Crispus

Crispus was the oldest son of the emperor Constantine I and played a fairly important role in the political and military events of the early fourth century. The regular form of his full name is Flavius Iulius Crispus, although the forms Flavius Claudius Crispus and Flavius Valerius Crispus also occur. His mother was a woman named Minervina, with whom Constantine had a relationship, probably illegitimate, before he married Fausta in 307. When Minervina died or when Constantine put her aside we do not know. Nor do we know when she gave birth to Crispus; we may assume, of course, that it was before 307. Some modern authorities, on good grounds, think that it was in 305. Crispus' place of birth must have been somewhere in the East, and it is not known when he was brought to Gaul and when, where, or under what circumstances he was separated from his mother. Constantine entrusted the education of his son to the distinguished Christian scholar Lactantius, thereby giving a clear sign of his commitment to Christianity. We are not told when Lactantius assumed his duties, but a date before 317 seems likely. Nor do we know how successful he was in instilling Christian beliefs and values in his imperial pupil. No later than January of 322 Crispus must have married a woman named Helena -- not to be confused with Constantine's mother or daughter by the same name- and this woman bore him a child in October of 322. Constantine, we learn, was pleased.

Crispus' official career began at an early age and is well documented. On March 1 of 317, at Serdica (modern Sofia), his father appointed him Caesar. The consulship was his three times, in 318, 321, and 324. While nominally in charge of Gaul, with a prefect at his side, he successfully undertook military operations against the Franks and Alamanni in 320 and 323. In 324, during the second war between Constantine and Licinius, he excelled as commander of Constantine's fleet in the waters of the Hellespont, the Propontis, and the Bosporus, thus making a significant contribution to the outcome of that war. The high points of his career are amply reflected in the imperial coinage. In addition to coins, we have his portrait, with varying degrees of certainty, in a number of sculptures, mosaics, cameos, etc. Contemporary authors heap praises upon him. Thus the panegyrist Nazarius speaks of Crispus' "magnificent deeds," and Eusebius calls him "an emperor most dear to God and in all regards comparable to his father."

Crispus' end was as tragic as his career had been brilliant. His own father ordered him to be put to death. We know the year of this sad event, 326, from the Consularia Constantinopolitana, and the place, Pola in Istria, from Ammianus Marcellinus. The circumstances, however, are less clear. Zosimus (6th c.) and Zonaras (12th c.) both report that Crispus and his stepmother Fausta were involved in an illicit relationship. There may be as much gossip as fact in their reports, but it is certain that at some time during the same year the emperor ordered the death of his own wife as well, and the two cases must be considered together. That Crispus and Fausta plotted treason is reported by Gregory of Tours, but not very believable. We must resolutely reject the claim of Zosimus that it was Constantine's sense of guilt over these deeds which caused him to accept Christianity, as it alone promised him forgiveness for his sins. A similar claim had already been made by Julian the Apostate. We must also, I think, reject the suggestion of Guthrie that the emperor acted in the interest of "dynastic legitimacy," that is, that he removed his illegitimate first-born son in order to secure the succession for his three legitimate younger sons. But Crispus must have committed, or at least must have been suspected of having committed, some especially shocking offense to earn him a sentence of death from his own father. He also suffered *damnatio memoriae*, his honor was never restored, and history has not recorded the fate of his wife and his child (or children).

Roman Emperors - DIR Crispus Caesar (luc.edu)
The Execution of Crispus on JSTOR
Crispus: Brilliant Career and Tragic End on JSTOR

Nazarius

(4th century CE), was a Roman and a Latin rhetorician and panegyrist. He was, according to Ausonius, a professor of rhetoric at Burdigala (Bordeaux).
The extant speech of which he is undoubtedly the author (in R.A.B. Mynors, XII Panegyrici Latini, Oxford 1964, No. 4; English translation in C.E.V. Nixon/Barbara Rodgers, In Praise of Later Roman Emperors (Berkeley 1994) was delivered in 321 CE to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the accession of Constantine the Great, and the fifth of his son Constantine's admission to the rank of Caesar. The preceding

speech (No. 12), celebrating the victory of Constantine over Maxentius, delivered in 313 CE at Augusta Treverorum (Trier), has often been attributed to Nazarius, but the difference in style and vocabulary, and the more distinctly Christian coloring of Nazarius's speech, are against this.

Nazarius was an orator who lived in the fourth century AD. Virtually nothing is known about his life. The only information we have is that he delivered at least two speeches in 321 in honor of Emperor Constantine and his two sons, Crispus and Constantinus. Of the two speeches Nazarius delivered, only one is known. He is also said to have had a daughter who was a renowned orator.

Sources

Nazarius is known only through three written sources. First, there is the panegyric (eulogy) he left behind. This was delivered in Rome before the Senate in 321. The occasion for this was the fifteenth anniversary of Constantine's reign and the quinquennalia of his two sons, Crispus and Constantinus. The speech celebrates Constantine's victory over Maxentius after the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 and was likely delivered in Constantine's absence. It is striking that Nazarius makes almost no further references to the events after the battle. He also mentions nothing about himself, his whereabouts, his origins, or his position. This may indicate that he deemed this unnecessary due to the fame he enjoyed at the time.[1] The twelfth panegyric is sometimes also attributed to Nazarius, but according to Wilhelm Kroll, there are insufficient elements to support this claim.[2]
A second written source comes from Jerome of Stridon (best known for his translation of the Bible into Latin).[3] Nazarius appears twice in his chronicles. In the year 324, Jerome writes: "Nazarius, rethor insignis habitur." Nazarius was therefore a renowned orator in his time. In the year 336, Hieronymus mentions the daughter of Nazarius: ‘Nazarii rethoris filia in eloquentia patri coaequatur.’ Apparently, Nazarius' daughter had as much rhetorical talent as her father. Finally, Nazarius is mentioned in Ausonius's "Commemoratio Professorum Burdigalensium." Deci(m)us Magnus Ausonius (c. 310 – c. 393) was a celebrated Latin poet from Bordeaux, where he taught grammar and eloquence. Ausonius writes that Agricus held a chair previously held by Nazarius and Patera. This passage has led to much speculation about whether Nazarius actually came from Bordeaux. However, this remains highly uncertain. If Nazarius were indeed from Bordeaux, Ausonius would undoubtedly have devoted more texts to him. Moreover, it is also unclear whether the chair Agricus took in Nazarius's place was actually located in Bordeaux. According to some researchers, it was located in Rome.

Contents of the panegyric

As mentioned earlier, the panegyric was addressed to the Senate on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of Constantine's reign and the quinquennalia of Crispus and Constantine, the two sons of Constantine. Constantine himself was probably not present during the speech. The speech is primarily a slimy ode to the emperor. According to Nazarius, Constantine surpasses all previous emperors.[10] The military skills of the emperor and his sons are praised, and he describes Constantine's campaign against Maxentius. It was Maxentius's cruelties that forced him into battle. Constantine was urged to fight by his deceased father, Constantius. Constantine is praised as a peacemaker, and strangely enough, Nazarius does not dwell on the tense situation that arose after the victory in 312 between Constantine and Licinius, who was still co-emperor in the eastern Roman Empire in 321.

Style

Nazarius writes in baroque prose in Gaulish Latin, overloaded with every conceivable stylistic device. Nixon and Rodgers compare his style to that of a student eagerly displaying all his rhetorical skills. Nazarius's style betrays a passion. for obscurity, which was typical of this period. This obscurity is particularly evident in the description of Constantine. Nazarius is a master of his classics, and the speech is full of allusions to Cicero, Sallust, and Virgil.

Historical Significance

Nazarius's speech contains very little historical information about Constantine. Especially from the period after Constantine's victory over Maxentius, almost nothing is mentioned. This may be due to the fact that Licinius was still co-emperor in 321. The atmosphere between Constantine and Licinius (who was not a Christian) was particularly tense at that time.
It is important to note that Nazarius, along with Eusebius, Lactantius, and the unknown author of the twelfth panegyric, are the only contemporaries to have written an account of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (just outside Rome). This battle,

where Constantine defeated Maxentius, is still often considered a milestone in the history of Christianity. Constantine is said to have a dream or vision during the battle, which led him to victory and subsequent conversion to Christianity. However, the accounts of Nazarius, Lactantius, Eusebius, and the unknown author of Panegyric 12 differ significantly. Moreover, both Eusebius and Nazarius testify in his "Church History" that divine intervention occurred just before the start of the Italian campaign against Maxentius, and not immediately before the famous battle at the Melvian Bridge. According to Lactantius, Constantine had already converted before the start of his Italian campaign. According to the primary sources, there is absolutely no evidence of Constantine converting to Christianity during the battle.

From a religious perspective, Nazarius's speech is particularly interesting. Unlike Eusebius and Lactantius, Nazarius was clearly not a Christian. Together with the unknown author of Panegyric 12, Nazarius has handed down to us a pagan version of the battle at the Melvian Bridge. It is particularly difficult to grasp Nazarius's religious convictions. His speech contains many pagan elements. He refers to Mars, among other things, and praises Constantine's immortality (something a Christian author would never do). Yet, there are undoubtedly Christian elements as well. Nazarius's choice of words clearly demonstrates his familiarity with monotheism. Heavenly troops that had aided Constantine in his victory were commanded by his deceased father, Divus Constantius. Nazarius doesn't mention a dream or vision, as Eusebius or Lactantius do, but he does speak of armies sent by heaven to fight for Constantine. This heavenly intervention was a reward for Constantine's piety.

It seems highly likely that Nazarius did not dare to take a position between paganism and Christianity. This can be explained by the uncertain political and religious situation in the Roman Empire at the time of his speech. Some researchers, such as T. Barnes, believe that Nazarius was indeed a Christian. Wilhelm Kroll correctly points out the Christian meaning of the name Nazarius.