deo taciti spiritus exierunt, quia non ad doctrinam dei tradendam, sed ad ministerium creabantur. ille uero cum sit et ipse spiritus, tamen cum uoce ac sono ex dei ore processit sicut verbum. This 'creation for a ministry' looks to the angelic doctrine of Heb. Chapter 1 which sets out the distinction between the Son of God and the angelic spirits in similar terms as Lactantius; the son fulfils a salvific economy in Hebrews that elevates him above the angelic order. cp 'ad ministerium creabantur' and Heb. 1. 13-14.
πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἴρηκέν ποτε, Κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου; οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶν λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα .....;
Satan is one of these spirits made for a ministerium/diakonian (Epit 22.3) hence to be radically distinguished from the Son.

The processio of the Son from the Father is again explained wholly in terms of an economic revelation: 'ille uero cum sit et ipse spiritus, tamen cum uoce ac sono ex dei ore processit sicut uerbum, ea scilicet ratione, quia uoce eius ad populum fuerat usurus, id est quod ille magister futurus esset doctrinae dei et caelestis arcani ad homines perferendi. ipsum primo locutus est, ut per eum ad nos loqueretur et ille uocem dei ac uoluntatem nobis reuelaret.'(1)

The structure of this pre-existence christology clearly shows the marks of the tradition of the Apologists and the Logos-doctrine, not least in Lactantius' intimate connection between the Processio of God's vox/sermo (4.8) and the incarnate economy of salvation. The elaborated distinction between the Logos endiathetos and prophorikos is not preserved in the Institutes however(2) though it remains even in the christology of Tertullian.(3)

(1) The caelestis arcani echoes Romans, and demonstrates the apologetic context (a revelation for the pagans) which is constantly behind Lactantius' thought. cp. Rom.16.25. τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑμᾶς στηρίξαι κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μυστηρίου χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσιγημένου.

(2) Except in so far as the "vocalem spiritum procendentem de ore (dei)" looks to its apologetic roots in the Logos prophorikos of the second century theologians. (cp. Theophilus. Ad Aut. 2.10.22. Hippolytus Con. Noet. 10, Justin Trypho. 61. Tatian Adv.Gr.5. Tertullian Adv. Prax. 6) The creative function of the son in Lactantius, particularly the use of the wisdom tradition of Prov.8.22, similarly looks back to the apologetic doctrine that the word was uttered for the sake of creation cp. e.g. Hippol. Con.Noet.10.

(3) Who teaches that the word is uttered (prophorikos) simultaneously with God's process of creation [- Adv. Prax. 7:1. 'Tunc igitur etiam ipse sermo speciem et ornatum suum sumit, sonum et vocem, cum dicit Deus: Fiat lux. Haec est nativitas perfecta sermonis, dum ex Deo procedit: conditus ab eo primum ab cogitatum in nomine Sophiae: Dominus condidit me initium viarum'] though the same had been . eternally with God as his immanent (endiathetos) reason, Adv.Prax 5:- 'Ante omnia enim Deus erat solus, ipse sibi et mundus et locus et omnia. Solus autem, quia nihil aliud extrinsecus præter illum. Cæterum, ne tunc quidem solus; habebat enim secum, quam habebat in semetipso, rationem suam scilicet. Rationalis etiam Deus, et ratio in ipso prius; et ita, ab ipso omnia. Quæ ratio, sensus ipsius est. Hanc Græci λόγον dicunt, quo vocabulo etiam sermonem appellamus.'

Nonetheless Lactantius' conception of the vocal spirit (4.8.9) shows several signs of depending on Tertullian's Logos doctrine of Adv. Prax.7. Not only does the same exegetical material reoccur(1), but the apologetic explanations show a certain parallelism. One can also note how the economic bias of Lactantius' christology is witnessed even more strikingly, and is shown to have an evident apologetic inspiration, in the fact that he devotes only three chapters of Bk.4. to its theoretical exposition(2) while the rest of the chapters(3) are given over to the incarnate economy.

The Logos doctrine of the apologetic tradition taught the procession of God's word for the sake of creation and, as it is preserved in Tertullian at least, that the incarnate economy was the final stage of the Logos' process towards a substantive personal elaboration.(4)

(1) Tertullian uses a catena of; Prov. 8-22f., (cf Dl.4.6.6f) Ps 2.7 (cf Dl. 4.15.3), Jn 1.3 (cp Dl. 4.8.16) and Ps. 33.6 (cp Dl. 4.8.14)

(2) Dl. 4. 6-9.

(3) Dl. 4.10-4. 30.

(4) cf. H.R. Mackintosh. The person of Jesus Christ. Edinburgh 1948. p.155

This conception of the apologists, that the economy actually advances the mode of being of the Logos in some way, is partly preserved in Lactantius, when he speaks of the second birth of God's Son. The hermetic literature presented the essential unoriginateness of God (agenetos)(1) or his self-origination (autogenes)(2) by means of the twofold description motherless and fatherless:'- ipse enim pater deus, origo et principium rerum, quoniam parentibus caret, ἀπάτωρ atque ἀμήτωρ a Trismegisto verissime nominatur, quod ex nullo sit procreatus.'(3) Lactantius is especially enthusiastic about the text,(4) because it at once embraces a scriptural formula(5) and allows him to develop his apologetic demonstration.

(1) cf. G.L. Prestige. God in patristic thought pp.37-54. see Dl. 4.13.2-5

(2) cp. Lactantius' references to the Sibylline quotation at Dl.1.17.13 "a Sibylla autogenes et agenetos et apoietos nominatur." See R.m. Ogilvie. The Library of Lactantius. pp. 32-33.

(3) Dl. 4.13.2.

(4) viz "verissime nominatur".

(5) cp. Heb. 7.3 where the priest Melchisidec is taken as a type of Christ:- ἀπάτωρ,ἀμήτωρ, ἀγενεαλόγητος, μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων,ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ, μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές.

Lactantius therefore argues that the second birth in the flesh was fitting for the Son himself (bis nasci oportuit) irrespective of the effect it had on mankind, for the virgin birth would mean that Christ was "fatherless" in his second birth just as he was "motherless" in his first. Lactantius here interprets the whole incarnation on the basis of the father's will to make the Son like him in all things(1):

'sed tamen nasci eum voluit tamquam hominem, ut per omnia summo patri similis existeret...'(2) or again: idcirco etiam filium bis nasci oportuit, ut et ipse fieret ἀπάτωρ atque ἀμήτωρ.(3)

The attribution of both adjectives <u>motherless</u> and <u>fatherless</u> is therefore a demonstration of Christs divinity, a divinity that flows from that of the supreme father, since Christ is possessed of the father's characteristics, just as he outlined in his account of the first birth at Dl.4.6.(4)

(1) The 'similis' here parallels the 'similis' of 2.8.3. ((Deus) produxit similem sui spiritum), but here the phrase <u>ut per omnia</u> extends the significance of this likeness into a dynamic concept and so presents the christological structure as essentially economic.

(2) Dl. 4.13.1.

(3) Dl. 4.13.2.

(4) Dl. 4.6.1-2 this passage again parallels Dl. 2.8.3. and now enlarges on the earlier phrase: (virtutibus patris dei praeditus) :-
'Deus igitur machinator constitutorque rerum, sicut in secundo libre diximus, antequam praeclarum hoc opus mundi adoriretur, sanctum et incorruptibilem spiritum genuit, quem filium nuncuparet. et quamuis alios postea innumerabiles creauisset, quos angelos dicimus, hunc tamen solum primogenitum diuini nominis appellatione dignatus est, patria scilicet uirtute ac maiestate pollentem. The third verse includes Christ within the divine power: summi dei filium, qui sit potestate maxima praeditus.'

The concept of this two-fold birth is set out in the terms of spiritus-caro :'in prima enim natiuitate spiritali ἀμήτωρ fuit, quia sine officio matris a solo deo patre generatus est, in secunda uero carnali ἀπάτωρ fuit, quoniam sine patris officio uirginali utero procreatus est, ut mediam inter deum hominemque substantiam gerens nostram hanc fragilem inbecillamque naturam quasi manu ad inmortalitatem posset educere. factus est et dei filius per spiritum et hominis per carnem, id est et deus et homo.'(1) This conjunction of spirit and flesh in the person of Christ constitutes him a mediator between God and Man. This aspect of the incarnate economy, as a soteriological factor, is taken up again in 4.25 and made even more specific: ' sed tamen ut certum esset a deo missum, non ita illum nasci oportuit, sicut homo nascitur ex mortali utroque concretus, sed ut appareret etiam in homine illum esse caelestem, creatus est sine opera genitoris. habebat enim spiritalem patrem deum et sicut pater spiritus eius deus sine matre, ita mater corporis eius uirgo sine patre. fuit igitur et deus et homo, inter deum atque hominem medius constitutus, unde illum Graeci μεσίτην uocant, ut hominem perducere ad deum posset id est ad inmortalitatem: quia si deus tantum fuisset, ut supra dictum est, exempla uirtutis homini praebere non posset, si homo tantum, non posset homines ad iustitiam cogere, nisi auctoritas ac uirtus homine maior accederet.'(2)

(1) Dl. 4.13. 3-5

(2) Dl. 4.25. 3-5.

The reference to Christ as the Mesites yet again witnesses a New Testament foundation in the Epistle to the Hebrews(1). Lactantius' conception of this mediating stance effected by the spiritus-caro(2) conjunction is evidently elaborated in theological terms more than philosophical, or anthropological. His terms of the christological union(3) are :-

(a) '.. et homini, quem induerat, quem gerebat...'(4)

(b)' filius dei nasceretur sicut homo.'(5)

(c)'..mediam inter deum hominemque substantiam gerens nostram hanc fragilem inbecillamque naturam...'(6)

(d) 'fuit igitur et deus et homo, inter deum atque hominem medius constitutus...'(7)

(e)'..interim et deum fuisse et hominem ex utroque genere permixtum..'(8)

(1) cp. Heb. 8.6, 9.15, 12.24.

(2) spiritus-caro, the respective symbols of divine and human nature. cp. A. Grillmeier. Cht in christian tradition 1. p.122. V.Loi Lattanzio p.209.

(3) cp. V. Loi Lattanzio pp.220-226. ibid. cristologia e soteriologia. pp 251-256. Even though Lactantius does refer to 'putting on a body','being born as man', nonetheless his favourite formula is the taking of human flesh.

(4) Dl. 4.10.1b

(5) Dl. 4.10-3A.

(6) Dl. 4.13-4.

(7) Dl. 4. 25.5.

(8) Dl. 4.13.6.

The emphasis on the incarnate son being "in the middle" between God and man expresses,then, the concept of mediation rather than a confusion of natures. In the way Lactantius clearly feels no pressing need to elaborate the terms of that union, he is looking back to the tradition of the earlier apologists, not to the debates of the following generation. The most specific explanation Lactantius offers is the phrase "ex utroque genere permixtum", which appears to be a conflation of the formulae of Tertullian and Cyprian and which itself makes no advance in articulating the terms of the union.(1)

(1) Lactantius adopts Cyprian's title from the Ad Quirinum 2.10. which also supplies him with a formula signifying the mediating role of Jesus: 'Quod homo et deus Christus ex utroque genere concretus, ut mediator esse inter nos et patrem posset.' To this basic formula he makes certain alterations: viz permixtus for concretus, the change is difficult to explain for elsewhere in the Dl 'permixtus' is used in a disparaging sexual sense (eg. Dl.1.20. 31, 2.12.1. 4..8.4.) though it most probably reflects a reminiscence of Tertullian's vocabulary which prefers mixtus to signify the mode of union (cp. Adv. Marc. 2.27: 'filius dei miscens in semetipso hominem et deum.' Apol.21. nascitur homo deo mistus.').
cp. Latin Irenaeus. Adv. Haer. 4.20.4. 'commixtio et communio dei et hominis.' Novatian also follows Tertullian in this: De Trin. 25.5. 'permixtus et sociatus.'

(c) Duo Adventus

Lactantius presents the concept of the two advents of Christ as a fine rhetorical balance to the two nativities that have so far constituted the structure of his christology. As the Son of God had a first birth before the beginning of time, and a second birth in the "fullness of time", so he also has a first advent in that fullness of time, where he appears in the humility of the human condition, and a second advent at the end of time, when he appears as the glorious judge of the Eschaton. By means of this balanced rhetorical figure Lactantius presents a christology that is eschatological throughout, since the full meaning of the Christ can only be discerned by the man who appreciates that this incarnate figure at once embraces the very origins of the world and its final end. This is why Lactantius maintains that the believer must accept the double mystery of the two births/two advents before the meaning of Christ becomes apparent, and those who do not retain this scheme lose the truth. The Jews are criticised as inconsistent since they believe in the second glorious advent of Christ but do not accept the first: 'quomodo igitur Iudaei et confitentur et sperant Christum dei qui hunc idcirco reprobauerant, quia ex homine natus est? nam cum ita sit a deo constitutum, ut idem Christus bis adveniat in terram, semel ut unum deum gentibus nuntiet, deinde rursus ut regnet, quomodo in secundum eius aduentum credunt qui in primum non crediderunt?'(1)

(1) Dl. 4.12. 13-14, cp. Dl. 7.1. 24-25 'itaque ut in quarto libro de primo aduentu eius diximus, sic in hoc secundum referemus aduentum quem Iudaei quoque et confitentur et sperant, sed frustra, quoniam necesse est ad eos consolandos reuertatur ad quos conuocandos prius uenerat. nam qui uiolarunt impie humilem, sentient in potestate uictorem eaque omnia quae legunt et non intellegunt deo repensante patientur.'

Lactantius describes the sacramental paradox of Christ's coming in terms of the lowly Kenosis of the first advent only vindicated in the glory of the second.(1) The Jews fail to respond to Christ because they cannot grasp the mystery of the divine economy of the second coming: ' nam cum legerent cum quanta uirtute et claritate filius dei uenturus esset e caelo, Iesum autem cernerent humilem sordidum informem, non credebant filium dei esse ignorantes duos eius aduentus a prophetis esse praedictos, primum in humilitate carnis obscurum, secundum in fortitudine maiestatis manifestum.'(2) The terminology of the Adventus is taken over from the previous apologists. Tertullian even supplies him with the elaborated structure of the two comings, the one Kenotic, and the other glorious.(3) And the same terminology is preserved in Cyprian.(4) The word in both the Vetus Latina and the Vulgate is the normal equivalent to the scriptural parousia(5) and represents the concept of Judaeo-Christian messianism: "the one who is to come".(6)

(1) Thus following Tertullian's doctrine. cp. Adv.Jud. 14.1f, Apol 21.14, Adv. Marc. 3.7.1f. Lactantius especially depends on Adv.Jud 14 for material on the priesthood of Christ, as well as the 2 advents.

(2) Dl. 4.16.13.

(3) Adv.Jud.14.

(4) Cp. Ad Quir. 2.13.1. -'quod humilis in primo adventu suo veniret.' also Bono Pat.23.

(5) See Loi. Lattanzio p.218. cf. vetus Latina. 2 Tim.4.1,8. Tit. 2.13. The term also renders the greek 'epiphaneia' cf C. Mohrmann. (Epiphania) études sur le latin des chretiens Vol 1. pp. 249-250 and Loi. Lattanzio p.218. fn.52.

(6) eg. Mtt. 11.3, 21.9, 23.39. Jn. 11.27. Heb. 10.37.

The whole basis of Lactantius' conception of the second coming of Christ is founded on this scriptural - apocalyptic tradition to which he adds Sibylline and Hermetic testimonies at points of agreement, as an apologetic device.(1)

So while the overall structure of his theology of the two comings is by no means original, the way in which he extends the christological scheme to make an intimate parallel between the two births and two comings is something new. The whole dispositio of God in relation to Christ is thus placed in an immense scheme of meta-history stretching from the origins of time to the end of time and governed throughout by the person of God's son. This Son who made the world(2) will come to judge and rule during the last age of that world(3)- the millenial rule that is the end of the seven ages of creation. Apart from a brief summary in the epilogue to the Dl,(4) which is outside the eschatological scheme of his theology as such since it is a moral exhortation to end his work, the last reference Lactantius makes either to the Christ, or the Son of God is at 7.24.15 where the "great King" is enjoying the millenial rule on earth.

(1) eg. Dl. 7.19.9 '- quod etiam Sibylla cum prophetis congruens futurum esse praedixit:'

(2) Dl. 4.6.9., 4.7.1.

(3) Dl. 7.24. 1-2.

(4) Dl. 7.27.6. (Pater enim noster ac dominus)'... perspectis erroribus hominem ducem misit qui nobis iustitiae viam panderet. hunc sequamur omnes, hunc audiamus, huic devotissime pareamus...'

After this point, especially when from 7.26 onwards he describes the events that occur when this Kingly rule is completed (-that is the destruction of the world and a new creation(1)) - Lactantius only speaks of the acts of God, in terms he has previously reserved to designate the supreme Father(2).

Although there are no certain indications, this suggests that Lactantius probably followed Tertullian and Novatian in his conception that after the millenial rule of Christ was over, and the Logos' restoration of his world finally completed, then the Logos would be re-assimilated into the Father(3) so that God may be all in all. This apologetic view was based on the Pauline conception in 1 Cor.15.28 :

> ὅταν δὲ ὑποταγῇ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα,τότε (καὶ) αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς ὑποταγήσεται τῷ ὑποτάξαντι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, ἵνα ᾖ ὁ θεὸς (τὰ) πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν.

(1) Dl. 7.26.5.

(2) Deus omnipotens dominus. (Dl. 7.26.5)

(3) cp. H.R. Mackintosh. The person of Jesus Christ pp.155, 158. Tertullian Adv. Prax.4: 'Videmus igitur non obesse monarchiæ Filium, etsi hodie apud Filium est: quia et in suo statu est apud Filium, et cum suo statu restituetur Patri a Filio.' Novatian De Trin. 31.192: 'haec uis diuinitatis emissa, etiam in Filium tradita et directa, rursum per substantiae communionem ad Patrem reuoluitur. Deus quidem ostenditur Filius, cui diuinitas tradita et porrecta conspicitur, et tamen nihilominus unus Deus Pater probatur, dum gradatim reciproco meatu illa maiestas atque diuinitas ad Patrem, qui dederat eam, rursum ab illo ipso Filio missa reuertitur et retorquetur, ut merito Deus Pater omnium Deus sit et principium ipsius quoque Filii sui, quem Dominum genuit, Filius autem ceterorum omnium Deus sit quoniam omnibus illum Deus Pater praeposuit quem genuit.'

It is strange to see this aspect of christology present in Lactantius, only in so far as an archaic element has lasted so long. But the essentially economic nature of the Processio of the Son in Lactantius' thought gives the correct context for such a view, as well as his dependence on Tertullian for the details of the two advents of Christ. It was only the controversies with Marcellus of Ancyra that led the inclusion of the phrase "whose Kingdom will have no end" in the Constantinopolitan symbol.(1) It was not present in the text of the Nicene Creed.

In the later version of the Epitome, Lactantius specifies that it is the new creation that follows Christ's limited rule which is the 'Kingdom that has no end'.(2) Here, however, he makes no mention of the Son in this regard - it is rather "the Kingdom of God."

(1) J.N.D. Kelly. Early christian Creeds 3rd Edn. London 1972. p.303.

(2) Epit. 67.8. ' post haec renovabit deus mundum et transformabit iustos in figuras angelorum, ut inmortalitatis veste donati. serviant deo in sempiternum. et hoc erit regnum dei, quod finem non habebit.' Lactantius appears to be looking to the authority of Revelation. 21.1.

(iii) Soteriological figures:

(a) Christus Sacerdos

The central importance of the concept of worship in the Dl has already been illustrated in Chapter 4 of the thesis.(1) In Lactantius' hands the notion becomes predominately a moral one and this partly explains the systematic relationship in his christology of the two main themes - Christ the priest, and Christ the teacher; for in so far as Christ teaches justice to men he is teaching them the true worship of God and thus performing a priestly or cultic function. These two pillars of his christological doctrine are therefore aspects of the same argument.

Lactantius describes the priestly role of Christ by two means, firstly his concept of the Church as the temple of God (worshipping society) built by Christ, and secondly his use of Old Testament proof texts for which he especially relies on the Epistle to Hebrews(2) as well as the writings of Tertullian(3) and Cyprian.(4)

(1) Ch. 4.(iii) a-e Divine Worship

(2) for an analysis of the christology of priesthood in Hebrews cp O. Cullmann. The Christology of the NT. 2nd Ed. London 1963 pp 83-107 H.R. Mackintosh. The person of Jesus Christ. pp.78-87

(3) Adv. Marc. 3.7. Adv. Jud. 14.

(4) Ad Quir. 1.15 (quod domus et templum dei Christus futurus esset) from which Lactantius reproduces the text of 2 Sam. 7. 4-5, 12-14,16 at Dl. 4.13. 22-23. and. Ad Quir. 1.17 from which Lactantius reproduces the catena of Ps. 109 and 1 Sam. 2.33-36 at Dl.4.14.4-5 Nonetheless only once does Lactantius follow Cyprian's habitual application of the temple figure to Christs' person (cp Dl.4.18.4) everywhere else in the Dl it is the faithful who are the templum dei and Christ is the builder, the door, or the high-priest of that temple. When Lactantius follows Cyprian it is on the authority of the NT tradition cf. Jn.2.19-22,mk. 14.58.

He defines the motivation of the incarnate economy in two succinct passages at the beginning of 4.10. In the first version he presents three reasons for the dispositio:

(i) that the Son should build a Temple

(ii) that he might teach righteousness

(iii) that he might win the reward of immortality for humankind:

'in primis igitur scire homines oportet sic a principio processisse dispositionem summi dei, ut esset necesse adpropinquante saeculi termino dei filium descendere in terram ut constitueret deo templum doceretque iustitiam, uerum tamen non in uirtute angeli aut potestate caelesti, sed in figura hominis et condicione mortali, et cum magisterio functus fuisset, traderetur in manus inpiorum mortemque susciperet, ut ea quoque per uirtutem domita resurgeret et homini, quem induerat, quem gerebat, et spem uincendae mortis offerret et ad praemia inmortalitatis admitteret.'(1) The second version appears in verse three of the same passage where he is speaking about the prophetic account of the economy. The role of Christ here is:

(i) to perform wonderful deeds

(ii) to 'sow' the worship of God throughout the whole world

(iii) to be crucified and rise again: 'nemo adseuerationi nostrae fidem commodet, nisi ostendero prophetas ante multam temporum seriem praedicasse, fore aliquando ut filius dei nasceretur sicut homo et mirabilia faceret et cultum dei per totam terram seminaret et postremo patibulo figeretur et tertio die resurgeret.'(2)

(1) Dl. 4.10.1.

(2) Dl. 4.10.3.

The two lists are basically the same since his treatment of the wonderful deeds of Christ interprets them as essential parts of Christ's paideia(1) and the crucifixion and resurrection equally correspond to Christ's winning the reward of immortality for man.(2) There are three main elements therefore in Lactantius' account of Christ's salvific work - the cultic role, the pedagogic role, and the act of winning immortality for men.(3)

Christ descended in the first place ut constitueret deo templum (D1.4.10.1).(4) In Lactantius the Templum dei is pre-eminently an anthropological symbol(5), the association of the pure of heart, that society of just men who by virtue of their justice constitute the only true worshippers. This society is the Church of God,(6) it is the true temple that replaces the Jews who have been disinherited.

(1) There is a re-statement at D1. 4.11.7. Here Christ has the two-fold role of transferring God's religion to the nations and teaching the pagans righteousness - the first is a priestly role, the second a pedagogic :'sed illum filium suum primogenitum, illum opificem rerum et consiliatorem suum, delabi iussit e caelo, ut religionem sanctam dei transferret ad gentes, id est ad eos qui deum ignorabant, doceretque iustitiam, quam perfidus populos abiecerat.' cp. the same formula at D1. 4.13.1.

(2) Both the sufferings of Christ and his miracles are interpreted in a lengthy passage (D1.4.26) as aspects and symbols of his spiritual teaching. viz. 4.26.3. 'quaecumque enim passus est non fuerunt inania, sed habuerunt figuram et significantiam magnam sicut etiam diuina illa opera quae fecit: quorum uis et potentia ualebat quidem in praesens, sed declarabat aliquid in futurum ; or D1.4.26.11- item labes et maculas inquinatorum corporum repurgauit. non exigua immortalis potentiae opera: uerum id portendebat haec uis, quod peccatorum labibus ac uitiorum maculis inquinatos doctrina eius purificatura esset eruditione iustitiae.' or D1.4.26.14- 'sed haec inenarrabilis potestas mago uirtutis maioris fuit, quae demonstrabat tantam uim habituram esse doctrinam suam.'

(3) D1.4.19.11. 'uitam enim nobis adquisiuit morte superata. nulla igitur spes alia consequendae inmortalitatis homini datur, nisi crediderit in eum et illam crucem portandam patiendamque susceperit.'

(4) The reward of immortality is consequent on true worship: cf Thesis ch 4[iii].e. and D1. 4.14.2.

(5) cp. Thesis chp.5. (vi)

(6) cp. D1. 4.13.26, 4.14.1, 4.27.5, 5.2.2, DM. 1.5 and 2.5-6. esp V. Loi. Lattanzio pp. 244-247 "la storia della salvezza nella vita della chiesa", H. Koch. Der Tempel Gottes bei Laktanz. Ph.76 1920. pp.235-238.

Lactantius uses the concept of Christ as the builder of the Temple to illustrate the royal character of Christ's priesthood. He makes an exegesis of 2 Sam. 7.4f, to illustrate that the Old Testament proclamation that the 'seed of David' would build a house for God's name was not fulfilled in Solomon's building but rather in Christ's establishment of the Church- "the heart and faith of the men who believe in him".(1) This text of Samuel is used as a demonstration of Christ's royal exaltation(2) for there is a play on the concept of 'house' - a "house of God", and the "house of the one who builds it." Lactantius equates the two, for the Christian Church is both the new temple of God's worship and the fruit of Christ's exaltation.

(1) Dl.4.13. 25-26. 'prophetae uero de eo loquebantur qui tum nasceretur, postquam Dauid cum patribus suis requieuisset. praeterea Solomonis imperium perpetuum non fuit: annis enim quadraginta regnauit. deinde, quod numquam filius dei dictus est, sed filius Dauid, et domus quam aedificauit non est fidem consecuta sicut ecclesia, quae est uerum templum dei, quod non in parietibus est, sed in corde ac fide hominum qui credunt in eum ac uocantur fideles:'

(2) Dl. 4.13.23. 'suscitabo semen tuum post te et parabo regnum eius. hic aedificabit mihi domum in nomine meo et erigam thronum eius usque in saeculum, et ego ero ei in patre et ipse erit mihi in filio. et fidem consequetur domus eius, et regnum eius usque in saeculum.' Lactantius offers a similar testimony to this exaltation, derived from 1 Sam. 2.35 at Dl. 4.14.5.

The act of building the temple therefore constitutes the Kingly role of Christ,(1) but Lactantius also offers it as a vindication of Christ's right to the title of High-Priest: ' quibus ex rebus apparet prophetas omnes denuntiasse de Christo, fore aliquando ut ex genere David corporaliter natus constitueret aeternum templum deo, quod appellatur ecclesia, et uniuersas gentes ad religionem ueram dei conuocaret. haec est domus fidelis, hoc inmortale templum, in quo si quis non sacrificauerit, inmortalitatis praemium non habebit. cuius templi et magni et aeterni quoniam Christus fabricator fuit, idem necesse est habeat in eo sacerdotium sempiternum, nec potest nisi per eum qui constituit ad templum et ad conspectum dei perueniri.'(2)

The passage clearly emphasises the unique role of mediation that Christ performs as priest - there is no approach to God except "through him who built the Temple".

(1) A concept which Lactantius consistently uses in the context of such an exaltation theology - Dl. 4.12.19. ' denique ob uirtutem ac fidem, quam deo exhibuit in terra, datum est ei regnum et honor et imperium et omnes populi tribus linguae seruiunt ei, et potestas eius aeterna, quae numquam transibit, et regnum eius non corrumpetur.' See also Dl. 4.14.20 which posits the cause of Christ's exalted Kingship and priesthood as his self-emptying in the incarnate ministry, a 'fidelity' which is rewarded.

(2) Dl. 4.14. 1-3.

The force of this 'per eum' is further clarified in the Christological summary of 4.29.14 when Christ's priesthood is again set out in terms of his unique mediation which makes him the 'door' and 'the Gate of life'[1] through whom all men must pass.

The conception of the priesthood of Christ was worked out most fully in the Epistle to the Hebrews[2] and was developed thereafter in almost all the major Greek apologists.[3]

(1) Dl. 4.29. 14-15 `non potest igitur summus ille ac singularis deus nisi per filium coli. qui solum patrem se colere putat, sicut filium non colit ita ne patrem quidem. qui autem filium suscipit et nomen eius gerit, is uero cum filio simul et patrem colit, quoniam legatus et nuntius et sacerdos summi patris est filius. hic templi maximi ianua est, hic lucis via, hic dux salutis, hic ostium uitae.' This text is especially reminiscent of the two treatments in John, Christ as the Way and the Life (Jn. 14.6) and Christ as the door (Jn 10·9). Here Lactantius is probably aware of Cyprian: Ad Quir. 3.24. (Non posse ad patrem perveniri nisi per filium ejus Jesum Christum) which presents a catena including both these texts of John.

(2) eg. Heb. 2.17-18, 3. 1-6, 4. 14-16, 5. 1-10, chs 7-9.
cp. H.R. Mackintosh. The person of Jesus Christ pp 78-87
V. Loi Lattanzio pp. 231-232.

(3) 1 Clem. 61.3, 64.1. Ignatius. Phld. 9.1; Martyr. Polycarpi 14.3; Justin Trypho. 34.2, 42.1, 115-116 (on Joshua the priest); Ps. Hippolytus, In S. Pascha 46; Clem Al. Strom. 6.153-4; Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 4.8.2, Dem. Evang. 48.

Lactantius depends more immediately for his catena of proofs on Cyprian(1) and for his interpretation on Tertullian(2) and possibly on Justin's Dialogue with Trypho,(3) but the many parallels with Hebrews throughout the Dl suggest most strongly that Lactantius has a first hand knowledge of the text and consequently may derive his association of Christ's priesthood and Gods exaltation of the 'faithful' Son after his Kenotic mission(4) from the New Testament tradition expressed here which specifically describes Christ as the priest who became faithful (πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς) in the incarnate economy so that he could be an effective mediator for men.(5)

(1) Ad. Quir. 1.15, 1.17

(2) Adv. Jud. 14.

(3) Trypho. 115-116. see Thesis ch.2.(ii) a.

(4) Dl. 4.14.20 'propterea quia tam fidelis extitit, quia sibi nihil prorsus adsumpsit, ut mandata mittentis inpleret, et sacerdotis perpetui dignitatem et regis summi honorem et iudicis potestatem et dei nomen accepit'. This list of exaltation attributes, especially the last two("iudicis potestatem et dei nomen accepit")seem to look to the old latin version of Revelation. 5.12 where the lamb is liturgically honoured with "power and godhead". Lactantius preserves the same concept of an apocalyptic liturgy at Dl. 7.23.1. and 7.26.5 (the latter text has a similar authority in Rev. 21.1.) In the concept of the exaltation, he appears to denote the glorification of Christ's human nature since he has already taught the word's pre-existence cp. J. Lecuyer. Jésus fils de Josedec et le Sacerdoce du Christ RSR. 43. 1955. p.92. The same formula of name-exaltation occuring at Dl.4.14.20 can be found in Philipp. 2.9 and Heb.1.4.

(5) Heb. 2.17. ὅθεν ὤφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι, ἵνα ἐλεήμων γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ.

In Hebrews, as in Lactantius, the exaltation of Christ the priest is the result of his self-emptying 'fidelity' during the earthly ministry, but the text also witnesses the same play on the concept of 'house' that one finds in Lactantius: a house built for God and a house of descendants, both of which are ultimately synthesised in the idea that Christ is Son and master of the house while the faithful believers constitute his household.(1)

The exegesis of Zechariah 3.1-8 (the high priest Joshua)(2) takes up an important part of this aspect of Lactantius' christology: 'quis autem futurus esset cui deus aeternum sacerdotium pollicebatur, Zacharias etiam nomine posito apertissime docuit. sic enim dixit: et ostendit mihi dominus Iesum sacerdotem magnum stantem ante faciem angeli domini, et diabolus stabat ad dexteram ipsius, ut contradiceret ei. et dixit dominus ad diabolum: imperet dominus in te qui elegit Hierusalem: et ecce titio eiectus ab igni et Iesus erat indutus uestimenta sordida, et stabat ante faciem angeli. et respondit et dixit ad circumstantes ante faciem ipsius dicens: auferte uestimenta sordida ab eo et induite eum tunicam talarem et imponite cidarim mundam super caput ipsius. et cooperuerunt eum uestimenta et imposuerunt cidarim super caput eius. et angelus domini stabat et testificabatur ad Iesum dicens: haec dicit dominus omnipotens: si in viis meis ambulaueris et praecepta mea seruaueris, tu iudicabis domum meam, et dabo tibi qui conuersentur in medio horum circumstantium. audi itaque, Iesu sacerdos magne. quis non igitur captos mentibus tum fuisse Iudaeos arbitretur, qui cum haec et legerent et audirent, nefandas manus deo suo intulerunt?'(3)

(1) Heb. 3.1-6. ὅθεν, ἀδελφοὶ ἅγιοι, κλήσεως ἐπουρανίου μέτοχοι, κατανοήσατε τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ ἀρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν, πιστὸν ὄντα τῷ ποιήσαντι αὐτὸν ὡς καὶ Μωϋσῆς ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ. πλείονος γὰρ οὗτος δόξης παρὰ Μωϋσῆν ἠξίωται καθ' ὅσον πλείονα τιμὴν ἔχει τοῦ οἴκου ὁ κατασκευάσας αὐτόν. πᾶς γὰρ οἶκος κατασκευάζεται ὑπό τινος, ὁ δὲ πάντα κατασκευάσας θεός...Χριστὸς δὲ ὡς υἱὸς ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ· οὗ οἶκός ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς..

(2) cf. P. Monat. La présentation d'un dossier biblique. Lactance et son temps. pp. 273-292.

The Old Testament text had a strong tradition of apologetic interpretation. Justin applies it between chapters 115-117 of the Dialogue with Trypho to make five conclusions -

(a) Jesus the Son of Josedec is the type of the future priesthood of Christ and his faithful followers.

(b) All Christians freed by Jesus' grace became new men in union with him and so participate in this new priesthood.

(c) Thereby they lay aside the sordid clothing of their sins.(1)

(d) The priestly sacrifice of the faithful is one of prayer and thanksgiving.

(e) And in the final resurrection they will be glorified in their priesthood and enjoy dominion on earth.(2)

(1) Justin interprets the 'filthy garments' in the light of Paul's conception (Rom. 13.12-14, Gal. 3.27, Eph. 4.24) viz putting on a 'new self' through moral actions.

(2) cp. J. Lecuyer. Jésus le fils de Josedec... p.87.

Tertullian[1] is perhaps a more immediate theological authority for Lactantius' treatment for he alters Justin's universal application of the priesthood and attributes it directly to Christ himself. Tertullian remarks:

(a) on the directness of the prophecy in the 'sacrament of the same name'

(b) That the two garments lowly and glorious refer to Christ's two advents.

(c) that the filthy garment signifies the mortal and passible flesh Christ assumed.[2]

All of which interpretations are followed by Lactantius. But the final application of the text by both Justin and Tertullian to a glorious vindication by God at the end of time, when all Christians participate in a glorious priesthood disappears in Lactantius' version. The entire exegesis is directed wholly to Christ in the Dl, and the faithful appear as the temple of God rather than a priesthood.[3]

(1) Adv. Marc. 3.7. Adv. Jud. 14.

(2) J. Lecuyer. Jésus le fils de Josedec.. pp.87-88

(3) The concept of the glorious priesthood of believers in the eschaton is indirectly preserved, however, in his conceptions of the heavenly liturgy at the end of the world. cf. Dl. 7.23.1 and 7.26.5, and the way christians offer the "gift and sacrifice" of ethical behaviour cf. Dl. 6.24. 26-28, 6.25. 5-7, 11-12. The whole concept of "gift and sacrifice" (cp. esp. Dl. 6.25.12) seems to derive from Heb. 13.15.

In Lactantius' interpretation of Zechariah[1] he:-

(a) explains the correct signification of the name (neither Joshua son of Nun nor the son of Josedec) on the grounds that only Jesus the Son of God had ever stood in the presence of God and the angels or suffered adversity (4.14.13). He thus connotes the two states of Christ - his pre-existence with God and the angels, and his suffering ministry.

(b) He also states that the 'filthy garment' signifies the first coming in humility and in the flesh "ut pararet templum, deo", and he applies the anology of the burnt brand to the passion and death: ' et sicut titio igni ambureretur id est ab hominibus cruciamenta perferret et adultimum extingueretur.'(4.14.14)

(c) The prophecy promises an exaltation of the great priest who shall "walk in my ways and keep my precepts" (4.14.9) which Lactantius expounds as referring to Christ's priestly ministry of teaching men the knowledge and cult of the true God: ' filium suum principem angelorum legauit ad homines, ut eos conuerteret ab inpiis et uanis cultibus ad cognoscendum et colendum deum uerum, item ut eorum mentes a stultitia ad sapientiam ab iniquitate ad iustitiae opera traduceret. hae sunt uiae dei in quibus eum ambulare praecepit, haec praecepta quae servanda mandauit.'[2]

(1) Expressed between Dl. 4.14. 12-20

(2) Dl. 4.14. 17-18a.

(d) And Lactantius finally interprets the exaltation of the priest in terms of his self-emptying fidelity to this incarnate ministry:-

'ille uero exhibuit deo fidem: docuit enim quod unus deus sit eumque solum coli oportere, nec umquam se ipse deum dixit, quia non seruasset fidem, si missus ut deos tolleret et unum adsereret, induceret alium praeter unum, hoc erat non de uno deo facere praeconium nec eius qui miserat, sed suum proprium negotium gerere ac se ab eo quem inlustratum uenerat separare. propterea quia tam fidelis extitit, quia sibi nihil prorsus adsumpsit, ut mandata mittentis inpleret, et sacerdotis perpetui dignitatem et regis summi honorem et iudicis potestatem et dei nomen accepit.'(1) Christ is thus exalted to the dignity of an eternal priesthood because he has been faithful (4.14.20): Lactantius' authority for the eternity of the priesthood is drawn from his argument at 4.14.3 that since Christ's role is to found an eternal temple(2) it logically follows he will always have a position as priest in this temple; but he also cites the promise to Melchisedec(3) which can suggest that he is looking to the text of Hebrews 7 which not only teaches the doctrine of the eternity of Christ's priesthood on the basis of the same proof text,(4) but has also provided Lactantius in the preceding chapter with the concept of this priest's "motherlessness" and "fatherlessness"(5).

(1) Dl. 4.14. 18-20.

(2) that is, the society of true worshippers who thereby will win immortality as a consequence of their justice. cp thesis ch 4.iii d-e.

(3) Dl.4.14.4. 'Dauid in psalmo CVIIII id ipsum docet dicens: ante luciferum genui te. iurauit dominus et non paenitebit eum: tu es sacerdos in aeternum.'

(4) Heb. 7.21,24 ὁ δὲ μετὰ ὁρκωμοσίας διὰ τοῦ λέγοντος πρὸς αὐτόν,Ὤμοσεν κύριος,καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται,Σὺ Ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα....ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἀπαράβατον ἔχει τὴν ἱερωσύνην.

(5) cp. Heb.7.3. also Heb. 4.14, 10.25. Dl.4.13. 2-4. Here Lactantius' text is expanding on the priestly office of Christ (as in 4.13.1) which is "to transfer religion", or "give a new law to worshippers".

As in Lactantius, the eternal priesthood is here a specific part of Christ's post-incarnate exaltation.(1) The word-play on the term 'faithful' to signify an obedient Kenosis that results in a divine exaltation(2) may also suggest a reliance on Hebrews which similarly teaches the faithfulness of the priest to God,(3) which directly results in God's exaltation of him "who is already the builder of the house"(4), the son and the master of the house, that house which is the faithful believers.(5) All the terms of this theology are those followed by Lactantius though he rearranges them in his own apologetic format. None of the other apologists, however, present all the same aspects of this doctrine of Christ's priesthood together, and so it would appear that Lactantius had a first hand acquaintance with the Letter to the Hebrews.

(1) cp. Dl. 4.14. 20A and Heb. 5.8-10. καίπερ ὢν υἱὸς ἔμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν· καὶ τελειωθεὶς ἐγένετο πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου, προσαγορευθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀρχιερεὺς κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδέκ.

(2) cf the use of the word in two connotations - "obedient" and "firmly established" - within the same text: Dl.4.14.5.'item in Basilion libro primo: et suscitabo mihi sacerdotem fidelem qui omnia quae sunt in corde meo faciet, et aedificabo ei domum fidelem, et transibit in conspectu meo omnibus diebus.' Lactantius plays on the double meaning by applying it to the concept of Kenosis - exaltation. See S. Szmidt. The meaning of the word "fides" in Lactantius (English abstract) Rocznici Teologiczno-Kanoniczne Lublin. Vol.18. No.4. pp.133-142.

(3) Heb. 3.2. Ὅθεν, ἀδελφοὶ ἅγιοι, κλήσεως ἐπουρανίου μέτοχοι, κατανοήσατε τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ ἀρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν, πιστὸν ὄντα τῷ ποιήσαντι αὐτόν.

(4) κατασκευαστής... /fabricator. (cp. Heb.3.3. Dl. 4.14.3.)

(5) cp. Heb. 3. 1-6 cited previously.

Lactantius, therefore, applies the priesthood of Christ as a soteriological figure by means of various arguments. In the first place, in so far as worship is the sole factor that allows the appearance of justice on earth and the sole factor that prepares men for immortality(1), then Christ's role in restoring true worship by constituting the Church of God is a fundamentally salvific act. Christ thereby restores to men the hope of an immortal destiny which they had forfeited by their allegiance to a false cult with its consequent immorality. Lactantius therefore describes this priesthood as a mediation in characteristically cultic terms - Christ is the sole door to the temple in which, alone, salvation can be found.(2) As priest he is man's only hope for immortal life as he restores true worship.(3)

(1) cp. Thesis ch.4.(iii)e.

(2) Dl.4.30. llb.'hic est fons veritatis, hoc domicilium fidei, hoc templum dei: quo si quis non intraverit vel a quo si quis exierit, a spe vitae ac salutis alienus est.' (cp. Dl.4.29.15) This doctrine of Christ's unique priestly mediation within the Church, that is likewise 'portus salutis', can be traced in Lactantius back to the authority of Cyprian's ecclesiology: cp. B.Studer. La Soteriologie de Lactance. Lactance et Son Temps Ed. Monat p.269. + B.Studer. Die soteriologie Cyprians Von Karthago Ag.16. 1976. pp.450-454.

(3) Dl.4.14. 1-3'(ut (Christus))...constitueret aeternum templum deo, quod appellatur ecclesia, et uniuersas gentes ad religionem ueram dei conuocaret. haec est domus fidelis, hoc inmortale templum, in quo se quis non sacrificauerit, inmortalitatis praemium non habebit. cuius templi et magni et aeterni quoniam Christus fabricator fuit, idem necesse est habeat in eo sacerdotium sempiternum, nec potest nisi per eum qui constituit ad templum et ad conspectum dei perueniri.'

The idea of priesthood is intimately associated with that of sacrifice. For Lactantius all believers must 'sacrifice' in Christ's temple before they can win eternal life (4.14.2) This 'cultic sacrifice' has already been identified by Lactantius as the virtuous life, following the principles of justice.(1) It is consistent with the system,then,to discover that the sacrifice of Christ is seen almost exclusively in terms of his magisterium, that life of perfect justice which Christ not only taught, but actually lived out on earth. It is the paideia of a perfectly just life that appears to be the 'sacrifice' of Christ, for the actual immolation of Christ on the cross is given a subordinate role in so far as the Dl explains the suffering and death as an implied consequence of his teaching ministry:- Christ's very death then is a magisterium:'ergo ut perfectus esse possit, nihil ei debet opponi ab eo qui docendus est, ut si forte dixerit 'inpossibilia praecipis', respondeat 'ecce ipse facio.' 'at ego carne indutus sum, cuius est peccare proprium'. 'et ego eandem carnem gero et tamen peccatum in me non dominatur'. 'mihi opes contemnere difficile est, quia uiui aliter non potest in hoc corpore'. 'ecce et mihi corpus est et tamen pugno contra omnem cupiditatem'. 'non possum pro iustitia nec dolorem ferre nec mortem, quia fragilis sum'. 'ecce et in me dolor ac mors habet potestatem et (tamen) ea ipsa quae times uinco, ut uictorem te faciam doloris ac mortis. prior uado per ea quae sustineri non posse praetendis: si praecipientem sequi non potes, sequere antecedentem'. sublata omnis hoc modo excusatio est et fateri hominem necesse est sua culpa iniustum esse qui doctorem uirtutis et eundem ducem non sequatur. uides ergo quanto perfectior sit mortalis doctor, quia dux esse mortali potest, quam inmortalis, quia patientiam docere non potest qui subiectus passionibus non est.'(2)

(1) See eg. Dl. 6.24. 26-29. cf. Thesis. ch.4.(iii).

(2) Dl. 4.24.16-17.

(b) Christus Doctor

Lactantius' conception of Christ's life and ministry as a 'magisterium' marks a distinct departure in the Latin patristic tradition. The idea, in the way it is extensively developed by Lactantius, is reminiscent of that christology of paideia more readily associated with the Alexandrian school.(1) And indeed even though there is no direct link, Lactantius' theology here develops further affinities with the Alexandrians in so far as his christology begins to elevate his thought to the level of a true systematic, for having divided his apologetic analysis between Bks 1-3 into two parts, one addressed to the religiosi, the other to the philosophi Lactantius now attempts to demonstrate that Christ is the healing of this divorce in the ancient world between the affairs of religion and wisdom. In offering Christ at once a priest and a pedagogue, he is positing him as the sole authority that commends the allegiance of both types of ancient man, and therefore the reconciliation, in his own person, of wisdom and religion.

(1) Viz Clement and Origen. cf. W. Jaeger. Early Christianity and Greek Paideia. Oxford. 1961. p.50f. and H.E.W. Turner The patristic doctrine of redemption London 1952 p.36f.

Lactantius defines the Son of God, from the beginning, in the terms of an economy of revelation, and thus interprets the meaning of the title Word of God:(1), ille uero cum sit et ipse spiritus, tamen cum uoce ac sono ex dei ore processit sicut uerbum, ea scilicet ratione, quia uoce eius ad populum fuerat usurus, id est quod ille magister futurus esset doctrinae dei et caelestis arcani ad homines perferendi. ipsum primo locutus est, ut per eum ad nos loqueretur et ille uocem dei ac uoluntatem nobis reuelaret. merito igitur sermo ac uerbum dei dicitur, quia deus procedentem de ore suo uocalem spiritum, quem non utero, sed mente conceperet, inexcogitabili quadam maiestatis suae uirtute ac potentia in effigiem, quae proprio sensu et sapientia uigeat, conprehendit;' (2) The logical climax of that revelatory mission comes in the second birth of the Son which Lactantius explains in terms of a cultic function and a pedagogical one: ' In primis igitur scire homines oportet sic a principio processisse dispositionem summi dei, ut esset necesse adpropinquante saeculi termino dei filium descendere in terram, ut constitueret deo templum doceretque iustitiam.(3)

This entire mission within God's dispositio, is an economy of salvation and thus provides the basis for interpreting this christology of paideia as a fundamentally soteriological concept.(4)

(1) cf. V. Loi. Lattanzio. pp.210-213. (Verbum Dei: Dl.(4.8.8-9,14-15) (4.9.1-3) (4.15.10) (6.25.12) Sermo Dei: Dl. (4.8.6,9) (4.9.1-2) (4.29.6) (Epit 37.2) Vox Dei: Dl. (4.8.11-12) (4.9.1)

(2) Dl. 4.8.7-9.

(3) Dl. 4.10.1.

(4) cf. V. Loi. Cristologia e soteriologia. pp.259-260: "La redenzione operata dal Cristo e, per Lattanzio, essenzialemente un "magisterium": il Figlio di Dio si e incarnato per essere maestro dell' umanita mediante la rivelazione dei misteri divini e per illuminare le menti umane con la luce della sapienza divina.".

Doctor Sapientiae

Christ is constituted sole mediator in his priestly capacity since he alone can effect the true worship of God, yet even in his pedagogical role he is equally the sole mediator between God and man, according to Lactantius, in so far as the human mind stands in absolute dependence on a divine revelation of truth.(1) To follow God, the "teacher of wisdom" and "guide to virtue" is the only way then to possess the truth: ' Nobis autem qui sacramentum uerae religionis accepimus cum sit ueritas reuelata diuinitus, cum doctorem sapientiae ducemque uirtutis deum sequamur, uniuersos sine ullo discrimine uel sexus uel aetatis ad caeleste pabulum conuocamus: nullus enim suauior animo cibus est quam cognitio ueritatis.(2) Both those divine attributes (revelator/doctor) and (dux) are subsequently applied to the Son's role in the incarnate economy,(3) thus depicting his ministry as one of divine revelation of the truth: ' sed auersos esse arbitror diuina prouidentia, ne scire possent ueritatem, quia nondum fas erat alienigenis hominibus religionem dei ueri iustitiamque notescere. statuerat enim deus adpropinquante ultimo tempore ducem magnum caelitus mittere, qui eam perfido ingratoque populo ablatam exteris nationibus revelaret.'(4)

(1) cp. Thesis ch.4.(i) Also see prologue: Dl. 1.1. 17-18, 25.

(2) Dl. 1.1.19

(3) cp. also Dl. 4.11.14. where Christ is: (doctor, dux, comes et magister.)

(4) Dl. 4.2.5.

And it is in this ministry of revelatory teaching, in which the Son is fulfilling his essential nature as God's vocal spirit, that he is able to be recognised on earth for the deity he truly is: 'qua uirtute ac iustitia quoniam Christus instructus uenit in terram, immo uero quoniam ipse uirtus et ipse iustitia est, descendit, ut eam doceret hominemque formaret. quo magisterio ac dei legatione perfunctus ob eam ipsam uirtutem, quam simul et docuit et fecit, ab omnibus gentibus et meruit et potuit deus credi.'(1) This last passage describes the operations of Christ in substantive terms(2) which logically tend to place Christ in a unique position, a figure of absolute significance. Lactantius supports such a conception by the eschatological scheme of his christology. In short, he is maintaining that Christ is a teacher of divine wisdom on earth because before the foundation of the world he <u>was</u> that very wisdom of God. The perfections witnessed in his earthly ministry implicitly reflect the perfections of his being before the world was made. This is why Lactantius emphasises the absolute uniqueness of the role of Christ. "Since the beginning of the world", he says, there has been no other like him: `superest ut factis uerba firmentur: quod philosophi facere nequeunt. itaque cum ipsi praeceptores uincantur adfectibus quos uinci praedicant oportere, neminem possunt ad uirtutem quam falso praedicant erudire ob eamque causam putant neminem adhuc perfectum extitisse sapientem, id est in quo summae doctrinae ac scientiae summa uirtus et perfecta iustitia consenserit; quod quidem uerum fuit. nemo enim post mundum conditum talis extitit nisi Christus, qui et uerbo sapientiam tradidit et doctrinam praesenti uirtute firmauit.'(3)

(1) Dl. 4.16.4.

(2) Christ is not virtuous, he is himself <u>virtue</u>, ie. Christ cannot be measured by any standard since he himself is the absolute measure of all standards.

(3) Dl. 4.23. 9-10.

The theological implication of his argument is that the only absolute or perfect representation of wisdom on earth can be that Wisdom which existed before the world and created the order of that world. (1) This is why Lactantius requires the 'perfect teacher' to be a heavenly being: ' eo fit ut terrenus doctor perfectus esse non possit. at uero caelestis, cui scientiam diuinitas, uirtutem inmortalitas tribuit, in docendo quoque sicut in ceteris perfectus et consummatus sit necesse est.' (2) Yet he also finds a basis for the incarnation in the corollary of the self-same argument since this heavenly teacher (3) requires physical embodiment so that his words may have real authority over physical creatures.

(1) Cf. Dl. 4.6.6., 4.7.1.

(2) Dl. 4.24.5.

(3) For Lactantius' description of Christ as Doctor Iustitiae cp Dl. 4.13.1, 4.25.2, (4.24.19. magister iustitiae) (4.24.10. praeceptor iustitiae). For Doctor virtutis cp Dl. 4.24.12, 4.16.4. This approach deliberately echoes Seneca, cf H.J. Kunick. Der lateinische begriff "patientia" bei Laktanz Diss. Freiburg. 1955 pp.115-117, 202-204. See also V. Loi. Cristologia e soteriologia pp. 261-263.

The verse continues: 'at id omnino fieri non potest, nisi mortale sibi corpus adsumat', and the argument is fully developed so that the whole meaning of the assumption of flesh is explained on magisterial terms: 'uides ergo quanto perfectior sit mortalis doctor, quia dux esse mortali potest, quam inmortalis, quia patientiam docere non potest qui subiectus passionibus non est. nec hoc tamen eo pertinet ut hominem deo praeferam, sed ut ostendam neque hominem perfecta doctrina esse posse, nisi sit idem deus, ut auctoritate caelesti necessitatem parendi hominibus inponat, neque deum, nisi mortali corpore induatur, ut praecepta sua factis adinplendo ceteros parendi necessitate constringat. liquido igitur apparet eum qui uitae dux et iustitiae sit magister corporalem esse oportere nec aliter fieri posse ut sit illius plena et perfecta doctrina habeatque radicem ac fundamentum stabilisque aput homines ac fixa permaneat, ipsum autem subire carnis et corporis inbecillitatem uirtutemque in se recipere cuius doctor est, ut eam simul et uerbis doceat et factis, item subiectum esse morti et passionibus cunctis, quoniam et in passione toleranda et in morte subeunda uirtutis officia uersantur. quae omnia ut dixi consummatus doctor perferre debet ut doceat posse perferri.'(1)

(1) Dl. 4.24. 17-19.

The argument derived from this christology of paideia is an apologetic address of extreme subtlety since it explains the scandal of the Passion in terms that would convince the pagan literati, implying that it occured in the Socratic manner - as a consequence of the pedagogue's fidelity to his own teaching even to the point of death.(1) The same argument is extended to serve as a demonstration of the necessity of a historical appearance of God(2) and, as has been already noted, it demonstrates that he who is incarnated as a teacher of wisdom must of necessity be divine;(3) the power of deity commanding man's obedience, and the weakness of the human nature providing an example of virtue.(4)

(1) Dl. 4.24.7 Dl. 4.26.27 'sed cum in omnibus uitae officiis iustitiae specimen praebuisset, ut doloris quoque patientiam mortisque contemptum, quibus perfecta et consummata fit uirtus, traderet homini, uenit in manus inpiae nationis,' cp. Cicero. Tusc. II. 18.43. 'apellata est enim ex viro virtus; viri autem propria maxime est fortitudo, cuius munera duo sunt maxima , mortis dolorisque contemptio.'

(2) 4.24.6a:'nam si veniat ad homines ut deus, ut omittam quod mortales oculi claritatem maiestatis eius conspicere ac sustinere non possunt, ipse certe deus virtutem docere non poterit, quia expers corporis non faciet quae docebit ac per hoc doctrina eius perfecta non erit.' Lactantius approaches the incarnation as something that is a particular stumbling-block for the pagan literati (cf. Dl. 4. 22-3-5)

(3) Dl. 4.24.18 'nec hoc tamen eo pertinet ut hominem deo praeferam, sed ut ostendam neque hominem perfecta doctrina esse posse, nisi sit idem deus, ut auctoritate caelesti necessitatem parendi hominibus inponat, neque deum, nisi mortali corpore induatur, ut praecepta sua factis adinplendo ceteros parendi necessitate constringat.'

(4) (cf. Dl. 4.24.16-17a) also 4.26.26: 'is igitur corporatus est et veste carnis indutus, ut homini, ad quem docendum venerat, virtutis et exempla et incitamenta praeberet.' The systematic link between the conceptions of Christ as the teacher who assumes flesh to empathise with his disciples, and Christ's priestly role, is provided for Lactantius by Hebrews. cp. 2.18 on Christ's priestly role:ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέπονθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθείς,δύναται τοῖς πειραζομένοις βοηθῆσαι.

(c) Christus Victor

Lactantius has exposed the dispositio dei according to three elements (1) :—

(a) a priestly role of Christ, who founds a new temple;

(b) a pedagogic role, since he comes as God in flesh to be an authoritative teacher among men;

(c) and that when the magisterium had been completed (functus fuisset) Christ should undergo death, conquer it in the resurrection, and give to the human nature he had "put on", the hope and reward of immortality.

This third role, the conception of the death of Christ and its purpose, can be merged with the second, as has been already noted, so as to be hardly indistinguishable from it. Such is the case when Lactantius approaches the mystery of Christ's death from an apologetic standpoint. Then, he justifies the scandal in terms of a pedagogue's fidelity. Nonetheless he is too deeply involved in the ecclesiastical tradition to be able to represent the Passion in such wholly apologetic terms, and so it is that many traces of a different, scriptural, conception of Christ's death remain within his work, depicting it as a conquest over death that liberates man's servitude to sin and its penalty of corruption.

(1) Dl. 4.10.1. subsequently cited.

The formulae in which this aspect of Christ's salvific work is recorded are notably consistent and possibly represent traces of a credal confession:

(a) ' et cum magisterio functus fuisset, traderetur in manus inpiorum mortemque susciperet, ut ea quoque per uirtutem domita resurgeret et homini, quem induerat, quem gerebat, et spem uincendae mortis offerret et ad praemia inmortalitatis admitteret.'(1)

(b) 'ut suscepta hominis figura et condicione mortali doceret homines iustitiam et cum mandatis dei functus ueritatem gentibus reuelasset, multaretur etiam morte, ut inferos quoque uinceret ac resignaret atque ita demum resurgens ad patrem proficisceretur in nube sublatus.'(2)

(c) 'uitam enim nobis adquisiuit morte superata. nulla igitur spes alia consequendae inmortalitatis homini datur, nisi crediderit in eum et illam crucem portandam patiendamque susceperit.'(3)

(d) 'is igitur corporatus est et ueste carnis indutus, ut homini, ad quem docendum uenerat, uirtutis exempla et incitamenta praeberet. sed cum in omnibus uitae officiis iustitiae specimen praebuisset, ut doloris quoque patientiam mortisque contemptum, quibus perfecta et consummata fit uirtus, traderet homini, uenit in manus inpiae nationis, ...sustinuit ergo cruciatus et uerbera et spinas. postremo etiam mortem suscipere non recusauit, ut homo illo duce subactam et catenatam mortem cum suis terroribus triumpharet.'(4).

(1) Dl. 4.10.1.

(2) Dl. 4.12.15.

(3) Dl. 4.19.11.

(4) Dl. 4.26. 26-28. See also. Epit.39.7: ' suscepit carnem, ut... hominem ad deum magisterio suo superata morte perduceret.'

Form (c) is evidently a scriptural allusion bearing close relation to the persecution logia, in Matthew's Gospel.(1) The other three formulations, however, show certain affinities which allow a christological "creed" to be reconstructed, amounting to six articles:

(i) He adopts (suscepit) or puts on (induit) human nature (hominis figura, condicio mortalis)(2)

(ii) He fulfils a ministry of teaching (cum magisterio functus fuisset)/or fulfils the divine command.(cum mandatis dei functus..)

(iii) He is delivered up (traderetur) into the hands of the impious.(3)

(iv) He suffers and accepts death (multaretur..morte) (mortem suscipit)

(v) He conquers death (vincendae mortis) (ut inferos...vinceret) (morte superata) (mortem cum suis terroribus triumpharet)

and finally, at least in form 'b',

(vi) He rises and ascends to the Father on a cloud.

(1) Mtt. 10.38 (Vulg)'et qui non accipit crucem suam, et sequitur me, non est me dignus.' Mtt. 16.24. (Vulg)'si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum, et tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me.' This scriptural reminiscence in Lactantius is introduced by an aphorism, however, that has all the marks of a confessional formula in its succinctness and balance: 'vitam enim nobis adquisivit morte superata'.

(2) the description of the incarnation as 'the form of man' 'human condition' is itself reminiscent of the terms of the christological creed in Philippians. cp. Phil. 2.6-8. ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν,μορφὴν δούλου λαβών,ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, καὶ σχήματι εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.

(3) cp. Mtt. 17.22 (Vulg.)'Filius hominis tradendus est in manus hominum: et occident eum, et tertia die resurget.'

Such christological formulae have all the elements of a creed without bearing immediate relation to any of the more established credal formulae that began to be circulated more and more after Nicaea, but in Lactantius they have an evident catechetical motivation which suggests that their credal character may not be accidental. Nonetheless they are more reminiscent of the primitive single clause confessions (the christological proto-creeds found eg. in the writings of Ignatius)[1], than the formal creed structure witnessed at Nicaea. It is also a fruitless task to attempt, from the texts, any reconstruction of an original creed, perhaps of the Church at Nicomedia or Gaul, since Lactantius is freely interpolating his own didactic material into whatever source he is using here.

The concept of Christ's suffering as a triumph over death and a liberation from the fear of death, can be found in the same text from which Lactantius has adopted his teaching on Christ's priesthood and mediatorship - the Letter to Hebrews.[2]

(1) eg. Ephes 18.2, Trall. 9, Smyrn. 1. 1-2. cp JND Kelly Ancient Christian Creeds 3rd Edn. London 1972. p.68.

(2) Heb. 2.9.τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ'ἀγγέλους ἠλαττωμένον βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον,ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσηται θανάτου.

Ibid. 2. 14-15: ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ παιδία κεκοινώνηκεν αἵματος καὶ σαρκός,καὶ αὐτὸς παραπλησίως μετέσχεν τῶν αὐτῶν, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸν διάβολον, καὶ ἀπαλλάξῃ τούτους,ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας.

cp.v. .15 and Lactantius:'mortem cum suis terroribus triumpharet' Dl. 4.26.28. See H.M. Esteve. De Caelesti mediatione sacerdotali Christi. Diss. Madrid. 1949. pp. 206-231.

From this, and similar scriptures,(1) there developed a very vital patristic tradition of the death of Christ "understood as a victoria over death, Satan, and sinfulness".(2) Yet the Lactantian formulae listed previously(3) clearly show that he identifies the death of Christ with an act of magisterium - it is the fidelity of Christ to his own teaching(4) and manifests the suffering Christ in his exemplarist role as Doctor virtutis. This is the mainstay of his argument, and clearly designed on an apologetic motive.(5)

(1) 2 Tim. 1. 10. Rev. 1.18.

(2) cf. G. Aulen. Christus Victor London 1970. pp. 36-60. Also Christus Victor Mortis. (Terza Settimana Teologica,Sept. 1957) Rome. (Libreria editrice dell' universita Gregoriana) esp - S. Lyonnet. La Valeur théologique de la résurrection du Christ selon S.Paul pp.95-118. D.M. Stanley. Christ's resurrection in Pauline Soteriology Analecta Biblica. 13. Pontificio Instituto Biblico. Rome. 1961. esp pp. 268-274. H.E.W. Turner The Patristic doctrine of Redemption ch.3.

(3) especially (a) and (d) Dl. 4.10.1:-'ut ea (mors) quoque per virtutem domita resurgeret.' Dl. 4.26.27:- 'ut doloris quoque patientiam mortisque contemptum, (praeberet) quibus perfecta et consummata fit virtus.'

(4) Moreover Lactantius interprets the details of His passion and cross as symbols of the real significance of the magisterium: the passion becomes a symbol of those torments which the life of virtue will propose to the individual (Dl4.26.19) and the crown of thorns signifies the Church gathering around Christ the teacher (Dl 4.26.1-3) and the Cross itself is the sign of Christ's message embracing all nations (Dl.4.26.34.

(5) Classical parallels for this in Cicero and Seneca have already been noted. cp p. 456.

The idea of death being vanquished is wholly subordinated in his text to the magisterial notion and is no longer developed as an independent tradition,(1) merely recalled in his system. There only remain a few instances in the Dl which present an alternative view to the magisterial conception of the Atonement, but in each case Lactantius' argument extends only as far as the apologetical situation allows. So, for example, he speaks of Christ's death in the sacrificial terms of the scriptural tradition - Jesus is the lamb which is "immolated", "who pours out his blood" "for the salvation of many":-

(a) ' agnus enim candidus sine macula Christus fuit, id est innocens et iustus et sanctus, qui ab isdem Iudaeis immolatus saluti est omnibus, qui signum sanguinis, id est crucis qua sanguinem fudit, in sua fronte conscripserint.'(2)

(b) ' quod cum sciret futurum ac subinde diceret oportere se pati atque interfici pro salute multorum, secessit tamen cum discipulis suis'(3)

(1) Even the possibility of extending this treatment to include the scriptural notion of the death as a sin-sacrifice is not pursued by Lactantius. The terms of his argument are wholly apologetical. cf. V.Loi Cristologia e soteriologia p. 274:" possiamo subito affermare, che in nessun passo dell opere lattanziane si puo cogliere una correlazione diretta tra la morte di Cristo e i peccati dell 'umanita." This analysis seems somewhat severe since the whole point of the magisterium of Christ is to provide men with life-giving teaching, and 'Life' in the Dl means immortality, men earn this Life by virtue and they learn virtue by the teaching of Christ. As his death is taken as a supreme manifestation of that magisterium, therefore, Lactantius does draw an immediate link between the death of Christ and the liberation of man from the sin-fulness that binds him to corruption. see Dl.4.26.11 also Dl.3.26.3-13.

(2) Dl. 4.26.39.

(3) Dl. 4.18.2. cf. Mtt. 16.21.(Vulg)'exinde coepit Jesus ostendere discipulis suis, quia oporteret eum ire Ierosolymam, et multa pati a senioribus....et occidi.' Mtt. 26.28.(Vulg)'Hic est enim sanguis meus novi testamenti, qui pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.'

(c) ' lignum autem crucem significat et panem corpus eius, quia ipse est cibus ac uita omnium qui credunt in carnem quam portauit et in crucem qua pependit. de qua tamen apertius ipse Moyses in Deuteronomio ita praedicauit: et erit pendens uita tua ante oculos tuos[1].'

The first formula is set in the context of the Passover-Lamb whose blood saved from destruction[2] but the scriptural basis of the others is equally apparent and all three evidently rise from a eucharistic context. The second (4.18.2) combines the Matthean prophecy of the passion with a reminiscence of the Eucharistic formula itself, while the third is taken directly from the Johannine eucharistic discourse. For Lactantius, the most probable source for such formulae would be a liturgical one, which may suggest that his theological analysis of Christ's death might have reproduced much more of the scriptures' sacrificial terminology if his readership had been different. Given that he is expressly writing for a philosophically motivated audience who had not been initiated in the Christian mysteries, then the consistency of his christology of paideia (even embracing a doctrine of Atonement that is almost exclusively set out in magisterial not sacrificial terms) is to be read as a remarkable apologetic feat rather than evidence of a limited theological mind.[3]

(1) Dl.4.18.28-29. cf. Jn 6.35-36. (Vulg).'Ego sum panis vitae: qui venit ad me, non esuriet: et qui credit in me, non sitiet unquam' And Jn. 6.51-52:'Ego sum panis vivus, qui de caelo descendi. ...et panis quem ego dabo, caro mea est pro mundi vita.'

(2) 'The paschal feast of the jews' see. Dl.4.26.37-42.

(3) As. V.Loi. Cristologia e soteriologia p.272: who complains that the passion is treated only as a trimph over death, or as an example of heroic virtue and concludes:"che scoprono la poverta' dell pensiero lattanziano sul valore della passione di Cristo."

(iv) Archaic elements

(a) Princeps Angelorum

G. Verbeke[1] noted that Lactantius carefully distinguished the angels who were 'created' and the Son who was 'engendered': "La manière dont ce fils procède du père diffère également du mode de production des anges: alors que Le Verbe a été conçu par l'intelligence de Dieu[2] et engendré par lui (genuit, progenuit)[3], les anges sont considérées comme des créatures de la divinité suprême (creavisset)[4]." V. Loi later argued [5] that he was mistaken in his interpretations of the relative weight of the two verbs (genuit, creavit) noting that Lactantius equally applies a'created'formula to the son's first birth[6], just as he applies a 'generated' formula to the production of the angels.[7]

(1) G. Verbeke. L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma, du Stoïcisme à S. Augustin Paris 1945. p. 473.

(2) Dl. 4.8.9.

(3) Dl. 4.6.1. Epit. 37.1.

(4) Dl. 4.6.2.

(5) Lattanzio p.177

(6) Epit. 38.9. 'in prima nativitate spiritali creatus est ex solo deo sanctus spiritus factus est.'

(7) Dl. 2.8.6. 'postea multos alios genuit operum suorum ministros..'
Dl.7.5.9. 'cum posset semper spiritibus suis inmortalibus innumerabiles animas procreare, sicut angelos genuit...'

Loi is correct, first in noting that Lactantius' language in this respect has not got the force of technical formulae, and secondly in his observation that Lactantius is able to use creare in the classical sense which indiscriminately embraced the ideas of "making and "generating".(1) It is only the Arian controversy which brings about a clarification in the terminology for the Church's theological needs and which, in the context of the question of the Son's divine nature, strongly differentiates generatus and creatus conferring on them a precise theological connotation of divine as opposed to non-divine. Neither the context, nor the relative significations are to be found in Lactantius;yet the argument of Verbeke is not as anachronistic as Loi suggests for Lactantius does make a careful distinction between the Son and the angels of God and admits that divinity applies only to the first. The terms of the distinction appear to rise from the major source of his angelic christology which is the Letter to the Hebrews. The scriptural argument differentiates the Exalted Son and the angelic spirits who are subordinate ministers of God.(2)

(1) Substantivally creatus can replace filius: cp. Ovid. Met.(5.145) (11.295 , 303) and (13.22,346,616)

(2) Heb. 1.13-14. πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἴρηκέν ποτε,κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἑως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου; οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶν λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα εἰς διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν;

cp. C. Mohrmann: études sur le latin des chrétiens. vol.1. Rome. 1958. pp. 225-227.

Lactantius repeats this classification(1) and absolutely differentiates the Son from the rest of the angelic host in terms of an exaltation to deity in which they do not share: ' et quamvis alios postea innumerabiles creavisset, quos angelos dicimus, hunc tamen solum primogenitum divini nominis apellatione dignatus est, patria scilicet virtute ac maiestate pollentem.'(2)

The Son is called by the divine name in so far as he "powerful in his father's excellence and majesty". This constitutes, as far as Lactantius is concerned, but one single power of Godhead,that of the Father and the Son (expressly excluding the angels): ' ille autem praeses mundi, et rector universi, qui scit omnia, cuius divinis oculis nihil septum est; solus habet rerum omnium cum filio suo potestatem: nec est in angelis quidquam, nisi parendi necessitas;'(3) and one single divine worship of Father and Son: ' quapropter cum mens et uoluntas alterius in altero sit uel potius una in utroque, merito unus deus uterque appellatur, quia quidquid est in patre, ad filium transfluit et quid-quid est in filio, a patre descendit. non potest igitur summus ille ac singularis deus nisi per filium coli. qui solum patrem se colere putat, sicut filium non colit ita ne patrem quidem.'(4)

(1) Dl. 2.8.7.'multos alios genuit operum suorum ministros...'
Dl. 1.7.4.'habet enim ministros quos vocamus nuntios.'
Dl. 1.7.5.'et est illut verum....genuisse regni sui ministros deum verum hi neque dii sunt neque deos se vocari aut coli volunt, quippe qui nihil faciant praeter iussum ac voluntatem dei.'
Dl. 1.7.8.'tertius enim versus ostendit ministros dei non deos, verum angelos apellari oportere.'

(2) Dl. 4.6.2. cf. Epit. 37.3.'denique ex omnibus angelis, quos idem deus de suis spiritibus figuravit, solus (filius) in consortium summae potestatis adscitus est, solus deus nuncupatus.'

(3) Dl. 2.16.8.

(4) Dl. 4.29. 13-14.

Both these christological statements are given further force in the light of his previous demonstrations in Bk.1. that the concept of degrees of deity, or a council of minor divinities sharing power and honour, is a logical impossibility since if the providential power is shared at all it is utterly compromised(1), and likewise with divine worship.(2)

Lactantius approaches the divinity of the Son in terms of an exaltation, which is how Hebrews also envisaged it(3) Though, while Hebrews applies the exaltation to Christ after the incarnate economy, Lactantius at 4.6.2. is clearly referring the notion to the Son's existence with God before the creation of the world.

(1) Dl. 1.3.7. 'eodem modo etiam dii, si plures sint, minus ualebunt aliis tantundem in se habentibus. uirtutis autem perfecta natura in eo potest esse in quo totum est quam in eo in quo pars exigua de toto est. deus uero si perfectus est, ut esse debet, non potest esse nisi unus, ut in eo sint omnia.'
Dl. 1.3.22. 'iam ergo ceteri non dii erunt, sed satellites ac ministri, quos ille unus maximus ac potens omnium iis officiis praefecerit, ut ipsi eius imperio ac nutibus seruiant. si uniuersi pares non sunt, non igitur dii omnes sunt: nec enim potest hoc idem esse quod seruit et quod dominatur. nam si deus nomen est summae potestatis, incorruptibilis esse debet, perfectus inpassibilis nulli rei subiectus.' He is therefore aware that a crude subordinationism denies the possibility of ascribing divinity to the son.

(2) Dl. 1.19.2. 'quoniam si honos idem tribuitur aliis, ipse omnino non colitur, cuius religio est illum esse unum ac solum deum credere.'

(3) Heb. 1.4.

Lactantius makes a further and equally radical distinction between the Son and the angels at (4.8.6-8) where the Son of God is described as revelatory word, whereas the angels are "silent spirits" created for service, not teaching: ' nam sermo est spiritus cum uoce aliquid significante prolatus. sed tamen quoniam spiritus et sermo diuersis partibus proferuntur, siquidem spiritus naribus, ore sermo procedit, magna inter hunc dei filium ceterosque angelos differentia est. illi enim ex deo taciti spiritus exierunt, quia non ad doctrinam. dei tradendam. sed ad ministerium creabantur. ille uero cum sit et ipse spiritus, tamen cum uoce ac sono ex dei ore processit sicut verbum, ea scilicet ratione, quia uoce eius ad populum fuerat usurus, id est quod ille magister futurus esset doctrinae dei et caelestis arcani ad homines perferendi. ipsum primo locutus est, ut per eum ad nos loqueretur et ille uocem dei ac uoluntatem nobis reuelaret. merito igitur sermo ac uerbum dei dicitur.'(1) This passage is introduced in a way that clearly implies the scriptural foundation of this angelic doctrine, and sends us yet again to the text of Hebrews.(2)

(1) Dl. 4.8. 7-8.

(2) Dl. 4.8.6. `primum nec sciri a quoquam possunt nec enarrari opera diuina, sed tamen sanctae litterae docent, in quibus cautum est illum dei filium dei esse sermonem itemque ceteros angelos dei spiritum esse.' cf. Ps. 104.4. (LXX) : ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πῦρ φλέγον.
and Heb. 1.7,8. καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει,Ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα,καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα·πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν,Ὁ θρόνος σου,ὁ θεός,εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος,καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου.
[citing Ps. 104.4, and Ps 45. 6-7 to differentiate the angels and the son.]

The terms of the argument in verse 8 quite clearly demonstrate a classical Logos doctrine which interprets both the eternal processio/ prolatio[1] of the Word, as well as the incarnate economy, on the basis of a revelatory paideia. This gives the distinction between spoken or communicative word and silent spirit its real force and explains why he reserves the revelation of God as a function of the Son alone who is contained within the nature of deity in a way the angels are not.

The distinction between the Son and the angels is articulated carefully, therefore, but it is nevertheless evident that Lactantius preserves a primitive tradition of angelic christology. V. Loi suggests that the christological title of Dux Magnus[2] corresponds to the concept of Jesus as the head of God's angelic host,[3] an interpretation of the theophany to Joshua at Jericho preserved in Justin[4] among others and rendered as archistrategos.

(1) Processio Dl. 4.8.8a. prolatio Dl. 4.8.12a.

(2) Dl. 4.2.5. 'statuerat enim deus adpropinquante ultimo tempore ducem magnum caelitus mittere.'

(3) V. Loi. Lattanzio pp. 214-215. cp. Joshua 5.14. (LXX)

(4) Justin Trypho 34.2., 61.1. 62.5. Ps. Hippol. In S. Pascha 3; 55. Methodius of Olympus. Symposium. 3.6.63. Eusebius H.E 1.2.3., 1.2.11. cf. J. Barbel. Christos Angelos Bonn.1941. pp. 234-235.

It seems more probable that at Dl.4.2. Lactantius is following a different tradition in regard to the idea of Christ as "leader", one supplied by Isaiah and the Epistle to the Hebrews,(1) which relates more immediately to that context of salvific revelation in which Lactantius locates the term. The idea of the angelic archistrategos is nonetheless preserved in the Dl. (dux sanctae militiae)(2) where it is applied to the second coming of the Christ when he enters his glorious Kingdom. Lactantius here preserves the elements of a tradition that is found in the mouth of Christ himself.(3) The same tradition is expressed even more directly in Bk. 4. when Lactantius describes the Son as the princeps angelorum(4): 'filium suum principem angelorum legauit ad homines, ut eos conuerteret ab inpiis et uanis cultibus ad cognoscendum et colendum deum uerum.'(5)

(1) Is. 55.4-5(LXX) ἰδοὺ μαρτύριον ἐν ἔθνεσι δέδωκα αὐτόν, ἄρχοντα καὶ προστάσσοντα ἔθνεσιν. ἔθνη, ἃ οὐκ ᾔδεισάν σε, ἐπικαλέσονταί σε, καὶ λαοί, οἳ οὐκ ἐπίστανταί σε, ἐπὶ σὲ καταφεύξονται ἕνεκεν τοῦ θεοῦ σου τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰσραήλ, ὅτι ἐδόξασέ σε.
Heb. 2.10. Ἔπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα, πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι.

Heb. 12.2. ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν, ὃς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν αἰσχύνης καταφρονήσας, ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ κεκάθικεν.

(2) Dl. 7.19. 4-5. 'hic est enim liberator et iudex et ultor et rex et deus, quem nos Christum uocamus, qui priusquam descendat, hoc signum dabit. cadet repente gladius a caelo, ut sciant iusti ducem sanctae militiae descensurum, et descendet comitantibus angelis in medium terrae.'

(3) Mtt. 16.27(Vulg) 'Filius enim hominis venturus est in gloria patris sui cum angelis suis et tunc reddet unicuique secundum opera eius.'

(4) For the textual authority supporting this title in Dl. cp Brandt CSEL. 19. p. XLIV.

(5) Dl. 4.14.17. cf. Novatian De Trin. 11.57 '.. est enim periculum grande salvatorem generis humani, totius dominum et principem mundi.. aevorum omnium et temporum regem, angelorum omnium principem, antequam nihil praeter patrem,...' cf. J. Barbel. Christos Angelos. pp. 234-235. V. Loi. Lattanzio. p..215.fn.44.

Lactantius' angelic statements, then, continue to emphasise the distinction between the Son and the angelic spirits, rather than presuming any identification on the grounds of a common genus. This presumption is rarely a valid one even in the most ancient versions of the angel christology which are often concerned themselves to use angelic imagery to emphasise the Κυριότης[1] of Jesus. A. Grillmeier's analysis of the tradition of angelic christology demonstrates the need to interpret such statements in terms of the economy of Christ's mission rather than as statements of the Son's essential nature, and the economic context of all Lactantius' angelic statements supports such a view: "Judaistically conditioned christology is predominantly functional, not ontological. It is possible to transfer the name 'angel' to Christ as a functional category as long as the way lies open for a full definition of his transcendence and the way in which, in the view of the tradition, it corresponds to his nature. But the insufficiency of this teaching in this respect was soon felt".[2]

(1) cf. A. Grillmeier. Christ in Christian Tradition 1. pp.47-53

(2) A. Grillmeier. Christ in Christian tradition. 1. pp. 48-49

In short, the angel christology of Lactantius, although strangely preserved up to the eve of the Arian crisis itself (which saw the final demise of this tradition in its attempted use as an argument against the deity of Christ), is fundamentally orthodox.(1) It does not compromise the clear teaching on the divine rank of the Son, and uses the angelic tradition to attribute a uniquely revelatory function to the Logos-Sermo.

(1) Also cf. the case of the "Tropici" whose reductionist version of the angelic christology is refuted in Athanasius' Ep.ad Serapion. cf. JND. Kelly. Early Christian Doctrines pp. 256-257.

In fact, Lactantius follows the angelic doctrine of Tertullian(1) which interprets it as a description of a function rather than a nature(2) and applies it within the context of a revelatory Logos-theology. He also finds both patristic authority and scriptural demonstrations of the same tradition in Cyprian's Ad Quirinum, of which one of the chapter headings(3) clearly dispels any notion that the angelic titles of this period were inconsistent with a high-christology.

(1) De Carne Christi. 14: 'dictus est quidem (Christus) magni consilii angelus, id est nuntius, officii non naturae vocabulo. magnum enim cogitatum patris, super hominis scilicet restitutione, adnuntiaturus saeculo erat.' cf. J. Barbel. Christos Angelos pp. 284-288 See also Novatian's defence of economic angelic christology. De Trin. 18. 103-104: 'Quomodo ergo Deus erit, si angelus fuit, cum non sit hoc nomen angelis umquam concessum? Nisi quoniam ex utroque latere nos ueritas in istam concludit sententiam, qua intellegere debeamus Dei Filium fuisse qui, quoniam ex Deo est, merito Deus quia Dei Filius dictus sit quoniam Patri subditus et annuntiator paternae uoluntatis est, magni consilii angelus pronuntiatus est. (104) Ergo si hic locus neque personae Patris congruit, ne angelus dictus sit, neque personae angeli ne Deus pronuntiatus sit, personae autem Christi conuenit, ut et Deus sit, quia Dei Filius est, et angelus sit, quoniam paternae dispositionis annuntiator est, intellegere debent contra scripturas se agere haeretici, qui Christum cum dicant se at angelum credere, nolint illum etiam Deum pronuntiare quem in ueteri testamento ad uisitationem generis humani legunt saepe uenisse.'

(2) A. Grillmeier. Christ in Christian Tradition. 1.p.52." (Tertullian's) distinction that angel is a name descriptive of a function and not of a nature will remain decisive for latin theology. Thus the name 'angel' can be applied to Christ, just as he can also be given the name 'prophet'. For Christ is the last and absolute revealer of the Father, quite simply his Logos sent out into the world." P. Monat similarly explains the angelology of Lactantius in these functional, apologetic terms: " Lactance veut faire comprendre aux païens sa fonction..comme l'eût fait un Roi, Dieu a envoyé comme l'héraut aux hommes son chef le plus prestigieux: l'image est parfaitement à la portée des esprits païens." cf. Lactance et son Temps. Ed. Monat./Perrin. p.292.

(3) Cyprian Ad Quirinum 2.5. 'quod idem angelus et deus Christus.'

(b) Christus spritus dei

Lactantius conceives the pre-existent Christ as the first born spirit of God, a holy spirit from the supreme spirit of the Deity.(1) Analogously the angels are spirits of God in so far as they too derive their origin from the Deity and share a spiritual nature.(2) In this context the description 'spirit of God' would not consitute per se, a divine title, it would rather signify a substantive being(3) that participated in the spiritual nature of God, as opposed to a physical type of creaturehood. When Lactantius wishes to distinguish the Son who is God's spirit from the angels who are similarly God's spirits he always specifies the formulae; so the Son is either "incorruptibilem spiritum"(4) or "spiritum, qui esset virtutibus patris dei praeditus."(5)

(1) Dl.2.8.3. 'deus..produxit similem sui spiritum, qui esset virtutibus patris dei praeditus.'
Dl.4.6.1. 'Deus..sanctum et incorruptibilem spiritum genuit, quem filium nuncuparet.'

(2) Epit.37.3. 'ex omnibus angelis, quos idem deus de suis spiritibus figuravit...'
Dl.4.8.6. 'sed tamen sanctae litterae docent, in quibus cautum est illum dei filium dei esse sermonem itemque ceteros angelos dei spiritus esse.'
See. Loi. Lattanzio. pp.176-183. (spiritus quale sostanza celeste degli angeli.)

(3) Dl.4.8.10. 'nostri spiritus dissolubiles sunt, quia mortales sumus, dei autem spiritus et uiuunt et manent et sentiunt, quia ipse immortalis est et sensus ac uitae dator. nostrae uoces licet aurae misceantur atque uanescant, tamen plerumque permanent litteris conprehensae; quanto magis dei uocem credendum est et manere in aeternum et sensu ac uirtute comitari quam de deo patre tamquam riuus de fonte traduxerit!'

(4) (Dl.4.6.1.) The incorruptibilis is applied as a divine epithet (see Thesis Ch.4.(ii) a.) in which the angels evidently do not share because he elsewhere teaches their sexual fall from grace. (Dl.2.14.1-3)

(5) Dl.2.8.3. See also Epit.37.3.'solus in consortium summae potestatis adscitus est, solus deus nuncupatus.'

Such a precise specification is always required since the concept of "holy spirit" can be equally applied to the Father, the Son or the angels. The clearest differentiation of the Son-spirit from the angel-spirits occurs in Lactantius' adaptation of Tertullian's Logos theology where the Son is defined as the only communicative spirit of God, the Word, or vocal spirit,(1) who fulfils the role of revelation.(2)

Lactantius' terminology leads to a pneumatological doctrine that does not, then, articulate a threefold, Trinitarian, structure of the deity and which can therefore be classed as pre-nicene binitarianism. The functions normally attributed to the person of the Holy Ghost(3) especially after Constantinople in 381 are, in Lactantius, attributed either to the Son or to God himself, and he consequently appears to have no conception of any third spirit who can be called "God".(4)

(1) Dl.4.8.7-9. eg -'procedentem de ore suo vocalem spiritum, quem non utero, sed mente conceperat..'

(2) Dl.4.8.6. 'sermo est spiritus cum voce aliquid significante prolatus.' cf. Tertullian Adv. Prax. 7.6. Novatian. De Trin 30.183. Also A. Orbe Hacia la primera teología de la procesion del verbo Estudios Valentinianos 1.1. Rome 1958. p.451. Ibid 1.2. pp.534, 540-554. V. Loi Lattanzio. p. 169

(3) used personalistically, to avoid the evident confusion that can arise between 'spirit of God' and 'Spirit of God' or a holy spirit and the Holy Spirit. When Holy Spirit is used personalistically to designate the third member of the trinity, as wholly distinct from Christ, then the term will be underlined.

(4) Jerome Comm. in Ep ad Galat. 2.4.: '...multi per inperitiam scripturarum, quod et firmianus in octavo ad demetrianum epistularum libro facit, adserunt spiritum sanctum saepe patrem, saepe filium nominari.'

Jerome twice complains of Lactantius' pneumatology on the grounds that he attributes the title of 'Holy Spirit' indiscriminately to either the Father or the Son.(1) This archaic pneumatology, which truly reflects the flexible language of the scriptures rather than being a sign of "inperitia scripturarum", was no longer tolerated after the council of Constantinople, and may well explain why the corpus of Lactantius' letters was "lost" in antiquity. Jerome's reference is already an apologia to retain the Dl for its apologetic merits irrespective of its heterodox pneumatology.

Jerome's interpretation that Lactantius' doctrine of The Holy Spirit rendered it an impersonal spirit of divine sanctification, would appear to be reliable.(2)

(1) Jerome. Comm in Ep. ad Galat 2.4. cited previously, and Epist 84.7:-'et apostolus praecepit: omnia legentes, quae bona sunt retinentes. Lactantius in libris suis et maxime in epistulis ad Demetrianum spiritussancti omnino negat substantiam et errore Judaico dicit eum vel ad patrem referri vel filium et sanctificationem utriusque personae sub eius nomine demonstrari. quis mihi interdicere potest ne legam Institutionum eius libros, quibus contra gentes scripsit fortissime, quia superior sententia detestanda est?'

(2) Lactantius follows the Old Latin scriptural tradition of Christ's baptism which inserts the version of Ps.2.7. (today I have begotten you) into the account of the Father's words to Christ - "in order to stress the spiritual rebirth attendant on baptism, and to explain the Holy Spirit in terms of sanctification rather than as the third person of the Trinity." (R.M. Ogilvie. The Library of Lactantius. p.104) see Thesis ch 2.(ii) a. cf. A. Orbe. Hacia la primera teologia de la procesion del verbo 1.2. p.542f.

Such a binitarian doctrine, however, is not a theological aberration on the part of Lactantius. It represents a longstanding western tradition, more widespread than has often been imagined.(1) The only oddity is the late date at which it appears, but even here it is typical of Lactantius to retain archaic theological strands, for he always looks back to the Church of the second century apologists rather than forward to the Church of the post-nicene fathers. In addition,Lactantius is not the last representative of the binitarian strand for it can be discerned even into the early writings of Hilary,(2) and perhaps even more interestingly - the creed of the Council of Sardica (343) which shows a clear conception that it was the Holy Spirit who assumed flesh of the virgin Mary.

(1) cf. B. Studer, La sotériologie de Lactance (Lactance et son Temps. Ed. Monat./Perrin) pp.270-271:"le binitarisme, avant les discussions sur la divinité de l'Esprit Saint (avant 360), est un phénomène beaucoup plus étendu qu'on ne le pense, surtout dans la théologie latine. Ainsi constatons-nous que la théologie d'Hilaire, à la différence de la théologie d'Athanase après 360, est pratiquement binitariste." Also. A. Orbe. Hacia la primera teología de la procésion del verbo. 1.2. p.553:"la teología binitaria del autor de las Institutiones Divinae se avenía mal a recoger un elemento, probablemente tradicional, que aparece ya en S. Ireneo y Tertulliano." For a demonstration of the existence of such a spirit-christology and its traditional respectability cf; M. Simonetti. Note di Cristologia pneumatica. Ag.12.1972.. pp 201-232. F. Loofs. Christologie in: Realencyklopädie für protestantische theologie und Kirche. vol. 4. pp.26-27. HA. Wolfson. The philosophy of the Church Fathers. Cambridge. Mass. 1964. pp. 183-191 (who cites all the patristic texts in which Logos is equated with spiritus) Also J.Barbel. Christos Angelos. pp. 188-192.

(2) Hilary. Comm. In Matt. 3.1-3, 33.6. cf. F. Loofs. Hilarius von Poitiers in Realencyklopädie für protestantische theologie und Kirche. vol. 8. p.59. M. Simonetti. Note sul commento a Matteo di Hilariodi Poitiers in Vetera Christianorum. 1.1964 pp. 57-58. P. Smulders. La doctrine trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers Rome 1944. pp. 84-88.

This council led by Hosius of Cordoba was composed wholly of western bishops, and reflects the typical western concern with the divine unity rather than the plurality, not only in its credal spirit-christology(1) but also in its disciplinary decision aquitting Marcellus of Ancyra of all charges of heresy. Indeed the whole terminology of the pneumatological question was only given precision by the debates on the personal deity of the Holy Ghost which post-dated Lactantius by fifty years. Up until this time the whole momentum of dogmatic development and formulation was supplied by scriptural exegesis. Christology advanced freely because a wealth of Old Testament proof texts could be found to elucidate the relationships of the Son and the Father, but few Old Testament testimonia could be similarly used to demonstrate the nature of a third divine spirit and this goes a long way in explaining the slowness of pre-nicene pneumatological development.(2)

(1) Mansi VI. col.1216.D. (Gk. Text Mansi.III.col.85)'credimus et suscipimus paraclytum spiritum sanctum, quem nobis ipse dominus promisit et misit. et hunc credimus missum. et is passus non est, sed homo, quem induit, quem adsumpsit ex Maria virgine, qui potuit pati, quoniam homo mortalis, deus autem inmortalis.' This view is essentially the theological tradition to which Pope Callistus held, and which is attacked by Novatian in the De Trin. 9.12.17. With regard to the Holy Spirit becoming incarnate of the Virgin cf. JND. Kelly. Early Christian Doctrines. p.144.

(2) Eg. for Justin the Old Testament 'Wisdom' was the Son. For Theophilus it refers to the spirit. For Athanasius in the Festal Letters it denotes the Son whereas in his Epistle to Serapion it refers to the Spirit. cf. RPC. Hanson. Biblical exegesis in the Early Church. Cambridge History of the Bible vol.1. pp.412-453. esp. pp.422-423.

Even the pre-Nicene latin writers who did so much to fix the terms of a trinitarian theology, Tertullian and Novatian, are fundamentally motivated by a defence of the divine monarchy. Novatian's work De Trinitate was only given such a title in later ages and in fact he teaches very little on the Spirit in comparison to the extensive way he elucidates the relationship of the Father and the Son.(1)

(1) Novatian. De Trin. 29. Text. ed. H. Weyer. Dusseldorf 1962. cf. Editor's notes p. 182f: 'Even Novatian does not expressly call the spirit God'. See also. HB Swete. The Holy Spirit in the ancient Church. London. 1912. pp. 107-109. and A.D'Ales. Novatien: étude sur la théologie romaine au milieu du troisième siècle. Paris. 1925. pp. 117-120.

Tertullian witnesses this tradition of spirit christology which could use the terms "spirit of God" and "word of God"as interchangeable designations. Tertullian shows this in the Adv.Praxean.(1) the De Oratione, (2) the Apologeticum,(3) and the Adv. Marcionem.(4) But where Tertullian advances on the tradition, articulating the personal subsistence of the Holy Spirit as a third gradus of the one divine nature,(5) Lactantius makes no such advancement.

(1) Adv. Prax. 26.4: 'dicens autem spiritus dei, etsi spiritus dei deus, tamen non directo deum nominans, portionem totius intelligi voluit, quae cessura erat in filii nomen. hic spiritus dei idem erit sermo....ita et hic sermonem quoque agnoscimus in nomine spiritus.'

(2) De Orat.1.1: 'dei spiritus et dei sermo et dei ratio, sermo rationis, et ratio sermonis et spiritus utriusque, Iesus Christus dominus noster.'

(3) Apol.21: 'et nos etiam sermoni atque rationi itemque virtuti, per quae omnia molitum deum ediximus, propriam substantiam spiritum inscribimus.' Ibid.(On Christ as a ray from the sun of God's deity): 'ita de spiritu spiritus, et de deo deus modulo alterum, non numero, gradu, non statu fecit, et a matrice non recessit, sed excessit.'

(4) cf. Adv. Marc. 4.18.

(5) Adv. Prax. 25.

So it is that the Dl equates the Logos(1) with the Spiritus Dei: 'hunc sermonem divinum ne philosophi quidem ignoraverunt, siquidem Zenon rerum naturae dispositorem atque opificem universitatis logon praedicat....est enim spiritus dei quem ille animum Iovis nominavit. nam Trismegistus...virtutem maiestatemque verbi saepe descripsit, sicut declarat superius illut exemplum, quo fatetur esse ineffabilem quendam sanctumque sermonem, cuius ennarratio modum hominis excedat(2).'

And Lactantius, along with Tertullian and the almost unanimous tradition of the early church, interprets the 'holy spirit' and the 'power of the Most High' which comes upon the virgin Mary at the Annunciation as a reference to the pre-existent Son, not a distinct 'Holy Ghost'.(3)

(1) Dl. 4.9.1. Logos as the speech, reason, voice and wisdom of God: 'Sed melius Graeci λόγον dicunt quam nos uerbum siue sermonem: λόγος enim et sermonem significat et rationem, quia ille est et uox et sapientia dei.'

(2) Dl. 4.9. 2-3 passim.

(3) Dl. 4.12.1. 'Descendens itaque de caelo sanctus ille spiritus dei sanctam uirginem cuius utero se insinuaret elegit. at illa diuino spiritu hausto repleta concepit et sine ullo adtactu uiri repente uirginalis uterus intumuit.' Similarly Ignatius Magn. 15.2., Hippol. con. Noet. 16.4, Justin Trypho. 100 and 1. Apol. 33., Clement of Alexandria Ped. 2.19.4, Theophilus Ad. Aut. 2.10, Irenaeus. Adv.H. 5.1.3., Tertull. Adv. Prax. 26.3-4. Hilary. De Trin. 2.26. [Based on Rom. 8.9. spiritus dei - spiritus christi.]

Similarly the spirit of God[1] who is the agent of prophetic inspiration is one and the same as the Son.[2] For Lactantius it is this spirit of God who suffers, himself, the very torments he spoke about through the person of David in the 21st psalm.[3]

Lactantius' christology is according to the Spiritus-Caro formula[4], and in this context the 'holy spirit' which Jesus breathes into the disciples after the resurrection[5] is evidently not a distinct hypostasis, but refers to the divine power of spirit possessed by the holy flesh of Christ whereby he was able to perform miracles in his earthly ministry.[6] It is this divine power, which naturally belongs to him, that Christ communicates to his apostles.

(1) This force of inspiration is logically equated with the Logos who as the "vocal spirit" is pre-eminently the revealer. Lactantius' terms are 'holy spirit' (Dl. 4.11.1) and more frequently 'divine spirit' (Dl. 4.5.5., 5,9.6, 6.1.1, 7.24.9)

(2) Dl. 4.14.15 'quomodo autem et cum quibus mandatis a deo mitteretur in terram, declarauit spiritus dei per prophetam docens futurum ut cum uoluntatem summi patris fideliter et constanter inplesset, acciperet iudicium atque imperium sempiternum.'

(3) Dl. 4.18.31. 'quae utique propheta non de se locutus est. fuit enim rex et numquam illa perpessus est, sed spiritus dei per eum loquebatur, qui fuerat illa passurus post annos mille et quinquaginta.'

(4) Romans. 1. 3-4. cf. Thesis ch.6.(ii)b. R. Cantalamessa La primitiva esegesi cristologica di Romani 1.3-4 e Luca 1.35. RSLR. 2.1966. pp. 69-80.

(5) cp. Epit 42-3. 'inspiravit in eos spiritum sanctum ac dedit eis potestatem mirabilia faciendi ut in salutem hominum tam factis quam verbis operarentur.' The final phrase 'deeds as well as words' relates the apostolic teaching to the teaching ministry of Christ. Lactantius not only interprets Christ's miracles as symbols of the magisterium (Dl. 4.26. 1-16), but specifically describes it as a perfect teaching in "words and deeds" (Dl. 4. 23-4.24) esp. 4.24-19b.

(6) cp. Dl. 4.26.11 '- non exigua inmortalis potentiae opera'

The inarticulated state of Lactantius' pneumatology has frequently been explained on the basis of theological incompetence, or isolation from the mainstream of Christian thought.(1) Accusations of theological incompetence, however, are usually only ways of avoiding critical investigation of the subject by proscribing him from the outset. In addition, although Lactantius' theology appears quite strange in many aspects, all his treatments have been shown to be rooted in previous ecclesiastical traditions, and in almost every case his 'oddity' consists only in his preservation of archaic theological forms rather than an incompetent invention of new ideas. An explanation which has been rarely considered is the wholly apologetic nature of his work, for it is quite possible that such a proto-catechesis as the Dl, might be content with leading the pagan mind to a belief in one God and his Son and leaving further instruction for the Catechumenate proper. Thus the initiation into the doctrine of the Spirit would be given in the episcopal preparations for baptism when the neophyte would also be initiated into the sacramental mysteries - none of which are developed in the Dl. The pneumatology then could be explained on the basis that the complete doctrine is a mysterium arcanum which Lactantius reserves from his uninitiated audience.(2) The references of Jerome, about his letters, however, accord fully with the pneumatology preserved in the Dl and suggest that the basic doctrine of the Spirit is fully worked out as far as Lactantius is concerned.

(1) "His knowledge of Christian doctrine and literature was defective". (B. Altaner. Patrology. p.208) "Everything Tertullian and Novatian had achieved for a systematic teaching on the Trinity is forgotten by Lactantius". (H.Von. Campenhausen The Fathers of the Latin Church p.75)

(2) Dl. 7.26.9. 'abscondi enim tegique mysterium quam fidelissime oportet, maxime a nobis, qui nomen fidei gerimus.'

A third and most likely possibility is that the 'oddity of Lactantius' pneumatology may have been ever emphasised by the theologians of the post-Nicene, and post-Constantinopolitan eras, and judged as an anachronism by the critics of more recent ages. In its own day it quite possibly represented, far more honestly, the general level of Western articulation about the role of the Holy Spirit than we might be led to believe was operating if we were to think that the speculative Trinitarianism of Tertullian, Novatian or Hippolytus(1) was standard church confessionalism. It is also well to remember that even at Nicaea the general level of articulated credal belief in the Holy Spirit can be guaged by one rather bald article.(2) In regard to formulating a pneumatological doctrine,then, it is undoubtedly correct to say that "the problems which Lactantius finds are no greater than those of his other contemporaries".(3) The obscurity of the spirit-christology he preserves, far from isolating Lactantius from the Christian tradition, witnesses that he is in the mainstream of a most primitive and archaic tradition that reflects the obscurities of the New Testament experience itself.(4) He presents, then, the background to the pneumatological debate that began in earnest in the last half of the 4th century and at one and the same time explains the Church's need for such a debate.

(1) The monistic theology of Callistus was probably the stronger tradition, and it is manifested in the Sardican Creed as late as 343.

(2) καὶ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον

(3) A. Grillmeier. Christ in Christian tradition. 1. p.201.

(4) Especially the scriptural identifications of Christ and God's Spirit eg. Mk. 2.8, Rom. 1.3-4, 1 Tim. 3.16, Heb. 9.14. 1. Pet. 3.18-20.

(v) The Union of Father and Son.

Lactantius is in no doubt as to the divinity of Christ, He teaches the same, and freely applies the concept "God" to the Son.(1) The Son is divine in his pre-existent state, uniquely enclosed within the divine nature of the Father.(2) He is also described as enjoying a divine exaltation after his earthly ministry(3) in terms redolent of the Christological teaching of Philippians,(4) and consistently in the Dl. Lactantius' language demonstrates that he takes the divine status of Christ for granted.(5) The question remains, however, in what way did he envisage this divinity he ascribes to the Son? To this problem of the manner of Christ's union with the Father he devotes a chapter of Book 4(6) which shows considerable signs of dependence on the previous Latin apologists(7) and presents his own thought on the issue in its most succinct form.

(1) B. Studer. La Sotériologie de Lactance (Lactance et Son Temps. Ed. Monat/Perrin) p. 259- "Sans doute, il ne conteste pas la divinité du Christ, et lui donne des titres divins tels que Parole de Dieu, Sagesse de Dieu, Force de Dieu, Prince des Anges."

(2) Dl. 2.8.3, Epit. 37.3., Dl. 4.6.1f.

(3) Dl. 4.14.20 '- accepit nomen dei.'

(4) Philipp. 2.9. διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσεν καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα.

(5) "The same is both God and man" eg. Dl. 4.13.5-6, 4.25.5. scriptural confessions such as 'hic deus noster est' are directly applied to him (Dl. 4.13.8-9) and the authority of his teaching ministry is explained on the basis of his divinity (Dl.4.24.18) Lactantius also uses formulae naively such as "the passion of God" (Dl.4.26.33) On the attribution of divine titles to Christ see V. Loi Lattanzio pp. 227-229

(6) Viz,Dl. 4.29

(7) Esp. Tertullian Adv. Prax. 8, and 18.

In 4.29 Lactantius elucidates the union of the Father and Son by means of a series of arguments supplied by several different images. His first argument is based on the concept of natural relationship. The Father and Son are not different or separated because they mutually depend on one another: 'cum dicimus deum patrem et deum filium, non diuersum dicimus nec utrumque secernimus, quia nec pater a filio potest nec filius a patre secerni, siquidem nec pater sine filio nuncupari nec filius potest sine patre generari.'(1) This argument re-appears in later theology and is then used to demonstrate the concept of the divine circumincession - a trinitarian theology based on the concepts of co-eternity and co-equality. Although Lactantius' argument at first sight appears to suggest such a conception the analogies he uses to develop the idea show that these notions are not, in fact, before his mind. The divine relationship is quite evidently conceived in the manner of Tertullian's imagery as an economic movement from the father's instigating power:' cum igitur et pater filium faciat et filius patrem, una utrique mens, unus spiritus, una substantia est: sed ille quasi exuberans fons est, hic tamquam defluens ex eo riuus, ille tamquam sol, hic quasi radius ex sole porrectus(2).

(1) Dl. 4.29.3.

(2) Dl. 4.29.4.

These examples of the union of Christ are further explained in the following verse and once more the identity is set out in terms of an economic fidelity, (the Father and Son are one because the Son is the faithful expression of God his hand, strength and voice):' qui quoniam summo patri et fidelis et carus est, non separatur, sicut nec riuus a fonte nec radius a sole, quia et aqua fontis in riuo est et solis lumen in radio; aeque nec uox ab ore seiungi nec uirtus aut manus a corpore diuelli potest. cum igitur a prophetis idem manus dei et uirtus et sermo dicatur, utique nulla discretio est, quia et linqua, sermonis ministra, et manus, in qua est uirtus, indiuiduae sunt corporis portiones.'(1) The economic movement from Father to Son is therefore the all important concept in Lactantius' mind: 'quia quidquid est in patre, ad filium transfluit et quidquid est in filio, a patre descendit.'(2) The recurrence of a favourite apologetic image demonstrates his use of the economic basis of the christological union - the Son is one with the Father as a faithful son within the household of his father:' cum quis habet filium quem unice diligat qui tamen sit in domo et in manu patris, licet ei nomen domini potestatemque concedat, ciuili tamen iure et domus una et unus dominus nominatur. sic hic mundus una dei domus est et filius ac pater, qui unanimes incolunt mundum, deus unus, quia et unus est tamquam duo et duo tamquam unus. neque id mirum, cum et filius sit in patre, quia pater diligit filium, et pater in filio, quia uoluntati patris fideliter paret, nec umquam faciat aut fecerit, nisi quod pater aut uoluit aut iussit.'(3)

(1) Dl. 4.29.5-6.

(2) Dl. 4.29.13B.

(3) Dl. 4.29. 7-9.

Lactantius breaks his argument at this point to introduce a catena(1) of scriptural proofs to the unity of the Father and the Son, using them to show that although two persons(duae personae) are mentioned the singleness of the Godhead is not prejudiced: 'sed fas non erat plurali numero separationem tantae necessitudinis fieri. unus est enim, solus, liber, deus summus, carens origine.'(2) He immediately continues by showing yet again the economic basis of that unity: 'quia ipse est origo rerum et in eo simul et filius et omnia continentur. quapropter cum mens et uoluntas alterius in altero sit uel potius una in utroque, merito unus deus uterque appellatur, quia quidquid est in patre, ad filium transfluit et quidquid est in filio, a patre descendit.'(3)

His final argument is drawn from the singleness of divine worship which at once embraces the Father and the Son. This is a strong argument for the divine unity given his previous demonstration that if God's worship is shared with anyone at all it is utterly perverted.(4) The inclusion of Christ into the true cult is therefore a demonstration that his nature is inalienable from God's. Again, however, the identity is demonstrated from the economic function of the Son through whom the Father is worshipped.

(1) Dl. 4.29. 10-11. viz Is. 45.14 (Cyprian. Ad Quir.2.6) Is.44.6. and Hos. 13.14.

(2) Dl. 4.29.11b

(3) Dl. 4.29 12-13.

(4) Dl. 1.19.2.

The Son's role is one of unique mediation(1) as the worship of God is only restored to men(2) by the economic ministry of Christ the priest.

Lactantius' main formula of the union is both precise and foreful in the way it defends the divine Monarchy: 'cum igitur et pater filium faciat et filius patrem, una utrique mens, unus spiritus, una substantia est(3).'

But the una substantia is evidently a long way removed from the Homoousios/consubstantialis of Nicaea, and a greater theological distance is operating than would be thought merely by reference to the twenty years or so that separate the respective confessions.

Christ in Lactantius, is the mens and spiritus of God since he is the divine Logos, the vocal spirit which proceeds economically from the Father for the sake of revelation.

(1) cf. the christological titles of Dl. 4.29.15 - legatus, nuntius, sacerdos, ianua, via, dux, ostium.

(2) ie the faithful whom he describes as those who "receive the Son" and "bear his name" (Dl. 4.29.15) which probably alludes to the Johannine concept of faith cp Jn. 1.12, 13.20.

(3) Dl. 4.29.4.

It is, then, the Logos-theology of the earlier apologists which provides the basic structure of his christological thought as can be clearly seen from all the economic analogies and examples he used to define the relationship of the Father and the Son.(1) It is this overall structure which although not as rigorously taught as in Justin, Theophilus, or even Tertullian, nonetheless limits the possibility of christological development in the Dl and gives to his thought an essential tinge of christological subordinationism. In short, Christ is divine because he is contained within the deity of God the Father the sole source of all: ' quia ipse est origo rerum et in eo simul et filius et omnia continentur.'(2) This subordinationism can easily be overemphasised of course,(3) and it would be wrong to see it as quasi-Arianism simply because of Lactantius' late date. The Dl are in a wholly different world to the Arian controversy, they look back to an earlier and more primitive tradition of theologising(4) and in any case, the clear conception of Christ's <u>divine status</u> in his work fundamentally separates him from the excesses of Arianism.

Nonetheless, just as his pneumatology is a clear demonstration of the need for the council of Constantinople, the fluid nature of his christology is a clear demonstration of the need for Athanasius and Nicaea.

(1) And not least in the wholly economic basis of the incarnation of christ as a salvific mission of paideia.

(2) Dl. 4.29.12.

(3) cf. V. Loi. <u>Lattanzio</u> pp.203-207. (p.203) "Lattanzio usa espressioni che rivelano una concezione nettamente subordinazionista la quale non si discosta molto dalle interpretazioni teologiche che furono patrocinate anche dagli Ariani." Many of Loi's arguments, however, with which he supports this Arian interpretation of Lactantius seem anachronistic; for example that Lactantius uses a "favourite Arian Text" viz. Proverbs.8.22-30 - but as yet this was not an 'Arian' text in any way at all, and on the contrary had a longstanding pedigree in the Apologetical

(3) continued/...

tradition, a tradition Lactantius faithfully follows. Again Loi finds the mention of the hermetic deuteros theos a disquieting sign (Dl.4.6.4. (cp. Loi.204) but the way in which Lactantius uses pagan authorities throughout the Dl quite clearly shows that the citation of a text rarely implies that he has any deep relation with the original literature, or any deep feeling for the theology it represents. In the case of the deuteros theos, he is simply making apologetic mileage out of it.

(4) An example of the great difference between the statements of a typical Logos theology, and the way such statements could be rationalistically reduced and pressed into service in an Arian sense, can be gained from the work of Tertullian. It would be as wrong, for example to read the formula "(fuit autem tempus cum et delictum et filius non fuit - (Adv.Herm.3)" * in an Arian sense, as it would to take the formulae of Lactantius and similarly misapply them to an Arian dialectic.

* cf. A. D'Àles. La théologie de Tertullien. pp. 94-96.

Epilogue.

The theologian of the DI is evidently no Origen or Irenaeus. He does not have the poetic expanse of the Greek speculative theologians, nor do his interests allow us to note any strong affinity between the Christian systematic of his western counterparts,such as Tertullian , Novatian or Cyprian, and the doctrine our author presents in the DI. Such contrasts however, although prima facie unfavourable to Lactantius, are in a sense superficial. The later patristic tradition, a view revived in the age of the patrologies, consistently assigned Lactantius to a place in the limbo of theological development. There seemed little in his work of any specific Christian worth; insights , that is, which were epoch-making in the development of dogma. Tertullian and Novatian both performed a valuable systematic role in providing christological and trinitarian formulae, and Cyprian was highly valued for his ecclesiological work, but Lactantius was viewed with some disdain by a triumphant Church that had risen above and beyond the pagan environment that formed the warp and woof of Lactantius' situation. Great respect was always afforded to his memory, but he was accepted as a rhetor , not a theologian.

In addition his character and personal interests present him to us as an ideal picture of Roman 'gravitas'. His theology is not brilliantly speculative, but on the contrary conservative in mould,fundamentally functional (in the sense that it has a constant orientation to the Moral) and far from breaking new ground tends to look back to the oldest established patterns. Indeed, forms of primitive theologising such as the Spirit-christology,the angelic christology, the milleniarism, or the impermanent nature of Christ's kingdom, are almost anachronistically preserved in his hands up to the eve of Nicaea. When these forms

appear again after him, they are to be judged heretical.

It is not unfair,perhaps, to say that he would not have been able to cope with the Council of Nicaea itself, had he been present. But then again many of the bishops who were there would have shared that predicament. It is not only Gibbon who thinks there is hardly an iota of difference between the varying christologies, a great number of the Nicene bishops only slowly began to see the full meaning of the issues they had debated,long after the Council itself. Lactantius, then, in all his conservatism, his imprecision and preference for archaic forms, is perhaps not untypical of the western theologian of his day. It would certainly be erroneous to suppose that the work of Tertullian was 'typical' of the general level of Church consciousness in the 2nd century. A man such as Lactantius is a more sure guide, and a work of general catechesis, such as the DI,will prove to offer a wider sample of Church confession than the speculative work of a Tertullian or an Origen. In short it would appear to be a mistake to conclude from the theological tradition contained in the DI that Lactantius is an incompetent workman. The subtlety with which he constructs a remarkably coherent magisterial christology argues against such an inference. Many of the patrologies explain the theological character of the DI on the basis that he did not have the wit to put across the theological treasures that were all around him, and explain this failure, in turn, on the suppositions of limited reading, limited intelligence, or both.

One might,then, suggest an alternative viewpoint: Firstly that the fluidity of the pre-Nicene tradition itself is partly responsible for the somewhat reserved nature of his theologising. Secondly

that he is deliberately eschewing speculative theology (and understandably so) since his work is designed first and foremost as a catechetical communication to pagans. It is an introduction to Christian theology not a monograph for Christian cognoscenti. It is perhaps ironical that Lactantius should so often have had to face this charge of being 'un-ecclesiastical'.It is a measure of his success,for with the possible exception of Clement's Protreptikos (or Justin's Dialogue With Trypho,) this is the only patristic apology that seriously attempts to communicate with the pagan world, on its own terms, and through its own culture. And it is the only pre-Nicene Latin work that attempts to offer a genuine catechetical system. The character of Lactantian theology thus appears to be determined by these twin forces of a fluid tradition and a catechetical motivation.

If this is so, one is faced anew with the task of taking his theology seriously. Much more theological analysis needs to go on in the area of Lactantian studies, particularly his theological formulations, before this critical period of Church history can be said to have been properly clarified for us. The theological analyses that comprise the present study, especially regarding his doctrine of God and doctrine of Christ,have attempted to show how profoundly scriptural is his mind. Scriptural models and scriptural formulae frequently underly his text and must therefore provide the framework of his consciousness.as a theologian. In this he is typical of the pre-Nicene Father. The Church was then motivated by scriptural forms in a most dynamic and vital manner.

It is this widespread scriptural background to Lactantius' thought in the DI that, above all else,has led the present study to challenge the frequently-held view that the DI gains its inspiration from sources external to the Christian tradition, whether these are seen as Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, or Hermeticism. All these elements are

there in his text, of course, and many more,including Epicureanism and classical paganism - but they are used in an exemplarist manner, and the terms of his theology quite clearly show that his inspiration and motivation arise constantly from within the orthodox ecclesiastical world.

It is perhaps only when the extent of the ecclesiastical background to the mind of Lactantius is more fully appreciated that he will emerge as a figure not only of great historical significance in patristic literature but one who also deserves to be read sensitively as a theologian.

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A P P E N D I X I

SCRIPTURAL INDEX TO DI

(Canonical Order)

A

OLD TESTAMENT AND APOCRYPHA

	Cyprian's Ad Quirinum	Scripture	Lactantius	Apologists	Allusion or Citation
1		Gen 1.27	2.10.3		A
2		Gen 2.6-7	5.18.13		A
3	2.5	Ex 23.20	4.10.7		A
4		Num 11.31	4.10.10		A
5		Num 13.9	4.17.12		A
6	2.20	Num 23.19	4.18.29		C
7	2.10	Num 24.17	4.13.10		C
8	1.18	Dt.18.17	4.17.6		C
9	2.20	Dt.28.66	4.18.29		C
10	1.8	Dt.30.6	4.17.9		C
11	1.8	Josh.5.2	4.17.9		C
12	1.17	1 Sam 2.35	4.14.5		C
13	3.56	1 Sam 16.7	4.17.17		A
14	1.15	2 Sam 7.4f	4.13.22	Trypho 1.18 Justin	C
15		1 Kings 9.6-9	4.18.32		C
16	1.2	1 Kings 19.10	4.11.6		C
17		1 Chron 7.19-22	4.18.32		C
18		Nehem.9.26	4.11.5		C
19		Psalm 1.1	4.16.6		C
20	3.31	Psalm 1.5	7.20.5		A
21	2.8	Psalm 2.7	4.15.3	Trypho 88 Justin Adv.Prax.7 Tert.	C
22	2.24	Psalm 3.15	4.19.8		C
23		Psalm 15.2 (LXX)	5.9.2		A
24	2.24	Psalm 16.10	4.19.8		C
25	1.21	Psalm 18 43-4	4.11.9	Trypho 28 Justin	C
26	2.20	Psalm 22 17-19	4.18.30	Trypho 98 Justin Adv. Jud.13 Tert.	C
27	1.3	Psalm 28.4-5	4.12.18		C
28	2.3	Psalm 33.6	4.8.14	Ad Aut 1.7 Theophilus. Adv.Prax.7 Tert.	C
29		Psalm 35.15	4.18.14		C
30	2.3	Psalm 45.1	4.8.14		C
31	2.6	Psalm 45.6-7	4.13.9	Trypho 56 Justin	C

	Cyprian's Ad Quirinum	Scripture	Lactantius	Apologists	Allusion or Citation
32	2.28	Psalm 50.1	5.13.5		A
33		Psalm 69.22	4.18.18		C
34		Psalm 72.6-7	4.16.14		C
35		Psalm 78.24	4.10.10		A
36		Psalm 85.12	4.12.7		C
37		Psalm 90.4	7.14.9	Trypho 81 Justin	C
38		Psalm 94.21f	4.18.26		C
39		Psalm 104.4	4.8.6-9		A
40	2.26	Psalm 110.1	4.12.17		C
41	1.17	Psalm 110 3-4	4.14.4		C
42		Psalm 127.1	4.13.27		C
43	2.1	Prov 8.22-31	4.6.6-8	Ad Aut.2.10 Theophilus Adv. Pr. 7 Tert.	C
44	2.1	Eccles 24.5	4.8.15		C
45	(Parts only) 2.14	Wisd 2.12-27	4.16.7-10		C
46	1.3	Isaiah 1.2	4.11.12		C
47		1s.6-12	7.24.3		A
48	2.9	1s.7-14	4.12.4	Tert Adv. Jud.9	C
49	2.21	1s.9-5	4.12.10		C
50	2.10	1s 11.1-3	4.12.20	One citation Trypho 87 Justin	C
51	1.21	1s 11.10	4.13.19		C
52		Is 19.20.	4.13.10		C
53		Is 30.26	7.24.7		A
54	2.7	Is 35.3-6	4.15.7f	Trypho 69 Justin	A
55	2.7	Is 42.6	4.20.12	Tert Adv. Jud.12	C
56		Is 44.6	4.29.10		C
57		Is 45.1-3	4.12.18		C
58		Is 45-8	4.12.9		C
59	2.6	Is 45.14-16	4.13.7	Tert Adv. Pr.13	C
60	2.13	Is 50.5	4.18.13		C
61	2.13	Is 53.1-6	4.16.15	Justin 1 Apol.51	C
62	2.13	Is 53.7	4.18.16		C
63	2.15	Is 53.8.9;12	4.18.24		C

	Cyprian's Ad Quirinum	Scripture	Lactantius	Apologists	Allusion or Citation
64	1.21	Is 55.4	4.2.5	Trypho 14 Justin. Tert. Adv Jud. 8	A
65		Is 63.10	4.12,8		C
66	1.21	Is 66.18	4.11.10		C
67	/I.21/	Jeremiah 1.5	4.8.1		C
68	1.3	Jer 2.13	4.30.1	Trypho 140 Justin	A
69	/I.8/	Jer 4.3	4.17.8		C
70	1.3	Jer 8.7-9	4.11.13		C
71	2.15	Jer 11.18	4.18.27		C
72	2.15	Jer 11.19	4.18.27b	Trypho 72 Justin	C
73		Jer 12.7	4.20.7-9		C
74	2.23	Jer 15.9	4.19.4		C
75	2.10	Jer 17.9	4.13.10	Tert. Carn. 15	C
76	1.2	Jer 25.4-6	4.11.4	Tert. Adv. Prax.	C
77		Jer 31.31	4.20. 6,10	Justin Trypho 11	C
78	2.6	Baruch 3.36	4.13.8		C
79		Ezekiel 34.25	5.23..3		A
80		Ez 34.25,28	5.11.1		A
81		Ez 38.20-22	7.26.2		A
82		Ez 39.9-11	7.26.4		A
83		Ez 40 passim.	4.11.11		A
84		Daniel 7.2	7.16.1-5		A
85		Daniel 7.13	4.12. 12-16,19		C
86		Daniel 7.13	4.21.1		C
87		Daniel 12.2	3.19.3		A
88	2.25	Hosea 6.2	4.19.9		C
89		Hosea 13.13	4.19.9		C
90		Hosea 13.13	4.29.11		C
91	2.23	Amos 8.9	4.19.3		C
92	1.10	Micah 4.2	4.17.3		C
93	2.13/ 2.16	Zech 3.1-8	4.14 6-16	Justin Trypho 115 Tert Adv. Jud.14	C
94	2.20	Zech 12.10	4.18.29		C
95		Mal 1.6	4.4.2		A

	Cyprian's Ad Quirinum	Scripture	Lactantius	Apologists	Allusion or Citation
96	1.16	Mal 1.10	4.11.8	Justin Trypho 28	C
97		Esdras	4.18.22	Justin Trypho 72	C
98		Odes of Sol 19	4.12.3		C
99		Praedicatio Petri/Pauli	4.21.2-4		C
		B. NEW TESTAMENT			
1		Mt 5.28	6.23.34	Ad Aut. 3.13 Theoph.	A
2		Mt 5.32	6.23.33		A
3a	3.48	Mt 5.44	6.18.10	Ad Aut. 3.13 Theoph.	A
3b		Mt 5.48	6.12.4		A
4		Mt 7.12	6.23.32	(Neg form of Golden Rule)	A
5		Mt 8.23	4.15.22		A
6		Mt 9.6	4.15.6		A
7		Mt 11.5	6.24.21 (7.27.13)		A
8		Mt 14.23	4.15.16		A
9		Mt 14.22	4.15.20		A
10	3.32	Mt 19.12	6.23.38		A
11		Mt 22.44	4.12.17		A
12		Mt 24.4	4.30.8		A
13		Mt 24.19	7.16.8		A
14		Mt 24.21	7.17.6		A
15		Mt 24.27	7.19.2		A
16		Luke 3.21	4.15.2		A
17		Luke 4.23	3.30.5		A
18	3.21	Luke 6.36	6.12.41		A
19		Luke 6.39	3.30.5		A
20		Luke 8.17	6.24.11		A
21		Luke 12.33	6.12.35		A
22	3.5	Luke 14.11	5.15.9		C
23	3.1	Luke 14.12	6.12.3		A
24	3.61	Luke 16.25	7.11.3		A
25	2.6	John 1.1	6.25.12	Ad Aut 2.22 Theoph. Adv. Prax. Tert 13	A

	Cyprian's Ad Quirinum	Scripture	Lactantius	Apologists	Allusion or Citation
26	2.3	John 1.3	4.8.16		C
27		John 2.19	4.18.4		C
28		John 4.13	4.30.1		A
29	2.24	John 10.18	4.26.31		A
30		John 10.30	4.29.13	Adv.Prx.8.25 Tert.	A
31	2.1	John 17.3	4.28.1		A
32		Acts 1.9	4.12.15		A
33		Romans 1.19-22	2.3.18-19		A
34	3.53	Romans 11.36	2.8.29		A
35	3.106	Romans 12.19	6.18.11		A
36		Romans 16.25	4.8.8		A
37	3.69	1 Cor 1.20f	3.3.16		A } 4 diff refs to same passage
38	3.69	1 Cor 1.20f	4.2.3		A
39	3.69	1 Cor 1.20-24	5.12.11		A
40	3.69	1 Cor 1.23	5.36		A
41		1 Cor 2.6-8	5.1.15		A } 3 diff refs to same passsage
42		1 Cor 2.7	5.18.11		A
43		1 Cor 2.8	5.3.17,20		A
44		1 Cor 2.14	2.3.21		A
45	3.3	1 Cor 3.2	5.4.6		A
46	3.27	1 Cor 3.16	5.8.4		A } 2 diff refs to same passage
47	3.27	1 Cor 3.16	6.25.15		A
48	3.69	1 Cor 3.19	5.15.8		A
49	3.62	1 Cor 6.16	6.23.15		A
50	3.32	1 Cor 7.7	6.23.38		A
51	3.93	1 Cor 11.19	4.30.2		A
52		1 Cor 13.11	7.5.22		A
53		Eph 2.12	4.11.2		A
54	3.11	Eph 4.22	3.26.13		A
55	3.8	Eph 4.26	6.18.33		A
56		1 Thess 5.8	5.12.15		A
57		2 Thess 2.3	7.17.48		A
58		1 Tim 2.5	4.25.5		A

	Cyprian's Ad Quirinum	Scripture	Lactantius	Apologists	Allusion or Citation
59		1 Tim 6.15	4.12.17		A
60		Hebrews 1.3/8.1	1.1.5,8 (2.16.9) (2.19.1)		A
61		Heb 1.7	4.8.6		A
62		Heb 1.14	2.14.1		A
63		Heb 2.10 (12.2)	4.3.5		A
64		Heb 2.17	4.24.12		A
65		Heb 3.5 (12.8)	4.4.1-11		A
66		Heb 7.3	4.13.3		A
67		Heb 7.18	4.20.11		A
68		Heb 8.2	4.25.2		A
69		Heb 8.3 (9.9)	6.24.27		A
70		Heb 8.13	4.20.10		A
71		Heb 9.14	4.18.22		A
72		Heb 9.16	4.20.2		A
73		Heb 10.20	4.29.15		A
74		Heb 11.38	7.17.10		A
75		1 Rev 3.13f	5.23.5		A
76		2 Rev 2.1	4.30.2		A
77		Rev 2 (passim)	7.17.8		A
78		Rev 11.1	4.11.11		A
79		Rev 13	7.16-7.17		A

A P P E N D I X 2

SCRIPTURAL INDEX OF OLD TESTAMENT CITATIONS ACCORDING TO LACTANTIUS' ARRANGEMENT, ILLUSTRATING THE CATENA GROUPINGS

	Cyprian Ad Quirinum	Lactantius	Scripture	Citation or Allusion
1		2.10.3	Gen 1.27	A
2		3.19.3	Dan 12.2	A
3	1.21	4.2.5	Is 55.4	A
4		4.4.2	Mal 1.6	A
5	2.1	4.6.6-8	Prov 8.22-31	C
6	1.21	4.8.1	Jer 1.5	A
7		4.8.6-9	Ps 104.4	A
8	2.3	4.8.14	Ps 33.6	C
9	2.3	4.8.14	Ps 45.1	C
10	2.1	4.8.15	Eccles 24.5	C
11	2.5	4.10.7	Ex 23.20	A
12		4.10.10	Num 11.31	A
13		4.10.10	Ps 78.24	
14	1.2	4.11.4	Jer 25.4-6	C
15		4.11.5	Neh 9.26	C
16	1.2	4.11.6	1 K 19.10	C
17	1.16	4.11.8	Mal 1.10	C
18	1.21	4.11.9	Ps 18.43-4	C
19	1.21	4.11.10	Is 66.18	C
20		4.11.11	Ez.40 passim.	A
21	1.3	4.11.12	Is 1.2	C
22	1.3	4.11.13	Jer 8.7-9	C
23		4.12.3	Ode Sol 19	C
24	2.9	4.12.4	Is 7.14	C
25		4.12.7	Ps 85.12	C
26		4.12.8	Is 63.10	C
27		4.12.9	Is 45.8	C
28	2.21	4.12.10	Is 9.5	C
29		4.12.12-16,19	Dan 7.13	C
30	2.26	4.12.17	Ps 110.1	C
31		4.12.18	Is 45.1-3	C
32	2.6	4.13.7	Is 45.14-16	C
33	2.6	4.13.8	Baruch 3.36	C

	Cyprian Ad Quirinum	Lactantius	Scripture	Citation or Allusion
34	2.6	4.13.9	Ps 45.6-7	C
35	2.10	4.13.10	Jer 17.9	C
36	2.10	4.13.10	Num 24.17	C
37		4.13.10	Is 19.20	C
38	1.3	4.13.18	Ps 28.4-5	C
39	1.21	4.13.19	Is 11.10	C
40	2.10	4.13.20	Is 11.1-3	C
41	1.15	4.13.22	2 Sam 7.4f	C
42		4.13.27	Ps 127.1	C
43	1.17	4.14.4	Ps 110.3-4	C
44	1.17	4.14.5	1 Sam 2.35	C
45	2.13/2.16	4.14 6-16	Zech 3.1-8	C
46	2.8	4.15.3	Ps 2.7	C
47	2.7	4.15.7	Is 35.3-6	A
48		4.16.6	Ps 1.1	C
49	(Parts only) 2.14	4 16.7-10	Wisd 2.12-27	C
50		4.16.14	Ps 72.6-7	C
51	2.13	4.16.15	Is 53.1-6	C
52	1.10	4.17.3	Micah 4.2	C
53	1.18	4.17.6	Dt 18.17	C
54	(1.8)	4.17.8	Jer 4.3	C
55	1.8	4.17.9	Dt 30.6	C
56	1.8	4.17.9	Josh 5.2	C
57		4.17.12	Num 13.9	A
58	3.56	4.17.17	1 Sam 16.7	A
59	2.13	4.18.13	Is 50.5	C
60		4.18.14	Ps 35.15	C
61	2.13	4.18.16	Is 53.7	C
62		4.18.18	Ps 69.22	C
63		4.18.22	Esdras	C
64	2.15	4.18.24	Is 53.8,9,12	C
65		4.18.26	Ps 94.21	C
66	2.15	4.18.27	Jer 11.18	C
67		4.18.27	Jer 11.19	C

	Cyprian Ad Quirinum	Lactantius	Scripture	Citation or Allusion
68	2.20	4.18.29	Num 23.19	C
69	2.20	4.18.29	Dt 28.66	C
70	2.20	4.18.29	Zech 12.10	C
71	2.20	4.18.30	Ps 22.17-19	C
72		4.18.32	1 Chron 7.19-22	C
73		4.18.32	1K 9.6-9	C
74	2.23	4.19.3	Amos 8.9	C
75	2.23	4.19.4	Jer 15.9	C
76	2.24	4.19.8	Ps 3.5	C
77	2.24	4.19.8	Ps 16.10	C
78	2.25	4.19.9	Hos 6.2	C
79		4.19.9	Hos 13.13	C
80		4. 20.6,10	Jer 31.31	C
81		4.20.7-9	Jer 12.7	C
82	2.7	4.20.12	Is 42.6	C
83		4.21.1	Dan 7.13	C
84		4.21.2-4	Praedicatio Petri/Pauli	C
85		4.29.10	Is 44.6	C
86		4.29.11	Hos 13.13	C
87	1.3	4.30.1	Jer 2.13	A
88		5.9.2	Ps 15.2	A
89		5.11.1	Ez 34.25,28	A
90	2.28	5.13.5	Ps 50.1	A
91		5.18-13	Gen 2.6-7	A
92		5.23.3	Ez 34-25	A
93		7.14.9	Ps 90.4	C
94		7.16.1-5	Dan 7.2	A
95	3.31	7.20.5	Ps 1.5	A
96		7.24.3	Is 6.12	A
97		7.24.7	Is 30.26	A
98		7.26.2	Ez 38.20-22	A
99		7.26.4	Ez.39.9-11	A

A P P E N D I X 3

THE NON-CYPRIANIC SCRIPTURE TEXTS IN THE DI, WITH THE CATENA-GROUPS

		Lactantius	Scripture	Allusion or Citation
	1	2.10.3	Gen 1.27	A
	2	3.19.3	Dan 12.2	A
	3	4.4.2	Mal 1.6	A
	4	4.8.6-9	Ps 104.4	A
(CATENAE) ↓	5	4.10.10	Num 11.31	A
	6	4.10.10	Ps 78.24	A
	7	4.11.5	Neh 9.26	C
	8	4.11.11f	Ezek 40f	A
A	9	4.12.3	Ode Sol 19	C
	10	4.12.7	Ps 85.12	C
	11	4.12.8	Is 63.10	C
	12	4.12.9	Is 45.8	C
	13	4.12.12-16,19	Dan 7.13	C
	14	4.12.18	Is 45.1-3	C
	15	4.13.10	Is 19.20	C
	16	4.13.27	Ps 127.1	C
	17	4.16.6	Ps 1.1	C
B	18	4.16.7-10	Wis 2.12-27	C
	19	4.16.14	Ps 72.6-7	C
	20	4.17.12	Num 13.9	A
	21	4.18.14	Ps 35.15	C
	22	4.18.18	Ps 69.22	C
	23	4.18.22	'Esdras'	C (Trypho)
C	24	4.18.26	Ps 94.21	C
	25	4.18.28	Jer 11.19	C (Trypho)
	26	4.18.32	1K 9.6-9	C
	27	4.18.32	1 Chron 7.19-22	C
	28	4.19.9	Hos 13.13	C
D	29	4.20.6,10	Jer 31.31	C (Trypho)
	30	4.20.7-9	Jer 12.7	C
E	31	4.21.1	Dan 7.13	C
	32	4.21.2-4	Praedicatio Petri et Pauli	C

		Lactantius	Scripture	Allusion or Citation
F	33	4.29.10	Is 44.6	C
	34	4.29.11	Hos 13.13	C
	35	5.18.13	Gen 2.6-7	A
	36	5.9.2	Ps 15.2	A
	37	5.11.1	Ez 34.25,28	A
	38	5.23.3	Ez 34-25	A
	39	7.14.9	Ps 90.4	C (Trypho)
	40	7.16.1-5	Dan 7.2	A
	41	7.24.3	Is 6.12	A
	42	7.24.7	Is 30.26	A
	43	7.26.2	Ez 38.20-22	A
	44	7.26.4	Ez 39.9-11	A