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MORE ON “CHRISTIANITAS” IN THE CODEX THEODOSIANUS

Yesterday we saw that the earliest reference for “Christianitas” = Christianity (rather than the earlier *Christianismus*) was in the Theodosian Law Code (*Codex Theodosianus*) of 450 AD:

Christiānitas, ātis, f. Christus.

I. *Christianity*, = *Christianismus*, Cod. Th. 16, 7, 7; 12, 1, 112.—

II. **Meton.**, *the Christian clergy*, Cod. Th. 12, 1, 123.

I thought that I would look up these passages.

Those unfamiliar with the book should know that it is a compilation of rescripts, letters written by emperors of the dynasty of Constantine and afterwards. Book 16 is dedicated to theological matters, and the tone of it is extremely aggressive.

Imp. theodosius et valentinianus aa. basso praefecto praetorio. post alia: apostatarum sacrilegum nomen singulorum vox continuae accusationis incesset et nullis finita temporibus huiuscemodi criminis arceatur indago. 1. Quibus quamvis praeterita interdicta sufficiant, tamen etiam illud iteramus, ne quam, postquam a fide deviaverint, testandi aut donandi quippiam habeant facultatem, sed nec venditionis specie facere legi fraudem sinantur totumque ab intestato **christianitatem** sectantibus propinquis potissimum deferatur. 2. In tantum autem contra huiusmodi sacrilegia perpetuari volumus actionem, ut universis ab intestato venientibus etiam post mortem peccantis absolutam vocem insimulationis congruae non negemus. nec illud patiemur obstare, si nihil in contestatione profano dicatur vivente perductum. 3. Sed ne huius interpretatio criminis latius incerto vagetur errore, eos praesentibus insectamur oraculis, **qui nomen christianitatis induiti** sacrificia vel fecerint vel facienda mandaverint, quorum etiam post mortem comprobata perfidia hac ratione plectenda est, ut donationibus testamentisque rescissis ii, quibus hoc defert legitima successio, huiusmodi personarum hereditate potiantur. dat. vii id. april. ravennae theodosio xii et valentiniano ii aa. cons.

7. Emperors Theodosius and Valentinian Augustuses to Bassus, Praetorian Prefect.

(After other matters.) The voice of unremitting accusation shall assail the sacrilegious name of each and every apostate, and the investigation of such a crime shall not be prevented by any time limitations. 1. Although previous interdicts suffice for such persons, We repeat, nevertheless, the well known provision that after they have deviated from the faith, they shall have no power to make a testament or gift, nor shall they be permitted to defraud the law by the pretense of a sale, and on intestacy all their property shall be bestowed on near kinsmen, preferably on those who are adherents of Christianity. 2. It is

Our will, moreover, that the right of action against such sacrilege shall be perpetuated to such an extent that to all persons who come to an inheritance on intestacy We shall not deny the unrestricted right of due accusation, even after the death of the sinner, nor shall We allow the action to be obstructed if it is said that nothing was adduced in attestation during the lifetime of the profane person.

But in order that the aforesaid crime may not be interpreted too broadly through the error of uncertainty, by Our present divine response. We pursue those persons who have made sacrifices or who have commanded them to be made, after they had assumed the name of Christianity. The proved perfidy of such persons, even after death, shall be punished as follows: their gifts and testaments shall be rescinded, and their inheritances shall be obtained by those heirs upon whom this right is conferred by statutory succession.

Given on the seventh day before the ides of April at Ravenna in the year of the twelfth consulship of Theodosius Augustus and the second consulship of Valentinian Augustus. (April 7, 426)

Charming stuff. Now from book 12, title 1, 112. This is one of a bunch of rescripts jointly from the emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius.

Idem aaa. florentio praefecto augustali. in consequenda archierosyne ille sit potior, qui patriae plura praestiterit nec tamen **a templorum cultu observatione christianitatis abscesserit**. quippe indecorum est, immo ut verius dicamus, illicitum ad eorum curam templa et templorum sollemnia pertinere, quorum conscientiam vera ratio divinae religionis imbuerit et quos ipsos decebat tale munus, etiamsi non prohiberentur, effugere. emissa xvi kal. iul. constantinopoli honorio n. p. et evodio cons.

The same Augustuses to Florentius, Augustal Prefect. In obtaining the office of chief civil priest,[*archierosyna*] that person shall be considered preferable who has performed the most services for his municipality, and who has not, however, withdrawn from the cult of the temples by his observance of Christianity. Indeed it is unseemly, and further, that We may speak more truly, it is illicit, for the temples and the customary rites of the temples to belong to the care of those persons whose conscience is imbued with the true doctrine of divine religion, and who ought properly to flee such compulsory public service, even if they were not prohibited by law from performing it.

Issued on the sixteenth day before the kalends of July at Constantinople in the year of the consulship of Emperor Designate Honorius and of Evodius. (June 16, 386)

In 386 paganism was still the state religion. Here the edict prohibits Christians from filling the office of chief priest.

12.1.123, from Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius, (July 28, 391) is about the efforts of local men to avoid being ruined by imperial taxes on those who became members of the city council.

Idem aaa. ad tatianum praefectum praetorio. dudum super his, qui relictæ curia **vel senatoriam dignitatem adepti sunt vel christianitatis obtentu** curialium se consortio separarunt, evidens sanctionum nostrarum processit auctoritas, ut, si eorum personas vel honor vel religio defenderet, quod ex curiali substantia vel ipsi retinerent vel in alios transtulissent, obnoxium publicis descriptionibus haberetur. 1. Evidens etiam praecepto nostro tempus expressum est, ex quo consulatu, si qui de curialibus ad ecclesiam confugissent, omni scirent patrimonio curiae esse cedendum. ...

The same Augustuses to Tatianus, Praetorian Prefect. The evident authority of Our sanctions has previously been issued in regard to those persons who have deserted the municipal councils and have either acquired the rank of Senator or by the plea of Christianity, have separated themselves from the association of decurions, to the effect that, if such persons were protected either by rank or by religion, the property from their holdings as decurions which they either retain themselves or which they transfer to others should be held obligated to public assessment. 1. A definite time limit was also defined by Our regulation, stating from what consulship they shall know that they must cede all their patrimony to the municipal council, if they should flee from the decurionate to the Church. ...

All well and good, and very official, of course.

But [a kind correspondent](#) has pointed out that the TLL contains other, potentially earlier, uses of the word, notably in ps.Cyprian. I will discuss these next.
