

Karl Strobel, *Das Imperium Romanum im 3. Jahrhundert*. Modell einer historischen Krise? Zur Frage mentaler Strukturen breiterer Bevölkerungsschichten in der Zeit von Marc Aurel bis zum Ausgang des 3. Jhs. n. Chr. *Historia Einzelschriften*, Band 75. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1993. 408 Seiten.

The 'crisis' of the third century A. D. is enjoying something of a vogue at present, although, as the elaborate subtitle of K. Strobel's contribution already hints, he is inclined to doubt whether 'crisis' is the right word. There has been, of course, intense activity, chiefly manifest in the Bonn Colloquia, devoted to the *Historia Augusta*, with undoubted benefit to proper understanding of the period. But there is now a welcome accession of new evidence, such as the inscriptions from Apamea (published in part so far by J.-CH. BALTÿ, *Comptes Rendus Séances Acad. Inscript.* 1987, 213 ff.; cf. ID., *Journal Roman Stud.* 78, 1988, 97 ff.) and papyri from a village near Dura (D. FEISSEL/J. GASCOU, *Comptes Rendus Séances Acad. Inscript.* 1989, 535 ff.; J. TEIXIDOR, *ibid.* 1990, 144 ff.), both of which the author was able to utilise; and, from the west, the astonishing victory inscription found outside Augsburg in August 1992, published with laudable promptitude by L. BAKKER, *Germania* 71, 1993, 369 ff., but not of course available to Strobel. Further, it is not just the *Historia Augusta* that has been submitted to new and searching analysis. One may mention D. S. POTTER, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire. A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* (1990), a learned and often very instructive doctoral dissertation, although marred in places by some unfortunate errors. The author must be commended for revising his work to take Potter into account. It was naturally not possible for him to profit from B. BLECKMANN, *Die Reichskrise des 3. Jhs. in der spätantiken und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung. Untersuchungen zu den nachdionischen Quellen der Chronik des Johannes Zonaras* (1992). Bleckmann's excellent study has demonstrated the value of old-fashioned *Quellenforschung*. A fundamental problem with the third century A. D. is to establish what actually happened (and when). Although the work under review is principally devoted to *Mentalitätsgeschichte*, attention is paid in several sections to these matters as well.

Strobel's work is divided into five Parts, followed by four appendices, a list of abbreviations and indices. The abbreviations, listing just over fifty items, do not compensate for the lack of a *Literaturverzeichnis*. But the number of works cited is very extensive and the author was evidently obliged in any case to cut down the size of his Heidelberg *Habilitationsschrift*, presented in the *Wintersemester* 1988/89, of which this is the published version. He refers in the Foreword to four sections, here omitted, which have appeared separately: in *Münster. Beitr. Ant. Handelsgesch.* 8,2, 1989; *Klio* 72, 1990; *Münster. Beitr. Ant. Handelsgesch.* 1991/2; *Beitr. z. Wirtschafts- u. Sozialgesch. d. Ant. Welt* 2, 1991. The first of these is concerned with money and inflation, the second and third with third century Judaic sources, the last with the "Sortes Astrampsychi und Sortes Sangallenses". Further forthcoming publications are also announced: his investigations into the rabbinic understanding of history from the late 2nd to the 4th century are to appear in a work in which he takes issue with M. HADAS-LEBEL, *Jérusalem contre Rome* (1990) and in a study of the reflection of the mechanisms of Roman rule in the Talmudic sources. Questions of methods and source-criticism have already been surveyed in a contribution to a Straßburg Colloque: *Jüdisches Patriarchat, Rabbinertum und die Priesterdynastie von Emesa: Historische Phänomene innerhalb des Imperium Romanum der Kaiserzeit*. Evidently, the author has mastered Hebrew, no mean achievement. The reviewer can only comment that, had the fruits of these researches been included in the present volume, he would have been obliged to declare himself disqualified to assess it.

As it is, the beginning of the work includes some pages which are rather indigestible, for a different reason. Part I, the Introduction, opens conventionally enough, with a review of the term "Krise", as applied in par-

ticular to the third century A. D., with reference to modern scholarship, from Gibbon and Burckhardt to Rostovtzeff, A. Alföldi, Walser and Pekáry, Dodds, G. Alföldy, MacMullen, Christol and a good many others (pp. 11–26). Here one may note that the author signals yet another forthcoming publication: on the problem raised by the assumption of a universal "Krisenbewußtsein" c. A. D. 250, he writes (p. 18 n. 37), "werde ich mich an anderer Stelle äußern". But pp. 26–32, under the heading "Zu den theoretischen Grundlagen einer Geschichte mentaler Strukturen", represent an attempt to set his investigation on a thoroughly modern foundation, by bringing into play *inter alia* Th. Nipperdey's historical anthropology and a variety of works on social psychology, "Psychophysiologie der Aufmerksamkeit", etc. This section may not be to everyone's taste. There follow "thematische Schwerpunkte", in effect outlining the remaining content of this study, followed by a brief summary of his investigation of rabbinic literature and, as an appendix to this Introduction, printed in smaller type, a condensed discussion of the "Stilwandel" in the art of the late Antonine period and the third century and whether it can be regarded as an "Ausdruck der Krise des Reiches". The subject does not lend itself very easily to this sort of treatment (particularly without photographs). Curiously enough, the copious literature here cited does not include the opening chapter of MACMULLEN's Roman Government's Response to Crisis A. D. 235–337 (1976), a work referred to several times earlier on, where the same sort of thing was undertaken (rather more readably).

Parts II, III and IV, which constitute the core of the book (pp. 49–297), concentrate almost exclusively on Christian and Jewish sources: in particular the Oracula Sibyllina (repeatedly), Tertullian, Irenaeus, the Chronography of Judas, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Dionysius of Alexandria, the Coptic Elijah Apocalypse. Part IV also has a section on the Imperium Palmyrenum, while the four appendices are devoted to the Or. Sib., the apocryphal Epistula Apostolorum and Commodian. Thus it is fair to say that what is examined in this work – and had the sections published separately also been included this impression would be even more pronounced – reflects what must be called very much a minority element in the population of the empire. However this may be, Part II (pp. 49–138), devoted mainly to Christian and related sources of the Antonine and Severan periods (A. D. 161–235), comes to the conclusion that they display no "Endzeiterwartungen" over and above those traditional to the churches; further, that their attitude to the empire was on the whole positive. Although some have placed the onset of crisis in the reign of M. Aurelius – and, strictly from a military or economic point of view there is much to support this – it is another matter to argue that contemporaries saw the signs. Cassius Dio, however, needs to be considered; but his perception of the situation is reserved for discussion in Part V (cf. below). The reviewer, at least, finds nothing to quarrel with in Strobel's analysis, and the discussion is full of valuable ideas, backed up by an ample apparatus of scholarly literature. As far as Tertullian is concerned, the reviewer would simply comment that his works addressed to a secular audience (Ad Nat., Apol., Scap.) were surely imbued (more than has been generally appreciated) with a burning wish to refute the presentation of the Christians in PLIN. epist. 10, 96–97 and TAC. ann. 15,44. Echoes of the phraseology of these two writers recur again and again (cf. for a brief discussion Festschr. J. C. Mann. Bull. Inst. Arch. London 29, 1992, 37–68, at 63 f.).

Part III (pp. 139–184) takes the argument further forward chronologically, dealing with material from the quarter of a century between the fall of the Severan dynasty and A. D. 260, essentially OR. SIB. XII and Cyprian, with the main attention focused on the latter. Here Strobel is concerned not least to take issue with G. ALFÖLDY's interpretation of Cyprian's changing attitude, Historia 22, 1973, 479 ff., reprinted in ID., Die Krise des Römischen Reiches. Heidelberger Althist. Beitr. u. Epigr. Stud. 5 (1989) 295 ff. In particular, Strobel prefers a later dating for Cyprian's Ad Fortunatum; but his brief discussion (p. 167) is hardly adequate to demonstrate that it belongs to A. D. 257, after the opening of the Valerianic persecution, rather than (as Alföldy, following H. Koch) to spring 253. Be this as it may, Cyprian's writings certainly contain enough dark utterances about the dire circumstances of the time. As so often, the Christians were blamed: *sed enim cum dicas plurimos conqueri et quod bella crebrius surgant, quod lues, quod fames saeviant, quodque imbres et pluvias serena longa suspendant nobis imputari, tacere ultra non oportet* (CYPR. Demetr. 2). Far from denying that things were desperate, Cyprian piles it on: *mundus ipse iam loquitur*, followed by his celebrated listing of drought, harvest failure, declining production of mines, manpower shortage, wars external and civil, crime and the breakdown of morality, etc. (ibid. 3; 5; 7; 10 ff., etc.). The inference was clear: *iam mundi finis in proximo est* (ibid. 23). The approach of the Antichrist may not be mentioned all that often, but the letter of the confessor LUCIANUS, calling Decius the Great Dragon and the *metator antichristi* (epist. 22,1, cf. Apoc. Joh. 12,3 ff.) and the reference to *imminente antichristo* in CYPRIAN's letter to Lucius of Rome (epist. 61,2) cannot be played down. Likewise, in De mort. *ruinae humani generis*,

*venientes iam antichristi minae* and *mundus ecce nutat et labitur et ruinam sui non iam senectute rerum sed fine testatur* (14; 25) and the reference in a letter to the plebs of Thibaris to the *saeculo iam moriente* (epist. 58,2) match the striking sentence *in fine adque in consummatione mundi antichristi tempus infestum adpropinquare iam coepit* in Fort., pr. 1. Whether this is dated to 253 or 257 or somewhere in between does not, surely, matter so much. To conclude, as does Strobel, that Cyprian "formulierte kein 'allgemeines Krisenbewußtsein des 3. Jh.' oder gar dessen Kulminationspunkt" (p. 184), looks like special pleading.

Part IV (pp. 185–297) moves the discussion forward to the years 260–274. Several matters of *Ereignisgeschichte* require treatment here. Unexpectedly – but it is because he is concerned to establish the chronology of Dionysius of Alexandria – he reverts to the late 240s and the accession of Decius. He dismisses, without argument ("kann nicht überzeugen", p. 192 n. 50, an unfortunately rather too frequent turn of phrase in his footnotes) the case first put forward by S. DUSANIĆ, *Chiron* 6, 1976, 427 ff., and developed, with important modifications, by R. ZIEGLER, *Roma renascens*. In: *Festschr. I. Opelt* (1988) 385 ff., that Philip met his death not at Verona but in the eastern Balkans. The reviewer, at any rate, was convinced, cf. Decius reconsidered. *Colloque sur les empereurs illyriens*, Straßburg 1990 (forthcoming). The full discussion of other difficult questions – e.g. of ephemeral figures such as Jotapianus, Mareades/Cyriades, Sampsigeramus/Uranus Antoninus, and of the Imperium Palmyrenum – must be treated with respect and carefully compared with other recent studies, such as those by Potter (often criticised here), and now Bleckmann and F. MILLAR, *The Roman Near East 31 B. C. – A. D. 337* (1993). A minor point is helpfully solved by BLECKMANN p. 117: the Guard Prefect of the usurper Macrianus is called both Ballista and Kallistos, but the latter is simply a textual corruption (K for B, resulting in the name, in the genitive *Ballistou*, becoming *Kallistou*). At pp. 287 ff. the now fashionable dismissal of Roman claims of Sassanid revanchism is emphatically accepted, perhaps justifiably – but it seems difficult to deny that at various stages some Romans at least believed that the Sassanids had intentions of reconquering the lands once ruled by the Achaemenids. A few pages later, 292 ff., comes a rare section on events in the west, the abandonment of the Upper German-Raetian Limes (with an unfortunate misprint, p. 292, "Um 260 bzw. 260 n. Chr."). On the fate of the romanised population, one misses here a reference to J. G. F. HIND, *Whatever happened to the Agri Decumates? Britannia* 15, 1984, 187 ff., who makes a convincing case (which could be reinforced) that it was at least partly evacuated and resettled around Metz. Strobel believes that "ein Untergang des Limes 259/60 im 'Sturm der Barbaren' erweist sich wie die Vorstellung vom Überrennen der rechtsrheinischen Provinzgebiete durch die Alamannen als Fiktion". On this whole question, one will now of course have to take into account the new inscription from Augsburg referred to at the opening of this review. Not least, the fact that barbarians *gentis Semnonum sive Iouthungorum* had captured many thousands of Italians, *multis milibus Italarum captivor*, rather reinforces the traditional view (criticised by Strobel) that the events of A. D. 259–60 represented a particularly acute phase of the crisis. The revelation that the provincial population of Raetia, the *populares*, had taken part in the defence is also interesting. That the giving up of a direct military presence beyond Rhine and Danube "keine wirklich faßbare Reflexion bei den Zeitgenossen hinterlassen hat" is of course merely an argument from silence: where would one expect to find traces of a reaction given the miserable state of the sources for the western empire from this time? Another recent article deserves mention here: H. SIVAN, *The Historian Eusebius of Nantes*. *Journal Hellenic Stud.* 112, 1992, 158 ff., has strengthened the case for assigning to the late 250s the siege of Tours described in a fragment of EUSEBIUS of Nantes (*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* V 23; 2,8). The siege – with engines, which 'barbarians' were generally reckoned not to be capable of using – was undertaken by the "Celts from across the Rhine"; and the whole of Gaul supposedly defected to them.

Part V, "Das 3. Jahrhundert: Zur Problematik des Krisenmodells" (pp. 299–369), draws the arguments together and seeks to demonstrate that "der Begriff des Wandels bzw. des Strukturwandels" is more appropriate than that of "Krise" to describe the period between the late Antonines and A. D. 284. This is all very well; but the fact remains that most of those who have used the term "crisis" have applied it in particular to the years 235–284, or even more restrictively to the period c. 249–274, and not to the 'third century' in this extended sense. Of course, Cassius Dio and Herodian have been, very understandably, cited as witnesses for an early perception of looming crisis. Still, Herodian was hardly writing before the middle of the third century, when things were already bleak enough. As for Dio, it is disappointing that F. MILLAR's aberrant early dating, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (1964), is here accepted, e.g. p. 338 n. 278 for the composition of Book 52 under Caracalla. Millar's case was rejected almost universally from the start, and it is no good simply to dismiss the arguments of e.g. T. D. BARNES, *Phoenix* 38, 1984, 240 ff., who dates the com-

position of the whole work much later, as "nicht zwingend", without further comment. The date when Dio's History was composed is a vital matter, and an Appendix on the subject might have been of more use than the one devoted to the date of Commodian (one will readily agree that this must remain an open question, which means, to be sure, that one is not allowed to use his hysterical outpourings as evidence for "Krisenbewußtsein" in the middle or later third century). Towards the end of Part V the writing reverts to the sort of rather jargon-ridden style already noted in the Introduction, e.g. (to quote a relatively short sentence from p. 344): "In einer oberflächlichen und wenig spezifischen Definition wäre Krisenwahrnehmung das Wahrnehmen eines In-Bewegung-Geratens von Gewohntem im Sinne ungewollten Wandels und der (subjektiv) negativ gewerteten Veränderung von Entwicklungsverläufen". Mercifully this kind of language is the exception. However much one may disagree with some conclusions, this work has provided plenty of material to think about. Misprints seem to be few in number: "Cornelianus" on p. 153 and in the Index for Bishop Cornelius of Rome is trivial; and it is a shame about "Origines", in the Index and in several of the places where Origen is cited, but this is not a serious blemish.

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