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# Zosimus, Greek Historian of the Fall of the Roman Empire: An Appraisal of His Validity and Merits

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ZOSIMUS, GREEK HISTORIAN OF THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE  
AN APPRAISAL OF HIS VALIDITY AND MERITS

by

Daniel C. Scavone

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Loyola University in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
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## LIFE

Daniel C. Scavone was born in Chicago, Illinois, February 11, 1934.

He was graduated from St. Ignatius High School in Chicago, Illinois in June, 1951, and from Loyola University, Chicago, in June, 1955, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Having served in the U. S. Army as a 2nd Lieutenant during 1957, he was honorably discharged with the rank of Captain, U. S. Army Reserve, in 1965. From 1957 to 1960 he served as a Cost Accountant in an Executive training program with The Prudential Insurance Company. He began his graduate studies at Loyola University in September, 1960, as an NDEA Fellow in the History of Western Origins Program and participated in the initial semester of the Loyola in Rome Center in 1962.

He has taught at Loyola College, Montreal (1963-1966); Rosary College, River Forest, Illinois (1966-67), where he was acting Chairman of the Classics Department; St. Mary of the Lake Seminary Junior College, Niles, Illinois (1967-68), where he served as acting Chairman of the History Department; and currently is a member of the Classics and History Departments of Elmhurst College Elmhurst, Illinois.

He was married in August, 1963; a fine son was born in August, 1965.

## PREFACE

I would like to express my gratitude to my loving wife whose strength and encouragement never failed; to the members of the History of Western Origins Committee for inspiration and guidance, and especially to Father Raymond V. Schoder, S. J., for his friendship, to Professor George Szemler, for serving as my advisor, and to Sister Kathleen O'Brien, B. V. M., for her continued faith in me; to the Office of Health, Education, and Welfare for the assistance provided by a three-year NDEA Fellowship.



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## INTRODUCTION

Many problems face the student of the Greek historian Zosimus, beginning with the very time and place in which he lived and worked. Traditionally, and very simply as a starting point, we may say with certainty that he produced his History of the late Roman Empire at some time before 502 a.d., and since he wrote in Greek, that he lived somewhere within the Greek half of the Empire. We know too that he was thoroughly out of sympathy with the Christian religion which, since the Edicts of Theodosius I, had become the official religion of the Roman state, both the eastern and western parts. Despite this he pursued a political or judicial career in the employ of a Christian government, having represented himself, presumably, in the title page of his work as κόμης ἀποφισκοσυνηγόρου.<sup>1</sup> Again, precisely where he practiced in this capacity is unknown, though very probably the place was Constantinople. Some conjectures about these uncertain details will be offered in the appropriate contexts of this paper.

A great deal can, of course be determined about the man from a careful reading of his work. To begin again with the obvious,

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<sup>1</sup> Photius Bibliotheca Codex 98. See Bibliography for editions of primary sources cited.

Zosimus set out to write a New History<sup>2</sup> of the Roman Empire, sketchily from Augustus to Diocletian (I.1 - II.7),<sup>3</sup> then more amply from Constantine through Theodosius (II.8 - IV.59), and finally quite copiously thence to the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410 a.d. The History ends abruptly in the midst of Book VI, which, it is agreed by most scholars, is incomplete. One is compelled by circumstantial evidence in the text to believe that Zosimus did plan to continue his account to his own day,<sup>4</sup> which was considerably later than 410, and that he would have told his story in considerably more detail, since the fulness of his narrative improves consistently throughout.<sup>5</sup> One point more: the overall carelessness of Zosimus' work indicates that he labored over it only a short time, rather than for many years. This brief period included the last years of his life, as the unpolished state of Book VI evi-

2

This is the title found in Codex Vaticanus 156: *Zosimi comitis et exadvocatus fisci Historia Nova*. This is the oldest MS of Zosimus.

3

A major lacuna between Books I and II has deprived us of his account of Diocletian.

4

Zosimus 4.59; also 3.32, 4.21, 4.28, et al.

5

Book I covers about 300 years, Books II-IV barely 100 years, Books V-VI only about 15 years.

dences.<sup>6</sup>

Let us assert at this point what we shall certainly insist upon again later, that Zosimus' History as we have it remains an epitome even where it is most profuse in details. We use this term not in the precise sense in which Photius used it,<sup>7</sup> but to make the reader aware at the outset that, in comparison with the mass of material in modern works like those of Gibbon and Bury,<sup>8</sup> Zosimus' is but an outline. Nor can he be regarded as the equal of Ammianus Marcellinus in quantity or quality. Another fact makes the term "epitome" quite the proper one to use: since the narrative of Zosimus never reached down to his own day, he is not a primary source for the historical events contained in his text, but drew from various other sources, now mostly lost, from whose work he borrowed heavily and on whose work he remained always very

6

Ludwig Mendelssohn, ed., Zosimi comitis et exadvocati fisci Historia Nova (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1887), p. vii. (Hereinafter referred to as Mend.) Translations of Mendelssohn's Latin in this paper are the present writer's responsibility.

7

Photius Bibliotheca Codex 98.

8

Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. by J. B. Bury (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1909-14).  
J. B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958).

closely dependent, sometimes even approaching plagiarism.<sup>9</sup> This tendency to abbreviate has resulted, in certain instances, in what appear to be rash judgments and naive "black and white" statements about the leading persons on the stage of his History. Really these simple character sketches represent a summary statement of the more detailed descriptions drawn from his sources. Nor did Zosimus avoid the other vices common to epitomes, the omission and confusion of events.

The summary quality of Zosimus' work promotes another consideration. In view of the fact that all we have in Zosimus derives from written sources, whatever is of value in his work as well as what is subject to adverse criticism may possibly be attributed to his sources. Since he followed these sources very closely, the highly accurate picture of events provided by our historian in a surprising number of cases may be to the credit of Eunapius or Olympiodorus, on whom he chiefly relied. Similarly, his carelessness, predilection for exaggeration, and naivete, apparent throughout, his vocabulary even, may also derive from others. In particular, and this is saddest of all, perhaps, because there is evidence to support it, his pictures of Constantine, Julian, Valen-

9

Rudolf K. Martin, *De fontibus Zosimi* (Dissertation, University of Berlin, 1866), p. 20. Compare Zosimus 3.2.4 with Eunapius frg. 9; Zosimus 4.20 with Eunapius frg. 41. For the fragments of Eunapius' *Νέα Ἐκδοσις*, see C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* (Paris: Editore Ambrosio Firmin Didot, 1885) IV, 11-56. (Hereinafter referred to as FHG.)

tinian I, Theodosius I, Stilicho, and some others, which Zosimus' religious views force him to charge with emotional prejudice, seem to have been precolored by Eunapius, who was more strongly biased even than Zosimus. Our historian is of great value to modern historians in his own right where he is the sole extant ancient source for some event. This, of course, is accidental, but points up what is likely to be the real value of Zosimus' work: the fact that he preserved the pagan point of view of Eunapius and Clypiodorus, which happened to be his own view, and thereby exerts an important corrective to the equally prejudiced ecclesiastical historians of the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>10</sup>

The plan of this paper involves an elaboration of the above outline and an assessment of the work of Zosimus in terms of his political, religious, and historical ideas. These ideas will be considered in the context of the thoughts and attitudes, conscious and subliminal, prevalent in the Roman Empire in its last two centuries. The personality of Zosimus will be found to be at home among a certain segment of late Roman society, the last representatives of dying paganism. The preoccupation of this group lay in the great classical literary works produced, for the most part, before Christianity came into existence; their education consisted in the study of these works and in the rhetorical exercises which

10

J. B. Bury, S. A. Cook, and F. E. Adcock, eds., The Cambridge Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923-39), XII, 711.

began to permeate the educational system from the first Christian century onward; their gods were the gods of the Greeks and of the Romans of the Republic and early Empire, the gods who were glorified in the literature. These deities were thought to have preserved Rome in innumerable crises and would save Rome again in the present barbarian danger. The leaders of this pagan group were members of the senatorial aristocracy, the old ruling families of a once healthy Rome. In the East they were the philosophers of the remaining pagan schools of Athens.

An associate of such a segment of the population who set out to write history, therefore, had certain and definite models to imitate: Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, if he was a Greek; Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, Ammianus Marcellinus, if his tongue was Latin. In addition, the Christians had invented a new brand of history writing which broke many of the rules of historiography established by the classical group. If Zosimus must follow his classical models, he must also react, with Eunapius and others, to be sure, to the bastardized histories of Christians such as Eusebius of Caesarea. These problems of historiography are among the topics discussed in Chapter III.

Within the wide realm of paganism there were many varieties. Mystery cults still held out hope of salvation to men of that temperament; Neoplatonism was the successor of Stoicism as the respectable faith of intellectuals. But even within the latter sphere there were variants: the strain which became an intellectual basis for Christianity because many of its tenets were so compatible with the spirit of the new religion; and the rather more

superstitious branch which emphasized theurgy. But these were personal beliefs; overriding all was the old state cult with its public worship designed to defend Rome against her enemies. There existed among pagans, for pagans, a remarkable toleration. It was possible for a person to be a Neoplatonist, an initiate of several of the mystery cults, and to participate actively in the worship of the gods of Rome. The religious sentiments of Zosimus go hand in hand with his view of history, and therefore will also be treated in Chapter III.

Chapter I will contain observations on Zosimus' life and work, including its survival in a world dominated by hostile Christians, its esteem in late antiquity, the manuscript tradition, and the edition history. The problems associated with his sources will be the subject matter of Chapter II.

Finally, a copious treatment of Zosimus' method, bearing on his credibility, and a survey of the use of our historian by modern scholars will indicate the extent of his usefulness and his value as a historian, his anti-Christian bias notwithstanding, to scholars of the present day. While we should remember the epitomizing quality of the New History, we must still credit Zosimus with the selection of his material. In this sense his work is representative of his own prejudices and values.



## CHAPTER I

### THE LIFE AND WORK OF ZOSIMUS

A single paragraph, II.38, seems to provide the chief clues to Zosimus' dates.<sup>11</sup> He is here describing two taxes imposed by Constantine by which, he contends, citizens of the Empire were utterly destroyed financially, to the extent that most of the cities in his day were becoming ghost towns. The exactions mentioned are (1) a tax of gold and silver, commonly known as the Chrysargyron or collatio lustralis, to be paid every four years by negotiatores, that is, all businessmen, including, for the sake of illustration, even the poor hetairai, or prostitutes; and (2) the foliis or collatio glebalis, paid annually by Senators, based upon their ousia, i. e., property or net worth.

This paragraph has led Mommsen<sup>12</sup> and Mendelssohn to quite different conclusions about Zosimus' floruit. We shall indicate

11

Compare the extremes of chronology adjudged by Franz Ruhl, "Wann Schrieb Zosimos?" Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, XLVI, (1891), 146-147, who felt there was no need to place Zosimus before 518, the end of Anastasius' reign, but then, using II.38, settled also upon 501, and Ludwig Jeep, "Die Lebenszeit des Zosimos" Rh. M. P., XXXVII, (1882), 425-33, who asserted that Zosimus flourished in 425.

12

Theodore Mommsen, "Zosimus," Byzantinische Zeitschrift, XII (1903), 533.

these below and add a bit of internal evidence, apparently unnoticed by Mommsen, whose conclusion rests mainly on evidence outside the text, which will establish a workable compromise concerning this vexing issue.

Having mentioned the follis, Zosimus states that it continued to be enforced long after Constantine's time. If he is indeed referring only to that tax, as it seems, for he uses the singular τῆς ἀπαιτήσεως, we may have a terminus post quem for Zosimus' floruit of 450, for that is when the follis was lifted by the Emperor Marcian.<sup>13</sup> What follows, moreover, seems to indicate that the other tax, the Chrysargyron, continued to be enforced in Zosimus' day for the historian complains that the wealth of the cities of the Empire continues to be reduced until most of them (likely an exaggeration) have become drained of their citizens. If it is true, as Mendelssohn contends, that Zosimus did not see the abolition of the Chrysargyron, his terminus ante quem may well be established, for this imposition was only removed in 498 by the Emperor Anastasius I (491-518).<sup>14</sup>

Mommsen adduced external evidence, as we have said, to show that the same year 498 ought to be construed as the earlier limit

13

Novella of Marcian, 2.1.4.

14

Mend., p. 97, note 1; A. H. M. Jones, The Later Roman Empire 284-602, A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 237, holds the year 498 for this event. See also Bury, Later Roman Empire, I. p. 441.

of Zosimus' active life. In opposition to Mendelssohn, he felt, though he gave no reason, that Zosimus did indeed refer to the abolition of the Chrysargyron. The case of the great German historian, however, depends on the fact that Zosimus was one of the sources of Eustathius of Epiphania who carried his work down to 503, but who lived later than that date.<sup>15</sup>

It must be stated that Mommsen's placing both Eustathius and Zosimus flush in the sixth century will not do. Evagrius Scholasticus, who continued the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomenus, and Theodoret down to 594, and who himself died around 600, was the originator of the statement that Eustathius had Zosimus' work before him and continued our historian's work down to the twelfth year of the reign of Anastasius (503).<sup>16</sup> But Evagrius also tells us that he did not know when Zosimus lived, though he also used the latter, as we can tell from his accurate repetition of Zosimus' very words, echoing Zosimus' strong criticism of the Chrysargyron, even adding Zosimus' own example of the poor prostitutes as victims;<sup>17</sup> criticizing Zosimus' imputation of authorship

15

Mend., p. vii; Wilhelm von Christ, Geschichte der Griechischen Litteratur, Vol. VII of Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, ed. by Iwan von Müller (12 vols.; Munich: Oskar Beck, 1924), p. 1037.

16

Evagrius Historia ecclesiastica 3.37 and 5.24. See Mend., p. vii.

17

Evagrius 3.39.

of that vile exaction to Constantine;<sup>18</sup> and reiterating his ideas about Constantine's choice of Byzantium for his new city and about the Fausta and Crispus episode, in order to refute them.<sup>19</sup> A date for Zosimus was not forthcoming from Evagrius' perusal of Eustathius, since, as Mendelssohn concludes, Zosimus and Eustathius were practically contemporaries, so that the latter never considered the need to relate Zosimus' dates. It is not conceivable that Evagrius should not know the dates of a writer living, as Mommsen reasoned, in the mid-sixth century. Rather, up to this point, the view of Mendelssohn would seem to stand up: the floruit of Zosimus could be placed within the half-century 450-498.

The contention of this paper, based upon an interpretation of what Zosimus actually said in II.38, is that Zosimus did indeed witness the recission of the Chrysargyron in 498, but that this date must still be upheld, with Mendelssohn, as roughly the last year of his life.<sup>20</sup> The latter point is based also on the above argument from Evagrius,<sup>21</sup> which requires that Zosimus be suffi-

18  
Evagrius 3.40.

19  
Zosimus 2.30.

20  
See note 6, supra.

21  
Evagrius 3.41.

ciently early. The former hinges on Zosimus' language in II.38. Describing the Chrysargyron, he says, "It was possible to perceive every four years, when the period was almost at hand for the payment of the tax, wails and lamentations throughout every city."<sup>22</sup> Note the use of the imperfect ἦν : I feel that Zosimus himself did witness the hardship wrought by the exaction. But at the time of writing, the concrete experience of the lamentations was in the past. He concluded the passage by asserting that the cities continue to decline. This was meant to convey the conviction that such decline was a direct effect of the two tax impositions and that though they were no longer in force their effects continued to be operative.

Regarding Zosimus' dates, nothing is gained by investigating the prevalence of his name. Fabricius<sup>23</sup> indicated the frequency of usage of this name from the second century on.

Mendelssohn attempted a number of leads by which hopefully to narrow further the fifty-year span that he had established for

22

... ὥστε ἦν ἰδεῖν μέλλοντος τοῦ τετραετοῦς ἐνίστασθαι χρόνου, καθ' ὃν ἔδει τοῦτο τὸ τέλος εἰσφέρεισθαι, θρήνους ἀνὰ πᾶσαν πόλιν καὶ ὄδυσμούς;

The translation of ἀνὰ πᾶσαν πόλιν offered in this paper ("throughout every city") is a correction of the versions of Buchanan and Davis and of the anonymous translator of 1684 ("throughout the entire city"). Rev. R. V. Schoder, S. J., Professor of Classics of Loyola University was kind enough to point out that the absence of the article precludes the latter translation as a general rule.

23

Johann A. Fabricius, Bibliotheca Graeca (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966), VII, 71-73.

Zosimus' floruit. They proved largely fruitless. First the passage 1.57 was adduced, where Zosimus expounds his purpose of describing Rome's fall, which took place in as short a time as her rise to supremacy according to Polybius.<sup>24</sup> This period in Polybius was fifty-three years. But one must ask whether Zosimus meant that the fall took place in about fifty years as well, or whether, as Mendelssohn interprets it, he meant his "short space" only generally. Again, when does this period begin for our historian? Mendelssohn conjectures, citing 4.59, where Zosimus describes Theodosius' decrees abolishing paganism in Rome, that 395 could have been such a date. But perhaps 380 would be more appropriate to Zosimus' plan since that year marked the beginning of the series of anti-pagan edicts of Theodosius. We feel, too, that Zosimus was <sup>not</sup> ~~less~~ likely to have considered that ~~Rome's~~ decline began after Theodosius.

In the light of the date of 498 as established above, Mendelssohn's discussion of the chronology of Olympiodorus<sup>25</sup> and how that bears on Zosimus is seen not to approach the problem at all. Olympiodorus was the major source for the last part of Zosimus' History; he carried his work down to 425, which tells us only that he, and hence Zosimus, lived later than that time.

24  
Polybius 1.1.

25  
Mend., p. vi.

Similarly, there is no end of passages in which our historian's tone seems to place him long after the events under discussion. Two examples should suffice. In 5.34 Zosimus referred to the death of Stilicho, one of the latest major occurrences in the History, in the following terms: Stilicho was "a man of greater forbearance than almost all the dynasts of that period."<sup>26</sup> There is no final force in this argument by which Zosimus would seem to be referring here to an event long past, but the words

do lend themselves to that interpretation. Consider too the historian's remark that all Boeotia and the rest of the Greek lands through which Alaric passed have shown the marks of Alaric's devastation to this very day, .<sup>27</sup>

An argument e silentio was indicated by Mendelssohn<sup>28</sup> involving Zosimus' failure to mention the fire of 476 which destroyed the library founded by Julian at Constantinople after he had mentioned the establishment of that library.<sup>29</sup> This might have been used to prove that the History was composed before 476, but the

26

Translations of the text of Zosimus included in this paper are drawn largely from James J. Buchanan and Harold T. David, trans., Zosimus: Historia Nova, The Decline of Rome (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1967), reviewed by Alan Cameron, Classical World (September, 1968), 19. However, on occasions when their translation was thought to be deficient for some reason, the present writer has offered his own version. In all cases the Greek text has been consulted in order to control the translation given. The text used has been that of Mendelssohn throughout.

27

Zosimus 5.5.

28

Mend., p. x.

29

Zosimus 3.11.

weakness of such an approach was clear even to its author. Arguments from silence or omission can sometimes be crucial, but normally their value is limited and they should be employed with caution.

There is at least one passage which may corroborate our late date for Zosimus' writing. This was his reference in 1.6.1. to pantomime dances, responsible "to this day (μεχρι τοῦδε)" for much mischief, filling the cities with factions (στάσεις) and riots (παραχαί) (1.5.4). Now at a certain festival of the "Brytae"<sup>30</sup> in 501 and 502, in Constantinople, riots occurred and many were hurt. These festivals featured dancing as a main event, which could very well be associated with "pantomime." Zosimus may have had these riots in mind at 1.5.4 and 1.6.1. Things reached such a state that Anastasius banned the "Brytae" from the whole Empire in 502.<sup>31</sup> The force of all this is that Zosimus produced Book I, at least, prior to 502 since he was apparently not aware of the abolition of the "Brytae" (= pantomime?). As we have already shown (above, page 11) that 2.38 was written after 498, we have narrowed considerably the termini of Zosimus' literary life. We may assume that the rest of his work was written at the same time or in the years immediately after, since, as we have indicated (above, page 2), the New History was not the labor of a lifetime but rather of

30

Bury, Later Roman Empire, I, pp. 437-438 with notes.

31

Ibid., n. 5.



a very few years.<sup>32</sup>

Numerous passages in Zosimus provide an overall conviction in the reader that he did indeed witness those last years of the Roman Empire in the west. A listing of such passages in paraphrase may perhaps impart in a short space this ethos. The Empire was reeling in the direction of ultimate annihilation.<sup>33</sup> When I shall have arrived in my narrative at those times in which the Roman Empire gradually became barbarized and shrank to a smaller size, I shall present the reasons for its misfortune.<sup>34</sup> Constantine personally planted the seed of our present devastated state of affairs.<sup>35</sup> As a result of Constantine's various taxes the wealth of the cities is little by little being drained off until the majority are now bereft of their inhabitants.<sup>36</sup> Until this day the Roman emperors . . . have lost more peoples besides, some becoming autonomous, others surrendering to the barbarians, yet others be-

32

We owe this section on the "Brytae" to a personal note from Mr. Alan Cameron of the University of London, who was kind enough to supply a copy of an (as yet) unpublished paper in which he made this very point.

<sup>33</sup>Zosimus

Ibid., 1.37.

<sup>34</sup>

Ibid., 1.58.

<sup>35</sup>

Ibid., 2.34.

<sup>36</sup>

Ibid., 2.38.

ing reduced to utter desolation.<sup>37</sup> A portent appeared to Valens: a man, lashed and beaten, lying dead-still in the road, unspeaking but with his eyes open. The men who were clever at explaining such things conjectured that the portent bespoke the condition of the State, which would continue to suffer beatings and lashings, like a person breathing out his last, until it was completely destroyed by the wickedness of its magistrates and rulers. And indeed it will appear, as we survey events one by one, that this prediction was true.<sup>38</sup> Notwithstanding, a law abolishing them (the old State religious rites) was laid down, and, as other things which had been handed down from ancestral times lay neglected, the Empire of the Romans was gradually diminished and became a domicile of barbarians - or rather, having lost its former inhabitants it was ultimately reduced to a shape in which not even the places where the cities lay situate were recognizable. That matters were brought to such a pass my narrative of individual events will clearly show.<sup>39</sup>

Despite Zosimus' extremely close dependence on his sources, especially Ennapius, who shared his views on religion, such remarks on the fall of Rome smack of first hand experience. Further, they

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37  
Zosimus 3.32.

38  
Ibid., 4.21.

39  
Ibid., 4.59.

would seem to preclude times before 450. Zosimus would therefore, under the thesis of this paper, have been alive when Rome was threatened by Attila's Huns in 452 and sacked by the Vandals under Gaiseric in 455. He would have witnessed the deposition of Romulus Augustulus by Odovacer in 476, the subsequent murder of the latter by Theodoric the Ostrogoth who established his Italian kingdom in 493, and the foundation of a Visigothic kingdom in Spain in the last years of the fifth century.

As little is known with certainty about Zosimus' homeland as about other aspects of his life. His narrative carries him throughout practically every part of the vast Roman Empire, and often landmarks are mentioned which might betray a more than casual familiarity with a certain area. However, when such clues are pursued by the researcher little consistency is found, and the conclusion must generally be drawn that any intimate details apparently known to Zosimus should be referred to his sources. For example, much of the story told by our historian takes place in the middle parts of the Empire: Noricum, Pannonia, Moesia. The Zosimian index lists almost one hundred references to these areas, the towns, rivers, and other landmarks therein. The following is a paraphrase of Zosimus' description of the Pannonian town of Cibalae.<sup>40</sup> It was near this town, situated on a hill, that

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40

Ibid., 2.18. Cibalae has not been exactly located, but was probably situated near the modern towns of Mikanofzi and Vinkovcze in Lower Pannonia. William Smith, ed., A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography (London: John Murray, 1878).

Licinius mustered his army for a showdown with Constantine (in the year 314). A narrow road leads up to the town, along the greater part of which lies a swamp, while all the rest around is mountainous. From here an open plain extends; here Licinius pitched camp, extending his lines under the hill in such a way that his wings might not appear weak. Constantine drew up his army near the mountain, cavalry in the van. From this point our historian enters into an account of the battle which is more a rhetorical exercise than any true rendering of events, but for our purposes here, it is important to note the highly detailed description by Zosimus regarding the site. In a later section<sup>41</sup> Magnentius, we are told, intending to fight near Sirmium, also in Pannonia, brought his army to the plains in front of Potovius which are intersected by the Dravus River, which flows through Noricum and Pannonia and empties into the Danube. Such exegetical assistance might be expected from one describing events which have taken place in his own territory. Yet still later<sup>42</sup> Zosimus would have us believe that Alaric traveled from the town of Emona in upper Pannonia into Noricum by crossing the Aquillis River and the Apen-

41

Ibid., 2.46. Portions of Sirmium have been traced near modern Mitrovitz in the southeast part of Lower Pannonia. Smith, ibid.

42

Ibid., 5.29.

nine Mountains. Now no such river is known and the Apennines are badly misplaced.<sup>43</sup> A native of this area, or at least one whose employment has brought him hither so that he has come to be at home here, would not make such mistakes about the geography. Zosimus must, then, have derived these details of the landscape from his sources, and have been able to give the impression of personal experience only by virtue of his skill as storyteller.

It would probably be a mistake to think that since Zosimus has purported to describe the reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire his work must necessarily be west-centered. Surely the repeated barbarian assaults on the city of Rome must have made the same awful impression on Zosimus as on other thoughtful citizens<sup>44</sup> and have served to emphasize the gravity of the situation in the west. However, in Zosimus' day, it was not crystal clear that the danger would be destructive of only the western half of the Empire. The threat of Persians and barbarians in the east was just as real. To Zosimus' mind a new nadir had been reached in the east when, upon the death of Julian, Jovian ceded to the Persians the

43

See Chapter II, p. 40 on Pisander as Zosimus' probable source for the Aquilis. Sozomenus Historia Ecclesiastica 1.6 seems to derive it from Pisander, via Olympiodorus.

44

See Jerome Epistles 126; 127; 60; 123.16. See also Salvianus De gubernatione Dei, passim. However, with an unparalleled optimism concerning the fortunes of Rome, the sieges of the city were shortly forgotten by most writers, when it was seen that the city had, after all survived. See Chapter III, pp. 82-85.

Roman stronghold city of Nisibis; other losses of land and people followed, our historian assures us, which up to his own day had not been retrieved.<sup>45</sup> If our dates for Zosimus are upheld, he may also have been alive when the Huns ravaged Asia and Europe to the walls of Constantinople itself in the invasions of 441-5; he surely knew the Ostrogothic problem, solved by the Emperor Zeno by sanctioning the takeover of Italy by Theodoric, in order to rid the Eastern Empire of their menace. He may have been alive to witness the new Persian war with the sacking of Amida in 502, though he does not mention or allude to it. In fact, Zosimus' narrative only becomes what might be called west-centered after his adoption of Olympiodorus of Thebes as chief source.<sup>46</sup>

Failure to turn up definite evidence for placing our historian in the western half of the Empire only fortifies the opinion of many that Zosimus was at home in Constantinople.<sup>47</sup> But first let us recount in paraphrase the data presented by Zosimus about Constantinople and its environs.<sup>48</sup>

45

Zosimus 3.32-33.

46

Ibid., 5.26.

47

Mend., p. xli; xxxviii, n. 1. Frederick Reitemeier, "Disquisition," in Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Vol. XXX: Zosimus ex recognitione Iohannis Bekkeri (Bonn, 1837), p. xxv. (Hereafter called "Bekker.")

48

Zosimus 2.30-32.

Constantine, intending to build a new Christian capital of the Empire which would be the equal of old Rome,<sup>49</sup> first selected a site in the Troad near ancient Ilium. Here foundations were laid and a wall section which could still in Zosimus' day be seen by anyone sailing toward the Hellespont.<sup>50</sup> These were left unfinished. He finally chose Byzantium (whose impenetrable character he had personally experienced in his recent siege of Licinius).<sup>51</sup> Now he expanded it to make it suitable for an imperial residence. The city is situated on a hill and extends over part of the isthmus which is bounded by the so-called Horn and the Propontis. Formerly it had a gate at the point where the stoas built by Severus end. A wall leading down the hill from the west side extended as far as Aphrodite's temple and the sea over against Chrysopo-

49

Andrew Alföldi, The Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome, trans. by Harold Mattingly (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 113-14. J. B. Bury, Later Roman Empire, I, 69.

50

Sozomenus Historia ecclesiastica 2.3 gives the same description. Andrew Alföldi, "On the Foundation of Constantinople: a Few Notes," Journal of Roman Studies, XXXVII (1947), 10-16, disbelieves the story of the prior construction at Troy as representing the efforts of various Byzantine authors to expropriate Troy, metropolis of Rome, in order that Constantinople might seem more ancient, eternal, noble than Rome. The same historian, Conversion of Constantine, pp. 93-94, points out the naturalness of Constantine's search for a more appropriate capital, in imitation of all emperors from the 230's on. The motive imputed by Zosimus is, therefore, tendentious.

51

Zosimus 2.23.

lis, while one from the north side of the hill in similar fashion descended to the port, which they call the Dockyard (Νεώριον) and beyond to the sea, which lies straight ahead at the mouth through which one sails out to the Euxine. The strait has a total extent out to the Euxine of about thirty-eight miles. Such, says Zosimus was the original size of the city. In the place where the gate had formerly been, Constantine constructed a circular agora which he encompassed with two-storied stoas. He built two very high arches of Proconnesian marble facing one another; through these one may enter the stoas of Severus and leave the old city. Wishing to make the city much larger, he surrounded it, at a distance of about two miles beyond the old wall, with a new rampart that cut off the entire isthmus from sea to sea. He built a palace not much smaller than the one at Rome. In addition he decked out in every finery a Hippodrome, a part of which he made a shrine to the Dioscuri; their statues even now may be seen standing in the stoas of the Hippodrome. In another part of the same building he set up the tripod of Delphic Apollo, which had on it the very image of the god.<sup>52</sup> There being in Byzantium a very great agora with four stoas, at the end of one of these, to which there are many steps leading up, he built two temples and set therein cult-statues. One was of Rhea, mother of the gods. They say that Constantine, out of indifference to religious objects, treated this despitefully, removing the lions on either side and changing

52

Sozomenus 2.5 has a similar account.



the attitude of the hands; formerly the goddess appeared to be holding the lions, but now her gesture was altered to that of one praying as she vigilantly looked out over the city. In the other temple he set up a statue of Fortuna Romana. Moreover he built homes for certain Senators who had followed him from Rome. He distributed to the Byzantine populace maintenance which has continued in existence to this day.<sup>53</sup> He spent money on many useless structures, and some which had to be torn down soon after as being unsafe because of hasty construction.<sup>54</sup> Successors of Constantine further enlarged the walls of Constantinople and increased the population. They permitted dwelling to be so contiguous that great overcrowding makes it risky to go out. Also much of the seashore is now land where stakes drive into the sea support houses, enough of them to make up a good-sized city.<sup>55</sup> Julian gave Constantinople a Senate like that at Rome and built a large harbor, a haven for ships from the treacherous south wind; a stoa in the shape of a crescent rather than straight running down to the harbor; finally a library was built inside the imperial

53

This statement is of no assistance in reckoning Zosimus' dates. A. H. M. Jones, Later Roman Empire, 306-7 and 696-97, traces the legislation revolving about the corn dole down to the reign of Tiberius, 578-82, at which time it was still in effect.

54

Zosimus 2.30-32; Themistius Oratio 3.47c confirms this statement.

55

Zosimus 2.35.

stoa.<sup>56</sup>

References abound also to the Hellespont, Propontis, and the "strait between Constantinople and Chalcedon," as Zosimus called the Bosporus.<sup>57</sup> He placed the capture of Macrinus in the last location,<sup>58</sup> and erroneously had Zenobia drowned in the middle of that strait;<sup>59</sup> Licinius escaped Constantine's siege of Byzantium by crossing over to Chalcedon.<sup>60</sup> The environs of the latter city seem sufficiently well known too. Constantine feared the Bithynian coast to be too rugged for transport ships, whereupon he had a number of fast skiffs built and headed for the so-called "Sacred Promontory" at the mouth of the Euxine, about twenty-five miles from Chalcedon.<sup>61</sup> Again, Zosimus mentions the marshes adjacent to Lake Phileatina near the Euxine, west of Byzantium. The Scythians,

<sup>56</sup>

Ibid., 3.11. Zosimus' remarks regarding Julian's bestowal of a Senate on the City may be in error, considering what he has already said about Comstantine's attracting senators from Rome, 2.31. See A. H. M. Jones, Later Roman Empire, II, 1082, note 13.

<sup>57</sup>

The term "Bosporus" is reserved in Zosimus for the Cimmerian Bosporus. See 1.64 and 4.20.

<sup>58</sup>

Zosimus 1.10.

<sup>59</sup>

Ibid., 1.59; See Buchanan and Davis, Zosimus: Historia Nova, p. 36, note 1.

<sup>60</sup>

Zosimus 2.25.

<sup>61</sup>

Ibid., 2.26.

realizing that fishermen lay in ambush in those marshes, made their way through the strait between Byzantium and Chalcedon. The garrison in the latter place extended as far out as the shrine of the martyr Euphemia near the sea's entrance.<sup>62</sup>

In 2.24 Zosimus indicates his familiarity with the currents and winds of the Hellespont which flows into the Aegean. A north wind renders the entrance into the Hellespont practically impossible, while a south wind quite neutralizes the current.<sup>63</sup> A sea battle was shaping up between Licinius' fleet under admiral Abantus and that of Constantine. The former, setting sail from the harbor of Aeantium, a town in the Troad, had to bide time owing to a north wind prevailing in the morning hours.<sup>64</sup> Constantine chose to wait in the narrows, his fleet being inferior in number. Around noon, however, the north wind abated and a strong south wind arose surprising Abantus' ships and driving them hard against the Asiatic shore. Further indication of this situation comes at 1.42 where Zosimus asserts that the Scythian boats were not able to withstand the swiftness of the current in the narrows of the Propontis. Again, Julian's harbor in Byzantium was intended to pro-

62

Ibid., 1.34; 5.18.

63

Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XIV, n. 108. Bury, Later Roman Empire p. 67.

64

This is implied in Zosimus, who emphasizes their fear of the fleet.

vide a haven for ships from the treacherous south wind.<sup>65</sup> From the above passages it is difficult to avoid the impression that Zosimus made his home in Constantinople.

Zosimus' title, comes et exadvocatus fisci, appeared already in the copy of the Zosimian text examined by the ninth century Patriarch Photius. The title comes, or Count, might refer either to an office or an honor.<sup>66</sup> There were literally scores of meanings attached to it, for which reason we are limited to the most subjective sort of conjecture in associating it with Zosimus. There were three levels from Comes primi ordinis to tertii ordinis. Constantine seems to have introduced it as an official title, already applied to various types of aides.<sup>67</sup> A law of 413<sup>68</sup>

65

Zosimus 3.11. One might adduce further indications that Zosimus was a Constantinople resident. On several occasions he records decisions of the Senate at that city (4.43-44; 5.11; 5.20; 5.29; 6.12). In addition, Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XXXI, n. 77, felt that Zosimus (5.41) spoke of Etruscan ceremonies as a Greek unacquainted with the national superstition of Rome and Tuscany. We might add that he surely seems to have had to research the history of the ludi (2.1-6), the Pontifex Maximus (4.36), and the various oracles he recounts.

66

The following narrative has been derived generally from material in A. H. M. Jones, Later Roman Empire, pp. 507-14.

67

Ibid., p. 104-5. As an honorary title, comes primi ordinis was granted to technicians and professors in 413 and 425 respectively. Cod. Theod. 6.20.1; 6.21.1.

68

Cod. Theod. 6.15.1.

granted the title of comes primi ordinis to Assessors or judicial advisors of court magistrates. Zosimus may well have received it in this way as a young advocate. If so, he may have held the rank of clarissimus since the Emperor Anastasius I decreed this rank to comites primi ordinis.<sup>69</sup>

The advocatus fisci was the senior member of each of the official bars of the Roman state. The highest of these bars were those of the Praetorian Prefects and of the Urban Prefects, below which were the provincial courts.<sup>70</sup>

69

Codex Justinianus 12.49.12. This was the rank attached to members of the Senate, though already by the end of the fourth century subdivisions within the rank arose, so that Senators who had held the highest offices down to the chief palatine ministries were accorded the title illustris; the next group were styled spectabilis; all the rest remained simply clarissimi. See Jones, Later Roman Empire, pp. 528-29.

70

Even before the time of Constantine, an advocate had to be enrolled at the bar of some judge, a rule which lasted throughout the late Empire. Moreover the number of lawyers on any bar was limited. In the east, unlike the west, in the latter years of the Empire, the profession was overcrowded. Legislation was required to maintain a reasonable maximum number of advocates on the various state bars. In 439 a limit of 150 was set for the court of the Praetorian Prefect of the East; in 474 a maximum of fifty was set for the bar of the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum. See the Novella of Theodosius II, 10.1 and Cod. Just. 2.7.17. Gradually, from about 468 on, the tenure of the advocatus fisci of different bars began to be limited, usually to two years, after which he had to retire from practice. This allowed the ambitions of the great numbers of applicants, who were on waiting lists as super-numerarii for the higher bars, to be satisfied by more frequent promotions. Legislation passed during this same period barring pagans from the office of advocatus fisci may have had, in the light of the above, a dual purpose. Codex Justinianus 2.6.8. See p. 32, infra.

The noblest Romans generally pursued the legal profession as young men, as an introduction to careers in government or to fulfill the social obligations incumbent upon their rank. The main body of real professional barristers came from a rather lower social stratum to whom the substantial salary and prospects of advancement would have been an inducement. A complete legal education was not necessary until after 460 when Leo I made it requisite by law for the bar of the Praetorian Prefect of the East. This rule was gradually extended until a regular course of legal study was required for admission to the bar of the Comes Orientis and the other provincial governors' courts. Still, from the beginning the minimal educational standards demanded study of grammar and rhetoric, that is, the usual education of a gentleman. Thus Zosimus surely advanced to this stage of training.<sup>71</sup>

71

Already by the 380's, however, Libanius had complained that things were changing in that the traditional rhetorical education was being omitted in more and more cases in favor of a legal training which could be had only at Rome in the west and at Constantinople and Berytus in the eastern half of the Empire, and only in Latin at that. Libanius Orationes 1.214; 2.43-44; 43.4-5; 48.22-24; 49.27-29; 62.21.3. Therefore, while such training was not absolutely required until later (sufficiently odd by modern standards), aspirants would have done well to take a law course in order to remain in a competitive position regarding legal posts that might become available. This was in contrast with the ideals of Quintilian in whose time there was a clear distinction between the advocate-orator and the jurist-technician. See H. I. Marrou, A History of Education in Antiquity, trans. by George Lamb, Mentor Books (Toronto: The New American Library of Canada, Ltd., 1964), p. 387. Quintilian 12.1.13; 12.1.24-26; 12.3.

It is quite probable that Zosimus was never personally required to take formal legal training. In his writing there is hardly any trace of intimate knowledge of the law or interest in it at all. Indeed, the whole impression given in his History is that Zosimus may not really have held the titles credited to him, or any other important public office, for that matter. Mendelssohn felt, to the contrary, that Zosimus' exposition of the changes in military and civilian offices, though imperfect, betrays a man who had discharged public office and is knowledgeable in administration.<sup>72</sup> In any case, since we ought not to push an argument without evidence to support it, and against as worthy an adversary as Mendelssohn at that, we will simply say that we have no information concerning the bar at which he served. It is possible that his status there was secure and that imperial enactments requiring a law certification applied only to young aspirants. By his generation text-books and commentaries on the law existed in Greek, and Greek alone was sufficient for eastern advocates specializing in oratory, that is, trial lawyers. But the language of all of the law schools was Latin, and the bulk of legal literature was not available in Greek until Justinian's day. Modern sources are vague regarding the substitution of Greek for Latin at Berytus, which was the most important of the law schools.<sup>73</sup> It is indeed

72

Mend., p. xxxviii, note 1.

73

Jones, Later Roman Empire, II, 989-90. Marrou, Education in Antiquity, pp. 389-90.

possible that by Zosimus' day such an education was available in Greek; in fact there is, in our opinion, little reason to presume that Zosimus knew Latin.<sup>74</sup> As this paper will indicate later, the strong rhetorical flavor of the History of Zosimus argues the case of a traditional Roman education in grammar and rhetoric. The chief language of such an education was Greek.<sup>75</sup>

74

In either part of the Empire in late antiquity many intellectuals seem to have been weak or ignorant in the language of the other half. On Orosius, see Samuel Dill, Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), p. 68, n. 1. Augustine knew little Greek; he admitted reading Plotinus in Victorinus' Latin translation; see Arnaldo Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.," in The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century, ed. by Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 99. There is no evidence that Eunapius knew Latin; he did not even mention the leading western intellectuals of his day, such as Augustine, Jerome, Basil, Gregory, Ausonius, Prudentius, and Ammianus Marcellinus, the last most surprising of all. See Wilmer Cave Wright, trans., Philostratus and Eunapius, the Lives of the Sophists, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1952), p. 321, and also A. F. Norman, "Magnus in Ammianus, Eunapius, and Zosimus: New Evidence," Classical Quarterly, VII (1957), 133, n. 1. Averil Cameron and Alan Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Late Empire," C. O., XIV (1964), 325, n. 1 indicate a similar deficiency in Greek of the Senator Symmachus. Regarding John Lydus' small ability in Latin, we were able to consult T. F. Carney, "The World of the Bureaucrat in Ancient Times," in Comparative Administration Group Occasional Papers, (April, 1967), Part 3, p. 14, note 8.

75

Carney, "World of the Bureaucrat," Table 3.1, gives a list of ancient works considered to be standard classics to John Lydus and his colleagues, culled from the writings of John, hence applicable to the eastern half of the Empire: Greek authors included Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides, Diodorus, Plutarch, Arrian, Cassius Dio, Ptolemy; Latin authors were Virgil, Livy, Horace, Cicero, Caesar, Juvenal, Suetonius, Lucan, Apuleius. Any hint of most of these is lacking in Zosimus, while drawing from his work, we might have added Polybius and Herodotus. Also notably missing from John's list was Tacitus.



Finally, assuming that Zosimus did rise to a high position, the dearth of absolute biographical information which has come down about him strengthens the conjecture of Reitemeier<sup>76</sup> that he concealed his paganism in the interests of professional advancement.<sup>77</sup> To put it otherwise, he seems to have concealed his identity in his work to avoid being associated with such flagrantly anti-Christian ideas. We do know that Anastasius I, in whose reign Zosimus lived, did maintain an anti-pagan policy.<sup>78</sup> Zosimus' work may have had only private circulation considering the fact that it escaped the invectives of Christian writers prior to Evagrius.<sup>79</sup> Zosimus would not, then, have been affected by the law of Leo I and Anthemius in 468 by which pagans were prevented from holding the office of advocate of the fisc.<sup>80</sup>

The History of Zosimus was written in six books. This division is vindicated by Mendelssohn,<sup>81</sup> though some of the manuscripts show a five-part division. The following is intended to give the

76  
Reitemeier, "Disquisitio," p. xxv in Bekker.

77  
See also Mend., pp. vii-viii and xiii.

78  
Jones, Later Roman Empire, II, 938.

79  
Gibbon, Decline, Chapter XXVIII, n. 64.

80  
Cod. Just. 2.6.8.

81  
Mend., pp. xiv-xv.

reader an idea of the contents of each book; it should be kept in mind that, as already mentioned, the treatment of events became fuller as the work advanced. Book one begins roughly with Augustus and ends with the death of Carinus about 284. Book two covers the years 313 to 354, that is, the reigns of Constantine and Constantius. A long lacuna is apparent at the beginning of the book, in which Zosimus must have treated the reign of Diocletian. The extant portion begins with the famous discussion of the Secular Games (2.1-7). In Book three the rise and death of Julian, Zosimus' hero, are covered, as well as the reign of Jovian and finally the accession of Valentinian in 364. Book four is the account of Valentinian, Valens, Gratian, and especially Theodosius (364-395). Book five covers a period of about thirteen years in the reign of Arcadius and Honorius; Book six another two, 408-410.

It is the almost unanimous opinion of the scholars that Zosimus did not live to complete his work,<sup>82</sup> which, he hints frequently, he would have brought down to his own day.<sup>83</sup> The many inaccuracies of Book six<sup>84</sup> would seem to be proof enough that the work was published posthumously, and similarly that there could not

82

See, for instance, Mend., pp. vii-viii and 294, note; von Christ, Griechischen Literatur, pp. 1037ff.

83

Zosimus 4.59, especially, but see Footnote 4 supra.

84

Buchanan and Davis, Zosimus: Historia Nova, pp. 249-257, the notes passim. They generally echo the views of Mendelssohn's notes to Book VI, passim; for example see Zosimus 6.7.6 and 6.12.1 and Mendelssohn's note, p. 288.

have been a second edition by Zosimus, as Photius conjectured from the title *ἱστορία νέα* and from the fact that Eunapius' chronicle was known in two editions.<sup>85</sup> Zosimus, it rather seems, did not even personally publish a first edition. It is impossible now to know the background of the title New History, which does appear in certain MSS., not least of which is Codex Vaticanus 156, the oldest of the extant texts.<sup>86</sup> Reitemeier<sup>87</sup> felt that Zosimian MSS had already fallen into neglectful disrepair because of his paganism by Evagrius' time. This finds support in the fact that John of Antioch (early seventh century) who translated part of Herodian<sup>88</sup> into his historical chronicle, constructed the remaining part of the third century from Eutropius and Zosimus. However, he dismissed Zosimus from the accession of Diocletian--precisely where the great lacuna appears in modern texts.<sup>89</sup> Reitemeier further conjectured that copies of Zosimus ceased to be made by Photius'

85

E. Condurachi, "Les Idees Politiques de Zosime," Revista Clasica, XII-XIV (1941-42), 115-27, p. 118, felt as Photius, that Zosimus was known in two editions. Hopefully this is disproved in this paper.

86

Fabricius, Bibliotheca Graeca, p. 65.

87

Reitemeier, "Disquisitio," p. xxvii-xxviii in Bekker.

88

Herodian's work reached the reign of Gordian II, 238 a. d.

89

Mend., p. xxvi.

day.<sup>90</sup>

Zosimus' work, which had thus undergone great criticism and was, consequently, neglected in the immediately ensuing Christian centuries, was partly vindicated by Photius in the ninth century.<sup>91</sup> The Patriarch, unlike Evagrius Scholasticus, and Nicephorus Callistus at the start of the fourteenth century,<sup>92</sup> at least attempted to treat Zosimus objectively; after calling him one of the impious who often attacked Christianity, the learned Photius proceeded to describe the contents of the six books and even had some mild praise of the historian's style. In the centuries that followed, Zosimus had both detractors and defenders. The chief cause of the attacks made upon him has been his obvious anti-Christian attitude. Because of this nothing contained in his History could be accepted for the simple truth. But this sort of prima facie opposition belongs in an era other than our own. It is interesting that the chief of the defenders of his historical authority are two editors and translators of his work, Leunclavius, who produced the first complete edition of Zosimus in Latin in 1576 and Reitemeier, whose major edition of the Greek appeared in 1784. None who have worked over his text in a spirit of scholarship appear in the camp of his

90

Reitemeier, "Disquisitio," p. xxvii in Bekker.

91

Photius, Bibliotheca Codex 98.

92

On Evagrius, see pp. 5-6 above; for Nicephorus (1256-1335), his Historia ecclesiastica 16.41. The latter's work, in 18 books, covered the period from Christ to the death of Phocas (610).

opponents, though Mendelssohn is quite neutral and generally sound in his appraisal. Aside from Leunclavius and Reitemeier, editors did not make a special point of writing apologiae for Zosimus.

The first Greek edition, though of the first two books only, appeared in 1581; it was made by Henry Stephanus. Nine years later Frederick Sylburg came out with the first complete Greek text as part of the Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Romanae. His emendations have been praised even by Mendelssohn.<sup>93</sup> Between 1678 and 1684 there was a rash of Zosimian scholarship: L. Cousin translated the History into French, Christopher Celarius produced a new edition based heavily on Sylburg's, still another edition was prepared at Oxford, and finally an English translation by an anonymous hand was published in London in 1684.

Reitemeier's edition of 1784 seems to have initiated a half-century of heavy activity revolving about our historian. It had been, after all, a hundred years since the last major work on him had appeared. The value of Reitemeier's work will appear more pronounced as the present dissertation proceeds. In 1802 Seybold and Heyler published a German translation; a second English version, by J. Davis, dates from 1814, followed by a second French traduction by J. A. C. Buchon in 1836. The following year saw the Greek and Latin text edition of I. Bekker, Volume XXX of the Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae. Fifty years later, in 1887, Mendelssohn produced his classic edition; and finally in 1967 appeared

the fine English translation of Buchanan and Davis, which will not be known for its scholarly apparatus which is minimal.

The various works mentioned above derive from some ten or twelve MSS dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These are summarized in Reitemeier<sup>94</sup> and discussed at some length by Mendelssohn.<sup>95</sup> It is sufficient to say here what is agreed to by all who have considered the problem, that Codex Vaticanus 156 is the archetype of all of the others. This was proved by A. Kiessling<sup>96</sup> from the fact that it is the oldest and contained the same lacunae of the first, second, and fifth books which are found in all the other MSS.<sup>97</sup>

94  
Reitemeier, "Praefatio," in Bekker, Zosimus, pp. ix-xiv.

95  
Mend., pp. xvii-xxvii.

96  
A. Kiessling, "Zu Zosimus." Rh. M. P., XVIII (1863), 135-

36

97  
Mend., p. xxi. The works mentioned above in the list of editions and translations appear in the Bibliography.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOURCES OF ZOSIMUS

We have seen that Zosimus failed by almost a century to attain his goal of bringing his narrative down to his own day. As he was not, therefore, an eyewitness of the events which he relates, his sources assume great importance. A fundamental conclusion about Zosimus' written sources was drawn already by Photius

Εἴποι δ' ἄν τις οὐ γράφαι αὐτὸν ἱστορίαν, ἀλλὰ μεταγράψαι τὴν Εὐναπίου.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of Reitemeier it was commonly held that the chief sources of our historian were three earlier writers, well chosen by Zosimus for having written accounts of their own times, and so, for being true primary sources. These were P. Herennius Dexippus, whose Scythica was an account of the Gothic invasions from about 238 to 270; the above named Eunapius of Sardis, who continues the history Dexippus from 270 to about 404;<sup>2</sup> and Olympiodorus of Egyptian Thebes, used by Zosimus for the years 405 to 410.<sup>3</sup> This is

<sup>1</sup> Photius Bibliotheca Cod. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Eunapius frg. 1.

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Bury, in his edition of Gibbon, Vol. III, Appendix 1, p. 511, calls Olympiodorus the chief source for the years of the reigns of Honorius to Theodosius II.

the view of this paper. However a distinction must be maintained between these sources of factual historical data and other works ready by Zosimus, from which he drew ideas of a more universal nature. It is hoped that sufficient reminiscences of Polybius and Herodotus in the work of Zosimus will be shown in subsequent chapters to establish them as sources of this second type used by our historian.

R. K. Martin crystalized all this in 1866 by means of a detailed comparison of the remains of the three earlier historians respectively with the account of Zosimus. His conclusion, however, that Zosimus used these sources to the exclusion of all other literature, has been attacked ever since. Martin showed that while Zosimus did mention previous writers, for example, Herodotus at 4.20, Polybius at 1.1 and 1.57, Pisander at 5.29; Quadratus at 5.27 with his sole mention of Olympiodorus, Syrianus at 4.18, the Emperor Julian at 3.2, 3.8, and 3.11, there are indications that such references were derived by our historian from his sources, who made the same citations; <sup>that</sup> such was Zosimus' dependence on the three named above. The naming of these writers, then, represents a case of "padding" his bibliography.<sup>4</sup> At 3.2 and 3.8 Zosimus re-

4

Carney, "The World of the Bureaucrat," Part 3, p. 9, noted the rather large degree to which John Lydus expanded his own "bibliography" by means of works that he found cited by the authors he did read. That he could have made something of a reputation as a Latin scholar in this way despite the importance laid upon literary studies among civil servants in the fifth century, is evidence of the meagre amount of Latin known in the east. See Carney, Part 3, pp. 5-9.



marks that readers who wish to understand the history of Julian should read Julian's own writings' Martin pointed out that Eunapius says the same thing in fr. 9,<sup>5</sup> and that therefore Zosimus did not really use Julian as a Quelle. Nor did he see Pisander's poem. Sozomenus, the church historian, who also drew from Olympiodorus, relates<sup>6</sup> the same story about the Argonauts referred by Zosimus, 5.29, to the poet Pisander;<sup>7</sup> Martin attributed that story to Olympiodorus as common source for both Zosimus and Sozomenus, a view with which Mendelssohn concurs.<sup>8</sup> So far, so good, However, Martin's final proof was faulty: he asserts that since Zosimus passed over in silence the years 405-406, between the end of Eunapius and the start of Olympiodorus, rather than look to another source, it is extremely probable that he confined himself solely

5  
Martin, de fontibus Zosimi, p. 22.

6  
Sozomenus Hist. eccles. 1.6.

7  
Pisander came from Lycaonia in Asia Minor. He flourished around 260; there is ascribed to him a poem on the marriages of gods and heroes, Ἡρωικῶν Θεογαμίας. See Mend., n. at 5.29.3. If Fabricius is correct, then Martin's view, that Zosimus never read Pisander, is fortified.

8  
Mend., note at 5.26.1. Olympiodorus' interest in the Argonaut legend is further attested by fr. 33, where he named Herodorus who wrote a geographical and historical monograph on the Argonauts. See Albin Lesky, A History of Greek Literature, trans. by James Willis and Cornelis de Heer (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1966), pp. 329-30. Also see E. A. Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes," C. Q., XXXVIII (1944), 43-52. The fragments of Olympiodorus derive completely from Photius Bibliotheca Codex 80 they can also be used in FHG, IV, 58-61.

to the three historians throughout. For here would be clear evidence of Zosimus' research habits which betray an almost unbelievable carelessness - or a commendable loyalty. The fragments of Olympiodorus, however, do touch lightly on the years in question before their fuller narrative from 407 on.<sup>9</sup> Fragment 12 refers to the elevation of one Marcus to the imperial throne by the rebellious troops in Britain even before the seventh consulship of Honorius, that is, the year 406 for the elevation of Marcus. Zosimus, moreover, relates at 6.3.1 events occurring in the sixth consulship of Arcadius, also the year 406.

Our historian is not hereby exonerated of the charge of negligent research procedure. Eunapius, who carried his history down to 404, was almost entirely concerned with affairs in the eastern half of the Empire. Consequently he omitted events which took place in the west, even those of more than average importance, such as Alaric's first incursion into Italy, 402-3.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Zosimus completely ignored this event.<sup>11</sup> However, at about 5.26 Olympiodorus was adopted as source and Zosimus acquired an immediate, but roughly sutured, interest in the west, for Olympiodorus'

9

Mend., n. ad 5.26.1.

10

Eunapius fr. 74 expresses despair at organizing the events of the west into history, there being no reliable sources at hand.

11

Bury, Later Roman Empire, I, 160, n. 1; Mend., n. ad 5.26.1

εὐλαγ was west centered.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Zosimus' initial assessment of Stilicho<sup>13</sup> as greedy and deceitful, followed that of Eunapius, fr. 62. Later, with Olympiodorus, fr. 2 and 3, his opinion altered, until we get, 5.34, a final word of praise which is totally out of tune with Zosimus' earlier attitude: . . . πάντων ὡς εἰπεῖν τῶν ἐν ἐκείνῳ δυναστευσάντων τῷ χρόνῳ γερονῶς μετριώτερος . . . τρεῖς δὲ πρὸς τοῖς ἑξήκοντι ἑνιαυτοῦς ἑστρατηγηκῶς οὐκ ἔφάνη ποτὲ στρατιώταις ἐπὶ χρήμασιν ἄρχοντας ἐπιστήσας ἢ στρατιωτικὴν σίτησιν εἰς οἰκεῖον παρελόμενος κέρδος.

Martin's work has the importance of emphasizing point by point the overwhelming dependence of our historian on the work of Eunapius and Olympiodorus. Subsequent scholars have suggested supplementary sources with varying success. The opinions of Mendelssohn are eminently worthy of consideration because most have won acceptance, while one has sparked debate which has proved most fruitful concerning not only Zosimus' sources, but more important,

12

It is interesting to quote the remarks of Chester D. Hartmanft, trans., Sozomenus: Church History from A. D. 323-425, Part II of Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories, Vol. II of A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: The Christian Literature Co., and Oxford and London: Parker and Co., 1890), p. 223 "The most curious feature of all is Book IX, in the entire change of its method; . . . he has given here in remarkable excess the events affecting the Western State; he has done it nowhere else; . . . some wonderful change came over his purpose, whether that were a fuller view of the relation between state and church, or the desire to deepen the impression of his philosophy of history . . ." It was at Book IX that Sozomenus abandoned Socrates in favor of Olympiodorus as source, a fact now generally known.

13

Zosimus 5.1, 5.4 and passim.

the interrelationships between Zosimus, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Eunapius, and the whole area of literary borrowing and ancient historiography. It is hoped that by setting out from Mendelssohn's views on the sources of our historian and proceeding briefly through the debate, in which the last word does not yet seem to have been uttered, it will be possible to articulate a thesis about Zosimus' originality, which relates to a discussion of his sources to the extent that it lays bare the plan or skeleton of the History as envisioned by Zosimus, into which he collated the material drawn from his sources. Our historian will not, to be sure, emerge as an extraordinarily original thinker, but it is the belief of this writer that the theme or plan to which he continually returns was not to be found as such in Zosimus' written sources. Only in this sense can it be termed original at all. One way of phrasing this theme would be that under paganism the Roman Empire had withstood every challenge, whereas since Christianity had become dominant the end had truly come into view and the decline of Rome in Zosimus' day appeared irretrievable. The idea is just one expression of the Christian-heathen debate of the fourth and fifth centuries; so it is neither surprising to us nor original in Zosimus for him to have been concerned with it. As a participant in the controversy Zosimus was simply a representative of his age. It is by using this idea as the leading thread of his historical narrative that Zosimus was independent of his sources, that is, original. Once this central unifying plan has been established, in the next chapter, a more meaningful discussion of Zosimus' view of his

tory and purpose in writing will be made possible.

To begin with, it must again be emphasized how closely Mendelssohn agreed with Martin's contentions about the utter dependence of our historian upon Eunapius and Olympiodorus. This is also the view of this paper. However Mendelssohn differed with the view that Dexippus was consulted by Zosimus.<sup>14</sup> Since very little of Dexippus is extant, Martin resorted to a comparison of Zosimus with Herodian, whom Dexippus followed extensively, and with Aelius Lampridius and Julius Capitolinus, scriptores historiae Augustae, who cited Dexippus<sup>15</sup> and presumably used his Scythica or Chronica. The vague identity of these scriptores as well as the manifold other problems surrounding their work renders such an approach of questionable value. Mendelssohn's conclusion, though it advances one step, by excluding the Chronica from Zosimus' sources because of the serious discrepancies between the two seems still to lack persuasion, probably just because the problem is insoluble. He maintains that for Book I, 1-46 Zosimus used a source who had used Dexippus' Scythica but not the Chronica.<sup>16</sup> In any

14

Mend., pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

15

Dexippus is cited by Trebellius Pollio in Gallienus 13, Claudius II 2; by Aelius Lampridius in Alexander Severus 49; by Julius Capitolinus in Maximinus 6-7, the Gordians 2 and 9.19, Maximus and Balbinus 1.15, and the thirty tyrants 32.

16

Subsequent to Mendelssohn, F. Graebner, "Eine Zosimusquelle," Byz. Zeit., XIV (1905), 87ff, concluded in a major article that Zosimus did not use Dexippus.

case it is difficult to explain how Zosimus passed over in a single sentence the capture of Athens, the occasion of Dexippus' great, though unsuccessful, adventure: Τῶν δὲ Ξκυθῶν τὴν Ἑλλάδα κάκιστα διαθέντων καὶ τὰς Ἀθήνας αὐτὰς ἐκπολιορκησάντων . . .<sup>17</sup>

Martin's proof that our historian did not have the writings of the Emperor Julian before him do seem to be destructive of any arguments to the contrary.<sup>18</sup> The same would have to be said against Mendelssohn's belief that Thucydides should be included in the reading material of Zosimus.<sup>19</sup> This historian as well as Syrianus and Quadratus, both named by Zosimus as actual sources,<sup>20</sup> was dismissed by Martin, rightly, we feel, on the circumstantial evidence drawn from the case of Julian. Asinius Quadratus ought surely to be sought in Olympiodorus, who would have consulted him for information concerning the foundation of Ravenna.<sup>21</sup> Syrianus

17

Zosimus 1.39.

18

See p. 39 supra.

19

However a case could possibly be made for Zosimus' use of Herodotus. See our treatment of this, Chapter IV, where we hope to have shown that either Zosimus or Eunapius was familiar with Herodotus at first hand.

20

Zosimus 4.18 and 5.27.

21

Thompson, "Olympiodorus of Thebes," noted Olympiodorus' interest in the foundation legends of Ravenna and made it possible that he even visited Rome and Ravenna, p. 44, n. 2.

is accepted by Mendelssohn simply because nec est quod de ea re dubitemus.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere<sup>23</sup> the ditor utilized the Neoplatonism of Syrianus to ascribe that philosophy to Zosimus; this will be treated in a later section of this paper.

The case of Polybius as source is of yet another kind. That historian was neither casually mentioned, as Herodotus (Thucydides was never named by Zosimus), nor was he used as a source for factual historical details. Zosimus rather employed certain statements of Polybius as the starting point for his own historiographical position. This position will be discussed later since it forms the basis of Zosimus' main theme, the decline of Rome. Since we shall there maintain that this theme was a product of Zosimus' own intellect, the portion of the History that is "original," we must here conjecture that the work of Polybius was actually before our historian.<sup>24</sup> This is not as cautious a surmisal as might seem necessary in view of the proofs of Martin which militate against it; arguments to defend it are forthcoming in the next chapter, but unless a more complete manuscript of Eunapius comes to light full certainty will remain absent. Further, it is unlikely that Eunapius' history will be resurrected considering Leunclavius'

22

Mend., p. xxxviii.

23

Ibid., notes ad l.1, 5.36, 5.41.

24

Mend., p. xxvii. See p.89 , infra, for new contextual evidence that Zosimus did read Polybius.

assertion to Henry Stephanus around 1575 that Eunapius was nowhere extant, not even in Italy.<sup>25</sup>

On the assumption that Eunapius was not a serious enough scholar to investigate the Ludi Saeculares at such length as Zosimus did at 2.1-6, Mendelssohn sought elsewhere for the origin of the information contained in the account of our historian and concluded that this source was the Περὶ τῶν παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις ἑορτῶν (or Περὶ Θαυμασίων) of one Phlegon of Tralles in Lydia or Caria who lived in the time of Hadrian.<sup>26</sup> Zosimus does here note<sup>27</sup> that the Sibylline oracle establishing the ludi was quoted by others before him; presumably he would not have made a point of this had he continued to follow Eunapius, his regular source up to this point.<sup>28</sup> Certainly it was not his habit to interject such a reference to the general "others"; he did so on only two other occasions,<sup>29</sup> one of which will come up for discussion shortly. On the abandonment of Eunapius at 2.36.2, as in the case at hand, we must agree with Mendelssohn that Zosimus seems surely to have been pursuing a

25

Fabricius, Bibliotheca Graeca, VII, 536 n.

26

Mend., p. xxxvii. On Eunapius' careless approach, see fragments 1 and 74.

27

Zosimus 2.5.5.

28

Though Martin, De fontibus Zosimi, thought Eunapius was the source.

29

Zosimus 2.36.2 and 3.2.4.



matter relevant to his programme in searching out and quoting key oracles here and throughout his whole text.<sup>30</sup> Here again he is explicit, and there is no reason to impute dishonesty to him: καὶ ταύτην ἐκ πολλοῦ τὴν ἔννοιαν ἔχων, πολλὰς τε βίβλους ἱστορικὰς καὶ χρησμῶν συναγωγὰς ἀνεξήγητας, χρόνον τε ἐν τῷ περὶ τούτων ἀπορεῖν δαπανήσας, ἐνέτυχον μόλις χρησμῶ τινὶ συμβουλῆς εἶναι λενομένων τῆς Ἐρυθραίας ἢ Φαεινῶν τῆς ἠπειρώτιδος.

At 4.36 Zosimus indicated again that

he was digressing, and again it is the sort of information that is compatible with his main theme. While the quelle of Zosimus' information cannot be determined, it is probably not Eunapius,<sup>31</sup> for an investigation into the beginnings of the office of Pontifex Maximus would not have been in keeping with the temperament of the rhetorician.

Mendelssohn clearly missed the mark<sup>32</sup> in asserting that for his section on the famous Persian expedition of Julian our historian once again departed from his main source in favor of the account of one Magnus of Carrhae, who was present on that expedition. According to this view Zosimus also drew from the writings of Julian himself. Magnus' work, which is available only in fragmen-

30

This despite Eunapius fragments 26-27 on oracles given to Julian.

31

See also Mend., p. xxxviii.

32

Mend., pp. xxxix-xlvi.

tary form,<sup>33</sup> owes its survival, such as it is, to John Malalas. The attribution of Magnus as a source has led to a great debate spanning eighty years, the development and conclusions of which are worthwhile summarizing. Mendelssohn's reasons for suggesting Magnus are as follows. Sudhaus<sup>34</sup> had proved a great similarity between Zosimus and Ammianus Marcellinus in their accounts of the Persian expedition as elsewhere, but because sometimes Zosimus gave a fuller account while at other times the treatment of the latter was more complete, it was rightly thought that neither derived from the other, but that a common source had to be found. This was said not to be Eunapius since fragments 19-23, commonly thought to refer to the Persian expedition, in fact find no parallels in either Zosimus or Ammianus. Moreover, the military account of Zosimus was considered sober and accurate compared to the apparent anecdotal character of Eunapius' fragments. The choice of Magnus was probably touched off by the fact that in the narra-

33

Magnus' fragments are to be read in Felix Jacoby, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker (Berlin: 1930), Vol. IIB, No. 225, pp. 951ff.

34

H. Sudhaus, De ratione quae intercedat inter Zosimi et Ammiani de bello a Juliano imperatore cum Persis gesto relationes (Dissertation, University of Bonn, 1870), cited in E. A. Thompson, The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. 23. Sudhaus was not available to the writer: its age and the notices, such as that in Thompson, given to his work did not indicate any great usefulness for our purposes

tives of both Ammianus<sup>35</sup> and our historian<sup>36</sup> about the Roman siege of Malozamalcha one of the men first to enter that town was named Magnus; and thus it was thought that both narratives derived from an autobiographical moment in the war memoirs of Magnus of Carrhae. Discrepancies in the two treatments are explained by conjecturing that Ammianus filled out his account of Magnus from his own experience, since he, too, was present in the army of Julian, while our historian used Magnus solely.

Toward the beginning of his discussion of the events of Julian's public life Zosimus again referred to "other" writers:<sup>37</sup>

ἐπεὶ δὲ προσήκει τὴν τάξιν ἡμᾶς μὴ διασπάσαι τῆς ἱστορίας,  
εἰρήσεται καὶ ἡμῖν συντόμως ἕκαστα κατὰ τοὺς οἰκείους  
καιροὺς, καὶ μάλιστα ὅσα τοῖς ἄλλοις παραλελει<sup>εἶ</sup>φθαι δοκεῖ.

It was Mendelssohn's opinion that in this instance our historian was referring to Eunapius, though he concedes that Eunapius surely did not "omit" (~~τοῖς ἄλλοις~~ ) an account of the Persian expedition <sup>παραλελειφθαι</sup>. If this is really the meaning to be attached to τοῖς ἄλλοις here, then Eunapius was being dropped in an instance in which for some reason his narrative was deficient. According to Mendelssohn this deficiency was the blatantly adulatory character of Eunapius' description of the achievements of his hero Julian. Presumably Zos-

35  
Ammianus Marcellinus 24.4.23.

36  
Zosimus 3.22.4.

37  
Ibid., 3.2.4. See p. 47 and n. 29 supra.

imus could not use this as he had used practically everything else in Eunapius.

The weakness of this seems to be the tendentious quality of Mendelssohn's argument. For we note that when Zosimus uses the expression "other writers" at 2.5.5, his editor thinks that naturally he must be referring to just that. When the same expression comes up again, at 3.2.4, he will not allow Zosimus to speak for himself; instead he interprets our historian to mean by "others" Eunapius alone, whom he had been following up to that point. In both cases the interpretation suits Mendelssohn's thesis. Clearly he has contradicted himself to make a point. It is far more probable that Zosimus is to be believed, and that he was correcting other writers who had treated the life of Julian without capturing the true greatness of that last champion of paganism. Indeed we should carry this further. Eunapius, if anyone, truly appreciated Julian's achievements; moreover, the Persian expedition represented the centerpiece of Eunapius' history. Why should Zosimus put him aside precisely at this juncture? Now immediately prior to 3.2.4 Zosimus referred to the writings of Julian in words very similar to fragment 9 of Eunapius where we find: τοῖς μὲν βουλομένοις τὸ μέγεθος τῶν ἐκείνου λόγων τε καὶ ἔργων ἀνασκοπεῖν τὸ περὶ τούτων βιβλίον ἐπιτάξομεν. Far from requiring us to seek a different Quelle for this section, this would seem to emphasize Zosimus' dependence on his major source in the passage immediately

following.<sup>38</sup>

Virtually every aspect of Mendelssohn's position concerning Magnus has been attacked by Thompson and others. First, the Magnus tribunus of Ammianus and Zosimus who, as a soldier in the front lines, was among the first to tunnel through into Maiozamalcha is not Magnus of Carrhae, who seems rather to have been a member of Julian's general staff.<sup>39</sup> Thus this aspect of Mendelssohn's argument is considerably weakened. The biographer of Ammianus further pointed out that of the five fragments of Eunapius (19-23 with parts) commonly thought to pertain to the Persian expedition, only one, frg. 22, does indeed pertain with certainty. Two of the four parts of this fragment, 22.1 and 22.2, contain statements of Julian and a third, 22.4, records certain statements of his troops after his death. The last part, 22.3, is nearly identical with Ammianus 24.3.14, except for the discrepancy of a proper name. Both refer to the army's arrival at a town after a long march during which there was extreme shortage of food; upon arrival there was actually danger to the men from overeating. In Ammianus the town was Maiozamalcha; Eunapius' "Ctesiphon" may be explained by the fact that fragment 22.2 refers to events  $\pi\rho\acute{o}$  Κτεσιφώντος and by surmising that the name of the town was mistakenly carried over to the next fragment by a copyist. An alternate possibility,

38

See Walter R. Chalmers, "Eunapius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Zosimus on Julian's Persian Expedition," C. Q., X (1960), 154.

39

Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 31 and n. 3.

offered by Chalmers,<sup>40</sup> is that this fragment is really a parallel to Ammianus 25.1.4. The latter does not here mention the army's danger from overeating, but satietas frumenti does seem to be a playing down of the same idea, merely excising the element of exaggeration. The difference in the name of the town is even more appropriately faulted to a Eunapiian copyist, since Ammianus' Hucumbra is not as well known as Maiozamalcha, thus inducing the copyist to substitute the Ctesiphon of the immediately preceding fragment. By this alternate suggestion Zosimus can be brought into the picture. If we allow another alteration of the name of the town to "Symbra" we have a parallel in Zosimus, 3.27: . . . καὶ ἅμα τροφήν ἀφθονοῦν ὁ στρατὸς εὐρών ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ κώμῃ, καὶ ὅσα πρὸς τὴν χρείαν ἤρκει λαβῶν, τὸ περιστὸν ὅσον ἦν ἅπαν διέφθειρεν.

More below (pp. 55-57) on the important question of errors in reproduction of ancient texts.

Fragment 21 would also relate to the Persian expedition provided we understand "Persians" for Eunapius' "Parthians" and thereby ascribe yet another error in nomenclature to Eunapius or a copyist.<sup>41</sup> This exchange of terms would not be unique in the pagan historiographical tradition with its tendency to avoid technical or non-classical terms in favor of an inbred archaizing predilection. Hence our historian frequently gives "Scythians" when he

40

Chalmers, "Eunapius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Zosimus," p. 154-55.

41

See Norman, "Magnus in Eunapius," p. 130, n. 1.

well knows the actual name of the tribes in question.<sup>42</sup> The matter of this fragment, trivial as it is, would then find a strong parallel in Ammianus' description of the siege of Pirisabora, 24.2.10. Now the account in Zosimus of this siege<sup>43</sup> is quite similar to Ammianus', though not in the details of the Eunapius fragment. If this fragment was extracted from Eunapius' description of this same siege, he is here still the source for Zosimus, and a step has been taken towards a thesis concerning the relationship of Ammianus to the other two. Precisely what this relationship is must wait until later (p. 58), when what must amount to no more than a hypothesis will be suggested.

When we add that fragment 23 surely deals with events after the death of Julian, and thus immediately following his part in the Persian expedition, we find that three of the five Eunapian fragments in question (21, 23, and the four parts of 22) may well pertain to that invasion and, against Mendelssohn, that they are paralleled in Ammianus and Zosimus. We now propose to make the statistics read four out of six.

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42

Of the numerous references to Scythians, three suffice to make our point: at 1.31 Zosimus equates them with the Borani, though in the same paragraph he mentions other particular tribes; at 4.20 and 26 the Scythians are without doubt the Visigoths being driven towards the Roman frontiers by the Huns in the events leading up to the battle of Adrianople. See Averil and Alan Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition," p. 321. Further, at 3.32, Zosimus substitutes Persians where clearly Parthians are meant.

43

Zosimus 3.17-18.

In an important article, A. F. Norman turned up an entry in the Souda, previously unassociated with any particular author, which he attributed to Eunapius.<sup>44</sup> The statement provides still another version of the tunnelling into Maiozamalcha described in Zosimus 3.22.4 and Ammianus 24.4.23, and if Norman is correct, then the similar accounts on these two writers are in all probability not from Magnus but Eunapius. We would then have a sixth reference in our Eunapiana to the Persian expedition, with the same sort of problematic parallels in Zosimus and Ammianus. Let us compare the two historians with the entry in the Souda. Zosimus gives: ὁ πρῶτος ἀναδὺς . . . ἦν δὲ Σουπεράντιος, ἐν τῷ λόχῳ τῶν βικτόρων οὐκ ἄσημος, ἐπὶ τούτῳ δὲ Μάγνος, καὶ τρίτος ὁ Ἰοβιανὸς, τοῦ τάγματος τῶν ὑπογραφέων προτεταγμένος, ἔπειτα δὲ πλείους. Ammianus has: Evolat Exsuperius de Victorum numero miles, post quem Magnus tribunus et Iovianus notarius; quos audax multitudo secuta . . . We read in the Souda, s.v. ἀνασχοῦσα: ὁ δὲ πρῶτος ἀνασχωὼν ἐκ τοῦ ὀρέγματος ἦν Μάγνος, καὶ ἀνδρώδης τε καὶ διαφερόντως τολμητής. It will be seen that the historians contain details which are absent in the Souda, the most crucial difference being their listing Exsuperius-Σουπεράντιος as the first one out of the tunnel, whereas the Souda gives only Magnus. These discrepancies, in fact the very naming of individuals, may be explained by the fact that the first man to breach the defenses of a town in a siege operation

44

Norman, "Magnus in Eunapius." See for a cautious agreement Alan Cameron, "An Alleged Fragment of Eunapius," C. Q., XIII (1963).



was honored with the corona muralis;<sup>45</sup> it is possible that in this case there was more than one claimant to the honor and that the different versions reflect the rivalry. But more likely, as Cameron has shown without doubt, the solution lies in the quoting methods of the Souda.<sup>46</sup> In a lexicographical entry such as we have here (s.v. ἀνασχοῦσα), he habitually compressed the original, keeping only what was essential for his immediate purpose. As Cameron has indicated all such examples of this taken from Eunapian fragments in the Souda, we must borrow one of his for illustration here. Occasionally the Souda has used the same fragment twice, that is, for two separate lexicographical entries. This enlightening example is taken from fr. 68: (1) s.v. μυρίελικτος: ὁ βαρὺς καὶ μυρίελικτος ἐκεῖνος ὄφεις, κάθαρπερ ὑπὸ τῆς Μηδείας ὑποφιθουριζόμενος, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν κεκαρωμένος παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν; (2) s.v. κεκαρωμένος: ὁ δὲ καρδίαν ταῖς τιμαῖς ἤδη κεκαρωμένος παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ἐς τὴν ὁδόν. The portion of the sentence which contains the word under illustration is given fully while the other portion or clause is truncated. In the Magnus fragment, the Souda was interested only in the word, ἀνασχοῦσα, keeping enough of the rest to comprise a complete sentence. Thus Magnus was maintained from the original Eunapian fragment since it was the shortest of the

45

noted. Ammianus' error in calling this the corona obsidionalis was by Chalmers, "Eunapius, Ammianus, and Zosimus," p. 153-54.

46

Cameron, "An Alleged Fragment."

possible names (Ξουπεράντιος and Ἰοβιανός being longer); the other names, with their attributes, present in the lines of Zosimus and Ammianus, were omitted as unnecessary. Under this hypothesis, the original lines in Eunapius concerning the tunnelling into Maiozamalcha must have been very similar to those which we now have in Zosimus.

It has been shown, it is hoped, by the whole narrative on the sources used by Zosimus that for his section dealing with the Persian expedition of the Emperor Julian our historian continued to rely heavily upon his chief source who, from 1.47 through about 5.26, was Eunapius of Sardis. He may have fortified certain statements by consulting the various writings of Julian himself;<sup>47</sup> he may have consulted the philosopher Syrianus, whose floruit around 430 postdated by over a decade the latest date alluded to in the Eunapiian fragments, that is, the year 414 in fr. 87; he seems to have found Eunapius inadequate for his research into certain aspects of paganism, including the history of the ludi saeculares and the office of Pontifex Maximus, and certain recorded oracles. Definite sections of Zosimus' work emanate from his own intellect too, and this will be treated later.<sup>48</sup> But the outline of historical events derived from Eunapius.

It is important, in grappling with the numerous discrepancies

<sup>47</sup>

But see above, pp. 39-40.

<sup>48</sup>

Chapter III.

between the details in Zosimus and in the Eunapian fragments, to be aware that of those seventy-odd fragments which were drawn from the Souda about thirty have been attributed to Eunapius on merely stylistic grounds or for other conjectural reasons. Indeed some have now been proved to belong to some other writer.<sup>49</sup> Of the forty remaining, the strong possibility is that they have suffered from Soudan mutilation. Besides, Chalmers has shown that such fragments were taken by the Souda from the various Excerpta Historica Constantini Porphyrogeniti,<sup>50</sup> themselves habitually inaccurate. Therefore, the Eunapiana available to us today is often quite different from the text of Eunapius used by Zosimus. The charge of carelessness thrown at our historian ever since the time he wrote is hereby greatly weakened.

Against the common view that Ammianus could not have borrowed from Eunapius because his own work was published prior to the latter's, it has recently been shown that Eunapius may have published a treatise on Julian even before he began a more universal history covering the years 363 to 395. He then interrupted his historical endeavors to write his famous Lives of the Philosophers around 395, returning to history around 414, when he produced a νέα ἔκδοσις, incorporating the work on Julian as well as some other minor

49

Cameron, "An Alleged Fragment," p. 235.

50

Ibid. Also Chalmers, "Eunapius, Ammianus, and Zosimus," p. 155, and Walter R. Chalmers, "The Νέα Ἐκδοσις of Eunapius' Histories," C.Q., III (1953), 166.

historical treatises.<sup>51</sup> It is thus possible, and the similarities alluded to in the foregoing sections of this chapter tend to bear it out, that Ammianus was in fact able to consult the work of Eunapius at least for his discussion of Julian. Chalmers,<sup>52</sup> having defended the honesty and overall value of the memoirs of Oribasius, physician to Julian and Eunapius' source for the Persian expedition, suggests that although Ammianus had himself accompanied Julian to the east, he would still have found valuable the observations of Oribasius, a man who had been in close contact with Julian and his general staff. On the other hand, and not without a tinge of irony, it is still plausible on chronological grounds

51

Chalmers, "Eunapius, Ammianus, and Zosimus," p. 157; "The Νέα Ἐκδοσις," pp. 165-70.

52

Ibid., p. 157-58. The arguments of Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, 134-36, on Oribasius are not free of some minor contradictions. He wonders how Mendelssohn could conclude from the fragmentary form of Eunapius that the latter was just not a serious historian but more interested in writing encomia of Julian, and this to such an extent that Zosimus had to abandon him as source for the Persian expedition. But in practically the same breath he asserts with full confidence that Oribasius, who was Eunapius' source for this part of his work, and whose remains are even scantier, was a "charlatan" who transmitted in his own memoirs of Julian's Persian war little more than a series of stories about Julian or sayings of the hero. If Thompson is correct about Oribasius, the poor quality of his information could not but result in a poor Eunapian narrative, a fortiori that Zosimus should switch from that account to something better, Magnus or some other. Mendelssohn would then, by Thompson's own argument, be correct.

that Eunapius saw the historical work of Ammianus,<sup>53</sup> though we must assert that there is no indication that Eunapius knew Latin, or was much interested in western history. Further, he made no mention of Ammianus. In fact it seems that he spent his life as a teacher at Sardis after a five-year educational sojourn in Athens. Not only was the name of Ammianus absent from his writings; also missing are those of all the shining lights of the west from Augustus to Ambrose.<sup>54</sup>

Discrepancies between our historian and Ammianus could be explained in various ways. Ammianus presumably read the original Julian treatise of Eunapius, while Zosimus more likely used the *ἡ ἔκδοσις*, since he used Eunapius for the histories of other emperors besides Julian. Again, Zosimus was ordinarily condensing material which Ammianus was filling out from his own experience and notes.<sup>55</sup> In sections where both Zosimus and Ammianus used the same source and which contain orthographical discrepancies or statistical variations, Ammianus is probably to be preferred as an

53

O.J. Maenchen-Helfen, "The Date of Ammianus Marcellinus' Last Books," American Journal of Philology, LXXVI (1955), 392, was more forceful: "It was not in the steppes of the Ukraine that the Huns slept on horseback. They did it only in the pages of Ammianus from where, without waking them up, Eunapius carried them over in his work."

54

Wright, Philostratus and Eunapius, pp. 319-321

55

On Zosimus' regular method of compressing the rhetorical flourishes of Eunapius see Mend., p. xxxvi, and Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 136.

eyewitness and in view of his accustomed sedulity. On the other hand, who is there who can evaluate the divergent manuscript traditions of the two writers? It is wholly possible that the redactors of Ammianus were less careful about proper names than were the copyist of the Zosimian text, or that both groups were deficient in this area. We are dealing with possible independent corruption within two separate manuscript traditions over a period of centuries.<sup>56</sup> Some differences are undoubtedly owing to the errors of our historian in quoting Eunapius; some too are the fault of Eunapius in the copying of Oribasius, cases in which Ammianus spotted and corrected the error from his personal knowledge of the events. Whenever Ammianus, a soldier, assessed a situation differently from Oribasius, essentially a civilian with no known military training altogether. Finally, lest we leave out a single alternative, perhaps some original errors made by Oribasius and perpetuated by Eunapius would be detected and changed by Ammianus in his account; and it is, after all, in the realm of possibility that Ammianus himself contributed a misspelled proper name, or rendered a Persian name into Greek differently than did Oribasius. One thing is absolutely certain from the great number of orthographical discrepancies between Zosimus and Ammianus, and that is

56

But see the opposite view in Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus p. 29. In support of our opinion we might adduce an oracular response quoted in Greek by both Zosimus (3.9) and Ammianus (21.22), where we find in a passage of four lines already a difference in one word: Zosimus has πέντε, while Ammianus gives πέρυπη.

that our historian did not use the work of Ammianus directly.<sup>57</sup>

Zosimus all but states flatly that he is changing his main source at about 5.26. In the first place he names Olympiodorus of Thebes in Egypt at 5.27. Further, from this point on Zosimus, like Olympiodorus, views events from the point of view of Ravenna, that is, the west.<sup>58</sup> We have already seen Zosimus' change of attitude toward Stilicho at 5.34. Such vacillation on the part of our historian finds its explanation in a comparison of the opinions of Eunapius, reflected in fr. 62, and of Olympiodorus, fr.2, Zosimus' successive sources. In order to complete the case a comparison of the fragments of Olympiodorus with the text of our historian will be necessary.<sup>59</sup> For the preservation of an epitome of the work of this apparently excellent, energetic historian we are entirely in the debt of the Patriarch Photius.<sup>60</sup> Olympiodorus commended himself to Zosimus first as a pagan' but this quality notwithstanding, he was, it seems, a superb choice since he described the events of only eighteen years in twenty-two books, hence in great detail.

57.

For a sampling of these discrepancies, see Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 28-29. The vast majority are proper names.

58

It was at the point where he adopted Olympiodorus (Book IX) that Sozomenus also took more interest in western affairs. See note 12 supra.

59

Much of the comparison that follows owes its debt to Thompson, "Olympiodorus."

60

See note 8 supra.

Moreover he was a contemporary of these events of the years 407 to 425.<sup>61</sup> In this he may be compared to Ammianus whose last eighteen books cover only twenty-five years. Certain other traits indicated by Photius will make it clear that Olympiodorus was a historian of the type praised by Polybius<sup>62</sup> and incarnate in the adventurer-historian Ammianus. Such was the reputation of the materia historiae of the Theban that he was adopted by Sozomenus, a Christian, who abandoned his regular source up to Book IX, Socrates.

Olympiodorus was active as a traveler both for the sake of his researches and as a function of his political post under Theodosius II,<sup>63</sup> to whom he dedicated his work.<sup>64</sup> The fragments describe his voyages to Athens, Egypt and Lower Nubia, and his mission to the Huns.<sup>65</sup> The highly detailed and "Ravenna-oriented" narrative of the fragments<sup>66</sup> indicate that he may have visited Rome and Ravenna, but there is no absolute proof of this. In addition, he read widely in many areas, especially epic and geograph-

61

As mentioned above, pp. 40-41, he also treated less fully the years 405-406.

62

Polybius 12.25 and 12.28.4.

63

Fr. 18.

64

Fr. 1.

65

Fragments 28, 36, 37, 18.

66

See frs. 12, 13, 24, 26.



ical treatises. His views on Homer seem to have been respected,<sup>67</sup> and from Herodotus<sup>68</sup> and Pisander<sup>69</sup> he drew versions of the Argonaut story, traces of which appear in both Zosimus<sup>70</sup> and Sozomenus.<sup>71</sup> Herodotus also found mention in the scant remains of the Theban.<sup>72</sup> Asinius Quadratus, named by Zosimus at 5.27, probably in imitation of Olympiodorus, would have been the latter's source for his knowledge of Ravenna,<sup>73</sup> while Thompson<sup>74</sup> suggested cautiously that Olympiodorus' sentiments regarding the rich at Rome may derive from none other than Ammianus.<sup>75</sup>

Since, as he said, he intended to write not history but ἕλη ἱστορίας,<sup>76</sup> Olympiodorus felt free to violate certain restrictions

67  
Fr. 45.

68  
Fr. 33.

69  
Zosimus 5.29.2.

70  
Ibid.

71  
Sozomenus Hist. eccles. 1.6.4.

72  
Fr. 33.

73  
Thompson, "Olympiodorus," p. 45.

74  
Ibid., pp. 50-51.

75  
Frs. 43-44; Ammianus 14.6 and 28.4.

76  
Fr. 1.

imposed traditionally on historians,<sup>77</sup> who, it must be remembered were considered to be producing literature above all else.<sup>78</sup> We must reserve for later a discussion of the rules of history writing determined by the literary traditions and rhetorical education of late antiquity. Suffice it here to note that in a spirit of total archaizing, this tradition avoided all use of technical and non-classical terms. This last phrase is meant to cover a great deal: foreign language words or lines; "unclassical" modern expressions; military terminology and accurate tactical description; architectural nomenclature; the exact wording of official documents; the titles and other terms related to Christianity.<sup>79</sup> Olympiodorus, then, was quite liberal in his breach of certain of the above rules of his trade. It is entirely possible that if we had more of his work we might be in possession of the first really accurate description in classical historiography of a battle, complete with the names, strength, and disposition of the units involved and their tactical deployment. What we do have is sufficiently enlightening: not only did he frequently give Roman official titles in a Greek transliteration, but evidence from Zosimus

77

Thompson, "Olympiodorus," pp. 47ff.

78

Norman H. Baynes, Review of Von Ernst Stein, Geschichte des spätromischen Reiches (Vienna: L. W. Seidel and Son, n.d.) in J. R. S., XVIII (1928), 223.

79

Averil and Alan Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition," pp. 316-328.

seems conclusive that he also included whole sentences, generally of an epigrammatic nature, in Latin. Moreover, his consideration for geographical details and accuracy in presenting statistics in general<sup>80</sup> are out of keeping with the customary treatment of similar items by other Profanhistoriker. Nor does Olympiodorus regularly apologize for such violations, as is likewise customary in those rare instances when others have broken one or other of the rules. However, on a fair number of occasions Olympiodorus' transliteration consciously serves the purpose of informing his Greek readers of the actual word used by the Latin speaking west.<sup>81</sup>

There are at least ten examples of Greek transliterations of Latin titles in those chapters of Zosimus for which Olympiodorus was his source, of which at least two are applied to the same individuals in both historians. Thus at 5.35.1 Zosimus tells us that Olympius, who was later to be the nemesis of Stilicho, was given the title τῶν ὄφφικίων μάγιστρος; the Theban, fr. 8, has also said so. Jovius, who schemingly betrayed Honorius and Attalus in turn, is named πατρικίος both in the pages of Zosimus and of the Theban.<sup>82</sup> Other Zosimian transliterations, though applied to different subjects in Olympiodorus, are: μάγιστρος again,

80

Frs. 16, 27, 42, 44.

81

See for example, φοιδέρατοι, fr. 7; ὀπτίματοι, fr. 9; νωβελίσσιμον fr. 12; πατρικίος fr. 13.

82

Zosimus 5.47.1; Olympiodorus Fr. 13.

at 5.32.6; *δομεστικῶν* at 5.32.5, 5.36.3, and 5.47.1; *νοταρίος τριβού-  
νος* at 5.34.7; *κοιαίστωρ* at 5.32.6; and *τριβούνος* at 5.40.2. These  
examples would be less striking were there companion examples else-  
where in Zosimus where he was not using Olympiodorus. Moreover,  
these terms are not forced except in two instances in which Zosi-  
mus qualifies his transliteration by a *λεγόμενος* or *καλοῦσιν*  
phrase.<sup>83</sup> Note the explicit language below; this was clearly not

the sort of thing to do without apologizing to one's readers . . .  
ἐκλήθη Μάνιος Οὐαλέριος Ταραντῖνος • τοὺς τε γὰρ Χθονίους θεοὺς  
μάνης καλοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι, καὶ τὸ ὑγιαίνειν βαλῆρε, Ταραντῖνος  
δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν τῷ τάραντι θυσίας.<sup>84</sup>

Also contrast to the above 5.20.3: *πλοῖα γὰρ ἦν αὐτῷ πρὸς ναυ-  
μαχίαν ἀρχοῦντα, Λίβερνα ταῦτα καλούμενα, ἀπὸ τίνος πόλεως ἐν  
Ἰταλίᾳ κειμένης ὀνομασθέντα καθ' ἣν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ταύτων τῶν πλοίων  
τὸ εἶδος, and 3.29.3-4: . . . ἔπεσεν Ἀνατόλιος ὁ τῶν περὶ τὴν αὐ-  
λὴν ἡγούμενος τάξεων, ὃν καλοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι Μάγιστρον . . . συν-  
αποκλινάντων αὐτῷ καὶ τῶν ἀμφὶ τὸν βασιλέα δῶω ταγμάτων οὓς  
σκουταρίους προσαγορευ-  
σουσιν*, where Eunapius was still Zosimus' source.

Olympiodorus has the above cited examples and more: *μάγιστρος τῶν  
ὄφφικίων* again, fr. 46; *δομεστικίων*, fragments 16-17; *κυαίστωρ*,  
fr. 13; *πριμικήριος τῶν νοταρίων*, fr. 13; *μαγιστριανός*, fr. 31;  
*κουράτωρ*, fr. 40; *πραιτούρα*, fr. 44; *ὑπάτος, δισίγνατος*, fr. 23;

83

*νοταρίος τριβούνος*, 5.34.7; *τριβούνος*, again, at 5.40.2

84

Zosimus 2.3.2.

ῥῆξ, in the form ῥηγῶν, fragments 18 and 26 (referring to a tribal leader, βασιλεύς, fr. 18, being reserved for the Emperor); Κεντηνάρια fr. 44. In his digression into the origins of the title Ποντίφex Μάξιμος, our historian used that term and noted that under the monarchy the office was always held by τοὺς βασιλέας. . . οἷ τε λεγόμενοι ῥῆγες. The source for this passage was not Eunapius, we feel, and probably not Olympiodorus; but the important aspects of these Zosimian transliterations are the explanatory character of the passage and the didactic quality of the λεγόμενος phrase, unlike the Theban's usage.

Olympiodorus employed geographical Latinisms as well, such as Ἰσπανία, fr. 30, Ἀφρικὴ, fragments 40 and 42, and φόρους for ἀγορὰς, fr. 46. At this point the purist in Zosimus apparently emerged, for he insisted upon the ordinary Greek for these, so that we find in the Olympiodorian sections as well Ἰβηρία, at 6.1.2 and 6.4.5, and Λιβύη at 6.7.5. Interestingly, Sozomenus picked up the Latinized forms in Book IX, following the Theban.<sup>85</sup>

It is only in that portion of his work taken from Olympiodorus that we find in our historian actual Latin sentences. This occurs on four occasions in Books V and VI, and not elsewhere, in the Eunapian sections. Prior to adopting Olympiodorus Zosimus' practice was to translate into Greek. Having freed Rome from a plague through his sacrifice, Poplicola inscribed the altar:

85

Sozomenus Hist. eccles. 9.11.4 and 9.8.3. Eunapius Vit. soph. 476 gives . . . ἐκ Λιβύης, ἣν Ἀφρικὴν καλοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι . . .

Πόπλιος Βαλέριος Ποπλικόλας τὸ πυροφόρον πεδίαν Ἄϊδη καὶ Περσεφόνη καθιέρωτα καὶ θεωρίας ἤγαγον Ἄϊδη καὶ Περσεφόνη ὑπὲρ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἑλευθερίας. 86

Unfortunately, most of the cases of actual Latin wording in our historian are not paralleled in the fragments of his Quelle. At 6.11.2 the context in which there is a danger of cannibalism among the starving people of Rome, who were agitating for the sale of the corpses of slain gladiators with the cry, "Pretium inpone carni humanae," is not to be found in the Theban, but the presence of a passage in Sozomenus<sup>87</sup> very similar to this one of Zosimus is evidence that Olympiodorus is the source. However, in fr. 4 a similar theme occurred in a different context of which we do have an exact imitation in our historian at 5.40.1. Here indeed the words used are almost identical, εἰς ἀλληλοφαγίαν ἐλθεῖν ἐκινδύνουσαν in Zosimus echoing the ἀλληλοφαγία τῶν ἐνοικοῦντων ἐγίνετο of the Theban. That the rest of Zosimus' Latin derives from Olympiodorus rests on conjecture, but in the light of the foregoing, the conjectural basis is quite sound. At 5.29.9 the senator Lampadius objected to the ransom of Rome paid to Alaric with the words, "Non est ista pax sed pactio servitutis." A prophetic inscription colored the death of Stilicho at 5.38.5: misero regi servantur.<sup>88</sup>

86

Zosimus 2.3.3.

87

Sozomenus 9.8.

88

Mend., n. ad 5.38.6 attributed this passage to Eunapius as source since it represents a reversion of Zosimus to his "Eunapian" opinion of Stilicho.

Finally, in a passage which, we hope to show, Zosimus adapted to his own historical theme, he tells of the melting down of the statue "τῆς ἀνδρείας, ἣν καλοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι Virtutem" in order to raise enough gold for still another pay-off for Alaric.<sup>89</sup>

It was only after Zosimus came under the influence of the Theban that he began the regular practice of establishing the chronology by consulships. His two previous references to the consuls of a given year appear in Eunapius sections, but there the references are almost parenthetical, and in any case two instances hardly make the rule.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, upon taking up Olympiodorus, Zosimus dates the last years of his History by naming the yearly Consuls: the year 406 is so indicated at 6.3.1; 407 at 6.2.1; 408 at 5.28.1; 409 at 5.42.3. Apparently the failure to date the year 410 in the same way is owing to the incomplete state of Book VI because of Zosimus' death.<sup>91</sup>

89

Zosimus 5.41.7.

90

Zosimus 3.10 and 5.18.

91

Concordance of fragments of Olympiodorus and text of Zosimus

Fr. 2	Zosimus 5.28.1; 5.32
3	5.26.2; 5.27; 5.36.2; 6.12.3; 6.13.2
4	5.40.1
5	5.29.9
6	5.37.4; 5.38.1
8	5.35.1; 5.46.1
9	5.26.3
12	5.43.1; 6.1.1; 6.2.1; 6.4.1
13	5.47.1; 5.48.1; 6.8.1; 6.12.2
14	5.47.1
16-17	5.36.3; 5.47.1

In view of the fragmentary form of the extant remains of his chief sources, definite conclusions are not forthcoming about Zosimus' use of previous literature. Until new material becomes available, we can perpetuate Martin's thesis by which Zosimus would have used Dexippus, Eunapius, and Olympiodorus in succession. But we are not at all persuaded that these men represent the full extent of his research. Very likely he attempted to give the impression of wider reading by dropping author's names as though he were intimate with the writings. Still, there are sections of the Historia nova which transcend Eunapius, particularly, as the Quelle of the great bulk of it. The most important contribution of the next chapter, as of this paper, will be to indicate the extent to which Zosimus was familiar with the great intellectual controversy of his day. Indeed so conversant was he with the charges and counter-charges of pagan and Christian historians and apologists that he constructed a theme or framework incorporating the pagans' position, filling the interstices with detailed historical narrative. That he read much is implicit in our position; that he did not cite Christian sources<sup>\*</sup> as from citing Herodotus or Polybius, for example, especially since his readers would be largely pagans.

is a fact; but the same prestige did not attach to his work from naming a Christian



### CHAPTER III

#### THE RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND HISTORICAL VIEWS OF ZOSIMUS

In this chapter we propose to consider the key ideas of Zosimus in the areas of religion, politics, and philosophy of history. In the ancient world these areas were largely intertwined, and so, while an attempt will be made to treat them separately, some crossing over will be inevitable. The statements of our historian must, moreover, be viewed against the prevalent ideas of his era; they must be read in terms of the traditions, religious, political, and literary, which comprised his thought-world as a pagan. The importance of traditions in the Graeco-Roman context need not be emphasized or elaborated; conservatism was inherent in that culture from the time when Homer gave it birth. Additions, originality, fresh approaches found their way into it, but little was discarded. We need not agree fully with the opinion of many scholars that the period after the Silver Age was one of intellectual stagnation.<sup>1</sup> At worst this may have been the case; but generally speaking the intellectual life of the late Roman Empire

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. Palanque et al., The Church in the Christian Roman Empire, Vol. 1: The Church and the Arian Crisis (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953), p. 586. See also M. L. W. Laistner, "Some Reflections on Latin Historical Writing in the Fifth Century," Classical Philology, XXXV (July, 1940), 241-257.

ought to be described as a downward trend. There will, of course, be occasional examples of originality to contradict the general trend, but the trend remains a fact. Most often what appears to be new is merely a new composite of traditional elements, a re-shuffling, as it were, of archaic institutions and ideas. We shall also, as we must, attempt to discern the relationship between Zosimus and the Christian tradition of historiography, which had in Zosimus' day been rather successfully defending a position contrasting fundamentally from that of our historian.

As we have indicated several times before, Zosimus wins no prizes for originality. The one aspect of his History not found elsewhere is perhaps an accidental quirk of the passage of time during which the work of some other writer, perhaps Eunapius, has become lost. We refer here to the existence of an authentic historical purpose in our historian such as neither Ammianus Marcellinus nor Olympiodorus, to name the two most respected pagan historians of late antiquity, possessed. These men produced lengthy, detailed histories of short periods of time, hardly the ideal vehicle by which to develop a philosophy encompassing the entirety of historical events. The History of Zosimus, beginning as it does from the Trojan War, was an attempt at universal history in the Polybian sense,<sup>2</sup> and therefore surpasses even the work of Eunapius who professedly began at about 270, where Dexippus left off, and concluded about 404. Zosimus thus related events both before

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<sup>2</sup>

Polybius 1.3.4; 1.4.6ff; 3.32; 8.2.3ff; 29.12.4-5.

Eunapiana and after, and if we read the clues correctly, would have taken his narrative down to the turn of the sixth century or whatever prior date should have impressed him as most appropriate.

Even if it were admitted that the likelihood is great that Zosimus is borrowing strenuously from Eunapius, we would still be compelled to assert the individuality of his treatment. Our historian extends his central theme through three chief sources, not only the ~~Eunapian~~ portion. The latter may indeed have maintained such a theme - his work was re-edited in a form less offensive to Christianity - but the fact is that Zosimus believed in it just as fervently. Zosimus has in about four books, 1.47 to 5.26, what Eunapius has in fourteen. Thus even if our historian had selected his theme from passages scattered throughout Eunapius' work, the finished product of the former has the advantage of more compact form, making for greater intensity of the message. It is unavoidable that the personality of a historian is reflected in his product: his selection of material and method of presentation must always be affected to some extent by his own preconceptions and intellectual biases. We shall propose that Zosimus went far beyond his sources, that his digressions point to a greater interest in the history of pagan institutions, such as the ludi saeculares, Pontifex Maximus, and oracles, than any of his chief sources.

In fact, in the wide scope of the New History as well as in the existence of a unifying theme the Count is closer to the Christian ecclesiastical historians of the fourth and fifth centuries: Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius, Socrates, Sozomenus, to

name the outstanding figures. Because of his paganism he was neither inclined nor competent to cover biblical material, but he did take his stand directly opposite the Christian attempt to represent supernatural activity as working on behalf of Christianity in history.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the Christian historiographers, however, our historian was not under the total domination of his theme.<sup>4</sup> While he was not capable of the subtlety that makes art, he did manage to avoid the principle of "overkill" present in Orosius or Sozomenus who saw God as direct cause in almost every historical event. We have referred to Zosimus' work as an epitome. With regard to the narration of particular events, and even in its characterizations, brief and unambiguous, the New History can only take its place alongside the Breviaria and epitomes of Eutropius, Rufius Festus, Aurelius Victor, and the Epitome de Caesaribus. But in his insistence on a programme around which these details are structured Zosimus of Constantinople is unique in late pagan historiography.

Except for the largely unpolemical references to Christianity in Ammianus,<sup>5</sup> Latin historians of the fourth and fifth centuries

3

Similarly Eunapius Vit. soph. 472 may be used to show Eunapius' intent to counterbalance Christian hagiography by his biographies. See Palanque, The Church and the Arian Crisis, p. 247.

4

See Laistner, "Some Reflections," p. 250.

5

Ammianus 22.10.7; 22.11.5; 22.11.10; 27.3.15; 30.9.5. But see 22.5.4 and 27.3.1.

regarded Christianity with a condescending silence, which might even be termed tolerance.<sup>6</sup> Such abstinence from overt criticism more and more became a "recognized technique" of pagan apologetics.<sup>7</sup> The reasons for this silent treatment regarding the new faith might vary in the different pagan writers. But we can list the plausible reasons at work in pagan circles. Generally speaking the Bible would never be read by a pagan because its Greek was just not elegant enough.<sup>8</sup> A real dialogue was thus, in most cases, not possible. Before the late second century, too, it had not yet been seen that Christianity was even a threat to the old religion. For the rest, that praiseworthy Roman quality of religious tolerance was probably a factor. A pagan of keen mind like Porphyry, the protege of Plotinus, could not keep silent once exposed to biblical contradictions apparent to one seeking to undermine the bases of Christianity. As members of the superior of the two cultures, as they felt, most pagans would not stoop to grappling with the vulgar unintellectual Galileans. Despite the fact that most Christian writers display a love of the pagan classics, or at least the experience of a rhetorical, that is, liberal education,

6

Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," pp. 95ff.

7

Joseph Vogt, The Decline of Rome (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965), p. 150.

8

Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," p. 82. The writer owes credit to Momigliano for a number of details of this entire section.

the new faith drew its intellectual image from the fact that in the fourth century it was still primarily the religion of the lower and middle classes of the cities and towns of the Empire.<sup>9</sup>

After the time of Constantine, if a challenger did appear who would condescend to a dialogue, the fear of an illiberal government soon forced the opposition to take indirect and subtle forms such as imitation of the pagan historians of the past or implicit rejection of morals and values peculiarly Christian, such as asceticism or the command to "cut off thy right hand."<sup>10</sup> Ammianus, as indicated above, was almost neutral in religious questions; still Thompson has shown that in the books written after the accession of Theodosius his treatment of Christianity improved.<sup>11</sup> The Annales of the great pagan senator Nicomachus Flavianus, dedicated to Theodosius I, followed classical models; since it is lost we cannot say much more about it.<sup>12</sup> But Symmachus, the contemporary of Ammianus and Nicomachus and the second of the three leaders of the senatorial aristocracy in Rome, has left us many epistles

9

A. H. M. Jones, "The Social Background of the Struggle between Paganism and Christianity," in The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity, 21. See also H. I. Marrou, "Synesius of Cyrene and Alexandrian Neoplatonism," in Ibid., p. 143, on paganism as the religion of culture.

10

Pierre Courcelle, "Anti-Christian Arguments and Christian Platonism: from Arnobius to St. Ambrose," in ibid., 158ff.

11

Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, pp. 84ff.

12

Vogt, Decline of Rome, p. 148.

and speeches. His primary claim to our interest lies in his religious leadership in the last decades of the fourth century; yet his letters are remarkably free of controversial religious discussion at a time when the edicts of Theodosius were little by little obliterating all trace of public pagan worship.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the Saturnalia of Macrobius, which dates from about 400, was a Ciceronian dialogue whose interlocutors included Nicomachus, Symmachus, and Vettius Agorius Praetextatus; in the spirit of their reticence concerning Christianity, Macrobius' philosophical dialogue treated the new faith as though it did not exist.<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to conclude that the literary silence of these men was caused solely by fear of the government, despite Thompson's conclusive arguments regarding Ammianus;<sup>15</sup> the frequent repetitions of laws in the Theodosian Code indicate that certain laws were not enforced,<sup>16</sup> and among these were a number of the twenty-five religious restrictions of Book XVI of the Code. The Christian regime moved extremely cautiously in the extermination

13

Dill, Roman Society, p. 16.

14

See the great solar syncretism envisioned at 1.17.1-24.1, from which the Christian God is notably absent. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition," p. 316.

15

Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 38.

16

See on this point Ramsay McMullen, "Social Mobility and the Theodosian Code," J. R. S., LIV (1964), 49ff.

of paganism, especially in the environs of Rome itself.<sup>17</sup> Indeed before Theodosius there were no imperial decrees barring any public pagan institution.<sup>18</sup> The refusal of the title of Pontifex Maximus by Gratian and Theodosius, the removal of the alter which stood in front of the statue of Victory in the Curia,<sup>19</sup> the withdrawal of state funds for the public rites were not restrictions against the practice of the old religion, but rather represented

17

Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 130ff. Alföldi, Conversion of Constantine, pp. 50f, 80, 108f, 118ff.

18

A. A. Barb, "The Survival of the Magic Arts," in The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity, 105-108. Constantine's legislation of the years 318-321 dealt largely with magic and divination, out of fear, as Zosimus, 2.29, puts it, that others might themselves gain power via those means, as he himself had done. Public pagan practices were explicitly allowed (Cod. Theod. 9.16.1-3; Alföldi, Conversion of Constantine, pp. 75ff. Subsequent increasingly stringent laws were apparently not heeded and had to be renewed by Constantine's successors. Again, it has been shown that in the 360's and 370's the quarrel of the senate in Rome with Valentinian I turned not on religious differences, since that Emperor did not persecute paganism as such, but on privileges claimed by the ancient aristocratic families as against the party promoted by the Emperor, comprising his Illyrian and Pannonian courtiers. His laws also attacked magic and haruspicy, especially when conducted by night for harmful purposes (Cod. Theod. 9.16.7-9, the last of which expressly claims a toleration platform; see Ammianus 30.9.5). Zosimus correctly reflects this at 4.3. Alföldi, A Conflict of Ideas in the Late Roman Empire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 1-2, 16-17, 98-104.

19

Previously removed by Constantius, restored by Julian.



the separation of paganism from the state.<sup>20</sup> Members of the senate were apparently still burning incense at that altar upon entering the senate-house in 382 despite Theodosius' decree of the year 380<sup>21</sup> which made the Nicene faith binding on all subjects. Still, after the year 383, when Gratian died, Symmachus was Prefect of the city of Rome, Praetextatus of Italy.

It seems true to say that since fear of the Christian regime was not the sole reason for their disregard of the new faith as an object of invective, the motive may have had something to do with the awareness on the part of these senators and others like them that they were a special cast of men, descended as they were from the great aristocratic families of the middle Empire. So much has been written about their sense of pride in their role as caretakers of the ancient religion and literature that it need only be mentioned here.<sup>22</sup> The existence of a Christian senate in Constantinople since the time of Constantine must have helped foster the

20

Palanque, Church and the Arian Crisis, pp. 703f. Zosimus is correct in his emphasis on Gratian's refusal rather than Theodosius': the nobiles of the Roman senate, still mainly pagan would feel this poignantly; not so in the case of Theodosius and his Christian senate in the east. Herbert Bloch, "The Pagan Revival in the West at the End of the Fourth Century," in The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity, p. 196, was wrong in giving 379 as the date for Gratian's turnabout, more logically placed in 382. This has been proved by Palanque, "L'Empereur Gratien et le grande Pontificat païen," Byzantion, VIII (1933), 41-47.

21

Cod. Theod. 16.1.2.

22

An excellent study in English is Dill, Roman Society.

feeling among the senators in Rome that they were the custodians of paganism.<sup>23</sup> Also, since the senate was by now possessed of little real power, and severely limited in the available means of offering opposition to the Christian government, they fell back upon art, religion, and literature as the chief vehicles of expression.<sup>24</sup> But they were simply beyond tooth-and-nail in fighting with the boorish lower class Galileans. Well-known too is the tone of Symmachus' correspondence, omitting any hint of the then-current difficulties of the state while laboring over the absolute necessity of his son's election to the office of praetor, an office no longer bearing any power, virtually a merely honorary title. Here was sheer pretense: acting as if it were not the fourth century but perhaps the last century of the Republic.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, in the east, the majority of historians were themselves Christians following closely the footsteps of Eusebius. Thus the programmed opposition of Zosimus stands out, along with that of Eunapius of Sardis,<sup>26</sup> as a reaction peculiar to the eastern part of the Empire, which began there after the death of Theodosius the Great at the end of the fourth century.

23

Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 130ff.

24

Ibid., p. 143; Alföldi, Conversion of Constantine, pp. 79f.

25

Vogt, Ibid.; also Dill, Roman Society, pp. 143-66.

26

Photius Bibliotheca Codex 77.

In both parts of the Empire it is possible to perceive a relationship between the confidence placed by poets and historians in Rome's future on the one hand, and the degree to which they complain about Christianity on the other. The reticence of pagan writers of the fourth century regarding the religious debate does go hand in hand with the feeling of the State's ultimate resiliency. The inexorable force of the internal and foreign evils was not seen then as we see it today, with the advantage of historical perspective. The military setbacks of the fourth century notwithstanding, it was a period of strong, successful emperors: Constantine, Julian, Valentinian I, Gratian, Theodosius. From the times of Marius and Caesar to the more recent achievements of Julian in regaining the initiative in transalpine lands, Roman armies had frequently defeated Germans who held numerical superiority. We can only imagine the confidence of Roman soldiers that they could beat the barbarians anytime; it must have made for a great moral superiority.<sup>27</sup> The successive shocks of Adrianople and Alaric's sack of Rome caused consternation among citizens of the Empire for a time; but the persuasion of the panegyrists that Theodosius was still in control of a docile barbarism soon assuaged Roman fears.<sup>28</sup> The Visigoths had stayed in Rome only three days, burned little,

27

Dill, Roman Society, pp. 285-291

28

Vogt, Decline of Rome, p. 158.

slain few. Recovery of confidence was again rapid.<sup>29</sup> Ammianus, and men like him, recognized that Rome was in decline during their day, but they did not believe it to be permanent.<sup>30</sup> The pages of Dill<sup>31</sup> are profuse with the message of confidence among educated Romans of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, a confidence stemming from ignorance of the real state of affairs, or one which consciously strove to imitate the patriotic literature of the early Empire and earlier. Among those who perceived the decline even in their own day, the Christians, Augustine, Orosius, Salvian stand out.<sup>32</sup> Among the pagans, Zosimus and Eunapius are alone. With the death of Theodosius the Christian government went into recession. Christians were suddenly less certain of the rightness of their calling and pagans became more aggressive in reviving the charge that the decline was the fault of the new religion. Eunapius thus marks a revival of pagan Greek historiography, almost non-existent during the fourth century.<sup>33</sup>

To be sure the silence of the pagans in either part of the Empire was effective in assuring their safety and freedom of

<sup>29</sup> Dill, Roman Society, p. 309.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 131 and n. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Dill, Roman Society, pp. 303-345.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 312-315; 318-323.

<sup>33</sup> Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," p. 81.

conscience. The careers of the great western senators and of men like Libanius and Themistius in the east as well as the continued existence of the schools at Athens are evidence of the tolerance accorded by the Christian regimes. It can easily be seen why the pagan opposition in the east has been called "academic":<sup>34</sup> its leaders were almost all professors rather than aristocrats bolstered by time-honored privileges; the vehicles of expression were ineffective speeches and pamphlets whose message was largely one of mutual toleration between the two religions.<sup>35</sup> Christian leaders had little to fear from a group whose ideals were antiquarianism, moderation, and an erudition which was preoccupied with "classical" canons of excellence. Such men naturally thought in terms of the forms and concepts of the past when faced with the problems of present-day change. The intellectual training of Roman schools actually sidetracked its products from serious thinking about political and social issues; in doing so it produced "a habit of abject submission to authority, which was fatal to originality and progress."<sup>36</sup> While the emperors allowed their laws to go unheeded to some extent, and ignored sporadic pagan reaction such as that of Eunapius at the turn of the fifth century

<sup>34</sup> Jones, "Social Background," pp. 32-33.

<sup>35</sup> Themistius Orationes 12 and 5; Libanius Oratio 30; See also Symmachus Relatio 3; N. Q. King, Theodosius and the Establishment of Christianity (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> Dill, Roman Society, pp. 428-29.

there were Christian historians and apologists to take up the defense, men like Augustine and Orosius. If it is true that the silence of pagan intellectuals regarding Christianity was bred partially by their confidence in Rome's future and the impression that there was really little to complain about, the condemnation of the new faith by Zosimus bespeaks a loss of confidence. As we shall see not only did our historian perceive, as few of his generation did, that the Empire was falling, but he even noted the political, economic, social, and what to him were the religious causes. This veritable despair at the condition of the State goes far toward indicating his late date.<sup>37</sup>

Even in Constantinople during the fourth century, the brevi-  
aria commissioned by Valens from Eutropius and (Rufius?) Festus were written in Latin and subsequently translated into Greek.<sup>38</sup>

Such works were too short to have displayed an interest in ultimate values or in religious debate. Presumably their purpose was to educate the conglomerate of Germans, municipal and provincial aristocracy, and other provincials entering the relatively new senate in Constantinople as painlessly as possible in the simple details of Roman history. This new leading class had been subject to a regular turnover in both parts of the Empire as a result of the upheavals of the third century, since each successor

37

Pages 11-18 supra.

38

Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," p. 86.

to power was obligated to reward the Germanic chiefs and other influential provincials who had served him loyally during his rise to the top.<sup>39</sup> This lack of concern with ultimate values is, by the thesis here being presented, not true of Zosimus. It would be tempting to see in the digressions, in which the Count supplied antiquarian information, always of a religious nature, his own contribution to the Romanization of these new men. But as a predominantly Christian group they would have found Zosimus' discovery of a pagan oracle foretelling the greatness of Constantinople, the Christian Rome, superfluous, even anathematic.<sup>40</sup>

There can, in fact, have been only one group of readers in the eastern Empire at the turn of the sixth century that our historian can have hoped to reach with his pagan message: they are the last scholars of the philosophical school of Athens. The unbroken list of known teachers runs from Plutarch (d.431) to Justinian's closing of the schools in 529. Those who have stated without supporting explanation that only at 1.1.2, 5.35.5, and 5.41.5 can statements of Zosimus be construed in Neoplatonic contexts were extremely myopic in this regard.<sup>41</sup> As we shall point out below (pages 90 to 97), Zosimus' very view of the historical pro-

39 Ibid., pp. 85f. Also Jones, "Social Background," p. 27.

40 Zosimus 2.36.

41 Mend., p. xiii; Buchanan and Davis, Zosimus: Historia Nova, in notes at these places, are satisfied merely to cantare the great editor.

cess was founded upon Neoplatonic theology. His affinity to Athens can be seen in the story taken from the Athenian philosopher Syrianus of the miraculous preservation of Athens amidst the foreboding calamities of nature following upon the death of Valentinian, at 4.18; Athens was again left relatively unmolested by Alaric through wondrous means on account of her pagan affiliations (5.5-6); at 5.34, Zosimus avers, "That the learned men (φιλομαθούντας) may not be in doubt about the time of Stilicho's death, let them know that it occurred on the twenty-third of August in the year in which Bassus and Philippus were consuls, which was also the year that the Emperor Arcadius met his fate."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the purpose of our historian in addressing his work to an Athenian readership was probably the intention of providing historiographical ammunition for the philosophers as a reply to certain current positions taken by the ecclesiastical historians. If this hypothesis is true, then the work of Eunapius either was known not to be satisfactory for the purposes of the schools, or did not, in fact, approach the material as Zosimus did. The programme of the Christian writers will be taken up later; but first we should outline that of Zosimus, against which the former will more appropriately be understood.

Zosimus' philosophy of history consists in the belief that

42

Ammianus' opinion of these Athenian Platonists differed sharply. Soothsayers had predicted Julian's failure in Persia; his quack philosophers were wrong in bidding him go on: 23.5.8-11 cf. also 22.12.7.



the gods of pagan Rome had always been at work guarding the fortunes of the Empire by oracles and portents which were properly understood and acted upon by leaders devoted to them and alert to them; that ever since Christianity had been granted toleration and later been elevated to the supreme place as the official religion of the government, the old gods had either abandoned Rome in the face of internal and foreign evils or themselves worked evils upon her. The causes, then, of the decline of the Roman Empire lie in the policies of the more notable Christian emperors unguided by the tutelary gods of the state.<sup>43</sup> Extremely significant in all this is Zosimus' clearly and oft stated opinion that in his day the Empire was irretrievable. Since this theme is best given in the words of our historian, it has been quoted at length in Appendix; the passages have been selected to indicate what we feel is the superstructure of the New History. Therefore we have included those purely historiographical sections in with the ones in which Zosimus leveled his charges at Christianity. The position of this paper is strongly that either these sections are not to be traced to a source, or if some can so be traced, Zosimus has surrogated them to his own purpose.<sup>44</sup>

Let us now see whether we can discern a unity and some of the

43

For a temperate modern treatment of the ways in which Christianity contributed to Rome's decline, see Momigliano, "Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire," in The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity, pp. 1-16.

44

See note 26, Chapter I.

relationships within the thematic material quoted in the Appendix, and the presupposites underlying it. In the first passage cited it should be noted that Zosimus was following closely the narrative of Polybius dealing with Greek history as prologue to his major theme of the greatness of the Roman Republic.<sup>45</sup> We note that our historian, too, surveys the important events of Greek and Roman history leading up to his narrative proper, which begins really with Constantine early in the second book (II.1.2-5 and the remainder of Book I). But whereas Polybius began his detailed narrative with the first Punic War,<sup>46</sup> Zosimus continued with his survey until he was ready to begin in earnest to write history. At 1.57 Zosimus again returns to Polybius, asserting the relationship between their respective themes.<sup>47</sup> Just as the Megalopolitan intended to depict Rome's rise in a short period, Zosimus will outline her decline. Another similarity appears at 1.1 where our historian indicates a conception of the historical process not unlike that of his predecessor. He imagines that a force is at work governing future events. In a spirit of tolerance which we shall see was a mark of the Graeco-Roman mentality with respect to the multitude of cults that made up paganism even in Zosimus' day, he is ready to call this force either *Μοιρῶν ἀνάγκη* ἢ *ἀστρούων*

45

Polybius 1.1-2.

46

Ibid., 1.5.

47

Ibid., 1.1 and 6.2.

κινήσεων ἢ Θεοῦ βούλησιν . Polybius implies this same idea at 1.4 where "Fortune inclined almost all the affairs of the world in one direction, and forced them to converge at one and the same point." Our historian echoes his model at 5.41: it was fated (ἔδει) that everything having to do with the city's destruction should coincide. Moreover, so it had been prophesied (προφητευσάντων). The role of tyche in Polybius is a prominent one, the goddess usually being invoked as cause when a real cause was not available.<sup>48</sup> Where a cause was discernible, however, "it would not be any adequate solution to speak of chance . . . rather a cause must be sought; for without a cause, nothing, expected or unexpected, can be accomplished."<sup>49</sup> That, further, Zosimus subscribed to the political philosophy of Polybius,<sup>50</sup> can be seen from his own statement of preference for Republican forms, though, we shall maintain, this was not the overriding purpose of those lines of 1.5-6.<sup>51</sup>

Although Zosimus treated events as foreordained by God's will,

48

Ibid., 1.4.1; 1.63.9; 10.5.8; 18.28.5; 29.21.1-9; 36.17.1-

4.

49

Ibid., 2.38.5.

50

Ibid., Book VI. Mendelssohn, p. xxviii, adduces Zosimus' avoidance of hiatus as another imitation of Polybius.

51

See, however, Condurachi, "Les Idees Politiques," p. 120, disproved here.

the stars,<sup>52</sup> or Fate (1.1), and in spite of his numerous references to oracles which serve as communications from the gods regarding future events, by and large free will reigns supreme in his pages, as his heroes and villains are made to merit his praise or blame. The Romans had indeed lost their Empire through their Empire through their own folly; as for the "benevolence of Providence, our own generation has rejected it (1.57)." We shall see particulars of personal human causation of the most crucial proportions in the course of our commentary on Zosimus' programme, for our historian is profuse in his attribution of the decline of Rome to the acts of the Christian emperors. When Julian departed from Antioch against the advice of the omens he was surely exerting free will (3.12).<sup>53</sup>

Reconciling the diverse notions of causality in the works of ancient historians and poets has long been a challenge to modern

52

Plotinus 3.1.5 insists that the stars do not cause, but just indicate.

53

See the defense of free will against stoic necessity in Plotinus 3.1.7, and, closer to Zosimus' time, in Proclus In Republicam, in C. J. De Vogel, Greek Philosophy, A Collection of Texts with Notes and Explanations, Vol. III: The Hellenistic-Roman Period (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), 1473b. In indicating the development of Aeneas' character, Brooks Otis, Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 218, suggests an interesting and even workable solution to the problem of fate vs. free will. Aeneas, as other men and gods, can accept fate with piety or reject it with furor; fate itself is the predestined product of their interpenetrating acceptances and rejections. Hence, acceptance or rejection are free, but it is precisely through this freedom that fate works.

students.<sup>54</sup> Zosimus seems, prima facie, to be totally confused about the supernatural machinery operative beneath the surface of man's world. As if fearing to omit any divine force he had ever heard of, he imputes causal activity now to τύχη (4.24; 5.14; 5.18; 6.13), now to Nemesis (τῆς Ἀδραστείας, 5.10), again to Δίκη (2.40; 5.38 twice). He sees a supreme power at work for which his word is τὸ Θεῖον (1.58; 2.37; 3.9; 4.29; 5.24; and 6.7), or θεία πρόνοια (1.1; 5.51).<sup>55</sup> In addition to these there are the old gods of Graeco-Roman mythology, still active in temples and shrines. These provide signs and instructions to men through oracles (1.57). Indeed, they are still efficacious as of old where their faithful continue to reside, as at Athens, home of the pagan universities (5.5-6; 5.24). Oracles are also available<sup>a</sup> for all important occurrences in the Sibylline Books, whose age and venerability are obviously esteemed by Zosimus (2.16; 2.36; 2.4-5). The future was also the sphere of the soothsayers, who are made by our historian to have foretold the success of Constantine (2.29; see also 2.16) and that the last vestige of Roman courage would vanish if ever the statue of Virtus were destroyed (5.41). Certain individuals

54

See, for example, Tacitus Annales 6.22; then compare 4.1, "The cause was heaven's anger against Rome," and 16.33, ". . . thus was demonstrated heaven's impartiality between good and evil!"

55

In 5.51 the phrase is πρόνοιας Θεοῦ; see the reference there also to an oath sworn before God, in the singular, τὸν Θεόν. In the sense of believing in a single supreme Power, Zosimus was monotheistic as were the Neoplatonists.

were thought to possess clairvoyance, for example, the Emperor Diocletian (2.10) and the mother of Magnentius (2.46).

It is possible, however, in the case of Zosimus to sort out the relative roles of these powers and phenomena, and that in terms of the Neoplatonic teaching of Plotinus and his successors.

The references to Ἀσπαρτεία and Δίκη may be disposed of simply enough as poetic personifications, though Neoplatonism believed in the presence of innumerable δαίμονες, good and bad, in the world of men.<sup>56</sup> They are interchangeably used by Zosimus to depict the force which haunted persons deserving of punishment until such punishment took place. On one occasion (6.7) we find τὸ θεῖον serving the same function exactly. Zosimus' use of Τύχη seems, similarly, a literary device. In each of the cases in which it is found it is equivalent to "it happened that . . . because . . ." Thus at 4.24 Τύχη made the worse judgment prevail . . . because Valens led out his forces in disarray. Τύχη saved the Empire when no physical force could have stopped Gainas . . . because, briefly, Gainas went too far in indiscretions (5.14). Again, Τύχη had exalted Eutropius, and it subsequently brought about his fall . . . because of the hatred of his enemies (5.18). Finally at 6.13 Τύχη, advancing down the road leading to the ruin of Rome, found a way to foil the peace plans . . . because Sarus hated Ataulph. Aside from pointing out the obvious imitation of Po-

<sup>56</sup> Porphyry De abstinentia 2.37-40; see E.R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety, Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 37-58.

lybius' usage, one might venture another explanation. In having recourse to  $\tau\acute{\upsilon}\chi\eta$ , Zosimus may have been influenced by Proclus, his Neoplatonic contemporary, whose de providentia et fato<sup>57</sup> keenly observed that Fate and Providence are really two facets of the same phenomenon. Unable to fathom the total reality of Providence at work, so to speak, from a distance, Neoplatonists ascribe the portions that we do catch glimpse of to a mechanical, almost whimsical Fate. Providence does seem to leave the "details" to secondary causes active in the world.<sup>58</sup>

Now on several occasions it is clear that our historian conceives of a Supreme Power which seems identical with the Providence which is the activity of the World Soul of Plotinus' system.<sup>59</sup> In that philosophical scheme perhaps the most notable points are a strict hierarchy of beings and a principle of necessity which demands that the higher nature must create that which is immediately subordinate.<sup>60</sup> Simply stated, then, Plotinus posited the One at the top of his world system; no thought, will, or

57

Extant only in the thirteenth century Latin translation of William of Moerbeke.

58

In De Vogel, Greek Philosophy, III, 1471 a and b.

59

Plotinus 4.8.2.

60

Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. I: Greece and Rome, Part II, Image Books (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962), p. 210.

activity can be ascribed to the One,<sup>61</sup> but by a process of emanation which occurs by the above mentioned necessity, Nous comes to be. As an entity which can be equated with the Demiurge of Plato's Timaeus, Nous gives rise to the World Soul which, in turn, generates individual human souls and the visible world.<sup>62</sup> The variations in these hypostases wrought by Proclus are significant because he was a contemporary of Zosimus. Born at Constantinople, he was to become Scholarch at Athens until his death about 485. Between each of the three principal hypostases Proclus added many more intermediaries. Most importantly, at the level of Soul, a triad existed (the triadic principle pervaded Proclus' systemization of Neoplatonism): among the 'divine souls were placed the old Greek gods; within the group called demonic souls were thought to be the heroes, angels, and demons; finally there were the human souls. Significantly, the world, for Proclus as for Plotinus<sup>63</sup> was a living creature. Proclus added that it was formed and guided by the divine souls, that is, generally speaking, the traditional gods.<sup>64</sup>

Zosimus, as stated above, may have had the Neoplatonic Provi-

61  
Plotinus 3.8.8.

62  
Ibid., 5.2.1.

63  
Ibid., 4.4.35.

64  
Proclus In Platonis theologiam 1.17; In Platonis Rempublicam 1.37.27f. See too Dill, Roman Society, pp. 105-106.



dence (Προνοία ) in mind when he used that term and also when he referred to τὸ θεῖον. In his very first paragraph θεία προνοία was made to govern, or underlie, the other powers mentioned. Again, the divine benevolence (θεῖαν εὐεργεσίαν ; εὐμένεα τοῦ θεοῦ) is causally referred to in contextual connection with oracles disclosing the future (1.57-58; 2.37). Finally (5.51), the government of Honorius, bereft of προνοίας θεοῦ , was completely inept and dim-witted. Zosimus' consuming interest in oracles thus appears in a new light: they are the communications to mankind originating at the level of the World Soul, through the agency of the traditional gods who are emanations ultimately from the One, and transmitted via the traditional channels, the temple oracles and the Sibylline Books.

The precise relationship between the oracles and other means of divine information on the one hand and the decline of Rome on the other is a keynote of our historian's theme. First, those signs that have come true are living proof of the efficacy of the old religion, whose abandonment has resulted in the devastated situation of the Empire of Zosimus' own day (2.7; 2.34; 2.38; 3.32; 4.21). Hence his commitment to the searching out of significant oracles (2.36; see too 1.58). The gods continue through signs such as these to offer aid (2.29; 2.36; 5.5-6; 5.24; 5.38; 5.41), but nowadays men are blinded to them (1.57; 5.51). Recently, even, because of their neglect the former talismans of the State have become inefficacious, and a "guilt-laden Demon" has taken charge to actively catalyze the fall of the Roman Empire (5.35; 5.41).

An interesting passage from Porphyry's letter to Marcella<sup>65</sup> bears the message that as soon as a man forgets God his soul becomes the dwelling place of demons. Here, perhaps, is still another Neoplatonic strain finding expression in our author, and tying together the ideas of 1.57 and 5.51 with that of 5.35 and 5.41. In the former two is the idea of the recent Christian disregard of divine signs; this has resulted in the indwelling of demons in the organism of the State.

In addition to the above-mentioned references to the evils of the then-present day, the decline was announced directly or alluded to on numerous occasions, each time preceded by what, in the mind of our historian, was a major cause. By pulling these together we shall derive some firmer notions of his view of history.

The very first allusion to the decline does not appear until 1.37 in connection with the barbarian invasions. Without heaping undue credit upon Zosimus for noticing the obvious, it is remarkable to see how few intellectuals living in the last century of the Empire were astute enough to realize the seriousness of Rome's situation. Of course, as we contend in these pages, Zosimus' insight may bespeak his relative lateness, his having survived, even, the demise of Romulus Augustulus Constantine actually gave assistance to the Germans, as Zosimus thought, by weakening the system of defenses worked out by Diocletian (2.34). At 3.32 in one of his digressions, our historian researched Rome's past re-

65

In De Vogel, Greek Philosophy, III, 1440 d.

cord of protecting and maintaining territory under her sway in order to point up her current cession of Nisibis and other Armenian lands under the Christian Emperor Jovian.<sup>66</sup> The admittance of barbarians into the Roman army by Theodosius I (4.33, which is a sequel to that of 4.30), associates that Emperor, as Constantine had been associated, with this failure of foreign policy. At 5.5-6 the old gods were still, on the other hand, powerful enough to ward off Alaric's barbarian bands from pagan Athens, whereas later Honorius' ineptness, unenlightened by Providence, could not save the city of Rome from the same enemy (5.51; see 5.35-6; 5.40-41).

The religious cause appears first at 1.57-58, and is taken up at 2.5, where Constantine again bears the burden of blame, this time for failing to hold the ludi saeculares, after Zosimus has spent six paragraphs in a lengthy digression, the longest in ancient literature, on the antiquity of this festival and its effectiveness in warding off danger to the State (see 2.29). Theodosius' role as cause of Rome's fall through the installment of Christianity was indicated by Zosimus in a series of steps (4.29; 33; 37; 59), perhaps reflecting in summary the actual legislative steps of that Emperor which culminated in the laws of 380, by which

66

Zosimus correctly reflects the grief felt among Roman writers about this Treaty of Dura whereby Nisibis was given over to the Persians after they had failed in three different sieges to take it; Gibbon, Decline, II, p. 553, fortifies the opinion of Zosimus in considering it a landmark in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

Christianity was made the official religion of the Empire,<sup>67</sup> and of 391-92, which forbade the offering of sacrifices, entering temples, and the worship of images.<sup>68</sup> The statements made by our historian indicating the culmination of the series (4.59) probably have reference to these latter measures. Honorius was also responsible for the decline on account of his religious policy (5.40-41; 5.51).<sup>69</sup>

In the several preceding paragraphs it has been noted how Constantine, Theodosius, and Honorius are said to have contributed by their religious policies and their relations with the barbarians to the weakening of the State. The former two are joined by Zosimus in certain other types of activities cooperating in that same direction. Constantine is charged in rapid succession with luxurious living, profligate spending, revamping the magisterial order, toleration of greedy and otherwise unskilled officials, loosening military discipline, weakening the frontiers, softening the troops through easy living, and oppressing the solid citizens of the Empire, especially of the cities, with extreme taxes to support his own inefficiencies (2.33.38). Zosimus states quite directly:

67

Cod. Theod. 16.1.2; see Palanque, Church and the Arian Crisis, p. 691; also Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 159-60.

68

Cod. Theod. 16.10.10-12; 16.7.4-5.

69

Jones, "The Social Background," p. 37, has clearly shown that in the success of Christianity the chief factor of all was government support.

. . . καὶ ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν τῆς ἄχρι τοῦδε τῶν πραγμάτων ἀπωλείας αὐτὸς τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὰ σπέρματα δέδωκε (2.34). What is more interesting, the same list virtually describes Theodosius (4.27-33) and Valentinian I (4.16)! Nor was this purely fortuitous, as we shall see.

In his article, "Les idées politiques de Zosime," E. M. Condurachi focussed upon Zosimus 1.5-6 to establish the thesis that our historian was, in the fifth century after Christ, thoroughly Republican in sentiment. Therefore, the decline of Rome began not with Christianity, but when one man, Augustus, held power. Despite the fact that certain sections which we have adduced as belonging to Zosimus' theme were there introduced, Condurachi still concluded that the Count was indifferent in matters of religion.<sup>70</sup> Let us look again at that passage. Zosimus recites the difficulty of one man's doing the best job even if he were sincere; his judgment in choice of officials might at times fail him. If, then, he should lapse into the worst sort of monarch, the tyrant, see the dangers: the revamping of the magistrates' offices; turning his eyes from officials' abuses; treating his subjects as slaves, as most autocrats do; flatterers gain high offices; cities are thrown into turmoil; the zeal of the troops is diminished. In Octavian's reign the trouble for the State was signaled by the introduction of the immorally obscene pantomime. When this list is compared

70

E. Condurachi, "Les idées politiques de Zosime," Revista Clasica, XIII-XIV (1941-42), 118-19; 125-27.

with the list of charges against Constantine and Theodosius, it becomes clear that in this early passage Zosimus was already pointing ahead to those sections of Books II and IV in which he expresses his disapprobation of their respective regimes. If more persuasion be required, one need only advert to the first lines of 2.29: περιστάσεις δὲ τῆς πάσης εἰς μόνον Κωνσταντίνον ἀρχῆς οὐκέτι λοιπὸν τὴν κατὰ φύσιν ἐνοῦσαν αὐτῷ κακοήθειαν ἔκρυπτεν ἀλλὰ ἐνεδίδου τῷ κατ' ἐξουσίαν ἅπαντα πράττειν.

Let us conclude this commentary on the theme of Zosimus with a brief discussion of the seven digressions, as we prefer to dub them, contained amid that material. Some of them have already been adequately dealt with (3.32; 5.5-6; 5.24; 5.38), as showing the remaining power of the old gods or the loss of Roman territory. The challenge of the ecclesiastical historians seems to have been the impetus behind the inquiry into the origins of the ludi and of the Pontifical office (2.1-7; 4.36). Eusebius had thrown back Christian origins to the point at which it could meet paganism on equal chronological footing; besides providing historical data concerning aspects of the old religion for Athenian students (above, p. 86), it is altogether possible that our historian was consciously reasserting the great antiquity of the old cultus in answer to Eusebius et al.

The last digression has a similar intent. It is the search for an oracle predicting the greatness of Byzantium (2.36-37). But it happens to parallel, though from the pagan point of view, a

passage from Sozomenus, the church historian.<sup>71</sup> There God is said to have appeared to Constantine and to have led him by the hand to the site of Byzantium. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Zosimus was here replying to this, a current Christian story concerning his home town. His oracle, though extremely old, foretells the growth and success of Constantinople. And he countered the Christian's reference to God with a comparable devotion: τῷ θεῷ βραχὺς ἀεὶ τε ὄντι καὶ ἔσομένῳ. This is no isolated coincidence. The two historians again match arguments in their respective accounts of the story of Pope Innocent's allowance of pagan rituals to be conducted in the hope of thwarting Alaric's take-over of the city of Rome. Zosimus avers that the rites were never held because of public apathy, with the result that Alaric had to be bribed at great expense to the State and the ruin of the citizens. Sozomenus<sup>72</sup> implies, at least, that they were performed, but proved ineffectual, with the same result. The most striking example of Zosimian retaliation against Christian history occurs at 2.16. The miracle of the appearance of the monogram of Christ to Constantine before the battle at the Milvian Bridge must have been household fare throughout the Empire. It was surely a key moment in the success of the new religion. Once again the Count has at hand a pagan version, which because it was so weakly put and con-

71

Sozomenus Hist. eccles. 2.3, borne out by Cod. Theod. 13.5.

7.

72

Ibid., 9.6.

fused must have been contrived for the immediate context.<sup>73</sup> If these passages are not sufficient proof that our historian had read Sozomenus, it is at least unassailable that he was replying to stories current among Christians and recorded by their new breed of historians.

The above discussion of the historical purpose of Zosimus has been a pivotal juncture of this paper. Therein can be discerned the political, religio-philosophical, and historico-philosophical views of the man, in short, his Weltanschauung. As the only extant pagan history incorporating the standard arguments against the efficacy of the new faith, the work of Zosimus attains an importance far greater than its intrinsic worth. The main thrust of his attack on the Christians emerges clearly from the foregoing narrative: the disasters of the fourth and fifth centuries are the result of the Romans' neglect of their national gods. It must be recognized that in citing in consecutive order all of the passages contributing to this conclusion, the impression given is that our historian was little more than a snarling critic of all things Christian. Yet this is not a true image of the Count. For the most part his approach is by silence or innuendo; we shall better appreciate his technique in a later treatment of his method in

73

It was not originated by Zosimus, for Lactantius de mort. pers. also recorded it. Alföldi, Conversion of Constantine, pp. 16-18, has shown that even if the vision of Constantine appeared merely in a dream, which is all that Lactantius De mortibus persecutorum 44.5-6 records, we must accept it as a historical fact, an overwhelming experience for Constantine.



general, and especially his characterizations, in which pagans somewhat were absent when God was handing out vices. His handling of individual Christians burdens them with perhaps more than their rightful share of character flaws, but except for Constantine, his son Constantius, the foil of Julian, Theodosius, and certain Christian ministers, Zosimus' criticism is moderate. A definite quality of fairness is apparent, as we shall see, even in the sections dealing with the arch-villain of the New History, Theodosius the Great (4.34; 50; 52; 58).

Following is a complete concordance of the references to Christianity as such in Zosimus. At 2.29 Christianity is characterized as a religion which washes away any crime of an unrighteous man: it is the cult of sinners like Constantine, who has just had his own son, Crispus, and his wife murdered. That same emperor is described in another context (4.36.4) as τῆς ὀρθῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς περὶ τὰ θεῖα τραπεῖς καὶ τὴν Χριστιανῶν ἐλόμενος πίστιν . In the same place Gratian has refused the robe of the Pontifex Maximus on the grounds that it was not lawful for a Christian to wear it. In a line probably taken from Julian's writings via Eunapius, the 360-man bodyguard accompanying the future emperor to Gaul are described as knowing only how to say prayers.<sup>74</sup> This has probable reference to the fact that they were Christians, though Zosimus did not openly say so (3.3). Similarly at 4.23 the troops of

74

Julian, Epistle ad Athenienses 277d gives the figure of 360; for the sarcasm, see E. A. Thompson, "Three Notes on Julian in 361 a.d.," Hermathena, LXII (1943), 83-95.

Valens were "indolent, trained only for taking to their heels, and making weak, effeminate pleas." In this way did Zosimus prepare his readers for the imminent catastrophe of Adrianople. As this statement was made in connection with Valens' entrusting the command to Sebastianus, who was Julian's worthiest lieutenant (3.12), the reference may again be to Christian troops. At 4.59, the locus classicus of our historian's abuse of Christianity, the new faith was an absurd belief (ἄλογος συγκατάθεσις) which had forced out the rites that had protected Rome for 1200 years, after which the decline set in. Here again the extreme age and venerability of the old religion is set against a Christianity described as "newfangled." In the same paragraph appears once again the idea of Christianity as a religion which promised forgiveness of every sin or impiety.<sup>75</sup> Zosimus' tirade against the monks, 5.23, seems so close to Eunapius,<sup>76</sup> that the latter must be held responsible for much of the content. Still the Count must have found those sentiments compatible with his own views:

These men abstain from legitimate marriages, and in cities and villages alike they fill up their populous orders with bachelors, good for nothing in time of war or of any other public necessity (not to mention the fact that, proceeding along a certain path from that period right down to the present day, they have appropriated to themselves a great part of the land, and under the pretext of sharing all things with the poor, they have reduced practically every-

75

See the same idea in Julian, Caesars 336 A-B; Alföldi, Conversion of Constantine, p. 101, n.4, has found it also in Celsus.

76

Eunapius Vit. soph. 472-76.

one to poverty).<sup>77</sup>

Again, Olympius, new minister of Honorius, responsible for Stilicho's demise, covered up great inward malice, under guise of Christian piety (5.32.1). A reference to Honorius' legislation of 408 barring non-Christians from service in the palace<sup>78</sup> is made at 5.46, where Honorius made an exception in the case of Generidus a general of pre-eminent virtue and service to the State.

The final direct references all share in common the circumstance of an outlaw's taking refuge in a Christian Church. Thus, we find barbarian troops (4.40.5-6), the wife and daughter of Rufinus (5.8), Eutropius, eunuch minister of Arcadius (5.18), Gainas barbarian troops trapped in Constantinople (5.19), Lampadius (5.29), Stilicho (5.32), and Attalus (5.45), successively playing this role. Three of these are sympathetically handled by Zosimus: Lampadius, who feared senatorial reprisals for complaining outspokenly at their purchase of Rome's safety from Alaric; Stilicho, who, Zosimus felt, had been unjustly slandered by the Christian Olympius and had now been condemned;<sup>79</sup> Attalus, later to be Alaric's

77

Among Christian practices the cult of relics and monachism were especially abominable to pagans, the latter to some Christians, even. The key passages are Zosimus 5.23, Eunapius Vit. soph. 472-76, Rutilius Namatianus 5.439-52 and 515-26, Libanius Oratio 2.32; see also Julian Epistle 89b.

78

Cod. Theod. 16.5.42; see too 16.10.21 for the year 416.

79

By 5.32 Zosimus, using Olympiodorus, had begun to be favorable to the character of Stilicho.

puppet emperor, has just been described as too moderate a man (μέτρια φρονῶν) to track down Stilicho's friends, for which he himself was being persecuted. The wife and daughter of Rufinus can only be considered as neutral, except for their relationship to that regent of Arcadius whose ambition was villainous to our historian (5.1-8). As for Eutropius, the shame of the Roman Empire, and the barbarians, our author must have relished allying them with the object of his animosity. In general, therefore, these passages do not cast a slur on the church, unless we choose to see the church depicted as the refuge of the enemies of the government, though in some cases they be wrongly charged. Zosimus the advocate, may be here pleading the case of the need for the supremacy of law, even though the law be the tool of a Christian regime, no less than Socrates did in the Crito when the law seemed antagonistic to his own interest. To the advocate, legitimate authority, right or wrong, must be respected; to the historian focussing upon foreign forces wreaking the destruction of the Empire, the collusion of the Christian church with outlaws represented an internal threat aggravating and accelerating the decline. Such passages as these latter ones may thus be seen not as direct assaults on Christianity as a religion but as an institution detrimental to the welfare of the State. Prior to Constantine, the pagan altars had served the same function of sanctuary for outlaws but then Rome's very existence was not in jeopardy.

The pagan charge, which was the central thrust in the pages of Zosimus, has itself an interesting history. By sketching this

history, it will be possible to indicate the character of the new Christian historiography which it was Zosimus' intention to refute. Here, however, our task will be to point out the influence of the new school on Zosimus' method. It will remain for Chapter IV to deal with Zosimus' rebuttals to particular Christian historiographical ploys.

The theme of Livy's preface: Roman greatness in Roman character, has for its corollary the idea that Rome's defeats were caused by the wrath of the gods on account of some irreverance, that is, a breakdown in that character. Justin Martyr, one of the earliest of the Christian apologists, gave reply<sup>80</sup> to what must have been a common charge of pagans almost from Livy's time on: that the sacred books of the Christians had predicted the fall of the Roman Empire. Hence were linked the new sect and the ancient pagan view of history. True Christian historiography, born, as it was, with Eusebius, was unknown to the first three centuries of the Christian era.<sup>81</sup> Still, long before its creation by Eusebius of Caesarea, the stage had been set for ecclesiastical historiography by Christian apologetics.<sup>82</sup> From the inception of the faith Christians had compared their beliefs and standards with those of

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80

Justin Martyr Apology 1.11.1.

81

Otto Bardenhewer, Patrology, the Lives and Works of the Fathers of the Church, trans. by Thomas J. Shahan (Freiburg and St. Louis: B. Herder, 1908), p. 237.

82

Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," p. 89.

their pagan counterparts. The earliest apologetics was largely defensive. In the hope of bringing about an end to the sporadic persecutions around the Roman Empire in the second century, they tried to reconcile the truth of reason, attained by pagan philosophy, and that of revelation. This latter point was true of Justin Martyr (c. 100-167) and it was true of Origen, about a hundred years later. His De principiis sought a synthesis of Christianity and Platonism.<sup>83</sup> It was similarly true of Ambrose and Augustine, steeped as they were in the pagan literary and religious temperament. Indeed, the intellectual formation of the majority of Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries was the same as that of pagan authors. Not only did the sons of Christians regularly receive a rhetorical, that is, liberal, education in the east, but they also became teachers.<sup>84</sup> The intellectual life of the later Roman Empire, of pagans and Christians alike, was drawn from pagan literature. Even for those who no longer believed in the old gods, pagan religious ideas were so much a part of the great works of literature that good literary style seemed impossible of attainment without such pagan coloring. To turn one's back on that literary tradition was to choose barbarism over civilization. In this sphere the choice was not Christianity or paganism,

83

Dodds, Age of Anxiety, pp. 127ff.

84

The locus classicus which must be cited in this context is Ammianus 22.10.7; see also 25.4.20.

but paganism or barbarism.<sup>85</sup> Hence Justin was careful to couch his first Apology as a rhetorical model complete with proemium, propositio, refutatio, probatio, peroratio.<sup>86</sup> It was he, so it seems, who began the tradition of the two-part treatise consisting of a negative rebuttal of pagan accusations and a more positive exposition of Christian teaching. Athenagoras was known for his frequent citation of classical Greek poets and philosophers. In 177 he could say, "These charges are alleged against us: atheism, cannibalistic banquets, incestuous unions."<sup>87</sup> At that early date the pagan-Christian debate carried on by Zosimus was not prominent. Tertullian, opposed to Christian adaptation of pagan modes of thought, noted in addition the charges of refusing to worship the state gods and to offer sacrifices to the emperors.<sup>88</sup> Significantly, he replied to pagan accusations that natural calamities were the responsibility of the new sect. Around the turn of the third century Minucius Felix cast his apologia in the form of a Ciceron-

85

Dill, Roman Society, pp. 385-395; Palanque, Church and the Arian Crisis, pp. 558-566; Jones, "The Social Background," p. 31, cites Libanius Orationes 2.43-44, 47.22, and 44.27-28.

86

Bardenhewer, Patrology, p. 50.

87

Athenagoras Plea for the Christians 3.12-13.

88

Tertullian Apologia 10.1.

ian dialogue, the Octavius.<sup>89</sup>

Celsus was the first among the pagans to perceive, about 178, that the church was a menace worthy of literary refutation despite its suppression in the recent Hadrianic persecution and the current ones under Marcus Aurelius.<sup>90</sup> His Ἀληθὴς λόγος, known through Origen's famous refutation seventy years later, both attacked particular doctrines of Christianity, notably its foundation on a ridiculously hopeless Messianic idea, and invited Christians to be good citizens by following the religion of the Roman state. In times when the barbarians were pressing in on all sides Christians had refused to serve in the army; unless the increase of the church was checked, an upheaval in Roman society was imminent, even aggravating the barbarian peril.<sup>91</sup> Here is the first extant trace of the pagan charge which appears in Zosimus. Tertullian was to give his answer to it around 200.<sup>92</sup>

In the year immediately following Origen's Κατὰ Κέλσου, the exemplar of Christian apologetics,<sup>93</sup> there began the first general

89

Bardenhewer, Patrology, pp. 64-72. Dodds, Age of Anxiety, pp. 114-15.

90

Dodds, ibid., p. 105.

91

Origen Contra Celsum 3.55, 8.35, especially 8.68-75; see Bardenhewer, Patrology p. 147; also Momigliano, "Christianity and the Decline," p. 9-10.

92

See note 88 supra.

93

Bardenhewer, Patrology, pp. 147-48.



persecution under Decius. This Emperor was one of the heroes of our historian.<sup>94</sup> Up to this point a number of cases of scattered provincial police action had marred the "old Roman practical toleration of freedom of thought,"<sup>95</sup> when outbreaks of anti-Christian feelings had received imperial sanction.<sup>96</sup>

The fifteen books *Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν* of Porphyry, the biographer and successor of Plotinus, are extant only in fragmentary form as a result of their proscription in 448 under Theodosius II and Valentinian III. He complained that since the cult of Jesus had replaced that of Asclepius in popularity a rash of epidemics had been visited upon the Romans by the angry gods; thereby he attacked the divinity of Christ.<sup>97</sup> For the most part, though, his attack, launched around 270, was aimed at Biblical inconsistencies. He was, in fact, the first man to subject the Bible to historical criticism.<sup>98</sup>

Arnobius wrote his Adversus nationes in the first decade of

94

Zosimus 1.21-25.

95

Dill, Roman Society, p. 47; see Dodds, Age of Anxiety, p. 133.

96

Dodds, ibid., p. 110.

97

Porphyry Adversus Christianos fr. 80, cited in Dodds, ibid. p. 109.

98

Dodds, Ibid., p. 127.

the fourth century,<sup>99</sup> though Jerome states that he had been a vehement pagan antagonist of the church in his Chronicle under the year 327. Thus the pagan arguments to which he purported to give Christian response may have been weapons he himself had employed against the church, though they have now been traced back to Porphyry.<sup>100</sup> In the tradition of Christian apologetics the work was divided into two broad sections: the first two books took to the defense of the faith, while Books 3-7 for the most part developed his polemic against the old cults. The pagan attack on Christianity before Arnobius has been reconstructed from his work and includes the following notions: ever since the coming of Christianity all scourges have besieged mankind; the gods, have abandoned their former concern and departed (1.1-9); in their anger against the Christians they have allowed, even sent, the barbarian invasions (1.6' 13' 4.24). They attacked the basis of Christian belief, the idea of God incarnate, saying that Christ's miracles were merely secrets he had stolen from certain Egyptians; Christ was thus no more than a skillful magician (1.43-49). We have seen that the pagan habit of ignoring in silence things Christian stemmed from their low impression of the culture of most converts to the new creed; and so the pagan adversaries cited by Arnobius

99

Courcelle, "Anti-Christian Arguments," p. 151.

100

Ibid., pp. 151, 156.

charged that the witnesses of Christ's life were not worthy of trust as they were ignorant peasants whose language was vulgar (1. 57-59). Finally these pagans, as others before and after, until, at least, Christianity became identified with the State, appealed to patriotic sentiment: why did not the Christians worship with their fellow-countrymen? Were they not undermining the respect due to the ancient national traditions (3.2; 7; 4.36)?

Two writers emerged on the heels of Constantine's triumph of the Milvian Bridge, who mark in their writings an alteration in the attitude of Christianity paralleling the improvement in the material prospects of the faith. When the works of Eusebius and Lactantius came out, the thrill of the Christian victory was still fresh. Tolerance and peaceful coexistence was not the theme; Christianity was moving to the offensive, and it was in this mood that the new genre of ecclesiastical historiography was born.<sup>101</sup> As a disciple of Origen, Eusebius was a Platonist steeped in Greek thought patterns.<sup>102</sup> Lactantius was not called the "Christian Cicero" without good reason: in his minor works alone can be traced at least thirty-five citations or allusions to Tullius.

Eusebius did not create ex nihilo. As indicated above, the Christian apologists established the apologetic tenor of the new

101

Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," pp. 79-97.

102

D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, Eusebius of Caesarea (Westminster, Maryland: The Canterbury Press, 1961), pp. 139-49.

genre. But much more was derived from these colleagues, as well as from the pagan historiographical tradition. The beginnings of a new Christian chronology were contributed by Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, and Hippolytus of Rome; to the ancient lists of kings, magistrates, scholarchs found in pagan writings were added successions of bishops of the most important sees; the doctrinal debates which had taken place among philosophers were paralleled by narratives dealing with the establishment and continued purity of Christian dogma. Similarly, from the pagan school of history-writing was borrowed and perpetuated the strong biographical character. This characteristic derived from Tacitus and Suetonius, especially; but even before their time it was the dominant aspect of Xenophon's view of his art, whose individual heroes, Cyrus, Socrates, Agesilaus, are the prime movers of history in his pages. Thus in Eutropius, Festus, and Aurelius Victor, the Emperor Tiberius was the base hedonist just as he was in the two older Roman historians; Nero was treated in an even more stereotyped manner. Zosimus, in the spirit of conciseness of his early sections, devoted as little space as possible to these rulers;

yet we have: Τιβέριος ὁ παρὰ τούτου διαδεξάμενος τὴν ἀρχὴν εἰς ἑξήχατον ὤμότητος ἔκτραπείς ἀφορητος τε δόξας εἶναι τοῖς ὑπηκόοις ἀπεδιώκετο καὶ ἔν τινι νήσῳ κρυπτάμενος ἐτελεύτησεν...

Νέρων τε καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτον εἰς μοναρχίαν παρήεσαν περὶ ὧν ἔκρινα μηδέν παντάπασιν διελθεῖν, ὡς ἂν μηδὲ ἐπ' ἐκμελέσι καὶ ἀλλοκότοις πράξεσιν αὐτῶν καταλείποιτο μνήμη (1.6). It was in Ammianus

Marcellinus' characterizations that that ancient science reached a

climax. Here was the secret of his freshness. His pictures of Sextus Petronius Probus and of the emperors Constantius, Julian, Valentinian, and Valens will guide all future biographers of these men.<sup>103</sup> What we shall have to say of Zosimus' characterizations in a later section will establish him as a regular exponent of this aspect of historiography.

Under Christian influence biography came to be regarded not only as a description of the external aspects of the subject's life, but more importantly of the soul's constant struggle against evil.<sup>104</sup> This strain grew up almost independently of the pagan heritage; it is the marked feature of hagiography, a Christian literary genre which first saw light in the fourth century with Athanasius' life of St. Anthony. Twenty years prior to this, in 337, Eusebius attempted to handle the life of Constantine in similar manner. The resultant disregard for truth when, for example, Constantine's conversion was made to come as a miracle, without warning, proved fatal to future hagiographical biographies of prominent statesmen.<sup>105</sup>

The problem of chronology was one of the keenest to be felt

103

Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, pp. 121ff.

104

Palanque, Church and the Arian Crisis, p. 564.

105

Eusebius Vita Constantini 1.28-29; Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," pp. 92ff. See Hartranft, Sozomenus, p. 216, on the prominent place of biography in Sozomenus.

by Christian historians: how to reconcile Adam et al with Deucalion and his breed; how to impose upon the new composite Biblical-mythical chronology the Christian view of God's providence so that divine intervention within pagan contexts was as palpable as in church history. Thus Christian historiography had a built-in philosophy of history. One other issue must be mentioned here - in a discussion that is far from exhaustive - and that is the persecution of Christians while the exclusiveness of the Jews was exempted. The Roman position seems to have been that as an ancient nation within the Empire the Jews were legally entitled to follow their ancestral religion. Christianity was, on the other hand, a conglomerate of many peoples and could make no claims upon antiquity.<sup>106</sup> Eusebius attempted to meet this by establishing the idea of Christianity as a nation, though different from the other nations in the Empire. He accomplished this by depicting a continuity between the Old and New Testaments, thereby pushing back Christian origins beyond the beginning of the pagans' awareness of their own civilization. The foundation of comparative chronology was not the least of Eusebius' accomplishments.<sup>107</sup>

Eusebius in turn began almost immediately to influence other writers, both pagan and Christian. Among the latter, imitators, continuators, and translators abounded: the realization that here

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106

Dodds, Age of Anxiety, p. 111.

107

Wallace-Hadrill, Eusebius, p. 156.

was something new seems evident even among Eusebius' contemporaries. His disavowal of set speeches, though it resulted in a loss of ethos, such as Livy achieved in portraying the national Roman character, such as Herodotus and Thucydides attained in their vivid characterizations, became the practice in all historiographical circles during the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>108</sup> By this time it was clear to all that the invented speech, which was the most conspicuous feature of the rhetorical tradition, betrayed what Collingwood termed a "lack of interest" in what was really said, that is, simply, in the truth.<sup>109</sup> Truth was lost when an imaginary speech was inserted by a historian or when, obedient to the demands of a "literary canon" of homogeneity of style, a real speech was translated into the style of the writer. It may well be called a rule of the pagan tradition of history writing never to reproduce documents or speeches in their original form.<sup>110</sup> In response to the new "canon" established by the Caesarean, the invented speech is almost nonexistent in Zosimus. Of the eight occurrences of oratio recta which we were able to trace, the longest, a seven-line recommendation of Julian by Eusebia, wife of Constantius, is so qualified that the speech is not given in her

108

Laistner, "Some Reflections," pp. 243ff.

109

R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, A Galaxy Book (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 30.

110

J. B. Bury, The Ancient Greek Historians, Dover Books (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958), pp. 229-30.

own words, but she spoke *τρόπῳ τοιῶδε* . The others are short one-or two-liners, pithy and epigrammatic in character. These are found at 3.1, 3.25, 4.36, 4.51, 5.29, 5.40, 5.43, and 1.54.

Eusebius stepped off in a new direction, likewise, in his introduction of documents, contrary to the rhetorical tradition, in the contemporary "officialese;"<sup>111</sup> in addition are numerous quotations from other writers, from Josephus and Philo to the apologists themselves. But most frequent are his citations from the Old and New Testaments.<sup>112</sup>

The emphasis on biography in the historical traditions of antiquity resulted naturally in the ethical or psychological interpretation of history which viewed events as somehow related to the moral fiber of individuals or peoples. It is not necessary to go beyond simple references to Sallust,<sup>113</sup> who felt that Roman moral dissolution brought about her decline after the final defeat of Carthage; Livy, who saw the moral decline of his day as respon-

111

Eusebius Hist. Eccles. 8.17.1-2; 8.17.6-10; 9.1.1-11; 10.5.2-24.

112

Ibid., 2.10.1-10 and 2.5.1-7 for Josephus; 2.17.1-24 for Philo; 2.2.1-6 and 2.13.1-8; 1.3.39-47, 1.8.16, 2.22.1-8 for the Bible. See A. and A. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition," p.321.

113

Sallust Bellum Jugurthinum 4 and passim; see M. L. W. Laistner, The Greater Roman Historians (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 53-54.



sible for Rome's degeneration from the glorious years of the Republic;<sup>114</sup> Tacitus, for whom the purpose of history was to record good deeds and inspire evildoers with the fear of posterity's denunciation.<sup>115</sup> Thus, when in the context of the pagan-Christian controversy we find in Eusebius the notion that disasters should be attributed to the wickedness of men and prosperity to their obedience to the will of God,<sup>116</sup> we recognize this as a reply to the pagan charges adopted later by Zosimus which was couched in their own terms, except that Eusebius had reference to the Christian God and His relationship to all men, whereas pagan invective had reference to the old gods' punishment of sins wrought originally by Christians.

The more aggressive side of the Caesarean's answer lay in the belief which he shared with Lactantius and, in fact, with Constantine himself that success on earth was proof of one's righteousness in the eyes of God.<sup>117</sup> It has been shown that originally Eusebius' emphasis was on the coincidence of the coming of Christ with the peace-bearing reign of Augustus, but that after 324, the

114

Livy Preface and passim.

115

Tacitus Annales 3.65.

116

Wallace-Hedrill, Eusebius, p. 155.

117

Alföldi, Conversion of Constantine, pp. 20ff; p. 11: As early as the second century appeared the concept that an emperor's success was the gift of some god rather than the result of his own skills.

year of Constantine's final elimination of Licinius, his focus fell upon Constantine who received his rule as a reward from God.<sup>118</sup> At this point he felt that the end had been reached toward which history had been tending; at each point along the way the Divine purpose had been achieved.<sup>119</sup>

The theme of Lactantius' De mortibus persecutorum was stated by Constantine himself in a letter written after 324: the persecutors have met terrible deaths while the just followers of Christ have been victorious.<sup>120</sup> These ideas, coming from the pen of the first Christian Emperor, should not be surprising, since Lactantius had served as tutor to Crispus about 317, shortly after writing his historical apology.<sup>121</sup> The work may indeed have been written in the service of Constantine.

To push on with the history of the Christian-pagan debate,

118 Eusebius Vita Constantini 1.24ff.

119 Wallace-Hadrill, Eusebius, pp. 175ff.

120 Eusebius Vit. Const. 2.24; see Lactantius De mort. pers., chapter I.

121 Norman H. Baynes, review of Die Kaisergeschichte in Laktanz De Mortibus Persecutorum, by Von Karl Roller, in J. R. S., XVIII (1928), p. 227, assures us of the historical character of this work of Lactantius. Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," p. 80, dates it 316; Alföldi, Conversion of Constantine pp. 43ff, believes it finished before 313, but with addition of the last two chapters one and one-half years later, since they show a change of attitude toward Licinius.

Ammianus, quite tolerant towards the new faith,<sup>122</sup> laid stress on simple morality rather than the question of one's religious convictions. Recognizing the decline of Roman power, he attributed it to the dishonoring of ancient values, especially by aristocratic society, and to the fact that from army officers down to the men in the ranks and civilian officials, all had fallen short of ancient standards, so that the officers were unfit for their responsibilities, the troops were too soft, and officials were corrupt.<sup>123</sup> Salvian's view was also universal, applying to pagans and Christians alike. The success of the Vandals in Spain and Africa is owing to God's judgment on account of the sins of the people.<sup>124</sup> The barbarians surpass the Romans not in strength, but in character.<sup>125</sup> The cause behind the sacking of Trier in 406, which Salvian (390 - c. 448) witnessed personally, was the vice of the people and God's punishment.<sup>126</sup>

In Sozomenus, a contemporary of Salvian in the first half of the fifth century, the effort to answer the pagan allegations that

122

See p. 75 and n. 5 supra.

123

Ammianus 14.6.10 and 31.5.14. See Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 132. Also Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 148-49.

124

Salvian De gubernatione Dei 7.11ff.

125

Ibid., 7.13; 23.

126

Ibid., 6.8; 13.

Christianity was responsible for the decline of the Empire is more pronounced. As is the case in the writings of the pagans, natural calamities and barbarian irruptions receive ethical explanation, but the tables are turned upon the pagans, for it is their irreverence that is being punished: "To insure the stability of imperial power, it is sufficient for an emperor to serve God with reverence, which was the course pursued by Honorius."<sup>127</sup> In demonstrating that Christianity comes from the Supreme Being, Sozomenus recorded an abundance of visions, miracles, prophecies, and divine interventions. Such prodigies served to offset the theurgical practices of the Neoplatonists, but more specifically to prove that Providence was directly promoting the Christian faith. At 1.7 he says, "From many facts it has often appeared to me that the teaching of the Christians is supported, and its advancement secured, by the Providence of God . . . for at the very moment that Licinius was about to persecute all of the churches under him, the war in Bithynia broke out, which ended in a war between him and Constantine in which the latter was so strengthened by Divine assistance, that he was victorious over his enemies by land and sea." This immediate intervention of God as cause in every historical event of importance goes on in Sozomenus ad absurdum. With such an approach Sozomenus could hardly defend the study of pagan classics

127

Sozomenus Hist. eccles. 9.16.

by Christians, as had Socrates, his older contemporary and model.<sup>128</sup>  
 This latter also placed great store in miracles - no more or less, however, than anyone else living in that miracle milieu - but made definite efforts at impartiality, even in the case of Julian. His inclusion of documents has been extremely valuable for our knowledge of his period.<sup>129</sup>

The foregoing represents that which was relatively new in history writing in the Christian era, that entity to which Zosimus had to react, principle for principle, and often down to points of detail. En route we also noted the great extent to which Christian thinkers were steeped in the rhetorical literary tradition in style, form, and content. It is hoped that the uniqueness of Zosimus' New History among pagan works has become more clearly established as a result of our having traced, albeit in a survey far from exhaustive, the pagan-Christian argument at the historiographical level. The import of the discussion has been devoted to the peculiar position taken by Zosimus the individual. Indeed there has been a conscious attempt to highlight the ways in which the Count differed from all other historians writing in the pagan rhetorical tradition. One should not, however, draw the inference of a total divorcement of Zosimus from that tradition. His involvement in it produced the religious principles which, as we have

128

See Socrates Hist. eccles. 3.16.

129

Ibid., 3.1; 12; 14; 21; 23.

seen, were operative throughout his work. The divine machinery of his History, though shaped by contemporary Neoplatonic conceptions, was not alien to the ultimate causes of things for which previous pagan historians, such as Polybius, Livy, and Tacitus, were groping. In the next chapter we shall deal further with Zosimus' relationship with this tradition and the men who had formed it and those who were promoting it in late antiquity. We shall see that at every turn his work reflects and demonstrates the rhetorical education ascribed to him by this paper (pp. 29-31), and that this resulted in an archaistic orientation and imitation of classical models. Zosimus' trustworthiness, accuracy, in short his ultimate value to modern scholars will have been greatly influenced by this feature of his work.

## CHAPTER IV

### ZOSIMUS AND THE RHETORICAL TRADITION: AN EVALUATION

If the work of Zosimus was intended to be read and used by the schoolmen of Athens, one might have expected it to exhibit a more direct affinity to one other group of men, a group which must have been famous in Zosimus' time for their heroic stand on behalf of the old religion in the face of Theodosius himself. This was the Senate at Rome. In the west, the City, as Rome was dubbed, was the last pagan stronghold, just as Athens was in the east. We have seen the timidity of the Christian emperors, from Constantine to Theodosius, even, before this body when their religious prerogatives were at stake (pp. 78-80 supra). During the last two decades at the fourth century, the leaders of this body continued to hold the highest offices.<sup>1</sup> The pagan reaction of this period is too well known to need dwelling upon here beyond a resume. When Gratian and Theodosius first began to crack down on its religious freedom the Senate became outspoken, as in the days of the Repub-

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1

Among many instances, the most notable would be Symmachus as Prefect of the City and Praetextatus as Praetorian Prefect of Italy in the year 384, Nicomachus as Praetorian Prefect of Italy during 389-391, Symmachus as Prefect of the City again in 391, and Rutilius Namatianus in the same office in 413, even after Honorius' first anti-pagan laws of 408.

lic, in its demands for toleration. Upon Gratian's death Q. Aurelius Symmachus was chosen to deliver the speech representing their views on this subject to the youthful Valentinian II at Mediolanum. The avowed purpose was to secure the restoration of the altar of Victory in the Roman curia, but it is tempting to see in the final struggle of the Senate more a demand for intellectual freedom than a defense of the old religion.<sup>2</sup> But care must be exerted in separating religious considerations from the other element: we do so only for the sake of this discussion. In the first place, the real living paganism of the fourth and fifth centuries consisted in the mystery religions that had come to Rome from Persia, Egypt, and Phrygia.<sup>3</sup> The great senatorial families attest their devotion to all of these cults by their numerous inscriptions recording their enrollment as priests or initiates of Isis, Mithras, Attis, and Cybele, or their submission to the Taurobolium.<sup>4</sup> The old religion of the State still stood for patriotism, but when it came to the care of their souls the senators looked elsewhere. Recall that the controversy between Valentinian I and the Senate was

2

Ambrose, who was instrumental in bringing about the rejection of the argument of Symmachus, himself attacked the Relatio on the issue of toleration in his Epistle 57; see Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 162-63. See also Ambrose Epp. 17 and 18.

3

Dill, Roman Society, pp. 74ff.

4

Vogt, Decline of Rome, p. 142; Bloch, "The Pagan Revival," pp. 202-203.



again a struggle of the forces of culture against illiteracy.<sup>5</sup> Throughout Alföldi's pages the idea of religion as the concern of the Senate in the controversy is minimized in favor of selfish privileges or literary interests.<sup>6</sup> Combine the fact of the deficiency of real political power in the Senate, their genuine interest in other means of religious experience, and the great preoccupation with literary activity in Rome in the late fourth century: little place is left for the religious aspect. In addition to his historical pursuits Nicomachus Flavianus collaborated with his senatorial colleague Vettius Agorius Praetextatus in establishing the text of Livy. This was also the period of Donatus' grammatical, lexicographical, and biographical treatises, the great commentary on Virgil by Servius (whose monumental tombe bears not a reference to Christianity), and Macrobius' Saturnalia. Preoccupation with such matters placed these litterati in a world in which Christians had no share.<sup>7</sup>

Thus it seems that the real theme of Symmachus' Relatio is

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter III, n. 18, supra.

<sup>6</sup> Alföldi, A Conflict of Ideas, pp. 109; 143, n. 52.

<sup>7</sup> Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 144-45; Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography," p. 98.

toleration, which had always been an aspect of Roman culture.<sup>8</sup>  
 This plea for intellectual freedom is expressed in the words,  
 "Suus enim cuique mos, suus ritus est," and "Uno itinere non po-  
 test perveniri ad tam grande secretum."<sup>9</sup> Indeed, among pagans of  
 Symmachus' day syncretism and toleration of the various forms of  
 religious expression was the rule.<sup>10</sup>

Within the Senate itself there was by no means a clear pagan  
 majority in spite of Symmachus' insistence. Ambrose' claim in 384  
 that there was in fact a Christian plurality seems to have been  
 based upon a "monster petition" procured by Pope Damasus two years  
 earlier in which Christian members of the Senate had voted against  
 the restoration of the Victory altar.<sup>11</sup> The implication has been  
 raised that Christians, who were usually new men risen in the em-  
 peror's service, could easily have outnumbered the pagans if they  
 were to assemble in Rome from the various other administrative

8

Libanius Oratio 30 contains a similar idea, and Themistius  
Orationes 5, delivered before Jovian, and 12 to Valens were both  
 pleas for intellectual freedom and religious toleration. See  
 above, pp. 82-85, and note 36.

9

Symmachus Relatio 3.

10

In addition to the attitude shown by the works cited in n.  
 8, above, the Saturnalia of Macrobius and Zosimus 1.1 exhibit the  
 same friendliness for any legitimate expression of paganism.

11

Ambrose Epistle 17.9-11.

capitals. Damasus' list may, thus, have consisted of the names of these "non-resident" western senators.<sup>12</sup> Zosimus, who gave the Roman Senate a pagan majority (4.59), thus provides an accurate picture, as far as he goes.

Eight years later, upon the death of Valentinian II, and on the heels of Theodosius' anti-pagan legislation, the pagans reacted in earnest. The usurper Eugenius, with the Frankish forces of Arbogast behind him, promoted an ostentatious display of pagan rituals and a reversion to the religious status as it had existed before 382, that is, that State funds again were made available to the State cults and the altar of Victory was again restored.<sup>13</sup> The outcome of the battle on the Frigidus River near the northern tip of the Adriatic Sea is well-known. With that defeat of Eugenius in 394, in which Nicomachus gave his life, paganism in the western Empire was lost.<sup>14</sup> Praetextatus had died in 385, Symmachus would go in 402, Claudius' last poem dates from 404, and Rutilius Namatianus, whom Dill singled out as "the last genuine representative of the old pagan tone in literature,"<sup>15</sup> produced his

12

Jones, "The Social Background," pp. 29ff; See too Palanque, Church and the Arian Crisis, pp. 704, n. 3 and 705.

13

Ambrose Epistle 57.6.

14

Zosimus erroneously puts Theodosius' laws (by our assumption that he was in fact referring to those laws) after 394; see 4.59 and 5.38.

15

Dill, Roman Society, p. 46.

lines in 416. Nicomachus' son, co-leader of the pagan reaction in 392, took refuge in a church and became a convert to the new faith.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding all this our historian is mysteriously reticent. The actions of Gratian in 382, so momentous for the future of Zosimus' faith, are reduced to that Emperor's refusal of the pontifical robe and a pun, after the fashion of the rhetorical style.<sup>17</sup> After several indications of Theodosius' increasingly hard line regarding paganism (4.33, 37), it was only at 4.59 that he reported Theodosius at Rome and in confrontation with the Senate. Thus the crises of paganism marked by the laws of 382 and 391-2 were given only scant allusion by Zosimus, while all in between, including the whole ara victoriae affair, indeed even the very names of Symmachus and Nicomachus, were passed over in total silence. The major political events of these years, however, involving Arbogast's seizure of power from Valentinian II for Eugenius, were taken up fairly adequately (4.53-55 and 4.58). If we must offer an explanation of this failure to elaborate these two decades, entirely out of keeping with Zosimus' personality, it can only be a surmise that Zosimus' world was that of the eastern Empire and moreover, that fully a century had elapsed since those events con-

16

Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 164-65.

17

Zosimus did, however, take this opportunity for his discourse on the history of the office of Pontifex Maximus.

stituting the last flourish of paganism in Rome. It speaks for the completeness of the obliteration of the old religion in the west that Zosimus should not comm<sup>em</sup>orate the men behind it. Even if he were equipped with the details of those twenty years, might he not quash them lest in relating them he pay too great a tribute to the success of the hated Christian emperors?<sup>18</sup>

Plausible as this explanation is, a better one is available. Thompson has shown that Ammianus Marcellinus, writing his last books under Theodosius, felt himself to be laboring under strong intellectual intimidation from the imperial office, for which reason his religious discussions of those books were curtailed.<sup>19</sup>

Now Eunapius, who was the chief and probably the only source of Zosimus here, also wrote under Theodosius; his reduction of coverage of the events of 380-400 might thus be reflected in the New History. We shall see this factor of censorship operative on several other occasions.

Be this as it may, we have shown that the entire work of Zosimus reflects the general position of this group of aristocrats. Indeed, it is safe to say that the same events traced by Zosimus would have received identical coloring had they come from the pen

18

For the same reason, presumably, Zosimus did not record, however, his rhetorical inclinations may have tempted him, the highly epigrammatical last words of Julian preserved in Theodoret Historia Ecclesiastica 3.20, "Galilean, thou hast conquered."

19

Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, Ch. 7.

of any of the leaders of that society. Like Tacitus, our historian never knew the Republic. In this sense, his praise of its institutions was cold and distant, almost a mere literary convention. Still, it is possible to discern a touch of the sincerity of Livy or Polybius - or even of Tacitus himself - if we turn to the corollary of Republican encomia, Zosimus' depression over absolutism in government. This was indicated above, pp. 101-103; in addition to the citations there, one might adduce 4.35 where Gratian "came under the influence of courtiers who are wont to corrupt the manners of autocrats"; at 1.37 Zosimus alone narrated the defense of Rome by the Senate in the absence of Gallienus; the religious role of the Senate was mirrored in the sole notice accorded to Praetextatus by our historian (4.3). There, as proconsul of Greece, he was made to persuade Valentinian I not to prohibit the celebration by his constituents of the great and ancient mysteries. The archaism inherent in pagan culture, from Hesiod's vision of a golden age in his past through Livy's reverence for the early Republic, found its continuation in the reactionary sentiments of that senatorial leadership against a Christian autocracy, and its culmination in the work of our historian.<sup>20</sup>

Besides Aurelius Victor, who wrote under Constantius II, the compiler of the Historia Augusta also preserved the historical

20

Ammianus, too, felt that events of his own times were of less significance than those of earlier periods, and adduced exact precedents in the past to which to compare present events; see Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 148-49.

point of view of the aristocracy, in which the extent of a man's culture was the criterion of his moral excellence. A military emperor, up through the ranks, who was neither aristocratic nor educated - the two went hand in hand - was by this standard not a good man by nature.<sup>21</sup> One could also be sure that such a one would have been a Christian. Hence Zosimus' reference to Valentinian I (3.36.2) stigmatized him as one who *πολέμων δὲ μετασχὼν οὐκ ὀλίγων παιδείας οὐδεμιᾶς μετεσχέκει*.<sup>22</sup> He was not so explicit regarding the other Christian emperors, but there were other pagan values against which they might be measured. Livy had emphasized several: pietas with reference to the gods; fides to treaties and promises; disciplina, that is, due deference to both military and civil authority; virtus, or courage; dignitas and gravitas, that is, seriousness appropriate to one's status; frugalitas, the simple life free from excessive luxury.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the Christian emperors without exception failed in pietas, as it was understood by Zosimus, Julian alone excelled.<sup>24</sup> Constantine and his son Constantius

<sup>21</sup> See Alföldi, *A Conflict of Ideas*, pp. 98-104.

<sup>22</sup> Alföldi, *ibid.*, pp. 122-23, characterized Zosimus as a Helene, a pagan man of culture in the east in whose eyes a Christian was always backward and ignorant. Such a one might well have averted those eyes from the fact that Valentinian was in fact a sensitive and refined man who spoke well, painted, sculpted, knew Virgil by heart, and gave over his son Gratian to the tutelage of Ausonius, the great poet of the age.

<sup>23</sup> P. G. Walsh, *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 66.

<sup>24</sup> See pages 179-181, *infra*.

notably violated the virtue of fides: the latter especially was characterized in Zosimus by the idea of envy (φθόρος 3.5, 8).<sup>25</sup> The slaughter of kinsmen was made by Zosimus to run in the family of Constantine, as first he and then Constantius committed this crime against those who above all ought to have been shown fidelity (2.29; 2.40). Both were repeatedly characterized as men who customarily broke their oaths (2.18; 28; 2.44; 45; 46; 3.9). In their various ways the chief Christian emperors managed to subvert the discipline of their troops, which our historian saw as one symptom of Rome's degeneracy.<sup>26</sup> Finally, in dignitas, gravitas, and frugalitas the Christian emperors were again deficient.<sup>27</sup> Julian, in each case, was credited with the correlative virtue. In fairness, Zosimus did not make it a practice to attack the courage of the emperors,<sup>28</sup> men upon whose shoulders lay the heaviest responsibility in the world. Considering the importance of biography in ancient historiography, this sort of characterization is one of the weakest aspects of Zosimus' work. When we take this

25

See Baynes, Review of Von Ernst Stein, p. 222, Ammianus 16.12.68-70, and Zosimus' version of Eusebia's speech, below, page 168 for Constantius' custom of claiming credit for other's military victories.

26

See especially 2.33-34 on Constantine and contrast that with Zosimus' treatment of pagan generals, below, pages 170-72.

27

See Zosimus' characterization of Constantine and Theodosius, passim, especially.

28

Except for Honorius; see 6.8 for an instance.



up in more depth later, we shall see his valiant attempts at fairness and truth. Although such attempts do not undo the obvious bias of his sketches, they do serve to put our historian above and apart from the ecclesiastical writers, who made far fewer concessions to the other side.

It was the common bond of the rhetorical education that united the points of the triangle represented by the pagan senatorial aristocracy, Zosimus, and the pagan literary tradition. By the Silver Age, rhetoric had given the force of law to certain literary conventions. As canons of style and content, these conventions had, thus, to be imitated, and even the mode and extent of imitation was subject to regulation.

The classical theory of imitation was born long before Roman rhetoric. It had already been an ideal, around which there existed unwritten rules, of the lesser poets who borrowed so much from Homer, including the epic metre, the broad area of myth and legend as proper subject matter, much of the epic vocabulary and formulae, even his name, the *Ὀμηρίδαί*. The theory saw development in the personalized treatment of the same stories by the tragedians, and in the imitation of Thucydides by Xenophon and others. It entered Rome with her first assimilation of Greek literature, which took the form of translations and adaptations of epic and new comedy, and was continued in Virgil's use of Homer, Catullus' of the Alexandrian poets, and Horace's imitation of Lucilius, for example.

The theory would hold that the subject matter within the limits of the genre was the common property of all who worked in that

genre. A middle way between independent invention and slavish plagiarism should thus be the desired goal. Each literary form such as epic, tragedy, comedy, and the rest, had its appropriate style. Imitation of style within a genre was also required.<sup>29</sup> The essence of this approach, which was to become canonical among later Romans, was articulated by Isocrates:

Honor should not be bestowed on those who take the first step in anything, as much as on those who bring it to the most successful conclusion; not so much on those who seek a subject on which no one has ever spoken before as on those who can treat their subject in a manner beyond the power of anyone else.<sup>30</sup>

Horace stated more soberly that mastery of a literary form could only be attained through a knowledge of the laws of the genre, the selection of a congenial theme, and the proper stylistic development of the theme in accordance with its laws.<sup>31</sup>

It was not necessary to credit one's source. The cultivated reader would immediately recognize the classic authors. In the case of a lesser known Quelle, the fact but not necessarily the extent of indebtedness might perhaps be admitted.<sup>32</sup> Historians were governed by the same canons, as they were considered to be writing literature as well. A classical historian might even be-

29

G. C. Fiske, Lucilius and Horace (Madison, 1920), Chapter I.

30

Isocrates, Panegyricus 8-10.

31

Horace, Ars poetica.

32

Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, pp. 21-22.

come the standardized paradigm for a particular topic or type of story. Thus, employment of the idea of  $\tau\acute{\upsilon}\chi\eta$  was often intended to evoke reminiscence of Polybius;<sup>33</sup> siege operations were generally patterned after Thucydides.<sup>34</sup>

Samuel Dill has applied the theory of imitation to the fifth century a.d.:

If a man wished to characterize in a single word the bad side of education and literature in the fifth century, "servility" would probably be the most apt and truthful. The whole tendency of the school training was to make writers slavish imitators of inimitable models, to load the memory instead of stimulating the reason and imagination. When an author was praised, he was praised as having rivalled or distanced Homer or Pindar, Horace or Virgil; he was never praised for having opened new vistas to thought, or for having revealed new powers of expression in language.<sup>35</sup>

Having drawn Zosimus into the camp of the senatorial aristocracy at Rome by means of the bonds of religion and political ideals, we propose next to discuss another connective via Zosimus' participation in the pagan rhetorical and historiographical tradition.

To begin at the beginning, we might point out that the theological tone throughout the work of our historian hearkens back to

33

A. and A. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition," p. 321, n. 5.

34

E. A. Thompson, "Priscus of Panium, Fragment 1b," C. Q., XXXIX (1945), 92ff.

35

Dill, Roman Society, p. 428.

Herodotus himself.<sup>36</sup> Herodotean too, though an aspect of paganism generally speaking, was his insistence upon the regular presence of divine signs as guides for men.<sup>37</sup> The remarkable absence of military insight or even concern for accurate military descriptions apparent in Zosimus' work was also a regular ground for complaint against the Father of History.<sup>38</sup>

Long before our historian's era rhetoric had worked its influence upon classical  $\mu\acute{\iota}\mu\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  so that, juxtaposed to the conventional allusions<sup>to</sup> and quotations<sup>of older writers</sup> was to be found, in a grotesque artificiality, an endless series of forced etymological interpretations, striking epigrammatic utterances, and antiquarianisms, all aiming at sensational effect. At worst, in Zosimus' day, a superabundance of classical vocabulary in connection with the attempt to rearrange words and material into unique combinations resulted in a style unlike any human speech. Happily, this was not the case with our historian. Photius, though not a professional critic but one who used some amount of original insight, said about Zosimus' style that it was "concise, clear, and distinct, nor does he

36

W. W. How and J. Wells, A Commentary on Herodotus I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 43: ". . . with Herodotus the philosophy of history is wholly theological."

37

Among numerous others, see Herodotus 1.86, 1.209, 6.98, 7.137, 8.14, 8.35ff, and 9.65.

38

See How and Wells, Commentary on Herodotus II, note on 5.118.3, whose remark, "Herodotus, as usual, shows complete ignorance of tactics," reflects the general consensus of scholars. For Zosimus, see pages 150-154, infra.

dwell apart from charm"<sup>39</sup> Reitemeier recognized a rhythmical style not seen in his contemporaries.<sup>40</sup> Mendelssohn's estimate was also without any serious disapprobation. He saw a style now transparently Herodotean, now Thucydidean, now Polybian, now Julian, but always Zosimian. Of the indications which point to a learned imitation of Polybius, none is more evident than Zosimus' regular avoidance of hiatus, though the Count did not adhere so rigidly to the rules. From the ancients in general he learned a certain severity of writing, but in his desire to avoid sounding too harsh, a style emerged which everywhere bears vestiges of τῆς κοινῆς διαλέκτου. Finally, in excerpting Eunapius, his habit was to abridge the proud rhetoric and ornaments and substitute a style which was jejune and moderate.<sup>41</sup>

From time to time, though, the appearance of a carefully balanced construction or symmetrical epigrammatic statement more clearly reveals the rhetorical tradition at work in the pages of Zosimus. Thus, in a capsule characterization, Magnentius was "bold when fortune smiled, cowardly when she frowned" (ἐν μὲν τοῖς

39

Photius Bibliotheca Codex 98. See La Rue Van Hook, "The Literary Criticisms in the Bibliotheca of Photius," C. Ph., IV (1909), 178-89.

40

Reitemeier, "Praefatio," p. viii in Bekker.

41

Mend., pp. xiii; xxviii; xxxvi and note on 3.7.6. See also the remarks in J. B. Bury, review of Mend., in Classical Review, III (1889), 37-38.

πλεονεκτήμασι τῆς τύχης θρασύς, δειλὸς δὲ ἐν ταῖς περιστάσεσι).<sup>42</sup>

More vivid is a considerably longer and more complex example which, it would seem, settles any doubt regarding the influence of the schools upon our historian. Sebastianus asked for 2,000 men of his own choosing.

For he judged it difficult to lead a host of soldiers who had been laxly governed, but not too difficult to train a few and bring them around from effeminate to manly ways; furthermore, he thought it more advantageous to take a chance on a small number than on a great throng . . . he sought not those who were nurtured in flight and fright, but those who, recently enlisted in the army, were endowed by nature with outstanding physique . . . these he trained, praising the obedient and plying them with gifts while appearing to the disobedient severe and inexorable . . . He lay in wait for the barbarians; now finding some weighted down with spoils, he butchered them and became master of the loot; now finding others drunk or others bathing in the river, he throttled them.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, his several religious digressions on oracles, and especially those on the ludi saeculares and Pontifex Maximus,<sup>44</sup> do betray an antiquarian bent, though one which, it must be admitted, is welcome to the modern scholar, and is not so pressed as to weary the reader. Note too the etymological aspects of the last mentioned passage.

We have already remarked<sup>45</sup> that most later historians after

42  
Zosimus 2.54.

43  
Ibid., 4.23.

44  
Ibid., 2.1-7, 4.36; see above, page 96.

45  
Above, pages 119-121.

Eusebius, among them Zosimus, avoided the technique of the elaborate set speech. Zosimus regularly gave direct quotations of oracles,<sup>46</sup> but that was nothing new, having been already a habit of Herodotus. On at least three occasions,<sup>47</sup> Zosimus quoted an inscription, one of which was a pithy epigram which predicted the wretched death of Stilicho (5.38) - this in retrospect, for Stilicho had been killed off at 5.34. It reads, "'misero regi servantur, ὅπερ ἔστιν ἄθλίῳ τυρράνῳ φυλάττονται,'" or "Woe to the tyrant for whom these are preserved." The context was intended to be one of tragic irony, for Stilicho had ordered the Capitoline gates, on which the curse was inscribed, to be stripped of their gold.

Of the several "speeches" - the word is used for want of a more accurate one - presented in direct discourse by Zosimus, the longest, as we have seen, does not purport to be an actual quotation, as Eusebia was describing Julian's virtues *τρόπῳ τοιῷδε* :

He is young and of artless character. His entire life he has devoted to the pursuits of knowledge and thus is totally unfamiliar with practical affairs - so much the better for our purposes hereafter. For in his administration of affairs he *\*→* will be publicly registered in the Emperor's name, while in the latter he will perish and Constantius will have no one of the imperial family to be called to the imperium. (3.1)

46

Zosimus 2.6 and 2.37 are the best examples; see too 1.57.4.

47

Ibid., 2.3, 3.34, 5.38.

\* will either succeed or fail. In the former case the happy outcome

Significantly, this short oratio recta contains two of the key ideas in Zosimus' estimate of Constantius, his habitual expropriation of the credit for his staff's victories and his reason for elevating both Julian and his brother Gallus to the purple. Aurelian's siege of Palmyra was embellished by Zosimus' recording of the citizens' insults at the Emperor and the bow-and-arrow elimination of the worst offender by one of Aurelian's body-guard, who was made to remark, "If you so command you shall see this insolent man a corpse" (1.54.3). A short speech of Julian which points up the amazing presence of mind with which our historian endows him, is given at 3.25.3. Having miscalculated the steepness of the opposite bank in a river-crossing operation, with the result that the enemy had set fire to his men's boats "the Emperor counteracted by stratagem his calamitous mistake, saying, 'They have succeeded in their crossing and have obtained possession of the bank; for that fire which attaches to their boats signifies the very thing I myself enjoined the soldiers on board to do as token of their victory.' Thereupon all, just as they were, boarded the boats and crossed over." At 4.36.5 Gratian's refusal of the Pontifical robe was prophetically commented upon by one of the priesthood, again post factum, "If the Emperor does not wish to be called Pontifex, soon enough there will be a Pontifex, Maximus." (εἰ μὴ βούλεται ποντίφειξ ὁ βασιλεὺς ὀνομάζεσθαι, τάχιιστα γενήσεται ποντίφειξ μάξιμος.) It was Maximus who had just (4.35) put Gratian to death and usurped his place: hence the pun. Another epigrammatic speech, shorter than two lines in length, was given to Theodosius upon hearing of



the dislike of the court for Rufinus: "Unless they lay aside their jealousy of Rufinus, they will soon see him ruling" (4.51.2). (εἰ μὴ τὸν κατὰ Ρουφίνου φθόνον ἀπόθωιντο, ταχέως αὐτὸν ὄψονται βασιλεύοντα .) A brief statement of Stilicho's was introduced at 5.29: Peace should be made with Alaric "because Alaric spent all that time in Epirus for the Emperor's benefit, to the end that along with me he might make war on the Eastern Emperor, strip Illyria from his realm and annex it to Honorius."<sup>48</sup> The lone dissenting reply of Lampadius was a model of brevity: "Non est ista pax sed pactio servitutis," (ὁ δὲ δηλοῖ δουλείαν μᾶλλον ἢ περ εἰρήνην εἶναι τὸ πραττόμενον .) At 5.40 the envoys announced to Alaric sieging Rome that the citizens were armed and ready to fight, to which he replied neatly, "Thick grass is more easily cut than thin," and demanded every bit of wealth in the city before he would raise the siege. To the envoys' question, "If you should take all these things, what would be left for those who are inside the city?" he retorted simply, "Their lives." This compact interchange is the closest thing to a dialogue in all the pages of Zosimus. Finally, the grain supply from Africa having been cut off, the

48

Zosimus recited this policy of Stilicho on two other occasions (5.26 and 27), and it was picked up by Bury, Later Roman Empire, I, pages 110-11, 120, and 169. Norman H. Baynes, "A Note on Professor Bury's History of the Later Roman Empire," J.R.S., XII (1922), 211-216, took issue. His position, relying on Zosimus 5.11 was that the eastern government feared Stilicho's takeover of Constantinople itself and not merely the Prefecture of Illyricum. Baynes might have adduced Zosimus 5.31, where Stilicho insisted that he, not Honorius, go to Constantinople upon the death of Arcadius.

starving people of Rome begged to have a chance at the corpses of slain gladiators, with the cry, "'Pretium inpone carni humanae,'  
 ΤΟῦΤΟ Δὲ ἔστιν, 'ὄρισον τῷ ἀνθρώπινῳ κρέσει τιμὴν.'"

One is tempted to think that his rhetorical predilection for such clever lines caused Zosimus to seek out a vehicle by which to present them, and what we have seen above is the result. The objection that he must have found these in his sources, especially Olympiodorus for the latter examples containing Latin (see supra, pages 68-70), is partially nullified by the fact that even in epitomizing, he maintained them. For all we know, our historian may have condensed longer speeches in Eunapius and the Theban to arrive at the epigrammatical remarks which we now read in his work.

Of all the demands imposed upon the historian by the rhetorical tradition, the farthest reaching was probably the archaistic conservation of classical vocabulary. This has been discussed at great length for the fourth and fifth centuries by Averil and Alan Cameron<sup>49</sup> who capsulized this many-sided regulation by citing a line from the Rhetoric of Aelius Aristides: "Concerning expression I would say this: not to use a noun or a verb unless you have found it in books."<sup>50</sup> Syme remarked that Tacitus would go to any lengths or contortions rather than denominate the governor of an

49

A. and A. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition," p. 320, note 5.

50

Aelius Aristides Rhetoric 2.10.

imperial province by his exact title.<sup>51</sup> Ammianus, too, despite his long military career, was deliberately inexact regarding military terms.<sup>52</sup> Olympiodorus was unique in his bold usage in giving Roman titles in the original Latin. Such titles belonging in the context of the Empire were not, of course, to be found in classical Greek or Latin authors. Thus when Zosimus resorts to a painful periphrasis to render the common phrase "Praetorian troops": τοὺς περὶ τὴν αὐλὴν στρατιώτας, οὓς πραιτωριανούς καλοῦσιν (2.9.3), or for the altar of a Christian church: τῆς τραπέζης τοῦ λεγομένου θυσιαστηρίου (5.19.5), or, what was perhaps his greatest tribute to the artificiality of the rhetorical style, his circumlocution for a Christian church itself - so remarkable in view of his regular use of the word ἐκκλησία :<sup>53</sup> παρὰ Χριστιανῶν τιμώμενον οἰκοδόμημα νομιζόμενον ἄσυλον (4.40.5), when we find such periphrases, we begin to understand the reasons. Recall too that although our historian soaped Olympiodorus as to insert Latin words and phrases into his text, thereby violating the rhetorical tradition, he held out against the Latinized place-names of his Quelle (see supra, page 68, ). Other examples of Zosimus' prejudice in favor of archaistic or classical vocabulary are noteworthy. His

51

Ronald Syme, Tacitus (Oxford, 1958), I, 343-44).

52

See e.g., Ammianus 15.5.2; Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, pp. 123-24.

53

Zosimus 5.23.4, 29.9, 34.3, e.g.

at 1.8.2 clearly signifies "Mesopotamia." Having referred to the "monks" directly, he felt the need to apologize, as if to show that while he has used the word, he had not coined it: ὑπὸ τῶν λεγομένων μοναχῶν (5.23.4).<sup>54</sup> Most common among such circumlocutions in our historian was his reluctance to name the particular barbarian tribes. Since he frequently did so name them accurately, these occasions must be attributed to his rhetorical heritage. Thus at 3.3.3, for example, his πλήθος . . . βαβάρων defeated by Julian περὶ πόλιν Ἀργέντορα (Strasbourg on the Rhine) are really Alamanni, whom he named as conducting operations along the Rhine at 3.1.1: καὶ Φράγκους μὲν καὶ Ἀλαμαννοὺς καὶ Σάξονας ἤδη τεσσαράκοντα πόλεις ἐπικειμένας τῷ Ῥήνῳ κατειληφότας. However, the generic term which served as a catch-all for all barbarian tribal names was Σκύθαι, as Zosimus indicated at 4.38.1: "About this same time there appeared above the Danube a certain group of the Scythians unknown to all those dwelling there, but the barbarians called them Grothingi." On two other occasions (4.7 and 4.20) our historian referred to a group τῶν ὑπὲρ τὸν Ἰστρον Σκυθῶν. In the latter place they were attacked by the Huns, themselves dubbed by Zosimus βασιλείους . . . Σκύθας, after Herodotus.<sup>55</sup> Finally, these Scythians above the

54

A. and A. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition," pages 317ff, show that even Christian historians followed this practice with reference to Christian terms.

55

Herodotus 4.20, though he did not refer ~~directly~~ to the Huns.

Danube were revealed, in the context of the Battle of Adrianople, as πλῆθους . . . Γότθων λέγω καὶ Ταϊφάλων. The site of Adrianople was not named by Zosimus.<sup>56</sup>

Zosimus' treatment of battles and sieges was generally as mere literary compositions in which only some startling or noteworthy aspect of the actual event might be included to individualize it. One might even say that he avoided really describing any battle in favor of such "rhetorical battles." His omission of the locations of these battles parallels his normal omission of indications of chronology and duration, and may derive from Eunapius, whose own carelessness about these matters was noticed by Mendelssohn (See pages 47-51 supra), and admitted by the Sardinian.<sup>57</sup>

Let us examine a few cases of this usage. As a prelude to Aurelian's final victory over Zenobia's Palmyra, Zosimus remarked that "Zenobia began to think of expansion." The statement is true, of course, but contains no inkling of a military, economic, or political motive (1.44). At 2.26 we receive a bit more information and a rhetorical exaggeration of the number of troops slain, for good measure: ". . . having emboldened the soldiers, over whom he promised to take personal command, (Licinius) arranged the ranks

56

At 1.37, Zosimus indicates the collection of barbarians under the name of Scythians. Priscus fr. 1b called the Huns Σκύθαι; see Thompson, "Priscus of Panium," pp. 92ff. A. and A. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition," p. 321, gives the regular Latin name for the Goths as "Getae," who were long extinct.

57

Eunapius fr. 1.

of battle. Having proceeded forth from the city he encountered an enemy that was all prepared for the fierce battle that ensued in a location midway between Chalcedon and the Sacred Promontory. Constantine's side clearly got the upper hand, falling upon the opposition with great force and wreaking such great havoc that out of 130,000 men scarcely 30,000 escaped." At 2.18-19, the detailed description of the battle between the same two rivals at Cibalis in Pannonia was first noticed by Gibbon to have been a "rhetorical rather than a military battle."<sup>58</sup> Even Zosimus felt he had to apologize with a ὡς εἰπεῖν for giving us still another "battle fiercer than any other" (μάχη πάσης ὡς εἰπεῖν ἄλλης καρτερωτέρα).

(Constantine) quickly commanded the first charge; with standards raised he was immediately on top of his adversaries. There ensued a battle fiercer than any other, so to speak, for after both sides had exhausted their arrows they fought for a long time with javelins and spears. The battle began at dawn and continued along until evening, when the right wing under the command of Constantine was victorious and put its opposition to flight . . . [Later] following the flight from Cibalis. When the two armies first engaged they employed bows, an interval separating them; but when their arrows were spent they rushed in with spears and daggers . . . when countless numbers had fallen on both sides and the contest had become a draw, the armies at a given signal broke off the fighting.

The battle of Strasbourg, mentioned above, was accorded the following treatment:

And as soon as he had heard his scouts' report that a vast horde of barbarians had crossed the Rhine in the vicinity of Argentoratum, which is situated on the river's bank, he advanced with his army on the spur of the moment. Having collided with the enemy above and beyond all expression it was he who set up the trophy: 60,000 men perished in the

battle proper and as many more plunged into the Rhine and were destroyed in its current. Therefore, if anyone should wish to compare this victory with the battle of Alexander against Darius, he would not find it inferior to that. (3.3)

Zosimus described the battle of Mursa in epic fulness without demonstrating any more real tactical insight than in the other examples cited (2.50.4-53.1):

And now the two armies met and had at each other on the plain in front of Mursa; the battle which ensued was such as had scarcely taken place previously in this war, and many fell on both sides. . . . the armies continued to engage in close combat. Magnentius' men, roused to the higher pitch of fury, did not stop fighting even when night had fallen upon the combatants, and their leaders too persevered both in fulfilling their military functions in general and in encouraging each individual soldier to press heavily upon the adversary. Constantius' leaders likewise recalled the pristine courage and glory of the Romans. And now in the depth of night they were smiting one another with spear and sword and anything else that happened to be near at hand. Neither darkness nor any other of the things which customarily cause a cessation of hostilities stopped the armies from their mutual slaughter. Indeed they counted it the greatest good fortune to die all together side by side. Their generals displayed all throughout the battle deeds of the greatest courage and valor, and among others there fell Arcadius, who commanded the ranks of the Abulci, and Menelaus, to whom had been given the leadership of the horse-archers from Armenia. Now the things told of Menelaus should not be passed over in silence. They say that he simultaneously fitted three arrows to his bow and with a single discharge transfixed not one but three bodies. Using this mode of archery he shot down no small number of the foe, and was almost singlehandedly the cause of the enemy's flight. Nevertheless, he was himself overthrown by the hand of the commander in chief of Magnentius' army, Romulus. The latter likewise fell, having been hit earlier by a missile hurled by Menelaus; after this blow he did not desist from the fray until he had killed the man who had struck it. Constantius being the manifest victor in the light of the rout of Magnentius' troops, an immense slaughter of men and horse

and other beasts of burden now took place . . . 59

We shall have more to say shortly about Zosimus' sudden Homeric ebullieny (infra, pages 189-90). Finally, the battle of the Frigidus River (4.58), for Theodosius as momentous as that of the Milvian Bridge was for Constantine, was also given the rhetorical treatment by Zosimus. Fortunately he named Eugenius as the adversary, for he did not name the location. We are, however, treated to an eclipse of the sun and an indecisive initial encounter after which the rhetorical slaughter begins afresh:

Against (Theodosius' barbarians) Eugenius led out his entire army and there was a mighty clash. Now at the very moment of the battle there occurred an eclipse of the sun; as a result for more than half the time the participants thought it was night rather than day. The armies accordingly adopted a style of night-fighting which produced such great slaughter that on that day the majority of Theodosius' confederates were slain, including one of their generals, Bacurius . . . Theodosius, noting the approach of dawn, with all his troops

59

Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XVIII, n. 82, felt, from this description, that our historian was neither soldier nor statesman. The epic ebullieny of this section, so different from the rest of Zosimus' style, was attributed to a source other than Eunapius by Alberto Olivetti, "Osservazioni sui Capitoli 45-53 del Libro II de Zosimo e sulla loro Probabile Fonte," Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica, XLIII (April, 1915), 321-333. His nominee was "una poetessa romana e cristiana, Petronia Proba, (chi) abbia composto un centone sulla guerra tra Costanzo e Magnenzio." Norman H. Baynes, "A Note of Interrogation," Byzantion, II (1925), 149-53 acknowledging the need for a poetic source, tentatively agreed. However, Zosimus might still have derived the account, epic style and all, from Eunapius, who would then have used a panegyric of Constantius or the poem of Petronia. The former is more likely since it is highly probable that neither Zosimus nor Eunapius knew Latin. Otto Seeck, cited by Olivetti, p. 331, held the panegyric theory, Geschichte des Untergangs der Antiken Welt, vol. IV, app., p. 435.



rushed at them as they still lay on the ground, and throttled them as they felt no pain whatsoever . . .<sup>60</sup>

One cannot consider criticizing as a regular policy Zosimus' innumerable omissions of historical facts and details. We shall, of course, do so when it is unavoidable; remember that he was writing an epitome of much longer histories. But while omitting much, Zosimus managed to fill his pages with trifling and almost incredible stories.<sup>61</sup> Assessing our historian by modern standards, as is proper, Mendelssohn had this to say:

In fact the more one gets to know Zosimus, the more he learns to distrust him. He confuses times, ignores places, connects things not to be connected and vice-versa, describes fables and miracles, while what actually occurred is omitted or treated incidentally, he propounds the same story a second time, a little differently; all in all, there is no vice of which a historian might be guilty which cannot be found somewhere in Zosimus.<sup>62</sup>

There was built into the rhetorical style a passion for superlatives and exaggeration. It was present in Herodotus, Tacitus, and Ammianus; it is to be found in abundance in our historian.<sup>63</sup> We propose here to expose this unhappy aspect of Zosimus' History,

60

That some strange occurrence took place during this battle seems likely since Sozomenus Hist. Eccl. 7.24 inserted the influence of a windstorm favoring the missiles of Theodosius' men.

61

Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XXVI, n. 126.

62

Mend., xlvi. Practically every other judgment of Mendelssohn is favorable or neutral.

63

See Alföldi, A Conflict of Ideas, pp. 3-5.

though our censure is not bitter,<sup>64</sup> recalling how deeply involved in the whole rhetorical approach he must have been. Modern science has taught us a great deal about the relationship of a man to his work. For example, Professor Carney, after discussing the biography of Marius as retold at different times by ancient writers, remarks:

Portents feature prominently in (John Lydus') account, too; he has in fact a most un-Christian familiarity with the books of collections of them, which seem to have been much in demand right across the period of the Empire. And, just as preoccupation with portents continues in John, so political sophistication drops still further away, indicated inter alia by anachronisms and factual errors.

These trends show a surprising similarity to those discovered in current examinations of the psychology of rumour and the forgetting of detail across time. Apparently, the details of an issue are in part simplified, in part exaggerated; prevailing viewpoints and the cultural beliefs of the individual concerned lead him to assimilate parts of the issue to his frame of reference, distorting them in so doing. Presumably all this has to do with the way human communications operate: acquaintance with biographies, spread across an expanse of time, bearing upon other individuals, suggests that Marius's is not the only image to undergo such changes. Hence all the more need for controls such as here outlined upon our selectively operating perceptivities.<sup>65</sup>

With this in mind as a caveat against too harsh an estimate of our historian, we may say that the tale of 2.52 about the exploits of Menelaus provides an excellent example of what we should like to call naivete. Such Herodotean stories, which Zosimus was apparently fond of relating, sometimes represent his attempt at

64  
Nor was Mendelssohn's, above, no. 62.

65  
T. F. Carney, "Content Analysis: Construing Literature as History," Mosaic, I (1967), 38.

sensational effect. As it was an element of the rhetorical tradition, Zosimus had every right to indulge in this sort of thing. Surely we can understand the amazement of the historian of the fifth century b.c. at the marvels he relates, but a thousand years later that rhetorical custom just does not wear well. Moreover, modern students appreciate those wonderful digressions of Herodotus, so informative about the world-view, the state of knowledge, and the general mentality of the literate man of his era. In view of differing estimates of troop strength, numbers killed in battle, and other statistics which might have shed light on late antiquity, we should have welcomed it if Zosimus had been more sedulous about such things. Instead, we find, at 3.52, that Julian had 800 boats built, on which grain was shipped from Britain to feed his constituents in Gaul left without crops because of the military campaigns but Julian himself gives 600 as the figure.<sup>66</sup> Earlier (1.43.2), Zosimus would have us believe that 50,000 barbarians were slain by Roman troops fleeing a battle by unfamiliar roads! The offhand account here is undoubtedly to be explained by Zosimus' quest for brevity in this early portion of his History: ἐτρέποντο μὲν οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι, διὰ δὲ ἀγρίπτων αὐτοῖς ὁδῶν ἀπροσδοκῆτοῖς ἐπιπεσόντες πέντε τῶν βαρβάρων μυριάδας διέφθειραν.<sup>67</sup> Aurelian similarly πολλὰς τῶν βαρβάρων ἀπώλεσεν μυριάδας at 1.49.1. The 60,000 enemy dead

66

Julian Epistle to the Athenians, 279ff.

67

The crabbed style of διὰ . . . ἀπροσδοκῆτοῖς is worthy of Thucydides.

reported by our historian for the battle of Strasbourg (3.3.3) may reflect popular exaggeration<sup>68</sup> or may be a MS error, intending to record a figure closer to Ammianus' 6,000.<sup>69</sup> That the former is likely seems the case in view of Zosimus' remarks immediately following: ὥστε εἴ τις ἐθέλοι τῇ πρὸς Δαρεῖον Ἀλεξάνδρου μάχῃ ταύτην παραβλεῖν τὴν νίκην, οὐκ ἂν εὖροι ταύτην ἐκείνης ἐλάττονα .

While his figures of 98,000 troops for Constantine and 188,000 for Licinius were accepted by Gibbon and Jones, and while those of the second civil war (2.22), 130,000 troops and 200 ships for Constantine and for Licinius 165,000 and 350 respectively, were not questioned by Gibbon, Bury would decrease to 50,000 ~~and~~ the 400,000 men attributed by our historian to Radagaisus (5.26).<sup>70</sup> In the face of Zosimus' apparent opinion that the numbers of the barbarians were immense, we must state that of Bury that they were much fewer than "often imagined."<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the high figures given by Zosimus might simply have been his salute to the rhetori-

68

Guiseppe Ricciotti, Julian the Apostate (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1960),

69

Ammianus 16.12.63; this was the view of Mend., note on Zosimus 3.3.3.

70

Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XIV, nn. 51 and 104; A. H. M. Jones, Constantine and the Conversion of Europe, Collier Books, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962), p. 70. Bury, Later Roman Empire, p. 167, n. 3; but Orosius 7.37.16 and Augustine de civitate Dei 5.23 similarly record high figures.

71

Bury, Later Roman Empire, p. viii.

cal tradition, as were the following examples of his use of superlatives in the exaggeration of historical events.

We find at 3.15 and again at 3.22 the razing of towns so completely by Julian's men that they seemed never to have existed. Again, the plague of the year 251 under Gallus (described at 1.26) struck on the heels of successful barbarian raids: οὕτω πρότερον ἐν τοῖς φθάσει χρόνοις ποσάτην ἀνθρώπων ἀπώλειαν ἐργασάμενος. That of 261 under the Emperor Gallienus (1.37) was one οἷος οὕτω πρότερον ἐν παντὶ τῷ χρόνῳ συνέβη . Valentinian, we are told at 4.9.4, thus ended the war against the entire German nation (πρὸς τὸ Γερμανικὸν ἅπαν ). This war was described in a single paragraph, and that padded by an anecdote about the cowardice of the Batavian legion, which then spearheaded Valentinian's counter-attack for the victory. At 4.25.3, all the barbarians ravaging Thrace were destroyed in one day; in the very next paragraph the gullible barbarians of the east were gathered into the large cities on a given day under the pretext of grants of land and money, and were wiped out. In a doublet, 4.35.1 and 4.39.3, the general of Theodosius, Promotus, wrought double havoc on the enemy. In the latter place we are witness to "the greatest slaughter ever to have taken place in any naval engagement."

On occasion we note a phenomenon which is not flattering to our author. Though he is, generally speaking, an abbreviator, he sometimes records information of a trivial or anecdotal nature which Ammianus, much more detailed throughout, thought fit to leave out. Both men recount the rout of Julian's cavalry at the battle

of Strasbourg; Zosimus alone narrates Julian's dressing them, subsequent to the victory, in women's clothes as part of their punishment. Later on in the Persian expedition Ammianus, writing as an eyewitness, described the death of Macamaeus and his evacuation from the battlefield though mortally wounded (pallescentem morte propinqua, 25.1.2). In our historian (3.26) Macamaeus managed to do in four of the enemy with his bare hands before being carried out wounded but still breathing (ἐμπνοῦν ἔτι).<sup>72</sup>

Trifling and Herodotean anecdotes appear throughout the New History. For the most part, they reflect a poverty of judgment on the part of our historian, such as we have already indicated. They generally contain factual material; but history is not necessarily served by a description of the straight shooting of an unnamed Persian bodyguard of Aurelian.<sup>73</sup> On at least two occasions the Herodotean epithet was precisely deserved. An echo of the tale by which Pisistratus regained power in Athens<sup>74</sup> appears at 1.51 where

72

Compare too the two accounts of the hostages of the Quadi (Ammianus, with Julian, has Chamavi), where Ammianus omits the embellishment of the story of the king's son: Zosimus 3.7 and Ammianus 17.8. Eunapius, however, has it, fr. 12. Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XIX, n. 83 tended to discredit the embellishment because of his respect for Ammianus. However, Julian's dream (Zosimus 3.9) is given almost exactly by Ammianus 21.2.2.

73

Zosimus 1.54. See other instances at 1.29, 1.33, and 1.62, 1.69-70 (Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XII, n. 31 calls the story of Lydius "long and trifling."), 2.8 (Gibbon, Ch. XIV, n. 13, calls the story "foolish"; Jones, Constantine, p. 57, accepts it as true.), 4.13; 4.40; 4.44; 5.9; and 5.29.

74

Herodotus, 160.

the sophisticated Antiochenes were the victims, just as were the precocious Athenians in the story of Herodotus.<sup>75</sup> Again, the escape of Hormisda at 2.27 reminds us of the young thief's rescue of the body of his brother from the guards of the pharaoh Rhampsinitus.<sup>76</sup> That Zosimus had the story of the Halicarnassan in mind is confirmed by his assertion that "these things I have narrated exactly as they happened." Recall Herodotus' appendix to his story group: "Anyone may believe these Egyptian tales if he is sufficiently credulous; I myself keep to the general plan of this book, that is, to record the traditions of the various nations just as I heard them related to me."<sup>77</sup> One final reminiscence of Herodotus is conjured up by a one-of-a-kind remark of Zosimus. Julian departed from Antioch against unfavorable omens; regarding the reasons Zosimus says, "I know why, but will not tell" (τὸ δὲ αἴτιον εἰδὼς ὑπερβήσομαι, 3.12.1). This sort of remark was a favorite of Herodotus, by which he maintained an air of mystery and romance

75

It is possible to discern sometimes in Zosimus' treatment of the Antiochenes a reflection of Julian's attitude towards them (though by and large Zosimus is not bitter towards the people of Antioch). Thus at 3.11 he calls them naturally fond of spectacles, in the same paragraph in which he refers to Julian's Misopogon. It is as if he was making an effort to bring home a point, for earlier (1.61) he had described Aurelian's successful attack on Antioch while the citizens were viewing a horse-race.

76

Herodotus 2.121.

77

Ibid., 2.123.

around his travelogues.<sup>78</sup> By such similarities, at the same time not sufficiently frequent in Zosimus to be considered part of his own mentality, his familiarity with Herodotus appears more certain; it is virtually confirmed when we consider these in the light of the affinities already indicated (pages 140-141, supra).

In addition to these harmless, though unhistorical, episodes, our historian surely aspired to the sensational when he related the out-and-out fables which we shall repeat here. We cannot know to what extent Zosimus believed them; not all of them can be attributed to the prevalent miracle mentality, within the framework of which Zosimus attempted to counter the wonders fabricated by the church historians, for some bear no theological wrappings while others are not unflattering to Constantine and Theodosius. The first, however, surely rivals the works of the Christian God, though our historian did not credit his own gods for the miracle. The war of Probus against the barbarians near the Rhine had just begun

when a famine broke out everywhere in that area. Then a tremendous storm burst forth, pouring down grain in addition to raindrops, such that heaps of it automatically piled up in certain places. All were stunned by this marvel, and at first did not dare to touch the grain and appease their hunger. But when necessity became stronger than every kind of terror, they baked loaves and devoured them. Thus at one and the same time they shook off their hunger and very easily won out in the war, thanks to the Emperor's luck.(1.67).

78

Ibid., 2.123 and 2.171.



It was Gibbon<sup>79</sup> who drew our attention to the fantastic account by which our historian has Constantine disrupt and put to flight the entire army (150,000 men) of Licinius at Adrianople, assisted by twelve of his men (2.22). The story of Theodosius, accompanied by only five men, infiltrating enemy territory incognito in order to root out the barbarians who were terrorizing the Macedonian countryside during repeated night raids, is not less fanciful (4.48). We have already made enough of the miraculous preservation of Athens by her tutelary deities on two occasions (4.18 and 5.6). Such stories also belong in this context since Zosimus apparently was convinced of their veracity.<sup>80</sup>

With this series of mirabilia we have exposed ourselves to a side of Zosimus which can only be comprehended by realization of his total involvement in the rhetorical milieu. His imitation of "classical" authors as well as his close dependence upon his main sources, his quest for sensationalism through striking epigrammatic utterances, superlatives, and exaggeration are all evidences of this truth. When one sees so often the anecdotal taking precedence over the truly historical, one has the impression that Zos-

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79  
Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XIV, p. 177.

80  
See page 100, supra, and Appendix, paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6.

imus' work is lacking in a sense of balance, or better, of proportion.<sup>81</sup> This is true of the Father of History, so it seems, inasmuch as Herodotus devoted so much space to traditional stories about his characters, and built a sequence of motivation as much upon petty and personal aims and ambitions, as come to light from such stories, as upon national ambitions and exigencies. But in the case of Herodotus this may be pardoned; tradition was all he had to go on. Zosimus had no such excuse. His naivete and fondness for marvelous tales is very much in the Herodotean manner; but they are out of place in an educated man of the fifth century, a.d.

There is another aspect of Zosimus' striving for effect which is of a positive or legitimate nature. We refer here to his ability to characterize an event by means of a chain of allusions and references which emphasize its particular importance. Unfortunately this was not often used effectively. One example would be the the gradual approach, which we have seen (above, page 100 ), by which Theodosius legislated against paganism (4.29, 33, 37, 59). The same sense of drama or tragedy if we may so name it, can be perceived in Zosimus' method of preparing the reader for Stilicho's fall by first having him oppose Honorius' journey to Ravenna, then

81

Dill, Roman Society, p. 441ff, noted that no fifth-century historian was worthy of the name, neither Prosper nor Idatius having been gifted with any sense of proportion. Such historians wrote compilations, epitomes, or uncritical and insignificant collections of anecdotes. See Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 121; also Laistner, "Some Reflections," p. 241.

by indicating the hostility towards Stilicho of certain troops which the Emperor would be commanding at Ravenna. Then, just as Stilicho was about to obtain what would be the climax of his entire career, regency and power in both parts of the Roman Empire, the calumnies of Olympius are made to bring him down (5.30-34). Finally at 5.38 we learn that Stilicho had been warned of his death by the Capitoline Gate inscription. The Vandal's ambition to full power, based upon what he claimed had been Theodosius' intention, were clearly stated by Zosimus at 5.4. The idea of tragedy is heightened by his employment, in the same context (5.35 and 5.41) of a Neoplatonic notion: that the "guilt-laden" demon (ἀλιτήριος δαίμων) had taken control of affairs, making it necessary that all things run together which had a bearing on the ruin of the State. The situation has become tragic in the full sense of the word. Man is now helpless to control his own destiny. In a sense Zosimus has drawn the tragedy of Stilicho together with that of Rome: as the Vandal's death had been foreordained by the inscription, so had the loss of Roman courage when the statue of Virtus was melted down been prophesied (5.41). Recitation of the portents accompanying a disaster, as our historian has done here, upon the death of Valentinian (4.18), and elsewhere, was a stylistic device commonly used by Roman historians to create tension.<sup>82</sup>

The rhetorician's love of exaggerated reversals of fortune is

a regular feature of Zosimus' History. Time and again his characters were raised to the pinnacle of prosperity only to be toppled, as in the presentation of the life of Stilicho. Within a particularly short span (5.1-18), the reader can experience three Aristotelian catharses, as Rufinus, Bargus, and Eutropius in rapid succession find their firm footing ironically and tragically withdrawn. Wealth flowed freely into Rufinus' house as the dull Arcadius signed whatever he was instructed to sign. The minister began to dream of obtaining the Empire for himself through a dynastic marriage of his daughter to the Emperor. As his arrogance increased he was generally hated throughout the realm (5.1). Later, even as the wedding procession was en route, Rufinus was unaware that it was not heading for his house, but stood aghast to see that Eutropius had undermined his ambitions by secretly and successfully introducing Arcadius to another candidate (5.3). But Rufinus' murder at the hands of Gainas' men, sent by Stilicho, when as Praetorian Prefect the eastern regent rode proudly at the side of the Emperor, spelled the real tragedy. Moments before in the fullness of power, in death his hands and head were severed and insulted (5.7).

Bargus, of lesser stature, required less space. Having performed the dirty work of Eutropius, the new master of the east, he received in payment a high military post with the hope of greater rewards to come. At this point his wife was persuaded by Eutropius to bring treasonable charges against him, for which, our editorializing historian assures us, he was "punished as he deserved,

after which one and all assiduously admired and praised in song the eye of Adrasteia, whose notice it is impossible for anyone to escape who had committed a foul deed" (5.10).

At this point we are told that Eutropius was now drunk with riches and fancied himself to be wafted above the clouds as his every enterprise was profitable. Supreme in Constantinople, only Stilicho could challenge him (5.10-12). Again it was Gainas, the agent of Stilicho, here given his own motive in his hatred of Eutropius' power, who perpetrated the downfall. "And so fortune handled Eutropius unexpectedly in both directions: having exalted him to a height such as no eunuch ever attained, it plunged him to death owing to the hatred of the enemies of the State towards him" (5.18).

The story of Nisibis<sup>83</sup> exemplifies Zosimus' art of contrast. His focussing upon Jovian's transference of that Roman garrison to the Persians by the Treaty of Dura represented the grief universally felt by men of that time, who considered such appeasement shameful to the Roman name, and a blow to the security of Rome's eastern provinces.<sup>84</sup> Julian's steps to protect Nisibis, on the other hand, had already been mentioned (3.12); then, after an outline of the treaty terms, Zosimus entered upon his digression on

83

Zosimus 3.31-34; see Gibbon, Decline, II, pp. 553-55.

84

Gregory Nazianzenus Oratio 4; Ammianus 25.7; Eutropius 10.17.

how Rome had never before ceded land.<sup>84A</sup> The drama, as well as the contrast of Jovian's act with the attitude of all previous emperors regarding Nisibis, was heightened by Zosimus' presentation of the pleas of the Nisibans (3.33) and their weeping and wailing upon evacuation of the two (3.34) and by his remark that even Constantius, for whom Zosimus lost no love, had upheld the security of that town through three unsuccessful Persian wars.<sup>85</sup>

Zosimus' method of characterizing an event or a mood participates in the same gradual bit-by-bit unfolding process which he employs in the case of individuals. There are thus no character studies as such. Instead we find, in the tradition of Homer and the other classical authors down through Tacitus, a person's character presented via his actions, piecemeal. Because of the abbreviated nature of his work, Zosimus had frequently to resort to short descriptive remarks about his characters, adding little or nothing in subsequent passages. These "characterizations" are necessarily simplistic and one-sided. The person is either a villain or a hero. Let us state at the outset that Zosimus' villains are in almost every case Christians. (And that statement is qualified by "almost" merely to account for any exception to the rule

84A

Zosimus 3.31-32; see Appendix, paragraph 3.32. See the reply of Augustine de civitate Dei 4.29.

85

Zosimus 3.33. Our historian also mentioned Diocletian's fortifications at 2.34 to expose by "subtle" contrast Constantine's own negligence. Gibbon, Decline, Ch. 13, n. 33, is the source of this note.

of which we are not now aware.) One should not be misled by this frequent habit. Just as Stilicho's altered personality emerged from portrayals which Zosimus had culled from Eunapius and Olympiodorus successively, so these "thumbnail" sketches are probably the result of his considered summation of the more elaborate pictures which once existed in one or other of his lost sources. This at least helps to explain how it comes to pass that for our historian a man is either wise and virtuous or villainous and Christian. While the focus in Zosimus' more elaborate characterizations is centripetally upon the emperors and ministers (as was true of Tacitus), these shorter sketches meet us at every turn, so to speak. A few specimens of Zosimus' very brief, of his moderate, and of his full-length treatments will suffice to bring home to the reader our historian's method of depicting character and his lack of subtlety in this area.

It was Eusebia, wife of Constantius, whose speech on behalf of Julian has been recorded above (page 144 ). In that place she was accorded a brief characterization by Zosimus, as a woman who had attained a pinnacle of learning surpassing her sex in wisdom. Her role on Zosimus' stage is thus brief, but not too ephemeral to prevent her being endowed for all time with wisdom for having been on the side of Julian.

The great Roman senator and friend of Symmachus, Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, received barely a mention, at 4.3, where he persuaded Valentinian I to allow the ancient Greek mysteries to be performed. He received a single phrase of description as "out-

standing in every virtue."

The religious persecutions under Decius were not mentioned by Zosimus, but that Emperor was depicted as if Zosimus had been aware of them. Moreover, he was granted more space than his three-year reign would seem to merit (1.21-25). Let us see, however, how much encomia the last of the pagan historians managed to cram into that space. Decius was "a man of distinguished family and rank, besides being adorned with every virtue." He habitually gave good advice based upon experience; he refused a command in the interests of the emperor conferring it, as if he knew that the troops would elevate him over the emperor. He did his job among the soldiers efficiently; they regarded him as their choice for Emperor since he would "effortlessly surpass Philip in political excellence and military experience" (1.21). With a shudder, Decius took power against his will. When Philip moved against him with greater numbers, the troops with Decius were still confident in their leader's skill and foresight in everything (1.22). Decius was victorious. Against the barbarians he won every battle, finally succumbing personally through betrayal. He had been a very good Emperor (ἄριστα βεβασιλευκότι). With him out of the way the barbarians began to prosper (1.23-24).

The foil of Decius was his successor, Gallus, himself pagan, but not beloved of Zosimus because of his opposition to the hero who had persecuted the hated Christians. His short characterization is hence the exact antithesis to that of Decius: As a general under Decius, he plotted rebellion with the barbarians (1.23).



He was proud that he had caused his predecessor's death, almost shouted aloud about it. He even promised to pay to the barbarians an annual sum (Recall that almost any collaboration with the enemy was a bête noire of our author) (1.24). He ruled negligently, allowing the barbarians on all frontiers to raid Roman territory (1.26). Ignorant of the invasions in the east, Gallus was finally killed by his own men because he was slothful and careless (1.28).

The Emperor Aurelian was similarly painted in one color. He was throughout a good tactician (1.48-62, passim). We hear of his praiseworthy construction of his now-famous wall in Rome (1.49), his clemency to the Antiochenes, who had gone over to Zenobia (1.51). He was a man of natural vigor and ambition (1.55). Lenient also to the Palmyrenes upon their surrender, when they later rose up against him and gave the purple to a pretender, he returned and razed the city to the ground (1.56 and 1.61). He constructed a sumptuous temple to Sol and strengthened and reformed Roman coinage. His own assassins buried him with great honor for his great labors and risks on behalf of the commonwealth (1.61-62).

Two epithets to which we shall have become accustomed by the conclusion of this section were also applied to Arbogast: these are immunity to money and military ability. The consistent praise of our historian for this Frank renders it unimportant that he did not speak of his religion as pagan. These virtues were extolled in common at 4.33, 4.53, and 4.54; his martial ability was reiterated at 4.47, 4.55, 4.57, and 4.58. The art of Zosimus was here not subtle.

Tatian, the pagan placed in office by Theodosius during one of his periods of estrangement from Ambrose,<sup>86</sup> received two notices. We learn that he was in every regard a worthy person, such as could administer brilliantly the affairs of the Empire even in the Emperor's absence (4.45). Later Rufinus engineered his retirement, despising him and his son simply because they were uncorruptible and administered their offices dutifully (4.52).

The general Fravitta also performed admirably in the short space allotted him (He appears at 4.56 and 5.20-22). When first we meet him we are told that he believed in a man's standing upon his oath (4.56). Having been appointed general against Gainas by the common consent of Emperor Arcadius and the Senate, though a barbarian, he was in temperament and religion a Hellene, and had many victories behind him. Unable to tolerate idleness, he drilled his troops continuously, building up their strength and confidence. We are then informed on three occasions in 5.20-21 that he was always prepared and on the qui vive for enemy activity. When his opportunity arose, he himself made initial contact with the enemy. Returning to court after the victory he had no fear to acknowledge his success as the gift of the gods, even within earshot of the Emperor, who made him consul (5.20-21).

Again (5.46), the general Generidus, though a barbarian, was a good man in every way and faithful to the old gods and the an-

86

Presumably after he was publicly rebuked by Ambrose for the reconstruction of the synagogue at Callicinum in Mesopotamia, and prior to his final espousal of the role of champion of the faith as he did penance for the massacre at Thessalonica.

cestral rites. He too is shown exercising his troops continuously and safeguarding his assigned territory.

The Christian Anician family, meanwhile, singled out for a sole reference at 6.7, were sorry to see things going well for the commonwealth (κοινῆ...παῖσι), since they alone, possessing the riches of nearly everyone, were unhappy when the people were happy. (The occasion was the appointment of Attalus and the feeling among Romans that they had received, for once, good magistrates.)

In these short or moderate characterizations the total absence of personal attributes contrary to the total behavior pattern of an individual is remarkable. The summaries given above contain every moral judgment made by Zosimus about a man. When our historian turned to describing the actions of his major personages, for this remained his vehicle for divulging their characters, he was sensible enough to admit the good in a Theodosius, for instance. It is interesting to note that while for the Christian emperors an occasional word of praise can be found, in the cases of Julian, the only pagan emperor, and the few other pagans who rose to public positions warranting extensive treatment in Zosimus, hardly a trace of a vice appears! Where good deeds and traits were recorded with the bad, however, Zosimus was not skillful enough to reconcile those that were mutually exclusive.<sup>87</sup>

Zosimus was entitled by a usage of Tacitus, and hence of the

87

See Alföldi, A Conflict of Ideas, pp. 3-5, according to which this was a fault of the whole historiographical tradition.

pagan tradition, to avoid this pitfall by attempting to persuade his readers that an individual's character actually changed for the worse after his early career had been praiseworthy. Here was a tactful way of admitting the good traits of someone he wished to criticize, as if he could not bring himself to allowing the concomitant existence in a person of a capacity for good or evil. Tacitus had asserted a change of character regarding Tiberius and pointed to one in Nero's case.<sup>88</sup> Our historian thus opens 2.29: "The universal sovereignty having devolved upon Constantine alone, no longer did he conceal his natural badness of character (κακο-ἡθειαν), but he indulged himself in every licentious act . . . He thought he should make a beginning of impiety with his own household."<sup>89</sup> Again (4.16), "To speak plainly, (Valentinian's) character (τὸν . . . ἐπιτηδεύοντα τρόπον) was different from that which he had exhibited at the beginning of his reign." Up to this point Valentinian had received grudging praise for his sound magisterial appointments (4.2),<sup>90</sup> men whom he kept in line (4.3), for his scrupulous care about tribute receipts and troop provisions, for a basic religious tolerance when the good of his subjects demanded it, for his fitting provisions for the defense of

88

Tacitus Annales 4.1 and 4.13.

89

See Tacitus Annales 4.13 where Nero's evil inclinations were touched off by the murder of his mother.

90

Gibbon, Decline, III, pp. 7-11.

the Rhine (4.3), and for his conquest of the "whole German nation" (4.9). Up to this point (4.16), his only faults had been his lack of culture (3.36), his removal of Julian's appointees, and his edicts against magic (4.1-2). Now, however, the list of drawbacks begins to cancel out some of his strong qualities: under an appearance of moderation, he had really been hard on his subjects; the cost of the army becomes the pretext for a severe tribute; hated by all, he became still more bitter; he allowed his officers to indulge in profiteering; in short, his character had altered.

At 4.35 we are told of the corruption of Gratian's character by evil courtiers, a usual occurrence among autocrats.<sup>91</sup> Prior to this Zosimus had been uncommonly neutral towards him.<sup>92</sup> Even now the worst we learn is that his favoring of certain Alan deserters had led to revolution in his own army and his own death at the hands of Maximus the usurper. But the refusal of the Pontifical robe at 4.36 stigmatized him as an enemy of the old religion, and here is the key to his change of personality; thus does Zosimus correctly reflect the influence of Ambrose and Theodosius which took hold of Gratian around 380.<sup>93</sup>

91

Ibid., III, p. 140, elaborates the idea of a real change in Gratian. See Tacitus Annales 4.1 and 14.52.

92

Zosimus 4.12, 19, 24, 32-34.

93

For the "old" Gratian see Alföldi, A Conflict of Ideas, pp. 84-87; on the influence exerted upon him by Ambrose and Theodosius, p. 120.

We have already indicated the main lines of Zosimus' biography of Constantine, one of the chief actors on his stage. To review here a large part of Book II would surely be to belabor a point. Let us look again, briefly however, at the mode of Zosimus' presentation. The very first references to Constantine represent him as the cause of the ruin of the State for his failure to hold the ludi saeculares (2.7),<sup>94</sup> as born out of wedlock<sup>95</sup> and as having designs on the throne (2.8-9).<sup>96</sup> The reader is already prepared for what is to follow in such a characterization. But the account is not all one color. At 2.17 and 2.21 examples of his clemency are given, and his military exploits are fairly narrated in 2.16-26 (passim),<sup>97</sup> including the wondrous tale of his patrol's disruption of Licinius' entire 150,000-man infantry (2.22). His serious personal vice of infidelitas (2.18 and 2.28) has already been dis-

94

Glover, Life and Letters, p. 287, calls this naïve in our historian.

95

Orosius 7.25 calls Helena the concubine of Constantius Chlorus; Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XIV, n. 9, made her his divorced former wife.

96

The ambition of Constantine is borne out in the biography by A. H. M. Jones, Constantine, p. 58.

97

However, Alföldi has clearly shown that the divine signs of Constantine at the Milvian Bridge were quite real to him, this against Zosimus' version involving a strictly pagan portent (see above, pages 104-105 and note 73 there): Conversion of Constantine, pp. 16-18.

cussed (pages 136-137, supra).<sup>98</sup> The change occurred, as we have noted, at 2.29. Having perpetrated the deaths of Crispus<sup>99</sup> and Fausta, he gave up his old ways and espoused Christianity. At 2.11, Fausta had shown uncommon loyalty to Constantine by informing on

98

But, against Zosimus, see Buchanan and Davis, Zosimus: Historia Nova, notes on 2.18 and 2.28, where it is noted that the facts of the relationship between Constantine and Licinius are simply not well known.

99

That the heinous affair actually took place is no longer in dispute, despite Eusebius' omission. Constantine may have been jealous of Crispus' popularity, as Gibbon, Decline, II, pp. 218-221, indicates. Fausta did have three sons in whose way Crispus stood, Patrick Guthrie, "The Execution of Crispus," Phoenix, XX (Winter, 1966), 327, points out that the names of the three sons and also their regular association on coins and inscriptions smack of legitimacy. Zosimus 2.20 called Crispus the son of Constantine and his concubine Minerva. Joseph Vogt, "Pagans and Christians in the Family of Constantine the Great," in The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity, 38-55 suggested the actual guilt of Crispus and Fausta; the theme of the article is the plan of Constantine to found a hereditary dynasty. Zosimus missed two opportunities to criticize Constantine further by failing to note this and Constantine's jealousy of Crispus. Guthrie, ibid., 328, also reminds us that Eusebius emphasized Constantine's policy of political and religious unity and dynastic legitimacy (Vita Const. 7.12-13; 10.6-7) and that he spoke, as it were, as spokesman for Constantine's regime. A. H. M. Jones, Constantine, p. 200, stated that whatever the charges (they are wrapped in obscurity: Gibbon, Decline, ibid.), Constantine never rehabilitated the reputations of his son and wife. Their names were erased from public inscriptions and never restored. All of the above militates against Eusebius' silence on this matter. Crispus was commended for his services to the Empire (Hist. Eccl. 10.9.4.6) and never mentioned again by Eusebius. Leunclavius, in his Introduction to the text of Zosimus, found in translation as Introduction to the Anonymous English translation of 1684, page xiif (though they are unnumbered), thinks that Eusebius feared to describe the events surrounding Crispus' death: "Whom should Constantine spare, who spared not his own blood?" Eusebius could not have Crispus die guilty for it was manifest to all that he was innocent; nor could he have him die innocent, which account would have crossed Constantine.

her own father, Maximian Herculus, causing his ruin thereby. These two passages taken together provide us with an episode as subtle as Zosimus ever produced: Constantine repaid her loyalty and his marriage vows with murder. The old faith abandoned, Constantine conducted no more successful military campaigns (2.31). His luxurious living and profuse spending<sup>100</sup> in the new capital, and his weakening of the defenses<sup>101</sup> take up the remainder of his life-story, which ended in disease (2.30-39).<sup>102</sup>

One would be led by Zosimus' account of Constantius II, to believe that the son of Constantine performed but one decent act in his whole life: having outwitted Vetrician and taken over his army, he allowed his victim to live in peace in Bithynia (2.44). For the rest, he would not take a back seat to his father in impiety and wished to prove his manliness by drawing first the blood of

100

Libanius, Or. 46.22-23 and Evagrius 3.39 corroborate Zosimus' view of the vileness of the Chrysargyron. See also Gibbon, Decline, II, pp. 210-212, concluded that this tribute was "arbitrary in the distribution and extremely rigorous in the mode of collecting."

101

Jones, Constantine, pp. 183ff, asserted that Zosimus just did not understand Constantine's plan for the defense of the Empire. His policy was based upon a realistic assessment of the Empire's ability to support an army large enough to defend the whole frontier. Both finances and manpower were insufficient. Constantine's flexible army proved adequate for 150 years. See also Jones, Late Roman Empire, p. 100f.

102

Contrast Eusebius Vita Const. 4.53: when Constantine died his body was still strong and vigorous, free from all disease and blemish.



his household. Having had certain members of his family put to death (among whom were relatives of Julian), he made the soldiers say they would have no rulers other than Constantine's sons (2.40).<sup>103</sup> His motive for giving Gallus, the brother of Julian, the title of Caesar was impugned: hoping for Gallus' unsuccess against the Persians, he would then have a pretext for disposing of him (Only he and Julian, of all the relatives of the sons of Constantine, had been spared) (2.45). Having been beaten by the Persians in his first campaign and having fallen into Magnentius' trap (2.43; 2.45), Constantius conquered the latter in the battle of Mursa (2.50-54).<sup>104</sup> At 2.55 another parallel to Constantine appears: once he was secure, Constantius' arrogance and misrule were given vent (See pages 172-173, above). Upon the charges of eunuchs that Gallus was seeking the imperium, Constantius recalled him and had him killed. Throughout we have been advised of Constantius' quality of deceitfulness (2.44, 45, 46), and of his naturally suspicious nature (3.1, ὑποψία, ὑπόπτως and 3.2, ἀπιστος δὲ ὧν φύσει ; see pages 136-37, supra). Deeming himself incompetent to deal with the foreign threats on all sides of the Empire, he named Julian as Caesar, having been moved by Eusebia's deceit that at worst, if Julian were to fail in Gaul, they would be rid

103

The evidence regarding the guilt of Constantius is surveyed by Giuseppe Ricciotti, Julian the Apostate (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 7ff.

104

See infra, pages 189-90.

of him (3.1f).<sup>105</sup> This is, of course, an echo of his motives for promoting Gallus. Julian's military successes, virtues, and esteem in the eyes of his soldiers evoked another of Constantius' character flaws, that of envy ( $\phi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ , 3.5; 3.8).<sup>106</sup> Finally, at 3.9, Zosimus reports on Constantius' anger, arrogance, and refusal to be bound by "oaths, covenants, or any other word of honor in use among men."

The unmarred character of Julian emerges as a colossal contrast and, in a sense, as a centerpiece, to those of Constantine and Constantius before him and of Jovian, Valentinian, Theodosius, and Honorius-Arcadius subsequent. Modern students ought to remember that our whole estimate of Julian as "champion of reason and enlightenment" derives from Julian himself and was perpetuated by the pagan historians, notably Ammianus, Eunapius, and Zosimus.<sup>107</sup> As Julian was the last of the pagan rulers and the perfect model

105

Ricciotti, Julian, p. 66, disagrees with Zosimus, using the argument of Sozomenus, Hist. Eccl. 5.2, that Constantius would not have paid the high price of a Roman disaster in Gaul just to be rid of Julian. Still, in terms of the character of Constantius as built up by Zosimus, the possibility of this Emperor's betrayal of his two kinsmen seems logical and consistent. Ammianus would agree with our historian, 16.11-13.

106

Ammianus 16.12.68-70 points out Constantius' custom of claiming credit for others' military victories. See Eusebia's speech, supra, p. 144; also see Baynes, review of Roller's Die Kaisergeschichte in Laktanz, p. 222.

107

See Socrates Hist. Eccl. 3.23.18 and Gregory Nazianzenus Or. 5.23 for an opposite view held by T. R. Glover, Life and Letters in the Fourth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1901) pp. 47-76.

to serve as rhetorical antithesis to Constantius, this treatment was to be expected. The Apostate is first seen in Athens associating with philosophers and excelling his teachers in all kinds of learning. Drafted as Caesar and sent to Gaul, he was yet not entrusted with full command (3.2).<sup>108</sup> Eusebia again arranged his promotion, as his predecessors had not halted the inroads of the barbarians. He immediately saw to the strengthening of his forces and won a striking victory, comparable to that of Alexander the Great over Darius, at Strasbourg (3.3). We are shown here his wisdom in refraining from punishing his cowardly cavalry. Julian next began preparations for a war against the whole German nation (κατὰ τοῦ Γερμανικοῦ πάντος). Still acting in good faith, he attributed his victory to the τύχη of Constantius and sent to him Vadamarius the captured barbarian chieftain (3.4).<sup>109</sup> Here again appear notices of Julian's wisdom and of his troops' admiration of him. His concern for people, evidenced by his scrupulousness over the liberation of captured Roman citizens (3.4), was only surpassed (3.5) by his construction of 800 boats for the grain supply of his people in Gaul. Here too his soldiers loved him, we

108

This cannot be considered as unusual as Zosimus would have us understand. Julian was as yet untried. See Glover, *ibid.*, p. 54.

109

Julian Epistle to the Senate and People of Athens 279C-280B calls him Chnodomarius; Zosimus' Quadi are there given as Chamavi, as in Ammianus 17.8 and Eunapius Fr. 12.

are told, for his plain living, courage, and financial moderation as well as for his other virtues "in which he surpassed practically all other men of his time" - for all of which Constantius was envious. The encomium continues on and on. The reader has by now, no doubt, had enough, but may read the rest for himself, 3.6 to 3.29, where Julian dies, having nearly reduced the Persian power to utter destruction, and having been credited with almost every known military, civil, social, and personal virtue, all absent from the lives of the Christian emperors.

Worth noting, however, is Thompson's discovery<sup>110</sup> that of Ammianus' eight books devoted to Julian, only one, Book XXII, deals with his peacetime administration as Augustus, and here his religious policy receives little praise and abundant criticism, though Ammianus was himself a Neoplatonist.<sup>111</sup> Thompson attributes this to the lack of literary freedom under Theodosius. Similarly, of Zosimus' thirty chapters on Julian, only part of one (3.11.3-4) covers this aspect of his career, and there not a word on his religious policy, which must be gotten wholly from Julian's writings, as Zosimus says at 3.8. Assuming, as we do (page 32, supra), the secrecy surrounding Zosimus' publication, the fear of governmental censorship and reprisal does not obtain in his case, unless Eunapius, who was surely his source at this time, and who was a

110

Thompson, Ammianus Marcellinus, pp. 84-86.

111

Ibid.

contemporary of Ammianus, had curtailed his account under the same pressures as Thompson describes for Ammianus.

One might say that Zosimus' treatment of Theodosius is reminiscent of Tacitus' of Tiberius, in that the facts given by Zosimus do not always confirm his evaluation. The narrative concerning Theodosius given above (pages 100 to 103 ), is only part of Zosimus' picture of the man. At 4.50 our historian admitted with wonder the contradictions of good and evil in Theodosius' life. At 4.44 he was a man of innate effeminacy (ἐμφοτον μαλακίαν ); yet his diplomatic policy before the Senate made sense. Other praise was paid to him on several occasions; <sup>112</sup> at 4.16 where he first appeared in Zosimus' pages, he was shown as a successful general, saving Moesia from the barbarians in the reign of Valentinian I. An argumentum e silentio is not out of place here, and that is Zosimus' failure to capitalize upon the Thessalonikan massacre. It may be owing to Eunapius' reticence, writing as he was during the reign of the Spaniard. As knowledge of that affair must have been common property, Zosimus' omission fortifies the opinion of Martin that our historian did not go beyond his three main sources for the historical facts of his narrative.<sup>113</sup>

We have already presented the main lines of Zosimus' portrayal

112  
Zosimus 4.25.1; 34.5; 50.1-2; 52.4.

113  
See supra, pages 38-46.

of Rufinus and Eutropius (pages 164-66, supra).<sup>114</sup> Hardly a single credit was allowed them, a dubious honor shared also by Olympius, minister to Honorius after Stilicho (5.32-36, and 5.44).

An especial source of odium to our historian was the entire race of barbarians. Though certain individual barbarian leaders come up for praise by the cultured Byzantine,<sup>115</sup> his general position is that of bitterness which was prevalent in Constantinople.<sup>116</sup> Hence they are seen plotting with βαρβαρικὴν Μανίαν (5.11.3); their βαρβαρικὴν . . . ἀπληστίαν was insatiable (5.13.1); they do not abstain from murdering women and children as they pillage all available property (5.13.3); again, they possessed a miniacal hotheadedness by nature (5.14; 5.19.2), were, naturally, untrustworthy (ἀνθρώπου βαρβάρου καὶ ἀπίστου, 5.31.5), and insolent (5.40). When he came to Alaric (with whom we conclude our series of character analyses) Zosimus again had a special function to be filled: the Christian Emperors, Arcadius and Honorius, had to be depicted as unfavorably as possible. As we shall see, in Alaric he had found an excellent challenge to these quidnuncs, as he con-

114

Zosimus' disdain for Rufinus has found agreement in Gibbon, Decline, Ch. 29, n. 11.

115

See supra, pp. 170-172, for Arbogast, Fravitta, and Gen-eridus; infra, pp. 183-185, for Alaric. Enough has been said about Stilicho.

116

Vogt, Decline of Rome, pp. 181-185.

sidered the young rulers.<sup>117</sup> The Goth first appears in the process of subduing all of Greece (5.5-7). At this point Zosimus recounts the first of three instances in which Stilicho allowed Alaric to escape from the grasp of his army. We begin to comprehend this strange tactic of the Vandal, who was nothing if not a great general, when next we meet Alaric (5.26); here Stilicho contracts with him that together they might annex Illyria to the west.<sup>118</sup> Later, for his assistance Alaric demanded money from the western government, which because of Stilicho's arguments was paid by the Roman Senate (5.29). Mindful of his truce made with Stilicho, though the latter was now dead (5.36), Alaric preferred to continue the peace for a small amount of money. Zosimus justly criticized Honorius for neither paying the price nor concentrating his legions against Alaric in 408.<sup>119</sup> The western Emperor in fact conducted the whole business foolishly. By 5.40 Alaric had surpassed even a barbarian's insolence. Yet he stood by his bargain with the Romans by which they were allowed free movement to and from the city after it had been taken (5.42). Meanwhile, Honorius broke his oath to give up noble hostages to the Visigoths (5.42, 45). At 5.51 Zosimus explicitly remarked on the moderation and leniency of

117

In his very first reference to them Zosimus made them out to be the pawns of their ministers, 5.1.

118

The same programme of Stilicho was stated at 5.27 and 5.29.

119

Jones, Later Roman Empire, p. 198.

Alaric's peace terms, the rejection of which by the western leaders was proof that God had abandoned them. At 6.8 Honorius, as if roused from a deep torpor, was poised for flight. Alaric was still abiding by his oaths at 6.10, and when Honorius' sister Placidia became his hostage, she was treated in a manner befitting her station (6.12).



## CONCLUSION

If Zosimus has not appeared to be an important object of scholarly endeavor for his own sake during the past fifty years, his work has proved to be of great value in subsidiary studies. In such studies his honesty has been vindicated: by this we mean to say that he has told the truth as he has seen it, and has not intentionally perpetrated falsehoods. He has on occasion bent over backward to render praise to a Theodosius or some other Christian amidst his barrage of criticism. Reitemeier emphasized this faculty of truthfulness and honesty in our historian: it is obvious that he might have flattered his Christian emperors as the Christian historians did, often hiding facts which might have sullied their image. In another place Reitemeier bemoans the loss of Ammianus as source. But, he continues, who are the writers by whose authority the veracity of Zosimus is to be destroyed? Eutropius and Victor who wrote only summaries? Eusebius and the church historians? Inferior to the ancients, among his contemporaries Zosimus was supreme.<sup>1</sup> It is true that he was biased in everything that he said; the statement is well made, for example, that "On ne se trompera point sur Constantin en croyant tout le mal qu'en dit

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<sup>1</sup> Reitemeier, "Disquisitio," in Bekker, pp. xxv and xxxviii-xl.

Eusebe, et tout le bien qu'en dit Zosime."<sup>2</sup> Still, his prejudice ran so deep, and he was so imbued with the rhetorician's argumentative mentality that, we feel, he firmly believed in the truth of all that he wrote. And this is, after all, the most we can say about the work of any historian insofar as he is interpreting events. Nor are all of his criticisms of the Christian emperors inaccurate or false; indeed Zosimus has reflected the modern textbook treatment of many of his characters from Constantine to Honorius.

If we attend to his sketchy treatment of the events of Book I, we are impressed by the correct picture which he presents of the conditions of the third century, during which the Roman Empire was in fact struck by repeated plagues and droughts in association with the widespread raids of the barbarians.<sup>3</sup> There are errors of detail;<sup>4</sup> nevertheless the total sweep of his narrative hits with no inconsiderable impact, as the reader follows the destructive path of the barbarian from Mesopotamia to Antioch, from Pityus on the east coast of the Black Sea, around its southern shore through Trapezus, Chalcedon, and Nicaea, and up again to the Danube. Those

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Fleury, Histoire Ecclesiastique, Vol. III, p. 232, quoted by Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XVIII, n. 1.

3

M. I. Rostovtzeff, The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), Vol. I, p. 476 and Vol. II, p. 737, n. 2.

4

Gibbon, Decline, Ch. X, n. 44; n. 55; n. 140, for example.

venerable cities of Hellenic and Hellenistic times had been the source of so much of what is taken for granted as our western heritage. Zosimus must surely have intended to impress on his contemporaries the feeling that Graeco-Roman civilization was in the very process of disintegration at the moment of such repeated raids occurring almost simultaneously in Italy-Illyria, Syria, and all along the Black Sea (1.27-37). And so he concludes this section with statements to the effect that throughout the east πάντα μὲν ἦν ἀναρχά τε καὶ ἀβοήθητα; that Rome herself was εἰς ἔσχατον ἑλληλακυΐαν . . . κακοῦ ; that the Scythians (i.e., barbarians) subsequently τὴν δὲ Ἰταλίαν πάσαν ὡς εἰπεῖν ἔπελ- ; and that ἐν ἔσχά- τῳ δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἰλλυριαῖς πραγμάτων ἐκ τῆς τῶν Σκυθῶν ἐφόδου διακειμένων καὶ πάσης τῆς ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίους ἀρχῆς ἐς τὸ μηκέτι εἶναι λοιπὸν <sup>σαλευομένης</sup> (1.37).

G. Downey has shown that the account of Zosimus regarding Aurelian's campaign against Zenobia (1.44ff, passim) does clarify the references in later chroniclers to a battle fought at Immae. Zosimus' account has been acknowledged as the best extant for this campaign; the reason it has been imperfectly understood is owing to his failure to name the site of Immae, which we have noted as a frequent drawback of his work.<sup>5</sup>

The chief subject of Book II is Constantine, and our historian has been at the center of most Constantinian controversy, as

5

Glanville Downey, "Aurelian's Victory over Zenobia at Immae, A. D. 272," TAPA, LXXXI (1950), 57ff.

we have seen above in our discussion of his characterization of the first Christian Emperor. Zosimus is the earliest extant secular source for Constantine.<sup>6</sup> Here the situation is different from that of Book I, in that here the overall picture given by Zosimus seems erroneous, while most scholars have had to accept his judgment of numerous details of the life of Constantine, whereas in Book I we have seen that his mistakes were of detail while the large picture was accurate. Still that very prejudiced total impression must be recognized as validly reflecting the impression made by Constantine's conversion upon pagans of his day and of subsequent generations.<sup>7</sup> The essential spirit of fairness of Zosimus' account is brought home to the reader when we recall the occasions on which he praised Constantine, and when we consider that the acts of vandalism of Christians in dismantling pagan temples were virtually omitted by our historian, but were found to be so frequent and degrading by the emperors that they made such acts illegal.<sup>8</sup>

The epic treatment of 2.45-53 has been the subject of two articles, both of which agree in the conclusion that Zosimus' source here (or Eunapius' source whose tone was retained by Eunapius to be carried on in Zosimus) was either an epic poem or a

<sup>6</sup> Jones, Later Roman Empire, p. 78.

<sup>7</sup> Vogt, Decline of Rome, p. 49, for example.

<sup>8</sup> Codex Theod., 16.10.15; 17; 18.

panygyric celebrating the victory of Constantius at the battle of Mursa<sup>in 351.</sup> Olivetti felt strongly that this was the poem of Petronia Proba; this was accepted with caution by Baynes.<sup>9</sup>

Little need be added to what has already been said about Zosimus' coverage of the Apostate, the central matter of the bulk of Book III. In an article by Thompson our historian was shown to have been wrong in asserting that the place from which Julian wrote his Epistle to the Athenians was Sirmium. However, Zosimus' narrative, by which Julian was made to write several letters at that time, was accepted by Thompson, who concluded that Julian's output of propaganda pamphlets at Naïssus to both Greece and Italy was considerably greater than has been supposed.<sup>10</sup>

Zosimus' essential fairness to Valentinian and Theodosius has already been indicated as apparent from the mixture of praise and blame found in his characterizations of those men. When juxtaposed to Otto Seeck's view of Valentinian, the account of our historian is a model of objectivity. For the German historian, Valentinian was a destructive German beast, lazy, and a coward.<sup>11</sup> Re-

9

Alberto Olivetti, "Osservazioni sui Capitoli 45-53 del Libro II di Zosimo e sulla loro Probabile Fonte," Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica, XLIII (April, 1915), 321-333. Norman Baynes, "A Note of Interrogation," Byzantion, II (1925), 149-53. See n. 59, above.

10

E. A. Thompson, "Three Notes on Julian 361 A. D.," Hermaethena, LXII (1943), 83-95, esp. 93-95.

11

Otto Seeck, Geschichte des Untergangs der Antiken Welt, cited in Alföldi, Conflict, pp. 5-8.

call too Zosimus' omission of the Thessalonika affair, which could have been a strong handle in his destructive criticism of Theodosius. Even with this much to his credit, Zosimus' value in Books IV to VI lies further: in the fact that he is so often the sole or fullest source for our knowledge of events. He alone is cited (4.51-52) for the career of Rufinus and for Gratian's refusal of the title of Pontifex Maximus (4.36), as also for Theodosius' victory over Maximus (4.42-46).<sup>12</sup> The only serious complaints against him seem to be for his poor judgment in affording so little space to the momentous battle of Adrianople (4.23-24);<sup>13</sup> for his insinuation that Theodosius sold offices;<sup>14</sup> and for his incorrect assessment of Valentinian as uncultured (above, page 136, and note 22). On the other hand Gibbon generally felt that "Zosimus' partial evidence is marked by an air of candor and truth."<sup>15</sup> He was alert to the manpower shortage from which the Empire was suffering, for which see his section on Theodosius' use of barbarians in the army (4.30 and 33). However, he missed this point in his treatment of

12

Jones, Later Roman Empire, p. 1100, n. 59; p. 1131, n. 65; p. 1099, n. 52; N. Q. King, Theodosius, pp. 62-63, for example.

13

Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XXVI, n. 90, notes this and the fact that Ammianus 31.12f does present a suitably adequate account.

14

Jones, Later Roman Empire, pp. 393-94.

15

Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XXVII, n. 82. (The topic here was Theodosius' sloth.)

Stilicho's attempts to gain Illyria for the west, failing to note, as he did, that that province had long been a recruiting ground for troops.<sup>16</sup> At 4.20 our historian gives the now accepted version of Gothic migrations in 378, as opposed to invasions. Thus his total picture is accurate. Still he has been attacked for presenting a tangled mess for the final subjugation of the Goths by Theodosius in 379.<sup>17</sup>

Jones has called Zosimus "fairly full and accurate," in short, our best source for the years 395 to 410, i.e., Books V and VI, though the loss of Olympiodorus was admittedly regretted.<sup>18</sup> Gibbon considered him our best guide for Alaric's conquest of Greece (5.5-7).<sup>19</sup> On Book V generally, Vogt noted that Zosimus' narrative "paints a vivid contrast between the land of Italy, for so many years the almost defenseless prey of its conquerors, and the court of Ravenna, pursuing its ceremonies and intrigues as though playing out some ghostly game."<sup>20</sup> Zosimus alone is cited on the

16

Zosimus 5.26; 27; 29. Norman Baynes, "A Note on Professor Bury's 'History of the Later Roman Empire'," J. R. S., XII (1922), 211. J. B. Bury, Later Roman Empire, Vol. I, pp. 110-11. See below for further considerations on this point.

17

Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. I, p. 236.

18

Jones, Later Roman Empire, p. 170.

19

Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XXX, n. 5.

20

Vogt, Decline of Rome, p. 185.

fall of Stilicho (5.32-34), for the events from Stilicho's death to the appearance of Alaric before Rome and for the latter's demands on the city, and on the affairs of Olympius (5.34-51).<sup>21</sup>

Regarding the real policy of Stilicho, Zosimus has been a key tool in the hands of Baynes. Against Mommsen and Bury who emphasized that the Vandal's goal was the gaining of Illyria for Honorius and the west with the aid of Alaric, an aim so stated by Zosimus (5.26, 27, 29), Baynes insisted that this was indeed Stilicho's policy, but only after he had despaired of winning regency over both of the young sons of Theodosius.<sup>22</sup> Zosimus stated clearly (5.4) that Stilicho aimed at governing in the east as well as in the west and based this claim upon the supposed deathbed instructions of Theodosius himself. In this he was echoing the propaganda of the Vandal as we have it in the poems of Claudianus.<sup>23</sup> Further, at 5.11, Zosimus may represent the eastern view when he says that Eutropius feared Stilicho's coming to Constantinople. Finally, Stilicho made one last effort at being sent to the new capital, upon the death of Arcadius (5.31). The importance of our historian to modern scholarship is at its highest point in this contro-

21

Jones, Later Roman Empire, p. 1102, n. 4; 1109, n. 65; 1105, nn. 27-28; Gibbon, Decline, Ch. XXXI, n. 1.

22

Baynes, "A Note on Bury," 211-216; he cites Mommsen, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. IV, pp. 517-18. See also Bury, Later Roman Empire, pp. 110-11, 120, 169, and Peder G. Christiansen, "Claudian Versus the Opposition," T.A.P.A., XCVII (1966), 45-54.

23

Claudianus de Consulatu Honorii III. 142 and 152-8; IV. 432.



versy and in another matter, which he related in Book VI.

Gibbon had already noted<sup>24</sup> that Zosimus alone preserved the memory of the revolt in Britain early in the fifth century. Zosimus' remarks on this key event of British history (6.1-6 passim and 10) were employed by Collingwood to destroy the position of Bury<sup>25</sup> who would have made the final evacuation of Britain come at some time after 428, based upon a reading of the Notitia Dignitatum. But our historian implies (6.6.1), according to Collingwood, that Britain was never recovered by the Romans after 410. Though differing in their respective interpretations of the details of Zosimus' text and in the extent to which he is to be taken literally, the modern views of Collingwood, Baynes, Thompson, and Stevens all agree in basing their individual versions upon the account of Zosimus and its relation to other literary and archaeological records regarding this event.<sup>26</sup>

Several aspects of this paper await further detailed study. Thus there is no pretension here to anything approaching a definitive study of Zosimus. However, it is sincerely hoped that we

24

Gibbon, Decline, III, p. 373.

25

R. G. Collingwood, "The Roman Evacuation of Britain," J. R. S., XII (1922), 74ff. J. B. Bury, "The Notitia Dignitatum," J. R. S., X (1920), 146ff.

26

Collingwood, ibid.; Baynes, "A Note on Bury," 217-220; E. A. Thompson, "Zosimus on the End of Roman Britain," Antiquity, XXX (1956), 163-167; C. E. Stevens, "Marcus, Gratian, Constantine," Athenaeum, XXXV (1957), 316-47.

have at least indicated some of the avenues via which further research could prove valuable rather than trivial, both regarding the evaluation of the material covered by Zosimus, and regarding the man as a proper representative of the late Roman Empire. Finally, we may be pardoned for hoping that "our historian" might, as a result of this paper, become just that in a literal, not merely editorial, sense.

## APPENDIX

The passages cited in full below are intended to encompass the independent thought of Zosimus. They have been selected as statements of unifying theme of his work and find their explanation and discussion above on pages 88 to 109.

1.1. Polybius of Megalopolis, having undertaken to set down the events of his own time that were worthy of remembrance, thought it correct to show through the evidence of the facts themselves that the Romans, though they had fought with their neighbors for 600 years after the founding of the city, had not attained great power. But then, having gained dominion over a certain part of Italy, which they in turn lost after Hannibal's passage through it and after their defeat at Cannae, and having seen the enemy pressing upon their very walls, they were raised to such great fortune that in scarcely fifth-three years' time they had acquired not only Italy but all of Africa as well, while in the west they had subdued the Spaniards. They sought yet more: they crossed the Ionian Gulf, conquered the Greeks and dissolved the Macedonians' realm, capturing alive him who was currently their king and taking him back to Rome. Now of such things no one would attribute the cause to human strength, but rather to the Fates' necessity, or the stars' revolutions, or God's will, which is attendant upon those pursuits of ours that are righteous. ( . . . Μοιρῶν δὲ ἀρχὴν ἢ ἀστρῶν κινήσεων ἀποκαταστάσεις ἢ θεῶν βούλησιν τοῖς ἐφ' ἡμῖν μετὰ τὸ δίκαιον ἀκόλουθον ὄσταν. ) For these agents impose a certain sequence of causation upon future events, making them appear in such a way as to implant in people who judge human affairs aright the opinion that their administration is prescribed by providence (θεῖα πρόνοια): thus spirits thrive during periods of productivity, but, when sterility predominates, they decline to that condition which is now observed. What I am saying will of necessity be made manifest by the facts.<sup>1</sup> (*Italics mine.*)

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In the following passages the italicization is the present writer's.

1.5. . . . But when the civil wars of Sulla and Marius and thereafter of Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great had destroyed the Republic, they abandoned the aristocracy and chose Octavian dictator. To his discretion they committed the entire administration without realizing that they had riskily entrusted this great power to the impulse and license of a single individual. For even if he should undertake to rule with rectitude and justice, he would not be able to do the right thing for everybody: e.g., he could not succor readily those who were separated from him by a very great distance. Again, he would not be able to discover enough magistrates who would be ashamed not to live up to a vote of confidence placed upon them. Moreover, he would not be able to accommodate so many diverse customs. If on the other hand he transgressed the limits of his power and got carried away into tyranny, upsetting the magistrates' offices, overlooking official abuses, thwarting justice with bribes, reducing subjects to the status of slaves (such has been the case with most autocrats, in fact almost all of them with a few exceptions), then of course it followed of necessity that the brute power of him who got possession of authority spelled calamity for the public at large. For flatterers are plied at the hands of such a man with gifts and honors and attain the highest offices, while gentlemen who prefer the life of leisure to the busy life naturally resent the fact that they do not enjoy the same benefits. And so it comes to pass that the cities are filled with factions and riots: since civil and military offices are handed out to men who are not above corruption the results are to render civilian life unpleasant and distasteful for men of refinement and to weaken the soldiers' zeal in times of war.

1.6. Indeed, that these results are the case experience of events has clearly shown in itself. These events began in Octavian's reign, when the pantomimus' dance was introduced for the first time by its co-promoters, Pylades and Bathyllus, as well as other things which have been responsible for much mischief right up to the present.

1.37. . . . With the entire Roman Empire reeling in the direction of ultimate annihilation, a plague the likes of which had never throughout all time occurred broke out in the cities. It lightened the calamities inflicted by the barbarians, and caused those who were become sick to account happy both themselves and the cities that, having already been captured, were altogether destitute of men.

1.57. . . . Now what happened prior to Palmyra's demolition is worth relating, even though I appear, in accordance with the purpose stated in my introduction, to have been composing my history in summarized form. For just as Polybius narrated how the Romans acquired their sovereignty within a brief period of time, so I am going to tell how they lost it through their own blind folly within no long period of time. But more of this when I shall have come to the later portion of my history. Now as for the Palmyrenes, when they had obtained no small part of the Roman Empire, as I have recounted, many announcements portending their ultimate destruction were made by heaven; what these were I shall say. At Seleucia-in-Cilicia stood a temple to Apollo . . . wherein there was an oracle . . . These (stories told about the oracle) . . . I resign to the blessed age of mankind, our own generation having repudiated all divine benevolence (Θείαν εὐεργεσίαν).

1.58f . . . And indeed the benevolence of providence (εὐμενεία τοῦ Θεοῦ) towards Rome was of such sort so long as the sacred rites were observed. But when I shall have arrived at those times, in which the Roman Empire gradually became barbarized and shrank to a smaller size (and that, too, disabled), then, to be sure, I shall present the reasons for its misfortune and shall add, insofar as I can, the oracles which disclosed what would take place. But meanwhile it is high time that I return to where I digressed, lest I appear to forsake, undone, the order of my history.

2.1. . . . As a result the longest life a man lives will embrace the time between celebrations of this feast. For what we call an age the Romans call a saeculum. Moreover, (the festival) is of help in curing plagues and pestilences and diseases. It got its start for the following reason. Valesius, from whom is descended the Valerian gens, was an illustrious man among the Sabine folk. In front of his house there was a grove of very tall trees which were struck and burned by thunder and lightning, the significance of which event was a moot question. Thus, when his children fell sick, besides the medical practitioners he conferred also with the soothsayers, who concluded from the manner of the fire's falling that the gods' wrath was at work. Naturally Valesius tried to appease heaven by sacrificial offerings. And since both he and his wife were overcome with fear expecting that the death of their children would occur momentarily, he prostrated himself before Vesta and promised to give her in exchange for the children two unblemished souls, his own and that of their mother. When he looked back at the grove that had been struck by lightning, he seemed

to hear a voice bidding him to take the children to Tarentum and there give them water from the Tiber to drink, having heated it upon the hearth dedicated to Dis and Proserpina. After hearing this he the more despaired of his children's safety, 'for Tarentum was in a truly remote part of Italy wherein water from the Tiber would not be found. Besides, it gave him no good hope to have heard that the water was to be heated on an altar of the nether divinities.'

2.2. Thereupon the soothsayers also were in a quandary; but he, having heard the same things a second time, decided he must obey the god. He put the children on board a river boat and carried the fire along with him. But when the children lay prostrate under the heat, he navigated toward the side of the river where the water's flow seemed peaceful. Having bivouacked at a shepherd's hut together with his children, he heard that he must land at Tarentum (for this was the name of the place, which was homonymous with the Tarentum near the Iapygian Promontory). Accordingly, having worshiped heaven for this happy event, Valesius instructed the pilot to pull ashore and, having disembarked, told all to the shepherds. He drew water from the Tiber, heated it upon a hearth which he constructed on the spot, and gave it to his children to drink. And, sleep coming upon them as soon as they had drunk, they were restored to health. They dreamt that they had offered black victims to Proserpina and Dis and spent three straight nights in festival, singing and dancing. They told the dream to their father, relating that a big man of divine appearance had laid a strict charge upon them to perform these things upon the Campus Martius at Tarentum, where there is a place reserved for the exercising of horses. However, when Valesius wished to construct an altar there, the marble-workers upon excavating the place found an altar already built, on which had been inscribed "To Dis and Proserpina." Thereupon, since he was now more clearly informed as to what should be done, he offered black victims on this altar and there kept the nightlong vigils.

2.3. Now this altar and the institution of the sacrifice had their origin from the following cause. There had once been a war between Rome and Alba Longa. Both being under arms, there came into view a certain prodigy clad in a black skin and shouting that Dis and Proserpina enjoined them, before engaging, to make a sacrificial offering beneath the earth to them. Having thus spoken, it vanished. Accordingly the Romans, confounded by the apparition, both consecrated an altar and, having sacrificed thereon, concealed it underground at a depth of twenty

feet so that it would not be known to any others except themselves. Valesius, when he had discovered this altar and completed the sacrifice and the all-night vigils, was called Manius Valerius Tarentinus: the Romans' word for the gods of the underworld is manes and for being hale is valere, while he was given the name Tarentinus because the sacrifice was performed at Tarentum. Later, in the first year following the expulsion of the Kings, a pestilence having come upon the city, Publius Valerius Poplicola sacrificed upon this altar to Dis and Proserpina a black ox and a black heifer and freed the city from the plague, inscribing on the altar these words: "I, Publius Valerius Poplicola, have dedicated the fiery plain to Dis and Proserpina and have staged spectacles in honor of Dis and Proserpina because of the liberation of the Roman people."

2.4. Following these events, when in the 502nd year after the city's founding diseases and wars had broken out, the Senate, desirous of finding relief from these woes, ordered the decemviri sacris faciundis, who were charged with keeping the Sibylline Books, to investigate the oracles. When the oracles declared that the evil would cease if sacrifice were made to Dis and Proserpina, they searched out the spot and hallowed it by fire, just as instructed, to Dis and Proserpina, in the fourth consulship of Marcus Popillius. And, having completed the sacrifice and having rid themselves of the ills that beset them, they again concealed the altar, laying it to rest in some far corner of the Campus Martius. This mode of sacrifice was neglected for a period of time, but Octavian Augustus revived the ceremony once more after certain unhappy events . . . . Lucius Censorinus and Manius Manilius Puelius being consuls . . . . Ateius Capito explained the ordinance concerning the games as well as the times when the sacrifice should be performed and the spectacle held, the quindecimviri sacris faciundis, who were charged with keeping the Sibylline Books, having made their investigation. After Augustus, Claudius held the celebration, not observing the defined number of years intervening. Thereafter Domitian, paying no heed to Claudius' reckoning but counting up the number of years from the date when Augustus staged the festival, was seen to maintain the institution as traditionally handed down. One hundred and ten years later Severus together with his sons Antoninus and Geta set up the same festivities, in the year when Chilo and Libo were consuls.

2.5. The mode of the festival as recorded is as follows. Heralds used to make the rounds inviting everybody to gather for a spectacle which they neither had seen before nor would ever see again. In summertime, a few days

before the games were held, the quindecemviri, seated upon a temple podium on the Capitoline or the Palatine, distributed the lustral articles to the people: these are torches and brimstone and bitumen, and slaves do not partake of them, but freemen only. After the entire populace has convened at the aforesaid places or at the temple of Diana located on the Aventine Hill, one and all bearing wheat and barley and beans, they solemnly keep the night-long vigils to the Fates on . . .<sup>2</sup> nights. The time of the feast being now at hand, which they celebrate over a period of three days and as many nights in the Campus Martius, the sacred rites are performed at Tarentum on the bank of the Tiber. They sacrifice to these gods: Jupiter, Juno, Apollo, Latona, Diana; also the Fates and the goddesses of childbirth and Ceres and Dis and Proserpina. At the second hour of the ceremonies' first night the Emperor along with the quindecemviri slaughters three lambs upon three altars set up at the riverbank and, having stained the altars with blood, he burns the offerings whole. A theatre-stage having been constructed, fires are kindled and lit up, a hymn, newly composed, is sung, and sacred pageants are put on. The performers receive as their wages the firstfruits of the wheat and barley and beans (for these, as I have said, are distributed to all the people alike). On the first day thereafter, having ascended the Capitoline, where they offer the usual victims, they move thence to the theatre that has been prepared for the performance of the games in honor of Apollo and Diana. And on the second day, at the hour designated by the oracle, noble matrons congregate on the Capitoline, supplicating and hymning the god as is meet and right. And on the third day, in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, twenty-seven remarkable boys and as many girls, all of them flourishing on both sides (i.e., having both parents alive), sing hymns and paeans in both the Greek and the Latin languages, by which the cities subject to the Romans are kept safe. Likewise other things used to be performed in the way divinely ordained; so long as these services were discharged the Roman Empire continued intact. Furthermore, that we may believe this to be the very fact of the matter, I shall set forth Sibyl's oracle itself, seeing that it has already before us been recited by others:

2.6. "Indeed, whenever man's longest span of life  
Comes round its cycle of one hundred ten years,



Remember, Roman, however forgetful,  
Remember to do all these things, for the gods  
Undying, on the plain washed by Tiber's wave  
Where narrowest, when night steals over the earth,  
The sun having hid its light. Then do you make  
Offerings to the procreant Fates, both lambs  
And dark she-goats. Gratify the goddesses  
Of childbirth with incense fit. Next, for Tellus,  
Teeming everywhere, slaughter a black sow.  
Let all-white bulls be led to Jupiter's stand  
By day, not night: for to the gods celestial  
Daytime sacrifices alone are pleasing.  
Let Juno's shrine accept from you a heifer  
Immaculate. And let Phoebus Apollo,  
Son of Latona, invoked also as Sol,  
Get like offerings. May the Latin paeans  
Sung by boys and girls at once fill the temple  
Of the gods. But let the girls keep their chorus  
Separate, as the boys. Let all their parents  
On both sides be still alive and flourishing.  
On that day married women on bended knee  
Alongside Juno's celebrated altar  
Will pray the goddess.\* Give purgations to all,  
Men and women, especially the latter.  
Let all bring from home whatever is proper  
For mortals to offer the gods as firstfruits,  
Propitiation to dwellers in heaven  
Mild and blessed. Let all these things lie heaped up,  
That women and men seated as suppliants  
You may remember to serve. Both day and night  
Let a vast throng continually attend  
The gods' chairs. Mix solemnity with laughter.  
May these things always be in your hearts and minds,  
And all the land of Italy and Latium  
Will ever submit to your sovereignty."

2.7. Now, events themselves have proven to us the fact that, as long as all the above was performed precisely in accordance with the oracle's direction and the demands of the situation, the Romans kept their Empire and continued to hold under their sway nearly the entire civilized world; but, the rites having been neglected near the time of Diocletian's abdication, the Empire gradually ebbed and has escaped notice becoming for the most part barbarized. That this statement is true I indeed mean to demonstrate chronologically. For from the consulship of Chilo and Libo, when Severus celebrated the Secular Games, until Diocletian was made consul for the ninth time and Maximian for the eight, 101 years elapsed. And then Diocletian became a private citizen, with Maximian following his example. But when Constantine and Lucianus were consuls

for the third time the interval of 110 years had now come full circle: the games ought to have been held conformably to custom. Since this was not maintained affairs necessarily have come to the unhappy state that currently oppresses us.

2.16. . . . Meanwhile Constantine, having proceeded with his army as far as Rome, encamped in front of the city in a plain that spread out and was suitable for deploying cavalry. Maxentius, having shut himself up within, was offering victims to the gods and consulting the soothsayers about the war's fortune; he also was searching the Sibylline Books. Now, when he discovered an oracular sign to the effect that one who did the Romans some harm must perish by a woeful death, he took it that the oracle referred to himself, as one who would ward off those that attacked Rome intent upon her capture--which very thing turned out to be true. For when Maxentius had led his forces out of Rome and crossed the bridge which he himself had joined, owls in endless number flew down and covered the wall. Upon observing this, Constantine ordered his men to form in order of battle . . . When (Maxentius') horsemen gave up he took to flight along with the rest and made for the city via the bridge across the river. The timbers could not sustain the pressure of the host, but broke; and together with all the rest Maxentius himself was borne downstream.

2.29. . . . The universal sovereignty having devolved upon Constantine alone, no longer did he conceal his innate badness of disposition but he indulged himself in every licentious act. Still, he made use of the ancestral rites, not so much out of respect as out of necessity. And therefore he had faith in soothsayers of whom he had made trial, just as though they had truly foretold all the things that had prospered for him. When he had arrived at Rome he was altogether full of vainglory, and he thought he should make a beginning of impiety with his own household. For he put to death his son Crispus, whom he had honored with the rank of Caesar as I have related earlier, for having come under suspicion of being intimate with his step-mother Fausta; no consideration was accorded natural law. When Constantine's mother, Helena, bore with irrepressible bad grace the pathetic destruction of one so young, as if consoling her Constantine cured the evil with a greater evil: he ordered an extraordinarily hot bath to be prepared, put Fausta in it, and removed her only after she had died. Feeling guilty about these crimes as well as about his scorned oaths, he approached the priests asking

for lustration. They replied that no method of purification had been handed down capable of cleansing such abominations. But a certain Spaniard named Aegyptius, who had entered Rome and become a close friend of the women in the palace, in a conversation with Constantine maintained confidently that the doctrine of the Christians could wash away any crime and held out this promise, namely that the unrighteous who accepted it would immediately stand free and clear of all sin. Constantine most readily received this word and laid aside the ancestral rites in favor of those which Aegyptius imparted to him. He now initiated his impiety by holding divination as suspect, since through it many pieces of good fortune had been predicted and had come to fulfillment for him, he was afraid lest, in the case of others' consulting it against him, that which it should predict would likewise come to pass. In keeping with this decision he directed his efforts towards abolishing things of this kind. Thus, when there fell the ancient feast day on which the army had to ascend the Capitoline and discharge the customary rites, Constantine, fearful of the soldiery, participated in the celebration; but at a sign sent by Aegyptus they let loose a torrent of abuse against the march up the Capitoline. Constantine, having apostatized from the sacred service, incurred the hatred of the Senate and the people.<sup>4</sup>

2.32. . . . With no war on his hands he devoted himself to luxurious living. He distributed to the Byzantine populace maintenance which has continued in existence up to this day. Expending public money upon many useless structures, he built some which a bit later were demolished as being unsafe owing to hasty construction. He also threw into confusion the long-standing magistracies.

2.33. . . . Constantine upset the established order and divided the one office into four commands. [There follows an explanation of the new divisions into Prefectures.] He instituted magistri, one for the cavalry, one for the infantry, and to them transferred the power of ordering the soldiers and punishing the offenders. In this way did he detract from the prefects' authority, thereby doing harm to the affairs of both peace and war, as I shall immediately explain. For while the prefects had exacted the revenues everywhere through their agents and paid for their military expenses out of these, and while they had the soldiery under their control, submitting to punishment for what-

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Zosimus is probably guilty of an anachronism, as the occasion was most likely Constantine's vicennalia.

ever seemed to them to be an offense, naturally the soldiers, realizing that he who supplied their provisions was also he who punished delinquents, would not dare do anything contrary to their duty, out of fear partly that their rations would be cut off, and partly that they would be punished forthwith. But at the present time, with one man as paymaster and another as arbiter of discipline, the soldiers act as they please in all respects, and to boot the greater part of the provisions falls to the gain of the general and his agents.

2.34. Constantine also did something else that afforded the barbarians free access into the Roman people's domain. Thanks to Diocletian's foresight all the frontiers of the Roman Empire had been fortified in the manner already described with towns and citadels and towers where the entire soldiery lived. Thus the barbarians could not effect passage anywhere as forces would encounter them and repel invasions. Constantine abolished this security by removing the greater part of the soldiery from the frontiers to cities that needed no auxiliary forces. He thus deprived of help the people who were harrassed by the barbarians and burdened tranquil cities with the pest of the military, so that several straightway were deserted. Moreover, he softened the soldiers, who treated themselves to shows and luxuries. Indeed, to speak plainly, he personally planted the seeds of our present devastated state of affairs.

2.36. . . . Indeed, I have often wondered how, since the city of Byzantium has grown so great that no other can compare with it in prosperity or size, no divine, prophecy about its developing good fortune was given to our forebears. Having meditated long on this matter and having unrolled many historical works and collections of oracles (spending time also in perplexity over these latter), I have finally come across a certain oracle (reportedly that of the Erythraean Sibyl or of the Epirote Phaenno, who is said to have delivered oracles as one possessed herself), upon which Nicomedes the son of Prusias relied, and, interpreting it to his own advantage, declared war upon his father at the behest of Attalus. [149 B.C. The oracle follows.]

2.37. . . . This oracle really tells all, so to say, however indirectly and enigmatically, both of the evils that would befall the Bithynians in later times owing to the heavy

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The passage referred to here has been lost in the gap between Books I and II.

burden of taxes imposed upon them, and of the fact that the rule would soon "pass to men who inhabit the seat of Byzas." And just because the events foretold have occurred over no little extent of time let no one assume that the prophecy pertains to some other matter. For all time is brief to God (τῷ θεῷ), Who always both is and shall be. These things, then, I have gathered from what the oracle said and from what has happened. If the oracle seems to anyone to imply something else, let him be minded in this way.

2.38. . . . Having brought about these things, Constantine persevered in his unnecessary gifts to worthless and useless men, exhausting the tribute money. Thus he became burdensome to the taxpayers while enriching those who had no contributions to make, for he considered prodigality to be liberality. He also imposed an excise of gold and silver upon all those who conducted business enterprises anywhere in the world, right down to the most paltry merchandise: not even the unfortunate courtesans did he let avoid this impost. As a consequence it was possible to perceive every four years, when the period was almost at hand within which this tax had to be paid, wails and lamentations throughout the entire city. And when the appointed time arrived scourges and tortures were applied to the bodies of those who, on account of extreme poverty, could not pay the tax. What is more, mothers even sold their children as slaves and fathers prostituted their daughters; they were obliged to pay the exactors of the tribute out of the traffic of such things. Indeed Constantine, wishing to contrive something really painful for men of conspicuous wealth, would name each to the office of praetor and, using this honor as a pretext, would deprive each of a great weight of silver. Therefore, one could see, as often as those commissioned to make this appointment came to the cities, the flight abroad of all those in fear of obtaining the honor with the loss of their fortune. He had the net worth of the most illustrious men registered, and imposed a tax which he personally dubbed the follis. With such assessments Constantine impoverished the cities, for long after his time the exaction continued. The wealth of the cities little by little is being drained off, until the majority are now bereft of their inhabitants.

3.32. . . . When I had reached this point in the history it occurred to me to revert to former times and to ascertain whether the Romans had ever consented to relinquishing any acquisition of theirs, or, generally speaking, had permitted the other side to hold anything whatever of theirs, once it had come under their sovereignty. Indeed, after Lucius Lucullus had subdued Tigranes and Mithridates and

first brought under the Roman sphere of influence their territories as far as the heart of Armenia and, in addition, Nisibis and the forts bordering it, Pompey the Great confirmed the possession of these for the Romans by a peace established by himself, thereby capping Lucullus' successful ventures. Again, when the Persians<sup>6</sup> bestirred themselves the Senate selected Crassus general with supreme power; he came to blows with the Persians and, having been captured in the battle and killed by them, bequeathed the Romans an ignominy that has lasted to this day. Next, Antony assumed the command and, captivated by love of Cleopatra, handled his military affairs in a casual, indifferent manner' and he too departed this life having committed deeds unworth of the Roman name. Still, despite these calamitous reverses, the Romans lost not one of those regions. Even after their form of government had been changed into a monarchy and Augustus had set as boundaries for the Roman Empire the Tigris and Euphrates, they still did not withdraw from this country. A great while later the Emperor Gordian attacked the Persians and fell in the middle of enemy territory; yet not even following this victory did the Persians sunder anything that was under Roman jurisdiction, nor even following the most disgraceful peace of Philip with the Persians. Not long thereafter, when the Persian fire had swept over the East, their forces having overcome the great city of Antioch and penetrated even the Cilician Gates, the Emperor Valerian took the field against them, only to come into their hands; but not even then did he grant the Persians freedom to appropriate these regions, for the loss of which the Emperor Julian's death alone sufficed. And, indeed, until this day the Roman Emperors have been unable to recover any of them, but have gradually lost even more peoples besides, some becoming autonomous, others surrendering to the barbarians, while yet others being reduced to utter desolation. As our history progresses these matters will be pointed out in course.

4.21. . . . While the greatest peril hung over these regions messengers sped to the Emperor to announce what had happened. Having settled Persian affairs as best he could, he came on the run from Antioch to Constantinople, whence he proceeded towards Thrace, bent on waging war against the Scythian renegades. To the army on the march and to the Emperor himself a portent appeared, as follows. The body of a man was seen lying on the road, like one

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Zosimus, of course, means Parthians.

who had been lashed from top to toe, altogether immobile save that his eyes were open and looked out upon those who approached him. They inquired who he was and whence, and at whose hands he had suffered so; he answered not at all. Regarding him as a prodigy, they pointed at him as the Emperor passed by. When the Emperor put the same questions to him he was no less silent. He was reckoned neither as alive, because his entire body was motionless, nor yet as wholly dead, because his sight appeared unimpaired. All of a sudden the portent vanished. Those who were standing about were in a quandary as to what should be done. The men who were clever in explaining such things conjectured that the portent bespoke the condition of the State, which would continue to suffer beatings and lashings, like a person breathing out his last, until it was completely destroyed by the wickedness of its magistrates and rulers. And indeed it will appear, as we survey events one by one, that this prediction was true.

4.27. . . . After beginning his reign in a pleasure-loving, easy-going fashion, (Theodosius) shook up all the established offices and constituted more military leaders than there had been before. Whereas there had been before, Whereas there had been one master of horse and one of infantry, he distributed these magistracies among more than five men, and by this act he burdened the fisc with higher maintenance costs (for whatever formerly only two leaders had individually had was now furnished to five or even more). At the same time he exposed the soldiery to the avarice of a great number of officers each one of whom wanted, from the huckstering of military provisions, to amass not just a petty profit but a fortune as large as if there were still only two of them. Moreover he increased also the cavalry-wing prefects and squadron leaders and tribunes to a number double that which he had inherited. Meanwhile the troops received no similar windfalls from the fisc.

4.28. Thus matters stood, owing to the negligence and the enormous covetousness of the Emperor. He introduced such extravagances to the imperial table that, because of the multitude and costliness of the dishes, the population of cooks and cupbearers and the like could not be totaled up without many entries in a notebook. Concerning the host of eunuchs in the Emperor's service-- and the majority of these, especially the ones of conspicuously youthful bloom, called to account such officers as they willed and held the control of the entire Empire, diverting the Emperor's mind whithersoever they pleased--concerning these, I say, what need is there to make a longer speech, when I should be recounting the causes of the Empire's destruction

consequent therefrom? For, since he poured out the public funds at random to unworthy persons, he naturally needed more money. He put up for sale the provincial magistracies to any chance takers, paying no heed at all to a man's reputation or earnestness but judging as suitable anyone who could produce a goodly sum of gold or silver. And so it was possible to observe money-changers and brokers and partners in the most sordid businesses in the marketplace wearing the insignia of office and handing over their provinces to those who had more wealth.

4.29. Such was the turn for the worse in the affairs of the State: within a short period of time the military forces were lessened in importance and in number alike while the cities were destitute of money, some being exhausted by immoderate levies of tribute, others by avarice of magistrates who overwhelmed with slander those that did not cater to their insatiable desires, all but shouting aloud that they must recover everything that they had paid out for their magistracies. Hence the inhabitants of the cities, afflicted with both penury and magisterial wickedness, led a most unfortunate and pitiable existence, supplicating and begging Providence (τὸν θεόν) to find a way out of all their problems. For it was still possible for them to frequent the temples without fear and to propitiate the gods (τὰ θεῖα) according to their ancestral rites.

4.30. The Emperor Theodosius, having observed the considerable diminution of his fighting force, invited whosoever wished among the barbarians above the Danube to desert to him, promising he would enroll them in the ranks of his soldiers. Many accepted, being of the opinion that if their number should increase, they would easily gain control of the Empire . . .

4.32. . . . Theodosius instructed the tribute collectors to enforce payments with all rigidity, just as if nothing untoward had befallen the Macedonian and Thessalian cities [which the barbarians had just conquered since they had been left undefended]. Then one could see expropriated all that had been left thanks to the barbarians' philanthropy. For not only money, but also women's jewelry and every article of clothing right down almost to underwear, were listed in the tribute assessments; and each

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<sup>7</sup> Zosimus accurately reflects the state of affairs; on the use of German troops and leaders in the armies, and the levying of new taxes to pay for them, see Vogt, Decline of Rome, p. 158.



town and farmstead was full of wailing and lamentation, all alike calling upon the barbarians to come to their aid.

4.33. While the affairs of the Thessalians and Macedonians were in this state the Emperor entered Constantinople in splendor as if in celebration of a glorious victory, taking no notice of the public misfortunes, but indulging his wantonness throughout the length and breadth of that great city. (The Scythians) strove to cheat the Emperor again. For they sent to him deserters of the worst possible sort, who promised to do in good faith and friendship whatever he should command. And he took them at their word trustingly, apparently not having profited at all from his past experience with them. . . . Once again the deserters had the situation in hand, thanks to the Emperor's folly bred of riotous living. For all things that contribute to the corruption of life and morals increased at the Emperor's bidding to such an extent that practically everyone who emulated his pursuits defined human happiness in these terms. Ludicrous comedians, dancers totally depraved, everything connected with obscenity of the most salacious sort and with dissolute music, were rehearsed both in his time . . . The State plunged headlong into destruction because of those who imitated such madness. Furthermore, the abodes of the gods were assaulted throughout cities and countryside, and danger threatened all who believed in deities or who looked to heaven and venerated its phenomena at all.

4.36. . . . Worthy of recording as not irrelevant to the instant event [the death of Gratian at the hands of Maximus] is the following. In Roman religious ceremonies the chief place was held by the Pontifices, whose name, if translated into Greek, would be  $\gamma\epsilon\phi\upsilon\rho\alpha\iota\omicron\iota$ . They got this appellation for the following reason. At a time when mankind did not yet understand veneration by cult-statues, the first representations of gods were fashioned in Thessaly. There being no shrines, for their usage was likewise unknown, the effigies were set up on a bridge over the Peneus River, and those appointed to minister to the gods were called  $\gamma\epsilon\phi\upsilon\rho\alpha\iota\omicron\iota$  from the images' first location. The Romans took over this designation from the Greeks and styled those who first held priestly offices in their midst Pontifices, among whom they ordained that the kings be numbered, as a mark of their superior dignity. Numa Pompilius was the first to take the title, followed by all those who were called kings and then later by Octavian himself and those who succeeded to the Principate. Indeed, at the same time as each received the highest

position the sacerdotal robe was offered him by the Pontifices, and straightway the title of Pontifex Maximus was ascribed to him. Now all previous emperors appeared to have welcomed the honor and to have borne the title most gladly, even Constantine when he came to power (although in religion he turned from the right way and embraced the Christian faith) and likewise after him the others in order, including Valentinian and Valens. But when the Pontifices, in accordance with custom, offered Gratian the robe he rejected it, on the grounds that it was not lawful for a Christian to wear such garb. When the robe had been returned to the priests he who was foremost among them in rank reportedly said, "If the Emperor does not wish to be called Pontifex, soon enough there will be a Pontifex Maximus."

4.37. . . . Theodosius conceded that Maximus was Emperor and pronounced him worthy of sharing with himself the imperial insignia and title, but secretly he was making plans to fight him, while he cozened him with every kind of flattery and adulation. To this end he even sent Cynegius, his praetorian prefect, to Egypt with explicit instructions to forbid all worship to the gods, to put bolts on the shrines and to display before the Alexandrians the image of Maximus set up in public, proclaiming to the people that Maximus had been made co-ruler. Cynegius followed the instructions, closed the doors of the temples throughout the East and all Egypt and Alexandria itself, and prohibited age-old sacrifices and every ancestral holy ritual.

4.38. What befell the Roman Empire as a result from that time until this will be shown subsequently, item by item, in my narrative of events.

4.59. . . . Theodosius' success having reached this point, he journeyed to Rome and declared his son Honorius Emperor, at the same time creating Stilicho general of the legions there and leaving him in charge as his son's guardian. Then, having convened the Senators who adhered to their long-standing ancestral rites and would not be moved to assent to those who condemned the gods, he delivered a speech in which he exhorted them to recant their "error" (as he called it) and so embrace the Christian faith because it promised forgiveness of every sin and every impiety. None was persuaded by this exhortation or was willing to give up the rites which had been passed on from generation to generation since the City's founding, in favor of an absurd belief, for, they said, by preserving the former, they had inhabited a city unconquered for almost 1200 years, while they did not know what would

happen if they exchanged them for something different. In turn, Theodosius said that the treasury was burdened by the expense of the rites and sacrifices, that he wanted to abolish them, that he did not approve of them and, furthermore, that military necessities called for additional funds. The Senators replied that the ceremonies could not be performed duly except at public expense. Still a law abolishing them was laid down, and, as other things which had been handed down from ancestral times lay neglected, the Empire of the Romans was gradually diminished and became a domicile of barbarians, or rather, having lost its former inhabitants, it was ultimately reduced to a shape in which not even the places where the cities lay situate were recognizable. That matters were brought to such a pass my narrative of individual events will clearly show.

5.5. . . . Next all Boeotia and whatever other peoples of Greece the barbarians passed on their descent from Thermopylae were laid low, and from that day to this have shown the marks of that devastation for every eye to behold; only the Thebans were spared, partly because of their city's fortifications, partly because Alaric, in his zeal to capture Athens, did not wish to take the time to besiege them. And so the Thebans avoided the crisis as Alaric made for Athens, supposing that he would take the city readily because its great interior size made it impossible to guard and, because the Piraeus was short of supplies and would surrender to the besieging party after a little while. These were the hopes Alaric cherished. But the city by virtue of its venerability was destined to invoke in its behalf a certain divine providence, even in such impious times, and to survive unsacked.

5.6. The reason why the city was saved ought not to be passed over in silence, being somehow a work of the gods that should restore its hearers to piety. While Alaric and his entire force was approaching the city he spied Athens Promachos patrolling the wall just as she can be seen today in statue form, armed and looking capable of withstanding invaders: she appeared to stand just like the heroic Achilles that Homer portrayed opposed to the Trojans when in his wrath he waged a war of revenge for the death of Patroclus. Alaric could not bear the sight of her, but put a stop to any attempt against the city and offered terms of peace through heralds. The Athenians received these favorably, and exchanged oaths, whereupon Alaric with a small escort entered Athens. He encountered an altogether cordial welcome and, having bathed, dined with the city's notables, receiving gifts besides; he departed leaving the city and all Attica unharmed.

Thus Athens, which during the reign of Valens alone came off unscathed from the earthquake that shook the whole of Greece IV. 18, now once again, having been led to the brink of disaster, escaped.

5.24. . . . Upon the second banishment of John Chrysostom from Constantinople, his partisans set fire to the church, thereby endangering the whole city. A certain miracle which happened at this time it is not fitting to pass over in silence. The Senate-house of which I have been speaking had before its doors statues of Zeus and Athena which stood on stone bases, appearing just as they do even today . . . . Now, when the Senate-house had been entirely consumed by fire and the liquefied lead from the roof was dripping down upon these statues and even the building stones, had they not been fire-resistant by nature, would have been rolled against them, when all this beauty had been reduced to rubble, common opinion holds, these statues as well crumbled into dust. Yet when the site was cleared and made ready for renovation these statues alone were seen to have survived the general destruction. This event caused all cultured people, to conceive better hopes for the city, as if these divinities would always make provision in its behalf. But let all these matters turn out as seems best to divine providence (τῷ Θείῳ ).

5.35 . . . . And just as if these things did not suffice to sate the evil genius which, heavy laden with bonds of guilt and godforsaken (τὸν τότε συνέχοντα δαίμονα, τῆς τῶν ἀλιτηρίων ὄντα σείρας καὶ ἐν ἐρημία τοῦ Θείου ), was forever upsetting all human affairs, to what had been done before, something else was added.

5.36. . . . The Emperor rejected the peace terms of Alaric, even though to settle the present situation satisfactorily he should have done one of two things: either he should have postponed the war by making a moderate outlay of money for a truce or, if he preferred to fight, he should have collected all his military legions, stationed them opposite the enemy approaches, and cut off the barbarians from advancing further. In this latter event Sarus should have been appointed commander-in-chief of operations, not only because in his own right he was, owing to his valor and battle experience, terrifying to the enemy, but also because he possessed a force of barbarians sufficient for the job of resistance. But Honorius neither accepted the peace nor cultivated Sarus' friendship nor mustered the Roman army but, pinning all his hopes on Olympius' vows, he became the author of great calamities to the State. For he furnished the army with leaders who aroused the enemy's contempt, placing Turpilio in charge of the

cavalry, Varanes over the infantry, and Vigilantius in charge of the corps of slaves. Other matters were handled in like manner. And so everyone was in despair, already envisioning the destruction of Italy.

5.38. . . . Serena paid the penalty proper to her impiety toward the gods, which I am now going to narrate. When the elder Theodosius had put down the tyranny of Eugenius, he came to Rome and instilled in everyone contempt for the sacred rites by denying the use of public funds for the sacrifices. Priests and priestesses alike were expelled and the shrines were forsaken, deprived of religious ceremonies. At that time, then, Serena, making light of all this, desired to see the temple of the Great Mother. Spying the necklace on the image of Rhea, an ornament worthy of her divine cult, she removed it from the image and placed it around her own neck. And when an old woman, the last of the Vestal Virgins, upbraided this impiety to her face, she mocked her and ordered her attendants to eject her. As the woman descended she called down upon the heads of Serena and her husband and her children everything that her impiety deserved. But Serena, taking no notice of this, left the shrine sporting the necklace. Thereafter often there came a dream by night of a vision by day warning her of her impending death, and several others had visitations very similar to hers. To such an extent did Δίκη, who pursues the impious, prevail in fulfilling her office that even though Serena knew what was coming she took no precautions but placed at the disposal of the noose that very neck around which she had hung the goddess' ornament. Stilicho also, it is said, on account of another act of impiety not very different from hers, did not escape τῆς Δίκης mysterious ways. For he had commanded that the gates on the Capitol be stripped of their great weight of gold, and those who were ordered to fulfill this task found on a certain part of the gates the inscription "misero regi servantur," that is, (ἀθλίῳ τυραννῶ φυλάττονται), "Woe to the tyrant for whom (these) are preserved." And the upshot corresponded to the inscription, for he ended his life woefully and wretchedly.

5.40. . . . Then it was that the Romans were convinced that the man who was making war on them was Alaric, and, despairing of all things that pertain to human strength, they recalled the resources that the city had formerly known in times of crisis and of which they were now bereft because they had violated the ancestral rites.

5.41. While they were occupied with these thoughts Pompeianus, the urban prefect, by chance met some men who had

come to Rome from Etruria. They said that a certain city, Narnia by name, had freed itself from imminent danger, having evoked by prayer to heaven and by worship in the ancestral manner violent lightning and thunder which drove off the barbarians besetting it. After this conversation Pompeianus was persuaded of the advantage of doing what the pontifical books prescribed. But, since his religion was that which currently prevailed, in order that he might accomplish in greater safety his heart's desire he related everything to Innocent, the bishop of the city. Innocent, placing the salvation of the city ahead of his own religion, secretly allowed him and the priests to do whatever they knew how to do. But when they said that nothing would avail the city unless the customary sacrifices were performed in public, with the Senate ascending to the Capitol and celebrating both there and in the city marketplaces the duly prescribed rites, no one dared to take part in the ancestral ceremonies. Instead they bade the man from Etruria farewell and applied themselves to appeasing the barbarians in every possible way. Therefore they sent the envoys back again and, after an exchange of a great many words accepted these terms: that the city pay 5000 pounds of gold, 30,000 more of silver, 4000 silk tunics, 3000 scarlet-dyed fleeces, and 3000 pounds of pepper. Since the city had no funds in the treasury, absolute necessity demanded that such Senators as had resources should undertake to secure these amounts by levy. To Palladius was assigned the task of meting out what payments should be made by each individual according to his substance. He was unable to collect everything completely either because the owners concealed a part of their possessions or simply because the city had been reduced to penury owing to the exactions of one greedy Emperor after another. The guilt-laden genius which had seized control of human affairs led those who were in charge of this particular business to the utter extreme of wickedness, for they decided to make up what was lacking with the ornaments attached to the gods' images--which of course meant nothing other than the images which had been consecrated by sacred rites and adorned with decorations befitting the fact that they had preserved the city's well-being from of old, and which when the religious rites had been diminished to some extent had become lifeless and inefficacious. Finally, since it was fated that everything having to do with the city's destruction should coincide, they not only stripped the images of their adornment but even melted down some of the gold and silver ones, among them that of Courage, which the Romans call Virtus. With its destruction there was extinguished whatever courage and virtue that Romans had, just as it had been prophesied by men schooled in divination and ancestral ritual.

5.51. . . . Such were the lenient and temperate terms proposed by Alaric: everyone alike was amazed at the man's moderation. But Jovius and the other magistrates whose power was second only to the Emperor's insisted that these demands could not be accepted because all of them had bound themselves by oath never to conclude peace with Alaric. Moreover, if the oath had happened to have been made to God (τὸν Θεόν ) perhaps it might have been possible to overlook it by trusting the divine beneficence (τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλανθρωπία ) to condone the impiety; but since they had sworn by the Emperor's head it was not lawful for them to commit perjury against such an oath. So dim were the wits of those who, bereft of God's providence (προνοίας Θεοῦ ) were then conducting the affairs of the State.

6.13. . . . Meanwhile Alaric set out with his troops for Ravenna in the hope of making a firm peace treaty with Honorius; but fortune (ἡ τύχη ), advancing down the road leading to the ruination of the State, found another impediment to dash that hope. For Sarus, who had allied himself with neither the Emperor Honorius nor Alaric, was by chance staying with a small force of barbarians at Picenum. . . .

To these might have been added the sections of Book II dealing with Julian, except that we know that they were taken from Eunapius who emphasized Julian's reign.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Daniel C. Scavone has been read and approved by members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 30, 1969  
Date

Paul S. Felt  
Signature of Adviser