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*Between Authority and Orthodoxy: Historical Perspectives and
Narrative Strategies in Sozomen of Bethelia's Historia Ecclesiastica.*

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Abbreviations:

AB	<i>Analecta Bollandiana: revue critique d'hagiographie</i> = Societe des Bollandistes.
AAAD	<i>Antichita altoadriatiche</i> (Trieste and Rome 1955 -)
ACO	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> , (Berlin 1914 -)
AHC	<i>Annuario historiae conciliorum: internationale Zeitschrift für Konziliengeschichtsforschung</i> (Paderborn 1969 -)
ANPNF	<i>The Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> (New York and Edinburgh 1885-1896; repr. Grand Rapids, MI 1997)
AnTard	<i>Antiquité Tardive (revue internationale d'histoire et d'archéologie (ive - viiiie s.).</i> Turnhout
BullJRylandsLib	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester</i>
ByzZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i> (Munich and Berlin 1892 -)
CAH	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna 1865 -)
CCSG	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca</i> (Turnhout 1977 -)

CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i> (Turnhout 1953 -)
CTh	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> ed. P. Krueger, P. M. Meyer and T. Mommsen (Berlin 1923 - 1926)
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i> (Washington D.C. 1941 -)
ELECTRUM	<i>Electrum; Journal of Ancient History</i> (Krakow 1997 -)
GCS	<i>Die Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller</i> (Leipzig and Berlin 1897-)
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i> (Durham, NC 1958-)
HThR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i> (Cambridge, MA 1908 -)
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> ed. H. Dessau, (Berlin 1892-1916)
LSJ	<i>Liddell, Scott & Jones Greek Lexicon</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JbAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike & Christentum</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
RH	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
RS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>

TS-NS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies (New Series)</i>
Le Muséon	<i>Le Muséon Revue d' d'Études tudes Orientales (Leuven 1881-)</i>
LCL	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
MD	<i>Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici</i>
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
MediterrAnt	<i>Mediterraneo antico : economie, societa, culture. Pisa</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
PHist	<i>Przegląd Historyczny</i>
PLRE	<i>J. R. Martindale, A.H. M. Jones, J. Morris (eds.)</i>
RHPhR	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire (Cambridge 1970 - 1992)</i>
RIDA	<i>Revue internationale des droits de l'Antiquité</i>
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes (Paris 1941 -)</i>
SCI	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
SOAW.PH	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i>
SP	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
StRel	<i>Studia religiologica; Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellonskiego (Krakow 1977-)</i>

TM	<i>Travaux et memoires</i>
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>

General Introduction

Οὐχ ὑμῶν ἐστὶν γινῶναι χρόνους ἢ καιροὺς οὓς ὁ πατὴρ ἔθετο ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ.¹

*Christus dagegen hat das element der Innerlichkeit, der Reflexion, der subjectivität, in die Welt gebracht. Die Sinnlichkeit hat er zum inneren Bewusstseyn überhaupt, das Recht zur Moralität erhoben; darum ist Christus der Mittelpunkt der verflossenen Zeit, weil er es ist, der Radicalreformen der Menschheit herbeigeführt und das grosse Blatt der Weltgeschichte umschlagen hat.*²

*Church history was made up of three elements: miracles, monkery, popery.*³

*La storia può apparire, all'uomo classico, come una améthodos hyle; e tuttavia essa ha un metodo e un senso, por gli storici greci e romani, metodo e senso diversi secondo le varie epoche e i vari autori. Spesso siamo tentati di dare una definizione unitaria del pensiero storico classico, contrapponendolo, come intuizione ciclica del tempo, e dominata dall'idea di fortuna, alla intuizione lineare, che sarebbe giudaica e cristiana.*⁴

Ecclesiastical History (henceforth *HE*⁵) is, as the name suggests, a Christian genre of historical writing. It has been widely recognised as a milestone in the development of historiography, even if the length and strength of the double umbilical cord which links it with other historiographical traditions, namely the Graeco-Roman classical and the Judeo-Biblical, may still be the subject of scholarly debate.⁶ If we were to approach works bearing this name as part of their title without previous knowledge about the genre, it is quite likely that we would infer from that name that the works were dedicated either to a historical account of the Christian Church (or one of the Christian denominations) or, alternatively, that the work in question may be a history of a nonreligious entity such as a place, an ethnicity, or a state, written from an ecclesiastical point of view. Such is one of the Latin contributions to this genre namely the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* or 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People', written ca. 731 by St. Bede the Venerable (Latin: *Beda venerabilis*, 672/3 – 735), a Benedictine monk and scholar from the monastery of St Paul, Jarrow, in present day county of Tyne and Wear, North-Eastern England. Bede combined in his ecclesiastical history a

¹ Acts 1:7.

² A. von Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena zur Historiographie* (Berlin 1838; Repr. Hamburg 1981), p. 25.

³ John Henry Newman, letter to James Robert Hope, 6th Nov. 1843, in F. J. McGrath *FMS et al.* (eds), *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, (London 2006), vol. X, p. 12.

⁴ S. Mazzarino, *Il Pensiero Storico Classico* (Bari 1966), vol. II, pp. 376-377.

⁵ This is the conventional abbreviation of 'Ecclesiastical History' based on the Latin *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Greek: ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἱστορία). NB: All the English translations of the ecclesiastical historians in the present study are based on C. D. Hartranft's translation of Sozomen and A.C. Zenos's of Socrates (with my own alterations), both in *NPNF* (Second Series), Vol. 2 (Edinburgh 1889; Repr. Grand Rapids, MI 1997).

⁶ For an assessment of *HE qua* genre, which convincingly highlights its indebtedness to pagan Graeco-Roman historiography, see: P. Van Nuffelen, 'Ecclesiastical History', in: S. McGill and E. J. Watts (eds.), *A Companion to Late Antique Literature* (Hoboken, NJ 2018), pp. 161-175; D.J. De Vore, 'Genre and Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*: Towards a Focused Debate' in: A. Johnson and J. Schott (eds), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations* (Washington, DC 2013), pp. 19-49, with further bibliography.

description of the advance of Christianity in Roman and Anglo-Saxon England with an important detailed description of England in general from 55 BC to his own day.⁷

Another potential interpretation could suggest a 'hybrid', i.e. an account of both ecclesiastical and secular affairs whereby the Christian Church is at the centre of a narrative (implicitly at times) which nonetheless flows along (mostly) secular chronological lines. The ecclesiastical historian may focus on points of tangency (e.g. of co-operation, co-existence, or conflict) between the Church and the secular world. This raises the question of how to delineate the borderline between the two realms, a question which tends to become more challenging after the so-called 'conversion' of Constantine in 312 and the continued Christianisation of the Roman Empire under his rule.⁸

The issue of 'ecclesiastical' and 'secular' is far from being merely a 'technical' one. In fact, it is bound to raise more questions. The motivations to write a *Historia Ecclesiastica* may vary. Is a *HE* written by a cleric necessarily more apologetical than one written by a layman? Can a Christian layman write a *HE* while heeding classical principles of pagan origin e.g. Tacitus's '*sine ira et studio*'⁹? These questions, by no means trivial, inevitably throw us into the minefield of approaching 'truth' in historiography, a virtue much feted by historians since its earliest beginnings of historical writing in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁰ Christianity, as opposed to a polyphonic Greco-Roman paganism¹¹ has offered a new, unfathomable truth namely the salvific universally-liberating Truth of Christ, a truth which purports to embed the metaphysical in the material and demonstrate the role of the temporal, including time itself, in God's plan for His Creation.¹² This Truth, from the Christian Church's point of view, has a historical pedigree. The Church has traced this pedigree to the Hebrew Bible and atestifies to God's Truth, previously revealed to the Israelites through the Covenants with their Patriarchs, reaffirmed through their Prophets but is now (i.e. after the coming of Christ), offered to all mankind as a new era of liberating hope.¹³ If we bear in mind that Christ's

⁷ See: A. Crépin, M. Lapidge, P. Monat, Ph. Robin (eds.), *Bede le venerable, Histoire ecclésiastique du peuple anglais* (=SC 489, 490, 491 Paris 2005). See also: J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People A Historical Commentary* (Oxford 1993), pp. XVI-XXI.

⁸ Despite its questionable nature, we shall use throughout this study, for the sake of convenience, the word 'conversion' whenever the dramatic turn in Constantine's policy towards the Christian Church in 312 needs to be referred to. Studies of this conversion abound. For the latest discussions of Constantine's conversion see: S. Bralewski, 'Konwersja Konstantyna Wielkiego na chrześcijaństwo w świetle jego własnego świadectwa – kilka uwag', *Przegląd Nauk Historycznych* 15 (2016), pp. 45-79; T.D. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Chichester 2014), pp. 1-26; D. Potter, *Constantine the Emperor* (Oxford 2013), pp. 131-160; G. Bonamante, 'Lo STATUS QUAESTIONIS: Un bilancio storiografico', in: E. dal Covolo and G. Sfameni-Gasparro (eds), *Costantino il grande alle radici dell'Europa* (Vatican City 2015), pp. 33-63. N. Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities: Imperial Authority and Civic Politics* (Philadelphia, PA 2016), pp. 67-83.

⁹ *Annales*, 1,1.

¹⁰ For a recent up to date discussion of 'truth' in Greco-Roman historiography see: M. Tamiolaki, 'Lucian on Truth and Lies in Ancient Historiography: The Theory and its Limits' in: L.I. Hau and I. Ruffel (eds.), *Truth and History in the Ancient World* (Abingdon 2017), pp. 267-283.

¹¹ The New Testament relates this poignantly in Pilate's interrogation of Jesus and the former's famous rhetorical question: Τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια; John, 18,38.

¹² On the Christian truth and its relation to history see: P. Riceur, *Histoire et vérité* (Paris 1955), pp. 93-112.

¹³ See: Matthew, 28,19-20: πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν· καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος and John, 8, 32: καὶ γνώσεσθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς.

Promise was not limited to the future παρουσία but also meant a continuous recognition of His Presence in the middle of the world, i. e. in the *hic et nunc* (an element which became more and more dominant in the life and thought of the Church in the first three centuries AD and shaped during that era a Christian sense of historicity and a distinctive Christian Tradition¹⁴ the appearance of Christian historiography alongside a growing interest in the Christian interpretation of time and historicity (apart from their role in pagan classical philosophy in the fourth and fifth centuries) becomes apparently more prominent in Christian thinking.¹⁵ Once we become able to contextualise politically and intellectually the genre of *HE*, we are due to face a fundamental question: How the ecclesiastical historian may think and write through the prism of the Christian Truth? Will they try to harmonise the likely tension between the temporal and the eternal or rather highlight it? Will ecclesiastical historiography be necessarily merely apologetical or would it develop a more nuanced approach?¹⁶

Another fundamental question which emanates from the former one would be: how the choices of the church historians reflect their historical perspectives (as there is no

¹⁴The term 'tradition' (παράδοσις; *traditio*) was already used by St Paul (e.g. 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15) with regard to the spread of heterodoxy amongst the churches. St Paul also ensures that the tradition related by him be passed down to posterity to safeguard orthodoxy ((2 Tim. 2:2). Thus, through the succession from the apostles onwards, the apostolic tradition became a yardstick by which the truthfulness and the historicity of the Christian Truth were measured, as was acknowledged time and again by the Church Fathers e.g. Hippolytus of Rome (ca.170-235), who penned a short treatise entitled Ἀποστολικὴ Παράδοσις which claims to be an accurate and authoritative account of the rites and organisation of the Church. His younger contemporary Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185-254) remarked: ", *servetur vero ecclesiastica praedicatio per successionis ordinem ab apostolis tradita, et usque ad praesens in Ecclesiis permanens : illa sola credenda est veritas quae in nullo ab ecclesiastica discordat traditione*" (*De Principiis, Praefatio*, 2). On tradition and historicity in the early church see:

G. Ebeling, *Die Geschichtlichkeit der Kirche und ihrer Verkündigung als theologisches Problem* (Tübingen 1954), pp. 31-65. Ebeling makes a clear distinction between 'tradition' and historical recollection (which is, of course, the foundation of every historiography): "Tradition ist also ein Vergangenheit und Gegenwart zur Einheit verbindendes, als geschichtlicher Zusammenhang fortdaurendes Geschehen. Diese Tradition sich fortpflanzende und darum gegenwärtig bleibende Vergangenheit ereignet sich nicht als historische Erinnerung, sondern als unmittelbarer Geltungsanspruch." (ibid. p. 33).

¹⁵ For a survey of history as 'Heilsgeschichte' in Patristic thought, see:

A. Luneau, *L'histoire du salut chez les Pères de l'Église. La doctrine des âges du monde* (Paris 1964), esp. pp. 161-187 and pp. 287-356 For an excellent summary of the Greek Patristic approach to time and temporality (as opposed to the Latin Fathers' strand of thought which culminates in St Augustine) see: D. Bradshaw, 'Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers', *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 311-66. For St Augustine's view of time and eternity as presented in his *Confessiones* see: C. L Troup, *Temporality, Eternity and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine's Confessions* (Columbia, SC 1999), esp. pp. 82-116.

¹⁶ G. Downey, 'The Perspective of the Early Church Historians', *GRBS* (1965, pp. 57-70) is still useful as a basic presentation of the problem despite being for the most part inclined to think in sharply defined categories whereas more recent research seems to be subtler in the main. Downey remarks *inter alia* (p. 58): "The ecclesiastical historian was not merely a Christian historian. He was a representative and protagonist of a new kind of history to which a certain section of his society would be hostile." The transformation of the Greco-Roman world in late antiquity after the conversion of Constantine added to the old pagan animosity towards Christianity, the long-existing internal doctrinal tensions and disputes which culminated in the great controversies of the fourth and the fifth centuries. The question: "How an ecclesiastical historian will manoeuvre in a polarised Christian society?" remains, as we shall see, of central importance.

historiography without perspectives) and what are thus the narrative strategies which the church historians in-question may employ to achieve their goals? ¹⁷

Be that as it may, one might be inclined to presume that the ecclesiastical historian would be an 'ecclesiastical' himself, i.e. an ordained priest – and yet the record shows that this genre was chosen by historians in holy orders as well as lay authors. The inventor of the genre, Eusebius Pamphili (ca. 260-339) was indeed a churchman; to be more precise, a bishop (of Caesarea Maritima in Palestine since 315).¹⁸

The ecclesiastical historian whose work is the subject of the present study, Sozomen (ca. 370-ca. 450), a Palestinian-born lawyer who settled in Constantinople, was apparently a layman, as indeed was another contemporary ecclesiastical historian, Socrates of Constantinople (d. after 439).¹⁹ The fact that the genre, despite its religious provenance, did not remain exclusively a literary territory of the clergy illustrates, amongst other things, the all-encompassing progress of the Christian Church in the Roman Empire and indeed, as we shall see later, in some of its neighbours since the lifetime of Eusebius and Constantine. It follows that the significance of Eusebius's innovation should be assessed in the light of its reception and dissemination in late antiquity.

When the Constantinopolitan lawyer Sozomenus Scholasticus, or with his full name, Salamanes Hermeias Sozomenos (Σαλαμάνης Ἑρμείας Σωζομενός), normally known in English as Sozomen,²⁰ set out to write a *Historia Ecclesiastica*,²¹ probably around 450, ecclesiastical history was, it seems, an established genre of late antique Graeco-Roman historiography, particularly in the Greek east from which it had originated. Ecclesiastical histories were written before Sozomen's days mostly in Greek, although one important contribution to this genre, dating from the beginning of the fifth century (402/403), had been made in Latin by the Italian-born monk Rufinus of Aquileia.²²

The new genre was apparently well-received amongst the neighbouring cultures of the early Byzantine church, namely, the churches of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Armenia, where

¹⁷The applicability of the discipline of narratology to historiography has been asserted (albeit in passing) already by one of the founders of narratological studies. See: R Barthes, 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récites ; *Communications* 8 (1966), pp. 1-27. A more elaborate defence of that assertion was offered by the American theorist Hayden White, who argued that '...there is an element of poetry in every historical account. This is because in our account of the historical world we are dependent ...on the techniques of the figurative language both for our characterization of the objects of our narrative representations and for the strategies by which to constitute narrative accounts of the transformations of those objects in time.' See: H. White, 'The Historical Text as a Literary', in R.H. Canary and H. Kozicki (eds.), *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding* (Madison, WI 1978), pp. 41-62.

¹⁸ For a concise introduction see: A. P. Johnson, *Eusebius* (London 2013), esp. pp. 1-24.

¹⁹ On Eusebius, Socrates and their place in the development of the genre, see Chapter I *infra*.

²⁰ For a detailed analysis of Sozomen's names, see Chapter III *infra*.

²¹ NB: Individual contributions to this genre will be referred to in the footnotes by their authors' abbreviated names: Soz. (Sozomen), Soc. (Socrates), Ruf. (Rufinus), Eus. (Eusebius), Philost. (Philostorgius), and Theod. (Theodoret).

²² Tyrannius Rufinus (ca. 345-411), a scholar, theologian and prolific translator from Greek into Latin. He translated into Latin (with many alterations of his own) Eusebius's *HE*, to which he added two books from his own pen whereby his narrative ends in the death of the emperor Theodosius I in 395. See Cap. I.

Christian literature was beginning to thrive in the local languages. Ecclesiastical histories were translated and original contributions to the genre were to appear at a later stage.²³

The genre of ecclesiastical history seems to have reached Egypt, although the Egyptian contribution survives only in fragmentary state.²⁴ Present scholarship adduces the former existence of a *HE* in Coptic dating back to the fourth century from a surviving Arabic translation of parts of that work, into which a Coptic translation of Eusebius's *HE* seems to have been incorporated. These were embedded in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, a compilation started Severus ibn al-Muqaffa, Coptic Orthodox bishop of Hermopolis Magna in Upper Egypt (d. 987).²⁵

Other fragments and paraphrases are scattered in a plethora of manuscripts, collections of ecclesiastical documents and other works and being undergoing a scholarly process of reconstruction. ²⁶ Important original ecclesiastical historiography in Syriac, however, was to appear in the sixth century, as is attested above all by the surviving portion of John of Ephesus's Syriac *HE*.²⁷

The newly-invented Christian historiography may have found a welcoming readership throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. We can reach such a conclusion because as far as we know, translations from the Greek began to circulate relatively soon after the appearance of the original editions. The first ecclesiastical history was translated into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian, thus seemingly following the ever-growing dissemination of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world (and concurrently on the fringes and beyond the traditional limits

²³ For the Armenian translation of Eusebius's ecclesiastical history, see: A. Charean (ed.), *Patmut'wn ekelets'woy Eusebiosi* (Venice 1877). On the Armenian translation of the church historian Socrates of Constantinople see: G. Ch. Hansen, 'Einleitung' in id. (ed.) *Sokrates Kirchengeschichte*, GCS-NF 1 (Berlin 1995), pp. xxv-xxviii, and R.W. Thomson, *The Armenian Adaptation of the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* (Leuven 2001), pp. 6-13. We do not know of any translation of Sozomen's *HE*. Was the very rich, classicising style of his Greek prose an insuperable challenge? On Sozomen's style see: G. Ch. Hansen, 'Prosarhythmus bei den Kirchenhistoriker Sozomenos und Sokrates' *ByzSlav* 26 (1965), pp. 82-93, and G. Sabbah – B. Grillet, *Sozomène: Histoire ecclésiastique I-II*, SC 306 (Paris 1983), p. 35, p. 65 and pp. 82-93.

²⁴ On Coptic literature in late antiquity, see: R.S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ 1993), pp. 251-260. See also : A. Boud'hors, 'La version copte de l'Histoire ecclésiastique' in: S. Morlet and L. Perrone (eds), *Eusèbe de Césarée, Histoire Ecclésiastique: Commentaire. Tome I, Études d'introduction* (Paris 2012), pp. 267-270. Note also: J. den Heijer, 'À propos de la traduction copte de l'Histoire Ecclésiastique d'Eusèbe de Césarée. Nouvelles remarques sur les parties perdues', in: M. Rassart-Debergh and J. Ries (eds), *Actes du IVe congrès copte II De la linguistique au gnosticisme* (Louvain/A. Camplani, Paris 1992), pp. 185-193. On original ecclesiastical historiography in Coptic see: H. Brakmann, 'Eine oder zwei koptischen Kirchengeschichten?', *Le Muséon* 87 (1974), pp. 128-142.

²⁵ B.Evetts, (ed.), *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria I-IV*. (= *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. I.2, I.4, V.1 and X.5) (Paris (1906-1915).

²⁶ On recent efforts to re-construct the Coptic *HE*, see: A. Camplani, 'L'Historia ecclesiastica en copte et l'historiographie du siège épiscopale d'Alexandrie: à propos d'un passage sur Mélitios de Lycopolis' in : N. Bosson - A. Boud'hors (eds.) *Actes du huitième Congrès International d'Étude Coptes. Paris, 28 juin - 3 juillet 2004* (= *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 163) (Leuven 2007), pp. 417-424.

²⁷ On John of Ephesus see: J. J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth Century Byzantium* (Unpublished D.Litt. thesis; University of Groningen 1995). See also: S.A. Harvey, 'Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches', *Byzantion* 58 (1988), pp. 295-308, and ead., 'Theodora the "Believing Queen":

A Study in Syriac Historiographical Tradition', *Hugoye – A Journal of Syriac Studies* 4.2 (2001) (<<http://www.bethmardutho.org/index.php/hugoye/volumeindex/131.html>>).

of Hellenisation and Romanisation in Europe, Asia, and Africa) after the Constantinian conversion. The translations into the aforementioned oriental languages (alongside Latin²⁸) may suggest that Christianity was continuing to spread quite successfully even beyond the eastern borders of the Roman empire.²⁹ The main area of expansion was the territories controlled by Sassanian Persia, where growing numbers of Christian scholars, scribes, and potential readers in these languages were to be found, despite strong anti-Christian propaganda which was not unconnected to Persian imperial relations with the Roman Empire.³⁰

This situation caused frequent skirmishes with the predominantly Zoroastrian court of the Sassanian Shahs, escalating at times into all-out persecutions which resulted in more names being added, in these regions, to the lists of Christian martyrs.³¹

²⁸ The case of translations into Latin seems to reflect a somewhat different phenomenon than the translations of Greek Christian literature into oriental languages in late antiquity. The reason is, seemingly, a rather different socio-cultural context. Plainly put, the introduction of Christianity to Syria, Armenia, Persia, or even the less-hellenised rural regions of Egypt was naturally bound to put the inhabitants of these parts in a closer contact with Greco-Roman culture than ever before, and thus generate a demand for translated Christian literature and above all translations of Holy Scripture – whereas neither Christianity nor a good command of Greek were novelties in the Latin west, whether in Europe or North Africa. Averil Cameron has observed that the Roman educated elite was: ‘open to Greek intellectual currents, especially in philosophy, but by the turn of the fourth century the situation had changed. While some were still deeply influenced by Greek philosophy, most now relied in the main on translations’. See: Av. Cameron, ‘Education and Literary Culture’ in Av. Cameron and P. Garnsey (eds), *CAH 13* (Cambridge 1998), p. 666. A possible connection between the advance of Christianity in the west and the decline in mastery of Greek letters should not be dismissed altogether. Gillian Clark, however, has pointed out that ‘... there is still an argument that Christianity offered unusually wide access to education because of its tradition, inherited from Judaism, of reading and commenting on scripture in regular meetings for worship’. Clark makes a convincing case for such a claim by highlighting the role of preaching and teaching in church as an alternative channel of learning, which was not only accessible to the illiterate, but also enhanced literacy and promoted education among the least literate in Roman society, namely women. See: G. Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 85-89. On the inseparable connection between literacy and the enhancement of episcopal authority (and thus, the spread of Christianity *ipso facto*) before the ‘conversion’ of Constantine, see: R. Lane, Fox, ‘Literacy and Power in Early Christianity’, in A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf (eds), *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge 1994), pp. 126-148 (esp. p. 141 ff.). It follows that widespread literacy is bound to beget more than one variety of educational standards, and therefore one can expect the appearance of a ‘semi-educated’ social stratum consisting of people with variable levels of knowledge and comprehension skills among the parishioners at a church, despite their literacy. This social phenomenon seems to correspond to Keith Hopkins’s pervasive ‘sub-élite literacy’ without which, according to his analysis, ‘The radical and subversive message of primitive Christianity could not have become initially established across the whole empire ...’. See: K. Hopkins, ‘Conquest by Book’, in J.H. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, MI 1991), pp. 133-158. The ecclesiastical historian Socrates of Constantinople, while naming potential types of unsuitable readership for his work, refers to a similar social group, characterising them as simple-minded, interested in nothing but sheer facts yet even so, unable to grasp them when they are shrouded in an elegant style (τοῖς δὲ ἰδιώταις, ὅτι μὴ δύναται ἐφικέσθαι τῶν πραγμάτων καλυπτομένον ὑπὸ τῆς κομψείας τοῦ λόγου). See: Soc. VI, Intr. 1, 5.

²⁹ For a study of the translations and reception of Eusebius’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, see: M. J. Hollerich, *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Oakland, CA 2016).

³⁰ On Sassanian policies *vis a vis* the Christians in the fourth century see: B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 216-225. Note also: T. Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of An Empire* (London 2009), pp. 77-79.

³¹ Sozomen is a Greek source of unique importance for the persecutions of Christians in

Elsewhere, east of the Euphrates, Christian literature and scholarship found, in certain cases, apparently more favourable conditions as a result of a successful mission. The church consequently enjoyed prosperity and growing prestige among nations governed by Christian princes. The best example is perhaps that of the Armenians after the conversion (ca. 320) of the Arsacid King Trdat IV (Greek: Τηριδάτης) 'the great' (298-330).

The Christian Armenians were soon (i.e. as of the early fifth century) armed with Mesrob-Mashtotz's newly invented national script. This invention was followed by a vast project of translations from Syriac and Greek. Having translated the Bible, as well as selected items of pagan and Christian literature, Armenian scholars did not neglect to translate ecclesiastical histories into their own language – sometimes more than once – as seems to be the case with Socrates of Constantinople's *HE*.³² This successful reception of ecclesiastical histories in Armenia, permits a further assumption: that the genre may have had a certain role in the efflorescence of original historical writing in classical Armenian in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Like most inventions, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Eusebius's new historical genre, did not come into being *ex nihilo*.³³ Like his teacher Pamphilus and his teacher's teacher Origen, Eusebius belongs to a Patristic school of thought which drew on a fusion of pagan (i.e. Greek) and Jewish traditions. The invention of *Historia Ecclesiastica* unsurprisingly reveals this fusion at work, as the *HE* is deeply rooted in pagan Greek historiography as well as in Jewish Hellenistic traditions. It would therefore seem that before any serious attempt to study Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* can be made, our attention must turn first to the development of the genre in question over the period of about a hundred and fifty years (ca. 300-450) from the appearance of the first ecclesiastical history up to Sozomen's own contribution to the genre. In doing so, it is necessary to make steps towards a more coherent definition of the genre despite some endemic obstacles (to be discussed below). The genre includes several

Persia in the early 340s. See: Soz., II, 9-15. The acts of the Persian martyrs in the reign of Shapur II (309- 379) are also documented in a manuscript in Syriac (British Library MS. Add. 12150). This manuscript dates from 411 and is attributed to bishop Marutha of Martyropolis (Syriac: ܡܪܬܐ ܡܪܬܐ, *Mayperqit* in Northern Mesopotamia, present day Silvan in the Diyarbakir region, south-eastern Turkey). For a guide to the Persian Martyr Acts, see: S.P. Brock, *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in* (Piscataway, NJ 2009), pp. 77-84. For a revisionist view, challenging the idea of Zoroastrianism as the 'state-religion' of the

Sassanian Persian empire, see: P. Gignoux, 'Church-State relations in the Sassanian period' in: T. Mikasa (ed.), *Monarchies and Socio-religious Traditions in the Ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden 1984), pp. 72-80.

³² See: R.W. Thomson, *The Armenian Adaptation of the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* (Leuven 2001), pp. 6-14. As has been mentioned, no Armenian translation of Sozomen is known to have been made. For a study of early Armenian translations see: L. Ter-Petrosian, *Ancient Armenian Translations* (Eng. trans. K. Maksoudian) (New York 1992). On the influence of the Armenian translation project on historical writing in Armenian until the eighth century see in brief: Thomson (2001), pp. 2-6. See also: Id., 'The formation of the Armenian Literary Tradition' in: N.G. Garsoian, T.F. Mathews, and R.W. Thomson (eds), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington, DC 1982), pp. 135-150.

³³ For important observations see: A. Louth, 'Eusebius and the Birth of Church History', in: F. Young, L. Ayres, and A. Louth (eds), *Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 266-274.

works which are still often consulted but rarely studied, as was observed by Arnaldo Momigliano, although, as will be shown here, this situation has changed considerably.³⁴

Momigliano's observation was based on an overview of the sparse relevant modern scholarship,³⁵ and his preliminary discussion (published posthumously) showed that students of late antiquity have seldom found the ecclesiastical historians worth looking at on their own merits, despite their undeniable richness as sources,³⁶ which keeps them indispensable for any study of the eastern and western empires (and indeed some of their neighbours) up to the seventh century. Along these lines it would perhaps be fair to say that until the last decade of the twentieth century the prevailing consensus was that the genre of ecclesiastical history was the invention of one author, Eusebius Pamphili (ca. 260-339), bishop of Caesarea Maritima in Palestine, whose work became, due to the so-called 'Constantinian conversion',³⁷ a model for imitators and continuators.

The ecclesiastical historians were often castigated for being what they were, instead of what certain scholars wanted them to be.³⁸ These scholars seem to have ignored the different literary norms of late antiquity. Another common view until quite recently was that the historians concerned, despite certain passages in their writings exhibiting independent outlook, were merely copying each other's work.³⁹

³⁴ A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, CA 1990), p. 132.

³⁵ One typical approach to *HE* has been traced back to Franz Overbeck and nineteenth century German romantic nationalism. See: D. J. De Vore in Johnson and Schott (2013), p. 20. This approach regards Christianity as a 'new nation' and is echoed in T.D. Barnes's depiction of Eusebius's *HE* as: 'a novel kind of national history' which Barnes combines 'inevitably' with 'literary or philosophical history'. See: T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA 1981), p. 128.

³⁶ An exception which illustrates the contrasting norm is E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, 2 vols (Paris 1939-1949).

³⁷ For a discussion and an assessment of Constantine in Sozomen's *HE*, see Chapter 6 of the present study.

³⁸ Such, for example, was the view of Momigliano's pupil, Averil Cameron, who wrote: 'It is perhaps surprising that Christian history – history written from the Christian point of view, that is, not the more specialized history of the church [*sic*] – is conspicuously absent from the fourth century list of Christianized literary forms. Eusebius's *Church History* sprang into new popularity with Rufinus's Latin translation and had a clutch of imitators in the church historians of the early fifth century, but important as its innovations were, it did not inspire the development of a new and perhaps more pragmatic Christian history.' See: Av. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of the Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, CA 1991), p. 140.

³⁹ It should be noted that Gibbon had already observed that 'There is a remarkable difference between the two ecclesiastical historians [Socrates and Sozomen] who in general bear so close a resemblance'. See: E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. IV (repr. The Folio Society, London 1986), p. 164. Gibbon's observation remained largely ignored.

See e.g. G. F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Evagrius* (2nd ed. Macon, GA 1986), pp. 205-206. Nonetheless, Chesnut goes on to say, inconsistently, (p. 206) that Sozomen's *HE* is '... a genuinely critical piece of historiography...'.²⁶ The debate on the validity and use of 'classical' and 'Byzantine' as cultural and indeed literary categories remains very lively and keeps revolving around the same focal points namely those of 'continuity' and 'change'. This debate becomes at times a vicious circle and Anthony Kaldellis, with full awareness of the potential pitfalls, offers us now a way ahead: 'It was only in recent times that the narrow definition of the "classical", the one that prevailed in the second century AD itself, was revived and institutionalized in western academies. Modern classicism affected to despise "later" literature while fully adhering to its verdicts and canonical constructions and relying on its scholarly tools. There is considerable scope for ideological deconstruction here. Our Classical Studies are in many respects still caught-up in these nineteenth-

The genre of ecclesiastical history was thus mostly portrayed as an inferior literary form, located on the fringes of a declining ancient historiography. Ecclesiastical historiography emerged from the scholarly discussions of the last century as a defective product of the Christianisation of Graeco-Roman literary culture and its consequent 'Byzantinisation'. Certain scholars, while addressing the vexed issue of the great similarity between two of our church historians, Socrates of Constantinople and Sozomen of Bethelia, borrowed (apparently not without a hint of prejudice) from the discipline of New Testament studies the term 'synoptic' to describe the respective church histories of the authors concerned

As a typical example of this approach we can take the German scholar Walter Nigg, who argued in 1934 that:

Auch in formaler Beziehung lässt sich diese starke Einheit der nacheusebischen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung nachweisen. Sie ist, um Wilhelm Bauers Ausdruck zu gebrauchen, eine ausgesprochen "referierende Geschichtsschreibung". Die fortsetzer des Euseb begnügen sich, das rein Tatsächliche des geschichtlichen Geschehens mitzuteilen, ohne den Ursachen nachzufragen. ... Sie machen auch keinen Versuch, von den dargestellten Personen anschauliche Porträts zu entwerfen. Alle die angeführten Persönlichkeiten erwecken einen leblosen und starren Eindruck; es fehlt ihnen eine individuelle Physiognomie. Sie gleichen byzantinischen Gemälden, die ohne die Kunst der Perspektive gemalt sind.⁴⁰

Nigg's unflattering view of the ecclesiastical historians was reiterated almost without modification some eighteen years later by R.L.P. Milburn in the fourth of his eight Bampton Lectures, delivered at the University Church of St. Mary The Virgin, Oxford in 1952. Milburn did not try to challenge Nigg's harsh judgement of the 'synoptic' ecclesiastical historians (Socrates of Constantinople, Sozomen of Bethelia, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus). Nonetheless, being an Anglican clergyman (he was serving at the time as chaplain of Worcester College, Oxford), he seems to have felt obliged to salvage the cornerstone of the genre, the first ecclesiastical history, which he nonetheless regarded with esteem. However, his subtle suggestions to look at the merits of this work can easily be applied also to later church histories, and thus the genre as a whole is rescued from being classified as worthless. It should be stressed that the unflattering view of the ecclesiastical historians was shared even by eminent Anglican churchmen who were patristic scholars of renown, such as Bishop J.B. Lightfoot (1828-1889), also cited by Milburn. Milburn's lectures are thus an apologetic endeavour aimed at a revival of interest in the significance of 'Early Christian Interpretations

century tangles ... Slowly, we are working our way back to a more holistic Byzantine view of Greek antiquity.' See:

A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge 2007), p. 41.

⁴⁰ W. Nigg, *Die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung* (Munich 1934), p. 35. Yet, despite this sweeping criticism (using among other things a cliché such as the likening of an imagined uniform and homogenous description of 'lifeless and rigid' characters in post-Eusebian ecclesiastical historiosto figures in Byzantine paintings), Nigg admits none the less that each of Eusebius' successors (Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret) possesses something of an individual voice: 'Jeder dieser Fortsetzer des Euseb besitzt selbstredend seine eigenen Besonderheiten, die in seinem persönlichen Naturell begründet sind'. See: *ibid.* p. 33. Nigg, however, does not elaborate on either 'Besonderheiten', or 'Naturell'.

of History' (as they were titled in print⁴¹) without compromising the essential criteria of modern scholarship. Although the historian can still find these lectures valuable, it would be fair to say that Milburn's main addressees appear to have been theologians and the theologically minded. It should be noted also that the elegant collective noun 'Interpretations' may suggest that Milburn was fully aware of the differences between the ecclesiastical historians and 'other' Christian authors (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, Orosius) whose writings can indeed teach us about early Christian perceptions of history or (as with Augustine) about Christian attitudes towards the concepts of time and temporality.⁴² In fact, most of the works concerned touch upon these issues without falling necessarily into any particular accepted category of historiography. One may question Milburn's intentions, but regardless of his goals, it is hard to deny, with hindsight, that he nonetheless took an important step towards an alternative assessment of the ecclesiastical historians, based on their intrinsic qualities.

The notion whereby the church histories may be, despite all possible reservations (above all those regarding their 'originality'⁴³), a unique genre worth studying, appeared in an article by Glanville Downey, 'The Perspective of the Early Church Historians' which had been mentioned earlier as a still- useful (albeit limited) presentation of the problems which arise from an attempt to define coherently the perspective of ecclesiastical historiography in the period under discussion.⁴⁴ A decade later was published the paper 'Church History and Early Church Historians' by Robert Markus.⁴⁵ Markus's discussion, it should be noted, is still of great relevance for any student of ecclesiastical historiography and of Eusebius in particular.

Two important contributions to the study of the ecclesiastical histories were made shortly afterwards, in the late seventies. These were Glenn Chesnut's book *The First Christian Histories*, published in 1977 (a revised and enlarged second edition appeared in 1986⁴⁶) and the proceedings of a conference entitled *La storiografia ecclesiastica nella tarda antichità*, held at the University of Erice in December 1978.⁴⁷ Both contributions, in their different ways, set out to explore the riches of the ecclesiastical histories on their respective merits. Chesnut sought to uncover the principles of late antique Christian historiosophy⁴⁸, but the greater part of his

⁴¹ R.L.P. Milburn, *Early Christian Interpretations of History* (London 1954). See especially his discussion of Eusebius: pp. 54-73.

⁴² See e.g.: Aug. *De Civitate Dei*, XII, 13.

⁴³ This brings us back to the modern charge of 'plagiarism'. Yet the following (modern) observation offers a more nuanced perspective: 'The patch writer recognizes the profundity of the source and strives to join the conversation in which the source participates. To join this conversation, the patch writer employs the language of the target community'. See: R. Moore Howard, *Standing in the Shadow of Giants: Plagiarists, Authors, Collaborators* (Stamford, CT 1999), p. 7. See also: G. Constable, 'Forgery and Plagiarism in the Middle Ages', *Archiv für Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel und Wappenkunde* 29 (1983), pp. 1-41.

⁴⁴ G. Downey, 'The Perspective of the Early Church Historians', *GRBS* 6 (1965), pp. 57-70.

⁴⁵ R. Markus, 'Church History and Early Church Historians', in: D. Baker (ed.), *The Materials, Sources and Methods of Ecclesiastical History (=Studies in Church History 11)* (Cambridge 1975), pp. 1-17.

⁴⁶ The revised version does not offer any radical modifications.

⁴⁷ S. Calderone (ed.), *La storiografia ecclesiastica nella tarda antichità: atti del convegno tenuto in Erice, 3-8 XII 1978* (Messina 1980).

⁴⁸ Historiosophy is the area of philosophy exploring the significance, if any, of human history. It is particularly concerned with the possibility of teleological development- that is, a design, purpose, directive principle, or finality in the process of human history – including the possibility of a metaphysical factor in that process. The term was coined by the German Catholic philosopher Franz von Baader (1765-

discussion is in fact dedicated to the first ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius of Caesarea. Some church historians, like Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 345-411) and Philostorgius of Borissus (368-430?), are not mentioned at all, and the focus of the study – wherever it appears to be focused – is often the theological outlooks of the authors concerned, and less their merits as historians. The collected papers of the Erice conference, however, are perhaps the first true modern attempt to apply contemporary methods of analysis to the works of the church historians, and thus the reader is provided, probably for the first time, with a discussion that sets out to demonstrate that ecclesiastical histories were indeed a genre with dynamic intrinsic development and individual contributors, contrary to previous dismissive criticisms.

This change in the evaluation and treatment of ecclesiastical historians over the last four decades is reflected clearly in Wolfgang Liebeschuetz's paper, 'Ecclesiastical Historians on Their Own Times', which was read at the eleventh international conference on patristic studies, held in Oxford in 1991.⁴⁹ Liebeschuetz, despite his own reproachful attitude towards the ecclesiastical historians in the main, observed nonetheless 'high literary qualities' in Theodoret's *HE*.⁵⁰ Yet this intriguing observation has been enigmatically left by Liebeschuetz unaccompanied by any further (essential) explanations.

Indeed, even the harshest critics could never have claimed that the ecclesiastical histories, despite their name, were restricted to historical events that pertained solely to the 'church' (in any sense of this word).⁵¹ Quite the contrary. The works that belong to this genre are packed with an abundance of information, without which our knowledge of late Roman and early Byzantine religious, political, social, and military affairs would be significantly more limited. Yet even if their informational value has been acknowledged at times, the record may still show that the individual authorial voices of the ecclesiastical historians have been consistently overlooked.

More recently, however, this rather unexciting *status quaestionis* has greatly changed. Contemporary scholars, it seems, have lent their ears to Arnaldo Momigliano's posthumously-published call for a radical re-evaluation of the ecclesiastical historians.⁵² A range of new specialised studies, more attuned to the delicate (yet very significant) differences between the church historians, have appeared over the last decades. The immediate benefit for scholarship lies primarily in a new awareness of the unique voices in each of the ecclesiastical histories, thus far collectively and as already mentioned, often unflatteringly labelled, if not entirely dismissed. To this wave belong (in chronological order of their

1841) and was borrowed by his better-known friend the idealist philosopher Friedrich von Schelling (1775-1854). Historiosophy was re-introduced in the twentieth century by thinkers such as the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the scholar of Islamic thought Henry Corbin (1903-1978) and the *doyen* of Jewish Mysticism studies Gershom Gerhard Scholem (1897-1982). See: S. M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton, NJ 1999), pp. 159-161.

⁴⁹ J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, 'Ecclesiastical Historians on their own Times', in: E.A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 24 (Leuven 1993), pp. 151-163 (= Id., *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity: Religion, Barbarians and their Historiography* (Aldershot 2006), § II).

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 156.

⁵¹ For an example of a short contribution which exhibits a budding, albeit hesitant, awareness of this key element in ecclesiastical historiography (note the title), see: J. Harries, 'Patristic Historiography' in I. Hazlett (ed.), *Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to A.D. 600* (London 1991), pp. 269-279.

⁵² A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, CA 1990), pp. 132-152.

publication) the monographs by F. Thelamon on Rufinus of Aquileia,⁵³ T. Urbainczyk on Socrates of Constantinople,⁵⁴ M. Wallraff on the same church historian.⁴² Wallraff is also the editor (together with Jonathan Stutz and Nicholas Marinides) of the surviving fragments of a *HE*, composed by another bishop, Gelasius of Caesarea (d. 395).⁵⁵ Other contributions to Eusebian studies by D. Mendels, E. Carotenuto, M. Verdoner, A. Johnson and J. Schott., the first volume of a commentary on Eusebius and more recently, J. Corke-Webster's monograph on the inventor of the genre *Historia Ecclesiastica*.⁵⁶

Other scholars who were more interested in specific aspects of Christian historiography have nonetheless contributed to the rediscovery of nuances and shades of colour on the canvases that the ecclesiastical historians have left us. Under this category fall works like Friedhelm Winkelmann's overview of the contacts between ecclesiastical histories and Byzantine historiography,⁵⁷ Dieter Timpe's preliminary considerations of the genre of ecclesiastical history (with emphasis on Eusebius),⁵⁸ Hartmut Leppin's study of the idea of the 'Christian Emperor' as reflected in Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret,⁵⁹ Thomas Ferguson's analysis of the role of the genre of ecclesiastical history (Eusebius of Caesarea, Rufinus of Aquileia and Philostorgius of Borissus) in the theological controversies of the fourth century and indeed, in the shaping of a Nicene concept of orthodoxy⁶⁰, Gary Trompf's study of 'Early Christian Historiography', published with the sub-title 'Narratives of Retributive Justice', thus revealing in a nutshell the hermeneutic principles which guide the author's interpretation of the ecclesiastical histories, i.e. regarding them as a link in a chain of the Judeo-Christian literary tradition, built up around the Biblical principle of Divine Retribution, traced back by Trompf with painstaking efforts to the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.⁶¹ Pauline

⁵³ F. Thelamon, *Païens et chrétiens au IV^e siècle: L'apport de l'«histoire ecclésiastique» de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Paris 1981).

⁵⁴ T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, MI 1997). ⁴² M. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates: Untersuchungen zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (Göttingen 1997).

⁵⁵ M. Wallraff, J. Stutz and N. Marinides (eds.), *Gelasius of Caesarea Ecclesiastical History The Extant Fragments With an Appendix containing the Fragments from Dogmatic Writings* (= GCS-NF 25; Berlin 2018).

⁵⁶ See respectively: D. Mendels, *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity: An Essay on Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids, MI 1999); E. Carotenuto, *Tradizione e innovazione nella HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA di Eusebio di Caesarea* (Naples 2001); M. Verdoner, *Narrated Reality: The Historia ecclesiastica of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Frankfurt/Main 2011); S. Morlet and L. Perrone (eds.), *Eusèbe de Césarée, Histoire Ecclésiastique: Commentaire. Tome I, Études d'introduction* (Paris 2012) and J. Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge 2019).

⁵⁷ F. Winkelmann, 'Rolle und Problematik der Behandlung der Kirchengeschichte in der byzantinischen Historiographie', *Klio* 66 (1984), pp. 257-269.

⁵⁸ D. Timpe, 'Was ist Kirchengeschichte? Zum Gattungscharakter der Historia Ecclesiastica des Eusebius', in: W. Dahlheim, W. Schuller and J. von Ungern-Sternberg (eds.), *Festschrift Robert Werner* (Konstanz 1989), pp. 171-204.

⁵⁹ H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Großen zu Theodosius II: Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Sokrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret* (Göttingen 1997).

⁶⁰ T.C. Ferguson, *The Past is Prologue: The Revolution of Nicene Historiography* (Leiden 2005).

⁶¹ G.W. Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography: Narratives of Retributive Justice* (London and New York 2000). On Luke as the 'first Christian historian', see: *ibid.* pp. 47-106. See however: J. Schröter, 'Lukas als historiograph: das lukianische Doppelwerk und die entdeckung der Christlichen Heilgeschichte', in: E.-M. Becker (ed.), *Die antike Historiographie und die Anfänge der christlichen Geschichtsschreibung* (Berlin 2005), pp. 237-262.

Allen, who published in 1981 a monograph on the sixth-century church historian Evagrius Scholasticus (ca. 535-ca. 600), has contributed two important articles in which she has highlighted the place of concepts like 'Hellenism' and 'heresy' in the narratives of Socrates and Theodoret.⁶² A different aspect of the ecclesiastical histories has attracted the attention of Ivan Krivushin who in a short book, published in post-communist Russia (yet still imbued with Marxist approach), has looked at the role of the crowd in the narratives of all the church historians up to Theodoret.⁶³

Also of interest are the works of the Australian scholar Alana E. Nobbs. Nobbs has to her credit an important comparison of digressions in Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. Nobbs has also dedicated papers to various aspects of the Eunomian church historian Philostorgius of Borissus, which have undoubtedly helped to draw scholarly attention to this exceptional church historian.⁶⁴ Philostorgius has also received some attention outside the Anglophone world, mostly in Germany and France.⁶⁵

The entire problem of ecclesiastical historiography and its relation to classical pagan historiography (including its late antique exponents), has received fresh reconsideration. David Rohrbacher, in his introductory survey of historiography in the fourth and fifth centuries, has placed the ecclesiastical historians in a more general context, which includes contemporary pagan historians.⁵² Another survey, by the French scholar Herve Inglebert, is homing on the development of the genre within the wider context of Christian historiography and covers, albeit in a nutshell, a longer period of time (from the second century to the seventh century) and the divers linguistic and cultural scenes where the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* had left its mark.⁶⁶

The Christian literary context of ecclesiastical historiography, however, was the focus of a colloquium entitled *L'historiographie de l'église des premiers siècles*, held at the University of Tours in September 2000. The range of relevant topics covered is extremely wide and stretches from historiography in the New Testament to Christian historiography of the seventh century. The ecclesiastical historians have not been neglected, and most of them are discussed from different angles by various contributors. However, it is important to note that the ecclesiastical

⁶² P. Allen, 'Some Aspects of Hellenism in the Early Greek Church Historians', *Traditio* 43 (1987), pp. 368-381; Ead. 'The Use of Heretics and Heresies in the Greek Church Historians: Studies in Socrates and Theodoret', in G. Clarke (ed.), *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (Rushcutters Bay, NSW 1990), pp. 265-289.

⁶³ See: I. Krivushin, *История и народ в церковном историографии V века* (Ivanovo 1994).

⁶⁴ A.E. Nobbs, 'Digressions in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret', *JRH* 14 (1986), pp. 1-11. On Philostorgius see: Ead. 'Philostorgius' View of the Past, in G. Clarke e.a. (eds.) *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (Rushcutters Bay, NSW 1990), pp. 250-264.

⁶⁵ See respectively: D. Meyer (ed.), *Philostorg im Kontext der spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart 2011); J.M. Prieur, 'Aège selon l'histoire Ecclésiastique de Philostorge', *RHPhR* 85 (2005), pp. 529-552, and Id. 'Eunome selon l'Histoire Ecclésiastique de Philostorge', *RHPhR* 86 (2006), pp. 151-172. For a discussion of Philostorgius's place in the tradition of the genre, see: E.I. Argov, 'Giving the Heretic a Voice: Philostorgius of Borissus and Greek Ecclesiastical Historiography', *Athenaeum* 89 (2001), pp. 497-524.

⁶⁶ See: H. Inglebert, 'Le développement de l'historiographie chrétienne dans le monde méditerranéen (II e -VII e siècles de notre ère)' *MedAnt* 4 (2001), pp. 559-584.

historian whose work is the concern of the present study, Sozomen of Bethelia, received attention only from one participant in the colloquium, Guy Sabbah.⁶⁷

Guy Sabbah also completed in 2008, in collaboration with other scholars, an annotated bilingual edition of Sozomen, in the series *Sources Chrétiennes*. This French edition, based on the text of Joseph Bidez and Günter Christian Hansen's modern standard edition (GCS 50, Berlin 1960; 2nd revised edition: GCS-NF 4, Berlin 1995) with the French translation by the Dominican scholar André-Jean Festugière OP and with contributions from Bernard Grillet and Laurent Angliviel de la Beaumelle.

This edition includes valuable introductions and offers a particularly rich apparatus of footnotes which are of essential importance to any student of this ecclesiastical historian.⁶⁸ Other notable essays dedicated to the ecclesiastical historians, authored by Friedhelm Winkelmann, Peter Van Deun, Hartmut Leppin, and Gabriele Marasco were published in a collection edited by the latter.⁶⁹

A more recent German contribution to a little explored aspect of *HE* as genre of apologetics was made by Martin Wallraff.⁷⁰ Recent important Italian and Polish scholarship on the subject should also be noted.⁷¹ A major contribution to the study of fifth century ecclesiastical historiography to date, however, is Peter van Nuffelen's comparative study of Socrates and Sozomen, dedicated chiefly to their historical views as reflected through their methods of

⁶⁷ G. Sabbah, 'Sozomène et la politique religieuse des Valentiniens', in: B. Pouderon and Y.-M. Duval (eds), *L'historiographie de l'église des premiers siècles* (Paris 2001), pp. 293-314. Sabbah's contribution to the Tours conference is focused on one specific aspect of the text: Sozomen's treatment of the religious policies of two Roman emperors, the pro-Nicene Valentinian I (364-375) in the west and the pro-Arian Valens (364-378) in the east.

⁶⁸ Sozomène, *Histoire ecclésiastique, livres I-II*, éd. J. Bidez, trad. André-Jean Festugière, annoté par Bernard Grillet et Guy Sabbah, SC 306 (Paris, 1983). *livres III-IV*, éd. J. Bidez, trad. André-Jean Festugière, annoté par Guy Sabbah, SC 418, (Paris, 1996). *livres V-VI*, éd. J. Bidez et G.C. Hansen (GCS), trad. André-Jean Festugière, annoté par Guy Sabbah, SC 495 (Paris, 2005). *livres VI-IX*, éd. J. Bidez et G.C. Hansen (GCS), trad. André-Jean Festugière, annoté par Laurent Angliviel de la Beaumelle et Guy Sabbah, SC 516 (Paris, 2008).

⁶⁹ See: G. Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.* (Leiden 2003).

⁷⁰ See: M. Wallraff, 'Warum ist „Kirchengeschichte“ in der Antike ausgestorben?', in: id. (ed.), *Geschichte als Argument? Historiographie und Apologetik*, (Leuven 2015), pp. 1-19.

⁷¹ See e.g. M. Simonetti, 'L'imperatore arbitro nelle controversie teologiche', *MedAnt* 5 (2002), pp. 447-464; A. Baldini, 'Considerazioni ulteriori su Sozomenos *HE* 1,5,1 e sulle edizioni della storia di Eunapio', *AntTard* 12 (2004), pp. 387-391; K. Iliski, 'Kirchengeschichte als Weltgeschichte' in: D. Brodka and M. Stachura (eds), *Continuity and Change: Studies in Late Antique Historiography* (= *Elektrum* 13)(Cracow 2007), pp. 121-129; M. Stachura, 'Wandlungen und Kontinuität in der Häretiker und Heidenpolitik in den Werken von Sokrates und Sozomenos': *ibid.* pp. 131-146.

Id., 'Walka państwa rzymskiego z pogaństwem i herezją w oczach historyków późnoantycznych: Filostorgios, Sokrates, Sozomenos, Teodoret i Zosimos' (=The Struggle of the Roman State with Paganism and Heresy in the Eyes of the Late Antique Historians: Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen and Zosimus), *U schyłku starożytności - Studia źródłoznawcze* 8 (2009), pp. 127-148.

However, a substantial Polish contribution to scholarship on ecclesiastical historiography is: S. Bralewski, *Obraz papieżstwa w historiografii kościelnej wczesnego Bizancjum*, (=The Image of the Papacy in the Ecclesiastical Historiography of Early Byzantium) (Łódź 2006). Id., *Symmachia cesarstwa rzymskiego z Bogiem chrześcijan (IV-VI wiek)* (= The Alliance of the Roman Empire with the God of the Christians) (Łódź 2019). A large portion of this work is dedicated to this theme through the prism of the ecclesiastical historians from Eusebius to Evagrius Scholasticus.

handling their source materials. Incidentally, Van Nuffelen provides a revised examination of their respective sources, picking up from where previous scholarship on Socrates left off in 1898 and on Sozomen in 1911.⁷² Yet, Van Nuffelen deals with the ecclesiastical historians even-handedly and is thus, seeking to colonise a territory quite different from that of a monograph on a single historian.⁷³

Another important Francophone addition to relevant scholarship which is in fact a work in progress is a commentary on Eusebius's ecclesiastical history of which only the first volume has appeared thus far.⁷⁴

The most recent attempt at a monograph on Sozomen (and indeed the first one since Georg Schoo's study of Sozomen's sources), is Caterina Berardi's *Linee di storiografia ecclesiastica in Sozomene di Gaza* (Bari 2016). Unfortunately, this work leaves much to be desired.⁷⁵ The latest substantial contribution to the study of Christian historiography in late antiquity, focusing on Eusebius of Caesarea and the reception of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* through the ages up until the present, is M. J. Hollerich's *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Oakland, Ca. 2021). Sozomen receives in this gigantic work a brief discussion and a few additional mentions, all of which emanate from the author's view whereby Sozomen's indebtedness to Eusebius is quite minimal.⁷⁶

We shall not conclude the present exploration of recent academic research of fifth century ecclesiastical historiography without mentioning five doctoral dissertations which remain unpublished to date: L. Gardiner's study of Socrates (Cambridge 2013), E. Delacenserie's thesis on the reception of Socrates (Ghent 2016) and earlier comparative studies from the US: B. Fitzgerald, 'Pagan activities during the reigns of Valens and Theodosius I according to the church historians Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret' (Princeton Theological Seminary 1995), S. A. Rushing, 'The Apostolic Tradition in the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret' (Baylor University 2013) and J. J. Reidy, 'An Alternative History of the Church : A Study of the Lost Arian History' (St. Louis University 2015). Reidy's work is an important and, in many ways, a pioneering study of a missing link in the chain of ecclesiastical historiography. A most recent contribution focused on Sozomen has been made by S. Bralewski, who has teased out from Sozomen's narrative the church historian's assessment of

⁷² P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété: Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004). F. Geppert, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Socrates Scholasticus* (Leipzig 1898); G. Schoo, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Sozomenos* (Berlin 1911; repr. Aalen 1973).

⁷³ This has been recognised by Van Nuffelen himself. See: Van Nuffelen, op. cit., p. xxii, where the author acknowledges, in the introduction to his study, the long overdue need for a monograph dedicated to Sozomen: 'Sozomène est moins populaire ... aucune monographie n'est consacrée à son *Histoire ecclésiastique*. C'est un manque qui c'est fait sentir, car de nombreuses questions ne peuvent être clarifiées sans une vue d'ensemble sur son ouvrage'.

⁷⁴ See: S. Morlet and L. Perrone (eds), *Histoire ecclésiastique. Commentaire. Tome I: Études d'introduction* (Paris 2012).

⁷⁵ See Peter van Nuffelen's incisive review of Berardi's book in: Idem, 'Old and New Debates on Sozomen', *Histos* 11 (2017), pp. xlv-xlviii.

⁷⁶ See: M.J. Hollerich, *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Oakland, Ca. 2021), pp. 68-83 and *passim*.

virtues and qualities of two role models: the pious Christian ruler and the wise ascetic, devoted to the practice of a superior philosophy.⁷⁷

The above survey of contributions to the study of the ecclesiastical historians, it should be stressed, does not claim to be exhaustive. It may be regarded as an overview of the most essential contributions which modern scholarship on late antique ecclesiastical historiography offers to present-day students of the field. In the light of this state of affairs, Sozomen seems to emerge as the Cinderella of the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians, and thus hardly requires any further justification for being the subject of the present study. His specific contribution, as we have seen, has hardly enjoyed a dedicated study and, as has been acknowledged by Van Nuffelen, needs to be assessed and placed within the tradition of the genre in its entirety.

To achieve this it would appear essential, before turning to Sozomen and his work, to dedicate the first chapter of the present study to a reconsideration of the genre's origins and to analyse the process of their amalgamation through the first ecclesiastical history, Eusebius's *HE*, followed by a sketch of the genre's development based on examples taken from surviving works by Sozomen's predecessors, namely Rufinus of Aquileia, Philostorgius of Borissus and Socrates of Constantinople, based on groups of diagnostic case studies, aiming at an exploration of the developmental tendencies of the genre before Sozomen's own contribution.

The second chapter aims at providing the religious context in which Sozomen wrote, i.e. the major trends in Christianity during Sozomen's lifetime, chiefly from Theodosius I (379-395) to Theodosius II (408-450), the latter being the emperor to whom Sozomen's *HE* is dedicated. A special emphasis will be placed on key issues in ecclesiastical politics which are likely to have had an impact on Sozomen's view, despite their absence from Sozomen's surviving work.

In the third chapter we shall consider the main issues which arise from the peculiar composition of the *HE* itself: the dedication to Theodosius II, the *proemium* with its statement of intent, and the date of composition.

The fourth chapter shall be dedicated to the role of Sozomen's religious beliefs in shaping his authorial voice which governs his historical perspectives and narrative strategies. First, we shall discuss these concepts and try to show how they apply to Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It will be followed by an analysis of Sozomen's account of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria as test case. If we understand the "historical perspective" as an understanding of the social, cultural, intellectual and emotional conditions that shaped people's lives and activities in the past, this concept takes on special significance when analysing a historiographic genre that is devoted to the history of the Christian Church. In this context, we will show that Sozomen's use of biblical allusions in his discussion of Athanasius' career, occupies an important place. We will present Sozomen's affiliation with the Nicæan faith in the era of constant religious uncertainty, as argued in the second chapter of the present study.

⁷⁷ See: S. Bralewski, 'The Catalogue of Virtues in the Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen of Bethelia', *Vox Patrum* 84 (2022), pp. 31-50.

The fifth chapter's subject-matter is Constantine and his reign. The underlying hypothesis is that Sozomen's conception of this Roman emperor as a religious leader provides the framework for his outlook and can thus serve as a key for shedding light on his authorial voice. We shall show how Constantine and his reign were 'mythologised' by Sozomen and at the same time, had raised fundamental questions with which Sozomen had to grapple.

The sixth and last chapter seeks, in the light of the conclusions drawn from the preceding chapter on Constantine, to extend the study to Sozomen's account of Constantine's successors, Constantius II, Julian, and Valens, leading, as we hope, towards a synthesis of those elements of Sozomen's authorial voice which were evidenced in the previous five chapters. This chapter offers a re-configuration of Sozomen's outlook. It attempts to explore Sozomen's view of a succession of emperors whose handling of the Constantinian legacy was marked by their rejection of the Doctrine of Nicea and therefore may offer a good test case of coherence in Sozomen's thought. The present study seeks to identify and elucidate a distinctive individual element in Sozomen's authorial voice, rather than focusing on the evident differences between him and his predecessor (most notably, the portrayal of monks and holy men which Sozomen often supplements by independent and indeed, unique material).⁷⁸ It follows that this theme ought to remain beyond the scope of the present study, although inevitably several occasional incursions into this territory must be allowed nonetheless.⁷⁹ Given the constraints of the present format, Sozomen's account of Theodosius I's reign and the plethora of new questions it raises, had to be left out too.⁸⁰

We shall endeavour here to define the essence of Sozomen's individual authorial voice, which still remains overshadowed by the proximity in time, place, and choice of genre, to Socrates of Constantinople and his own *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Our working assumption will be that certain essential and indeed peculiar characteristics of the Palestinian born church historian may be found in portions of his narrative which are still often classified as mere plagiarism of Socrates's ecclesiastical history, leading certain scholars to believe that Sozomen's *HE* could not warrant much more than *Quellenforschung*.⁸¹ Recent scholarship, as has been already argued, has re-opened the case of the ecclesiastical historians. Now that the former *communis opinio* seems to have lost its sway, it seems high time to ask whether Sozomen of Bethelia was merely a follower of Eusebius of Caesarea, a successor of Socrates of Constantinople, or, rather, an ecclesiastical historian in his own right.

⁷⁸ A clear example of this lack can be found in D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2002), pp. 169-170. See also *ibid.* pp. 190 and 197.

⁷⁹ See however: T. Urbainczyk, 'Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen', *Historia* 46 (1997), pp. 355-373 (esp. pp. 362-364).

⁸⁰ On this account see: R. Malcolm Errington, 'Christian Accounts of the Religious Legislation of Theodosius I', *Klio* 79, (1997), pp. 410-135.

⁸¹ See e.g. G. Schoo (1911), pp. 16-18. Schoo's research results have been effectively revised and augmented by Van Nuffelen. See: P. Van Nuffelen, *Un Héritage ...* (Leuven (2004), pp. 455-497.

Chapter 1: The Birth of a Late Antique Genre: *Historia Ecclesiastica* from Eusebius of Caesarea to Sozomen of Bethelia

ἀλλὰ μόνοντῷ προφητῶν τὰ μὲν ἀνωτάτω καὶ παλαιότατα κατὰ τὴν ἐπίπνοϊαν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μαθόντων, τὰ δὲ καθ' αὐτοὺς ὥς ἐγενετο σαφῶς συγγραφόντων⁸²

...quod aeternitas in Scripturis aliquando pro eo ponatur ut finem nesciat, aliquando vero ut in praesenti quidem saeculo finem non habet, habeat tamen in futuro.⁸³

Non habet tempus aeternitas. ⁸⁴

Records, like the little children of long ago, only speak when they are spoken to, and they will not talk to strangers. ⁸⁵

A. The Christianisation of Ancient Historiography: Graeco-Roman Models, Biblical Traditions and Eusebius of Caesarea

The beginnings of pagan Graeco-Roman historiography still remain a rather obscure historical and literary process, having emerged mostly from oral traditions which were concerned above all with legends or semi-legendary stories and transmitted partly by authors about whom our knowledge (with the exception of later historians) is limited.⁸⁶ By sharp contrast, the literary genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* appears to be the brain child of one author, operating, as it were, in full awareness of the innovative character of his invention.⁸⁷ Yet, it was pagan historiography, probably, more than any other relevant literary genre (e.g. Biblical literature and exegesis, Christian apologetics, pagan biography) which was exploited by the inventor of *HE*, despite the apparent differences between the two. It is worth noting that the inventor concerned was unable to define satisfactorily his own work without grudgingly admitting that it was based on a Christian adaptation of characteristic themes in Graeco-Roman historiography.⁸⁸ It is suggested that looking at the development of the genre of ecclesiastical history is in fact a study of a process of Christianisation of classical Graeco-Roman historiography. Sozomen's *HE*, the subject of the present study (it will be argued at a later stage) is perhaps the most comprehensive example of this literary phenomenon. It is not uncommon to think that classical Greco-Roman historiography had integrated myth with

⁸² Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, 1, 37.

⁸³ Origen, *Commentarius in Pauli Epistulam ad Romanos* 6, 5.

⁸⁴ Tertullian, *Contra Marcionem* 1, 8.

⁸⁵ C.R. Cheney, *Medieval Texts and Studies* (Oxford 1973), p. 8.

⁸⁶ For a concise description of the beginnings and development of classical Greek historiography, see: S. Hornblower, 'Introduction' in Id. *Greek Historiography* (Oxford 1994), pp. 1-72 (esp. pp. 7-54). See also C.W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley, CA 1983), pp. 1-46; O. Lendle, *Einführung in die griechische Gschichtsschreibung* (Darmstadt 1992), pp. 10-35. C. Darbo-Peschanski, 'The Origin of Greek Historiography' in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Chichester 2010), pp. 27-38 and more recently: T.F. Scanlon, *Greek Historiography* (Chichester 2015), pp. 1-25. On the beginning of Roman historiography (and its connection with Greek historiography in particular) see:

D. Flach, *Römische Geschichtsschreibung* (Darmstadt 1985; repr. 2013), pp. 56-79.

⁸⁷ Eus. *HE*, I, 1, 5.

⁸⁸ Ibid., V, *Praef.*

contemporary history. But what, really, is 'myth'? Oliver Taplin has commented on modern conceptions of 'myth' in a way which illustrates the elusive and indeed, vexing nature of this term:

*A myth is a good story, plus some other special ingredient – though there is little or no agreement over what that ingredient might be.*⁸⁹

Taplin's comment is at best, a step in the right direction but not much more than that. Myth may be regarded, for starters, as an *influential* story, but what kind of story and which 'component' of that story makes it 'influential'? And in what ways? While the simplistic thesis of Greek progress from the sensual and emotional towards the reasonable and rational, from the allegedly- fictional *mythos* towards the thought-through *logos* (in keeping with the formula, famously proposed by Wilhelm Nestle⁹⁰) - has been rightly and competently rejected, it would be difficult to say that the common juxtaposition of 'myth' and 'truth' has been completely eradicated. In fact, it seems to be prudent not to be tempted by the propensity of certain scholars to push us to the opposite extremity.⁹¹

The common notion of a story which is at odds with a true story has been disproved, as was strongly argued by the Finnish comparative religion scholar Lauri Honko, who had convincingly highlighted the *sacred* nature of mythical narratives.⁹² Despite their obvious diversity, they share the theme of *beginnings*, be it the emergence of gods, the formation of the universe, the creation of mankind, the birth of a tribe, a city or an *ethnos* (*ethnogenesis*). We shall return to this issue in Chapter 5 of the present study, whereby we will be analysing Sozomen's account of Constantine the Great and his reign as an example of myth-making out of recent historical events, practiced, as it were, already by Herodotus in his account of the foundation of Athenian democracy.⁹³

However, it seems essential to highlight this fundamental issue in the context of the beginnings of *HE* as a genre, given the fact that Sozomen's narrative, together with Socrates' and Theodoret's respective contributions to the genre concerned, were recently bundled up with 'sheer myth-making' by Timothy Barnes.⁹⁴ An equal emphasis must be put, therefore, on the nature of the reception of narratives associated (one way or another) with myths and the nature of their influence. The Old Testament (especially the Septuagint), another presupposed

⁸⁹ See: O. Taplin, *Greek Fire* (London 1985), p. 92.

⁹⁰ For Nestle's theory of the development of Greek historiography, see: W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos Zum Logos: Die Selbstentfaltung Des Griechischen Denkens Von Homer Bis Auf Die Sophistik Und Sokrates* (Leipzig 1942 repr. Stuttgart 1975), pp. 503-529.

⁹¹ For an analysis leading towards this conclusion see: R. Fowler, 'Mythos and Logos', *JHS* 131 (2011), pp. 45-66.

⁹² See: L. O. Honko, 'The Problem of Defining Myth' in: A. Dundes (ed.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley, CA 1984), pp. 41-52. Honko offers a descriptive definition. According to Honko, (ibid. p. 49) the myth *inter alia*: "...expresses and confirms society's religious values and norms, It provides patterns of behaviour to be imitated, testifies to the efficacy of ritual with its practical end and establishes the sanctity of cult...The events recounted in myths have true validity for a religious person. For this reason, the use of the term myth in everyday language is from the scholarly point of view inexact (in ordinary language myth is often used expressly for something untrue, utopian misguided etc.)."

⁹³ See: H. Haarmann, *Myth as Source of Knowledge in Early Western Thought: The Quest for Historiography, Science and Philosophy in Greek Antiquity* (Wiesbaden 2013), pp. 196-207.

⁹⁴ T.D. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Chichester 2011), p. 19.

source of inspiration for a Christian ecclesiastical historian (in any presumed way) contains historical writing (e.g. the Babylonian exile), which seems to be ‘mythologised’ by the prophetic text appended to it.⁹⁵ Other Biblical examples for this phenomenon are the Books of Daniel and Chronicles.⁹⁶ Thus, the Gospels, being patterned notably on the narrative of the Old Testament, may be regarded, in addition to their historicity and historiographical context and function⁹⁷, also as a ‘constituent myth’ of Christianity due to their peculiar reception.⁹⁸

A different audience was required, at a later stage, in order to tell the story afresh *qua* history and thus to comprehend the Christian Church in accordance with the rules of *both* dispositions namely the Divine and the human, as both were acknowledged to have governed the course of history. Yet doing so may have triggered new problems. Can telling the ‘story’ of the Early Church really be an equivalent of re-telling a Biblical story? It would certainly be unimaginable to attribute to an ecclesiastical historian any ambition to add new books to what had been largely (if not undisputedly) acknowledged at this point, i.e. the turn of the fourth century as canonical Scripture, (not the least due to the growing demand for an accurate and stable text at the service of ecclesiastical cohesion).⁹⁹ On the other hand, it seems feasible to

⁹⁵ The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (in Hebrew **יוסף בן מתתיהו הכהן** AD 37- ca.100) is widely regarded as a mediator between Jewish Biblical traditions and the Early Church, notably through his *magnum opus Antiquitates Judaicae* (Ἰουδαϊκὴ ἀρχαιολογία) – an interpretive paraphrase of the Old Testament presented as a history of the Jewish people from the Creation to the wake of the Jewish rebellion against the Romans in A.D. 66 (to the latter he dedicated his earlier major work *ἱστορία Ἰουδαϊκοῦ πολέμου πρὸς Ῥωμαίους* or *De bello Iudaico*). It is however worth noting that Josephus regards the prophet not only as an extra-ordinary person endowed with outstanding speech skills as well as a God-inspired preacher who predicts the future (*AJ*, VIII, 243-244) but also as a *historian* who is in charge of recording the past, a view which he highlights in his later polemical defence of the antiquity of the Jewish people in his work *Περὶ ἀρχαιότητος Ἰουδαίων λόγος*, better known as *Contra Apionem* (I, 37-41). This possibly links Josephus’s prophet, on one hand, with the Greek myth since these qualities, as Louis Feldman has observed, correlate with those of the Greek prophet Calchas who features in Homer (*Iliad* I. 70). On the other hand, the early Christian Church seems to have found Josephus’s specific interpretation of the prophets’ mission very useful e.g. *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* 2. 5. See: L. H. Feldman, ‘Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus’, *JThS-NS* 41(1990), pp. 386-422. Josephus, as we shall see, had inspired Sozomen who singles him out as a trustworthy source (*Soz.* I, 1, 5).

⁹⁶ For historiography in The Book of Daniel, see: F. Millar, ‘Hellenistic History in a Near Eastern Perspective: The Book of Daniel’ in P. Cartledge, P. Garnsey and E. Gruen (eds.), *Hellenistic Constructs* (Berkeley, CA 1997), pp. 89-104. On the role of prophetic texts in Chronicles see: P.C. Beentjes, ‘Constructs of Prophets and Prophecy in the Book of Chronicles’ in L.L. Grabbe and M. Nissinen (eds), *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former and Latter Prophets and Other Texts* (Atlanta, GA 2011), pp. 21-40. See also: W. Johnstone, ‘The Mythologising of History in the Old Testament’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 24 (1971), pp. 201-217.

⁹⁷ See: E.-M. Becker, ‘Historiographical Literature in the New Testament Period (1st and 2nd Centuries CE)’ in: T. Holmén and S.E. Porter (eds.), *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus II* (Leiden 2011), pp. 1787-1814. See now her extended analysis in Ead., *The Birth of Christian History: Memory and Time from Mark to Luke-Acts* (New Haven, CT 2017), pp. 69-129.

⁹⁸ See: G.K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids, MI 2012), pp. 55-94.

⁹⁹ See: Eus. *HE* III, 25. The final stage of both the Jewish and Christian Biblical canon still attracts a lively debate among scholars. It is of relevance to pay attention to scholars who date the finalisation of the Jewish Biblical canon to as late as the aftermath of the catastrophic Bar Kochba revolt (AD 132-135). One of the ensuing effects on the Jewish outlook on history was to reject the possibility of prophecy and Divine Revelation (including of course the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ). It is perhaps against this background that the Babylonian Talmud names Malachi as the last prophet. See e.g.: *Tosefta Sotah* 3:3; *Yoma* 9b; *Sanhedrin* 11a. Another Talmudic tradition associates the end of prophecy with the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans: “Since the Temple was

explore a hypothesis whereby their *historical perspectives* were shaped by the Biblical heritage. The ecclesiastical historians seem to have sought to create, each one in his own way, a hybrid historiography i.e. a fusion of the sacred and the transcendental as handed down by Holy Scripture, with the literary effectiveness of the classical Graeco-Roman historiographical heritage in gaining appreciation, and so, to acquire authority for their respective works in the eyes of their intended readership. It will be argued that the ‘mythologisation’ of history was one of the major narrative strategies they had chosen for the materialisation of their plan.

A word of clarification concerning ‘narrative strategies’ and ‘historical perspectives’, the two focal points of our study of Sozomen’s *HE*, would not go amiss here. Narrative strategy is a scheme, device, method or technique of narrative which an author employs in order to engender a certain meaning. In other words, a design of narrative aimed at achieving the communication of a specific message. The use of the ‘mythological’ or the ‘archaic’ can serve such a strategy for the creation of a contrast with the new and the contemporary (in their broadest sense) and thus, the ‘old’ becomes instrumental in the creation of a focus on the ‘new’ and the contemporary. In the words of the literary theorist Wolfgang Iser (1926-2007):

*‘to defamiliarize the reader with topics and language that are old while familiarizing the reader with what is new and particular to this story’.*¹⁰⁰

The applicability of narratology, the study of narrative, to historiography was recognised almost as soon as narratology itself had emerged as an analytical tool of literary criticism and not long after the beginning of a growing focus within narratological scholarship on the connection between historiography and fiction.¹⁰¹ This connection received its crystallisation from the American philosopher of history Hayden White (1928-2018). White argued that historiography, not unlike fiction, relies on strategies of explanation which fall into several categories namely: argument, employment (i.e. the assembly of a series of historical events into a narrative with a plot) and ideological implication.¹⁰²

The historian’s freedom of manoeuvring is obviously *a priori* more limited than that of the fiction writer. A historian is of course attached to the source material which does not allow a free invention of stories. Yet, historiography is not free of speculation, uncertainty, caution and indeed, ambiguity and ambivalence. All these unavoidable areas of indeterminacy take active part in the shaping of the historian’s perspective. As the historian (just as the writer of fiction) cannot reproduce in writing anything *in toto*, it follows that a historical work will always be shaped by a certain perspective.¹⁰³

destroyed, prophecy has been taken from prophets and given to fools and children. “(*Baba Bathra*, 12, b). In the light of these traditions, it would be hard to dismiss the possibility that this Jewish departure from history may have also served simultaneously Jewish anti-Christian polemics. This adversity seems quite likely to have shaped the emerging ecclesiastical historiography in the opposite direction i.e. as a demonstration of God’s active involvement in the world, stirring the course of history from the Crucifixion through His new chosen people – the Christian Church. See: J.A. Sanders, ‘The Issue of Closure in the Canonical Process’ in: L.M. McDonald and J.A. Sanders (eds.) *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MS 2002), pp. 252 – 263.

¹⁰⁰ See W. Iser, ‘Narrative Strategies as a Means of Communication’. In: M.J. Valdés and O.J. Miller (eds.), *Interpretation of Narrative* (Toronto 1978), pp. 100-117 (esp. 101-102).

¹⁰¹ See: I.J.F. De Jong, *Narratology & Classics: A Practical Guide* (Oxford 2014), pp. 167-168.

¹⁰² See: H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore, MD 1975), p. 7.

¹⁰³ See: M. Fludernik, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie* (rev. ed. Darmstadt 2013), pp. 11-12.

Narrative strategy is also linked with what narratology theorists commonly refer to as 'focalisation' i.e. the narrator's 'vantage point' on a series of events that are either believed to have taken place, or that have occurred in reality.¹⁰⁴ The plot in its Aristotelian whole i.e. consisting of beginning, middle and end¹⁰⁵ (or the *fabula*) can be 'arranged' or 're-ordered' by the author and this re-ordering of the *fabula* is known by narratologists as *syuzhet*.¹⁰⁶ This can be done from different vantage points i.e. omniscience, involvement or distance. The choice of the vantage point (or focalisation¹⁰⁷) can change, as it does in a text.¹⁰⁸ The differences in focalisation can be in time (e.g. an *excursus* to archaic times, which in itself can serve as 'mythologisation' such as in the 'archaeology' or the 'narrative displacement' in Thucydides¹⁰⁹) or space (e.g. in an *excursus* dedicated to geography which typifies Herodotus¹¹⁰). However, focalisation also tends to be governed by the nature of the historian's source material or indeed by the historian's way of handling it.¹¹¹ This can be not only the result of the immediate documents and oral reports from informants which are in use, but also an engagement with a literary tradition and in the case of a genre like *HE*, a religious commitment which the ecclesiastical historian seeks to make by engaging with biblical and Christian post-Biblical traditions and by choosing the suitable narrative strategy to do so. It follows that a Christian historical perspective would be quite likely to reflect the History of Salvation vis-à-vis the manifestation of history as succession of rulers in time or, in short, to convey the eternal in relation to temporality. The two 'histories' become thus the main 'focalisators' which shape the perspective of the ecclesiastical history and influence the narrative strategies employed by the ecclesiastical historian.

Our method of analysis is also indebted at this point to Rudolf Bultmann's ideas concerning the New Testament and 'mythical' thinking.¹¹² The quasi-mythical nature of the Gospels, may help us to understand better the Christian environment in which the genre of ecclesiastical history was created. It will be argued later, but this time *contrary* to Bultmann's proposition, that this happened in a period (namely ca. 300) in which more-educated Christians could have

¹⁰⁴ The French narratologist Gérard Genette introduced the term 'focalisation' to avoid using 'point de vue' which he found problematic. See: G. Genette, *Discours du récit* (Paris 1972; repr. 2007), pp. 190-204. For the same reason 'vantage point' is being used here as it appears to be in the present context a clearer term than 'point of view' which in English (as in French) is commonly associated with 'opinion'.

¹⁰⁵ Aristotle, *De Poetica*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ The terms *фабула* and *сюжет* are attributed to the Russian formalists Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) and Victor Shklovsky (1893-1984). See: E. Volek, 'Die Begriffe 'Fabel' und 'Sujet' in der modernen Literaturwissenschaft.' *Poetica* 9 (1977), pp. 141-166.

¹⁰⁷ On 'focalisation', see: M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (3rd edition: Toronto 2009), pp. 145-163.

¹⁰⁸ See: D. Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore, MD 1999), pp. 109-132.

¹⁰⁹ See: J.R. Ellis, 'The Structure and Argument of Thucydides' Archaeology', *Classical Antiquity* 10 (1991), pp. 344-376. See also: S. Hornblower, *Thucydidean Themes* (Oxford 2010), pp. 59-99.

¹¹⁰ See: K. Clarke, *Shaping the Geography of Empire: Man and Nature in Herodotus' Histories* (Oxford 2018), pp. 26-41. On the applicability of narratological analysis to Roman historiography, see: C. Tsitsiou-Chelidoni, 'History beyond Literature: Interpreting the 'Internally Focalized' Narrative in Livy's *Ab urbe condita*' in: J. Grethlein and A. Rengakos (eds.), *Narratology and Interpretation* (Berlin 2009), pp. 527-554.

¹¹¹ Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 116. As we shall see, the handling of source material had played a pivotal role in the invention of *HE*.

¹¹² See R. Bultmann, 'Offenbarung und Heilsgeschehen' (repr.), in: H. W. Bartsch (ed.) *Kerygma und Mythos I* (2nd ed., Hamburg 1951), pp. 15-48. See also: Id. *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ 1958), pp. 11-21.

been in certain need of a history (or were believed to be in such a need by the inventor of the genre). This particular historical work would recount the beginnings of their faith *without* the 'mythical' tenor of the Gospels. On the other hand, it seems that the inventor of the genre sought to retain the connection to the Biblical origins by absorbing certain Jewish traditions. It will be also argued that Sozomen, perhaps more than any other post-Eusebian ecclesiastical historian, was responsive to the transformation of both the story of Constantine's life and indeed, the story of the conversion of the empire, into a *Christian* 'myth'.

As already mentioned before, we shall return to the role of 'myth-making' as a fundamental concept in Sozomen's *HE* in Chapter 5 of the present study. Let us turn now to the role of Greco-Roman historiography in the making of ecclesiastical historiography. The Greek historians we define as 'classical', are obviously far from being homogeneous. Despite the common labelling, differences in the characteristics of their writing are easily detectable. An extended definition of 'classical' historiography may include the Ionian λογογράφοι of the sixth and fifth centuries BC, whose writings survive only in fragments.¹¹³ However, the term 'classical' refers normally to the more eminent (and better preserved) Herodotus of Halicarnassus (ca.484-425 BC), and the two Athenians, Thucydides (ca. 460-400 BC) and Xenophon (ca. 431-354 BC). Despite apparent differences in scope, tenor, and method in their respective works (and, of course, their life circumstances) and despite the caveats which, as we have already seen, every scholarship on myth must take into account, it can still be said that the Greek classical historians were concerned with making historical sense of Greek mythology by turning it into a coherent, rationalised narrative of political, social, religious and psychological factors of human behaviour and actions.¹¹⁴ Their narrative strategies vary between the anthropologically- descriptive and ostensibly non-judgemental (as in Herodotus) and the unreservedly- involved and highly- opinionated despite an overarching claim for 'scientific' impartiality and objectivity (as in Thucydides).¹¹⁵ Rhetorical devices, narrative strategies (which were witheringly criticised already in classical antiquity as reflecting sheer bias, partisanship and betrayal of the truth¹¹⁶) and indeed, questionable originality, did not diminish the authoritative status of these historians.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ See: S. Hornblower, *Greek Historiography* (Oxford 1994), pp. 10-16.

¹¹⁴ For a recent discussion of Greek conceptions of 'rationalisation' of myth, see:

G. Hawes, *Rationalizing Myth in Antiquity* (Oxford 2018), pp. 1-36.

¹¹⁵ On classical (and modern) historiography as a 'myth transformation' project, see: J. Mali, *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography* (Chicago 2003), pp. 1-35. On Thucydides as 'political psychologist' see: J. Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (London 2007), pp. 29-51. On the relevance of myth transformation and political psychology to Roman historiography, see: T.P Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics: Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature* (Leicester 1979; repr. Bristol 2003), pp. 41-53. Herodotus was interested also in what can be called 'ethnography' of non-Greek nations (e.g. Persians, Egyptians, Indians and in their respective mythologies). This theme found its way into Ecclesiastical historiography as can be inferred from Sozomen's work and indeed, the work of some of his predecessors, in particular, the heterodox ecclesiastical historian Philostorgius of Borissus (368 - ca. 430), See, respectively: W. Stevenson, 'Sozomen, Barbarians, and Early Byzantine Historiography', *GRBS* 43 (2003), pp. 51-75 and G. Marasco, 'Filostorgio e i barbari' in S. Bianchetti (ed.), *Poikilma: Studi in onore di Michelle R. Cataudella in occasione del 60 compleanno* (La Spezia 2001), pp. 721-735.

¹¹⁶ See e.g. Plutarch, *De malignitate Herodoti*, 1-5; Lucian, *Quomodo historia scribenda sit*, 15-22 and 33-39.

¹¹⁷ For a defence of the reliability of classical historians despite the criticisms against them, see:

By contrast, ecclesiastical history, upon its initial appearance, developed a distinctive notion of a single historical event, i.e. the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, chosen by the inventor of the new genre as its starting point. Eusebius does not conceal his claim for originality in embarking on this kind project. Yet, he does not neglect to mention his indebtedness to previous authors, despite his clear awareness of his pioneering role in choosing to walk down this untrodden path.¹¹⁸ At the same time Eusebius also highlights the potential importance of his ambitious contribution for all those who cherish the study of history in general.¹¹⁹ The subject concerned, i.e. the *Ecclesia*, is treated as an *ethnos* and the history of this 'nation' - the 'nation' of the Christians - is from the very first ecclesiastical history closely linked (not quite accidentally, one may observe) with the history of the Roman Empire. The apologetical tone for what appears to be a logical choice of beginning for a history of the church is due to the fact that, according to pre-Eusebian Christian thought, often demonstrated in apologetics and inspired by the Bible and Biblical exegesis, as well as by Greek and Hellenistic philosophy (notably the thought of Plato and Philo of Alexandria¹²⁰), *Ecclesia*, the subject matter of any *Historia Ecclesiastica*, did not 'begin' with the Incarnation or the Crucifixion. Eusebius's 'answer' to the 'archaeologies' of Herodotus, Thucydides and Josephus is a theological discussion concerning the nature of Christ, meant to demonstrate a core theme in Christian dogma: the pre-existence of Christ. By doing so Eusebius defies the conventional chronology which was handed down by both Greco-Roman historiography and the Old Testament. In this way Eusebius created a new historical perspective, governed by 'spiritual chronology', emanating from the trans-temporality of Christ which Eusebius also uses to attack "...those who suppose that it (*scil.* Christianity) is recent and foreign, appearing no earlier than yesterday".¹²¹ In narratological terms we may say now that Eusebius's invention is a historiographical genre based on a double or rather, 'hybrid' focalisation. The *Ecclesia Visibilis* has had its prefiguration in the history of ancient Israel. The Incarnation in the fullness of time, the summit of the spiritual history of mankind, i.e. in the History of its Salvation, occurred - as was consistently argued from the Gospels onwards - in fulfilment of previous Biblical prophecies.¹²²

A. B. Bosworth, 'Plus ça change.... Ancient Historians and their Sources', *Classical Antiquity* 22 (2003), pp. 167-198.

¹¹⁸ Eus. *HE*, I, 2, 23.

¹¹⁹ Eus. *HE*, I, 1, 3-5.

¹²⁰ A notable exponent of this current in early Christian thought is Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150- 215); see: e.g. his *Stromateis*, 1,13,58; 25-26, and *Paedagogus*, 3,3,17. On Clement and Philo, see: E. Osborne, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge 2005), pp. 81-105.

¹²¹ Eus. *HE*, I, 2, 1. David De Vore, in an otherwise thoughtful article seems to have missed the relevance of Eusebius's discussion of the nature of Christ to his chronological structuring of his *HE* and indeed to Eusebius's historical perspectives. De Vore refers to that discourse as "some temporally transcendent theological prolegomena about the nature of Christ. But this does not stretch the narrative's chronological boundaries in any original way...". De Vore goes on to claim that Eusebius had followed the examples of both Herodotus and Thucydides who wrote 'archaeologies' (i.e. introductions, dedicated to archaic times or in De Vore's words: 'prehistory'). However, a close comparison between the three historians disproves De Vore's claim. Unfortunately, De Vore seems to have overlooked Josephus as a more likely source of inspiration for Eusebius's conception of 'archaeology'. See: D.J. De Vore, 'Genre and Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History: Towards a Focused Debate' in: A. Johnson and J. Schott (eds.), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations* (Cambridge, MA 2013), pp. 19-49, esp. p. 31.

¹²² Eus. *HE*, I, 2, 17- 3, 20. On the early Christian theology of time, see: O. Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit: Die Urchristliche Zeit und Geschichtsauffassung* (Zürich 1962), pp. 35-46.

The birth of Christianity, almost concurrently with the decline of Jewish Hellenism and not long before the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD (perhaps the most symbolic of Christ's recorded prophecies in the New Testament)¹²³, had prompted amongst learned Christians the need to develop a sensitive historical outlook.¹²⁴ This appears to have been particularly vital when the Early Church had to cope with relentless and influential Jewish opposition which remained active under the first Christian emperors.¹²⁵ The attempt to demonstrate the historical links between Jesus and the prophecies of the Old Testament and, at the same time, the problematic task of justifying the Church's revolutionary (or, from a Jewish point of view, scandalous¹²⁶) development, i.e. the formation of the Universal Church through the Apostolic Doctrine, "The Church From The Gentiles"¹²⁷, are perhaps, for our purposes, the most significant *foci* of what certain scholars insist on describing as 'the first Christian historical work' namely the Book of Acts.¹²⁸

The break with Judaism, an officially recognised *religio licita* throughout the Roman empire, required amongst other things, an awareness not only of Jewish anti-Christian polemics and perhaps other, more militant forms of confrontation (which could have been expected almost everywhere within and beyond the borders of the Roman empire), but also an alertness to potential pagan misgivings about the legitimacy of the new religion and its overt claims to the Jewish past, as well as to the future of the human race.¹²⁹

A major source of inspiration which can be described as a combination of Jewish spirituality (including the Jewish concept of self-identity, derived from the Biblical notion of the ancient Israelite nationhood as a result of Divine Choice¹³⁰) with Greek classical historiography and ethnography, was the literary output of the aforementioned Flavius Josephus whose work included every possible ideological element that could appeal to Christian scholarship and thought notably his closeness to the lifetime of Christ, expressed in a much-debated passage,

¹²³ Matt.22,8; Mark, 13, 1-2; Luke, 21, 24.

¹²⁴ For a recent overview of the early Christian ideas of history, history writing and their value for developing Christian communities of the patristic era, see now: S. Dan Laing, *Retrieving History: Memory and Identity Formation in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI 2017), pp. 47-162.

¹²⁵ For an assessment of Jewish religious influence in the Roman Empire, see: W. Liebeschuetz, 'The Influence of Judaism among Non-Jews in the Imperial Period', *JJS* 52 (2001), pp. 235-252. On considerations of the status and influence of the Jews in the early Christian empire see: H. Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100-400* (Oxford 2012), pp. 17-20.

¹²⁶ Jewish displeasure with Christian *Kerygma* in the diaspora appears already in the NT. See: 1 Corinthians 1:23. For Jewish literary reactions to the dissemination of Christianity in the second and third centuries see: C. Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians* (Mineapolis, MN 1994), pp. 165-190. See also: M. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (Albany, NY 1996), pp. 13-22.

¹²⁷ See: A.F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA 1986), pp. 163-181. The notion of *Ecclesia ex gentibus*, it should be noted, was essential for the historical development of the post-Pauline self-definition of the church, given the fairly- quick disappearance of the *Ecclesia ex circumcisione* i.e. the network of Jewish-Christian communities. On approaches to issues arising from the study of early Christian expansion, see: A.M. Schor, 'Conversion by the Numbers: Benefits and Pitfalls of Quantitative Modelling in the Study of Early Christian Growth', *JRH* 33 (2009), pp. 472-498.

¹²⁸ See: G.E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden 1992), pp. 311-389.

¹²⁹ See: J. Lieu, 'History and Theology in Christian Views of Judaism' in J. Lieu, J. North and T. Rajak (eds.) *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (London 1992), pp. 79-96.

¹³⁰ The *locus classicus* in the OT is Deut. 27,9 (cf. Eus. *HE* I, 4, 2).

the so-called (since the Renaissance) *testimonium Flavianum*,¹³¹ a witness to the immediate fulfilment of Christ's prophecy regarding the Jerusalem Temple's destruction, a strong castigation of what the author regards as Jewish self-destructive fanaticism and obstinacy, alongside an elegant philosophical repudiation of paganism – and all of this from the pen of a descendant of a priestly family, i.e. the highest Jewish nobility.¹³² It is thus hardly surprising that Josephus's works were preserved primarily due to their special place in the Christian library: *The Jewish War*, *The Jewish Antiquities*, and *Against Apion* feature amongst the main sources in the writings (most of which were dedicated to apologetics or exegesis) of eastern and western Christian authors alike, from Theophilus of Antioch (*floruit*: later second century) to Lactantius (ca. 250-325). It was not very likely that Josephus's work would be ignored.¹³³

The post-Pauline church, now (i.e. in the second century) no longer regarded as a Jewish sect, but a separate, independent religion with a message addressed to the *oecumene* as a whole, found herself entering repeatedly into conflict with another contemporary organisation with a universal vision namely the Roman state. When the history of the Church was about to be written for the first time, it was seemingly a reasonable choice on the author's part, albeit hazardous (if we bear in mind that Graeco-Roman paganism was alive and well at the turn of the fourth century and, as yet, by no means deprived of power¹³⁴) to undertake the inclusion of the universal nature of Christian culture and institutions into the nascent ecclesiastical historiography and to shape its narrative accordingly. When a decision was made to employ historiography in the service of Christianity this resulted in no less than a 'media revolution' as Doron Mendels would want us to believe.¹³⁵ Yet, Mendels's conclusions, despite their attractive modern flare, must be treated with caution. It remains to be seen whether the intended readership of the first ecclesiastical history was indeed drawn from among potential pagan converts as argued by Mendels, or rather was conceived with regard to an 'internal mission', aimed primarily at educated Christians who were identified in some way as unsatisfactorily conversant with the Christian past. It would also be reasonable to assume that such a decision reflected a belief in the solidifying potential that the very reading of a history may have on those who were seeking either new pathways towards the Christian Church or those who were in need of a stronger, more palpable sense of belonging, despite being already baptised.

The inventor of the literary genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* was Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea Maritima in Palestine (ca. 260-339), nicknamed also 'Eusebius Pamphili' after his mentor, the Phoenician-born scholar Pamphilus of Berytus (martyred in 310), a devoted disciple of the

¹³¹ See: Joseph. *AJ*, XVIII, 63-64. For a discussion see: J. Carlton-Paget, 'Some Observations on Josephus and Christianity', *JThS-NS* 52 (2001), pp. 539-624.

¹³² Thus, Sozomen, writing ca. 350 years later, still regards Josephus's pedigree as something to be reckoned with. See Soz. I, 1, 5: Καὶ Ἰώσηπος δὲ ὁ Ματθίου ὁ ἱερεὺς, ἀνὴρ παρά τε Ἰουδαίους ἐπιδοξότατος γενόμενος.

¹³³ For a summary of Josephus's place in patristic literature, see: M. Hardwick, *Josephus as a Historical Source in Patristic Literature through Eusebius* (Atlanta, GA 1989), pp. 105-125.

¹³⁴ On paganism at the turn of the fourth century in general see: R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth 1987), pp. 609-662.

¹³⁵ D. Mendels, *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity: An Essay on Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids, MI 1999), pp. 179-233. The author painstakingly tries to present the invention of *Historia Ecclesiastica* as part of a missionary endeavour which, according to Mendels's somewhat idiosyncratic theory, drew primarily on skilful 'marketing' techniques and astute salesmanship.

great Biblical scholar Origen of Alexandria (185-254), himself, from ca. 232, a resident of Caesarea.¹³⁶ That little can be said with some certainty about Eusebius' life and career prior to the great persecution under the emperor Diocletian in 303 is indeed surprising, given that Eusebius was a prolific writer who left a range of works in various fields and *genera*: Biblical exegesis, apologetics, polemics, panegyric, hagiography, biography, chronography and of course, ecclesiastical history.¹³⁷ A biography of Eusebius is known to have been written by Acacius, his successor on the episcopal throne of Caesarea, but this is now lost.¹³⁸ Some scanty internal evidence can be found, scattered through his writings, and more can be gathered from passages in the works of some of his contemporaries, especially another prelate and prolific writer, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria (ca. 296-373).¹³⁹ It is also noteworthy that the works of those who are traditionally regarded as his successors as ecclesiastical historians namely Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret (to whom one may add, despite obvious misgiving, the heterodox Philostorgius), hardly offer any information concerning his biography.¹⁴⁰

Eusebius was born probably in the early 260s, for he mentions the episcopate of Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 265) as having taken place 'in our time' (καθ' ἡμᾶς).¹⁴¹ Eusebius also refers to three notorious figures, the controversial bishop of Antioch, Paul of Samosata,¹⁴² the anti-Christian Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry of Tyre,¹⁴³ and the Hebraist Dorotheus of Antioch,¹⁴⁴ in the same way. Elsewhere Eusebius reports that he had seen the young Constantine with the then- emperor Diocletian when they were on their way from Palestine to Egypt, a journey which must have taken place in 296.¹⁴⁵ Even the place of his birth or the ethnic origins of his ancestors cannot be identified. He does refer to Palestine as 'our country',¹⁴⁶ but this reference in an address written late in life by the bishop of Caesarea, who had been established in his Palestinian see for two decades or so, does not necessarily indicate that he was a native of the province concerned or that he was raised there. It would seem the name of Eusebius's natural father was doomed to oblivion (perhaps not by coincidence). The historian of the Church could have been less than keen to shed light on his own pedigree and

¹³⁶ For Eusebius of Caesarea's life, times and environment, see now: J. Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge 2019), pp. 17-48. See also: M. J. Hollerich, *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Oakland, CA 2016), pp. 2-46.

¹³⁷ Ibid. pp. 48-59.

¹³⁸ On Acacius of Caesarea (d. after 365) nicknamed 'the one-eyed' (ὁ μονόφθαλμος), a proponent of Arianism. See: Jerome, *De Viriis Illustribus*, III., 98; Soz. III, 5; Philost. *HE*, IV, 12; Soz. IV, 26; Soc. III; Id. IV, 2; Jerome, *Epistula ad Marcellam*, 141.

¹³⁹ See: K. Anatolius, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His thought* (London 1998), p. 85 ff.; T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantine: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA 1993), pp. 23-33.

¹⁴⁰ See: A.P. Johnson, *Eusebius* (London 2014), pp. 1-25. On the circumstances and context of Eusebius' *HE* and its composition, see: A. Louth, 'Eusebius and the Birth of Church History' in: F. Young, L. Ayers and A. Louth (eds), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 266-274.

¹⁴¹ Eus. *HE*, III, 28, 3.

¹⁴² Ibid., V, 28, 1.

¹⁴³ Ibid., VI, 19, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., VII, 32, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Eus. *VC*, I, 19.

¹⁴⁶ Eus. *Tricennialia*, XI, 2.

eventually avoided doing so in favour of a spiritual ancestry.¹⁴⁷ This may be reflected through the fact that Eusebius's name was transmitted to the following generations as *Eusebius Pamphili* in commemoration of his teacher and mentor Pamphilus of Berytus, himself a disciple and successor of Origen¹⁴⁸ in the library of Caesarea.¹⁴⁹

The legacy of Origen,¹⁵⁰ with the Bible in its centre, undoubtedly inspired Eusebius in one of his notable undertakings as a scholar.¹⁵¹ This was the *Onomasticon*, a gazetteer of Biblical place names.¹⁵² Eusebius remained all his life proud of his personal connection with Origen's legacy, which was passed down to him by a mentor who was a former disciple of the great master and a venerated martyr. It is not unreasonable to assume that it was in Caesarea, during his years of scholarly apprenticeship under Pamphilus, that Eusebius had learnt from his master the meaning and importance of spiritual succession and its essential importance in theological and pastoral authority. Origen's influential legacy of Biblical exegesis, in which his Hexapla¹⁵³ played a pivotal role, shaped and broadened Eusebius's thinking about history and appears to be, as Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams have demonstrated, the amalgamated source of Eusebius's first historical work, his lost *Chronicle*.¹⁵⁴

The road from here to the presumption that Eusebius's choice of the succession of bishops as one of the *foci* of his ecclesiastical history is the fruit of Origen's inspiration, as reflected in the *Chronicle*, is not long. The attempts to link the Christian succession of bishops with a Jewish succession of Rabbis, preserved in Tractate *Avot* (Heb: אבות = 'Fathers') of the *Mishnah*, a corpus of Rabbinic commentaries on the Mosaic Law, edited ca. 200 AD, have chiefly raised questions rather than answered any. Adam Kamesar sought to link the succession of bishops with Origen's defence of the Septuagint. According to Kamesar, Origen used the success of bishops to demonstrate the validity of tradition as part of his defence of the authority of the Septuagint, having himself contributed to a reaffirmation of the Hebrew Bible's authority through his *Hexapla*. Amram Tropper, for his part, borrows one of Kamesar's examples, the

¹⁴⁷ For a discussion of self-identity among Christian intellectuals in the wake of the Great Persecution, see: E. De Palma Digeser, 'Christian or Hellene? The Great Persecution and the Problem of Identity' in: R.M. Frakes and E. De Palma Digeser (eds), *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity* (Toronto 2006), pp. 36-57. On a Christian 'identity politics' which appears to be reflected in the emergence of the term 'pagan' for polytheist non-Christians, see now: A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford 2011), pp. 14-32. Sozomen, writing in the fifth century, still conveys the sense of an insecure identity as he tells the story of his grandfather's conversion to Christianity. Sozomen reports in a somewhat overstated fashion that his great-grandfather was a 'Hellene' (i.e. a pagan) who was among the first to embrace the Christian faith in his home town of Bethelia. See: Soz. V, 15, 14.

¹⁴⁸ For a recent biographical sketch of Origen, see: P.W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford 2012), pp. 14-19.

¹⁴⁹ Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 11.

¹⁵⁰ See: C. Kannengieser, 'Eusebius of Caesarea, Origenist' in: H.W. Attridge and G. Hata (eds), *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism* (Detroit 1992), pp. 435-466.

¹⁵¹ On the Old Testament's influence on Eusebius' historical thinking see: C. Kelly, 'The Shape of the Past: Eusebius of Caesarea and Old Testament History' in: Id., R. Flower and M.S. Williams (eds), *Unclassical Traditions*, vol. 1 (Cambridge 2010), pp. 13-27.

¹⁵² Thus T.D. Barnes, 'The Composition of Eusebius' *Onomasticon*' *JThS-NS* 26 (1975), pp. 412-415. See however, R.S. Notley and Z. Safrai (eds.), *Eusebius, Onomasticon* (Leiden 2005), p. xv, who try (inconclusively) to contest the early dating.

¹⁵³ See: M.J. Martin, 'Origen's Theory of Language and the First Two Columns of the Hexapla' *HTR* 97 (2004), pp. 99-106.

¹⁵⁴ See: A. Grafton and M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book* (Cambridge, MA 2006), pp. 133-177.

Homiliae in epistula ad Hebraeos 8, 9 in which the author, John Chrysostom (347-407) presents the chain of transmission which links Moses through the succession of prophets and sages with the legend about the seventy Jewish elders and their identical translations of the Hebrew bible into Greek, produced at the behest of king Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt.

Tropper's classification of the succession in *Avot* is odd despite the fact that God's name is absent from the Jewish source (which is in fact Tropper's main line of argument). The unbroken tradition from Moses through the prophets and sages is being made in support of a religious claim – it cannot be divorced from 'theology' even if God is not mentioned explicitly. Be it as it may, both cases reveal (even if Chrysostom's homily is a later source) the importance of continuity and pedigree (in the broadest sense of the term) in both the Jewish and Christian traditions in the third century. The ways however parted. Late antique Judaism essentially rejected history-writing. Jews, unlike the Christians, did not invent (at any rate, not at this stage) a 'synagogal history'.¹⁵⁵ The admiration for Origen and his revered legacy through Pamphilus, Origen's immediate disciple, seems to have cemented these major elements in Eusebius' historical approach and was apparently instrumental in building up Eusebius's authority.¹⁵⁶

Eusebius escaped the fate of his teacher, although he relates that he was an eye-witness of the persecutions in Caesarea.¹⁵⁷ He also tells us about his sojourns, during the persecutions, in Tyre¹⁵⁸ and in the Egyptian Thebaid. Refuge could hardly be sought in those places at the time, since the Christians in these provinces were, as in Palestine, subject to religious oppression which often resulted in martyrdom.¹⁵⁹

Later sources which do not appear entirely impartial, relate that Eusebius may have been arrested during his stay in Egypt. The same sources (i.e. Athanasius and Epiphanius) also make allegations about Eusebius's conduct in prison which may have secured his release unharmed.¹⁶⁰ We do not possess any reference to this episode in Eusebius's own writings which would refute or confirm the belated invective, however, it is quite likely that his experience during the persecutions in Caesarea, which included the incarceration of his mentor Pamphilus in 307 (followed by the latter's martyrdom in 310), gave Eusebius the impetus for writing an account of the persecution in Palestine, known as *De Martyribus*

¹⁵⁵ See: A. Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship and the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford 1993), pp. 4-40; A. Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East* (Oxford 2004), pp. 236-240. Tropper believes that *Avot's* chain of succession '... is akin to the secular lists of the Greco-Roman world' yet 'Chrysostom's chain is invested with a theological interpretation of history' (Tropper, *op. cit.*, p. 239).

¹⁵⁶ See: E. Carotenuto, *Tradizione e innovazione nella HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA di Eusebio di Caesarea* (Naples 2001), pp. 84-87; C. Kannengiesser, 'Eusebius of Caesarea, Origenist' in: Attridge-Hata (1992), pp. 436-439; See also: L. Jones Hall, *Roman Berytus: Beirut in Late Antiquity* (Abingdon 2004), p. 205.

¹⁵⁷ Eus. *HE*, VIII, 2, 1, and *Mart. Pal.* IV, 8.

¹⁵⁸ Eus. *HE*, VIII, 7.

¹⁵⁹ For an analysis of the persecutions against the Christians from Diocletian to Constantine which highlights this issue, see: M. Gaddis, *There is no crime for those who have Christ: religious violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA 2005), pp. 29-67.

¹⁶⁰ Ath. *Apol. Sec.*, VIII, 3; Epiph., *Pan.*, 68, 8, 3.

Palestinae.¹⁶¹ This work was rewritten more than once, and a shorter version of it seems to have been incorporated in book VIII of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.¹⁶²

Having survived the persecutions, Eusebius was consecrated bishop of Caesarea (ca. 315). His ecclesiastical career soon took off in correlation with the changing fortunes of the Christian faith under Constantine's rule. Eusebius seems to have established excellent contacts with the new *regime* and his literary output in the later years of his life can be characterised, in a sense, as an intellectual effort to adjust the Christian mind to the apparent turn which the course of Christian history had taken since 312, the year that saw the beginning of Constantine's conversion to Christianity.¹⁶³ Eusebius was an eye-witness of this move and (at least) some of its notable consequences. His sensitivity seems to have prompted him to grasp the new circumstances appropriately, as his later career appears to show. The same state of mind also led him to edit and re-edit his ecclesiastical history so that it would reflect the new reality of the Constantinian empire, transforming gradually the status of Christianity from mere tolerance towards an official supremacy recognition under Theodosius I.¹⁶⁴ Eusebius's

¹⁶¹ On the Great Persecution in the Diocese of Oriens (including Palestine), see: M. S. Shin, *The Great Persecution: A Historical Re-Examination* (Turnhout 2018), pp. 169-180.

J. Corke-Webster, 'Author and Authority: Literary Representations of Moral Authority in

Eusebius of Caesarea's *The Martyrs of Palestine*' in: P. Geminhardt and J. Leemans (eds), *Christian Martyrdom in Late Antiquity: History and Discourse, Tradition and Religious Identity* (Berlin 2012), pp. 51-78.

¹⁶² T.D. Barnes, *Eusebius and Constantine* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), p. 148.

¹⁶³ See: H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore, MD 2000), pp. 187-191.

¹⁶⁴ Constantine's carefulness and moderation in his ecclesiastical politics are highlighted by Slawomir Bralewski against the background of the Arian controversy and the convocation of the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325). See: S. Bralewski, 'Cesarz Konstantyn I Wielki wobec kontrowersji arianskiej', *Labarum* 8 (2009), pp. 7-28. Bralewski regards doctrinal compromise as the top priority of Constantine's ecclesiastical policy in Nicaea and argues that the emperor sought to maintain neutrality and did not allow his personal theological views, (whatever they may have been), even those concerning a pro-Arian orientation, to influence his compromise politics: 'Jesli nawet Konstantyn mial jakies poglady teologiczne, nawet o orientacji proarianskiej, to nie mialy one wplywu na prowadzona przez niego polityke Kompromisu.' (Bralewski, *op. cit.* p. 27). Constantine's careful pro-Christian domestic policy after his victory over Licinius in 324 is presented somewhat differently by Timothy Barnes. According to Barnes, "It is the fulmination of one who feels frustrated because he has been compelled to recognize that political conditions are not yet ripe for him to enforce a policy dear to his heart". See: T.D. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Chichester 2011), pp. 107-111. See however: A Lopez Kindler, 'Constantino y el Arianismo', *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 22 (2013), pp. 37-64. Lopez Kindler argues that Constantine's attitude towards the Arian heresy was shaped by his personal preference of orthodoxy in doctrinal terms, but in practical terms it was influenced by political factors. Chief among them, the unity of his empire and prevention of unrest. Lopez Kindler refers to this gap between rhetoric and action as ambivalence: "la ambivalencia de su postura respecto ala religion". As we shall see, Constantine's ambivalence did not escape the notice of ecclesiastical historiography. It had a significant role in the formation of its historical perspectives. Note also: M.J. Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire* (Oxford 2015), pp. 179-199. Edwards' analysis supports the view whereby Constantine was on the whole, a man of religious integrity. On Theodosius I and the imposition of Nicene orthodoxy, see: C. Freeman, *A.D. 381: Heretics, Pagans, and the Dawn of the Monotheistic State* (Woodstock, NY 2009), pp. 91-104. Note also: R.M. Errington, 'Church and State in the First Years of Theodosius I', *Chiron* 27, 1997, pp.21-72.

diplomatic skills must have helped him to retain his position in the imperial court all along the remaining years of Constantine's reign, although he did not lack some sworn enemies like Bishop (since 328) Athanasius of Alexandria, a champion of Nicene orthodoxy. Athanasius was not only a sharp-minded theologian but also an astute and indeed a militant politician, as well as indefatigable polemicist who sought to advance his doctrinal opinions despite a strong opposition and this, while working relentlessly to increase the prestige and authority of Alexandria, his episcopal see.¹⁶⁵ He refused to forget the allegations concerning Eusebius's favourable regard of the teachings of the presbyter Arius of Alexandria (which Eusebius had officially renounced in the Council of Nicaea in 325).¹⁶⁶ Another staunch opponent was Bishop Macarius of Jerusalem, who relentlessly tried to challenge Eusebius's accepted position as the metropolitan of Palestine.¹⁶⁷ His admiration for Constantine and his gratitude to this emperor were expressed overtly in his last works, the panegyrics, collectively known as *De laudibus Constantini* and above all, the biography of his imperial benefactor, *De Vita Constantini*, which Eusebius wrote after the passing of Constantine, setting new standards in Christian literature by likening the emperor to the Hebrew prophet and law-giver Moses as part of what may be regarded as Eusebius's political theology.¹⁶⁸ Eusebius died in 339 or 340.¹⁶⁹

These milestones in Eusebius's life appear to be also benchmarks in the long and complex process through which the inventor of ecclesiastical historiography produced his work. The

¹⁶⁵ The prestige of the see of Alexandria is attested in a nut shell by the title *papas* (pope) which was first associated with Heraclas, bishop of Alexandria (between 232 and 248). See: Eus. *HE* VII, 7, 4. However, the see of Alexandria had to cope with continuous challenges to its authority as in the case of bishop Melitius of Lycopolis (d. 327) who refused to admit into communion Christians who lapsed during the Great Persecution (303-311). Melitius founded a sect known as 'the church of the martyrs' and seems to have garnered extensive support. The threat posed by the Melitians was considerable enough to feature on the agenda of the Council of Nicaea (325) which, in fact, did not resolve this issue, just as it did not resolve the Trinitarian crisis despite (or perhaps because) the compromise behind the Nicene Creed, brokered primarily through the direct involvement of Constantine. Such was the legacy which Athanasius inherited from his mentor bishop Alexander of Alexandria upon succeeding him in 328. See: D.M. Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father* (Oxford 2012), pp. 20-25.

¹⁶⁶ Arianism has been recently reassessed and redefined as 'an umbrella term (*Sammelbegriff*) which 'as a label for particular development in late-classical (*sic*) Christian theology and doctrine (*Lehrbildung*) has given rise to an abundance of misunderstandings – often conscious and even deliberate misunderstandings'. See: H.-Ch. Brennecke (S. Donecker, Eng. trans.) , 'Introduction: Framing the Historical and Theological Problems' in: G. M. Berndt and R. Steinacher (eds), *Arianism: Roman Heresy and Barbarian Creed* (Farnham 2014), pp. 1-19. Brennecke indicates that only the subordination of the (pre-existing) Son/Logos to the Father (whilst emphasising the triune God) – is what Arius passed down to later confessions (notably those of the synods of Rimini and Constantinople in 359-360) who otherwise had hardly anything to do with the presbyter from Alexandria. See: Brennecke, *op. cit.* p. 19. Note also: R. Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 14-16.

¹⁶⁷ On the tensions between Eusebius and Macarius, see: Z. Rubin, 'The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Beginning of the Conflict between the dioceses of Caesarea and Jerusalem' in: *The Jerusalem Cathedra* II (Jerusalem 1982), pp. 76-106.

¹⁶⁸ Av. Cameron, 'The Construction of Constantine' in: M.J. Edwards and S. Swain (eds), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1997), pp. 145-174. On Eusebius as a political theologian, see: F.J. Cortes, 'La legitimación cristiana de la dinastía constantiniana: la teología política de Eusebio de Cesárea' *Palabra y Razón* 14 (2018), pp. 83-99.

¹⁶⁹ S. Morlet, 'Eusèbe de Césarée: biographie, chronologie, profil intellectuel' in: Id. and L. Perone (eds), *Eusèbe de Césarée histoire ecclésiastique: commentaire*, tome I (Paris 2012), p. 12. ⁵⁵ Text: K. Karst (ed.), *Eusebius Werke, Band 5: Die Chronik aus dem Armenischen übersetzt mit textkritische Commentar* (=GCS 20) (Leipzig 1911).

same personal sensitivities which may have helped him in grasping almost instantly the historic meaning of the Constantinian conversion may have seen him through the labyrinth of church politics during the doctrinal upheaval of the early Arian controversy.¹⁷⁰ These personal qualities seem also to have prompted him to undertake the writing of a history of the church, perhaps, as early as the last decade of the third century. This undertaking, however, followed an earlier endeavour, the *Chronicon*. This chronicle consisted of two books. The first was a collection of preliminary data for universal history. This, with the exception of certain fragments in Greek and Syriac, survives today only in its Armenian translation.⁵⁵

The second book, 'Chronological Canons', was an attempt to synchronize Jewish, Graeco-Roman and Near Eastern chronology, presented in a tabular format with running columns.¹⁷¹ These *Canones* have come down to us *via* Jerome's revised and altered Latin version, completed probably in about 380 and re-edited in 382.¹⁷² Eusebius was by no means the first chronographer, not even the first Christian one. He was indebted greatly to his Christian predecessor Julius Africanus (third century), albeit not without reservations.¹⁷³ Africanus, it seems, was himself a link in the chain of an already existing Christian chronicle-writing, as Eusebius relates later on in his *Ecclesiastical History*.¹⁷⁴ Yet Eusebius' reasons for this undertaking seem to be quite different from those which may have motivated his Christian predecessor. Julius Africanus, the surviving evidence suggests, was a millenarian, who sought to demonstrate that Christ was born in the middle of the sixth millennium and that the world would reach its end after 6000 years. These learned investigations were inspired by the Jewish apocalyptic historiographical heritage, originating in the book of Daniel (esp. Cap. 9) and its apocryphal derivatives, all of which, as indicated above, had deeply influenced early Christian thought and Christian interpretation of history, in particular.¹⁷⁵

Eusebius, however, was opposed to the predominantly millennialist context of Christian chronography, and he did not refrain later-on from scorning a well-known proponent of millennial doctrines, Papias of Hierapolis (ca. 60-130), describing him as a man of 'very little intelligence'.¹⁷⁶ Eusebius also held Papias responsible for the proliferation of chiliastic views among many Christian writers after him, including the indefatigable anti-heretical polemicist bishop Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130-200).¹⁷⁷ Thus, William Adler may be right in assuming that 'Eusebius's own chronicle was in all-likelihood a deliberate attempt to extricate chronography

¹⁷⁰ For those early stages, see: R.C. Gregg and D.E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (London 1981), esp. pp. 77-129.

¹⁷¹ For a detailed discussion, see: R.W. Burgess (with the assistance of W. Witakowski), *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart 1999), pp. 21-65.

¹⁷² For the textual history of Eusebius' Chronicle, see: A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Lewisburg, PA 1979), pp. 29-83.

¹⁷³ See: W. Adler, 'Eusebius' Critique of Africanus' in M. Wallraff (ed.), *Julius Africanus und die Christliche Weltchronik* (Berlin 2006), pp. 147-158.

¹⁷⁴ Eus. *HE*, VI, 7. See: R.W. Burgess, 'Apologetic and Chronography: The Antecedents of Julius Africanus' in Wallraff, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-42.

¹⁷⁵ For an examination of the adaptation of a major theme in Danielite prophetic historiography, i.e. the 'Seventy Weeks of years', by early Christian authors (going up to Eusebius and his *Demonstratio Evangelica*), see: W. Adler, 'The Apocalyptic Survey of History Adapted by Christians: Daniel's Prophecy of 70 Weeks' in: J. C. Van der Kam and W. Adler (eds.), *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (Assen and Minneapolis, MN 1996), pp. 201-238 (esp. p. 218 ff.).

¹⁷⁶ Eus. *HE*, III, 39, 13.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

from its millenialist attachment'.¹⁷⁸ In the chronicle were brought together Eusebius's various scholarly skills which were acquired during his years of study with Pamphilus. These include, as already noted, Biblical scholarship and exegesis, theological inquiry and debating. We must assume that Eusebius's schooling included his vast Greek learning, which also served him in his explorations of Egyptian, Chaldean, Assyrian and Babylonian mythologies.

Eusebius himself stresses the connection between his chronicle and the *HE* and the way in which his previous experience as a chronographer had shaped his narrative strategy in the preface to the latter by stating:

*I have already summarised the material in the chronological tables which I have drawn up, but nevertheless in the present work I have undertaken to produce the narrative in full detail.*¹⁷⁹

Whether Eusebius had premeditated the writing of the chronicle as a preparatory *étude* for a larger scale history is unclear. Be it as it may, there is no doubt that his understanding of history and its usefulness for the intellectual ends of the Christian Church (regardless of the potential addressees he may have had in mind at the time of writing, i.e. pagan and/or Christian *literati*) must have deepened during his work on the chronicle. The general chronological framework of the *HE*, i.e. the succession of Roman emperors, was already laid down in the *Chronicon*, and seems to have been chosen deliberately to highlight, or rather to be contrasted with, the eternity of the Church and thus provided a unique historical perspective whereby the narrative is focalised by the eternal and the transient both. Eusebius, the future author of the *Praeparatio Evangelica* and the *Demonstratio Evangelica*, had already acquired considerable experience as Christian polemicist and apologist, being the author of *Contra Heroclem* and other apologetic-polemical writings.¹⁸⁰ It is quite clear that he was preoccupied with the growing sophistication of the persistent attempts to dismiss Christianity as novelty or fantasy¹⁸¹ and at the same time seems to have developed sensitivity to the impact of the fluid political circumstances on the Christian Church in the Roman empire between 303 and 312. These factors, as it were, must have prompted Eusebius to combine his various skills in an attempt to give his Christian readers, members of clergy as well as educated laity, a key to a better understanding of their past, which would help them in picking

¹⁷⁸ See: W. Adler, 'Eusebius' Chronicle and its Legacy' in: Attridge-Hata (1992), pp. 467-491.

See also: W. Witakowski, 'The Chronicle of Eusebius: Its type and Continuation in Syriac Historiography', *Aram* 11-12 (1999-2000), pp. 419-437.

¹⁷⁹ Eus. *HE* I, 1, 6.

¹⁸⁰ *Contra Heroclem*, is a refutation of Sossianus Herocles, a zealous anti-Christian Roman Governor of Syria and Bithynia under the emperor Diocletian who was one of those who masterminded the Great Persecution (ca. 303). Herocles had penned an invective against Christianity entitled Φιλαλήθης ("Lover of Truth"). This work included a comparison between Jesus and the Cappadocian wandering Neo-Pythagorean ascetic, philosopher and alleged wonderworker Apollonius of Tyana (ca. 15 AD – 100 AD). See: M. Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in legend and history* (Rome 1986), pp. 19–50. Eusebius's refutation of Herocles was probably written before 303. See: T.D. Barnes, 'Sossianus Herocles and the Antecedents of the Great Persecution', *HSPH* 80 (1976), pp. 239–252. On Eusebius's early apologetic-polemical writings see: A. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism* (Leiden 2000), pp. 50-73.

¹⁸¹ Eus. *HE* I, 4, 1-2.

up the intellectual gauntlets of the present.¹⁸² These could have been thrown at their feet by pagans and Jews, as well as by a vast range of heresies and heretics.¹⁸³

Eusebius, as is evident from the introduction to his HE, was fully aware of the innovative nature of his literary undertaking. He appropriately did not neglect to register a 'patent' on his invention. He did this by recording clearly and distinctly his personal claim to this new type of intellectual property, addressing his potential readers in the very beginning of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* thus:

*We pray God to give us his guidance, and that we may have the help of the power of the Lord, for nowhere can we find even the bare footsteps of men who have preceded us in the same path, unless it be those slight indications by which in divers ways they have left to us partial accounts of the times through which they have passed ...*¹⁸⁴

Eusebius later continues, this time following the classical practice of justifying his pioneering undertaking:

*To work at this subject I consider especially necessary, because I am not aware that any of the church writers¹⁸⁵ has until now paid attention to this kind of writing and I hope it will appear most beneficial to those who hold the study of history in esteem.*¹⁸⁶

We will have to pay some attention to the possible identity of those obscure readers 'who hold the study of history in esteem'. Modern scholarship has generally accepted Eusebius's self-accreditation. There is no reason to disagree with Robert Markus who, in a paper written back in 1975, puts the blame for the lack of a more critical approach to this presupposed historiographical innovation on a consensus amongst modern scholars. Markus summed up the questions which modern scholarship, to his mind, had failed to pose. 'Is ecclesiastical history' he asks (beyond the Christianity of its main 'protagonists'), 'indeed a new genre?'¹⁸⁷ But even if we are inclined to answer in the affirmative (as Markus eventually did), the problems that arise consequently are greater still. The accurate dating of the composition of Eusebius's HE remains debatable. Whatever argument we accept, our choice would

¹⁸² J. Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge 2019), pp. 62-73. Corke-Webster remarks in this regard (p. 72): "This was a history born of a watershed moment. Eusebius must also be envisaged as writing for both clerics and a wider Christian audience, many of whom shared the education, values, and prejudices of elite, Hellenised, Roman citizens."

¹⁸³ On contemporary pagan polemical writing against Christianity, see: R.L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT 1984), pp.126-163. On the spread of heresies in the second and third centuries alongside the expansion of the Church, see: R. Lane-Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London 1986), pp. 265- 335.

¹⁸⁴ Eus. HE I,1,3.

¹⁸⁵ τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν συγγραφέων. Kirsopp Lake (see: LCL 153 p. 11) translates 'Christian writers' and justifies it by claiming that "the antithesis to the word used is either "heathen" (as here) or "heretical" '. Lake's translation at this point is inconclusive. Eusebius appears to highlight not only his pioneering role as the first historian of the Church but also his personal authority being a member of the clergy and therefore (from his point of view), being in possession of the right credentials for such an undertaking. It follows that 'Church writers' is more accurate. Cf. Eus. HE III, 25, 6: παπὰ πλείστοις τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν translated this time as to 'most of the writers of the church' referring mainly to the Church Fathers.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 5.

¹⁸⁷ R. Markus, 'Church History and the Early Church Historian' in D. Baker (ed.), *The Materials, Sources and Methods of Ecclesiastical History* (= *Studies in Church History* 11) (Oxford 1975), p. 1.

necessarily affect the identification of Eusebius's chosen readership and his reasons for addressing them. We must therefore look first at the structure and contents of this gigantic opus which has been characterised by Wolfgang Liebeschuetz as 'the most untidy work of genius ever'.¹⁸⁸

Unlike other large-scale works which have come down to us from Graeco-Roman antiquity, Eusebius's *HE* survives apparently in its original form. The internal division into books and chapters is probably Eusebius's own.¹⁸⁹ These happy circumstances are of course extremely beneficial for any student of the genre's development, since they facilitate the laborious process of comparing the various contributions to the tradition with the text on which they are believed to have been patterned. This is of essential importance in the case of Sozomen's *HE* which seems to be linked with Eusebius in a subtle but firm way. This makes them both, as Peter van Nuffelen observes, parts of a grand unity.¹⁹⁰

The themes which Eusebius chose to deal with in his *HE*, are presented in the preface to his work. This is of particular importance as these themes became seminal to the development of *HE* as a genre:

1. *The successions of bishops*
2. *The propagation of the Word of God by famous preachers or by distinguished writers*
3. *Heretical teachings and their proponents*
4. *The fate of the Jews*
5. *The pagan opposition to the Word of God*
6. *Martyrs and Martyrdom*.¹⁹¹

Eusebius's promises in his statement of intent are normally kept throughout his work with one exception: the development of the New Testament canon, a key theme which encapsulates the core questions of Christian Biblical authority and therefore, of essential relevance to Eusebius's own historical perspectives, is actually missing from the list concerned.¹⁹²

The *HE* consists of ten books. The first seven, according to Timothy Barnes, may have been written before the end of the third century, whereas an opposite view, dating the publication of a 'first edition' of Eusebius's *HE* to 311 (three more were to appear up until 324) has been proposed by Richard Burgess who, like Barnes, had rejected a previous *communis opinio*

¹⁸⁸ W. Liebeschuetz, 'Ecclesiastical Historians on Their Own Times', *SP* 24 (1993), = Id., *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot 2006), II), p. 51.

¹⁸⁹ See: G. Bardy, 'Introduction' in Id. (ed. and trans.), *Eusèbe de Césarée, Histoire Ecclésiastique Tome IV* (Paris 1960; repr. 1987) (= *SC* 73bis), pp. 101-113.

¹⁹⁰ Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), p. 134.

¹⁹¹ A list of nine topics is unnecessarily suggested by De Vore but it can be narrowed down to the above list. See: D. De Vore, 'Genre and Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History: Toward a focused Debate' in: A. Johnson and J. Schott (eds), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations* (Cambridge, MA 2013), p. 31.

¹⁹² Eusebius seems to have been aware of the disruptive potential that this specific theme (which was still debatable in his day - as he himself reports: *Eus. HE* III, 24, 17-18) could carry. His way to address this issue was 'to summarise' (φαιλαιώσασθαι) the writings of the New Testament and touch upon the question of their canonical status in passing. See: *Eus. HE*, III, 25, 1-7.

dating the first 'edition' of Eusebius's *HE* to ca. 303 – a view still in vogue.¹⁹³ The last three books were added later on with the intention of incorporating into the narrative of the *HE* the dramatic changes in the history of the Church which had occurred over the transition period from the Tetrarchy to Constantine's successful bolstering of his position as sole Roman emperor following his victory over Licinius (i.e. the period between 303 and 324). In this context it would be perhaps right to say that Eusebius was the first 'continuator' of himself, setting a remarkable example for his future followers as to how the history of the Church might be written. He himself commented on the guiding principles of his decision to augment the volume of his *HE* at the very beginning of book VI, by stressing what he regarded as a most pressing necessity, i.e. to pass down the contemporary events 'for the knowledge of those who will come after us'.

It may be also considered that the later Eusebius, by the time of writing a holder of a senior position in the church hierarchy as incumbent of the see of Caesarea, seems to have mellowed so that his previous didactic tone, reflected in his distinct claim *à la* Polybius for the 'usefulness' of his work, is transformed in the opening section of the eighth book of his *HE*, into a (relatively) more general statement of intent to record current events for posterity.¹⁹⁴ This change in tone is significant, for it places the Eusebius of the last three books of the *HE* in a slightly more 'classical' self-reflective position as a historian. Eusebius appears here to be drifting back towards a self-styled definition of the historian's art. There seems to be a return to the historian's image as a gatherer of data who appears to be leaving to his readers the business of assessing and interpreting the materials collected. This was indeed one of the features of Greek classical historiography of the Herodotean variety.¹⁹⁵ However, further reading reveals that this was no more than an *intermezzo*. The extensive incorporation of original material and the profuseness with which Eusebius praises Constantine show that

¹⁹³ For Barnes's theory, see: T.D. Barnes, 'The Editions of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*' *GRBS* 21 (1980), pp. 191-201. A more conservative hypothesis suggests that Eusebius' *HE* was written from a perspective which runs 'from Eden to the Milvian Bridge', see: G.F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Historians* (Paris 1977), p. 94 ff. Yet in the second edition of the same book (Macon, GA 1986), pp. 116-118, Chesnut appears to have modified his views (in response to Barnes's suggestions, apparently). Chesnut thus concedes a possible pre-303 date of composition for most of books I-VII, yet, he is reluctant to take the date of composition back to 295 as Barnes did. For a post-303 dating of the first seven books of Eusebius' *HE*, see e. g. R.M. Grant, *Eusebius as Church Historian* (Oxford 1980), p. 14; Grant's discussion, however, is not free of inconsistencies, see e.g.: pp. 31-32. For the theory which favours 311 as the year of publication, see R.W. Burgess, 'The Dates and Editions of Eusebius' *Chronici Canones* and *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *JThS-NS* 48 (1997), pp. 471-504. For major scholarship supporting 303, see: *ibid.* p. 472, n. 3, and more recently, M. Verdoner, *Narrated Reality: The Historia Ecclesiastica of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Frankfurt/Main 2011), pp. 35-38.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Polyb. I, 3-4. On Eusebius' *HE* affiliation with the Hellenistic tradition of historiography and Polybius in particular, see: Verdoner, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-84. See also: K. Iliski, 'Kirchengeschichte als Weltgeschichte' in: D. Brodka and M. Stachura (eds.), *Continuity and Change: Studies in Late Antique Historiography* (Cracow 2007), pp. 121-129.

¹⁹⁵ Eus. *HE* I,1, 5. It should be borne in mind that Eusebius, who was *inter alia* a chronicler, shared with Herodotus, as part of their pursuit of universal history (albeit in different ways), considerable efforts to establish a chronological framework by using synchronisms. See: A. Grafton and M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, MA 2006), p. 170 ff.

Eusebius remained loyal to the methods of the new historiography which he himself had formulated.

Let us look briefly at the structure and contents of Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. The following is by no means a comprehensive summary of its contents: rather, it is an attempt to highlight specific structural and thematic components which appear to have been instrumental in shaping the genre's subsequent tradition.

Books I and II

Books I and II embody a single literary and historical unit. They deal with the life and times of Christ (book I), the mission of the apostles, and the laying of the earliest foundations of the primitive church up to the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 66 in the reign of Nero, which concludes book II.

Alternatively, a more radical examination may suggest that book I is an 'introduction' which reiterates the life and death of Christ, and it is only with the Apostles and their legacy, i.e. the earliest formation of ecclesiastical hierarchy, that the 'real' ecclesiastical history begins.¹⁹⁶ However, the recounting of the story of Jesus is linked through the concluding section of book I with the story in the following book of the life of the Apostles after the Ascension. This section is dedicated to an apocryphal correspondence between Jesus and King Abgar of Edessa (modern Urfa in southern Turkey), which Eusebius claims to have obtained from the Edessene city archives.¹⁹⁷ Here we encounter the practice with which Eusebius's name as an innovator in historiography is frequently associated. He incorporates into his narrative what, according to him, are copies of these letters, introducing them to the reader by remarking that '... there is nothing equal to hearing the letters themselves, which we have obtained from the archives'.¹⁹⁸

Eusebius's remark appears to add a certain dramatic sonority in the reader's inner ear. The inclusion of genuine documents (according to the author, at least), supports an episode which is not mentioned in the NT but pertains to the 'emplotment' (to use Hayden White's terminology or the *fabula* if we follow the terminology of the Russian formalists) of the Gospels.¹⁹⁹ Eusebius's solution to what could have been a potential clash between 'tradition' and 'history' becomes a constituent characteristic of his narrative. The inner tension between 'tradition' and 'history' in Eusebius's church history remains an open question. However, Arnaldo Momigliano played a pioneering role in highlighting this polarity in Eusebius's *HE*.²⁰⁰

A different point of view can be found in Robert Wilken's assessment of Eusebius's church history. Wilken is categorically convinced that Eusebius, even in his *Ecclesiastical History*, was

¹⁹⁶ See: V. Twomey, *Apostolikos Thronos* (Münster 1982), p. 20 ff.

¹⁹⁷ For a discussion of the Abgar story's place in Eusebius's *HE*. See: A. Mirkovic, *Prelude to Constantine: The Abgar Tradition in Early Christianity* (Frankfurt/Main 2004), pp. 31-53 and pp. 89-116.

¹⁹⁸ Eus. *HE* I, 13, 5: ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχείων ἡμῶν ἀναληφθεῖσων.

¹⁹⁹ See respectively n. 20 and n. 24 *supra*.

²⁰⁰ See: A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, CA 1990), p. 137.

writing primarily as a theologian and thus that his *HE* did not consist of any 'history' of the primitive church in either the classical or modern sense.²⁰¹ Yet, Monika Gödecke, following Walter Nigg, does not see necessarily a contradiction between theology and myth in Eusebius's *HE*, as both share themes such as demonology, history as an ongoing battle between God and the devil and of course, the question of 'beginning'.²⁰² If so, it would be fair to say that as far as Eusebius is concerned, both theology and myth are two 'focalizers'. They equally partake in the formation of Eusebius's historical perspective and inspire his narrative strategy.

Books III-IV

The *leitmotiv* of these books is the successions of bishops which evolved from the apostolic church to become a network of churches deployed across the empire. The period of time covered thus stretches from the second half of the first century AD up to the beginning of the third century. Timothy Barnes has observed that despite the attempt to maintain the chronological framework, the narrative is often disjointed and is, as he points out 'woven from a number of quite disparate themes'.²⁰³ However, it is possible, despite Barnes's criticism, to see how Eusebius moves along the lines of the scheme he had outlined in his preface. The evolution of the ecclesiastical system in the east, as well as in the west, provides Eusebius with chronological slots into which he inserts other events, falling neatly under the categories previously specified in his programme. The episcopal successions in Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria and Antioch are the chronological background of the beginnings of Christian literature. This includes also a description of Josephus and his historical writings (III, 9), thus underlining Josephus's vital importance for the formation of Christian literature and implicitly, the Jewish historian's key role in the evolution of Christian historical consciousness.²⁰⁴

The treatment of the emergence of Christian literature seems to have prompted Eusebius, a trained Biblical scholar with contributions like the *Onomasticon* to his credit, to give his readers a special bonus which is absent from his list of main themes. This is the aforementioned *excursus* on the order of the Gospels and their *apocrypha* (*HE*, III, 24-25). The questions of right and wrong in the canonicity of scripture also hark back to the posing of similar questions

²⁰¹ See: R. L. Wilken, *The Myth of Christian Beginnings: History's Impact on Belief* (Garden City, NY 1971), pp. 73-74. It would seem the inclusion of materials of non-Scriptural sources pertaining to Christ is at odds with Wilken's theory. For a reconsideration of the problem, see: R. Cameron, 'Alternative Beginnings - Different Ends: Eusebius, Thomas and the Construction of Christian Origins' in: L. Bormann, K. Del Tredici and A. Standhartiger (eds.), *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays honoring Dieter Georgi* (Leiden 1994), pp. 501-525.

²⁰² See: M. Gödecke, *Geschichte als Mythos: Eusebs Kirchengeschichte* (Frankfurt/Main 1987), p. 83. Walter Nigg regards Eusebius historiographical project as mythologisation of history ("Geschichte gewordenen Mythos") and associates this with a cosmic and mythical conception of history, peculiar to Christianity: "kosmische und mythische Geschichtsanschauung, die dem Christentum eigentümlich ist". See: W. Nigg, *Die Kirchengeschichtsschreibung. Grundzüge ihrer historischen Entwicklung* (Munich 1934), p. 15 ff.

²⁰³ T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA 1981), p. 129.

²⁰⁴ On Eusebius and Josephus, see: D. Mendels, 'The Sources of the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius: The Case of Josephus' in: B. Pouderon Y.-M. Duval (eds.), *L'historiographie de l'Eglise des premiers siècles* (Paris 2001), pp. 195-205.

concerning matters of doctrine.²⁰⁵ However, this ties in nicely with a theme which does appear on Eusebius's list, namely the history of heresy and heretical movements. The main narrative is continued²⁰⁶ with the story of Simon Magus, followed by the appearance of the first known 'organised' Christian heresy, the movement of the Ebionites (III, 27).²⁰⁷

The theme of martyrdom is addressed by the narration of the martyrdoms of Polycarp of Smyrna (IV,15) and Justin of Neapolis (IV,16), and the fate of the Jews, as promised, is treated, amongst other things, by an account of the disastrous Jewish uprisings against Rome: the revolts in Egypt and Libya in 115-116 under Trajan (IV, 2) and the catastrophic Bar Kochba war in Palestine (132-135) in the reign of Hadrian (IV ,6).

Book V

This book can be generally described as a continuation and development of the aforementioned main themes over the span of time between the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 – in fact, Eusebius had already covered the first sixteen years of his reign in book IV) and the beginning of the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211). For our purpose, however, book V is of marked importance. It is in the preface of this book that Eusebius embarks upon a reflection on the differences between classical historiography and the new historiography which was emerging from his pen. His thoughts about his own work-in-progress show us that he felt unable to provide his readers with a totally independent definition of the hybrid historical work which he was about to produce. For a better clarification of the nature of his work and its goals, Eusebius chooses to contrast it with classical historiography. Eusebius juxtaposes the Graeco-Roman tradition of historiography with his new invention, portraying ecclesiastical historiography chiefly as a 'negative image' of the classical tradition.²⁰⁸

Book VI

This book too consists of a collection of episodes which fall under some of the categories on Eusebius's menu of main themes. To these belong a description of the persecution of the Christians under Septimius Severus and its resulting martyrdoms (VI, 1), as well as the later wave of persecution under Decius (249-251). Another phase in the development of Christian literature is unfolded with chapters dedicated to authors like Clement of Alexandria (VI, 6; VI, 13), the Bible translator Symmachus (VI,17), Hippolytus of Rome (VI, 22) and the chronicler Julius Africanus (VI, 31). Heresy and its proponents are not forgotten either, and Eusebius incorporates in this book accounts of heretical movements such as the Elkasaites (VI, 38) or a

²⁰⁵ See: B.D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (2nd ed.; Oxford 2000), pp.180-184.

²⁰⁶ Eus. *HE*, III, 26, 1.

²⁰⁷ On Eusebius's account of the Ebionite movement, see: D. Bernardi, *Les disciples de Jésus du Ier siècle à Mahomet : Recherches sur le mouvement ébionite* (Paris 2017), pp. 169-190.

²⁰⁸ Eus. *HE* V, *Praef.* Although Eusebius' indebtedness to classical historiography has been recognised in the past, it has received a more detailed scholarly attention only recently. See: D. DeVore, 'Genre and Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History: Prolegomena for a Focused Debate', in A. Johnson and J. Schott (eds.), *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations* (Cambridge MS 2013), pp. 19-45 and most recently, J. Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge 2019), pp. 89-120.

portrait of Novatus, the founder of the sect of the Novatianists (this sect was still in existence in the fifth century, when we meet them in connection with the views of Sozomen's predecessor Socrates of Constantinople²⁰⁹). Amidst all of this, Eusebius remembers to intertwine his narrative with the relevant successions of bishops (VI, 10; VI, 21; VI, 35; VI, 39).

But book VI of Eusebius's *HE* contains a new literary element which makes its first appearance here. This is the incorporation of a 'biography' of a chosen 'hero' which also serves as a means to convey to the reader some of the historian's more valued beliefs and ideologies. Eusebius's choice is his 'spiritual ancestor', Origen (185-254), the great Biblical scholar and exegete – the venerable (and highly controversial) teacher of Pamphilus, Eusebius's own mentor. This 'biography' occupies intermittently most of this book (237). Indeed, Origen's life story touches upon almost all the above-mentioned themes so that Eusebius can allow himself to depart from its main 'plot' when he finds it appropriate and divert the narrative to another issue (or several issues). This done, Origen's life appears again, and Eusebius simply moves on with recounting that life story by picking up from where he left off. Thus, we are to encounter what may seem to be traces of the same technique in the epitome of Philostorgius's church history (Philost. *HE* ,10, dedicated to his hero Eunomius of Cyzicus), and a fully preserved example in the treatment of the life of John Chrysostom which occupies (save for the first chapter) all of book VIII of Sozomen's ecclesiastical history. Much of the same approach seems to have shaped Sozomen's account of the pugnacious bishop of Alexandria Athanasius (ca. 296 – 373) as we shall see later.²¹⁰

Book VII

This book continues an account which was begun already in the previous book: that of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (248-265). The activities of Dionysius, himself a victim of the persecutions under Decius and Valerian (257), and a champion of orthodoxy and church unity, were documented in Dionysius's letters. Eusebius cites extensively from Dionysius's ample correspondence with various important figures. The choice of the addressee is, of course, indicative of the matter at hand. In the short preface to book VII, Eusebius underlines the usefulness of this method in addressing his readers:

*In the composition of the seventh book of the Ecclesiastical History Dionysius, the great bishop of the Alexandrians will again collaborate with us in our undertaking by his own words, indicating in turn each of the things that were done in his day, by means of the letters that he has left behind.*²¹¹

Once again, the incorporation of original documents in the narrative of an historical work receives additional weight. However, it is difficult to regard this method only as a convenient pointer. Gustave Bardy thought that the rest of book VII, which consists chiefly of accounts pertaining to heresies and heretics, was a 'filler' added by Eusebius simply because the letters of Dionysius did not contain enough material on their own to fill a whole book.²¹² This

²⁰⁹ T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, MI 1997), pp. 26-28.

²¹⁰ See comparison with Socrates *infra*.

²¹¹ Eus. *HE* VII, *Praef.* For a general discussion of Dionysius of Alexandria and his surviving writings, see: W.A. Bienert (Introduction and German trans.), *Dionysius von Alexandrien: Das erhaltene Werk* (Stuttgart 1972), pp. 1-24. For the original texts, see: C.L. Feltoe (ed.), *The Letters and other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria* (Cambridge 1904). Bienert's German translation is based on this edition.

²¹² G. Bardy (ed. and trans.), *Eusèbe de Césarée, Histoire Ecclésiastique Tome IV* (Paris 1960; repr. 1987) (= SC 73bis), p. 106.

explanation seems rather odd, for Eusebius's interest in heresies was expressed clearly in his list of main themes. We have already seen that Eusebius kept his promise to give an account of this problematic aspect of church history by dedicating space to heretical doctrines and movements in previous books.

Books VIII-X

Eusebius seems to have written the last three books of his ecclesiastical history sometime after the cessation of persecution and Galerius's decree of toleration in 311. Later versions were to appear by 324.²¹³ He produced an independent work, *De Martyribus Palaestinae* which dealt with the martyrs of the province in which he was residing (the complete version survives only in Syriac translation). Yet the persecution was terminated in the east only in 313 with the concessions given to the Christians by the Augustus Maximinus Daia shortly before his defeat and suicide. The dramatic change in the fortunes of the Christian church in the Roman empire after Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge called, as it were, for the writing of an appropriate supplement, covering the years of the oppression and bloodshed which were inflicted on Christians throughout the empire. Failing that, Eusebius's *HE* could have hardly claimed for itself the authority and esteem which apparently were not only a desired personal reward but, in this case, (it would be reasonable to assume) were essential for the validation of the new genre's status in the changing Christian literary republic.²¹⁴

Eusebius himself expresses his personal view of the pressing need to write the eighth book, justifying this undertaking by a professed commitment to look after posterity's interests:

*Having concluded the succession from the apostles in seven entire books, in this eighth composition we regard it as one of our most urgent duties to hand down, for the knowledge of those that come after us, the events of our own day, which are worthy of no occasional written record.*²¹⁵

Later on, as mentioned above, Eusebius edited and re-edited these additional books so that they were adjusted to the portrayal of a grateful church, indebted to its imperial benefactor and protector – Constantine. The history was thus brought to a close at the pinnacle of Constantine's personal political success, his final victory over Licinius in 324 which secured him the position of sole ruler over the entire Roman empire.

Alongside the detailed descriptions in book VIII of the 'great persecution' under Diocletian (303), one can observe that citations from original documents almost disappear here (with the

²¹³ See : V. Neri, 'Les éditions de l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* (livres VIII-IX): bilan critique et perspectives de la recherche' in: Morlet-Perone (2012), pp. 151-183. See also: G. Traina, 'La question des éditions de l'*histoire ecclésiastique* et le livre X' in: Morlet-Perone, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-207.

²¹⁴ The kind of mindset which seems to have impinged on Eusebius' editorial strategy during the preparation of the later revised editions is reflected in his reticent attitude towards the papacy and Church of Rome after the end of the anti-Christian persecutions in 311 Cf. Eus. *HE* VII, 1-9, whereby Eusebius seems to highlight the authority and indeed orthodoxy of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, whose advice is sought by the bishops of Rome with regard to the struggle with heresy. Eusebius quotes a reference to one of Dionysius's predecessors, Heraclius, as 'Pope', Leaving such a reference in the text seems to speak for itself. For a detailed analysis see: V. Twomey, *Apostolikos Thronos* (Münster 1982), pp. 140-192.

²¹⁵ Eus. *HE* VIII, *Praef.*

exception of Galerius's decree of toleration).²¹⁶ In the following books, however, translated copies of the Latin of various official documents and letters occur again more frequently. The last book is partly a description of the restauration of churches that had been badly damaged or completely destroyed during the persecution.²¹⁷ This occasion had probably prompted Eusebius to include in his narrative a sermon delivered by himself at the consecration of a new basilica in Tyre.²¹⁸ More original material appears later on. This material is chiefly pertinent to the changes in the status of the Christians and, in particular, the privileges and concessions granted to the church hierarchy by Constantine. The victory over Licinius ends the first ecclesiastical history.

Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica* does not offer any clear-cut solution for those who insist on labelling it. The nature of this work has been recaptured vividly in Wolfgang Liebeschuetz's words: 'Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History is perhaps the most untidy and disorganised work of genius in the whole of literature. But a work of genius it is. For Eusebius has shown that Christians, collectively the Church with a capital 'C', could be made the subject matter of historical writing like a city, a nation or an empire'.²¹⁹

But Eusebius's genius is not restricted just to the way in which he introduced the History of Salvation as a focaliser, turning *Ecclesia* into an object of historical enquiry.²²⁰ His contribution goes beyond its significance to the development of Christian culture in late antiquity. Eusebius, it may be said, revolutionised the old Graeco-Roman historiography through the agenda which he set for addressing his subject matter.²²¹ The hybrid nature of the narrative in the *HE* demonstrates a substantial degree of liberation from classical literary conventions. The essential convention of classical historiography which, since Thucydides, called for the inclusion of lofty speeches in the narrative of a worthy historical work, was notably abandoned. It would be perhaps too far-fetched to argue that the Eusebian innovation of including original documents *in extenso* in the narrative of the *HE* was purposely devised in order to replace the invented speeches, often used as a rhetorical *tour de force* by classical historians demonstrating their literary skills. Yet, the contrast between the elegance of the invented speech and the low-key style of some of Eusebius's hand-picked documents (regardless of their originality) should not escape our notice. This literary iconoclasm seems to have been ideologically linked not only with the intrinsic requirements of the subject-matter, i.e. the history of the Christian Church, but also, with the challenging task of addressing a readership consisting primarily of (it seems) of non-theologians. Eusebius's identification of his addressees is somewhat ambiguous. In the closing lines of his *premium*, he expresses his expectations for the reception of his ecclesiastical history thus:

*I hope that it will appear most beneficial to those who hold the study of history in esteem.*²²²

²¹⁶ Ibid. VIII, 17, 6-11.

²¹⁷ Eus. *HE* X, 2.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 4.

²¹⁹ W. Liebeschuetz 'Ecclesiastical Historians on Their Own Times', *SP* 24 (1993), p. 151 = Id., *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot 2006), II).

²²⁰ See: H. Zimmermann, *Ecclesia als Objekt der Historiographie: Studien zur Kirchengeschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Vienna 1960), pp. 9-22.

²²¹ Eus. *HE*, I, 1, 5.

²²² *HE*, I, 1, 5

A respect for historical learning was of course an integral element of Hellenistic *paideia*, but it would seem hasty to imply that in these words Eusebius was necessarily addressing pagan readers. Illustrating the changing currents in the history of the church with a fusion of citations from original documents, collected stories about martyrs, heretics, and a 'biography' of a 'super-hero' like Origen in book VI – it may well be argued – seems indicative, first and foremost, of an implied Christian audience. Eusebius's addressees must have been thus readers with more than a reasonable standard of education. Indeed, there does not seem to be a good reason to rule out the existence of a growing stratum of well-educated Christians, well rooted (like Eusebius himself) in both worlds, who may have had a satisfactory knowledge of the Bible and who may have flourished during the fairly relaxed period of the *Pax Ecclesiae* (ca. 261-303), when Christianity may have reached out to virtually all walks of life in the Roman empire. The act of citation, as Dominique Gonnet has shown²²³ receives special weight in a Christian context, given that Christianity, in essence, is a religion dependent on a book, namely Holy Scripture. Reliance on books is precisely what takes place in the New Testament, where the Old is frequently cited, especially with regard to events which the New Testament perceives as fulfilled prophecies. Eusebius, the well-trained Biblical scholar, must have been aware of the double jeopardy which he was facing with his chosen project. A history of the church cannot be detached from Christ's promises to the Apostles and their followers who were named after Him: the Christians. Yet, this history cannot be written unless one acknowledges the hiatus between the super-human, heavenly tenor of the New Testament and the universal church of the transition period at the beginning of the fourth century. The church had turned into an *expanding* organisation with an abundance of mundane concerns. These were considerations which, in terms of the marked apocalyptic attitudes of the Apostles and the Primitive Church to this world, were utterly unthinkable.

Eusebius had to take the Bible on board and to move on. This he did by letting his sources speak for themselves. However, the choice of the documents which were allowed to speak remained essentially the author's prerogative, and there was no attempt on Eusebius's part to deny this. The classical self-professed quest for objectivity, customarily associated with Tacitus's *sine ira et studio* was no longer valid. The historian of the church was writing in the name of Divine wrath against the adversaries of the Word of God and with unconcealed partisanship for the emerging orthodoxy and its benefactor, Constantine. He was no longer an onlooker; neither was he pretending to be one. Eusebius was proud to be an engaged historian and his partisanship was presented by him as an undistorted prism of an all-encompassing truth. The church historian, by his choice of subject, was now an active participant in the transformation of the perception of the driving force that sets human history in motion from *tyche* to *telos* – as this process was later characterised by the Cappadocian Fathers.²²⁴

Eusebius hardly needed to cite the Bible very extensively when he was writing about Biblical history in his *HE*. He seems to have been pretty assured that being Christians, his readers would be familiar with Biblical allusions. But when he was dealing with the history that

²²³ D. Gonnet, 'L'acte de citer dans l'*Histoire ecclésiastique* d'Eusèbe', in: B. Pouderon- Y.-M. Duval (eds), *L'historiographie de l'Eglise des premiers siècles* (Paris 2001), pp. 181- 193.

²²⁴ See, e.g. Gr. Nyss. *Anim. res.* (= PG 46, c. 117) and Id. *Infant.* (= Jaeger 3-II: 93). For a description of the development of teleological historiosophy in the thought of the Cappadocian Fathers, see: J. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven, CN 1993), pp. 152-163.

followed, he was committed, (precisely as a Biblical scholar who cites the verses on which he is about to comment), to provide his readers with the written evidence, i.e. the original documents. Moreover, citation, it seems, was an effective way to address theological issues, such as doctrinal controversies which in turn generated aggravating heresies, and at the same time, to avoid writing an abstract text which a readership of non-theologians could have found too difficult to stomach.

Eusebius of Caesarea invented a new method of writing history. He found it an effective way to deal aptly with what he regarded as intrinsic requirements of his chosen subject-matter, the history of the Christian church from Jesus to his own day. He tackled the polymorphous presence of the Christian church in history by narrowing down its facets into an itemised list of main themes. These themes, the succession of bishops, the development of Christian mission and literature, the emergence of heresies, the fate of the Jews, pagan anti-Christian opposition and Christian martyrdoms, were in fact an exploration of the external and internal life of the Christian church which, through Eusebius's treatment, gained a new dimension – a dimension of historicity. Eusebius accomplished his task, relying on a chronological framework which he himself had outlined beforehand in his *Chronicon*. The promised plan was carried out in full (with some additions). This may appear as a literary iconoclasm, a deliberate break with the Graeco-Roman classical tradition of historiography, but such a radical view can be only partly justified, for it would be quite mistaken to argue that classical historiography was indifferent to moral values and devoid of didactic pretensions.²²⁵

The Ciceronian idea that history was an 'applied science' of sorts, a *magistra vitae* modelled on Polybius's 'pragmatic history'²²⁶ i.e. a useful and edifying pursuit, continues throughout the various phases of Eusebius's *HE* to be repeatedly advocated, as we have seen. The practical use of history was apparently imported to Eusebius's *HE* from the Greek historiographical tradition which goes back to Polybius in the second century BC (from whence it was handed down to Cicero). It is also not unreasonable to assume that Eusebius may have known Lucian.

This may be inferred perhaps from the preface to book V which castigates 'other authors of historical narratives' who amongst other ill-chosen traditional topics have opted to write about men blemished with 'countless murders for the sake of children and homeland' – which seems to be reminiscent of Lucian's admonitions to historians in his *De conscribenda historia*. In this passage, the essayist of Samosata (ca. 120-after 180) urges the historian 'to be in his books stranger and stateless'.²²⁷

As we shall see, the development of the genre would continue to be influenced through the fourth and fifth centuries by the classical tradition, at the same time as the last efflorescence of late antique pagan historiography, influenced in turn by the salient output of the ecclesiastical historians.

²²⁵ Wolf Liebschuetz has demonstrated the classical roots of the Christian tradition of 'outspokenness' which seems to have nurtured Eusebius. See: J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom: Clerics between Desert and Empire* (Oxford 2011), pp. 43-48. See also: P. Siniscalco, *Il senso della storia: Studi sulla storiografia cristiana antica* (Soveria Manelli 2003), pp. 281-297.

²²⁶ Cic. *De oratore*, II, 9; cf. Polyb. I, 4.

²²⁷ Lucian, *Hist. conscr.*, 7-8.

B. Rufinus of Aquileia

We have already seen that the first continuator of Eusebius was in fact Eusebius himself.²²⁸ His choice to add three books to the original seven of his *HE* exemplifies what was to become an essential model for later ecclesiastical historians. Bringing the narrative down to the historian's own times (or nearly so) was to become a common practice in the contributions to the genre, and it seems that like Eusebius himself, the ecclesiastical historians regarded their treatment of contemporary history as indicative of their relevance to their readers.

After Eusebius' death, the fourth century had seen several contributions to the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica*. However, some survive only in odd fragments whereas others are lost. Peter van Nuffelen has argued that certain collections of documents to which a brief narrative had been added may have also been entitled 'Ecclesiastical History'. According to this taxonomy, under that category fall *Historia Arianorum* by bishop Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 295-373) as well as his *Apologia Secunda, De Synodis* and the *De decretis Nicenae synodi*.²²⁹ More collections of documents bearing the title of 'Ecclesiastical History' are attributed to a certain Apollinarian, Timothy of Beirut (fl. fourth century) and the anonymous so-called 'Ecclesiastical History of the Alexandrian Episcopate'.²³⁰ More scanty evidence (two fragments in total) is the surviving portion of a *HE* attributed to a Cypriot bishop, Philo of Carpasia (fl. Second half of the fourth century). This author seems to have chosen to focus on stories of *martyria* during the persecutions under Diocletian.²³¹ Another Ecclesiastical History may have come from the pen of a homoiousian author named Sabinus who wrote in Syriac.²³² Peter Van Nuffelen has suggested a possible identification of this author with Sabinus, Macedonian bishop of Heraclea-Perinthus in Thrace (fl. second half of the fourth century?), although, as Van Nuffelen himself admits, the evidence, in this respect, is too limited.²³³ The author of another, much debatable lost church history from the second half of the fourth century remains unknown. This work received scholarly attention through the fragmentary material, which was gathered from later sources by Joseph Bidez. Bidez reconstruction allowed him only to style the remnants of this *anonymus* as *Fragmente eines Arianischen Historiographen* (sic).²³⁴ The contents may suggest that the original could have been an ecclesiastical history with an Arian twist, and Bidez indeed refers to the unknown author quite decisively as *Der*

²²⁸ See: T.D. Barnes, 'The Editions of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*', *GRBS* 21 (1980), pp. 191- 201.

²²⁹ See: P. Van Nuffelen, 'Ecclesiastical History' in: S. McGill and E. J. Watts (eds.), *A Companion to Late Antique Literature* (Hoboken, NJ 2018), p. 165 and Idem, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène*, (Leuven 2004), pp. 207-209. See also: B. H. Warmington, 'Did Athanasius write History?' in C. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (eds.), *The Inheritance of Historiography 350-900* (Exeter 1986), pp. 7-15 ; F. Winkelmann, 'Zur nacheusebianischen christlichen Historiographie des 4 Jahrhunderts' in C. Scholz and G. Makris (eds.), *Plypleuros nous. Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner (=Byzantinisches Archiv 19)*(Leipzig 2000), pp. 405-414.

²³⁰ See: P. Van Nuffelen, 'La tête de l'histoire acéphale', *Klio* 84 (2002a), pp. 125-40 ; A. Bausi and A. Camplani, 'New Ethiopic documents for the history of Christian Egypt', *ZAC* 17 (2013), pp. 195-227.

²³¹ See: L. Van Hoof, P. Manafis, and P. Van Nuffelen, 'Philo of Carpasia: Ecclesiastical history', *Revue d'Histoire ecclésiastique* 112 (2017), pp. 35-52.

²³² F. Nau, 'Une liste de chronographes', *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 10 (1915-1917), pp. 101-103.

²³³ See: Van Nuffelen (2018), p. 168. Sabinus was used by Socrates who nonetheless criticised him for his anti-Nicene bias. See: *Soc.* I, 8, 24-25 and II, 15, 8.

²³⁴ For the fragments, see: J. Bidez-F. Winkelmann (eds) *Philostorgius Kirchengeschichte* (Berlin 1981), pp. 203-241. See also: H.C. Brennecke, *Studien zur Geschichte der Homoer: Der Osten bis zum Ende der homoischen Reichskirche* (Tübingen 1988), pp. 134-141.

Arianische Fortsetzer Eusebs.²³⁵ However, despite Bidez's authoritative tone, this seems to be beyond conclusive proof.²³⁶

Another much debated lost work was the ecclesiastical history of Gelasius of Caesarea (d. 395).²³⁷ Gelasius, who in 365 succeeded Acacius, Eusebius's successor, on the episcopal throne of Caesarea in Palestine, was, unlike his Homoian predecessor, a loyal supporter of Nicene orthodoxy, as can perhaps be expected from his background, for he was the nephew and *protégé* of Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem (ca. 313-386), a learned cleric and a leading figure of the pro-Nicene faction in the Palestinian church.²³⁸

Gelasius was deposed under the pro-Arian Valens, but was restored to his old position under the pro-Nicene emperor Theodosius I. His lost ecclesiastical history is believed to have taken as its starting point the reign of Diocletian and seems to have ended with the death in 336 of Arius of Alexandria, the originator of the Arian controversy, as has been argued by attention over the last century from German and French scholars, in particular. The debate emanated from the publication of a monograph by the German scholar Anton Glas. The discussion revolved around Gelasius's place in the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography following Glas's claim that Gelasius was used by Rufinus of Aquileia, the first Latin ecclesiastical historian. Glas was relying on later sources, such as the *Syntagma*, a compilation of extracts from ecclesiastical histories, which was made by Gelasius's namesake, Gelasius of Cyzicus (fl. after 450).²³⁹ Glas's theory generated a scholarly chain-reaction which yielded a range of contributions to the study of Gelasius's place in the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography. The atmosphere was most notably heightened by Friedhelm Winkelmann's impressive attempt to reconstruct a substantial part of Gelasius's lost *HE*.²⁴⁰ Winkelmann's reconstruction, however, has now been superseded by a new edition published in Berlin with an English translation.²⁴¹

²³⁵ Bidez-Winkelmann (1981), p. CXXXVI.

²³⁶ For a more recent attempt to identify the author of at least part of that 'Arian' continuation of Eusebius, see J. J. Reidy, "Eusebius of Emesa and the *Continuatio Antiochiensis Eusebii*," *JEH* 66 (2015), pp. 471–487. Reidy has developed further the reconstruction of a lost fourth century none-Nicene history (or historiographical tradition) in his as-yet unpublished PhD dissertation: *An alternative history of the church: A study of the lost Arian history* (St. Louis University 2015). See: Reidy, *ibid.* pp. 285–329. Reidy proposes to associate the traces of 'Arian' historical material, previously identified by Joseph Bidez, with three lost works namely, the aforementioned Eusebius of Emesa's *Continuatio*, an anonymous continuation of the very same *Continuatio* and a lost 'Arian' martyrology. Bidez's reconstruction and Brenncke's comments have been recently called into question by Peter Van Nuffelen. See: P. Van Nuffelen, 'Considérations sur l'anonyme homéen' (forthcoming) = https://www.academia.edu/36100969/Forthcoming_P_Van_Nuffelen_Consid%C3%A9rations_sur_l'anonyme_hom%C3%A9en_docx

²³⁷ Gelasius *Historia Ecclesiastica* survives only in fragments. For a reconstruction see: M. Wallraff, J. Stutz and N. Marinides (eds); N. Marinides (Eng. Trans.), Gelasius of Caesarea Ecclesiastical History; *The Extant Fragments with an Appendix containing the Fragments from Dogmatic Writings* (= *GCS-NF* 25) (Berlin 2018).

²³⁸ Thus, according to Sozomen. See: Soz. III, 14, 3. See also: J.W. Drijvers, *Cyril of Jerusalem: Bishop and City* (The Hague 2004), pp. 31–64.

²³⁹ A. Glas, *Die Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisarea* (Leipzig 1914), pp. 17–25.

²⁴⁰ F. Winkelmann, 'Untersuchungen zur Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisarea' (Berlin 1965); Id. 'Charakter und bedeutung der Kirchengeschichte des Gelasios von Kaisarea', *BF* 1 (1966), pp. 346–385.

²⁴¹ See: M. Wallraff, J. Stutz and N. Marinidis (eds and Eng. trans.), *Gelasius of Caesarea Ecclesiastical History The Extant Fragments; With an Appendix containing the Fragments from Dogmatic Writings*

The problem has been tackled again by Peter van Deun and Peter Van Nuffelen who incidentally have summarised the various theories which had been proposed since the publication of Glas's article.²⁴² Their conclusions have shown that Gelasius should be regarded as an independent contributor to the genre whose work was unknown to Rufinus. Van Nuffelen is particularly radical in his own theory according to which the lost work attributed to the bishop Gelasius of Caesarea (d. ca. 400), is a later compilation by an author who used the name of the Palestinian bishop to disguise his identity.²⁴³ Van Nuffelen's theory has been contested more recently by Martin Wallraff who has argued that in the main, Van Nuffelen had failed to produce a convincing evidence which would justify his painstaking efforts to solve the problem by an introduction of a 'Ps. -Gelasius'.²⁴⁴ Be it as it may, for our purpose suffice to say that although the question, remains admittedly open²⁴⁵, the latest criticisms have been instrumental in helping Rufinus to emerge from this century-old debate as an independent contributor to the genre, whose work contains much merit, as indeed was the approach of Françoise Thelamon whose study of this Latin-writing church historian remains the standard book to date.²⁴⁶ It is Rufinus to whom we now need to turn our attention.

Born in Iulia Concordia (west of Aquileia) ca. 345, Tyrannius (or Turannius) Rufinus was sent to Rome for his education (where he befriended Jerome, himself a would-be ecclesiastical historian who never fulfilled his own promise to contribute to the genre a 'large-scale history' (*latiorem historiam*)).²⁴⁷ Rufinus was baptised in ca. 370 and became a member of an ascetic community in his home town. His interest in this way of life drove him to visit the east with its famous sanctuaries. He arrived in Egypt (ca. 373) and it was there, in Alexandria, together with his new friend who was later to become his patroness, the noble and wealthy widow Antonia Melania (also known as Melania the Elder), that Rufinus had experienced the hostilities between the Arian and the Nicene churches which followed the death of Athanasius in the same year. Rufinus, however, found in Alexandria a worthy teacher. This was Didymus 'the Blind' (ca. 313-398), one of the leading theologians of the Alexandrian school in the fourth century and Athanasius's own appointee to the position of head of the Catechetical school in that city.²⁴⁸

(Berlin 2018). For a survey of modern Gelasian scholarship, see: ; 'Introduction' in *ibid.* pp. XXIII-XXVII.

²⁴² See: P Van Deun, 'The Church Historians after Eusebius', in: Marasco (2003), pp. 158-160; P. Van Nuffelen, 'Gélase de Césarée un compilateur du cinquième siècle', *ByzZ* 95 (2002b), pp. 621-640.

²⁴³ See: Van Nuffelen (2004), pp. 210-211.

²⁴⁴ See : M. Wallraff, 'Gélase de Césarée. Un historien ecclésiastique du IV^e siècle', *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 92 (2018), pp. 499-519. See also: Id., Stutz and Marinidis *op. cit.* pp. XXVII-XXVIII. For a recent critique of Van Nuffelen's theory, see: J.J. Reidy, 'The Works of Gelasius of Caesarea: A Potential Source for Sozomen's Ecclesiastical History?', *J ECS* 30 (2022), pp. 275-298.

²⁴⁵ Wallraff, Stutz and Marinides, *op. cit.*, p. XXVIII, n. 65.

²⁴⁶ F. Thelamon, *Paiens et chrétiens au IV^e siècle: L'apport de l'«Histoire ecclésiastique» de Rufin d'Aquilée* (Paris 1981), pp. 18-21.

²⁴⁷ See: Jerome, *Vita Malchi* I (= PL XXIII, 55)

²⁴⁸ On Didymus the Blind and his teaching career: R.A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana-Champaign, IL 2004), pp. 13-35. See now: G.D. Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism* (Oxford 2015), pp. 8-45. Note also: D. Szymańska-Kuta, 'Dydym Ślepy – mistrz szkoły aleksandryjskiej (przegląd źródeł)', *Studia religiologica* 43 (2011), pp. 77-92 .

Didymus was a devoted admirer of Origen and his influence on Rufinus appears to have been of crucial importance. Rufinus remained all his life loyal to Origen's teachings. His old friend Jerome too sat at Didymus's feet but was to become later a bitter opponent of Origenism, turning vehemently against his old schoolmate Rufinus during the so-called 'Origenist controversy' at the turn of the fifth century. His personal involvement in that controversy was to shadow Rufinus for the rest his life.²⁴⁹

Having completed his studies with Didymus, Rufinus moved to Palestine (ca. 380), where his old friend Melania had founded a monastery for speakers of Latin on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.²⁵⁰ Here he was engaged in the copying of books and started making a name for himself as a gifted translator from Greek to Latin. Rufinus's friend Jerome had in the meanwhile settled also in Palestine (in 386), supported by his own patroness Paula. Jerome, who lived in a monastery at Bethlehem, became involved in the Origenist controversy, taking, as mentioned above, a fierce anti-Origenist stance, not sparing his former friend.²⁵¹

Back in Italy in 397, Rufinus found himself unable to find a safe haven to harbour him at the face of anti-Origenist pressures. He found that his foes were relentlessly tarnishing his name even in his native country. This was done mainly in connection with his consistent advocacy of Origenism. Staying in the beginning at the monastery of Pientum (near Terracina), he went back to work on translations from the Greek. Amongst those which were made during his stay there, the Latin version of Origen's *De Principiis* should be noted. It should be also mentioned that Rufinus was particularly keen (perhaps not without good reason) to render into Latin selected works of the Cappadocian Fathers, the great champions of Nicene orthodoxy.

The slander which kept being spread by his anti-Origenist adversaries, drove Rufinus to withdraw to his native region. He seems to have settled in Aquileia in 398. The following years were the apex of anti-Origenist propaganda, now marshalled vigorously by Theophilus (d. 412) bishop of Alexandria. Rufinus, still under attack, wrote in 400 an *Apologia*, addressed to Pope Anastasius, who had just endorsed the condemnation of Origenism, first confirmed at the Council of Alexandria, earlier that year.²⁵² Rufinus's training and skills were thus similar to those of Eusebius. Rufinus, who also translated the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* about that time, moved back to Rome (ca. 406) and remained there until 408, when he was forced to flee to Sicily with other refugees from the city from fear of the invading Visigoths. Rufinus died in Sicily in 411 or 412.²⁵³ The translation of Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica* into Latin was commissioned in 402 by Chromatius, bishop of Aquileia.²⁵⁴ Chromatius, facing apparently a

²⁴⁹ On the biography of Rufinus, see: O. Fedalto, 'Rufino di Concordia: Elementi di una biografia' AAAd 39 (1992), pp. 19-44.

²⁵⁰ On Melania as a patroness of learning and her patronage of Rufinus, see: P. Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome and the Making of Christianity in the West 350-550* (Princeton, NJ 2012), pp. 274-288.

²⁵¹ See: J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome* (New York 1977), p. 196.

²⁵² For a detailed analysis of the charges of Origenism and Rufinus's defence against them, see: E.A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ 1992), pp. 85-193.

²⁵³ On Rufinus's late years, see: C.P. Hammond, 'The Last Ten Years of Rufinus' Life and the Date of his Move South of Aquileia', *JTS-NS* 28 (1977), pp. 372-429.

²⁵⁴ On Chromatius and the church of Aquileia, see: C. Sotinel, 'L'évêque chrétien devant la diversité religieuse de la cité: Chromace et Aquilée', in: F. Beatrice and A. Peršič (eds.), *Chromatius of Aquileia and his age* (Turnhout 2011), pp. 163-176.

rather despondent atmosphere in his diocese, wanted (we are told) to provide the members of his community with reading material which would divert their mind from a fast-approaching danger, namely, the mighty forces of the Visigoths under Alaric who was laying siege to Milan at that time.²⁵⁵ In addition to that, the inhabitants were terrified by a local outbreak of plague.

Rufinus accepted the undertaking, and we can speculate that he may have regarded the proposed project as an excellent opportunity to strengthen his shaky position. His translation was produced in the course of 402/403. This translation was in fact a substantial paraphrase of Eusebius' lengthy Greek original which eventually shrank the ten books of Eusebius into nine. To these nine books of the Latin translation, Rufinus added from his own pen two original books, normally marked as book X and book XI thus underlining their place as a continuation of the original ten (turned nine) books of Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.²⁵⁶ Despite this close literary linkage, there seems to be little doubt at present about their distinctive original contribution to the emergence of ecclesiastical historiography. Rufinus's innovation lies primarily in the introduction of holy men, monks bishops and the ascetic life into the range of essential themes for an ecclesiastical historian. Moreover, the miraculous had become, by Rufinus's treatment, an integral part of the fairly new universal Christian reality, by being expropriated from hagiography and incorporated in the narrative of a virtually contemporary history, turning the lives and the attainments of the ascetics and outstanding bishops (such as Athanasius of Alexandria) into a Christian manifestation of *virtus*, fighting paganism and heresy respectively.²⁵⁷

Rufinus thus justifies his choice to reduce Eusebius's *HE* to nine books instead of the original ten:

*Now it should be noted that since the tenth book of this work [sc. Eusebius's HE] in Greek has very little history in it (quoniam perparum erat in rebus gestis), all the rest of it being taken up with bishops' panegyrics which add nothing to our knowledge of the affairs (scientiam rerum), we have omitted what seemed superfluous and joined what history there was in it (historiae si quid habuit) to the ninth book, which we have made the conclusion of Eusebius's account.*²⁵⁸

Rufinus, unlike Eusebius, had lived all his life in a Christian empire and his outlook appears to reflect this crucial difference quite clearly. Despite the modesty (in terms of length) of his contribution, Rufinus nonetheless enriched the genre immensely by anchoring it firmly in the long-standing and unresolved cultural tension between the 'factual' and the miraculous, a state of mind which was to govern the development of ecclesiastical historiography even after Sozomen up to the last exponents of the genre, Evagrius Scholasticus in the Greek east and (to a certain extent) the Venerable Bede in the Latin west. Rufinus presents his plan thus:

²⁵⁵ On Alaric's Italian campaign, see: P. J. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489* (Oxford 1994), pp. 208-213.

²⁵⁶ On Rufinus and the continuation of Eusebius, see: M. Humphries, 'Rufinus's Eusebius: Translation, Continuation, and Edition in the Latin Ecclesiastical History', *J ECS* 16 (2008), pp. 143-164. See also: T.C. Ferguson, *The Past is Prologue: The Revolution of Nicene Historiography* (Leiden 2005), pp. 86-92.

²⁵⁷ See: Ferguson, *op. cit.* pp. 112-121. Thelamon (1981), pp. 375-417.

²⁵⁸ Ruf. *HE*, *Prologus in Libros Historiarum Eusebii*

The tenth and eleven books we composed based partly on what has come down from those before us and partly on what we remembered adding them like two little fish to the aforesaid loaves. If you approve and bless them, I am confident that they will satisfy the crowds (quod sufficient turbis).²⁵⁹

The apparent allusion to one of Christ's most memorable acts of wonderworking in the New Testament (Matthew 15: 21-39) is very significant and its significance is twofold: Rufinus, who is about to introduce a new theme to the genre of ecclesiastical history i.e. the lives and deeds of holy men and women, speaks here indeed as a believer who writes with devotion and persuasion.

Yet, despite these favourable circumstances (we refer here in a general way to the empire being Christian, not to Rufinus's personal circumstances, which were, due to the Origenist controversy, far from favourable) it would be hard to say that Rufinus did not have certain specific hurdles to overcome. Writing in a Christian empire, Rufinus had nonetheless to deal with some challenging aspects of church life. The colourful and heroic figures of saints like Spiridon and Pafnutius,²⁶⁰ indefatigable and bold prelates like Athanasius of Alexandria and Hilary of Poitiers,²⁶¹ and exotic as well as reassuring stories about the dissemination of Christianity beyond the borders of the Roman empire, or the miraculous fiasco of the Jewish attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple in the days of Julian,²⁶² were apparently delightful to write and to read. But the inner rifts and the endemic and acrimonious conflicts between the squabbling factions within the Christian Church during the Arian controversy had to be dealt with as well. This is, for example, how Rufinus comments on the outcome of the synod of Ariminum in 359:

This was the time when the face of the church was foul and exceedingly loathsome, for now it was ravaged, not as previously by outsiders, but by its own people. One banished, one was banished and both of them were of the (same) church.²⁶³

Thus, the responsibility, in Rufinus's view, for this shameful conduct does not lie with demonic powers wishing to ruin the edifice of God's church. It is purely human inadequacy which stirs the havoc. Rufinus stresses the unnecessary, if not foolish, nature of the crisis by suggesting that the main culprit is human error and innate wickedness. God is merciful, for He can choose, if He so pleases, to deliver the obedient and truth-loving believers from the detriments caused by the shortcomings of mortal sinners, for the sake of His Glory. The chosen, like Theodosius I, are recognised by their quest for unity, which is a token of supreme goodness and piety. The pious Theodosius can himself be 'hideously tarnished by the demon's deviousness' (XI, 18), as can be seen from the massacre which took place at Thessalonica in 390 which Theodosius had orchestrated in retaliation for the lynching of Butheric, one of his officers, during a riot. But having been reprimanded by the 'priests of Italy' he admitted his crime and showed humility and penance in public 'with tears' and respect for the supremacy of ecclesiastical authority.

Rufinus's ecclesiastical history is drawn to a close with the death of Theodosius I in 395 and Rufinus adds a concluding remark: ... *he himself went on to a better place to receive his reward*

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ruf. *HE*, X, 3-4.

²⁶¹ Ibid. 15; 28; 31-32.

²⁶² Ibid. 10-11; 38; 40.

²⁶³ Ibid. 22.

with the most faithful sovereigns²⁶⁴ having guided the Roman empire successfully for seventeen years.

²⁶⁵ The subtle treatment of Theodosius seems to suggest that Rufinus, self admittedly, had moved on from Eusebius' vociferous panegyrics. His view of the emperors is positive but not unconditionally so. The real protagonists in his history are men and women whose life and deeds shaped the Christian reality and to him it is self-evident that a good emperor would comply with the judgment passed by a unified church.²⁶⁶ The supremacy of this church of holy men, hermits and saints, implicitly but consistently expressed in Rufinus's narrative, later became one of the main themes in the genre's tradition, which shaped the historical views of Sozomen.

C. Philostorgius of Borissus

The turn of the fifth century saw an extended interest in ecclesiastical historiography and it seems that the genre was now growing out of its initial merely apologetic and didactic designs (without abandoning them altogether). Its tributaries were now flowing into a more 'classical' terrain of 'pure' erudition and literary excellence *per se*. However, the links which were forged in the historiographical chain at this particular phase of its evolution are almost completely lost (with the exception of a few fragments) and our assumptions with regard to the two main missing links from this period, the (probably) more 'conventional' *HE* by Pseudo (?) Gelasius of Caesarea,²⁶⁷ or the mammoth and ostentatiously erudite *Historia Christiana* by Philip of Side (fl. ca. 420), can only remain conjectural.²⁶⁸ Another (fragmented yet more substantial) link in the chain of ecclesiastical historiography is the *HE* of Philostorgius, a native of Borissus in Cappadocia (368- ca. 430), whose work, as noted above, may have relied on the anonymous Arian historian of the 370's. Philostorgius's work survives only in a form of an epitome, traditionally attributed to Photius. Philostorgius's *HE* is exceptional not only because of its problematic transmission.²⁶⁹ Its uniqueness lies in the confessional affiliation of its author, who was apparently a supporter of the Eunomian denomination, a dissident neo-Arian church. This 'church' (Philostorgius himself refers to it as *συναγωγή*) is the convenience name given to the followers and supporters of the Anomean doctrine, passed down by two theologians who were also trained logicians and outstanding rhetoricians, namely, Aetius 'the Syrian', and his adjutant and successor Eunomius, a native of Oltesiris in north west

²⁶⁴ *cum piissimis principibus*

²⁶⁵ Ruf. *HE*, XI, 34.

²⁶⁶ See, however, G.W. Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography* (London 2000), pp. 158-184. Trompf tends to highlight the retributive nature of Divine intervention in human history but seems also to be ignoring the need to explain the meaning of Rufinus's attempt to 'integrate' the holy men into the 'main current' of ecclesiastical history.

²⁶⁷ For a revisionist discussion of Gelasius of Caesarea, dating the (now lost) *HE* attributed to him to the fifth century (i.e. later than the previously accepted dating of the second half of the fourth century) see: P. van Nuffelen, 'Gélase de Césarée: un compilateur du cinquième siècle', *ByzZ* 95 (2002), pp. 621-640.

²⁶⁸ W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke 2007), p. 123 ff. Philip's work is attested by Socrates Scholasticus in his *HE*, VII, 26-27. See also: K. Heyden, 'Die Christliche Geschichte des Philippos von Side' in: M. Wallraff (ed.), *Julius Africanus und die Christliche Weltchronistik* (Berlin 2006), pp. 209-243.

²⁶⁹ For a detailed discussion of Philostorgius's transmission and reconstruction see now: B. Bleckmann and M. Stein (eds and German trans., with introduction and commentary), *Philostorgios Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 1 (Paderborn 2015), pp. 1-36.

Cappadocia, better known as 'Eunomius of Cyzicus' after the metropolis of the Hellespont district of which he was consecrated bishop.²⁷⁰ At the centre of their teachings was the sharpest disassociation in substantiality of Christ from the Godhead hitherto known in Christian theology. Aetius and Eunomius asserted that the Son was 'unlike' (ἀνόμοιος) the Father. This radical school of thought stood in concert with the more moderate Arian and Homoian churches during the reigns of emperors like Constantius II (d. 361) and Valens (364-378) and had remained bitterly opposed to the victorious Nicene doctrine after the accession of Theodosius I in 379.

Although mentioned in Codex 40 of Photius's voluminous collection of book reviews, the *Bibliotheca*, the identity of the epitomist cannot be established with certainty and still remains debatable.²⁷¹ Philostorgius's *HE* in its original form, we are told by Photius with the accord of two epigrams in the *Anthologia Palatina* (IX, 193-194), consisted of twelve books, beginning acrostically, i.e. with letters taken from the author's name. However, despite their present state, the remains of Philostorgius's *HE* still convey, even when looked at through the opaque veil in which the epitomist has wrapped the lost original text, something of the author's mixed sentiments of pride and bitterness, which typify a faithful believer who in the face of the demise of his denomination is forced to concede defeat and is keen to record his church's interpretation of history for posterity, before this church becomes obsolete.²⁷²

This motivation dictated an original agenda which seems to have distanced Philostorgius consciously from Eusebius, who despite his personal pro-Arianism appears to have been perceived by the time the Eunomian historian was writing (ca. 430) largely as Constantine's panegyrist.²⁷³ Philostorgius, as far as can be learned from the epitome, deliberately established a different starting point as part of what seems to be his endeavour to form an alternative heterodox focalisation, aiming at discrediting the legacy of Nicaea and its emerging paradigm of ecclesiastical historiography, by replacing the heroes of Nicene orthodoxy with the champions of the non-Nicene doctrine of his own denomination, namely Aetius and

²⁷⁰ On Aetius and Eunomius as reflected in Philostorgius's *HE*, see respectively:

J.M. Prieur, 'Aège selon l'Histoire Ecclésiastique de Philostorge', *RHPPhR* 85 (2005), pp. 529-552; Id. 'Eunome selon l'Histoire Ecclésiastique de Philostorge', *RHPPhR* 86 (2006), pp. 154-172.

²⁷¹ There are good reasons to call into question the attribution of the epitome to Photius. See: E.I. Argov, 'Giving the Heretic a Voice: Philostorgius of Borissus and Greek Ecclesiastical Historiography', *Athenaeum* 89 (2001), pp. 520-523. For a recent reiteration of the conservative acceptance of Photius's authorship of the epitome, see: A. Baldini, 'Eunapio, Olimpiodoro, Filostorgio: Indizi sulle "responsabilità" del patriarca Fozio' in: D. Meyer (ed.) *Philostorg im Kontext der spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart 2011), pp. 41-64 (esp. pp. 42-45).

²⁷² On aspects of Philostorgius's *HE* as a 'heterodox' work, see: J.-M. Prieur, 'histoire de l'église et histoire profane dans l'histoire ecclésiastique de Philostorge' in B. Bleckmann et al. (eds), *Philostorge, histoire ecclésiastique* (Paris 2013) (= *SC* 564), pp. 25-50. See also:

H. Leppin, 'Heretical Historiography: Philostorgius', in: *SP* 34 (2001), pp. 111-124.

²⁷³ Jerome sought to exploit Eusebius' pro-Arian reputation in the fierce anti-Origenist polemic which he directed mainly against his former friend, Rufinus of Aquileia. This he did by ascribing a work of disputed origins and of central importance for the Origenist controversy, the *Apologeticus pro Origene*, to the prolific bishop of Caesarea. Rufinus, for his part, seems to have sought to demonstrate that the author of this work was Eusebius' mentor, the martyr Pamphilus. See, respectively: Jerome, *Ep.* 84, 11 (= *CSEL* 55, 133-134); Id. *Apologia* I, 8-11 and 13; II, 15 and 23; III, 12 (= *CCL* 79, 7-11, 12, 48-49, 59-60, 83-85). Rufinus, *Prologus in Apologeticum Pamphili Martyris pro Origene* (= *CCL* 20, 233).

Eunomius.²⁷⁴ Instead of Constantine, Philostorgius begins his history with a *proemium* dedicated to praise of the Maccabees, the Jewish priestly family (and later, the founders of the Jewish Royal Hasmonean dynasty), who led the rebellion in Judaea against the oppression of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the 160s BC.²⁷⁵

Thus, the skeleton structure of the lost original, which appears to be preserved quite well in the epitomised text, would be as follows:

1. *Praise of the Maccabees (I). Possibly, a remnant of the original proemium which may have had apocalyptic contents. The mention of the prophet Daniel suggests that this was one of the main themes from the outset. The mention of the Jewish martyrs that soon follows (1,1) is apparently along the same lines.*
2. *The ascendancy of Constantine (I, 2-8)*
3. *The foundation of Constantinople (II,9)*
4. *The dissemination of Christianity; on geography and natural history; the 'biography' of Aetius – the founding father of the Anomean church (III, 4-15)*
5. *The death of Gallus and the subsequent promotion of Julian (IV, 1-2)*
6. *The reign of Constantius II (V, 1-5); the apex of Arianism*
7. *The rebellion of Julian and the death of Constantine (VI, 5)*
8. *The reign of Julian (VII, 4-13)*
9. *The accession of Jovian and the restoration of Christianity (VIII, 5-8)*
10. *The reign of Valens (IX, 3-4)*
11. *The 'biography' of Eunomius (X)*
12. *Conclusion: The coming of the barbarians (XI, 8 - XII, 3). Omens and the forthcoming fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy. The disintegration of the Roman empire is underway according to the Eunomian interpretation. The 'decline of mankind' with its eschatological overtones (XII. 4-13) draws Philostorgius's HE to a close that matches neatly the apocalyptic vaticinium ex eventu at its beginning.*

The general chronological framework in Philostorgius's *HE* is clearly based on the succession of emperors. This also ties in well with his markedly legitimist outlook and general resentment of usurpers.²⁷⁶ The main themes appear to be appended to the main headings. It seems logical

²⁷⁴ T.C. Ferguson, *The Past is Prologue: The Revolution of Nicene Historiography* (Leiden 2005), pp. 152-162.

²⁷⁵ On the Maccabees and the Hasmonean dynasty see: E. Regev, *The Hasmoneans: Ideology, Archaeology, Identity* (Göttingen 2013), pp. 12-25 and pp. 129-174.

²⁷⁶ See: A. Lankina, 'Leadership for the Christian Empire: Emperors and Bishops in the Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgius', *Church History* 87 (2018), pp. 684–717 (esp. p. 692 ff.) ; H. Leppin, "Heretical Historiography: Philostorgius," *SP* 34 (2001), pp. 111–124; Note also: G. Marasco, 'Philostorgius and Gelasius' in Id. (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century AD* (Leiden 2003), p. 270 ff.

to assume that the original text must have contained materials like original documents and copies of letters, which may have been meticulously removed by the epitomist who, as we can see, was very eager to express his personal resentment of Philostorgius's views in remarks which he persistently inserted in passages all over the epitome. Yet, this cannot be established with certainty.²⁷⁷

We have already seen that Eusebius did not pretend to style himself a 'neutral' historian in his *HE*. Yet the father of church history resorted to extensive citation of original documents, which is perhaps his implicit statement of commitment to a historical veracity. Philostorgius seems to have had a slightly different purpose. He wrote primarily as a polemicist-historian. Philostorgius sought among other things to demonstrate that God's wrath, incurred by the rejection of Eunomius and his doctrines, was the underlying cause of natural disasters as well as political and military failures with which the empire had to cope in his lifetime and more specifically, in the period between the death of Arcadius and the accession of Valentinian III (i.e. 408-425).²⁷⁸ These were in his eyes (as is stressed by the epitomist himself: *Ibid.* 10)-portents, heralding a fast-approaching apocalyptic Divine punishment.²⁷⁹ His main intention was seemingly, to tell the story from a Eunomian point of view, to challenge the pro-Nicene triumphalism and its interpretation of ecclesiastical history, offering his readers an 'alternative narrative'. The treatment of the fall of Rome and the West to the Goths in books XI-XII suggests, insofar as the epitomised text allows us to pass judgement, that Philostorgius did not show particular interest in 'secular' politics and military affairs: he was interested chiefly in doctrinal disputes, and the recurrent failures of the Roman empire on these fronts were exploited by him for the purpose of self-vindication. When his interest shifts elsewhere, it is mainly to the world of erudite learning and natural science.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ For certain caveats in the respect see: G. Sabbah, 'Sozoméne et philostorge: le récit des conciles de 359' in: D. Meyer (ed.) *Philostorg im Kontext der spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart 2011), pp. 119-141 (esp. pp. 136-137).

²⁷⁸ See: Philost. XII, 6-13

²⁷⁹ See: P. Janiszewski, 'Między apokalyptiką, Arystotelesem i astrologia: "Historia kościelna" Filostorgiosa', *PHist* 87 (1996), p. 247 ff. Peter Van Nuffelen, following Janiszewski, highlights the connection between Philostorgius's apocalyptic interpretation of contemporary history and his Eunomian stance. See: P. Van Nuffelen, 'Philostorge et les eunomiens sous Théodose II' in: D. Meyer (ed.) *Philostorg im Kontext der spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart 2011), pp. 307-328. However, Van Nuffelen unnecessarily argues that 'L'origine de son interpretation apocalyptique n'est donc pas théologique mais sociale, et se trouve dans la situation désespérée des eunomiens dans l'empire théodosien'. See: *Ibid.* p. 325. The evidence for the separation between 'théologique' and 'sociale' appears to be forced, particularly given Van Nuffelen's analysis, which had hitherto demonstrated how inseparable were Philostorgius's theological outlook and his station in life as a supporter of a small heterodox sect, particularly during the reign of Theodosius II which saw the collection and codification of laws *De haereticis* (*CTh* 16, 5, 65) of which seventeen are specifically dedicated to the Eunomians. See: R. Flower, 'The Insanity of Heretics Must Be Restrained': Heresiology in the Theodosian Code' in C. Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 172-194, esp. p. 187 ff.

²⁸⁰ See e.g. Philost. III, 6-13 which betrays clear traces of interest in geography, biblical studies and zoology. For a comprehensive discussion see: D. Meyer, 'Philostorg, Aristoteles und Josephus Naturwissenschaftliche Excurse in der Kirchengeschichte' in Ead. (ed.), *Philostorg im Kontext der spätantiken Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart 2011), pp. 21-40. See now: Ead. 'Débat cosmologique et discours historique dans l'histoire ecclésiastique de philostorge' in: P. Blauddau and P. van Nuffelen (eds), *L'historiographie tardo-antique et la transmission des savoirs* (Berlin 2015), pp. 191-208.

D. Socrates of Constantinople

The clear emergence of Socrates of Constantinople in recent decades as scholars- preferred ecclesiastical historian, should hardly surprise any student of the genre.²⁸¹ Socrates offered the scholars concerned an advantageous starting point for their research. By choosing him they seem to have opted for the study of a work which has come down to us in its entirety, free of the questions which Sozomen's unfinished *HE* is bound to pose. For example, was Sozomen's invitation to Theodosius II to censor his work, as presented in Sozomen's dedicatory address to this emperor (henceforth *Dedicatio* = *Ded.*), ever accepted?²⁸² If so, is the 'missing' portion of book IX a direct result of imperial censorship?²⁸³ What then could have been the flaws which may have prompted the emperor to censure the concluding portion of the ninth book (unless the missing final chapters simply indicate the author's death before the completion of the project)? These issues, important though they are, seem to be dwarfed by the striking similarity with Socrates's *HE*, which has been studied through a limited list of diagnostic cases by Theresa Urbainczyk in addition to her monograph on Socrates, in which, it should be noted, Urbainczyk highlights Socrates's independent approach towards the Eusebian model of *HE*.²⁸⁴

Socrates according to Urbainczyk, 'does not claim to be following Eusebius's and she supports her own claim by citing a passage from Socrates's preface to the fifth book of his *HE*, in which he defends his decision to include material which does not necessarily relate to (strictly speaking) ecclesiastical affairs such as wars. Urbainczyk notes that Socrates included the emperors in his defence of the rationale of his work. She attributes this to a possible response to readers' criticism.²⁸⁵ Yet, it seems more likely that Socrates may have tried to address in advance potential readers' displeasure at his own disapproval of Eusebius of Caesarea, also for other reasons, as can be inferred from Socrates's critique of Eusebius's *De vita Constantini*.²⁸⁶ Although elsewhere Socrates seems to defend Eusebius against his detractors,

²⁸¹ The two modern monographs on Socrates are: Th. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, MI 1997), and M. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates. Untersuchungen zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (Göttingen 1997). For a collection of essays dedicated to Socrates, see: B. Bäbler and H.-G. Nesselrath (eds.), *Die Welt des Sokrates von Konstantinopel. Studien zu Politik, Religion und Kultur im späten 4. und frühen 5. Jh. N. Chr.* (Munich 2001).

²⁸² Soz. *Ded.* 18.

²⁸³ See: G.F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Evagrius* (2nd ed., Macon, GA 1986), pp. 203-204. Chesnut follows (albeit hesitantly) G. Schoo, *Die Quellen der Kirchenhistoriker Sozomenos* (Berlin 1911), pp. 6-8. Schoo believed that the imperial censorship was possibly aimed at an account concerning the empress Eudokia, Theodosius II's estranged wife who was expelled from the court of Constantinople to Jerusalem in 442 following allegations about an affair with the Master of the Offices, Paulinus.

²⁸⁴ See: Urbainczyk (1997), pp. 82-89.

²⁸⁵ Urbainczyk, *op. cit.* p. 85.

²⁸⁶ Soc. *HE* I, 1, 2. The Constantinopolitan church historian expresses here his dissatisfaction with Eusebius' *De vita Constantini*, describing Eusebius at the time of the composition of the *VC*, i.e. shortly before his death, as 'more preoccupied with the praises of the emperor and with the loftiness of expression and the panegyric tone of his words, as in an eulogy, than with covering the events accurately'. Socrates may be implicitly reminding his readers of Eusebius' questionable reputation from an orthodox (i.e. Nicene) point of view, as the last two years of Constantine's reign saw a *rapprochement* between Constantine and the supporters of the *homoiousion* following the reinstatement of Arius at the synod of Jerusalem in 335. Eusebius, it should be borne in mind, praises this synod as 'the greatest of those we know'. See: Eus. *VC* IV, 47. Despite this unflattering statement, Socrates seems to have relied extensively on Eusebius' *HE* and *VC* nonetheless. See: P. Maraval in *SC* 477, pp. 14-19 and p. 46 n. 1.

this is in fact a lukewarm account which actually turns a spotlight on Eusebius's pro-Arian leanings more than it reclaims him for Nicene orthodoxy.²⁸⁷ Socrates seems to be communicating to his readers his quintessentially negative view not by original argumentation but by drawing on the *De Vita Constantini*, which he himself had presented as questionable:

*For in the first place, he was present in the council of Nicaea which defined the homoousion and indeed agreed with it. He himself says so in the third book of the Life of Constantine ...*²⁸⁸

Socrates goes on to claim that: 'The Arians are misled, regarding him as being of their opinions'.²⁸⁹ Trying to frame Socrates's approach to Eusebius may tell us something about Socrates's true colours. He tends to enjoy the best of all worlds. It seems that the development of the genre no longer required the contrasts of 'Christian simplicity' as opposed to 'Hellenic sophistry'. But we must not be tempted to think that there were no longer frontiers and constraints. Eusebius could be criticised as part of the pagan historiographical legacy which, at least since the days of Polybius characteristically encouraged historians to justify their writing by exposing the flaws of their predecessors. At the same Eusebius had to be defended, probably in order to counter-balance what may have been otherwise regarded as too radical in the eyes of the undiscerning readers who were particularly disliked by Socrates, yet in a fashion carefully selected in order to convey the ecclesiastical historian's true sentiments.²⁹⁰

The preface to Socrates's book VI reads more as an intentional throwing down of a gauntlet, than an attempt to please everybody. Although we may never know whether Sozomen had started his *HE* independently or planned it as a response to Socrates, we must certainly take on board Theresa Urbainczyk's further contribution to the problem of the relations between the Socrates and Sozomen. Urbainczyk has compared the two church historians in two important articles focusing on selected issues. In the first, she argued that Sozomen undertook to change the slant of Socrates's *HE* chiefly in three areas: first,

Church-State relations, second, individual asceticism, and lastly, the portrayal of Jews and Judaism. This was followed by an article on the use of panegyric by both Socrates and Sozomen. Here, Urbainczyk chose to look at these church historians' portrayals of individual emperors and found noteworthy variations, mainly as regards Constantine, Theodosius II, and Julian. Apart from the depiction of emperors by Socrates and Sozomen, Urbainczyk, has singled out from a range of notable individuals in both ecclesiastical histories, the bishop of Constantinople John Chrysostom (347-407) as a unique figure amongst the church hierarchy whose singularity was not free of controversy, conjuring up opposed responses from Socrates and Sozomen.²⁹¹ The crux of Urbainczyk's achievement in the study of ecclesiastical

²⁸⁷ Soc. II, 21.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. 2, cf. Eus. VC, III, 13.

²⁸⁹ Soc. II, 21, 4.

²⁹⁰ See: Soc. VI, *Praef.* 7. Socrates's habitually moderate tone changes here dramatically as he portrays himself as obliged to manoeuvre between different sectors of Constantinopolitan society, namely the highbrow, the unlearned, popular sympathies, and those who he identifies as the 'Zealots of our churches' (οἱ μὲν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ζηλωταί). Socrates goes on to say (Ibid., 9) that he is able to respond to potential complaints, such as those anticipated here, by relying on evidence taken from 'what has been written by the ancients' (ἐκ τῶν τοῖς παλαιοῖς γεγραμμένον).

²⁹¹ See respectively: Th. Urbainczyk, 'Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen', *Hist.* 46 (1997), pp. 355-373; Ead., 'Vice and Advice in Socrates and Sozomen', in:

historiography is perhaps her specific contribution to the present growing scholarly awareness of the contrast between Socrates and Sozomen. Although she focused on Socrates she has nonetheless offered some fresh observations as to how the two ecclesiastical historians differed in the praises they extended to the emperors. Thus, Urbainczyk has shown how Socrates praised Constantine for his commitment to church unity,²⁹² whereas Sozomen highlighted the gifts and advantages which were showered on the church by him following his conversion.²⁹³ Socrates praised Theodosius II's meekness,²⁹⁴ whereas Sozomen prefers to emphasise his learning.²⁹⁵ Urbainczyk identifies the roots of those differences in Socrates's ideal of unity whereas Sozomen, according to her reading, puts doctrinal purity first.²⁹⁶ Urbainczyk notes differences between the church historians in their fundamental outlook and their view of the bishops. Socrates thus tends to be critical of the bishops whose quibbles about authority and hierarchical prestige stood in the way of unity, whereas Sozomen's praise of Theodosius II's learning is closely associated by him with the Christian emperor's duties to support the Church and obey its leaders. Urbainczyk goes on to make an important observation of Sozomen's *Dedicatio* to Theodosius II: 'Therefore his (*sc.* Sozomen's) praise of Theodosius II stresses not his piety but his learning and his respect for good writing. Hence, the address is not at all the subservient reverence it seems at first'.²⁹⁷

Another emperor, Julian, is an exception. Being an apostate, it is not unreasonable to assume that both ecclesiastical historians should have in store nothing but words of condemnation for him and indeed this is precisely what Sozomen does. In addition to a condemnation of Julian's campaign against Christianity, Sozomen indirectly refers to Julian as a tyrant by presenting this emperor as being dogged by fears about his public image from the moment he turned his back on Christianity. Along these lines, Sozomen portrays the assassination of Julian as an act inspired by the Greek historical *topos* of tyrannicide.²⁹⁸ Socrates on the other hand describes Julian as a well-meaning ruler yet a victim of his own shortcomings, e.g. a temperamental character, vanity and ostentation.²⁹⁹ It seems that Socrates, when dealing with Julian, sought to balance his narrative (which his Christian readers could have expected to be nothing short of a *damnatio memoriae*)³⁰⁰ with a measured addition of positive comments which

M. Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 1998), pp. 299-319.

²⁹² Soc. I, 27, 5.

²⁹³ Soz. I, 6; I, 8; I, 9; II, 32.

²⁹⁴ Soc. VII, 42, 1-2. Socrates likens the meekness of Theodosius II to that of Moses and supports his praise of the emperor with an appropriate quotation from the Old Testament (*Numbers* 12:3): 'Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth'.

²⁹⁵ Soz. *Ded.* 7 and 18.

²⁹⁶ Urbainczyk (1998), p. 316.

²⁹⁷ Urbainczyk (1998), pp. 317. We shall return to Sozomen's *Dedicatio* in Chapter 3 of the present study.

²⁹⁸ Soz. V, 17, 1, and VI, 2, 1, which may echo the death of two Athenians, Harmodius and Aristogeiton who were put to death in 514 BC, having assassinated the Peisistratid tyrant Hipparchus, becoming thus an Athenian symbol of martyrdom for the sake of freedom and democracy. They were accordingly dubbed by Athenian historiography the τυραννοκτόνοι, i.e. 'tyrant-slayers'.

²⁹⁹ Soc. III, 21, 16.

³⁰⁰ On Christian responses to Julian in his reign (up to the sixth century), see now: P. Van Nuffelen, 'The Christian reception of Julian' in H.-U. Wiemer and S. Rebenich (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Julian* (Leiden 2020), pp. 356-393.

seems to be serving a reverse psychology of sorts. An astute rhetorical stratagem which may also reveal more about the author himself:

*And since the opportunity is presenting itself to speak a little about the emperor Julian, a man of eloquence, let no one of his admirers look for a bombastic style of expression as if it were necessary that the discourse may not be lagging behind its subject. Since our history is about Christianity, the discourse, for the sake of clarity, is humble and lowly (ταπεινός και χαμαιζήλος) as the one which was announced at the outset.*³⁰¹

The insistence on the unimportance and even obtrusiveness of an elevated style remains a prominent feature in Socrates's own style and thus keeps delineating the differences between Socrates and Sozomen. We shall be returning to the comparison between Sozomen and Socrates throughout this study. Yet at this stage it would not go amiss to look at Socrates primarily as a link in the chain of ecclesiastical historiography which connects Sozomen with this (in his lifetime) relatively young and by no means rigid literary tradition, which seems to have accommodated contrasting tendencies such as following the Eusebian model by espousing the idea of a 'Christian' humble and lowly style, putting clarity first, while departing from Eusebius by returning to themes rejected by the inventor of the genre.

Neither Socrates nor Sozomen tend to divulge personal information.

Photius (ca. 810-893) is the earliest witness of their works – as earlier potential sources such as the *HE* by Theodore Lector (first half of the sixth century AD) and the *Historia Tripartita* by Cassiodorus (second half of the sixth century), which draw extensively on their works, only mention the names of both church historians in passing, as does Gregory the Great. The ninth century polymath and Constantinopolitan patriarch found Socrates's style 'unremarkable' and his knowledge of doctrinal matters 'inaccurate'.³⁰² It should be noted that Socrates is mentioned also by Liberatus Diaconus, archdeacon of Carthage, a Latin writer on the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, an account of which he wrote between 555 and 567 entitled *Breviarium Causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum*, and a certain Sozomenos is mentioned in one of Isidore of Pelusium's letters, but there is no evidence which would allow us to identify this Sozomenos with our church historian.³⁰³ Peter van Nuffelen has defined Socrates and Sozomen for his part as 'des caractères opposés',³⁰⁴ despite his concerted efforts to show that on the whole both church historians shared the same positive, even optimistic if not idyllic,

³⁰¹ Soc. III, 1, 3-4; cf. Soc. I, 3 and VI, *Praef.* 1-6. See: Herodotus, V, 55; Thucydides, VI, 56-59; Aristotle, *The Constitution of the Athenians*, XVIII. It is hard also not to think of Sozomen's account as a deliberate juxtaposition with the introductory note which opens Eus. *HE*, V. Sozomen extols the virtues of those who sacrificed themselves for their country, family, and friends, in sharp contrast to Eusebius' dismissive attitude towards the same loyalties, regarding only the peace of the soul and the attainment of the (Christian) truth worthy of self-sacrifice.

³⁰² See respectively: Theodore Lector, *Historia Tripartita* (= PG 86, c. 160); Cassiodorus, *HE, praef.* (= PL 69, c. 880); Gregory the Great, *Ep.* XXXIV. For Photius's *testimonia* see: Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Codex 28 (on Socrates) and Codex 30 (on Sozomen).

³⁰³ See: Liberatus Diaconus Cap. 2 (= PL 68, c. 969); Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* I, 300. The latter is cited in *PLRE* II, p. 1023 (1), which is an attempt to identify the church historian with a certain δομέστικός by the same name.

³⁰⁴ Van Nuffelen (2004), p. 82.

view of Theodosius II's reign as an age of peace and harmony, politically as well as religiously. An age, seemingly, unstained by executions and untarnished by heresy.³⁰⁵

It can be said that the sensitive reader would not fail to justify Urbainczyk's sharp observations and may recognise now a difference in style between Socrates and Sozomen particularly as regards the emperors, but also notable bishops such as Athanasius of Alexandria and John Chrysostom. There are other elements which stand out as soon as the same sensitive reader sets out to compare Socrates and Sozomen. These elements are clear differences in form and material organisation which, as we shall see, have bearings on the contents. To these one may add Socrates's afore-mentioned preference of brevity and unembellished style.³⁰⁶ This is in sharp contrast with Sozomen's rather polished Greek and longer accounts. It would appear that recent scholarship on Socrates seems to have regarded his overall approach to his chosen subject, despite his own statement of intent, as more 'secular', not only because of his displeasure with the hierarchy or the inclusion of military history, but also due to what certain scholars had understood as the absence of 'theology' in his narrative, his critical handling of some of his sources, his concise accounts, and his potted style. It could be said that Socrates, according to this interpretative tendency, brought the genre of *HE* closer, or rather, pushed it backwards towards a relatively more 'secular' Graeco-Roman historiography.³⁰⁷

The two ecclesiastical historians share according to the manuscript tradition the sobriquet 'Scholasticus', yet, despite the common association of this title with the legal profession, it

³⁰⁵ See: P. Van Nuffelen 'The Unstained Rule of Theodosius II: A Late Antique Panegyric Topos and Moral Concern' in: G. Partoens, G. Roskam, and T. Van Houdt. *Imago Virtutis* (Louvain 2004), p. 229-256. See also: M. Stachura, 'Wandlungen und Kontinuität in der Häretiker- und Heidenpolitik in den Werken von Sokrates und Sozomenos', *Electrum* 13 (2007), pp. 131-146.

³⁰⁶ As stated by Socrates succinctly, defending his choice to include secular material such as wars in his ecclesiastical history by naming reasons such as exactitude and avoidance of repeated struggles between contentious bishops and their insidious machinations. See: Soc. V, *Praef.* 1-10, and Soc. VI, *Praef.*

³⁰⁷ See e.g. Urbainczyk (1997), pp. 171-169; M. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates: Untersuchungen zur Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (Göttingen 1997), pp. 282-289. Both scholars seem to be fully aware of the central role which a term such as *συνπάθεια* (very roughly translated as 'harmony between earthly and Divine affairs') plays in Socrates's thought. Yet, they prefer to ground it in Socrates's *paideia* and his philosophical training than his Christian identity. They stress along the same lines the fundamental importance of 'unity' in Socrates's historiography. It follows that the role of the Church, according to this interpretation, is merely a matter of political instrumentality. For opposite views see: G.F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Evagrius* (2nd ed., Macon, GA 1986), pp. 176-181, who attempts to portray Socrates as an 'avowed' Origenist; G. Sabbah, *SC* 305, p. 83, who claims *inter alia* that Socrates's culture was 'purement et exclusivement chrétien' (despite Socrates's *paideia*, his pagan tutors and his undeniable familiarity with Platonic philosophy: Soc. II, 35 and III, 23). See also: P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Louvain 2004), pp. 413-417. Van Nuffelen offers an alternative reading by highlighting the quintessentially Christian nature of Socrates's understanding of history. According to Van Nuffelen's analysis, 'unity' in Socrates's *HE* is in the main a theology of history and unity within the church – and the state – as the means to achieve the ultimate goals of human history. These goals are, to Van Nuffelen's mind, peace and piety. For a view of Sozomen as the only church historian really interested in the impact of law on reality, see: M. Stachura, 'Walka państwa rzymskiego z pogaństwem i herezją w oczach późnoantycznych historyków: Filostorgios, Sokrates, Sozomenos, Teodoret i Zosimos *U schyłku starożytności*', *Studia źródłoznawcze* 8 (2009), pp. 127-148. Stachura highlights the shared interest in law and its implementation by a Christian historian such as Sozomen and a pagan historian such as Zosimus (d. ca. 500), the author of the *Historia Nova*.

seems that only Sozomen was in actuality engaged in the practice of law.³⁰⁸ Socrates may have earned this title in acknowledgment of his Greek *paideia*, as Pierre Maraval has suggested.³⁰⁹ Another question which has preoccupied the students of Socrates's *HE* is whether he was a member of the clergy. As has been mentioned, despite his moderate attitude, Socrates could show his displeasure with the conduct of zealous churchmen as well as expressing his distaste for certain belligerent bishops.³¹⁰ This can hardly be regarded as a clergyman's outlook. It would thus be fair to say that Socrates introduces into the genre of ecclesiastical history a lay focalisation. His layman's approach allows him to relate to an event such as Constantine's conversion to Christianity (which inspired Eusebius to write most of books IX and X of his *HE* almost as a dithyramb) very unceremoniously as '... the time they (sc. the emperors) began to be Christian'.³¹¹

This question is often coupled with the question of his denominational affiliation. Socrates shows intriguing openness towards the Novatianist movement, and this has led certain scholars to associate him with that sect.³¹² In both cases, the evidence is notoriously scanty and inconclusive. Therefore, the attempted answers remain conjectural. The missing portion of Sozomen's book IX frustratingly prevents us from a comparison between both ecclesiastical historians on issues such as the Nestorian controversy or the Council of Ephesus. However, Socrates, having taken the genre away from Eusebius's jubilant optimism, chose to conclude his own ecclesiastical history in a tone which hardly manages not to betray the author's concern:

*But we shall here close our history, praying that the churches everywhere, with the cities and nations may live in peace, for so long as there is peace, those who wish to write histories will have no material (εἰρήνης γὰρ οὐσης ὑπόθεσιν τῆς οἱ ιστοιογραφεῖν ἐθέλοντες οὐχ ἔξουσιν).*³¹³

An appropriate way to sum up what is being expressed in this passage would be in one word: **ambivalence**. Socrates's *HE* is the work of a church historian whose focalisation tends to shift back towards a classical rationalised narrative.

³⁰⁸ There is nothing in Socrates's *HE* which would suggest that he was a lawyer by training. Particularly striking in this respect is what appears to be Socrates's poor proficiency in ecclesiastical law. See: S. Bralewski, 'La connaissance de la loi ecclésiastique chez Socrate de Constantinople en confrontation avec l'œuvre de Hermias Sozomène', *Studia Ceranea* 6, pp. 243-255. Conversely, one of Sozomen's rare first-person passages relates precisely that (Soz. II, 3, 10): 'But I cannot omit mentioning the case of Aquilinus, who is even at the present time residing with us, and who is an advocate in the same court of justice to which we belong'. On Sozomen's legal expertise and his use of the Theodosian Code and other legal sources, see: R.M. Errington, 'Christian Accounts of the Religious Legislation of Theodosius I', *Klio* 79 (1997), pp. 398-443 (esp. pp. 310-335).

³⁰⁹ See: P. Maraval, *SC* 477, p. 10.

³¹⁰ Soc. V, *Praef.* 2.

³¹¹ *Ibid.* 9

³¹² Thus Van Nuffelen (2004), p. 84. See however Urbainczyk (1997), pp. 26-28. Urbainczyk rightly stresses the inconclusiveness of Socrates's accounts of the Novatianists and in particular, his personal relations with this sect. Urbainczyk thinks that while Socrates may not have been a member of this sect, he seems to have had a sympathy towards them and friends among them. On Novatianism and its theology see: J.L. Papandrea, *Novatian of Rome and the Culmination of Pre-Nicene Orthodoxy* (Eugene, OR 2011), pp. 73-120.

³¹³ Soc. VII, 48, 7.

E. Conclusion

The early development of ecclesiastical history as a genre can by no means be described as a 'linear' process. The first contributions after Eusebius were made under different circumstances, and most important, from different doctrinal stances, which necessarily formed detectable nuances in the historical outlook of the authors. The development of the genre in the fourth century, admittedly, is still a considerable *lacuna* in our knowledge, which scholars' guesswork, however learned, has failed to fill in. It can be said nevertheless, despite the missing links of the Arian *Anonymus* and Gelasius of Caesarea, that the genre must have gained broad readership over the fourth century. It seems that Arians, as well as their 'orthodox' (i.e. pro-Nicene) opponents, were equally keen on contributing to the genre. Thus, we may assume that the new type of history must have been welcomed by a substantial number of readers.³¹⁴

The possible popularity which ecclesiastical history may have enjoyed in the later Roman empire, could also be a reasonable explanation for the choice of Chromatius, bishop of Aquileia, to commission a Latin translation of Eusebius' *HE* from Rufinus, believing that this kind of reading material would be a relief and a source of consolation and hope for his flock, troubled by fear of Alaric's invading Visigoths and shattered by the threat of a devastating plague.

Philostorgius's case, however complicated (given that there is only a very late epitomised text in our possession), seems to suggest that the writing of an ecclesiastical history may have been one of the best options for a man of letters who wished to plead the Eunomian case in the Constantinople of the 430s. In other words, in a heightened religious atmosphere (as we shall see in the following chapter), its popularity may have turned ecclesiastical historiography into a preferable way to promote a heterodox cause. Philostorgius's choice receives special weight if one bears in mind that he was writing when it had become clear that, despite the new challenges which orthodox supremacy had to face at that time (Nestorianism, early miaphysitism), the fate of Arian and Neo-Arian denominations, at least in the eastern empire, appears already to be sealed despite the fact that its remnants, alongside other heretical churches, still lingered in the Greek east as late as the seventh century.³¹⁵ Philostorgius's account of the history of the church was imbued with conviction of Divine retribution, a theme which is, of course, an integral component of the genre, having been absorbed into it from Graeco-Roman and Jewish sources alike.³¹⁶

Rufinus, like Sozomen (as will be argued later), represents an historical outlook which appears to have been moulded by the triumph of the Nicene church under Theodosius I and his successors. Yet none of the church historians exhibits euphoric triumphalism. Rufinus's outlook can be defined as 'solid orthodox' and I propose identifying this orthodoxy (in addition to Rufinus's self-evident unequivocal support of the Nicene Creed) in the very integration of the rising holy men and women into the narrative of his ecclesiastical history, alongside the throng of memorable ecclesiastical events, now heavily 'politicised' and inseparable in essence from the 'old' mundane history. It should be borne in mind: 'mundane'

³¹⁴ See: A. Lankina, 'Leadership for the Christian Empire: Emperors and Bishops in the Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgius' *Church History* 87 (2018), pp. 686-692.

³¹⁵ See: P. Maraval, *Le Christianisme de Constantin à la conquête arabe* (Paris 1997), pp. 394-492.

³¹⁶ See however: Trompf (2000), pp. 173-175.

but hardly 'secular' – as the secular of old has now been absorbed by an overriding Christian context. Even the pagans are part of this history, particularly insofar as they are able to mount resistance to the advance of Christianity.

This development seems to have left for Christians like Rufinus only the desert or the monastery as a viable option for the kind of spiritual life which Eusebius, the founding father of the genre called 'wars most peaceful waged for the very peace of the soul'.³¹⁷ The 'old' history was brought even closer to the ecclesiastical later-on. As with Rufinus, a private commission was apparently also the reason for writing the most substantial surviving church history after Eusebius and (probably shortly) before Sozomen. This was the ecclesiastical history, written by Socrates of Constantinople (fl. 440s) who, like Sozomen, is known from the manuscript tradition by the title σχολαστικός. Socrates's *HE* was written for a certain Theodore, whom Socrates addresses 'O Theodore, holy man of God'.³¹⁸ Despite what seems to be a commission from a clergyman (although this, like so much about Socrates, remains conjectural) Socrates was not (probably) a clergyman himself. At any rate he does not come across as seeking to endear himself to the hierarchy. Neither can we be sure about his denominational affiliation despite his apparent contacts with the Novatianists. He seems to have been a tolerant, well-educated Constantinopolitan layman who regarded the Church first and foremost as an integral part of his identity, as much as the Roman State seems to have been. His yearning for peace seems to be expressed in theological and philosophical terms not so much as reflection of his religion but rather as an expression of being a *homo politicus* to the core. It could be claimed that Socrates had led the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* back to the territories which Eusebius refused to colonise. The wars, politics, ambitions, competitiveness and intrigue which were the mainstay of Graeco-Roman historiography were now brought back to the fore, and the Church, as Socrates shows, was not necessarily a refuge from this world. Socrates needed a plain style to write an account of the entanglement of the sacred and the secular.

The genre could no longer be the same and, as he himself had anticipated, his work was bound to have repercussions. Although the way in which the Palestinian born lawyer came into contact with Socrates's *HE* cannot be determined with certitude, this work has to be acknowledged as Sozomen's most influential source (to put it as mildly as possible, given the high degree of similarity between the works concerned). If Rufinus could have translated one ecclesiastical history and written another to distract the minds of the good folk of Aquileia, Socrates takes a step forward in the development of the genre by integrating a variety of 'secular' events back into a narrative which was supposed to be dedicated to the affairs of the church in the first place.³¹⁹ Socrates points out that he had chosen to do so because the more mundane affairs of the state and the activities of the church had indeed become inseparable. Thus, Socrates removes the imagined barrier between old and new, between the spiritual and secular, which appear to be still present (though in a harmonious cohabitation) in Rufinus's

³¹⁷ Eus. *HE*, V, *Praef.*

³¹⁸ Soc. *HE*, II, 1,6; VI, *Praef.* 1; VII, 48,7. Theodore is unknown from other sources and the holiness which Socrates attributes to him can by no means serve as sufficient support for scholars who try to infer from this that Socrates must have belonged to the clergy. See: e.g. G. Sabbah, 'La construction de l'histoire chez Sozomène. De la dédicace à Théodose II à l'éloge de Pulcherie', *Bulletin de l'Association pour l'Antiquité tardive* 14 (2005), p. 65. As has been mentioned before, the cognomen 'Scholasticus' used to be attached to lawyers, as indeed was Sozomen, and also Evagrius of Epiphania (ca. 535-after 594). Glenn Chesnut has argued in favour of such an identification also for Socrates (see: Chesnut (1986), pp. 176-77), but recent scholarship on Socrates raises justifiable doubts about his association with the legal profession. See: Urbainczyk (1997), p. 14; P. Maraval, *SC* 477 (2004), pp. 9-13; Van Nuffelen (2004), pp. 8-10.

³¹⁹ Soc. V, *Praef.*

HE. Socrates's *HE* is written in an environment in which the church is omnipresent. An ecclesiastical history therefore appears bound to be almost a re-incarnation of classical Graeco-Roman historiography.³²⁰

We saw that ecclesiastical histories were written before Sozomen within changing contexts in the Christianised Roman empire, and that this genre, contrary to modern allegations of rigid conformity and lack of originality which some scholars have characterised as 'plagiarism', had produced contributions quite different in essence, one from another. Eusebius's influential model was indeed recapitulated by each of the contributors, but always with an individual twist, consisting of specific modifications which were inspired naturally by changing trends in late Roman ecclesiastical politics (as well as by other socio-cultural changes). An overview of these pivotal trends in the life of the Church during Sozomen's lifetime, i.e. the rule of the house of Theodosius (379-450), will be essential for the present study. Therefore, these trends will be at the centre of our discussion in the next chapter.

³²⁰ Pace P. Janiszewski, *The Missing Link: Greek Pagan Historiography in the Second Half of the Third Century and in the Fourth Century AD* (Warsaw 2006), pp. 459-464. Janiszewski believes in a clear-cut distinction between late antique pagan historiography and the new genre of *HE*. The evidence appears to be more nuanced. It is chiefly thanks to Socrates that we know about the work of the deacon Philip of Side in Pamphylia. Socrates informs us (*HE*, VII, 27, 1-5) about his older contemporary's *magnum opus*, the *Historia Christiana* in thirty-six books. Socrates stresses that Philip did not entitle his work 'Ecclesiastical History'. Socrates also points out that Philip's work had incorporated an abundance of erudition which rendered it useless (ἀχρεῖον) for the educated and the ignorant alike. Socrates thus seems to convey to his readers what we can regard (with the utmost caution) as a certain notion (yet by no means a sharply-defined set of conventions) of ecclesiastical history as a distinctive *genre* which was beginning to emerge from the circles in which he had probably moved, namely the Constantinopolitan εὐπαίδευτοι.

Chapter 2: Sozomen and Contemporary History: Major Trends in Ecclesiastical Politics under the Theodosian Dynasty

Fundamentum et principium doctrinae sacrae historia est, de qua quasi mel de favo veritas allegoriae exprimitur.
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A crevasse still separates the passion and creativity with which educated men conducted theological disagreements and the secular problems of the age. To attempt to throw ropes across this crevasse remains a risky business. The integration of ecclesiastical and secular history is frequently acclaimed as desirable. But when it is conducted with too strenuous a determination to reduce phenomena to a single explanation, with too great an anxiety to cut down to manageable proportions the intricacies of thinking men, this integration will take place on terms which can only impoverish both: the theologian will see the complex and passionate concern of an Augustine or a Julian of Eclanum drained of life, by being presented as no more than an ideological superstructure; while the historian of the later Empire will be equally dismayed by the reduction of the subtle functioning of Roman society to a stereotyped pattern of conflict between rich and poor, administration and provincials.³²²

... quippe schismata non tam ex ardenti Religionis studio oriuntur, quam ex vario hominum affectu, vel contradicendi studio, quo omnia, etsi recte dicta sint, depravare et damnare solent.³²³

A. Introduction

The present chapter has as its subject certain doctrinal currents in the Christian church which, apart from their immediate divisive impact on the Roman Greek East (and their bearings on Christendom as a whole), are known to have had a strong effect far beyond the actual time of their appearance, namely the fifty years between the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381 and the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431. These trends will be studied here as part of an endeavour to offer a definition of a *Zeitgeist* which, as we shall try to show, had engendered and shaped Sozomen's individual outlook as reflected throughout his HE. It should be borne in mind, however, that since Sozomen may have begun his HE ca. 448 (or shortly thereafter) and may have been working on it in as late as 450-453, it would be nonetheless beneficial to look at controversies which occurred after the period covered in the surviving portion of his work. In other words, we shall be trying in the present chapter to survey the religious and intellectual environment in which Sozomen had operated, not his own religious convictions, as reflected in his HE (to which the fourth chapter of the present study is dedicated).

We need however to bear in mind that by doing so, we are obviously running the risk of conjecture (for this is in fact what making a connection between a chronologically-focalised text³²⁴ – with events which are left outside the text concerned as we know it – would essentially be what we may end up with).

³²¹ Hugh of Saint Victor, *Didascalion*, 1, 6, c. 3 (= PL, 176, 805).

³²² P. Brown, 'Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment', *JThS-NS* 19 (1968), pp. 93-94 (= *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London 1972), pp. 183-184).

³²³ B. de Spinoza, 'Epistola LIV' in Id. *Opera Posthuma* (Amsterdam 1677), p. 630.

³²⁴ By 'chronologically focalised' we refer here to the dependence of focalisation in historiography on the Chronological organisation of a historian's work. Sozomen's HE offers shifting focalisations which appear to correlate to a chronological framework formed according to imperial reigns. On focalisation and time, see now: A. Munslow, *Narrative and History* (London 2019), pp. 48-53.

Yet, taking this risk be justified in Sozomen's case, not only by the sheer coincidence of those religious and intellectual trends (partly – at least) with our ecclesiastical historian's formative years³²⁵ – but also by Sozomen's own line-up of his *HE*, laid down in his dedication to the Emperor Theodosius II, whereby the author proposes to bring his *HE* to a close in the seventeenth consulate of Theodosius II i.e. the year 439.³²⁶ The Pelagian and the Nestorian controversies, as well as the beginnings of miaphysitism have no trace in Sozomen's surviving text. Yet these controversies had occurred already (it will also be argued) in the adulthood of our ecclesiastical historian, closer in time to the writing of Sozomen's *HE* and thus, as we believe, were likely to affect the shaping of his mature religious outlook late in life. We shall be looking here at the formative influence of major trends in the Catholic Church in the (nearly) three decades of the reigns of Theodosius I and Arcadius with some incursions into the following decades of Theodosius II's forty-eight years long reign – in order to study the impact, they may have had on the moulding and shaping of Sozomen's outlook. However, as Sozomen's *HE* in its surviving form ends abruptly with the discovery of the relics of the prophet Zachariah i.e. in the year 425³²⁷ approximately before the middle of the ninth book³²⁸ we find ourselves in a paradoxical situation whereby we are in fact deprived of what could have otherwise been an essential analytical tool in the reconstruction of Sozomen's focalisation, namely Sozomen's account of the most recent events of his contemporary history, including events of which he, as a resident of Constantinople, must have been an eye witness.³²⁹ Therefore, it seems useful to discuss these issues nonetheless and see if there are detectable implicit traces of their reverberations or rather, if there are points of tangency which may be identified as focalisers in the surviving portion of Sozomen's narrative and his narrative strategies.

³²⁵ For a recent summary of these issues, see: C.C. Berardi, *Linee di Storiografia Ecclesiastica in Sozomen di Gaza* (Bari 2016), pp. 13-21. See also: A. Labate, s.v. 'Sozomeno' in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane 2* (Genova-Milan 2008), col. 5064-5067.

³²⁶ Soz. *Dedicatio*, 19 cf. Soc. VII, 22. Socrates is dutifully singing the praises of Theodosius II while claiming that 'neither do I wish to show off rhetorical skills' (Ἐγὼ δὲ ...οὔτε λόγων ἐπίδειξιν ποιήσασθαι βοθλόμενος). Socrates seems to be paying a necessary lip service to the reigning emperor. It seems thus reasonable to assume that Sozomen (possibly following here Socrates as well), did not wish to venture into the 440's as this meant dealing with controversial issues (e.g. the banishment of the empress Eudokia to Jerusalem in 443, or the doctrinal crisis around the *latrocinium* of Ephesus II in 449- to mention but two) which could have put our church historian in a rather uncomfortable position vis-à-vis the imperial court. I would contend that even if Sozomen were writing at some odd point after Theodosius II's death in 450 and before Pulcheria's death in 453, still, open criticism of her late brother would have not necessarily endeared Sozomen to Pulcheria, now the reigning empress - despite what must have been from Sozomen's point of view, a huge relief when Pulcheria and her husband Marcian, both staunch supporters of Nicene orthodoxy, were now seating on the imperial throne.

³²⁷ Soz. IX, 17,3.

³²⁸ On the peculiarity of Sozomen's Book IX, a seemingly more "secular" portion of his *HE* which appears to be significantly indebted to the pagan historian Olympiodorus of Thebes, dealing mostly with Western political and military affairs, see: G. Sabbah, *SC* 516, pp. 16-20; P. Van Nuffelen, 'Sozomenus und Olympiodorus von Theben, oder wie man Profangeschichte lessen soll', 47 *JbAC* (2004), pp. 81-97. See also: J. Matthews, 'Olympiodorus of Thebes and the History of the West', *JRS* 60 (1970), pp. 79-97.

³²⁹ On the place of *eyewitnesses* in classical historiography see: L. Pitcher, *Writing ancient history: An Introduction to Classical Historiography* (London 2009), pp. 57-64. Sozomen himself reveals his own appreciation of eye witnesses in the very beginning of his work by placing this source of information in a biblical context: The Patriarch Abraham, as Sozomen indicates, 'was accounted to be worthy to be an eyewitness and the host of the Son of God.' See: Soz. *HE*, I, 2 cf. Gen. 18,

It will be argued that the Theodosian era, as reflected in Sozomen's *HE* can be typified by the decline of Arianism and by the imperial court's efforts to impose and maintain Nicene orthodoxy as a unifying religious and indeed, political framework for a struggling empire.³³⁰ The troubled episcopal career of John Chrysostom together with the Origenist and Pelagian controversies can provide us with some helpful insights in this respect. It will also be argued that these strained phases in the life of the Church in the eastern Roman Empire had shaped Sozomen's outlook, placing him in a vantage point situated between orthodoxy and deeply embedded sense of uncertainty (quite differently from Socrates's pragmatism which may appear at times to border with religious aloofness).³³¹ Thus, our investigation must consider the likelihood of finding traces of these phases in Sozomen's *HE*, bearing in mind that our church historian was writing while the Catholic Church was responding to the challenges of the Christological controversy and the conflictual differences between Alexandrian and Antiochene interpretations of the Nicene Creed.³³² However implicit, the role of these factors in shaping Sozomen's narrative strategies would require our special attention.³³³

In the rest of the present chapter, we will try to see in what ways Sozomen's writing in the middle of the fifth century, appears to be responding to his lifetime's *Zeitgeist* in his account of major trends in the ecclesiastical politics of (mainly) the fourth century. A special attention therefore will be paid to highlight what is distinctive in the way in which Sozomen narrates these key events and consequently we will seek to infer from Sozomen's narrative how he regarded the ways in which religion and politics interacted in the Roman empire since 324, the year which saw Constantine's final victory over Licinius and the beginning of the former's reign as sole emperor - with which Sozomen also opens his work.

³³⁰ Fergus Millar had observed that '...as regards religion, an intense awareness of deviance pervades both Christian writings writing of the period (*scil.* the reign of Theodosius II) and the pronouncements of the Emperor...Christian state and society were a minor problem compared to the fact that uniformity of Christian belief and practice could not be attained.' See: F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408-450* (Berkeley, CA. 2006), p. 130.

³³¹ See: Wallraff (1997a), p. 41. For an opposing interpretation, see: L. Gardiner, PhD dissertation (Cambridge 2013; unpublished), p. 50. Gardiner believes that Socrates's neutral position on Christian Dogma was "... intended to suggest commonalities between Christian sects." Gardiner goes on to remark (*ibid.* n. 164), "...he (*scil.* Socrates) was certainly a committed and knowledgeable Nicene Christian." There seems to be a *prima facie* contradiction between Gardiner's observations. His comment about Socrates's 'commitment' to the Nicene Creed remains essentially unsupported in his discussion. Peter Van Nuffelen also identifies Socrates as 'nicéen'. However, Van Nuffelen attributes to Socrates two major points of deviation from what Van Nuffelen regards as 'ce qu'on pourrait appeler l'orthodoxie établi' 'This deviation is apparently a reference to Socrates' ambivalent attitude towards' Origenism and Novatianism. see: P. Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage de paix et de piété: Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), p. 37-46.

³³² See: T. Toom, 'Appealing to Creed: Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria', *HeyJ* 62 (2021), pp. 290-301.

³³³ Sozomen's much debated use of documents from imperial and ecclesiastical archives (alongside his literary sources, reports from eyewitnesses and oral traditions) is one notable example of our church historian's challenging handling of his sources. For a detailed discussion see: Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage...* (2004), pp. 247-262.

B. Sozomen and the Theodosian *Zeitgeist*: Ecclesiastical Politics between Declining Arianism and Reclaimed Nicene Orthodoxy

An attempt to discuss the specific background against which students of historiography ought to set and analyse an historical work of their choice would hardly require a lengthy explanation. Yet, the relations between historians and their lifetime and indeed - the degree to which historians are reflecting contemporary ideas and experiences in their work remains always debatable, just as the 'Zeitgeist' of that lifetime may often trigger a lively debate between those who are sceptical about the introduction of a spiritual language into historical analysis - and those who are more open to it.³³⁴ However, it would nevertheless be beneficial to bear in mind that Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* belongs to an era which, in a sense, may be characterised by a late antique precursor of Peter Brown's modern "crevasse", even if on the surface it would seem that the fifth century ecclesiastical historians, Sozomen included, incorporate both aspects in their narratives without drawing clear boundaries between them.³³⁵ The ensuing question would thus be: does the inclusion of military and secular-political affairs in an ecclesiastical history signify necessarily their "sacralisation" in the historian's mind (even if it is agreed beforehand that the inclusion of both ecclesiastical and secular events in one narrative is not the same as *explaining* the one by

³³⁴ For a discussion of the elusive definition of 'Zeitgeist', see: T. Jung, 'The Politics of Time: Zeitgeist in Early Nineteenth-Century Political Discourse', *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 9 (2014), pp. 24-49. Jung traces the uses of 'Zeitgeist' in early nineteenth-century European political discourse and shows how the political debates were often pervaded by what he identified as 'spiritual vocabulary' - to which 'Zeitgeist' i.e. 'Spirit of Time' - belongs. Plainly put, this concept reflects a supposition that a superhuman 'power' which can hardly be documented empirically, governs human opinions, decisions and actions in a given historical period. According to Jung: "Invocations of the national spirit, the spirits of freedom, justice, enlightenment, Christianity, and civilization went hand in hand with anxieties about the spirits of disorder, luxury, effeminacy, irreligion, and revolution." Jung finds traces of this 'spiritual vocabulary' already in the political discourse of the sixteenth century, i.e. much earlier than the common attribution of 'Zeitgeist' with the thought of G. F. W. Hegel (1770-1831) or J. G. Herder (1744-1803). See: Jung, *op. cit.* p. 24. Thus, following Jung's analysis, the concept of 'Zeitgeist' emerges as a universal concept, which may potentially be applicable to any historical context. We will argue that Sozomen's narrative reveals traces of a Zeitgeist which was shaped first and foremost by the political implications of the doctrinal controversies and conflicts of his lifetime.

³³⁵ See P. Brown *supra*. It should be borne in mind that Socrates (who might be regarded perhaps as the more 'secular' among the post-Eusebian Greek-writing historians' trio: Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret (see, however, G. Sabbah, *SC* 516, p. 50), touches in his *HE* upon the question of Church and State relations, but to him it is mainly a *political* question. See e.g. Soc. II, 25, 6-7. Magnentius's attempt of usurpation under Constantius II, although abortive, is presented by Socrates as the outcome of the Arian controversy. Thus by leaving with his reader the transformation of the nearness of those events within his narrative, into an imaginary process of causation, Socrates seems to have aimed at a reasoning of *post hoc propter hoc*: when the doctrinal controversies overwhelm the Church - ambition, delusion and disobedience spread across the Roman state and undermine its stability. Note also Socrates's concluding note (Soc. VII, 48, 6-7) whereby the author expresses his hope for everlasting peace for both Church and State. See: Urbainczyk (1997), pp. 169-176. In the eastern empire, however, the official perception of the secular and the sacred *qua* interdependent authorities received its legal formulation in the sixth *Novella* of the *Codex Justinianus* whereby the emperor Justinian I (527-565) refers to *συνφωνία* of authorities. See: A. V. Klyuchareva, «Принцип симфонии» в отношениях Церкви и Государства в Византии IV-IX вв», Вестник 1; Сборник статей Преподавателей и студентов Теологии Тульского Государственного Университета (2006) = www.teologia-tula.ru/library/vest1/simphonia. (in Russian). Note also: J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood, NY 1989), pp. 208-211.

the other)? In other words: Is the incorporation of "secular" material in a work entitled 'ecclesiastical history', an indication of Brown's "crevasse"? ³³⁶

The relevance of these questions is neatly highlighted against the background of our ecclesiastical historian's lifetime, and an analytical study of Sozomen's work would thus clearly benefit from an attempt to bolster such an analysis by an overview of the main doctrinal conflicts and the traces which they left in contemporary literary evidence. Furthermore, it would be fair to say that church-state (or sacred-secular) relations are often an implicit part of what appears to be an internal dispute between theologians, i.e. between colleagues who, up until the outbreak of a specific controversy, are in full communion with the same church. The concept of "state" in this respect, it should be stressed, can be modified in certain cases with a more general concept of the "secular" (employed mainly for rhetorical or even strictly propagandistic purposes) and does not *necessarily* denote an active involvement of the Roman (Eastern as well as Western) administration in the internal ecclesiastical dispute under discussion. Conversely, what could be defined as a purely political issue, can receive religious overtones almost without impinging directly or obliquely on doctrinal affairs, and it falls to us to reconstruct and – if possible – broaden the context. ³³⁷ This must have been a particularly challenging issue from the point of view of an ecclesiastical historian like Sozomen whose treatment of the *augusta* Pulcheria, Theodosius II's sister (and after the latter's death in 450, his successor on the imperial throne, together with her consort Marcian), had to be navigated between Pulcheria's 'secular' political prowess and her carefully cultivated public image of a 'Holy Virgin'.³³⁸ Reportedly, Pulcheria had dedicated her virginity (τὴν αὐτῆς παρθενίαν) to God³³⁹, and her personal lifestyle is said to have been conducted in a quasi-monastic household, where she piously devoted her time to prayer and charitable activities. Clerics and monks were welcome frequent visitors. Pious as it may have been, it was apparently made public at the same time not only as part of what we might label today as 'imperial propaganda' *per se*, but also, as Sozomen actually hints, as an astutely masterminded public relations strategy, employed by a fifteen-year-old, whom Sozomen describes as divinely-gifted with a most-outstandingly wise mind above her age (ὕπερ τὴν ἡλικίαν σοφώτατον καὶ θεῖον ἔλαβεν νοῦν).³⁴⁰ This exceptional wisdom came to the rescue of the princely orphans namely, Pulcheria herself and her younger siblings, Theodosius the younger, Arcadia and Marina, who could at that critical stage fall prey to potential machinations of powerful, crafty and ambitious courtiers such as the influential Persian-born

³³⁶ On the inclusion of wars in ecclesiastical history, see: Soc. V, ΠΡΟΟΙΜΙΟΝ, 2. The Constantinopolitan ecclesiastical historian justifies here his decision to include wars in his narrative. Socrates's main reason for this is 'in order to make it known that when public affairs are troubled, so are ecclesiastical affairs, as if by sympathy of sorts' (ἵνα γνωσθῇ, ὅπως τῶν δημόσιων ταραττομένων ὡς ἐκ τινος συμπαθείας καὶ τὰ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ἐταράττετο). See: P. Van Nuffelen (2004), pp. 120-123. T. Urbainczyk (1997), pp. 71-75 and M. Wallraff (1997), pp. 160-163.

³³⁷ For a broader context of the Arcadian establishment including a critique of Holum, see: J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1990), pp. 132-145. Note also: K. Cooper, 'Contesting the Nativity: Wives, Virgins and Pulcheria's *imitatio Mariae*', *Scottish J. of Religious Studies* 19 (1998), pp. 31-43. See: Soz. IX, 1-3 (cf. *Theodoret, HE, V, 36, 2-4*).

³³⁸ On the political context see: N. McLynn, 'Imperial Piety in Action: The Theodosians in Church' in: S. Destephen, B. Dumézile, H. Inglebert (ed.), *Le prince chrétien de Constantin aux royautés barbares (IVe - VIIIe siècle)* (Paris 2018), pp. 315-339, esp. p. 329 ff.

³³⁹ Soz., IX, 1, 3. This dedication seems to have taken place in 414. On the dating, see: SC 516, p. 371, n. 3.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

eunuch Antiochus or the omnipotent prefect Anthemius.³⁴¹ Pulcheria was apparently relying on what seems to have become by then (after 408) a deeply embedded politico-religious sentiment. This was the popular belief according to which the emperor's personal piety and devotion were the only viable guarantee for providential safeguarding of the empire's peace and prosperity.³⁴² Thus, while it has to be borne in mind that Sozomen was writing seemingly to flatter Pulcheria (who as will be argued later, may have already succeeded her brother Theodosius II on the imperial throne) - we still need to remember that Pulcheria's survival suggests that not only the potentates who run the imperial court after Arcadius's death used her and her siblings as a political asset. The survival of the imperial family also suggests that Pulcheria, for her part, knew how not to alienate them.

However, Sozomen reveals also how Pulcheria ensured astutely the public visibility of her siblings and herself beyond the walls of the imperial palace, despite their splendid (but obviously dangerous) isolation:

*First, she dedicated her virginity to God and instructed her sisters in the same way of life in order to keep off the palace any other man and thus to eliminate any opportunity for rivalry and machination. In order to confirm her decisions and have as her witnesses God Himself, the priests and all the subjects, she had ordered an amazing and most beautiful sacred table made of gold and precious stones with which she presented the church of Constantinople for the sake of her own virginity and her brother's reign and she had that engraved at the front of the table so that it may be made clear to all.*³⁴³

Having proposed this line of inquiry, we become logically obliged to examine what (if any) were the boundaries between 'internal' and 'external' as regards the church, not only *vis-à-vis* the late antique Roman state, its head, representatives and institutions, but also (subject to inevitable constraints) in relation to the church's constantly evolving position in late antique society.³⁴⁴ Yet, as we shall see, on the whole, the role of the state in Sozomen's homeland, the Greek Roman empire of the east, did extend, without any clear break, from the purely secular

³⁴¹ See: K.G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 1982), p. 94; J. Harries, 'Men without women: Theodosius' consistory and the business of government' in: C. Kelly (ed.) *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2013), p. 72.

³⁴² Soz., IX, 1, 2. Sozomen, however, is referring to this belief primarily in relation to Pulcheria and indicates that as 'The Divine power which watches over the universe, foresaw that the emperor would be most pious, had therefor placed Pulcheria his sister as guardian of himself and his reign' (ἐπεὶ οὖν εὐσεβέστατον τὸν βασιλέα ἔσεσθαι προεῖδεν ἡ τῶν ὅλων οἰκουρὸς θεία δύναμις, ἐπίτροπον αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἡγεμονίας κατέστησε Πουλχερίαν τὴν ἀδελφήν). Cf. Soc., VII, 42, 2-5 whereby Theodosius II is said to have been 'exceptionally meek' (πραὺς σφόδρᾳ). Socrates remarks that 'Because of his meekness, God has surrendered to him his enemies without war combats' (Διὰ ταύτην γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὴν πραότητα καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πολεμίους αὐτῷ δίχα πολεμικῶν ἀγώνων ὑπέταττεν). For an assessment of Pulcheria and her role in the court of Theodosius II, see: A. Busch, *Die Frauen der theodosianischen Dynastie: Macht und Repräsentation kaiserlicher Frauen im 5. Jahrhundert*

(Stuttgart 2015), pp. 110-125 and K.G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Ca. 1982) pp. 79-111.

³⁴³ Soz. IX, 1, 4.

³⁴⁴ For a discussion of this question, highlighting the 'contested borders' between government and ecclesiastical hierarchy in the reign of Theodosius II, see: F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408-450* (Berkeley, CA 2006), pp. 140-167.

i.e. administrative and indeed military (in our terms), to an ever-expanding, more stringent regulation of church affairs.³⁴⁵

The demonstration of this interchangeable function is essential for the uncovering of underlying non-religious motivations and interests. We shall attempt to show how these lurk quite often behind what may appear to be, at first sight, some rather lurid descriptions of 'squabbles between contentious bishops and their machinations against each other'.³⁴⁶ This remains in our estimate, one of the essential keys for studying Sozomen's narrative strategies.

But despite the Theodosian court manifest piety, it seems quite clear that the Theodosian government on its part, did not show much enthusiasm with regard to purging the church of heretics (apparently, not even when Nestorius, the controversial short-lived bishop of Constantinople (428-431), promised the emperor Theodosius II a decisive victory over the Persians if the emperor helped him to eradicate heresy from the empire).³⁴⁷ Again, although Sozomen's *HE* ends abruptly, as it were, before the beginning of Nestorius's episcopacy and the doctrinal instability that was to follow during the two decades between the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431) and that of Chalcedon (451),³⁴⁸ it would be hard to imagine that this state of affairs had not left its mark on Sozomen's focalisation of his narrative and likewise, on his shrewd narrative strategies.³⁴⁹ The causative connection between Theodosius II's youth and the bliss of peace, granted by God to the Eastern empire (which was also a period of time marked by Theodosius's staunch devotion to Nicene orthodoxy) does not seem clear at first glance but once we establish the nature of this connection we can recognise Sozomen's subtle yet incisive way of expressing his doubts and indeed, his displeasure about the state of affairs at a later stage, i.e. in Theodosius's later adulthood which was of course closer to the time in which Sozomen was writing.

³⁴⁵This is the picture which emerges from a long scholarly debate on that issue: See: W. Enßlin, *Die Religionspolitik des Kaisers Theodosius d. Gr.* (Munich 1955), pp. 64-88.

A. Lippold, *Theodosius der Große und seine Zeit* (2nd edition; Munich 1980), pp. 123-138. A more nuanced approach to this question is offered in N. Q. King, *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity* (London 1961), pp. 23-49. R. M. Errington, 'Christian accounts of the religious legislation of Theodosius I', *Klio*, 79 (1997), pp. 398-443; Id., 'Church and State in the first years of Theodosius I', *Chiron* 27 (1997), pp. 21-72; H. Leppin, *Theodosius der Grosse: auf dem Weg zum christlichen Imperium*, (Darmstadt, 2003) *passim*; N. McLynn, 'Genere Hispanus: Theodosius, Spain and Nicene Orthodoxy', in: M. Kulikowski, K. Bowes (eds.), *Hispania in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives*, (Leiden 2005), pp. 77-120;

I. Fargnoli, 'Many Faiths and One Emperor. Remarks about the religious legislation of Theodosius the Great', *RIDA* 52 (2005), pp. 147-162; M. V. Escribano Paño, 'Teodosio I y los heréticos: la aplicación de las leyes en el *Libellus precum* (384)', *Antiquité Tardive* 16 (2008) pp. 125-140.

³⁴⁶ Soc. V, ΠΠΟΟΙΜΙΟΝ, 2.

³⁴⁷ See: R. Flower, 'The Insanity of Heretics must be restrained': Heresiology in the Theodosian Code', in: C. Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 172-194. See also: C. Luibheid, 'Theodosius II and Heresy', *JEH* 16 (1965), pp. 13-38.

³⁴⁸ For a comprehensive overview of the doctrinal controversies and their implications that dominated these decades, see: S. Leuenberger-Wenger, *Das Konzil von Chalcedon und die Kirche Konflikte und Normierungsprozesse im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert* (Leiden 2019), pp. 18-135.

³⁴⁹ See e.g. Soz. IX,16, 3. Sozomen, comparing the military and domestic disarray of the western empire towards the end of Honorius's reign (d. 423) with the fairly stable Eastern empire, remarks about the latter: "At that time the Eastern part of the empire was relieved of enemies and was run in perfect order contrary to general opinion (παρὰ τὴν πάντων δόξαν) for the sovereign (*Scil.* Theodosius II) was still young' (ἦν γὰρ ἔτι νέος ὁ κρατῶν). The inclusion of the 'general opinion' is adding more than a hint of Sozomen's doubts despite the apparently conventional praises.

Sozomen highlights what is seemingly his dissatisfaction with the emperor by reminding the reader the low level of expectations from Theodosius II during his young adulthood (Theodosius was twenty-two when his uncle Honorius passed away on 15th August, 423). In this regard, it is worth noting that Sozomen reports that Theodosius II succeeded his father Arcadius on the imperial throne after the latter's death, having been 'just weaned' (ἄρτιως γάλακτι τρέφεσθαι ππεπαθμένον).³⁵⁰

This detail is intriguing given that Theodosius was seven years old when he was proclaimed emperor on 1st May 408.³⁵¹ Guy Sabbah has suggested that Sozomen may have confused here the date of Theodosius's accession to the throne with his proclamation as *Augustus* on 10th January 402 when he was just nine months old.³⁵² This does not seem to be likely. We know that the average age for stopping breastfeeding in early Byzantium was fairly late i.e. roughly at four years of age.³⁵³ At any rate, it would seem implausible to assume that Sozomen would have been negligent about milestones in the career of a contemporary emperor. In addition, it should be borne in mind that the belief in the transformative powers of food, physical as well as spiritual, were widespread and deeply embedded in early Byzantine Christian culture. Christians, according to Gregory of Nyssa, are saved and perfected by what they eat and by the one who feeds them.³⁵⁴

It is thus permissible to assume that Sozomen is very elegantly pointing at Theodosius's slow and perhaps even belated development which appears to be also associated with the Biblical invocation of two types of nourishment: that of babes and that of adults, by St Paul.³⁵⁵ If this interpretation is right, then it becomes clear that Sozomen may expect us to associate Theodosius's errors later in life with his belated (and therefore, flawed) development in earlier life. We will have to analyse Sozomen's historical perspectives whilst remaining open to the polyphony of a Greek-speaking Christian empire with its firm continuum of Roman imperial government, fostering increasingly warm relations between church and state, despite the doctrinal conflicts and the controversial personalities of individuals in both parties concerned. The interplay between the sacred and secular seems to have been anticipated already in Eusebius's *De Vita Constantini*, perhaps even more strongly than in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, despite the difference in genre.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ Soz. IX, 1, 1.

³⁵¹ According to Socrates Theodosius II was eight years old when succeeding Arcadius. Socrates does not mention the young emperor's termination of breast feeding. See: Soc. VII, 1,1.

³⁵² See: G. Sabbah, *SC* 516, pp. 368-369 n. 5.

³⁵³ See: C. Bourbou *et al.*, 'Nursing mothers and feeding bottles: reconstructing breastfeeding and weaning patterns in Greek Byzantine populations (6th–15th centuries AD) using carbon and nitrogen stable isotope ratios', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 40 (2013), pp. 3903-3913. Note also: P. Stephenson, *New Rome: The Roman Empire in the East 395-700* (London 2021), p. 20 ff.

³⁵⁴ Gregory of Nyssa makes this connection when he observes: "The one being nourished is certainly formed according to the kind of nourishment consumed" (τῷ γὰρ εἶδει τῆς τροφῆς συνδιατίθεται πάντως καὶ τὸ τρεφόμενον (*Canticum Canticorum*, Homily 15; Eng. trans. J.D. Penniman). Greek text: R.A. Norris Jr. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on the Song of Songs*, (Atlanta, Ga. 2012), 468.9-10. See: J.D. Penniman, 'Fed to Perfection: Mother's Milk, Roman Family Values, and the Transformation of the Soul in Gregory of Nyssa', *Church History* 84 (2015), pp. 495-530.

³⁵⁵ 1 *Corinth.* 3, 1-3.

³⁵⁶ Eusebius went on to include imperial documents in his biography of Constantine just as he did in his *HE*. In a letter to Alexander bishop of Alexandria and Arius, the Alexandrian heterodox presbyter, Constantine describes himself as being motivated by a vision of a universal harmony between secular politics and religious unity. See: Eus. *VC*, II, 65, 1-2. See also: L. Pietri, *SC* 559, pp. 67-82; Av. Cameron and

The essence of this phase is chiefly the additional dimension which the active participation of the emperor, the empress (and/or his entourage or notorious members of his household acting on his behalf) adds to the narratives of post-Eusebian contributions to ecclesiastical historiography.³⁵⁷

There was a tightening of ties between church and state in the eastern Roman Empire, following its conversion under Constantine. It became clear in the second half of the fourth century, after a spell of rather volatile imperial religious sympathies (shifting from 'semi'-Arianism under Constantius II to Julian the Apostate's short-lived pagan restoration, a very brief spell of pro-Nicene imperial policy under Jovian, and back again to Valens's support of Arianism and his anti-Nicene persecutions³⁵⁸), that emperors could be fickle, and even when thoroughly converted, could still be subject to the weaknesses of the flesh, as well as to those of the spirit. Thus, in the light of the traumatizing experience which Nicene orthodoxy had suffered between 337 and 378, personified in the career and writings of Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296- 373)³⁵⁹ it does not seem odd that the revival of the alliance between church and state was bound to provoke considerable anxiety on the part of certain Christian intellectuals (in both east and west) who would feel alarmed by the growing involvement of churchmen in secular politics, or, alternatively, would deplore the attempts made by Roman emperors, or leading figures in their court, acting formally on their behalf to gain control over ecclesiastical affairs.³⁶⁰

This spirit of discontent with the "politicisation" of the church in the east (with some strong reverberations in the west) found its incarnation at the turn of the fifth century in the person of John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople (fl. ca. 349-407; Episcopate: 397-404) and is reflected even in his early writings.³⁶¹ The case of Chrysostom, however, sets before us a more

S. G. Hall, (Intr., Eng. trans. with commentary), *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford 1999), pp. 30-34 and pp. 46-50.

³⁵⁷ See: H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Großen zu Theodosius II: Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret* (Göttingen 1996), pp. 26-39 and pp. 167-193. Leppin highlights throughout his study mainly the fifth-century ecclesiastical historians' view of the Roman emperors' orthodoxy from Constantine to Theodosius II. See also: Urbainczyk (1997), pp. 32-35.

³⁵⁸ See: N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley, CA 2003), pp. 234-263.

³⁵⁹ For a lucid study of Athanasius's theological stances placed in the context of the Arian crisis, See: K. Anatolios, *Athanasius; The Coherence of his Thought* (London 1998), pp. 85-163.

³⁶⁰ See: A. Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D", in Id. (ed.) *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 1963), p. 81. Momigliano outlines the development of this trend, and convincingly traces its beginnings back to the affair of Priscillian, the bishop of Avila in Spain (b. 340) who was tried and executed on a fabricated charge of "Manicheism" at the imperial court of Trier with some of his followers (including two clergymen) by the catholic short-lived western emperor Magnus Maximus, probably in 385. The emperor also dispatched special emissaries to Spain, with a clear plan to eradicate the Priscillianist movement altogether. The bewilderment and concern of major Christian contemporaries appears to be reflected in the strong protest of no other than Martin of Tours (who was no Priscillianist sympathiser himself) against the response with which these actions had met. See: Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogus cum Gallo*, III, 12-13. See also: H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford 1976), p. 133 and p. 146. On the social aspects of Priscillianism, see: R. Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley, CA 1985), pp. 88-114. See also: M. V. Escribano Paño, 'La disputa priscilianista: de conuersatio ascética a maleficium', in: D. Vera and R. Teja (eds.), *Hispania en la Antigüedad Tardía* (Bari 2002), pp. 205-231.

³⁶¹ See e.g. Chrysostom's *Comparatio regis et monachi* (=PG 47 col. 387-392). David Hunter's convincing arguments in favour of 379 as a *terminus a quo* for the dating of this short treatise may

complex challenge, given the highly 'politicised' nature of his episcopal career which, as we shall see later, owed its very existence to an unconcealed intervention of the imperial court in the bishop's election process.³⁶² It will be also argued later that Chrysostom's legacy is likewise present in Sozomen's treatment of the relations between 'church' and 'state'. These categories again, if we turn back to Peter Brown's methodological observations, are coterminous in Sozomen's *HE* with what the modern reader may classify as 'theology' and 'history' in his narrative, even if the vocabulary is entirely different. Furthermore, it will be the highly 'politicised' nature of his episcopal career which, as we shall see later, owed its very existence to an unconcealed intervention of the imperial court in the bishop's election process. Furthermore, it will be argued that Sozomen's rehearsal of the Chrysostom affair (to a greater degree than in the case of Sozomen's predecessor, Socrates) appears to have aimed at the conveyance of an explicitly political message to his readers. Sozomen's *HE* thus should be regarded as an encounter and indeed a fusion of the secular with the religious in an environment whereby the borderline between the two was becoming more and more fuzzy. This fusion seems to have emanated from Sozomen's historical perspectives and had shaped his narrative strategies. The literary evidence from the period concerned, which, amongst other things, consists of polemical literature but also of other genres, e.g. epistolography, hagiography and forms of (to use Patricia Cox Miller's terminology) 'collective biography'³⁶³ often consciously expropriated and converted for partisan purposes climate whereby "theology" often appears to have been only an excuse for the expression of underlying (not

offer a more plausible interpretation, which neatly supports our line of inquiry i.e. that this was, possibly, a response to Theodosius I's restoration of Nicene orthodoxy and its expected consequences. See: D. Hunter (Eng. trans. and intr.), *A Comparison between a King and a Monk! Against the opponents of the Monastic Life: Two Treatises by John Chrysostom* (Lewiston, N.Y.1988), p. 39. On Chrysostom's background see : C. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398-404) Weltsicht und Wirken eines Bischofs in der Hauptstadt des Oströmischen Reiches* (Tübingen 2002), pp. 42-110. Note also: J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London 1995), pp.18-23. The centrality of John Chrysostom's figure for a better understanding of the *Zeitgeist* of the era under discussion has been duly highlighted by the very title of J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz's *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1990). See: *ibid.* pp. 166-194. On the western response to the Chrysostom affair see: H. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford 2001), pp. 499-507.

³⁶² The nature of election to the Constantinopolitan episcopal throne from the election of Nectarius in 381 to that of Anatolius in 451, and the role of imperial intervention in this procedure has been re-assessed from a revisionist point of view. See: P. Van Nuffelen, 'Episcopal Succession in Constantinople (381-450 C.E.): The Local Dynamics of Power', *JES* 18 (2010), pp. 425-451. Although at pains to play down the role of imperial intervention in the election of the bishops of the imperial capital - and highlight the dynamic role of 'local' powers at play within the process - which, under the influence of modern sociological methods he renames 'establishment' *en bloc* (*op. cit.* p. 429) - Van Nuffelen candidly concedes nonetheless: 'One cannot deny the importance of imperial intervention'. (*op. cit.* p. 449). Van Nuffelen's interpretation is a more radical version of Peter Norton's earlier study whereby the imperial intervention in episcopal elections in late antiquity is played down. For Norton's discussion of imperial intervention in elections to the see of Constantinople, see: P. Norton, *Episcopal Elections 250-600: Hierarchy and Popular Will in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2007), pp. 83-91. Norton too nonetheless admits that "... it cannot, however, be in serious doubt that the decisive influence was the emperor's wish." Norton, *op. cit.* p. 91.

³⁶³ See respectively: A. Garzya, 'L'epistolografia letteraria tardoantica' in: Id. (ed), *Il mandarino e il quotidiano* (Naples 1983), pp. 115-148; Av. Cameron, 'Form and Meaning: The Vita Constantini and the Vita Antonii' in T. Hägg and P. Rousseau (eds), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2001), pp. 72-88 and P. Cox Miller, 'Strategies of Representation in Collective Biography: Constructing the Subject as Holy' in: T. Hägg and P. Rousseau, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-254 (esp. pp. 214-227).

necessarily strictly religious) tensions, resulting at times in disorder which eventually deteriorated into waves of violence.³⁶⁴

The evidence suggests that the main scene was regularly the urban centres of the eastern Roman empire (i.e. Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria), but the participants, it should be stressed, were often recruited and brought in from further afield, namely from rural areas.³⁶⁵ The countryside was often home to monastic centres, and the period concerned saw a considerable transformation of the monk and his roles in the Christianised Roman society.³⁶⁶ Monks were gradually becoming active players in a political arena whereby the boundaries between the sacred and the secular appeared to be more and more confused. The monasteries often served as a source of manpower for the top of the hierarchy³⁶⁷ and for the emerging pressure groups, wishing to stretch their muscles against their opponents by bringing into the urban centres large contingents of sympathetic monks to march in processions, organise riots or, simply, to clash head-on with the supporters of the opposite camp.³⁶⁸

It was argued in the previous chapter that Eusebius embarked upon the writing of his *HE* with an evident awareness of the delicate character of his attempt to embroider the sacred and the secular and indeed, the spiritual and the political, onto the same fabric of historical

³⁶⁴ See: D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2002), pp. 208-209.

³⁶⁵ See: E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e-7e siècles* (Paris 1977), p. 225 ff.

³⁶⁶ On the ways in which early Christian historiography deals with the changing role of monks and monasteries in the fourth century Roman Near East, see: A. Westergren, 'The Monastic Paradox: Desert Ascetics as Founders, Fathers, and Benefactors in Early Christian Historiography', *VC* 72 (2018), pp. 283-317. For Westergren's discussion of *Sozomen's HE* see *ibid.* pp. 303-314. Westergren regards Sozomen's treatment of monasticism as 'the integration of the monks within a larger historical setting, that of the empire, making them part of the familiar story about settlement and growth.' (*ibid.* p. 314). In other words, Sozomen's account relies on classical Greco-Roman historical perspectives which are frequently based on *topoi* such as founding fathers, their settlement endeavours and struggles, and the expansion and rise to prominence of their foundations. See also: A. Martin, 'D'Eusèbe à Sozomène ; la place du monachisme dans les nouvelles Histoires ecclésiastiques', *Admantius* 17 (2011), pp. 93-117. Martin highlights Sozomen's focus on the role of the monks in the Christianisation of the Roman empire and beyond, as well as their pro-active and indeed, effective participation in campaigns against various heresies.

³⁶⁷ See: M. Forlin-Patrucco, 'Bishops and Monks in Late Antique Society', *ZAC* 8 (2004), pp. 332-345.

³⁶⁸ The picture which emerges from a study of monkish violence, from the monastic movement's earliest beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon in 451, is all the more striking. See: J.M. Gaddis, *There is No Crime for Those Who have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA 2005), pp. 151-250. See also: D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2002), pp. 199-205. Caner, relying for this purpose on Sozomen (*Soz.* VIII, 9, 4), seeks to demonstrate that the aggressive monkish involvement in urban unrest at the turn of the fifth century was caused chiefly by economic pressures. The same picture emerges from the grim testimonial, left to us by the pagan historian Eunapius of Sardis (d. after 404). Eunapius ascribes to every monk in his time (i.e. towards the end of the fourth century) 'tyrannical power' (τυραννικὴ ἐξουσία) which has been elegantly played down by scholars who depicted Eunapius's comment (*Vitae Sophistarum*, VI, 11) merely as an outburst, incited by the indignation of a frustrated hellene, lamenting (understandably, though) the destruction of paganism by the triumphant church. Thus e.g. P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford 1978), pp. 9-11. See, however, the concluding remarks in J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1990), pp. 251-252 and G. Dagron, 'Les moines et la ville. Le monachisme à Constantinople jusqu'au concile de Chalcedoine (451)', *TM* 4 (1970), pp. 229-276.

narrative. Later on, as the genre developed into more of a contemporary history, the ecclesiastical historians, from Rufinus onwards, seem to have conveyed in their individual narratives an attempt to 'throw ropes', to use again Peter Brown's vivid metaphor, across an unbridgeable gap between rival currents in the Christian church. The rivalry begot an acrimony and the acrimony, in turn, begot a crisis. This crisis appeared paradoxically where and when the sacred and the secular were promisingly re-united, namely, under the rule of the Theodosian dynasty, for the most part, staunch supporters of Nicene orthodoxy.³⁶⁹

Yet, despite the clear commitment of this dynasty to the Nicene Creed, the eastern Roman Empire and its capital Constantinople, in particular, were the scene of profound conflict, between Christians of various denominations during Sozomen's lifetime.³⁷⁰ The tense religious atmosphere in the New Rome of the east was captured by a visitor from the province of Cappadocia who, whilst being himself engaged in defending the exact place of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, left us in passing a rare portrayal of the "man in the street" in a crisis-ridden late antique capital:

*Indeed, all throughout the city have become full of such things, the narrow alleys, the markets, the squares, the streets, the garment retailers, the money changers, our food purveyors. If you ever ask for a change, this man would philosophise about 'Begotten' and 'Not Begotten' and should you ever inquire about the price of bread, the answer is given: "the Father is greater, and the Son is subordinate". If you may ask: 'Is the bath ready?' this person would embark on defining the Son as originating from nothingness. I do not know what one should name this ill: brain inflammation, madness, or whatever epidemic ailment which causes mental derangement.*³⁷¹

Gregory had made this observation sometime around the convocation of the Second Ecumenical Council in 381³⁷² suggests that the eastern capital city of the Roman Empire, had become completely obsessed with religious debate concerning Christ's Genesis and Person. This wave of heightened religious sentiment seemed to Gregory to have swept people of all walks of life, regardless of background, education and occupation. Complex theological concerns, contrary to sound human behaviour - as can be inferred from Gregory's unconcealed opprobrium³⁷³ had permeated even into the humblest sectors of

³⁶⁹ On the shift of Theodosius II towards miaphysitism in the last decade of his reign, see: F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408-450* (Berkeley, CA 2006), pp. 157-167.

³⁷⁰ For the Constantinopolitan context see: W. Mayer, 'Cathedral Church or Cathedral Churches? The Situation at Constantinople (c. 360-404)', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 66 (2000), pp. 49-68 and R. Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser und Konstantinopel: Kommunikation und Konfliktaustrag in einer spätantiken Metropole* (Berlin 2013), pp. 383-410.

³⁷¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio de deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti* (= E. Rhein et alii (eds), *GNO*, X, 2 (Leiden 1996), p. 121). Modern scholars had related previously to this passage, but their discussions usually omit the last sentence quoted here which appears to be a 'punch-line', containing the core of Gregory's opinion in this respect. See e.g. T.E. Gregory, *Vox Populi: Popular Opinion and Violence in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century A.D.* (Columbus, OH 1979), pp. 3-4. Cf. W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA 1984), p. 636; R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 1995), pp. 149-150; J. Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford 1998), pp. 221-222. Note also: S. Williams and G. Friell, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay* (London 1994), p. 48.

³⁷² Lim (1995), *Public Disputation*, p. 149.

³⁷³ Gregory's 'clinical' depiction of his Constantinopolitan interlocutors may have been more than a mere rhetorical device. The opposition to Nicene orthodoxy amongst the crowd of the capital persisted despite the emperor's intolerant stance which was at the time (i.e. after 380) assuming the form of enacted laws. Gregory of Nyssa may have been responding with real fear and anger to the anti-

Constantinopolitan society. So much so, that one could no longer escape it even in mundane venues such as the marketplace or even public baths. This is even more remarkable since Gregory's symbolic interlocutors express overtly Arian beliefs. Gregory, the energetic campaigner for Nicene orthodoxy, corroborates, seemingly, what can be inferred from contemporary imperial legislation; Arianism was still pretty much alive in Constantinople in the early 380's - although flourishing, as we shall see, it no longer was.³⁷⁴ Gregory very astutely links up this outlandish Constantinople with the Arian doctrines. The discerning reader is implicitly given the freedom to identify the culprits with whom this outlandishness lies. Gregory depicts the eastern Roman capital as a bizarre place. A city where even street peddlers and moneychangers (the allusion to the biblical story of Jesus and the Cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem appears to be quite clear)³⁷⁵ seemed to be entirely preoccupied with lofty theological issues arising from the controversies over the Trinitarian dogma, cannot be, according to Gregory, the abode of a sound, mentally healthy human society. Sozomen's lifetime (ca. 370- ca. 450)³⁷⁶ ran parallel to the greater part of the Theodosian dynasty's rule over the later Roman Empire, stretching from the ascent of Theodosius I 'the Great' to the imperial throne in 379 to the death of his grand-daughter, the empress Pulcheria, in 453 (one might wish to extend this period of time to the death of her husband, the emperor Marcian, in 457). This era saw the second phase of Christian triumph (the first being the years between the Constantinian 'conversion' and the convocation of the Council of Nicaea, i.e. 312-325, although it would surely be incorrect to say that the progress of Christianity in the Roman Empire during the turbulent years between 337 and 379 was brought to a standstill).³⁷⁷

In this second phase there feature two benchmarks in late antique church history; first, there is the termination of the Trinitarian controversy (or, more commonly, the Arian controversy), and the consequent victory of the Nicene Creed over the rival doctrines amongst the churches of both the Greek east and the Latin west. The watershed in the history of the Nicene church is marked by the convocation of the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) - right

Niceans who had even tried at certain point to assassinate his close friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, then the orthodox bishop of Constantinople. This attempt may have taken place sometime between November 380 and May 381. See: Greg. Naz. *De vita sua*, 1442-1474 (= PG, 37, col. 1129-1131). The dating of Gregory of Nyssa's works is still a matter of scholarly debate. For its problems, see: G. May, 'Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregor von Nyssa' in: M. Harl (ed.), *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse. Actes du colloque de Chevetogne (22-26 septembre 1969)* (Leiden 1971), pp. 51-66.

³⁷⁴ On the abolition of institutions with Arian or semi-Arian affiliation, see: *CTh* 16,5, 11-13.

Sozomen (Soz. VII, 12, 12) reports that Theodosius I's laws against the heretics were not implemented "because he did not want to punish the subjects, but to intimidate them so that they may become of the same opinion about the Divine like himself." (οὐ γὰρ τιμωρεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' εἰς δέος καθιστᾶν τοὺς ὑπηκόους ἐσπούδαζεν, ὅπως ὁμόφρονες αὐτῷ γένοιοντο περὶ τὸ θεῖον).

³⁷⁵ Cf. Matt. 21. 12.

³⁷⁶ See: Cap. 3 of the present study.

³⁷⁷ See: R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire 100-400* (New Haven, CT 1986), pp. 52-73.

MacMullen's discussion is in fact a rather sketchy outline. However, he wisely draws our attention to several major factors in the largely- obscure development of the empire's Christianisation. MacMullen's taxonomy of these factors includes, notably, 'nonreligious factors', 'evangelical campaigns' and the 'conversion of intellectuals' which he attempts to depict chiefly as a mental process of transformation, or in MacMullen's own words (with regard to the case of St. Augustine) - 'something beyond ordinary logical framing' (p. 71). See also: P. Brown, *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge 1995), pp. 3-26.

at the beginning of the Theodosian era³⁷⁸ - and that of Chalcedon (451) - towards its end. The defeated ecclesiastical camp, often being referred to as "the Arian church" or "the Arian movement", was, it seems, a rather loose coalition of churches, each being in a variable degree of co-relation to the original teachings of the presbyter Arius of Alexandria (d. 336) and, as the available evidence suggests, endemically prone to internal disagreements and conflicts.³⁷⁹ Yet, the pro-Nicene victors could not rejoice for long. The triumphant Nicene church, by now in a position to style itself (perhaps more justifiably than before) as "Catholic"³⁸⁰, was soon to be challenged by dissenters from within over the question of the natures of Christ.³⁸¹

Second, there was the crisis within Nicene orthodoxy in the interim between the Council of Constantinople and the Council of Chalcedon. It would perhaps be fair to say that the new crisis, commonly known as the Christological controversy, affected mostly the eastern empire, but it did also have significant bearings on the developments in the west, as we shall see later. However, this conflict, with its precursors, the Origenist and the Pelagian controversies, entailed frequent ecclesiastical gatherings which were convoked in order to restore unity and harmony within the church. It resulted in the rise of the miaphysite church alongside other 'non-Chalcedonian' denominations (e.g. the Church of the East, generally (but erroneously) known as "Nestorian"³⁸², named so after the Antioch-educated monk Nestorius of Germanicia, bishop of Constantinople between 428 and 431, to whom the doctrine of two separate Persons in the Incarnate Christ is commonly attributed.³⁸³

³⁷⁸ For a detailed discussion of the beginning of the reign of Theodosius I, including a fresh reconsideration of the First Council of Constantinople and Theodosius' s religious legislation, see: R. Malcolm Errington, 'Church and State in the First Years of Theodosius 1', *Chiron* 27 (1997), pp. 21-72.

³⁷⁹ On the diversity within "Arianism" and the relation of the various Arian schools to the seminal thinker, see: M. Wiles, 'Attitudes to Arius in the Arian Controversy' in: M.R. Barnes and D.H. Williams (eds.) *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh 1993), pp.31-43. See also: Id. 'Eunomius: hair-splitting dialectician or defender of the accessibility of salvation?', in: R. Williams. (ed.) *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge (1989), pp.157-172. For the political history of the 'homoian' (also homoean) church in its heyday (i.e. from the death of Julian to the ascendancy of Theodosius I ; 363-379), see: H.- Ch. Brennecke, *Studien zur Geschichte der Homoer* (Tübingen 1988), pp. 158-242. Brennecke attributes to the homoeans a leading role in the ecclesiastical politics of the time by dubbing this position "das offizielle Bekenntnis der Reichskirche". For a contrasting view which radically challenges the idea of a 'Homoean church' altogether, see: R.P. Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford 2000), pp. 204-205.

³⁸⁰ The historical development of the notion of 'Catholicity' in the fourth century church has hardly been studied as such. For an historical overview of the development of the concept of Catholicity in the early church, see: A. Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity before the Age of Cyprian* (Leiden 1999), pp. 296-309 For a useful preliminary outline of the use of this term in the fourth century, see: P. M. Brlek, 'De vocis «Catholica» origine et notione', *Antonianum* 38 (1963), pp. 263-287. Sozomen reports (VII, 4, 6) that Theodosius I prohibited by law (*CTh* XVI 1,2) the use of the title 'Catholic Church' by those who did not honour equally (τῶν ἰσότητι) the Three Persons of Christ.

³⁸¹ For a bird's eye survey of the unfolding of the debates about the natures of Christ, see: R.A. Norris and R. C. Saler. *The Christological Controversy* (Minneapolis MN 1980), pp. 95-122.

³⁸² See: S.P. Brock, 'The "Nestorian" Church: A Lamentable Misnomer', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 78 (1996), pp. 23-35.

³⁸³ On Nestorius and his formative background, see: G.A. Bevan, *The New Judas: The Case of Nestorius in Ecclesiastical Politics, 428- 451 CE* (Leuven 2016), pp. 39-76. On the beginnings of the Church of the East, see: J. Mayendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, (Crestwood, NY 1989), pp. 96-100. Mayendorff, quite typically, refers to the nascent Church of the East as

The new divisions within the Christian Church during the first half of the fifth century have been the focus of several modern scholarly attempts at analysis. The apparent entanglement of these doctrinal discords with ethnic and cultural differences, tensions and struggles did not escape the notice of students of late antiquity in the twentieth century and has indeed provoked a lively debate amongst leading historians of that period. Clashes between identifiable different groupings within the later Roman empire, which may have been relatively dormant or, at times, silenced in the pre-Christian empire, were identified already in 1916 as 'nationalism' in disguise by Ernst Llewellyn Woodward.³⁸⁴ Woodward's theory was contested by several scholars, most notably by A.H.M. Jones.³⁸⁵ His reservations regarding the relevance of the term 'nationalism' in the context of *e.g.* fifth-century Alexandria or Carthage are still important, if problematic, caveats. Yet, it should be borne in mind that present-day students of the fifth-century Mediterranean world, would be adapting presumably a rather naive approach to the surviving sources (and Sozomen's ecclesiastical history is certainly no exception) by ignoring the fact that our ability to 'locate' cultures and to reflect more fruitfully on the practice of acculturation, cultural expropriation, or even cultural deprivation by different groupings (which often turn these practices into explicit or implicit criteria of distinction or, more narrowly, of self-definition), has been considerably augmented by the contribution of contemporary cultural theory.³⁸⁶ It is essential to add to these the pioneering studies of the French sociologist and cultural theorist Maurice Halbwachs, on the collective memory.³⁸⁷

Their critique of modern culture now provides the historian with a new analytical tool which can and indeed should be employed also by historians of late antiquity, who are often confronted with issues of collective identity, not always effectively manageable through more conventional methods of study. The tool of analysis, offered to us by the aforementioned theorists (each one in his own particular way) is underpinned by the more subtle concept of 'ethnicity'. This concept may aptly replace, in certain cases (it will be later argued), the surviving residues of 'nationalism' in contemporary historical discourse on late antiquity. The problem in its rephrased guise of 'ethnicity' received new leverage also in the Eastern Roman context.³⁸⁸ Fergus Millar highlighted, in this context, the essential importance of a more rigorous consideration of the ethnic and linguistic factors in the religious upheaval of the near east at the turn of the fifth century. Examining the linguistic mosaic of the region in connection

'Nestorian Christendom of the East' (ibid.p. 97). For an essential overview of the source material, see: S.P. Brock, 'The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials', in G. Dragas (ed.), *Aksum-Thyateira: A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodius* (London 1985), pp. 125-142 (= S. P. Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Aldershot 1992) § XII). See also: W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA 1984), pp.752- 758; P. Maraval, *Le Christianisme de Constantin à la conquete arabe* (Paris 1997). pp. 353-358.

³⁸⁴ See: E. L. Woodward, *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire* (London 1916), pp. 28-49.

³⁸⁵ See: A.H.M. Jones, 'Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?', *JTS-n.s.* 10 (1959), pp. 280-298.

³⁸⁶ See: P.J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, NJ 2002), pp. 52-79.

³⁸⁷ See: M. Halbwachs, *Le memoire collective* (Paris 1950; Revised edition Paris 1997), pp. 97-142; Halbwachs, not coincidentally, developed his theory, departing from an earlier study dedicated to the transformation of the Holy Land 'legendary topography' of the Gospels by the emergent collective Christian memory: See: Id., *La Topographie legendaire des Evangiles en Terre Sainte. Etude de memoire collective* (Paris 1941; Repr. Paris 2007), pp. 14-89.

³⁸⁸ Liebeschuetz (1990), pp. 48-85.

with an apparent interplay of ecclesiastical politics and acculturation in the region concerned, Millar's conclusions point us firmly at the necessity to pick up from where the advocates of late antique 'nationalism' (as well as their critics) had left off.³⁸⁹ The relevance of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic identity' to Sozomen has been demonstrated by Walt Stevenson in an essay dedicated to the portrayal of barbarians by Sozomen.³⁹⁰

Whatever our analysis yields, it is permissible to infer from the results of the council of Chalcedon in 451 and its ensuing events that the spread of non-Chalcedonian congregations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria and beyond the north-eastern borders, in Persia, Armenia, Lazica and Caucasian Iberia, necessarily created a growing polarisation between the religious climates of the Greek east and the Latin west.³⁹¹ However, the implications in the eastern regions on the relations between Greek-speaking churches and those which retained other indigenous languages as a means of (primarily) doctrinal self-determination and distinctiveness are by-and-large more complex than the fashion in which they are usually portrayed, and need to be appropriately reassessed.

The ideal of a unified Roman empire seems to have been of considerable significance following the death of Constantine the Great in 337, and this remained so even after what we regard now as the 'final division' of the empire.³⁹² There was evidently a sharp contrast between Constantine's legacy, which consisted of a fairly united empire, satisfactory relations with its neighbours, relatively secure borders³⁹³ - and (at least in theory) one 'official' Christian confession, namely, the Nicene creed - as opposed to the chaotic state of affairs with which Theodosius I had to deal with at the time of his accession. The Roman state of Constantine's successors (until 379) was eroded partly by an increasing military vulnerability, which had manifested itself earlier in the 360's with the Roman failure to cope effectively with the rise of Sassanian Persia under Shapur II (309-379), and later on, with the deterioration of the relations with the Goths.³⁹⁴

The domestic arena was no less turbulent. The predominant cause was the doctrinal conflicts within the Christian church, and most notably, the Arian controversy. The council of Nicaea (325)³⁹⁵, despite its doctrinal resolution, the *Symbolum*, which was officially endorsed by the imperial court, had failed nevertheless to take measures to ensure its implementation. In fact, a mechanism for ensuring a doctrinal *Gleichschaltung* was not deemed necessary as yet, probably due to the convocation of the council under imperial auspices. The marriage of crown and altar as a political *modus operandi* was still in its embryonic stages, and it may be

³⁸⁹ See, F. Millar, 'Ethnic Identity in the Roman Near East, 325-450: Language, Religion and Culture', *MedArch* 11 (1998), pp. 159-176.

³⁹⁰ W. Stevenson, "Sozomen, Barbarians and Early Byzantine Historiography", *GRBS* 43 (2002-2003), pp. 51-75.

³⁹¹ Meyendorff (1989), pp.187-206.

³⁹² A. Pabst, *Divisio Regni: Der Zerfall des Imperium Romanum in der Sicht der Zeitgenossen* (Bonn 1986) pp. 133-152.

³⁹³ See: R.C. Blockely, *CAH* 13, pp. 426-433.

³⁹⁴ See: Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI, 16, 1-8, supplemented by Zosimus, *HN*, IV, 22-26. For discussion, see: P. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489* (Oxford 1991), pp. 147-152. On the Gothic crisis in the accounts of the 5th century ecclesiastical historians see: S. Bralewski, 'Kryzys gocki z perspektywy historiografii kościelnej V stulecia', *Zeszyty naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace historyczne* 148 (2021), pp. 263-276.

³⁹⁵ On the Council of Nicaea see: H. Pietras, *Council of Nicaea (325) : religious and political context. documents, commentaries* (Rome 2016).

reasonable to argue that it must have taken some time to realise that a Christian emperor could indeed be challenged on religious grounds just as pagan emperors could be branded as tyrants and oppressors as in the former age of the martyrs.³⁹⁶

It seems that the first to have acted out of such sentiments were the dissenting followers of the Alexandrian deacon, Arius, led by bishops Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea³⁹⁷ and later on (after their re-instatement), the pro-Nicene opponents of this settlement (whose champion was since 328 the newly elected bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius) had overwhelmed most of the other prelates by their ferocious contentiousness and overt defiance.³⁹⁸ It was not long before imperial involvement in ecclesiastical affairs was proven volatile. Constantine's patronage of the Nicene Creed gave way to a considerable degree of flexibility, which encouraged the Arians further again. In fact, Constantine himself, the champion of Christian unity, appears to have become more tolerant towards their cause before his death although the evidence does not suggest that he was won over.³⁹⁹ The Arians were soon in a position to gain control over most of the key Episcopal sees, deposing, where and when possible, their pro-Nicene incumbents and taking severe measures to suppress the Nicene congregations. The Arians had considerable gains in key cities like Alexandria, Antioch and even Constantinople itself, but appear to have failed to gain support in the countryside. The question remains: was this a case of sheer neglect? Or, perhaps, a genuine failure to conduct an 'internal mission' which may have been connected with the markedly-intellectual image of the movement and its proponents' lack of interest in (if not condescension towards) its public image?

The answers to these questions appear in many ways to depend on another question, more fundamental in essence: What was the nature of 'Arianism' in the fourth century? Was it an organised 'church' with a political arm which we can duly regard as a 'party'? Was it perhaps a 'movement' of sorts (by 'movement' we may refer to the sum total of like-minded people operating to advance an ideology or a doctrine more or less voluntarily without a central governing body or with *ad hoc* leadership)? Or was it neither the former nor the latter – but as certain commentators would encourage us to believe, more of a 'rhetorical device' used primarily by campaigning pro-Nicene clerics and writers, especially polemicists (e.g.

³⁹⁶ A characteristic example is Bishop Ambrose of Milan's confrontation with emperor Theodosius I following a massacre of innocent citizens in Thessalonica. See: Soz. VII 25.1-7; Theod. HE V 17-18.

³⁹⁷ On Arianism and anti-Arianism before Constantine's death see: T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MS 1993), pp. 10-33 and p. 61; M. Simonetti, *La crisi Ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome 1975), pp. 99-134.

³⁹⁸ See: A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'église d'Égypte au IVe siècle (328-373)* (Rome 1996), pp. 341-389.

³⁹⁹ Constantine was baptised on his deathbed by the leader of the Arians, Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, who shortly thereafter became bishop of Constantinople. See: Eusebius, *vita Constantini*, IV, 61-73. For a thorough discussion see: R. W. Burgess, 'ΑΧΥΡΩΝ or ΠΡΟΑΣΤΕΙΟΝ. The Location and Circumstances of Constantine's Death', *JThS-NS* 50 (1999), pp. 153-161. However, the evidence does not suggest that he had embraced at any point Arianism as a religious conviction *per se*. Whatever measures he had taken which were apparently in favour of the Arian party and a blow to supporters of Nicene Orthodoxy (e.g. keeping the pro-Arian bishop Eusebius of Caesarea as his advisor and banishing the defender of Orthodoxy bishop Athanasius of Alexandria), were taken for no other than political reasons. See: S. Bralewski, *Symmachia cesarstwa rzymskiego z Bogiem chrześcijan (IV-VI wiek)*, t. 2 (Łódź 2018), pp. 70-88. Note also: A. López Kindler, 'Constantino y el arrianismo', *AHlg* 22 (2013), pp. 37-64.

Athanasius of Alexandria) to alert, urge, castigate their opponents as well as defend their doctrinal position and their followers? ⁴⁰⁰

If the nature of the Arian movement during its heyday (i.e. 337-381) remains largely obscure or, apparently, distorted in the (mostly) pro-Nicene sources, there can hardly be any dispute about the change in the fortunes of Nicaea's loyal adherents after Theodosius I's accession. ⁴⁰¹ Yet, there seems to be sufficient evidence to suggest that the movement, despite all its alleged or real weaknesses, was by no means easy to eradicate. Sozomen's narrative does not lack certain significant examples. ⁴⁰² The Arian threat, despite the Nicene victory, appears to have been more than just a living memory when Sozomen was writing. It was, seemingly, still a viable option for the dissatisfied, those dissidents whom orthodox writers (like Sozomen) would try to portray as inclined towards religious discord. Moreover, if we treat the orthodox literary response with the appropriate caution, it will nevertheless appear that pro-Arianism after 381 was a sentiment which was accompanied, at times, by motivations not necessarily dictated solely by personal political ambition. There were ethnic considerations as well. Arianism was the denomination of the newly Christianised Goths, a Germanic people which since the fourth century was increasingly playing an active role on the military and political scene of the empire. The Goths, formerly a hostile alien nation of what the Romans were used to regard mainly as belligerent barbarous tribesmen, were gradually incorporated (but, apparently, not fully absorbed) into the ethnic amalgam of the empire following their crossing of the Danube in 376. ⁴⁰³ However, it became evident before long that the Goths would not easily let themselves to lose their independence, become tamed, let alone fully assimilated. ⁴⁰⁴ In spite of their military services to Theodosius I ⁴⁰⁵ and his heirs, Arcadius and Honorius, they remained largely a disparate grouping, and it should be noted that its members were not granted Roman citizenship automatically. ⁴⁰⁶ The Goths remained distinctive, amongst other features, due to their Arian Christianity, which was passed down to them by their bishop, Ulfila, "the apostle to the Goths". ⁴⁰⁷ Such a situation must have generated amongst Nicene loyalists in both empires serious fears of an Arian fifth column, although the direct evidence for this is (perhaps not surprisingly) quite limited.

Yet, the services of the Goths were indispensable, and it seems that while Theodosius I may have contented himself by taking legislative measures in an attempt to make Arianism less

⁴⁰⁰ See, D. M. Gwinn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the Arian Controversy* (Oxford 2006), pp. 245-249.

⁴⁰¹ Lewis Ayers refers to this change as 'victory'. See: L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford 2004), pp. 244-269.

⁴⁰² See e.g. Soz. VII, 6; 17; VIII, 8 and IX, 9.

⁴⁰³ See: P. Heather, *Goths and Romans* (Oxford 1991), pp. 122-142 and (*contra* Heather, unconvincingly though), N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley, CA 2002), pp. 341-355.

⁴⁰⁴ See: E. P. Gluschanin, "Die politik Theodosius' I. und die Hintergründe des sogenannten Antigermanismus im Oströmischen Reich," *Historia* 38 (1989), p. 231; H. Wolfram, *Die Goten. Von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts* (Munich 1990), pp. 144-145.

⁴⁰⁵ See: S. Bralewski, 'Kryzys gocki z perspektywy historiografii kościelnej V stulecia', *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Prace Historyczne*, no. 148 (2021), pp. 263-276. Note also:

M. Székely, 'Theodosius and the goths', *Chronica* 17 (2017), pp. 79-106.

⁴⁰⁶ P. Heather, *Goths and Romans* (Oxford 1991), pp. 164-165; Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 109-113.

⁴⁰⁷ According to Socrates, Ulfila had a predecessor as bishop of the Goths by the name of Theophilus who attended the Council of Nicaea. See: Soc. II, 41, 23.

attractive to all the inhabitants of the empire, his policy had never aimed at an outright eradication of this church from his realm.

Sozomen records in detail the infamous Thessalonica affair (about which Socrates is intriguingly silent): Theodosius, seeking to appease the Gothic garrison in Illyricum following the lynching of their commander Butheric by an enraged crowd in Thessalonica, gave the German troops *carte blanche* to avenge Butheric's death by massacring local residents in the city's own circus.⁴⁰⁸ His successors preferred (or, more accurately, were forced) to put up with this situation - if grudgingly - as we shall see later. This problem appears to have had less acute implications for the religious state of affairs in the eastern empire than might have been expected. The Goths had indeed a massive presence in the Constantinopolitan court and not the least amongst the rank and file of the army, but despite their constant shifting between being identified with the enemy from without and enjoying spells of political and military eminence from within, the situation remained unresolved. Their Arianism, it seems, was conveniently linked by the Romans with their ethnic attributes and thus came to be acknowledged as part and parcel of the Goths' presupposed innate "barbarism".⁴⁰⁹ When the Goths moved westwards, their "barbarism" (including the heretical component) could have served as a useful tool in the hands of eastern propagandists in their endeavours to blacken the western empire and minimise, if not eliminate altogether, the salient prestige and durable influence of the Papacy. The weightiness of the fears which the presence of the Goths on eastern Roman soil seems to have provoked, can be deduced from Sozomen's narrative. Sozomen was writing after the Goths had moved westwards and yet, our ecclesiastical historian seems quite preoccupied with their presence.⁴¹⁰

Although there was no further 'Gothic problem' in the east, and the Gothic threat had indeed ceased there, its impact was apparently deeply entrenched in the recollection of easterners. Moreover, it is not unlikely that certain Constantinopolitan circles were haunted by thoughts about a scenario whereby the eastern empire might be hearing again in due course from the pugnacious Goths. There may have been a concern that the Germanic warriors might consequently be teaming up with their new allies (or rather, their newly acquired western vassals) forming a coalition with which a military clash would be, eventually inevitable. It is however not unlikely that those ideas may have been nothing more than fearmongering, proliferated mainly to demonise the west, not failing to remind the readers that paganism

⁴⁰⁸ Soz. VII, 25, 3.

⁴⁰⁹ The image of the Goths in the east is typically reflected in the writings of Synesius (ca. 373-414?) a native of the Libyan *pentapolis* who spent nearly three years in Constantinople (ca. 399-402). Synesius became later bishop of Ptolemais in Libya (410). See: T. Schmit, *Die Bekehrung des Synesius von Kyrene* (Munich 2001), pp. 282-288. Likewise, the foreign ethnicity of the Goths is associated with the identity of the perpetrators of riots in John Chrysostom's homilies *De Statuis* (delivered in 387, i.e. from his Antiochene period as presbyter, before he was chosen to serve as bishop of Constantinople). Chrysostom conflates the ethnicity of the Goths (to whom he refers as 'people of foreign race') with their heresy which, according to his interpretation, is the key for their rebelliousness. See: PG 49, col 37. For a comprehensive discussion of the image of the Goths in the Roman empire under the Theodosian dynasty, see: S. Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique: Les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du Ve au VIIe siècle* (2nd ed. Paris 2011), pp. 43-112.

⁴¹⁰ Soz. II, 6; VI, 37; VII, 17.

was still prominent in Rome, suggesting thus that the capital of the West had incurred Divine wrath⁴¹¹

The presence of Arian sectarianism was well noticed also elsewhere throughout the eastern empire and its existence was by no means limited to the Gothic ambience or to the Constantinopolitan scene. The Arians were still quite active in Egypt round 412⁴¹², and are reported to have been pretty conspicuous in Antioch at about the same time or shortly thereafter.⁴¹³ However, the western empire was still the main battleground against Arianism. The Latin west was indeed crumbling but despite the political chaos under Honorius (d. 423), which was intensified after the downfall of Stilicho and later during the reign of Valentinian III (d. 455)⁴¹⁴, and regardless of the dangerous proximity to the Vandals and the Huns - the prestige of Old Rome did not wane.⁴¹⁵ Sozomen's stance towards the west seems to reflect not only an Early Byzantine 'patriotism' (opportunistic or not). It also reveals the growing degree of alienation between the two *partes imperii*. This is perhaps best illustrated in Sozomen's account of Attalus's abortive *coup* against Honorius, the emperor of the west, in 409.⁴¹⁶ This account was fortunately included in the surviving portion of the (apparently) unfinished ninth book of Sozomen's work, and Sozomen's report reveals also some old Roman quasi-republican "local-patriotic" overtones which were possibly aired and used liberally in order to spice-up the concoction of ambition and heresy, distinctively flavouring Sozomen's narrative. Sozomen concluded his account of that debacle by an expression of unconcealed *Schadenfreude* towards the alliance of the heterodox Arians with the pagans.⁴¹⁷

Sozomen's apparent antipathy towards the westerners (despite his admiration for the legacy of western unswerving Catholicism) does not spare the Catholics either, who were left to the

⁴¹¹ Soz. IX, 6, 1-5.

⁴¹² Syn. Ep. 128

⁴¹³ Theod. HE, V, 35.

⁴¹⁴ See: F. Elia, *Valentiniano III* (Catania 1999), pp. 3-90.

⁴¹⁵ Leo the Great, *Sermo* 82.

⁴¹⁶ Soz. IX, 8. Attalus was a son of a pagan *praefectus urbi* of Phrygian origin, who collaborated with the Goth Alaric in his attempt to accelerate the enfeeblement of the disintegrating western empire, its emperor Honorius and his court in Ravenna. Alaric attempted to gain control over the Apennine peninsula by creating a renegade kingdom in central Italy with Rome as its capital and Priscus Attalus as its puppet-sovereign. See: J. Herrin, *Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible of Europe* (London 2020), pp. 20-22. Sozomen reports (Soz. IX,8,2) that shortly after his usurpation, Attalus convened the Roman senate and delivered a grand address with ornate rendition, in which he promised to restore the old privileges of the house to their previous glory and to "re-subjugate Egypt and all the provinces of the East to the rule of the Italians" (καὶ τὴν Αἴγυπτον καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν πρὸς ἑω ἀρχομένην ὑπὲρκοον Ἰταλοῖς ποιήσειν). It is worth noting that Sozomen refers to the western Romans as "Italians". By what seems to be an intentional belittling of the westerners' Roman-ness (as opposed to the 'genuine' Roman identity of the East, as Sozomen implicitly suggests), our ecclesiastical historian appears to convey here certain condescending views towards the West, which may have been in circulation perhaps due to strong Constantinopolitan court propaganda. On the question of the Roman self-identity of Constantinople and the Eastern Empire, see: A. Kaldellis, 'From Rome to New Rome, from Empire to Nation-State: Reopening the Question of Byzantium's Roman Identity', in: L. Grig and G. Kelly (eds.), *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2012), pp.387-404 (esp. p. 399 ff.)

⁴¹⁷ Soz. IX, 9, 1. The pagan presence in the West, as Sozomen's narrative obliquely suggest, was still a power to be reckoned with towards the end of the fourth century and further on. On the problems of assessing this presence see: M. Piechocka-Kłós, 'Chrześcijanizm i poganizm. Rozkład sił w senacie rzymskim pod koniec IV wieku', *Studia Warminskie* 50 (2013), pp. 283-293.

mercy of the barbarians, in this manner stimulating his readers' imagination to contrast the contemporary subservient dwellers of the city of Rome with the valiant inhabitants of the same city in the past. Having described the sack of Rome in 410 by the frustrated Alaric, Sozomen points out that only Alaric's respect for the Apostle Peter saved the spacious church around the apostle's tomb from being plundered by the troops of the Gothic warlord. Highlighting the fact that the westerners (and their most symbolic shrine), actually owed their survival not only to St Peter, but also to the quirky piety of a barbarian, Sozomen then brings his report to a close with a somewhat sarcastic tone:

*He was in fact responsible for not destroying Rome completely. Those who were saved there (they were indeed many), resettled the city*⁴¹⁸

The dwindling fortunes of the Arian church were not the sole source of concern for the defenders of Nicene orthodoxy. Whilst Arianism in the east was becoming a beleaguered denomination, another ecclesiastical crisis was already looming there: the Origenist controversy.

C. Sozomen between Intellectualism and *Realpolitik*: The First Origenist Controversy and the Downfall of John Chrysostom.

Whatever an elaborate attempt to date the composition of Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* may eventually yield, it is hardly disputable that his personal experience of the Arian controversy could have only been limited to something very oblique in nature. Early Byzantine Palestine is not known to have been a major stronghold of the Arian movement,⁴¹⁹ yet the Arian crisis did impinge on the region nevertheless.⁴²⁰ Other heresies also flourished in Palestine all through the fourth century according to the Palestinian-born Epiphanius of Salamis (315-403), who industriously recorded these sects and their teachings in his 'chest of remedies', the *Panarion*.⁴²¹ However, nothing seems to challenge the assumption that Nicene orthodoxy was successfully established amongst the Christian population of Palestine roughly by the 380's.⁴²²

⁴¹⁸ Soz. IX, 9, 5.

⁴¹⁹ Sozomen, as ever, appears to be very keen to single out his native Palestine (to which he refers as the 'Church of Jerusalem', (a very revealing political statement, given the fact that the dispute between the churches of Caesarea and Jerusalem over hegemony in Palestine was not settled as yet) as an immaculate region which had never succumbed to Arianism. See: Soz. VII, 2, 2.

⁴²⁰ See: C. Dauphin: *La Palestine byzantine: Peuplement et Populations*, (Oxford 1998), vol. I, pp. 249-254.

⁴²¹ See: F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis Book I (Sects 1-46)* (Leiden 1997), pp XVI-XXVII. Sozomen, in his summery of Epiphanius's career (Soz., VI, 32, 3) which took that monk from the monasteries of Palestine to the episcopal see of Salamis (Constantia) in Cyprus, refers to that indefatigable warrior against heresy as having been 'educated by the best monks' (ὕπὸ μοναχοῖς ἀρίστοις παιδευθεῖς). See: A.S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cyprus: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2016), pp. 56-62. Jacobs seems to have missed the point when he refers to Sozomen's portrayal of Epiphanius as "generally quite flattering" (Jacobs, *op. cit.* p. 59). Sozomen apparently uses Epiphanius's reputation beyond his native Palestine (i.e. in Egypt where he had spent several years of ascetic training, and in Cyprus where he eventually became of bishop) to highlight the prestige of our ecclesiastical historian's own birthplace.

⁴²² Soz. II, 2 and 4; V, 15; For discussion see: E.I. Argov, 'A Church historian in search of an Identity: Aspects of Early Byzantine Palestine in Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica*' *ZAC* 9 (2005), pp. 367-396.

By contrast, what modern scholarship has named the 'Origenist Controversy' had reached its peak in a period which coincides with Sozomen's early adulthood. Moreover, its consequences had strong repercussions throughout Sozomen's later lifetime (and beyond), and particularly so in his chosen place of residence - Constantinople.

The Origenist controversy, unlike the Arian crisis, did not stem from an act of formal endorsement of a doctrine either by the church, or by the state. In fact, the circumstances of its outbreak, in so far as the sources can be trusted, appear to be entirely a result of a strictly defined clash of personalities over prestige and authority, yet its impact had shattered the Christian Church all over. So much so, that its reverberations are still felt in Photius's *Bibliotheca*, written in the ninth century.⁴²³ As such, the arbitrary nature of the events which provoked it remains the primary concern of any relevant scholarship on the subject.⁴²⁴ It thus becomes impossible to overemphasise the importance of the drastic changes which the Orthodox Church was undergoing under the house of Theodosius as a constituent experience for educated Christians.

Many of these, like Sozomen, as well as his contemporaries Socrates of Constantinople and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, could as it were, neither lean on their Christian up-bringing, nor rely on their Hellenic *paideia* (which was coming to be mistrusted and castigated almost all over the Christian empire⁴²⁵) in the face of a highly politicised church, patently governed by a most un-evangelical pursuit of personal ambition, and doctrinally guided more often than ever before along controversial lines. Confusion was the inevitable result. Sincere seekers for truth were confronted by the transformation of their beliefs into a negotiable political commodity. The short-lived dichotomy between the "desert" and the "city", which was meant in the first place to re-vitalise the 'spiritual' church as opposed to the politicised 'secular' one, was significantly reduced in this era, as soon as the ecclesiastical authorities discovered together with the lay authorities the potential of the monastic movement as a source for the recruitment of future leadership. The two ecclesiastical planets could no longer spin in separate orbits. If we accept this premise, it will be self-evident that a significant part of our survey should be dedicated to the boundaries (if there really were any) between office holders and functionaries in the 'secular' church on the one hand, and monks, solitaries and recluses on the other at the turn of the fifth century.⁴²⁶

Sozomen grew up into a late antique intellectual world which still had to accommodate an ideal of unity in the face of countervailing social, ethnic and religious pressures, despite (or, perhaps, thanks to) the relatively limited scale of civil conflict in the fourth century.⁴²⁷ In the

⁴²³ See: J. Naumowicz, *Wczesnochrześcijańscy pisarze aleksandryjscy w Bibliotece Focjusza*, (Wrocław 1995), pp. 52-62.

⁴²⁴ For a discussion of the origins of the controversy see: E.A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ 1992), pp. 43-84. Note also: K. Banev, *Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy: Rhetoric and Power* (Oxford 2015), pp. 13-18.

⁴²⁵ See: Av. Cameron, *CAH* 13, pp. 673-679.

⁴²⁶ For a study which examines this phenomenon by focusing on fourth (and fifth) century bishops with monastic background in the east, see: A. Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA 2004), pp.13-34 and pp. 178-191.

⁴²⁷ This assumption is of course debatable, but there seems to be a good reason to agree on this issue with Philip Rousseau's carefully balanced discussion *ad rem*. See: P. Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries* (Harlow 2002), pp. 220-222. Rousseau brings home the growing differences between East and West and the main conflicting political and religious strands within each *pars imperii*. Rousseau

political reality under the Theodosian dynasty, however, the church was coping with blatant internal contradictions and diametrically-opposed interests.

The Origenist controversy can be regarded as the fruit of this development (or degeneration), being entirely (as far as the surviving evidence allows us to form an opinion) typified by a clash of personalities which eventually got out of hand, stirring up insoluble doctrinal and political divisions. Both secular and ecclesiastical authorities proved unable even to contain, let alone to terminate, this conflict until the ultimate and unequivocal condemnation of Origenism by the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553 under Justinian I (527-565).

The relevance of the Origenist controversy for Sozomen's background goes beyond its chronological overlap with our historian's lifetime. This controversy was, like Sozomen himself, deeply rooted in the holy landscape of Palestine ⁴²⁸, from where it spread almost immediately to Egypt and Constantinople, with echoes as far as Rome. Thus, it does not seem totally inappropriate to assume, that as a native Palestinian, Sozomen may have been an eye-witness of, or, at any rate, fairly closely in touch with, some of the ensuing events and, quite likely, with some of those who had been actively involved in them.⁴²⁹ Sympathies and antipathies, which could have been formed and nurtured in his early Palestinian years, may have travelled with the *émigré* Sozomen himself to his adopted home in Constantinople, where the aftermath of the John Chrysostom affair was still being played out in the 420's and 430's, as can be adduced from Socrates's *HE*.⁴³⁰ Origen and the Origenists had notably occupied a distinctive place also in Sozomen's main source namely, Socrates's *HE* which seems altogether more remarkable, given the latter's exclusively Constantinopolitan background.⁴³¹

Thus, a close look at the circumstances of this controversy and its ramifications can be of considerable help in our attempt to draw a mental, and indeed, intellectual, map of Sozomen's world. Its sad aftermath, could be regarded in hindsight as an anticipation of another sad affair connected with the Constantinopolitan episcopal throne, namely the downfall of Nestorius of Germanicia (386- ca. 450), bishop of Constantinople from 428 to 431 who, although not documented in Sozomen's surviving text, must have been on his mind when he was writing and given the fact that Sozomen promises in the dedication to Theodosius II to bring his *HE* to a close at this emperor's seventeenth consulate (i.e. in 439 ⁴³²), it is not

convincingly points out that Constantine's successors' responses to the challenges set by his legacy, unwittingly reinforced a 'confident self-identity' (p. 221) in the invasions-ridden West, as well as in North Africa. Rousseau also implies that this created a political and cultural chain-reaction whereby the growing political differences accelerated in turn the self-distancing of the East from the rest of the empire. Rousseau stresses that this process took place whilst on one hand, ideological commitment to imperial unity was still officially maintained but on the other hand - the contradictory nature of the politico-cultural circumstances "was not easy to reconcile with a uniformity of theological opinion throughout the empire." Rousseau thus highlights very effectively the sources of the profound confusion which later (i.e. at the turn of the fifth century) became deeply ingrained in Sozomen's generation and seems to have shaped his historical perspectives.

⁴²⁸ See: H. Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2008) pp. 212 ff.

⁴²⁹ See e.g. Soz. VIII, 12, 6.

⁴³⁰ Soc, VI, 2-4; VI, 7. For a recent analysis of Socrates's and Sozomen's accounts of John Chrysostom in their respective ecclesiastical histories, see now: S. Bralewski, *Symmachia cesarstwa rzymskiego z Bogiem chrześcijan (IV-VI wiek)* (Lodz 2019), pp. 179-198.

⁴³¹ See: B. Neuschafer, 'Zur Bewertung des Origenes bei Sokrates' in B. Babler and H.-G. Nesselrath (eds), *Die Welt des Sokrates von Konstantinople* (Munich 2001), pp. 71-95.

⁴³² Soz. *Dedicatio*, 19.

inconceivable that Sozomen had intended in the first place to cover the ecumenical council of Ephesus I (431) and the deposition of Nestorius. The end of both men's respective episcopates (and, perhaps, their respective struggles with the bishops of Alexandria, Theophilus and his successor and nephew Cyril⁴³³) seems to have raised some serious questions about the role of intellectual prowess in Christian and particularly, episcopal leadership and the ways in which Christian intellectualism could or could not be squared with contemporary ecclesiastical *realpolitik* vis-à-vis the secular authorities.⁴³⁴

Origen, the prolific theologian and biblical exegete (185-254) whose teachings concerning the Godhead were reportedly the cause of the crisis, was himself a native of Alexandria who was forced to leave his homeland due to soured personal relations with his ecclesiastical superior, Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria.⁴³⁵ This fact, apart from the content of Origen's teachings, may have added a negative dimension to his figure in the eyes of later critics - many of them being themselves the incumbents of episcopal sees and thus, particularly preoccupied with questions of church hierarchy, jurisdiction and episcopal authority. Origen was forced to seek refuge from Demetrius's fury in Caesarea Maritima in Palestine (ca. 232), following his ordination as presbyter by Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctistus, bishop of Caesarea, which took place without the blessing of the Alexandrian bishop. The rest of Origen's life was spent in Caesarea where he was appointed to the headship of the newly-founded local library, which he passed on to his disciple Pamphilus (martyred in 310). As was mentioned in the previous chapter, this was the very same Pamphilus who later on became the teacher and mentor of Eusebius of Caesarea, the inventor of ecclesiastical historiography.⁴³⁶

One of Origen's most influential contributions to Christian thought was his theory of the economy of the Godhead. Origen went on from this theory, to develop a soteriological cosmic system, based on Christ's relation to the Father on one hand and to mankind, angels and demons on the other. It was presented and discussed in his treatise *De Principiis*, which may have been written ca. 218-225 and has survived mainly in its translation into Latin⁴³⁷ by Rufinus of Aquileia, one of the main protagonists of the Origenist controversy who was also

⁴³³ On Cyril of Alexandria's conflicts with the see of Constantinople see: J. A. McGuckin, On his *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy - Its History, Theology and Texts* (Leiden 1994), pp. 1-125. On Cyril's involvement in the Christological controversy with focus on the *Theotokos* controversy, see: E. Artemi, 'The Christological controversy between Nestorius of Constantinople and Cyril of Alexandria' *Vox Patrum* 57 (2012), pp. 35-51. On Socrates's account of the *Theotokos* controversy. See: S. Bralewski, 'Mądrość kontra ignorancja – spór o tytuł Theotokos w świetle "Historii kościelnej" Sokratesa z Konstantynopola', *Vox Patrum* 80 (2021), pp. 177-196.

⁴³⁴ See: G. Bevan, *The New Judas: The Case of Nestorius in Ecclesiastical Politics, 428- 451 CE* (Leuven 2016), pp. 186-204.

⁴³⁵ Eus. *HE* VI, 26.

⁴³⁶ Eus. *De Martyribus Palaestinae* (L) 11, 24. Photius, *Bibliotheca Cod. 118*: See : M. S. Shin, *The Great Persecution: A Historical Re-Examination* (Turnhout 2018), p. 174 ff.

⁴³⁷ The Greek original has perished. The only surviving portion has been preserved in the *Philocalia*, an anthology of selected texts by Origen which were collected by two of the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. The bits which have come down to us through this channel are chapters III, 1 (on free will) and IV, (on Biblical exegesis). The reliability of the transmission of Origen's *Urtext* (about which already Rufinus of Aquileia had considerable reservations), as well as the authenticity of the material preserved in the *philocalia* remains debatable. See: H. Crouzel, *Origene* (Paris 1985), cap. 2. See also: R.E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church* (Oxford 2010), pp. 127-144.

the translator of Eusebius's *HE* into Latin and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, an ecclesiastical historian in his own right.

Even an attempt to summarise Origen's theological system can end in a long excursus which might divert us considerably from our present objective, namely, the controversy over Origen's teachings which had stirred tremendous havoc in the Christian Church for over two centuries. Suffice it, for clarity's sake, to sketch a basic outline of Origen's relevant theological tenets according to Sozomen's generation's "orthodox" understanding of them - as was indeed done by no other than Jerome, a staunch anti-Origenist.⁴³⁸

According to Jerome's taxonomy, Origen's main theological errors were as follows:

- 1) *The Son answers to the Father within the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is subordinate to both.*⁴³⁹
- 2) *Man is originally a rational creature who has fallen to his present bodily existence from a previous celestial one, in which (according to Origen's reading of Genesis, III, 21: "And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them") he did not possess any sort of corporeality.*⁴⁴⁰
- 3) *Satan is not pre-destined for doom and had not been denied salvation initially. In fact (Origen maintains), the devil can be restored to his previous glory and regain his place amongst God's orders of angels.*⁴⁴¹
- 4) *Demons can be turned into humans and vice versa.*⁴⁴²
- 5) *Human temporal existence is based on finite, exhaustible substance. Therefore, the Resurrection in the world to come cannot bear the same ontological characteristics as in this world, and thus, is bound to be free of any conceivable materiality.*⁴⁴³
- 6) *There may have been a succession of worlds in the past, and there might likewise be more in the future.*
- 7) *The fire of hell burns nowhere but in our tormented mind, dogged by mental acknowledgement of our sins and haunted by our ensuing sense of guilt.*⁴⁴⁴
- 8) *Christ may return and suffer again, and this time, for the salvation of the demons.*⁴⁴⁵

⁴³⁸ See: K. Banev, *Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy: Rhetoric and Power* (Oxford 2015), pp. 72-80.

⁴³⁹ Jerome, *Ep.* 124,2,13 (=CSEL 56, 97-98,115-116); *Id. Contra Ioannem Hierosolymitanum* 7 (=PL 23, 376).

⁴⁴⁰ *Id.*, *Ep.* 124,3,9 (=CSEL 56,98-99, 108-109); *Cont. Ioann.* 7 (=PL 23,376). *Id.*, *Ep.* 124, 3 (=CSEL 56, 98); *Cont. Ioann.* 7 (=PL 23,76).

⁴⁴¹ *Id.*, *Ep.* 124,3 (=CSEL 56, 98); *Cont. Ioann.* 7 (=PL 23,76).

⁴⁴² *Id.* *Ep.* 124,3 10 (=CSEL 56,99, 111-112).

⁴⁴³ *Id.* *Ep.* 124,4; 5; 9; 10 (=CSEL 56,99-100,101-102,109-110,111-112).

⁴⁴⁴ *Id.* *Ep.* 124,7 (= CSEL 56,104- 105).

⁴⁴⁵ *Id.* *Ep.* 124, 12 (= CSEL 56, 114-115).

- 9) *The allegorical exegesis of Scripture is more desirable than the literal, as it is designed for the spiritually advanced.*⁴⁴⁶

On the face of it, some of Origen's ideas seem akin to certain Arian doctrines (e.g. his view of inter-Trinitarian relations). Nonetheless, this in itself can hardly be accepted as a factor of substantial importance in the outbreak of the Origenist controversy, which indeed coincided with the decline of the Arian movement.⁴⁴⁷ The essence of the beginnings of this controversy appears yet more elusive if we bear in mind that Origen in fact enjoyed a respectable position (often on the verge of veneration) amongst leading fourth-century theologians and Christian thinkers, such as the first (strictly speaking) monk ever to become a prolific writer, Evagrius Ponticus (346- 399). Evagrius was, as his sobriquet reveals, a native of Pontus in northern Asia Minor, who joined (ca. 382) the monks of Nitria (present day Wadi al- Natrun) in the Egyptian desert. He was soon to become the exponent of Origenist thought (significantly modified by his own original views) amongst the venerable monks of Nitria. In Alexandria itself, the erudite theologian Didymus "the blind" (ca. 313-398), who became the head of the very same institution in which Origen had first made a name for himself as a teacher in his own day - i.e. the Alexandrian catechetical school - had acquired a reputation, amongst other things, due to his profound knowledge of Origen's teachings. These he enthusiastically endeavoured to pass down to promising students amongst the many who came to sit at his feet. Amongst these were two natives of the region of Aquileia in Northern Italy. These two were also old schoolmates who were educated together in Rome: Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus; 347-420) of Strido (in present day Croatia) and Tyrannius Rufinus (345-411) of Julia Concordia (present day Concordia Saggitaria near Aquileia in Italy), whose ways were later to part. The former was to become a staunch opponent of the Origenist legacy, whereas the latter remained devotedly loyal to it and was consequently forced to pay a high personal price for this unshakeable loyalty.

The teachings of Origen thus enjoyed a considerable period of efflorescence on the fertile intellectual soil of Alexandria, where they seem to have turned their author into a Christian "philosophers' philosopher", or, in other words, a favourite subject of study for the *crème de la crème* amongst the students of Christian theology who came to Egypt to round off their higher education. However, the thriving Origenist renaissance occurred at a time in which the church was gradually turning a cold shoulder to the theological ivory tower, which may have helped to make the defeated Arians, Homoians and Eunomians even less popular.⁴⁴⁸ The unabashed

⁴⁴⁶ Id. *Cont. Ioann.* 7 (= PL 23, col. 376).

⁴⁴⁷ This seems to be made clear again due to Jerome's insight (regardless of its apparent rhetorical edge) who speaks about 'recent' past times with unconcealed triumphalism, as is explicitly reflected in *Eo tempore quo totum orientem (excepto papa Athanasio atque Paulino) Arianorum haeresis possidebat* (ibid., Col. 358). On Jerome's observations on the phases in the development of Arianism and their use in establishing its chronology, see: A. Canellis, 'Saint Jerome et les ariens', in: J.-M. Poinot (ed.) *Les chrétiens face à leur adversaires dans l'occident latin au IV^e siècle* (Rouen 2001), pp. 143-194 (esp. p. 169 ff.).

⁴⁴⁸ See however: S. Rubenson, 'Why Did the Origenist Controversy Begin? Re-thinking the Standard Narratives', *Modern Theology* 38 (2022), pp. 318-337. Rubenson offers a revisionist analysis, arguing that: "... early monasticism was deeply rooted in the classical school tradition using the same pedagogical methods and largely adhering to the same ideals and goals. The transformation of this tradition had started with Origen and was developed within early monasticism by the use of his and his successors texts and their methods and examples." (op. cit p. 337).

(if not arrogant) intellectualism of these movements offended not only the uneducated or semi-educated masses but even, on a certain occasion, emperor Constantius II, as Sozomen himself reports.⁴⁴⁹

The victorious Nicene Church, as all the fifth century ecclesiastical historians relate, was preoccupied with asserting its role as a guarantor of an alliance between the Christians and their God.⁴⁵⁰ Defending this alliance was now emerging as inextricably associated with the protection of orthodoxy and thus the Catholic (Nicene) Church became strongly engaged in drawing the boundaries of Orthodoxy as a predominantly instrumental concept in the realisation of the aforementioned alliance not only with God but also with the imperial court in Constantinople, and turned to the pursuit of *realpolitik* which would ensure at the same time, an efficient channel of communication with the masses whom she never neglected to take on board.⁴⁵¹ The monastic movement was going from strength to strength in this period. The monks were moving rapidly towards the forefront of church politics and, before long, had become influential mainly due to their position at the heart of Christian society. Monks

⁴⁴⁹ Soz. IV, 14, 1-3.

⁴⁵⁰ On the development of a Nicene 'theology of triumphalism' in connection with the alliance ("symmachia") between God and the Christians from Eusebius to the fifth century ecclesiastical historians, see: S. Bralewski, *Symmachia cesarstwa rzymskiego z Bogiem chrześcijan (IV-VI wiek)* (Łódź 2019), pp. 112-128.

⁴⁵¹ These parallel challenges which the catholic (i.e. Nicene) church had to face at the turn of the fifth century namely the secular authority on one hand and popular demands, were recaptured by Sozomen when, in keeping with the Eusebian model (following it as a strategy of authoritative narrative), he included in his account of the final deposition and banishment of John Chrysostom (in 404) a letter sent to the exiled bishop of Constantinople by Pope Innocent I (pontificate: 401-417), followed by another letter from the same Pope to the Constantinopolitan Church addressing it to the clergy as well as the laity. Sozomen remarks in his short introduction to the letters concerned (*HE*, VIII, 1), that the Pontiff was 'outraged' (ἐχάλεπαινε) and that he 'condemned' (κατέγνω) the actions against John Chrysostom. Sozomen goes on to say that Innocent was, at that particular point, 'keen to convene an ecumenical council' (οἰκοθμενικὴν δὲ συναγεῖραι σύνοδον σποθδάζων). Sozomen lets the readers to figure out the relevance of the Pope's hopes by themselves, as he does not elaborate any further on this. Sozomen does, however, add here a rare note in the first person whereby he informs the readers that: 'I found these two letters in Latin and reproduced them' (ἐκατέραν τε ἐπιστολὴν ἐκ τῆς Ῥωμαίων φωνῆς εὐρὼν παρεθέμην). Contrary to what could have been expected at this stage, the first letter, addressed to John Chrysostom, does not focus on the Pope's indignation. Rather, Innocent advises in a measured tone to the deposed Bishop to be steadfast and endure his ordeal with patience (ὑπομονή), echoing the NT (e.g. Romans 2,7; Hebrews 12,1-2; 2 Timothy 2, 12; James, 1, 3). On the other hand, Innocent's second letter is addressed not only to all the Constantinopolitan hierarchy but also to all the laity of the Church of Constantinople "under bishop John" (τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον Ἰωάννην) which already appears to reflect the Pope's rejection of Chrysostom's deposition and indeed, the Pontiff's refusal to recognise his successor, Arsacius of Tarsus (d. 405), whom Innocent deemed an intruder. In this letter, the Pope's tone is in sharp contrast with his tempered language in the letter to Chrysostom. Innocent refers to Chrysostom's predicament as a 'scene of evil' (τὴν σκηνὴν τῶν κακῶν) and although the Pontiff does recommend patience here as well, he nonetheless promises rather incisively: 'Our God will shortly put an end to such tribulations and they will eventually tend to your profit' (Δώσει γὰρ ἐν τάχει ὁ ἡμέτερος θεὸς ταῖς τοσαύταις θλίψεσι τέλος καὶ ταῦτα συνοίσει ὑπεννηοχέειν). The difference in tone suggests that Sozomen seems to have wanted, as it were, to highlight the Pope's wish not to alienate the imperial court in his letter to a deposed bishop who was in reality an imperial appointee, yet at the same time, the Pontiff found it essential to make it clear to the frustrated hierarchy and the angry laity of Constantinople, that he was not condoning the injustice which their banished bishop had suffered, having been deposed without due process, and that John's detractors will be punished while those who remained loyal to him will be rewarded. For further discussion see: S. Bralewski, *Obraz papieżstwa w historiografii wczesnego Bizancjum* (Łódź 2006), pp. 209-220.

assumed the role of a pivotal link and indeed, a useful mediator between rich and poor, city dwellers and peasants, the elite and the humbler strata of the later Roman society. The secular power of the bishop was equally becoming a key feature in the perception of this position, and the effective exercise of this power (from the imperial court's point of view that is) had manifestly become a prerequisite in the selection process of appropriate incumbents of major Episcopal thrones. Thus, the Milanese crowd who vehemently demanded in 373 (or 374) the appointment of the yet-unbaptised governor Ambrose, the *consularis* of Aemilia Liguria, as their bishop, signifies, not quite surprisingly, the enhancement of a 'secular' transformation of the episcopate, mirrored through the hagiographic imagery of Ambrose's biographer, Paulinus of Milan, an older contemporary of Sozomen (*floruit*: early fifth century).⁴⁵² The western precedent must have helped to pave the way for similar attitudes towards the episcopate in the east. Thus, about a decade later, there was no hindrance to elevating to the see of Constantinople under Theodosius I a high-ranking official at the imperial service, such as Nectarius, (d. 397), a *praetor* who, like Ambrose, had not even been baptised before being chosen for the episcopate.⁴⁵³

The influence of this phenomenon on the election of John Chrysostom to the see of Constantinople is recognisable despite the difference in circumstances and protagonists. The election of John, an Antiochene monk who, according to Sozomen was "of noble stock, exemplary conduct, a terrific orator and debater"⁴⁵⁴ as Nectarius's successor in 397, indicates, amongst other things the growing prestige of the monastic movement at court and its essential role in the tightening of the ties between Crown and Altar.⁴⁵⁵ This entailed a process of re-adjustment of ecclesiastical governance. More specifically, the church could no longer simply dictate the religious agenda without taking pressing political needs on board whilst conducting debates on doctrine. The ecclesiastical leadership had recognised the essential need for *realpolitik*. Now it had to adjust its strategies accordingly. Mission and Doctrine were of course still perceived as revealed from Heaven by Christ and passed down through the apostolic heritage. But the constraints of mundane politics generated a vital necessity to identify public sentiments, to keep a sensitive finger on the unruly pulse of popular opinion, and to canalise these energies in a useful fashion. Such a situation was bound to affect also the self-esteem of the hierarchy. In fact, since Doctrine (i.e. the Truth) was acknowledged virtually as negotiable and since the secular power was in most cases benevolent and attentive, the prestige of ecclesiastical conciliar *fora* could reach an unprecedented apex which is reflected both in the frequency of such gatherings and the nature of the decisions taken by them. Sozomen's narrative documents internal divisions as characteristic of heterodoxies while the Catholic Church progresses not the least due to its unifying, all-encompassing

⁴⁵² See: Paulinus of Milan, *Vita S. Ambrosii*, 7-8. For a discussion, see: N.B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, CA 1994), pp. 37-52.

⁴⁵³ McLynn draws our attention to the fact that the church had barred ex-magistrates from the priesthood in a decree, issued at about the same time which saw Ambrose's elevation to the see of Milan. See: *Ibid.* p. 45 n. 168.

⁴⁵⁴ Soz. *HE* VIII, 2,2. cf. Soc. V, 8, 12. Socrates's account of Nectarius's election, unlike Sozomen's, is laconic and the emperor's involvement in the process is minimised. However, he refers to Nectarius's personal character which he describes as 'gentle' (ἐπιεικής). Sozomen, on the other hand is highlighting in a more detailed narrative, the centrality of Theodosius I's active role in the election including his insistence on his choice 'despite being opposed by many clerics' (πολλῶν ἱερέων ἀντιτείνοντων).

⁴⁵⁵ See: J.M. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley 2005), pp. 151-196

universal mission.⁴⁵⁶ Sozomen's perspective thus is seemingly, that of a dichotomy between intellectualism as reflected through the endless heretical divisions that follow the heretics' endless theological precisions and what appears to be a down-to-earth political approach of Nicene Catholicism under Theodosius I.⁴⁵⁷ Our period of seventy years not only begins and ends in Ecumenical Councils, it also saw two others in the intervening years; Ephesus I (431) and Ephesus II (449).⁴⁵⁸ The latter's claim to Ecumenical status, it should be stressed, was contested almost upon convocation⁴⁵⁹. Both the Council of Ephesus I and the synod of Ephesus II had triggered heightened atmosphere, civil unrest and violence.⁴⁶⁰ In addition to the Councils, the first half of the fifth century also saw the rise of local synods to an influential position, which they had not enjoyed to a similar extent in the fourth century. Two good examples can be observed. In the east, "the synod of the oak" in 403, which was summoned to

⁴⁵⁶ Cf. Soz. VII, 17-18 and Ibid. 20.

⁴⁵⁷ Soz. VII, 20, 1: Sozomen begins by reporting the progress that the Catholic Church had made but his narrative does not appear to be in any way solemn or jubilant. Neither does it reflect any triumphalism. There is no attempt to offer any theological interpretation. Sozomen points out that this progress had been achieved above all at the expanse of the pagans and chiefly through imperial intervention, following Theodosius I's decision to close off and eventually to demolish pagan places of worship. Sozomen's narrative retains a down-to-earth tone while giving an account of this process of Christianisation in *realpolitik* terms i.e. the instrumentality of secular power in the Church's growth: 'deprived of their houses of prayer, the pagans got accustomed, with time, to frequent the churches' (Οἱ δὲ ἀπορία εὐκτηρίων οἶκον τῷ χρόνῳ προσειθίσθησαν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις φοιτᾶν).

⁴⁵⁸ For the proceedings of the five first ecumenical councils, see: E. Schwartz (ed.) *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum (=ACO)*: (Straßburg 1914; Berlin-Leipzig (1922-1940) supplemented by J. Flemming (ed.) *Akten des ephesischen Synode von Jahre 449 (syr.) mit O. Hoffmanns deutsche iibersetzung und seiner Anmerkungen. Abhandl. der Kaiserl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften In Göttingen, philosophisch-historische Klasse 15* (Berlin 1917). For Ephesus I see: L.D. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN 1990), pp. 134-169. For Ephesus II see: S. Acerbi, *Conflitti politico-ecclesiastici in oriente nella tarda antichità: Il Concilio di Efeso (449)* (Madrid 2001), pp. 109-148). Note also: M.S. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils AD 431-451* (Oxford 2018), pp. 35-87 and pp. 158-170.

⁴⁵⁹ Ephesus II was summoned in 449 by Theodosius II in despite strong ecclesiastical opposition, not the least from Pope Leo I "The Great" and bishop Flavian of Constantinople. The main objective of Ephesus II's convocation was to address the doctrinal questions which arose following the synodical action, taken in 448 against the influential miaphysite archimandrite Eutyches, whose growing prestige in the imperial court began to be regarded as a threat among adherents of Nicene orthodoxy. The sessions of Ephesus II were presided over by bishop Dioscorus of Alexandria, himself a strong miaphysite, who guided the deliberations with fierce determination to advance his doctrinal (and political) goals. Thus, the militant bishop of Alexandria managed an impressive feat: Eutyches was reinstated, Flavian, in turn, was deposed and most importantly, the *legati* whom Leo I had dispatched to Ephesus with his unequivocal repudiation of miaphysitism - known as the *tomus* - were unprecedentedly humiliated, thus leading the Church of Rome and the churches of the east to a crisis which ended only when the Council of Chalcedon in 451 declared all the resolutions of Ephesus II null and void. Leo commented on the events of Ephesus II in a letter to Theodosius II's sister, (now empress) Pulcheria who, despite her brother's own miaphysite sympathies remained all along staunchly loyal to Nicene orthodoxy, referring to the proceedings of Ephesus II as *non iudicium sed latrocinium* (Leo, *Ep.* 95= *ACO* II, 4, pp. 50-51). Henceforth Ephesus II was nicknamed by supporters of Nicene orthodoxy, 'the robber synod'. On Pope Leo I in the aftermath of Ephesus II, see: S. Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden 2012), pp. 259-283.

⁴⁶⁰ See: T.E. Gregory, *Vox Populi: Violence and Popular Involvement in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century A.D.* (Columbus, OH 1979), pp. 81-161.

deal with the case of John Chrysostom, and, in the west, the synod of Carthage in 418, which met as part of the African church's vigorous campaign against Pelagius and Pelagianism.⁴⁶¹

This, however, contrary to ecclesiastical official parlance with its emphasis on unity and catholicity, was no longer carried out for the benefit of the Christian Church as a whole. The religious sentiments and loyalties of Christians throughout the empire, from Theodosius I's death in 395 to the Council of Chalcedon in 451, were monitored, and indeed actively manipulated, by the four occupants of the senior episcopal sees of the Christian church, namely, Alexandria⁴⁶² Antioch,⁴⁶³ Constantinople, and Rome. The growing discord between the apostolic sees was augmented not only by personal ambition, but also through the manipulation of specific theological refinements, which often reflected mainly local beliefs and local traditions. A fifth episcopal see was precisely at the same time struggling with a growing degree of success to gain the prestige which would eventually raise it to the privileged status of the patriarchal sees, namely the see of Jerusalem. ⁴⁶⁴ The bishopric of Jerusalem was led, towards the end of the fourth century, by a charismatic, ambitious prelate and as we are about to see, a key player in the dramatic beginnings of the Origenist controversy: bishop John of Jerusalem. The endeavours of John and more importantly, the relentless efforts of bishop Juvenal who succeeded Praxillus, John's immediate successor, on the episcopal throne of Jerusalem, to advance the interests of their see bore fruit at the Council of Chalcedon, when Jerusalem's status was eventually equated with the other four apostolic sees. This was another case of inseparable personal ambition which generated a new doctrine, based appropriately on a fresh interpretation of tradition and with the blessing of the imperial court duly obtained.

Arcadius's court was more than happy to welcome the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the secular political arena, as one can readily learn from the early stages of the John Chrysostom affair. ⁴⁶⁵ The elevation of the presbyter John of Antioch – an exceptionally brilliant preacher, duly nicknamed ‘the Golden Mouth’ (ὁ Χρυσόστομος; 347-407)⁴⁶⁶ to the episcopal throne of Constantinople was apparently a suitable choice on the part of those who were *de facto* running the imperial court during the reign of Arcadius (395-408), but apparently not without the emperor's approval.⁴⁶⁷ This seems to be the underlying motivation of the influential eunuch Eutropius, by whom Chrysostom was hand-picked.⁴⁶⁸ Given these circumstances, one

⁴⁶¹ See now: S. Squires, *The Pelagian Controversy: An Introduction to the Enemies of Grace and the Conspiracy of Lost Souls* (Eugene, OR 2019), pp. 217-219.

⁴⁶² See: C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, MD 1997), pp. 278-315.

⁴⁶³ See: J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1972), pp. 239-242.

⁴⁶⁴ For the struggle of Jerusalem to obtain a patriarchal status, see (still essential) E. Honigsmann, 'Juvenal of Jerusalem' *DOP* 5 (1951), pp. 211-279.

⁴⁶⁵ *Soz.* VIII, 13 cf. *Soc.* VI, 2. Both ecclesiastical historians report that the decision to appoint John Chrysostom to the see of Constantinople followed a period disagreement about the right successor of Nectarius, John Chrysostom's deceased predecessor on the Constantinopolitan episcopal throne.

⁴⁶⁶ For recent studies of John Chrysostom's life and career, see: E.M. Synek, 'Frauen als Akteurinnen der Kirchengeschichte: Eine Case-Study zu Sturz und Rehabilitation des Johannes Chrysostomus', *Ostkirchliche Studien* 64 (2015), p. 148, n. 3.

⁴⁶⁷ See: W. Mayer, 'John Chrysostom as Bishop: The View from Antioch', *JEH* 55, pp. 455-466. Note also: P. Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser und Konstantinopel: Kommunikation und Konfliktaustrag in Einer spätantiken Metropole* (Berlin 2013), p. 362.

⁴⁶⁸ See: Palladius, *Dialogus* 5; See also: A.M. Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London 2004), p. 20.

might wonder why John Chrysostom's previous liberal *paideia* under the master whom Sozomen calls "the Syrian"⁴⁶⁹, i.e. the prolific orator, author and professor of rhetoric Libanius of Antioch (himself a bitter opponent of Christianity and a pagan to the marrow of his bones⁹⁰), was not regarded at that stage as a hindrance. On the contrary, it seems quite likely, to judge by Sozomen's account, that John's outstanding rhetorical skills were appreciated beforehand as a useful political asset by an imperial court still fairly tolerant⁴⁷⁰, despite its self-proclaimed orthodoxy, and by no means devoid of practical calculations even with regard to religious matters.⁴⁷¹ John's common sense (or at, least what his sponsor Eutropius⁴⁷² must have deemed him to be in possession of), political sensibility and above all his (presumed) gratitude for having been propelled to one of the summits of Christendom may have been taken for granted in that case. The ensuing stormy episcopate (397-404) became a momentous political affair which shocked many contemporaries. Stretching over twenty-two (out of a total of twenty-eight) chapters in the eighth book of his *HE*, Sozomen's detailed account of Chrysostom's tenure of the Constantinopolitan see remains one of the best surviving testimonials to this shock.

In a religiously charged atmosphere, less than two decades after Gregory of Nyssa's encounters with what he regarded as a wide-spread religious obsession in the streets, markets and public baths of Constantinople⁴⁷³, Origen's negation of God's corporeality may appear as a theme unlikely to be raised and discussed elsewhere than in advanced theology classes. It is difficult to imagine these elaborate theories, despite Gregory of Nyssa's aforementioned complaints, being taken to the churches, let alone the marketplaces, of the eastern empire's urban centres.⁴⁷⁴ Yet, a host of events which took place mainly in the triangle of eastern cities,

⁴⁶⁹ Soz. VIII, 2, 2. Sozomen seems to be employing a strategy of distinction through the highlighting of ethnic origin in order to distance and alienate the readers from the staunchly-pagan Libanius.

⁴⁷⁰ Pagans were still holding important positions in the imperial administration as late as early sixth century. See: Photius, *Bibliotheca cod.* 98 on the pagan historian Zosimus who, according to Photius, held at about that time (ca. 500?) the post of *advocatus fisci*. On Sozomen's conception of paganism, see: B.J. Fitzgerald, *Pagan Activities during the Reigns of Valens and Theodosius I according to the Church Historians Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret* (PhD dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary 1995; unpublished), Part II.

⁴⁷¹ Arcadius, having been approached by Porphyrius, a monk from Palestine, was reluctant to Christianise by coercion the city of Gaza (of which Porphyrius was later to become a bishop). Gaza was at the time an important regional centre of the cult of local deity, Zeus-Marnas (Gazan devotion to paganism under Julian is described in Sozomen's account of the martyrdom of the brothers Eusebius, Nestabus and Zeno. See: Soz. V, 9). The emperor justified his reluctance by pointing out that the citizens of Gaza had a good record as punctual taxpayers and an enforced conversion might have negative implications on their fiscal credits. See: Marcus Diaconus, *Vita Porphyrii*, cap. 35-36. For discussion, see: Z. Rubin, 'Porphyrius of Gaza and the Conflict between Christianity and Paganism in Southern Palestine' in: A. Kofsky and G.G. Stroumsa (eds), *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem 1998), pp. 31-66. Porphyrius's successful campaign against the pagans of Gaza was effectively supported by empress Eudoxia, Arcadius's wife. On Eudoxia's image in the narratives of the ecclesiastical historians, see: S. Bralewski, 'Empress Eudoxia through the Prism of Fifth Century Ecclesiastical Histories', *Vox Patrum* 75 (2020), pp. 43-66.

⁴⁷² On Eutropius and his career, see: M. Mariani, *Arcadius (395-408): Dispute religiose, scontri etnici, giochi diplomatici e intrighi di palazzo alla corte di un imperatore dimenticato* (Wroclaw 2020), pp. 222-255.

⁴⁷³ See: Soz. VIII, 17, 4-6 cf. Soc. VII, 15, 13. See: P. Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser und Konstantinopel: Kommunikation und Konfliktaustrag in Einer spätantiken Metropole* (Berlin 2013), p. 321 ff.

⁴⁷⁴ Soz. VIII, 11-14

Jerusalem, Alexandria and Constantinople, (with some reverberations in Old Rome) reveals precisely the opposite.

The church was thus assuming the guise of a *cursus honorum*, a career fit for the ambitious.⁴⁷⁵ Sozomen, a lawyer and a Catholic admirer of monks, could have been bewildered by the extent to which the Church relied on the transformation of human ambition into a power house of God's service. Looking at the evidence we can only suggest that the period of time covered by Sozomen more or less overlaps with the chapter of ecclesiastical history whereby the hierarchy became inseparable from mundane affairs and was beginning to develop an attitude of *realpolitik* like never before. It could be argued that this happened mainly due to Theodosius I's abandonment of previous policies of religious toleration.⁴⁷⁶ On the whole, these were, essentially, fully fledged reforms, taking the alliance between the secular and ecclesiastical establishments far beyond the earlier Constantinian arrangements. In the absence of persecutions, restrictions or any other significant hurdles in the way of the triumphant Nicene church, the new generation of pursuers of ecclesiastical careers were at times poised to invent them for the realisation of their personal ambitions and the accumulation of power. Thus, the safeguarding of Orthodoxy through a continuing campaign against the allegedly ubiquitous heresies had been readily recognised as a palpable means of self-advancement. The heresies were now placed by the Theodosian legislation on the same footing as paganism, leaving however the other grouping of non-Christians, i.e. the Jews, still officially tolerated and (albeit half-heartedly), protected by the state and with visibility that played a significant role in the shaping of Sozomen's historical perspectives and his historiosophy.⁴⁷⁷ It should be stressed nevertheless that the process was not always premeditatedly abused. Most of the protagonists were originally monks or admirers of the monastic movement. The sweeping success of those involved seems to have taken many of them by surprise. However, once this new source of influence and power was identified, it was bound to persist. Only the excuses made to retain it varied.

The Origenist controversy is not devoid of personal grudges turned gradually into explicit allegations of heresy. We have already seen that the victorious Nicene church was still haunted by memories of its dire fortunes under hostile emperors such as Constantius II, Julian and Valens. When these daunting memories were coupled with the anti-intellectualism provoked by the learning and command of rhetoric which was shown by neo-Arian mavericks like Eunomius of Cyzicus⁴⁷⁸, or even fellow-travellers and fellow-ascetics with abundance of depth and originality such as Evagrius Ponticus⁴⁷⁹, the motivations of such austere and

⁴⁷⁵ See: C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, CA 2005), pp. 172-207. Note also: D. Hunt in *CAH* 13, pp. 262-268.

⁴⁷⁶ C. Freeman, *A.D. 381: Heretics, Pagans and the Dawn of the Monotheistic State* (Woodstock, NY 2009), p. 104. See now: H. Leppin, *Theodosius der Grosse* (Darmstadt 2019), *passim*.

⁴⁷⁷ Soz. I, 1, 1-10. On the presence and legal status of the Jews in the Eastern Roman Empire see: F. Millar, 'Christian Emperors, Christian Church and the Jews of the Diaspora in the Greek East', *JJS* 55 (2004), pp. 1-24. On the role of pagans and Jews in Sozomen's historical perspectives, see: P. Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage de paix et de piété: Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), pp. 138-144.

⁴⁷⁸ Soz. VI, 26. On Eunomius's rhetorical excellence and its association with heresy, see: R.P. Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford 2000), pp. 364-382.

⁴⁷⁹ Soz. VI, 30, 7-11. Sozomen's appreciation of Evagrius's intellectual skills seems to highlight the allegations that were made with regard to Evagrius's contacts with a married woman following which Evagrius had embraced the ascetic life. See: B.E. Daley SJ, 'Evagrius and Cappadocian

uncompromising champions of Nicene orthodoxy as Epiphanius and Jerome may become clearer.

This pursuit of extended power may have been enhanced by the Palestinian setting, which both Epiphanius and Jerome had shared as well. The former was a native of the village Besanduk (Beit Ze בית צדק) near Eleuthropolis (Beit Govrin בית גוברין) in southern Judea, where early in his career he was the founder of a monastery. Epiphanius was appointed bishop of Salamis (Constantia) in Cyprus at a later stage. However, he often visited his native country and stayed in close contact with his fellow monks there.⁴⁸⁰ Epiphanius' ally in the campaign against Origenism, Jerome, was a resident of Bethlehem from 386 onwards. Despite his monastic life and his many scholarly pursuits (of which his translation of the Bible into Latin, the Vulgate, is probably the most famous), Jerome found the time to become deeply involved in local ecclesiastical politics. Sandwiched between two longstanding influential Christian (and indeed, secular-administrative) centres, namely Egypt and Syria, early Byzantine Palestine was beginning only now (i.e. the end of the fourth century) its struggle for a place of honour on the ecclesiastical map.⁴⁸¹ The monastic movement and the rise of Holy Land pilgrimage had laid the foundations for a thorough rejuvenation of Palestine as a religious centre which would mature in the course of the fifth century with the appearance of thriving clusters of monasteries, organised as collections of individual cells (λαύρα) in the Judean desert and the eventual recognition of Jerusalem as an apostolic (i.e. patriarchal) see by the Council of Chalcedon.⁴⁸² But even before all that could materialise, the transformation of Palestine which seems to have been in full swing even under the Arian emperors, had had plenty of opportunities to offer to indefatigable activists such as Epiphanius and Jerome.

The prosaic events which precipitated the controversy shed light on the centrality of the perpetrators' personal motives.⁴⁸³ The partisan interests and personal ambitions of key figures in the crisis and, above all, of Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, served all along to fuel each and all of its phases.⁴⁸⁴ Even when personal clashes are acknowledged as a primary factor in

Orthodoxy' in : J. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young (eds.), *Evagrius and His Legacy* (Notre Dame, IN 2016), pp. 14-48.

⁴⁸⁰ Soz. VII, 27. On Epiphanius' career, see: A.S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cyprus: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2016), pp. 8-29.

⁴⁸¹ See: H. Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2008), pp. 16-50; E.D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire AD 312-460* (Oxford 1982), pp. 28-49;

⁴⁸² On Palestinian monasticism in the fourth and fifth centuries see: R. L. Wilken, 'Loving the Jerusalem Below: The Monks of Palestine', in : L. I. Levine (ed), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York 1999), pp. 240-250.; L. Perrone, 'Monasticism as a Factor of Religious Interaction in the Holy Land during the Byzantine Period', in: A. Kofsky and G.G. Stroumsa (eds), *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem 1998). On the success of Jerusalem's claim to patriarchal status, see: E. Honigmann, 'Juvenal of Jerusalem', *DOP* 5 (1950), pp. 209-279.

⁴⁸³ S. Elm, 'The Dog that Did Not Bark: Doctrine and Authority in the Conflict between Theophilus of Alexandria and John Chrysostom of Constantinople' in: L. Ayers and G. Jones (eds.), *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London 1998), pp. 68-93.

⁴⁸⁴ A view on which both Socrates and Sozomen are in full accord. See: Soc. VI, 7 cf. Soz. VIII, 11- 14. Sozomen, however, is keener to depict Theophilus of Alexandria as an arch-plotter against John Chrysostom and his account links Theophilus's anti-Origenism with pure opportunism. Sozomen retains a fairly tempered throughout most of his account but as he is about to conclude his inhibitions dissipate and his vocabulary becomes seemingly blunter e.g. in his description of the end of Cyrinus, the bishop of Chalcedon and one of Theophilus leading supporters. Cyrinus, according to Sozomen, was unable to join the bishops who were convening in Constantinople to depose John as he was severely wounded shortly

the eruption of the Origenist controversy, it is still difficult to name the perpetrator since those who initiated it do not seem to have estimated properly the far-reaching consequences of their exercise of personal power or their immediate response to confronting manifestations of power. We can however say that the chain of events which led to what we call now 'the Origenist controversy' consists of the following incidents.

On 13 September 393, the metropolitan of Cyprus, bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, now a revered octogenarian, whilst paying a visit to his native Palestine, delivered a sermon on the occasion of the feast of the Ascension of the Cross, in the Martyrion, the cathedral church of Jerusalem, adjacent to the Anastasis, the rotunda surrounding the Holy Sepulchre.⁴⁸⁵ Epiphanius' sermon included a very undiplomatic attack on the local bishop, John of Jerusalem and his friends, Rufinus of Aquileia and the latter's patroness, the wealthy Roman widow Melania the Elder. Both now resided on the Mount of Olives and together with Bishop John were known for their admiration of the teachings of Origen as well as for their close contacts with the monks in Egypt who shared their pro-Origenist views, particularly as regards Origen's negation of God's corporeality. As the guest of honour was still preaching, the outraged John disrupted his sermon by sending his archdeacon to cut short Epiphanius' offensive discourse. This move, according to Jerome's report, was met with protests by the congregants with whom Epiphanius enjoyed great popularity. John was infuriated yet again, and this time responded in person with a direct counter-attack on Epiphanius' alleged vanity and self-centred character. The following day, John preached from the same pulpit. His sermon was directed against 'simple people whose narrow-mindedness led them to think that God has arms and legs and whose ignorance does not stop them from condemning Origen whose teachings they are unable to grasp'.⁴⁸⁶

The message did not need further explanation. The addressee was of course Epiphanius, but John's fierce response perhaps suggests also that the bishop of Jerusalem was troubled by Epiphanius' popularity amongst his flock, and it is likely that his harsh words reflected some concerns about ensuing problems. However, John's response to Epiphanius' attack incurred Jerome's wrath. He regarded it as a public humiliation of his old friend Epiphanius, but it would also appear that this clash was an excellent opportunity for the monk of Bethlehem to gain publicity and influence not only in the abstract (and splendidly isolated) world of Christian scholarship, but also in the bustling ecclesiastical political arena which bordered with the walls of his monastery. He himself a former student and translator of Origen, Jerome, having sensed an opportunity to affiliate himself comfortably with a potentially solid source of power, had become at that stage of his career a staunch opponent of Origenism. He turned

beforehand due to what appeared to be punishment inflicted by (presumably divine) justice (δίκη) for his hubristic conduct. Sozomen remarks very clearly that Cyrinius's help 'was regarded necessary for the machinations against John' (καίπερ ἀναγκαῖος εἶναι δοκῶν πρὸς τὰς κατὰ Ἰωάννου ἐπιβολὰς). See: Soz. VIII, 16, 5. Susanna Elm, however, makes considerable efforts to show that Theophilus's role in the John Chrysostom affair (see *infra*) was nevertheless a result of his doctrinal convictions - but her line of argument offers often unnecessary refinements (e.g. "... this chapter makes an argument not so much from silence as about silence") and her views remain on the whole - unsupported. See: S. Elm, *op. cit.* p. 68.

⁴⁸⁵ On the celebration of this feast in Jerusalem see: *Itinerarium Egeriae*, 48-49.

⁴⁸⁶ The incident is reported by Jerome in his *Contra Joannem*, a reply (dated to early 397) to John of Jerusalem's (now lost) *Apologia*, published shortly before that. See: Ibid. 11, 14. For discussion see: S. Rubenson, 'The Egyptian Relations of Early Palestinian Monasticism', in: A. O'Mahony *et al.* (eds), *The Christian Heritage in the Holy Land* (London 1995), pp.35-46.

against his old school mate and competitor Rufinus of Aquileia who shortly after their public reconciliation in Easter 397 went back to Italy.⁴⁸⁷ Rufinus, as was already noted, was on close friendly terms with John of Jerusalem, the pro-Origenist bishop of the Holy City.

If indeed John of Jerusalem had anticipated imminent trouble, his premonition was proved right. Epiphanius, who may have regarded the skirmish at the Martyrion as a test of his personal prestige, decided (possibly, due to encouraging signals that may have been received from the members of the church of Jerusalem), to defy John more aggressively, hitting hard at the heart of a sensitive area of ecclesiastical collegiality namely, Episcopal jurisdiction. Violating the rules laid down in canons 4, 5 and 6 of the Council of Nicaea and canon 2 of the Council of Constantinople⁴⁸⁸, Epiphanius, consecrated a priest the following year Paulinianus, Jerome's younger brother (and one of his four henchmen who had been actively operating against John of Jerusalem since 394).⁴⁸⁹ Like his elder sibling, Paulinianus was a monk in Bethlehem, and in theory under Bishop John's jurisdiction. The Cypriot metropolitan thus transgressed the boundaries of his province without compunction, and given the circumstances, it would appear that he could hope to get away with it due to an extraordinary (and very solid) coalition of supporters, consisting quite naturally of his old contacts in Palestine i.e. monks from or with some connection to his old monastery near Eleutheropolis, Jerome's followers and perhaps other admirers of his campaign against heresy. He must have weighed up his camp's ability to withstand John's response beforehand, as John had the Episcopal establishment (with its resources) at his disposal.

Epiphanius' defiance was well calculated. John of Jerusalem failed to shield the pro-Origenists against the fierce attacks of Jerome, and this failure seems to have led to Rufinus's departure from Palestine.⁴⁹⁰ However, it seems that both parties involved were equally successful in providing Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria (385-412) with a golden opportunity to interfere in Palestinian ecclesiastical affairs. Theophilus, an energetic and resourceful incumbent of the see of St. Mark, is known to have been till then (396-397) an anti-anthropomorphite (i.e. pro-Origenist) theologian.⁴⁹¹ Always ready for any scheming which might extend his influence and prestige, Theophilus attempted to mediate between John of Jerusalem and Jerome in 394⁴⁹² and 396.⁴⁹³ Shortly thereafter (i.e. in 397), Theophilus became actively involved in the search for a suitable candidate for the see of Constantinople which had fallen vacant after the death of Nectarius, the previous incumbent, in September 397. It is hard to disregard the proximity in time of those two events, for Theophilus' endeavours to intervene in Jerusalem and Constantinople with equal seriousness seem to be, from our perspective, an acknowledgment *de facto* of the growing strategic importance of the see of Jerusalem. Theophilus' understanding of Jerusalem's rise to ecclesiastical eminence, prefigures, as it were, its eventual formal elevation to the status of an apostolic see by the Council of Chalcedon about fifty-four years later.

⁴⁸⁷ See: M. Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago 2006), p. 99.

⁴⁸⁸ See: J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd edition; London 1972), pp. 296-331.

⁴⁸⁹ On Jerome's four adjutants, Paulinianus, Vicentius, Eusebius of Cremona and Rufinus (not to be confused with the ecclesiastical historian of Aquileia) see: E. A. Clark (1992), pp. 30-33.

⁴⁹⁰ See: J.D.N. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London 1975), pp. 195-209.

⁴⁹¹ See: E. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*, p. 59 and p. 64.

⁴⁹² See: Jerome, *Ep.* 51, 1 drawing on a letter from Epiphanius to John of Jerusalem.

⁴⁹³ See: Jerome, *Contra Iohannem* and *rd. Ep.* 82 (addressed to Theophilus).

By masterminding such a grand plan, Theophilus emerged as an audacious ecclesiastical politician who did not hesitate to push forward the legacy of his predecessor Athanasius. However, unlike Athanasius, whose loyalty to the cause of Nicene orthodoxy withstood perils such as public humiliation, imperial animosity, persecution and long periods of hiding, banishment and exile - Theophilus, an orthodox bishop in the Theodosian empire since 385, proved himself not only as notoriously aggressive in managing ecclesiastical affairs, but also as a quintessentially opportunistic cleric. This is clearly reflected in the circumstances which brought about his abandonment of the pro-Origenist views which he held before 397.

As has already been mentioned, the escalating tension between Jerome and John of Jerusalem following Epiphanius' instigations, served Theophilus as an opportunity to meddle in the affairs of the diocese of Jerusalem. He hastened to dispatch to Jerusalem his presbyter and trusted *factotum* Isidore to act as a mediator between John and Jerome. Isidore, however, contrary to what one would expect from an honest broker, was carrying with him a personal letter from Theophilus to John with strong pro-Origenist contents, directed against Jerome. Isidore somehow managed⁴⁹⁴ to bring the letter and its contents to the attention of Vicentius, one of Jerome's closest friends. This of course fuelled the conflict further.⁴⁹⁵ However, back in Alexandria, Isidore's position seems to have remained unaffected, since as a presbyter he continued to play a pivotal role in Theophilus' long-term planning (which may also give room for the thought that the outcome of his trip to Palestine was well received in Alexandria). Isidore was handpicked by the bishop of Alexandria as his recommended candidate for the episcopal throne of Constantinople following the death of Nectarius on 26th September 397. At this point Theophilus' plans were foiled by a matchless adversary. This was none other than the eunuch Eutropius, who was at that time the most influential figure in the court of the lethargic young emperor Arcadius⁴⁹⁶ and his Frankish wife Eudoxia. Eutropius had achieved at Arcadius's court the position of regent in all but name. When Theophilus set out to promote Isidore's candidacy, he soon became frustrated, as it was revealed that Eutropius, following a recent trip to Syria, had already named his man for the coveted bishopric. Eutropius's choice was the rising Antiochene deacon and immensely popular preacher, John, nicknamed by posterity, due to his rhetorical prowess *Chrysostomos* (Golden Mouth).⁴⁹⁷ Eutropius, the seasoned courtier, was apparently relied on John's outstanding popularity as a preacher in Antioch, recognising in his exceptional rhetorical skills a potential ability to harness the volatile Constantinopolitan masses, whereas Chrysostom's superb classical education under Libanius of Antioch could guarantee a bishop with intellectual brilliance which might appeal at the same time to the coteries of the highbrow elite, as well as other factions in the capital

⁴⁹⁴ The reasons are not clear, but Clark's implicit suggestion that this was not an accident can hardly be supported, See; Clark, p. 40.

⁴⁹⁵ Clark, *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ Arcadius's passive character is depicted by Philostorgius (HE XI, 3). The same Eunomian historian is our source for Eudoxia's Frankish origins (XI, 6). According to Philostorgius, Eudoxia was the daughter of Bauto, one of Theodosius I's generals. See also: PLRE, vol. I, pp. 159–160). For a recent assessment of Eudoxia's portrayal by the ecclesiastical historians, see: S. Bralewski, 'Empress Eudoxia through the Prism of the 5th-Century Ecclesiastical Histories', *Vox Patrum* 75 (2020), pp. 43–66. Note also: E.M. Synek, 'Frauen als Akteurinnen der Kirchengeschichte: Eine Case-Study zu Sturz und Rehabilitation des Johannes Chrysostomus', *Ostkirchliche Studien* 64 (2015), pp. 150–153

⁴⁹⁷ The nickname 'Golden Mouth' was given to outstanding orators in earlier times. The example of the Bythinian-born Dio Cocceianus of Prusa (d. after AD 110) is probably the best known. It seems that John's *sobriquet* appeared early in the fifth century. See: J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London 1995), p. 4.

who were notoriously associated with divisiveness in the Constantinopolitan church and would thus be instrumental in securing their essential support of the alliance between Church and State.⁴⁹⁸

Theophilus may have had good reasons to believe that he could press on with his lobbying for Isidore. This can be inferred, perhaps, from Eutropius's handling of the situation. Eutropius had to take serious measures such as blackmailing in order to hamper Isidore's candidacy. Eutropius, having carried out some thorough investigations, received information concerning certain discrepancies which had been discovered in the financial records of the Alexandrian episcopal administration. All of those were in Theophilus' favour. Eutropius threatened Theophilus with indictment unless the bishop of Alexandria withdrew his candidate from the race. The threat proved effective, and Theophilus gave way shortly afterwards. However, despite the humiliating defeat, or perhaps because of it, Theophilus waited patiently for an opportunity to restore his prestige to its former glory, and indeed, such an opportunity soon presented itself. Again, the context was what had now taken the shape of a wide-ranging campaign against those Christian intellectuals and prelates who showed keen support for the teaching of Origen.⁴⁹⁹

As we have seen, following the instigations of Epiphanius, and with Jerome's active participation, Palestine was the setting for the first skirmishes, but after the humiliation of John of Jerusalem and the departure (or rather the flight) from Palestine of Rufinus of Aquileia, the crisis did not dissipate. The legacy of Origen, taught by influential teachers such as Didymus 'the Blind' from the Christian school of Alexandria⁵⁰⁰, found an able, devoted and original exponent who effectively spread it in the monastic centres of the Egyptian desert. This was Evagrius Ponticus (345-399), whose influence as a thinker, coupled with his exemplary ascetic life, brought him the admiration of certain monks in the Egyptian desert,

⁴⁹⁸ Soz. VIII, 2. In this introduction of John Chrysostom's background, we also encounter Sozomen's ambivalence towards classical *Paideia* which from Sozomen's point of view could offer advantages as well as dangers such as excessive intellectualism. Sozomen, highlights the importance of this theme in his perspective by an authorial intervention. While commenting about Chrysostom's fellow-townsmen and fellow student Theodore (350-428; later bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia) who shared with John the initiation into the ascetic life but at some point felt attracted back to his old worldly lifestyle – Sozomen points out (VIII, 2, 9) that Theodore 'had naturally dressed up his pursuit with counter-arguments derived from ancient models (for he was very erudite)' (οἷα δὲ εἰκὸς ἐναντίοις λογισμοῖς κοσμήσας τὸ σπουδαζόμενον ἐκ παλαιῶν ὑποδειγμάτων (ἦν γὰρ πολυῖστωρ)). Sozomen's comments (e.g. 'naturally') turn his authorial voice into a moral commitment by linking Theodore's withdrawal from the ascetic life with his erudition and his classical training in the art of logic and by doing so, sharing with the sensitive reader his both his values (the supremacy of ascetic life) as well as his mixed feelings about intellectualism.

⁴⁹⁹ On Origen's legacy prior to Theophilus's involvement in the dispute, see: K. Banev, *Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy: Rhetoric and Power* (Oxford 2015), pp. 13-18. See: Soz. VIII, 11. Sozomen's ambivalence is showing here (Soz. VIII, 11, 1-2) when he describes the Egyptian monks who sparked up the anti-Origenist controversy as acting 'out of simplicity, get a hold of the holy scriptures unexamined' (ὕπὸ ἀπλότητος ἀβασανίστως τοὺς ἱεροὺς ἐκλαμβάνοντες λόγους) whereas their opponents, apparently the followers of the Alexandrian exegetical tradition which favoured allegory, receive from Sozomen a sarcastic depiction, characterising them as 'Those who look for hidden meaning in names' (Οἱ δὲ τὴν ἐν τοῖς ὀνόμασι κεκρυμμένην διάνοιαν σκοποῦντες).

⁵⁰⁰ Soz. III, 15, 1-5. On Didymus 'the blind' and his school see: R.A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late Antique Alexandria* (Urbana, IL 2004), pp. 135-158.

but seems also to have provoked much hostility on the part of many others there.⁵⁰¹ Internal divisions among the monks of the desert were already deeply embedded in the monastic communities of the Egyptian desert. Tensions between various factions, formed along ethno-cultural and social lines, namely 'Greeks', 'Egyptians', 'educated' and 'illiterates', are attested in contemporary literary sources, and the spread of Origenism amongst the monks in Egypt was bound to interact with the conflicting currents. As in Palestine, those who were opposed to Origen's ideas had a hidden agenda, which was to surface following the initial clash with the other camp. Evagrius's contribution to Origenist thought amongst the learned monks in Egypt was profound, and, like the 'neo-Arian' movement before it, Evagrian Origenism was regarded as exceedingly demanding intellectually and by its nature, lacked as it were, any specific characteristics, which could have endeared it to broader monastic or ecclesiastical circles, let alone the laity.

However, one specific tenet in this set of teachings proved to be more irksome than the others from an anti-Origenist point of view. The main issue taken with Origenism revolved around Evagrius's rejection of the 'Anthropomorphic' Godhead. According to the Anthropomorphites⁵⁰², as they had come to be known, the abstract, ineffable, shapeless and thus incomprehensible Godhead advocated by the Origenists, actually disengaged the human race from its creation in God's own image and likeness, as manifested in the Bible, an asset of which they felt deprived by the Origenist mind.⁵⁰³ In terms of practical politics, those negative sentiments (which in most cases seem to have been initially sincere) commended themselves immediately as a viable means to manipulate the crowds in Alexandria, as in Jerusalem before and in Constantinople later on. The anti-Origenist message was simple, clear and thus easy to convey and absorb, whereas the Origenists, (or at least those of them who were involved one way or another in public life e.g. Rufinus of Aquileia and even John of Jerusalem) neither in Palestine, nor in Egypt seem to have been interested in anything but pure theological speculation, and simply neglected to take on board the political havoc which their theological pursuits might stir up. Being exceedingly privileged and self-confident, they do not seem to have cared much about their public image. The Episcopal tenure of John Chrysostom in a sense epitomises this insoluble conflict between the intellectual and the statesman, the moralist and the courtier and, in the terms of the present discussion, between the desert and the city.⁵⁰⁴ John's heroic struggle with those two contrasting elements paved his way to become the first ever orthodox martyr under an orthodox emperor, a hitherto unknown phenomenon in the history of Christianity⁵⁰⁵, and the vexing nature of this type of conflict between the church and the imperial court is highlighted implicitly by Socrates's account of

⁵⁰¹ For an analysis of Evagrius Ponticus's 'Origenism', see: J. Knežević, 'U Origenovu obranu: povijesno-teološke karakteristike origenizma Evagrija Pontskog', *Bogoslovska smotra*, 88 (2018), pp. 987–1009 (in Croatian). On Evagrius Ponticus's crucial role in the dissemination of Origen's teachings in the Egyptian desert see: J. S. Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (Farnham 2009), pp. 16–26.

⁵⁰² See: Clark (1992), pp. 44–47

⁵⁰³ Gen., 1, 27.

⁵⁰⁴ On the phenomenon of the 'monk-bishop' in late antiquity, see now: A. Sterk, *Renouncing the World yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MS 2004).

⁵⁰⁵ On the martyr-like image of John Chrysostom after his death as reflected through Palladius's 'Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom', see: P. Van Nuffelen, 'Palladius and the Johannite Schism *JEH* 64 (2013), pp. 1–19. See also: W. Mayer, 'The Making of a Saint. John Chrysostom in Early Historiography', in M. Wallraff and R. Brändle (eds.) *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren: Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters* (Berlin 2008), pp. 39–60.

the affair.⁵⁰⁶ Sozomen's recapitulation of Chrysostom's martyrdom is the latest testimonial, coming after three other major contemporary literary sources, i.e. Palladius' *Dialogus de Vita Sancti Ioannis Chrysostomi*, the aforementioned report by Socrates in his *HE* and a text in a form of a funerary speech, falsely attributed to Martyrius of Antioch.⁵⁰⁷ Sozomen's version however, being based on tendentious reworking of the two previous ones, provides us with a rare opportunity not only to examine the Palestinian church historian's methods of work, but also (given Sozomen's highly expressive tone in his Chrysostom narrative) to formulate an opinion about his religious stances.

However, in 399, two years after the consecration of John Chrysostom as bishop of Constantinople, a humiliated and vengeance seeking, but still pro-Origenist Theophilus had to face a new compromising situation but this time his authority was challenged from within his own back yard. Theophilus' new adversaries were monks from the Egyptian desert monasteries, who formed together a strong anti-Origenist faction. The surviving evidence, unfortunately, does not allow us to reconstruct with satisfactory accuracy the divisions amongst the monks. Yet, it is not unlikely that the eruption of the Origenist controversy in the monasteries and retreats of Egypt was related to other divisive issues such as the social and ethnic internal differences mentioned above. The Theodosian Code records the efforts that had been made at about this time (398) to keep the rising power of the monks in check. This seems to be indicative of the growing self-confidence of the monks and its active role in their consolidation into a definite and important sector in the social mosaic of the eastern Roman Empire. We must not rule out a scenario whereby the monkish opposition, later led by the monk Isaac, with which John Chrysostom had to grapple shortly after the beginning of his episcopate⁵⁰⁸ may have in some way served as an example for a growing faction of frustrated monks in the Egyptian desert who sought to exercise power in the face of the monastic elite, its educated members and their (apparently) like-minded associates i.e. the ecclesiastical dignitaries in the episcopal court of Alexandria.⁵⁰⁹ Given what we know about Evagrian Origenism, it is not hard to imagine how the educated monks (who, as was suggested before, must have necessarily formed the very core of Evagrius's disciples), managed to upset the 'simple' monks who readily believed in the corporeality of the Godhead and were known, as

⁵⁰⁶ See: M. Wallraff, 'Le conflit de Jean Chrysostome avec la cour chez les historiens ecclésiastiques grecs', in : B. Pouderon and Y.-M. Duval (eds.), *L'historiographie de l'église des premiers siècles* (Paris 2001), pp. 361-370.

⁵⁰⁷ See: M. Wallraff (ed.), *Oratio Funebris in Laudem Sancti Iohannis Chrysostomi* (Spoleto 2007), pp. 17-20.

⁵⁰⁸ See: Liebeschuetz (1990) pp. 211-214. We know very little about the early stages of the tension between Chrysostom and the monks of Constantinople. Liebeschuetz's discussion asserts that Chrysostom's detractors from amongst the Constantinopolitan monks formed an active opposition from the earliest days of Chrysostom's episcopate. See: Palladius. *Dial.* 40; Soz. VIII, 9.. The identity of the monk Isaac who is believed to have led this opposition later, remains uncertain, but his identification with a monk by the same name, known to us from Sozomen (VI, 40) seems rather dubious. According to Sozomen's story, the monk Isaac predicted Valens's death after the emperor's refusal, on the eve of the battle of Adrianople, to restore the churches which were previously seized from the orthodox communities at his order. Sozomen refers to this Isaac as "a good monk who, for the sake of God, paid no attention to any danger". This is at odds with the following portrayal of John and his opponents in Sozomen's narrative. Sozomen is our only surviving source for the otherwise obscure beginnings of Constantinopolitan monasticism. It is however difficult to accept J.D.N. Kelly's suggestion that this is "largely because the earliest communities had been founded by semi-Arian bishops whose initiative the Orthodox preferred to overlook once they had taken over". See: J.D.N. Kelly, *Golden Mouth* (London 1993), and p.123.

⁵⁰⁹ See: CTh, IX, 40, 16 and J.M. Gaddis, *There is no Crime for Those Who have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA. 2005), pp. 220-223.

mentioned before, by the seemingly dubious nickname 'Anthropomorphites', a sobriquet which may suggest more than a dash of condescension towards their belief. Yet, the Egyptian ecclesiastical elite with Theophilus at its head, seems to have been taken altogether by surprise. Theophilus' apparent complacency is reflected through his reaction to the consequences of his Paschal epistle for the year 399 in which he launched an unequivocal attack on those who, according to Theophilus, erroneously believed that the Godhead was in possession of bodily organs.⁵¹⁰ The monks were outraged and responded fiercely. A host of tumultuous anti-Origenist monks appeared in the streets of Alexandria, demanding vociferously from Theophilus that he should denounce the contents of his epistle and anathematise Origen. They did not refrain from voicing clear threats to the life of the bishop of Alexandria should he fail to comply.

The seriousness of the threat can be inferred from the promptness in which Theophilus reacted obligingly. His vague attempts to negotiate his position and appease the rioting monks were soon abandoned at the face of the vehement attacks on Origen and subsequently on himself an accomplice of the heretics and as such, as a potential enemy of God.⁵¹¹ The raging crowd was placated, we are told, only when the terrified prelate responded by addressing the raging crowd with the following statement: "In seeing you I behold the face of God".⁵¹² However, paying this backhanded compliment to the monks was not good enough to satisfy them and Theophilus immediately went on to declare his unequivocal rejection of Origenism. Once a clear statement was obtained from the bishop, the perilous scene could be brought to an end.

⁵¹⁰ This festal letter does not survive. Its contents are attested by John Cassian, *Coll.* 10, 2.

⁵¹¹ It should be borne in mind that despite the above-mentioned internal divisions, the anti-Origenist faction could have not possibly attained its expanding strength amongst the monks of Scetis and Nitria and, least of all, to challenge successfully the episcopal authority, if indeed this group had consisted exclusively of the ignorant and the illiterate. On the Egyptian monks, see: E. Wipszycka, *The Second Gift of the Nile: Monks and Monasteries in Late Antique Egypt* (Warsaw 2018), pp. 337-370. Apart from misfits with palpable personal negative motivations against the predominance of the old elite, there were also some well-educated monks who believed sincerely that classical education (and in some cases, any form of education) was, in John Cassian's words, impedimentum salutis, a stumbling block in their way towards salvation in Christ. The uneducated monks and their 'uncluttered' and innocent devotion, 'untainted' by the 'degenerating' influences of Greco-Roman paideia. For discussion: D. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford 1993). Pp. 148-151. The reputation of the Egyptian monks in Syria, and their idealised image as achievers of the absolute fulfilment of Christian life (if not perfection), are reflected in John Chrysostom's own words of praise for them in a work dating to the 380's or early 390's: In *Mattheum homilia* ,8,4-5. Chrysostom conveys an idyllic view of the monks' life style by referring to it (having strongly recommended the Vita Antonii as an essential reading for would-be monks beforehand): τοιοῦτον ...βίον, οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νόμοι ζητοῦσι "the sort of lifestyle which Christ's laws call for". The reference to the Christian teachings as "laws" (a usage reserved in Patristic literature beforehand mainly to Mosaic laws and their pivotal role in Jewish legalism is quite telling. If indeed this usage reflects a change, it might be an early attempt of John Chrysostom to reconcile the monastic holy (but as yet unruly) lifestyle with the political demands of normative secular civic life in the Eastern Roman empire, with which John Chrysostom was so preoccupied shortly after his elevation to the Episcopal throne of Constantinople in 397.

⁵¹² Soc. VI, 7, 10. Socrates remarks in passing that "... and probably the whole dispute regarding this matter would have been set at rest, had it not been for another incident which took place immediately thereafter". This seems to hint that Theophilus did not intend to turn the tables altogether. If we accept this assumption, it may seem probable that Theophilus had realised only later on that the incident with the anti-Origenist monks could actually be beneficial for him after all. This appears to be more explicitly suggested by Sozomen (Soz. VIII, 12, 1).

Theophilus did manage to get himself off the hook this time, but at the same time managed to get himself nonetheless into yet another difficulty. By becoming overtly an anti-Origenist he had to face the reproaches of his closest (and apparently ablest) *confidants*. This meant the loss of vital advice and assistance which his betrayed colleagues had offered him before he crossed the lines, advising him amongst other things on matters of governance and financial management of the church of Alexandria. Among the leading figures in Theophilus' team of adjutants were handpicked men such as the presbyter Isidore, Theophilus' former candidate for the episcopal throne of Constantinople, and the four monks known as the "Tall Brothers" who held key positions in the Egyptian hierarchy (one of them, Dioscorus was made by Theophilus bishop of Hermopolis. His brother Ammonius is said to have chopped off his ear deliberately to avoid ordination⁵¹³), whereas two others, Eusebius and Euthymius, were entrusted with major responsibilities within the Alexandrian ecclesiastical administration. However, it should be borne in mind that they must have had, as Socrates acerbically points out, first-hand information about many skeletons in Theophilus' cupboard. Chief among these: Theophilus' venality. This certainly was a particularly threatening fact which Theophilus could not afford to overlook, having been defeated by Eutropius on that account during the bishops of Alexandria's canvassing for Isidore's election to the See of Constantinople.⁵¹⁴ Theophilus, now reportedly relying on a solid majority within the Egyptian church, summoned a synod in Alexandria which consequently anathematised Origen and condemned the Tall Brothers as his followers. However, Theophilus did not content himself with this formal provision. Socrates reports that, having written assertively to the desert monasteries about the authoritative Scriptural testimony to God's corporeality, Theophilus opted for an unprecedented measure. The bishop of Alexandria in person led a large contingent of militant anti-Origenist monks to Nitria, where he distributed arms to the "anthropomorphites" and encouraged them to turn against their fellow-monks who refused to denounce the Origenist teachings. The overwhelmed Origenist monks had to flee. Among the fugitives were the Tall Brothers who sought refuge beforehand in the desert. As their lives were now at risk, they had to leave Egypt and seek asylum beyond Theophilus' reach. They were joined by Isidore, Theophilus' former presbyter and trusted agent who, as mentioned before, had in the meantime fallen out with Theophilus and had consequently been ejected from his post and excommunicated by his former superior.⁵¹⁵ The Tall Brothers and Isidore ended up in Constantinople (after an unsuccessful attempt to find a safe haven in Palestine), where they were welcomed by bishop John Chrysostom. They all appealed to the Constantinopolitan bishop's help, and John Chrysostom willingly obliged. Chrysostom's consent to assist the Alexandrian refugees was soon to mark a watershed, not only as regards his own career. It became a turning point in the history of church-state relations in the Roman empire - and as such (as we shall try to show) a confusing, even shocking, but also, at the same time, an inspiring and formative event in the religious consciousness of Sozomen and other authors of his generation.

Was it, Chrysostom's letter to Theophilus, in which the bishop of Alexandria was called upon to explain his actions, the spark which re-ignited the fury of Theophilus and pushed him to scheme against his Constantinopolitan colleague so fiercely? ⁵¹⁶ There is hardly any evidence

⁵¹³ Palladius, *HL*, 11. Cf. Soc. IV, 23.

⁵¹⁴ Soz. VIII, 2, 16-18 Cf. Soc. VI, 2, 4-5.

⁵¹⁵ Soz. VIII, 12.

⁵¹⁶ Pall. *Dial.* 8;; Soz. VIII, 13, 5.

which would suggest that Theophilus was at any time considering in earnest burying the hatchet. Indeed, Theophilus did choose to offer his good offices when asked by Constantinople to mediate between bishop Damasus of Rome and bishop Flavian of Antioch, a task which Theophilus accomplished successfully.⁵¹⁷ However, this remained an act of rather marginal recognition and on the whole did not impinge in any way on Theophilus' apparent status anxiety which must have been aroused by the transformation of Constantinople into the centre of ecclesiastical diplomacy during the short period of time since the beginning of John Chrysostom's episcopate.⁵¹⁸ Theophilus apparently refused to put up with John's growing influence at the imperial court and no less important - the expansion of Constantinopolitan Episcopal jurisdiction due to sweeping administrative reforms⁵¹⁹ and John Chrysostom's policies whereby Constantinople was turned into a centre of mission and evangelisation, directed first and foremost at the Goths in Thrace and the Danubian provinces. Given Chrysostom's far reaching geopolitical aspirations which could be equated as it were with Theophilus' own plans, Theophilus' famous φιλαρχίας πάθος⁵²⁰ had apparently been put to continuous test since his fiasco with Isidore's candidacy for the See of Constantinople. Thus, there is no reason to assume that Chrysostom's intervention in Theophilus' dispute with the Tall Brothers and his former presbyter was other than a last straw from the point of view of the indignant bishop of Alexandria. Furthermore, it is hard not to get the impression - *pace* Palladius and his idolising portrayal in *Dialogus de vita Sancti Ioannis Chrysostomi* - that John Chrysostom himself was affected by more than a little of the same πάθος which Palladius so emphatically attributed to John's enemy - Theophilus. John Chrysostom's eventual choice to summon Theophilus to Constantinople was for all intents and purposes, a quintessentially political act, and it does not appear to be credible that John was unaware of it. Likewise, John was at about the same time sharpening his teeth by his endeavours to discipline the monks of Constantinople.⁵²¹

John needed every possible source of support, and not only because of his rivalry with Theophilus.⁵²² A new, more prominent, and much more dangerous animosity arose in the meantime. John fell out of favour with the Empress Eudoxia.

The beginnings of the deterioration of these troubled relations which eventually sealed John's fate are hard to track down due to the questionable reliability of the *Vita Porphyrii* by Marc the Deacon.⁵²³ This is our only surviving source for the claim that Chrysostom had dared as early as 400 to censor the empress openly (in this case, expressing his indignation concerning

⁵¹⁷ Soc. V, 15.

⁵¹⁸ G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale, Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris 1974), p. 465.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 466-469; For a discussion of these reforms and their status *de jure* as reflected in the canons of the Council of Chalcedon, see: E. Herman in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds) *Das Konzil von Chalkedon* (Würzburg 1953), vol. II, pp. 472-474.

⁵²⁰ Pal. *Dial* 13-15.

⁵²¹ See: Palladius, *Dial.* 19, 99-100. Soz. VIII, 9, D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2002), pp. 194-199.

⁵²² L. Baan, 'L'evêque Chrysostome: exigences et réalisations', *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 58 (1997), pp. 423-428; Kelly (1995), pp. 120-121; R. Lizzi, *Il potere episcopale nell' 'Oriente romano: Rappresentazione ideologica e realtà politica (IV - V sec. d. C.)* (Rome 1987), pp. 52-55; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, 'Friends and Enemies of John Chrysostom' in: A. Moffat (ed.), *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning* (= *Byzantina Australiensia* 5) (Canberra 1984), p. 92.

⁵²³ *Vita Porphyrii* 37, 15.

Eudoxia's allegedly rapacious personal conduct), a pattern which was to reoccur and typify John's behaviour from now on.⁵²⁴ Reportedly, John did not refrain from a rather vivid biblical imagery in his public appearances as a preacher, whereby he likened the empress to biblical queens like Jezebel and Herodias. This blatant defiance of all the rules of courtly etiquette remained at the centre of John's self-conduct until his final deposition and exile in 404.⁵²⁵ Unlike other bishops who had dared to denounce emperors before, namely Athanasius of Alexandria and Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, making no traceable political calculations, and probably driven by a personal propensity to explore the limits of his own religious authority and moral prestige, cut himself off any potential pressure group which could have counter-balanced for him the easily-foreseeable discontented response of the imperial court to the unfavourable contents of his sermons. Given their exceptional popularity with Constantinopolitan churchgoers, these sermons were rightly perceived by the offended empress and her entourage as exceedingly damaging, leaving them no viable way of turning a blind eye to the bishop's statements from the pulpit.

Thus, we return to Constantinople after the arrival there of the Tall Brothers and Isidore, probably in autumn 400.⁵²⁶ The Egyptian monks were indeed received warmly, but apart from honouring the rules of ecclesiastical hospitality, John seems to have been hesitant as to what should be done with regard to their appeal for arbitration between themselves and Theophilus. John acted cautiously, denying the fugitives' admittance to communion, on which the accounts of Palladius, Socrates and Sozomen are in full accord. However, in the meantime, the Tall Brothers managed to obtain a promise from the empress Eudoxia to bring their grievances before a council, to be convened for that purpose.⁵²⁷ The promise was kept, but differently than expected. The way in which the wheels were set in motion remains unclear, but shortly afterwards an imperial summons was dispatched to Theophilus to appear before a court in Constantinople, presided over by the local bishop.⁵²⁸ The naming of John as the senior judge of this court is intriguing given his previous reluctance to interfere decisively in their favour, and the Tall Brothers' exasperation at his lukewarm support of their cause.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁴ Allegations of misogyny being a dominant trait of Chrysostom's character were rejected in an analysis of his correspondence with women. See: W. Mayer, 'John Chrysostom and Women Revisited', in: Ead. and I. J. Elmer (eds.), *Men and Women in the Early Christian Centuries* (Strathfield NSW 2014), pp. 211-225.

⁵²⁵ For a thorough consideration of Chrysostom's relations with Eudoxia, see: S. Bralewski, 'Empress Eudoxia through the Prism of the Fifth Century Ecclesiastical Histories', *Vox Patrum* 75 (2020), pp. 43-66. See also: A. Busch, *Die Frauen der theodosianischen Dynastie: Macht und Repräsentation kaiserlicher Frauen im 5. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 2015), pp. 71-85 and W. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1992), pp. 198-202. Liebeschuetz convincingly discredits the *Vita Porphyrii* as an unreliable source. See: Liebeschuetz, *op. cit.* p. 200.

⁵²⁶ K. Holl, 'Die Zeitfolge des ersten Origenistischen Streits', in: id. *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, vol. II (Berlin 1928), pp. 327.

⁵²⁷ Soz. VIII, 13.

⁵²⁸ Pall. *Dial.* VIII.

⁵²⁹ According to Palladius (*Dial.* VII, 132-135), in response to John's written requests to Theophilus to terminate the quarrel in a peaceful manner, the latter wrote in reply to his Constantinopolitan colleague, calling his attention quite offensively to the canons of the Council of Nicaea which denied bishops the adjudication of matters beyond the borders of their dioceses. Kelly (p. 201), attributes the success of the Tall Brothers in winning over the imperial government to Eudoxia's sympathetic response to their pleas. It is more likely that John himself decided to take off the gloves following Theophilus's condescending response to his efforts, especially since Theophilus added to his argumentation another remark, pointing

Theophilus eventually presented himself in Constantinople after delaying as far as he could. In the intervening time, Theophilus had to find a way to extricate himself from the peril that lay ahead. Theophilus, as Palladius reports, had kept all the time a network of agents in the capital whose business it was to provide him with useful information. It was probably through their good services that Theophilus learned about the opposition to John and its Syrian key figures, namely, the bishops Severian, Acacius and Antiochus, and most importantly, the militant archimandrite Isaac, who was bitterly opposed to Chrysostom's endeavours to keep the monks in Constantinople under check.

Theophilus was paving the way for a hitherto unknown phenomenon in the history of Christianity: the slandering of an incumbent orthodox prelate by accusation of heresy under an orthodox emperor. In other words, the charge of heresy was no longer a matter of theological debate with a heterodox "party," "church" or "movement". It was transformed into a means of settling personal scores, through invectives and personal denigration. Theophilus directed his efforts first and foremost *ad hominem*, working hard to find a convenient set of excuses which would create the impression that his attacks were in the final analysis *ad rem*. The following events, perhaps more than any other theological controversies of the period, would have played a crucial role in shaping (or shocking) the psyche of young contemporary Christian persons like Sozomen. Their meaning was, as is reflected throughout the works of both Sozomen and Socrates, the removal of a boundary which up until then was deemed to be profoundly marked in the mind of most Christians since the conversion of Constantine: the ideal boundary between an orthodox church and an orthodox state.

Theophilus' ingenious move was to bring on board the old enemy of Origenism and (as we have seen before) an astute ecclesiastical manipulator, Epiphanius of Salamis. This was achieved by smearing John Chrysostom with the same charge, which had dogged the Tall Brothers and their companions, i.e. the charge of Origenism. There seems to have been correspondence (not extant) between the bishop of Alexandria and the Cypriot bishop in this respect.⁵³⁰ As in John of Jerusalem's case nearly a decade earlier, Epiphanius was more than happy to play a prominent role, which he managed successfully by convening a synod in Cyprus. This synod not only anathematised Origen's teachings, but also made its decision public on the opposite shores of Anatolia.⁵³¹ Shortly afterwards, Epiphanius arrived in Constantinople in person, with a clear intention to mar John Chrysostom's reputation by associating him with advocacy of the Tall Brothers and their pro-Origenist followers, thus attaching to him the Origenist tag. It was hoped that by doing this he would discredit the bishop of Constantinople, raise support from circles hostile to John and as one could expect, might even have the case against Theophilus eventually thrown out. Epiphanius however,

out acerbically that should he be judged, this would be by "Egyptians" and not by someone who resided at a distance of seventy-five days of journey.

See: A. M Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London 2004), pp. 72-74. Hartney observes that John Chrysostom's downfall must not be attributed only to his soured relations with Eudoxia due to the deliberate lack of "political adroitness, but also to the lengths to which he was willing to go in prioritising his version of the Christian community above secular concerns." Socrates and Sozomen, as we shall see, represent, each in their own way, a bemused generation of Christian *litterati* who, having witnessed the tragic case of Chrysostom were left with the dilemma which the dichotomy between lofty Christian idealism and political "adroitness" seemed to have generated.

⁵³⁰ Soc. VI 13; Soz. VIII, 14; J.N.D. Kelly (1995), pp. 205-207.

⁵³¹ Jerome, *Ep.* 90

did not excel as a lobbyist. His attempt to have the signatures of all the bishops who happened to be in Constantinople attached to an anti-Origenist declaration, which apparently, he hoped to circulate during his visit, was met with refusal and even with sharp criticism. Another important goal which Epiphanius failed to achieve was the support of the empress. In fact, he managed mostly to incur her wrath.⁵³² Epiphanius left Constantinople openly expressing his revulsion at the two-faced nature of ecclesiastical, as well as secular politics in the city instead of just bidding farewell to the bishops who escorted him to the harbour before embarking a ship on his way back to Cyprus.⁵³³ He was never to reach his destination and died *en route* (on 12th May 403).

However, despite Epiphanius' failure to have Origen and Origenism anathematised, build up an ecclesiastical and secular anti-Origenist opposition, and consequently, to save Theophilus from the ignominy of being tried by a hated colleague, the tables were beginning to turn. Up until now, (i.e. summer 403), Theophilus had managed not to appear in Constantinople, despite the fact that the imperial summons was delivered to him in person by none other than the head of the *agentes in rebus* nearly a year prior to Epiphanius' visit to Constantinople. The worried Alexandrian bishop must have felt relief when, as he was planning his next move after Epiphanius's death, news from Constantinople had reached him, indicating that John Chrysostom had managed to entangle himself in a new conflict with the empress Eudoxia over a highly provocative sermon with bluntly misogynist contents. Both Socrates and Sozomen, who report this turning point in Chrysostom's fortune, agree that Eudoxia was deeply offended by John's attack on her gender, and asked her husband, Arcadius, to have the bishop of Constantinople summoned to appear before a council, headed by Theophilus, to stand trial. Yet, unlike Socrates, Sozomen, a frustrated court historian (as we shall see in the next chapter), is less precise as regards Arcadius's consent to act as requested, probably due to our historian's reluctance to vilify the imperial dynasty altogether.⁵³⁴ The change in the court's policy unleashed the hard-core opposition to Chrysostom which was present in force in Constantinople and further afield⁵³⁵ and consisted of vindictive bishops and angry monks,

⁵³² Ibid., 15: It is typical of Sozomen to be the most detailed source, and this is certainly the case as regards the circumstances of the encounter between Epiphanius and Eudoxia. The heir, Theodosius the younger, a sickly infant, fell ill during Epiphanius' sojourn in Constantinople. Eudoxia, who was acquainted with Epiphanius' reputation as a healer, sent for the visiting bishop. When the revered prelate was brought in, the worried empress beseeched him to pray for her ailing son. Epiphanius, direct as ever, promised Eudoxia without hesitation that her son would live only if she refrained from supporting the Tall Brothers. Eudoxia, annoyed by what she may have regarded as the bishop's attempt to advance his partisan agenda by virtually blackmailing her replied calmly: "If God sees fit to take away my child, so be it."

⁵³³ Soz., *ibid.* Sozomen seems to rely here on an oral tradition, as his narration of the story opens with λέγεται. Sozomen brings direct quotations, charged with apparent theatrical atmosphere, of Epiphanius' exasperated words of departure from the capital and its clerics: "I leave you the city, the imperial court, the show. I, for my part, am out of here. In fact, I am keen, very keen to do so."

⁵³⁴ Soc. VI, 15; Soz. VIII, 16. Cf. Pall.; Dial. Palladius' version of this drastic change of course in John Chrysostom's dispute with Theophilus is significantly different. According to this version, Arcadius had the council convened with Chrysostom to preside over this gathering, but the bishop of Constantinople refused, making it clear in addition to his refusal that he intended to investigate the charges against Theophilus.

⁵³⁵ Most notably, the dioceses of western Asia Minor (= the civil dioceses of *Asiana* and *Pontica*; See: Pall. *Dial.* 14 for the former and Sozomen, VIII, 6, for the latter) which had undergone a thorough reorganisation under Chrysostom's heavy-handed supervision, resulting, amongst other things in a major reshuffle of incumbents. See in detail: Kelly, pp. 172-180.

directed by a militant leader; the archimandrite Isaac.⁵³⁶ Thus, when Theophilus eventually arrived in Constantinople, the way was already paved for the transformation of the designated accuser into a defendant. Theophilus managed to consolidate the forces, which comprised the opposition to Chrysostom and, carefully avoiding any contact with the bishop of Constantinople after his arrival, assembled the anti-Chrysostom coalition at a synod in a monastery inhabited mostly by Egyptian monks, situated on an estate known as "The Oak". This was formerly the property of the omnipotent prefect Rufinus on the opposite shore of the Bosphorus, so this particular location (which offered secure distance from the centre of the capital and presumably, the unswerving loyalty of its Egyptian residents) suggests that Theophilus had carefully considered matters of personal safety whilst planning this major move.

It is thus permissible to assume that even by the convocation of the synod of the Oak, Theophilus and his anti-Chrysostom supporters were not entirely confident that they would emerge victorious from the conflict, given that, as can be seen in the final analysis, the synod appeared to be mainly the reprisal of an Egyptian alliance against the Constantinopolitan bishop (supported by certain Syrians, including notably bishop Severian of Gabala who as Sozomen reports, 'had not yet changed his former resentment against John').⁵³⁷

The Synod of the Oak tried John *in absentia*. Theophilus, having apparently realised by now that playing the Origenist card would be counterproductive⁵³⁸, focused on John's gross misconduct in administration as his main line of accusation. John's refusal to attend the sessions had been in fact a violation of Arcadius's orders, which obviously weakened John's position at the imperial court even further.⁵³⁹ After four unsuccessful attempts on the part of the synod to summon John Chrysostom to appear before them, John was now found guilty of contumacy, and on these technical grounds (which presumably suited best Theophilus' plans, given the fact that the validity of the Synod of the Oak could in principle be challenged on the same grounds upon which Chrysostom was charged in the first place, i.e. transgression of jurisdictional borders and violation of collegiality) - John was deposed and shortly afterwards sent to exile in Bithynia. The ensuing reaction of the Constantinopolitan crowd to his exile was overwhelmingly tumultuous. The alarming situation on the streets of the capital, in addition to an ominous events that may have happened concurrently such as an earthquake and possibly a miscarriage suffered that very day by none other than Eudoxia herself, may

⁵³⁶ On Isaac, see: P. Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople ca. 350-850* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 66-68.

⁵³⁷ Soz. VIII, 15, For a summary of the synod of the Oak see: Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 59. Twenty-nine out of a total of thirty-six signatories with episcopal titles, as it were, came from Egypt.

⁵³⁸ Pace Susanna Elm's endeavours to show that Theophilus never meant as much. Elm ignores almost completely the previous liaison between Theophilus and Epiphanius which was masterminded, as the evidence suggests, precisely for that purpose. Furthermore, Elm fails to link Theophilus' anti-Origenism with the circumstances under which he came (or more bluntly, was forced) to embrace this conviction. Thus, although it would be hard to disagree with Elm's concluding note that "issues of orthodoxy and heresy are never static. They must always be seen in context: the same doctrinal concerns will be described differently depending on the source, the situation and the status of the accuser and the accused." - it nevertheless seems that Elm's oversight precisely in this respect renders her theory implausible. See: S. Elm, 'The Dog that did not bark: Doctrine and Patriarchal Authority in the Conflict between Theophilus of Alexandria and John Chrysostom of Constantinople' in: L. Ayres and G. Jones (eds), *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London 1998), pp. 68-93.

⁵³⁹ H. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford 2001), p. 495.

have prompted the distressed empress to realise that John's ousting and expulsion had incurred Divine wrath.⁵⁴⁰ She immediately set out to remedy the situation by recalling John and offering for him to be re-instated, sending to him a reconciliatory (as well as self-incriminating) note, indicating that she had nothing to do with the malicious plot to dislodge and tarnish him. John was reluctant to accept the offer before the verdict of the Oak was officially quashed, but after further pressure he did. However, he did not return immediately to the Episcopal palace, as the riots were still on, and we can assume that even in this troubled moment John was inclined to capitalise on the longest-possible duration of the unrest. This suspended return was justified when a counter-synod assembled shortly afterwards and declared the decisions of the Oak null and void, despite not having canonical authority.⁵⁴¹ Theophilus, defeated once again, disappeared from the scene as fast as he could back to Alexandria.

Yet, there was no longer a need of Theophilus to rekindle the flame of opposition to John Chrysostom. Pockets of violence erupted again in the city, and this time churches and worshippers were targeted. Opponents of Chrysostom raided the great church of Hagia Sophia in an attempt to stage a public denunciation of the bishop of Constantinople. This serious violation of public and, more seriously, religious order, ended in an assault by a formation of soldiers which was dispatched to the church to suppress the seditious action. The assault ended with casualties, and to restore order, the bishop himself was brought to deliver a sermon.⁵⁴² John was received by a jubilant crowd of well-wishers and supporters.

Yet, the opposition never really waned. Its disgruntled agitators were now propagating an invective against the counter-synod, based on a canon falsely attributed to the council of Antioch (341), which forbade clerics to appeal for help to the secular authority.⁵⁴³ The new direction taken by Chrysostom's detractors suggests perhaps that Theophilus' clandestine attempts to win the support of the imperial court had not yet been exposed. John's supporters replied that the canons concerned were in fact "Arian", given their dubious provenance. We can clearly see that in the Constantinople of 404 an accusation of Arianism was still more effective and bound to attract more public interest than that of Origenism.

⁵⁴⁰ Our Sources offer different accounts of John's first expulsion and recall. Socrates (*HE*, VI, 16, 5) does not mention Eudoxia in this context whereas Sozomen (*Soz.* VIII, 18, 5) does include her in his version of John's banishment, depicting her as being the one behind John's recall. Sozomen intimates that 'having yielded to the supplications of the people' (Εἰξασα δὲ ταῖς ἱκεσίαις τοῦ δήμου), the empress persuaded her husband Arcadius to allow John's return. Sozomen may have been hinting here that Eudoxia had concerns about the realisation of her plans, as he goes on to say that the empress dispatched the eunuch Brison, her *confidant*, 'in haste' (ἐν τάχει) to arrange the deposed Constantinopolitan bishop's journey back to the capital. The return of Chrysostom following the impact of an earthquake is related by Theodoret (*Theod. HE* V, 34), whereas the possibility of Eudoxia's intervention in favour of John's recall may have followed a miscarriage, perceived by the terrified empress as a punishment for his exile is reported by Palladius (*Dial.* IX, 5). For a comparative discussion of Eudoxia's portrayal by Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, see: S Bralewski, 'Empress Eudoxia through the Prism of Fifth Century Ecclesiastical Histories', *Vox Patrum* 75 (2020), pp. 43-66.

⁵⁴¹ See: J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London 1995), p. 238.

⁵⁴² *PG* 52, Col. 440 183

⁵⁴³ See: C. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398–404) Weltsicht und Wirken eines Bischofs in der Hauptstadt des Oströmischen Reiches* (Tübingen 2002), pp. 327-353.

John's victory was short-lived, and his second and final deposition and exile were not a matter of theological dispute. Having regained his unrestrained self-confidence which as we saw, often came coupled with self-destructive tactlessness, Chrysostom again challenged Eudoxia. This time John let his golden mouth go aggressively against women following a dedication of an honorific statue of the empress, presented to her by the prefect of the capital.⁵⁴⁴ The palace responded angrily by imposing a house arrest on the bishop. Shortly after Pentecost 404, a deputation of Chrysostom's opponents was received in audience by Arcadius. The worn-out bishops, impatient and fearful that John might manage another feat of survival demanded an immediate and permanent deposition and banishment of the bishop of Constantinople. Their demands were accepted, and after Arcadius's official approval, John Chrysostom was ousted from his see for the second time, never to return.⁵⁴⁵ The death of Eudoxia in autumn 404 did not change his fortunes, and he was never recalled. He died near Comana in Pontus probably from thirst and exhaustion in September 407, having spent three years in exile during which he was often transferred from one place to another across Asia Minor.⁵⁴⁶

John's ashes were returned to Constantinople in 438 and their return and re-burial were celebrated solemnly following his full rehabilitation by the emperor Theodosius II.⁵⁴⁷ In the intervening years, and indeed even before his death, John Chrysostom generated a popular movement which, alongside other movements which originated from other controversies (Concerning the heresies of Pelagianism and Nestorianism), shook the early Byzantine society throughout. His stormy episcopate shattered what hitherto appeared to be a rather successful (if not idyllic) marriage between Crown and Altar by posing afresh, questions about the borderlines between the secular and the sacred, between personal ambition and doctrinal devotion and, overall, between power and belief.

Despite his staunch Nicene orthodoxy and rhetorical brilliance, he embodied the vulnerability of the monk who emerges from his desert only to discover the thin Christian coating of the eastern Roman metropolis. The questions and confusions which the John Chrysostom affair the consciousness and perceptions of Sozomen and his generation posthumously perhaps even more than during Chrysostom's lifetime. He became the first orthodox political victim under an orthodox emperor: a new type of martyr, *tout court*.⁵⁴⁸ John Chrysostom's martyrdom

⁵⁴⁴ For the dedicatory inscription see: *ILS* 822.

⁵⁴⁵ On John Chrysostom's exile, see: W. Mayer, 'John Chrysostom: Deconstructing the Construction of Exile' *Theologische Zeitschrift* 62 (2006), pp. 248-258.

⁵⁴⁶ J.N.D. Kelly (1995), pp. 272-285

⁵⁴⁷ Soc. VII, 45 cf. Theod. *HE* V, 36, 1-2. See: C. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398-404): Weltsicht und Wirken eines Bischofs in der Hauptstadt des Oströmischen Reiches* (Tübingen 2002), pp. 415-423.

⁵⁴⁸ On the "imitation" of martyrs as a cultural *topos* in late antique Christianity, see: P. Brown, 'Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity', *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000), pp. 1-24. On John Chrysostom's enthusiasm about martyrdom, as opposed to Augustine's warnings against it, see J.M. Gaddis, (2005) pp. 170-179. Gaddis rightly draws our attention to a major characteristic of the *Zeitgeist* which he regards as paradigmatic: "Many different forms of zealous behaviour could be encouraged or justified under the rubric of imitating to honouring the martyrs. Ideologies and discourses of martyrdom, then, played a key role in developing a larger paradigm of action pleasing to God. This was made possible by a broadening in the definition of the word "martyrdom", taking it back to its original pre-Christian sense of "bearing witness". This possibility gained new relevance after the conversion of Constantine brought the age of pagan persecution and traditional martyrdom to an end, and many Christians began to worry that it was no longer possible to imitate the virtues of the early martyrs."

soon evolved into a cult, shared by considerable number of followers who refused to let this martyrdom be forgotten and their indignation to be placated. Their line of action did exclude recourse to violence and despite the scanty evidence it can be argued that their determination was not fruitless. Their success is reflected already in the restoration of John's name into the Constantinopolitan diptychs as early as 416 and the culmination of that endeavour is apparently Chrysostom's final rehabilitation by Theodosius II. Sozomen's outlook appears to be an outcome of this unsettling dialogue between the 'people' and the 'prince' (i.e. the emperor) who were meant to function in harmony as organs in the body of Christ – the Church. Sozomen's ambivalence was apparently born out of the inharmonious tones in this dialogue which was hitherto an unprecedented chapter in the history of the Christian church.⁵⁴⁹

D. Conclusion

Any attempt to reconstruct the background for the writing of Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* is bound to entail the elusive business of evaluating at least two other major controversies of undeniable importance, which however, are absent from Sozomen's surviving text. These are the disputes over the teachings of the British-born monk Pelagius and of the Syrian-born monk and later bishop of Constantinople, Nestorius of Germanicia who was condemned and deposed at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Both, like John Chrysostom, his nemesis Theophilus of Alexandria and his nephew and successor Cyril of Alexandria, who led the anti-Nestorian opposition represent the efflorescence of Christian intellectual acumen in Sozomen's generation but, as we have seen, Sozomen is not unaware of the problematic side of this intellectual brilliance which from his point of view as a focaliser, is reflected when coupled with episcopal leadership. Right from the very beginning of his *HE*, Sozomen shares with the reader his ambivalence about intellectual skills: "*If they (scil. those who governed the Christian Church in its early beginnings) did not indeed possess a language sharpened for expression or beauty of style, nor the power to convince their hearers by means of dialectics or mathematical demonstrations, still not because of this they succeeded in their undertaking any less.*"⁵⁵⁰ The controversies which their respective opinions and teachings provoked, troubled seriously the Christian Church in the second, third and fourth decades of the fifth century with far-reaching consequences. Despite the danger of getting bogged down in hopeful speculations which often lies at the doorstep of any reference to a *testimonium e silentio*, it would still be worth our while to make a mention of these controversies, as it would be constructive to assume that the formation of Sozomen's religious and political leanings could not have possibly gone completely untouched by these doctrinal conflicts.⁵⁵¹ Whether or not these disputes had left identifiable

⁵⁴⁹ Traces of scandal and fear evoked by memories of the excessive use of violence against orthodox worshippers who were believed to be Chrysostom's supporters, their spouses and offspring, during Easter 404, are distinctly present in Sozomen's narrative. See, e.g. Sozomen's elegant reference to false allegations of "disorderly acts" which had been fabricated against the Johnite clergymen who were treated harshly by the soldiers. See: Soz. VIII, 23.

⁵⁵⁰ Soz. I, 1, 10 Εἰ γὰρ καὶ γλῶσσαν πρὸς φράσιν ἢ κάλλος λέξεως ἡκονημένην οὐκ εἶχον οὐδὲ <δια>λέξεσιν ἢ γραμμικαῖς ἀποδείξεσι τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας ἔπειθον οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο χεῖρον αὐτοῖς ἐπράχθη τὸ σποθδαζόμενον.

⁵⁵¹ Thus, Sozomen's reflections about the Jews' refusal to receive Christ and accept the Gospel could have been inspired e.g. by Cyril of Alexandria and his incisive rhetoric against Nestorius at Ephesus I. See: Cyril of Alexandria, *Homilia V, Ephesi dicta deposito Nestorio* (CEPG 5253) (=ACO I. I. 2, pp. 92-94. Cyril compares Nestorius to the Jews who had accused the early Christians of worshipping a

(even if oblique) traces in Sozomen's narrative should thus be acknowledged as a vexing question which, given the circumstances, must be kept lurking behind the wings, to be brought back to the fore at a later stage of our analysis.

The possible relevance of the Pelagian controversy⁵⁵² to a study of Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* deserves, however, to be (at least) recognised as an option, given that the surviving and scanty evidence testifies to an eventful and significant Palestinian stage in the troubled career of the British born monk Pelagius (d. after 418), the initiator of the dispute.⁵⁵³ Although, on the whole, it is fair to say, the controversy concerned is known to have left a divisive mark mainly in the west (dissenting churches of the Pelagian variety are believed to have flourished in Britain and Ireland as late as the sixth century, while in Gaul an active Pelagian 'movement' is known to have challenged the Catholic church throughout the fifth century⁵⁵⁴), it would appear somewhat simplistic to infer from the church historians' silence on the subject that the east did not have to grapple at all with Pelagian questions and with the presence of Pelagian groups there.⁵⁵⁵

mere man. On Cyril's rhetoric, see: S. Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: The Making of a Saint and of a Heretic* (Oxford 2004), pp. 192-195.

⁵⁵² On Pelagius's theology see: S. Squires, *The Pelagian Controversy: An Introduction to the Enemies of Grace and the Conspiracy of Lost Souls* (Eugene, OR 2019), pp. 183-193.

⁵⁵³ For an overview of Rome and the origins of the Pelagian controversy, see: R. Toczko, 'Rome as the Basis of Argument in the So-Called Pelagian Controversy (415-418)', *Studia Patristica LXX* (2013), pp. 649-659. Y.-M. Duval, *L'affaire Iovinien: d'une crise de la société romaine à une crise de la pensée chrétienne à la fin du IV et au début du V siècle* (Rome 2003), pp. 287-313. In an essay which brilliantly explores the weighty influence of Pelagianism in the West, Robert Markus argues: "The Eastern churches were scarcely touched by the controversy. The conflict, which divided the Western church bypassed Eastern Christendom almost entirely. "But between these statements Markus does draw our attention nevertheless to some evidence which, however scanty, suggests that the East may have been more than aware of the doctrinal crisis which followed the spread of Pelagianism in the west. Thus, Markus points out: "Although two bishops of Constantinople appear to have complied with Western wishes, Nestorius gave shelter to the bishops exiled by the government of Ravenna after the proscriptions of the teachings of Pelagius and Celestius in 418." It is hard to believe that Nestorius acted on such a matter out of pure ignorance. Markus relies amongst others, on Marius Mercator's account of the conflict and particularly, on his comments on Nestorius's decision to grant the heterodox refugees asylum in Constantinople, which Markus cites thereafter: "whether he (*scil.* Nestorius) did this from malice or folly it is hard to know." Mercator's partisanship is too obvious and as such warrants an extremely cautious approach to it. Markus also draws our attention to what appears to be the conspicuously small space, which the Pelagian controversy occupies in the *Acta* of the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (in 431). However, we do find in the *Acta* concerned a remark made by Cyril, bishop of Alexandria which follows an anathema of numerous heretics, whereby the bishop adds to the list 'those who follow the opinions of Celestius and Pelagius, which we have never received' (*ACO* 111.3, P.22; I/2, p.80). This wording, coming from the pen of Cyril of Alexandria one of the leading theologians and ecclesiastical politicians in the first half of the fifth century, may suggest an apologetical need to disprove past accusations once and for all. Thus, we are presented with material which may give room to the thought that eastern ecclesiastical circles were poised to minimise and indeed silence altogether the actual impact which Pelagianism may have had in the East. See: R. A. Markus, 'The Legacy of Pelagius: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Conciliation', in: R. Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge 1989), pp. 216-217.

⁵⁵⁴ R. W. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth Century Gaul* (Washington DC 1992), p. 40 ff.

⁵⁵⁵ See: K. Heyden, 'Western Christianity in Palestine: Motivation, Integration and Repercussions of Migration in Late Antiquity', in: C. Burlacioiu (ed.), *Migration and Diaspora Formation: New Perspectives on a Global History of Christianity* (Berlin 2022), pp. 67-90.

Sozomen's lifetime stretched over a period of major controversies in the Christian church. It began with a promise of a *pax ecclesiae* following the ascendancy of Theodosius I 'the great' in 379, the victory of Nicene Catholicism, its official ecclesiastical affirmation at the Council of Constantinople (381) and the termination of the Trinitarian controversy. The marriage between crown and altar which Theodosius's reign had fostered, seemed ready to enjoy happy days on the solid foundation of a united Roman empire.

The course of events proved to be different. Arianism was indeed defeated, but the Arian churches continued to flourish despite the official ban on this denomination. The victory of Nicene orthodoxy and the disappearance of persecutions exposed and escalated deeper internal divisions which previous threats and perils managed to cement and conceal. East and West were separated in the church before the final partition of the Roman Empire between Arcadius and Honorius in 395, creating a problematic yet persistent pattern of rulership in the Eastern empire, whereby an ineffective emperor is merely background of the actions of an influential figure, such as was the *praefectus praetorio orientis* Rufinus of Aquitania in the first year of Arcadius's reign.⁵⁵⁶ The newly restored orthodox unity proved to be only a loose framework under which, tensions of ethnic, philosophical and theological differences could emerge. The schools of Alexandria and Antioch continued to thrive and charge the atmosphere of the Christian intellectual world with the teachings of inspiring teachers and preachers such as Didymus 'the blind' and John Chrysostom, as well as Origen *redivivus* whose theological and exegetical legacy was championed by a great many, not the least by Rufinus of Aquileia and indeed, by Theophilus of Alexandria before his defection to the opposite camp. Christian intellectual diversity in the East also nurtured its own detractors. Epiphanius of Salamis, the *doyen* of the Christian science of heresiology and heretics-hunting, hailed from Palestine, where under the influence of monks like Hilarion, and later on in the first half of the fifth century, the deserts of Judea and Sinai with their *laurae* were beginning to emerge as leading centres of monasticism with new ascetic teachings and practice.⁵⁵⁷ This period saw the meteoric rise to eminence of monasticism, not only as a venerated Christian way of life but also as a human pool from which the church could recruit its hierarchy, including potential incumbents of key Episcopal sees. However, the coming of age of the monastic movement meant also a growing self-assurance which turned the monks into a tightly knit network of influential pressure groups, and indeed fully-fledged political parties in major urban centres like Alexandria and Constantinople.⁵⁵⁸ In those cities local dignitaries, bishops and even emperors were often forced to listen with awe to the monks, or otherwise face violence and disorder. The urban monks of Constantinople withstood the attempts of bishops like John Chrysostom and Nestorius to tame them. In Alexandria their Egyptian brethren became the main political power which could make or break a bishop's career - as Theophilus, the

⁵⁵⁶ For a discussion of Rufinus's role in Arcadius's court, see now: M. Mariani, *Arcadius (395-408): Dispute religiose, scontri etnici, giochi diplomatici e intrighi di palazzo alla corte di un imperatore dimenticato* (Wrocław 2020), pp. 148-221. Rufinus's position as the strong man behind the imperial throne was filled by a succession of prominent figures who exercised crucial influence at the imperial courts of Arcadius and Theodosius II. Sozomen seems to be going out of his way to portray Pulcheria, Theodosius II's sister as one of them.

⁵⁵⁷ On the dissemination of monasticism in fifth century Palestine, see: J. Patrick, Sabas, *Leader of Palestinian Monasticism* (Washington DC 1995), pp. 19-83.

⁵⁵⁸ On Alexandrian Monasticism see: C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity* (Baltimore, MD 2006), pp. 245-277. On the beginnings of Constantinopolitan monasticism see: P. Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople ca. 350-850* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 62-89.

energetic and strong-willed bishop of Alexandria came to recognise. Their growing involvement in ecclesiastical politics denoted another vivid aspect of this unexpected Christian pluralism as that phenomenon illustrated the crossing between the loftiest spiritual aspirations and practices - with the most mundane of pursuits geared by uncontrollable ambitions.

Christian intellectual diversity in the first half of the fifth century exposed also an ethnic diversity which seemed to have gone beyond its levels under the old pagan Roman Empire. Sozomen must have rubbed shoulders in Constantinople with speakers of Greek, Syriac and Latin and possibly of Germanic languages spoken by those whom he may have regarded as 'Barbarians'.⁵⁵⁹ There were among others, Armenians, Persians, Iberians, Goths, Egyptians and 'Indians' (i.e. Axumite Ethiopians).⁵⁶⁰ The ethnic diversity is likely to have sharpened the naturally anticipated sensitivity of an immigrant like Sozomen to questions of collective identity. Religious diversity, however, often appeared to be intertwined with this ethnic richness. It may have been stimulating and even inspiring - but it could likewise confuse and overwhelm a native of a small township from the fringes of the Sinai desert in orthodox *Palestina Salutaris*.⁵⁶¹

In a sense, Sozomen's focalisation as a witness and historian of the Church is mirrored in a rare document which came from the pen of the reigning emperor, Theodosius II, to whom Sozomen dedicated his work, as we shall see in the following chapter.⁵⁶² In November 430, during the mounting pressure of the Nestorian controversy, Theodosius wrote a *Sacra* to Cyril of Alexandria in which he unfolded his political philosophy (in fact, his political theology).⁵⁶³ The emperor stressed the pivotal role of ecclesiastical unity as a key factor in the security and the well-being of the Roman Empire and its citizens. The emperor referred to himself as a sovereign appointed with God's Grace and thus the mediator between Heaven and earth, between God and the human race. Keeping the church and the empire in the correct state of piety and obedience to God's will is the Christian emperor's mission and the very foundation of his realm is laid upon Divine sanction.⁵⁶⁴ But it is the same Theodosius, who is still associated by many scholars with Gilbert Dagron's theory of the so-called Byzantine Caesaro-Papism⁵⁶⁵, who emphatically argued in another *sacra* to bishop Cyril of Alexandria, written at about the same time, that only proper ecclesiastical deliberation and enquiry and not

⁵⁵⁹ Soz. IX, 1, 1.

⁵⁶⁰ Soz. II, 24. Cf. Ruf. I, 37; Soc. I, 19; Philost. III, 3. See: G.B. Ladner, 'On Roman Attitudes toward Barbarians in Late Antiquity' *Viator* 7 (1976), pp. 1-25.

⁵⁶¹ On Sozomen's Palestinian 'local patriotism' see: E.I. Argov, 'A Church Historian in Search of an Identity: Aspects of Early Byzantine Palestine in Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* ZAC 9 (2006), pp. 367-397.

⁵⁶² Sozomen references to Theodosius II in the surviving part of his *HE* are tellingly typified by what can be regarded as a 'low key narrative strategy'. Sozomen refers to that emperor as 'the son of the empress' (VIII, 15, 1) and mentions him in passing before (and in sharp contrast to) the beginning of his panegyric of Pulcheria (IX, 1, 3). The ensuing question would then be: could this be expected of an author who really wished to ingratiate himself to the reigning emperor and his court?

⁵⁶³ On Theodosius II's involvement in the councils of Ephesus I and II see: K. Iłski, *Sobory w polityce religijnej Teodozjusza II* (Poznań 1992), pp. 31-61.

⁵⁶⁴ *Sacra ad Cyrillum Alex. et ad singulos metropolitae*, ACO 1, I, p. 114.

⁵⁶⁵ On the foundations and principles of so-called Byzantine Caesaro-Papism in relation to Theodosius II, see: G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le «cesaropapisme» byzantin* (Paris 1996), p. 61 ff. Dagron's theory has been recently contested. See: A. Caldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge, MA 2015), pp. 72-73 and pp. 165-184.

arrogance and verbal contention can reveal the divine truth in accordance with the succession of apostles and bishops. The Christian faith, according to Theodosius, calls for consensus rather than imposition and coercion of doctrines.⁵⁶⁶

This pronouncement, when taken as read, could have been welcomed by the church historian Socrates of Constantinople who concluded his *HE* in 439 in a statement which highlights his distrust of the clergy and his tendency to regard them as belligerent zealots, almost perennially responsible for strife and tension:

*'In such a flourishing condition were the affairs of the Church at this time. But here we shall close our history, praying that the Churches everywhere with the cities and the nations may live in peace: for so long as peace continues, those who desire to write histories will find no materials for their purpose'.*⁵⁶⁷

Was this an expression of a candid belief in a possible 'end of history' emanating from 'Un heritage de paix et de piété' as Peter van Nuffelen believes, bound to lay a foundation to a future of doctrinal unity and political harmony for the Christian church and the Christian empire?⁵⁶⁸ Or was it, perhaps, just an ostensible optimism, which may have hidden behind a rhetorical façade and a calculated narrative, more than a whiff of disquietude, doubts and even disillusion? Could these sentiments be passed on to a keen reader of Socrates albeit a reader determined to keep the faith despite the upheaval of the first Origenist controversy and the crisis which followed the demise of John Chrysostom? Could this *coincidentia oppositorum* warrant a response from an author with a propensity (beyond practical considerations of personal safety) towards what we recognise and refer to as 'ambivalence'?⁵⁶⁹

Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* was to appear after Socrates's statement had been published. It remains to be seen whether a reading of Sozomen's *HE* through this prism may shed more light on Socrates' intriguing note of conclusion despite the incompleteness of Sozomen's own work.

⁵⁶⁶ *Sacra ad Cyrillum*, p. 73.

⁵⁶⁷ Soc. *HE*, VII, 48, 6-7

⁵⁶⁸ Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage...* (2004), pp. 412-417. Van Nuffelen, apparently, is unable to ignore certain concerned tones in the ecclesiastical histories of both Socrates and Sozomen but does not seem to make much of it as he associates those concerns with "...la peur de perdre ce bien qui leur est transmis." (ibid. p. 424).

⁵⁶⁹ For a concise discussion of 'ambivalence' as 'the simultaneous attachment to incompatible or contradictory ideas or beliefs', see: K. Weisbrode, *On Ambivalence: The Problems and Pleasures of having It Both Ways* (Cambridge, MA 2011), p. 11 ff. For further discussion, see cap. 5 in this study.

Chapter 3: Sozomen and his Ecclesiastical History

*Le christianisme est une religion d'historiens. D'autres systèmes religieux ont pu fonder leurs croyances et leurs rites sur une mythologie à peu près extérieure au temps humain; pour livres sacrés; les chrétiens ont des livres d'histoire, et leur liturgies commémorent, avec les épisodes de la vie terrestre d'un Dieu, les fastes de l'Église et les saints:*⁵⁷⁰

*Le type même du faux problème qui s'offre à nous au départ est le conflit entre l'eschatologie chrétienne et la notion du progrès. La polémique religieuse s'est trop souvent égarée dans cette impasse: certes, il reste exact que ce thème du progrès spontané et continue de l'humanité est issu d'une laïcisation et, en somme, d'une dégradation rationaliste de l'eschatologie chrétienne; rien n'est plus trompeur pourtant que cette opposition progrès-espérance ou progrès-mystère.*²

A. Sozomen: Origins, Life and Career

There is no denying it: we know very little about Sozomen. Given the paucity of information about the ecclesiastical historian who is the subject of the present study, a reconstruction of his life and career is bound to be largely guesswork based on shreds of information which have come down to us through a rather flimsy transmission. The scanty evidence has to be drawn from Sozomen's own *Historia Ecclesiastica* where in most of our supporting material is gathered, in fact, from sporadic remarks which Sozomen makes in passing throughout his narrative. We shall apparently be best served if we turn our attention to that sparse information before turning the spotlight on Sozomen's *opus* itself.

Sozomen hailed from Palestine, and more specifically, from the rural area surrounding the city of Gaza in the late Roman province of *Palestina Tertia* in south-western Palestine.⁵⁷¹ He relates that his family was rooted in the village⁴ of Bethelia (present day Beit-Lahiye, near Gaza).⁵⁷² This place received its original name (i.e. *beit eloha* = 'house of god') ἐκ τῆς Σύρων φωνῆς - 'from the language of the Syrians' which is Sozomen's reference to the local variety of Aramaic, perhaps the so-called 'Christian-Palestinian Aramaic'.⁵⁷³ The 'house of god'

⁵⁷⁰ M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou le Métier d'historien* (Paris 2002), p. 38. ²

P. Ricoeur, *Histoire et vérité* (Paris 1955), p. 81.

⁵⁷¹ See: Soz. VI, 32, 5. On the surviving evidence concerning the three *provinciae* in late antiquity see: F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408-450* (Berkeley CA 2006), p. 71. On the countryside of *Palestina Tertia* at the turn of the fifth century see: D. Bar 'Frontier and Periphery in late Antique Palestine', *GRBS* 44 (2004), pp. 69-92. On the development and organisation of the Church in late Roman/early Byzantine Palestine, see: L. Perrone, 'Rejoice Zion, Mother of All Churches': Christianity in the Holy Land during the Byzantine Era' in: O. Limor and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land. From the Origins to the Latin Kingdoms*, (Turnhout 2006), pp. 141-173. See also: H. Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2008), pp. 328-347.

⁵⁷² On the territory of Gaza in late antiquity see: L. Di Segni, 'The Territory of Gaza: Notes of Historical geography', in: B. Bitton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky, (eds.), *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2004), pp. 41-58.

⁵⁷³ See: Soz. VI, 32, 5 cf. Soz. VIII, 10, 1. This Aramaic dialect belongs to the so-called 'Western Aramaic' group and is also known sometimes as 'Syro-Palestinian'. We must not confuse it however (as indeed do both C. Hartnft and A.-J. Festugière, Sozomen's translators into English and French respectively)-with the Syriac, which is an Eastern Aramaic dialect. On Christian Palestinian Aramaic and its various names See: C. Müller-Kessler, *Grammatik des Christlich-Palästinisch-Aramäischen* (Hildesheim 1991), pp.1-4. For a useful description of the various groups of Aramaic dialects and their evolution, see J.A. Fitzmeyer, 'The phases of the Aramaic Language' in Id., *A wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula, MO 1979), pp. 57-84. Note also: F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and belief under Theodosius II* (Berkeley, CA 2006), pp. 107-116; On the development of literary culture in Syriac (especially in the light

concerned was a shrine dedicated to the deity of Zeus-Marnas, the latter name being apparently a Graecism of *marana* - 'our lord' in Aramaic)⁵⁷⁴. Sozomen's family, we are told, had been Christian for at least two generations prior to our historian's birth. According to Sozomen, it was his grandfather who converted to Christianity following a miracle which saved his neighbour and (it seems)⁵⁷⁵ kinsman, one Alaphion. The wonder worker was the illustrious monk Hilarion, himself a native of Tabathea, a nearby village.⁵⁷⁶ Hilarion's help was requested when Alaphion became gravely ill, having become possessed by a demon. Sozomen stresses that this miraculous deliverance from the grip of the malignant agent followed several futile attempts to drive out the evil spirit. Those attempts were carried out by pagan and Jewish practitioners alike, but to no avail. It was only at that grim point of desperation that Hilarion was brought in. This seems to have been Sozomen's subtle way to reveal his family's former disregard of Christianity, as the non-Christian healers were consulted first, and only after their failure to relieve the patient from his suffering, when Sozomen's despondent family had no longer anything to lose, they sought the help of a Christian holy man.⁵⁷⁷

Be that as it may, the ensuing event was to change their attitude and indeed their lives. The Christian hermit is reported to have succeeded where pagan and Jewish practitioners proved to be ineffective. Hilarion's method of treatment was, according to Sozomen, simply to call out the name of Christ, and the possessed was immediately freed of his devilish tormentor. The miraculous feat must have left its mark on the patient's grateful family, as Sozomen goes on to report that Alaphion, together with Sozomen's grandfather and their families, were all baptised shortly afterwards.⁵⁷⁸ Although the story can be understood at first glance as a rather blunt triumphalistic⁵⁷⁹ exposé concerning the validity and indeed, the superiority of Christianity, it seems to have more to it. This evocation of family memories, narrated ostensibly in passing, does not appear to be a general statement of those convictions, but rather an attempt on Sozomen's part to re-configure his focalisation apparently in order to weed out what seems to have been a deeply- implanted image of the superstitious characteristics which were still actively attributed by Christian leaders to the religions of the Roman near-eastern religious 'market-place'.⁵⁸⁰ The author who claims to be a historian

of its relations with the Greek), see: Idem. *Religion, Language and Community in the Roman Near East: Constantine to Muhammad* (Oxford 2013), pp. 117-131 and Idem, 'The Evolution of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac?', *J ECS* 21 (2013), pp. 43-92.

See now: H. Gzella, 'The Syriac Language in the Context of the Semitic Languages' in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (Abingdon 2019), pp. 205-221.

⁵⁷⁴ Soz., V, 15, 14. On the deity Zeus-Marnas, see Z. Rubin, 'Porphyrius of Gaza and the conflict between Christianity and Paganism in Southern Palestine' in A. Kofsky and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Sharing the Sacred. Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem 1998), pp. 31-66.

⁵⁷⁵ Soz. V, 15.

⁵⁷⁶ On Hilarion See: Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis* 32; Soz. III, 14, 21-27.

⁵⁷⁷ On the role of exorcism in the dissemination of Christianity see: C. Grey, 'Demoniacs, Dissent and disempowerment in the late Roman West', *J ECS* 13 (2005), pp. 15-37.

⁵⁷⁸ See: Soz. V, 15, 15.

⁵⁷⁹ On various aspects of the 'ideology of victory' in the ecclesiastical histories of Eusebius, Rufinus, Philostorgius, Socrates and Sozomen, see now: S. Bralowski, *Symmachia cesarstwa rzymskiego z Bogiem chrześcijan (IV-VI wiek)* (Łódź 2019), pp. 112-128. On 'triumphalism' as a major constitutive element in the emergence of Christian historical conscientiousness and its manifestation in the narratives of the nascent Christian historiography, see: G.W. Trunpf, *Early Christian Historiography: Narratives of Retributive Justice* (London 2000), pp. 109-157.

⁵⁸⁰ See: R. Beck, 'The Religious Market of the Roman Empire: Rodney Stark and Christianity's Pagan

appears to be grappling here with the norms of the 'rationalistic' school of classical Greek historiography (namely the Thucydides-Polybius tradition which also inspired historians who wrote in Latin such as Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus) whereby the supernatural and the factual should not mix. Sozomen, in what appears to be an attempt to reconcile between hagiography and historiography, seems to be particularly keen, unlike his predecessor Socrates of Constantinople, to give more weight to a specific *Christian understanding of history*. This is achieved not by direct statements, but rather, by highlighting the progeny of his views in the miraculous event concerned. Clearly it proved to be a milestone in his own family history.⁵⁸¹ This endeavour must not be taken for granted and – if our assumption is correct – it may offer us a clue as to certain concerns that our church historian could have had about his potential readership. In other words, the story of the cure seems to be an attempt to proclaim the viability and relevance of a Christian message which could be associated with certain strata of the Constantinopolitan society mainly with biblical mythology, not necessarily with 'reliable' history in the traditional-classical (i.e. pagan) sense of that term. Sozomen is apparently aiming at an audience which, although Christian, still appears to be tolerant, at times cynical and easy going, or at least indifferent – as to the 'correct' attitude towards other religions and not the least, towards heresy. In fact, it is now possible to see how the twenty-seven intervening years between John Chrysostom's downfall and Nestorius's demise which overlap a significant part of Theodosius II's reign are patently marked by a growing politicisation of the Church and by a deeper involvement of the secular clergy and indeed, the monastic movement, in secular affairs.⁵⁸²

Competition' in: L.E. Vaage (ed.), *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity* (Waterloo, Ont. 2006), pp. 233-252. Beck's essay is essentially a critique of a major (yet debatable) attempt to study the dissemination of Christianity in the Roman Empire by utilizing the research toolbox of a social scientist. See: R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ 1996), esp. pp 191-208. This 'market' did not vanish at once after the conversion of Constantine and the ensuing gradual Christianisation of his empire. In fact, only after the rise of Theodosius I 'the Great' in 379, were other religions seriously targeted and it was apparently not before the closure of the philosophy and rhetoric schools of Athens under Justinian in 529 that the market concerned did breathe its last (a state of affairs which was to last less than a century until the coming of Islam).

⁵⁸¹ Soz. V, 15, 15-16. Cf. Socrates's apologetical tone in the *Introduction* section to *HE*, V. Socrates explains there to his readers his choice to combine his account of ecclesiastical affairs with more secular events such as wars, justifying it plainly thus: "We do this for many reasons: not only to bring to one's knowledge the events, but also in order that the readers do not experience a feeling of saturation by dwelling on the bishops' contentiousness and on what they engineered against each other" (Τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ πολλῶν ἔνεκα ποιούμεν <οὐ μόνον> τοῦ εἰς γνῶσιν ἄγειν τὰ γινόμενα, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ τοῦ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας μὴ προσκορεῖς γενέσθαι ἐκ τοῦ μόνῃ σχολάζειν τῇ φιλονείκιᾳ τῶν ἐπισκόπων καὶ οἷς κατ' ἀλλήλων ἐτύρευθσαν). The narrative strategy behind this explanation is not necessarily obvious: Is it really essential to include wars in an historical narrative to secure its accuracy? This statement is bound to remain somewhat obscure unless one assumes that regardless of their Christianity, the readers which Socrates and indeed Sozomen were hoping to address, tended still to attribute more reliability to secular accounts of historical events which were written along the lines of pagan Greco-Roman historiography.

⁵⁸² For Sozomen's account of John Chrysostom's following as well as his opposition see: Soz. VIII, 2, 11. For a comparative analysis of Sozomen's and Socrates's account of John Chrysostom's episcopate and its aftermath, see: S. Bralewski, *Symmachia cesarstwa rzymskiego z Bogiem chrześcijan (IV–VI wiek)* (Łódź 2019), pp. 157-188. On Sozomen's view of what may be referred to in modern terms as the constantinopolitan 'mass-psychology' (i.e. his treatment of the behaviour of the 'crowd' in the Eastern Roman capital) and its implication on religious and secular policy-making the eastern Roman empire see: I. V. Krivushin, *История и народ в церковной историографии пятого века* (Ivanovo 1994), pp. 49-74 (esp. p. 56 ff). On the transformation of ascetic 'voluntary' practice with its 'popular' prestige into an active factor in the recruitment for and governance of the episcopate, see:

It would not go amiss to note in this respect that the relative tolerance which non-Christians were still enjoying in the Roman east had been continuously eroding since the restoration of Nicene supremacy.⁵⁸³ Oriental paganism, as well as Judaism, were to suffer a devastating blow from the anti-pagan and anti-Jewish imperial legislation of Theodosius I and his successors, (although its actual implementation appears to have been quite erratic).⁵⁸⁴ We shall return to this strand in Sozomen's writing, which seems to represent a lack of certainty and even fear about the place of Christianity in the Roman empire overall, a rather surprising sentiment, given the fact that the empire had been 'officially' Christian for over a century prior to the time in which Sozomen was writing. It is also essential to remember that the empire was also 'officially' Orthodox, (i.e. Nicene), for (approximately) seven decades before the composition of Sozomen's *HE* i.e. since the accession of Theodosius I. From all our surviving sources of the period, it is Sozomen who reveals the uncertainty and disquietude which many orthodox Christians seem to have felt under Theodosius II, a theme which was often suppressed, perhaps not so much due to fear of an official censorship of sorts, but more likely out of a genuine reticence to display any kind of doubt which could in turn be understood as dissenting or even as disbelief altogether. It is perhaps against that backdrop that we should see Sozomen's so-called 'dedication' of his work to Theodosius II (which in fact is styled as a petition to the emperor, calling upon him to attach his seal of approval to the submitted *opus*).⁵⁸⁵ Moreover, to the concealed sentiment of uncertainty about the place of orthodox Christianity (in the eastern empire, at any rate), it is essential to add the looming uncertainty about Theodosius II's succession which, apart from being in a sense closely connected with Sozomen's concerns about future, seems, as will be shown later, to have preoccupied Sozomen as well, whilst working on his *HE*.

Apparently, the attribution of Divine healing powers to Christian saints like Hilarion, the monk who eventually drove out the demon 'only' (and the ostensible effortlessness of the feat

C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, CA 2005), pp. 100-152 (esp. p. 137 ff.). See also: A. Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MS 2004), pp. 178-191. Sterk attempts here a summary of the fifth century ecclesiastical historians' attitudes towards the ordination of monks and their elevation to the episcopate. Her conclusions however are quite erratic, and as regards Sozomen, she appears to overlook Socrates's and Sozomen's diametrically opposed attitudes towards this issue, clearly reflected throughout their respective accounts of John Chrysostom's episcopate. Cf. Soc. VI, 2, 11-12 whereby Socrates quite reticently justifies the writing of his account by indicating that 'the man is famous' (ἐκφανής ὁ ἀνὴρ) as opposed to Soz. VIII, 2,2 who sings the praises of John Chrysostom right from the outset in no equivocal terms; 'a man of noble birth, of virtuous life and of such terrific eloquence and persuasion skills that he surpassed all the orators of his age' (γένος ὦν εὐπατριδῶν, ἀγαθὸς τὸν βίον, λέγειν τε καὶ πείθειν δεινὸς καὶ τοὺς κατ' αὐτὸν ὑπερβάλλων ῥήτορας).

⁵⁸³ The relevant evidence which suggests quite clearly that this 'erosion' was a continuous situation since the accession of Theodosius I and well into his grandson's and namesake's reign, can be found in the *Codex Theodosianus* whereby Theodosius II's letters to high-ranking officials such as the Praetorian Prefects of the *Oriens* are drawing on previous laws issued by his predecessors - namely his father Arcadius, his uncle Honorius and his grandfather Theodosius I. See: *CTh* XVI.5.60+8.27+10.23+10.24. For discussion see: F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire*, pp. 150-157. See also: H.-L. Noethlichs, *Die gesetzgeberischen Maßnahmen der christlichen Kaiser des vierten Jahrhunderts gegen Häretiker, Heiden und Juden* (Dr. Phil. dissertation, University of Cologne 1971), pp. 128-191. Note also: N.Q. King, *The Emperor Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity* (London 1961), *passim*.

⁵⁸⁴ See: F. Millar (2006), pp. 116-129. See also: J. Harries, 'Men without Women: Theodosius' Consistory and the Business of Government' in C. Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 67-89 (esp. pp. 74-77).

⁵⁸⁵ For further discussion of the *Dedicatio*, aiming at the possible purpose of its writing see *infra*.

seems to be a key issue here) by invoking the name of Christ, was not devoid also of evangelising intentions, directed at the heathen, as well as at heretics. For example, the reader is implicitly invited to contrast the simplicity (and thus, the superiority) of the Christian method of exorcism with the pagan and Jewish parallel techniques which involved, according to Sozomen's report, 'incantations and enchantments' (ἐπιῳδαῖς καὶ περιεργίαις) - in other words, intricate skills, complex training and extensive knowledge.⁵⁸⁶ This contrast appears to be expressed by Sozomen's dry remark according to which Hilarion 'only called out the name of Christ'. Sozomen relates here to Jews and Judaism in a tone which does not lack defiance (alongside the conventional triumphalism) reflecting without doubt the immense influence of John Chrysostom on our ecclesiastical historian and - in this particular case, Chrysostom's famous sermons *Against the Judaizers*, in which faithful Christians are strongly warned against the Jews' magical powers.⁵⁸⁷ Yet, the reader receives here a rare opportunity to inspect proselytism at work in an ambiance which the contemporary mind may rightly identify as a 'multicultural environment'. This is a social and cultural definition which seems to be perfectly applicable to the city of Gaza and its surrounding district in late antiquity.⁵⁸⁸ There

⁵⁸⁶ Sozomen is presenting here a rather ambivalent approach to knowledge. On one hand he highlights the essential importance of scholarship and knowledge in the broadest sense of these terms right from the outset (Soz. I. 1. 13-16). On the other hand, however, the divine inspiration of a holy man empowered by Christ can surpass all these skills. On Sozomen's view of knowledge, see: M. Letteney, *The Christianization of knowledge in late antiquity: intellectual and material transformations* (Cambridge 2023), pp. 96-97.

⁵⁸⁷ See: John Chrysostom, *Adversus Iudaeos* VIII, 5, 6-7(=PG, 48, 937). For a discussion, see: R. L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (New Haven, CT 1971), pp. 66-94. It is of relevance to bear in mind that the Christians in Roman Palestine seem to have acquired the same reputation namely, of mastering magical healing powers, amongst Palestine's Jewish population and the Palestinian Talmud records more than one story about certain recalcitrant Rabbis and their relatives who were cured by Christian healers. The Talmudic stories stress that those Christian healers treated their patients *in the name of Jesus* (בְּשֵׁם יֵשׁוּעַ) - which can indicate in Hebrew not only their religious identity, but also - 'by uttering the very name of Christ'. See: *Palestinian Talmud, Shabbat*, 14, 4 and *Ibid. Avoda Zara*, 82, 2. See: M. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation* (Albany, NY 1996), pp. 114-116.

⁵⁸⁸ On the Christianisation of Gaza in late antiquity, see: F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370-529 Part One* (Leiden 1995), pp. 223-245. On conversion in antiquity in general see: A.D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford 1933; rep. Baltimore, MD 1998), pp. 187-211 (still essential). Nock's study illustrates the spread of Christian proselytism before the Conversion of Constantine by depicting it chiefly as a process of 'mental re-orientation', an explanation not free of intrinsic problems. This apparently inadequate definition still frustrates certain historians. The way in which conversion to Christianity eludes its students is well reflected in Carol Straw and Richard Lim's Introduction to the collection of papers under their joint editorship dedicated to major trends in modern historiography of late antiquity whereby Straw and Lim point out that "The graffiti of funeral banquets in the Catacomb of SS. Pietro e Marcellino in Rome reveal the ambiguities of Christian conversion in ways no written text can." See: C. Straw and R. Lim (eds.), *The Past Before Us: The Challenge of Historiographies of Late Antiquity* (Turnhout 2004), p. 11. The historian's perception of the problem at hand and its intricacies is sharpened further by Peter Brown's sensitive differentiation between 'conversion' and 'Christianization' in his concluding contribution to the same collection which draws upon the case of St. Augustine. See: P. Brown, 'Conversion and Christianization in Late Antiquity: The Case of Augustine', in Straw and Lim, *Op. Cit.* pp. 103-107. See however: N. McLynn, 'Seeing and Believing: Aspects of Conversion from Antoninus Pius to Louis the Pious' in: K. Mills and A. Grafton (eds.), *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing* (Rochester, NY 2003), pp. 224-270. McLynn's overview of other contributions to the collection of papers, which it concludes, in fact consolidates all the specific examples discussed by the contributors into a coherent typology of conversion to Christianity in the first millennium by presenting it primarily as

is no doubt that this miraculous deliverance became a constituent event, in other words, a keystone in the construction of the new Christian identity which was embraced by our Palestinian-born church historian's family. But the question nevertheless remains: who actually were Sozomen's ancestors? More precisely put, does the surviving evidence offer us any clue as to what would they have considered themselves to be before they and their relatives became Christians? Another relevant question arising from our inquiry would certainly be the following: What happened to the perception of self-determination amongst Sozomen's relatives and their likes in Sozomen's native region after their baptism? Did they simply regard themselves as "Christians", or was their new religion coupled in their mind somehow with their regional and ethnic identity? Differently put, were they facing the need to adopt a 'strategy of distinction' which would perhaps help to differentiate between themselves and other Christians now that they had disengaged themselves from the pagans?⁵⁸⁹ And if so, was it just a combination of old and new identities or rather, a chain reaction of sorts, whereby the embracing of Christianity had made room for the emergence of a more 'local' identity, based perhaps (but not necessarily exclusively) on the memory of an older collective identity which may or may not have been lying dormant or side-lined, if not entirely suppressed, under the old imperial rule of pagan Rome? Was this 'strategy of distinction' just a local idiosyncratic ethno-social phenomenon? Or did it go on to mature into fully fledged 'identity politics', finding its expression in the imperial as well as the

a social process. This is not to say that the mental transformation of individuals is marginalised or altogether neglected. Rather, McLynn demonstrates how in the case of the phenomenon under discussion, the mental factor becomes inextricably part of the dynamics of social (and in the case of late antiquity-multi cultural) interaction. Conversion as a social process, as McLynn implies, is an intrinsically *Christian* phenomenon, or in his own words: "Christian commitment is something to be negotiated" (ibid. p. 226). Sozomen's 'ancestral conversion story' suggests that its author, although Christian by birth, was nevertheless still 'negotiating' his Christian identity vis-a-vis a society undeniably Christian and yet, far from being religiously homogenous. Perhaps what was under negotiation was not so much his Christian commitment. Rather, Sozomen's experience in Constantinople (as opposed to his boyhood in *Palestina Tertia*) could have led him to consider the place and meaning of **Catholic** Christianity in his personal identity- having been exposed to diverse manifestations of *Christian* identities.

⁵⁸⁹ Christianity (in its interplay with 'ethnics' and/or 'class') is beginning only now to receive its long overdue scholarly acknowledgement as a factor in the creation and transformation of late antique 'collective identities', having been in many ways taken for granted and thus hardly studied *beyond* the (strictly speaking) context of individual identity- and this is applicable to many studies which deal with 'Christianisation'. There is still limited scholarly awareness of the lines along which Christianity had undone the suppression of old collective identities under the pagan Roman Empire and likewise fairly-limited interest in the role of Christianity in the revival and indeed invention of such identities. The modern theoretical foundations of the concept of 'collective identity' owes more than a tad to the thought of the French sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) who coined the term 'collective memory'. See: M. Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris 1925; Repr. Paris 1994), pp. 187-221. For a discussion of Christian identity (which contributes primarily to a sharper definition of this issue in the context of the Primitive Church) see: J. M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford 2004), pp. 62-97. The problems arising from the application of the term 'ethnic identity' on the Near East in late antiquity are analysed in F. Millar, 'Ethnic Identity in the Roman Near East 325-450: Language, Religion and Culture', *Mediterranean Archeology* 11(1998), pp. 159-176. Note also W. Wischmeyer, 'A Christian? What's that? On the Difficulty of Managing Christian Diversity in Late Antiquity' in M.F. Wiles and E.Y. Yarnold, with the assistance of P.M. Parvis (eds.) (= *SP 34 Papers Presented at the 13th International Conference of Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999*) (Leuven 2001), pp. 270-281. Specific relevant observations can be found also in W. Pohl, 'Telling the Difference: signs of Ethnic Identity' in idem with H. Reimitz (eds.): *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities 300-800* (Leiden 1998), pp. 1-69.

ecclesiastical arenas (as was then the case with Palestine's neighbours, Syria and Egypt)?⁵⁹⁰ It would make sense to begin with Sozomen's own brief remark on his ancestry. Sozomen's grandfather is described by his grandson the ecclesiastical historian as being a 'hellene' (καθότι πατὴρ Ἑλλήνων).

Literally taken, this would simply imply that the grandfather concerned was originally a pagan native speaker of Greek. Yet, we should bear in mind that the cultural history of the Roman near east offers us at times examples whereby one's command of Greek language can hardly be indicative of the same individual's origins or, strictly speaking, of what the modern reader would refer to (mainly as a matter of convenience) as the "ethnicity" of the individual in question.⁵⁹¹ We must therefore assume that being a native speaker of Greek was by no means indicative of one's possession of a pedigree, traceable back to any of the historical waves of Greek migration and settlement in the Near East, before, during or after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 330's BC.

It is worth noting however, that both Jews and pagans who were native speakers of the so-called Palestinian Aramaic⁵⁹², like other late antique Palestinian residents who were of either Nabatean origin or descendants of nomadic Arab tribes⁵⁹³ (and of course, those who descended from mixed origin), are known to have been proficient in Greek.³⁰ As there is ample evidence that individuals could have been regarded as "hellenised" regardless of their actual 'ethnic' origins once they had 'satisfied' certain criteria of the acculturation process (chief

⁵⁹⁰ For Egypt see: R. Bagnall, *Late Antique Egypt* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), pp. 230-260 and p. 278 ff. The case of Syria is perhaps more complex. For a recent assessment of the 'identity' factor in late antique Roman Syria (and beyond), see now: N. Andrade, 'Syriac and Syrians in the Later Roman Empire: Questions of Identity', in: D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (Abingdon 2019), pp. 157-174.

⁵⁹¹ Perhaps the best example remains that of Flavius Josephus, one of the Jewish generals during the uprising of Judea against Roman rule (66-73) who ended up settling in Rome as Vespasian's protégé, becoming there a historian of the Jewish rebellion against Rome and incidentally, one of the exemplary surviving stylists of Greek prose in classical antiquity. Josephus himself was, as has already been noted in chapter 1, a scion of the Jewish high priesthood, i.e. a member of the highest Jewish aristocracy. The encounter between Judaism and Hellenic culture yielded not only the Septuagint, but also a rich Jewish literature in Greek, originating mostly from the diaspora (but also from Palestine itself), culminating with the philosophical and exegetical works of Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BC-50 AD). Other non-Greek men of letters who left us an evidence (if oblique and at any rate, very fragmentary) of a significant literary output in Greek were writers such as the Egyptian priest Manetho and the Babylonian Berossus (both flourished ca. 300 B.C.). For the surviving fragments see respectively: *FGrH* 680 and 609. On Berossus, see now: K. Stevens, *Between Greece and Babylonia: Hellenistic Intellectual History in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge 2019), pp. 94-119. On Manetho, see: D. Mendels, 'The Polemical Character of Manetho's *Aegyptiaca*' in: H. Verdin, G. Schepens and E. De Keyser (eds.), *Purposes of History: Studies in Greek Historiography from the 4th to the 2nd Centuries B.C.* (Leuven 1990), pp. 91-110 (=D. Mendels, *Identity, Religion and Historiography: Studies in Hellenistic History* (Sheffield 1998), pp. 139-157). For the surviving texts of Jewish Greek Literature see: C. R. Holladay (ed.), *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors* vol. 1 *Historians* (Chico, Ca. 1983); vol. 2 *poets* (Chico, CA., 1989).

⁵⁹² On Palestinian Aramaic and its transformation into the so-called 'Christian Palestinian Aramaic' (which sets it distinctly apart from its cousin, Syriac, see in brief: A. Desreumaux, 'Ephraim in Christian Palestinian Aramaic', *Hugoye* 1.2 (1998),

<<http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/VolNo2/HV1N2DEesreumeaux.html>>; Note also: A. Wasserstein, 'Non-Hellenized Jews in the Semi-Hellenized East' *SCI* 14 (1995), pp. 111-137 and B. Isaac, 'Ethnic Groups in Judaea under Roman Rule' in *idem* (ed.), *The Near East under Roman Rule* (Leiden 1998), pp. 257-267. See also: F. Millar, *Religion, Language and Community in the Roman Near East: Constantine to Muhammad* (Oxford 2013), pp. 15-32.

⁵⁹³ For the Arabs in the Roman Empire see: J. Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (Abingdon 2003), pp. 454-535. On the Nabateans, see: *op. cit.* pp. 364-391.

among them, the acquisition of a fully-blown Hellenic *paideia* ⁵⁹⁴), it follows that Sozomen's seemingly clear statement about his grandfather's identity remains far from straightforward, and does not allow us to content ourselves with the obvious literal interpretation, namely, that of a direct 'Greek' ethnic origin.⁵⁹⁵ Conversely, almost from the outset - Ἕλληνες in the near eastern Christian tradition did not have to stand for anything particularly 'Greek' in the pure 'ethnic' or the imagined 'folkloristic' sense of the word. This can be inferred from the Old Syriac Gospels and the *Peshitta* whereby Ἕλληνες is translated by *armaye* i.e. 'Arameans'.⁵⁹⁶ This specific 'ethnic' distinction, as David Taylor has pointed out, 'was understood by the native lexica as a synonym for 'pagans'.⁵⁹⁷ We can take Taylor's observation perhaps a step further and infer from this phenomenon that Christianity was perceived in the Roman Near East quite often as an anti-thesis to old strategies of ethnic distinction whereby rite and religion were an integral part of one's ethnic *self*-identity.

We have already encountered the perception of Christianity as a new *ethnos* in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea at the turn of the fourth century and it is permissible to assume that his views on ethnicity in his *HE*⁵⁹⁸ may have reflected existing strands of collective memory and collective identity in Eusebius's Palestinian diocese of Caesarea and perhaps further afield.⁵⁹⁹ However, it should be borne in mind that Eusebius had also to grapple with a conservative Roman mentality which made the Romans reluctant to accept what they regarded as novelty and so Eusebius found himself tasked with the necessity to prove the antiquity of Christianity and trace back its origins to the beginning of the human race, before it became known worldwide, demonstrating at the same time that there was nothing strange or revolutionary in the character of that religion.⁶⁰⁰ It is likewise possible that Eusebius could have helped new Christians in the converted empire to re-invent themselves and cut off their ties with their Hellenic or Semitic (=Aramaic or 'Syrian') ancestry more conveniently.⁶⁰¹ It might well be the case that the descendants of those "Hellenes" and "Arameans" (themselves

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. Ammianus Marcellinus's debatable self-styling as a 'former soldier and a Greek' (*miles quondam et Graecus*), *Hist.* XXXI, 16, 9. It is not unlikely that to Ammianus, a native of Antioch (ca. 330) the term 'Greek' was synonymous with a high social (and thus cultural) status. Cf. with *ibid.* XIX, 8, 6 whereby Ammianus describes himself as a 'gentleman' (*ingenuus*): On the contents and evolution of Greek *Paideia* in late antiquity, see: H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris 1965), pp. 451-471. For the social significance of Greek language and culture in Rome, see: F. Biville, 'The Greco-Romans and Greco-Latin: A Terminological Framework for cases of Bilingualism' in: J. N. Adams, J. Janse and S. Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford 2002), pp. 77-102 (esp. p. 90 ff.).

⁵⁹⁵ For a discussion of this problem see: E.I. Argov, 'A Church Historian in Search of an Identity: Aspects of Early Byzantine Palestine in Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *ZAC* 9 (2006), pp. 367-396.

⁵⁹⁶ Likewise, the early transmission of the *NT* testifies to similar linguistic practices. See e.g. Mark, 7, 26 which Jerome translates: *Erat autem mulier gentilis*.

⁵⁹⁷ D.G.K. Taylor, 'Bilingualism and Diglossia' in: J.N. Adams, M. Janse and S. Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Word: Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford 2002), pp. 298-331 (esp. 315-316).

⁵⁹⁸ See: J. M. Schott, *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia 2008), pp. 136-154.

⁵⁹⁹ On questions of identity in early Christian literature, see: J. M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Greco-Roman World* (Oxford 2004), pp. 62-146.

⁶⁰⁰ See: Eus. *HE* I, 4. On this particular aspect of Eusebius's outlook, see: S. Bralewski, *Symmachia cesarstwa rzymskiego z Bogiem chrześcijan (IV-VI wiek)*, t. 1 (Łódź 2018), pp. 11-14.

⁶⁰¹ On Eusebius's approach to ethnicity as an exegete and apologist, see: A. P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford 2006), esp. pp. 198-233.

in fact still identifiable as such) did not find it unusual to use their own collective identity-tag to label negatively the rejected paganism as a token of denunciation of their old 'self' following their baptism. However, this was not meant to last for long. The truncated empire together with the divided Church were soon to revive and (as will be shown later) let the rejected ethnic identity to reappear on the scene through the back door and this time as a constituent element in the construction of emerging new regional Christian identities. Identity politics thus became intricately connected with doctrinal conflicts and quite often the existing evidence suggests that any attempt to disentangle them is doomed to failure.

With these considerations, we now find ourselves facing a labyrinthine set of problems to face, as we attempt to establish a clearer view of Sozomen's origins. In fact, we are forced to hinge the analysis mainly on our ecclesiastical historian's very name and the names of his family's neighbours in Bethelia who may have been also his kinsmen (quite likely through marriage). The latter assumption remains quite conjectural and relies heavily on the recurrence of similar names amongst the neighbours and relatives concerned.⁶⁰² Thus Sozomen tells us about a monk who was, perhaps not by coincidence, partly his namesake, Salamanes.⁶⁰³ Sozomen reports in his account of the monks of Palestine that one of them, the aforementioned monk Salamanes and his three siblings, who like their brother, had become monks, hailed from Bethelia, Sozomen's hometown. The four brothers were, as our church historian emphatically stresses, scions of a local noble family (ἐνπατρίδαι τῶν ἐνθεν) and 'practiced philosophy' (ἐφιλοσόφουν - i.e. led an ascetic life) near their home village.⁶⁰⁴ Their mentor was the very same Hilarion whose successful act of exorcism brought Sozomen's ancestors to the baptismal font. Their names were: Malachion, Phuscon and Priscion. These names are clearly an attestation of what we may define, using modern labelling, as "cultural syncretism", for they are in fact hybrid *composita* consisting of Semitic, Latin and Greek components.⁶⁰⁵ The same applies to Sozomen's grandfather's neighbour Alaphion (whom we already met as the possessed from Bethelia, miraculously cured by Hilarion's intercession). Alaphion's name, a

⁶⁰² For detailed description of the customary inclusion of ancestors' names in one's own full name in the Eastern Roman empire and on late antique polynomy, see: A. Laniado, 'L'onomastique romaine dans le monde proto-byzantine: quelques témoignages négligés', *AnTard* 12 (2004), pp. 329-336. Laniado traces the beginnings of this custom in the Roman east back to the second century AD and demonstrates its persistence as late as the sixth century. Laniado, following the works of J. Gascoü and L. MacCoull, also argues convincingly that in some cases names of ancestors (in addition to the patronymic) were added *before* the proper name of the individual concerned. See: *ibid.* p. 336 ff. Laniado's explanation thus tends to disprove Peter van Nuffelen's virtually unsubstantiated comment on Sozomen's full name according to which: "Ce triple nom est remarquable à une époque où l'on portait d'habitude un seul nom". See: P. van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété : Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), p. 47.

⁶⁰³ Soz. VI, 32, 5. The name Salamanes (Σαλαμάνης) is recorded also in archaeological findings of the period concerned. It appears in several versions in the manuscript transmission, and is likewise attested in Photius's *Bibliotheca* I, 36. See: R.W. Daniel, 'From work on the Petra Papyri: Arabic on a Greek Ostrakon from Roman Egypt and the Name of the Church Father Sozomen', *ZPE* 131 (2000), pp. 173-176. See also: P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété* (Louvain 2004), pp. 46-51. Van Nuffelen's suggestion that Sozomen may have been of Arab origin does not seem to be tenable - as will be shown *infra*.

⁶⁰⁴ Soz. VI, 32, 5.

⁶⁰⁵ The name 'Malachion' is seemingly a combination of 'malacha' ('angel' in Aramaic) with the Greek suffix '-ion'). The other two names originate apparently from the Latin: 'fuscus' i.e. 'dark-skinned' and 'priscus' - 'curly-haired', coupled with the aforementioned Greek suffix.

combination of an Aramaic root with a Greek suffix, seems to follow the same pattern.⁶⁰⁶ If we apply this to Sozomen's own first name 'Salamanes', we find an Aramaic root SLM, meaning "peace, prosperity, health" compounded with the Greek suffix "-anos" or "-anes".⁶⁰⁷ The manuscript tradition and indeed the earliest surviving *Testimonium*, i.e. Photius (*Bibliotheca*, cod. 30), display a range of variants of this name.⁶⁰⁸ Indeed, with the exception of the account of Alaphion's miraculous deliverance, there is no other specific reference to Sozomen's relatives as such, but a hypothesis which presumes blood relations on account of the recurrence of a name seems to be a better conjecture. Along this line of consideration, it would appear that Sozomen's origins can be traced back to a family rooted in the rural elite of the Gaza region in *Palestina Tertia*. It seems that they were (at least partly) pagan native

⁶⁰⁶ Soz. V, 15, 15. Alaphion is, quite likely, a derivation from the Aramaic verb YLF ('to learn'). Sozomen mentions another Alaphion (Soz. III, 14, 28, this time a monk from Asalea (modern Al-Nazleh, between Gaza and Ascalon) who flourished under Constantius II and was also honoured together with other prominent Palestinian holy men of his generation like Aurelius from Anthedon (cf. Soz. III, 14, 29. Cf. Soz. V, 9, 9. where Sozomen reports that Anthedon was a 'sea-side city about twenty stadia away from Gaza') and Alexeion from Beithagathon (all these places are in the region between Gaza and Ascalon, i.e. Sozomen's home region). These individuals were known for their exemplary life and for their endeavours to evangelise pagan Palestine.

⁶⁰⁷ Pace van Nuffelen, who has unnecessarily attempted to argue that the name "Salamanes" as a derivative of a semitic root SLMN which he translates "«sain» ou «sauvé» ". On these grounds van Nuffelen has tried to show that "Sozomenos" (Σωζόμενος) may be understood as a Greek translation of the originally-semitic "Salamanes" i.e. 'saved' being a participle stemming from the deponent form of the verb σώζω). Van Nuffelen's suggestion is based on an erroneous reading, ignoring the well-known tradition of common semitic names derived from the root SHLM meaning 'peace; e.g. שלמה Shelomo (= "Solomon") in Biblical Hebrew and other variants See: L. Costaz, *Dictionnaire Syriaque-Français* (Beyrouth 1986), pp. 370-371 s.v. There is however no direct evidence which would corroborate van Nuffelen's theory about possible Arab origins. The fact that the name 'Salamanes' appears in a range of inscriptions (mostly tombstones), located in places known to have had some Arab population (either nomadic or sedentary) in late antiquity like Petra and Bostra or from provinces bordering with regions where the Arab presence is known to have been strong (e.g. in the provinces *Arabia*, *Syria*, *Palestina Prima*) - does not seem adequate to support such an assumption. See: van Nuffelen, *op. cit.* pp. 48-49. Likewise, van Nuffelen, following Irfan Shahid (*BAFIC* p. 225), believes that Natiras, a bishop of Gaza whose name is recorded in the *Acta* of the first Council of Ephesus (431), was an Arab and argues that establishing Arab origins of an incumbent of the episcopal throne in the bishopric to which Sozomen's birthplace belonged, might help us to consider Arab origins for Sozomen himself. Needless to say, this kind of assumption seems to be *a priori* far-fetched. Even if we were to agree with van Nuffelen about Natiras's origins, we still had to bear in mind that a bishop in the later Roman near east could quite often be virtually an 'import' of someone being of a 'foreign' ethnic background (i.e. from an ethnic grouping not inhabiting the diocese under his jurisdiction). Such was the case of Theodoret of Cyrrhus, an Antiochene who felt pretty alienated from his Aramaic speaking north-Syrian Semitic flock. See: Theod. *Ep.* 113, 3. However, even an identification of the very same Natiras as an "Arab" appears to be contestable. Shahid and van Nuffelen seem both to have overlooked the more likely option whereby the name "Natiras" is a derivative from the Aramaic root *NTR* ("to guard, to keep, to observe, to mind") - and not 'Nadir' ("vow" in Arabic) as Shahid maintains. See: Costaz, *op. cit.* p. 203. Perhaps it would not go amiss to suggest that if we were to translate "Salamanes" back into the Greek, the correct result would have been the well attested Christian name Ἐρηναῖος. Along the same line it seems not unlikely that 'Natiras' may have originated from the Greek not uncommon name Φίλαξ ('guard').

⁶⁰⁸ For the range of variants of Sozomen's first name, see Van Nuffelen, pp. 50-51. See also: E. Amato, 'Un perduto epitafio per lo storico Sozomeno?', *Byzantion* 79 (2009), pp. 20-24. Amato following Van Nuffelen, accepts the Arab ethnic identification and proposes to identify a certain 'Salamanios' mentioned in the seventh century *Lexicon Seguerianum* as the addressee of an epitaph by Procopius of Gaza (465-528) with our ecclesiastical historian. Amato's theory remains merely conjectural. From this conjecture also emanates Amato's erroneous suggestion of 480/490 as the date of Sozomen's death.

speakers of Aramaic. However, bearing in mind that Jews too could have been labelled as 'hellenes'⁶⁰⁹ and given the fact that Aramaic was normally the native language in Palestine – Jewish or half-Jewish origin – should not be dismissed.

As we have already seen, amongst the ineffective healers who failed to alleviate the sufferings of the possessed Alaphion were Jews, as well as pagans. Perhaps a wish to eliminate any memory of Jewish roots, accounts for Sozomen's sharp deviation from the more conventional opening lines of his predecessor Socrates.⁶¹⁰ We may recall that these simply convey the author's rationale of picking up from where Socrates's own source of inspiration, namely Eusebius of Caesarea, had left off. Sozomen's ostensibly-bemused interest in the Jewish persistent refusal to embrace what he calls 'the faith of God the Word', as opposed to what he regards the will and the accord of many other members of the human race who did accept it. This direct narratorial comment is fairly rare in Sozomen's narrative and is used, apparently as a point of focalisation whereby the exposition of the narrator's historical perspectives and indeed, their line of inquiry is being presented as bemusement. Sozomen's narrative strategy emerges here as subtle and open ended. Sozomen as a narrator seeks to build up authority based on reflection as a strategy, not necessarily on being an eye witness or on highlighting personal qualities.⁶¹¹

The legacy of the 'hellene' grandfather seems to have led Günter-Christian Hansen to assume that Sozomen may have been named originally 'Hermeias', a name of clear pagan origins⁶¹² after his grandfather.⁶¹³ This can be added to the frustrating range of hypotheses regarding Sozomen's background which one cannot possibly hope to prove decisively. However, the cognomen 'Sozomenos' is clearly the most 'Christian' amongst the three, as it bears a direct reference to Christian concept of Salvation.⁶¹⁴

If the first two names could have been handed down from Jewish and (or) Pagan ancestors, the name 'Sozomenos' can hardly be deemed anything but Christian. Any re-translation into

⁶⁰⁹ See: S.J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness; Boundries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, CA 1999), pp. 135-139. See also my discussion in E. I. Argov, 'A Church Historian in Search of an Identity: Aspects of Early Byzantine Palestine in Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica*' ZAC 9 (2006), p. 374, n. 34.

⁶¹⁰ Soc. I, 1, 1-3.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., Sozomen's bemused tone is apparent right from the first words of Book I: "Ἐννοια μοί ποτε ἐγένετο. Sozomen's juxtaposition of the Jewish disbelief with the widespread reception of the Christian faith in the eyes of other 'people' – τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις ἀνθρώποις – (not 'nations'). Cf. Soz. II, 5,1. Here the beginnings of the evangelisation of the pagans (under Constantine's own sponsorship) is described by Sozomen as taking place amongst δῆμοι καὶ πόλεις. This reveals an attempt to strip the image of the Jews from the more conventional attributes of nationhood or ethnicity. Despite the ostensible bewilderment of the narrator, this is in fact, a framework narrative of certainty, due to be contrasted, as we shall see, with the inner elusive developments within the Church. These will provide what may be defined as 'counter-focalisation'. Sozomen's use of the first person is thus essentially different to the classical antecedents e.g. Polybius and Ammianus Marcellinus. See: A. J Ross, *Ammianus's Julian: Narrative and Genre in the Res Gestae* (Oxford 2016), pp. 29-38.

⁶¹² The name Hermeias is based on the name of the messenger of the Greek pantheon – Hermes. Yet it is essential to remember that it was not uncommon for Christians to bear names of 'pagan' inspiration e.g. 'Origen', 'Isidore', 'Diodore', 'Cassiodore' etc. We also know about a Christian philosopher by that name. His *floruit*, however, is hard to establish. See: R.C. Hanson (intr.) in SC 388 (Paris 1993).

⁶¹³ See: Hansen (2004) vol. 1, p. 11.

⁶¹⁴ See, however: L. Robert, *Bulletin épigraphique* 315, describing a tombstone from the archeological museum in Constanta in Romania, (the ancient black sea port of Tomi), whereby 'Sozomenos' appears as the name of a foreign merchant. Robert is hesitant about the Christian origins of the name but fails to substantiate his doubts.

Aramaic would have pointed us at the root YSHA which is of course also the source of Christ's name in Aramaic and in Hebrew: 'Yeshua'. It seems that the name Sozomenos has to be set apart from similar names known to us from the Hebrew Biblical tradition e.g. יהושע, ישעיה, יהושע, whereby there is always a reference to God as an 'active' Saviour. In the case of the name Sozomenos, this name is in the passive voice of the participle (literally: 'being saved') which conveys the Christian essence of this specific name by alluding to its bearer as someone who *is already being saved*.⁶¹⁵ There are several documentary attestations of this rather rare name, otherwise known to us from late antique literary sources only from two epistolary sources: A letter of Libanius and another letter from the correspondence of Isidore, an ascetic and exegete from Pelusium, present day Baluza in the northern Sinai peninsula, Egypt (*floruit*: fifth century).⁶¹⁶ However, the archaeological findings do not necessarily give us a definitive answer as to our historian's identity. Needless to say, a recurrence of a name remains in itself meaningless unless there is more data appended to it in the inscription or document from which it has originated.

Sozomen, to judge by what we have seen thus far, was a descendent of a prominent and possibly well to do family from the provincial upper class residing in the countryside around Gaza. The family's station in life can be inferred from the education with which they were able to provide our church historian - as well as from Sozomen's remarks about the ancestry of the monks of Bethelia who, as was suggested before, may have been also his own relatives. The same family seems to have had close contacts with the neighbouring port city of Maiumas, although it is hard to determine what exactly the nature of these contacts was. Hansen thinks that Sozomen's grandfather could have fled Bethelia during Julian's persecution, finding refuge in the Christian community there which seems to have been already well established by that time. However, Hansen admits that this is conjectural.⁶¹⁷ Yet, if this theory is correct, Sozomen's grandfather was then perhaps in his thirties (or older). He was probably baptised by Hilarion in the early 350's at latest. This can be established with tolerable certainty, as we know that Hilarion left Palestine in 353 never to return (he moved to Egypt and later to Cyprus where he died in 371).⁶¹⁸ From Sozomen's reference to the conversion of his grandfather "with his entire house together with those of Alaphion's family"⁶¹⁹ - one can gather that

⁶¹⁵ G.-Ch. Hansen, relying on the New Testament (1 Cor 1, 18) gives a good reason to believe that the name Sozomen was basically what he calls a *Wunschname*. In this case, a name given either to commemorate an actual deliverance from a misfortune or disaster which may have occurred in the past, or to protect against whatever infelicity which may be looming in the future. The passage in 1 Corinthians which refers to οἱ σωζόμενοι is recording the usage of this participle in the present indicative medio-passive referring according to Hansen 'zuversichtlich vom künftigen Heil'. See: Hansen (2004), p. 16, n. 33.

⁶¹⁶ See: Libanius, *Ep.* 1383 and Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* 1300 (=PLRE II, p. 1023, 1).

Ep. 102. See also respectively: R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley CA, 1988), p. 203; Jones-Martindale, *PLRE*. For the archeological evidence of the name 'Sozomenos', see: R.W. Daniel, 'From work on the Petra Papyri: Arabic on a Greek Ostrakon from Roman Egypt and the Name of the Church Father Sozomen', *ZPE* 131 (2000), pp. 173-176.

⁶¹⁷ Hansen (2004), pp.12-13. Hansen mentions Sozomen's account of the ecclesiastical status of Maiumas which was separated from the jurisdiction of the see of Gaza to become an independent see (Soz. 2, 5, 7). However, Hansen does not go beyond assuming, with regard to Sozomen and his family's contacts with Maiumas that Sozomen could have spent the two first decades of his life in either Bethelia or Maiumas. See: Hansen (2004), p.13. Van Nuffelen (2004), pp. 62-68 for his part, proposes to locate Bethelia, Sozomen's birthplace, within the jurisdiction of the diocese of Maiumas - not of Gaza- despite Bethelia's situation in the vicinity of the latter.

⁶¹⁸ See Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis*, (= Migne *PL*, 23, 29-54).

⁶¹⁹ Soz. V,15,14: αὐτὸς τε πανοικὶ καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους Ἀλαφίωνος

Sozomen's reference to a 'house' and 'family' may have been in the broadest sense of these terms, i.e. including not only parents and siblings - but also spouses and offspring, amongst other clan members. In other words, Sozomen's grandfather seems to have been married by the time at which Alaphion's miraculous healing had taken place. If so, it follows in all likelihood, that he must have been at least in his early twenties in the 350's (or perhaps even older). That being the case, some of his children (one of whom could have been one of our historian's parents) may have been born before his baptism.⁶²⁰ This would mean that Sozomen's parents could have quite likely reached the average age of marriage in the late 360's or early 370's.⁶²¹ This will give us an approximate *terminus a quo* for Sozomen's date of birth. Now, Sozomen says that when he was young, he used to know people "from the same stock" as that of the four monks from Bethelia mentioned above, namely, the brothers Malachion, Salamanes, Phuscon and Crispion. Given the fact that these brothers were all monks and (most likely) did not have any offspring, Sozomen could be referring to older relatives (whom he actually describes as "good men", highlighting presumably their Christian virtues) who were still alive and at any rate, of a fairly old age during Sozomen's youth, as our historian points out himself.⁶²² This would push backwards rather than forwards Sozomen's possible date of birth and would therefore allow us to suggest that Sozomen was born sometime between the late 360's and the early 370's.

We are now forced to depart from Sozomen's approximate date of birth in order to leap over the missing bits of his early life towards his professional career, as there is no shred of evidence about his boyhood or adolescence apart from the passages discussed above.

The manuscript tradition adds to Sozomen's full name the title σχολαστικός (erratically though⁶²³). This suggests that the bearer of that title was a member of the legal profession.⁶²⁴ Sozomen's vocabulary, e.g. his correct usage of the ecclesiastical legal term 'canon' (as opposed to Socrates's evident sloppiness in using this term) - also supports the identification of Sozomen's occupation as that of a lawyer.⁶²⁵ This assumption receives additional support by our historian's own first-person statement in book II, 3, 10, whereby Sozomen tells us about a colleague of his, one Aquilinus who, according to our historian, was "still" (εἰσέτι νῦν) appearing as a litigator "in the same courts of law" (ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς δικαστηρίοις) in which (we are implicitly told) Sozomen himself used to appear - and by using the word "still" the

⁶²⁰ On the age of majority (and marriage) in late antiquity, see: A. Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1996), pp. 115-116. Arjava observes that (p.115): "The contemporary tendency was to stress 25 years as the real threshold of adulthood."

⁶²¹ Van Nuffelen has tried to argue that Sozomen may have been born as late as 403 or slightly earlier. According to him, our historian's father was born in the 360's but van Nuffelen does not provide any conclusive evidence which would make his position tenable. Van Nuffelen's reading of Soz. V, 15, 17 is too limited. He seems to ignore Sozomen's more general reference to 'people from the same stock' who seem to have included family members older than the four brothers. See: Van Nuffelen, *op. cit.* p. 52: Hansen (2004) vol. I, p. 18 prefers ca. 380 as Sozomen's date of birth arguing that an active lawyer in the 440's could have been born no later than ca. 380's. Hansen's view too remains virtually unsupported. It would appear unconvincing to argue that a man in his seventies could not have been engaged in legal practice (and indeed in the writing of a historical work) in fifth-century Constantinople.

⁶²² Soz. V, 15, 17: ἐκ ταύτης δὲ τῆς δὲ τῆς γενεᾶς μέχρι καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς περιῆσαν ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί, οἷς ἤδη πρεσβύταις νέος ὢν συνεγενόμην.

⁶²³ In the respective titles of the *Dedicatio* and book VII.

⁶²⁴ See *ODB* vol. 3, p. 1852, s.v. *scholastikos*.

⁶²⁵ See: S. Bralewski, 'La connaissance de la loi ecclésiastique chez Socrate de Constantinople en confrontation avec l'oeuvre de Hermias Sozomène', *Studia Ceranea* 6 (2016), pp. 243-255 (esp. pp. 252-253).

reader is made to understand that this is the state of affairs at the very same time when our historian was writing.⁶²⁶ We may likewise interpret a remark made by Sozomen in his brief account of the miraculous cure of Probianus, one of the medical practitioners at the imperial court of Constantine. Sozomen reports in the first person “I learned to know” (ἐποθόμην), how that physician was delivered from a debilitating ailment at his feet by a Divine vision which he saw at the *Michaelion*, the church of St Michael the Archangel in the village of Sosthenion (Σωσθένιον – present day Istinye, north of Istanbul on the European shore of the Bosphorus ⁶²⁷). Sozomen praises the healing powers which were reputedly associated with that sanctuary, and remarks quasi-apologetically in conclusion:

I have only recorded a few of the incidents which I know to have taken place in this temple because there is no time to recount them all (ὅτι μὴ πάντα καταλέγειν καίρος).⁶²⁸

It is not unlikely that this comment may have come from the pen of an aging historian, caught between his inclination to aggregate as much erudite information as possible, and natural fears emanating from advanced age.

Our previous inclination to situate Sozomen’s family in the upper strata of Gaza’s rural area can now possibly be justified, for it follows that sending off a well-educated young man to be trained as a lawyer required considerable financial means. In fact, the costs of such a venture would exceed mere tuition fees and normal up-keep expenditures, given the fact that the nearest law school known to us at that time (i.e. ca. 390) was the school of Roman law of Berytus (modern Beirut), so travel expenses had to be taken into account as well.⁶²⁹ It would appear that Sozomen’s well-to-do family must have provided its promising son with good tutors who imbued the talented pupil with classical *paideia*. This solid foundation must have stood for him in good stead at the preparatory level and was virtually patterned on the same mainstream, predominantly rhetorical-philosophical, education of the now officially anathematised pagan world.⁶³⁰ One assumes that giving a student, however promising, such an opportunity was not done without some sense of “practical” purpose. Perhaps the effort to provide young Sozomen with education on a high-level was made in the first place with regard to prospects of a career in the imperial administration.

The classical, all-round Greek education or *enkyklopaideia* granted its recipients, first and foremost, essential skills for the advanced study of the disciplines which Marcus Terentius Varro famously defined in the first century BC as the nine *artes liberales*, namely grammar,

⁶²⁶ Soz. II,3,10: For a demonstration of Sozomen’s competence as a jurist see: R.M. Errington, ‘Christian Accounts of the Religious Legislation of Theodosius I’, *Klio* 79 (1997), pp. 398-443 (esp. 410 ff.).

⁶²⁷ See: R. Janin, *La Géographie Ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantin. 1. Part : Le Siège de Constantinople et le Patriarcat Oecuménique. 3rd Vol. : Les Églises et les Monastères*. (Paris 1953), p. 362.

⁶²⁸ Soz. II, 3, 13.

⁶²⁹ On the law school at Berytus see: L. Jones-Hall, *Roman Berytus: Beirut in Late Antiquity* (Abingdon 2004), pp. 195-220.; T. Honoré, *Law in the Crisis of Empire 379-455 AD* (Oxford 1998), p. 10. See also: P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, WI 1992), p. 20 and p. 130. The school of Berytus was at the time probably the only viable option for those who wished to be trained in Roman law in the Roman Near East, as the University of Constantinople was opened only as late as 425. Thus, Van Nuffelen’s mention of Sozomen’s reference to the schooling of the Cypriot bishop Tryphilos of Ledrae who studied there hardly adds much to the debate. See: Van Nuffelen (2004), p. 54.

⁶³⁰ See *CTh* XVI, 10.

dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, astronomy, music, medicine, architecture and arithmetic.⁶³¹ These were a prerequisite for such a career. We can surmise that these plans reflect somehow the new career vistas which were opened to orthodox Christians with the rise of Theodosius I about a decade earlier (i.e. in 379) and due to the ensuing triumph of Nicene orthodoxy in the Roman empire under his rule.⁶³² Yet, one may find this theory quite puzzling, as there is no trace of anything particularly Christian in the aforementioned type of education.⁶³³

But there is reason to believe that what we call now 'religious education' was (in late fourth century Roman Palestine, at least) - mainly a matter of private initiatives, particularly in a rural settlement like our historian's native Bethelia, a community which apparently consisted of tightly-knit family relations as was suggested above. In other words, the elders of the extended family made it their business to ensure that the essential knowledge of the core doctrines of the Christian faith plus a reasonable familiarity with the Bible would be passed down to the younger generation. Against this background Sozomen's remark on his grandfather's familiarity with Holy Scripture receives additional importance. Thus the strength of this essentially Christian environment with its strong educational foundations allowed (so it seems) families like Sozomen's to invest in a type of education as 'pagan' as the ancient but still very prestigious *enkyklopaideia* for the benefit of their offspring apparently without fears that the young person's religious convictions would be seriously challenged. On the whole, despite the Theodosian anti-pagan and anti-Jewish legislation, non-Christians still enjoyed a fairly tolerant *modus vivendi* at the turn of the fifth century as they no longer seemed a matter of domestic concern and posed no threat on the stability of the Christian imperial rule. An excellent example of this cultural and religious diversity is preserved in a personal note which has survived in Socrates of Constantinople's *Ecclesiastical History*. Socrates does not hesitate to tell his readers in his own *HE*⁶³⁴ that he himself, a native and resident of the Christian capital of a Christian Roman empire, was educated by two pagan

⁶³¹ Hence perhaps Sozomen's somewhat apologetical narrative is revealed in his reference to his grandfather's numeracy (a skill which could have safely been mentioned alongside the more quintessentially 'Christian' skills of excellence in the field of Holy Scripture exegesis) without excessively highlighting the 'pagan' origins of the family. See: Soz. V, 15, 16. Sozomen is apparently very keen to minimise the 'negative' impression which such a sincere, yet blatant confession may have on a certain type of pious readers by stressing at the same time that the very same grandfather was also well versed in the Holy Scripture and the art of its interpretation. However, despite the 'pious' balance between 'paideia' and Christian knowledge it seems that Sozomen's main strategy here was at the same time to ensure that the standard of education of his provincial ancestors be properly highlighted, nonetheless. This was possibly, alongside his polished Greek, a 'preventive' rhetorical measure against the expected dismissive approach towards the Palestinian-born ecclesiastical historian from condescending Constantinopolitan highbrow readers.

⁶³² See in general: E.J. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria*, (Berkeley CA 2006), pp. 1-23; R. Cribiore, *The school of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* (Princeton, NJ 2007), pp. 42-82 and pp. 197-228.

⁶³³ The aforementioned first sentence which opens Sozomen's *proemium* actually paraphrases Xenophon's *Cyropaideia* I, 1: "Εννοια μοί ἐγένετο. The following quotations and references, scattered throughout Sozomen's *HE* undoubtedly testify to the quintessentially classical nature of Sozomen's schooling; Our church historian mentions *inter alia* the Caledonian boar and the bull of Marathon (I, 1, 11), the Argonauts (I, 6,5), the tale of Apollo and Daphne (V,19,6), Pan and the Muses (II, 5, 4), Homer, Menander, Euripides and Pindar (V, 18, 4-6), References to the *Iliad* can be found in *Dedicatio* 1 and 15; I, 7,3; VI, 2, 10; There is also a reference to the *Odyssey* which can be found in *Dedicatio* 15. There are mentions in the *Dedicatio* also of Simonides, Plato, Oppianus and Theopompus (ibid. 5-7). Aristotle also receives a mention (VII, 17, 2).

⁶³⁴ Soc. V, 16, 9

grammarians, Helladius and Ammonius. Moreover: the two men were formerly priests of Zeus and Pithekos (i.e. 'the ape', an Egyptian deity associated with Thoth, the god of learning⁶³⁵) respectively. They came to Constantinople as refugees, probably following the campaign against paganism in Egypt towards the end of the fourth century, and yet, Socrates's Christian belief, however different in its manifestation from that of Sozomen's, appears to be deeply embedded nonetheless.⁶³⁶ Thus, it can arguably be suggested that cultural openness and religious tolerance were not uncommon (yet exposed to ever-growing pressures) in the Theodosian Near East.⁶³⁷

Sozomen's training as a lawyer in Beirut was followed at certain unknown point, (existing scholarship tends to take for granted the common yet problematic assumption that this must have happened sometime after 426⁶³⁸ by his relocation to Constantinople. There is no surviving source which testifies to his professional or literary career apart from three details which require our consideration. First, Sozomen's reliance on legal material (notably Theodosian laws on religion).⁶³⁹ Second, his mention of his colleague Aquilinus, which may suggest that Sozomen was still active as a lawyer whilst working on the composition of his ecclesiastical history, and third, Sozomen's own reference to his previous historical work.⁶⁴⁰ One assumes that Sozomen's two careers may have met with some success (albeit a modest one). It would be hard to imagine that he would have been keen to mention, even in passing, both his legal and literary activities had he been a total failure as a lawyer *cum* man of letters. Rather-it seems that, as far as his accomplishments are concerned, Sozomen's voice, at this particular point (i.e. a fairly advanced age), is that of a somewhat dissatisfied yet

⁶³⁵ See: G. Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford 2004), pp. 209-210.

⁶³⁶ See: Urbainczyk, (1997), p. 15. See also: Z. Farkas, 'Socrates Scholasticus on Greek Paideia', *Acta Ant. Hung.* 45 (2005), pp.187-193.

⁶³⁷ Socrates, as mentioned in chapter 1 of the present study, exhibits openness towards the Novatianists. See: T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor 1997), pp. 26-28. On tolerance and the survival of pagan religion at the period concerned see: P. Garnsey and C. Humfress, *The Evolution of the Late Antique World* (Cambridge 2001), pp. 132-169. See also: F. Millar (2006), pp. 116-129. It was noted in the previous chapter that despite the unequivocal commitment of the emperors of the Theodosian dynasty to orthodoxy, they did not regard their doctrinal allegiance necessarily as a clarion call for an intensified evangelisation of their realm - and the case of Porphyrius of Gaza and the efforts which he had to make in order to realise his plans to Christianise Gaza by coercion under imperial auspices are a good example for this.

⁶³⁸ This appears to be the scholarly *consensus omnium opinionum*. See: Hansen (2004); H. Leppin in G. Marasco (ed.) *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2003), p. 223; Grillet-Sabbah, *SC* 306, p. 21, based merely on Sozomen's brief report on certain characteristics attributed to Atticus of Sebaste, bishop of Constantinople 406-426. See: Soz. (VIII, 27,7). These were told, according to our church historian, by 'those who knew the man' (οἱ γε τὸν ἄνδρα ἐγνώσαν). This passage can hardly be regarded as an adequate evidence for the *terminus post quem* of Sozomen's relocation to the capital city. It follows that we are still unable to date accurately this relocation *pace* Warren Treadgold, who has argued that 'had Sozomen been in town, he would have heard Atticus preach at some point'. Treadgold's assumption is at any rate a questionable one. However, even if Sozomen did hear Atticus, the reliance on a third party as a source could have been an elegant way to avoid a more direct admission of our church historian's personal failure to be impressed by a revered late bishop of Constantinople. See: W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (London 2007), p. 147. Cf. Soc. VII, 2, 7. Socrates, in contrast to Sozomen, does not conceal his unflattering opinion of Atticus's rhetoric skills.

⁶³⁹ Soz. 1, 1,13; *Ibid.* 1, 8, 14.

⁶⁴⁰ Soz. I, 1, 12

indefatigably ambitious educated man who still seeks as it were, to gain more recognition in both areas and who apparently has not yet lost hope to make a name for himself.⁶⁴¹

His title *σχολαστικός* does not suggest any particularly-high rank, merit, accolade or acknowledgement and there seems no particular reason to identify him with the *δομειτικός* Sozomenos, known to us from one of Isidore of Pelusium's corpus of epistles.⁶⁴² The favourable view of Chrysostom which could have pleased Theodosius II (who granted, at the behest of Proclus, bishop of Constantinople, a full rehabilitation to Chrysostom in 438, by permitting the bishop to bring back Chrysostom's remains for an official burial in the capital)⁶⁴³ does not seem at the same time necessarily a stance which would have endeared Sozomen to those who were moving in courtly circles or other members of the upper echelons of the Roman society. It would seem justifiable to assume that our church historian was well-aware of conflicting political, social and religious undercurrents which his work was reflecting. Given the fact that this multi-faceted (if not 'ambivalent') approach is encapsulated in Sozomen's own statements in the unusual Dedication to the emperor Theodosius II which precedes a more 'traditional' proemium, as well as in the statement of intent in the proemium itself, it will make sense to examine both in a context wider than their structural function. Both recapture in their contents, in addition to their peculiar form, much of what seems to make Sozomen's work exceptional within the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

B. The Dedicatio: An Address to Theodosius II

Right from the outset, Sozomen appears to differ from the ecclesiastical historians before him, or at least, from those amongst them whose *Historiae Ecclesiasticae* have come down to us. He prefaced the nine books of his work not with a 'traditional' *proemium* or *praefatio*, but with a personal address to the emperor Theodosius II.⁶⁴⁴ The nine books of Sozomen's *HE* were designed to deal with the period of time which begins with the defeat of Licinius (i.e. 324) and are quite unexpectedly brought to an end in the year 425, contrary to Sozomen's promise to bring his work to a close in Theodosius II's seventeenth consulate, i.e. the year 439⁶⁴⁵ - the date which also marks the end of the *HE* in seven books by Sozomen's predecessor - Socrates of Constantinople.⁶⁴⁶ Although the *HE* itself begins only after that address with a *proemium* 'proper', duly styled as the first chapter of the first book (yet, by no means akin to its

⁶⁴¹ We shall elaborate on the meaning and characteristics of Sozomen's 'voice' in chapter 4 of the present study.

⁶⁴² See: *PLRE* II, p. 1023, 1

⁶⁴³ Soc. VII, 46.

⁶⁴⁴ On dedications of literary works in classical and late antiquity see: T. Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions* (Stockholm 1964), pp. 117-149.

⁶⁴⁵ Apart from being the year which concludes Socrates's coverage of the history of the Church, it was also the thirtieth anniversary of Theodosius II's reign (on 10th January). See: G. Sabbah, 'La construction de l'histoire chez Sozomène. De la dédicace à l'éloge de Pulchérie', *Bulletin de l'association pour l'antiquité tardive* 14 (2005), p. 65. It should be noted, however, that Sabbah mistakenly indicates that 439 was the year of the emperor's *huitièmes Quinquennales*.

⁶⁴⁶ Socrates's *HE* unlike Sozomen's, begins with the year 305. The differences in the starting point arise apparently from Sozomen's previous inclusion of Constantine's earlier rule (i.e. prior to becoming the sole ruler of the Roman empire following his victory over Licinius in 324) in his history of Christianity in two books (now lost), which began with the ascension of Christ. See: Soz. I, 1, 12.

antecedents, as we shall soon see), it appears that the author did want us to regard the address to Theodosius as an integral part of the work as a whole and not as an introductory note of sorts, attached to the main bulk of text for more ‘technical’ purposes

(namely, as a literary ornament intended primarily for the eyes of the dedicatee). Sozomen’s address to Theodosius II has traditionally been known to scholars as the *Dedicatio*, following, it seems, the index of chapters added to Sozomen’s text in its oldest surviving manuscript, partly attributed to the last Byzantine author to attempt an ecclesiastical history, Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos (ca.1256-1335).⁶⁴⁷ The classification of this opening note as a ‘dedication’ was handed down to generations of editors and other scholars who, as the record shows, had hardly been inclined to pay it any critical consideration and thus the title *Dedicatio* remains unchanged.⁶⁴⁸ Yet, a close reading of this address, starting from its very title (despite the title’s Latin which suggests a date later than Xanthopoulos’s list of chapter titles should give us some additional food for thought.⁶⁴⁹ Sozomen says in the address to Theodosius, that the composition of his *HE* was essentially a privately initiated project, and in passing does not refrain from making what appears to be rather candid remarks implying that the work concerned was undertaken by an ambitious author who was motivated by hopes for pecuniary reward, probably not without an additional package of other worldly benefits which the imperial court would grant to the opportune supplicant.⁶⁵⁰ Here we encounter one of the paradoxical oddities which appear quite often in Sozomen’s narrative. This seemingly candid admission of hopes for imperial patronage and munificence is blatantly out of place here. Sozomen’s candour seems to be an open invitation to the reader not to take the work as read. Moreover, this kind of exaggerated, almost self-incriminating sincerity would appear - by any standard - counter-productive.

Yet, as we read on, it is revealed that the praises which Sozomen showers on the emperor receive a rather grotesque twist - which in turn might pinpoint to a resignation of sorts on the author’s part.⁶⁵¹ Sozomen thus tries to communicate to the perceptive reader that these hopes were futile in the first place and indeed are to remain unfulfilled due to hindrance related perhaps to the emperor himself. In this light one should read statements such as: “You may reward the speakers with your favourable judgement and applause as well as with golden

⁶⁴⁷ For this index of chapters (or *pinax*) see: *Codex Baroccianus* 142, Bodleian Library, Oxford. The *pinax* in that manuscript bears the title: πίναξ τῶν ἐννέα λόγων τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας ἑρμείου σωζομένου τοῦ σαλαμίνιου συντεθειῖς παρὰ νικηφόρου καλλίστου τοῦ ξανθοπούλου has been contested by Sozomen’s editor Günther Christian Hansen who dated the portion of the manuscript under consideration to the early fifteenth century raising in passing some doubts about the dedication’s authenticity as well. See Hansen’s *Einleitung* in *GCS-NF* 4, pp. XI-XII.

⁶⁴⁸ See: Hansen (2004), p. 86.

⁶⁴⁹ Hansen (1995), p. XI.

⁶⁵⁰ On imperial patronage as the key for advancement of status in late antiquity, see: Ch. Rollinger, ‘The Importance of Being Splendid: Competition, Ceremonial and the Semiotics of Status at the Court of the Late Roman Emperors (4th -6th Centuries), in : K.C. Choda, M. Sterk de Leeuw and F. Schulz (eds.), *Gaining and Losing Imperial Favour in Late Antiquity : Representation and Reality* (Leiden 2020), pp. 36-72.

⁶⁵¹ The usage of ‘grotesque’ here draws on Wolfgang Kaiser’s analysis of this term based on its historical appearances in literature, art and architecture alike. See: W. Kaiser, *Das Groteske: Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung* (Oldenburg 1957), pp. 22-23. Other relevant aspects of the grotesque are presented and discussed in W. Yates, ‘An Introduction of the Grotesque: Theoretical and Theological Considerations’ in J. L. Adams and W. Yates (eds.), *The Grotesque in Art and Literature: Theological Reflections* (Grand Rapids, MI 1997), pp. 1-68.

images, erection of statues, gifts and every kind of honour.”⁶⁵² The rhetorical transition is from the abstract “favourable judgement” via the noise of the emperor’s “applause”, a gesture which can well be recorded by the senses, towards what the hopeful author regards unabashedly (but seemingly in the same purposefully-exaggerated rhetorical fashion), as the core and crux of the matter, namely the material gains which follow the public demonstration of imperial favour. In other words, first come the golden images and statues and then (or rather, at last) the gifts and various personal honours (which might as well generate in good time more gifts and perhaps some coveted honours and preferment). The open contrast between our historian’s enthusiastic praises of piety and his unconcealed (or maybe overstated) venality, is intriguing and may suggest that this text aims in fact at something not quite straight-forward as a mere *encomium* after all.⁶⁵³

To judge by the modalities of its tone, Sozomen’s *Dedicatio* is perhaps more of a political address to Theodosius II, and, as we shall soon see, a rather bold one. One observes a clear slant in that tone, deflecting from the adroitly subservient to the didactic-moralistic. The former suits properly a would-be courtier. The latter, however, falls quite neatly into the category of an encomium. Yet even the educators of crowned heads were required, if they really wished to survive, (let alone to gain royal favour) to be tactful and even when they wrote encomia to instruct their purple-born disciples, they had to maintain an obvious code of etiquette and observe political adroitness (a reality which both Constantinopolitan Bishops, John Chrysostom and Nestorius of Germanicia, failed to internalise to their own detriment). If indeed the encomiastic tone can be recognised here, one can justifiably wonder whether addressing in this way an adult (Theodosius should have been by then in his late 40’s) may be counter-productive in more than one serious way – unless the imperial addressee was actually not meant to read the dedication or was no longer in the land of the living. If any of these possibilities can be accepted, it follows that Sozomen’s address to Theodosius II may offer the reader an insight into our church historian’s erstwhile (and by now shattered) hopes to secure himself a position at the imperial court.

In other words, given the conclusion, the opening section makes hardly any sense as an effective panegyric and thus raises serious doubts as to whether it had ever been written for praise, embellishment or any other flattering purpose at all. Thus, if our assumptions can be followed, the only sense which this text could possibly make would be as a parody, written perhaps with an intention to have it published posthumously i.e. after the author’s or perhaps, after the ostensible dedicatee’s departure from this world. The strategy behind this parody is apparently aimed at granting our ecclesiastical historian solid authority at the face of posterity.⁶⁵⁴

Sozomen begins by quoting what seems to be common knowledge, conveying its truism, so to speak, in a quasi-folkloristic *panache* of prosaic pearls of wisdom by simply using φασι (‘they say’) as its source. He names certain pursuits which had typically taken the fancy of

⁶⁵² Soz. *Dedicatio*, 2.

⁶⁵³ On the impact of the Christian version of the encomium at the turn of the fifth century and its role in the emergence of Christian rhetoric see: A. Quiroga, ‘Utram Bibis? Aquam an Undam? El “Encomio a Melecio” de Juan Crisóstomo’, *Rhetorica* 26 (2008), pp. 221-253.

⁶⁵⁴ On addressing posterity as a narrative strategy of solidifying the historian’s authority in ancient historiography, see now: D. Lateiner, “‘Bad News’ in Herodotos and Thukydides: misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda”, *Journal of Ancient History*, 9 (2021), pp. 53-99. On similar strategies in Hellenistic and Roman historiographies, see: J. Grethlein, “Future Past”: Time and Teleology In (Ancient) Historiography’, *History and Theory* 53 (2014), p. 309-330.

past emperors. Among these he refers to sovereigns of the past who were ‘fond of ornaments’ (φιλοκοσμοίς), ‘those who were engaged in the study of letters’ (τοῖς τὰ περὶ λόγους σπουδάσασιν)⁶⁵⁵ and ‘those who trained in the art of war’ (τοῖς δὲ τὰ περὶ πόλεμον ἀσκοῦσι). All of this is contrasted later by Sozomen in a moderate fashion which does not hasten to give away its ambiguities. Yet, we get even at this early stage a hint of Sozomen’s ability to blend moralism with words of praise. Here for example, he highlights the emperors of old who distinguished themselves as scholars (to judge by Sozomen’s emphasis on the seriousness which sets their learning apart from ‘normal’ education). Scholarship, so it seems, is not a pursuit which one would readily associate with crowned heads, although the appeal to the Platonic ideal of a King-Philosopher remains apparently in the background to shield the author against any accusation of impertinence or disloyalty.

It should be borne in mind that this type of accusation had played a fatal role in the case of John Chrysostom who appears to be as we have seen (Chapter 2), one of Sozomen’s sources of inspiration, alongside the long-recognised pagan and Jewish classical authors whose work is also mentioned in Sozomen’s *Dedicatio* as well, namely Arrian, Homer, Josephus and Julian.

⁶⁵⁶

Having named a few of the more traditional virtues which could have received a seal of approval from pagan emperors and classical moralists alike (although even in this opening sentence Sozomen already mixes indisputable virtues such as scholarly acumen and military prowess - with fondness for ornaments, a pursuit which quite likely would have met with the opprobrium of more than one of the ancient moralists- not to mention Church Fathers such as John Chrysostom himself.⁶⁵⁷ A Christian reader well versed in the Scriptures could have perhaps heard here the echoes of certain fundamental interdictions from the Old

⁶⁵⁵ A rather daring remark whereby what could be understood as a superficial or wanting education of other emperors is clearly (and boldly) implied.

⁶⁵⁶ See Chrysostom’s ‘Christianising’ (and yet fairly subversive) treatment of the *topos* of the ideal ruler in his *Comparatio Regis et Monachi* (PG 47, 319-386), composed ca. 380- i.e. shortly after the ascendance of Theodosius I. This was a period of considerable political volatility as the true nature of the new emperor’s religious policies was not revealed up until after the Council of Constantinople (381). The similarities between the texts are quite obvious, but the differences are striking in that they show how astutely Sozomen has managed to dilute the rhetorical flamboyance of Chrysostom without watering down altogether the message he wished to send across, namely: Power and luxury are bound to corrupt and tend to lead even pious rulers towards error. Monastic life is the ultimate Christian remedy of this incurable condition. However, it’s Sozomen’s ostensibly more ‘moderate’ address which should be regarded as a more radical one. Chrysostom had known only the more traditional contrast between a King and a monk which he himself had to face (with tragic consequences) at the court of Arcadius, Theodosius II’s father. Sozomen however, seems to have witnessed a more complex reality at Arcadius’s son’s court, whereby the King concerned (i.e. the emperor) was brought up almost as a monk by his devout and staunchly orthodox sister, princess Pulcheria. However, despite this virtuous up-bringing, Theodosius II is depicted and praised by Sozomen who relies for this purpose not on the Bible but on Homer. In other words, Theodosius II according to this address is first and foremost a secular ruler and his Christian piety is hidden by the blinding shine and splendour of his regalia and his temporal power. Small wonder that Sozomen tries rhetorically to look into Theodosius’s soul behind the emperor’s attire: “Girt with the purple robe ...”

⁶⁵⁷ See: M. Illert, *Johannes Chrysostomus und das Antiochenisch-syrische Mönchtum: Studien zu Theologie, Rhetorik und Kirchenpolitik im antiochenischen Schriftum des Johannes Chrysostomus* (Zürich 2000), pp. 37-45. See also: W. Mayer, ‘The Making of a Saint: John Chrysostom in Early Historiography’ in : M. Wallraff and R. Brändle (eds), *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren: Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters* (Berlin 2008), pp. 39-51 (esp. p. 45 ff.).

Testament, a tone which would encapsulate much of Sozomen's *modus narrandi* throughout his work later on.

Yet, the dash of mockery towards certain great rulers of the past does not diminish the seriousness of Sozomen's intentions and in fact, seems to make perfect sense in making one of his main messages come across: piety is the key to the emperor's success and indeed to the prosperity of his subjects. Sozomen thus completes the rhetorical stratagem by amalgamating pleasantries and seriousness into a depiction of the emperor, thus combining the author's convictions with essential praise of the monarch:

*"you wear within always that genuine ornament of the monarchy, piety and philanthropy"*⁶⁵⁸

a statement which nevertheless raises questions about Sozomen's own doctrinal views, given the fact that Theodosius II's reign saw since the consecration of Nestorius as bishop of Constantinople in 428, even a series of doctrinal crises in which the emperor was playing a gradually-growing active role, while being challenged at the same time (a period stretching over the last two decades of Theodosius's reign i.e. between 431 and 450) by a powerful and opinionated opposition.⁶⁵⁹ Yet, this cannot be regarded as hard evidence, especially in as much as the dating is concerned, for views, however controversial, can be inserted in a later edition into the main body of the narrative when the author expects the edition concerned to be released. Therefore, we must draw on more general assumptions with regard to the work under discussion as a whole. Given this fact, it is not off the mark to assume that an aspiring church historian would be able to show political adroitness by singing the praises of the sovereign irrespective of his own beliefs- unless there is some internal evidence to suggest the opposite. Thus, only when the contradictions are identified and collated, are we able to assess the balance.

This said, we can assume that any dissonance or contradiction between the spirit of the address to Theodosius II and the contents of the *HE* itself, whenever spotted, is likely to highlight the rhetorical essence of the address to the emperor.⁶⁶⁰ These preliminary

⁶⁵⁸ Soz. *Dedicatio*, 2.

⁶⁵⁹ F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA. 2006), pp. 157-191.

⁶⁶⁰ Peter van Nuffelen rightly remarks in this respect: "An often-recurring imperial quality indicates as much a sound use of rhetorical handbooks as the persistence of a certain ideal. By dubbing these qualities panegyric *topoi*, we express the idea that the author attributed them to an emperor because the literary genre demanded so, not because the ruler really possessed them. In the second place, even virtues have to be interpreted.... panegyric is a facade that serves to hide the real acts of the emperor, be it by literary dressing-up or by propagandistic deformation." See: P. van Nuffelen, 'The Unstained Rule of Theodosius II: A Late Antique Topos and Moral Concern' in: G. Partoens, G. Roskam and T. van Houdt (eds.), *Virtutis Imago: Studies on the Conceptualisation and Transformation of an Ancient Ideal* (Louvain 2004), pp. 229-230. Van Nuffelen's assertion of a hidden agenda as a quintessential feature of the panegyric thus also implies that the specific choice of praise and virtue may encode (once the author had identified a readership in possession of the correct cultural 'key' to unlock it) the author's private agenda which, in that case, must correspond to widespread yet officially or quasi-officially suppressed ideals, views or beliefs amongst the readership concerned. It follows that this literary phenomenon would typify periods of political uncertainty and instability such as periods of anarchy, dynastic decline or *interregna*. The years between 447 and 453 during which Sozomen seems to have been writing his *HE* certainly seem to have exhibited signs of these phenomena. Particularly as regards the religious 'anarchy' i.e. the developments around the *Latrocinium* (Ephesus 449) and its aftermath. To this we may add the build-up of deep sense of insecurity at the face of the Barbarian threat in addition to the fragile relations with the Persian Empire since 421. Sozomen seems to be reflecting these fears (and indeed to brush aside the humiliating price of the peace with the Huns) by, amongst other things, counting the empire's blessings at the face of the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410, the continuous turmoil in the Western

assumptions are not concerned with the obvious risk that the author may have run, namely the danger of incurring the sovereign's indignation which obviously could have cost him more than just the loss of a much coveted imperial patronage.

Thus, this address does not lend itself easily to labelling or pigeonholing in accordance with 'traditional' *genera* which ancient and indeed modern scholars and critics would be able to identify neatly. It is thus hard to accept at face value Van Nuffelen's view according to which 'Pourtant, il montre, dans la dédicace sa maîtrise de l'écriture d'un *encomion*.'⁶⁶¹ Sozomen may have borrowed certain elements from the classic encomium, only to manipulate and blend them with other borrowings from different *genera*. For example, Sozomen's emphasis on piety appears to have been inspired by Eusebius's statements of intent in the respective first chapters of book I and book V of his *HE*. However, this allusion is made only to guide us towards Sozomen's conclusion that in fact 'no such great a matter has been made of piety, the true ornament of the empire'. (εὐσεβείας δέ, τοῦ ἀληθοῦς κόσμου τῆς βασιλείας οὐδενὶ τοσοῦτος λόγος ἐγένετο) has been made of piety, which is after all, 'the true ornament of the empire'.⁶⁶² Sozomen seems to be playing here with the variety of meanings that the word 'logos' can carry and so the readers are actually informed that the author is not denying his indebtedness to Eusebius (whose symbolic presence is echoed in this passage through the mention of piety (εὐσεβεία)). However, the fact that previous mentions of 'piety' by the father of ecclesiastical history do not add up, according to Sozomen, into a satisfactory 'logos' suggests that Sozomen, quite self-confidently, pinpoints to his predecessors' shortcomings and sees himself at the same time free to innovate by formulating his own agenda and by shaping on his own the literary means suitable to address the issues which that agenda may raise.

The title, which apparently is a later addition does not offer us any clue. It refers to the address, as mentioned before, simply as "logos" - a general term which does not necessarily derive from something specific in the text (although the word *logos*, as we have seen, does appear in the *Dedicatio*). It is perhaps more likely that the appearance of 'logos' in the title reflects the perplexities of a later Byzantine copyist who may have chosen to be on the safe side by avoiding a more specific categorization of this unusual text.

Sozomen turns now to a description of the emperor as a decision-maker and a supreme judge, but if the reader expected that the ruler would be praised first and foremost due to his virtues as a statesman or a commander-in-chief, Sozomen chooses instead to demonstrate the sovereign's quality of mind through a portrayal of Theodosius's performance as an adjudicator in a more leisurely pursuit, namely literature and rhetorical contests. The emperor is said to be a meticulous and most attentive listener who can pay attention to every imaginable aspect, great and small, of the art of oratory, however abstract or complex. It is hard to ignore the very detailed list of the categories which Theodosius, according to our church historian, is bound to pay attention to, whilst assessing the aspiring contestants.

empire and the tense relations with the Huns: "Thus was the Eastern Empire preserved from the evils of war and governed with high order" (IX, 6, 1). On the Eastern Roman empire and the Huns in the late 440's see: C. Kelly, *Attila the Hun: Barbarian Terror and the Fall of the Empire* (London 2008), pp. 120-135. Note also: Y. Livneh, 'The Sack of Rome (410 CE) in The Constantinopolitan Church Histories of the Fifth Century' in: H. Amirav, C. Hoogerwerf, and I. Perczel (eds.), *Christian Historiography between Empires, 4th-8th Centuries* (Leuven 2021), pp. 123-42.

⁶⁶¹ P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et Sozomène*. (Leuven 2004), p. 54

⁶⁶² Soz. *Dedicatio*, 2.

Sozomen's manifestly overblown pedantry can hardly fail to create quite an awkward impression which is apparently more effective as a parody of classical encomia – rather than serving as an encomium proper:

*"When you preside over (those) contests and judge the discourse, no artificial sound and form can rob you of your precision, rather, you award the prize with uprightness, observing whether the diction is suitable to the design of the composition and so also with regard to the form of the discourse, sections, order, unity, phraseology, construction, argumentation, logic and narrative."*⁶⁶³

There is perhaps nothing particularly rebellious in the claim which follows Sozomen's portrayal of the imperial adjudication, as the generosity of Theodosius towards the orators and men of letters who flocked to his court is extolled without reservations and indeed placed above the way in which certain ancients (Greeks and Romans alike) used to reward outstanding poets, philosophers and historians.⁶⁶⁴ However, given the fact that Sozomen refrains from naming contemporary beneficiaries of imperial munificence, the quasi-encomiastic elements of this address seem to receive a different meaning. They begin to make more sense once we consider the likelihood of irony. Irony is of course hard to substantiate and yet, appears to be a viable interpretative option.⁶⁶⁵ It is quite clear that the lack of more specific examples is a result of a more abstract tendency which would necessarily be at odds with an attempt to produce a convincing *panegyricus*. Sozomen goes on to reduce the generosity of those ancient pagan benefactors into a display of sheer competitiveness instead of what could have been understood as a genuine, uncalculated act of philanthropy in the first place. This is done by showing how quick were the Cretans to publicise their gift to Homer (and indeed how boastfully that was done) by inscribing all the relevant details on a column. This abuse of philanthropy, as Sozomen stresses, was later on picked up by the *Aleuadae*, the royal dynasty of Thessaly in northern Greece who sponsored the poet Simonides (*floruit*: ca. 556-466 BC), by Dionysius the tyrant of Syracuse who offered Plato his hospitality and by Philip, king of the Macedonians who imitated the Cretan example in connection with his patronage over the historian and rhetorician Theopompus of Chios (*fl.* ca. 378- after 320 BC). Sozomen renders thus the legendary pagan magnanimity into yet another type of athletic ostentation. The possibility that the *Dedicatio* could be a parody (which in itself can be the fruit of ambivalence).⁶⁶⁶ written essentially for posterity becomes even more worthy of serious

⁶⁶³ Soz. *Ded.* 4

⁶⁶⁴ Sozomen mentions the names of Homer, Simonides, Plato, Theopompus and Oppian. Plato and Oppian are highlighted by a short and a longer description respectively. Sozomen chose to describe the Athenian philosopher not by his intellectual legacy but merely as 'the companion of Socrates' (τὸν Σωκράτους ἑταῖρον) and this particular attribution seems to give away an already deeply ingrained Judeo-Christian biblical opprobrium of homosexuality as a prominent feature of Greek paganism. Could this be at the same time a quip at the expense of his Constantinopolitan predecessor who, as we know (Soc. V, 16, 9 cf. Soc. III, 16), was proud of his classical training in philosophy and rhetoric? Likewise, Sozomen's choice to be almost excessively specific about the claim to fame of the poet Oppian (*floruit* second century AD), namely his account in verse of the kinds, nature and the catching of fish, suggests not only undisguised condescension towards the poet in question but also more than a tad of low esteem towards the emperor who could reward with abundant lavishness the author of such inferior poetry.

⁶⁶⁵ It has been suggested that 'The idea of past contexts that are meaningful in themselves, but which are no longer 'ours' requires the ironic viewpoint of detachment. Through irony we can discern the meaning or sense of a context without participating in, or being committed to, that context. 'See: C. Colebrook, *Irony* (Abingdon 2004), p. 3.

⁶⁶⁶ See: M. A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-Modern* (Cambridge 1993), pp. 24-26. Rose, following scholars such as F.J. Lelièvre and G. Murray, highlights here a connection, recognised already in classical antiquity, between parody and ambivalence: "...even when something like

consideration once it is borne in mind that these patronages seem to have in common something which may have served the disillusioned Sozomen in expressing his mixed feelings namely his disappointment and bitterness on one hand - while keeping a seemingly positive and hopeful façade on the other. Irony and parody seem to coalesce here. The personalities of the illustrious patrons concerned as well as their *literati* clients had quite often a dubious reputation in their lifetime and were not necessarily admired by later commentators and critics either. For example: Simonides was attacked for being a money grabber by the philosopher Xenophanes and the comic playwright Aristophanes, whereas Theopompus was accused of being 'malicious' (Nepos), 'bitter' (Cicero) 'an overzealous prosecuting attorney, always attacking his heroes' (Lucian) and 'a judge who is more searching than Rhadamanthys in the underworld or a military doctor who probes and cauterizes wounds very deeply' (Dionysius of Halicarnassus).⁶⁶⁷ Sozomen render thus the legendary pagan magnanimity into yet another type of athletic ostentation. All of this is an attempt to disassociate paganism from any imaginable moral high ground which it may still be hoping to hold. Sozomen also seems to challenge at the same time the adulation of the pagan Greco-

Roman past (clearly reflected throughout the work of his main source Socrates of Constantinople)⁶⁶⁸ as the hotbed of unsurpassed sophistication and tastefulness - as can be inferred from Sozomen's apparent lack of appreciation not only of Oppian's poetry, but also of what he regards the emperor 'Severus's disproportionate reward for mediocre verse. Sozomen expresses his low esteem of both the poet and his benefactor by referring to Oppian's poetry as 'moderate'.⁶⁶⁹ The understatement here is quite obvious. 'Moderate' may be understood here as 'limited' in terms of literary quality or value and at the same time, it can also be interpreted as 'measured' i.e. politically calculated and tailored to serve personal ambition and interest. As Oppian must have been a rather well known poet (and the survival of most of his poem *Halieutica* certainly supports this assumption), Sozomen, who in the following paragraph will have sung the praises of Theodosius's devotion to learning and his all-encompassing knowledge, seems to be somewhat inconsistent here in his tone, as he

ridicule is used this does not mean that the parodist is completely negative about a target... Aristophanes was able to parody and admire Euripides at the same time..." (*ibid.* p. 24).

⁶⁶⁷ On Simonides and Sozomen see: J. H. Molyneux, *Simonides: A Historical Study* (Wacounda, IL 1992), pp. 120-121. It is worth noting that Molyneux seems to be struggling with the evidence as he cites the German Scholar F. W. Schneidwin who understood Sozomen's reference to the *Aleuadae* as 'disparaging' (*ibid.* p. 121). Schneidwin's interpretation convincingly supports the proposed reading. The choice of Theopompus appears to be going beyond the mere illustration of royal patronage. Apart from being the 'court historian' of Philip II of Macedon and his reign, Theopompus, a pupil of the Athenian rhetorician Isocrates, is known to have authored an invective against Plato and a treatise *On Piety*. Given Sozomen's expressed interest in both topics (i.e. invectives and piety), the choice of Theopompus must have been instrumental in pointing the reader at the correct association: Sozomen thus dismisses the court historian and his royal employer. On Theopompus see: G.S. Shrimpton, *Theopompus the Historian* (Montreal 1991), pp. 3-28 and especially pp. 127- 156 where Theopompus's moral and political views are discussed. Sozomen who does not seem to be very hopeful about a reward for his labours during his lifetime - could have been expressing here a consolation of sorts through his hope to be recognised as a trustworthy historian by posterity instead of falling into disrepute if he were added to the long and ancient list of court historians.

⁶⁶⁸ Sozomen is probably inaccurate here. The poet Oppian of Corycus (or Anabazus) in Cilicia, the author of the poem on fishing *Halieutica* flourished, according to his anonymous biographer, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180). Guy Sabbah however thinks that Oppian was indeed a contemporary of one of the first Severi, either Septimius Severus or Caracalla. See: *SC* 306, p. 95 n. 4.

⁶⁶⁹ Soz., *Dedicatio*, 6: Σευήρος δὲ μετρίας ποιήσεος χρυσοῦν κατὰ στίχον Ὀππιανῷ δορησάμενος, οὕτω τῇ φιλοτμίᾳ κατέπληξεν

assumes a more didactic attitude and goes on to explain to his dedicatee that “Severus” who rewarded Oppian handsomely with gold for each line of his aforementioned ‘moderate verse’:

*...so astonished everybody with his liberality that the poems of Oppian are popularly called golden words to this day.*⁶⁷⁰

The abrupt shift from praising the sovereign for his outstanding eye for every minute literary detail onto offering him a quick tutorial in literature and popular culture is thought-provoking. Irony seems to be at work here. At present it should only be noted that this inconsistency can hardly be regarded as an ideal way to win the emperor’s unequivocal support and thus again a case can be built against an uncritical interpretation of the *Dedicatio*.⁶⁷¹

Once the narration of the liberality of ancient notable (or infamous) patrons of letters and learning had ended, Sozomen, who as we have seen, does not appear to be impressed neither by the generosity of the pagan past nor by its intellectual or aesthetic standards, is able nonetheless to apply those questionable standards (from his point of view) to Theodosius’s personal conduct, quite contrary to what could have been expected from a Christian panegyrist. If the opening of the address had raised expectations that the author will distance the figure of the emperor from the sinful follies of his predecessors on the imperial throne (including pagan learning) and indeed will highlight his remoteness from the lax morals of the Greco-Roman past in general, we find instead that Sozomen is heading all of a sudden in a different direction:

Such were the gifts of former lovers of learning and letters. But you O Emperor⁶⁷² do not let yourself to be outdone by any of the ancients in ambition insofar as learning is concerned and you seem to me to do so not without a good reason.

This passage offers another example of roundabout verbiage which can hardly be taken for sheer flattery. On the one hand Sozomen appears to be unimpressed by ancient generosity towards men of letters, the fashion in which Theodosius follows in the footsteps of the ancients could purge the old patronage of the arts and render it another good reason to sing the emperor’s praises. Yet, on the other hand Sozomen refers to Theodosius’s attitude towards learning as φιλοτιμία - a word which can mean ‘ambition’ as well as mere ‘love of munificence’. Thus, the ancient philanthropy may have been transformed into a sheer ambition. In other words, the emperor, Christian as he may be, does share with the ancients *the* competitive spirit which, as we have seen before, was scorned already by Eusebius of Caesarea in the proemium to his *HE*.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷¹ As indeed is the case with many scholars. For the latest example see: P. van Nuffelen, (2004), p. 92.

⁶⁷² I accept here Chester Hartranft’s translation of ὦ βασιλεῦ with a *caveat*. Although this kind of address to a Roman emperor was not uncommon in late antiquity, one may still wonder to what extent the classical meaning (i.e. a Greek form of address to oriental kings and most commonly, to the king of Persia, the embodiment of tyrannical monarchy in Attic prose) was still in circulation. On this form of address in classical antiquity, see: E. Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address: From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford 1996), pp. 90-95. For a brief discussion of the Greek language in late antiquity See: G. Horrocks, (Chichester 2014), pp. 155-159. Note also: G. Matino, *Lingua e pubblico nel tardo antico: Ricerche sul greco letterario dei secoli IV – VI* (Naples 1986), pp. 7-25.

Excursus: The Origins of the Dedicatio

The 'eclectic' tendency which was identified in the *Dedicatio* may also suggest that Sozomen like other contemporary men of letters could have drawn on Christian literature as much as on the classical literary models. As Sozomen's admiration for John Chrysostom has already been mentioned before, it is now hardly surprising to see that the *Dedicatio* is significantly inspired by the Constantinopolitan Bishop's 'A Comparison between a King and a Monk' which we will be discussed below.

In choosing this, Sozomen, it seems, was following an old motif which was handed down to him from pagan Graeco-Roman literature namely the King-Philosopher known to us from the sixth book of Plato's *Respublica*.⁶⁷³ While Chrysostom is virtually disengaging the two, Sozomen keeps them together only to depict their co-habitation in Theodosius II's person in a hyperbolic and thus supposedly, in a parodic fashion. Both authors begin with popular opinion, and both appear to regard popular opinion with apprehension. Chrysostom displays right from the outset his famous directness which would later in life bring to his demise:

*'Since I see that most people love and admire things that seem to be goods, rather than things which are by nature beneficial and truly good, I think that it is necessary to say a few things about both of them and to compare with each other both that which the multitude neglects and that which they zealously pursue.'*⁶⁷⁴

Sozomen is altering the love of goods to fit a king but by doing so he highlights what kings, let alone emperors may share with commoners. Even a noble occupation as the love of letters becomes reified. Sozomen's parody turns it into another object in the inventory of goods which pleased the rulers of the past:

*"They say that among the ancient emperors were always those who were keen on certain valuable things. The lover of ornaments cared for the royal purple, the crown and such like. Those who were studious of letters, composed some mythical work or treatise capable of fascinating its readers; those who were practiced in war sought to send the weapon straight to the mark, to hit wild beasts to hurl the spear, or to leap upon the horse."*⁶⁷⁵

Chrysostom's view of kingship is a sharply defined one. The king and the monk are two opposites. The juxtaposition between them is stated clearly and distinctly. The former is trained to rule over men. The latter is trained to govern his passions. The monk, in Chrysostom's view, deserves to be a king ruling over anger and envy and pleasure and not allowing the power of pleasure to dominate his soul. Not so the king.

"But the one who seems to rule over men, but who is enslaved to anger and the love of power and pleasures, first will appear quite ridiculous to his subjects, since he wears a crown of gems and gold but

⁶⁷³ On this Platonic theme see: M.P. Nichols, 'The Republic's Two Alternatives: philosopher kings and Socrates', *Political Theory* 12 (1984), pp. 252-274.

⁶⁷⁴ D. G. Hunter (Eng. trans.), *A Comparison between a King and a Monk/Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life: Two Treatises by John Chrysostom* (Lewiston, NY 1988), p. 69.

⁶⁷⁵ Soz. *Ded.* 1.

*is not crowned with moderation, since his whole body shines with a purple robe, but he has a disarranged soul.*⁶⁷⁶

Sozomen may have found here a suitable literary model on which he could pattern his own ridiculing view of Theodosius II, an emperor who was raised in a palace run ostensibly as a monastery. In other words, in a world of make-belief. A king who was led to believe (to some extent) that he was a monk. Yet, this was just a façade. The emperor remained clad in the imperial purple and his virtues remained hidden underneath. The parody is an act of resignation. The emperor may be Christian. He may consider himself pious. The imperial purple however remains his visible persona. It follows that all the acts of philanthropy, generosity and even learning are nothing more than empty gestures as these are aimed at pleasing the crowd.⁶⁷⁷

*“Girt with the purple robe and crown, a symbol of your dignity to onlookers, you wear within always the true ornament of sovereignty, piety and philanthropy. Whence it happens that poets and writers, and the greater part of thy officers as well as the rest of thy subjects, concern themselves on every occasion with you and your deeds.”*⁶⁷⁸

Although we do not possess the concluding part of Sozomen’s *HE* ninth book, the *Dedicatio* may offer us a hint about what Sozomen may have wished to convey in the remainder of his account of Theodosius II’s reign. However, beyond the speculations, it should be borne in mind that it was the same Theodosius II who brought back for burial at the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople the ashes of John Chrysostom. Theodosius also led in person the funerary procession.⁶⁷⁹ If the proposed reading is correct, it follows that even this parody, which quite paradoxically appears to be inspired by a serious prelate and thinker like John Chrysostom, demonstrates in its *coincidentia oppositorum*, Sozomen’s pervasive ambivalence.

⁶⁷⁶ Hunter, op. cit. p. 71.

⁶⁷⁷ On the public persona of Eastern Roman emperor and his relationship with the Constantinopolitan crowd, see: R. Pfeilschifter, *Der Kaiser und Konstantinopel: Kommunikation und Konfliktaustrag in einer spätantiken Metropole* (Berlin 2013), pp. 294-329 (esp. pp. 301-306, discussing the unrest in Constantinople during and after John Chrysostom’s episcopate).

⁶⁷⁸ Soz. *Dedicatio*, 3.

⁶⁷⁹ Soc. VII, 45, 3.

Chapter 4: Framing Power, Reaffirming Orthodoxy: Athanasius of Alexandria and the Shaping of Sozomen's Authorial Voice

Πάντα μὲν δὴ τὰ ἐκείνου λέγειν τε καὶ θαυμάζειν μακρότερον ἂν εἴη τυχὸν ἢ κατὰ τὴν παροῦσα ὀρμὴν τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἱστορίας ἔργον, οὐκ εὐφημίας.⁶⁸⁰

*I learned to manage the weapon of grave and temperate irony even on subjects of Ecclesiastical solemnity.*⁶⁸¹

Il est très facile d'établir une opinion passagère dans l'âme des foules, mais il est très difficile d'y établir une croyance durable. Il est également fort difficile de détruire cette dernière lorsqu'elle a été établie. ⁶⁸²

For the Christian view of history is a vision of history sub specie aeternitatis, an interpretation of time in terms of eternity and of human events in the light of divine revelation. And thus, Christian history is inevitably apocalyptic, and the apocalypse is the Christian substitute for the secular philosophy of history. ⁶⁸³

A. Introduction

The relationship between the ecclesiastical historians and Christian doctrines seems self-evident but, as we have seen right from the outset, this relationship is far from being straightforward. It could be assumed that a Church historian would be committed to one coherent doctrinal outlook, but the writings of Eusebius and his continuators reveal internal complexities and indeed, contradictions. The following examples may illustrate this issue: Eusebius of Caesarea's doctrinal integrity had been called into question by his contemporaries due to his alleged pro-Arian leanings⁶⁸⁴ whereas Socrates of Constantinople, Sozomen's immediate predecessor in the chain of ecclesiastical historiography, appears to have had Novatianist sympathies.⁶⁸⁵ Rufinus of Aquileia was a devotee of Origen during the First Origenist controversy in the 390's and had to defend himself against Jerome's scathing attacks

⁶⁸⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio XXI*, 5,1.

⁶⁸¹ E. Gibbon, *Mémoires of My Life* (ed. G.A. Bonnard; London 1966), p. 79.

⁶⁸² G. Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules* (Paris 1895), p. 130.

⁶⁸³ Ch. Dawson, *The Dynamics of World History* (London 1957), pp. 236-237.

⁶⁸⁴This is an on-going scholarly debate. For an association of Eusebius with the views of Arius of Alexandria, see: M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome 1975), pp. 60-66; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh 1988), pp. 46-59; A. Cameron and S.G. Hall (Intr., Eng. Tran. and Comment.), *Eusebius, Life of Constantine* (Oxford 1999), p. 3 and p. 258; T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA 1981), p. 205 and p. 265; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (5th Edit. London 1977, Repr. 1993), p. 231 ff. H. Pietras, 'Początek kontrowersji ariańskich', *Zeszyty Naukowe UJ: Studia Religioznawcze* 39 (Kraków 2006), p. 77; The association of Eusebius with Arianism has been rejected by C. Luibheid, *Eusebius of Caesarea and the Arian Crisis* (Dublin 1978), pp. 98-125; R. Williams, *Arius* (London 2001), pp. 171-174 and R. Toczko, 'O arianizmie Euzebiusza z Cezarei raz jeszcze - Głos w dyskusji', *U schyłku starożytności - Studia źródłoznawcze* 8 (2009), pp. 101-126.

⁶⁸⁵ There are several passages in Socrates's *HE* which seem to reflect his fairly positive view of the Novatianists. See e.g.: *Soc. HE* IV, 9, 5; V, 21, 2-3; VI, 22, 20; VII, 12, 2-3 and VII, 25, 18-20. See: T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople; Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, MI 1997), pp. 26-28.

M. Wallraff, 'Geschichte des Novatianismus seit dem vierten Jahrhundert im Osten', *ZAC* 1 (1997), pp. 251-279; Id., *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates. Untersuchungen zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (Göttingen 1997), pp. 30-35 and pp. 235-257.

which cast doubts about Rufinus's orthodoxy.⁶⁸⁶ Philostorgius of Borissus, a surviving lone voice of heterodoxy among ecclesiastical historians, was an admirer of Eunomius, the Anomean bishop of Cyzicus who was together with Aetius 'the Syrian', a prominent advocate of anomeanism, a denomination which may be described as a particularly radical variety of Arianism.⁶⁸⁷ Another ecclesiastical historian and Sozomen's younger contemporary, bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus (393-466), for his part, had to extricate himself from Cyril of Alexandria's accusations of heresy, having been a close friend of bishop Nestorius of Constantinople and one of his prominent supporters in the run-up to the Council of Ephesus in 431 and a prominent member of the clerical Antiochene network.⁶⁸⁸ Thus, any generalised collective reference to Eusebius's successors as 'Nicene' or 'Orthodox' historians⁶⁸⁹ appears to squeeze these ecclesiastical historians into a tight jacket and is not doing much justice to the significant nuances which a close reading of their respective works may reveal. Thus, as we have already become aware of the pivotal role which ambivalence plays in Sozomen's narrative, the need to focus on the intersection between our church historian's religious convictions (i. e. the manifestations of his doctrinal adherence) and indeed, his historical perspectives, as a key to unlock his authorial voice, emerges as essential for our study of Sozomen's *HE*.

The present chapter, therefore, seeks to explore the nature of Sozomen's authorial voice while taking into consideration our ecclesiastical historian's circumstances as described in the previous chapters. This contextualisation, in addition to a necessary awareness of Sozomen's propensity for understated, open-ended, and ambivalent narrative are thus essential tools for analysing the makeup of his authorial voice. It should be also borne in mind that Sozomen's preference of understated language, ties in nicely with the legacy of Greek classical historiography whereby self-aggrandisement, as well as telling stories about oneself were deemed distasteful and potentially dangerous. The Greek historians' preferred style often involved a lament of the historian's fortunes which had driven him to a state of self-defence, forcing him to guard against envy or resentment.⁶⁹⁰ Christian valorisation of modesty and humility rather enhanced and elaborated authorial practices of self-deprecation and self-effacement.⁶⁹¹ It is also assumed that Sozomen's narrative strategies are inevitably a response

⁶⁸⁶ See: Ruf. *Apologia I*, 1, 36 (= CCL XX, 37, 70), cf. Jerome, *Apologia I*, 17 (= CCL 79, 15-17). On Rufinus's involvement in the First Origenist Controversy and his exchange of *apologiae* with Jerome concerning their respective personal orthodoxy, see: E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: the Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, NJ 1992), pp. 159-183. See also: A. de Vogüé OSB, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique. Deuxième partie : le monachisme grec : Vol. 3: Du desert de Gaza à Constantinople* (Rome 2015), pp. 60-77.

⁶⁸⁷ See: Philost. *HE*, III, 15-23; Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 40. See also: J.-M. Prieur, 'Eunome selon l'Histoire ecclésiastique de Philostorge', *RHPhR* 86 (2006), pp. 171-182.

⁶⁸⁸ Theod. *Ep.* 80, *Ep.* 81 and *Ep.* 113. See: V. Vranic, *The Constancy and Development in the Christology of Theodoret of Cyrrhus* (Leiden 2015), pp. 15-27; P. B. Clayton Jr., *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus: Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451)* (Oxford 2007), pp. 14-32 and I. Pásztor-Kupán, *Theodoret of Cyrus* (Abingdon 2006), pp. 7-13. On the Antiochene network and Theodoret's role in it at Ephesus I and its aftermath, see: A. Schor, *Theodoret's people: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria* (Berkeley, CA 2011), pp. 81-109.

⁶⁸⁹ See e.g.: G.W. Trumf, 'The Golden Chain of Byzantium: The Tripartite Histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, Part II: From Jovian to Theodosius', *Phronema* 10 (1995), pp. 23-38.

⁶⁹⁰ See: G.W. Most, 'The Stranger's Stratagem: Self-Disclosure and Self-Sufficiency in Greek Culture' *JEH* 109 (1989), p. 114-133 (esp. pp. 124-126).

⁶⁹¹ See: D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practices of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia 2004), pp. 94-109. On virtues and values in Sozomen's *HE*, see now: S. Bralewski, 'The

to a politically and religiously challenging environment under Theodosius II and, possibly, his successors, Pulcheria and Marcian, despite the official (albeit often-contested⁶⁹²), pro-Nicene political framework. It follows that the identification of Sozomen as a 'Nicene' ecclesiastical historian (as with his predecessor Socrates), correct though it is, does not offer us an adequate characterisation of the authorial voice in-question. Another related attribute namely, Sozomen's alleged sharing in an alleged Nicene triumphalism after an (equally) alleged victory over paganism and Arianism, as was recently suggested, may require now further examination.⁶⁹³

Catalogue of Virtues in the "Ecclesiastical History" of Sozomen of Bethelia', *Vox Patrum* 84 (2022), pp. 31-50.

⁶⁹² For major doctrinal tensions in the two last decades of Theodosius II's reign, see: R. Price and M. Gaddis (Eng. trans. intro and notes), *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon Volume 1* (Liverpool 2005), pp. 9-37. J.A. McGuckin, 'Nestorius and the Political Factions of Fifth-Century Byzantium: Factors in his Personal Downfall', *BRL* 78 (1996) pp. 7-22; S. Wessel, 'The Ecclesiastical Policy of Theodosius II' *AHC* 33 (2001), pp. 285-308. Note also: J Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt Studien zu den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Christen, Heiden und Juden im Osten des Römischen Reiches (von Konstantin bis Theodosius II.)* (Berlin 2004), pp. 271-294.

⁶⁹³ See: P. Van Nuffelen, 'The Many and the One: Communities and Ecclesiastical Histories in the Age of Theodosius II' in: W. Pohl and V. Wieser (eds.), *Historiography and Identity I: Ancient and Early Christian Narratives of Community* (Turnhout 2019), pp. 299-314. However, Van Nuffelen, in his exploration of the connection between ethnic identity and denominational adherence, does concede that "... triumphalism and patronage are not very helpful categories to understand the character of these (*scil.* the ecclesiastical) histories, nor is their identification as Nicene histories suggested by the incorporation of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoretus [*sic*] in the tripartite histories of Theodorus Lector and Cassiodorus in the sixth century. This imposes a degree of agreement and uniformity that glosses over substantial differences related to the specific position each author assumes in the many communities that populated the Roman Empire." See: *Ibid.* p. 300. On the emergence of 'triumphalism' in Eusebius's *HE*, see: S. Bralewski, 'Boże zwycięstwo (εὐθεος νίκη) – „ideologia tryumfu” w "Historii kościelnej" Euzebiusza z Cezarei', *Vox Patrum* 63 (2015), pp. 331-351. Bralewski highlights the sacral essence of God's victory over His enemies, as reflected in Eusebius's historiographical outlook and is notably summarised in the preface of Book V of his *HE*. This comes to the fore in Eusebius's emphasis on the divine choice of Constantine for the materialisation of God's plan, alongside the transformation of what was perceived initially as defeat i.e. martyrdom - into part of the Christian victory, by underscoring the reward of immortality, granted by God to the *athletae Christi* who gave their lives at His service. Christian triumphalism is examined from a different angle in Sozomen's own statement concerning the Jewish rejection of Christianity which apparently had been carefully placed in the opening lines of his work. This particular statement has been interpreted by Oded Irshai as, "...an implicit effort to check the spirit of triumphalism that had engulfed contemporary presentation of Christian History". See: O. Irshai, 'Christian Historiographers' Reflections on Jewish-Christian Violence in Fifth Century Alexandria', in: N.B. Dohrman and A.Y. Reed (e ds.), *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire: The Poetics of Power in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA 2014), p. 148. The complex and indeed precarious situation in which 'Nicaeanism' as the theological and political framework of the Catholics in the East had found itself in, between the Council of Constantinople I in 381 and the Council of Ephesus I in 431, casts further doubt about the ascription of 'triumphalism' to the fifth century ecclesiastical historians, Sozomen included. See: M.S. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils, AD 431-451* (Oxford 2018), pp. 28-34. Sozomen, as Smith points out (p. 29, n. 139), preferred to refrain from quoting the Nicene Creed verbatim in his work. See: *Soz.* I, 20, 3. Sozomen's explanation for this intriguing choice i.e. the fear of having his work read by 'some uninitiated' (τῶν ἀμυήτων τινᾶς), comes across as an elusive excuse, reflecting, apparently, concerns arising from fluid circumstances which required caution rather than sentiments of triumphalism, namely the Christological uncertainties following the *latrocinium* and possibly, through the Council of Chalcedon. On the dynamics of the doctrinal tensions from Ephesus I to Chalcedon, see: D M. Gwynn, 'The Council of Chalcedon and the Definition of Christian Tradition', in: R. Price & M. Whitby (eds.), *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400-700* (Liverpool 2009), pp. 7-26. On the different interpretations of the Nicene Creed and their role in the Christological controversies, see: T. Toom, 'Appealing to Creed: Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria', *HeyJ* 62 (2021), pp. 290-301. Note also: A. Radde-Galwitz, 'Private Creeds and their Troubled

It would be then reasonable to assume that an exploration of Sozomen's narrative strategies in relation to his religious convictions and his confessional identity may entail, in the first instance, an analysis of Sozomen's account of the episcopate throughout the century which the surviving portion of his ecclesiastical history covers, namely the fourth century. Working from this premise, Sozomen's account of the career of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296-373) stands out even at first glance. Athanasius uncompromising defence of Nicene orthodoxy and his resourceful and untiring struggle with heterodox religious hierarchies and secular authorities alike, including the pro-Arian imperial courts of Constantius II and Valens, make a strong case for an analysis of Sozomen's account of Athanasius of Alexandria and his career in an exploration of our ecclesiastical historian's authorial voice.

However, before we turn to the proposed line of investigation, it will not go amiss to consider the relevance of an authorial voice to historiography and indeed to the shaping of the historian's historical perspectives and narrative strategies, as those are, for all intents and purposes, *narrative choices*. First, there is the need to pay attention to the historian's role as an author i. e. the historian's role as a textual decision-maker. The narrational decisions behind those choices are made, according to Michel Foucault, by an 'implied author'⁶⁹⁴ who shapes the narrative based on norms and rules which remain often 'silent'. In other words, these sets of norms, rules, and beliefs are *implicitly* embedded in the narrative and govern the representation of the past as history and the structure of the work concerned (which itself is an integral part of this representation).⁶⁹⁵

The historian's role as an implied author and thus, a narrational decision maker, is not limited to a narration of a truth, organised by embedding the rules and norms concerned, but also includes a consideration of the audience or readership (the 'narratees') to whom the work is intended.⁶⁹⁶ The implied author who appeals to a responsive readership is emerging thus not

Authors', *J ECS* 24 (2016), pp. 465-490 which sheds light on the culture of suspicion and incrimination of Christian authors accused of heresy in the fourth century. A culture which was passed down to the fifth century and gathered additional momentum when Sozomen was writing. His membership of the legal profession must have made him particularly mindful of this aspect of theological debates.

⁶⁹⁴ M. Foucault, 'What is an author?', in: J. V. Harari (ed.), *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (London 1979), pp. 141-160. Foucault observes: "...neither the first-person pronoun, nor the present indicative refer exactly to the moment in which he writes, but rather to an alter ego whose distance from the author varies, often changing in the course of the work...the author-function is carried out... in this division and in this distance." (p. 152). The term 'implied author' was originally coined by the American literary scholar Wayne Booth who refers in this way to 'the author's second self'. See: W. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago 1961), p. 67-75. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan interprets Booth's conception of the author's *alter ego* as 'the consciousness that governs the work as a whole, the source of norms embodied in the work.' See: S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* (Abingdon 2002), pp. 87-88.

⁶⁹⁵ See: A. Munslow, *Narrative and History* (London 2019), pp. 43-44. We may now need to consider whether Sozomen as an ecclesiastical historian, committed to the relatively new norms and rules of his chosen genre, may appear to be standing within certain 'distance' from the implied author who emerges from his work. Peter Van Nuffelen ascribes the distance that Sozomen takes from his sources to the legacy of Herodotus. See: P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), p. 259.

⁶⁹⁶ For the reader as the author's 'addressee', see: G. Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin 1982), pp. 103-143. Prince offers various categories of readers which may be envisaged by an author e.g., 'Ideal readers, virtual readers, implied readers, informed readers, competent readers, experienced readers, super-readers, arch-readers, average readers, and plain old readers.' See: Id. *op. cit.*

only as author but also as an authority. This authority is also manifested by the historian's awareness of his readers' expectation to uncover hidden meanings through his work. The prediction of potential readership's expectations and their expected responsiveness by the historian i.e., assessing respective readers' ability to decipher any hidden meanings of the historian's choice, is bound to involve a certain element of justified belief.⁶⁹⁷

The historian's work, despite (or rather, because of), its commitment to a truth (or 'lines of interest' as Booth gingerly puts it⁶⁹⁸), is thus by its very nature, an *apologia pro veritate*. This is highlighted by an intradiegetic (i.e. the narrator "exists" in the story) historian like Sozomen who, as we shall see, does not refrain from first-person interventions in his narrative. These interventions appear very often at points of high religious contention, uncertainty within a doctrinal conflict and in accounts of heterodoxy or apostasy.⁶⁹⁹ Sozomen also adds to his perception of his role as a historian-author a didactic streak which coalesces with his wish to pass down his work as his legacy, possibly due to advanced age, as was suggested in the previous chapter.⁷⁰⁰

What is, then, the meaning of 'voice', in the context of 'authorial voice'? The narrative choices of the historian-author shape the authorial 'voice' and bring forward the historian's 'point of view'. The latter must not be confused with the term 'focalisation' which is associated with what the agents within the historical text are said to be seeing.⁷⁰¹

It is fair to assume that the author-historian may be sought out and recognised not only throughout first-person interventions but also in what appears to be a 'plain' narration of events and the agents who feature in them, even when the very same historian-author appears to be 'absent' from the narrative. This may be perceived in turn, as a narrative strategy.⁷⁰²

p. 103. Sozomen, seems to have combined at least the first eight categories on Prince's list when he implies that his work should only be read by 'initiated' readers (Soz. I, 20, 3).

⁶⁹⁷ On the concept of justified belief, i. e. accounting claims for historical evidence, especially those made by the author (in this case, Thucydides), see: P. Kosso, 'Historical Evidence and Epistemic Justification: Thucydides as a Case Study', *History and Theory* 32 (1993), pp. 1-13.

⁶⁹⁸ Booth, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁶⁹⁹ Soz. I, 112-20; I, 5, 1; I, 20, 3; II, 14, 4; II, 21, 8; III, 5, 6-8; 15, 10; IV, 2, 2; IV, 9, 5; IV, 11, 1; IV, 20, 8; IV, 25, 4; IV, 27, 7; V, 9; V, 9, 1; VI, 2, 12; VI, 8, 8; VI, 12, 13-15; VI, 25, 13-14; VI, 26, 4; VI, 27, 4-7; VII, 19, 9; VII, 25, 13.

⁷⁰⁰ See: Soz. I, 1, 19... μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τοῖς προηρημένοις ὧδε φιλοσοφεῖν ὑπόδειγμα καταλιπεῖν ἀγογῆς "...moreover, we wish to hand down to those who have chosen to practice philosophy, a model of conduct". On the historian's first-person intervention in the narrative for didactic purposes in classical Historiography, see: G. Longley, 'I, Polybius: self-conscious didacticism?' in: A. Marmodoro and J. Hill (eds.), *The Author's Voice in Classical and Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2013), pp. 175-207. Sozomen's expressed wish to educate the monks of posterity by leaving behind a 'model of conduct' seems to have emanated not so much from his admiration for the monastic lifestyle (which he acknowledges himself. See: Soz. I, 1, 18), as from certain displeasure about the misconduct of certain monks in the past, as we shall see later.

⁷⁰¹ Munslow, *op. cit.* p. 43. Munslow points out that the historian's authorial voice cannot be 'considered...without the concept of focalisation'. In other words, the authorial voice is notably formed by how the agents of the historical text are focalised. The author thus 'speaks' through what the agent 'sees'.

⁷⁰² Paul Ricoeur notes: "Des faites passés, réel ou imaginaires, peuvent-ils être présentés sans aucune intervention à tous égards du locuteur dans le récit ? Les événements peuvent-ils être simplement apparaître à l'horizon de l'histoire sans que personne ne parle en aucune façon ? L'absence du narrateur au récit historique ne résulte-t-elle pas d'une stratégie, par laquelle celui-ci se rend absent au récit ?"

The historian is therefore to be regarded as an *agent* alongside the agents *within* the narrative, or according to Alexander Nehamas's definition, a *character* who "... guides interpretation and is in turn modified in its light."⁷⁰³

In what follows, we will try to pay attention to Sozomen's 'literary ventriloquism'⁷⁰⁴ whereby the historian speaks through the agents i.e., those who take part in the struggle around the making of orthodoxy in the late Roman empire of the fourth century, the organisation of these agents' appearance and inter-relations in Sozomen's narrative as well as the place which these various components occupy in a mosaic that eventually shapes Sozomen's perspectives, narrative strategies, and all in all, forms our historian's authorial voice.

B. Sozomen and Athanasius of Alexandria: Championing Orthodoxy and Garnering Authority in a Hostile Environment

Sozomen's unconcealed admiration for Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria (ca. 296 - 373), makes its first appearance in Sozomen's *HE*, well before the narrative portion which our church historian allocates to the Alexandrian bishop's stormy career.⁷⁰⁵ Sozomen concludes a chapter in book I which deals with the unflattering contentiousness of certain bishops at the Council of Nicaea, by highlighting two towering figures who represented the quest for ecclesiastical unity, as well as the struggle for elucidation and acknowledgement of one Christian Truth. The seeker of unity who committed to fire all the complaints which bishops had submitted to him, one against the other, was no other than the emperor Constantine⁷⁰⁶ whereas Athanasius who was back then still a young deacon⁷⁰⁷, accompanying his superior (and later – his predecessor), bishop Alexander of Alexandria (d. 328), had distinguished himself in the intellectual debates of the learned bishops. Athanasius intellectual excellence shined out among the clerics who were according to Sozomen, '*terrific dialecticians and trained in such like rhetorical methods*' (δεινοὶ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ τὰς τοιαύτας μεθόδους τῶν λόγων ἡσκημένοι).⁷⁰⁸

See : P. Ricoeur, *Temps et récit, tome II* (Paris 1984), p. 121.

⁷⁰³ See: A. Nehamas, 'The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative ideal', *Critical enquiry* 8 (1981), pp. 133-149. (esp. p. 145).

⁷⁰⁴ See: A. Bennet, *The Author* (Abingdon 2005), p. 13.

⁷⁰⁵ For overviews of Athanasius's life and career, see: K. Anatolius. *Athanasius* (London 2004), pp. 1-30.

T.G. Weinandy, *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction* (Washington D.C. 2018), pp. 1-10; D.M. Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father* (Oxford 2012), pp. 1-53 and M. Tetz, 'Zur Biographie des Athanasius von Alexandrien' in: W. Geerlings and D. Wyrwa (eds.), *M. Tetz Athanasiana* (Berlin 2015), pp. 23-60.

⁷⁰⁶ Soz. I, 17, 5.

⁷⁰⁷ According to Timothy Barnes, (based on the accusations that had been levelled against Athanasius for consecration as bishop being under the canonical age of thirty), Athanasius was born in 299. See: T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MS 1993), p. 93.

⁷⁰⁸ An expertise in dialectics appears to be another example of Sozomen's use of ambiguity (e.g. Soz I, 15, 3) whereby Sozomen stresses that the Alexandrian presbyter Arius, the author of the heresy that bore his name, turned out to be a most skilled dialectician (Διαλεκτικώτατος δὲ γενόμενος).

The bishops had gathered to discuss questions arising from the menacing disagreement about the Doctrine of the Faith.⁷⁰⁹ Sozomen does not reveal, at this stage anyway, what was Athanasius's specific contribution to the debates, but we are allowed to infer from Sozomen's indication of the emperor and his entourage's attention to those debates (διέπρεψαν καὶ βασιλεῖ γνώριμοι καὶ τοῖς ἀμφ' αὐτὸν ἐγένοντο)⁷¹⁰, that the discussion participants were moving in a favourable direction (from both imperial and Catholic points of view) i.e., towards an accepted orthodoxy which may consequently unify the strife-ridden Church. Sozomen seems to prepare the reader for the later appearance of Athanasius in his narrative by pointing not only to Athanasius's exceptional intellectual prowess but also to his skills as communicator through the initial favourable impression he had left on the emperor and the imperial court, two institutions against which, the future bishop of Alexandria will ironically be engaged in a tireless struggle throughout most of the rest of his life.

This promising debut of the young Athanasius turns out to be just a prelude to what was about to unfold in book II.⁷¹¹ Sozomen relates a story that seems to have been still in circulation wrapped in rumours and dubious interpretations when he was writing namely, the circumstances of Athanasius's consecration as bishop of Alexandria on 8th June 328 after the death of his mentor bishop Alexander of Alexandria on 18th April the same year.⁷¹² This step parenthood appears, albeit in a brief version, already in Rufinus's *HE*⁷¹³, but is a circumvented in Socrates's own account.⁷¹⁴ We have a good reason to believe that Sozomen must have seized the opportunity not only to extend Rufinus's narrative by adding more details, but also, at the same time, to offer a counter-narrative in opposition to an anti-Catholic version of the story which apparently was included in the lost *urtext* of Philostorgius's *HE*, the echoes of which are preserved in the epitomised version of that work.⁷¹⁵

⁷⁰⁹ Soz. I, 17, 7.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹¹ Very little is known about Athanasius's background. See: T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MS 1993), pp. 10-18; P. Gemeinhardt (ed.), *Athanasius Handbuch* (Tübingen 2011), pp. 73-81.

⁷¹² Soz. II, 17. For the dating of bishop Alexander's death and Athanasius's succession, see: *SC 306* p. 296 n. 2.

⁷¹³ See: M. Humphries, 'Rufinus's Eusebius: Translation, Continuation, and Edition in the Latin Ecclesiastical History', *J ECS* 16 (2008), pp. 143-164.

⁷¹⁴ See: Soc. I. 15. Socrates, however, points out in passing (ibid. 4) *that nor is it improbable that it took place* (οὐκ ἀπείκως δὲ γενέσθαι). Socrates is relating, however briefly, the existence of opposition to Athanasius that may have tried to dismiss that story as fictitious.

⁷¹⁵ See: Ruf. X, 15 cf. Soc. I, 15 who does credit Rufinus as the source (ibid. 1) of his extremely abridged account (Τοῦτόν φησιν Πουφῖνος). See however, Soc. I, 23, 3 whereby Socrates relates accusations levelled against Athanasius with regard to the validity of the latter's ordination as bishop of Alexandria, first, in 330 by the Melitians (supporters of bishop Melitius of Lycopolis who was strongly opposed to what he considered as an easy readmission into Communion of lapsed Christians during the Diocletianic persecution, becoming consequently a heresiarch. See: A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'église d'Égypte au IV^e siècle (328-373)*, (Rome 1996), pp. 217-319; P. van Nuffelen, 'The Melitian Schism: Development Sources and interpretation' in: Id. (ed.): *Studies on the Melitian Schism in Egypt (AD 306-335)* (Abingdon 2016), pp.xi-xxxvi) - and again, in 335, during the synod of Tyre, by the pro-Arian bishops Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea. See: H. Hauben, 'Catholiques et Mélitiens à Alexandrie à la veille du Synode de Tyre', in: M. Immerzeel, J. van der Vliet et al. (eds.), *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millenium, vol. 2* (Leuven 2004), pp. 905-921. See also: Philost. II, 11; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 68.7.2-4; 69.11.4-6; Greg. Naz. *Oratio* 21; *Apophthegmata Patrum* 78. See *notae* 31-34 in P. R. Amidon SJ (trans. intro. and notes), *Philostorgius: Church History* (Atlanta, Ga, 2007), pp. 26-27.

Athanasius, according to Sozomen's account, was said to have ascended to the episcopal throne of Alexandria by disreputable means. Sozomen is prefacing his version of the story by sharing with the readers his own opinion, hinging it on the statement 'as I believe' (ὡς ἡγοῦμαι) that this consecration followed an election which was directed by God (θείας προστάξεσιν).⁷¹⁶

These allegations follow a brief description of Athanasius's compliance with what appears to be the emerging episcopal ordination etiquette of *Nolo episcopari*, by an attempt to flee. However, he was found and was forced by Alexander (βιασθῆναι πρὸς Ἀλεξάνδρου) to become his successor on the episcopal throne of Alexandria.⁷¹⁷

While Sozomen was relying thus far on his own thinking, followed by the conventional non-specified 'they say' (φασιν), he now goes on to offer his readers a more detailed account, drawing on a controversial theologian, namely Apollinarius, bishop of Laodicea, present day the port city of Latakia in Syria (ca. 310-390).⁷¹⁸ The choice of this source may seem intriguing, given that Apollinarius was officially acknowledged and condemned as a heretic in the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) and seemingly earlier.⁷¹⁹

Apollinarius, himself a former strong defender of the Nicene faith against Arians, Homoians, and Anomeans⁷²⁰, and seemingly, Athanasius's close friend⁷²¹, who was allegedly persecuted by the homoiousian bishop George of Laodicea because of this very friendship⁷²², authored a Christology which sparked up a controversy and set against him formidable opponents such as Diodore of Tarsus (d. ca. 390) and Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390).⁷²³

⁷¹⁶ Soz. II, 17, 1.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ The account of Athanasius's succession to the episcopal throne of Alexandria has come down to us in one of Apollinarius's surviving fragments. See: H. Lietzmann, *Apollinarius von Laodicea und seine Schule* (Tübingen 1904), p. 269 (fr. # 168). Mario Baghos, however, following Chester Hartranft (*NPNF* v. II, p. 269 n.1), believes that the Apollinarius in question is an unknown author. See: M. Baghos, 'The Traditional Portrayal of St Athanasius according to Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret' in: D. Costache, P. Kariatlis and M. Baghos (eds.), *Alexandrian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal* (New Castle upon Tyne 2015), pp. 139-173, n. 103 (p. 157).

⁷¹⁹ On Apollinarius's career, see: E. Mühlberg, *Apollinarius von Laodicea* (Göttingen 1969), pp. 26-63. For a recent chronological reconstruction, see: T. J. Carter, *The Apollinarian Christologies: A Study of the Writings of Apollinarius of Laodicea* (London 2011), pp. 400-422. For Apollinarius's supposed condemnation by the synod of Rome in 377, see: S. Gerber, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und das Nicänum*, (Leiden 2000), pp. 132-136; C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana. Recherches sur l'Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311-440)*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1976), pp. 818-820. Guy Sabbah has proposed 371-372 as the date of Apollinarius's first condemnation by a Roman synod. See: *SC* 495, p. 368, n. 2.

⁷²⁰ Theod. *HE*, V, 3, 2.

⁷²¹ See: S.-P. Bergian, 'Athanasius und Apollinarius', in: P. Gemeinhardt (ed.), *Athanasius Handbuch* (Tübingen 2011), pp. 152-158.

⁷²² Soz. VI, 25, 7-9. See: M. Del Cogliano, 'George of Laodicea: A Historical Reassessment', *JEH* 62 (2011), pp. 667-692. Del Cogliano dates the excommunication of Apollinarius by George to 346. See: Del Cogliano, op. cit., p. 680. Apollinarius's friendship with Athanasius is not mentioned by Socrates. See: Soc. II, 46. Apparently, Socrates sought to avoid the echoes of a major controversy. Sozomen, writing approximately a decade later, in a period of doctrinal upheavals and in advanced age, could undoubtedly afford being less inhibited.

⁷²³ On Gregory of Nazianzus's initial engagement with Apollinarian theology, see: S. Elm, 'Apollinarius of Laodicea and Gregory of Nazianzus: The Early Years' in: S.-P. Bergian, B. Gleedeund and M. Heimgartner (eds.), *Apollinarius und seine Folgen* (Tübingen 2015), pp. 3-18. On Diodore and Apollinarius see: C. A. Beeley, 'The Early Christological Controversy: Apollinarius, Diodore, and Gregory Nazianzen', *VC* 65 (2011),

According to Apollinarius, Christ, God's incarnated Son, could not have possessed a human mind (νοῦς) despite his assumption of human nature. Apollinarius believed that this would have been at odds with Christ being the sinless Redeemer of mankind. Christ's mind remains, as argued by Apollinarius, occupied by the *Logos*, and thus solely divine. It follows, as Apollinarius surmised, that in the Economy of the Incarnation, God is superior to the human flesh. Apollinarius inferred from this that Christ was in possession of one divine nature, in sharp contrast with the Nicene doctrine of consubstantiality (ὁμοούσιον) of the Son with the Father.⁷²⁴

Why should Sozomen, a catholic ecclesiastical historian, rely on a recognised heretic? Apollinarius, as Patrick Andrist has demonstrated, was a 'privileged' heretic whose case (not unlike Tertullian's and Origen's cases ⁷²⁵) reveals the nuanced attitude of Catholic theologians and scholars towards certain prominent Christian thinkers, even if their opinions and beliefs were officially rejected and condemned by the Catholic Church. Andrist convincingly argues, following a close reading of a range of sources dealing with heresy, stretching down to the thirteenth century, that "even though Apollinarius is always branded as a heretic, his reception in the Byzantine world is not totally negative".⁷²⁶ Nonetheless, the nuanced attitude which allowed Sozomen to openly rely on a heretic, albeit an unusual one, may still appear odd. Yet, looking again at the matter at hand, it becomes apparent that Sozomen seizes this opportunity to share with his readers his ambivalent view of a 'politicised' hierarchy. Sozomen is not ignoring the unflattering rumours about Athanasius's consecration and in fact, appears keen to record them for posterity. However, at the same time he casts doubts about these rumours by associating them with a controversial author who despite being a heresiarch, was nonetheless read and appreciated.⁷²⁷ Thus, the rumours concerned, according to Sozomen's subtle insinuation, had originated from a source marred with heterodox partisanship. It also seems quite likely that Sozomen is seizing this opportunity to reject the accusations made by Philostorgius in this regard.⁷²⁸ This strategy, apart from additional material which does not appear in Socrates's relevant account, seems to reflect the historian's wish to instil in his readers' mind admiration, and at the same time to question the motivation behind the charges levelled at a champion of Nicene orthodoxy such as Athanasius and which

pp. 376-407. Beeley highlights Apollinarius's influence on Gregory of Nazianzus despite their fundamental differences. Apollinarius's Christology was fiercely attacked nonetheless by the Nazianzene in the early 380's. See: Greg. Naz. *Oratio* XXII, 13. Gregory argued that it was irrational to posit that the Word of God took on human flesh without a human mind, that the Word takes the place of the human mind, and likewise, wrong to argue that Christ had two distinct natures, divine and human, "cut, or combined, into two sons". See: S. Elm, *op. cit.* p. 17.

⁷²⁴ See: Beeley, *op. cit.* p. 379.

⁷²⁵ On Origen's and other Church fathers' condemnation, see: S. Seppälä, 'Anathematized Church Fathers: a Gateway to Ecumenism?', *RES* 11 (2019), pp. 10-28. On Tertullian's association with the heretical movement of the Montanists (*aka* "The New Prophecy"), see: D. I. Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge 1995), pp. 41-52.

⁷²⁶ See: P. Andrist, 'The Two Faces of Apollinarius: A Glimpse into the Complex Reception of an Uncommon Heretic in Byzantium', in: S.-P. Bergjan, B. Gleedeund and M. Heimgartner (eds.), *Apollinarius und seine Folgen* (Tübingen 2015), p. 285.

⁷²⁷ Andrist, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-306.

⁷²⁸ Philost. II, 11. See: G. M. Fernández Hernández, 'La elección episcopal de Atanasio de Alejandría según Filostorgio', *Gerión* 3 (1985) p. 211-230.

nonetheless were deemed controversial enough in the eyes of his contemporaries and the preceding generation.⁷²⁹

As the legitimacy of Athanasius's consecration was still believed to be questionable, the seal of approval that was granted to him by his mentor and predecessor bishop Alexander of Alexandria, had a meaning of crucial importance in the context of the episcopal succession. Thus, highlighting its provenance from a bond between a master and a disciple, which Sozomen, the 'providentialist' ecclesiastical historian⁷³⁰ is keen to depict as made by God⁷³¹, was an essential narrational choice. This bond between bishop Alexander of Alexandria and the young Athanasius also offers Sozomen an opportunity not only to include in his narrative additional material, which was absent from Socrates's account, but also occasions to alter significantly what his predecessor did relate. Such is the story about Alexander's first encounter with Athanasius when the latter was still a boy. This encounter, quite tellingly, had occurred on a feast day commemorating the martyrdom of one of bishop Alexander's own predecessors⁷³²:

He [Scil. Athanasius] turned out to be very suitable for the Church and fit for the priesthood, and was, from his youth, so to speak, self-taught (Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐκκλησιαστικὸς ὅτι μάλιστα καὶ περὶ τὸ ἱεραῖοθαι ἐπιτελιότατος, ἐκ νέου, ὥς εἰπεῖν, αὐτοδιδάκτος). It is said that the following incident occurred to him near manhood (οὐπω προσήβω) . It is to the present day the custom of the Alexandrians to celebrate with great pomp an annual festival in honour of one of their bishops named Peter, who had suffered martyrdom. Alexander, who then led the church, engaged in the celebration of this festival, and after having completed the worship, he remained on the spot, awaiting the arrival of some guests whom he expected to breakfast. In the meantime he chanced to cast his eyes towards the sea, and perceived some children playing on the shore, and amusing themselves by imitating the bishop and the ceremonies of the Church. At first he considered the mimicry as innocent, and took pleasure in witnessing it; but when they touched upon the the secret parts (τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἤψαντο)⁷³³, he was troubled, and having summoned the notables of the clergy, he showed them the children who were called together and questioned as to the game at which they were playing, and as to what they did and said when engaged in this amusement. At first, terrified, they refused to answer, yet having been persistently threatened by him with torture (ἐπιμείναντος δὲ αὐτοῦ τῇ βασάνῳ),⁷³⁴ they

⁷²⁹ Socrates is silent about the circumstances of Athanasius's consecration as bishop of Alexandria. See: Soc., I, 15.

⁷³⁰ On Sozomen as a 'providentialist' historian, see: M. J. Hollerich, *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Oakland, CA. 2016), p. 80.

⁷³¹ Soz. II, 17, 5. See *infra*.

⁷³² First told by Rufinus of Aquileia. See: Ruf. X, 15.

⁷³³ Sozomen apparently refers here to the *Disciplina arcani*, the parts of the Christian liturgy, such as the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, from which non-Christians and catechumens were excluded in the fourth and the fifth centuries. See: M. Baghos, 'The Traditional Portrayal of St Athanasius according to Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret', in: D. Costache, P. Kariatlis and M. Baghos (eds.),

Alexandrian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal (New Castle upon Tyne 2015), pp. 139-171, esp. p. 156 ff. Note also: E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI 2009), p. 458.

⁷³⁴ Corporal punishment for children is advocated in the OT: לֹא יָמוּת בֶּן-תִּכְנוּ בַּשֶּׁבֶט, לֹא יָמוּת: ("Do not withhold discipline from a boy; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die; Punish him with the rod and you shall save his soul from hell ") (Proverbs, 23, 13-14). See also: C. Laes, 'Child Beating in Roman Antiquity; Some Considerations', in: K. Mustakallio, J. Hanska, H.-L. Sainio, and V. Visolanto (eds.) *Hoping for Continuity. Childhood, Education and Death in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Rome 2005), pp. 75-89.

confessed that Athanasius was their bishop and leader, and that many children who had not been initiated had been baptised by him. Alexander carefully inquired what the priest of their play was in the habit of saying or doing, and what they answered or were taught. On finding that the entire protocol of the Church (πᾶσαν τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν τάξιν) had been accurately observed by them, he consulted the priests around him on the subject, and decided that it would be unnecessary to rebaptise those who once, in their simplicity, had been judged worthy of the Divine grace (τοὺς ὅπας ἐν ἀπλότητι τῆς θείας χάριτος ἀξιοθέντας). He therefore merely performed for them such offices as it is lawful only for those who are consecrated to initiating the mysteries. He then took Athanasius and the other children, who had playfully acted as presbyters and deacons, to their own relations under God as a witness that they might be brought up for the Church, and for leadership in what they had imitated. Not long after, he took Athanasius as his table companion and secretary.⁷³⁵

Sozomen's extended version of the story seems to echo a biblical theme⁷³⁶, namely the Divine designation of an individual's life, from a young age or even before their conception and birth, making them destined for a key role in God's plan. The story appears to allude to the prophets Samuel, Jeremiah and Amos, as well as the apostle Paul. We should bear in mind that each of these biblical figures represents in his own way a mission which had led them, like Athanasius, to live their lives, at odd points, *contra mundum*.⁷³⁷

Sozomen clearly seeks to address the accusations against Athanasius's installation as bishop of Alexandria. It is hard to deny that our ecclesiastical historian does enjoy the benefit of hindsight and the easiest way to play down his assessment would be to attribute to him a *vaticinium ex eventu* but this would be of less relevance in the present case as our focus here should remain on Sozomen's authorial voice and so, Sozomen's choice to rely on biblical connotations should nonetheless be regarded as the crux of the matter. This may be supported by Sozomen's use of the first person when his narrative turns to an assessment of this stage in Athanasius's career. God's involvement in Athanasius's life and achievements is recognised and highlighted in a fashion that may satisfy biblical and classical Greco-Roman perspectives and horizons of expectation at the same time:

*For my part, I am convinced (πειθομαι) that it was not without Divine help (οὐκ ἄθεει) that Athanasius succeeded to the high-priesthood; for he was eloquent and intelligent, and capable of opposing plots, and of such a man the times had the greatest need (ὁ κατ' αὐτὸν ἐδεῖτο καιρὸς). He displayed great aptitude in the exercise of the ecclesiastical functions and fitness for the priesthood, and was, so to speak, from his earliest years, self-taught.*⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ Soz. II, 17, 5-10.

⁷³⁶ See: P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), p. 282. Van Nuffelen tends to play down the role that the Bible plays in Sozomen's *HE*.

⁷³⁷ See: 1 Sam., 1, 21-28 (the dedication of life to God's service, cf. Ruf. *HE* X,15, 15. Rufinus actually mentions Samuel in this regard: *velut Samuhel quidam in templo domini nutritur*), and 13-15 (the strife between Samuel and King Saul); Jer., 1,5 בְּטֶרֶם אֶצְרָךְ בְּבֶטֶן יְדַעְתִּיךָ וּבְטֶרֶם תֵּצֵא מִרֶחֶם הִקְדַּשְׁתִּיךָ ("Before I formed you in the belly I knew you and before you came out of a womb I consecrated you".) and Jer. 38 (Jeremiah's incarceration following his confrontation with the court of Zedekiah, the last King of Judah); Amos, 7 (challenging Amaziah the priest of Bethel and Jeroboam king of Israel, having been sent by God to prophesy on the fate of that kingdom). On the association with St. Paul, see: Acts, 9, 15-16, also cited by Rufinus in Ruf. X, 15. See: Baghos, *op. cit.* pp. 150-151. The significance of children in the construction of God's Kingdom is famously highlighted by both the *OT* and the *NT*. See, respectively: Psalms, 8, 2; Matt. 19,14; Mark 10,14 and Luke 18, 16.

⁷³⁸ Soz. II, 17, 5.

Here too we can see a reference to a concept which is present in both classical and biblical traditions. Sozomen is using here, as part of his narrative strategy, the concept of 'times' (καιρός) as if to emphasise the inevitability of Athanasius's appearance on history's stage. Sozomen does it without using the classical vocabulary, reserved by pagan historians to convey necessity or fortune as a driving force governing the tides of history outside any single human being's prediction or control, such as ἀνάγκη or τύχη.⁷³⁹ The crux of this assertion, however, is Sozomen's reference to Athanasius's elevation to the Alexandrine episcopal throne⁷⁴⁰ which, according to our church historian, did not take place without Divine involvement (οὐκ ἄθεεϊ) which seems to echo the concept of Divine Accommodation or condescension (κατάβασις). According to Stephen Benin, 'Divine Accommodation' is:

"...divine revelation in human terms; that is, divinity adapting and making itself comprehensible to humanity in human terms. It is the adaptation of and adjustment of the transcendent to the mundane; it is the fine tuning of divine order."⁷⁴¹

Divine Accommodation was a notion which had been at play, together with (or rather, in contest with) the notion of Apostolic Origin in a long debate over the origins of episcopal sees.⁷⁴² It should be also borne in mind that Divine Accommodation was a theme which features in Athanasius's own writings whereby the bishop of Alexandria argues against the Arians that the Incarnation was an act of condescension.⁷⁴³ This theme was passed down to the Cappadocian Fathers and indeed to John Chrysostom of whom Sozomen was a devotee, as we saw in chapter two of the present study.⁷⁴⁴ Thus it would be fair to say that Athanasius

⁷³⁹ See: G.F. Chesnut, 'Kairos and Cosmic Sympathy in the Church Historian Socrates Scholasticus', *Church History* 44 (1975), pp. 161-166. Curiously, Chesnut points out (p. 162) that *kairos* is mentioned by the ecclesiastical historians Socrates, Theodoret and Evagrius (but omits Sozomen). On καιρός in the Bible (both OT and NT), see: J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London 1962; repr. 2009), pp. 125-134.

⁷⁴⁰ On Athanasius's election as bishop of Alexandria, see: A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'église d'Égypte au IV^e siècle (328-373)*, (Rome 1996), pp. 321-339.

⁷⁴¹ See: S.D. Benin, *The Footprints of God: Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Theology* (Albany, NY 1993), p. 1.

⁷⁴² Sozomen (VII 4, 6) associates the origins of the episcopal see of Rome with St. Peter as the leader of the Apostles (ὁ κορυφαῖος τῶν ἀποστόλων). Elsewhere (Soz. IV 15, 6) he refers to the episcopal throne of Rome as 'Peter's throne' (τὸν Πέτρου θρόνον). However, Sozomen regards the major episcopal sees of the Roman Near East namely Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria as the fruit of Divine Accommodation. Constantinople, the 'New Rome' appears to fall under the same category as Sozomen does not refer anywhere to its episcopal see as Apostolic. Rather, he highlights (Soz. II, 3, 6) the successful foundation and the ensuing prosperity of this city which bore Constantine's name, linking it with the 'assistance of God' (σὺν θεῷ) See: S. Bralewski, 'Hierarchia wschodnich biskupów w historiografii kościelnej V wieku', *Vox Patrum* 58 (2012), pp. 181- 199 (esp. 192-196).

⁷⁴³ See: Athanasius, *Orationes contra Arianos* 1, 40. For the place of Divine Accommodation in Athanasius's thought, see: C. Stead, 'Rhetorical Method in Athanasius', *VC* 30 (1976), pp. 121-137; S.D. Benin, *The Footprints of God: Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Theology* (Albany, NY 1993), pp. 25-30 and K. Anatolios, *Athanasius The Coherence of his Thought* (London 1998), pp. 111-115.

⁷⁴⁴ See e.g.: Greg. Naz, *Oratio* XXI, 8: John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* III, 3. On Divine Accommodation and Condescension in the writings of the Cappadocians and John Chrysostom, see: Benin, *op. cit.* pp. 31-71. See also: J.W. Trigg, 'Knowing God in the Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus: the Heritage of Origen', in: A. McGowan, B. Daley and T. Gaden (eds.), *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson* (Leiden 2009), pp. 83-104 and K. Kochańczyk-Bonińska, 'John Chrysostom 'On the Incomprehensible Nature of God' – The Simpler Way of Presenting Complex Theological and Philosophical Issues', *Vox Patrum* 85 (2023), pp. 91-104.

and his legacy became synonymous with Nicene orthodoxy and its prominent defenders over the seven decades that separated the end of Theodosius II's reign during which Sozomen was writing, from the death of Athanasius in 373.⁷⁴⁵

Sozomen's narrative strategy at his defence of the accession of Athanasius to the episcopal throne of Alexandria does not limit itself to highlighting God's involvement in the process. In addition to the turn of the spotlight at this particular point on Athanasius's personal virtues and the wholehearted support he enjoyed from his mentor and predecessor bishop Alexander of Alexandria, Sozomen gives this defence its finishing touches by adding to the mix the friendship of Athanasius with the monk Antony (251-356), the traditionally (albeit arguably, as noted by Sozomen himself⁷⁴⁶) accepted founding father of the monastic movement. This tradition, as Claudia Rapp has suggested, owes its influential place in the history of Christian monasticism to the wide-spread popularity of the *Life of Antony*, attributed to Athanasius.⁷⁴⁷ This hagiographic work is believed to have been written shortly after the revered hermit's death in 356, becoming quickly, due to its pioneering as well as appealing nature, "the blueprint for all later writing about monasticism and holy men."⁷⁴⁸ Sozomen himself provides us with a vivid description and indeed, politically thought-through justification for his choice to highlight the camaraderie and solidarity of the then-nearly-octogenarian and

⁷⁴⁵ See: M. Baghos, 'The Traditional Portrayal of St. Athanasius according to Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret', in D. Costache, P. Kariatalis and M. Baghos (eds.), *Alexandrian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal* (New Castle upon Tyne 2015), pp. 139-171. Baghos demonstrates how '...the Nicene cause had become by his (*scil.* Theodosius II) reign intricately associated with the legacy of the saint (*scil.* Athanasius)' (p. 143).

⁷⁴⁶ Soz. I, 13, 1.

⁷⁴⁷ The standard edition is: G.M. J. Bartelink (ed.), *Athanase d'Alexandrie: Vie d'Antoine*. (= SC 400.) (Paris 1994). Bartelink's answer to the question of the authorship of this pioneering biography of a Christian ascetic is firmly in favour of Athanasius. For an opposing view of this issue, see: T.D. Barnes's review of Bartelink's edition in *JThS* 46 (1995), pp. 327-331. For a thorough consideration of contemporary scholarship on the authorship of the *Vita Antonii*, its date and circumstances of composition, as well as its sources and readership, see: E. Wipszycka, *The Second Gift of the Nile: Monks and Monasteries in Late Antique Egypt* (Warsaw 2018), pp. 33-50. Socrates, however, remarks (Soc. I, 21), that writing about Antony would be superfluous as Athanasius the bishop of Alexandria was ahead of the Constantinopolitan church historian 'having published a particular book about his life' (μονόβιβλον εἰς τὸν αὐτοῦ βίον ἐκθέμενος). Similar attribution of that *vita* to Athanasius was made by Gregory of Nazianzus in his commemorative sermon on Athanasius much earlier, between 379 and 381. On the dating of this sermon, see: J. Mossay, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 20-23* (=SC 270) (Paris 1980), pp. 99-103. This sermon was delivered probably on the occasion of the Saint's feast day on 2nd May. See: Greg. Naz., *Oratio* XXI, 5. On the relation between hagiography and historical writing in late antiquity see: I. Perczel, 'Hagiography as a Historiographic Genre: From Eusebius to Cyril of Scythopolis, and Eustratius of Constantinople', in: H. Amirav, C. Hoogerwerf and I. Perczel (eds.), *Christian Historiography Between Empires (4th-8th Centuries)* (Leuven 2021), p. 181-219.

⁷⁴⁸ See: C. Rapp, 'Monastic Jargon and Citizenship Language in Late Antiquity', *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 32 (2020), pp. 54-64 (esp. p. 57 ff.). For an introduction to early monasticism and the texts it generated, see W. Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford 2004). See also: C. Rapp, "Desert, City and Countryside in the Early Christian Imagination", in: J. Dijkstra and M. van Dijk (eds.), *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, [= *Church History and Religious Culture*, v. CLLLVI] (Leiden 2006), pp. 93-112. For comprehensive recent studies of Athanasius's *Vita Antonii*, see: J. N. Bremmer, 'Athanasius' *Life of Antony*: Marginality, Spatiality and Mediality', in: L. Feldt and J. N. Bremmer (eds.), *Marginality, Media, and Mutations of Religious Authority in the History of Christianity*, (Leuven 2019), pp. 23-46, with further bibliography. See also E. Wipszycka, *The Second Gift of the Nile: Monks and Monasteries in Egypt* (Warsaw 2018), pp. 27-107.

much-admired hermit, with the young bishop of Alexandria, as means of placating those among his readership, who may still (i.e. ca. 450) have qualms, genuine or otherwise, about the consecration of Athanasius as bishop of Alexandria:

“...his (scil. Athanasius) reputation was greatly increased and was sustained by his own private virtues and by the testimony of the monk Antony the Great. For when called upon by Athanasius, this monk heeded and visited the cities, accompanied him to the churches, and voted with him on opinions concerning God. He evinced friendship in every sense towards him (καὶ φίλον ἐν πᾶσιν εἶχεν αὐτόν), and avoided the company of his enemies and opponents.⁷⁴⁹

The friendship between Antony and Athanasius is not the only a partnership of like-minded ecclesiastics or a doctrinal seal of approval which the elder among the two is granting the younger. The aged ascetic's prestige and the widespread fame which he had enjoyed are underlined by Sozomen as if to convey a sense of spiritual legacy which was destined to be passed down to Athanasius and establish not only his authority but also his own fame and popularity as a pastor and a teacher, as reflected in Athanasius's own *Life of Antony*.⁷⁵⁰ Sozomen thus complemented the disputed legacy of Athanasius's predecessor Alexander of Alexandria, scared by the conflicts with Arius, Melitius and their supporters, with the apparently unquestionable legacy of Antony.⁷⁵¹

Richard Lim has shown that ‘The collective voice of a people came to be regarded as an expression of authoritative opinion, even of truth, in late antiquity’.⁷⁵² Thus, Athanasius's popular support, from Sozomen's point of view, can legitimately outweigh any hierarchic considerations and protocols, or in other words, it should be understood as *vox populi vox Dei*.⁷⁵³ God's intervention in favour of Athanasius is reflected in this way as well as in the unswerving support he received from Antony, a holy man admired all over Egypt. The nature of the contact between the hermit from the desert and urban centres is in fact a theme which Sozomen had previously explored in his own biographical sketch of Antony:

“He above all others came forward spiritedly and most zealously for the defence of the injured, and in their cause often resorted to the cities; for many came out to him, and compelled (ἐβιάζοντο) him to intercede for them with the rulers and men in power. All the people felt honoured (ἐτιμήσαντο) in seeing him, listening to him speak, and obeying his orders; but he preferred to remain unnoticed and to hide in the deserts. When compelled to visit a city, he never failed to return to the deserts as soon as he

⁷⁴⁹ Soz. II, 17, 11.

⁷⁵⁰ See: P. Rousseau, ‘Antony as Teacher in the Greek Life’, in: T. Hägg and P. Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2000), pp. 89-109. See also: A. P. Urbano, *The Philosophical Life: Biography and the Crafting of Intellectual Identity in Late Antiquity* (Washington D.C. 2013), pp. 213-219.

⁷⁵¹ On the image of Athanasius as inheritor of bishop Alexander and the Alexandrine tradition, see: Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage ...* (Leuven 2004), p. 327.

⁷⁵² See: R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 1995), p. 27. See also: K. Oehler, ‘Der Consensus Omnium als Kriterium der Wahrheit in der antiken Philosophie und der Patristik: Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Begriffs der allgemeinen Meinung’, *Antike und Abendland* 10 (1961): 103-30.

⁷⁵³ The loyalty of the Alexandrian crowd to their bishop had become common knowledge when Sozomen was writing in the fifth century. See: T. E. Gregory, *Vox Populi: Violence and Popular Involvement in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century A.D.* (Columbus, OH 1979), p. 191. Gregory remarks on the riots following the deposition of Dioscorus, Patriarch of Alexandria by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and his ensuing exile to Gangra in Paphlagonia: “...the people of Egypt came to look upon their archbishop as the embodiment of the will of God.”

had accomplished the work he had undertaken; for, he said, that as fishes are nourished in the water, so the desert is the world prepared for monks; and as fishes die when thrown upon dry land, so those who go to the cities lose the monastic gravity (τὴν μοναστικὴν σεμνότητα). He carried himself obediently and graciously towards all who saw him, and he was careful not to have, nor seem to have, a supercilious nature (φύσιν ὑπεροῦσαν).⁷⁵⁴

Sozomen seems already to have taken into account the established reputation that holy men have acquired since the life and times of Antony. We can see here (and this is equally applicable to Athanasius) that the contacts between the solitaries of the desert and the *saeculum* were right from the outset quite ambiguous. The desert was meant to be a sanctuary: a place of refuge from the maddening crowd of the urban centres, the noises of the cities and their mundane pressures and distractions. This wilderness sanctuary was meant to be a haven of prayer and ascetic pursuits such as fasting and self-mortification. However, by the time Sozomen was writing, the monks of the Near East were already known for their powerful and effective advocacy of popular grievances, but at the same time, were becoming more and more enmeshed in worldly politics of the urban centres of the Roman empire.⁷⁵⁵ The traditional image of the monks as the holy begging poor who cut themselves off the 'real world' had been transformed and recent studies of their social and economic circumstances, have made the old, contrasted image of 'desert' as opposed to 'city' all but redundant. In the beginning of the fifth century, their reputation had become at times questionable due to the growing number of those deemed hypocrites and impostors among them, some of whom enjoying the patronage of the powerful and the wealthy in the cities.⁷⁵⁶ The image of Athanasius emerges likewise skilfully alternating between ecclesiastical statesmanship and

⁷⁵⁴ Soz. I, 13, 9-10

⁷⁵⁵ See: P. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *JRS* 61 (1971), pp. 80-101. Brown has supplemented his article (now a classic) over the years, with certain second thoughts. Into this category falls an important *caveat*: "Looking back at what I would now have to abandon and modify in my previous picture of the holy man, I think that the greatest single feature of my portrayal of the holy man in need of revision would be his "splendid isolation." See: Id., 'The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity', *Representations* 2 (1983), pp. 1-25 (p. 11). For Brown's later reflections on his 1971 article, see: Id., 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971-1997', *J ECS* 6 (1998), pp. 353-376 (esp. p. 369-378). For the development of the relations between the monastic desert and the urban centres in Egypt (and Palestine), see: D.J. Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* (Oxford 1966), pp. 46-81 (still essential); E. Wipszycka, *Monks and the Hierarchical Church in Egypt and the Levant during Late Antiquity* (Leuven 2021), pp. 106-133, pp. 217-225 and pp. 293-329. The growing political influence of the monks and their growing presence in the cities is documented in the *Codex Theodosianus*, whereby a law from 390 that aimed at removing the monks from the cities and keeping them out in the wilderness was repealed only two years later. See: *CTh* XVI.4.1-2. See most recently: M. Fafinski and J. Riemenschneider, *Monasticism and the City in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 2023), pp. 28-46

⁷⁵⁶ See: D.F. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 2002), pp. 158 – 205. Caner discusses the concerns that were raised about the abundance of 'pseudo monks' in the East by John Chrysostom and his *protégé*, the monk (later abbot) Nilus of Ancyra (d. ca. 430). Nilus promoted in his writings what he regarded as return to the original strict monastic exactitude (ακρίβεια). Caner observes: "What makes Nilus' ascetic *akribeia* striking is the emphasis he places on its aristocratic aims: for him it meant, above all, a monastic lifestyle that would distinguish monks from the common herd." (Caner, *op. cit.* p. 161. Sozomen's image of the monks appears to be shaped accordingly.

mundane politics, relying, as it were, on his remarkable ability to feel at home in both diverse, multi-faceted realms.⁷⁵⁷

Sozomen thus comes across at this initial stage as an author of a saga.⁷⁵⁸ Athanasius emerges right from the outset as a warrior at the service of Nicene orthodoxy. Sozomen paves the way towards the transformation of Socrates's more 'down to earth' and not necessarily flattering account of Athanasius career⁷⁵⁹ by highlighting the instant growth of Athanasius's reputation, prestige and authority from the very beginning and in a fairly inhospitable terrain as tokens of divine choice. This is reflected through compatibility with the demands of the 'times' (i.e. Athanasius's political acumen), the support of fellow defenders of Nicene orthodoxy, particularly towering monastic figures such as Antony, and last but not the least, Athanasius's successful bid for the inheritance of St Mark's throne.

C. Struggling with Bishops, Standing up to Emperors: Sozomen and Athanasius's Legacy of Orthodox Heroism

Sozomen's next stage in narrating the episcopate of Athanasius reveals key elements in his narrative strategies, namely our church historian's choice of the prisms through which he looks at how the events had unfolded. The focal points keep oscillating between the divine prism whereby God's involvement as we have seen thus far in the narration of Athanasius as a chosen youth and his election to the see of St Mark - and the human prism which produces a coarse-grained narrative of ecclesiastical politics whereby the bickering of leaders of different (i.e. heterodox) denominations such as the Arians and the Melitians, are laid bare as being mostly a pretext, concealing efforts to gain power and influence, being driven not necessarily by belief and conviction but rather, by envy and competitiveness and aiming at access to the emperor with the hope of having his ear.⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁷ See: P. Brown, *Treasure in Heaven: The Holy Poor in Early Christianity* (Charlottesville, VA 2016), pp. 71-88. Brown opines (p. 87): "Many monks were landed gentry. Many have been revealed, by modern scholars, to have been fully paid-up intellectuals in the teaching tradition of the great Origen. (Indeed, such are the pendulum swings in modern scholarship that, only a generation ago, we thought that Athanasius and other Greek authors were guilty of having dressed up Egypt's rude sons of the soil as classical philosophers. Now it is the other way round: even Antony has been presented as an intellectual masquerading as a peasant!)." Ewa Wipszycka, however, has argued that Peter Brown did not pay attention to the influence of holy men on urban population. See: E. Wipszycka, *Monks and the Hierarchical Church in Egypt and the Levant during Late Antiquity* (Leuven 2021), pp. 50-56. David Frankfurter, for his part, regards the holy men as merely rural phenomenon. See: D. Frankfurter, 'Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt'. *J ECS* 11 (2003), pp. 339-385.

⁷⁵⁸ Despite running the obvious risk of anachronism, it seems that the name of the medieval Nordic genre can be fruitfully attached to Sozomen's account of Athanasius's career, as the focal points of our Church historian's narrative in this respect are the bishop's political astuteness and individual heroism in the context of a doctrinal controversy turned into a political struggle, not unlike the Icelandic *Samtíðarsögur* (contemporary sagas) of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See: M. Bampi, 'Genre' in: Á. Jakobsson and S. Jakobsson (eds.) *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas* (London 2019), pp. 4-14.

⁷⁵⁹ See: K. Dahm, 'No Voice of Reason: Socrates of Constantinople's Adaptation of Athanasius of Alexandria as a Source for his Ecclesiastical History' *JLA* 16 (2023), pp. 74-105 (esp. p. 96 ff.).

⁷⁶⁰ On envy and the exertion of influence at the Roman imperial courts of the fourth century AD, see: I. Künzer, "The Greatest Glory is always Habitually Subject to Envy"—Competition and Conflict over Closeness to the Emperor at the Roman Court in the 4th Century, in: K. C. Choda, M. Sterk de Leeuw and F.

Sozomen's awareness of the psychological aspects of the interaction of Athanasius with his flock (e.g. in Sozomen's depiction of Athanasius's alliance with Antony), is reflected also through his clashes with his adversaries which will feature throughout the remainder of Athanasius saga. Sozomen's handling of the 'political' psychology behind the doctrinal conflict focuses on the essential role of reputation in the process of attaining power and in Athanasius's case, as Sozomen is implicitly keen to show, the build-up of reputation occurs against all odds:

It were especially (μάλιστα) the Arians and Melitians who had rendered Athanasius most illustrious (ἐνδοξότατον) ; although always plotting (ἄει μὲν ἐπιβουλεύσαντες) they had never managed to prevail in seizing him justifiably (δικαίως αὐτὸν ἐλεῖν). In the first place, Eusebius wrote to urge him to receive the Arians into communion, and threatened, without writing it, to ill-treat him (κακῶς αὐτὸν ποιῆσιν ἀγράφως ἠπειλεῖ) should he refuse to do so. But as Athanasius would not yield to his representation, but maintained that those who had invented a heresy in innovating upon the truth, and who had been condemned by the council of Nicaea, ought not to be received into the Church, Eusebius was exerting himself to interest the emperor in favour of Arius, and so procured his return. I shall state before long how all these events came to pass.⁷⁶¹

This description of Arians and Melitians as 'plotting' sets the stage of the struggle with heterodox bishops and the confrontation with emperors which were to chequer Athanasius career all along. However, it follows a nod to Sozomen's orthodox readers as they are told that this plotting only managed to augment Athanasius's acclaim and the machinations of the Arians and Melitians proved to be futile. Yet, at the same time, it reveals a shift in Sozomen's narrative decision making and, in this case, in his choice of prism. Moving from the biblically-inspired narrative with which he described Athanasius youth ⁷⁶² Sozomen is now using a 'secular' prism. The clash with the 'Arians' is narrowed down here to the confrontation with bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia who is presented as a bully and indeed, a menacing blackmailer. The emperor Constantine, on the other hand, appears here as a fickle ruler who would lend his ears to a busy heretic. This seems to be in sharp contrast to the orthodox myth around this emperor, the liberator of Christian Church, the convenor of the Council of Nicaea

Schulz (eds), *Gaining and Losing Imperial Favour in Late Antiquity: Representation and Reality* (Leiden 2019), pp. 17-35. Envy also preoccupied contemporary and near contemporary church fathers. See: P.M. Blowers, 'Envy's Narrative Scripts: Cyprian, Basil and the Monastic Sages on the Anatomy and Cure of the invidious Emotions', *Modern Theology* 25 (2008), pp. 21-43.

⁷⁶¹ Soz. II, 18, 1. The Melitian schism, as has already been, mentioned, is named after bishop Melitius of Lycopolis, present day Asyut in Upper Egypt (d. 327). On the beginning of the Melitian church see: A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'église d'Égypte au IVe siècle (328-373)*, (Rome 1996), pp. 303-319. The scholarly *communis opinio* which associated that schism (initiated by Melitius in 306) with the acceptance of the *lapsi* (i.e. Christians who yielded to the authorities during a persecution) back into the Church when the Diocletian Persecution had been raging, has been called into question but the results remain inconclusive. See: P. Van Nuffelen, 'Introduction: The Melitian Schism: Development, Sources and Interpretation', in: Id. (ed.), *Hans Hauben: Studies on the Melitian Schism in Egypt (AD 306-335)*, (Abingdon 2017), pp. XI-XXXVI. The Eusebius in question here is Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia (present day İzmit in Turkey) and for the last three years of his life, bishop of Constantinople (d. 341). He led the Arian sympathisers together with his colleague bishop Theognis of Nicaea. On Eusebius of Nicomedia and his supporters who Athanasius dubbed 'Eusebians', see: D.M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the Arian Controversy* (Oxford 2006), pp. 103-124.

⁷⁶² Soz. II, 17.

to which Sozomen had made a substantial contribution throughout his work.⁷⁶³ Athanasius, focalised by Sozomen, is notably relying on the resolutions of the first ecumenical council in his categoric rejection of the Arian bishop's demands. Sozomen, being a member of the legal profession, shows sensitivity to the pivotal role of hard evidence. This is reflected through this first test of Athanasius's tenacity. Sozomen indicates that Eusebius of Nicomedia's threats were communicated to the new bishop of Alexandria yet not in writing. This may suggest that the bishop of Nicomedia did not wish to leave a written attestation to what could have been construed perhaps as misconduct by his enemies within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Sozomen hints in this way that the Arians, despite their growing presence in the imperial court, still felt that caution was essential. In this way Sozomen demystifies the vestiges of their image which appear to have had still some leverage in his lifetime, as we have seen in connection with his account of the episcopate of John Chrysostom in Chapter 2 of the present study. Sozomen uses what appears to be Eusebius of Nicomedia's careful attempt to cover his tracks, to point at the nefarious nature of the Arian leader. Sozomen's narrative strategy, presumably, considers (and consequently ignores) the potential ensuing question of his readers: "if there is no written evidence, and since the author does not indicate reliance on oral tradition, how can he be so sure about those threats?"

Sozomen's decisiveness is an authorial act which forges authority based on what seems to be a justified belief.⁷⁶⁴ This is done by providing *inter alia* a version of this incident which is slightly (but significantly) different to that of his predecessor. Socrates reports that Eusebius of Nicomedia did write to Athanasius a letter in favour of Arius, asking the new bishop of Alexandria to receive back into communion Arius and his supporters. Socrates, for his part, is quite vague as to the contents of this letter, saying that although written with a pleading tone, this letter was menacing 'from the outside' (ἐξωθεν δὲ διηπειλεῖ).⁷⁶⁵ No explanation is given as to the nature of the 'outside' concerned. Sozomen seems to be using this story to display marshalling the material with more clarity and greater confidence than Socrates's somewhat opaque report. Nonetheless Sozomen (like Socrates) promises his readers to tell

⁷⁶³ Soz. I, 17, 1. See chapter 5 of the present study, whereby it is shown that this unflattering depiction of Constantine is by no means a single one. Yet, Sozomen manages to interweave it with a plethora of praises for Constantine as an ideal emperor, pretty much in the spirit of Eusebius of Caesarea and his Constantinian doxologies. For a recent discussion of the Eusebian contribution to of the literary image of Constantine as an ideal ruler, see: B. Zalewski, *Humanitas w ustawodawstwie Konstantyna Wielkiego. Religia - polityka - prawo* (Lublin 2021), pp. 84-93. Zalewski points out that from Eusebius of Caesarea's point of view, only the birth, death and the resurrection of Christ were more important events in the history of the human race, than the rule of Constantine, which Eusebius of Caesarea regards as a culminating turning point in that history. See: Zalewski, *op. cit.* pp. 86-87. Sozomen's nuanced view of Constantine (and a reverberation of his authorial voice) is revealed in the conclusion of his account of the death of that emperor. See: Soz., II, 34, 6:

⁷⁶⁴ On justified belief see in brief: W. P. Alston, *Beyond "Justification": Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation* (Ithaca NY 2005), pp. 23-26. For a survey of various approaches to justified belief, see: J. Carlin Watson, 'Epistemic Justification', in: *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* = <https://iep.utm.edu/epi-just/> Carlin Watson observes: "Very generally, justification is the right standing of an action, person, or attitude with respect to some standard of evaluation. For example, a person's actions might be justified under the law, or a person might be justified before God. *Epistemic* justification ... is the right standing of a person's beliefs with respect to knowledge, though there is some disagreement about what that means precisely. Some argue that right standing refers to whether the beliefs are more likely to be true. Others argue that it refers to whether they are more likely to be knowledge. Still others argue that it refers to whether those beliefs were formed or are held in a responsible or virtuous manner." Sozomen seems to be aiming in this case mainly at those last two.

⁷⁶⁵ Soc. I, 23, 4.

them more later on, but whereas Socrates appears to be concerned merely with technicalities such as structure and coherence, Sozomen seems to be seizing this opportunity to create suspense with hope to increase his readers' curiosity and excitement.⁷⁶⁶

Sozomen ambivalent attitude towards the involvement of the emperor - in this case Constantine - with the affairs of the Church is reflected through the depiction of Constantine's response to the accusations made by the 'Eusebians' against Athanasius. Constantine, committed as always to Church unity, appeared, according to Sozomen, to have been at first confused by the manipulative accusations levelled against Athanasius by the Arians and conversely, by Athanasius's defence. So much so that consequently the emperor was unable to decide to whom he should believe.⁷⁶⁷ Sozomen not only exposes the omnipotent ruler of the Roman empire at what could have been interpreted as personal weakness, but also obliquely suggests that the emperor was not committed in earnest to any Christian doctrine and prone to expediency.⁷⁶⁸ However, this did not deter Athanasius now facing accusations amounting at high treason, but what could have developed into a threatening crisis between the emperor and the bishop of Alexandria, takes a turn that yields positive results from Sozomen's point of view:

*For this reason, having been summoned to answer for the offense, Athanasius was further accused of having conspired against the sovereign (ὡς ἐπιβουλεύων τῷ κρατοῦντι), and of having sent, for this purpose, a casket of gold to one Philumen. The emperor detected the calumny (συκοφαντίαν) of his accusers, sent Athanasius home, and wrote to the people of Alexandria to testify that their bishop possessed great moderation and a correct faith; that he had gladly met him, and recognised him to be a man of God (θεῖον εἶναι); and that, as envy had been the sole cause of his indictment, he had appeared to better advantage than his accusers;*⁷⁶⁹

Nonetheless the recognition of Athanasius's qualities as a man of God is soon followed in Sozomen's narrative by Constantine's pragmatism and practical politics:

and having heard about many dissensions in Egypt due to Arian and Melitian instigation, the emperor, in the same epistle, exhorted the multitude (τὸ πλῆθος) to look to God, to take heed unto his judgments, to be well disposed toward one another, to prosecute with all their might those who plotted against their

⁷⁶⁶ Soc. *ibid.* promises to tell the readers about Eusebius's efforts to win over Constantine in favour of Arius in its 'proper place' (κατὰ χώραν ἐρῶ) cf. Soz. II, 18,2 (οὐκ εἰς μακρὰν ἐρῶ).

⁷⁶⁷ Soz. II, 22, 3: οὐκ εἶχε λοιπὸν ὅτῳ πιστεύσειεν ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος.

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. Soz. II, 28, 14 whereby Sozomen is even more direct. Some of the bishops who were gathered in Tyre (335) were stricken with fear and soon went home, following the letter which Constantine wrote to that synod in favour of Athanasius's request to have his accusers summoned to Constantinople for a re-examination of his case before Constantine himself. Nonetheless, Eusebius of Nicomedia and his supporters did not give in. They approached the emperor and managed to persuade him to lend them his ears. Constantine's response to accusations against Athanasius made by Eusebius of Nicomedia and his followers, in the aftermath of the Synod of Tyre, is described by Sozomen thus: "*The emperor, either believing (πιστεύσας) their statements to be true, or assuming (ὑπολαβὼν) that now unanimity would be restored among the bishops if Athanasius were removed.*" Sozomen is actually pointing the readers at Constantine's expediency by not dismissing a more 'innocent' possibility (i.e. sheer trust in the statements of the anti-Athanasian bishops) which at any rate, if accepted, would have presented Constantine as a rather naïve ruler.

⁷⁶⁹ Soz. II, 22, 8.

like-mindedness (τῇ αὐτῶν ὁμονοίᾳ) ; thus the emperor wrote to the people, exhorting them all to like-mindedness, and striving to prevent divisions in the Church (μὴ διασπᾶσθαι τὴν ἐκκλησίαν).⁷⁷⁰

Athanasius himself, despite his notably principled mindset and tough character has according to Sozomen, his moments of vulnerability. Following summonses sent by Constantine, Athanasius refuses to attend a synod in Caesarea Maritima in Palestine, *fearing the machinations* (δεισας τὴν σκαιωρίαν) of Eusebius, bishop of that city.⁷⁷¹ Having been “having been more intensely constrained” (σφοδρότερον βιασθεῖς) - by Constantine surely? - to attend later on another synod, this time in the Lebanese city of Tyre (335), he had faced there new accusations made by those in league with bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia and the Melitian bishop John, of committing a range of offences such as breaking a sacred chalice, throwing down an episcopal chair, having Ischurias, a certain presbyter, chained up and falsely accusing the very same Ischurias of casting stones at the statues of the emperor, reporting the accusation to Hyginus the governor of Egypt. In addition, what seems to be a more substantial accusation, Sozomen reports that Athanasius was accused of chaining torturing and deposing Callnicus the bishop of Pelusium (Tel el-Farama, in the eastern extremes of the Nile delta, Egypt). This accusation was followed by more accusations of similar nature by bishops who sided with the supporters of John, the leader of the Melitians: Euplus, Pachomius, Isaac, Achillas and Hermaeon. They also revived the old claims about the illegality of Athanasius’s ordination as bishop of Alexandria.⁷⁷²

Sozomen is taking up here the role of a ‘distant author’. He is not passing his own judgement. He allows Athanasius to ‘speak’ for him by, first, highlighting Athanasius’s successful self-advocacy, partly by what can be regarded as his rhetorical skills, and partly by requesting deferment for further preparation of his defense, and second, by turning again to moments of vulnerability at the midst of Athanasius heroic struggle with so many formidably ruthless plotters:

...as generally happens (οἷα φιλεῖ) in such a studiously concocted plot (ἐν σπουδαζομέναις ἐπιβουλαῖς) , many even of those considered his friends (τῶν νομιζομένων φίλων) loomed up unexpectedly as accusers. A document was then read, containing popular complaints that the people of Alexandria could not continue their attendance at church on his account. Athanasius, having been urged to justify himself, presented himself repeatedly before the tribunal; successfully repelled some of the allegations, and requested delay for investigation as to the others. He was exceedingly perplexed (Ἡπόρει δὲ λίαν) when he reflected on the favor in which his accusers were held (κεχαρισμένους) by his judges, on the number of witnesses belonging to the sects of Arius and Melitius who appeared against him, and on the indulgence that was manifested (συγγνώμης ἄξιουμένους) towards the calumniators, whose allegations had been overcome.⁷⁷³

Sozomen allows himself to opine in a didactic tone that betrayal is not uncommon and has its typical features. This he imparts as received wisdom. He goes on to probe into Athanasius’s ‘conscience’. Here our church historian shares with his readers a quintessential component of

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., 9. See: Constantine’s letter to the Catholic Church of Alexandria from the year 331 in: O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 N. chr: Vorarbeit zu einer Prosopographie der christlichen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 1919; Repr. Frankfurt/Main 1964), p. 181 cf. Soc. I, 27, 19.

⁷⁷¹ Soz. II, 25, 1.

⁷⁷² Soz. II, 25, 3-6.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., 7-8.

his authorial voice. Athanasius, even in moments of victory, can be vulnerable, fearful and distressed. By presenting Athanasius's fears (and by doing so, Sozomen reveals Athanasius's 'human face') prior to narrating the bold actions the bishop of Alexandria eventually is about to take vis-à-vis his colleagues, (among them those who were up until then 'considered' his friends) and now in league with his arch-enemies, Sozomen echoes in particular the legacy of stoicism and its answers to vicissitudes such as betrayal and injustice.⁷⁷⁴ Sozomen's narrative at this stage remains, as it were, purely 'political'. The shift to a 'secular' prism from the 'religious' one is a clear example of what could be regarded as Sozomen's bifocal narrative.

When Sozomen returns to the 'religious' prism, he is nonetheless keen not to show any claim to theological expertise despite the fact that his narrative is touching on charged theological issues. This modesty, and at times, self-deprecation, is revealed before long as a rhetorical device which is intended to make his voice heard despite potential risks, by those who can read between the lines. Such is the case of Athanasius at the synod of Antioch, attended by ninety bishops at the presence of the new emperor Constantius II (341).⁷⁷⁵ The pretext for convening this synod was the dedication of the newly finished church which Constantius's father, the late emperor Constantine began to build, but in reality as Sozomen intimates, this occasion was used, as the outcome shows, to turn around the doctrines of Nicaea.⁷⁷⁶ Despite the challenge of dealing with major doctrinal issue, it was the condemnation and deposition of Athanasius which appears to have received priority and according to Sozomen's account, was first on the synod's agenda.⁷⁷⁷ Only then the bishops addressed urgent and complex theological questions. Unlike Socrates who contents himself with a sheer summary of the statement of faith that was drafted by the synod, Sozomen adds his personal comments about the outcome, obliquely calling into question the motives, practices and indeed, the competence of the bishops concerned, who just a short while ago had deposed Athanasius:

They resorted, in fact, to such ambiguity of expression, (ἐπαμφοτερίζουσιν) that neither the Arians nor the followers of the decrees of the Nicæan Council could call the arrangement of their words into question (τῶν ῥημάτων ἐπισκῆπτειν), as though they were ignorant of the holy Scriptures (ὡς ἀγνώστων ταῖς ἱεραῖς γραφαῖς). They purposely avoided all terms which were rejected by either party, and only made use of those which were agreed on both sides. (ἐκατέρων ὁμολογούμενα). They confessed that the Son is with the Father, that He is the only begotten One, and that He is God, and existed before all things; and that He took flesh upon Him, and fulfilled the will of His Father. They confessed these and similar truths, but they did not describe the doctrine of the Son being co-eternal or consubstantial with the Father, or the opposite. They subsequently changed their minds, it appears, about this formulary, and issued another, which, I think, (ὡς οἶμαι) very nearly resembled that of the

⁷⁷⁴ On fear in Roman Stoicism, see: D. Agri, *Reading Fear in Flavian Epic: Emotion, Power, and Stoicism* (Oxford 2022), pp. 32-42 and pp. 133-159.

⁷⁷⁵ See: R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318 – 381* (London 2005), pp. 284-292. Hanson points out that both Sozomen and Socrates confuse this synod with another gathering that took place in the same city three years earlier which actually was the synod that deposed Athanasius. See: *ibid.* p. 285 n. 32; *SC 418* p. 68. n. 3 and *ibid.* p. 90 n. 1. See also: P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), pp. 355-357 and L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford 2004), pp. 117-121.

⁷⁷⁶ Soz. III, 5, 2.

⁷⁷⁷ Cf. Soc. II, 8-10.

council of Nicaea, unless, indeed, some secret meaning be attached to the words which is not apparent to me (εἰ μὴ τις ἐμοὶ ἄδηλος διάνοια τοῖς ῥητοῖς ἀφανῶς ἔγκειται).⁷⁷⁸

Sozomen is commenting here on the dynamics of what should have been merely a doctrinal deliberation. He is seemingly neutral about the collaboration between the pro-Arian bishops and their colleagues who remained true to Nicene orthodoxy in a mutual attempt to draft a document free of divisive issues, but then our historian is adding an incisive remark about the concerted efforts to sanitise, as it were, the statement of faith. The bishops, according to Sozomen did it: *as though they were ignorant of the holy Scriptures*. It is clear that an accusation of disregarding the holy Scriptures is by any standard, more serious than not being familiar with them, especially given their fundamental role in the early Arian controversy.⁷⁷⁹ Sozomen is presenting the endeavour to achieve a doctrinal compromise as a sad moment of verbal acrobatics and fickleness, reflected in the change of mind of the bishops present, and resulting in the drafting of two statements of faith. However, Sozomen, armed with rather acerbic self-deprecation, suggests that the Nicene truth seems to have emerged victorious even at this particular point, as the second document that this synod had produced, was similar to the resolutions of Nicaea. Sozomen concludes sarcastically that at any rate it seemed so, unless the words thereof have had a secret meaning that was beyond his comprehension. Sozomen thus retains a *modus narrandi* which may reflect his displeasure and even derision, without being bluntly disrespectful.

Athanasius's career was chequered with banishments and flights, most of which were ordered by Constantius II.⁷⁸⁰ Having fled to Rome following his deposition, Athanasius met there with other bishops who were persecuted by the imperial authorities for opposing the Arians and found shelter there, among them bishop Paul of Constantinople who was deposed and exiled by Constantius following the murder of Hermogenes⁷⁸¹, a general of the cavalry who, while passing through Constantinople on his way to Thrace, attempted to carry out the removal of Paul from his see. Hermogenes attempt met with riots and violent resistance of the Constantinopolitans who rallied around their bishop. The clashes between the general and the locals resulted in setting fire to Hermogenes's house and eventually lynching him.⁷⁸²

Constantius arrived soon in Constantinople outraged and seeking retribution. Having taken punitive measures against the city, including the expulsion of Paul its bishop, he went back to Antioch where he was staying at the time. Sozomen reports that the Arian "partisans" (σπουδασταὶ) deposed Gregory, the Arian bishop of Alexandria for not doing enough to enforce their doctrines in that city, and on account of the disasters which struck that city since

⁷⁷⁸ Soz. III, 5, 6-8.

⁷⁷⁹ See: S. Parvis, 'Christology in the Early Arian Controversy: The Exegetical Wars', in: A. T. Lincoln and A. Paddison (eds.) *Christology and Scripture: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London 2007), pp.

⁷⁸⁰ On banishment and the Church in general, see: D.A. Washborn, *Banishment in the Later Roman Empire, 284-478 CE* (Abingdon 2013), pp. 41-64. On Constantius II and the banishment of bishops, see:

W. Stevenson, 'Exiling Bishops: The Policy of Constantius II', *DOP* 68 (2014), pp. 7-27.

⁷⁸¹ See: *PLRE* I, Hermogenes I.

⁷⁸² Soz. III, 7, 6-7. On bishop Paul of Constantinople and his career, see: T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MS 1993), pp. 213-217.

Barnes dates the killing of Hermogenes and the ensuing expulsion of Paul to 342.

he took office. Gregory was replaced by George of Cappadocia who was singled out for his active personality and for being a staunch supporter of the Arian dogma.⁷⁸³

In Rome, Athanasius, Paul and the other bishops who had to take refuge there, enjoyed the support and protection of pope Julius I. The Roman pontiff had also written to the bishops of the East, accusing them of treating the bishops concerned unjustly and troubling the churches by abandoning the dogma of Nicaea. Sozomen indicates that pope Julius's letter was passed on to the bishops of the East by the bishops who supported Athanasius and Paul, after they returned to their respective sees. This is followed by a rare glance into what appears to be Sozomen's own ironic perception of wordsmithing, legal reasoning and irony itself:

*The bishops (scil. of the East) could hardly tolerate these letters., and they assembled together in Antioch and replied Julius with a letter replete with beautiful expressions, and legal reasoning but also filled with irony and not devoid of a most ghastly threat. (ἀντέγραψαν Ἰουλίῳ κεκαλλιεπημένην τινὰ καὶ δικανικῶς συντεταγμένην ἐπιστολήν, εἰρωνείας τε πολλῆς ἀνάπλεων καὶ ἀπειλῆς οὐκ ἀμοιροῦσαν δεινότητος).*⁷⁸⁴

This description of the bishops' letter and its contents consists of key elements in the components of Sozomen's authorial voice namely brilliance of style, legal astuteness and irony but it is not unlikely that Sozomen is actually expressing obliquely his own ambivalence about himself and the role that was left for him in his advance age to play in the early Byzantine literary arena, being himself an experienced lawyer.⁷⁸⁵ The heroic figure of Athanasius, an uncompromising defender of Nicene orthodoxy appears to have teased out not only Sozomen's own pro-Nicene convictions but also, writing in a turbulent era whereby the future of Nicene orthodoxy did not seem secure, to have triggered his ambivalence, doubts and indeed exasperation with what appeared to be the insuperable influence that heretics had exercised within the ecclesiastical hierarchy and indeed, the imperial court in his day just as they did during Athanasius's heroic career. However, Sozomen does not forget the bishops who remained true to Nicene orthodoxy, supported Athanasius and stood by his side opposite the alliance between Constantius II and the pro-Arian bishops in the council of Milan (359).⁷⁸⁶ Sozomen highlights in particular the unswerving support of the Church of Rome and the bishops of the West who did not hesitate to launch a scathing attack on the anti-Athanasian calumnies concocted by the bishops of the East and orchestrated by the emperor, Constantius II, himself:

The Eastern bishops insisted that Athanasius should be condemned to banishment, and expelled from Alexandria; and the others, either from fear, fraud, or ignorance, assented to the measure. Dionysius, bishop of Alba, the metropolis of Italy, Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli in Liguria, Paulinus, bishop of Trier, Rhodanus, and Lucifer, were the only bishops who raised their voices to high heavens and declared that Athanasius ought not to be condemned on such slight pretexts; and that the evil would not cease with his condemnation (ἀνέκραγον καὶ ἐμαρτύραντο μὴ χρῆναι ὥδι ῥαδίως καταδικάσαι Ἀθανασίου· μηδὲ γὰρ ἄχρι τούτου, εἰ γένοιτο, στήσεσθαι τὸ κακόν,

⁷⁸³ Soz. III, 7, 9. George of Cappadocia is described unflatteringly by Ammianus Marcellinus (XX, 11, 4),

⁷⁸⁴ Soz. III, 8, 4.

⁷⁸⁵ See ch. 3 of the present study.

⁷⁸⁶ See: D. H. Williams, 'The Council of Ariminum (359) and the Rise of the Neo-Nicenes'. In: Y.R. Kim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*, (Cambridge 2020) , p.305-324. On Constantius II in this context see: K. M. Girardet, 'Constance II, Athanase et l'édit d'Arles (353),' in : C. Kannengiesser (ed.), *Politique et théologie chez Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1974), pp. 63–91.

χωρήσειν δὲ τὴν) ; but that those who supported the orthodox doctrines concerning the Godhead would be immediately subjected to a plot. They represented that the whole measure was a scheme concerted by the emperor and the Arians with the view of suppressing the Nicene faith. Their boldness was punished by an edict of immediate banishment (ἐπιβουλὴν καὶ κατ' αὐτῶν τῶν ὀρθῶς περὶ θεοῦ δεδογμένων· ἐπὶ καθαιρέσει τε τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ πίστεως ταῦτα σπουδάζεσθαι παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῶν τὰ Ἀρείου φρονούντων. καὶ οἱ μὲν ὧδε παρρησιασάμενοι ὑπερορίῳ φυγῇ κατεδικάσθησαν), and Hilary was exiled with them. The outcome showed what was the real reason for which the council of Milan had been convened (ἄληθῇ δὲ τοῦ ἐν Μεδιολάνῳ συλλόγου αἰτίαν εἶναι, ἣν ἔλεγον, ἐπιστοῦτο ἢ ἀπόβασις) . For the councils which were held not long after at Ariminum and Seleucia were evidently designed to change the doctrines established by the council of Nicaea, as I shall show shortly. ⁷⁸⁷

Sozomen relishes the opportunity to celebrate the resilience, boldness, and indeed bravery of the western bishops who supported Athanasius. This clash between the pro-Nicene bishops and the alliance of Eastern pro-Arian bishops and a pro-Arian irascible emperor in Milan is in fact an implicit postulate made by the implied author: heresy means strife, disunity, and indeed, tyranny. ⁷⁸⁸

The following developments added another dimension to this equation. Athanasius had managed to avoid an audience with Constantius despite the summonses that were dispatch to him by the emperor. He was suspicious about Constantius's real intentions and together with his flock was troubled and struck by anxiety. ⁷⁸⁹ Athanasius kept dodging the imperial summonses until a force of Roman legionnaires was sent to arrest him. Sozomen reports that Athanasius was concealed in an Alexandrine church known as the church of Theonas. The soldiers broke into that church but failed to find the bishop of Alexandria inside. Sozomen relates that Athanasius was almost apprehended however:

It is said that he escaped this and many other perils by the Divine interposition; and that God had disclosed this previously (λέγεται γάρ, ὡς πολλάκις ὑπὸ θείων μηνυμάτων πολλοὺς καὶ ἄλλους κινδύνους διέφυγε, καὶ τήνδε τὴν ἔφοδον θεὸν αὐτῷ προαναφῆναι·) ⁷⁹⁰

In his description of Athanasius miraculous escape from the soldiers who were sent to arrest him, Sozomen refrains for using the word 'miracle'. This time the involvement of God in saving the unyielding bishop of Alexandria is not recorded via the historian's own thoughts and beliefs but through reliance on what seems to be an oral tradition which opens with the conventional λέγεται.

Sozomen thus forges a third variety of prism alongside the 'divine' and the 'human' or otherwise the 'religious' and the 'political' prisms: a hybrid which can be named 'tradition-oriented'. The historian narrates what tradition has passed down about super-natural events without involving the author's personal judgement. Sozomen's ambivalence is demonstrated in the options which appear to be given to the readers i.e. to decide whether the narrative consists of what the author believes or whether it is reflecting merely what the author would have liked to believe. These three prisms brought together create Sozomen's wide ranged

⁷⁸⁷ Soz. IV, 9, 2-5. On the identification of the western bishops listed here, see: SC 418, p. 220, n. 1.

⁷⁸⁸ S. Diefenbach, 'A Vain Quest for Unity: Creeds and Political (Dis)Integration in the Reign of Constantius II' in: J. Wienand (ed.), *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD* (Oxford 2015), pp. 353-378.

⁷⁸⁹ Soz. IV, 9, 7.

⁷⁹⁰ Soz. IV, 9, 10.

‘optics’ and position Sozomen as an ecclesiastical historian in possession of a complex and indeed rich authorial voice.

D. Conclusion

The career of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, an emblematic figure of the Nicene Orthodoxy⁷⁹¹, had provided Sozomen an opportunity to tell the story of pro-Nicene heroism. Sozomen’s authorial voice was given a space to be heard without forgoing his usual narrational attributes namely open-ended approach and cautiously interlaced ambivalence.

Sozomen, a pro-Nicene ecclesiastical historian, had mined the riches of the Athanasius saga. He examines the quasi-mythical story of Athanasius childhood, the scandalous rumours about his election to the episcopal throne of Alexandria and the struggles with heterodox prelates and emperors which resulted in smear campaigns, persecution, hostile synods, banishments and flights of the uncompromising bishop of Alexandria. Sozomen produced a multi-layered narrative whereby his orthodox solid belief, alongside his uncertainties and anxieties, facing an environment which was becoming more and more hostile to Catholics towards the end of Theodosius II’s reign, are combined into a narration of Athanasius’s life through three prisms namely the divine or religious whereby the author openly draws on his belief, the human or political which deals with the intricacies of ecclesiastical politics, especially in the context of heresy and its alliance with certain Roman emperors and lastly , the prism of tradition whereby the implied author, is trying to ‘distance’ himself from his narratees and so, attempts to shape his narrative into a non-judgemental transmission of an existing tradition. The reliance on ‘tradition’ does not seem to be merely a rhetorical device, nor is it a continuation of the Greek tradition which began with Herodotus.⁷⁹² It is a result of writing a complex history on a charged subject in a charged environment.

Sozomen’s implicit reliance on tradition in the narration of the Athanasius saga, reflects his ambivalence, his vacillation between belief and realism, hope and resignation and so becomes one of the stepping stones in the shaping of his authorial voice.

⁷⁹¹ P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), p. 500.

⁷⁹² Van Nuffelen, op. cit. p. 249.

Chapter 5: Beyond the Myth: Sozomen's Conception of Constantine's Imperial Leadership

*Neque enim nos imperatores ideo felices dicimus quia vel diutius imperarunt vel imperantes filios morte placida reliquerunt vel hostes rei publicae domuerunt vel inimicos cives adversos se insurgentes et cavere et oprimare potuerunt. Haec et alia vitae huius aerummosae vel munera vel solacia quidam etiam cultores daemonum accipere meruerunt, qui non pertinent ad regnum dei, quo pertinent istii et hoc ipsius misericordia factum est, ne ab illo ista qui in eum crederunt velut suma bona desiderunt. Sed felices eos dicimus, si iuste imperunt, si inter linguas sublimiter honorantium et obsequia nimis humiliter salutantium non extolluntur sed homines esse meminerunt.*⁷⁹³

*Sed neque imperiale est libertatem dicendi denegare, neque sacerdotale, quod sentias non dicere. Nihil enim in vobis imperatoribus tam popolare tam amabile est quam libertatem etiam in iis diligere, qui obsequio militiae vobis subditi sunt. Siquidem hoc interest inter bonos et malos principes quod boni libertatem amant, servitutem improbi. Nihil etiam in sacerdote tam periculosum apud Deum, tam turpe apud homines, quam quod sentiat, non libere denuntiare... Quid igitur est amplius? Disciplinae species, an causa religionis? Cedat oportet censura devotioni.*⁷⁹⁴

ὥς καὶ τῆς ἱερωσύνης ὁμοτίμου οἶμαι τῇ βασιλείᾳ οὕσης, μᾶλλον μὲν οὖν ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς τόποις καὶ τὰ πρῶτα ἐχούσης.⁷⁹⁵

A. Introduction

Sozomen has emerged thus far as an ambivalent observer of the developments in the life of the Church in the eastern Roman empire, who seems to have remained a stranger in his adopted hometown of Constantinople despite his long career there.⁷⁹⁶ The connection between ambivalence and strangerhood is quite natural. Being a stranger implies, among other things, that nothing in the surrounding environment is taken for granted or regarded as

⁷⁹³ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, V, 24.

⁷⁹⁴ Ambrose, *Ep.* XL, 2 and 11.

⁷⁹⁵ Soz., *HE*, II, 34, 6.

⁷⁹⁶ This can be adduced from Sozomen's rare bits of homodiegetic first-person narrative whereby Sozomen's narratorial persona is shifting from his usual zero-focalisation heterodiegetic omniscient narration towards an internal focalisation, conveying through those biographical asides, the voice of an overt narrator. Thus Sozomen (Soz. I, 1, 12) refers to his hope to be supported by God in writing an ecclesiastical history 'contrary to expectation' (παράδοξως). It would seem unsatisfactory to associate Sozomen's self-portrayal as an unexpected ecclesiastical historian simply with literary formulaic authorial *humilitas*. What should alert us here is that Sozomen goes on to tell us (Soz., I, 1, 12) about his previous endeavours to write a history of the Church from the Ascension of Christ to the overthrow of Licinius in 324 (now lost), Sozomen seems to be referring to his previous unsuccessful attempt to make a name for himself in Constantinople as historian which may have alienated him from local literary circles and patronage opportunities, rendering now his new attempt to establish himself as historian despite his bumpy road as 'unexpected'. Another expression of Sozomen's strangerhood can be evinced by his first-person narration of his Palestinian ancestry (Soz. V, 15, 14). Sozomen reports that his grandfather was born into a pagan family. Sozomen's choice to record his pagan pedigree may have not merited our attention had it not been for his Palestinian roots. It seems that Sozomen, an *émigré* ecclesiastical historian who had apparently struggled with being an outsider in Constantinople, was determined to make clear that, despite his Palestinian origins, he was not of Jewish extraction. Hence perhaps Sozomen's peculiar choice to begin his *HE* with a reflection on the Jewish fundamental disbelief in Christ (Soz. I, 1, 1-8).

‘natural’ by the outsider. This state of mind has found an apt formulation in Zygmunt Bauman’s analysis:

*‘The burden to resolve ambivalence falls, ultimately, on the person cast in the ambivalent condition. Even if the phenomenon of strangerhood is socially structured, the assumption of the status of stranger, with all its attendant ambiguity, with all its burdensome over-and under-definition, carries attributes which in the end are constructed, sustained and deployed with the active participation of their carriers in the psychical process of self-construction.’*⁷⁹⁷

Thus the Palestinian-born lawyer⁷⁹⁸ and strong Catholic whose religious formation had been, so it seems, the product of a devout environment⁷⁹⁹ had to find a way to accommodate the complex aspects of Church and State relations during the fourth century just as he seems to have forced himself to do as part of his own ‘self-construction’, facing the complex reality in Constantinople and indeed -both eastern and western empires at the time when he was writing i.e. ca. 450. It follows that nowhere could Sozomen’s ambivalence be tested more challengingly than in his account of Constantine the Great (273-337), the founder of the Christian Roman State whose conversion to Christianity and the ensuing imperial policies are still coming across modern scholarship as elusively ambiguous.⁸⁰⁰

Sozomen’s account of Constantine’s reign stretches over the two first books of the *HE*. The present chapter will look at Sozomen’s manifest (as we shall try to show) ambivalence in this account, which is revealed chiefly in Sozomen’s ambiguous attitude, shifting between devotion to the Christian myth which developed around Constantine’s alleged heroic sanctity on one hand – and criticism which seems to be corroborating at times some of the pagan accusations against Constantine- on the other. We shall see that Sozomen did not regard himself committed to an explicit choice between the two and so these seemingly contradictory attitudes are not at all mutually exclusive in Sozomen’s discourse.⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁷ Z. Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge 1993), p. 75.

⁷⁹⁸ Soz. II, 3, 10. For a recent affirmation of Sozomen’s legal expertise see: S. Bralewski, ‘La connaissance de la loi ecclésiastique chez Socrate de Constantinople en confrontation avec l’œuvre de Hermias Sozomène’, *Studia Ceranea* 6 (2016), pp. 243-255.

⁷⁹⁹ Soz. I, 1, 18-19. Sozomen expresses his concern about appearing ungrateful to ‘those called monks’ (τῶν καλοθμένων μοναχῶν) by consigning their virtue to oblivion (ἀμνηστίᾳ παραδεδωκότες τὴν αὐτῶν ἀρετήν). Although this cannot prove that Sozomen was educated - in any formal sense - by monks as van Nuffelen rightly points out (See: van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété* ...p. 53, n. 290), it nonetheless suggests that our ecclesiastical historian was brought up in a devout Christian environment that had instilled in him high esteem of the monastic way of life to which he refers throughout his *HE* as ‘philosophy’ and which is described by him here as a virtuous one.

⁸⁰⁰ Harold Drake has re-phrased the current scholarly agenda as regards the Constantinian conversion thus: “...the question about Constantine’s conversion needs to shift from “Did he become a Christian?” (about which there can be very little doubt) to “What *kind* of Christian did he become?” I will be argued in the present chapter that Sozomen appears to have been preoccupied with a question along the lines the latter. See: H.A. Drake, ‘The Impact of Constantine on Christianity’ in N. Lenski (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge 2006), pp. 111-136. Note also: R. Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 10-11 and G.L. Thompson, ‘From Sinner to Saint? Seeking a Consistent Constantine’, in E.L. Smither (ed.), *Rethinking Constantine: History, Theology, and Legacy* (Eugene, OR 2014), pp. 6-25. Thompson offers a particularly valuable sketch of the beginnings of the Constantinian myth and its reflection on recent scholarship.

⁸⁰¹ On the development of a myth around Constantine, tracing its origins back to Eusebius, see: F. Hubeñak, ‘La Construcción del Mito de Constantino a Partir de Eusebio de Cesarea’,

Sozomen is clear right from the outset: Providence is the driving force of history. It follows that according to Sozomen, what appears to be irreconcilable to human mind, including inconsistencies in the behaviour of a ruler who purports to be a Christian and a champion of Christianity, would require a subtle and refined approach as Providence operates in mysterious ways and history should not be understood as an account of human action but an endeavour to understand God's actions which is bound to defy our logic and misleading sense of coherence. This type of attitudinal behaviour was described by Eugen Bleuler (1857-1939), the Swiss psychiatrist who coined the term 'ambivalence' as '*Die gleichzeitige Bindung an unvereinbare oder widersprüchliche Ideen oder Überzeugungen*' ('the simultaneous attachment to incompatible or contradictory ideas or beliefs').⁸⁰²

Scholars studying the relatively short tradition of approximately a hundred and fifty years of ecclesiastical historiography preceding Sozomen's work, might be able to identify quite easily several dissimilarities between the younger Christian genre and its pagan Graeco-Roman antecedents.⁸⁰³ Nevertheless, both historiographies have in common a keen interest in (at least) two archetypal figures, namely the ruler and the hero (in the broadest sense of the terms, bearing in mind that both can, as they do, coalesce). Thus, it can be safely argued that both historiographical traditions allocate significant space to an exploration of human leadership. This mutual interest, however, appears to be virtually no more than a point of tangency, as some of the fundamental differences between pagan and ecclesiastical historians come to the fore instantly, if the study is conducted against this backdrop.⁸⁰⁴

The ecclesiastical historians, in keeping with Eusebius's programmatic reconfiguration of history from the terrestrial to the Providential⁸⁰⁵, were now seeking to chart afresh the places where, according to their convictions, *real* power resided i.e. where, Providence was operating towards the fulfilment of its preconceived plan to keep perfecting the Creation through devout agents namely, priests, bishops, martyrs, monks, holy men or exceptionally devout lay believers. It follows that the supreme representative of temporal authority and power i.e. the Roman emperor, was not relegated to an auxiliary role. He had to be accommodated alongside the divines and only failing that (i.e. if he was unfortunate enough to adhere to a heterodox doctrine or if he lapsed) – the emperor would be depicted as the embodiment of a strictly-speaking 'secular' (and indeed hostile) authority.

As we shall see throughout this chapter, this depiction too was bound to be carried out within self-imposed boundaries whereby the necessities of political adroitness coalesced with literary codes and a pre-supposed readership's horizon of expectations. It is essential in this context not to disregard the history of the contacts between the Roman emperors and the Christian Church which stretched back over nearly three centuries prior to Constantine's so-called 'conversion'. Strained as these relations may have been at times- it would be almost a truism

POLIS 23 (2011), pp. 61-88.

⁸⁰² Cited by K. Weisbrode, *On Ambivalence: The problems and pressures of Having it Both Ways* (Cambridge, MA 2012), p. 11. See also: L. Bleuler, 'Ambivalenz', *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* 1, (1911), pp. 266-268.

⁸⁰³ See: D. Timpe, 'Was ist Kirchengeschichte? Zum Gattungscharakter der 'Historia Ecclesiastica' des Eusebius' in W. Dahlheim e.a. (eds.), *Festschrift Robert Werner* (Konstanz 1989), pp. 171-204.

⁸⁰⁴ See: A. Momigliano, 'Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century AD', in Id. (ed.) *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 1963), p.92ff. Note also this (still essential) coherent discussion: W. Völker, 'Von welchen Tendenzen liess sich Eusebius bei Abfassung seiner 'Kirchengeschichte' leiten?' *VigChr* 4 (1950), pp.157-180.

⁸⁰⁵ Eus. *HE*, V, 1.

to say that this substantial legacy could not be transformed, let alone eliminated, overnight.⁸⁰⁶ It was only a matter of pragmatic policy-making to assume that regardless of emperor's change of heart, any ensuing change on the ground must be gradual and accompanied with effective trust-building measures.⁸⁰⁷ This measured transformation of those bi-lateral contacts is well reflected in the ecclesiastical historiography. Socrates however begins to change the direction of the journey by castigating Eusebius for his focus on the praises of Constantine instead of the accuracy of his reports. Socrates does not tire from declaring repeatedly his impartiality but does not refrain from criticising the clergy for their zealotry and belligerence and praises Theodosius II for his disapproval of clergymen who attempted to persecute others.⁸⁰⁸ As the address to Theodosius II seems to be a parody it is permissible to say that when Sozomen decides to praise a member of the Theodosian dynasty, he chooses to praise Pulcheria, Theodosius II's sister and although he praises her for her devotion, piety and intelligence, it is quite clear that his non-ambivalent depiction of Pulcheria is linked, first and foremost with her staunch support of Nicene orthodoxy, possibly from a more secure vintage point during or shortly after the Council of Chalcedon.⁸⁰⁹

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'myth' thus: '*A traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.*' It would be fair to say that we often think about myth as a story whose author is unknown and the anonymity of the author or authors serves in our imagination to associate the term 'myth' with terms such as 'tradition' and 'antiquity' which, in turn, give it its flare. Constantine's case is clearly different. The myth which was associated

⁸⁰⁶ See: M. Wallraff, 'Constantine's Devotion to the Sun after 324', in M. F. Wiles and E. J. Yarnold (eds) with P.M. Parvis, *Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999: Historica, biblica, theologica et philosophica* (= SP 34) (Leuven 2001), pp. 256-269. The belated echoes of the religious transformation after Constantine's conversion are illustrated e.g. in a bronze medallion which dates to the early 320's Rev. GLORIA SAECLVI VIRTVS CAESS: Constantine is seated holding a sceptre, offering globe with phoenix to Caesar, a panther at his feet (*RIC* 7 Rome 279). See: N. Lenski (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge 2006), Coins: #33.; M. Grant, *The Emperor Constantine* (London 1993), p. 134; J. Elsner, 'Perspectives in Art', in Lenski, *op. cit.* pp. 269-277. See also: S. Calderone, 'Teologia politica, successione dinastica e consecrazione in età costantiniana', in W. den Boer (ed.), *Le culte des souverains dans l'empire romain* (Geneva 1973), pp. 244-261; R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London 1986), pp. 620-622; H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore, MD 2000), pp. 286-291; R. Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 148-149.

⁸⁰⁷ For a detailed discussion of the contacts between the Roman Emperors and the Church in the first three centuries see: F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (2nd ed. London 1992; Repr. 2001), pp. 551-607. Millar concludes thus (*ibid.* p. 606): "... all that need be claimed is that the form of the Emperor's exchanges with the church, and the presumptions which underlay them, cannot be understood without close reference to the long-established patterns of his contacts with other bodies and with individuals seeking justice or benefit. More specifically, it may be emphasized both that Constantine's conversion did produce a personal commitment of entirely novel content, and (on the other hand), that this commitment could not fail to express itself in forms which were essentially traditional."

⁸⁰⁸ Soc., I, 1, 2. cf. Id. III, 1, 2, VI, 1, 1-2 and Id. VII, 47, 1-2.

⁸⁰⁹ Soz. IX, 1. On Pulcheria see now: A. Busch, *Die Frauen der theodosianischen Dynastie: Macht und Repräsentation kaiserlicher Frauen im 5. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 2015), pp. 110-135. See also: P. Blaudeau, 'Les Augustae garantes de la continuité de la politique religieuse théodosienne ? Regard sur l'engagement respectif de Pulchérie et d'Eudocie dans la controverse christologique après la mort de Théodose II (450-460)', in: P. Delage (ed.), *Les Pères de l'Église et les femmes. Actes du colloquede La Rochelle 6 et 7 septembre 2003* (La Rochelle 2003), pp. 368-399.

with him had known authors such as Eusebius of Caesarea, the inventor of the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* and his older contemporary Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius (ca. 250-ca.325), a North African rhetoric teacher and convert to Christianity.⁸¹⁰ Lactantius ended up as an advisor to Constantine and alongside Eusebius the author of works such as Book X of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Laus Constantini* and *De Vita Constantini* had laid the foundations to what became a ‘Constantinian myth’ particularly in his *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, a work which preserves the story about Constantine’s vision of the Chi Rho which led to his conversion to Christianity.⁸¹¹ Sozomen’s use of John Chrysostom’s *Comparatio regis et monachi* upon which, as proposed in the third chapter of the present thesis, Sozomen had patterned his *Dedicatio* to Theodosius II can tell us too about his ambivalent attitude towards Roman imperial power, its symbols, attributes and visibility.⁸¹²

In his imperial power narrative, Sozomen appears to idolise the type of Christianity that was championed by Athanasius and John Chrysostom.⁸¹³ In the sixth chapter, as we shall see, Sozomen combines his ambivalence towards imperial power with his Catholic convictions to create an account of the Constantinian dynasty in which the real protagonist appears to be not so much the heterodox emperors, but rather, the beleaguered Nicene Doctrine.

B. The ‘Mithologisation’ of Constantine

Looking back to the invention of the genre and to the literary models which Eusebius of Caesarea, its inventor, had passed down to his successors- we may find that the Christian Emperor was re-invented and at the same time retained some of his traditional, ‘technical’ roles in the production-process of a valid Christian historical narrative.⁸¹⁴ The Christian empire and indeed, the growing exposure to the historical writing in the Bible and to the New

⁸¹⁰ On Lactantius and Constantine see: E. Palma Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire: Lactantius and Rome* (Ithaca, NY 2000), pp. 115-144. See also: D. Potter, *Constantine the Emperor* (Oxford 2013), pp. 301-306. Note also: W. B. Shelton, ‘Lactantius as Architect of a Constantinian and Christian “Victory over the Empire”’, in: E. L. Smither (ed.), *Rethinking Constantine: History, Theology and Legacy* (Eugene, OR 2014), pp. 26-36.

⁸¹¹ Constantine’s conversion to Christianity is one of the examples offered by the German philosopher of history Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996) for the vital role of myth in any political system. See: H. Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt/Main 1979; Repr. 2006), p. 390 ff.

⁸¹² Soz. *Dedicatio*, 3. Sozomen is praising Theodosius II’s piety, but not before describing the emperor’s ornate garments and regalia in real life: “Girt with the purple robe and crown, a symbol of your dignity to onlookers” (ἀλουργίδα δὲ καὶ στέφανον πρὸς τοὺς θεωμένους σύμβολον τῆς ἀξίας περικείμενος) cf. *ibid.* 2, wherein piety is described as the genuine ornament of kingship (ἐνσεβείας δὲ, τοῦ ἀληθοῦς κόσμου τῆς βασιλείας). Sozomen shrewdly goes on to claim that Theodosius II is in possession of all virtue (πᾶσαν ἐπήσκησας ἀρετὴν) but includes in those virtues also the superficial and ostentatious display of regal attire for “onlookers” which was classified by Sozomen in the preceding sentence as inferior to piety.

⁸¹³ On Christian views of imperial power in the fourth century, see: H. A. Drake, ‘Speaking of Power: Christian Redefinition of the Imperial Role in the Fourth Century’ in: J. Wienand (ed.), *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD* (Oxford 2012), pp. 291-308.

⁸¹⁴ Eusebius seems to have been mindful of the Roman *penchant* for conformity as a key to legitimacy. Thus, he was keen to retain – as far as was possible – certain *formulae* which could have been used as ‘shock-absorbers’ during the early (and apparently confusing) transitional period of the ‘Christianisation’ of the Roman empire. One example of this is chronology. See: R.W. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronology* (Stuttgart 1999), pp. 28-35. For the Roman background see: D. Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley, CA 2007), pp.184-211.

Testament in particular, had offered historians an ample opportunity to transform the sovereign into a hero and indeed to introduce into historical writing a 'positive' register of achievement, satisfaction, admiration and even pride with better prospects of being acknowledged as sincere and trustworthy – instead of their former (with certain exceptions) common status of an often alienated contestant in countless and endless literary tournaments of the pagan empire.⁸¹⁵ Eusebius's ecclesiastical history is laden with attempts to praise his heroes, holy men, martyrs, scholars, ascetics and eventually (in the tenth book) – the new secular patron of the Christian Church, the emperor Constantine himself- amidst copious quotations of official documents for good measure.⁸¹⁶ It would appear that Eusebius did not allow himself after Constantine's turn to Christ to be carried away by "the joyful condition of affairs"⁸¹⁷ and had made considerable efforts to ensure that his *HE* would not be dismissed instantly as an embellished account of political craftiness clad in clerical robes. In fact, the opportune change in the Church's fortunes required a yet greater responsibility as a vast new potential readership was now entering Eusebius's horizon, and the first church historian had every good reason to believe that his work might serve as an important Christian showcase or differently put, the first port of call for many proselytes who were expected now to be knocking on the Church's doors, seeking to follow the emperor's footsteps. ⁸¹⁸ Constantine was of course quite an exception. Even pagan men of letters like the mysterious historian Praxagoras of Athens (early fourth century AD) and the Antiochene professor of rhetoric,

⁸¹⁵ See: Av. Cameron, 'Eusebius of Caesarea and the Rethinking of History', in E. Gabba (ed.), *Tria Corda. Scritti in onore di Arnaldo Momigliano* (Como 1983), pp. 71-88.

⁸¹⁶ A.H.M. Jones believed that the provenance of the lengthy quotations from original documents in the works of ecclesiastical historians came from a presumed reverential attitude (stemming merely from the fact that they were Christians) towards Holy Scripture: "Owing presumably to their reverence for the actual words of holy writ, they developed the habit of citing their authorities in full even when they were not inspired". See: A.H.M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (London 1948; Repr. Toronto 1997), p. 7. Although quite attractive, Jones's theory is not free of problems. It is hard to imagine a Christian, let alone a prelate and a veteran of the Great Persecution like Eusebius of Caesarea, treating imperial documents with the same kind of ritualistic reverence towards the written word of the Bible which was handed down to Christianity from Judaism. It is perhaps more likely that by inserting into his narrative substantial chunks, taken from original imperial documentation, the first ecclesiastical historian was seeking to distance himself from the rhetorical characteristics of pagan historiography with its tendency towards (as he may have seen it) embellished verbosity and indeed, ostentatious polemical usages. In fact, one could turn Jones's argumentation on its head by claiming that Eusebius's concern about 'textual fidelity' is diametrically opposed to Christian reverence, for it embodies a very secular strategic calculation of accuracy and precision as means to exercise influence and amass power by implicitly assigning to a text, authored by men, the authority attributed to Holy Scriptures by virtue of being revealed to mankind by God through the hallowed mediation of His Prophets and Apostles. Eusebius's strict attitude will be modified in good time by Sozomen, letting in through the back door some of the rejected 'classical' elements of historiography such as rhetorical running commentaries, together with Biblical (and to a lesser degree-classical) intertextuality and above all, his ambivalence, as we shall see later. For a recent (very) concise re-definition of relevant literary analytical terms in the context of late antique 'classicizing' historiography, see: G. Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus The Allusive Historian* (Cambridge 2008), pp. 165-166. However, given the similarities between Sozomen and Socrates's ecclesiastical histories, the modern notion of 'intertextuality' might lose much of its analytical edge in this specific context. Sozomen, at any rate, uses distinctive allusions quite frugally and in most cases, to supplement or highlight what must have been singled out in the first place, as loopholes in Socrates's narrative.

⁸¹⁷ 'Ἐπὶ τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων Φαιδρότητι is the title given in the manuscript tradition to the panegyric which Eusebius inserted into his *HE* as the fourth chapter of Book X.

⁸¹⁸ On the editions of Eusebius's, *HE* see: T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA 1981), pp. 128-130. For a revisionist approach, leaning towards a 'single edition' theory, see: A.P. Johnson, *Eusebius* (London 2014), pp. 104-111.

Libanius (ca. 314-392), could not ignore his outstanding success and used his career, despite his turn to Christianity, to illustrate the rewards of virtue.⁸¹⁹ However, this was apparently quite unusual. It seems that Greek historians were not at ease with songs of praise for rulers ever since the days of Herodotus, although in reality they kept writing them with various degrees of willingness.⁸²⁰ This was the case with Roman historians since Tacitus's decisive anti-rhetorical rhetoric which predominates in the opening of his *Annales* (although already Livy was scorned by Asinius Pollio for his *Patavinitas* which apparently included the former's seemingly uncritical reverent tone).⁸²¹ This literary tradition was deeply ingrained and so a positive depiction of a ruler as a hero was acknowledged in the second century by Lucian mainly as the lowly concern befitting the likes of miasts and poets – not of estimable historians.⁸²² On the other hand, historians such as Appian, Cassius Dio and Herodian were bound to present themselves as such (i.e. as unbiased and non-partisan truth-seekers), whilst showing off (with variable degrees of subtlety) their skills as scholars, speech writers and moralists, but in reality, it seems, seeking above all to leave their names to posterity.⁸²³

The invention of the genre of Ecclesiastical History by Eusebius seems to have drawn a clearer line between the concept of 'historiography' and 'rhetoric'⁸²⁴ although it would appear of course rather far-fetched to claim that Eusebius's substantial inclusion of original documents

⁸¹⁹ On Praxagoras see: Photius, *Bibliotheca* LXII. See also: P. Janiszewski, *The Missing Link: Greek Pagan Historiography in the Second Half of the Third Century and in the Fourth Century AD* (Eng. trans. D. Dzierzbicka; Warsaw 2006), pp. 352-371. Note also: F. Winkelmann, 'Historiography in the Age of Constantine' in G. Marasco, *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.* (Leiden 2003), pp. 14-15. On Libanius's view, see: Libanius, *Oratio* LIX, 19. Timothy Barnes thinks that both writers reflect, alongside Eusebius 'independently', an 'official' version of Constantine's rise to power, although this statement is not supported by any hard evidence. See: T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge MA 1981) p. 272 and p. 402. It is perhaps more constructive to assume that both Libanius and Praxagoras were influenced by Eusebius, particularly by his *De vita Constantini*. See: P. Petit, 'Libanius et la *vita Constantini*' *Historia* 1 (1950), pp. 562-582 and P. -L. Malosse, 'Libanios se <<temoins oculaires>> Eusèbe et Praxagoras: Le travail préparatoire du sophiste et la question des sources dans l'*Eloge de Constance et de Constant* ', *Revue des études grecques* 113 (2000), pp. 172-187.

⁸²⁰ See: Lucian, *De conscribenda historia*, 7-8.

⁸²¹ See: Tacitus, *Annales* I, 1. Livy was famously scorned by Asinius Pollio (Quintilian I, 5, 56; VIII,1,3) for his *Patavinitas*. There has been a lively scholarly debate about Pollio's observation which remains, as it were, still unclear. Perhaps one should consider, among other equally conjectural suggestions, a possibility whereby the provincial aroma which Pollio may have sensed (or may have chosen to find) in Livy's narrative could have been a result of the exceedingly solemn and indeed somewhat overblown and unnecessarily reverent tone with which the Patavium (present day Padua)-born historian wrote about archaic Rome, most notably in book I of his *Ab Urbe condita*. Pollio's remark becomes more telling, given the fact that he himself came from a provincial background. He was a native of Teate Marrucinum (present day Chieti in the Abruzzo region). See: J. Muñoz Coello, 'Livio, Polión y la *patavinitas* : El relato historiográfico', *Klio* 91 (2009), pp. 125-143. The Palestinian-born Sozomen too exhibits a propensity towards a certain overblown solemnity which gives away more than a whiff of provincial *angst*. See e.g. Soz. V, 15.

⁸²² Lucian, *loc. cit.*

⁸²³ Cassius Dio is perhaps the best (and at any event, the longest) surviving example of a Roman historian (of Greek origin) whose work reflects clearly these trends. See: F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford 1964), pp. 73-83. Millar shows how to surmount these 'shortcomings' (from a modern conventional point of view) and even turn them into a more insightful and less dogmatic hermeneutical approach (ibid. p. 118). See also: W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke 2007), pp. 13-17.

⁸²⁴ Although there was apparently no shortage in Rome of diverse learned literature (e.g. handbooks of rhetoric, philosophical treatises). On the differences between the two, see: Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, X, 31-34; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.*, V, 8.

in his narrative was sufficient to produce a historical work, stripped of embellishments and other rhetorical devices (and it is perhaps not entirely incorrect to argue at this point that the very same inclusion of documents can also be regarded as unabashedly rhetorical). Yet, Eusebius's efforts to make a clear distinction between history and rhetoric appear almost self-evident when we examine the diversity within his treatment of the towering figure of Constantine 'the Great'.⁸²⁵ The Constantine of the tenth book of Eusebius's *HE*⁸²⁶ is significantly different to the image of that emperor in the same author's *De vita Constantini* (henceforth: *VC*).⁸²⁷ If the first Christian emperor is celebrated in Eusebius's *HE* primarily as the temporal channel through which God had chosen to deliver the Christian Church from the bondage of persecution to the liberty of legitimacy and consequently, to efflorescence – it is in the *VC* that the foundations of the mythologisation of Constantine and his transformation from a Christian ruler into a Christian 'Hero-Emperor' are laid, although the work remains nonetheless politically oriented all throughout.⁸²⁸ This process had coalesced with the emergence of a so-called 'Christian Hellenism' which can be traced back to the thought of the Alexandrians Clement and Origen.⁸²⁹

C. Recovering the Myth and Recovering from its Aftermath

Having suggested that Constantine and his reign were transformed into what we may call a 'myth', we must be cautious not to attach to it the modern label of a 'political myth'. The term 'sacred myth' would be perhaps more appropriate even though at any stage of its evolution, the 'Constantinian myth' remains a Siamese twin of the highest level of 'state' politics.⁸³⁰ It

⁸²⁵ Sozomen himself was familiar with that epithet. See: Soz. III, 5, 2.

⁸²⁶ See: Eus. *HE*, X, 8.

⁸²⁷ For examples of these variations see: Av. Cameron and S.G. Hall (trans., intro. and comment.), *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford 1999), pp. 13-16. On aspects of Constantine's image as reflected in Eusebius's *VC* see: *ibid.* pp. 34-46. For a more detailed discussion see: Av. Cameron, 'Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine', in M.J. Edwards and S. Swain (eds.), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1997), pp. 145-174. Note also: R. Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 143-149. Van Dam however, seems to be entirely off the mark in his strange attempt to interpret Eusebius's comparison with Moses as an act of refusal 'to concede any continuity between Constantine, the first Christian Emperor and the Tetrarchs, his pagan predecessors who had initiated persecutions on the Christians' (*ibid.* p. 143). For other contributions to the debate on Constantine as Moses, see: *ibid.* p. 144, n. 1.

⁸²⁸ As observed also regarding the *Vita Antonii*, attributed to Athanasius. See: Av. Cameron, 'Form and Meaning: The *Vita Constantini* and the *Vita Antonii*' in: T. Hägg and P. Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2000), pp. 72-88. Cameron points out (*ibid.* p. 82) that Eusebius made it his business to use the medium of biography first and foremost as means of persuasion and education: "...Eusebius has a lesson in mind, and that has overridden questions of genre, just as it has dictated the manner and style of writing. Rather than judge the *Life* as if it were a sober attempt at an objective history of Constantine, we should read it as a life of a holy man, with the difference, of course, that this holy man is also an emperor."

⁸²⁹ On 'Christian Hellenism' with an emphasis on Eusebius as its exponent in the context of the Constantinian transformation of the Roman empire, see: F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background* vol. II (Washington, DC 1966), pp. 611-658. See also: J. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven, CT 1995), pp. 169-183. For the place of the myth in the evolution of 'Christian Hellenism' out of the struggle of the Church Fathers with Greek philosophy see: N. Siniossoglou, *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance* (Cambridge 2008), pp. 97-108.

⁸³⁰ For relevant caveats see: C. Flood, *Political Myth* (London 2002), pp. 27-45. Flood makes here an essential distinction between 'sacred myth' and 'political myth' remaining aware nonetheless of the 'extremely fluid' borderlines between the two categories in question (*ibid.* p. 32). In this context of 'sacred

follows that we should consider locating the driving forces behind the creation of that myth, at the (still elusive) crossroads of religion and civic politics in the Roman empire. The encounter between the two appears to have become (mostly during the third century), a focal point of the wider cultural climate and thus seems to have played a notorious if not yet dominant role in the *zeitgeist* although mainstream scholarship tends often to be sceptical in this respect.⁸³¹ The emperor and indeed the Roman state (symbolically

myth', Flood refers *inter alia* to what he calls the 'culture hero'. Flood explains: 'The culture hero is not normally portrayed as the creator of the world but is the one who completes the world by making it habitable for man, thus bringing culture' (ibid. p. 30). Eusebius depicts Constantine's life and career as God's latest achievement, being essentially an advanced and indeed crucial phase in the realisation of His grand plan to perfect the world. See: Eus. *VC*, I, 5. To help his message come across, Eusebius does not refrain from infusing his narrative with echoes of the ancient theogonic (and cosmogonic) Greek myth, likening Constantine's enemies to 'God-battling giants' (Cameron and Hall (1999), p. 69 cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 50 whereby the 'mighty giants... give pleasure to Zeus' mind within Olympus' (G.W Most, 2006=LCL 57, p. 7) cf. ibid. 185 (Most, *op. cit.* p. 19). See however: Kl. Rosen, 'Die Constantinische Wende oder wie ein Mythos gemacht wird' in W. Schreiber (ed.), *Die religiöse Dimension in Geschichtsunterricht. Ein interdisziplinäres Forschungsprojekt. Tagungsband* (Neurid 2000), pp. 99-110. Note also : A. Marcone, *Pagano e cristiano: Vita e mito di Costantino* (Bari 2002), pp. 92-97. Both offer nonetheless a more 'political' reading of the Constantinian myth.

⁸³¹ See for example: M. Edwards, 'The Beginnings of Christianization' in N. Lenski (ed.), *A Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge 2006), pp. 137 – 158. Edwards argues right from the outset: "...in the ancient world, however, there was nothing that resembled Christianity...even in the Indian summer of Neo Platonism, no philosophy that was so much of a cult" (ibid. p. 138). Edwards, however, goes on to comment – pretty much in the spirit of Max Weber's *Religionsoziologie*, that: "...it may be that what Weber called the "intellectualism" of the privileged class disposed them to admire the frank philosophers who not only participated in the ridicule of the ancient gods but refused them the formality of worship." (ibid. p.140). Edwards's scepticism leaves the door open to another interpretation, whereby the displeasure with old Roman paganism was by no means restricted to coteries of an intellectual elite (or to a part thereof known to us from the surviving sources). Yet, the derision and mockery, embodied in what Edwards correctly calls "the ridicule of the ancient gods" appear to be nonetheless limited to a fraction of the Roman chattering classes whereas others (among them, a sizable number from among the well-educated) where taking part in helping Christianity to permeate further into Roman society, being attracted not only to the universal message – but also to its ritual and liturgy. These, it seems, proved to be welcoming and accommodating in an age such as the third century, dominated by growing instability, diminished security and a rather fluid sense of identity. This is perhaps also a result of Christianity's marked urban character which helped it spread into 'strategic' urban centres. It is quite clear that what certain scholars like to style as "the Constantinian Revolution" could have hardly taken place without a certain distinctive and indeed, a fairly wide-spread transformative stage which would have laid down the ideological 'infra-structure', accompanied by some kind of systematic realisation of this ideology, based on an accepted *orthopraxis* i.e. on a widely-recognised *ritual* and serving perhaps as an alternative to a an existing and accepted Roman ritual. It can hardly be denied that such a Christian network was up and running before the last quarter of the third century and the Christian mission, becoming more than ever before, a familiar presence in Roman 'public life', was responding to a growing 'public demand' for a new *ritualised* spirituality, as Eusebius himself seems to suggest in *HE* VIII, 1, 3. See: D. Mendels, *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity: An Essay on Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History* (Grand Rapids, MI 1999), pp. 235- 241. Such a ritual could have existed alongside the old gods, perhaps the worship of the emperor, as opposed to the more 'philosophical' paganism advocated by the likes of Porphyry and his disciple Iamblichus, which had remained mostly confined to schools and highbrow intellectual circles. See: J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford 1979), pp. 223-235. This vein of thought seems to have influenced Eusebius all throughout in his career. See: Eus. *Tricennalia*, 1-3, where the role of the Emperor is augmented into a cosmic focus of unity on earth. For a consideration and definition of 'ritual', see: T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*:

encapsulated at times in the emperor's *genius*), were perceived – as a result of an ongoing development in Roman religion which can be traced back to the second half of the first century AD – by certain contemporaries – as a *ritus* shared (or expected to be shared) by various groupings of Roman citizens throughout the empire. The question to what extent – if at all – this cult was a 'state cult' i.e. an official state-sponsored and coordinated cult remains debatable.⁸³² This intellectual trend was inspired amongst other things by what Dominic O'Meara calls 'the divinization of the state'.⁸³³ The contacts between state and religion in the Roman Empire were, needless to say, no novelty, though certain scholars would tend to depict religion in Rome under the Julio-Claudian dynasty as a 'new religion'.⁸³⁴ We must be, however, very cautious even when we surmise that Constantine's conversion did entail, up to a certain extent, a change in the Roman state 'agenda', (for example, a presumed pro-active involvement in projects which hitherto were not an officially-recognised part of civic politics e.g. – evangelisation) – as recent studies tend to examine afresh the question of (and consequently re-open the case for) a Roman *Reichsreligion* prior to Constantine's conversion.⁸³⁵ If this was the case, it could be argued that Eusebius's invention, the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, may have reflected this general trend which well predates the time of its conception and as a result of these politico-cultural dynamics, was arguably well equipped to develop far beyond Eusebius's original intentions. If this assumption can be followed, it should not be too difficult to realise why Eusebius's work had played a major role in the shaping of the historiography of the fourth century and indeed in the creation of the

Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam (Baltimore, MD 1993), pp. 55-62. For a recent suggestion of a 'growth-model' of Christianity in the Roman Empire see: R. Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of how Christianity became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York 2006), pp. 63-83. Any attempt to squeeze the process of 'Christianisation' of the Roman empire into the strait-jacket of a clear-cut definition, especially when such a definition is inextricably entangled with two other collective concepts, namely "paganism" and "ethnicity", must relate first to caveats concerning the methodological perils that await those who insist on drawing borderlines between the three. See: Av. Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of the Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, CA 1991), pp. 121-129 and 220-229. For a theory of a transformation of the 'Greek' sense of identity into an imaginary 'Roman' one – in the eastern Roman empire and in 'Romania' (i.e. its Byzantine successor) – see: A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 42-119 (esp. pp. 42-61).

⁸³² See: I. Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford 2002), pp. 91-103.

⁸³³ See: D.J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2003), pp. 145-151.

⁸³⁴ See: J. Scheid, *Religion et piété à Rome* (Paris 2002), pp. 143-154, who addresses the issue in a chapter revealingly titled 'La nouvelle religion'. For an approach which highlights some essentially evolutionist characteristics of the Augustan religious reform and (despite a drawback in the reign of Nero) its ensuing developments see: J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford 1979) pp. 56-90 and pp. 167-200. See also: P. Brown, *A Social Context to the Religious Crisis of the Third Century A.D.* *The Center for Hermeneutical Studies UC Berkeley, Colloquy* 14 (1975), pp. 1-13.

⁸³⁵ See: C. Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA 2008), pp. 59-119. Ando demonstrates through a twofold study (i.e. of Theodosius II's and Justinian I's *codices* – as well as of the religious contacts between Rome and her provinces during the high empire) that despite the modern tendency to deny often the existence of a Roman *Reichsreligion* – the case for such a phenomenon is far from being closed (ibid. pp. 95-98). Paganism seems to have evolved nonetheless into an imperial cult, having undergone a transformation into a *Loyalitätsreligion* revolving around a deified and ritualised Emperor. See: J. Scheid, *Religion et piété à Rome* (2nd edn. Paris 2002), pp. 95-127. Note also: J. M. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Oxford 2006), pp. 182-201. For the post-Constantinian phase see: T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge, MS 1993), pp. 165-175; R. Klein, *Zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der Spätantike* (Tübingen 2008), pp. 80-121; R. M. Errington, 'Church and State in the First Years of Theodosius I', *Chiron* 27 (1997), pp. 21-72.

Constantinian myth. We can likewise forge a reasonable estimate of its direct literary influence although we no longer possess the works of Eusebius's immediate successors such as Gelasius of Caesarea.⁸³⁶ Socrates of Constantinople, the reticent ecclesiastical historian, was unable to circumvent the Constantinian myth despite his manifest (yet unsuccessful) efforts to retain a certain aloofness and produce a more balanced church history, unbiased by 'bishops' quarrels' and indeed, despite his literary sensitiveness which reveals itself when he strives to extricate himself in advance from the presumed harsh judgement of certain purists for including accounts of war campaigns in a work dedicated to the history of the Church.⁸³⁷ Like Socrates before him, Sozomen organises his *HE* on the basis of imperial reigns.⁸³⁸ However, it is quite clear that Sozomen attached to Constantine a greater and at any rate more diverse importance given that the account of Constantine's reign, which stretches over the two first books of Sozomen's *HE*, is more detailed, even if we sift out portions of material not related directly to the Emperor. It is therefore quite puzzling to find that Sozomen's account of the first Christian Roman Emperor's reign begins rather unceremoniously. In fact, it appears to be quite in contrast with the preceding *proemium* with its cogitations on vexing theological questions such as the persistent incredulousness of the Jews. This however is followed by the traditional ostensible humility with which Sozomen's reflections on his own aptitude to carry out the task he had set for himself. In fact, this statement hardly conceals the self-confidence and indeed the sarcasm of a seasoned man with ample life experience.⁸³⁹ Sozomen concludes his statement of intent in a solemn tone, reminding his readers of the historian's sublime commitment to the truth which is immediately followed by a dithyramb in prose for the 'Catholic Church' (i.e. the Nicene Church) and its truthful doctrines which had been 'put to a test many times'.⁸⁴⁰ Thus it would be fair to say that already the conclusion of the *proemium* encapsulates a certain ambiguity in Sozomen's state of mind as he acknowledges a primary undefined and therefore unlimited truth prior to his 'empirical'

⁸³⁶ See: P. van Nuffelen, 'Gélase de Césarée, un compilateur du cinquième siècle' *BZ* 95 (2002), pp. 621-640. See also: F. Winkelmann, 'Zur nacheusebianischen christlichen Historiographie des 4. Jahrhunderts', in: C. Schulz and G. Makris (eds.), *Polypheuros Nous: Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner* (Leipzig 2000) (= *Byzantinisches Archiv* 19), pp. 405-414.

⁸³⁷ Soc. *HE*, V, *Proem.* 1-10. Socrates felt that the prominent role of Emperors in his *HE* (in contrast to an already recognised *erwartungshorizont* attached to this genre) did require further clarification as can be inferred from his comment: "I continually include the Emperors in the history, because from the time they began to be Christians, the affairs of the Church have depended on them, and the greatest synods took and take place by their decision." This statement does not seem to have any overtones of discontent attached to it and so we can accept it as a fairly straight forward description of the reality in his life and times (i.e. a century after Eusebius's death) and an acknowledgement of Constantine's pivotal role in the shaping of this reality. It is, however, noteworthy that Socrates opts for a relatively low key depiction of the emperor's figure by describing what we now call 'the conversion of the empire' simply as the time in which the Emperors 'began to be Christian' (χριστιανίζειν ἤρξατο). In addition, Socrates is quite direct in his description of the relations between the Church and the Emperors as a dependency (τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας πράγματα ἥρτητο ἐξ αὐτῶν), a situation quite akin to the dispensation of patronage in a Roman *clientella* of old. Thus, according to Socrates, despite the new Christian contents, the form remained Roman in essence. See: T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople* (Ann Arbor, MI 1997), pp. 139-140. Cf. H. Leppin (1996), pp. 40-59, M. Wallraff (Göttingen 1997), pp. 103-110.

⁸³⁸ Sozomen himself outlines this organizing pattern. See: Soz. *HE*, *Ded.*, 19-21.

⁸³⁹ Soz. I, 1 and 11-13.

⁸⁴⁰ Soz. *HE*, I, 1, 17: ... ἐπειτα δὲ τὸ δόγμα τῆς καθόλου ἐκκλησίας γνησιώτατον ὅτι μάλιστα φανεῖται πολλάκις μὲν ταῖς ἐπιβουλαῖς τῶν ἐναντία δοξαζόντων δοκιμασθέν, οἷα δὲ θειόθεν τὸ κρατεῖν λαχόν αὐθις εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν ἐπανελθὼν δύναμιν καὶ πάσας τὰς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τὰ πλήθη πρὸς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀλήθειαν ἐπισπασάμενον.

assertion of the tested and approved 'Catholic truth'. Having invoked the help of God, Sozomen seems to insist on beginning his narrative with notable bishops before commencing his portrayal of Constantine in a dry annalistic style:⁸⁴¹ This chronological framework is soon followed by the first appearance of the Emperor on the scene but the description of a major event such as the beginnings of Constantine's change of heart which would culminate in the Emperor's open acknowledgement of Christianity as his religion, is already conveyed to the reader, assuming the guise of an ancient tradition:

*We have been informed that Constantine was led to honour the Christian religion by the concurrence of several different events, particularly by the appearance of a sign from heaven.*⁸⁴²

Sozomen's narrative appears at first glance to be more influenced by the fourth-century transformation of Constantine's turn to Christianity into a dramatic legend.⁸⁴³ Yet, Sozomen's treatment of the story as a myth does not have to suggest necessarily a sweeping acceptance of its veracity.⁸⁴⁴ Indeed, by reproducing this pivotal episode in the history (of the church and the Roman state alike) in the very form of a myth, Sozomen, it would appear, should give it the validity of a myth and thus the reader is actually advised by Sozomen to proceed with caution. Sozomen tends to combine quite often his choice to enlarge and extend previous accounts of select events with what appears to be his hidden personal agenda. When the additional material touches upon the supernatural, the miraculous, the extraordinary or the extreme- it is quite likely that Sozomen is sending an ambiguous signal to reflect his personal ambivalence and thus, one may find it beneficial to approach Sozomen's extended version with this working hypothesis.⁸⁴⁵ It should be made clear at this point that ambivalence ought not to be confused with doubts or disbelief. In fact we should regard Sozomen's ambivalence as the fruit of a sincere faith, (in his case, the catholic orthodox Nicene⁸⁴⁶ Faith), seeking to engage with a past whose indelible imprint on the historian's state of mind cannot be denied, yet his influential mythologised transmission appears to be tied in with ecclesiastical issues

⁸⁴¹ Soz. I, 2, 1: "During the consulate of Constantine Caesar and Crispus Caesar, Silvester governed the Church of Rome, Alexander, that of Alexandria and Macarius, that of Jerusalem". For a survey of early Roman annalistic historiography see: E. Ruschenbusch, *Die frühen römischen Annalisten: Untersuchungen zur Geschichtsschreibung des 2. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Wiesbaden 2004), pp. 9-12.

⁸⁴² Soz., I, 3 cf. Soc. *HE*, I, 2. Unlike Sozomen, Socrates, seemingly the more 'secular' church historian, prefers to usher Constantine in his *HE* against the rugged pre-Christian backdrop of the acclamation as an emperor by his soldiers in Britain in 306.

⁸⁴³ For the development of the 'Constantinian myth' in the fourth century, see: A. Wilson, 'Biographical Models: The Constantinian Period and beyond', in S.N.C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds.) *Constantine, History, Hagiography and Legend* (London 1998), pp. 107-135.

⁸⁴⁴ There is a host of (often contradicting) modern scholarly concepts and allusions attached to the term 'myth', each of which differently employed by various modern theorists who have contributed to a range of disciplines. This is clearly illustrated in a recent study whose preface begins candidly with the following statement: "It would be nice to begin with a clear and concise definition of 'myth', but unfortunately, that can't be done". The author, having produced an erudite study of various approaches to 'myth' from Homer to Sir William Jones, finally acknowledges the elusiveness of his chosen subject, but is not shying away from trying his hand at defining the allegedly un-definable by concluding: "myth is ideology in a narrative form" and more specifically- "the arrogant, bullying discourse of the structurally strong". See: B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology and Scholarship* (Chicago 1999), p. ix and pp. 207-209

⁸⁴⁵ On Sozomen's treatment of super-natural phenomena see now: A. J. Quiroga-Puertas, 'In Hecate's Realm: A Note on Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 7.23', *CQ* 65 (2015), pp. 427-433.

⁸⁴⁶ The reception, understanding, construal and reaffirmation of 'Nicene Orthodoxy' had evolved into an 'idea' over the fourth and fifth centuries, especially in relation to conciliar activities at Ephesus I (431), Ephesus II (449) and Chalcedon (451) as well as the various synods between them. See: M. S. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils, AD 431-451* (Oxford 2018), pp. 1-35 and *passim*.

which leave, from Sozomen's point of view, quite a lot to be desired.⁸⁴⁷ The narrative appears to be at first sight nothing but a rather straightforward expression of devotion and adoration. However, quite often this can appear to be thin coating. The Christian myth of the apparition of the Cross which had allegedly initiated the process of communicating God's will to Constantine, followed by the Emperor's 'conversion', was also followed by a material manifestation of what it was meant to signify in the first place - the Emperor's new spiritual transformation:

"The Emperor, amazed at the prophecies concerning Christ which were expounded to him by the priests, sent for some skilful artisans, and commanded them to remodel the standard called by the Romans Labarum to convert it into a representation of the cross, and to adorn it with gold and precious stones. This warlike trophy was valued beyond all others: it was always wont to be carried before the Emperor and was worshiped by the soldiery".⁸⁴⁸

Sozomen shares with the reader his thoughts about the reason behind Constantine's line of action. The temptation to dismiss this explanation as superfluous can hardly be denied. What can be more self-explanatory than a convert's enthusiasm about his newly-found truth? Yet, Sozomen's explanation is not religious. Rather, he relocates Constantine's line of action into a strictly-speaking secular political context, implicitly suggesting that Constantine was still behaving like a brutish pagan and that his discovery of Christ was chiefly a result of a search for a viably-powerful divine patronage. In other words, Sozomen demonstrates how, despite his embracement of Christ, Constantine remained up until that particular point pretty much the old pagan mixture of a general and a statesman.⁸⁴⁹ His dealings with Christ are, according to Sozomen, motivated by the same psyche which Constantine, in turn, identifies within his own soldiers i.e. merely for manipulative and expedient purposes:

I think that Constantine changed the most notable symbol of the Roman empire (τὸ ἐπισημώτατον σύμβολον τῆς Ρωμαίων ἀρχῆς) into the sign of Christ (εἰς Χριστοῦ σημεῖον), chiefly that by the habit of having it always in view, and of worshipping it, the soldiers might be induced to abandon their ancient forms of superstition, and to recognise the true God, whom the Emperor worshipped.⁸⁵⁰

Constantine's choice of Christianity is integrated by Sozomen into the emperor's military skills and indeed into a resourceful pattern of leadership. Constantine is generous not only in his offerings to his adopted God and Saviour – but also manifestly in the remuneration of his soldiers. The emperor's new personal faith appears to be falling neatly into a place which –

⁸⁴⁷ As mentioned *supra*, the term 'ambivalence' is attributed to the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler (1857-1939) but this term has never been confined to psychiatric terminology. On a basic level, 'ambivalence' is the experience of having an attitude towards someone or something that contains both positively and negatively valenced components. See: W.D. Crano and P.R. Prislin (eds.), *Attitudes and Attitude Change* (New York 2011), pp. 262-285. For a recent theory of 'ambivalence', see: K. Weisbrode, *On Ambivalence: The Problems and Pleasures of Having It Both Ways* (Cambridge, MS 2012). Weisbrode observes *inter alia*: "...ambivalence is a spiritual condition... An ambivalent person seeks to overstep mortal limitations" (op. cit. p. 18) and "Desire and desirability are... the basis of ambivalence..." (op. cit. p. 28).

⁸⁴⁸ Soz. I, 4, 1.

⁸⁴⁹ Eusebius and Socrates had placed Constantine in a secular political context as well. See e.g. Eus. VC I, 27-28 and Id. HE IX, 9, 24 whereby God becomes the emperor's ally in his campaign against his enemies. Cf. Soc. I, 2.

⁸⁵⁰ Soz. I, 4, 2.

quite likely - used to be occupied until the beginning of the fourth century by the emperor's own *genius*.⁸⁵¹

The gold and the precious stones for the newly-'Christianised' military standards are, as can be inferred from Sozomen's narrative - money well spent, with which the emperor appears to have sought to secure the loyalty, the perseverance and the steadfastness of his troops. Yet, the following story incorporated by Sozomen almost unnoticeably into his extended version of the Constantinian conversion saga, reveals that the dramatic change in the imperial religious convictions did not eliminate from his army human weaknesses and shortcomings. Not even the most obvious one such as cowardice:

*It is said that on one occasion, on an unexpected movement of the hostile forces, the man who held the standard in terror, placed it in the hands of another, and secretly fled from the battle. When he got beyond the reach of the enemy's weapons, he suddenly received a wound and fell, while the man who had stood by the divine symbol remained unhurt although many weapons were aimed at him; for the missiles of the enemy, marvellously directed by divine agency, lighted upon the standard and its bearer, although in the midst of the danger, was preserved.*⁸⁵²

The *leitmotif* of divine retribution - manifesting itself here in a fashion which mimics certain biblical stories⁸⁵³ - can hardly be regarded as embellishing or glorifying Constantine. In fact, it quietly suggests that the (by now) legendary Emperor was not free of imperfections as a military commander. Thus, his military success is turned here on its head in order to highlight his alliance with God who, through the sign of the Cross is the sole protector of Constantine's soldiers and the author of the emperor's military success. Sozomen, is relying here on Eusebius⁸⁵⁴, the initial architect of the Constantinian myth, to highlight the emperor's absolute dependence and reliance on God.⁸⁵⁵ We can now realise in what sense Constantine's

⁸⁵¹ On the emperor's *genius* and his place in Roman state cult, see: I. Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford 2002), pp. 130-142 and 162-197. For the relevance to Constantine see: Ibid. pp. 364-369. Gradel's detailed discussion, based on contemporary artifacts and epigraphic material, surmounts the paucity of literary sources from and on the Roman third century and demonstrates quite convincingly how the cult of the Roman emperor's *genius* did survive the so-called 'third century crisis'.

⁸⁵² Soz. I, 4, 3.

⁸⁵³ Cf. Ex. 17, 8-16. The victory of the Israelites over the Amalekites was achieved with the help of a reified agency, namely the hands of Moses, which only when raised up towards heaven secured the defeat of the Amalekite foe. On the principles of retribution and their 'historicisation' in the Hebrew Bible and Greek historiography, see: G.W. Trunpf, *Early Christian Historiography: Narratives of Retributive Justice* (London 2000), pp. 10-46.

⁸⁵⁴ Eus. VC II, 2.

⁸⁵⁵ Constantine's conversion created a momentum which produced social groups (secular, as well as clerical), thereupon acquiring a status of imperial beneficiaries - quite in line with previous customary acts of imperial euergetism. Although scholars will presumably continue to debate the 'conversion' of the empire in terms of 'continuity' and 'change', there can hardly be a dispute about the pivotal enterprising role that Constantine had played personally in the political and social transformation of the Roman empire in the early fourth century. The foundation of the 'New Rome' in the east which occurred *in tandem* with the political, administrative and military re-organisation of the Constantinian Empire opened new socio-political windows of opportunities. Constantine himself appears to have been aware of this change as such. See: S. Bralewski, 'Was Constantine the Great aware of the Constantinian Shift?', *Studia Ceranea*, 9 (2019) pp.157-169. It follows that the Constantinian myth enjoyed a widespread support of many *homines novi* (particularly in the eastern empire) who had something to gain from safeguarding and cultivating this legacy. Libanius of Antioch provides us with some relevant examples; See: e.g. Libanius, *Or.* 42, 24-25. For a detailed discussion see: P. Heather, 'New Men for New Constantines?' in: P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines* (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 11-33. Heather's discussion goes as far as the turn of the fifth century and demonstrates the longevity and indeed, durability of

contemporaries were overwhelmed by his victories, regarded at times as possible only due to a divine (or Divine) intervention.⁸⁵⁶

D. Ambivalence and Polemics: Sozomen's Mixed Approach

Constantine's imperfections are dwarfed as Sozomen tackles head-on the allegations about the emperor's responsibility for the murder of his son, the *Caesar* Crispus. These allegations had dogged Constantine in his lifetime and were passed down to posterity, despite the relentless imperial and ecclesiastical mechanisms of propaganda and their vigorous attempts, as was suggested before, to whitewash Constantine's blood-stained legacy.⁸⁵⁷ Sozomen, however, is the only orthodox ecclesiastical historian who dwelt on that incident, (the other heterodox ecclesiastical historian to do so being the Anomean Philostorgius of Borissus).⁸⁵⁸ In Sozomen's account the reader encounters a mixed approach, whereby Sozomen writes as a fierce polemicist, advocating staunchly the tenets of Catholic Christianity (i.e. Nicene orthodoxy) and at the same time, the devout ecclesiastical historian also writes as a seasoned and indeed, disillusioned child of his time, whose sincere orthodox Christian faith does not render him blind in the face of a deeply politicised and theologically-fickle contemporary ecclesiastical establishment.⁸⁵⁹ Sozomen's Constantine is a non-mimetic historical character. Constantine emerges from Sozomen's narrative as an historical agent who, though real, is also

Constantine's re-organisation of the Eastern Roman state. Understanding the effect of the changes in the Roman administrative system under Constantine despite the lack of comprehensive or coherent records, is of course of essential importance. See also: Ch. Kelly, 'Bureaucracy and Government' in N. Lensky (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge 2006), pp. 183-204.

⁸⁵⁶ On Constantine's military leadership see: H. Elton, "Warfare and the military" in N. Lensky (ed.) *op. cit.* (Cambridge 2006), pp. 325-346. On Constantine's military reforms, see: P. Southern and K.R. Dixon, *The Late Roman Army* (London 1996), pp. 17-38.

⁸⁵⁷ See: R.M. Frakes, 'The Dynasty of Constantine down to 363' in N. Lensky (2006), p. 95; Ch. M. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (London 2004), pp. 204-208; T.G. Elliot, *The Christianity of Constantine the Great* (Scranton, NJ 1996), pp. 232-234. Note also: H.A. Pohlsander, 'Crispus: Brilliant career and Tragic end', *Historia* 33 (1984), pp. 79-106.

⁸⁵⁸ See: *Philost. HE*, II, 4. Being an Eunomian i.e. a strong opponent of Nicene orthodoxy, Philostorgius's choice to do so may seem obvious. Yet, his *HE* has come down to us as an *epitome* attributed to the Constantinopolitan patriarch and polymath Photius (ca. 810-893). The authorship of this epitome remains unclear but be it as it may, the epitomator was at any rate, a strong defender of Nicene orthodoxy. Thus, it is not unlikely that the same epitomator may have believed that by including a passage that blackens Constantine's name he was exposing the impertinence of the heretical church historian.

⁸⁵⁹ For a recent consideration of the relevance of the notion 'change' to the Roman empire following Constantine's turn to Christianity, see: G. Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 106-117. Clark's observations offer a more balanced view of the social implications of Constantine's religious policies after 312 than Ramsey MacMullen's harsh judgement of the process of 'Christianisation' of the Roman empire which MacMullen finds of little significance. See: R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven, CT 1986), *passim*. Note also: P. Veyne, *Quand notre monde est devenu chrétien (312-394)* (Paris 2007), pp. 159-183. Veyne's approach can be called 'synthetic'. He refers to the fourth century convincingly as 'un siècle double' and to the Roman empire- 'l'Empire païen et chrétien' (nodding as he goes to André Piganiol's classic *L'Empire chrétien* (Paris 1947) showing how Christianity did advance during the period concerned without recourse to an outright persecution of the pagans despite various campaigns against paganism. See: Al. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford 2010), pp. 33 - 92. On the struggle with paganism and heresy as reflected in the histories of Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret and Zosimus, see: M. Stachura, 'Walka Cesarstwa Rzymskiego z pogaństwem i herezją w oczach późnoantycznych historyków: Filostorgiosa, Sokratesa, Sozomenosa, Teodoreta i Zosimosa' *u schyłku starożytności - Studia źródłoznawcze* 8 (2009), pp. 101-126.

an embodiment of an idea.⁸⁶⁰ In this case, Sozomen's conception of Roman Christian imperial rulership for better and for ill. Sozomen's choice to elaborate on an issue which could have still been regarded in the Christian Roman Empire as sensitive, is apparently not an uncalculated narrative strategy. Sozomen may have weighed up potential gains and losses which could have been expected following such a daring approach. His statement of intent in the *proemium* seems to reflect it *in tandem* with its conventional rhetorical functions. If so, it is fairly reasonable to assume that Sozomen did not see immediate risk to himself when he chose to rummage through the skeletons in Constantine's cupboard.

Alternatively, this example might support the assumption that Sozomen may have been writing whilst coming to terms with an engrossing recognition that his *HE* would have to be published posthumously. It is also quite likely that Sozomen could hope that his courage to deal with the dark side of Constantine, the idolised emperor turned publicly into a saintly hero, would enhance his credibility as a historian (in contrast perhaps to Socrates). It is reasonable to assume that this kind of criticism could have been regarded as radically iconoclastic in Theodosius II's court.⁸⁶¹ It may be the reason why Sozomen appears to be treading quite carefully. Even when dealing with a filicide, Sozomen retains a cautious and measured tone which seems to be compatible with some basic requirements of a sound, meticulously- drafted legal document. A pragmatic narrative strategy:

I am not unaware that the pagans say (οὐκ ἄγνοῶ δέ, ὥς Ἕλληνες λέγουσι) that Constantine, after killing some of his closest relatives, and after being an accomplice in the murder of his own son Crispus (καὶ τῷ θανάτῳ Κρίσπου τοῦ ἐαυτοῦ παιδὸς συμπράξαντα), repented of his evil deeds, and inquired of Sopater⁸⁶², the philosopher who was then the master of the school of Plotinus, concerning the means of purification from guilt (περὶ καθαρμοῦ). The philosopher for his part replied that there was no purification for such crimes. The Emperor having been upset by this rebuff, happened to meet with bishops who had promised him to be cleansed from all his evil-doing through penance and baptism, he was delighted with those propositions which were in-line with his aim (ἡσθῆναι τε τούτοις κατὰ σκοπὸν εἰρηκόσι) , admired their doctrine, became Christian and led his subjects towards that religion.⁸⁶³

Although Sozomen begins quite apologetically, hastening to claim a personal awareness of anti-Constantinian pagan invectives which may have well been remembered or might even still be in circulation, his argumentation is focused here more on 'technical' points and less on

⁸⁶⁰ On a non-mimetic historical character, see: A. Munslow, *Narrative and History* (London 2019), pp. 59-60.

⁸⁶¹ See: M.S. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils 431-451* (Oxford 2018), p. 168.

⁸⁶² Chester Hartranft, Sozomen's English translator, drawing on Eunapius of Sardes's *Vitae Sophistarum* (Aedesius) suggested that this philosopher may be identified with Sopater of Apamea, who was executed in 333 on the advice of Flavius Ablabius, the *Praefectus Praetorio Orientis*, having been accused of using magical arts to ward off the winds in order to deny Constantinople its food supplies. See: Eunapius, *VS*, VI. 3, 1-7. See also: C. Hartranft, *NPNCF II* (Edinburgh 1890; repr. Grand Rapids, MI 1997), p. 242, n. 6. Note also: M. Becker, *Eunapios aus Sardes: Biographien über Philosophen und Sophisten. Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Stuttgart 2013), pp. 252-269; U. Hartmann, '„...Und die Pronoia hat die Menschheit noch nicht verlassen“ Die Konstruktion der Geistesgeschichte als pagane Gegenwelt in Eunaps *Philosophenviten*' in: B. Bleckmann and T. Stickler (eds.), *Griechische Profanhistoriker des fünften nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart 2014), pp. 51-84.

⁸⁶³ Soz., I, 5, 1.

‘ideological’ issues.⁸⁶⁴ The pagans remain nonetheless the main culprits. They, according to Sozomen, were still keen to malign the Christian Church (the use of λέγουσι can imply also that the pagans were responsible not only for the very spreading of those rumours, but first and foremost, for their fabrication. Their accusations emanate from an attempt to portray the conversion of Constantine as sheer expediency, as the Emperor was looking for a more flexible religion that would grant him an absolution for the heinous crime of murdering his wife and his son.⁸⁶⁵

E. The Defence of Constantine in Sozomen’s Narrative

Sozomen does not seem to be tempted to reproduce the afore mentioned accusations, serious as they may be, within the framework of another stage in the conflict between Christianity and paganism. Instead, it seems that our ecclesiastical historian chooses to open his legal trade’s tool box in order to find a suitable rhetorical device, opting, as it were, for a counter-attack (quite reminiscent of a court room cross-examination) aimed at an outright demolition of his adversaries’ credibility before their version of the story could even be considered by the reader.⁸⁶⁶ The allegations against Constantine are dismissed on the grounds of factual anachronism as well as incongruence in specific details. Sozomen’s arguments are supported in an erudite fashion but the sources on which he relies are neither biblical nor historical. It is the ancient Greek myth of Hercules and his labours to which Sozomen turns in his endeavour to refute the accusations made by a pagan opposition against a Christian Emperor, attempting thus to destroy that opposition using their own weaponry against them. However, the moral questions that will have arisen by now, remain virtually unaddressed. What matters to Sozomen, the Constantinopolitan lawyer, is apparently whether the judges i.e. his readers, can be eventually persuaded that the ‘procedure’ had been flawed right from the outset. It is quite clear that in Sozomen’s reckoning, once that goal is achieved, they will be compelled to throw the case out:

It seems to me that this story has been invented by those who endeavour to vilify the Christian religion (ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκεῖ ταῦτα πεπλάσθαι τοῖς σπουδάζουσι τὴν Χριστιανῶν θρησκείαν κακηγορεῖν). Crispus on whose account, it is said, Constantine required purification, died in the twentieth year of his father’s reign, having issued, while alive, together with his father, many laws in favour of the Christians, being also a Caesar, second in the imperial hierarchy, to which still testify at present the dates appended to these laws and the names of the legislators thereof. It does not appear likely that Sopater had any direct contacts with Constantine who did not rule further than the regions near the ocean and the Rhine; for his dispute with Maxentius, who governed Italy, had sparked up a civil war in the Roman dominions that it was not easy at that time to visit Gaul and Britain and those who live there and the neighbouring countries in which-it is generally agreed- Constantine embraced the

⁸⁶⁴ See: J.F. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* (New Haven, CT 2000), pp. 51-52.

⁸⁶⁵ The alternative pagan version of Constantine’s conversion story is possibly recorded by Zosimus, *HN* II,29. See: F. Paschoud, *Cinq études sur Zosime* (Paris 1975), pp. 29-32.

⁸⁶⁶ On legal rhetoric in late antiquity see in general: J. Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 1999), pp. 56-77. On traits of legal training in Sozomen’s style and the use of legal material in his *HE* see: R.M. Errington, ‘Christian Accounts of the Religious Legislation of Theodosius I’, *Klio* 79 (1997), pp. 398-443.

*Christian faith before he set off to fight Maxentius and arriving at Rome and Italy. To this, again, testify, the dates and the laws which he had enacted in favour of our faith.*⁸⁶⁷

Sozomen intensifies the narrative into zero-focalisation, he saves his first-person interpretation to the conclusion that follows his refutations of the pagan opposition claims by using a compressed syllogism (*enthymeme*):

*But even if we easily agree somehow that Sopater happened to meet the Emperor or had enquired through a letter about his wish, it is unimaginable that the philosopher was ignorant that Hercules the son of Alcmena, obtained purification at Athens by the celebration of the mysteries of Demeter after the murder of his children and of Iphitus, his guest and friend. What has been said suffices to demonstrate that the pagans did maintain that purification from guilt of this nature could be obtained and each of those who have fictitiously argued that Sopater had maintained the contrary – proves his mendacity. I would indeed refrain from saying that the most distinguished man amongst the pagans for his learning at that time, had been ignorant of those matters.*⁸⁶⁸

Sozomen is clearly defending the first Christian emperor by referring to evidence which would render Constantine's responsibility for the murder of his son unlikely. The evidence concerned does not appear to be a rhetorical stratagem. It is in fact a reference to the most authoritative official documents namely, imperial laws. This reference seems to be relying on the convenient availability of those laws which had been made widely accessible through the publication of the *Codex Theodosianus* in 438, i.e. not very long before Sozomen was writing.⁸⁶⁹ Yet, Sozomen seems to be aware that this evidence could be regarded nonetheless as too 'circumstantial' and therefore, insufficient on its own, to refute the pagan allegations. This might be inferred from Sozomen's use of the myth of Heracles and the murder of his friend Iphitus which has among its versions one that highlights Heracles's madness which famously caused the mythological hero to kill his close friend and indeed, to carry out other killings, among them, the murder of his wife princess Megara and their children.⁸⁷⁰ It follows that if the present interpretation is correct, Sozomen was using his erudition to allude in a subtle fashion to his own understanding of Constantine's mental state at the time of those murderous acts (and therefore corroborating the pagan accusations). The allusion to Heracles receives additional weight if one bears in mind Constantine's association with the mythical dynasty of the *Heraclidae* through his marriage to Fausta, the daughter of Maximian who notably boasted a Herculean pedigree.⁸⁷¹ Sozomen may have been aware also of other pagan allegations against Constantine, as can be inferred from his reference to Constantine's alleged extermination of "some of the closest of his relatives" - which Sozomen carefully sets apart

⁸⁶⁷ Soz., I, 5, 2-3. Guy Sabbah points out that Sozomen could have been referring to *CTh* XVI, 2, 4 (3rd July 321) and *CTh* XVI, 2, 2 (21st October 319); XVI, 2, 5 (25th May 323). See: *SC 306*, p. 130, n. 1.

⁸⁶⁸ Soz. I, 5, 4.

⁸⁶⁹ On the compilation and promulgation of the Theodosian code, see: J. Matthews, 'The Making of the Text', in: J. Harries and I. Wood (eds.), *The Theodosian Code Studies in the Imperial Law of Late Antiquity* (London 2014), pp. 19-44.

⁸⁷⁰ See: Appolodorus, *Bibliotheca*, II, 4, 12.

⁸⁷¹ See: *Panegyrici latini* 7 (6), 2, 5; Constantine's acquired Herculean pedigree is reflected also in inscriptions and coinage. See respectively: *ILS* I, 154, No. 681 and *RIC* VI 203 Nr. 622. See also: R. Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 84-85 and E. Herrmann-Otto, *Konstantin der Große* (Darmstadt 2007), pp. 30-31.

from the death of Constantine's son Crispus.⁸⁷² The setting apart of Crispus's murder is apparently significant. According to Zosimus (*fl. ca.* 500) a pagan historian who seems to have recorded in his *Historia Nova* a fuller version of the pagan accusations mentioned here incidentally, one of Constantine's victims was his wife, the empress Fausta who was allegedly scalded to death in a bath of boiling water at her husband's behest - for an attempt to seduce her stepson, Crispus. Zosimus relates that Fausta fell in love with Crispus and when her overtures met with rejection, the infuriated Empress complained to her husband about Crispus, accusing him of an attempted rape. Having killed his son and heir, Constantine learned to know that his wife's allegations were false and emanated from her own unfulfilled adulterous machinations.⁸⁷³ However, Sozomen is possibly trying to point out here that, as in Heracles's case, the tragic circumstances of both killings are far from being straight forward and should be put to rest by every honest and trustworthy historian of Constantine's reign - among whom the embittered and biased pagans could not be counted. Hence Sozomen's reference to 'those who endeavour to vilify the Christian religion' as the representatives of a pagan opposition within late Roman society, presumably active since the days of Constantine himself, with whom every contemporary Christian is likely to be familiar and whose claims are therefore no more than a contentious nuisance. It follows that these claims are hardly something to be reckoned with, and the reference to the murder of Iphitus in a paroxysm of fury could possibly suggest (albeit obliquely) that even sincere and committed Christians can lose their mind, should God so please. Therefore, if a pagan hero like Heracles, could seek purification having fallen, due to his crime, into a state of *miasma* (and hope is always present behind a quest for purification - even when the tragic hero acknowledges unequivocally his responsibility and the horrific nature of his crime) - there is no reason, Sozomen argues, to deny a devout Christian like Constantine the right to seek remission of his sins. If pagan authors (like Euripides) could praise the power of human friendship to surmount a pagan superstition like *miasma* - why a Christian like Constantine who had acknowledged Christ as his Saviour in the most public fashion conceivable, should not turn to Christ to seek purification, regardless of the true nature of his crime? The educated Christian reader could find in Sozomen's work, a useful answer to pagan allegations using the pagans' own literary and religious heritage. This could have been done, whilst making an astute use of the rhetorical functions of scepticism and irony which themselves could lead to the affirmation of the belief under attack once the doubts themselves are successfully questioned. This practice is in line with the defeat of sophistry by Socrates in the Platonic tradition.⁸⁷⁴ Consequently the

⁸⁷² Soz. I, 5, 1: ἀνελόντα τινὰς τῶν ἐγγυτάτῳ γένους καὶ τῷ θανάτῳ Κρίσπου τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ παιδός.

⁸⁷³ Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, II, 29,2 cf. Philost. II, 4 and Ioannes Zonaras XIII, 2, 37-41. On Zosimus, see: W. Liebeschuetz, 'Pagan Historiography and the Decline of the Empire', in G. Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity Fourth to Sixth Century AD* (Leiden 2003), pp. 206-218. On Zonaras see: B. Bleckmann, 'Die Chronik des Johannes Zonaras und eine pagane Quelle zur Geschichte Konstantins', *Historia* 40 (1991), pp. 343-365 and more recently: T. Banchich and E. Lane (Intr. And Eng. Trans.), *The History of Zonaras: From Alexander Severus through the Death of Theodosius the Great* (Abingdon 2009), pp. 1-22. On Philostorgius, see: E. I. Argov, 'Giving the Heretic a Voice: Philostorgius of Borissus and Greek Ecclesiastical Historiography', *Athenaeum* 89 (2001), pp. 497-524; P.R. Amidon S.J (Intr. And Eng. Trans.) *Philostorgius: Church History* (Atlanta 2007), pp. xiii-xxv. It is perhaps not a coincidence that certain Constantinian laws concerning adultery namely CTh IX, 7, 1-2; 8, 1 and 24, 1 originate from this time (i.e. 326). See also: D. Woods, 'On the Empress Fausta', *Greece and Rome* 45 (1998), pp. 70-86.

⁸⁷⁴ Sozomen may have been alluding to Euripides's *Hercules Furens*. See *ibid.* 1152; 1156; 1160; 1199-1201. In the Greek myth, Theseus offered hope against guilt and shame by virtue of being 'friendship personified'. Sozomen's defence of Constantine does not rule out, at any rate, a possibility whereby the emperor escaped punishment. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, a younger contemporary of

doubts (if they appear at all) might give way to a reaffirmed belief.⁸⁷⁵ Another important conclusion, which Sozomen's handling of the darker sides of Constantine's legacy could have offered his readers, was that Constantine's continuous success after those tragic events proves that he was perfectly cleansed by his Saviour, despite the pagan accusations.

F. Sozomen and Constantine's Orthodoxy

The considerations made thus far only highlight the open-ended nature of Sozomen's ambivalent outlook, whereby orthodoxy is maintained simultaneously with the help of the Constantinian myth and despite the darker sides of Constantine's reign. We should bear in mind that some of Sozomen's orthodox readers, could have been supposedly inclined to have some misgivings in this respect, given Constantine's conciliatory position towards bishops who, from their point of view, seemed to have supported Arius e.g. Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea who were banished three months after the Council of Nicaea was adjourned⁸⁷⁶ but were recalled and reinstated to their sees by a synod, convened by Constantine at Nicomedia in 327, apparently due to Constantine's direct intervention on their behalf⁸⁷⁷, and indeed, at a much later stage, towards Arius himself (readmitted to communion in 335 at Constantine's behest following a synod in Jerusalem⁸⁷⁸), whereas an intrepid defenders of Nicene orthodoxy such as Eustathius, bishop of Antioch and the indefatigable Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria (since 328), were, each one in his turn, deposed and exiled (in 327 and 335, respectively).⁸⁷⁹ This may have been remembered (and interpreted in

Sozomen (ca. 396-466), is more direct in associating *miasma* (or its equivalent: *agos*) with the Arian heresy. See: Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 15, 2-3. Theodoret relates how the good folk of Samosata refused to bathe together with Eunomius, their Arian bishop who replaced their revered former Catholic bishop Eusebius, after the latter was ousted from his see under Valens. The explanation for this was a fear of *agos*, a pollution of the water caused by direct contact with a heretic. See also: R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford 1983; repr. 2003), pp. 308-318 and *ibid.* p. 381.

⁸⁷⁵ See: T. C. W. Stinton, "'Si credere dignum est': Some Expressions of Disbelief in Euripides and Others", *PCPS* 22 (1976), pp. 60-89.

⁸⁷⁶ Soz. II, 32, 7-8 cf. Philost. *HE* I, 1, 10.

⁸⁷⁷ Sozomen, following Rufinus and Socrates, associates Constantine's intervention in favour of Arius, as well as the bishops of Nicomedia and Nicaea, with the emperor's half- sister Constantia, the widow of his enemy Licinius (executed by Constantine in 324). Constantia had managed on her death bed, having previously fallen under the influence of a certain pro-Arian presbyter, to bend Constantine's heart towards the exiles concerned. Constantia pleaded the case of Arius and his supporters and expressed her fear of Divine wrath and punishment which could afflict her brother and the Empire due to their unjust banishment. See: Soz. II, 27, 2-4 and 34, 2. cf. Ruf. X, 12; Soc. I, 25 (who erroneously dates Constantia's death shortly after the end of the Council of Nicaea); Theod. *HE* II, 3. On the blaming of Constantia as means of salvaging the memory of Constantine, see: J. Hillner, 'Fifth-century Church Historians: Social network analysts before their time?' in the Blog: *Migration of Faith Clerical Exile in Late Antiquity (325 - 600)*, April 2016 = https://blog.clericalexile.org/2016/04/01/fifth-century-church-historians-social-network-analysts-before-their-time/#_ftn3 Note also: J. Barry, *Bishops in Flight: Exile and Displacement in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA 2019), pp. 142-145.

⁸⁷⁸ Soz. II, 27, 13 cf. Ruf. *HE* X, 12; Athanasius, *Apologia contra Arianos* II, 84; Id. *De Synodis*, 21, 2. Eusebius of Caesarea, writing about the Jerusalem synod in his *Vita Constantini* after Constantine's death, remains silent on the reinstatement of Arius. See: Eus. *VC* IV, 43-47.

⁸⁷⁹ On the deposition of Eustathius of Antioch (following fabricated accusations), see: Soz. II, 19. Cf. Eus. *VC* III, 59-62; Jerome *Vir. ill.* 85; Soc. I, 24, 1; Theod. *HE*, I, 21-22. See also: M. Simonetti, *La crisi Ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome 1975), pp. 103-110; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids, MI 2005), pp. 208-217 and more recently, S. Cartwright, *The Theological Anthropology of Eustathius of Antioch* (Oxford 2015), pp. 20-31.

hindsight by certain Constantinopolitan Catholic circles, facing growing concerns about the brewing doctrinal turmoil between 448 and 451⁸⁸⁰ as Constantine's 'leniency' towards heretics or even his palinode from the aftermath of the Council of Nicaea until his death in 337.⁸⁸¹ However, there is nothing in Sozomen's narrative that would suggest that Constantine may have undergone a change of heart that made him a supporter of Arian teachings.⁸⁸² Rather, Sozomen is apparently trying not to shy away from addressing adverse opinions which his readers, orthodox and heterodox alike, were quite likely familiar with. ⁸⁸³Sozomen's chosen narrative strategy emanates from epistemological choice as an implied author i.e. the source of the governing consciousness of the work as a whole and indeed, of the norms embodied in

⁸⁸⁰ See: J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (5th ed. London 1993), pp. 330-343; G. A. Bevan, *The New Judas: The Case of Nestorius in Ecclesiastical Politics, 428-451 CE* (Leuven 2016), pp. 288-310; On the confusion and unrest in the East which followed Ephesus II see: *ACO* II, 1.1, 93:17-39. Pope Leo I's correspondence with Pulcheria, Theodosius II's devout Catholic sister (and soon-to-be empress), reflects the shared concerns of both eastern and western Catholics at that time of confusion i.e. from October 449 to Theodosius II's sudden death in July 450. See: Leo, *Ep.* 45 and *Ep.* 58. Pulcheria was one of the prominent members of what could be regarded in modern terms as a Catholic elite network with whom Leo I had corresponded as part of his campaign against Ephesus II. On the nature of late antique 'elite network' see: E.A. Clark, 'Elite Networks and Heresy Accusations: Towards a Social Description of the Origenist Controversy', *Semeia* 56 (1991), pp 79-117. The Theodosian Catholic elite network included other members of the imperial family e.g. Constantius III's influential widow (and Theodosius I's daughter), Galla Placidia (ca. 390 -450), her son, the Western emperor Valentinian III and his wife, Licinia Eudoxia, among others. See: A. Busch, *Die Frauen der theodosianischen Dynastie: Macht und Repräsentation kaiserlicher Frauen im 5. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 2015), pp. 122-125. It is worth noting that in his response to Leo I's rejection of Ephesus II, the emperor Theodosius II refers to Constantine as a symbol of orthodoxy by arguing that Ephesus II did not deviate in any way from the Faith, divine dogmas and the decisions accepted by the most reverend bishops who were gathered in Nicaea 'under Constantine of divine memory' (*sub divinae memoriae Constantino*). See: M.S. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils 431-451* (Oxford 2018), p. 168.

⁸⁸¹ Sozomen seems to be reminding his readers of this in passing, with typical minimalistic subtlety by indicating that Constantine's will was given for safekeeping to a presbyter who was indeed "a follower of Arius, yet (*italics are mine*) of virtuous life" (ὄντα Ἀρείου, ἀγαθὸν δὲ τῷ βίῳ). See: Soz. II, 34, 2. According to Socrates, (I, 39), the presbyter's name was Eutokios. Cf. Philost. *HE*, II, where a more detailed version of this story is recorded. According to Philostorgius, Constantine was poisoned by his conniving brothers and having discovered the plot, entrusted the will shortly before breathing his last, to Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, the most prominent amongst the sympathisers of Arius in the imperial court who was to become bishop of Constantinople shortly afterwards in 338. The bishop, according to the Anomean church historian, had managed to deliver the will to its legitimate addressees, namely Constantine's sons, having shielded it from the prying eyes of their uncles by hiding the document in the folds of the defunct emperor's robe and thus, allegedly, the prelate saved the princes from sharing instantly their father's fate. Sozomen's command of Latin enabled him to follow Rufinus's version (cf. Ruf. *HE*, X, 12) despite Rufinus's uncensored vivid description of Constantine's tightening ties with the Arian clergy. This seems to have escaped the notice of Guy Sabbah (see: *SC* 306, pp. 380-381 n. 3). On Sozomen's competence as a Latinist see: G-Ch. Hansen (2004), vol. I, p. 54, n. 194.

⁸⁸² For a recent defence of Constantine's orthodoxy, see: M. Bagos, 'On the Sainthood of Constantine the Great: A Case-Study of his Churches in New Rome', *The Basilian* 3 (2021), pp. 29-51.

⁸⁸³ For allegations about Constantine's shift towards Arianism ('Palinody') in his last years. See: Jerome, *Chronicon* a. 337 cf. Philost. II, 1. See: A. Piganiol, *L'empire chrétien (325-395)*, (Paris 1947; Repr. 1972), pp. 44-45. For a refutation of the claims about Constantine's Arian leanings late in life, see: S. Bralewski, 'Cesarz Konstantyn I Wielki wobec kontrowersji arianskiej', *Labarum* 8 (2009), pp. 7-28. See also: A. López Kindler, 'Constantino y el arrianismo', *Anuario de historia de la Iglesia* 22 (2013), pp. 37-64 and P. Maraval, *Constantin le Grand : Empereur Romain, empereur chrétien 306-337* (Paris 2014), pp. 298-306.

the work concerned.⁸⁸⁴ He leaves his narrative 'lean' enough, allowing his readers to conclude, should they so wish, that Constantine may have been punished after all, given the fact that the bishop that baptised Constantine on his deathbed was an Arian cleric. Following this ethical turn, Sozomen's readers could easily observe as they read on, that heresy and murderousness kept haunting, just like the *Erinyes*, the younger generations of the Constantinian dynasty. To highlight this, Sozomen added to the mix a simple but sharp ingredient: the essentially-pagan concept of misfortune which is of course an anathema to Christians:

*From that moment on, controversies about the Dogma became frequent again in private and in public, and with them, transgressions and hatreds*⁸⁸⁵

Sozomen opts for stating what from his point of view are some indisputable facts, leading thus the reader to infer that *post hoc propter hoc* and so Constantine II, one of Constantine's three sons, was defeated and killed near Aquileia three years after Constantine's death at the hands of his brother Constans (who was to find his own death ten years later, fighting the usurper Magnentius).⁸⁸⁶ There seem to be present here faint echoes of Greek tragedy. This can be inferred from Sozomen's choice of the word ὕβρεις which also appears in the NT.⁸⁸⁷ Sozomen appears to have found a subtle way to point at the regrouping and revival of heterodoxy before Constantine's death and more so, under Constantius II, without assuming the role of an orthodox critic of the Constantinian dynasty.

It would appear that, through an ostensible (by any standard) response to pagan allegations, Sozomen creates for himself an opportunity not only to circumvent the official censorship but also to extricate himself from the consequences of potential displeasure which his work could incur, especially amongst influential courtly and ecclesiastical circles, who could look askance at his narrative. By employing this narrative strategy, he seems to shun any possible allegation of defamation of Constantine and his sacred mythical memory.⁸⁸⁸ On the other hand, the

⁸⁸⁴ On the 'implied author' see: W. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago 1961), p. 61 and *passim*.

See also: S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* (Abingdon 2002), pp. 87-88.

⁸⁸⁵ Soz. III, 1, 5: 'Ἐντεῦθεν τε πάλιν περὶ τοῦ δόγματος ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ δημοσίᾳ συχνὰ διαλέξεις ἐγίνοντο, σὺν ταύταις τε καὶ ὕβρεις καὶ ἀπέχθεται. The resumption of the Trinitarian controversy after Constantine's death is conveyed without any mention of a Divine agency.

⁸⁸⁶ Soz. III, 2, 10.

⁸⁸⁷ For example: Acts 27:10, 21; 2 Cor.12:10. See: W. Barclay, *New Testament Words* (London 1964), p. 133. According to Aristotle, means also 'injustice'. See: SRhet. 1373a34-5, 1374a11-12, 1389b7-8, 1391a18-19; For a discussion see: D. Cairns, 'Hybris, Dishonour, and Thinking Big', *JHS* 116 (1996), pp. 1-32. Sozomen's choice of the plural also suggests that he may have been alluding to more than one sense of transgression. In other words, the perpetrators of the renewed controversy committed crimes against their fellow men as well as against God.

⁸⁸⁸ Sozomen could have had in mind in this context the traumatic aftermath of the demise of Chrysostom. In more than one sense Chrysostom's end was reminiscent of his successor Nestorius of Germanicia's fate and the subsequent uncertainties of the last years of Theodosius II's reign. Cf. Soz. VIII, 22-28 whereby the *topos* of 'Divine Retribution' is prominent (e.g. cap. 25). Thus Peter Van Nuffelen's view according to which "En même temps, le regard tourné vers les dangers du passé vaincus semble rendre Socrate et Sozomène aveugles aux problèmes de leur époque" would appear to benefit from a reconsideration. As regards Socrates, Van Nuffelen himself is, it seems, forced to acknowledge that "En écrivant vers 439-440, il n'était évidemment pas au courant des problèmes des années suivantes." In as far as Sozomen is concerned, the evidence suggests quite the opposite, as we shall see later. See: Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage ...* (2004) pp. 85-86. On the impact on Sozomen of the Chrysostom and Nestorius ecclesiastical affairs, see chapter 2 of the present study. On the secular side, (if the proposed dating of

quasi-legal style could have been regarded by Sozomen as an efficient antidote against any perception of his portrayal of Constantine as mere panegyric. Sozomen seems to have been interested in conveying safely (but nonetheless clearly) to a knowledgeable and discerning readership, his personal understanding of the Christian Emperor's office. If indeed this goal was on his mind, he could not (and indeed did not) belittle Constantine's achievements. Yet, for the same reason, Sozomen sought to communicate to his readers, without playing the daredevil though, the shortcomings of the founding father of the Christian Empire and by subtle projection, the imperfections and proclivities of Constantine's successors up until the author's own lifetime. Sozomen is setting forth to chart here the inadequacy of the Christianisation of the Empire and indeed its failure to remedy the human race from its mortal failings. It follows that the secular rulers, Christian though they are, mirror in fact this sombre state of affairs.⁸⁸⁹ Several other examples seem to testify to the same ambiguous approach towards Constantine. Having shown his indignation at the pagans' allegations concerning Crispus (without really refuting them) – Sozomen does not hesitate to show how Constantine was trying to allure the Romans to join him in his newly-embraced religion:

*As soon as the sole government of the Roman empire was vested in Constantine, he issued a public decree commanding all his subjects in the East to honour the Christian religion, carefully to worship the Divine Being, and to recognise that only as Divine which is essentially so, and which has the power that endures for ever and ever: for he delights to give all good things ungrudgingly to those who zealously embrace the truth: he meets their undertakings with the best hopes, while misfortunes, whether in peace or in war, whether in public or in private life, befall transgressors.*⁸⁹⁰

450-453 is correct) it is perhaps the fall out of grace of the influential eunuch, the *spatharius* Chrysaphius who was executed on Pulcheria's order in the summer of 450 which may have been the latest to leave its mark on Sozomen. See F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA 2006), pp. 192-193.

⁸⁸⁹ Thus Sozomen's readers are in fact encouraged to curb their enthusiasm as the history of their own church, as Sozomen will have grasped by now, is often the history of failing Christian emperors and factious clerics. Sozomen emerges as an historian who, despite the elegance of his writing and in sharp contrast to a simplistic reading of his *Dedicatio* and his evident awareness of his readership's sensitivities is not writing to ingratiate himself. It was apparently not only a 'pious' historiosophy but also a personal conviction which may have driven Sozomen to point out in this respect in his *proemium*, astutely yet incisively, that neither these notables nor their deeds are the main protagonists of his work (Soz. I, 1, 12): "For I am convinced that the topic is not the achievements of men..." (πέπεισομαι γάρ ὡς ὑποθέσεως οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δημιουργηθείσης...). Therefore, his expression of gratitude to the monks which follows this statement must be extended beyond the limits of the historian's biography and be given more leverage as a manifestation of Sozomen's view of the monastic movement as a tower of strength in a Christian yet corrupt empire and as a guardian of true Christian virtue. His rhetoric refusal (*Ibid.*, 19) to be accused of committing their memory to oblivion (ἀμνηστία παραδεδωκότες τὴν αὐτῶν ἀρετὴν) is apparently more than a conventional allusion to Herodotus and his paradigmatic μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά... ἀκλεῖα γίνονται (Herod. *Hist.* A, 1,1). Rather, it may hint to Sozomen's fears as heterodoxy (e.g. miaphysitism) was raising its head again after the *Latrocinium* in 449. It is perhaps not unreasonable to assume that Sozomen must have had concerns about the survival of testimonials to the attainments of the monastic movement, should the history of the Church be re-written and both the Catholic ideological opposition as well as the active resistance to heterodoxy (both embodied in the monastic movement) be marginalised or obliterated altogether.

⁸⁹⁰ Soz. I, 8, 1

Indeed, Constantine, according to Sozomen did prohibit officially⁸⁹¹ the old pagan rites, demolished a multitude of pagan temples and monuments and abolished ancient pagan customs. Yet, the Emperor, as Sozomen also observes, is not exercising his authority in a tyrannical fashion. Sozomen's Constantine, despite the decree, seems to be keen to solicit his subjects support for his new religion, rather than simply coercing them into submissive worship.⁸⁹² The justification for this is pragmatic as well as dogmatic. The Emperor specifies the rewards which await those who obey. However, he does not hesitate at the same time to point out that the rewards he shall be able to offer the proselytes will be topped up by no other than God Himself. This implicit contact with God, namely the recognition of being God's chosen earthly sovereign who is the recipient of God's gifts as well as the Providentially-empowered giver of gifts in God's name and under His patronage⁸⁹³, is strongly emphasised by Sozomen. He produces a very detailed account of the actions taken by Constantine to make good (from his own initiative and indeed, at his own expense) the state of churches and individuals who had been the victims of previous anti-Christian waves of persecution. Constantine showered the Church with all goodness and his own reward was quick to be handed down to him:

The prosperity of religion kept pace with the increased prosperity of the empire. After the war with Licinius the Emperor was successful in battle against foreign nations; he conquered the Sarmatians, and the people called Goths and concluded an advantageous treaty with them. This people used to live at the time across the Danube and they happened to be of extreme bellicosity in both their number and their physical features, always ready in arms they held sway over other barbarians, finding nobody their match except the Romans. It is chiefly- so it is said- this war which showed to Constantine through signs and dreams under what sort of providential protection God had placed him. Once he emerged victorious in all the campaigns which took place against him and being eager to show favour to Christ in return⁸⁹⁴ he thanked Him through being passionate about our religion and exhorted his subjects not to practice any but the one true faith and regard it as the way of salvation.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹¹ Eusebius includes a copy of Constantine's public decree (γράμμα δημόσιον) in *VC*, II, 24-42. Cf. Eus. *HE X*, 5-7.

⁸⁹² Sozomen's depiction of Constantine's implementation of his religious policies (Soz. I, 8, 1-5) hints apparently at a position of *realpolitik* which manifests itself through Constantine's manoeuvring between his commitment to Christianity and the emerging well-calculated policy of tolerance *de facto* of non-Christians. For a discussion of Constantine's policy of 'Conflicting Messages' see: H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the bishops: The Politics of intolerance* (Baltimore 2000), pp. 284-297 cf. C.M. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (Abingdon 2004), pp. 250-251. Odahl, as opposed to Drake, clings to a more traditional view whereby Constantine is believed to have been a strong Catholic who was unable to carry out his plans to Christianise the Roman empire thoroughly only because his endeavour was "occasionally interrupted by political conflicts in the eastern Church and by military campaigns on the Danube front during the years 330-336." (Odahl, *ibid.* p. 251). On Sozomen's view of Constantine as 'Christian legislator', see: O. Huck, 'Constantin, législateur chrétien', *Aux origines d'un topos de l'histoire ecclésiastique*, in: P. Blaudeau and P. Van Nuffelen (eds.), *L'historiographie tardo-antique et la transmission de savoirs* (Berlin 2015), pp. 283-317. See also (still essential): J. Gaudemet, 'La législation religieuse de Constantine', *RHEF* 33 (1947), pp. 25-61.

⁸⁹³ On the sincerity of Constantine's belief in being chosen and protected by the God of the Christians in the light of his personal attestation, see: S. Bialeswki, 'Konwersja Konstantyna Wielkiego na chrześcijaństwo w świetle jego własnego świadectwa – kilka uwag', *Przegląd Nauk Historycznych*, 15 (2) (2016), pp. 45-79. See also: K. M. Girardet, *Der Kaiser und sein Gott: Das Christentum im Denken und der Religionspolitik Konstantins des Grossen* (Berlin 2010), pp. 44-62.

⁸⁹⁴ The original expression used by Sozomen here is: ἀντιφιλοτιμούμενος τὸν Χριστὸν. The verb ἀντιφιλοτιμέομαι is also known to have been used in a medical context meaning thus "to set up a vicious circle with" (See: *LSJ* p. 165).

⁸⁹⁵ Soz. I, 8, 8-10.

Sozomen could have had this connotation of a 'with-profit' religion in mind in choosing the rather unusual idiom ἀντιφιλοτιμούμενος to communicate his suspicion that Constantine's response to God's favours was excessive and formed a negative precedent. Piety and devotion in their Constantinian version were turned into a commodity, something to be traded for God's help and support and not necessarily a manifestation of genuine devotion.⁸⁹⁶ In other words, Constantine, Christian as he may have been, was nonetheless still bogged down in the pagan way of thinking and its intrinsic propensity to strike deals with divine powers through votive offerings and gifts. If this interpretation can be followed, it could be suggested that Sozomen saw in this aspect of Constantine's leadership a tragic ἀμαρτία and the nucleus of later Emperors' aberrations and deviations which in turn will have incurred Divine wrath on the Roman Empire. This interpretation operates harmoniously on two levels: It apparently offered an explanation of the grim scene of disunity in the Church which unfolded from the Nicene orthodox point of view by showing how the precedent set by Constantine impinged on the conduct of his successors who included heretics and an apostate. Yet, the Constantinian myth is paradoxically saved by the depiction of the first Christian emperor as a human being, prone to imperfection and ill judgement. Constantine's achievement can still be praised precisely because as a human (and indeed as a Roman emperor) error could not be avoided.

Along these lines we might also be able to sharpen our understanding of Sozomen's remark Καὶ ἐν ἅπασιν μὲν, νομοθετῶν δὲ μάλιστα, ἐσπούδαζε θεραπεύειν τὸ θεῖον.⁸⁹⁷ In this case the meaning is threefold: to the religious and medical connotations which are attached to θεραπεία, we can now add with confidence an explicit allusion to "a service done to gain favour".⁸⁹⁸ The emphasis on 'legislation' as Constantine's top achievement amongst the services rendered by him to God and His Church might suggest that Sozomen did not find, in hindsight, Constantine's implementation of the laws he himself enacted, very satisfying and the surviving evidence suggests that Sozomen did have enough reasons to be displeased with Constantine's performance in this respect. Constantine's laws which were profusely praised by Eusebius, did not prevent divisive practices and tumultuous behaviour even within the Church.⁸⁹⁹ The ensuing conclusion may well be that devout Christians such as Sozomen were still regarding Constantine's reign as an era of miraculous developments. Nonetheless despite the veil of time (or perhaps due to that veil) they could identify past opportunities that were lost and this loss, in hind sight, threw the Roman empire and the Catholic Church into chaos.

⁸⁹⁶ It should be borne in mind that Sozomen himself had highlighted the role of piety as being essentially sufficient by itself to secure prosperity to emperors and their realms. See: Soz. IX, 1, 2.

⁸⁹⁷ Soz. I, 8, 13: He strove to serve the Divine in everything – and particularly in legislation.

⁸⁹⁸ See: LSJ, p. 792

⁸⁹⁹ Eusebius praises Constantine as legislator in VC II, 20-21. In VC 3, 4 Eusebius relates the conflict in the Church of Alexandria which led to the schism between Thebes and Egypt, and numerous conflicts between bishops and bishops. This schism was followed by riots and indeed, disfiguration of the emperor's statues. We know that despite the prohibition on pagan sacrifice (CTh XVI, 10, 2) these practices were not eliminated. Nor were the gladiatorial combats (VC, 4, 25, 1). Another illustration of the gap between ideology and practice can be found in an early edict (later repealed) which forbade any Jew to have a Christian slave (CTh XVI, 9, 1: Sirm. 4). Well known is also the legislation against magic but the Christian legislator is far from being unequivocal on that matter. The Theodosian Code shows e.g. that while private haruspicy was categorically prohibited, public use of the same practice was none the less allowed (CTh IX, 16, 1-3). The extent of the influence which the Church had exercised over the implementation of Constantinian and post-Constantinian laws remains debatable. See: J. Harris, *Law & Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 1999), p. 52 and pp. 150-152; Note also: R. Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 27-34.

The same ambiguity seems to be governing Sozomen's narrative when he enters into the very thick of Constantine's direct involvement in ecclesiastical affairs. Constantine's commitment to his new religion and his marked respect for its exponents, namely, clergy, monks and holy men, did not turn the emperor into a humble or docile on-looker insofar as the Church's affairs were concerned. Quite the contrary. In addition to a vivid portrayal of the emperor's unrestrained ambition to gain a reputation of holiness alongside his existing kudos as a general and statesman (or perhaps because he found his secular attainments unsatisfactory), Sozomen's Constantine emerges as a self-proclaimed bishop, keen to lead the Church and even set her challenges which may have been perhaps more suitable in a pagan environment. Even so, Constantine's behaviour on this occasion (which could have been deemed disrespectful towards Alexander, bishop of Constantinople, having ordered the prelate to take part in a public disputation with pagan philosophers) is miraculously leading to a positive outcome, contrary to what would have been expected:

When Constantine arrived in Byzantium, certain philosophers⁹⁰⁰ came to him to complain of the innovations in religion, and particularly of his having introduced a new form of worship into the state, contrary to that followed by his forefathers, and by all who were formerly in power, whether among the Greeks or the Romans. They likewise desired to hold a disputation on the doctrine with Alexander the bishop; and he although unskilled in such argumentative contests, and perhaps persuaded by his life, seeing that he was an excellent and good man, accepted the struggle at the command of the Emperor. Where the philosophers were assembled, since everyone wished to engage in the discussion, he requested that one whom they esteemed worthy be chosen as spokesman, while the others were to remain silent. When one of the philosophers began to open the debate, Alexander said to him, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ not to speak." This word barely said, the man, having been dumbstruck, was immediately silenced.⁹⁰¹

⁹⁰⁰ 'Philosophy' is quite often the *terminus technicus* with which Christian authors were referring to Christian ascetic practices. Sozomen is no exception in describing ascetic monks as those who 'practiced philosophy' (ἐφιλοσόφουν). See e.g.: Soz. III, 14, 4. However, unlike 'philosophy', the collective name 'philosophers' in most cases (when using it as a noun, Sozomen refers to notable ascetic monks as 'ecclesiastical philosophers' see e.g. Soz. III, 14, 30 and VI, 35, 7) and indeed, in the present one, is being used in the classical pagan sense i.e. scholars who pursue the study of theoretical speculative Greek-style philosophy. In this sense, the title 'philosopher' carried negative connotations and reflected particularly, the rivalry between the Church Fathers of the preceding generations and the pagan world of thought. This linguistic development (largely present in the writings of Origen and Eusebius) remained mostly in the context of the intellectual wrestling with paganism. The Cappadocians- and Gregory of Nyssa in particular – added another dimension to the debate by linking the term 'philosophy' with 'orthodoxy' in a formidable intellectual venture to establish not only the compliance of Nicene orthodoxy with Greek ontology and epistemology, but also its philosophical supremacy as being the source of a higher (i.e. more adequate) 'natural theology' or as Gregory also puts it elsewhere – a 'moral and natural philosophy'. See respectively: Greg. Nyss. *Contra Eunomium* I, 186 and Id. *Vita Mosis*, 2. Despite the theological attempts to 'systematise' the approach to it, 'Philosophy' never became a rigorous concept and retained considerable polysemic flexibility, as we can further see in Sozomen's case. See e.g. Soz. III, 14, 38. On the transformation of 'philosophy' and its derivatives in early Christian literature, see: A.-M. Malingrey, *"PHILOSOPHIA": Étude d'un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque, des Présocratiques au IV^e siècle après J.-C.* (Paris 1961), pp. 159-261. See also: Ch. Marksches, *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen* (Tübingen 2007), pp. 88-109. On the implications of these developments on the ecclesiastical political discourse from the Council of Nicaea (325) to the Council of Chalcedon (451) and beyond, see:

A. Meredith SJ, *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church* (London 2012), pp. 87-118.

⁹⁰¹ Soz. I, 18, 5-7.

In relation to this story, it is worth noting that Sozomen had distinguished between two types of philosophy: Hellenic philosophy and church philosophy. He associated the former with paganism and attributed to its proponents a love of empty disputes. Sozomen, unlike his predecessor Socrates of Constantinople, did not ascribe any particular value to classical philosophy. Nor did he divide the Hellenic philosophers into true and false. In general, he ascribed to them recklessness as their main trait, which became the reason for their demise in the reign of Valens.⁹⁰² Conversely, Sozomen did regard monastic asceticism as the true philosophy and referred to it as 'ecclesiastical philosophy'.⁹⁰³

The story carries more than a tad of biblical allusions. The association with Moses, already known to us from Eusebius's *De vita Constantini* is by no means the only one.⁹⁰⁴ The imagery of Moses seems to be present here as well, but interestingly Sozomen appears to have moved from its Eusebian association with Constantine to another protagonist namely bishop Alexander of Constantinople. The bishop obeyed the Emperor's command to take part in the disputation which the philosophers requested although the bishop was, as Sozomen reports, 'inexperienced in such school-level debate exercises' (τοιαύτης γυμνασίας λόγων ἀτρίβης).⁹⁰⁵ The 'inexperienced' bishop shares with Moses apparently impaired speech and exemplary humility.⁹⁰⁶ However, his underlined inferior opening position (a very elementary level of schooling) in the duel against the sophisticated philosophers, highbrow and thoroughly educated up to the highest academic level, is perhaps equally reminiscent of the Biblical duel between David and Goliath, whereby the young and inexperienced shepherd boy (the bucolic symbolism suggests perhaps another correlation between David and the traditional pastoral attributes of Alexander's episcopal ministry) refuses to fight the Philistine champion with King Saul's copper helmet, coat of mail and sword, having claimed being inexperienced in

⁹⁰² See: S. Bralewski, 'Zagłada filozofów helleńskich w Imperium Romanum - obraz mędrców w relacji Sokratesa z Konstantynopola i Hermiasza Sozomena', *Vox Patrum* 32 (2012), pp. 58-72. Sozomen pointed to the birth of a new God-sent philosophy, which was a way of life totally directed towards the Creator. This philosophy did not require education. It was based on ascetic practices and the strength of mind which emanated from them drawing its power from God.

⁹⁰³ Soz. IV 16, 11 See: S. Bralewski, 'The Catalogue of Virtues in the Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen of Bethelia', *Vox Patrum* 84 (2022), pp. 31-50 esp. pp. 44-46.

⁹⁰⁴ See: Eus. *VC*, I, 12. and *passim*. However, Sozomen, unlike Eusebius, is not alluding in this case to Constantine. Rather, the implicit association with Moses relates here to bishop Alexander who, like the Israelite prophet was not a man of words. See: *OT*, Exodus, 4, 10-12. The biblical figure of Moses was transmitted by Jewish Hellenism to the Greco-Roman world where it became a well-known literary *topos*. On the origins and evolution of that tradition, see: J. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Abingdon TN, 1972), pp. 25-79. Moses as a 'biographical model' was adopted by various Christian men of letters during the fourth century. That trend culminated in Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita Mosis*. See: A. Wilson, *Biographical Models: 'The Constantinian Period and Beyond'* in Lieu and Montserrat (eds.) (London 1999), pp. 107-135. The model was borrowed also by other ecclesiastical historians. Thus, the heterodox Anomean Philostorgius related *inter alia* that Ulfila, the 'Apostle of the Goths' who evangelised almost single-handedly those fierce Germanic warriors and went on to become their bishop, was dubbed by Constantius II (an Emperor who shared with both Ulfila and Philostorgius strong pro-Arian convictions) as the 'Moses of our time' See: Philost. *HE*, II, 5. On Ulfila, see: N.B. McLynn, 'Little Wolf in the Big City: Ulfila and his Interpreters' in J. Drinkwater and B. Salway (eds.), *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected: Essays Presented by Colleagues, Friends and Pupils* (London 2007), pp. 125-135. Socrates of Constantinople likens in his *HE* the emperor Theodosius II to Moses on account of this emperor's meekness. See: *Soc. VII*, 42 -15 cf. *OT* Numeri, 12, 3. See: L. Gardiner, 'The Imperial Subject: Theodosius II and Panegyric in Socrates's Church History' in C. Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 244-268.

⁹⁰⁵ Soz. I, 18, 6.

⁹⁰⁶ See: *Ex.* 4, 10-12; *Num.* 12, 3

using that kind of weaponry.⁹⁰⁷ The most intriguing figure, however, is that of Constantine who – according to the present interpretation – assumes here the problematic role of Saul.⁹⁰⁸ Constantine, like the first king of Israel, appears to be weak and whimsy. He is unable to resist the pagans' love of contentiousness and their penchant for competitions - clearly manifested in this story- and succumbs to the temptation of the philosophers' request to host a disputation between the bishop of the new capital and themselves (and so we are informed by Sozomen in passing that this story had originated from the 'Constantinopolitan years' i.e. the last seven years of Constantine's life). That detail seems significant, as this is the period which came after the Council of Nicaea in 325 and which saw other pious imperial acts of commitment to Christianity.⁹⁰⁹ Constantine's public manifestations of zealous loyalty to his religion were not limited to initiatives in practical areas such as codification and public administration. The surviving evidence suggests that Constantine also sought recognition as a spiritual leader and theologian. This is attested in his *Oration to the Saints*, delivered perhaps shortly after the Council of Nicaea or thereabouts.⁹¹⁰ Constantine's speech famously incorporates, amongst other things, a blunt attack on pagan philosophers, their teachings, values and practices, reaching a notorious rhetorical climax in the emperor's scorn of the philosophers:

*"Go impious ones! ... to the slaughter of your sacred rites, banquets and great festivals."*⁹¹¹

There is hardly any trace of these strong anti-pagan sentiments in Sozomen's account of Constantine's audience with the philosophers. It would appear that Sozomen may have tried to expose a pagan reality which in more than one sense was still lurking behind the Christian myth of Constantine, carefully avoiding an outright demolition of the very same myth, manoeuvring between imperial power and Christian orthodoxy. Sozomen, as has been

⁹⁰⁷ Cf. *LXX, Reg. 1, 17, 39*: καὶ εἶπεν Δαυὶδ πρὸς Σαουλ Οὐ μὴ δύναμαι πορευθῆναι ἐν τούτοις ὅτι οὐ πεπείραμαι and *Bibl Heb. 1 Sam., 17, 39*: וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל שָׁאוּל לֹא אוּכַל לְלָכֶת בְּאַרְבָּה כִּי לֹא נִסִּיתִי

⁹⁰⁸ Cf. Theod., *HE*, III, 19 whereby the emperor Julian is compared with King Saul.

⁹⁰⁹ Sozomen exhibits here what would appear as chronological carelessness. The tripartite encounter between Constantine, the philosophers and Alexander took place seemingly after the Council of Nicaea as can be inferred from Sozomen's own indication according to which the Emperor, the philosophers and the prelate met 'Ὡνίκα γάρ παρεγένετο Κωνσταντῖνος εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον' ("when Constantine arrived in Byzantium"). As the council of Nicaea was convoked in 325, Alexander could not have governed (as yet) the church of Constantinople as the New Rome was founded only five years later. It should be noted however that according to the rhetorician Themistius (ca. 317-388), the re-foundation of Byzantium as the planned new imperial capital was already announced by November 324. See: Themistius, *Or.* 4, 58b. It is likewise worth noting that Sozomen insists on referring to Alexander not as the bishop of Byzantium (i.e. the city which predated Constantinople) but τοῦ ἐπιτροπεύσαντος τὴν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἐκκλησίαν ("who governed the Constantinopolitan church") despite the fact that Alexander, the first bishop of Constantinople, was consecrated before the foundation of the New Rome by Constantine, perhaps even before the council of Nicaea. See: Grillet-Sabbah (1983), p. 200, n.1. Thus, it seems that Sozomen chose to associate Alexander with a more prestigious episcopal see, regardless of chronological accuracy, not an uncommon malpractice in late antiquity (cf. e.g. Epiphanius of Eleutheropolis often being referred to as 'Epiphanius of Salamis' after his episcopal see in Cyprus).

⁹¹⁰ See: I. Heikel (ed) *Constantini Oratio ad Sanctorum Coetum* (Leipzig 1902) (=GCS 7); For the dating of the speech see: T. D. Barnes, 'Constantine's Speech to the Assembly of the Saints: Place and Date of Delivery', *JThS* 52 (2001) pp. 26-36. On the development in Constantine's approach to the doctrine of God, see: T. Toom, 'Constantine's *SUMMES DEUS* and the Nicene *UNUS DEUS*: Imperial Agenda and Ecclesiastical Conviction', *VOX PATRUM* 34 (2014), pp. 1-20. Toom concludes, following a meticulous examination of the evidence (p.20): "No doubt, Constantine's *Summus Deus* was meant to match with the re-restricted Nicene *Unus Deus*, but the Nicene *Unus Deus* was not necessarily the all-inclusive *Summus Deus*."

⁹¹¹ *Or.*, XI, 7. See: J. M. Schott, *Christianity, Empire and the Making of Religion in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia 2008), pp. 118-122.

already argued, does not raise any direct criticism of the Emperor's proclivities let alone his consent to be an adjudicator in (what seems to be from Sozomen's point of view anyway) an awkward and perhaps even inappropriate spectacle. This event would have left much to be desired in the eyes of a provincial orthodox Christian like our ecclesiastical historian and only a miraculous eventuality could probably save it from being regarded as a disgrace. Such a Providential intervention is not late to appear. The silencing of the philosophers in the name of Christ by Bishop Alexander clears away the unpleasant if not shocking impression, that an orthodox reader could have had. Nonetheless, Sozomen is more direct when it comes to his own doubts about the veracity of this story (leaving perhaps enough room to extricate himself from potential accusations). Sozomen is putting this tale of a miracle on a par with an apocryphal story about the philosopher Julian the Chaldean (*fl.* second century AD)⁹¹² and his undisclosed scepticism is spiced up with more than a pinch of sardonic musing:

*Well then, it is right to consider which miracle is greater: that a man, let alone a philosopher, should be so easily deprived of speech or, to half a stone with the hand, by the power of a word, a miracle I have heard some people bumptiously attributing (κεκομπλογῆσθαι ἀκήκοα) to Julian surnamed 'the Chaldean' and these however are the things which I learned in this respect.*⁹¹³

In his handling of this concoction of fact and fiction, Sozomen is grappling with contradictory aims: the historian's self-evident pursuit of communication and his self-imposed regime of obfuscation. The latter, however, is a signpost which helps those initiated readers who are in possession of the right associative 'key' to unlock their way into the inner sanctum of the historian's mind and decode his message. The remarks in the first person seem to offer some kind of pointer and once the knowledgeable reader's attention is drawn to the dubiety which the author associates with the story's origins and contents (as reflected through the ostentatiously pensive soliloquy Ἄρ' οὖν δίκαιον ἀναλογίσασθαι and the concluding remark καὶ τὰ μὲν ὥδε ἐπὶ ὑθόμην) - they are likely, if they did not figure it out at first glance, to be prompted by Sozomen's hints towards a re-reading of the story with a new, subtler, awareness. It is probably at this point that Sozomen hoped to draw his readers' attention the substitutive nature of the story, i.e. to the fact that the story is a tropological text which hides another text.⁹¹⁴

G. Sozomen and the Council of Nicaea: The Orthodox Past and the Doctrinal Uncertainties of the Future

If there were to be any doubts about an 'initiated' readership being envisaged by Sozomen as the potential addressee of his HE, these are cleared away by our ecclesiastical historian himself when he turns to another account of Constantine as adjudicator, but this time in connection with an internal Christian affair, namely the hearing given by the Emperor to the recalcitrant presbyter Arius of Alexandria and his opponents.⁹¹⁵ It is due to Arius that Constantine, an

⁹¹² See: *SC 306* (1983), p. 202 n. 1

⁹¹³ *Soz.*, I, 18, 7.

⁹¹⁴ On the "substitutive" as a means of literary encoding, see: H. Adams, *Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic* (Tallahassee, Fl. 1983), pp. 15-17.

⁹¹⁵ On Constantine and the Arian controversy, see: S. Bralewski, 'Cesarz Konstantyn I Wielki wobec kontrowersji arianskiej' *Labarum* 8 (2009), pp. 7-28., Note also: R. Williams, *Arius* (rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI 2009), pp. 48-81; T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA 1981), p. 202 ff and J. J. Armstrong, 'Reevaluating Constantine's Legacy in Trinitarian Orthodoxy: New Evidence from Eusebius of

indefatigable seeker of unity in the Church, had chosen to pioneer the realisation of the Church's claim to catholicity through the concept of an Ecumenical Council. Constantine, having experienced the endemic discord and contentiousness within the Church, did not content himself in outlining succinctly the form and the purpose of such a gathering but was also keen to supervise in person its transfer from the drawing board into a functional and practical project.⁹¹⁶ Sozomen, a strong Catholic, is highlighting in his narrative the Emperor's benign efforts to point the Council at the right direction without violating its Divinely-inspired autonomy.

Here the myth of Constantine changes its meaning and returns to signify for the orthodox ecclesiastical historian the solid foundation on which his contemporary church was standing after all. Sozomen was probably responding to the anti-Nicene opposition which raised its head in the last years of Theodosius II's reign when the Emperor's hitherto germinating miaphysite inclinations had become more prominent.⁹¹⁷ The defence of the foundation of the orthodox establishment which was so greatly indebted to Constantine could have equally been triggered by pope Leo the Great and his uncompromising championing of the Nicene doctrine, epitomised by the *Tome* and the state of disarray into which the Church of the eastern Roman empire had been thrown after the Council of Ephesus I and more intensely since the consecration of Flavian as bishop of Constantinople, through the *Latrocinium* in 449 and up until the Council of Chalcedon in 451.⁹¹⁸ These years also saw, as has already been mentioned, a threatening erosion in the position of Nicene Catholicism.⁹¹⁹ Rejecting fiercely accusations *ad hominem* which may have been in circulation about Constantine's proficiency in Greek (given the looming doctrinal crisis - a very sensitive issue from an eastern Roman point of view^{920,921}), Sozomen is very attentive to Constantine's forbearance of at the company of

Caesarea's Commentary on Isaiah', in : E. L. Smither, *Rethinking Constantine : History, Theology and Legacy* (Eugene, OR 2014), pp. 91-104.

⁹¹⁶ Soz. I, 17. Cf. Eus. *VC*, III, 7-11; Soc. I, 8; Ruf. *HE* I, 2; Theod. *HE* I, 7

⁹¹⁷ See: F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408-450* (Berkeley, CA 2006), pp. 157-168 and pp. 182-191; K.G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley, CA 1982), pp. 175-216; B. Green, *The Soteriology of Leo the Great* (Oxford 2008), pp. 202-247.

⁹¹⁸ On Leo the Great and the *latrocinium* see: S. Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden 2012), pp. 259-283.

⁹¹⁹ The shaky ground on which Nicene orthodoxy stood in the period concerned (i.e. 428-451) is clearly reflected in the intellectual biography and career of another ecclesiastical historian namely Theodoret of Cyrus (ca. 396-466). See: P. B. Clayton, Jr., *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus: Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451)* (Oxford 2007), pp. 135-166 and pp. 215-282. See also: S. Acerbi, *Conflitti politico-ecclesiastici in oriente nella tarda antichità. Il II Concilio di Efeso (449)*, (Madrid 2001), pp. 235-253 and C. Fraisse-Coué, , 'D'Éphèse a Chalcedoine : << la paix trompeuse >> (433-451)', *Histoire du Christianisme* III (1998), pp. 36-65.

⁹²⁰ See: F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire*, pp. 20-25. Sozomen's effort to refute allegations about Constantine's unsatisfactory command of Greek reflects perhaps certain aspects, political as well as intellectual, of the ecclesiastical crisis in the last years of Theodosius II's reign. Millar points out that "...when the Nestorian controversy arose, the Emperor himself engaged in heated verbal exchanges in Greek with the conflicting parties". (*ibid.* p. 24). For Millar's detailed discussion of the long aftermath of the Nestorian controversy, see: *ibid.* pp. 170-191. See also: S. Acerbi, *Conflitti politico-ecclesiastici in oriente nella tarda antichità. Il Concilio di Efeso (449)* (Madrid), pp. 146-148 and pp. 224-235

⁹²¹ A. De Halleux, 'La réception du symbole œcuménique de Nicée a Chalcedoine', *ETH* 61 (1985), pp. 5-47 (= Id., *Patrologie et œcuménisme : Recueil d'études* (Leuven 1990), pp. 25-67). Note also: D.M. Gwynn, 'The Council of Chalcedon and the Definition of Christian Tradition' in: R. Price and M. Whitby (eds.), *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400-700* (Liverpool 2009), pp 7-26.

militant clerical disputants who were putting the Imperial patience to a continuous test (yet another attribute of Moses in the Pentateuch)⁹²²:

*From that point, the debate was directed by the bishops towards the Doctrine in question. The Emperor listened, allowing plenty of time and with great patience, to the points made by each of both parties. He agreed with those who spoke well and dissuaded through gentle discussion each and any of the contention-seekers from continuing the ruckus, according to his grasp of what he heard, for he was quite practiced in the Greek language. Finally all the bishops agreed with one another and decreed that the Son is consubstantial with the Father.*⁹²³

Sozomen does not seem – at first glance - to be offering us new information about an event of crucial importance in the history of the Christian Church such as the Constantinian brokering of an ecumenical doctrinal *consensus* in Nicaea. However, the true significance as well as the lasting political (and indeed theological) leverage of the formulation of the Nicene Creed upon the formation of Catholicism as galvanised orthodoxy is conveyed by Sozomen in the following section which is essentially a dramatic turn from a descriptive narration to a direct statement in the first person, linking the momentous event of the past with the author's present:

*In order that posterity might possess in the future the solid and clear symbol of the faith which proved gratifying at the time, I had deemed necessary for a demonstration of the truth to provide the very relevant document, but having been advised by pious friends, well versed in such matters, that those things had to be said and heard only by the initiated and their initiators, I have followed their counsel - for it is not unlikely that some of the uninitiated might read this book – thus I have concealed those of the secrets about which one needs to keep silence as much as possible, though I have not left the reader altogether ignorant of the opinions held by the synod.*⁹²⁴

There is hardly a reason to doubt the importance which Sozomen attaches here to Constantine's achievement in the Council of Nicaea. Sozomen is recapturing the essence of the Emperor's attainment, while maintaining nonetheless guarded tones. Our church historian avoids any triumphalism and refrains from an interpretation based on Divine causation. Thus, according to Sozomen's account, Constantine neither pressed the bishops to submission, nor were they forcibly made to give way by any direct miraculous providential intervention. Sozomen's Constantine, as patient as Moses in his dealings with the ever-unruly sons of Israel in the desert, helped the divided bishops 'gently' (πράως) i.e. through a patient discussion and negotiation with – allegedly- each and any of his many opinionated interlocutors (ἐκάστω διαλεγόμενος) to work together their way towards a common, unanimously approved, statement of belief. The Emperor's patient efforts to reach a genuine ecumenical concord in the Church proved to be, Sozomen stresses, universally 'gratifying'

⁹²² See e.g. : Ex. 32, 9-14; Num. 12, 3-13; Deuter. , 1, 9-13;

⁹²³ Soz. I, 20,1.

⁹²⁴ Soz. , I, 20, 3 : "Ἰνα δὲ καὶ εἰς τὸν ἐξῆς χρόνον βέβαιον καὶ δῆλον τοῖς ἐσομένοις ὑπάρχει τὸ σύμβολον τῆς τότε συναρεσάσης πίστεως, ἀναγκαῖον ὡήθην εἰς ἀπόδειξιν τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτὴν τὴν περὶ τούτων γραφὴν παραθέσθαι· εὐσεβῶν δὲ φίλων καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐπιστημόνων οἷα δὴ μύσταις καὶ μυσταγωγοῖς μόνοις δέον τὰδε λέγειν καὶ ἀκούειν ὑψηγομένων ἐπῆνεσα τὴν βουλήν (οὐ γὰρ ἀπεικὸς καὶ τῶν ἀμυήτων τινὰς τῇδε τῇ βίβλῳ ἐντυχεῖν), ὥς ἔνι δὴ τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἃ χρὴ σιωπᾶν ἀποκρυψάμενος· ὥσπερ δὲ μὴ πάμπαν ἀγνοεῖν τὰ δόξαντα τῇ συνόδῳ

(τῆς τότε συναρρησάσης πίστεως).⁹²⁵ If this was the case then the attentive reader would probably be wondering whether this gathering was highlighted by Sozomen in order to suggest that it was a benchmark in the history of the Christian Church leaving it to the reader to infer that other Ecumenical Councils that were convoked later (Sozomen reports in the surviving portion of his *HE* at least, only about the Council of Constantinople in 381⁹²⁶) were actually links in a chain of failures, for they were all stamped with conflict and discord and Constantine's achievement was never repeated subsequently despite their ecumenicity. What follows adds more grounds to this initial impression. Sozomen abandons abruptly the measured *modus narrandi* hitherto employed.

The concluding passage is more of an interjection, addressing the reader with a rhetorical premeditated 'spontaneity' as if penned in passing in the first person, just as Sozomen did in his *proemium*.⁹²⁷ The reader is invited with unexpected directness to share with the church historian a secret, but the sudden directness proves to be ostensible as Sozomen chooses eventually not to give away the 'secrets about which one needs to keep silence'. Yet, the most intriguing part is the advice given to Sozomen by his 'pious friends' (εὐσεβῶν δὲ φίλων) whereby he should refrain from his initial intention to produce the original document in which the decrees of the Council of Nicaea were recorded as a demonstration of the truth (εἰς ἀποδείξιν τῆς ἀληθείας).⁹²⁸ Even before we consider this advice, the question why Sozomen was so keen to produce the document concerned is begging to be asked. Was there any question about the authenticity of the accepted text of the *Symbolum* of Nicaea? We know that Nicaea had been gaining its authoritative status in the Christian tradition since the 350's and not the least thanks to Athanasius's vigorous anti-Arian polemical output which drew heavily on Nicaea and its *Acta*.⁹²⁹ Was Sozomen's initial intention a reaction to a renewed campaign against the authority of Nicaea? Even if we consider Sozomen's unexpected frankness as no more than a rhetorical nod to his readers, it cannot be denied that Sozomen was showing here awareness of certain expectations on the part of his potential readership in this respect. Such a connection does not seem to be out of order and thus might as well be indicative of our historian's response to Ephesus II or perhaps even to Chalcedon. It is also not unlikely that Sozomen was expressing in such an oblique yet audacious way his displeasure and fears as a devout Catholic facing the perceived threat from of the miaphysites, a process which was accompanied by accusations of forgery from all parties concerned, although these were by no means precedents.⁹³⁰ If we look at the advice given, it quite simply reminds Sozomen that

⁹²⁵ The verb συναρέσκω bears also the meaning of 'to please together' (see: *LSJ* 1698 s.v.). Thus, it would appear that 'gratifying' - whereby the mutual pleasure or satisfaction (pretty much as the connection between 'agree' and 'agreeable') can be understood as an act of grace (and indeed - of Grace)-might offer us the correct nuance that corresponds best with Sozomen's interpretation of the doctrinal concord which came into fruition under Constantine's leadership in Nicaea.

⁹²⁶ Soz., VII, 7-9. It ought to be borne in mind that, according to Sozomen's original plan (*Dedicatio*, 19), the Council of Ephesus should have been covered in book IX. It is quite likely that Sozomen had died before the completion of his work or perhaps had never completed it.

⁹²⁷ Soz., I, 1.

⁹²⁸ Soz. I, 20, 3.

⁹²⁹ For a survey of Athanasius's polemical works, see: D.M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the 'Arian Controversy'* (Oxford 2007), pp. 13-48. For the centrality of Nicaea in Athanasius's later anti-Arian polemic, see: *ibid.* pp. 171-177.

⁹³⁰ For the full text of the Nicene Symbol see: Athanasius, *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi*, 33 cf. Soc. *HE*, I, 8, Theodoret, *HE*, I, 8; Gelasius of Cyzicus, *HE*, II, 25. Allegations and issues concerning authenticity, misinterpretation and falsification were endemic to all Ecumenical Councils and their subsequent process of 'reception' from Nicaea to Chalcedon. See: D. M. Gwynn, 'The Council of Chalcedon and the Definition of

those matters should be kept restricted solely to the company of ‘the initiated and the initiators’ (μυσταὶς καὶ μυσταγωγοῖς). If the proposed context is to be endorsed, then the identification of these simply as baptised Christians will not redeem this remark from its obfuscation. Pagans could probably read (if they were so inclined) works written by Christian authors and so could the κατεχόμενοι who were preparing themselves for baptism. In fact, it is hard to find in the Nicene *Symbolum* - regardless of the version which Sozomen sought to produce here (if any) - anything mysterious which had to be hidden from the unbaptised. It would thus appear more likely that by ‘uninitiated’ Sozomen was referring to the rising miaphysite opposition whose doctrinal views would render itself heretic in the eyes of a committed Nicene Orthodox like Sozomen. His caution offers further support to our suggestion that Sozomen’s ecclesiastical history appears to have been composed between Ephesus II in 449 and Pulcheria’s death in 453 and, to judge by Sozomen’s underlined caution, it is not unlikely that Sozomen could have been still working on his *HE* after the Council of Chalcedon was adjourned. Even the official reaffirmation of the Nicene Creed in Chalcedon does not seem to have been a sufficient reassurance for an observer like Sozomen who had experienced the fickleness of emperors and bishops alike in a series of traumatizing clashes since the deposition of John Chrysostom, in a period of time that had stretched over approximately half a century. Since the disheartened (yet thoroughly loyal) Catholic historian was still so concerned about the future of the Nicene faith, a detailed discussion which included an attempt to authenticate relevant documents deemed original, could only be offered to a sympathetic reader by an author like Sozomen as a *desideratum*. Thus, this kind of study had to await better times which from Sozomen’s point of view could only mean a restoration of a firm and stable Orthodox Nicene supremacy. Only such an environment could possibly guarantee that whenever and wherever the authenticity and the accuracy of documents pertaining to the foundations of the Christian Doctrine were to be studied, this would no longer happen in the threatening shadow of the ‘uninitiated’, i.e. the heterodox opposition of the Catholic Truth.⁹³¹ Although Constantine’s patience was allegedly endless⁹³², he could show his indignation according to our church historian, in a manner not lacking in venomous wit and Sozomen seems to be particularly keen to re-tell a story which illustrates this well:

Christian Tradition’ in R. Price and M. Whiteby (ed.), *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400-700* (Liverpool 2009), pp. 7-26 and R. Price, ‘Truth, Omission and Fiction in the Acts of Chalcedon’, in R. Price and M. Whiteby *op. cit.* pp. 92-106. Those problems persisted also after Chalcedon See: S. Wessel, ‘Literary Forgery and the Monothelite Controversy: Some Scrupulous Uses of Deception’, *GRBS* 42 (2001), pp. 201-220.

⁹³¹ Scholars who have commented on this passage tended to take it as referring to the baptised as opposed to the unbaptised. Thus, G.-Ch. Hansen (2004), vol. I, p. 182 who believes that Sozomen’s advisor had maintained strongly the “*Arkandisziplin*” which used to be a distinctive boundary of belonging, between baptised Christians and the non-baptised. Although paganism was by no means extinct in the fifth century, it is reasonable to assume that with the substantially-growing number of baptisms in the eastern Roman empire – the secretive character of the ‘Mysteries’ i.e. the Christian rite of initiation (which apparently had served practical purposes of survival in the hostile environment in the pre-Constantinian Empire) – was bound to be no longer shrouded in mystery by the time Sozomen was writing. Likewise, Peter van Nuffelen’s reading of μυσταὶς καὶ μυσταγωγοῖς yields the same black and white picture: “La piété de Sozomène frôle la bigoterie.” See: P. van Nuffelen (2004), p. 65.

⁹³² For some considerations of the role of imperial power *vis-a-vis* the so-called ‘democratic element’ at the first Ecumenical councils and in Nicaea in particular, see: R. MacMullen, *Voting about God in the Early Church Councils* (New Haven, CT 2006), pp. 20-23 and pp.27-28.

It is related that the Emperor was so much inclined towards concord amongst all Christians, that he invited to the council also Acesius, bishop of the church of the Novatians, presented to him the definition of the faith and of the feast⁹³³ which had already been confirmed by the signatures of the bishops, and asked whether he too would agree to those ones. Acesius answered that their exposition defined no new doctrine, and that he approved of the opinion of the Council and that this was the way in which he was instructed to believe and to celebrate the feast from the beginning. "Why then", said the Emperor, "being of the same opinion, do you set yourself apart from Communion?" After bringing up the first outbreak of the controversy between Novatianus and Cornelius⁹³⁴ under Decius and proclaiming as unworthy of Communion those who were guilty of a sin which according to the Holy Scriptures was a mortal one⁹³⁵ (for on God's power solely – not on the priests' – depended the remission of sins) – the Emperor replied by saying: "O Acesius, set up a ladder and ascend alone to heaven." I think the emperor said those things not in praise but because the Novatians, although human, regard themselves as sinless."

This encounter between Constantine and the bishop of the Novatians, apparently copied directly from Socrates who, unlike Sozomen (and unlike himself elsewhere throughout his own *HE*), divulges information about his source more generously. However, each of the ecclesiastical historians has different agendas and different purposes: while Socrates is trying to use this anecdotal story to expose the bias of his predecessor Eusebius and unnamed 'others' (presumably Rufinus of Aquileia and possibly Sabinus of Heraclea and Gelasius of Caesarea)⁹³⁶, using the Novatians as a test case probably without being a Novatian himself⁹³⁷, Sozomen does not seem to be keen on reiterating the story simply because it revolves around an heretical bishop who was disgraced by the Imperial court.⁹³⁸ Although it is permissible to assume that Sozomen was happy to ridicule a heretic he also seems to have seized yet another opportunity to highlight Constantine's generosity, patience and indeed, the emperor's passion for unity in the Church. The dissenting bishop is portrayed by Sozomen not only as a pedestrian who is unable to rise to the occasion and accept Constantine's magnanimous proposal to return to communion with the Orthodox Church, particularly when this proposal is based on Constantine's logical assertion that the differences between the Novatians and the Catholics were minute and therefore – given the solemnity of the event – could and should be regarded as negligible. The insistence of Acesius on embarking upon a vindictive historical lecture instead of lending a more sensitive ear to the emperor's attempts to reason with him,

⁹³³ i. e. Easter. See: W. Stevenson, 'Sozomen on Victor and the Easter Controversy' in: P. Grech e.a. (eds), *Pietro e Paolo : il loro rapporto con Roma nelle testimonianze antiche* (= *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 74) (Rome 2001), pp. 567-575.

⁹³⁴ The reigning Pope (d. 253). See: Eus. *HE*, VI, 43, 3-22.

⁹³⁵ Cf. 1 John, 5, 16.

⁹³⁶ Soc. I, 10, 5: Τούτων οὔτε ὁ Παμφίλου Εὐσέβιος οὔτε ἄλλος τις ἐμνημόνευσεν πώποτε ('Neither Eusebius Pamphili nor any other has ever mentioned these things'). On Socrates's sources see: P. Maraval, 'Introduction' in *SC* 477 (Paris 2004), pp. 23-32.

⁹³⁷ For a *caveat* against an identification of Socrates as a Novatian sympathizer see: J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, 'Ecclesiastical Historians on Their Own Times', *SP* 24 (1993), p. 159 (=Id., *Decline and Change in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot 2006), II).

⁹³⁸ Cf. Soc. I, 10, 5 who stresses that neither Eusebius nor anyone else ever made a mention of this story. Socrates goes on to say that his informant was 'a very old man in all respects trustworthy' (ἐγὼ δὲ παρὰ ἀνδρὸς ἡκουσα οὐδαμῶς ψευδομένου, ὃς παλαιός τε ἦν σφόδρα), who was present in Nicaea. Socrates gives away the old man's identity in Soc. I, 13, 2: Auxanon, a Novatian priest who reportedly as a boy accompanied senior clergy of his church to the Council of Nicaea.

is a matching background decoration to a depiction of Constantine at a moment of ominous disappointment.

Constantine's scorn of Acesius is condescending and rueful at the same time. His dismissive yet humorous tone betrays nonetheless a sense of achievement: Acesius's stubbornness is not only a matter of a challenged or otherwise unrefined personal character. It is also the inevitable outcome of heretical thought, which is no more than arrogant and blasphemous cogitation, for only the arrogant and the blasphemous can possibly believe that a member of the human race can be free of sin and thus Acesius is doomed to isolation and seclusion as a result of damaging heresy. He and his followers missed an opportunity to re-join the majority of Christendom and thus they will not only 'set up a ladder' but also ascend it entirely on their own. It is not impossible to hear alongside the disdain also a hidden threat. The emperor was indeed patient - but even his endless patience could run out and those who exhaust it are doing so at their peril.⁹³⁹

And run out it apparently did. The very last years of the reign of Constantine saw an intensified religious legislation, which was intended to reaffirm and possibly extend the grounds covered by the codification of laws *De Hereticis*.⁹⁴⁰ Constantine, at this particular point⁹⁴¹ determined to uproot at least certain kinds of heresy from his realm⁹⁴², applied substantial pressure on the Montanists (to whom Sozomen refers here as the 'Phrygians'⁹⁴³,

⁹³⁹ Soz. I, 22, 2-3.

⁹⁴⁰ See: *Cod. Theod.* XVI, 5, 1 and 2 (1st and 25th Sep 326). Constantine's laws seem to have been regarded as a significant yet problematic legacy more than thirty years later. See: Eutropius, *Breviarium* IX, 8. Writing under the Arian emperor Valens, the breviarist refers to most of Constantine's laws as 'superfluous', reflecting quite likely the imperial court's particular displeasure in this respect. The belated codification seems to have followed the synod of Tyre and Jerusalem (334-335: first convoked at Caesarea in Palestine, but following Athanasius's refusal to attend was eventually moved to Tyre and later transferred to Jerusalem). Sozomen's report is uniquely detailed (cf. Soc. I, 33-35 and Eus. *VC* IV, 43-47;) It relies, obliquely though, on the *Acta* of that synod (cf. *CSEL* 65.53/4). See also: T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (1993), pp. 22-33. Note also: H.A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops* (Baltimore 2000), pp. 309-310.

⁹⁴¹ The Chronology of the outbreak of the so-called 'early Arian controversy' in the last years of Constantine's reign is still debatable. For a discussion of the main issues arising from this question see: D. M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians* (Oxford 2007), pp. 69-87.

⁹⁴² Sozomen, grappling apparently with the task of addressing the issue of Constantine's last years' approach towards 'Arianism', writing in an unstable doctrinal environment such as Constantinople was in the late 440's comments (Soz. II, 32, 1): *Even if the doctrine of Arius had been espoused by many people in disputations, it had not been as yet separated into a distinct lot bearing its founder's name* (οὐπω εἰς ἴδιον διεκέκριτο λαὸν ἢ ὄνομα τοῦ εὐρόντος). On the role of polemical 'construction' of a 'heresy' as a token of formation and affirmation of Christian 'orthodoxy' in late antiquity, see now: Av. Cameron, 'The Violence of Orthodoxy' in E. Iricinschi and H.M. Zellentin (eds.), *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity* (Tübingen 2008), p.105 ff. The time-reference 'as yet' can hardly be understood as other than a retrospective attempt to create a rather artificial distinction between the last years of Constantine's reign and the rise to prominence in the imperial court of individuals who were strong supporters of Arius notably Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, the prelate who eventually baptised Constantine on his deathbed, and whose influential position was still going strong under Constantine's successors until his death in 342. See: R. Williams, *Arius* (2nd edition; London 2002) pp. 236-242. Sozomen, writing from a Nicene orthodox point of view, was trying thus to salvage the Constantinian myth which paradoxically was vital for the vindication of the Nicene doctrine after the accession of Theodosius I in 379 and the 'restoration' of the Nicene Dogma to its alleged previous status as an Imperial doctrinal orthodoxy in the Council of Constantinople (381), a restoration that appeared to be in a precarious state after the *latrocinium* of 449.

⁹⁴³ Cf. Soz. II, 18, 3. See: Grillet-Sabbah (1983), p. 304, n. 1. Sozomen remarks however that although the 'Phrygians suffered the same treatment as the other heretics' - they still flourished in their region

on the Valentinians, the Marcionites, the Paulinians and other heresies. Yet, despite Constantine's patent intolerance towards heresies at this point⁹⁴⁴, Sozomen, almost in passing, by singling out the case of the Novatians and Constantine's specific policy towards them - highlights the emperor's essential lack of fanaticism even at this belated attempt at a heavy-handed *gleichschaltung* and his ability not to be vindictive even towards those who opposed him in the past, like the very same obstinate Novatian bishop Acesius who previously failed to accept the imperial invitation during their encounter at the Council of Nicea to lead his church back into communion with the Catholics:

*The Novatians alone, because they chanced to have good leaders, and due to the fact that they entertained the same opinions respecting the Divinity as the Catholic Church, were numerous from the beginning and remained so not being much injured by the law. The Emperor, I think, desisted on purpose, for he only wished to intimidate his subjects, not to destroy them. Acesius who was then the bishop of their heresy in Constantinople had found favor in the eyes of the emperor due to his exemplary way of life thus on his account, obviously, his church was spared.*⁹⁴⁵

of origin 'and the neighboring regions, for here they had, since the time of Montanus, existed in great numbers and do so to the present day' cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, Sect. IV, 1, 1-15,8.

⁹⁴⁴ Sozomen, just as his main source Socrates before him, is silent on Constantine's campaign against the Donatists in North Africa. Although Sozomen's dependence on Socrates may provide an explanation, this still remains somewhat intriguing given Sozomen's knowledge of western affairs as manifested in his Book IX. It is likely that the Donatists' reputation for rigour albeit to excess from an orthodox point of view, was still a sensitive issue (Socrates alleged positive view of the Novationists whose actions – unlike the Donatists - did not end in bloodshed - may reflect this). Sozomen, a strong Catholic, seems to have chosen to circumvent the Donatist schism not only because Socrates did so. See: S. Bralewski, 'Did the bishops ordered by Emperor Constantine the Great to gather at Nicaea, discuss the Donatist Schism?' in: D. Bojović (ed.), *Saint Emperor Constantine and Christianity vol. 1* (Niš 2013) pp. 203-215 (esp. p. 210 ff.). See also: H. Kraft, *Kaiser Konstantins Religiöse Entwicklung* (Tübingen 1955), p. 28 ff. W.H.C. Frend, 'Donatus paene totam Africam decepit. How?' *JEH* 48(1997), pp. 611-627. Note also: G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom and Orthodoxy* (Oxford 2006), pp. 206-219 and A. Dearn, 'Persecution and Donatist Identity in the *Liber Genealogus*' in: H. Amirav and B. ter Haar Romeny (eds), *From Rome to Constantinople*: (Leuven 2007) pp. 127-136. Although the risks which a *testimonium e silentio* entails must always to be reckoned with, and despite the fact that the beginnings of the conflict preceded the starting-point about a decade or so, the absence of a theme of such significance from Sozomen's narrative appears to be nonetheless very telling, especially if one notes that Sozomen, unlike Socrates (who, as was indicated *supra* also says nothing about the Donatists), exhibits in book IX of his *HE* more than a sound knowledge of Western Roman ecclesiastical and secular political affairs. It seems thus that this void in Sozomen's *HE* served possibly the afore-mentioned essential retention of the Constantinian myth. Sozomen's good-tempered Emperor who listened patiently to opinionated bishops and stiff-necked heretics in Nicaea with an immense sense of respect for the Church, appeared to our ecclesiastical historian (and perhaps to Socrates as well) as being exceedingly at odds with the use of coercion against other Christians, regardless of their heterodoxy. Even Constantine's eventual shrewd abandonment of the persecution (see: Optatus Milevitanus, *App.* IX, 10) was not good enough to help this incident to find its way into neither of the ecclesiastical historians' narratives. It is very tempting to imagine a potential influence albeit oblique, of an older contemporary, Augustine of Hippo, whose sharp attacks on the Donatist church (see e.g.: Aug. *Enarr. ii in Ps.* 101, 6; *Enarr. in Ps.* 95, 11) together with his advocacy of (moderate) state coercion against Christian sectarianism could have reached Sozomen by the time the latter was working on his *HE*. Sozomen must have also been aware of the anti-Catholic terror spread in Numidia by Donatist militants, namely, the *circumcelliones*. Yet, although not entirely impossible (and Sozomen keen interest in western affairs together with his good command of Latin make this a reasonable likelihood) this would still appear highly speculative. See however: J. Roldanus, *The Church in the Age of Constantine: The Theological Challenges* (Abingdon 2006), pp. 36-40.

⁹⁴⁵ Soz. II, 32, 5

To Sozomen, a trained jurist, the changes in Constantine's policy towards the heterodox are manifested chiefly against the backdrop of the emperor's own legislation. Constantine was willing to compromise (καθυφίει) and turn a blind eye towards the Novatians and their church contrary to his own laws. Sozomen's interpretation of this deviation from imperial previous staunch support of Nicene orthodoxy exhibits more of our church historian's command of ambiguity. On the one hand, Sozomen argues that there had been a philosophy behind Constantine's behaviour; that of the Roman

Clementia Caesaris:⁹⁴⁶ φοβῆσαι μόνον, οὐ λυμῆνασθαι τοὺς ὑπηκόους προθέμενος. Even when the emperor was exercising his authority, he was seeking to avoid staining his reign with his subjects' blood.⁹⁴⁷ On the other hand Sozomen could have relied on existing common knowledge of Constantine's other, non-mythical *persona* i.e. that of the self-appointed supreme governor of the Church who did not refrain when he so pleased from writing to Celsus, his *vicarius* in Africa, with regard to the unruly Donatists:

I will show those people which and what kind of worship should be offered to the Godhead. ⁹⁴⁸

It is not unlikely that Constantine's handling of the Donatists' obstinacy was not forgotten, especially in the atmosphere which dominated Constantinople and indeed, its imperial court, during the late 440's. This was not unlikely particularly after Ephesus II but the first signs of unrest and disquietude were becoming noticeable probably after the downfall of Nestorius in Ephesus I, a period of approximately two decades duly dubbed *la paix trompeuse*.⁹⁴⁹

Sozomen's Constantine, devout and committed to the Christian cause and the dissemination of Christianity as he may have been believed to be, could also be presented as somewhat fickle. Sozomen does not shy away from a juxtaposition of the Emperor who poked fun at the Novatian bishop Acesius during the Council of Nicaea – with the later Constantine who bends his own rules unabashedly and befriends heretics, among them the aforementioned bishop. Even at this stage Sozomen is reluctant to present these changes simply as whims of a corrupt tyrant which from his orthodox point of view could have been depicted in a more 'revisionist' fashion. Sozomen was not aiming at an iconoclastic historiography and his criticism was always shrouded in what seems at first glance as a fairly moderate and 'constructive' narrative. Yet quite often the 'hermeneutic' passages, i.e. the portion of the text in which our church historian offers a commentary or an analysis of the personality or the phenomenon under discussion reveals that Sozomen is never straightforward and that what appears to be a plain presentation betrays, after some careful examination, its twists and slants. In this case, the explanation is offered in passing by telling us that the Novatianists' survival was possible "because they chanced to have good leaders" (ὥς ἀγαθῶν ἡγημόνων ἐπιτυχόντες).⁹⁵⁰ In other words, Constantine could set aside his former commitment to Nicene orthodoxy, having been

⁹⁴⁶ On *Clementia Caesaris* as a Roman political tradition see: R. A. Bauman, *Human Rights in Ancient Rome* (London 1999), pp. 67-86.

⁹⁴⁷ The image of the pious emperor who – like the church itself – is abhorred by blood, was pressed home by the well-oiled propaganda machine of Theodosius II's court. See: P. van Nuffelen, 'The Unstained Rule of Theodosius II: A Late Antique Panegyric Topic and Moral Concern', in T. van Houdt *e.a.* (eds.), *Imago virtutis* (Louvain 2005), pp. 229-256.

⁹⁴⁸ See: Roldanus (2006), p. 40.

⁹⁴⁹ See: Ch. Fraisse-Coué, 'D'Éphèse à Chalcédoine: <<la paix trompeuse>> (433-451)', *Histoire du Christianisme* III (Paris 1998), pp. 9-77.

⁹⁵⁰ Soz. II, 32, 5.

mellowed somehow by the steadfastness and perseverance of other Christian denominations. The implicit suggestion is that the leaders of a heterodox church such as the Novatianist were aware of his character and knew how to approach him and overcome potential objections to a dialogue with them. Thus, since Constantine respected the strength and fearlessness of the Novatianist leadership, he could get himself to treat their bishop Acesius respectfully, the latter being the very same recalcitrant Novatian bishop whose religious idealism and lack of political adroitness seem to have eventually exasperated the patient emperor a decade earlier in Nicaea. It is worth noting, however, that, as we have already seen, Sozomen's Constantine is expressing his frustration by inviting the obstinate Novatianist bishop to climb up a ladder to heaven. Constantine's tongue-in-cheek remark suggests that had the emperor's sense of humour been more limited, the Novatianist bishop would have become a martyr of his own church. Yet, thanks to his courage and exemplary principled life-style he lived to gain Constantine's appreciation despite the doctrinal dispute. Consequently, he became the guardian angel of his own church. This story seems to reflect one of Sozomen's own ideals: personal virtues such as bravery (Ἀνδρεία) and righteousness (Δικαιοσύνη) are superior to mere dogmatism and thus, being God's gift, can surmount doctrinal differences which not uncommonly are turned into a tool at the hands of cynics and opportunist seekers of self-advancement. If duly appreciated, they can lead to peace and unity in the Church.⁹⁵¹

It therefore seems not unlikely that Sozomen, despite his manifest respect for the Constantinian myth, was able to remain uncontrolled and unconditioned by it as he was able to highlight aspects of Constantine's personality which are not necessarily compatible with the myth concerned. Here again Sozomen's ambivalence is at work. He does not seem to be any longer restricted by the constraints of the Eusebian model and is showing instead an inclination towards a return to the conventions of Classical Greek historiography as laid down by Herodotus and Thucydides. By this we may see in him a link in the chain that connected late antiquity with what has been defined as 'Byzantine historicism' which held the reign of Constantine as a lost Golden Age.⁹⁵² By doing so, Sozomen seems to have liberated Constantine from the confinement of Eusebius's *De vita Constantini* in order to bring his figure back into a more historical context. If this line of thought is to be accepted, it becomes permissible to adduce that Sozomen saw in the 'historical' Constantine an admirer of strength of character, patience, endurance, independence and personal commitment to attain and maintain them.⁹⁵³ Constantine respected the Catholic Church for embodying these ideals and likewise admired the Novatianists for the same reasons now that they had become a beleaguered religion just as the Catholics (and indeed all Christians irrespective of their denomination) used to be before 312.⁹⁵⁴ However, Sozomen's praise for the good leadership of the Novatianist Church, may not be simply the result of Sozomen's manifest reliance on Socrates. It suggests implicitly that the Catholic Church was lagging behind. Sozomen, true to his method goes on to highlight his displeasure at his own church by heaping more praise on the heretics taking here apparently a calculated risk. The relatively small differences between the Novatianists and the Catholics allowed Sozomen to brush aside the doctrinal differences

⁹⁵¹ On Sozomen's conception of virtues, see: S. Bralewski, 'The Catalogue of Virtues in the Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen of Bethelia', *Vox Patrum* 84 (2022), pp. 51-50.

⁹⁵² On Byzantine historicism see: A. Kaldellis, 'Historicism in Byzantine Thought and Literature', *DOP* 61 (2007), pp. 1-24.

⁹⁵³ See: H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Großen zu Theodosius II: Das christliche Kaisertum bei den Kirchenhistorikern Socrates, Sozomenus und Theodoret* (Göttingen 1996), pp. 58-59.

⁹⁵⁴ Soz. II, 32, 3

and extract yet more praise for Constantine in the name of virtues which would have most certainly received the seal of approval from any pagan rhetorician and moralist and indeed, notable pagan historians.

H. Sozomen's Account of Arians and Arianism

Sozomen does not seem to show any hesitation to evaluate the role of the so-called 'Arians' as a historical phenomenon which must not be belittled. Sozomen's remarks to this effect appear to be at odds with modern scholarly tendency to wrap up with the general-purpose packaging of 'rhetoric' the presence of those supporters in ecclesiastical politics and indeed in more secular politics, during the better part of the fourth century. Whether they did match the elusive definition of a church 'party' or were 'just' a multitude of kindred spirits (they were soon to demonstrate an endemic propensity to split into factions, each of which was ready to claim orthodoxy for itself and appoint a hierarchy of its own)⁹⁵⁵ – Sozomen seems to be dealing with Arianism as an influential and far reaching movement which had situated itself in its heyday almost ubiquitously in key positions in the Roman empire beginning at the very top namely, the imperial court. Thus, Sozomen would have refused to regard this 'pressure group' (to whom he refers- just as Athanasius of Alexandria and Socrates of Constantinople before him- as 'Eusebians' *tout court*) simply as a figment of Athanasius's manipulative imagination. Yet, it should be borne in mind that Sozomen's ambivalence and otherwise nuanced outlook could contain a two-fold phenomenon such as Arianism. This term appears to refer to the faction led by a notable bishop such as Eusebius of Nicomedia and indeed the diverse range of churches and congregations who sympathised with the opposition to the Nicene doctrine.⁹⁵⁶ Having quite likely witnessed the troublesome presence of the Arian Goths in Constantinople and at any rate, as book VIII demonstrates, having heard stories about their struggles with his much-admired John Chrysostom, Sozomen may have had a very good reason to believe that Athanasius's account of the nature of the Arian presence in the Roman Near East was reliable. This ties in very well with the two authors' staunch Nicene Catholicism.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁵ For an 'evolutionary' account which highlights well the dynamics of the so-called 'Arian Controversy' see: L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford 2004), pp. 105-186. See also: D.H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of Arian Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford 1995), pp. 12-22.

⁹⁵⁶ For the doctrinal aspects, see: M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome 1975; Repr. 2010), pp. 43-76.

⁹⁵⁷ For an assessment of Athanasius's role in the so-called "construction of the Arian controversy" see: D. M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians* (Oxford 2007), pp. 89-100. Gwynn who strongly advocates Athanasius's invention of an imagined "Arian party" as an abstract rhetorical concept or - in Gwynn's own words, 'a polemical party construct', remarks right at the beginning of his discussion that "there is little indication that the polemic of Athanasius had any immediate effect upon eastern opinion in these years." Gwynn goes on to say that "for both Julius and the western bishops at Sardica the defence of Athanasius's innocence became inseparable from the condemnation of a 'Eusebian party' set apart from the main body of the Eastern Church." Gwynn is actually showing that the evidence leaves certain room for doubt as to whether the historical context that he himself reconstructs here does not corroborate actually the opposite of his theory i.e. the existence of a rapidly-growing pro-Arian presence in the East, well before the death of bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia in 342. For the main caveats concerning the perception of 'Arianism' as a rigorous 'doctrine' and an ecclesiastical 'party' see: R. D. Williams, 'Review of R.P.C. Hanson's *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*', *SJTh* 45 (1992), pp. 101-111; L. Ayers (2004), pp. 2-3

The Arians' initial presence in the East appears to have been a network of personal contacts which was on the one hand strong enough to render Athanasius at this stage (he had lived in exile in Italy since 339) powerless out of his Alexandrian depth – and on the other – was connected sufficiently and efficiently enough to bring together those whose collective name has gone down to history as οἱ περὶ τὸν Νικομηδέα Εὐσέβιον (thus Socrates, I, 38, 10 cf. Soz. II, 32, 7 who opts a more archaic style: οἱ ἀμφὶ τὸν Εὐσέβιον τὸν Νικομηδείας ἐπίσκοπον). It would be of course problematic to squeeze the dissemination of Arianism in the late 330's into the strait-jacket of modern definitions such as 'party'. Suffice it to bear in mind that regardless of how the supporters of Arius were 'organised' at the time– if at all– they were deemed in Rome a threat to such an extent that Pope Julius I chose to team up with the exiled bishop of Alexandria, deliberately (and quite extraordinarily, given the traditional animosity between Eastern and Western hierarchies), supporting him against the East, trying perhaps to instigate eastern prelates against the emergence of a powerful pro-Arian marriage between crown and altar in the Eastern part of the empire. Athanasius and the Pope had realised that they needed to address a reality whereby a range of doctrinal interpretations inspired by Arius and his basic notion of the Superiority of the Godhead (apparently without a 'systematic' approach- let alone- literature, and with no organisational mechanisms in place– as yet) was already spreading under the auspices of a sympathetic imperial court and more importantly, at the same time it was the potential to spread faster further afield. In other words, Athanasius was using the terminology of an 'Arian party' assuming that his foes in the east had already good prospects to become a powerful organisation that will lead the churches or, if not stopped, perhaps even replace them. By using a strategy akin to Jan Assman's 'politicisation through polarisation'⁹⁵⁸ i.e. by relating to a budding politico-ecclesiastical coalition as if it were a *fait accompli* of an 'ecclesiastical party', he was still trying to remain on top of his game. This he hoped to achieve by deterring potential recruits from joining the associates of Eusebius of Nicomedia (and later of Constantinople) through claiming for himself and his allies an authority based on a representation of an allegedly wide-spread and therefore, 'authentic' Church, presented as *maior et sanior pars*. Athanasius claimed for the Nicene following a majority not only by the number of followers (which could always be contested due to manipulation, threats or sheer violence) but first and foremost, by relying on the seniority and indeed, the (as he understood it) superior quality of mind of those who – like himself – rejected Arius and most importantly remained loyal to Nicaea and its solid doctrines, as opposed to the volatile and inconsistent mind of the pro-Arians who kept changing their theology.⁹⁵⁹

If this interpretation can be accepted, one could conclude that if there was any rhetorical invention in Athanasius's claim, it was *pace* David Gwynn, not so much the rhetorical fabrication of an 'Arian party' (i.e. an alliance within the eastern hierarchy which may have still been in a fairly embryonic state), but rather the invention of a Catholic 'moral majority'

and 3-14 and J. Behr, *The Nicene Faith: The Formation of Christian Theology*, Vol. II, Part 1 (Crestwood, NY 2004), pp. 21-36. Note also: D. M. Gwynn (2007), pp. 248-249 whereby the author himself is candidly showing sound awareness of the limits of his own theory concerning the concept of Arianism as a polemical 'party construction'.

⁹⁵⁸ See: J. Assmann, *Herrschaft und Heil: Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa* (Frankfurt/Main 2002), pp. 104-108.

⁹⁵⁹ See: Athanasius, *On the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* 22, 3-5 (=M. Geerard (ed.), *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* 4, § 8556). See also: T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (1993), pp. 56-62.

rhetoric⁹⁶⁰ (Sozomen, in II, 32, 4 apparently reflects a trajectory of a distinctive Athanasian rhetoric by claiming that each heresy, right from its conception, consisted of “a small number of fanatics” - ολίγους τοὺς ζηλώσαντας ἔσξον). From this notion of a ‘moral majority’ had evolved a peculiar “discourse of orthodoxy” which relied *primarily* on the authority a human gathering, namely the Council of Nicaea, whereby Arius and his opinions were unequivocally condemned, while pro-Arian bishops and future leaders of the Arian movement such as Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea (alongside Eusebius of Caesarea) – were brought back to the fold (cf. Philost. I, 9). Sozomen, an avid admirer of Athanasius is highlighting throughout his narrative the lack of a substantial Arian ‘doctrine’ *per se* and by downplaying the theological differences between the Arians and the Catholics – as he does in II, 32, 1 (stressing mainly self-advancement and zealousness as the main characteristics of the pro-Arian camp) – Sozomen is actually attributing the main role in the inception and promotion of ‘Arianism’ – to personal interests and ambitions rather than to truthful devotion and convictions based on learning or Divine inspiration. For Sozomen who was as has been argued in chapter 2 of the present thesis, a keen admirer of John Chrysostom, who may have been relying on information gathered from his contacts amongst the supporters of the bishop turned martyr⁹⁶¹ about the troubles which those who were still known as ‘Arians’ (not the least due to their Gothic origins⁹⁶²) had caused in Constantinople in the years that saw the demise of Eutropius and Gainas i.e. 399-400.⁹⁶³ Arians and Arianism were thus at this stage far from being perceived just as the fruit of rhetorical astuteness. In the eyes of the generation that had known Athanasius and his campaigns, the ‘Arians’ were still associated with the shadows of a turbulent yet heroic past.

For the Catholic veterans of the persecutions under the Emperor Valens (364-378), this was the pro-Nicene loyalists’ finest hour, living precariously yet enduringly under heretical supremacy, actively resisting whenever possible and suffering martyrdom willingly when defeated.⁹⁶⁴ Sozomen’s generation had witnessed another type of orthodox martyrdom, that

⁹⁶⁰ The term ‘moral majority’ is borrowed from the American conservative political action organisation (in reality an Evangelical Christian organisation but officially a non-religious organisation open to all conservatives, claiming also Roman Catholic and Jewish membership). On the rhetoric of the ‘Moral Majority’ and the milieu from which it originated see: D. Snowball, *Continuity and Change in the Rhetoric of the Moral Majority* (New York 1991), pp. 31-90. For Athanasius’s anti-Arian rhetoric see also: D.M. Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father* (Oxford 2012), pp. 76-85; K. Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of his thought* (London 1998), pp. 85-96.

⁹⁶¹ A good example for this can be found in Soz. VIII, 17-28 whereby a funerary speech, the *epitaphios* by Pseudo-Martyrius is frequently used. See: P. van Nuffelen, *Un héritage* (2004), pp. 441-443. Although van Nuffelen acknowledges Sozomen’s close contacts with the Johannites – he finds himself in the dark when he attempts to explain this particular familiarity (ibid. p. 76: *La raison pour laquelle il avait cherché le contact avec le johannite reste obscure*). It seems perhaps less obscure if we bear in mind that Sozomen may have been an eye witness to Chrysostom’s banishment.

⁹⁶² See: N. McLynn, ‘Little Wolf in the Big City’: Ulfila and his interpreters’, in: J Drinkwater and B. Salway (eds.), *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected* (London 2007), pp. 125-135 (esp. pp. 131-133). Note also K. Schäferdiek, ‘Die Anfänge des Christentums bei den Goten und der sog. Gotische Arianismus’, *ZKG* 112 (2001), pp. 295-310.

⁹⁶³ Soz. VIII, 8, 4 and VIII, 8. See: J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1990), pp. 104-125.

⁹⁶⁴ Soz. VI cap. 9-21.

of John Chrysostom, which had taken place during the reign of Arcadius (395-408).⁹⁶⁵ In other words, this was a new type of martyrdom. A martyrdom under an orthodox Emperor.

orthodox bishop called to witness under an orthodox emperor, undoubtedly a traumatizing event for the Catholic camp, which generated a large group of Chrysostom devotees, among them those who expressed their strong sentiments in rioting as well as in writing.⁹⁶⁶

Sozomen however keeps his narrative free of a lachrymose tone and his comments on the rise of heresy remain understated, retaining a subdued, almost detached attitude, throughout his own explanations of the action taken by or in the name of Constantine. It seems that Sozomen is thus allowing the reader to form independently an opinion on an emperor who codifies laws against heresy not very long before he himself is about to lend his own ears to heretics:

The emperor however enacted a law that their own houses of prayer should be abolished and that they should meet in the churches and not hold church in private houses, or in public places. He deemed it better to hold fellowship in the Catholic Church and he advised them to assemble in her walls. By means of this law almost all the heresies, I believe, disappeared. During the reign of preceding emperors, all who worshiped Christ, however they might have differed from each other in opinion, received the same treatment from the pagans and were persecuted with equal cruelty. These common calamities, to which they were all equally liable, prevented them from prosecuting any close inquiries as to the differences of

⁹⁶⁵ If the dating of Sozomen's life (i.e. ca. 370- after 450), proposed at chapter 3 of the present study, is correct, it would appear not unlikely that Sozomen's contacts with the Johannites may have been established between 404 and 407 or a little later. Van Nuffelen's view whereby Sozomen 'n'avait plus connu Atticus' can hardly be an acceptable inference from Soz. VIII, 27, 7 referred to by Van Nuffelen (*op. cit.* p. 51. n. 282), for in this passage we are only told that the information about Atticus had come down to Sozomen from "those who knew the man" (οἱ γὰρ τὸν ἄνδρα ἐγνοῶσαν). It seems that only nearness in time and place to the Johannites in what can be regarded as their 'hey day' i.e. ca. 404-416, can offer us an explanation of Sozomen's interest in these devotees of Chrysostom and their willingness to share with our church historian their recollections let alone allow him to consult their archives (if there had ever been any). It is indeed hard to imagine an aspiring young lawyer who arrives after 426 in Constantinople (according to Van Nuffelen, *op. cit.* pp. 51-53) - i.e. over twenty years after Chrysostom's final exile - and sets forth to seek out the followers of a (partly disgraced) dead bishop. Theodosius II's full rehabilitation of Chrysostom (since ca. 416 his name was restored to the diptychs), obtained through the diplomacy of Proclus, the bishop of Constantinople (who also brought back John's remains for re-burial in the Church of the Apostles) took place only in 438. Socrates reports that by this Proclus 'brought back to the Church those who had separated themselves from it on account of Bishop John's deposition'. See: Soc. VII, 45. Sozomen's unforgiving tone is diametrically opposed to Socrates's unconcealed resentment of the Constantinopolitan bishop and since Sozomen was writing after Socrates, it seems more likely that Sozomen's refusal to become reconciled to his hero's fate and let go of the bad memories - testify to a considerable degree of personal involvement in events related to that affair.

⁹⁶⁶ Echoes of the traumatised reaction to what was perceived as John Chrysostom's *martyrium* are preserved in Palladius of Helenopolis's, *Dialogus de vita Sancti Ioannis Chrysostomi* which seems to have been another source for Sozomen's account of the aftermath of that affair. See: Soz. VIII, 24-28 cf. Palladius, *Dialogus*, 11, 123-129. On the Johannite riots in Constantinople following the downfall of John Chrysostom see: J.H.G.W. Liebeschuetz, 'The Fall of John Chrysostom', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 29 (1985), pp. 1-31 and Idem., *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1990), pp. 157-227. On the reaction of the Johannites to the unprecedented heavy-handed response of the imperial government to their riots, see: N. McLynn, 'Christian Controversy and Violence in the Fourth Century', *Kodai* 3 (1992), pp. 15-44 esp. pp. 35-36 (= Idem., *Christian Politics and Religious Culture in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot 2009), II). See also: Hansen (1995), pp. 381-389. *Contra*: Van Nuffelen (2004), p. 76. On the call for martyrdom as a constituent factor in the development of Catholic discourse and identity from Constantius II to Theodosius II: J.M. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for those Who Have Christ* (Berkeley, CA 2005), pp. 88-102.

opinion which existed among themselves; it was therefore easy for the members of each party to hold church by themselves and by continually conferring, however few they might have been in number, they were not disrupted. ⁹⁶⁷

The reference to the heroic past, that of the persecution of Christians under pagan emperors as the only time in which all Christians, regardless of their doctrinal affiliation, were equal, appears to be Sozomen's protest at the failure of the Church to establish a lasting unity and indeed, to eliminate all heresy altogether. The conversion of Constantine and the liberation from the pagan bondage did not liberate the Christians from the love of contention and the pursuit of power. As soon as the pagan yoke was shaken off, they felt free to turn against each other more vehemently than ever before. It is hard not to see in Sozomen's evocation of the pre-Constantinian Christian past within a gloomy reflection which includes the sad aftermath of Constantine's reign, as well as a reflection of the disarray which was engulfing the Christian Church in the historian's life-time. Sozomen is struggling with a reality whereby many hopes (passed down and kept alive in the Eastern Roman empire due to the longevity and vitality of the Constantinian myth) where now shuttered, possibly in the wake of the rise of miaphysitism whilst the memories of Nestorius (and indeed the man himself) were still very much alive.⁹⁶⁸ Despite the fairly conjectural connection – it is perhaps no coincidence that Sozomen should mention in passing that the Phrygian heresy, *alias* the Montanists, who were decimated elsewhere around the Roman realm, were still thriving in Phrygia:

*... for here they had, since the time of Montanus, existed in great numbers and do so to the present day.*⁹⁶⁹

The "Eusebians"⁹⁷⁰ had won Constantine over in the last years of his reign – and Sozomen, a loyal devotee of the Constantinian myth, yet a disillusioned admirer of Constantine, seems to have chosen to remain ambivalent and hence his choice to avoid a direct statement leaving thus to the reader the guesswork leading towards a sound comprehension of the two concluding chapters in Book II. With a certain dryness in a minor key as in the first appearance of Constantine on the scene of his narrative in Book I, and with the gross omission (perhaps due to cautious self-censorship) of the elimination of Constantine's nephews Dalmatius and

⁹⁶⁷ Soz. II, 32, 2-4.

⁹⁶⁸ Cf. Soz. IX, 1, 9: *That new heresies have not prevailed in our times, we shall find to be due especially to her* (scilic. Pulcheria, the sister of Theodosius II), *as we shall subsequently see.* Certain scholars following Hartranft in his introduction to the English translation (See: *NPNF II* (Edinburgh 1897; Repr. Grand Rapids, MI 1997), Vol. 2, p. 201) have understood this passage as a reference to Nestorius, disregarding the plural in the reference to αἱρέσεις. Hartranft, for his part thought that "The Eutychean heresy in the first stage was hostile to Pulcheria's views while its overthrow was not effected until a year after the death of Theodosius". The passage concerned, however, appears to suggest quite the opposite. As the praises of Pulcheria could be sung loudly presumably only after the *rapprochement* between Pulcheria and her brother Theodosius II (and surely the more so, after Theodosius's death in 450), there was no political requirement, as yet *pace* Hartranft, to make an explicit mention of Marcian. It seems that the only 'new' heresy which could have been referred to by Sozomen in addition to Nestorianism, was the nascent movement of miaphysitism. This, as was argued before, supports a possible dating of Sozomen's work to ca. 450-453. See: Van Nuffelen (2004), p. 148.

⁹⁶⁹ Soz. II, 32, 6: ἔνθα δὲ ἐκ τῶν κατὰ Μοντανὸν χρόνων πλῆθος ἀρξάμενοι καὶ νῦν εἰσι. On Montanism see: H. Chadwick (2001), pp. 114-116.

⁹⁷⁰ As was mentioned before (n. 120) Sozomen refers to the Eusebians as οἱ ἀμφὶ τὸν Εὐσέβιον τὸν Νικομηδείας ἐπίσκοπον (II, 32, 7). However, Sozomen refers to them also at one point (III, 1, 5) as 'Theognians' (τοῖς ἀμφὶ Θεόγνιον) – after Eusebius of Nicomedia's colleague and close associate Theognis bishop of Nicaea.

Hanniballianus in 337. Both were originally named heirs to the imperial throne together with Constantine's sons Constantius II, Constans and Constantine II.⁹⁷¹ Nonetheless, Sozomen reports the division of the empire between Constantine I's sons, the three *Caesares* (the West to Constans and Constantine II and the East to Constantius II). The division of the imperial estate is followed by a deterioration in the emperor's health:

*... and as his body had grown enfeebled, he arrived in Helenopolis in Bithynia to take the water from the springs. As his ailment became more severe he was transferred to Nicomedia and it was while he stayed in a suburb there, that he was initiated into holy baptism. After that he greatly rejoiced and gave thanks to God.*⁹⁷²

I. Sozomen's Concluding Reflection on Constantine's Life and Achievements.

Sozomen, like any skilled lawyer attaches considerable importance to his summation. Sozomen chooses to encapsulate the essence of Constantine's life in his success. However, the summation becomes perhaps not inadvertently an indictment of the Constantinian dynasty and its successor, the House of Theodosius. None of Constantine's successors had managed to achieve what he had and the reason for these failures is enunciated:

*He was immensely successful like no one else known to me (ἐπιτετυκτικός δὲ ὥς οὐκ οἶδ' εἴ τις ἕτερος) in his undertakings; nor did he undertake anything, it seems to me, without God.*⁹⁷³

Using the same method, Sozomen elaborates on Constantine's achievements and thus implicitly (NB: "known to me" can mean either from contemporaries or from books and indeed, from oral traditions) pinpoints the areas in which Constantine's successors had failed to deliver. The list is seemingly a recognisable negative image of the failings of Constantine's successors:

*He was victorious in his wars against the Goths and the Sarmatians and indeed, in all his military enterprises and he changed the form of government according to his own mind and with such ease (καὶ τὴν πολιτείαν πρὸς τὸ δόξαν αὐτῷ οὕτω ῥαδίως μετεσχημάτισεν), that he created another senate and another imperial city to which he gave his own name. He assailed the pagan religion, and in a little time subverted it although it had prevailed for ages among the princes and the people.*⁹⁷⁴

Constantine's military victories seem to point to the major Roman political and military failures against the Goths under Valens and Honorius. The mention of the Sarmatians is likewise reminiscent of Valentinian I, who failed to subdue them and the rebellious Quadi in Pannonia before his death there in 375. The creation of a 'New Rome' which bears Constantine's name is presented as the culmination of Constantine's reunification of the

⁹⁷¹ See: Grillet-Sabbah, *SC* 306 p. 380, n. 1. Socrates too remains silent about the dynastic massacre which followed Constantine's death. Philostorgius however (Philost. II, 16) reports that Constantine was poisoned to death by his brothers in Nicomedia. Having discovered the plot Constantine managed to draw up a will shortly before breathing his last in which he called for vengeance. See: I. Tantillo, 'Filostorgio e la tradizione sul testamento di Costantino', *Athenaeum* 88, (2000), pp. 559-563.

⁹⁷² Soz. II, 34, 1.

⁹⁷³ Soz. II, 34, 2.

⁹⁷⁴ Soz. II, 34, 4.

empire after the defeat of Licinius (Sozomen remarks that Constantine's political reforms were carried out "according to his own mind and with such ease" – perhaps a hint to the supreme power which influential eunuchs such as Rufinus, Anthemius and Chrysaphius had exerted in the courts of Arcadius and Theodosius II) and calls for a juxtaposition with the permanent division of the empire between Arcadius and Honorius after the death of their father Theodosius I in 395. Finally (and most significantly from a church historian's point of view): Constantine managed to assail the pagan religion and subvert it – as opposed to Julian the apostate who, despite his Christian upbringing, had fallen under its spell and tried to restore it to its previous heinous glory.⁹⁷⁵

Thus, the foundations of the Christian Roman Empire which were magnificently laid by Constantine were deemed by Sozomen over a century later to be – in spite of their accepted divine inspiration – far from becoming the rock-solid firmament of God's kingdom on earth. Yet Sozomen, despite his disenchanted observations and sombre reflections on the Constantinian era, did not wish to undo the myth of Constantine. Sozomen acknowledges the importance of that myth to Catholic Christians like himself and (presumably) his discerning readers despite the sad end of what was after all a glorious reign which opened new vistas of hope for the Christian Church.

Sozomen's peculiar narrative seeks therefore to highlight in a learned and duly understated fashion the inevitable susceptibility of Constantine's achievements – like all human affairs – to vanity and error, but our historian seeks to do so without debunking the Constantinian myth altogether, realizing that doing so would not only shutter the pious hopes of his fellow pro-Nicene Catholics. Worse, compromising Constantine could also undermine their claim for orthodoxy, and the latter relied heavily on the legacy of the Council which Constantine convoked to and presided over in the very same Nicaea which gave them their Creed. Yet, despite the subtlety and the erudite rhetorical refinements and allusions, Sozomen refuses to part with Constantine and his life on a low key. The concluding sentence of book II which relates the aftermath of Constantine's burial in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople becomes unexpectedly a declarative *coda* which consists of one of the author's rare direct and unequivocal personal statements – in sharp contrast with the cautious, quasi-legalistic tone which has been maintained by Sozomen thus far:

⁹⁷⁵ It is not unimaginable that Sozomen's implicit criticism of Constantine's successors' performance as leaders on all fronts could be extended along those lines to include Theodosius II and his failure to eliminate the Persian threat on the eastern front as well as of his failure on the home front to eradicate heresy (Nestorius had memorably argued in his address to Theodosius II, that the former was the result of the latter). See: C. Luibhéid, 'Theodosius II and Heresy', *JEH* 16 (1966), pp. 13-38. Note also: G. Traina, *428 AD: An Ordinary Year at the End of the Roman Empire* (Princeton, NJ 2009), pp. 34-39. Sozomen would have been particularly concerned with Theodosius's failure to resist the temptation of one of heresy's varieties namely – miaphysitism. Moreover, both Theodosius II and his father Arcadius were notoriously regarded as tolerant towards the pagans and the Jews and were accused of allowing them to prosper to the detriment of the Church. It will not be too hard to identify in this strand of thought a source of influence on Sozomen's own historiosophy, (as manifested in his *proemium*) in which such tolerance is indeed negligence which is tantamount to putting hurdles in the way of Christianity's mission. See: F. Millar, 'Christian Emperors, Christian Church and the Jews of the Diaspora in the Greek East CE 379-450', *JJS* 55 (2004), p. 1 ff. and idem. (2006), pp. 125-129. If indeed our line of interpretation can be accepted, it would obviously lend more support to a late dating of Sozomen's work (at least in its surviving form) i.e. – sometime between Theodosius II's death in 450 and the death of his sister, (by then empress), Pulcheria in 453.

*From that time, as if due to a Genesis of sorts, a custom has emerged (ἀπὸ τοῦτο δὲ ὡς ἔκ τινος ἀρχῆς ἔθους γενομένου) whereby Christian emperors who died in Constantinople later on and indeed bishops, were laid to rest there, for the priesthood, I think, is essentially equal to royalty in honour – moreover, in sacred places, it even holds the ascendancy.*⁹⁷⁶

It should be noted that Sozomen does not share his thoughts with us before presenting them as a response to a phenomenon which ‘emerged’ allegedly all by itself- *ex nihilo*.⁹⁷⁷ Sozomen seeks (ostensibly though) to avoid a narrative of causation. The ‘Genesis’ concerned seems, at a glance, no more than a metaphor, but it is hard to brush aside the impression that the metaphor here is the message. Sozomen retains nonetheless an open-ended, polyphonic style which allows those who are so-inclined to ascribe to Constantine the supernatural authorship of the emerging custom *post-mortem* – not unlike that of Saints.⁹⁷⁸ Yet, the mysterious custom lends itself also to a more secular interpretation. Sozomen’s portrayal of Constantine’s life and times is in fact a synopsis of two powers – the secular and the sacred- and both seem to have benefited effectively from the deceased Constantine – just as they had profited handsomely

⁹⁷⁶ Soz, II, 34, 6. μᾶλλον μὲν οὖν ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς τόποις καὶ τὰ πρῶτα ἐχούσης.

⁹⁷⁷ The biblical allusion to Genesis, I, 1-2 in ἔκ τινος ἀρχῆς ἔθους γενομένου seems to have escaped the notice of all modern translators of Sozomen. This appears to be a Syricism and originally, perhaps, a Hebraism, which may have permeated into Sozomen’s Greek via the Syriac translation of the Bible. Although in theory Sozomen could have been familiar with the Jewish translations of the Bible into Aramaic (the *Targumim*), this appears to be quite unlikely. Sozomen, a native of Palestine must have spoken the local Aramaic dialect known to modern scholarship as ‘Christian Palestinian Aramaic’ (also known as ‘Syropalestinian Aramaic’ or ‘Melkite Aramaic’), but this is not necessarily of relevance here as it is believed that this particular dialect which belongs to the so-called ‘Western Aramaic Dialect Group’ stayed free of the influence of Hebrew. See: C. Müller-Kessler, ‘Christian Palestinian Aramaic and its significance to the Western Aramaic Dialect Group’, *JAOS* 119 (1999), pp. 631-636. However, there is a good reason to believe that Sozomen must have had a fairly good command of a *different* Aramaic dialect, the Eastern Aramaic dialect known as Syriac, as can be inferred from his account of the Persian Martyrs and holy men. Sozomen seems to have composed his account drawing on these Acts which were written in Syriac; cf. Soz. II, 14, 3 and see S.P. Brock, *The History of the Holy Man Ma’in* (Piscataway, NJ 2009), pp. 78-71. It follows that Sozomen’s familiarity with Syriac Bible cannot be dismissed. The Book of Genesis is known in the Syriac translation of the OT (i.e. the *Peshitta*) as *sfr’ dbryšit*. The word *bryšit* in Syriac originally means ‘in the beginning’ (as in Hebrew). Thus, a possible influence of the Hebrew must not be dismissed given that all the books of the OT (and perhaps some books of the *Apocrypha*) were translated in north-eastern Syria (ca. 100) directly from the Hebrew. See: S. P. Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition* (Piscataway, NJ 2006), pp. 23-27. We must also consider an independent Jewish Palestinian influence. This may be gathered from the transformation of the Hebrew word בראשית which had evolved to become synonymous, in Jewish oral law (Heb. תורה שבעל פה, Gr. δευτέρωσις), with the theme of Creation. Hence the Hebrew term מעשה בראשית (interchangeable with ‘Creation’ probably in early post-Biblical literature i.e. ca. third century BC) which translates literally as “The Story of the Beginning” (NB: A ‘proper’ Hebrew word for ‘Creation’ is בריאה cf. *bryt* in Syriac). It is worth noting that the rabbinic tradition records Gen. I. 1 amongst the changes which the legend of the Septuagint attributed to the Jewish sages who, according to that legend, were commissioned by Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek. See: A. Wasserstein and D.J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge 2009), pp. 51-94. Thus, the aforementioned term, מעשה בראשית is already recorded in the *Mishnah* (a compilation of Jewish oral laws attributed to Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nasi i.e. Rabbi Judah the Patriarch d. ca. AD 220 in Sephoris, Palestine). See: *Mishnah, Khagigah*, Cap. 2, Sec. 1. Hence the title Γένεσις in the Septuagint which, to judge by Sozomen’s usage (which at any rate does not conform with G.W.H. Lampe, *PGL* s.v. pp. 234-236 - cf. Soz. III, 18, 3), had remained interchangeable with ‘Beginning’ (and thus translated into the Greek as ἀρχή also in his time (i.e. in the fifth century)).

⁹⁷⁸ On the development of the cult of the memory of Constantine, see: T. Canella, ‘Santuari di memoria costantiniana fra V e VI secolo’ in: Ead. (ed.), *L’Impero costantiniano e i luoghi sacri* (Bologna 2016), pp. 533-555.

from the opulent magnanimity of the living emperor. Sozomen's concluding note is a minimalistic illustration of a momentous 'Genesis' which, as Sozomen hints, created the world in which our Church historian was still living. An era which could justifiably be re-named as 'post-Constantinian'. The Constantinian myth was born with the inhumation of the emperor, but its birth over the Imperial tomb, according to Sozomen's clues, entered Constantine's name too into the list of failing emperors – since Constantine's memory failed to achieve after his death a control of his inheritance which would match the unshakable sway he held over church and state during his lifetime. Constantine was thus leaving behind him a political and religious estate of total disarray and Sozomen, having reminded us Constantine's mythical pedigree by alluding to *Hercules Furens*, appears to have identified the main culprits which were responsible to the disarray into which Constantine's inheritance had fallen: Heracles's very own *hybris* and *hamartia*- to which Sozomen implicitly adds another element: *hairesis*.

Sozomen's brief comments on Constantine's burial in the Church of the Holy Apostle seem to be yet another compressed hint. Constantine's own tomb, in the church of the Holy Apostles, sparked up a scandal shortly after his death. In this church were twelve sarcophagi of the apostles, supported by plinths shaped as $\theta\eta\kappa\alpha\iota$.⁹⁷⁹ A thirteenth plinth was designated originally to house Constantine's grave. However, the tomb's location stirred a havoc, for it was regarded as a vain attempt to present the defunct emperor as a thirteenth apostle - if not as Christ's successor altogether. Constantine's son and successor Constantius II responded to the protests and had his father's grave transferred in its entirety to a purpose-built mausoleum, adjacent to the main church.⁹⁸⁰

The fact that bishops were soon to find their resting place alongside emperors⁹⁸¹ seems to have helped Sozomen to come forward with a thought-provoking statement. Despite the understated description, the burial of Constantine was indeed a starting-point, for bishops as well as emperors. Bishops could, to Sozomen's mind, hold indeed the ascendancy, but this privilege is clearly and distinctly confined in Sozomen's thinking to 'sacred places'. It follows that in the world that lies beyond the confines of a church and as long as there is a non-sacred place in the world (i.e. as long as on earth the Kingdom is still under construction) prelates

⁹⁷⁹ See: A. Vasiliev, 'Imperial Porphyry Sarcophagi in Constantinople', *DOP* 4 (1946), pp. 1-26; G. Downey, 'The Tombs of the Byzantine Emperors at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople', *JHS* 79 (1959), pp. 27-51.

⁹⁸⁰ Cf. Soc. I, 40, 2. Socrates's brief account of Constantine's funeral seems to be reflecting contemporary imperial propaganda, as it gives the readers a reason to believe that the burial of bishops in the church of the apostles was envisaged by Constantine prior to its building in order to ensure that the emperors as well as the prelates will be deposited close to the apostles' relics: $\eta\nu\ \delta\iota'\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron, \pi\epsilon\pi\omicron\upsilon\eta\tau\omicron, \omicron\pi\omega\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\ \omicron\iota\ \beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \iota\epsilon\rho\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\omega\ \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\iota\kappa\omega\ \lambda\epsilon\iota\psi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega\ \mu\eta\ \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\iota\mu\acute{\pi}\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$. See: G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale, Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris 1974), pp. 401-409. On the wish of burial next to Saints' tombs see: Y. Duval, *Auprès des Saints corps et et âmes : l'inhumation « ad sanctos » dans la chrétienté de l'Orient et l'Occident du IIIe au VIIe siècle* (Paris 1988), pp. 61-73.

⁹⁸¹ Burial within the *pomerium* was restricted in old Rome to the emperors and the *vestales*. See: Servius, *Aen.* XI, 206. Constantine's burial seems to have opened the floodgates for a great many in Constantinople who wished now to have their final resting place near Saints and Martyrs. The imperial court was forced (it seems) to address that situation by issuing a special directive for the attention of the Constantinopolitan *praefectus* (CTh, IX, 17, 6 dated to 29th or 30th July 381), whereby he was instructed to transfer the multitude of the dead already buried in Constantinople "above the ground enclosed in urns or sarcophagi" (*supra terram urnis clausa vel sarcofagis*) to a re-burial outside the city walls. See: E. Rebillard, *Religion et sepulture. L'Église, les vivants et les morts dans l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris 2003), p. 81.

and emperors remain equal in honour. Therefore, in the realm of the 'non-sacred' i.e. in the minefield of church-state politics, neither bishops nor emperors are immune to sin and error.

Thus, Constantine, according to Sozomen, had indeed laid the foundations of a Christian Roman empire with the Church at the pinnacle of this vast edifice. Yet despite his political and military success and regardless of his public glorification of Christ and his relentless efforts to attain one true doctrine and place it at the core of one undivided Church, Constantine's later years in which he had allegedly committed or was an accomplice to murderous acts, sought the equivalent of canonisation⁹⁸² and lent his ears to heretics, had blighted all his magnificent achievements. The accountability for Constantine's 'original sin' will pass down to his descendants and by implication, possibly, to their successors. From Sozomen's point of view, the Church, like the human race after the Creation, was facing a predicament, having been tested in the wilderness of controversy, strife and division and this, after only a short stint in an imaginary Nicene paradise of what was in the first place, a very fragile ecumenical unity.

⁹⁸² Cf. Eus. *VC*, IV, 71.

Chapter 6: The Predicament of the Nicene Faith: Sozomen and The Constantinian Dynasty

El diagnóstico de una existencia humana - de un hombre, de un pueblo, de una época - tiene que comenzar filiando el repertorio de sus convicciones. Son éstas el suelo de nuestra vida. por eso se dice que en ellas el hombre está. Las creencias son lo que verdaderamente constituye el estado del hombre. Las he llamado << repertorio>> para indicar que la pluralidad de creencias en que un hombre, un pueblo o una época está no posee nunca una articulación plenamente lógica, es decir, que no forma un sistema de ideas, como lo es o aspira a serlo, por ejemplo, una filosofía. Las creencias que coexisten en una vida humana, que la sostienen, impulsan y dirigen son, a veces, incongruentes, contradictorias o, por lo menos, inconexas.⁹⁸³

Oligarchy is imposed as the guiding theme, the link from age to age whatever be the form and name of government.⁹⁸⁴

ἀνατέτραπται μὲν γὰρ τὰ τῆς εὐσεβείας δόγματα, συγκέχονται δὲ ἐκκλησίας θεσμοί. φιλαρχίαι δὲ τῶν μὴ φοβουμένων τὸν Κύριον ταῖς προστασίαις ἐπιπηδῶσι· καὶ ἐκ τοῦ προφανοῦς λοιπὸν ἄθλον δυσσεβείας ἢ προεδρία πρόκειται· ὥστε ὁ τὰ χαλεπώτερα βλασφημήσας εἰς ἐπισκοπὴν λαοῦ προτιμότερος. οἷχεται σεμνότης ἱερατικῇ· ἐπιλελοίπασιν οἱ ποιμαίνοντες μετ' ἐπιστήμης ποιμνιον τοῦ Κυρίου, οἰκονομίας πτωχῶν εἰς ἰδίας ἀπολαύσεις καὶ δώρων διανομὰς παραναλισκόντων ἀεὶ τῶν φιλαρχούντων. ἡμαύρωται κανόνων ἀκρίβεια. ἐξουσία τοῦ ἁμαρτάνειν πολλή· οἱ γὰρ διὰ σπουδῆς ἀνθρωπίνης παρελθόντες ἐπὶ τὸ ἄρχειν ἐν αὐτῷ τούτῳ τῆς σπουδῆς τὴν χάριν ἀνταναπληροῦσι, τῷ πάντα πρὸς ἡδονὴν ἐνδιδόναι τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσιν. ἀπόλωλε κρίμα δίκαιον· πᾶς τις τῷ θελήματι τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ πορεύεται. ἡ πονηρία ἄμετρος, οἱ λαοὶ ἀνουθέτητοι, οἱ προεστώτες ἀπαρρησίαστοι· δοῦλοι γὰρ τῶν δεδωκότων τὴν χάριν, οἱ δι' ἀνθρώπων ἑαυτοῖς τὴν δυναστείαν κατακτησάμενοι. ἤδη δὲ καὶ ὄπλον τισὶ τοῦ πρὸς ἀλλήλους πολέμου ἢ ἐκδίκησης δῆθεν τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας ἐπινενόηται, καὶ τὰς ἰδίας ἔχθρας ἐπικρυψάμενοι· ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἐχθραίνειν κατασχηματίζονται. ἄλλοι δέ, τὸν ἐπὶ τοῖς αἰσχίστοις ἐκκλίνοντες ἔλεγχον, τοὺς λαοὺς εἰς τὴν κατ' ἀλλήλων φιλονεικίαν ἐκμαίνουσιν, ἵνα τοῖς κοινοῖς κακοῖς τὸ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς συσκιώσωσι.⁹⁸⁵

A. Constantius II

Sozomen's view of the emperors who succeeded Constantine, seems to be embedded albeit abstractly in the organising principle which governs the architectonics of his work i.e. the division of his ecclesiastical history into books. From all the emperors who reigned since 324 only the reigns of Constantine himself and his son Constantius II were allocated two books

⁹⁸³ J. Ortega y Gasset, *Historia Como Sistema* (Madrid 1941; Repr. 2003), p. 2.

⁹⁸⁴ R. Syme, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford 1986), p. 13.

⁹⁸⁵ St Basil the Great, *Letter XCII*, 2 (written in 372).

each.⁹⁸⁶ The rationale behind this division is not particularly hard to figure out.⁹⁸⁷ These emperors, *père et fils*, had both embodied for good or ill the conflicting essences which still co-existed in the Christian empire of Sozomen's own time, namely: the exercise of secular power along the lines of traditional "Romanness" and the submission to God and those in whom His authority had been invested (the issue of how is meet and right to do so or in other words, the question of "which cleric and which doctrine are orthodox?" will prove to be inextricably entangled with both). While Constantine initiated already during his lifetime (through the good offices of Eusebius of Caesarea and his *HE*) the process which will have the first Christian emperor "mythified" as we have tried to show in the preceding chapter, the now-defunct emperor's son, Constantius II was bound to acquire the image of an epigone.⁹⁸⁸ However, it would be simplistic to attribute it only to the shadow of his pioneering father.⁹⁸⁹ Nor should we ignore what appears to be an effort on Constantius's part to resolve issues of legitimacy arising from his questionable ascendancy to sole rulership over the Roman Empire.

⁹⁸⁶ Sozomen, however, perhaps out of his political caution, refrains from naming in the outline of his *HE* which concludes the *Dedicatio* (19) these sons; Constantius II (emperor 337-361), Constantinus II (317-340) and Constans (333-350). Constantius II outlived his brothers and co-rulers Constans and Constantine II. The latter was killed by the former in 340 and Constans himself was killed ten years later by the usurper Magnentius. Sozomen only indicates laconically that the third and the fourth books will embrace the ecclesiastical affairs "under his (*scill.* Constantine's) children" (τὰ ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτοῦ παίδων). Cf. Soz. III, 2, 10 and IV, 1, 1.

⁹⁸⁷ It is hard to accept van Nuffelen's view in P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), pp. 279-282. Van Nuffelen claims that: "L'idée de grouper des livres en dyades n'a aucun but pratique." Van Nuffelen attempts to identify quite forcibly a common theme in every "dyade" in Sozomen's nine books, ignoring regrettably Sozomen's own thoroughly practical explanation of his work's skeletal structure according to imperial reigns. See: Soz. *Dedicatio* 19-20. More importantly, the "practicality" of Sozomen's method of dividing his work into books is a statement in itself. Sozomen stresses in his proemium: I am convinced that since the topic is not what has been achieved by men it is not beyond God to make an historian out of me contrary to all (Πέπεισμαι γάρ, ὡς ὑποθέσω οὐκ ἔξ ἀνθρώπων δημιουργηθείσης παραδόξως ἀναφανῆναι με συγγραφέα οὐκ ἄπορον τῷ θεῷ) (Soz. I, 1, 12). The highlighted self-doubt appears to go beyond rhetorical stratagems. Why and to whom should Sozomen's choice to write a history of the church appear so extraordinary? One option is perhaps an allusion of the author to his advanced age (see cap. 3 of the present study). Sozomen ironically hints at those who may not expect him to complete an undertaking such as his *HE*. However, Sozomen's comment could also suggest that he was trying to disarm a particularly suspicious readership, aware of patently partisan heterodox historical writings, based on partisan documents as Sozomen himself points out (*ibid.* 15-17). A good example for this may be Philostorgius (d. ca. 430). See: P. R. Amidon SJ (Eng. Trans. and Intro.), *Philostorgius: Church History* (Atlanta, GA 2007), pp. xviii-xxi. Amidon suggests that Philostorgius 'may have hoped that the new university founded in Constantinople in 425 by Theodosius II would include some circles in which his revisionist account might be read with sympathy'. (Amidon SJ, *op.cit.* p. xix). Third option to consider is that Sozomen's ostensible self-doubt could have possibly echoed certain dissonances in Socrates's reception. These may have been related to the latter's apparent tolerance towards Novatianism. See: Soc. I, 10. Thus the ancient compositional framework of rulers and reigns could safely offer the distrusting yet educated reader, a familiar and user-friendly framework to handle what was otherwise still controversial reading material. See also M. Wallraff (1997), p. 152 n. 6 (convincingly rejected by Van Nuffelen). See also: G. Sabbah (1983), pp. 60-65 and H. Leppin (1996), pp. 283-287.

⁹⁸⁸ On the erosion of imperial power (and image) after Constantine's death, see:

P. Barceló, 'La deconstrucción del poderío imperial en el siglo IV', *Gerión* 29 (2011), pp. 193-210.

⁹⁸⁹ In his account of the honours bestowed by Constantine on the small harbor town of Majumas in Palestine for its communal adherence to Christianity, Sozomen (II, 5, 8) says in passing that by renaming this seaport of his native region of Gaza, 'Constantia', Constantine rewarded Majumas for her piety by naming her after "the dearest of his children" (τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ τῶν παίδων). On Constantine's image throughout the fourth and fifth centuries. See: G. Bonamente, 'Costantino santo', *CrSt* 27 (2006), pp. 735-769.

⁹⁹⁰The present chapter will aim at identifying the nature and the objectives of Sozomen's narrative strategies as employed in his accounts of the emperors from the Constantinian dynasty (i.e. from 337 to 378) while taking into account the particular challenges and sensitivities that were likely to face a Christian historian like Sozomen who set out to respond to the phenomenon of Christian imperial succession and in particular, to its specific problematics from the point of view of a Nicene orthodox author.⁹⁹¹

It could be said that while Constantine sought to achieve compromise through astute and relatively patient negotiations, aiming at a doctrinal consensus and consequently cementing the unity of the empire, his son Constantius II seems to have taken a more cavalier approach, despite his involvement in a throng of synods and ecclesiastical deliberations which were trying to bridge the gaps between the pro-Nicene Catholics and their disgruntled opponents who had displayed various degrees of attachment to Arianism. It was Constantius II's challenge to deal with a pro-Nicene ecclesiastical faction, inspired by a militant as well as astute Catholic prelate and politician such as bishop Athanasius of Alexandria or in a sense to be portrayed for posterity by a pagan not ignorant of the intricacies of the Christian Church such as Ammianus Marcellinus.⁹⁹² Thus, after the re-introduction of Nicene supremacy any negative image of this emperor seems to have required a bolder narrative strategy. It follows that a depiction of Constantius as an epigone was apparently the focalisation preferred by later orthodox historiography.⁹⁹³

⁹⁹⁰ For the commemoration of Constantine as a central element of Constantius' imperial propaganda, emphasising his self-proclaimed privileged claim to the Constantinian legacy, see: M. Moser, *Emperor And Senators in the Reign of Constantius II: Maintaining Imperial Rule Between Rome and Constantinople in the Fourth Century AD* (Cambridge 2018), pp. 119-168.

⁹⁹¹ 'Succession' as a theologico-political concept (as we have seen in Eusebius of Caesarea's *HE* case in chapter 1), has occupied a central place in Christian thought from the Church's earliest days. Kendra Eshelman observes that: "In structuring Christian history around successions, Christian authors were drawing on a resonant idiom that implicitly situated their movement among the intellectual disciplines of the Roman empire, while simultaneously asserting its priority and superiority to the rest, especially philosophy. In doing so, they employed many of the same tricks as contemporary intellectual historians. Christian writers use succession lists to display their mastery of their field and/or to authorize their interpretive positions, as Quintilian does. Once again, an advantage of the device is its apparent neutrality: polemicists who cite diadochai in the heat of controversy pose as reporters of objective fact. Like their pagan counterparts, Christian authors extend or curtail the lineages they report in order to make (or disrupt) a link to a prestigious ancestor, or to saddle rivals with a discreditable origin." See: K. Eshelman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians* (Cambridge 2012), p. 215.

⁹⁹² On Constantius II and Athanasius see: C. R. Galvão-Sobrinho, *Doctrine and Power. Theological Controversy and Christian Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA 2013), pp.127-151 and T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA 1993), p. 97 ff. Note also: P. Barceló, *Constantius II. und seine Zeit: Die Anfänge des Staatskirchentums* (Stuttgart 2004), pp. 63-91. For Constantius II's portrayal by Ammianus, see: Amm. Mar. *RG* XXI, 16, 18.

⁹⁹³ Socrates highlights (Soc. II, 2, 7) the central role of the court eunuchs in the conversion of Constantius's court to Arianism. He describes it implicitly in contrast with Constantine's own conversion to Christianity in which the message of the true religion is communicated directly to the emperor himself – whereas Constantius, according to Socrates, is talked into embracing the Arian denomination only after his wife was persuaded *because of the eunuchs* (διὰ τῶν εὐνοῦχων) to do so: "shortly afterwards the philosophical inquiry passed over to the emperor himself" (Μετ' οὐ πολὺ δὲ καὶ ἐπ' αὐτὸν διέβαινε τὸν βασιλέα τὸ ζήτημα). The reader is elegantly invited to infer from Socrates's narrative that this was a case of *post hoc propter hoc*. Thus, Socrates insinuates that Arianism was a religion whose apostles and preachers were

Thus, we may assume that in the eyes of strong Catholics like Sozomen, Constantius II was the head of a heterodox ruling elite which had tried to impose its doctrinal preferences on a church true to Nicene orthodoxy.

Despite the anti-Arian literary heritage of his day which had apparently nurtured his main source namely Socrates⁹⁹⁴, Sozomen, it seems, chose to retain considerable independence even in his assessment of a pro-Arian emperor. In two chapters of Book III, Sozomen focuses on the 'emperors' as if the coupling with the pro-Nicene Constans (who shared with Constantius II the rule over the empire until his demise in 350) might somehow soften an account which from a Catholic point of view can hardly be regarded as a vapid read:

*The emperors had from the beginning preserved their father's view about doctrine; for they both favoured the Nicene faith (τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ πίστεως ἡστην). Constans maintained these opinions till his death: Constantius held a similar view for some time; he, however, renounced his former sentiments after the term "consubstantial" was slandered (διαβληθείσης τῆς τοῦ ὁμοουσίου λέξεως), yet he did not altogether refrain from confessing that the Son is of like substance with the Father.*⁹⁹⁵

Constantius II, as Sozomen hastens to stress, was not brought up in the spirit of heresy and his brother Constans even remained true to Nicene orthodoxy.⁹⁹⁶ As to Constantius's defection to the Arian camp, Sozomen is ready to offer an explanation:

*By this kind of people (ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν τοιούτῳ scil. The followers of bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia) allowed himself the emperor Constantius to be influenced and although I am certain that he retained the same doctrines as those held by his father and brother yet he exchanged a word for a word and instead of "homousios" he said "homoiousios").*⁹⁹⁷

We must not be confused by what appears to be at first glance a more lenient attitude on Sozomen's part towards the erring emperor. In addition to an attestation of a personal impressionable character, Constantius is now portrayed also as a ruler whose keen interest in the intricacies of the Christian doctrine may have been genuine, if not quite compatible with

merely eunuchs and women. On the powerful status of the eunuch Eusebius in Constantius II's court, see: M. Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago 2001), pp. 67-68. It follows that the emperor who let himself to be converted by the teachings espoused by someone who was regarded as an incarnation of unmanliness would be therefore acknowledged as a weakling (in contrast to his strong-headed father) and thus, a heterodox epigone. The image of an epigone however seems to be floating in the air already during Constantius's reign. Cyril, the recalcitrant bishop of Jerusalem (d. 386) wrote to Constantius II in as early as 351: *I do not, of course, mean that you are coming now for the first time from ignorance to knowledge of God (for you have been forward to teach others by your religious conversation), but I write to add confirmation to what you know, so that as you have received imperial sovereignty by paternal inheritance you should learn to be honoured by God with greater heavenly crowns, or rather that you should now both return fitting thanks to God the King of all, and also be filled with greater courage in the face of your enemies, as you understand, from the marvelous work of God on your behalf, to what effect your sovereignty is made the object of his love.* See: W. Telfer (ed.), *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa* (Louisville, KY 1955; repr. 2006), p. 194.

⁹⁹⁴ E.g. Soc. II, 3. Socrates describes the joyful reception of Athanasius in Alexandria after his return from his exile in Trier in 337, quoting *verbatim* a *lettre de protection*, issued by Constantine II in support of Athanasius's reinstatement. Cf. Athanasius, *Apol. sec.* 87, 4; *H. Ar.* 8, 2.

⁹⁹⁵ Soz. III, 18, 1-2.

⁹⁹⁶ Soz. III, 18 4. On the the education of Comstadius II and his brothers, see: P. Maraval, *Les fils de Constantin* (Paris 2015), pp. 10-14.

⁹⁹⁷ Soz. III, 18, 4.

the Emperor's personal abilities. According to Sozomen, since Constantius was only modestly gifted intellectually, he was unable to comprehend and recognise the Catholic truth despite his up-bringing and the presence of staunch Catholics such as his brother Constans and bishop Athanasius of Alexandria in his life. Sozomen exposes more of Constantius's shortcomings as he goes on to narrate the audience of Constantius with Athanasius at Antioch (346) after the latter was recalled from his exile in Italy and reinstated to his see, due to Constans's intervention in his favour. Sozomen's account exposes an emperor whose intellect was not lacking only insofar as theology was concerned. The confines of Constantius's mind could be exposed also in a more 'political' context.⁹⁹⁸ Even in his dealings with his unswerving Catholic opponent Athanasius, Constantius had been outsmarted by the astute bishop. Sozomen is apparently keen to seize yet another opportunity to praise Athanasius, who alongside Chrysostom seems to embody in the eyes of our church historian, a Christian version of the Graeco-Roman hero figure. Yet, it would appear that Constantius's lack of political wisdom and Athanasius's confident and sophisticated self-handling in the imperial presence are not necessarily the only point here:

Since he (scil. Athanasius) found that Constantius was well disposed and agreeable, and it looked as if the emperor would restore his old church to him, Constantius, allowed himself to be influenced by the leaders of the opposing heresy (ὕποθεμένων τῶν προεστώτων τῆς ἐναντίας αἰρέσεως), said to him: "I am ready to fulfil the promises that had been made when you were recalled. However, it is just that you should in return grant me a favour, and that is, that one of the many churches under your control be given over to those who refuse to be in communion with you". Athanasius replied: "O emperor, it is indeed just and compulsory to obey your commands and I shall not speak contrarily, but as there are in this very city of Antioch people who eschew communion with the heterodox, I request a like favour, that they have one church and may assemble there unhindered." While Athanasius's request seemed just to the emperor, to those on the heterodox side it seemed better to keep quiet, as it occurred to them that there was absolutely no way in which their peculiar opinions could ever gain ground in Alexandria on account of the very same Athanasius who was able to retain unfailingly his like-minded partisans and win over his opponents (δι' αὐτὸν Ἀθανάσιον ἱκανὸν ὄντα τοὺς ὁμοφρονοῦντας ἀσφαλῶς ἔχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐναντίους ἐπάγειν). However, if this were to materialize in Antioch, the supporters of Eustathius⁹⁹⁹ who were very numerous will come together- to begin with. ¹⁰⁰⁰

Apart from providing us with yet another example of Constantius's feebleness, Sozomen seems also keen to highlight more positive sides of what appears to be through his prism, a rather gullible ruler. Despite the strong influence of the Arians on him, Constantius seems to have retained a certain independence and Sozomen's account depicts him capable nonetheless

⁹⁹⁸ For a comparative survey of Constantius II's involvement in the affairs of the Christian church as reflected in the narratives of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, see: J. M. Hunt, *Constantius II in the Ecclesiastical Historians* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Fordham University 2010), pp. 211-290.

⁹⁹⁹ Despite Eustathius's brief episcopate (ca. 325-327; See chapter 5), he managed to gather a substantial following which remained an active distinguished religious community in the city until the 370's. Eustathius produced his own distinctive Trinitarian theology which has come down to us in fragments. See: J. Declerck (ed.), *CCSG* 51. Eustathius acknowledges one *hypostasis* and a dyad, coming out of God's singularity, while this singularity (or monad) is proclaimed in the dyad. See: L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford 2004), pp. 68-69. Sozomen's report suggests that in the 340's the Eustathian community in Antioch had suffered oppression but was still holding back. See also: R. W. Burgess, 'The Date of the Deposition of Eustathius of Antioch', *JTS-ns* 51(2000), pp. 150-160.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Soz. III, 20, 7.

of listening to reason and accepting it - even when it comes from the leader of his sworn opponents. Although Sozomen does not miss another opportunity to praise the performance of Athanasius, it seems that Constantius receives here some credit for his moderate attitude which his 'Arian' or, to be more precise, Homoian leanings had not manage to eliminate altogether.¹⁰⁰¹ At the same time the Arians are depicted primarily as cunning courtiers who prefer to keep quiet when the emperor behaves unpredictably and are likewise unable to protest against an imminent threat to the interests of their camp even if they enjoy the patronage of the emperor. In other words, Sozomen asserts that orthodoxy, being based on uncompromising truth and the inspired personal courage of its exponents, can be respected by a heretical emperor. Arianism, despite its pretension to be the true manifestation of the Christian truth is unable to produce leaders like Athanasius whose craftiness, according to Sozomen's account, can be matched only with his bravery. The collective profile of the Arians displays nothing but scheming and treachery and even under privileged circumstances their faith does not inspire any of them to rise to the occasion and speak his mind-let alone turn the tables back in their favour. Yet, even so, the Arians did not have a reason to be concerned. The imperial benevolence was no more than a gesture and did not signify any meaningful change in Constantius II's religious convictions. The emperor however seems to have been involved in a selection of the bishops that were invited to participate in the synods as this could help to secure the results of the synodal deliberations according to the imperial wishes as can be learned from later examples such as the preparation for the synod of Nicomedia.¹⁰⁰² There is certainly nothing comparable with Constantine's commitment to ecclesiastical unity. It seems that Sozomen tends to confuse Constantius's response to the demands of his brother Constans who had threatened him with war, with his involvement in later stages of the Trinitarian controversy.¹⁰⁰³ The synod of Serdica was important for the defenders of Nicene orthodoxy, for it ended with a rehabilitation for bishops associated with the Catholic camp e.g. Marcellus of Ancyra who was excommunicated by the oriental bishops as early as 335 in the synod of

¹⁰⁰¹ The Homoians appear on the ecclesiastical scene in 357 although their teachings can be traced back to Arius and Eusebius of Caesarea's theological views. The Homoian position in the Trinitarian controversy revolved about Christ the Son, being "like" or "similar" (ὅμοιος) to God the Father, while carefully refraining from using the charged term 'substance' (οὐσία) in this context. On the Homoian denomination, see: U. Heil, 'The Homoians', in: G. M. Berndt and R. Steinacher (eds.), *Arianism: Roman Heresy and Barbarian Creed* (Farnham 2014), pp. 85-115; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Grand Rapids, MI 2005), pp. 557-597; L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford 2004), pp. 133-144. L. H.-C. Brennecke, *Studien zur Geschichte der Homöer: Der Osten bis zum Ende der homöischen Reichskirche* (Tübingen 1988), Pp. 5-56. For an attempt to highlight this aspect of Constantius II's figure against the backdrop of his religious policies, see: R. Klein, *Constantius II und die christliche Kirche* (Darmstadt 1977), pp. 105-159. Note also: S. Laconi, *Costanzo II: ritratto di un imperatore eretico* (Rome 2004), pp. 28-52; T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA 1993), pp. 132-147; M. Simonetti, *La crisi Ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome 1975), pp. 153-249 and pp. 313-49.

¹⁰⁰² On Constantius II's involvement in the selection of participants in synods during his reign, see: S. Bralewski, 'L'influence de l'empereur Constance II sur la composition des conciles', *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 8 (1995), pp. 127-148.

¹⁰⁰³ As can be inferred from Sozomen's chronological gross mistake in the beginning of book IV where Sozomen states that "Four years after the synod of Serdica, Constans was killed in Western Gaul." (Soz. IV, 1, 1). Thus, according to Sozomen the council of Serdica took place in 347. The correct dating, however, is either 342 or (more likely) 343, as was convincingly reaffirmed by Sara Parvis. See: S. Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy* (Oxford 2006), pp. 210-217.

Tyre and again in the synod of Philipopolis.¹⁰⁰⁴ We can understand this confusion as emanating from our church historian's tendency to dwell as long as possible on historical events from which a pro-Nicene message could be extracted. It is quite understandable that the rehabilitation of prominent pro-Nicene bishops during a pro-heterodox reign, might receive peculiar attention from a Catholic Church historian who would naturally be very keen to portray this event as yet another victory of the orthodox over the oppressive power of their opponents. But if Constantius II had enjoyed a certain leniency in Sozomen's approach towards him whilst portrayed against the figure of the matchless Athanasius, the nuanced approach was no longer possible.

Sozomen - unlike Socrates¹⁰⁰⁵ - seems less inclined to link Constantius's detraction from the resolutions of the synod of Serdica¹⁰⁰⁶ with the death of Constans which was followed shortly afterwards by the proclamation of Constantius as sole ruler and the latter's preparations for a military operation against the usurpers Magnentius and Vetranio.¹⁰⁰⁷ But even when Sozomen moves to a direct attack on Constantius, our church historian refrains from presenting him as the sole villain:

*'The emperor, persuaded by the slander of the heretical opposition (Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ταῖς διαβολαῖς πεισθεὶς τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐναντίας αἰρέσεως) changed his mind, and contrary to the decree of the council of Serdica, exiled the bishops whom he had previously restored. Marcellus was again deposed and Basil re-acquired possession of the bishopric of Ancyra. Lucius was thrown into prison and died there. Paul was condemned to perpetual banishment and was dispatched to Cucusum in Armenia, where he died either of ailment or of violence. I for my part am unable to be precise, however, rumour still has it (ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἀκριβῶς, φήμη δὲ εἰσέτι νοῦν κρατεῖ) that he was strangled by the followers of Macedonius'.*¹⁰⁰⁸

Sozomen, with marked resignation in his tone is indeed conceding here failure to establish accurately how Paul, the deposed orthodox bishop of Constantinople, found his death.¹⁰⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰⁴ Soz. III, 11, 7-8. Other notable bishops who were rehabilitated with Marcellus of Ancyra in Serdica were Paul of Constantinople, Lucius of Adrianople and Asclepas of Gaza (Soz. III, 24, 3). Marcellus's arch-enemy Basil of Ancyra who was to play a key role in the synods of the late 350's was sent, on this occasion, into exile.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Soc. II, 26 cf. Soz. IV, 1. Although Socrates attaches to Constantius II a more pro-active reaction to the demise of his brother and co-emperor Constance, both accounts seem to suggest that Constantius could not run the risk, at this critical point in his reign, of an opposition amongst his generals who were without exception holders of Arian convictions. See: C. Piétri, 'La politique de Constance II: Un premier >césaropapisme< ou l'imitatio Constantini?' In: A. Dihle (ed.), *L'Église et l'Empire au IV^e Siècle* (Geneva 1989), pp. 113-172 (esp. p. 152 ff.). See also: J. Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court: Oratory, Civic Duty and Paideia from Constantius to Theodosius* (Ann Arbor, MI 1995), pp. 87-89. According to Vanderspoel, Constantius sought to diversify his court by promoting pagans like the philosopher and orator Themistius to the senatorial rank. It could therefore be argued, along these lines, that this imperial policy marked a new phase in the deterioration of the bi-lateral relations between Arians and Catholics.

¹⁰⁰⁶ On the resolutions of the synod of Serdica and their problematics see: C.H. Turner, 'The Genuineness of the Serdican Canons', *JThS* 3 (1902), pp. 370-397 and more recently, H. Hess, *The Early Development of Canon Law and the Council of Serdica* (Oxford 2002), pp. 95-123.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Magnentius assumed the imperial rank at Augustodunum (Autun) on 18 January 350. The usurpation of the *magister peditum* Vetranio (which according to Philostorgius, *HE* III, 22 was masterminded in collaboration with Constantius's sister Constantina), took place less than two months later, on 1 March. See: T.D. Barnes (1993), p. 101 ff. and P. Barceló, *Constantius II und seine Zeit: Die Anfänge des Staatkirchentums* (Stuttgart 2004), pp. 113-120.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Soz. IV, 2, 1-2.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Sozomen seems to be treading very carefully, taking care to remain a limited heterodiegetic narrator with external focalisation, ostensibly not offering any commentary of his own and quoting a rumour

However, this rhetorical confession leaves the reader wondering whether our church historian was unable to do so due to the paucity or inaccessibility of relevant sources, or was it, perhaps, a certain reluctance on Sozomen's part (in line with his apparent caution) to appear too knowledgeable about the accurate circumstances of Paul's end? Conversely, Sozomen draws (if this is the correct word in this context) on a 'rumour' that is 'still' in circulation – and it is permissible to assume that the orbit of circulation is the streets of Constantinople. We may also assume that (at least) the Constantinopolitan readers could have been familiar with this 'rumour' and could complete the missing bit of the puzzle fairly easily with no need to elaborate on the matter any further. Yet, even if this was not the case, it would be reasonable to assume that Sozomen's readers would have reacted with some bewilderment (quite the same way as a modern reader might have done) to a historian who openly admits his inability to be precise, opting for reliance on rumours instead. Since Sozomen is not a Herodotus who often conveys throughout his *Historiae* archaic or foreign oral traditions without commitment to their veracity, let alone accuracy¹⁰¹⁰, such a statement is bound to raise suspicion on our part, just as it may have intrigued Sozomen's contemporary readers. Any attentive reader may thus infer from Sozomen's rhetorical confession (which appears to be reflected through his choice of the verb ἀκριβῶς)¹⁰¹¹ that it is probably an invitation to remain distrustful towards another version of the story (which another interested party seems to have been trying to keep alive even a century after those tragic events).¹⁰¹² If this assumption can

instead which may suggest that he regarded what the rumour conveyed as plausible. On bishop Paul of Constantinople and his career, see: T.D. Barnes (1993), pp. 212-217:

G. Dagron (1974), pp. 425-442 and W. Telfer, 'Paul of Constantinople', *HTR* 43 (1950), pp. 30-92.

¹⁰¹⁰ See e.g. Herod. I, 5, 3.

¹⁰¹¹ The noun ἀκριβεία and some of its derivatives were used by the grammarian Heraclitus the Allegorist (fl. First or second century AD) from whence, together with other distinctive vocabulary (e.g. ἀλληγορία, εἰκὼν, θεολογία, σύμβολον, τύπος, ἐρμηνεία and derivatives), it was handed down to Christian exegesis and hermeneutics. See: D.A. Russel and D. Konstan, *Herclitus: Homeric Problems* (Atlanta 2005), p. IX ff. A fine example is the *Cohortatio ad Graecos* attributed until recently to Ps.-Justin and now believed to have been authored by Marcellus of Ancyra. See: B. Poudron, 'Allégorie d'expression et allégorie d'interprétation chez Héraclite et dans la *Cohortatio* de Marcel d'Ancyre: étude de vocabulaire' in: D. Auger and E. Wolff (eds.), *Culture classique et christianisme: Mélanges offerts à Jean Bouffartigue* (Paris 2008), pp. 115-137. Heraclitus himself used the adjective ἀκριβῶς, as it were, to highlight an effort to interpret texts appearing to be absurde or impious. See: Poudron, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁰¹² Cf. Soc. II, 26, 5 who shows no hesitations about the validity of his information concerning the nature of Paul's end (i.e. strangling by those who escorted him to his exile place, Cucusum in Armenia) cf. Soc. V, 9,1 whereby Socrates reports that the emperor Theodosius I brought back to Constantinople the body of Paul from Ancyra, his burial place (cf. also Soz. VII, 10). Although Macedonius is mentioned here as the instigator of the arrest, Socrates's remark does not imply necessarily that the actual strangling of the deposed bishop was planned by Macedonius, neither it suggests that this murder was carried out by the new bishop's followers. It should be noted, however, that Paul was arrested by Flavius Philippus who according to Socrates was ὁ τῶν βασιλειῶν ἑπαρχός i.e. the praetorian prefect of *oriens*. For his career see: *PLRE* I, pp. 696-697. See also: T.D. Barnes (1993), p. 217. A source used uniquely by Sozomen, the anonymous *Historia Acephala*, a church history of Alexandrian origin (formerly attributed to Athanasius but now dated to ca. 419 and believed to have been possibly authored by Cyril of Alexandria. See: SC 317, pp. 11-25) relates the story of Paul's deposition but without a word on his demise. See: *Historia Acephala*, I, 4-7. This account of Paul's career, as Annik Martin the editor of the *Historia Acephala* remarks (following Gilbert Dagron) is apparently aimed at a quasi-hagiographical presentation of the Constantinopolitan bishop. See: SC 317, p. 47. Martin points out that this tendency becomes clearer with Socrates. However, she fails to consider the meaning of the absence of a direct attack on Constantius II. Dagron, for his part, defines even more sharply the literary *nachleben* of Paul's death. Dagron observes that, under Theodosius II, 'Il suffit de regrouper ce qui disent de lui Socrate et Sozomène pour faire de sa vie une œuvre d'hagiographie'. See: Dagron (1974), p. 433. Dagron too seems to have missed an opportunity to consider the ecclesiastical historians' shared silence on the emperor's role in what can be

be followed, the ensuing question would be of course, *cui bono*? Differently put, the critical reader is compelled to ask: whose interest could it possibly be to spread those 'rumours'? One would assume that the imperial propaganda right after the accession of Theodosius I in 379 i.e. while the orthodox were busy in repositioning themselves, must have been more concerned about the image of a Christian emperor turned a bishops' slayer more than it was troubled by imperial doctrinal errors of the past. If indeed this was the case, Macedonius was a convenient scapegoat and the 'rumours' seem to have helped to add a touch of authenticity to what seems to be a semi-fabricated story. Sozomen whose outlook (as emerges from our previous analysis) was seemingly more religiously oriented than his predecessor's, exposes here one of his sensitivities. The deceptively innocent remark about 'rumour' as the true origin of the very version of the story which lays the responsibility for Paul's strangling at Macedonius's followers' doorstep, complies with Sozomen's self-imposed regimen of caution. Yet this caution is being maintained without giving up on pressing home the church historian's personal (and critical) agenda. Sozomen's version of the murder of bishop Paul of Constantinople (and that said, it should be borne in mind that another appropriate title for Paul was 'Bishop John Chrysostom's predecessor') appears too to be one of the trajectories of the traumatic fate of John Chrysostom. It would appear that by associating with rumours the version of the story which incriminates the followers of Macedonius, Sozomen is actually discrediting it. Thus, if indeed we are looking at a clue, offered to us by Sozomen, it follows that Constantius himself, regardless of Macedonius's actual role in Paul's demise, must be acknowledged as the main culprit. This interpretation matches Sozomen's self-professed devotion to monks and the ideology of the monastic movement, known to us from Sozomen's own *proemium*¹⁰¹³ since Macedonius was not only bishop of Constantinople but also stood by the cradle of the first monastic foundation in the eastern Roman capital, remaining all along an active patron and friend of the budding Constantinopolitan monastic centre.¹⁰¹⁴

Constantius's uninhibited attitude towards orthodox bishops is not portrayed by Sozomen as emanating from a particularly cruel innate character. The emperor's alleged involvement in the murder of Paul is contrasted, perhaps not coincidentally by Sozomen's somewhat diluted account of Constantius's clement treatment of the usurper Vetrano after the latter's abortive *coup* in Illyricum.¹⁰¹⁵ The emperor who did not spare the life of a prelate who in reality posed no threat to him, proved to be magnanimous towards an adversary who could hardly be belived to have treated Constantius with the same clemency if he had his way:

After the campaign against Illyricum the emperor arrived at Syrmium and Vetrano met him in the same place under conditions agreed in advance (ἐπὶ ῥηταῖς συνθήκαις εἰς ταῦτόν ἐνθάδε Βρετανίων ἦλθε). As the soldiers who had proclaimed him emperor changed sides and saluted Constantius as sole

described as the political preliminary stage in the process of martyr-making. It should be borne in mind that a process such as this is bound to precede the appearance of a relevant hagiography whereby the original political motivations that led to the posthumously- acknowledged martyrdom are already watered-down or absent altogether.

¹⁰¹³ Soz. I, 1. 18-19.

¹⁰¹⁴ On the role of Macedonius in the initial steps of monastic development in Constantinople see: P. Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople ca. 350-850* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 62-65. Note also: V. Drecoll, 'Die Stadtklöster in Kleinasien und Konstantinopel bis 451', *Christianesimo nella Storia* 23 (2002), pp. 623-648.

¹⁰¹⁵ Cf. Soc. II, 28, 18. Socrates stresses that Vetrano's *coup* was suppressed mainly by Constantius's diplomatic skills. On Vetrano, see: A. Omissi, *Emperors and Usurpers in the Later Roman Empire: Civil War, Panegyric, and the Construction of Legitimacy* (Oxford 2018), pp. 163-168 and pp. 182-190.

sovereign and Augustus- (for things turn out to be that way since the emperor himself and his supporters saw to arrange it) – Vetranio grasped the betrayal and so, with the face downwords (πρηνής), he threw himself in supplication at the feet of Constantius. Constantius in fact pitied him, yet he stripped him of the imperial insignia and purple, allowed him to return to private life, ordered to provide liberally for his needs at the expense of the state treasury, and told him that it was more befitting an old man to abstain from the cares of the empire and live in quietude.¹⁰¹⁶

The theme of treachery seems to be gaining more ground in Sozomen's narrative. The place which it occupies takes us back to the very core of Sozomen's understanding of the 'Arian' chapter in the history of the church. Arianism emerges as the betrayal of God in favour of a treacherous idea; that of human reliance on human power instead of trust in God alone. In other words, the various Arian teachings, i.e. the reduction of Christ's divinity to a mere reflection comparable to that of notable prophets and thus, a merely human figure (albeit endowed with supernatural powers) had also impinged on Constantius's understanding of his own political circumstances. The emperor seems to believe, according to Sozomen's account, that his success makes him omnipotent and self-sufficient, a conviction typical of many ancient tyrants as opposed to a God-fearing Christian emperor, who, although not mentioned by name, must be no other than Constantius's direct predecessor namely his father Constantine. Constantius, reportedly, liked to refer to his reign as a sign of God's approval of his Arian confession. When he expressed his beliefs in the west, the reaction from pro-Nicene bishops was at times less restrained than that of their colleagues from the east.¹⁰¹⁷ Constantius was strongly reproached by proponents of Nicene loyalism such as bishop Lucifer of Caralis (modern Cagliari) who strove to refute Constantius's own assertion '*in imperio florere, vivere regni possidens gloriam*'.¹⁰¹⁸ Sozomen's depiction of Constantius at his successive and rather sad victories (not over Rome's barbarian enemies but, over former loyal officers and a relative who was a potential heir) is also the depiction of an emperor who has lost the essential attributes of a Christian sovereign. What are we now to make of Constantius's expedient magnanimity towards Vetranio?¹⁰¹⁹ Constantius does not pause to wonder about the meaning of the frequent rebellions against him such as those of Magnentius, Vetranio and the *magister militum* Silvanus.¹⁰²⁰ Sozomen reports that the Jewish revolt in Palestine (in 353)¹⁰²¹ was

¹⁰¹⁶ Soz. IV, 4, 2-3.

¹⁰¹⁷ On the resistance of the pro-Nicene bishops of the West, see: Hanson (2005), pp. 459-556. For the literary anti-Arian legacy of imperial invectives against the heterodox Constantius II (including notable pro-Nicene Western bishops such as Lucifer of Caralis (Cagliari) and Hilarius (Hilary) of Pictavium (Poitiers), see: R. Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 78-126.

¹⁰¹⁸ See: Lucifer of Cagliari, *De regibus apostaticis*, 1. On anti-Arian thought under Constantius II, see: F. Heim, *La théologie de la victoire de Constantin à Théodose* (Paris 1992), pp. 107-126.

¹⁰¹⁹ Cf. Cicero, *Cato Maior de senectute*, V,17. Cicero's Cato sets forth to refute the common view of notable authors (among them Isocrates and Ennius) on the unsuitability of the elderly for participation in the management of state affairs: *Nihil adferunt qui in re gerenda versari senectutem negant*.

¹⁰²⁰ Soz. IV, 7, 1-3 (on Magnentius) and ibid. 4 (on Silvanus). On the *magister militum* of Frankish origin Silvanus, see: *PLRE*, I, pp. 840-841 s.v. Silvanus 2.

¹⁰²¹ Very little is known about the so-called 'Gallus revolt', commonly dated to 353 (there is no evidence to support the dating 352 suggested by Guy Sabbah in *SC* 418, p. 214, n. 1) which was the last purely-Jewish attempt to take up arms against the Romans in Palestine (unless we take into account the active Jewish participation in the revolt of the Palestinian Samaritans in 529/530. See: A.D. Crown, 'The Samaritans in the Byzantine Orbit', *Bull/RylandsLib* 69, (1986), pp. 96-138. Some scholars tend quite focibly to dismiss the reports about the Gallus revolt as a tendentious exaggeration of Christian authors. See: H. Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2008), p. 137 and pp. 319 ff. Sozomen's account however, (which on the whole is clearer than

suppressed ruthlessly by the *Caesar* Gallus - only to let himself be allured into his own perdition by the same vainglory which was entertained in turn by the other three usurpers.¹⁰²² Instead, like every stiff-necked ruler since the ominous encounters between Pharaoh and Moses, Constantius is driven to produce more of the same which had already incurred the Divine wrath i.e. to convoke more ecclesiastical gatherings aimed at the advancement of his heterodox doctrinal goals. Constantius had to deal with a fierce opposition embodied as before in the unswerving and elusive Athanasius who managed to escape again from another attempt to arrest him.¹⁰²³ Yet, even those concerted efforts aimed primarily at the recalcitrant western episcopate, which were manifested in the councils of Arles (353) and of Milan (355), proved to be fruitless and the *causa Athanasii* kept gathering momentum and gave hope to those who remained true to Nicaea.¹⁰²⁴ The West was not conquered. The emperor strove to strike terror into the minds and hearts of the clergy and continued to rely on force in his attempt to follow his father's footsteps hoping time and again (the repetitiveness being, as Sozomen's narrative implicitly suggests, a symptom of the tyrannical emperor's folly) to achieve heterodox unity in the church. Sozomen allows here the dry facts to speak for themselves and before long Constantius's vanity emerges from his presentation as being entirely deprived of his father's political and personal qualities which Sozomen highlighted and praised in his two first books namely moderation and patience:

*The council of Milan was dissolved without any business having been transacted (ἀπράκτου δὲ διαλυθείσης τῆς ἐν Μεδιολάνῳ συνόδου), and the emperor condemned to banishment all those who opposed the schemes of the enemies of Athanasius. As Constantius wished to establish uniformity of doctrine throughout the Church and to unite the bishops in concord (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν συμφωνεῖν περὶ τὸ δόγμα καὶ τοὺς ἱερέας ὁμονοεῖν) he formed a plan to convene the bishops of all factions to a council to be held in the west. He was aware that this was troublesome given the long distance over land and seas, yet he did not altogether despair of success.*¹⁰²⁵

Sozomen's deceptively plain narrative reveals in this passage the skilful elasticity of our church historian through a virtuosic juggling between various levels of showing and telling, focusing on Constantius's tendency toward self-deception. Here, Sozomen's narrative reflects again his appetite for parody, through an exaggerated presentation not only with what the emperor did (or is believed to have done) but also with the emperor's mind: his thoughts,

Socrates's) does not give any apparent justification for Sivan's hyper-criticism (Soz., IV, 7, 5) : *the Jews of Diocaesarea overran Palestine and the surrounding areas* (οἱ δὲ ἐν Διοκαισαρέᾳ Ἰουδαῖοι τὴν Παλαιστίνην καὶ τοὺς περὶ ὧντας κατέτρεχον). Cf. Soc. II, 33.

¹⁰²² Soz. IV, 7, 6-7.

¹⁰²³ Soz. IV, 10, 4-5

¹⁰²⁴ On the councils of Arles and Milan see: M. Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident, 335-430* (Paris, 1967), p. 270-273; K.M. Girardet, 'Constance II, Athanase et l'édit d'Arles (353): A propos de la politique religieuse de l'empereur Constance II' in: C. Kannengiesser (ed.), *Politique et théologie chez Athanase d'Alexandrie: Actes du Colloque de Chantilly 23-25 Septembre 1973* (Paris 1974), pp. 65-91 (esp. pp. 71-78). Note also: J.M. Hunt, *Constantius II in the Ecclesiastical Historians* (PhD dissertation, Fordham University 2010), pp. 217-230. Hunt finds Sozomen's account of Constantius's intentions plans prior to the council of Milan (Soz. IV, 8, esp. 5-6) as "a more nuanced and gentler interpretation" (compared with Ruf. X, 21 and Theod. II, 15). Hunt appears to have not noticed Sozomen's subtle sarcasm in his depiction of Constantius's scheming. Sozomen is using for that purpose his narratorial authority as an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic (and thus, an omniscient narrator with zero focalisation) to ridicule the ostensible moderation of the emperor who tries to achieve doctrinal uniformity in the Church without using his full power from the outset. Perhaps an attempt to imitate his Father Constantine: "He (*scil.* Constantius), *did not recourse to violence overtly in the first place* (Ἐποίη δὲ τοῦτο οὐ φανερώς οὕτως τὰ πρῶτα βιαζόμενος).

¹⁰²⁵ Soz. IV, 11, 2.

hopes and plans, assuming thus the role of an omniscient narrator.¹⁰²⁶ However, a closer examination of Sozomen's ostensibly knowledgeable reproduction of Constantius's thoughts reveals that this is by no means just a miniature-size rhetorical application of Thucydides's famous speech-writing method. Thucydides notably took the liberty of putting in his protagonists' mouths whatever the historian regards as τὰ δέοντα μάλιστ' εἰπεῖν when other evidence is not available.¹⁰²⁷ Sozomen uses this 'mind-reading' to poke fun at a pedestrian emperor who, despite being an indefatigable council-organiser appears to be more concerned with the logistics of yet another unnecessary ecclesiastical gathering. We can thus surmise that this was Sozomen's way of communicating to the readers, his understanding of Constantius's various initiatives: they were doomed to failure all along despite his (and by implication- the Arians') temporary success. Sozomen's derision is articulated by an emphasis of the emperor's unfounded optimism when Constantius was preoccupied with his new project and before he was getting ready to make an ostentatious entrance into Rome in a triumphant style.¹⁰²⁸

The preparations for a *triumphus*, were hardly justified by the ancient requirements of republican Rome. Victorious Roman generals were officially declared *triumphatores* and authorised to enter Rome in procession through the *porta triumphalis*.¹⁰²⁹ Constantius' preparations - proved to be an overture to a *fiasco*.¹⁰³⁰ Liberius, the new pope (pontificate: 352-366)¹⁰³¹ who had been summoned to the imperial presence resisted 'bravely' (ἀνδρείως) the emperor's attempts to win him over and accept Arian doctrines. The recalcitrant bishop of Rome was consequently exiled to Beroea in Thrace. Moreover, it was now clear that Athanasius's influence was the powerhouse of the western pro-Nicene opposition and

¹⁰²⁶ On omniscience as a literary technique see: R. Scholes and R. Kellog, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York 1966), pp. 272-282; S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* (Abingdon 2002), pp. 96-97.

¹⁰²⁷ Thuc. I, 22, 1.

¹⁰²⁸ Soz. IV, 11, 3: Μένων δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς αὐτῆς γνώμης, πρὶν εἰς Ῥώμην ἔλθεῖν καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν Ῥωμαίοις ἐπιτελεῖν πομπὴν κατὰ τῶν νενικημένον Sozomen is apparently referring to the Roman victorious generals of old who (at least in theory) had to obtain a special permission from the senate to march in a *triumphus* within the *pomerium*. See: M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA 2007), pp. 199-214. On constantius's sojourn in Rome in 357, see: M. Moser, *Emperor and Senators in the Reign of Constantius II: Maintaining Imperial Rule Between Rome and Constantinople in the Fourth Century AD* (Cambridge 2018), pp. 287-312.

¹⁰²⁹ Cf. Amm. Marc. XVI, 10, 2: *Nec enim gentem ullam bella cientem per se superavit, aut victam fortitudine suorum comperit dicum, vel addidit quaedam imperio, aut usquam in necessitatibus summis primus vel inter primos est visus...* *Triumphus* were celebrated in old Rome according to certain sources, until Diocletian's triumph in 303. See: *Panegyrici Latini* II, 4; Eutropius 9, 27, 2; Chronographus anni 354 (= *MGH AA* 9, 148); Cassiodorus, *Chronica* (= *MGH AA* II, 150).

According to another source it was the western emperor Honorius who held the last triumph in 404. See: Orosius, *Hist.* VII, 9, 8. At any event, Constantius's desire to enter Rome triumphantly reflects a process of transformation of the ceremony from a former living honorific tradition into a stale imitation, serving primarily for self-glorification. There seems to have been a tendency to imitate this ceremonial tradition in some way even later. An imperial triumphal celebration, such as that of the emperor Anastasius in 498 was still likened by a contemporary poet to the triumph of Aemilius Paulus, the victor of the battle of Pydna who brought to an end both the third Macedonian War, as well as the Kingdom of Macedon itself in 168 B.C. See: Priscian, *De laude Anastasii*, 174-177.

¹⁰³⁰ Ammianus likens, evidently not by coincidence, Constantius's first impressions of Rome upon his arrival at the city to those of Pyrrhus. See: Amm. Marc. XVI, 10, 5.

¹⁰³¹ Cf. Amm. Marc. XV, 7, 6. Ammianus refers to Liberius as *Christianae legis antistes*. In the same chapter Ammianus points out that the emperor, despite having driven Athanasius from his see in Alexandria, was nonetheless very eager to secure the support of 'the greater authority of the bishop of the Eternal City' (*tamen auctoritate quoque potiore aeternae urbis episcopi firari desiderio nitebatur ardenti*). On pope Liberius, see: T.D. Barnes, 'The Capitulation of Liberius and Hilary of Poitiers', *Phoenix* 46 (1992), pp. 256-265.

Sozomen is once again very keen to emphasize the bishop of Alexandria's long shadow. But apart from heaping praises on Athanasius, this example also enriches our church historian's portrayal of an emperor, consumed by a personal obsession towards the fugitive prelate.¹⁰³² Sozomen reports allegations that the true reason for Liberius's banishment was an objection to Constantius's request to withdraw from communion with Athanasius.¹⁰³³ Liberius, according to Sozomen, did not content himself with this act of defiance but went on to push the boundaries even further, offering the emperor uncalled-for advice about the measures that must be taken to remedy the conflictual situation of the Church. This is seemingly a response to an emperor blinded by his own vanity. However, Sozomen, the experienced lawyer, is highlighting on this occasion what appears to be nothing more than shallow legalistic argumentation – as opposed to a spiritually-motivated commitment of the bishop of Rome to the Nicene doctrine:

*As the emperor referred to all the decrees which had been enacted against Athanasius by various councils, and particularly by that of Tyre, Liberius told him that no regard ought to be paid to edicts which were issued from motives of hatred, of favour, or of fear. He sought to get the bishops of every region to sign the formulary of faith compiled at Nicaea (ἐξίηται δὲ τὴν μὲν ἐν Νικαίᾳ παραδοθεῖσαν πίστιν ὑπογραφαῖς τῶν πανταχοῦ ἐπισκόπων κρατίνεσθαι) and that those bishops who had been exiled on account of their adherence to it should be recalled.*¹⁰³⁴

Constantius's hopes to attract the Church of Rome to his camp were thus frustrated, although he was still keen to try his luck with Liberius, abandoning theological and legalistic debating and reverting to less refined means of persuasion, such as bribery. As with his handling of the role of Constantine in the encounter between bishop Alexander of Constantinople and the philosophers, the biblical inspiration behind Sozomen's narrative can hardly be regarded as just a passing similarity. The source of this inspiration is this time, seemingly, the New Testament:

*The emperor perceiving that Liberius was not inclined to comply with his mandate, commanded that he should be deported to Thrace, unless he would change his mind in two days. "For me o emperor", replied Liberius, "there is no need of deliberation; my resolution has long been formed and decided and I am ready to go forth to exile." It is said that when he was being taken away to banishment, the emperor sent him five hundred pieces of Gold: he however, refused to receive them and said to the messenger who brought them: "Go and tell the sender of this gold to give it to the flatterers and hypocrites who surround him (ἄπιθι καὶ ἄγγελον τῷ πεπομφότῳ τὸ χρυσοῖον τοῦτο δοῦναι τοῖς ἄμφ' αὐτὸν κόλαξι καὶ ὑποκριταῖς) for their insatiable greediness plunges them into a state of perpetual want which can never be relieved. Christ who is the same as the father in everything provides us with food and with all goodness."*¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰³² Cf. Amm. Mar. XV 7, 10: *Id (scil. Constantius) enim ille Athanasio semper infestus, licet sciret impletum, tamen auctoritate quoque potiore aeternae urbis episcopi firmari desiderio nitebatur ardenti.* On Athanasius as a fugitive, see: J. Barry, *Bishops in Flight: Exile and Displacement in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA 2019), pp. 31-55.

¹⁰³³ Soz. IV, 11, 4. It seems that by using for this purpose the conventional λέγεται, Sozomen is singling out what he regards as more trustworthy information.

¹⁰³⁴ *ibid.* 4-5.

¹⁰³⁵ Soz. IV, 11, 9-10.

Constantius assumes here the role of the high priest Caiaphas, surrounded by the contemporary incarnation of the hypocritical Pharisees¹⁰³⁶, i.e. the Arian clergy, whose flattery and hypocritical behaviour had already been highlighted and scorned by Sozomen more than once before. The emperor, as we have seen before, is very keen to add the bishop of Rome to this circle. Yet, Liberius is steadfast in his resistance to the emperor who tries to turn him into a new Judas Iscariot by offering him a handsome amount of money.¹⁰³⁷ We must not let Liberius's praise remain solely at the centre of attention, nor should we see in Sozomen's portrayal of Liberius as a bishop who missed an opportunity to be martyred for the sake of Nicene orthodoxy, the only purpose of our church historian's narrative. There is another nuance which is brought to the fore alongside Liberius's personal strength. Sozomen is acknowledging implicitly through the figure of the allegedly incorruptible Pope, Rome's privileged position in the ecclesiastical world. Sozomen's high regard for Old

Rome becomes more explicit if we take into account his watering down (which he shares with other pro-Nicene sources) of Liberius's eventual compromise with the very same "hypocrites" (i.e. the court Arian clergy) later on at a council in Sirmium in winter of 357-358.¹⁰³⁸ Sozomen is thus making a statement which is far from being straightforward, given that it was made in the charged atmosphere of Constantinople apparently a city quite unfavourable to old Rome during the late 440's and the early 450's.¹⁰³⁹ It is permissible to infer from this episode that Sozomen, a concerned orthodox, harks back to Rome's unshakeable loyalty to the Nicene cause which proved to be essential in the survival of the Catholic Church when what seems to be a volatile east was led astray by the Arian "human" doctrines. We can imagine that Pope Leo the Great's role in the doctrinal crisis which was brewing when Sozomen was writing could have affirmed our church historian's pro-Roman view. His aforementioned command of Latin which made western source material available to him, must have helped to bolster this kind of ecclesiastical *weltanschauung* as well. Although this might appear a very uncommon outlook for an eastern Roman jurist in the wake of the Council of Chalcedon, there is nevertheless sufficient evidence to justify a reassessment of the cultural strands in the eastern Roman empire during the reign of Theodosius II (408-450) being "firstly, and in a very profound sense, Roman."¹⁰⁴⁰

¹⁰³⁶ Cf. Matthew, 15, 7-9. Jesus, having addressed the Pharisees "You hypocrites!" goes on to quote the prophet Isaiah (29, 13): "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men". It should be noted that the "precepts of men" (LXX: ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων; Bibl. Hebr.: מִצְוֹת אֲנָשִׁים קְלָמָה) does not refer only to a postulated general fallacy which may underpin heterodox teachings but can also be pointing more specifically to their contents, namely the Arian emphasis on the *supremacy of human nature* in Christ. Thus, according to this interpretation, Arianism is not only a figment of human imagination, but also a mindless human percept and therefore, profanation of the Divine.

¹⁰³⁷ Mark, 14, 10-11.

¹⁰³⁸ Soz. IV, 15. See: T. Barnes (1993), pp. 138-141. See also: J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford 2000), pp. 134-135.

¹⁰³⁹ See: G. Dagron (1974), pp. 481-483; C. Fraise-Coué in L. Pietri (ed.) *Histoire du Christianisme* III (Paris 1998), pp. 65-76. A major phocal point in the tensions between Rome and Constantinople at the time was the question of Ecclesiastical Roman Supremacy which remained a haunting concern in the Church of Rome since the Council of Constantinople in 381, as the see of the New Rome was constantly extending its power *de facto* while claiming entitlement to more privileges *de iure*. These tensions came to a head in the Council of Chalcedon in 451. See: S. Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome* (Leiden 2012), pp. 285-308.

¹⁰⁴⁰ F. Millar (2006), p. 84. Millar's discussion goes beyond the "technical" approach to the use of Latin in the imperial government and public administration typified by Gilbert Dagron's concept of *langue d'état*.

Constantius had two more councils ahead of him: that of Nicomedia and the 'double' council of Ariminum – Seleucia. The council of Nicomedia never went ahead since an earthquake hit the city hard before the bishops managed to get there. Sozomen reports that the tremor was felt as far away as the cities of Nicaea, Perinthus "and even Constantinople".¹⁰⁴¹ This intervention of a *force majeure* marks in Sozomen's account the beginning of a certain softening in Constantius's doctrinal zeal. He sought the advice and spiritual guidance of bishop Basil of Ancyra, the leader of the homoian faction out of profound perplexity.¹⁰⁴² The bishop must have sensed the first telling signs of loss of commitment on the emperor's part and hastened to reply, commending the emperor's piety and urging him not to miss an opportunity to demonstrate his zeal for religion.¹⁰⁴³ Basil's letter was effective at least temporarily, for when the bishops were already gathered in Ariminum and Seleucia, Constantius was back to his old self, planning another council to discuss and summarise the proceedings of the synod of western bishops (convened in Italy at Ariminum, on the Adriatic coast), as well as the resolutions of their eastern colleagues (gathered at Seleucia, in Isauria, on the southern coast of Asia Minor). Sozomen however does not refrain from illustrating once again the obstinacy and narrowmindedness of Constantius. The emperor exhibits as always vigorous involvement in the endeavours to restore unity to the divided church. Still when preparations for the new council got underway, it was imperative to use very mundane reasoning concerning the terms of its convocation until the emperor was persuaded, according to Sozomen:

Millar demonstrates the far-reaching bearings that "dual-lingualism" had vis-à-vis the position of Greek as the main language of the population. Because of that, the survival of Latin in public service provided a useful tool of social integration by means of recruitment and acculturation at the service of what Millar calls "Greek Roman Empire". Millar points out that "there is very little to show that even among educated persons who had learned Latin, the inherited corpus of pagan Latin literature, or Christian theological writing in Latin, normally entered an individual's culture" (ibid. p. 91). And yet, Millar is also making convincingly a case for the importance of a consideration of certain individual exceptions by drawing our attention to the fact that "In the context of the Greek Church, as the *Acta* of the Councils show, the one Christian Latin writer who functions prominently as a point of reference for orthodox doctrine is Ambrose of Milan." (*loc. cit.*). Sozomen, the Constantinople lawyer, can thus be regarded as a product of this integrative process. It would seem that Sozomen may have been able to retain his independent judgement and look up to Rome and to Latin theological literature, finding in them a haven of unyielding orthodoxy and uninterrupted loyalty to Nicea, whilst the Greek ecclesiastical world around him was showing again signs of doctrinal inconsistency and instability, just as it did during the reign of Constantius II. Liberius thus becomes a personified symbol of old Rome and by implication - of Catholic bravery. Liberius will be followed in turn by Ambrose, another audacious prelate who dared to oppose and even castigate an emperor, Theodosius I 'the great'. See: Soz. VII, 25. On the beginnings of Ambrose's cult, see: N. B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, CA 1994), pp. 368-377. This Roman tradition seems to have found in Sozomen's own time its due exponent in Pope Leo I 'the great' who, as Millar himself stresses "engaged in direct correspondence with Theodosius (*scil.* the younger) in Latin, which did not require translation" (Millar, *op.cit.*, p. 94). Sozomen associates solid loyalty to Nicene orthodoxy not only with old Rome but also with the western clergy in general. See: Soz. VI, 24, 1.

¹⁰⁴¹ Soz. IV, 16, 1-3

¹⁰⁴² On Basil of Ancyra's career, see: G. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 32 (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1923), pp. 124-28; Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids, MI 2005), pp. 325-329; M. Simonetti, *La Crisi Ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome 1975), pp. 202-206. For a detailed discussion of Basil's involvement in the councils that took place between 351 and 360, see: L. Ayers, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford 2004), pp. 134-160.

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid. pp. 15-16.

*'That it would neither be desirable for the public because of the expense, nor advantageous to the bishops due to the long distances (πεισθεῖς δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς ὥς οὔτε τῷ δημοσίῳ λυσιτεῖ διὰ τὴν δαπάνην οὔτε τοῖς ἐπισκόποις διὰ τὰς μακρὰς ὁδοὺς)'*¹⁰⁴⁴

Sozomen prefers to say essentially no more about Constantius and moves on to discuss in detail the deliberations of the twin councils. We hear from Constantius very briefly whilst he is engaged in yet another attempt to convince the bishops of the East who were convened in Seleucia to accept the resolutions document, drafted by their colleagues in the twin-council of Ariminum.¹⁰⁴⁵ At this point in Sozomen's narrative, the emperor seems to have vacated the ecclesiastical arena and the bishops, as well as the theologians, become together the main actors in an ecclesiastical drama revolving around the subtleties of theological nuances and a brutal series of episcopal depositions. The marginalisation of the emperor in Sozomen's narrative at this particular point becomes very telling when the shadows of divisive prelates such as Eudoxius, the new bishop of Constantinople and Acacius, the bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, were cast on the ecclesiastical arena. Sozomen expresses his dismay at the ecclesiastical anarchy which followed the zealous attempt of the two Arian bishops to eliminate the Nicene legacy as well as those who had remained loyal to it:

*Eudoxius and Acacius jointly exerted themselves to the utmost in endeavoring to cause the edicts of the Nicene council to fall into oblivion. They sent the formulary read at Ariminum with various explanatory additions of their own, to every province of the empire, and obtained from the emperor an edict for the banishment of all who should refuse to subscribe to it. But this undertaking which appeared to them so easy of execution, was the beginning of the greatest calamities, for it stirred havoc throughout the empire and inflicted on the Church in every region a persecution more grievous than those which it had suffered under the pagan emperors.*¹⁰⁴⁶

Why were the Arian bishops given at this point a *carte blanche* to police the thoughts and the actions of their opponents? The question receives more leverage as the edict was issued by an emperor who up until then showed a clear propensity to supervise closely the experiments at the doctrinal laboratory and scrutinize their political bearings. Was Constantius so preoccupied by more urgent affairs that he was no longer able to continue his personal efforts to win over the Catholics or to harness the theological acumen of the 'full' Arians, the 'semi'-Arians (homoians) or the 'ultra'-Arians (or 'Anomeans')?¹⁰⁴⁷ Constantius's role seems to have

¹⁰⁴⁴ Soz. IV, 17, 1.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Soz. IV, 24, 8. Sozomen finds once again a way to juxtapose the sacred and the secular by stressing that Constantius's negotiations in the Council of Constantinople with the eastern bishops were carried out: *as he was getting ready for a Consular procession the next day, according to the Roman custom, on the first of the month called by them January* (καθὰ Ῥωμαίος ἔθος ἐν τῇ νομηνίᾳ τοῦ παπ' αὐτοῖς Ἰαννουαρίου μηνός). It is worth noting that the Romans are being referred to by Sozomen as "they" and the Roman installation of a Consul is described by Sozomen, on the whole, as if it were an alien custom which required, for the benefit of the reader, an explanatory note on a very basic level, not neglecting to include the Latin name of the first month of the new year. Sozomen's remark seems to reflect, despite his personal interest in western affairs and his access to Latin culture, his concurrent awareness of a growing distance between the Greek and Latin Roman Empires (cf. Soc. I, 16, who uses the name 'second Rome' Δευτέρᾳ Ῥώμῃ). On the transformation of old Rome's image in the literature and scholarship of the new Rome, see: G. Bowersock, 'Old and New Rome in the Late Antique Near East', in P. Rousseau and M. Papoutsakis (eds.), *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown* (Farnham 2009), pp. 37-49.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Soz. IV, 26, 2-3.

¹⁰⁴⁷ The Anomeans were the followers of the sophist *cum* theologian Aetius of Antioch (d. 366) whose presence was already receiving considerable notice. The principles of Aetius's theology came down to us in his *Syntagmaton* (*apud* Epiph, *Panarion*, 76, 11, 1). On Aetius and his disciple Eunomius of Cyzicus, see:

diminished considerably in the council of Constantinople in 360 while the synods of the Acacians which were convened at Antioch later on are already incorporated into Sozomen's narrative without any evident trace of imperial interest or response to them.¹⁰⁴⁸ On the other hand, could the reason for this side-lining of the emperor simply be something more prosaic such as a *lacuna* created originally by Sozomen's (and Socrates's) source for this period, the lost work of the heterodox (more specifically, Macedonian) bishop Sabinus of Heraclea Perinthus in Thrace?¹⁰⁴⁹ Any attempt to answer any of these questions is not likely to break the confinements of the speculative. Yet, a consideration of a purposeful focalisation seems to be more appropriate. Sozomen, the admirer of Constantine, is making here an unequivocal political statement: the church needs the emperor as much as the emperor needs the church. Sozomen concludes this episode of ecclesiastical quasi-anarchy with a grim reflection which seems to be hiding at the same time also a stark admonition:

*For if this persecution did not appear to be that much torturous to the body as the preceding ones, it appeared more grievous to the sound-minded on account of its disgracefulness; for both the persecutor and the persecuted were the off-spring of the church. In addition, the evil was all the more disgraceful for people of the same religion treated their fellows with a degree of cruelty which the sanctified law prohibits to be manifested towards enemies and strangers (καὶ τοσοῦτον αἰσχρὸν τὸ κακόν, ὅσον πρὸς τῷ ὁμοφύλους τὰ πολεμίων δρᾶν καὶ περὶ ἄλλοφύλους τοιούτους εἶναι ὁ ἱερατικὸς θεσμὸς ἀπηγόρευεν).*¹⁰⁵⁰

Sozomen seems to be more fearful of the consequences of the empowerment of the Arian bishops by the emperor than engaged in an opprobrium of the main culprit. The highlighting of the fact that 'both persecutor and persecuted' (i.e. both heterodox and orthodox), were after all Christians, seems to suggest that Sozomen regarded all other criteria of identity, self-determination, class and status as subordinate to a Christian ecumenical fellowship. It follows that the only power which can be counted as truly abused is the one which was supposedly invested in an individual by God Himself to act in His name. Therefore, not Constantius who granted the Arian bishops extra-ordinary authorities but rather, the bishops who requested them appear to be the main villains of the story. It is permissible to assume that if indeed Sozomen was writing in the shadow of something reminiscent of this ecclesiastical havock i.e. at some odd point between 448 and 450, he could have had on his mind the case of bishop Dioscurus of Alexandria and his attempt of continue and amplify the expansionist policy of his predecessor in order to establish Alexandrian hegemony in the Christian Church.¹⁰⁵¹ Be it

R. P. Vaggione O.H.C, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford 2000), pp. 12-29. Note also: L. Ayers (2004), pp. 144-149.

¹⁰⁴⁸ On the Arian Acacius, Eusebius's influential successor at the see of Caesarea in Palestine (episcopate: 340- ca. 365), see: J. T. Lienhard, SJ, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington DC 1999), pp. 182-186 and Id. 'Acacius of Caesarea, *Contra Marcellum*. Historical and Theological Considerations', *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 10 (1989), pp. 1-22.

¹⁰⁴⁹ On Sabinus, the Macedonian bishop of Heraclea-Perinthus (modern Marmara Ereğlisi on the north shore of Marmara Sea, Turkey) and his lost συναγωγή τῶν συνοδικῶν (attested in Soc. I, 8, 25 ; II, 17, 10 ; III, 10,11;III, 25,19, IV,12,41) see: P. Battifol, 'Sozomène et Sabinos', *ByZ* 7 (1898), pp. 265-284 ; G. Schoo, *Die Quellen des Kirchenhistorikers Sozomenos* (Berlin 1911), pp. 95-105 (both still essential). Note also: W.-D. Hauschild, 'Die antinizänische Synodalsammlung des Sabinus von Heraklea', *VChr* 24 (1970), pp. 105-126 and more recently, Van Nuffelen (2004), pp. 447-454. Van Nuffelen seems to be somewhat hesitant about the identification of Sabinus as the source for most of Soz. IV, 27-30. See: Id. *op. cit.* p. 453.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Soz. IV, 26, 4.

¹⁰⁵¹ For the complex nature of Dioscurus's role in the ecclesiastical crisis preceding the Council of Chalcedon, see: S. Acerbi, 'Ortodossia, Eterodossia ed Emarginazione Religiosa nei Concili

as it may, it is quite clear that even if Constantius did find a way to keep a watchful eye on ecclesiastical affairs (and there is no reason to think he was losing interest in them), the emperor could not interfere actively any longer. There was no shortage of concerns on the diplomatic and on the military fronts and these most certainly demanded Constantius's undivided attention in 360 as the situation on the eastern frontier was escalating. Sassanid Persia was posing an ever-growing military threat through incursions into Roman Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁵² Sozomen, unlike Socrates¹⁰⁵³ was not of the opinion that his readers required an interlude peppered with military history to entertain them between the acts of the ecclesiastical drama and does not elaborate on that particular Persian war. Sozomen only remarks (as part of his concluding note on the aftermath of the deposition of bishop Meletius of Antioch) that the emperor came to Antioch having heard that the Persians were about to launch an attack against the Romans.¹⁰⁵⁴

However, another more immediate threat, (as Constantius was soon to find out) was emerging from the west. More specifically, from Gaul. This latest threat was posed by Constantius's successful half cousin, Julian (ca. 330-363). Constantius will appear again in the opening chapter of book V only to find his sudden death, aged forty-five (in 361).¹⁰⁵⁵

With Constantius's death, Sozomen not only begins the remainder of his *HE* but also brings a distinctive era to a close. Timothy Barnes, following Socrates (*Soc.* II, 41, 17) and the Oxonian patristics scholar J.N.D. Kelly, refers to Constantius's reign as a labyrinthine 'Age of Synodal Creeds' in his useful summary of the creeds and councils between 337 and 361.¹⁰⁵⁶ It seems more accurate, however, to stretch that periodisation backwards and include in it Constantine's reign as well. Despite the obvious difference, the two emperors emerge from Sozomen's narrative as ambitious and notoriously involved in ecclesiastical affairs. It would be fair to say that both emperors sought to unify the church through (*mutatis mutandis*) measured paternalism. On the whole, Sozomen's account grants them the status of

Orientali del V Secolo: Il Caso di Dioscoro di Alessandria', in: F. Amérigo (ed.), *Religión, Religiones, Identidad, Identidades, Minorías; Actas del V Simposio de la Sociedad Española de Ciencias de las Religiones Valencia 1-3 de febrero 2002* (Las Casillas, Jaén 2003), pp. 67-77.

¹⁰⁵² On Roman-Persian relations in the fourth century see: B. Dignas and E. Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge 2007), pp.32-34 and R.C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (Leeds 1992), pp.12 -24. Note also: K. Schieppmann, *Grundzüge der Geschichte des sasanidischen Reiches* (Darmstadt 1990), pp. 32-52. The aggravation of relations between Constantius and Julian since the latter's self-proclamation as *Augustus* which took place in winter 360 in Paris is described by Ammianus Marcellinus throughout most of the twentieth book of his *Res Gestae*. See: Amm. Mar. XX, 4-11

¹⁰⁵³ Soc V, ΠΠΟΙΜΙΟΝ. Socrates presents here his theory about the συμπάθεια between state affairs and ecclesiastical affairs. Socrates does not try to conceal the priority the state receives on the whole in his historiography: If the state falls into disarray, the affairs of the church become muddled too. Nothing seems to be more far from Sozomen's interpretation, whereby the state can become the embodiment of all evil while the Catholic Church continues to march from glory to glory provided that it remains true to Nicene orthodoxy. Thus, the persecutions perpetrated by the Arian bishops and condoned (to say the least) by the state under Constantius II, proved, according to Sozomen, to be instrumental in the consolidation and expansion of the Catholic Church. See: Soz. I, 1, 17. The reign of Valens the pro-Arian zealot, is also, according to Sozomen, one of the finest hours of orthodoxy as it saw the rise of the monastic movement which was to play a major role in the final victory of the Nicene doctrine. See: Soz. VI, 27, 10.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Soz. IV, 28, 11.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Soz. V, 1, 6.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Barnes (1993), p. 229.

Constantine's epigones as their attempts to mimic him were doomed to failure. After all they were not on the side of the Nicene doctrine.

B. From Julian to Valens: Apostasy, Heterodoxy and the Survival of the Nicene Faith

Julian was at the advent of his usurpation (i.e. 360/361) in charge of the Roman army in Gaul.¹⁰⁵⁷ Constantius made him a junior co-ruler bearing the title of *Caesar* five years earlier (i.e. in 355, when Julian was hardly twenty-five years of age). It seems that the dynastic principle dictated Constantius's choice despite the fact that Julian was the younger half-brother of the unsuccessful usurper Gallus and given the fact that both were the survivors of the massacre of the imperial family shortly after Constantine's death in 337.¹⁰⁵⁸ Sozomen's account of Julian's reign largely consists of a mirror-imaging of Constantine's reign, not unlike what could be expected from a Christian historian writing about the apostate.¹⁰⁵⁹ Thus, Julian set forth to undo the transformation of the Roman Empire, according to Sozomen's account, in every minute detail associated (albeit vaguely, at times) with Constantine and Christianity:

He himself offered libations openly and publicly sacrificed ; bestowed honours on those who were zealous in the performance of those ceremonies; restored the initiators and the priests, the hierophants and the servants of the images to their old privileges; and confirmed the legislation of former emperors on their behalf; he conceded exemption from duties and from other burdens as was their previous right; he restored the provisions which had been abolished, to the temple guardians, and commanded them to be pure from meats, and to abstain from whatever according to pagan saying was befitting him who had announced his purpose of leading a pure life. He also ordered that the nilometer and the symbols and the former ancestral tablets (τὸν πῆχυν τοῦ Νεῖλου καὶ τὰ σύμβολα κατὰ τὰ παλαιὰ πάτρια) should be cared for in the temple of Sarapis, instead of being deposited, according to the regulation, established by Constantine (κατὰ πρόσταξιν γὰρ Κωνσταντίνου), in the church.¹⁰⁶⁰

It seems that Christianity as such was by no means the only object of Julian's strong feelings of anger and hatred, although they sufficed to make him raze to the ground the city of Caesarea in Cappadocia.¹⁰⁶¹ There were also other factors such as Julian's profound and life-long interest in the study of Neo-Platonic philosophy.¹⁰⁶² Another element was Julian's hatred

¹⁰⁵⁷ See: K. Rosen, *Julian: Kaiser, Gott und Christenhasser* (Stuttgart 2006), pp. 135-177; G.W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, MA 1978), pp. 31-45.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Soz. V, 2, 8-14. See: S. Tougher, *Julian the Apostate* (Edinburgh 2007), pp. 12-21. See also: R. M. Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius* (Chapel Hill, NC 2006), pp. 16-19.

¹⁰⁵⁹ For a recent assessment of Christian literary response to Julian, see: P. Van Nuffelen, 'The Christian reception of Julian' in H.-U. Wiemer and S. Rebenich (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Julian* (Leiden 2020), pp. 356-393. Van Nuffelen conveniently divides that response into three categories namely, polemic, history and hagiography. However, as regards 'history', Van Nuffelen rightly points out that 'Christian historiographical views were formed in dialogue with earlier positive and negative traditions about Julian. Yet, these two bodies of evidence cannot always be neatly separated' See: *ibid.* p. 365.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Soz. V, 3, 2-3.

¹⁰⁶¹ Soz. V, 4, 1. Cf. Libanius, *orat.* XVI, 14.

¹⁰⁶² See: J. Bouffartigue, 'Philosophie et anti-Christianisme chez l'empereur Julien' in : M. Narcy and É. Rebillard (eds.), *Hellénisme et Christianisme* (Villeneuve d'Ascq 2004), pp. 111-131.

of Constantius II who slaughtered his nearest family.¹⁰⁶³ This is taken to be a certain fixation connected with Constantine, for the figure of Constantine appears to have occupied a central position amongst the targets of Julian's fury as much as they have been praised by Julian's admirers such as Ammianus Marcellinus.¹⁰⁶⁴ In other words, it would appear that the reader's attention is drawn to a certain personal competitiveness which Sozomen subtly interweaves amongst the main threads of Julian's obsessive aversion to Christianity. Sozomen goes on to illustrate this through a description of Julian's behaviour in Sozomen's native region of Gaza in Palestine. Julian's attention was drawn to Maiumas, the harbour of Gaza. This small town was situated at a distance of twenty stadia from the city of Gaza.¹⁰⁶⁵ It is permissible to assume that the new name Constantia was given to Maiumas⁷⁵ as a token of imperial euergetism. It did not however offer much which could possibly appease Julian's hatred of his two predecessors:

He likewise accused the inhabitants of Constantia in Palestine of attachment to Christianity and rendered their city tributary to that of Gaza. Constantia as we stated before ¹⁰⁶⁶, was formerly called Majumas and was used as a harbor for the vessels of Gaza...On the accession of Julian, the citizens of Gaza went to law against those of Constantia. The emperor himself sat as a judge, and decided in favour of Gaza, and commanded that Constantia should be an appendage to that city...Its former name having been abolished by him, it has since been renamed the maritime quarter of Gaza.¹⁰⁶⁷

Sozomen comments here not only on another aspect of Julian's anti-Christian policies. He is also writing as a lawyer reviewing a legal procedure. There is no additional commentary on the abused authority of the emperor as a supreme judge. It is not only the inequity towards a Christian community but also the salient violation of the Roman traditional respect for previous imperial legislation which is made to speak for itself in a particularly bold narrative strategy. We can assume in addition that Sozomen writes here not just as a detached legal analyst but, being a native of the region surrounding the city of Gaza, as an expert with first-hand knowledge of the subject under discussion.¹⁰⁶⁸ Sozomen himself hastens to bolster his focalisation by inserting into his account acknowledgement of his personal connection to this

¹⁰⁶³ See: J. Bidez, *La Vie de l'Empereur Julien* (Paris 1930; Repr. 1965), p. 86.

¹⁰⁶⁴ For an appraisal of Julian's portrayals by fourth and fifth century sources (though Sozomen's *HE* is hardly mentioned), see: H.-G. Nesselrath, 'Kaiserlicher Held und Christenfeind: Julian Apostata im Urteil des späteren 4. und des 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.' in B. Bäbler and id. (eds.), *Die Welt des Sokrates von Konstantinopel* (Munich and Leipzig 2001), pp. 15-43.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Soz. V, 3, 7. Maiumas was the town's ancient Semitic name, apparently a derivative of *Mayim* (מים) or *Maya* (מַיָּא) i.e. "water" in Hebrew and Aramaic, respectively.

¹⁰⁶⁶ cf. Soz. II, 5, 7-8

¹⁰⁶⁷ Soz. V, 3, 7. On the changes in the status of Gaza, its civic administration, the rivalry with maiumas and the creation of *Palestina Salutaris* see: J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration* (Oxford 1972), p.174; K. M. Hay, 'Evolution of Resistance: Peter the Iberian, Itinerant Bishop' in P. Allen and L. Cross (eds.), *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church Vol. I* (Brisbane 1997), pp. 159-168; L. Di Segni, 'The Territory of Gaza: Notes on Historical Geography' in: B. Biton-Ashkelony and A. Kofsky (eds.), *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2004), pp. 41-59.

¹⁰⁶⁸ For an analysis of Sozomen's view of Julian, emphasising Sozomen's reliance, first and foremost, on Julian's letters, See: P. Célérier, *L'ombre de l'empereur Julien. Le destin des écrits de Julien chez les auteurs païens et chrétiens du IV^e au VI^e siècle* (Paris 2013), pp. 70-95. Célérier concludes following his rather one-dimensional discussion: 'Les lettres de Julien sont pour lui des faits historiques à part entière. En somme, Sozomène se serait montré plus « objectif » que Socrate, moins polémique.' (*op. cit.* p. 95).

regional topic in the following section, which is a very brief aside, dealing with a later unsuccessful attempt of the bishop of Gaza to unify the episcopal sees of Gaza and Majumas.¹⁰⁶⁹ Sozomen's readers could find here another reassurance of the aptitude, credibility and indeed, the authority of the ecclesiastical historian they chose to read. Sozomen, unlike Socrates when writing on Julian,¹⁰⁷⁰ does not feel obliged to explain his choice of style or produce an apology on the inclusion of an emperor like Julian in an ecclesiastical history. To Sozomen, the Christian response to Julian's campaign against the Church was not a philosophical drill. It was merely the Church's struggle for survival.¹⁰⁷¹ It seems that Sozomen from his vantage point in the late 440's is less detached than Socrates and this manifests itself in his assessment of the Church's chances to survive had Julian's plans materialised. Sozomen is far from underestimating the seriousness and the abilities of the apostate. The severity of the threat that Christianity was facing is reflected, according to Sozomen, in Julian's insights and his deep understanding of the Christian psyche (alongside destructive sentiments such as envy) which led him to opt for what can only be described as a strategy of reversed psychology against the Christians:

*It is not from any feeling of compassion towards the Christians that he treated them at first with greater humanity than had been evinced by former persecutors, but because he had discovered that paganism had derived no advantage from their tortures, while Christianity had been especially increased, and had become more honoured by the fortitude of those who had died in defense of the faith. It was simply from envy of their glory that instead of employing fire and the sword against them to a change of sentiment, he had resorted to argument and persuasion and sought by these means to reduce them to paganism; he expected to gain his goal more easily by abandoning all coercive measures, and by the manifestation of unexpected benevolence (καὶ τοῦ σκοποῦ περιέσεσθαι ῥαδίως, εἰ βιάζεσθαι μὴ ἀξιώσας ἐκ παραδόξου φιλάνθρωπός τις εἶναι δόξει περὶ αὐτούς).*¹⁰⁷²

Sozomen's attempt to disassemble the cogs in Julian's brain produces an unexpected observation. Julian's failure to suppress Christianity, to Sozomen's mind, was a result of his presumed advantage namely: his familiarity with some of Christianity's most acclaimed assets such as personal sacrifice, endurance and the power of persuasion which emanates from both, coupled with the acquisition of an impressive contingent of prominent and

¹⁰⁶⁹ Soz. V, 3, 9. Sozomen indicates that the failed attempt to unify the two episcopal sees happened in his own lifetime. See: H. Sivan (2008), pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Soc. III, 1, 4.

¹⁰⁷¹ Soc. V, *praef.*, 10. See: T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople* (Ann Arbor, MI 1997), pp. 156-159. Urbainczyk tries to present Socrates's depiction of Julian as somewhat more positive than those of Sozomen and Theodoret although she admits nonetheless that in Socrates's ecclesiastical history, "Julian is not presented favorably" (ibid. p. 157). Urbainczyk suggests that Socrates's approach may have been the fruit of an attempt "to reach an audience of people who had been exposed to a favourable account of Julian's reign." (p. 158). This suggestion remains virtually unsupported. Urbainczyk herself goes on to show how Socrates scorns Julian for failing to live up to his philosophical principles (Soc. III, 19, 1-2) and praises Theodosius II for being a true philosopher-king (Soc. VII, 22, 7-8). Sozomen's account seems to be less judicious than his predecessor's. However, Sozomen stresses repeatedly that Julian threatened to annihilate the entire Christian Church. Christian attacks on Julian are in Sozomen's eyes, so to speak, acts of self-defence or in his own words: *his threat would have been fully executed had his death not been quicker* (Ἐξέβη δ' ἂν ἵσος εἰς ἔργον ἢ ἀπειλή, εἰ μὴ θᾶττον ἐτελεύτησεν). (Soz. V, 4, 6).

¹⁰⁷² Soz. V, 4, 7.

persuasive scholars, philosophers and orators.¹⁰⁷³ Julian, despite his rejection of Christianity, emerges nonetheless a true admirer of its cultural agencies. He believed that the road towards a de-Christianisation of the Roman Empire passed through an adaption of the same methods which the Christian Church employed until (and indeed after) Constantine was won over. It follows that *instead of employing fire and sword against them* should be read as a continuation of Sozomen's fears about Julian's hidden intentions as expressed in the preceding sentence.¹⁰⁷⁴ Julian could have been in Sozomen's estimate more successful had he not been besotted by Christianity's own success. Thus, the Church was again saved thanks to its own qualities which had enchanted even its sworn enemies.¹⁰⁷⁵

Julian's ambition to beat Christianity with its own weapons is thus frustrated by the emperor himself. Sozomen keeps focusing on this 'schizophrenia' which seems to be so different from the more monochrome portrayal of Socrates and Theodoret.¹⁰⁷⁶ The persecutor, harsh and merciless as he was, still had certain regard to public opinion and to certain moral values.

¹⁰⁷³ Julian's respect for the Christian intellectual elite did not save them from his vindictive policy and his education law (*CTh* XIII, 3, 5) which aimed virtually at purging higher education of Christian teachers and restore pagan philosophers to their previous prestigious status. This initiative was obviously short-lived. See: Soz. V, 18, 2-3. On the image and demise of the philosophers in Sozomen's (and Socrates's) *HE*, see: S. Bralewski, 'Zagłada filozofów helleńskich w Imperium Romanum : obraz mędrców w relacji Sokratesa z Konstantynopola i Hermiasza Sozomena', *Vox Patrum* 32 (2012), pp. 58-72. Bralewski highlights Sozomen's dismissive attitude towards pagan philosophy, pointing out that while dealing with the issue of Julian the Apostate's policy towards Christians (Soz. V, 18) in an analogous passage to Socrates' Ecclesiastical History (Soc. III, 16, 12-20), Sozomen actually refrains from engaging with Socrates's comments on the merits of certain pagan philosophers (especially his Athenian namesake) or the merits of Hellenic *paideia* in general. Note also: A. J. Quiroga Puertas. 'Fidem Tene, Verba Sequentur. Rhetoric and Oratory in the Historia Ecclesiastica of Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen', *VELEIA* 32 (2015), pp. 97-108. Quiroga Puertas finds (p. 104) in Sozomen's view of Hellenic *paideia*, compared with that of his predecessor Socrates - a more direct critic on these matters e.g. in his description of Nestorius who, despite his rhetorical skills was dismissed by Socrates as 'empty-minded' (κενόδοξον) (Soc. VII, 29,7) - a 'positive evaluation of the literary and rhetorical dexterities of a Christian figure'. Sozomen thus, according to Quiroga Puertas's assessment, 'did not rely entirely on the adherence to the Christian orthodoxy and took into account the extent to which such oratory and rhetoric were commanded by unorthodox figures'. Quiroga Puertas fails to recognise here Sozomen's sarcasm disguised as modesty (Soz. III, 15, 7), whereby his praises are ostensibly heaped on a heretic (in this case, the Anomean Aëtius) only to highlight the hollowness of those rhetorical dexterities when serving heresy.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Soz. V, 4, 6: *there is no doubt but that his menaces would have been fully executed had not death quickly intervened.*

¹⁰⁷⁵ On the influence of Christianity on Julian, see: K. Rosen, *Julian: Kaiser, Gott und Christenhasser* (Stuttgart 2006), pp. 298-303 and pp. 318-328. The closest to Sozomen's view of Julian as a persecutor through and through seems to be Philostorgius. See: Philost. VII, 1, 1-3. Philostorgius used the lost history of Eunapius of Sardes and it might well be that Sozomen used this pagan historian as well to supplement and indeed, to diversify his work and its substantial dependence on Socrates's account. Theodoret appears to be somewhat more influenced by Gregory of Nazianzus and his *Orationes* (4 and 7) See: 4,51; 4,57; 4,61-63; 7,11. Gregory highlights in his profile of Julian the transformation of his religious rejection of Christianity into sheer cruelty. On Philostorgius's and Gregory of Nazianzus's contribution to the Christian literary tradition concerning Julian, see: G. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, MA 1978), pp. 2-3. See also: P. Van Nuffelen (2004), pp. 366-367.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Certain scholars tend to regard Sozomen's account (Soz. V, 19, 3) of the circumstances under which Julian's treatise *Misopogon* ('On Aversion to Beards') was composed. It was a reply to the fun poked at Julian by the Antiochenes for, amongst other things, his Greek philosophers' style long beard. Sozomen points out that later, Julian "quite extraordinarily", suppressed his feelings of indignation and repaid the offence by words alone (Ὑπερφυῶς δέ πως τοῦ θυμοῦ μεταβαλλόμενος λόγοις μόνοις τὴν ὕβριν ἡμύνατο).

Julian's political cynicism and ruthlessness were accommodated in his complex personality with unexpected sentiments such as shame. These presented themselves most notably in the particular context of Julian's animosity towards the Christian Church:

*Although he earnestly desired to abolish the Christian religion, yet he plainly was ashamed to employ violent measures, lest he should be accounted tyrannical. He used every means however, that could be devised to lead his subjects back to paganism: and his army in particular...*¹⁰⁷⁷

Julian's repeated attempts to achieve success in the de-Christianisation of the empire met with considerable resistance and so a convenient target had to be found. Sozomen is keen to pinpoint the military as one such target. Yet, it is perhaps because of their undistinguished pre-dispositions that the soldiers make the appearance of Christian resistance among them more remarkable. Conversely, Julian's failure on this front becomes at Sozomen's hands not just another ominous fiasco which heralds the anticipated end, but also another salvo in a campaign which seems to associate Julian's implacable hatred of the Christian Church with what can be called in our terms a disturbed character. It is hard to say whether the theme of Julian's alleged personal disorder has belonged to the Christian *contra Julianum* literary tradition. It is also hard to determine whether it belongs to Sozomen's own contribution. It should be borne in mind that there is no evidence for such a bold characterisation of Julian either in Gregory of Nazianzus's *orationes* or in later compositions.¹⁰⁷⁸ Here, Sozomen is trying to remain an honest broker. A close reading can even detect a hint of empathy with the common folk trapped between their upbringing and the whims of an obsessive monarch. Nonetheless, Sozomen's attempt to understand the commoners who succumbed to Julian's machinations and consequently, turned idol-worshippers reveals the limits of our Church historian:

He placed the pictures of the gods in juxtaposition with his own, in order that the people might secretly be led to worship them under the pretext of rendering due honour to him; he abused ancient usages and endeavored to conceal his purpose from his subjects. He considered that if they would yield obedience, he would have reason to punish them as infringers of the Roman customs and offenders against the emperor and the state. There were but very few (and the law had its course against them) who seeing through his designs, refused to render the customary homage to his picture, but the multitude,

¹⁰⁷⁷ Soz. V, 17, 1. Julian had faced disobedience in his army in Gaul and in Persia but it would be hard to associate these problems categorically with a sweeping reluctance to obey an apostate. Ammianus does not offer any relevant information. There were however pockets of Christian resistance amongst Julian's troops and two of the dissidents, Juventinus and Maximinus, were executed in Antioch on 29 January 363. Cf. Theod. III, 15, 4-15. Those 'military martyrs' represented probably a very extreme case as Julian, being aware of the influential role which martyrdom had played in the rise of Christianity, purposefully tried to avoid the creation of new Christian martyrs and preferred to punish Christian rebels by exile rather than death. See: G. Sabbah, *SC* 495, p. 178 n. 1.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See e.g. John Chrysostom, *De S. Babyla contra Julianum et gentiles* 79. The Christian tradition attempted to decipher the peculiarities of Julian by highlighting his attraction to clairvoyance, divination and magic. While Socrates is silent about this aspect of Julian's biography, Sozomen does acknowledge this tradition but tends to dismiss its importance in the eyes of Julian. See: Soz. V, 1, 8-9; cf. Amm. Marc. XXV, 2, 8 who argues that Julian was opposed to *scientia vaticinandi*. This however carries a more 'practical' meaning and must not be confused with Julian's hatred of Christianity and his plans to restore paganism to the Roman Empire. On Julian's interest in divination and magic, see: Van Nuffelen (2004), pp. 374-377.

conformed as it usually does (οἷα φιλεῖ), through ignorance or mindlessness, believed naively that they were obeying an ancient law and drew closer more naively to the images. The emperor gained nothing further. Yet unyielding, having tried out that kind of stratagem, he did not cease from making every possible effort to divert his subjects towards the practice of his own religion.¹⁰⁷⁹

The state of religious affairs in the Roman Empire under Julian becomes in Sozomen's narrative a mere projection of Julian's personal desires and imagination. The key phrase here is evidently "The emperor gained nothing further." On one hand the reader understands in a straightforward fashion that there was hardly any mass return to paganism following this orchestrated forced worship of images, but another aspect of Sozomen's presentation of Julian becomes prominent. The emperor, it seems, did not feel satisfied even when he had his way. His success was futile, but Julian remained unyielding, and it was only on his death bed that the emperor who set out to wage war against Persia relying on the Gods that his policy was a fiasco. The reader is elegantly and in a very unfussy manner told that this emperor was struggling with his perception of reality. His temper was not necessarily bound to endear him to the pagans.¹⁰⁸⁰ This diagnostic account carries too Sozomen's watermarked narrative strategy namely – an open ended, understated and toned-down style.¹⁰⁸¹ Sozomen ensures that readers who wish to understand the phenomenon of Julian without recourse to the supernatural would be able to do so. Sozomen is assisted here by a quasi-clinical component (which one often finds in a less-than-refined form in earlier authors who wrote about the follies of Roman emperors).¹⁰⁸² However, those who seek a more religious interpretation would hardly require here any explicit mention of Divine intervention in order to infer from the outcome of a harrowing scene such as this¹⁰⁸³ that Julian must have been subjected to Divine retribution not only at the hour of his death at the Persian front in 363, but also during most of his reign which seems to have been torturous to himself as much as it was detrimental to his Christian Subjects. Thus, Sozomen finds a less obvious (yet perhaps more effective) way than Socrates to try and understand the challenging figure of Julian without rubbing off the traumatic imprint of an apostate and a persecutor that this Roman emperor had left in Christian memory

¹⁰⁷⁹ Soz. V, 17, 6-7.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See: R. Browning, *The Emperor Julian* (London 1975), p.184 ff.

¹⁰⁸¹ Despite the quintessential differences dictated *a priori* by different genres of historical writing it is hard not to contrast Sozomen's writing with that of Tacitus and Ammianus which Timothy Barnes regards (with a hint of inspiration from Macaulay) as "dramatic". See: T.D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), pp. 187 – 198. Although Barnes warns against saluting Ammianus as the "heir" of Tacitus (ibid. p. 192), his argumentation is actually quite supportive of that view. So is particularly his likening of Ammianus's style to that of the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) who, according to Barnes "derived ... his literary style largely from the Evangelical preaching to which he was exposed when very young" (ibid. p. 196). However, Barnes's analysis of Tacitus's influence on Ammianus reveals that "drama" in historical writing can be achieved in more than one way. Thus, it could be said that Sozomen's avoidance of shrill verbosity, pompous statements and excessive rhetorical devices is in fact, accentuating the inner dramatic complexities of a protagonist such as Julian.

¹⁰⁸² Sozomen's source of inspiration here could have possibly been Suetonius. See e.g.: Suet. *De vita Caesarum, Tiberius*, 62-67.

¹⁰⁸³ There are echoes of an attitude more dismissive than timid which many Christians seem to have felt towards Julian in the description of Julian's reign as 'just a little cloud that would quickly pass'. The attribution of such a snide comment to Athanasius (Soz. V, 15, 3 cf. *Historia acephala* 10; Rufin. *HE*, X, 35) is probably a later vaticinium *ex eventu*.

and indeed- in ecclesiastical historiography.¹⁰⁸⁴ It would be fair to say that despite his unconcealed and reproachful attitude, Sozomen remains true to his principle to use a scornful depiction of an emperor sparingly (even when the emperor becomes a heretic, let alone an apostate). The dramatic effect does not suffer from this compressed narrative. The failed attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple at Julian's behest and with his political, moral and financial backing - the last episode in Sozomen's account of Julian's reign before the emperor heads for his demise in the war against Persia - illustrates this quite well. According to Sozomen's interpretation, Julian was hardly motivated by any sympathy towards Judaism. His real motive was of course his wish to upset and humiliate the Christians.¹⁰⁸⁵ Yet, Sozomen's comments on the repeated attempt to resume the construction works after an earthquake struck the site of the Temple shortly after the rubble was cleared away and the workmen were about to lay the first foundation - seem to become a concluding note to the church historian's account of that emperor, his religious policies and his reign as whole:

*Men often, in endeavouring to gratify their own passions, seek what is injurious to them, reject what would be truly advantageous, and are deluded by the idea that nothing is really useful except what is agreeable to them. When led astray by this error, they are no longer able to act in a manner conducive to their own interests, or to take warning by the calamities which are visited upon them.*¹⁰⁸⁶

When Sozomen proceeds in the beginning of book VI to describe how Julian eventually found his death during the Persian campaign (allegedly at the hands of a Christian) the question of Divine retribution is brought up again. Sozomen neither embraces nor rejects it. Instead, he chooses with a palpably diplomatic tone to profess ignorance and the reader comes to realise that certain aspects of Julian's life and indeed, his death which occurred nearly ninety years earlier are still a delicate matter:

*It is not unlikely that some of the soldiers who then served in the Roman army might have conceived the idea, since Greeks and all men until this day have praised tyrant-slayers for exposing themselves to death in the cause of liberty, and spiritedly standing by their country, their families and their friends. Still less is he deserving of blame, who, for the sake of God and of religion, performed so bold a deed. Beyond this I know nothing accurately concerning the men who committed this murder besides what I have narrated. However those who affirm this view say unanimously (συμφωνοῦντες οἱ λέγοντες ἰσχυρίζονται) that it is not a fabrication that his death was a result of Divine wrath.*¹⁰⁸⁷

Sozomen stresses the truth cannot be established in this case. The same applies to 'accuracy', as was the case with the death of Bishop Paul of Constantinople in Constantius II's reign. It

¹⁰⁸⁴ On Julian as persecutor in Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, see: R. J. Penella, 'Julian the Persecutor in Fifth Century Church Historians', *The Ancient World* 24 (1993), pp. 45-53.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Sozomen remarks in passing (Soz. V, 22, 2) that Julian knew that the Jewish religion was "so to speak, the mother of the Christianity, depending on the same patriarchs and prophets" (ἦδει γὰρ μητέρα ταύτην, ὡς εἶπεν, τοῦ Χριστιανῶν δόγματος καὶ προφῆταις καὶ πατριάρχαις τοῖς αὐτοῖς χρωμένην). On the various reactions to Julian's intention to rebuild the Jerusalem temple, see: A. Freund, 'Which Christians, Pagans and Jews? Varying Responses to Julian's Attempt to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century CE', *Journal of Religious Studies* 18 (1992), pp. 67-93. See also: F. Blanchetière, 'Julien: philhellène, philosémite, antichrétien', *JJS* 33 (1980), pp. 61-68.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Soz. V, 22, 10.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Soz. VI, 2, 1-2.

seems that this argumentation again serves as an excuse.¹⁰⁸⁸ It seems that the consensus of those who supported the interpretation of Julian's death as an act of Divine retribution did not necessarily encourage an inclination on the historian's part to add his voice to that choir. The reasons for this rather intriguing caution can only be searched for in Sozomen's contemporary environment and his prospective readership. Sozomen reports in the conclusion of his account of the empire's affairs under Julian about catastrophies such as earthquakes (including a Tsunami in Alexandria)¹⁰⁸⁹ which occurred frequently during that reign. These are defined by Sozomen as signs of God's wrath and appear to be evoking in passing a reality not unknown to Sozomen's contemporaries as can be inferred from a letter on them by the ecclesiastical historian *cum* biblical scholar bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus.¹⁰⁹⁰ It is perhaps of relevance that Julian's writings were not even mentioned in the *Acta* of Ephesus I while other anti-Christian literature (e.g. Porphyry's works) was condemned to be committed to fire. It follows that the fact that an emperor was the author did have certain leverage. More broadly, an attack on Julian was bound to raise the delicate question of religious freedom. It would be sensible to assume that a staunch orthodox like Sozomen who was writing towards the end of Theodosius II's reign, when the Nicean supremacy was facing a growing challenge from the nascent miaphysite movement, felt that siding unequivocally with those who claimed to be in possession of the key to the ultimate understanding of God's historical designs would not be in the best of his interests. It would be hard to imagine that Sozomen hoped or even considered to leave the door open for pagan readership. However, his remarks in the concluding paragraphs dedicated to Julian, following his version of the demise of an emperor whose death's circumstances remain shrouded in mist, could indeed be addressed to any Christian faction which could end up in power, accommodating (rather comfortably) also the miaphysites:

I know not whether, on the approach of death, as is wont to be the case when the soul is separated from the body and when it is enabled to behold diviner spectacles than those within human ability and so Julian might have beheld Christ, I am unable to say. Neither there are many who say this. Nor dare I reject it as a falsehood. For it is not improbable that events even more extraordinary than those should occur, in order to demonstrate that the religion named after Christ has not been formed through human endeavour. ¹⁰⁹¹

From the accession of Jovian after Julian's death on 26th June 363¹⁰⁹² Sozomen's narrative becomes less focused on the emperors. It is quite probable that as his *HE* was getting nearer to his own life time, even a zealous Arian emperor such as Valens (364-378) whose outright persecutions of the Nicene orthodox church dwarfed Constantius II's spasmodic, and at any rate, less heavyhanded handling of the *homooousians*, had to be treated with caution, as Valens's successor, the Spanish-born Theodosius I (347-395) was the founder of the reigning imperial dynasty of his day and a military officer under his western colleagues Valentinian I

¹⁰⁸⁸ See n. 165 *supra* cf. Amm. Mar. XXV, 3-5. For a detailed discussion of Julian's last campaign against Persia and his death, see: K. Rosen (2006), pp. 345-372.

¹⁰⁸⁹ See: Soz. VI, 2, This seems to be another example of Sozomen's sloppy chronology. The so-called 'Great Tsunami' of Alexandria occurred on 21st July 365 i.e. in the reign of Valens, over two years after Julian's death. See: Amm. Marc. XXVI, 10, 15-19. For a detailed discussion, see: G. Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus The Allusive Historian* (Cambridge 2008), pp. 88-101.

¹⁰⁹⁰ See: Soz. VI, 2, 13 cf. Theod. *Epp.* II, 41.

¹⁰⁹¹ Soz. VI, 2, 12.

¹⁰⁹² See: Socr. III, 21, 17 cf. Amm. Marc. XXV, 3, 9, 5 and *Hist. aceph.* 4, 1.

and Gratian. Thus, it is not hard to see how miscalculated slants in the ebb and flow of an historical narrative concerned with the emperors after Julian could have had bearings on the tenability of the author's position. Yet, regardless of practical considerations such as these, the Roman emperors seem to have started right after Julian's death a new leg of their journey in the ecclesiastical world. Perhaps the best presentation of the new *Zeitgeist* after Julian is encapsulated in the response of the emperor Valentinian I to the request of Hypatian, bishop of Heraclea-Prerinthus in Thrace who approached the emperor while the latter was travelling from Constantinople to Rome. The bishop's request was to grant the orthodox bishops of Thrace, Bithynia, the Hellespontus and neighbouring regions a permission to assemble themselves together for deliberations on doctrinal issues. The emperor replied plainly and unlike any of his predecessors with what appears to be perhaps a slightly more genuine sentiment of reverence:

*I am but one of the laity and have therefore no right to interfere in these affairs. Let the priests to whom such matters appertain, assemble where they please.*¹⁰⁹³

Yet, it would be simplistic to believe that the emperors had been transformed overnight. Valentinian's orthodoxy required more than his personal commitment and his good will in order to flourish again and eventually emerge victorious in the struggle against Arianism and its tributaries. Sozomen was apparently well aware of the pitfall which was awaiting a historian who neglects the context of his protagonists and his point of departure from Julian's reign to Jovian's restoration of Christianity to its former glory reflects this awareness concisely yet effectively:

*The dangerous and disturbed condition in which affairs had been left by Julian's strategy, and the sufferings of the army from famine in an enemy's country, compelled Jovian to conclude a peace with the Persians, and to cede to them some territories which had been formerly tributary to the Romans. Having learned from experience that the impiety of his predecessor had excited the wrath of God, and given rise to public calamities, he wrote without delay to the governors of the provinces, directing that the people should assemble together without fear in the churches, that they should serve God with reverence, and that they should receive the Christian faith as the only true religion. He restored the churches and the clergy, to the widows and the virgins, the same fiscal exemptions and every former dotation for the advantage and honour of religion which had been granted by Constantine and his sons, and withdrawn later by Julian.*¹⁰⁹⁴

Once again, despite the new era that was dawning, there is uncertainty about the new emperor's prospects¹⁰⁹⁵ and by implication about God's role in human history and the history of the Christian Church in particular. Julian was gone but Sozomen's account of the succession suggests that this was not in itself enough to secure the restoration of the Christian hegemony. Jovian, shortly before his proclamation, still feels compelled to refuse the honour and to make

¹⁰⁹³ Soz. VI, 7, 2. The bishop's petition (not mentioned by Socrates) preceded the convocation of the council of Lampsacus in 364.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Soz. VI, 3, 3-4. Cf. Anonymous Arian historian, frg. 39 (= Bidez-Winkelmann, *Philostorgius* (Berlin 1981), p. 237.

¹⁰⁹⁵ On Jovian's proclamation and the insecure atmosphere of his reign see: N. E. Lensky, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century* (Berkeley, CA 2002), pp. 14-20.

clear to the soldiers that he was a Christian.¹⁰⁹⁶ Sozomen's Jovian is brought to re-evaluate the situation he, the Roman army and indeed the Roman state in its entirety were now facing. Sozomen is keen to show us that Jovian did not turn to his ancestral religion as a matter of course. His decision to restore the Christian faith was, according to Sozomen, the fruit of an empirical thinking i.e. based on what he had learned from his experience (Τῇ δὲ πείρᾳ μαθὼν) under Julian. Jovian's practical thinking is translated into practical action and this one manifested itself in codification. It seems that the object of this law *de raptu vel matrimonio sanctimonialium virginum vel viduarum*¹⁰⁹⁷ must have been particularly appreciated by Sozomen apart from his basic professional sensitivities as a lawyer. Was it personal prudishness, provincial upbringing or simply piety? Be it as it may, Sozomen complains that disgraceful lasciviousness and promiscuous behaviour are something which 'usually happens' (οἷά γε φιλεῖ) when religion is abused.¹⁰⁹⁸ We have already met this sulkiness in Sozomen's tone expressed in the same words with regard to the behaviour of the docile crowd under Julian.¹⁰⁹⁹ But not only is the crowd in Sozomen's view gullible or submissive. The church itself or more accurately, the ecclesiastical leaders of the day had suffered similar shortcomings. Sozomen finds the behaviour of the ecclesiastical leadership under Julian as much as under Jovian virtually unworthy and it should be noted that neither the orthodox nor the heterodox escape his unconcealed scorn. Even the excuse made for keeping the comment brief only sharpens its edge:

*The presidents of the churches now resumed the agitation of doctrinal questions and discussions. They had kept quiet during the reign of Julian when Christianity in its entirety was at peril, and had unanimously offered up their supplications for the mercy of God. It is thus that men, when attacked by foreign enemies, remain in accord among themselves but when external troubles are removed, then internal dissensions creep in; this however is not the right time for taking stock of the politics and nations which this misfortune had visited (ἀλλ' ὅσας μὲν πολιτείας καὶ ἔθνησι τοῦτο συνέβη, οὐ τοῦ παρόντος καιροῦ καταλέγειν ἐστίν).*¹¹⁰⁰

It is hard to choose between the silence of the ecclesiastical leadership under Julian and their unanimity to indicate which one is used by Sozomen to express his displeasure. Perhaps there is no need. Both represent Sozomen's conviction that the church, despite being endowed with outstanding individual figures such as monks, holy men and very few bishops, can be docile and conformist just like the crowds and it can likewise be crafty and ambitious like states and those who govern them. Thus, Sozomen's choice to focus on the budding friendship between Jovian and Athanasius in the remainder of his account of Jovian's eight months on the imperial throne is hardly a surprise. The towering figure of the bold bishop of Alexandria and particularly his courage, boldness and unyielding personality were singled out as an antidote to the disturbing liberty of being a doubting Thomas which Sozomen could have been believed to have granted himself.¹¹⁰¹ Jovian's growing friendship with Athanasius which was

¹⁰⁹⁶ Soz. VI, 3, 1. See: Leppin (1996), pp. 86-90; Brennecke (1988), pp. 178-180.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Extant in the Theodosian code. See: *CTh* IX, 25, 2.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Soz. VI, 3, 6.

¹⁰⁹⁹ See: Soz. V, 17, 6-7.

¹¹⁰⁰ Soz. VI, 4, 1-2.

¹¹⁰¹ Soz. VI, 5, 1-4.

cut short, like Jovian's own reign¹¹⁰², after eight months from this emperor's proclamation, seems to be here a metonymy of the restoration of the Nicene faith before it is tested again under Valens.

The reign of Valens seems to be characterized by Sozomen in a fashion which can be described as a hybrid, combining as it were elements from the reigns of both Constantius II and Julian. Sozomen presents the Pannonian-born emperor as hot-tempered and cruel as Julian - and a fanatic Arian as Constantius II.¹¹⁰³ Like most of his predecessors, Valens too finds himself dealing with Athanasius who had managed once again to escape an arrest. Valens and Athanasius's Arian adversaries act this time not quite as one would expect:

*The Emperor Valens, soon after, wrote to grant permission for him to return and hold his church. It is very doubtful whether in making this concession, Valens acted according to his own inclination. I rather imagine that, on reflecting on the esteem in which Athanasius was universally held, he feared to excite the displeasure of the Emperor Valentinian, who was well-known to be attached to the Nicene doctrines; or perhaps he was apprehensive of a commotion on the part of the many admirers of the bishop, lest some innovation might injure the public affairs. I also believe that the Arian presidents did not, on this occasion, plead very vehemently against Athanasius; for they considered that, if he were ejected from the city, he would probably trouble the emperors, and then would have an opportunity for an audience with regard to them, and might possibly succeed in persuading Valens to adopt his own sentiments - and in arousing the anger of the like-minded Valentinian against themselves.*¹¹⁰⁴

There is probably more to this unexpected moderation on Valens's part than the *prima facie* conclusion that Valens was not simply a deranged thuggish heretic.¹¹⁰⁵ Sozomen's assumptions highlight this emperor's vulnerabilities and fears. Valens, like Constantius II, is afraid of a pro-Nicene brother, but unlike Constantius II, is also influenced by public opinion. Valens's moderation concerning Athanasius does not seem to be a necessary inference from the suppression of Procopius's unsuccessful *coup*.¹¹⁰⁶ The emperor seems to have learned from the experience of his predecessors and estimated that it would be a waste of time and resources to open a conflict with a high profile bishop who knew all too well how to marshal the noisy and violent crowds of Alexandria, including the notoriously aggressive

¹¹⁰² Hartmut Leppin finds Sozomen's view of Jovian's short reign detached despite that emperor's orthodoxy. See: Leppin (1996), p. 89.

¹¹⁰³ The cruelty of Valens is presented against a secular background, in this case, that of the failed usurpation of Procopius in 365. Sozomen describes the merciless punishment which was inflicted on the usurper. Procopius was fastened by the legs to two trees which had been bent to the ground. Once these trees were allowed to resume their natural position, the victim was torn in twain. This kind of punishment is a classical *topos* but is said to have been used in reality (cf. Ovid. *Met.* VII, 442; *Hist. August. Aurelius*, 7, 4). Sozomen moves on without a tarry to discuss Valens's attitude towards non-Arian bishops and his 'anger' because of their rejection of the (pro-Arian) resolutions of the Council of Ariminum. Sozomen encourages the reader, in this way, to put together on his own these facets of Valens's personality. This technique seems to be essential in guarding the narrative against sentimentality and a lacrimose tone. See: Soz. VI, 8, 1-6 cf. Socr. IV, 5-7; Philost. IX, 5; Eunap. *frag.* I,5; II, 28; Amm. Marc. XXVI, 3-10 ; Zos. IV, 4-8.

¹¹⁰⁴ Soz. VI, 12, 13-15 cf. *Hist. aceph.* 5, 8-10.

¹¹⁰⁵ See: G. Sabbah, 'Sozomène et la politique religieuse des Valentinien', in: B. Poudron and Y.-M. Duval, *L'historiographie de l'église des premiers siècles* (Paris 2001), pp. 293-314.

¹¹⁰⁶ Thus: N. Lensky (2002), p. 249.

reinforcements of desert monks¹¹⁰⁷ and whose skills of trouble-making in various shapes and forms across the realm had become legendary over a period of time that stretches across three decades. Sozomen's thoughts about the Arians and their rather timid position in this affair reveal that the Arians were apparently in a state of disarray and indeed, decline. They could no longer rely on eloquent and persuasive leaders such as the Eusebians of yore. Their presence in the imperial court seems to have dwindled since Sozomen argues that they were no longer able to exercise influence at Valens's court and even were haunted by fears that the staunch Arian emperor might be won over and join the other side.¹¹⁰⁸ None of these, it seems, would have been imaginable in the days of Constantius II despite the fact that Constantius himself as we have already seen, did recall Athanasius at his brother's behest. The decline of the Arians is likewise felt in Valens's other personal encounters with two other Nicene loyalists: Basil of Caesarea in 372¹¹⁰⁹ and the Syrian-born monk Isaac of Constantinople at the wake of the disastrous battle of Adrianople in 378.¹¹¹⁰ Their encounters with Valens continue and even augment the tradition of iconic boldness in addressing the emperor associated with Athanasius and perceived as an extension of the martyrological discourse from the preConstantinian persecutions. These encounters herald the coming of age of the monastic movement and the transformation of its proponents into a recognised and indeed prestigious

¹¹⁰⁷ C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, MD 1997), pp. 259-260.

¹¹⁰⁸ The decline of 'Arianism' (i.e. mostly the homoians who were actually opposed to the original teachings of Arius) appears to have been felt in the west although the relevant evidence is fragmentary and otherwise problematic. The decline of Arianism, however, did not necessarily propel the Catholics in the west to a position of supremacy before the accession of Theodosius I (i.e. after Valens's death) and the publication of the two first books of Ambrose of Milan's treatise *De Fide* (379/380). See: McLynn (1994); D.H. Williams (1995). When looked at against this background, Rufinus's report about Valens's decision not long before the battle of Adrianople to recall the exiled Catholic clergy and release the monks who were sent off to forced labour at mines, cannot be ignored. See: Ruf. *HE*, XI, 13. Sozomen prefers to highlight what seems to be a Constantinopolitan monastic tradition which attributed a prophetic role to a monk (perhaps not coincidentally a founding father figure) in the closing scene of Valens's life and later on to associate the return of the exiled bishops to their sees through what seems to be a purposefully concocted paragraph of roundabout verbiage, aimed at presenting the recall of the exiled Catholic bishops as an initiative taken by Gratian (Soz. VII, 2). To what extent Rufinus's and Sozomen's accounts complement each other would be impossible to determine. However, it is not unlikely that both stories echo a beginning of a change in Valens's policy in favour of the Catholics shortly before his death. This change may have influenced Gratian in his consideration of Valens's successor. See: V. Messina, *La Politica religiosa di Graziano* (Rome 1999).

¹¹⁰⁹ Soz. VI, 12 and 16. See: P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley, CA 1994), pp. 173-174.

¹¹¹⁰ Soz. VI, 40. See: P. Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople ca. 350-850* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 66-68. The monk Isaac could possibly be identical with the archimandrite Isaac, associated with the foundation of the *Dalmatou* coenobitic monastery believed to be the first monastery in Constantinople. It is not unlikely that the same monk is the monk Isaac who became later John Chrysostom's *nemesis* and (alongside bishop Theophilus of Alexandria) one of the architects of the Constantinopolitan bishop's downfall (Soz. VIII, 9, 4-5). A *vita* of Isaac (*BHG* 956) has come down to us and it suggests that this monk died in 383 (and thus could not have been Chrysostom's detractor twenty years later). Yet, this information is uncertain. Sozomen, however, despite his manifested admiration for Chrysostom is quite intriguingly laconic at that particular point and does not elaborate on the clashes between the latter and Isaac. This might suggest that our church historian could have thought the two Isaacs were indeed the same person.

political pressure group.¹¹¹¹ The end of Valens's reign is lurking behind his encounter with Isaac. Showing lack of self-control and calm in the face of a tumultuous crowd, stricken with panic and anger as the emperor was waiting for reinforcements sent from the west by his nephew and co-emperor Gratian.¹¹¹² Losing his nerve following a particularly humiliating clash with an abusive Constantinopolitan crowd at the hippodrome¹¹¹³, Valens, according to Sozomen's explanation, simply allowed himself to be pressurised. He succumbed to popular impatient demand to wait no longer for the reinforcements which had been already dispatched by Gratian and set out to meet the Goths who were ravaging Thrace, and by that time were already bringing the war to the outskirts of Constantinople. Valens was to lose his life in the imminent battle.¹¹¹⁴ However, the discourse of the encounter between the emperor and the monk is not theological. There are no deliberations about the Person of Christ or the Triune God. The discourse involves religion, but the style is more reminiscent of tough political bargaining and indeed, of market haggling:

*'When Valens was on the point of departing from Constantinople, Isaac, a monk of great virtue, who feared no danger in the cause of God, presented himself before him, and addressed him in the following words: "Give back, O emperor, to the orthodox, and to those who maintain the Nicene doctrines, the churches of which you have deprived them, and the victory will be yours." The emperor was offended at this act of boldness and commanded that Isaac should be arrested and kept in chains until his return, when he meant to bring him to justice for his temerity. Isaac however replied: "You will not return unless you restore the churches." And so in fact it came to pass.'*¹¹¹⁵

It has been suggested that Isaac's clash with Valens "became a culminating episode in Nicene triumph narratives."¹¹¹⁶ At a glance, there is hardly anything in this account that would betray any outstanding literary rendition of the Nicene triumph, but it would be hasty at this point to call into question Sozomen's literary skills. Rather, it would appear that this seemingly unsophisticated account testifies to Sozomen's firm hand over the portrayal of his protagonists. The unrefined and direct speech of the rough Syrian monk brings Isaac to live up to the reputation of those monks pursuing the radical asceticism for which the monks of Syria were renowned.¹¹¹⁷ We can see how Sozomen, having duly paid lip service to Isaac's sanctity beforehand, reduces Isaac, regardless of his orthodoxy, to a rather brutish figure. The motivation for this is uncertain. Did the figure of the Syrian monk offer the Palestinian lawyer

¹¹¹¹ See: N. McLynn, 'A Self-Made Holy Man: The Case of Gregory Nazianzen', *J ECS* 6 (1998), pp. 463-483. McLynn highlights (pp. 480-481) the revolutionary dimension of these encounters between emperors and holy men.

¹¹¹² Soz. VI, 39, 2-4 cf. Amm. Marc. XXXI, 11, 1. Ammianus did not attach much importance to (or rather preferred to downplay) the riots against Valens in Constantinople by presenting them as 'mild': *seditioneque popularium levi pulsatus*

¹¹¹³ On the hippodrome as a 'political space' and background for popular unrest in Constantinople, see: Dagron (1974), pp. 320-347.

¹¹¹⁴ On Valens and the battle of Adrianople, see: M. Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars*, (Cambridge 2007), pp. 137-143; J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1989), p. 379-382. Note also: T.A. Burns, 'The Battle of Adrianople: A Reconsideration', *Historia* 22 (1973), pp. 336-345.

¹¹¹⁵ Soz. VI, 40, 1 cf. *Philost.* IX, 17; *Socr.* IV, 38; *Ruf. HE*, II, 13; *Theod. HE* IV, 31-36; *Eunap. Frg.* I, 6; II, 40, 41; *Amm. Marc.* XXXI, 11-14 *Zos. HN* IV, 24.

¹¹¹⁶ See: D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA 2002), p. 192, n. 173.

¹¹¹⁷ See: P. Escolan, *Monchisme et église : Le monachisme syrien du IV siècle un monachisme charismatique* (Paris 1999), pp. 185-187 and p. 203.

who was himself, like Isaac, an outsider in Constantinople, an opportunity to remind his readers and himself that foreigners who appear on the Constantinopolitan scene could and should be listened to? Or is this account perhaps a reflection of Sozomen's feelings for his much-admired John Chrysostom, himself a native of Syria, an ascetic and a daring confronter of imperial authority? Neither can be assumed with certainty. However, there could be little doubt that this prophecy, unpolished as it may be (and perhaps precisely because of its crudity), marks through its fulfilment the victory of orthodoxy over heresy. It is however very telling that Sozomen chose to bring the end of this chapter in history of Nicene orthodoxy without a hint of triumphalism. It seems that the ecclesiastical historian who lived in an era when the orthodoxy of the emperor did not prove to be a guarantee for the supremacy of the Nicene doctrine has remained ambivalent even when penning an account of a Roman emperor's demise which (as he could know with certainty) proved to be a turning point in the history of the hitherto beleaguered Nicene orthodoxy.¹¹¹⁸

C. Conclusion

Peter van Nuffelen, in his comparison between Socrates and Sozomen makes the following observation:

“À l’opposé de Socrate qui éparpille des remarques méthodologiques dans plusieurs préfaces, Sozomène exprime ses opinions entièrement dans le premier chapitre de son œuvre.”¹¹¹⁹

It was our purpose here, to demonstrate that Sozomen's opinions are indeed by far more nuanced and more intricate than what has been openly stated in the *premium* of his *HE*.¹¹²⁰ Sozomen's outlook as reflected throughout his work emanates from an ambivalent, ironic and even acerbic world view, and these elements govern his narrative strategy. It receives its first airing right from the outset, namely in the address to Theodosius II, as was shown in chapter 3. What appears to be otherwise an awkward or even clumsily-penned, half-baked panegyric, acquires poignant zest once we realise that the author, a well-educated lawyer, could have not been hoping in earnest to win the favours of the sovereign by this particular text. Once this becomes clear, not the least after the contents are carefully analysed, the parodistic nature of this address begins to unfold. It follows that Sozomen was writing with an intent which was opposed to what had been explicitly communicated. If this can be accepted, Sozomen may be identified with the practice of irony. Irony, a key feature of the Platonic literary legacy, should hardly be regarded in this context as a literary oddity.¹¹²¹

Having discussed the key term ‘ambivalence’ and its relevance to Sozomen, particularly in his personal context as an outsider in Constantinople or his ‘status of strangerhood’, we have

¹¹¹⁸ Socrates may have echoed in his own version of Valens's death near the walls of Constantinople certain rumors (which could have initially been spread by pro-Nicene circles) about the ‘unclear’ (ἄδηλος) nature of this emperor's end. See: Soc. V, 1, 1.

¹¹¹⁹ P. Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), p. 124.

¹¹²⁰ Sozomen himself hints that the discovery of the events which were documented in collections of letters which he had seen was for him an unsettling experience. See: Soz. I, 1, 16.

¹¹²¹ See: Soz. *Ded.* 5. Sozomen refers there to someone who hardly needed introduction, Plato, quite ambiguously, as ‘Socrates’ companion’ (τὸν Σωκράτους ἐταῖρον).

turned to the figure who provides the framework to the church histories of both Sozomen of Bethelia and Socrates of Constantinople, namely, the Roman emperor.

As has been evidenced from Eusebius's *HE* X, and the later *Vita Constantini* an important part of the Eusebian literary legacy was the transformation of the imperial representation into a 'sacred myth' in which both works, despite their evident differences, operated in tandem. If the first Christian Emperor is celebrated in Eusebius' *HE* primarily as the temporal channel through which God had chosen to deliver the Christian Church from the bondage of persecution to the liberty of legitimacy and consequently, to efflorescence – it is in the *VC* that the foundations of the mythologisation of Constantine and his transformation from a Christian ruler into a Christian 'Hero-Emperor' are finalised.

The apparent success of this literary alchemy is reflected in the effective connection of Constantine with Moses and Christ. This evolved into a process of 'mythologisation' which was passed down through the genre's young tradition. Socrates of Constantinople and Sozomen of Bethelia joined this tradition when the Constantinian myth was already a *fait accompli*. However, Socrates remains the more 'secular' of the two and therefore more exposed to the political effectiveness of the mythologised Constantine.¹¹²² Sozomen allows himself to associate the myth more directly with providential choices of contact with the human race. Thus, the Eusebian alchemy is being dispelled. The secular and the sacred, although inseparable remain in a tense relationship. It follows that the conversion of Constantine did not 'Christianise' him *in toto*.

Rather, it made him a tool at the hands of God and a successful one. The destruction of paganism started with Constantine but Sozomen, the ambivalent observer is not sharing Eusebius's jubilant tone, nor does he heap endless praises upon the first Christian emperor. His ambivalence is always at work and so he can look at the beginning of the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity in a different way:

*Some seeing objects that were previously venerable and fearfully thrown carelessly down, and filled with straw and rubbish became contemptuous of their previous objects of worship and blamed their forebearers for their error. Others envied Christians for their honour shown them by the emperor and deemed it necessary to imitate the customs of the ruler. Others applied themselves to studying doctrine and by means of signs, dreams or contact with monks and bishops, decided it was better to turn Christian.*¹¹²³

It was God's choice to continue the History of Salvation through the agency of a Roman emperor who was still behaving like a brutish pagan and whose discovery of Christ was chiefly a result of a search for a viably-powerful divine patronage which is a normal pagan practice. In other words, Sozomen demonstrates how, despite his embrace of Christ, Constantine still remained up until that particular point quite the same old pagan mixture of

¹¹²² Soc. I,2 cf. Soz. I,3. Socrates describes the vision of the Chi Ro as an inscription on a pillar of light. In Sozomen's version 'some holy angels' spoke to Constantine and promise him victory by the sign of the Cross.

¹¹²³ Soz. II, 5,6. For a recent discussion, see: C. P. Jones, *Between Pagan and Christian*, (Cambridge, MA, 2014), p.100

a general and statesman. We saw that Sozomen's ambivalence could accommodate these seemingly adverse elements and turn Constantine into a paradoxically more human figure. The same ambivalence knows how not to 'de-mythify' Constantine completely as by doing so the evidence of the past as a glorious achievement of Christianity through Constantine will be contested and God's will would be called into question. This paradigm allows Sozomen to highlight Constantine's role in the Council of Nicaea as pivotal in the mission of this emperor and being both a Catholic (i.e. an orthodox Nicene Christian) – and a lawyer, Sozomen does not refrain to put on his polemicist's cap and defend Constantine against the accusations which the pagan opposition kept making about the emperor's notorious responsibility for his son's murder.

Sozomen highlights the human nature of this crime in a way which once again quite paradoxically echoes the ambivalence of the Greek tragedy playwrights. Sozomen manages to turn quasi-legal rhetoric and the dramatic element of filicide into a Christian narrative, seizing opportunity to highlight the Christian maxims of penitence and forgiveness.

Despite Constantine's central role in the Council of Nicaea and its outcome. Sozomen, the staunch Catholic is not exhibiting any signs of a triumphalistic approach to what should have been perhaps celebrated by a pro-Nicene ecclesiastical historian. As a solemn moment in the history of the Church, Sozomen's ambivalence is revealed in his treatment of Nicaea. The Council emerges as a moment of Christian unity, which proved to be the time when the seeds of future controversies were sown. This is apparently a projection of his lifetime realities, but Sozomen is not deterred by what he already knew. Sozomen continues to maintain the same ambivalent approach which helps him to navigate through the Constantinian succession and the abandonment of the Nicene doctrine. The deviation from the Nicene truth opened the floodgates and so, Julian can become almost another episode between two pro Arian emperors namely, Constantius II and Valens. The latter for example can be persuaded to show clemency not by Christians but by a pagan rhetorician and philosopher such as Themistius (317-390).¹¹²⁴ The memory of this troubled world where heterodoxy and paganism seem to have had the upper hand does not seem to have faded away during Sozomen's lifetime. The legacy which Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica* seems to narrate is that of uncertainty, fickleness and disunity.¹¹²⁵

The true protagonist remains however the Nicene faith which will emerge victorious again under the Theodosian dynasty. However, Sozomen, as we can learn from his account of Theodosius I's reign, was not drawn towards any kind of triumphalism. Insofar as the remainings of his account of the Theodosian dynasty allow us to judge before Sozomen's *HE* reaches its unplanned abrupt end, his approach remained unchanged. Today's victory can become tomorrow's defeat. Yet the defeat, in turn, can become a victory. It is perhaps not just out of piety or partisanship that Sozomen paraphrases the biblical verse: 'nothing is impossible with God'.¹¹²⁶ The Catholic truth which in Sozomen's words 'is shown to be the

¹¹²⁴ Soz. VI, 37, 1.

¹¹²⁵ Pace Van Nuffelen, *Un heritage...* (2004), p. 425.

¹¹²⁶ Cf. Matt. 19, 26: παρὰ δὲ Θεοῦ πάντα δυνατά.

most genuine as it has been tested frequently'¹¹²⁷ is the only antidote to our ecclesiastical historian's ambivalence.

¹¹²⁷ Soz. I, 1, 17.

Epilogue “...since the topic is not the works of men...”¹¹²⁸: Sozomen’s Contribution to *Historia Ecclesiastica*

*In dem so eröffneten Raum ist, theologisch gesehen, die tiefste Geschichte allererst möglich, weil dieser Raum innerhalb der freiesten Freiheit Gottes eröffnet – was wäre freier, unbedingter, gnadenhafter als der Plan und die Verwicklung der Menschwerdung? – und deshalb auch selbst ein Raum der Freiheit ist: der raumgebenden Freiheit Gottes für die Freiheit des Menschen. In diesem Raum kann der Mensch Geschichte agieren.*¹¹²⁹

*In jeder Epoche muß versucht werden, die Überlieferung von neuem dem Konformismus abzugewinnen, der in Begriff steht, sie zu überwinden. Der Messias kommt ja nicht nur als der Erlöser; er kommt als der Überwinder des Antichrist. Nur dem Geschichtsschreiber wohnt die Gabe bei, im Vergangenen den Funken der Hoffnung anzufachen, der davon durchdrungen ist: auch die Toten werden vor dem Feind, wenn er siegt, nicht sicher sein. Und dieser Feind hat zu siegen nicht aufgehört.*¹¹³⁰

Historia Ecclesiastica started life as a fresh expression of the history of the beginnings of Christianity. This emanated into a history of God’s Church which was exhibiting a growing awareness of its universal identity as *Ecclesia*. Sozomen of Bethelia owes his work to the emergence of this historiographical genre’s new tradition which evolved from the *HE* of Eusebius of Caesarea. Although Eusebius was still somewhat hesitant of the specific nature of the entity which this term represented at the time vis-à-vis the Jewish progeny of the Christian Church, he nonetheless felt obliged to refer to the Christians as a new nation¹¹³¹ to make his message come across more clearly. Eusebius began as a historian of a persecuted religion and ended up adjusting and altering his very same history, tailoring it to the new ecclesiastical, political and social changes as a triumphant imperial religion.

The historiographic model that Eusebius laid down had not only enshrined the position which the historical document occupies in the minds of historians, but also introduced a new category of truth as the historian’s aim. Most of ancient pagan Graeco-Roman historiography aspired to record the truth about men and their action in the world and to salvage the findings from distortion and oblivion. Eusebius, a trained exegete of Holy Scripture, shifted the focus of his readers to the intrinsic voice of his chosen documents, having incorporated many of them in a narrative ostensibly less pretentious than the previously prevalent narratological Graeco-Roman models. The ecclesiastical historians, taking their cue from Eusebius, turned their eyes to the Christian Church, which they regarded as the powerhouse behind all men’s affairs, being, as they understood it, the point of encounter between the Creator and His

¹¹²⁸ ὡς ὑποθέσεως οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δημιουργηθείσης Soz. I, 1, 12.

¹¹²⁹ H. U. Von Balthasar, *Theologie der Geschichte: Ein Grundriss* (Einsiedeln 1959), p. 54.

¹¹³⁰ W. Benjamin, ‘Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen’, in Id. *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und andere Aufsätze* (Frankfurt/Main 1965), p. 82.

¹¹³¹ Thus, ἔθνος in Eus. *HE* I, 4, 2 cf. *Ibid.* I, 1, 2 whereby the Jews are being referred to as ἔθνος as well. It becomes clear *pace* Kirsopp Lake (who translates for *LBL* the former as ‘nation’ and the latter as ‘race’) that both should be translated as ‘nation’ or ‘people’, as indeed is translated into French by Gustave Bardy. See respectively: K. Lake, *LCL* 153 p. 39 and p. 6 cf. G. Bardy, *SC* 31, p. 18 and p. 3.

creation.¹¹³² The world was no longer a playground for Gods or *numina*. It would no longer be a stage for arbitrary jitters of a *Tyche* or an *Ananke*. Once the world was visited by Christ, the entire human race became a mirror of God's contact with human history through the universal (i.e. Catholic) church. Eusebius's surviving successors (with the exception of Philostorgius) had to be the communion of those who faithfully adhered to the canons and principles of the Council of Nicaea in 325. The ecclesiastical historian was no longer a mere recorder of events. They sought to communicate the Christian truth by the reproduction of documents and to reduce the role of rhetoric and embellishment. In other words, the birth of the genre had revolutionised the meaning and function of the historian's work.

The legacy of Eusebius, however, was passed down to his inheritors amidst a confusing era of doctrinal controversies and conflicts between Nicene orthodoxy and heterodox imperial authorities. Eusebius's successors discovered before long, that their attempts to record further ecclesiastical developments could not share in Eusebius' original optimism. The conversion to Christianity did not save the empire from the onslaught of the barbarians, nor did the temporary victory of Nicene orthodoxy under Theodosius I guard it against new doctrinal conflicts. The post-Eusebian ecclesiastical historians, each in his singular turn, had to grapple with a reality which could offer them only sharp contrasts to the historical phenomena of the past that nurtured so richly Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, namely the spirit of the persecuted elect and the triumphalism of the vindicated.¹¹³³ Instead of becoming nostalgic they chose to respond to the changing eastern Roman environment by highlighting what seemed to have offered some kind of hope for the future. Thus, Rufinus of Aquileia turned his eyes to the desert and indeed to the holy men who devoted themselves to a life of asceticism. His work offered the reader a visit to a haven of Christian virtue.¹¹³⁴

Socrates, writing about forty years after Rufinus, already writes as a Christian historian who has absorbed and combined the legacies of both his predecessors. However, unlike them, he is a layman and thus represents a relatively new type of citizenship in the Christian republic of letters: a Christian by birth, a Greek by education and a member of the upper-middle class of the Eastern Roman capital city. Socrates could write his *HE* in what now seems to be the calm tone of a conservative observer.¹¹³⁵ This was a tone, reflective of a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the episcopate and a particular antipathy towards John Chrysostom.⁷ Socrates's conclusion of his history hardly disguises his fears that the shaky *pax ecclesiae* which followed the first council of Ephesus in 431 was in fact no more than a truce.¹¹³⁶ It is in the very nature of truces which does hardly allow them to be extended indefinitely.

¹¹³² Peter Van Nuffelen has added to this model the devil in his description of causality in both Socrates and Sozomen. See: Id. *Un héritage de paix et de piété. Étude sur les Histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène* (Leuven 2004), pp. 307-309.

¹¹³³ This theme was picked nonetheless by the Eunomian ecclesiastical historian Philostorgius in his reference to the Maccabees. See: Philost. I, 1. On the emergence of a discourse of persecution under the pro-Arian emperor Valens, see: M. Kahlos, 'A misunderstood emperor?: Valens as a persecuting ruler in late antique literature' in É. Fournier and W. Mayer (eds), *Heirs of Roman Persecution Studies on a Christian and Para-Christian Discourse in Late Antiquity* (Abingdon 2019), pp 61-78; Ead., *Religious Dissent in Late Antiquity, 350-450* (Oxford 2020), pp. 59-66.; S. Bralewski, 'Boże zwycięstwo (ἐνθεος νίκη) – „ideologia tryumfu” w "Historii kościelnej" Euzebiusza z Cezarei', *Vox Patrum* 63 (2015), pp. 331-351.

¹¹³⁴ See: M. Humphries, 'Rufinus's Eusebius: Translation, Continuation, and Edition in the Latin Ecclesiastical History', *J ECS* 16 (2008), pp. 143-164.

¹¹³⁵ Soc. VI, 5, 1-2 and VI. 18, 2.

¹¹³⁶ Soc. VII, 48,6. See: Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage...* (2004), pp. 420-422.

Socrates can only express his hopes for unity. He does not rely on faith alone. His hopes and prayers for life in peace include 'the churches everywhere with the cities and nations'.¹¹³⁷ There is nothing in this kind of emotional statement which would suggest the optimism which Van Nuffelen attributes to both ecclesiastical historians.¹¹³⁸

Like Socrates of Constantinople, the Palestinian-born Sozomen of Bethelia was a layman. Like his close predecessor, he was a resident of Constantinople, but unlike Socrates he was a native of Palestine and in many ways, an outsider who developed as it were, a very different observation of similar events and developments in both church and state. Sozomen, like Socrates (*mutatis mutandis* though – as we have tried to show), chose to cover the period beginning with Constantine's emergence as a sole ruler of the Roman empire in 324 and intended to bring his church history, like Socrates, to a close in the year 439. However, unlike his predecessor, he had reached as far as (or, rather, natural causes probably forced him to stop at) the year 425. It is quite likely that death and not an imperial censorship was responsible for the missing end of book IX. As Sozomen outlines in the *Dedicatio*, the chronological framework of his planned work¹¹³⁹, it is permissible to assume that, had a censor been involved – the entire chronological outline would have been struck out. One can only wonder whether the similarities between the two ecclesiastical historians would have been ever so closely maintained, had Sozomen honoured his original plan as stated in the dedication to Theodosius II.¹¹⁴⁰ The missing portion would have presumably included Sozomen's account of charged contemporary issues such as the Nestorian controversy, the First Council of Ephesus and its aftermath. Our choice has been to focus on the backbone of Sozomen's and indeed Socrates's *Historiae Ecclesiasticae* namely the emperors of the Eastern Roman empire whose reigns are the building blocks with which our church historians shaped the architectonics of their respective works. However, this similarity in structure does not conceal, as we have tried to show, essential differences in contents and indeed, fundamental differences in the respective authorial voices of both ecclesiastical historians.

Although there is no evidence which would suggest that Socrates was not a Catholic, his unflattering view of the church hierarchy focused mainly on the implications of what he regarded as 'their' quarrels and strife– on the peace and the prosperity of the empire as a whole. It would be fair to say that Socrates is the more 'secular' of the two.

Not so Sozomen. The lawyer of a provincial background who sought his fortunes in Constantinople, was apparently the more 'religious' of the two.

As we have seen, Sozomen's authorial voice can be heard through his account of Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria who spent most of his career challenging, hiding and fleeing both religious and secular authorities, mainly due to his unswerving defence of Nicene orthodoxy and his unwavering objection to any sort of doctrinal compromise. Sozomen, writing in the Constantinopolitan volatile politico-religious atmosphere of the late 440's and perhaps slightly later, is allowing his authorial voice to be heard unmuffled through his account of the Athanasius's career, the bold bishop of Alexandria who had always managed to manoeuvre between mostly heterodox hostile power and his own doctrinal loyalism. Sozomen's own

¹¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹¹³⁸ Van Nauffelen, op. cit. P. 425.

¹¹³⁹ Soz. *Dedicatio*, 21.

¹¹⁴⁰ Soz. Ibid.

narrative strategies which oscillate between sensitive observation of power and unshaken Nicene orthodoxy may explain what comes across as sympathising with the pugnacious yet politically astute bishop of Alexandria.

Sozomen who at an odd point insists on not being a theologian himself,¹¹⁴¹ produced a narrative which reflects a two-fold endeavour: to treat religious affairs within their secular political context (as he does in his account of John Chrysostom's episcopal career), as well as to communicate his view of the religious (i.e. divine) agency within secular affairs in the case of Athanasius. Both motifs have shaped his authorial voice into a hybrid of a nuanced, open ended and toned-down mode combined with a strong pro-Nicene convictions. Relying on this hybridity, Sozomen is thus shaping and moulding an authorial voice that reflects his navigation between authority and orthodoxy.

This is also demonstrated in Sozomen's treatment of other figures. Although he too, like his predecessor Socrates, follows the framework whereby the division into emperors' reigns offers, it seems that his main focus is not on the emperors and the deeds of men. The main protagonist is the Nicene doctrine.

When the players deviate from this doctrine, both the Church and the State suffer. As the history of the Church had seen long periods of straying from the Nicene path and since in the time of writing there were signs that the Church was not coming out of the woods of heresy, Sozomen, a devout orthodox Christian was trying to cope with his bewilderment through a narrative which reflects ambivalence accompanied with irony and even parody. These seem to have served him in communicating his mixed feelings without descending into complete exasperation. The stormy career of bishop Athanasius of Alexandria was turned through Sozomen's narrative strategies into a tale of the Nicene orthodoxy. The ups and downs of Athanasius's life are turned into a narrative of uncompromising resistance and heroism, passing through divine inspiration, persecution, banishment and flight and restoration without triumphalism. The shaping of the Athanasius saga appears to reveal key elements in Sozomen's authorial voice namely the three prisms of the divine-religious, the human-political and the reliance on tradition. Although Socrates too seems to be showing signs of ambivalence, these are by far more limited. Socrates's more secular approach did not allow contradicting sentiments to play a major role in the shaping of his narrative. On the other hand, in Sozomen's case, ambivalence appears to have evolved from his experience as an outsider in Constantinople and eventually shaped his authorial voice by marrying together a strong Nicene orthodoxy and a polished Greek style.¹¹⁴²

Our analysis of the portions of Sozomen's narrative dedicated to Constantine and the Constantinian dynasty suggests that Sozomen's approach to Constantine was by no means that of a panegyric. Sozomen does not make room for doubt about his true admiration for the emperor who led the subjects of his realm towards the Christian faith and whose achievements according to our church historian, were like no other sovereign and his success was the fruit of his alliance with God.¹¹⁴³ In fact, Sozomen strives to portray Constantine's presiding over the Council of Nicaea as God's greatest reward to the first Christian emperor.

¹¹⁴¹ Soz. VII, 17, 8.

¹¹⁴² Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Cod. 30. Photius also observes that Sozomen differs from Socrates in certain particulars (διαφωνεῖ δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τινὰς ἱστορίας).

¹¹⁴³ Soz. II, 34, 4.

Sozomen goes along with the 'mythologisation' of Constantine but only to a certain extent. Conversely the later Constantine emerges from Sozomen's pen a volatile and whimsical monarch. Sozomen's account is intricate: he chooses not to directly criticise Constantine's later allegedly lenient policy towards the Arians. Rather, Sozomen prefers to build up his narrative around nuclei of understated reflections on earlier phases of Constantine's career. All in all, Sozomen, an experienced and admittedly astute lawyer, remains despite his ambivalence, Constantine's skilled defence councillor. Sozomen thus manages to transform his ambivalence into a token of a sincere faith despite the questions that the Constantinian myth kept raising when Sozomen was writing. Sozomen does not refrain from indicating that, before and a little after Nicaea, certain ominous signs of later infelicities were already noticeable. Thus, the killing of Crispus, Constantine's heir apparent, became a harbinger of the test to which God put his own anointed one. Yet, Sozomen's interpretation is gloomier. This failed test did not pertain only to Constantine. Sozomen actually seeks to demonstrate how this tragedy prefigured the predicament that was still awaiting the Church of the Nicene Doctrine as well as the post-Constantinian State. If one ought to characterise Sozomen's *weltanschauung*, it would hardly seem appropriate to do so through a rosy prism focused on John Cassian's 'legacy of peace and piety'.¹¹⁴⁴ It is actually against the background of the stints of peace between Church and State and indeed, the rarer brief internal ecclesiastical periods of peace – that Sozomen's concealed concerns and fears about the future of the Nicene orthodoxy are being unfolded. Sozomen thus can hardly be regarded as a claimant of a peaceful and pious legacy but rather – as a subtle yet unrelenting communicator of that legacy's elusiveness and fragility. His sense of hope must by not be mistakenly deemed a sense of relief.¹¹⁴⁵

The Catholic Church was the first to be tested. The orthodox homoousians who celebrated their triumph in Nicaea in 325, found themselves after more than a decade oppressed under Constantius II. The predicament of the orthodox reached its nadir (as Sozomen seems to be hinting with what emerges as the signature of his authorial voice: a refined mixture of subtlety and boldness) – with the murder of an incumbent of the episcopal see of Constantinople.¹¹⁴⁶ This murder took place only a quarter of a century after the reassuring display of unity in Nicaea. Yet, Sozomen's refinement does not blare the message which our ecclesiastical historian interweaves in his narrative: even in the face of hopeless circumstances Catholic (i.e. Nicene) orthodoxy proves to impart vitality, courage and devotion like those in the heyday of Christian martyrdom – whereas heresy is the embodiment of selfishness and unsound mind. This belief is defended by Sozomen through his portrayal of Athanasius of Alexandria and is later enhanced by Sozomen's particularly sympathetic account of John Chrysostom's

¹¹⁴⁴ John Cassian, *Institutes*, II, 5.

¹¹⁴⁵ Van Nuffelen, in his attempt to make a case for a common 'héritage de paix et de piété' (in his view, equally shared by both Socrates and Sozomen) – and drawing on a rather curious comparison of Soc. (VII, 22), (a chapter to which Pierre Maraval has rightly referred as 'éloge' – see: *SC* 506, p. 83 n. 2) – with Soz. IX, 1-3 and IX 16 – argues that: 'Le règne de Théodose II était, à ce que prétendaient les orientaux plus bienheureux que tous les précédents. Socrate et Sozomène rejoignaient cette opinion, comme le démontrent les passages glorifiant l'empereur vers la fin de leurs *Histoires ecclésiastiques*', Id. (2004), p. 409. Van Nuffelen seems to be ignoring the context which renders the two texts very different despite the ostensible similarity. Van Nuffelen does not consider the absence of Theodosius II's sister Pulcheria from Socrates (and Theodoret) narratives. Such a significant difference – as pointed out rightly by G. Sabbah and L. Angliviel De La Beaumelle – cannot be explained only by different dates of composition. See: *SC* 516, pp. 370-371, n. 2. Socrates seems to have had the inclination to put the *raison d'état* first whilst Sozomen had given priority to God and therefore, to adherence to Nicene orthodoxy.

¹¹⁴⁶ Soz. III, 3, 5.

episcopate. Both bishops, according to Sozomen's account, appear to be willing to take risks and sacrifice themselves for the orthodox truth. Their enemies are motivated primarily by self-advancement, tribalism and envy. Athanasius and Chrysostom advanced the Christian truth and glorified God in a hostile environment of misguided authority and struggling orthodoxy, the divine truth of the Nicene Faith remains the main protagonist.

Sozomen's dedication of his work to Theodosius II keeps raising questions: Was that dedication an unedited text which Sozomen intended to revise after the completion of his work? Or was it composed in the first place to convey the exasperation of an ageing devout Palestinian-born observer of Constantinopolitan volatile ecclesiastical politics? Along these lines, these could have possibly been a reaction to the demise of bishop Flavian of Constantinople in 449 and the growing threat upon Nicene orthodoxy caused by the rise of miaphysitism, led by the archimandrite Eutyches (d. after 454), who for his part had greatly influenced the powerful Grand Chamberlain at Theodosius II's court, the powerful eunuch Chrysaphius, with the significant collaboration of Dioscorus, bishop of Alexandria (d. 454)? Where all these fears and uncertainties intensified after the *latrocinium Ephesinum* (σὺνοδος ληστρική), the Ephesine Robber Council in 449 with Theodosius II's increasing involvement, having appointed Dioscorus to preside over this gathering?¹¹⁴⁷ Was this bitter experience from a Catholic point of view, what prompted Sozomen's flattering description of Pulcheria (who is completely ignored by Socrates), the uncompromising defender of Nicene orthodoxy in those uncertain times? Are these challenges, among other things, the reason for Sozomen's staunch admiration and extolment of the bishops of Rome, as a stronghold and indeed sanctuary of the faithful who remain true to Nicene orthodoxy (which goes way beyond Socrates's attitude)?¹¹⁴⁸ The present study has tried to answer these questions with the affirmative, and so, it would surely be hard to imagine how this dedication could achieve the stated goal of self-ingratiation at the imperial court.¹¹⁴⁹ Whatever the original intention of the dedicator may have been, it seems that Sozomen's real dedicatee was not Theodosius II, but the readers of posterity who were invited in this rhetorical way to unveil Sozomen's canvas, when the time is ripe to present it in the open. Sozomen's life circumstances such as his devout Catholic¹¹⁵⁰ upbringing in Palestine, his questionable integration into Constantinopolitan society and his admiration for Athanasius of Alexandria and John Chrysostom, had produced

¹¹⁴⁷ See: ACO II.1.1, 68:2–69:6 (I.24), 71:20–30 (I.48), 72:5–30 (I.49), 73:4–18 (I.50), 73:21–74:6 (I.51), 74:9–28 (I.52). See also: M. Smith, *The Idea of Nicaea in the Early Church Councils, AD 431–451* (Oxford 2018), pp. 157–170. On Dioscorus and his role in the *latrocinium*, see now: V.L. Menze, *Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria: The Last Pharaoh and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 2023), pp. 89–139. Menze regards Dioscorus as an 'emperor's henchman'.

¹¹⁴⁸ See: S. Bralewski, *Obraz papieżstwa w historiografii kościelnej wczesnego Bizancjum*, (Łódź 2006), pp. 269–278.

¹¹⁴⁹ See: K. G. Holum, *Theodosian empresses: women and imperial dominion in late antiquity* (Berkeley, CA. 1982), pp.195–216 and pp. 93–96. Holum believes that after the banishment of Theodosius II's wife Eudocia to the Holy Land in 443 "the favor of Pulcheria might have been worth cultivating once more." (p. 96). This seems to be conjectural and at any rate, given the doctrinal crisis that dominated ecclesiastical politics would have been unlikely before Theodosius II's death in 450. Singing the praises of the emperor's sister,) whether still residing in Hebdomon or readmitted into the imperial palace) beforehand would have presumably found sympathetic audience only among a circle of her close supporters and pro-Nicene kindred spirits of which Sozomen must have been one.

¹¹⁵⁰ Sozomen reports (VII, 4,6) with a whiff of pride that emperor Theodosius I 'The Great' made by law (cf. *CTH* XVI, 2) the title 'Catholic Church' exclusively the collective name of those who 'offered equal honour to the Three Divine Persons' (μόνων δὲ τῶν ἰσότημον τριάδα θεῖαν θρησκευόντων).

altogether an authorial voice quite different from his predecessor Socrates. The core of this voice as we have shown, is pervasive ambivalence. A lawyer by training, Sozomen's history is at times both accusation and defence. His account of Constantine's reign demonstrates his subtlety and ability to defend orthodoxy. His defence of Athanasius and John Chrysostom is both a defence of orthodoxy and an indictment of secular authority,

Although the concluding portion of his planned ecclesiastical history has not come down to us, it seems that (Sozomen must have died before completing a revised version of this conclusion which he may have started perhaps shortly before the death of Theodosius II or even shortly thereafter – as can be inferred from his aforementioned praise of Pulcheria and indeed from the place which the West occupies in book IX of his ecclesiastical history. This was possibly a response to the looming renewed threat of the Huns.¹¹⁵¹ Sozomen's views and his tone are far from reflecting the (ostensibly) relaxed, reticent narrative of his predecessor Socrates. However, despite his elegance of style, Sozomen, having led a less sheltered life than Socrates, was also capable of conveying his conception of imperial religious leadership, and indeed his ability to combine a staunch belief which recognises the empowering rewards of the Constantinian contribution to the advance of the Christian faith and the shaping of a Christian ruler's role model - with an unexpected, well-hidden, yet incisive critique of its politico-mythical aspects. Sozomen's Catholic faith did by no means lead him toward turning a blind eye to the behaviour of certain bishops under Julian and Valens. His hopes for a better future, for harmony and mutual accord between Church and State, are expressed with extra poignancy when he addresses Theodosius II, praising the emperor for his piety, in a time when the emperor's previous orthodoxy appears to be standing on shaky ground. By calling Theodosius II 'more regal than the kings who proceeds you', Sozomen reveals in passing his ambivalent view of the reign of Constantine. This oblique assessment is enhanced by prophesying that future generations will boast of Theodosius II's rule as alone unstained and pure from murder, beyond of governments that ever existed' (πάντων τῶν πώποτε γενομένων).¹¹⁵²

Sozomen thus seems to have enriched the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* with historical perspective and narrative strategies, emanating from a mind which can accommodate realism, astuteness and irony - together with an unshakeable faith in Nicene orthodoxy and its resilience. Sozomen's authorial voice is accordingly situated between ambivalence towards authority and devotion to Nicene orthodoxy.

One the whole, the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* seems to have come a long way since the days of Eusebius, the inventor of the genre, who was also Constantine's advisor, down to Salamanes Hermias Sozomenos, the outsider who despite his previous foray into the literary

¹¹⁵¹ On the relations between the Eastern Roman Empire and Attila's Hunnic 'empire' in the late 440's see the fragmentary account of the historian Priscus of Panium, *Fr* 10-14 (= R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, Vol. II (Liverpool 1983), pp. 241-295). For discussion, see: P. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History* (London 2005), pp.307-333; C. Kelly, *Attila the Hun: Barbarian Terror and the Fall of the Roman Empire* (London 2007), pp. 117-167. Note also: Idem., *The End of Empire: Attila the Hun and the Fall of Rome* (London 2012), pp. 233-239 and L. Pigoński, 'Berichus and the Evidence for Aspar's Political Power and Aims in the Last Years of Theodosius II's Reign', *Studia Ceranea* 8, pp. 237-251.

¹¹⁵² Soz. *Dedicatio*, 16.

scene had never quite managed, by his own implicit admission, to emerge out of obscurity.

¹¹⁵³

Although he was a resident of Constantinople for many years, Sozomen seems to have remained a stranger all along, struggling to find his place amongst the more privileged Constantinopolitans. Sozomen's ambiguity whereby devotion and acerbic overtones overlap or become entangled, presents itself right from the outset when our ecclesiastical historian declares: "For I am convinced that since the topic is not the works of men, it should not be difficult for God to make me appear, contrary to expectation, as an historian."¹¹⁵⁴

In such a statement, the boundaries between hope and ambition on one hand and insecurity on the other, appear to be quite fuzzy. Thus, Sozomen's authorial voice can be typified by the assimilation of its contrasting qualities: the author is undoubtedly not just a lukewarm orthodox Christian like Socrates but a devout Catholic believer and yet, in his understated way - an incisive and even acerbic critic who does not shy away from commenting, however subtly, on failures of secular and religious figures alike. Sozomen was an ambivalent Orthodox who sought refuge in irony as well as in the doctrinal and political prestige of the bishop of Rome. He appears to be a believer who seems to have never tired from seeking and finding more reasons for hope. Sozomen's work was an attempt to outdo Socrates through a subtler and a more intricate narrative strategy from within, alongside wider, at times more erudite historical perspectives, wrapped up with brilliance of style from without.¹¹⁵⁵ In spite of undeniable similarity to his unmentioned predecessor Socrates of Constantinople¹¹⁵⁶, Sozomen's contribution to the genre of *Historia Ecclesiastica* remains unique. Despite his ambivalence, Sozomen emerges as a church historian with a distinctive voice. That of a thoughtful observer of authority and at the same time, a stalwart champion of Nicene orthodoxy.

¹¹⁵³ Soz. I, 1, 12.

¹¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*: Πέπεισομαι γάρ, ὡς ὑποθέσεως οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων δημιουργηθείσης παραδόξως ἀναφανῆναι με συγγραφέα οὐκ ἄπρον τῷ θεῷ

¹¹⁵⁵ Noted already by Photius. *Bibliotheca*, cod. 30: ἐστὶ δὲ Σωκράτους ἐν τῇ φράσει βελτίων

¹¹⁵⁶ Sozomen does mention (VI, 35), perhaps not unintentionally, the 'other' Socrates i.e. Socrates of Athens who 'when unjustly condemned to drink poison, he refused to save himself by violating the laws in which he had been born and educated' (ὃς ἐξὸν σώζεσθαι καὶ ταῦτα ἀδίκως κώνειον μέλλον πίνειν αἰδοῖ νόμων, καθ' οὓς ἐγένετο καὶ ἐτρέφη). Sozomen's apparent word play may reveal, albeit tongue in cheek, the rationale behind our church historian's endeavours as he may have envisaged it: to 'save' (σώζειν) Socrates i.e. to correct and better the work of Sozomen's preceding link in the historiographic chain of *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

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