

‘TRAMPLE UPON ME...’  
THE SOPHISTS ASTERIUS AND HECEBOLIUS:  
TURNCOATS IN THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

WOLFRAM KINZIG

Christopher Stead’s masterly contributions to the history of Arianism need no special mention here since they are standard reading for everyone interested in the subject. One of the Arians of the first generation was the sophist Asterius. The patriarch of Antioch, Severus, tells the following story about him:

... it is related in church histories that Asterius, who was a sophist and author among the Arians, was often received and often returned to his vomit [cf. *Proverbs* 26.11 = 2 *Peter* 2.22], insomuch that this expression of his is cited in histories. He cried out lying on his face before everyone and saying, “Trample upon me, the salt which has lost its savour” [cf. *Matthew* 5.13].<sup>1</sup>

Severus refers to ‘church histories’ as the source of this anecdote. Yet in the church histories preserved it is not attested—at least insofar as it refers to Asterius. We do find, however, in Socrates’ *Church History* a very similar story about Hecebolius, one of emperor Julian’s teachers. In 3,13 Socrates points out that Julian’s policy of appointing only pagans to administrative posts induced many people to put money and career before the true faith and to apostatise. He goes on:

Of these was Ecebolius, a sophist of Constantinople who, accommodating himself to the dispositions of the emperors, pretended in the reign of Constantius to be an ardent Christian, while in Julian’s time he appeared an (equally) vigorous pagan; and after Julian’s death, he again wanted to be a Christian. For he prostrated himself before the door of the house of prayer, and called out: “Trample upon me, the salt which has lost its savour” [cf. *Matthew* 5.13]. Of so fickle and un-

---

<sup>1</sup> Sever. Ant., ep. VI 5,4; ed. E.W. Brooks, *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, in the Syriac Version of Athanasius of Nisibis*, 2 vols. (London 1904), I, 321 f.; transl. II, 286.

scrupulous a character was this Ecebolius, throughout the whole period of his history.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that we are dealing with the same event. Both Severus and Socrates speak about a man lying on the ground and shouting: 'Trample upon me, the salt which has lost its savour' in order to be readmitted to the Church. In the first case, however, the man is said to have been Asterius and in the second Hecebolius. The life and works of Asterius have recently been studied by the author of the present article.<sup>3</sup> Hecebolius, however, has not yet received much scholarly attention.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, therefore, I should like, first, to give an outline of Hecebolius' life; secondly, I shall examine the odd behaviour described in the story; and thirdly, I should like to ask whether the story is historical, about whom it was told originally and why it became a 'wandering story'.

## I

A closer analysis of the seemingly trivial anecdote about Asterius/Hecebolius leads us to one of the most fascinating and, as it were, 'modern' phenomena of the fourth century, namely those people who, apparently without inner scruples, changed from paganism to Christianity and vice versa. In the wake of the Constantinian revolution there was a large influx of people into the Christian Church which, almost overnight, had turned out to be the new mainstay of late antique Roman society. It has

<sup>2</sup> Ὦν εἰς ἦν καὶ ὁ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως σοφιστὴς Ἐκηβόλιος. Ὅστις τοῖς ἤθεσι τῶν βασιλέων ἐπόμενος ἐπὶ μὲν Κωνσταντίου διαπύρας χριστιανίζειν ὑπεκρίνατο· ἐπὶ δὲ Ἰουλιανοῦ γοργὸς Ἑλλήν ἐφαίνετο· καὶ αὖθις μετὰ Ἰουλιανόν χριστιανίζειν ἤθελε. Ῥίψας γὰρ ἑαυτὸν πρηνῆ πρὸ τῆς πύλης τοῦ εὐκτηρίου οἴκου, Πατήσατέ με, ἐβόα, τὸ ἄλας τὸ ἀνάισθητον. Τοιοῦτος μὲν οὖν κοῦφος καὶ εὐχερῆς Ἐκηβόλιος πρότερόν τε καὶ ὕστερον ἦν (PG 67, 413A-B; tr. NPNF, altered). Cf. also *Suda*, s.v. Ἐκηβόλιος which is based on Socrates.

<sup>3</sup> *In Search of Asterius: Studies on the Authorship of Homilies on the Psalms*, [FKDG 47] (Göttingen 1990), 14-21, 125-132. Cf. now also the doctoral dissertation by Markus Vinzent, *Asterius von Kappadokien, Theologische Fragmente: Einleitung, kritischer Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Diss. Munich 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. esp T. W. D(avids), 'HECEBOLIUS', *Dictionary of Christian Biography* II (1880), 872 f with references to earlier literature; (Otto) Seeck, 'Hekebolios 1', *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie VII/2* (1912), 2800; Wilmer Cave Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian III*, (London 1923; rpt. 1961), XLVII-XLVIII; A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire I* [= PLRE I] (Cambridge 1971), 409, s. v. 'Hecebolius I'.

been estimated that the number of Christians in the Latin west rose dramatically from two million at the end of the third to four to six million by the end of the fourth century.<sup>5</sup> In the East there may have been a rise from between five and ten million to double this figure during the same period. At the same time the overall population in the empire may have decreased from a supposed level of fifty million in A.D. 300. Figures such as these are, of course, notoriously unreliable, since we neither have any ancient statistics at our disposition nor do we know the exact development of the overall population of the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>6</sup> There can, however, be no doubt that the old pagan cults lost ever more of their members to the Church.<sup>7</sup>

A closer look, however, raises doubts in some cases as regards the sincerity of these conversions. Ambrose, for example, mentioned those Christians 'by name only' (*nomine Christiani*) who advocated a reinstatement of the altar of Victory in the Roman Curia in 384;<sup>8</sup> and Augustine saw reason to give special advice as to how to treat those people who only pretended to be Christians when they sought to be admitted to the catechumenate.<sup>9</sup> In the first three centuries conversion to Christianity meant becoming an outsider in Roman society, suffering social pressure and even outright persecution. Morals in the Church were, therefore, broadly speaking, rather high. In the fourth century, however, especially after Constantine's victory over Licinius in 324 and his sub-

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ludwig Hertling, 'Die Zahl der Christen zu Beginn des vierten Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 58 (1934), 243-253; Ludwig Hertling, 'Die Zahl der Katholiken in der Völkerwanderungszeit', *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 58 (1934), 92-108; cf. also Bernhard Kötting, 'Christentum I', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* II (1954), 1138-1159, 1139. T.D. Barnes, 'Christians and Pagans in the Reign of Constantius', in *L'Église de l'Empire au IVe Siècle* [Fondation Hardt/Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 34] (Vandœuvres-Geneva 1989), 308.

<sup>6</sup> As regards the statistical difficulties in describing the development of the overall population cf. Hertling (*op. cit. n. 5*), A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols. (Oxford 1964; rpt. 1986), II, 1040-1045; Alexander Demandt, *Die Spätantike: Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian 284-565 n. Chr.* [HAW III/6] (Munich 1989), 276. On the theory of a decrease in population as a factor accelerating the fall of Rome cf. the literature surveyed by Alexander Demandt, *Der Fall Roms: Die Auflösung des römischen Reiches im Urteil der Nachwelt* (Munich 1984), 352-368. Demandt himself is rather sceptical as regards all such theories.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. e.g. Kötting (*op. cit. n.5*); Karl Baus and Eugen Ewig, *Die Reichskirche nach Konstantin dem Großen*, I/1: Die Kirche von Nikaia bis Chalkedon, 2nd ed. (Freiburg 1985), 189-238; Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London 1986), 663-681.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ep.* 72(17), 8.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *de cat. rud.* 5,9; moreover *conf.* I.11.18.

sequent increased interest in Christianity, all this changed. Now it was socially advantageous to belong to the Church which all of a sudden enjoyed imperial benevolence and support.<sup>10</sup> In most cases, it is true, the nature of our evidence prevents us from determining the motives for which people converted to Christianity. Moreover, as Ramsay MacMullen has convincingly argued, the term conversion itself involves considerable conceptual difficulties.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, a careful and patient analysis of the ancient sources does suggest that the phenomenon of 'half'-Christians was quite widespread.<sup>12</sup>

Hecebolius is a classic example of this pattern of behaviour. Unfortunately, the historical evidence as regards his life is scattered and must be carefully pieced together. His name is, of course, derived from ἑκηβόλος (> ἐκών + βάλω originally meaning 'attaining his aim' and in later writers 'far shooting').<sup>13</sup> In Homer this word occurs as an epithet (cf. e.g. *Il.* 1,14.21.373 etc.) and as an independent noun (cf. e.g. *Il.* 1,96.110 etc.), and in both cases it designates Apollo.<sup>14</sup> As a name it is relatively rare. (I have found only two further bearers, who are most certainly not related to our Hecebolius.<sup>15</sup>) His name suggests that our Hecebolius was originally pagan. Socrates may also indicate that when

<sup>10</sup> On this phenomenon in general cf. Kurt Aland, *Über den Glaubenswechsel in der Geschichte des Christentums* [TBT 5] (Berlin 1961), 41-56.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)*, (New Haven/London 1984).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the material collected in A(rthur) D(arby) Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford 1933), 156-163; Gustave Bardy, *La Conversion au Christianisme durant les Premiers Siècles* [Theol(P) 15] (Paris 1949), 329-351; Winfried Daut, 'Die "halben Christen" unter den Konvertiten und Gebildeten des 4. und 5. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 55 (1971), 171-188; Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford 1981), 28 f.; MacMullen (*op. cit.* n. 11), 56 f., 144 f.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford 1940; rpt. 1985), s. v.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ibid.* and Jessen, 'Hekebolos, Hekatebolos, Hekatebeletes', *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie VII/2*, (1912), 2800-2802, 2800 f. Moreover, it sometimes also refers to Artemis; cf. *ibid.* 2802 and Liddell-Scott-Jones, (*op. cit.* n. 13), s. v.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. IG XII/7 (Amorgos-Minoa), no. 344 (M. Ἰούλιος Ἐκήβολος, perhaps second or third century); cf. P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews (eds.), *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, I: The Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Cyrenaica (Oxford 1987), s.v. Cf. furthermore P.M. Fraser, E. Matthews and J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire II*, [= PLRE II] (Cambridge 1980), 528: Hecebolus (probably a governor of Libya Pentapolis in the early sixth century). As to other bearers of this name cf. below.

he says that 'in the reign of Constantius he pretended to be an ardent Christian'.

This change of allegiance may have been a matter of conviction; it may, however, also have come about, because Hecebolius wanted to be appointed to one of the official teaching posts in Constantinople.<sup>16</sup> As Raban von Haehling pointed out, Constantius 'attempted with more determination than his father to drive out paganism from public life by legislative means'.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, he promoted Christians, and in particular Arians, to high administrative posts.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, it is well attested that Constantius frequently interfered with appointments at the school of Constantinople as in the case of Libanius and Themistius.<sup>19</sup> Under Constantius, 'Constantinople became the intellectual

---

<sup>16</sup> On the official support of the teaching of rhetoric in the fourth century cf. Henri-Étienne Marrou, *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité*, 6th ed. (Paris 1965), 431-450, esp. 436 f.; George A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* [A History of Rhetoric III] (Princeton, New Jersey 1983), 134 f.; Robert A. Kaster, 'The Salaries of Libanius', *Chiron* 13 (1983), 37-59, 39-41; as to the schools of Constantinople cf. *ibid.*, 163-167; Fritz Schemmel, 'Die Hochschule von Konstantinopel im IV. Jahrhundert p. Ch. n.', *Neue Jahrbücher für das Klassische Altertum* 11 (1908), 147-168; Kennedy (*op cit.*), 163-167; Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* [The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 11] (Berkeley 1988), 126 f. Cf. also the behaviour of Hecebolius' colleague at Constantinople, Bearchius, who, according to Libanius, praised Constantius' religious works in a *panegyricus*, even though he was a pagan (cf. *or.* 1,39). Furthermore *or.* 62,11: The rhetors received their appointments as reward for flattery. Libanius does not mention, however, that he, too, wrote a βασιλικὸς λόγος on the emperors Constantius and Constantius (*or.* 59).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Raban von Haehling, *Die Religionszugehörigkeit der hohen Amtsträger des Römischen Reiches seit Constantius I.: Alleinherrschaft bis zum Ende der Theodosianischen Dynastie (324-450 bzw. 455 n. Chr.)* [Antiquitas 3/33] (Bonn 1978), 527-536. Cf., however, the qualificatory remarks by Karl Leo Noethlichs, 'Hofbeamter', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XV (1991), 1111-1158, 1154; cf. also Karl Leo Noethlichs, *Die gesetzgeberischen Maßnahmen der christlichen Kaiser des vierten Jahrhunderts gegen Häretiker, Heiden und Juden*, Diss. Cologne 1971, 62-70; Karl Leo Noethlichs, 'Kirche, Recht und Gesellschaft in der Jahrhundert mitte', in *L'Église de l'Empire au IVe Siècle* [Fondation Hardt/Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 34] (Vandœuvres-Geneva 1989), 251-299, esp. 288-291.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Haehling (*op cit. n. 17*), 527-536, esp. 534; Barnes (*op. cit. n. 5*), 306-321. However, Constantius' policy was not altogether consistent in this respect, since he had also to give in to the constraints of *Realpolitik*. Cf. Haehling *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Lib., *or.* 1,35.37.74.80.94 f.; Them., *or.* 2; Marrou (*op cit. n. 16*), 441; Peter Wolf, *Vom Schulwesen der Spätantike: Studien zu Libanius* (Baden-Baden 1952), 24 f., 42.

capital'.<sup>20</sup> At this time (around 342) Constantinople boasted a school with distinguished teachers, among them the *grammatici* Didymus and Nicocles of Sparta and the sophist Bemarchius. The young Libanius taught there privately 340-342 (and again later in an official function 348-353).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Libanius tells us that during this first stay at the 'new Rome' there were two further sophists there, whose names he does not mention. One of them came from Cyzicus<sup>22</sup> and had with Nicocles' help acquired the citizenship of the city. Later he seems to have fallen out with Nicocles, for the latter attempted to gain Libanius' support in trying to ruin this man.<sup>23</sup> The other one was a Cappadocian<sup>24</sup> who had been given the position which Libanius had hoped for: he had been appointed 'highest rhetor' (ῥήτωρ ἄκρος) by the emperor on the Senate's request.<sup>25</sup> Both sophists were hostile towards

<sup>20</sup> Paul Lemerle, *Le Premier Humanisme Byzantin: Notes et Remarques sur Enseignement et Culture à Byzance des Origines au X<sup>e</sup> Siècle* [BByz.E 6] (Paris 1971); the English translation which is slightly expanded and which is used here appeared under the title *Byzantine Humanism—The First Phase: Notes and Remarks on Education and Culture in Byzantium from Its Origins to the 10th Century* [Byzantina Australiensia 3] (Canberra 1986); cf. there 55 and in general 55-63; moreover, N(i)gel G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London 1983), 49 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Schemmel (*op cit. n. 16*), 151 f. and the relevant entries in PLRE I. On Didymus cf. also Kaster (*op cit. n. 16*), 269 (no. 46); on Nicocles cf. Otto Seeck, *Die Briefe des Libanius zeitlich geordnet* [TU 30/1-2] (Leipzig 1906), 221 f.; Wolf (*op. cit. n. 19*), 37-39 and n.74; Kaster (*op cit. n. 16*), 202-204, 317-321 (no. 106) and Willy Stegemann '10) N[i]kokles] von Sparta', *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie XVII/1*, (1936), 352-356; on Libanius cf. (R.) Foerster and (K.) Münscher, 'Libanios', *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie XII/2*, (1925), 2485-2551.

<sup>22</sup> No other sophist from Cyzicus seems to be known. The Diogenes mentioned by Karl Gerth, 'Die Zweite oder Neue Sophistik', *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie SVIII*, (1956), 719-782, 781 was in fact a *grammaticus*, not a sophist. Cf. *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker III/B*, 3 vols., (Leiden 1950/55), No. 474; Kaster (*op. cit. n. 16*), 398f. (no. 207).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lib., *or.* 1,31.

<sup>24</sup> Other famous Cappadocian sophists were e. g. Pausanias of Caesarea, Eutychiarius and Strategius of Caesarea; cf. Gerth (*op cit. n. 22*), Nos. 204, 92, 260.

<sup>25</sup> Lib., *or.* 1,35. The expression ῥήτωρ ἄκρος (= *orator/rhetor summus*?) appears to have been an official title designating the supreme sophist in the school (a kind of headmaster?). It is apparently not attested elsewhere. On the synonymous use of σοφιστής and ῥήτωρ in official terminology cf. dig. 27,1,6,2 (Antoninus Pius) and Wolf, (*op. cit. n. 20*), 20. For the (non-technical) usage of *orator summus* cf. the references given in *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae IX/2* (Leipzig 1968-1981), 899, 71-73. On the Constantinopolitan senate cf. Jones (*op. cit. n.6*), 132 f, 527; Gilbert Dagron, *Naissance d'une Capitale: Constantinople et Ses Institutions de 330 à 451*, 2nd ed. [BByz.E 7] (Paris 1984), 117-210 and Alexander Demandt (*op. cit. n.6*), 396 and n. 226. On the procedure for appointment cf. Kaster (*op. cit. n. 16*) p 39-41.

their new colleague<sup>26</sup> and appear to have been involved in the plot against Libanius which led to his expulsion from Constantinople.<sup>27</sup>

Since we know that Theodosius II expanded the school in 425 (he appointed three *oratores* and ten *grammatici* in Latin literature and five *sophistae* and ten *grammatici* in Greek literature<sup>28</sup>), we may assume that at the time when Hecebolius taught there it was somewhat smaller. This could mean, however, that from Libanius we in fact learn about *all* official Greek sophists who taught at Constantinople during the 340s (i.e. the man from Cyzicus, the Cappadocian and Bemarchius).<sup>29</sup> Hence Hecebolius was probably one of them, and there are several hints which suggest that he is identical with the anonymous Cappadocian. Around 340<sup>30</sup> Hecebolius became young Julian's teacher. Without doubt, only

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Lib., *or.* 1,38; as to the identity of the two sophists mentioned in this chapter I follow Jean Martin/Paul Petit (eds.), *Libanios—Discours, Tome I: Autobiographie (Discours I)* [CUFr] (Paris 1979), 38 *pace* A. F. Norman (ed.), *Libanius' Autobiography (Oration I)* [University of Hull Publications] (Oxford 1965), 158 who identifies them with the Cappadocian and Nicocles. Nicocles was *grammaticus*, not sophist (cf. Socr. 3,1 and Kaster (*op. cit.* n. 16), 317).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Lib., *or.* 1,44-47.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *cod. Theod.* 14,9,3 and 15,1,53; moreover, cf. Schemmel (*op. cit.* n. 16), 167; Friedrich Fuchs, *Die höheren Schulen von Konstantinopel im Mittelalter* [ByA 8] (Leipzig/Berlin 1926) 1 ff.; Louis Bréhier, 'Notes sur l'Histoire de l'Enseignement Supérieur à Constantinople', *Byzantion* 3 (1926), 73-94; 4 (1927), 13-28, esp. (1926), 82-94; Marrou (*op. cit.* n. 16), 442 f.; Kennedy (*op. cit.* n. 16), 165-167; Lemerle (*op. cit.* n. 20), 66-68.

<sup>29</sup> The number of sophists who were *immunes* appears to have varied between three and five, depending on the size of the city; cf. the rescript by Antoninus Pius in *dig.* 27,1,6,2. On immunity for sophists cf. Marrou (*op. cit.* n. 16), 434-436.

<sup>30</sup> On Julian's biography cf. Richard Klein, 'Julian Apostata: Ein Lebensbild', *Gymnasium* 93 (1986), 273-292 who lists the most important literature. The chronology of Julian's youth and education is highly controversial, since the evidence is contradictory (cf. the survey of scholarship in Kaster (*op. cit.* n. 16), 319-321). One of the main difficulties concerns Julian's exile in Fundus Macelli. Did it precede or did it follow Julian's studies at Constantinople and Nicomedia? The chronology was first put forward by Norman H. Baynes in his review of Seeck (see below) in *The English Historical Review* 27 (1912), 755-60, 758 f. and in a subsequent article, 'The Early Life of Julian the Apostate', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 45 (1925), 251-254. It was recently defended by Kaster (*op. cit.*). Baynes assumed *two* stays at Constantinople and proposed this chronology: 339/40 studies in Constantinople with Mardonius; 342-348 exile in Fundus Macelli; 348 second stay in Constantinople: Julian studies with Nicocles and Hecebolius; 348/9 stay in Nicomedia (Kaster: late 347 or early 348 until 348 or early 349: studies with Nicocles and Hecebolius followed by the stay in Nicomedia). I follow, however, Eberhard Richtsteig, 'Einige Daten aus dem Leben Kaiser Julians', *Philologische Wochenschrift* 51 (1931), 428-432 who slightly modified Otto Seeck's earlier findings in *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*

the best sophist was considered for this position. The Cappadocian, however, was appointed 'highest rhetor' by the emperor himself (βασιλέως πέμποντος, Lib., *or.* 1,35). Hence he held a particularly eminent position and must, in the emperor's eyes, have been just the right man to teach his cousin. It is, therefore, highly likely that the anonymous Cappadocian and Hecebolius are identical. He was, perhaps, at that time, still young, since Libanius emphasizes that the Cappadocian had only won one rhetorical contest so far (ἐξ οἴμαί τινος ἀγώνος ἑνός, *or.* 1,35).<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Libanius' hostility towards this man fits the facts very well, since we know that he thoroughly disliked Hecebolius as well and would not even mention his name.<sup>32</sup>

As regards Hecebolius' teaching, Socrates gives us the following account. It is probably partly based on Libanius' *Funeral Oration over Julian* (*or.* 18) and partly on one of Emperor Julian's biographies:<sup>33</sup>

'And Julian, when he was grown up, attended the schools at Constantinople, in the Basilica, where the schools then were. He appeared in public in plain clothes and was superintended by the eunuch Mardonius. In grammar, Nicocles the Spartan was his instructor; and from Ecebolius the Sophist, who at that time happened to be a Christian, he learned the art of rhetoric. The emperor Constantius had made this provision lest by attending lectures of a pagan teacher he would turn away to idolatry.'<sup>34</sup>

IV (Berlin 1911), 456-458. As opposed to Baynes and Kaster Richtsteig assumed that Julian was only *once* in Constantinople (which is the simpler hypothesis) and gave as dates for Julian's subsequent stay in Nicomedia and (indirect) contact with Libanius the years 341/2-345; for the stay in Macellum 345-351. Richtsteig's chronology, however, is not free from difficulties either.

<sup>31</sup> This may, however, be pure polemic. On the importance of rhetorical contests cf. Norman (*op. cit.* n. 26), 157; Stefan Rebenich, 'Augustinus im Streit zwischen Symmachus und Ambrosius um den Altar der Victoria', *Laverna* 2 (1991), 55-75, 59 and n. 31. Both anonymous sophists are again mentioned in 1,38: Τῷ μὲν δὴ σοφιστᾷ ἐπενθείτην, ὁ μὲν οὐδὲ ἀνθήσας ἀρχὴν, ὁ δὲ ἀπνηθηκῶς. ὁ μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲ παρήλθεν εἰς τὸ δόνασθαι, ὁ δὲ ἐξεπεπτόκει (Martin/Petit 114, 9-11). The first one must be the Cappadocian. Pace Fritz Schemmel, 'Die Schulzeit des Kaisers Julian', *Philologus* 82 (1926/27), 455-466, 456 f., who concludes from *or.* 1,35 ὁ μὲν δὴ σεμνὸς σεμνῶς εἰστήκει that this 'fits better an old than a young man' and who, therefore, identifies Hecebolius with the man from Cyzicus. Considering Libanius' irony in this passage, I do not find this convincing.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. below.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Franz Geppert, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Socrates Scholasticus* [SGTK] (Leipzig 1898), 69-75, 122. Libanius cannot have been Socrates' only source, because he gives some details which are not found in Libanius (pace Kaster (*op. cit.* n. 16), 317).

<sup>34</sup> Ἰουλιανὸς δὲ αὐξήθεις τῶν Κωνσταντίνου πόλει παιδευτηρίων ἠκροᾶτο, εἰς τὴν



We learn from this that Julian underwent the classical three tier education, i.e. 'primary school' under the παιδαγωγός Mardonius;<sup>35</sup> 'secondary school' with the *grammaticus* Nicocles and, finally, 'higher education' with the σοφιστής Hecebolius who taught him the art of rhetoric.<sup>36</sup> At that time the school was situated in the Basilica in the east of the city and not yet on the capitol to where it moved, perhaps in 425.<sup>37</sup> Hecebolius was then a Christian which was one of the reasons why Constantius had chosen him. Libanius, who, when writing about Julian's youth, does not even mention Hecebolius' name, emphasizes this

βασιλικήν, ἔνθα τότε τὰ παιδευτήρια ἦν, ἐν λιτῷ σχήματι προῖων καὶ ὑπὸ Μαρδονίου τοῦ εὐνούχου παιδαγωγούμενος. Τῶν μὲν οὖν γραμματικῶν λόγων Νικοκλῆς ὁ Λάκων ἦν αὐτῷ παιδευτής· ῥητορικὴν δὲ παρὰ Ἐκηβολίῳ κατάρθου τῷ σοφιστῇ Χριστιανῷ τότε τυγχάνοντι. Τοῦτου δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντίος προενόησε μήπως Ἕλληνας διδασκάλου ἀκροώμενος πρὸς δεισιδαιμονίαν ἐκκλίνου. Χριστιανὸς γὰρ ἦν ἐξ ἀρχῆς Ἰουλιανός (3,1 [PG 67,369A-B]; tr. NPNF, altered).

<sup>35</sup> As regards Mardonius' role, Socrates is not altogether clear. At least for part of the time at Constantinople, Mardonius seems to have taught Julian simultaneously with Nicocles and to have acted as his minder. About him cf. PLRE I, 558 and (W.) Enßlin, 'Mardonios (2)', *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie* XIV/2 (1930), 1658; Peter Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassene in der griechisch-römischen Antike* [Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Geschichte und Politik 14] (Stuttgart 1980), 58, 215 (no. 67). The religious allegiance of Mardonius is a matter of debate; cf. e. g. G. W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (London 1978), 24; Athanassiadi-Fowden (*op cit. n. 12*), 14-23 (Mardonius was a pagan) *pace* Seeck (*op cit. n. 21*), 457; Enßlin (*op cit.*), 1658; Demandt (*op cit. n. 6*), 95 (Mardonius was a Christian). Cf. furthermore Augusto Rostagni, *Giuliano l'Apostata: Saggio Critico con le Operette Politiche e Satiriche Tradotte e Commentate* [II Pensiero Greco 12] (Torino 1920), 361-370. Apart from Mardonius Julian was looked after by another eunuch whom Libanius calls σωφοσύνης φύλαξ (*or.* 18,11).

<sup>36</sup> As to the Roman education system cf. Marrou (*op cit. n. 16*), 389-421. The modern terms must, of course, be applied with some caution. As to the danger of false retrojections cf. Paul Speck's review of Lemerle, (*op cit. n. 20*; French ed.), *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 67 (1974), 385-393, 386 f. Robert Browning, *The Emperor Julian* (London 1975), is quite unclear about Hecebolius. On p. 39 he states that Julian may have studied under him in *Constantinople*; on p. 52, however, he claims that after Macellum Julian 'probably began once again to attend the lectures of Hekebolios at *Nicomedia*' (my italics).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Paul Speck, *Die Kaiserliche Universität von Konstantinopel: Präzisierungen zur Frage des höheren Schulwesens in Byzanz im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* [ByA 14] (Munich 1974), 94; Speck., review cited (n. 36), 389 and n.15; Cyril Mango, *Le Développement Urbain de Constantinople (IV<sup>e</sup>-VII<sup>e</sup> Siècles)*, [Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance/Collège de France/Monographies 2] (Paris 1985), 26 *pace* *ibid.*, 30; Schemmel (*op cit. n. 16*), 151; Wolfgang Liebeschuetz, 'Hochschule', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XV (1991), 858-911, 872. As to the topographical problems which nevertheless remain cf. Lemerle (*op cit. n. 20*), 68 n.58.

point as well (*or.* 18,12) and says that Julian ‘was enduring this incompetence in rhetoric because of the war waged against the altars by his teacher.’<sup>38</sup>

Socrates then goes on to explain that young Julian made great progress in the *λόγοι* which lead to his quickly becoming famous in Constantinople.<sup>39</sup> Since he thus had become a potential threat to the throne, the emperor decided to send him to Nicomedia, to the same city where Libanius had moved after the scandal at Constantinople. Constantius gave orders, however, that Julian should not be allowed to attend lectures by Libanius because of the latter’s paganism.<sup>40</sup> Strangely enough, however, Libanius claims that ‘the reason for the fact that he found pleasure in my oratory and yet avoided its author was that marvellous teacher of his. He had bound him with many fearsome oaths never to be or to be called my pupil and never to be enrolled on the list of my students.’<sup>41</sup> He, therefore, attributes this prohibition to Hecebolius rather than to the emperor.

We do not know whose account is more reliable. At first sight Libanius’ version seems more likely to be correct. There were, after all, strong tensions between the rhetor of Nicomedia and his former Constantinopolitan colleague, especially if Hecebolius is identical with the anonymous Cappadocian mentioned above. These were not least due to the fact that Libanius was a pagan, and Hecebolius was briefed by the emperor to avoid everything which could encourage in his young pupil a favourable disposition towards the gods.<sup>42</sup> Yet why did Socrates

<sup>38</sup> ...φέροντα τὴν φαυλότητα τῶν λόγων διὰ τὸν πρὸς τοὺς βωμοὺς τοῦ διδασκάλου πόλεμον (*or.* 18,12 (Foerster II,242,3-5; tr. Norman)). Cf. also Socrates’ polemical reaction in 3,32: Καὶ εἰ Ἰουλιανὸς ἦν σοφιστής, εἶπεν ἂν καὶ αὐτὸν κακὸν σοφιστὴν ὡς καὶ Ἐκηβόλιον ἐν τῷ ἐπιταφίῳ Ἰουλιανοῦ (PG 67,437C).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. 3,1 (PG 67,369B-C).

<sup>40</sup> Ἰουλιανὸς δ’ ἐκωλύετο φοιτᾶν παρ’ αὐτῷ διότι Λιβάνιος Ἑλλήν τὴν θρησκείαν ἐτύγγανεν ὧν (1,13 (PG 67,369C-372A)).

<sup>41</sup> Τὸ δὲ αἴτιον τοῦ τοῖς λόγοις <μὲν> χαίρειν, φεύγειν δὲ τὸν ἐκείνων πατέρα πολλοῖς καὶ μεγάλοις αὐτὸν ὄρκοις ὁ θαυμαστὸς ἐκεῖνος κατελήφει σοφιστὴς ἢ μὴ ἐμὸν μῆτε γενέσθαι μῆτε κληθῆναι φοιτητὴν μῆτ’ εἰς τὸν κατάλογον ἐγγραφῆναι τῶν ἐμῶν ὀμιλητῶν (Foerster II, 242,16-243,3; tr. Norman). (This clearly refers to Hecebolius, not to Nicocles; *pace* Foerster and Münscher (*op. cit.* n. 21), 2490; Stegemann (*op. cit.* n. 21), 354). Johannes Geffcken, *Kaiser Julianus* [Das Erbe des Alten 8] (Leipzig 1914), 8, 129 assumes, therefore, that Hecebolius accompanied Julian to Nicomedia (cf. also Demandt (*op. cit.* n. 6), 95). I find this far from convincing: if Hecebolius had been with Julian he could have controlled him without binding him by oaths.

<sup>42</sup> Socrates himself appears to acknowledge this when he says: Οὗτος μὲν οὖν τὴν

deviate from his source in this point? Did he suspect that Libanius tried to exonerate Constantius from certain charges which had been made against him?<sup>43</sup> In any case, he had other information about this matter to which he gave more credit than to Libanius' version.

Furthermore, Socrates tells us in 3,13 that Hecebolius reverted to paganism during Julian's rule. He connects this piece of information with the fact that Julian did not tolerate any Christians in the imperial household or in the provincial administration. The steadfast Christians, therefore, resigned from their offices, whereas others, 'because they preferred money and worldly honour to the true happiness, turned without hesitation back to sacrificing.'<sup>44</sup> Socrates' account reflects the political reality quite accurately. As Raban von Haehling showed convincingly, during his short reign Julian appointed only pagans to administrative posts.<sup>45</sup> Since for many people the line between the old and the new faith was blurred anyway, Hecebolius was by no means the only one who returned to the old faith. There were several lapsed Christians in Julian's administration.<sup>46</sup>

It could be, therefore, that Hecebolius' lapse has to be seen in connection with his being appointed governor or *praeses* of Egypt. We possess a letter by Libanius which he addressed to the Prefect of Egypt, Gerontius (*ep.* 306 Foerster). In this letter, Libanius says that some slaves had run away from their master Sebon (one of Libanius' friends) and had been found by Euodus with a certain Onesimus. He, in turn, had sent them to Hecebolius, the son of Ascholius, assuming that they would then be returned to Libanius (and probably from there to Sebon). However,

---

ὄργην κατὰ τῶν παιδαγωγῶν, εἰς τὸν κατ' αὐτῷ γραφέντα λόγον ἐκένωσεν. This speech is lost. Cf. Foerster and Münscher (*op. cit.* n. 21), 2527.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. in particular Libanius' description of the murder of Julian's relatives, which he does not directly lay at Constantius' door; cf. *or.* 18,10.

<sup>44</sup> "Ἐτεροι δέ, ὅσοι μὴ ὀρθῇ γνώμῃ ἐχριστιάνιζον, ὅσοι [ὡς *coni. Valesius*] τὰ χρήματα καὶ τὴν ἐνταῦθα τιμὴν, τῆς ἀληθοῦς εὐδαιμονίας προκρίναντες, μὴ μελλήσαντες πρὸς τὸ θύειν ἀπέκλινον (PG 67,411C-413A).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Haehling (*op. cit.* n. 17), 537-547.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. also Greg. Naz., *or.* 4,11; furthermore Haehling (*op. cit.* n. 21), 544-546; Hanns Christof Brennecke, *Studien zur Geschichte der Homöer: Der Osten bis zum Ende der homöischen Reichskirche* [BHTh 73] (Tübingen 1988), 106 and n. 48; Noethlichs (*op. cit.* n. 17), 1154-5. Another classical case of a turncoat from that time is Domitius Modestus who also changed sides at least twice. He was the prototype of a nimble, ambitious official 'who when applying for a high administrative office aligned himself with the denomination of each individual ruler' (Haehling (*op. cit.* n. 21), 67 f.). Cf. moreover, PLRE I, 605-608.

they never arrived. Libanius, therefore, suspected that they had run away a second time and asks Gerontius to restore the law in its full force.

From one of Libanius' remarks it may appear that he did not particularly like the Heceboliis mentioned in this letter. For he comments on the fact that the slaves had not arrived yet by saying ... πολλοί τε ὑπονοίαι κατὰ τοῦ πράγματος. If this is intended to denigrate Heceboliis it would fit well with what we know about Libanius' relationship with the sophist of the same name and would suggest their identity.<sup>47</sup> This would mean that Heceboliis became at some unknown date some kind of higher official (governor? *praeses*?) in Egypt.<sup>48</sup> He would have been appointed by Constantius, since *ep.* 306 probably dates from spring or summer 361.<sup>49</sup> Such an honour for a sophist is not impossible, if one considers the fact that the sophist Demetrius became governor of Phoenice some time before 358<sup>50</sup> and the pagan (!) rhetor and philosopher Themistius was not only adlected to the Senate of Constantinople in 355, but even made Proconsul of that city in 358-9.<sup>51</sup> When Julian came to power, Heceboliis wanted to retain his job and therefore decided to sacrifice.

On the other hand Libanius was on friendly terms with Ascholiis, the father of this governor, as can be seen from *ep.* 615 (Foerster). The remark in *ep.* 306 must, therefore, perhaps, be understood in a different way, in which case it is rather unlikely that the Heceboliis mentioned by Libanius is identical with the sophist. In this case the latter's lapse was a consequence of the school law issued by Julian in June 362.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Cf. in this sense e.g. Seeck (*op. cit. n. 4*), 2800.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Seeck (*op. cit. n. 21*), 378.

<sup>50</sup> PLRE I, 247 f. (DEMETRIUS 2).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 890. As regards the rise of some *grammatici* cf. Kaster (*op. cit. n. 16*), 130-132.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Gustave Bardy, 'L'Eglise et l'Enseignement au IV<sup>e</sup> Siècle', *Recherches de science religieuse* 14 (1934), 525-549; 15 (1935), 1-27; (1934), 546. One wonders whether Socrates' wording ὁ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως σοφιστῆς Ἐκηβόλιος does not imply that under Julian he was still sophist in this city. Cf. also *Suda*, s.v. Μάρις where Socr. 3,12f. is abbreviated in such a way that the lapse of Heceboliis is the result of Julian's school law. Cf., moreover, above n. 2) On Julian's school law cf. *cod. Theod.* 13,3,5; *cod. Iust.* 10,53,7; *ep.* 61 (Bidez) and the testimonies collected in J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Imperatoris Flavii Claudii Iuliani Epistulae, Leges Poemata, Fragmenta Varia* [Nouvelle Collection de Textes et Documents] (Paris/London 1922), 69-75. Cf. on the whole problem, J. Bidez, *L'Empereur Julien—Oeuvres Complètes*, I/2: *Lettres et Fragments, texte révu et traduit* [CUFr] (Paris 1924), 44-47; Bardy (*op. cit. n. 12*) 542-549; C. J. Henning, *De Eerste Schoolstrijd tussen Kerk en Staat onder Julianus*

This law was specifically directed against the Christian sophists.<sup>53</sup> Julian left them a choice: either to take their teaching of the classics seriously and hence to worship the gods or to resign their posts.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, many Christians chose the second alternative, among them Marius Victorinus<sup>55</sup> in Rome and Prohaeresius in Athens, even though in the case of the latter the emperor wanted to make an exception.<sup>56</sup> The reason for Hecebolius' lapse may, therefore, be directly connected with this law.

Julian never mentions his teacher in his writings, unless a highly rhetorical letter in which Julian asks Hecebolius to keep on writing to him is genuine.<sup>57</sup>

As regards Hecebolius' later life we have no further information<sup>58</sup>—

---

*den Afvallige*, Diss. Nijmegen 1937 (unavailable to author); Glanville Downey, 'The Emperor Julian and the Schools', *Classical Journal* 53 (1957), 97-103; B. Carmon Hardy, 'The Emperor Julian and His School Law', *Church History* 37 (1968), 131-143; also (in German) in Richard Klein (ed.), *Julian Apostata* [WdF 509] (Darmstadt 1978), 387-408; Richard Klein, 'Kaiser Julians Rhetoren- und Unterrichtsgesetz', *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde* 76 (1981), 73-94. Cf. also Brennecke (*op. cit.* n. 46), 105 n. 46.

<sup>53</sup> Iul., *ep.* 61 (Bidez 74,3-5).

<sup>54</sup> Orosius even claims: *Sed tamen, sicut a maioribus nostris compertum habemus, omnes ubique propemodum praecepti condiciones amplexati officium quam fidem deserere maluerunt* (*adv. pag.* 7,30,2 CSEL 5,510,2-4). This appears to be exaggerated. Cf. also Klein (*op. cit.* n. 52) 87 f.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Aug., *conf.* 8,10.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Hier., *chron.* a. 363 (Helm<sup>2</sup> 242,24-243,1); Eunap, *vit. soph.* 512 (ed. Wright).

<sup>57</sup> Iul., *ep.* 194 (Bidez and Cumont). The authenticity of this letter is disputed e.g. by Franz Cumont, *Sur l'Authenticité de Quelques Lettres de Julien* (Gent 1889) [Université de Gand. Recueil de travaux publiés par la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres 3], esp 15 f., 19; W. Schwarz, 'Julianstudien', *Philologus* 51 (1892), 623-653, 626 f. and note c; Geffcken (*op. cit.* n. 41), 145; Bidez (*op. cit.* n. 52), 234; Wright (*op. cit.* n. 4), XLVIII; Seeck (*op. cit.* n. 4), 2800. The authenticity is defended by Bidez and Cumont (*op. cit.* n. 52), 263f.; Kennedy (*op. cit.* n. 16), 164. Cf. furthermore E. v. Borries, 'Flavius Claudius Iulianus', in: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie XI/1* (1918), 26-91, 80-83; PLRE I, 409.

<sup>58</sup> It is, of course, tempting, to assume his identity with the *praeses* (?) of Cappadocia Secunda to which Gregory Nazianzen addresses a letter in around 385 (cf. PLRE I, 409 (HECEBOLIUS 3)). It seems, however, that for chronological reasons this is rather unlikely, since then Hecebolius would have been at least 65 years old (assuming as latest date of birth some time around 320). According to the codex Parisinus gr. 7155 (codex C in the edition by Bidez and Cumont (*op. cit.* n. 52)) Julian's *ep.* 115 (Bidez and Cumont) is addressed to the same person as *ep.* 194 (on which cf. above), i. e. Hecebolius. In the Laurentianus LVIII,16 (L) and the Harleianus 5610 (H), however, no such address is found, and modern editors, therefore, tend to emend Ἐκκεβολίῳ to Ἐδεσσηνοῖς. Cf. e. g. Geffcken (*op. cit.* n. 41), 145; Bidez and Cumont (*op.*

that is apart from the fact, to which I shall now turn my attention, that Socrates tells us how Heceboliu wanted to be readmitted to the Church.

## II

When we examine the story related by Socrates and Severus in some more detail, it is important to regard its context in both these authors' works. Socrates clearly sees Heceboliu as one of those turncoats who trim their religious beliefs according to the tides. Severus, it is true, also underlines that Asterius 'was often received and often returned to his vomit.'<sup>59</sup> Yet at the same time he seems to regard Asterius' lying on the floor and crying as a sign of true repentance. The letter that contains the story (*ep.* VI,5,4 (Brooks), written some time between 515 and 518) deals with the problem of the monk and presbyter Mark who attempted to be readmitted to the Monophysite Church after having lapsed to the Diphysites and Massalians.<sup>60</sup> Severus advocates receiving Mark into the Church 'on the basis of a written document, upon his anathematizing the heresies of the Diphysites and of the Massalians, together with the impious men themselves and their impiety.'<sup>61</sup> The reason for this was that, during the Arian controversy, the Church had been equally indulgent towards men like the bishops Eleusinius<sup>62</sup> and Hosius of Corduba and Asterius himself. Hence, for Severus, Asterius' behaviour was by no

---

*cit. n.* 52), ad loc.; Bidez (*op. cit. n.* 52), 234, 241 and ad loc.; Wright (*op. cit. n.* 4), XLVIII; B. A. van Groningen (ed.), *Juliani Imperatoris Epistulae Selectae* [Textus Minores 27] (Leiden 1960), ad loc.; Bertold K. Weis, *Julian—Briefe*, griechisch-deutsch, (Munich 1973), 186, 237; *pace* PLRE I, 409. Cf. also Borries (*op. cit. n.* 57), 80-83.

<sup>59</sup> The saying from *Proverbs* 26.11 is traditionally used in the context of apostasy; cf. e. g. 2 *Peter* 2.22; conc. Nic., *can.* 12 (Joannou 33); Bas. Caes., *can.* 44 (J. 136) etc.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. also *ep.* VI,5,5 (Brooks (*op. cit. n.* 1)).

<sup>61</sup> Brooks (*op. cit. n.* 1), II/2, 287; cf. also 291.

<sup>62</sup> This is perhaps not bishop Eleusinius of Sasima, as Brooks (*op. cit. n.* 1), II, 467, s. v. 'Eleusinius' suggests, but probably the fourth century bishop Eleusius of Cyzicus. At Nicomedia in 365 he 'weakly succumbed to Valens' threats of banishment and confiscation, and declared his acceptance of the Arian creed. Full of remorse at his cowardly submission, on his return to Cyzicus, he assembled his people, confessed and deplored his crime, and expressed his desire, since he had denied his faith, to resign his charge into the hands of a worthier bishop. The people of Cyzicus, who were devotedly attached to him, refused to accept his resignation' (Edmund Venables, 'ELEUSIUS (2)', *Dictionary of Christian Biography* II, (1880), 76f., 76; cf. Socr., *h.* e. 4,6; Philost., *h.* e. 9,13).

means outrageous, but a sign of his true repentance. One does wonder, however, why he did not express greater astonishment in this particular case. Was a very emotional plea for readmittance to the Church perhaps a normal occurrence when one who had lapsed repented of his offence?

A glance at the practice of penance in the fourth century provides us with an answer to this question. In the early Church apostasy as committed by Asterius and Hecebolius was regarded as one of the gravest sins. In the fourth century there was a widespread view that repenting apostates were only to be readmitted to the Church at the moment of their death.<sup>63</sup> In this regard the views of Basil of Caesarea on the subject are of particular interest. For he says that apostates should 'mourn' (προσκλαίειν) all their lives.<sup>64</sup> He describes this first degree of penance<sup>65</sup> as follows: the penitent 'stands outside the door of the house of prayer and asks the entering believers to pray for him, confessing his injustice.'<sup>66</sup> The parallel with the story in Socrates' version is immediately apparent. Whereas Severus is much more general, the historian, too, describes Hecebolius as being 'outside the door of the house of prayer' (πρὸ τῆς πύλης τοῦ εὐκτηρίου οἴκου) and mourning. In particular, the expression ὁ εὐκτήριος οἶκος is quite striking, since it seems to reflect offi-

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Syn. Elv., *can.* 1; Bas. Caes., *can.* 5 (Joannou 103; for heretics); *can.* 73 (J. 150); Greg. Nyss., *can.* 2 (J. 209f); furthermore Dion. Alex., *can.* 5 (J. 15f). Cf., however, the somewhat different legislation at the Nicene Council, *can.* 10-12 (J. 32-34) and the Synod of Carthage in 419 (*can.* 45 [J. 262]).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *can.* 73 (Joannou 151,2).

<sup>65</sup> For the intricate problem of the degrees of penance (*Bußstufen*) cf. F. X. Funk, 'Die Bußstationen im christlichen Altertum', *Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen und Untersuchungen* I (Paderborn 1897), 182-209; Eduard Schwartz, 'Bußstufen und Katechumenatsklassen', *Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Strassburg* VII (1911); which has been reproduced in: *Gesammelte Schriften* V (Berlin 1963), 274-362 (quoted thereafter); Bernhard Poschmann, Art. 'Bußstufen (Bußstationen)', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* II (1954), 814-816; Joseph Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bußstufenwesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg 1955).

<sup>66</sup> ... ἔξω τῆς θύρας ἐστὼς τοῦ εὐκτηρίου οἴκου καὶ τῶν εἰσιόντων πιστῶν δεόμενος εὐχὴν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ποιεῖσθαι, ἐξαγορεύων τὴν ἰδίαν παρανομίαν (*can.* 56 (Joannou 144,18-221)). Cf. also *can.* 22 (J. 125), 75 (J. 152). Moreover Ps.-Greg. Thaum., *can.* 11 (J. 29); Hier., *ep.* 77,5 (on Fabiola): 'dissuta habuit latera, nudum caput, clausum os. non est ingressa ecclesiam domini, sed extra castra cum Maria, sorore Moysi, separata consedit, ut, quam sacerdos eiecerat, ipse reuocaret' (Hilberg II,42,13-15). For the third century cf. already Tert., *paen.* 7,10; *pud.* 3,5 and A. d'Alès, *L'Édit de Calliste: Étude sur les Origines de la Pénitence Chrétienne* [BTH] (Paris 1914), 409-421; Bernhard Poschmann, *Paenitentia secunda: Die kirchliche Buße im ältesten Christentum bis Cyprian und Origenes. Eine dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung* [Theoph. 1; rpt. 1964] (Bonn 1940), 240 f.

cial terminology such as that found in Basil's canons.<sup>67</sup> It is not quite clear whether the πρόσκλαυσις as a separate degree of penance existed only in Asia Minor<sup>68</sup> or whether it has to be presupposed even where our sources are silent.<sup>69</sup> The question has no bearing on our case anyway, since both Asterius and Hecebolius appear to have come from Cappadocia.<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, the mourning as such was by no means unusual, but standard practice in penance at that time. What was unusual, however, was the fact that Asterius/Hecebolius *lay on the floor*. In this respect an interesting parallel is provided by an anonymous author whom Eusebius quotes in his *Church History*. He recounts how the confessor Natalius had been installed as a rival bishop to Pope Zephyrinus of Rome (198-207) by the adoptionists Asclepiodotus and Theodotus the Banker. As a result of nocturnal visions and angelic castigations, however, he felt remorse: he got up in the morning, 'put on sackcloth, and covered himself with ashes, and went with much haste, and fell down with tears before Zephyrinus the bishop, rolling at the feet not only of the clergy but also of the laity, and moved with tears the compassionate Church of the merciful Christ. But for all his prayers and the exhibition of the weals of the stripes he had received, he was scarcely admitted into communion' (5,28,12; tr. Lake).<sup>71</sup> In doing this Natalius exactly fulfilled the require-

<sup>67</sup> As to the 'official' flavour of the term cf. G.J.M. Bartelink, "'Maison de Prière" comme Dénomination de l'Eglise en tant qu'Édifice, en particulier chez Eusèbe de Césarée,' *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 84 (1971), 101-118, 117.

<sup>68</sup> Thus e. g. Bernhard Poschmann, *Buße und Letzte Ölung* [HDG IV/3] (Freiburg 1951), 47; Heinrich Karpp, *La Pénitence: Textes et Commentaires des Origines de l'Ordre Pénitentiel de l'Eglise Ancienne* [TC 1] (Neuchâtel 1970), XXII. Cf., however, *const. apost.* 2,10,4; 2,18,7; 3,8,3 (on these passages Marcel Metzger, *Les Constitutions Apostoliques* III, introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes [SC 329] (Paris 1986), 102-104); *conc. Trull., can.* 87 (Joannou 223); *can.* 1, wrongly attributed to the Council of Constantinople 381 (cf. CPG 8604; ed. C. H. Turner, 'Canons Attributed to the Council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, Together with the Names of the Bishops, from Two Patmos MSS POB' POΓ', *Journal of Theological Studies* 15 [1913/4], 161-178, 164; on the problem of origin cf. Fr. van de Pavard, 'Die Quellen der kanonischen Briefe Basileios des Grossen', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 38 (1972) 5-63, esp. 27-45); *Theod. Stud., ep.* 2,49 (PG 99,1257C).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Schwartz (*op. cit.* n. 65), 312; Gustav Adolf Benrath, 'Buße V.', *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* VII (1981), 452-473, 458; C. Vogel, 'Penitenza I', in: *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane* II (1983), 2742-2746, 2745 f.

<sup>70</sup> For Asterius cf. Kinzig (*op. cit.* n. 3), 14 and n. 12. For Hecebolius cf. above.

<sup>71</sup> ... ὥστε ἔαθεν ἀναστῆναι καὶ ἐνδυσάμενον σάκκον καὶ σποδὸν καταπασάμενον μετὰ πολλῆς σπουδῆς καὶ δακρύων προσπεσεῖν Ζεφυρίνῳ τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ, κυλιόμενον ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας οὐ μόνον τῶν ἐν κλήρῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν λαϊκῶν, συγγέει τε τοῖς δάκ-



ments of the *exomologesis* as set out by Tertullian.<sup>72</sup> The public prostration as part of penance is also described by other sources from the third century.<sup>73</sup> At that time, however, such a public display of contrition already appears to have been exceptional.<sup>74</sup> One and a half centuries later, it certainly was.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, Asterius/Hecebolius reinforced the impact of his behaviour by shouting 'Trample upon me, the salt which has lost its savour.' What does this saying actually mean? It clearly alludes to *Matthew* 5.13: 'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.'<sup>76</sup> Whatever its original meaning was,<sup>77</sup> in the early Church Jesus' words were interpreted as referring to discipleship. According to an exegesis favoured especially by Origen, the disciples, the salt of the earth, guaranteed the further existence of the earth by preserving it from decomposition and decay. By

---

ρυσιν τὴν εὐσπλαγχρον ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ ἐλεήμονος Χριστοῦ πολλῇ τε τῇ δεήσει χρησάμενον δείξαντά τε τοὺς μάλωπας ὧν εἰλήφει πληγῶν μόλις κοινωνηθῆναι (Schwartz/Mommsen 504,2-8). On this incident cf. Paul Galtier, *Aux Origines du Sacrement de Pénitence* [AnGr/SFT A/6] (Rome 1951), 152 f.; Gustav Bardy, *Eusèbe de Césarée—Histoire Ecclésiastique. Livres V-VII, texte grec, traduction et notes* [SC 41] (Paris 1955), 77 n. 11; Poschmann (*op. cit.* n. 66), 363 f.

<sup>72</sup> *Paen.* 9-12; cf. the commentary in the edition by Charles Munier, *Tertullien—La Pénitence*, introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire [SC 316] (Paris 1984). Furthermore cf. *pud.* 5,14; 13,7.

<sup>73</sup> *Cypr.*, *laps.* 35; *Orig.*, *c. Cels.* 6,15.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Tert.*, *paen.* 10,1.

<sup>75</sup> For the west cf., however, Ambrose, *paen.* 1,90; 2,96. On public penance in Milan at Ambrose's time cf. Roger Gryson, *Ambroise de Milan—La Pénitence*, texte latin, introduction, traduction et notes [SC 179] (Paris 1971), 31-50. The most famous act of penance in the fourth century and beyond was, of course, performed by the emperor Theodosius the Great on Christmas 390; cf. *Ambr.*, *ob. Theod.* 34 (Fallar 388, 6-10): *Stravit omne, quo utebatur, insigne regium, deflevit in ecclesia publice peccatum suum, quod ei aliorum fraude obrepserat, gemitu et lacrimis oravit veniam. Quod privati erubescunt, non erubuit imperator, publicam agere paenitentiam.* The last clause is suggestive as regards penitential practice. On the incident cf. Hans von Campenhausen, *Ambrosius von Mailand als Kirchenpolitiker* [AKG 12] (Berlin/Leipzig 1929), 238-240; Rudolf Schieffer, 'Von Mailand nach Carossa: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der christlichen Herrscherbuße von Theodosius d. Gr. bis zu Heinrich IV.', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 28 (1972), 333-370, 340. Cf. furthermore Sozomen, *h. e.* 7,15,5f. on public penance in Rome. Unlike in the case in question here, in Rome the shedding of tears formed part of the liturgy.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. also *Mark* 9.49 f. *Luke* 14.34 f.; *Colossians* 4.6.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. the commentaries, esp. Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 1. Teilband: Mt 1-7 [EKK I/1,1] (Zurich etc. 1985), 219-227.

following the example of Christ it was, therefore, actually possible to postpone the end of the world.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, since at least the times of Augustine, the *datio salis* had formed part of the (western) rite of the acceptance into the catechumenate.<sup>79</sup> It is unclear if before Augustine such a practice was already carried out. Moreover, we do not know whether this practice would have been carried out in those areas for which our sources are silent (especially in the East). If so, the words discussed here could be a direct allusion to a liturgical use of *Matthew* 5.13 during the catechumenate.<sup>80</sup> Be that as it may, a lapse from Christianity meant that the salt had lost its savour<sup>81</sup> which, if it occurred too often, could be understood to have serious implications for the preservation of the world. It is probable that Asterius/Hecebolius alludes to this understanding of *Matthew* 5.13.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *c.Cels.* 8,70; *comm. Ioh.* 6,303; *comm. ser. Matt.* 37 (Klostermann/Benzl Treu 70,1-5); *cat. Matt.* 90 f. On these passages cf. Henri Irénée Marrou, *A Diognète*, introduction, édition critique, traduction et commentaire [SC 33] (Paris 1951), 164-166; Wolfram Kinzig, *Novitas Christiana: Die Idee des Fortschritts in der Alten Kirche bis Eusebius*, unpublished Habilitationsschrift, Heidelberg 1991, 443 f and n. 128. Cf. furthermore *mart. Pion.* 12,12; *Cypr., unit.* 1; *syn. Carth.* (256), 7 (Soden 254); *Ioh. Chrys., hom. Matt.* 15.6f.; *ps.-Ioh. Chrys., op. imperf. Matt.* 10.13; *Theod. Mops., frg. Mat.* 24 (Reuss 104 f.). On discipleship cf. Wolfgang Nauck, 'Salt as a Metaphor in Instructions for Discipleship', *Studia Theologica Lund u.a.* 6 (1953), 165-178. On salt in antiquity in general cf. I. Blümner, 'Salz', *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie* II/1,2 (1920), 2075-2099. On salt as metaphor in the Church Fathers cf. James E. Latham, *The Religious Symbolism of Salt* [ThH 64] (Paris 1982), 104-171. Salt as a metaphor for preservation or incorruptibility was 'by far the most universal [theme] throughout the history of salt symbolism' (p. 161).

<sup>79</sup> It is probably first attested in Aug., *de pecc. mer. et rem.* 2,26,42. Cf. the discussion in Franz Josef Dölger, *Der Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie* [SGKA 3/1-2] (Paderborn 1909), 92-100; G. Bareille, 'Catéchuménat', *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* II, (1923), 1968-1987, 1972 f.; Alois Stenzel, *Die Taufe: Eine genetische Erklärung der Taufliturgie* [FGTh 7/8] (Innsbruck 1958), 171-175; L(eo) Koep, 'Salz', *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* IX, 2nd ed., (1964), 284 f.; Elmar Bartsch, *Die Sachbeschwörungen der römischen Liturgie: Eine liturgiegeschichtliche und liturgietheologische Studie* [LWQF 46] (Münster, Westfalen 1967), 253 f., 290-305; Georg Kretschmar, 'Die Geschichte des Taufgottesdienstes in der alten Kirche', *Leiturgia* V (1970), 1-348, 72-74; Latham (*op. cit.* n. 78), 87-103.

<sup>80</sup> From the sixth century onwards the interpretation of the salt given to the catechumens as preservation (Exegesis of *Matthew* 5.13?) is found quite often (cf. the references given in Dölger (*op. cit.* n. 79) 93 n. 3 and Latham (*op. cit.* n. 78) 87-96). Dölger himself, however, rejects such an interpretation of the original meaning of the *datio salis*.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. esp. Origen, *cat. Matt.* 90 f.

No doubt, in the imperial Church of the fourth century the behaviour by well-known figures such as Asterius and/or Hecebolius must have caused quite a stir. Severus seems to have interpreted it as a sign of true repentance; for Socrates it was just the whining of an opportunist who sees a cake turn into dough.

### III

Finally I turn to the question from which we started: which story, if any, is the original? We cannot, of course entirely exclude the possibility that the anecdote was told about a whole variety of people and has, therefore, to be regarded as a literary *topos* rather than as an account of an actual event. However, it appears to me more likely that we are dealing here with a confused piece of historical information. Several reasons allow us to assume that Socrates' version<sup>82</sup> is at the basis of Severus' account:

1. Socrates is much more precise: as was shown above, Hecebolius belonged to a clearly definable group of penitents.
2. Severus refers explicitly to 'history books' as the source of his information.
3. He does that in such an imprecise way that he is probably quoting from memory. Such imprecision is also found in his other example, Hosius of Corduba. Severus says: 'Hosius also, the bishop of Corduba, the old man, whom Athanasius who is among the saints often called "a man of goodly old age" was often perverted and overcome by the times and again received'.<sup>83</sup> In fact, Athanasius calls Hosius εὐγηρότατος only once;<sup>84</sup> moreover, Hosius lapsed from what was later regarded as the orthodox position not 'often' but just once, namely at the council of Sirmium in 357 where, under strong pressure, he signed the Arian Second Creed.<sup>85</sup>

Hence it appears that Severus vaguely remembered a story about a fourth century sophist who had lapsed—and promptly confused Hece-

<sup>82</sup> It is probably based on oral tradition; cf. Geppert (*op. cit. n. 33*), 15 f., 59-65, 123; on Socrates' predilection for anecdotes cf. *ibid.*, 16, 64 f.

<sup>83</sup> Brooks I, 322; II, 286 f.; cf. also VI,2,2 (B. I, 230; II, 206 f.).

<sup>84</sup> *Fug.* 5,1 (Opitz 71,7); another example is found in the letter by the (Eastern) synod of Serdica (342/3), in: Ath., *apol. sec.* 42,7 (Opitz 120,5).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. T(homas) D(aniel) C(ox) M(orse), 'HOSIUS (1)', *Dictionary of Christian Biography* III (1882), 162-174, 171 ff.

bolius with Asterius.<sup>86</sup> Another, and perhaps even more important, clue for this confusion is given when we compare the Greek of Socrates 3.13 as printed by Migne with its Armenian version. F.C. Conybeare pointed out that after the words ἐπὶ μὲν Κωνσταντίου διαπύρωσ χριστιανίζειν ὑπεκρίνατο the Armenian 'adds words equivalent to καὶ αὐτὸς Ἀρειανὸς ὄν, which must certainly have stood in the Greek text'.<sup>87</sup> One may ask whether Conybeare was not somewhat over-confident in attributing the addition to the original text.<sup>88</sup> For one wonders whether the addition is not an old gloss in which a reader explained in what sense Hecebolius actually *followed* Constantius (i.e. by becoming *Arian*), since Constantine had already favoured Christianity. Nevertheless, it may well have stood in the original text, for it fits with what we know about Socrates' views. He loathed not only the dialectics of the sophists, but also Arianism in all its versions.<sup>89</sup> If it is a gloss, it is in any case a very old one, because Severus' confusion is explained with much more ease if we assume that he read it in his text.

Severus' version is, therefore, nothing more than a *lapsus memoriae*.

---

<sup>86</sup> For Asterius cf. Kinzig (*op. cit. n. 3*), 16.

<sup>87</sup> F. C. Conybeare, 'Emendations of the Text of Socrates Scholasticus', *Journal of Philology* 33 (1914), 208-237, 232. The Armenian version, which was made by Philo of Tirak in 695/6, was printed by M. Ter Mowsesean, Valarshapat 1897.

<sup>88</sup> It is, apparently, not only missing in both Valesius' and Hussey's editions (which are based on different manuscripts), but also in the *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* and the manuscript used for the relevant entry in the *Suda*. As to the complicated textual history of Socrates' *Church History* which is still not fully cleared up cf. Pierre Périchon, 'Pour une Édition Nouvelle de l'Historien Socrate: les Manuscrits et les Versions', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 13 (1965), 112-120 and the literature in CPG 6028. As to the Armenian translation cf. *ibid* and Périchon (*op. cit.*), 114-116.

<sup>89</sup> Glenn F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius*, 2nd ed. (Macon, Georgia 1986), 182-184. As to the role of Arian officials in the emperor's administration cf. von Haehling (*op. cit. n. 17*), 534.