

## CHAPTER II

*'No Longer Does Phoebus Have a Cabin'*  
*Emperor Julian and the Fall of the Temple of Apollo*  
*in Delphi*  
*Aude Busine*

**The Last Oracle: A Christian Forgery?**

According to a seventh-century anonymous *Passion* (BHG 170–1), the Dux of Egypt Artemius was arrested in Antioch and brought to the Emperor Julian, who tried to make him renounce his Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> In the middle of a vivid discussion about the supremacy of the Christian God over pagan deities, the martyr tells the Emperor: 'And in any case you yourself have been fully assured of this from the oracular responses which your doctor and quaestor Oribasius has brought you from Apollo in Delphi. And I shall recite the response to you, even if you don't wish it. It goes as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Speak to the king; the wondrous hall has fallen to the ground.  
 No longer does Phoebus have a cabin, nor the laurel of prophecy,  
 nor the babbling spring, and the babbling water has been quenched.<sup>3</sup>

The three hexameters are again quoted by the Byzantine historian Cedrenus in the eleventh or twelfth century, with approximately the same scenario: the oracle was given to Oribasius, who had been sent by Julian to consult the oracle at Delphi on his behalf.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Artemii Passio* (BHG 170–1) (? John Damascene *CPG* 8082) = Kotter 1988: 202–45. The text is almost fully translated by Mark Vermes in Lieu and Vermes 1996: 224–56. Interactions between 'pagans' and Christians, with regard to prophecy, are analysed in the present book by Ramelli (Chapter 3), Timotin (Chapter 2), and Zambon (Chapter 8).

<sup>2</sup> *Artemii Passio* § 35 (Kotter) = Philostorgius VII 1c (Bidez), 35, l. 27–30 (transl. M. Vermes): πάντως δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς τοῦτο πεπληροφόρησαι, ἐξ ὧν σοὶ χρησιμῶν Ὀριβάσιος ὁ ἱατρὸς καὶ κοιαιστὼρ παρὰ τοῦ ἐν Δελφοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος κεκόμικεν. Ἐγὼ δὲ σοὶ καὶ τὸν χρησμὸν, κἂν μὴ βούλη, ἐπαναγνώσσομαι· ἔχει γὰρ οὕτως.

<sup>3</sup> *Artemii Passio* § 35 (Kotter) = Philostorgius VII 1c (Bidez), 35, l. 21–33 (trans. A. Busine): Εἶπατε τῷ βασιλεῖ· Χαμαὶ πέσει δαίδαλος αὐλά· / Οὐκέτι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην; / Οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσιν, ἀπέσβετο καὶ λάλον ὕδωρ.

<sup>4</sup> Georgius Cedrenus, *Hist. Comp.* I p. 532, l. 4–5 (ed. I. Bekker, *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Scylitzae ope*, Vol. 1 – *Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae*, Bonn: Weber, 1838): πέμπει οὖν Ὀριβάσιον τὸν

*Emperor Julian and the Fall of the Temple of Apollo*

209

In the mid-nineteenth century, the English poet Algernon Swinburne discovered the oracle and incorporated it in a 140-verse poem entitled *The Last Oracle*.<sup>5</sup> He was struck by both the literary quality of the hexameters and their dramatic tone, which foreshadowed the end of the ancient world. At that time, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the author of the verses was often considered the last poetic voice of antiquity.<sup>6</sup> Since then, the text has been abundantly commented on, generating many diverging interpretations. Modern views can be divided into two main categories: those following Swinburne in considering it an authentic oracle uttered in Delphi during Julian's reign, and those who regard it as a Christian forgery mocking Apollo and the pagan emperor.<sup>7</sup>

The first interpretation comes from the romantic and subjective view that the virtuoso composition cannot be other than genuinely pagan, in keeping with the best classical tradition, and hence the text, read genuinely, must have been delivered during the reign of Julian.<sup>8</sup> The babbling spring (v. 3: *παγὰν λαλέουσαν*) has thus been identified as the Castalia, from which the Pythia drew inspiration, and the babbling water (v. 3: *λάλον ὕδωρ*) as the Cassiotis river, which made women prophetic in Delphi.<sup>9</sup> According to some interpretations, the temple was already in ruins and the oracular institution no longer existed at the time the oracle was composed.<sup>10</sup> The embassy of Oribasius has thus been linked to Julian's policy of restoring the traditional cults; the choice of Delphi would have reflected the emperor's own affection for the Pythian god. The words of Apollo, who speaks about the collapse of his temple, seemingly mirror the desolation of the sanctuary and its institutions at the time. Perhaps the temple clergy produced this text to express their despair,<sup>11</sup> although some proponents of this interpretation argue that the text was not composed by the oracular staff, but by Oribasius himself, who gave it as an oracle to Julian.<sup>12</sup> However, the main objection to these interpretations of the text is

ἱατρὸν καὶ κοιαίστωρα ἐν Δελφοῖς ἀνεγεῖραι τὸν ναὸν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος (l. 4–5. Oracle quoted at l. 8–10. On Cedrenus' source for this passage, see Cameron 1963.

<sup>5</sup> Algernon Charles Swinburne, *The Last Oracle*, v. 7–9: 'Tell the king, on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling, / And the watersprings that spake are quenched and dead. / Not a cell is left the God, no roof, no cover'.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g., Bury 1931: 370. <sup>7</sup> For a more detailed bibliographical overview, see Guida 2001.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g., Dempsey 1918: 180; Schröder 1940; Thompson 1946; Parke and Wormell 1956: 290.

<sup>9</sup> Pausanias 10.24.7. See e.g., Bowra 1959: 433–4; Gregory 1983: 361.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g., Henry 1985: 50–2, who put forward the hypothesis of an unknown earthquake that destroyed Delphi between July and October in 362.

<sup>11</sup> In his novel *Julian*, G. Vidal even speculates that the Pythia was paid by Christians to produce such a dramatic response; Vidal 1964: 324.

<sup>12</sup> See Fatouros 1996.

that the temple of Apollo at Delphi had not yet fallen during the reign of the Emperor Julian.<sup>13</sup> An alternative explanation has thus been proposed: that the oracle was produced at the sanctuary of Apollo at Daphne near Antioch, where the temple burned down during Julian's sojourn in the Syrian metropolis in October 362.<sup>14</sup>

On the contrary however, since the mid-nineteenth century a number of scholars have interpreted the text as a Christian forgery in light of its content, which seems incompatible with traditional authentic oracles, and its vocabulary, which includes Dorisms that do not fit with its alleged Delphic origin. Following Gustavus Wolff's assumption in his *De nouissima oraculorum aetate* (1854),<sup>15</sup> two significant attempts to demonstrate the Christian origin of the production were made in the 1950s. Odysseus Lampsidis<sup>16</sup> and Maurice Bowra<sup>17</sup> both claimed that the text is nothing else than plagiarism of a passage of Gregory of Nazianzus in his second *Oration against Julian*, which reads: 'Again the Castalia spring was silenced and she keeps silent, and the water does not prophesise anymore, but it is mocked. Apollo has become a speechless statue; Daphne has again become a plant lamented by a myth' (Πάλιν ἡ Κασταλία σεσίγηται, καὶ σιγᾶ, καὶ ὕδωρ ἐστὶν οὐ μαντευόμενον, ἀλλὰ γελώμενον· πάλιν ἀνδριάς ἄφωνος ὁ Ἀπόλλων, πάλιν ἡ Δάφνη φυτὸν ἐστὶν μύθῳ θρηνοῦμενον).<sup>18</sup> Lampsidis goes even further by asserting that Gregory himself composed the bogus oracle in the years following Julian's death.<sup>19</sup> Both texts share a common theme, that is, the silence of the oracle, and both allude to the prophetic power of water and the sacred laurel of Apollo. Accordingly, the tone and the vocabulary of the oracle, and especially the adjective *lalos* (λάλος, 'chatterbox'), the verb *lalein* (λαλεῖν, 'chat' or 'babble'), and the noun *kalybê* (καλύβη, 'cabin'), denoting the temple, have been interpreted as sarcastic, as in the text of Gregory,<sup>20</sup> while the oracle itself is offered as a further proof of the futility and collapse of oracles. Julian himself admits in the *Contra Galileos* that not only has the prophetic spirit vanished from the Hebrews and the Egyptians, but also the oracles keep silent.<sup>21</sup> There is

<sup>13</sup> Bowra 1959: 427–32; Cabouret 1997. <sup>14</sup> Vatin 1962, followed by Vanderspoel 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Wolff 1854: 44. See Guida 2001: 390–2. <sup>16</sup> Lampsidis 1957. <sup>17</sup> Bowra 1959.

<sup>18</sup> Greg. Naz. *Contra Iulianum Imperatorem* 2 (*Or.* 5), 32. This text in turn might be based on Clem. Alex., *Protrepticus* 2.11.1: Σεσίγηται γοῦν ἡ Κασταλίας πηγὴ ('the spring Castalia was silenced').

<sup>19</sup> Lampsidis 1957.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Bowra 1959: 430; Cabouret 1997: 156–7. Note that as such, λαλεῖν has no negative connotation, especially in the Imperial period. See *LS s.v.* λαλεῖν, col. 1026.

<sup>21</sup> Julian *Contra Galileos* F 45 (Masaracchia) = Cyr. *Contra Iulianum* VI, PG 76, col. 801 l. 60–61–804, l. 1–2: Ταύτη τοι καὶ τὸ παρ' Ἑβραίοις ἐπέλιπεν, οὐκοῦν οὐδὲ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις εἰς τοῦτο σώζεται. Φαίνεται δὲ καὶ τὰ αὐτοφυῆ χρηστήρια ταῖς τῶν χρόνων εἰκοντα περιόδοις. 'Thus it is that the

*Emperor Julian and the Fall of the Temple of Apollo*

211

little doubt that his adversaries, from Gregory of Nazianzus onwards, took advantage of this admission of weakness and used it against him.

While Gregory's orations may have had a deep impact on the Christian view of Julian,<sup>22</sup> I do not agree, however, with the idea that the similarities between Gregory of Nazianzus and our oracle, which are rather common as far as Delphi or Daphne are concerned,<sup>23</sup> suffice to prove a direct lineage between both texts. Moreover, the wording is slightly different: in the oracle, Castalia and Daphne are not mentioned by name, and Apollo is called Phoebos. But more importantly, Gregory does not mention the fall of the temple, which appears to be the central point of the prophecy intended for Julian.

### The Text and Its Context

Regardless of the influence of Gregory on the author of the oracle, and of whether the oracle should be considered pagan or Christian, the text was recorded for the first time by the anti-Nicene Church historian Philostorgius.<sup>24</sup> His *Church History*, written between AD 397 and 426, is known from a ninth-century epitome by Photius and long but incomplete quotations reported in the anonymous *Artemii Passio*. The assumption that the oracle in question was first recorded in Philostorgius' *Church History* stems from Joseph Bidez's inclusion of the passage from the *Artemii Passio* containing this oracle in his 1913 reconstruction of the text of Philostorgius, and this inclusion has never been challenged. Consequently, scholars have typically dated the context of the production of this oracle to before the composition of Philostorgius' *Church History*, that is, to between Julian's reign and the first quarter of the fifth century. For those supporting a Christian origin, the forgery would have been circulated in the context of the vivid anti-pagan polemics during the years following Julian's death, in what Bernadette Cabouret called 'la guerre des oracles'.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, the text should have been composed and circulated shortly after the

prophetic spirit has ceased among the Hebrews also, nor is it maintained among the Egyptians, either, down to the present. And we see that the indigenous oracles of Greece have also fallen silent and yielded to the course of time' (trans. W. C. Wright).

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Van Nuffelen 2020: 376–82.

<sup>23</sup> See the examples provided by Gregory 1983: 357–61.

<sup>24</sup> For example, see Bowra 1959: 430: 'Philostorgius is responsible for the appearance of the oracle in the *Artemii Passio*'; Gregory 1983: 356–7: 'the ecclesiastical history of Philostorgius (died c. 426) . . . is almost certainly the source of the passage in question'.

<sup>25</sup> Cabouret 1997: 156.

destruction of the sanctuary, following either an earthquake or its sacking by Alaric in 395.<sup>26</sup>

However, it is not obvious that Philostorgius should be considered as a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of our text. For one thing, Bidez's choice to include the relevant passage of the *Artemii Passio* in his reconstruction of the *Church History* is not grounded, since neither the content of the three hexameters nor the story of the oracular consultation are found in Photius' summary of Philostorgius. Bidez placed the entire passage at the beginning of Book 7, without transition, just after the following summary of Philostorgius from Photius:

Julian seized power and through public proclamations proclaimed complete liberty to the pagans to carry out all of their projects, in that way handing over the Christians to indescribable and unspeakable sufferings, since in every place the proponents of paganism subjected them to every kind of injury, to new sorts of torture, and to the most painful modes of death.<sup>27</sup>

Likewise, Bidez's reconstruction of the passage immediately following the three hexameters (chapter 2 of Book 7) addresses a completely different subject, that of the violent death of Bishop George in Alexandria in 361. In short, this passage hardly finds a coherent place in Bidez's reconstruction of the seventh book of Philostorgius' *Church History* as it has been reliably summarised by Photius.

Secondly, the trustworthy status of the pagan oracle in the *Artemii Passio* is not in line with the views of Philostorgius, who considered pagan oracles fallacious prophecies unveiled by divine providence.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, there is no evidence that Philostorgius ever recorded Artemius' life or death:<sup>29</sup> the name 'Artemius' does not occur in either Photius' summary or anonymous hagiographer's quotations of Philostorgius *in extenso*.

The *Artemii Passio* is a late fictitious work structured on the basis of a sixth-century *Passio* that ignored Philostorgius. I have shown elsewhere that the aim of both versions was to support the development of the cult of a medical saint in Constantinople about whom little was known at the time.<sup>30</sup> In the *Artemii Passio*, Philostorgius' text primarily functioned as historical background to the story of the *Passio prima*. The significance of

<sup>26</sup> Bowra 1959: 433 *contra* Gregory 1983: 362–3, who stresses the absence of any evidence of a violent destruction of the Delphic temple at that time.

<sup>27</sup> Philostor. *HE* 7.2. <sup>28</sup> Philostor. *HE* 7.12 and 15. <sup>29</sup> See Busine 2018: 98.

<sup>30</sup> See Busine 2018.

*Emperor Julian and the Fall of the Temple of Apollo*

213

the oracular quotation in the *Artemii Passio* is that it is the first time the saint defies Julian by refusing to renounce his faith and sacrifice to the pagan gods, after having been arrested and brought to the emperor. Julian becomes angry after hearing the terrible words of Apollo, and the martyrdom of Artemius begins.<sup>31</sup>

We should therefore be cautious when considering the words placed in the mouth of the martyr when challenging the Emperor as part of the original *Church History*. Dialogues between a martyr and his or her persecutor are *topoi* of late ancient fictitious hagiography. In my opinion, we should hold instead that the oracle about the fall of the temple of Apollo was placed in the mouth of the martyr by Artemius' hagiographer in order to enhance and develop a shorter passion.

### The Fake Oracle and the Historical Julian

If we give up the idea that the oracular text was produced during the reign of Julian or shortly thereafter, we can analyse the quotation of the three hexameters differently, as part of a later fictitious work without any links to the historical Julian. In this section, I would like to show that the story of the Delphic oracle given to Oribasius, which does not appear as such in any extant sources prior to the *Artemii Passio*, relies on a mixture of different elements of the life of the historical Julian available to the hagiographer through his main sources, Philostorgius and Theodoret.

According to Photius' summary, Philostorgius explains – without mentioning Julian – that oracles flourished after the removal of the relics of Babylas from the sanctuary of Apollo at Daphne, although all these prophecies turned out to be false.<sup>32</sup> The crucial role played by the events at Daphne in 362 in the development of Christian resentment towards Julian need not be stressed again. Let it suffice to recall that, according to Amianus Marcellinus, Julian decided to unblock the spring and remove the tombs surrounding the temple, because Apollo could not prophesy.<sup>33</sup> Christian sources argue that the power of the relics of the martyr Babylas was responsible for the silence of Apollo, and present this as evidence of the inability of pagans to predict the future. As is well known, the emperor's attempt to renew the sanctuary of Apollo failed because the temple burned down in October 362;<sup>34</sup> unsurprisingly, Christians saw the intervention of God in this event. The silence of the oracle of Apollo and the sudden

<sup>31</sup> *Artemii Passio* § 36. <sup>32</sup> Philostor. *HE* 7.12. <sup>33</sup> Ammian. Marcell. 22.12.8.

<sup>34</sup> Ammian. Marcell. 22, 13, 1.

burning of Julian's temple clearly contributed to crystallise Christian polemics against Julian, as did Julian's military debacle against the Persian's and subsequent death. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, Julian took auspices and made many sacrifices before launching the war, as any pagan ruler would have done.<sup>35</sup> Whereas Ammianus attributes the Emperor's death on the battlefield to a supposed failure to follow divine omens,<sup>36</sup> Philostorgius attributes the emperor's miscalculation to the gods themselves, who misled Julian through oracles and told him he would win without a fight.<sup>37</sup> In the mid-fifth century, Theodoretus also used pagan divination and prophecies to stress the inanity of pagan gods and the credulity of Julian. He is the first, however, to state that Julian resorted to proper oracular institutions: the emperor would have sent people to Delphi, Delos, and Dodona before his campaign, and many gods urged the emperor to engage in the war.<sup>38</sup> Theodoretus then quotes an oracle in which the pagan gods supported Julian's military plans.<sup>39</sup> Since Artemius' hagiographer drew on Theodoretus on many occasions, it seems likely that he built on this passage to craft the episode of the oracular consultation in Delphi, in the framework of verbal jousting between the martyr and the emperor. The way the author of the *Artemii Passio* stages Oribasius as the messenger who went to Delphi and received the oracle, with the unfounded title of *quaestor*,<sup>40</sup> is a new element. Oribasius was a physician from Sardis, who dedicated a medical treatise to Julian and is known for having played a role in Julian's accession to power.<sup>41</sup> It is possible that the *mise en scène* of Oribasius as consultant of Apollo stems from the hagiographer's misappropriation of a story found in Philostorgius, according to which Oribasius was at the deathbed of Julian.<sup>42</sup> This version of the last moments of Julian's life is not attested earlier.<sup>43</sup> According to Ammianus Marcellinus (25, 3, 21), it was the philosophers Priscus and Maximus who assisted the Emperor before his death and engaged in one last philosophical conversation with him.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ammian. Marcell. 22.12.6–7. <sup>36</sup> Ammian. Marcell. 23.5.10–13.

<sup>37</sup> Philostor. *HE* 7.15: τοῖς πανταχόθεν χρησμοῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὁ παραβάτης ἀναπεισθεὶς ὡς ἀμαχὸν ἔξει τὸ κράτος, κατὰ Περσῶν ἐκστρατεύει. ('The Apostate, persuaded by the pagan oracles everywhere that his power would be invincible, set out on campaign against the Persians' – trans. P. R. Amidon).

<sup>38</sup> Theodoret. *HE* 3.21.1. <sup>39</sup> Theodoret. *HE* 3.21.2.

<sup>40</sup> The title of *quaestor* is dubious and appears for the first time associated with Oribasios in the *Souda* (O 543), see Baldwin 1975.

<sup>41</sup> On Oribasios, see, recently, Boudon-Millot and Goulet 2005; De Lucia 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Philostor. *HE* 7.15. <sup>43</sup> Cf. Joh. Lyd. *De mens.* VI, 118 (sixth century).

<sup>44</sup> Ammian. Marcell. 25.3.21.

*Emperor Julian and the Fall of the Temple of Apollo*

215

However, Philostorgius' version allowed the hagiographer to combine the pre-campaign oracular consultation with the renowned physician Oribasius witnessing Julian's miserable end due to the lies of the pagan gods in a single story.<sup>45</sup> In the *Passio*, this episode is no longer linked to the war against the Persians or the death of Julian, but is situated within the context of the vivid discussions between the Emperor and the martyr that anger Julian. Because they exploit the classical tropes of the silence of Apollo's prophetic water and the collapse of his temple, the three verses allegedly delivered to Oribasius and recited by Artemius within the narrative sufficed as a trigger for the anger of Julian and initiate the torture of the martyr.

**Pseudo-prophecies about Pagan Temples**

In this last section, I will situate the three oracular verses found in the *Artemii Passio* and deriving from oracular material used by Church historians in the context of late ancient *ex eventu* prophecies in which pagan gods foretell their own defeat and the replacement of their shrines with Christian buildings.

Although it has been neglected by scholars interpreting Julian's oracle, there is another important Apollonian prophecy just a few paragraphs later in the *Artemii Passio*. While arguing with the Emperor Julian about the true religion, Artemius uses the following words to demonstrate that Julian's beloved god Apollo has prophesied the coming of Christ:

And why do I say this? The prophets from early times made pronouncement of Christ, as you yourself understand quite well. And there are many testimonies of His Advent even from the gods revered by you and the predictions of the oracles, both the Sibylline books and the poetry of the Roman Virgil which you call the Bucolics. And Apollo himself who is admired by you in his prophetic role uttered the following sort of words about Christ. For when asked by his attendants, he answered as follows:<sup>46</sup>

O would that you had never asked me at my very end,  
 Unhappy ministers of mine, about, the holy god  
 And spirit holding cluster-like all things in its embrace:  
 The stars, the light, the rivers, Tartarus, the air and fire!

<sup>45</sup> See Baldwin 1975: 93–4, who doubts the genuineness of Philostorgius' version, because of the notable silence of his contemporary and biographer Eunapius.

<sup>46</sup> *Artemii Passio* § 46, l. 1–8: Καί τί δή ταῦτα λέγω; τόν Χριστόν ἄνωθεν οἱ προφήται προκατήγγειλαν, ὡς καί αὐτός κρείττον ἐπίστασαι· καί πολλαί τῆς αὐτοῦ παρουσίας αἱ μαρτυρίαι κακῶν τῶν παρ' ὑμῖν σεβομένων θεῶν, καί τῶν χρησμῶν αἱ προαγορεύσεις· τά τε Σιβύλλεια γράμματα, καί ἡ τοῦ Βιργιλίου τοῦ Ῥωμαίου ποιήσις, ἣν ὑμεῖς Βουκολικὴν ὀνομάζετε, καί αὐτός ὁ παρ' ὑμῖν θαυμαζόμενος Ἀπόλλων ὁ μαντικός τοῖόνδε τινὰ περὶ Χριστοῦ ἐξεφώνησε λόγον. Ἐρωτηθεὶς γὰρ παρὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ προσόλων, ἀποκρίνεται ὧδε·

This spirit drives me all unwilling from this very shrine.  
 And now the day when I must yield my tripods is at hand.  
 O grieve for me, ye tripods, grieve: Apollo now departs;  
 Departs: a mortal man who is from heaven forces me;  
 He is the God who suffered, yet his godhead suffered not.<sup>47</sup>

The tradition of this text is complex, but it suffices here to note that several versions of it circulated, and the same nine verses are found in the Tübingen *Theosophy*, a sixth-century Christian collection of pagan prophecies presented as an answer to the question of which religion would prevailed in the future (περὶ τῆς μελλούσης κρατεῖν θρησκείας).<sup>48</sup> Later collections of pseudo-oracles present a longer version, with a second part professing some points of Chalcedonian doctrine, such as the two unmixed natures of Christ and an insistence on his suffering.<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, the longer version is said to ‘have been found in Delphi . . . on a tablet carved in the temple, during the twenty-first year of the reign of Anastasius (that is 511), after a big flood’.<sup>50</sup>

The two oracles attributed to Artemius share a number of common features. In both oracles Apollo threatens his consultant and laments the fact that he cannot prophesy anymore and must leave his temple and his tripods. It thus seems likely that the hagiographer was looking for prophecies warning Julian about the end of paganism and found both texts in the same kind of collection of pseudo-oracles. Their form and content are both similar to other pseudo-pagan prophecies about the coming of Christianity that circulated in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. While the motive of the impotence of pagan gods and the silence of their oracles may be much older, the insistence in these later pseudo-oracles on the destiny of Apollo’s temple is new. In another famous oracle allegedly found inscribed on a stone, Apollo foretells the transformation of his temple into a church; with minor

<sup>47</sup> *Artemii Passio* § 46, l. 9–17 (trans. P. R. Amidon): Μὴ ὄφελος πύματόν με καὶ ὕστατον ἐξερέεσθαι, | Δύσμορ’ ἐμῶν προπόλων, περὶ θεσπεσίοιο θεοῖο, | Καὶ πνοιῆς τῆς πάντα πέριξ βοτρυηδὸν ἐχούσης, | Τεῖρα, φῶς, ποταμούς καὶ Τάρταρον, ἥερα καὶ πῦρ, | “Ἡ με καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλοντα δόμων ἀπὸ τῶνδε διώκει. | Ἡ δὲ ἐμοὶ τριπόδων ἔτι λείπετο ἠριγένεια, | Αἰ, αἰ, με, τρίποδες, στοναχίσσατε, οἶχετ’ Ἀπολλών, | Οἶχετ’ ἐπεὶ βροτὸς με βιάζεται οὐράνιος φῶς. | Καὶ ὁ παθὼν Θεός ἐστι, καὶ οὐ θεότης πάθεν αὐτή.

<sup>48</sup> *Theosophy* § 16 (Erbse) = I 5 (Beatrice). See Busine 2005: 425–8; Gigli 2011: 69–70; Tissi 2018: 138 and 202–14, with relative bibliography.

<sup>49</sup> *Theos. Graec. Fragm. Thesauri Minores* π<sub>8</sub> (Erbse). See Daley 1995; Gigli 2011: 77–9; Tissi 2018: 323–37.

<sup>50</sup> *Theos. Graec. Fragm. Thesauri Minores* π<sub>8</sub> (Erbse), l. 27–9: εὐρηται δὲ ἐν Δελφοῖς . . . εἰκαστὸν πρῶτον ἔτος τῆς βασιλείας Ἀναστασίου γενομένης ἐπομβρίας μεγάλης κατακλυσμοῦ δύναμι ἐχούσης ἐγγεγραμμένους ἐν πλακί καὶ ἀποκείμενος εἰς τὰ θεμέλια τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰδωλείου.

*Emperor Julian and the Fall of the Temple of Apollo*

217

variations, several Christian authors record that when asked about the future of his place of worship (τίνος ἔσται δόμος οὗτος;), Apollo prophesied:

Do whatever leads to virtue and order, I prophesy a single triune God ruling on high whose imperishable Logos will be conceived in a virgin. Like a fiery arrow he will course through the middle of the world, gather up everything and bring it as a gift to the Father. This house will be hers. Her name is Maria.<sup>51</sup>

The common aim of the many versions of this prophecy is to show that devotion to the Virgin Mary was foretold by the Greek deity and explain the transformation of pagan temples into churches dedicated to the Theotokos, particularly in Cyzikos, Athens (either near the altar of the unknown god or in the Parthenon), and on the island of Ikaria, where the text was inscribed near a church.<sup>52</sup>

In the sixth century, Malalas recorded a similar oracle given to the Emperor Augustus alluding to both the silence of the Delphic oracle and the departure of Apollo from his temple. In the tenth book of the *Chronographia*, Malalas states:

Augustus Caesar Octavian in the 55th year of his reign, in the month October-Hyperberetaios, visited the oracle. He offered a hecatomb in sacrifice and asked, ‘Who will reign over the Roman state after me?’ (Τίς μετ’ ἐμὲ βασιλεύσει τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς πολιτείας;) No answer was given him by the Pythia. Then he made another sacrifice and asked the Pythia why no answer had been given to him but the oracle had remained silent. The Pythia made him the following reply:

A Hebrew child ruling as god over the blessed ones bids me  
abandon this abode and return to Hades.  
So now depart from our leaders.<sup>53</sup>

Malalas then says that Caesar Augustus left the oracle and came to the Capital, where he built a tall altar that was still standing at the author’s time, with the following inscription in Roman letters: ‘This is the altar of the first-born god’ (Ὁ βωμὸς οὗτός ἐστι τοῦ πρωτογόνου

<sup>51</sup> This text is quoted by Theodotus of Ancyra, *Oratio in Sanctam Mariam Dei Genitricem*, PO 19.3, no. 93, 333–4; Pseudo-Athanasios of Alexandria, *Interpretatio of the Temple in Athens*, PG 28, 1428c–1429a; Malalas, *Chronographia* 4.8 (ed. Thurn); *Theosophy* § 54 (Erbse): ‘Ὅσα μὲν πρὸς ἀρετὴν καὶ κόσμον ἄρωρε ποιεῖτε. ἐγὼ δὲ ἐφετμέω τρεῖν ἕνα μόνον ὑψιμέδοντα θεόν, οὗ λόγος ἀφθίτος ἐν ἀδαεὶ κόρη ἔγκυος ἔσται. οὗτος ὡσπερ τόξον πυριφόρον μέσον διαδραμῶν ἅπαντα κόσμον, ζωγευσῶς πατρὶ προσάξει δῶρον. αὐτῆς ἔσται δόμος, Μαρία δὲ τοῦνομα αὐτῆς.

<sup>52</sup> See Busine 2012, with previous bibliography.

<sup>53</sup> Malalas, *Chronographia* 10.5 (Thurn) (transl. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, R. Scott): Παῖς Ἐβραῖος κέλεται με θεὸς μακάρεσσιν ἀνάσσειν / τόνδε δόμον προλιπεῖν καὶ αἶδος αὐτῆς ἰκέσθαι / καὶ λοιπὸν ἅπιθι ἐκ πτόμων ἡμετέρων.

θεοῦ).<sup>54</sup> Just like the oracle that provides an explanation for the construction of a church in honour of the Theotokos in Delphi, this oracular story provides an aetiology for a building still standing at the time in which the story was written down.

I propose reading the three hexameters allegedly given to Oribasius along the same lines. The oracle used by Artemius' hagiographer similarly situates a specific building, the temple of Apollo, within the history of the end of the pagan world and the victory of Christianity. It might come from ready-made collections gathered in the sixth century, wherein Apollo appears as a privileged medium used by God to announce the coming of Christianity through *ex eventu* oracles.

At the time he composed this oracle, the author could still read that laurel and water played a significant role in oracular inspiration in classical and Christian literature. For example, Nonnus still described the prophetic waters in similar terms to our oracle without the polemical meaning given to it by Christian apologists in the fourth century.<sup>55</sup> The author of the oracle could also find the trope of Apollo complaining about the silence of the oracle in well-known texts, such as Eusebius, who, quoting Porphyry, refers to genuine oracular verses in which Phoebus laments the Pythia's loss of her loquacious voice (λάλος ὀμφή).<sup>56</sup> A century later, Prudentius links the silence of the Delphic shrine to the coming of Christ.<sup>57</sup>

If we turn to our three hexameters, there seems to be no indication that they were originally produced as an utterance of the Delphic Apollo. The mentions of a spring and prophetic water seem to be a display of purely literary knowledge, without any link to the reality of the Delphic shrine at the time. The various oracles encouraging the construction of a church dedicated to the Theotokos demonstrate that a single prophecy about the fate of a pagan temple could be reused in several contexts. Moreover, there are similar texts to that of our oracle that at some time were considered authentic Delphic productions, such as, importantly, a later version of the second prophecy quoted by the author of the *Artemii Passio*, which would have been found inscribed *in situ* in the sixth century (see earlier in

<sup>54</sup> *Chronographia* 10.5.

<sup>55</sup> Nonn. *Dionysiaca* 13.133–4: ἀσιγήτοιο δὲ πηγῆς | Κασταλῆς λάλον οἶσμα σοφῶ πάφλαζε βρέθρω ('the babbling rill of Kastalia, the never-silent spring, bubbled with wisdom in its water').

<sup>56</sup> Eus. *PE* 5.16.1 = Porphyry F 322 (Smith).

<sup>57</sup> Prudent. *Liber Apotheosis* 435–8: *Ex quo mortalem praestrinxit spiritus alium | (spiritus ille deus) deus et se corpore matris | induit atque hominem de uirginitate creauit, | delfica damnatis tacuerunt sortibus antra.* ('Since the Spirit, that Spirit who is God, touched a mortal womb and God entered into a mother's body and by a virgin made himself man, the cavern of Delphi has fallen silent, its oracles condemned'; trans. H. J. Thomson).

*Emperor Julian and the Fall of the Temple of Apollo*

219

this section). In the Delphic context, the three hexameters could take a specific meaning, giving sense to the ruins of the temple. In late antiquity, Delphi developed as a commercial place rather than declining, as shown by the extension of the so-called Roman agora, which was no longer the religious centre it used to be. The access road to the agora, formerly the Sacred Way, was repaved in the fourth and fifth centuries with blocks from the temple.<sup>58</sup> In the course of time, the decay of the renowned pagan building needed to be situated within the narrative of a conquering Christianity, and Apollo's laments about the collapse of his temple and impending departure perfectly fit.

Finally, there seems to be no indication that our oracle was originally composed for Julian. As pointed by Augusto Guida, the words *eipate tō basilei* (εἰπατε τῷ βασιλεῖ) seem to reproduce a formula frequently used in the Old and New Testaments to introduce a message from God.<sup>59</sup> Our oracle's address to a *basileus*, a king or an emperor, should be understood as a general warning for bad rulers rather than a warning specifically directed at Julian. In Malalas, other Christian prophecies are presented as answers to pagan rulers in similar ways. For example, pharaoh Petissonos is reported to have consulted the Pythia in Memphis, where he was given a theological oracle about the identity of the great God of Israel.<sup>60</sup> According to Malalas, this prophecy was the cause of the liberation of the Jews and their return to Israel.<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, the text of this oracle is also said to have been inscribed in stone, such that it was still visible at the time Malalas wrote his *Chronographia*.

In sum, the three-verse oracle quoted in the *Artemii Passio* should not be linked to the anti-Christian policy of Julian nor the reprisals following his death, nor can this text tell us anything about the circumstances of the collapse of the Delphic temple. Comparing this text with other, similar oracular texts reveals that it was written much later in the fifth or the sixth centuries, when the need to provide pagan temples with stories of Christianisation arose.

<sup>58</sup> See Cabouret 1997: 146–8. <sup>59</sup> Guida 2001: 408–9, with examples.

<sup>60</sup> Malalas, *Chronographia* 3.13: Ἔστι κατ' οὐρανοῖο μεγάλοιο βεβηκός φλογός ὑπερβάλλον αἴθριον, ἀένσον, ἀθάνατον πῦρ, ὃ τρέμει πᾶν, οὐρανός, γαῖά τε καὶ θάλασσα, ταρτάριοι τε βύθιοι δαίμονες ἐρρίγησαν. οὗτος ὁ θεός αὐτοπάτωρ, ἀπάτωρ, πατήρ υἱὸς αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ, τρισόλβιος· εἰς μικρὸν δὲ μέρος ἀγγέλων ἡμεῖς. μαθῶν ἀπιθι σιγῶν ('There will have descended from great heaven a celestial, everlasting and imperishable fire that surpasses flame, at which everything trembles – the sky, the earth and the sea, and even the deep Hell-dwelling daemons shudder in fear. This is God, self-fathering, fatherless, a father son of himself thrice-blessed. We belong to a small part of the angels. Now you have learnt this, go in silence'; trans. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, R. Scott).

<sup>61</sup> Malalas, *Chronographia* 3.14.

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*Emperor Julian and the Fall of the Temple of Apollo*

221

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