

SUMMARY

The article *Passio Perpetuae and Acta Perpetuae: Between Tradition and Innovation* focuses – after general analysis of the text and its issues was given – on the extant versions of the hagiographic narrative known as *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. This text contained a number of innovative and – in the context of Antique and early Christian society – potentially subversive features: the central character, Perpetua, is a woman who is claimed by the editor of the text to have extraordinary spiritual authority (e.g. to absolve the dead from punishment in the nether world, to reconcile differences between major Church figures etc.). Perpetua rejects all conventional social roles that were considered natural for a woman (mother, wife, daughter fully subordinated to paternal authority etc.). These novel features were felt to undermine the existing social order and hierarchy, and it was necessary to “explain them away” in order to make the text more compliant with traditional and generally accepted social values. This was the aim of the later version of the narrative known as *Acta Perpetuae*. In spite of these efforts, *Passio Perpetuae* remained highly venerated in the mainstream Church and, though innovative, it paradoxically became a tradition in its own right.