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REVIEW

of:

Tertullien, *Le Manteau (De Pallio)*. Introduction, texte critique, traduction, commentaire et index par Marie Turcan (Sources Chrétiennes 513), Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 2007, 254 pp., ISBN 978-2-204-08493-2, € 29 (broché).

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Tertullian's *De Pallio* is a curious, short Latin speech on the speaker's conscious change from the normal Roman *toga* to the philosopher's *pallium*. After many years of neglect, this notoriously complex text, often considered to be one of the most difficult pieces of Latin ever written, appears to have regained some scholarly attention. After the publication in 2005 of a full English translation and commentary of 332 pages by the author of this review,<sup>[1]</sup> the text has now finally also found its deserved place in the *Sources Chrétiennes*. The original text poses so many problems of idiom, syntax, style and content, that many additional comments are needed. This explains why in the SC, too, an entire volume is devoted to this relatively short text (counting only some 3300 words in Latin).

Marie Turcan, a well known specialist of Tertullian, who has already edited two other SC volumes on Tertullian (SC 173, *La toilette des femmes* and SC 332, *Les spectacles*), is a trustworthy guide to Tertullian's work. Expectations were accordingly high as soon as the volume was announced and particularly since a first draft of the introduction was put online at [www.tertullian.org](http://www.tertullian.org). Now the printed book has come to fulfil the promise. M<sup>me</sup> Turcan offers readers a fine edition with facing French translation, accompanied by ample notes conveniently printed entirely below the text and translation, and mostly filling up more than half of every page. This body of material is preceded by a fairly brief introduction (66 pages) and followed by a helpful 24 p. index of unique or rare Latin words.

The introduction opens with an instructive survey of manuscripts and editions of *De Pallio*. It is clear from the start that Turcan wishes to present a new text that is different from the earlier leading critical editions, notably the text by A. Gerlo published in the *Corpus Christianorum* in 1954. Turcan has studied five manuscripts (NXF, V and L) and collated some of the earliest editions. The text she presents has discarded a number of emendations which had been adopted by several 20<sup>th</sup> century editors. Specific choices involving the constitution of the text are discussed in the footnotes below the text and translation.

A second main section of the introduction deals with the vexed problem of the date of *De Pallio*. The text itself offers little factual help and, accordingly, scholarly disagreement is vast, with datings ranging from 193 to 222. The main point of controversy is the reference by Tertullian to 'three Augusti' (2,7). According to Turcan this can only be taken as a reference to the reign of Septimius Severus and his two sons, that is to the years 209-211. M<sup>me</sup> Turcan seems rather optimistic in her assessment of 'historical' data in this rhetorical text, but some readers will remain more sceptical.

After a helpful survey of the main line of Tertullian's argumentation, it is argued that the text is stylistically closest to *De anima* (which would confirm a date in 209). Next, it is suggested that the historical person Tertullian actually did adopt a *pallium*, not as a properly religious dress, but, as the speech argues, simply as a convenient, light garment, which allows a man more freedom to distance himself from public life and to criticize depravity, and as a symbol of philosophy and science.

Most of this information about the *pallium* is actually given by the personified Pallium at the end of the speech, as Turcan duly observes (p. 39). In further explaining Tertullian's choice for the *pallium*, Turcan stresses his strong conviction as a Christian, or more specifically, his 'ardeur nouvelle' (p. 43) as a follower of Montanism. This religious zeal is even reflected, so the French scholar argues, in the style of the personified speech by the Pallium, with use of rhyme and rhythm, pairing of synonymous or contrasting words and other stylistical means.

This is, indeed, possible, but other approaches would seem valid as well. Particularly the flowery rhetorical style points in quite another direction. In my 2005 commentary I have tried to show that the speech can perfectly be analysed as a stylistic *tour de force* and a largely playful literary performance in the style of Second Sophistic orators such as Apuleius. In my view, here we see Tertullian delivering a rhetorical show before an attentive live audience of mostly non-believers who expect him to adopt the excessive rhetorical standards of his time. In his *De Pallio*, Tertullian proves that he can stand the test and play the game according to the rules, without the aim to preach or to develop theological ideas, and with Christian (and Montanist) doctrine present only in the background. The speech, then, shows him as a man between two worlds: the pagan Greco-Roman culture and the new Christian era.

Turcan obviously does not agree, and holds on to the traditional view that the speech is, essentially, a profoundly Christian and serious document. This position is, of course, legitimate, but I regret that M<sup>me</sup> Turcan does not enter into the debate, failing even to mention the new, 'Second Sophist' approach, and merely elaborates on the Christian aspects of the text. It is, perhaps, revealing that many of the notes in this section of the introduction refer to the studies on *De Pallio* as a deeply Christian text by M. J.-C. Frédoille (1972 and 1984), who is also named in her final word of thanks. In the end, one may say, the question whether this speech is a piece of 'serious Christianity' or of 'playful, half-pagan rhetoric' remains a matter of personal believe and taste.

Turcan's Latin text, by contrast, is a definite improvement. My 2005 commentary has been made on the basis of the 1954 text by Gerlo, mentioned above. I consciously adopted this standard text in order to concentrate upon literary, rhetorical and stylistical matters. One of its reviewers (Roland Mayer in *BMCR* 2006.01.39) has lamented that fundamental choice and argued that a new edition of the text was, in fact, necessary. In the course of the centuries, this highly difficult text had given rise to numerous conjectures, many of which had found their way in printed editions as far as Gerlo's, even where the MSS offered readings that were intelligible and, therefore, tenable. Turcan's edition now offers the kind of edition Prof. Mayer seemed to demand. Some sample surveys showed me that her text differs from Gerlo's in dozens of places, with a relevant change at almost every page of the Latin. Turcan's choices are, on the whole, balanced, well argued, and convincing. I can only express my regret that this fine Latin text was not available during my earlier work as a commentator.

The French translation is introduced with no more than a few words (p. 58). Here it is stated that the French language is unsuitable to bring out some of the special effects of the Latin, which seems a fairly noncommittal remark. The translation itself is helpful and clear (quite unlike Tertullian's Latin!), but inevitably also rather plain.

Turcan's ample notes pursue a twofold aim (p. 59): they defend the readings that have been chosen in the Latin text and explain those places in the speech where Tertullian seems to be deliberately obscure. In most of these notes, Turcan proves to be a reliable philologist and a safe guide. Numerous as these notes are, they do not amount to a full, running commentary. They also show a Tertullian that is perhaps a little too serious, although this is in accordance, of course, with Turcan's general approach to the text as an earnest testimony of a fervent Christian. In this sense, Turcan's new edition and the 2005 commentary in English may be said to complement each other.

The volume closes with an index of words, which has been composed with particular care. The index clearly distinguishes between e.g. *hapaxlegomena*, rare words first used by Apuleius, words appearing first in Tertullian, with every category being typographically marked. A brief list of such marks and signs would have been helpful at the start of the index itself, but those who wish to study the idiom of *De Pallio* in detail will probably find their way in the material just as well.

To conclude, Turcan's new edition of Tertullian's *De Pallio* is welcome indeed. The French scholar offers an excellent, new Latin text that is a clear improvement on existing critical

editions. It is accompanied by a helpful translation and by supplementary notes explaining the textual choices and the meaning of obscure words and phrases. In addition, the introduction is of great help to those interested in the history of the text and its modern editions, while the index serves those interested in the study of Tertullian's idiom. On the other hand, Turcan's traditional contextualization of the text as the product of deeply Christian convictions and intentions misses the opportunity to discuss other approaches of this intriguing text, for instance in terms of the Second Sophistic. But all in all, Turcan's edition of *De Pallio* is a valuable addition to the outstanding series of texts that is the *Sources Chrétiennes*.

1. Mrs. Turcan has reviewed my 2005 commentary in: *Revue des Études augustiniennes et patristiques* 52, 2006, 433-435 (text available online at <http://tertullian.vincenthunink.nl> > reviews).

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